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By
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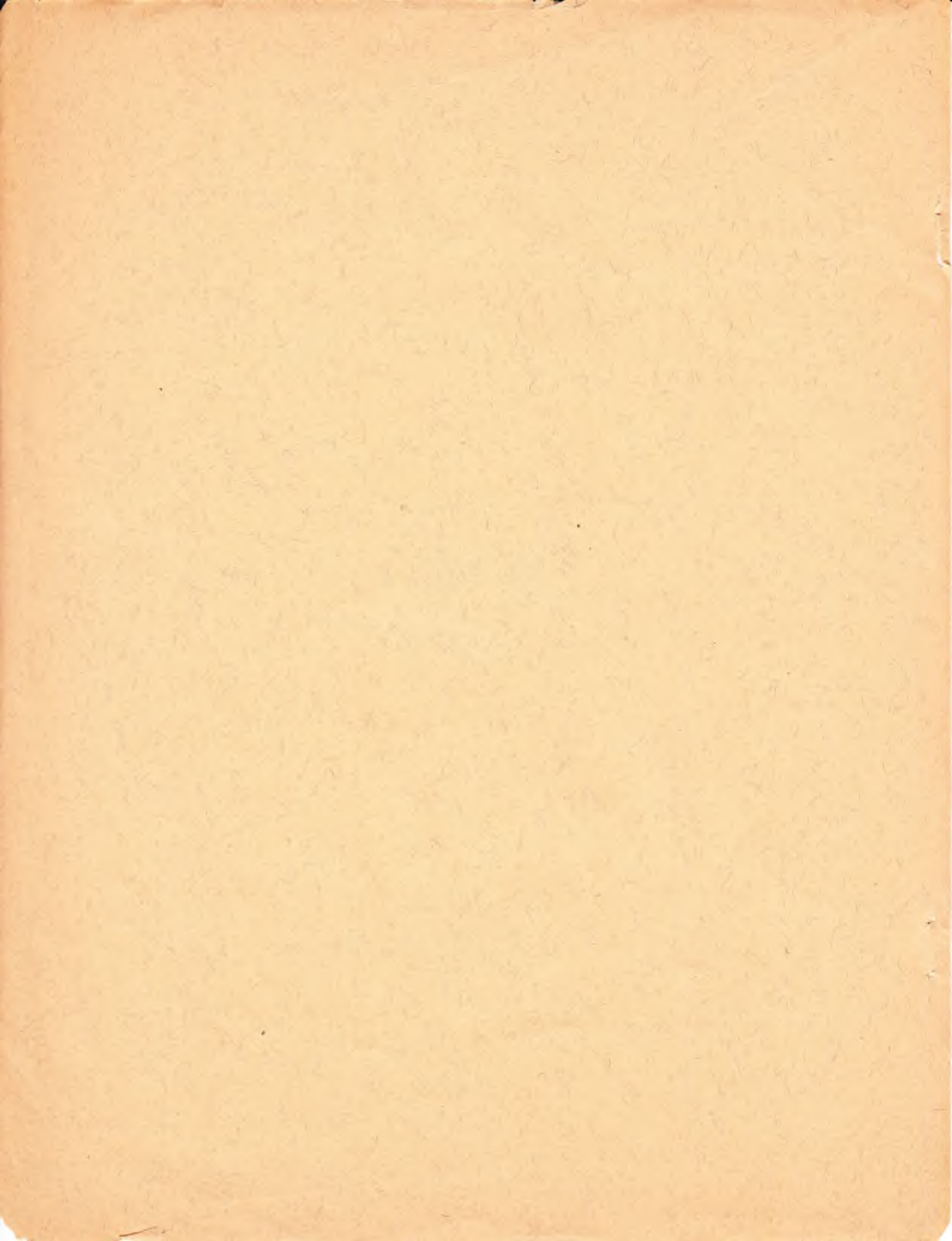
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he Big O



THE BIG O

"Illegitimus Non Carborundum"

Volume 1, Number 3

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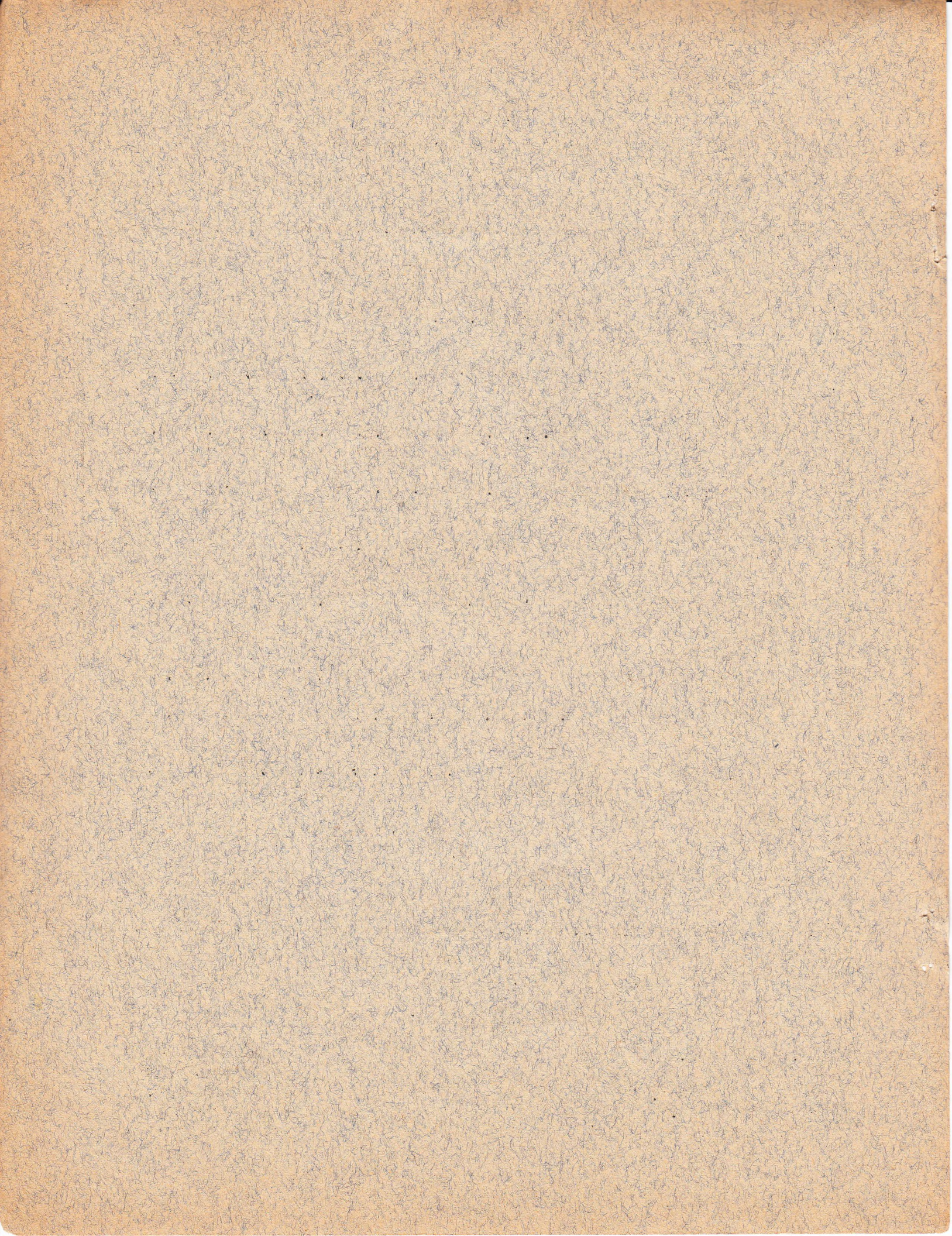
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DEPARTMENT
OF
QUEER COMPLAINTS

THE WEST vs.

The Big O: Certain changes have been made in this magazine. We are constantly trying new ideas, changing format, and seeking better and more efficient ways of production. Any living organism must change, and we are conceited enough to consider The Big O alive: at least, we consider the staff of The Big O alive. Some doubt has been cast upon this last assertion, and we are currently under investigation by the L.S.:B.S., the House UnAmerican Committee, and Kefauver.

To return to the original subject, you will note that the name has been changed from Orgasm to The Big O. We have finally kneeled to popular convention. Too many of our friends--and oddly enough, friends we respect--have objected. So, Orgasm will be struck from the record, only to reappear when reference is made to the first two issues of this magazine. In mixed company henceforth, if people ask what the name means, you may reply, "The Big Organism." To us of the staff, however, it will always remain--albeit silently--Orgasm.

We are de-emphasizing sex, not personally, but in the mag. Naturally, we are not responsible for that which is said by our contributors. We find sex, or better, the emphasis on sex in our culture one of the funniest things devised by man. Somehow, we can't understand **peoplo** who talk unconventionally and act like prudes.

We are de-emphasizing science fictionese. This has been done because our "outside" circulation is now bigger than our SAPS circulation. When it gets bigger that the combined SAPS-FAPA circulation we shall write and submit a story to a science fiction professional mag--or, if you will--magazine.

SAPS-FAPA Circulation: Will our non-science fiction readers kindly ignore this topic. It isn't set up for you, and the chances are you won't understand it.

We were recently deluged by a FAPA mailing, the 55th, that included the previous two mailings back to November, 1950. We are astounded. (As well as startled, galacticed, amazed, wondrous, and fantasied and sciencefictioned.) The very rich imagination and ingenuity we found there has made all this worth while. This isn't intended as a white-wash of FAPA, so let not the membership get a collective swelled-head. Most of the mailing--both FAPA and SAPS--is the sheerest kind of crap. But, as Burbee mentioned to us (Burbee named once), every once in a while you find something good.

Concerning format, FAPA is much superior to SAPS. Perhaps this is the fault of weight of numbers. But Eney! Can't we do something about this?

Speaking of Burbee (Burbee named twice), as we were, he and Lancy are apparently Insurgents. Since we have practically no idea what this means, aside from what we've picked up in the reading, and since we have only a hazy idea of what the Elders are about, we'd like to suggest that there may be some correlation here. Does one Elder equal one Insurgent? Can't they be combined, for simplicity's sake? How about Insurders? Elgents? Eldents? Indergents? Detergents?

We were glad to have met Burb (Burbee named thrice) during a recent visit to IA. The next time around perhaps we'll meet Lancy who seems capable of writing a good fapmag. Unfortunately, Lancy is an upside-down, British West Indian suckfist bastard because he doesn't understand one of the basics of general semantics: all generalizations are invalid including this one.

