

UMBRA

July
No. 14



FRED VON BERNSTEIN

UMBRA, good old Um again, is put out by John Hitchcock, 300 E. University Pkwy., Baltimore 18 Maryland, USA. Monthly, it sells for 10¢, subs 3/25¢, 6/50¢, higher subs not advised but greedily accepted. Umbra is always dittoed (ALWAYS, do you hear, Jansen?!), and this is issue #14. For July yet. Probably mailed out July 5. As close to a.m. as I can wake up. Check your receipt dates, fans! If you're in Balto., call BE5-7472 or RI7-7580, and drop around for a chat. I'm lonely.



"Burnt Umbra?"

EN THI APXHI - editorial - JH - page 4
The first entry into the contents contains a contemptuous constant and a contented compiler.

CONNECTICUT YANKEE VERSUS COUNT BELISARIUS - book review - Noah W. McLeod - page 5
This is Noah's Return to Umbra, and starts a new series. Welcome back!

CRITIC ON THE HOTSEAT - critique - Larry Ztark III - page 7
See what happens when you try to slip a free plug past me? Ztark indeed...heh heh...

MORE REVIEWS - an untitled column - JH - page 14
If this is going to continue in Um, tell me and I'll title it. A Brave New Experiment...

I TRAVELED TO THE MOON AND BACK! - short feature - Ed Cox - page 15
Well, what would YOU call it?

WHAAAT - letter column - not quite everybody, I'm sorry to say - page 17
If you want more interesting letter columns, for heavens sake get out and Write Them!

CHICKENSCRATCHES - fanzine reviews - JH - page 23
If you want more interesting reviews, get out and publish more interesting fanzines...

LAST BREATH OF LIFE - the final editorial that rattles Mr. Boggs - JH again - p.28?

COVER by Fred von Bernewitz. Let's have a popularity contest: whose covers do you like better, Fred's or Ted White's?

INTERIORS by Fred and Larry Bourne (FvB, LB), and courtesy of Old Soggy, the Tower Ditto.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS: only one this time--mine:

John Hitchcock, 300 E. University Pkwy., Baltimore 18, Maryland, U.S.A.

If you know of anyone who's moving (or you're moving yourself), let me know and I'll publish the new address on Umbra 15's contents page.

OF CONTENTS STABLE

EN THI APXH

IN THE BEGINNING, let me offer a note of appreciation to Jan Jansen for last issue, which he typed up, mimeographed, and mailed out, and on which he did a better job than I could have ever hoped to have done myself. Um 13 felt the loss of his column, I believe (and so says everyone who's mentioned it); and Um's lateness was due, as well as Jan's conspicuous absence, to the broken-up life he's led since Easter. I hope you've had all the bad luck around home that's coming to you, Jan. Thanks a million for Um 13.

Just yesterday I got a small package from Ellis Mills marked JANTALK I. It's Jan for 30 minutes on tape for USfandom, and he did a splendid job of timing. Perhaps one should let Jan run the "official programmes" at British cons. And, Jan, you speak English very well. I'm taking the tape over to WSFA tomorrow night, and, if all goes well I'll pass it on to the Eney or Ted White to be sent around Fapa, as Jan wants. I'll also try to get a copy of it to keep in this area. It's a fascinating tape, and it might be worthwhile for several copies to be made along its American journey.

What is quality? (that changed the subject, didn't it?) To start at the lowest level, I have two mental images filed under quality. One is a delicate, cultured, educated person (right out of the New Yorker masthead, in fact) holding up one manicured forefinger, opening his pursed lips (a la Ustinov?) and emitting the pearl-shaped sound from his pear-shaped vibrant palate: "Quality." The other is a science fiction fan/collector, over 30, with a day's growth of bristle, at a con (regional), going around with an intense look in his eye, slapping his right fist into his left palm, and demanding, "Quality!"

The first image is positive (you see, I used to be a dream-interpreter), representing what "quality" is, recognizing it as a state of artistic expression; the second, negative (and all too common in fandom) representing a desire, fanatic, to get away from uninspired expression churned out almost from force of habit. I doubt if most fans who scream for quality in promags have a definite idea of what they want; they remember when stf was new and exciting to them, and a few masterpieces of short-story writing here and there, and they want to get away from the literature for the un-artistic public, whose taste hasn't been developed so far. And not too many people with a good education can put quality into words, no matter how well acquainted they are with it.

So I, a fan who's trying to become a bit educated, shall try it now. Quality, without any adjectives, and referring to writing (if I had more space, time, and ability I'd expand it to all the "fine arts"), is an attribute of a piece of work which attains a certain degree of artistic ("literary") excellence. To be artistic a writing must firstly be complete--it must consist of an effective style, three-dimensional thoughts and characters (ie, human beings), and a good plot. Secondly all the parts of the writing must work together to produce the whole; the style must itself express the meaning put through it, the thoughts must themselves express the characters who originate them, and the characters must themselves act upon one another as the plot demands. Artisticness comes from skill in putting together the parts of the story to work together with maximum efficiency.

The plot, then, is basic. A plot is an event or connected series of events in which the principal characters participate, and is the center around which the story is organized. A sample plot would be
(continued p. 27)

CONNECTICUT YANKEE

VERSUS

COUNT BELISARIUS

by—

NOAH W. MCLEOD

De Camp is an engineer by profession and training and a science fiction writer by avocation. He is also a man with a considerable knowledge of history and a keen sense of the ridiculous. He is therefore well fitted to write the story of Martin Padway, 20th century American, thrown back into sixth century Italy.

LEST DARKNESS FALL was published in Unknown Worlds well before the end of World War II. It can therefore be safely said de Camp's object in writing it was not to ridicule the American Government's Far Eastern policy, which turned out to be curiously parallel to and as disastrous as the policy of the Byzantine Empire in Italy and North Africa. In particular, the yarn was written before people noticed the resemblance between MacArthur and Belisarius, the great Byzantine general.

There is a hard cover edition of the novel, published (if my memory does not play tricks) by Holt. I recommend the hard cover edition, if available. The Galaxy version is condensed and ineptly so, leaving out many of the choicest episodes and jokes.

De Camp says he always wanted to write a story of the type of A CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT. Then when he read Robert Graves' COUNT BELISARIUS, he decided to do one of sixth century Italy. If Graves read LEST DARKNESS FALL, it is dollars to doughnuts he didn't enjoy it. Graves has a reverence for the past,

which de Camp, and for that matter Mark Twain, completely lack.

For readers who know nothing of history, I had better give a resume of events. The Ostrogoths, under Theodoric, invaded and occupied Italy in the late fifth century. However, Roman civilization remained intact, much as Chinese civilization went on under the Manchus. The Byzantine Emperor, Justinian, having reconquered North Africa, sent his general, Count Belisarius, to conquer Italy. Belisarius was a military genius, but like MacArthur in the Korean war was not adequately supported. The resulting twenty years' war ruined Italy, and ushered in the dark ages.

When Martin Padway, a young American archaeologist, finds himself in sixth century Rome, his first impression is that he has wandered onto a movie set. However, when he oriented himself to his situation, he set about the problem of making a living. His first venture was distilling brandy from wine. From there he branched out into journalism. He was always hampered by the limited technical knowledge and primitive tools of the ancients. Most people do not realize how much modern gadgets are dependent on specialized equipment for their manufacture. The best fire arm a modern gunsmith could make with the tools of the Romans would be a smooth-bore muzzle loader.

From journalism, Martin moved like Churchill into politics. He makes and unmakes Gothic Kings; organizes a night attack on the Byzantine camp, and captures Belisarius.

De Camp has apparently read Gibbon, as well as Graves and Mark Twain. Some of his characters would make a Tammany ward heeler seem honest, and a Southern "wool hat" congressman seem enlightened. Nor are the clergy spared: a bishop is mentioned who keeps two concubines; the reigning pope is referred to as "an old rascal." Most of the Goths have IQs comparable with the brighter occupants of a home for the feeble minded.

The women are sharply individualized, yet remain types rather than individuals. There is Julia, Martin's housekeeper, who disgusts him by her parasites; Mathaswentha, the bloodthirsty Gothic Princess; Dorothea, the proud Roman beauty. Julia and Mathaswentha are so overdrawn, deliberately in my opinion, as to be funny at times. They are more akin to the heroines of ROGUE QUEEN and THE VIRGIN OF ZESH than to real people. Dorothea is pathetic rather than funny.

It is somewhat doubtful whether the capture of Belisarius would have led to the decisive results told in the yarn. Justinian's army was more than a rabble of mercenaries dominated by the brilliant minds of Belisarius and Narses. The Byzantine army had a trained officers' corps and a sound military doctrine. Moreover, it was backed by sea power and by the financial and industrial resources of Constantinople.

LEST DARKNESS FALL is a good yarn of the "Connecticut Yankee" school. It is well worth reading; but if the hard cover edition is available, in Ghu's name read that. The GALAXY people botched the editing of their paper bound version.

---NWMcL

LEST DARKNESS FALL, L. Sprague de Camp. Galaxy Novel #24, Galaxy Publishing Co., Inc., 421 Hudson St., New York 14, N.Y. ...

Noah has recovered from his illness, and with this article he resumes his book reviews for Umbra.

