
BINARY
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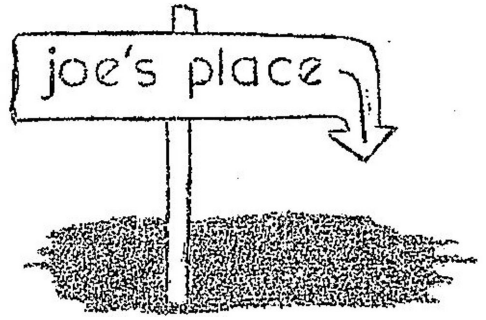


This is BINARY 1000 (i.e. number 8) produced for the 43rd mailing of the OFF TRAILS MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION, and coming from J.P.Patrizio, 22 Eaton Road, St. Albans Herts. This will be the last BINARY from the above address.

BINARY

As we have now reached 1000 (albeit, after only eight issues) and as it also the last I shall do from this address, it seems right and proper that something special should be done to mark the occasion. I have therefore compiled the biggest BINARY to date and haven't written it all myself - which makes a change. The main article is by Bill Temple, to whom I am most grateful. He says that this will be the last thing he does in a fanzine, except for the odd letter in Binary, as he is leaving fandom for ever. The front cover is by Atom (Oh, you guessed) and the bacover by Alan Young, a technical illustrator in the department wherein I work - I hope to run Alan's work regularly. Duplicating is by Pete Weston.

With any luck we will be moving shortly after the deadline for this mailing, and there will be a lot to do thereafter, so this means that the next BINARY wont be out before September (I can pretty well promise this, but you never know). If you want to know exactly when we move, keep your eyes open when reading SKYHACK.

FESTIVE SEASON FROLICS

Since last time, Christmas has happened and it is viewed retrospectively with an almost Freudian mixture of pain and pleasure. The journey from our house to Temple Towers (and the one back) wasn't good. Apart from the mountains of luggage, we had the two children (both good, I'm glad to say) and a large dog who learned the hard way that it couldn't prowl up and down the back of a car where also resided me, ¼ of a mountain of luggage and two children (still good).

A memorable occurance was the showing of 'The Mark of Zorro' - the original version with Doug Fairbanks. A few months ago Bill obtained an 8mm copy of this after waiting half a lifetime to see it again. The film is 45 years old, silent, and uses no sophisticated techniques such as panning camera, but despite this it has held up very well. The visual jokes are still funny, the action still has zip and hasn't gone all limp at the edges, and the sub-title writer had been reading too much Shakespeare, which adds to the fun. Bill had taped some Spanish music and I controlled (?) this while slowley absorbing about half a bottle of excellent Malmsey - all of which made this a most enjoyable evening's entertainment.

The rest of the holiday seemed to be nothing but Andrew and Bonny - I'm sure there was more than one of each. Bill must have been suffering from reaction once we'd left, as can be seen in the following extract from

a letter he sent:

> "The house seemed almost tomb-like quiet after I saw you off in the taxi and I wasn't quite sure that I really liked it, after all. In fact I felt quite sad when wiping Bonny's muddy paw-marks off the back door, etc., and afterwards Joan felt quite sad, too, because I'd used a mucky cloth and she had to do the job over again."

LOOK, LOOK - I GOT A LETTER
Dunno if one letter makes a letter column, but it's the best I can do. It came from Duncan Steel who says:

> "So you had an encyclopaedia man from Caxton's, too. I don't know whether you just didn't mention it but it wasn't going to cost you £75 over 10 years - you would have to pay over 2 or 3 years at most, and in return they also throw in a (nominal 15 gns) family Bible or Oxford Universal Dictionary when you've finished paying, and when you agree in the first plade you can select any of their photography, angling, car mechanic ar suchlike handbooks to about 15 gns. (again, their price) for free, I presume. What made me laugh the most, though, was the final bit. Having got through all that lot, you could see it coming, and it did -- 'Now with all these books, you'll want somewhere nice to keep them', and we just happen to produce a genuine cardboard cut-out book-case to hold the lot!"

We didn't get as far as you obviously did; once I had found him out, he left with barely a word of protest.

> "I don't know whether your remarks on pop music are meant to be taken light-heartedly.... I mean, you obviously (?) don't like any of it - though I think if you tried, and if you had an ounce of feeling for rhythm and for the emotive power of a song and its music, you couln't fail to rate the Beatles - however, whatever may be your opinions you've a right to them; but what worries me is that you give the impression that your opinions of pop music are the correct ones, and anyone who disagrees must be wrong.((yes)) Not that I don't think that the majority of pop music is crud, but even some of that is OK for a background or for dancing and, in the whole body, if you go searching, there are a few jewels hiding away."

