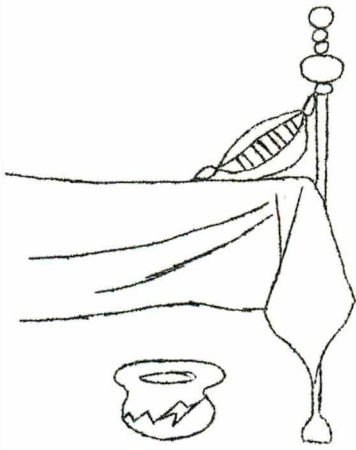


Abas-10



Astounding RAEBURNISMS



Page after page of solid black type

from Boyd Raeburn, 9 Glenvalley Drive, Toronto 9, Canada

Cover by Pat Patterson

Headings by Gerald Steward

Special type for Mr. Bloch's article by Smith-Corona Electric
(I am a pseudo Esquire)

The name of this mag is **A BAS** two words, like.

I hope that the larger than usual size of this issue will perhaps partly compensate for the time it has taken to appear. The letter column grows and grows, and still I had to miss some interesting letters from it. But keep the letters coming, for I only put out the zine for those interested in it.

As you probably all know by now, the Southgate in '58 tradition is at last being realized, and the 1958 World Convention will be held in Los Angeles. But after Southgate, what? I have heard that Detroit is planning to bid for the 1959 convention, but will there always be a group keen enough (some might say suckers enough) to put on a world convention, for the world conventions have grown to such a size and complexity that they entail a tremendous amount of work. Perhaps future world conventions will have to tend more towards the simple, informal style of the Midwescon. Perhaps eventually no group will be found to promote a world convention, and the field will be left to the regional cons. In such an event, I doubt very much that fandom would collapse, as William Merrill was screaming at the NYCon last year, for active fandom does not depend on world conventions. Maybe we would see less of some of the fringe-fan convention-goer types, but we could well do without them. The London Convention could certainly have done without the fringe-fan bunch from the chartered plane crowd who walked out of the con hotel without paying, leaving the convention committee stuck with the bills.

Marion Zimmer Bradley has an occasional column, The World of Null-F, in Robert and Juanita Coulson's YANDRO. In her column Mrs. Bradley writes reviews of books on science, mythology, etc. Apparently some readers wrote directly to her to complain of the presence of the column, and in YANDRO #51 Coulson and Bradley blew their tops. I admire editor Coulson for his attitude of "This is my zine and I print what I like and to hell with you Jack." If a reader doesn't like some item in a zine, he is perfectly free to say so, and very likely the editor will be interested in his opinion. If he dislikes some regular column, he is quite free not to read it, but he should not presume to tell the fanned what he should or should not print.

But Mrs. Bradley takes a different tack. She says: "It is my contention that the reader of fanzines is usually a science fiction fan. Based upon that premise, I draw the secondary assumption that science fiction fans are usually interested in science, and from these proceed logically to the idea that some readers of fanzines are interested in science." After a short discussion of the change in status of science fiction she continues: "Fans -- at least the most active and ardent fans -- furiously denounce science fiction." Who? Who? Who? Can Mrs. Bradley name a sufficient number of these "active and ardent fans" to validate her claim? I am tired of these claims that active fans denounce science fiction. I am tired of pussyfooting articles which make vague and woolly observations and denunciations but never name names. It's time somebody put up or shut up.

Mrs. Bradley reiterates another familiar old plaint that fanzines don't devote themselves to science fiction. But her own column is on science, not science fiction, and I challenge her assumption that science fiction fans are usually interested in science. Certainly some may be interested in science, but science fiction fans have all sorts of interests, and it is the discussion of these varying interests in fanzines about which she complains. Does a discussion of science or a review of a book on science have any more place in the fanzine devoted to science fiction for which Mrs. Bradley yearns than a discussion of any other subject in which the readers and editor may be interested? Is she not perhaps contributing to the very situation she deplures? If she holds so sternly to her view, should she not be a little uneasy over appearing in YANDRO, for while that zine is more strongly science fiction oriented than many, approximately 41% of the non-fiction material in ^{the issue in} which this column appears (not counting the column itself) does not deal at all with science fiction.

I omitted to note in A BAS #8 that the H.P. Lovecraft letter printed in that issue was printed by permission of August Derleth and Arkham House Publishers. Incidentally, Mr. Derleth advises that that letter was not strictly H.P.L.'s last letter, for he wrote letters in batches.

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THE MOTH & THE ARCTIC STEAMROLLER

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August 24th, and out to Malton airport to catch a TCA Viscount to Montreal. One hour later landed at Montreal airport and along with a mob of other passengers into a bus to take us to Dorval airport. Out of the bus at a most unairportish building into a room with desk and pb stand and such. "Now, who wants a double?" A general cry of "What's with this double jazz?" "This is the Dorval Inn. Aren't you all staying overnight?" "Hell no, we're taking to 6 o'clock flight." Out to the bus again, throw out a couple of nuns waiting to be taken somewhere, and on to Dorval airport, about half a mile away. At last on to a TCA Super Constellation and with a mighty roar up and up and off to England. Settled down to read a pb of Merritt's Metal Monster I'd picked up from a newsstand, having forgotten to bring anything to read, and quickly found I had a sense of boredom. Dinner was served. Where was the shrimp cocktail, the tossed salad, the filet mignon of the Toronto-New York TCA run? This was on a par with a Midwescon-at-Bellefontaine banquet. Tried to sleep. Couldn't. Looked out window at exhaust ports. Exhaust ports glowed bright red and gushed blue flame. Reminded me of Willis and Harp Stateside. Morning. Below us nothing but cloud, like a big woolly snowbank. Beautiful. Looked at cloud. Looked at breakfast. Ugh. Looked at cloud some more. Plane started to descend a little. Goshwow, must be over England. Still nothing but cloud. Lo, as if by a giant hand, cloud pulled aside, and there below was the cluttered English countryside, smallish fields, and every one completely surrounded by masses of trees and hedges. The plane sank lower and lower, touched down, and we were in England. By local time it was 9.30 a.m. but by Toronto time it was 4.30 a.m., a grisly hour to be bounding out of a plane after a 10¹/₂ hour journey and no sleep. Everything frightfully English, with people speaking with English accents, masses of English cars, buses looking like overgrown Dinky Toys, and English weather. (light rain.)

Into the terminal and waft through immigration and into Customs. "How long are you going to be in England?" "Two hours." A chalk hieroglyphic on my bag and I was through. Not once was my luggage inspected by Customs at any of the borders I crossed. I must have looked guileless and innocent. With several other people into a limousine to take us to some other part of the airport. The limousine dashed into a road full of traffic, inspiring yells of horror from all for we were on the wrong side. A sudden realization that that's the way they drive in England and all was calm. Into the terminal again, and up to a large waiting area to wait for the call for my flight to Paris. Area full of people and seething masses of Boy Scouts and small English boys with English small boy faces and English small boy haircuts and English small boy suits all exclaiming "Daddeh, I say, Daddeh!" Lots of time to kill, so decided to phone a couple of friends in London. Blithely wandered up to the foreign exchange counter and asked haughty person to change a dime into English currency. Shock and dismay. Substituted a quarter for the dime, and asked for some pennies to make phone calls. My first encounter with the ponderous English currency. Pennies the size of fifty cent pieces. Gathered my mountain of copper and staggered off to the phone booths to unravel the intricacies of Button A and Button B. On English pay phones you push things. At last my flight was called. Into a waiting room ("Daddeh, I say, Daddeh") and then a brisk walk from desk to desk to desk showing my passport to French official after French official. On to a BEA plane, and up over the cluttered English countryside again. Suddenly the White Cliffs of Dover, all famed in song and story, and there was the Channel, and also lunch. Lunch excellent, with masses of butter instead of the square inch pat served in North America. Hardly was lunch finished than we touched down at Le Bourget airport. Out of the plane, again the obstacle course of passport inspections, and then on to the Customs. The luggage was lined up on a low counter, the passengers stationed themselves behind their respective bags, and a Customs officer started moving down the line, dreamily chanting "Vous n'avez rien a declarer?" and idly swiping at the bags with a piece of chalk. Suddenly he paused. He'd forgotten something. "Passeport. Passeport." We fluttered our passports at him, and, reassured, he took up his chant again. Accustomed to Idlewild, I grabbed my bag. But no. Was I not taking the bus? Then my bag would be loaded on the bus for me. Dazed by such luxury, I climbed into the bus and off we went with myself gazing eagerly out the window at my first sight of France. It was rather a shock. I expected things to look French, but not that French. One felt that it had been specially provided for the benefit of arriving tourists. Wide cobblestone sidewalks, masses of sidewalk cafes, children carrying long, long loaves of bread, gendarmes wearing capes and riding bicycles, all so like a French movie that I expected Fernandel to appear at any moment.

At last the suburbs were left behind and suddenly into a place with streets running in all directions and in the distance what looked like the top of a power pylon showing above some trees and geewhiz that's the Eiffel tower and this is PARIS. Out of the bus and into a cab and off to Le Grand Hotel du Louvre. ("You may rely on us to attend to his comfort and welfare and looking forward to the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Raeburn.") Le Grand Hotel du Louvre a quiet, unostentatious, non-touristy place full of people speaking French without subtitles. I had had no sleep for 24 hours and immediately flaked out. Woke about 7 p.m., went out, and started to walk. Along L'Avenue de l'Opera to La Place de l'Opera and up Le Boulevard des Italiens and on and on. Streets full of Sunday night crowd, and everything fascinating. Didn't know I could walk so much. Started to retrace my steps, thinking about dinner, and inspecting the menus outside cafes. Menu at one place bore the inscription "We more or less speak English." Ha ha funny, I thought, then noticed that the same sign was emblazoned along the front of the place itself, and inside, on a raised bandstand was a woman singing La Vie en Rose, with French-type vocal glissades. Obviously the place was a tourist joint, and also obvious that next she would sing Mademoiselle de Paris or some other French Vocal Gem From The Ed Sullivan Show. Having sworn to never stay within earshot of such stuff if I ever got to Paris, I moved on. Getting close to 10 p.m. and still I hadn't eaten. Remembering that the menu outside Delmonico's, a dignified looking restaurant near the hotel, had looked most attractive, I went to Delmonico's.

Before I set out there had been banter of the "Well, soon you'll be eating snails" type, so, I thought, By Ghu I'm going to eat snails. Casting my eye over the menu I started my order by saying "Escargots de Bourgogne." A few minutes later there was a plate in front of me. On the plate was a silver dish. On the dish were piled six little, round, grey, earthenware pots. Each pot was filled to the brim with dark brown melted butter with green specks of some vegetable material floating on the surface. It all looked most revolting. I leaned over the dish and a wave of garlic hit me in the face. I hurriedly leaned back and plunged the small fork provided into the first pot, fishing up a small dark chunk of something. My stomach went flutter. Don't be a dope, I told myself. You're just being influenced by the squeamish types whose imagination can't rise above roast beef. What's the difference between eating snails, and eating scallops or oysters. None, I replied, and put the first snail in my mouth. The taste of garlic was overpowering. I longed for a glass of water, but I knew it would make the waiter feel ill to see me drinking water with my dinner, so I slobbered back some wine and went on to the second snail. By the time I got to the sixth and last I decided I rather liked them. In New York French restaurants, snails are served as a main course, and cost about \$2.50 for six. In Paris restaurants they are an appetizer, on the same footing as, say, a shrimp cocktail, and cost about 50¢ for six. The French custom of wine with meals is a great idea, the only drawback being that, not used to drinking large quantities of wine, I would finish a meal hovering on the verge of intoxication after working my way through a bottle.

Still being short of sleep, I slept until noon the next day. I had partially wakened some time during the morning to hear rain thundering down, but I willed it to go away and went back to sleep. Sure enough, when I woke again the rain was gone, the sun brightly shining, and there was Paris all like in the movies, but without the Gershwins or Offenbach soundtrack. (I seem to have had my own private weather, for the Silverbergs were in Paris about the same time, and they had lousy weather.) Off walking again, and into Tuileries gardens, where I spent a couple of hours contentedly sitting and watching people sailing model boats on a large pond with fountain. Out of the gardens and through the traffic to the Champs-Élysées. There is no speed limit in Paris, the streets are wide, and the traffic moves. It all looks and sounds like a production car race, with thundering hordes of Citroens (the 2CV looks remarkably like the Cyclops II) and Simcas and Renaults and Panhards streaming madly around the traffic circles. If you're in the way when a traffic light changes, that's just too bad. Along the Champs-Élysées, enjoying the small parks with beautiful formal flower beds, and eventually to the Arc de Triomphe, where I decided that rather than retrace my steps I would go onto a parallel street and work my way back. It seems though, as Bob Silverberg remarked later, that Paris does not have any parallel streets, and after walking for a great distance I found I was completely lost. Got directions from a pair of cops, and was still lost, as I couldn't find any of the streets I was supposed to take. At last I figured out how to get back to the hotel by subway. For dinner that evening I decided to try one of THE restaurants, so leaped into a cab and off to Le Taillevent (an establishment of dignified splendor which would have delighted Andy Young, the well-known fan of "fancy expensive restaurants") where I wallowed in foie gras with truffles and the various specialties of the house. I think I shocked the waiter a little by ordering a rather cheap wine, but I didn't feel I would appreciate Chateau Lafite-Rothschild 1806, especially at Fr.50,000 a bottle. (Actually the majority of the 365 wines listed were pretty reasonably priced.) The food was very good, but not much above Delmonico's, itself a highly rated restaurant, which had the advantage of being convenient, so I ate there the rest of the time.

Paris is a beautiful city, full of parks and elaborate flower beds, and I was quite content the whole time I was there to just walk and look, there always being something interesting to see. One of the few touristy things I did was go up to the top of the Eiffel Tower, where the view was magnificent, and the souvenirs on sale among the tawdriest I've ever seen. I decided against taking any of the bus tours around the city, as I saw most of the famous buildings and places by just walking around and coming across them.

I did, however, take a tour to Versailles, which I thought would be interesting to see, being a famous place and all that. So, on to a tour bus and out to Versailles, the bus going through Sevres on the way there and through the Bois de Boulogne on the way back, which was quite interesting and historic, I guess. Sitting behind me was an Englishman who sounded exactly like Richard Haydn, and the usual "Daddeh I say Daddeh". Obviously the English are not yet a matriarchy, for I never did hear a "Mummeh I say Mummeh". The Palace of Versailles itself was jammed with tourists being led around in large groups, and the whole thing was a bit of a drag. The guide rather bugged me by refusing to believe that I belonged with her party, and wouldn't answer a question I asked, so I never did find out a few things I wanted to know. The palace gardens are particularly beautiful, but I had time to cover only a small part at a fairly brisk pace, for we were given only half an hour to ourselves after dragging around through the Hall of Mirrors and stuff like that.

Near the Place de l'Opera was a restaurant offering hot dogs, hamburgers, and "hush puppies Southern style". I was amused to find such things offered in what is considered the world centre of gastronomy, and still think it funny, although when I mentioned it in the presence of Rory Faulkner she went into a long diatribe on how she lived for six months or something on hamburgers. Personally I don't care if she lived on honey and locusts, although it would be more likely to be gall and wormwood.

In the window of a theatre ticket agency near the hotel was a poster, suitably illustrated, which ran:

COMEDIE DE PARIS PIGALLE

STRIP

STRIP

STRIP

HOURRAH!

2 HEURES DE DESHABILLAGE ET D'AGACERIES

I was curious as to what point in the proceedings the HOURRAH! applied, but not enough to bother to find out. (the last line means "Two hours of undressing and provocations.")

Thursday, and I decided it was time to move on, so on to the airlines bus and a wild ride to Orly airport, missing cars and bicycles by inches. Through the usual mass of passport inspections, on to an Air France plane, and off to Geneva. The countryside around Paris most uncluttered, one vast melange of various shaped fields, all shades of green and brown. Into thick cloud, and much hoping that we wouldn't bop a mountain, but suddenly the clouds were gone and alpiney pastures about 200 feet below and then down at Geneva airport. Through Customs (a dumb look and a fast "Je ne parle pas Francais" gets you a long way) and a quick bus ride through very fresh and Swiss-looking suburbs to the air terminal which is also the railway station. I had an hour to kill before my train left for Lausanne, so I took a stroll down to the lake front. At the sight of a paddle steamer on the lake I almost expected to hear strains of Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee, but there wasn't even a yodel. Geneva has a quiet, small-town atmosphere, vastly different from Paris. I could say that Paris is like a sophisticated society beauty, and Geneva like a scrubbed, fresh farm girl, but that would be very corny. The traffic is very easy and polite, and the tall, narrow street-cars look like a Roland Emmett cartoon come to life. Back to the station and the train. Was I in first or second class? the porter asked. I hadn't specified the class when buying my ticket, and on looking at it found I was in second class. Told the porter, and he bunged me into a compartment all cosy and upholstered. The train started, and I wondered if this was second, what must first class be like. I was in it I found when the ticket collector came through and banished me to a limbo of plain wooden seats. 40 minutes travel and I arrived at Lausanne. Into a cab, and a hair-raising ride to the Versins' apartment. The concept of Stop Streets seems to be unknown in Europe. You just charge into an intersection and hope a car isn't coming the other way.

