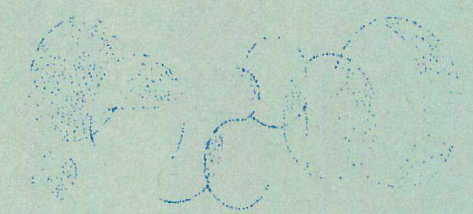


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STANDARD 83-83
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pros -
and

cons:

GALAXY---

'SCIENCE
FICTION'

OR 'MAGAZINE'?



GOLD - ELSBERRY - CALKINS

((The following is in continuation of a discussion of present-day sf in general and GALAXY in particular begun in the letter column of OOPS 27 by Richard Elsberry. To save readers the trouble of digging into their files for reference material, the more important parts of that earlier discussion are herewith repeated.))

ELSBERRY SAID:

"...I haven't read more than two issues of Galaxy in two years.

Those two issues bothered me, though. They were highly depressing... I began to wonder...if this was becoming standard sf fare. What ever happened to Padgett's robot, Joe, and Gallagher (or was it Galloway?) and the "fun" stuff that used to appear in aSF and TWS? You can take only so much doomsday and despair--and isn't that what Gold decries? I seem to recall--yes, here it is--"Anyone for Domsday? Not you! Not us!" says Gold. Yet the September and October issues of his magazine are full of it. In "Lastborn" by Asimov, Miss Fellowes and her little Neanderthaler are blasted into the Stone Age, victims of a society which places progress above poetry, a society without a heart. Our society.

"On the Double" by Bibble is not a doomsday story, but it is a typical O. Henry with the bumbling Earthmen plodding through to victory against superior technology. In Clarke's "Stroke of the Sun" the umpire is burned to a crisp to assure a political victory; satire, I suppose, but not very funny. Damon Knight's novelette 'destroys' a no-good Earthman who tries to gain wealth through an alien device he doesn't comprehend. Nothing was really accomplished in the story--and I certainly wasn't entertained. There was no point of reference; I couldn't fit myself into the story at all. I'd have much preferred to read about a well-intentioned modern-day man destroyed by a system, plan or policy developed in our present society which he cannot cope with or comprehend...because this may be the way I'll 'go under' one of these days. Tenn's "Lisbon Cubed" in the next issue is much like Knight's story--the Earthman decides to fight the aliens on his own and succeeds only in getting himself painfully killed. Where is the inspiration, uplift, entertainment that used to be in sf? Bloch's "Block That Metaphor" is another story that left me cold--given the situation Bloch has set up the outcome is inevitable. ... Just seems to me that there is a bit too much killing and violence to be found in these two magazines. The only story I really enjoyed was Pohl's "The Wizards of Pung's Corners" and one good story per each two issues is not a percentage to keep me reading Galaxy. Maybe it's a sign of the times or the author's don't want to cover well-trodden ground again, but damn it there wasn't anywhere near this amount of this type of story in the pre-1950 period. Then it was the exception; now it seems to be the rule. I think if I ever start writing sf I will have a little sign on my typewriter that will read: "Would JWC have printed this in 1941?"

H. L. GOLD ADMITTED: in a letter to S-F TIMES that "The (science fiction) rush produced so huge a strain on writers, who of course produce the very thing we sell, that quality just had to drop. Too many markets were competing for the output of too few skilled writers. Borderline stories which ordinarily would have been sent back for tuning up and polishing had to be bought as is because somebody else would have grabbed them without change. Routine ideas and treatments had to be good enough because magazines were buying wordage to fill pages with and writers were harried into turning out material that most of our temporary competitors were buying sight unseen. New authors sold too quickly to learn anything but bad writing habits and were thus deprived of editorial guidance that would have gotten them through their necessary apprenticeship. ..."

CALKINS CHIDED: "Frankly, Horace, we knew it all along--we just wondered when you would get around to admitting it. But now that the bubble has burst, will Galaxy get around to publishing good sf once again? Hmmm?" Although I did not really expect a reply to this aside, I was happy to see one when

EDITOR GOLD REPLIED: "My reply is serious, yes, but at my own evaluation this time. There's an earnest motive behind all the needling of science fiction, and Galaxy in particular, in Oopsla: you and your readers want to know how science fiction turned from a beautiful bride to a repugnant hag. Instead of answering with symbology--which is only a more obscure form of analogy, and even the best analogy has to be approximate--I'll explain with publishing statistics:

All commercial magazines have an effectively complete turn-over of readership every five years.

You and your readers stayed on considerably longer, exceptions that the rule takes into consideration, but, though you publish and contribute to and read fanzines, it's not science fiction that is your bond. It used to be; it isn't any longer. You've turned over, as you statistically had to, eventually.

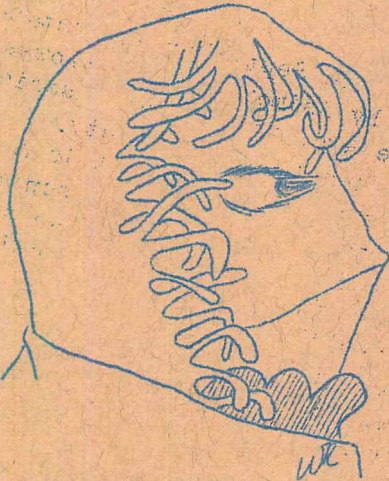
Richard Elsberry's appraisal of two issues of Galaxy could be no better proof. All the stories in those issues were publishable or better, a deadline-imposed criterion that you may rant against but is nevertheless the main fact of life to every editor with publication dates to meet. One --more, but I'm settling for one--story was a standout: "Lastborn" by Isaac Asimov.

How or why Elsberry misread it so thoroughly is not significant, except that he has moved out of science fiction and could be counted on to misread it. In freshness of theme and thematic development, in backgrounding, characterization, motivation, resolution--all the basic ingredients of reader identification--"Lastborn" is at least the equal of anything Asimov has ever done, and the warm welcome it was given by readers and writers is evidence that the story rang the bell now, and would have rung it in any year of Elsberry's own particular five-year Golden Age of science fiction.

I never enjoy seeing readers turn over, but with fans it's a much harder and hurtful process. They turn against, not over, and they understand and appreciate science fiction less than if they had never read it, until they finally move out--leaving room for others to honeymoon for five years, grow predictably disenchanting, then vindictive, and at last get a divorce as bitter as yours, and the bunch before you, and so on back to First Fandom or before.

Regret it, mourn it as lost youth, or whatever it represents to you, but why be enraged or malicious or spiteful? It's only a statistical process. Science fiction brought you the friends you're in touch with. It isn't the reason you're in touch now. But does friendship need any excuse? (signed) horace"

CALKINS HERE: Your letter contains several incorrect statements, Horace, and I'd like to take the room here to discuss several of them, but before I



do I'd like to make sure one thing is clear: namely, that in writing this I do it not as a person "enraged or malicious or spiteful" but as one of those other types you mentioned...a sincere friend. Since our earlier correspondence, I have always considered myself to be--and I hope I have not jeopardized this position--a friend of yours, and I still do. Believe me, nothing would please me more than to see you and Galaxy smack dab on top of the publishing heap, turning out reams and reams of the very best kind of science fiction. If fannish critics, myself included, grow 'enraged' at times it is because they are sincere devotees of good science fiction and feel hurt, shocked and perhaps even cheated in some obscure fashion (although not by you personally, you understand) when you publish what is by your own admission sf of borderline quality, routine in both idea and treatment. We know how downright good sf can be--and has been--and we are sorry to find it less than perfect now.

That you find this sometimes heated criticism to be 'malicious or spiteful' is, I feel, the result of your own hurt feelings speaking--but please bear in mind that in most cases we are criticizing not Galaxy in particular but the entire present-day sf field in general, of which Galaxy is a part. In thus classifying us as intentional troublemakers, Horace, you do us a grave injustice.

There may be some truth in your other claim--that while sf created fandom, it is no longer the binding tie--but the amount is difficult to determine, and, indeed, fandom itself cannot come to an agreement on this question. When Bob Madle won TAFF a couple of years ago, fandom was confronted with the somewhat surprising knowledge that we were not all one big happy family but more like a number of not-too-similar families having a common ancestor. Still, science fiction was that common ancestor, and it my own personal belief that sf still plays a dominant role in all families of fandom and that if sf suddenly ceased to exist, so also would fandom.

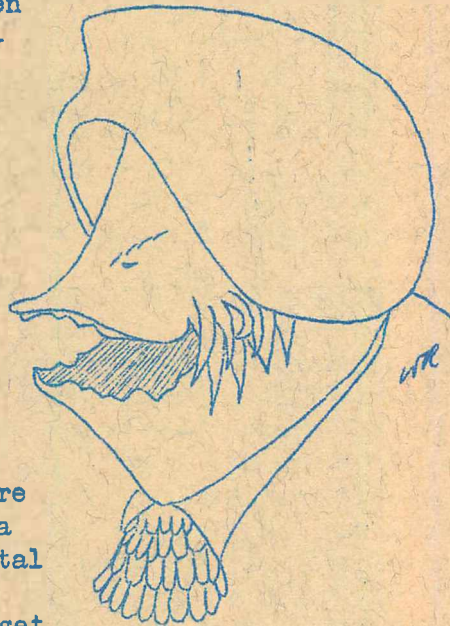
With fandom's very existence depending upon the state of the professional science fiction field, wouldn't you agree that, if nothing else, our instinct for self-preservation would demand that we take an intense interest in the status of present-day sf? In this respect a malicious fan would be bent upon destroying himself along with science fiction. Such types of person are known to exist in the world, but I deny that fandom has a larger-than-proportional percentage in respect to the total world population.

Other points in your letter deserve attention, but I'll get to them later on. In the meantime I sent your letter to Richard Elsberry for further comment and in due time the following letter came back from exotic Schenectady.