Actually, I consider that I have at least 2½ oz. of feeling for rhythm etc. but what's that got to do with present day pop music? Of course it all depends on how you define pop music, but it should be obvious to all that I mean beat music, including rock, R&B, etc. when I say 'pop music'. The Beatles (two of them anyway) write some quite clever songs; they have some little gift for melody. But they are poor instrumentalists and wirse singers - in fact their singing is so bad that it hardly falls into this class.

Pop music can give me nothing that I can't get from classical music, folk music or modern jazz. The gems you say exist, more ofthen than not are lifted from some piece of classical music.

BOOKS
The following are library books I have read recently .

For Whom the Bell Tolls: Ernest Hemingway. (This one should have been in last time but I ran out of room.) My first encounter with Hemingway and I'm left with mixed feelings. I found the'translation' from formal Spanish into formal English, irritating. Time and again it kept pulling me up just as I was getting into the story. Yet in places you were really there, seeing the events happen.

A Moveable Feast: Ernest Hemingway. This deals with the years 1921-26 which Hemingway spent, as a young writer, in Paris. I didn't like this very much (despite what Kenneth Tynan says) as it read more like notes for the final version than the final version itself. A lot of disjointed episodes interspersed with snide comments about people he met, and no communication of the feel of the place. The outstanding thing about the book is the wordage about food and drink. Hemingway's idea of realism seems to be a full description of his meals at any particular time, and he tries to make out that he can remember exactly what he ate, and what it tasted like, some 25-30 years ago. I'm coming to the conclusion that I don't like Hemingway's writing, but I'll try another novel.

The 4-Dimensional Nightmare: J.G.Ballard. A collection of 8 short stories; 3 SF, 5 fantasy. One story (Studio 5 - The Stars) was quite good, and two others were better than bad simply because they came to some sort of conclusion. The other five finished where they started - in the middle. No story, no point, no interest; just purple prose. One of the collection (Voices of Time) has the distinction of being the worst short story I have ever read.

After Doomsday: Poul Anderson. A space ship returning from an expedition finds Earth has been completely destroyed. Who did it and what can be done about it? Anderson has written a fast moving story around this theme, keeping the reader guessing right up to the last chapter. The characterization isn't too good, and 'After Doomsday' is a bit Boys Ownish, but in its own unpretentious way it hold the interest, and is good reading.

Ever Such a Nice Lady: Marjory Todd. Non-fiction; the account of a Probation Officer's years of service in the East End of London. As you read this you begin to get an idea of the reasons why there is so much crime - lack of education, indifferent parents, stupidity, and just bad luck. The book is written as a series of unconnected episodes which don't, funnily enough, lack coherence but manage to get over to the reader the author's feelings of frustration and complete lack of contact with her wards. Very good reading.

The Naked Society: Vance Packard. A treatise on how far the US has moved

towards a '1984' state, and the violations from different quarters (government, advertising, etc) of the privacy of the individual. Packard gives the impression that the US isvery close to being a police state except that it isn't just the police who has access to what should be considered private information. I'm left with the feeling that Packard probably overstates his case and sites only the extreme cases; but then these cases are for real so perhaps I'm being complacent. I'd like to hear Stateside comments on this. However, I found the book absorbing and not quite as long winded as the other Packard books.

They Walked Like Men: Clifford Simak. Simak's latest novel and far from his best. The story is based on aliens taking advantage of land laws to buy up the whole Earth; we are to be taken over, all legal, like. The aliens are shaped like bowling balls but can adjust to take any other shape they like. However, they turn out to be incompotent, just like most of the others who have tried the same sort of trick. Slickly written, but too many loose ends, too much padding, and too many stupid characters. All very unbelievable - I just didn't care.

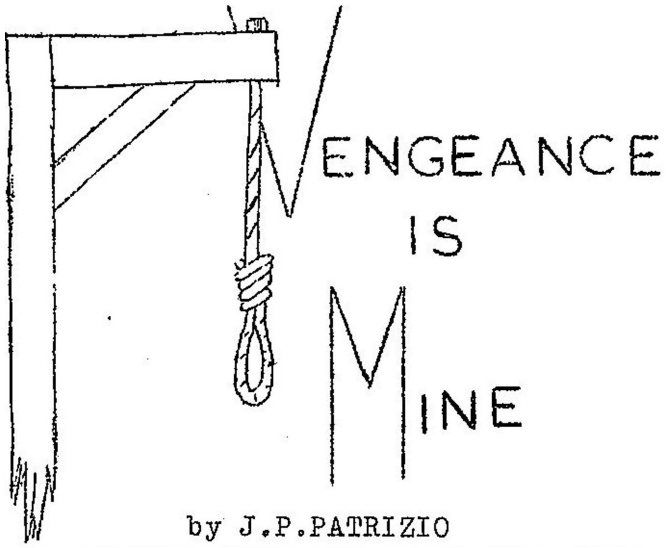
The Counterfeit Man: Alan E.Nourse. 13 stories which make up a fairly good readable collection. No really outstanding story, but only two which weren't worth reading.

