





I am also in somewhat of a quandry as to what to do about page numbers and such. The ideal that I have for this zine is simply to type stuff up and stick it together as it happens. On that principle the page numbers should simply be the sequence in which I happen to type stencils. The trouble is I started the LOC's first and typed these pages somewhat later (although I have a lot more LOCs to go through) and so forth. Not only that I just typed a nine page article which I expect to run in here and in APA: NESFA and it really ought to have some kind of page numbers. It seems rather unsporting to actually do anything that resembles layout for the issue. Oh well, if I only do it just this once, maybe it will be OK.

Anyway, I have purchased this house. More accurately, the bank and I have purchased this house. The bank has the mortgage and I have the house. I sometimes suspect that the bank has the better of it. I wouldn't trade though. Have you ever tried to sleep in a bank lobby? Believe me, houses are much comfortable.

This here house is in Concord. Concord is, I suppose, a suburb of Boston. Maybe it is an exurb. I think it is a suburb, though I am not really up on these things. In any case it is a change from living right off of Harvard Square. Color me a suburbanite.

This here house is about seventy years old and is a two family. The theory is that we live in one half and rent the other. At the moment the second part of that theory is untested. We haven't rented the other half yet. I look forward to becoming a landlord with baited breath (that's right - baited) Don't ask me to explain. The deal is that we moved into the place in September. We decided that the second floor, which are going to rent, need renovation badly. We did all of the good stuff. We painted and wall papered the whole thing. We had the floors sanded and had polyurethane varnish put on them. We remodeled the bathroom, stripping the old plaster off, taking out the old fixtures, building in a shower, etc. It has been a lot of work and we only recently got it all done. (Thank, God!!!) All that remains is to rent this now lovely apartment. Unfortunately this is a particularly slow time of the year so we may well end up carrying it for a few months. On the other hand we may rent it tomorrow. You never can tell about these things.

The whole thing has been very educational. I have always been aware that there is an entire subculture that that is preoccupied with repairing houses and improving the property. It is one thing to be passively aware that a thing exists and quite another to have it become an active part of ones life.

I have, in short order, become much more knowledgable about all sorts of things. I expect that I should share lots of this new found knowledge with you. Afterall, anything which has consumed such a large chunk of my spare time really ought to go into something called PERSONAL NOTES.

In little doses, of course. For the moment I have only one little observation to make. If you are buying patching plaster you get the kind that you mix with water. If you are getting spackling compound, don't get the powder that you mix with water. Instead, get the kind that comes ready mixed. I have found UGL-222 to be superior.

More on this and other deathless topics somewhere else in the zine.

WHERE ARE THEY?

One of the questions that has been bruited about in SF circles for some time is the question of where the aliens are. It seems unreasonable to assume that, in a universe of billions of galaxies, with a galaxy having a hundred billion stars, that this particular planet should be the sole abode of intelligent life, that there aren't quite a few planets around with intelligent life forms on them. And, if there are, it seems unreasonable to assume that we lead the pack as far as technology and science are concerned. In fact, if one thinks of the billions of years involved it seems reasonable that there should be races that are millions or even billions of years ahead of us. When we think of what our own race has managed to achieve in the past few hundred years of technological development we boggle at what could be achieved in millions of years by these hypothetical aliens. Surely their technology must be like magic to us, as far beyond our comprehension as the transistor and the laser are beyond the comprehension of a caveman.

So where are they?

Why aren't they here now? Why haven't they been here already for millions or even billions of years. Why hasn't anyone been here before? If they aren't here now, why aren't we stumbling over their artifacts?

Some years ago in Astounding Science Fiction there was an extensive discussion of the problem. Since then it has been the subject of much speculation, both in SF circles and in those groups concerned with space travel. Some of the possible answers are:

1. We are first on the scene, or at least so early that there is nobody around to visit us or to try to communicate with us.
2. We are unique - either planetary systems are very rare or else life is very rare or else intelligent life is very rare. The difference between (1) and (2) is that in the first case we are the first of many; in the second case there is nobody else to start out with.
3. Technological societies have a negligible life span. There were lots of other races but they have all popped off.
4. Galactic society has recently been devastated, say by war, by technological breakdown, or because everybody just left. (The elder races became pure spirits and departed the material plane.)

Theories (1) to (4) are different versions of there is nobody else besides us at the moment. If there are advanced extraterrestrial races we want to account for their absence. Some more theories:

5. Interstellar travel is impossible. The possibility and feasibility of interstellar travel is a rather complicated topic which I will discuss in some detail below.
6. Interstellar travel is possible but is not very economic. We have not been visited because the cost is much higher than any potential return.
7. Interstellar communication is impractical. (We know enough now to rule out its impossibility - barring, of course, a rather startling level of cosmic perversity.) In the absence of knowledge about where anybody is, the problem of establishing interstellar communication, even for a mature technology, may simply be too formidable.

Theories (5) to (7) are different versions of a basic idea that other intelligent races may exist but there is no travel or communication between them because the technical problems imposed by interstellar distances are simply too great. The first group of theories says that there is nobody to talk to; the second says that there is no way to talk to anybody. We have a third group which says that for one reason or another, people are talking alright - they just aren't talking to us. Some theories:

8. We are a protected species. Either developing species in general are protected from interference or ours in particular is. (The latter has been good for more than one SF story.).
9. We are still ignorant. If our science were more advanced it would be clear that there is a preferred mode of communication which we don't know about yet. (E.g. MACROSCOPE)
10. Communicating with immature races is simply not very interesting for mature races. The grownups will talk to us when we have something to say.
11. There exists an interstellar communications network, complete with beacons for us newcomers. If we start looking for it seriously we will find it.
12. We may simply be well out of the center of action. Stars (and planets?) are sparser in our neck of the woods than they are in the central regions of the galaxy. In short, we are hicks.
13. Reason X - a favorite of John Campbell. The motives of mature societies are not comprehensible to us. We are in the position of children trying to speculate about the motives of adults of another culture.

There are probably a few other major possibilities that I have overlooked in this enumeration. I believe, however, that the three general categories are complete.

This is not the first time this problem has been considered. (Scarcely) However much of the speculation on this topic that has been published as Science Fiction. This would be alright except SF is biased by the demands of having good stories and by a number of standardized conventions. For example, it is common to assume that there are a large number of intelligent races - all very young in terms of the length of recorded history. If one considers the vast amounts of time involved in the development of an intelligent race this is highly improbable unless some kind of common factor is involved. (It should be pointed out, though, that it is possible that our initial contacts will be with cultures at about our own level.)

The problem is that if one is going to try to make an attempt to answer the question one has to be prepared to speculate not only on whether or not there are technological societies in existence but also on the potentialities of advanced technology. This is one of the staples of SF and we can mine it for ideas. We have to be careful, though, a notion whose consequences are inconsistent with what is known is quite permissible in SF.

Besides SF there is a rapidly growing body of work in this whole area. It is an academically respectable topic. International conferences of scholars are held. A good example are the books of Carl Sagan. Or, say, Freeman Dyson. Exobiology, like cosmology, is an attempt to understand the big picture - the rather large universe in which we are such a minute part. The thing here is although one is working with highly uncertain guesswork, they are trying to do the best they can.

We can sharpen the problem by considering it as a paradox. Current thought suggests that it is quite unlikely that we are the only Intelligent race in the galaxy - that there are others besides us now and that we have predecessors that achieved science and technology millions and even billions of years before us. (That's American billions, of course.)

Let us suppose that interstellar travel is possible. Mind you, we don't have to suppose that it is particularly fast. In Science Fiction stories it is common to postulate faster than light travel. Unfortunately we have no real reason to believe that travel faster than light is possible and a great deal of reason to believe that it is not. Let us suppose that speeds upwards of 300 kilometers/second (.001 c, 186 miles/second) are attainable. At these speeds it would take about two hundred million years to traverse the galaxy. This may seem like a long time and on our time scale it is a very long time. In the history of the galaxy it would be a short but noticeable time - sort of like one year in the life of a man aged 75. Actually it is unreasonable to assume interstellar travel quite that slow - speeds which are faster by one or two orders of magnitude should be possible.

In any case the key point is that any race which can or will colonize will fill up the galaxy at approximately the rate at which it can travel. If it takes two hundred million years to cross the galaxy it takes two hundred million years to fill it end to end. (The reason is that the ships reach a world, colonize it, and that world also sends out ships. The colonies expand in all directions at a rate that includes travel time between stars and refitting time.)

In short, on the interstellar time scale, colonization is a flash phenomenon. Once a race acquires the capability and will for colonization it will take over the galaxy in short order. To summarize:

- a) It is probable that there are other Intelligent races and that they have been coming into existence for billions of years.
- b) Interstellar travel is feasible, if somewhat expensive.
- c) Out of all these races at least one was imperialistic and went out and colonized the stars. This happened a long time ago.
- d) When this race arrived on Earth there was no life on land. (Animal life on land didn't occur until 300 million years ago.) The aliens procede to seed the surface with their own plant forms and colonize the land. Native life forms never came out of the sea except as airborne bacteria. Native land plants and animals never developed. In particular the human race never happened.
- e) You and I don't exist.

That conclusion has been reached before, although usually with a somewhat different line of argument. I am willing to concede that it is correct - it is hard to conceive of any way of proving the matter, once it is open to question. However, believing in one's nonexistence turns out to be a very poor basis for action. It may be logically correct to assert that since one does not exist one does not have to eat. Certainly it is an economical line of argument. Despite the claims of logic and economy, however, it turns out that if you don't eat you get hungry. And since I like to eat I refuse to believe in my own non-existence. Therefore I am inclined to reject conclusion (e) above and pretend that it is all wrong.

If it is granted that we exist then there must be something wrong in the line of argument that leads to point (e). The obvious point to reject is point (a). However I can't believe it. Consider:

There are about one hundred thousand million stars in the Galaxy. Most of these are about the size of our sun, a little larger or somewhat smaller. There is a small minority of very bright or very large stars and a large minority that is substantially smaller than our sun. It is fair to say that somewhere between twentyfive and forty percent could be homes for life if they had planets in the right orbits.

Current theories predict planets like ours for most stars which are the size of the sun. There are several reasons for believing this to be so. First of all there is the argument of observation - a number of nearby stars have planets and/or dark companions of a size intermediate between that of a star and a planet. (These have been found by analyzing the perturbations of the stellar path. As far as I know there have not yet been any direct observations of extrasolar planets. I expect it though - if one can take pictures of stars one can probably catch a transit of a superjovian planet.) Direct observation thus suggests that it would be unreasonable to expect that planets are rare. Secondly there is the angular momentum argument. In the process of formation a star starts out with a great deal of angular momentum. When the protostar collapses to form a star it must spin very fast. It is an observed fact that stars which are above a certain threshold size in mass tend to spin very fast - they have retained their original angular momentum. Stars which are smaller than that threshold tend to spin much more slowly than they should - they have lost as much as 98% of their angular momentum. The easiest way for a star to get rid of its angular momentum is to transfer it to its planets (for which, of course, it needs planets.) The third major line of argument is that modern theories of planetary formation suggest that it is a very common thing. This is the weakest line of argument - planetary formation theory is still unverified speculation. We know more about the subject, but we still don't know enough to know what we are ignorant about.

Let us grant that what appears to be the case is actually the case - that there are about 20 to 50 billion stars which are of the right general spectral class and which have planetary systems. We may ask how many of these have planets which are of the right size and position to be suitable for life. (Not how many have life, but what percentage are in the right place.) We don't know. We have fairly good reasons for supposing that planetary systems will look something like our own - Jovian type planets further out, small Earth type planets further in. What we do not know are things like how tight the parameters have to be.

For life to start we need a small rocky planet with oceans of water and a reducing atmosphere. Obviously the surface temperature must be in a certain range. It is easy to calculate what the surface temperature of a body at a given distance from the sun and a given albedo must be. These calculations are wrong for Earth, Venus, and Mars. The reason they are wrong is that they ignore atmospheric effects. For example suppose that Mars were a little larger and that it had an atmosphere like that of Venus. We might then have the interesting situation of Mars being too hot for life, even though it was further away from the sun than Earth.

There are a lot of calculations that we can make about a planetary atmosphere. For example, given the mass and temperature of a planet we can calculate how long it will retain any particular gas. (The lighter they are, the faster they go.) That is, if we assume that a planet starts with so much Hydrogen in its atmosphere we can calculate what percentage will be lost into space in a given time.

However atmospheres do not exist in isolation from the planets they are around. For example, most of the Carbon Dioxide on Earth is dissolved in the oceans or, in effect, tied up in Carbonates. As far as we know. We don't know how much exists in the deeper parts of the Earth or how much of that is migrating upwards. We do know that the Earth and its atmosphere are in a complex chemical equilibrium. We are beginning to understand some of the details of that equilibrium. We don't know much about what kind of variation in atmospheres to expect but what we have found in our solar system is very interesting. We know that a planet can be too small to have an atmosphere. We didn't expect that a small planet could have as dense an atmosphere as that of Venus. We do not know whether it is important that Earth has a moon - maybe the Moon skimmed off enough of our atmosphere so that the greenhouse effect never took hold. On the other hand the Sun was about forty percent cooler five billion years ago - maybe there was a greenhouse effect that was responsible for keeping Earth warm enough for life to start.

My impression is that the chances of a planet being at the right position, having the right mass, and having the right composition are very low. I mention the latter because it seems likely that in the early history of the Galaxy the supply of heavy elements was not high enough to form rocky planets. Current theory has it that supernovae are the source of the heavy elements. (Every thing heavier than Helium is a heavy element.) Obviously the concentration of heavy elements must have been lower in the first few billion years of galactic history.

Still and all there are a lot of planets out there. If only one out of every ten thousand solar systems has a planet in the right place etc that would still leave several million potentially life bearing planets.

But, given that there are several million planets which are candidates for bearing life, what are the chances that life actually developed. I would say, quite good. We have a fairly good idea of how life actually started. That is, if we start with the atmosphere of four billion years ago and the oceans of that time we can trace the process in which the ocean became a dilute organic soup. The chain of formation from simple gasses and liquids to DNA has been traced. Given the initial conditions, life seems to be a high probability consequence.

But even if you have life, that doesn't mean that you have intelligent technological life. What are the chances of intelligence developing. I suggest that they are very good. It might be argued that it took several billion years on Earth for intelligence to develop and that, therefore, it is likely to be a rare and improbable occurrence. I suggest that this line of thought is fallacious. Life, as far as we can tell, must start in water. I am prepared to believe that it is grossly improbable that an intelligent race which lives underwater will develop technology. This implies that technology is associated with creatures that are very much like land dwelling animals. Now life on land is a quite recent phenomenon in the history of the planet. Plant life started really invading the land about 450 million years ago. Animals started colonizing land about three hundred million years ago. That is - for over 90% of the history of the Earth life was confined to the Ocean.

We might argue from that that it is the invasion of land is the rare and improbable event - if it took a couple of billion years to happen it must be an unlikely sort of thing. However we now think we know why the invasion of land took place, why it took so long, and that it took so long. The reason is, in a word, Oxygen. One of the consequences of the development of life is the slow conversion of the atmosphere from a reducing (Hydrogen rich) atmosphere to an oxidizing atmosphere (Oxygen rich). Life on land is much more demanding than life in the oceans. The use of free Oxygen permits land life - faster and more efficient chemical reactions. Without a sufficient level of free Oxygen in the

air there can be no animal life on land. The evidence suggests that as soon as the free Oxygen level was high enough life spread to land. The whole process seems inevitable if somewhat slow.

There is, of course, the necessary qualification that there be land. I shouldn't be surprised if worlds covered entirely with water were fairly common. For example, if we merely had twice as much surface water as we do there would be very little land area left at all.

Given land life, how likely is the development of an intelligent race. I used to think that it must be something that is quite unlikely. However I had not appreciated the importance of the Oxygen level or how recent land life is. In three hundred million years life has gone from some crude amphibians to a very rich and very sophisticated ecology.

One has the impression that once life got started on land evolution continually accelerated; a matter of success breeding success, so to speak. Actually this should be the case. When life started it must have been very close to the edge of the permissible number of mistakes. We can think of DNA as a gigantic program for constructing a living thing. In the beginning parts of the program would be useless and part of it would be contrasurvival. More than half worked, however, and that was enough. Over the megayears the program was refined. Useless and worse than useless parts of the program were eliminated. New mechanisms were invented, made permanent, and elaborated on. Today a single living cell is an example of systems engineering on a scale of complexity and quality of work far beyond anything that we humans have ever done.

The hard part of life - the thing that took so much time - was simply to evolve and thoroughly establish such thoroughly reliable answers to the problem of what to do to stay alive and flourish. By the time life appeared on land the hard part had already been done. The basics had been solved. And on land, with the advantages of an Oxygen economy, evolution has been proceeding merrily. Life on land had many more options open to it than life in the sea. And those options were explored and exploited with increasing rapidity and efficiency.

In short, I think that intelligent life on Earth was no sort of accident at all. Something like us was certain in fairly short order once there was animal life on land. And animal life on land was certain once the Oxygen level was high enough. And I rather suspect that the time table for that event was about average, give or take a billion years.

All of which leaves us with a Galaxy in which a lot of intelligent races have appeared over time - millions of them with a new one coming up every thousand years or so. I repeat, where are they?

One answer, which is ominously plausible, is that the average life of technological races is short - most of them just don't make it. In view of our current problems it seems all too likely that we are one of a vast majority of races that won't make it.

And yet...

What would it mean, "not to make it"? One answer is that we might indulge in a thermonuclear war which did enough damage to the biosphere to eliminate life on land for a while - including us. That, however, would only postpone the issue for a few hundred million years until the next intelligent race came along. I suppose there must be a fair number of intelligent (?) races that commit suicide in that particular fashion.

What about Ecodoom. What about the problems that are pressing on us right now? Population pressure, exhaustion of irreplaceable resources, pollution, contamination and destruction of the ecology, etc.? Will we be done in by these?

In the long run I think the answer is almost certainly no.

This is not to say that the next few hundred years might not be fairly grim. Our times and those of our children look to be fairly exciting. One recalls the ancient curse, "May you live in interesting times."

To be sure, there are going to be a lot of people starving to death in the next one hundred years. We may well have a dieback in the year 2020 or so. It may get very hairy. But a population explosion and mass starvation does not mean the end of the human race. Even if our present industrial society collapses it does not mean the end of the human race. It does not even mean the end of technology and science.

Nor is the exhaustion of resources an important issue - in the long run. (Be it noted, however, that we don't live in the long run.) In the nature of things such things as extractive industries such as petroleum and mining are transient phenomena. In the near future - five hundred years or less - we shall learn to do quite well without them. Recycling and conservation only delay the inevitable. The real question is what we will do when all of the irreplaceable resources run out.

There are really only two options. One is a agricultural society which does without science and technology. The other is a technological society in which all of the primary sources are the inexhaustible resources - solar energy, hydrogen fusion, minerals from the sea, etc - and which has developed a stable ecology that includes both technology and the biosphere.

I suspect that the agricultural option must be fairly common. It need not be bad as the feudal societies of the past. We have learned a lot in the past few thousand years and we have learned a lot about learning in the past few hundred and all of that knowledge would be available. With population under control, with advanced biochemistry, with good medicine it might not be too bad. But I suspect that it would look an awful lot like modern China. I don't think I would like it...

However I suspect that, for the human race, we will eventually find our way to a high level technology that is stable. I say this, because I don't think the knowledge will disappear. Without the resources that we are so recklessly wasting now it will be much harder to build the requisite computers, fusion plants, etc. However, given the knowledge, I think the temptation to try will always be present, and I think one ruling elite after another will make the attempt until one finally succeeds.

And what of the chances of Ecodeath - fouling up our environment to such an extent that the ecology collapses. I must admit that I think that this is quite improbable. To be sure, we could do a great deal of damage if we poured poisons into the environment with ever increasing enthusiasm. But it just isn't in the cards. Over time you learn. You don't use such and such technology because the side effects are just too expensive. Yes, more species will be lost. And, yes, there will be disasters. But, in the long run, these kinds of problems will be solved. I may be wrong, but I don't think that the danger is very great.

In short, I think that once a race has acquired technology it does not lose it and eventually finds its way to a stable high technology culture - provided that it does not destroy itself with high technology weapons. There must be an

appreciable fraction of intelligent races that go that way. We have a good chance of being among them.

Unfortunately this does not exhaust the list of potential hazards. Here are three I can think of right off the bat. In the next hundred years we will probably go in for biochemical engineering and applied genetics in a big way. There is a reasonable chance that we will make an irretrievable mistake somewhere along the line. In the next hundred years we will probably develop artificial intelligence and use it in a big way. Something like the mad computer that destroys the world is a possibility. Remember the great blackout. It happened because the Eastern power network had an unpredictable instability. What if we develop a world encompassing high level technology and it has an unpredictable instability.

There are a lot of ways things can go to hell in a handbasket...

I suspect that a lot of races which develop technology don't make it...

Unless, of course, they get the answers from the stars...

Even if the chances of surviving the first thousand years of technology are poor there should be quite a few survivors. And the survivors should last for a long time. Remember, all that is required is that there be one race that develops interstellar travel and has a taste for expansion and they take over the entire Galaxy in due time. On the evidence there isn't even one. Why not?

I am inclined to believe that interstellar travel is possible. I have gone through the calculations that purport to show that an interstellar rocket is impossible. There is much in them. However those who use such calculations to prove the impossibility of interstellar travel miss an essential point, which is that interstellar travel is quite feasible provided that you start out with a ship large enough to maintain a closed ecology and you are willing to take your time about getting there. To us, a trip of a few thousand years is grossly impractical. Suppose, however, that our lifespans were twenty thousand years (postulate an alien race with that sort of lifespan) or that we have learned how to artificially extend our lifespan that much. Or that we have learned how to build artificial intelligences - either electronic or biochemical - with effective lifespans that large. Then such trips are no longer inconceivable.

At present we do not have the technology or the resources for interstellar travel. We do have a lot of ideas, however. Things like the interstellar Ram jet and laser cannon. Some of these will turn out to be impractical. (Flown any Zeppelins lately?) It seems most unlikely that they all will.

I doubt it...

