

Inspiration

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In case anyone is interested, this is being done by one Lynn Bridges, 7815 Navy, Detroit 9, Michigan. He is sole editor, writer, and for once, publisher of everything to be found herein -- so you know where to send the atomic bomb.

PROLOGUE

For the first time in 4 years, INSP is being done by a civilian. I'd hoped that this could be somewhat of a super issue, as issues of INSP go, but such is not to be. Army discharge came too late for me to do anything but bang out the usual very few haphazard pages. Only the lateness of the mailing is allowing this to be done at all, another good argument in favor of getting the mailings out on schedule. Nor does there seem to be any chance of improvement in the near future, for starting next month I shall be going to an engineering school at night 5 nights of every week while working 6 days a week.

Four years of army life is a long time, and right now the reaction of return to civilian status has me feeling quite lazy. I suppose it will wear off. At first glance, those four years seem to be so much wasted time. All the training for civilian occupations which the army is supposed to give hardly applies in my case, since I was no specialist and went to none of the myriad of army schools. I had such prosaic duties as infantry rifleman, basic training instructor, and general clerk. On returning to civilian life, I'm getting my old job and am at the same same stage that I was 4 years ago.

Yet, in other ways I was lucky. No physical injuries, and I even have very few unpleasant memories as reminders. All in all, those 4 years did me no harm, and I can see now that they weren't entirely wasted. I was 23 when I went in, and in many ways still a kid. I matured more during those past 4 years than would have been possible as a civilian. Physically there is little change. I look about the same -- a few pounds heavier and in better shape possibly -- but that's about all. The big change is in mental attitude. I've learned to take orders, unpleasant ones, and also to give orders. I've held jobs of reasonable responsibility and have proven to myself that I could handle them. There's a feeling of self-confidence that I never had before, something I've always needed. There's also more of a healthy tendency to think things thru to a logical conclusion. There is also quite a bit more cynicism in my attitude towards almost anything, but I'm hoping most of that will wear off before long.

BACK TO FANDOM

Now that I'm somewhat firmly settled, I'll have more opportunity for fan activities -- despite a very curtailed amount of time. To date, my scattered prozine and fanzine collections, such as they are, have not been assembled, but I do have a place to work and such things as a brand new duplicator to work with, which puts me in reasonable condition.

But I can't say that I have any really great incentive towards fan activity. I'm interested in it, and have been ever since I found out about fandom some 5 or 6 years ago. But the, to me, unhealthy tendency of fandom to drift away from science-fiction and fantasy literature into a world of its own continues, and that is one thing I wish to stay away from. A little of this business of fandom for itself is alright, but not to the extreme to which it is carried by many fans. I'm still old fashioned enough to be interested in science-fiction first and fandom second.

DO WE NEED SUBSCRIPTION TYPE FANZINES ?

Somehow I can't help but disagree with Croutch, Widner, and the others who are proclaiming that the main need in FAPA is more general fanzines of the type associated with subscription fanzines. To me, most of the individually done FAPAZines are more interesting -- which is by no means intended as being anything against the contributions of either Croutch or Widner. Both usually are always near the top of the list in their offerings.

But the place for that type of fanzine is as a subscription fanzine, to be distributed or sold to fandom as a whole rather than to the specialized group of fans who are FAPA members. Much more interesting in FAPA are those individual type of fanzines which are to be found nowhere else and which present each writers ideas on the various topics which come up in FAPA.

However, Croutch has an excellent point in objecting to those fanzines which read just like a letter, and in which the writer just starts in and goes thru the entire mag without so much as an apparent break. It adds greatly to the readability and interest of a FAPAZine if it is at least divided up into separate topic headings, as is HORIZONS.

INSP is probably what Croutch considers a letter type fanzine, and perhaps justly so. It is composed directly onto the stencil, and usually I have no more than a general idea of what I intend to write, if I have that much. I do it that way because I like it better, altho it was originally done because I had no time to do it any other way. In my case, at least, it makes for more individuality and a less stilted style of writing, altho it certainly makes things worse from the standpoint of spelling and grammar.