New Writings in SF..1: John Carnell (ed). Carnell tells us that this is a new concept in SF and the next stage on from magazine SF. There are 5 stories, 4 of which are good to good+, the fifth (by John Rankine) being poor. But one rotten story out of five isn't bad going, and Carnell must be swearing at not getting much of this standard of writing when he was editing the pulps.

The Ethical Engineer: Harry Harrison. Further adventures of Jason dinAlt whose exploits were first related in 'Deathworld'. Our hero is abducted from Pyrrus by a nut who wants him punished for his youthful sins. They crash on a planet with a run-down civilization, and then go through lots of jolly adventures together. Throughout the book there is what purports to be an ethical argument but what is really the mechanism for getting Jason into more trouble just as he has sorted out the last lot. Harrison's idea of science being bracketed under neat little headings such as 'electricity', 'chemistry', etc, wont bear too much examination, but the book is so well written that you don't think of these things while you're reading it - a most willing suspension of disbelief. But Mr. Harrison makes one heinous error when he has Jason breaking a Morse-type code and saying "Start with one stroke for A, two for B, and so on up to twenty six strokes" - however, they were supposed to be speaking a form of Esperanto, which has 28 letters.

Introducing SF: Brian Aldiss.(ed). A 12 story anthology intended for those who are just getting interested in SF - significantly, I had read only five. Quite a good collection which will, no doubt, do its job well. One sour note was the glossary of terms compiled by Aldiss; this was unnessary and embarrassingly juvenile.

Here endeth the 8th editorial.



by J.P.PATRIZIO

At the present time there is a Bill going through the British Parliament which will irradicate the last vestiges of barbarism from our law books - this Bill (virtually certain of passing) aims at the abolition of the death penalty for murder.

Now I guarantee that already at least half of the readers will be frothing at the mouth and babbling incoherently. No matter what studied and logical arguments are presented, pro and con, the one fact emerging is that talk about the death penalty is controlled largely by the emotions. Accepting this, and realizing that what I say will convince nobody, let us have a look at some of the reasons given for the retention and for the abolition of capital punishment.

The most popular argument for keeping the death penalty is presented to us as a blood-crazed gentleman running down the street shooting all and sundry for no apparant reason, or chopping up little children into littler pieces just for the hell of it - and simply because they know thy wont be hanged for it. This is a most unreasonable argument with nothing to support it - did you feel the urge to go out and kill somebody when you heard of the end of capital punishment? A variation on this theme is the argument that without the fear of the noose, professional criminals will take to carrying lethal weapons, or at least more will do so. This is, of course, sheer conjecture - but it can't simply be dismissed as such, as to do so would be to say, in effect, 'We'll just wait and see' - and you can't just wait and see where you are gambling with people's lives.

Luckily, we have some evidence to support the abolitionists who say that getting rid of the death penalty will not create a murder-happy society- the evidence of other countries (and some states of the Union) which have already got rid of capital punishment. The murder rate in these countries has undergone no adverse effect. To quote Professor Thorsten Sellin on the subject, "Whether the death penalty is used or not, both death penalty States and abolitionist States show rates which suggest that their rates are conditioned by other factors than the death penalty." This seems to oe as true for countries which have recently abolished capital punishment as for those who did so 100 years ago. There is no reason to suppose that Great Britain will be any different, unless you are going to say that the people here are a lot worse than thise elsewhere.

If, then, the death penalty is not a deterent to murder, can it perform any useful function? There is a point of view held by some retentionists that it can. They say that the execution of all murderers (even those who are insane) is socially expedient and should be considered as

another facet of social hygien. This, again, is a highly charged emotional idea which will either bring forth a dispassionate "Hmmm, yes", or cause you to recoil in horror. Hanging the murderer finishes off the case quite neatly; you don't have him sitting in prison, a very expensive guest of the country, and you don't have the awkward decision to make of whether or not you can let him out. You can also console yourself with the thought that a long term prison sentence is worse than death - at least it is if it's somebody else and not you.

So, by means of the death penalty you can cut out the cankers of society. But when you consider it further, the murderers are generally less of an encumberance on society than most other types of criminal. If you are going to say that the worst criminals should be candidates for the noose, surely you must include some criminals other than murderers; for example, petty thieves, sex offenders, etc. And so where do you stop if you want to cleanse society? Do you go back to the 18th and 19th Centuries where there were 220 crimes punishable by death, and where the manner of carrying out the sentence was an integral part of the sentence? It's been a long hard grind to get the statute books in the state they are in now (imperfect as they are) any steps we take to modify them should be progressive, not retrogressive. Anyway, this 'hygien' approach to the death penalty was one favoured by Hitler, and few of us thought he was a power for good throughout the land.

