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Yngvi is a Louse

A MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION

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THE (THEORETICALLY FILLETED) SHAMBLES for the 34th Mailing and adjacent parts.

OFF TRAILS 34 (Cheslin the AE) Apart from the cover, this is beginning to look more like an OFF TRAILS now. Only there's two ells in "Worrall" Ken.

OFF TRAILS vol IX no 1½ (President Lichtman) A bit out of date (and sequence) now, but I mention it as a springboard for a blast at the Constitution.

I don't like the present Constitution.

For one thing, I can never remember what it says nowadays. I watched the old Constitution grow up and was able to keep gently abreast of it - besides being myself instrumental in its growth. Nowadays I get all confused. It's like Basic English - it's far simpler than ordinary English, only it's a hell of a job trying to remember which words to exclude all the time.

But I've come to the conclusion that there is a more fundamental deficiency in the Constitution than that. In the present one, that is. Previously, every Mailing or so brought proposed amendments, which were voted on and accepted or rejected as the case might be. Thus an admittedly imperfect thing kept on becoming gradually more perfect as time went on. Absolute perfection being in practice (if not in theory) impossible, nevertheless there was a steady movement in the right direction.

When the time came, I voted for the present Constitution as a further step along the road towards Perfection. Even if I'd voted against it it'd have passed, but at the time I saw it as a continuation of what had been going on previously. I now find I was mistaken. It may well be an improvement on what it replaced in every particular but one. But that one underlies everything. The previous Constitution was a living, growing entity. The present Constitution has a built-in bias (or what has proved in practice to be a built-in bias) against change of any sort, and is therefore dead. Stagnant.

Worse, utterly uninteresting. I can't even be bothered to read it again.

SOUFFLE 3 (John Baxter) Or Scuffle or Shuffle or Skiffle or something. No, I didn't know "lunch" meant a penis - I thought it meant a light or lightish mid-day meal. And right here and now I'd like to go on record as objecting in no uncertain terms to euphemisms of that sort. The language loses more good words that way - - - I'm not getting at you John, of course, and in fact I have you to thank for enlightening me on this particular subject. But euphemism in general is beginning to annoy me.

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"BUT IT ISN'T A PHALLIC SYMBOL. IT'S A PHALLUS."  
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SIZAR 8 (Bruce Burn) Clean Lungs - yeah. I'm for it/them. Unfortunately I can't emigrate to New Zealand - I've got some relations there. You know, middle-distance relations. One can steer clear of such in a population of 50 million, but not in a New Zealand-size population. (Well, at least I had an excuse ready).

ENVOY TEN (Ken Cheslin) I like the front cover cartoon for a start. ~~At~~ But enclosed drainage-centres without outlet to the open

sea tend to become even more salt than said open sea. Instance the Caspian, Lake Chad, the Utah Salt Lake, the Australian salt lakes, etc. (Actually I didn't think of your explanation at the time, and on a short term basis it may possibly be correct. Eney? Forward, please.) ~~✓~~ I checkmark points to be picked up in pencil - if the pencil happens to be within reach at the time. I checkmarked your "QUARTERING" review for instance opposite this subject. Otherwise I skim through the zine I'm about to comment on, paying particular attention to reviews of my own zine. As I've done here too.

VAGARY 17 (Bobbie Gray) I'd considered the sawn-off log, decided that appearances from that angle might be deceptive, and was concentrating on the way he was mistreating his bowstring. ~~✓~~ If failure to make sense of cricket is evidence of dimness of wit (as per your WAAF who was "very bright in other directions" - a back-handed compliment if ever I saw one) then I'm in something of the same category. For instance, I've never quite dug how come so many games are "drawn" when it's almost impossible to have an equal score on the scale that runs are normally scored. (Usually well into the hundreds, you North Americans and things). I liked your "Camp Comedian" WAAF story though. I haven't liked what I've seen of the new Coventry Cathedral in pictures. I don't know whether I've seen the thing itself or not. I've passed through central Coventry a number of times, and have seen something that may or may not be the Cathedral - it looks more like a factory. Possibly it is a factory. I honestly don't know. But then, I'm not all that fond of the more traditionally shaped cathedrals, either. Though at least they're usually in keeping with their surroundings. ~~✓~~ Apart from mentioning that "St Patricia" reminds me somewhat of another Canadian, Eric Ericson, about whom I suspect that a certain Irish fan knows more than has been publicly revealed, I think I'll leave her severely alone. One can have too much of that sort of thing.