Pierre and Martine Versin are a delightful couple, the weather was perfect, Lausanne is enchanting (I love hilly cities) and it was all quite wonderful. The Versins live on the fifth floor of an apartment building overlooking Lake Geneva, and the view was beautiful, with sail and power boats pattering around on the lake, and a helicopter whirring back and forth. During my three day visit I talked more science fiction than I normally do in a year. The weather, the surroundings, and the charm of the Versins all added up to utter perfection, making this visit the high point of my tour.

With great regret I left Lausanne and back by train to Geneva. Walked around Geneva for an hour and a half, getting slightly lost again, and then filled in the remaining half hour to plane time drinking vermouth (a taste I acquired at the Versin's) at the cafe outside the terminal. Pierre had warned me that the Swiss put lemon in everything, and I found he was right. On to a Swissair plane. Cookies and orange juice served. Down at Zurich, and into the transit waiting room, clutching a card entitling me to one free drink (soft). Ordered coffee, which was absolutely superb, and served with a jug of cream. This was a pleasant surprise, for the concept of coffee with cream seems unknown to the French and British, both peoples preferring to put hot milk in their coffee. The public phones in the lounge bore large notices that they were for foreign calls only - presumably to prevent in-transit spies from chatting to their buddies downtown. Out into a dinky little DC3 with a fearsome slope on the aisle, and off we chugged into the night. More cookies and orange juice. Down at Stuttgart, all raining and gloomy. Out of the plane for passport inspection, and then we were off again. More cookies and orange juice. Finally we landed at Frankfurt. Surfeited with Swissair hospitality, I managed to summon up enough German to assure the Customs officer that I only had perhaps 200 cigarettes, and then was greeted by the Benfords and their father who had brought along the Renault Dauphine. (They are people of Taste and Discrimination.) The Benford twins are a very pleasant pair, and their parents made me most welcome. In deference to my presence the rain held off for the entire time I was in Frankfurt. According to the Benfords this was an unprecedented meteorological phenomenon, but then, they didn't seem to like anything at all about Frankfurt, and were rather looking forward to returning to the U.S. While at the Versins' the conversation was often heavy on the discussion of science fiction, at the Benfords' the emphasis was on faaandom. Being so isolated from the fannish scene, they were took full advantage of the opportunity for first-hand information. I had planned to go on to Brussels and Antwerp, but all the flights were booked up, so I switched my ticket to Pan-American and went direct to London.

London again, and off through the rain and dark of early evening to the King's Court Hotel. The only fan in sight was busy Dave Newman, wildly trying to get equipment set up in spite of the confusion caused by the decorators, but soon I walked a bunch of people in the middle of which I recognised Ron Bennett. We sat down in the bar, and I walked a crowd of the familiar U.S. convention-goer faces. I felt depressed. This was just like a U.S. con, but without the usual faanish coterie to brighten things up. However, Bennett and I sat contentedly chatting while the con-goer types stood around with blank looks. Dave Newman came in, and insisted on buying drinks for everybody. Each person who wanted beer was asked whether he wanted warm beer or cold beer. Already the hotel was becoming accustomed to these peculiar Americans. I tried a sip of Newman's beer, which, while called "bitter" was sweet and tasted of caramel, so a can of Danish Pilsener was produced out of an icebox. By this time the bar had been taken over by the receptionist and manageress who spent as much time giggling hysterically as serving customers. I thought perhaps the freely Newman-furnished drinks were responsible, but this seemed to be their normal convention demeanor. The bar closed at 11.20 (I noticed the time, as technically it closed at 11 p.m.) and those still around went down to the lounge, where drinks were available all night, but I said to hell with it and went to bed.

Thursday morning, and I managed to get up and get down to the dining room in time for breakfast, where I sat shivering although wearing my thickest windbreaker, while Dave Newman beamed happily in a light sports shirt. This was my first encounter with the

penetrating English cold - a chill that goes right through you. The English fans showed great solicitude for the comfort of their thin-blooded visitors, and one but needed to walk into a fannish abode for heat to be provided (Bobbie Wilde practically saved my life one night with a gas fire and coffee) but generally there is so little heating that one becomes thoroughly chilled, and even several hours in a warm room only thaws out the surface.

After breakfast I took a bus downtown (See London From The Top Of A Bus) overshot my mark, and found myself in front of the Horse Guards outside Whitehall. Walked a block or so, and there was Trafalgar Square and Nelson's Column and stone lions and fountains and pigeons and stuff. All the time when walking around London one keeps running into famous streets and buildings and monuments and things which everybody knows only exist in the movies. Somehow it seemed unnatural. Wandered up to Simpson's-in-the-Strand to try their famous steak-and-kidney pie for lunch. Not as good as Madeleine Willis's steak-and-kidney pie. The menu listed exotic (to me) items such as jugged hare with red currant jelly, and stewed tripe and cow's heel. I came across this jugged hare item again when Arthur Thomson, Steve Schultheis and myself went into a restaurant near the King's Court. Schultheis and I both ordered baked rabbit, but they had only one order of rabbit left, and would one of us care to have jugged hare instead? I bravely allowed Steve to have the rabbit, and the jugged hare was produced. It seems that the "jugged" just refers to the way it is cooked, a sort of stew, but the hare itself is a different matter. While rabbit is considered rodent, and eaten fresh, hare is classed as game, so the carcass is hung in a non-refrigerated place and allowed to mature. When it is considered ripe enough the maggots are brushed off and it is cooked and served. It was an interesting dish, but the taste was so strong that I only managed to get through about half of it, while Arthur Thomson watched me with awe and slowly turned green. I had even considered trying jellied eels if I ever came across them (gad, but I'm adventurous) but after listening to Arthur Thomson's description of them as small bits of stuff covered with black skin floating in a bowl of green goo and how he had once been sick after watching somebody eating them I decided that that was one dish I wouldn't try. These delicacies are at opposite ends of the social scale, jugged hare being quite upper-crust, and jellied eels very, very plebeian.

Dinner with the Silverbergs and Moskowitz, and then off to the regular Thursday night Circle meeting at the Globe. Globe full of fans and noise and smoke. I like standing not at all, so grabbed one of the few bar stools and talked to whomever pulled up beside me, thus enjoying pleasant conversations in comfort. Had a long discussion on skiffle (which I still consider a phony fad) with John Brunner, and then John Roles of Liverpool took over. Roles exudes personality in great big chunks. He has a constant friendly beam, and radiates interest. But all this was not to last. Fiendish Ron Bennett came along and introduced Norman Wansborough to me. Wansborough said "Aaarr" and sprayed my ear with a mysterious mumble which seemed to be about G.M. Carr trying to tighten up the standards of admission to FAPA (she isn't) and what did I think of this? I said I thought it an excellent idea, abandoned my precious stool, and callously left Roles to Wansborough's attentions. I soon found a table to sit on near the door, and spent the rest of the evening talking to masses of English and Irish fans, and ducking whenever Wansborough hove near.

Next day the convention proper started, and most angles of this have already been covered in numerous convention reports, including how Sam Moskowitz resisted the Belles of Bayswater Road who sought to deprive him of his Sense of Wonder, so I won't go into it here. The convention as a whole (in my opinion an immense success) was unlike U.S. conventions in that it was faanish. It would be most unusual to find as part of the program at a present day U.S. convention program such items as the running gun battle between the agents of the Goon and anti-Goon over the convention gavel, the Ceremony of St. Fantony, or the tape plays such as March of Slime and Last & First Fen, (not that I yearn for more of the 140 proof Polish White Spirit I consumed in the St. Fantony ceremony. I think that would be too much even for Tucker.) Even the official convention luncheon

was a most palatable meal, although I was surprised at the fou-up over the seating arrangements. It was decided to allocate places rather than have people scrabbling for position (unlikely in this case anyway I think), and the allocating consisted of a hungry mob lining up at the door and being told in turn opposite whom each was to sit. Mad confusion all round. Some woman from the chartered plane group was performing this task. I can't recall her name, but she had tremendous decibels.

The whole hotel being occupied by convention attendees, the lounges were used for all social gatherings, and only one room party was held, on the Sunday night. This party was chased from room to room by the management for it always seemed to be going on next to a room where somebody had young children, or the receptionist was trying to sleep after being up for 48 hours, and indeed it was very noisy, with Laurence Sandfield (NOT to be confused with Sandy Sanderson, who is a Good Man) plunking his guitar (he is a cross the London Circle bears in silence), Sheldon Deretchin (whom some of the English fans dubbed "The American Peter Reaney") bellowing an interminable ballad about "good ol' mountain dew" and other fans singing square, square songs. I was told that it is not usual to sing at English convention room parties, and can only conclude that it was general ennui which produced this doleful ululation.

I had a good look at many of the notable places of London, but often in a fairly perfunctory fashion, for I have no love for being lectured at in guided tours. Eric Bentcliffe was good enough to spend the day after the convention showing me such places as St. Paul's and Buckingham Palace which we reached by walking through St. James' Park, one of the many very beautiful London parks. I was surprised to find that Ludgate Hill is a short, gentle slope, and that the Law Courts building on Fleet Street is one of the most impressive buildings to be seen in London. The office of the British Helicopter Association is located in one of the buildings of Westminster Abbey. Outside one part of the Houses of Parliament is a drinking fountain erected in commemoration of the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association."

I stayed on in London for a week after the convention in order to see sights, shows, and so on, but often I was very slow in getting out, for so depressing was the ever present cold that after forcing myself out of bed into the frigid atmosphere of the room, I would just sit on the edge of the bed feeling miserable and too generally depressed to do anything or go anywhere. The room had a loudspeaker into which the hotel fed radio programs. At these times I would turn it on to try to alleviate my depression, but the taste of whoever was operating the gadget was pretty loathsome, and my morning shivers were always accompanied by "Music While You Work", a program which each day dug up some foul little orchestra beside which Lawrence Welk sounds like Chico Hamilton.

I did manage to get moving early enough one morning to accompany the Silverbergs to Canterbury by bus. On the journey there I was surprised to notice that English roads do not have any shoulders. If the driver of a car needs to stop, he has to stop right on the road. At Canterbury we thoroughly investigated the cathedral, which looked impressively old, and stood with awe on the very spot on which Thomas a Beckett was rubbed out. It is impressive to be in the places where Famous Things happened so long ago. The contrast of architectural styles in Canterbury is quite striking. You walk down a street where all the shops are of most modern style (these having been built on bombed out areas) and then suddenly without any transition you're in the midst of buildings of extreme antiquity, all half-timbered and leaning over the street. After we left the cathedral we decided we would refresh ourselves with crumpets, the Silverbergs having never eaten them. We looked at menu after menu outside Tea Shoppe after Tea Shoppe, but no crumpets could we find (they were out of season), so decided anyway to have something to eat in Queen Elizabeth's Guest Chamber. Up the stairs, and right inside the doorway was a screen covered with covers from the New Yorker, but they did have a genuine (they claimed) Elizabethan ceiling and brass warming pans on the walls

Arriving back in London we made for the Gore Hotel, where we had reservations in the Elizabethan room. This place was a surprise to the Silverbergs, who had expected bright lights and tables for four. It couldn't have been more different. It is a reconstruction of an Elizabethan banquet room, lit only by massive candles, a long communal table, rush-covered floor, serving wenches in Elizabethan costume, a minstrel warbling appropriate songs, and all that jazz. Real time machine stuff. First we were served soup - the men being served first in accordance with the fine old Elizabethan custom - which we slurped from large wooden bowls. ("Make as much noise as you like. There's no such things as bad manners.") (Spoons must be Un-Elizabethan) Then followed the First Remove, an assortment of such things as Boar's Head (like a slice of salami), Roast Peacock (gucked up into a paste) fish of some kind, and other assorted goo. I ate this various stuff using only the flat, two-tined fork (technically known as a bifurcated dagger) provided, not realizing until the Second Remove that the knife ("Please, it's a dagger") had been missed from my place setting. Barbara Silverberg remarked that this marked me as a North American, for an Englishman would have been helpless without a knife. The Second Remove consisted of roast beef and artichoke pie and various dull vegetables. The Silverbergs were quite happy with the food, but I found it all rather a drag, except for the soup and the dessert, which was syllabub, a wonderful paste concocted from raspberry juice, canary wine, cream etc. I have the recipe for it, but it's a little mysterious. Does anybody know what is meant by "With a wooden cow, fold at the turners"? With the soup we drank mead, a delicious beverage brewed from honey, and with the rest of the meal we had claret. This was contained in earthenware drinking vessels, holding at least a pint, which the wenches kept refilling. So we sat happily bellowing out choruses to "Green Grow the Rushes" and calling "Ho wench! More wine!" and having ourselves a ball. The room is no larger than a regular dining room, holding about 15-20 people, and the illusion was excellent. Horribly expensive by English standards, but for the atmosphere it was well worth it. Finally we decided that we had had enough claret, and staggered off to the gathering at the Globe. For me this was a mistake, for the heat and thick atmosphere of the Globe didn't go at all well with the claret, and I had to leave in a hurry, aided by ministering-angel-thou Pam Bulmer. A fat lot of use it was to be told afterwards by the experienced Bulmers that I should have stuck to mead.

I never did get to Cambridge, despite my good intentions, but I did manage to get to Windsor for an afternoon to look at Windsor castle, an experience I'm very glad I didn't miss. The whole layout is most impressive - the castle itself plus various towers, chapels, ancient half-timbered houses and so on all surrounded by an immense stone wall. ("Please do not picnic in the cloisters") The view from parts of the wall was most impressive, with the town of Windsor spread out below, the Thames winding through, and beyond some very pretty countryside with in the distance some types playing cricket and others next to them practicing rugby (English style, without cheerleaders.) I presume these were the famous Playing Fields of Eton on which was won the Battle of Waterloo. I wondered if the Battle of Trafalgar was won on the Thames. The State Apartments (in which nobody lives now) in the castle are quite fabulous, full of rare furnishings and tapestries and masses of Rubens, Rembrandts, Van Dykes, Holbeins etc. They make Versailles look like a slum.

London has a tremendous subway system, with lines going all over the place, but in spite of its complexity it is very easy to get around on it, for maps and directions are posted everywhere - unlike the New York system where the visitor is left in confusion. The system is palstered with advertisements to an extent that makes the NY and Toronto subways look barren. Some of the movie posters are too much. "Frankie ((Vaughn)) - slugging and singing his way...." "Raw teenage excitement to thaw you out." While the London public transport is most efficient, it closes down very early; buses stop running about 11.30 p.m. and subways at midnight. Sunday is worse; I got back to Charing Cross station from a visit to the Clarkes and Sandy Sanderson at 11.45 p.m. and not even the subway was running.

Finally farewell to London, and off by train to Liverpool, where Norman Shorrocks plucked me soggy and exhausted out of the pouring rain and into the Central Hotel at Birkenhead. All the Liverpool hotels were full, and the only reason the Central had a room vacant was because Madle, Schultheis, Will Jenkins and Deretchin had just checked out. I was delighted to find that it had a private bath, for after the King's Court hot water was an unaccustomed luxury. Out to the Shorrocks for dinner, and then back to Liverpool for the regular meeting of the Liverpool group. They have two rooms at the top of a building in the heart of the fashionable shopping section, and they are in the process of fixing up the rooms to make a fine fannish hangout. (Fanzine covers make intriguing wallpaper.) Deretchin cornered poor John Owen and bellowed Hebrew and Russian songs at him, but the rest of us had a fine time. After the meeting broke up we stood around in the Lime Street station dodging torrents of water (the roof is old) seeing Deretchin and Jenkins off on the train to London, and then I was taken back to the Central Hotel the proprietors of which obviously believe that an Englishman's hotel is his castle. It took literally several minutes for the night porter to undo all the bolts, bars, chains and locks on the door. I was wakened next morning by a maid flinging open the door of my room and announcing reprovingly "It's 'alf past ten." I had shot the bolt on the door the night before, but they raise strong maids in the provinces. A few minutes later Norman arrived, and eventually got me on the train to Manchester. My psi powers had conquered even the Liverpool weather, and the rain had stopped. From Manchester I made my way by bus to Romiley and Harry Turner. Eric Bentcliffe joined us in the evening and a fabulous fannish time followed. Harry used to produce the famous ZENITH in the early forties, and it was fascinating to look through issues of ZENITH and other British zines of the period. I was most interested to learn that, unlike U.S. fandom which gradually changed from a dead serious absorption with science fiction to the lighter approach we find today, British fandom went from serious to fannish in the early forties, then back to serious again only to emerge into the present day British fandom we know and love.

Next morning by fast efficient diesel train through the pretty Romily countryside back to Manchester, and on to a BEA plane which zoomed at a snappy 160 mph over to Belfast. Having actually arrived at the historic Oblique House, I was so bemused that I casually strolled into the famous attic without pausing to think appropriate solemn thoughts as I crossed the threshold. John Berry arrived muttering "I feel vicious" and a demonstration game of Ghoddminton was staged for the benefit of Steve Schultheis and myself, John playing against Walt and Madeleine. While certain portions of Berry "factual" articles may be open to doubt, I now have no reason to disbelieve his descriptions of Ghoddminton games. As played by the Belfast fans, it's a natural for television. That evening we went to James White's, and a new side of James White was revealed to me. At the convention, the suave, impeccably dressed White looked as though freshly plucked from the president's office of a large insurance company. On his home ground the true White, the agent-of-anti-Goon White, came to the surface. How evilly his eyes glittered as he crouched in his living-room, plonker-gun poised, awaiting the entrance of unsuspecting George Charters. Berry was a little more circumspect - he shoved his wife through the door first, enabling Steve Schultheis to take a photo of the Goon Himself cowering behind a woman.

