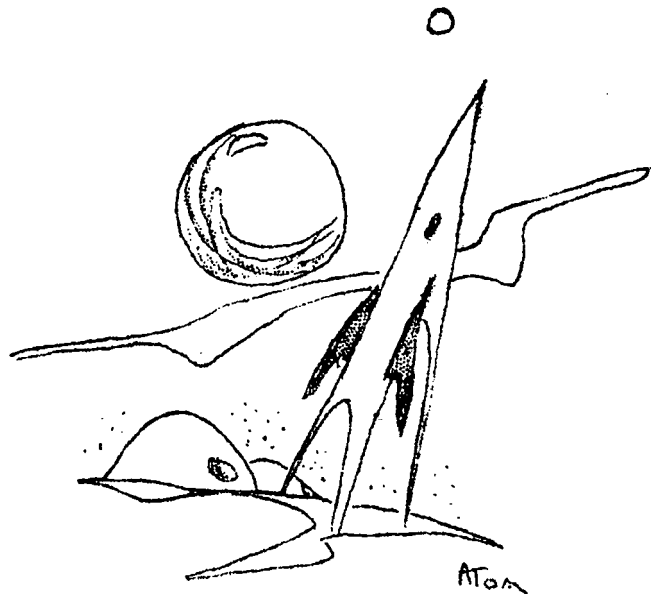


THE NEHWON REVIEW

"Of all the collections of garbage and innuendo
I have encountered in fandom, this is one of
the prizes." -- ROBERT COULSON, Vandy #28



NUMBER SIX

SPRING 1970

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A CLOWN ON THE MOON

Mais où sont les Lunes d'antan?

-- Jules Laforgue

2 APRIL 1969

Now as we approach sleep the moon returns. Like a bubble of pure light it floats in the mouth of night, whole and serene. During the daylight hours in North America the moon suffered a penumbral eclipse, and since it rose over the Berkeley hills this evening, and till now, near 2200 o'clock, it was hidden by scudding rainclouds. Now moonlight glimmers on the wet pavement of the patio, and flickers on the golden blossoms of the California poppies, too dim and fickle, however, to make them unfurl to the radiance.

Nothing in nature is more lovely than the full moon gliding resplendently through breaking stormclouds. The moon keeps her dignity; the outrages against her so far have been small. More time must pass before the moon becomes a hurtling advertisement for Coca-Cola (Campbell once suggested how this could be done), before the Bradbury nightmare begins with beercans discarded in the Mare Tranquilitatis. But all this will come, and there is a poignancy about beholding the moon these last times before her surface is begrimed by the tracks of men.

OLD DREAMS

1

"WHEN I WAS A KID" -- so said old D. D. Harriman in Robert Heinlein's "Requiem" -- "practically nobody believed that men would ever reach the Moon.... But I believed -- I believed. I read Verne and Wells and Smith, and I believed that we could do it -- that we would do it. I set my heart on being one of the men to walk the surface of the Moon, to see her other side, and to look back on the face of the Earth, hanging in the sky."

Later he spoke again for all of us, we science-fictionists of 30 years ago: "I just wanted to live a long time and see it all happen.... There were lots of boys like me. We had science clubs, and basement laboratories, and science-fiction leagues -- the kind of boys that thought there was more romance in one issue of the Electrical Experimenter than in all the books Dumas ever wrote.... I just wanted to live long enough to see men rise up to the stars."

Despite contrary examples, including at least two science fiction editors, both of Amazing Stories (1)*, and perhaps a few lonely others, one could hardly be a science-fictionist in the old days and not believe as D. D. Harriman believed, and by 1946 -- if not as early as 1940, when "Requiem" was published in Astounding Science Fiction -- most of us were persuaded that we would live long enough, that the conquest of space would begin in our lifetimes. All but one of the participants in Gerry de la Ree's 1947 Beowulf poll on space flight believed that man would reach the moon in the twentieth century (2), and in the same year Robert Heinlein (not a participant in de la Ree's poll) predicted in the Saturday Evening Post that we would land on the moon in ten years' time (3). I myself, in the story "The Craters of the Moon" (Dream Quest, c. 1949), forecast the first moon landing for the early 1950s, though this was less a serious prediction than a fictional device to give immediacy to the story.

The two events that had convinced us that space conquest was imminent were the wartime development of the atomic bomb and of rocket ships. Even before the war was over, Willy Ley was assuring us ("V-2: Rocket Cargo Ship," ASF, May 1945) that "the first spaceship has been built already, only it is not used as such. Yes, we might as well admit it, V-2 is the first spaceship."

But before we were convinced, we had been inspired in our belief by the noble and idealistic science fiction stories we had read, where space was conquered by brave and intrepid men (though the spaceship itself might have been invented by a mad scientist, with a beautiful daughter): stories like Asimov's "Trends," Wellman's "Men Against the Stars," and of course -- as D. D. Harriman would remind us -- Wells' First Men in the Moon and Smith's The Skylark of Space. Hardly any fictional character had crass and shameful reasons for conquering space in those days. Indeed, from our vantage point, even the gentle absurdities of Fredric Brown's "The Star Mouse" form a near-perfect apotheosis of the prewar vision. Herr Professor Oberburger, a refugee from Nazi tyranny, shoots off a rocket to the moon from his backyard in Connecticut, for no better reason than Just Because. Space is conquered as a personal project by a private citizen, a scientist who is admittedly "a bit crazy," but is absolutely dedicated to science rather than to the making of war, or of money. Bemused by such science fiction, few of us had any idea how space really would be conquered.

In his guest of honor speech at the 1968 Lunacon, Don A. Wollheim paid tribute to this sort of science fiction: "Back in those days, back in the dismal '30s, science fiction was a dream that sustained us through some very gloomy perspectives.... We believed in it because those stories spoke of wonders to come which we desperately longed to see. The elders about us scoffed at these Buck Rogers visions, but we believed in them -- a tiny stubborn minority" (4). That tiny minority believed, he said, in many wonders that have already come to pass; robots and mechanical brains, atomic power, television (!), and, of course, space flight.

* The numbers in parentheses refer to the Notes at the end of this essay.