Which leaves us with the original problem. If life is highly likely, if there are a multitude of intelligent races with technology, and if interstellar travel is feasible, then where are they?

I don't know. I thought about the possibility that nobody considers interstellar conquest worth the trouble. After all, if you have managed to solve the problems of living on your home world there are no real motives for interstellar colonization except that of ensuring racial survival by scattering the seed. To survive at all you have to devise a society which is non-expansive. Having done so, you've lost your motives for expansion. The trouble with this line of thought is that a race might well wish to launch a campaign of conquest and colonization for purely abstract reasons which are noneconomic.

Another possibility that I have played with is that Arthur C. Clarke is right. The future belongs to the intelligent machines. Perhaps the Galaxy is girdled with intelligent machines talking to each other. Perhaps they know all about us and are watching and waiting right now. However they don't care about us. What they are waiting for is for us to develop the intelligent machines that will succeed us. A somewhat disquieting thought.

Still and all, I really don't think that it is too likely. Maybe I'm overly optimistic...

There is another possibility which struck me as I was writing this. We have argued that there must be quite a few intelligent extraterrestrial races with a highly developed technology. We have also argued that Interstellar travel is probably feasible, but rather pointless. On the other hand interstellar communication is quite practical for long lived high technology races so we might expect that there would be a good deal of it. We have also argued that advanced races probably have no interest in interstellar colonization. And, finally, it seems unlikely that there haven't been any potential interstellar conquerors.

Consider the threat presented by a paranoid race with a mature technology. Suppose they wanted to destroy all other intelligent races. They probably could do so. What they would do would be to send a ship to the stars of other races equipped with something that would cause them to become novae.

Any intelligent race presents an unpredictable danger to all other races. Even worse the danger is probably not from one of the races which is willing to communicate, but from one which is not - a race which is totally unknown.

When intelligent life first appeared in the Galaxy, say seven billion years ago, the danger must have been obvious. It seems reasonable that they would have done something about the possibility. And this is what they might have done...

Well beyond Pluto, in a cometary orbit that takes it in past the Sun every twenty thousand years, is a ship. It is ancient, that ship. It has been there now for three billion years. But it is not dead, that ship. Its builders had the resources of a Galaxy wide culture four billion years old to draw upon. They built very well. Inside that ship is an intelligent machine. For billions of years that machine has drowsed. Every twenty thousand years it makes a quick pass at the Sun and renews its energy supplies. It is patient, that machine. It has to be.

Lately that machine has come very much alive. It watches our planet for one particular thing. It knows that there is a Galaxy wide communication net. It knows that sooner or later we will begin to listen to the net and when we do we will be warned about it.

It waits. It knows that we are there, because our planet is radiating radio energy like a star. It waits for one of two things. One is an attempt to destroy it. The other is launching an interstellar ship without announcing it and its destination on the Galactic net. And if either of these events occurs that it has waited for so patiently for it does its thing.

And the Sun goes nova....

LOCS

Michael T. Shoemaker
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July 27, 1976

Dear Richard

I've been intending to drop you a line on PN #6 for months, but my loc frequency these last couple of years has been as infrequent as your publishing schedule. (*That bad, eh.*) I always find PN most enjoyable yet have trouble loccking because there is too much to say. The prospect of loccking wearies me. Often I have found this to be the case with such zines as SF commentary, Speculation, Mythologies, etc. The main reason I'm writing is to let you know that I am an ardent fan of Harry Partch's music. He ranks among the genuinely innovative geniuses of any of the arts. For my term paper in Form & Analysis last year I analyzed his Delusion of the Fury.

I'll be mailing you the latest Oxytotic, #13, tomorrow.

Oxytotic is a rather pleasant little dittoed zine that Michael has been putting out sporadically over the years. Recommended.

I have a small confession to make, in case I haven't made it already. I have never, to the best of my knowledge, heard the music of Harry Partch. I have no clear knowledge of who he is. I am curious, though. In the quiet of the evening when I sit back in the recliner, killing a fifth in honor of Beethoven, I often muse, *Who is Harry Partch?* When I meet my fellow musical illiterates at the record store (they handle Best of the Golden Goodies) we whisper with mingled hope and despair, *Who is Harry Partch?*

You know, I do believe I have the germ of a good story there. I'll have to think about it a bit. I do hope it hasn't been done before.

Next is a letter from Don D'Amassa. Don is just going to have to wait. It is against the sacred canons to start a letter on the last three lines of a page. Just like him to try it, too.

Don D'Amassa
19 Angell Drive
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July 29, 1976

Greetings:

I notice that not only are you publishing a bit more frequently than before, but there are more pages in this latest issue. That's a dangerous direction in which to move, I warn you.

Well, yes, it is probably is. However it is almost inevitable. I suppose you are familiar Girblemacher's equations, which give a complete description of the factors controlling the production of fanac. They explain why PN #7 was, of necessity, larger and more quick in appearing than its predecessor.

I was fascinated by your description of the rigors of giving up the weed. I've never been a smoker myself, and while it is intellectually possible for me to realize how a dependency can work, it's difficult to grasp it on any deeper level. You make it sound like an unmitigated hell, and if I needed any further reason not to take up smoking in the first place, you've provided it.

A wise, or perhaps, fortunate decision. I hadn't thought of the perils and traumas of quitting as dramatic - I had rather expected that it would be a bore to non-smokers and carefully avoided by smokers.

You misjudge literary people in your discussion of SF as trash. Literary raconteurs love their gadgets just as much as anyone else. By your definition of gadget, the various literary tricks so repulsive to some are gadgets of the first order. The clever wordplay, hidden symbols, flashbacks and flash forwards and all. Just as every group has its own jargon, so do they all have their gimmicks.

A point well taken. Much of the mutual disdain the crypto-engineers and the petit-litterati is simply a conflict in taste in gadgets.

The various negative attributes you assign to SF are quite possibly valid, in gneral, but they are external, not inherent in the genre. Many are the result of the way the market is composed, the way it is conceived by publishers to be composed, and a variety of other reasons not strictly inherent in the material being written. I suppose, though, that a difference that makes no difference is no difference, in a pragmatic sense.

No, no. A difference that makes no difference is no difference only if it makes not difference in all respects.

I don't think I can agree with you here - I believe they are inherent. That is, the characteristics I was discussing are the important inherent features of SF - the ones that readers and writers react to.

I'd like to see George Flynn substantiate his claim that Fred Brown wrote crime novels rather than murder mysteries. First of all, I assume that by the former he means novels in which we're not particularly concerned with who committed a murder. If that's so, then at least three quarters of Brown's work falls in the latter category, as for example, THE FABULOUS CLIPJOINT, A PLOT FOR MURDER, THE SCREAMING MIMI, ONE FOR THE ROAD, etc.

The role playing propensities of fans are, I think, worth some study. More than almost any other activity I can think of, SF fandom (specifically fanzine fandom) allows people to try on different personalities. I've been told that I come across substantially less friendly in print than in person, for example, although I don't consciously try to assume a pose. I suspect in my own case that it's because that it's because I've had time to think out my remarks in print, whereas in person I often don't have time to work out my arguments, and let them lie fallow. (Well, actually Don, the truth of the matter is that you have an engaging smile - an asset not to be underestimated these days.) But in fandom at large, you even see the phenomenon of people changing their identities in order to alter their image in fandom. I suspect a good team of psychologists could make hay studying the various dichotomies.

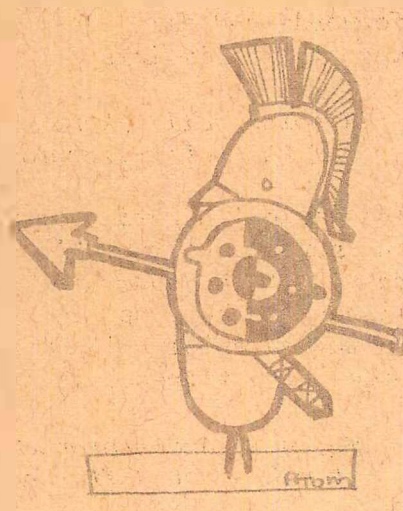
Now there's an idea - perhaps fans should be studied wholesale instead of retail. On the other hand I suspect they might find out things I don't want to know about.

Actually the whole thing of identity games and playing with your image is mostly a consequence of the fact that a lot of fans are young.

Although I'm not particularly close to the SCA, there is one aspect of the organization that bothers me. I find that some individuals become so enmeshed in the SCA that they have lost touch with the outside world. The outside world is a pretty unpleasant place much of the time, but I don't think the solution is to stick one's head in a hole and pretend it isn't there.

To tell the truth I don't think of the outside world as an unpleasant place most of the time. I have noticed that if one pulls one head into a hole and pretends that the world isn't there, that the outside world tends to become distinctly more unpleasant. Dwelling inside reality traps tends to have deleterious effects on the pleasantness of one's surroundings. If one doesn't give one's employer a modicum of one's enthusiasm one soon finds employment to be marginal. When one is a monomaniac one tends to find one's circle of friends narrowing to similar monomaniacs. (A process hastened when the aforementioned marginal employability leads one to cadge off one's soon-to-be former friends). Those sort of things tend to make life substantially grubbier and grayer - both more difficult to manage and less rewarding.

I would not single out the SCA though. There are a multitude of reality traps around. There are the bridge bums who can make a dummy reversal double squeeze with their eyes shut but who



cannot quite make it to class. There is his brother, the chess bum. There are the chaps who spend their days in a drug induced haze. There are people whose life revolves around the cause. The SCA does, however, seem to rank with the best as a high-powered reality trap. And then there is Dungeons and Dragons....

Brendan DuBois
283 Dover Point Rd.
Dover NH 03820
July 31, 1976

Dear Richard:

Thank you for sending me your PERSONAL NOTES #7. Since this is a loc of sorts, I hope I can get on your mailing list. Pretty please?

But Brendan - obviously you are on my mailing list, or else you wouldn't have gotten it. As a general thing once I put somebody on the list they stay on for a good while - they are not likely to come off unless I conclude that they have no interest in it or that I have lost interest in sending it to them. In general, one gets on my mailing list because the thought strikes me that the recipient might want to be on my mailing list. For example they might trade fanzines, or they might ask, or they might be a friend or a relative of mine, or it occurs to me that they might like it, or something.

I was extremely (but pleasantly) shocked when I received your zine in the mail. To actually receive a fanzine in the mail that I didn't send away for made me feel that at least somebody else knows me out there in fandom. At first I didn't know how you got my name until I started reading about your trip to England. Of course! You're the Richard Harter that's a NESFan and publishes APASTAN in APA:NESFA. How could I be so dumb. Anyway, thanks for the issue.

Er, I don't mean to be personal, but how many Richard Harter's do you know. It is a bit disconcerting to be characterized as "the Richard Harter that's...". I have this mental image of Dover being filled with Richard Harters. There is Richard Harter, the undertaker, and Richard Harter, the insurance salesman, and Richard Harter, the postman, to say nothing of Richard Harter, who manages the local KFC. In Cambridge we have Richard Harter the mathematician (me) and Richard Harter the lawyer (him) but we seem to be relatively deprived with respect to Harters.

After reading PERSONAL NOTES #7, I must come to the conclusion that it is the best personalzine that I have ever read. I've read BROWNIAN MOTION and DON-O-SAUR and others, but I think none of them compare with you zine.

You are obviously a man of brilliant critical insight. I always glad to see someone speak up with honest forthright opinions like that.

First, there's your, er-size, which means a lot of reading and entertainment. Second, there are side-splitting cartoons by Mike Gilbert. Funny! And, of course, the locs and your unique but very good form of writing. Highly enjoyable.

Mikie is an excellent artist (although not in style right at the moment.) The cartoons really are brilliant - they deserve a much wider audience.

Now, down to basics. The cover of PERSONAL NOTES is original. It must've taken a lot of modesty to print it. (Well, yes, but then I'm noted for my modesty) And I feel I must disagree with what you said on page three. PERSONAL NOTES is not dreadful nor is it a shoddy product. I think it's high-class, both in style and in format.

Your article on the Foul Weed is interesting. As a non-smoker, I find it hard to believe that it's all that hard to kick the habit, but I know better. It's hard to kick any habit, whether smoking, drugs, or chewing fingernails. When I talk to people who do smoke and ask them if they plan to quit, some of them get hot under the collar, saying there's no reason to quit, the Surgeon General's report is fake, etc. Maybe, but smoking does other things, such as smelling up air, fingers, clothes, furniture, hair, etc. Plus the burning of the preceding.

Well yes, there are rather obvious reasons for quitting that have nothing to do with health reasons. Most of my old clothes have pinholes in them from falling ashes and a quantity of my furniture has cigarette burns on them. It is a messy habit, to say the least.

Habit is not the right term though - nicotine addiction is the term and it is qualitatively different. To illustrate what is involved, deprive yourself of sleep for fortyeight hours or so, until your system desperately, passionately cries for sleep, so that it becomes a preoccupation and an obsession.

Nicotine addicts "get hot under the collar" about smoking for the very good reason that doing without is a notion that is immensely threatening.

I have to disagree with your assessment of PN. To be sure, it (issue #7) was quite good as fanzines go - not, perhaps, top rank, but better than most. The point is that fanzines in general aren't very good. The repro and printing is cheap. The writers and artists are all amateurs. Production control is usually marginal. These things are inevitable. The amount of talent and time that would be required to put out a superlative fanzine (i.e. a magazine that one would consider mediocre and amateurish if one found it on the newstand) is immense. For example:

PN is usually riddled with typos. It also littered infelicitous phrasing, and paragraphs that meander aimlessly. I repeat myself and contradict myself. These faults occur because I am a lousy proofreader and because I draft directly onto stencil. (Almost everything in PN is first draft as it appears.) I could be more professional about it. I could do a first draft hand, lay everything out beforehand, proof everything, and then put it onto stencil when I have everything letter perfect. PN would be a better zine if I did do all of these nice things. However it is all more work and trouble than I want to put into it, so I don't.

Or consider repro. I could slipsheet - I don't. If I were a fanatic about repro quality I would go through each page and eliminate each sheet on which the print quality was flawed. I try to keep the repro quality up but I don't go to such extremes. Even if I did all I would have is very good mimeo printing - a cheap and inferior process to begin with.

If one judges the quality of a fanzine by using the same criteria that one would use for, say, SATURDAY REVIEW then it becomes quite clear that PN is really not very good. Which is okay because it was never intended to be really good.

Stanford Burns
PO Box 1381
Glendale CA 91209
August 9, 1976



Dear Dick Harter (~~Widely the World~~)

First off, let me say that the concept of color xerography fascinates me - but in the previous examples I've seen, the color was much more intense. Could you or Mary enlighten me on what the original was like? Were the scratches on the original? Was the color soft and muted - especially the background? How does it work? I must admit that the process piques my curiosity, and I would like to find out more about it. Are you aware that Xeroxes have been made by laying a person down directly on the machine? I saw an article in one of the photo mags a year or so ago, showing a portrait of a nude lady made by laying various sections of her - um - person on the machine, and then combining the results into one whole not unlike composite pictures of the Earth taken by satellite.

The original was a slide blown up. The scratches were in the xerox. The background was muted in the original. Basically it is a three colour process with three passes made over the material. Black is built up by composition.

First, three comments on the issue. I like the sections in brown ink. They seem easier on the eyes than straight black ink. The section in red, however, was fairly hard to read. Red has less contrast than other types of color...

Second, in your comments you have a tendency to say something, and then repeat it in the next line, or the second one after that. You don't do it very often, but you should be aware of this tendency.

Well, you see, the thing is I first draft onto stencil and sometimes lose track of where I am and what I have just said. Besides I sometimes leave the typewriter for a while and come back with the result that I lose track of where I am and what I have just said. And besides I first draft onto stencil with the result....

Third, George Flynn is both right and wrong. It isn't my memory that is faulty, but my info source. The "info" about NOVA and PAVANE came via Don Keller, and seemed to fit into what I remembered. NOVA may well have been a Hugo nominee - I don't remember, and just took Don's word. On the other hand, I don't think PAVANE was disqualified because of prior British publication - making a book eligible in the year of its British publication for the Hugos is a fairly recent regulation of the awards, if I remember correctly. If it wasn't nominated, I don't think that was the reason. 1968 was a good year for books - not only did the ones I've previously mentioned come out then, but that was also when the first books of Vance's Planet of Adventure and Panshin's Villiers novel came out.

I agree with Don D'Am^{ma}ssa that NIGHT OF THE JABBERWOCK is an excellent Brown mystery. Unfortunately it is out of print and is difficult to find, though I did find a copy in the local library. THE FABULOUS CLIPJOINT is also out of print and I never have found a copy of it.

As to the rest of the issue: I enjoyed the comics, sympathize with your struggle to be quit of the EVIEL WEED - being a fellow addict - and your trip report brought back fond memories of the month I spent in England in 1969. Did you notice that they only sell PEPSI in London, and not COKE??? Keep up the good work.....

.....

Michael T. Shoemaker
2123 N. Early St.
Alexandria VA 22302
August 6, 1976

Dear Richard,

I most vehemently disagree regarding your comments about Hugo quality zines. (*Oh goody, I'm controversial. Maybe now I'll have a shot at a Hugo.*) I am not one of those who want to see the biggies kicked out of competition just because of their slickness, etc. (Although I would like to see the awards discontinued because the disparity in circulation is an unfair advantage, and because the capital outlay of zines like ALGOL is tantamount to buying the Hugo.) I think the only distinction between a fanzine and a professional zine is that the prozine makes a profit. Therefore, SFR and perhaps LOCUS (depending on whose figures you believe) are clearly prozines and should be ineligible.

Contrary to what you contend, the most exasperating thing to me about the fanzine Hugos is that most of the biggies are not very good! SFR is the only exception, but it is not a fanzine. If you like to read a newspaper more than a collection of intelligent essays; then I can understand why you think so highly of LOCUS, but newspapers don't interest me much. If you prefer comics to books I can understand your preference for ALGOL and OUTWORLDS, but the written content is all that's important to me and the written content of ALGOL and OUTWORLDS is piss poor.

Examples of excellent small fanzines: TITLE'S first 24 issues were the most outstanding fanzines I've ever seen. The early PREHENSILES were excellent as were and is Ed Connor's MOEBIUS TRIP. SPECULATION (the best sercon zine I've ever seen, and the only zine I've ever subbed), CYPHER, SF COMMENTARY (which had a relatively small circulation for most of its history), and THE WSFA JOURNAL (during the period of issues #58-79) are among the best sercon zines ever published. RIVER-SIDE QUARTERLY has been erratically brilliant. RENAISSANCE, AWRY, TOMORROW AND..., BEABOHEMA (in its early days) are more examples of outstanding small zines. And let's not forget ENERGUMEN, which was brilliantly written and beautiful, and very small in circulation.

P.S. I enjoyed the England trip report a lot.

Ah, yes, vehement is the word, alright. I always enjoy these things as long as they don't get too far out of hand, so let me stir the pot a little bit more.

First of all, let us consider that ancient chestnut, what is a fanzine? (I have even been in panels on the topic - it is one of the more mildewed of the old chestnuts.) But first let me tackle an even more ancient and hoary pair of chestnuts - what is a fan and what is a pro? Well, the answers are simple enough. A pro is an author who writes for money and who makes a reasonable part of hi/her income from writing Science Fiction. (There, now that wasn't too hard.) A fan, on the other hand, is someone who is a fan of Science Fiction (using fan in the general dictionary sense) who participates in the collective fan activities of science fiction fans. That is, one is a fan in Webster's sense if one enjoys Science Fiction. One is a Fan in the sense of Science Fiction fandom if one interacts in some way.

What then, is a prozine? A prozine is a general circulation magazine which publishes Science Fiction. It is definitely a business - all persons involved, writers, editors, artists, clerks, printers, and distributors, are paid and expect to be paid the normal going rate for their activities.

And what is a fanzine? (Bet you thought I was never going to get to that.) A fanzine is a magazine published by a science fiction fan in his/her status as a science fiction fan which is about Science Fiction and/or topics which may be expected to be of interest to Science Fiction fans. Period.

You will note that nowhere in that definition is there anything about amateur or professional, nothing about circulation, nothing about profits or money. Quite right. I believe that at best all such criteria are pernicious and perverse and at worse lead to hardening of the fatty matter in the brain. A fanzine is a fanzine. You judge what the thing is by the thing itself. You look at the magazine and read it and it is mostly pretty obvious. You don't demand circulation figures from the hapless publisher; you don't pull a surprise audit in the night. If SFR had one tenth the circulation every one would go around saying, "my what a fine fanzine." (Well, most everybody.) If we did not get into this puppy piss about "professional" and "profits", there wouldn't be any real doubt about what SFR is. Come on, now. Is there any doubt in your mind that Geis is a fan - he's been a fan for a coons age, now. Not only is he a fan, he's a fanzine fan has been for ages. He has been publishing what is, in many respects, the same magazine for over a decade. But at some point in the past it stopped being a fanzine because Geis violated the sacred canon of being out of pocket on an issue. Which line of reasoning makes about as much sense as worshipping dog dorks in the dark of the moon.

Pace. Let us consider the question of what is an amateur magazine. After all the Hugo rules talk about amateur magazines. Regardless of whether or not the offenders are fanzines, are they amateur publication? Well, now, I have this to say about that:

First of all, let me remark that many members of the fan press display a startling and refreshing innocence in matters of money and business. One might easily suppose from some of the things one reads that ten cents an hour is a reasonable wage. (There are, perhaps, those who are worth no more than that, but that is another matter entirely.)

In particular, there is a quite substantial difference between a hobby that makes a small profit (not counting labor and overhead) and a business. A business is something you can make a living at. This means that it returns enough to pay for your time and to cover expenses and to return a reasonable amount on invested capital.

(To forestall the nitpickers I will point out that there is a time factor in these things - one may start a business and not show a profit for some time during the startup period. And, of course, business can fail; it happens all the time.)

For example, suppose that Phineas T. Schishkabobble puts in twenty hours a week on his fanzine, week in, week out, and that he nets after all expenses the magnificent sum of one thousand dollars. This amounts to slightly less than one dollar and hour for his time. This cannot be regarded as a reasonable return on his time and effort. His efforts are a hobby, not a business. (I will grant that the IRS doesn't quite see it that way.)