But deep down at the core of the retentionist's soul (if he has one) lies the real reason for his desire to keep the death penalty -retribution- an eye for an eye. This being a Christian country it is, of course, quite natural for this to be the case; the Bible states quite categorically "Thou shalt not kill", so it well behoves a true pillar of the Church to maintain God's law by hanging anyone who deviates from it. However, there are those among us who cannot find it in our hearts to sink to the level of the killer, and terminate the existance of, for all his faults, a fellow human being - and this leads to an anomalous situation. A murderer who is obviously guilty, can go free because the jury can't bring itself to bring in a verdict of guilty; they do not want to be the cause of his execution. This state of affairs is palpably wrong, so what do we do about it? Screen the jury to make sure that they will bring in a verdict of guilty, if justified. This was done for the Jack Ruby trial, much to the distaste of most people. The only other alternative would seem to be the removal of the cause of the anomaly. Get rid of the death penalty.

A strong argument against the death penalty being used as a form of punishment is its finality - there is no chance of making amends if you find out at a later date that you've convicted the wrong man. However, the Commons debate on hanging brought to light the fact that not everybody is worried about this. A Conservative M.P., Brigadier (of course) T.Clarke was reported as saying "I am perfectly happy if a mistake was made and if one more mistake was made in the next five or ten years; it should be made if it saved the life of one child." An unhealthy sentiment which kicks away a basic principle of British (and other) justice. Two hundred years ago, Sir William Blackstone said "It is better that ten guilty persons

escape than one innocent suffer", and on this premise a system of law has evolved in which an innocent person can feel (relatively) safe when in the hands of the police. Remove this premise, even for the lofty sounding reasons quoted above, and we enter the police state.

Now that we all have decided that capital punishment is a barbaric, disgusting, degrading and thoroughly un Christian practice, we come to the important question - is there an effective alternative? Obviously there must be, but what it is nobody seems to have found out yet. I suppose that there are, basically, two types of murderer: the insane murderer, and the cold blooded murderer who does it for gain. There is certainly a fair bit of overlap in these categories and they will both have offshoots, but let's just consider the basic two.

Murders are commited predominantly by the insane to whom punishment is of no consequence, and so no penalty will act as a deterent. The insane killer will, unfortunately, be with us for a long time to come. A lot of research will eventually enable us to recognise the potential killer, but this is not just around the corner. In the meantime, psychiatry, sadly lacking in British prisons, would go a long way towards curing the convicted insane murderer and also help to prevent further crimes. Other than this, indefinite incarceration seems to be the only answer.

The murders which are done for gain are a different matter altogether, because these are understandable and therefore preventable. The murderer, in this case, weighs up what he has to gain against the chance of a long term prison sentence or the death penelty, and occasionally decides that it is worth the risk. We must, therefore, introduce some form of punishment which will always be a deterent (something the death penalty demonstrably wasn't). Here it may be an idea to give the psychologists their head. As murderers generally seem to be imaginative men (the sane ones) a deterent which fires the imagination is called for; for instance, making the convicted murderer a himan guinea pig in medical research programmes is worth thinking about, but there are associated moral problems. But again, there is no obvious answer, other than the long term of imprisonment.

The worst thing about murder is that it leaves you so little room to move when you are looking into new ways to prevent it, or when you are attempting law reforms. Which crimes such as theft you can try something clever, and out of the ordinary, and if it doesn't work it's just hard luck.. you've only lost some property. But with murder, if you're proved wrong you've got a lot to live with.

I feel that there is much in the theory that murder is a manefestation of a sick society, and before we go too far in the punishment of murderers rather than their rehabilitation, we shoula look closely at the saying "Physician, heal thyself."

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RESPONSE

TO
THE
42nd
MAILING

OFF TRAILS: Ethel. Got it in for me in a big way, haven't you? 11 pages too many credited in the last mailing - and now, none at all. What ever it is I've done, I'm sorry Ethel.

NEXUS 2: Weston. You've already had a letter - what more do you want, blood?

SHELTA THARI 1: Eney. I'm sorry if I upset you, Mr. Eney, Sir, when I asked if any OMPA members would really vote for Goldwater. It must have come over in some way I didn't intend (put it down to the language difference). Taking the point a bit further; I normally wouldn'd say that a person in another country was nuts if he voted for a candidate whose views I didn't agree with, as it is usually none of my business. However, with the President of the US things are a bit different - my live depends on the person you vote in, almost as much as yours does. Frankly, I was scared of Goldwater, entirely because of his foreign policy... and I'm glad to see that most of you over there agreed with me. A most interesting run-down; thanks.

PHENTYPE: Eney. All your questions about the Loncon etc. will probably be answed officially, but I've just got to put in my oar.

The cheapest method of getting into town from London Airport is by London Transport bus. If you take an 83 it passes through Wembley, where you can pop in and see Bill Temple - but don't tell him I sent you. The last thing I would suggest is for you to take a taxi - there's a standard charge of £3 into London.