Next day Walt took me for a drive in the countryside, and Ireland IS green. I don't know how they get the grass that shade. Far in the distance, standing in solitary grandeur on top of a hill, was a tower which looked straight out of a fairy tale, the Tower of the Enchanted Duplicator. There have been a few changes since the original account was written. It is now possible to drive right up to the Tower, but the single lane road is designed for small cars only, making sure that the Holy Ground is not profaned by Detroit barges. The dwarfs are still active, but now they fire golf balls instead of boulders, and instead of egg o' bu the road is lined with blackberries for the sustenance of weary fans. The weather of Ireland was too much even for my control, and so there was no more sight-seeing, but I was quite content for the rest of my visit to sit in Oblique House and soak up fannish atmosphere and talk. To somebody who knows George Charters only through the Berry narratives, Charters in person is surprising.

He may be as old as Berry alleges, but he looks about thirty five. He is not particularly loquacious, but adds immensely to a gathering by quietly radiating immense good cheer.

As the time came for me to leave Belfast, it looked as though the weather were conspiring to keep me there. A heavy fog came down, and I was worried that the Nutt's Corner airport would be closed in and I wouldn't be able to make my connection at Glasgow. This would have been serious, for one can't just hop on trans-Atlantic planes as though they were buses. However we got away with only a short delay. On to a BOAC DC7 at Glasgow, an unscheduled call at Shannon airport (Southern Ireland this time) and then I was on the long journey south back to home and warm weather. I had been away only four weeks, but it seemed much longer.

I am still unable to decide whether I like England. Continual travel and meeting people combined with the ever-present cold produced a mental numbness, so that while on the surface I reacted normally, I was incapable of any deep feeling. England seemed like a gigantic movie set, and it is still hard to realize that people actually live there all their lives. But I did immensely enjoy my sojourn in England and Northern Ireland, a sojourn that was made very pleasant by many fine and friendly people, including Terry Jeeves, Eric Bentcliffe, Norman and Ina Shorrocks, Dave Newman, John Roles, and the rest of the Liverpool mob, Eric Jones and the Cheltenham group, Harry and Marion Turner, Mal Ashworth, Ron Bennett, Walt and Madeleine Willis, Arthur Thomson, Joy and Vinç Clarke, Ken and Pamela Bulmer, Sandy Sanderson, John Brunner, Bobbie Wilde, James White, George Charters, John Berry, Eric Needham and Paul Enever (both of whom unfortunately I saw only briefly), Ethel Lindsay, and a good samaritan of the London Circle named, I think, John Newman.

"She's eaten practically nothing since she got home Saturday night - but nothing! I tried - not a half hour ago - to get her to take a nice cup of chicken broth. She took exactly two mouthfuls, and that's all. She threw up everything I got her to eat yesterday, practically." Mrs. Glass's voice stopped only long enough to reload, as it were. "She said maybe she'd eat a cheeseburger later on. Just what is this cheeseburger business? From what I gather, she's practically been living on cheeseburgers and Cokes all semester so far. Is that what they feed a young girl at college these days? I know one thing. I'm certainly not going to feed a young girl as run-down as that child is on food that isn't even---"

"That's the spirit! Make it chicken broth or nothing. That's putting the ole foot down. If she's determined to have a nervous breakdown, the least we can do is to see that she doesn't have it in peace."

"Just don't you be so fresh, young man -- Oh, that mouth of yours! For your information, I don't think it's at all impossible that the kind of food that child takes into her system hasn't a lot to do with this entire whole funny business. Even as a child you practically had to force that child to even touch her vegetables or any of the things that were good for her. You can't go on abusing the body indefinitely, year in, year out --- regardless of what you think."

"You're absolutely right. It's staggering how you jump straight the hell into the heart of a matter. I'm goosebumps all over.....By God, you inspire me. You inflame me, Bessie. You know what you've done? Do you realize what you've done? You've given this whole Goddam issue a fresh, new, Biblical slant. I wrote four papers in college on the Crucifixion - five, really - and every one of them worried me half crazy because I thought something was missing. Now I know what it was. Now it's clear to me. I see Christ in an entirely different light. His unhealthy fanaticism. His rudeness to those nice, sane, conservative, taxpaying Pharisees. Oh, this is exciting! In your simple, straightforward, bigoted way, Bessie, you've sounded the missing keynote of the whole New Testament. Improper diet. Christ lived on cheeseburgers and Cokes. For all we know, he probably fed the mult---"

- J.D. Salinger "Zooey"

MATIN CHEZ NOUVELLE MAISON

.....stating it no less precisely for a certain lack of experience, Sandeman awoke to a shower of birds. Exactly put; certainly not phalaropes, but nevertheless of a flitting smallness, a helterskelter dart and scatter against, across and over, the unmowed lawn.

-----I feel, he said, As steel-like as if fashioned for a particular purpose.

Observing the people across the yard stoutly in the act of not hiding from him - and imagining his own furtive face dimly looming behind the venetian blind - he entered clanging upon the day. And Oh and Oh. Sunlight like golden water cast from a glass to cascade across a billiard table; thus and so, the lawn. A cigarette magically appeared in Sandeman's mouth; as magically, coffee steamed. He hummed an aria underscored in iambic, imagining himself tight in boots, devilishly grinning with a silver crop-head indenting his cheek.

-----Viszla is relentless, said his mother from a doorway; implacable as an obelisk, columnar as to corset. They will come sometime this afternoon, she finished, intoning as for drum-roll and cornet.

Summersummersummer hummed the window fan, suddenly. It was a morning fashioned of those dregs remaining stickily after youth's draining; such and such an amount of thus and so; morning's smell deprived of bee-hum, sunlight without motes, wind sans indicative aspens. Horror! said Sandeman, smiling.

-----I have said, she finished, perioding it with a small, fat foot. Lethargically a fly stumbled up into the air, viscosely ichored after the quiet night. Dew sweated a child's basketball lost and neglected among the grass; a trellis impinged its shadow upon the curved surface; Ozimandias gigantic upon an orangy asteroid.

-----I am reminded of thus and such, said Sandeman with an inexpressive gesture as if to acrobatically swing. I feel a particular horror and see myself remorselessly rushing through space, making a noise like a subway. Time dims and glims and gloms, looming evilly as a wet towel in a locker-room.

-----Ay! and she was gone into a nether darkness constructed with design from so many walls; the blinds like God's eye or Vishna's or Krishna's, still shut, still down. The extant world constricted like a swallowing throat; he was the Eve's apple. He turned, promising himself the last victory and the best, of confronting all opponents with a steely and mocking sideways glance --- but doom goosepimpled his thighs, smelling abruptly of cigarettes smouldering in an enclosed ashtray.

-----They are Coming! arrived his mother, emotionally besom'd, flesh astrain as a storm-caught ship; creaking. The aptitudes of the Universe inclined towards scatology, fumigation and the priesthood. Bells like knells hovered unbidden on the tightrope, the lightrope, the right rope of here and now.

-----You and your breeding dogs, said Sandeman, and, putting on his panama, hurried out to catch the 7.45.

-- Kirs

Change of address: Greg Benford
10521 Allegheny Drive
Dallas 29, Texas.

Derelicti # 8

Derogation

The usual meeting of the Bryce Patton Fan Club and
Tommy Steele Record Boiling Society.

Coulson: At least you people aren't fans of Little Richard.

Lyons: And what is your objection to Little Richard?

Coulson: Why, he's worse than jazz.

Raeburn: Ignoring the arid reaches of fuggheadedness implicit in that remark,
where lies the impeccable Coulson taste?

Ted White: Man, he digs folk songs.

Kidder: You know, the uncouth vocal utterances of the people.

Lyons: You judge them like a Camembert cheese. The older and rottener they are....

White: At least he isn't a Lawrence Welk fan.

G.M. Carr: I'm surprised at your attitude of contempt for Lawrence Welk and how little
basis there is for it because he's one of the shrewdest showmen in the
business and his show is strong enough to pull thousands of viewers....

Kidder: And heave thousands of others?

G.M. Carr: Welk is not afraid to give the people what they want to hear, not what
so-called music experts try to tell people what they want.

Lyons: Ha! If the people and G.M. Carr want something, that's fine, but if it's
something she doesn't approve, she yells for censorship.

G.M. Carr: No music form can be truly called successful unless it caters to what
the people want.

Raeburn: Poor Bach, Stravinsky, Ellington, Bartok, MFQ....all failures.

G.M. Carr: True, Welk is 105% corn, but experience amply proves that people like corn...not only like it, but they're willing to pay for it...and in showbusiness, that's what counts.

Lyons: Right. Out with all musical values. Money-making is all that counts.

Kirs: G.M. Carr I know, but who is this Coulson in our midst?

Lyons: He's one of the Indiana fans. Puts out a fanzine named YANDRO.

Franklin Ford: The colorless, nearly worthless fanzines such as YANDRO, published by colorless drudges....

Raeburn: Remember, it was he who said that, not I.

Coulson: I don't know Raeburn that well, and I'm happy that way.

Kirs: If you ever go to a con in Indiana, Boyd, don't expect to be lionized.

Kidder: He'd more likely be lyonnaised. They seem to consider him pretty small potatoes.

Raeburn: I'm crushed...or should I say mashed?

Kirs: The important thing is, is Coulson a fan?

Raeburn: Well, he puts out a fanzine and reads fanzines and makes comments and all that.....

Don Ford: Aw, you're just these British fanzine publishers to whom the collectors, convention-goers, local club members etc. are not really "true" fans.

Lyons: You overlook the fact that in Britain most of the convention-goers and club members are true fans.

Moomaw: Yeah, they don't have the mass of fringe-fans we have here.

Willis: Admittedly there are some very worthy people who can rightly claim to be fans in the usual sense of the word, by virtue of participation in the affairs of a local group or by private correspondence, but as far as fandom is concerned they might as well not exist, except for three days a year when they may appear at conventions. The fact that they have no interest in fanzines means they have neither interest in nor knowledge of fandom outside their own local group.

McCain: Don Ford probably wouldn't recognize a fanzine if it walked up and bit him on the leg.

Elinor Busby: Fringe-fans don't know they're fringe-fans. They think they're just as fannish as anybody. Only acti-fans can tell the difference.

Willis: Apparently in America there is this ghost fandom which walks only at conventions. People like Kyle, Moskowitz, Madle, Evans and so on, who are never heard from for 362 days in the year and who if they take part in national fandom in that period must do so under assumed names...come convention time they spring to life and are seen right in the thick of it, speechmaking and organizing and intriguing and politicking just as if they were the very core of fandom, carrying on just as they did in The Immortal Storm and ignorant of everything that has happened since.

White: But Madle is a true fan. Eney says so.

Madle: In America Eney is a comparatively unknown fan.

Eney: I am as a planet rending its garments and crying "Ah, sharper than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful satellite."

Larry Stark: All this is fascinating, for I attempt to look at fandom as an area of human experience out of which logical and sincere and important story material can be constructed.

Raeburn: Stories which you then present as fact, huh?

Stark: Does it matter? Does anything matter but silver slanting rain on the cruel lilacs and compassion in the heart's deep core?

Kidder: Don't let Stark puzzle you. That's the way they talk in that group in Cambridge.

Dodd: It's beyond credence.

Andy Young: No, near Boston.

Wm. Deeck: Compassion? In fandom? I find in fandom an inherent viciousness. I've been told that I'm wrong, but that's my view.

Stark: You should lend your eye a moderate aspect. Let it beam through the aquarium of your head like a dead codfish.

Hitchcock: Ugh. Stark, why are you always so morbid?

Stark: Ah, the emotionalism of youth. I trust you grasp the dangers of adolescence?

Hitchcock: Oh yes, with both hands.

Trina: That's the awful effect of Freud on the middle classes. They think they've a moral duty to say whatever dirty thing comes into their minds.

Holleman: You oldies are always putting down us teenage fans. I believe you're actually frightened at the thought that teenagers are constantly coming into fandom and publishing zines of their own and doing what they like but someday you'll hear that my zine QUIRK was named the outstanding zine of the year. Yes, someday I expect to be up among the great ones.

Lyons: Well, we all have to go sometime.

Holleman: One thing my zine won't have is stuff by Jean Young because things like her "Mostly Mesozoic" stink and degrade a fanzine mucho and...

Kidder: Hey, where is Jean?

Raeburn: Steward's taken her out in his car. He wanted to prove he doesn't always end up in the ditch.

Andy: My wife has been taken from me. Quick, bring me my bicycle.

Kidder: Very well, if you insist, but it makes a very poor substitute.

Steward: Hello. I didn't knock in case I missed something.

Andy: Aha! You're the guy I'm gunning for.

Steward: I don't like that kind of language.

Andy: No?

Steward: No. You should say "for whom I am gunning."

Trina: Careful, Gerald. These orthodox scientists can be dangerous when aroused.

Steward: I know. You'd better help me. Can you use a 38?

Trina: No, I'm a small 32.

Steward: It's a gun. Take it. Slip it in the top of your stocking.

Trina: But how about you?

Steward: Oh no. I couldn't.

Trina: Oh Gerald, why are you so cold to me? Have I lost my mystery?

Steward: No, it's under the cushion with my Galaxy.

Lyons: So, the plot thickens.

Kirs: If this keeps up it'll be even more thickening.

Trina: Gerald, if you only knew how much I yearn.

Steward: Your money makes no difference to me.

Raeburn: Trina is a popular socialite.

Steward: I'm not interested in her politics.

Trina: Oh Gerald, will you not keep our love inviolate?

Steward: You can keep it in any color you like.

Kidder: How do you expect to marry and have children if you keep away from girls?

Steward: I'll think of something.

- BR

 Pacific Mathematics is just page after page of solid black equations - Jim Benford

More editorial type comments: If you are not familiar with the original, the finer nuances of the Carl Brandon item in this issue will be lost on you. A pity, but that is always the case with satire. I feel that Carl is today the leading fannish satirist, and I hope to be able to present more of his work. His "Cacher in the Rye" in *INNUEENDO* is a masterpiece. *INNUEENDO* is itself one of the best fanzines appearing at the moment. The Bay area group shows signs of stepping into the shoes of the old LASFS Insurgents. Fannish history is being made.

BOY MEETS GHOUL

AN
ARTICLE
BY
ROBERT
BLOCH

AS THESE LINES ARE WRITTEN, A GREAT DEAL OF CRITICAL ATTENTION IS BEING PAID TO THE LATE NATHANAEL WEST.

REVIEWERS AND ESSAYISTS HAIL HIM AS ONE OF THE IMPORTANT VOICES OF THE THIRTIES. THEY GENERALLY AGREE THAT THE CRITICS OF TWENTY YEARS AGO WERE PRETTY STUPID TO IGNORE THE VIRTUES OF HIS WRITING -- AND BY INFERENCE, CONGRATULATE THEMSELVES ON BEING SO MUCH MORE ACUTE AND PERCEPTIVE.

THEY ALSO INTIMATE THAT NOW JUSTICE WILL BE DONE -- HAVING BESTOWED THEIR APPROVAL, NATHANAEL WEST WILL BE ELEVATED AUTOMATICALLY TO A PERPETUAL POSITION OF PRESTIGE IN AMERICAN LETTERS.

THUS THE SITUATION AS I WRITE.

BUT MAY I VENTURE A SMALL PREDICTION?

IN THE FEW SHORT MONTHS ELAPSING BETWEEN NOW AND THE TIME THIS ARTICLE APPEARS IN PRINT, NATHANAEL WEST AND HIS WORKS WILL SINK BACK INTO COMPLETE OBSCURITY AGAIN. VIRTUALLY NOBODY WILL REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT HIM -- INCLUDING THE CRITICS WHO ARE PRESENTLY TRUMPETING HIS PRAISES.

IS IT BECAUSE NATHANAEL WEST WAS A POOR WRITER? NOT IN MY OPINION. IT SO HAPPENS I READ MISS LONELYHEARTS WHEN IT APPEARED IN 1933, AND THE DAY OF THE LOCUST WHEN IT WAS PUBLISHED IN 1939, AND I SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TRYING TO INTEREST MY FRIENDS IN READING THESE NOVELS. BUT MOST OF THEM WOULDN'T EVEN BORROW MY COPIES, LET ALONE GO OUT AND SPEND 39¢ FOR A REMAINDER COPY OF THEIR OWN -- AS I DID, SHORTLY AFTER EACH BOOK APPEARED. THE SAD TRUTH IS, NATHANAEL WEST, ALTHOUGH HE MADE A BIG BUCK IN HOLLYWOOD, NEVER APPEALED TO THE READING PUBLIC. HIS WAS A NAME DESTINED FOR OBSCURITY.

HOW IS IT THEN THAT ALMOST EIGHTEEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH THERE IS A SUDDEN, CONCERTED REVIVAL OF CRITICAL INTEREST IN HIS FOUR SHORT NOVELS?

BECAUSE ALL FOUR HAVE JUST BEEN RE-PUBLISHED IN ONE HANDY VOLUME -- AND BECAUSE LITERARY CRITICS ARE GHOULS.

