Fandom is a Way of Life: A Folkloristic Ethnography of Science Fiction Fandom

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"FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE:"
A FOLKLORISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY OF SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM

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"FANDOM IS A WAY OF LIFE:" A FOLKLORISTIC ETHNOGRAPHY OF SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM
PREFACE

I have been a reader of science fiction for most of my life, often devouring ten or twelve books in a single week. As an engineering student at the University of Pennsylvania, this interest was piqued by a semester-long seminar in the analysis of science fiction. My enjoyment of this course was enhanced because my fellow students were equally interested in this genre of literature; they neither derided it nor ignored it, as many of my friends did. When the course ended, the instructor told us that he had only one regret: he would have preferred to teach the course in the fall semester, so that the class could attend the Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference.

After the lecture, I asked him to tell me more about the meeting he had described. He told me that the conference was a yearly event, usually held in November or December, at which readers and authors gathered to discuss the creation and content of science fiction. In November 1973, I noticed a poster advertising the event, to be held at one of Philadelphia's larger hotels. I made a point of keeping the specified weekend free and, when the morning arrived, went directly to the hotel.

Part of what I saw made sense to me: panel discussions on short story writing; interviews and speeches: a "Meet-the-Author" party. Other activities, however, were totally beyond my ken—groups of intense individuals arguing about the care and feeding of mimeograph machines, for example. Although I did not know it at the time, I was observing
science fiction fandom.

A month or so later, at a meeting of the Philadelphia Folk Song Society, I met Judith Weiss for the first time. Her first words to me were, "Didn't I see you at Philcon?" When she saw the blank look on my face, she explained that "Philcon" was the nickname given to the conference I had just attended. Judith and her then-housemate Don Keller were my first introduction to the world of fandom. On her recommendation, I attended the 32nd World Science Fiction Convention, held in Washington, D.C. during Labor Day weekend of 1974, where I learned more about fandom in four hectic days than I had previously learned in a year.

I continued to attend the Philcon each year, enjoying it more and more as I grew to know some of the regular attendees. Through advertisements in Galaxy, a science fiction magazine, I became a subscriber to two fan magazines ("fanzines"). These proved useful when I moved to Bowling Green, a place where a large selection of new sf books is hard to find. With them I kept abreast of the field, so that on my return to Philadelphia I was able to catch up with my reading.

I had originally planned to do this thesis on some aspect of folklore contained within the literature of science fiction, but when I began to plan such a project I realized that I was ignoring an aspect of American and European culture so unique that I was quite surprised when I found that no other folklorist had preceded me. Fandom has been in existence since the early thirties, but has been generally ignored by scholars in the social sciences. The more I considered it, the more the idea appealed to me. This thesis is the
result.\(^1\)

In further chapters, the definition of "fandom" will be examined in some depth; for the moment, it will suffice to say that science fiction fandom is that assemblage of individuals who take part in activities which are directly or indirectly related to science fiction: forming local clubs; publishing, writing, and editing fanzines; organizing and attending conventions.

To a folklorist, the study of fandom has great appeal. Folklorists have long been interested in the function of informally organized groups, in the ways individuals identify with and join such groups, and in the behavior of group members when they gather together. Fandom presents a perfect opportunity to observe such a group from these and other aspects.

My goals in this thesis were multiple: I wanted to learn more about fandom for my own personal knowledge, while at the same time I wished to gather the type of information useful to the social scientist, using the methodologies of folklore for data collection and analysis. I determined to concentrate on the following aspects:

1. What is the history of fandom, and how much of this history is known to the average fan?

2. What is the organization of fandom as a social entity? Are there taxonomies which show how fans are differentiated from each other and from outsiders?

3. What functions are served by the fan magazines and the

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\(^1\)The sole exception is Fredric Wertham, *The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), which only deals with one aspect of science fiction fandom—the fan magazines. This book will be considered further in Chapter IV.
conventions?

4. What effects does the interface between fans and writers have upon fandom and upon science fiction writing and publishing?

5. Is science fiction fandom a unique entity, or do similar social organizations exist around other genres of literature?

6. Are there aspects of fandom to which current folklore theories can be applied and tested?

With these six points of approach set out, I began to plan my fieldwork. I chose to use an ethnographic approach, mixed with participant observation at conventions. My first informant was the individual who had done the most to bring me into contact with fandom, Judith Weiss. Her aid was invaluable, as she helped me select other potential interviewees from different parts of the world of fandom, often providing me with introductions as well. All told, I made seven interviews during the period between October 1976 and March 1977. A total of eight individuals were interviewed, all but one from the Philadelphia area. Appendix I gives brief biographies of each informant, including their involvements with the various aspects of fandom. All but one of the informants are fans; the exception is the proprietor of Philadelphia's only all-science fiction bookstore, whose commentary seemed too worthwhile to ignore.

As in any research work based partially on field interviews, excerpts from such interviews make up a large portion of the quotations to be found in this thesis. To avoid burdening the reader with an unnecessary quantity of footnotes, all quotations from such interviews will not be footnoted. Table I presents a summary of the interviews, and may be used in lieu of more formal documentation.
TABLE 1
INTERVIEW DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON(S) INTERVIEWED</th>
<th>LOCATION OF INTERVIEW</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judith Weiss</td>
<td>Author's home</td>
<td>28 October 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Scithers</td>
<td>Informant's home</td>
<td>4 December 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis McUnney</td>
<td>Author's home</td>
<td>14 December 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. B. Post</td>
<td>Informant's home</td>
<td>4 January 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Parris</td>
<td>Phil. Science Fiction</td>
<td>16 January 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner Dozois and</td>
<td>Informants' home</td>
<td>6 March 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Casper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Fisher</td>
<td>Informant's home</td>
<td>10 March 1977</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My informants were all very helpful and willing to speak openly on all aspects of fandom. In most cases, the informants knew each other, often commenting on the probable opinions of their counterparts. Several have loaned me books, while others were kind enough to make me copies of rare and otherwise unavailable material. I cannot thank them enough for their courtesy and time, especially when I consider the mocking treatment fandom often receives from the press and other outsiders.  

I had hoped to attend many conventions during the course of my research. Unfortunately, the demands of a low budget and a part-time job limited my trips to two: the 1976 Philcon and the 1977 Kubla Khan, held in Nashville. However, I feel that these, combined with those I have previously attended and the information provided by my informants,

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2See, for example, Edna C. Stump, "Is Science Fiction the Hope of American Life?", Philadelphia Inquirer, 28 March 1976, "Today" Magazine section, pp. 10-17.
have given me a sufficient amount of data to comment on these occurrences.

The following chapters follow the order of the goals stated earlier. Chapter I deals with fandom's history, as derived from both written and oral sources. I have chosen to make this chapter quite brief for two reasons. First, most of fandom's history has already been documented by fannish historians. The chapter is filled with references to and quotations from their works; the interested reader should refer to them for further details. Second, certain portions of the historical information will be needed for the sake of clarity in later chapters, and will be presented at the time of need.

Chapter II presents an ethnographic overview of fandom as it exists today. Included here are ethnic taxonomies of the various types of fans, an examination of the stereotype of the introverted fan, a look at the achievement of status within fandom, and a study of the functions played by and benefits received from membership in fandom. Also in this chapter is an examination of several definitions of "fan" and "fandom," and some examples of the esoteric humor of fandom, which includes hoaxes, diseases, religions, and helicopter beanies.

The third chapter turns to the fan magazines and the Amateur Press Associations (APAs). These provide the fan with a form of long-distance communication and interaction with his or her fellow fans. Using concepts suggested by Michael Owen Jones in Why Faith Healing?, involvement in these activities is examined in terms of their being a "second occupation" which fulfills needs not adequately cared for via

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other activities.4

Chapter IV examines the conventions, at which direct interaction between fans occurs. The chapter draws on the works of Robert Jerome Smith and Richard A. Reuss to demonstrate how a convention can be viewed as a form of folk festival containing both formal programs of accepted behavior and informal activities often including licentious behavior.5

Chapter V is a brief examination of one activity often found at the conventions—filksinging, the singing of fannish folk songs. Appendix II contains sample filksong texts.

Chapter VI turns to the interface between fans and writers. Considered here are topics including hero-worship, becoming a professional, authors who are also fans, and the effects of fannish criticism upon authors and their works. Also discussed is "fan fiction"—works of fiction about fans and/or writers.

The seventh chapter examines the various "sub-fandoms" which have grown out of sf fandom, including author-oriented groups, the Trekkies, and comics fandom. Unrelated fandoms oriented around the mystery/suspense and western genres are also considered. The relationships between sub-fandoms, science fiction fandom, and other-genre fandoms are examined.


The final chapter sums up the work and provides a few suggestions for further studies. For the benefit of the reader who is unfamiliar with the terminology of fandom, a glossary is provided following this last chapter.

My involvement with fandom has not been very great. My informants tell me that I should not consider myself a fan, but only a "fringefan"—someone who is just barely a fan, hardly involved in fandom. I am, to be frank, honored to be even this close, for fandom is a cultural entity that I greatly respect. Since beginning work on this thesis, however, my interest in fandom has increased. I have become a member of an APA, and I hope to increase my convention attendance in the years to come.

Though fandom may never become my total way of life, I have become increasingly pleased that it is now a part of my life, a part which I hope never to lose in its entirety.
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"Fandom is a Way of Life:" A Folkloristic Ethnography of Science Fiction Fandom

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A science fiction ("sf") fan is an individual whose interest in this literary genre has extended past reading into involvement in such things as local science fiction clubs, fan magazines ("fanzines"), and sf conventions ("cons"). Science fiction fandom is the loosely-structured, geographically-dispersed organization of these fans. Drawing on both written sources and field interviews with eight informants, the history, composition, and structure of sf fandom is examined from a folkloristic viewpoint. The forms of folklore which serve to bind the individual fan to the larger social entity of fandom are detailed.

Despite its literary orientation, fandom is primarily a social organization. The primary motivation of individuals for becoming involved in fandom proves to be a desire to communicate and meet with others who share interests. Through participation in fandom, the individual fan may gain social acceptance, peer recognition, opportunities for self-expression and creativity, and aid in becoming a professional creator of science fiction.

Fanzines provide the geographically-dispersed body of fandom with a means of indirect communication. These magazines—written, illustrated, edited, and published by fans on a non-profit basis—provide
their readers with information and commentary on both science fiction and fandom. Participation in this communications network is shown to fulfill individual psychological needs, with the amount of fulfillment achieved being related to the amount of participation.

The sf conventions provide an arena in which fans may directly interact with each other. The relationship of these conventions to the local groups which sponsor them is explored, and the organization, membership, and financing of such events are discussed. The formal and informal behaviors found at cons are described and compared with activities at South American religious fiestas and academic conventions. The concepts of a convention as a period of license and as a form of folk festival are discussed.

The linkages between the fans and the professional creators of science fiction—many of whom once were fans—are examined. The relationships and contrasts between sf fandom and groups such as "Star Trek" fans and mystery fans are presented. Filksinging—the singing of songs with a science-fictional theme—is discussed and texts of three such songs are presented in an Appendix. A Glossary of the esoteric terminology, acronyms, and neologisms of fandom is provided.
CHAPTER I
FANDOM'S EARLY YEARS:
AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

The history of science fiction fandom can be garnered from both written and oral sources. This chapter will present a brief summary of fandom's formative years, contrasting written and oral information so that conclusions can be drawn as to the historical knowledge of the average fan. Later chapters will consider aspects of the present state of fandom in considerable depth.

Much of the written history of fandom exists only in rare copies of early fanzines, which were generally unavailable for my researches. However, several fans have written books and articles on the topic, and it is from such works that much of the information presented here is derived. The primary sources are the books by Harry Warner, Jr., Sam Moskowitz, and Richard Eney.¹

In order to utilize oral historical information, I asked each of my informants to tell me what he or she could of fandom's history. Only one individual, Fred Fisher, was unable to tell me anything on the subject. J. B. Post refused to tell me anything, suggesting that I would do better to use the works previously cited. Dennis McCunney, George Scithers, and Judith Weiss all made similar suggestions, but

each of them also contributed some amount of remembered historical information. The remaining informants, Susan Parris, Gardner Dozois, and Susan Casper, all had some amount of historical data to contribute.

Most sources attribute fandom's origin to the letter columns of the early science fiction magazines, particularly those of Amazing Science Fiction (now Amazing Stories), first published in 1926. \(^2\) To Hugo Gernsback, the magazine's original editor, fandom offered a method of improving circulation; thus, reader's letters were not only published, but encouraged. Amazing's current editor, Ted White, described the result:

"From almost the beginning, letter writers to Amazing included in their comments responses to earlier letters published in the magazine. It was but a short step for some of these readers to initiate private and direct correspondence with each other. And yet one more step for those who live in the same area to make personal contact with each other and form clubs. And, in the process, various of these readers—some of them club members, some of them in contact only by correspondence—began to publish amateur magazines for circulation among themselves. Thus "fandom" was born." \(^3\)

Other early magazines ignored the letter columns and became directly involved in the formation of clubs. \(^4\) In an essay on science fiction publishing, author Frederik Pohl discussed one such organization, the Science Fiction League:

"Wonder Stories tried the experiment of starting the first large-scale science fiction fan club, the Science Fiction League, as a promotion device. It was their hope that they would be able to enroll thousands of members, all of whom would buy every copy of the club's official organ, which of course was Wonder Stories. Their expectations were not realized. Many of the members bought"


\(^4\) Warner, Yesterdays, p. 28.
the magazine more or less regularly. But more importantly they invented science fiction fandom, which now can turn out more people for a weekend convention than the SFL ever managed to sign up. It was through the SFL that local clubs got their first major impetus in forming and staying alive, and from them came everything else.  

Both George Scithers and Dennis McCunney described the Gernsback-edited Amazing Stories letter columns as the breeding grounds of fandom. McCunney, however, also associated the Science Fiction League with this magazine, rather than with Wonder Stories, the correct publication.  

Both Moskowitz and Eney deal in depth with fandom during the 1930s. During this formative period, fans were deeply concerned with ideological disputes involving such dogmas as Communism and Technocracy, and many local clubs were beset with internal feuds and power struggles. The feuds were often concerned with whether the purpose of science fiction was entertainment or edification. In a review article on Moskowitz's The Immortal Storm, Damon Knight notes that the book exemplifies just how seriously the early fans took their science fiction.  

A major event of the 1930s was the first science fiction convention. In October 1936, a small group of New York City fans, all members of the New York branch of the International Scientific Association, one of the period's many clubs, travelled to Philadelphia for a visit with its branch of the club.  


7 Eney, Fancyclopedia, pp. 33-34.
In the forties, according to Warner, fandom was almost wholly composed of young white males, with a few female exceptions. Much of All Our Yesterdays is taken up with descriptions and photos of various fans and details of their activities and feuds. Other sections are devoted to the conventions, fanzines, and clubs of the period. Warner emphasizes the primacy of the clubs over the conventions as a means of direct contact between fans of this era:

Geography meant a trifle more in fandom during the forties than it does today. Fans were less prosperous, the war made travel difficult during half of the decade, and the prozines [professional science fiction magazines] were urging fans to form local clubs. Many more local fan clubs, confined to a city and its immediate environs, existed in those days. . . .

Several informants commented on the makeup of early fandom. Susan Parris, for example, told me, "I know that it was a very small group of people, mostly young men, very, very shy. In all the pictures of them, they all wear horn-rimmed glasses." To some extent, the latter comment does agree with the pictures in Warner.

Gardner Dozois and Sue Casper were more detailed in their knowledge of early fandom's composition:

SC: I know that when it started it was a lot different than it is now. The conventions when we began were a lot different than they are now.
DA: In what ways?
SC: Well, they were much smaller, to begin with. . . . A convention of fifty people was an average convention.
GD: I think one other difference, at the time, was that to a large extent fandom was younger then. . . . The bulk of fandom in the early years was composed of kids about eighteen, nineteen, sixteen.
SC: The majority of whom were males.
GD: The majority of whom were . . . white middle-class.
SC: All of whom I would say.

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9 Ibid., p. 211.
DA: There are very few Black fans in evidence at conventions even now, that I've seen.
SC: The number is still very small.
GD: There are a hell of a lot more now than there were twenty years ago, certainly. . . . There weren't very many women in early science fiction fandom. That’s changed a good deal.
SC: And mostly over the last ten or twenty years, ten or fifteen years, in fact.

During the 1950s, fandom's meeting ground began to switch from the clubs to the conventions, in part because the magazine-sponsored clubs became defunct. The fanzines and APAs (Amateur Press Associations) remained the means of indirect contact between distant fans. The change from clubs to conventions is borne out by the attendance figures of the World conventions ("Worldcons") of the period. The highest attendance during the forties was 200, while conventions of the fifties show a range from a low of 400 to a high of 850.10

The last fifteen years of fandom have been marked by great growth. By 1970, Worldcon attendance was regularly above one thousand, reaching nearly five times that number by mid-decade.11 Local clubs are still to be found in many major metropolitan areas, often acting as the sponsoring groups for local and regional conventions. Fanzine publishing is a flourishing activity, as exemplified by the fact that several manufacturers of duplication equipment regularly exhibit their products at conventions.

Although several attempts were made, only one try at uniting fandom under a single organizational structure had even limited success. This was the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). From its inception


11 Ibid., pp. 37-43.
in 1940, the N3F has been embroiled in both internal dissension and external controversy, and has "... never managed to be an important force in fandom, though some of its aims... would be worthwhile."12

Several informants commented on the N3F, all of them agreeing with the above opinion. George Scithers' comment was typical:

DA: Would you say there's any sort of organization to fandom?
GS: There are a number of organizations which exist in and around fandom, but there is no central body, and attempts to create one have been howling failures. The National Fantasy Fan Federation goes back, oh, twenty-five years or so, and in spite of having a number of very capable and competent people in its organization—president, secretary, and things like that—the organization as a whole has been a howling joke among experienced fans for a very long time.

DA: What do they do, or try to do?
GS: A lot of vast projects with half-vast minds running them. They tend to come on pretentious and, oh, there's a fan word, "fuggheaded."

Several other aspects of fandom's history should be noted before turning to its present. First, fandom is not a wholly American institution. While the U.S.A. is fandom's primary source of members, fans are also to be found throughout Europe and in most portions of the British Commonwealth. Second, it should not be presumed that each fan is a participant in all forms of fan activity. Since fandom began, the individual fan has had several choices of activity—clubs and conventions for direct interaction, fanzines for indirect communication—and not all fans possessed the time, interest, or money needed for involvement in all of these.

Finally, the concept of "numerical fandom" must be considered. Jack Speer, author of the original Fancyclopedia, described the history of fandom up to 1954 in terms of a set of stages, with some stages

12Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 113.
separated by transition periods. Table 2 summarizes this schema.\(^{13}\)

### TABLE 2

**SUMMARY OF NUMERICAL FANDOMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>PRIMARY ASPECTS OF THE PERIOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eofandom (1930-33)</td>
<td>No sense of group existence; letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Fandom (33-36)</td>
<td>Interest in science, science fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Transition (36-37)</td>
<td>Shift in interest to fandom itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Fandom (37-38)</td>
<td>Feuds and political infighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Transition (38-40)</td>
<td>Return to interest in professional sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Fandom (40-44)</td>
<td>Balance of interests in sf and fandom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Fandom (44-46)</td>
<td>Trend toward book collecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Fandom (46-50)</td>
<td>Split interest groups begin to form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Transition (50-51)</td>
<td>Concern about &quot;literary value&quot; of sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Fandom (51-53)</td>
<td>Split between faanish, sercon fans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Transition (53-55)</td>
<td>A small group proclaims itself as &quot;Seventh Fandom,&quot; but is shouted down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Fandom (55-58)</td>
<td>Renewed interest in fandom as a social entity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite its esoteric nature, three informants referred to this concept of numerical fandoms. Scithers described it briefly and then referred me to the Fancyclopedia for details. Weiss mentioned the concept in passing, calling it a "... sort of verbal lore that's passed down." McCumney gave me a detailed lecture on the various stages and the individuals involved in each of them, generally agreeing

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13 Eney, Fancyclopedia, pp. 59-60. Originally, Speer's system went only as far as Fifth Fandom, but was later extended by its inventor. No written documentation is available as to other continuations of the system. The concepts of the "faanish" and "sercon" fan will be considered in the following chapter.
with the data provided in the Fancyclopedia.

It would seem that the amount of historical knowledge possessed by my informants is not great when compared to the wealth of information in the published works. This appears to be true no matter what the age of the fan or the duration of his or her tenure in fandom. Scithers and McCunney, the two most knowledgeable informants on historical matters, are at opposite ends of the age spectrum, and Scithers has been a fan for about twice as long as McCunney. This would seem to imply that learning about fandom's history is not a matter of necessity for most fans.

At the same time, one can see that each informant has some reasonably accurate knowledge of either fandom's history or the sources for its study. Judith Weiss, who told me that she had "... read things about it, but ... didn't bother to remember the facts ...," offered to lend me the appropriate source works if I were interested. As will be seen later, what fans do tend to remember is not historical information but memorates centering around specific events and individuals. In general, the fan is concerned with fandom not as an historical entity but as a social one.
CHAPTER II

THE COMPOSITION OF FANDOM

The Definition of "Fandom"

Fandom can be considered as the community of individuals who are linked through the various fan activities. To understand fandom, then, one must begin by understanding what makes a fan. Each informant was asked to describe his or her concepts of what a fan is. Two traits emerged: a fan is one who is interested in science fiction; a fan is one who interacts with others who possess a similar interest.¹

Several informants emphasized that an individual who has only the first of these qualities is not a fan. Scithers described a fan as:

... somebody who takes an overt act beyond buying and shelving science fiction magazines and books. ... Attending a convention, putting out a fanzine, writing to a fanzine, belonging to a science fiction club, these are the normal overt acts.

Similarly, Post called a fan "... someone who, on the spectrum of things, is a little bit more active than a reader."

The interactive aspect was shown up most clearly in the interview with McCunney:

¹Arguments as to the precise nature of "science fiction" have been fought in both fandom and academe. In this thesis, the term (and its abbreviation, "sf") will be taken to include all forms of speculative literature, including fantasy and "sword-and-sorcery." Readers concerned with these arguments should turn to academic journals such as Extrapolation and Science Fiction Studies, and to works such as Brian W. Aldiss, Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1973), which deal with such questions.
DA: What makes a fan a fan, and not just an average joe?
DM: Well, an interest in science fiction, of course, and from there a desire for the company of like-minded people. Science fiction fans are communicators. Science fiction fans love to talk to each other, endlessly, about anything.

Reference to this interaction based on shared interests is also seen in definitions of fandom such as this one from a column in *Amazing Stories*:

The essence of fandom is the personal reaction and contribution of each fan; my idea of "fandom" isn't necessarily yours. Fans are brought together usually, but not exclusively, by an interest in sf or fantasy to share these and common interests: Music, politics, ... lifestyles, food, each other.²

One important aspect of fandom is its geographic dispersal.³

It is, in effect, a community without location which acquires its sense of *communitas* through the various forms of fan activity. When I suggested to Judith Weiss that fandom appeared to me to be much like an extended family, she said:

Well, that description has been applied before. I suppose it's so, in a way. I mean, it's more of a tribe than a family, or it's an extremely large group of people. As a matter of fact, somebody else once put it better. She said, "Fandom is a small town, except that it's spread out all over the world."

But it's a small town, with its gossip and its feuds and its important citizens. Everyone knows what everyone else is doing. It's really more like that than a family.

**The Demographics of Fandom**

Little data exists on the demographics of fandom. Writing on the size of fandom in 1974, Ted White noted that:

The most optimistic assessment of fandom's number—based more on convention attendance than anything else—is that there are perhaps five thousand people in the world who consider themselves "fans." In more realistic terms, not many more than a thousand

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are actively involved in most of the hardcore activities of fandom—club attendance and fanzine reading and publishing, for instance.4

The age of fans ranges from early teens through old age. At the conventions I have attended, the majority appeared to be in the fifteen-to-thirty bracket, which agrees with the view given in the Fancyclopedia. Stumpf suggests that the teen years are best for entry into fandom, as this is when the individual is "... still freshly obsessed with matters of space, time, life, death."5

A 1948 survey cited by Warner showed only eleven per cent of fans to be female. This has changed greatly in recent years, to the point where about half the fans to be seen at conventions are women. One aspect of fandom which has not changed since the period of which Warner wrote is the racial mixture; fandom was and is a predominantly Caucasian group.6 At a convention I attended in May 1977, for example, there were only four non-Caucasians in an audience of about three hundred individuals.

As the number of women in fandom increased, the role of women changed. Several of my informants mentioned this in brief; one, Susan Parris, discussed the topic in depth:

DA: Would you say that women play a secondary role in fandom?
SP: This is something that I find very, very difficult to define what I believe, because in some ways women do have a very good position in fandom, but in other ways... women are treated the same as they are in the mundane world.
DA: Could you tell me more about the good things for women in fandom?
SP: Okay, for the most part, each person in fandom is

5Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 4; Stumpf, "Is Science Fiction," p. 12.
6Warner, Yesterdays, p. 26; see also Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 147.
considered to be solely responsible for themselves, even in people who are couples. In the mundane world, it seems that this does not apply, that the woman is basically an appendage to her husband or her lover, unless the woman has a very forceful and definite personality.

In fandom, women do have an opportunity to use their individuality, or to develop it. There's a little more opportunity for taking on responsibilities that actually mean something. Some of the best fanzines in the country are published by women or contributed to by women. Of course, now we do have some really fine women writers of science fiction. We have had all along, but not as many as there are men.

In another twenty years, I think it's going to be fairly equal.

DA: From my observations I've gotten the impression that although women have an equal role in terms of responsibility, when it gets to be the middle of the night women again become objects. Would you say that is fairly true?

SP: Oh, yeah, among certain groups in fandom. I'm not saying that women as a whole are treated by male science fiction fans...on an equal footing. There are an awful lot of chauvinistic men and women in science fiction. I'm not saying that science fiction fandom is perfect, because it certainly is not, but there are opportunities in science fiction fandom that I have not run across in the mundane life.