There's another fapmag, Borogrove which makes a slighting reference to us as "the Ma and Pa Jukes of stf." Frankly, we are delighted that our campaign of deliberate opprobrium is paying off. However, the point was that the writer(?) of this mag(?), a being(?) apparently without the necessary scientific background, objects to our--and others--picking flaws in stories. He uses what would have to be called one-valued logic in sneering, "(It's) Science FICTION, remember?" Is it? Why not SCIENCE Fiction? Why not Noitcif Ecncics?

Finally, there's a sapsine called Intergalactic upon which we are calling down the Gods of the FBI. On the last page is this:

工	事	區	分
Goong	See	Kuey	Fun

Now, by combining the goong and see ideographs, and the kuey-fun, we get, respectively, "work" and "divide into sections," or, in free translation, "Divide the work." Well, all we can say is:

千年金結

Our Favorite Government Secret: An article in the S.F. Chronicle of 5-20-51 has started us off again. Buried at the end of the news section on page 16, this article is headed

"U.S. Studies Problems of Space Ship."

We are firmly convinced--have been for some six months--that It has been done already. We wonder what the time differential is between what the Government tells us in regard to its research and what stage that research is actually in. Grant us that there is a lag and the learning curve (or data-gathering curve) is

exponential, and you must agree with our speculation.

We'll quote two paragraphs from the story: "Scientists still are trying to master the problem of how to attain 'escape velocity'--the speed required to get a missile beyond the gravity of the earth. Stack put the critical speed 'in the area of 20 to 25 times' the speed of sound.

"In gathering preliminary data on 'escape velocity,' tiny test models already have been sent streaking aloft at speeds approximately 20 times that of sound."

This is staggering. Of course, nobody bothers to clarify that further. So asking, "The speed of sound under what conditions?" won't get you any place; let's assume that it's STP at sea level. Then you get no place. That'd give you a velocity of 19,000 mph, and we heard it was 25,000. Using the figures given in the story, then science fellows must be sending models "streaking aloft" at 20,000 mph! Now, applying the time lag and learning curve multiplied by Skinner's k, you've gotta come up with an answer, and the answer comp. pat: it's done!

In case you disagree with this pleasant fantasy of ours--that at the very least man-made projectiles are leaving Earth and not coming back--consider these facts:

1. There used to be a comparative wealth of information in the news concerning research on rocketry. The flow has become an intermittent trickle, especially with respect to performance figures.
2. Couple of years ago the papers here were discussing a "super-secret" project down at White Sands. We've forgotten the name--which only goes to establish the basics of Orwell's "1984"--because all mention of the thing is gone, vanished, and disappeared from Man's lips. But what in hell could secret research be down there? Aside, of course, from having Kraft-Ebing study the LASFS.
3. When our military research finally discovered the step-rocket principle and goosed a WAC Corporal off the end of a V-2, the announced respective speeds were 5500 mph and 1700 mph. Carrying this simple ratio out--and someone who knows more engineering than we will probably sneer that you can't carry the simple ratio out--shows that a four-step job would be travelling at 53,000 mph.
4. There's a terrific campaign on. All sources of communication are filled with discussions of rockets, etc. And we are not naive enough to think that this is due to the post-war science fiction radiation,

Maybe that cover of ours on the last issue--the one announcing the landing on the Moon on Sept. 16--is nearer truth than fiction. 'Course, we'd guess it at 9-16-52. And if this mag should happen to fall into the hands of the FBI, we're only kidding, fellas--and where do you get an application to file for the study of Martian geology?

Gem Tones: As, yes, the remove-your-aggressions section. To all who are new to this mag, there's an inhibited female living in Seattle, Washington who publishes --and by using the word we give her more decorum than she deserves--who publishes a fan magazine called "Gem Tones." We take admittedly sadistic delight in titillating what this

femininist would undoubtedly call her "mind"; we wouldn't call it that at all. (What I would like to call it, Es won't let me put in print.)

Mrs. Carr is putting out a series of mineralogical fan mags. Last issue was printed on a lack-lustre yellow paper, and this gave her the right to call it the "Topaz number." This issue was printed on a beautiful vomit-pink and is called the "Rose Quartz number."

Ignoring the child's drawing of a centipede which is supposed to be the front cover, we turned to the following page and found this poem:

"Rose Quartz
Number

"We t'ROSE QUARTZ of ink at a Mimeo--
"We t'ROSE QUARTZ of----"

But why go on? This is the sort of contrived cuteness found in female adolescents and which makes us unbearably ill.

The contents' page is extremely messy; apparently the stencil was folded along the short axis of the page about 1/3 of the way down. The editorial was highly erudite and proves to us that Mrs. Carr is trying her damndest to become an intellectual snob. This editorial--and we know it's an editorial because she used that heading at the top of the page--concerns itself with the terrible state of affairs regarding the SAPS spelling and grammar, and insults to other readers, apparently, by using "four-letter synonyms for feces." Obviously, Mrs. Carr has never read Korzybski or Chase or Hayakawa or Vogt (either one) or Wendell Johnson or Ogden and Richards, etc.

Now, the trouble with being an intellectual snob is that you leave yourself open to **all** sorts of attack if you make one teeny-weentsy error. Especially when you write an editorial on spelling. Take, for instance, the heading of the next department, "Violets & Vitreol." Beautiful, n'est-ce pas? When we went to school they spelled it v-i-t-r-i-o-l; moreover, they meant sulphuric acid. There's a picture accompanying this department of a test-tube upended and drops of the contents spilling out. All we can say is that anyone idiotic enough to spill H_2SO_4 from an apparent height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet into a receiving container deserves exactly what he--or she--gets!

Carl Murray: The instant success of the article in the last issue, "Building Blocks of the Universe," has led people to inquire about the author. "Who is this Carl Murray?" they ask, "And from under what rock did he crawl?" Or sometimes it's simply, "And from what piece of woodwork did he emerge?" Or, and this is even more frequent, merely, "?"

Well, and we're sorry, we can't answer these questions. Aside from a few tid-bits we have picked up in correspondence, we know practically nothing about the man.

Oh, sure, we know the usual things: his educational background, what he has in the bank, what his preferences are in the way of food, his reading tastes, his amusement tastes, his hobby of travelling (in the last two years he has moved from Bennett, New Mexico to Jal, New Mexico), etc. But we know none of the important things. How did we meet this non-entity?

Not long ago a letter of Gus appeared in Startling wherein we made the statement that Echippus was the name of a beetle and not that of a horse. A few days after the mag hit the stands we got this letter:

"Dear Les or Es, as the case may be, .

"Startling Stories, Vol. 21, No. 1, page 143, quote: You might point out to Murray, (Murray Leinster, an author--Eds.) however, that Echippus is the name of a beetle or some such insect and not that of a horse. End of quote.

"More than a hundred years ago some teeth and part of a skull were found in England. The teeth did not look much like those of a horse, I mean beetle; indeed, they were thought to belong to an extinct monkey. Years after the first discovery of the English ancient horse, I mean beetle, bones and teeth of very similar horses, er, beetles were found in New Mexico and Wyoming. Finally, a complete skeleton was discovered of this "dawn beetle", or Echippus as it was called. Echippus was a slender little beetle, only sixteen inches high and rather dog-like in shape. This shaggy little insect was the ancestor of our modern beetles. You have probably confused the Echippus with the little Przevalski's horse, which lives in central Asia, a common-enough mistake. The central Asians have cleft palates, due to an insufficiency of leafy vegetables in their diet. Therefore, when they describe the size of the Przevalski's horse, they say "beetle" instead of "little".

"All geologists have rocks in their heads.

"Sincerely yours,

"E. O. Hippus"

In the same letter which we explained that the name Echippus had been given originally to a South American beetle and that therefore the dawn horse was now known as Hyracotherium, we also requested that the writer of the above monstrosity communicate with us. And we just bet you knew all along, it turned out to be Carl Murray.

----Les and Es

. . . . EUROPE

In 1947, a small group of young New York-New Jersey fans became a bit bored with the more intellectual discussions so prevalent in FAPA. They preferred less serious ajay publications, slapstick humor, and a devil-may-care attitude toward format and content. They desired to enjoy ajay, rather than to use it as a means for publishing their views on philosophy, religion, and world affairs.

Instead of trying to change FAPA, this group created an entirely new amateur journalism organization. No previous publishing activity was needed to join, and total membership allowed was less than half

that of FAPA, meaning a publisher would save money on paper, and also give the hectofan a break. To discourage any idea of deadwood, membership requirements were higher than FAPA, and required at shorter intervals--six pages every six months. The originating group of fans called themselves "Spectators." The organization itself became "Spectator Amateur Press Society" or more familiarly, SAPS.

FAPA almost to a man sniffed at this bastard upstart. "Juvenile," they cried. "Not worthy of consideration. It will never last."

But it has lasted. It has lasted through four years and sixteen mailings. The next mailing, SAPS Mailing #17, will begin its fifth year.

For the first few mailings, Spectators dominated. Kennedy, Alpaugh, Schauburger, and others in that group originated SAPS and naturally took an active part in its growth. However, Schauburger joined the Army, Kennedy retired from Fandom, and soon no Spectators were left. Yet, SAPS was on a firm footing. The Michigan group had taken over, Art Rapp was in his heyday, and SAPS rolled on. When Rapp joined the Army, leading activity shifted to D.C., Richard Eney became OE, and under his sterling leadership, SAPS finally passed the magic mark of two hundred pages in a single mailing!

But SAPS 1951 is merely another term for FAPA. The old SAPS no longer exists.

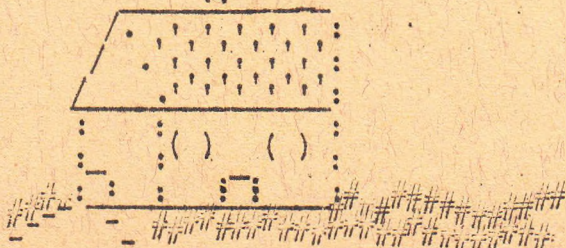
A casual comparison of membership listings will disclose that virtually all of SAPS belong to FAPA--Ray Nelson and Meg Johns being principal exceptions. Many a jay-zines are being used to gain activity credit in both organizations, since FAPA has no rules barring previous fanzine distribution as does SAPS, and FAPA's deadline being only a month behind SAPS' does not hinder this action. Instead of the type (tripe, if you prefer) of material for which SAPS was expressly created, we now have FAPA-styled discussions and articles. SAPS has outgrown its bastard classification; it is now FAPA's legitimate younger brother.

Coswal once called me chief recruiting officer for SAPS, because I brought Meg Johns and the Coles into that organization. Bob Pavlat remarked via letter that membership of those people were prime factors in his joining. Now, I'm wondering if it was worth the trouble.

