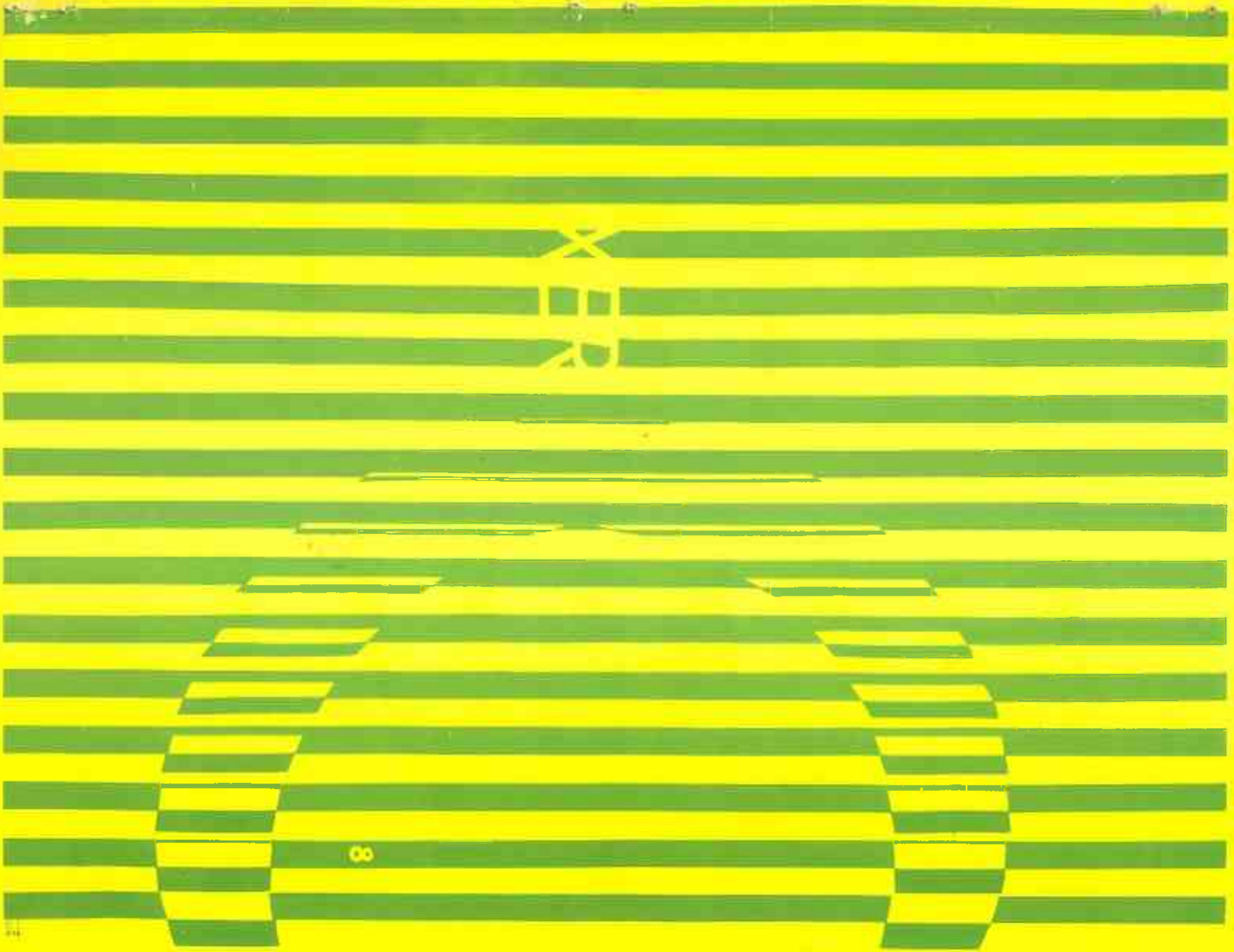

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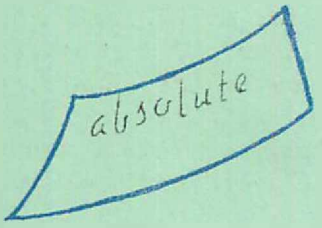
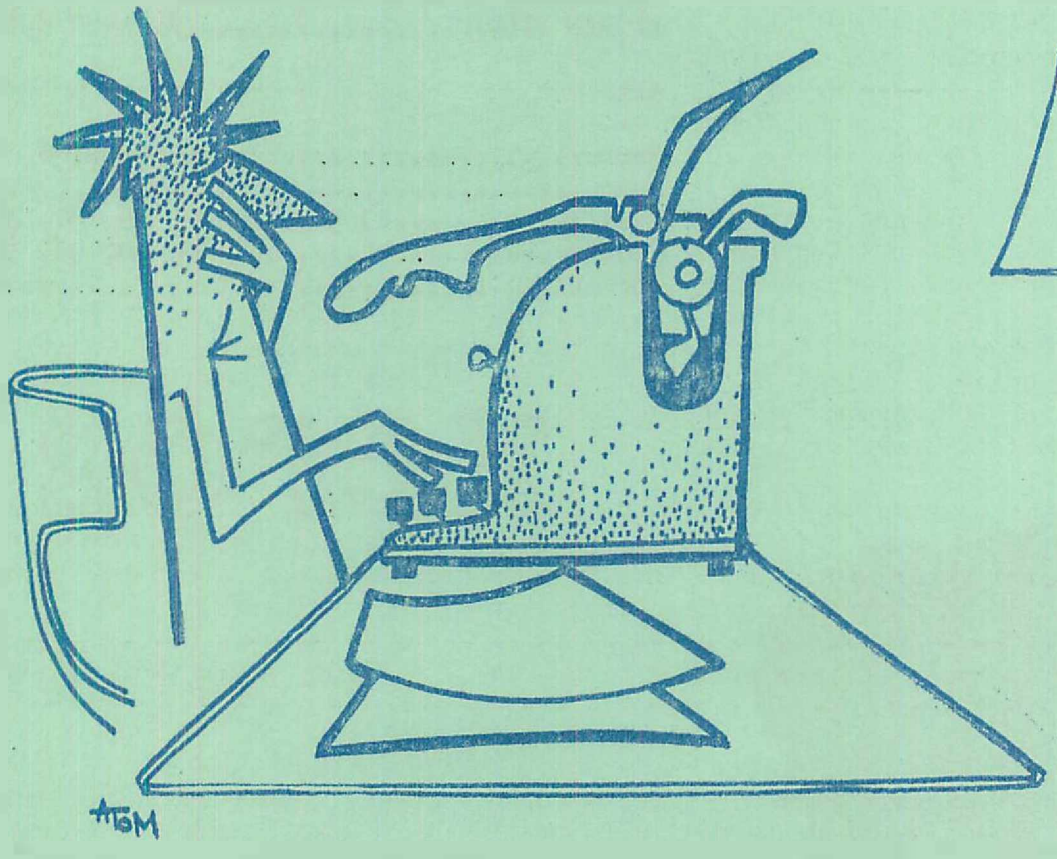
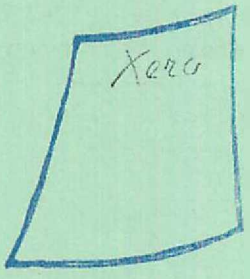
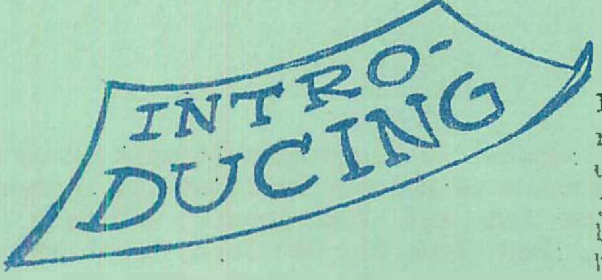
MAY Xero 8

Hootin' Zoots! This antepenultimate issue of the Fanzine of Relativistic Dadaism comes to you from Pat and Dick Lupoff, 210 East 73rd Street, New York 21, New York. Bhob Stewart is art director and head layout man. Ella Parker is Sterling Agent but dig this: copies go to contributors and for limited trades. No new subscriptions will be accepted (existing ones will be honored.)









It is customary in many "real" magazines to run small features introducing the contributors, but fandom is a tight-knit group, just about everybody knows just about everybody else, and to introduce, for instance, Walt Willis, would be silly presumptuousness -- not to mention altogether superfluous. New fan-writers constantly emerge, of course, but they do so, for the most part, by appearing first in "WAHF" sections of letter columns, then in the lettercols proper, often in crudzines of either their own or eachother's publication...and finally in "major" fan publications. By this time we all know them anyhow.

Xero, however, has published a number of articles by fringe-fen who may be altogether unkown to general fandom, and for whatever interest such information holds for you, here are a few facts about past and present contributors to Xero whom you may not otherwise know.

CHRIS STEINBRUNNER, who wrote "Next Week: The Phantom Strikes Again" in Xero 4, is a former writer of radio dramas, in which capacity he became a full-fledged member of the Mystery Writers of America and the unofficial official bartender at MWA gatherings. Of all the people I know, Chris probably has the greatest number and variety of active interests. He works full time as a television continuity writer for WOR-TV; he has two weekly interview programs on WFUV fm radio, one dealing with books, the other with movies, and appears periodically on the "Long John" program; he writes, produces, and directs annual hour-long radio dramas for presentation on Halloween and Sherlock Holmes's birthday (he is a Baker Street Irregular).

Chris is a devotee and authority on the imaginative film: mainspring of the Fantasy Film Club, a member of the Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society, an indefagitable habitue of West Forty-Second Street. Chris, Pat and I have discussed any number of possible articles for Xero, and I hope that at least one of them will materialize before this magazine ends its run in two more issues.

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Hut-sut ralston on a rillera and a brolla brolla suet, hut-sut ralston on a rillera a

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CHARLIE COLLINS manages a paperbound bookshop in New York, a job that brought him the information he shared with the rest of us in "The Fantastic Paperback" in Xero 6. Numerous requests that "TFP" become a regular feature of Xero -- or at least that Charlie write a follow-up article -- have met with sympathy but no action on his part. Reason: he's too busy with the fantastic paperback. Last Halloween he arranged a display of weird, fantasy, and other imaginative literature which boomed their sales in his store. Publisher's Weekly ran a photo of the display and a short article by Charlie somewhat similar to his longer work in Xero.

Right now he is working on an anthology of weird and horror fiction for which he has a contract from Avon Books. In addition to several hard-to-get stories by some of our favorite authors, Charlie hopes to include some stories never before published in English. Currently at work translating various grislies for him is...

-- --

Mairzy doats an doazy doats an little lamzy divie, a kiddly divie too, wouldn't you?

- -

...HAYWOOD P. NORTON, who claims and stoutly maintains that he was exorcised from Fordham University for diabolism. He is currently attending a college of more liberal views toward the religious, irreligious, and sacrilegious practices of its students. In addition to attending classes, translating foreign grue into English, and developing an interest in fanzines, Haywood is working on several short stories and on a Gothic novel the likes of which has not been seen since Melmoth -- if then.

Haywood's article on the late Clark Ashton Smith is his Debut in Print, and manifests some of the characteristics of the typical first work. It also contains a strange, slightly different-drummered use of the English language, which you may find utterly charming or quite the opposite. I'll be interested to know which. The article itself will appeal primarily to the person already interested in macabre fiction in general and Smith in particular. In the ninth or tenth Xero, I hope we'll have another article by Haywood, and possibly a "preview" chapter excerpted from his novel.

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Jeepers, creepers, where'd you get those peepers? Jeepers, creepers, where'd you get

-- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- - -- -

I'm not sure whether the author/artist behind "Fandi" belongs in this list of unfamiliar names or not, but just in case you don't know him...

...GARY DEINDORFER may be the youngest retread in fandom. He first became active back in the middle 50's as a very necish neo. He went the way of most such: enthusiastic reader, writer, fan correspondent, publisher...and then gafiated before anyone had got to know him very well. After a couple of years fulltime mundac, Gary rejoined fandom last year, attended the 1961 Phillyconf, published Lyddite, and has started a series for Steve Stiles's Sam chronicling his sojourn back in the real world.

"Fandi", by the way, came into this house drawn with a blue-inked ballpoint pen, and has taken a heart-rending amount of eye-wrenching mimeoscopy by Bhob to get it into the shape you see herein. I mean to take no credit from Gary for conceiving and writing "Fandi", or for doing the original artwork on it. But India Ink, out there, please! Or at least a black ball-point. Art editors of Bhob's calibre are hard to come by, and blind ones are absolutely no value to this enterprise.

- -

Chickery-chick, cha-la cha-la, checkalaromee in a bananika, ballika-wallika can't you

- -

HENRY MAZZEO ("The Shadow Meets Snoopy") bases his fictional account on the depredations of a real Snoopy at past Fantasy Film Club screenings. In fact, of this month's contributors, quite a few are members of the FFC: H. P. Norton, Lin Carter, Bhob Stewart, Steve Stiles, Henry, and of course Pat and myself. What goes on when the lights go off is truthed on Henry's page. You wouldn't believe it from meeting him (or from "The Shadow Meets...,") but Henry is an advertising writer, and is the, ah, person responsible for more than one television commercial you have seen.

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I'm Chiquita Banana, and I come to say, Bananas have to ripen in a certain way. When

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RICHARD KYLE is no newcomer to the pages of Xero, and has been turning up with letters in so odd a brace of zines as Discord and SFTimes. I have not, however, seen his byline on other than letters so far. He has sold a number of detective stories to Manhunt but not under his own name, and will not reveal his byliname. He is one of the relatively few authentic comic book fans, among other things -- he bought the first issue of ACTION COMICS new off his friendly neighborhood newsstand 24 years ago.

His article on Victor Fox is a truly remarkable work, and I implore the anti-comics faction of Xero-readers not to pass it by without at least looking at the first few paragraphs. Once you've done that, I think you'll read it all, and I don't think you will regret it.

Some time between now and Xero 10, Richard has promised to take time out from beating James Blish about the head and shoulders with a blunt instrument and write an article about Sparky Watts, the World's Strongest Funnyman. Or was it the World's Funniest Strongman? Either way, I glee. And I hope he'll not ignore those other BIG SHOT heroes, the Face and Skyman.

- -

H i p p i t y g i t z h o t c h a r i n g b o w r e e, s i b o n i a s k i p p

- -

I think that just about covers it. Lessee, ever'body out there know who James Blish is? Sprague de Camp? Avram, Wollheim, Atom?

Oh yes...

...WALTER ALEXANDER WILLIS visited Fort Mudge, Georgia, in 1952. It is not known whether he will have time to duplicate this achievement on his next trip to the Western hemisphere, but he is believed to date to be the only resident of Belfast ever to visit Fort Mudge. No other fanzine can make that statement.

