

THIS HERE IS DIASPAR NO. 4 ²⁷/₃₃

and it comes to you without benefit of dummying, previously-written copy, correction fluid, or clergy. There'll be nothing herein but mailing comments, because it's got to be either a full DI minus comments or comments minus anything else. This time you get the comments, Mr. Lyons (it was you, wasn't it?). Nexttime you may get the full treatment, which includes artwork, dummied edges, masterpieces of fanfiction (tsk, and in a family fanzine, too), comments and discussion on last DI, acid, vitriol, and the Rack. Then again, you may get just mailing comments again. And speaking of which...

READ ANY GOOD FAPAZINES LATELY?

KER:: I know what a Hittite is from Egyptian history, but who/what was/is a Thinite? # Do you mean Elmer Perdue compiled a history of the future as complete as the one you describe? Elmer Perdue? Do you mean the Elmer Perdue who has been...? # Well really, why read a book or go to a movie when you can watch a baseball game? # Agreed, there seem to be indications that there was a beginning to the universe, but the basic concept is the same whether you consider God or the universe as having always existed. Indications have nothing to do with it. # As for the writing of the Bible, I can only quote my reference, which on second reading does not say exactly what I thought. Hendrik van Loon, in "The Story of the Bible," says: "...please don't ask me 'when the Bible was written,' because I could not answer you. Every little Jewish village and every little Jewish temple possessed certain accounts of its own which had been copied on the skins of animals or on bits of Egyptian papyrus by pious old men, who took an interest in such things. Sometimes small collections were made of different laws and of prophecies for handy use among those who visited the temple. During the eighth century century B. C., when the Jews had settled down to their life in Palestine, those compilations grew larger and larger. At some time or other between the third and the first century before our era, they were translated into the Greek language, and were brought to Europe. Since then they have been translated into every language of the world. As for the New Testament, its history is quite simple. During the first two or three centuries after the death of Christ, the followers of the humble carpenter of Nazareth were forever in danger of trouble with the Roman authorities. The doctrines of love and charity were thought to be very dangerous to the safety of the Roman state, which had been founded upon the brute strength of the sword. The early Christians...got their information from secret little pamphlets which were passed from hand to hand. Thousands of such pamphlets were copied and re-copied, until people lost all track of the truth of their contents. Meanwhile, the Church had been triumphant. ... The (head of the) Church called together a number of learned men. They read all the accounts which were popular, and discarded most of them. ...seven hundred years after the death of Christ the New Testament (as we know it) was definitely adopted by the Churches of the East and those of the West." # Loved the stick people, but didn't think too much of the story up front.

TARGET: FAPA:: I don't know if gin would work or not, but Dave Rike used wood alcohol, I believe, in his ditto, and got results. Regular ditto fluid works better, but in a pinch alcohol will do the job.

GOOD NEWS:: I'm interested Jack, in this Scn. business. Just how do you get this knowledge of immortality? Been reading Bridey Murphey? (Speaking of whom, my favorite part is where she continually tells her pastor or whatever after he dies, "See, pastor? There's no Purgatory! See? No Purgatory!")

GEMZINE:: Odd that in this one mailing we get long letters from Wetzel in two different publications. It was a hard decision, but I think his stuff here is the most fuggheaded (there's more of it, for one thing). # Really, don't you think you were being a bit touchy with Marilyn Tulley? I mean, for a minute there I thought typing all that Wetzel stuff had Had Its Effect. # Enjoyed the issue immensely, but have no comments at the moment. As a smattering of fact, most of it is Wetzel, and he doesn't need any comment.