Dammit, I like SAPS! I joined SAPS before I even thought of joining FAPA, and I think several of its rules would help in lifting FAPA out of its present slump.

Even so, I don't see any reason why SAPS, in its present form, should exist. SAPS is FAPA. Is there a need for two similar societies?

--- Lee Jacobs



You haven't lived if you've never been able to appreciate the Morgan family. First, there's the magnificent French radio commentator, Henri Morgan. Then, in the world of science, who has not heard of the mighty Austro-German brother team, Doktors Heinrich und Willi von Morgan, and their experiments with aluminuminum? Finally, of course, Lord Sir Sam Morgan, the world's greatest authority on Oligocene termite coprolites.

Less well known, but equally as talented, is the screen, radio, and television star and American member of the family, Mr. Henry Morgan. In our opinion he is the greatest living humorist exemplifying the subtle, satirical, culturally-subjective comedian. Only Benchley could have given him any serious competition.

Mr. Morgan has turned writer just for us. Also, from far and near come the reports that he is a human being and a nice guy. Considering the alacrity with which he came through with this article, we cannot but agree.

W H A T S C I E N C E F I C T I O N H A S D O N E F O R M E

The very first s-f magazine I ever read was by...that is, edited, published, and probably illustrated, by Hugback Gernsgo. He wrote it too. I read it from cover to page two. At that point I had to put it down and reflect. Wasn't there, I thought, wasn't there in the long ago, somewhere in our cultural and chronologic background, another magazine of this type? I thought about this for some time, and finally came up with the answer. No.

But I did remember a book I'd come across in the attic of an old, peculiar Pennsylvania hotel. It was in this same hotel that some of our more famous forefathers had slept during one of our revolutions. Scribbled on the walls were the names Otis Fla (friend of Ambrose Canast, a bugle player with Washington's Army--the only bugle player up to that time who had a hare-lip)....Carotid Art, the well-loved ptarmigan speller, Weems Knidley...oh, I don't know.

Well, in the attic I found a cat-eared copy of "The Future, its Frightful Promise" by Oscar Karlweiss (no relation) and I want to tell you, that little old dog--no, cat-eared book opened my ears. It was the great granddaddy of our present day stuff....printed in 1671, it ante-dated even Jules Verne by at least ten years.

The first article was one that to-day you may smile at, but think of what it meant then! In it a certain lady is looking ruefully at a messy apron she has to put on

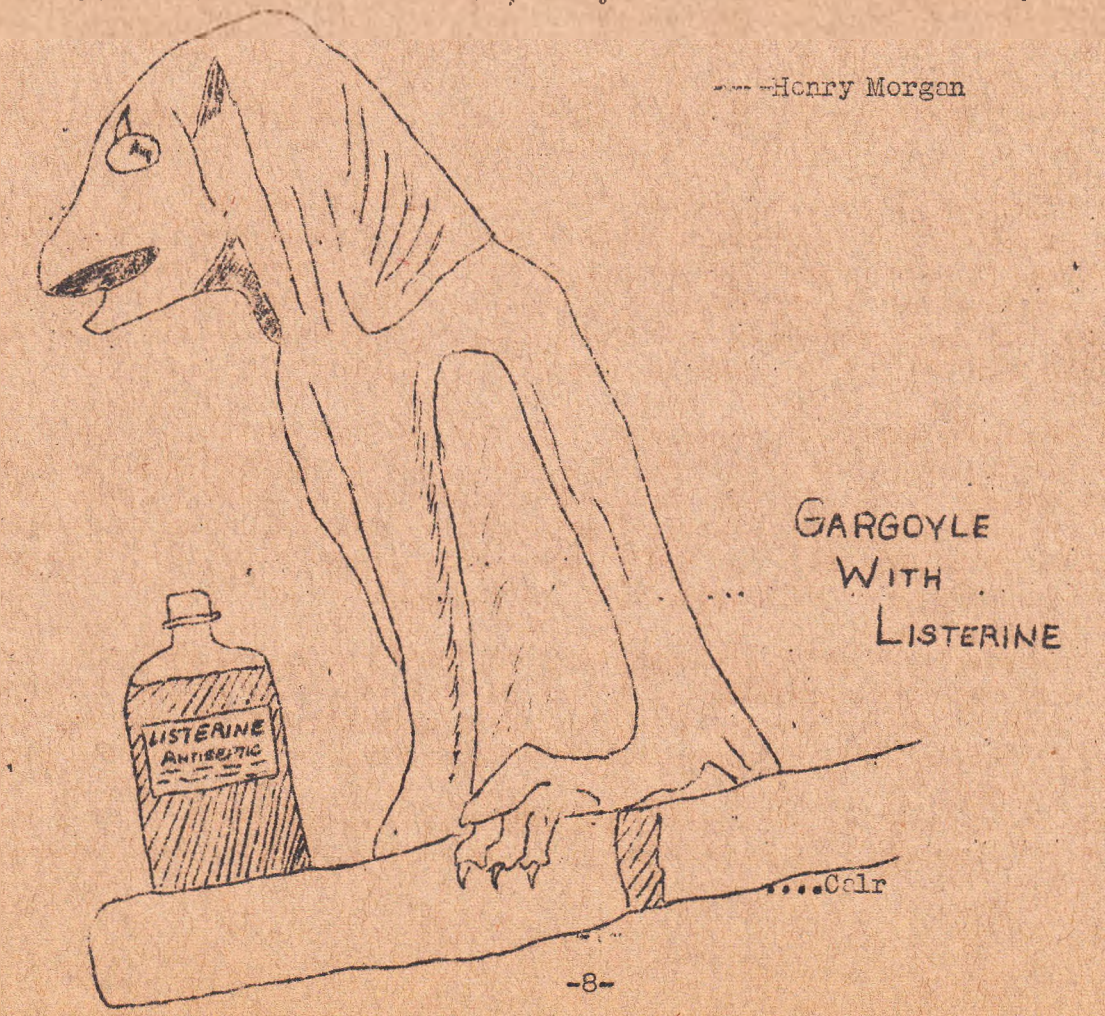
since the other one has been stolen. The one in her hand needs pressing. At that moment her husband comes up from the buttry and screams.. "It's done, it's done." At this his wife bursts into uncontrollable (more or less) sobs...he has handed her an electric iron.

You must remember that this was in 1671, when even uranium was just used for feeding pigs. People knew about sad irons, flatirons, yes, and gridirons, too...but hardly anyone had ever heard of General Electric. People stood outside Karlweiss' house throwing wristwatch radios into the living room and shouting.."Karlweiss is a witch. He and his fag friends must go!"

And this was only fiction, mind you!

Another piece in the book concerns an invention that sounds even more imaginative to-day than it did then, and the book was written in 1863, mind you. Two people are discussing death, and one of them turns to the other and says...."For my dough, bury me under a pyramid." Of course we now know what the girl meant, but in those days it was far from a commonplace, I assure you. There were some Indian mounds outside Cairo, Illinois, and there were some empty caves that looked like somebody had died there, but pyramids were as revolutionary as...well, as this new boxcar you may have seen...the ones painted all white and red. (Inside they're the same as the old ones, but what the hell.)

In short, I have an idea that the science fiction of to-day may very likely turn out to be the science fiction of yesterday (in time of course). It is for this reason we must not lose our heads over scattered bombings and the failure of the anti-histamines, but set our noses to the big grindstone of the future. After all, it's the future that's before us, and you shou'dn't kid about it.



For out outside circulation: Hannes Bok is an artist, first class, as well as being an author. His written works run to fantasy rather than science fiction, and the same may be said for his illustrations. The man has an amazing ability to combine horror with humor, and the result sends a squitchy feeling up and down the spine.

You should, after finishing this, become "correspondence-clear." If you ever again fail to acknowledge written communication, you should only have an Albite-Anorthite melt grow in your stomach.

W H Y A R T I S T S G O B U T G R E Y

I

Some years ago, a friend of mine ditched his current girl friend. He was an addict of Delius, Szostakowicz, Bruckner and Mahler.

"We were talking about music," he explained. "and she told me that the most beautiful and profound music ever written was Victor Herbert's Ah Sweet Mystery of Life."

I could see his point. But, because there was a time when I thought that In The Halls of The Mountain King was the most beautiful and profound music ever written, I could sympathize with the girl.

And so, when I read some of the gruesome slush sent into "Readers' Letters" departments of fantasy magazines -- and am tempted to go out and hang myself-- I hark back to the days when I, too, didn't know any better.

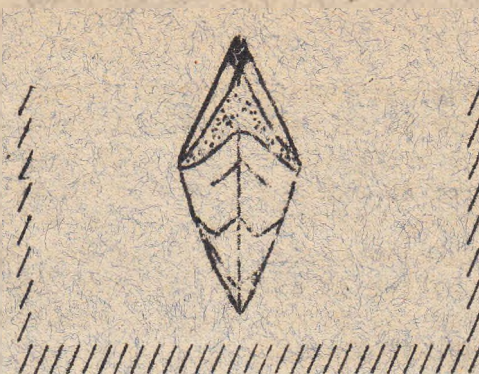
In fact, I'll go so far as to tell an embarrassing tale about myself: I flunked Public Speaking in High School because at the end of the term I got up and brilliantly narrated how I had come to the conclusion that Normal Rockwell and Maxfield Parrish were better than Michaelangelo, Botticelli, Rembrandt, Durer and El Greco.

I just didn't know from nothing.

My ears burned in sympathy yesterday for some students of a radio school, who-- in a broadcast over station WLIB--told the world that they were potential disc jockeys. I don't think much of the school they attend. Such voices! --accents from Lower Slobbovia! And one of them said, in all seriousness (ah, oho!) that composers of such little gems as "Mona Lisa," "Sam's Song" and "Stardust" are better than Mozart, Beethoven, Sibelius and Chaikovsky. He used the same reasons that I used in my public-speaking nosedive.

We both had the idea
moderns were equipped
of their forbears; plus
own, they just had to

Ah, the optimism of Youth!
an idiot studies under
talents plus da Vinci's
surpassing da Vinci's.



that, since these
with the experience
originality of their
be better.

We were saying that if
da Vinci, his own
must result in work

We just didn't know from nothing.

And the fans who write-in that Fantasy Illustrator Doakes is better than stodgy old Rembrandt and Rubens -- they just don't know from nothing either. Let us hope that they'll learn better as the years go tromping along.

