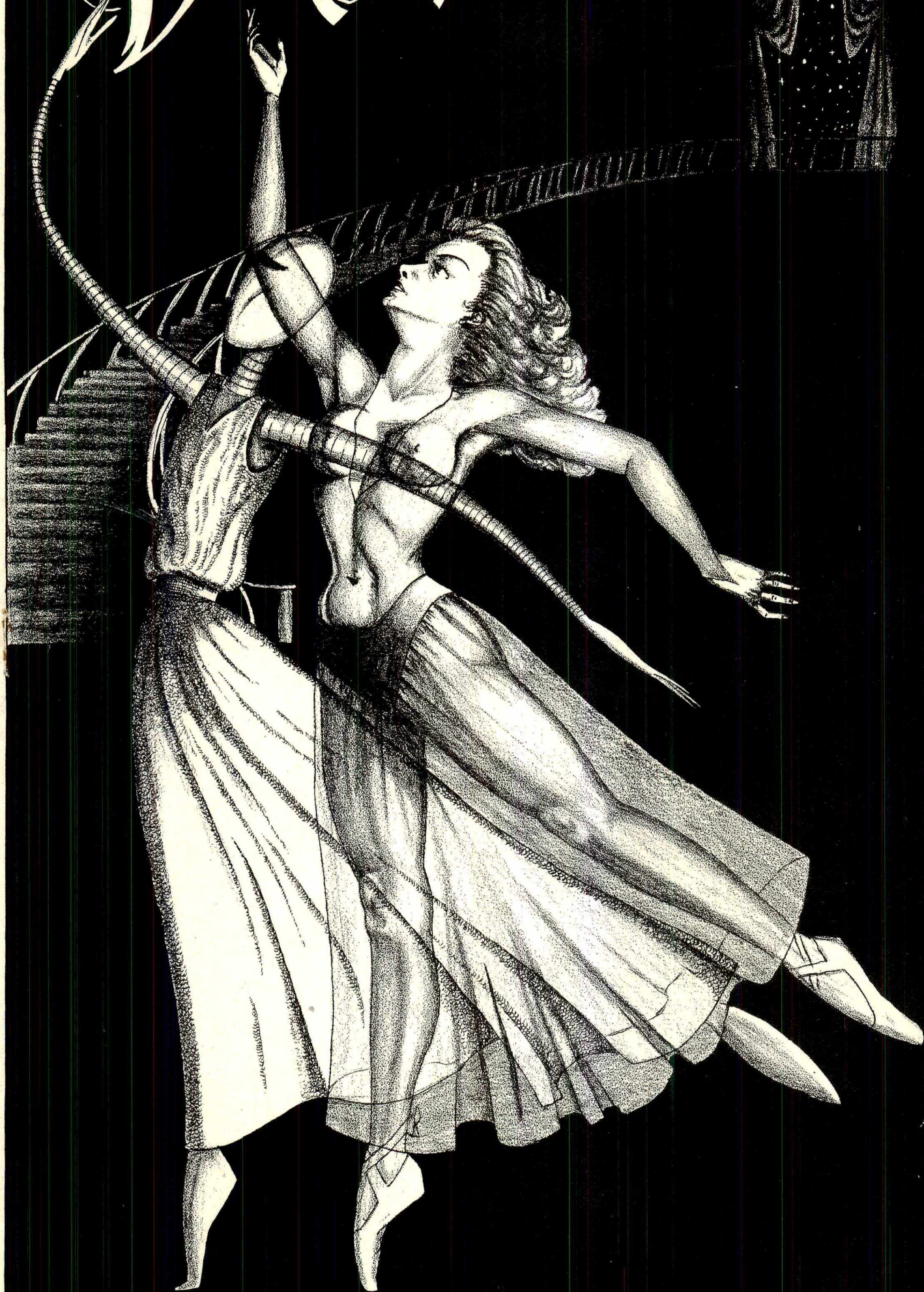


# ZOM







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## LANEY SAVES THE MONTH

But for the exhaustive article volunteered by Fran Laney, there would scarcely have been a Vom this month. (Same complaint: Lack of letters.) "A Critical History of Vom" is praps one the longest sustained pieces of egoboo in fanzine history. There is no truth to the rumor we oferd to use 5 staples per issue on Laney's cöpy's if he would compose this critique.

Laney, with a long-range eye on our 50th Anniversary Issue, which should be appearing in Jan '46, has made an acceptable suggestion: That a symposium of outstanding material from the Vom file should be reprinted in that gala number (along with new & special material). Vom therefore invites this Panel of Experts to submit their recommendations (selected from the first 40 issues) for inclusion in such a Vomthology. Rothman...Speer...Warner...Widner...Tucker...Perdue...Lowndes...Lizbscher...Thompson...DRSmith...DREvans. U are invited to nominate the 15 best letters. Anywhere from 10-25 may be reprinted depending on length & the circumstances, at present unforeseeable, surrounding the editor tord the end of '45. In separate divisions I should appreciate your naming the best 5 articles, the top 5 pieces of art. Start thinking about all this now, will U? altho there's no hurry about submissions. I'd like to have all nominations in about the middle of Nov.