**Ethnic Taxonomies Within Fandom**

Within any social structure there are distinctions made between types of members. During the fieldwork interviews I asked informants if there were different types of fans, how these types were distinguished, and what they were called. From the answers to these questions resulted three ethnic taxonomies, based on categorizing fans by amount of activity, type of activity, and orientation of activity.

When fans are described in terms of the orientation of their activities, a bipolar dichotomy is found. At one extreme is the "sercon" fan, one whose interests are in the serious and constructive study of the literature of science fiction. At the opposite pole lies the "faanish" fan, who is more interested in the social phenomenon of fandom—its friendships, feuds, gossip, and personalities. As with any
dichotomy, many fans are at neither extreme, but somewhere between the two, as Dozois and Casper pointed out to me:

DA: Are there labels for these different types of fan?
SC: No.
GD: Well, you can make a stab at labelling some of them by the thing that's been going through the fanzines for twenty or thirty years now about the sercon versus the faanish fan.
SC: I might add that these two types of fans are usually quite contemptuous of each other.
GD: These definitions are also quite tricky, because one can turn into the other, depending on how you squint at it. . . . Sometimes one kind of fan will turn into another kind of fan. There are people who started out being into science fiction, reading a lot of it, who have gotten into fandom and gradually become embroiled in fandom and have stopped reading science fiction for the most part.

A second taxonomy of fans can be constructed from the types of activities they participate in within fandom. A fan can, of course, take part in more than one activity. The categories within this grouping can contain either sercon or faanish fans. The first such category is the club fan, a fan who is a member of his or her local science fiction club. Scithers commented that club fans are "... generally one of the other classifications as well, but this is not always the case."

Another type is the fanzine fan. Fanzine activity takes several forms, including writing, editing, illustrating, and publishing, and a fanzine fan may be involved in any or all of these. Some fanzine fans merely read fanzines; others go so far as to become involved in what Scithers called "... more serious but not entirely commercial publication of science fiction materials; essentially, some non- or semi-commercial publishers." Fanzine fans may be either sercon or faanish; this is often reflected in the contents of the fanzines in which they are involved.

Convention fans are those whose activities are focused on the
regional and World conventions. These may be further divided into those who only attend cons and those who take a more active part in the planning and running of conventions. The latter may be either sercon or faanish in their orientation, and this orientation may be reflected in the types of events to be found on the convention's program.

However, when one examines only those who attend the conventions (which of necessity must include the organizers), the sercon-faanish dichotomy takes on an additional dimension. At a convention, the sercon fan is usually involved with the formal program—panels, lectures, art shows, etc.—while the faanish fan comes to the convention more for the social aspects, sometimes sleeping through the entire program and partying all night instead.

Scattered amidst the three preceding categories are the organizational or political fans, of which Judith Weiss said:

... There are a lot of people who are into fandom because it gives them an opportunity to organize. I find this true with a lot of organizations, like the [Philadelphian] Folk Song Society. Voluntary groups, you usually find that the people leading them—people like the president, the vice-president, the treasurer—are usually people who want to have something to run and act authoritative about, and that's a way for them to do it.

Sue Casper and Gardner Dozois also discussed the political fan:

SC: There are certain people whose sole existence in fandom is for the purpose of having power over the rest of the people in fandom. You run into this with every kind of organized body. Most of these people are both sercon and faanish, in that they are very into what goes down at panels and how the huckster shows and art shows are run, but they're also very much into partying and being with people and getting to know people, because that's the only way you can get the power.

GD: Generally speaking, your hard-core faanish politickers and your hard-core faanish fans are not that interested in science fiction as literature or science fiction as a thing itself. I mean you will run into the same types of people in train fandom or hotrod fandom or refrigerator fandom, you know. The science fiction is just an excuse to gather and do their thing, whatever it is, and many of them don't even read much science fiction.
SC: However, a lot of them are heavily into it. You can't generalize like that.

One specialized type of fan is the huckster or business fan, found most often at the conventions. Dozois and Casper described this type of fan to me:

SC: There's one type of fan you forgot, and that's the business fan, he who goes to the convention to sell his goods, be they books or swords or jewelry or art work, and basically goes for that purpose, although he may enjoy the rest of the convention.
GD: Or he may not, he may just pack up and go home.
SC: He may just pack up and go home at night. You do have the people who go primarily for business reasons. Then you have the hucksters who become hucksters just because they want to go to conventions and that's the only way they can afford to do it.
GD: We may just be seeing the beginning of this business fan thing. The market for science fiction trinkets and accessories of one sort or another has hardly been tapped yet, and once it is really broached I think we're going to get a lot of people who are jumping on that as a quick way to make money, who will come into fandom or at least circle around the periphery.

An alternative view of this type of fan was given me by Fred Fisher, who, although he runs an all-science fiction bookstore, does not think of himself as a fan:

DA: In talking to Gardner and Sue, they commented that one of the varieties of fan that they perceived was a new one, what they term a business fan, someone who goes to conventions and is involved in science fiction for business purposes rather than enjoyment.
FF: Well, that's true, but how do you separate it out? I mean, it's like art dealers. I'm sure they go to shows and stuff, but they're basically appraising stuff and looking at market conditions. They may also enjoy looking at the paintings, but if you're in the business . . . It's true that it's basically a business for me, but I don't consider myself a business fan because I don't partake in many of the fannish activities while I'm there . . . . I have a feeling that the fans are opposed to other people making money out of their fannishness.
DA: They'd rather that it was a fan who happened to go into business?
FF: Yeah, I've encountered that a couple of times at conventions. Now, I personally don't take a booth at the huckster room for a couple of reasons. One of them is that I have a store and I want people to come to the store. The second is that for some people that's the only way of making their living, and I don't want to interfere with that.
The financial survival of the huckster is dependent on his or her opposite number in fandom, the collecting fan. None of my informants mentioned this type of fan, but Warner discusses them, commenting that collecting fans are often uninvolved in the mainstream of fandom and are primarily interested in books and professional magazines, with fanzine collection a secondary interest.  

A final type of fan is the academic fan, one who takes advantage of the recent trend in *academe* towards the study of science fiction to teach and do research on the subject. Not all academic fans are involved in fandom, but many are. Contributors to such academic journals as *Extrapolation* and *Science Fiction Studies* are oftentimes fans whose academic interests have allowed them to overlap their professions with their avocations.

In addition to the two typologies already presented, fans divide themselves in a third way based on the degree of involvement with fandom. This dichotomy is usually summed up by a pair of acronyms: FIAWOL (*Fandom Is A Way Of Life*) and FIJAGDH (*Fandom Is Just A God Damn Hobby*). To a FIAWOL fan, fandom is a major consumer of his or her time and energy, sometimes to the extent that such a fan will choose to try and earn a living through fan activities such as huckstering or fanzine publication. To the FIJAGDH fan, fandom is, as Susan Parris put it, "... a part of my life, but it's not the all-encompassing one drive behind all my actions." Those informants who discussed this dichotomy with me tended to emphasize that they were not FIAWOL fans, with one exception; this emphasis becomes more important when viewed in respect

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7 Warner, *Yesterdays*, p. 56.
to the stereotype of a fan found within fandom. The exception was

Dennis McCunney, who commented:

This all tends to get somewhat strange. I considered myself one of the GodDammed hobby people, for example, until I sat down a few years ago and started realizing that, by and large, the vast number of people that I know were science fiction fans and the majority of things that I did on my own, as things that would interest me or educate me or amuse me or what have you, were somehow concerned with science fiction and science fiction fan doings. That changed somewhat, ... I am no longer quite so heavily involved in fandom as I once was.

The Stereotypical Fan

Within fandom, there exists a stereotype of the typical fan as an introverted individual for whom fandom provides a social setting within which he or she can function. The earliest mention of this is in the Fancyclopedia, which remarks that "... most fans are introverted to a greater or less degree, it's generally held. ... But the intensity appears less marked today [1959] than before the end of World War II." McCunney agreed that this stereotype is fading:

The traditional, historical view has fans as misfits who got into fandom because they didn't really quite fit into whatever social milieu they were in, and found in science fiction a unifying interest and in science fiction fandom a social circle that would accept them. This allowed them to operate in social circumstances. I think this is changing to a certain extent, simply because large numbers of the people who are coming into fandom nowadays are not misfits and are not people who haven't been able to fit in. They're probably people who are fairly well adjusted on the outside of fandom. They simply find fandom fun and and they enjoy it.

Other informants suggested that those who fulfill this stereotype still exist within fandom. Susan Parris and Fred Fisher both remarked that fandom is very protective of and helpful to such individuals; both also made it clear that this was not the reason for their involvement

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8Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 92.
with fandom.

A third view was presented by J. B. Post:

DA: There's the whole stereotype of the person who reads science fiction . . .
JBP: Propellor beanie and all that?
DA: . . . being the young kid who can't . . .
JBP: Can't make it with the girls?
DA: . . . can't make it with the girls or can't make it socially in general and turns to science fiction as an escape. Do you think that's fairly representative of most fans?
JBP: No, it's too young. The really young kid, he doesn't know he can't make it. It's the older ones, . . . it's the people who are not physically beautiful, shall I say, that this may be a part of their life that gradually takes on more importance to them because they can't make it socially.

But they're not the only ones. What about the fellow who makes clay pots? He can't make it socially, so he goes out and makes . . . beautiful clay pots, don't knock it!

There's a little something to it, but not quite what the outsiders think. I find people who pretty much fall into the fan stereotype, and sometimes I think that there is something a little wrong with them. Not that fandom is not part of a full life, but they think that it's all of life.

I think there's something wrong with that. I think they forget that because they haven't found anything else yet.

The idea that this stereotype applies mostly to the FIAWOL type of fan was also put forth by Judith Weiss:

I mean, that's the great fannish cliche—the fan is a former outcast from his peer group, but here he has found a new peer group. You find that most of the FIAWOL people are of this type. Their total allegiance is to fandom because it has given them friends and a home and all this stuff they never had. Whereas, I would say, the FIJAGGH people are less, not maladjusted, but they're better adjusted to the larger world, so they aren't in need of this kind of close-knit thing.

Fred Fisher told me a story which further emphasizes this point:

Now, I have a customer who's fairly steady. Well, you can't call him a steady customer, 'cause he drops in a lot of times and doesn't buy anything, but he's around a lot.

Now when I first opened [the science fiction bookstore], he was a big reader of science fiction, but was completely uninvolved with science fiction fandom. With some customers, I have a relationship very similar to a bartender, in which they come in and tell me everything that's going on with their lives.

One of the things I like about the bookstore is that there are a lot of my customers that I become friends with. Two of my customers
came in the other day, told me that they were getting married, and invited me to their wedding. I mean, I've never seen them outside the store, yet they felt that they wanted me at their wedding, and that's part of what I like about it, that's part of why I went into the business.

This particular person, I know a great deal about what's going on in his life. As other aspects of his life have deteriorated or have encountered problems that he basically can't cope with, his involvement with science fiction fandom has grown. I've watched it happen. It's really remarkable that as his problems in coping with his life increase, he's become a bigger and bigger fan. . . . It's interesting to see that happen, and I wonder if, as the rest of his problems get straightened out, he'll gradually drop his involvement in fandom.

Based on my observations at conventions and readings in fanzines, I would suggest that all three of these views hold some truth. The stereotypical fan does exist in fandom, though in a minority; the stereotypical fan is more likely to be a FIAWOL fan than a FJAGW fan; fandom does offer such people a social unit within which they are more able to function, if only because they become involved with individuals who share at least one interest with them. That interest, at first, is science fiction; later, it may change to an interest in fandom itself.

The Organizational Aspects of Fandom

Gilliland describes fandom as "... a community of social peers, with very little stratification and less organization."9 With regard to organization, his statement is partially correct. At the level of the local club, one finds officers, constitutions, by-laws, and the usual organizational apparatus. Fanzines often have requirements as to the format of submissions, much like any other publication, and the specialized type of fanzine called an APA, which will be considered in greater detail in Chapter IV, often has a constitution or other set of

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regulations detailing the size and frequency of its member's submissions.

Conventions are organized by committees of fans. In the case of regional cons, the committees are often derived from the members of a local club within the region. The World Science Fiction Society is an organization which exists for the sole purpose of selecting the sites for Worldcons and transferring power between Worldcon committees, which are often less locally-oriented in their membership than those of regional conventions.

While all of the above are forms of organization, the truth of Gilliland's statement lies in the fact that there is no all-encompassing structure which takes in the whole of fandom. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, several attempts to create such an organization have been made, most notably the National Fantasy Fan Federation. All have failed in their objective.

Social Status In Fandom

As Gilliland states, fandom is essentially an egalitarian community of social peers. There are, however, two ways in which a fan can achieve status within fandom: longevity and activity. A newcomer to fandom, or "neofan," is often given less respect and attention than those who have established themselves in fandom through the various modes of fannish activity. At the same time, social gaffes by neofans are usually excused because of their status and its result: lack of knowledge of expected modes of behavior.

Extreme longevity in fandom is highly respected. This is due, in part, to the fact that many fans do not remain involved in fandom in their later years, either because their needs and interests have changed
or because external circumstances have left them lacking the time for their activity. A fan whose activity ceases of his or her own choice is said to have "gone gafia" or to have "gafiated;" the term is an acronym for "Getting Away From It All." Similarly, one who leaves for external reasons has "fafiated," from "Forced Away From It All." Those fans whose involvement in fandom dates back to its earliest years may become members of First Fandom, an organization open to those involved in fandom prior to 1938. First Fandom is both a "... historical and a continuity-maintaining group."  

As is implied by the way in which the ethnic taxonomies center around activity, the primary route to status within fandom is activity. Both Scithers and Post stated that fanzine activity is most important, with convention activity a close second and local club activity at the bottom of the list. Both McCunney and Weiss noted that the most important fans are those who are best-known, which supports this statement since both fanzines and conventions are less regionally-oriented than club activity. Weiss pointed out that

... the well-known fans, what they call "Big Name Fans," or BNFs, are usually people, either they write a hell of a lot of letters and articles and are well-known in fanzine circles, or else they show up at tons of conventions and they're very visible and they throw parties and they drink a lot and they're well-known at conventions. They're just people who are very extroverted or they do a lot of activity and people know who they are.

Recognition of a fan's activity may come in several ways. An important fan may be invited to be the Fan Guest of Honor at a convention,

Fred Fisher told me that he had heard that fandom goes through a near-complete turnover of membership every six or seven years. Warner (Yesterdays, p. xviii) places the average stay of an active fan as between two and four years.

Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 70.
though not all cons have such guests. Another form of recognition is
found in the Science Fiction Achievement Awards, called "Hugos" after
Hugo Gernsback. These were first awarded in 1953, and have been given
at each Worldcon since 1955. The categories of awards have changed
often, but they generally include awards to writers (Best Novelette,
Novel, Novella, and Short Story), editors (Best Magazine or Best
Professional Editor), and professional artists, as well as several
awards for fan activities (Best Fanzine, Best Fan Writer, Best Fan
Artist).\(^\text{12}\)

In recent years some controversy has arisen over those Hugos
awarded to fans, revolving around whether those fanzines which earn
their editor-publishers a profit are sufficiently amateur for consider-
ation. As a reaction to this, a new set of awards, called FAAN awards,
have been created by those whose interests are primarily fanish in
nature.\(^\text{13}\)

Other awards also exist in fandom. These, as well as the Hugos,
illustrate a unique aspect of fandom. Unlike other literary awards such
as the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes, these are presented by a vote of the
readers themselves, rather than by a panel of professional critics.\(^\text{14}\)

**Egoboo and the Secret Masters of Fandom**

The primary form of activity recognition in fandom is much more


\(^\text{13}\)See, for example, the letter from Mike Glyer in the fanzine
Science Fiction Review \(\text{B:2}\) (May, 1977), pp. 40-41, and the accompanying
reply by the magazine's editor.

\(^\text{14}\)These lesser awards include the Campbell Award (Best New Author),
the Frank R. Paul Award (Best Professional Artist), and the Gandalf Award
(Best Fantasy Author).
widespread than either awards or guest of honor invitations. This is the receipt of "egoboo," which was described to me by Dennis McCunney:

Generally, you do this [take part in fan activities] in order to gain "egoboo," which is a difficult term to define. I guess it's sort of the equivalent of a transactional analysis "stroke." You do this in order to get response, in order to make people aware of you. If you do your particular piece of fan activity well, your convention or your fanzine or what have you, people will pat you on the back and say, "Hey, that was a nice issue you published!" or "Gee, this was a really good convention!" I understand that the term is gaining currency in a fairly wide circle outside fandom. It's been picked up as one of those nice descriptive terms that precisely describes why you're doing something for the approval of your fellow human beings.

An advanced form of egoboo is to be described as one of the "Secret Masters of Fandom," or SMOFs. Being a SMOF is a somewhat humorous honor, in that there is no actual organization of these Secret Masters. Rather, it is a term applied by fans to those who, as Judith Weiss put it, "... take pride in the fact that no one knows who they are, but they run everything behind the scenes. People know who they are, but they aren't very visible."

A correspondence can be seen between the organizational type of fan and the fan who is called a SMOF by his or her peers. Sue Casper described the term this way:

These are the people who like to sit around and discuss who's going to do what at which convention and who's going to run what convention. They want to run fandom. These are the people that want to run fandom and that do run fandom. Everybody gets into that a little bit in one direction or the other, because everybody wants fandom to go in a certain direction and to be certain things. The informality of fandom's organization via the Secret Masters was emphasized by J. B. Post:

The Secret Masters of Fandom are something like the Elders of Zion. It's a myth in somebody's mind who feels he's being persecuted. The Secret Masters are those people who are willing to expend some energy and do some work and get something done. The non-Secret Masters are those who sit around and complain and when
somebody does something they say, "Oh, you're a Secret Master of Fandom!"

This is true of any organization. Somebody goes and does something. In formal groups, they're exceeding their authority. If there is no authority to exceed, they become a Secret Master.

**Fannish Humor**

The cynical, self-mocking nature of the Secret Masters exemplifies an important aspect of fandom—its sense of humor. Esoteric humor has played a major part in fandom's history, as demonstrated by fannish religions, various hoaxes, and Twonk's disease, about which Warner says:

Fandom has its own special disease, unknown to medical dictionaries. Twonk's disease is believed to be spread by germs that live on mimeograph stencils. It is much worse than other diseases, in that it has no symptoms whatsoever, making it impossible to know when an individual is suffering from it. Fortunately, it is never fatal.¹⁵

Because much of the communication in fandom occurs between individuals that have never met in person, hoaxes involving non-existent individuals have occurred several times. 'Joan W. Carr' and 'Carl Joshua Brandon' were two such pseudonyms that took on lives of their own. The latter became such a well-known and respected fan that 'he' was elected to the editorship of two APAs before the hoax was revealed.¹⁶

Another form of hoax involves non-existent books. In many of the writings of H. P. Lovecraft, mention is made of the Necronomicon of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred. Other writers in Lovecraft's circle also refer to the book, which does not exist. For a time, a group of fans in


New Haven, Connecticut, arranged for cards to be placed on file in the Yale University Library's card catalogue, referring the interested researcher to a copy in the Rare Book Collection supposedly bound in human skin.17

A third type of esoteric humor found in fandom is the fannish religion, on which Warner writes:

Almost from their emergence, fans have taken occasional delight in organizing burlesque religions, possibly as an ancestral memory of the way scientific discoveries had been discrediting fundamentalist tenets of Christianity in recent decades.

Warner mentions such deities as GhuGhu—a beetle-bodied monster on the planet Vulcan, FooFoo, Ignatz (the mouse in Herriman's Krazy Kat cartoons), and Roscoe, an invisible beaver.18

Dennis McCunney told me more about these religions, one of which he had once been involved with:

DM: There are at least three fannish religions that I know of. Nobody takes these seriously, in the sense of being "true believers." There's Herbangelism, which is built around a no-longer existent comic book character named Herbie. You may remember Herbie, he was a rather rotund little fellow with black bangs and round glasses, a thoroughly unlikely superhero who used to be able to do fantastic things with his lollipop. There's a religion built around him named Herbangelism.

There is the worship of something called the Great Spider, about which I know nothing. There is a fannish religion that a friend of mine founded, which I got involved with, called—oh, dear, what's the formal title for it—The True Faith.

DA: Aren't they all?
DM: There are two tenets to the True Faith, the first of which is that the Lord Mota resides on Mars in the persona of a great sacred green cat. . . . Whether or not Lord Mota is God is a . . . distinction we don't worry about too hard. The second tenet is that if you'll believe the first tenet, you'll believe anything. It goes

17Ibid, p. 110. Recently, the publishing house run by informant Scithers, Owlswick Press, has printed this "book," written in a non-existent language.

18Warner, Yesterdays, p. 44.
on from there.

Once again, this is another of those little complicated social jokes which fans play. People have been known to take these things more seriously than they ought to, but, by and large, it's no religion in the true sense that people actually invest any great deal of belief in it. I'm certain that no worshipper of the Great Spider or Herbie actually believes in the existence of the Great Spider or Herbie, although there have been a number of low-key fan feuds among worshippers of one or another of these various religions, claiming that theirs is the one true belief.

Gardner Dozois pointed out to me that there is "... a self-mocking quality to many fannish institutions." This can be clearly seen in the forms of tongue-in-cheek humor just described, and reaches its acme in the self-mocking stereotype of a typical fan as an adolescent wearing a helicopter beanie. During one early convention, a group of fans wore these as a joke. Since then they have become a humorous tradition, found most often in cartoons of fans in fanzines and convention program books.19

Twonk's disease and the various hoaxes and religions are all forms of what Jansen termed esoteric folklore, which deals with how a group perceives itself and what a group expects others to think of it. Jansen distinguishes this from exoteric folklore, which is material concerned with what a group thinks of other groups and what a group believes that another group thinks that the first group thinks. Both types of folklore are found in groups with some type of isolation; both function by enhancing group solidarity and stability.20

The helicopter beanie stereotype is partly of an exoteric nature, because it arose as a reaction to mocking newspaper and magazine

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19. Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 84; Warner, Yesterdays, p. 43.

articles which portrayed fans as adolescents exclaiming "Gosh, wow, oboy!" over unbelievable stories. Fans still feel that the outside, "mundane" world believes that they behave in this manner. During interviews, many individuals commented with some degree of bitterness on the way both fans and science fiction are viewed by the world outside fandom.

Of course, the very terming of the world external to fandom as "mundane," and its inhabitants as "mundanes," is in itself esoteric stereotyping. An aspect of this stereotype pointed out to me by both Weiss and Casper is that fans get a certain amount of pleasure from purposely putting on the members of this mundane world. With the exception of the Worldcons, few fan conventions are large enough to require an entire hotel. This leads to interactions with members of other convention groups that are often amusing to fans and bewildering to outsiders, especially at those conventions which have masquerades.

This aspect of conventions will be considered further in Chapter V, but a brief example of a single incident may help to illumine the ways in which the mundanes often misperceive fans. At a convention in Nashville in May 1977, I overheard the ten-year-old child of a hotel employee remark to his father, "I haven't seen any ray guns yet, have you?" This is an example of the mundane view so aptly satirized and converted into exoteric folklore by the helicopter beanie stereotype.

The Functions of Fandom

Before leaving the discussion of fandom as a social organization, two closely-related questions must be considered. First, what benefits does an individual receive from membership in fandom? Second, what is fandom's function?
For most fans, the primary reward is what J. B. Post called "... the companionship of like-minded people." This was mentioned by all my informants. Another important benefit from fandom is egoboo, and for the extremely involved fan, the possibility of earning some of the awards mentioned earlier. Since most fans are heavy readers, though not always of sf, there is also intellectual satisfaction to be gained.\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, for some fans, there is the profit motive; this applies mostly to the hucksters, but also affects a few fanzine publishers. For the most part, however, fan activities are not of a profit-making nature.

The function of fandom is that of any group which forms around a specialized interest: the creation and maintenance of a medium of communication about that interest and related topics. Once an individual has become involved in fandom and has formed friendships with other fans, the topic of communication may vary from the initial subject of science fiction. A typical description of fandom is this one:

\ldots For me, fandom was a communications network that brought me together with my friends. \ldots We come together because we value sf. We stay, because we value each other. \textit{We} celebrate fandom because it is the bond that holds us together.\textsuperscript{22}

Almost all of my informants emphasized the communicational aspect of fandom as its major function. Several also noted that an additional function may be the way in which fandom provides a home for those who fit the stereotype of the introverted individual whose sole

\textsuperscript{21}During fieldwork, I queried informants as to the amount and variety of their reading habits. Most seem to be heavy readers (4-8 books/week), with tastes that are by no means confined to sf. In general, literacy is highly valued among fans. One speaker at a convention I attended began his remarks by commenting that fans are among the few remaining groups of individuals who read for enjoyment.

interest is science fiction. This, however, can be seen as a natural consequence of the fact that fandom provides such individuals with the place where they can communicate on the only topic that interests them.
CHAPTER III

LONG-DISTANCE COMMUNICATION:

FANZINES AND APAS

Definition and History of Fanzines

The fanzines provide the science fiction fan with the major means of intercommunication with his or her fellow fans. Fanzines are unique in that they are the only aspect of fandom to have been the focus of scholarly study. In 1973, psychologist Fredric Wertham wrote The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication, which provided much of the data in this chapter.¹

Wertham defines fanzines in the following way:

Briefly defined, fanzines are uncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their editors produce, publish, and distribute. They deal primarily with what they call fantasy literature and art. The fact that they are not commercially oriented, may come out irregularly, and are privately distributed differentiates them from the professional newsstand magazines. Their writers and readers belong chiefly to the under thirty group.²

As discussed in Chapter II, fanzines grew out of the letters written to the early professional science fiction magazines. Sources differ as to what the first fanzine was and when it was published. Wertham places the first fanzine at The Comet, initially appearing in 1930. This is supported by fan writer John Berry. Warner, however,


²Wertham, Fanzines, p. 33.
cites The Recluse, which existed for one issue in 1927, as the first fanzine.  