Yet once even oldtime fan Wollheim had entertained doubts about space flight, which he expressed in a speech at the Torcon in 1948 or perhaps the Cinvention in 1949 -- at any rate more than 20 years after magazine science fiction began. Despite the innumerable stories about space travel, chances really ran strongly against the conquest of space, Wollheim said; space probably never would be explored by mankind. This dark prediction jolted us all because he gave a reason that then seemed worthy of sober thought. The moon and the planets in the solar system aside from Earth, he said, are obviously barren of exploitable resources -- either they have no valuable mineral deposits at all or only deposits not worth the incredible cost of transporting them in quantity back to Earth. Men are likelier to squander vast amounts of capital in attempts to tap the petroleum resources of inhospitable Antarctica than to try to bring back mineral wealth from space, for however difficult it may be to exploit Antarctica, it is a simple feat compared with the task of carrying Martian coals to Newcastle. And without that incentive, Wollheim prophesied, Terran industry, notoriously tightfist, was not going to be so improvident as to pour vast rivers of dollars into space conquest.

A dozen years after the first Sputnik, Don's prediction looks pretty feeble, far more feeble than it actually was -- for he is probably right about the paucity of exploitable resources in the rest of the solar system. But he must have known that he was not pronouncing a valid prediction, and probably he didn't mean it very seriously. It was only a nonce assertion on which to base an enlivening address, and to that extent it succeeded resoundingly.

Certainly DAW was not so naive as to suppose that American capitalists would have no motive for jumping into the space business with eyes ablaze and coattails flying, whatever the return they might expect from sucking up fresh reservoirs of petroleum or uranium up there. Certainly they have done so, and not from altruistic reasons either, although so far as anybody knows, there is no proof that planets of plenty swarm within reach of our spaceships out there in the solar system.

EXPENSIVE THRILLS

2

WALT WILLIS, writing in November 1957, remarked that the "Space Age" was dawning "in a way not one of us foresaw. What's more -- and this is the most surprising thing of all -- we see now quite clearly that it just couldn't have happened any other way" (5). After the event, science fiction always looks rather naive, for it sometimes sees the event but never the circumstances. The advent of atomic power is an even better example of this than the conquest of space. There were many stories about atomic power before 1945, but nobody ever imagined Hiroshima or the Cold War. But however naive science fiction writers may have been about space conquest -- and they were incredibly naive -- they did not neglect altogether the crass profit motive in their treatment of space flight.

A few stories, such as del Rey's "The Stars Look Down," were largely concerned with the business competition involved in "space," and even so optimistic and high-spirited an adventure as The Skylark of Space was

centered, in its early chapters, on the cutthroat competition between World Steel, which tried to gain control of "X," and the company organized by Seaton and Crane to develop the applications of "X." And "Requiem" itself, outwardly the most idealistic of space stories, deals underneath with the stock market speculations of D. D. Harriman (no kin, obviously, of Edward H. Harriman, nineteenth century monopolist, unscrupulous king of the Union Pacific), who becomes a rich man by investing his money in "a crazy rocket company," despite the oft-voiced forebodings of his shrewish wife. (The business aspects of Harriman's life were made explicit in the companion story published a decade later, of which the title is sufficient description, "The Man Who Sold the Moon.")

But in virtually none of such stories was the profit motive dealt with as if it were of transcendent importance, and I remember no early science fiction yarn which could have been cited to counter Wollheim's argument against the probability of space conquest. No one, in short, ever imagined that "space" would glow in iridescent hues like a new South Sea Bubble. Indeed, hardly anyone in or out of science fiction has ever stood up to shout out the gabble of the propagandists of the so-called aerospace industry and to point out the obvious.

Not even today, on the very eve of the first moon landing. In Warhoon, so magnificent and authoritative a fanzine that it has become the bible of fandom, we read Richard Bergeron's assertion that, while the space program has not been entirely altruistic, there have been in all of history no scientific experiments "not connected with war or commercialism" that cost as much as the space program (6). This is surely a true statement. The formulation of Darwin's theory, for example, must have cost everybody a great deal less, even if the expenses of sailing the Beagle to Tahiti and New Zealand are figured in. And the General Theory of Relativity cost nothing at all, since Einstein bought his schnapps and tobacco out of his own pocket. Dick speaks as if the staggering cost of the Apollo project were somehow one of its prime virtues.

Ted White tells us that "in point of actual fact today's rockets cost so many millions of dollars that only the mightiest nations can afford to build them" (7). But let us turn to Newsweek (7 July 1969) for some information about the way in which this "mighty nation" built the Apollo spacecrafts. "Contractors for the Apollo project were chosen by review boards.... North American Aviation, Inc., was chosen to build the front end of the Apollo, the command section housing the three astronauts and their controls, and the service section with the rocket motor, propellants, electrical power and oxygen.... Then NASA picked Grumman Aircraft Engineering Co. to build the lunar module (LM). By the end of 1961, contractors had been selected for the three segments of the Saturn 5 launch rocket: Boeing Co. for the 7.5 million-pound-thrust first stage, North American for the million-pound-thrust second stage, Douglas Aircraft Co. for the 200,000-pound-thrust third stage, and later International Business Machines Corp. for the guidance brains to steer the whole assembly." Drew Pearson adds further data in a column published the day before the Apollo 11 moon trip took off: "The industrial miracle-workers of the Apollo program range from Boeing...to Aerojet ...to Grumman...to Westinghouse, McDonnell Douglas, MIT, Minneapolis-Honeywell, Bell, Eagle-Picher, Bendix and Whirlpool." He reports that "a total of 17,000 companies supplied all the component parts, some of

them minor, which are going into the launching at Cape Kennedy tomorrow. Of these, 9000 companies made substantial contributions and perhaps 20 developed highly important parts contributing to the launching and all that went before" (8). In other words, the government of a capitalist nation does not build rockets, but instead hires private industry to build them. Everybody knows this, but somehow the "actual fact" gets lost in the clouds of airy rhetoric.