But is it possible to make a living putting out a fanzine? Let us try some figures on for size. Suppose our budding entrepreneur is putting out a classy little fanzine which has a circulation of 2500 copies. For the sake of simplicity we shall assume that these are all subscription copies. Let us also suppose that he puts out this zine twelve times a year and that he charges a buck a copy for it. My goodness, that is 30,000 dollars a year - he must be making a mint...

Well, not quite. There are a few expenses to be taken into account. I will suppose that this zine is done on mimeo and superfan does all the mimeography himself. I suppose this for two reasons; first of all mimeo is supposedly cheaper than printing, and, secondly, I am familiar with the costs of mimeo. Let us suppose that this zine runs to fifty pages, and that the actual print run is about 3000 copies. For the print run he will need 150 reams of paper and about 75 tubes of ink. Let us suppose that he can get paper at \$1.50 a ream and ink at \$2.25 a tube. This is about \$390 for paper and ink, i.e. 13¢ a copy. (This figure is sort of a rock bottom estimate. However costs should not run over 20¢) Postage, envelopes, and labels will run about 33¢. The direct costs come out to about 50¢ a copy sold. Thus our boy is pulling in twentyfive hundred a month income and has expenses of about twelve fifty, which comes to 15000 a year. Not magnificent but not bad.

However that is not the whole story. There are a host of miscellaneous expenses. To build and sustain that circulation you need to do some advertising. In practice the print run will have to be a bit higher than 3000 copies if you want 2500 copies sold. There will be correspondence and telephone calls. And you may well be paying the contributors something. Ten thousand words at a penny a word adds up to a hundred dollars an issue. It all adds up.

And then there is the question of where you house the mimeo, the piles of paper, and the copies to be collated. Presumably superfan has them in his home. The IRS obligingly allows him to take a deduction for using part of his home as a place of business. However this is only fair. Superfan is supplying space for equipment and supplies and this is one of the costs of doing business.

By the time you get through figuring all of the expenses the net comes to something on the order of \$800 to \$900 dollars a month. You can live on it, albeit not terribly well. So, yes, it is possible to put out a large circulation fanzine and make a living at it.

Mind you, you will have to work your butt off for it. You must type fifty pages of material on stencil every month. You must run 150 reams of paper through the machine every month. You must collate 3000+ copies every month. You have to keep records on all of your subscribers. You have to address

all those envelopes and mail them. And you have to do all of this single-handed. (You don't have any margin to pay wages to anyone.) Offhand I would guess that your "business" will take about 60 hours a week. Easily. I'm not sure that it can be done. Geis went the mimeo route for a while and gave it up as being too much work.

If you have the zine printed you avoid the bulk of the mindbending labor. However the production costs then go up and you need an even larger circulation. If you distribute at bookstores you have returns and the bookstore's cut to contend with. In short, one can make a modest living by putting out a big circulation zine. All it takes is years of experience and plenty of talent as a writer, and editor, and a publisher. You could do better in any of several of the fields in which you have expertise if you went into it full time. You could even make more money running a mimeo for someone else than running it for yourself.

If we consider an amateur magazine to be one which cannot meaningfully be considered to be a business then SFR should be disqualified. LOCUS may or may not qualify. ALGOL and OUTWORLDS definitely are not businesses despite the fact that they play around with the trappings.

However I do not accept that definition of amateur. Amateur magazine to me is a fanzine. A professional magazine to me is just what I said it was. And I think it is arrant balderdash to say that SFR (or any of the others) is not a fanzine or is not an amateur magazine.

.... How do you like them potatoes?

I will have to grant you that most of the biggies really aren't that strong on written content. LOCUS is dull. ALGOL and OUTWORLDS are much better than you give them credit for, but they aren't among the best as far as written content goes. The zines you cite were mostly quite good (I would disagree with some of your picks, but that gets down to the minutia) but not as good as you would have us believe. (I cannot accept a critical judgement that says that the early PREHENSILES were excellent whereas the written content of ALGOL and OUTWORLDS is piss poor. Rot.)

.....

MATH PUZZLER #1

Consider the transformation $P(x) = N/(1-x)$. If $N = \frac{1}{2}$ we have $P(x) = 1/(2(1-x))$, $P^2(x) = (1-x)/(2-x)$, $P^3(x) = (2x-1)/2x$, $P^4(x) = x$. That is, for $N = \frac{1}{2}$, $P(x)$ is a generator of a cyclic group of order 4. Show that the only rational values of N for which P is the generator of a finite group are $N=1$, $N=1/2$, and $N=1/3$.

.....

Incidentally there was a break of about five and a half months between the start of comments on Mike's letter and the end of them. Inbetween were such things as MidAmericon. etc. This particular bit of babbling is being written January 2, 1977. It now appears quite unlikely that PN will get out in 1976.

UNIFIED FIELD THEORY

Tim Joseph

In the beginning there was Aristotle
And objects at rest tended to remain at rest,
And objects in motion tended to come to rest,
And soon everything was at rest,
And God saw that it was boring.

Then God created Newton,
And objects at rest tended to remain at rest,
But objects in motion tended to remain in motion,
And energy was conserved and momentum was conserved
and matter was conserved,
And God saw that it was conservative.

Then God created Einstein,
And everything was relative,
And fast things became short,
And straight things became curved,
And the universe was filled with inertial frames,
And God saw that it was relatively general,
but some of it was especially relative.

Then God created Bohr,
And there was the principle,
And the principle was quantum,
And all things were quantified,
But some things were still relative,
And God saw that it was confusing.

Then God was going to create Furgeson,
And Furgeson would have unified,
And he would have fielded a theory,
And all would have been one,
But it was the seventh day,
And God rested,
And objects at rest tend to remain at rest.

ARKHAM, July, 1976:

In keeping with its policy of offering "relevant" majors, Miskatonic U. has just announced a new major in SF fandom, complete with a comprehensive curriculum of courses in the field. The new major and the course schedule will be released for general publication later this fall. PERSONAL NOTES (the alternative newszine) is proud to announce that it has once again scooped the competition (as usual) and has the courses being offered for you here and now. Remeber, you read it first in PERSONAL NOTES (the semi-impermeable newszine)

THE MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY SF FAN MAJOR COURSE OFFERINGS¹

Orientation: Fandom Is A Way Of Life; conventions, fanzines, clubs, APA's, feuds, fanspeak. Introductory value analysis avoidance.

Disorientation: Fandom Is Just A Goddamn Hobby: Gafia, FAPA, and feuds. Advanced value analysis avoidance. Preq.: ORIENTATION.

Fan Economics I: Economics of conventions and fanzine publishing. How to find cheap repro supplies.

Fan Economics II: How to do your FANAC on company time without getting fired. Filching office supplies. Preq.: FAN ECONOMICS I.

Fan Economics III: How to survive while being unemployed as a result of being fired for doing FANAC on the job. Preq.: FAN ECONOMICS II

Fan Economics IV: How to fail in a small, fan oriented business. Book publishing; book dealing. Preq.: FAN ECONOMICS III.

Fanzine Publishing I: How to publish a small, sloppy personalzine. Elementary indifference to repro values. Use of hekto and ditto. Care and feeding of purple glotches.

Fanzine Publishing II: How to publish a snappy little genzine. Cadging material. Elementary layout. How to suck up to pros. Mimeo vs Offset. Preq.: FANZINE PUBLISHING I or permission of instructor.

Fanzine Publishing III: How to publish a Hugo-class zine. Cadging material. Timing issues to the Hugo Ballot. Pretentious layout. Advanced controversey. Preq.: FANZINE PUBLISHING II, FAN ECONOMICS III, and permission of instructor.

Fanzine Publishing IV: How to publish a small, sloppy personalzine. Advanced indifference to repro values. How to ignore purple glotches. Preq.: FANZINE PUBLISHING III, DISORIENTATION.

COLLECTING I: How to start a collection. American magazines. English language magazines. Foreign language magazines. Books. Obscure periodicals. Rare old fantasies.

COLLECTING II: Purchasing a ~~large~~ very large decrepit old building to house your collection in. (And, incidentally, you.) Preq.: COLLECTING I.

1. M.U. offers a B.S. in SF Fandom.

APA Writing I: Getting involved with an APA; mailing comments; the Erma Bombeck school of writing; free form diaries.

APA Writing II: Getting hooked on APA's. How to join other APAs. How to contribute to twenty APA's concurrently; high speed babbling in print. Getting on the FAPA waitlist.

APA Writing III: How to start an APA. Problems of being a collator. Colation procedures. How to get contributors. How to get rid of contributors. Secret APA's, feud APA's, and APA:NESFA.

APA Writing IV: How to kick the APA habit. Binding your APA's. Retiring into FAPA.

Fan Writing I: Elementary fanspeak, vocabulary and structure. How to write reviews without really thinking. Con reports. (NOTE: Fan Writing I may be substituted for Remedial English I only by fan majors.)

Fan Writing II: Writing pretentious amateur fiction. Writing pretentious critical essays. Faanish humor.

Fan Writing III: Interesting, Hugo-award winning fan-writing. Elementary and advanced controversey. Becoming a Geis columnist.

Fan Writing IV: The libel laws of the United States and Canada. Landmark lawsuits in fandom.

Modern Fan History: What happened last week. Who is bidding for what. Who is publishing what. Current ancient and venerable traditions.

Ancient Fan History I: The Thirties and Forties. Bob Tucker.

Ancient Fan History II: The Fifties and Sixties. Bob Tucker.

Worldcon Bidding I: How to raise money; how to waste money; how to give parties for people who wont vote; how to alienate your ardent supporters.

Worldcon Bidding II: Buying the Worldcon. Preq.: WORLDCON BIDDING I and desperation.

Con Chairing I: Running a six day worldcon with 5000 attendees, a \$250,000 budget, hand-tooled, leather bound program books, multi-track programming, and a re-enactment of King Kong with the original cast.

Con Chairing II: Running a medium size semi-informal regional convention. Preq.: Ccn Chairing I.

Con Chairing III: Running a small unprogrammed relaxacon. Preq.: CON CHAIRING II.

Con Chairing IV: Running a Star-Trek convention. Preq.: Greed and lack of ethics. Not open to those who have taken Con Chairing I, II, or III.

Fan ROTC: Conventional warfare. Preq.: Attendance at St. Louiscon.

Science Fiction: Read and discuss Science Fiction. Elective, no credit.

VICTORIA WAYNE ::: PO Box 156 Stn D ::: Toronto, Ontario ::: Canada

Dear Richard;

April 20, 1976

A late, late letter on PERSONAL NOTES 6 (and many thanks also for numbers 1 thru 5, received via Karen Klinck back during striketime last fall.) I have been messing around with alternate approaches in my own zine SIM, and the third issue, numbered 2A, is entirely a letterzine. For the fourth issue (numbered 2B) I plan to try a diary/letterzine arrangement, and looking over PERSONAL NOTES it occurred to me that what I planned to try was very similar to what you are already doing. Nothing new under the sun. You do it well, your zine is a good example to look to, other zines influencing the way SIM 2B will go include INFERNO and KNOCKERS FROM NEPTUNE and IT COMES IN THE MAIL. The fifth issue, numbered SIM 3, will be a genzine in the original format and arrangement, perhaps minus a lettercol, however, and I (changing my mind again) will offer subscriptions on whole numbers issues. But zines I do in the PERSONAL NOTES/INFERNO/etc. tradition will be for the usual only. I change my mind a lot. SIM 2A, by the way, has been printed and collated for over a month now, and handed out at cons already; and has, to my knowledge, even already been reviewed - but most of the copies have not been mailed yet due to my lack of \$\$\$\$\$. You will get one, never fear, but on a realsoonnow basis. Anyhow, I do like the rambling-letters-natterings approach to fanzines and it remains to be seen how well I can manage it. You do a terrific job and other people in Toronto who have seen my copy have said the same thing.

- * *Thank Ye Kindly for the fair words. SIM 2A, etc are out and distributed at this writing. All are good zines. V.V. is one of our up and coming fanzine publishers.*
- * *I have never seen INFERNO or KNOCKERS FROM NEPTUNE; however IT COMES IN THE MAIL is one of my favorite zines - in part because I genuinely enjoy reading it and in part because of sheer delight in the logic of the title and the concept of the zine. In a sense ICITM is the ultimate in the passive reaction zine - or would that be fair and correct to say?*
- * *The format for PN was determined by two things. First of all, I found that the most effective part of PROPER BOSKONIAN, when I was editing it, was the letter column and the approach that I evolved there for handling the letter column. Secondly I found that I did not really want to be bothered with the paraphernalia of the genzine - seeking contributors and artists, worrying about layout and subscription lists.*

Harry Warner's comments spurring you to remark on the survival of fanzines over the years leads me to suggest that few fanzines are thrown away. I have the impression that collections are usually sold at con auctions or some such, or passed down to a member of a newer fannish generation, when the original owner decides he no longer wants them or is interested. My own first fanzine, however, will probably have at most a 60% survival rate - a third of the copies went to members of the local club (since the club financed it) who, for the most part, aren't into fanzines at all and probably discarded their copies perhaps even unread. A waste. When I did my second genzine I was determined to finance it entirely myself, and the entire print run went to fanzine fans and letterhacks likely to hang on to the issues. Similar mailing lists are used by all of the Toronto Derelicts, who publish almost all of the zines coming out of Toronto at present, and I would imagine it to be a safe bet that even at the turn of the century our zines, like

those from all the others, will survive. Mouldering in private attic collections perhaps, or in some damp box in a cellar, but accessible at any rate. Fans seldom throw out a fanzine, no matter how bad. Most have some sort of collecting mania.

- * All true enough. However fans quite often do stop being fans - particularly publishing giants. More often than you might think. They either drop out of fandom entirely or they drift into some other area and gradually lose touch. Young fan tend to live erratic and unstable lives, moving here and there, and changing interests and activities rapidly. I don't believe that any zine with a circulation of more than 25 has more than about a twenty to thirty percent survival rate over twenty years. However, yes, some copies will be kicking around for decades.

Enjoyed the gourmet guide to the greasy spoon. I don't know why, but from recent visits to American cities, I find that the type of restaurant that is affectionately called a greasy spoon in Toronto - and there are lots of them here - is rather rare in, say, Columbus or Detroit. (Downtown, anyway.) In American cities, we have found mostly adequate chains (with the exception of Ronald's Revenge) or really GROTTY greasy spoons that even we, unfussy as we are, wouldn't go into. Few restaurants in Toronto are as bad as that. The average cheap restaurant in Toronto has vinyl upholstered booths and arborite tables, and you pick your own seat, and there are those horrible tinny jukeboxes at every table. Menus are generally not more imaginative than fish and chips or spaghetti or hamburgers, a variety of soups, and sandwiches. But the food is a good buy and quite palatable at some of these restaurants and one of them, Plato's Symposium in downtown Toronto, has become a fannish hangout.

In your review of MYTHOLOGIES you mention the phenomenon of quilting in solid black areas in mimeo. That's one thing the Toronto Derelicts haven't had - we're pretty solidly into Gestetner fandom here, and have some machine freaks in our number (myself included.) Taral Wayne MacDonald, using a fifty-year-old handcrank, gets deep black areas with electrostencils comparable to the best offset. Using a newer electric machine we can still get solid areas but not quite as black. Your repro seems to be quite good in regards to solid colours - I would guess you're using a silk screen machine. (The NESFA Gestetner 460) The local clubzine is done on an A.B.Dick and doesn't do nearly as well as Derelictzines in the way of quality of illos. Incidentally I can do electrostencils at 750 lines/inch resolution for \$1.50 each plus 50¢ postage cost for the entire mailing; or 75¢ each if you supply the stencil blank.

- Well, actually, I make a home for the NESFA electostenciller so I don't have need for the service. However some of my readers might and I pass it on.
- * You can get completely dark areas from an electric silk screen machines and electrostencils provided that you run slowly enough and you override the automatic inking with sufficiently heavy manual inking. What you cannot do is to tape into a regular stencil electostencilled artwork with large dark areas and get heavy dark areas - the inking rates are different. PN #7 had some good examples of full page electostencilled artwork - although the quality control was erratic.

(A five-and-a-half page fanzine review. The mind boggles. Ghod. Can you imagine someone doing a quarterly reviewzine with that much depth? I get over a hundred fanzines per quarter, the damn thing would run to a ream of paper per copy and be absolutely unstaple-able.)

Enjoyed the FOOPERCON report, and also the illos. Seems enough went wrong, but in retrospect it never seems so bad after all. Here a selection of Derelicts

are just back from BALTICON, and on the return drive we were so dead tired we were miserable, but now, recovered, I feel it was a very good weekend after all.

Ahah. God is a She. Bravo.

Actually, to be fair, God should be above gender. I am not a rabid feminist and I prefer the company of men to women, because I feel men are more interesting and more on the same wavelength as I am, and more "into" the same interests. [At this point V.V adds a note that "that doesn't sound too good". I can't imagine why.] So while God needn't be referred to as "He" all the time, it is refreshing to see a "She" occasionally, but I take it in the proper spirit.

* I would think that if one were a good Christian one would have to consider
* God to be male. The language of the Bible (or, rather, of the standard
* English translations) is quite explicit. God created Adam in His own image.
* Our Father who art in Heaven, etc. One can argue that all of this language
* is metaphorical. There are two troubles with that sort of argument. One
* is that when you start treating language as metaphor and parable you can
* make it take on almost any meaning you choose. The other is that if you
* do treat the language of the Bible as metaphor then it is logical to conclude
* that the attributes which characterize God are male in nature - that is, if
* God is genderless, there must be a reason for using the male pronoun rather
* than the female pronoun. And that reason must be males are much closer in
* character to God than females are.

* Offhand it would seem that if one is a good Christian one is committed
* (or ought to be) to male supremacy. In practice, however, one can be a
* good Christian (or at least believe oneself to be so) without any such
* commitment. Once one has opened the gates of interpretation one can make
* the Bible mean pretty much anything one chooses; good Christians do so regularly.
* One is forcibly reminded of Kierkegaard's comments about the broad path of
* Christianity and Christian whorehouses.

* Since I believe neither in God nor in Christianity (and would thus be a
* Unitarian if I went to church) I feel at liberty to choose whatever gender
* happens to suit my fancy. Besides - if I were so careless or so rash
* as to attribute masculinity to the Deity, She might be offended.

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Like any other fairminded, unbigotted liberal I enjoy a good ethnic slur joke. And yet I must admit to certain twinges of conscience. I don't think any one enjoys being the butt of that sort of humor. A "Polish" joke may be very witty if one doesn't happen to be Polish. If one is, it is not so humorous. An obvious answer is to forswear this sort of humor, but that will not do. I am told by reliable authorities that it is even harder to give up ethnic slur jokes than it is to give up smoking.

Fortunately a solution to this problem has occurred to me. It just so happens that the most intelligent, witty, urbane, and secure individuals in the world are Science Fiction fans. Not only that, they are renowned for their sense of humor and their lack of temperamental sensitivity. Therefore I am sure that no one will object if, instead of telling POLISH, HEBREW, ITALIAN, JAPANESE, EGYPTIAN, Ruthenian jokes we tell, instead, Fan jokes. You know - how many fans does it take to change a lightbulb? That sort of thing. Since nobody will mind we might just scatter a few around for fillers. Tallyho.

For example, did you hear about the tournament between the Eastern Kingdom and the Western Kingdom. The Eastern kingdom did not show up and it took the Western Kingdom three days to lose.

Did you hear about the fan who thought his typewriter was pregnant because his apazine started missing periods.

And then, for all time poor taste, consider the tale of Phineas T. Schish-Kabibble. Phineas had an old abandoned outhouse on his property. Being an economical sort Phineas really wanted to avoid the cost of having it pulled down and the thought occurred to him that he might be able to rent it out, so he stuck a "for rent" sign on it. Sure enough a Trekkie appears and says that it's the very thing - a place where he can watch star trek reruns in peace. Phineas thought it all very peculiar but didn't mind as long as he collected his fifty dollars a month. The next day after he rented it, however, he was surprised to see not one but two TV antennas over the outhouse. This seemed a little odd so he stopped by to ask about it. He wondered perhaps if Trekkies liked to have two TV sets, one for Star Trek and one for other stuff. The Trekkie explained, "Oh no. It isn't that. The other set isn't mine at all. It belongs to the Science Fiction fan that I rented the downstairs to."

How many Nesfans does it take to change a light bulb? Six: One to hold the bulb, two to turn him, one to make the committee report, one to update the light bulb inventory status sheet, and an impartial observer from the rules committee.

And so on... One thing about PN is that it almost always is in some sort of bad taste.

When I was in high school I discovered and was enamoured of a book entitled *The Art of Thinking*. I recently acquired a copy which remains carefully unread because reading it stirs up painful thoughts about how I have fallen far below the ambitions that I had for myself when I was young. I have come to believe, however, that those ambitions were fundamentally misplaced.

It is notable that the average product of the American educational system is ignorant - boorishly ignorant. For the most part they do not improve in later life; most of what they learned in school they forget rapidly; most of what they retain is the part that was wrong to begin with; and with time they become incredibly cocksure about the ill founded opinions and misinformation that they profess.

It would seem that a strong course in the art of thinking would be in order for many of us, with follow up courses every year. And yet such a demand is really unreasonable. Being well informed means that one must go to considerable effort to acquire a large amount of information about topics that are almost entirely irrelevant to one's daily life. The effort to be well informed is not worthwhile in terms of profit and loss. And, besides, one has much to do in life besides thinking. Even given the time, most of us have neither the talent or inclination for abstract thought.

(Continued on Next Rock)

NOT MAKING IT

THE AGRICULTURAL FUTURE

It has been one of my tenets that this is the age of decision - that the next hundred years are the critical ones in which the future of the human race for millions of years to come will be decided. It is certainly a melodramatic thesis; it may even be true.

