

This is another issue of SPY RAY produced in a rush because of reasons I'll get around to explaining in a minute. And tomorrow the summer term starts, sheest. Operation Crifanac CCX, and

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It's Eney's Fault
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THE MUSE WITH THE BEANIE: Startled me a bit, it did, to see some people last time remarking in surprise that they didn't know I wrote that crazy Bishop Percy stuff, for I've been contributing poetic snippets fairly frequently to the mailings of various APAe. Well, maybe twice a year -- lots more often when Nanshare was unattached, snf, as old IGNATZ fans will recall. But what really croggled me was seeing Bergeron rate "St. Nelson and the Emperor of FooFoo" in his list of the most enjoyed items in Mailing LVIII. I croggle. All this because Roscoe, realizing with His divine foreknowledge what was going to happen, motivated Rapp to publish that old poem and keep my string of consecutive appearances unbroken. It certainly is a wonderful thing. (Don't count that line for activity credit, Pelz.)

For those who didn't spot it, "St Nelson" was a parody of "King John and the Abbot of Canturbury", a good old English -- or I should say Old-English -- ballad in which John got bugged at the Abbot for keeping up a good deal of state and threatens him with death unless he can answer three questions: how soon he can ride the whole Earth about -- that is, around, as we'd say -- how much he is worth (John was always in financial trouble -- they even nicknamed him "Lackland"), and what he's thinking. If you're the sort who's gotta know how things come out, the Abbot's shepherd disguises himself and gives quibbling answers: (1) ride with the sun and you can make it in one day; (2) 29 shillings, since for 30 "Our Savior was sold/ by the false Judas, so I've been told/ And 29 is the worth of thee/ for I think thou'rt one shilling worse than he"; (3) "Ha! You think I'm the Abbot of Canturbury, that's what you think!" So the King gave him a pardon and a pension, and the Abbot gave him another. I trust the shepherd didn't lose them in the hooraw and uproar at the end of John's reign; he seemed a slightly fannish type. As Speer would say, the answer about riding with the sun shows a stfnal orientation.

For obvious reasons, lots of fannish poetry fits into the classification of parody or pastiche: Bruce Pelz' folksongs are an obvious instance; not indeed of identifiable parody -- he has lots more originality than that -- but of the pastiche of folkish style. I trust you will be kind enough not to ask me how a person used to guitarplaying and singing would be expected to write if not in folksong-type style. The general explanation for the success of parody -- especially in contrast to our abominable records in flights of serious poetry -- is of course our sophistication; being able to see the trite, shallow, or fuggheaded motivations of serious poetry, and having in prose an infinitely better vehicle for communication, fans feel embarrassed producing

long works in verse. (You know how sensitive we are to the hint of affectation, preciousness, or poseurismé: "There is nothing wits dread so much as the imputation of buffoonery, for it sometimes comes a little too near the truth" -- and often lies within a hair's thickness of it, for that matter.) Doing a parody -- especially if everybody will recognize it as such -- takes the curse off; if one's balance swerves that fatal hair's-breadth into silliness, one is covered by the cloak of unseriousness. (As Ted White coppers bets on his more outrageously false statements with "careful; perhaps I'm only baiting you".)

I suppose it's the same way (with a few words changed appropriately) with the predominance of cartoon over "absolute" art in fan illustration, but Bergeron is much better fitted than I to hold forth on that point. Especially since he's busy in both of those types of art. And there's a related phenomenon in fiction, but dammit, I've got to stop writing the blurbs for that FAPA Anthology in advance, here.

THE FALL OF COVENTRY, Folksongs Unwrit
or, It Was Sad When That Great Ship Went Down #1

FIRST VERSE OF A SONG FOR ELINOR ABOUT MORDOR IN '64 WHICH WOULD HAVE GONE TO THE TUNE OF "OLEANNA" IF I'D EVER FINISHED IT:

Oh, to stay in far Seattle,
That is where I'd rather be
Than attending Mordorcons
In Barad-dur beside the sea...!

But then the IA crowd dropped the "Mordor in '64" slogan so I said to hell with it.

RICHARD BERGERON AND HIS ELECTRIC WARHOON; Folksongs Unwrit
or, Yes, Boys, That's Where My Money Goes #2

THAT FAPA THING: The 300-page anthology I was mentioning getting together for FAPA's 100th Mailing is shaping up nicely; the only difficulty is that it'll almost certainly run over 300 pages -- in fact, there'll be that much without any illos or editorial space; all but four stencils are out, and those will take it over the mark without counting the litho pages or the three count em three prefaces. Some copies of this production are to be available for outsiders -- that is, non-FAPA members; outsiders as defined with respect to the outsiders, from our SAPSish point of view. But as all good fans know, three hundred pages, even when cut, are a hell of a lot to run. Hence the skimpiness of this issue of SPY RAY. Next time around: an Irregularization on Three Hearts and Three Lions, and some cross-infective stuff for the Coventry crowd. Write if you get work, and hang by your thumbs.