WHATSIT 2 (Ken Cheslin) This "Thrice Yearly Publishing Organisation" suggestion is made at a highly appropriate time, because I'd been going to raise the subject in any case - not from the angle of another new apa (the only new apa fandom needs is one for monapans only, just to see what the multiapans would do about it) (I wouldn't join it in any case, because I'm in OMPA already) (finish the sentence Mercer before it strangles you) but from the angle of OMPA reform. The point is, I've come to the belated conclusion that December's the worst possible time to have an apa mailing. Either the December Mailing should be put back to January, or brought forward to November, or abolished altogether. In view of the already-existent difficulties that would be aggravated by a two-month gap between either September and November or January and March, I think the third course would be preferable. In that case, it might make sense to reorganise the office-holding system so that the new slate takes over with the March Mailing. ~~✓~~ Your questionnaire was hilarious - if you don't mind me asking, have I perchance met any of the contestants on my assorted trips to Stourbridge? I tend to suspect I may have done.

PACKRAT 5 (Jim Groves) Private Members' bills aren't part of Question Time, though. Question Time (one hour per sitting-day) is devoted, in theory exclusively, to cross-examination of government ministers on any subjects for which they ~~are/are not~~ have any responsibility. Private Members' time for bills is something else. In theory, any MP has the right to introduce a bill, but unless time can be found to discuss it, he needn't have bothered. In every session, therefore, a certain amount of time is allocated to private members for dealing with their bills, and a ballot is held at the

beginning of the session for priority in the use of that time. The half dozen or so MPs who head the ballot stand a good chance of their pet bills becoming law, particularly if the government looks benevolently on the project in question. There is also debating time allotted to private members on a similar system, during which various subjects may be thoroughly thrashed out without legislation being involved. There is also the adjournment, when the House is about to rise, when any MP can introduce a motion on a subject that he claims to be of urgent public importance, and if the Speaker agrees that it is so, it is debated there and then. ~~///~~ That "the primary purpose of the law is the protection of the law-abiding" is, you say, a "basic axiom about which it is no use arguing". What, I immediately thought, about the Law of Gravity for example? Actually you're probably right, but when someone says that it's "no use arguing" about something I immediately smell a rat, that's all.

CONVERSATION 19 & 20 (Lynn Hickman) At first I thought that the nudes were an attempt to show Rackham how it's supposed to be done. Then I saw they were Rackhamart. And the term "mechanical nude", whether intentionally or no, takes on a new meaning I notice. Good work - Hickman-type reproduction obviously suits Rackham's style better than ordinary wax stencil does. ~~///~~ As for No. 20, thumbs down I guess.

ERG 14 (Terry Jeeves) Here one sees Rackham in a different light. I admit that I know nothing whatsoever about art, but obviously art is going to be judged by results, not by methods. No matter what fabulous techniques go into the cutting of a stencil, they alone cannot make a thing good art if they don't reproduce as the artist hopes.

SCOTTISHE 30 (Ethel Lindsay) Re Sharon Towle's letter, I'd tend to say that whilst living conditions (weather apart) are much the same for any given category of people all over England (I don't know much about Scotland etc but I suspect the same applies there too), the people themselves are vastly different between north and south. Even between Lincoln (which is only marginally north) and the south. A Lincoln person is more casually friendly than a southerner (such as myself) but a true northerner is far more so. In Bristol I can walk into an office in which two girls are working, go to a filing cabinet, look something up, and walk out again without a word being spoken by any of us. That would be impossible in Lincoln, let alone further north. ~~///~~ Cheers for MachiaVarley, Sid Birchby, and all your fabulous string of correspondents. Oh - and Walt of course.

