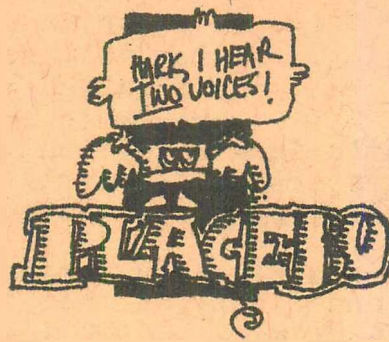


PLACEBO 3.5 SALTED SMOKED





This is SALTY SMOKED SALMON
a letter supplement on PLA-
CEBO 3. Although it is be-
ing published after #4 it
is especially numbered 3.5
to annoy you completist fan-
zine filers, the very peop-
le who might have noticed
that October was PLACEBO's
first anniversary. We had
of course, planned a giant,
gala annish but we realized
early on that we had a prob-
lem — no articles. For all
our begging and pestering
we had had no outside contri-
butions of written material
and almost no artwork. Look-
ing over the old letters on
#3 we noticed that some of them
seemed stale even to us and
we wondered too if maybe the
reason there haven't been
more locs on #4 is that you
haven't seen your locs on
#3 in print. So, rather
than keep those locs salted
away in our files any longer
we did a bit more editing
and put this supplement to-
gether. No.5 awaits your
locs and contributions.

— M.F. & B.S.

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Barry Smotroff
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Michael Glicksohn
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I'm afraid I wasn't as impressed with this issue as I'd hoped to be. It doesn't seem to live up to your first two issues. The thicker paper is fine as far as cutting down see-

through is concerned (I don't happen to like the color, but that's immaterial) but the production values seem low. Many of the pages are quite poorly reproduced, with blotches and lines on them that could very easily be removed with a little corflu.

Contentwise the issue is a bit of a let-down after #2, but then #2 had some fine material and I suppose this is only to be expected. I'm still not quite sure about Hank Davis' article. The title is positively brilliant, and there is much that is amusing through the article, but there's also what seems to be an undercurrent of maliciousness that somehow spoils it for me. It's as if Hank wasn't sure if he was merely being funny or if he was spitefully getting in a few digs at fannish foes and fallacies. This dual purpose seems to set up stresses that weaken the article.

Hank's view of faneds I must take as an attempt at humor that just doesn't strike me as humorous. I doubt that there are many faneds as debased as Hank describes and yet I do get the feeling that he's writing not entirely in jest. As for con committees, well my answer to Hank is clearly laid out in the editorial of the latest AMAZING/Sept. 7 where Ted quotes extensively from a letter I wrote on this subject. I do hope, though, that Hank is aware that the selection of an expensive Worldcon hotel is something over which concons have no control. (From some of Hank's asides at Ted, I wonder if he reads either of the magazines Ted edits? He seems to bear quite a strong grudge against Ted.)

The old idea of sf as the guiding light and the entire question of "Whither Science Fiction?" must surely be one of the most worn out topics in the history of fandom. I'd be interested in reading Wollheim's ideas (although I doubt I'd agree with many of them) but I shudder at the thought of yet another long, drawn-out, and basically fruitless analysis of this tired old concept. For our sakes, guys, please don't resurrect it, huh?

The idea behind the double review was fine, but hard to implement. The least you could have done would have been to keep Ole son on the right side of each consecutive double page and Greenwald on the left. Not perfect, but better than the way it ended up, I think. Then there's the question of whether or not Olefson was worth printing in the first place. He seems to be so hung up on the excitement of his sexual image that he doesn't care whether or not he communicates anything. Well, I for one am not sufficiently blinded by his daring departure from conventional imagery to fail to note that the "review" says practically nothing. He promises to "give some examples" of how sf is "on the verge of putting out" (whatever the hell he means by that) but then seems to give examples that prove the opposite, how restricted and irrelevant sf actually is. Perhaps Mr. Olefson should consider that the image itself is not important, what matters is how appropriate the image is to what the writer has to say. If it is Mr. Olefson's contention that the field has become inbred and insular, that "They just ain't writin' like they did when I was a nipper" and if he gets a thrill out of shocking us with sexual images, then surely he should have chosen to describe sf in terms of masturbation, not prostitution?

You know, I don't think I've met anyone in fandom in the last year or so who's impressed me more than David Emerson. In simple terms, he's a natural. He's also proven himself to be a very capable writer, as some of his hilarious con reports in BREET have shown. Alas, it therefore saddens me to have to admit that I didn't like his Hula-hoop article this issue. And what is worse, I can't even really say why. It seems to lack the grace of his best writing, and seemed somehow forced; as if a cute idea had been stretched all out of proportion. There were some funny lines there, and some good ideas, but I think it would have benefited from some pruning.

Oh dear, my subtle sense of humor blows it again. Or, perhaps, your subtle sense of humor upstages me completely. Of course I know what goes into gefilte fish. And what goes into lox. Did you know I was making a feeble pun? [We didn't then and do now. Anyway we didn't want to confuse people about gefilte fish's ingredients.]

Along with Loren MacGregor I suppose we all wonder at the devious paths followed by the USPOD. We recently got a note from Stan Lee's office in New York and, not surprisingly, the envelope had a N.Y. postmark. However, on the back of the envelope was a postmark from Miami Beach, Florida! You figure it out. (I've already told Terry Hughes that a copy of his MOTA came with the rubber-stamped message "Found in supposedly empty mailbag — Equipment and Repair Centre, Edgewater, N.J." The fact that there's a stamp to cover this situation is somewhat frightening!)

Re-using old envelopes may well be ecologically sound, but don't forget that it's the Post Office one is dealing with again. As the husband of the editor of ASPIDISTRA, naturally I tried this procedure: but recycling proved too much for the local mail sorters. More than half the time they'd send the fanzine right back to me, despite the fact that the TO part of the address was four times as large as the FROM. As this meant 15¢ or more additional postage each time, I soon gave up on the idea of re-using other people's envelopes. Ecology is fine, if you can afford it. (And isn't that a beautiful straight line . . .?)

Don Fitch
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You're right there on the debasement of language. It's something which bothers me and which I try to avoid but it's clearly inherent in the linguistic process, and can be expected

to continue speeding up, along with the speeding-up of communication and of change in general in our society. Perhaps part of the debasement, and perhaps just another form of linguistic change, is the addition (and sometimes, substitution) of meanings — things are getting so that one hesitates to use the word "roach" (or "grass," "weed," "pot," "smoke," etc.) for their older denotations; even though the meaning is usually clear enough from the context; the listener's mind tends to wander from the point one is trying to make. *sigh*

That bit about needing to "show development in citizenship and patriotism" in order to graduate from highschool is indeed frightening, especially since it's so clearly subjective and probably designed to be discriminatory. (If a student has made The Authorities uncomfortable, and/or they don't like him, and they can't hang anything else on him; they'll get even with him by using this. There are times when even an ancient conservative such as myself feels a certain sympathy with the social revolution.)