**Ethnic Taxonomies of Fanzines**

In discussing fanzines with my informants, I found that the magazines were classifiable by two ethnic taxonomies. The first breaks down the types of fanzines by their content, the second by the method of reproduction. Not all informants have taken part in fanzine production, although some were experts in the field; all, however, have read fanzines.

In dividing fanzines by content, the major category is that of the "generalzine" or "genzine," a fanzine with a number of different contributors which deals with an assortment of topics. The Fancyclopedia further subdivides this category into three types of genzines: the "subzine," sent out to subscribers and contributors; the "APAzine," a genzine produced only for the members of an APA; the "Official Organ" (00) or "clubzine," a genzine produced by a fan organization.

Other content-oriented categories of fanzine tend to concentrate on specific subjects or types of material. A "newszine" is concerned with the current events of fandom and the science fiction publishing industry. A "letterzine" primarily contains reader's letters, often commenting on the letters published in previous issues. A "reviewzine"

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4Weiss, Post, and McCunney have all had substantial fanzine involvement. Scithers is a noted fanzine editor, holding two Hugo awards for the magazine Amra.

5Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 66.
has reviews of new science fiction works and of other fanzines. An "individzine" or "personalzine" is essentially a monolog which comments on whatever the writer may find of interest. A "chainzine" is the fanzine form of a chain letter, in which each recipient adds his or her comments and forwards the whole to the next individual on a list.

The faanish-sercon dichotomy discussed in the previous chapter applies to all of the fanzine types mentioned above. Thus, a faanish reviewzine would concentrate on reviews of fanzines and other fan publications and activities, while a sercon reviewzine would mostly contain reviews of new sf books. Few fanzines fall at the extremes of this dichotomy, but most evince a definite leaning in one direction or the other.

Some overlap is found between the various types of fanzines. A personal reviewzine, for instance, has all the reviews written by a single individual, relating the works reviewed to his or her personal opinion of what "good" sf or fanzines should be, while a general reviewzine has a number of reviewers, each with a different viewpoint.

Also, most fanzines publish or discuss reader's letters. When a highly critical letter is to be published, a copy is often sent to the contributor whose work is being discussed, so that a response may also be included. This, of course, is similar to the policy of many professional and academic journals.

Another way to classify fanzines is by the method of reproduction used in publication. McCunney listed for me five methods in current use: mimeograph, ditto, xerography, hectography, and offset lithography. He noted that mimeo is the most common form of reproduction, with ditto second. Hectography is not very common at present, but was used a great
deal in fandom’s early days. McCunney told me of a Brazilian fan who
does not have access to mimeograph or ditto equipment and "... boils
bones to make the gelatin necessary to do hecto reproduction."

Many fans scorn offset lithography because of its expense and
its impersonal nature, despite the quality of the resultant product.
One fan, writing in a column in Amazing Stories, commented that

A fancish truism holds that offset printing is impersonal and
cold, "not fancish" because the fanzine editor entrusts his
repro to other hands instead of painstakingly slipsheeting and
collating by himself, usually because he wants to increase his
printrun drastically; because he ends up with a "professional" look
associated with slick magazines; because, generally, he wants to
produce a fanzine to sell, a fanzine for buyers, not himself.6

While McCunney’s listing covers the current methods of fanzine
reproduction, two other techniques are worthy of mention. A "carbonzine"
is one reproduced at the typewriter by means of carbon paper, a method
used by early fans when the number of copies needed was few.7 Another
method of fanzine production was via wire and tape recordings. Warner
notes that one of the few functional sections of the N3F is its Tape
Bureau, which maintains a directory of fans who wish to correspond by
tape and offers an assortment of copies of taped material, including
convention speeches, fancish folksongs, and television soundtracks.8

The Demographics and Readership of Fanzines

It is hard to tell how many fanzines are actually in existence
at any moment, because the lifespan of a fanzine is often quite short.

p. 98.

7Warner, Yesterdays, p. xix.

8Harry Warner, Jr., "Opere Citato," Riverside Quarterly 5:1
Wertham notes that

Often no date is given; instead there is only a number or only a month and no year. . . . In some fanzines the pages are not numbered. . . . Sometimes the editors change.

Most fanzines are more or less ephemeral. A few current ones have existed for years. . . . But many, for one reason or another—personal, economic, college, job—cease publication after several issues or even after only one. . . .

The number of fanzine titles, involving in the aggregate thousands of readers, has been variously assessed, but without firm basis. Nobody knows the exact number. It has been estimated that since their beginning some seven thousand titles have been published.9

The readership of an individual fanzine is usually quite small, as White points out:

The average fanzine is still published for a readership of only a few hundred—running from limited circulations of fifty or less to three or four hundred for most of the better-known "ganzines" or general-interest fanzines. A few have exceeded this circulation—SF Review has a circulation of well over a thousand and so does Locus—but mimeographing and collating more than a few hundred copies of a fanzine is a real chore, and one that few fans care to maintain for any length of time.10

The actual readership of a fanzine is comprised of several different classes of individual. The main body of a fanzine's readership is its subscribers (or, in the case of an APAzine or clubzine, the members of the APA or club). However, not all fanzines accept subscribers, sending copies instead only to those who write a letter of comment to the editor after each issue. Many fanzines send copies to potential subscribers, contributors, and reviewers, and to other fanzine publishers in hopes of a trade. Others send copies of their magazine to those who have contributed and to those whose works are reviewed in the current issue.11

9 Wertham, Fanzines, pp. 37-38.


11 Wertham, Fanzines, pp. 83-84.
Fanzine Content

The content of fanzines is quite varied. Wertham lists eleven different items to be found in fanzines: fiction, fact articles, letters, interviews (conducted either by phone, tape, or letter), editorials, art and cartoons, reviews, reports on and announcements of conventions, feuds between fans, poetry, and collector's data.12

The quality of fanzines, in terms of both their content and their production, runs the gamut from unreadable reproduction and incomprehensible grammar up to masterpieces of layout and writing. In general, fans are more concerned with content than with the technical aspects of production, but this is not always so, as Dennis McCunney emphasized in his interview:

DM: The Gestetner people [manufacturers of mimeograph equipment] had an exhibit at the Torcon [1973 World convention]. They provided mimeo machines, mimeographs, stencil makers, collators, what have you, and stencils and a supply of paper and a couple of their representatives to run things, because somebody on the Torcon committee convinced them that fans were large consumers of mimeography materials. From what I understand, they were really quite surprised at the response, not only at the amount of stuff they actually ended up doing at the convention, but at the knowledgeability of the fans who would come in and say, "Oh, that's okay, you don't have to do it for us, we know how!", and proceed to run Gestetner equipment, in some cases, I suspect, better than the Gestetner reps could.

DA: I've been told that there are some fanzines that are devoted to nothing but the fine points of mimeography.

DM: I haven't seen any of those. I have seen fanzines that are entirely devoted to their appearance and production. Jay Zaremba . . . spent a lot of time in his fanzine talking about how a fanzine could be published with an eye towards its appearance, because the vast majority of fanzines, for a long time, well, the principal effort of the editor was put into the words, into what he was writing, and precious little attention, if any, was paid to such things as layout and illustration and whether or not the thing was readable.

Well, a couple of years ago people began suddenly discovering graphics. The fact that you could do more with a fanzine than just

12 Ibid., pp. 91-119.
type up a stencil full of words and run it off. They've been going around it ever since.

... It was very interesting, but it struck me as kind of circular, rather like the ham radio operators who spend all their time talking to each other about how strong their signal is and what sort of equipment they use to put out that signal. I usually end up scratching my head and saying, "Yes, but what are you saying? What kind of communication is here? I think you're getting hung up on mechanisms."

Fisher suggested that the number of really good fanzines was few, and that the best ones should not be considered as fan publications at all:

But those [the good fanzines], they belong in the "little magazine" class, rather than the "fanzine" class. These are your magazines that transcend, that would be good magazines whatever the subject they were dealing with, because these people are creative, they're good writers, and they're interested in what they're doing. They're more like Paris Review or something like that, anything that got started as a "little magazine."

An important aspect to the content of fanzines is the freedom of speech displayed in their generally uncensored contents. Wertham attributes this to two factors: first, the circulation of most fanzines is so low that nobody who would be of a mind to complain even knows of their existence, and, second, the editor and publisher of a fanzine are usually the same individual. Another reason is that most fanzines are non-profit in nature—the editor-publisher has no advertisers to complain about the contents of his or her fanzine.13

Many fanzine editors take advantage of this freedom by making editorial comments within contributed letters, articles, and reviews. These comments are usually "... enclosed in some form of brackets or double parentheses."14

13Wertham, Fanzines, pp. 71-73.

14Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 21.
Esoteric Humor in Fanzines

Two forms of the esoteric humor of fandom occur only within the pages of fanzines. The first is a tradition described to me by Judith Weiss, in which a writer can make a tasteless or insulting comment and then overstrike the text with slashes or hyphens in such a way that the original remains visible. Warner terms this the "... fanzine equivalent of the humorous aside of stage convention, something that the writer pretends to have decided that he shouldn't have said, but doesn't try to conceal thoroughly."\(^{15}\)

A second humorous tradition is the use of the letter 'h'. This letter is often added after the initial consonant of a word in order to imply that the word is being used specifically in reference to fan activities. The three words most commonly modified in this manner are "Ghod," "bbeer," and "lhiterature;" the former is most often used in reference to the deities of the various fannish religions. The *Fancyclopedia* notes that such words can be pronounced: "When spoken, such aspirates are voiced: Luh-HIT-er-a-ture, Buh-HEER."\(^{16}\)

Problems in the Werham Study

As will be seen in a later chapter, science fiction fans make a clear distinction between sf fandom and other fandoms, such as comics fandom. This distinction is based primarily on the fact that comics fans are motivated by desires for collection and sale of comics, rather than an interest in their content. A similar distinction is made between those fanzines oriented around sf fandom, whether they be sercon or

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\(^{15}\) Warner, *Yesterdays*, pp. 41-42.

\(^{16}\) Eney, *Fancyclopedia*, p. 83.
faanish, and comics fanzines.

Wertham's study, although valuable, does not make this separation. In his introduction, he states:

For some purposes a sharp distinction can be made between a strictly science fiction fanzine and one chiefly comics-oriented. But both belong to the same special means of communication, the structural delineation of which is the aim of this investigation. To stress the different categories means to overemphasize the differences instead of the similarities. It would be the opposite to what fanzines stand for. They do not want to erect fences but to build bridges. Moreover the different kinds tend more and more to increase the topics they deal with. Being an entirely unpedantic form of communication, fanzines as a while cannot be covered by pedantic methods.17

While Wertham is correct in emphasizing that the mechanism of communication is the same for sf and comics fanzines, he errs in presuming that the contents are similar. Comics fanzines are, as many of my informants noted, oriented toward the collector rather than the appreciator. Another difference, related to the first, is that comics fanzines are more often published for a profit than sf fanzines. Finally, Wertham's error is, I believe, compounded by ignoring the fact that the fans themselves make a distinction between sf and comics fanzines.

Wertham's study was based on what he termed a "... large representative collection of great variety."18 While he gives no details on the actual size of this collection, nor of its contents, the excerpts he uses throughout the book indicate that in addition to mixing comics and sf fanzines, he also fails to distinguish between fanzines and APAs. As will be seen, this distinction is quite important in determining the type of communication that actually occurs via the fanzine medium.

A final problem with Wertham's work is his assertion that fanzine

17 Wertham, Fanzines, p. 38.
18 Wertham, Fanzines, p. 37.
writers are primarily under thirty, mentioned at the start of this chapter. In general, sf fans are older than comics fans, a factor which Wertham did not take into account when making this statement. Also, as Ted White notes, the best sf fanzines are produced by the older, more mature fans. This casts further doubt on the representative nature of Wertham's collection.19

The Functions of Fanzines

Despite these problems, Wertham is correct in viewing fanzines as a form of communication. He notes several important aspects of fanzine communication: they are aimed at small groups, rather than masses of people; they are often intensely personal; they are open to anyone who wants to publish and has access to a typewriter; they are spontaneous in nature; they are written for pleasure, not for praise; the communications in fanzines foster personal relationships which are often later enhanced by contact at conventions.20

Only one of the points raised by Wertham here is open to question: his assumption that fanzines are published for pleasure. As discussed in the preceding chapter, fanzines are a major means to recognition within fandom, and the publisher of a good fanzine is often the recipient of ego-boost. While the receipt of praise may, in fact, be a form of pleasure, Wertham's assertion tends to ignore this function of fanzine publishing.

This aspect of fanzines was emphasized to me by Judith Weiss:

JW: You can set yourself up as an editor with very little


money and attempt to actually create a publication that will continue, sometimes for years and years. It takes up a big chunk of your life, if you want to get into it, but that has a great attraction for a lot of people. It's a way to be important within a circle of people.

DA: Then a fan might get egoboo out of publishing a fan magazine?
JW: Oh, yeah. I think that's the main reason why anyone would do it.

Most of my informants, however, viewed fanzines simply as a medium of communication. McCunney carried this a step further:

DA: Are there other purposes to fanzines besides communication?
DM: What other purposes are there?
DA: Egoboo, perhaps?
DM: Well, that's true, but that's communication on another level.

Several writers have also emphasized the communicative aspects of fanzines. White describes them as "... a means of social intercourse and self-expression for geographically removed fans," while Glicksohn calls them "... a hobby, a means of communication, a way of gaining notice (or notoriety) within fandom."

White's mention of "self-expression" points out the creative aspect of involvement in fanzines. Wertham traces this creativeness back to the initial desire for communication:

"Much has been written abstractly about the nature of creativeness. The producers of fanzines are an example of the concrete manifestations of the desire for it. Maybe, like others in the nonfanzine world, they wish to see their writing and drawing in print. But far deeper is the desire to communicate and to socialize with others, both amateur and professional. Theirs is not a search for identity, but a search for communication. Their incentive is to convey something in some way that they are unable to through the usual means and to try out their ideas on others who are receptive."21


22Wertham, Fanzines, p. 123.
Reflected in this statement is the previously-mentioned stereotype of the fan as one who turns to fandom as the only place where he or she can communicate about things of interest.

**APAs—Multi-directional Communication Mechanisms**

In examining the communication to be found in fanzines, it is important to note that it is primarily uni-directional, going from the writer to the reader without causing a large amount of direct conversation between individuals. While many fanzines publish and encourage letters of comment, the primary mode of communication is not conversation, but a public lecture. To engage in multi-directional communication, the fan turns to the APAs, defined in the *Fancyclopedia* as follows:

A group of people who publish fanzines and, instead of mailing them individually, sends them to an official editor, who makes up a bundle periodically (although these mailings have sometimes not been temporally regular) and distributes one to each member. Such apazines are contributed to the bundle by their publishers without charge, being considered exchanges for the other members' fanzines. The procedure saves time, work, and postage for the publishers; and since the mailing bundles are identical and all members may be assumed to know their contents, comments on them lead to lively discussions.23

APAs are not an invention of fandom. Heap traces them back to the amateur magazines produced in the 1750s by students at Oxford and Cambridge. The oldest extant APA, the National Amateur Press Alliance, which is not a fan APA, was founded in 1876.24 The oldest fan APA is FAPA—the Fantasy Amateur Press Association—which has been in existence since the late thirties and includes in its mailings one fanzine that has gone for over thirty years without missing any issues.

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or changing its publishing schedule, a rarity in fandom.\textsuperscript{25}

It was in FAPA that the concept of mailing comments, which distinguishes fan APAs from their mundane counterparts, first emerged. These comments are what give APAs their multi-directional communications. Warner described their first appearance as starting

\textquote[\ldots{} a tradition that quickly became the new group's selling point and its greatest difference from mundane apas, providing a genuine continuity between bundles and inspiring members to think about what they read in place of simply reacting to the magazines.\textsuperscript{26}]

\textbf{Distinctions Between APAs and Fanzines}

Wood has noted three basic differences between fanzines and APAs. The primary one is that noted above—an APA offers the fan a chance to participate in a multiple, ongoing conversation, while a fanzine often offers a single point of view and a one-way conversation. Through an APA, one gets a chance to become acquainted with several individuals, while a fanzine only presents the fan with one new person, though sometimes in greater detail. Finally, APAs tend to be much less formal in their organization than fanzines, since each APA is under its contributor's control as to layout and content.\textsuperscript{27}

McGinney pointed out to me that the amount of intercommunication that occurs in an APA is highly dependent on its mailing frequency:

\textbf{DA: Would you say that there's a distinction between fanzines and APAs?}

\textbf{DM:} Yes, though the fields overlap. \ldots{} What sort of activity happens in an APA largely depends on the way the APA is set up. MinneAPA \textsuperscript{[an APA organized by the local club in Minneapolis]} is

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{26}Warner, \textit{Yesterdays}, p. 193.
\end{itemize}
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for example, has a bi-weekly schedule, or did. I don't know whether it's still maintaining that schedule, but if you wanted to stay current in MinneAPA, it was wise to contribute every two weeks. Needless to say, this means that there isn't going to be too terribly much you can do, production-wise, and it's just going to be a series of comments to the other people in the APA. . . . However, what was talked about in the publication would largely have to do with what was currently going on in MinneAPA, whereas your traditional fanzine is probably going to spend more of its time and effort on whatever the editor and his or her contributors happen to be into at that time.

An APA like FAPA . . . which has a quarterly schedule, you see a lot more of actual fanzines being put through the APA. You know, people who are publishing fanzines and also happen to be members of FAPA, so they'll send their fanzines through, possibly with a supplement in which they can make mailing comments to the other people in the APA. Course, one of the difficulties of having a quarterly schedule in an APA is the fact that it tends to cut down on the amount of meaningful communication you can have.

The Organization of an APA

Judith Weiss told me about the organization of the typical APA:

DA: In an APA, does everyone contribute equally to the costs of mailing?
JW: Yeah, there's usually dues which cover mailing costs, mimeograph costs. Usually, not everybody has equipment for reproduction, so one person who maybe has a mimeo will say, "Well, I'll run off your stuff, if you'll send me ten cents a page," or however much it is.
DA: How does one join an APA? Do you find out, say that there's an APA around your corner and knock on the door?
JW: Usually, you'd have to meet someone who was in it, and maybe get the address and a sample copy. You can usually get a sample copy.
There's certain APAs that are very popular, that have a lot of people that want to get into them, and they have waiting lists. You have to wait till someone drops out. There's some APAs that have a very complicated system where there are active members and there's non-active members and there's waiting list people. It all depends on how many pages you're allowed to contribute, and things like that.

George Scithers is a member of The Cult, which is an APA with a limited membership. In addition to giving me a copy of The Cult's four-page constitution, he described it to me at length:

GS: The Cult is a thirteen-member, rotating-editorship Amateur Press Organization of a peculiar type which is not accurately
described by the term "APA". We've been squabbling over the applicability of the name for about twenty years. The Cult is approximately twenty years old.

DA: What do the members of The Cult write about?
GS: Traditionally, they squabble about the rules, and occasionally talk about science fiction, and what each other are doing, and the like.

DA: How does one become a member?
GS: One applies in writing by a letter to the Official Arbiter of The Cult, and one has a letter of approximately three hundred words published in one of the publications of The Cult which have been published by a member or by one of the top five Waiting-Listers of The Cult, which means that there is something of an inverse blacklist—if a prospective member can find none of the thirteen members and none of the five active Waiting-listers who will publish his letter, then he can't get in. In practice, this has never had to be used, but it is an obscure provision of the rules, just in case.

DA: Are all the members of The Cult fanzine publishers on their own?
GS: They are, of necessity, since each of the thirteen members, in turn, on a three-week period, which comprises the 39-week cycle, is the editor. But each of the members of The Cult must in his turn publish a fanzine which is distributed to the other twelve members and the top five Waiting-Listers.

DA: The Cult's magazine is only distributed to the thirteen plus five?
GS: It must be distributed to the thirteen plus five; it has been distributed to a great deal more. By a stratagem, I once put an 'FR' number of a book which was published in an edition of 2500 copies technically Fractional Rotators, but that's an extreme example.

DA: I'm not sure what a Fractional Rotator is.
GS: Okay, the formal publication of The Cult is the Fantasy Rotator, which has been coming out every three weeks—although the schedule has not been perfectly kept—every Fantasy Rotator that should have shown up since the thing was founded in August of 1966 has shown up. We're now on our 362nd Fantasy Rotator.

DA: Are you one of the original members?
GS: No, I am not.
DA: Does someone have to drop out before a new person can get in?
GS: Yes, the organization has thirteen members. If one of the members drops out by failing to publish or by failing to write to at least every other Fantasy Rotator editor, then the topmost Active Waiting-Lister takes his place and the rest of the Waiting List moves up. In order to keep the Waiting Lists properly stuffed, we have the five top who have requirements to write and get the publication, and beyond the five as many more as care to be attached to the list, but who have no responsibilities and no rights.

DA: So The Cult's publication is the Fantasy Rotator. What is the Fractional Rotator?
GS: If a member or an Active Waiting-Lister chooses to publish
something inbetween two Fantasy Rotators, it's properly numbered on
the half or quarter or decimal, and is called a Fractional Rotator.
Inactive Waiting-Listers, their publication is called a Decimal
Oscillator, a term that I invented one time, and have been blamed
for ever since. There's also the possibility of calling a publica-
tion a Non-Integral Vibrator, but we've never figured out to what it
might apply.

Most APAs do not have rules as complicated as those of The Cult.
Typical regulations for an APA specify the membership limit, publication
deadlines, minimum contr tribute of each member, the method of choosing
the Official Editor, and a way of changing the rules.

Many APAs founded by science fiction fans are oriented towards
neither science fiction nor fandom, but instead around other interests
which fans have found they share, such as recorded music (APA-LP) and
cooking, gardening, and home crafts (APPLE). Other APAs limit their
membership to individuals who are members of a regional club—for
instance, APA-NESFA, open to members of the New England Science Fiction
Association—or to those born after a certain year, like APA-45 and
APA-55, which are open to those born after 1945 and 1955, respectively.

I asked Judith Weiss, who is a member of APPLE, if this APA was
somewhat like the chain letters of recipes that occasionally circulate.
She replied in the negative:

No, it's actually not. It's more like thirty neighbors
chatting over the back fence. The recipe thing is very mechanical
and impersonal, but in this everyone is becoming friends with
everyone else. It's like two old neighbors leaning over the back
fence, trading not only recipes but hints on how to make their
tomatoes grow better and how to get the stain out of the whatever.
It's an attempt to create a little back-fence community dealing with
these homely things.

Another reason is that if you just send a recipe to someone,
you're not really writing anything, and a big part of an APA is
mailing comments, which is where you take everyone else's fanzine
from the time before and write a comment on what they said, one by
one. So, it's a conversation. If you just sent off five recipes to
a friend, you aren't conversing with them. The whole thing is that
you're carrying on an ongoing conversation with other people.
The Non-Profit Nature of Fannish Publishing

Several informants emphasized that fannish publishing, whether it be in the form of a fanzine or contributions to an APA, is generally a non-profit activity. Few fanzines actually turn a profit, and those that do are viewed in a different light by fans than those that do not. The dissension about the Best Fanzine Hugo award mentioned in the previous chapter has arisen, to a large extent, out of the fact that the fanzines which often win this award are those few that do turn a profit for their publishers.

These profit-making fanzines, however, are also those with the largest circulation; because they are thus visible to a greater number of fans, they stand a better chance of receiving votes for the Hugo Awards over those fanzines with smaller press runs which are thus unknown to many fans.

That fanzines are, for the most part, amateur and non-profit is quite important. Wertham notes that

... it is necessary to make a sharp distinction between amateur and dilettante. The amateur seriously cultivates an activity in his spare time, whereas the dilettante merely dabbles without any deep application. ...

Of paramount significance is the economic factor. In short, fanzines—in their most typical examples—function outside the market and outside the profit motive. Publishing then is not a business but an avocation.28

Fanzine Publishing as a Second Occupation

As Wertham has noted and many of my informants have substantiated, fanzine activity is a time- and energy-consuming process. For many fans, publishing becomes a second occupation, taking up a large proportion of those hours not devoted to revenue-producing work, eating,

28Wertham, Fanzines, p. 74.
and sleep. The rewards for such activity are not financial; rather, they are social in nature. Communication with others who share a fan's interests, group acceptance, friendships, and egoboo are the major rewards received by fans in return for participation in the world of fan publishing. This is also true of participation in conventions and local clubs, but on the whole these activities do not demand the time and energy outlay that fanzine publication requires. It should be noted, though, that the fan who travels to a large number of cons will spend a great deal on travel, lodging, food, and the like; this is not, however, the type of expenditure demanded by fannish publication, even though the rewards may be the same.

In *Why Faith Healing?*, Michael Owen Jones examines the reasons behind individual choice of occupation, focusing his study on the factors that affect traditional faith healers. Much of his theoretical information is drawn from Anne Roe's *The Psychology of Occupation*, and certain points made by both Jones and Roe are applicable to the examination of fan publishing as a second occupation.29

Roe defines an "occupation" as "... the major focus of a person's activities, and usually of his thoughts." The FIWOL fan, as described in the preceding chapter, is often an individual whose thoughts and activities are fandom-directed, even though he or she may have a "mundane" job which supplies his or her financial needs.30

Both Roe and Jones discuss an ordered set of goals developed by Maslow. Roe notes that these goals are only motivators of behavior, and

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30Roe, *Occupations*, p. 3.
that the individual is also affected by biological, cultural, and situational factors in the choice of occupation. Summarizing Roe's listing of these goals, in order of descending prepotency, we have:

1. Physiological needs, such as hunger, thirst, and sex
2. Safety needs, including shelter, protection, order, and routine
3. A need for belongingness and love
4. The need for self-respect and self-esteem
5. The need for information
6. The need for understanding
7. The need for beauty
8. The need for self-actualization; i.e., being all that one "could be." 31

Jones notes that individuals who have more than one occupation often use each occupation to fulfill different goals:

Maslow's hierarchy is extremely important in the present context, for in the case of many cult leaders and faith healers, the individuals are engaged in two or more occupational choices each of which satisfies different needs. The one vocation, such as farming, mining, fishing, or factory work, provides the prepotent needs of physical survival, while the other occupation, say, faith healing, preaching and religious teaching, or social leadership, satisfies some of the other needs at a higher level.

