

NAMELESS NAJJERINGS

I mourn, I really do. I had gotten very fond of KYBEN's color combination. The purple paper and blue covers were KYBEN, almost as much as I was. Poople always commented on the paper, which surprised me; I didn't know people really cared. (The most recent comment came from Richard Brandt: "You seem to have found the ideal color paper for covers, which beats white by a long streak, and purple paper really accentuates the ink (even if it does look a little like perfumed toilet paper).")

Alas, in Baltimore I can find only one place that sells purple paper--Gestetner. And when Ann came back from Gestetner with two reams of purple paper for last issue @ \$4.08 a ream, I knew a change had to be made. I had been establishing green as PHANTASMICOM's color, but it will have to become KYBEN's now as well. It's the only thing I can get that's at all dark, to cut down on showthrough. While another change might have to be made if this doesn't work out, I can't come up with anything that could go wrong and so green is now official. (While we often changed colors every issue to make PhCOM distinct, I like having the continuity of one color.) (And I had my choice of blue, buff, canary, goldenrod, green and pink @ 2.28 if I buy 10 reams at a time.)

Speaking of green, I tried a reprint experiment and xeroxed some copies of KYBEN 1 out of my sole remaing copy of PHANTASMICOM 8. For those of you who missed that sterling, out-of-print issue, you can now complete your run of KYBEN. (If you already have #3. That's OP and impossible to xerox because of the purple paper it's on.) I only have a dozen or so green readable-but-no-work-of-art copies, available at the single-copy 35¢ price. See what I do for you? Aren't you grateful?



KYBEN 5

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JEFF SMITH

Well, people, the dreams of being attacked by cartons of books are over. I'm no longer packing for Penguin Books. Right after I finished stencilling last issue--before I even started mailing it out--I got a job as a Bioclerk (hmm?) at Catonsville Community College--assistant to the Biology Lab Technician (who is R. Pennington "Bob" Smith, a couple of whose cartoons grace these pages). My knowledge of Biology is not overwhelming (I'm trying to pick that up as I go along) but I was hired mostly for Inventory Control. The Natural Sciences Division has all switched to a computerized inventory--all except Biology. I'll be working the transition and maintaining it afterwards. Again, my knowledge of computers is not overwhelming (though at Penguin I became quite adept at finding and correcting their errors from a human standpoint) but I won't be working directly with them. There's a computer technician downstairs who serves as my input and output unit. So far we just have all the student aides taking a complete physical inventory. Over the next month or so I'll be adapting this to a form suitable for the computer.

If all this sounds dreadfully serious, let me assure you this place is as an asylum. At this writing we have 132 rats awaiting dissection--and when one of them died we tried out our new embalming machine on her. We bought out the science department of a small local catholic girls' college, and had a marvelous time going into hysterics over some of the junk we found ourselves in possession of. It's a madhouse.

I went to school here in 1968-1970 (in *chortle* Business Administration). It's a two-year college, and there are still students here who were here when I was a student. Nice atmosphere, I guess.

Hugos again. Frustration again. Nobody I voted for won. This is coming to be the rule rather than the exception. I am resigned to being completely outside the usual run of fannish tastes. (The way Hugos have been going, this is something to be proud of.) The Hugo is really becoming solidly entrenched as a Popular Award, with "Most Popular" obscuring "Best" right down the line.

To my mind there was one (1) superior novel last year: Bob Silverberg's DYING INSIDE. The other five novels were lumped together as okay but nothing to shout about (except Simak's A CHOICE OF GODS, which bored me so that I couldn't finish it). I've bitched about Asimov's THE GODS THEMSELVES a couple times now; there was never any doubt it would win the Hugo. (I had hopes it might not win the Nebula; no such luck.)

I can't possibly complain about "The Word for World Is Forest" by Ursula K. LeGuin winning the novella award because I honestly could not choose between it, "The Gold at the Starbow's End" by Pohl and "The Fifth Head of Cerberus" by Gene Wolfe. I voted them Pohl, Wolfe, LeGuin not on the merits of the individual stories but on the authors--if I could have voted them all into first place I would have.

I didn't think there were any outstanding novelettes in 1972. I voted for Ellison's "Basilisk" because I was impressed with the control he exercised in turning Vietnam into a myth. Poul Anderson's "Goat Song" won; it was okay, I guess.

There were two superior short stories on the ballot--Tiptree's "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" and Joanna Russ's "When It Changed." "The Meeting" by Pohl & Kornbluth is good but not superior. "Eurema's Dam" is minor Lafferty. The latter two won.

ENERGUMEN beat out LOCUS for Best Fanzine, the real surprise. Congratulations, Mike and Susan! I voted for SF COMMENTARY, with NERG second. I'm far from displeased. Congrats, congrats, indeed.

Pro Artist: I voted diFate first, Freas fifth. The winner: Freas.

Pro Editor: I voted Carr first, Bova fifth. The winner: Bova.

I didn't vote on Dramatic Presentation.

In the Fan People categories, my second-place people (Torry Carr and Tim Kirk) won. My first-place people (Dick Geis and Bill Rotsler) lost. Terry's was well-deserved. Tim's is always deserved, but... (There will be no Phantasmicom Award for Bill Rotsler this year, thank you.)

And the John W. Campbell New Writer Award went, not to Piglet, but to Jerry Pournelle. Jerry Pournelle? The only thing I read by him--"The Mercenary"--was as boring as the Simak novel. Pournelle may have been a Campbell writer, but that doesn't make him "best."

Is there no hope for us? Are we to be forever saddled with a popularity contest? I suppose so. If I can ever convince myself that that's all it ever will be I'll be much happier, and I'll be able to accept in and enjoy it in the same spirit as the Top 40--I

am interested in what other people like; but what I like and dislike and what is good and bad do not always match. I realize that. I feel a lot of people don't.

Actually, that part doesn't bother me as much as the other:
Voting for Isaac Asimov rather than THE GODS THEMSELVES. (Before
you call me on that for my voting in the novella category, reread my
explanation.) Bummer, bummer. Mumble, mumble.

Ah well, next year when all my choices win I'll probably feel it's a great system. I'm not hard to please.

The telephone rings.
Jeff answers. --Hello.
Faint voice heard behind dial tone.
--I can't hear you.
--I think I have the wrong number. *click*
brrng
--Hello.
Faint voice heard behind dial tone.
--I can't hear you.
--Is this 644-2272?
--No, ma'am, this is 525-0191.
--I was trying for 644-2272.
Sorry. *click*
brrng
--Hello.
Faint voice heard behind dial tone.
--This is still 525-0191.
--Why can't I get 644-2272? I'm going to call the operator.
click
brrng
--Hello.
--Is this 644-2272?
--No, operator, this is 525-0191.
--Your lines must be crossed.
I'll report it for you.
--Thank you. *click*
brrng
--Hello.
--Ethel?
--No, ma'am, her line and mine are crossed. You can't reach her.
Faint voice heard behind dial tone.
--I can't hear you.
--Is this 644-2272?
--No, ma'am.
THIS IS A RECORDING PLEASE HANG UP AND TRY YOUR CALL AGAIN. IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE, PLEASE DIAL

THE OPERATOR. PLEASE HANG UP
NOW. THANK YOU.
click
--Shit. She's going to call
again.
brrng
--Hello.
--Is this 644-2272?
--No, ma'am. I tried to tell
you before--
click
brrng
--Hello.
click
--I'm going to see if we can call
out.
--Who're you going to call?
--My parents.
bzzzzliklikliklikliklikliklikliklik
ssssssssliklikliklikssssliklikli
ikliksssslikliklikliklikliklikli
kliksssssssslikliklikliksssslik
liklikliklikliklikliklikssssssss
sliklikliklikliklikliklikssssssss
s*brrng*
--Hello. ((As always, faintly be-
hind the sound of a dial tone.))
--Hi, Randy?
--Jeff?
--I can't hear you too well.
--I hear you okay. Want me to
call you back?
--Yes, please. *click*
brrng
--Hello.
--What's up?
--My phone isn't working. Every-
body who tries to call 644-
2272 gets us.
--Is that why you called?
--Yeah. I just wanted to know if
THIS IS A RECORDING. PLEASE HANG
UP AND TRY YOUR CALL AGAIN. IF
I can, but it's useless. I can't