In FAPA, we generally expect things a bit different from that usually found in other fanzines. I don't mind subscription types of variety fanzines, but I certainly don't want to see them in place of the individual type of work usually found in FAPA.

FAPA MEMBERSHIP, AGAIN

Loney suggests raising the membership limit to 75, an idea with which I heartily agree, so long as there are at least 10 more qualified applicants. certainly 10 more cranks of the handle aren't going to overtax anyone, nor is the job of stapling 10 more copies each 3 months. So by all means let's take in more members. The bigger it gets, the more interesting FAPA becomes.

I still like the idea proposed by Swisher a couple of years ago that we have a variable membership list composed of all those who are eligible and can keep up requirements. Under this system, the FAPA membership roster would be the list of all those eligible to receive the next mailing. Thus, by looking at the number of members listed in the FANTASY AMATEUR, each contributor would know how many copies of his publication to send. This would work perfectly with the number of members and applicants currently listed. There are no indications just now that the membership would get so large as to seriously strain the output facilities of anyone, unless there are a very great number of fans who have not applied for membership because of the long wait it entails. Seems to me that it's worth giving a try.

But at any rate, let's try to do something about the eligibles on the waiting list. Cleaning out some of the deadwood helped a lot, but it wasn't quite enough.

From the quality and interest of the first part of Butnan's "Modern Mythological Fiction", it would seem that this will be one of the most valuable contributions ever distributed thru the FAPA. One issue of READER AND COLLECTOR containing such stuff as this is worth a dozen fanzines put out by some members, whom I could list but won't.

ESCAPE FICTION

Most of us, have at one time or another, heard science-fiction and fantasy derided as being just "escape" fiction. A few of us have even cheerfully admitted that this is so. Why there should be any reason for condemning fiction for being "escape" I don't know. One of the chief reasons for reading as a pastime is just because it is a means of relaxation from the things we have in ordinary life.

But I'm willing to offer the opinion that science-fiction and fantasy, or at least much of it, is not primarily escapist in nature. True, most of the scenes in fantasy and in science fiction have little or no relation to the world as it is today. And it is for that very reason that it can't be considered as escapist.

The prime requirement of "escape" fiction is that it take the reader away from the everyday world, and allow him to identify himself with the chief character in a book or story which he is reading. And for doing this, the much more popular western or detective types of fiction suffice much better than do any of the forms of fantasy. Few of us have the imagination to actually project ourselves into the form of Kimball Kinnison while reading a Lensman story, but it is quite simple for the average reader to imagine that he is actually the dashing cowboy or the irresistible sleuth in a story which is only a slight variation of everyday life. Actually, the characters and events which take place in the average detective or western story have as little relation to actual life as have those of science-fiction, but they are in a form which is much more easily understood by the average reader.

The better science-fiction stories, especially the currently popular type depicting future societies and sociological problems, are so provocative of intelligent thought that they are at best only a secondary method of "escape." Of course, there are the "Superman" and straight adventure science-fiction tales, which are definitely "escape" altho in a slightly different form than the more popular types of fiction. But most fans don't overly approve of this type of story, even tho it is the mainstay of most of the pulps. The bulk of s-f pulp readers are interested only in a form of "escape" fiction more different from ordinary life than that found in ordinary fiction.

As for fantasy, it is but little more to be considered escapist than is intelligent science-fiction. Its very strangeness to what is actually known to exist rules it out for average consumption, unless it be combined with a great deal of adventure. Being mainly interested in science-fiction, I like only fantasy with either exceptional writing or exceptional ideas, and I read it for that writing or those ideas, and not for escapism.

My own escapist reading is confined mostly to detectives, all types. Naturally, I have my particular favorites in that field, and prefer certain types of story to others. There is just as much of a difference in story types in the detective field as in any other -- perhaps even more than in science-fiction or even in fantasy. I'm no expert in the field of detective fiction, just a fairly experienced reader.

