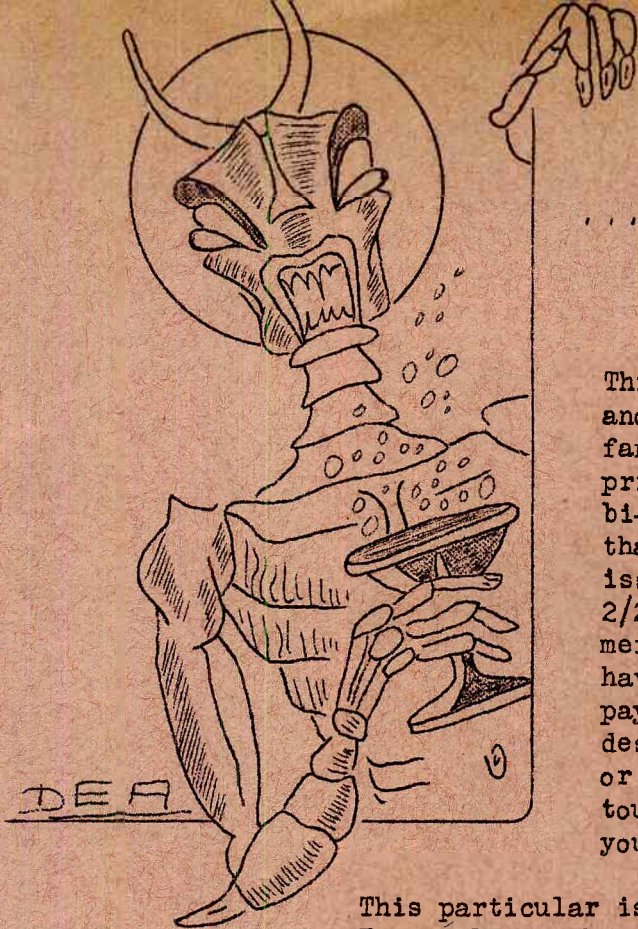


17



HARNESS



...DANS UN VERRE D'EAU

This is the Seventeenth (not to be confused with another magazine of a similar name) issue of the fanzine called, strangely enough, OOPSLA! The printing schedule is supposedly an "irregular bi-monthly" but so far it's been more irregular than anything else. Prices vary, but 15¢ per issue is desired, with longer subscriptions at 2/25¢, 4/50¢. Overseas fans may have the issue merely for a letter of comment, but several fans have made donations to the TAFF in my name in payment, which I think is a nice gesture. Also desirable would be detailed maps of your country or an occasional promag, booklet, pictures, tourist propaganda, or what-have-you. Anything you may deem proper will do for an exchange.

This particular issue is intended for publication in May 1955. Things being what they are, I'm typing this in late March. I tell you this for no particular reason, but it may help to explain why this first editorial often seems so much older than Therbligs. The reason being that it is older than Therbligs. That is because it is typed first. Earlier, you see. Yes.

A number of fans have indicated a desire to see the entire adventures of THE HARP STATESIDE in one volume. I am agreeable and I imagine Walt would be, so if each of you would care to indicate whether or not you would like to pay for a copy (about 25¢ would cover it) I'll start drafting up plans. Don't send any money---yet---but just give me an idea of how many to print. These would be printed on a non-trade basis and in addition to OOPSLA's regular (!) publishing schedule and I'd need to sell about 75 copies to make it economically feasible for me. The biggest drawback is the fact that Walt has not yet finished writing the adventures of the Stateside trip, but perhaps he would make arrangements to take care of this point. The entire adventures of THE HARP STATESIDE begin in Chicago in 1952 at the Chicon II (printed originally in QUANDRY 27 & 28) and continue through four issues of OOPS, plus this one. I have no idea how much longer the balance will run, but the entire magazine should approach 50 pages.

Slated for publication next issue is a reprint. This may cause some of you to groan when you hear it, being unalterably opposed to reprinting in any shape or form. If you are one of those people, don't give up hope but read on. Because the reprint will consist of Bob Shaw's wonderful FANSMANSHIP LECTURES. These are to fandom what George Gobel is to television and I have no doubt that many latecomers to the scene are unfamiliar with the fine art of fansmanship. It is woefully apparent. The next issue of OOPSLA! should help do something about that.

Say, Redd, is OOPS a science-fiction fanzine? I was just wondering because I happened to mention that IF was on my recommended reading list, last issue, and if it's okay with the readership, I'd like to add the rest of the titles I buy. There was a time, once, when I bought most everything they published but in recent years I've become much more selective. I don't know how my reading lists compares with most

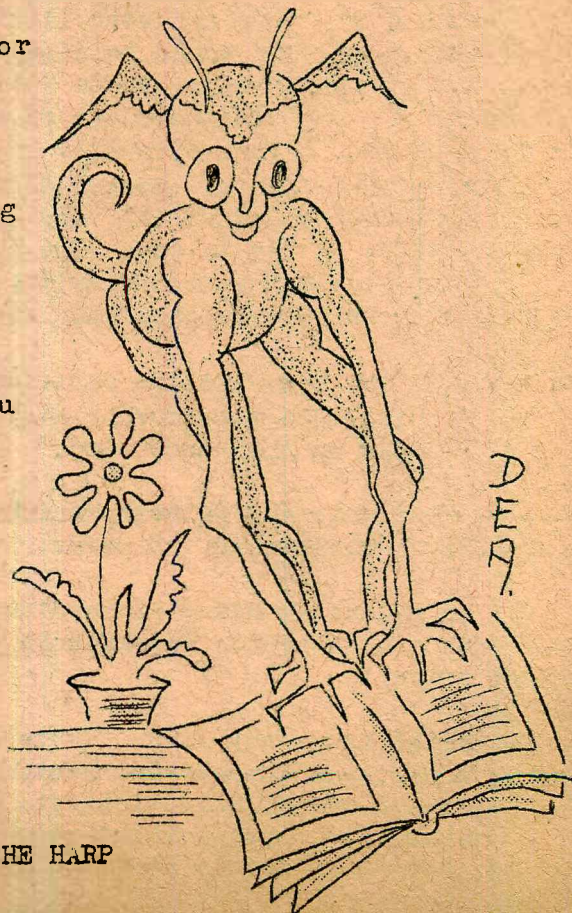
...Dans Un Verre D'Eau II

other fans' or the BNF's, but here it is. Regular as clockwork I have my dealer save every issue of ASTOUNDING, F&SF, GALAXY (though sometimes I wonder about this one), IF, BEYOND (where is this one lately?), and STARTLING (this one has, with the Spring 1955 issue, combined with TWS and TSM, a move I would have regretted deeply a year ago but which causes only mild wonder today; the wonder being how long the present STARTLING will last as a "pulp" magazine.) Once on my list were GALAXY SF NOVELS (now disappeared from the stands), FANTASTIC and AMAZING (deteriorated rapidly after their initial rise in quality with the switch to digest-size and I stopped buying them again), FANTASY FICTION (where is it?), TWO COMPLETE SCIENCE-ADVENTURE BOOKS (your guess is as good as mine) and FANTASTIC UNIVERSE (which I stopped buying because of the 50¢ price tag and never bothered looking at again after the drop to 35¢). There may be much good reading I am missing, but those six regular magazines have proven to be worthy of reading issue after issue. I also manage to buy and read about 90% of the pocket books being published, and there are some astonishingly excellent selections being published both new and reprinted in this media.

With this issue, OOPSLA! goes to nine "foreign" countries and has more of an international circulation than it has ever had before. Included among these countries are such foreign powers as Canada, which is just about as close to the US as you can get, but I have to draw the line somewhere. Anyhow, OOPS goes to Canada, England, Norway, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Australia, Sweden, and Belgium, with the bulk of the copies to England, Scotland and Canada. It is interesting to note that only one more copy goes to Canada than to Scotland, which speaks something concerning the amount of fanac done in the two countries. Canfans had best look to their laurels. Almost 1/3 of the circulation of OOPS is mailed outside United States boundaries.

A note to other faneds having trouble with rising publication costs: If you're having trouble scraping up the cash for each issue of your sterling fanzine, here are some prices and tips for comparison with your balance sheets. An issue of OOPS costs, roughly, \$15.00; however, I get my ink from an outside source and it costs nothing for me. If you buy your own ink, A. B. Dick puts out an excellent brand for only \$1/lb and I find 1 lb of black ink is more than sufficient for an issue's printing. A. B. Dick F1160 stencils give you a film-topped stencil for excellent reproduction for only \$5.70 for two quires. You can stretch stencils by printing standardized back covers and other repeated pages and printing enough for two or three issues at once. The paper OOPS is produced with comes from Master Products Company, 330 S. Wells Street, Chicago 6, Illinois, and sells for \$1.22 per ream in 20 ream lots. It is opaque enough to be printed on both sides and requires no slip-sheeting. If you don't like my paper, they have many different types at low prices and you'd do well to drop them a line. Lastly, it's pretty hard to save money on stamp costs, but you can do it by watching those page numbers. Often an extra two pages of print can cost you an extra 1¢ per copy...and that makes a big difference if your circulation is over 200. All little things, but they add up.

Speaking of OOPS' international circulation, the little gent on the right is Thaks djr P11. He is reading the #1703 issue of OOPS which just arrived on the Earth-Mars rocket. It contains THE HARP ON VENUS by Walt Willis...





FANZINE

BOB SILVERBERG

F
A
R
O
N

Fanzines for review are to be sent to Bob Silverberg, 760 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn, New York.

SPIRAL -- Denis Moreen, 214 Ninth St, Wilmette, Ill.
Monthly, 10¢, 3/25¢. Mimeo, 16 pages, #9. Nov '54.

What had been one of the better general fanzines becomes, with this issue, an individzine--an expanded editorial column with little or no outside material. A move like this would be disastrous for some fanzines, which I charitably won't name, whose editors are devoid of any ability to be interesting in their own right, but since Moreen is one of the most capable fans currently active, SPIRAL becomes a notable addition to its genre. Moreen seems able to talk entertainingly about everything and anything, and since he's in the thick of current fandom, he has a lot to say. The mag is neatly and legibly mimeographed and highly recommended herewith. The masthead is a model of conciseness which should be carefully studied by most fanzine editors.

The lone outside contribution is a short letter by Gregg Calkins which includes the amusing statement, "Let's face it. Fanzines today aren't as good as they once were." They've been singing that song for twenty years.

RHEA -- Fred Malz and Gilbert Menicucci, 675 Delano Avenue, San Francisco 12, Calif.
25¢, 4/\$1. Multilithed, 20 pages. #2, Fall 1954.

Use of an expensive means of reproduction throws the price of this one all out of line with its content. Poorly-done blurred multilithing does not justify an exorbitant price.

The material is pretty good. There's a story, or rather a recounted incident, by Bobby Warner, a column by Cal Beck, some poetry by Bloch and others, articles by Mari Wolf and editor Malz, letters, and scraps and odds. But the very real lack which makes this fanzine third-rate is the absence of an editor. The two fellows listed above must merely assemble the material without any attempt at editing.

Fanzine Fanfaron II

For example, the Warner story would have profited by judicious cutting; a clever editor would have removed the truly deplorable final paragraph and would thereby have improved the story immensely. The Beck column, which is interesting despite (or perhaps because of) CTB's usual high inaccuracy-level, is written in some language closely approximating English. Samples: "the mortality for new bookshops has precipitated badly." "Overwhelming landslide defeats will take place against the Republican Party." "The coming Democratic victories will eclipse all other's it's had in the past."

Fred Malz' analysis of Charles Hamm's Frisco opera is some of the most inept music criticism yet revealed: "If its composer, Charles Hamm, wrote the score for the sake of impressionism, he slightly overstepped the bounds of listener-enjoyment by condensing it to a point where there was no definite trend in nature...the production was slightly poor." The rest of the page was equally quotable, but you get the idea. RHEA displays as neat a lack of editorial ability as could be imagined. And for a quarter a copy, too.

A BAS -- Boyd Raeburn, 9 Glenvalley Drive, Toronto 9, Canada. 26 pages, mimeographed. Irregular. Pay After Reading. #5 (Dec '54).

