

# AMBLE 5

27th OMPA MAILING

Perpetrated by ARCHIE MERCER of 434/4 Newark Road, North Hykeham, Lincoln, England. (E&OE) Emanating from within the Caravan in the Shadow of the Malleable Ironworks. Yngvi is a Louse. A MERCATORIAL PUBLICATION

As a technical detail, this typewriting apparatus still hasn't been finalised (I think they're waiting till after the christmas rush - in the mean time, I've only paid a deposit anyway, so I'm not all that disturbed). So here goes with

## THE SHAMBLES

reviewing  
the 26th Mailing and an odd postmailing. A VERY odd postmailing, in fact, being

OMPalog FICTION (FAN & FAAN) (Alan J. Lewis apparently) Once every now and again, just one or two times in every Fandom, there comes a fanzine that proves to be of absolutely no interest whatsoever. With the possible exception of Nancy Share's semi-nude, OMPalog is that fanzine.

Of the two stories, the serious one is undoubtedly the best - it's just that I happen not to care for that sort of story anyway. The faanniiisshh one is just a vague rambling episode that drags in fans' names just for the sake of bringing in fans' names, and gets nowhere either with or without their aid. For the rest, the artwork is mainly cruddy and not very well duplicated besides, the text is riddled with unconcealed strikeovers, and not unlike that.

Kind, friendly, likeable, North Coast Al Lewis - WHY must you do this to one? I earnestly suggest you give us something more in the line of a personalzine in future, and then nobody'll CARE about cruddy illoes, unconcealed strikeovers and the rest of it. Over to you for Better Things.

OFF TRAILS v7:2 (Daphne Buckmaster ex officio) Again good work, Daphne. But although it seems mean after your open support for at least one of my proposed amendments, I've voted against yours. I like the numbering system, as tending to timebind. For instance, by just glancing down the list one can see immediately that there are only six memberships (or five and two halves if you like) left that have existed since the first mailing - which is something that both of us can be quietly proud of, incidentally, O Eighth Member.

As for the other amendments, I voted for my own two natch and also for Ron Bennett's, of which I heartily approve. I voted against Bob Lichtman's poll scheme though. For one thing, the older I get the less I find myself liking popularity contests and the like - I wouldn't even like them if I was to win the things. Anybody's entitled to run one of course, and try to get the other members to cooperate - but I'm firmly against the thing being made in any way official.

One further thing I have to say - with regard to the last para of "The Editor Returns" concerning "quibbling about rules" - I'm all for quibbling about

rules, any sort of rules and at any time. I'm a perfectionist at heart, and I maintain that until any given set of rules reaches perfection (which it seldom if ever does) its defects should be quibbled about at every opportunity.

BURP! 18 (Ron Bennett) Welcome back after too long an absence to one of my long-standing favourite OMPazines. Could be longer of course (the zine, not the absence), but none the less welcome.

Several months' constant perusal of THE TIMES has demonstrated the truth of an impression I'd long been under, namely, that said newspaper is by no means as conservatively-oriented as it is usually supposed to be. That notion probably derives largely from the slight stuffiness of presentation - no bylines apart from an occasional special feature article, moderation of language and not unlike that. However, this sort of thing has a charm that rapidly grows on one, and the policies advocated by the paper's editorials are usually as far remote from the official Tory line as they are from the official Labour line. Also, although they're by no means perfect, the advertisements (full-scale type I mean, I'm not referring to small-ads) in THE TIMES are considerably less nauseating on the whole than were those in the late lamented News Chronicle (which as a "popular" paper ran the same sort of things as did all the other "populars"). Which is not to say that I've changed my mind about regretting the News Chronicle's demise of course, far from it, and in particular the fact that it WAS the only "popular" paper of its type is regrettable. But THE TIMES isn't at all a bad substitute, I find, from my own point of view.

ERG 6 (Terry Jeeves) Very interesting, both about the honeys and the soggy moon. And just for the record, I confirm that I did notice your comment on the previous ERG among the reviews. (That's the trouble with me, I have a sort of ingrained habit of reading these zines).

EYE TRACKS 2 (George Locke) Highly readable and/or interesting throughout. The "index of first lines" is something that other zines could often copy to good effect. For this, you are forgiven the original first lines that NEEDED this indexing.