LIGHT:: The first issue in many a moon which has interested me, though, some of your so-called humorous remarks left me cold. It continually appalls (sp?) me how many people in FAPA and elsewhere seem to think that the mere addition of sex to a joke automatically makes it funny, despite the joke's inherent lousiness. I shouldn't have just said sex, but also profanity and general subjects or terms considered taboo. It reminds me of children tittering at dirty jokes they can't understand...just the fact that they are dirty automatically makes them screamingly funny. Of course, it may be simply an overdeveloped love of rugged individualism which prompts you to such blatherings, Les, but you're not the only offender. Wee Willy Clod is the main one...I find it fantastic that everyone likes his stuff so much. Personally, some of my favorite jokes (most, as a matter of fact) sound like they'd been dipped in concentrated filth, as Dave Rike would put it. But they happen to be good jokes. # Actually, to my mind a dirty joke has to be pretty goddamned dirty to be much good (speaking in a sweeping generality here and allowing many exceptions)...this is because humor is built on the ridiculous, and when jokes get filthy they also become pretty ridiculous ("the hell with your daughter, how much for the cow?" comes to mind as ridiculous, but it's really not very filthy...I could mention some pretty filthy ones, but not here in front of the postal inspectors and everyone). But in a fanzine you have to watch out for the aforementioned p.i.'s, which cuts down your number of available good jokes considerably. # As for anyone who eats a can of beans becoming a Pig Noise Fan...well hey, I heard a really good one the other day: "Beans, beans, the musical fruit; makes everybody go rooty-toot-toot!" Hoho! # But like I say, I enjoyed this (#63 under surveillance this time, I forgot to mention).

WHAMMY & NOTED:: I was wondering when I read these just why so many fans feel a compelling urge to put out a one-shot whenever they get together and have the wherewithall handy. The results are seldom worth much. But I guess it boils down to the fact that fans like to publish, and one-shots are things they can do together and enjoy. And no matter how cruddy the final product, it invariably brings back memories later, which service should not be overlooked by fans trying to Take The Long View when contemplating one-shots.

IT CAME FROM BOX 203:: I dislike both your Pre-FAPA and Warner's FAPA for the same reason: both, it seems to me, lead in a short time to a separate APA. If our wading listers want to set up their own APA, then by all means let them...but that's their business, not ours. # I am highly in favor of requiring wading listers to write in after every mailing in order to stay on the list, and I think it would solve a good deal of our troubles. For instance, Perdue is obviously out at long last...but look who's #1 on the wading list: Val Walker. Walker published something like two fanzines (issues) during his entire fan career, which terminated long ago. I think I'd rather have Perdue than one who publishes not at all!

FANTASY AMATEUR JR.:: Last I heard from the Graham petition was from Bob Bloch, who signed it and passed it on--to whom, I have no idea.

ELMURINGS:: A better zine than last time...but he needed eight pages. How many here--nine? Nein! # I am amused by Elmer's numbering each issue #1...apparently between issues he forgets that he's ever published anything before.

SOUNDING OFF!:: Well dammit, if you don't like the looks of Horizons, why did you use exactly the same format here?

NULL-F #3:: The cover is simply fabulous...best color work I've seen yet, particularly in choice of colors. The drawing is good, too, as are all of Harness' in here. He has improved immensely since his early stuff, which had Cartier's style but not his knowledge of anatomy. # Loved the foofs and Leeh's bits too. # In fact, I liked this damn mag. NULL-F #2:: Also enjoyed.

SAMBO:: You are another of them people I was bitching about in the review of LIGHT. Fortunately, a goodly percentage of your jokes are amusing...but damn near every one has to do with sex, which implies a one-track mind, at best. Really, it does get a bit tiresome, you know. # I'll bet you really flip over ALICE.

WENDIGO:: I just knew Wetzel would be an atheist! # Someone should make a collection of this boy's pieces, and publish them as "The Worst of Wetzel". # Wonderful stuff herein, Dutch.

PHANTASY PRUSS:: Enjoyed muchly, particularly the reminiscing. But I'm just a damned ole timebinder at heart, anyway.

STEFANTASY, both of 'em:: Is this Wilimczyk that Larry Shaw was rooming with the Frank Wilimczyk who used to publish for FAPA (I think) in the early '40's? I noted an illo in ~~THE~~ INFINITY by someone named Wilimczyk, and I recall that the chap I'm thinking of did some purty good art for his own zines (tho in a much different style than the one in INFINITY--but that could be explained by the passage of a decade-and-a-half). # The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE FICTION ad was wonderful, wonderful!