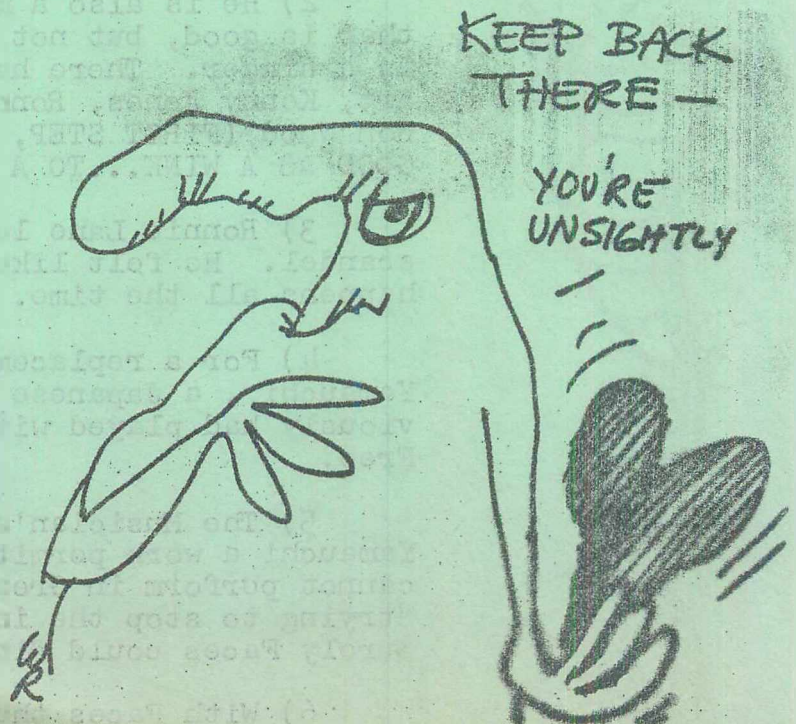
YOU NEED ASSISTANCE, PLEASE DIAL
hear you because of the extra
THE OPERATOR. PLEASE HANG UP NOW.
dial tone I've always got and
THANK YOU.
we get cut off after fifteen
seconds. I'll talk to you later.
--Bye. *click*
brrng
--Hello.
--Hi.
--Oh, hi, Mom. I really can't
talk. My phone's not working
and we're gonna be cut off.
--Why'd you call?
--I can't hear you. You're being
drowned out by a dial tone.
--Why'd you call?
--To see if the phone was working.
blip
--Hey, we weren't cut off this
time. Maybe we can talk for a
bit if you speak up.
--You know we're going on vaca-
tion tomorrow, don't you.
--No, I didn't.
--Well, you knew we were *blip*
going to Wildwood.
--I didn't know it was tomorrow.
--Well, I haven't talked to you
all week.
--I would have stopped by, but
the car was in the shop.
--What was wrong with it?
--I ran it into a guard rail.
--You did *blip* what?
--Saturday I was going up to the
school, and I skidded in the
rain and got caught in the
guard rail. Took about half an
hour to get loose, and four

people to help.

--Were you hurt?
--Hmm? No. I wasn't going too
fast. But the car was really
stuck. Right away *blip* a
truck came up the bollogo
driveway behind me and I
thought they were going to
help, but they just wanted to
know if they were in Silver
Spring.
--Silver Spring?
--I told them they were about
forty miles off, so they got
back in the truck and drove
away. But two other cars stop-
ped, and then a police car,
and we worked it free.
--Bad damage?
--\$175 worth. *blip*
--That's nice. Where'd you get
the money?
--We had it.
--Well, how's your job?
--Great. Much better than Pen-
guin. The student aides are
taking the physical inventory
of all the labs, and then I'll
rewrite them for the computer
so theoretically we'll always
know where everything is.
--You *blip* like it then.
--Oh, yeah. I--
ssssssssliklikliklikliklikssss
liklikliklikssssliklikliklik
==What's going on here? ((nasty))
--Hi. Are you 644-2272?
==I am. Who are you? ((nastier))
--Have you gotten any calls at
all this evening?
==No I haven't. ((nasty))
--Well, it's not for lack of try-
ing. Lots of people have tried,
but they all got me.
==Who are you? ((nasty))
--I've reported it and I hope
it's fixed tomorrow.
THIS IS A RECORDING. PLEASE HANG
click ((nasty))
UP AND TRY YOUR CALL AGAIN. IF
--Bye, Mom. I'll talk to you la-
YOU NEED ASSISTANCE PLEASE DIAL
ter. Have a good trip. *click*
brrng
--Hello.
--Ethel?
--No, ma'am. Her line and mine
are crossed. You can't reach
her until--
click

brrng
 --Hello.
 --Ethel?
 --No, ma'am.
 click
 brrng
 --Hello.
 --Is this 644-2272?
 --No, ma'am. This is 525-0191.
 --Your lines must be crossed.
 --Another operator already reported it.
 --Fine. Thank you. *click*
 --I wonder if we can have this disconnected until it's fixed?
 --I don't know. Why don't you call an operator and see?
 bzzzlikliklikliklikliklikliklikliklikssssssssss*brrng*
 --Operator. May I help you?
 --Can I have my phone disconnected tonight?
 --It can be done when the business office opens Monday morning.
 --I wanted it now. My phone's crossed with another and I'm getting all her calls.
 --All I can suggest is that you take the phone off the hook.
 --Then it goes *beepbeepbeep* quite loudly.
 --Try smothering it with a pillow.

--Thank you. *click*
 --I'm going to take a shower. While in the shower Jeff hears a bell ring every thirty seconds or so. While drying himself he asks:
 --Was that the phone?
 --Yeah. Ellie called, and every time we got the recording we hung up and she called again. But we had to stop because her finger got sore from dialing.
 --So why didn't she invest in a push-button?
 --Same reason we didn't. Every penny counts.
 brrng
 --Hello.
 --Ethel?
 --I told you before--
 click
 --What did the operator say about disconnecting the phone?
 --She said take it off the hook and smother it under a pillow.
 --You want to?
 brrng
 --Hello.
 click
 --I get awfully tempted, but I'm not sure. I hate cutting myself off that way. If something important should come up no one could get hold of us.



--We could stay busy in a way
that would keep us from an-
swering the phone anyway.
--True, but still...

brrng
--Hello.
--Ethel?
--Ann, get me a pillow!

ROLLING STONE 144 (and why they didn't do a Special Gross Issue I'll
never know)

Among the minor items leading up to the 21-page Thompson/Stead-
man "Fear and Loathing at the Watergate" (maybe they did do a Special
Gross Issue) (actually Hunter S. Thompson seems much saner here than
in his last appearance) is an item that deserves an Honorable Men-
tion in this year's Big Rip-Off Contest. The ripper-offer is the
oh-so-liberal British Musician's Union, which apparently holds a
great deal of power over there and is liable to drive a lot of Bri-
tish musicians out of Britain. The first time I heard of them was
when they were considering banning the mellotron because it had the
capability to put all the island's violinists out of work. (That's
a slightly paranoid reaction.)

Now they have effectively ended Rod Stewart's solo career, un-
less someone undergoes a change of heart.

The basic situations are these, stated as
simply as a Rod Stewart fan can:

1) Rod Stewart is a rock singer with a
wrecked voice but a marvelous style, the best
singer--as opposed to vocalist--in rock. To
date he has released four albums (THE ROD STEWART
ALBUM, GASOLINE ALLEY, EVERY PICTURE TELLS A
STORY and NEVER A DULL MOMENT) and a "Best of"
collection (SING IT AGAIN, ROD).