Binary II (Joe Patrizio) This War on Want business - the article was written in the sort of style that I'd expect to find in, say, the Daily Sketch. If it was to appear in the Daily Sketch (which I take for BC) I might glance through it if I had a minute to spare, but I certainly wouldn't take it seriously. I only read it through carefully and critted it because it appeared in a fanzine, the perpetrator of which moreover asked openly for such treatment. Your justification of it gets more reasonable towards the end, but I was going by what the article seemed to say, not (emphatically) the merits of the cause itself. The article seemed to ask - hysterically - why we could go on having a good time when people were starving. "Equal misery for all" (now where did I get that expression from?) was the impression it gave me.

BIXEL 2 (Alva Rogers) H'm - I thought I'd have something specific to say about this, but it doesn't look like it. Harry Warner's col,

I may as well say while I'm here, takes tops, and The Gospel According thing takes bottoms. Otherwise the standard is generally high.

MORPH 29 (John Roles) I do 75 copies of AMBLE - that is, I use slip-sheets in pre-counted packs of 75 which gives me 76 copies. My main trouble is lack of suitable working space. In Cheltenham and then in the underground penthouse I was even more crowded than in the caravan. Now things are a bit different, but the only really satisfactory surface I think would be a long bench of workbench-height. Perhaps I can try standing my new portable table on something next time. For size it's ideal. Previously I had to stand the flat-bed, the ink-tray and the paper on three different things of different heights. ~~##~~ I think I mentioned that if I'd had my release deferred I stood a good chance of making sergeant in the near future. But I'd sooner be a civvy than a sergeant any day. I just don't like discipline for discipline's sake, and I would never wish on somebody else what I wouldn't willingly undergo myself.

IT'S CHRISTMAS IN TEXAS looked somewhat mysterious - almost, I thought, like an Ellis Mills zine except that you could read it. Which was odd, because I was under the impression that Ellis Mills had disappeared from the scene long ago, an impression sedulously fostered by Ellis Mills himself by dint of not appearing on it. I see from OFF TRAILS that I was somewhat mistaken in this. Ellis (welcome home mate) - if you haven't received any AMBLES between 5 and 11, how come? Or are those the only two that move you to comment? ~~##~~ From the context, I assume that Palmer and Sneed are golfers. But for all I know of things golfish they could equally well be US Senators or congressmen, TV personalities, baseballers, news commentators or what have you. Sorry. ~~##~~ From the appendices, one is given to wonder how you have time to do anything. The answer, of course, is that you don't, hence the long loud silences. But at least this is all legible.

paraFANalia 10 (Bruce Burn) The best issue of yours I've seen for a long time, Bruce. The snippets of NewZ are full of, of all things, considerable interest for a start. ~~##~~ I've come to the conclusion that the positions of the Ban-the-bomber and the Don't-ban-the-bomber are irreconcilable. I say that from a position that sympathises with both while agreeing with neither. (Like I don't see things in as clear-cut terms as the advocates of the various policies seem to). Emotionally, I'd like to be a Ban-the-bomber - it's just that I don't accept wholeheartedly their aims and things, though I admire them tremendously for having them. ~~##~~ I never noticed any particular conspiracy of silence on the matter, though perhaps the News Chronicle (which in those days was my one daily paper) doesn't count. However, it does occur to me that a conspiracy of silence is just as good a weapon as is passive resistance, and not all that dissimilar to it, either. I can think of a number of subjects that can best be countered by conspiracies of silence, and in fact I rather think that some of them are being. Certain notoriously ego-centric titled characters who used at one time only to lift a finger for the reporters to come running seem lately to have disappeared from the press altogether - and about time too.