OUR COVER THIS MONTH is the first of a series of experimentals designed by Bhob. Preliminary reactions obtained by showing it around New York fandom have ranged from "Wow!" to "Yecchhh!" As with all things in Xero, Pat and Bhob and I will be most interested to hear your reaction. Also, in view of the experimental nature of the cover, several versions of it exist; that is, the same design, but printed on several types of paper stock and colors of paper. There is no such thing as a standard edition and variant editions, or a standard edition and a de luxe version. Not that all of this matters, I suppose, except to a few completist-collectors and/or historians interested in such minutea...jeez, Bruce Pelz, I swear this is not being done to drive you crazy. But it just so happens that Bruce Henstell's copy of Xero 7 had one page in it mimeod on green day-glo paper, the only such copy in the whole circulation of 160 or so.

The cover for Xero 9 is also ready; it, too, is a Bhob Stewart experimental, and the print run is again split...between red day-glo, pink regular, and yellow regular paper. Reactions to it are unanimously favorable so far, but there is some controversy over which paper shows off the design to best advantage. The day-glo is by far the most eye-catching -- it fairly R!O!A!R!S at you -- but, as Pat has pointed out, the pink provides a far more subtle tone scale in the shaded areas, and may well show off the design to better advantage, even though it does so less spectacularly than the bright stuff. And then I contend that the pink is just too weak a color, that the yellow is better.... You'll just have to wait for Xero 9 and let us know your reaction.

I mentioned before the fantastic stencilling work done by Bhob Stewart on Gary Deindorfer's "Fandi". It might be well, while I'm at it, to acknowledge some other people's efforts in behalf of Xero. The stenafaxed Atomillos (and others) are largely thanks to Chris Steinbrunner who, among his multifarious connexions, has arranged a contact whereby we get our electronic stencilling at ridiculously low prices...and consequently can afford far more of it than we otherwise would. Assistance also from Jim Moriarty in more ways and to a greater extent than we can specifically acknowledge for Certain Reasons...but thanks, Jim.

And finally, and most of all, thanks to Larry and Noreen Shaw, in whose cellar our Rex rests and without whose hospitality and assistance Xero would simply not exist. For periodic relief at the crank, for moral and alimentary support, for assistance in collating, stapling and mailing (for Xero 6 they did that entire job without so much as an acknowledgement in the colophon)...mere thanks seem inadequate.

Kokomo Kokomo Kokomo, Kokomo Kokomo Kokomo, Kokomo Kokomo Kokomo, Kokomo Kokomo Kokomo

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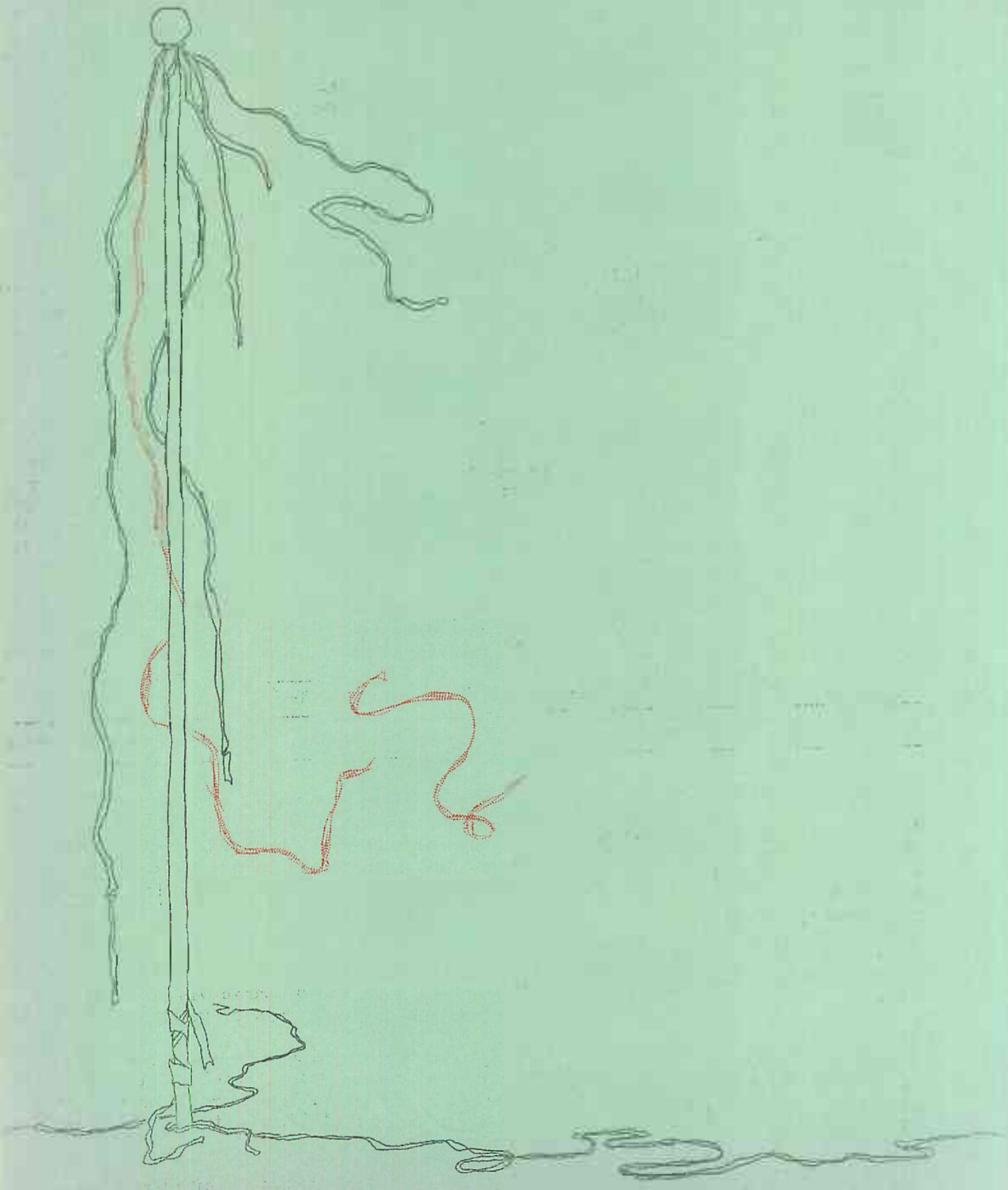
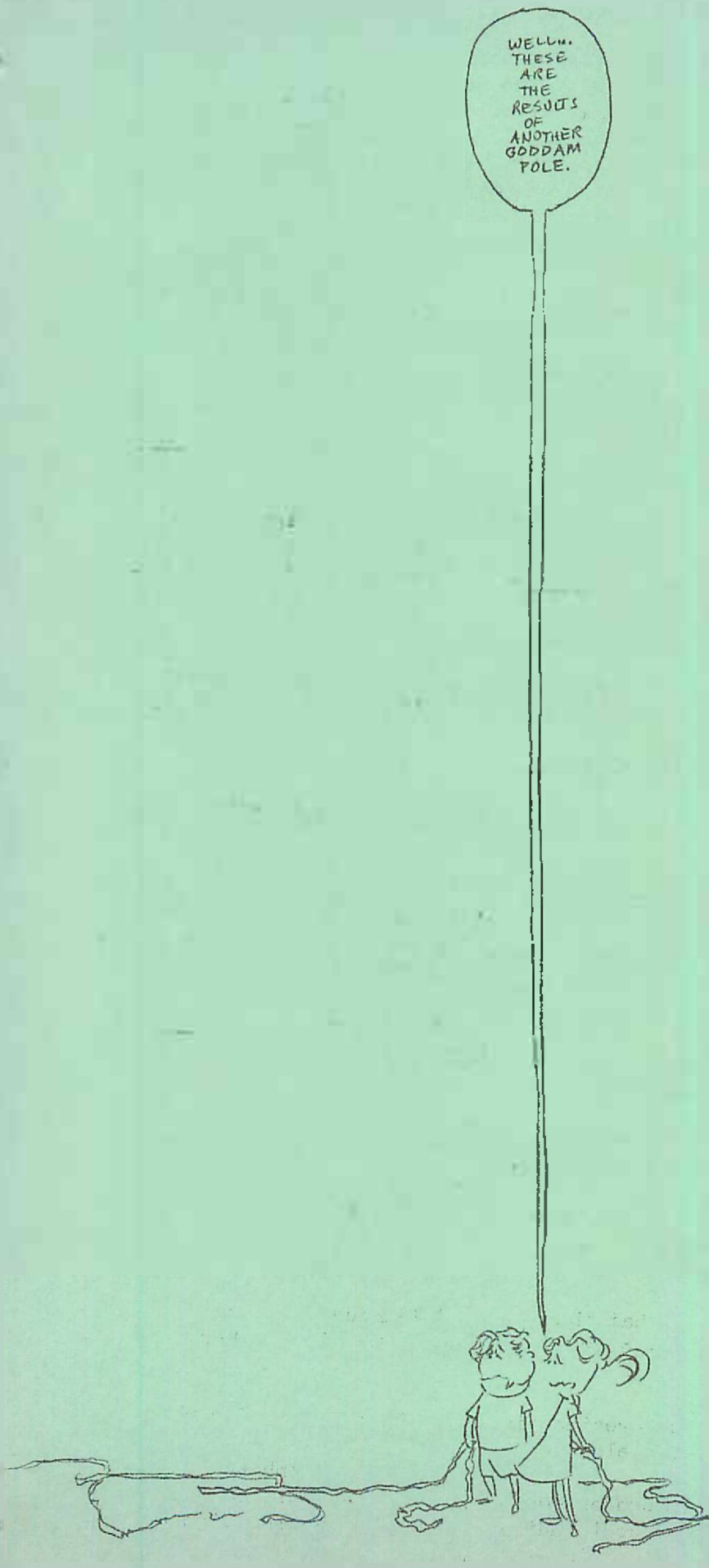
AFTER CHICAGO WHAT? All of fandom has been building up for two years or longer for the blast to take place at Chicago this Labor Day. With last year's Worldcon held in a hard-to-reach city, most of us have had the monkey on our backs since Pittsburgh; some, since Detroit or even longer. Willis is coming back after ten years -- and bringing Madeleine -- and we'll have a popular and talented TAFF delegate as well. And Chicago has a reputation for putting on great cons. And...and...it's really going to be great. Really.

And then will dawn a gray, gray September 4, 1962. The great Chicon III will be over. For those of us lucky enough to entertain our various transoceanic visitors before they return home, the con will, in effect, be extended by a few days or weeks. But still....

All of which makes me very happy indeed to hear from Washington of the plans being pushed already in preparation for the Discon in '63. Oh, of course it won't be their con to put on, officially, until the business session at Chicago, but there seems to be little talk in any Eastern city of more than a token bid against DC...if that. The Discon it will be, you can bet your beanie.

And while Chicago will beyond question be a joy and a consummation of fannish dreams for years past, with luck it will be far more than a culmination. It will be the source of new impetus for fanac yet to come. Nostalgia? Nerts! Science fiction is about the future!





There were seventy - five tabulatable responses to "another goddam poll" in Xero 7. Several additional reseponses were received which are not included in this summary. These can be divided into two distinct groups:

(1) Responses from countries other than the United States. In the editorial material which accompanied the poll I made mention of the possibility of publishing an appendix to this report, summarizing foreign responses. However, they proved so diverse, not merely in viewpoints expressed but in the entire approach taken to the poll, that I was unable to derive any sort of coherent report from them.

(2) "Essay" type responses which supplemented or bypassed outright the original questionnaire that was used. Some took the opportunity to protest that the yes / no, multiple-choice format of the poll did not make provision for determining the degree of feeling of respondents, or for any of the proverbial ifs,

ands, and buts with which they would have qualified their answers. Without question, I must concede that such objections are justified. The purpose of using the format that was used, was to obtain replies that could be converted to statistics. An "essay" format could have been used equally as well, although I doubt that it would have brought as high as the 50% response that the questionnaire did. But the responses would then have called for a highly subjective interpretation on my part in order to make any sort of statistical sense of them, without which they might make an interesting symposium but would not give us the measurement of fannish political feeling that is behind this whole project. With the highly subjective interpretation, even though some degree of fairness could be achieved by having several "readers" doing the interpreting, the whole thing becomes less and less a real measurement and increasingly a semi-intuitive "feel".

Of course the kind of questions which were used, failing, as they do, to provide for degrees of feeling and for qualifications of positions, open the results to challenge from another quarter: not that the statistics themselves are invalid, but that, though a valid measurement of responses to the questions asked, these questions do not really probe and measure the feelings they were aimed at.

Certainly some of the comments appended to returned questionnaires add weight to this argument...comments such as "reluctantly", "with grave reservations", "neither, really, but if I must choose", "both--I see no conflict", "both--in sequence ". And my favorite, regarding the section on foreign affairs: "I don't want a harder policy or a softer policy -- I just want a policy. We don't seem to have one."

Well, enough of this preliminary chatter. The poll was a lot of fun. The responses made interesting reading, and you are free to evaluate the results any way you wish.

RESULTS OF ANOTHER GODDAM POLL: Section I: Registration and Voting.

Questions 1 and 2: Are you a registered voter; if yes, indicate your registration; if no, your general sentiment.

There were 49 registered voters, 26 not registered. Of the registered voters, 23 were Democrats, 18 were Republicans. 5 reported as independents, 1 Socialist Worker, and 1 Liberal. One registered voter ignored question 2, accounting for only 48 of the 49 registered voters. Of course not every respondent answered every question, and in some cases answers were untabulatable ("essays") so in few cases will the total number of responses total 75.

Of the 26 reporting as not being registered voters, 15 stated that they favored the Democratic Party; 10, that they favored the Republican Party; 1 independent, 1 anarchist, and 1 anarchist/socialist.

Questions 3 and 4: Did you vote in the 1960 Presidential election; if so for whom; if not, your general sentiment at the time of the election.

43 respondents voted: 25 for Kennedy, 18 for Nixon. In addition, 1 voted for Farrell Dobbs (Socialist Worker); 1 for Adlai Stevenson, 1 voted but voted "Blank", and two voted "Socialist". One of the two respondents who voted Socialist comments that he did so as a protest.

Of respondents who did not vote in the election, 11 stated that they favored Kennedy; 12, that they favored Nixon. Combining the voters and non-voters for Kennedy and Nixon, there were 36 for Kennedy; 30, for Nixon.

Questions 5 and 6: Did you vote in the 1956 Presidential election; if so, for whom; if not, you general sentiment at the time of the election.