And since the United States is not a communist nation, the space program involves the taking of profits by these giant industries, who (in case anybody wonders about it) assuredly are not in it merely to advance science or to help our country keep ahead in space, or even to garner fresh sources of wealth on the moon or Mars or Titan. An advertisement for North American Rockwell in Time (2 May 1969) is instructive. "As a prime contractor on the Apollo program," North American boasts, "we had a lot to do with man's first flight around the moon and back. We built the spacecraft itself, plus most of the rocket engines that powered Apollo 8 on that historic mission.... We've had firsts in all the 19 businesses we're in -- everything from fiberglass fishing trawlers to airborne computers. And in the process we've become one of America's largest corporations...." (9)

To imply, as Dick Bergeron does, in the face of all this, that the space program is not connected with "commercialism" rocks the mind more violently than E. E. Evans' famous statement to Charles Burbee. But while we are still tossing in the wake, Dick tells us that we must forget our lofty dreams of old and accept the present reality because -- he reminds us philosophically -- "that's the way things are." He thinks the same dictum applies to the way in which the United States is shoveling billions of bucks into the job of pounding "a Far Eastern country back into the stone age," and he blithely disregards the fact that in both cases, the Vietnam war and the space effort, the way things are is that the American public is being suckered.

As much as any war, support of the Apollo project is sold to us as a patriotic duty. At a Chamber of Commerce luncheon in San Francisco, where the Apollo 10 astronauts were guests of honor, astronaut Thomas Stafford paid tribute to the "American public for having financed the historic voyage." "It was a team effort," Stafford said, "of three of us, a half million men and women who worked on Project Apollo, and 200 million Americans" (10). Patriots all. But Stafford somehow forgot to mention a fourth party to the proceedings: the owners of the aerospace industry, a mere handful of swindlers and robber barons, who are not patriots but profiteers, and who privately stash their billions in Swiss bank vaults and use paper profits to take over control of 19 more big corporations.

"What will make it possible," Tom Lehrer asks, "to spend \$20,000,000,000 of your money to put some clown on the moon?" (11) Well, of course, it is American taxes that make it possible to siphon that impossible gush of dollars out of our pockets and spill them so unerringly into the pockets of those few men who run the aerospace industry. But Tom Lehrer's figure of \$20,000,000,000 is a slight underestimate of the money involved to date. In the United States budget for 1967-8, the National Aeronautics and Space administration (NASA) was given a cool

\$4,724,901,000 for fiscal year 1968 alone, and for fiscal year 1967 it had received even more, \$5,425,815,000. According to Time magazine (9 May 1969), a grand total of \$24,000,000,000 has been bestowed by the federal government on the Apollo project to date (12).

They tossed \$134,000,000 -- just as a random expense -- into erecting the Vehicle Assembly building at Cape Kennedy (13), a vast structure covering eight acres and standing 525 feet tall, where the Apollo/Saturn rockets are built. In contrast, the Pentagon in Washington, D. C., the world's largest office building, cost only \$83,000,000 to build in 1943, and the Empire State building in New York City cost only \$40,000,000 when it was put up in 1930. The latter building sold in 1961 for a mere \$65,000,000, less than half the cost of the VAB.

If the government had squandered \$134,000,000 on building a national opera house in Washington, and a grand total of \$24,000,000,000 on a federal cultural-educational program (14) -- something that would transform this country, and the world, to a state much closer to utopia, far more surely than the Apollo project, and faster -- there would have been a terrible outcry from American taxpayers. What keeps the taxpayers so silent when their money is drained into the gigantic boondoggle of putting a "clown on the moon"?

Well, it's all sold to us as part of the desperate race to Keep Ahead of the Russians. Soviet scientists did American capitalists an incalculable favor in 1957 when they put up the first artificial satellite. After that jolting setback to American leadership and enterprise, there was no trouble in America when it came to budgeting four or five billions a year for "space." Only a few heretic, non-euclidean thinkers ever seem to ponder the question of "Why?" and to wonder audibly how we, the taxpayers, are supposed to benefit from keeping ahead in space.

Time (9 May 1969) reports in portentous tones that "Preoccupied by the Vietnam war and proliferating troubles at home, the White House has placed a low priority on establishing America's post-Apollo goals in space. Unless stimulating goals are enunciated, the team that made Apollo possible may begin to disintegrate for lack of a sufficiently compelling challenge." But the only "sufficiently compelling challenge" Time can scare up offhand is "enunciated" by Wernher von Braun, who solemnly maintains, "Russia still wants to beat us in space." Time says hopefully, "If that happens, the money spigot would probably open wide again."

On the other hand, sooner or later indignant citizens may start to ask, "What's in it for me?" and may require an answer of their rulers. As an earnest of their concern, some of them may even refuse to pay that portion of their taxes that supports the space program -- as some have already refused to pay that portion of their taxes that supports the Vietnam war. Of course the aerospace industry will not need to ask the same question. They know what's in it for them: \$24,000,000,000.

The space program has become absolutely essential to American capitalism for exactly the same reason that the Cold War had to be fought: because the enterprise glitters like an improbable mountain of gold, an undreamed-of bonanza, potentially the biggest, gaudiest boondoggle ever

conceived by our greedy human race. Paradoxically, it matters not at all whether there exists up there some source of untold wealth, waiting to be claimed and defended and marketed. No "quest for the gold of the Incas is dangled before us," as Bergeron points out (15), but the mere effort -- impossibly grandiose, impossibly spendthrift -- of trying to conquer space is flooding an Amazon of wealth into the already bulging coffers of the aerospace industry.

For the benefit of restless citizens, NASA and its owners have another method of selling the space program besides the one of trooping the colors. Despite the manifestly ripe nature that we sniff on the wind of its financial hokeypokey, the conquest of space -- we are given to understand -- is a glorious adventure, just as glorious an adventure, in fact, as war itself. It also possesses certain attributes of a Roman circus, for everybody is invited to share vicariously in the space effort by way of television and radio, and for some people the excitement of following a space launch seems to fill the same role in their lives that science fiction did in our lives when we were very young.