Hank Davis has some clever points in his fanpower article (though I think there may be too much cleverness there, and too little accuracy), but he seems to be rather off the track about getting on a con committee and picking an expensive hotel, as far as I can judge from having eavesdropped on many recent concom's conversations. The plain fact is, a Big Con requires a Big Hotel and Big Hotels are Expensive. (Acto report: only ca. 13 cities in the U.S. have hotels large enough to hold a 2000-person con . . . and breaking the con up into several hotels will draw even more anguished bitching.) Also, ConCom people (they're a special breed) know by now that most fans (for some inexplicable reason will be more satisfied with a \$30 perday hotel and a \$5 membership fee than with a \$20 hotel and a \$10 membership fee, even though the latter would be far cheaper in out-of-pocket expenses. And really (again, I think) the whole power trip syndrome Hank deals with is part of an older fandom; it's still hanging on, but the new fan scene puts much more emphasis on being a Good Person, and the power-trippers are viewed with amused (and slightly condescending) toleration. [We think you and Mike took Hank a little too seriously. His article was a satire, not a muckraking expose.] [Speaking for myself: I can't help but wonder why you two, as well as others, had to rush to deny the reality of what Hank describes, doings which previously had seemed to me to be obviously satirically exxagerated, too wild to be within the realm of possibility. Perhaps I'm just too naive and innocent, or are some people feeling guilty? — M.F.]

I haven't noticed anyone in LAfandom making an attempt to observe the Dietary Laws (except during Pesach, when it seems to be more a matter of Tradition than of conviction), but I suppose it would be difficult in many cities — even in L.A. (Kantor's, for example, has delicious ethnic food, but kosher it isn't.) I remember acting as Shabbes Goy for Avram Davidson at the ?Pacificon? Baycon? when he was being Orthodox — we must have walked 8 or 10 miles across the city looking for a kosher place he could Really Trust, and climbing many stairs, because his room was on the 10th floor. Basically, most LAFans of Jewish heritage seem to be . . . quasi-agnostics of Jewish heritage, though a few seem to observe Reform practices. Though a few have been studying religion there seems to be an element of fashionableness in their attitude and somehow it seems a little strange to see someone lighting the Sabbath candles in the midst of a noisy room party at a con.

I wonder if the next decade or so will see more of a return to religious roots — Christianity doesn't seem to lend itself to that very well, because so much of it is ridiculous in the light of the modern world, but Judaism has a mystical element and a non-demanding (or individualistic) attitude [!!] which (along with its extraordinarily powerful traditions) could be quite comforting to those who are looking for Roots. (This has been, sor of, a continuation of an early-morning conversation at the worldcon with Brad Balfour, who has been travelling around the country in a van all summer and who is re-discovering his Jewish heritage.)

Hey, may I assume your permission to reprint that Baskin-Robbins Chorus in APA-L? [Yes — M.F.] B-R ice cream is a great delight of LA fandom, too — Bruce Pelz still holds an annual Virgileo Party (to celebrate his and his ex-wife's birthdays, and get rid of mathoms) with the requirement for admission being that females bring 2 quarts of soft drinks and males a pint of B-R (no substitutes allowed, not even Swenson's) ice cream. (Those who are undecided are requested to bring both, but they rarely do.) (The gluttons, of course, prefer Farrell's,

but we don't talk about that.) Since I'm psychologically addicted I usually take two pints — often mandarin chocolate [Yay!-BS] and Daquiri Ice — and often eat that much. This is a rare binge, of course, dictated mostly by the fact that there is no B-R store in the Covina area. *sigh*

Cy Chauvin misses the point (even though you might not have known you were making it) of the Trollope review. One does not get all Excited over Trollope (or Jane Austen or Charles Lamb) — they are the sort of writers who attract a small, devoted but quiet circle of devotees. [At last! Someone who understands. Thanks for saying it Don, and thanks too to you and all the others who responded to my filk song query-MF]

Jeff Schalles
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It all comes back to me now, the way you two were describing this ish in all its 10000# paper glory with Hula Hoop Mythos and - and- and and it's all true. From an over all

point of view, this is quite a fine issue.



So, Moshe — except for the fact that I almost never opened a comic book, opting for SF paper and hardbacks from the local libraries your editorial hits awful close to home with my early years. I didn't fit in either. I was rotten at sports, intolerant of stupidity, disinterested in fighting and the "who-can-take-who" arguments that were so prevalent (leaving me with a sore mouth and a bleeding nose, seeing as I was the one person around that "anyone could take" and anyone and everyone did. It was the neighborhood shortcut to manhood). I had a list a lightyear long of kids and teachers who were Gonna Get It. But I haven't given it to them, not yet and not directly. But I figure all the time I spent reading and writing and thinking, and eventually later in highschool, fanning, wasn't all for nothing. And while all of them are now jerking sodas and playing soldier and chasing footballs and pushing pencils behind scummy desks, I'm hoping to be an Arty Feller who writes and thinks and does neat stuff like that. So fuck them all. Hah!

I liked the Stu Shiffman illos for the Hula Hoop Mythos. Much better than I could have done, so I'm glad I didn't bother to try. Stu is the kind of artist fandom USED to have quite a few of around, until they were all scared away by Kirk and Barr and them people. By the way, who is Stu? Has he been around for a while, or is he a new guy? /He's been in fandom about a year and a half — a bearer of the PLACEBO seal of approval./

Ah — and Barry, can you tell me anything more about that law saying that a person may be denied a high school diploma for not showing development in patriotism and citizenship (which could mean anything from flunking POD to burning the school, down to stealing it and hiding it a Commie Martyr to . . .)? I remember when I was a high school senior, the people in my homeroom decided one morning that they didn't feel like standing for the national anthem and mouthing the pledge of allegiance and then sitting back down for the moment of silent meditation. We all just sat there the whole time while the words and music came in over the intercom from wherever it originated in the bowels of the Office, staring at the walls, the ceiling, the floor, the clock, anything but at the teacher who stood there with her hand over her heart facing the little scummy flag by the door, glancing back at us with ever increasing evil looks, but afraid to do anything until the sacred rites were over. And when they were over, she said — "Well!" and told us not to leave the room until she came back with the principal. So we sat there twitching in our seats while the first bell rang and while the kids that were supposed to be in our room for first period math class piled up outside the door, and then the principal stormed in and told us what a bunch of dirty traitors and commies and everything we were, and said we all oughta be arrested and thrown in prison for what we had done, and that he was calling a special meeting of the school board to see what disciplinary action could be brought against us. But nothing ever came of it. When they started fishing around to do something to us, a three student committee of with-it students (I really had very little to do with all of this. I had been reading a book that morning when someone nudged me and said: "Hey, we're not gonna put pu with the moring exercises today. Don't stand up. Pass it on." So I absently passed it on and went on reading and read right on through all that went on, and was late for my class like everyone else, but, luckily, the teacher was one of the young with-it guys who thought what we had done was a Great Thing and spent all of English class talking about it with us. While I kept on reading.) went up and pointed out that there wasn't a damn thing they COULD do to us, because, at that time at least, there was no real reason for us to stand up and go through with all that shit except for the fact that Everyone Had Been Doing It for years, so why not keep on doing it? So nothing happened to us. Except that the faculty went on a big patriotism kick and they got new flags for all the rooms which were three times as large as the old ones and had gold fringe around them, and they had a special Patriotism assembly that we all had to attend where some of the dinky smart-ass brown-nosin "patriotic" students got up and read us Patriotic and Inspiring speeches while everyone sat and yawned and I read . . .