Re your comment on CYRILLE - for Britain the war started in 1939, true. But I myself was not called up until 1943, and for a long time thereafter I used to equate "pre-war" with "pre-call-up". That is, the beginning of my (highly inactive) army service was of far more significance to me than was the actual beginning of the war.

Re mailing comments, see Donaho this mailing, he says it far better than I seem to have been doing.

GLOOM 2 (Mike Deckinger) Interesting "expanded-type" mailing comments (see what I mean, George?). I don't care for black ink on dark paper though. At least, not LIGHT black ink on dark paper.

KOBOLD 1 (Brian Jordan) Or "How Inorganic was my Syllabus".

I HAVE read "Aku-Aku", mate. And I'm just wondering whether YOU have. I quote you: "he persuaded the Easter Islanders to finish-off a half-completed stone figure - - - then drag it halfway across the island, and mount it on its base". What the book actually records is three separate and independent incidents. A gang of Easter Islanders were persuaded to put in several days' work on one of the unfinished statues, just long enough to demonstrate that they knew how to do it. A somewhat larger gang re-erected one of the overthrown statues that had formerly stood all around



the island, again proving that they knew how to do it. The intermediate stage - moving a statue about the island - was another thing again. All the natives could say, when asked how the statues were moved about, was that "they walked of themselves". However, Heyerdahl himself managed to persuade almost the entire population to pull a third statue around the place by brute force - proving not that the natives still knew how THAT was done, but that (with even more difficulty than in the other two cases) it was POSSIBLE.

An extremely interesting book, *Aku-Aku*, incidentally.

MARSOLO 8 (Art Hayes) To your Anonymous Pro Who Has Never Been One, I would like to suggest that such items as "This will come through even better when you put it into English" and "You have a good story here. Why don't you write it?" are hardly what I'd call CONSTRUCTIVE criticism.

SCATALOG 1 (Art Wilson) Not unlike welcome, you seem to have both an interesting slant on things AND a worthy sense of humour. I take it that you're an American-type person from what you say, though I don't think the matter's ever come up anywhere in so many words that I've seen. That cover takes full marks, too, it looks reminiscent of a Roles experiment except that it's successful. (OK, John, I don't mean it - you've had some good ones too).

VAGARY 12 (Bobbie Gray) Return of another old favourite, and this time in full measure. Most of the bulkier items in the mailing I put at the bottom of the pile to be read later - this one I made sure of reading the night the mailing arrived.

Actually, though it was full of interest, it doesn't inspire much comment. The personal anecdotes etc I can only mention that I appreciated them muchly, the nuclear disarmament I think I've already said all I'm capable of saying several mailings ago, I have now stopped going to the cinema altogether, and there is nothing I can usefully say on witchcraft at this point.

VERT 2 (Ivor Mayne) Interesting, your write-up on like beats comes over considerably more clearly than did the one in *HABAKKUK*. One sideline here - I tend to think of "beat" as an adjective, "beatnik" as the related noun. This obvious usage doesn't seem to have occurred to anybody else though, because they use either as both indiscriminately (or do I mean both as either?) and then spend days arguing what they mean by each.

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HER FATHER KEPT A BOARDING HOUSE, ULLA BOBERG BELAY

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SCOTTISHE 22 (Ethel Lindsay) If "beat" can be a noun, then "Ethel" can be an adjective, and I can say that this issue isn't so Ethel as usual. Which it isn't. However, it has a better-than-usual set of outside contributions to make up for this. Walt's reminiscences are far too short after far too long an absence, but otherwise of considerable interest. (Re the "Oddenda" paragraph to the above, it gives me to wonder precisely what crime (if any) is committed by a female who comes to somebody else's husband in a darkened room pretending to be his wife).

MachiaVarley on litter reaches a fabulous conclusion, and Donaho on "women" interests, too. When I saw his quote about the bloke who "liked women when all his friends liked girls" I thought at first how profound. Further reflection

seemed to indicate that it was so bloody profound as to be meaningless.

I ultimately came to the conclusion that what he meant was that he tended to like women as fully-fledged human beings in their own right, rather than simply as actual or potential snogging-partners. But it took me considerable cogitation to get there.