ELSBERRY REPLIED: "Dear Gregg (and, over your shoulder, HL Gold):

If I gave the impression that any of the stories in the September and October 1958 Galaxys were 'bad' then I gave a false impression. I certainly didn't mean to imply that they were poorly written, although that impression seems prevalent since I did not say they were 'good.' An oversight on my part. The stories were, if not classics, well written, eminently readable, and worthy of publication. My objection, and it's purely a personal one, is to the themes of the stories--themes which left me depressed. What I was trying to point out was that this was not the 'type' of story I want to read for steady fare. I'm reading sf for enjoyment; escape if you will. And the trouble with the two issues was that I simply did not enjoy them. Reading them was like reading two consecutive books by Kafka. A fine writer, but he can get you down in such massive doses.

When you pick up two consecutive issues of a magazine and find both filled with a certain type of story--let's call them 'beat-the-Earthman-down-type' for lack of something better at the moment--you can make several assumptions: (1) this is the type of story the authors are all producing; (2) this is the type of story the editor is buying; or (3) the editor did not use proper judgement in mixing up his material.



I know the answer is not (1) but it could be either (2) or (3) or both. Had these stories been doled out one or two to an issue I'd have had no gripes. Mixing the heavier, more dismal themes with something lighter seems to be only good editorial horse-sense. Naturally I like to see the Earthman get put in his place now and again --for a while we had a spate of stories where Earth was always coming out ahead. Too much of anything--even good stories if all of the same type--leads to discontented readers. John W. Campbell came to realize that back in 1947 when he was called on running too many atomic destruction stories; he immediately went to the opposite tack and outlawed them completely, for which I think he too is open to criticism. My plea is simply for moderation--not too much doom and despair, not too much space opera nor too much Hal Clement.

((I feel forced to insert here that I do not agree entirely with Elsberry. wgc)) Gold says readership turns over every five years. I believe him. I turned over five years ago, now I'm back. But I didn't stop reading sf because I was tired of it or didn't like what was being published at the time. Something had to give because of the press of affairs and it was sf. But what I saw in Galaxy last year seemed considerably different (I don't have the magazines here to prove it, though) than what I had been reading five years ago. Perhaps Gold has been so close to the field that he hasn't seen a slow move to a new type of story, a type he has been using liberally (at least in two issues) and perhaps even helped foster. Or perhaps I'm work on insufficient data based on only two issues. How say you?

However, despite my own opinions, Gold must be attuned to the pulse of the 'average' sf reader since my 1958 Ayer's Directory shows Galaxy's circulation at about 116,000, tops in the field by many thousands. Gold undoubtedly realizes you can't please everyone...but it's a good idea to try to please as many as you can. I'll be interested, though, in what the 1959 Ayer's has to say; perhaps you could convince Gold into giving us a sneak preview?"

CALKINS FINISHES UP WITH: I'll pick assumptions (1) and (2) myself. I think the case is not one of editorial mismanagement but rather incompetence or lack of effort on the part of the authors. The insatiable maw of the science fiction boom made sf just too easy to sell--to keep their jobs, editors have to fill their blank pages with something, and if no good stories are forthcoming...well, there are just no good stories to put in the magazine. With most of the threat removed from the rejection slip, authors began to get somewhat lax. I do not begrudge Gold the fact that he had to buy second-rate stories for Galaxy because of economic pressures...or the same of Campbell for Astounding, or Mills for F&SF...but I do hold it against him when we fans point out this fact to him and have him deny it flatly, next branding us as 'enraged or malicious or spiteful.'

Now, however, the boom is over. Presumably the lackadaisical newcomers have departed for greener pastures and the backsliding old-time authors have decided to settle down to writing quality sf once again...but they won't settle down easily, and we fans are depending heavily upon you editors to see that the authors do become tame once again. And if they do not appear to be doing so and the quality of published sf does not rise again, we'll holler and holler loud! Probably for editorial scalps! That's only fair, isn't it? You're hired to do a job and please your readers; if you fail to do this do you feel you deserve the acclaim of an editor who succeeds?

Sf readers, Horace, I claim do not follow the same publishing statistics other readers do...that very same First Fandom you mention in connection with bitter divorces from science fiction is still very much with us: Tucker, Bloch, Moskowitz, Kyle...how far back would you like to go? I'm a relative baby, myself, and my five-year turnover period has come and gone more than twice without my interest in sf showing signs of flagging...indeed, it has quickened, for am I not herewith devoting a good deal of energy and argument (to say nothing of time and money) in the interests of providing better science fiction for the future?

In sf, longevity is not the exception, it is the rule. Today's issue, I feel, is a plain one: we want better sf than we are getting. If Galaxy 'Magazine' fails to produce the quality Galaxy 'Science Fiction' once did, we feel we are justified in asking for a new deck of cards. Don't you?

FANNING WITHOUT GEARS

"A fanzine," said Redd Boggs, "should be thought of as a delicately adjusted machine."

Now I have a respect for Redd Boggs that verges on veneration, so naturally I took this dictum very seriously. I tried, really tried, to think of fanzines as delicately adjusted machines. Most every morning Madeleine would find me standing in the hall in a sort of catatonic trance, surrounded by fallen-off back covers and crinkled staples, clutching battered sheaves of mimeographed blotting paper. She knew I was trying to think of them as delicately adjusted machines and she would lead me gently to the breakfast table and feed me energy-giving toast and marmalade. With her help and encouragement I eventually began to succeed in seeing them as delicately adjusted machines and sometimes my frown of concentration would relax into a weak but appreciative smile. Madeleine would look at me solicitously and I would explain, "It's this delicately adjusted machine from Grennell." Indeed after a while we stopped thinking of them as fanzines at all. "any DAMs in the mail?" I would call out cheerily on my return from work in the evening, and if there were I would take them into the garage and open them with my screwdriver, which I was now using instead of my nailfile, and examine the works inside.

So all was going quite well until one day the Nameless Ones of Seattle started sending me their fanzine. Now I don't know whether you saw the earlier CRYs, the ones with the long long letter sections from people like Esmond Adams, Rich Brown, Bill Meyers and Les Gerber, but I can tell you it was not easy to think of them as delicately adjusted machines. I knew that according to Boggs I should be able to perceive how all the parts fitted together with jewel-like precision like finely cut gears, but to me it just looked like a glorious fannish mesh. But Boggs had spoken, so I tried harder. And harder. The strain began to tell on me. I don't remember much about that time now but they tell me I was found smearing thick grease all over my Quandry file and wiping down the pages of the coming Hyphen with a rag dipped in light engine oil.

Naturally Madeleine was perturbed at this, like the loyal wife she is. Besides, she had had an article in that Hyphen. Of course she is too good a fan to doubt the wisdom of Redd Boggs, but she began to wonder if perhaps I in my simplicity had misunderstood him. Perhaps even taken him too literally, like the character in 'The Wallet of Kai-Lung.' "It is related that a person of limited intelligence on being assured that he would certainly one day enjoy an adequate competence if he closely followed the habits of the thrifty bee, spent the greater part of his life in anointing his thighs with the yellow powder which he laboriously collected from the flowers of the field."

THE
HARP
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ONCE
OR



So the dear girl started looking through the old fanzine files for other writings of The Sage of Minnesota which might cast a different light on the problem. Eventually to her joy she came upon the answer. She waved it in front of my staring eyes and almost immediately the light of sanity (comparatively speaking) returned. I made a complete recovery and now I feel it my duty to bring the same message of hope to others who may be similarly afflicted. If any of you feel the urge to think of fanzines as delicately adjusted machines, hurry round to your friendly neighbourhood BNF and ask if you can look at his copy of Boggs' Index to Astounding.

This dreadful business was all hushed up at the time, so you innocent young fans won't know about it, but I think the truth should now be revealed. However horrible they are, facts are facts and must be faced. Briefly, about seven years ago Boggs decided that he would publish an index to Astounding. He went painstakingly through every single issue published during the twenty-odd years of the magazine's existence and listed every story under both title and author. Then he rearranged them in alphabetical order and put them onto stencils, checking and double-checking each item with his usual exacting thoroughness. Then he cut a tasteful cover, ran the lot off in his usual pellucid mimeography, which looks more as if it had been impressed on the paper by angels wielding dies of burnished gold than by inky stencils, collated each copy with machine-tool precision, stapled them three times, and mailed them out in envelopes. Three weeks later in far-off Ireland I was looking at one of them in awed admiration. Here was a delicately adjusted machine if ever a fanzine was. The neat columns marched up and down the pages like polished pistons, gleaming mathematically. Shaking my head humbly I closed the noble thing and prepared to place it in some place of honour from which it could be withdrawn at a moment's notice to confound anyone who should suggest that fans were careless slobs. I took a last respectful look at the cover...and exclaimed in horror. "Aargh!" was the way I put it, if I remember. I shook my head and looked again, incredulous. But there it was, stark and unmistakable, in impeccably cut letters an inch high: "ASTOUNDING STORY KEY."