For many fans, membership in fandom at any level of activity may fulfill some of these needs. When one considers those fans whose activity levels are such that they pass from the dilettante to the amateur—whose involvement in fandom is so great that fandom is, for them, a second occupation—it becomes clear that several of the higher-numbered, less accessible goals in the Maslow hierarchy are being fulfilled through participa-

31Ibid., pp. 25-29. 32Jones, Why, pp. 6-7.
tion in fannish activity.

Group acceptance, for example, is a way of satisfying the need for belongingness and love. When this acceptance reaches the level where the fan is receiving egoboo and other forms of recognition, the need for self-respect and self-esteem becomes fulfilled. It is possible to adduce examples of behavior within fandom showing how the remaining four needs may also be met, but it is less clear that this is true for the majority of individuals involved in fan publishing. If "information," for instance, is limited in its meaning to refer to data about a fan's specific interests and especially to information about sf and fandom, it can be said that this goal is fulfilled by participation in fanzines and APAs. This, however, seems to be a case of bending the data to fit the theory.

Summary

It has been shown that membership in fandom and participation in fan activities, particularly publication activities, reward the fan on two different levels. At the surface level, the fanzines and APAs act as a communications network, linking geographically dispersed individuals who have shared interests. At a deeper level, participation in this communications network serves to fulfill individual psychological needs, with the amount of fulfillment provided by fandom related to the amount of time and energy expended by the fan in such participation.
CHAPTER IV

DIRECT INTERACTION: SF CONVENTIONS

This chapter will examine the phenomenon of science fiction conventions ("cons"). At these gatherings, fans meet and engage in both programmed and unprogrammed activities. The history of both local sf clubs and conventions is briefly described, as is their relationship with each other. The interrelated topics of convention organization, membership, and financing are discussed. The types of formal and informal behavior found at cons are detailed, and these behaviors are considered in relation to current folkloristic studies: the sf convention is considered as a form of folk festival comparable to the religious fiestas of Latin America, and is also compared to the conventions held by a professional group—the American Folklore Society (AFS).

The Interrelated History of Clubs and Conventions

As mentioned in Chapter I, many local clubs grew out of the organizations formed by professional sf magazines as a means of increasing their subscriberships. By the end of the 1940s, these national fan clubs were defunct. However, many of their chapters continued their existence as purely local organizations, serving as meeting places for the fans residing in specific areas.¹

At present, local clubs are found in many metropolitan areas.

¹Warner, Yesterdays, pp. 211-256.
In parts of the country where fans are geographically diffused, organizations are regional in nature rather than local; for example, the New England Science Fiction Association has members throughout the Northeastern states. Judith Weiss told me that

... about every large city has one, and some small cities have them, too. A fan who's really into fandom who moves to a city that doesn't have one usually starts one, if he's the organized type, the type that likes to organize things, to start them.

J. B. Post described for me his role in the formation of such a group in Rochester, New York, during the early fifties:

Mmmmm, let's see, it was in the eighth grade that I encountered some problems and they sent me off to a camp for maladjusted boys. There I met another maladjusted fellow who has been my lifelong friend ever since.

We, after a lapse of a few years, managed to get together and organize a science fiction group at the public library in Rochester. And, lo and behold, after we had created our own fandom, drawn together a whole variety of people our own age—and a few older, in fact—we discovered that there had been a whole earlier fandom.

... We had a great period of our own. It was our own kind of fandom. And then I went off to school, people got drafted, it fell apart. Then there's after this—I discovered another wave of fandom and recreated it, but this one is aware of the rest of the world.

From their start, sf clubs have been inextricably connected with the conventions. The earliest con was in fact a meeting of a small number of individuals who were members of different branches of the same club. This occurred in October 1936, when six members of the New York City branch of the International Scientific Association came to Philadelphia to visit a similar number of members who belonged to the latter city's branch.\(^2\)

At present, almost every major American city has at least one sf con each year. This, however, is a recent development, as White notes:

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 227.
Until about a decade ago, there were relatively few conventions—less than half a dozen a year. However, the late fifties and sixties witnessed an astonishing mushrooming of local and regional conventions. Conventions and conferences are now being held in nearly every major city in the United States at least once a year; New York City is now host to several, put on by different groups and individuals, some of them avowedly for the reason of personal profit.

White's final phrase points out that, like fanzines, cons are expected by the majority of fandom to be non-profit activities.

The first World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon) was held in New York City in 1939. With the exception of the period between 1942 and 1945, when many fans were in the armed forces, this gathering has been an annual event ever since. It occurs at a different location each year, and has been held in most large American cities and several international sites, including Toronto, London, Heidelberg, and Melbourne.

Organization, Membership, and Financing

Generally, but not always, conventions are organized by members of the local or regional club in whose vicinity they are being held. The task of organizing a con is the responsibility of a con committee, whose members carry out such functions as negotiating with a hotel, arranging for publicity, planning the convention's formal program, and inviting guest speakers (usually noted writers and editors; also, in some cases, fans). Even a small convention requires an extensive amount of organization and planning. At one convention I attended, which drew about three hundred people, the program book listed eighteen

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individually as members of the planning committee.5

Worldcon committees are drawn in part from members of the local
club in the convention area, but also utilize the talents of more
distant fans who possess expertise in specific matters. George Scithers,
for example, has organized masquerades—competitions in which fans wear
costumes based on characters in sf novels, stories, and films—at a
number of Worldcons, although only one of these conventions has actually
been located in his home town. Judith Weiss made further comments on
this aspect of Worldcon organization:

... The Worldcon committee changes from year to year, because
it depends on who's holding the Worldcon... For instance,
next year's Worldcon—SunCon, 'cause it's going to be held in
Florida—there are no fan groups to speak of in Florida, but they
wanted to have a convention in Florida. The people who are
running the committee live in New York, Boston, the Northeast, but
they all got together and said, "We're the committee for this
convention, and we are going to plan this convention for Miami."
And that's the first time, really, that a long-distance convention
has been planned.

Usually, it's the local club of a city that gets together and
says, "We're going to hold a Worldcon," but quite often the fan
club of that city will have very little to do with the Worldcon
committee if they're holding a Worldcon. So, they aren't even
that connected.

In order to attend a convention, a fan must become a member of
that convention. Memberships can be purchased either in advance or upon
arrival at the con site. The membership fees for local and regional
cons are usually in the neighborhood of five to ten dollars per person.
Some conventions offer a reduced rate to those who join in advance,
while others give discounts to members of the sponsoring club.6 Membership
in a con entitles a fan to a membership badge and a program book


6Often, a local group will have some kind of membership display
at a con, in hopes of attracting new members from the mundanes who attend.
listing the formal program. The badge is usually required for admission to many convention activities—art shows and sales rooms, for example—but unregistered individuals are sometimes able to participate in portions of the official program, as well as in all unofficial, unscheduled events.

Worldcon membership is considerably more expensive than that of a local con, running between fifteen and fifty dollars, but it brings the fan additional benefits. Because a Worldcon is planned over a two-year period, progress reports are issued to members at intervals during this planning period. These discuss various aspects of the planning, including hotel facilities, programming, and tourist attractions, and keep the member posted on other information of general interest to fandom. Many Worldcons also issue a final progress report in the months following the convention, detailing the goings-on at the con and presenting the fan with a financial statement.

Because many fans cannot afford to attend the Worldcon, but wish to participate from a distance, these conventions have two types of memberships—attending and supporting. Attending memberships are for those who will be present at the convention, and are usually more expensive than supporting memberships, which give the fan a form of long-distance participation in the event via mailed copies of the progress reports and program book. In recent years, Worldcons have adopted a time-based scale of membership fees, so that an individual who purchases a membership shortly after a site is selected is charged less than one who joins later on. By joining early, a fan may save up to half of what he or she would pay at the door.

Both classes of Worldcon membership also make the holder a member of the World Science Fiction Society until the con ends. This
group is an unincorporated literary society with three functions: attendance at the current Worldcon, selection of the recipients of the Hugo Awards, and selection of the site of the Worldcon to be held two years hence. It should be noted that membership in this group does not give an individual a voice in the planning of the convention; this power remains in the hands of the Worldcon's committee.

The Hugo Awards—formally titled the Science Fiction Achievement Awards, but nicknamed after the "Father of Magazine Science Fiction," Hugo Gernsback—are fandom's highest honor. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, these awards are presented in an assortment of categories to both fans and professional writers. Nominations for these awards, as well as for other presentations, are solicited from Worldcon members via the progress reports. After the nominations have been tallied, the members of the Worldcon are mailed ballots listing the top five contenders in each category. The ballots are totalled by the convention committee, and the awards—in the shape of a rocket ship—are presented at a banquet at the convention. Usually, the winners are not known in advance, but on occasion word has leaked out.7

The award categories are defined in the constitution of the World Science Fiction Society. This document also permits each Worldcon committee to present two Hugos in new categories; in some cases, these special awards have become standardized through amendment to the group's constitution, such as the award for "Best Dramatic Presentation," added in 1960. Other special awards are one-time affairs, such as the Hugo presented to astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins at the 1969

Worldcon for "The Best Moon Landing Ever."  

The WSFS constitution also specifies the mechanism by which Worldcon sites are selected by con members. In order to allow a Worldcon committee sufficient time for planning, sites are selected two years in advance; thus, the 1979 site will be selected at the 1977 convention. Site selection is a complex process in which the North American continent is divided into three zones—Eastern, Central, and Western—with the convention moving in rotation among the three. A group which wishes to have a Worldcon located in a specific city within the zone under consideration places a "bid" with the current Worldcon's committee. At the convention, the bidding cities are listed and each member is entitled to vote on the proposed sites.  

The expenses of putting on a convention are covered in several fashions, including auctions of donated material, the sale of advertisements in the program book (and progress reports, in the case of a Worldcon), and the sale of memberships. Funds acquired by these and other methods go to cover such expenses as the printing of membership badges and program books, mailing and telephone costs, and the rental of convention space in the hotel. Speakers are seldom paid, but are usually given honorary memberships in the hotel instead. In my interview with Dennis McConney, he noted that many hotels offer a convention organizer a certain percentage of free rooms out of every large block of rooms rented; such rooms are usually used for purposes such as convention

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9 "Official WSFS Rules," p. 129. Special provisions in these rules provide a mechanism for foreign con sites.

10 Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 36.
headquarters, lounges, and housing for committee members and important speakers.

The process of bidding for a Worldcon site is often an expensive proposition in itself, involving advertisements in the progress reports and program book of the current Worldcon, buttons, and posters. In addition, bidding groups often sponsor "bid parties" at the current Worldcon. At these events, members of the bid committee hold an open-door party, often with open bars, in an attempt to convince partygoers of the superiority of their site over other contenders' cities. In order to defray the expenses of bidding, many bid committees sell "pre-supporting" memberships to the proposed Worldcon at a low rate. Should the site win the vote, the holders of such memberships are entitled to convert them to either supporting or attending memberships at an extremely low price; should the site not be selected, these memberships are usually valueless.

The importance of the bid parties in the sale of these pre-supporting memberships and in the acquisition of site votes is partially related to the way fans look on the activities of the various local clubs. Many of my informants, for example, depicted certain local groups in terms of their interests and the behavior of their members. Thus, a bid party can serve to counter unfavorable depictions by demonstrating the hospitality and desirability of a local club as a potential Worldcon sponsor. Judith Weiss described how negative opinions of a local group once prevented it from winning a Worldcon bid:

When I was eighteen, the summer before I went off to college, I went to D-Con, which was in Dallas, downtown, and I commuted every day to it. . . . See, the whole thing was—the Dallas group were very into comics, and they still are, which is why they lost the '73 bid for the convention, 'cause everybody said, 'Dallas? It's gonna
be a comics convention!" So, they all voted for Toronto, 'cause Toronto fans were into science fiction. . . . They knew it [Dallas] wouldn't be that bad, they just thought it would be too much comics influence. . . .

Formal Convention Activities

Science fiction conventions are highly festive occasions involving groups that range in size from a few hundred to well over five thousand. In the following portions of this chapter, the similarities of these conventions to other forms of festivals will be considered, drawing primarily on Robert J. Smith's studies of festival behavior. From the information already presented, the parallels between an sf con and Smith's description of a festival begin to appear:

Festivals are occasions of special significance to a nation, community, or small group. One has a right to take part simply by virtue of his being a member; indeed, it is often a man's participation which confirms him as a member. The celebration is generally (though not always) institutionally sanctioned, and celebrated annually on a more-or-less fixed basis.\(^\text{11}\)

Worldcons come closer than local conventions to fitting this description. They are of significance because of their size and because of the awards presented during their ceremonies. Attendance at a Worldcon, especially one distant from one's home, is respected behavior within fandom. Finally, almost all sf cons take place on a regular, annual basis, and are activities sanctioned within fandom as being of value.

All of my informants have attended conventions, although the numbers and frequency of attendance vary somewhat. Most go only to those within a reasonable distance from their homes, although some make a point of attending every Worldcon they can get to, no matter what the

\(^{11}\)Smith, Art, p. 5.
expense. Weiss, for example, is usually willing to travel no further than Boston or Washington from her Philadelphia home, but took the trouble of going as far as Kansas City for the 1976 Worldcon.

Two informants have had extensive experience in the planning and operation of conventions. Scithers was chairman of the 1963 Worldcon committee and has worked with several other Worldcons as parliamentarian and masquerade organizer, as well as participating in the operation of local cons in both Washington and Philadelphia. McCunney was for several years involved with the Philadelphia convention, in positions up to and including the committee chairmanship.

Most local and regional conventions are weekend affairs, beginning on a Friday evening and ending Sunday night. The Worldcons are traditionally scheduled for Labor Day weekend, and begin on Thursday and continue through the weekend until late Monday afternoon. Unprogrammed socializing at all conventions usually starts the night before the convention opens and continues until the day after it closes.

Most conventions have some amount of formally programmed activities and display rooms. The amount and variety of activity often depends on the interests found in the sponsoring group, although an attempt is made at Worldcons to provide some amount of programming for all possible interests among fans. Like fan and fanzines, conventions are often termed as "sercon" and "faanish"; Dennis McCunney provided me with an example of each:

DA: What happens at a convention?
DM: This depends on the convention. There are conventions of all sorts. Some conventions, like Philcon [The Philadelphia con], for instance, have been traditionally serious and constructive conventions, conventions which feature people involved in the science fiction field—writers, editors, artists—talking about what they do and about the field in general. It's a means of keeping people in
touch with what's going on in science fiction.

Other conventions, like Midwestcon (known in fandom as a "Relaxacon"), have simply been excuses for fans to get together and have fun. Midwestcon doesn't have a formal program, Midwestcon doesn't have a huckster room, Midwestcon doesn't have an art show, Midwestcon, I think, doesn't have a guest of honor. Midwestcon is simply an excuse for a bunch of fans to get together around a pool and drink and swim and socialize and get a suntan and relax for a weekend.

Even those conventions which, like Midwestcon, are primarily social in nature have some organization, as Gardner Dozois pointed out:

Conventions, of course, are organized. Even Relaxacons, which are nothing more than a weekend spent around a pool just generally having a good time, are organized to a certain extent, in that somebody went to the trouble to rent a hotel, somebody went to the trouble to make sure that there was a party, that there were party goods available, to make sure that people knew what was happening and when, and make sure that the people they wanted to know knew, as opposed to the people they didn't want to know. Now that could be a very formal thing, like an invitational con, where specific people they wanted to know knew, or a more informal thing, such as not advertising in the Star Trek News if they didn't want Troddies there, or to make sure they did advertise in Analog, because that would reach the kind of people they wanted to come.

Renting a hotel is an important factor in setting up a con, as my conversation with McCuneey brought out:

DM: As science fiction has grown, organized activities pertinent to science fiction have grown. Most particularly, for example, the Worldcon, which is now up in the top ten percent of size of conventions being held in this country. . . . I don't have any figures, but as near as I can tell, well, for a while there, the Worldcon was the largest convention that I knew of that could still technically be accommodated in a single hotel. At this point, it's grown a bit beyond that—you get Worldcons with matter-of-factly two or three or four backup hotels to help house all the people. . . .

Generally, your principal hotel will be chosen because it has convention facilities—meeting rooms and the like—which are large enough to house all these people. The hotel itself isn't likely to have enough sleeping room, so you have to have overflow hotels simply to hold everyone. . . . By far, the vast majority of people that I know would much prefer to stay in the main hotel.

DA: Even if it's just across the street to the overflow?

DM: Well, if they can manage it, they'd like to stay in the main hotel, 'cause that, so to speak, is where the action is. They're much more likely to find out where things are happening and get involved if they're right there where things are occurring.

DA: Well, when you go to Philcon, which is here in your native
city, do you stay in the hotel, or do you stay at home?

DM: Chances are I stay in the hotel, and this is a matter of either convenience or necessity. The past couple of Philcons, for example, which I was running, I felt it necessary that I be on the premises at all times since I was the man in charge of that particular function and since I was the one who would have to deal with serious problems, if any came up.

Most of my informants who attend conventions in their home towns told me that they prefer to stay at the hotel, for much the same reason as McCunney—being where the action is—but often cannot afford the expense and so go home each night.

I had each informant tell me about what the formal events at a convention involved. All answers were fairly similar, providing me with lists and descriptions of different types of events. McCunney provided me with the most detailed description:

DA: What sort of formal events does one find at a convention?
DM: Generally, conventions which are organized that way have a Guest of Honor, who is someone who is well-known in the science fiction field. Hopefully, someone that the majority of attendees have not seen.
DA: The Guest of Honor would be a professional, rather than a fan?
DM: Generally, yes, though some conventions make a practice of having both a professional Guest of Honor and a fan Guest of Honor. Now, one of the things that has to be remembered is that out of the people who attend a convention—depending on the convention—a large number of the people who attend are not going to be fans, they're going to be readers. They may, as a result of their attending a convention—or more than one of them—become fans, but primarily their reasons for attending a convention is a means of finding out what's going on in the science fiction field and meeting a lot of the people who do it.
DA: When you say "a large number," what sort of percentage of the attendees are you talking about?
DM: This depends upon the convention. It's difficult to give you any sort of percentages on that. . .
DA: If you have a science con, you have a formal program. Do other cons have a formal program?
DM: You'll have a Guest of Honor, you'll have other guests, there will be speeches, there will be dialogues, there will be panels, slide shows, lectures. Most conventions have a program of sf-related films. There will be a huckster room where dealers will sell hardcover and paperback science fiction books, back issues of science fiction magazines, movie posters, just about anything else you can
imagine. There will be an art show of science fiction-related art. In many cases, there will be other events, depending on what the con committee can come up with and think they might be interesting.

DA: I know that some conventions have masquerade balls.
DM: Yeah, some of them have masquerade balls, some have banquets. What they have largely depends, I think, upon what sort of facilities they can get from the hotel and how much work they feel like doing.

Of all the informants, only Scithers had a dislike for the huckster rooms:

DA: What about things like sales rooms or movie rooms?
GS: These are additional adjuncts which, okay, in past years they simply didn't exist, and they're always present in comics conventions, and they exist much more now than they used to.
DA: So comics conventions, in general, are a bit more monetary in orientation?
GS: Yes, very much so.
DA: I gather from your tone of voice that you're pleased that science fiction conventions are not.
GS: Of course! We have to be superior to somebody!

In this context, Smith notes that many religious festivals have concurrent commercial events, which are at their busiest when the devotional and festive aspects of the festivals are at their low points. Many fiesta-goers save money for the express purpose of spending it at such festival-related fairs. For such individuals, this fair is part of the fiesta, a part which does not diminish its other aspects. Only to the merchant, Smith points out, are the two wholly unconnected, an idea supported by Fred Fisher's comments on the "business fan" in an earlier chapter.12

At a Worldcon, which has a longer time span and serves more people than a regional or local con, the activities are usually more diverse in nature. Examining a progress report for the 1977 Worldcon, I found several types of planned activity that my informants did not mention: art auctions, workshops and seminars for artists, a general

12Smith, Art, p. 125.
auction, day care facilities, and a set of events aimed at the fanzine fans, including symposia, panel discussions, duplication facilities, an exhibit on the history of fandom, and a lounge.13

At most Worldcons and many smaller cons, there are also events which are organized for the members of the various special interest groups that exist in and around fandom. McCunney described some of these for me:

DA: Do conventions tend to have events related to the splinter groups like the Society for Creative Anachronism [SCA]?  
DM: This depends upon the convention. It changes. The Worldcon, for example, has traditionally provided a meeting place for the Burroughs Bibliophiles to hold their annual Dun-Dun. The Worldcon has also played host to the Georgette Heyer Society, which is a wierd thing in itself, since Georgette Heyer has not written science fiction. . . . The SCA has sometimes had events at conventions.

With the exception of those few conventions that lack formal programs entirely, the formal events at all conventions are some subset of those described above. Within these general types of activities, there is much room for variation; panel discussions of one convention, for example, will not share topics with those of another.

Smith points out that this format of variation within a repeated structural framework is common to many festivals, and goes on to note that

... to say that they [the events at a festival] are simply repeated year after year is the equivalent of saying that once you have seen one performance of Hamlet you have seen them all. . . . New experiences are what the festival offers. People do not want to come to the festival and find everyday life going on; this is obvious; but neither do they want nor expect to find last year's festival.14

Scithers commented that a convention is a forum for interaction:

There are four independent and interacting groups at a con: there are the people who came to see each other, there are the writers and editors who came to see each other, there are the general readers who came to see the writers and editors, and there are people who are running the machinery of the convention.

From my convention experiences, it would seem that this statement is an oversimplification. First, many attendees fall into several of these categories, changing from one to another depending on the specific activity in which they are participating. Also, it ignores one additional group which interacts with convention-goers—those members of the general public who are staying at or passing through the convention hotel for reasons other than attendance at the convention.

Such interactions often figure in the memorizes that fans tell about conventions. This came out in the Weiss interview:

Fans almost never have a whole hotel to themselves. Except for the WorldCon, you're almost always sharing the hotel with some other conventions. The interaction can be very interesting.

At Disclave [The Washington, D. C. regional con], we shared the hotel with the . . . Barber Shop Quartet Association. Well, they had their convention in the same hotel, and it was great because there was this one fan, a Washington fan as it turned out, who sings barber shop quartet, so he was attending both of them.

The people who were running the convention suite—there's always a convention suite open every night, which is where you can party if there's nowhere else to go—. . . invited one of the groups up to sing. So, they did a half-hour concert. They were these four very young guys from Annapolis, very clean cut, military haircuts and uniforms and everything, and they sang for a half-hour and everybody clapped.

A lot of us were sitting down in the bar at one point. . . . The bar is where you look for people between four in the afternoon and seven, you know, happy hour, after the panels close and before the parties start, before everyone goes out to dinner. So, we were all sitting in there, and some of the barbershop people were in there, and we were singing some fannish songs. No, they weren't fannish songs, they were regular old well-known songs—"Men of Harlech," or something like that, right—and the barbershop people sniffed and said, "Well, we'll show you how to do that!"

And they all got together and did their whole bit. It was great, 'cause they love to perform, they were performing at us, they just loved it 'cause we were clapping at them.

The event which causes some of the most intriguing interactions
between fans and other hotel residents is the masquerade. Costumes sometimes stem from the esoteric humor of fandom; for example, at one convention's masquerade, a fan entered dressed as an "old-time fan," wearing a helicopter beanie and carrying a plastic ray gun. When I attended the 1974 Worldcon in Washington, a masquerade–related event occurred which I later related to Judith Weiss during her interview:

DA: The one Worldcon I went to, I didn't really notice that there was a masquerade listed on the program.

JW: Which one?

DA: That was in Washington.

JW: Oh, Discon, y'know. Oh, there was a masquerade.

DA: Yes, there was. I found that out in a very strange way. You remember that at Discon, they had rented the Sheraton–Park for the convention... and they ran out of space and ended putting up the overflow across the street at the Shoreham Americana. The Shoreham, it seems, where I ended up, is the sort of place where you find Senator's mistresses and Arab oil sheiks with four machine-gunned, burnoosed guards walking around the hotel.

JW: Yes, they seem to like the Sheraton and Shoreham, because there was a Disclave/Washington regional con there one year, and Prince Feisal was staying there at the same time, and his secret service men were all over the place. They were rather bemused by the affairs.

DA: I can imagine that! Well, it seems that that weekend at the Shoreham was the convention of the researchers for the National Science Foundation. I recall not noticing that there was a masquerade—Friday night, Saturday night, something like that—and the fellow I was sharing a room with and I went over to the hotel to get some fancy clothes on and go out for dinner.

We were standing in the lobby, waiting for the elevator, and next to us were two or three mid-sixties distinguished-looking Physics or Biology Department chairmen, intently discussing some new and esoteric scientific development with great fervor and integrity.

The elevator came down, and out came these two young men discussing the stock market, dressed in the kind of clothes that I can only describe as "I may not be a Vice-President this year, but next year, just you wait and see!"

JW: Mmm-hmm.

DA: Italian black patent-leather shoes and three-piece handmade suits, digital watches, ...

JW: Of course.

DA: ... and leather briefcases with gold-leaf embossing. And they had absolutely perfect "Planet of the Apes" facial makeup on. I thought it was pretty amusing, but I enjoyed it even more when I noticed the expressions on the scientists standing next to me.

JW: Yes, right, fans tend to freak out other groups.
Informal Activities at Conventions

While the formal events at a con are an important portion of the activities in which fans partake, they are in no way the totality of the convention. Many other events of an informal and sociable nature are also a part of a sf con. To attempt to study cons strictly by examining their formal programs would ignore much of the behavior of convention attendees. As Smith points out, one cannot separate a festival into the formal and the informal, as it is all one event to those who attend. The existence of the Relaxacons emphasizes the fact that for some fans the social aspects are more important than the programmed activities.15

Informal behavior at cons takes many forms: conversation, filksinging, eating in groups, drinking, drug use, sex, and partying. These all have one common aspect—they are activities which require interaction between individuals. Some are, in part, a portion of the formal program, as the existence of fanzine fan lounges and con suite parties attests, but in general these activities take place outside the limits of the official program.