Incidentally, thanx are also extended Laney for stenciling his own article--or will that be evident from his unmistakably ~~elephantine~~ dainty touch?

Any coincidental appearance between this Vom & a kingsize Fan-Dango is due to the paper shortage. Better quality, uncolord, may be located by the time of the issuance of the next number, but it was 16# goldenrod & Vom at once or a delay of a wk to 2 wks.

\*ANGEL\*

GERRY HEWETT sprouted wings this month. He sponsord the litho'd cover

Next month: A nice space-scene, litho'd thru screen, by PFC Joe Gibson. Long letter from Anglofan Julian Parr. Ron Lane also to be heard from. And Bob Gibson. Who'll represent the American minority?

~~~~~  
VOICE of the IMAGI-NATION, aka VOM, #43. June '45. 15c, 7/\$.  
Seräento Forrest J Ackerman, Editor & Publisher; 6475 Met Stn, LA 55.  
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# A CRITICAL HISTORY OF VOM

*Fran Laney*

(Acknowledgement: The writer of this article wishes to thank Gerald Hewett for making the compilation upon which the statistical portion of this article is based, and for other miscellaneous help. FTL)

Voice of the Imagi-Nation, or VOM as it is more usually called nowadays, seems to be a perennial target for fault-finders and carpers. Other fanzines come and go, rarely exciting any undue amount of comment one way or the other, but for some reason or another VOM not only seems to go on forever, but in addition its career is marked by a strong barrage of persistent abuse. Yet the magazine has usually contained much of interest to me, and with the exception of a relatively few issues, has always seemed of reasonably satisfactory quality. For these reasons, I felt that it would be interesting to read the entire file of VOM, taking a few notes meanwhile, with the idea of attempting to analyse the magazine as a whole. This present article will be by no means an essay on "How to make VOM the #1 Fanzine"; but it will attempt to show one reader's reactions in a reasonably dispassionate manner. I might mention here that this article is based on the first 41 issues of VOM.

Some newer fans may not realise the historical circumstances attending VOM'S inception. Back in 1937, the old LASFL decided to publish a club fanzine, modelled somewhat after the 14-Leaflet and The Brooklyn Reporter (dawn-age fanzines published by SFL chapters in Chicago and Brooklyn respectively). This publication was known as IMAGINATION! and survived until the late fall of 1938. The readers column of "Madge" happened to be an especial pet of Forrest J Ackerman's, and when the club decided to discontinue IMAGINATION! he and Morojo asked and received permission from the LASFL to take over The Voice of the Imagi-Nation and continue it as a separate fanzine. It is of passing interest to note that early issues were sponsored by the club, and that material had to be approved by the group before being published. It was not until the fifth issue that the editors undertook the financing of the mag and became answerable to no one for their policy and material. From that time until very recently, VOM has been co-edited by 4e and Morojo, and while Morojo was perhaps more of a silent, hard-working partner, it is nevertheless true that VOM has reflected much of her personality as well as that of Ackerman. The past three or four issues have been edited by Ackerman alone.

VOM has from the first suffered exceedingly from the innate limitations of its editorial policy. Envisioned as a "mirror of fandom", its editors have felt it necessary to print every letter precisely as received, sans revisions or corrections of obvious errors in spelling and grammar. In the earlier days of the magazine, not only was everything published "sic" but everything received for the magazine was published, and in the precise order received from the post office! It took but comparatively few issues for it to become patent that balance could not be obtained if a fetish were made of the order in which the letters arrived, but it took wartime shortages of materials and time to force VOM to reject some letters and to make editorial condensations in others. Nevertheless, the "sic" style is still followed in presenting what material is used, as this writer recently learned to his cost when his stupid misprint "fnas" not only found its way into print but was made the subject of a jesting editorial comment!

The theory underlying the "sic" policy is that contributors will take especial pains with their contributions when they know that they are to appear "as is", and that there is a certain duty the editor owes fandom to show each fan as he actually appears to be. This writer is of the opinion that both facets of this theory have been thoroughly disproved in practise. Forrest Ackerman has an unequalled feeling of responsibility towards fandom, and, I am convinced, would regard it almost as a duty to appear at his best towards this group. If this attitude were more generally shared, the "sic" policy would no doubt work out very well. Unfortunately, however, it is not. Many fans have wracked their somewhat meager intellects to turn out insanely butchered-up letters, just to see how far the "sic" policy actually would go. Up until 1942, scarcely an issue of VOM appeared that did not waste at least one page to prove its "sic-ness" to some dope. In addition to the deliberate machinations of the nincompoops, far too many fans are either too careless or too poorly educated to turn out a perfectly spelled, well-expressed letter. As to the idea of showing fans to fandom as they actually are, I believe a very strong argument might be made to show that a greater service to individual fans would be to suppress or fix up material unworthy of them. Few of us are perfect enough not to turn out something every now and then that we later are



ashamed of, especially when we are rattling along in an informal letter. An occasional correction of an error or deletion of an untypically assinine statement (after all, each of us has his own peculiar and unique brand of assininity!) would be gratefully received by most of us.