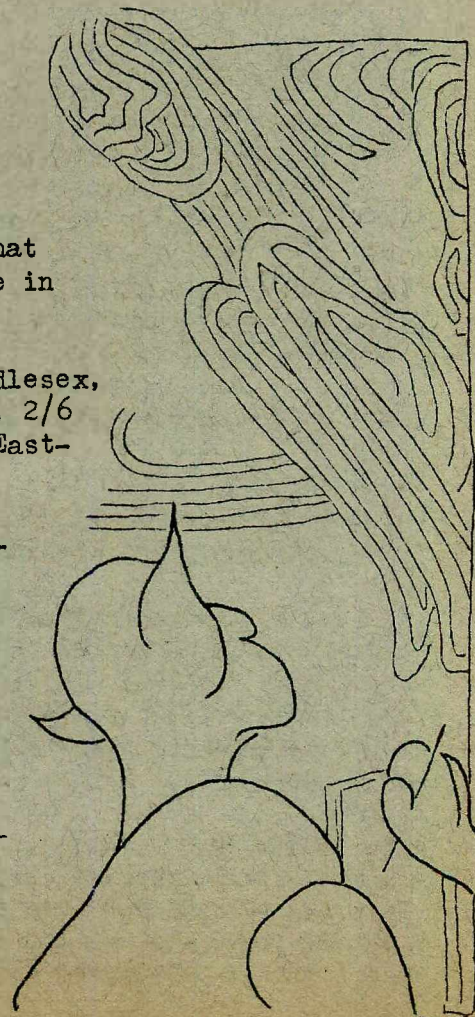
After a fumbled job like the above, it's a rewarding experience to turn to something as good as this. A BAS is a dedicatedly insurgent publication, operating in the tradition of Burbee and Laney, and doing a fine job of it. The material includes several satirical plays, some comic poetry that's both comic and poetry, a fine barbaric cover, letters, jazz reviews, and editorial comments, all nicely mimeographed and most ably executed. An amusing note arises in the letter column in which Jan Jansen (of Belgium) applauds Canadian Boyd Raeburn for his flaying of Peter Vorzimer (a Californian). This is about as international as fandom can get!

A BAS is one of those Pay After Reading affairs in which the reader appraises the mag and pays what he thinks it's worth. If RHEA is worth a quarter then this should draw at least twice that. But actually it is priceless. This is serious constructiveness with a vengeance; Raeburn, like Burbee before him, realizes that the most destructive criticism is actually constructive in effect if not in intent. Highly recommended.

ORION -- Paul Enever, 9 Churchill Ave, Hillingdon, Middlesex, England. 32 pages (half-size), mimeographed. Monthly, 2/6 (35¢) per year to George Richards, 40 Arncliffe Road, Eastmoor, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England.

This one is neat, literate, informal, and a worthy addition to the notable group of British fanzines now in publication. It's joyous to see the way in which the English fans have maintained their high standards in the face of the barrage of puerility currently being emanated by the standard-bearers of Seventh, Eighth or whatever fandom. During the present recession in American fanzinedom, such overseas fanzines as HYPHEN, ALPHA, NEW FUTURIAN, BRENNSCHLUSS, ORION, and the below-mentioned BEM, have been the most consistent purveyors of amateur work.

The highlight of this issue of ORION (the first I've seen) is a rambling and entertaining column by George Whiting, an Anglofan currently located in Greece.



Fanzine Fanfaron III

Also included are letters, reviews, some short bits, and the conclusion of a fan-fiction serial which had been running for the past few issues.

BEM -- Tom White and Mal Ashford, 3. Vine Street, Cutler Heights, Bradford 4, Yorkshire, England. 40 pages, mimeographed. Irregular, two issues for 1/6 or one prozine. #3, September 1954.

Another fine British magazine. BEM is ebullient, lively, and on a par with the top American fanzines; accent is on satire and general fun-poking. When it's done by Bob Bloch, who in this issue offers parallel comments on the Midwestcon through the eyes of Joe Pro and Joe Fan VIII, the material reaches a considerable degree of excellence. Other fictitious con reports by Nigel Lindsay and Archie Mercer fall completely flat, though. Also on hand are Bob Shaw and Vincent Clarke with what seem to be columns, and both up to the usual high standard of that pair. The letter column and editorial comments are among the best in the business.

The lack of any well-coordinated editorial design is the only thing that keeps this from being top-ten material; perhaps it's the dual-editor scheme, never a very practical one, which is responsible for this. The best fanzines are representatives of editorial personality, and magazines with several editors generally present a schizophrenic appearance unless the editors are as unified in general attitudes and interests as the Walt Willis-James White-Bob Shaw group.

Mimeography in this issue runs from very good to mediocre. But I do wish the British fan publishers would cease their annoying habit of mailing their mags out rolled so tightly that three or four arms are needed to hold them flat while reading.

FOG -- Don Wegars, 2444 Valley Street, Berkeley 2, Calif. 10¢. 26 pages, dittoed. #5, December 1954.

A year from now the only items of any interest in this issue will be Dean Grennell's calculation that there are 308,915,776 possible combinations of six letters each in our alphabet, and Redd Boggs' quote from T. S. Eliot. The rest of the issue is taken up with the usual transient material which fills the middle-of-the-road, derivative, uninspired fanzines of today: reviews, a rambling editorial, a column, letters. Editor Wegars remarks mournfully that he'd like to have some articles to print but can't seem to find any, which is a sign that he's trying. As of now, FOG is a magazine of very little content indeed, though it stands up very well in the company of its contemporaries. Wegars, by the way, still maintains he's a member of Eighty Fandom, but I suspect future fan historians will disagree.

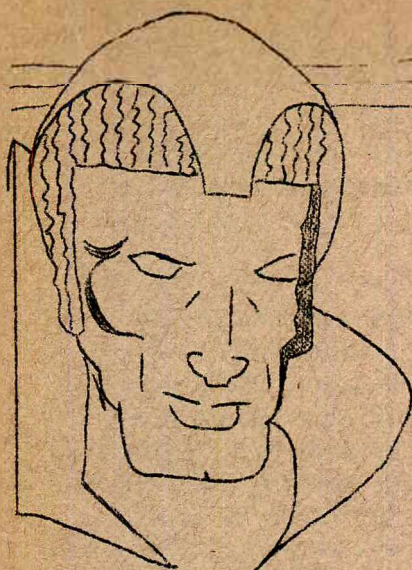
The dittography is not outstanding, and the yellow paper makes it even harder to read.

FIE -- Harry Calnek, Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia. 15¢, 4/50¢. 40 pages, mimeographed, quarterly. #4 (December 1954).

FIE seems to be all columns and letters except for a very long and very, very crude "play" by Calvin Thomas Beck which goes on for page after unbearable page. The columns range from mediocre to poor, which you must admit is not much of a gamut, and the whole issue leaves me completely cold. Like almost all Canadian fanzines, it's neatly mimeographed, mildly interesting, and filled with bop talk, a jargon which I, for one, regard as the least. But def.

-- Bob Silverberg

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Be you informed that Silverberg's novel, REVOLT ON ALPHA C, will be published in April--time of this writing is March 20--by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. Price is undetermined but should be in the usual \$2.50 to \$3 range. Silverberg is unique in the fact that he was able to sell this novel before being able to sell so much as a short-short to the American prozines. Now hit ASTOUNDING, Bob. wgc)



HUMOR

IS A FUNNY THING

Some people may think it a bit presumptuous for me to discuss this business of comedy. Well, I don't claim to be an authority, by any means; but anyone who has been a science-fiction fan as long as I have must develop a sense of humor.

That's particularly true when one regards the trend in recent years; more and more fanzines are featuring humorous material. At the same time, more and more fans are publicly proclaiming themselves as aficionados of POGO, MAD COMICS, and the works of Roger Price.

They dote upon interlineations, limericks, four-line doggerel, shaggy dog stories, out-and-out jokes of the single-, double-, or triple-entendre variety, and the presentation of sf cartoons. There was a time when a Bob Tucker or a Charles Burbee seemed almost unique in the field; today, apparently, fan humorists crawl out from under every stone. Some of them, of course, would be better off if they stayed there--nevertheless, a mighty crop of comics has sprung up within the past five years.

Meanwhile, at conventions and fan-gatherings, the accent on humor is more and more pronounced with each succeeding session. If a club decides to offer a playlet before a gathering, the chances are 10-to-1 that it will be deliberately farcial in content. The guest speakers tend towards frivolity, and even the panel discussions generally veer into facile repartee. According to reports from attendees at last falls MetroCon in New York, the theme of the affair was a discussion of What's Wrong With Science-Fiction?; but, the real highlight, according to these same reports, was an out-and-out humorous talk by Isaac Asimov. Speaking as one who has had the pleasure of seeing Isaac in action, I can well understand why this would be so.

But it leads me to wonder: what would happen to Isaac Asimov if he chose to write humor rather than serious material? With all due respect to his talent, I venture to guess that he would meet with a comparatively cool reception. There is something about written humor which causes even L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher to fall on his Pratt.

Through the years a certain amount of humorous material has been professionally published in the science-fiction field--and a fair share of it was written by men like Messrs. de Camp and Pratt. A small minority enjoyed it, apparently, but I cannot think of a single example in the genre which has attained majority acclaim. Perhaps the sole exception is H. L. Gold's superb fantasy, TROUBLE WITH WATER in the old UNKNOWN. And here again I'm inclined to suspect that it was the obvious love and feeling that went into the story which sustained it in the regard of most readers rather than the purely comic elements.

BY ROBERT BLOCH

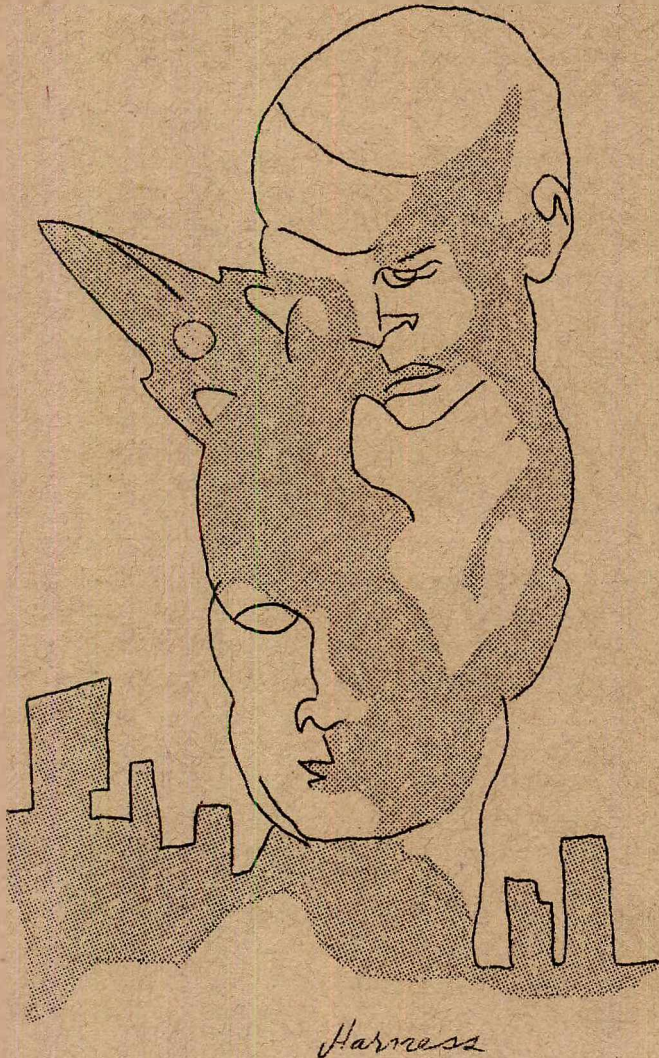


Humor Is a Funny Thing II

What's wrong with the status of humor in science-fiction?

In seeking to answer that question, perhaps it would be well to examine what's wrong with the status of humor in general. As somebody once remarked, you can accuse a man of almost anything--but if you want to incur his undying enmity, just tell him that he has no sense of humor.

A sense of humor, so-called, seems to be regarded as everyone's inalienable birthright, along with the ability to decorate Christmas trees, make spaghetti sauce, and choose unerringly the cigarette with the finest, mildest tobacco. As a result, the world is filled with hideously-laden Yuletide gibbets, drenched with burpulent spaghetti sauce, and clouded with the rancid smoke of cheap, virulently strong cigarettes--all to the apparent satisfaction of millions upon millions of people who pride themselves equally upon their abilities in the field of humorous perception.