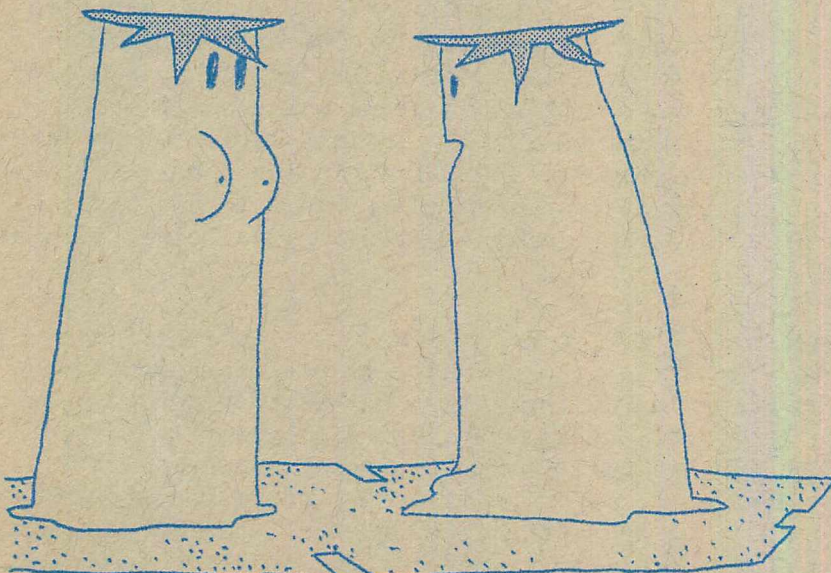
I didn't mention it to anyone at the time because I thought possibly no one else had noticed it, including Boggs, and that if I pointed it out he might commit suicide by falling on the point of his stylus. Later I came to wonder if perhaps I had underestimated Boggs' sense of humour and if the presence of this monumental typo right in the cornerstone of the work was a subtle allusion to the fact that it was an N3F sponsored Project. But it was only after many years experience in fandom that my mind broadened and deepened enough to understand the real message of the Astounding Story Key. It was no coincidence that the only typo Boggs ever made in his life should have been placed on the cover of the one work of his that was most likely to be consulted by each generation of fans as long as science fiction existed. The sercon fans would keep it and remember it and show it to neofen as, not a sercon project like any other, but as The Zine Where Boggs Made The Typo. And looking at it we would all subconsciously absorb its symbolic significance...that perfection is impossible for us, as it was for Boggs, and should not be striven after too hard lest in its quest we lose the true purpose of a fanzine, as a hifi addict ceases to enjoy music in his concentration on frequency response. In other words, a fanzine, like a human being, is more than a delicately adjusted machine.

ODD JOHN I was reading the other day a story in Astounding which is one of the reasons nobody will ever bother to make an index to that magazine again. It was by a man called David Gordon, whom I unwillingly remember as the author of another screamingly unfunny novelette the plot of which revolved slowly and tediously around the subject of duck excrement. In his current masterpiece he takes another twenty pages of what used to be the premier sf magazine to relate how a man saved himself from being poisoned by alien foodstuffs by dosing himself with Epsom salts. All the same I think, so beaten down am I by the monstrous mediocrity of modern magazine sf, that I would have endured even this unflinchingly if it hadn't been that the previous five pages had been occupied by another literary genius called Kuykendall recounting in juvenile patois how some small boys flew into space in a homemade space-

ship powered by old refrigerator parts and reversed the orbit of a Russian satellite. As it was, at this point there was a loud crack and the room was showered by splinters of camel's vertebrae. The magazine wasn't mine so I didn't throw it across the room: I just sat there clenching it in my trembling fists and wondering 'why do we let Campbell get away with it?'

I have a feeling that unless I digress here several people are going to write in and explain to me that both these stories were meant to be humorous and that the Gordon epic was voted first in the Analytical Laboratory. Well, listen, I don't care. I don't care if it is suddenly revealed that David Gordon is a penname for Theodore Sturgeon writing in collaboration with the ghosts of HG Wells and Edgar Allan Poe. It was a lousy story, which any half awake editor would have bounced off his desk if he hadn't kidded himself that the presence of a few paragraphs of chemical gobbledegook gave it some justification to appear in a science fiction magazine. I don't care if Campbell produces signed affidavits from thirty thousand cleared water diviners that a corresponding number of readers had wet themselves while reading it. It was simply not funny. Yes of course I know Campbell must have thought it was funny--obviously he must have had some reason for printing it instead of some piece of higher literary merit, such as selections from the New Jersey telephone directory--and those of his readers who also have no sense of humour laboured under the same delusion. But the simple truth is that this story, like many of those by Sprague de Camp, belongs to a special class of humour written for people with no sense of humour. It's like robots reading pornography. These people form a major part of the audience of certain tv and radio comedians who perform for their clientele much the same function that seeing-eye dogs perform for the blind. They produce a product clearly labelled 'humour,' like a detergent packet, with the instructions for use clearly indicated. At periodic intervals cues for laughter are unmistakeably indicated and the humourless ones recognise them with relief and laugh ritually, looking out of the corner of one eye to make sure they're in step and out of the other to make sure that everybody sees them enjoying the joke. Eventually they laugh at the cue-words whenever they see them, confident that they are intrinsically funny. With John W. Campbell these association symbols evidently include excrement, little boys and dialect, and these are also recognised by many of the solemn technical types who fill his letter column. The sad fact that the only sort of real humour John and these pale imitations of him appreciate are heavy-handed burlesques of scientific laws, which are for them a sort of blasphemy. They are taboo-breaking jokes, like sex among schoolboys.

People like these will never dare to criticise anything that looks like humour in case their guilty secret becomes known, but that's no explanation why the rest of us continue to worship the JWC idol and ignore the clay feet he keeps putting in his mouth. Yes, I'm thinking of a dirty word called dianetics, which did more to harm science fiction than the Shaver Mystery, but which we all seem to have agreed to tactfully forget. But if we are to be expected to follow Campbell in his latest adventure we are entitled to honesty about the last one. If he is disillusioned with dianetics, why doesn't he admit he was wrong? Or may we expect dowsing



Atom

"No, I will not introduce you to that disgusting William Rotsler!"

The Harp That Once Or Twice IV

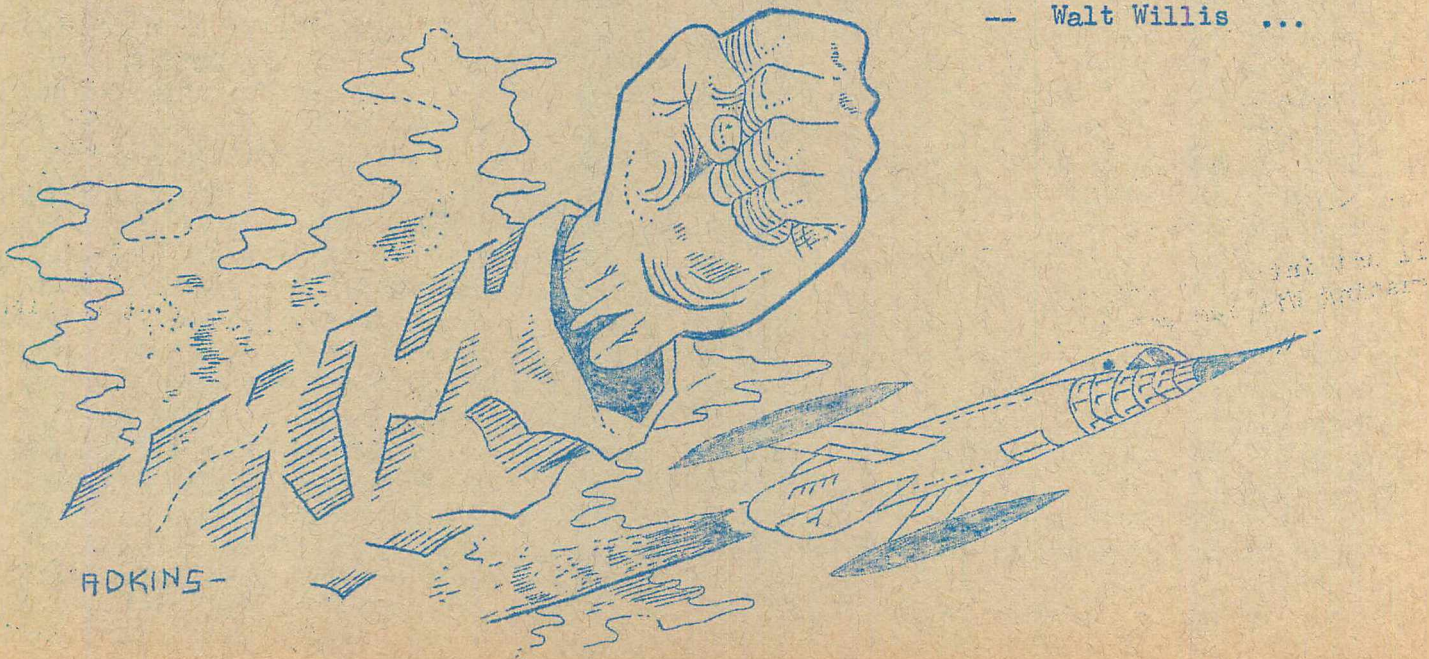
rods and sticky machines to disappear just as suddenly from the editorial columns of Astounding, leaving another few thousand trusting readers holding the can?

The truth is that we all still feel so immensely grateful to John for creating the golden age of sf that we feel he can do nothing wrong, but there's even more to it than that. I think we're all very fond of him as a person, even if we don't know him personally, partly because we recognise him as a fannish type like ourselves. Although he wouldn't touch fandom with a longer bargepole than practically any other pro editor, he has all our curiosity and sense of wonder and enthusiasm to the nth degree, and when he goes galloping off on some new hobby-horse we just smile affectionately and continue patiently reading through the unedited crud left on his desk. But ten years is a long time for a science fiction editor to have lost interest in science fiction. Are running a radio station, publicising Do-It-Yourself psychiatry or combing the nits of truth out of the lunatic fringe proper uses of the time our money pays for?