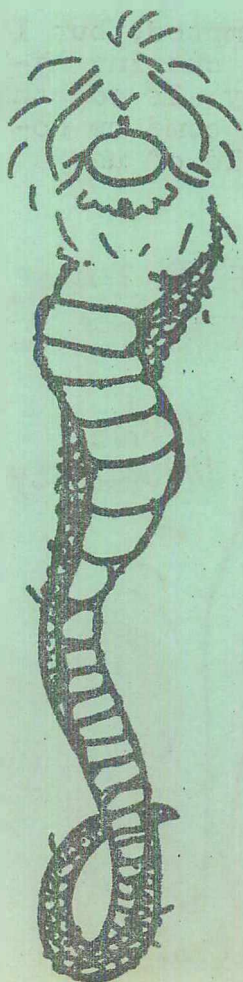
2) He is also a member of Faces, a rock group
that is good, but not as good a group as Stewart
is a singer. There have been four albums by Stew-
art, Kenny Jones, Ronnie Lane, Ian MacLagen and
Ron Wood (FIRST STEP, LONG PLAYER, A NOD IS AS
GOOD AS A WINK...TO A BLIND HORSE and OOH LA LA).

3) Ronnie Lane left Faces. No trauma, no
scandal. He felt like doing something else. It
happens all the time.

4) For a replacement, Faces took on Tetsu
Yamauchi, a Japanese who for three years pre-
viously had played with a British group called
Free.

5) The Musician's Union has now refused
Yamauchi a work permit; he and therefore Faces
cannot perform in Great Britain. The Union is
"trying to stop the influx of foreign musicians."
Surely Faces could find a British replacement!

6) With Faces thus at a crisis point, Stewart



has announced the termination of his solo career to help keep Faces from dying as a band. They can still perform just about anywhere else in the world they want to (so long as they don't stay in a Holiday Inn; they're banned from them), and they intend to.

This is presented here not as a mere grouse; I'm very unhappy at the loss of future Rod Stewart solo albums, but I'm even unhappier at the overview. For one thing, this is more power than any union should be allowed to possess. When four people say that of all the people in the world, this is the one we want to work with us, what right has a union to say they can't work with him because (and only because) he's a foreigner?

I confess to knowing only a bit about American unions, and nothing about British ones. I suspect a difference between the socialist base there and the capitalist base here may affect the operation of the unions. But it's damned silly! This man has lived in England for three years or so. All of a sudden it's no longer his home?

Even worse, this is another example of the distressing, omnipresent nationalism that is cropping up everywhere. America has most of it; we have so many problems that the new ones of Watergate and the recession are tipping us over the edge. To justify living in the country we have to protest too much; we are always on the defensive. THIS is good about America and THIS is good and THIS and THIS. We can't admit to anything new because too much is already known.

Russia is having a bad time of it. There is just beginning to be some real, vocal dissent in the USSR. This is a very bad time for them. Their stance has always been Russia Is Good. They have no history of owning up to their mistakes. There is no Free Speech as there is in America; we always have to own up to our mistakes, because everyone is free to point them out. If Free Speech were to suddenly emerge in Russia, there would be years and long, long years of catching up to do. I don't think the country's pride could withstand such an onslaught of abuse. So instead there will probably be another big clampdown, and the Russian people will suffer again.

Short-term: There may be only one more Rod Stewart album.

Long-term: The major governments of the world are all at or near crisis points. Look at the four nuclear powers: America is no longer Number One, the last ten years having been rather dumb ones for it (not corrupt, just dumb); Russia is damned if it frees its people, damned if it represses them; China has suddenly rejoined the world, and it's too early yet to really tell what the culture shock might do; and France has alienated the entire world with its nuclear tests. In simpler times this might have meant World War III, but the risks are too great today.

If there were no nuclear weapons, widespread battle might well break out. But not because any one country is really war-mad at another. Every major power is internally upset in one form or another, and aggression would be merely a release. Today it's a release that can't be afforded.

Yet some release is necessary. Emotions are too high. Some-

thing will have to give.

I step out on no more limbs this evening.

The best juxtaposition of radio ads I've heard in a long time:

1 -- "You can get everything for the perfect night at *****.
Think how impressed she'll be when she sees your pad, with the
new waterbed and the fur-lined blanket you picked out yourself.
Sit back and enjoy your pipe when you give her the silver bracelet
she so richly deserves. Everything for the perfect evening."

2 -- "Ladies, for abortion referral call..."

Last issue I started, just for the hell of it, to publish
some story fragments of mine. It wasn't supposed to be anything
much, just publishing old story fragments. No redeeming social
value.

Here's a piece of a letter from Darrell Schweitzer:

"Yr chapter fragment for your unwritten novel on p. 15 is too
brief to say much about. The grammar is correct, the sentences all
make sense, but there isn't even a trace of a storyline yet, and
only a hint of a character. You really shouldn't have stopped here.
You said you typed to nowhere, but if you'd kept on going you would
have gotten to somewhere eventually, even if it was only to the
realisation that the first 10 pages were extraneous & the story
really started on p 11. ((More likely the realization that I'd
typed to nowhere again.))

"Try chaining yourself to the typewriter for once, and make
someone promise not to feed you or let you go until you have writ-
ten something. Or you might try the official Clarion recipe (sp?)
for curing Writer's Block:

50 ml orange juice
50 ml vodka
50 ml milk of magnesia

"Personally, I never tried it because I never needed it ((try
kapectate, maybe?)), but it seems to me you could use a strong
dose. Remember, writing is something you do, not something you
talk about doing."

You wrong me, Darrell. I don't talk about my writing. (For
one thing there isn't too much to say.) I write. Very. Slowly.
I doubt that more than two paragraphs of Jeff-Smith-talking-about-
his-writing have ever been published in fanzines. I was a produc-
tive writer five years ago. Now I am not. I write very little,
though I'm working a lot out in my head. I'm becoming quite a per-
fectionist in my thinking, and while I'm working on several ideas
I'm not satisfied with any of them at this point. I don't want to

put anything down on paper until I'm satisfied with it in my head. I will obviously never be a full-time writer. (I'm an editor, anyway. Writing is a sideline. Unfortunately, there aren't too many editing jobs in Baltimore, and I like it here.)

As I said, I was productive five years ago, but I had very little to say. Now I've opened my eyes to the world and started seeing what's going on. It takes a while to catch up to any sort of reasonable level. If I do manage to produce again the results will be quite different from the old stuff, manifested here in the fragments I've started printing. (Darrell's letter and my reply replaced this issue's stellar piece.)

Darrell, what you are writing is what I was writing back then--stories about what you've read. Perhaps someday you will achieve a transition from writing about what you read to writing about what you see. It may be a smooth transition for you, or it may be that you will have to stop writing for a while and start again after a period of time. But if you want to be more than a hack, it is a transition you will have to make.

A paragraph from a letter from Don Keller:

Yale Eidekin, a friend of Gardner's ((Dozois)), was down from Chicago at the PSFS meeting, so afterwards a few of us went back to Gardner's place and sat up till 3 AM, mostly listening to Gardner's incredible stories about Milford, and Steve Herbst's driving and... best of all...on the way back from Torcon, the Haldebus ((Jay and Alice Haldeman's VW bus)) stopped at a place to eat and bought these things called Texas Redhots, hotdogs with moldy chili on them. Hungry as they were, they found them literally inedible, so they left them in the shoebox they came in. When they got to Jay's parents' place in Terrytown, they went inside to sleep, bringing the shoebox with them. Upon their arising in the morning, Jay's father said, "I don't know what was in that shoebox, but I opened it up and there was something dead in there, so I took it out and buried it in the back yard." (That leaves me weak with laughter every time I think about it.)

Last stencil being typed 24 September 1973.

Last issue we covered my first car trip to Washington DC. The other day I did it again. Bruce Gillespie is here in town, staying with the Zelaznys. (He plans to be gone from Australia four months.) While he was staying in Baltimore, he was more interested in seeing Washington. One day Judy Zelazny took him down, but she had trouble getting to Georgetown; no could do. So on Saturday I volunteered to help him find Georgetown. The two of us. And he knew about as much about DC as I.

Well, as soon as we hit Washington we were spun out into Silver Spring again. But we got back in and found Georgetown. Coming out was hysterical; we couldn't stay on the same road for anything. I will always treasure the memory of Bruce gazing desperately at the map and saying, "We still have a slight chance..." Pax.



Theta Worship in Private Catholic High-Schools - or - How to Breed Another

Aleister Crowley.

Being



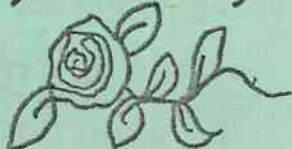
A Factual Study of Strange and Bizarre Rituals
and **JAGAN CULTS**¹
That

Exist Today Right Under Your Very Nose in
The Most Respected Institutions² and
Among the Highest Classes of Society

by

Darrell Schweitzer,³ Esq.