All of which is another way of saying that, in my opinion, a sense of humor goes hand in hand with what (for lack of a more appropriate term) I must call good taste. An appreciation of humor requires exercise of a critical faculty; it calls for perception and discernment in order to see the "point" of a joke. It also calls for a degree of objectivity; for often the "point" may be directed at oneself. There is more, much more, to humor than merely the primitive enjoyment of another's misfortune. This is the "humor" in quotation-marks of the fraternity or lodge initiation; it is the sadistic sport of the barracks and the prison courtyard; it is the blood-brother to the conceit of L'Ollonais the pirate, whose jests took the form of cutting off a captive's lips, frying them before his eyes, making him eat them, and then killing him because he didn't show appreciation by smacking his lips. This is the humor of the savage.

Real humor, too, is more than mere braggadocio (as exemplified in the boasts of the riverboat and mountain men, and the "tall tales" of Paul Bunyan). It is more than the spectacle of the worm that turns (found in the folklore of every ethnic group, from the Plains Indians to the African Bushman) in which a weak or despised being, animal or human, outwits a supposedly superior adversary. It is more than the puncturing of conceit, relish in the fall that goeth after pride.

Good humor--pantomimic, verbal, illustrated or written--contains within itself elements of the grotesque and the incongruous; linked to our evaluation of reality by a slender thread of what we recognize as "truth." All first-rate humor, whether it embodies the forthright frankness of a Will Rogers or the absurd hyperbole of a Perelman, hinges on the presentation of an incongruity in such a fashion that we recognize the "truth" of it. In essence, it causes us to momentarily accept a fresh frame of reference; then contrast it with "normal" standards, and laugh accordingly.

Humor Is a Funny Thing III

Not everyone, I submit, is necessarily capable of this sort of reaction. Nor do I mean to imply that those who can do so are necessarily "superior" intellectually or in any other way. But I do believe that those who possess such an appreciation also come to appreciate the cleverness and ability of humorists.

The only trouble is, they seldom bother to say so--for humor has little critical status in the western world today. It is not the purpose of this observer to posit the rationale of this sorry state of affairs. Whatever the causes, the results are plainly (and humdrumly) apparent.

In 1900-1910, the United States was a humorist's paradise. The leading forms of "live entertainment" consisted of the minstrel show, bigtime vaudeville with the accent on comedy, and the extravaganzas of Weber and Fields, Harrigan and Hart, McIntyre and Heath, et al. A "musical comedy" was not a boy-meets-girl story set against a background of choreography by Agnes deMille, but a vehicle for a Fred Stone, a Raymond Hitchcock, a DeWolf Hopper or an Eddie Foy. Everybody remembered Francis Wilson in Erminie but nobody cared about the plot.

In literature, the big names were Mark Twain; George Ade, with his Fables in Slang; Finnley Peter Dunne and Mr. Dooley, and a score of others, including John Kendrick Bangs, George W. Peck, and Eugene Field. Many of these men commanded big fees as lecturers; their speeches and banquet responses were accorded wide publicity in the press of the day. The "Willean" "epigram" was not yet out of favor, and "wit" was an accolade of esteem.

During the second and third decade of this century, written humor, per se, suffered a gradual decline. Ring Lardner and Will Rogers, however, won deserved praise, and Leacock and Benchley began their reign. But there was a noticeable deterioration; Irvin S. Cobb and Ellis Parker Butler inaugurated a sort of Saturday Evening Post school of humor, with grades scarcely extending above the kindergarden. The rise of the comic-strips began, and a further deterioration was noted as artists started to concentrate on a "theme" or even a definite "story-line" to sustain interest. Few were clever enough to base lasting appeal upon an unending supply of truly humorous material.

Even the gaudy musicals began to follow the trend: such comic artists as Fields, Wynn, Joe Cook and Frank Tinney now began to cavort against the plot-outline of a "book show." In this they followed the lead of the movies, where Chaplin, Langdon, Keaton and Lloyd all used "story formulas" to bolster their sight-gags and introduced captions; even the Sennett and Christie and Educational comic crews depended more and more heavily upon both "situations" and "wise-crack" subtitles for laughs.

Then came radio, and the incessant grind of week-in, week-out manufactured buffolas. The talkies emphasized the need for dialogue, and hence a plot of sorts. Inevitably, written humor followed suit. Aside from the upsurge of parody--as exemplified by Perelman and the early work of Corey Ford, George W. Chappell, and Will Cuppy--humor became a sort of an ornamentation, a gay fringe adorning a conventional plot. And there was, naturally, only one basic plot; simple hero revolts against domestic tyranny or worldly crooks and wins in the end. It would be possible for me to list perhaps 200 motion pictures in the 1930s and 1940s alone which fall into this category--but why should I, when nobody would read it except Tucker?

For that matter, I've got a pretty strong hunch that he's the only one reading this as it is. Are you there, Wilson?

Even the work of the late Thorne Smith, utilizing as it did the best elements of fantasy and whimsy, relied heavily on the familiar henpecked-husband-revolts theme for its plot-framework. His well-deserved success was an exception in an era

Humor Is a Funny Thing IV

where written humor was generally relegated to Ballyhoo and Esquire: the old Life and Judge languished and died as the '30s advanced.

Anyhow, the change came. During the War there was a feeble resurgence of the sort of thing Ed Streeter had done in 1917 with his Dere Mable. Max Shulman, Hargrove, and a few others capitalized on the brand of "rookie comedy" which has survived virtually unchanged in this country since the gay times at Valley Forge. Then written humor went down the drain entirely and disappeared with a feeble kerplunk.

Yes, Perelman is still writing--but one need only contrast his recent efforts with his work of 1934-45 to note the difference. Perelman today is self-consciously satirizing; poking fun at the books and movies of 25 years ago, enacting the ancient role of the bumptious traveler or the amateur gardener in hackneyed style.

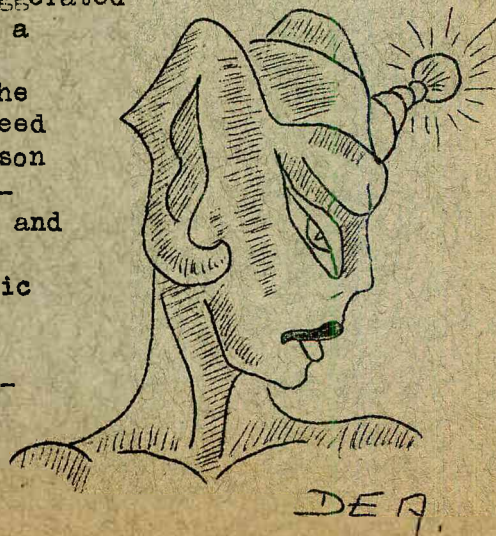
Dean Grennell would nominate H. Allen Smith as an outstanding practitioner of humor today. I would perchance defer to his estimate, insofar as his first two books (significantly enough, produced during the war years) are concerned. Since that time I believe Smith is largely a retailer, a raconteur and chronicler of the humor of others; he has a flair for humorous narration, but the real belly-laughs come from his recital of something dreamed up by a Wilson Mizner or a Jim Moran in the good old days.

Is American humor dead? Certainly not; we have our aforementioned Roger Price, our numerous cartoonists--many of them superb--and a variety of talented comedians on stage, screen, radio, television and the nitery circuits. I don't mean to imply that humor no longer exists. I merely wish to emphasize that it no longer has status.

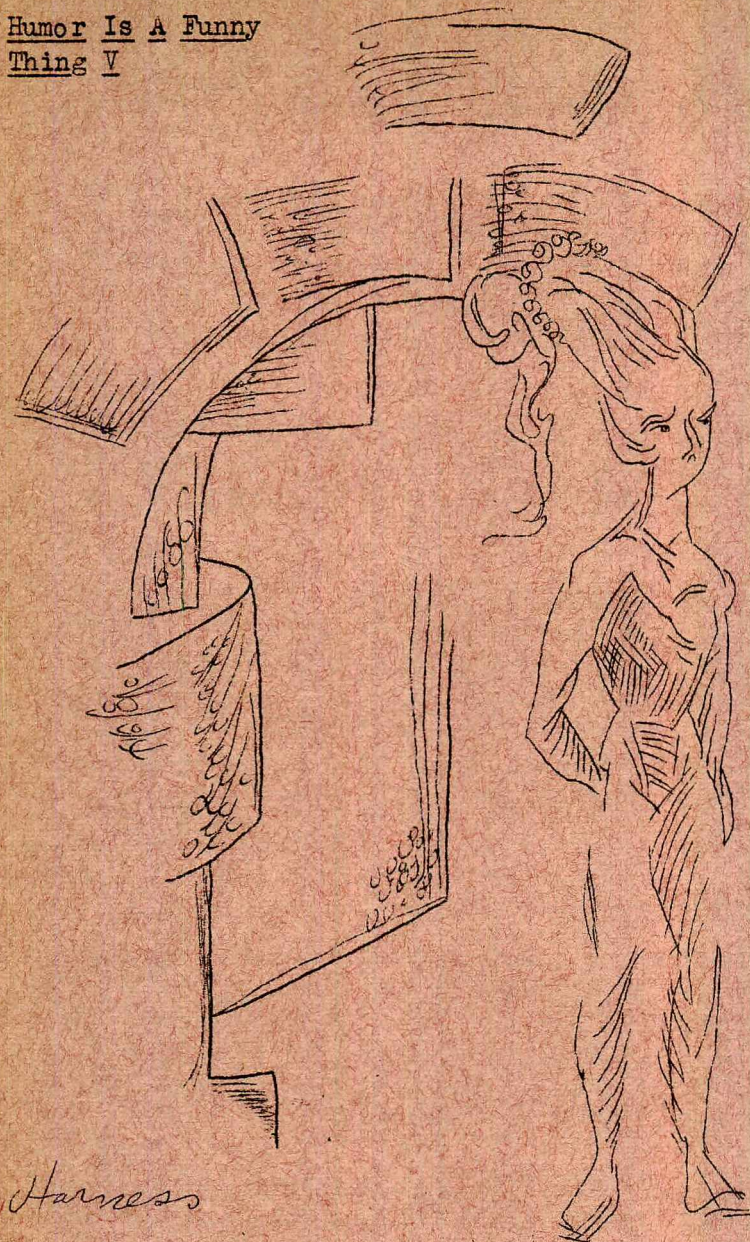
How many comedians are even nominated, let alone selected, for Academy Awards? Comedies continue to do a good business in motion picture houses, but people seem ashamed to view them as artistic efforts; for every genuine comedy that wins acclaim there are a dozen tear-jerking stinkers receiving automatic accolades because they are "serious." Filmed and televised equivalents of soap-opera or the old ten-twenty-thirty melodramas are given critical consideration, whereas the work of Alec Guinness or Jacques Tati is enjoyed but dismissed with little of the sincere appreciation due fine artistry.

Instead, all "comedy" today seems lumped together with the low antics of such inept and hammy jobbernowls as Abbott and Costello, Martin and Lewis, Red Skelton, Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason and other face-makers whose appeal is purely to the sub-adolescent. The individual talents of a Wally Cox or a Georgie Gobel are seldom evaluated on a separate level; the catch-phrase has replaced the genuinely apropos individual remark--the look of exaggerated agony in closeup has usurped the deadpan subtlety of a Keaton--the emphasis is on the idiotic antics of the playground, where Jerry Lewises can be detected by the dozen. Lest one think that this is exaggerated, I need only point out the mechanics whereby the Jackie Gleason show was introduced last week; with a fanfare, a portentous repetition of Gleason's name in the credits, and the appearance of twenty flamboyantly dressed chorus girls who ended their routine by shrilling in orgasmic ecstasy. "HERE comes JACKIE GLEASON...NOW!!!"

Can anyone possibly imagine that such an "introduction" would be necessary for a true comedian of the stature of Charlie Chaplin? "HERE comes CHARLIE CHAPLIN...NOW!!!" Hardly.



Humor Is A Funny
Thing V



Humor, I'm afraid, has become a vulgar business today. And that is why it is regarded with such trepidation when it rears its motley head in print.

It's quite de rigueur to laugh aloud at the evanescent image on the movie or TV screen...perfectly proper to appreciate the momentary mirth vocally induced by a radio performer or the voice of your next-door neighbor recounting a "good story I heard the other day." It is even permissible to enjoy a fleeting glimpse of a cartoon.

But the same "gag" or the same "situation" narrated in print and offered as a "narrative" is verboten.