Food-oriented activities take several forms. At those conventions which have banquets, such activity becomes a portion of the formal program for one night. Another type of eating involving groups of fans is the "Great Wall Expedition," described to me by Judith Weiss:

 обычно, a "Great Wall Expedition" is traditional. I don't know if that term extends cross-country, it's an East Coast fannish term for going out to look for a Chinese restaurant. Sometimes it's referred to as "Great Walling," sometimes just "Let's go eat."

Fans tend to eat in large clumps, because fans, East Coast Fans, anyway, tend to like food. They tend to be gourmets, almost. They

15Smith, Art, pp. 46, 109.
tend to really appreciate food. Although there are a lot who don't, there are a lot who do, who really get into food, and who really like Chinese food.

Judith also told me an eating tradition which parodies the formal banquet:

JW: Some cons have a banquet. The Worldcon always has a banquet. But not everybody goes to the banquets.
DA: Do they just go out and eat instead?
JW: Yeah. Banquets are usually expensive and have bad food, that's sort of a tradition of its own. A lot of people don't like going to banquets. There is a tradition that grew up very recently, in the past four or five years, called the "Banquet." It's a group of fans holding a parody of the banquet, sort of like the Black Mass being a parody of the Mass. They go out and find a McDonald's or a Gino's or something as sleazy as they can, usually within walking distance, and about fifteen of them go out and eat there. They give out the Hugos. They're a version of the Hugos, sort of a sleazy fan award given out to people, usually for reasons of nastiness. Sort of like the Friar's Roast, but on a lower level.
DA: Is there more than one Banquet for every banquet?
JW: No, no. Banquets only take place at Worldcons. That's not a really established event, that just got started two or three years ago.

Partying is an important aspect of attending a fan convention, as McCunney pointed out:

Yes, yes, conventions by and large have parties, sometimes quite a few of them. Fans are socializers, and, as we attempt to point out to the hotels that we hold science fiction conventions in (when we're in the process of negotiating to hold the convention), "Fan conventions are basically well-behaved conventions. They won't damage your hotel, they won't be rowdy, they won't skip out on their room bill, they won't throw chairs out the window and break liquor bottles in the pool and do all the other various things that a lot of the organizations that hold conventions in your facilities have. They are, however, social, and they will party and sing and talk all night, and best you be aware of this fact."

One of the great difficulties in dealing with a hotel is trying to convince the hotel that it will be in everybody's best interest if the hotel will try to assign rooms to sf conventions members that are all pretty much in the same area of the hotel. "The fans won't care if they party all night, but your other guests might, and since we'd really rather avoid the security men knocking on the door at three in the morning and telling us that we're too loud and we'll have to close down the party." There's been rather limited success with this, I'm afraid, but we're working on it.

McCunney's comment on good behavior at conventions is borne out
by comments by the Sales Director of New York's Comodore Hotel, home of many cons: "I love these kids. . . . The damage to hotel property is nonexistent. I'd rather sell 600 rooms to this group than 600 to a businessman's convention, where there's a lot of drinking."  

This specific comment was, however, in reference to a "Star Trek" convention, where many of the attendees are below the legal drinking age. At science fiction cons, liquor is usually in evidence, but almost always in moderation. Several of my informants noted that illicit drugs, usually marijuana or hashish, are also to be found at sf cons. Dozois noted:

... there are people who use drugs and there are people who don't use drugs, but the people who don't are usually tolerant of the others as long as it goes on behind their backs and out of their sight. They will still associate with the people to one degree or another as fans. What it comes down to is that while there may be some people who are not of middle-class morality in fandom, fandom as a Gestalt operates on a middle-class level, middle-of-the-road morals, in spite of the reputation for being weird and freaky. Stealing is disapproved of, violence is disapproved of, damaging other people's property or damaging a hotel is disapproved of, dishonesty, to a certain degree, is disapproved of.

Drinking, pot-smoking, late-night partying, and sexual activities are all forms of what is often termed "licentious behavior." Smith points out that such behavior is emic; i.e., the definition of such behavior is internal to the community in which it occurs. In his study of Latin American festivals, he concludes that such behavior falls between "proper" behavior and "criminal" behavior, a view which essentially formalizes the comments of Dozois and McCunney on behavior at cons.  


One special form of group behavior at cons is the singing of fannish folksongs, mentioned earlier by Judith Weiss. The history of this activity and the content of the songs will be considered further in the following chapter. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that this is another type of informal activity that occurs at sf conventions.

Sexual promiscuity at conventions was a topic that brought me a range of comment from my informants. This diversity of response was reflected both in the *Fancyclopedia*, which remarks that "whether fans are actually more or less promiscuous than other people is an unsettled point, tho [sic] from the way they talk you'd think there'd be no doubt about it," and in Smith's comments about South American festivals:

It is impossible to determine the amount of sexual intercourse that occurred during the festival, or even to derive, with any degree of certainty, an approximation of it. Young men would laugh at the question and say there was a great deal, while older men would laugh but say there was not.18

Of my informants, Scithers and Post were the oldest, and both seemed to feel that there was little sexual activity at conventions. When I asked Post what went on at a con, he responded:

Drinking, not as much copulating as one would think, though probably more than before. Primarily, it's drinking and "Hail, fellow well met." Some innocent making-out, some not so innocent. That's the social aspects of it.

Scither's response was similar:

DA: One of my interviewees commented that one of the prime functions of conventions is to give people a chance to get into bed with each other. What's your opinion on that?

GS: What you've got is somebody whose interest in conventions is either "getting into bed" fandom or "talking about getting into bed" fandom, which are not necessarily the same thing.

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When I spoke with younger fans, the opinions moved to the opposite extreme. When I asked Judith Weiss, for instance, to tell me about sex at conventions, she replied:

JW: Well, there's a lot of it. As a matter of fact, I was sitting with some friends once, . . . and we were trying to count how many fannish couples we knew that were "real" couples, not just people who had been together for a few months, but people who were really committed to each other, either married or living together. We found some, but we had to count them one by one. Fans seem to be unmonogamous, convention fans, at least.

DA: Even fans who are monogamous outside of the conventions? If they go to the conventions as a couple, would they generally split up?

JW: Probably. I think a lot of them do.

DA: Sort of a "period of licence," like carnival?

JW: Yeah, in a way it is. I think that's why a lot of people go to cons, because it's a chance to get away from your mundane life, and that's part of it. Then Sunday evening comes, and you go home.

DA: I'm just thinking that fans must get an awful odd impression of what each other is really like if they go to the convention to let loose. . .

JW: . . . I think we all see each other's convention selves, and that's about it, but there are fans you see at home. The fans I know that I see when they're not at conventions act pretty much the way they do when they're at conventions.

DA: Is that because you see them in groups of fans, or do you see these people as individuals?

JW: No, individually. People I see individually tend to be about the same.

Whether or not a convention acts as a period of license depends in part on the viewpoint of the individual. At one convention party, I overheard one teenage fan remark to a comrade that there was an "orgy" occurring in his hotel room, but that such things didn't interest him; his companion immediately asked for the room number and left the party.

Another example of sexuality at conventions is the "lime Jello" story, told me by Susan Parris:

SP: The lime Jello was actually a joke that we were playing on a professional writer named Joe H. . . . He had told a woman named A., along with several other people, that his main sexual fantasy was having a bathtub full of lime Jello and two beautiful women for the evening. So A., in her usual way, ran around and collected money for the lime Jello fund. This was without Joe's idea, any idea that
this was happening.

She eventually got enough money together that . . . weekend. We went out and bought a hundred and twenty-eight packages of lime Jello. Well, some of 'em were lemon, 'cause there weren't enough lime. We cleared out the store racks of two different stores, and they all thought we were weird.

We went back and made a bathtub of lime Jello in Joe's room. We had gotten a key from his wife.

DA: Was she to be one of the two beautiful women?
SP: No, no, we had volunteers!
DA: They were lining up?
SP: Yes, lining up, they were very anxious to help Joe out. We filled up the bathtub and eventually got Joe up to it. By the time we got Joe, well, we had to have people keep Joe away from his room long enough for the Jello to gel. Now, a bathtub full of lime Jello takes many hours to gel, even with ice, and, believe me, we used quite a bit of ice!

By the time we got Joe up there, we had of course been leading him into bars and various parties for four or five hours while the Jello gelled. He didn't even realize we were going to his room. That was the lime Jello. We gave him the lime Jello and two beautiful women and they came out several hours later full of green in their hair. But no one even knows what went on behind those doors.

Bystander at Interview (Name Unknown): What happened to the lime Jello?

SP: Well, Joe and his two young female friends took care of that problem before they left the hotel room.
DA: They just kept running hot water until it all washed down, I'll bet.
SP: They flushed some of it . . . Of course, we have a little problem now, because Gardner Dozois wants to have a bathroom full of chocolate tapioca, and we can't figure out how we can cook that much tapioca.

Sexual behavior at conventions is also affected by the role of women within fandom. Susan Parris commented that "... men in fandom seem to be able to take "no" for an answer a lot easier than men in the mundane world. They seem to understand, they don't seem to be looking to get laid. . . ." She went on to note that the male–female ratio is out of balance with fandom, though less so than it was in fandom's early days.

The Function of Conventions

Most of my informants feel that the function of science fiction
conventions is to provide a place for fans to directly interact with each other. George Scithers told me that cons exist "... because the communication by fanzine and by telephone and by letter turns out to be inadequate for many people."

To most fans, the social aspects of the conventions are the primary reasons for their attendance; it is the desire to meet with old friends, and the possibility of making new friends that draws them to these events. The formal program is secondary, although most convention attendees go to some or all of this part of the convention. Post pointed out that although the formal events are less important to most fans, the conventions with strong programs draw the largest number of people. He attributed this to a need to justify to one's self the expense of attending what could be considered merely a social event, were it not for the program.

Several informants also noted that for those who are involved in the professional aspects of science fiction—writing, editing, illustrating, and publishing—the conventions also have business aspects. Stories are sold and solicited, the methods of writing and illustrating are discussed with fellow professionals, and feedback from the readers is received. Both Scithers and Mozois are such professionals, and both noted that one advantage of this status is that convention expenses become tax-deductible. In a later chapter, the ways in which fans and professionals interact will be considered in more depth.

When a few fans meet outside the context of a convention, the nature of the ensuing communication is different than that which occurs at conventions. The presence of a large group adds a celebratory aspect to all types of individual fannish behavior. This was best
expressed by writer Ursula LeGuin in her Guest of Honor speech at the
1975 Worldcon:

Well, I think we have come here to celebrate. This is a
celebration; this is what the word means—the coming together of
many people, from all kinds of weird places, away from their
customary life and ways, often at some trouble and expense, maybe
not knowing very precisely why they come, but moved to come, to
meet together in one place, to celebrate.

And a celebration needs no cerebration, no excuses or rational-
ization. A celebration is its own reason for being, as you find
out once you get there. The heart has its reasons which reason
doesn’t know, and a celebration such as this has its own reasons,
its own strange laws and lifespan; it is a real thing, an event, an
entity, and we here, long after, in our own separate ways and
places, will look back on it and remember it as a whole. And if
there were bad moments in it, if some of us got drunk and some of
us got angry, and some of us had to make speeches, and others of us
got horribly bored by the speeches—still I think the chances are
that we'll look back on it with some contentment, because the
essential element of a celebration is praise, and praise rises out
of joy. When you come right down to it, we've all come here to
enjoy ourselves. 19

It is easy to see the similarities between Ms. LeGuin's statement
and Smith's description of the convention as a form of "limited
participation" festival; i.e., a festival that is not open to an entire
community, as is the New Orleans Mardi Gras:

Within this class of [Limited participation] festival lies a
subclass that is living and growing luxuriantly: the businessman’s
or scholar's convention. More or less peculiar to our time, the
convention yet would seem to have its behavioral roots in the oldest
of traditions. Achievements of the past year are summed up, those
for the new year are projected. The old leader is deposed, a new
one is inaugurated. There is a formal reading of papers (=Scriptures?),(and there is festive interaction in bars, hotel rooms, and whatever
other entertaining places the conventioneers may discover. In other
words, the group periodically comes together to interact ceremonially
and festively.20

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19 Ursula Kroeber LeGuin, "The Stone Ax and the Muskoxen,"
reprinted in SunCon Journal 35:1 (1977), p. 6. The actual speech was made
on 14 August 1975, in Melbourne, Australia. It is interesting to speculate
as to whether the similarity between LeGuin's comments and those of Smith
are in part due to the former's being the daughter of noted anthropologist
A. L. Kroeber and anthropological writer Theodora Kroeber.

20 Robert Jerome Smith, "Festivals and Celebrations," in Folklore
Before considering further the parallels between conventions and other forms of festivals, two aspects of Smith's statement must be considered. First, he limits his description to "businessman's and scholar's conventions"; while a science fiction convention is neither of these, it possesses aspects of both, implying that this definition can be broadened. The equivalency of the "formal reading of papers" to the lectures, speeches, panels, and symposia at cons cannot be denied, presentations such as the Hugos are certainly the summing up of achievements, and there is surely no question but that festive interactions do take place at sf cons.

A more serious question arises when the use of the term "limited participation" is considered in comparison to Smith's description of a "general participation" festival:

... the central function of the festival seems to be to give occasion for men to rejoice together—to interact in an ambience of acceptance and conviviality. In the case of general participation festivals, the festival is often the only occasion in which the members of a community come together. On this occasion, they interact; the interaction is satisfying, therefore likely to be repeated. The satisfaction creates a bond between the participants; they have had pleasure in each other's company. They identify with each other; in a general participation festival the individual relates to, and identifies himself with, the community. Thus, the festival is a prime device for promoting social cohesion, for integrating individuals into a society or group and maintaining them as members through shared, recurrent, positively reinforcing performances.21

There is nothing in this definition which does not apply as easily to a "limited participation" festival such as the Worldcon as to a "general participation" festival like the Latin American fiestas

Smith has studied. The sole distinction appears to be that a limited


21Ibid., p. 167
participation festival does not include in its membership all of the surrounding community. The term "community" is misleading here, however, in that the participants in a limited participation festival are, in and of themselves, a community, and it is with this community, rather than the larger community in which fandom is subsumed, that the fan is becoming integrated through his or her participation in the festival. To the fan, then, a convention is a "general participation" festival; it is only to the extraneous, external observer that such conventions appear to be of a "limited participation" nature.

Early scholarly studies of festivals tend to concentrate on two aspects—their relationship to various forms of ritual behavior and the loosening of traditional standards of morality during the "period of licence." These concepts are apparent in Wertham's description of sf cons as "... a kind of ritual with Apollonian and Dionysian features."22 Similarly, Briffault, writing in 1931, described the function of festivals as a means of safeguarding "... the established order by loosening the social codes. (Bread and circuses/panem et circenses)"23

Briffault goes on to say that

... the chief disadvantage attaching to such collective expressions lies in the inevitable tendency of formalism and ritual to take the place of genuine feeling and conviction and in the hypocrisy which frequently attends the customary, formal or compulsory participation of the individual in regulated expressions of sentiments which he may not truly share.24

The viewpoint expressed here is not particularly applicable to the study of conventions as a form of festival. Briffault's comments

22 Wertham, Fanzines, p. 118.


24 Ibid.
rest on the underlying presumption that festivals exist in relationship to major societal institutions such as religion and the nation. Because science fiction conventions involve only a small portion of the total population, all of whom take part of their own free will, the concepts of "compulsory participation" and "regulated expressions of sentiments" are no longer applicable. In this sense, Smith's concept of the "limited participation" festival becomes more important—because such festivals are detached from the majority and the institutions of the majority, they are no longer festivals in the eyes of early scholars.

Smith suggests that the functions usually proffered by scholars for festivals—economic reasons, the removal of individualism, promotion of patriotism, supporting rulers, maintaining an egalitarian society, and the like—are in fact secondary. He goes on to note that the primary significance of a festival

... must be found in the experience itself, which is life enhancing. One lives for a period of time in another world in which the premises of reality are different from those of ordinary reality. The experience is sui generis; a complex of aesthetic experiences of sight, sound, smell, touch.

The central function of the festival is to give occasion for people to rejoice together—to interact in an ambience of acceptance and conviviality. The other functions are derived from this. 25

The feelings of rejoicing and celebration analyzed by Smith and described by LeGuin are affective states. Smith notes that anthropologists such as Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown view festival behavior as a way of generating such states, rather than this behavior being the result of the participants entering states of celebration and joy. These anthropologists viewed such states of mind as performing the various sociological functions of festivals mentioned above. On this point, Smith disagrees,

25 Smith, Art, p. 9.
saying that the "... attainment of these states is an end in itself, and that any sociological binding that may be accomplished as a result of it is secondary." 26 It is with Smith's view that most fans would agree; both LeGuin's statement and that of Susan Wood in Chapter II indicate that to a fan it is the sense of ceremonial celebration and interaction that is important, and not the fact that conventions can be viewed as performing the function of enhancing fannish solidarity. It can be seen, then, that each attendee at an sf con is actually a performer whose performance consists of participation in various types of behavior, both formal and informal. As Smith remarks, the reward to such a performer is not cognitive—he or she does not learn something new—but affective, in that the performer receives a positive emotional response, which may consist of either purely internal emotion, external emotional feedback from his or her fellows, or a combination of the two. 27

Studies of festivals have suffered from the problem that the various types of behavior at a festival, many of which are themselves genres of folklore, tend to be examined on an individual basis, rather than as an interrelated whole. Smith's concept of the affective response being an end in itself provides a solution: the various genres of behavior at festivals can be classified according to the nature of the affective reaction brought about by their performance; Smith terms this reaction the "interpretant." Thus, Carnival is an instrument for the evocation of joy, while Holy Week festivities elicit a feeling of devotion from their participants. These affective states, says Smith, are brought on by "... may different artifacts and patterned behaviors

26Smith, Art, p. 131.
..." which "... evoke, maintain, and reinforce their respective emotion sets."^28

The forms of behavior at a science fiction convention evoke several different types of celebration. The formally programmed events are usually celebrations of science fiction itself, while the informal activities celebrate fandom—the network of activities by which fans communicate and interact. Each of these celebrations has the same effect—the evocation of a feeling of joy and pleasure in the participant, along with the subsidiary knowledge that this feeling is shared with a set of like-minded individuals. The festival, of which the sf con is but a single example, can thus be viewed as an umbrella-like form of folklore, within which many different types of behavior act to effect the final result in the participants. As Smith notes, "... the festival itself is often the context for the other genres of folklore."^29

An important aspect of festivals is that the types of behavior found within them are different from those of everyday life in three ways: if everyday life provides the festival participant with predictable experiences, the festival will present him or her with unpredictable events; if the participant's normal stimuli are quiet and calm, the festival presents those that are louder and more exciting; where everyday behavior is that termed "responsible" or "proper," the festival allows behavior of the "irresponsible" or "improper"


With regard to the sf cons, it can be seen that these scales of behavior hold true. The "lime Jello" story presents an excellent illustration. Here, we find behavior of a type not found outside the convention arena, a kind of behavior that presented one individual with an unexpected and unpredicted event, while allowing several others the unusual excitement of participation in an activity which would be considered irresponsible in an everyday setting.

In addition to providing the participant with a change from the usual forms of behavior, change may also occur via the various interactions that occur at a festival. Smith suggests that there are four types of interaction which may occur at a festival:

1. Individual-individual interactions, such as making friends or enemies and renewing old acquaintanceships
2. Individual-group interactions, in which the relationship between an individual and the surrounding community change due to the individual's performance at the festival
3. Group-individual interactions, such as a family's leaving its door open to strangers during a fiesta
4. Group-group interactions, in which the relationships between two groups are weakened or strengthened.

Because science fiction conventions essentially involve only one "group," interactions of the fourth category are not to be found.

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30Smith, Art, pp. 9-10. Smith also notes that there are some groups whose daily lives are conducted on the premises of the festival reality. For such individuals, a "festival" brings similar changes, but to the reverse end of the scales—these festivals are subdued, small, and predictable.

unless one considers the fighting for Worldcon sites between local
groups a form of such behavior. All of the other varieties of inter-
action are often found at conventions. The individual-individual
interaction is the most common; many fans come to conventions because it
is one of the few chances they have to be with their long-distance
friends in the fanzine world. The various awards and other forms of
recognition which take place at conventions, and the labelling of
hard-working convention organizers as "Secret Masters of Fandom," are
forms of individual-group interaction. Group-individual interactions
are to be seen in the fact that many new individuals are brought into
active fandom after they come to a convention for the first time; for
many people, a chance visit to a convention is their first contact with
science fiction fandom; for some of these, it is just the beginning.

Another form of group-individual interaction is the "open party,"
such as the con suite party mentioned by Weiss. Many convention parties
are by invitation only, limiting their attendance to friends of the host
or members of one of fandom's many subgroups. The fan who is not
invited to such affairs will instead look for open parties, usually by
the time-honored method of walking the hotel corridors and looking for
rooms with open doors and masses of people within them.

Other Conventions

In the foregoing section, it has been shown how sf conventions
can be considered as a form of festival, and how folkloristic theories
regarding such festivals can be applied to these events. A final step
in such an analysis is to consider whether or not it can be extended
further to cover the numerous other types of conventions and similar
meetings which occur on regular bases throughout the world.
Many of my informants suggested that there is a basic similarity between conventions, no matter what the sponsoring group may be. Fisher, for example, said:

There's basically no difference, conventions are conventions. The words to the songs may vary, and the drugs or alcohol that are consumed, and how many people take off their clothes and make fools of themselves may vary, but not much. It's a difference in degree, not in kind.

Similarly, Weiss remarked that "... every organization that you've ever heard about has conventions. I mean, there are folklore conventions, and Shriners' conventions. It's the same thing. ... I see a parallel in a lot of different groups."

To my knowledge, the sole scholarly study of behavior at an actual convention is that of Reuss. In an article on the folklore of folklorists, he discusses behavior at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society (AFS) noting that:

... though we [folklorists] now study urban folklore, and more occasionally the traditions of middle- and upper-class Americans, we thus far have shrunk from applying to ourselves the methods, theories, and observations we so freely bestow on others.\(^{32}\)

Several aspects of the AFS conventions are parallel to those of Sf cons. There is a division between formal events, such as the reading of papers, seminars, and the banquet, and informal events like drinking, shop talk, visiting, building and maintaining contacts with fellow folklorists, and social conversation in the hotel lobby during those periods when the formal sessions are not in progress. Just as the Worldcon banquet is the time when science fiction's awards are presented, so the AFS banquet is the place where the Society's new officers are

announced and the latest members of the Folklore Fellows—the discipline's highest honor—are presented to the body of folklorists for their acclaim.

As an important parallel between the academic and science fiction conventions, one must note that, for the participants in either event, the informal activities are the most important occurrences. Reuss states that

... important as formal papers and discussions are, they take a distinct second to the informal visiting and shop talk constant throughout the next several days.33

Reuss also notes that narratives about prominent folklorists are often told by members of the AFS. These, too, have a parallel in fandom—the memorates told by fans about convention experiences, such as the "lime Jello" story, and about noted authors.34 The latter will be considered further in a succeeding chapter.

As a participant in both types of convention, I was struck by their similarities long before I encountered the works of either Reuss or Smith. Behavior at conventions is something that affects many individuals, yet has seldom received academic attention. It is my hope that in future years other scholars will look further at this realm of behavior, especially at business and trade conventions, where the affective states reached by the participants might not be those of joy or devotion, but may instead be related to the profit motive or other forces.

33 Ibid., p. 310.

34 Ibid., pp. 314-317.
CHAPTER V

FILKSINGING AT CONVENTIONS

One type of informal behavior which occurs at many sf conventions is the singing of filksongs, which the Fancyclopedia describes as "a type of music which, if it weren't fannish, would be called a folk song; fan parodies or pastiches or this or other types of mundane chansons."¹ This chapter will examine the history and nature of this behavior, and briefly consider the content of filksong lyrics.

Two different theories have been proffered as to the origin of the term "filksong." The Fancyclopedia attributes it to a typographical error which was adopted as an aspect of fandom's esoteric humor. Juanita Coulson rejects this and suggests that "... a more popular extrapolation gives credit to the genius of some unsung fannish punster who supposedly said: 'a filksong is a fannish song in the ilk of a folksong.'"²

Coulson notes that filksinging originated as an occurrence at closed-door convention parties during the 1940s, with the practice gradually becoming more well-known and open during the following decade.

¹Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 69.
²Ibid.; Juanita Coulson, "I Had One Filksong but the Guitar Player Over There," SunCon Journal 35:2 (1977), p. 9. The title of this article is another example of fandom's esoteric humor. Eney notes that "... in Roger Price's In One Head and Out the Other ... his character Clayton Slope 'had a clever trick of saying any conceivable sentence so that it sounded like "I had one grunch but the eggplant over there."' Fans find the expression useful, too." (Fancyclopedia, p. 87.)
The first large public filksing occurred at the 1960 Worldcon in Pittsburgh, and lasted throughout the night. Filksinging sessions usually occur during the late evening or early morning hours at conventions, after the programmed events have been completed and partying has begun. Some conventions set aside space for filksinging sessions; at those which do not make such provisions, the filksings take place in unused meeting rooms, convention suites, hotel corridors, and, when small groups of fans are involved, in private hotel rooms.\(^3\)

Many filksongs have received publication in various fanzines. The first published filksong was a setting of the sf poem "Cry in the Night," by Cyril Kornbluth, in the May 1945 mailing of VAPA, an early APA.\(^4\) In 1955, The Bosses' Songbook, an all-filksong fanzine, was published by fan Dick Ellington.\(^5\) At the 1976 Philcon, I purchased a recording of filksongs, whose liner notes stated:

Hello. Well, here it is—a recorded, not-for-profit fanzine—the first, as far as we know. It's something like a mimeo 'zine, except that to appreciate it you have to use a turntable . . . and its main subject is filksongs.