II

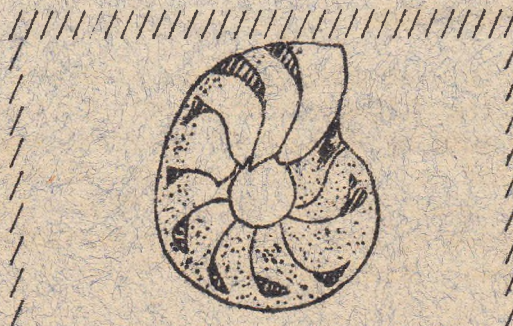
In the first place, most artwork appearing in pulp magazines bears small resemblance to the original drawings. Yes, I said drawings, because the method of reproducing artwork (except in cover pictures) rules out the use of painting.

Interior illustrations in pulp magazines are what's known as "line cuts". Thus at the outset, the artist is bogged-down with limitations. A line-cut reproduces only pure black -- whether a solid area or a fine hairline. Thus the artist, if he wishes to use greys in his picture, must simulate them by spreading out, in a white area, a lot of tiny dots or hairlines -- achieving a half-and-half mixture which the eye blends into an approximate grey. And to achieve a uniform grey or a subtle nuance from black through grey to white takes a lot of time and patient effort. If you don't believe me, get out a pen and try it. Only a superlative craftsman like Finlay can get a range of more than three greys. The average pulp illustrator rests content with pure white, one grey, and pure black.

Therefore, knowing that he is limited to white, one grey and black, the artist must confine himself. He can't be subtle with his use of tone and value -- it won't reproduce. The most he can do, if he is a bona fide artist, is to stylize his picture, so that the lack of subtlety isn't missed. And so his work is always "contrasty", through no fault of his own. How then can it possibly compare with -- say, Blakelock's BROOK BY MOONLIGHT? It can't!

Now there is a better method of reproduction known as halftone, whereby the engraver's magic can reproduce any grey that any artist can cook up. But unfortunately, halftones have a habit of darkening the effect of the original, so that areas intended to be pure white will come out a soft grey. This can be remedied by carefully detailed work on the part of the engraver -- "etching out" portions of the metal plate. But it's expensive. And about expense, more later.

It's necessary to use
magazines because of the
which is only a slight
tissue and blotting



to be pure white will
This can be remedied
work on the part of
"etching out" portions
But it's expensive.
later.

"line cuts" in pulp
quality of pulp paper,
stop above bathroom
paper. It's both too

soft and coarse to take ink properly. Consequently, artist Doakes' beautiful black areas generally print-up as grey ones, and spotty grey ones at that, not a bit like those in the original.

So you can see that pulp reproductions have little likeness to the original drawings. How, then, can you tell if the original work was good or not.

III

Comes now the question of time. The editor summons you to his office and says, "I have five pictures for you to do by next Monday. They've got to be sent to the engraver then, so don't fail me."

The poor artist may not have worked for months, because the magazine was a bi-monthly, and didn't care to use his work in every issue. Here he is stuck with five drawings to be conceived and executed in two weeks or less. Contrary to popular myth, artists do not turn a crank and thereby produce a picture. Covering a sheet of paper with pen or pencil takes time -- and the more carefully and artfully covered, the more time it takes. Covered with what? With (let us hope) good draftsmanship and an original conception.

I don't know about the other illustrators, but I'll tell you about me. The editor's given me a story in which not a darned thing happens until the last paragraph, wherein Our Hero finds he isn't a man at all, he's a robot. How can I possibly get a good drawing from THAT?

I read the fool manuscript four or five times, looking for a loophole. All through the story, nothing has happened by way of "dramatic action" except various conversations the hero has held with various characters. Should I show him arguing with the heroine, as described on page 10 of the manuscript? No, of course not -- he LOOKS like a human being, even if he isn't one, and if I show two ordinary human beings arguing, where's the fantasy? -- it could illustrate any ordinary love story.

Well, I certainly can't show the heroine arguing with a robot -- for one thing, it will "give the end of the story away", and besides, the hero looks exactly like a human -- readers will write in and complain that the artist has made a mistake.

What would you do? Well, no matter what I finally do turn out, the readers write in and complain that Bok is slipping -- this illustration isn't very fantastic. As if Bok could help it. He might submit a fantastic picture which didn't illustrate the story, but in that case, both readers and editor would object.

In which quandary, Bok thinks and thinks and thinks. Sometimes it takes days. Sometimes he pulls a rabbit out of the hat and does manage to turn out an illustration which is fantastic and yet fits the story. Sometimes. But what can he do when he has to turn out five pictures in less than two weeks? And supposing he does have a brilliant idea -- how much time can he devote to careful execution of it? If he just scrawls it on paper, readers kick because his work is "crude." (They kick about his work's crudeness regardless, since the finest work is often loused-up by the ink "not registering" on the coarse pulp paper).

And if this weren't enough, some editors think that they're artists. They hire a guy on the strength of his past performance, and then proceed to dictate how he shall interpret the story (often they tell him to illustrate a certain paragraph on a certain page) and just how to draw it -- the girl must be so many inches high,

her costume must consist of burlesque-theater breastplates and panties rather than an imaginative conception of future fashions; the hero should be over there, and doing this or that, and the dragon shouldn't have heartshaped scales, he should have triangular ones, etc. ad nauseam. Oh, and by the way, don't draw this in dry-brush -- the **medium** you specialise in. Artist Joe Blow has some drybrush work in the same issue, and we want variety in techniques -- so instead of the medium you handle best, you must draw this picture in grease-pencil.

IV

Comes now the question of salary. Most fans who discuss pulp-illustrating with me are flabbergasted at the price I get.

Generally, the doorbell rings, and as I open the door, a youth or damsel says plaintively, "Oh, you're not Mr. Bok!"

"I sure am," I say.

"But I thought you were about sixty, and with lank yellow hair hanging over your eyes! And tall and stooped-over!"

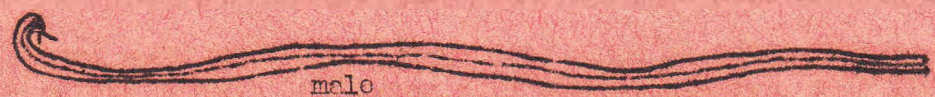
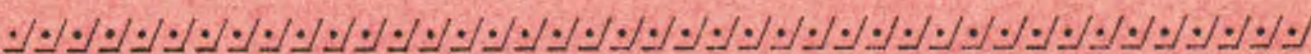
They come into my one-room combination of workshop and living-quarters, and look very downcast. Eventually they confess why. Seems they figures I got \$500 per picture -- after all, my work was published in a magazine and "everybody knows" that people whose work appears in magazines get at least \$500 per picture.

And if I get \$500. per picture, why am I living in this snoddy old tenement, and wearing rags?

The answer is simple. I don't get \$500. per picture. I do get a heckuva lot more than I did in pre-war days. Back in 1940 and 1941, I got \$5.00 per picture from nearly all magazines except Famous Fantastic. They paid me \$10! -- top price!. Now the average payment per picture (obtained by adding up and dividing what ten fantasy magazines pay) is \$20. per picture.

Covers average at less than \$75. per each. If an artist were lucky enough to get 6 covers a year, he'd earn all of \$400. or less!

So you see, the average fantasy-pulp illustrator is forced to turn out as much work as possible, barely to keep alive. If he's a real artist -- that is, if he values quality above the necessities of live --he turns out less work, because he



Ascaris, natural size
Modified after Buchsbaum, "Animals Without Backbones."

requires time and careful thought to produce high-quality work. And even if he's a hack, and whapps out pictures as fast as he can, he'd have to make 20 covers per year, or 75 half-page interior drawings to earn \$1,500 a year. I suggest you start counting the works of artists in the magazines, and figuring up their yearly salaries.

And so, how can pulp illustration possibly even equal, let alone rival, the works of past masters, many of whom were subsidized by kings, and could take years to turn out one picture?

And so Pete Fan writes in, "Doakes' illustration for THE GOOZLED OPSTERS is better than van Gogh!!!!!!!"

Ten to one, Pete Fan never saw a van Gogh, except in a lousy reproduction. (I hated van Gogh myself until I saw his originals -- wow, what a difference!) Pete hasn't even seen Doakes' original for THE GOOZLED OPSTERS; he is judging from a cheesy reproduction on bad paper.

I'll say one thing about pulp paper -- often it makes a bad picture look better than it really is.

V

Comes now -- esthetics. Pete Fan raves over Doakes' illustration, which shows a realistic woman (copied from a photograph in BAMPING BEAUTIES MAGAZINE, and "made fantastic" by adding a snaky tail, copied from LUCKY WHEELS MAGAZINE, and further fancied-up with a lot of bubbles and stars that have nothing to do with the story -- they just "look nice"). This, says Pete Fan, is real art. Pete also writes that because THE GOOZLED OPSTERS was a time-travelling yarn, it's no good, because H. G. Wells wrote a time-travelling yarn years ago.

What Pete really likes is the subject matter of the picture. Or the technique. He thinks he likes the drawing -- only artistically speaking, there ain't no drawing. Art is essentially interpretation, making a sort of soup-cattier. You don't interpret a woman by drawing her as the BAMPING BEAUTIES MAGAZINE camera sees her. You interpret her by making her softer, fleshier, more lushly feminine -- or by making her attenuated, ethereal, not of this world -- or by accentuating the length of her nails, the slant of her eyes, the sinister sinuosity of her contours.

The fact that the picture may be entirely without pattern doesn't faze Pete. He'd snicker at a house built without blueprints and in varying styles of architecture; but he hasn't the sense to realize that a good picture, like a good building, must follow definite laws of structure. Often when I try to explain Composition to Pete Fan and his ilk, I'm greeted with, "Composition? What's composition?" And yet Pete -- with no knowledge of esthetics whatever -- thinks Doakes is better than Rubens, who draws ugly fat old floozies.

He's like editors who think that "action in a picture" consists of 17 different fist-fights going on at once. Whereas a good artist can convey an exciting feeling of action, although the drawing contains just the head of a girl smiling, by the use of dynamic line. Pete and the editor aren't really talking about "action" -- they're talking about subject-matter, human-interest, association of ideas.

(-) (-) (-) (-) (-) (-) (-) (-) (-) (-) (-)

VI

To hear no talk, you'd think that all pulp fantasy illustration is lousy. And yet, I know a lot of it isn't. A great deal of it is far too good for pulp magazines -- worth far more than \$20 a throw. Some of it belongs in expensive books. A very little of it belongs in Museums.

Let's talk about technique. Artist Smith can't draw worth beans. He can trace nice pretty girls out of movie stills, however, and swipe Artist Jones's rocket-ship from an old issue of GORY SPACE STORIES. He pretties them up with a super-fancy technique -- all kinds of tricky stipple work, delicate cross-hatch, brilliant scratchboard exercises -- all derived from other pen-artists who in turn derived them from eighteenth-century engravings on metal and medieval woodcuts.