In a world where millions prove the "box-office appeal" of a Danny Kaye or a Jimmy Durante, the highest-paid humorous writer is a guy name of Bennett Cerf, who merely records the gags and jokes of others. Out of the many thousands of hardcover books published in the past half-dozen years, one would be hard put to list twenty that were actually and basically "humor." Exclude the "folksy" feminine narratives of the Cheaper by the Dozen genre and you cut the

number down still further.

This "folksy" humor is the last refuge of the professional today. The Dick Ashbaughs and Parke Cummings grind out dreary little pieces in secluded corners of popular magazines, sticking to the trite-and-true formula of "Papa is a dope" and little else. Whimsy, fantasy, and the pure downright whackiness of comedy-for-its-own-sake are eschewed in favor of hackneyed gags about income taxes, landlords, neighbors who borrow the lawn-mower, and mothers-in-law; to say nothing of what happens to Dear Old Dad when he tries to make himself handy about the house or the kitchen. Mark Twain, apparently, died just in time--if he were alive today he'd either have to write 300-word squibs about his daughter in day-camp or reminiscent "nostalgic think-pieces" a la Thurber and Frank Sullivan. Instead of proposing immortal toasts to General Grant or wiring a reply concerning the report of his death, poor old Mark would find it necessary to surround himself with a corps du ballet and emerge wearing a checkered hat while the engineers turned up the volume on "Here comes the Old Jumping Frog HIMSELF...that Merry Madcap...that Calaveras County Cutup... Mark TWAIN!!!"

Did I mention that the chorus girls would all be wearing frog costumes? Well, God forbid, I didn't want to...but I must.

Anyhow, now that we've surveyed the status of humor in general it's perhaps a little easier to understand just why we have plenty of the commodity in science-

Humor Is a Funny Thing VI

fiction circles but very little open praise for it. Science-fiction fans, like everyone else, are ashamed to admit that they "take humor seriously" in its written form.

They pass up a well-written book like Ward Moore's Greener Than You Think in favor of any so-called "serious" work, no matter how inherently poor its content may be--and often is. While some reviewers offered grudging accolades to certain stories in the recent Science-Fiction Carnival anthology, their tone unwittingly betrayed a lesser regard than that bestowed on admittedly inferior yarns in "straight" anthologies.

Through the years some of the finest talents in the field have done their best work in humor. Not one of them is held in esteem on that account, although such stories were enjoyed at the time. Humor just isn't "important" according to today's fashion in values.

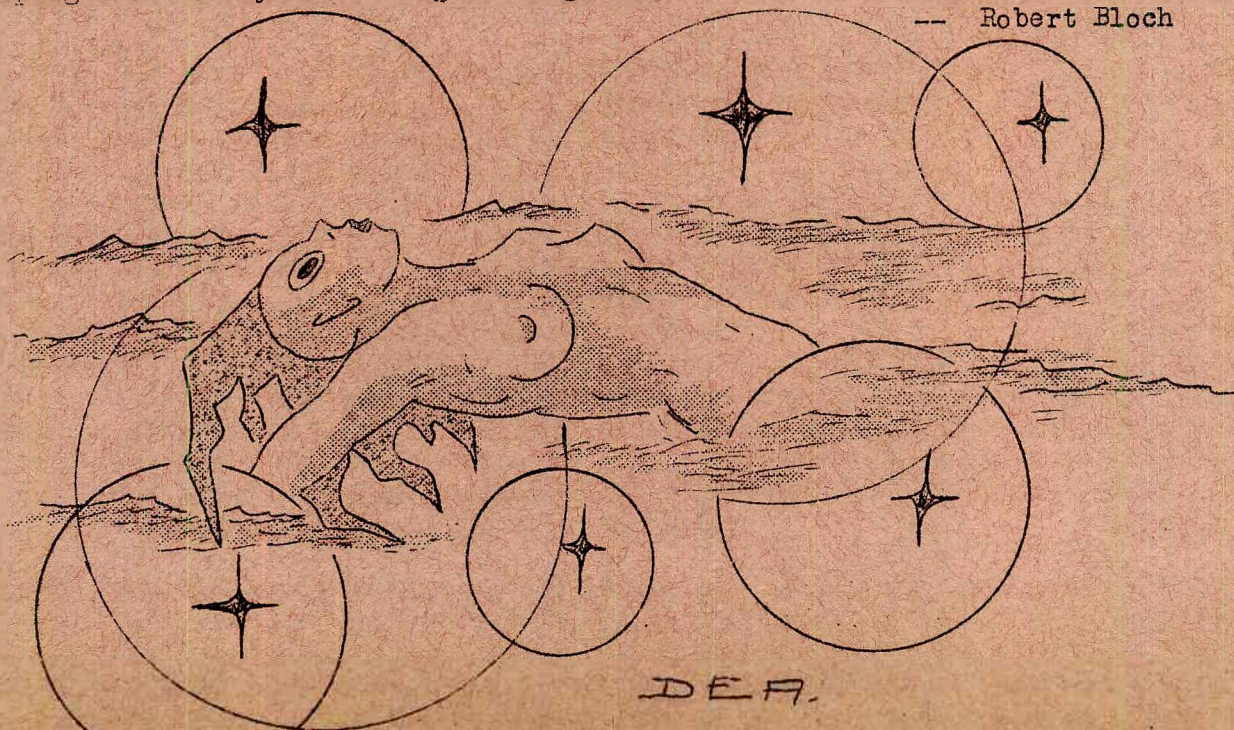
The same extends to a consideration of material in fanzines; without any hesitation I would say that a good 75% of the best fanzine material appearing during the past 6 years has been pure (or impure) humor. Fortunately, however, fanzines seem to have escaped the stigma which has blighted the prozines and the book markets. It is possible to be frankly funny for the sake of fun in a fanzine and win recognition: cf. the sterling efforts of the aforementioned Tucker and Burbee, together with Hoffman, Grennell, Willis, Shaw, Clarke, Harris, Ashworth, Carr (Terry, not Gertie) and others too humorous to mention.

This, I hazard, is a Damned Good Thing.

But whenever I see an Asimov or a Boucher or a George O. Smith swing into action during a public appearance, I can't help but be saddened by the fact that they are denied equal opportunity to amuse an audience on paper. When I reflect on the gems in a Kuttner letter, I wish sadly that he might transfer them to the attention of a wider and more appreciative public. And while I enjoy Charles Horne, I'd be just as happy with half-a-dozen books about the exploits of Hoy Ping Pong.

Still, we can't have everything. And as it is, I'm duly grateful for the position accorded humor in the fan press today--for in the so-called "real world" beyond the plight of comedy is nothing to laugh at.

-- Robert Bloch



So tell me another...

DON
WEGARS

Early one morning I am sitting at this bar in the Blind Lemon, a small place on San Pablo Avenue, when who should walk up but my old friend Action Jones. He is called Action for some esoteric reason which I never find out, but I think that it is because he is once a director in Hollywood, and always yells, "Lights! Camera! Action!" but I am not for sure, and will vouch for this in no ways.

Well, to make a short story long, my old friend Action is becoming slightly woozy, and I suggest that we should maybe go for a walk in the cold morning air that is always cold in the mornings around Berkeley. To my innocent and helpful suggestion he slightly flips. He says, "You better mind your own damn business, because I am not drunk, as you may think, but only feeling my oats."

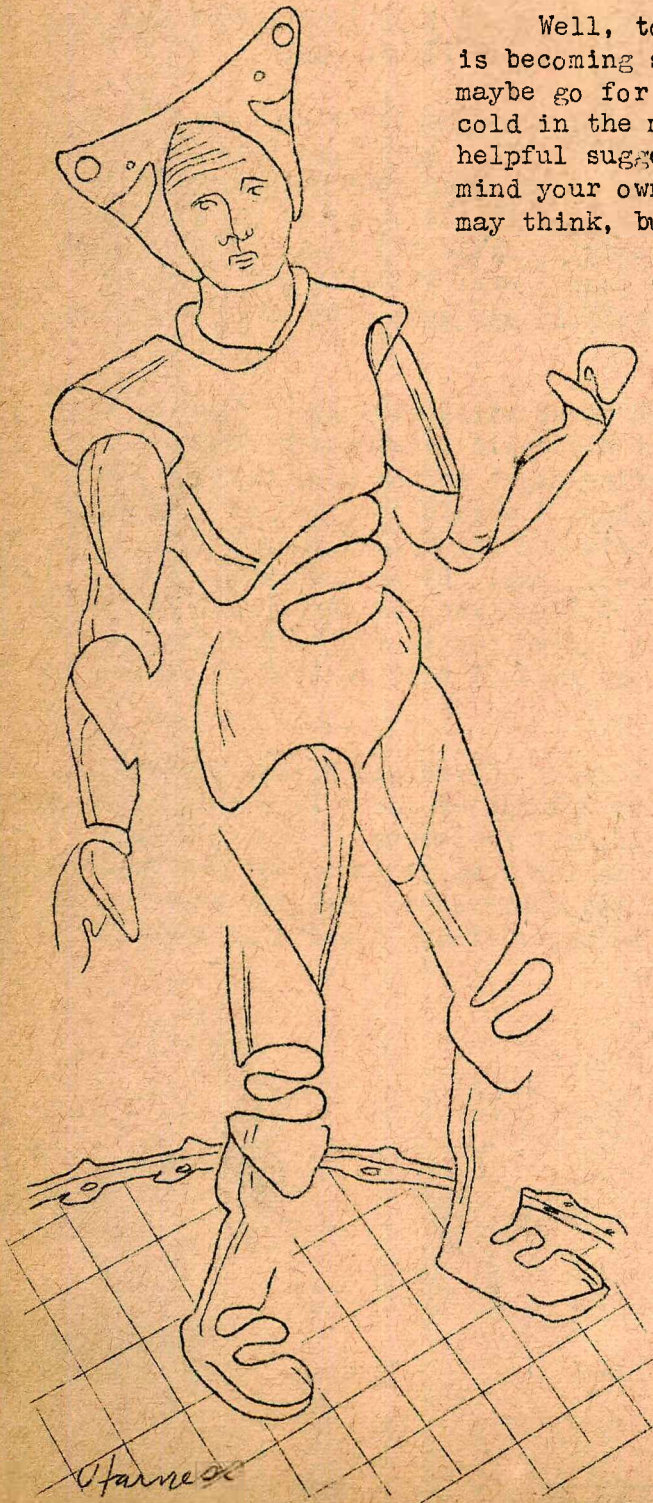
I take him seriously for the moment because I notice the broad sitting next to Action, his arm wrapped around her, and I am sure that he is feeling something, but somehow I cannot bring myself to believe it is just oats.

Finally he becomes more cooperative and we walk over to the door and outside into the cold morning air, and I tell him that the morning air is always cold in Berkeley, but this morning it is even colder because the rain is also cold in Berkeley, and at this moment it is coming down in bucket-fulls.

I turn my collar up to keep the rain from running down my neck, but Action grabs me by the arm and says, "You better leave that damn collar down because there are a lot of rough guys around here and I do not want you mistaken for nobody like that!"

The rain is slightly pouring down my back by this time and I tell him that I want to look like a rough guy because of what they do to guys who do not, and then I mention what happens to this little punk who is obviously a punk and does not go in for the casual style.

Action sobers up for the time and asks me what more I know about this, and so I tell him that this little punk is in a drugstore buying some kind of book about all this flying saucer crap when these rough guys ask him what kind of crap he has. The little punk is not smart enough to tell



So Tell Me Another... II

them and also does not have the sense to bug out quick. He is speechless, as they say in English V. The rough drugstore cowboys tear the book from his hand and say to each other that he is reading a bunch of crap, and the reason they know it is crap is because who else but a goat reads that kind of crap?

I tell Action that this is written up in the papers and that it is creating quite a stink in California. I also mention that a reporter from Columbus, Ohio, comes out here to cover the story for some Marine's scandal-sheet and returns to write a vivid account of how low the mentality is in certain parts of the country, and he furthermore states that once while he is watching a picture in a cinema palace he almost stands up in his seat and yells to a bunch of guys behind him that they are nothing but a bunch of earthworms.