ERIN GOON BACK John Berry arrived home safely this evening from America, courteously relinquishing the limelight to Mr K. He was a little thinner and hairier than when he set out and his wrist was still swollen from a bite he got in Seattle yesterday (no, not from GM Carr--a mosquito) but he was in his characteristic good spirits and bubbling over with the other highspots of his incident-crammed Odyssey. He wrote 40,000 words of his report in Seattle (taking him almost through the doors of the Convention hotel) and will be going on through as soon as he gets his breath back from the 6000 miles he's flown since his last paragraph. I asked him if he'd any message meanwhile and he asks me to thank everyone for the wonderful time he had and to apologise to those whom, conventions being what they are, he didn't get around to saying goodbye to in Detroit.

FENAISSANCE So many fine things are happening in fandom these days that I feel someone should notice them in case they go away again. Not just the lighting of new fires in old greats like Warner and Tucker, and Jim Harmon with his wonderfully outrageous series of fan biographies in JDargassy, but this wonderful wave of new talent which seems to have started with Bob Leman and the CRY letterhacks. And it's still going on all over--Nirenberg in Canada, Koogle in Texas, Ferguson and Jefferson in Australia, and now McAulay and Hautz down here in Dublin. Where are they all coming from? Someone should conduct a poll to find out how fandom can get so many recruits at a time when it is ostracised by the promags.

-- Walt Willis ...





Letters for this sterling department should be long, witty, charming, intelligent, ~~unencumbered~~ with INQs, post-paid, and ~~reasonably~~ free from four-letter words...after all, this is a family fanzine, at least most of the time.

While we do not make it a policy of granting equal space to all political parties, persons with legitimate axes to grind may find room here if they grind interestingly.

Gregg Calkins editing (see Pavlat letter below).

---THERBLIGS---

LETTERS AND THE LIKE , , ,

Bob Pavlat, 6001 43rd Ave, Hyattsville, Md

In the past two weeks I've gotten two quote cards. They are just about the only two that I've received this year. These things, like TAFF, OOPSLA!, and many other desirable institutions are hard to kill off. And, come to think of it, I've also received two issues of Oops very recently and they are also the only ones this year. There must be a connection here someplace.

I have, of course, been interested in seeing the results you got out of the Rex, particularly after the panning that Janke gave his. It looks to me like you have the beast under control--the only bad page in my copy was bad only because it had no printing on it. In short, I got a blank page. I'm not entirely crazy about the blue ink on colored paper--particularly on paper colored blue--but it did have a pleasing effect on the green paper. Or maybe I have weird taste.

I've wondered too about the fictional character that I would most like to be. These questions are a bit harder now than they used to be. A mere couple of dozen years ago I could have answered easily. At one time my answer would have been Ching Li (the hero of a children's fantasy, "Ching Li and the Seven Dragons"). Later I might have picked Tarzan, or Buck Rogers, or John Carter, or for a few brief months, Polaris ("Polaris--of the Snows"). And during part of high school English I would have chosen without question Beowulf--what adventures that man had!

The names of the people I would be now have changed, but I'm afraid their character is still the same. Attractive to me now are Strider (The Lord of the Rings), Dick Summers (The Big Sky--Boone was the main character in most respects but Summers stole the show as far as my own fancy is concerned), possibly Dorn in Islandia, or, much less likely, John Lang, the main character in the novel. At present I'd probably place Strider first choice, Summers second, and Dorn third. Each was thoroughly and completely home in his environment. The environment was a challenging frontier-type in the first two cases (though in the case of Strider the 'frontier' was the frontier of occult knowledge and forces rather than the wild injuns and dangerous bars that Summers faced) and was at least undeveloped though not strictly rugged country in the case of Dorn. Strider and Summers both conquered odds that would have felled lesser men, but they did it with human doubts and fears and yet showed uncommon good sense for their environment. (This last can't be proved in the case of Strider for there is no one to compare him with, but it is in keeping with the sense of the book that Strider was a man among men.) I'd be one of them, for they competently faced their environment and belonged there however poorly adjusted to some other setting.

Oops is, at present, my favorite of the subzines. Even if you still do forget to identify yourself (as far as I can find, your name doesn't even appear in Oops 27--man, how modest can you get?) (Yes it does appear, come to think of it. Where Tucker asks--"You are publishing this, aren't you, Gregg?" Think of the poor historian of the future who will never be positive that "Gregg" is Gregg Calkins,



and as to those initials "WGC" on page Opere Citato V, who is wgc? Oh well. Much enjoyed. May there be many more.

::-Yours was by far the best thought out and most well developed answer to the fictional character question, Bob, and curiously enough your answers parallel mine quite closely...matter of fact, if I were familiar with the characters of Summers and Dorn, they might fit all the way down the line. I'm afraid, though, that I have yet to outgrow my more youthful pleasures because my all around choice for the person I'd rather be than any other remains one of my earliest idols, our old friend Tarzan. Not, I hasten to add, the Tarzan of the movies and the funny papers, but the well-bred-multilingual-widely-traveled-man-of-many-adventures as he was

originally created and described in the books of Edgar Rice Burroughs. There were many things I liked about Tarzan, but chiefest of all was his utter disregard for the restriction of time. Tarzan went where he liked when he liked and returned--if he felt like it--via the same impulses. No schedules, no time-tables, no 8-to-5 job, no alarm clocks...man (or should I say ape?) that is the life! ## I'm not quite so modest as you credit me (who ever heard of a modest fan?) but I am fairly absent-minded at times... gc -::

Robert Bloch, Box 362, Weyauwega, Wisconsin

Thank you for the egoboo...I know what a lot of work it is for you to

go through correspondence and carefully cut out the pertinent or impertinent passages to paste up this way, and I'm duly grateful for it.

Sooner or later I'll come up with something else. Right now it's all dirty prose. PSYCHO is out, doing well, with various deals cooking regarding it...then I've another novel which I just shoved off to the publisher...and am currently following up with another. Keeps me too busy for comfort.

And, as I guess you know (if some of your subscribers don't) my fanzine pieces are seldom effortless; the hardest part of writing alleged humor is to make it look spontaneous. It isn't quite so difficult to ad lib verbally in a social or anti-social situation because things are constantly happening to prompt some kind of remark. But when you start cold, with a blank piece of paper, you gotta organize and you can't loaf. (The most successful organizer, I suppose, is Jimmy Hoffa, and even there the most you can say for him is Hoffa loaf is better than none.)

PS: The family is quite well, thanks. Marion is covering everything in the garden with fertilizer...and believe me, the strawberries taste like hell that way...

::-For readers unfamiliar with the custom, it may bear repeating here that after the letter column is compiled I go through all of the comments received on the issue in question and clip them out of the letters they came in, tape them to a separate sheet of paper, and mail them as the 'egoboo express' to Oops' contributors. So even when your letter is not published in the letter section, your comments still reach the contributors they commented about, so please keep writing. I trust I need not add that letters are the staff of life both for editors and contributors... gc -::

::-By the way, more recent news than this letter has it that PSYCHO is being made into a movie by Alfred Hitchcock...should be a real top-notch show! gc -::

Richard Elsberry, 82 Lee Avenue, Schenectady 3, NY

Was discussing the decline of the sf mag with Pat the

other evening when the grain of an idea for a 'think'-type article, or perhaps a story, came to me. The two big splurges of magazine publishing came in 1939-41 and 1949-51. Both came immediately before a war. Both times the country was coming out of a period of readjustment--the depression in 1939 and a recession in 1948-49 following the postwar attempts to get back on a peacetime footing. At both periods the economy was on the upswing, the future looked good--people felt like doing things and writers felt like writing. In 1939-42 and 1949-52 we had some of the best sf ever written. I think this was because these were exciting days--we were getting ready to fight a war, and then we were fighting it. During WW II, authors like Heinlein



and de Camp were holding down full-time jobs in the defense industry, and yet producing more copy than they do now as full-time writers! I think the reason there are so few sf magazines now (ten compared to a time when there were thirty) is because we are in a dull period. We've just come out of a recession, true, but there is a different atmosphere. The threat of 237 H-bombs is hanging over us and I claim this is one hell of a deterrant to writing a story about man's glorious future. I'd guess that if the diplomats can figure out some sort of safeguards for H-bombs we'll have another spate of sf magazines.

Or maybe this is simply cyclic. If you hear about three or four new sf magazines starting in 1960 you might start thinking about your reserve status in 1961. The one thing that keeps me from seriously thinking about writing anything along this line is the fact that I just don't have the figures and facts on hand to do the job properly. But I would like to see some fannish articles discussing trends in the field; this is an area that most shy away from because it requires some research and thinking. And I am a living example of the fact that you can get a fanzine editor to print something that is completely thoughtless. There used to be a lot of trend-type articles back in the early 40's, but then a fan had only to go back 14 years at the most and be familiar with only four or five magazines. Today he has a 25-year span to cover, thousands of individual issues, and perhaps 50 magazines. It's a task for a historian. Or Harry Warner.

Has Warner ceased writing "All Our Yesterdays"? This was an excellent column, I now realize after rereading many old Fanvariety's and Opus'. I'd like to see an edition of all of Warner's "Yesterdays" columns, and I think I'd even be willing to pay money for it.

Willis is in fine fettle, though I feel a bit slighted (as should Hal Shapiro) that Walt has forgotten the Invention, that febrile fantasy concocted one beery evening after a meeting at Mark 'The Southpaw' Harris' place. It wasn't well written, to be sure, but my how we pulled them in. And we had fabulous cooperation from the attendees, even though we never even told them they were there before the report came out. Ah well, the name lives on long after the works are forgotten. Have to agree with many parts of WAW's column, though, especially the boilerplate charge against Gold and Silverberg. I've read some pretty good stories by Silverberg but nothing outstanding yet. Walt has no defense for still reading Galaxy if he thinks it is as bad as he says. What he really means, I think, is that he likes to beat his head against the wall because it feels so good when he stops...

::-A loud second from me on the "Yesterdays" collection. Someone? gc ::-



Harry Warner, 423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, Md

Probably it was just coincidence, but I thought #26 to be far superior to #27.