Of course, there's the point of view that a newspaper has a duty to publish things it disapproves of just as much as things it does - however much it may belittle them by way of editorial comment. On the other hand, it's obvious that no paper can possibly print everything that is reported to it, and much stuff that has no particular relevance requires eliminating. It's sometimes hard to deter-

mine just where the boundary lies between suppression of essentials and elimination of inessentials. If several papers with widely differing political viewpoints see eye to eye on some specific thing (such as the CND) it could be that they're right. However. And incidentally, fandom could do with one or two conspiracies of silence right now.

"Gods Like Grass" (so do cows, come to think of it - never mind, back to the subject) I found tremendously interesting. There are, surely, cases where a plant visibly grows from the seed without the latter being buried - I've seen pictures of coconut palms thuswise, and I think there must be others - but that aspect apart, the argument hangs together excellently. ~~But~~ But surely one can't claim activity-credit for something that one has not done oneself. Or do you mean - - - after all, if Heracles could cope with a similar quantity - - -

ENVOY 11 (Dick Schultz) The first half of this conrep was excellent - took me right there, and I found myself revelling in it. The second half was a letdown - not your fault, Dick, but the fault of things outside your control (unless you were to have ignored them). Specifically, I found myself being no end grotched by Sturgeon's antics. That's one form of humour I hate - even if Olsen and Johnson did do it even more cruelly. I only recovered at the very end, on the last conrep-page but one, where you started slinging the tyoes around somewhat catastrophically. I was just wondering what "a funch of fans" reminded me of when, just four lines lower down, I hit the ceiling. And this is a high room as rooms go, too. ~~Same~~ Same page, you suggest that your "yellow press" has a larger mass audience than ours. I'm given to understand that in fact ~~cuts~~ out-circulates yours by a good deal. The reason for this is that a British national paper circulates throughout Great Britain - and Ireland too if they want it - whereas an American paper, though it circulates in an area twice as big as the British Isles, doesn't cover more than a fraction of the total population of the US.

NOTED - UL 9 (Norm Metcalf).

AFTERTHOUGHTS AND THINGS - somewhere Bruce Burn brought up the subject of how the Common Market, if Britain joins it, will hurt New Zealand. This is something that one sees mentioned everywhere, and which frankly I don't dig - though I'm open to argument, natch. The facts as I see them are as follows. Britain has a bigger population than she can produce the food for at home. Therefore Britain has to import food or starve, and the only way to pay for that food is to export non-food products. New Zealand, on the other hand, has a population of - less than a twentieth of ours, inhabiting roughly the same area as our fifty-odd million. And the New Zealanders produce far more food than they can eat. So if the worst came to the worst and both countries were thrown back on their own resources with no outside contacts, the British would literally starve until the population reached a viable level, whereas the New Zealanders would only have to do without imported manufactures. Now the existence of a country that cannot feed itself is, to my mind, ridiculous, and should never have been allowed to happen in the first place. An attempt is now being made to do something about it. I'm in favour.

On filing the Mailing, I chance to observe that it isn't "Christmas" in Texas, it's "CRISTMAS" - or, more probably, "GRISTMAS". Another corny pun, I guess. Also, I now seem to have two SOUFFLES No. 3 - both different.

SAVOYARD 8/SPELEOSAVOY Menace (Bruce Pelz) I file my fanish correspondence, always have done. At first I only used to file the inward stuff, but before long I started taking carbons too. I find it extremely useful for referring back to obscure points - and also for understanding what the replies are about. I let it accumulate for a year, then sort everything out into its constituent fans, staple each fan-bundle tidily together, arrange them alphabetically, and stash them together in a similar box to those I keep fanzines in. ~~Re~~ Re G&S, Gilbert's words are of course brilliant - and therefore lose much of their effect if one hears them only, whether sung or recited. Sullivan's music is seldom in the same class, being mostly of a meretricious nature. His one strong point, to my mind, is that he can write a good rousing marching tune, but there the tunes have to suffer the fatal handicap of being written deliberately for singing rather than playing, and being therefore very difficult to consider on their own merits. The only piece of music known to me that Sullivan wrote for musical performance as distinct from vocal, the overture "Di Ballo", is so utterly meretricious I don't know why he bothered. If only he could have headed a Sousa-type band though - - -