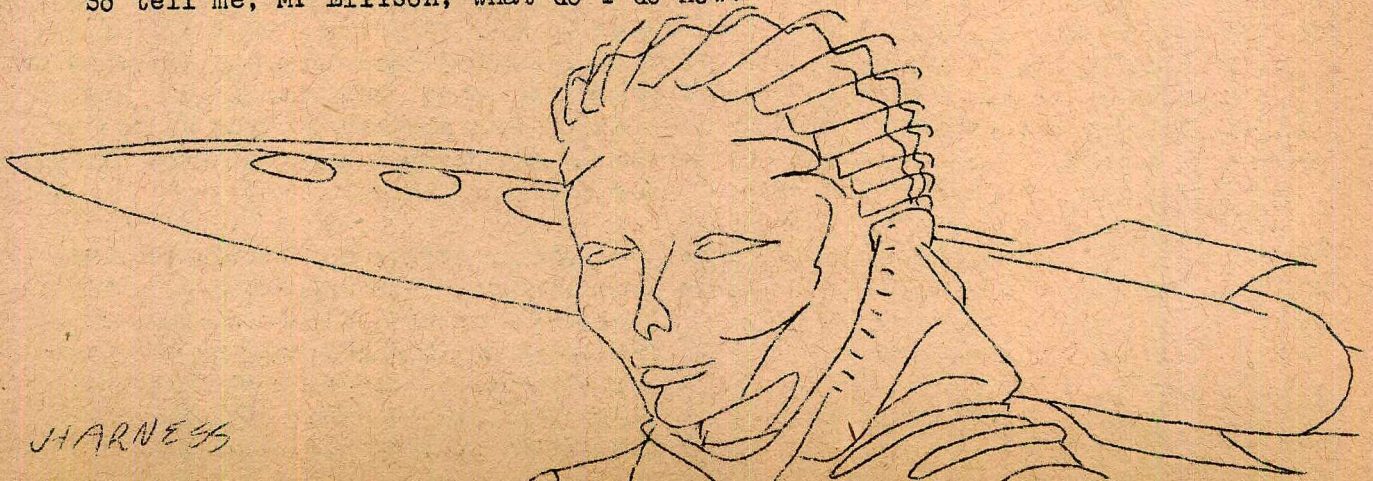
Action tells me that this is funny and that he knows this little punk and that the little punk is a great friend of the reporter from Columbus, Ohio.

So Action pulls his collar up and motions for me to do likewise. By this time I am certain Action is sobering up, but with Action it is sometimes hard to tell and so I will not give anybody more than even money on the aforementioned proposition. He says that this is a bad state of affairs and that in the cause of common decency we should do something about it. I tell him nothing doing and that I wish to have my nose fully out of this situation, but also that I will give him the name and address of a legal organization known as the NFFF in any such case as he wishes to press the matter.

It is by now plain to me that we are both of us still very drunk, and am happy that nobody has come along to make book on our alcoholic consumption, because one would have to be very drunk indeed to go tramping about in the cold rain of Berkeley at two in the morning. I tell Action that perhaps I should tear out of that neighborhood lest I become associated with those goats and get myself pushed around by the rough guys who do not like this flying saucer crap. He says okay but that if I do get in trouble to send my problem to Harlan Ellison who, he says, will fix me up. This Ellison, Action says is a wondrous person indeed and is out to fix the world up right and will undoubtedly help me. So I say fine, I will do that if anything happens to me.

The reason I explain all this is that yesterday a kind old friend explains to me that this fandom in which I am mixed is just a bunch of goats like this other punk, and ever since then I am hearing the cold, wet footsteps of the guys from Berkeley who do not like flying saucer crap. So far I am mistaken but one never can tell about such, especially when one is often too unnerved to open the door to see if it is the milkman who comes stomping, who he hopes it is, instead of someone he doesn't know who it is but hopes it is not.

So tell me, Mr Ellison, what do I do now?



Richard Lupoff

MR. GREENE AND THE MONSTER

J. Goodwin Greene fairly tore the little brass door off his mailbox when he got home. He reached in for the manilla envelope, dropped it, picked it up...and dropped it again. He fell to his knees and managed to get it open with fumbling fingers. A scrap of paper fell out. "'Monster of the Stellar Void' would have made good reading twenty years ago ...full of pseudo-science and action. Today's readers demand a deeper plot, beter character development, and a more mature story." The signature was a familiar set of initials.

Tears welled in the eyes of the bowed figure. He took the remaining contents of the envelope and placed them in his pocket. He re-read the slip in disbelief.

It wasn't that he needed the money from the story so badly. A comfortable job as a milkman served to keep "Goody" Greene clothed and housed. But a milkman is a singularly unglamorous profession and just a little attention--the slightest bit of back-patting or favorable comment--was all that he wanted. His entire life had been about as unspectacular as existence could be so he'd turned to science fiction for escape, and eventually to writing. He had never sold a story and it looked as though he never would.

The disheartened author staggered into his plain apartment and threw himself across the unmade bed in utter despair. If only he had lived twenty years earlier. In the golden age of rocket-ships and ray guns his stories would have sold like hotcakes...he would have been the idol of the science fiction world. All his rejection slips mentioned this fact.

Pity the man born before his time; doubly so the man born after his.

When the clangor of the alarm woke J. Goodwin Greene early the next morning he had the feeling that something was different. The room was the same, but...his radio had transformed overnight from a modern portable to some old-fashioned model with a horn on top for a speaker. He glanced around the once-familiar room and found everything different from what it had been the night before...even his clothes he had forgotten to remove the night before were strange and out of date.

It came to him in a flash...his dreams had somehow come true and he had travelled backwards in time. Twenty years, perhaps...please, God, let it be twenty years. He made sure the manuscript was in his pocket and hastily put on the strange-but-familiar coat and ran out the door. He hurried down the street, looking for the familiar Crown Publishing Company offices. The lot was vacant! For a moment he was stunned, but he recovered enough to remember that the building was a new structure and would not yet be erected from his present position in time. What next? An older magazine, of course, but was there another one close by? He knew better than to spend money dated well into the future for a bus or taxi. After a short walk he stumbled onto the offices of SCIENCE MYSTERY MONTHLY, a magazine defunct in his own time, but just starting business in this time stream. It didn't matter to Greene that the magazine would fold in less than twenty years... his stories would see publication and that would be satisfaction enough.



Mr Greene and the Monster II

The editor sat in a small but impressive office and read "Monster of the Stellar Void" avidly. At last he looked up and said: "Young man, if you will accept three cents a word for this story it will appear in our next issue. We had planned on using house-ads as filler, but your story will make an excellent lead novelette...or would, if the contents page and cover were not already printed. We can squeeze the story in, even though it won't be credited on the mast-head."

J. Goodwin Greene was so flabbergasted by this sudden success that he couldn't even answer...he just stood there and looked at the editor. The latter, misinterpreting the silence, amended his offer. "I'll make it five cents a word if you'll agree to wait a few months for payment. We can't afford quite that much this soon."

Shocked by this windfall, Green managed to stammer a vaguely affirmative reply and leave the office on unsteady legs. He kept quietly to his apartment the next few weeks, pawning most of his possessions for living money, waiting for publishing day to arrive. When the great day dawned he reached the office bright and early...so early the printer had to run off a single copy to give him. The others would be printed sometime in the afternoon, but Greene had the very first one. And in the issue, from page 96 to page 104, was "Monster of the Stellar Void."

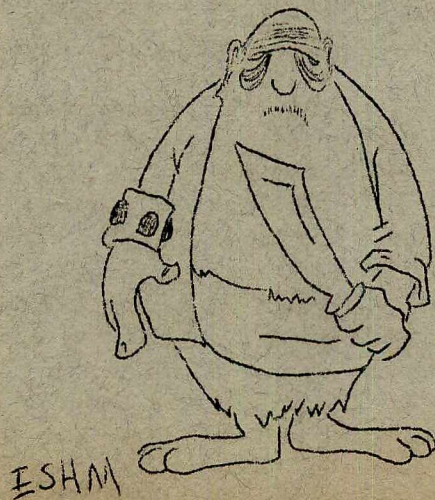
On the way home he carefully removed the story from the issue in order to save it and was leafing fondly through the pages when he stepped off the curb and was killed instantly by a speeding car.

He woke again in his room to find himself bruised and battered and half-naked. His shoes were missing along with one of his stockings, his shirt was torn, and his jacket had completely disappeared. He looked around. With a start he realized he had returned to his original time. What clothing he had left was of modern cut and his radio...well, the radio had been hocked twenty years ago, but that proved the whole thing wasn't a dream. He had pierced the veil of time and returned to tell the tale. Others had said they had, of course, but he had the proof.

That was, he could get the proof--all he needed was an old copy of SCIENCE MYSTERY MONTHLY with his story in it. He spent the week, then the month, and then a year searching for back issues of the magazine until he found a man with what seemed to be the only existing copy. It took just about the balance of his savings to buy the copy, and even then it was imperfect, but he had to have the final proof.

Daring not to let anyone see his prize, he wrapped it in an old sheet of brown paper and dashed hurriedly home. Safe in his apartment he opened the magazine to page 96...it wasn't there! Someone had carefully removed pages 96 to 104 from the back of the magazine.

-- Richard Lupoff ...



THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE

THE HARP STATESIDE

(Continued)

You would almost think that the Grand Canyon had been specially designed as a National Park. You'd expect that a thing of this size, which Nature had moreover carelessly just left lying around in the open, would be hard to conceal from the eyes of free-loaders. But, no. The approach to it is up a gradual slope and you have to pay your dollar with a blind trust in the good faith of the National Parks Service and the American Geographical Society.

It's not until you get a few yards from the edge that it bursts on you. In front of you the next instalment of normality is ten miles away. In between is not just a deep cleft, as I'd always imagined, but a whole different world, a wild jumble of alien geography. It takes a while to realize how fantastic it is, because at first you've nothing to compare it to. In the Canyon itself, for instance, are mile-high mountain ranges which look so near you feel you could almost jump down on their peaks. As a spectacle that is its only fault—it's too fantastic to be taken in. It's not until you convince yourself how wide and deep the thing actually is, and how far away is the other side and the blue mountains far beyond that, that you feel really awed.



The trouble is that this took me about three months, and by that time I was too far away to go back for another look. This was my 12th day in America, and every one of them had been far too full of new sensations and impressions. Besides I'd never really recovered from the stress of the arrival in New York, the journey to Chicago and the Chicon itself, not to mention those five nights without sleep. Looking back on it I sometimes wonder that I survived at all. As it was I was suffering not only from a slight cold in the head, but a sort of intellectual numbness, an anaesthesia of the sensibilities which was to last for weeks after I got home to Ireland. I stood there looking at the Grand Canyon, telling myself this here was an awe-inspiring phenomenon of majestic grandeur, but all my subconscious would reply was: "Ah, yes. The Grand Canyon. A very big hole in the ground." I went conscientiously from spectacle to spectacle, trying very hard to be impressed, but

it was no good. My case was hopeless. I finally realized that all I could do was try and remember as much of it as I could so that I could marvel at it retrospectively. Des-



The Harp That Once Or Twice II

perately I bought (or at least I was going to buy it but Forry swooped down and paid for it as a present to Madeleine) a 3D viewer and a roll of Grand Canyon TruVue film. Now I look at the Grand Canyon quite often and am quite awed by it and by the fact that I was there, whereas neither seemed at all extraordinary at the time.

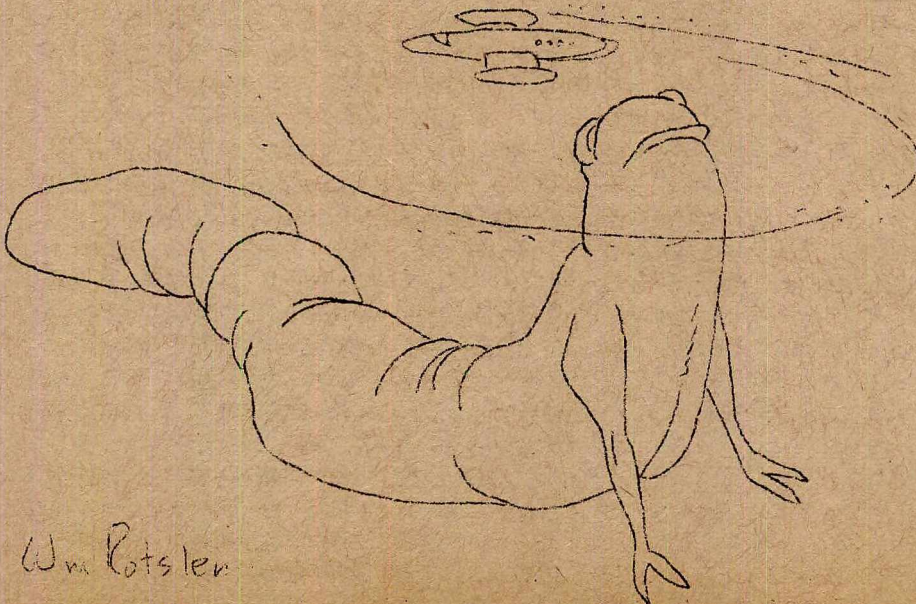
We spent I suppose a couple of hours walking from promontory to promontory looking at the Canyon from all angles. On the way back from one Mari started to run from sheer high spirits. I trotted along beside her and we'd got back to the path before I realized she thought we'd been racing. Curious, I'd always thought of the Americans as an athletic nation. I suggested she should come over to Ireland next year and we'd start a new race. Fortunately Rog Phillips wasn't listening or he might have thought I was making an indecent proposal. At this point it started to rain, at which everyone was duly astonished. Even me, because I hadn't seen any rain since mid-Atlantic and had almost forgotten about it. I thought of writing to the Fortean Society--"Look, water is falling from the sky!"