16 voted for Eisenhower; 15, for Stevenson; 1, for "johnson", presumably Lyndon Johnson. 23 non-voters favored Eisenhower; 14 favored Stevenson. One respondent indicated that he favored Eisenhower, but did not say whether he had voted for him or not.

Section II: Opinion on selected issues (foreign policy)

Question 7: In the conduct of US foreign relations, you favor a policy generally more militant, more accomodating, about as present. (multiple choice)

Again, not all of the 75 persons whose ballots were tabulated, answered this one question (or on others). Sixty three persons answered this question: 31 favored a more militant policy; 15, a more accomodating one; 17, about as at present.

Question 8: Do you believe that US foreign policy should have a specific "goal"? Answers were 65 yes, 4 no.

Part "b" of the same question: If yes, would you prefer "Victory over Communism"..."Peace and friendship with all peoples and systems"...other? There were 19 votes for "Victory", 31 for "Peace", 22 voted for "other", or for "both", even though several of the last named indicated with their votes that there was a conflict between the two, and that perhaps "victory" would have to precede "peace".

Questions 9 and 10: were each three-part, yes-no questions. The questions and the totalled answers are:

Do you favor disarmament based on mutual inspection and controls? 65 yes, 10 no.....If this cannot be attained, do you favor disarmament based on mutual pledges and the "honor system"? 11 yes, 64 no.....If this cannot be attained, do you favor unilateral disarmament? 9 ye, 61 no.

Should the United States recognize the People's Republic of China? 35 yes, 32 no.....Should the United States work for the admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations? 13 yes, 55 no..... If the People's Republic of China should gain membership in the United Nations, should the United States withdraw from the UN? 8 yes, 64 no.

I regret the use of the word "work" in the second part of question 10; it was an inadvertence of some sort in cutting the stencil. The word should have been vote, and the question might have brough substantially different results if it had been so worded. Ahweel, it's too late now.

Question 11: Here are a couple of admitted catch-phrases. Which do you prefer?
Give me liberty or give me death...36.
Better red than dead.....20.

Section III: Opinion on selected issues (domestic)

Question 12: Do you favor generally increased governmental control and activity in domestic economic affairs?

Yes: 19. No: 50.

Question 13: The general power of labor unions should be:

increased..... 3
decreased.....50
as at present...18

Question 14: Should the government "get out" of (a) the farm business....yes42, no28
(b) the power business...yes22, no47

In questions 12, 14, and 15, the word "government" was used without clarification as to whether the reference was the United States (federal) government, state governments, others: cities, counties, etc...or a possible world government, perhaps based on the UN.

At the time of making up the questionnaire, I unconsciously assumed that all references were to the US (federal) government. I believe that all or most of the respondents did the same, but at least the possibility that some answers are suspect due to this ambiguity should be acknowledged. I tell you, this poll taking isn't the cinch it seems to be. Pete Graham, h-a-a-a-l-p-p!!!

Question 15: was another yes-no set, seven parts. Should the government "get into"

		yes	no
(a)	school aid (public schools).....	56	19
(b)	school aid (parochial).....	12	60
(c)	health insurance.....	38	35
(d)	health "service".....	29	38
(e)	transportation.....	23	45
(f)	general industrial pricing and wage policies...	23	45
(g)	advertising and merchandising practices.....	31	38

Section IV...

...of the goddam poll called for general comments and position statements, and a good many came. Several persons of conservative leaning took the opportunity to sound off at considerable length and quite interestingly. I'll quote at length from Bob Leman, the Voice of Fannish Conservatism after reviewing the final question on the poll, the Larry Shaw Special. Note that the questionnaire was published last November, hence the time reference in the question:

Now that the Kennedy administration is almost a year old, are you generally disappointed (21 were), pleased (again, 21), neither (25) with its conduct?

Well, a dead heat, but I must add that there were two write-ins for "disgusted" and one for "bored", plus several comments of the general nature: "I didn't expect much and I haven't been disappointed."

# # # # # # #

So there it is, all laid out. What does it mean? Is fandom overwhelmingly liberal? Is there a conservative groundswell? If so, why so silent?

My personal conclusion, based on the poll results: no, there is no great silent swell of conservatism in fandom. But our microcosm is not nearly as solidly liberal as one might think from reading the general run of fanzines. More than either, we're stuck about on dead center, giving solid support to the things that the Establishment favors (policed disarmament, aid to public schools)...opposing things the Establishment opposes (unilateral disarmament, aid to parochial schools)...and dividing, pretty much along national lines, on matters which divide the nation rather evenly (recognizing Communist China, government health insurance).

If this is the case, then the question still arises, why does the overriding tone of spoken and printed fannish opinion on political matters swing so much farther leftward than the actual overall feeling of fandom? (Of course, this is assuming the validity of the goddam poll. If you don't accept this....)

One person who denies the existence of a substantial conservatism in fandom is the man who bears the title of Number One Conservative Fan himself. Bob Leman writes:

> The questionnaire is enclosed. My answers are, I'm sure, about what you'd expect. I'm on record about most of these questions already. What I want to address myself to here is your suggestion that there are probably quite a few conservatives in fandom, but that these people are, for some unaccountable reason, silent, while the scarcely larger group of liberals is so articulate as to give the impression that all fandom (insofar as it is political at all) is liberal.
>
> Now I'll have to agree with you that there's little in the way of conservative political polemics in fanzines, while there's a surfeit of leftist matter. Where I disagree is with your suggestion that the conservatives

are there, but they're just not talking. It's my own belief that there are very few political conservatives in fandom. (This letter, if you publish it, will no doubt be in the same issue as the results of the poll, so I'll be on record, for right or wrong, for all to see.) I bast this notion upon my own view of the kind of people who make up fandom, which is based, of course, upon the fanzines and letters I receive. (I must admit that there have not been too many of these the past twelvemonth.)

Fandom seems to me to be made up mainly of articulate people of a shade more than average intelligence. Because they are articulate, they are better able than most to communicate their ideas, and we find in fanzines the ideas of the people in the microcosm, insofar as they have ideas. The conclusion that I draw from fanzines is that practically all fans are politically uninformed and naive. Those who are of my generation developed liberal ideas when there was -- possibly -- an excuse for espousing such ideas (or at least so I keep telling myself -- I was a flaming liberal when I was an undergraduate) and they haven't had the mental elasticity to see where they've gone wrong. They've found a comfortable rut and neither heaven nor hell can force them to seriously consider opposing ideas, so that when the different idea is laid before them they see it not at all, but rather a paper dragon glued together by The Reporter et al. (Understand, I am aware of the exceptions to my generalization. I think I know all the names that can be cited to show that there are some highly-respected conservative fans. But these are only exceptions.)

The younger fan generation is practically entirely liberal, I think, and I attribute this to the wholly sheep-like attitude of those who have matured since, say, World War II. They were taught by a generation that was firmly hardened in the mold of liberal thought, and the spirit of rebellion is not in them. They are conformists of purest ray serene, parroting the poli sci prof's notions, and the poli sci prof's notions haven't undergone an iota of change for twenty years.

He became a liberal, probably for commendable reasons and most likely in a spirit of rebellion against parental discipline, when he first began to think about political matters. That may well have been the last thought he had. If it was good enough twenty years ago, it's good enough today. And that's what he teaches his students. Today's students being what they are, they are perfectly happy to swallow archaic New Deal slogans as progressive thinking. This is, of course, a national phenomenon, and not confined to fans.

And now comes Bob Shea (formerly and erroneously called in these pages "Shay"), a member of a frequent luncheon trio the other members of which are Larry Shaw and myself. Bob is a bit of an enigma to me; in our luncheon conversations, the most favored topics tend to be science fiction and/or fandom, writing/editing/publishing and the attendant problems thereof, and politics. I consider myself a modern-day conservative, although I am not fond of the term: today's conservatives tend to resemble the liberals of bygone eras more than they do the conservatives of those times, and the result is considerable semantic boggling.

But anyway, there I will sit, propounding what I consider the contemporary conservative line, balked at every step by Bob, and at the end of a heated exchange, I will go grumbling into my pasta about "fuzzy-minded liberals"...whereupon Bob will say: "Liberals? Who said anything about liberals? I'm a conservative!"

Larry Shaw smokes his pipe.

And here is a statement of position from Bob Shea:

I think the tendency of Americans to divide themselves into Right and Left and thereafter give standardized responses to all political issues shows great lack of imagination. If the fans responding to your goddam poll show similar lack of imagination in permitting themselves to be easily categorized, I will be disappointed. Where are we to find imagination, if no among fans?

Neither Right nor Left, it seems to me, can be accepted wholeheartedly by anyone who tries to be reasonable and is fairly well informed. In answering your poll I found myself at times taking a Left position, at times a Right, at times unable to check either Yes or No. Lest I seem a blindly a fence-straddler as other seem to me blindly Left or Right, I'd like to try to sketch in more fully the position dimly indicated by the check marks I made; i.e., I'd like to show that it is a position, not just a posture.

I like to think of myself as a conservative, but the brand of conservatism I espouse is a far cry from that of Barry Goldwater, the National Review, and their familiars. My allegiance is to a body of thought called conservative which is traceable to the English Tories and the American Federalists, which has been a real political force only in Great Britain, which, to quote Clinton Rossiter's Conservatism in America, "accepts and defends the institutions and values of the contemporary West. Not only does it continue to hold in trust the great Western heritage from Israel, Greece, Rome, and all Christianity, the way of life that speaks of humanity and justice; it also pledges its faith to what we know and cherish as constitutional democracy, the way of life that speaks of liberty and the rule of law," but, to quote Rossiter further, is "full of harsh doubts about the goodness and equality of men, the wisdom and possibility of reforms, and the sagacity of the majority." All of which, I know, sounds dreadfully vague and abstract, but is clearly, I hope, something different from Barry's simple program of turning the clock back to the days of President McKinley. My kind of conservative doesn't want to turn any clocks back -- or ahead for that matter. He wants to live wisely according to what the clock says now.

Turning then to your poll, regarding the section on party allegiance, I don't feel really at home in either party. The kind of conservatism I support is suspicious of change, but is willing to accept it when it is a practical necessity. I voted for Eisenhower in '56 because he seemed to me to be holding the line for a viable status quo while Stevenson appeared to be championing change for the sake of hypothetical progress. But by 1960 the status quo ceased to be viable (perhaps it never was; perhaps I was just poorly informed in 1956), and I supported Kennedy who seemed, and seems, to me a practical man advocating necessary changes, while the Republican insistence that the changes advocated by Kennedy were not necessary looked to me like blind standpattism.

Since the poll has to do with the political preferences of science fiction fans, I must add that another factor entered the picture between 1956 and 1960 to swing me from liking Ike to backing Jack. This, of course, was Russia's success in the conquest of space. And when Ike and Dick kept insisting that it didn't make any difference, that space wasn't really that important, well...!

As for foreign policy, I think the true conservative position ought to be based on a realistic estimate of our capabilities and our national interest. As to disarmament, I consider the arms race a symptom of the East-West conflict, not a cause of it, and I think our national interest dictates that we damned well better be as strong as they are. I agree with what Winston Churchill said in 1934 when the English were disarming while the Germans rearmed: "It is the greatest mistake to mix disarmament with peace. When you have peace you will have disarmament." So that if inspection and controls

gave us the assurance that we were still as strong as they, I think disarmament would be fine, relieving our productive capacity of a great burden. Without that assurance, though, we'd be cutting our own throats.

"Do you favor generally increased governmental control and activity in domestic economic affairs?" I didn't answer that one. I do not favor further government entry into economic affairs for the sake of "order", "progress", "democracy", "logic", as Socialists and many liberals do. On the other hand, I think government should so enter, and energetically, to alleviate severe hardships in the event of depression, recession, and unemployment; and that it should intervene when economic disturbances or imbalances in this country tend to weaken us in competition with other countries, particularly the communist countries. You will note, therefore, that my answers vary as to what specific fields government should "get into".

I happen, being a parochial school product, to have mulled over the problem of government aid to parochial schools to the point where I can't give a simple yes or no answer to your question on that. I don't believe that government should aid parochial school directly; as a conservative I want to conserve the principle of separation of church and state. On the other hand, the parochial school system educates a great number of American children and thereby substantially reduces the cost of public education. I think therefore that it would be simple fairness if government "aided" parochial school by making tuition payments to them tax deductable.

Regarding the Larry Shaw Special, I am moved to say something which I think will horrify both the rugged individualists of the Right and the inveterate protesters of the Left: I think those set in authority over us are in a better position to know what is best for us than we are. Therefore while I do not always understand why the Kennedy administration has done everything that it has done, I assume that it knows what it is doing, and I think it fair to say that I am "pleased" with it. My respect for the wisdom of authority is, I think, a classical conservative position. It is certainly a far cry from the fear and hatred of government evinced by Goldwater-type conservatives. It is equally far, I hope, from the presumptuous disrespect and flouting of authority certain Leftists revel in as "civil disobedience."

I believe with Walter Lippmann that, "Strategic and diplomatic decisions call for a kind of judgement -- not to speak of an experience and a seasoned judgement -- which cannot be had by glancing at newspapers, listening to snatches of radio comment, watching politicians perform on television, hearing occasional lectures, and reading a few books. It would not be enough to make a man competent to decide whether to amputate a leg, and it is not enough to qualify him to choose war or peace, to arm or not to arm, to intervene or withdraw, to fight on or to negotiate." It is not enough, I might add, to justify a man's writing smear letters with the Birchniks or marching for peace with the Saneniks. There is a middle ground between slavish, uncritical support of the regime and an equally blind posture of being in all things "agin the government". Generally speaking, the true conservative prefers the middle ground.

I hope I haven't been hoplessly longwinded, but I found myself leaping at this as an excuse to try to sum up my political philosophy in one place. There's a statement by Jack himself that admirably epitomizes my feeling that something other than a simple allegiance to Right or Left ought to determine a man's political views: "The policies I advocate are a result of the rule of reason. It is reasonable to say we've got to do something about low-income housing, we've got to do something about minimum wages, we've got

to do something about our schools. Reason tells me we've got to do these things.

"The common definition of liberal today is an ideological response to every situation, whether it fits reason or not. I don't have an automatic commitment to provide these things. But I don't know how any reasonable man would arrive at any other idea in 1960. If the rule of reason brings you to the position that happens to be the liberal position, it is the one you have to take, but no just because it is liberal."

Which is exactly, I like to think, how I've come to call myself a conservative, yet be a registered Domocrat (in New York) and a supporter of the Kennedy administration. I suppose each of us likes to think he is reasonable, no?