The argument is simple enough. It is simply that the industrial age which we are now in is an unstable transitional age which is, of necessity, shortlived. Attend. Before the invention of agriculture and civilization the human race was in effective equilibrium with its environment. During the period of preindustrial civilization the race was in potential equilibrium with its environment. (Potential because it was possible for the race to do so if necessary even though it was a period of expansion and growth.) The current industrial age is not even in potential equilibrium. The whole structure rests on the extraction of nonrenewable resources and continued growth; neither of which can be sustained over a long period of time. We may be pumping oil out of the ground fifty years from now; it seems most unlikely that we will be doing so five hundred or five thousand years from now. *[Actually, now that I think on it, we probably will. I can picture the last oil well bringing up a dribble of oil as a gaggle of schoolchildren stand around and listen as a guide explains that in the twentieth century wells like this sustained industrial civilization. Some things never change.]* It seems clear enough that this transition period must end and that in the long run the world economy must cease depending on nonrenewable resources.

So much is obvious. What does it mean? Well it seems to me that there are only two real possibilities. One is a future of high technology; the other is a predominantly agricultural future. The technological future would be one where the energy problems had been solved (presumably hydrogen fusion and solar power), where all raw materials used are either renewable - e.g. timber - or are effectively inexhaustible - e.g. magnesium from the sea, and one in which the social problems in living in such a world had been solved. In short, this is the future if we manage to solve the problems of today and successfully muddle our way through the crises of today. *[I have no particular patience with those who proclaim that we would do better without technology; such gentry are divided into three categories - the ignorant, the fools, and the knaves. The categories frequently overlap.]*

Still and all, it seems likely enough in the face of the various crises that confront us that we won't make it, that we won't muddle through. If that is the case what sort of future is in store for us?

Perhaps we would do best if we first take the long view and then figure out how we might get there. Suppose that we do not solve the problem of how to supply energy for a high energy economy. In particular suppose that we do not possess the wherewithal for mechanized agriculture. (The oil is long gone - what do you power the tractors with?) Then more than half the world population will have to engage in agriculture. Without cheap transportation the cities will have to shrink - they can't be supplied with the goodies of life at the rate they are now. A world without lots of high energy sources is an impoverished world - more so than one might think. What do you build with? Iron? Don't be silly. Even if the ores weren't exhausted, what would the steel mills run on? No, they will be back to wood and stone. And if you have to build with wood and stone and are constrained to use manual labor (with the aid of animal labor) it becomes much more expensive to build. There is a double

squeeze effect here; not only is everything more expensive in terms of manual labor required, but there is less available since more must be diverted to agriculture. The upshot is that artifacts of all kinds become much more expensive to produce and that, in absolute terms, there will be many fewer of them.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the future would be like the past - that it would be medieval in character. After all, the knowledge of the past would still be there. For example the medicine of the future might not retain the gleaming hospitals of our day but the basic knowledge would still be there. There might not be tractors but there would be scientific agriculture. It is even likely that a certain amount of advanced electronics would survive. *[This is sheer guess, but it seems reasonable. LSI chips are cheap in terms of the cost of materials; even if materials were enormously more expensive they would still be cheap. The question really is whether enough technology was possible so that the machines that make such things could continue to run and be supplied. For example, to make pure Germanium you might need certain resins which require, for their purification, a certain catalyst which is the byproduct of an industrial process which is no longer feasible because Hafnium is no longer available. That sort of thing.]* There will still be shipping, although there won't be trucks and automobiles. There may well even be trains. Then again, there may not.

If there is one artifact made out of metal that will continue to exist it will be guns. They are, after all, relatively small; and there will be some metal available. As for why guns will be selected as the most important artifact made of metal - it's not too hard to figure out.

Incidentally I have meandering on here, making the implicit assumption that there will be very little metal available. It is true enough that the metal atoms do not disappear; it is also true that there are immense amounts of metal available in the form of currently existing artifacts. However this metal is and will be steadily dispersed into nonrecoverable forms - at least they won't be recoverable without high energy technology.

Another question of interest is what sort of political structures are likely. I would expect that the world would not be unified. I would expect that the most common form of government would be some variant of Chinese communism. (Not that I am particularly fond of that sort of thing.) The great advantage of a state religion built around the notion of serving the people is that the practitioners of the religion are the ones who benefit from it. This is, I admit, an uncertain prediction. History shows that religions tend to end up in the hands of an absolutist priesthood which exploits the laity. The various varieties of communism show much the same tendency. Our era has been devoted to the perfecting of various forms of popularly based socialistic totalitarianism; in the future we may expect that people will find still other ways to misgovern themselves. One thing that I would definitely expect is that most governments would be strong governments in the sense of doing a lot and ruling and regulating a lot. I would also expect that freedom of expression and individual dedication to art would be sparse. (Communal art might do quite well.) As far as freedom is concerned the lights that are going out now will continue to go out.

Thus, the Future: Agricultural, totalitarian, socialistic, literate, fragments of technology preserved, efficient medicine and production of the basic necessities. Essentially static but internationally anarchistic. Population about the same as now or somewhat lower. The standard of living would be sharply lower in what are now the industrialized nations; rather higher in the underdeveloped countries of today. The Future in a word: Impoverished.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

In the beginning was the plan and then the specification.
And the plan was without form, and the specification, it was void.
And darkness was upon the face of the implementers thereof.
And they spake unto their leader, saying,
"It is a crock of shit, and none may abide the odor thereof."

And it was leader and it was project head.
Now the leader spake unto his project head, saying,
"It is a crock of excrement, and none may abide the odor thereof."
And it was project head and it was section head.
Now the project head spake unto his section head, saying,
"It is a container of excrement, and it is very strong, such that
none may abide before it."

And it was section head and it was branch manager.
And that section head spake unto his branch manager, saying,
"It is a vessel of fertilizer, and none may abide its strength."
And it was branch manager and it was department manager.
And that branch manager spake unto his department manager, saying,
"It containeth that which aids the growth of plants, and it is
very strong."

And it was department manager and it was chief engineer.
And that department manager spake unto his chief engineer, saying,
"It promoteth growth, and it is very powerful."
And it was chief engineer and it was vice president in charge of
product development.
And the chief engineer reported unto his vice president for product
development saying,
"This powerful new product will help promote the growth of the company."
And the vice president looked upon the product, and saw that it was good.

more locs

Dear Richard

Mike Glicksohn
August 18, 1976
141 High Park Ave.
Toronto Ontario
M6P 2S3, Canada

The latest PN is impressive indeed, for its bulk, its content, and its production. Disregarding for a moment the rather odd choice for cover (unless your aim was to scare small children, of course) one can't help but be impressed by the quality of the colour xerography.

I note, too, by comparing the copy you sent me with the one you sent Victoria that there are two versions of the cover, one the reverse of the other. Either that colour xerox machine is even more versatile than I'd imagined or you reversed the negative yourself and provided the machine with two prints to work from. Which was it?

Neither. The cover was done from a slide, not a print. It was run off in
a couple of passes and the slide was reversed between passes.

The material in PN is such that it could easily generate a huge volume of response were each reader to try and match your own careful exposition of the various items you put under your idiosyncratic microscope. To avoid the concomitant problems of editing the world's largest letter column I shall unselfishly make my remarks both less broad and less deep than the material that provokes them. Don't thank me, no, no. It's the least I can do for an American.

Your obviously serious attempt to delve deeply and meaningfully into the philosophy of fanzine publishing awed me with the clarity of the truths it exposed. "It amuses me and keeps me in touch with my friends" is profound indeed. Also rather true and probably one of the better explanations of Why We Do It that one could come up with.

Presumably different fanzine editors put out fanzines for different and
rather personal reasons. Some people are obviously in love with the whole
idea of printing and publishing. Some are obviously possessed of a burning
need for personal expression. (The well known adolescent syndrome.) Etc.
Now it happens that I like fanzines and publishing a fanzine, despite the
fact that I think that most material is rubbish and of that which is good,
most of it is minor. Naturally it is needful for me to find a rationale
for participating in and enjoying activities which I am wont to deni-
grate. Since the mysticism of holy fandom makes me slightly ill that option
is closed to me. So I struggle along racking my brains to try find intrinsic
merit in fanzines and fanzine publishing. Perhaps there is none and I
deceive myself. But I cannot help but feeling that the whole idea of a
personalized individual press is important and a very good thing. It is
not so much what is published, as it is the mere fact of it being published.

I don't smoke; in fact I've never smoked a cigarette, although once I took a single puff of one just to see what it might be like. There were no flashing lights, no moments of heightened perception, no thrilling shivers through every nerve and tendon, so I didn't bother with the evil-smelling filthy things again. (Er, what ~~kind~~ of cigarette was that you were trying?) (That's entirely specious, of course: If I'd actually done that for the reasons stated I wouldn't have

bothered with sex after the first time either, but it makes for an interesting opening to the paragraph, so I'll leave it in.) If you were reading carefully you might have detected a slight lack of enthusiasm for cigarettes in that sentence. I'm not militantly anti-smoking but by and large I do find smokers an inconsiderate lot, butting out their weeds anywhere they happen to be without thought of the environment or the people around them, depositing ashes over everything and generally fouling up the world. So I'm very pleased that you've abandoned the things, whether you were one of the unthinking ones or not. I congratulate you on what must have been a very trying and difficult experience and I hope it sticks.

Actually I don't think that smokers are any more inconsiderate as a class
than anyone else - most people are inconsiderate in some respects. It's
just that smoking is inherently somewhat messy and that anything that is
pretty much of a semi-automatic habit is going to be performed without a
great deal of thought for the surroundings.

I guess fanac can absorb exactly as much of your time as you're willing to devote to it. I spend considerably more than 600 hours a year at it, that's for sure, but Don was talking about just his fanzine, which is an impressive statistic indeed. Add in his letters, his articles, and the occasional con and evidence would seem to indicate that Don D'Amassa spends about 600 hours a year not on fanac. I guess that must be when he sleeps and takes a crap.

Your article on SF as TRASH had some interesting ideas in it but it certainly rambled around in making them. It reads very much as if it was written directly on stencil: by someone can think and write well on stencil but directly on stencil nevertheless. (If you carefully thought it out and drafted it several times beforehand give me a moment to get my foot, calf, knee, and thigh out of my mouth...) But when you start without even mentioning what book review column you are referring to I think I'm on fairly solid ground.

The book review column bit (F&SF, by the way) is no evidence at all - I am
capable of the most astounding typos and am a hopeless proofreader. But
you're right. I almost always compose directly onto stencil. When I write
professionally (e.g. reports, journal articles, etc) I draft and redraft.
PN is for fun, and I'm lazy. Comments on letters, by the by, are composed
directly as I am typing the letters.

I think what you were getting at is not so much that Joanna Russ doesn't understand engineers but rather she doesn't understand the engineering mentality, which seems to be linked to science fiction in your mind. There are a lot of people who are fascinated by gadgets who don't work as engineers, and perhaps that interest of theirs makes them science fiction fans. With the recently increased scope of the SF field, though, I'm not at all sure that the appeal of the gadget is as great as it obviously once was. There will always be a large number of SF fans who enjoy the gadget-oriented story but increasingly there are those who look for and enjoy less mechanical aspects of the field. (I'm not one of them, though: I like SF for its action and adventure and don't mind admitting it.)

Point well taken about engineers and Joanna Russ. I wouldn't equate SF and
the engineering mentality but there are large portions of SF that are strongly
oriented towards the engineering mentality. Incidentally your last couple
of lines is interesting equation. Action and adventure come from the pulp
tradition and need not be gadget oriented. And, of course, gadget oriented
stories may be and often are not particularly strong in the action and
adventure line.

Mike's various comic strips were as interesting as ever. Are they all new? I didn't think Little Mikey was still doing stuff for fanzines. What sort of hold do you have over him? (Half nelson, Hammerlock, thumbscrew?)

Actually the stuff that Mike and Howie did was old, although Boskone was the first time I had seen it (Boskone 76). Mike still does some stuff for fanzines, but not as a regular thing. In this case Mike happens to be an old and good friend.

Thoroughly enjoyed your report of your visit to England. In fact, it depressed me somewhat because that's precisely the sort of thing I would have liked to have written about my own trip to Australia, but I don't have your gift for describing something so well with so few words. You managed to convey an excellent impression of the country in a tight, personal and entertaining way. Darned good writing.

Thank you. Although the trip report was first drafted onto stencil, I did put a considerable amount of thought into how I wanted to write. Trip reports are all too often a rather dull catalog of places gone and things seen and done, a style of writing that does not evoke the original experience. I wanted to try to give some sort of feeling of what the trip felt like.

In my experience, despite the vastly inferior salaries, Englishmen nowadays are travelling abroad quite extensively. People I knew as a kid in England who'd never been more than a hundred miles away in their lives now take annual vacations in Roumania, Bulgaria, Spain, etc. The times they are a'changin'.

Surely someone told you of the joys of a ploughman's lunch. Every pub serves one and every one is different, based on French bread, cheese and pickles, relishes, chutney etc. For 20p it's the best lunch you can buy, especially with a pint of draft guinness to wash it down.

I, too, enjoyed the theatre in London. Not only could you see some of the top names in the theatre, but the top seats in the house were only six bucks or so. I went just about every night I was in London during my last visit. (Saw "The Mousetrap" too, and had it figured by the end of the first act. Did you? But I cheated, using my usual sneaky technique of figuring out a Christie plot: I picked the most unlikely person and worked backwards to find evidence for his guilt. It worked, of course.)

I had read it many years ago and remembered who done it. What I didn't remember was who the real policeman was. I guessed, and naturally was wrong. Speaking of Christie, how did you like Curtain?

"Elevenuses" always used to be a generic term for a generic term for a mid-morning snack with tea. It never stood for any particular kind of edible but meant the actual break itself. Perhaps some enterprising firm has taken it over though to cash in on the fact that most everyone already uses the word anyway.

I'd have to disagree with you totally about fanzines and which are preferable for reading. I'd take an issue of MOTA, for example, over an SFR anyday. Hell, I'd read a PN before turning to Ge's. (Er, thanks, I think.) It all depends on what your interests are; and since I'm far more interested in people than in Science Fiction my reading choices reflect that. Your comparison of a fannish fanzine versus SFR as being amateur theatre and Broadway is totally inaccurate, and I'm surprised you'd make it. You'd be justified in saying such a comparison would be like The Old Vic Shakesperian troupe versus say, the cast of Hair: both are totally professional, but they do entirely different types of things. To suggest that the better fannish fanzines are somehow not as well written as the sf-oriented zines is simply totally wrong. In many cases the fannish fanzines

have a higher level of writing ability and certainly for many of us are inherently much more interesting than SFR. (You'll notice how carefully I avoid words like "good", "better" etc. MOTA isn't better than SFR; neither is TRUE RAT. But I prefer them both to what Dick Geis does, even though he does it well.)

I had to hunt a bit to find where I made the comparison. I would cheerfully
admit the invalidity of the comparison except that it will make for a much
better argument if I don't. Certainly the context that the remark was made
in was deliberately provocative and I mean to go on being provocative; not
so much to create an uproar as it is that I am pigheaded and cantankerous.

It is my contention that much of this discussion of "professionalism"
and the proliferation of "peer" awards is due in great part to that old
familiar creature, the serpent of jealousy. For example, to be snide and
probably unfair, would Linda Bushyager be quite so strident if Granfalloon
had won a Hugo? How much of the call for fannish purity come from unre-
quited yearning for awards?

Enough of character assassination. In some ways it is futile to argue
over choices and tastes in reading. This is particularly true when one
takes into account that there is a whole world of material other than
fanzines to be read. I happen to like SFR but I do not expect others to do
so or to share my tastes. Regardless of content, however, I assert that SFR
is very well edited - better edited than most fanzines, and that Geis is, at
least in comparison to the average fanzine writer, a very good writer.

On the other hand, I would have to agree the better fannish fanzines are
better written and more interesting than almost all serious SF oriented
fanzines. The basic reason for this is that their task is easier. To begin
with it is always easier to write well about that which you know well -
which means that it is easier to write about oneself and one's personal
experiences and interests than it is to write about a more general topic.
It is also easier, I believe, to write light humor well than it is to try
to write serious articles.

However, a defense of SF oriented fanzines versus fannish fanzines wasn't
quite what I had in mind with that statement. If you wish I will admit
that the best fannish fanzines are professional casts of Hair to SFR's
Old Vic (a comparison that will probably leave Geis grasping for breath)
but I still insist that most fanzines are amateur theatre. (Mind you, I
happen to approve of amateur theatre.)

George is writing better locs now than he used to send me. (Although I just now remembered that I couldn't use anything of the loc he sent me on XENIUM. I'mmm... Maybe it's the material he has to comment on? Nothing personal, George; lots of people don't get into my lettercolumns. I'm a very erratic and idiosyncratic editor.)

I suspect that comments by the editor tend to make a letter more interesting.
The fact that the editor was interested enough to comment on what the writer
had to say keys the reader to be interested also.

What's oxymoronic about saying fandom is part of the SF microcosm, unless George is thinking fandom is the SF microcosm, which is hardly an oxymoron anyway? You printed it Richard so I assume you agreed with it. Maybe you'll explain where two contradictory concepts are being linked together?

Er, I believe that George was referring to "SF microcosm" as an oxymoron.
There certainly is some incongruity in applying the term microcosm to SF,
which takes the entire cosmos as its subject matter. Or so I understood
it. Maybe George had something else in mind. Did you, George?

I'd agree with you: on the paper you're using brown ink does have a friendlier look to it.

I also agree with (disgustingly syncophantic, aren't I?) (Of course not) your thoughts on the relative lack of any real influence in fanzines, despite what Harry thinks. My own facetious remark (the "degree of respect" one) was aimed in the same general direction. I can't take fandom seriously except in as far as I personally relate to it. It is important to me, but it isn't important. (By that I suppose you to mean that although it is important to you it isn't of general importance. Nonsense. If it is important to you personally it is important in an absolute sense. I was speaking to God about this just the other day and She assured me that it was so. In fact, She tells me that She is waiting for you to figure out the purpose of life because She is very curious and is getting just a little impatient.) Fanzines are much the same: they are important to the people involved in them (all five or six hundred of us) but they lack any truly cosmic significance. Of course, all the best things in my life lack any cosmic significance, so I'm certainly not putting fanzines, fans or fandom down. But I keep them all in perspective as I frivolously fritter away my life on them.

More than five or six hundred I should think. (I argued about this with
Ted White about five years - I have an almost endless willingness to defend
my wrongheaded ideas.) If you exclude people who only write for and read
APAs and have no contact with other sorts of fanzines, and you exclude those
who passively subscribe to a few of the major fanzines (that's LOCUS, SFR,
ALGOL, and OUTWORLDS) and have no other contact with or interest in fanzines
you are still left with around a thousand to fifteen hundred fanzine fans.
Although I must admit that the whole question of who (what?) is a fanzine
fan is somewhat moot. At any particular moment there are around two to
three hundred fanzine titles current. I would suppose that this means that
there are three to five hundred people engaged in producing fanzines. I
suppose we should count all of them. Then there are the people who write
articles for fanzines and the people who do the art. Many of these are in
the first category but many are not. And then there are inveterate letter
hackers. Add, too, the occasional letter writers who get most of their fan-
zines by subscription. There are the once active fanzine fans who have
gafiated and don't know it yet. (Some twitch, now and then.) All of this
does not count the APAs and the APazine writers which may technically be
fanzines but which are a breed in themselves. There's many an APA contributor
who has no interest in fanzines whatsoever.

No one could argue with your comment that a lot of people in fandom suffer from an inability to relate to the real world and have thrown themselves into an artificial small-pond environment for that reason. But as you point out, this is not a situation confined to fans; and I know more talented, moderately well-adjusted and sensible people in fandom than oddballs incapable of really distinguishing fantasy from reality. And watch those cracks about funny hats, fella. (Yessir!!)

Hey. listen, I gotta go. I hear a bottle of whiskey calling my name and while fanzines are inherently trivial, whiskey is most definitely of major importance in this world. (I long ago realized that a great amount of pain, trouble, sadness and misery are a direct result of consuming alcohol so in an unselfish and altruistic attempt to reduce the suffering of my fellow beings I'm trying to drink as much of

the stuff as I can, thereby preventing it from falling into the mouths of those who could not handle it. This Good Work keeps me busy, but I'm fulfilled by it. So...Duty Calls.)

I'll Drink To That!!!

.....

Ed Cagle
3 August 1976
Locust Grove OK 74532
Star Rt So Box 80

Harter,

The cover of PN 7 is reasonably well done, but is much too alien to be believable. What is it, anyway?

Twinkies are much more than nourishment. Serve them at your next party inserted in a doughnut and watch the reaction.

Coincidentally, I have also been smoking the weeds since 1953 and I haven't tried once to quit. I take that back; I quit once for a month or so while in a hospital. Something about not wanting to cough. If I ever decide to quit I shall take your advice in good faith. It sounds reasonable. Quit smoking and become a phenobarb junkie. Amphetamino and phenobarb to ease the pain of quitting smoking???? Wouldn't vodka work?

A friend recently quit smoking and took up dipping snuff to relieve the strain. In a few weeks he started chewing plug tobacco and carrying a spit can with him in the house. His wife made him start smoking again.

Undoubtedly worse for his health, but I can imagine that a woman wouldn't want to kiss a man with a plug of tobacco in his mouth.

You have heard the immortal words: "Hi, I'm Walt Garrison and I don't smoke!" to boost snuff sales on the boob. (Of course you have.) (*Er, well, no, to tell the truth.*) Walt is then shown galloping along on his horse, presumably happy as hell with a lipfull of snuff and getting his arse whammed on a saddle. Now, dang it, I grew up on a cattle ranch (ate half a bale of hay a day) and rode horses and occasionally dipped snuff, but I rarely dipped snuff and rode horses. To be roaring along on your stubborn steed and suddenly come upon a steep ditch is almost certain to put said snuff down your gullet. And that ain't fun. (Maybe half a can a dip was too much...)

Maybe so. In any case I doubt that snuff swallowing is one of the standard events in a rodeo. Although that is an idea for a handicap event - you have to ride a bronc and keep your chaw. Extra credit if you are thrown and can spit while coming down.

Shrewd and clever words re Joanna Russ. You have relieved me of the burden of wondering why what she writes often grates on my nerves. Do you know anything else that might ease my burden.