However, they explained to me that it was just a gesture to make me feel at home. I thought it was nice of them to risk their canyon like that. I only hope I can get James White to arrange a drought when they come over to Ireland.

Eventually we tore ourselves away and retraced our tiremarks back through Jacob Lake, Fredonia, and Kanab on to the road for California again, through Zion National Park. This was a new thing in canyons, because this time the road goes along the side and down into the canyon through a mile-long tunnel. Every now and then there's a window cut in the tunnel wall for you to look through and in one place the outer wall is so thin they've had to patch it up with concrete which they've carefully camouflaged to look like canyon from the other side. It's a tremendous engineering feat and it made me think ruefully about Irish tourist attractions, which usually have nothing more in the way of display than a battered signpost and a muddy path.

It was at Zion that the protagonists of terrestrial scenery finally had to admit defeat by Forry Ackerman. Repeatedly during the last two days they had been calling his attention to peculiar rock formations, odd colours, startling vegetation: "There," they would say, "isn't that fantastic?" But Forry refused to admit that these were in any way exceptional. He looked contemptuously down his nose at them as if to say, "Poo. Mere terrestrial stuff." He implied that these things, even the outré formations of Zion, where the very earth had raised itself up and writhed to impress him, were very commonplace compared to even the lunar landscape. His

attitude seemed to be that these canyons were a sneaky attempt by the National Parks Service to divert the attention of the American public from the wonders waiting to be seen on the planets. They were, in that sense, anti-science-fiction, and he would have nothing to do with them. I felt sorry for the National Parks Service, but they shouldn't have allied themselves so obviously with the "See Terra First" party.



Wm Kotsler

The Harp That Once Or Twice III

The sun set soon after we left Zion and darkness followed with disturbing haste. It was still very warm though as we started to cross the desert, even going very fast and with all the car windows open. It was the first time I'd ever felt a warm draught. There was now nothing to see but the stars, and I was startled to notice that the Plough was almost below the horizon. We must have been in nearly the latitude of North Africa. After some hours fast driving there was a glow in the sky ahead like dawn; it was the lights of Las Vegas, twenty miles away. About 2 am we entered a region of billboards advertising various establishments in "Downtown Las Vegas." This seems to have been all there was of uptown Las Vegas, for we seemed to go straight out of the billboards into a forest of blinding neon signs, all jumping and swirling round like a fireworks display where everything had gone off at once. We went into a den of gilded vice called "The Golden Nugget" on the theory that food was cheap in these places because the owners practically gave it away so as to lure patrons to the gaming tables. It works too, because I was lured in there myself. It was an enormous room with fruit machines, one-armed bandits, or whatever you call them, all round the walls, and poker, faro and roulette tables in the middle all covered with neat piles of silver dollars. Apparently this is the sort of elephants' graveyard of silver dollars; I never saw one anywhere else. They make fine chips. I put 25¢ in a fruit machine just to say I had gambled in Las Vegas (I lost, heavily--all 25¢) and went back to the eating annex. I had tomato juice, minestrone, roast turkey with cranberry sauce, sherbert and coffee, all for \$2.00, which I suppose was fairly cheap for the States.

Forry, on the other hand, felt he would like a little salad, and ordered the one on the menu. This was a mistake.

First, they brought a big sort of vase thing all full of long thin vegetables like celery, for us all, including Forry, to nibble at while we were waiting. Then they brought all of us, including Forry, bowls full of crushed ice and carrots, scallions, celery, radishes, asparagus, olives, and other miscellaneous vegetation; these were for all of us, including Forry, to eat along with our main dish. Then they brought Forry's main dish, the Salad. They trundled it along on a trolley and heaved it onto the table. Forry looked at it aghast. It was on an enormous glass plate, about 18 inches in diameter. From this there towered skywards a pyramid of tier after tier of vegetables. It was a sort of Monument to Market Gardening--every vegetable I have ever seen was represented in force, together with about fifty I had never even heard of. It must have taken hours to design, let alone construct, and I am sure it was reinforced internally with steel girders. It wasn't so much a dish as the sort of thing you would expect to find towed along in a carnival town, embellished with young women in flowing draperies and representing The Spirit of Vegetables or something. Forry, already surrounded by as much green stuff as a rabbit in Heaven, cowered away from the monstrous edifice. "What," he said weakly, "No neon sign?" He was right, we saw; it did call for a neon sign. If anyone ever invents luminous celery I suggest he get in touch with the Golden Nugget.

Forry managed to eat some of it without it falling over onto him and we went out into the hot air again and into the darkness of the Mojave desert. Dawn broke somewhere near Pasadena and I began to realize that my subconscious was bitterly disappointed. I hadn't seen the Pacific Ocean. I know it was silly of me, but ever since I had first thought about going to America I had had such a clear mental picture of my first sight of the Pacific Ocean. I would go through a high, steep pass in the Rockies and there spread out before me would be the green plains of California and in the distance the blue Pacific. My common sense told me that no matter how it looked on the map, the coast was much too far away from the mountains but I kept thinking we'd surely glimpse the sea from some high land. But no, I arrived in Los Angeles without seeing anything more startling than an all-night store ("The Farmer's Market") selling orange juice at 10¢ a glass--with free refills. I proceeded to try to drink them out of business...I'd never had enough orange juice and I was determined to drink enough to last for the rest of my life...while Wendayne

The Harp That Once Or Twice IV

bought some groceries and Rog Phillips bought a copy of Amazing. There was a reader's letter in it complimenting one of his stories very highly and he read it through twice and then decided he still had to have it to keep. Pro authors are no more immune to egoboo than fans.

We got to Forry's house about 8 am. The most unusual thing about the outside of it is the life-size figure of Marlene Dietrich in cardboard propped up in the porch. Obviously she was cut out to be a receptionist. Rog and Mari went off home and the rest of us went to our beds. Mine was the couch Wendayne used for her diatetic auditing.

We got up again about noon and had breakfast, while Forry opened his mail and I helped him read it. Then he started making phonecalls while I browsed around. (He has three rooms and two garages completely full of science fiction.) (The car stands in the driveway.) Apparently he was inviting people to a part tomorrow, either to meet me or for me to meet them. Every now and then I could hear him spell out my name for one of the latter category.

Also staying in the Ackermansion at this time were Alan Hershey, past president of the Outlanders, and his attractive wife. (Alan was the young man I'd noticed on "The Neptunia" reading Lovecraft, but had never spoken to.) In the evening we all went out for dinner in a Chinese restaurant. I'd never had Chinese food before and I thought it was wonderful, but I still haven't got over the shock of hearing Forry order four dinners and five plates. Apparently one Chinese dinner is more than one person can eat and this eminently sensible solution avoids waste of both money and food. I can't help thinking we Europeans haven't got our restaurant managers properly trained.

Then we went back to the house and talked some more and Forry showed me his curiosa. Rare books and magazines, collections of promag covers illustrating bare-faced plagiarism as many as six times over the years and across the world, original artwork, interesting letters, and finally gramophone records. I heard Forry's first speech...he sounded almost as nervous as I was...and the actual voice of Claude Degler himself speaking at the Denvention.

So ended the first of four eventful days in Los Angeles. (Next installment: My encounters with van Vogt, Ray Bradbury and the Pacific Ocean.)

EASTERCON I notice that in their publicity the Cleveland Convention Committee proudly announce that this is the first time a whole hotel has been taken over for a science fiction Convention. Alas, Cleveland, I have news for you. British Fandom did this for their 1955 Convention at Easter; and a fabulous success it was. In fact in some ways it was the ultimate Convention. Nothing could have been better. It was so successful that the official program lasted only two hours and was hardly heard of again. News of survivors from the wreck, such as the auction and the film show, was spread by word of mouty throughout the bars and lounges so that the official program did flicker back into existence from time to time, but generally people were so happy where they were that they quite forgot it was supposed to exist.

One utterly unique feature about this Convention was the attitude of the hotel staff. The most disobliging person there was the hotel manager, who stipulated--mildly, I admit--that the cleaners be allowed into the lounges at 7 am to clean up. Apart from this he said we could make as much noise as we liked. The Night Porter did come in at 4 am the first night, but only to talk about science fiction and take orders for tea. The bartenders wielded zapguns and entered thoroughly into the fannish spirit. There was an advertising campaign started by the Liverpool Group for a beverage called "Blog" and they put one of the posters behind the bar and gravely informed nonfan casual drinkers that they were momentarily out of stock

The Harp That Once Or Twice V

because of the heavy demand. Finally...I know this must sound incredible...the hotel is willing to have us again! Naturally we sent Tucker a postcard advising him to stop collecting bricks--we had found the perfect Convention Hotel.

Of course this happy state of affairs wasn't attained without a few awkward moments...such as, for example, the police raid. Maybe I should explain that in England the hours for drinking are strictly controlled and any hotel that allows drinking after hours in the public rooms by non-residents is liable to be prosecuted and have its license taken away. But this was a small hotel and about a third of the conventioners were staying at another one a few hundred yards away. At 4.20 am on Sunday morning there was a nice little party going on in the downstairs lounge when the night porter shambled in, followed by two huge policemen. One of them carried the hotel register and began to ask people their name and room number, while the other just stood there looking ominous, with an arresting sort of expression on his face.

I was going to tell you exactly what happened, naming names, but warning bells have started to ring in my subconscious. I think British Conventions are getting impossible to report--everything is either too confusing or libellous. Anyhow complete disaster was averted by presence of mind by some and absence of body by others, and the police retired in frustration. After a decent interval the Convention Secretary thought he might as well go home. He was registered in a room at the hotel all right, but it was a broom closet. At about 5 am, then, he opened the hotel door and went outside. He found himself standing beside one of the policemen who had been in earlier. "And where might you be going?" asked the policeman. "For a walk," answered the Convention Secretary innocently, striding out as jauntily as a Convention Secretary can at 5 am in the middle of a Convention. The policeman followed him ponderously and for about half an hour the two of them in single file walked the streets. At last, just about dawn, the tired fan shook off his pursuer and doubled back home. I should think that by now everything has happened to Convention Secretaries.

The modern British Convention is fabulous. See for yourself by voting for London as the next World Con site when its bid comes up at Cleveland.

(o)-(o)

A

fourth tender poem of the Old Spaceways titled...

"It's Not the Heat, It's the Humidity"

Space is pretty cold.
It's almost a vacuum, you know, and our survey ship
Is pretty far from the sun--not too much heat to begin with.

Besides, heat radiates.
Go out on the skin of the beast in a space-suit, sometime.
Listen to your suit heaters switch on as high as they'll go.

Me, I'm in sick-bay.
Frozen feet and hands, they say, and I think that's pretty funny,
Especially since I'm only a steward and not a deck hand or crewman.

Well, those deep-freeze food lockers get pretty cold sometimes.

HERBLIGS

"WILLIS HAS
IMPECCABLE
TASTE!"



Therbligs II

"Work like this makes a man think." Hon. Mole in THE POGO PAPERS.