JH.

CRITIC- ON THE HOTSEAT

BY ZTARK

Ever received an "editorial directive" from Sean Hitchcock? They strike a masterful balance between dictatorial demand and misty-eyed appeal; and, though I'm usually convinced upon reception that a) I won't find the time to do anything this issue, and b) even if I were floating in free time, there are no subjects lying around loose, Umbra usually has a submission by me well before deadline. Of course, as John con-

fided last March, the real deadline for any issue is a sort of Manhattan Project Security Matter, so that he can receive "late" manuscripts in plenty of time...but that's the least of his editing accomplishments. F'rinstine, I was waiting for him this time; been mulling for months a 12-page article-advertisement for that as-yet-unpublished masterpiece "STELLAR--Magazine of Fan Fiction" which Ted White and I hope will thud upon the scene this summer. But what does Sean have to say? In one monstrous paragraph he sez (translated), "I'm overstocked with fannishness; go back to science-fiction."

But here I have him trapped. I may not get to see my frabjous masthead slogan ("Fiction about Fans...serious and otherwise") in purple print ((you just did, damn you-jh)), but at least I have a reason to clear an eight-month-old idea out of the memory banks. Back around last August Charles Beaumont began his column on the "Science Screen" in F&SF, and the title of this article leapt into mind. I combed through Ted's enormous files of practically everything, digging out Beaumont stories I'd read, and looking for all those I hadn't, so that I could criticize the new critic. I smuggled the mags out of Washington when the summer was over, fully expecting to take care of the idea some afternoon when the family thought I was doing homework. Then I got socked with REAL homework, and the pile of mags just gathered dust. And now Mr. Hitchcock gives me my golden opportunity.

Beaumont's seems to me the first cogent column of criticism that science fiction movies have been subjected to. He's had experience working in Hollywood, and he has done some particularly good and provocative work in the magazines. He stands in an excellent position to howl over the putrid and oo over the classic as they stream from the celluloid mills. So far, I think he's managed to do just that, and do it in such a way that his column stands equal in my mind with Tony Boucher's column in the same magazine--and that's about as mushily praising as I've ever seen.

Beaumont in stories, however, would appear to be a very uneven kind of genius. In that respect, it might be good to note that both Beaumont and Bradbury are printed side-by-side in the last Beaumont-containing mag I have; neither one has a science-fiction theme, but that's irrelevant. Both men seem to me to be good, and imperfect, for exactly the opposite reasons. Despite a lot of criticism leveled at Ray, his stories have a much deeper effect when good and stir more depth of thinking than the ordinary writer. Though it often appears to be an anti-science attitude, his material does contain a bedrock of philosophical point of view that makes him an important writer.

His problem is style. A Bradbury story always seems to me to end wrong, though upon examination the structure is always good (in his best remember), and the theme is illustrated properly. Still, I feel there is an aura of the ominous that clings consistently to the wrong signposts in the story, preparing ME, if not "the reader," for turns in story-line that never occur. And I think that's because Ray points these signposts out with narrative tags that shouldn't be there, intentionally building the story awry. His other problem, so far as I'm concerned, is that quotations so very often seem stilted, and whole passages are written "funny." Things are in such a state that it's only the occasional paragraph of Bradbury's (and those the more poetic passages, such as the opening of 'The Long Rain,' or the pieces of 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' that describe the man-fire relationship) that seems to flow out of the mouth well. Bradbury has never come to terms satisfactorily with expression of idea, though the ideas themselves are excellent.

Beaumont, as I said, is usually the precise opposite. He is a master stylist, a master not only of a personal style which is excellent, but of variations in style which fit his story-lines properly. Most of his dialogue is real-sounding, and his narration often has a speakable quality about it. And, instead of laying his story-line a la Bradbury with an often irregular trowel, he has a gift for evocative construction, forcing the reader to the inevitable conclusion without ever having to spread out a blueprint of prose.

It's his plots or ideas, often, that worry me. In actual construction, most of them are pulpishly simple; and there is sometimes a pretty weak or shallow concept hiding behind the verbal fireworks of style. In some cases, actually bad ideas or even extremely un-new ideas appear important only because of the manner in which the outer shell of prose has been handled. Charles Beaumont has what Bradbury achieves only a paragraph at a time, but I don't think he's ever done as much with it as Ray himself could have done and has done without it.

This style-consciousness which he must possess has led Beaumont to satire occasionally. "The Last Caper" (F&SF Mar '54) was billed as a combination of Spillane with Bradbury. Had it been in the magazine a year or two earlier--say, just after Browne made his classic goof--it might have stood chances of appearing original. It wasn't even funny when I read it. Then, with Chad Oliver he did "The Last Word" (F&SF Apr '55) which attempted to put all s-f cliches into one large, bulky package. It was pretty sad. I think there may have been a third piece of satire in F&SF after that, printed under the alibi that the authors had missed a few cliches, and in the interests of public safety, &c. I doubt if it could have been much.

In the August '54 issue though, Beaumont worked on a story called "The Quadriopticon," which began to show a little more of his basic talent. It's a weird conglomerate of half-thought-through ideas, and the most evident thing about it is that Mr. B. had experience with Hollywood and retained enough of it to be eloquently nasty. The 3D craze is the basic setting (since a 4D projector is the major plot-structure element), the general ballyhoo of Hollywood openings gets the treatment, and the crudeness of science fiction films comes under fire too--but none of them is handled thoroughly enough to make a central theme. Through an accident of electricity, the male star of the film in question is projected into the character of the lead, and lives through the celluloid life a couple of times. Oddly enough, he comes to the conclusion that the whole putrid ratrace has something ennobling about it after all, and manages to swallow his earlier pride near the end and go off into the bushes with his leading lady. Somewhere in the center of the story, the point of view switches



from fed-up author to Hollywood Lover, and all the intentionally poor details of the intentionally awful picture work against the story's conclusion. Were the addle-headed star to have come into the theatre believing he had worked in a neo-Birth of a Nation, and ended with a case of malignant nausea, I could see the whole structure as valid, but when the whole conversion is reversed, I can't find the justifications in the story.

But those are about the only genuinely all-terrible stories I've seen with the Beaumont brand. Of the others (those I've seen, remember; Ted's files even aren't perfect, and I wasn't in favor of poring over half a million contents pages just for this article), there are a great many that I'm going to point the fickle-finger at, but any reader who's not so damn particular will probably hate me for it. They all have a brand of provocative ingeniousness about them which covers up the flaws I tend to consider horrendous.

Take "Black Country," for instance. It was printed in PLAYBOY (Sep '54), a magazine which would create a lot of hell in international affairs if good-natured fans ever decided to export it to Britain or Europe. It is at least 50% highbrow pornography, and usually about 25% stand-on-own-two-feet excellence. It's sort of the pervert's ESQUIRE, and as such has managed to reach higher and dredge lower insofar as material is concerned than its predecessor.

"Black Country" is a story about jazz-men written entirely in the idiom of the musician: an exaggerated prose style that explains itself, like Dylan Thomas' lucid insanity. Observe: "Spoof Collins blew his brains out, all right—right out through the top of his head. But I don't mean with a gun. I mean with a horn. Every night: slow and easy, eight to one. And that's how he died. Climbing, with that horn, climbing up high. For what? 'HEY, MAN, SPOOF—LISTEN, YOU PICKED THE TREE, NOW COME ON DOWN!' But he couldn't come down. ... 'The bullet didn't kill anything. I'm talking about the one that tore up the top of his mouth. It didn't kill anything that wasn't dead already. Spoof just put in an extra note, that's all.'"

That kind of writing is easy to do, even for a fan, for maybe a paragraph or two. Beaumont kept it up for seven straight pages, with never a letup in its drive or originality of phrasing. The whole thing reels out, simple and shining, from the first sentence on into the last. No mere man should be allowed to write that well. It spoils so much of the rest that's printed.

But I've got to quibble on the old complaint: the underpinnings are weak as hell. In brief, the story sketches a colored trumpeter who knows he's dying of cancer. He takes on an untried musician as saxophonist for one of those tight little diabolical combos that are synonymous with Real Jazz, teaches him the trumpet, and then blows his own head off. There is also a girl singer who passes from Spoof to Sonny in her affections about the middle of the story, without a fight from Spoof. (Very possible only a symbol for his handing over his musical style to the new man.) The new leader then begins to act queerly, occasionally makes with a trumpet-break that sounds like Spoof Collins incarnate, books the band's tours through the same routes Collins travelled—and finally one night steps out with Spoof's trumpet (it had been buried with him), and "shakes it all out

of the horn"...in other words, plays out all the music his teacher never got to play.

For its style, it's an immortal classic; but the bare bones show through. The opening image is one of fellow band members playing a jazz man to rest, alone in the rain. That you can find in any romantically-inclined jazz history text; the scene was Davenport, Iowa, and the tombstone no read Beiderbecke. The final shocker is that a young white man could play the music of someone else--and that happened twice in the '38 Goodman concert: Beiderbecke played by Bobby Hackett, and Armstrong by Harry James. Beaumont added only one original and forceful ingredient: Spoof Collins's premonition of death and unspoken legacy of music. THAT is never stated, but he hints you up so close to the edge so often that even when you fall into the conclusion it doesn't seem entirely your own idea.