On a motor trip to California in 1962, I learned to my surprise that while I journeyed west across the continent an astronaut, or maybe two astronauts -- I have forgotten -- were on the travel round and round the planet somewhere above my head. At every service station and hamburger joint I stopped at along the road I was vexed by excited people telling me of the "progress" of the orbiting capsule. How does one endure such outbursts of mob enthusiasm? It was almost as painful as frantic Beatle fans foisting upon one their favorite selection from Sgt Pepper.

"Russian?" I asked one station attendant who reluctantly tore himself away from the radio to come out and sell me a tank of regular and tell me about the space flight. "No! One of ours!" he said. Ours? Likely enough, if Laika was one of the Russians. But alas, as I thought it over, I realized that the space jockey was one of mine in the same sense that all men are; I am part of humanity, and the astronauts are at least nominally so. We all belong to the same species that spawned Hitler, Calvin, and Constantine Copronymus. The astronaut was one of mine just as other maniacs are -- the soldiers who clear the Vietnamese out of caves with flamethrowers, or the cops who club down students at a campus demonstration.

The public frenzy apparently has abated somewhat since 1962, probably because of the thundering monotony of the radio and television reports heavily seasoned with commercials, but with the full resources of the American advertising industry behind it, such propaganda is likely to continue potent, and I suppose fresh enthusiasm will break out when a man finally steps out onto the moon.

BOGUS HEROES

3

SO FAR as I can judge -- as a sober student; not, certainly, an enthusiast of the space program -- the most dramatic event, perhaps the only one so far, in the history of "space" took place 12 April 1961 near

the village of Smelovka in the USSR. Yuri Gagarin, the first man to orbit the earth in space, came down in a plowed field and climbed out of Vostok I clad in his bright orange spacesuit to confront an audience of three: a woodcutter's wife, a little girl, and a spotted calf. Had he been a humorous man, Gagarin might have taken off his helmet and quipped "Take me to your leader!" -- addressing of course the calf. Instead, he shouted reassuringly to the frightened humans, "Friends, I'm one of your own people!"

The moment is dramatic because it is perhaps the only human contact that we know about between a working astronaut/cosmonaut and the private citizen. Otherwise, the "spaceman" is entirely a creature of television and is as unreal as Captain Video, Mr Spock, or Ed Sullivan. As much as these other heroes, astronauts were tinkered together by publicity men -- that is to say, by big business -- for the bamboozling of the slobbering lunkheads who exist largely to lick the dust and cry huzzah before their current heroes.

If it were otherwise, the astronaut image as it glimmers before us would not look so mediocre and so bland. The leitmotif of the whole production is, "Don't offend anybody." If astronauts were really chosen on a just scale for their knowledge and ability, they would not emerge, every one of them, looking so much like college football stars. Not only are they all cleancut and (nonetheless) virile, but each is equipped with a very feminine, attractive wife who looks like an expensive call girl or at least a waitress in a Hilton hotel coffeeshop, and one or more well-scrubbed, obedient offspring. The astronauts and their families all look like models for a series of life insurance advertisements.

It is easy to see that if a prospective astronaut turned out to be squat and gorilla-like (the truck driver stereotype), or to have a plain, bucktoothed wife, or to have fathered a teenaged son or daughter who had been arrested for taking part in a student "riot," he would be washed out faster than if he were discovered not to know how to read and write. One astronaut, Donn Eisele, was divorced by his wife after 16 years of marriage, about the time Apollo 11 took off; one suspects that this may disqualify the man from ever going into space again. The public image is all-important. The Apollo 10 astronauts carefully shaved before they came plopping down into the Pacific. Probably they strewed gobs of shave cream and week-old whiskers all over the interior of the "command module," but delicate instruments thus damaged mattered less than presenting pretty faces to the news cameras. You can't look like a hippy and still be a space hero, of course.

Consider the names of the Americans who have orbited or gone into space so far: Alan Shepard, Virgil Grissom, John Glenn, Scott Carpenter, Leroy Gordon Cooper, Walter Schirra, Neil Armstrong, Eugene Cernan, Edward White, David Scott, James McDivitt, Donn Eisele, John Young, William Anders, Frank Borman, Walter Cunningham, Michael Collins, Richard Gordon, Charles Conrad, Roger Chaffee, Edwin Aldrin, James Lovell, Russell Schweickart, Thomas Stafford. This is hardly a list of typical American names. It is a cast of characters out of an imaginary America, conjured up by Eric Frank Russell, dreaming in happy ignorance 3357 nautical miles from our shores. I open the current Oakland telephone directory at random (page 361) and find a more representative list of Amer-

icans. In addition to a whole column of Matthews, and a sprinkle of Mattinglys, Maxfields, and Maxwells, I note these names: Mattiello, Mattioli, Mattonen, Mattuci, Matulich, Matulovich, Mauroni, and Mauvais. There are no such furrin names on the list of astronauts. Nearly every name on that list is Anglo-Saxon, and aside from a Celtic name or two, all of them are safely Nordic: not a drop of alien and toxic blood in the lot.

Even the astronauts' given names are conventional, for the most part, aside from Cernan's and Grissom's. I presume Cernan is called Gene, which is solidly respectable, having been the given name of two venerated redneck governors of Georgia, U.S.A., and I understand that Grissom, cumbered with a handle derived from the clan name of a Roman poet, rejoiced in the more manly name of Gus.

To go to such lengths to avoid offending a fawning public fondly believed to be unable to grovel before a hero who is not certified as a white, redblooded, Anglo-Saxon American smacks of blind neurosis and morbid anachronism. Other parts of American business, unenlightened otherwise, have managed to turn more rational long since. Baseball, for example, is a big business. For decades, ballclub owners fretted over the risk to their investments when they dared to field a shortstop with an Irish moniker. Later, their jittery experiments with employing ballplayers having Italian, Polish, Jewish, and Spanish names caused no tottering of the National Pastime, and at last, a quarter century ago, they began to hire Negro players without causing the game to collapse. The mystical urge to worship doglike before the baseball hero has burned as hot in the day of Willie Mays as in the day of Lou Gehrig. Few Americans of 1969 would be shocked and outraged to behold an Apollo spacecraft manned by heroes with names like Nakagawa, Kowalski, and Bonnazola.