THIS NATHANAEL WEST "BOOM" IS NOT A NEW PHENOMENON. FOR YEARS IT HAS BEEN THE PRACTISE OF MOST CRITICS AND REVIEWERS TO DIG UP DEAD WRITERS AND SNIFF ECSTATICALLY AT THE BODY OF THEIR WORK.

LAST YEAR, H. L. MENCKEN CAME IN FOR A SHARE OF KUDOS. THE YEAR BEFORE THAT IT WAS DYLAN THOMAS. THE YEAR BEFORE THAT IT WAS F. SCOTT FITZGERALD. CRITICS WHO HAD IGNORED MENCKEN FOR YEARS AS AN AMUSING BUFFOON WHO HAD LONG OUTLIVED HIS ERA SUDDENLY AROSE TO PROCLAIM THAT HE WAS A MAJOR FIGURE. REVIEWERS WHO HAD IN THEIR TIME PENNED VIOLENT DIATRIBES AGAINST TENDER IS THE NIGHT AND HELPED TO BREAK SCOTT FITZGERALD'S HEART BEGAN TO EXHIBIT A CURIOUS ABOUT-FACE AND ASSERT THAT HE WAS THE VERY MIRROR OF THE TWENTIES IN OUR LITERATURE.

AGAIN, IT'S EASY TO FERRET OUT THE REASON FOR THEIR REACTIONS. MENCKEN DIED AND THE BIOGRAPHIES APPEARED, ALONG WITH RANDOM REPUBLICATION OF SOME OF HIS WORK. DITTO, DYLAN THOMAS. IN THE CASE OF FITZGERALD, NOT ONE BUT SEVERAL BOOKS EMERGED:

MIZENER'S BIOGRAPHY, SCHULBERG'S FICTIONALIZATION OF HIS CAREER. AND PARAMOUNT REMADE THE GREAT GATSBY, STARRING THAT GREAT DRAMATIC ARTIST, MR. ALAN LADD.

SO THE GHOULS WENT TO WORK.

THAT'S ALL THEY NEED...A SIMPLE MONUMENT OR HEADSTONE TO MARK THE LOCATION OF A WRITER'S CORPSE. IN A MOMENT THEY GATHER AROUND AND START BURROWING. ONCE THEY GET THEIR HANDS ON THE BODY, THEY JOIN IN AN EXULTANT CHORUS OF, "UMMMMMM -- Good!!!"

IT IS AN ODD, BUT BY NO MEANS INSIGNIFICANT FACT THAT THESE SELF-SAME CRITICS NEVER SEEM TO RE-DISCOVER THE MERITS OF ANY LIVING AUTHOR WHO SINKS INTO OBSCURITY. TRUE, EDMUND WILSON LAST YEAR WROTE A LONG ESSAY RE-APPRAISING THE WORK OF JAMES BRANCH CABELL, BUT THIS IS THE SOLE EXCEPTION I'VE BEEN ABLE TO UNEARTH. NO CRITIC, TO MY MIND, HAS YET EXCLAIMED UPON THE WORTH OF GEORGE WILLIS, WHOSE THE WILD FAUN SEEMS TO ME TO BE SUPERIOR TO THE MUCH-PUBLICIZED YOUNG MAN WITH A HORN; NOR, TO CONTINUE IN THE GENRE OF JAZZ-NOVELS, HAS ANYONE EXTOLLED DALE CURRAN'S PIANO IN THE BAND.

AT THE PRESENT MOMENT YOU'LL FIND VERY FEW OF THESE GENTRY WASTING WORDS OR SPACE OVER SUCH FORMER TITANS AS THEODORE DREISER, SINCLAIR LEWIS, OR THE STILL-ALIVE DOS PASSOS.

BUT WAIT UNTIL THE "OFFICIAL" LEWIS BIOGRAPHY APPEARS. WAIT UNTIL THE PRESENTLY IGNORED OR ANATHEMIZED JAMES T. FARRELL DIES AND SOMEBODY DECIDES TO RE-ISSUE STUDS LONIGAN OR FILM IT. WAIT UNTIL THEY MAKE A MUSICAL COMEDY OUT OF ELMER THE GREAT OR YOU KNOW ME, AL AND SEE HOW FAST THE GHOULS WILL START CHEWING OVER RING LARDNER.

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY HAVE, BY AND LARGE, ESCAPED THIS PARTICULAR MANIFESTATION OF COMMERCIAL DRUM-BEATING. THUS FAR ONLY TWO WRITERS HAVE ATTAINED FRESH FAME AFTER THEIR DEMISE -- H. P. LOVECRAFT AND ROBERT E. HOWARD. IN BOTH INSTANCES, THAT FAME WAS HONESTLY ARRIVED AT; BY MEANS OF TRUE "WORD-OF-MOUTH" CIRCULATION RATHER THAN HIGH-PRESSURE PROMOTION. INDEED, THE OUTSIDER WAS SO POORLY RECEIVED INITIALLY THAT THE PITIFULLY SMALL EDITION TOOK SEVERAL YEARS TO SELL OUT. HOWARD'S WORK FOLLOWED A SIMILAR PATTERN. OTHER NOTABLES IN THE FIELD, NAMELY, HENRY S. WHITEHEAD, ARTHUR MACHEN, THOMAS BURKE, JOHN BUCHAN, ALGERNON BLACKWOOD, WALTER DE LA MARE, OLAF STAPLEDON, A. MERRITT, AND STANLEY WEINBAUM, HAD A SMALL COTERIE OF DEVOTED FOLLOWERS WHICH DWINDLED RATHER THAN AUGMENTED AFTER THEIR DEATHS.

IT IS, TO THIS PARTICULAR OBSERVER, RATHER FRIGHTENING TO SEE HOW COOLLY AND CALLOUSLY THE BIGTIME GHOULS OPERATE.

WITNESS THE "SHAW REVIVAL" NOW CURRENT -- THE "SHAVIAN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION" OF LAST YEAR WHICH WAS A PURE PRESS-AGENT'S DREAM FROM START TO FINISH. IT DOESN'T MUCH MATTER WHETHER SHAW WAS GOOD, BAD, OR INDIFFERENT; THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE SAME CRITICS WHO NOW PLUMP FOR HIM WERE BLITHELY DISMISSING HIM AS OLD-HAT FOR A GOOD TWENTY YEARS PRIOR TO HIS PASSING.

EUGENE O'NEILL WAS OUT OF FAVOR WITH THE CRITICS OF THE FORTIES -- TODAY HE IS BEING "REDISCOVERED" WITH A VENGEANCE.

IT'S THE OVERNIGHT ABOUT-FACE WHICH BOTHERS ME...AND THE IMPLICATIONS BEHIND IT. IMPLICATIONS REGARDING THE VERACITY, THE INTELLECTUAL HONESTY, OF A VERY SMALL GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO LAY CLAIM TO SETTING THE STANDARDS OF TASTE AND MERIT FOR AN ENTIRE NATION.

ALL TOLD, PERHAPS TWO HUNDRED OF THESE PEOPLE CONTROL -- OR PURPORT TO CONTROL, THROUGH THEIR JUDGEMENTS -- THE INTELLECTUAL JUDGEMENTS OF A HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE MILLION POTENTIAL READERS, PLAY-GOERS, AND STUDENTS. AND WHEN THIS MINUTE BODY SUDDENLY GALVANIZES INTO ACTION TO ACCLAIM THE WORK OF SOME CREATIVE ARTIST WHOM THEY'VE EITHER IGNORED OR OPENLY DAMNED FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, IT'S AN OCCASION FOR SUSPICION.

INEVITABLY, FANDOM BEING WHAT IT IS, A GREAT DEAL WILL PROBABLY BE WRITTEN ABOUT VANCE PACKARD'S RECENT BOOK, THE HIDDEN PERSUADERS. IT IS A PITY, TO ME, THAT PACKARD DIDN'T INCLUDE A DETAILED DISSECTION OF THE "INTELLECTUAL SNOBBERY" APPROACH WHICH SEEMS TO OPERATE IN THIS AREA OF SUPPOSEDLY DISPASSIONATE CRITICISM.

WILL THE DAY COME, I WONDER, WHEN THE WORKS OF ALEXANDER BLADE, IVAR JORGENSEN, AND CALVIN KNOX BE RESURRECTED BY THE GHOULS BURROWING IN OUR LITTLE FIELD?

SOMEHOW, I THINK NOT. I AM DISINCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT DAMON KNIGHT WILL EVER PEN A EULOGY ON DEROS. AND EVEN IF SOME AMBITIOUS PUBLISHER PUTS OUT THE COMPLETE WORKS OF VICTOR A. ROUSSEAU, I DOUBT IF P. SCHUYLER MILLER WILL GO OVERBOARD FOR IT.

SCIENCE FICTION FANS ARE OFTEN ACCUSED OF INTELLECTUAL IMMATURITY AND AN ADDICTION TO "CRAZES." BUT IN MY OPINION, THEY ARE HONEST DEVOTEES. THEY ERECT THEIR OWN IDOLS, AND BOW DOWN TO THEM REVERENTLY IN ETERNAL FEALTY. IN THIS THEY SEEM FAR SUPERIOR TO THE BLIND FOLLOWERS OF THE GHOUL-PRIESTS OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM WHO PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE A DOZEN GODS IN TURN AT A WORD OF COMMAND. THOSE WHO ADORE HEINLEIN CONTINUE TO ADORE HIM, ON THE BASIS OF AN ACTUAL APPRECIATION OF HIS WORK. THEY DON'T WAIT FOR SOME DISTANT VOICE TO COMMAND THEIR WORSHIP AT WILL, JUST BECAUSE SOME PUBLIC RELATIONS MAN IN A PUBLISHING HOUSE STARTS NEEDLING AN OBEDIENT CRITIC WHO -- WHILE HE MAY TRY TO MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN DEALING WITH THE WORK OF THE LIVING -- HAS NO COMPUNCTIONS ABOUT GILDING THE LILIES ON A DEAD MAN'S GRAVE.

AS A PROFESSIONAL WRITER, I AM PROBABLY PREJUDICED. I'D MUCH RATHER HAVE SEEN NATHANAEL WEST ACCORDED A PORTION OF RECOGNITION DURING HIS LIFETIME; I'D PREFER THAT FITZGERALD HAVE BEEN HONOURED TO HIS FACE RATHER THAN TO HIS SKULL. AND I THINK THAT SOME OF THE BITTERNESS OF LEWIS'S AND DREISER'S LAST YEARS MIGHT HAVE EASILY BEEN EASED BY A FEW KIND REMINISCENCES ON THE PART OF THE SELF-SAME CRITICS WHO WAIT FOR A POSTHUMOUS "BOOM" TO BESTOW THEIR BLESSING.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM, IN THE SUMMING UP, HAS FREQUENTLY BEEN QUOTED AS FOLLOWS: "IN MY TWENTIES THE CRITICS SAID I WAS BRUTAL, IN MY THIRTIES THEY SAID I WAS FLIPPANT, IN MY FORTIES THEY SAID I WAS CYNICAL, IN MY FIFTIES THEY SAID I WAS COMPETENT, AND NOW IN MY SIXTIES THEY SAY I AM SUPERFICIAL."

TWENTY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE MAUGHAM WROTE THESE WORDS, AND I RATHER DOUBT IF CRITICS HAVE BOTHERED TO SAY MUCH OF ANYTHING ABOUT HIM IN HIS SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES. BUT WHEN HE DIES, WAIT AND SEE. WAIT UNTIL THE "BIOGRAPHY", WAIT UNTIL THE RE-ISSUANCE OF OF HUMAN BONDAGE AND A FEW OTHER TITLES, AND THEN WATCH THE NOW-SILENT GHOULS BEGIN TO BAY HIS PRAISES AT THE MOON.

MEANWHILE, WE SCIENCE FICTION FANS AND READERS, IGNORING THE ULULATION WILL CONTINUE TO PAY HAPPY HOMAGE AD INFINITUM TO THEODORE STURGEON AND/OR GREGOR BANSHUCK, AS OUR TASTES DICTATE.

OUR TASTES -- THE TASTES OF READERS RATHER THAN THE TASTES OF GHOULS.

EXPOSE

THE 3 MINUTE SINGING COMMERCIAL YOU PAY TO HEAR BY BOB TUCKER

Nonsense, you say? Nobody will ever catch YOU dropping a coin into a jukebox ---- or telephoning a disc jockey ---- seeking a certain popsy tune, you say? That's for the birds, you say?

Hah! I say. If you have never contributed a nickel toward the fortunes being amassed by the jukebox czars, if you have never made a request of a disc jockey, then bully for you, and I'm with you. That is, indeed, for the birds. But if you have ever wasted a single coin in a jukebox, or have ever listened to a single disc jockey in recent years, then I say you have listened to a singing commercial and probably was unaware of it.

The trade calls them "promotion singles"; the movie moguls call them "title songs," or sometimes "theme songs". Whatever the fancy label, they are nothing more nor less than hastily composed pieces of music designed to advertise a motion picture (for free) in jukeboxes, on radio and TV.

They have mushroomed into quite a lucrative racket, and certain examples have proven an advertising bonanza. I'm unable to pinpoint the beginning, unable to name the culprit who first discovered that a promotion single could sell a picture, but the idea seems to have sneaked up on the whole English-speaking world without anyone in the audience being aware of it.

The richest strike, and very nearly the first one, was a song and a film named "Three Coins in the Fountain" which was much-too-popular some years back. That lachrymose abomination quickly became a runaway; it was played and sung everywhere, wound up on the hit parade, and garnered more advertising for the film of the same name than the studio could possibly buy with dollars. The company which produced the film, 20th Century Fox, wasn't blind to the strike they'd made. Riding a good horse to death in the traditional Hollywood manner, they have whipped out a title song (and disc) for nine out of every ten pictures produced since, hoping to repeat that earlier astonishing performance. And it follows, without belaboring the point, that the songs were utter crud; the lyrics and music reveal the lack of inspiration, lack of quality, lack of competency and above all, the lack of time to produce a decent piece of writing and scoring.

Since April, 1956, that company has made these songs to advertise these pictures:

The Revolt of Mamie Stover
Bus Stop
The Best Things in Life Are Free
Anastasia
The Girl Can't Help It
Smiley
Oh Men! Oh Women!
The River's Edge
China Gate
Bernadine

But the Fox studios aren't alone, because other Hollywood head-men have eyes and ears, and nothing succeeds like copying an earlier success. In the same calendar period, these pictures and these songs, for publicity:

Friendly Persuasion
Jubal
Safari ("We're on Safari")
Autumn Leaves

You can't run away from it
Gaby
Somebody up there likes me
High Society

Julie
That Certain Feeling
War and Peace
The First Travelling Saleslady
Bundle of Joy
Johnny Concho
Rebel in Town
The Toy Tiger
Pillars of the Sky
Written on the Wind

Four Girls in Town
Giant
Let's be Happy
Love in the Afternoon
The Strange One
This Could Be The Night
Man on Fire
Funny Face
The Tattered Dress
A Face in the Crowd

In not all instances above was the song written and titled to advertise the picture. "Autumn Leaves", for instance, was popular before the picture, but the film company took advantage of the music by using the title and including a rendition of the song on the soundtrack. And in other rare instances, such as "Giant", the score was written as a full-length background theme to the picture; nevertheless, the company rushed into production an album "from the soundtrack" to cash in on sales and to advertise.

Some of these musical abortions may never be heard in your city because your theatre manager is a lazy cuss, or because your disc jockeys and their stations have better sense. But for the more unfortunate souls who have any or all of the above titles dinned in their ears day and night, the scheme usually works like this:

Prior to the release of the picture, the film company will distribute through regular channels a disc of the proper title. Some copies are actually purchased in record stores by young people who lack sense; some are sold (or given away, again through regular channels) to radio stations for their day-to-day programs. When the picture is dated to play a certain city, the promotion-minded theatre manager (or press agent, if it is a large theatre in a large city) delivers a copy to the jockeys, along with a handful of passes, and sits back content. And every once in a while some darn fool thing catches on, and people call in for it, and feed coins into jukeboxes. And the three-minute commercial is a success.

How long have you been hearing: Friendly Persuasion, High Society, Island in the Sun, Bundle of Joy, Man on Fire, and that awful thing, Bernadine? And have you forgotten Anastasia?

You think I'm talking through my hat, you say?

Wait around, and see if Nat King Cole's "China Gate" catches the juvenile fancy. It is a perfect example of the "popular song" written to cop free three-minute time-slots on the air. The words are inane and the music is crud.

I figure it will take twenty years before the FCC gets wise.

STOP DUPER: The fall publicity campaigns are getting under way. The MGM studios have hired Nat King Cole to sing the "Title song" (from which a disc will be cut) for their forthcoming flicker, "Raintree Country". Phone your favorite jockey at once.

— — — — —

The Glasses lived in an old but, categorically, not unfashionable apartment house in the East Seventies, where possibly two-thirds of the more mature women tenants owned fur coats, and, on leaving the building on a bright weekday morning, might at least conceivably be found, a half hour or so later, getting in or out of one of the elevators at Lord & Taylors or Saks or Bonwit Teller's. In this distinctly Mannhattanesque locale, Mrs. Glass was (from an undeniably hoyden point of view) a rather refreshing eyesore. She looked, first, as if she never, never left the building at all, but that if she did, she would be wearing a dark shawl and she would be going in the general direction of O'Connell Street, there to claim the body of one of her half-Irish, half-Jewish sons, who, through some clerical error, had just been shot dead by the Black and Tans.