My one quarrel with the story is that it deals with an impossibility, and every other paragraph or so ADMITS it's an impossibility. What results is something of a Superman-yarn: "This couldn't be done, and people who saw it swear he couldn't do it, but there he was doing it!" Strains credulity far too much. Besides, both Hackett and James found it impossible to submerge their own personal styles enough to do more than imitate the notes that night in Carnegie Hall, and whenever Hackett improvises, it's HACKETT and not Beiderbecke you hear. The actual impossibility of "what Sonny does anyway" makes the whole thing look like a perfectly written fraud.

Take another example, "The Crooked Man" (PLAYBOY Aug '55). This is a terribly constructed pulp-style story. I've noted two flagrant slips into the pulp idiom: "The barboy ran his fingers over his solar plexus, tapping the fingers, making them hop in a sinuous dance. He hesitated, still smiling, this time questioningly, hopefully, a smile filled with admiration and desire. The Finger Dance, the accepted symbol since 2648, stopped; the pudgy brown digits curled into angry fists."

The "subtle" dragging in of the date is pretty poor form. Or this: "Damn Knudsen! Damn the little man! Thanks to him, to the Senator, Jesse was now a criminal. Before, it had n't been so bad: not this bad, anyway. You were laughed at and shunned and fired from your job, and sometimes kids threw stones at you, but at least you weren't hunted. Now--it was a crime. It was a sickness. -- "He remembered when Knudsen had taken over. It had been one of the little man's first telecasts; in fact, it was the platform that had got him the majority vote:--"

And then he proceeds to frame a "political speech" which actually sets the social background for the proceeding scene. And, typical of a pulp-plotted yarn, the villain enters early as an annoying character, and re-enters at the climax to bring ruin on the whole plot. It's extremely poorly written as s-f or



any other kind of fiction, and got first spot in the magazine and became an important topic of conversation for only one reason: the story is set by the fact that, in this future-society, artificial insemination has made sex as such unnecessary, and therefore homosexuality has become the prevailing mode. The rebels in the story are a man and a woman committing an obscene act-marriage.

This single-facet look seems to characterize Beaumont's general performance, even more so than his excellent style. For instance, "Free Dirt" (F&SF Jun '55) is a mood piece à la Shirley Jackson and her "never-explain" masterpieces. The central character is just as improbable as those in "One Ordinary Day, With Peanuts" (F&SF Jan '55); he is a man who steals everything he gets, simply because he prefers it that way, and yet who has never even been suspected. He finds out that the cemetery is giving away free dirt, and so steals some seeds and a wheelbarrow and proceeds to grow and eat the biggest and juiciest meal he's ever had. Whereupon the vegetables turn back into dirt and he dies. The mood is all, and that is excellently executed. He makes you believe all this unreality while reading, which is as much as anyone can ask for. I do believe, however, that there are overtones of deeper symbolism that ramble through Miss Jackson's work, whereas Beaumont again evokes only a shining surface of technique, little deeper.

In "The New Sound" (F&SF Jun '53), we have possibly one of the most grisly satires on record. The character in question is perfectly drawn as the ultimate in hifi tape collectors, and even more rabid a completist than Ted White. He collects only the recorded sounds of dying. (In the selection of types of death and descriptions of them, Beaumont is terribly, terrifyingly effective and imaginative.) There is also the perfect portrait of the frustrated completist, as the man records the Bang, but not the Whimper with which the world ends. It's pungent and sharp enough to leave you with a snort of satiated ridiculousness, despite the vividness of the previous shocks. Both these stories are simple portraits of exaggerated extremes, one more wry and dry than the other. They are very good, but they are also only single-facet stories. A third is his most recent, so far as I know: "A Classic Affair" in Dec '55's PLAYBOY. It states first that a man is being unfaithful to his wife by falling love with a Duesenberg. He describes his falling in love with it, and the structure of his tale coincides excellently with anyone's description of his "finding his soulmate." Then he draws some pertinent analogies from other realms which often give a man similar feelings of passion, and the whole idea begins to seem not so queer after all. Finally the author-friend-of-family/father-confessor buys the car, intending to sell it to the passionate one in exchange for the neglected wife--except that, as the story fades out, it's obvious that he'll never get up courage enough to give the thing away. He's fallen in love with the car himself. Quick, cute, and intriguing. But only one facet.

I have found four stories by Beaumont which I think are well-rounded pieces of work worth hanging on to. They are not so shallow and restricted as they might appear, nor do they exhibit much of a flaw in the way of style. "The Vanishing American" is one of those, in the Aug '55 F&SF, though there isn't an ounce of science or fantasy in it. It looks more like a NEW YORKER try, and might have been accepted when the Metro mag bounced it.

It concerns a middle-aged man who gets the idea he is vanishing. Neither his boss, nor the elevator boy, answer his small talk. His wife answers the baby's cries instead of his "I'm home!" And people on the street ignore him. Wandering dejectedly, he finds himself in front of the Library lions, and reflects on his old beliefs about them: one is HIS lion, and would get up and carry him into the jungle if he had courage enough to climb on its back. So, thinking himself invisible, he mounts his lion, only to find a crowd

staring and snickering at him. He's glad to find himself visible, and also glad to find one man in the crowd championing his right to do as he pleases. As I said, there's no fantasy in it at all; it's merely socio-psychological symbolism, discussing the common mass-man of today's cities and his interest in individuality. I can't see why the NEW YORKER didn't take it!

A second Beaumont classic is "The Hunger" (PLAYBOY Apr '55) in which a 30- old maid willingly gives herself to a sexmaniac. This is probably his most important piece of work, since it can be read and appreciated and interpreted for quite a number of angles and levels. It certainly draws a brilliant picture of a frustrated woman living with widowed sisters, and there is much more than sensationalism even on its surface. The whole fabric of reader expectation and value is ripped up and woven anew. Observe:

"She was looking for someone." "The words formed in her mind, unwilling: 'Robert Oakes, listen, listen to me. You're not the only one who is lonely. But you can't steal what we're lonely for, you can't take it by force. Don't you know that? Haven't you learned that yet?'"

And the conclusion that will not allow itself to be forgotten:

"'I've been looking for you,' she said, boundlessly. 'Every night I've thought of you. I have.' She walked toward the man. 'Don't be afraid, Mr. Oakes. Please don't be afraid. I'm not.' " "The young man stopped. He seemed to freeze, like an animal prepared for flight." "He did not move for several seconds." "Then he began to walk toward Julia, lightly, hesitantly, rubbing his hands on his trousers." "When Julia was close enough to see his eyes, she relaxed, and smiled." "Perhaps," she thought, feeling the first drop of rain on her face, "perhaps if I don't scream he'll let me live." "That would be nice."

That's his best, I think, but not his best science fiction. That can be found in IF: "The Beautiful People"--Sep '52, "The Jungle" in Dec, '54. Both of them are "that horrid social stuff" that anti-moderns complain about, but both have the distinct advantage of being interesting, important, and applicable to more than merely the fans of The Sense of Wonder.

"The Beautiful People" concerns itself with the problem of the mass mores and the mass mean--whether beauty MUST be an ideal democratically arrived at and forced upon all dissenters. Central character is an adolescent girl who refuses to be remade surgically into a stereotyped perfection. It's blood brother to Bradbury's intellectualized concept of a world which was purged of all fantasy and so had no fear; but this world, though just as vast and intricate and polished, is a real world. People move around in it, and speak of it as though they lived in it. The reality of regimentation is brought forcefully home, while the protestations of mother and psychologist that "beauty" (stereotyping) is necessary is made to appear the basest of hypocrisies. Despite the fact that "the little girl is crushed by society," this is a vivid and excellent piece of material.

"The Jungle" is even more striking an example of an old theme brought to health and vigor by Beaumont's prose. The society it paints is one of the scale of the SLANNish vanVogt, one so vast that its new project is the conversion of the continent of Africa into one gigantic housing development. The protagonists are the architect who conceived and executed the project and a witch doctor who is crushing it back into the jungles. The emphasis here, as in the People, is on tangible details. The massive scale of the story is carried through to almost a Greek formula: two kings in open conflict over the good of society. Neither of them is precisely correct, and defeat for either means almost extinction of his race. But most of the answers in ordinary life are not "right" answers, and only in SLAN is precision of workmanship synonymous with happy ending. Here, civilization finds a much older and more powerful protagonist, and both man and housing plan meet a none-too-pleasant end.

And that, so far as I know, is all that Mr. Beaumont has had published. If anyone else knows of other Beaumont (oh yes, nearly forgot! INFINITY 2, Feb '56, "Traumerei," "kill a solipsist and you obliterate reality, fair-to-middling good, nothing exceptionally worth noting.") floating around, I'd like to be notified. Also maybe we could squabble some via letters, and make Sean O'Hitchcock very happy.