The coincidence would consist in the fact that you unloaded your editorial section and Willis on the one issue, leaving nothing of quite comparable worth for the other. You seem to have hit the editorializing vein that Redd Boggs mined so profitably back in the glory days of Skyhook, with a passing bit of help from Tucker's diabolical skill at finding amusing quotations. And this is the very finest, Willis writing that I've seen in two or three years. I wish fans who want to demolish people or things would study his methods and learn that it can be done more completely and conclusively by keeping one's temper, being brief, and writing in literate fashion. The Bible section should win without difficulty any contest that may be held to determine the funniest page of fannish writing in 1959.

Bennett is just as interesting, amusing and attention-compelling. But this system of dribbling out the convention report to all kinds of fanzines over a long period of time is not at all satisfactory for the readers, and it must be pretty exasperating to the writer after he's gone through it. Surely there must be some more sensible way for a TAFF delegate to tell what happened. One lengthy account of the whole trip might be written, published in a fanzine to be determined by lot, and then the re-

maintaining publications to whom the individual feels an obligation would get the articles dealing with certain sidelights and special incidents that weren't treated in the main chronicle. I know that Ken Bulmer is still writing about these oddities from his trip across, after a couple of years. Or some brave and time-wealthy fan might be found who would agree to publish in complete form the trip account as a one-shot, selling it at an inflated price with profits going to the next TAFF fund.

::-Or why not just give the original TAFF winner an extra \$30 or so in a special fund to be used solely towards publication costs of him putting out his own travel adventures in a single volume? gc -::

Ethel Lindsay, 6 Langley Ave, Surbiton, Surrey, England

How very nice to get two
Oops!a!s at once...makes

the day, makes the day.

As I have just finished reading 'Shaggy' I was pleased to see another part of Colonial Excursion---it's quite a job making sure you catch up with them all--and I don't want to miss any. Ron gives a very telling little cameo of Lee Shaw here. He is doing a good job of telling us what it was like. Almost as good as being there. I find that I don't even care that the installments that I am reading are all haywire, I am enjoying it too much. What a wonderful trip it must have been.

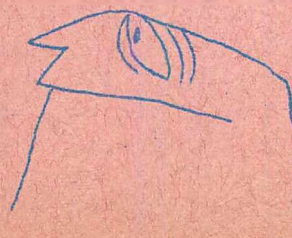
I wouldn't want you to think me too nosey, but after all this time I would like to know approximately how old you are, what you look like, and, if you still have the patience to answer, what is a student to trade? I suppose you realise that I have a picture in my mind of a guy about 30-odd and (don't ask me why) rather tall?



::-I'm afraid I don't know what a 'student to trade' is myself, but for my part I'm a 6th year student at the University of Utah, studying mineralogy, an allied science to geology. It's taking me six years to graduate--next June--because I changed my major in the middle of the stream, but even after I graduate I expect to stay in school at least two more years as a graduate student, possibly longer, and I just may end up teaching college for a living if things work out. I already teach one or two laboratory periods a year, as it is. ## Otherwise I'm twenty-four, thanks, but will be crowding twenty-five very closely by the time you read this. I'm relatively tall, I suppose...six feet even (about 183 cm) and I've recently slimmed down from a former 238 lbs (17 stone even) to my present 196 (14 stone even) and I plan to get down to 13 stone right on the nose before I quit losing weight. I'm blond, wear my hair cut rather short, and need my black horn-rimmed glasses for long-distance seeing as I've become rather near-sighted reading so much science fiction and other things in my youth. I'm fairly athletic, love to bowl, fonce, play tennis, swim, and pitch horse-shoes...and, in fact, have just returned from a summer job which kept me high in the Uinta Mountains all summer, hiking long hours every day at elevations around twelve to thirteen thousand feet. ## What else? I'm married--just celebrated our third anniversary in September--and for the present we're substituting three cats and an ex-Marine-Corps-buddy roomer (also attending the University) for a more conventional sort of family because my wife has to keep her job as a school-teacher in order for me to be able to attend school until I graduate. JoAnn graduated about a year-and-a-half ago. ## Good grief! you now know almost as much about me as I do...but if there's anything more you'd like to discover, just write. I'm at my very best when talking about myself. gc -::

Archie Mercer, 434/4 Newark Rd, N. Hykeham, Lincoln, England

Oops! the 26th and 27th received with thanks. I observe that my sub expires with #27, which was news to me inasmuch as I didn't even know I had one. I do try irregularly to keep abreast of them by passing a shilling per or so to TAFF, and on this occasion I overdid myself and passed along five



shillingsworth all at once to Ron Bennett. If this isn't the APPROVED method of subbing--I mean, unless Ron writes to you every time, how will you know that the money HAS been deposited?--that's just unfortunate for me. Though I wouldn't grudge it to TAFF all that much.

Blue ink looks better on coloured paper (particularly blue, strangely enough) than on white paper. So you're alone among the neo-bluezines that I'm not urging to revert to good old faithful berlack.

::-No, Archie, you did exactly right in sending the money to Bennett and TAFF. Ron generally writes to let me know who has sent money and how much, but as I usually enter your "sub" on the books when I read in your letter that money has been sent to TAFF, so it's more of a formality on Ron's part than anything. ## Thanks for the vote of confidence on blue...I'm beginning to like it myself, particularly now that I'm learning which paper colors go best and which to avoid. gc -::

Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Avenue, N. Hollywood, California

I am perfectly satisfied with the

science-fictional content of Oopsla! 26 and 27. I never meant to imply (and I certainly didn't say) that Oopsla! didn't have enough; I protested against the idea of cutting it down because fannish fans aren't interested in it. You will no doubt be hearing from those readers now that there's too much sf discussion in Oops. Willis' article comes up with some good, original points. Gold is supposed to be coming out with a letter column but I haven't seen it yet, so Willis is still right there. As for Silverberg writing competently but not outstandingly; much of his work is run-of-the-mine but there are many fine pieces such as "Road to Nightfall." The answer lies in the volume required to make a living at full-time writing. Every word can't be deathless prose, as Bob once said in a letter to SFS.

I'm getting tired of this "dirty pro" routine. (Not that you use it.) It's not offensive as a joke, but where does it originate as a serious statement? I've been out of touch with fanzines until a year ago so I would like to know how come "vile," "dirty," "filthy"? And whence comes this stereotyped belief that pros ride around in droshkys and run over the poor peasant fans for amusement? This doesn't fit the facts very well. I like to think of the pros and the fans as being on the same side, but you say: "Why?" Well, the only answer I can think of is: "Why not?" But I'm only a fringe-fan/fringe-pro so I wouldn't really know what the shooting is about.

::-This "dirty pro" routine didn't spring up in the last year, Donald...as far as I know it's been with us since the first fan-turned-pro equated his new status with boy-turned-man (phrase courtesy Larry Shaw, fan-turned-pro-turned-fan) and gave his erstwhile comrades-in-arms a dose of holier-than-thou before departing the fan world forever. So the "vile" probably originated out of hurt pride as well as a large swig of sour grapes. It may have been sincere at first, but as far as I know it's been nothing but a joke for years. Particularly without question are those instances when it is applied to certain well-beloved pros who have long retained their contacts with fandom, such as those vile pros and hucksters Tucker, Bloch, and Larry Shaw. gc -::

::-I can't resist printing the following excerpt... gc -::

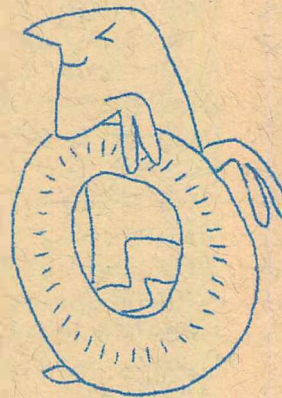
Ger Steward, 219 McRoberts, Toronto 10, Ontario

Oopsla! is probably the only fanzine that gives you more than

equal value for money spent. Not only that but is one, if not the only, safe bet.

When you subscribe, you can be reasonably sure that you will get your full subscription before a) you die of old age, or b) the editor dies, fanwise.

And it just happens that I have been carrying a Yankee dollar in my wallet for some considerable time, waiting for the exchange to go up so that I could trade it at the bank for a profit. Instead I'll send it to you and you can wait for the rate to go up...



Carl Brandon, L-31 Macpherson, New York, NY

Frank O'Connor, or one of those Irishmen who write for the New Yorker,

once wrote a story called "The Night the Old Nostalgia Burnt Down." It came to my mind because I was thinking back, as I sit here, remembering the good old days of sf. They were the good old days, weren't they? We might now be in a new Golden Age of sf but I doubt it. I doubt it because I read the latest issue of aSF (except the serial) on the train down to NYC last week and I can't remember a single item in it except JWC's editorial. More and more I find myself reading JWC's editorial first in the book and usually nothing else. Generally it is worth the price of admission. But I sat down here not to write about JWC or aSF but "the good old days."

These good old days as I remember them were the lush period from 1948 through 1951. Part of the thrill of sf was sauntering over to the corner drugstore in the evening and pawing through the stack of pulps, looking for the latest one. Anticipation was part of the fun in those days. I can remember many times walking home from school, my nose buried in the latest TWS or SS purchased immediately upon leaving class. I can still remember the stories, now over ten years old, but somehow I can't remember last week's aSF. Fred Brown's "What Mad Universe," and that fantastic run of serials in aSF: "And Searching Mind," "Dreadful Sanctuary," "Players of Null-A," "Seetee Shock," "The Queen of Zamba," "Needle," "Gulf," "To The Stars." I know that many of them won't stand rereading today but at the time there seemed to be an intangible something --an aura to the magazines--that made even the potboilers seem passable.