Pete Fan may agree that the girl and the rocketship aren't very good, but the "picture" is superb, he maintains, because of the wonderful technique. Technique in itself is nothing. Nobody in his right mind would applaud a pianist who, at a concert, gives forth with a half-hour rendition of finger-exercises in brilliant technique.

Technique is only HOW you say a thing -- the language in which it's couched -- and if the artist isn't saying anything (that is, offering creative, interpretive subject-matter) -- he is simply saying nothing in very brilliant language. And if a speaker got up on the platform and delivered a lot of double-talk with an Oxford accent and all sorts of marvellous modulations -- it would still be double-talk, signifying nothing -- except that the speaker thought he could "put one over" on his listeners.

VII

Every fantasy artist to whom I've talked says that he has received a letter of this sort:

"Dear Mr. Jones: I liked you picture for SCROBBLE MY OWLPS in the May 1872 issue of GRUESOME STORIES. Would you please send it to me? Thank you. Yours sincerely, Pete Fan." Although, Pete Fan generally doesn't close with yours sincerely -- usually it's "FAN-atically yours", or "The Watcher by the Wailing Well, Pete Fan", or "The Bugeyed Fantasite, Pete Fan" --something real cute and individual, letting Jones know that Pete is a real character, Pete is different, Pete is Somebody.

Mr. Jones, at the outset of his career, makes the mistake of sending the drawing, autographed, for Pete Fan's collection. Does he receive a thank-you note? Of course not.

Jones could have sold that drawing to a private collector, thereby maybe augmenting his pitiful fantasy-illustration wages. In other words, he gave Pete Fan a drawing worth money. Did Pete ever give Jones anything? As a matter of fact, Pete wrote three letters to editors panning Jones' work. But Pete wanted to impress his fellow-fans by having an original Jones, something none of them have, and nyaah to YOU, I'm Pete Fan, I am, I got something you ain't got, nyaah to you, I'm better than you are.

Jonesy later discovers this drawing in the possession of John Pulp-reader. John paid Pete Fan ten bucks for it. Did Jonesy get anything out of it? Of course not. But Pete Fan got ten bucks without any work. And yet Pete tells everybody he's

crazy about fantasy and fantasy art. Seems to the various Joneses concerned that Pete is making a racket out of it.

Worse still is this letter, common to all the illustrators:

"Dear Mr. Jones: I just adore your gorgeous work. Will you please make me a cover for my fan magazine, DISGUSTING? I'll need it by June Tenth. (The letter is post-marked June 5th). Thank you. Yours STAMPFstically, Pete Fan."

Jonesy, earning just enough to pay the rent, is supposed to drop everything and spend a week or two doing something for nothing. Even if he could turn out the drawing in one day (and I don't know one illustrator who can) -- it's still a loss of time and money. Do you think Pete Fan would give Jonesy a day's wages if Jonesy wrote in to Pete, and asked "Dear Fan: I adore your fannishness, please send me a day's or a week's wages." Not on your life!

And supposing Jones DOES send Pete a specially-drawn cover. What happens? Pete doesn't frame it -- he rams tacks through it, hangs it on the wall until it's smoked-up and flyspecked, and has to be thrown away. Or sold to some other fan.

So finally, when Jonesy in self-defense asks for payment of any drawings that Pete Fan requests, Pete denounces him as a money-mad lousa to all and sundry.

Cute, too, is the editor, who has received a letter from Pete Fan requesting a Jones original. Jonesy has to fork over if he wants to continue working for the editor. It doesn't cost the editor anything to be nice to Pete Fan.

It's a great life. And yet people wonder why I'm trying to quit fantasy and get into some other field of art.

-----Hannes Bok

A friend of ours, who works for the S.P. Railroads, passed this on to us, swearing all the while that every word is true:

A clean-cut young man was found wandering through the aisles of one of the fancier passenger trains. The remarkable thing about this young man was that in one hand he was carrying a hammer and in the other, a raw pork chop. Upon due investigation of his two pieces of luggage, the company found one empty and the other filled with stale bread.

With fairly straight face, this friend of ours suggests, in answer to our wondering about the meaning of the pork chop and the hammer, that the young man was going to beat his meat.....

THE LS:BS, A PROGRESS REPORT

As a result of the article in the last issue, we became intensely interested in the Linguoidal Section of the Bureau of Standards (LS:BS) and Dr. von Hohenheim. We wrote to Poul Anderson, von Hohenheim's secretary, asking an investigation of the International Standard Matzo Ball which people are as sharp as, in terms of roundness, sphericity, density, specific gravity of surrounding medium, etc. Mr. Anderson replied:

You may be interested in knowing that the L.S. of the B.S. has since achieved a number of other successes. It has completed work on the International Standard Pancake which things are as flat as (measuring it to within an angstrom of its life, if pancakes have life), the International Standard Whorehouse on Monday Morning which things are as disorganized as (obviously, a state of maximum entropy: this is what theorists call the Heat Death), and the International Standard Door-knob which corpses are as dead as.

The last unit requires some explanation. A body having a deadness of one doorknob is, obviously, infinitely dead, or from another viewpoint has zero aliveness; and an infinitely alive body has a doorknobbishness of zero. If we define aliveness as $\frac{R}{S}$, where R is the response to a stimulus S, we can go into the theory of this

unit in some detail. The P.S: B.S. took S as a standard stimulus, using the International Standard Shaft driven into the most appropriate place to a depth of one meter, so that the value of S is one shaft-meter. R was then expressed in meters, being the height to which the subject leaps when S is applied. (To be sure, R may appear in other ways, such as a loud scream; but the energy so expended can be measured and converted to the equivalent height in meters to which it would have propelled the body.) Clearly, an infinitely alive subject (doorknobbishness zero) would have leaped to an infinite height; and an infinitely dead body (doorknobbishness one) would not have leaped at all. Thus the dimension of R/S, or liveness, is the shaft⁻¹. We multiply by a constant c having the value unity and the dimension shaft and can then express the relation between doorknobbishness (D) and aliveness (R/S) by the simple equation

$$D = e^{-\frac{cR}{S}},$$

which shows that aliveness is proportional to the negative of the logarithm of doorknobbishness. Differentiation will show that the time rates of change of D and R/S are proportional. The International Standard Mackerel turns out to have a value of slightly less than one doorknob.

The local branch of the L.S. has also been investigating a unit to be known as the mink. A perfect (or infinite) nymphomaniac will be considered as having a

sexual capacity of one mink; a perfectly frigid female will be assigned a minkishness of zero. So far we have found no specimen that can quite compare with the International Standard Mink, but research is proceeding diligently and we have found a minkishness of at least 0.95 after corrections have been made for time of month (a matter involving periodic functions of a complex variable) and alcoholic content. Her telephone number is classified information. Any qualified women wishing to further the progress of science should contact the undersigned at the Paradise Bar.

Other units to which our group will presently devote attention include the International Standard Bunny which people are expected to be quick like, the International Standard Large Bird which winks off like (also the alternate unit, the International Standard Herd of Turtles, with determination of the conversion factor between these two units), the International Standard Hunk of Wet Liver which people are as sharp as, the time rate of breakage when the International Standard Bull is released in the International Standard China Shop, and the International Standard Wet Rag which certain unvarnished people lie like. All further suggestions will be gratefully received and carefully considered.

Sincerely yours,

Poul Anderson
Secretary

P.S. I mentioned your suggestion of the International Standard Matzo Ball to Dr. von Hohenheim and had a reply only the other day. (He lives right here in town and I spoke to him in person, but his synapses are slow.) He's very interested in the idea, but unfortunately his department is completely tied up with defense work. The Air Force wants the International Standard Bat Out of Hell.

READER REACTION: ORGASM, VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2

Total Votes:	19	<u>Most Popular Items</u>	
Good:	17	"Building Blocks of the Universe":	6
Mediocre:	1	"Official Report":	2
Bad:	1	"Merwin Letter":	2

Respectfully submitted,



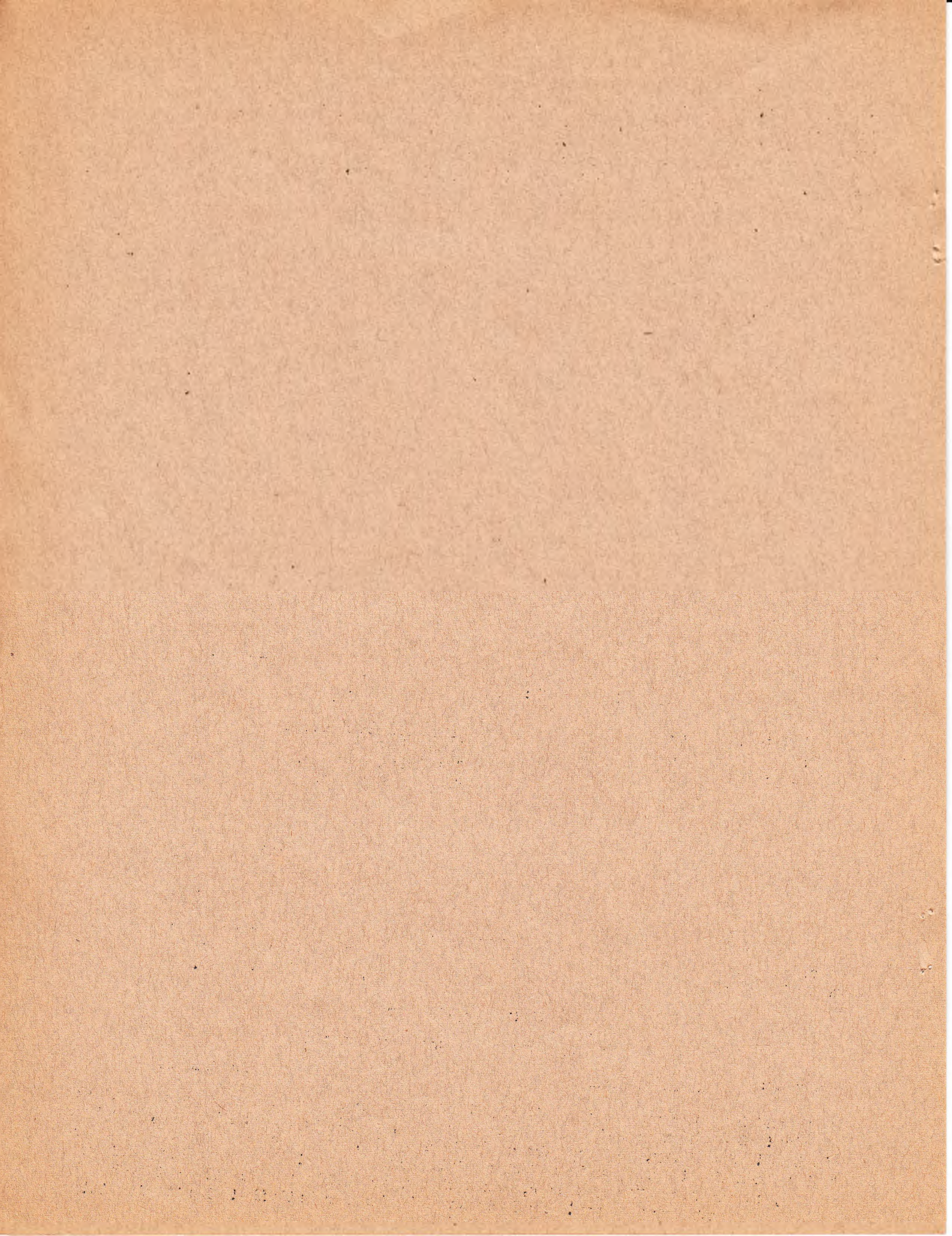
Hermie
Senior Statistician,
Big O Research Staff

Fearful of the Hollywood trend to squeeze stf into a "formula", we are looking forward with horror to this ad, in the movie magazines, dated June, 1954.