I have no idea what the extent of the man's picture-work was, nor what he worked on. Perhaps if Mr. Hitchcock and Mr. Boucher would be good enough to hand a copy of this magazine on to him, Mr. B. would explain himself. I'd certainly like to know anyway. He's a good, effective writer. I like his work much more than I've indicated. He mentioned somewhere, though God knows where I could have read it, that less and less of his output now is going into science fiction. I find that regrettable. I am very glad, however, that Boucher has him watchdogging The Science Screen for us. His taste and his imagination in his stories are of the caliber I'd like to find in more critics...and he has a way with an insulting epithet which is admirable. Let's hope he stays with F&SF for a long, long time to come.

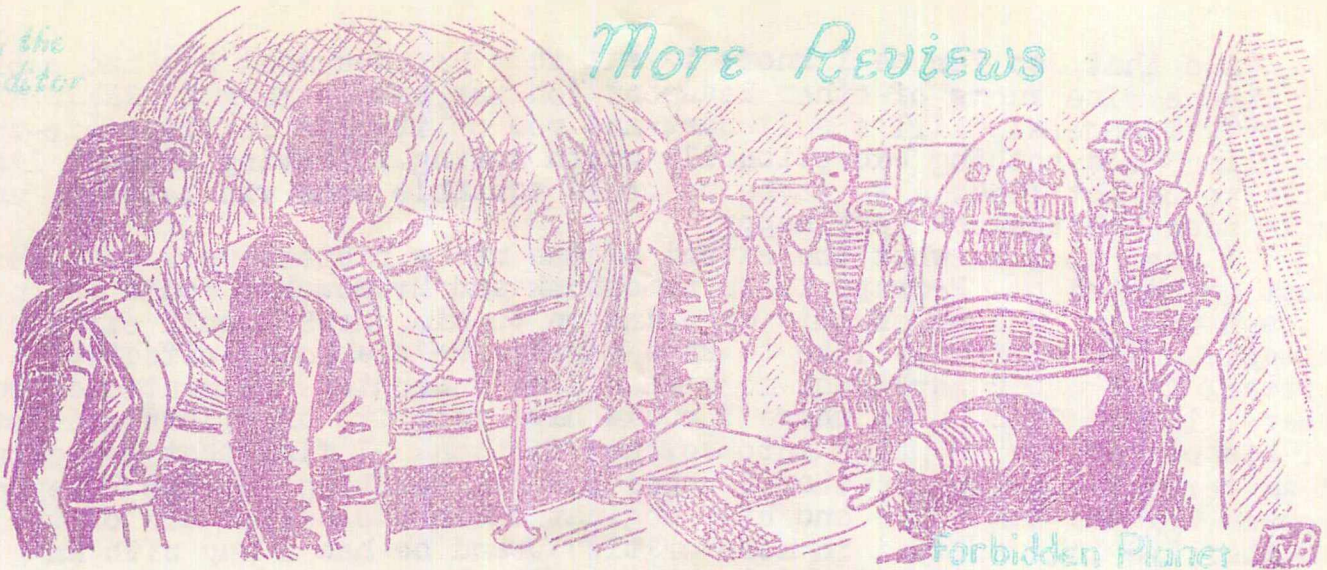
Larry Stark.

"Stop making me happy!" --magnus

(cont'd from following page) mostly unrecognizable in the crew. Cook displays weakness for liquor, but that's only for laughs. Leader possesses some qualities of a leader, though. Scientist's-daughter hollow. Scientist (actually philologist, bless him!): his character is only let out of the usual idiom enough to prepare for the culmination of the plot. This saves loose ends of character traits that have no bearing on the course of action from confusing the movie-goer, but in the ideal play ALL the central characters' character traits must work explicitly or implicitly or inherently for the plot. In the denouement the Scientist goes through pretty believable states as he is gradually brought to face the fact that a part of him has destroyed all his companions, some of the present crew, has grown out of his own desire for expanded mental abilities to do his work, is about to destroy his daughter & himself. (It kills him first and ceases then to exist.) Plot: A (scientist) and B (daughter) and C (id-monster) inhabit planet. D (captain) in service of that S constant tries to find C for A (also in service of S). (As a matter of fact, A and S have double relationship; D isn't shown as feeling anything toward S.) Discovers C's identity as product of A's striving toward S. Brings A, B to realization of identity. A, defending B and possibly D, and C destroy each other. It's not clear who the central character protagonist is. From the quality of acting, and thought one would guess A. Then it's a tragedy. From the plot-structure, I'd say offhand D. Then it's got a happy ending and tragic ending combined. (A more realistic ending than most Great plays, too...)

Not much space left: They Knew Too Much is not a flying-saucer book. It should be classified as an unsolved mystery. Mostly narrative, and narration expository in part, it has a lucid, direct style. What discourse there is (mainly letters) is biographical, and fits in well with the style of narration. Gray paints his more important characters well. The whole book is well organized, thought-out. It deals with apparent international suppression of civilian UFO researchers, and what UFO talk there is in it is merely a sideline. Basically Gray's written a documentary account of two or three mysterious suppressions of key men in research into the UFO mystery. It's fascinating, and worth your time if you're inclined toward that stuff. End of column. JR

More Reviews



This may or may not be a continuing column, depending on (a) response and (b) funds handy for seeing movies, buying books. (Remember I'm not exactly a true stfenatic: I see/read mainstream too. And there's always time spent learning Swedish.) It also depends on how much usable material I have on hand. This time around, let's take Forbidden Planet, Gray Barker's THEY KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS, and if there's still space, WORLD WITHOUT END.

Aristotle defined the six parts of a play as: spectacle, music, diction, thought, character, plot--in order of increasing importance. This is noteworthy only because all Western playwrights since then have hewn to his rule (maybe I'm hyperbolic, but you catch the meaning, no?). Now in his day the actors had to perform before those monstrous Amphitheatra. The audience wasn't especially quiet either. So the actors had to wear gigantic masks to be recognized in the back rows, and had to yell at the top of their voice to be heard at all. Today, we have a modicum of quiet in our audiences and PA systems are frightfully prolific. Hence emphasis is placed now on the actor's own skill--a thing impossible in the golden age of Attica (if not Greece).

I may run into argument here (I hope I do), because I place acting as separate from diction--the art of constructing sentences so that the sounds themselves embody, suggest, and carry the meaning of the thoughts to be expressed--and one step higher. So the modern play has seven parts: the scene (lighting, scenery, sight of a funeral, etc), music, words, acting, thought, character, plot.

Taking Forbidden Planet, we find: scene--a little uneconomical for the people who built it in the play, and loses sense of plausibility when one springs from an underground laboratory to a 576-cu.-mi. atom power plant; music--electronic "futuristic" stuff, very original, but would need more development to carry the intensity of action competently--this part quite promising; diction--unnatural in places, stereotyped in others (you'd think not everyone yells the same or uses the same "standard" American dialect) (wait'll I hear a Low Baltimorean dialect in the movies!); acting--skilled in Walter Pidgeon, believable in whoever played the leader of space crew, slightly unnatural in Anne Francis--who looked unnatural in "futuristic" garb anyway, albeit a little appealing, and pretty uninspired in most of the others, although the robot acted as one would expect; thoughts--fail utterly to build any three-dimensional characters; the closest to a complete human, being being Mr. Pidgeon again; character--

(continued p. 13)

I travelled to the Moon and back!

I flew around the Moon, yes I did! I went on the TWA Moon-Rocket and so can you! If, that is, you go to Disneyland in Buena Park, California.

I guess quite a few of you who watch television have probably seen the Disneyland show on Wednesdays. You've watched, possibly, the shows showing the progress in the construction of the Magic Kingdom of Disneyland where everything becomes reality. Well, I went there.

Without going into detail, and there's plenty of it, about the rest of the place, I'll get right down to my Moon-flight. You go to Tomorrowland. You go through the entrance, past the ice cream man, to the aisle between the flags of the United Nations, past fountains of water spattering up alongside the cement walls of the two major buildings, and then you're in Tomorrowland. The major item in its skyline is the TWA rocket-ship towering up like a phallic symbol from its three hydraulic landing fins. It's only a mock-up one third the size of what an actual 240 foot rocket would be like, but still it's pretty impressive.

However, this is only a mock-up and we don't go to the moon in it. Instead we go to the building adjacent to it. Buy your ticket or give the "C" ticket out of your ticketbook at the booth and then go into the waiting room. It's a circular room with sitting room around the two sides away from the entrance with a panoramic color view of the solar system opposite the entrance. On this is recorded planets, routes, historical information (first moon rocket 1986) and other such stuff. I wondered if Heinlein knew about this.

We wait awhile until a goodly number of people (mostly adults) are there. Then a real lovely type lovely clad in dark blue cap and coat with powder blue slacks and sexy space boots comes down a ramp and announces that the next TWA flight is about ready. Will we please go up either ramp, right or left?

So we do. We walk up the slight incline and then turn into a circular passage and enter the ship. It's a great, round place, with four rows of seats (much like the shape of the seats in jet bombers) into which we seat ourselves. They are placed in graduated heights from a railed-off circle in the center of the barrel-like "combartment" we're in. In this middle space is a scanner almost two yards across. About fifteen feet above is another one. All around us we see the framework, girders and such of the ship plus three instrument panels. To one side is the stewardess and a small intercom unit. We are cautioned not to smoke nor to eat while in flight.

Then the pilot takes over and he starts talking over a PA. We are told that the bottom scanner gives a rear view from the ship and the top vice versa. In the background we hear ship-to-control tower talk, etc. And then we blast off.