- J.D. Salinger "Zooey"

XMAS IN NEW YORK-1954

by Dick Ellington

The party was technically over so we straggled forth from Mason's basement, all save Jukovsky and he hath drunkenness of a high order.

We assemble in the hall outside Mason's apartment but I am fanzineless. I lurch to the basement. Jukovsky, he of the muy raro lack of stamina, is now engrossed in rolling from side to side, or wall to wall if you prefer, hitting with great precision each and every neat pile of glass shards en route. This was much to the detriment of the clothes and the skin and amusing to Vanilla, who watched from behind the couch.

I bellow for assistance and receive only a chorus of shhhs and a most helplessly drunken Curran. Between the two of us we manage to sit Marty up. He pukes. We disregard his levity and array him in suit coat, neatly hiding results of said puking. He pukes again, but we are men of great and drunken patience. An overcoat covers all.

We carry him upstairs and are greeted with howls of great and fine merriment and a tender string of snarls from Gibson. A discussion ensues. Dialectic obviously dictates that we give Marty (a) fresh air and (b) coffee. We sally forth for Washington Square, dropping fen along the way in various bars and subway stations.

Curran and I still support a spasmodically twitching Jukovsky who leaves two neat toe tracks on the cement. I look at Dan. He replies with a tee-hee. I chuckle. We both go into spasms of glee. Jukovsky falls on his face with a dull thunk. We laugh more loudly and pick him up.

One more block. I find myself supporting both Curran and Marty. I drop both in disgust. Danny howls and dances nimbly aside into a wall. Jukovsky makes another dull thunk.

At last the park. It is quite cold, freezing one might say, but we feel nothing. The party is now reduced to Gibson, Trina and Saha on one bench, Marty on another, prone, and Curran, Mason and myself erect and weaving. A bottle of I.W. Harper is also on hand, mixing freely with the crowd.

Curran lurches off in mad search for coffee and I go down to investigate the still slumbering Jukovsky. He is still puking occasionally so I maintain my distance.

Six or seven diminutive juvies make the scene from the direction of MacDougal street. They stop and stare in unison at Marty. They regard me with owlish intentness. I return the gaze.

"Whynchoo take yer friend home?" one of them asks. His interest is obviously purely clinical.

"Nunyerdambizness" I articulate with awe that I can still talk.

"He's sick. Takim toa horspital."

"Go away." I snarl distinctly.

This last annoys the littlest one no end. He steps shakily forward and swings madly at me. I am on the weave back so he misses. I pick him up, all 75 pounds of him, and throw him over a fence. His friends growl. Mason arrives and begins arguing with others. They walk up path toward rest of our group, still arguing.

I pick little one up. He is apologizing, pleading drunkenness. I help him look for his glasses. Suddenly there is a whistle. He and remaining two confreres bolt up the path and disappear into mysterious night. Jukovsky is still very unconscious and has developed pitching tendency which tends to shift him from bench to ground with great regularity. I finally leave him on ground and meander back to other bench for needed lubrication. Joe, Trina and Saha are still sitting. Mason has disappeared. I refresh myself from bottle.

Kindly old lady, out giving her dog his 3 a.m. romp, approaches and states calmly that "Your friend is up there aways. I think he's dead."

We ambulate up path and sure enough, there is Mason, prone under another bench with face quite flattened by some flattening object, mayhap rock. Curran now returns and adds to confusion. Mason wakes up and groans. Jukovsky is still unconscious so I drink coffee Danny has brought.

We debate situation and decide to return and rid ourselves of casualties who are delaying progress no end. We load up and move off. Gibson and Saha carry Mason, Curran and I carry Jukovsky, Trina is rear guard, carrying assorted fanzines, thermos bottle and Mr. Harper who is getting quite low. We drop Jukovsky again several times but crusted puke and dirt on face prevent serious facial injuries.

Mason's place. We dump Mason on bed and Jukovsky on couch and leave for Jericho. Mr. Harper is empty. After short prowling looking for long-gone juvies, we desist and ensconce ourselves in cozy, warm Jericho for serious drinking.

Mason's wife arrives. She is annoyed. "You beat Mason up, you bastards." We convince her such is not the case but she is adamant that we return and remove drunken fan from bathtub. We return, puzzled. Sure enough, Jukovsky is couchant in the bathtub. We extract him.

Saha sits down on edge of bed to talk to hazy, bloody-faced Mason. We decide to leave but Saha has passed out across Mason's legs so we leave him to Rimba's tender mercies.

Gibson takes Trina home and Curran and I waylay poor, unsuspecting cab driver and load in Jukovsky for long ride to Ozone Park. Jukovsky is almost awake now and has conceived unexplainable hatred for cab drivers. He expresses same by screeching intellectual obscenities at cab driver who is fast losing patience. We decide nothing can hurt the boy now and proceed to slap the occasional cupped palm over his palpitating jaws, thus effectively gagging the torrent.

South Ozone Park. His father pays off the cab, much to our relief, as naturally we are broke. He also takes charge of maudlin son. Danny and I drag our feet off in search of a subway.

It is six a.m. and it is Xmas morning. I look at Danny. The sequence as before. Through drunken giggles he blurts out strangled "Merry Xmas. I riposte neatly with "God damn the Merry Gentlemen."

This is one from The New Yorker which I couldn't resist reprinting:

"The Queen exchanged gifts with some of her hosts. To the college, she presented a copy of the status of the Order of the Garter. To colonial Williamsburg she gave a small 17th Century cheer." - Durham (N.C.) Herald.

Rickity Rax, Rickity Rax,
Ply them with flax! Co-ax, Co-ax!
Williamsburg! Williamsburg!
Zounds!

HOW THE OTHER HALF

Which is by way of being extracts,
printed by permission, from the
letters of Alex (or Rich) Kirs.

I've just moved to the City Island place. It is in a brand-new private-housy sort of building, and is ultra-modern in a restrained sort of way. I like it very much. The use of a beach restricted to the inhabitants of the immediate neighborhood goes with the apartment. I have over the weekend completed all the construction of two long wooden platforms, which shall be stained a fairly natural white-streaked drigtwood color, and upon which eventually shall be placed two foam-rubber mattresses, thus converting into couches. They are quite nice, and I have blisters all over my hands. The neighborhood is all agog; I am a Craftsman, and thusly, Respectable. I am Handy. One of the women said, "I have a girl for you..." meaning not what you are most likely to think, but, "I have (or know) a young marriageable "nice" girl who might just conceivably be interested in handsome old you." Oh well. Last weekend I built a couple of lawn chairs out of scrap lumber. I seem to be building, building....

The youth of the neighborhood are much impressed. The females, confronted with my suave sophistication, shuffle their feet and giggle. The males stand about, all muscular and all, in tight little knots or clots, occasionally giving out with a bark of masculine laughter....but mostly, just frowning. They distantly approve of my carpenterial abilities; one of them is rumored to be on the point of inviting me out on his Boat; the crowning seal of social approval. All is talk of ketches and yawls and star-class and skiffs and all that. Everybody owns boats, builds boats, talks boats, or just covets them. I shall, I shall, go all nautical, see if I don't. I shall wear a yachting cap sans fouled anchors, and I shall walk with a roll. Really.

If you think the American taste is bad as regards cars, just you go into Piser's, which is a huge furniture company. I went, seeking approximations of the couch-beds described above, and was shown thousands upon thousands - almost literally - of overstuffed, gadgety, gimcracky, vulgar, tinsel-woven upholstered, lacquered, faked, generally useless heaps of gunk. My Ghod. Just looking at the things, much less being surrounded by them, set my teeth on edge. All of them looked as if they weighed about ten tons each. What with the salesman insisting on showing me the various beauties of each set (pardon, "set"; the idea is that it is impossible to buy furniture, except in "sets", which consist of a couch, two chairs, and a table, the chairs looking like shrunken couches, and the couch looking like nothing so much as the front of a 1957 Mercury.) and pointing out the loveliness of the finish (stained, or bleached, or lacquered, in every case), I had most violent feelings of nausea, and left the place in a hurried huff. Never again. From now on, I shop at Macy's. What I simply cannot see is, the place is enormous, and thus, they must pay awful rent, and it is full of things, which argues factories and all that, all of which adds up to Big Business, which means people must actually BUY the damn junk. I don't see it. They must all be quite mad.

Guys in the neighborhood have taken to coming from the private beach, wearing tight swimming trunks with towels wrapped about their loins a la sarongs, so's it looks like they're naked under the towels, and then walking up the block to the main street, causing the tourists to make with all sorts looks of wild surmise. They -- the guys-- go in to the candy store and sit around, still to all intents and purposes nude under their little towels, and laugh like crazy. It is all most pithy and all, I guess.

"Nice" girls. Ideally, all American lads between the ages 14 and 19, go prowling about looking for hordes of un-nice girls for seducing purposes. They - the boys - at this time take the view that any girl who permits herself to be seduced is un-nice. Meanwhile, they are strongly convinced that the only girl to marry, or fall in love - seriously - with, must be "Nice." "Nice" is defined, as above, as being non-promiscuous. Now, the thing is that all are guilty until proven innocent, and thus, the kids probably often seduce real "nice" girls, who just hadn't the stamina or whatever was necessary to resist the seduction. I expect there are some "nice" girls knocking about, really. However, one never meets them. Meanwhile, there are all sorts un-nice girls, gals who would cheerfully bed with all and sundry if it would do them any good, who spontaneously conclude that their only hope lies in being "nice"; such a state being attained by locking the legs together as rigidly as if welded, and by looking askance at any mention of any subject so much as featherlightly touching on smut. These gals go about making like "nice" girls, and their sole function is decorative. The nice real, "nice" girls, marry "nice" boys or top-level executives or millionaires, and live happily ever after, except when they happen to marry one's close friends, whereupon one sees through the fallacy of it all. Superstition has it that the un "nice" girls become Vice girls, but they equally often marry top-level executives, Nice Boys, and millionaires. As well as one's close friends. Meanwhile, there are all these boys passing some arbitrary age, and finding themselves spouseless, and having traumatic incidents left and right. Somewhere, somehow, they sophisticize it all so that any to-them-attractive un-nice girl becomes ironcladly "nice", a delusion they will defend to the bloody, bloody death, as its invalidation would reflect on the men's manhood, like. "Nice" girls are just as expensive as decorative-type mock-"nice" girls. I think.

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I am in process of mental stagnation. Soon I shall take up neighbor on offer of nice girl, and marry, and settle down and have kids and buy lots of things I don't need on time payments and spend rest of life making payments and buying more things I don't need and fighting with wife and mistreating kids and worrying about doing same and complaining about how weather was colder/warmer/dryer/wetter when I was young and sitting on lawn in undershirt in summer and all like that. It is a prospect the horribleness of which pales completely beside the inevitable feeling of having Gone With The Herd. I Shall Be Like Everybody Else. This all inspired by talking with friend who I found sitting in the living-room when I got home last night. His mother had accident and is in hospital and he was on vacation and spent time drinking self to death and wenching madly, and now comes to me expecting I Solve All with a few Well Chosen Words.....or at least, by lending ear to his troubles. Anyway he complains he is Getting Noplace and has Lost Interest in All He Used To Be Interested In and Doesn't Know What To Do, and when he gets drunk he Feels Like Getting Married (horrid pause while the both of us contemplated the full, finer implications of what he'd said.) and is afraid some monday he will wake up beside strange chick with marriage license under pillow and all like that. I tell him Jawn's solution; drive fist into wall or through window, run like mad to doctor, who will shoot one full of stuff to make one calm or something. I tell him my solution; drink sufficiently to become immediately completely insensible and quite unable to do anything much less marry strange chick. He tells me he is Afraid.

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In New York, one goes into the woods (having first dressed in red, with target-faces painted here and there, and "NO!" signs and like that) with three cartridges. One sits down, being careful no bush looms behind you to make you look like you have antlers, and being doubly careful not to make any deer-like movements or noises, or ANY movements and noises, and by and by hordes of hunters rush madly past, threshing their way through alder thickets and sloshing through the fallen leaves and hurray-ing and halloo-ing and furiously smoking cigarettes and clinking coins in their pockets and blowing moose-calls and generally making a gawdawful racket. As soon as they have disappeared from sight, a deer rises casually from behind a bush, and you shoot it through the heart. It bounds merrily away and you shoot it in the rear, and it falls down dead. It really does. You keep the third cartridge for the man who bounds casually from behind a tree, deer-tag in hand, in the direction of your deer. It is all very exciting.

- Kirs

BLACK SWEATER TO LAB SMOCK OR SCOOP DON'T LIVE HERE NO MORE

HARRY WARNER JR.

Science fiction stories have cast off some of the barnacles that once clung to them. The colors have gone from the rays these days in the prozines. The scientist's pretty daughter rarely is the heroine, as once she was, and the newspaper reporter who once was the principal stooge to get the science or milieu of the action to the reader has been converted - where he hasn't been discarded altogether. When he appears nowadays, he is most frequently a sort of Greek chorus, nameless, and often in the form of a group of reporters, who appear just long enough to pose a few questions or voice some opinions.

But there's no reason to mourn or rejoice over the loss of the reporter as a character in a science fiction story. I can testify that the reporters as they appeared in the prozines bore no relationship to reporters as they really exist. The notion the public has of the character and activities of the reporter is probably pretty close to the antics he once performed in the science fiction magazines, so it might not be a bad idea to clear up the matter briefly. After fifteen years of newspaper work, I speak with a bit of authority.

The first thing that a reporter used to do in a science fiction story was to scent a scoop; a big story which would raise his weekly pay from \$17.50 to \$20.00, and get him a byline on the front page. This is precisely the thing that reporters don't do, in the common course of events. The public thinks of a reporter as going around hunting scoops so steadily that at least one out of every three reporters in the nation today is nicknamed Scoop. There was a time when such a concept was justified, but times have changed.

In the prozine stories, the reporter heard that this old fellow had invented perpetual motion or anti-gravity, tracked down his dwelling place, and immediately got plunged into the action by touching a lever accidentally. In reality, the reporter who heard of such an invention would find the old fellow employed by an aircraft factory or chemical laboratory or some other large firm which requires all of its employees to assign to it patent rights in return for a stated sum which is paid to the employee if the corporation obtains a patent on his device. When the reporter contacted the public relations department of the firm for information on the invention, he would be told that it was classified information. If he wrote indignantly to his congressman about such withholding of facts, the congressman's secretary would sign her boss's name to a letter assuring the reporter that the matter had been brought to the attention of the Pentagon and that the unnecessary censorship would be cleared up instantly. That's the last the reporter would hear of the matter.

As for scoops in general, reporters seldom strive for them for two reasons: policy of their newspaper, and self-protection. The reasons are really related, and derive from a common cause, the complexity of today's life and the impossibility of the few newspaper reporters doing a thorough job of covering the hundreds of thousands of persons in their territory. Each of the two newspapers in Hagerstown, for instance, has

about ten reporters to cover news emanating from the circulation area of about 40 miles radius, containing perhaps 100,000 persons. In a metropolitan area, the same ratio holds good, give or take a little; a large newspaper may have 100 people on its news and editorial staff, with more than a million people in the general vicinity to be looked after. It is impossible for the news staff to do a thorough job in such a situation. In most cities, they do as complete a job as possible through cooperation, trading information, dividing up a story among men from two or more newspapers to make sure that it will be covered from all necessary angles. A few large city newspapers do not even send reporters out to cover local happenings. Independently, a central news agency operates to take care of run-of-the-mill items, providing all newspapers in the city with the facts, in order to free reporters for special matters.

Now, there is nothing to prevent a reporter from showing initiative enough to dig out scoops, under this setup, but human nature is operating. The reporter who fails to share his big story with his fellow reporters from the other newspapers will find himself overlooked quite frequently in the future, when those fellow reporters are sharing stories. The newspaper publisher who orders his photographers not to shoot a couple of extra pictures for a competitor when the competitor's men are tied up elsewhere may find himself in an impossible situation if his own photographer's camera fails to synchronize at the biggest local football game of the year. There are exceptions to the rule, of course. The most notable was the guy who broke prematurely the news of the end of World War Two in Europe. Remember the things that the press and the news services said about his lack of professional ethics?

Something else to remember is that many apparent scoops and big stories are no such thing. The newspapers which appear to score beats over rivals in the same city, day after day, with exclusive stories, are frequently doing it by sheer trickery. Usually, it is a result of the use of a little gimmick, known to all newspaper editors but utilized by only a few sensationalizing souls. This little gimmick is the simple process of blowing up something completely insignificant and trusting to big black type and the front page position to force the public to accept it as something important. Frequently the story which looks like an exclusive when spread across the top of the front page in one newspaper will be found buried away on page 17 in three paragraph length in other newspapers at the same time. A variant of this same process is to feature some minor aspect of the big story of the day, in order to make it seem that this newspaper has dug up an angle that every other newspaper overlooked.