I've changed, and this accounts for part of the trouble, but the rest of it lies in the fact that the authors and editors have changed too. It's something you can't quite put your finger on but it's there. The authors are more technically competent, the prose more polished, the plot twist more circuitous--but at the end I generally feel curiously cheated. The socio-technological ends are too pat, too logical. The hero is never just plain lucky. The hero really had the solution in his head all along--it was just a matter of finding the catalyst that made him put a and b together to achieve c. One of the few authors, to me, who is still consistently entertaining is Eric Frank Russell. His people--and he usually sticks to one character with whom you can immediately identify yourself--have a degree of reality. They may be genius-types but they are never arrogant about it--if anything, they seemed a bit ashamed of their special abilities. An admirable virtue, modesty, that has pretty much gone by the boards these days.

::-Neither Carr nor Ellik wrote this. It came in response to the column by Willis in last issue which asked that Carl Brandon not be allowed to die. gc -::

Fred L. Smith, 3 Douglas Muir Rd, Faifley, Clydebank, Glasgow

Walt, typically, has managed to put his

finger on one of the major faults of current sf in his discussion of the "boilerplate" of Silverberg, Ellison, et al. Unconsciously I've had the same feeling about these same particular fans-turned-pro: that they should have the love of sf and background combined with imagination and ability to produce first rate stuff, but somehow the work we were all expecting has just not come forth. Most of these boys have just become hacks working for a living and I think, furthermore, that the editors of the better mags are largely responsible for this. A. Bertram Chandler tells how, fifteen years ago, he had to re-write "Giant Killer" three times before it was acceptable to Campbell...until he finally hit upon the idea of telling the story from the rat's

viewpoint. I rather fancy that nowadays JWC, or Gold, would not take the trouble. If the story was competently written in its first version it would be accepted, probably, and the fresh viewpoint ignored. I wish some of the current writers could enlighten us on this point. I see Gold admits this, partially, in the article you quoted in your reply to Richard Elsberry's letter. What I'm trying to say is that where Chandler virtually wrote three different stories before JWC induced him to write the original, different approach, and equally competent writer today would sell the first version and we'd never see the better story he still



had in him.

::-I think that is precisely the problem facing science fiction today--lackadaisical editing--and until we come up with some editors really dedicated to producing science fiction rather than science fiction magazines we'll continue to get the first story that comes off of the top of the average sf author's head. gc ::

Les Nirenberg, 1217 Weston Rd, Toronto 15, Ontario

Some of Dr Ibid's ideas were worth remembering, but he

forgot to tell Bob a few unique murder methods which I will relate to you now.

One of the favourite capers of Bluebeard, the famous--or should I say infamous--lady-killer, was the one where he coated a can of pork and beans with contact glue and then geared up the automatic can opener to 5000 revs. This was exceptionally good, without a trace of the body afterwards. All that was needed was a new paint job for the kitchen.

For lady bluebeards there are a few, also. One favourite is the mixing of plastic wood with shaving soap, thereby causing a mixture of lock-jaw and suffocation. Of course we mustn't ignore some of the "easy to mix" recipes such as substituting nitric acid for mouthwash and tooth-paste, and coating the floor of the shower stall with a thin coating of axle-grease.

Stan Woolston, 12832 Westlake St, Garden Grove, California

Elsberry's letter touches on fun stuff in TWS, etc. To me, if I edited a zine I'd think some of this would be almost necessary to make the editing job palatable. Heck, you have to be a critic to select proper stuff--proper balance and all that. A fan may be very critical...and I suspect that many fans become so habitually critical because they are inclined to take digs at everything that then they end up hating much of science fiction. Last Burbday party Ed Hamilton made a comment to the effect that he went to most of the "science fiction" movies with the intention of enjoying them, even when they were badly flawed. Anyone who criticizes them, it seems to me, would cringe and be unable to 'suspend disbelief' enough to enjoy what good points they might have. I know I've found much filmed science fiction to be mostly crud, including some others find excellent. (Verne's "From The Earth To The Moon," for example, had flaws that stood out in my mind, such as the gal living through unprotected take-off without anyone bothering to notice there was little chance she could survive...let alone the whistling meteor sort of thing.)

But there is a habit of criticism. Unless you enjoy being aggressive, criticism would be a downbeat emotion.

::-And there's as good a definition of the sense of wonder as any I've seen...the suspension of disbelief. Most of us seem to have lost the knack of this trick these days, possibly because of the rapid gains in science-fact on science-fiction...or at least that limited portion of the science-fiction scope--space travel--which is stressed in present day sf movies. But I'm afraid that I can't go to a badly flawed sf movie determined to enjoy it no matter what any more than I can go to any grade B or lower movie, no matter what the subject, and come out content. The continued casual acceptance of mediocrity in the field of sf, as in any field, will inevitably destroy excellence. Excellence must be strived for, fought for, lusted after, and enthusiastically recognized when found, or it soon ceases to be. gc ::



Richard Eney, 417 Ft Hunt Rd, Alexandria, Virginia

Your question is a nice twist on the old if-you-could-be-

anyone idea and though I'd rather be a genuine historical character (Raymond Spruance or William Marshal or...) it'd be nice, too, to be Jorkens (for the variety of things that happen to him) or Martin Padway (because I'd like to prevent darkness from falling, too) or Vakar Zhu of Lorsk (to collect what knowledge I could at that remote date) or even Conan the Cimmerian (to enjoy the feeling of invulnerability). Bob Tucker isn't kidding with the "causes of death" bit about the 1200 means of dying,

one of which must be specified on your customs declaration when you bring a corpse home. The services have a largish manual listing some 15,000 complaints which may afflict military personnel, with an appendix for psychological complaints. I hasten to add that it isn't, as Bob implies, a matter of getting sick of one of these things or else: catchall classifications (fever, unknown origin, not elsewhere classified... upper respiratory tract infection, NEC...allergic reaction, unknown origin...psychasthenia, UO...) were provided and doubtless are for the dead, too.

It was but the work of a moment to sketch the device which would reconcile the correlation of the line of force of recoil with the line of resistance to recoil, while keeping the sights near the barrel where they belong: a T-shaped gun, revolver type, which is fired by the middle finger poked thru the yoke which connects barrel-and-cylinder group with grips. To use, the hand is held with the line thru the knuckles parallel with the ground; sights are visible over the back of the hand and the barrel is dead in line with the radius (the bone on the same side as the thumb).

Hey, trying it just now (the position, not the weapon) I find one drawback; you'll have to shave the back of your hand to get a proper view of the sights. But for fast-draw work it's a natural for the "trainfire" method about which there's been so much talk.

::-Good development of why you'd like to be the fictional character you'd pick, Dick --shows much more thought given to the subject than most others contributed. gc -::

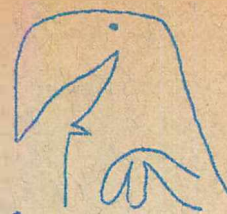
Len Moffatt, 10202 Belcher, Downey, California

The "child called science fiction" is, as Willis says, neglected today--by the editors and the writers (not all of them but enough to give the child an appearance of near-malnutrition) and I suppose by the fans who don't complain loudly enough for the editors and writers to hear. We could carry the "child" analogy further. Let's say that sf once was a child, and was nurtured and brought up by the pros and the fans. Now it is an adolescent, a kind of crazy mixed-up kid, not knowing which direction to take, what to strive for (or even whether to strive at all), lacking guidance from its parents who seem to be at odds with each other. (I don't mean that the stories themselves are necessarily juvenile or adolescent in theme, but merely the stage the field has reached. We do get some mature or "adult" stories as well as some pretty juvenile ones--but even human adolescents have produced grown-up ideas, thoughts, goods, etc.) So it would seem that the parents must take a firmer hand. The fan side of the parent team can't do much more than complain or holler at the breadwinner partner ::-sounds more like a real marriage all the time...gc-:: i.e., the pros. Only the latter has the money (and the talent, time and equipment) to get the child into a state of good health, to guide it into the paths of more constant quality, freshness, imagination... Many of the fans have the talent, too (and of course change 'gender' so to speak and become pros) but they are not in the position of Daddy Pro, who does the buying--and the selling--in the field.

::-The large amount of comment received this time in response to both Willis and Elsberry indicates to me a far greater interest by fandom in science fiction than a good many people would have us believe. A healthy thing, I vow. gc -::

* * *

Other persons commenting this time included: Manfred Alex, John Koning, Ron Ellik, Ray Thompson (who by the way wants to get fanzines again, address A/2C Ray etc, AF 17503099, 6952nd RSM, SPO 199, NY, NY), Dennis Tucker, Jim Caughran, Inchmery fandom, Ron Bennett, Es Adams, Rick Sneary, Alan Dodd, Don Allen, Peter Singleton, Richard Schultz, Ted Pauls, Robert Lambeck, Vic Ryan, George Scithers, and a number of others here unnamed. Thanks to all who wrote...a good letter section depends on YOU, you know...and remember, too, that all comments are carefully clipped from your letters and sent to the contributors concerned via the "Egoboo Express" so don't feel that because your letter was not printed your comments were not heard. They were.



DANS UN VERRE D'EAU

There have been a few changes in OOPS this time, not the least of which is changing the editorial section to back here from its usual opening spot, and I suppose that a few explanations are in order.

Speaking of the editorial, let's take that first. It is now the last thing in the issue instead of the first because it is always written after everything else has been put on stencil and is ready to mimeograph. Being chronologically last, it seemed a bit silly to me to have it geographically first. Thus the switch. However, this left a big blank space at the first of the magazine which could conceivably lead to confusion as to the identity of the editor, subscription rates, etc, so the contents page was added to fill this gap and also to satisfy the many requests for such a listing.

