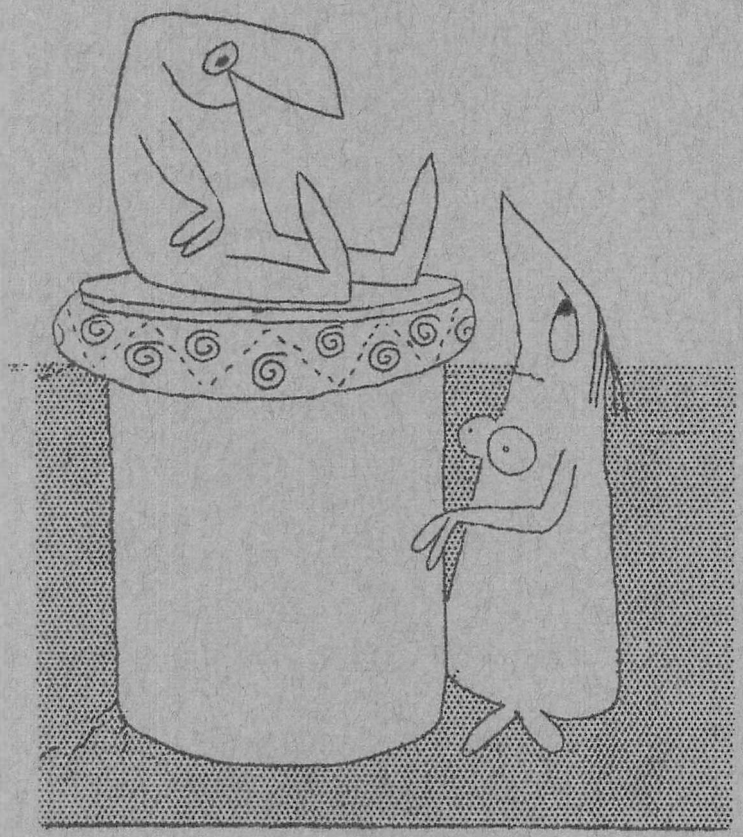

This is NULL-F #40, the Giant Tenth Anniversary Issue, not to be confused with any other Giant Tenth Anniversary issues of NULL-F, written and published by Ted White, 339, 49th St., Brooklyn, N.Y., 11220 and mimeoed by QWERTYUIOPress. Thish is postmailed to FAPA 110, and will also appear in APA F 34 and APA L 20. Illos are by Rotsler, of course.
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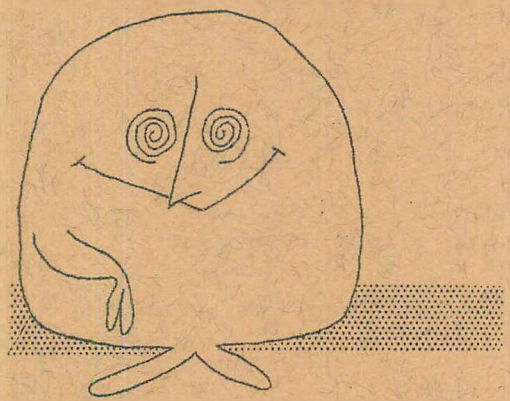

UFFISH THOTS

IT'S FANAC TIME! There's something contageous about fanac. It's an infectuous disease, I think. Day before yesterday Terry Carr paid me one of his quarterly visits, a large sheaf of stencils for LIGHTHOUSE under his arm. Yesterday he was here again, as the mighty, yea thundering Qwertyuiopresses rolled out another superb issue of his fanzine. Then, after he left last night, Andy and Barbara Main came over to work on JESUS BUG. Barbara was wearing sexy red pants, and I'm not surprised Andy accomplished little that night. Tonight he was back again, and Barbara was less distractingly garbed... dammit. And the mighty presses once again rolled their thunder across the land...

The itch is upon me. I have watched the production of two very fine looking fanzines, which I have myself by my own hand mimeographed upon a fine new shade of goldenrod-tan paper that my jobber had just gotten in, and the itch is upon me. I thirst to produce my <u>own</u> fanzine upon that paper.