Actually, newspaper reporters are among the laziest of God's creatures. Herbert Hoover spoke near Hagerstown a few years ago, bringing into the area about two dozen men from big city newspapers, syndicates and press services. During his speech, only about one in three glanced at the prepared text to make sure he wasn't improvising his talk, and I saw only one reporter pencilling in the little changes and omissions in the text that Hoover turned out. The rest just sat and stared and tried to keep their ears closed, confident that someone would alert them in the event that something unexpected was said. Most press conferences consist of walking into a room, picking up a large manila folder containing a couple of hundred mimeographed pages of facts and background material, listening to the celebrity summarize the contents of this package, eating the sandwiches, and going back to the office to write the story; the Eisenhower-type press conference, filled with questions, is an exception.

I might point out, incidentally, that the modern science fiction stories which tell of flashbulbs shining at the launching of the first moon rocket are quite inaccurate. Newspapers have been converting to electronic flash units so fast that only a few small town photo-journalists worry with flashbulbs these days. Photography in many science fiction situations would be quite impossible, anyway, because of the fogging effect that many types of radiation have on film; even in downtown Hagerstown, we cross the street when the Tuberculosis Association has its portable X-ray machine at work on chest examinations, remembering pictures that were lost to this type of radiation. Even an

old-fashioned radar set could blister a photographer who got into its zone of action while carrying flashbulbs in his pocket.

A very unfortunate circumstance is the popularity today of journalism courses in college, even with the students who have no intention of entering newspaper work after graduation. Every reporter is driven to distraction by the people who once took journalism, and believe that they are the only persons who can be trusted to give information on this or that matter. Journalism majors are a particular headache when they get newspaper work, because they are so confident that they know how the work should be done, and so are unable to adjust to the idiosyncracies of the newspaper which has employed them. No two newspapers in the nation do things exactly the same way, and the job of publishing a newspaper is so complex that the routine can't be changed without missing a deadline. "The Front Page" may have been a true picture of journalism in a particular era in a particular city -- Chicago, in the early part of the century -- but neither the play nor the movie bears the slightest relation to things as they now exist.

The best guide that I know to the general attitude and nature of newspaper reporters is Mencken's autobiographical volume, "Newspaper Days". The journalistic circumstances that it describes have changed irrevocably, but the atmosphere that Mencken recreates in this book is the genuine thing, the atmosphere that exists in big newspaper offices and small ones, independent of time or place to the best of my knowledge, presumably the same atmosphere from which "The Spectator" emerged, comprised of such elements as cynicism and guesswork and ambition and clumsiness and profanity. No reporter who asked the scientist's beautiful young daughter for an interview had ever drawn a deep breath in that atmosphere.

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"Now, when you start to read The Republic," said Dr. Everall, "--that is, if you do, you will note that it has all sorts of funny names in it...long names...Thrasymachus and Polemarchus and Cephalus. Students are always complaining about this (as if I had anything to do with it), asking why these people aren't called John Jones, or Wyatt Earp, or some other good American name. Most of them drop the course when they find out that The Republic is such an UnAmerican book...which is of course good for them...and for the course. Because then I can get down to cases with the two or three students who are left...that is, of course, after I finish explaining to them just what good they will get out of Philosophy. I'm going to tell you that now and get it over with. Take a dog...any dog...if he's brown, what do people call him? Yes, Brownie. If he's got spots, what do they call him? The American people are so original. If the dog doesn't have any recognizable features, of course, they call him Rover. And so what happens? You walk out on the porch and whistle and call "Brownie, come here, boy." Fifty thousand dogs come running down the street, a brown tide of them. They tromple over you, push their way into your house, eat up all the dog food and all of your food (there's not much difference, you know), and then tromple over you on their way out. All because you had the misfortune to be a perfectly normal American who named his dog Brownie. But...now you're taking a Philosophy course; you're no longer a normal American. Do you call your dog Brownie, or Spotty, or Lassie? No. Your dog's name is Thrasymachus. And so, when you step out on the porch and call "Thrasymachus, come here, boy!" do fifty thousand dogs tromple all over you and ruin your house? Of course not. Not even your own dog comes."

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- Terry Carr. Reprinted from DIASPAR #5 (by permission)

Mrs. Margaret Jackson - she is the president of the League of Mothers of Central High School, Little Rock, Arkansas. She too is handsome in a the dansant sort of way. She is also an embattled mother, and although the usual U.S. mother is no different from any other, when they become organized and fully conscious of their sacred and privileged role -- they become rather special. They are a daunting mixture of high priestess of some slightly prurient cult, Queen Victoria, Boadicea, a vestal virgin and of course, a tigress.

- Patrick O'Donovan, in the Globe & Mail.

CARL BRANDON | MY FAIR FEMMEFAN

With the assistance of Pete Graham and Terry Carr

Prologue: My Fair Femmefan opened at Brandonhaus early in 1957 and became an overnight success. The amusing story of the gauche neofanne who was tutored by a BNF and became a successful BNF herself has proved to be the most popular production of the Slan Shack Players since The Fannish Revival Hour in 1954. We present it here with running notes to clarify the background for each musical number.

I. The opening number takes place at a world convention. Iggens and Bickering, two BNFs, are walking through the convention hotel. In the background can be heard Sam Moskowitz. They are bewailing the miserable state of fandom when they come upon Martha Coznowski, who is hawking NFFF memberships.

IGGENS: Listen to her, mark the way she stutters,
Appalled by every horrid phrase she utters.
By rights she should be drummed clear out of fandom
For mispronouncing fannish words at random.

MARTHA: ...ess-tee-eff fans...

IGGENS: What a horrid thought!
This is what the serconfan foundation
Culls a truly fannish education.
Listen to this neo here, dropping aitches out of Bheer,
Using fanspeak any way she chooses.
You, girl, - ever heard of Rapp?

MARTHA: Whattaya take me for, a Sap?

IGGENS: Listen to these infantile abuses.
Hear this neofan or worse
Utter ideas so perverse--
I'd just as soon have Dogler on the scene.
Neos blithering at a con,
Just like this one...

MARTHA: ELRON, ELRON!

IGGENS: I ask you, now, precisely what's that mean?
It's ess-tee-eff and Elron that keep her in her place.
She might be very different with a sensitive fannish face.
Why can't the Welcommittee teach new members how to fan,
Instead o trying to fit them into some great Cosmic Plan?

(to Bickering)

If you believed this hogwash, you'd soon be on the shelf....
Or have to join the N3F yourself.

BICKERING: Go to hell.

IGGENS: A trufan's way of thinking absolutely cubbyholes him;
He must be very careful when some rabblouser polls him.
Why can't the Welcommittee teach new members how to fan?
The pros know how to write, and critics how to pan.
Drinkers always drink from birth' (at least I'm told they can.)
Oh, why can't the N3Fers learn...to...FAN!

II. Iggen and Bickering decide to tutor Martha Coznowski and make her a masterfanne who will be accepted in all fannish circles. As part of her early fannish education she joins the local fanclub. At a meeting of this Martha overhears some fans daydreaming aloud:

FIRST FAN: It's rather dull in town, I think I'll take me to Belfas'

SECOND FAN: I've got some home brew here, I'll pour me out a glass.

THIRD FAN: Why wait for egoboo? -- I'll mail my mag first-class.

ALL: Wouldn't it be loverly.....

MARTHA: All I want is a hektograph,
And beside me just plain Falstaff;
Fannags to make me laugh
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly....
Lots of prozines for me to read,
What a trufannish life I'd lead,
Yes, that's the life I need
Oh, wouldn't it be loverly.
If I had my stf checklist all compiled and stencilled up,
I would be the happiest fan since Amazing was just a pup.
Someone there to slipsheet for me,
Sensitive and fannish as he can be,
Who likes to read ess-tee-eff, wouldn't it be loverly,
loverly,
loverly.

III. At the same meeting, Holloway, who is an old fan, tired and cynical, expresses his views on fandom:

HOLLOWAY: The Ghreat Ghod Ghu gave fans the blasted mimeo
Because hektographic repro really stank.
The Ghreat Ghod Ghu gave fans the blasted mimeo, BUT
With a little bit o' luck
With a little bit o' luck
Someone else will turn the goddam crank.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit o' goddam luck!

HOLLOWAY: The Ghreat Ghod Ghu made bheer for inspiration,
So that our zines would not be filled with crud.
The Ghreat Ghod Ghu made bheer for inspiration, BUT
With a little bit o' luck
With a little bit o' luck
You can drink your bheer and never pub.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit o' goddam luck.

HOLLOWAY: Ghreat Ghu says we should always welcome trufans,
And give them food and lodging when they roam.
Ghreat Ghu says we should always welcome trufans, BUT
With a little bit o' luck
With a little bit o' luck
When they visit us we won't be home.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit o' luck we won't be home!

HOLLOWAY: Oh, it's a crime when a faned folds his fanmag,
And fills subscribers' hearts with grief and doubt.
Oh, it's a crime when a faned folds his fanmag, BUT
With a little bit o' luck
With a little bit o' luck
The Better Business Bureau won't find out.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit o' goddam luck!

HOLLOWAY: Oh, you must work to help support your fanzine,
Which is the right and proper thing to do. . . .
Oh, you must work to help support your fanzine, BUT
With a little bit o' luck
With a little bit o' luck
Soon subscribers will be supporting you.

ALL: With a little bit, with a little bit,
With a little bit o' goddam luck.

IV. As Martha's education continues she is spending more and more time with Iggens, whose friend Bickering speculates that perhaps they are falling in love. Iggens protests to the contrary.

IGGENS: I find the moment I let a femmefan fall for me, she becomes loving, attentive, and completely fuggheaded. I find the moment I fall for a woman I begin to gafiate. So here I am, a confirmed old bachelor, and likely to remain so. After all, Bickering....

I'm an ordinary fan,
Who desires nothing more than do the others of his mold:
To fan exactly as he likes and drink as much as he can hold.
An average fan am I, of no insurgent whim,
Who pubs a fannish mag, not some rag
Concerned with recipes and silly frilled lace trim.
Just an ordinary fan...BUT
Let a femmefan in your life, and your fannishness takes a nosedive.
She'll redecorate your room, sweep the place out with a broom;
When she's cleared out all the refuse she will give it to her nephew's scrap-drive.
Oh, let a femmefan in your life, and fanning hasn't got a chance!
You've a deadline, but you find she has something else in mind,
So although you ought to hurry you spend your evening in worry at a dance.
You were a fan of grace and polish
Who never spoke above a hush.
Now all at once you're using language
That would make Charles Burbee blush!
Oh, if you let a femmefan squeeze ya, then you're courting fannishthnesia
You will join the nonfan rabble, playing games like bridge or scrabble!
I maintain it's less a pity to be on a con committee
Than to ever let a femmefan in your life.

I'm a quiet-living fan
Who, though he has a sense of humor, is content with silent laughter;
Who likes an atmosphere as restful as con-halls the morning-after.
A literary man am I, who finds stf quite a bore,
Who hasn't read a utopian novel written since Sir Thomas More.
Yes, a quite conservative fan...BUT
Let a femmefan in your life, and you'll say goodbye to fandom.
In a line that never ends come her dull, plebeian friends--
Though they're her friends stout and true, very soon you'll find that you can't stand 'em.

She'll have an opinionated family, who will decide that fanning's sin;
You will explain it's just a hobby, but plebeians....who can win?
Oh, let a femmefan in your life,
Let a femmefan in your life....!
I shall NEVER let a femmefan in my life.

V. Following this, Iggens makes it a point to treat Martha as coldly as possible. Martha, a typical young fan, wants to become a BNF, so she tolerates his coldness and applies herself to her fannish studies. But her indignation finds expression when she is alone.

MARTHA: Just you wait, Enry Iggens, just you wait!
For hell hath no fury like a femmefan's hate!
When your old typer will not stencil,
I'll hand you a sharpened pencil!
Just you wait, Enry Iggens, just you wait!
Just you wait, Enry Iggens, till your bills
From S.F. Bookclub are higher than the hills.
You'll say, "Mail this money order" --
I'll buy me a tape-recorder!
Ah-ha-ha, Enry Iggens, just you wait!
Ohhh, Enry Iggens, just you wait till you're in Raeburn's Derogation.
Hah! Enry Iggens -- and you're stomping 'round the room in irritation.
Though you're full of indignation,
I'll be laughing with elation --
Ah-ha-ha, Enry Iggens; Oh-ho-ho, Enry Iggens,
Just you wait!
One day I'll be famous; every fan will be stunned
By my beauty and wittiness; I'll win the TAFF fund.
When Don Ford counts the ballots, he will write to me and say,
"Your fare to England's shores is on the way."
Then an air-letter from the con-committee is sent:
"Anything on the program you want, we'll present."
"Thanks a lot boys," I write back, "but as I've always said,
The only thing I want is Iggens head."
"DONE!" writes the chairman with a stroke;
I'm sending you passage for the bloke."
Then you'll think that you're Big-Ponded, Iggens dear--
But you'll make no guest-of-honor speech, I fear.
You'll display your elocution
Only at your execution!
Ah-ha-ha, Enry Iggens; Oh-ho-ho, Enry Iggens--
Just you wait!

VI. Martha's education continues. Iggens, assisted by Bickering, is teaching her some of the finer points of fannish pronunciation:

IGGENS: Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957

MARTHA: (hesitatingly): Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957

IGGENS: Again...

MARTHA (more surely): Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957

IGGENS: I think she's got it; I think she's got it.

MARTHA: Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957

IGGENS: By Ghu, she's got it; by Ghu, she's got it!
Now, once again, where is the Blog?

MARTHA: In the fog, in the fog.

IGGENS: And what do fans do in the fog?

MARTHA: They snog! They snog!

ALL: Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957! (Hoohaw!) Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957!

IGGENS: In Bhoston, Bhloomington and Bhelfast,

MARTHA: Bhlighters all enjoy a bheerbust....
I have a Cosmic Mind, what do I do now?

IGGENS: Now once again, where is the blog?

MARTHA: In the fog, in the fog!

IGGENS: And what do fans do in the fog?

MARTHA: They snog! They snog!

ALL: Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957!
Snog and Blog in the Fog in 1957!

(The number ends with Iggens, Martha and Bickering joining in a wild tango, amid boisterous cries of "Arriba!" and "Los Cuentos Fantasticos!")

VII. It is months later, and Martha has completed her fannish education. Iggens and Bickering take her to the London Convention, where she scores a resounding success. All the con-goers wonder who the unknown femmefan is, assuming she must be a well-known fanne making her first appearance at a convention. After the last convention party is over, Iggens and Bickering celebrate their victory.

BICKERING: Tonight old man, you did it, you did it, you did it!
I thought your plan was shaky, yes indeed I did.
I doubted that you'd make it; I hoped that you'd forsake it.
But now I'm very thankful that proceed you did!
You should get a Hugo, or a Laureate Award!

IGGENS: 'Twas nothing, really nothing.

BICKERING: All alone you swept each difficulty from the board!

IGGENS: Now wait, now wait, give credit where it's due--
A lot of the egoboo goes to you!

BICKERING: But you're the one who did it, who did it, who did it!
Though our hopes at times were hazy, you were reliable as Taurasi.
There's no doubt about it -- you did it!
I thought my beanie prop would wilt,
The way you pushed things to the hilt.
At times I was quite sure you'd pushed it too far.

IGGENS: Shortly after Registration, I discarded trepidation--
I left her by herself and went to the bar.

BICKERING: You should have seen them take the pause.
Everyone wondered who she was.

IGGENS: You'd think they'd never seen a trufanne before.

BICKERING: And when at last the Masquerade got started (despite the BBC)
And BNFs flocked round her by the score,
"I simply said "You did it, you did it, you did it!"
They thought she was so fannish that at midnight she must vanish--
And they never knew that you did it!

IGGENS: Thanks Roscoe for Goon Bleary -- if he hadn't been there I'd have died of boredom.

BICKERING: Goon Bleary? Was he there?

IGGENS: Yes...that man's so adept at the art of fannanship
That I knew Miss Coznowski would have to consort with him sans a slip.
Every fan at the con who was famous was under surveillance by that shamus.
Finally I saw it was fuggheaded not to let him have his chance with her,
So I stepped aside and let him dance with her.
Just to see what he could learn, he used fanspeak at every turn;
Every gambit he could play, he used to strip her mask away--
And when at last the dance was done, he grinned as though he'd made a pun.
Leering beneath his moustache, that horrible fuzz,
He announced from the rostrum that he knew who she was!

BICKERING: No!

IGGENS: Quite so!
"Her manners are quite poor," he said, "that clearly indicates that she's
trufannish.
"Whereas nonfans have their social rules, we trufans don't, because we're
slannish.
"And although I've only spoken with her briefly and at random,
"I can tell at once that she is of--First Fandom!"

BICKERING: But she's only twenty!

IGGENS: Quite so.

BICKERING: This evening, sir, you did it, you did it, you did it!
You said that you could do it, and indeed you did.
I thought that you would rue it; I doubted that you'd do it,
But now I must admit it--yes, succeed you did!

VIII. At the London convention Martha has met Freddie Bunker-Hill, an American fan.
In the weeks that follow their return to the States, Freddie courts her in his fannish
fashion, but as Tucker could have predicted, Freddie knows nothing of normal romance.
Finally he gets up the nerve to propose to Martha:

FREDDIE: Your writing's the ultimate in humor, and there's a rumor referring to we
two:
They say that our styles go well together; I wonder whether--

MARTHA: Egoboo!
Always egoboo! I get praise all day through,
First from him and now from you! Is that all you trufans can do?
Don't drag emotion through fannish mire--
If you're on fire, tell me!
Don't talk of budgies--speak of the dove!
If you're in love, tell me!
Ever since I met you at the Londonvention dance,
You've only spoken to me of fans!
If you think that fanac makes you consummately glad,
Try sometime to kiss a hekto pad!
Has some unlucky love twisted your mind?
Can't you unwind?--Tell me, tell me!
Don't talk of raising Twelfth Fandomites--
Certainly you must know how to tell me now!