Perhaps there is a pool of astronaut trainees. If there is, I assume that paddling around in it are token representatives of Japanese, Slavic, and Italian ancestry. Less likely, there may be an embryo spaceman each of Armenian, Mongol, and Navajo derivation. Perhaps a budding Buck Rogers answers the rollcall to the name of Isidore Finkelstein, another to the name of Jose Maria Gonzales. There may even be a Negro in the group (there are around 20,000,000 of them in the country, after all), and -- in recognition of the astounding theory that homosexuals have been responsible for all progress and culture in the history of mankind -- there surely must be a practicing pederast, as distinct from latent ones, in the astronautical reserve. Of course no woman will be named an astronaut in the foreseeable future, although women constitute more than half the population. "There's a waste-disposal problem with a woman aboard," one male astronaut explained lamely (16).

Whether any of these unAmerican Americans will ever manage to get into space is uncertain. If the time comes that one of them accomplishes the feat, I suspect that the instant hero will be tricked out like a ballplayer with a good old American nickname to take the curse off his minority-group name: "Rocky" Nakagawa, "Shorty" Kowalski, "Tex" Bonnazola. But today we have only astronauts with names like the heroes of Clayton Astounding science fiction: "With a superhuman effort, Tom Stafford burst the ropes that held him to the rock on the strange asteroid. 'Now, Dr Vladimir Kowalski,' he shouted, 'put down that raygun or I shall thrash you soundly!'"

Of the IQs of these heroes, the less said the better, although Time would have us suppose that they are all geniuses that would make Richard Seaton blush for shame. Time (18 July 1969) quotes "Boss Astronaut Donald K. ('Deke') Slayton" as saying astronauts have "got to be good stick and rudder men, and also real smart," but evidence indicates that they are actually blockheads of the Stupid Adonis, or Flash Gordon, type. A conversation between two astronauts reminds one of a scene between Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, only less profound. Evidently it takes less brains than conditioning to ride a capsule. After all, the Russians flew dogs in their capsules on at least two occasions, and the Americans have orbited a certified monkey or two.

A minister of the Miami Bible college professed to be shocked at the "language of the street" spoken by the crew of Apollo 10 when they broadcast from space in May 1969, and a NASA official defended them by saying, "Those are human beings up there, and they acted like human beings. That's all, no more and no less." Well, a little less: they acted like rather beetlebrowed human beings, not much superior to jockies, if not jockos, and though one cannot object to whatever "profanity, vulgarity, and blasphemy" the crew put on the air, at least one must agree with Edgar Z. Friedenberg, who called their broadcasts "witless chatter" -- one of the few accurate descriptions of the astronauts' subliterate language I have ever read (17). Another is William H. Honan's. In an article for Esquire, he was unkind enough to print an excerpt from John Glenn's broadcast during the orbital flight of February 1962: "Smoothing out real fine. We're doing real fine up here....I have nothing but a very fine feeling. It feels very normal and very good. My status (18) is excellent. I feel fine. Over." Honan remarks that "it seems clear that whatever else he may have added to the Saga of Man, John Glenn filled the first chapter in the Book of Space with five hours of unrelieved drivel...." (19)

But speaking of offensive "space" language, purely Pecksniffian objections aside, reminds me of the incredible Christmas broadcast from Apollo 8 in December 1968. Of this I can say little (though I scream a lot), since -- praise the pure unsullied stars -- I don't have a television set and seldom listen to the radio, but Igor Stravinsky's acerbic comments are sufficient. He speaks of the "Christmas pageant space-show" as "reconciling missile technology and Genesis," and adds, "In fact, the space capsule itself was turned into a teleological argument as the Three Wise Men astronauts, guided by earthshine, read Biblical poetry to Sabbatarian earthlings. Gott mit uns, the Space Program was assuring us...." (20) Words fail me, but shouldn't the press agents who dreamed up this stunt be hanged as traitors to our nonsectarian constitution?

What piddling heroes these void-wights are, indeed. Even Time can find little to say in praise of the Apollo 11 crew, and admits that "it may be true...that they have all been somewhat dehumanized by what Edwin Aldrin calls 'the treadmill' of the space program." Michael Collins, Time reports, "is by all accounts the most likable member of the crew," and even he doesn't sound very likable (21). One casts about for metaphors: three acres of quackgrass and Jimson weed; a stack of cans of jack mackerel, at three for 69¢; half a carton of Pepsi-Cola in no-return bottles.

Despite the torrent of blather in praise of "our" astronauts, it is really curious that "space" has not yet produced a hero to be mentioned in the same breath with Lindbergh, or even Wrong-Way Corrigan. Terrence O'Flaherty's TV column of 20 June 1969 begins, "If you have a calendar handy, circle July 20 and 21. That's when Neil Armstrong will star in a three-man show. And who is Neil Armstrong, you may ask? Remember the name. He will be the first human being to set foot on the moon" (22). Yet Armstrong (no relative of Jack, one supposes) was up there once before -- in March 1966 -- and it is taken for granted that no one remembers him. A very forgettable hero.

Perhaps the moon landing will produce a real hero: the still-unknown Armstrong, or another astronaut, but probably it will not. The space program so far, if it has a hero at all, has only the spacecraft itself, and the "SPS" engine that propels it. The machines leave little room in the program for a hero, at least until something unexpected happens and gives us a martyr. The astronauts are all too obviously puny men that slide into the vastness of space like minnows released into the ocean.

COLD REALITIES



LONG AGO, George Bernard Shaw, musing upon our American millionaires whose factories are "fenced in by live electric wires and defended by Pinkerton retainers with magazine rifles," inquired whether anybody thought that "Washington or Franklin would have lifted a finger in the cause of American independence if they had foreseen its reality" (23). Things have changed in the 60 years and more since Shaw wondered thus. The factories are still there, but many of their owners, like the Prohibition era beer barons after 1933, have "gone legit." Their property is guarded today, not by Pinkerton men, but by the United States government itself, and all their employees are rigorously screened by the FBI to be sure that none has harbored a wayward thought in his life. If we science-fictionists could have foreseen the reality of the conquest of space, would we have wished so hard for it to come to pass?