In the rear scanner we see violent orange red; above we see the white clouds and blue sky. A tremendous vibration pulses through us, up from the floor, and we hear a roar of rockets above the monologue of the pilot. Up, up and up we go, Disneyland and metropolitan Los Angeles spreading out, receding below us. Swiftly the clouds above come down and disappear as the rockets roar down to an immense "PTOOING!" and we're told we just exceeded the sound barrier. Now there is just the vibration from the powerful rockets as we see the greater part of the West Coast and Pacific Ocean.

Then, in seconds it seems, the earth becomes surrounded by the dark of space and we see the day and night line of de-

by Ed
Cox

marcation. The overhead scanner shows the deep of space and the moon, larger than ever before.

I noticed dials and pointers revolving on meters and then STANDBY FOR TURNOVER flash on a small screen in red. The pilot explains about turnover, how the rockets cease and powerful gyros rotate the ship. Then in the above scanner we are shown the sister-ship doing exactly that in the depths of space in her return from a trip around the moon. The scanner is focused on her (as it was on the space station earlier) and we see the jet of flame cease, the white and red TWA ship rotate; the flame start again.

Then our ship does turnover. The vibration ceases; the earth and moon in the bottom and top scanners disappear and come into sight in the top and bottom scanners; then the rockets come on again. The sensation of turnover was very real except for no drop-sickness!

Now the moon is a huge thing in the bottom scanner. The pilot tells us about it and we get closer and closer. But we are not to land. This is a trip around the Moon and soon we are given a close-up view under high magnification of the earth disappearing around the jagged silhouette of the Moon. The pilot tells us of the long centuries of conjecture about the dark side of the moon. Then flares arc out in the dark and burst into revealing brilliance. Three times we see them expose the same barren, crater pocked surface of the Moon just as it is on the light side. Then we are around it and on the way back.

On the way up, we were shown Halley's Comet and given a bit of info about it. On the return trip we were shown the sun and its spectacular corona. Then under shielded, high magnification, we were shown the turbulence; the great gouts of gaseous flame spouting hundreds of thousands of miles into space; the fierce surface action.

Then back to earth. The moon receded in the rear scanner; the earth, a sphere of half blue-green and half darkness, approached us in the fore scanner. We were told that we'd land in Disneyland an hour or two ahead of nightfall. And we could see, as we grew closer, after turn-over again, the great wave of darkness sweeping westward across the continent.

The sky in the upper scanner grew lighter as the earth rushed up toward us in the lower scanner. The earth rushed together and took recognizable shape and contour of mountains and rivers; then southern California and Los Angeles took shape and grew rapidly large. Above us blue sky and clouds took shape as orange flame lanced out below us obscuring the view and tremendous vibration of the stepped-up braking action of the rockets cushioned us to the earth.

The inter-rocket-tower talk ceased; the scanners winked out and the cute stewardess was telling us to wait for the lights to come on (as they did) and file out the nearest entrance.

I'd been around the Moon on a TWA rocket! And let me tell you that it is probably nearer to the real thing than anything else on earth! If you're ever in Disneyland, or near this part of the country, try it. It's worth it; especially if you're a science-fiction fan. You too can fly around the Moon!

the end

((Editornote: Just for curiosity's sake, how much did that ticket cost, Ed?))

WHAAAT?

Dick Ellington, 299 Riverside Dr., Apt. 11a, New York 25, N.Y. -- Poo. Stuck Larry Stark on the ESFA mailing list and the first time he wanders down I'm not there. Stark's article, story, or what have you (parable maybe?) was quite sharp and should make Shaw wince a little. I still like Infinity though.

Wonder why Wetzel always puts himself in the position of persecuted and beaten type? Yeah.

I'll give Larry Stark points over Bulmer in their argument. One Fan's Opinion.

Hoo! You should get up to the con and help us plug London in '57. I wouldn't say these people are going to put up a battle but from the way things are going the NYCon is liable to look more an Anglofan paper dump. Fun though. Only other possibility so far is from L.A. -- put in by (of all people) the Chesley Donovanites.

Your fanzine reviews were, as usual, quite interesting and I await with glee the flood (or flush?) of articles pondering this question of where fandom is headed now. Things sure are getting dead in Amfan circles. Very few new fanzines and what there are show me little.

...Heck, if you take Wetzel away, what will Mason have left to vituperate on?

((Hoo yourself? Really, Dick, are we being very nice toward the Bulmer? We who took them in from the ~~wet~~ wet atlantic and gave them shelter? (at least I gave them shelter; rumors from NY have it you offered them a subway station...) And now I print "Ken Bulmer is a fat-head," and you support it. I wish to rescind what Larry said about Ken last ish. Ken's head is NOT fat. It has another attribute--or it did when I saw it last--and anyway I'm sure it serves ~~her~~ him very well. Besides, I don't see why Larry had to make remarks about Ken's head in the first place. Larry's intent was to be vicious about Ken's writing, and surely the handsome Bulmer head has nothing to do with that. Shame on you Larry. Shame on you Dick. Shame. # Fandom's really drifting half a dozen ways into limbo here, isn't it? Now why don't we DO something about it. Seriously. We must get together at the Con (assuming I can afford the thing) and diagnose the trouble. It would make a more interesting symposium than what seems to be the usual fare.))

Andy Young, 10 Sumner Rd., Cambridge 38, Mass. -- Doesn't the title of Jan's column just mean "English from Flanders"? If it doesn't, translate it into Dutch and I'll try again. Not that I understand Dutch any more and Flemish.

I think Larry Stark is all wet if he thinks Infinity is going to fold. In the first place, I think Shaw is awake enough to avoid being led astray by fan letters. He's had quite a bit of experience in the pulp field, you know. But the thing that clinches it is that the stuff printed by other long-established prozines is as good as, or even less good than, the stuff he prints. I feel safe in saying this because I don't read so much sf as to have lost all my critical ability; I often pick up a prozine and put it back on the stands simply because it contains crud. I'd say that Infinity runs about the level of Fantastic Universe or The Original SF Stories, or a bit higher. It's certainly better than Imagination, and it isn't in a rut like Galaxy.

My own pet hypothesis about the lack of "Sense of Wonder" in modern sf is that modern writers don't know enough about modern science. There is plenty of sense-of-wonder material in modern research, but nobody who can write seems to know about it.

But there's another side to the coin. Modern readers of sf know even less about science than did the readers back in the "sense-of-wonder" days, on the average, because it is the "hard-core" type of readership which is familiar with science, and sf today lives on a large fringe audience that knows very little about science. So if a story is to sell, it can't contain very much science or the fringe readers will drop the thing. Gernsback was wrong; you just can't teach science through science fiction. At best you can interest people in science.

Now if you want to argue about this point, let me make one more comment: it seems to me that it is the element of science that makes science-fiction different from fantasy and other kinds of fiction. And you never hear complaints about a "sense-of-wonder" being absent from fantasy or mundane fiction, because those types never had it. You show me a story with a "sense-of-wonder" to it and I'll show you a story that depends on the properties of the physical universe, explicitly, for its effect.

And on the other hand, I must agree with you that much of "classic" sf has the property of imparting a wonderful sense, rather than a sense of wonder.

In the first line on p. 21, I think Larry Stark should have said "social machinery" instead of "sociological machinery." I've noticed that almost everyone in fandom misuses the word "sociological." Time and again you hear complaints about Galaxy's "sociological" science fiction, but it isn't sociological at all. The nearest thing to truly sociological science fiction that I think of right off the bat is some of Chad Oliver's work. The stories in Galaxy and elsewhere merely describe a strange society--no more completely than any setting for any sf story is described--and then superimpose a plot on it. You might call this "social" science fiction, but to be "sociological," a story would have to expose a little of the sociology of the society being considered, in terms of the concepts of sociology (status, function, et al). There's no reason why this couldn't be done, except that almost no one would appreciate such a story. For every reader of sf who knows something of the physical sciences there are dozens who get their science from the newspapers and slicks; but for every reader who's ever opened a sociology text there would be hundreds who had never even heard of the terminology before.

File on you, Hitchcock, for thinking nobody says file any more.

Your fanzine reviews are as sound as any, and a lot sounder than some in prozines. But the only person I've seen whose fmz reviews don't bore me is Robert (Ghod!) Bloch.

Three cheers to Jan for doing a beautiful job of mimeoing; for inserting a few delightful comments; for his editorial. I'm tempted to say that you and he should take over joint editorship of ALPHA—which sounds so like UMBRA that I mix them up anyway.

((Uit Vlaanderen Engels means "outside of Flanders, English." Parody of "In Vlaanderen Vlaams," "inside Flanders Flemish," the slogan of people over there who were opposed to the use of French all over Belgium. #Do you mean to say that Bloch is Ghod?? Sacrilege! #You mean to say, Jan and I should take over joint editorship of Umbra, don't you? Well, Jan has offered to do another ish of Umbra next spring. Trouble is in communications between Baltimore and Antwerpen. Too costly, too much time to edit a regular fanzine across an ocean and two or more different postal authorities. Still, maybe we might put out a Cosmopolitan annual. Hoe vindt U dat, Jan?))