Finding your way around London is an aquired art - and you just wont have time to do it. For the first year all I knew were relatively small areas, and I used to pop up like a prairie dog, from the Underground, into the place I wanted to be. A most worthwhile booklet for you to get is Visitor's London, published by LT at 5/-. It tells you what to see, and how to get there.

Medical aid is easy (although I hope you get nothing worse than a hangover). All you do is holler, and you get what you need. You will be asked to sign a form so that the doctor can get paid (by the Government) for the treatment.

HAGGIS 2: Peters. We almost joined Bookplan - thanks for the warning. I agree with most of what you say about Art. I just don't understand how some people can go into raptures about a few bits of tin welded together. The Observer recently ran extracts from a biography of Picasso and showed a photograph of one of his sculptures. It was a gas ring from

a gas cooker - he hadn't done anything to it except stand it on its end and give it a name. Somebody will pay through the nose for it - its a mad world.

Sorry, can't oblige about the Binary cover. I've got a couple of spares but they're no better than the one you've got, as I always send my 50 best copies to OMPA.

HEX 8: Wells. Thanks for telling us what happened over there, in your election. How come Johnson wasn't on the Alabama ballot? Didn't he want to be, or is it legal not to let an official candidate on your list if you don't like him?

The answer to your question about a stranded member bringing down the Government is really quite simple. Traditionally, the Government goes to the country if it loses a division in the House of Commons. If the Government has a small majority, such as the present on has, a member stranded in Scotland could just about tip the balance. However, this is only the traditional way - there is nothing in law to say that the Government must resign, and the present Government probably wouldn't if it was defeated in an unimportant matter. In fact I believe that the Government need not resign, no matter how many times it loses a division, until its five years are up. In practise this wouldn't happen if for no other reason than the Party doing it would never be voted in again.

FENRIS 7: Hulan. Welcome, sir - going by this issue, I'm glad you came. Enjoying your'Conservatism' article as I did, I still think you paint a rosier picture of the true-blues than the situation warrents. Conservatism may mean 'cautious' etc. but it also means 'reacting against change'. You go too far when you say, with respect to Negro integration, that the radical engages in terrorism - according to my newspaper it's the Civil Rights people who are being murdered, not the segregationist Conservatives. You are also unfair in suggesting that radical parties invariably make random changes; there is no proof of this at all.

Going on to your bit about Kings and Queens of England (not GB) Elizabeth is probably thought of as the greatest, Richard has strong romantic overtones, and John is considered the all-time stinker. But not many people think about it, really.

RINGWRAITH 1: Bailes. I wish your entry into the mailings could have been made on a more cheerful colour of paper; I found it a bit too bilious for happy reading. I looked at it balefully, you might say (OK, so you wouldn't).

The Trachenberg system of mathematics is too complicated for me - I'll stick to my fingers, it's quicker. Lad, lad, you're putting ideas into my head with all those pointers towards 'do it yourself' articles. A spirit duplicator sounds just the thing to do next - now if I can just get a little help from Bobby Gray...

COGNATE 6. Hickey. Your easy, chatty style is beginning to tell, and I'm now looking for Cognate in the mailings - especially when they're as big as this one. For your information, the word 'stew' means brothel.

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PLAGIARISM IN SF

WILLIAM F. TEMPLE

No bird has ever uttered note
That was not in some first bird's throat;
Since Eden's freshness and man's fall
No rose has been original.

-- Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

There was this interview with John Wyndham in the SUN the other day. He had an acute case of "writer's block" and no-one who's never suffered from this psychological affliction can imagine what an ordeal it can be. You're hiking happily along the road of narrative. Then the road begins to wind uphill. The gradient becomes tougher, your progress slower. Presently, you're labouring under the delusion (if it is a delusion) that the hill is growing higher even as you're scaling it.

You give yourself a shot of adrenalin and climb grimly to the top.

And discover that the far side of the hill doesn't exist. The road ends abruptly at the crest and drops a perpendicular: you're on the brink of a sheer cliff.

Now you need to make a leap of faith with a parachute woven of confidence. These damn parachute packs have a way of getting lost just when you most need them.

Wyndham has been blocked in the middle of a new novel for all of two years now. His publishers keep hoping to feature it in their autumn list. Last year (1964) they had to remain satisfied with re-issuing the TRIFFIDS, KRAKEN, and CHRYSALIDS as a Wyndham Omnibus.

The rest of us, also awaiting another smooth, convincing adventure from this gifted story-teller, wonder what's caused the block.

More than one writer has stymied himself by a too drastic change in his climate of living. A northern novelist who's made his name by realistic depiction of life in the Black Country moves to London, believing it to be the heart of things. And finds himself rootless and lost in the prattle and pretence of Chelsea (as was -- now Islington) and dries up. For the Black Country was the true heart of his work.