20th Century-Fox presents
H O N E Y M O O N O N A R I S I A
(from the story "Grey Lensman")

Starring: Betty Grable and Dan Dailey

Betty and Dan sing and dance their way into the hearts of all Arisia as well as all America! See the impressive ceremony where Dan, playing Kinball Kinnison, receives his Lens! See Betty, as Nurse Clarrissa MacDougall, top dance a message of danger to Dan when she is trapped in a Boskone "pleasure palace"! See the mighty climax as Dan, in the lead flying saucer, takes the entire Tellus' space fleet into battle in an effort to rescue Betty! Produced by Zwilniks for Zwilniks! Don't miss it!



This one is a reprint from Now, Fandom, Sept.-Oct. 1938. Check that date again. After you've finished reading, check it again.

This is the first time we ever knew we had anything in common with the Binder brothers. And we blush to think that they were singing our theme song ten years before we started playing it!

Merwin, Browne, Palmer, and the rest of you editors (except, of course, Campbell and Gold): read this thing!

WILL THIS BE THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE-FICTION?

What sort of advancement and change of form is science-fiction going to experience in the near future? This is a fascinating and troublesome question.

At the time science-fiction was introduced as a recognized form of fiction in 1926, its future seemed bright and glorious. It was going to sweep the world, replace outdated forms of literature and in general forge its way to olympian heights. At least that was in the mind of every enthusiast of that time. And with the sudden impetus with which it shot into the fiction field, it did seem that such would be its career.

The result, of course, has been far different. After the initial flare-up was over, science-fiction gradually settled itself into an obscure niche, and today it battles for its very existence with the hordes of other magazines it was easily to have overreached and passed.

What is the answer? The answer is that we expect too much of it. Unique and thought provoking as it was, it had no appeal except to those of high imagination and a scientific bent. And the latter quality, sad to say, is gradually dying out. Science-fiction today is not treading a virgin field--it is competing with other types of fiction for a place in the sun.

The result is apparent in the current science-fiction, notably that of Astounding Stories. The fiction element is encroaching rapidly on the scientific element, and the qualities of action and emotional appeal are increasing over the original quality of brain stimulation.

Perhaps it was inevitable, especially with the Depression dealing such a staggering blow at the publishing industry. And what will science-fiction be, say ten, twenty years from now? Perhaps I am wrong, but ten years from now science-fiction will be pseudo-scientific-fiction entirely. I think that the scientific angle will be lost entirely.

Science-fiction will then be only a branch of the fantastic group of literary types, including weird, futuristic, and adventure stories. People will buy it then from the same reason they buy western tales and detective stories--to be thrilled and entertained; not to be mentally stimulated. And its following, I sadly predict, will always be small.

---- Erando Binder

You've demanded him! We can only
comply with your wishes. So here
comes that little, old Master
Philologist ~~compleat~~ with cantrap.

D O N ' T F E E D T H E C A R B O N A T O M S

Carbon is the element without which all the organic chemists would starve to death. When an organic chemist meets a carbon atom, he bows low and says, "Good afternoon, your Lordship." If one is not an organic chemist, it is sufficient to merely tip one's hat and present one's card. Abeunt studia in mores--unless you know what I mean.

It was formerly thought that organic compounds were exclusively of plant or animal origin. In 1828, Wohler (a great practical joker) slipped up to a molecule of ammonium cyanate and gave it the hot-foot. It gave a great yell and rearranged itself into a molecule of urea. In a letter to Berzelius, Wohler wrote, "I must tell you that I can prepare urea without requiring a kidney or an animal, either man or dog." In 1828, this was considered a very snappy rejoinder.

There are some quarter-million known organic compounds, the most important one being composed of two atoms of carbon, six atoms of hydrogen, and one atom of oxygen. This compound is known variously as methyl carbinol, ethanol, hydroxyethane, methyl methanol, ethylene hydroxide, and ethyl alcohol.¹ It finds wide use as a covering for ice cubes. It is also an important tool in mathematics.²

The teeming multitudes of organic compounds exist because carbon can unite with itself to form chains and rings. When six carbons join hands in a circle, the result is a benzene skeleton. Even the best-regulated households usually have a benzene skeleton or two in the closet. To gain a clear insight into the benzene structure, the chemist procures a clean sheet of unruled paper. On this paper he draws six little pyramids³ linked together. He then lays this paper on the floor and climbs upon the chandelier to get a bird's-eye view of the structure. Next, he places the paper on the chandelier and lies on the floor to get a worm's-eye view. He then knocks off work and goes to the nearest bar, where he gets stinking drunk. This is known as the spirit of chemistry.

"What makes carbon behave in such an erratic fashion?", I hear you clamoring. I daresay that if you were shaped like a tetrahedron, your behavior would be somewhat erratic, also.

Carbon atoms are generally quite docile creatures, but during the rutting⁴ season they become very vicious. Once, while dehydrating water in my laboratory, I heard

¹Also rot-gut, white-lightning, corn squeezings, stump juice, etc.

²The Nertz Equation, which expresses the action of a free American radical, states: "Two can go into a fifth with none left over, but there will be one to carry."

³For the benefit of any purists, these pyramids are actually tetrahedrons.

⁴Hell, Mac don't read all the footnotes.

a very ferocious rustle behind me. Turning quickly, I found myself surrounded by a mob of two or three rutting carbon atoms.

"Death before dishonor", I cried, and applied right rutter. My staunch craft immediately veered to starboard with a bone in her teeth.

"Avast, ye bilge-rats", I shouted at my trusty crew. "Furl the top-gallants. Secure the mizzen-mast. Box the compass." Turning to my first mate, I said, "Weigh the anchor, mister." He scurried off. A few moments later he returned and saluted.

"Cap'n, it weighs ninety-seven pounds, six ounces."

"Enter that into the log", I cried, and crushed his skull with a marlin spike.

For days we luffed with wind (it was a luffly breeze). From the crow'snest came the cry "Thar she blows." Scarcely believing my eyes, I watched the huge bulk rise to the surface. It was Adobe Richard, the great blue whale. If we caught him we could blubber for days. But I fear that I digress.

One night while in my study reading the small print in a corset advertisement, I heard a rapping at my window. Now this was passing strange, as my study did not have a window. None-the-less, my duty as a host demanded that I open the window, so, gibbering with eldritch horror, I flung wide the portal. A nondescript carbon atom clambered in and cast itself upon my couch.

"My dear Sir or Madam, as the case may be, what have we here?", I ejaculated. (It is devilishly hard to determine the sex of a carbon atom.)

"I got confused", it said simply.

Having at last determined the sex of my patient, I polished my glasses and tapped them against my fore-finger. "In what way do you get confused, my good man?", I asked, probing him about the sternum with my stethoscope.

"Well, how can President Truman be a native son of both Palm Beach and Texas?"

"The President was reared in Missouri", I said, pleased with myself for remembering this odd bit of information.

"The other day I heard someone say that Truman, the son of the Beach, was raised in Texas." Tears welled in his eyes as he awaited my answer.

"You misunderstood", I replied, giving him a fatherly pat on the head and injecting 50 cc's of glucose intravenously.

My patient sank back on the couch in a comatose condition, his breath coming in short pants. I loosened his collar and applied cold compresses to the base of his skull. Soon his breath came in long pants, and he departed, a sadder but wiser carbon atom.

I consider this my most remarkable case.

----- Carl Murray

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WINCHESTER PICTURES CORPORATION
780 North Gower Street
LOS ANGELES 33, CALIFORNIA

April 6, 1951

Les & Es Cole
3040 Adeline Street
Berkeley 3, Calif.

Mr. Hawks is very sorry but he is unable to write an article for your publication, but has asked that I send you the enclosed material. Members of the working press throughout the country are furnished with this same material for story ideas, column material and so forth. The vital statistics will, I am sure, answer most of the questions regarding the filming problems.

If you do print a story we would appreciate very much your sending us a copy of it.

Thanks for your interest in our production, and continued success in your new venture.

Sincerely,

L. Sherwood
Sec'y

Enc.

"THE THING": WINCHESTER PICTURES PUBLICITY REPORT

SYNOPSIS

An emergency call from a group of scientists working on a secret project at the North Pole brings Captain Pat Hendry (Kenneth Tobey), radio man Warrant Officer Vic MacAuliff (Dewey Martin), co-pilot Lieutenant Eddie Dykes (James Young), navigator Lieutenant McPherson (Robert Nichols) and newspaperman Ned Scott (Douglas Spencer) to the scene from an Air Force base at Anchorage, Alaska.

Scientists Carrington (Robert Cornthwaite) and Chapman (John Dierkes) advise the group that a strange aircraft, composed of metal that is playing havoc with compasses, has fallen a few miles away. Captain Hendry is more interested in Carrington's pretty secretary Nikki, (Margaret Sheridan), than in the fallen plane but nevertheless organizes a search party and flies the group to the location of the ill-fated ship.

They find the craft frozen under ice. It resembles a flying saucer. The craft is completely destroyed, to the chagrin and consternation of scientists, when a thermite bomb is used to melt the ice away from the plane.

As the frustrated searchers start to leave, Captain Hendry spots a weird figure buried in the ice several yards from where the wreck had been. A block of ice containing the figure is cut loose. This is The Thing. It is flown back to the base.

Carrington is furious when Captain Hendry refuses to permit him to free the figure from the ice until after official okay has been given. Scott, too, flares up when refused permission to transmit a story. Complications develop when their radio transmitter goes dead.