Jean Linard, 24 rue Petit, Vesoul, H.Sne., France. -- I'm not an old enough fan yet who could afford to comment pertinently, and on Fandom chapter, please accept apologies. All what I feel myself able to discuss about en connaissance de cause if any is French situation in sf field; and sf—I mean publication of American material, in France, is not interesting. And a misty thing to you, probably.

COMMUNIQUE: -- I might be somewhat ashamed at my opinion on French science-fiction traitorously exposed without corrections by John. Opinion and report transmitted in haste --as a post-script rather personal to John than aiming Umbra, because of its style. Besides, the details on the French sf library chapter was close to incomplete, about for the same reason.

But I can't really be ashamed at my creole English. All right all right, my English is a creole one, and for a long while to come. Although Archie Mercer found it a bit French-Canadian (Alpha 13) and though the same individual, since that Alpha, is telling me in a letter that I'm writing IN ENGLISH! (I'm keeping his letter as a proof of such an odd testimonial.) Matter of points of view; as to me, it doesn't sound at all.

Thus creole if you want; in fact, nothing astonishing at it: I am a Creole. My Father-in-English is Walt Disney's Dell Comics Pub. Co., and mother is the Pocket-Merriam-Webster 25,000 entries, and my brother is Dean A. Grennell, with his permission, and my godmother, with her permission, is Jean Young, and my supergodfather's Jan Jansen (with my permission) and, even, I've a sort of cousin in California, not a linard either, rather an ellik sort of, maybe Ron. What else ought I be able to carry with a language I can hardly begin with?

Since "You want to be French?" is not the question to put, I turn it into "Who wants help me to learn English languages?"((Both of them?))

Besides, I can't help french sf situation, but enjoy it: for it is because of its slow mind that I had come to learn the creole in order that I may read more books.

In sum, and for such reasons, no, I can't be ashamed at my creolity on the contrary. Waiting better one, I'm badly proud of it, if you want to know. My last communication was the seventh or ninth thing I was

TRYING to write in non-creole-english (then, notice I didn't know it was creole on: now I know it is - subtle difference...). And I'm all alone to learning. And I'm old. And I'm not gifted. And I've not lots of lectures, as you American have, to help on learning english, me.

No, I can't get ashamed on creole subjects, or similar. If I could feel shame, or similar, I'd give my studies up. So that I'll never be otherwise than terribly proud of my creoleness. If the fact could make me more advanced in the language, I'm even willing to sound canadian, mexican, feeble-minded, or even worse: french or what you prefer.

SOMEONE ought be ashamed. Not me. As for you, American or English boys (and English, rather) you'd better help me. You have my address, and I repeat I'm all alone in France (with Annie, of course). Write, what.

In expectation, the sky is blue, and the blue of my eyes happen to be most of time a nice blue. Don't come and tell me, please, that I've got any twisted mine. Le sky is REALLY blue, today. Isn't my fault. I love the blue in my eyes. It is all of purity, all of purity.

Archie Mercer, 434/4 Newark Road, N. Hykeham, Linc., England. -- The cover is striking. Who is it. You? Or just anybody? ((Just anybody. I mean, it's a self-portrait of Ted White. Heh.))

You say you haven't laid eyes on a British prozine. Right-prepare to do so. Three recent ones are on their way. You needn't confuse this with generosity-they'd have been thrown away if you hadn't happened to be underneath where they fell. However, they will give you some idea of the junk Ken Bulmer-among others-is churning out for the pro market. And then they'll fire just as well in your incinerator as mine.

Alan Dodd on royalty-that opinion I too have heard voiced. But, by and large, the Englishman-in-the-street (if not the Scot etc) is pro-royalist if anything. The woman even more so-women are pro-royalty in the same way as they're pro-Hollywood, and a bit more so. They spend half their spare time (that's hyperbolic I know-but the principle remains intact) living the lives of the female members of the royal house vicariously. That's particualrly so when a woman's on the throne. Anyway, if I understand aright, the royal family is often front-page news even in your part of the world. Add to that the personal identification of it being "our" queen etc, and emotions run very high indeed.

Further to my yappings overleaf, I consider New Worlds and its bi-monthly companion ScienceFantasy to be among the top current prozines, giving place for certain only to F&SF. Authentic and Neb I consider pretty feeble on the whole. And Ken Bulmer HAS written a few readable short-novels (mostly collaborations with Vinç Clarke before branching out on his own) in the Panther series (same pubbers as Authentic).

I'll just finish by saying what is surely unnecessary, that the lettercol's the best Thing in an average issue. I eagerly await your OMPazine-I hope it's safely in the hands of the overworked Clarke family by now.

((I just got the Ompa mailing yesterday, and am going to start work on Fang 1 after this Umbra gets let loose. Fang, Ompans, will be mostly mailing reviews this time. with some talk about the local environment, and possible some on fannish subjects. I can never plan ahead on talking fannish things--they just come if they're there. No illos either. Tsk.))

Pierre Lungberg, Kyrkvägen 4, Lidingö, Sweden. -- It is no use for me to tell anything about Swedish SF; He will be angry if I tell the truth. By he I mean Lars. I suppose that you think that he is a rather clever boy, and I will not spoil it for him. The SF in Sweden is marching on and I



hope that this letter will not give you a wrong idea about Swedish fans. We have a lot to learn, not from you, we are new, but remember even young people can grow.

((Thank you, Mr. Lundberg. Although Mr. L. asked that his letter not be printed, in the interests of better relations and communications between Anglo-Saxon and Swedish language fandoms, I decided to excerpt a part of it. I believe that this more than anything else demonstrates the true spirit of the newly-discovered Sverfifandom.

The picture at the left was originally intended as a portrait of Mr. C. Hall; however, due to space considerations, I couldn't print his letter. However,

the readers are invited to write in appropriate name-captions for this illustration...Apropos of absolutely nothing, Mr. Hall panned Umbra 13.))

Kent Mooman, 4722 Peabody Ave., Cincinnati 27, Ohio. -- Forry Ackerman sent me a copy of Utopia-Sonderband, and tho I can't read a word of German, it looks like a basically good magazine. Heinlein's "The Long Watch" (from "The Green Hills of Earth") is the featured story, and it's backed up by a number of very short pieces of sometimes only a page or two in length. The main trouble with it is just that: it's too choppy, and looks as though the included items were thrown in at random with no regard for continuity. From what I've heard of Gerfandom, however, it'll take more than a mag like this to really inspire interest. Wonder what those neos that Greg Benford speaks of would think of a mag like Galaxy at this stage, when they're used to Jim Parker and Edmond Hamilton translations? ... But how does Larry Shaw feel about this grim prediction for Infinity? Maybe he'll reprint the item in "Fanfare" just to prove he isn't superstitious, eh? ((Maybe he will.))

ALAN DODD, 77 Stanstead Rd., Hoddesdon, Herts, England. -- ...The only thing I can think of to commend British Railways to anybody is that if Boyd Raeburn ever came to England for a con he'd be able to get free mats and Crockery with his initials on! #Larry Stark, in fiction for a change, utters a lot of world-weary words and wise statements that will probably be remembered in the future with as much affection as items like Redd Boggs's "Dream Quest." Heard anything from Redd lately?

((I had gotten a letter from Ron Bennett, who mentioned in Uml3 coming to America this summer. He didn't say a thing about the trip, except: #I won't be seeing you at the Worldcon, but I promise to talk about you at the Twerpcon." In Um 13 I had said I couldn't go conning in Sept. Did he mean he'd decided not to come over, or did he think I wouldn't come (on reconsidering, I think I can make it to NY)? I wrote Alan Dodd, and:

The last I heard was that he was writing a story about a bearded lady that he hoped to sell to a prozine--since then nothing. Not even a letter of comment on the current Camber in which he has a piece. I'm not sure but I get the impression you probably think Ron is making plans to stay in America permanently which isn't the case by any means. Being a school teacher of course Ron gets off most of the summer months and during that time he hopes to join the Merchant Seamen's Union and sign on board a ship headed for New York or Baltimore or thereabouts. The reason being so that he can attend the WorldCon in New York itself. But as he says he'll have to time it pretty carefully so that he can be back in England for his job which starts again about the first week in September...A stranger in a strange country. I hope he manages to get away with it. So now you know as much as I do. Poor Ron.

((So there it is. I wrote to Ron, too, of course...even giving Emergency Instructions on Landing, in case he was just leaving. No response. Nichts. Has he decided he couldn't swing it, or has he just counted me out of the con? If anyone knows what gives in the Bennett mind (& that includes YOU, Ron!), PLEASE let me know, and I'll give it publicity here. I've met the Bulmers and Basil Coukis at the docks, and I can imagine what it'd be like to land, for the first time here, unmet. It's a horrible nightmare, and I want to avoid it at all costs.))

To finish off the letter column, is Erich Pabel, publisher of Germany's only science fiction magazines.

Erich Pabel, Rastatt-Baden, Militärstr. 4, Germany. -- It may be the opinion of Miss Steul that Utopia has a very low standard. But this appears to be the rather biased opinion of a single individual after all. It has been our endeavor, since Utopia made its first appearance in Germany, to raise science fiction to the high standard it is now enjoying in the United States, Great Britain, etc. That this had to be done gradually will be understood if you consider that the majority of the German readers had no idea about SF literature whatsoever.