One of the joys of attending SF gatherings is the opportunity to join in a traditional Filksing. Further adventures (or parodies) of popular fantasy characters are put in rhyme form and sung by everyone with the inclination. Not all of fandom can write clever 'zine material—we hope you enjoy our recorded efforts.\(^6\)

The songs sung at a filksing are not limited to filksongs. One may also find traditional folk music, broadway tunes, and songs emphasizing esoteric humor, such as those of Flanders & Swann, Monty Python, and...

\(^3\)Coulson, "Filksong," p. 10.

\(^4\)Warner, Yesterdays, p. 46.

\(^5\)As cited in Coulson, "Filksong," p. 10.

or Tom Lehrer.\(^7\) Most of my informants have observed filksings, although not all have been interested in participating in them, as Dozois and Casper pointed out:

SC: Yes, filksongs are indeed a fannish tradition.
GD: But not all fans are into filksinging. I will rarely be caught dead within ten feet of filksinging.
SC: Filksinging is generally run by Irwin Strauss, who's known in fandom as "Filthy Pierre." It's a group of people who get together and sing traditionally fannish songs.
GD: Generally speaking, they're also the kind of people who get together and sing regular folksongs or pop tunes or whatever. I think there it's more an occasion of people who like to sing songs and get together in that kind of a meeting, and because they are fans and they're at a convention, they do filksongs.
SC: Generally a filksing will consist of mostly regular folk songs, with a few filksongs thrown in.
GD: And some of the filksongs are merely folk songs with worked-over lyrics.

My informants disagreed as to whether they consider filksinging and filksongs to be traditional. Judith Weiss remarked that "... there are fannish songs, which are well-known songs—you know, they take the tune and make new words for it, which is a time-honored folk tradition, making up new words for a tune."

Susan Parris was less certain about the traditionality of filksinging:

Most fannish traditions are like filksinging, which is the singing of fannish songs. Usually the music comes from a popular song, and the words relate a fannish story or a science fiction story or something bawdy along those lines, sung heartily by people out of tune, in the middle of the night, in hotel corridors. That's another tradition; well, not a tradition, but something that occurs a lot at science fiction conventions.

J. B. Post suggested that if filksinging was a tradition, it was a "created" one:

JBP: It's very interesting. It's a little self-conscious. That's the problem of "we're going to establish a tradition." That's almost a contradiction in terms. A tradition establishes

\(^7\)Cited in Coulson, "Filksong," p. 10.
itself. Once it's done, you can say, "Oh, we've established a tradition," but to consciously go out and say, "We're going to establish a tradition," well, you might do it, you might actually do it, but it's from a different quarter, I think, than the one that just grows spontaneously. You do something and say, "Hey, that's fun, let's do it again;", instead of, "Let's do something that's gonna be a tradition."

DA: Well, what sort of traditions does fandom have?
JBP: Oh, I can't think offhand. But filksinging is just a touch self-conscious. But there's enough spontaneity there to overcome this.

The actual content of filksong lyrics varies greatly. Many are parodies of tunes in more general circulation, such as "What Do You Do With A Drunken Viking?". Others draw on the plots and characters of popular science fiction novels such as those of J. R. R. Tolkien. In some cases, fans have obtained permission to set lyrics found in these books to music; this music is occasionally of their own composition, but more often a well-known tune such as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" or "Men of Harlech."8

Of all my informants, only George Scithers has had a great deal of experience with filksinging and with the actual composition of filksongs. During the course of the interview, he presented me with a copy of a song he had written with several other fans and discussed the filksong phenomenon in great depth:

GS: Filksongs are folksongs except that the people are still around and alive and you can point at them.
DA: The people who wrote them, or those that sing them?
GS: Both.
DA: What kind of songs are they?
GS: They are in some cases parodies of old ballads with a science fiction theme, they are Tom Lehrer-type of songs, that whole group of things.
DA: When you say "science fiction theme," would that include parodying the other fans or authors?
GS: To some extent. There are a number of ones on [Tolkien's]8

8Appendix II contains the lyrics to several typical filksongs, reprinted with permission.
The Lord of the Rings. There is one song cycle that I started, based on the associated songs "Great Fantastical Bun" and "I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago." That thing is up to about sixty verses, donated by many hands. I wrote no more than about six of them, for that particular one. (Dictates into mike)

I was born about ten thousand years from now.
When they land upon the moon I'll show them how.
And with Goddard, Ley, and Campbell
On an interstellar rumble
I'm the guy who caught and cooked and served the chow.

DA: Do you have any more at hand? (At this point, George went up to his workroom, found a copy of the text, and returned to continue his recitation)

GS: Well, I'm just a lonesome traveler
    and a great fantastical bum.
Highly educated, from mystery I come.
Well, I built the road of yellow, with bricks all bright
    and new,
And that's about the strangest thing
    that man will ever do!

With Jonny Cross I took it on the lam,
I'm the guy who went and woke up furious Sam,
And I planned the First Foundation
Just before the fragmentation
Of the Empire that had ruled the Sevagram.

Empire?
Well, I knew a cold eyed Emperor, and he
    ruled the Commonwealth;
When I drank the spring of Hippocrene, it
    sure improved my health;
I built the tow'rs of Carce, for good old
    Gorice II;
And that's about the strangest thing that
    man will ever do!

You see, these are what is called Roman, the equivalent of a
roman à clef. They are songs with an enormous number of complicated
internal references to them. I'm looking for one with an extraor-
dinary, ah, yes, here's one:

Lest darkness fall o'er sands of old Barsoom,
I gathered darkness and dispelled the gloom;
Then with John (the Warlord) Carter
I ran off with Gosselyn's daughter
And on a picnic watched old Earth go boom.

See, the references here are "Lest Darkness Fall" is the title of
a specific story, "Sands of Mars" is the title of a specific story,
"Barsoom" refers to a series stories by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and "sands of old Barsoom" is an oblique reference to "Sands of Time," another title. "I gathered darkness"—"To Gather Darkness" is a specific story by Fritz Leiber. Then, "Jon (the Warlord) Carter" is a character in the Barsoom stories. The reference to "Gosseyn's daughter," this refers to a character, Gosseyn, in, mm.

DA: That's Van Vogt, isn't it?
GS: Yes, Van Vogt. There was no daughter, in fact, and "The Million Year Picnic" is the referent in "on a picnic watched old Earth go boom."

There's one little quirk here—the first of the fantasy verses, "Well, I built a road of yellow, with bricks all bright and new," when written it referred to The Wizard of Oz and the yellow brick road. Since then, Robert A. Heinlein proceeded to write Glory Road, which was a yellow road. He was aware of this particular song. He might have done it for that reason.

And, similarly, "Jonny Cross" refers to Van Vogt's Sian, "furious Sam" is a reference to Sam Harker in the story "Fury," "the First Foundation" is a reference to Isaac Asimov, and "the Empire that ruled the Sevagram," well, "Sevagram" is an odd reference. It means "village" is some or other Hindu dialect. It was used by Ghandi in the first place, and Van Vogt picked it up as a nice, ringing line without any terribly important meaning to it.

Summary

Filksinging and filksongs can be seen to serve a dual function. They provide those fans having a musical orientation with an outlet for this interest within the purview of fandom. In addition, the esoteric references found in the lyrics of many filksongs have the same function as the other forms of esoteric folklore found within fandom—providing the individual who utilizes such material with a means of identifying with the main body of fandom.

To a folklorist, the activity of filksinging offers opportunities to observe both fandom and music; the orientation of this thesis has emphasized the former at the expense of the latter. A detailed study of filksinging and filksongs, providing an examination of lyrical content, tunes, creation, instrumentation, and the act of performance, would be a valuable addition to the corpus of musicological data already accumulated by folklorists.
CHAPTER VI

LINKAGES BETWEEN FANS AND WRITERS

This chapter will examine some of the more important aspects of the connections between sf fans and the professionals in the field—editors, artists, and, most importantly, writers. The relationships between fans and "pros" take place via the two major forms of communication in fandom: direct contact at conventions and indirect discourses in the fanzines.

**Hero-Worship of the Professionals**

As has been already noted in Chapter IV, sf conventions are not attended by fans; also present are sf pros and individuals who are not fans per se but are readers of sf who want to know what is going on in the field. Several of my informants pointed out that among the latter group, and among newer fans as well, there is a tendency to relate to sf pros in a manner which several informants characterized as "hero worship." Judith Weiss, for example, said:

I think there's a sort of hero worship. You have all the little pimply fourteen year-olds who've been reading science fiction since they were five—the PIAWOL types—who come to fandom as a sort of godsend. . . . Well, if you've ever read any of Isaac Asimov's reminiscences, he would reminisce about when he was a pimply little fan and he would look up at Clifford Simak and go, "Oh my God, he touched me!" There's a lot of that, the celebrity bit. So you can understand why a lot of writers really like going to conventions. They get what fans refer to as "egoboo," which is people making nice all over you.

Sue Casper's comments were similar:
SC: There are fans who go to conventions strictly for the purposes of meeting authors and talking to them and listening to what they have to say.

DA: Are these fans who are newer to fandom, generally?

SC: Well, certainly it's an attraction for the younger fans and for the newer fans to be able to go and then to say, "Hey, I met Robert Heinlein, or "I met Isaac Asimov." It's a big thing if you've never been to conventions and you're new to fandom and you know people who know who Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov are.

Dennis McCunney's opinions came in the form of a more discursive comment:

DM: There is, I'm certain, an amount of—oh dear, what's the appropriate term—well, definitely, pros are locked up to in fandom, at least by a certain segment of the fans.

DA: What segment is that?

DM: Those people who are into such things. I know that for myself, at least, there was a certain amount of this sense of wonder when I first got into fandom. You know, "Gee, gosh, I'm meeting so-and-so, who's a well-known science fiction writer!"

DA: Do you think this is fairly common to new fans?

DM: Quite probably. You stand a little in awe of them at first. One of the subjects that has gotten quite a lot of discussion in fanzines is fans wondering, "Gee, how do I meet these people? How do I get to know them? How do I establish a relationship with noted professional author X?"

There's sort of an unconscious dichotomy between the fan and the pro, with the pro standing a bit above the fan, having made it to a higher level. Generally, the cure for this is time.

DA: So longevity in fandom tends to eliminate this dichotomy?

DM: I wouldn't say that it eliminates it, but it does a lot to break it down. I've been in fandom for eight years, as I stated, and over that period I've had repeated contacts with professionals in the field, so that at this point I can probably safely say that I have friends who are professional science fiction writers.

DA: Do you relate to them differently than to your friends who are fans?

DM: I try not to.

DA: Do they relate to you differently than to their friends who are writers?

DM: They're going to relate differently to me in the sense that we're going to talk about entirely different things. For example, from what I've seen of the field, when professional science fiction writers get together, what they generally tend to talk about is money and contracts.

... Well, Billotsler, who is a well-known science fiction fan on the West Coast, ... described standing in the hotel lobby at Norwescon, and within about the space of fifteen minutes he had exchanged friendly greetings with Philip K. Dick and Robert Silverberg and Ted White and four or five other big names in the field, and he was approached a few minutes later by a few reo fans who wanted
to know how he had the personality to know all those people. He wrote an article about it later for a fanzine which attempted to tell how it was done, and the principal thing that tends to happen, as far as I can tell, is simply a matter of repeated contact. You just bump into these people, and, assuming you don’t make a complete fool of yourself, gradually the more you see them, the better you will get to know them.

Another aspect to the "hero" status of authors is that memorates tend to circulate about them in fannish circles. The line Jello narrative in Chapter IV is an example of such a story. These memorates are not limited in their subjects to authors, as Weiss pointed out:

JW: I mean, there are people who generate stories that get circulated.
DA: Do these people tend to be authors or fans?
JW: Both.
DA: Is either group more evident?
JW: No, not really. . . . If you've been in fandom for a certain short period of time, someone will tell you one of these stories—or three or four of them—or you'll hear someone refer to them, and you'll say, "What's that all about?", and they'll say, "Oh that was about the time that so-and-so did this."

Scither's described such stories as gossip, suggesting that their content follows "... Ningumbo's Rule that if you make up a totally false story, it's probably got quite a lot of truth in it." Whether these narratives are true or false, and whether they concern well-known authors or major fans, their similarity to the stories about notable folklorists which Richard A. Reuss describes are evident in the way their content centers about the more visible figures in and around fandom.¹

From Fan to Pro

One important reason why fans with longevity in fandom tend to lose the tendency towards hero worship of authors was pointed out by George Scithers: many authors "... used to be fans until they descended into professionalism." Since fandom's earliest days, many fans

have used fandom as a middle-ground between the reading of science fiction and the writing of such literature. Wertham, for example, notes that, "... it is not unusual to find that professional artists and writers made their debut in a fanzine."²

Two comments from editorials in Amazing Stories also bear out this point:

There is no arguing with the enormous importance of fandom upon the science fiction field: a significant majority of the best authors and editors in this field started out as sf readers, and thence fans, a process which shows no sign of abating even today.³

Many of today's professionals—like those I mentioned above [Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, and Robert Shea]—have been fans; fandom was for them a stepping-stone, a means by which they were able to develop the talents which they would later put to use in writing and/or editing (or illustrating) science fiction. Some remain fans to this day.⁴

While my informants tended to agree that many writers have begun their careers while involved in fandom, several felt that the number of sf writers who come from fandom is less than that in earlier years, because science fiction has achieved greater popular acceptance than it once had. Judith Weiss' comment is typical:

A lot of writers started out as fans, and still do. A lot more used to start out as fans, 'cause it was a closed, almost ghettoized society. As I was saying earlier, they were on the defensive, so you would have your fan groups, and out of them would come the writers. No so much now, but there are still a lot of writers who started out as fans.

Her view is in partial agreement with that of author Fredrik Pohl:

²Wertham, Fanzines, p. 74.
More and more of the new writers come into the field through personal contact of one sort or another—fandom primarily, but also sf conventions, clubs, writing sources, or the sheer happenstance of running into somebody well-connected in the field.5

J. B. Post commented to me that "science fiction is unique in that it is the only place where the professionals are drawn from the ranks of the amateurs to any extent." A list of the fans who have gone on to make their mark in sf writing would include many of the current major names in the field. Among such writers one would find Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, and Harlan Ellison. Also of note are individuals such as Anthony Boucher, Damon Knight, Judith Merril, and Ted White, who turned from writing to the fields of editing sf magazines and anthologies.

One important aspect of the convention is that fans have opportunities to learn about writing from its practitioners. Sue Casper noted that many fans are "... people who want to write, and they feel that by listening to authors speak about their work and the purpose and existence of science fiction, they can learn more about how to write." Many of the formal events at cons deal with various aspects of science fiction writing, editing, and illustration. At the 1974 Worldcon, for example, panel titles included the following:

Women in SF: Image and Reality
Science Fiction Images: SF Artists
The Famous Science Fiction Writer's School: Can Writing Be Learned? Is it Inherited? Is it a Social Disease?
Look What They Did To My Book, Ma!: The Process of Tailoring
SF to the visual media
Publish or Perish: The Problems Facing Today's SF Magazines
Hotter Than A Two Dollar Laser: The Nature of War in the Future6

5Pohl, "Publishing," p. 34.

The informal portion of a convention is also important to the aspiring professional. Here, he or she can come into more direct contact with the pros, and these contacts may prove useful when the fan attempts to make sales. Weiss told me how one author asked for her address and offered her a chance to illustrate some upcoming books because the author had seen and liked the works she had entered in the art show; although this particular job never materialized, her contacts with pros through fandom have led, in part, to other sales.

McCunney also elaborated on the importance of these fan-pro contacts:

DM: Fans meet artists, science fiction writers, editors at conventions or through the pages of fanzines, and being a fan sort of provides you with a stepping-stone towards being a pro because you already know a lot of the people that you will be dealing with as a pro.

Ted White [the current editor of Amazing Stories], for example, talks about the help he'd had in becoming a pro, because he'd been a fairly well-known fan before that for some time, and he already knew the editors to whom he'd be selling stories when he became a professional writer.

DA: Would you say that made them look more favorably toward his stories, or perhaps made them more favorable towards helping him make them into good stories?

DM: Quite possibly a combination of both. I think the principal part of it was simply that they knew him, and you're much more likely, if you're the editor of a science fiction publication and you get a story in your "slush pile" [an unsolicited manuscript from an author] from someone that you know as a fan, chances are that you're going to pay more attention to that story than if they were completely unfamiliar to you. And, quite possibly, if you can spare the time and effort, you're going to spend more time trying to develop the fan writers.

But, if nothing else, you [the fan writer] know where to begin, you already know something about what's being written, what has been written, who's writing it, what the markets are, what the editors are looking for. It's less of a hit-or-miss process for a fan, you can zero in more on exactly what you have to do to sell.

In addition to involvement in writing, editing, and illustrating, some fans have gone into the business of publication. Pohl notes that in the postwar years, six new fan-run publishing houses entered the
market, all dealing in works of science fiction and fantasy.\footnote{Pohl, "Publishing," p. 26.} Many of
the sources used for this work were similarly published, as are a number
of collections of sf criticism.\footnote{Fan-published items used for this thesis include all fanzines,
all filksong texts, and all books published by Advent: Publishers.
The latter has also published both collections of critical essays and
several studies of specific author's works.}

The Pro As A Fan

The fan who has become a science fiction professional does not
necessarily break off his or her connection with fandom. Many pros
remain involved with fandom and continue to take part in fannish
activities. Some fanzines include regular columns by those fans who
have "turned pro." These columns often deal with the world of the
professional science fiction writer, but sometimes consider more
fannish topics. Some professionals become involved with fandom only
after they are pros, as Judith Weiss pointed out:

A lot of writers start writing science fiction 'cause they read
it and they like it. Then they get invited to conventions and they
start going to conventions and they discover they like conventions,
so they become fans after they start being writers, which has
happened.

To the professional, conventions have not only the aspects that
appeal to fans, but other value as well. George Scithers and Gardner
Dozois, both professionals, noted that conventions have business
importance for the writer, thus allowing a pro to deduct the cost of
attendance from his or her income tax. Gardner described this for me:

GD: ... A lot of editors, a lot of writers come to conventions.
I've had a lot of business deals go down, or at least have the
"prop," the preliminary talking about them, be done at conventions.
DA: Then do you get to write off conventions as a tax expense?
GD: Some of them, yeah, I do. It is valuable for business. In
addJtJ, beyond just doing business itself—besides saying, "Hey, how would you like to see my new book?", or "What did you think of the story I sent you last week?", besides that kind of business—it's also fun and useful just to talk shop with your fellow professionals, even if you don't actually get any business deals out of it. It also gives you a kind of a glimpse into the present state of the art, just talking with people, hearing what they're doing, what kinds of things they have on their mind, where their attention is shifting. I find that valuable.

This is a lesser reason to me than the business and the shop talk, but to a certain degree it's also interesting to see the reaction of readers as opposed to fellow professionals. You get that at conventions, and not very much anywhere else. People will come up and discuss your latest book or story with you. Sometimes they'll just walk up and say, "This sucks!" and in its way, this is feedback, too. But sometimes you'll get into actual reasoned, intelligent discussions with them, which is valuable.

DA: When you say "talking shop with other writers," do you mean the business aspects, the actual craft, or both?

GD: Both, of course! Writers' talk, well, it depends on the writers, it depends what mood they're in, the time of day, and the circumstances, but writers' talk, shop talk generally, oh, it can vary from discussing technicalities of business—markets, who's buying what—to the craft of writing—how you put together this and that. It can go from there to actual philosophizing about the purpose of art—blah, blah, blah—and it can go from these breezy heights to very mundane personal talk and bullshitting. It's sort of a potpourri, all mixed in together.

For the writers, like the fans, conventions are also a social event. Scithers said that this is especially true for the writers because they are "... essentially on vacation and frequently they're away from their wives and it's a big party time." J. B. Post described this aspect of conventions as an example of a "trapper mentality:"

There's a nice social aspect about fandom. As long as you don't live for this exclusively, it's a nice break. The writers love to go to these things, too. It was once expressed... that it's a "trapper mentality." Writers are like this, and it turns out that map librarians [Post's current occupation] are like this, and anybody who labors essentially alone in any field.

You're all alone, it's just you against the world, the trapper out there gathering his furs. Then he comes to town, sells his furs, gets drunk with all the other trappers. It's a solitary experience that is also shared. Nobody who hasn't trapped can understand it. Nobody who hasn't curated maps can understand the little "in" talk about it.

You're alone, it's you against the white space of the typing paper, but it's shared in the sense that other people are doing the same thing all over the world. You get together once a year to talk
about it. And you don't even have to talk about it, you just know that, "Brother, I been out there in the woods, too, trappin'. Hey I got a good one. Let me tell you about the time I broke my leg and the wolves were about to get me."

You swap a few stories, you embellish it a little—it was one old, mangy wolf; now you're surrounded by a pack of twenty. But they know that, and you know it too, and it's part of the getting together.

I think this is important for the writers. The writers are, in a sense, most of the time saner than the fans, in the sense that they have to keep a cooler head about them.

It is possible to see applications of the "trapper mentality" concept to many other gatherings besides those of sf professionals. As Post himself notes, it could be used to describe meetings of any small, dispersed group, such as map librarians or folklorists. While it might also be applied to science fiction clubs, it would not seem quite so useful to describe the function of conventions for fans, because of the size of the groups involved and because of the other aspects of these conventions mentioned in Chapter IV.9

To the writers and other pros, however, this is an important aspect of sf conventions. Because this point and the business meeting aspect of conventions seemed to make them different for authors than for fans, I asked Gardner whether he felt that conventions existed for fans or for authors:

GD: I do think . . . that science fiction conventions are actually more for fans than for authors. I think that the authors who have the best times there are the authors who function as fans there, rather than segregating themselves as authors. There is an author's organization and an authors' meeting and an annual authors' banquet, these things could exist separate from fandom . . . . I think fandom would continue, to some degree, even if no authors ever went to science fiction conventions. . . .

. . . . SC: I disagree with what you said. . . . For one thing, authors go to conventions and they don't see the fans. For the most

9From my observations at conventions it would seem that there is little public jealousy and infighting among science fiction writers. However, this may not be the case when writers are out of the public eye.
part, they hole up together in the SFWA /The Science Fiction Writers of America, the authors' organization/ suite or in each other's rooms, you know. Maybe they're being fans on a different plane, but certainly being authors as a separate creation.

GD: However, if they wanted to just go someplace and meet other writers, they wouldn't necessarily have to do it in the context of fandom.

SC: But the idea of the advantage to the authors is not necessarily in terms of meeting other authors, it's also in terms of getting to know their public.

GD: Well, but you just said that they hole up in rooms all the time and don't go out!

SC: Yes, but they also go on panels and speak before the public as taking the part of the omniscient, "I know more than the rest of you schlubs because I was here," sort of like god-like creatures. Which, to a certain extent, they are considered in the media.

A final reason for author involvement in fan conventions is

egoboo. Sue Casper described this facet for me:

... An author goes to conventions and is seen and gets known. He's got a larger audience. More people know his name, so more people are likely to pick up his book when it comes out on the market, and so he receives a certain amount of [pauses] and then there's egoboo to be considered, you know. An author goes and people come up to him and say, "Hey, I read your story and it was really great!" and "Oh, gee, we want you to be on a panel 'cause you're a big authority!" and all this kind of stuff. There's a lot of egoboo for most authors, too. No matter how famous an author gets, I don't think they get over a certain need for egoboo.

Fannish Criticism and its Effects

One aspect of fan-pro relationships centers on the criticism of professional science fiction printed in the fan magazines and sometimes tendered in person at conventions. Such criticism may be either positive or negative; as Dozois mentioned in the preceding section, either is valuable if it is well-reasoned. In this section, the importance and effects of such criticism will be considered.

Positive criticisms of science fiction writing, editing, and illustration can have several effects. First, they supply the pro with egoboo. In addition, they can direct a pro towards a type of work for which there is a market. An article in Scithers' fanzine Amra,
celebrating the magazine’s twentieth anniversary, commented on some of
the effects the magazine’s criticism has had:

Fritz Leiber credits *Anar* with being one of the inspirations
for resuming the “Fafhrd & the Grey Mouser” adventures. It was from
us that Don Wollheim, then with Ace Books, found out about Roy
Krenkel, whom he used as the artist on the Ace editions of the E R
Burroughs books.10

Positive criticism can also have negative effects, as Post
pointed out:

Fandom is an unorganized body which give some feedback to
authors. They may not take the advice or comments, but a lot of
them do. In some ways this is bad, because you get a lot of idiots
coming in and saying, "I liked it when you did that Lovecraft-style
story. Why don’t you do some more?" And the writer, being lazy
and wanting his money easy, zips off seven or eight or ten of those
and a certain group of people eats them up and he makes money doing
it. I think this interferes with his own writing.

Most of the informants who are not involved with the professional
aspects of science fiction felt that fannish criticism has an effect on
the writers. Fred Fisher told me a few anecdotes which exemplify this:

DA: Do you see any aspects of fandom having effects on science
fiction writing?

FF: Well, in some ways. There is a tremendous amount of
feedback between the fans and the authors. I think Tom Purdom
[A Philadelphia fan and sf author] told me the classic story that
points that up. One night, he and his wife were in bed. He was
reading something, I don’t know what, but she was reading one of
the ‘Flashman’ books by [George MacDonald] Fraser—which are really
fine books—and she said to him, “You know, it’s really a shame that
I just can’t tell him how much I really enjoy his books.”

And Tom said, "Well, that’s one of the nice things about the
whole science fiction convention fandom thing is that you go to a
convention and people come up and say, ‘Hey, I read your book and I
really liked it, you know, and I think you should do more of this,’
or ‘I read your latest book and it just wasn’t as good.’"

And I’m sure no writer likes to hear that part of it, but, I
mean, you can sit down, I had a discussion with [Samuel] Delany and
I said, "You know, The Einstein Intersection reminds me of the
Alexandria Quartet," and we talked about the similarities that I
found. He said, "Well I read that at the time, but I don’t think it
influenced me, and this is what I think did influence me."

(April, 1976), p. 17.
So there is a tremendous amount of feedback. People are pretty vocal about what they like and don't like.