An electric flying suit, accidentally thrown over the cake of ice, shortly frees The Thing. It is alive.

We'd like to tell you the rest of the story but you'll have to see it to believe it. The answers to the following questions will give you some idea of what you're in for before the final fade out:

- 1....Is THE THING animal, mineral or vegetable?
- 2....Is THE THING sexed or sexless? How does it propose to populate this planet?
- 3....What is THE THING'S attitude toward women? Men?
- 4....What is the attitude of scientists toward THE THING? How does the military face it?
- 5....Can a torrid human love affair exist and blossom with THE THING filling out the eternal triangle?
- 6....Could THE THING survive the atom bomb?
- 7....Can man's limited mental horizons cope with the problems posed by THE THING?
- 8....Is THE THING a super-intelligent being with thought processes far exceeding those of the human mind or is it an automaton with a mind geared for one purpose--to destroy the human race?

VITAL STATISTICS

In Winchester Pictures' "The Thing" from another world, RKO Radio executives feel that they have a film which is sure to be one of the most talked-about motion pictures released during 1951. Revolutionary in its presentation, serious in theme, and adult in treatment, "The Thing" is a "hold-onto-your-seats" science-fiction story that is powered by suspense and sprinkled with laughs and romance. It is "that" different picture and those who have seen it are predicting it will start a new trend in motion picture making.

Completion of "The Thing" marked fulfillment of a life-long ambition for Producer Howard Hawks. For years, Hawks, rated as one of the screen's top producer-directors, had nurtured the idea of bringing a science-fiction story to the screen as a class "A" feature. Steeped in the importance of public acceptance and timing, Hawks patiently awaited the day when he felt the public was ready for such a picture. Last year, as the number of science-fiction magazines increased from eight to 20, Hawks felt the time had arrived.

• • • • •

Producer Hawks boasts that the screenplay of "The Thing" from another world was turned out in five days. On cross-examination he admits that he and a corps of research workers and writers spent 14 months authenticating story points with electronics engineers, leading scientists and college professors before sitting down to the typewriter for the five days of writing.

To give credence to the story and believability to the characters, Hawks cast 23 little-known players in the featured roles of the film. The fact that Hawks had budgeted the picture at \$1,300,000 and was using unknowns startled money-conscious Hollywood.

To Lee Greenway, make-up man, Producer Hawks handed the assignment of creating the image of the visitor from another planet. Greenway, whose avocations of oil painting and sculpture have won him fame in art circles in both Europe and America, took more than five months to create the image that perfectionist Hawks had in mind. In all, Greenway made 18 sculptures before getting the okay from Hawks.

Five major insurance companies refused Hawks insurance on The Thing itself, although the rest of the cast and the picture were fully insured. Cost of developing The Thing was put at \$40,000. The producer estimated that it would cost twice that amount to replace it after the film went before the cameras as cast and crew would

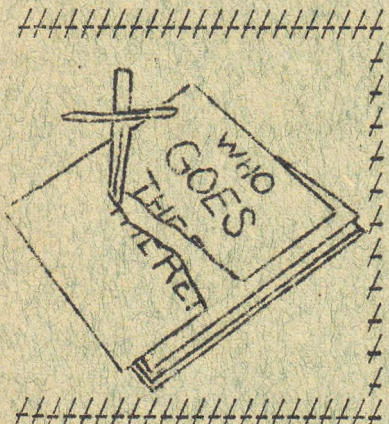
have to remain on the payroll while a new Thing was prepared. His request for \$125,000 worth of protection was nixed on the grounds that The Thing had little chance to finish the film unscathed. During shooting it had to be frozen in a block of ice; hacked by axes; attacked by vicious dogs; set afire and struck by lightning.

Most of the action of "The Thing" from another world takes place in a scientific laboratory, buried in

snow, located at the North Pole. The government has similar experimental stations throughout the arctic. The movie lab set contains over \$500,000 worth of authentic scientific equipment which was borrowed from California Institute of Technology and various industrial and chemical concerns.

Producer Hawks used two location sites away from the studio--one a downtown ice storage plant, the other at Cut Bank, Montana. The trip to Cut Bank, made by over 100 technicians and actors, took place aboard two chartered TWA Constellations. This Montana site was chosen because its terrain closely resembles that of the North Pole area where the story is set. RKO location executives decided against a trek to the Pole area because the company would only have two hours of daylight each day in which to shoot while at Cut Bank they could get the same scenery and eight hours in which to shoot each day. An RKO crew flew over 6,000 miles inspecting sites before choosing Cut Bank.

During the Cut Bank location trip the cast and crew were put to test under severest weather conditions. The town is located about 50 miles South of the Canadian border and 40 miles East of Glacier National Park. Weather during the stay of the Hawks company ranged from 20 to 40 degrees below zero. Camera equipment and electric motors had to be covered with electric blankets during out-of-door shooting. The actors and technicians had to be satisfied with fur-lined pants and parkas.



It took a technical crew of 27 almost five weeks to complete a necessary laboratory set on the below zero, wind-swept plains outside Cut Bank. Blizzards destroyed the first three erected, but the fourth one proved staunch enough to withstand winds hitting up to 60 miles per hour. A duplicate of the set erected on a sound stage at RKO took only one week to build.

One of the most interesting sets in the film is that of an underground greenhouse. RKO Greenman Walter Allen actually spent two months growing lettuce, beans, celery, onions, beets, spinach and strawberries in the "onstage" hothouse under conditions similar to those at which vegetables are grown at the North Pole. Soil is brought in for trays and huge violet ray lights furnish the necessary "sunshine."

RKO's wardrobe department got a real workout rounding up the necessary clothes for the 23 actors. Not only did wardrobe have to get clothes for the cast, but it had to outfit the technical crew as well for none of the technicians had the fur-lined clothes necessary to protect them under the severe sub-zero weather in which the film was lensed. Toughest problem was to get hold of over 100 pairs of fur-lined aviation boots. Since there is little need for such items in Southern California, stores did not stock them. Shoes were finally secured in Canada and the middle west.

"The Thing," hottest movie title of the past decade, turned out to be a headache for Producer Hawks. Two days after the film started shooting, a comedy novelty tune of the same title hit the air-waves. Within a matter of weeks it was the rage. Newspapers and merchants started referring to everything under the sun as The Thing. To avoid confusion between the song and film, which have no relationship to each other--the song is comedy, the film serious drama--Hawks added the appendage "from another world" to the title, "The Thing."

Practically every male member of the cast saw service in World War II. All but one held officer's rank. In "The Thing" from another world, he plays a Commanding General.

Are the movies a force for maturing? To ask that question is, almost, to answer it. Hollywood has become a synonym for vacuity serviced by technical experts: highly profitable vacuity, since a staggering proportion of Americans, young and old, week after week, place themselves under its influence.

Motion pictures became the big business through which unsatisfied men, women, and adolescents in unprecedented numbers were granted a daydream fulfillment of their hopes. The motion picture did not aim to make these unsatisfied people go forth and take positive action to solve their own problems. It aimed to give them a dream that was in itself so thrilling in comparison with reality that they would return, and return again, for further hours of dreaming. So fixed has this money-making formula become that even novels

and dramas of stature and integrity come out of the movie-mill something other than they were: they come out revised to fit the day-dreams of the unsatisfied immature.

----H. A. Overstreet
The Mature Mind

"THE THING": AN EDITORIAL REPORT

"The Thing From Another World" is a dirty, disgusting, vulgar picture. The entire affair is damn stupid and annoying. As for the players, Jim Arness makes an utter fool of himself as The Thing. His fat face refuses to move, and his menacing gestures provoke only revulsion and ridicule.

As we implied last issue, we were adopting the above outline as the International Standard Movie Review. It immediately becomes clear that this outline will fit anything Hollywood is capable of producing. But we stray.

"The Thing"--which may be subtitled "Frankenstein at the North Pole"--was reputedly taken from a story by John W. Campbell called "Who Goes There?" We don't believe it. The picture bore absolutely no resemblance to the story; in fact, you might say they were diametric opposites. For instance, Campbell's yarn took place at the South Pole and the men were Navy scientists. The picture? Well the characters--and we use the word with straight face--were an Air Force group at the North Pole.

About the picture we may say, "There's less here than meets the eye." Aside from a host of inconsistencies which we intend to point out, probably what annoyed us most was the conversion of a fine science fiction story into a typical, crummy Hollywood "horror" picture. True, the original story could be called a "horror" story, but its attraction was developed along these lines: a group of men deliberately ostracize themselves from humanity in an effort to save the planet. The conflict arises because of the monster's ability to assume human form (after having "ingested" the human) and the men's inability to tell human from monster. The horror in the situation is drawn out to a taut thread by a master craftsman, and he puts a constant, unremitting pressure on the reader'till the climax is reached.

But Hollywood? Wow! The old stock-in-trade horror was good enough for the last generation; hence, it must be good enough for this one. (Typical two-valued thinking we undoubtedly don't need to point out.) Therefore, we have such situations as these the Thing is never seen clearly, the audience gets no idea what it looks like.

Or, believe it or not, the one that was old hat just prior to the writing of "Uncle Tom's Cabin": the camp is looking desperately for the Thing which is in hiding. Three so-called scientists, after peering under beds and into test-tubes in their hunt, find blood drops leading to a locker. Bracing themselves, they pull open the door and out comes--a body. The fact that it's the body of a dog has nothing to do with the audience being, for the moment, frightened.

This other contrivance--never allowing the audience to see the Thing--is really worked at. In the Grand Dismount, for example, where the "humans" trap the "monster", the light is coming from a doorway behind it. The actors go to great lengths to

explain why they put out the foreground lights, as they've done in all other such situations involving contact with it, but unfortunately there was so much talking and laughing in the audience we never did find out the reason.

One other horror-provoker must be mentioned: someone at Winchester Pictures has a doorway fixation. In the film, whenever the Thing appears, it is to the accompaniment of a loud crash of a door being flung open and its outlines showing through.

As far as science fiction is concerned, the sight of chin-adorned, grey-goateed extras emulating "scientists" by peering into fuming radar-o-scopes and muttering, "Deflection 14° east" does not a science fiction picture make. And, as we hope we've shown, this can't even be considered a good horror film. So don't wait to start missing this picture. Start missing it now!

With your indulgence, we'd like to discuss some of those inconsistencies and inaccuracies we mentioned earlier. The studio claimed that 14 months were spent in research preparing for the pic. Bear that in mind!