As for your wondering about why the conservative voices in fandom, if any, haven't made themselves heard, I've run across something in Rossiter's book, mentioned above, which I think helps answer that:

"The conservative engages reluctantly in political speculation. Distaste, not affection, for a way of life persuades a man to think deeply and persistently about government. The Conservative's best of all possible worlds is already here, and he refuses to contemplate Utopia, much less draw up plans for it. Indeed, so foreign to his usual needs and tastes is the art of political theory that he will not even vindicate his own way of life unless it is openly and dangerously attacked. He then turns to strengthen those parts of his defense under heaviest assault. As a result, Conservatism appears at first glance to be a sort of gingerbread castle. Too many men from too many generations, most of whom went to their labors under the guns of reform, have taken part in its building.

"A closer inspection reveals that the castle is sound and well proportioned; beneath the gingerbread there are iron and stone. The many builders from the many generations have shared a common faith and a common purpose. The political tradition they have created and are still creating exhibits a high degree of unity and internal consistency. Out of the vast literature of Conservatism -- a mass of principles, prejudices, intuitions, dogmas, assumptions, theories, and moral explosions -- one may extract a harmonious system of political principles."

I hope something harmonious -- if not a system, at least a position -- can be extracted from this letter.

And, filling a gap in the previous statement, an excerpt from a later Shea missive:

Asked whether the United States should recognize the People's Republic of Chine, and whether the People's Republic of China should gain membership in the United Nations, I am tempted to answer, "How do I know?" This is not intended to express indifference; it is an answer based on my conviction that only those who have full information about our foreign policy and its aims and out diplomatic position with respect to other countries can make a knowledgeable decision about the two Chinas. That means the president, the secretary of state, and a few other high-ranking state department officials. They must decide whether recognition of Red China and willingness to seat Red China at the UN will score for us or against us in the complicated diplomatic game of West vs. East. Diplomacy is a game which governments must play with a great deal of secrecy. It is like poker in that it involves each side's concealing its strengths and weaknesses, like chess in that each side has, or should have, a long-range plan which would become ineffective if it were known to the other side. Necessarily, then, there is a lot we do not know about this problem.

> Yes, but this is a free, democratic, open society, and should we not have opinions and make our opinions known? Yes, but when people organize themselves into pressure groups announcing their unalterable, absolute opposition to recognition of Red China, they are hindering the government's ability to make an expedient decision based on facts. It is as if a chess player were forbidden to make, no matter what the circumstances, certain moves by kibitzers who could not see the board.

So there, the Considerations of a Conservative. But it's not at all what I mean by conservatism. Bob says "My respect for the wisdom of authority is, I think, a classical conservative position." But it is the liberals -- make that "liberals" -- of today who support authority, i.e., government, and would both broaden and deepen the extent of its activities. While the conservatives -- or "conservatives" -- of today adopt the classical liberal distrust of authority and do agitate for a maximum of individual options.

Are you, then, the conservative, Bob, while I am the liberal?????

It is almost too much to grasp, this complete exchange of roles. And yet, it seems to be what has happened...

Well, we also had lengthy statements from Lew Forbes and Ray Bean, shorter ones from Buck Coulson, Richard Kyle, George Scithers, and others, and others yet again, and I keep repeating that if this were a Kemp symposium they would make good reading, but it isn't...and as this thing has now reached to some eight pages, I think I shall cut it off here. Looking back over the results of the poll, I find it interesting to note the overwhelming sentiment for the reduction of labor union power (due, I think, to distress over the abuses of recent years rather than to any basic anti-labor sentiment)...

...the equally overwhelming support for policed disarmament was not an equal surprise; except for a few preventive-war nuts, it is a platitude...

and the huge vote against parochial school aid was, pretty obviously, a rush to the barricades on church-state separation, although a more virulent anti-clericalism can probably be found among some fans.

The poll was fun, and educational for me in terms of what is involved in constructing and conducting such a project. It would be far from exactly as it was, were I to do it all over. On the other hand, I do not think it worthless as a measuring tool, and I will be most interested to hear other evaluations -- supplementing my own, or disagreeing with it -- from other fans.

Since anonymous ballots were permitted, and since a good many of them arrived, I assume that anyone who wishes his personal views kept confidential used this means. As a result, I believe that it will be all right to permit those who wish to do so, to examine the accumulated ballots.

# # # # # # #

And to kill these last few lines, it seems increasingly a vogue these days for faneds to use their editorials as literary want-ads, and who am I to Buck the Trend?

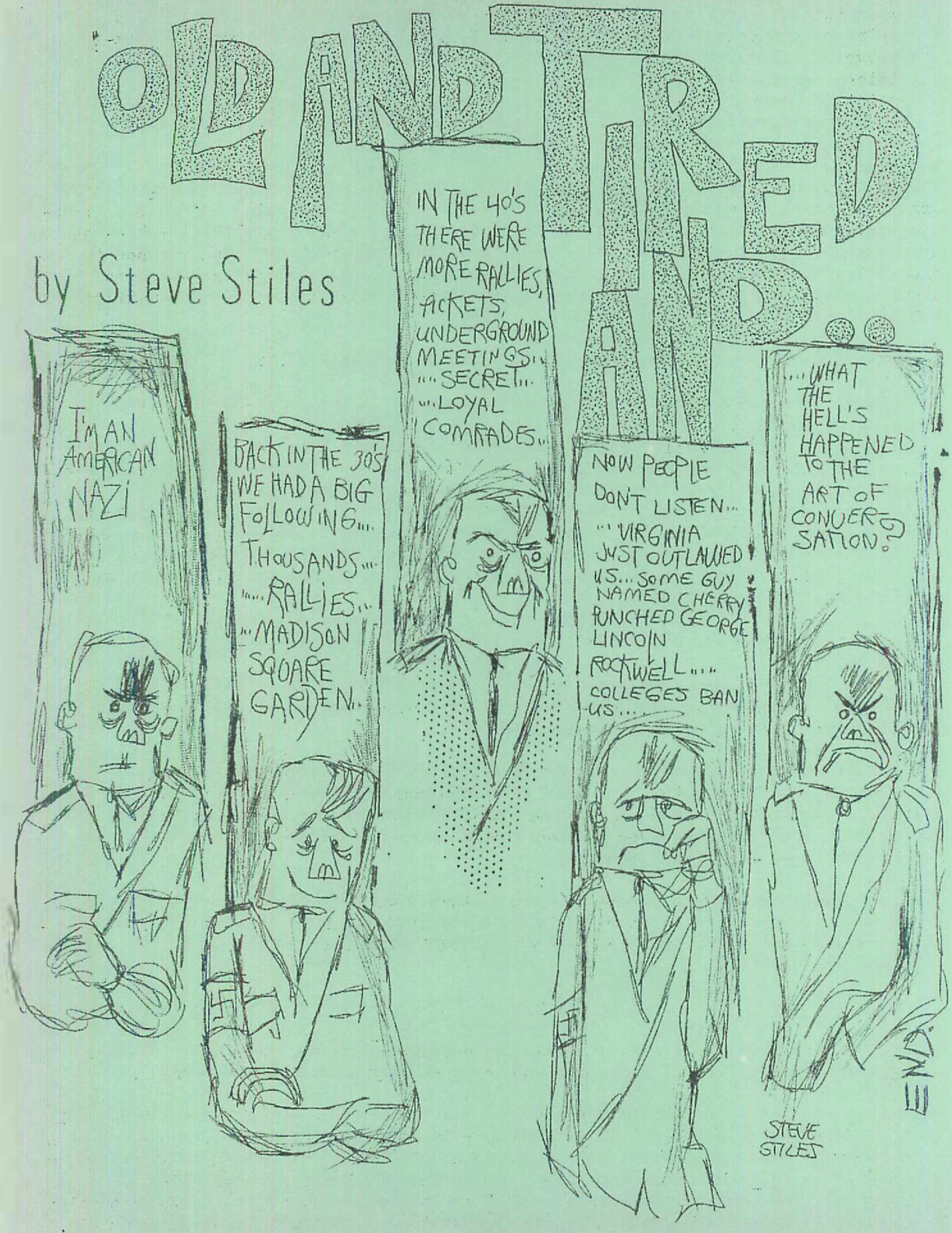
Anyway, I am most eager to obtain any copies I can of the old "Double Detective" pulp featuring Green Lama stories by Richard Foster (Kendall Foster Crossen). James Blish insists that the Green Lama's adventures were nothing but rather pallid imitation Fu Manchu stuff, but I find them a peculiarly charming combination of many factors: the mystic and exotic themes of the Lama's origins, straight adventure and pulp detective themes, several interesting characters (at least three of which were Jethro Dumont). Anyone willing to sell or lend?

Om mani padme hum, you all.

— Dick Lupoff

OLD AND TIRED AND

by Steve Stiles



THE SLANT STORY [CONCLUSION]

BY WALTER WILLIS

Our friendly neighbourhood blacksmith had no spreading chest-nut tree, just a contracting clientele, but he lasted in business long enough to go out in a blaze of glory, by making a new lever for our printing press in place of the one that had disintegrated so dramatically. Watching him at work with his bellows and hammer, I felt a vague sense of dissatisfaction. To use such primitive means towards the production of a science fiction magazine seemed somehow wrong, reminiscent of that famous shot in "Things to Come" of the luxurious modern automobile, panned to show it being pulled by a couple of woody post-atomic bullocks.

We weren't too pleased with the lever itself, come to that. It bent. Only a little, but enough to alarm two fans still suffering from shell-shock from the previous explosion. However, we braved danger and carried on because while the publishing of the magazine was getting increasingly difficult, its editing was getting daily more exciting. We were not only getting unsolicited material, but we were actually rejecting some of it ... and quite cavalierly, too. Rummaging through the old files last night I find, for instance, that I rejected a story by Charles Beaumont, submitted by Forry Ackerman. "Tell Beaumont to go back to Fletcher," wrote Walter A. Youngfan airily.

By far the most important factor in the progress of Slant was Manly Banister. He had produced the first

issue of his Necromantikon in early 1950 and we were overcome with admiration. The material was excellent, the printed headings the last word in elegance, and the mimeography so incredibly good I really thought it was photo-offset. I wrote Banister an enthusiastic letter and sent him a copy of Slant. He replied to the letter and then, when Slant arrived, wrote again without waiting for an answer. Apparently he was just as impressed with our efforts as we were with his, if for different reasons. We immediately formed what must have been one of the most enthusiastic mutual admiration societies ever to exist in fandom. Banister knew everything about printing -- he seemed to know everything about everything -- and was fascinated by what he thought the ingenuity and determination of our enforced improvisations. But, generous soul that he was, he could not bear to see us doing things the wrong way when he could help us do them properly. So as well as a never-ending stream of good advice, he started sending us all sorts of helpful odds and ends, even a font of 18-point Bodoni type for titles. We had had a few of this type but only a couple of dozen letters, which meant we had to re-title almost all our contributions. It wasn't a bad thing in a way, because it forced us to develop quite a facility for thinking up short snappy titles. A story from F. G. Rayer, for instance, about a girl in a devastated post-atomic world became "Eve of Tomorrow". For the cover, by the way, we had no really large letters at all, and I used to borrow them from the printer down the road where we bought our paper. Through diffidence I never told him what they were for and through politeness he never asked, though I have since often thought he may have been lying awake nights wonderin what possible reason that character must have for coming into his shop every few months and borrowing the letters A L N S T.

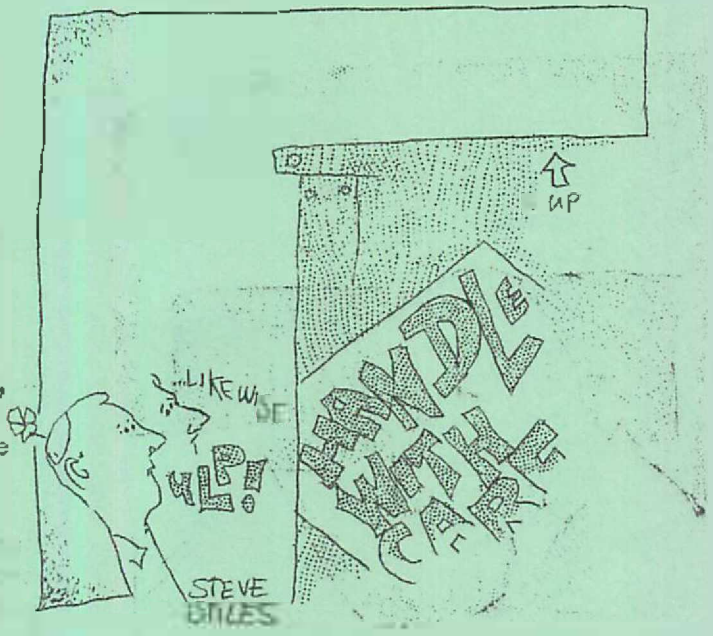
Banister also told us about his own press, to give us some idea of what a real machine was like, and how it had come into his hands:

> I thought I had printing troubles! I regard Slant with a tincture of awe. It is a monumental effort of herculean difficulty. The Augean Stables were a swoop of the shovel in comparison! The way you go about resuscitating machinery in the form of presses, typewriters, et al. It shows industry commingled with decisiveness of purpose. The enclosed tear-sheet shows a picture of my press -- which I bought second hand about a year ago for $85 plus some extra for freight.
>
> I have a friend who was then engaged in imprinting Christmas cards with a little 4x6 press. I thought I should like to have a press of my own, and looking into the matter, received a bulletin from a concern showing the little Victory press in the tear-sheet, but describing the Superior press. I figured this was about the size I should like ($6\frac{1}{2}$x10), and it did not seem to be much bigger than my friend's press, so I sent for it. Six weeks went by, while the shipment was held up by strikes, riots, floods, and I don't know what all. One day the wife called me at the office. "The press is here," she said, "and it looks like rain."
>
> "Goody," I said, "what has that got to do with the press?" ... "It's out in the front yard," she told me. ... "Well, for crying out loud, why don't you carry it in?" ... "I can't lift it!" ... "That little thing? What you got for muscles -- rubber bands?" ... "Little thing?" she yells. "It weighs 280 pounds!"
>
> Then I fell out of my chair. And I had to end-over-end the crate up the front steps, through the house and upstairs. If I ever sell it, the buyer is going to have to carry it out -- not me. Caveat emptor!

We were doubly impressed, because our own press was so small that you could have thrown it across the room, and many a time we felt like doing just that. As we'd feared, the new lever broke half way through Slant 4, and it was back to the smithy

again. Then a few weeks later this third lever broke. But we were determined to finish Slant 4 even if we had to place a standing bulk order with the blacksmith, and we did. In fact we had ever staggered a few pages into Slant 5 with our fast disintegrating press when the most momentous of all Banister letters arrived.