Judith Weiss suggested that the importance of fannish criticism was due in part to the fact that for many years it was the only criticism available:

I think there are very few authors who don't enjoy reading it. Some of the commentary is very intelligent, and, for a long time, that was the only commentary there was, because no one understood science fiction, no one knew what standards of literature to apply to it except the fans, who sort of understood what it was and knew how to criticize it, whereas someone who had never read it or who had never grown up reading it would try and make something out of it that it wasn't or would criticize it for things that were irrelevant to its purpose.

The other side to that coin is that fans will tend to excuse a lot of things that an outsider wouldn't excuse, they would tolerate sloppy writing and things like that. Now that there's a lot more "outsiders" in science fiction, I think it's healthier because of the perspectives.

Dennis McCunney pointed out that fannish criticism, though it has some effect, does not touch all authors:

Partially, it depends on whether or not the writer is aware of the criticism. I don't know how many fans follow the practice of sending writers whose works they review copies of the review.

I don't know how many writers actually pay any attention to this. I think it far more likely that any influence is more of a secondary nature, in the sense that the writers are a part of the fan community and therefore are affected by the thoughts and feelings of the fan community. There's going to be an effect simply to the extent that a writer, of course, is talking to an audience, and you can communicate to an audience if you have some idea of who they are.

... Whether or not fans are an accurate cross-section of the science fiction market I really can't say, but they're there, they're vocal, they're interested in the field, and they like to talk about it, what they think it is and what they think it should be.

The professionals among my informants, Scithers and Dozois, put less emphasis on the importance to the pro of fan criticism. Scithers felt that the only criticism of importance was that of professional editors such as himself:

DA: Well, do you think that ... writers ... are responsive to fannish criticism?
GS: Some of them are, the intelligent ones aren't!
DA: Is fannish criticism not worth bothering with?
GS: It's not very worth bothering with. When it's between fannish criticism and the criticism of somebody who's paying you money to write, there is simply no comparison.
DA: What about someone who's paid to criticize, . . . like Brian Aldiss in the London Observer or Sturgeon in the New York Times?
GS: If either one of them were given a budget and told to go buy stories and didn't go broke in a year, then his criticism is worth listening to very intently. If not, not.
DA: Did you have this viewpoint before you became an editor?
GS: [Very emphatically] Yes!

A long discussion about such criticism with Dozois and Casper brought out several points not mentioned by others. Dozois agreed with Weiss that reviews not written by fans can be dismissed by the "defense mechanism" of suggesting that the critic knows little about the field, a mechanism not applicable to fanzine reviews. However, in business terms, a negative review in a major, non-genre publication has more long-lasting effects because of the breadth of its circulation as compared to that of either a pro sf magazine or a fanzine. Dozois noted that "in spite of what fans would like to think, the fannish market is a drop in the bucket as far as sales are concerned."

Dozois suggested that the major effect of fannish criticism is not intellectual, but emotional, because there are numerous authors for whom fandom functions as a peer group. Casper agreed in part, saying that this was "... balanced out by other people who could give a shit less, who grew up in fandom and really don't care what the fans have to say. . . ."

This emotional response to the opinions of fans can be seen in the following remark by ex-fan and writer Robert Silverberg, taken from an essay explaining why he is giving up the writing of science fiction for other forms of literature:

Though nominated every year [for the Hugo award], my books and
stories have finished well behind more conservative, "safer" works. . . . Not that it affects what I write: I am bound on my own course and will stay to it. I wish only that I could be my own man and still give pleasure to the mass of science fiction readers."

Dozois proposed a solution to this emotional reaction:

One of the problems with being a professional and dealing with fandom is that the professionals who come out the best in interfacing with fandom, who suffer the least damage, are those who for the most part react to fandom as fans. I mean, they're professionals, sure, and they have a function as professionals, but for the most part the way they fit in to the convention and into fandom is as another fan. In other words, they go to the parties, they have a part in the society, etc., etc.

I think if you take fandom too seriously as a professional you can tend to get hurt because, as with any other sort of amateur criticism, there is an enormous amount of poor criticism in fandom. As with any other sort of amateur criticism, there is a tremendous amount of "cheap shot" criticism in fandom. It's a hell of a lot easier to write a bad review than it is to write a good review or even a neutral review. It's a hell of a lot easier to find some cheap-shot thing to say than it is to actually analyze a book.

Dozois and Casper also pointed out a type of criticism which essentially amounts to hero-worship in reverse:

GD: There is also a certain segment of fandom . . . who will come up to an author and say negative things to him just for the sake of saying negative things to him. . . . I think this is a way of cutting the author down to size and/or building themselves up.

SC: A lot of the time it's an alternative to meeting the author by way of ass-kissing. A lot of fans are sort of negative on the idea of going up to an author and saying, "Gee, I read you last book and I really loved it," figuring that the author is really tired of hearing this shit and by being negative they'll at least stand out in a crowd.

GD: Other people feel resentful of feelings of hero-worship and curdle it in the back of their heads into negative feelings.

In summary, it can be seen that, as fans suggest, fan criticism does have its effects upon professional authors, but these effects are not always what the fans presume them to be. Rather than aiding the

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author to better serve the reading public while still maintaining his or her professional standards, criticism by fans often leads authors into rewriting the same types of stories to please a coterie of readers or affects the author with ties to fandom in a negative and emotional way. Despite these negative results of fannish criticism, however, confrontations with readers also, as Dozois noted, lead to "... actual reasoned, intelligent discussions ... , which is valuable."

The Phenomenon of Fan Fiction

A final aspect of the fan-writer linkage is that type of writing known as "fan fiction," in which real-life fans and authors are characters in stories. Warner traces this type of roman à clef back to 1934 and notes that it is to be found in both fan and professional magazines.12 One important example of this form is The Enchanted Duplicator, a parody of Bunyan's A Pilgrim's Progress in which Jophan (i.e., Joe Fan) makes his way through such trials as the Hekto Swamp, the Forest of Stupidity, and Desert of Indifference on his journey from the village of Prosaic in the country of Mundane to the land of Trufandom where he reaches the Enchanted Duplicator, clutches its handle, and becomes a True Fan.13 Lupoff cites other examples of fan fiction, including the short stories "A Way Of Life," by Robert Bloch and "Whatever Happened to Nick Neptune," by Richard Lupoff, and many of the novels of Barry Malzberg, which often feature sf conventions as their

12 Warner, Yestercays, pp. 51-52.

scene and various writers and critics as their characters.\textsuperscript{14}

One aspect of fan fiction is the process of Tuckerization, named after its inventor, author and fan Wilson "Bob" Tucker. In a review of the fan fiction novel \textit{Now You See It/Him/Them}, Richard Lupoff describes this technique as the process of weaving "... real sf personalities into a story under either their own names or in transparent disguises." In honor of his creation, author Tucker is murdered in the first few pages of this work, a detective story set at a convention.\textsuperscript{15}

Another work of fan fiction is \textit{The Flying Sorcerers}, by Larry Niven and David Gerrold. In this novel, which takes place on a planet whose civilization has a multitude of gods, the heavenly bodies and the various deities are all named after various personages in the science fiction firmament, and the female characters all bear the first names of noted female sf authors. In a fanzine review of this book, a great deal of time was spent deducing who the various gods and planets actually represent; a few examples will suffice to demonstrate the Tuckerization process: Hitch, the God of Birds, represents Alfred Hitchcock; Ozells and Vrn, the two suns, are H. G. Wells and Jules Verne; Tukker, the God of Names, refers to Wilson Tucker; and Rotn'bair, the God of Sheep, depicts Gene Roddenberry, the creator of television's "Star Trek."\textsuperscript{16}

Fan fiction is yet another example of the esoteric form of humor found within fandom. In most cases, its internal humor does not prevent the non-fan from enjoying the fictional work. The fan who does understand

\textsuperscript{14}Richard Lupoff, "Say, Didn't I See You at Last Year's Midwestcon?", \textit{Science Fiction Review} 5:1 (February, 1976), p. 36.

\textsuperscript{15}ibid.

the various references, however, receives an additional tie to fandom through this understanding, while those individuals referred to acquire another form of egoboo.

Summary

In this chapter, the various ways in which fans and pros relate have been explored. The newer fan looks up to the professional, while the fan with longevity numbers some pros among his or her friends. Some fans go on to become involved in the creation of science fiction, thus completing the cycle. The conventions have functions for the pros which differ from those they provide for the fans; however, full enjoyment of a con does not come to a pro unless he or she sheds the mantle of superiority and joins in the festivities as another fan. Fannish criticism often does affect the pro, although not always in the way the fans expect. Finally, fan fiction provides a link which binds both pro and fan closer to fandom through its use of esoteric references and humor.
CHAPTER VII

OTHER FORMS OF FANDOM

In previous chapters, brief mentions have been made of the various sub-groups and sub-fandoms that exist in and around sf fandom. This chapter will examine these groups in more detail, concerning itself with their history and their relationship to sf fandom. In addition, some comparison will be made between sf fandom and literature-oriented groups that are unrelated to sf fandom, such as mystery and western fandom.

Sub-fandoms and Sub-groups

In an Amazing Stories editorial, Ted White notes that there are "... a proliferation of fandoms today, most of them bastard offsprings of sf fandom, and of varying degrees of consanguinity." The earliest form of these sub-groups are those formed by individuals with interests in the works of specific sf authors. White notes that these groups, such as Tolkien fandom,

... exist largely within the umbrella of sf fandom as distinct sub-fandoms. (Another is Burroughs fandom, and yet another Conan fandom—the Hyborian Legion.) Significantly, these fandoms tend to attract older members than do the comics or horror movie fandom.¹

Many of these groups issue fanzines devoted specifically to their interests; Scither's Amra, for example, is aimed at those

interested in Robert E. Howard's "Conan" stories. Wertham notes that similar fanzines exist around the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, J. R. R. Tolkien, and H. P. Lovecraft.²

Often, these groups have meetings at conventions, especially at the Worldcon. The Burroughs Bibliophiles, for example, hold their annual Dum-Dum during this convention, and a Regency-period tea, at which full-dress costumes are required, is held for fans of the historical novels of Georgette Heyer. Although not an author-related group, the association of older fans called First Fandom also meets at Worldcons.

Eney says that this group has

. . . no direct relation to the era. Don Ford, Bob Madle, and some others organized the group. . . . Its membership is restricted to folk who indulged in any sort of fanac (fan activity) before 1938, and apparently it is intended as an historical and continuity-maintaining group.³

Dennis McCanney described the activities of one fan sub-group to me:

DM: One such affinity group might be the Amber Society, who are basically interested in the works of Roger Zelazny, particularly the "Amber" series that he's been running currently, and who've held parties at several East Coast conventions that I've attended.

DA: Are these parties open to anybody who happens to be equally interested in the works of Zelazny, or do you have to be a member first?

DM: No, they're pretty much open to anybody who's into Zelazny. I don't quite understand where the Amber people are at. They seem to have an interesting thing going within their own group, because the principal members of the Amber Society have adopted personae out of the series and are playing the roles, to some extent, of the characters within the books.

At Union, for example, I met a gentleman . . . who was assigned the role of Caine, and he wasn't really sure what he was supposed to be doing, because he was "dead," his character had been killed off, and he'd never been dead before. Really wasn't sure how he was supposed to handle it. The members of the Society tend to turn up

²Wertham, Fanzines, p. 53.

³Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 70.
in vaguely Amber-ish costumes and rather resemble members of the SCA. 

... I'm not really certain what exactly the Amber Society does or how they enact the roles that they've chosen for themselves. They also publish a fanzine called Kolvir, which might very well develop into something very nice if they keep at it.

The "SCA" which McCunney mentions is the Society for Creative Anachronism, a group whose interest is in the re-enacting of the society of feudal Europe. Several of my informants noted that this group has few links with fandom at present, although many of its members are also sf fans. However, I have noticed SCA meetings at several of the conventions I attended, and would presume that the links between the two groups are not all that tenuous.

At a further remove from the mainstream of sf fandom lie groups oriented around such interests as comics, monster movies, and old-time radio shows. Warner notes a fanzine devoted strictly to the latter topic, Epilogue.4 White has described the evolution of comics and horror film fandoms:

... In the early 1950's ... comics fandom first gained awareness.
What happened is that several comics fans who were also sf fans transplanted the idiom and practices of sf fanzines and fandom bodily into virgin territory. ...

... Most sf fans look down their noses at comics fans, and mostly for good reasons: literacy seems to count for less in comics fandom than does a flair for crude imitations of comics art. ...

The proliferation of fandoms hardly stops with comics fandom. The publication of Famous Monsters of Filmland in the late 1950's spawned a whole fandom of horror-movie buffs, out of which has sprung yet another group of fanzines, devoted primarily to films and overlapping with film-fandom itself, which exists separately from sf fandom and may date as far back (for all I know). Again, ...

a whole fandom has taken the idioms and publishing practices of sf fandom—terming their publications "fanzines," etc.—largely in ignorance of their origins.5

George Scithers told me more about the origins of comics fandom:

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... The comics fans are generally unaware of the existence of science fiction fandom, which is an older group, in the sense that the group started earlier. The individual members are neither older nor younger, they are whatever they choose to be.

There were several attempts by science fiction fans in the late 50s and early 60s to establish comics fandom, and, in effect, establish a comics fandom, but the actual establishment of comics fandom seems to have been done by a man named Jerry Bales, who owes, insofar as I know, very little to science fiction fandom. Those people who were science fiction fans and also interested in comics tended to rally around that initiative, that start.

As I say, the two groups interact, but not so much that either group will tend to qualify its own existence by calling themselves "qualified" fandom. Comics fandom, speaking within itself, says "fandom," as if there is no other.

We know that there is no other [pauses] worth mentioning!

Wertham notes that there is a distinction between the fanzines produced by comics fandom and the so-called "underground comics" drawn by such artists as R. Crumb and S. Clay Wilson. However, many underground comics artists have also been contributors to comics fanzines. 6

Besides comics fans and horror-film fans, there is one other sub-fandom of importance—the "Star Trek" fans, often called "Trekkies." Like the other two sub-fandoms, this group has some overlap with sf fandom. It also shares with these groups the dislike of many sf fans, who often utter comments like these:

The stereotypical Trekkie is a non-reading TV addict, enthused over stars, and, at cons deeply involved with the program, rather than each other. To bend an ancient cliche, not all of my best friends Trekkies, but also my son Charles. 7

Myself, I have a threshold problem: I have become constitutionally (and apparently incurably) incapable of assimilating one more written or spoken word having to do with Captain Bones and Yeoman Spock and Doctor Tribble and the Star Ship Intercourse which like a transvestite in a ladies room boldly goes where no man has gone before. If you don't have this condition (called "Atrekon"), enjoy. 8

6Wertham, Fanzines, pp. 61-62.
7Gilliland, "Worldcon and Potlatch," p. 21.
Before considering the reasons why sf fans dislike the various sub-fandoms, it must be noted that some individuals do enter sf fandom through participation in these sub-fandoms. This was mentioned by both Gardner Dozois and Judith Weiss; the latter said:

Well, there's a lot of sf fans who started out as Trekkies. . . . I don't think there are any people in fandom who all of a sudden decide to just go to Trek cons and not go to sf cons. There are a lot of sf fans who watch "Star Trek" and like it, but they don't have that sort of, I mean, there's a real fanatical thing about "Star Trek," and I've seen it in people who come into the bookstore and that's all they want is "Star Trek." They aren't interested in reading other science fiction.

But, then a lot of them go into "Star Trek" at about the age of ten, and later they begin reading science fiction. I know a lot of sf fans who started out as Trekkies and later became sf fans.

A major reason for the disdain in which sf fans hold members of the various sub-fandoms is described by White:

. . . Disdain for economic largess is peculiar to sf fandom (which has always had a tradition of idealism) and is looked upon with something approaching sheer amazement (if not outright contempt) by comics fans and other members of allied sub-fandoms, whose entire social fabric is structured by the profit motive.9

Weiss made a similar comment:

The thing with the comics and the Trekkies and all that is that they all have something in common, but I think that the basic view of sf fans towards comics people is that they're very commercial, is that a lot of people are into comics to buy and sell. They love the comics, a lot of them, but comics has become a sort of investment-type thing.

This statement was borne out to me by my visits to the huckster rooms at various conventions. In almost all cases, there were more displays and booths catering to comics, movie, and "Star Trek" fans than there were dealers of science fiction books and fandom-related items such as fanzines and filksong collections. Fisher, however, suggested that

this may be the end of a trend:

Well, I've put my foot in my mouth about "Star Trek" so many times I may as well do it one more time. No, we don't sell a lot of "Star Trek" material, and there are a couple of reasons for that. One of the reasons being that I'm not a big "Star Trek" aficionado and I don't like to talk "Star Trek" to people. I think that holds down the "Star Trek" people from coming in, although we do carry all the basic items. We don't carry uniforms, or anything like that, but we do carry all the books.

The second thing is that I really believe that "Star Trek" is a dying phenomenon. Everyone tells me that I'm wrong, but that seems to be the way I see it. People are pretty much saturated with it, I think. Maybe if they bring the movie out, it'll revitalize the thing, but basically the people who manufacture things, whether "Star Trek" puzzles, books, or games, are six months behind the times, anyway. I mean, they've missed it by six months anyway, 'cause by the time they've heard about it and get hip to it and turn out their product, they're six months too late, already. So what seems to be the height of a fad, it already is on its way downhill. There's been an increased production in "Star Trek" items this past year, which really leads me to believe it's on its way downhill.

Another aspect of the sf fan's dislike for sub-fandoms is an intellectual one. White's earlier comment on the lack of literacy in comics fandom was supported and extended by several of my informants.

Judith Weiss, for example, said:

Also, I think sf fans tend to look down on the Trekkies and the comics fans because, after all, we read books. Sf fans are readers, and a lot of them don't just read science fiction, they read all kinds of books. We read, whereas Trekkies mostly watch tv and comics people, of course, read comics. So, there's sort of an intellectual thing . . .

This intellectual dislike also takes the form of resentment against the failure of many members of sub-fandoms to recognize the importance of sf fandom and sf fans in the history of the "lesser" groups. Scithers' statement earlier in this chapter typifies this attitude, as does this remark by White:

Most of these sub-fandoms use the terminology coined in sf fandom and some members of some sub-fandoms are convinced that their's was and is the only "real" fandom—that sf fandom is a
Johnny come lately.\textsuperscript{10}

The feelings of fans about other fandoms are further forms of esoteric beliefs of the types discussed earlier in this thesis. Such beliefs serve to enhance the fan's feelings of participation within fandom in two ways—by more clearly demarcating fandom's boundaries, and by identifying the holder of these beliefs as a member of the "superior" group. Weiss, Dozois, Casper, and McCunney all pointed out that in recent years fans holding such beliefs have taken steps to prevent members of the various sub-groups and sub-fandoms from holding meetings or renting sales space at the Worldcons.

Some informants pointed out to me that the dislike for the various sub-fandoms is related to the fact that many fans feel that fandom has grown too large and is beginning to split into a number of smaller groups, as White has noted:

In recent years, sf fandom has grown bloated: so many people are now participating in fandom that it is impossible to say, as one once might, "I know everybody in fandom at least by name." This has acted to attenuate fandom, to force it into smaller subgroupings where familiarity with everyone is again possible. And this in turn has forced the additional proliferation of sub-fandoms as people have tended to collect around specific enthusiasms.\textsuperscript{11}

In a similar vein, Judith Weiss commented that ". . . there's this whole thing where sometimes fandom feels engulfed by the comics people on one hand and the Trekkies on the other hand." J. B. Post, who has been involved in fandom since the forties, also complained that it was impossible to ". . . know everybody any more."

A number of informants noted that this fragmentation has become


evident in several cases. McCunney pointed out that the SCA is less affiliated with fandom than it had been during its origins. Dozois mentioned that those individuals interested in the horror and sword-and-sorcery types of fantasy now have their own convention, the World Fantasy Convention, and also noted that both comics fandom and "Star Trek" fandom have had conventions for many years that were unconnected to the various science fiction conventions; here, Casper emphasized that the overlap of attendance between these and the sf cons was "small."

One sub-fandom that is generally accepted by sf fans is that comprised by those fans who are also game players. Poker, chess, and hearts are all popular games among fans, and convention bulletin boards often carry announcements of the hotel rooms wherein fans may gather and participate in these and other games also popular in the mundane world. Many fans have a love for games which have an element of science fiction to them. The Fancyclopedia mentions two such games: Barsoomian Chess, described by E. R. Burroughs in his "Mars" novels, and Fairy Chess, in which the rules of chess are modified in some slight way, usually by giving one piece non-standard movement or capture powers, or by adding one or more new pieces to the game.12 A fannish friend has given me a set of a game called "Revenge!", a sort of science fictional "Monopoly" in which the streets of Atlantic City have been replaced by planets (often those from various sf novels) and the railroads by teleport stations. The game is quite complex with a six-page rule book which allows players to be reincarnated and to fight via duels, armies, or atomic bombs.

12Eney, Fancyclopedia, p. 77.
In recent years, the fannish interest in games has turned to the various "simulation" games in which scenes of past or future history are worked out via complicated rules and sets of pieces. In such games, the First World War or the Battles of Gettysburg may be re-fought, often with results that differ from actual history, or players may test their theories of combat in the future or in fantasy worlds with games such as "Sorcerer" and "Starship Troopers." Huckster rooms often include dealers in such games and their component parts, including five- and twenty-sided dice and miniatures of past, present, and future fighting equipment.

While it is tempting to dismiss such games as merely a form of play, two factors rule out such as assumption. First, as several informants noted, these games are not only used by game-players both in and out of fandom, but are also used in the training of military officers. I have observed similar "games" used at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania for the purpose of teaching future businessmen and businesswomen about the complexities of marketing strategies.

Another point of note about game-playing was brought out in my interview with Fred Fisher:

DA: What else do you carry besides books?

FF: We carry games, too. We started out just carrying science fiction games and that sort of overlapped into war games, because . . . there is an overlap here between war-gamers and science fiction readers.

War games, to a certain extent, are science fiction by their very nature . . . because they deal with alternate realities. If you're re-fighting the Battle of Gettysburg and the South wins, then you haven't fought the Battle of Gettysburg, you've fought some completely different battle that takes place in an alternate reality.

Fisher's suggestion that gaming is actually a form of science fiction implies another reason for the the opinion of many fans on
sub-fandoms such as comics fandom and "Star Trek" fandom. It may well be that these fans look down on the content of the material enjoyed by members of sub-fandoms as not being science fiction of the quality which they expect. It seems to me that because comics, horror films, and "Star Trek" are all aimed at a more general market than science fiction, fans may disdain them because of the drop in quality which can often ensue when a product shifts its orientation from a small group to a larger market. Unfortunately, this concept was not discussed with my informants, and must remain in the realm of speculation.

Before turning to those forms of fandom unrelated to sf fandom, one final type of sub-fandom must be considered. While fans become initially involved in fandom through their interest in science fiction, they often discover that they share other interests with their fellow fans. When one considers the size of fandom, this is not a surprising occurrence in and of itself; what is important is that such fans often attempt to extend the types of behavior found in fandom to cover these interests. Thus, many APAs are currently in existence which have topics other than sf or fandom, but with memberships comprised wholly or mostly of sf fans. These APAs include APA-5, whose topic is comics, APANAGE (children's literature), CAPRA (cinema), CHAPS (cowboys and heroes), and DAPA-EM (detective, suspense, and mystery fiction); the latter's title, with a reversal of suffix and prefix, proves to be an acronym for the phrase "Elementary, My Dear APA." One of the results of my researches for this thesis is that I have joined such a non-sf APA—APA-LP, whose topic is recorded and live music.

**Non-sf Fandoms**

In a sense, one could describe any group which has grown out of
a single shared interest as a "fandom"; interests in such things as steam railroads, historical events, and notable personalities have all brought forth such groups. This section will not range quite so widely afield, leaving that for later researchers; rather, it will concern itself with the fandoms that have grown around two other genres of literature: Western fiction and mystery/suspense fiction. These groups are not offspring of science fiction fandom, but show both similarities to and differences from sf fandom. In discussions of these groups with my informants, I found that most had little or no idea of their existence. Most felt that there were no other fandoms other than science fiction fandom, or that if there were such groups, they had not yet come to the attention of my interviewees.

Both Weiss and Scithers mentioned the Baker Street Irregulars as a possible example of another fandom. The BSI, as it is known to its members, is a worldwide organization of Sherlock Holmes fans, with branches in many cities. Several years ago, when I was possessed with an intense interest in the various Holmes books, I attempted to join The Sons of the Copper Beeches, the group's Philadelphia chapter. I found that the chapter, like most others, had a limited membership and a waiting list so long that my chances of joining in less than three years were quite slim. I also learned that the typical chapter only meets once a year. At this meeting, members present papers discussing various details of the stories about Holmes, usually with the presumption that Holmes was an actual person, and that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle [The author of the stories] merely acted as a literary agent for Holmes' biographer, Dr. Watson. In recent years, several novels, films, and records have been produced by Holmes fans, all purporting to fill in some
of the gaps in the recorded history of his life. Another feature of
the various BSI chapter meetings is that for each meeting one of the
numerous Holmes stories is selected; members are required to know the
selected story in great detail, with anyone who cannot answer any
question on the plot correctly being required to buy the questioner a
drink.

Warner notes that a number of fanzines exist devoted to the
works of specific mystery/suspense authors, including John D. MacDonald,
Frederick Foust, Frank Gruber, Ellery Queen, and Sax Rohmer. He suggests
that these publications may have been ". . . inspired in one way or
another by science fiction fanzines," but offers no proof of this
assertion.

Fred Fisher, who considers himself more of a mystery reader
than a science fiction reader, told me about a mystery fanzine which
he receives:

FF: Yeah, there's a mystery fanzine called The Armchair
Detective, but it's on a completely different level than any of
the science fiction fanzines.
DA: In what way?
FF: Well, in the first place, it's very scholarly.
DA: In the same manner that Extrapolation is? [Extrapolation
is the publication of the Modern Language Association's group on
science fiction.]
FF: Yes, except that Extrapolation is written by professional
academics, and The Armchair Detective Is not. The Armchair Detective
is written by mystery aficionados who sit down and read, oh, maybe
the collected works of a writer and then write a very interesting
and long paper on the writer's work in all its aspects, relating it
to the generally mystery field and so on. These people are not
necessarily academic people or very intellectual people, but the
articles deal with books in a different sense than the fanzines do.