U2, PhD, Lsd, Ac, Dc, and
Dr. of Bill Sht



DOMINIC COFFISKEH

MARCH 79

This is something of a sequel to my previous article.⁴ Basically, I noticed one day as I read through it for the multillionth time that there was a monstrous omission. One of the strangest aspects of Devon Prep hadn't even been touched upon!⁵ Somehow I had neglected to mention the rather unusual form of religious belief that grew up there, especially among the members of the senior class: Theta worship.

Now ordinarily a Theta is a Greek letter, and is best approximated on a typewriter like this: Θ. But in this particular case it became something far more significant, and perhaps (dare I say it) sinister. You see, the certain priest I mentioned last time, the one who spoke the thirty languages and taught all those science courses was obsessed with the letter theta.⁶ I had him for geometry and trigonometry, and soon noticed that when he did a problem on the board, there was always an angle theta. Theta was rammed down our throats until several students complained of persistent nightmares in which they were assaulted by a gigantic theta bent on castrating them with an omega.

The priest became known as Captain Theta,⁷ and one of the things that got the administration so mad about a certain issue of the school paper was a photo of the school superhero, Devon Man, with a caption that read, "Devon Man takes off to do battle with Captain Theta and his forces of darkness."⁸ Since the good Captain (who more respectfully should have been called Father Theta, but never was) was the homeroom teacher of my section, we soon adopted the theta as an insignia. In the intramural football championship our team had huge yellow thetas outlined in black painted on their shirts (at least one had it on the seat of his pants, too)⁹ and as waterboy I wore a monstrously oversized pair of overalls with a golden theta (luminous paint, even) on the back, running from shoulderblades to just above the waist. There was also a theta flag which was hung from one of the goal posts afterwards. (We won, because our hearts were pure and our minds clean, and a couple of our players were built like gorillas.)

Now that in itself is not in any way harmful. But alas, these kids, being aristocracy, and used to cars, money, orgies, fox hunting (several owned horses) and high quality education, didn't know where to stop. They took it utterly too far. I don't suppose anyone realised it until it was too late to do anything.

They began the tiny conclave that will ultimately burst on the unsuspecting world as the First Church of Theta.¹⁰ It all started one fine day during the lunch period. The cafeteria was located in the part of the school that was once a mansion, so it was two converted rooms rather than something built for that purpose. There were two wings with a connecting hallway, and since order was kept¹¹ by one member of the faculty only, he would move from one section to another and back, always leaving one unguarded, which would then commence with some illegal activity or other. Seldom anything significant, for if you understand the psychology of highschool students, you'll realize that they do ill deeds simply because they're there.

Well, one day something beyond the customary exchange of aerial projectiles occurred. The class goon made a silver theta out of some silver paper and wire (perhaps eight inches long when finished) and held it up over his head in a parody of the consecration of the Mass. The result was immediate. All the seniors, and soon everyone else, bowed down in Muslim fashion, arms outstretched, and did homage, chanting "Theta...Theta...Theta...."¹³

The sacred silver Theta was held so that all could see, and the ceremony repeated several times, until the teacher came back and things took on a more normal aspect.

The cult grew. Theta worshipping sessions popped up in several classes, whenever an incompetent teacher was present. The sacred symbol was found written on blackboards, walls, johns, school busses, students.¹⁴ This terrible pagan ritual took firm hold and previously good kids lost their respectable Christian Faith and plunged into the depths of depravity and grovelled madly before the awesome Theta.¹⁵ Their souls were lost, for even though they ceased to believe in God and especially in Hell, God and Hell continued to believe in them, which was all that mattered.

Like any new religion, the Theta sect had its share of miracles. One cure I remember especially well. Some kid was brought before the High Priest of Theta (formerly class goon, maker of the Sacred Theta), all hunched up and trembling most pitifully. I don't know what was wrong with him, but the poor soul certainly needed curing.

He was dumped on the floor at the feet of the High Priest.

"Do you believe in the sacred power of the Almighty Theta?"

"Oh, Ah BELIEVE! AH BELIEVE!! Oh cure me High Priest of Theta!"

"And do you believe in the healing magic of the High Priest of Theta?"

"AH BELIEVE!!! AH B*E*L*I*E*V*E!!!!!!!!!"

"And do you accept the Holy Theta above all others, as the infallible guide to life and the pursuit of happiness, especially the pursuit of happiness? (*pant pant heh heh*)"

"AH DO!! AH DO!! AH BELIEVE IT ALL!! Cure me mighty Theta!"

"And do you renounce Alpha and Omega and Phi and Rho and the other demons and do you reject their foul works?"

"AH DO! AH DO!"

"Very well, your sins have saved you."

The afflicted was then touched on the forehead with the Silver Theta and cured immediately.

That was only the first of many signs and wonders. Other unfortunates were cured of their ills, and miracles of all sorts became as common as fruit pies in those days. But...THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS A FREE MIRACLE (TANSTAAFM) so sacrifices had to be made to Theta. First it was such dubious items as used orange peels, but when the god became angry things of greater value were used. Pennies, old test papers, bottle caps, a tie swiped from some protesting unfortunate (formal dress code, you see) and ultimately human sacrifice came to be practised. A couple of freshmen vanished mysteriously¹⁶ and were never seen again. This went on for quite a while, until the cult was dealt a blow which caused serious setbacks, thus granting the world a brief reprieve. At least enough time for me to write this.¹⁷

Vividly I remember the climactic sacrifice. There was this kid most people liked to pick on, so he was a natural offering. Yup, he was grabbed by the cultists and sacrificed--almost, anyway.

I had fallen under the evil spell myself, and was a participant. I was assigned to hold the brazier of the Holy Incense (a paper cup containing some fresh cigarette butts) and thus witnessed the entire thing. The wretched fellow was stretched out on two desks, held by arms and legs. The high Priest made mysterious gestures over him with the Silver Theta, while the Assistant High Priest (as the religion became institutionalised, the clergy expanded) held the instrument of sacrifice, an empty bic pen. The Theta was held on high, while the frenzied worshippers bowed down in adoration, chanting the sacred name of Theta (except me--it's sacriligious to bow down while holding the Holy Incense), the pen rising up and hovering over the victim's heart, when alluvasudden the Headmaster burst in.

"What the heck it is?"¹⁸ (Remember, he's Hungarian.)

Panic, Chaos, Terror. Quickly I tossed the incense out the window, lest it fall into the hands of the infidels and be defiled; and all all leapt to their feet, whilst the High Priest tried to come up with a good cover story. He was spinning a pretty respectable line of bull¹⁹ when suddenly a strange and terrible thing happened, which has forever impressed itself on the hearts and minds of the faithful.