Personally, I think that the trouble is not so much children growing up and leaving their parents as children growing up and NOT leaving their parents. Or not leaving them far enough. They come to depend on each other so much that death is far more of a wrench than it would be otherwise. Particularly if an only child dies before its parent(s). Round these parts, it's very common for the married daughter to set up home just a matter of yards down the road from her parents, and from then on both families are practically as much in each other's pockets as if they still lived in one household. (The obliging young ladies who run these stencils off for me will probably never speak to me again after they see this. And if they should suggest that if I still had a parental home I'd probably still be living in it, maybe they'd have a point there at that).

UL 1 (Norm Metcalfe) Busses are kisses. Buses are the things you travel in.

Dunno who this Ruth Berman is, but I like her style in conrep. Croggles me these high prices paid at the auction though. Forty-odd quid for the original globe of Mesklin and two papier-mache models - not unlike w-h-e-w! And for what? I may be maligning the worthy purchaser, but the scene I picture to myself is something after this fashion: Dr Martin is showing a friend over her dusty fannish store-room. "And this," she announces, indicating the slowly decomposing and not particularly prepossessing at the best of times globe, "is the original model around which "Mission of Gravity" was constructed." "Is that so?" murmurs her visitor politely, his eye straying along the far more interesting-looking rows of book-titles.

SOME OF THE BEST FROM QUANDRY (Bob Lichtman) The only issue of Q I ever had - a double-issue actually, containing practically nothing except the nucleus of The Harp Stateside, which I disposed of when I acquired the bound edition - I no longer have (see immediately above, same sentence, different parentheses). This therefore (shades of Bill Evans!) is of no little interest, and turns out to be pretty good stuff. Certainly worth reprinting.

VIPER 1 (Bill Donahoe) Taking us Over, obviously. But to good effect though. Len Moffatt has an intriguing idea there. Jack Speer's advice, I agree, is equally applicable to any apa, though probably the best treatment of it in the long run would be to have it in pamphlet form for supplying to everybody who joins the waiting-list.

If a tune appeals to me, then it's not pretentious crud. If it doesn't appeal to you, perhaps it is. Or something. Cole Porter - now to me, most of HIS stuff is pretentious crud. All those brittle little tunes with the slick sophisticated words. I don't know about "Kiss Me Kate" - I've heard the music from it arranged for light orchestra or etc, but it never struck me as anything special. (Apart from "Wonderbar" I can't even remember what was in it). The only thing I've ever come across of Cole Porter's that strikes me as expressing an honest sentiment (with tune to match) is "Don't Fence Me In" - and even there he's done his utmost to ruin the whole effect by tacking on a cynical little introduction, the "Wildcat Kelly" bit.

Your comparison of American and British fandom/zines seems to make good



sense. I have met most known British fen myself some time or other, the main exceptions being acknowledged recluses like Alan Dodd and Bill Morse. And most of the ones I've met have met each other. However, we on this side of the Atlantic aren't the only ones who try and keep our disagreements quiet. I seem to remember recently reading in some Dietzine (I think it was) about a Situation that arose in California when "all six of them" were in the same room. I'm still wondering all six of precisely who, and why, and not unlike that.

That's a nice typo you have mate, on P.18 - "the wife of an old man is throwing a drunken brawl while he is in the bedroom quietly drying". Was the kitchen too full of empty bottles or something?

Although we seem on the whole to be on the same side in this mailing-comments controversy, as you can see, I do believe in giving virtually every zine a mention. Even if it's only half a dozen words adding up to "noted". In particular, the much-maligned "I liked your zine (damn these trigonometrical interpolations) I mean zine but can't think of anything to say about it" has its uses. If one is simply to skip mentioning it at all, that leaves a number of possibilities such as:

- (a) I read the zine and found it too cruddy to mention
- (b) I never got the thing, didn't bother to check the mailing list, and am therefore unaware that it exists
- (c) I lent my mailing out before I'd finished reading it, and this one never came back
- (d) I object to you, and try to pretend that you don't exist
- (e) I've already written to you on the matter, but the post office have lost the letter
- (f) etc etc etc and not unlike that

After all, egoboo IS egoboo.