So what can they do to us NOW?

Aljo Svoboda
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I read PLACEBO after every meal and before I went to bed /and call us in the morning./ and felt better within the week. . . . And once upon a time

I received PLACEBO in the mail, in about the Middle Ages, or was it June? Certainly, though, not in April, the date on the issue itself. Curses on you but dates like that give me guilt feelings even when I know it didn't come out then and I know this really isn't all that late of a loc, and inspire me to get it done and out of the way. Now don't you feel ashamed of yourselves for pulling a filthy fannish trick like that? [No]

Moshe, you seem to be of the same ilk as fen used to come from . . . rejected by mundania, even if in this case, it was you who rejected them, and not vice versa (the same is true in mycase, though not to such a marked degree as you) . . . introverted, but only because there's not a person to communicate with . . . the usual.

And if you think you're guilty of grandiose schemes . . . I too was determined to take over the junior high school I attended, when I was in the eighth grade, by harnessing the discontent of the more vocal students into revolution (the traditional sort of thing . . . storming the vice-principals office, holding him hostage, and like that). However, I was not so idealistic as to dream of imposing peace on the world through my efforts . . . no, I was going to secede from the Union and form a new nation on the junior high school. And, if that idn't work, I could always get sanctuary in Switzerland I thought. Of course, I don't think I ever really took my plan seriously, but iw was interesting to think about.



Hank davis, in his penetrating expose, comes dangerously close to the truth, dangerously close. Have to see what we can do about that, yes.

Hank Davis
4268 Bedford Ave.
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229

Obviously, I have set free dangerous knowledge, perhaps even things that fen were not meant to know, with my article, as witness that PLACEBO's sinister co-faneds turned my lore

against me by changing my "sergeant" to a "sargeant" — surely a classic case of the typo which does not look like a typo. But I fear it not. Now that I dwell in the catacombs of the IRS I have more power than any SMOF can muster. . . .

Moshe's lament for the comic books of yesterday struck a responsive triad (not any chord, mind you, but a triad!), even if he and I lament after somewhat different things. I mainly recall how dismal my comic reading seemed after entropy swallowed up Captain Marvel before the big, red cheese could so much as say "holy moley." But bringing up Supergirl instantly unsnaps my three-ring, imitation-leather-bound time-binder, for she came along during the first three or four year period in which I lost interest in comic books, and she

was well established with her secret identity, her supercat, the obligatory friendly enemy who always somehow suspects that Philbert Desenex, is, in reality, Wonder Warthog, and so on, by the time she first came into my ken. I have more nostalgia for Marsboy, Superboy's counterpart (and pal) on Mars.

Speaking of Supergirl, your wondering about her virginity, or perhaps the late lack thereof, brings up the problem of just how she could stop being a virgin. Surely, all parts of her anatomy are equally invulnerable. . . . If the necessity arose, the Man of Steel himself could come through, but that seems to be taboo lately. Not just immorality, but taboo. At her debut, Supergirl was a third or fourth cousin of Superman, but the passage of time seems to have transformed her into a closer relative, perhaps to avoid plot complications, perhaps to pave the way for evil, depraved Underground D.C. comics.

Superman is not the only candidate, naturally, I once mentioned to Ira Donewitz that there are several superheroes who might have the superclout to attend to the lady's deflowering. He agreed, and immediately suggested one that I hadn't thought of. "There's always Krypto," he said.

Barry's reflections upon roaches leads me to ponder Kafka's "Metamorphosis." If roaches were the only animal, would a man's turning into a roach be more horrible (because the metaphor of dehumanization would be more tightly focussed) or less (what else is there to metamorphose into)? Would the story's title lose its meaning if roaches spun cocoons from which they later emerged as roaches? Would Universal, in their first Lon Chaney, Jr. flick, "The Roachman," have to pay royalties to Kafka?

See how I always drag in the sercon aspects?

The Master and Margarita indeed deserves attention; more than it has received from fans, if not from the mundanes, who gave it GOOD REVIEWS in IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS. (But on second thought, wasn't there only one Signet paperback printing? Hmmm.... /The second printing is now out-MF/) When it broke the surface in 1968, I wrote a rave review of it for a fanzine -- which publication promptly folded. Obviously, another of those things that fan were not meant to know. But surely they realized the novel must be superb. . . . did not Judith Merrill give it a ho-hum review in F&SF? Who could ask for a clearer indication of high quality?

Don Keller
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Interesting to see the article on The Master and Margarita. I first encountered it in a book column of Judith Merrill's; she didn't like it that much, instead raving about

Miguel Angel Asturias' Mulata, a strange surrealistic, mythological (South American variety) fantasy -- the author was a Nobel Prize winner. Despite being a Spanish major and thus being able to judge the translation as excellent, I nonetheless could not finish it. But I did read Bulgakov's novel, and quite enjoyed it, a superior near fantasy. Bulgakov's Heart of a Dog, telling of a dog changed into a man and Black Snow, a mainstream theatrical novel, are also quite good. /I agree, and would have mentioned them had there been time and space-MF/

I am also quite heartened by the discussion of the debasement of the language, for it's something that frustrates me terribly, the

emptiness of so many words or phrases, especially superlatives; it makes it difficult to write a satisfactory review. /Why are superlatives so important? Shouldn't a review be more concerned with why something is good? Superlatives are used to show degree of "enjoyment" something even the debased ones do.-BS/ And cliches frustrate hell out of me in my fantasy writing — I have to twist and rewrite them in a fresh mode of expression. No wonder I write so seldom.

I have absolutely decided that Hank Davis is insane. Incurably. You also seem to have adopted him as your mascot, in a kind of way. His piece on how to fool neofans is chilling — I finished it and began to wonder: how do I know I'm sane? Scary. Let us be grateful that Hank does not (yet) publish his own fanzine. Ghod knows what nefarious schemes he'd perpetrate upon us.

I totally enjoyed David Emerson's "Tales of the Hula Hoop Mythos." It's one of those things you rarely see, an utterly absurd idea extrapolated to its logical end. I laughed out loud through much of it. Shiffman's illos were excellent.

Jerry Kaufman
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Your list of debased words, Moshe, can be swelled by every hip expression of the last five years. It can also be swelled by such phrases as "Like nothing you've ever seen before

. . . again!" I think the death of metaphors and the "debasement" of strong words is a natural thing in every language, resulting from the constant use of them. I wonder if "golly" was ever a shocking thing to say. /Probably not. Golly, like gosh, originated as a euphemism for "god."-MF/

The Hank Davis article was pretty amusing, but could have been cut some. I will admit, though, he had a few good ideas in there, and I'll be trying them out pretty soon. First, though, I'll be going to the Sargasso Sea, where I'll be testing them out on Hula Hoops.