Science fiction had to be introduced to the German reader and we had to get in on the ground floor. Simple action novels and space operas were the answer. New terms had to be introduced and explained. Telepathy, space travel, spacesuit, blaster, free fall, vacuum, light-year, etc. Our first novels had to be selected very carefully and with one thing in mind: to educate the reader to understand "good" science fiction. This cannot be done overnight but takes years of planning.

The year 1956 means for us that we have reached the point where we can offer our readers novels of good quality. We have published several excellent American novels, THE STARS ARE OURS, by Andre Norton, THIS ISLAND EARTH, by Ray F. Jones, WINE OF THE DREAMERS, by John MacDonald just to name a few. Scheduled to appear are Andre Norton's STAR RANGERS, PLANETS FOR SALE by E. Mayne Hull, SPACE PLATFORM and SPACE TUG by Murray Leinster, DOME AROUND AMERICA and LEGION OF SPACE by Jack Williamson, SECRET OF SATURN'S RINGS by Don Wollheim and many more. We rather doubt that UTOPIA "would be laughed out of business in the States in a month," to quote Greg Benford.

It might be of interest that the second issue of the Sonderband will be in the newsstands when you read this letter. It contains stories by Bob Heinlein, A.E. van Vogt, Ross Rocklynne, Ray Gallun and other American and German writers, with an excellent cover by Paul Blaisdell. With this issue the Sonderband will go bi-monthly and its new title will be UTOPIA SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZIN. Among other departments it will also feature a book-review column.

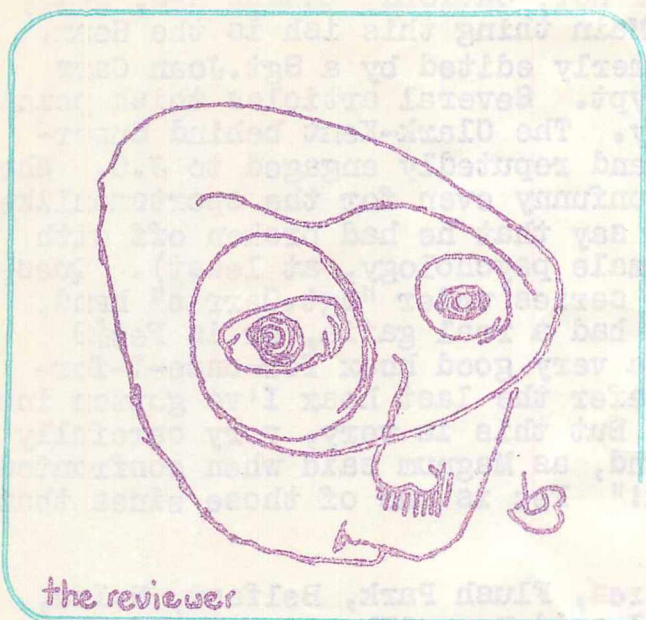
((Very sensible argument. But wouldn't you say that people like Anne are needed to push for improvement from the readers' side? As more and more readers come into the SFCD and Gerfandom, and become more acquainted with the idea of higher standards of writing, a second force for the same end will form. Naturally, the fans probably will never side with the people behind Utopia, but two movements for better science fiction, on either side of the producer-consumer fence, are better than one.))

So ends the letter column. Sorry for the occasional deep cuts, but there weren't enough letters to go eight pages. If more people write in reply to Uml4, we'll have a bigger Whaaat next time (hint).

* * * * *

Fans are ~~slugs~~ slobs. Tendrilless too.

-A. Young



CHICKEN- SCRATCHES

ECAMBER, Alan Dodd, 77 Stanstead Rd., Hoddesdon, Herts., Eng., 9d, irreg. mimeo, 36 pp., #6. -- Dodd leads off with an unoriginal cover, normal editorial, columns, fanfiot.by Berry (nice), article (shades of Eric Bentcliffe) on pornography in fanzines, a "classic" (that's a classic?) by Ron Bennett, average, a book review, same, a letter-converted-into-an-article by Bloch that barely succeeds in becoming an article, imported fanzine reviews (something I've never liked really), another column, fan-article by Benford on post offices, 6-page letter col., back cover. With all that, Camber is just about worth its price. Berry, Bloch, Bennett, (for once), the letters, and the profusion of columns are what count this issue. Considering that lastish was 68 pp., half of it letters, this is an off-issue. Taking it on its own merits, it represents a pretty good fannish zine. Definitely enjoyable to the Fannish Fan.

INSIDE, Ron Smith, 611 W. 114th St. 3d-310, New York 25, NY, 25¢, 5/\$1, bi-mo., photo-offset, 40 pp., #15. -- Inside's layout is original when you first see it, but by now I'm convinced either (a) it's something Inside just wouldn't be the same without or (b) layout is in a rut. This issue features three long articles: a review of 10 years of SFA, a list (serialized) of Lovecraft's character-books and works, and an article by Bob Bloch. This latter easily outdoes the rest of the material. Basically, it's an important person in stf talking about a subject vital and central to stf. His line: stf has again been associated in the mundane mind with dull hackwork, via the far-applauded movies, radio-TV shows--which struck an abysmal average on the whole. The boom, created by devotees of such misery picking up stf prozines and not finding what they wanted, has left the more-or-less intelligent public with a low opinion of the field, as did the BEM covers of the '30s-'40s. Remedy: getting someone in the mass media to show the dichotomy of the stf field by productions which are to the run-of-the-mill stffilms as High Noon is to the run-of-the-mill Westerns. As long as Inside can print articles, like that one, of REAL importance, 25¢ is a bargain. And, by the way, I'd like to see a long letter column in the next Inside.

FEMIZINE, Pamela Bulmer, 204 Wellmeadow Rd., Catford, London SE6, Eng., 1s/15¢, irreg., mimeo, 34pp., #9. -- Main thing this ish is the Hoax. For those who didn't know, Fez was formerly edited by a Sgt. Joan Carr of the British Ladies' Auxiliary in Egypt. Several articles thish point out that the good Sgt. was a non-entity. The Clark-Kent behind Superfanne was H.P. Sanderson, also a Sgt., and reputedly engaged to J.C. When this 2-year hoax was beginning to get unfunny even for the sportsmanlike British, HPS decided, he says here, to say that he had broken off with JC and she was gafiating (it's good female psychology, at least). Question: which is the real Hoax ish--the series under "Sgt. Carr's" hand, or this #9? that is, was Joan real and had a real gafia, or is Fez#9 perfectly straightforward in breaking a very good hoax for-once-&-for-all? I'm not saying anything. I'd prefer the last hoax I've gotten into to be the Multog hoax of 1 1/2 yrs. ago. But this is very, very carefully done. Damn well executed, in fact. And, as Magnum said when confronted with it, "This may be the Perfect Hoax!" Fez is one of those zines that are capable of it.

RETRIBUTION, John Berry, 1 Knockeden Cres, Flush Park, Belfast, N.Ire, irreg., mimeo, 44pp., #2. -- Last ish I said Berry&Thomson spread them selves over an awful lot of pages, and it didn't do the mag any good. I also said (if I remember) that with outside material, that would improve. I was right. Now this Berry is the topkick of the Goon Defective Agency with "branches" in Thomson, JanJansen, BobShaw, ChickDerry, CliffGould, and SteveSchultheis. This take-off on the magnificent Goon Show is an excuse to print fan-humor-fiction in the Fabulous Berry Vein, from various other fans (see above) and the Master himself. Atom's excellent cartoons, of course, are just as prolific as Berry, The Great Defect. A fabulous all-fan-humor zine by some of the top lights in fanwriting. RECOMMENDED. URGED.

INNUENDO, Terry Carr, 134 Cambridge St., SanFrancisco 24, Calif., free, irreg., ditto, 32pp., #1. Horridly poor dittoing in half the zine, not much material except Bloch and reprints, of which there weren't enough, and just not too much fannish inspiration coming thru make this a typical firstish effort by two well-seasoned, slightly world-weary faneds. With letters and more alive material (RB's is the only such this time) Inn will improve. It has quite a few pleasant possibilities and probabilities. (Other ed, incidentally, is Dave Rike, Box 203, Rodeo, Calif. Delingquent mee.)

UT I TID OCH RYMD MED UTOSKOPET, Kjell Pettersson, St.Tvärgatan 24A, Lund, Sweden, mimeo, 10pp.legal, #5. -- One of those ten pages is the English page, to become the English section if anyone ever writes letters, sends fanzines, etc., in English to K.P. Frankly, although I probably could get the gist of it, I didn't try the Swedish. Delingquent mee. Repro is pretty hectic, and layout is deceiving--I can't decide if it exists. Ut is OO for the Lund club (Utopia...familiar name?), and I promise next time to read the stuff in Swedish. Kjell is ready & willing to trade(hint).

FANTASY SAMPLER, John Murdock, %Henry Moore Studio, 214E.11thSt., Kansas City, Mo.(6), free, mimeo, 25pp., #4. --The former Vagabond, FS professes unlimited policy on subject matter, but this issue hews mainly to the fantasy line. This is where George Wetzel belongs (in fact, he does contribute), not in Wendigo...repro, layout superb, material spotty. That last will probably pick up as time goes on. It's free--what more to say?