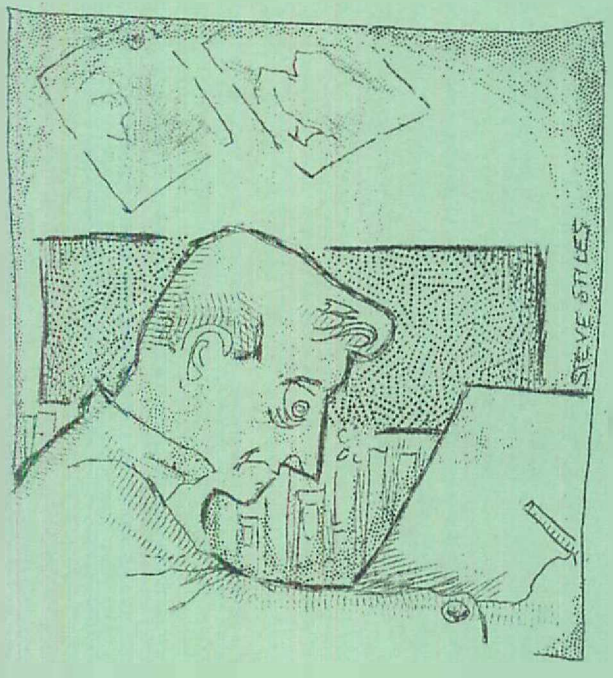
It was a long, long letter, written over many days, and embedded from time to time among other fascinating items were a series of communiques about his own printing press and about his incipient feud with Redd Boggs, who had just published a hostile criticism of Nekromantikon in Spacewarp. The sequence showed, quite unconsciously, the operation of the endearing enthusiasms which made Banister not only a most likeable character, but probably the most impressive colossus ever to stride across our microcosm. He had, Manly reported, glanced idly through the Boggs article and consigned it to the incinerator: he had more important things to think about, having bought an old treadle-operated press: Boggs was somewhat irritating, but not worth bothering about: he had cleaned and re-conditioned the treadle press and it was as good as new: maybe someone should slap Boggs down, but he hdan't time, he was fixing an electric motor to replace the treadle: all the same people like Boggs shouldn't be allowed to parade their ignorant presumption unscathed: now that he had this perfectly operating power press he might have the time to polish him off with a little satirical piece: he was going to sell the old press and put an ad in the local paper ... it was a pity we didn't live in Kansas City: the satire was turning out well and he was going to publish it on the new press, a real slap-up job that would wipe the odious Boggs off the face of fandom. (The satire, a beautiful little book called "Egoboo" about a character called, mysteriously, Vermillion Swampwater, was certainly the most impressive piece of ordnance ever to be used in a fan feud. Redd Boggs, however, is still around. Fortunatoly, as Manly was soon to agree.): he was crating up his old press and sending it off to us. Would we see about an import license.



I demurred by airmail, aghast at the sheer expansiveness of this gesture, but Banister would have none of it. This was what he wanted to do, and he was going to do it. Still stunned, I arranged about the import license and we settled down to the long wait as the press made its way to New Orleans and across the Atlantic. It finally came to rest in Belfast that November, and even Banister's previous description, quoted above, had not prepared us for the sheer massiveness of the thing. Partly because over here we're not accustomed to measuring large weights in pounds. Between us James and I inched it up the stairs, where we spent some ecstatic hours assembling it and running off a printed letter to Manly to let him know it had arrived safely. We set it up on the crate it had arrived in, a piece of Banister carpentry so substantial that I am still using it as a workbench. One other thing proclaims it as a piece of Banister work. It has printed address labels -- printed that is with my address and his in 18 point Bodoni.

We now went mad. We were like a man and his bride, like a hi-fi enthusiast with a new and perfect pick-up, like a violinist with a Stradivarius. We now for the first time had not only trouble-free running, but automatic inking and perfect register, so

after getting over our first thrill at seeing our printing as clear and perfect as we had never dreamed possible, we could think of only one thing -- colour, colour, colour. James gleefully cut three linocuts for his illustrations instead of one, but that was still not enough colour, so we invented striped ink. It was quite simple really, we dogged the inking plate so that it did not revolve and rolled bands of different coloured inks on it. For about twenty impressions this gave brilliant multi-colcured backgrounds suitable for sunset skies, etc, and then the colours got muddy and we had to clean off and start again. It was worth it, though, even if only because it took the monotony out of printing. Every single copy of Slant was different and some we thought so beautiful we could hardly bear to mail them out. Even now those covers seem to me quite effective, and those post-Banister issues of Slant something to be proud of. Number 5 has forty-six pages and we reached our peak with number 6, sixty perfectly printed pages, with multi-coloured cover and interior illustrations, including some professional engravings. Those last were the first signs of the end. James' eyesight had been deteriorating and he could no longer do linocuts. Besides we were getting terribly tired of typesetting, and for me article and letter writing were becoming a much more rewarding way of spending my time. So for Slant 7 I invented a way of reproducing mimeograph stencils on the printing press.



It worked quite well, but we didn't feel as proud of that issue as we had of the others. And if we were going to have mimeography we might as well get a mimeograph....

Fanzines are like people, their lives are usually anti-climax. The war hero ends up pushing a pen, the great statesman becomes a senile bore, the boxer turns wrestler: seldom do their lives end on a high note.

But what they were is still the Truth, and Banister's gesture is none the less great because Slant no longer exists. Nothing lasts forever and it was in the nature of things that we should eventually tire of the drudgery of typesetting. But not before we had, I think, produced some issues of a fanzine that were a credit to Manly and a lasting memorial to the generosity that can be found in science fiction fandom.

So let's forget that last anti-climactic issue of Slant and remember instead those two excited fans in Ireland opening the great crate from Kansas City, a crate as big as the heart of the man who sent it.

Walter A. Willis

FANDI

STORY AND ART BY

GARY DEINDORFER

STENCILLED BY DA-B

BUCK COULSON GO HOME

OUR STORY THUS FAR: WE FIND FANDI, UNAWARE OF HIS NOBLE DESTINY IN FANDOM, STUFFED UP TO HIS HAIRCUT— IN POST WORLD WAR II EUROPE IN A GARBAGE CAN...

HA! LOOK AT THE CUTE LITTLE BUGGER. SMILES EVEN IN HIS GROSS DEPRAVITY...

CUTE...

LET'S ADOPT THE KID...

SMUGGLE BACK TO THE STATES...

HE IS SHOVED ABOARD A HOME BOUND TROOP-SHIP BY THE KINDLY SOLDIERS (RAY C. HIGGS AND NORMAN BATES) WHO HAVE FOUND HIM. HE IS SMUGGLED OVER THE BROAD ATLANTIC IN A WHEATIES BOX... (ALL STRICTLY ANTI— REGULATIONS)

FINALLY, HE ARRIVES (HAVING ENDEARED HIMSELF TOTALLY TO THE TROOP-SHIP BY THIS TIME... THE CAPTAIN "LOOKING THE OTHER WAY") IN NEW JERSEY.

FANDI ARRIVES AT THE HUGE, PALATIAL-TYPE TOWN-HOUSE OF NORMAN BATES. WHERE HE IS TO LIVE. HE IS IN AMERICA. HE IS HAPPY. HE BELONGS, BY GHOD!

heaties

HA, FANDI! THIS IS MY MOTHER, MRS. BATES. SHE IS VERY RICH AND DESPISES YOU AS A STICKY LITTLE BASTARD, BUT SHE WILL GIVE YOU A GOOD HOME. SAY "HELLO," FANDI.

YOU BASTARD!

YES, ONKEL NORM. HELLO, MISSY BATES... I LOVE YOU.

FANDI LIVES ON. ONKEL NORM HAS RUN OFF WITH AN ACTRESS... BUT FANDI PASSES HIS TIME WITH HIS ANIMALS, HIS TOYS, HIS SEX BOOK, HIS PROPER IMPERSONAL BUTLER, AND IMPROPER PERSONAL MAID, AND CALLS FROM ONKEL RAYCEE IN JOPLIN, MO.

HI, ONCLE RAYCEE.

HI, CUTE URCHIN!

BASTARD KID...

SEX KIDDY BOOK

UNFORTUNATELY, A SERIES OF MISFORTUNES BEFALLS POOR FANDI: ALL HIS ANIMALS DIE, GET LOST OR ARE STOLEN; ONKEL NORM AND HIS NEW WIFE (THE ACTRESS) DEFECT TO SOVIET LITHUANIA. FANDI'S PRIVATE SCHOOL IN MANHATTAN EXPELS HIM AS "AN INEDUCABLE PERSON"; HIS PERSONAL MAID QUITS; FANDI COMES DOWN WITH DOUBLE PNEUMONIA (AS A RESULT OF HIS KIDNAPPING GETTING NATION-WIDE ATTENTION...)

HIS MISSY BATES, FINDING HIM AN INCREDIBLE THORN IN HER PATRICIAN SIDE, GIVES FANDI A MONSTROUS PILE OF MONEY, AND SHIPS HIM BY RAILWAY EXPRESS TO LIVE FOREVER AFTER AT THE HOUSE OF ONKEL RAYCEE, HIS WIFE ROTSI, HIS MOTHER ("MISSY HIGG"). HERE HE IS CONFINED TO BED TO RECOVER FROM HIS DOUBLE PNEUMONIA (AND KIDNAPPING TRAUMA). OUR SECOND INSTALLMENT OPENS AS FANDI DISCOVERS SCIENCE-FICTION.

IS WONDERFUL. IS LIVING IN PLACE WHERE IS WARMTH AND GROOVY COMPANIONSHIP. THEN AUNT ROTSI GIVES ME KEEN ES-TEE-EF BOOK WHICH IS SO SIMPLE WRITTEN EVEN FANDI CAN READ. IS ALL GOOD. ALL VERY ESCAPE READING AND GOSHWOOW. WILL WRITE LETTER OF FAN OF ES-TEE-EF?

I LOVE ROTSI

SENSE OF WONDER STORIES

I LOVE MISSY H.

TODA IS JUNE

FANDI IS VERY LUCKY. HIS VERY FIRST FAN LETTER IS PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF SENSE OF WONDER STORIES, IT IS CRUDE, BUT EARNEST-AS-HELL.

WOWIE!

FANDI'S LOVING FOSTER PARENTS THROW A CELEBRATION PARTY FOR HIM UPON GETTING HIS LETTER PUBLISHED... MISSY HIGG'S FIANCEE, POP ABCESS (A LOVABLE OLD PERVERT), IS THERE, AND SO ARE HIS MUDVILLE FRIENDS. AND CAKES AND PEPSI ARE RAMPANT...

OH THANK YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL CAKES, MISSY HIGG, AND I LOVE YOU ALL — YOU POP ABCESS, YOU BOBSEY, YOU BRUZ, YOU LES, YOU ANN, YOU MA

GOOD FOR YOU — FANDI!

CUTE IMMIGRANT!

LOVELY QUAINT CHILD

KEEP GOING, CUTE URCHIN.

RAY C.

THEN, ONE DAY, A SURPRISE!!!

HELLO, MY NAME IS JANEY JOHNSON. I HAVE TRAVELLED 2,000 MILES TO ASK YOU TO JOIN THE NEFF (NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION). YOU SEE, I READ YOUR FINE LETTER IN A "PROMAG" AND I THINK YOU WOULD MAKE A GOOD NEFFER. (BESIDES, IF I CAN RECRUIT YOU, IT WILL BE MY 87TH RECRUITEE THIS WEEK AND NEFF WILL GIVE ME A PRIZE.) JOIN, FANDI, DEAR?

WOW!! I LOVE TO JOIN NEFF, I THINK

THINGS HAPPEN QUICKLY...

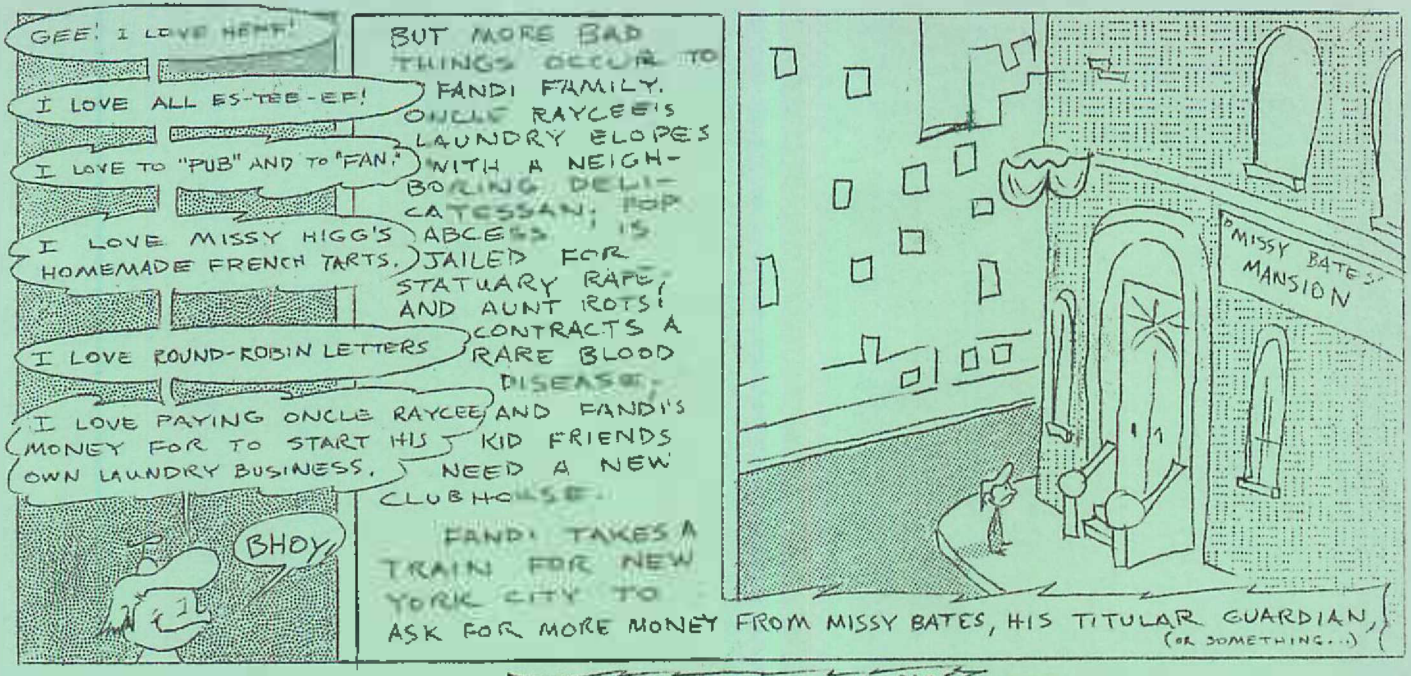
HOOHAH! NEFFERS FIND I RICH. ASK ME PUBLISH ALL THEIR OFFICIAL ZINES!!! (I LOVE NEFF)

CUTE

HOOBOY! I ONLY ONE RUN FOR PRESIDENT, TREASURER, PUBLICITY CHAIRMAN OF NEFF. I ALL THESE THINGS, AUNT ROTSI...