I read The Master and Margarita several yeats ago, but never thought it needed to stock the essential mind. Are you trying to brainwash us all into your state of mind, or are you willing to allow others to brainwash you? /You're misinterpreting the phrase "essential mind." Go back to #1 and take a look. you'll find that I applied it to a certain quality possessed by certain authors (and others) and their works. I'm not trying to establish an SF five foot shelf. The books I choose to write about (not, please note, review) are obscure things, worthy of interest but not always ownership. Now that I've explained all that why don't some of you send us a short list of your most essential (in Jerry's sense) books.-MF/ My essential mind includes: Mr. Dooley on Ivrything and Ivribody, I Lost It at the Movies, The Pogo Sunday Brunch, The Einstein Intersection, Alice in Wonderland, Ulysses, Myths and Rituals of Initiation and lots of more conventional books (Proceedings of the Discon, the Unicon, Memory Book from Tricon, etc.)

Michael Dobson
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The major reason I'm writing this, since I really don't loc too many fanzines, having not that much to say, is as a sort of personal response to "Sinuous Convolutions." I think

that probably most of your letters deal in some way with that piece; it's one of the nice, personal, well-done essays that turn up from time to time in odd places. Moshe, you can write sir. Even from

the beginning paragraphs, you slip into your childhood and expose nostalgia for the awful fifties for what it really is. The piece appeared for me at a very good time. I recently read Harlan's "One Life, Furnished in Early Poverty" and Lisa Tuttle's "Stranger in The House." And the old, deadly fantasy about returning to my childhood with All That I Know Now has been playing on my mind a lot. I drive thirty minutes from my house to school each morning, and my mind does a lot of wandering. Back and forth, around. It's so tempting to believe it all, but any logical analysis shows it to be invalid.

When I was in the eighth grade, in a forlorn and terrible attempt to completely dissociate myself from the little monsters that surrounded me, I told everybody (teachers included, just to be consistent) that I was an alien observer of Earth, a creature of Tau Ceti II (a planet with which I am in a way more familiar with than Earth) lurking among them. The reaction of the students was obvious. I was a "Martian" (or "Moonman", sometimes in the same sentence, as the students were unable to tell them apart.) "Dobson, if you're an alien, you wanna fight?" I lived in Alabama at the time, so probably the reaction was slightly worse than it might have been elsewhere. The eighth grade was for me the turning point of my life, the period of total insanity between real childhood and the beginnings of my maturity. A horrible time. Gee, you and Aljo and Moshe had all these schemes and fantasies — I was just an ordinary kid, I never planned more than the murder of some of my teachers-BS/

Sandra Miesel
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Barry, please stop tormenting yourself. I haven't the least recollection of anything you did at Noreascon. Honest. Although I have a ferocious temper, I haven't eaten a neo yet. Marion

Aimmer Bradley, on the contrary, has. Some years ago she was presented with a gingerbread neo, complete with beanie, and bit off its head with gusto.

And isn't it time we asked if that remarkably tranquil fellow at con parties can possibly be Hank Davis, the captivating Kentucky wit? Matching the person with the byline is often confusing — Mike Glicksohn expected me to be dour and middle-aged. Would the ultimate SMOF be a projecting telepath capable of creating mass delusions? Does such exist at present?

Loved the "Hula Hoop Mythos." "Immature hooplings" is a fine phrase. But what of the nerf ball? Where does it fit in the schema? Are they mutant offshoots of hula-hoop stock doomed to perpetual adolescence? Evidence for this view comes from observations of the heroic efforts whereby nerf balls occasionally turn themselves into nerf disks.

We took all the children to Midwestcon and they behaved amazingly well. Chirp showed wonderful poise, walking up to people, shaking their hands, "How do you do? I am very pleased to meet you. This is my first time at a con." If you want to make a favorable impression on her, should you ever meet her, kiss her hand. She loves this.

Terry Hughes
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Enjoyed David Emerson's bit. I always said that Davy Crocket Hats were for boys and Barbi dolls for girls, but hula hoops are bisexual! Columbia had a hula hoop contest recently but

they didn't let us big kids in. *sigh*

Seth McEvoy
Box 268
E. Lansing, Mi, 48823

Uh, who is Michael Carlson, and why is he saying those horrible things about me? "why is E.Lansing, Mich?" E.Lansing is, because it is east of Lansing, and home of Michigan State

University, the original land grant college.

Gibran now has outsold the Bible — I may leave the world! Thus endeth Western Civilization. /A final word on Gibran: I think that if you ignore the prose style you'll find that Gibran says some very true things. I'm not advocating his prose, just some of his ideas.-BS/

I think your writers don't understand what is neat about The Universe Makers — here is the first book to say what SF is about, by someone who has been at the center of things for a long time. If Don is wrong, he can't be far wrong — I thought he was a little harsh on Campbell, but otherwise right on the beam.

D. Gary Grady
520 Orange Street
Wilmington, NC 28401

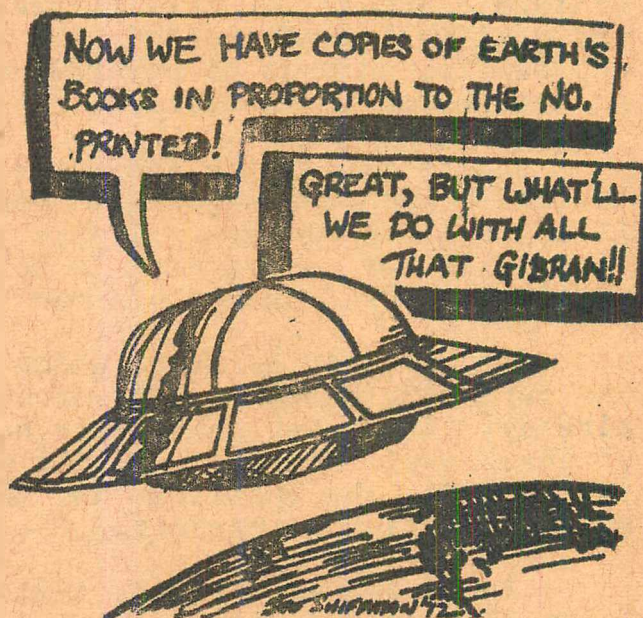
there's L.Sprague deCamp, H.Rider Haggard, J.William Fulbright, W.Somerset Maugham, E Teli-Keli, et al.

I disagree somewhat with Moshe on the educational value of SF. Much of the field is informative. Most fen can, for example, tell you where the asteroid belt is and what the Einstein clock paradox involves. And they have at least heard of neutron stars and black holes. I do agree that science fiction need not teach science to be good (but I can't see that it hurts if it does). /I agree, but isn't that sort of educational matter contained in many main-stream stories too? Anyway, the point is that SF is at its best when the education is only incidental.-MF/

Donn Brazier
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St.Louis, Mo.63131

Let's say that a person of any age has never read science fiction, has never even seen an SF movie or TV show. What will be this person's reaction to required, force-fed, SF reading? He will either like it and keep on with his reading, or cast it aside.