Well, I've got a jug of Jchnny Walker Black Label and a jug of Jim Beam.
You could do worse than that for starters.

Great cartoon stuff. One perfectly good reason for fanzines to be huge is to allow room for people like Mike Gilbert to amuse me greatly.

You seem to be confused about the proper way to mount a horse. There ain't no proper way. The point is to get on, and except for doing it in a way that is easiest for you, it really doesn't matter, least of all to a horse. Except of course, unless you plan to mount from behind. Most horses are touchy about that. So I'm told.

Interesting thing, Personal Notes. Do it more often.

Perhaps more important than correctly mounting a horse is correctly
dismounting. Once while I was still taking lessons in English riding
the horse I was riding decided this was the day that he wanted to be
spooked at everything and wanted to get in a little practice on such
things as rearing, bucking, jumping sideways, and sunfishing. Most of
the lesson was spent going in a wide variety of unwanted directions. I
wasn't thrown during all of this although there were several inches of
daylight between me and the horse several times and once I was wrapped
around the horse's neck for a bit. After all of the excitement was done
and the lesson came to an end the instructor very calmly informed me
that I was at liberty to dismount in a normal manner! The girl I was
riding with at the time had been watching with mixed feelings. As it
happens I haven't been thrown by a horse since I was a kid. She started
riding when I was older and at that time got thrown occasionally and was
a little jealous of the fact that I hadn't taken a fall. I discovered
that, although she didn't wish me to be hurt, she had perfidiously been
cheering for the horse!!

.....

Jodie Offutt
August 23, 1976
Funny Farm
Haldeman KY 40329

Boy! You went through a lot to quit smoking. Still, it worked. I have such a thing against taking medicine that the Cain method would be very hard for me to use. I cannot agree with you that it doesn't take a lot of will power to overcome anything. It takes a tremendous amount of will power to make a decision about something like smoking.

Like you, I smoked for nearly twenty years. Although I was not the heavy smoker. In fact, during the last three years or so I successfully held my cigarettes down to about 15 or so a day. That takes more willpower than quitting altogether because you have to be aware of it constantly. To me, it was easier to stop smoking than to have to think about it all the time.

I used Bantron, a nicotine substitute, and it worked well. It's been nearly two years since I quit. You know, sometimes I still have a passing urge for a cigarette - usually in times of stress. It's not so much an urge so much any more as it is a passing thought and my attitude towards the feeling is amusement. I also did a lot of deep breathing, which helped a lot. I think there is a danger period with quitters when it is easier to take up smoking again and that is at some point after you have successfully quit, are off the mental high that goes with the accomplishment, and you have forgotten how much

better you feel, when it would be very easy to think that you could smoke a cigarette for old time's sake. That situation is something to guard against.

I think it cannot be stressed enough how important your mental attitude is when giving up smoking. If you're not psyched up for it, it just won't work.

A funny thing is that I still resent the bigotry that is directed against smokers. Nor does smoking bother me at all. Oh, a smoke-filled, people-filled, oxygen-deprived room can get to me, sure, but I'm not a prick about others' smoke.

I'll bet you get a lot of stories about the trials of quitting smoking.

Certainly a lot of interest.

I have mixed feeling about anti-smoking bigotry and sentiments. On one
hand it is certainly true that there is a class of non smokers who are real
bigots - one gets the feeling that with the civil rights movement having
made one of their targets less available that a new one was welcome indeed.
(I am not being entirely facetious - there are non smokers who sound like
racist bigots at their worst.) And it is certainly true that a lot of the
the present noise is artificial. That is, until the last decade smoking
was very much an accepted and normal thing. (I will concede that this wasn't
always true and that there were always those that objected to it.) Much of
the fuss is a matter of fashion.

There is, to be sure, a health issue. The smoker does contaminate the air
around him. But then all of us impose such effects on ourselves and others.
E.g. the fellow with the anti-smoking bumper sticker right next to the
exhaust pipe on his car.

On the other hand there is no denying that it is a good deal more pleasant
to breath clean air. I notice this particularly in airplanes - the smoking
section tends to be a little bit hazy. And, although I think that to declare
ones home a no smoking area to be inhospitable, it is physically more pleasant.

.....

Jerry Kaufman
August 16, 1976
880 W. 181 St. #4D
New York City, NY 10033

Dear Richard,

I had a very good reaction to PN #6 but I never sat down to respond to it. Now I've gotten #7 and I'm rectifying my error. I have a good many small comments but, since I didn't mark the pages and since my reading was about a week ago, I may have forgotten some. Howsoever...

The cover, cheerfully breezy, is both a good photo and a good cover. It is also only the second example of the use of color xerography to this end (the other being an early APA-Q cover.) You might be interested to know that there are some artists doing "xerox art", fiddling with the controls on various color and B&W photocopiers and xerox machines to get variations in texture, focus, density etc.

I don't smoke. At one time I smoked an average of one cigarette a year, but that hardly amounts to a habit (I treated the act as more of a ritual.) But still I found Cain's method and your experience with it of great interest, as it seemed to suggest an understanding of the basis of smoking that might be used to break other habits. (For instance, consider using Cain's insight and modifying his methods to break oneself of science-fiction addiction which is as money-consuming and debilitating as smoking.)

I think you missed Version C of the smoking ads: "Our ciggies are sexy."

I'm not sure if you reword Cohen to better fit Don's definition; or because you perceive Cohen to be saying what your words say; or because you have a dead ear for poetry; or because you're trying to get Don's (and my) goat. Any which way you got my goat, and you can have it, but if your reason resembles the first two I give, then the third reason I give follows automatically.

Sorry about that. What I am wondering, though, is whether you didn't
toss that in (especially the "dead ear" bit) just to stir me up a bit and
get me to expand on whatever it was I was getting at. The missing para-
graphs of discussion will appear at the end of your letter.

All SF isn't trash, even by your definition, simply because not all SF is jargon-studded, or adventure fiction, or about gadgets. (Or are you saying that if SF isn't adventure/gadget/jargon stuff, then it isn't SF?)

Er, I don't mean to be obtuse, but what is my definition of trash? Or
is it my definition of SF that is in question? I went back and reread
what I said and, as far as I can tell, I never came to grips with the
question of whether SF was trash or what I meant by saying that it was.
However see the response to Sue Lewis's letter, wherein we obscure the
question a bit more.

I didn't find Mike Gilbert's prejudices too funny, though I did find the resemblance between "Dicky" and yourself amusing.

We weep for you.

You are about the only person I remember praising English food. All the rest of my friends and acquaintances who've visisted that country have remarked on the horrors of English cooking and the lengths they went to to eat only Chinese, French, Indonesian, etc., food while there.

Now that's an interesting comment. When I wrote about food in England I
was thinking of the food I ate in England rather an "English" style of
cooking. I am willing to concede that there is a lot of bad cooking and
a lot of bad food served in England; however I didn't find it to be so.
(To be sure, I was travelling with someone who had been there several times
before and knew the ropes and I had gourmet friends in England who were
delighted to suggest various premier restaurants.) I will state as a simple
fact that there are many fine restaurants in England - whether the style
of cooking be French, Italian, Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, or English is
beside the point. I will grant that most of these restaurants are expensive.
I will also assert that it is possible to find good and simple food in
England without any difficulty - we weep for anyone who does not delight
in scones and clotted cream. I will admit, however, that the English are
given to some real atrocities. For example, it is well known in the highest
circles of international finance that the wimpyburger is responsible for
the fall of the pound below two dollars.

Tastes certainly differ. I haven't bothered to read SFS for about a year because it became so boring, so repetitive. I couldn't remember what I read in it, had no responses I could make, and (to make a point probably more personal yet) disliked Geis's reviewing style and opinions, which constituted a good chunk of the magazine. On the other hand, though I don't read everything in Mythologies, I am interested in what Don has to say, and I find some of the lettercol rather more thought provoking than anything in SFR. As for Personal Notes it too is far more interesting than SFR. (Thank you kindly, sir.)

I remember that Psychotic was an exciting fanzine, a zine both amusing, and weighty. SFR isn't the same, having come through so many changes, and I am amazed that you can so easily address so much praise to the latter, when it is so routine and humorless when compared to its former self.

My point being: do not assume that the test of choice you propound will result in the same result that you suggest. You're letting your assumptions about what makes a good fanzine destroy your impartiality.

Your point is very well taken. I should not have assumed that everyone
else would make the choice I suggested as inevitable.

I had a quote from A.J. Liebling around here somewhere. Would you accept "Freedom of the press is reserved for those that own one" as a close approximation? What I am sure was intended as a putdown of the power of publishers and enforcement of the First Amendment, also makes a nice little statement of the possibilities of widespread ownership of mimeos, offset presses and other comparatively cheap methods of reproduction.

Another point very well taken, although I feel in my bones it is incomplete.
Let me put it this way: One could argue that the existence of such things
as fanzines and a personal press is important as the evidence of the exist-
ence of the freedom of the press while denying any particular importance
in fanzines themselves. Personally, I do believe this to be the case. That
is, I believe that the existence of a personal press has value and importance
above and beyond being a diagnostic indicator. However I have not yet been
able to state explicit reasons why this should be so

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And now to return to that Leonard Cohen quotation. First of all let me excerpt from PN#7 to make the context clear. Don D'Amassa wrote a paragraph explaining the title of his fanzine which reads as follows:

"As to the title, you should check the quote from Leonard Cohen on the title page (of every issue, in fact.) Cohen says "Let us compare mythologies; I have learned my elaborate lie." In other words, everyone has his own mythology/worldview, and each of them is equally true or false, relative to that particular purpose. Truth or falsehood really aren't applicable. The letter column is therefore titled, appropriately, "Elaborate Lies", to indicate that while each person might be writing what he/she considers to be the truth, it's not the same truth as that believed by someone else. I suppose it's an extension of the old saw that the more we know, the more we realize how little we know. I have very strong opinions, many of which I strongly believe in; but I still recognize that they are opinions, and might well turn out to be false in the terms of anyone else, or even in the light of new data. The terminology - myth, fable, parable - are all designed to reinforce the concept. I'm surprised, actually, that no one has picked up on the terminology before, particularly the explicit reference to the lettercolumn as 'lies'."

I commented in turn as follows:

"I may spend three or four pages discussing the propositions advanced in that paragraph. Suffice it for the moment that I would reword Cohen as, 'Come, let us banter about our delusion; I have mine in shape for verbalization.'"

I had also inserted in the text of Don's paragraph after the Cohen quote the remark, "BS says I, but more on that later."

Now, first of all, let me say for the record that I did make those comments to get Don's goat. I rarely write anything with the intention of getting someone's goat. Er, let me amend that. I am not above slipping the needle to those who combine pomposity with injured dignity. And, every so often, I say what I think and that usually offends somebody. In this case I had in mind several comments which I never got around to making. So let us turn to those instead.

First of all let me state flatly that this is a trite and banal piece of verse. (I shall end up with a whole herd of goats before I am through.) It is, to use Orwell's description of Kipling's work, a graceful tribute to the obvious. The idea is sophomoric - I say this on the simple grounds that I thought similar thoughts when I was a sophomore and have seen other sophomores do the same since then. (Yes, yes, I know, but I couldn't quite resist.) It is shallow and popular pseudoprofundity.

It is, moreover, flat in two rather distinct ways. To begin with the use of "Mythologies" is a vulgarity. Each of us, as Don suggests, has his own Weltshaun based on a large, heterogenous collection of experiences, symbols, feelings, observations, and theories. The elements of this Weltshaun vary from the irrational and the unverbalizable to soaring verbal abstractions. Each of us accepts from the culture around us a host of symbols, values, and theories. And each of us modifies and twists the selected components to fit the needs of their own personalities and experience. It is debased and sloppy use of the language to use "mythology" in this way. There is a Marxist mythology but Marxism is not a mythology.

But this is minor; the English language has been cheapened and debased for millenia and flourishes as vigorously as ever. The important falsity is in the assertion, "I have learned my elaborate lie." I have not; he has not; none of us have ever learned our elaborate lies. All that we have learned is achieved at the price of further elaboration. It is one of the stages of wisdom when one learns this.

I will concede that "I have learned my elaborate lie" is good verse. "Elaborate Lie" is a rather good turn of phrase. And "learned" admits of several interpretations, although I suspect that neither the poet nor most of his readers have in mind more than one. We could, for example, take "learned" in its most general sense, but this reduces the line to a convoluted way of saying I am I. Or we could use it in the sense of "come to an understanding of" and arrive at the obvious. Or we could use it in the sense of rote learning and rehearsing one's lines. Or one might assume that there is an implied "of" in there.

Now my rwording will stand up as one of the possible interpretations, which I was aware of, but I don't think that was what I was getting at. I rather suspect that what I had in mind was a rather cynical observation that people who think they are doing the Cohen bit end up doing something that is better described by my paraphrase.

I have already remarked that this is a trite and banal piece of verse. Let me expand on that a bit. It is not as banal as the work of Rod McKuen, which consists of commonplace thoughts expressed in commonplace words, devoid of originality and sharpness of image. Anybody might have said the sorts of things that McKuen says and anybody does, and if it is chanted solemnly in a misty mood it is poetry, God save us. Leonard Cohen is evidently of higher stature than that. Still. To begin with the thought expressed is not very profound. There is nothing particularly wrong with that for poetry certainly does not have to treat only the profound; however, this is the copybook wisdom of our times treated sententiously. It is not just the content that is banal, however. The language is banal also.

Let me turn for a moment to a quite good line of poetry, that famous line from Petra, "A rose red city, half as old as time." There have been those who have asserted that it is one of the best lines of poetry ever written. I wouldn't say so myself, but it none-the-less quite good poetry. Why? Well, to begin with, it flows well - it is good verse in the technical sense. Scansion, however, is found in the foothills; we must lift our eyes higher than that to see an Everest. The situation and the emotions provoked are not profound so the claim to greatness does not lie there. Petra is an ancient ruined city near modern Israel in, as I recall, modern Syria. Consider that phrase, "half as old as time." Now we have a strong feeling for the immediate past that is rooted in our experience. When I speak of events of ten years ago, I speak of things that I know well because they are part of my own experience. They are close to me and very real. If I speak of the events of forty years they are less immediate and less real; however they still have some closeness because they were part of the immediate experience of people I know well. When I go further and further back in time I lose that personal connection. To put it more concisely and more poetically; there is my past, and my father's past, and the past. The past is built on a scale greater than we and is awesome. We reduce; we bind it with dates and chronologies and imagine that we have mastered it; we have not we have merely affixed labels and mastered the labels. Imagine, if you will, a traveller standing on a hill side, looking for the first time on this ancient ruined city. None of the paraphernalia by which we reduce the universe to our scale is at hand. We look down and the magnitude of time is borne unto us, and we are awed. Time, ancient and greater than we, becomes immediate. This city is old; it is of Time and not of us. How old? It is not as old as time, for it was made by men, it had a beginning, and for them, as for us, there was time. It is half as old as time, which is to say that it is not as old as time but it is of time and not of us. To say it was so many thousand years old is a cheat. I know what a year is, for I have experienced it myself. I know what a hundred years are for that goes back to the beginning of my grandfather's time and I knew him. But I do not know and shall never know what a thousand years is. I deceive myself if I think that because I know what a year is and I know what one is and I know what one thousand is I therefore know what one thousand years are.

I could go on but I think my point is sufficiently well made. That line from Petra is good poetry; it is clear, simple, and beautiful. The Cohen quotation is not like that. What springs to mind when you say Mythologies? (an excellent fanzine, yes, yes, I know.) Tales of Greek mythology and, perhaps, bible stories you learned as a child. Does Cohen mean that or to say something about that? Well, no. He means something else and that something else is not an experience. It is a second hand word, a word about words and theories. And the whole poem is second hand words. We read it and we see nothing and we hear nothing and we smell nothing and we feel no pain and we feel no awe. It is of Mr. Tomlinson, by Mr. Tomlinson, and for Mr. Tomlinson.

=====

Hmmm. I did get carried away a bit there. I do hope I haven't mortally offended Don. However maybe I can redeem myself by pointing out that although I do not think highly of the Cohen quotation as poetry it does say something and does make a point. It does give a framework for what Don is trying to do, and I do not think that that is trite and banal.

I suspect that I have trod a bit on Jerry's toes in #7 and more so this time around. Still, it is none of it personal nor should it be taken so. If someone, Ms. Russ for example, damns something I like as rubbish I am not set down. I am and all of us should be more secure in our self-esteem than that. To find that their ideas and feelings are not universally esteemed is the inevitable fate of anyone who would measure his ideas against the world.

I confess a certain pique over that "deaf ear for poetry" bit. It is not a matter of being hurt; it is a call to battle. It is a challenge. One can ignore challenges either because it is wise to do so, or because the challenger is not worthy of notice, or because one prefers tranquillity. And it does give life savor to do battle now and then for no better reason than the pleasure of it.

It begins to dawn on me that PN #7 was somewhat controversial and I fear that #8 will also be controversial. However I really wasn't and am not trying to get anybody's goat or to raise hackles or to stir controversy. It's just that I have strong opinions and that I sometimes like to express them exuberantly. I plead innocent of merely trying to stir things up for the sake of stirring them up.

=====

Craig Miller
9115 Beverlywood St.
Los Angeles CA 90034

Dear Richard,

You know it's really crazy to me to think this, but I have been getting the thought in my mind that I've been receiving Personal Notes for quite some time now. Now, Hell, I've finally got enough time to write this and I've got a few moments to collect my thoughts on certain subjects that are in one way relative to your zine and in another way not really relative at all. The over all exclamation which isn't really a exclamation at all is that Personal Notes is a fucked up farce. This ISN'T a detraction, it is a compliment. Now I don't know how you would have been able to understand that remark but I sincerely feel that it is definitely filling up a needed vacuum, and since at this time I do not feel I would like going through to you and mentioning all this shit and all of the banana peel jive of saying "Well, I know that this is this and that is that," because if I do that, as well as many of your other loccers have done, Personal Notes could easy end up to be a pedantic sercon zine. I don't know about that Richard. I love it the way it is now. SFandom needs a good old fashioned fucked up zine, or "For Thou To Be Fucked UP," and so forth. Degenerate Class. Not class, because that is a generalization. (And who in their right mind wants a generalization, right?)

Cutting off subscriptions is not fashionable. It takes pure guts to something like that, to convey by personal means the so-called (and I do mean so called because of the fact that it is only mentioned by lack of a better term) high wave of apathy, and just getting down to what everything is all about. It's also easy to assume (which isn't too hot to do either, since of the fact that there is too much assuming in day to day life) that you are a genuine wizard as far as mailing lists are concerned. I mean, with no more subscriptions, who wouldn't be??? Ah-ha! That is the question of the purpose.

Personal Notes is goddam all out beautiful. I mean, ...Christ, it is beautiful. Really. I mean it. The farce is the wave of idealism held within it's own actuality. Hell, it's even beyond Thoreau (who I greatly keep in the mind of my brain.)

The color photo is excellent. I hope you don't get any of those anusy complaints that, "Why the fuck isn't there a big peon sign on the front cover of Personal Notes!!! I though this was Hugo material!!!!" Frankly, I'm glad you didn't do such a dastardly dittley. It's beautiful if one can convey their thoughts in such a way that they are direct to the people they are intended for without being in the hideous depths of over-commercialism. I'm sure there is a portion of your audience who sincerely feels that to NOT have a "PERSONAL NOTES" masthead is totally relieving, and is totally all-out relief from the constant battering the human senses get from day to day of blatant commercialism. And the fact that Personal Notes isn't a mark of commercialism makes it that much more welcome.

Thas' all fer now. Personal Notes is together. Keep up the Good Work.

P.S.- Let's get more of HOWIE GREEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Now that is one of the best and most utterly delightful letters I have
ever received. Beyond that I can and shall say no more.

.....

Peter Roberts
Oct 16, 1976
18 Westwood, Cofton
Starcross, Nr.Dawlish
Devon, UK

Mr. Richard Harter?

Thought so, OK, stand over there with your hands by your side and don't try to move. Any attempt to touch that typewriter and I'll staple your tie to the floor. Now just hold still and keep quiet while I search through this fanzine of yours for malicious and treasonable statements

which might imply that England and Britain are interchangeable names for the same country. Hmmph. Thought so - caught red-handed. Worse still, there's an inference that Cornwall might in any way be part of a certain Saxon country to the East of the Tamar. Yes indeed, obviously guilty, Mr. Harter: let him have it, Claude!

FOOT!

Heigh-ho, 'so much for that dream. But, back in reality, I wonder why Americans persist in calling Britain "England"? After all, you'd think that enough Celts emigrated to the States for present-day Americans to be sharply reminded that England is only one of several countries in the British Isles, and that Scots, Irish, Manxmen, Welshmen, and Cornishmen are not fond of being called 'English'. Perhaps the teaching of geography is not what it should be in US schools? It really is a source of minor puzzlement to me; after all, nobody ever seems to call the Portuguese "Spaniards" or the Dutch "Germans". Ah well, no matter - you Mexicans are all alike...

Anyway, please forgive my Cornish nationalist sensitivity, and let me give you most humble and hearty thanks for PERSONAL NOTES which I enjoyed very much. Good to see you too at the Eastercon.

Interesting, interesting, the natives are getting restless again. Even
worse they're getting uppish about what sort of natives they are. Better
set up the machine gun emplacements and break out another case of beads...

Well actually no - there are not several countries in the British Isles,
there are two, England and Ireland. A country is an independent sovereignty.
And all of you citizens of England are English by virtue of being citizens
of England. Irish, Manxmen, Welshmen, and, ah, Cornishmen may be of different
nationalities, but that is something else again.

The piece on smoking was interesting, especially since I'm one of the multitude who periodically attempt to give the habit up. Past attempts have always come to grief after a few days when I find myself depressed and irritable, and unable to put cigarettes out of my mind because of my unconscious habit of reaching out for a smoke (and then remembering painfully that I don't have any tobacco or papers in the house.) The strange thing is, however, that when I was working at the British Library I was not allowed to smoke, except at tea and lunch breaks in the canteen, and yet I never even wanted a cigarette - never even thought about it. Of course, I was only working in stretches of an hour and a half at a time, so it wasn't too long between breaks; but nonetheless that represented some five or six cigarettes not smoked, not even wanted, in each work period. Now, I wonder, why can't I conjure up that same psychological state when I'm not working? It must be a lack of self-discipline. Yeah, that's what I need. Bring me the flail, Igor!