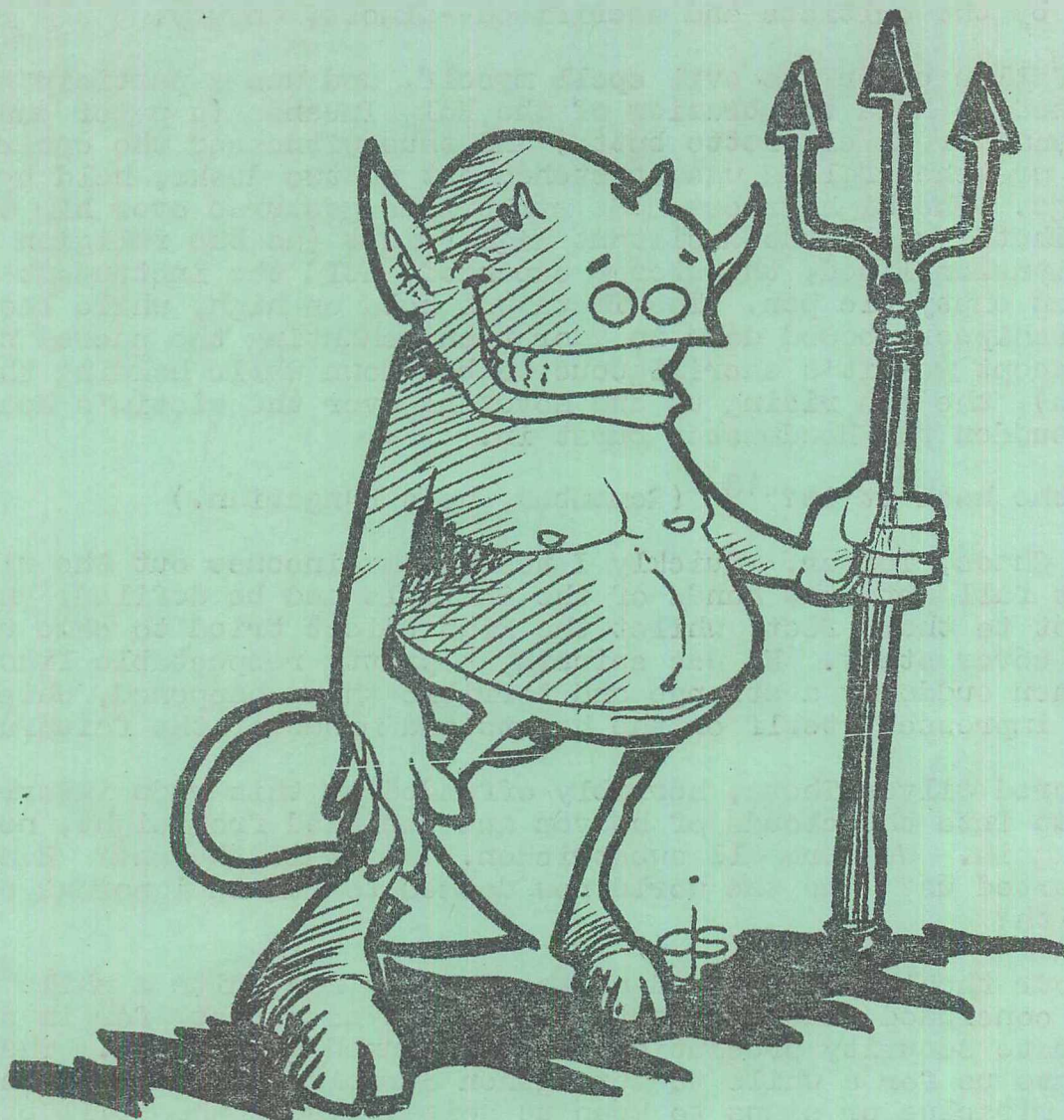
The Sacred Silver Theta, horribly offended by this rude interruption, rose up into the clouds of heaven and vanished from sight, never to be seen again. We were all awestricken. Was this the end? Had our god deserted us? Was the world now doomed to remain ignorant of the true faith?

Well, our theologians worked on the problem for quite a while²⁰ and finally concluded that the Theta meant this as a test, for in not taking adequate security precautions we had sinned grievously. Thus it would leave us for a while to strengthen ourselves by faith alone, without any miracles or signs to keep us going. Those who still believed would be saved, and those who didn't would flunk trig.

And one day, a day which no man can know in advance, Theta will come again, revealed in his true glory and accompanied by his legions of scalene, isosceles and equilateral triangles, and men will be redeemed and the faithful rewarded, and all the evils and every sort of folly will perish at the coming of this Theta; true righteousness will be restored, and the minds of men will be made clear as crystal.

This then is the cult of Theta, and as the proponents graduated and spread among the colleges of the country, the belief in the god also spread, and in time all other religions will fall by the wayside. The minds of men will be changed, and they will worship before the sign of the Theta and anxiously await the Second Coming. (If they don't, ve haf ways...) Once exposed to it no one will be able to resist. I have been caught up in it totally myself. My life, my friends, even my fanzine writing mean little now. All is Theta! You are Theta! I am Theta! The world is Theta!²²

I await the second coming and my soul is assured. And I, being one of the original apostles, must go forth and teach the faith of Theta to the masses. I think I'll start right here:



THETA BECKONS.....

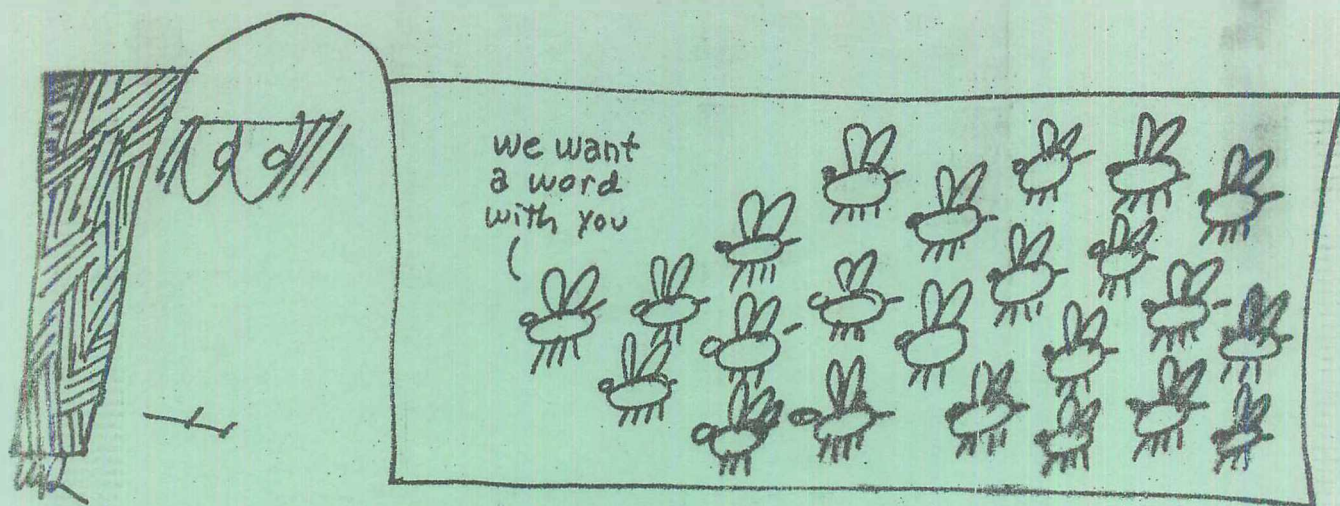
No End

23

Yo Footenotes

1. cf Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough (Macmillan 1952), p. 348.
2. Ibid.
3. Op cit.
4. No, but his sister was rather upset.
5. See Sigmund Freud, The Cigar as a Phallic Extension and Other Things My Mommy Never Told Me (Doubleday Psy Fi, 1932), p. 3.
6. Cit op you ninny!
7. Ibidem ibidem ibidem ribbitt...
8. H.P. Lovecraft, The Supernatural Horror in Literature, ch. 3.
9. He had a doorknob fetish.
10. Cotton Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World (Ballantine Adult Fantasy, 1972), p. 345.

11. Ha!
13. Don't say I didn't warn you.
14. Sam Moskowitz, The Immortal Storm, p. 35.
15. The King in Yellow, Act 2 scene i.
16. What the murderer failed to realize was that bowling balls do not dissolve well in dogshit.
17. cf. Leland Sapiro, "Eschatological Erotic Symbolism in the Oeuvre of Capt. S.P. Meek, USA and the Men's Room Grafitti of Charles Willard Diffin," RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY (Vol 5, N 5), pp. 32-33.
18. John Campbell made a similar remark in an editorial once.
19. Ruptured? Well, try our wonderful now stainless steel truss/chastity belt. Not only does it mend the hurt, but it also removes the temptation to do it again.
20. cf op cit ibid ibidem Cthulhu R'Lyeh ftaghn
21. One swig in the morning before retiring should do it.
22. Our theologians, Theta be praised, have concluded that there is at least one Greek letter in each of us, located in or around the bladder. You are a temple of the Holy Thota, ain't you glad?
23. cf Yahweh, The Old Testament.