I was discussing this with Andy and Barbara tonight, over the roar of the water in my downstairs sink. (I had the water running to help humidify the place and thus combat static electricity.) "I thirst to produce my own fanzine upon this paper," I said, fingering a sheet of it. "Perhaps I will produce another issue of NULL-F to accompany your postmailing. After all," I said, "that will lend stature to the mailing." Then I had a happier notion. "Fancy that," I said. "The next issue of NULL-F will be the fortieth, truly a Number To Conjure With. And, if I include it with the 110th mailing, postmailing-wise, it will coincide with my Tenth Anniversary in FAPA."

It was too much to pass up.

BOOK WEEK: I have been reading some fascinating books lately. They represent a pretty diverse group, taken as a whole, but each represents an area of my present interests, so I thought I might go into several of them here.

<u>Rapid Transit in New York City (And In Other Great Cities)</u> was

published by the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York in 1905.

For anyone who is a New York City history buff, as I am, or a fan of rapid transit, as I also am, this is a truly invaluable work. It dwells a bit too much on reports of the minutes of the meetings of the Chamber of Commerce, but this is understandable when one realizes the extent of the Chamber's role in obtaining for the city its first subway.

The book is divided into the following chapters, the titles of which are fairly self explanitory:

Chapter 1: The Beginnings & the Growth of New York City
Chapter 2: Plans for Relief /of early congestion/
Chapter 3: Early Subway Schemes
Chapter 4: Bridges to Brooklyn:
Brooklyn Bridge; Williamsburgh Bridge; Manhattan Bridge; Blackwells Island /Queensboro/ Bridge
Chapter 5: Tunnels:
Hudson River Tunnel; Hudson & Manhattan Railroad Tunnel; Pennsylvania Railroad Tunnels
Chapter 6: Elevated Railroads
Chapter 7: Rapid Transit Commission of 1875
Chapter 8: Commission of 1891
Chapter 9: The Chamber of Commerce
Chapter 10: Abram S. Hewitt
Chapter 11: Commission of 1894
Chapter 12: Preparing the Subway Contract
Chapter 13: Contract Awarded and Work Begun
Chapter 14: Engineering Features of the New York Subway
Chapter 15: Equipment of the Subway
Chapter 16: Work of Commission During Construction of Subway
Chapter 17: Opening the Subway
Chapter 18: Future Rapid Transit in New York
Chapter 19: Financial Statement
Chapter 20: Rapid Transit in Other Cities:
London; Berlin; Budapest; Paris; Glasgow; Boston; Chicago; Philadelphia
Chapter 21: Present Rapid Transit Laws
Chapter 22: Appreciation of the Chamber

As you can see, this is a formidible book. And, since it is well illustrated with photographs and engravings, a remarkable book as well.

While NYC's first elevated line (the Greenwich St.-Ninth Avenue line; now long torn down) was opened in 1878, the first subway line, which is presently a part of the IRT line, running from Brooklyn Bridge up Fourth/Park Avenue to Grand Central Station, under 42nd St. to Times Square, and up Broadway to 145th St, was not begun until 1900, and not completed until 1904. The intervening over twenty years was filled with all imaginable sorts of wrangling, some of it from unexpected quarters.

The first elevated line was pulled by a miniature steam engine, and was quite filthy, making a nuisance of itself for all who passed beneath it or lived along its right of way. And necessarily while subways were proposed, only London actually attempted running steam-powered trains underground -- and then rather unhappily. Some novel suggestions were made, most notible Alfred Beach's 1868 Pneumatic Subway, for which a sample tunnel was actually constructed in lower Manhattan. But Beach's idea was probably not practical, and he encountered the opposition of Boss Tweed, who had a stranglehold on the stages

and horse-cars which plied the streets then. But once electrification came into existence, and the elevateds were converted to third-rail, the principal objection to a subway (filth and fumes) was negated. Why, then, the long wait?

Abram Hewett summed it up as the difference between a republic and a monarchy; in Europe the powers that be need only decide a subway is necessary, and work is begun on it. Here, there were endless miles of red tape and legal problems. Not the least of these were posed by the need to cut under some private property.

The principal reason subways run under streets is that of property rights: the city owns the streets and what's under them, but private citizens and businesses own the land under buildings and private property. If a subway must run under this property, the city must first obtain the consent of the property owners.

They objected. There are always those who will object, to anything. And the law which had established the Rapid Transit Commission stated that in case of controversy, the question should be referred to the state supreme court.