Yes: so it seems, at least from fingering the palpitations that have come to my attention. Apollo 8 in December 1968 inspired a flabbergasting number of emotional outbursts in fanzines and elsewhere. Even the most rational of them, such as Richard Bergeron's in Warhoon #26, are as lyrical as "Ode to the West Wind": "As my father and I were watching /the journey of Apollo 8/ in a snowbound farm house in Vermont, he said, 'That's something, isn't it?' I replied in a matter-of-fact voice with what I now think was quiet understatement: 'It's the most fantastic adventure in the history of man.'" Ted Johnstone in his column "Slow Train Through Gondor" in Shangri-L'Affaires #75, December 1968, says, "So even if Christ's birth is hardly worth celebrating any more, we have something to remember for the next twenty centuries" (!). In an editorial in Amazing Stories, July 1969, Ted White seems to suppose that Apollo 8 was circling the moon for the sake of science fiction: "We salute you. Amazing Stories salutes you. We knew you could do it," and reports elsewhere in the same piece, "I've watched dozens of live-TV lifts-off from Cape Kennedy, and I've always felt a sort of

primitive awe and thrill, but this one was something special. This one brought up the hair at the base of my neck, and filled my eyes with tears as I squeezed my wife's hand. This one was the one my generation built its dreams on. This one was science fiction."

Discounting the "primitive awe and thrill," which I think we ought to outgrow, and leave to the naked savage watching the rogue in the derby and checkered vest stepping ashore with his string of Woolworth beads and baubles, we may wonder soberly why anybody but the millionaire who bloats richer from the endeavor wants to "conquer" space. Of course it is a big opportunity for the scientists and engineers of NASA, but like anybody riding a boondoggle, they are mainly concerned that the appropriations continue fat, and like many men in science today they probably couldn't care less whether they are building spaceships or concocting super-nerve-poison.

In his memoirs (24), the late Yuri Gagarin called the American astronauts "brave men," but insisted that they are not dedicated men, and are in it only for the money. They have, he alleged, the bourgeois notion of setting themselves up in business after becoming heroes. This is at least partly true (John Glenn, I believe, ran for congress, and Frank Borman has considered doing so -- on the Republican ticket, of course); money and prestige are powerful motives in the good old Soedinennye Shtaty, and the astronauts -- like most Americans -- raven after security of a sort Gagarin never had to worry about: i.e., economic security.

But the astronauts probably worry more about a matter even Gagarin himself must have worried about: getting ahead in one's trade. Most of the American spacemen, as well as most of the Russian cosmonauts, have been members of the military, and even those who are nominally civilian, such as Armstrong, have had wide military backgrounds. The dominance of the sword-brandishers in the realms of stardust was something we little imagined in the dawn age of science fiction, and we did not foresee that the military -- and the military combined with industry, in that horrid embrace called the military-industrial complex -- would come to fester all life in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Science fiction, indeed, was one of the last places where the intelligence was received, but of late nearly every story in Analog, and many stories in the other science fiction magazines, allows the reader to identify with a hero placed solidly on some rung of the military hierarchy. (This is one good reason, among many, for avoiding Analog these days.) The military has worked its neurotoxic influence so well that many people take it for granted that a hero, any hero, will belong to the military. Even so pleasant a throwback to the old days as Karen Anderson's space ballad, "Johnny Corrin" (Goliard, February 1969, FAPA mailing #126), describes a spaceman, otherwise appealing enough, who wears "golden stripes upon his sleeve." It is only to be expected.

The military clods have suffused the whole space effort with their bovine Weltanschauung (25), and to read a report on "space" causes ice to form on the diaphragm of anyone enamored of plain English and uncluttered prose. Perusing one of these communiques, we learn to our surprise that the fabled scientific equipment for Apollo 11 is called

EASEP, which is short for "Early Apollo Scientific Experiments Payload," while the astronauts on later landings will use a more complicated system, ALSEP, which is "Apollo Lunar Surface Experiments Package." Why not "Payload," as before, instead of "Package"? Indeed, why not call it LASEP, "Later Apollo Scientific Experiments Payload"? The military mind is inscrutable. One begins to wonder whether the space program is not run by maniacs when we discover that the Apollo spacecraft's engine is called not simply that, but rather the Service Propulsion System engine, SPS, for short. The mind that invents such impossible jargon is not capable of rational thought. The Apollo project is a capitalist's bonanza, but also a madman's carnival.

BUGLE CALLS

5

I AM NOT absolutely deadset against the whole space effort. One can, after all, discern some virtues in the institution of the whorehouse, even if the girls themselves may not look very alluring, and the syndicate that runs the business and the politicians who get their cut from the enslavement of women cannot be condoned. I can imagine some worthy uses of "space," such as rocketing into the sun the thousands of gallons of radioactive wastes which American industry stores away year by year and which will remain deadly to life as far in the future as A.D. 3000. Nevertheless, I think that it is as unlikely that something worthwhile will come out of the space effort as it is that pregnancy will follow upon buggery. It is unlikely, in any case, that the benefits will outweigh the drawbacks.

Many of the benefits that are supposed to accrue from the conquest of space are hardly of human interest. Wernher von Braun -- who was imported along with 126 other German scientists who worked on the Nazi V-2 rockets at Peenemünde -- presumes that the space program is primarily a scientific endeavor rather than a profit-making boondoggle. "The space program," he says, according to Time (9 May 1969), "is the first time we could keep the cutting edge of science and technology sharp without having a major war. Goddammit, does it take another war to get technology up to a higher plateau?" The good Doktor takes credit, obviously, for hoisting us to a new plateau on the wings of the civilizing V-2s, and no doubt a Saturn rocket is just as civilizing. Fewer people will die as a result of the Saturns -- unless, of course, some extraterrestrial plague is brought back to Earth by one of the space probes -- but many will be fucked. Are the supposed advances in science and technology worth it?