The long, critical book reviews of PHANTASMICOM seem a bit out of place here in KYBEN, but I thought short impressions of the books I read might fit in. I noticed as I wrote them they seemed to get longer...but I'll try to keep it simple. These won't appear in every issue: space here is limited, and anyway I don't always read as much as I have been lately. And I'll call them what Dave Hulvey always called our regular book reviews:

BOOK REPORTS/gD Smith

- 8/3 THE LAST UNICORN/Peter S. Beagle/Ballantine -- I finally got this read; the paperback was published in February 1969, and has been sitting on my shelf since then. It's a good book, though. There are some nice bits through the first half, and the second half is great. This is epic fantasy (even though the hero is Schmendrick the Magician) and shows how weak in imagination all the blood&guts sword&magic novels are. This book, the story of the last unicorn trying to find her fellows, is very rich. There is an odd sort of fatalism to it, in that the situations are such that no "happy endings" are possible, yet I got the feeling when I read it that everything turned out as best as it could. A good book, but I preferred his first novel, A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE.
- 8/5 LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE DEAF MAN/Ed McBain/Doubleday -- I've been reading mostly mysteries lately, enjoying myself immensely. I like police procedurals probably best, and "McBain"'s (he's really Evan Hunter, whose LAST SUMMER is one of my favorite novels) 87th Precinct series is a lot of fun--if you don't try to read half a dozen in a row. The books generally concern themselves with three cases the Precinct is working on simultaneously. In this book they have an unidentified man nailed to a tenement wall; a cat burglar who leaves a calling card (a live kitten) but no clues; and their old nemesis the Deaf Man, who, like a comic-book villain, sends them clues pertaining to his next crime. There is a large dash of humor, but it isn't really a comedy series.
- 8/7 REBECCA/Daphne du Maurier/Doubleday -- I would never have just

picked this book up and read it on my own. But through the last couple months I've been reading the Haycraft/Beecroft TREASURY OF GREAT MYSTERIES (the model for Anthony Boucher's TREASURY OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION) and "Rebecca" happened to be the finale. So I took a deep breath and started it. And I enjoyed it tremendously! It's really an exciting book, a grabber that I kept reading and reading. I don't expect to turn into a du Maurier fan, but I did like this one. ## The psychological mystery is a tough genre, because events must be revealed out of sequence (where's the mystery otherwise?) and everything must be consistent when the pieces are juggled around. The final piece in the REBECCA puzzle gorgeously ties together all the truths and lies in the rest of the book, consistent to both. It's called a classic, deservedly.

8/8 THE MAN ON THE BALCONY/Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö/Panthoon -- The Martin Beck series by this Swedish husband/wife team has been acclaimed the best series of police procedurals available. The premise is interesting: if you keep all your mental and physical senses operating, you'll "luck" into your solution. There isn't much in the way of brilliant deduction, just observation and memory. Beck (he is never called "Beck" by the authors; always "Martin Beck") is a dull character, deliberately colorless. This is just the second novel (ROSEANNA was first) --perhaps as time goes on we get to know him better. The first two books were certainly good enough for me to follow up on the rest.

8/9 TEN THOUSAND LIGHT-YEARS FROM HOME/James Tiptree, Jr./Ace -- A kind of mucked this collection up. The cover painting and front and back cover graphics are excellent, but the inside of the book is a mess. There is no table of contents. Each new story begins a couple lines from where the last one stops. The story titles are in capital letters (when they remembered), and to add to the confusion some of the stories have lines of upper-case type so they look like new stories. Typos abound. ## But the stories are what's important. This is not THE BEST OF TIPTREE, but it does have a lot of his best stuff, as well as a lot of fairly light material. "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" is here, my favorite. I also like "The Man Who Walked Home" and "Forever to a Hudson Bay Blanket," fairly sentimental pieces (particularly the latter); the humor of "The Man Doors Said Hello To" and "Birth of a Salesman"; lots more. But even in the lesser stories, like "Help" and "Mother in the Sky with Diamonds," there is enough good writing to keep things interesting.

8/9 WAX APPLE/Tucker Coe/Random House -- The Mitch Tobin mysteries are quite good, one of my favorite series. Tobin was a cop, but was kicked off the force when his partner was killed--instead of being there to back him up, Tobin was in bed with a woman not his wife. To keep his mind off his guilt and self-pity--and also as a manifestation of it--he spends all his time building a wall to enclose his back yard. He builds slowly and methodically; he's not interested in enclosing his back yard, only in building the wall. But occasionally, for money and other reasons, he leaves his house, ventures into the world, and becomes involved in murder. In WAX APPLE he becomes a bogus resident at a halfway house for former mental patients, trying to find the person who has been setting potentially lethal "acci-

dents" in the building. "Tucker Coe" is the pseudonym of one of my favorite writers, Donald E. Westlake. (This was a very well-kept secret for a while, and still is not generally acknowledged, but Random House let it slip on the copyright page of the latest book, DON'T LIE TO ME. I don't imagine Westlake was too happy about it.)

8/14 THE MAN WHO WENT UP IN SMOKE/Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö/Pantheon --In some ways this is the best of the first three Martin Beck mysteries. Beck is more personally involved in this case (a Swedish journalist went to Budapest and disappeared), and the slowly-developing portrait of his character is advanced quite well. However, when he suddenly started investigating all Alf Matsson's friends at once, three-quarters of the way through the book, I got lost. Well, on to THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN...

8/17 THE CRYSTAL CAVE/Mary Stewart/Fawcett -- I certainly am glad I finally got around to reading this; it has to be the finest fantasy since Tolkien. It is the first part of the autobiography of Merlin, from his childhood to the conception of Arthur. I can unhesitatingly recommend this book to just about everyone. If you don't like fantasy, you can read it as a historical novel. (The history is dubious; no-one really knows what England was like in the fifth century. But the book has the flavor of a historical novel.) If reading about magic annoys you, well, that part is underplayed. Magic is not a cure-all; it is something Merlin has which surfaces only occasionally, not in his control. If you dislike the pseudo-archaic style which most fantasy affects, you will be pleased to note that this book is written very simply, with a minimum of affectations of any sort. The characters are well-drawn, most of them either likable or admirable (and many both). The plot-line is strong, tying together many diverse strings. I was impressed by the sheer story-telling ability Ms. Stewart controls, and look forward to reading the sequel, THE HOLLOW HILLS. But first I have to whip through a book I owe the library.

8/18 GANGWAY!/Donald E. Westlake and Brian Garfield/Evans -- A new Westlake novel is one of my great thrills as a reader. Since 1965 he has written a dozen or so very funny books, from THE FUGITIVE PIGEON to THE HOT ROCK and BANK SHOT. But lately he has been saying he wants to do different things. He began writing hard-boiled detective stories, and has returned to mysteries lately as "Tucker Coe." He wrote a more serious Big Steal novel, COPS AND ROBBERS, and a non-fiction book--I believe about an island revolution. GANGWAY! is another comedy, and not one of the better ones. The first half of the book is slow, without being rich enough to be interesting slow. (Garfield should have been able to do that, but he is totally invisible throughout; while I'm sure he supplied the nicely detailed setting of San Francisco in 1874, the characters, plot and writing all sound Westlakish. Garfield must have done more, but I don't know what.) In the first half Gabe Beauchamps wanders around San Francisco after being thrown out of New York, planning to rob the SF mint. The second half, the caper, is as funny as it should be--with, as usual, the one small scene Westlake always buries to send me into hysterics. But if you've never read any Westlake, start with THE HOT ROCK.

8/24 THE HOLLOW HILLS/Mary Stewart/Morrow -- This one drags a little

from time to time, but again a really powerful story. The power struggles in the end were especially fascinating--in fact, the politics throughout were the most interesting parts of the novel. Ms. Stewart had to redo much more of the legends this time than last--partially perhaps to avoid rewriting T.H. White's THE SWORD IN THE STONE. I was disappointed that we saw little of Merlin's life overseas during Arthur's infancy, but my only real complaint with the book is that the era is painted clean, without the misery and suffering that must have been a part of the everyday life there. In this respect it approaches fantasy rather than history, I think. The times come across rather as Walt Disney pictured them in his SWORD IN THE STONE: bright and colorful. The only darkness is in Merlin's forebodings. ## But really, fine books all told. I'm glad I read them and I hope there's a third book to go to Merlin's "death."