Hell, look at that. I stop typing for half a minute to read the previous paragraph, and I find that I've mindlessly rolled myself another bloody cigarette. I shall have to glue my fingers together, I suppose.

I enjoyed reading your account of your trip to England (AND Cornwall!); there's always something fascinating in reading about how others see us - and it often turns out to be the minor differences and eccentricities of a foreign country which make the most impression; certainly they're one of the reasons why I enjoy holidaying on the continent. Mind you, you pick up some odd misconceptions - like your idea of the average Briton eating pates. I really like your sentence,

"For lunch one goes to the local pub and has a pint of bitters, some pate, and a bowl of soup." I know that many pubs are branching out and offering more items by way of food, but your menu is unusual to say the least. Standard pub food is a thing called "Ploughman's lunch" which you should be able to get in virtually any pub in Britain: it consists of bread, cheese, and pickles. I'll believe your pates, but you must have been going to some odd pubs whilst you were here. "Bitters" incidentally are, I think, something you put a dash of in when mixing complex concoction (such as those much beloved by Americans); "Bitter" is ordinary beer.

Right. "Bitters" was a typo - something that PN abounds in. My remarks
on Pate were colored by the fact that on one hand I am very fond of Pate
and on the other that It is, for all practical purposes, it is impossible
to get in American restaurants.

Still on the subject of British food, the terrible "bubble & squeak" is no more than fried potato and cabbage (a meal made of leftovers and a less than pleasant childhood memory;) supposedly the name comes from the noise made whilst cooking. 'Elevenes' is the name for a meal: the one that comes between breakfast and lunch, and is traditionally eaten by housewives. Tea and bisquits are standard fare for elevenes, so it's quite possible that some company is producing chocolate-coated wheatmeal bisquits called 'Elevenes'.

Which reminds me, perhaps some kind American reader will explain what an English muffin is supposed to be? Whatever it is, it's not to be found in England. Curious, that.

Nor is Swedish Ivy to be found in Sweden. An English Muffin is basically
a bread bisquit. It is disc shaped and is, perhaps, an inch thick and
three inches in diameter. The usual practice is to split it in half and
toast it.

Oh poot. I've just found another cigarette in my mouth. I think I'll hide the tobacco somewhere.

By the way, you can put me down for the brown ink; looks good, especially on illustrations and on the more orange tinted buff paper. Actually I think I bought a tube of that once and it should still be around somewhere. I'll have to give it a try.

Enjoyed Mike Gilber's material, as ever.

Better break off now, since I see there's a play on TV by Nigel Kneale of "Quatermass" fame. Thanks again for PERSONAL NOTES, and I hope to see more of them; for that matter, I can reasonably hope to see you sometime again, should TAFF be good to me. I keep my fingers crossed....

Why yes, it would be delightful to see you again - either because I am over
there or you are over here.

I have been informed that if I leave my remarks on, ah, England as they
are, I shall be descended upon by the entire British isles each with axe,
pen, and pate in hand. Mind you, the prospect of islands marching across
sea while the population remains undisturbing at tome has a certain charm.
I will concede, if you like, that the country is Britain and not England,
and that we, ah, yanks interchange the two names freely and find no real

qualms about doing so. However, it is not so much a matter of ignorance
as it is politics on the grand scale. You are drawing distinctions that
Americans customarily do not make. In this country we identify the
sovereign state and citizenship in it as primary. We regard region,
nationality, and culture as being secondary. Thus, for example, I was
born and raised in South Dakota and have lived in Massachusetts for many
years. I am an American; I live in Massachusetts. You are a Cornishman;
you live in Britain. It is sort of the official American ideology that we
are all Americans together. It is easy for us to forget that it is very
common to put one's tribe or region ahead of one's country as far as how one
describes oneself.

In truth, these distinctions appear somewhat parochial to the outsider.
I suspect that most British citizens are not quite so particular in applying
these distinctions to others as they are in demanding them for themselves.
For example, how do you refer to someone from the Ukraine or from Georgia or
from any of the other hundred odd nationalities in the USSR? To say that
so and so is a soviet is a barbarism; consider what a soviet actually is.
To say that they are Russian is to do the same thing that you are objecting
to; Russia bears much the same relation to the USSR as England does to Britain.
Similar problems arise in most countries; perhaps no one calls Portuguese
Spanish, but they do call Basques Spanish. Most countries in Europe and Asia
have enclaves of miscellaneous nationalities. In some cases the name of the
country is that of the dominant nationality or the country around which
unified the area. In others it is even more accidental. These distinctions
of nationality are of varying importance both to those within the nations
in question and those without.

For example, in the days when Greece was still part of Turkey one would have
scarcely been safe calling a Greek a Turk, even though he was a citizen of
Turkey. (Or was he a citizen? In many of these old empires one could be a
subject without being a citizen - to be a citizen one had to be of the ruling
race.) Even then, I should imagine that the importance of the distinction
depended on where you were from; I suspect that it would have been obscure
to a visiting Japanese.

It's all very complicated. And when you have a country that is ruled by the
Queen of England (excuse me, reigned over) and money issued by the bank of
England and which speaks English it isn't surprising that your poor relations
in the west don't always get all of these distinctions straight.

Incidentally, I happened to be in Harvard Square the other day and discovered
a book on Cornish history in one of the local bookstores. Actually it was
a little more specific than that - it was a history of the period of the
Cromwellian revolution. I was sorely tempted to pick up a copy and send it
to you.

.....

Charlie Brown
Locus Publications
PO Box 3938
San Francisco CA 94119

Richard

Re Locus: I did most of LOCUS writing from 1970-1972 while Dena published it.
When we moved out here I did nothing but engineering for 2 years (1972-1974) and

Dena did practically all of it including the writing. We shared the task in 1974 when she went back to school and I took over again in Jan 1975. At present I do nearly all writing and pastups while Dena does all of the editing and typing.

Evidently I have done Dena an injustice as far as attributing credit goes.
My apologies. It is, I suspect, almost always an error to try to figure out
who did what in a collaboration. Keep up the good work.

25 August 1976
Ed Meskys
Center Harbor NH 03226
Box 233

Dear Dick,

Just finished reading PERSONAL NOTES 7, and found it very interesting. I've read the first 3, but had no one to read the next 3 for me. Fanzines and other stuff come in faster than my readers can cope with.

As near as I can estimate it cost me \$2.50 to read PERSONAL NOTES. Now that's devotion or something. I've hired someone to tape fanzines and SCIENCE NEWS for me to supplement what volunteers can do. Marsha, Diana Studebaker and organizations like Library of Congress, Jewish Guild for the Blind and the Xavier Society keep me in books and a very few periodicals but that just doesn't help with stuff like fanzines and some technical magazines.

Every time I see something like your thing on smoking I'm so glad I never got hooked. I was a misfit in Jr.High School and never had the peer pressure to start. Also, I think I'm virtually immune to nicotine so that even if I had started there would have been no compelling urgency to continue. About 11 years ago, at the urging of a friend, I tried inhaling snuff on several dozen occasions and never got any lift, boost, or thrill from it and that, I'm told, is mainlining nicotine.

That was an excellent point about Ellison, Silverberg and whozit wanting to write mainstream but being hooked on SF.

I suspect that Ed would appreciate it if any of my readers wanted to record
fanzines or periodicals for him. If you would like to I suggest that you
write Ed and ask what he might like recorded and how it should be recorded.

Actually I suspect that inhaling snuff is much less effective than smoking
tobacco. There is this to say for it - it's a great deal cleaner. From
what I have read Nicotene is incredibly addictive - it is more likely that you
were insufficiently exposed than that you are immune.

=====

FAN JOKES REVISITED

Q: What do you get when you cross a Fan with an ape?

A: A retarded ape.

Dickeycon 1:
Dickey and Mary go to New Jersey

UNUSUAL, STRANGE
EXPENSIVE



METUCHEN,
SO TO SPEAK -
THE OLD GREY
HOUSE NEXT TO THE
GULF STATION.....

ARE YOU
STILL ON
25?



See Dickey Sleep.....

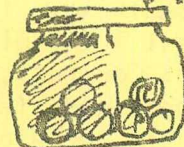
oh raptum



IPA AND WHITE STUFF DID THIS TO ME

the marbles

GOOD GOD
SPIRALS

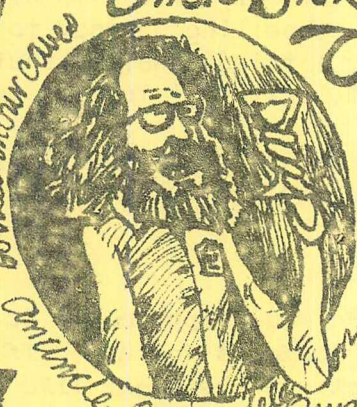


Flea
MARKET

THE WINE

IF ITS NOT RED BUT IT TASTES LIKE
Uncle Dickey's

White Stuff



A light, white, non
red, tin moron
David type Beverage
made from grapes
"Look at those legs"

The Hermit Crab (and
Attacks type)



SEE MARY LOOK



80 TONS OF SOLDIERS

WOLLY SHIT



METUCHICON

by
Sheila Gilbert

It was about 11:30 on a gruesome muggy Friday (the 13th, no less) when we heard tired footsteps clomping up the stairs. No, it wasn't the evil landlord come to evict us into the soggy outdoors or move our worldly goods onto the nearby railroad track. It wasn't a dark stranger, mysteriously caped, come to pick our tomatoes and lemon cucumbers and steal quietly off into the night. It was Richard and Mary, two weary travelers laden down with venison and cranberry liquor, explaining about those wrong turns they had taken and the cruel fate which had forced them to be in the wrong lanes at the wrong times. Taking pity on them, we decided to let them come into the house, and after strawberry tea, IPA, and spice cookies had made the rounds we settled down to find out what had happened to everyone in the past empty months.

At about three in the morning I tactfully suggested everyone go to sleep as we were planning to show Mary the greater glories of Englishtown the next morning. At 7:30 we cheerfully woke Mary and one of Richard's eyes and, telling the cats to see that Richard got everything he deserved, we zoomed off to Englishtown, pointing out all the idiosyncrasies of US 1 along the way. This included NJ's famous traffic circuses where wild trucks stampede bright colored rabbits and confused visitors give up in despair at the intricacies of our jug-handle turns. We also pointed out the Revival Tent set up for its nightly meeting, the coin pitch by which the Oldbridge Fire Dept hopes to shame travelers into helping support them, and the oddly assorted varieties of foliage and homes which make the state so distinctive.

Arriving at Englishtown Flea Market we paid our money to park in the mud, crossed the rickety plywood bridge which I know is going to collapse under us some day, and began to plot our strategy. Englishtown is huge and, unless you develop a plan of attack, you can wander helplessly all day long until you sink into a puddle or expire in a cloud of just and heat. Our decision was made when Mary spied some furniture and Mike found his heart's desire - antique marbles! At a good price, too! Having purchased these little glass gems, we move up Memory Lane and soon discovered that, unless carefully watched, Mary was liable to get out of control. But once Mike bought some fresh dill weed which could be waved visibly high in the air we decided we would not lose each other too easily. If the sight of madly capering dill didn't attract attention the aroma certainly would.

Three hours later, tired but content, we wended our way back to the car, pointing out to Mary the mountain of hubcaps glistening in the sun, and debating whether to buy Dicky a pet tree crab. However we soon realized that if the poor thing escaped from its cage and tried to nestle on its master's head it would be bound to slide off and crash to a shattering doom.

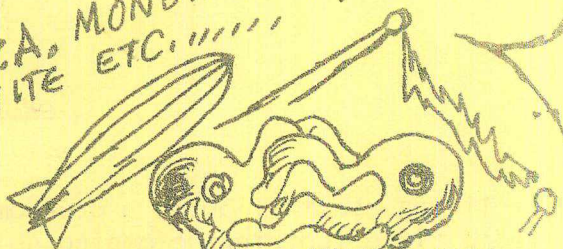
When we finally got back to the house, we discovered that Richard was still asleep, a state of thing which we could not permit to continue. After offering him coffee and threatening to fold him *into* the couch, we finally got him up. After eating we started off for Woodbridge Mall, one of the largest shopping plazas in the world. Mary was delighted by the live trees and the birds and fountains. And happily we discovered that Stern's had not only strawberry tea, but green apple, chocolate, cherry, etc. Also Dicky purchased the world's most expensive truffle,

Also... the Sea Cucumber

#1
★



W.P.A. MONUMENTS, WORKERS
UNITE ETC.!!!!



BATTLING STONE OCTOPI
CAPITALISM, WAR —
ZEPPLINS, ELECTRICITY
YEA!



GILBERTS GATES



TV SATURDAY NITE LIVE!
ETC! KUKLA FRANK OLLIE

SUNDAY: COFFEE

PICKY WAKES UP EARLY
ARGH!



COOK OUT
BURGERS, MASS. YEA! SON BAMBI CHUCKLE!
BAGGLES



PRINCETON
OHH H
NEAT



WHOOOPS, SAT NITE
DESSERT



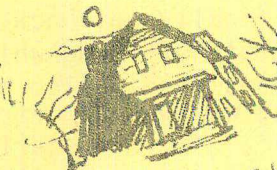
THE COLEUS KILLER



ACANT I
HAVE A
SALAD
REMOVE
DICKENS



THE HAUNTING OF HARTER
HOUSE



LIBERTY TOWER
RUNNER

WOK
DINNER



TITANIA
ROTTEN
GUESTS



and we bought some brandy and rum cakes. Then it was on to Swiss Colony and the health food store where we got watercress tea, laurel leaf tea, hibiscus tea, and Irish moss tea. And yes Virginia, Hibiscus tea is bright red. You could probably stain furniture with it.

Several bookstores, cheese shops, tobacco stores, and snack places later, we agreed that we'd have to give up the air conditioning and return to the hot house. Not being excessively brave we first toured the local area, pointing out neat old houses and lotsa stained glass. We forgot to go to the graveyard but I'm sure nobody missed us.

That night we took the New England duo to the China Diner. This innocuous sounding place is a peculiar new restaurant that just opened in Edison. Unlike most places with that sort of moniker the China Diner serves food - food like braised stuffed cucumber, cold jellyfish salad, scallops with tri-colored balls, fish head soup, etc. We settled for the five spice chicken, pork balls and sea cucumbers, and curried beef. We would have tried the glassy shrimp balls but the waiter couldn't explain what they were. Much tea and food later we headed over to Breyers Ice Cream Parlor to pick up some topping for our brandy and rum cakes. Then we took our captive audience home and proceeded to show them embarrassing slides of people who shall remain nameless.

Having thus prepared them for Saturday Night Live we sat back and watched Richard gasp in disbelief, chuckle, groan, and reach for another IPA as he gazed spellbound. Mary watched with closed eyelids. After 2:00 AM rolled around I also gave up, leaving Mike and Richard to yak on till about five in the morning, giggle over Richard's new wine label, protest as Cinabar, the Siamese, made off with Dicky's dirty socks, and anything else she took a fancy to. (This led Mary to ask if they, too, could get a Siamese retriever.) Sunday dawned as disgustingly muggy as had Saturday, and we decided that the house was no place to stay. So off we went to another flea market, this time dragging a grumbling Dicky who kept protesting that he didn't want to buy any fleas. However he didn't mind getting some orange whip. Having temporarily lost Richard in the crowd we managed instead to find some obliging concession owners who were giving out free samples of cheesecake and such odd cheese combos as gruyere with chablis and apricots, horseradish cheese, a cheese mixed with nuts and champagne, and many other oddities. These tastes served to remind us that we hadn't eaten yet, and after losing Mary, finding Richard, and finding Mary we decided it was time to head back to our hibachi. Hungry and almost purchaseless we returned home for a lunch of grilled venison, hamburgers, and salad topped with nasturtiums. Richard and Mary each bravely ate a flower and decided that they were pretty good after all.

With the clouds turning blacker we set off for Princeton. Princeton is still fighting the Tudor versus Medieval building revival, and as all houses are extremely well built, it seems likely that neither side will win. Both styles drew many oohs and ahs and a debate as to whether it would be worth buying one of these 20 room manses for a summer cottage. Then there was the peculiar statuary around the town such as the metal man - quite probably Thomas Mann - reading a book and sitting on a bench while some tourist sat down next to him and read over his shoulder, and the monument in Roosevelt Park, where greed, war, pestilence, materialism, death, and one other horror, are conquered by mankind working solidly together through industry and brotherhood. We got back in time to eat Friday's dinner which, after marinating for two days, was quite tasty. By then Ronald Reagan and Gerry Ford were making their presence felt and Richard and Mary chose the cowardly way out, packed up their goodies, and fled back to the only state that voted for McGovern. But watch out, Dicky, we're mailing you your welcome back, Kotter bubble gum cards. I bet you thought we'd forget.

TRASH?

by
Sue Lewis

Sue Lewis was quite interested in what I said about SF being trash and planned to write a serious commentary on it. She got as far as writing preliminary notes on it before the project, like so many other projects (fan) it was abandoned because of lack of time. She eventually turned her notes over to me for me to use provided that I edited them into some semblance of order. I have tried to do so and I hope that I have not done them or her conception too great an injustice. The finished draft is still somewhat rough. Sue should not be blamed for this for she had no opportunity to polish it up. As editor, I must accept the blame, although I plead that I did not want to stray too far from the original for fear of inadvertently altering the meaning.

I am interested in the topic of SF versus great literature which you are exploring. It prompts me to inflict my animadversions on you. Great literature, by definition, examines the important questions and, to some extent, has defined what those questions are. It has also been left with all of those questions for which no provable or demonstratable answers have been found. This, to my mind, guarantees that it deals in infinite and unseizable quibbling. At one time these questions were of great import to me and I worried about them a great deal. In my adolescence I took all these important matters seriously (and still do, though I worry about them much less) and I eagerly read a number of books which I will probably never read again. Eventually I decided what working hypotheses I would adopt on such deep matters as what is human kind, what is life for, what is good, what is evil, etc. This, I think, is sufficient.

Isaac Asimov had an article in a serious mainstream publication that said, essentially, "You guys in this zine are splitting hairs about essentially unsolvable questions; you have had no solutions and will have none, only endless debate; but if you want to read about what life will be like, what things will affect you in ten years, if you want to hear the debate over solutions that come into being that are now unknown, read the Science Fiction magazines." There are people who believe that the unsolvable questions are intrinsically worth hashing out. There are people like Isaac and myself who see no point in continuing pursuit of a line of research that cannot yield results, who are interested in more concrete everyday matters such as whether the world will get its collective head together in time to avoid Malthusian disaster before the year 2000. I say: What is so terrific about unsolvables? A deeply thought and illuminating philosophical statement on an unsolvable can go out of fashion but it can never be wrong - what's so great about that? And I am not interested in seeing the same problems with different settings from contemporary authors; the reviews of "serious fiction" I see do not suggest to me that any new viewpoints or insights are being presented.

Interestingly enough, some of these unsolvables may turn out to be solvable after all. The 1975 Turing lecture indicates to me that we may be able to explain intelligence, learning, problem solving, and perhaps even (gasp!) creativity. I am not nervous about this as my concept of my human uniqueness never depended on my superiority to animals or machines - if I have an immortal soul I don't see why they shouldn't also. The recent changes in my philosophy have been because of scientific observations. For example, I once felt that there was no reason

to believe that intuitive synthetic thought was qualitatively different from logical inductive thought until the recent evidence that they seem to be accomplished by different hemispheres of the brain. Another example is the near death episodes which indicate that there may be some sort of afterlife. (This is difficult because I still believe that one should live as if there weren't any.) So much for what is thought and what is life. (The best I could do with "What is a human being?" was me for one, but this leaves me without understanding a great part of humanity. However so do all the other hypotheses I have heard. Since they tend to contradict me about myself I mostly ignore them and stick by what I do have some insight into and handle the rest of humanity statistically or on a case by case basis.)

Anyhow, what I am leading up to is the heretical question: What is so great about great literature in contradistinction to the portion of SF that is good? Perhaps I am cheating because I have really pulled a switch on you. You were talking about the mainstream which usually means contemporary settings and people and I have been talking about acknowledged masterpieces, but I think that I am merely allowing the strongest interpretation of non-SF. We do run into trouble in drawing this distinction because much of Shakespeare is fantasy and some SF has been admitted to the great literature class (lets leave it at 1984 without stretching it) and where would that put Watership Down? At this point I will merely state my own prejudiced view that great literature is usefully illuminating philosophy which is clearly, forcefully, and movingly presented. Usefully illuminating is the key here. After a while there is very little that is usefully illuminating to be said on unsettled questions. So what does one read? One reads amusing and illuminating theories on questions which can eventually be settled. And that is what most SF is, even the stuff that is mostly action and adventure. As the unsolvable problems become transmuted into solvable one the line between great literature and great SF gets blurry and, in the limiting case, vanishes. In fact the SF I have felt was the best always has been close to that blurry line anyway. Dear Devil (Eric Frank Russell) and The Last Enemy (H. Beam Piper) spring immediately to mind. Perhaps they are merely banal restatements of themes far better handled in other works (I haven't reread them in a long while) but when I was worrying about the problem of what is human and what is death they were a lot more useful to me than the stuff I read in school. By the time I got to reading Shakespeare and Milton I had already met them, probably second hand, restated in simpler terms in the pages of Astounding and in Ace double novels.

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And now for the commentary. To begin with let me pick a nit. The example Sue has chosen for SF being great literature is unfortunate. I will concede that 1984 is great literature. But there are many who would not concede that 1984 is Science Fiction. The whole question of what is Science Fiction is beyond the scope of our discussion here. However I think it is fair to point out that 1984 is not representative of the Science Fiction genre; it was not written as Science Fiction and its author was not a Science Fiction writer. And it owes very little to the Science Fiction field.