Ted Johnstone, in the piece for Shaggy #75 already mentioned, suggests that "when the Infinite Frontier is effectively opened, there will be release for the forces of violent change which have been bottling up on this frontierless planet.... You want to fight? Go Out There and fight. You don't like the way we live? Go Out There and live however you want to...." Considering that the solar system is unlikely to provide any frontier such as Ted is thinking about, which must resemble the trans-Mississippi region in 1840, and that interstellar space is a long way from being conquered, Ted's suggestion is a little too visionary for me. Even if some of the planets and moons prove habitable, a remote possibility, they are going to be owned by oppressive governments or by

equally oppressive corporations, and tyrannized more rigorously, not less, than most areas of Earth. There is no room for salient individualism in space in the foreseeable future. And notice, by the way, how neatly Ted's suggestion falls in with the desires of those who are already wallowing in the downpour of bucks from the space effort. If the space frontier did channel off "the forces of violent change," and those who "don't like the way we live" could go elsewhere, as Ted hopes, then the great industries could further extend their control of the sheep on this planet, and never worry over a change that would bring about the system's richly deserved downfall.

At the moment it seems likely that the moon will be cut up like an Edam cheese by the big corporations, and Earthlings like Johnstone's rebel, shooting away from the home planet in search of a fight, will be required to ask for landing permission at Luna City from North American Rockwell, AT&T, or IBM. Barron Hilton, presumably in some seriousness, announced in a letter to Playboy "Hilton's long-range plans for a Lunar Hilton," just like in "2001." Is this Katzenjammer vision really what we dreamed of? As Bergeron says, "that's the way things are." But it shouldn't make us happy.

Bergeron avers that he, for one, finds that his "sense of wonder is continually aroused by man's epic reach for the stars." But I, for another, cannot discover much in the space program to lift me. The sight of good American crewcut heroes -- the Word made plastic, spacesuited eruptions of human credulity -- setting forth to conquer space for American industry rouses not a sense of wonder in me, but one of despair and depression. IBM and AT&T are expanding their power over me, and over all mankind, under the shabby pretense of following bugle calls of idealism. The heroes may be courageous, but not as courageous as Bertrand Russell and other men who have gone to jail as pacifists in time of war. Their accomplishments may be of some importance, but of small moment when compared to real human accomplishments: Bach's "B Minor" mass and Mozart's string quartets, Bruegel's "Land of Cockaigne" and Goya's "Los Caprichos," Shakespeare's "King Lear" and Swift's Gulliver's Travels. Let us strive to keep a proper perspective.

"The sky is the daily bread of the eyes," Emerson once remarked. It has been good to gaze out upon the moon and the stars in these latter days, especially, when every field and wood in view, every alkali flat and lonely ocean beach, is private property, usually posted with No Trespassing signs and sometimes patrolled by cops with shotguns at the ready. Everything but the ocean itself, and the sky, belongs to somebody. It was good to see something that belonged to nobody and therefore to everybody.

I wish that this restful vista for the eyes and mind might have remained uncorrupted, and that the only deeds to the moon were the ones pasted in scrapbooks by members of the Chicon II (1952). But now is the early starlight of a new age, and things are going to get even tighter, and worse. The familiar line from an old song is in imminent danger of becoming obsolete: "The moon belongs to everyone... The best things in life are free." There is much idealistic talk about man's "expanding into the universe," but as I see it, the space program, au fond, resembles the overflow of a pissoir.

In Karen Anderson's space ballad, Johnny Corrin discovers a new world out in space, somewhere out on the "milkfoam way," where "long blue rollers foamed and curled" and "Tree and meadow met the sand." And so with Johnny Corrin we have come full-circle, back to heaven and home, for Karen is describing Earth -- Earth as it was before we ravaged it. This planet, after all is said and sung, is probably the only one in the cloud of gnat worlds called the galaxy which will ever be as a "shadow of a great rock in a weary land" to homo sapiens. Having polluted this world nearly to extinction (26), the capitalists are heading in a mad rush for the moon and the other planets. If there is anything up there to plunder, they will do so.

But Earth is not a chocolate drop, to be casually tossed aside if it falls into the dust, and replaced by another like it from the cellophane bag. If it is even possible to accomplish any more after the havoc wrought by greedy exploitation, I would like for mankind to stay here and work to repair this lovely and comfortable world. The round, tidy sum of \$24,000,000,000 ought to finance a small start on a refurbishing job.

It's a brighter dream than the dream of conquering space.

* * * * *

20 July 1969

There are men on my moon.

Written June-July 1969

NOTES

1. The two editors were T. O'Connor Sloane, in whose case I cannot cite chapter and verse, unfortunately, and Raymond A. Palmer, who said he disbelieved in interplanetary travel "because of new science facts uncovered in my investigations of Shaver's Mystery." He added, "To the moon, perhaps, but not to the planets. There are forces in space that are not permissive of human life. It would be instant death to the Space Traveler when he reached outer space. To the moon, perhaps, because the moon is within the Earth's own 'no-word-coined' ring. You might even say (rather loosely) that it's possible because a bridge of 'air' exists between the two planets, except that air isn't the word. However, no more info, when published proves the Shaver Mystery. We're going to let the Army prove it for us. When they shoot those rockets!" (Strictly sic, from Space Flight, February 1947, edited by Gerry de la Ree.)

2. The 33 science fiction writers and fans who were polled by de la Ree were generally much too optimistic about the time required to build and launch a missile that would reach the moon. The modal guess

was 1950; the guesses ranged from 1947 to 1960 (aside from one guess of A.D. 2000). But six voters, including Dr C. L. Barrett, Hugo Gernsback, and L. Sprague de Camp, guessed 1960, which was pretty close. The first missile to reach the moon was Lunik II, which hit the lunar surface 13 September 1959, 35 hours after launching by Soviet scientists. The American Ranger 7 hit the moon 31 July 1964.

On the other hand, most voters in the poll guessed either too early or too late as to the date of the first manned flight to the moon. The only participant to guess accurately was Manly Wade Wellman, who predicted the event would take place between 1965 and 1970. Harry Warner was the closest guesser who took a specific date: 1970. Some of the other guesses as to the date of the first moon landing: A. E. van Vogt, 1949; Will F. Jenkins, 1950; Sam Moskowitz, 1952; John W. Campbell, Jr., 1953; Willy Ley, 1954; Theodore Sturgeon, 1955; Bob Tucker, 1955; Richard S. Shaver, 1960; Hugo Gernsback, 1972; Raymond A. Palmer, 1975; L. Sprague de Camp, 1975-2000. A. Langley Searles, the person who had believed that the first unmanned flight wouldn't take place till 2000, predicted that a manned flight wouldn't succeed till A.D. 2100! (Space Flight, February 1947, edited by Gerry de la Ree.)