Wyndham spent all of his writing life, i.e., from the early 'thirties, in sophisticated Bloomsbury, until a couple of years ago he moved to a cottage in a village deep in Wiltshire. Other authors seeking peace to write have done likewise, vegetated and quietly wilted away from lack of mental stimulation. Bright "with it" people, intellectuals or pseudos,

can be irritants or bores, yet also they can stir up your ideas. If you've been used to mixing with them, you're apt to miss their stimulus.

But if Wyndham wilts in Wilts. I doubt if the reason is as simple as that. In summer he holidayed much in the country and was familiar with the climate. The cause is more likely to be internal. Even before he moved he told us of a fear that he was drying up creatively. This is an occupational obsession with many writers, which worsens with age. You begin to feel you've mined out your particular lode, and you are only re-writing yourself, as Rider Haggard did in his later works (QUEEN SHEBA'S RING, THE PEOPLE OF THE MIST, etc.).

It may be that Wyndham puts his own finger on it in the SUN interview: "The problem is not to plagiarize myself."

Sometimes I regret once accusing him of continually re-writing THE WAR OF THE WORLDS. That is, harping on the theme of the break-up of ordinary, everyday life by the eruption of monsters in some shape or form, be they the INVISIBLE MONSTERS of a short story of his way back in the 'thirties, or the Kraken, or the little horrors of Midwich, or the famous Triffids themselves.

I didn't really mean it seriously because, of course, he'd written about many other concepts too, including the notable CHRYSALIDS. Later, though, I wondered if he had taken it seriously, for he remarked in company: "Bill here says I'm always re-writing THE WAR OF THE WORLDS."

Now, his new novel concerns a desert island where spiders are (so to speak) top dog and their leaving the island to try to conquer man. Unlike ordinary spiders they act together in packs, similar to ants.

One's triggered reaction is: "Wells-inspired again. THE VALLEY OF THE SPIDERS crossed with THE EMPIRE OF THE ANTS."

The fear of self plagiarism arises, I suspect, from the employment of the Monster Menace theme yet again wedded to the group-mind idea, which John has used at least once (the children of Midwich) and which Stapledon used before him and Dr. David Keller before Stapledon (THE HUMAN TERMITES).

However, I think he's being over-scrupulous.

When I was younger I had a horror of plagiarism and regarded stealing ideas as a crime. I prized originality and thought it the hallmark of genius. What I didn't realise then is that ideas are common property, free as the air around us, which we breathe communally.

I forget who said: "Originality is the sign of the second-rate writer.' That seemed to me nonsense once, but not now.

Everyone plagiarises, consciously or not. Even the greatest.

Shakespeare and Brahms did it consciously and didn't care a fig. They know a good thing (be it Marlowe's or Bach's) when they saw it and delighted to play their own variation on it. The creation of the variation, often making a slik purse from a sow's ear, was their own personal achievement and justification.

Despite my respect for originality, I have plagiarised, too, though not always knowingly. I remember being well satisfied about my first published short story, which concerned an animated and perambulating tree, a sort of early Triffid. I thought it original until I re-read a story of Ambrose Bierce's and saw with a nasty little shock that quite unconsciously I'd lifted the pivotal idea from it.

So let us take the afore-mentioned THE VALLEY OF THE SPIDERS, which I imagined had sprung, like all of Wells's works, new-born from its creator's brow. In a recent (1962) book, H.G.WELLS AND HIS CRITICS, by Ingvald Baknem, a norwegian, I find a long chapter about Wells being accused of plagiarism. Says the author: "THE VALLEY OF THE SPIDERS is another story in which the critics discovered traces of Kipling." And goes on to show that in general idea, plan, and atmosphere it could be regarded as a re-telling of the adventure of Morrowbie Jukes.

And, obviously, THE FLYING MAN owes much to Kipling's THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING. Also instanced is a parallel I had noticed myself: the chapter, "The Saying of the Law," in THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU, was clearly inspired by Kipling's "The Law of the Jungle" from the SECOND JUNGLE BOOK.

THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND is remarkably similar to Remy de Gourmont's D'UN PAYS LOINTAIN, a fact which critic Edward Shanks had earlier drawn attention to. THE STAR is almost a condensation of the astronomer Flammarion's novel THE END OF THE WORLD -- and Baknem claims: "Wells aludes to things he could have found only in Flammarion's book."

Wells has also been accused of plagiarising Verne. The early chapters of THE FOOD OF THE GODS are remarkably akin to DR. OX'S EXPERIMENT. And Baknem implies that the short story, IN THE ABYSS, could be an amalgam of ideas from 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA and Poe's CITY OF THE SEA.

THE TIME MACHINE is regarded as Wells's most truly original story. It's the father of all time-travelling yarns. But even here one of its most memorable incidents (the escape of the hero, via the 4th Dimension, from the hollow Sphinx) was anticipated by one of H.G.'s contemporaries, Oscar Wilde, in THE CANTERVILLE GHOST. The Ghost, similarly being crowded by a mob, employs the 4th Dimension to escape through walls.