There is a body of writing which is definitely within the SF genre. There is another body of writing which is definitely not SF genre but which uses devices and concepts which SF and fantasy are typically concerned with. Depending on one's definition can annex these to Science Fiction or not. I prefer not to. In any case, I did not have such works as 1984 in mind in my original discussion and it obscures the discussion to include them; it makes it all too easy to analyze works which are not SF genre and illegitimately extend the analysis to genre SF.

So much for nits. Sue's comments contain several major explicit and implicit propositions which I regard as being collectively and individually false. I say collectively because I reject the entire viewpoint presented and I say individually because I feel that the elements are in error as well as the combination.

Let me begin with the equation of great literature with philosophy. We may as well begin with the question of what we mean by literature and what we mean by philosophy. Some discussion of these points is necessary. I took the precaution of looking in the dictionary to see how literature was defined. What I found was not too helpful; several usages were given but not the one which both Sue and I both have in mind which is a qualitative description of writing.

The dictionary defines literature as a body of writing. In some general sense one might speak of everything that has been written as the literature of the human race. This body of writing includes, however, such things as IRS forms, laundry lists, and Perry Rhodan novels. When we speak of literature we do not have such things in mind. For example, we exclude all function writing such as forms, manuals, lists, etc. In fact, what we have in mind are novels, epics, verse, fiction of all forms, essays, works of commentary, etc. Nor do we include all works of this kind, but only a selected subset. This selection is made on the basis of excellence of writing and enduring appeal. Thus far we have a rough and ready definition of Literature with a capital L; to go further is to venture into the area in dispute. Some examples of great literature are: Homer, the Bible, Canterbury tales, Milton, Shakespeare, Dickens, Vanity Fair, and 1984.

Philosophy is, literally, the love of wisdom. At one time it embraced all of organized thought. It has come to mean general or first principals. This can be a specific usage such as the philosophy of science. It may refer to the basis for correct thought and argument. It may refer to basic questions about our existence as human beings. Further than this it is hard to go without entering in the great disputes about the proper domain of philosophy. Some would say that we have gone too far; there are those who would say that we have gone too far; that such questions as "What is Truth?" are meaningless and not in the domain of philosophy at all.

Having attended to the formalities let us return to the conception of literature contained in Sue's essay. Let me take two quotes: "Great literature, by definition, examines the important questions and, to some extent, has defined what those questions are. It has also been left with all of those questions for which no provable or demonstrable answers have been found." and "...great literature is usefully illuminating philosophy which is clearly, forcefully, and movingly presented." Now these are rather dubious propositions or, rather, different forms of the same dubious proposition. To be sure, Plato is literature and we can say all of these things about Plato. But can we say them with the same force about Dickens? Or, for that matter, about most great works of fiction? I submit that it is illegitimate to do.

Part of the problem here is that we do not really know what Sue has in mind when she says "the important questions" and "illuminating philosophy". She gives us some examples: what is human; what is thought; what are good and evil. This list could be extended indefinitely. These questions are the subject of what is usually termed moral philosophy. To a certain extent any work of fiction must touch on these questions. Any work that portrays human beings says something about what it is to be human. Any work that portrays decisions being made is saying something about morality.

Sue would apparently make moral philosophy a criterion for judging whether a given work is great literature or not. Indeed, not just a criterion, but its

principal concern. I suggest that this simply is not so. Literature, at least fiction, must have something to say about these questions simply because they are universal. They may or may not be solvable but they cannot be avoided; we may never ask, "What is life?", but we live and in living, provide our own answer to the question. We may never ask, "What is right and what is wrong?", but we must choose between them nonetheless. I will concede that literature may be more profound if it treats these questions seriously. But that is not its principal reason for being.

I would also reject the disjunction implied in the Asimov quotation and in the following, "There are people who believe that the unsolvable questions are intrinsically worth hashing out. There are people like Isaac and myself who see no point in continuing pursuit of a line of research that cannot yield results..." There are several areas of disagreement here. To begin with I do accept the disjunction between unsolvables and concrete everyday matters. Secondly I do not accept the point of view that uses a term such as "pursuit of a line of research". And...

What is the meaning of life? What are good and evil? Is there a God? Can you answer these questions? I cannot. Can they be definitively answered at all? No. Will definitive answers ever be possible? Probably not. If these questions can never be answered why bother with them? Because we have no choice about it; life forces them upon us.

That is the crux of the matter. These are existential questions. That is, these questions are implicit in our existence. They are forced upon us. Do you steal money from the cup of a blind child beggar? No. Why not? It would be wrong. How do you know? I just know. See you have an answer to the question of right and wrong.

Is "I just know" a sufficient answer? Some seem to find it so; most of us do not. We find ourselves in moral quandries. We find answers one way or another. This is, if you will, a level of abstraction. Some carry the process of abstraction further. We go on to form rules and think out situations in advance. Some of us go still further and lay out still more general rules. And some strive to establish absolutes. And this is reasonable. It is reasonable to try to find universal rules which will tell us what to do in advance.

So that is one thing that is wrong with Sue's formulation (as I have interpreted it.) When you contrast "unsolvable" with "more concrete everyday matters" you imply that these unsolvable questions are not concerned with concrete everyday matters and that is not necessarily true. These unsolvable questions are merely the most abstract and general form of existential - immediate, everyday, concrete - questions that we deal with everyday.

Another thing that bothers me is that phrase, "line of research". It suggests the error of confusing theory and experience. (Although I do not mean to imply that Susan is making that error in this context.) Theory is not life, of course. And literature is not life either. But neither is literature a line of research or a theory, even though a given work may contain theories. Fiction is, as it were, a shadow experience. When we read a work of fiction we live out, within our mind, the story being told. It is an experience analogous to that of reliving our own life; it is a story told to us rather than told by ourselves.

The usage of phrases such as "pursuit of a line of research" are consistent with the didactic purpose that Sue attributes to literature. One does not read a novel to have an experience - one reads it to find out the truth, or at least a truth. There are schools of philosophy that concern themselves mostly with exist-

critical analysis of selected novels, Camus, Sartre, Kafka, and Dostoevsky being the favorites. One can argue that this sort of analysis is unprofitable, and I think that I would have to agree. I rather suspect that Sue thinks so also. But I don't think that the purpose of literature is to provide raw grist for the millstones of literary analysis.

I am also charmed by the concept that, "As the unsolvable problems become transmuted into solvable ones the line between great literature and great SF gets blurry and, in the limiting case, vanishes." To be sure it is consistent with the didactic purpose for literature that Sue has posited. If we deny that viewpoint there is very little left of the sentence.

.

At this point I feel that it is germane if I say something about what literature is, and why I said that SF is trash. We will suppose that we are talking about fiction, although literature embraces much more than fiction. To begin with, we read fiction because it is rewarding. I say rewarding, rather than enjoyable, because there are works of fiction we may find positively unpleasant and yet we will read them. The mere fact that something is rewarding (even if only transiently) is not enough to mark it as literature.

Why is Perry Rhodan not literature while Shakespeare is. The classical test for literature is that it survives; if people are willing to read it fifty and one hundred years later then it offers something enduring. The convenience of this test is that it is automatic and safe; one is in no doubt about what is literature and one is never called upon to make critical judgements. I think we can do a little better than that, though.

Here are some hallmarks of literature: It tends to be well written in that the words themselves are put together well; it tends to have a variety of levels at which it can be read; it contains elements of fascination; it involves universals of human experience; and it is true in major respects to the psychology of people. Let me remark on some of these criteria.

It should be well written. It is possible to write a great work of fiction which is written in clumsy and awkward prose - Dreiser and Thomas Wolfe spring to mind - but it is an enormous handicap.

It should be written at several levels. Shakespeare springs to mind; most of his plays are a mixture of profundity and low humor. This demand is not just a demand to write for a variety of audiences; it is a matter of writing for a variety of audiences within a single person.

It contains elements of fascination. There are many things which are fascinating but which cannot sustain a story in their own right. They are like desserts. A fine meal is enhanced by dessert but it does not consist of only desserts.

It involves universals of human experience. Any story which does not is, of necessity, of limited appeal. A story which presents a fascinating theory can only be read at that level. A story which deals with the experiences characteristic of a small group which are not shared by others and not of interest to others will only be of interest to that small group. Theories, ideologies, coteries, fads and the like vary with time; people, their concerns and passions, endure.

It should be psychologically true. The simplest version of this is that a story have characters and that they act in character. One can ask more than that. One can ask that the characters have depth - that they are, or could be, real people about whom we have some understanding from reading the work in question. However I have something more than that. There are many stories which are little more than thinly disguised fantasies acted out. For example there are fantasies of omnipotence and the "Nobody understands me but I'll show them fantasy." There are a multitude of such themes. They are all false. They do not deal with the world, even metaphorically; they are consolatory tales told to deny the world as it is. I do not deny that such themes cannot be used successfully, for they have. (Cinderella remains popular.) In general, however, it is the baby in us and not the adult that they appeal to.

And now for Science Fiction....

P. Schuyler Miller once remarked that mainstream literature is about complicated people in simple situations whereas Science Fiction is about simple people in complicated situations. Like all aphorisms it is oversimplistic, but there is much to it. I would add the caveat that most "simple" situations really aren't all that simple when you take into account the complexity of the people involved.

The bulk of SF consists of adventure fiction in which cardboard characters act out the infantile fantasies I have deplored. There are many striking ideas; there are few people. In all of SF I cannot, offhand, think of a single example of a story in which there are two real people. (This is not to say there aren't any - simply that I can't think of any offhand.)

I cannot think of any writer within the SF field that I would consider a major writer with the stature of the great writers of the present or the past. I cannot think of a single novel produced within the field that would stand serious comparison with the great works of literature. There may be; I may well be overlooking something. It is noteworthy, however, that examples do not spring readily to mind.

I rest my case - for the moment.

=====

Andy Porter
August 22, 1976
PO Box 4175
New York, NY 10017

Dear Harter:

I was in your area (stayed at the Sheraton-Commodore, tres etrange, during the Book Affair at Harvard) in early June. Did absolutely no business, though I was the only SF-type publisher there, but really did like the neighborhood, which I'd never seen. I am very much into Colonial-type architecture, and I found masses of blocks of the stuff. I like brick sidewalks, too.

Why, though, is there a combination safe in the wall of the men's room in Memorial Hall?

Chauncy Street is right in the middle of that area which is one of the reasons
I lived in the same place for so long. (The other is that moving is a hassle.)
In many ways Cambridge was a lovely place to live. Not only is there the arch-
itecture, there are trees, oodles of bookstores, the variety of Harvard Square,
and the very comfortable combination of small town and city.

But I don't know why there is a combination safe.

I didn't remember PERSONAL NOTES #6, so I dug it out recently as I went through my fanzine collection. Interesting and slightly out of date. In fact, very out of date. The Controversies and such are fascinating in their dated qualities, and Great Causes are now hardly a distant pale whimper of their former size.

For instance, I have forgiven you for not getting a fanzine review column in to me. Do it again and you're dead, though...

Yessir!

Mike Gilbert this issue, as last, is absolutely hilarious. Pity that he won't be in Kansas City -- we were going to throw him into the pool, too.

England I have not been to. I've been parochial (in fact provincial) in my traveling. I do not have a passport, which certainly hinders travel plans. But I have been in many of the contiguous US states and 5 Canadian provinces. Also, I don't drive, so that hinders any plans I might make. But, for instance, when I went to Westercon last year (1975) I planned to go up the coast to Vancouver and take the train east across Canada. By good fortune I fell in with Jon Singer and we bussed to Eugene, rented a car with my credit cards and Singer's license, and drove up along the Oregon coast and inland to Portland where I met Ursula Le Guin and Dick Geis. Thence with Singer to Seattle where we parted company. I ferried to Victoria, Nanaimo, and Vancouver, and then took the train eastward.

One of the things I like to do is Go Alone. I do not like crowds, nor do I plan out every move in advance. I know where I want to go and generally how I want to/can get there. I don't like to make hotel reservations more than a couple of days in advance. I also like to take photos, though not of people. (I am reminded of one former NY fan who went to Europe and took lots of photos of his wife. When he was divorced the photos turned bitter.) People come and go, but the natural wonders and beauties of this world are forever. At least, one would hope so...

George Flynn's comment on the "amateur magazine/fanzine" wording is true. What we have here is a problem in communication... Fanzines have never been amateur magazines - they have been communications. They should have never been equated with "amateur" magazines because that brings in the term "professional magazine."

We all know what a prozine is, but a fanzine is a class apart. It is not analogous to a prozine, i.e. an amateur attempt at imitating a professional publication. ALGOL is not an "amateur magazine." It is a fanzine, but there's nothing amateur about it. I think I do a "professional" job at producing a magazine.

For that matter, AMAZING is a "fanzine" in many aspects. But it is certainly not an "amateur magazine" now, is it? (Snickers - RH)

Isn't semantics wonderful?

What a wonderful idea Harry Warner has! People who think of LAGOL as a fanzine refuse to accept money for their material! Why didn't I think of that? That would certainly help solve some of my money problems.

Then again, if some people are getting paid, everyone will want to get paid - even people who think of ALGOL as a fanzine. When was the last time you turned down free money?

Coming to Glicksohn's letter I'm getting confused. I think of ALGOL as a fanzine but not an amateur magazine; it's professional in approach but not fannish in execution (how'd that get in here?) It's also a critical success but not a financial one - that's something I mean to change. I do agree with you that just because something pays is no reason to say it's not fannish: look at SF conventions that make profits or NEW WORLDS (the old one edited by Carnell) or fans acting as agents for each other (young neofan Ray Bradbury touted the work of young fan Hannes Bok.)

I have already commented on this topic at excessive length elsewhere.
Suffice it to say that what Andy has to say makes great sense. There
are a couple of recent developments in this subject which are of interest.
In the latest ALGOL Andy has withdrawn ALGOL from competition for the amateur
magazine category. The other is that SUNCON has apparently ruled that certain
fanzines are ineligible for the best amateur award. I quote:

"The SunCon believes that "amateur" means just that. A publication whose purpose or aim is not to make a profit (whether or not it does), does not provide a living or income for its staff, and doesn't pay for contributions except in giving contributors copies. Such magazines belong in the 'professional editor' category. Please note that some previous winners in this category are now not eligible. If in doubt, nominate anyway, and we'll rule on the nomination."

This would appear to rule out ALGOL and SFR and possibly LOCUS. Also,
possibly, OUTWORLDS. Except for the question of paying contributors which
has always seemed to me to be completely irrelevant, these are reasonable
criteria for being amateur. If there is a battle, I would seem to be on
the losing side. So it goes.

.....
Ray Bowie, Jr.
August 13, 1976
31 Everett Ave.
Somerville MA 02145

Dear Richard,

....

The most interesting part of PN#7 had to have been THE FOUL WEED. I can see where quitting smoking is really a bitch of a thing to accomplish. My parents quit several years ago but I can't recall whether they were heavy smokers or not. Both my sisters smoke. At least one does. The same one tried to quit but on our way to Drew Whyte's theater party I was surprised to see her light up in the car. It could be she has stopped being a heavy smoker. I can't judge from that one incident and after reading your article I won't preach to anyone anymore about quitting. You proved very well that quitting is not easy.

I agree with your point about saddling kids today with the habit but how many are pushed into it? How many do it to look bigger in the eyes of their peers? I remember at the Industrial School for Crippled Children seeing a great deal of the kids there get onto smoking. I've been fortunate. I've never had the desire or urge to start it and I seriously doubt whether I ever will. For the most part I find the whole thing repulsive.

While I was hospitalized last year I got hooked on pain killers and it was a battle to get through the period without them. The reason why I was finally sent home last February was because the hospital had done all they could to get me better and I was still having trouble getting better so I was sent home. It did the trick.

Well, yes, there are many things that one can get addicted to. Go easy on
those remarks about heavy smokers, though. We heavy ex-smokers are a little
sensitive about that. As a combination of my trip to England and quitting
smoking my weight bounced from 155 to 175 and my waistline went from 30 to
34. After a lifetime of being skinny and being quite pleased with it this
sudden weight gain has been rather a shock to me. I keep toying with the idea
of going on the first diet in my life.

.....

Earl L. Wajenburg
August 10, 1976
Champaign, Illinois

Dear Mr. Harter,

Thank you for your fanzine; I found it most entertaining. I imagine you expected some response to your article, TRASH!!. (No, but then I am naive that way.) I will not disappoint you, but before I begin, what are "locs"? Letters of Comment? Is a reply to a loc a bag-

Moving quickly on, I disagree with your contention that a story which succeeds as literature must fail as science fiction and vice versa. At least I think I do, since you do not define "literature" or "success" explicitly. You more or less define science fiction, for the present purpose, at the beginning of TRASH!!. But I will suppose that by "success" you mean artistic and not monetary success. Or, since you think SF is trash, not even artistic success, but a sort of ontological success might be meant. I.e. if a tale thoroughly is science fiction it cannot likewise thoroughly be literature. Is that what you meant?

This is a point very well taken. Despite the provocative title the article
really did not closely address the main thesis.

More important is what you meant by "literature" or great literature. I gather that good literature deals with "people as people" and is man centered, not gadget-centered. I'm not sure I agree with that. Mystery stories are essentially gadget centered. Most of these are pretty trashy, but some, like the Sherlock Holmes and Lord Peter Wimsey stories, have been read and reread for more than half a century and have sometimes earned praise in fairly exalted academic circles.

The "discovery" sort of SF is the most obviously gadget oriented, and is therefore most closely analogous to the mystery story. Perhaps none of these stories will be remembered in a century or so. This is partly because science keeps on making them obsolete. Partly, no doubt, such puzzles are not as inherently interesting as, say, Oedipus Rex but that does not stop them from being good things of their kind. Some of them, like Hiding Place or A Sun Invisible, by Anderson, may be remembered for quite some time.

Even assuming that "great literature" must be man centered (as, no doubt, it usually is) the presence of a gadget or two doesn't mean that a story isn't anthropocentric. Robinson Crusoe and the Odyssey are both acknowledged greats. Yet the desert island and Poseidon are both gadgets within your meaning and not very likely ones at that. (*Er, it's a side issue, but Robinson Crusoe is generally considered a children's book and has survived on that basis.*) The stories are about people versus gadget. That kind of story is very common in SF and I don't see why it can't be "great literature" so long as it meets the usual prerequisites of "great literature". I would suppose those to be enjoyable and lucid style, as clear a characterization as the plot requires and, above all, an interesting plot. To give some examples of very good people versus gadget SF I would mention Canticle for Leibowitz (which you panned) by Miller; Le Guin's Ecumen stories; and The Enemy Stars by Anderson.

I didn't exactly pan Canticle for Leibowitz. It is quite good. What I was
saying is that it does not have the stature that is often attributed to it
by those intent on puffing up SF. Another example of gadget centered fiction
in great literature is much of Poe.

All of these stories tell how people live in odd surroundings. There is an art to making up the surroundings - they must interest and convince - but there is a greater art to making the people live in them. And that greater art, it seems to me, is the same art needed to make characters live in a story with any other setting.

What is the criterion for "good literature"? You indicate that it is "psychological profundity." You then say that SF cannot be profound because it is psychologically displaced. But by that displacement you only mean SF's settings are frequently remote in space and time from our daily experience. (*No, I do not mean that at all.*) That sort of displacement is irrelevant. Psychologists have delighted in finding all kinds of profundity in fairy-tales that took place "once upon a time" in no clearly defined place. Dante's Commedia which is, on one of its four levels of interpretation, nothing but psychology all takes place in the afterlife in a trio of environments at least as odd as many another planet.

If, by psychological displacement, you meant that the characters of SF routinely had interests and goals greatly dissimilar to ours, you would be right in saying that SF would never be great literature. It would also never be read. But the people in an SF story want the things people in any story want - to survive, wealth, political power, an explanation, to be love or admired. They may want economic power in the form of a monopoly on hyperdrives, they may want political power over the Lesser Magellanic Cloud, they may want the love and admiration of intelligent artichokes but that, like the remoteness of the setting, is irrelevant.

What do I think makes for great literature? The best exploration I ever came across was An Experiment in Criticism by C.S. Lewis. There are, he points out, two ways of reading books (or, indeed, of enjoying any form of art.) The first is to use a book, rather than submit oneself to it. People use books when they read how unpopular characters achieve greatness and put their enemies' noses out of joint, or how a poor but deserving girl married a millionaire, or how a detective tracked

down a killer with much blaze of guns and hammering of fists. That's trash. Such a book is generally read once, though the person addicted to that sort may read a dozen others with identical plots.

The other kind of reading, submitting oneself to the book, will chew through the book over and over through the years, spot new things each time through, savor particularly good passages, and so forth. A book is good, says Lewis, the more it invites this kind of reading and discourages the rest.

I strongly urge you to find a copy of the book. It is not long and Lewis discusses subtleties and special cases and objections I can by no means cover in a letter. In any case I do not see that SF discourages this type of reading. I, myself, indulge in it and I imagine many other SF-readers do too. Thank you once more for your fanzine and especially for your interesting, if erroneous, article.

Interesting and thoughtful comments. I hope to find book you mention for
C.S. Lewis is one of my favorite authors.

I fear that you have totally missed the point as far as psychological
displacement is concerned. And I must say that although I was brief I do
not think that I was totally obscure. The point is that one of the motives
for reading fiction, any fiction, is that it allows us to be elsewhere than
where we are and partake of the lives of others. There are two sides to this.
One is to broaden and extend our own reality by encompassing other realities.
The other side is deny or put away our own reality. It is the latter motive
that I call into question. Consider for the moment a bright but socially inept
adolescent whom we may call Joe Protofan for convenience. In the here and now
he is a pimply faced adolescent who is not terribly happy about it. What better
escape from here and now than to read tales of adventure that let him be some-
one else somewhere else. And what better escape from the here and now than SF
which takes him to the far reaches of time and space - as distant as possible
both in distance and psychologically. I cite The Jet Propelled Couch by Robert
Lindner for an illustration of the general mechanism involved and what it looks
like when carried to its logical extreme. It is just this motive of the denial
of reality that makes it hard for good SF to be written; it is hard to be truthful
about people when one is hell bent on evading truth. It is this, more than
anything else, that compromises the field. The genre SF writers were all fans
before they were writers - quite often very much fans. They got what they
wanted from the field and created more of the same.