"But readable micro-elite is a contradiction in terms" - I have an ally!

The foregoing was typed on Christmas Day 1960. Reading it over, I find I have a couple of further remarks. Under UL 1, I do realise that the price of 130-odd dollars included the manuscript as well, only I wasn't going back and altering all that, and I still think it a ridiculous price to pay for something strictly of sentimental-type value (albeit it helps the Con show a profit and not unlike that). And under VAGARY 12, where I say "there is nothing I can usefully say on witchcraft at this point" I don't mean that at some later date I'm going to suddenly Reveal All. What I meant was that with sundry things on the subject, both inside and outside fanzines, that I happen to read from time to time, it all seems to be gradually taking on some sort of coherent perspective. But that perspective has not as yet entirely "set". Which means in effect that there WAS something I could have usefully said on witchcraft at that point, after all, and I've just said it. I think.

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AMBLE SEEMS TO be settling down into a sort of regular-type pattern. I always start with the reviews, THE SHAMBLES, mainly in order that I can get the pile of zines out of the way and filed. And I always finish with two sides of the LAIR. This, because two sides per Mailing is the ration I've allotted to it. In between, everything seems to get corralled into a miscellaneous column under the name of

# OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE

The column where anything can happen but seldom if ever does

ARCHIE MERCER, Once upon a time, way way back when my age was still numbered  
 BRILLIANT in single figures, I used to sleep in a fairly large bedroom  
 THEORETICAL that was illuminated from without by four vertical window-  
 MATHEMATICIAN panes in a row. Lying in bed, I would watch these four  
 windowpanes and the wooden framework in which they were set.  
 I would count the windowpanes, and make four. Then I would count the wooden  
 uprights of the frame, and duly make five. I used to wonder why in an ob-  
 viously matching set like that there were not exactly the same quantity of  
 uprights as of panes. It didn't seem natural. Eventually I just came to  
 accept it as one of the many inexplicable laws of nature, and left it at that.

More recently, either Isaac Asimov or Willy Ley (or possibly both of them  
 alternately) has been arguing that logically the "A.D." and "B.C." eras ought to  
 be separated by a Year Zero. I was unable to accept this at the time - it  
 seemed as if there ought to be a flaw in his reasoning somewhere. Imagine if  
 you will a squad of soldiers on parade. Sergeant in charge of them - - -

"I want three volunteers - you, you and you. Three volunteers - atten -  
 SHUN !!! Three volunteers - one pace forward - MUAH !!! Three volunteers -  
 from the right - NUMBAH !!!"

"Zero." "One." "Two."

"Two volunteers reporting for duty - sah!"

Anyway, on and off I devoted quite a lot of thought to the matter, and  
 eventually came up with what I think is the answer. It rests on the difference  
 between Cardinal and Ordinal numbers. What follows will probably be old hat to  
 any of you who have made any sort of a study of mathematics, but I had to work  
 it out for myself. I'll apologise in advance for any misuse of technical  
 terminology I may be guilty of, likewise for confusing the issue by using non-  
 technical terms when there are perfectly good technical ones that I don't know  
 and/or wouldn't understand if I did. Not unlike I can only work within my  
 vocabulary.

Anyway, I started with the acquired knowledge that there are two types of  
 number - Cardinal (one, two, three etc) and Ordinal (first, second, third etc).  
 As a matter of fact, casting my mind back to the days when I didn't get very far  
 with learning Latin, I seem to remember that the Romans recognised two further  
 series, namely the "once, twice" series and the "one each, two apiece" one.  
 These however are simply sub-species of the Cardinal series, whose significance  
 is grammatical, not mathematical.

Cardinals and Ordinals then. One-two-three. First-second-third.

Now these two series of numbers are obviously related. In fact they bear  
 a one-to-one relationship from one up to - for all practical purposes - infinity.  
 However, their natures are vastly different to one another, and I have succeeded  
 in isolating several of those differences. Not all of them are strictly mater-  
 ial to the main theme of my argument (which is concerned with windowpanes, years,  
 and soldiers on parade in case I'm covering my tracks too well) but I'll set them  
 out here for the sake of completeness:

1. The Cardinal series includes zero and fractions. The Ordinal series,

on the other hand, includes neither. This can I think be easily demonstrated by postulating such conceptions as "noughth" and "halfth" which are pretty obviously nonsense both grammatically and mathematically.