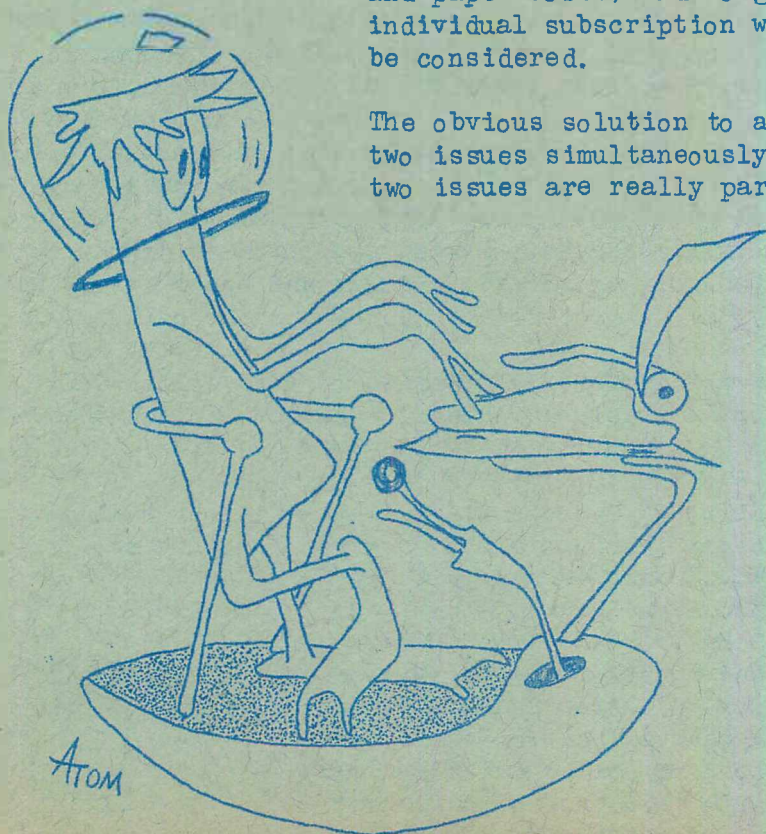
Next I ran into size problems. The issue originally scheduled for July or August was forced out of existence by an unexpected summer job which kept me out of town most of the time and left little opportunity to get to a typewriter. I had originally planned to go to school this summer and thus would have had enough free time for a regular issue, but as the job replaced the schooling and gave me valuable additional experience in addition to the money involved, when it came up I had to accept. Material ready for the summer issue had to be held over until fall. Then there was the matter of the Bennett column, an additional piece of material to my usual line-up, and the totally unexpected discovery of Vernon McCain's last manuscript by Bill Morse, and as if this was not enough the Elsberry-Gold letters began to look as if they would outgrow the letter column and require a separate package for themselves.

And thus I had about forty pages of material on hand, current and rapidly becoming dated, scheduled for immediate print. This would be fine except for several things. In the first place, my stapler won't handle that many pages with any degree of success, and I'm not about to buy--or even rent--another. Even if I were, my collator holds a total of thirty pages maximum (15 sheets of paper) and assembly of a larger magazine than this is a pain-in-the-neck. Also, how about the bookkeeping? OOPS subs are priced on the basis of so many pages per issue to sort of counterbalance my postage and paper costs, and to go through the book and change each individual subscription was too tedious and time-consuming to be considered.

The obvious solution to all of these problems was to publish two issues simultaneously, which I have done. But since the two issues are really part of a larger whole, I have purposefully refrained from assigning to them separate numbers but instead have published them as "28 and 29 combined" and bound them in two parts with near-identical covers and back covers.

I hope this explanation is satisfactory and that the situation will not arise again soon in the future ...but if it should, I will once again take similar measures. You can see from this example that it is a good idea to keep your subscription at least two issues in advance if you want to be absolutely sure of receiving all copies of OOPS as they are published.

There are two other miscellaneous



Therbligs II

changes this time which would probably have occurred anyhow, regardless of everything else, and they are (1) the use of slightly heavier paper stock for front and back covers to help protect the more fragile Masterweave paper, and (2) the return of the "!" to the title, which is properly an exclamation and as such deserves the exclamation point. The old title logo has also been re-adopted in this connection. Oh yes, as I mentioned above, the paper is once again Masterweave rather than the Gestetner stock used in the last two issues, and I trust that by its return all offset and other printing problems have been eliminated, leaving OOPS legible once again.

STARS OF THE SUMMER NIGHT were seen in plenty by your editor during the recent annual three-month spell of warm weather. The job I wound up accepting was involved in the preparing of a geologic map for the state of Utah, a task which may well occupy my summers for the next five or six years, and my official capacity was that of a field assistant for two professors here at the University of Utah. Although it was a state project, hiring and disbursing was handled by the University and since I am already a mineralogy student and lab assistant during the school year, the job was only a little different from my regular routine except that now we spent most of our time outdoors, even camping out on several occasions, and we were out of town all of the summer except for occasional weekends.

The first few weeks were taken up with reconnaissance, and in my travels I managed to briefly touch into Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Wyoming and Colorado as well as see most of Utah with the exception of the south-east portion of the state. Most of my time, however, was spent in the Uinta Mountains, a range notable by virtue of being one of the few east-west trending mountain ranges in the world, located in the north-east corner of Utah, just below the Wyoming border, extending from the Colorado line almost to Salt Lake City.

Needless to say, I had a fine time, learned a good deal, saw much more of the country than I had ever seen before, and in the course of the outdoor nights observed a good many more stars than I had been accustomed to seeing here in the neon-lit skies of the city. I'm sure man can't be alone in all of that vast expanse of universe.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN I had one brief week-long vacation during the summer and took a pretty speedy trip to San Francisco to visit my parents (meeting Terry and Miriam Carr briefly while there) followed by a drive down to Los Angeles to see my Grandmother (scoring a total miss on all of LA fandom!) and thence home, a total mileage of 2400 miles in six days (almost to the hour) which boils down to 400 miles per day, average, and if an average driving speed of 50 mph is plugged into the problem we find that my "vacation" consisted of approximately eight hours a day behind the wheel, eight hours for sleep, and eight hours for play. I felt a good deal like the legendary Dutchman before we were through, but I guess it was worth it.

Greatly enjoyed stopping in at the LA magazine shops... Salt Lake has a pretty complete line of new magazines and pocket-books but absolutely nothing in the way of used or older magazines except NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. Picked up about a dozen back issues of PLAYBOY (this is science fiction?) but still need a couple of dozen more... also got half a dozen issues of '40-vintage ARGOSY for 10¢ each as well as some FFM-FNs at the same price.

SCIENCE FICTION, ANYONE? Which reminds me that I have a number of sf magazines, FFM-FN included, with which I would like to part... preferably by trading for something else. In the "old days" when I was first a fan, sf was all the rage and hardly an issue of any fanzine went by without a notice of some sort listing magazines wanted or for trade. Apparently this isn't done any longer, but just on the off chance that I might have a sf fan like myself in the audience, I figured it was worth a try. As a rough outline I have mostly odds and ends I no longer want in my collection... duplicates of FFM-FN, SS-TWS, IMAGINATION, OW, a number of sf pbs, and some damaged items free for the asking to interested traders. Anyone?

er...I mean 'Dans un verre d'eau' III

TRENDS One that continues to bother me of late is the policy or policies of a number of fan editors regarding trades with other fanzines. Now somehow I always seem to wander back to my own early days in fandom with regards to my own ideas on a number of subjects, and perhaps my memory of those times is hazy, but it seems to me that in the fanzines of the 49-52 era trades were accepted on a pretty informal basis...a policy I still follow. If I like a fanzine, I trade with its editor on an all-for-all basis; if not, I don't trade at all. It seems to me that this used to be the rule, but now, apparently, it's the exception.

Sandy Sanderson of APORRHETA, for example, trades on an issue-for-issue basis. His trading editors are required to either publish as many issues as he does--which is a bit sticky as he is (or was--I haven't seen an issue for some time now) one of the few fanzines able to afford the luxury of a monthly publishing schedule--or else they must make up the deficit with subscription money. As far as I know, Sandy has never put the shoe on the other foot and found it necessary to send money to another publisher with whom he cannot keep pace...such as FANAC, for example, in which case I am sure he would find it more expedient to abandon his issue-for-issue schedule because of the large disparity in size between APORRHETA and FANAC. Now it is true that on an all-for-all basis Sandy would undoubtedly "lose money" on most traders, but I submit that for the least productive of these he could exchange sub monies with those fanzines he wished to continue to get, and for the other remaining fan publishers he would "lose" relatively little in comparison to the gain he would make in keeping to the true spirit of fan publishing. Fanzines, to my knowledge, have never before been produced at a profit, and the other aspect to this forced productivity--otherwise known as "keeping up with the Jones'" and "the armaments race" in various parts of the globe--is equally impractical.

For a second example, Miriam Carr goes to the other extreme and allows no trades at all. "Why," she says with some reason, "should I trade my fanzine with other publishers when by the virtue of being Terry's wife I already get most if not all of them?" While this is perhaps a valid point, I still cannot help but feel that it lacks the real spirit of fannish production and smacks more of the money-making attitude of the professional side of science fiction. Now I have nothing against being professional--and for that matter I wouldn't mind being a pro-author myself one of these days--but this, I respectfully submit, is not a good attitude for fandom as a whole to adopt. In this particular example, carried to its most illogical extreme, future fanzines would consist of only two issues: one for the editor to keep and one to be passed out among fandom at large to be seen and then sold or passed on to other fans when each recipient had finished with it.

Understand, please, that I am not disclaiming these two examples in particular, but the trend in general. What a Sanderson or a Carr can do, so can any other neofan who thinks of publishing a fanzine. Already I know of at least one fan editor trying to work out an intricate cost-for-cost trading basis, with little success, and at least another fanzine is delayed if not died a-borning because the editor cannot work out any satisfactory way to handle anticipated trades.