WRAITH:: I watch Gobel occasionally, but usually I'm nowhere near a TV set on Sat. nites. I recall one night I was home and turned on "Gunsmoke"...yeeghod! I tuned in Gobel rapidly. # Letter writing seems to be becoming a lost art in general fandom, too, Wrai, among the newer members. I recall that the new Dallas

fans rarely ever write letters of more than two or three paragraphs, at least from all indications. Quite a few of the other newer fans aren't very prolific letterwise, either. Perhaps the fact that so many fans are using their fmz as equivalent to letters is cutting down the output, but I dunno. Probably we've just got more new fans than usual who have little to say.

...tsk, and at the moment I find myself in the same position. Must remember to do my comments nexttime right after reading the mags.

Tennyrate, I do have a few words to say on a subject having little to do with FAPA (being about something called science fiction; I think one or two of you have heard of it). Subject is ACClarke's latest novel, "The City and the Stars". I've seen nothing about this anywhere, but happened to run into the book down at the library. It is based loosely on Ego's earlier "Against the Fall of Night," which fans with long memories will recall (DIASPAR, natch, comes from that, being the "city" in the title of the latest book)...actually, "City and the Stars" seems to use none of the writing of the original novel, but much of the general plot and background and characters. It is "Against the Fall of Night" as it would have been if Clarke had written it for the first time just now.

When I first read ATFON I considered it the greatest stf novel ever written, which conviction was shaken considerably when I read "Earth Abides"...but a recent rereading of ATFON (about two months ago) convinced me that my memories of it were not merely the usual remembrances of things past concerning the first stf I'd read. The novel is wonderful...not for its characterization, which is shallow, but for its sense of wonder (copyright, SAM). The sense of wonder was still there on rereading, which convinces me that it is an integral part of the story (indeed, the thing which makes it what it is), and not an invention of memory.

This sense of wonder business has been bandied about considerably of late, leading to some dreadfully repetitious writing by SAM and a wonderful (if rather unfair) satire in INSIDE. I was of the opinion, myself, that the sense of wonder came from the first few stories read by a fan before the glow of the strange new stuff wore off, but some recent readings have convinced me otherwise. There was Kummer's "Worlds Within Worlds," for instance, in a circa-1940 TWS, which I recently read for the first time.. It was a pretty terrible novel, but by God it had a sense of wonder...and happily enough for one interested in studying this sense of wonder, it was one of those stories with the skeleton showing. From a study of the skeleton of this, correlated with thoughts on ATFON and "City & Stars," I'd say that one wonderful way to achieve the wonder effect is simply to put a little scientific extrapolation in the god-dam story. You rarely see that any more...or at least, any original extrapolation (there are many standard extrapolations used today).

(Darnit, I'm going to have to go on to the fifth page to finish this...nothing to say, indeed!)

Seems to me the essential ingredient of the sense of wonder is the taxing of the imagination. That's why the first few stf stories read have it...even the mildest extrapolations are daring at that point. But after awhile you've read the standard extrapolations,

and your mind falls into a groove when you're reading the same old stuff again. There is no taxing the imagination: you've already accepted the same promises many times.

But every once in awhile you run into a new idea (understand me; I'm not speaking of new plot twists or any such things, but of new scientific ideas), and your mind is jarred out of its rut. The sense of wonder is back.

For a really good sense of wonder, the extrapolation has to be acceptable, else you go on reading with a what-the-hell-I'll-play-your-silly-game attitude. That's why fantasy can rarely supply the sense of wonder (the Lovecraft mythos and a few others have it because they are so fully and logically developed).

To get back to "The City and the Stars"...I consider this the greatest sf novel ever written, far better than ATTON because it is a version containing all of its virtues and not quite all of its faults. The sense of wonder here is tremendous, because it is logical and carried to a tremendous extreme. Naturally, the more sweeping and daring the extrapolation the greater the sense of wonder (provided it is logically acceptable).

Science fiction can have merit in many ways, the generally accepted one today being in social extrapolation. It can also treat the same problems as does mainstream fiction, but this is not its particular forte. It seems to me that the sense of wonder is its forte more than anything else, with the possible exception of social extrapolation (I place it above the latter because the problems handled by social extrapolation can be handled by mainstream fiction as well in many cases).

...which ends my longwindedness on this subject, and I guess should end the issue. Might as well. See you next time,

Terry Carr