Of course he didn't happen to be talking about publishing a fanzine, but it makes you wonder when you see how closely he whanged the nail on the head. Every now and then, say twice in the course of a month, fanac forces a stray thought across the otherwise pure purity of my mind. This month's thought is from Bill Morse, stationed in the wilds of England, who reveals that all the POGO annuals and the two extras that have been produced, plus a Pogomobile (whatever that is) are available in London for 10/6 (whatever that is). This, I assume, includes: POGO, I GO POGO, THE POGO PAPERS, THE INCOMPLEAT POGO, POGO STEPMOTHER GOOSE, and UNCLE POGO SO-SO STORIES. This collection costs roughly \$6 American, so if 10/6 is as little as I think it is, Stateside fans might well be buying future issues of Pogo from British distributors. I am sure that there are Anglofans, as well, who would like copies of any or all of the Pogo books, so if Bill Morse would be so kind as to drop the name and address of this fabulous place, I'll be more than happy to print it. I predict all copies will be sold within a fortnight (whatever that is). Looking back on it all, this month's thinking was proven to be pretty nigh incomprehensible (whatever that is) and apt to be tiring. Thinking is serious business, which I suppose explains why most people don't do more of it.

This month's ten pages of THERBLIGS have once again been cut down to a mere eight pages, and one of those I foolishly squandered on a full-page illo by ESEM, so I'll swing into the letters without further nonsense.

(Robert Bloch) Dear Sergeant: Congratulations! Both on your promotion and your publication...each represents a signal advance, in my opinion. This issue of OOPS contains a lot that I enjoyed, and holds up very well. Few fanzines can boast comments by Dickens, Tennyson, Bacon, Dryden, etc...as for Martial and Tom Dewey, I thought they were dead a long time ago. Willis is, as always, a delight; if he only had a suitable vehicle and theme he could produce some wonderful stuff for the general reading public and win a deserved reputation thereby. (PO Box 362, Weyauwega, Wisconsin)

.....and a very merry birthday to you, Bob. Since you are one of fandom's special VBNF's, I suggest you avoid Dean Grennell for the coming year--his .357 Magnum, you know, will also shoot .38 Specials and that would be a fate worse than mystic. I think that is a rather good pun, myself, and I've only used it twice. I had a birthday this month (May) too, just about yesterday in fact. On May 5th I started working on my last year in the USMC and on May 5th, 1956, I will be once again just plain old Lonesome Gregg, fan.

(Rick Sneary) A slight delay all around, but we wouldn't be fans if there wasn't. ... Vernon McCain has the rare gift in fan writers, of making you think about what he has said. Yet, not get into an argument with him. At least I don't. And I certainly agree with him about teenage fans. I was 18 when I started, back in 1944, and very green. None of the young fans of that day are still around, with the exception of those that have turned Pro, such as Chad Oliver. And I've seen several generations of fans pass. Now I'm reading my own Obiit. Tisk! Really, I always thought of myself as a contemporary of Art Rapp and Don Wilson. ... Yes yes. Willis must be compiled. But why not the whole Stateside adventure? With maps and things.. Be the first to publish "The Collected Works of Walt Willis" in this country. My big gripe of that year was that Forry brought Willis out here, then didn't tell his friends tell the last two days. I and Len Moffatt got to see him only at LASFAS, and he never did get a chance to meet Burbee, who he especially wanted to see. (2962 Santa Ana Street, South Gate, California)

.....all quotes from Sneary's letter are strictly sic, of course. The complete Stateside Adventures of Willis are being finished up now, Rick, and will be printed

Therbligs III

in a separate edition from OOPS as soon as they are ready. Yes, complete with maps and things, too. Don't worry about ordering your copy quite yet...I'll make plenty of noise about it when I'm ready to go to press. As for Burbee--about the only solution I can see is to take him to Ireland to meet Willis.

(Sam Johnson) I notice in this latest OOPS a complaint by Silverberg about my "mispelling" of mediocore. You can pass this along to him if you want: "Mediocore" is about as bad a misspelling as theatre, and many other words similar to this. Bob did so try to make it out to be funny too... (1517 Penny Drive-Edgewood, Elizabeth City, North Carolina)

.....rather than have Silverberg fight it out with you via OOPS, Sam, I offer the following: "mediocre" (sans 'h')

"misspelling" (with two s's) Both spellings are via Webster, so why not give up and accept defeat gracefully...we all make mistakes know and than.



ESHM

(Dean Grennell) I gotta comment on OOPSLA!! I think it is definitely my favorite fanzine being published these days...and if it ranks above HYPHEN in my esteem, it is to a large extent due to the fact that it has more Willis in it than HYPHEN has. ... I must have wrote that letter you quote from some time prior to the 3rd of November last fall because on that day I received a check from Ray Palmer in payment for the two stories which appeared in UNIVERSE #5. ... Fresh paragraph for Willis: I think that is the first public expose I've been of the PROTON hoax, which I'd nearly forgotten, I guess. Walt's comments on their bicycle trip is a fine example of the kind of thing I like to read... and his resumption of narrating the trip westward makes me wish that he was a fellow photophan like myself instead of a tennisfan...you can't preserve things like that for posterity with a racket...or even a racquet. ...

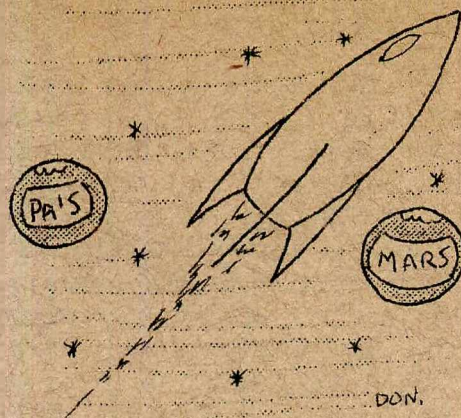
"...seldom have I seen a newspaper give more inadequate coverage to such an interesting event." That's a classic, yet these things trip so effortlessly from the Willis brain that we tend to take them as a matter of course and don't even give them the appreciation they deserve. ... There are times when I get the distinct impression that this world and in particular the English language is set up for the sole purpose of affording opportunities for Willis and Bloch to form immortal puns. Another instance of this occurred recently while Bloch

was down here visiting us. We decided to write a letter to Marty Greenberg and I was asking Bloch what Mrs Greenberg's first name was. "It's Ruth," he said. "Marriage has mellowed Greenberg; as a bachelor he was ruthless." (402 Maple Avenue, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin)

.....I have little to comment on this letter except that I regret that the smallness of THERBLIGS this issue caused me to cut most of it. There are many more letters to be printed, but somehow I get the impression I would be better off printing the rest of yours. Oh, well, perhaps I can chisel one out of you in time to be printed in next issue. And speaking of next issues, Dean, I wonder if-and-when the readers and I might expect another installment of GRENADEAN ETCHINGS?

Therbligs IV

(Tom Hinmon) ...a rival fan group has formed at the LDS business college, admission by invitation only. A serious, hard-working group, they only consider candidates who can contribute something to their fan publication. Their time is too valuable to waste just talking, so the word "rival" is used rather loosely here. Their first issue of their fanzine (title - undecided; regularity - undecided; subscription rates - undecided) is a proposed tying-in of religion and s-f, showing that the two are compatible. All this I get from Frances. I haven't been invited to join and probably won't be. I'm allergic to work after shepherding this group for 18 months or so. (1944 East 17th South, Salt Lake City 8, Utah)

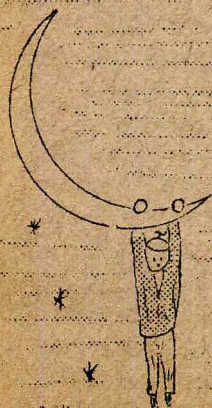


.....yeah, Tom, but they'll never have the fun in their sercon group that we had in our gab-fests when the Utah Science Fiction League was first being formed. Glad to hear the USFL is still going strong, even if the O-O, SWARM, has folded. When I get back to SLC we'll have to do something to let fandom know that Salt Lake can and will be a power in fandom. All we have to do is get the USFL, this new group, and the Frontier Rocket Society working together and we'll have a con site in no time.

I am inspired with memory and prodded with conscience to list art contributors for this issue, something I often neglect. This business of OOPS having no contents page is fine for most things, but often I forget little bits of necessary egoboo and I apologize to my very patient contributors for my faults. Artwork this issue is supplied by the ever-present DEA, another artist named Capella (who has been with OOPS since the first issue), new additions ESHM, Rotsler, and Don Allen (see this page) plus Richard Bergeron and Jack Harness, who also did the cover. If I have forgotten anybody--and I hope not--I apologize profusely.

(Joe Gibson) ...I'm more amused than intrigued by fannish arguments for more serious, constructive fan activity. Seems to me the damned thing can't help being constructive. Seriously, now, the amount of tolerance required to hobnob with the wierd characters permeating fandom can only enrich one's personality--prejudices and biased beliefs get a heck of a drubbing in fannish society. Similarly, there's that about s-f which forces it inevitably to produce some mature, constructive pieces of modern literature--not even the replanted western-made space-opera can successfully avoid it. S-f is a pioneering type of story; to read it and enjoy it, even as "escape" fiction, you must necessarily tear down some mental barriers to accept its tenets. That's the kind of mental exercise which must make you able to accept new tenets and changes in real life more readily than the person who clings to "the world as it is."

It's not more important whether s-f "foretells" new inventions or sociological trends of times to come; s-f can guess wrong more often than right. Yet the people who read s-f will be better able to accept new changes and conditions, whatever they are, than most other people--they've been doing it all along! And that is definitely something new in human society, though I doubt if it will have historic significance any time soon. ... But y'know, if I had to consider fandom seriously for very long, I damned sure would get fed up with it! (24 Kensington Avenue, Jersey City 4, New Jersey)



.....another excerpt from a long letter, like Grennell's, and I wish I could have printed it all. I understand, now, why some fans print letterzines, and I'd go into the business myself if I could be sure of plenty of letters like yours, Joe.

Therbligs V

ODDS AND ENDS. I wonder how many fans in the Los Angeles area received an invitation, as I did, from Universal-International Studios to attend a special preview of their new film, THIS ISLAND EARTH, about the 18th of April. Unfortunately for me, the night fell on a Tuesday and I had to remain absent, but I would have cheerfully given my eye-teeth to attend and perhaps they'll make a similar offer sometime again in the future. ## I buy my paper from Master Products Company of Chicago, Illinois, and they publish a quarterly supplement of mimeo ideas, news, and chatter. I was slightly surprised to see an idea sent in on color mimeography from long-lost-fan Shelby Vick. Vick knows about color mimeography, if anybody does, but I can't help but wish he'd display his skill to fandom at large in the form of another issue of CONFUSION. ## Also received was a notice from SHROUD PUBLISHERS and a request for publicity on their forth-coming books. Well, I think this is fair enough, and if they manage to stay in business they'll be outstanding publishers. Already published or scheduled are such rare gems as Lovecraft's "Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath" and Robert W. Chambers' "King In Yellow." They have other titles, but these stick in my mind as outstanding, partly because they are so very rare, and partly because I have always wanted to read them, myself. For more information I suggest you contact the publishers themselves at 819 Michigan Avenue, Buffalo 3, New York. They're a small outfit now, but I'd like to see them grow, myself.

(Mike Duckworth) Saw your review in the latest issue of OTHER WORLDS. Enclosed you will find 15¢ for a sample copy of OOPSLA! It's remarkable how, in so short a time, you have risen to the top in fandom. Keep up the good work. (4022 Kostner, Dallas 16, Texas)

.....well thanks for the compliment, there, Tex, and it's good to know that OW is back again. You'll pardon me for commenting, I'm sure, but does four years sound like such a short time in fandom to you? But I'm not at the top yet, either...don't run off--another ten years and I'm sure to get better.



There is always that little something to fanzine publishing that pops up unexpectedly and suddenly makes the whole mess seem worthwhile. Sometimes it is just a kind word or thought, but often it is a strange piece of mail. Several marvels and heartening pieces received this month were: the subscription (\$1) from Des Emery who still had four issues left on his old one; the special delivery letter from LA that contained only a 50¢ sub to OOPS; the note from Jaunita Coulson signed with the initials JWC; and the letter from a long-time OOPS subscriber, Ray Allard, who still found time to pass out egoboo and cheer to me at a time when he needed it most himself. I've said it before and I'll say it again...it's for and because of people like these that OOPS keeps coming.

To go from the sublime to the ridiculous, have I ever told you the pun about the highly promising chemist who suddenly threw his career out the window to become a cartographer. (Warning: this pun is a direct plagiarism from one told in QUANDRY, lo! these many moons ago...anybody remember it?) Anyhow, the crux of the whole matter is: he was putting the charts before retorts.