IX. Meanwhile, the old-timer, Holloway, has decided to quit fandom, and in his honor the local fanclub throws a huge party on his last night as a fan, calling it the Gafianquet. Holloway arrives at the party feeling tired and not very fannish....

ALL: There's just a few more hours, that's all the time you've got;
You'll be a nonfan at midnight on the dot.

HOLLOWAY: My reputation's all over fandom, and I've got to live up to it just a few more hours.....

I'm quitting fandom in the morning,
Retiring from this tiresome fannish life.
But this evening I must join in this bheerbust
And let my fan instincts run rife.
I'm gafiating in the morning,
Giving my crifanac the knife.
Neos, come and zap me -- everyone be happy,
And let your fan instincts run rife!
If I am drinking, pour me some more;
If I get sercon, kick me out the door!
For I'm quitting fandom in the morning,
Retiring from this fascinating life--
I'll be normal tomorrow, but tonight I'll drown my sorrow,
And let my fan instincts run rife!

ALL: Oh, he's quitting fandom in the morning
Retiring from this tiresome fannish life...

HOLLOWAY: I hate to leave it behind me, so everyone please remind me
That fandom's just a way of strife!

ALL: He's turning normal in the morning,
Giving his crifanac the knife...

HOLLOWAY: Though fandom is madness, ere I leave this sad mess,
I'll let my fan instincts run rife.
If I get plastered, put me to bed;
If I plan a fanzine, club me on the head!
For I'm quitting fandom in the morning,
Retiring from this tiresome fannish life;
Tonight is my last fling, so let's have the bells ring!
And let your fan instincts, those crazy fan instincts,
Oh, cut loose and let your fan instincts run rife!

X. At the Gafianquet, Martha suddenly becomes angry with Iggens and rushes out of the room crying. Iggens subsequently finds that she has moved away, leaving no word.

IGGENS: What in all of Hyphen can have prompted her to go, after I had helped her
rise to glory?
Hiding out in isolation...can this be a gafiation?
I must say it's quite a perplexing story!
Women are mundane, that's all I have to say for that!
Their reading matter's always nonfan rags.
Their lives are shaped by loutish, boorish, clownish, churlish, lowbrow
plebeian, proletarian mags!

BICKERING: Hmm?

IGGENS: Yes...why can't a woman be more like a fan?
Fan are progressive, with a free-thinking view,
More wise than Confucius, more strong than the Poo.
They've clear-thinking minds -- always know where they're at.
Why can't a woman be like that?
Why does every one do what the rabble do?
They dote on all that Billy Graham's said.
Their conversation's empty, and a babble, too.
Why don't they learn to think like Scientologists instead?
Why can't a woman just act like a fan?
Fan are so witty; I find that when I'm
With a fan I'm assured of a very good time.
A woman grows angry if just once you start to pettin' her.

BICKERING: How prudish!

IGGENS: What's even worse, their conversation's quite dull too.

BICKERING: Dim-witted!

IGGENS: Would you be shocked if I should swear at my Gestetner?

BICKERING: Of course not!

IGGENS: Well, why can't a woman be like you?
One fan in a hundred may watch TeeVee
(For after all, one might see Berry there!)
And you and I each have some small deficiency,
But by and large we are a marvelous pair.
Why can't a woman behave like a fan?
Fan-thinking is calm, open-minded and free.
We're never conceited; why, just look at me!
If fuggheads disagree with us, we just ignore them.

BICKERING: Naturally!

IGGENS: If we get panned by Claude Hall, do we make a fuss?

BICKERING: Of course not!

IGGENS: We don't start feuds with them -- we quietly abhor them.

BICKERING: Quite logical!

IGGENS: Well, why can't a woman be like us?
Why can't a woman be more like a fan?
Why, only a fan (and I'm sure you'll agree)
Would pub your last-minute TAPActivity--
Now, take Dean Grennell, he's a typical fan.
Why can't a woman be a Good Man?
Why is thinking something women never do?
Read GEMZINE and you'll see just what I mean.
Thinking with their typer's all they ever do;
I doubt they even keep their typers clean!
Why can't a woman be more like a fan?
If I were a woman who'd been to a con,
Been made guest of honor, and such goings-on
Would I start weeping as though I had due cause for sadness?
Act like I'd lost all rationality?
Would I run off and not announce my change of address?
Well, why can't a woman...be like me?

XI. Iggen finally finds out where Martha has moved to, and visits her. When asked why she left him, she delivers a tirade:

MARTHA: What a fool I was, what a dull, fuggheaded fool,
To think you were the earth and sky!
What a fool I was, what a bright-eyed, simple fool,
What a neofannish fool was I!
No, my trufannish-type friend,
You are not the beginning and the end!
There'll be cons every year without you;
FAPA will still be here without you.
There'll be good old J.D.
There'll be I.S.F.C.C.
Quinn will still send IF free without you!
Science Fiction Times will thrive without you;
Somehow Forrie will survive without you,
And there will still be blog
Where they snog in the fog.
LassFass will meet in the smog without you--
We can do without you!
You, mighty drinker who's always plastered--
You're just a stupid Cosmic-Minded crackpot!
We'll have South Gate in '58 without you,
(That con too will start late without you)
And if you must know, dear, Milwaukee still will make bheer without you!
Without your buying them, the prozines survive;
Without your carrying them, the mails arrive.
Without you lifting, drinkers all get high--
If they can get along without you, so can I!
I can still be well-known without you
I can pub on my own without you
So go 'way, little man, I can still be a fan without you!

XII. Iggen subsequently learns that Martha is to marry Freddie Bunker-Hill. Alone at home, he mixes himself a nuclear fizz, and reflects that it is nowhere near as good as the fizzes Martha mixes....

IGGENS: Fout, fout, fout, fout!
I've grown accustomed to her fizz!
She makes housecleaning seem worthwhile--
I've grown accustomed to the aisles she's cleared through messy piles,
And I'm not bothered by the glare from polished silverware.
It's quite familiar to me now,
This cleaning-up and putting-away,
My home was 'so supremely fannish, quite a wreck before we met;
Sure, I could just mess it up that way again...and yet
I've grown accustomed to her typer,
Quite fond of her LP's,
Accustomed to her fizz.

Marry Freddie! What a starry-eyed idea! What a goshwowboyoboyish thing to do!
She'll regret it! She'll regret it! It's doomed before they even reach the altar.

I can see her now, Mrs. Freddie Bunker-Hill, in a small apartment loaded down
with stf.
Bunker-Hill turns out impotent, but his wife's a woman still, so she's
mothering the good old N3F!

Each member now becomes her son or daughter,
and the Welcomittee's her delivery room;
She'll continue this perverted life he's brought her
till the day she's laid to rest inside her tomb!

HAH!

But perhaps she'll see the error in her way,
and she'll leave poor frigid Freddie in the lurch.
Then she'll come to me and kneel to me and say,
"You were right, you should've stopped us at the church."

HAH!

Poor, dear Martha! How simply frightful!
How degrading! How delightful!
How gratified I'll be when she begs me to take her back,
When she huddles on her knees outside my door,
Maternally frustrated, all for Freddie's lack--
Shall I take her in, or send her right back home?
Should she live with me, or ever after roam?...
I'm a most forgiving fan,
The sort who never could, never would
Get into a feud then carry a lifelong grudge.
Just a most forgiving fan...BUT
I will never take her back, tho she be crying in the snow!
Let her say that from now on she'll do all assembly-work! --
I shall very coldly tell her where to go!
Marry Freddie--HAH!

But I'm so used to hear her play "The Planets" every day,
Its highs, its lows, the way the ending goes--
Of course, I could just buy the thing
And get all this off my mind....
I'm very glad she's not trufannish; I can treat her like a pet,
Rather like a lower form of life that talks--and yet
I've grown accustomed to the trace
Of...something...in this drink,
Accustomed to her fizz.

(Iggens disgustedly throws his drink into the fire. Martha enters; they embrace. Curtain)

EPILOGUE: The next day Iggens and Martha have an argument, and Martha leaves again.
She marries Freddie and lives happily ever after, Iggens remains a confirmed old
bachelor, and George Bernard Shaw is content.*

*In a long addendum to Pygmalion, Shaw insisted for several pages that Higgins would
always remain a bachelor and pupil Eliza would marry her young suitor, Freddie
Eynsford-Hill. To assume that the heroine of a romance 'must have married the hero of
it' is 'unbearable' Shaw snorted."

----Time, July 23, 1956

One sunny day I took my gun and wandered out over the countryside. I hadn't gone very
far before I saw a small bird hopping away from a broken bottle. I waited for a while
and then the bird took sudden flight. I lifted the gun and whirled around in order to
lead the bird in its flight. I fired, and the bird fell and was still. Just then I
glanced down at the broken bottle and saw to my horror that it was half-full of whiskey.
The bird had evidently been drinking it. My heart was filled with sadness, for I realized
that the bird had been drunk, and at an obvious disadvantage. I branded myself a
cowardly killer. Now I must hang my head in shame when all the world asks, "Who killed
crooked robin?"

- George Spencer

HEARTS & FLOWERS

HARRY WARNER, HAGERSTOWN, MD.

Al (or Richard) Kirs fascinates me. He must be incredibly wise, and he seems to have a lot in common with the Buddha. I am pretty sure that he is going to die almost immediately, in either a fannish or a physical sense, because this kind of individual never goes on and on. I'm thinking of such persons as Willie Watson and T. Bruce Yerke, both of whom may have been out of fandom before you entered. They couldn't possibly re-enter the field today; it would be impossible for them to exist in fandom with that youthful reputation behind them.

Bob Bloch's article could profitably be the first of a series. Profitably in the sense of giving people hints about where to look for the less ballyhooed stuff, that is. The theory behind such a series would be perfectly sound: the really popular stuff can't often have all-out merits, because it must appeal to a rather low common denominator to win those huge followings. Priestley's "Time and the Conways" might be a good example. It might be described as Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" without the sugar and adjectives. It is an infinitely more poignant piece of work, I'd judge on the basis of reading the play, not seeing it, but it didn't even gain the popularity of Priestley's own "Dangerous Corner" which treats a slightly similar theme in a much less logical fashion. In music, my favorite example would be an American opera, Horatio Parker's "Mona". It won a huge prize about forty years ago for the best American opera, was produced at the Met with a fine cast, immediately got compared by the critics with "Pelleas" -- and suddenly was withdrawn from the Met's repertoire and probably hasn't been staged in the past quarter century. Apparently there were some sort of operatic politics involved, and the opera made dangerous allusions to the suffrage question, which might have had something to do with it. I note that a tiny snatch of it has finally been recorded on an Allegro survey of American music. In science fiction, I think that Wonder Stories in the mid-thirties would be the most fertile field for reviving Lost Causes. The writing is old-fashioned but not intrinsically bad, and the period has been almost completely overlooked by the anthologists. It's nice to see all those quotations from Mencken. I enjoyed those autobiographical books at least a decade ago, and I'm amazed to find myself remembering these fragments, as soon as I get started on one of them. It is also unbelievable to think that it was only three decades ago that Mencken was writing his iconoclastic stuff for a popular, nationally circulated magazine. Can you imagine the newsstands today containing anything that shatters the idols of the crowd so consistently? About the closest approach to a really liberal thinking is probably Mad, and I notice that even that magazine hides its most bitter commentaries: i.e., the little pictorial definitions that are used as a border for the front cover, and go unnoticed by most persons. That New York convention caused a lot of hard feelings and many unpleasant memories, but it certainly created a lot of pages of reminiscences and anecdotes. In fact, I can't remember so thoroughly reported a convention in all fannish history; I don't buy subscription fanzines, and I still feel as though I'd been through the whole affair, simply from reading about it in so many FAPA magazines, and in the few magazines on which I freeload.

[If you thought the New York con was well reported, wait until all the reports on the London convention come flooding out.]

GREG CALKINS, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

Read A BAS #9 last night and it was about the best you've ever done, I think..... particularly liked everything, but more so your prologue and Tucker and Warner and Shaw and Bloch and Kirs and the letter column. You provide a spark that I think fandom could use more of these days...the stuff conflicts are made of. It was this that almost inspired me to tear into RAPIER with several short, biting phrases. 'Keep it up..... more oil of vitriol is what this salad needs.

G.M.CARR, SEATTLE, WASH.

I like that fellow Rich Kirs. His remarks about Lilith Lorraine's poetryzine are the most comprehensive and effective valuation of her status as a 'poetess' and 'lady editor' that I have yet seen.

I don't know what H.L. Mencken thought a decent grandmother ought to forget, but speaking as a grandmother myself, I must say it's a great relief to be able to forget all the sort of pseudo-intellectual rubbish that Mencken and other semi-intellectuals like him used to consider important, and remember only the things I like to remember without having to pretend to be a semi-intellectual (egghead) myself. H.L. Mencken was too nuts even to be pickled for posterity.

[A quick glance at The Vintage Mencken writing about such things as quack doctors, the Scopes trial, Justice Holmes, democracy, and Abraham Lincoln. It is interesting to find that you consider Lincoln "pseudo-intellectual rubbish" Are only semi-intellectuals eggheads in your estimation, or do you consider full intellectuals to be super eggheads?]

WALT WILLIS, BELFAST, N. IRELAND

A fine issue, one of your very best I thought, and an alltime good fanzine. Personally I liked BoSh's piece best. As John says in RETCH, that bit about the old boy who lit the fire with petrol was one of the funniest things Bob has ever written. A fascinating article altogether. I myself have been for many years trying to perfect the Willis Barbecued Coal Method. It seems to me the whole problem is to secure an orderly progression of ignition from paper through wood to coal with oxygen available at all stages, and that where this usually breaks down is when the paper burns away and the sticks and coal which it has been supporting collapse in the grate in a compound having all the properties of asbestos. The Willis Barbecued Coal Method is to construct a little roofless house with coal, fill it with paper, and stretch rafters of wood across it, covered with fragments of coal. (The slatelike quality of some of the coal we get makes you feel like an arsonist at this point.) You light the paper and the conflagration starts immediately, all the flame being directed upwards towards the wood and coal, so that theoretically combustion of coal should be almost instantaneous. Unfortunately there appear to be some imperfections in this technique at its present stage of development. Either the sticks burn too quickly so that the roof falls in too soon, or the paper burns out leaving the rafters supporting a load of lukewarm coal.

But enough. Derogation this issue was even brighter than usual, and Tucker and Warner came through with some very fine stuff. So did Bloch, who was...what's the word I'm looking for...superb. The Kirs letters were quite fascinating. What extraordinary people he knows---can they really exist? Bob's letter contained what was probably the most memorable thing in the issue, the bit about Trevor's mother. I don't know quite what to say about it, except that I kept reading it and thinking about it. It gives the impression of having some profound meaning behind it all.

BOB PAVLAT, HYATTSVILLE, MD.

Con publicity. "David Kyle apparently thinks (cons), at least partly, exist for the purpose of popularizing stf." Me, Contour #1, Spring 1950, in an article condemning the idea of a group of professionals putting on a convention (which had been the tenor of Kyle's plug for the con made at Cincinnati in 1949). Couldn't help mentioning it, and pointing out that it (publicity) is no new idea with Dave. Nor is the Miss Science Fiction stunt -- he pulled the same thing in Cincinnati. Hell, I didn't even know he'd done that at New York till you mentioned it.

A Bas is jolly well packed with goodness. Tucker, Bloch, Kirs and Warner, not to mention Shaw and your letter writers and you. Bloch I'd almost like to thank for setting me on the trace of a good recording of Meadowlands (to use its shorter title.) I'm also wondering what Sidney Torsch had to do with Deserted Ballroom -- I've had that entry in my pocketbook for about four years now as a must buy record.

DEAN GRENNEILL, WISCONSIN

I continue to weakly envy the perseverance of people who can pore over dull material until they find something sufficiently fuggheaded to quote in their own magazines the way you and Tucker are always doing. Of course, I did notice the business about Adkins tenderly confiding that he was addicted to doing the Presley Grind and I made, and later won, a small bet with myself that you would pick it up for reprinting. It was a gem of its sort and, somehow, belongs in A BAS.

Derelicti Derogation...hoo-hah. You've got a lot of good lines in this installment; particularly outstanding, I might almost say outstandingly outstanding, were such ones as Kirs' "learning the blues," your own bit about the shower, and Trina's big speech at the bottom of page 7 is a-bristle with goodies. Had I been writing it, I'd have been tempted to stick in something about "...an absolute fishtail cad" in Lyons' speech but I presume you thought of this and wisely vetoed it.

Strangely enough, I was also unsurprised at your quoting here and there from the Aleister Crowley biography in TRUE. When I first read this I went galumphing up to Bloch's with it the next time I was in Weyauwega, feeling sure that it was precisely the sort of oddball stuff Bloch dotes on, but feeling quite sure that he had already heard about the guy. Sure enough, he produced a book, printed and published in England, which not only gives substantially the same story, complete with the photos which appear in TRUE but gives every indication that it was about the only "research" (shades of Lobachevsky and Tom Lehrer!) that Mannix did for his article in TRUE.