Another matter in connection with VOM'S policy is this idiosyncrasy known as simplified spelling, or "Ackermanese". Ackermanese, like its progenitor, has mellowed greatly with the years. In its earlier appearances, it was well-nigh unrecognizable as English, but has gradually become more and more conventional, has evolved with use. Ackermanese makes sense. It is a carefully thought out system of modernising and streamlining the written language, and is fluid enough to evolve and improve with use. It is nothing if not consistent. But the half-baked attempts at imitation which filled the earlier issues of VOM are annoying. There is no hint of logic or indication of utilitarian motivation in any of them. One suspects that they were abortive attempts by illiterate adolescents to disguise their lack of literacy.

The at one time "burning" issue of nudes is relatively unimportant as one examines the entire file. The first Vomaideen did not appear until the 12th issue, and the first nude one did not appear until #14, after the magazine had been leading an independent life for over two years. The terrific rash of nudes was largely confined to issues 29, 30, and 31; except for those three numbers, nude illustrations were sparse, if consistently recurring. From the standpoint of a man reading the whole file, the only drawbacks to the nudes were the poor execution of many of them (a criticism which applies equally to nearly all other fan art) and the almost unbelievable quantity of stupidly sophomoric comments on them pro and con. VOM would have been immensely improved if it had published the nudes sans comment as well as clothes.

As a "mirror of fandom", VOM seems to have been reasonably successful with three exceptions. First, the tendency of letters to hash and rehash previous ones--comments on the comments on somebody's comments--forces each topic that gets into VOM to occupy so much space as to crowd out many other subjects which a survey of other contemporary fanzines shows conclusively were occupying fandom's attention at the time. Second, VOM has throughout suffered from not having enough "original" writers, persons who would consistently introduce new items of fan interest. This has resulted in some topics getting run into the ground. Third, although editorial remarks in several widely separated issues indicate a desire for material dealing directly with sf and fantasy, VOM's almost complete lack of such material definitely warps "the mirror".

Even so, a reasonably accurate picture of fandom from 1939 to the present date may be drawn from VOM's pages. The unbelievably puerile and sophomoric vaporings comprising the bulk of the earlier issues indicate a group of very young people who had been relatively untouched by mundane problems and responsibilities. The British boys, bred under a constant shadow of war, from the start demonstrated noticeably greater maturity than the Americans, and in 1940, when Carnell, Youd, and others began describing actual experiences in the blitz, the British letters were so much "older" as to jolt seriously the unity of the magazine. In 1941, several of the Americans began to demonstrate a more serious approach, largely due, I suppose, to their gradually increasing chronological ages. But it was not until late 1942 that established fans as a whole showed anything approaching a collective maturity, and it is my belief that the advent of the war made "men" out of most of the "fen". VOM still has its silly and childish letters, but they do not as a rule come from persons old enough to know better. In the first year and a half of VOM, the only moderately serious and thoughtful material was a somewhat acid exchange between Jack Speer and Doc Lowndes on the now forgotten subject of Michelism. Almost all the rest of the magazine was trivial maunderings on trivia, coming, one presumes, from trivial persons. The overall picture of 1939 and 1940 fandom becomes even less enticing when one notices the reception given Milty Rothman's superb Science Fiction Is Escape Literature, which is one of the most provocative and best-done pieces of fan writing I've ever had the pleasure of reading. If published today, such a piece of material would create a sensation, but in 1940 the children were too busy swinging by their tails through the treetops to do more than give it a passing mention.

The coming of age of fandom is a subject to which an entire article might well be devoted, but in passing it should be sufficient to note the wide range of topics covered in two or three issues of the modern VOM, and the clarity of thought and cogency of reasoning displayed by so many of the writers as proof that mentally at least fandom is today reasonably grown up. A candid report on a file of VOM drawn up by a psychoanalyst would be extremely revealing and extremely annoying to VOM's editors and readers.



alike, but fans are not ever likely to be noted for psychiatric stability. I've gotten in hot water with many fans through my remarks on these matters in FAPA, so I shan't go into them any further here, except to note that very few of VOM's regular contributors have failed to give a very strong if unconscious self-revelation through their letters.

And there certainly have been a lot of letters in VOM! In the first 41 numbers of this magazine have appeared no less than 687 letters and articles exclusive of editorial remarks and advertising. That is an average of not quite 17 letters per issue (yes, earlier issues were much larger than those of the past year or so). These 687 letters have been written by 233 different people ranging from Alan Roberts and Harris Schmarje to Doc Smith and Abe Merritt. An interesting, or at least perplexing, fact in connection with all this is that no less than 118 people have written only one letter to VOM and then stopped. That is slightly more than half of VOM's contributors. Perhaps this is partly due to the clique-ish nature of the mag; especially in its earlier days one had to be deep in the inner circle in order to dig the jive.