OMNIBUS, Sgt.H.P.Sanderson, APO(OAB)MELT, British Forces PO 53, GPO(?), Eng., free, irreg., mimeo, 30pp., #5. -- This the first Omnibus slanted toward the general fan field, comes from the Middle East. Contents are editorial, two typically British fan-"articles," and a section taking off on Zenith. I found personality thruout, not spread too thin, and some good humor, but "Menith" is a total loss on my dull sensibilities(if any). In time, Sandy will probably start a letter column and print outside material; but he should take care to keep several pages to himself. It's free and worth writing for.

TACITUM, Benny Sodek, 1415 S. Marsalis Ave., Dallas 16, Tex., ?, monthly (?), mimeo, 24pp., #7. -- Editorial/fanzine reviews, article on inter-lineations, not bad, long Interview tn Terry Carr and Boob Stewart, yes another, book review by Ray Schaffer, good, letter column, interesting as usual, short article by Harlan Ellison entitled Remembrances of Idiocy. Sodek himself isn't spread too thin, but the 5 pages taken up with Carr's ums and ers and ...s is a total loss on me; they're nice guys out there, but I've never really been able to appreciate anything they've written. C'est dommage. Tac has no price listed; I suggest you write to Sodek for a sample. Of all the Texfan zines Tac has come the farthese in conquering the seemingly regional affliction of reams of empty words. Tac, incidentally, is also the only Texfan zine left. There might be a connection.

ECLIPSE, Ray Thompson, 410 S. 4th St., Norfolk, Nebr., 10¢, 50¢/6, bimoo., mimeo, 26 pp., #16. -- Eek has slipped into a comfortable niche, neither improving nor regressing. And it's a comfortable fanzine to read, too. Editorial, 4-page article by Deack giving-hell to the Sense of Wonder, fanzine reviews above average, 4-page fan-fiction (or was it?) by Berry, letter column, etc. That's just about the proportions of every issue. And, though no Great Dissentions rage through the letter column, and though the articles are not the kind that make one Think, Eclipse is a very enjoyable fanzine. Send a dime.

STAR SCIENCE FICTION FANZINE, George Sjöberg, Dalagatan 31, Stookholm Va (what does that mean?), Sweden, 75ö, 6/kr.4.50, mimeo, 18 pp.legal, #2. -- This is probably the best-reproduced of the seven Swedish fanzines (although I haven't seen them all). Good art, superbly uniform repro, good sense of layout, and no English characterize SSFF. As you probably have guessed, I haven't tackled much of the Swedish, and can't say anything about the level of writing. Contents include short stories, articles, poems, one eulogy (bona-fide, too, if I can understand it), a crossword (!), ads for trades, collectors, and editorial. Oh, to be Paul Enever and understand Scandinavian without having to learn Swedish...

WENDIGO, Georgina Ellis, 1428 15th St. E., Calgary, Alta., Canada, irreg., mimeo, 32 pp., #10(actually#7). -- Wendigo is its usual self, with one feud (Wetzel-Mason:see FS review) and a couple columns added. Artwork varies from good to...but the chief attraction is still the editor's fantas tically persistent ramblings. I said one time that Wendigo is an educational Experience to read. Despite Mr. W. and Mr. M. it still is. Recommended, for originality, if nothing else.

FANATTIC, John Champion, Rte 2, Box 75B, Pnedleton, Ore., bimo exc.summer, 15¢, mimeo, 22pp., #3. -- I mixed up the Facts. A single copy is 10¢, and a "mailing sub" is 15¢. Fan is put out on very thin paper, and the show through is bad; occasionally the typist types merrily through a heading; material is by the local crowd, but shows the fannish spirit, and isn't too bad; in fact Fan, apparently operated under a handicap, is a good deal better than I've intimated. With outside material and letters, it'll grow.

CLLOEV, Autarken, Club Meteor, Box 302, Malmö 1, Sweden, 75 ö, ditto, 14pp legal, #4. -- Again, I haven't read the Swedish. Just jolly. But the repro is wonderful. On a par with Umbra at its best. This is about the best dittoed fanzine I've seen. Clloev is also one of Sweden's fannishest fmz, and in the golden age of Swedish fannish adolescence (as a fandom). That's obvious, even without knowing a word of Swedish. (Tumtegubba--there's a Sw. word, altho I'm dubious about the spelling. Still, Clloev is fannish.) A contest will be run on how to pronounce Clloev. It's open to everyone except residents of the Scandinavian countries, Paul Enevers, and sons of Norwegian seamen (that means you, Jan Magnus!). Winner will receive the son of a Norwegian seaman. In case of tie, prize will be split.

Can't more than ONE person pronounce Clloev right??

ORION, Paul Enever (speak of the djävul...) (yes, Lars, djävulen.), 9 Churchill Ave., Hillingdon, Middx, Eng., 50¢/6, bi-mo, mimeo, 38 pp., #15. -- If Orion's only claim to fame were that it is the most regular fmz in the UK, it wouldn't be our Orion. (Thank you, Paul.) With the usual fabulous contributors, the usual high level of dignified fannishness, and the usual Mr. E. (maybe the most important of all) Orion is again admirably suited for 7th best fanzine (a high honor). It's also as well suited to go higher--in my estimation if nowhere else. RECOMMENDED!

NITE CRY, Don Chappell, 547 S. 79th Av. E., Tulsa, Okla., 10¢, 3/25¢, mimeo, 16 pp. 8 1/2"x7", v3nl. -- Old NC is slipping. Just an editorial and another column on Oklafandom of the '30s. It's still interesting, Don, but it's not worth 10¢ to a person who has no other association with Oklahoma. Keep Dan McPhail, by all means, but add more, please!

A BAS, (pronounced Ah, bahl for the uneducated), Boyd Raeburn, 9 Glenvalley Dr., Toronto 9, Ont., Can., 25¢, mimeo/gestetner, 38 pp., #8. -- Editorial, lengthy Derélioti Derogations, lengthy portions of Rich Alex Kirs, and a letter section with several Big Names in fandom showing why fans consider their names Big--these are on either side of a reprint from Road and Track which (for uninterested me at least) was the low point of a fine issue. Now if A BAS only sold for less... Really, this is a must. Why, it's got everything--except personality--and even with that subtracted, there's a lot left over. If it only sold for less...

Don Ford has just declared open season on Taff nominations, and I'm seriously thinking of running. Now I could suppress the information here, but just to show you how democratic-minded I am(sob) I'll let it out (sob) and be a nice (slob)fellow.

Taff has a balance of \$260 already, from last year's donations, and has a change in The Rules to see that some poor slob uses it: to get nominated, you have to have the signature of five other people, one being a generally-known fan; you have to donate \$5 on the spot; you have to swear you want it and will use it (the nomination) and will go to the London con after all (barring unforeseen Umstände). Deadline Sep 30-'56. Everything goes to Don Ford, Box 116, Sharonville, Ohio. The winner, of course, goes to the WorldCon in London or, if an unforeseen Umstand comes up and London doesn't get it but the Con stays in America, to the International Con II in London, which will amount nearly to the same thing if it's meeting British/Continental fans you want (which is what I would). Either one in September. Let's have a race that'll really bring in the voting donations, yes?

LONDON IN '57!

LAST BREATH OF LIFE

It's Eney's Fault Dept: A week or so ago, I called up John Magno to see if he intended to go to the WSFA meeting on Sunday evening (1Jul) as usual, and if so, if he'd drive me down. He agreed, and picked me up at six for the journey. At 7:30 we were in Silver Spring, and called up Griggs to make sure the meeting was there. It wasn't. WSFA was having a party. In Severna Beach. We called up Ted White, and Eney too, and their respective mothers gave us the same answer. No answer at Spencer's or von B's. So we (Mag and I) lit out for the trek over 45 miles of traffic-packed two lane roads. At around 9:30 we'd gotten to Severna Park, and after going down a couple mile-long blind alleys, we went back to the community shopping center, to find out that there was no such thing as Severna Beach. It was half a dozen miles of private cottages stretched along the shore of the Severn River, 12 miles north of Annapolis or so. When we finally got home, at 11 p.m., Mag resolved to call up White and ask what gave...next day JM tells me they left at 8 in the evening...

More plugs dept.: All it costs is \$2 to come to the World Con in New York...subtracting hotel bill, train fare, food bill, and incidentals (incidentals!), of course...and you get the Wonderful Convention Progress Report Bulletins (I couldn't imagine anything I'd rather get)! That's \$2 to the Fourteenth World Science Fiction Convention (or just 14WSFC, if your brain is shaped like a licence plate), Box 272, Radioactive City Station, New York 19, N.Y. (There'll be a helluva lot of fans there if I keep on advertising, won't there?)

A Finish to the Issue Dept: I'll try to get Um 15 out this time next month, so suppose we make that the deadline for free-lance material and letters. (This is July 4. Happy birthday...Dad.) Sorry about repro: have just discovered that my green fades after the fiftieth copy. Write me and tell how you liked this...will I be seeing you at the Con?



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