.....

George Flynn
August 31, 1976
on the way to Kansas City

Dear Harter,

I am using this opportunity of two and one half days on the road to catch u! up on my loccing. It should be legible if we don't hit too many bumps.

If it isn't I'll make it up as I go along - I'm sure you won't mind. I can
see the headlines in the scandal sheets now, "George Flynn says..."

Fascinating horror story about your giving up smoking. I have never smoked myself, nor gone in too much for other vices, with the exception of fandom.

Let's see, I type somewhere around 150 stencils a year, taking an hour or so apiece. And as for all my other fanaz... I don't think I want to know.

MYTHOLOGIES is a virtual personalzine

Actually Don D'Amassa had 5 entries in the last story contest: two won prizes, one was an honorable mention, and two didn't place. Anyway, on the average you did at least as well as he did, if that's any consolation.

I couldn't agree more with your analysis of the gadgeteering impulse. (You left out one major paraliterary example of a "gadget", the whodunit.) And yet I can't quite accept your ultimate conclusion, since I refuse to define "literature" in such a limited way. More semantics...

It's a pleasure to see that someone agrees with me about something! Actually,
I am prepared to argue either side of the SF versus literature question. In fact
I am tempted to write an article for the next issue of PN refuting myself.

Feel free to quote my A:N comments (such as they were) on your trip report. I believe I did neglect to point out that in the late 17th century the Parthenon was over 4000 years old.

Would I rather read SFR or a zine like MYTHOLOGIES, you ask. Well, when it first comes I certainly go through SFR more avidly, but that's to find out what news/scandal it contains more than for the quality of the writing as such. (I read the daily paper avidly too.) But I think I read the zines like MYTHOLOGIES or PN, when I do get around to them, with greater interest and more feeling of involvement. (The fact that they contain my own locs is of course totally irrelevant to this feeling.) But the whole argument finesses the question, as you put it to Harry Warner; even if SFR is better, the question remains, a better what?

Fie on you: I turn the phrase "SF mainstream" and you print it as "SF microcosm". You also missed my point about the 'political influence of fandom: I meant its influence upon SF itself (what gets published, etc), not on the outside world. If we're lucky, the outside world will keep failing to notice us.

I can't find your original letter to confirm that I misread it. However if you
will check my comments to Mike Glicksohn, you will see that I managed to construe
SF microcosm as an oxymoron also, so all is not lost.

On the other hand I plead innocent of misconstruing your meaning about political
influence. I understood you to be talking the SF, ah, mainstream. I was commenting
on your remark in the context of Harry Warner's original comment which was about
political influence in the larger sense.

You object to Mike Glicksohn's use of the word "noble" in referring to "even the worst piece of fannish rubbish". But have you never heard the term "noble gas"?

I trust you noted that a personalzine did get on the Hugo ballot this year.

Well, yes, I did. I also noticed which one got on the ballot and I want to say
this to my readers - you have let me down again. Remember, PN, represents the last
bastion of fannish solidarity against the creeping tide of gigantism. Get out
there and vote. It's time to get PN on the Hugo ballot.

Roy Tackett
915 Green Valley Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107
17 August 1976

Dear Richard,

It is Friday according to my calendar watch...but it is always Friday according to my calendar watch which seems to have stalled there some time back. It is probably just as well since, if things get a bit rough during the day, I can glance at my watch and mutter "Thank Ghu, it's Friday" which helps even if it is a lie.

And so we have PERSONAL NOTES #7 here and I would comment on a few things.

The Foul Weed....Yes. Isn't it? Who was it that wrote the doggerel about "Tobacco is a filthy weed. I love it."? I have to agree with that. I read you item about quitting with some interest. I started smoking, oh, somewhere around 1939, I suppose it was. Big deal back then. I've been on something over two packs a day for at least 30 years and when you think about it that's one hell of a lot of cigarettes gone up in smoke. *(Just a little under half a million - about a hundred cubic feet of tobacco if I calculate rightly.)* Not to mention an assortment of pipe tobacco and an occasional cigar. The idea of laying off has been flickering across my mind for some time...not with any real sense of purpose about it, mind you. I'm not all that bothered by what you call "fashionable bigotry" because I can be fashionably obnoxious. A charming young thing made some comments about smoking within my range of hearing a while back as I lit up. I informed her, among other things, that the alternative to smoking tobacco was chewing tobacco and she'd like that a hell of a lot less.

But yes, the idea of laying off has been flickering across my mind. I admit to doing a certain amount of psyching up. Last week I simply didn't buy any more cigarettes and when the last one on hand was gone...that was all there was. Have I quit smoking? Good question. Let's say that I am not smoking at the present time. Perhaps I have quit. Time will tell, no?

Good luck. Look at it this way - everybody stops smoking sooner or later.
Come to think of it, there is a school of thought that says that most of
us are going to end up smoking sooner or later.

Trash. I tend to agree with most of what you say. Does Joanna Russ write Science Fiction? The only thing of hers I have read (with any certain recall) is Picnic on Paradise which was not SF by my definition. It was a straightforward adventure story which happened to be set on another world and that does not, necessarily, make it SF. I think I would agree that Russ doesn't know what SF is about. But there are a lot of people in the field now who don't know what it is about. They have heard that there is a market there, where a few dollars may be made; they have heard that here is a field where one can try all sorts of weird and experimental ideas and techniques; some of it may be SF, some of it is not.

Your comments on engineers reminds me of a song of a few years back: little boxes on the hillside, little boxes made of ticky-tacky... and a line therein about the children going to the university where they're all put in boxes and they come out just the same---there's a doctor and a lawyer and et cetera. So, while I might agree with your observations about engineers, I wouldn't limit it to engineers.

Silverberg, Malzberg, and Ellison. Silverberg would be a loss to Science fiction but a gain to whatever he decides to settle on. Of the three I think that Silverberg is the only one who can make a real go of it in any other field. If he wanted to discard the frills of SF he could turn out excellent "mainstream" fiction. Silverberg is one I respect as a writer and not just as a stfpro. I have read vast assortments of Bob's books. He's good.

Ellison. Ummm. Komme ci, komme ca. Harlan is show biz, ya know, baby. He will dazzle you, he will entertain the hell out of you, but don't stop to think about it, to analyze it. It's a paper moon and a canvas sky and a muslin tree but Harlan can make it seem real. Yep, he's won awards. In show biz. His efforts at writing have not met with much success outside SF or show business.

Malzberg? Nothing. Nada. Nil.

Now I am sure that the various connoisseurs of what they like to call the "graphic story" (wunnerful words) will be able to point out all the differences in the works of Mike Gilbert and Howie Green but I must tell you, Richard, that they look just the same to me.

Your comments on writers are sage and wise and agree with my opinions.
Actually I must say that I don't really quite know what to make of Malz-
berg. Most of what I have read by him strikes me as miscellaneous whimper-
ing; however there are them as raves about him, and there are some mighty
high powered guns among those ravers.

You really think that Mike's stuff and Howie's stuff looks alike. I'm
boggled.

.....

Harry Warner Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740
October 22, 1976

Dear Richard:

I'm almost three months late with these comments on the seventh Personal Notes. If I'd been a full three months late, you might have less trouble reading them. This ribbon is bound to suffer any day now total collapse, in view of its advanced state of decay.

Three months?? Poof, tis nothing. I have just received a copy of
Gegenschein #13. Therein is a letter to Miss Lonelyfan. The author of
this letter claims that he has been held prisoner by Claude Degler for
thirty years. Said Degler has been making himself indispensable to fandom
by unequalled letterhacking under the letter writers name. The letter
to miss Lonelyfan did not include the writers name (as printed) but the
reply started off "===Harry, I'm afraid you're a very sick man." When I
read this a certain awful suspicion occurred to me. I don't mean to be
personal, but I was just wondering if you would mind answering a certain
question...

The cover is wonderful and, I'm afraid, very expensive. I have trouble adjusting to the fact that Xerox black and white reproduction never quite looks as good as I imagine it should be, while the color Xerox work is so much finer than can reasonably be expected at such an early stage of its infancy. If a photographer were turning out conventional prints from a slide or color negative, it would probably take most of an evening to obtain the good color balance that prevails in all of the color Xerox work I've seen in fanzines.

I hope your description of how you kicked the cigarette habit inspires some readers to go and do likewise. I've never smoked and I found it intensely interesting. At that, I had a vaguely analogous experience years ago, which I was forced to improvise as I went along. Nobody has written a book yet on how to break the habit of eating every evening a Peppermint Pattie, one of the big ones that cost a dime at the time and probably are much more expensive now. I'm not sure that the disadvantages of smoking don't include difficulties in dealing with the world. I eat a lot of meals at lunch counters. I've noticed that the individuals who sit near me and order nothing but coffee will usually drink without dawdling and will leave after perhaps ten minutes if they aren't smoking. The ones who smoke will often stretch that cup of coffee into a stay at the lunch counter at least as long as mine: twenty to thirty minutes, perhaps, depending on how long I must wait for service and how large a meal I've ordered. Some of the coffee drinkers who smoke just sip with the utmost delicacy. Others drink the coffee without delay but continue to sit there over the empty cup smoking another cigarette or two or three. Unless the smokers are thinking important thoughts and the non-smokers lack the ability to think over a cup of coffee, it looks as if the cigarette habit induces a delay in resuming one's activities.

Er, but smoking is an activity to be enjoyed in it's own right. You can
smoke while you are working though. (Depending on what kind of work you
do, of course. There is much to be said for not smoking while pumping
gasoline.) Tobacco can be relaxing and pleasant - it was called the peace
pipe for a reason, after all.

"Trash" seems a poor word semantically for science fiction, since I gather that you don't really think it's "trash" in the normal sense of that word. Why can't fans and pros give it a word with less severe emotional overtones, as Graham Greene did when he called his less weighty fiction "entertainments"?

Your trip report was the most fascinating thing in this issue to me. I had a wild impulse to go over there myself around the same time: it hit me when I read about Julie Andrew's return to the Palladium and for one awful evening I really thought I might yield to the impulse. (I sometimes do wild things: impulse was what impelled me to attend my first con, more than twenty years after I'd entered fandom!) Your description of the lesser roads in England gave that *deja vu* sensation for a little while, until I realized what was happening. Obviously I was remembering all those British roads that John Peel and Emma Steed had driven down in the Avengers, as well as the other motoring scenes in British movies. I had always imagined that the roads in such productions looked like that because they weren't real roads at all but just farm lanes which had been utilized to avoid difficulties with normal traffic. You also cleared up for me the nature of the British roundabout which I had seen mentioned without explanation in various British fanzines. Alas, even you failed to solve the most serious mystery of all: exactly what is the "double knock" in England, which figures so often in Dickens' novels. A knock by both hands simultaneously? A knock which continues twice as long as usual? A knock much louder than normal? Or something altogether different?

I don't think that most SCA participants get disoriented from the remainder of reality. Is membership in that group so much different from the role-playing that almost everyone engages in every day? When I drive in the summer through the most expensive suburb of Hagerstown, where the executive and management people live, I see men who are office bosses during weekdays spending their weekends and evenings laboring over the lawn and garden or painting shutters, just like a farmer tending his land and I am sure that many of them spend some hours weekly sneaking around in dismal circumstances with their mistresses. There's some role-playing involved here which isn't really different from the young fan who pictures himself as Old Barf Ears or the SCA hobbyist. A long time ago, Jack Speer wrote a good article in FAPA called, I believe, "Meet The Gang". Only after you'd read all the way through his series of thumbnail sketches of various characters did you realize that they were all various phases of Juffus himself. The percentage of fans who get so obsessed with their fannish life that they find themselves in real psychological trouble has always been extremely low. It certainly is not as big a problem as it is in the world of sports, for instance, where adjustment problems can become tremendous for kids who were first stringers on the high school eleven and find they can't make a mark in the tougher circumstances of college athletics, for the ball players who in their thirties find their career ending and must leave the limelight and try to survive in other forms of employment, for coaches who try to run their wife and children as they do their squads.

Mike Gilbert's pages were very funny. They didn't give me once the usual reaction that I have to such creativity, the sense that I could enjoy it much more if I had more background in graphic stories.

That is an excellent point about sports leading to adjustment problems
for participants. Sports is another area where one can get absorbed
into something until it constitutes the entire universe.

This whole business is one that I went into at some length in APA:NESFA.
The approach I took there was to deplore the dangers of monomania which
is a somewhat different matter.

Paula Lieberman
31 July 1976
3985 E Bijou #110
Colorado Springs CO 80909

Richard:

Received PN#7 today; my fanac seems to be getting picked up. Yesterday Don-o-Saur #46 showed up, I returned to the pages of APA-L a few weeks ago, I've got seven stencils waiting to be sent to A:N and one of these days Shadow & Substance might even get done.

That picture makes you look like a slightly improved version of Mike glicksohn (but not much!) Oh well, at least your chin isn't showing, though you e-rs are.

But who needs to staple stone tablets together? Those one merely stacks... and if one disapproves of the recipient it is easy to signify displeasure - one merely drops the tablets upon his feet.

Harter without a cigarette? Astounding! Guess we may never see you stoop to the depths of digging through a full wastebasket at a party at 2 am to try and find a butt with a fraction of an inch of smokable cigarette left on it (most of what was in the basket was empty beer cans and cigarette butts) or crawling out of bed to blindly hunt for that cigarette.

There is a resurgence now of pottery and glasswork made in the shop. A couple of weeks ago I visited the Van Briggie pottery here in Colorado Springs and a place called the Jolly Glassblowers. The first place had a lot of ceramic and some pottery for sale; there were a couple of pieces that I know Tony and Sue would fall in love with. At the second place I bought a warm glass swan bowl 12" long and several inches high for \$4.50 and one labelled a "second" because it had bubbles in the glass for \$2.50. Meanwhile I watched the glassworkers making things out of glass. And there are other places where I have seen silversmiths at work and other craftsmen. But it is true that such people tend either to be very old or several years under thirty. There are hardly any true craftsmen who are middleaged. I don't feel like writing more on the subject right now, but if prompted to, there's a lot more I can say.

So consider yourself prompted already and write something.

Three hits with over ripe fruit -- your article on SF as Trash is interesting, thought provoking, logically written -- but you didn't finish Harter, it just drops. The end just sits there and it is very unsatisfying -- it doesn't end well. So finish the article, damn it.

I'd rather read PN than SFR. I don't really like SFR, I don't. Does that mean I'm an imitation fan (assuming the definition of fakefan being a non-reader of SF but a fan of fandom instead. -- like maybe Mike Glicksohn or Craig Miller of the LASFS or any of a dozen other people anyone can think of (though not necessarily the same people)).

I've been meaning to speak to you about your syntax. Multiple levels of parentheses may be de rigeur in computer programming but they are not at all the thing in ordinary prose.

Speaking of cats, I just developed several rolls of film I'd had for months and two of them were of the cat at my former residence at MIT, though it was half an hour before I remembered what I was doing with two rolls of film of a cat that I couldn't remember. After a while, though, the picture of the cat in the sink jogged my faulty memory -- the pictures were almost two years old!

Hangover? What's a hangover? I don't get them.

"Degree of respect to fandom?" Consider Mike Glicksohn the honorary recipient of a bag of marshmallows via airmail. After all, if one can reward big name pros for pomposity by throwing marshmallows at them...

Er, Paula, I think you've gotten a little confused on the marshmallow bit.
Think of marshmallows as frozen lime jello.

=====

That seems to take care of the accumulated correspondence. There are also notes from Dick Geis, Howie Green, Bill Warren, and Victroy and Vanguard Swan. I see that this issue has set still another size record for PN, even if I stop typing stencils at this very moment.

Whoops. I take that back. There are two further letters that I forgot about. One is a letter that Mike Saler sent me last fall. I must say that I found it very confusing at the time, and I filed it under miscellaneous exotica. Recently I unearthed it and it seems to make much more sense in a rather surprising fashion. Truly Mr. Saler is a man who is ahead of his time.

The other wasn't really sent to me in my capacity as editor of PERSONAL NOTES. It was, presumably, meant for me personally. In view of the contents, hwoever, I feel it only right to include it in the zine.

But first, a graffitti observed on the walls of a mens room at MIT:

=====

GRAFFITTI IN A MIT JOHN

Limit $\sqrt{10} \approx 3$

(for sufficiently small values of 10)

=====

Mike Saler
November 3, 1976
393 Main St.
Concord MA 01742

Dear Richard,

Thank you very much for the copy of PERSONAL NOTES and I apologize for the delay in writing this letter. I feel confident in saying that this is the latest letter you have ever received.

Tim Joseph's "Unified Field Theory" was hilarious. Ditto for your "Miskatonic University SF Fan Course Offerings." As an aspirant to the title of "Convention Chairman" (how does Concord MA in 1980 strike you?), I would love to take both the Worldcon Bidding Course and the Con-Chairing Course. As an Ancient One, will you be teaching any of the courses?

"Where Are They?" was a superlative article. It deserves to be printed in a prozine...which leads me to an interesting question. Do you pay yourself for your articles in cash or contributors copies? I can't imagine you accepting the latter as compensation, as you could simply write to yourself and get a free copy. And Richard Harter, the Dick Dastardly of Fandom, the man who freely admits in this issue to owning a house in affluent Concord, would not allow an article of his to be published without suitable recompense. *(Of course I wouldn't. I charge myself two dollars a word for everything I write. As it happens, however, the publisher has a cash flow problem and I am being paid in IOU's.)* The Concord Committee for the Preservation of Pure Fanzines will be keeping an eye on you. (Not to mention the Concord Chapter of The John Birch Society, which fully lauds your capitalistic exploits. David Rockefeller will never sit at your table, right?)

I liked your fan jokes and can see them gradually evolving into specialized areas of fandom. Did you hear the new Lime Jello joke? The new Corflu joke? ~~WKK/ADG/THE/LATTI/ALISA/FAN/CPHSE/TAL/STHAFZ/TAL/ADG/TB/THE/EDHE/SLAB/~~ Keep it up.

I thoroughly enjoyed this issue, though, and once again apologize for not writing sooner. Sheila Gilbert's trip report was enjoyable and Sue Lewis' refutation of your "Science Fiction is Trash" theory was extremely interesting.

And my comment about my letter in this issue causing me to smile caused me to smile...

.....

Rev. Joseph Green
March 17, 1977

Dear Richard,

You don't know me, and I must apologize to you in advance for my presumption in writing to you. A number of our mutual acquaintances have suggested that I contact you, for they assure me that you are the very person I seek.

As you may know, I am a revivalist minister and have preached salvation and temperance for many years. During the last ten years my ministry has been made more effective by my invaluable assistant, "Crazy" Jack Williams.

Jack had once been a confirmed victim of the demon, Rum. It was in Memphis at a revival meeting that I was preaching at where he found Jesus in his heart and forswore the life of sin that he had been leading. And it was at that time that he came to me, humbly, asking what he could do to help the work of the Lord. At first I was hard pressed to answer him for his life of disappation had so ruined him that he was scarcely fit for the ministry or, indeed, for any other work. At last, however, it occurred to me that he might serve very well as an assistant to bear witness to the evil of drink, to serve, so to speak, as a bad example.

It was a work to which he was uniquely suited. Drink had done its work well on him. His faculties were not all they could have been but he was amiable; I can see him now with his everpresent vacuous grin. I have no doubt that the tremors were due to drink. I rather suspect that his habit of tuneless humming sprang from the same cause. However the thing that made him such a potent object lesson was the devastating effects of the various social diseases he had contracted upon his appearance. (I need only mention the way his left ear was eaten away and hung in tatters.) That, and his occasional habit of screaming and flailing away at imaginary snakes.

Despite the ruin that drink had worked on him Jack was an amiable and willing worker for the Lord. Recently, however, he finally succumbed to the ravages of tertiary syphilis and passed away. His loss is a hard one - his example on stage was so very effective - and I should very much like to replace him. This brings me to my question. Many of your acquaintances who are aware of my problem have suggested that you are a natural and obvious replacement for Crazy Jack - some even saying that you would be much better in the post.than he. It is my hope that you will see your way clear to do the Lord's work and take this chance to redeem what little remains of your wasted life.

This letter did not immediately disturb me for I supposed it to be addressed to the wrong Richard Harter (one of the Dover ones, no doubt.) However I began to worry when I showed it to a friend and he immediately started discussing how much money was brought in at revival meetings and what percentage of the cut I should ask for.

=====

So much for letters and such. The length at this point precludes any further personal babbling, or even any impersonal babbling. Since this was started we have rented the upstairs to a couple and are slowly renovating the downstairs. Slowly is the operative term here. We have done a bit, I suppose. Four rooms have been wallpapered and two of those repainted. The bathroom has all new fixtures and we have put up tile. We still haven't got in the suspended ceiling though. In short we have here the makings of a fine fannish saga (a la Bombeck). In view of the size of the zine, however, it is a tale that will have to be deferred until next time.

A few notes on production. The cover is, as you may have surmised, wallpaper. (Surely not a common choice for magazine covers.) The next issue will have the cover that was intended for this issue, a hand printed multicolor grove of trees. We have been working on it but it goes slowly. I switched paper supplies in mid stream. I am not sure that I like the new paper, although it is prettier. The trouble is that it demands slipsheeting which is a nuisance.

Next issue I hope to do a long deferred report on the Stock Market and my interest and reading in it. I must say that the market has treated me very well. In a period of about two and one half years I took out about six thousand dollars which is about sixty percent on my money. The profits from my market operations helped pay for the down payment on the house and for the renovation we have been doing. It is not at all clear to me that the market was a better use of my money. Oh well, a house is supposed to be a bulwark against inflation and all that sort of thing. We shall see.

I also have a new job. I am back at Lincoln Labs programming radar software. This is not excessively exciting, but it has its points of interest, and it pays very well. Getting the job is another little saga that is well worthy of writing up.

The house, as you may have suspected, is responsible for the long delay in getting out this issue. Indeed, if I had not been unemployed for a month, it would still not be out.

As a last note I will recommend The Seven Percent Solution, both the book and the movie. Those who are insuperably wedded to Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes will be a little upset. On the other hand the portrayal of Sigmund Freud is magnificent.

Until next time.....

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