PHENOTYPE Op Crif CCXVIII (Dick Eney) 218 I guess. ~~I~~ I wasn't able to answer for sure a single one of your quiz-questions, Dick. I'm not particularly worried though - I don't like quizzes anyway. As I was saying to John Baxter recently, either I know the answer (in which case it's too easy), or I don't know the answer (in which case it's too hard) or I'm not entirely sure of the answer (in which case it's not fair). ~~Re~~ Re the Bering Straits and all that arctic jazz, see my notes on ENVOY TEN above.

BIG DEAL 3 (Dave Hale) Did you ever contemplate reporting Sweet Freda Anderton to this lodgings warden character rather than letting her do it re you? Because it sounds as if she badly needs striking off - among other things. But then you <sup>know</sup> these golden-hearted northerners - come to think of it, was she a genuine northerner? ~~I~~ I tried a couple of short seasons youth-hostelling, then bought a tent. The main trouble, I found, was that either one planned one's itinerary in advance - which I found unduly restrictive - or one ran a very strong risk of finding a full house - unless it was raining badly, when they did usually make an extra effort. But as in those days, just about every kind of food - including bread - was on ration, an unexpected guest might still have to go to bed hungry. ~~EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION~~ does nothing to me, I'm afraid. Sorry.

KOBOLD 3 (Brian Jordan) So not only does one require a first-class brain to get a worthwhile degree, one requires a dedication above and beyond the call of human nature to get into the fred university even. I think, after all, I'm better off in my present uneducated state.

ANOTHER AFTERTHOUGHT - Bobbie said somewhere that she didn't care for loud noises. I think I know what you mean, Bobbie - when I'm trying to hold converse with you, I don't care for them either. You have one of the quietest speaking voices I've ever met. Trying to talk with you against the background of a Liverpool tape-recorder, for instance, is a frustrating experience for both of us.

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THE LAIR

BURROUGHS, Edgar Rice ... At the Earth's Core

Thanks to Ace, I now have the (first) four published Pellucidar novels.

MAD IN ORBIT - I don't think I'll bother to list any more MAD paperbacks, but just let future ones be taken for granted. In the mean time, here is a list (complete, I think/hope) of the first baker's dozen:

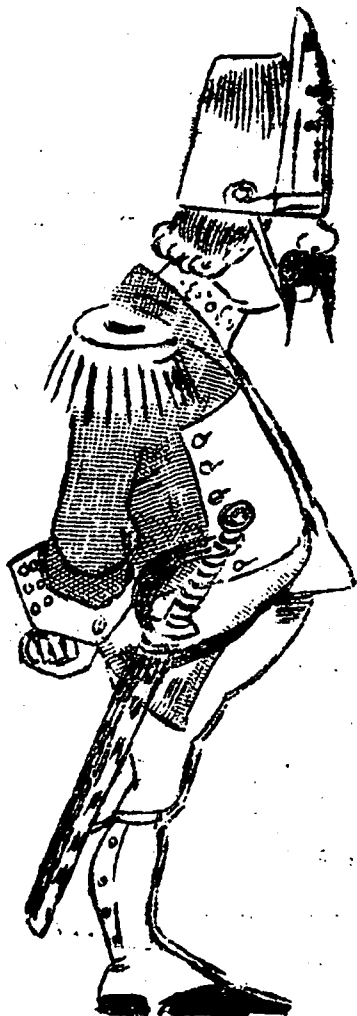
- Ballentine
1. The MAD Reader
  2. MAD Strikes Back
  3. Inside MAD
  4. Utterly MAD
  5. The Brothers MAD

- Signet
6. The Bedside MAD
  7. Son of MAD
  8. The Organisation MAD
  9. Like, MAD
  10. The Ides of MAD
  11. Fighting MAD
  12. The MAD Frontier
  13. MAD in Orbit

No. 2 in the series of Famous Freds is

FREDERICK THE GREAT

of Prussia and parts adjacent thereto. Jim Cawthorn has drawn him with a moustache on the grounds that it suits him.