Whether that was conscious borrowing or not, Wells did admit that he had lifted some of his characters from other people's works, including one rounded and complete from Mrs. Humphry Ward's MARCELLA.

Maupassant's LA HORLA, about an invisible creature, may have had something to do with the genesis of THE INVISIBLE MAN, but Wells himself said it was owed to -- of all things --W.S.Gilbert's BAB BALLADS, humorous verses, in particular a couple of lines from one called THE PERILS OF INVISIBILITY:

> Old Peter vanished like a shot,
> But then --his suit of clothes did not.

Previously, in fairy tales and legends, the invisible prince (or whatever) was totally invisible, clothes and all. Wells reflected: supposing only flesh and blood were rendered invisible, while the clothing remained unaffected?

So he wrote the most famous ever story of invisibility. Its success arose, not from the basic idea, but from the convincing treatment of it. For treatment is more important than originality. The real magic lies in the art of persuading the reader to adopt a "willing suspension of disbelief." This is trick which Wyndham can pull off better than most living s-f authors, and, additionally, in an admirable prose style (TROUBLE WITH LICHEN was beautifully written).

As Carlyle said in HEROES AND HERO-WORSHIP: "The merit of originality is not novelty: it is sincerity. The believing man is the original man."

So it were best if John Wyndham forgot about plagiarism, self or otherwise, and concentrated on sincerity and style.

John Christopher is another with this gift of making something fresh from something well-worn. I hear that two American film (B-type, unfortunately) companies are bidding for the rights of his latest novel, THE POSSESSORS. The story is about a take-over bid for Earth by creatures from space infiltrating into men's minds... Echoes of Wells again: STAR-BEGOTTEN? And hasn't this theme already been tackled successfully in a film: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS?

No matter. Christopher's variation can only be a personal one, pure Christopher, and generate new magic from old ideas.

For there is no new thing under the sun.

William F. Temple

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Prior to publication, Bill sent a carbon of the above article to John Wyndham to vet for any possible inaccuracies or objections. With Bill's permission part of Wyndham's reply appears below:

"It is an excellent article, and I wouldn't change a word of it--except that it is Hants, not Wilts. It is also a most encouraging and consoling article, for which I genuinely thank you.

"I think that by self-plagiarism I really was meaning the tendency to harp too much on the old world-manage: it does become monotonous. Perhaps it was depressing to know that I had landed myself with yet another. In fact, that may be the basis of the whole trouble -- which began, by the way, about a year before I removed here, so that I think that environment has little to do with it. The chief trouble seems to be now that the thing has become a kind of challenge. Several times I have said to hell with it, and started on something else, only to find that I have later drifted back to it with the feeling that I must get rid of it somehow.....I think I see a way now, and shall plod on.

"I was interested in your remarks on origins of ideas -- and, of course, you are perfectly right. Something has to trigger them off. The Wells example from the Bab Ballads is a perfect one. They crop up from the most unexpected places, and from the most improbable seeds, but there does have to be a seed.

"Again, many thanks for sending me a copy of your article. It's a pity it is destined for nothing wider than a fan magazine."

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The Story of th GH

How is it, then, that we have in so many words the two strongest gutturals in the language - g and h - not only separately, in so many of our words, but combined? The story is an odd one. Our Old English or Saxon scribes wrote - not light, might and night, but liht, miht and niht. When, however, they found that the Norman-French gentlemen would not sound the h, and say - as is still said in Scotland - licht, etc., they redoubled the guttural, strengthened the h with a hard g, and again presented the dose to the Norman. But, if the Norman could not sound the h alone, still less could he sound the double guttural; and he very coolly let both alone - ignored both. The Saxon scribe doubled the signs for his guttural, just as a farmer might put up a strong wooden fence in front of a hedge; but the Norman cleared both with perfect ease and indifference. And so it came to pass that we have the symbol gh in more than seventy of our words, and that in most of these we do not sound it at all. The gh remains in our language, like a moss grown boulder, brought down the valley in a glacial period, when gutturals were both spoken and written, and men believed in the truthfulness of letters - but now passed by in silence and noticed by no one.

from The English Language
by J.M.D.Meiklejohn.

ODDS and ENDS

To call the book ((The Small Back Room)) a piece of "pop fiction" derives from a stupid confusion - readable equals non-highbrow equals pop - but its effect is just insulting: and unwarrantable.

Kingsley Amis

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There has to be some kind of strange integrity even in bad taste - there is a good taste of bad taste. I mean there is some bad taste that is good, and some - I don't know what the good taste of bad taste is exactly.....

Susan Sontag

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Can a dead African river-horse be called a hippoposthumous?

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Even if we did nothing to protect ourselves, enemy attacks would be unlikely to kill more than 70% of the American people ((130 million))

General Kent

****

When the U.S. Commissioner of Education was asked about the banning of these two classics ((1984, and Brave New World)) from a Miami high school, he declined to comment because he said he had never heard of either of the books.