Nearly a third of VOM has been written by 15 people who got so interested in the "mirror" that they reflected themselves 213 times. The following list of VOM's top contributors (in quantity, at least) might prove of interest: (The figures of course indicate the number of letters by that person)

Milty Rothman	26	Joe Fortier	11
Jack Speer (& J.Bristol)	25	Vol Molesworth	11
Harry Warner	20	Elmer Perdue	10
Ted Carnell	16	Tigrina	10
Bob Tucker	14	D. B. Thompson	10
Walt Liebscher	14	Jimmie Kepner	10
Fran Laney	12	Dick Wilson	10
Art Widner	12		

These figures list all contributors who had ten letters or more to their credit. Forrest J (no period), the grateful editor of VOM, had originally intended to award valuable prizes to this loyal 15---things like mint copies of The Outsider and Ship of Ishtar---but due to acute shortages in the garage and a coincident relaxation of shortages elsewhere, he has decided to confer a much more signal distinction upon them. From now on, each of these gallant and self-sacrificing individuals will have special copies of each issue of VOM prepared for them, special copies with four staples instead of the customary three. Fandom's new elite, The Ancient and Honorable Order of the Four-Staples. Are you a four-staple man? What are you waiting for? Write a letter to VOM today!

Hmmm. So fascinated did I become while mulling over Gerald's figures that I seem to have strayed somewhat from the matter in hand.

VOM, I was about to say, has always had many faults--it could scarcely be an undistorted picture of fandom if it did not--but the irrefutable fact remains that VOM has consistently contained a solid core of good material of permanent interest. The fans who criticise the magazine so severely seem to forget a couple of obvious facts. First, there is no law to make them read the magazine. Ackerman publishes it, just as any other amateur publisher publishes his magazine, for his own pleasure, and at a considerable expense in both time and money. The ability lavished on VOM could bring Forry a comfortable living in professional journalism; anyone doubting this statement has only to consider that the Ackerman-edited Fort MacArthur Bulletin recently placed second in a national contest for service newspapers, of which there are over twelve hundred. Some of the scarlet-tinged New Yorkers who have so consistently vilified Ackerman throughout the years for his "puerile" fanzines might examine critically their own contributions to VOM before denouncing him as a dolt for not adopting their "futurian" attitude. Second, through his furnishing of the only medium through which any fan, high or low, may air his views and opinions on any subject at any time, Ackerman is rendering fandom an inestimable service. If fandom itself is to be considered worthwhile (and it must seem so to VOM's detractors, since they all spend much of their spare time in fan activities) then an open and untrammelled forum such as VOM is a definite asset, and must be assessed as such.

Certainly, VOM has faults. They are many and glaring. After having read the entire file of the magazine in something under two weeks, I am probably more aware of them than any other fan, Ackerman included. But even as intolerant a person as myself finds it easy to overlook such things as the less tasteful nudes, the sophomoric diatribes on religion, the disgusting if fascinatingly revealing fetish-worship built up around Tigrina, and the more juvenile vaporings of the very young contributors. If VOM were composed exclusively of such crudiana, it would of course be



worthless. But the saving residue of provocative and stimulating discussions; the occasional pieces of genuine, timeless, side-splitting humor; and the often beautiful artwork combine to make VOM one of my all-time favorites in the fan field.

One criticism frequently levelled at VOM is that it is of topical interest only, that a year-old VOM is somewhat less interesting than last week's newspaper. There is a certain amount of factual basis for this statement, since by its very nature a generalized discussion forum will contain much of solely topical interest. On the other hand, there is a wealth of excellent, timeless material in VOM. To illustrate my point, I have selected what I consider would make an adequate VOMTHOLOGY. Many VOM regulars, notably Jack Speer, are omitted simply because their letters are so largely commentary as to be wellnigh unintelligible unless one has at hand a copy of the VOM upon which they are commenting. Many leading VOM topics are ignored because an adequate coverage of them would require the inclusion of too many letters. I have tried to pick letters which are timeless, and which stand by themselves without reference to other VOM material. I have attempted, though not entirely successfully, to give in this selection a hearing for each major view or school of thought held by any audible number of VOM's readers. Due to their triteness, I have arbitrarily omitted letters dealing at any length with nudes, religion, or Tigrina. It is my belief that this list might easily be made three times as long without appreciably lowering the standards of the VOMTHOLOGY and without altering any of my criteria for selection.