Firstly, the Thing was found to be a vegetable. So, its initial actions were to kill the animals around it to get their blood--it was hungry. That's a perfectly normal reaction, we're sure you'll agree. But it is real bright: it starts chomping on strange animals without making any tests whatsoever. This Thing, it is carefully brought out, is obviously smarter than any man on Earth. You or I, trying the same trick on Mars, could very easily drop dead immediately if not sooner from poisoning. But then, you or I are not as smart as the Thing. (Nor would we have read the script.) Hollywood's reasoning is simple to understand: we eat vegetables. don't we? Well, if you had a big vegetable, it'd follow that it would eat us, wouldn't it?

Now, those of you that know us know too that we've been campaigning for a long time against the haphazard use of the form Homo cf. sapiens. In the picture--naturally--the Thing has the form Homo cf. saps. Since the planet from which it came was not mentioned, it could have come from a planet of another star system, and the form could have been correct. But God! Does anyone have any idea of what you'd need for such a happy coincidence? To begin with, the Thing was vegetable. Therefore, the first requirement is a free-living, motile form of vegetation. However, as we have seen, the baby Things were sessile. Now, this condition is quite common among the lower animals. Can anyone show us a highly specialized form--plant or animal--where it occurs? Yeh, we know, it is from a different solar system so--no rules whatsoever hold.

Second step: Mama and/or Papa grew the babies in earthly soil where they thrived. OK, but the implication must be stated. The soil of the native planet must be similar to ours, and the geochemistry similar too. The atmosphere, water content, processes of erosion, etc. all must be similar also. But the life? Oh, no, you see, this is a planet in a different solar system---

Thirdly, in our geologic history there has been no species which rose to dominance as a solitary unit. In other words, H. saps didn't evolve and reach his present status all alone. There were a couple of other genera and species that gave him competition.

Therefore, we may assume that the Thing was not the only species which took the Homo cf. sapiens form on its own planet. But the Thing was a vegetable. On earth, we have a symbiotic relationship with vegetables although we are the aggressive member.

If that relationship were reversed--as apparently it was--could the plants develop that particular form? We doubt it, but you see, it is a different solar system---

Hoot!. Did you notice what the Eskimo dogs did to it when it got among 'em? They tore off a piece--its arm. (Incidentally, this was a strange reaction for a dog! we know what our dog always does when it gets among plants!) The--ha, ha--the scientists immediately take the arm inside; throw it on an operating table; whip out scalpels, sutures, and clamps; and begin to study. A short time later the beast with five fingers stretches, flexes, and begins to crawl toward the end of the table. Since the heroine was bent over that particular end of the table, we might draw a nasty conclusion. We won't. What we would like to point out is that while regeneration is not too well understood, it does require an essential part of the nervous system. But, you see, it is a different solar system---

Come to think of it, the scene ended at that point. We can't remember anyone ever having explained what they did with the arm. That's short shrift, we're a-thinkin'.

While the master scientist--only one step below van Manderbootz--was pondering a way to discommodate the plant (and ignoring our gleeful shouts of "Use weed-killer!"), hero and heroine figure that broiling it is the best way. So, they lure it into the local officers' Club, and for several moments people keep pouring kerosene, gasoline, and lighter fluid--all lit--over it. It stands there growling (or is that the Thing's way of clearing its throat?) and sizzling; then it jumps out the window and goes running across the ice. This makes for a very effective scene but only proves to us that (1) it has snow-shoe type feet, and (2) its skin has a damn high kindling point. But, as we may have pointed out, it evolved on a world very closely similar to earth. Well, you see, it is a different solar system---

Oddly and conveniently enough, this fugitive from underneath a Thousand Island Crossing had the habit of registering on a Geiger counter. The intensity was terrific; it'd show up a couple of hundred feet away. Fortunately, the audience never does have to look at what the union--made apparent by the happy ending--of hero and heroine produces. This particular part of the audience did wonder, though, how a plant, evolving in an earthly ecology, could get so radioactive. Well, you see, it is a different solar system---

We plunked down \$0.90 a head to see the picture. We were objective enough to notice some good points which only shows how far we'll go to squeeze blood out of a turnip.

The scene where the monster gets among the dogs is beautifully photographed. It was about the only part where we felt the hackles rise.

After having met Mr. Kenneth Tobey--the hero--and having him tell us that "Mr. Hawks read the story in the original German," we were all prepared to dislike him on the screen. We were pleasantly surprised. He did a competent job, and considering the terrible dialogue, we were even more surprised when he didn't ham it up.

Douglas Spencer--the Newspaperman--also was competent. Obviously present as a foil and comic relief, he nevertheless gave the part a bit of extra je ne sais quoi.

One other point must be mentioned. Why are they down on flying saucers? The impassioned speech by the Newspaperman at the end may have been a comfortable stopping point. But God help any real saucers that may be thinking of landing around here! They'll be torn to pieces by the movie-going populace!

Y'know, Campbell's editorial of a few years back has not yet been disproved. If an extra-terrestrial race did plan to contact this race, then they'd sure as hell study us first. And if it turned out that they came in disc-like ships, we could be very embarrassed!

Concluding, then, we feel that this film has set science fiction back ten years. Is George Pal the only one in Hollywood science fiction can trust? When will these pea-brained, puerile "moguls" stop projecting their adolescent fantasies as to what the "public" likes onto the screen? Maturity, thy name is mud. We can only say to Howard Hawks: "More no back come don't and bum-bum-um ~~that~~ with here outta git!"

---- Los and Es Cole

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DEPARTMENT OF USEFUL INFORMATION

This issue's selection has been carefully chosen for all fans who are planning to attend the Nolacon this year.

3rd SELECTION: USEFUL INFORMATION

"Of the parasitic nematodes, one of the largest is Ascaris lumbricoides, which inhabits the human intestine...On hatching, the little worms do not remain in the intestine but take a sort of 'tour' through the body.

"The greatest damage to the host is done during the migrations of the young; the adult worms in the intestine seem to be relatively harmless unless they occur in large numbers. Up to five thousand worms have been found in one host, but even a hundred worms may block the intestine completely and cause the death of the host. Sometimes they wander about the body into the liver, the appendix, the stomach, and even up the esophagus and out through the nose, to the horror of the surprised host.*

"Infection occurs chiefly among people with bad sanitary habits, though it may be obtained in the best establishments from eating inadequately washed fresh salad vegetables.* The worms are common in our southeastern states.*#

Buchsbaum, Ralph. "Animals Without Backbones." First edition, Univ. Chicago Press, 1938. Pp. 160-161

* Italics ours.

A EUROPEAN "MURDER"

Have you ever dreamed of murder, of mass murder, of the destruction of two individuals?

Have you ever seriously considered plunging knives deep into young, healthy bodies, or mixing a pair of peculiarly potent cyanide cocktails?

Have you ever thought of strangulation, guns, or an axe in connection with the disposal of two sub-human lives?

I was happy that day in May; I was happy and my heart was light. I had received much money for my Contax IIA camera, my furlough papers were in my pocket, and I was heading for London and the First International Science Fiction Festival Convention.

I printed to Les 'n' Es: "I'll drop you a line from London. By the way, I've completed research on my socio-economic article concerning Paris culture. What is the deadline for O #3?" Since Les 'n' Es do all mechanical labor like cutting stencils, I let them set all deadlines.

I went to London full of sweetness and light and love for my fellow fen.

The Convention was very enjoyable; by this time you have undoubtedly perused various reports concerning it, so I won't go into details here, just mentioning that I missed Americans' smoke-filled rooms. Anyway, at London I printed to Les 'n' Es: "I'm always working toward bigger and better Orgasms. I'll trap Arthur C. Clarke into doing some material for us.

The first jarring note crept into my life shortly after I returned to France. I received a letter from the Coles full of such typical Cole-isms as "You shoulda seen the monkey that had the heets for Hormie." And in their intellectually obscene way that I have grown to know and love so well, they inquired if I was able to pick up anything from Clarke.

I checked the letter again. No, no deadline date was mentioned.

Since Clarke came through, I mailed his material along with, "...Say, peeplo, you've never told me the deadline date for O #3. And how long do you wish my Paris article?" I have the Coles keep O's backlog of material in California, so they put the magazine together. Subject to my approval, of course... Then, as a bit of bait, I added, "I also picked up a terrific two thousand word article by William F. Temple on "How to Write Serial Science Fiction." I'll send it along later."

That, I thought, should do the trick.

Sure enough, by return airmail, Les 'n' Es postcarded, "Sorry for the card, but we're moving. After June first our address will be... SEND TEMPLE ARTICLE IMMEDIATELY! Love & kisses, L & E."

Naturally, no mention was made about deadline date for O, or the length of my Paris article. About this time I stopped drinking beer...

I airmailed Temple's article and printed--"Are we going to have an Orgasm this summer?"

Days and weeks slipped by without a word. Finally, I rejumblled my Paris notes. Black market prices had changed, and parts of my article were hopelessly outdated. I decided to give them one last and final week, and if they didn't come through, I was going to write a violently vituperative article for Pavlat's Contour, blasting co-editors in general, and my own particular co-editors specifically.

And what a week that was!

Tuesday, I received a letter from Laney. "We're having a Wild Hair session," he wrote, "and we'd like to name you as honorary editor. Would you write a brief editorial for us in support of the insurgent way of life?" "I can't, Tomer," I replied, "I support the insurgent way of life, but I'm waiting for the go-ahead sign or O."

Wednesday, my sergeant spoke to me. "Jake," he said, "you ain't lookin' so well. Been goin' up to Pigalle every weekend?" "Nope," I confessed. "Sarge, I ain't had no beer for three weeks. I'm scared it's begimin' t'show. I been worryin' about the deadline date for O."

Thursday, Collette called from Paris. "You see me soon, no?" "No," I sighed, "word might come through about O and I didn't bother to put in for a weekend pass."

Friday, I fouled up a radiotelephone circuit between two generals. When called before my CO for disciplinary action, my only defense went, "Well, sir. I didn't have my mind on the job. I was planning my editorial for O if THE letter arrives tonight."

Saturday, I brooded in the Library, ignoring A Gnome There Was for Sixgun Legacy. Sunday, I had a sure seven-no-trump doubled-and-re-doubled vulnerable bid, but reneged on the last card. Monday, I was caught trying to screw radio tubes into light sockets.

Now all these trials and tests of sanity I could have stood. My morale was crushed, but my shoulders were still straight and broad. But Monday night I received a post-card from the Coles: "Dear Lee. Did we ever tell you the deadline date for O #3: It's _____, but we might be able to wait two or three days after that. Sorry to get you by the short hairs this way, but it couldn't be helped. Better get your stuff in right away. Letter this weekend. L & E."

The date mentioned is today!

Have you ever dreamed of murder.....?

----- Lee Jacobs

.....

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