2. A Cardinal number in the abstract is a noun, otherwise it's an adjective. An Ordinal number is properly always an adjective.

3. A Cardinal number is collective in nature, and always includes all lesser Cardinal numbers (including fractions). An Ordinal number is strictly singular, and includes nothing but itself (although the existence of all lesser Ordinals is implied by its use, it doesn't directly refer to them). Thus if you talk about "the three issues of my fanzine" you're referring to all three, not just one of them. Whereas if you say "the third issue of my fanzine" you are referring only to that one, which is identified by number. The existence of two earlier issues is here implied, but only incidentally.

4. A Cardinal number has no duration, is just a point on the scale. Two consecutive Cardinal whole-numbers are separated by an infinity of further points representing all intermediate fractions. An Ordinal number, on the other hand, HAS duration. In fact because there are no Ordinal fractions, an Ordinal number's duration is precisely equal to the interval between two consecutive Cardinal whole-numbers. (Otherwise, surely, their one-to-one correspondence wouldn't make sense).

The above, then, I have worked out for myself. More, in fact, but I'm not so sure of the rest. And though you mathematical geniuses out there may consider it very stale cheese, it's just a curd to me. (THAT one must be in the public domain).

Now we're in a position to get somewhere. If the duration of an Ordinal number is equal to the interval between two consecutive Cardinal whole-numbers, then it follows that the two series can be run alternately. Only as the Cardinals begin with "zero" and the Ordinals begin with "first", if the series are to match at the high end there must always be one more Cardinal than Ordinal. Which seems somehow (I'm not quite sure how) to tie in with the bedroom window paradox. Call the wooden uprights Cardinals, and the panes Ordinals. The sequence then goes: zero FIRST one SECOND two THIRD three FOURTH four full stop.

It matches, at least.

Now let's try applying this to the calendar. Ley or Asimov or both seem to consider that reckoning should start from some given year. Some may do, but to make proper sense, surely reckoning should start from some given instant - some point of time in fact. It doesn't matter if the instant chosen is that of the birth of Christ, the fall of the Bastille, the flight of the Prophet to Medina, or the bringing of the Good News from Ghent to Aix. It's convenient of course if the chosen instant can be identified with midnight, in fact if the year and the day are to keep in step it's advisable to fiddle it to that extent. Nevertheless the fact remains, a system of annual reckoning should properly begin with an instant, not a year.

Call that instant "Zero".

Exactly one year later, give or take a few hours to bring it neatly to



midnight if you like, you locate another point. Call this second point "One".

Between these two points, "Zero" and "One", there is one calendar year. We'd call this, under our present illogical system that is the cause of most of the difficulty, "Year One". We shouldn't, though. Or to put it another way, when we say "Year One" what we really mean is "The First Year". When we say "Year One" we are guilty of using a Cardinal number and meaning an Ordinal. "One", being Cardinal and thus having no duration, cannot possibly be a year. "First" can though. So when I call this year by its usual designation of "1960", or when you similarly call the year it'll be when you read this (I hope you do, anyway) "1961", what we actually MEAN is the 1960th year and the 1961st year respectively.

So we have our Zero, the instant at which the reckoning starts. A Cardinal zero. Before and behind it stretch the years. Ordinal years.

Oh yes - and the soldiers. The Three Volunteers. We're all perfectly well aware that they would in actual practice number off as follows: "One." "Two." "Three." Again, they're using Cardinal numbers for a strictly Ordinal purpose. Take Volunteer Number Two. He isn't "two". (We're not talking about pregnant servicewomen now. At least, we weren't). He's only "one". If the soldiers want to number Cardinally, then they should do it "One." "One." "One." This makes sense, but isn't exactly functional. What they REALLY mean (even though they probably don't recognise it at the time) is: "First." "Second." "Third."

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THEN I REALISED THAT MY BRAIN WAS NO LONGER FUNCTIONING

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MEET His name isn't really Max of course. Nor, come to that, is mine. He  
 MAX originally started calling me Max for no apparent reason, so I naturally had to call him Max back. So we've called each other Max ever since.