Vance Packard-
The Naked Society

****

100,000,000,000 dollars ((U.S. foreign aid since the war)); half a million dollars an hour, all day and all night, for 20 years. Or, if you prefer linear measure, the total in dollar bills would stretch to the moon and back, and there and back again, and there and back again.. 20 times. If there is a greater example of generosity in all the years of all the history of all the peoples of the world, I would like to hear of it. Meanwhile, I can only say that never in the field of human peace have so many given so little thanks so seldom for so much.

Bernard Levin

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How many people (except friends of blind violinists) made love to music before this century.

Katharine Whitehorn

****

The Kwangming Daily, an official Chinese paper, says Beethoven is bad, Debussy is dangerous and Chopin is corrupting. Teachers should put less emphasis on such compositions as Beethoven's sonatas and pay more attention to such "popular" songs of the masses as "Sing the praises of Chairman Mao".

B.U.P.

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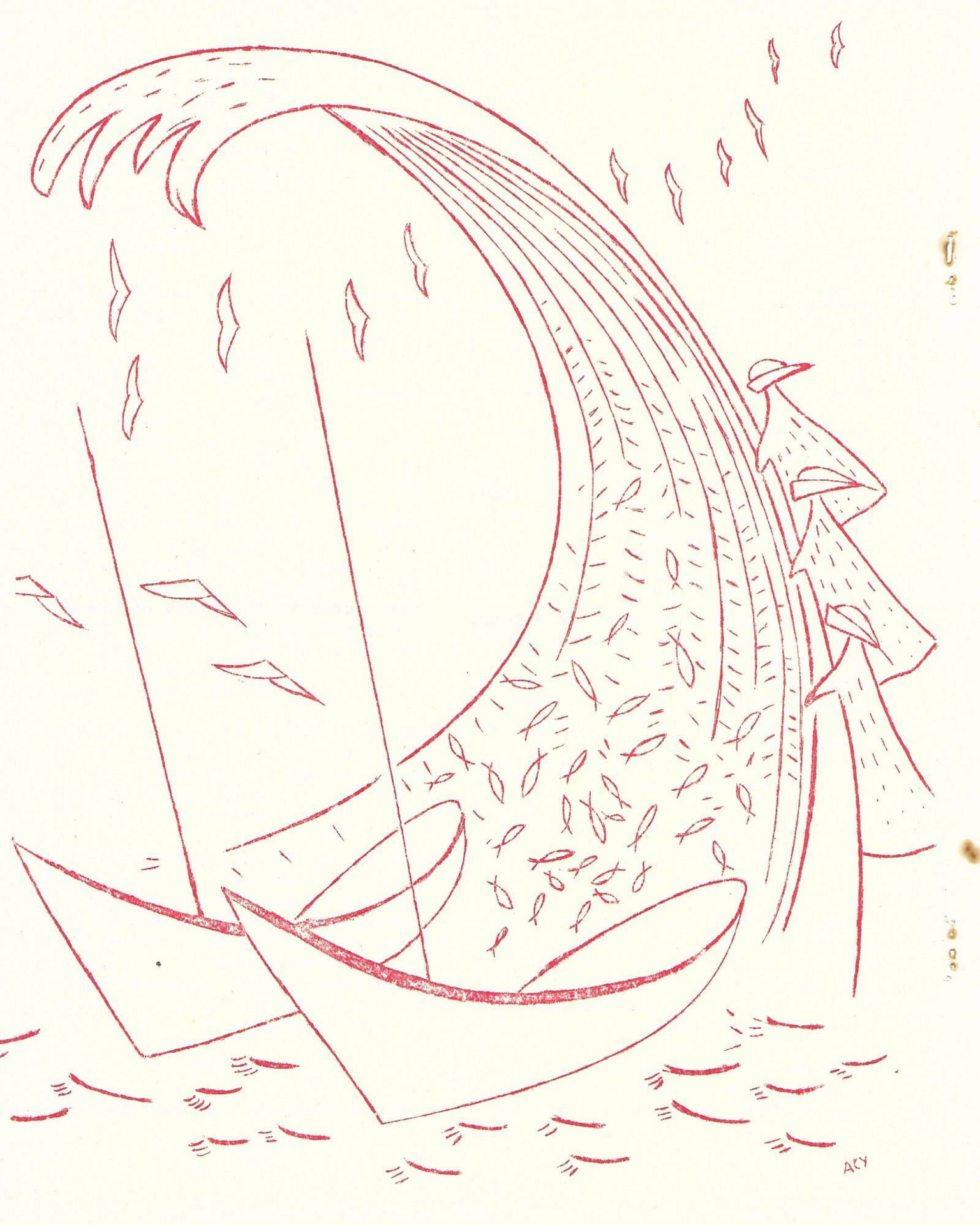
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