Phil Stong, an author almost completely neglected by faans although he is a confessed faan himself (him 'n Hermie Wouk) and even compiled an anthology before it became such a rage (THE OTHER WORLDS)...Phil also rails indefatigably at Czerny and his music book. Hardly a book of Stong's -- and they are legion -- but gets in a snide snick at Czerny. I recently read two new Stongs --BLIZZARD and RETURN IN AUGUST--to catch myself up with his output again and I beg leave to report that I think I have used up my tolerance to his faintly flatulant writing style for the balance of 1957. If he publishes anything else this year I'll have to schedule it for 1958, and not earlier than the third quarter of that. I have to guard against overdoses of a given author. I very nearly foundered myself in 1943 by incautiously reading around nine or ten books by Thorne Smith in the space of a couple of weeks. I've never been able to stand TSmith from that day to this. BLANKTHOT by Jean Young is a nice item and well do I remember that mad, mad night on Weyauwega's notorious Ann Street when you commissioned her to do the illo that accompanies it. Gads, but what a fannish evening that was, with what seemed like half of FAPA filtering from room to room sipping Crown Royal with expressions of inexpressible beatitude and tiny, delicious belches. But I pity the rest of your readers for I have heard JeanY recite this poem on tape and let me tell you that reading it just isn't in with hearing it. Liked the Kirs Pseudoneedhamery and, of course, BoSh was superb. Bloch's article, though, was the best single thing in the issue, I think. I read it with quite a bit of interest and a sort of rueful sympathy because, like him, I never seem to like the right things the best. Seems as though when I enjoy something it is almost certain to be roundly damned by everyone else in sight. And everybody else raving over something is a good sign that it will bore me to tears. I don't intentionally take this attitude for the sake of feeling smug or anything. Heaven knows, I've often thought that it would be nice if I could only appreciate some of the things which exist in such prodigious quantities for the benefit of the more numerous admirers they have.

I have thought, for example, that it must be damned nice to be really ape for Erle Stanley Gardner, who must love books because he has written so GAWWDDamn many of them and I've thought that it must be nice to be a real hot fan of the New York Yankees and cripes, it must even be nice to be an Elvis Presley fan and be able to get one's kicks by buying all the tons of records by him and to vie with other EPfen (who are as blades of grass in a vast meadow) for the honor of being the one who has been to see "Love Me Tender" the most often. But I can't. I'm me and I can't help it.

Enjoyed, too, Kirs' comments on Lilith Lorraine. I'll never forget the time I wrote a small letter of comment for some woman in a suburb of Detroit - forget her name now - who published a poetryzine and demanded that all comments be in verse as well. I forget what I said but exigencies of meter and rhyme led me to note in passing that Lilith

Lorraine's name had originally been something else, which - consistent at all costs - I've also forgotten. Ludmila Barnboiler or somesuch. Anyhow, what-ser-name printed it and next issue had to print an extremely tiffy note from Lorraine saying that she simply wasn't known by that name any more and please don't anyone call her that and so on and on. Foop. I am little given to bragging but I'm proud of one thing: Some day, in a hundred years or so, if a scholar starts out to write his doctoral thesis on fanzines of the mid twentieth century, he'll be able to say, "This thing Grue may not be much but at least it never published a poem by Lilith Lorraine or Isabelle Dinwiddie." Whatever happened to La Dinwiddie anyhow? Time was when every crudzine in the business had to have one of her witless little clots in it as inevitably as the staples or perhaps more so since some of them came all fell-apart. It is high time that some one denounced this pretentious swill for what it is and there could hardly be a better choice than Kirs.

JAN SADDLER PENNEY, JACKSON, MISS.

Ego Clarke was at Tulane a while ago. He spake the holy word on space travel, displayed Bonestalls and stood around afterward, beaming at all the ruddy provincials. Dave, mine spouse who is fannish and prefers Sturgeon, approached him respectfully.

"Ah, sir..." he began, "I wonder if you'd explain your remark about the eggplant?"

Ego stared with disbelief and dismay. His jaw hung low and his beard retreated to safety. "Huh?" he said.

"You know: the one in HYPHEN. 'I had one eggplant but.'"

"Oh. Well, uh, haven't kept up with Willis lately, I...." and he fled. Terribly excitable people, these British.

Kirs must have read Ouvrant Une Boite etc. because it says at the bottom that he wrote it, but somehow along about the third paragraph I find myself going back to the first to find out where I got confused, and about the third paragraph re-rebeginning, and honestly I just never get it read which is a terrible terrible thing. Yes indeed. But his letters are more understandable, and fascinating beyond degree. The teeners were only occasionally wear leather jackets, never dope, and only indulge in what would probably seem staid amusements to Kirs, who lives in a jungle of candy stores -- such as tearing up your father's Caddie until it outdrags anything on the New Highway, throwing drunk parties, and tossing eggs at policemen.

KENT MOOMAW, CINCINNATI, OHIO.

That Deeck letter is typical of a person who is not accepted by a certain crowd, and I disregarded it as such when I first read it. Good old Wm. no doubt went to the NYCon all set to live it up, meet all kinds of fans. He expected his fantastic reputation (lotters in the Standard magazines, et al) to serve as an automatic passport to welcome by everyone from Robert Merrill to you. When it didn't, when he came to the realization that his fuggheaded writing and oh-so-cute letters had done nothing for him, he rushed home and wrote that bit for Spencer's mag.

I can believe that what Tucker says is true....I have not the slightest doubt that publishing a novel such as "Wild Talent" can attract fanmail from crackpots in all corners of the nation. Heck, I've had ten or twelve letters in the prozines, and you should see the screwy letters I've received.

Warner's profile of Degler was most well received here. I know all too little about the Degler legend, and eagerly seek out all the info about him that I can.

I thot about Liebscher's poem all the while as I watched the parade on TV January 1st. Kirs continues to impress me as a writer. If this boy isn't a Canadian, where did you run across him? His fanac, outside of the two bits in Gould's mag, has been confined to A BAS, which leads me to believe that he was not in fandom prior to its outset. If he would try, I'm sure he could crack the "sophisticated" slicks with stories built around some of the stuff he passes along to you in mere letters.

Whatever happened to "The Sounds"?

[Kirs is an old fan, and tired. Had dropped out of fandom before A BAS started, and then came back. The Sounds disappeared partly through lack of material, and partly through lack of space. May come back sometime.]

CHESTER A. POLK, WERNERSVILLE, PA.

How in hell...or why...you publish such bilge as Tucker writes is beyond me. I happened to see a copy of A BAS #9 at W*t**l's house (where I spent the holidays) and that piece of idiocy by Tucker (which was nothing more than advertising for his cheap books) was comparable to that other piece of idiocy by Kers (which was nothing more than cheap pornography. I should imagine that a science fiction fan magazine would publish quality material by and for science fiction fans. You and your idiotic readers aren't science fiction fans. You are lunatics freshly escaped from the fringe Tucker discussed. And so is he. I happen to know that telepaths exist, and they are laughing at his cheap book. They consider him a dolt and his book the ravings of a money-hungry jackass. Some of my best friends are telepaths, and they tell me these things. It so happens that I am in training for telepathy and considering only the small distance I have traversed in my apprenticeship, I see the great sham perpetrated here. Tucker is a dunce. Hoping you are the same.

GREG BENFORD (International playboy)

The Derogation was marvellous and shows me why I can never duplicate one. The bitter part I can manage, but those priceless gems of wit - "Black is the color of my blue suede shoes", "What you might call Learning The Blues" - are impossible. That's why any imitation will be second-rate. Kirs was delightful as usual. Loved his description of Squirrel and he towering over sub-teenage fans. I've done this sometimes at various places where the little buggers were making all sorts criticisms and much shaking of fists and pointing out faults....I find someone about my size, instruct hurriedly on just what to do and how and so forth...and then stand directly behind the show-off one and just stare at him, meanwhile curling lip upward about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to achieve degree of sophisticated detachment....scares the hell out of them. First he just stares back at you in defiance and all brave and such, then, when you don't move, speak, or bat an eyelash, he sorta backs away, fumbling for words and sometimes falling over things in an effort to get away.... Also dug muchly Rich's description of teenager. Is quite true, really. The typical American girl-type teener is usually trying to be oh so mature and adult and make like I-am-above-mere-teenagers by going with college slob of doubtful intelligence or some joker from service. Quite the Thing over here to go around with G.I.s. Makes look so Old and all you know. This wouldn't be so bad, and is entirely natural for people to think they are superior, but the damn idiots are so sentimental about it -- "Oh I love Joe with all my heart and we have been going steady for TWO WEEKS which proves he is in love with me and oh we will be married soon and gee...." Gad, I'm making myself sick.

ANDY YOUNG, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Bhy Ghod, if pages 2&3 aren't a derogation, I don't know the meaning of the word. And bhy ghod again but I like to see people tearing other people who deserve it apart like that. Boy. I was momentarily puzzled (and simultaneously flattered) by my contribution to the lino on page 3; then I remembered what it referred to and burst out laughing. Gads, you must've been copying things down inside your eyelids. Geis's lino, same page, is a joy to behold. He's another who is fascinating in his wrath, when he has a genuine (i.e., one I consider genuine) gripe. Ghod. It is one of the crosses We Scientists Must Bear that the public thinks that "synthetic" means "fake". Ghod. If only there were some way of rubbing their faces in a bit of knowledge here and there and making sure that some of it would stay ground in.... Mother's Last Words. Did we ever tell you about the poems of Arthur Orison Dillon? He is one of Those who has had reams of his stuff published in little editions. Oberlin's library had a complimentary copy of some of his stuff; I guess he couldn't sell it so he gave it away to libraries, so he could say in the introduction of each book how many great libraries had copies of his other books. It is staggering that anyone could write such hackneyed, verbose, crass, crude, uninspired, sentimental drivel not once but over and over again. (Titles like The Radio, Strangers, Our Flag, The Trees, and like that.) What is even more amazing is that he would have the nerve to publish the stuff. What is even more incredible is that he would publish something like six or eight volumes of the stuff. Magnus discovered the

thing in the library and we read it through one time, being ever freshly amazed at the lack of freshness. It isn't just crude, either; it's so painfully sincere. Reading it is an Experience you won't ever forget! Jean figured that that was what you'd have her say in the Derogation (say, where are the Deros in those things?) but she was crogged at being a humble euphonium. She's still not quite over it. Poor Tucker. We enjoyed this bit greatly; however, he hasn't seen anything compared to what the writer of a popular book on genuine science gets. Or even a well-known scientist, author or what not. For that matter, there are plenty of crackpots that spring up in science's own back yard, so to speak. You see, in Tucker's case, there may have been a number of jokers in the crowd who just wanted to play esper and see if he'd rise to the bait; but with a straight book on science, you're much more likely to draw puré fanatics. I was crogged by The Old Oaken Dashboard. Somehow, Wistful Henry's "revolutionary headnut-tightening sequence" pretty near breaks me up. It sort of reminds me of a local optician's method of producing parabolic surfaces--he alternates a W stroke with an X, going from upper left down and up to center and down and up to upper right and down to lower left and and upper left and lower right and upper right and down....anyway, that's the first half of it. "Stop!" he shouts after the disappearing Ferrari. "See my four-way power seat go up and down!" Hoog!! Yargh! I laugh fit to bust. Good to see BoSh in print again. I was crogged over Albert, the cackly janitor; his method reminds me exactly of the stuff I used to do igniting small, explosive rockets, especially the bit about throwing matches and picking up flaming pieces. Bloch is most thought-provoking in his serious moods. I was going to say, Hoocha, look at all those obscure things Bloch likes that I've read, but found I hadn't read any of them. He must read a staggering amount of material. But then, it's his business. There have been similar cases of "forgotten" papers in the sciences, too. Sometimes a paper is forgotten because it's written in Italian or Polish or Dutch and very few people can, or bother to, read it. But other times a very clearly-written paper written in a major language gets ignored. I came across one of these the other day; in the study of galactic rotation, it is desirable to develop theoretically the apparent radial velocities and proper motions of distant stars, assuming that we all move at a certain speed in circular orbits around the galactic center. The general formulae are today generally attributed to Camm, who applied them in the mid-1930's to planetary nebulae. But Camm's paper refers you to Bottlinger, who was really the guy who invented the formulae; Camm merely changed his notation a bit. The funny part of it is that the paper in which Bottlinger developed the general formulae of galactic rotation is famous for the introduction of the "Bottlinger Diagram". You'd think that people would notice that this classic paper contains the first mention of the formulae and their application to planetary nebulae, but everybody still talks about "Camm's formula". Why? If only Kirs weren't so sordid.

LT. DAVID JENRETTE

The same comments you have made about the NY convention are similar to a long string I turned out some months back in *Quelles Horreurs* #2, which was cut on ditto stencils and the first run was so disappointing that it was never sent out. My chant was: "Who are we trying to impress?" The NYcon was, indeed, "vulgar ostentation". The best job of the right kind of impressing was performed by Lyle Kessler of Philly. He drove up to the con from the Quaker City (my home town) in his new T-Bird right from college. As a result he was wearing a pair of khaki slacks and a beat up sports shirt. When checking in and told the price of the room he pulled a shock act -- "Why, I can't afford to pay half that much." he said. Soooooo, he ended up with a single room with air conditioning for \$3.00 per night. Three dollars. Now that's what I call really making the right impression.

CURTIS JANKE, SHEBOYGAN, WISC.

I don't know what you'd do without Kirs, but I'd rather. But I guess your rag would be only about half as thick without his colorful but morbid fancies. If you must run fan fiction (and I refer to everything of his in the issue - but everything, because I staunchly refuse to believe that so many weird things could happen to one guy in one lifetime) I suppose his stuff is preferable to something like: "The blood-red eye of

ancient Phobos rose slowly over the scarlet sands like a ruby orb raped ruthlessly from the lovingly shaped forehead of some fusty, forgotten God lying neglected and forlorn in the dust of ages settling like a shroud over a forlorn planet forsaken by its huge-chested, limpid-eyed children uncountable eons before the first flame-tailed Man-rocket drifted hesitantly to rest to profane the sacred soil lain undisturbed for so long and so long that, shocked by the desecration, it swirled and eddied indignantly into the eyes and throats of the Man-brutes who now dared to sully its creamy smoothness like the blood pudding dear sweet wrinkle-faced old Grandma used to make for us when we descended upon her back in the dear old dead days beyond recall that none of us would ever see again on the dear old dead green hills of Earth that none of us would ever see again because the mad dogs of science had kneed it right in the groin in the blindness of their arrogant and ruthless desire to see what lies beckoning and enticing over the next green hill where perhaps the grass is greener, the folks are fewer, and the milk a bit bluer..." But I agree with him some about the general fuggheadedness of some teenagers, except (1) I was just as bad or worse (2) The teenagers I know blow better horn than I do. I'll bet Bob Tucker is going to be pretty sick when he finds out that a bunch of us telepaths got together and pumped "Wild Talent" into his head word for word. We knew he needed the money. Seems to me you are being a little hard on Deeck. Where else can he get rid of some fine writing except in fanzines? Now, thanks to your boorishness he'll have to go to his grave still full of a lot of big words he never got a chance to use. Shame on you.

GREG BENFORD (again)

We went out to the Bad Homburg con last week. Met Ernsting, Ackerman, and a woman from NY who knew Ellington. Ackerman didn't impress me at all as being the father of stf or something. During a dull session of the program I went over to Ackerman and inquired with bright, bright smile: "Excuse me, sir, could you explain just what happened in the old Burbee-Laney days of the LASFS?" Frown, pursing of lips. "Weeeell, at the time Burbee and several others were using the club for a hangout....playing bop records and drinking and that sort of thing, you know." Knowing smile, slight nod of head. "And when I complained (on the part of the rest of the members who were away, you know) they brought up this completely unfounded statement about the club being a 'nest of fairyism' and well I...." And like that.

/One boggles at the thought of Traditionalist Laney and ragtime fan Burbee playing bop records/

DICK ELLINGTON, NEW YORK.

Your dissection of Wm. Deeck most frabjous and roll on the floor and hug oneself with howls of glee over. This is the old Raeburn and it pleases me no end to see it even if later I stop and reflect that maybe you were too rough on him. Damn it, I have sadistic streak and enjoyed that so much I was and am without words to explain same. Derogation was right up to par and your capturing of La Trina, our own little doll, was superb. Even Trina admitted it sounded like her. Dozen or more people in town read same and all agree that it is masterful job of Trinaese. Can practically hear the dear little squeak while reading. Tucker bit hilarious and very believable. Imagine how many of these off-at-a-tangent weirdies are running around without keepers. Makes you kind of scared.

JOHN CHAMPION, PENDLETON, OREGON

Bob Shaw's letter reminds me of the opening scene in Steinbeck's TORTILLA FLAT. These two Mexicans are greeting each other, and one of them says pleasantly, smiling, "Chinga tu madre, Pepe." Mmmph. Kent Moomaw should visit Pendleton some time. Real Indians all over the place and authentic history and all like that. We still have Indian wars out here too....Saturday nights all the Indian juvenile delinquents get drunk, and so do the white j-ds, and we get into all sorts of fights.

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