AND I GOTTA BEANY NOW

YOU ARE CHUGGING ALONG FAMOUSLY, FANDI



The following key dialogue occurs:

Missy Bates: Are you the Fandi who is the new Neff wheel?

Fandi: Y*□*S.

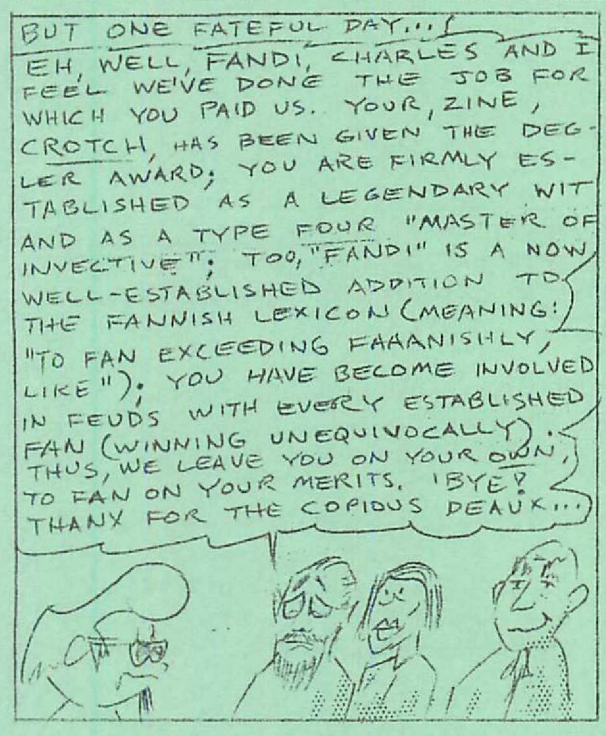
Missy Bates: HAHA-HAHA!! Here, go to this address in the village. Tell them the Madam sent you.

Fandi: I love you, Missy Bates.

Missy Bates: You bastard!

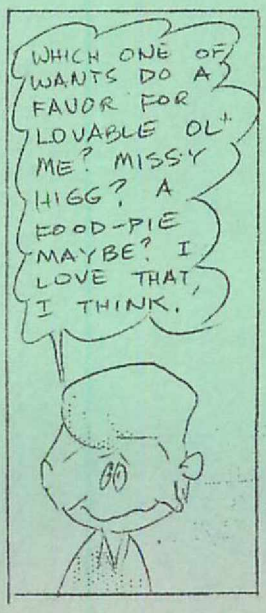

THE TRAIN PULLS UP, AND BATHES THE WELCOMING COMMITEE IN LIVE STEAM. THEN A STRANGE GROUP EMERGES...
CHOO-CHOO
FANDI??
FANDI??
FANDI?
FANDI!
YOU'RE FANDI?
FANDI?? IF SO, YOU'VE CHANGED.
YEH.
FANDI HERE. NOW LOOK... LET'S "LAY IT ON THE LINE." I'VE "CHANGED," LIKE, SINCE GOING TO NYC. DIG? THIS IS MY ENTOURAGE. THEY'RE GOING TO PUSH MY IMAGE IN TRUFANDOM. (L. TO R.) ALISS CUSHION, MY MISTRESS (LOOSE-LIVER FANDI); CHARLES DURBEE, MY GHOST WRITER (FABULOUS FANNISH WIT FANDI); TED E. BRIGHT, MY PUBLISHER AND FEUD MONGER (IMPECCABLE PUBLISHER AND CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE FANDI)...
WELL, ANYWAY WELCOME!!
FANDI?
FANDI
HI, NEFFER!
MY GOD, THE CUTE URCHIN TALKS COHERENTLY — WELL, HAHA, CUTE URCHIN, DO YOU HAVE MY LAUNDRY MONEY? HAHA
NO, HIGGS NO MORE "ONKEL (SNICKER "CRAP, RIGHT?) YOUR NEW FULL-TIME JOB IS DISTRIBUTING (BY MOTORSCOOTER COPIES OF (MY NEW GENZINE, CROTCH.
CLEVER TITLE, DURB.
AXIOMATICALLY!
YOU GOING TO PAY COURT AND LAWYER COSTS ON MY RAPE RAP? HUH, LIL CUTE IMMIGRANT?
WHY, NO, POP ABCESS I'M GOING TO LET YOU HAVE TO USE A PUBLIC DEFENDER AND BE CONVICTED; THEN I (OR DURB, ACTUALLY) WILL WRITE THE WHOLE THING UP QUITE HUMOUROUSLY...
(HOW ABOUT US, FANDI?, DO WE GET A NEW CLUBHOUSE, HUH?
YES, I'M BUILDING A NEW CLUBHOUSE!
OH, WE KNEW YOU HADN'T GONE BIG.
FOR MYSELF...
SMEK
FANDI, DEAR, MY TRY ONE OF MY FOODPIES YOU ALWAYS (LOVED THEM SO.)
THAT WAS BEFORE I FOUND TOWNER HALL AND LEARNED HOW TO BE FANNISH, BABY
YES, YOU'RE A TRUFAN NOW, FANDI
THUS DO THINGS PROGRESS AT THE HIGGS HOUSE! FANDI IS A VERY SNOTTY FELLOW, AND HE IS A MERCILESS SLAVE-DRIVER OVER HIS LOVABLE FOSTER FAMILY (FORCING MISSY HIGGS TO SPEND EIGHT DAYS PREPARING FOR A SPECIAL REGIONAL CON AND ORGY TO HELP AT HIGGS HOUSE). WITH THE AID OF FANDI'S FANNISH GUIDERS, DURBEE AND BRIGHT, FANDI IS ELECTED
GHOD!
AND THOUSANDS OF FANS A MONTH COME FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH HIM...
FANDI, DEAR, MAY I REMIND YOU THAT YOU HAVE 18 NEFF LETTERS TO DO THIS WEEK AND 679 WELCOME LETTERS TO DO...
"I HAVE BUT ONE FANZINE TO GIVE FOR MY EGOBOO..." HAHAHA
THANX FOR THE CUTTING QUOTE, TED.
OF COURSE, KID.
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR AUNT ROTSI WITH THE LOATHSOME BLOOD DISEASE?
"FANDOM NEEDS NEW BLOOD," HAHA. DIG ME?
(THANX FOR THAT ONE, TOO, TED.)
GLAD TO ASSIST.


THE TOWN OF MUDVILLE BECOMES A VERITABLE MECCA (OR JERSEY CITY)...
SEE AND SPEAK TO FANDI
I THINK I SEE HIM!!
HIS IMAGE
OH, NOW THEY'RE DOWN TO $15.00?
OH; ONLY ANOTHER DAYS WAIT, THEY SAID
THAT'S RIGHT, JUANITA,
TICKETS
CONVERSATION
CONVERSATION
CONVERSATION
CONVERSATION
I THINK HE LIKES ME, JOANNE, HE PROMISED ME A HASTY POSTCARD OF COMMENT...!
HE INSULTED ME, LES.
HAHA! HE INSULTED ME!
CROTCH
BHEEK 504
HAH! HE SNEERED AT ME! I TOUCHED HIM!

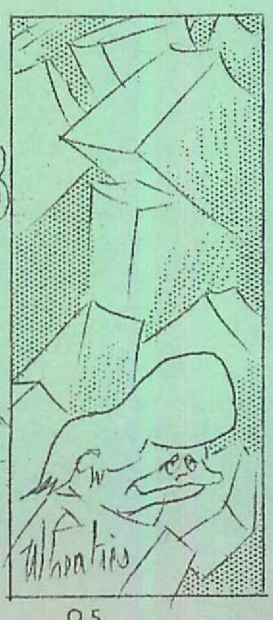

BUT ONE FATEFUL DAY...
EH, WELL, FANDI, CHARLES AND I FEEL WE'VE DONE THE JOB FOR WHICH YOU PAID US. YOUR ZINE, CROTCH, HAS BEEN GIVEN THE DEGLER AWARD; YOU ARE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AS A LEGENDARY WIT AND AS A TYPE FOUR "MASTER OF INVECTIVE"; TOO, "FANDI" IS A NOW WELL-ESTABLISHED ADDITION TO THE FANNISH LEXICON (MEANING: "TO FAN EXCEEDING FAAANISHLY, LIKE"); YOU HAVE BECOME INVOLVED IN FEUDS WITH EVERY ESTABLISHED FAN (WINNING UNEQUIVOCALLY). THUS, WE LEAVE YOU ON YOUR OWN, TO FAN ON YOUR MERITS. 'BYE? THANX FOR THE COPIOUS DEAUK...

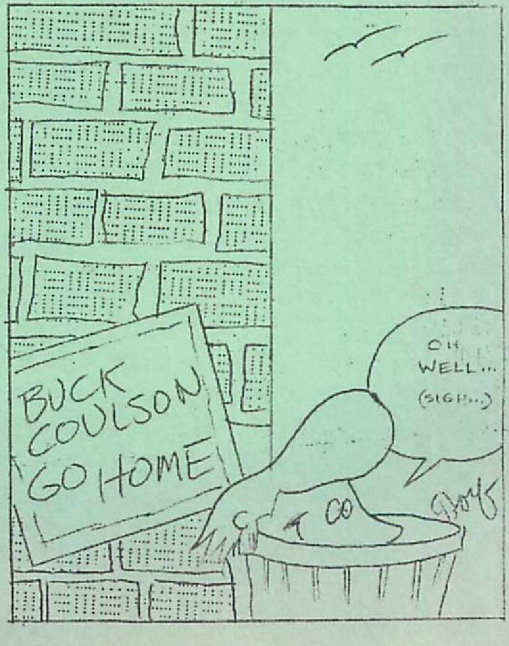

I REALIZE WITHOUT TOWNER HALL FELLOWS, FANDI NOT "FANDI THE FABULOUS FAN OF OUR TIME" BUT JUST "FANDI THE LOVABLE (AND LOVING) IMMIGRANT CHILE"
THESE APPURTENANCES THEREFORE BE USELESS


HAHA, MISSY HIGG, ONKEL RAYGEE, AUNT ROTSI, TWINS, POP ABSCESS, JANEY JOHNSON OF N3F, I AM SWEET, CRETINISH, D. P. FANDI AGAIN. I LOVE YOU ALL. HAHA. AMENDS? HUH?


WHICH ONE OF WANTS DO A FAVOR FOR LOVABLE OL' ME? MISSY HIGG? A FOOD-PIE MAYBE? I LOVE THAT, I THINK.


GODDAM INGRATE...
HAHA ONKEL RAYGEE? WHAT FUN THING YOU DO?
U.S.
MAIL




BUCK COULSON GO HOME
OH WELL... (SIGH...)

Lit'ry Discussions:

theological science fiction

JAMES BLISH

"...it may well be that something remarkable and beneficial did happen to s-f in the Fifties and I have failed to discern it. If so, will anyone who does discern it please send me a telegram -- collect? (Espers, saucerites and other non-survival types need not apply.)"

--James Blish, writing in Science-Fiction Times 20th anniversary issue, 1961.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM AHA044 AH-NA036
CGN COLLECT NY NY 21 324P EST
MR JAMES BLISH MILFORD PA

THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE FICTION

LOVE PAT & DICK.

When I asked, at the close of my article in the anniverary issue of Science-Fiction Times, for a single example of an important new trend in s-f since 1950, my request was -- how you poot eet een Angleesh? -- rhetorical, but you seem to have come up with an answer: theological science fiction.

Okay, you have me. I can only plead that I overlooked this because I predicted it; for evidence, I refer you to SKYHOOK 19 (Autumn 1953); so it didn't re-enter my head when I was trying to assess the past decade. Mea culpa. It's important and interesting, I agree.

I don"t want to repeat the substance of the SKYHOOK article, which still seems to me to be valid in its generalities. Since that time, though, the trend has proceeded apace, so that there's even less excuse for my overlooking it. You say in your letter* that there was "not a lot of" theological s-f in the fifties, but in fact there was -- you should pardon the expression -- a hell of a lot, and furthermore enough of it to permit it to be characterized further.

(Before I try this experiment, do we agree that it is essentially magazine s-f we are talking about? /Agreed./ Since the magazines were founded, that is where the trends we pay attention to have appeared first. If you want to include theological s-f which appeared first of all in novel form, you have a different set of statistics; the s-f novel with a theological axe to grind is one of the oldest and most dependable kinds of s-f and I can't see that there has ever been any "trend" here. The list runs from the two Benson novels I mentioned in SKYHOOK, written at the turn of the century and one of them still marvelous reading, through C. S. Lewis, Werfel's STAR OF THE UNBORN, and so on. Even Shiel wrote one: LORD OF THE SEA.)

But I think it's true that the theological story as relatively new to magazine s-f, and has in addition become quite common. You list four examples, two of which (A CANTICLE FOR LIEBOWITZ and the Carmody stories) are either provably or presumably pieces of books but have to be counted several times because they appeared seriatem or are continuing to do so. There are many more and I don't have anything like a complete nosecount; nor am

*All right, the jig is up. There was no collect telegram. It was done by mail, and it was not done in nearly the succint manner indicated in the fake telegram. Sob! RL/PL.

I going to run one, since lists are tedious and in any event I am prosecuting a slightly different line of argument.

There are now enough of these pieces to make it possible to separate them into categories; and when you do that -- or at least, when I do it -- you discover that one kind of story occurs far more frequently than any other, or all the others taken together. This is the story which deals, either directly or with major indirect emphasis, with the Second Coming.

The whole overall category begins in this way, with Bradbury's THE MAN, which appeared in TWS in February 1949. It was much imitated; I noted one such imitation in my SKYHOOK column (NIGHT TALK by Charles E. Fritch, SS September 1952). One such imitation, Paul L. Payne's FOOL'S ERRAND (TWS October 1952) went beyond the original into the very tough question of what constitutes sufficient grounds for belief, and how one can tell the Second Coming from its opposite number, the advent of Anti-Christ.