The assumption that this person has never read any SF or even seen an SF movie or TV show is practically ridiculous if the person is any age at all. Therefore, most exposures will have already taken place, and the person is wither infected with the SF virus, or he's immune, and further exposures for the immune person will actually



prove harmful to the purpose through re-inforcing his dislike or indifference. And the infected person will already be enjoying SF on his own.

So, we descend the age scale to very young children. At the primary level they could not understand any meaningful SF unless it were written for them directly. And there already is a body of literature designed for this purpose: the fairy tales. The fairy tales and similar legends contain the "sense of wonder," the prophecies and fulfillments as to rewards and punishments earned in the present and delivered in the future.

Let's zip up the age scale to about junior high. By this time the child has been exposed to some science and scientific experiments, if not science fiction. If his teachers have been clever he has developed, if not an interest in science, at least a curiosity about the world of natural things and man's inventions.

My question is this, which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Can curiosity be developed, or can it only be nurtured in a child who already, for either genetic or babyhood experience reasons, is full of curiosity? And such a child with curiosity and an appreciation of the curious, the puzzling, and the marvelous will most likely discover science fiction by himself.

In my own experience, this exposure took place by accident when I was already a junior in high school back in the year 1934. For some reason, unknown to me today, I did not realize that there was SF; I was totally ignorant of news-stands and magazines of all kinds except those that arrived in the mail for my parents. Put id down that I was a pretty stupid kid who spent most of his time playing softball in a vacant lot. However, when I was in the seventh grade my mind had been receptive to some science experiments shown to me by an uncle who performed mysterious things in my mother's kitchen sink. From this I had started to read books about astronomy, archeology, microbe hunting, etc.

At that point I would have been ready for an exposure to SF, I believe. However, it had to wait over four years for a fortuitous accident; a neighbor boy handing me a magazine with the statement that, boy, this is good stuff.

I'll never forget the thrilling, physical feeling of joy that came over me the night I read that first story: "Colossus" by Donald Wandrei in ASTOUNDING STORIES.

Basically, I think I'm saying that if you have the mind set to enjoy science fiction you will have the mind set to withstand "future shock" whether you've read any SF or not. I think that on that night back there in 1934 when my mind bumped into ASTOUNDING and boggled gleefully, I would have been just as gleefully boggled at a moon-walk, a flying saucer, or an invention as crazy as television.

Your last paragraph on p.9 gives too much credit to SF, I think, for stimulation in the world of words. I never got much of that from SF, but did in plenty of other places; whereas my own benefit did come in the field of science. I was highly stimulated by SF (and by interesting science) to grow up in science and make it a career. It also lead me into various fields that I had not run into previously,

i.e. semantics (from van Vogt). Is there really much "linguistic ambrosia" in SF? Some of Bradbury. Anything else? And don't refer me those dreamy crystal-colored paintpots. I said English can be "linguistic ambrosia," SF simply functions to clear the palate.-MF/

Pauline Palmer
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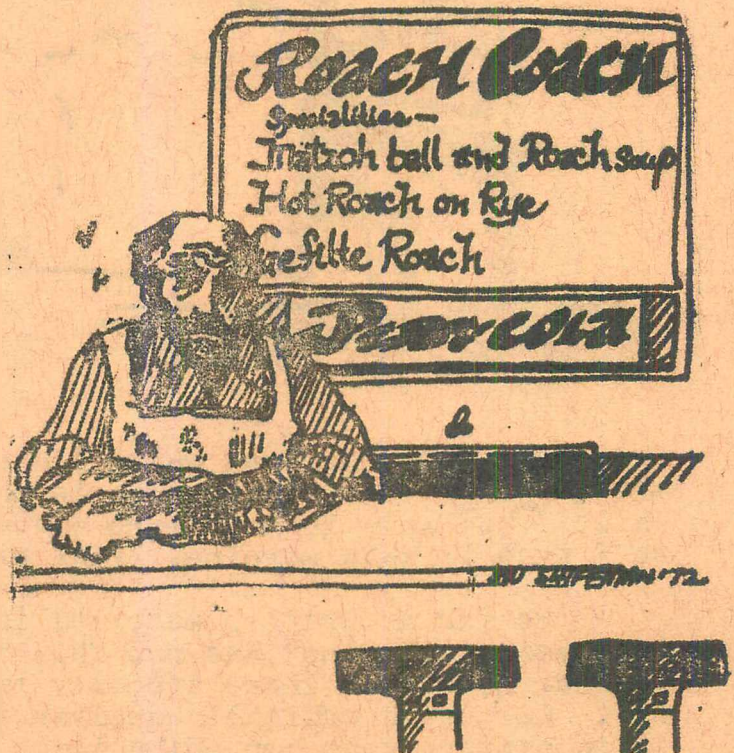
Moshe, I think your justification for reading SF on the rounds of "semantic tatebuds" and "linguistic ambrosia" (i.e., the existence in field of un-debased language) is

just as much an artificial and apologistic excuse as the ones you put down as untrue and unneeded. You said all that as necessary in the sentence, "SF, like any other form of literature, is its own raison d'etre, and nothing more is necessary." Yes, of course, and that's why I described SF's possible linguistic side-effects as fringe benefits rather than as justification. In the paragraph following the one from which you quote I said: "But I would like to point out the existence of a benefit of reading SF that you may not have noticed. It's a small benefit, not one that will matter to everyone, and not one to promise to the next person you start on his SF reading career." (underscoring added now). I then went on to describe an effect that SF had had on me, one that I couldn't really account for, but believed (I think) at the time of writing to be due in some vague way to SF's connection to science, a field that demands clarity and accuracy of expression. More on this later in the local.-MF/

Certainly in the sense that you have described, our language IS debased. Over-use of popular words and slang constantly causes loss of impact, if not actual out-and-out loss of meaning. I remember, when I was very young, that suddenly one day it dawned on me WHY a vacuum cleaner is called a vacuum cleaner. Up to that moment, it had just been another phrase that I'd known all my life and had never thought about when I used it. It was like discovering an entirely new word.

And discovering new words IS fun. Still. That's why I like to browse through dictionaries, and it's why etymology can be such an interesting field (when it isn't treated like so many sticks poked into the academic mud).

The type of prose you describe as being like "a drink of cold, clear spring water after a week in a desert" is very probably not what I would describe in those terms. But I suppose you mean the type of clear concise language use that makes each word carry its own full strength of meaning. This is what good poets do, whether writing poetry or prose. I hope so, I've been a poet almost as long as I've been an SF reader.-MF/ And I would suspect that the percentage of SF authors today who possess the ability to write like that is much



the same as the percent of current mainstream (prose) writers or the percentage of all contemporary poets.