One of the most puzzling circumstances of the building of this country's first and most important subway system is the early opposition of the courts to it. After a commission appointed by the court unanimously approved the plans for the "Broadway Subway," as it was then known, the court ruled against it, and indeed questioned the constitutionality of a subway! Deciding that the court had ruled only in the matter of the route submitted it, the commission drew up plans for a different subway (the one actually constructed) and, after new opposition by the court, finally was able to push it through, find a contractor (no easy task; no one knew whether a subway would be practical), and begin construction.

Thus began the first New York subway. It is also the subject of History of the New York Rapid Transit Railroad, a 1902 work devoted largely to photographs of the subway under construction, and, in the rear, ten pages of advertisements such as "Vitrified Salt Glazed Underground Conduit -- American Vitrified Conduit Co. -- Write for Catalogue" and "The Sicilian Asphalt Paving Co -- Sicilian Rock Asphalt Pavements & Trinidad Asphalt Pavements for Streets".

The Beach Tube is exhaustively covered in the 1873 volume, The Broadway Underground Railway - New York City.

The final volume among those I read was History & Description of Rapid Transit Routes in New York City, a reprint from "Apprendix A of the Annual Report of the Public Service Commission for the First District, State of New York to the Legislature, for the Year Ending December 31, 1909." It was published in January, 1910. This book consists strictly of a careful, point-by-point enumberation of each subway route planned, including those completed, under construction, and presently only proposed.

Only the original subway, with its extension to Atlantic Ave. in Brooklyn and other extensions into the Bronx, was completed. But the first BMT routes were under construction: the Manhattan bridge crossing with its extension down Flatbush Avenue as far as Atlantic, and the 4th Avenue line, which begins at Flatbush and Atlantic, and runs half a block from my house. The proposals were the most interesting, however, since they constituted a sort of never-never world of elsewhen. None of the routes proposed was built as then proposed, but some were startlingly similar -- including those built for the IND in the mid-thirties. In all, I think our present system is superior to the weird maze they planned in 1909, but still it's a shame the 34th St. and 23rd St. subways weren't built, nor were they replaced by

moving platforms, of a type first shown at the St. Louis Exposition, and much more recently at the Robert Moses Ersatz World Fair. Concerning both "Route No. 6, Fifty-Ninth St. Route" and "Route 7, Twenty-Third St. Route," the Rapid Transit board stated, "no action would be taken by the Board at present, especially in view of the fact of the proposed test of the moving platforms in 42nd Street, and the possibility that in case such test were a success, the company might want to bid on one or the other of these routes."

I have no idea what happened to that test, but in the mid-fifties the Transit Authority announced plans to scrap the 42nd St. Shuttle in favor of a somewhat fancied-up plan involving a short moving platform and a loop of moving individual cars. The plan was not workable -- one has only to view the careful supervision necessary for the use of such devices at the World Fair to imagine the chaos of the shuttle during rush hour -- and neither, I presume, was the earlier one. A pity.

A Deadly Shade of Gold is the fifth of John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee books for Gold Medal, and, at 287 pages, it's billed as "a double-length adventure."

MacDonald stated once (in The Mystery Writer's Handbook) that "Effective delineation of character was once, in mystery fiction, the frosting on the cake. Now, I am afraid it has become the cake itself, with plot intricacies the frosting. It requires, and justly I believe, the greatest amount of work, and yields the greatest rewards. It is, after all, the art of writing about people rather than things."

The pleasure of picking up and reading a new MacDonald is the pleasure of encountering again his gift for characterization, coupled with a pulp-writer's knowledge of pacing and movement. (When I was trying to explain to Dave Van Arnam how one alternates the reflective with the active in action-writing, how one builds and then releases tension within single scenes, and how one writes more about the fast action and less about static and passive scenes, all in order to carry the reader and keep him involved, I pointed to a particular chapter of Gold, where McGee is casing a Mexican villa at night. In one chapter, he scales a wall, meets the threat of a watch-dog, watches and listens at windows, sometimes to observe static scenes and sometimes climactic ones, is discovered, and escapes. "Copy that chapter out, word for word," I told Dave, "and your appreciation for pacing and movement will be vastly enriched.") MacDonald's appreciation of characterization descends from Chandler, of course, and at times McGee in his ruminations over modern-day society sounds startlingly like Philip Marlowe.