There seem to be two main fields in detective fiction, the British and the American, one about as prevalent as the other. Generally speaking, the British school of crime writing is much quieter than the American, without so much mass murder and with more attention paid to the details of crime detection. Under my own system of classification, I would divide it thusly: 1, the Scotland Yard field, in which the police painstakingly and inexorably track down the murderer; 2, the amateur field in which a private crime hobbyist goes thru a series of adventures and finally solves the mystery which has the ever present Scotland Yard baffled; and 3, the horror mystery, which now has few outstanding proponents.

Best of the English writers of type 3, which is of some interest perhaps to fantasy fans, is John Dickson Carr, whose "The Burning Court" has attracted some favorable comment in fantasy fiction circles. (Under the name of Carter Dickson, Carr also writes some of the best of the British straight mysteries, in a combination of types 1 & 2.) But to a midwesterner like myself, the locale and characters in most British mysteries seem too unreal and remote to be particularly interesting.

The American field of detective writing, as might be expected, is considerably more diversified, altho not always more interesting. There is the American equivalent of the Scotland Yard type in which it is the police who do the detecting. About the best that I've encountered along this line are the Anthony Abbott "Thatcher Colt" stories. But more important in American fiction is the private detective, often working in direct opposition to the police, but who finally solves the murder and either traps or otherwise disposes of the murderer. The American detective story private detective is a tough, omnipotent sort of guy, and in a sort of never-never land of crime is about the most interesting type of character to be found in that type of fiction. Recommended especially are Raymond Chandler's "Philip Marlowe" stories, which are written in a terse, descriptive prose, and which aren't cluttered up with the almost endless dialogue which infests most such tales. My personal favorite is Chandler's "Farewell, My Lovely", altho his "The Big Sleep" isn't far behind. They are real escapist fiction, with just enough realism to keep them on familiar ground. Both are available in pocket size, in case anyone is interested.

Another favorite type with me, when it's done correctly, is that of the strictly amateur sleuth who has a way of becoming involved in murder, usually quite humorously. Frank Gruber's "Johnny Fletcher" series, and Craig Rice's "Jake Justis" stories are representative of the best in this line.

Definitely not recommended are the many detective stories which have as a setting somebody's tea garden or a summer theater group (why so many writers seem to be interested in the summer theater is something I will never understand) and whose characters are never believable and don't even have the saving grace of being interesting.

Some writers have the habit of using amateurs who work closely with the police. Anthony Boucher's stories, or those which I've read, are of this type. Most fans have doubtless read his "Rocket to the Morgue" under the name of H. H. Holmes, which is largely about fans and fandom.

But the type of detective fiction in the American field which will probably be of most interest to fans is that written in a fantasy style. An outstanding proponent of this style is Cornell Woolrich, and as a recommended example I'll nominate "The Black Angel" which was published in pocket form by Avon a little over a year ago and can probably still be found. Other of Woolrich's stories can be found in pocket size by various publishers. (Reason for the many references to pocket sized volumes is that for the fast few years I've always looked for something that can easily be carried around and read in spare moments.)

For sheer entertainment and escapism, I'll probably stick to detective fiction, even in preference to fantasy. My favorite type of reading will still be science-fiction, altho I still maintain that I don't read it for purposes of escapism.

ON THE WORD "VENUSIAN"

For the nth time someone has brought up the subject of whether Venusian or Venerian is correct when applied to the planet. This time it's Croutch. I can't see that it makes a great deal of difference. True, according to the Latin rule and the dictionary, Venerian is the correct term. But the language we use now is English, and the use of Venusian fits more usual English grammar a little better. I'm an advocate of improving the language as much as possible, and am in favor of any such step of simplification as giving a word a more regular set of suffixes. I rarely have occasion to use the word much, but in the future I'll probably use Venusian.

Ah, little bottle of correction fluid, what would I do without thee?