Try rereading the following letters and supplements: Donald Gledhill (#3, p 3) discussing stfilms; Milty Rothman (#6, p 8) and his wonderful Science Fiction Is Escape Literature; Paul Freehafer's (#8 p 17) amusing discussion of the problems of a collector; Charlie Hornig's (#9, p 4) uproarious take-off on the typical "letter to the editor"; Art Widner (#15 p 5) cutting all the boys who had been viding to see who could remit for VOM in the screwiest way; Doc Lowndes' (#16 p 10) definitive discussion of Esperanto and its relation to scientifiction; Vol Molesworth's (#16 p 11) brilliant and logical essay on fandom's need of a sense of perspective; Doug Webster (#18, p 16) trying his best to stay calm and collected as he tells of his personal interview with Stapledon; DBThompson's (#21 p.4) lucid discussion on fandom's need for the pros; Hank Kuttner's (#23, p 6) interesting if tantalizingly incomplete discussion of Satanism; Sam Russell's (#25, p.1) letter of general comment and criticism, included in this list not only because it is a good letter but because it is one of the very few of its type which can stand alone without reference to previous issues of VOM; Erik Hopkins' (#25, p.8) masterful comparative criticism of Stapledon and Heinlein; Bruce Yerke (#28, p 3) with a stimulating discussion of the psychology of religion; Milty Rothman's (#28, p 8) well-done discussion of fan organizations; Milty's (#29, p.8) discussion on religion that is so well done that I ignored my criteria for once; Fran Laney's (#29, p.9) discussion of religion and the purpose of fandom (I should not have included one of my own letters except that there were so few in a cynical vein; I seemed to be the only regular contributor who rather consistently took a gloomy and sarcastic view of things. As a contribution per se, this letter amounts to little, but it should serve as a foil for the more idealistic and optimistic discussions.); Robert Bloch's (#29, p.13) poetical announcement of an increase in the family, a wonderfully funny bit of doggeral; Robert Bloch (#34, p.2) in a more serious mood discussing "Books for Snooks", a list of books selected as ammunition for thoughtful discussions; Eloise Becker's (#35, p.8) long and interesting discussion of personal philosophy; and then, the best thing ever to appear in VOM: Bill Temple's (#36, p.9) brilliant and logical affirmation of faith in fandom as a hobby and major avocation.

This list does not take into account the dozens of letters containing solid hunks of meaty discussion on a miscellany of subjects; these are mostly items devoted to one topic alone. This does not include the excellent series on "Plans for Slans", with the discussions on modern child-raising. It leaves out of account several excellent full-length articles; notably Ackerman's write-up of the Denvention (one of the few pieces of fan reporting that gives the reader an illusion of actually participating in the events described) and Art JoQuel's scholarly "Some Notes on the Black Arts". Ignored too are such features as RA Hoffman's "Quest In Time", an excellent piece of fan fiction; and the three page resume of the first 37 issues of FFF in #16, a concentrated history of a year of fandom. The casual reader may notice VOM's weakpoints, but the wouldbe anthologist suffers chiefly from an embarrassment of riches!

A fan can get along without VOM--of the 139,000,000 people in the USA 138,999,825 get along without it quite happily--but one's participation in fandom is not complete until he has the VOM habit. Better than benny, quicker than liquor; it's the most pleasant vice in fandom. #



JACK SPEER ties Rothman by riting his 26th letter to Vom. It comes from the civilized adres of 5229 University Way, Seattle 5, Wash, rather than the erst-while Afrikaan bomacile which "Black" Speer (he'll hate me forever for that) called home while in self-imposed exile.

January Vom followed me across the continent and ocean twice, and finally wound up in this mailbox yesterday (25 May). My comments'll probably be considerably dated, but in view of the requests for material in Fanews, and because I wanta honor this Undie by writing the first letter on it to you, I'll pour out my reactions to the contents.

In case nobody else caught it, Milty made an egregious error (whatever egregious means) (egregious means heap big error made in bad taste. Like Watson drinking benzine by mistake for benedictine) in identifying Spengler with The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. That book was written by an Englishman, Gibbon; Spengler is The Decline of the West.

Rob Mastell gives an example of the kind of thing Analestos denounces in a current Mopsy (Fapazine). He names five outstanding needs for the future--and he puts World Government and World calendar in the same bracket. Doesn't that show a woeful lack of a sense of relative importance? I suppose if Mastell had five evenings a month to spend in promoting reform, he'd give one to World Government and one to the World calendar.

Roy Johnson surprises me by saying "It cannot be expected that many slen will be avid musical enthusiasts". Where has he been?

Now we come to Francis T Laney. First, in addition to the correction about "stefnate", there's another philological error. "Imaginist", etcetera, were not the creations of the Galactic Roomers (Ashley's suggestion was "tem") - the im terms were suggested by Art Widner.

I was mighty surprised to see that Laney, more than a year after having set himself up as judge of fans and their works, should just be discovering fanationalism. But having made this discovery, he proceeds to go overboard with it. His suggestion of stef-versus-stefnism as the cleavage in fandom is invalid for four reasons:

(1) If stefnism were to be considered a separate and self-sufficient culture, then the only truly stefnistic writings would have to be about affairs of the microcosm. Yet it is well known that the bulk of discussions in the FAPA are about jive, politics, and various other things belonging to the world outside both the FAPA and science-fiction fandom.