Certainly in an era dominated by cardboard melodramas like the Fleming epics on the one hand, and the increasingly large numbers of gothic mysteries written by tidy old ladies on the other hand, the addition of a new character in the Chandler vein is to be welcomed.

The Rawhide Years is the second Norman A. Fox book I've read. (See my article in LIGHTHOUSE on westerns; the title of that article, by the way, is not mine.)

After MacDonald, the characterization is thinner, more prone to simplifications and stereotypes. But it is still satisfying, because Fox is a story-teller, and his story, as usual, is fascinating. Long Lightning was based on the expansion of the telegraph through the west. Night Passage, a third book of his recently read, deals with the railroads. This one is concerned with cattle-ranching in Montana, and the

river boats on the Missouri. Fox knows his milieus; his westerns are never set in a static stereotype of the Land of the Cowboys; a sense of change runs all through his books, the relentless tide of history is part and parcel of his stories. At one point our hero has come into Fort Benton, just as the town is celebrating the arrival of the new railroad. But in a bar a man tells him, "Listen to these blithering fools... Celebrating their own funeral, only they don't know it. To hear the talk, you'd think we were going to be twice as important a trading center with both the river and the railroad. Have you seen those advertisements the Benton Transportation Company has been buying in the papers? 'Rail and River!' they scream at you. But this is the finish of the boats, lad. Sure, we've had a big season; the thirty-fifth boat arrived yesterday. But the boats can't compete with railroad freight rates. That locomotive bell we were hearing today was a death knell. What started when the Northern Pacific built into Montana will be finished now that the Manitoba has come to our doorstep. Fort Benton is on its way to being just another cow town."

The story itself deals with a teenaged boy, an orphan, who runs away from St. Louis, is framed for a riverboat murder, and then, eight years later and a man, clears his name. Not a very new plot, but well told, and one I've always enjoyed. (I think my dissatisfaction with Pangborn's Davy was that it promised to be a similar story of a boy growing into manhood and justifying itself, but lapsed into a long series of paranthesis. Ah weel.)

Philip Jose Farmer's Dare is a book I reviewed at greater length for the British ZENITH (if they accept the review, that is), but its close juxtposition here with such as MacDonald's Deadly Shade of Gold only underscores its shortcomings. Gone is the story-teller of Green Odyssey, gone the full, rich characterizations of Alley God; only Farmer's ideas, as fascinating and outrageous as ever, remain -- and even these are used piecemeal and discarded unfinished. The book has the same hasty, cobbled-together feeling of his last, Tongues of the Moon, but while that miserable failure dragged indeterminably, this one is far too compressed.

One wonders what is happening to Farmer. I recall reading somewhere, some years back -- was it in Pitfcs? -- that Farmer had decided to discard his old psycho-biological sf for adventure and action. But, *sigh*, Farmer appears not to understand the themes which make adventure satisfying (Tongues, Inside Outside, and Dare are wholly unsatisfying in theme, conception, and execution; one gains no pleasure through identification with the protagonists), and he cannot plot action worth b*ans. In fact, I'm tempted to say that he cannot plot at all; his last three books consist of the wooden exposition and development of potentially intriguing ideas -- a typical amateur's mistake, confusing idea with plot -- and are wretchedly plotted. (An editor with a paperback publishing house told me, flatly, "Farmer can't plot.")

It's sort of sad, because since I read "The Lovers" in STARTLING in 1952, I've been a fan of Farmer's, and I hate to lose him...

On the other hand, if I've lost a Farmer, I've gained a Dick (no smiggers, please). Phil Dick's latest, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, is his most brilliant (and confusing) book to date. Unlike some fans, I enjoy being confused by an author when he handles it on this plane.

The book is built around a number of characters, all of whom are connected in some fashion with a drug, Can-D. The drug allows one to

go into and participate in a world of dolls, the Perky Pat Layouts. While there, one can communicate with others who've "gone into" the same layout, and live an entirely vicarious life. The drug is officially illegal, but is commonly used by the bored colonists on Mars, and is sold to them by the same company which legally sells the PP Layouts (a marvelous satire on Barbi Dolls) to them. Meanwhile, Earth is rapidly heating up, and noontime in the summer will kill an unprotected human being. Into all this comes the creature who had left the solar system many years earlier to voyage to Proxima Centuri as Palmer Eldritch. He may or may not still be Palmer Eldritch, but he has brought back a new drug, Chew-Z, ostensibly to compete with Can-D, but actually a far more dangerous drug which places one in Eldritch's subjective universe.