And no wonder he's scowling - he's got to face a lettercol called SCRAMBLE, and gaze on the words of Colin Freeman, who Scribbles (9 January 1963):

"That's a beautiful expression 'comparatively superlative', but surely it's not synonymous with 'bester', which is superlatively comparative. The former is 'betterest'."

+ What about 'deciduously coniferous' ?

"Actually, I'm not as fanatically anti-common market as everybody seems to think. If I thought that the E.E.C. would help create a united world then I'd be all for it, but I somehow feel it may do just the opposite. The Community appears to be striving to become another Big Power Bloc, shutting out the rest of the world, and I feel the politicians will come out on top again and not the idealists. In the Commonwealth we have emotional and economic ties with Asian and African countries - all colours and creeds. De Gaulle and Adenauer are more active than Linard and Klemm, and more influential I'm afraid."

+ And therefore, need all the more help, + surely?

Jim Cawthorn not only draws, he writes (also 9 January 1963):

"I think an effective reply to Espresso Coffee would be to send Italy the English Loaf, as repulsive and rubbery an object as ever factory churned out. The refrigeration company I work

for have been proudly publishing pictures of Hot-Cross Buns being put on ice ready for Easter 1963 - in December 1962. Ugh."

+ I'd be sorely tempted to call that sort of thing unchristian, myself - forty + days (and nights) might conceivably be symbolically significant, but three + fredlike months! These buns aren't manufactured - they're published.

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OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE - the column where anything can happen but seldom if ever does

TALKING ABOUT BRISTOL We were doing last time - at least I was. Further to what I said then, I've discovered circumstantial evidence to the effect that what is now the harbour is actually the original course of the river, and the present river bed is of artificial construction. When one comes to consider, that's the obvious way it would be done, too. Furthermore, I forgot one Avon last time, which I shouldn't have - it rises near this one's source, but flows south instead of west, coming out at Christchurch (Hants).

I've been thinking, though - Bristol in many ways is very similar to London. London was probably in continuous existence first, but both places existed in Anglo-Saxon times, as ports rather than administrative centres. Neither seems to have been any sort of county seat, and in fact both were situated right on the river that formed the county boundary at that point. Both, however, have for hundreds of years had virtual county status in their own right.

Both are situated on tidal rivers, at the lowest point that could conveniently be bridged. The Thames counts as a major river on the British scale, whereas the Avon is only a tributary of an even more major river - the Severn - but one way and another both places are more or less equivalently situated as regards interior communications. They're both in about the same latitude, the old city centres being maybe 120 miles apart. London faces east, whereas Bristol faces west. Thus London's natural overseas trading area would include the Channel coast, the North Sea, and the Baltic, whilst Bristol's would tend to be somewhat more distant - the Bay of Biscay, the Iberian peninsula, and the Mediterranean. And, once it had been discovered, the New World of course.

In general, though, the two places would seem to be fairly evenly matched. I have read that in Elizabethan (the First) times, Bristol was England's second city, London then as now being first. Nowadays, it is no longer second - nor third nor fourth, and is probably somewhere round the tenth place. And though Bristol is still growing, the Greater London area nowadays contains more than a dozen times the population of the Greater Bristol area.

And I'm wondering precisely why.

The only obvious reason I can think of offhand is that London has all along had the added drawing-power of being the administrative capital. This may be the only or main reason, but it still leaves open the question of why London rather than Bristol was originally selected. But whatever the reason was, so far as I'm concerned it's operated entirely in Bristol's favour. Bristol's now a nice handy size. London's ridiculous.

IT HURRS, ... I've managed to hold this down to eight pages this time. I ~~was~~ ... wanted to talk about Marchette Chute's biographies, and lengthen the lettercol, and like that - who knows, next issue may be down to six ... or four ... or two ... or ... no! NO! NOT THAT !!! 13Jan63 AM