(2) The suggested fission is only one, and probably not the sharpest one, that you could detect signs of. There's the division between the casual hobbyists and the all-out collectors, publishers, and so on. There's the distinction between those who read for the emotional kick and those who read for the ideas in stef. There's the cleavage between the adults of all faiths and the bright-eyed fourteen-year-olds.

(3) Every stefnist is at least 40% a fan of science-fiction, and every active scientifictionist is at least 30% a stefnist.

(4) Our history shows that every extreme movement toward an independent fandom (that is, away from the pros) has been followed by a reaction toward coalescence with the reader-collector enthusiasts. This is natural, because old-timers drop out and must be replaced from the ranks of the fantasy followers.

From which I conclude that an attempt to draw a line between fantasts and stefnists in fandom would be like trying to divide the American people into rich folks and paupers.

There are some other errors I'd like to jump on. Since Laney names me as the typical stefnist, I hope he'll take my word for it that the statement "The problems of making a living, of mingling in the world, of becoming an active part of civilization, seem to count little in the rabid stefnist's scheme of life", simply is not true. And I base that denial on acquaintance with many other fans besides myself. People like Kepner who would be swayed by slight reasons of any sort must have created this fallacy in Laney's mind; Ackerman is almost the only person I know to whom it really applies. I certainly did not go to Algiers, nor settle in Seattle, for stefnistic reasons. And while on this subject of changing residence, which I think is a fair test of the relative strength of motivations, the Slan Shackers are not moving to Los Angeles for fanish reasons--I learned somewhat to my surprise that they had quite different reasons.

Again and again Laney alludes to that jealously guarded prestige of seniority which Degler complained of so bitterly among the fans who wouldn't go along with him. I wish Laney would cite chapter and verse on this; personally I don't remember any cases of the authority of age being invoked except where it was relevant to the question in dispute.

Finally, I will plead guilty to the charge about Fancyclopedia, with an amendment: It was not that I considered extra important the activities that I participated in, but that I participated in them because I considered and consider them extra important. Also, of course, I gave more details on things I was connected with simply because I knew more details. #

Not to be surprised, ROTHMAN contributes his 27th letter to Vom--from Paris!

A SLIGHT TEE-HEE FOR EMILE E. GREENLEAF'S INNOCENT REMARK ABOUT "I THOUGHT FANS HAD TOO MUCH SENSE TO BE FASCISTS OR OTHER-ISTS." (Vom #41) IT'S A RARE THING TO FIND A FAN WHO IS NOT SOME SORT OF IST. (Twoud seem a fan woud be a stf'ist!) AND WHAT, PRAY, IS WRONG IN BELIEVING IN SOMETHING SUFFICIENTLY TO TALK ABOUT IT, WHETHER ITS NAME ENDS IN "IST" OR NOT? ON THE OTHER HAND, LET US HOPE THAT FANS HAVE TOO MUCH SENSE TO INDULGE IN



"OCCULT DISCUSSION." (Up Stf-ism; down occultism! Ray for Vom-ism: its mirror's a prism!)

GUS WILLMORTH WRITES AN EXCELLENT LETTER ON THE ORGANIZATION OF FANDOM. HOWEVER, AT THE PRESENT MOMENT, THE SUBJECT OF ANALYZING FANDOM'S ORGANIZATION IS A SUBJECT THAT FAILS TO INCREASE MY PULSE. (I FEEL SO FAR AWAY FROM IT ALL, HE SAID LAQUIDLY, SIPPING A COGNAC AT THE CAFE DE LA ZIG ZAG).

I EXPECT THERE WILL BE SOME ARGUMENT ABOUT A LETTER OF MINE IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE IN WHICH I SAY WORDS TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE ISN'T MUCH BENEFIT IN TALKING ABOUT FANTASTIC MUSIC, BECAUSE THE MUSIC THAT IS BASED ON FANTASY ISN'T THE BEST MUSIC. MAYBE I SHOULD ELABORATE. CONSIDER THE COMPOSITIONS THAT WE CALL FANTASTIC -- THEY'RE ALL PRETTY FAR DOWN ON THE LIST OF GREAT MUSIC. SCHEHEREZADE IS MAYBE THE BEST, AND WHILE IT'S LUSCIOUS MUSIC, I DON'T SEE ANYTHING THERE TO TALK ABOUT.

I WOULDN'T BASE MY PURCHASES OF PHONOGRAPH RECORDS ON WHETHER A PIECE IS FANTASTIC OR NOT. I'D BUY HUNDREDS OF OTHER THINGS BEFORE I'D CONSIDER BERLIOZ' FANTASTIC SYMPHONY. ON THE OTHER HAND, "RITES OF SPRING" AND THE "FIRE BIRD" ARE HIGH ON MY LIST BECAUSE THEY ARE GOOD TO LISTEN TO. AND THERE IS AN EXAMPLE THAT IN BALLET THE BEST IS FANTASTIC -- MOSTLY BECAUSE MOST BALLETS ARE FANTASTIC.