From the time one of the protagonists is first unwillingly injected with Chew-Z, one can no longer be certain any of the rest of the book has any objective reality. For Leo Bulero (head of PPL) goes through halucinatory sequence after sequence, each beginning with the feeling that at last the drug has worn off.

The confusion of realities (and the reason for the real reader-confusion) takes place not only between subjective realities of the protagonists, but also between their subjective realities and the book's "objective" reality. For things glimpsed while under Chew-Z may be relevant to the "real world" of the book as well. There is a confusion of time, and people who have not taken the drug see the "ghosts" of those who have. And Eldritch's stigmata -- artificial eyes, teeth and jaw, and arm -- keep cropping up on those who've taken the drug.

Who is Eldritch? A theological thread runs through the book; he might be God. Then again, for many he -- it -- is closer to Satan.

Barney Mayerson meets a Martian predator in the desert of Mars, and is at its mercy.

> "Get down off that contraption," the Martian predator thought, in a mixture of hope and need. "I can't reach you up there." The last was intended, certainly, to be a private thought, retained in camera, but somehow it had gotten projected, too. The creature had no finesse. "I'll wait," it decided. "He has to get down eventually."
>
> ...
>
> "All right," Barney said. "Here I come." He hopped from the cab of the dredge, flailing with his wrench.
>
> The creature dashed at him.
>
> Almost to him, five feet away, it suddenly squealed, veered, and ran past, not touching him. He spun, and watched it go. "Unclean," it thought to itself; it halted at a safe distance and fearfully regarded him, tongue lolling. "You're an unclean thing," it informed him dismally.
>
> Unclean, Barney thought. How? Why?
>
> "You just are," the predator answered. "Look at yourself. I can't eat you; I'd be sick." It remained where it was, drooping with disappointment and -- aversion. He had horrified it.
>
> "Maybe we're all unclean to you," he said. "All of us from Earth, alien to this world. Unfamiliar."
>
> "Just you," it told him flatly. "Look at -- ugh! -- your right arm, your hand. There's something intolerably wrong with you. How can you live with yourself? Can't you cleanse yourself some way?"
>
> He did not bother to look at his arm and hand; it was unnecessary.

Dick's writing style is functional, although his dialogue is much more than that. But it is much less his writing than his unusual conception which has led to books like this one. The ultimate confrontation between someone who has taken Chew-Z and absorbed the Eldritch stigmata and the telepathic Martian creature who senses the wrongness of the stigmata is a concept which lies almost within the realm of the surrealistic.

But Dick is really attacking the same question here that he has asked in Man in the High Castle, Martian Time Slip and The Penultimate Truth (especially the latter): what is real? Is there any true and ultimately objective reality? Is the world we, the "sane," view any more real than that of the insane -- or only a different world?

Dick's probes into reality are disturbing, because we live so close to the surface of our realities, and most of us are afraid to dig deeper and find out what sort of foundations we're standing on. (The hysterical fear of the psychedelic drugs evidenced by the orthodoxy is an excellent example of this.) Although Phil does his public digging only in the pages of a work of fiction, his characters, although all somewhat repulsive, are intensely believable, very real people, and it is difficult not to identify with them, for all their weaknesses and neuroses. And thus the digging is transferred to our private realities, and one has only to hit the segment in Man in the High Castle where one of the protagonists is translated into our San Francisco from his own, for the hairs on the backs of our necks to stand up. The truest element of pure fantasy in that book is a straight slice of present-day reality -- truely a monumental achievement for the author.

For this reason, Phil Dick is undoubtedly the most disturbing author in the science fiction field today, and one of the most important. His questions probe deeper than the superficial areas of presidential elections, and Heinlein's perverted politics; he certainly deserves more attention from the writers and critics who've contented themselves with all the straw men Heinlein has flung them. If you want to plumb symbolism, let us not worry about the political implications of the name of the cat in Farnam's Freehold -- how about Doctor Smile, the suitcase, in The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch?