13 The recent film "The Seven-Per cent Solution," and the novel on
which it is based, are both such works, as is The Firesign Theater's
comedy recording, "The Tale of the Giant Rat of Sumatra" [12", 33 1/3
r.p.m. recording (New York: Columbia Records, 1975)].

14 Harry Warner, Jr., "Opere Citato," Riverside Quarterly 5:1
In the first place, science fiction fanzines are interested in contemporary people. Take S. 's fanzine, which just happened to come in the store last week. That's as much concerned with S. as it is with science fiction. . . . But, in the mystery fanzine, it seems they're not quite as interested in contemporary things as science fiction. I suppose that's reasonable, 'cause science fiction is speculative and so on. They tend to deal with, well, there was a three-part series which ran maybe eighty pages over three issues of The Armchair Detective on Charles Dickens' The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

DA: Is that the unfinished one?

FF: Yeah, that's right. The last ten pages dealt with the unfinished ending. It was a very scholarly analysis of the book, and it ran about eighty pages. You would never see a science fiction fanzine spending eighty pages on a H. G. Wells novel.

DA: Actually, I'd have to disagree with you, because Riverside Quarterly published, in four installments, Jack Williamson's doctoral thesis on H. G. Wells.

Fisher went on to state that, to his knowledge, there were no organizations centered around other genres of writing which were comparable to sf fandom, suggesting that the reason was that "... the other people are devoted to the reading, and science fiction fans are not devoted to reading science fiction as much as they are acting out their fantasies." Fred felt that fans of non-sf genres "... probably read the books rather than going to conventions." In this regard, Post noted that some fans of mysteries have tried "... to get a sort of mystery convention going, but it's a half-hearted event. . . ." Warner also mentions the existence of this convention. However, neither Post nor Warner indicated that there was any direct link between these conventions and science fiction cons.15

In the genre of the Western novel, several fan clubs and magazines exist. As with mystery fanzines, these fanzines are oriented around interests in specific authors; one is concerned with the work of James Willard Schultz, another, The Curwood Collector, focuses on the life and

15Ibid.
and works of James Oliver Curwood. I corresponded with Reverend G. M. Farley, past editor of the *Zane Grey Collector*, a typical Western fan magazine. This publication started in 1967 as a two-page newsletter and grew to be a 14- to 16-page fanzine, containing articles by and about Grey, relevant news clippings, and a column entitled "How To Tell Zane Grey First Editions."\(^\text{16}\)

Several aspects of Western and mystery fandom distinguish them from science fiction fandom. One is the tendency to focus on the works of specific authors. While such interests also exist within sf fandom, they are by no means the major focus of fan publishing. Another difference is the emphasis on collection. Farley describes the readers of his fanzine as "western collectors," and this is borne out by the titles of both this magazine and the one devoted to Curwood. While the impulse towards collection certainly exists in science fiction fans, as the existence of huckster rooms points out, it is not the driving motive it seems to be in the case of the Western fanzines. The most important difference is that neither Western nor mystery fans have conventions of the type held by sf fans. In his letter, Farley commented on this difference:

> With all due respect to the S-F fans, and I am one, the western collectors were a more mature lot as a whole, and it was not easy to get them as inspired to do the things the S-F fans did such as conventions, Dun-Duns, etc. When I say mature, I do not mean intellectually. What I mean is that a lot of the younger generation became avid fans of Edgar Rice Burroughs, primarily because of Tarzan. I did a lot of oil paintings for ERBdom, the leading ERB fanzine, as well as some writing. So I am not belittling these fans. And, perhaps I am wrong in my conjectures. At any rate, I was never able to inspire the ZG fans to such an extent. Perhaps they were lazy.\(^\text{17}\)


\(^{\text{17}}\)Ibid.
As has been noted throughout this work, one of the prime aspects of sf fandom is the myriad ways in which fans communicate and interact through the fanzines and cons. The lack of a significant amount of such interaction, it would seem, is the real distinction between sf fandom and other-genre fandoms. A member of the Baker Street Irregulars, for example, who meets with his or her fellows only once each year is not comparable to the sf fan who maintains fairly constant direct and indirect contact with other fans.

Because of the lack of conventions in these fandoms, much of the interface between fan and pro is lost, as Post pointed out to me:

Science fiction is unique in that it is the only place where the professionals are drawn from the ranks of the amateurs to any great extent. You'll find some mystery fans, you'll find this a little bit, but nowhere can you approach this. Western novels, gothic readers, nurse novels—there's no communication except the product. . . . There is much more personal contact in fandom than in any other place.

This lack of personal contact between fans and pros causes another distinction to occur. SFWA, the science fiction writers' organization, each year presents pros with awards chosen by vote of the association's membership. These Nebula Awards are similar to the Edgar Awards given by the Mystery Writers of America and to other awards presented by writers to writers. Only in science fiction fandom does one find awards presented by the readers; furthermore, most fans consider the Hugo Awards as more important than the Nebula Awards, even though many authors prefer the acclamation of their peers to that of their readers.

Farley's comment on the relative inactivity of Western fans could be conceived as support for Fisher's assertion that the average sf fan is not a reader, but a doer. This contention, however, was not borne out by my research; most of my informants are heavy readers, not
only of sf, but of all forms of literature. Also, as was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the high rate of practicing literacy among fans is often used by them as a justification for their disdain for the various sub-fandoms.

**Summary**

The existence of sub-fandoms and fandoms essentially unconnected to sf fandom provides a basis of comparison useful to both the researcher and the sf fan. From an academic standpoint, the distinctions between sf fandom and those around other literary genres serve to underscore the way that sf fandom serves its members as a communications network and a peer group. To the sf fan, the various sub-fandoms provide a means of viewing fandom as a "superior" group not only in relation to the mundane world, but also with respect to fandom's imitators; these feelings of superiority, as well as those of group membership, are enhanced by forms of esoteric folklore regarding the alien groups.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is unusual for any academic study to be so thorough that all aspects of the topic receive the detailed analysis they deserve; it is even more unusual for a completed study not to suggest ways that it may be applied by other researchers in the same or allied fields. In these two regards, this thesis cannot claim to be unusual. This chapter will sum up the major conclusions reached in the foregoing sections, and will attempt to suggest certain possibilities for future researches.

Science fiction fandom is a group of individuals, initially brought together by a shared interest, but differentiating themselves through the various fannish activities. Membership in fandom is dependent upon participation in clubs, conventions, and publication activities; the amount and type of activity, however, is chosen by the individual fan. These fannish activities provide the fan with a communications network which links a scattered group of individuals into a larger framework. To the fan, direct and indirect interactions with his or her fellows are a prime motivation for involvement in fandom. Membership in fandom also offers the fan other rewards: social acceptance, recognition by peers, opportunities for self-expression and creativity, and aid in becoming a professional creator of science fiction.

As in other groups, folklore provides a mechanism for binding members of sf fandom closer to the group. Among these are esoteric humor, knowledge, music, and beliefs, memorates about important
individuals in and around fandom, and the feelings of celebration and joy evoked by participation in the science fiction conventions. The conventions also afford their attendees a period of license in which otherwise unacceptable acts are permissible, thus providing the fan with a framework for relieving tensions accumulated in the outside world.

Despite its orientation around literary activities, fandom is primarily a social organization. This is emphasized by the importance of informal activities at conventions, by the content of many narratives, and by the fact that the average fan is less interested in the past history of the group than the present behavior of its members. Also important in this context is the essentially non-profit nature of most fan activities.

The possibilities for future research suggested by this thesis can be divided into two categories: those involving further studies of fandom itself, and those which deal to some extent with other groups which have elements in common with science fiction fandom. In the first category would fall a more detailed study of the filksinging tradition, including an examination of the creation of these songs, an analysis of their content, and consideration of their performance. Another such "internal" study would be an analysis of "fan fiction" from the perspectives of literary theories and also those of popular culture.

Another topic not considered by this thesis is the question of why fans read science fiction, rather than other forms of literature. Many informants commented on the importance of the speculative nature of science fiction as a key factor in this choice, rather than its fantastic and other-worldly content. Fisher, for example, told me that whether he read an sf novel or a mystery was dependent on how well he
felt he could accept change in his life:

FF: ... I would say, though, that murder mysteries and the detective novel as a form is a satisfying form to people who find a great deal of dissatisfaction with what's going on in the world. I think that you could probably measure the popularity of the detective novel against economic prosperity, because the detective novel is a very establishment-type novel, regardless of the fact that most detectives are beating up on people... The detective story is very concerned with the restoration of the status quo—either someone is murdered and they find the murderer and he is punished, or something is stolen and they get it back.

DA: You don't see this in science fiction?

FF: Science fiction is not so concerned with returning things to the status quo. I think that science fiction is more concerned with the possibility that things will be different, rather than that things can be brought back to the same... Science fiction ... deals with the possibility that life is not going to go on as it was before, that we're going to have to find new answers to problems, we're going to have to go to new places.

... I would say that I tend to read mystery stories during periods of great emotional crisis, when I can't cope with science fiction. Reading science fiction is a good barometer of my own emotional health. When I'm not particularly worried or tense or on edge, I can read lots of science fiction and enjoy it, but when I am tense, on edge, unhappy, emotionally unsatisfied for one reason or another, I like to read mysteries, 'cause it does reassure you that everything will be okay in the long run.

In an article on adaptation to change, science fiction writer Alan E. Nourse suggests that sf engenders a "... positive adaptive attitude in its readers," through three things: it acclimatizes the reader to the idea that change is an inescapable part of life; it encourages the reader to welcome change, rather than to fear it; finally, sf offers the reader encouragement in the attitude that science and technology are potentially beneficial.1 From this and Fisher's comments, it becomes clear that the attitudes underlying individual taste in literature are well worthy of scholarly attention. Similarly, the reasons why writers choose to work in the sf genre are in need of

explication.

Turning to the external aspects of fandom, there are many potential avenues of research. The various sub-fandoms are deserving of study in themselves and in comparison with science fiction fandom. It would be especially valuable to know if these groups have esoteric folklore about sf fandom comparable to that which exists in sf fandom about sub-fandoms, and if such folklore serves the same purpose in all cases. The concept of the convention as a form of folk festival in which other genres of folklore occur is a valuable one. It is to be hoped that researchers will turn their attention to the forms of behavior found at non-sf conventions, and that this behavior will be compared and contrasted with that discussed in this work.

Finally, attention should be given to the many other groups which bear some resemblance to fandom in their orientation around a single point of interest. Steam railroad fans, model airplane enthusiasts, map librarians, folklorists—all have their degrees of organization, their methods of interaction, their means of communication. It is to be hoped that when enough such studies are made, the arduous process of collation can be begun; given enough time, it may be possible to make generalizations of the type not possible from any single work, no matter how thorough.

It is my hope that this thesis has, in several ways, added to the body of knowledge collected by folklorists. First, the study of groups such as sf fandom has been a task left untouched by many of my colleagues; perhaps this thesis will indicate to them that such groups deserve their consideration. Also, I believe that I have shown new ways of applying current folkloristic methods and theories,
especially in the sections on behavior at conventions and fandom as a "second occupation." Finally, I feel that I have somewhat blurred the line between folklore and popular culture; all too often, such trivial distinctions have prevented those in academe from the proper pursuit of knowledge.
GLOSSARY

APA: An acronym for "Amateur Press Association." A form of
fanzine which is essentially a roundtable discussion via the mails.

BNF: An acronym for "Big Name Fan." An apellation given to those of
importance in fandom.

Con: A science fiction convention. Most conventions are named by
combining some aspect of their location with the word; thus, a con-
vention in Philadelphia is called "Philcon," while one in Chicago
is the "Windycon."

The Cult: An APA with thirteen members and a complex set of rules.

Egoboo: A contraction of "ego-boost." Verbal or written praise given
a fan in respect of his or her activities. Often compared to the
Transactional Analysis term "stroke."

Faan: A fan whose activities are oriented towards the social aspects
of fandom.

Faanish: Pertaining to the social aspects of fandom. This term may be
applied to both individuals ("faanish fans") and their activities
("faanish zines").

Fan: An individual whose interest in science fiction has led him or
her to participate in science fiction fandom. In some cases, the
plural is written as "fens," not "fans," in an analogy to "men" and
"men."

Fannish: Pertaining to any aspect of fandom, whether sercon or faanish.

Fanzine: An amateur, non-profit publication by a fan.

Fen: See "Fan."

FIAMOL: An acronym for "Fandom Is A Way Of Life."

FIJAGH: An acronym for "Fandom Is Just A God Damned Hobby."

Filksong: A song sung by fans, usually with a sf- or fandom-related
lyric and a borrowed tune. Filksinging is the act of singing such a
song.

Fringefan: One who is just barely a fan, or an individual who is not a
fan at all, but enjoys the company of fans.
GAFIA: An acronym for "Getting Away From It All." Used to refer to one who has stopped taking part in fannish activities. Similarly, there is "FAFIA," for " Forced Away . . ." Both terms may be used either alone ("Joe has gone gafia.") or in a gerundial form ("Joe has fafiated.").

Hugo: Any of the Science Fiction Achievement Awards, presented by fans at the annual World Convention.

Letterhack: A fan whose letters are published with high frequency by either fanzines or prozines.

Mundane: As an adjective, this term refers to any component of the world outside of fandom. As a noun, it specifically indicates a denizen of that world.

Nebula: Any of the writing awards presented annually by SFWA.

Pro: An individual involved in the professional production of science fiction, via writing, editing, illustrating, or publishing.

Prozine: Any professional magazine of science fiction.

Sci-Fi: An abbreviation for "science fiction" loathed by fans, but often found in the media.

SMOF: An acronym for "Secret Master of Fandom." An appellation given

Sf: An abbreviation for "science fiction" commonly used by fans. Sometimes written as "stf," from "scientifiction," an early term for the genre.

SFWA: An acronym for "Science Fiction Writers of America," the science authors' organization.

Trufan: A fan whose longevity and high activity rate have earned him or her the respect of fellow fans.

Worldcon: The annual World Science Fiction Convention, held each Labor Day weekend at a site which changes each year.
APPENDIX I

INFORMANT BIOGRAPHIES

The purpose of this Appendix is not to sum up each informant's life, but to present the reader with those data gathered during the field interviews which will aid in evaluation of the informant's statements in this thesis. The biographies are presented in the order the interviews were made.

Judith Weiss

Age: Twenty-three.
Present Residence: Philadelphia.
Activities in Fandom: At age sixteen, began reading fanzines and joined the Dallas (Texas) Science Fiction Society. Attended first convention at 18. After moving to Philadelphia, joined the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society. Currently attends five conventions per year, usually including the Worldcon. Member of two APAs: APPLE (gardening, cooking, and home crafts) and APA-LP (recorded music). Has exhibited and won prizes at various convention art shows.
Other: Has sold some illustrations to Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. Currently reading 4-5 books per week, of which about half are sf.

George Scithers

Age: Fifty.
Present Residence: Philadelphia.
Profession: Editor of Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine.
Owner-operator of Oswald Press, publisher of science fiction and fandom-related material.
Activities in Fandom: Joined Elves, Gnomes, and Little Men's Science Fiction Chowder and Marching Society (Berkely, Ca.) in 1953. Attended first convention in 1954, began subscribing to fanzines in the next few years. Started the fanzine Amra in 1958; it is still in existence and has won two Hugo Awards. Moved to Washington, D. C., in 1959, and joined the Washington Science Fiction Association, later becoming its president and leading it to win the bid for the 1963 Worldcon, of which he was chairman. Has been parliamentarian and masquerade organizer for other Worldcons since then. Attends four to six cons each year, always including the Worldcon. Currently a member of the Phila. Science Fiction Society and an organizer of Philcon. Member of The Cult.
Other: Has had some stories published in the professional magazines.
Current reading of science fiction is extensive due to necessities of
job. Collector of science fiction art.

Dennis McCunney

Age: Twenty-seven.
Present Residence: Philadelphia.
Activities in Fandom: Entered fandom when he attended the 1968 Philcon, after which he joined the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society. Was a member of The Cult for two years. Attends four or five cons per year, usually including the Worldcon. Has been Chairperson of the Philcon committee several times, and has worked at this con in other capacities as well. Currently involved in very little fannish activity, but felt that it once claimed a large percentage of his time.
Other: Currently reads about six book per week, about half of which are science fiction.

J. B. Post

Age: Forty.
Present Residence: Philadelphia.
Profession: Map librarian for the Philadelphia Free Library.
Activities in Fandom: Organized a fan group in Rochester, New York, in the early fifties. Joined the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society in 1961, and has been active in it ever since. Has served as President of PSFS and has been Chairperson of several Philcons. Writes some reviews of sf for the fanzine Luna. Currently attends few conventions due to factors of time and expense. Has not attended a Worldcon since 1974.
Other: Author of An Atlas of Fantasy, a collection of maps depicting the geography of worlds described in various works of science fiction and fantasy. Currently involved in preparation of a bibliography on books on travel. Does little reading at present because of time pressures.

Susan Parris

Age: Twenty-six.
Present Residence: Baltimore.
Profession: Employee of T-K Graphics, a mail-order science fiction bookstore.
Activities in Fandom: Became involved in fandom after attending a meeting of the Washington Science Fiction Association in 1974. First convention was later that year. Currently active in her local organization. Member of two APAs: APPLE and a women's APA; also publishing her own fanzine.
Other: Her current job often takes her to conventions, where her employer often has tables in the huckster room. Present reading rate is about four books per week.
Susan Casper
Age: Thirty.
Present Residence: Philadelphia.
Profession: Social Worker.
Activities in Fandom: Limited to attendance at several cons each year. Became involved in fandom at age twenty when a friend took her to a convention. Occasionally reads fanzines.
Other: Does a great deal of reading, more mysteries than sf.

Gardner Dozois
Age: Thirty.
Profession: Author and editor of science fiction. Associate Editor of Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, Editor of a "Best SF of the Year" series for Dutton. Editor of several anthologies, including Future Power (with Jack Dann) and A Day in the Life. Has written numerous stories, for which he has been nominated for four Nebula awards and five Hugo awards.
Activities in Fandom: Became involved with fandom when he attended a convention in England while on furlough from his Army base in Germany. Current involvement is primarily through convention attendance, though he is a sporadic fanzine reader. Has been involved with fandom for ten years.
Other: Convention attendance is partially for business reasons. Reading rate includes fourteen to twenty novels per week, plus a large number of manuscripts due to editing duties.

Fred Fisher
Age: Thirty.
Profession: Owner and operator of Hourglass Books, a bookstore dealing in science fiction books, magazines, and war games. Some fanzines are also sold.
Activities in Fandom: Fred does not consider himself a fan, although he has attended some conventions (mostly for business reasons) and occasionally reads fanzines. However, he is a subscriber to The Armchair Detective, a mystery fanzine.
Other: Fred is usually involved in reading several books at once, but only reads sf at work. Other reading includes biographies, political books, and mysteries. He was included in this study because his profession puts him in contact with many fans and because of his knowledge on mystery fandom.
APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE FILKSONG TEXTS

The texts presented in this Appendix are drawn from written, rather than oral, sources. All are copyrighted and are reprinted with permission by the copyright holders. Numbers in square brackets are verse numbers, as found in the original texts. In several cases, verses have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The first song, "Young Man Mulligan," is the one cited by George Scithers in Chapter V. The second, "The Orc's Marching Song," typifies those songs based on works of science fiction, in this case those of J. R. R. Tolkien. Finally, "What Do You Do With A Drunken Viking" exemplifies those filksongs which draw on well-known folk songs and parody their lyrics.
"Young Man Mulligan"


Tune: Odd-numbered verses are sung to the tune of "I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago," even-numbered verses to the tune of "The Great Fantastical Bun." When all verses have been sung, the song ends with verses one and two sung simultaneously, as a finale.

Copyright Information: Copyright 1962 by the Terminus, Owlswick, & Ft Mudge Electrick St Railway Gazette.

/1/ I was born about ten thousand years from now.
When they land upon the moon I'll show them bow.
And with Goddard, Ley, and Campbell,
On an interstellar ramble,
I'm the guy who cooked and caught and served the chow.

/2/ Well, I'm just a lonesome traveler and a great fantastical bum;
Highly educated, from mystery I come;
Well, I built the road of Yellow with bricks all bright and new;
And that's about the strangest thing that man will ever do!

/3/ With Jonny Cross I took it on the lam,
I'm the guy who went and woke up furious Sam,
And I planned the First Foundation
Just before the fragmentation
Of the Empire that had ruled the Sevagram.

/4/ Empire?
Well, I knew a cold eyed Emperor, and he ruled the Commonwealth;
When I drank the spring of Hippocrene, it sure improved my health;
I built the tower of Carce, for good old Gorice II;
And that's about the strangest thing that man will ever do!

/7/ If you want to know who made the bow, twas me;
I first trained the wolf to domesticity;
But I lost the approbation
Of the whole Cro-magnon nation
When I tried to introduce monogamy.

/8/ When Tarzan met King Conan, he got himself stripped bare,
For Conan swiped his lionskin—I know, for I was there;
'Twas while I played left throwback for Miskatonic U,
And that's about the strangest thing that man will ever do!

/14/ I borrowed Collum's magic ring, and thus avoided Chun,
And with its aid I swiped the golden apples of the sun;
But I gave them to Queen Freydis for a torrid night or two,
And that's about the strangest thing that man will ever do!
Lest darkness fall o'er sands of old Barsoom,
I gathered darkness and dispelled the gloom;
Then with Jon (the Warlord) Carter
I ran off with Gosseyn's daughter
And on a picnic watched old Earth go boom.

I spied a hammer on a wall and summoned mighty Thor;
Then I escaped from deep dark caves to hear the trumpet roar;
But when I met a Darfar cook, I almost joined the stew,
And that's about the strangest thing that man will ever do!

I sold ten thousand condoms to Duke Barganax one year,
Invested all the profits just to bail the black-balled seer,
Then used that sphere to spy a smile, but all it said was "mew,"
And that's about the strangest thing that cat will ever do!

Eight months back I taught a Shambleau how to pet;
It was nothing but a crazy, drunken bet,
It was nothing but a gamble—
Then we started in to scramble:
And a month from now she'll have to see the vet.

When Kitty caused the trouble while the Red King snoozed away,
I tumbled down a rabbit hole one bright and rainy day;
And I finished all the marmalade before my fall was through,
And that's about the strangest thing a gal will ever do!

(noted in text as always being the penultimate verse)
When Rhysling sang about the hills of home,
When Gully flamed upon those steps in Rove—
Why, I've been there or I'll be there,
If there's action you'll find me there
From Centaurus to the Luna City Dome.
"The Orcs' Marching Song"


Tune: Sung to the "Ballad of Jesse James."


[1] Sauron was quite loth to be servant to Morgoth
And he really didn't care for wretched hours.
So he set up on his own on a brand new Mord'rish throne,
And he built up Barad-Dur, the Dark Tower.

[Chorus #1] Now Sauron had no friend to help him at the end,
Not even an Orc or slave (Orc! Orc!)
It was dirty Frodo Baggins that fixed his little wagon,
And laid poor Sauron in his grave.

[2] Sauron had some rings, they were mighty useful things,
And he only wanted One to keep,
But Isildur took the One just to have a little fun,
Sauron's finger still inside it—what a creep!

[Chorus #2] Now Sauron had no friend to help him at the end,
Not one of his foul Orcish crew (Orcish crew!)
You can curse that Frodo Baggins who fixed his little wagon
Because it seemed the fannish thing to do.

[3] Bilbo was the one who started half the fun;
He used the Ring to hide from poor relations—
Cheated at the Riddle Game, then he cheated them the same
By returning and resuming his old station. [Chorus #1]

[18] The wizard Saruman heard that rings were in demand
As a prelude to the coming of the stork.
And he thought that Sauron's Ring would be just the perfect thing
For his wedding to a pregnant lady Orc. [Chorus #2]

[32] Now Sauron is no more and his dark land of Mordor
Was destroyed without a single hint of pity.
But his spirit lives today, just the same in every way,
On the House Internal Security Subcommittee. [Chorus #2]

[33] In the wake of his defeat, Sauron ought to have felt beat,
But you needn't for his sake shed any tears.
Although Mordor is a wreck, he's / busy running cons for Trekkies,
And each Orc has swapped his axe for pointed ears. [Chorus #1]
When three Westron, mithril clad, in an Elvish mood and glad,
Stop at Butterbur’s to take their Lordship’s ease,
They will belly up to the bar, and in one voice they will roar,
‘Three rings for the Elven Kings, if you please!’ [Choruses 1 and 2]

Yes, when Westron, mithril clad, in an Elvish mood and glad,
Step into Butterbur’s to slake their thirst,
We shall raise up such a howl, although it may be foul—
And then we’ll grab their beer and drink it first! [Choruses 2 and 1]
"What Do You Do With a Drunken Viking?"

Author: Edwin the Wanderer

Tune: Sung to the tune of "What Shall We Do With the Drunken Sailor."

Copyright Information: Text taken from The Filthy Pierre Microprint Filksong Book, copyright 1976 by Erwin S. Strauss.

[1] What do you do with a drunken Viking?
What do you do with a drunken Viking?
What do you do with a drunken Viking?
Earlie in the morning?

[Chorus] Way, hey, and down he drinks it (3 times)
Earlie in the morning.

[2] Put him in a longship and row him over. (3 times)
Earlie in the morning.

[Chorus]

[3] Shave his belly with a rusty broadsword. (3 times)
Earlie in the morning.

[Chorus]

[4] Put him in bed with a Welsh lord's daughter. (3 times)
Earlie in the morning.

[Chorus]

[5] Dress him up in a homo helmet. (3 times)
Earlie in the morning.

[Chorus]

[6] Give him an ax and send him to battle. (3 times.)
Earlie in the morning.

[Chorus]

[7] Whatever you do, don't let him get sober. (3 times)
Earlie in the morning.

[Chorus]
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