The thing about Max is that he's a genius. I'll try to record some further examples of his genius for posterity, if only I can remember them long enough. One example comes to mind now. We have a calculating machine in the office where I work. In Max's office they usually have two, but sometimes one of them is borrowed for elsewhere when they need it themselves. So Max came down to my office to ask if our machine was being used at that time.

"Sporadically," I answered.

"Does that mean sort of on and off, like?" asked Max.

"Yes," I told him, and then being in etymological mood I amplified this somewhat to the extent of informing him that the word got its name from a group of Greek islands.

"Well, what doesn't these days?" said Max, borrowing one of my catch-phrases.

"Well, MY name doesn't, for a start."

"Oh yes it does," he argued.



"From what, then?"

"Archie - er - pelago."

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"EXCEPT FOR SPRING, SUMMER AND AUTUMN, WINTER IS PERHAPS THE GREATEST SEASON OF THEM ALL" - - - - St Alsobar

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HALF-TOLD TALES OF HOFFMAN I heard this story while I was in the army. In Germany, to be precise. I was sitting in the Naafi, probably reading, and there was this programme being relayed from BFN through loudspeakers situated at appropriate points throughout the camp.

It seems that the well-known Barcarolle from Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffman" was actually not composed by Offenbach at all. He was working on the opera and had got stuck or something, when wandering through the streets of some continental city or other (probably Paris, come to that) he heard this tune either sung or played, and was struck by it. So he listened and went his way, and it was not until he'd got some distance that it suddenly struck him that it was just exactly what he needed for "Tales of Hoffman".

Now he was faced with a problem, for of course he couldn't just use the tune and leave it at that. First of all, he had to find out who he had to get permission from. So he wandered all over the city looking for this elusive character who had performed the thing the other night, or trying to find somebody else who recognised the tune. And no trace of either performer or tune could he find.

So he began to get desperate. He had THE very tune he wanted, right there at his fingertips so to speak, and he was unable to use it. And at this point some clot decided it was time to turn the camp relay off for the night, so I never did get to hear the end of the story.

And it WORRIES me. I don't suppose any of you lot can be any help?

TEN BEST JAZZ TUNES Recently one of the JAZZ NEWS columnists decided to run a poll to determine which were the favourite jazz tunes, and asked readers to submit their ten favourites. In order that the result wouldn't be weighted TOO heavily in favour of the modernists, I duly got out and sent in my list. The tunes I selected, after some thought, were as follows:

Just a Little While to Stay Here	Slow Drag Blues (Sunshine)
Lily of the Valley	Canal Street Blues
Oh Didn't He Ramble (inevitably!)	Gettysburg
God Leads His Dear Children Along	Over in Gloryland
Blues for an Unknown Gipsy (Humph)	Irish Black Bottom

(in no particular order).

Naturally (or something), none of these titles figured in the Top Thirty. Nor did two titles I'd pondered long over before discarding in favour of the above, namely Snake Rag and Scott Joplin's "The Original Rags". Nor, come to that, "Margie", which I might well have included if I'd been in the mood. Nor Salutation March, nor Walk Through the Streets of the City, nor Sing On, and many many more of their superb ilk.



Now in its seventh instalment,

# LAIR OF THE LEADEN-FOOTED FANCY

finishes cataloguing the Mercatorial fiction collection and starts on the non-fiction, if I estimate aright.

INNES, MICHAEL

Operation Pax

Another recent acquisition, that I had previously never heard of. Despite the silly title (which turns out to be justified by events, but still) it's well worth hanging on to, standing in style sort of midway between his "crazy" books and his more serious pure-detective-type ones. As it is, the story only seems in its last few pages to realise "well, I'm a detective story - look, there's my detective - and so I'd better let him uncover something before I finish". To the general bewilderment.