NOW HERE IS WHERE I COMPLETELY CONTRADICT MYSELF. THERE IS A PIECE OF MUSIC -- ONE OF THE GREATEST THINGS WRITTEN FOR THE PIANO -- WHICH NOBODY HAS MENTIONED AS BEING FANTASTIC. YET, THINKING ABOUT IT FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THERE IS A DISTINCT FLAVOR OF FANTASY IN THE MUSIC ITSELF. IT'S PURE MUSIC -- DOES NOT TELL A PROGRAM -- BUT IT'S ATMOSPHERE HAS DARK POTENTS AND IMPRESSIONS OF THINGS HOPPING ABOUT IN THE NIGHT, AND WIND HOWLING OVER TOMBSTONES. I REFER TO THE CHOPIN PIANO SONATA IN B FLAT MINOR -- THE ONE WITH THE FAMOUS FUNERAL MARCH IN IT. LISTEN TO IT SOMETIME. IT'S TERRIFIC.

I COULD ALSO MENTION A PASSAGE IN THE THIRD MOVEMENT OF SHOSTAKOVITCH'S FIFTH SYMPHONY WHICH IS MOST DISTINCTLY COLD WIND HOWLING OVER THE STEPPES OF TIBET -- SHANGRI-LA STUFF.

SO FIRST I SAID IT DOESN'T PAY TO TALK ABOUT FANTASY IN MUSIC, AND I WIND UP DOING THAT LITTLE THING. WHAT A DOPE I AM.

OH YES, IN A DUSTY MUSIC STORE HERE I CAME ACROSS A LITTLE SONG ABOUT A WEREWOLF. I'M STILL DEBATING WHETHER IT'S WORTHWHILE BUYING THE WHOLE BOOK JUST FOR THE SAKE OF THIS THIRD-RATE SONG. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WAS WORTHWHILE GETTING THE BOOK OF DEBUSSY PRELUDES SO I COULD LEARN "THE ENGULFED CATHEDRAL", WHICH IS AS WEIRD AS THEY COME.

THIS LETTER IS GETTING TOO LONG. LIFE IS TOO SHORT. AU REVOIR.

P.S. I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TERRIBLY EXCITING VE DAY, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN MY SHOES LAST SATURDAY NIGHT. OOH LA LA. BEAUCOUP COGNAC. A DOPE DREAM WAS NOTHING LIKE THE EXPERIENCE OF WALKING HOME IN THE WEE HOURS, WITH THE DARK STREETS OF PARIS FLOATING PAST YOU, AND YOU FEELING LIKE A DISEMBODIED BEING, AND GRADUALLY AWAKENING TO THE REALIZATION THAT THOSE BOXES PASSING YOU ARE THE BOOKSTALLS ALONG THE SEINE AND THAT TOWERING BLACK MASS IS NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL, AND YOU WONDER HOW THE HELL YOU EVER GOT DOWN IN THAT DIRECTION OF TOWN. SOME DAY I WILL WRITE A BOOK. THAT NIGHT I FELT LIKE DORIAN GREY. #

Not to be outdone, SPEER is here again with his 27th epistle to the Whistle of Fandom.

The cover foto of Daugherty on current Vom is very good of him (done by Morrie Dollens). And Virginia (call her Jim-E) is done glamorously. (Ah, yes! Glamour, toujours glamour!) I'd like to see that correspondence with Cunningham--I'll bet it was very sporadic!

The news of Gallet is interesting, would have been more so if he'd told when his opinion of the Vichy government changed. Between Miltie and me, Ack should have some fair samples of mestef enfantin francais. (Ho, bébé!)

I'm sorry to see Dunkelberger supposing I challenged his veracity, if the word means the same to him that it does to me. I think that his, in my opinion, erroneous conceptions of the obscenity laws are due entirely to misunderstandings and the tyranny of words. For an example of the latter, notice how in his second note he confuses Army censorship--i.e., of information sent back by newsmen, and incidentally security censorship of personal letters--with postal censorship--more correctly prohibition (the word "censorship" was suggested by the entirely separate functions of the Hays office and similar authorities)--of obscenity. The soldier to whom I referred was stationed in the United States at the time he wrote his description of the town, and it was explicit in the transmitting endorsement that the offense was obscenity.

It is true, of course, that first class mail is seldom opened and inspected by postoffice officials. It may be, however, as for instance if the address should become illegible. And the law does not except first class mail which is found to obtain obscenity. "Every obscene, lewd, or lascivious, and every filthy book, pamphlet, picture, paper, letter, writing," it says here, "... is hereby declared to be nonmailable matter .... Whoever shall knowingly deposit, or cause to be deposited for mailing or delivery, anything declared by this section to be nonmailable, or shall knowingly take, or cause the same to be taken, from the mails for the purpose of circulating or disposing thereof, or of aiding in the circulation or disposition thereof, shall be fined not more than five thousand dollars, or imprisoned not more than five years or both." Compris? (Odd coinkydinky, which may sound faked but is fact: As I was typing the foregoing I made an error & applied a swish of obliterate to the stencil. To hurry the drying of the correction fluid, I was blowing on it. Fan Bob Bradford, here in the LASFS clubroom, working on Ferdue's Press, askt "Is the letter so hot as all that?" Little did he know..!)