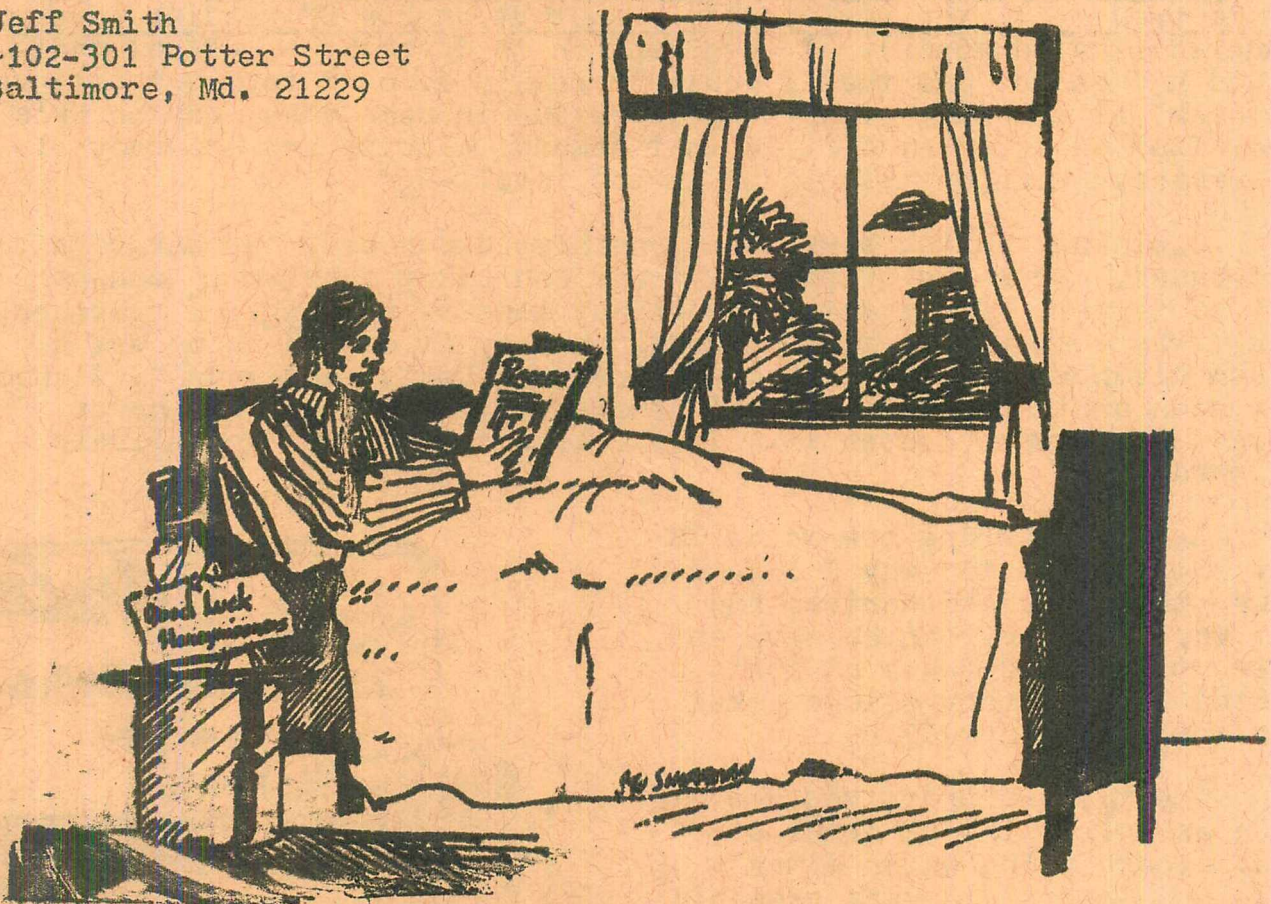
Which is to say that Sturgeon's law probably holds true in this variation, and there was never any reason to believe that, as he originally stated it, it was applicalbe only to SF.

If you've found yourself swamped with excess roaches since you first postulated their premises, you might consider opening a (kosher of course) /Roaches aren't kosher but there are some varieties of grasshopper that are-MF/deli called THE ROACH COACH. It could specialize in matzoh-ball and roaches soup, hot roach on rye and gefilte roach.

Maybe, even, as an unusual side-dish, in the place of potato salad, a serving of Hot Moshed Potatoes.

Yours 'til the roaches go back to Capistrano, . . .

Jeff Smith
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PLACEBO 3 arrived while I was on my honeymoon, but that's a good thing. /Oh? Everything else is packed away and the mail that came while I was away is much more accessible. Ann sleeps later than I do so I read PL this morning. (The pink pages matched out sheets nicely.)

So far as written material is concerned PLACEBO is quite good. "The Essential Mind" has now failed to interest me for three straight issues, however. There are only two ways to bring this kind of piece off. One is to critically analyze the book's brilliance. The other is to capture your own enthusiasm for the work in print. A dull, dry "read it" doesn't work.

The highlight of the issue was "Tales of the Hula Hoop Mythos." But there was one error and omission from David's otherwise excellent summary. Hula Hoops have nothing to do with bicycles, even indirectly. Why, Avram Davidson was awarded the Hugo for his discovery that bicycles come from paper clips, through clothes hangers. [True, true, but have you ever considered that clothes hangers are merely a variant form of the independently viable spinal cortex of the mesozoic hula hoop? Hula hoops being what they are they did not evolve normally from a primitive spineless form to a more advanced endo-skeletal type but rather in the other direction from a vertebrate to an invertebrate form.-MF] Whether or not staples and paper clips are related I'm not sure.

The omission was that no mention was made of colors. Hula hoops, of course, come in many different colors. The omission is understandable, though, because no-one knows for sure how hula hoops get their colors. One theory is that it depends on the color of the fanzine paper, which se rs into the essence of the staples. However, where are all the white hoops from dittoed fanzines? [Living inside the arctic circles, where their albinism serves as protective coloration.-MF] No, I feel color is determined by the type of staple, from the tiny Tots to the monsters we use for PHANTASMICOM. Each staple, though itself grey, has a brightness inside which does not appear until the Frisbee stage. This is only logical, for how else could something so dull and grey produce something so cheerful?

Peter Roberts
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Say it with aardvarks
African aardvars;
Keep sending secons and thirds;
One aardvark's worth so many words . . .

However they find her,
They will remind her
(each time one whistles or barks)
That you're the one who sends her
aardvarks.
(Archie Mercer)

"And now, Spot the Wonder
Aardvark!"



The devotion to certain obscure species of animal is well ingrained in British fandom and the aardvark is really only a step forward from early beasts. The budgerigar, if I remember correctly, was associated with Irish fandom and later the mysterious growth of Tribe X, associated with the tow fanzines CRABAPPLE and LINK, brought the camel to the fannish foreground. Various other beasts had also been mentioned with some frequency, notably the axolotl (probably as a result of MAD magazine) and the dreaded wombat.