WRIGHT, S. FOWLER

The Vengeance of Gwa

Deluge

Dawn

The Island of Captain Sparrow

The Screaming Lake

S. Fowler Wright is an author whose books are either (to me) highly enjoyable or utterly boring. In the latter category come things like "The Adventure of Wyndham Smith", the "World Below" complex, and his mundane historicals. (I've never tried his "Sydney Fowler" detective stories). The five above-listed, however, are all first-class. "Deluge" and "Dawn" together form one of the all-time top "catastrophe" stories. (Actually they're more intimately interinvolved than are most stories with sequels - "Dawn" starts parallel to "Deluge", with overlapping characters, and the latter part of "Dawn" carries on from where both sequences leave off). "The Vengeance of Gwa" is a prehistoric, or possibly post-historic, or possibly again an alternate universe, and tells the story of a primitive tribe battling for survival on all sides. "The Island of Captain Sparrow" is of course very well-known indeed, being a lost-race story of the "unknown lost race" variety. And "The Screaming Lake" is the other variety of lost-race story, where the race is known or suspected and searched for. The race in question is the Inca one, and I much prefer Wright's Amazon (river) heroine to Hudson's renowned Orinoco-oriented one.

WYLIE, DIRK, and KUMMER, FREDERIC ARNOLD, Jr

When Time Went Mad

A gloriously cockeyed short novel from Thrilling Wonder.

WYNDHAM, JOHN

The Day of the Triffids

Re-Birth (The Chrysalids)

Another pair of excellent "catastrophe" stories. It has occurred to me that a "sort of sequel" to the "Triffids" could be written where a film of the story's being made, and the botanists given the job of producing a realistic-looking triffid-like plant do the job too well and the triffids are then well and truly amongst us.

Then there's part of an elderly BRE Astounding, including Anthony Boucher's "Pelagic Spark", a story that has L. Sprague de Camp as a character, and thus according to the usual disclaimer on the contents-page denies that he exists,



E.M. Hull's "Competition" (I'd have liked to have seen some more of that series) and an article on the Sargasso Sea by Willy Ley.

#### FROM UNKNOWN WORLDS (anthology)

The short novel "The Enchanted Weekend" by John MacCormac is my favourite item herein, though when the mood is upon me I occasionally re-read one of the shorter stories, such as the pleasantly unkind "The Hexer".

#### THE CIRCUS OF DR LAO AND OTHER IMPROBABLE STORIES (anthology)

Edited by Ray Bradbury, to whom full marks for (against all traditions) NOT having included one of his own stories herein. However, apart from Charles G. Finney's extraordinary title-story which takes up nearly half the book, nothing herein is of any use to me.

#### HORNER, ARTHUR

##### Colonel Pewter in Ironicus

This is too big for the ordinary shelves, so it has to stand on the top shelf - hence its out-of-alphabetical position. It comprises the first series of the superb strip from the defunct "News Chronicle" (now still running in the "Daily Mail"), in which the redoubtable Col. P. discovers the land of Ironicus where animals live like men. Like all of the series, no more of which has unfortunately been issued in book form, it contains bags of lovely satire and sheer humour throughout. It has always surprised me that the Colonel's adventures never seem to have caught on amongst fans. (Ron Bennett excepted).

#### Walt Disney's DAVY CROCKETT, KING OF THE WILD FRONTIER

A sort of book-of-the-film-specially-prepared-for-children. I happen to be a Davy Crockett fan, so I keep it. It stands over a foot high, and therefore won't even stand upright on the top shelf.

#### RIPLEY, ROBERT L.

##### The Omnibus "Believe It Or Not"

A survival of my schooldays, which I actually keep among the works of reference. The items he tells of and/or portrays are often more "not" than otherwise, are frequently interesting - or would be if he went into more detail, and sometimes make me feel sick. Pasted inside the front cover there is a slim booklet entitled

#### BELIEVE IT ALL ROT

that is probably the best parody on Ripley's feature I've ever seen. Some typical text-entries (suitably illoed in the original of course) follow: "D. Hyde of Ryde taught his hen to lay dried eggs. D. Hyde rated the eggs of first class quality" - "Happinite the Hittite who foretold the Flood within a couple of gallons" - "A housewife at Nashville, Pa., trained sparrows to act as clothes pegs" - "It is difficult to believe that a woodpecker could peck a hole this size through one of the giant trees of California" - "Slick Dick the Deptford Dwarf 1841-1893 was never arrested; his legs were so short that he could wipe out his footprints with the seat of his pants".

That was "non-fiction" huh? I seem to have wandered into the "humour" section as a matter of fact. More next time.

AM