These were by no means the measure of the books I've read in the last week -- and, in fact, I cheated, since a couple were read earlier, much earlier. But I couldn't find Sex & the College Girl, which had some very funny passages that I wanted to quote, and I gave back the copy of Sin Whisper I borrowed, so I can't bolster my claim to surprise at the explicitness of recent newsstand pornography with any quotes from it.

"Pornography" is a word which is being much misused of late. I've seen it applied to some of Farmer's sf books, and I've also heard it used to describe clinically anti-erotic sex-scenes in modern best-sellers. By my definition, "pornography" is fiction written with the express purpose of arousing the reader, and the subsidiary purpose in most cases of providing fresh fantasies for masturbation. (This is certainly the prime use of pornography.) Naturally, this in the end leaves us with a subjective definition, since some people can be arouse to orgasm by almost anything, but in general I'd say that to be pornography a work should be obviously intended for nothing else.

I am not opposed to pornograohy -- it keeps the kids off the streets -- and indeed I think that if we legalized it, once the lure of the forbidden was disippated, we'd see a great deal less of it, and perhaps less use of the sexual lure in advertising as well.

But as long as pornography is regarded as a social evil (an attitude which grows, I expect, out of the subsidiary notions that a) thinking about sex is evil, and b) doing something about sex, especially by oneself, is more evil, unless blessed by the bonds of matrimony), and we are treated to the waste of millions of dollars in anti-porno campaigns by such unlikely agencies as the Post Office, the under-the-counter market for the stuff will flourish.

An outgrowth of the under-cover stuff is the legitimate (if that's the word I want) "sex book," now to be found on a surprisingly large number of newsstands, most of them metropolitan. Fabian and Saber were the earliest to call down the wrath of the censors; more recently Bill Hamling's Nightstand line came in for a crackdown, the financial repurcusions of which reduced ROGUE to bimonthly and put the Regency Books line into dormancy.

Recently I borrowed a copy of a Hamling book, Sin Whisper, and read it. It was fast, easy reading, and the topic would delight any old fans of JUSTICE WEEKLY among you, like Norm Clarke and Boyd Raeburn -- the protagonist gets embroiled in the ads in something called WHISPER. His early adventures with deceptively advertised girly movies and the like ring true, but his later escapades with 'sin-crazed' types of various sorts read like wishful thinking. In the end, true to Hollywood morality, he kills two women he'd stumbled onto while they were making love (to each other), and then commits suicide. Wasn't that wonderful, folks? Justice triumphed in the end!

The sex scenes were amazingly explicite, considering that no "unprintable" or four-letter words were used except "love." "Love" became a verb, and a euphemism for every other four-letter word in the author's considerable lexicon. For somehow he managed to work in complete (or nearly so) descriptions of just about every sex-practice in Dr. Frank S. Caprio's Variations in Sexual Behavior. I was surprised.

Considering the fact that a great many sex books on display in my corner candy store (53rd & Fourth Avenue, folks) along with the latest GAMMA and the like, have covers which verge upon the obscene and are certainly erotic, I had always assumed that the interiors would be conversely dull. I was wrong, I guess -- although the Hamling line (or, lines, now) does have a rather more innocuous set of covers than most, and the old assumption may still hold true...

Well, so much for BOOK WEEK.

GREAT MOMENTS ON TV: I was watching Hullabuloo tonight, in the company of Dave Van Arnam, Andy & Barbara Main, and Lee Hoffman. It was, ostensibly, a Writers Group meeting.

NBC's Hullabuloo is a thin imitation of ABC's Shindig; somehow they manage to pad the show out unmercifully, and I always wonder, after each show, why I watched it again.

Tonight they had Joey Heatherton on. She was on the debuting show, and managed to embarrass me with an amateur smorging of modern-dance and strip-joint bump and grind, such as I hadn't seen since I left Baltimore, lo! these many years ago.

Tonight she mostly sang. She's not much better at that. But she wanted to do some West Side Story material, so they let her take part in a medley which included "America".

"I want to be in America," she sang, doing a little dance step, and twitching her skirt. She grabbed hold of the skirt and raised it to the tops of her thighs. "Everything's free in America," she added.

It was a moment to be remembered. -Ted White