The publication of EGG as the Journal of Aardvark Fandom brought various other aardvarkophils together; but at the same time it intensified and revived some other latent animal fandoms and their followers. Chief amon these was Wombat Fandom. Was there room, however, for such a rival organization? I concluded that there was not and embarked on

a quasi-religious jihad to rid fandom of the pernicious cult of wombats and their sordid ilk. Some managed to remain neutral, others took to Elder Gods (Camels and Budgies); but aardvarkian trufans rallied with such cries as "Combat the Wombat!" and furthered the cause through fanzine and at conventions. A number of aardvark badges were produced and artists contributed with cartoons whilst writers typed out anecdotes and grim stories concerning the evil misdeeds of the wicked wombat.

In deference to the other members of the fannish bestiary, wombats excluded, I have relegated Aardvark Fandom to its present place as a thriving sub-branch of International Silly Animal Fandom. Whether this term is original, or whether I picked it up from the jermal and associated animal friends of APA-45, I can no longer recall. But new adherents are cropping up from day to day.

Pete Weston wrote to me a few days ago . . .

Anyone still interested in science fiction should close their eyes at this point. Pete is founder of Guinea Pig Fandom. . . .

David William Hulvey
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Harrisonburg, Va. 22801

That Hank Davis article is Massive. Here's the picture in my mind as Hank expounds this tale of woe. He's dressed in an elephant hunter's garb, with a heavy bandolier of 50 caliber

machinegun ammo crisscrossing his ample gut. Several medals of dubious origin boast of themselves brashly upon his chest. He's standing before a blazing fire in the trophy room of an old slant shack. As he speaks in a highpitched but mellow monotone he idly stirs the glass of cheap wine clutched feverishly in his left hand. With his right arm he gesticulates wildly to emphasize his narrative. Now, let's join his recitation:

"Yuh see, the slants wrote of it in their zines, that if a neo-fans heart was pure the BNF's verbal bite wouldn't harm him. Pore ol' Hulvey ~~did~~ gaffiated almost instantly. Horrible agony.

"Did I ever tell ya somethin' 'bout the SMOF? Yuh see, andy and I went off in the worldcon after him. Did we find him? By Ghod, we found him! The rascal's eyes gleamed like Hugos. Then he was coming at me through the consuite, big as a starship, teeth on him sharp as needle-point styli. You'll see them up in the study. We use 'em for defacin' AMAZING and FANTASTIC these days. Well, the typewriter jammed. Damn useless. andy fled in panic. The fool. Drug-crazed faans scattered. What we both ate at the banquet was enough to turn any man's stomach. Then he was on me. Snappin' and stabbin' at my fannish reputation. I lied cleverly, but yet he came on. Whatever the cost, I had to take him. Actin' merely on instinct, I threw a bottle of corflu at him. Eyes clenched, fists blazin', I advanced fearlessly as he fell before me. Haha. Then . . . what was it . . . ah . . . sorry I spilt the wine on yer pants boy. Gotta be off to the Lunarians meeting."

Who is this idiot Hulvey that you published? He must be insane. I just couldn't understand a word he said. Are you sure he's a fan? You'd be wise to check before sending your clean zine off to any ol' sectual deviate who asks for it.

Norman Hochberg
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Let me jump right in on my main beef with PL3 — its layout. Jerry Lapidus and Dan Stefan's zines have started me thinking about such an animal as fanzine layout and a few general discussions with Vin DiFate have solidified my view that every faned should do as much as he is capable of doing in the way of layout. You, unfortunately, are not.

Dan's cover is, simply, superb. I really like the Bode style and Dan's got it in spades. Let's see more of his stuff. [Anytime, Dan.]

Kudos for your Playboy-style toc. If you're going to copy a layout, there's no better place to do it from than a pro. The page is wonderfully balanced, an effect enhanced by the large picture on page three. (Playboy always follows their toc with a full-page ad.)

Bad news from page 4 through 15. No illos. Only "breakheads" every so often. Strange, as your editorials should be easier illoed than many others' (since they cover so many topics).

But now . . . the typographical abortion of the issue. The case of the obscene backjump in "The Universe Breakers." Okay, I know you wanted the opening spread across two pages. You could have done that in a number of ways without that absurd jump back. [And a lot of you jumped on our backs for it. Believe me, we were aware of what we were doing, we didn't like it, but we liked the solutions (including some you sent in) even less. And you'd be surprised at the number of respectable publications backjump when the need arises.]

I'd hardly classify SF as the only literature that uses words carefully. How much outside of SF do you read [Not counting what I read for my jobs I read about 50-50.-MF] Do you read any New American Reviews, little magazines or journalistic reportage (N.Y. Times Sunday Magazine)? SF uses words no less or more carefully than any other branch of literature that takes itself seriously. [Alright Norm, get off your high ~~stall~~ horse and listen for a minute. I've already discussed this once here but I guess I'm not finished. First, you'll notice that I said "Much of science fiction is just as responsible for the current decadence of the language as any form of oral or graphic communication." This isn't very different from what you just said. Second, I think I should explain that that section of my edit was written on the spur of the moment right on stencil and I couldn't work out all my arguments as neatly as I would have liked; I had to skirt around them instead. So: What I've been trying to say all along is not so much that SF does a great deal better in this area but that because SF presents us with real superlative things (what the Panshins call "the transcendant") it makes us more conscious of the inadequacy of commonly used superlatives — and, by extension, of linguistic debasement in general. This is not a 'justification' for SF, merely one of its possible effects.-MF]

Barry, "Stet" is very uneven. I can't see the use for the "It seems that Dept." since it isn't written by you. The other stuff I can see though not like (I hated the roaches bit). The piece rambled too much.

Dave forgot to mention that the god of the hula hoops appeared, in the title role, in Ringworld. There are a slew of tales about that,

but I shall leave it to Dave, a far better chronicler than I.

"Essential Mind" — God! You put that "8" and "r" in all your copies. That is dedication.

I like your 70lb. paper, but you've still got a ways to go before you hit the "Mike-Glicksohn-is-after-me-because-his-fanzine-just-sliced-off-one-of-my-fingers" stage.

Mae Strelkov
Casilla de Correo 55
Jesus Maria, Cordoba, Argentina

Dear Pharmacists of the Sugar-coated Pill (and it's no mere Placebo, for certain). . . (There! That's how I got around having to decide which of your names to put first when I wanted

to put both of them first!)

I liked your summary of SF's effect on people and I quite agree. If not for the enormous amount of SF I used to read when we lived in Buenos Aires and went to work daily, I could not have stood things the way they were then. It used to infuriate my mother in law, the books I brought home and Vadim and our kids devoured. She said they were destroying our minds. Quite to the contrary, we gained strength from the marvelous writings of Asimov, Simak and others. In the Hugo Gernsback period, we always bought a zine he put out — I still remember (yes, with nostalgia!) some of the stories he printed then.



I liked your mentioning about the language getting debased. In a former OUTWOLDS I mentioned feeling so sad over exactly that. I think that sincere people do not ruin a tongue . . . it is when a language is used to clothe insincerity that it gets at last ruined by "false referents" all the rest. [I think that's very true-BS] [I agree, reservedly-MF] I think that an honest person who used any of those terms you mentioned (save "unprecedented" — which is too show off a term, in my view) could still get away with it, convincingly.