Here, of course, we are on more familiar ground: the false messiah had been a staple of s-f for many years before the Fifties. But it's a part of the same subject. Heinlein and Lieber explored it in the Forties in the magazines and neither man is by any means through with it (note however that Valentine Smith, Heinlein's latest hero, is a true messiah; he is even backed up by a fundamentalist heaven, a most curious mixture). My own novel, which you mention,* is also in this older tradition, which exploits the Anti-Christ; and now I think it would be fair to bring in the quasi-mainstream s-f novels, because almost without exception they too belong to this tradition. The C.S. Lewis trilogy is about both subjects (Ransome is obviously a new Saviour, but his scientist - opponent is turned into the Devil in the middle of PERELANDRA, and in the last book of the series, THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH, poor old H.G. Wells is made to serve as the Anti - Christ). The one novel of Charles Williams which can possibly be considered s-f instead of fantasy, SHADOWS OF ECSTASY, is also about the Anti-Christ. So is Shiel's highly anti-semitic novel, though the Anti-Christ oddly turns into the Messiah of the Jews after all the battleships are sunk. Gore Vidal's MESSIAH is clearly an Anti-Christ. Lester del Rey's FOR I AM A JEALOUS PEOPLE,** which I remind you never appeared in a magazine and is still so hot a property that nine out of ten people who know it won't even talk about it, turns the whole human race into the Anti-Christ, together with a series of additional blasphemies that only a man who knows the subject as well as Les could possibly have managed. Les also published in Venture a crucifixion story which looks back toward the main subject. So did Walter Miller (CRUCIFIXUS ETIAM, ASF February 1953). It would not be hard to find more.

Okay. Now what is I talkin' about? WHAT IS I TALKIN' ABOUT?! (Who the hell you hollern at, man?) This:

As the year 1000 grew closer and closer, all of the civilized world was increasingly gripped by a chiliastic panic. I think it is about to happen again, though on a smaller scale and with fewer religious trappings. The year 2000 is almost upon us, and writers and readers who by habit look in that direction naturally feel its incipience a little earlier than most of the populace. I think they were feeling it in the Forties, which was the heyday of both the false-religion s-f story and the atomic-doom story, though both are still with us. In 1000 A.D. the panic arose out of a mass feeling that hardly anybody would be deemed worthy of being Saved. This time the mass feeling, detected well in advance by s-f, is that nobody is going to be saved -- a conclusion partly reflecting the rise of Protestantism, particularly in its more acerb Calvinistic hypotheses, and partly the visible Apocalypse which has been just around the next page of the morning newspaper ever since Hiroshima.

---

*A CASE OF CONSCIENCE. **It appeared in Pohl's STAR SHORT NOVELS.

I have discussed all this lengthily with Les, and as you might suspect, he thinks my analysis less discriminating than it should be. As I understand his proposals -- and I'm not the proper person to offer them at any length -- he feels that the Apocalyptic story has always been with us, and only the specific references to formal religions are new to s-f. This may well be true; if so, it would swallow up the chiliastic story into a minor sub-category, along with THE QUEST FOR ST. AQUIN and many other stories which my major category doesn't cover. (Though it would still leave the distinction. My wife reminds me that my own TURN OF A CENTURY is about as specific an expression of chiliastic panic as one can find anywhere in s-f, thanks to the fact that that was what it was solely about. I was stunned by the reminder, for I had forgotten it completely; I think it's a poor story, but all the same it ought to have occurred to me instantly in this context.) It would be well worth asking Les for comments; if he can offer them, you would have the judgements of a writer who has been thinking about this subject, and making it work, longer and harder than any other writer I know, and to better purpose.

In the meantime, we are left with your sub-category, in which characters to whom religion is important think about it in public and make their decisions bases for action. This is important and I welcome it; it is new to magazine s-f, and worth exploring. I have the feeling, however, that the s-f characters who are thinking about anything in religion except the Second Coming are very much in the minority, and that what you think of as theological s-f is either chiliastic or Apocalyptic in almost every case. The fewexceptions are potentially the most interesting; the examples everyone sees and marvels at (including my own book, surprised though I was that it was liked) are really pretty standard stuff, exploiting not the really difficult ideas of theology, but simply the traditional supernaturalism of which all stories about the devil, etc., are made.

Electricity is here to stay, and WEIRD TALES is dead; now that the lights are on, it would be a good idea to explore the lighted rooms of theology, and I agree that the exploration is under way. We are still, it seems to me, overly wedded to fright and shock.

Happy Easter.

how westlake's spy got into galaxy's elevator

FREDERIK POHL

Well, I suppose I should thank you for sending me your fanzine with the curious Westlake piece in it. It's a pretty foolish piece of work, though.

Let me correct a couple of false statements and falser implications. One false statement is that GALAXY is "heavily laden with Gold's inventory." At the time I took over the inventory was unusually low; at present, I have exactly two stories on hand that Horace bought -- out of a total inventory of about half a million words.

As to Westlake's account of how I came to buy his story THE SPY IN THE ELEVATOR, I have the correspondence before me. What happened was that Westlake's agent, Scott Meredith, sent me a story, CALL HIM NEMESIS, which I wanted to buy, but for IF, not GALAXY. Scott demurred, saying that Westlake was most anxious to crack GALAXY; couldn't I put it in GALAXY, even at a low rate? I didn't want to do that, for reasons having to do with my attempt to make IF a magazine with a character of its own; but I offered to do everythi

I could to buy a story of Westlake's for GALAXY if he cared to write one, up to and including working with him on revisions if necessary (something I seldom do, on principle; I don't believe in editorially dictated revisions in most cases.) Scott was happy; he turned up shortly thereafter with THE SPY IN THE ELEVATOR which I read, discovered it was harmless confetti, shrugged over and bought. It wasn't particularly good, but it wouldn't actually stink up the magazine, and there certainly was little hope of making any great improvements in it through revision. This was a few months before I restored GALAXY's word rate to 3¢, although I was paying that and more for good material; the advantage of not having a fixed minimum rate was that I could occasionally take on a story like this for bargain-basement rates and use the saving to pay somebody else for a better one at some other time.

This is the implication in Westlake's piece that most troubles me: His smug conviction that he did a Smart Thing in copying what he deems to be my own way of writing. In the first place, what madness is this that makes any writer think I want to pay someone else to write stories that I can write better than he can? If a writer comes up with a Pohl-type story and I like it, I'll of course buy it; but if what he thinks he is doing is cannily tricking me into a sure sale, he's mad. (A good way to check on the validity of this statement is to read GALAXY and see for yourself what kind of stories I publish.) In the second place, as Scott surely informed Westlake, the story was all but sold before it was written, so if ever he had a chance to write For Art, this was the chance.

If what turned out was "a silly insipid story" -- as Westlake puts it -- this may reveal something about the author himself, then, but I assure you it says nothing about the editorial policy of GALAXY.

To judge from your postscript, your views of GALAXY don't support Westlake's thesis either. I'm glad to know this. I think it would have been nice, though, if you'd said it in your magazine instead of privately to me.*

By the way, I hope I've made one thing clear. It isn't unfavorable comments that I object to. If Westlake, or you, or anybody reads GALAXY and thinks it stinks, and says so in print -- God knows, I don't agree; but they're within their rights. What I dislike (and indeed fear, because of the effect it has on people who take it seriously, and govern their actions accordingly when they sit down to write a story for me) is the phoney "inside stuff".

I haven't much interest in what Westlake thinks or doesn't think -- a man so unhappy within himself is uncomfortable to be around. Contrariwise, I have a great interest in next year's writers...many of whom are today's fans...many of whom may swallow this nonsense. If junk is published, it is easy (but unfair) to blame the editors. They are limited to what is written. The writers write the junk; if they haven't the guts to write what they think should be written, they might at least have the decency to refrain from screaming "rape." To write good science fiction requires a certain amount of gutsiness; those without it are probably better off in other fields, where the standards are lower anyway.

But it isn't true that everyone has fled. Westlake lists half a dozen or so "escapees" who don't write science fiction any more. Two of them -- Clarke and Budrys -- are in the current (Feb) GALAXY; two others -- Merril and del Rey -- have been in the last couple issues, and will be again shortly. The good ones don't leave permanently. In spite of difficult editors (not that difficult), in spite of low rates (not that low), in spite of everything, they stick around; science fiction is where they can do their best writing, and to a good writer that means a lot. (Correction: Budrys is in the current GALAXY -- as he was in the previous issue, and will be again shortly; Clarke is in April...and was an issue or two ago in IF.)

*What I said was the customary disclaimer about the views of the author (Westlake) not necessarily being the "official" views of Xero or its editors. I said that Poul Anderson's "The Day After Doomsday" was a dandy story. I still think so. I voted for it on my Hugo ballot. I also thought Clarke's two stories were dogs. -RL

doing nothing defined

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

Donald E. Westlake says: "De Camp and a lot of others aren't doing much of anything." If Mr. Westlake means that the stuff I write doesn't mean much of anything, he is entitled to his opinion. Sometimes I am tempted to agree with that estimate. However, if he means that I haven't been writing and selling since I quit SF, he is misinformed.

The last SF story I wrote was "Aristotle and the Gun," finished 11/9/56 and published in ASF for 2-58. Since then I have written and sold 33 articles (including some non-commercial pieces) and 12 books. The articles comprise: 5 published in SF and fantasy magazines, 10 in Science Digest, 2 in Science World, 1 in Travel, 3 in learned periodicals like Technology & Culture, 7 in Scithers' Amra (for fun), and 5 for miscellaneous outlets like encyclopedias.

The books break down as 1 textbook, 2 non-fiction books for the general market (1 out, 1 finishing), 3 historical novels (2 out, 1 to be pub Dec.1 [now all out -- RL]), 1 fantasy novel (with Bjorn Nyberg), 2 small NF juveniles (1 out, 1 coming soon), and 3 large juveniles (1 out, 1 out but not under my name, and 1 being edited).

I think that makes my point, that I have at least not been idle, without bringing in reprints (cloth and paper) of earlier SF and fantasy novels, foreign translations, appearances in anthologies, radio scripts, writings in the technical and public relation fields, magazine reprints of stories, publication of stories and articles written before A&TG, books contracted for and articles commissioned but not yet written, articles bought but not used, book reviews, published letters, and other fugitive pieces.

painful parts

AVRAM DAVIDSON

And now is when I wished I had some of that lovely liquor left largely undrunk (though it was drunk largely -- can one imagine the immense quantity of it, that fans should leave lashings of it uningested) at Kolchack's Kastle, that time at the PhillyCon; a drink, I say, I wish I had here in hand to fortify me for Don Westlake's DON'T CALL US / WE'LL CALL YOU, parts of which are painfully true. And parts of which are painfully not, though I hasten to deny any intent to invidiate Mr. Westlake's veracity. In my intercourse with him (purely of a social nature, harumpph) I discovered him invariably amiable, and his beard, moveover, is at least a marquis in the peerage of beards: of such a beard must the Onlie Begettor be a man of honor. However --

He quotes himself and Friar Garrett as having said, a year ago, presciently, "I am a professional writer. My entire income comes from writing. If science fiction can't support me, I'll write in some other field." In fulfilment of his/their prophecy, he now says, "Today I am a fulltime mystery writer, working on my fifth mystery novel (the 1st had already been published at the time of the ESFA meeting) and...Randy Garrett [is] working on a biography, for decent money." And goeth on to list Asimov, del Rey, Bradbury, Matheson, Beaumont, Clarke, Sheckley, Merrill, de Camp, and Budrys, all of whom are earning beef, beer, and bedstraw by writing for other than science fiction. Having quoted, I now comment.

I am also a professional writer. My entire income comes from writing.* I have always written in other fields as well, because science fiction has never, by itself, supported me. I doubt if it ever supported Asimov and Clarke, the former having been long a collegiate staff-member, and the latter having written science-fact as far back as s-fiction. I do not believe Judith Merrill ever lived entirely on her science fiction stories, she has written too few of them, wrote detective stories a long while back, and has been anthologizing for about five years successively, not counting earlier anthologies (Galaxy of Ghouls, Shot in the Dark). Bradbury, before he moved into the big time, was living in Venice, California, a low-rent district favored by citizens whose entire income comes from writing their names on social security checks. Del Rey long ago began to do juweniles. Etcetera.

Horace Gold is seldom quoted save to be hooted down, but he is the wise man who said, and said often, "No writer should ever depend exclusively on science fiction to support himself. The field is simply not big enough." At the time there were writers seemingly proving him wrong. But the times were out of joint; subsequent events proved Horace right. The key to Don's complaint lies not in science fiction's not supporting him, but in his comment that "it can't even interest us." The fault, dear Donald, lies not in your (ex) market... It is no offense, surely, to say that you probably never were a science fiction writer, but a mystery writer who wandered into sf by error, and who sold 14 stories beforediscovering that "none of /them/ are any damn good," and that you belonged in a different field. Those fourteen were sold to nine different markets, only two of which -- Analog and Galaxy -- were tops. Nine from fourteen leaves five, so it seems from my never-strong arithmetic that no more than four could have appeared in any top market. You do not say over how long a period you wrote and sold sf, though I do note that of your mystery stories five have been or will be anthologized, whereas none of your sf has -- further evidence, I'd say, that you have gotten out of the wrong field into the right one.

Randy Garrett, who, our readers will remember, was last seen writing a biography, "for decent money". The implication is that Goodman Garrett tired of sf and turned to nonfiction. Not so. RG is a man of wit, humor, laughter, learning, and capacity. There is much reason to believe he could be capable of supporting himself as a writer in any of many other fields. However, he learned some years ago that he could write the kind of stories John Campbell would buy and that John Campbell would buy them almost as fast as he could write them -- or would write them, for Randy Goodfellow has for a long time been engaged in a large-scale scheme of research involving comparative whiskey-testing, with no other thought in mind but the benefit of mankind, and this necessarily consumes a lot of time (it also consumes a lot of whiskey, too, but no man whose liver has not already turned green and petrified, can hold more whiskey with less visible effect). Thus, his craft, capable of navigating any seas you care to mention, has ridden safe at anchor in Port Campbell for so long that he almost seems afeared to venture past the breakwater; meanwhile the harbor is silting up around him, wit is worthless and laughter is lost. He wrote the bio -- of the current pope -- because his agent has a tie-in with the publisher and recognized that Randy has a knowledge of Catholicism both wide and sympathetic -- this last an important point in view of the Roman Catholic market.

Last week RG finished Papal People Leader (his joke) -- did he start on another bio? Not on your scapular, he didn't. He started on another story for John Campbell. Perhaps the bio will bring such scads, floods, freshets and torrents of royalty as will float him off to sea again.

Perhaps not.