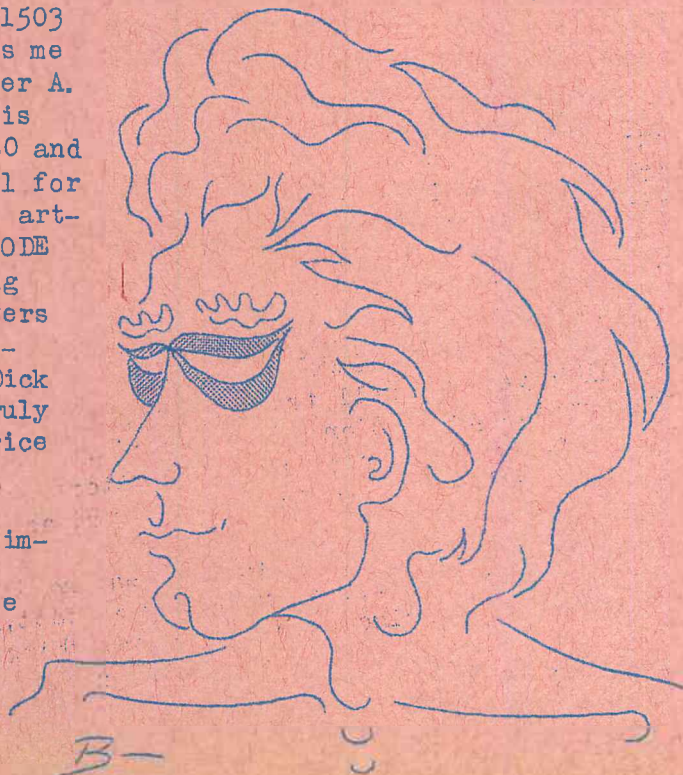
It's a sorry situation and an impractical one. Viewed in the cold light of absolute values these jury-rigged artificial trade conditions do not stand up at all well, anyhow. Issue for issue, APORRHETA, while an excellent magazine, cannot begin to stand up to GRUE; yet Grennell trades straight across, as far as I know. Even two for one, the fanzine production of the Carr's, while also of high quality, does not approach the excellent contents of the unfettered HYPHEN. And trading for SKYHOOK by anyone on a cost-for-cost basis is so absurd as to need no discussion.

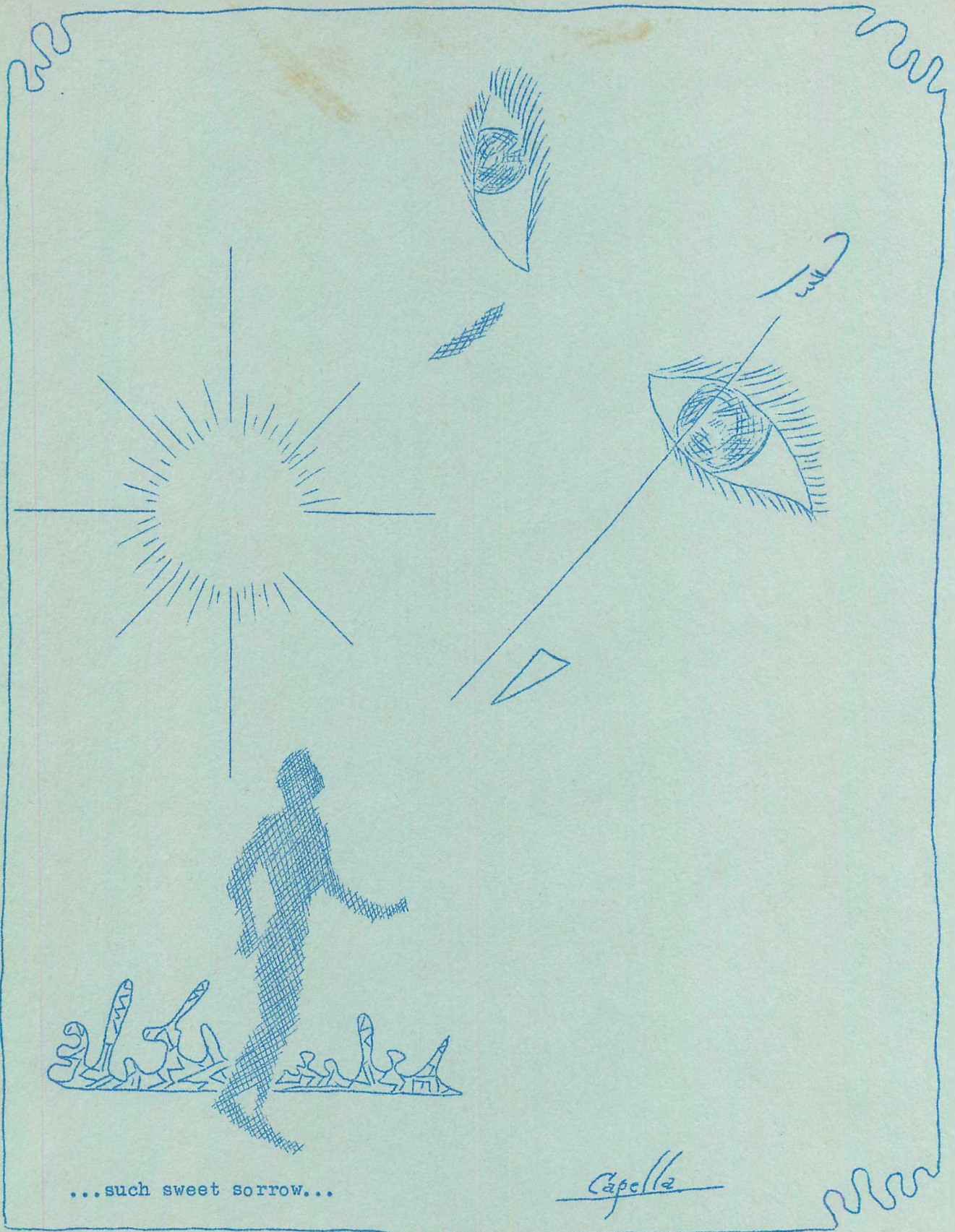
I'd like to stress again the point that I mean no ill towards any of the specific editors mentioned as examples...as a matter of fact, all of them happen to produce consistently excellent fanzines. But I do not think the artificial trade situation now being established is a healthy condition and I'd like to see it dropped. Let's trade all-for-all or not-at-all...how about it?

TIT FOR TAT Let me point out before the LA crowd does it for me that they were not the only people caught away from home by visiting fans this summer. After the Detention, the Southern California contingent headed by Bjo Wells and Ron Ellik--plus seven other stout-hearted fans--stopped by SLC to chat and caught yours truly in the wilds of Wyoming at the time. So I missed the LA crew twice in one summer--once on their home grounds, once on mine. Who said it couldn't be done?

John Berry did not stop by and I think I know why...and I'm afraid, John, that I'm going to be forced to expose your secret to the fannish world. You see, when Bennett stopped in on his way back to the East Coast last year in the company of Bob Pavlat, Ted White, and the then Sylvia Dees, I typed up and issued a challenge to Berry to a tea-drinking contest, with the latter three mentioned fans as witnesses and Bennett as process-server. John apparently decided this year that discretion would be the better part of valor and refused the challenge. I do not know who now holds the tea-drinking championship but it cannot be John...surely the officials of such an august body as 'The International Association of Tea-Drinkers' will not let Berry's refusal to meet a challenge go unnoticed.

MISCELLANEE It always happens. After the contents page for the issue was made up the piece of Bergeron art on this page was added to the issue...so I hereby give Richard Bergeron this special art credit. ## By far the best comic strip ever to appear in a fannish media--and as far as they are concerned, you could include most professional comics as well--was Bjo Wells' "Super Squirrel" in a recent PSI-PHI. Excellent in composition, it's a wonderful spoof on LA fandom...particularly when you consider that it is also drawn by one of the members of that group. Some fans with whom I have discussed this strip seem to have felt that it was a case of someone blowing their own horn a little too loudly, but I cannot agree. I think it was done all in fun...and I, for one, certainly accepted it that way. ## People who read damon knight's recent THE PEOPLE MAKER and were disappointed in its failure to carry out the plot's unusual promise will be interested in this card received from damon not too long ago after I wrote to him expressing my feelings on the novel. It turns out that the novel was heavily and clumsily cut to fit Zenith's format, and he (damon) hopes that he will be able to restore most of the missing portions in any future foreign reprints. damon's third novel is now in the works, by the way, and in my opinion will be a good one if it can survive the treatment accorded it by some editor's blue pencil. ## Ted Johnstone (1503 Rollin St, S. Pasadena, California) informs me that the first volume of the Works of Walter A. Willis will be ready around Christmas. This 'must' for every trufan will run between 80 and 100 pages, sport semi-hard covers, and sell for \$1 or 7/-. ## Noted with approval is the artwork on the cover and contents page of TRIODE 16...beautiful work by ATOM and outstanding mimeographing of one of the best color covers I've seen in a long time. ## Also appreciated beyond mere words is FANCY II from Dick Eney (417 Ft Hunt Rd, Alexandria, Va)...truly the encyclopedia of the fannish world. Price is \$1.25 for 190 pages of fabulous fannish fact. ## Best sf movie of the decade is "The World, The Flesh, and The Devil," an improbably titled rewrite of M. P. Shiel's "The Purple Cloud" in which Harry Belafonte does an outstanding job, ably supported by Inger Stevent and Mel Ferrar, marred only by the Hollywood ending. ## You bet your rubber baby booties this has been A STARFLAME PUBLICATION





...such sweet sorrow...

Capella