Oh, that's cute Barry — your editorial 4 pages and Moshe's (the Mosaic evangelist of science fiction) seven. Next time write 7 pages too [And he did, in #4, so, all of you, write your locs dammit.-MF] and I bet my answer to you will be even longer.

Re the criticisms of The Universe Makers of Do ld Wollheim, I was not one bit impressed. I loved the bok and its evident knowledge of the genre

and his sincerity. I read it three times over and found no fault with it. So he coined a word or two — this is a sin?

The Hula Hoop Mythos is a good take off on scientific jargon. Very, very, good! I especially admired it and felt a bit of chagrin, for I do write in much the same style when discussing a pre-Aryan

"mother language" of just a few basic old grunts, expletives and sighs, in my research.

All the letters are good — lettercols I enjoy best of all, in all the fanzines. [And we all enjoy your letters, Mae; even if we can only print a fraction of each marvelous and lengthy one] As for the two "ice cream cones crucified," I wonder if there will be complaints. The allusion to the goodness of that brand of ice cream up there, of course, I miss. The baiting of a holy cow makes sense. The Jesus idea has been made into something ridiculous — crucifixes brandished before heretics going up in flames at the stake, Indians converted at swordpoint while they fail to understand the talk of "God's Love" which the crucifix is supposed to signify. It's been a tragic, long tale of errors, and the feeling of treacly sanctitude some get when contemplating that symbol cannot have any meaning.

Leigh Edmonds
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Hank Davis' article on being a SMOF in this modern day and age was interesting but I rear that in the pursuit of lightheartedness he has strayed from the point that needs to be raised

sometime and somewhere. Being a SMOF these days is like being a BNF a few years ago, everybody and his mundane brother was one. Like the word "awesome", BNF has been devalued to the extent that we don't even bother to use the term anymore. How long has it been since you last heard somebody referred to as a BNF?

So now it is getting to the stage where everybody and his mundane brother is becoming a SMOF. This is quite okay by me because while people are entertaining themselves by writing about what a SMOF they are, they won't have time to notice that I am manipulating them. But what worries me is that in some time to come we will have to start searching around for another term to use in its place when the term has been exhausted. A quick look through the FANCYCLOPEDIA II (It's Ency's Fault) doesn't throw up any likely terms so maybe we had better try and invent one now before it's too late.

On the other hand, I see that there used to be a lot fannish religions in the days gone by and I know only too well that these are days of godlessness and strife but I can feel in my bones that it is time soon for a religious revival. Don Wollheim can make his fortune from being the high priest of Ghu again instead of eeking out a living trying to edit books. I myself am an adherent of the religion of Ignatz but more of that later. [Ask Barry to tell you about Herbangelism] -MF

Harry Warner, Jr.
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[The first two of the following paragraphs refer to our now defunct theology issue.] There is just one thing is fandom's history that is vaguely related to what you're thinking about.

Years ago, a bunch of fans tried to collaborate on Pal Jesus, a parody on Pal Joey. I think I have some excerpts from it somewhere but Elijah would be here again by the time I dug them out of the primeval chaos in the attic. All I can remember are a few song titles, like: "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be A Saviour" and "Get Me to the Cross on Time" plus the one that I kept wanting to write and never did, "Since Jesus Came Into My Wife." Somehow, I seem to remember that a fairly complete text of this work was published but was circulated only by personal contact to prevent it from falling into the hands of easily scandalized

parents of young fans, and therefore I never got a copy.

"Fmz" never did get universal acceptance as an abbreviation for fan/maga/zine. It was used by some fans who found it excited their libido to use fmz because it sounded something like 'femmes.' Then Louis Russel Chauvenet came up with "fanzine," which was distinctive and easily adaptable to other forms like "prozines," and fmz fell back into semi-limbo.

And that leaves me with no problem except the big one of how to get into the traditional two pages of my comments on such a large and generally excellent issue of PLACEBO. That heavy paper makes it feel monumental, something like the impression of substantiality and strength that you get from so many books published before World War Two. It's particularly beneficial to the artwork since there's virtually no showthrough. Maybe fanzines of the future which reprint from old days in fandom will borrow liberally from the third PLAVRBO for this very reason, because it will be so easy to mechanically copy the drawings. The front cover is magnificent and I really feel that it would have been better mated with the inside back cover, but maybe you were thinking about the wrong people seeing the inside back cover illustration when you put it in there.

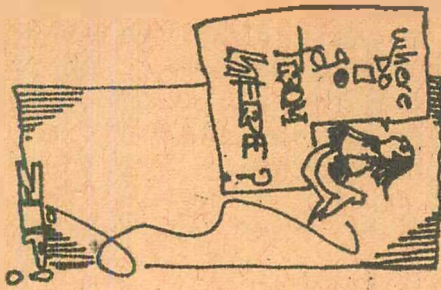
I was hoping that David Emerson would consider the possibility that hula hoops are stationary while small children are rotated by the superior hula hoop mentality whenever they venture inside one. But the whole article really deserves wider circulation than it can be given in a fanzine. It's the sort of article that some of the more learned journals of science might like to run as a special treat for the readership.

The Bulgakov book sounds very interesting. I wonder if it really has the relationship to Goethe's Faust which I suspect from your article? The German poem also deals with a girl with essentially the same name (Gretchen is the German nickname for Margaret, and the heroine is, in fact, named Marguerite in the Gounod opera based on Goethe) and with a devil's activities in Europe. Faust also moves between the present and the past in a sense since it introduces legendary Greek characters and stuff out of obsolete German mythology, and the master in the novel seems to have some of the same characteristics as Faust. Fascinating, and I think you're right. I checked back and one of the reviews does mention some of this in passing-MF

The letter section was entertaining. Hank Davis should be as far back on his loc obligations as I am. Then he wouldn't have any difficulty getting those folded fanzines traightened out. I challenge any creased fanzine to retain evidence of that condition after it has spent a week or two at the bottom of one of my piles of stuff awaiting replies and locs. I'm fascinated by the news that Loren MacGregor was driven out of fandom by too many "2001" reviews. That's the sort of information that makes me want to write a history of the recent years of fandom, simply so I can use it in the manuscript. I have a terrible fear that "Clockwork Orange" may attract almost as much attention in fanzines unless it doesn't impel people to go back again and again for repeated viewings of it. Those return trips were what caused so many of the fanzine reviews of "2001" to be written, sometimes by people who had already written about it after their first viewing.

And did I mention before the fact that I'm totally deprived of Baskin-Robbins? Hagerstown has its Howard Johnson, Col. Sanders, and most of the other traditions handed down to us from the pioneers of colonial times, but no B-R. And I don't remember ever patronizing the firm on my visits to big cities and such visits are becoming so infrequent that I'll probably be under doctor's orders to dilute my ice cream the next time I get to Fun City. I already feel that water at full strength is too much for me.





SALTY SMOKED SALMON (PLACEBO 3.5)
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