8/25 AN EXALTATION OF STARS/edited by Terry Carr/Simon & Schuster -- The current fad of original-novella volumes of science fiction began in 1969 with an excellent book called THREE FOR TOMORROW, written by Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny and James Blish. This new one is about the equal of that one, and has two of the same three writers. (Blish was ~~replaced~~ succeeded (okay, Roger?) by Edgar Pangborn.) Terry asked the three "to effect a blending of the science-fiction genre with questions of transcendental experience." Silverberg's "The Feast of St. Dionysus" is about an astronaut back from Mars, the only one of three to survive the first landing there. Nothing he could have done would have prevented his team-mates' deaths, but because he loves the wife of one of them he is wracked with guilt and certain the tragedy was his fault. He stumbles across a religious group in the California desert and tries to use this experience to purge himself and start anew. It's a difficult story, but I for one found it worthwhile to puzzle over it and dig things out. Zelazny's "Kjwalll'kje'k'koothailll'kje'k" (ghod help the engravers if it wins an award) is both a well-done murder mystery and a truly fascinating speculation on the religion of dolphins. The same hero as in "The Eve of RUMOKO" from THREE FOR TOMORROW; I hope Roger does more. Pangborn's "My Brother Leopold" is moving and well-constructed, showing many of the little hypocrisies of his DAVY society and of organized religion in general without noticeably brow-beating. The Church's problem: reconciling the statements of the people's prophet with its own teachings. The individual characters and the people as a whole all lose; only the Church wins. (I didn't give away the ending, relax.) A very sad story; a very good book.

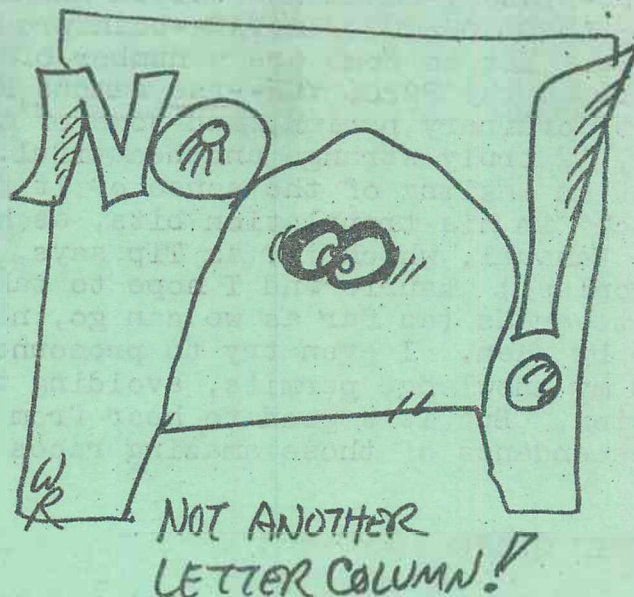
8/26 DON'T LIE TO ME/Tucker Coe/Random House -- My favorite of the Mitch Tobin books so far. Tobin has a private investigator's license now; I guess Westlake realized the absurdity of having this poor guy who just wants to be left alone keep stumbling over dead bodies. Now he has a legitimate excuse for finding them. This doesn't mean Tobin is now indistinguishable from all the other private eyes; he's just slowly rebuilding his life, and working (as a museum guard) is one of the ways he's doing that. My favorite part of this one involved Tobin's wall. He's been building it to totally enclose his back yard--no gates or windows--at a ten-foot height. It's at six feet now, and Mitch finds himself running into his back yard to escape some killers. Trapped. I've always wondered what would happen if the front of the house caught on fire with the family inside.

8/28 A TREASURY OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION, Volume 1/edited by Anthony Boucher/Doubleday -- Well, anyway, good science fiction. Maybe in 1959 these stories looked great, but if so, the changing times have laid them low. They're all readable, sometimes surprisingly so--I didn't expect it of the 1938 super-science extravaganza by Joel Townlsey Rogers or of the van Vogt novel, THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER (boring, of course, but not as bad as most van Vogt). The best is John Wyndham's novel RE-BIRTH; I'd forgotten just how good a novel that was. The other stories are all decent, although George P. Elliott's "Sandra," about a female slave who turns into a housefrau when married by her master, is equalled only by John Norman's Gor series as an anti-Women's Lib tract in the sf field. Elliott can be excused, perhaps, because he makes his male character such a clod that it's half his fault as well, but...an odd piece of fiction.

8/30 THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN/Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö/Pantheon -- This is a good one. Eight men are found shot on a bus, one of them a policeman. There are no clues. All the police working on the case just head off in different directions hoping for a break, and slowly the whole picture develops. ## From all indications, the book was both written and translated well. But there's an odd quality to all these books, like watching a foreign movie with English voices dubbed in. I just feel that there's a barrier between me and the events, so I can just watch and listen. I don't know whether the barrier is really there or whether my subconscious just keeps hold of the fact that it is a translated novel. Partially it must be the idiosyncracies of the original style faithfully kept by the different translators --like always using "Martin Beck" and the large number of lines of conversation consisting entirely of "Don't know." But it is there, at least for me, and isn't bad, really; these books have their own fine, distinctive flavor.

* "There's a latent hatred of police in all classes of
* society," Melander said. "And it needs only an impulse
* to trigger it off."
* "Oh," Kollberg said, with complete lack of interest.
* "And what is the reason for that?"
* "The reason is that the police are a necessary evil,"
* Melander said. "Everybody knows, even professional
* criminals, that they may suddenly find themselves in
* situations in which only the police can help them.
* When the burglar wakes up at night and hears a ratt-
* ling in his cellar, what does he do? Calls the police,
* of course. But so long as such situations don't crop
* up, most people react with either fear or contempt
* when the police, in one way or the other, interfere
* in their existence or disturb their peace of mind."
* "Well, that's the last straw, if we have to regard
* ourselves as a necessary evil," Kollberg muttered
* despondently.
* "The crux of the problem is, of course," Melander
* went on, quite unconcerned, "the paradox that the po-
* lice profession in itself calls for the highest in-
* telligence and exceptional mental, physical and moral
* qualities in its practitioners but has nothing to at-
* tract persons who possess them."
* "You're horrible," Kollberg said.

DEADLY LETTER



JEFF CLARK

Got KYBEN the other day, and read it through last night. Enjoyed what you didn't have to include in your letter....Roger Touhey! Ah, I'd forgotten all about the gent, and broke into tired mid-eve hysterics upon reading the name. Sure would like to see the end of that movie, sometime. (S(After Patty kicked us out of her room, and we rushed home on the subway to find out it was over, she turned back on the set and watched the rest of it. Disgusting.)S) I don't think California's that bad. I think my area's pretty good, in fact. To his list of clean cities Daniel Dickinson should add San Diego--and it is. After a while you tend not to notice it, but then I merely have to recall beautiful downtown Flatbush, with its exotic gutters full of dogshit....

My only complaint is that you need a car to do everything--and I love walking; but it seems to me N.Y.C. is one of the only places there is you can get along without private transport. I am getting very used to the car, though, and even took a spontaneous jaunt up to Westercon for only one day. It turned out to be part of one day at that, and coming back I encountered many years' worth of driving hazards. Like running out of gas on a Sunday on Route 101.... With about a gallon left I got off the freeway and holed up for the night in a little--real little--town called Soledad; right next to a gas station I slept on the seat until 8:00 A.M. I was grizzled and staggered by the time I made it back, but saw some beautiful country on the way. I'm still scared shitless of trying to negotiate L.A. once I'm off the freeway, so I'm not until I've got some definite, well-mapped destination....

It's always good to hear more of Tiptree amidst Maya country. Don't think I mentinned to you that one of my prime historical passions--when I'm able to follow it up--is the Aztec period. It's recently spread to all of pre-Columbian culture, and I only recently discovered in shock and delight that the University of Oklahoma Press publishes a whole slew of books on the subject--not all of them historical evaluations and rehashings, either, but quite a few source

documents of the immediate post-Conquest period among the list. I hope to hack my way through Bernal Diaz' account someday, but I've already read a book on PRE-COLUMBIAN LITERATURES and the part-myth, part-history documents called ANNALS OF THE CAKCHIQUELS and TITLE OF THE LORDS OF TOTONICAPAN--both products of two branches of the Maya race. Yet to come are a number of books on the Aztecs and Mayas, as well as the POPOL VUH--the famous Maya-written documents. It's an extraordinary period, and some of their writing, especially the poetry, is truly strange and beautiful. (Come to think of it, you can get an inkling of the sense of it from Lafferty's "Continued on Next Rock" in his translation bits, as he does at one point make mention of Nahautl, which is, as Tip says, the language of the Aztec-related peoples.) Laurie and I hope to take a long trip down to the Mexican site-areas (as far as we can go, next year), and I should be all read up by then. I even try to pronounce the Indian names as scrupulously as my knowledge permits, avoiding the more familiar Spanish pronunciation. But it's good to hear from a vivid man like Tip what the descendants of those amazing races are like beforehand.