3. "Keeping Posted," Saturday Evening Post, 3 May 1947, page 10. Although declaring that he had "an engineer's reluctance to make prophecies that may sound wild-haired," Heinlein was persuaded to gaze into the "crystal ball" as follows: "First unmanned rocket to the moon in five years. First manned rocket in ten years. Permanent base there in 15 years. After that, anything." He added, "If my figures are wrong, they are almost certainly wrong in being too timid." At the same time, Heinlein warned that "we may wake up some morning to find that the Lunar SSR has petitioned the Kremlin for admission of the moon to the USSR."

4. Quoted in Neikas #20, page 25; edited by Ed Meskys et al.

5. Quoted in Warhoon #26, February 1969, page 5; edited by Richard Bergeron. From Oopsla! #23, November 1957; edited by Gregg Calkins.

6. Warhoon #26, page 5.

7. Editorial, Amazing Stories, July 1969, page 125.

8. "Merry-Go-Round," San Francisco Chronicle, 15 July 1969, page 33.

9. "By the end of 1965, NASA was considering emergency measures to save the Apollo project from collapse, including the extreme step of cancelling its contract with North American and finding another company to develop Apollo." -- Newsweek, 7 July 1969, page 53.

10. "Packed S.F. Luncheon Hails Apollo Astros," San Francisco Examiner, 18 June 1969, page 12.

11. The question is asked on Tom Lehrer's record, That Was the Year That Was (Reprise 6179), recorded at the hungry i, San Francisco, in July 1965. Lehrer's own answer to the question is, "Well, it was good old American know-how, that's what -- as provided by good old Americans like Doktor Wernher von Braun."

12. The figure of \$24,000,000,000 is often cited as the cost of putting a man on the moon. However, much more than this was spent on the space effort. Earlier, the Mercury project cost \$276,500,000, and the Gemini project \$1,300,000,000. These figures are from Newsweek, 7 July 1969, page 54, which estimates that \$25,600,000,000 has been spent on "space" to date. Huge as that figure is, it seems like small change compared with the \$14,000,000,000 per year that the United States spends to "save" Vietnam from the "Communists," but however prolonged, that war must end, while the conquest of space is an open-ended bonanza.

13. The cost cited for the construction of the VAB is taken from a column by Banks Mebane, who toured the building. (Starling #13, January 1969, page 43; edited by Hank Luttrell and Lesleigh Couch.) The whole Kennedy Space Center cost \$875,000,000,000, according to Newsweek, 7 July 1969, page 44.

14. Before he signaled the go-ahead for the Apollo project in May 1961, President Kennedy used to ask plaintively, "Can't you fellows invent some other race on earth that will do some good?" Newsweek, 7 July 1969, page 42.

15. Warhoon #26, page 5.

16. The Russians, of course, racked up another "first" by putting a woman, Valentina Tereshkova, into space 16-19 June 1963. The first female space traveler orbited the earth 48 times. In an unpublished novel (circa 1960) Marion Zimmer Bradley made an excellent case for the superiority of spacewomen, but she was assuming that astronauts would be chosen entirely for intelligence and skill, not to fit a popular image. I have heard that Robert Heinlein, appearing on television about the time of Apollo 11, also advocated using women astronauts.

17. "Patriotic Gore," The New York Review of Books, 19 June 1969, page 35.

18. An integral part of the astronomical Kauderwelsch, the word "status" is used more often in space than in Beverly Hills. One of the remarks from Apollo 10 that the bible college sky-pilot objected to provides another example of its use: "The crew status is at tired and happy and hungry and thirsty and horny and all those other things."

19. "Le Mot Juste for the Moon," Esquire, July 1969, page 56. Of course Glenn, like Roger Maris in another field, is entitled to an asterisk, and no more, in the Saga of Man: "*The first American in orbit was John H. Glenn Jr." He was the third human to achieve this, er, status. Yuri Gagarin was the first and Gherman Titov the second. I have no record of what the Russians have said from space, but, considering that they are mostly military men too, they probably speak drivel like Glenn and cogeners.

20. "Where is Thy Sting?" The New York Review of Books, 24 April 1969, page 3. I should also mention for the record the U. S. commemorative postage stamp saluting Apollo 8, issued 5 May 1969. Its diruretic nature is indicated by its legend, "In the beginning God..."

21. Time, 18 July 1969, pages 27-30.

22. Terrence O'Flaherty, "The Biggest Story of All," San Francisco Chronicle, 20 June 1969, page 48.

23. "The Revolutionist's Handbook," Man and Superman: A Comedy and a Philosophy. New York: Brentano's, 1905, page 205.

24. Doroga v kosmos (The Road to the Cosmos), Moscow: Voennoye Izdatelstvo Ministerstva Oborony. My information is taken from a review of the book in the Times Literary Supplement, 5 June 1969, page 607.

25. NASA is nominally a civilian agency, but it is full of military executives; for example, Lt General Samuel Phillips, Apollo program director in Washington, who was formerly the Minuteman ICBM development director. As Lewis Mumford points out (Newsweek, 7 July 1969, page 61): "Space exploration...is strictly a military by-product; and without pressure from the Pentagon and the Kremlin it would never have found a place in any national budget." Note also the Apollo 11 crew patch, reproduced many places, including page 67 of the cited Newsweek. It is a patch very similar to those worn by men in many army outfits.

26. "Pratt-Whitney in Connecticut made the intricate machinery by which Apollo produces its own electricity. But unlike commercial plants which pollute the atmosphere, its by-product is water which the astronauts drink." -- Drew Pearson, "Merry-Go-Round," 15 July 1969. These baboons don't mind polluting Earth, but they can't bear to pollute empty space!

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MAYBE "ROTSLER FOR TAFFI"?