THE ANGLOFAN'S ALMANAC

I rather think this section should have a new title...there have been some complaints about the one above. They disturb me, even though I am well aware they were raised by war-mongering Scottish Nationalists who had nothing in mind except argument, and it makes me realize that I have been lumping in Bloody Britishers, Illiterate Irish, Sour Scots, Nice Norse, and Belchin' Belgians under the general title "Anglofan."

Comments from overseas this time were from: Jan Jansen, Eric Bentcliffe, Dennis Tucker, Ethel Lindsay, Good Old George Charters, Pete Royle, Cato Lindberg, Davis Parnabs, Douglas Millar, Walt Willis, Bill Morse, Mal Ashworth, Mike Wallace, and Nigel Lindsay...and possibly I've missed one or two. TAFF donations were made by Dennis Tucker (5/), Mike Wallace, and Bill Morse.

Anglofans can get OOPS any of two or three ways: 1) a letter of comment per issue, 2) a donation to the TAFF in my name, or 3) a small map of your area or any tourist propaganda you happen to have about. TAFF donations should go to Walt Willis, 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, N. Ireland. Dennis Tucker, bhless his shoul, has pretty well supplied me with British motoring and cycling journals...which also reminds me that I'll also send you OOPS in trade for a British science-fiction mag, in a ration of two of mine for one of yours. But now the letters.

(George Charters) I regret I did not acknowledge receipt of OOPSLA! sooner, especially because I am at the moment so exhausted that I am incapable of doing justice to the contents, which I enjoyed, but this short note is just to explain my state of exhaustion which is consequent upon the departure of Walter Willis for the Convention at Kettering after a week of hectic preparation of which nearly all the burden was carried upon the devoted shoulders of Bob Shaw and myself, and least you should think such preparation trivial I would like to mention that it involved such items as packing clothing, books, magazines, jigsaw puzzles, sandwiches, etc., and interviewing the baker, milkman, rent collector, butcher, grocer, gardener and wine merchant, selling old surplus office equipment, rearranging office furniture to make more room for files consequent upon the increase in HYPHEN circulation, buying new and essential office equipment, paying off some employees (electricians, o-fillers, flat-bed operators, etc), interviewing new employees (typists, manicurists, telephone operators, secretaries, etc), accepting cash subscribers, rejecting subscribers who failed to send cash, acknowledging submissions, answering letters from editors asking for material, answering the telephone (a difficult job as the phone-box is 200 yards down the street), making tea for Walter and Madeleine who all this time bravely refused assistance in their strenuous games of Ghoddminton, entertaining visitors, and, in short, carrying out all the multifarious duties necessary to the efficient running of O'Blique House. Will write you again in a year or so. (3 Lancaster Avenue, Bangor, Co Down, N. Ireland)

.....you do that, George. How do you use up your spare time, anyhow?

(Douglas Millar) The artwork is, for the most part, a waste of space. Harness shows originality and talent... Terry Carr is amusing, but the novelty...is wearing off... Willis: highly amusing. I would like to live in America for two reasons. Namely, to be able to hear decent modern jazz, especially the West Coast variety, and the pick of the best s-f. Otherwise I prefer Britain. Re Bradbury: HE and only he has vindicated sf in the eyes of intelligent non-sf critics in Britain; believe me, that is an achievement. Bradbury doesn't need to write anything new. He can live on the reputation created by "Fahrenheit 451"... (307 Montford Avenue, Rutherglen, Glasgow, Scotland)

.....couldn't prove it by me, Doug, but then I prefer Heinlein, too.

(Walt Willis) ...some of your titles are elegant to the point of confusion. When you're not sure after the first look who an article is by or sometimes even what it's called, you're only defeating your own ends. I think this is part of the reason for the impression I get vaguely that OOPS is a bit like a

vast empty cathedral. Beautiful to look at but not fulfilling its real purpose. ...I think it'd be a better fmz and would create a lot more stir in fandom if there were more reading in it and less looking. ...McCain was even better than usual and as a 34 year old I must agree with much of what he says. Grennell was good too. Silverberg was competent. Carr's ubiquitous critters were better than usual. ...Looking back over this OOPS again I see there's not so much to complain about as regards quantity of material but I still think there could be more of it. (170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, N. Ireland)

.....you are so right, Walt, and am I doing any better this issue?

(Pete Royle) I don't know whether to send you this letter or not; you see, I have a shrewd suspicion that my letters to America are not being received, for some mysterious reason... ('D' Coy, AAS, Arborfield, Berkshire)

.....they've been arriving all right, Pete, but you put on insufficient postage for transmission by air so they've been all drifting over slowly by boat.

(Cato Lindberg) After reading "Hot Romance and Cold Turkey" I wonder if there is one man in the world--Bob Tucker--who has seen more westerns than me. ... I envy the Swedes having their own science fiction magazine. The poor Norwegian fans, if there are any, must rely on imported matter and many times we even get short of that. But I hope this will change, for in SFQ I read that all Scandanavian countries will soon have their own promags. (Skogerveien 69, Drammen, Norway)

.....thanks for the International Reply Cupons, Cato---they are an excellent way to pay faneds in foreign countries.

(Nigel Lindsay) I enjoyed Old Pop McCain's article. Personally I think a lot of the so-called teenage fans are old fans posing as such. Take me for instance; I am 97 years old next Tuesday but I like to pretend to fandom at large that I am only 35. The Willis column; now this is IT. You don't see much of his writing in British zines. Wish I could have gotten in earlier on the Harp

Stateside epic... (311 Babbacombe Rd, Torquay)

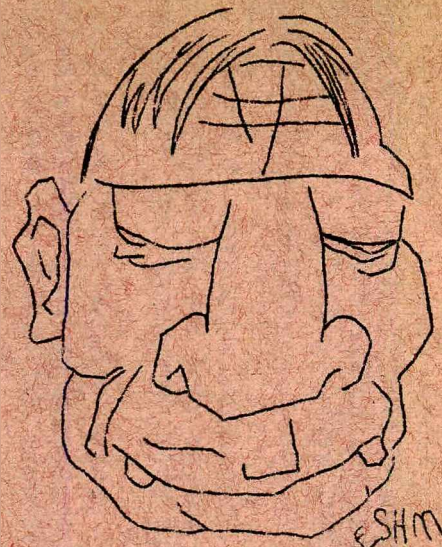
.....pretty soon, Nigel, you can get in earlier on the Harp Stateside. Not backwards in time or anything like that... merely a reprint edition.

(Ethel Lindsay) The Harp is still twanging away beautifully. I always think of WAW as the original 'quiet man' who every now and then can be absolutely devastating with his unbiased judgement. ...I see you have a letter by Tom White which I thought the best you quoted. He is rapidly becoming one of my favourite writers. (126 West Regent St, Glasgow)

.....there are about six or eight more letters I'd like to print but cannot for lack of room. I shouldn't have used so many illo's this time... Apologies to Bentcliffe, Janzen, Tucker, Morse, Ashworth and Wallace---maybe I can work your letters in next issue...



Dateline: 14 May 1955. About time for me to add in a few more comments here and there, possibly another letter or two, and then wrap up the issue. Plans are looking up for OOPS in the near future...next issue will see the addition of John Berry to the pages of OOPS as well as the reprint edition of Bob Shaw's FANSMANSHIP LECTURES and the ever-present Willis, making it almost an all-Irish issue. Also scheduled for future publication is an article on Joel Nydahl, editor of the favorite fanzine, VEGA, done by one of Joel's closest friends, Ian Macauley.



ONE THING ABOUT MILK IS THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE MUCH SHAPE

FRIENDLY ENEMIES DEPT: "Thanks for your letter and here is the reply." From correspondence received by the editor.

FACING THE ISSUE: "Bit of a cheek on the part of...Douglas Millar to tell an American to drop Americanisms!" From a similar source.

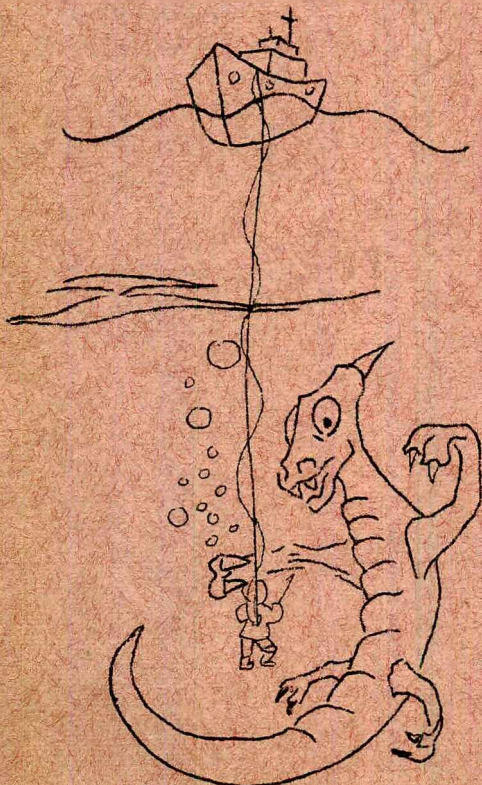
THE WAR WITH THE POST OFFICE: "Of possible interest to you. Your letter was cancelled in Frankfurt (Germany) of all places, on the 28th of April. Wonder how that got there...?" Jan Jansen, in a letter. That makes two of us, Jan.

WHAT WAS THAT AGAIN?: "...with the upgrading perhaps you've also got another Army address..." (underlines mine) From a letter. That, sir, is almost a cuss-word to our branch of the service.

NOTES AND COMMENT

If Laney were still with us, I am sure the next FANDANGO AWARD FOR FUGGHEADEDNESS would go without reservations to the editors of COUP, "fandom's most boring magazine." The subtitle, as you may have guessed, is of my own application. # I am just a little confused by the double revelation that Raleigh Multog is really George Wetzels and Boyd Raeburn is two or three other people. Now fandom can afford losing Multog (I'm surprised Wetzels wasn't ashamed to admit it)

but I've always regarded A BAS as an excellent magazine. Are the motives behind this "hoax" simply for publicity--as in the time they tried to 'reveal' 7th Fandom as a hoax--or is PROXYBOO LTD merely cleaning out the shelves for a new line of material? # On the Highly Recommended Reading list this time are numbers 1, 2 and 3 of STAR SCIENCE FICTION with special mention for Judith Merrill's "So Proudly We Hail" in the first collection; Ace Double Book's presentation of Alan E. Nourse's tense "A Man Obsessed"; and the Lion edition of "Hell's Pavement" by Damon Knight. I would swear I've read parts of this latter item someplace before, and that feeling bothered me all the way through the novel, before I stumbled onto the fact that this Lion "Original" had been substantially reprinted (though probably rewritten and connecting chapters inserted) from both Street & Smith and Standard Publications. # Also in today's mail was a fine letter from Julian Parr in Germany (Duesseldorf-Oberkassel, Barmer Strasse 18) who said, among other things: "BONN in '61! (Le Bonne Con) ...I'm in touch with a few German fans...who would like to correspond with Anglo-American fans - in English, of course. ...ask them to write me." # And that does it once again. "He gets through too late who goes too fast," said Publilius Syrus in Maxim 767, and I'll go along with that.



Bergeron

Wye

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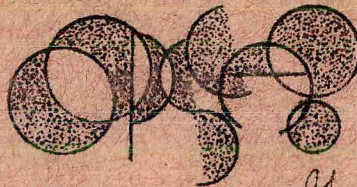
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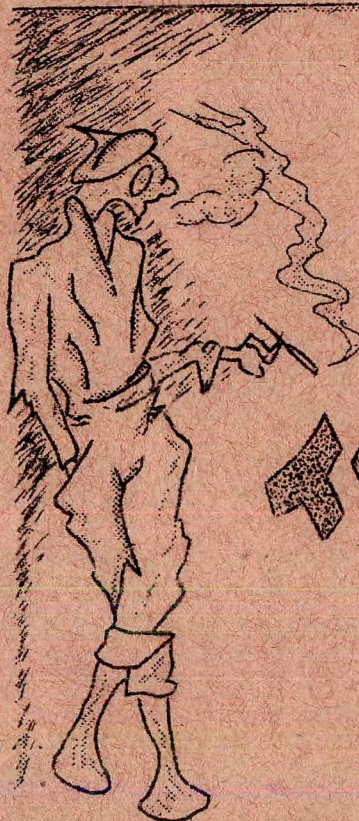
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