DENIS QUANE

I enjoyed the three articles in #3. Charlie Hopwood's article on Austria brought back memories of the one day and night I spent in Innsbruck two years ago, and made me wish I had been able to stay longer. I am glad, though, that I stayed in a better Hotel than the one he describes.

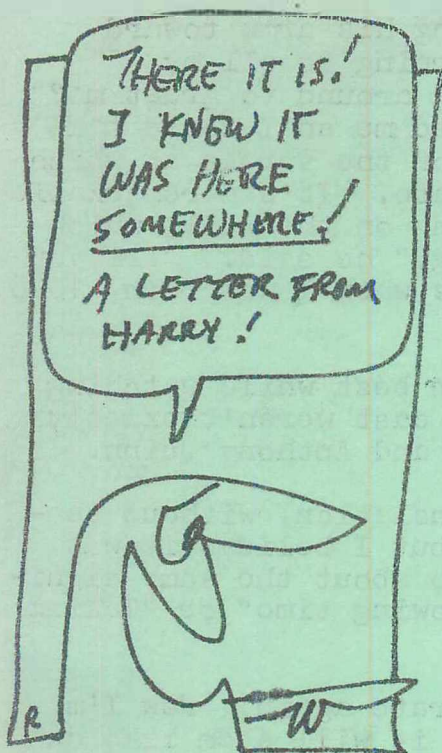
James Tiptree writes well, although temperamentally his likes, dislikes and opinions clash with mine on many points. This appears to affect my reaction to his fiction to the point where I am unable to enjoy it. Not so for his non-fiction--at least as it applies to his letter in PHANTASMICOM 10 and the travel article in KYBEN 3. I don't imagine that he would appreciate that his professional writing is liked less than his unpaid stuff, but what can I do...?

With regard to Darrell Schweitzer's article in #2, it isn't badly written, and is funny in spots--but that sort of thing has been done often before--too often. As a product of the Catholic school system myself, I'm getting a little tired of the constant put-down. Not everyone comes through the parochial schools with such negative attitudes.

Granted some of the teachers are eccentric and old-fashioned--not all are. And it is my experience that a negative attitude toward science is far from common. Less common in fact than among liberal arts college faculty members. It was an Irish Christian Brother who was the main influence in my decision to become a chemist.

After teaching for some years in East Texas State University--a former state teachers college, and still very much in the business of teaching teachers--I have not observed that public school teachers are any better as a group--they may even be worse, when, as is so often the case, the basketball coach, or an agriculture major, is put in charge of teaching science. And anyone has to be a little crazy to teach adolescents anyway. (Any readers of this who teach are excepted, of course.)

I will be looking forward to receiving KYBEN 4 (and also PHANTASMICOM 11, which I hope is still in the works). (S(Yes, *pant* it is).)



ROBERT BLOCH

KYBEN #4 is also great. Must tell you that nobody saw Humphrey Bogart as an extra in ROGER TOUHEY, GANGSTER--he never was an extra, and already had leading roles at the time this was made. Aside from which, I found nothing to quibble about in the entire issue. The cover, with its picture of a rotting tennis ball bouncing on a ruined court, makes one think. Many thanks for letting me see the issue--and all the brst--

HARRY WARNER, JR.

I hate to ruin my new image, but I've been writing locs at a stupendous rate for the past two months, trying to mend as many fences as possible in case I should manage to attend the Torcon. It would be terrible if the first thing I saw there should be a demonstration against me, staged by all the hundreds of fans whom I owe locs to. Anyway, the new KYBEN came yesterday, and it did something hardly any other fanzine has accomplished for years and years. It arrived at my home the day after it was postmarked.

My own job has gone so sour that I found myself rejoicing with a guilty subcarrier over your losing your own job when you were having so much trouble with the manager. Curiously, just about the time you were having so much trouble with bookstores, I was thinking about buying a very small second-hand one. The owner of a second-hand book and magazine store in a city within easy commuting distance from Hagerstown was trying to sell. I've been there often enough to know she does enough business to pay the rent and maybe show a slight profit, and it might have been excellent therapy for me to quit my job, buy that place, and run it the way she does, reading all day long with just an occasional brief interruption to accept some money or bargain over traded-in books. I've been wondering how complete retirement would affect my nerves, and this might have been a good compromise between that drastic action and hanging on to a nasty job. As usual, I couldn't make up my mind, and by now I think the woman has decided to retain ownership herself. (S(It's a shame. It sounds to me like something that would suit you very well. I hope something equally attractive comes up for you in the near future.))S)

Your brief conreports made fine reading and increased the urge to go to Toronto, even though I doubt my congoing would be as hectic as yours in various ways. That strange man who turned up at the Balticon may pay visits to Hagerstown every once in a while. I pass this character about once a month while I'm walking to work, always in the 200 block of Summit Avenue. One morning he was on the sidewalk beside a vacant lot where birds were fluttering madly, flying

away in terror because of the way he was waving his arms toward where they were feeding. "I'm saying good morning to all my friends," he told me. "See how they're flying around to greet me?" Earlier this week he grabbed my arm and stopped me so I could take a good look at the warehouse on the other side of the street at which he was pointing. "Take a good look at that date. It's a remarkable one." I looked at the stone ~~lettering~~ figuring on the wall, which said 1889. "Yes, sir, that's really something," he said. "All you have to do is turn it around a little and it's when I was born, 1898." He started to hop up and down in glee.

You must have been a bit less than at your best while watching ROGER TOUHEY, GANGSTER. Three members of the cast weren't exactly non-entities: Victor McLagen, Preston Foster and Anthony Quinn.

It's hard to be sure about the French translation, without seeing the entire sentence in which it appears, but I believe it was accurate. "Le temps" in this sense would have about the same significance as if you had written in English "Allowing time" or "Taking time" for my ego to deflate.

The Tiptree material is absolutely first-rate again. Now I'm afraid to start reading his fiction, for fear it will seem like an anti-climax after these fanzine contributions. Somehow, I suspect that Jim and Mae Streklov will have some lively conversation, if they should get together when she comes to this continent.

Rereading my loc reopened an old wound. That Maria Schell episode of ASSIGNMENT: VIENNA was pre-empted on Channel 7, which gives perfect reception in Hagerstown, and that channel dropped the whole series when it went into reruns. I tortured my eyes on Channel 13, which has the misfortune to encounter less than a mile from my home an FM transmitter whose frequency emits a harmonic which damages the sound and almost destroys the picture on my block, only to find that her role was quite brief, the script was frightfully bad, and she apparently played it as camp, from the little I could see, remaining almost immobile scene after scene and speaking her lines in a throaty whisper.

Ah, the mysterious things that turn up in books. A couple weeks ago, I bought a batch of stuff from a small town library that was thinning out its stock (at a nickel a copy, even complete sets of encyclopedias!). One acquisition was a first edition of Hamlin Garland's ROADSIDE MEETINGS. I found a message on the flyleaf that left me strangely curious to know who owned it before donating it to the library. It's prefaced by "At sea, 11/3/30" and written apparently to the writer's two children, telling one of them that the James Whitcomb Riley chapter will be interesting because "Briggs of Charleston, Ill., best man at our wedding" knew him, and telling the other that Garland is "a hell of a much more fellow than I thought he was" because of a chapter about a rugged expedition into Indian country. The father was sailing on the Augustus. It might be hard to dig out the passenger list from that particular crossing and try to confirm my suspicion that it might have been a fairly important diplomat or other government official. The library is in a mountain community that was very popular as a summer home for big shots in that era.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Richard Brandt/Joe L. Hensley/Ray Nelson/Darrell Schweitzer/Barry Smotroff/Bruce Townley

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