No conclusion about the legality of someone's act can be drawn from the fact that he wasn't prosecuted. We all know, or should know, that there are thousands of laws which are not enforced, and many more which are only enforced sometimes. The obscenity laws are enforced sometimes. The fact that GI censors in the South Pacific let pictures go thru is no indication that inspectors at 12th & Pennsylvania Avenue would do so.

It is not true that a complainant is needed in something like this, since it's criminal law. The non-interest of the Fargo postoffice was simply due to the character of the people there. Prosecutors don't like to make up a case anyway unless they're assured of cooperation from witnesses, and it's usually necessary for Irate Citizens to push them before they'll enforce laws such as on obscenity. However, Tucker says, and it's no doubt true, that the Post Office Department has men whose whole job is to patrol the mails and prosecute violations of the laws.

Finally, Dunk's statement that "Speer agrees with me on the point that there can be no definition of obscenity" is anything but true. I positively said that there can be and is. It is a question of precision--where to draw the line. Problems of precision, greater or less, arise in connection with any crime--sedition, blackmail, negligence, blasphemy. The possible problem of precision doesn't mean that such crimes don't exist, nor that there can be no definition of them. He can call it "setting one's own prejudices and opinions up in opposition to another's" if he wants to. The War Crimes Commission is going to be engaged in a little job of opposing opinions and prejudices in Europe for some time to come....

Raym's letter was as sincere as he always is. I'm glad to hear he's getting a diploma; a shocking number of adult fen have never finished hi school (Tucker is excused because he had to get out and sell papers for a living), and some show it.

Bravo for Widner's letter. Come to think of it, tho, how many fen who've been married for some time lack children? I don't even know of any who've stopped at one chick. Widner, Swisher, Tucker, Ashley, Laney, Dunkelberger --all have done fairly well by the Families. #

Paris. 13 June 45.

Not to be outdone, That (Roth) Man rites again! Still the undefeated champ, Miltie pens his 28th letter to Vom!

As is custom immemorable, when two fans get together at a confabulation they write a letter to VOM. Today is the world-shattering meeting of Lynn Bridges and myself in Paris, where we walked and talked and walked some more. We have said practically nothing about s-f or fandom as yet, but I'm carrying around with me the April FAPA mailing, which gives the affair some sort of official blessing.

Here's Lynn--

I'm the one who had to travel to get to the Pariscon. Miltie's stationed here, which I consider getting quite a break. Or maybe it's just a result of clean living. I wouldn't know. At any rate, the Pariscon is a success, and nobody's been expelled so far.

Me again--

Who ever heard of clean living in Paris? #

DON JALBERT (how'd he crash the party) puts in his 3¢ worth (inflation) from 13 Highland, Winchendon, Mass: It astonishes me to learn that Vom is receiving a comparatively small number of letters. Frankly, I don't understand why (nor I). It seems to me that such a magazine as the great Vom should always be kept pretty busy with contributions--if only for the fact that you've been publishing some mighty swell discussions recently. And you should be being swamped with letters by fen attempting to enter into the fields of discussion opened up by the recent Laney and Kepner articles.

If I may, I'd like to add one thing to the statements of the latter two; something that has bothered me because neither Kepner or the Laniac stopped to consider it. And it is a point that ought to be made, if only to dissappoint the egos of those who have been living under the shadow of it's shallow (?) hollow (?) ((word illegible; subject to either transliteration)) protection.

It is this: Fandom is not Intellectualism! To be sure, many younger fen mistakenly think it to be so, but naturally they are only kidding themselves.

Properly, though, fandom can not be called normality; I doubt if many fen would deny that the average fan is at least slightly more intelligent than the average man. Perhaps the best way of defining fandom is by saying that it is a bridge between the two - Intellectualism and normality - a bridge by which the man of better-than-average intelligence who is too lazy (and, sadly enough, many fen are) to do the neccessary studying to enable himself to become a true intellectual, may cross into a realm where his inborn, superior, imagination is given a chance to exercise itself.

Rip this one apart, Laney. #

PFC JOE GIBSON in Thungersheim, deutschland, tells the horror story of how he got his bronze star, concludes: All this time I was, in one sense, a fan. For weeks I carried an old issue of Astounding around in my pocket with a hand grenade. There was nothing particular about that Astounding, except maybe a Venus Equalateral story and the fact that it was an Astounding. But all the time I was a guy on another planet, a planet of war whose denizens weren't human, and were out to conquer the universe. If I'd been thinking of these Heinies as human beings I'd start thinking they felt the same way about it all along as I had, and maybe I wouldn't have done some of the things I did do. The guys in their grotesque fatigues and big helmets and little carbines were like something out of Buck Rogers. With the Japs-- (To be concluded.)