So far I have been obliged to disagree with Westlake. But I must agree with him on a point or two, which why I miss that drink I mentioned earlier. On the one hand, if we wish sf to be, and to be regarded as, part of fiction, and not something separate and

*Written, of course, before the Colonel assumed the editorial helm of F&SF.

and distinct, we should be glad that more and more of those who write sf write other things as well; we could argue that this will tend to prevent stagnation, inbreeding, provinciality, etc; that at the same time sf writers are writing non sf, non sf writers are writing sf, which will restore "improbilia" (Ward Moore's happy word) to its position in the world of letters which it held prior to Hugo Gernsback's having ghettoized (P. Schuyler Miller's verb) it by starting Amazing.

We could, I say, argue this. But would we believe it?

Summa, and sof-pasuk, Don Westlake ends with a "reason" "why science fiction is so lousy" -- that ESFA members recollected a Weird Tales story from the Thirties and had read it, while only two had even read a story from the previous month's Analog. I submit that this is not a reason, but a symptom. And this, of course, leaves us back where we were before. Magazine sf has seldom, if ever, been sicker. Paperback sf flourishes (even if it seems to Donald W. impossible to market his novel; by the names of the two publishers cited, I'd guess he's barely scratched the market) -- and, happy happy happy the science fiction fanzine seems remarkably healthy.

Of course, if writing for fanzines won't support me....

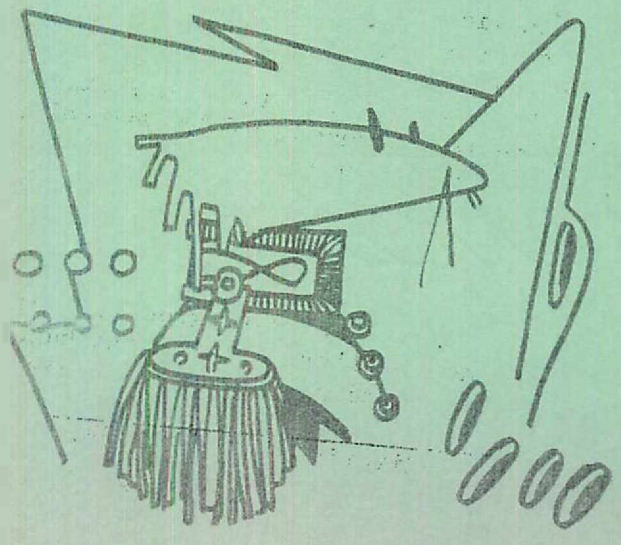
nor has he inquired

DONALD WOLLHEIM

Donald Westlake's essay is of interest to me, and strikes an honest note of free-speaking clarity in the sf writing business. I disagree with his summary dismissal of Ace, merely mentioning it in connection with one novel he hasn't finished and never will finish. Perhaps the sum of roughly 2¢ a word, slightly more, isn't enough to warrant his aiming at the Ace market -- but he ought at least to mention it.

Nor has he inquired as to whether or not Ace can use longer lengths (we can) or shorter lengths (we can). I don't offhand recall who his agent is /Scott Meredith - rl/ but I don't recall having had Westlake mss ever submitted my way.

However, now that Avram is taking over at F&SF, maybe the outlook there will change. I agree in general that Mills' editorship was somewhat less than inspiring.



VOTE FOR E

onyway, vote for TAFF whoever you vote for!


now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party
writers at work
ALFRED BESTER
AVRAM DAVIDSON
first of a series
by bhob stewart

BOOKS by LIN CARTER

CLIFFHANGER FROM CLARKE

A FALL OF MOONDUST, Arthur C. Clarke; Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1961; 248 pp., $3.95.

This, the first new novel we have had from Mr. Clarke since 1957, marks a new direction for the man who is probably the finest of England's science fiction writers. His early novels, such as the brilliant Child - hood's End or Earthlight, or, for that matter the colorful The City and the Stars, were dramatic extravaganzas laid at the crucial turning points of future history.

Lesser novels, such as The Deep Range or Prelude to Space, were closer to the documentary than the novel, and in them the narrative structure was merely an excuse for detailed exposition of forthcoming technological frontiers... in the first, submarine farming; in the second,. the opening of space exploration.

His new novel is a small-screen suspense thriller, laid nearly a century from now; no key period in history, it changes no worlds to come but attempts to reveal the even more mysterious worlds within the human heart.

It would not be inappropriate to call it the Bridge at San Luis Rey of science fiction; twenty-two men and women are trapped beneath a sea on the moon. Tourists, they were sightseeing in the Sea of Thirst, which is of talcum-fine volcanic dust, not of water. A freak accident sank their "boat" beneath yards of vacuum-dry "moondust".. leaving them helpless, depending on the intelligence and ingenuity of lunar colonial authorities for their rescue.

Their dust-cruiser, the Selene, was stocked with food, water and air, but not supplied to last indefinitely. Their radio helpless to penetrate the sea of dust abo them, they can only wait, and hope. To Captain Harris, skipper of the dust-cruiser, and Commodore Hansteen, one of the tourists who is also a famous explorer, fall the responsibility of keeping twenty frightened men and women not only alive, but sane, until rescue comes.

The novel is divided into two main stories: first, th hour-by-hour ordeal of the trapped passengers, their diversions and dangers, their bravery and their panic;

second, the slow, methodical and often heroic struggle of the authorities to find, and then, to free them. Both stories are, of necessity, quiet and understated. And also, unfortunately but also of necessity, dull.

It is perhaps unfair to measure one writer against the standard of another, but ... where Heinlein (for example) would have packed this novel with fascinating human interest detail, and peeled back the layers of these dierse personalities, showing what truly lay underneath, to be disclosed only under the pressure of emergency, Clarke makes only a cursory attempt to do so. He seems largely interested in the technical difficulties of locating and then releasing the victims of the accident. His flimsy and brief try at peeling off the old veneer of civilization is only a gesture: he tells us this nouveau riche broad was originally a lowly chorus gal (with a heart o' gold), this old harpy is an embittered troublemaker, this silent type is an embezzler, and another is a Treasury agent.

Moreover, we get only a skeletal picture of 21st Century life. The lunar colonies are glimpsed, not seen; the political picture on Earth is only touched on. Where Heinlein or Kornbluth or Pohl would have shown in telling detail how this tragedy entered into the lives of John Q. Public in Des Moines, Ivan Q. Pravda in Vladivostok, and Jon Q. Martian in Syrtis Major, Clarke treats us to an offhand glimpse of breathless millions clinging to their TV sets for a step-by-step newscast of the excavations.

Somehow the whole book savors of a short-story vastly stretched out... I will not use the word "padded". Endless pages describe what games the trapped passengers played, what books they read aloud, etc. It makes, somehow, a potentially exciting suspense thriller amazingly yawnsome. The suspense (and what there is, is strong) seems often artificially heightened by employing every conceivable disaster in the book: there's enough air and stuff for weeks, but the trapped heat cannot escape and the tourists will be cooked alive; diggers finally reach the sunken vessel, but their attempt to enter only pushes it deeper; on the brink of success, a fire breaks out in the wiring behind the walls, and so on.

A cliff-hanger it is, but a Childhood's End it sure ain't.

FIRE AND SLEET AND EGOBOO*

FIRE AND SLEET AND CANDLELIGHT, August Derleth (Ed.); Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, 1961; xix plus 236 pp., $4.00.

I do not have the earlier Derleth collection (Dark of the Moon, Arkham, '47) at hand, to which this is the companion-piece; but my memory -- trained by years of studiously inaccurate operation -- tells me it was an extremely uneven collection, alternating, wavering as it were, between the incredibly great and the awesomely bad. You are not likely to detect either extreme in this volume.

*Lin Carter, talented Hegemon of this review column, is represented herein with five poems, quite good ones, though I dare not mention the fact if I expect to get this review published

-- Guest Review by DAVE VAN ARNAM

Derleth mentions the growth of copyright restrictions and huge fee increases, explaining why it is "rather a representative collection than a comprehensive one." Also contributing to Derleth's problems was the fact that less macabre poetry has been written in the last twenty years (generally the period covered in the book).

The result is somewhat odd: Fire and Sleet and Candlelight contains no truly memorable poems (I don't find any, at least) -- but the technical level of the poetry in general, its control, imagery, taste, is superb throughout the volume. Such solidly entrenched mainstream figures as Mark Van Doren, Jesse Stuart, Elinor Wylie, John (of all people!) Betjeman, and Vincent Starrett -- and such well known writers in the microcosm as Lilith Lorraine, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Bloch and Donald Wandrei -- will not be ashamed of the company they are keeping, for they do no more than barely hold their own among the competition.

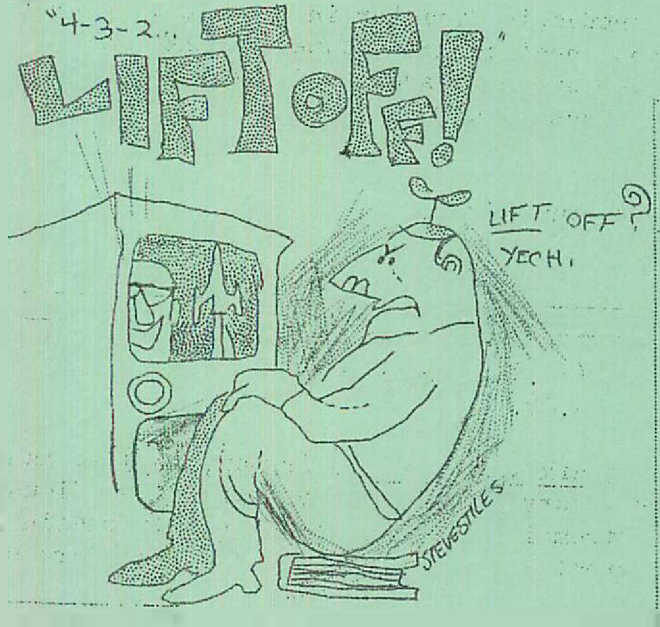
Good, bad or indifferent, this is only the second anthology of Gothic verse ever published, so it is worth the getting. And you aren't going to find another collection like this one for a long, long time.

CLASSICS REVISITED

THE XANADU LIBRARY; The Lost Continent of Mu, Col. James Churchward...Jurgen, James Branch Cabell...Om: The Secret of Ahbor Valley, Talbot Mundy...Kai Lung's Golden Hours, Ernest Bramah; $1.95, $1.45, $1.65, $1.45 respectively, Crown, New York, 1961.

This is beyond question one of the most delightful treats in the paperback field, four fantasy classics resurrected in durable, quality format for reasonable prices.

Jurgen, one of the most delicious and artful novels in American literature -- Col. Churchward's marvelous old tome of bunkum and nonsense -- Mundy's excitement and mastery of Oriental cloak-and-daggery -- and Bramah's rare, well nigh unknown Chinese fantasies -- all four worth reading (at least).



This series, admirably founded, displaying truly superb editorial taste, will doubtless fail -- as who in the mass market will buy such esoteric quality paperbacks at the price? But the fans will have a field day.

///An Editorial Intrusion, if I may, Mr. Carter...

It is policy around here never to censor contributors, and the result has been some statements in these pages with which the editors are in distinct disagreement. That policy applies to book reviews, and I must demur on your unqualified enthusiasm for Xanadu Library. It is, indeed, good to see these works in print again, but: (1) The prices are excessive. Jurgen, for instance, priced at $1.45, had a previous paperback edition for less than half-a-dollar. (2) The physical makeup of these books is extremely bad. They appear in a uniform and lackluster jacket design, the typography is most unattractive and sadly uneven, and the binding is anything but permanent. Yes, Xanadu will fail, but because of poor packaging and overpricing... not because it is fantasy.

-- rl.///

RECENT STUFF, BRIEFLY NOTED

THE UNSLEEP, Diana and Weir Gillon; Ballantine, New York, 1961; 207 pp., 50¢.

Ballantine is going to the dogs. They must have a new SF editor ... the sort who thinks along these lines: "Let's give 'em a novel in which all grass dies off (No Blade of Grass) -- then, if they buy that, we'll get somebody to write one in which grass grows like crazy (Greener than You Think) -- then one in which the oceans dry up (The Tide Went Out) -- then, if they buy that, one in which the oceans flood everything (After the Rain) -- "

This clinker is about when everybody stops sleeping due to a new pill. In about six months, you can expect Ballantine to bring out a co-clinker in which everybody goes to sleep and can't wake up.

What a racket.

DARK UNIVERSE, Daniel F. Galouye; Bantam, New York, 1961; 154 pp., 40¢.

This is a first novel, and it's got the old moxie. It shows us a Country of the Blind -- a subterranean world where the descendents of those who fled below to escape the bomb have reverted to semi-savagery and live in total darkness.

To them, the Light is the Devil. They have lost all memory of light, and "see" by means of highly-developed sonic sense, i.e., by echoes, like the bats.

Imagine, then, a novel that gives you a whole story without using a visual vocabulary! It must have been a terrific job of work, and it makes a splendid minor book. I did not catch Galouye slipping once. Nobody ever says "I'll go and see about dinner" -- they say "I'll go and hear about dinner", etc.

A very difficult technical achievement -- and a praiseworthy little book, well worth the price. And speaking of size and price -- whatever happened to the 35¢ paperback?

THE LONG AFTERNOON OF EARTH, Brian Aldiss; Signet, New York, 1962; 192 pp., 50¢.

So far, I'd say this is the best book of '62. Aldiss keeps them coming, and they are all good. With Daniel Galouye above, this chap -- if he can keep it up -- may very well be one of the major SF writers of the Sixties.

Aldiss depicts in wondrous detail the incredibly alien world in which the remote descendents of mankind find themselves, some two hundred million years from now. Reduced to knee-high foragers, their culture lost and swallowed in a competitive world of stupendous vegetation, they claw and struggle for survival as the dying remnants of a once-mighty race.

For this is the World of the Tree. Plants have taken on much of the mobility, appetites and (even) the intelligence of animal life, which is now extinct save for a few fading traces. In the World of the Tree, in which mile-long vegetable-spiders have spun webs from the earth to the moon, where Insect Men and Walking Trees battle with castle-building Super-Termites, man is a pitiful and doomed survival at best.

This is a genuine masterpiece of science fiction.

Get it, you must. Forget it, you can't.

PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE. Zenna Henderson, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y. 239 pp., $3.50.

If you are an admirer of Miss Henderson's stories of "the People", which began running in F&SF in 1952, you will have picked this book up already.

I am not. And if you, like me, find these gushy, emotion-drenched, horribly over-written stories unpalatable, then you will probably enjoy this review.

To my mind, this book typifies the worst aspects of what you might call "feminine" writing. The narrative throbs, quivers and palpatates with raw emotions, hunger, love, panic, despair, loneliness, and what have you. Everyone in the book bears a "cute" name: Derek, Lizbeth, Jeremy, Valancy, Debra. And they are all so goddam lovable it hurts.

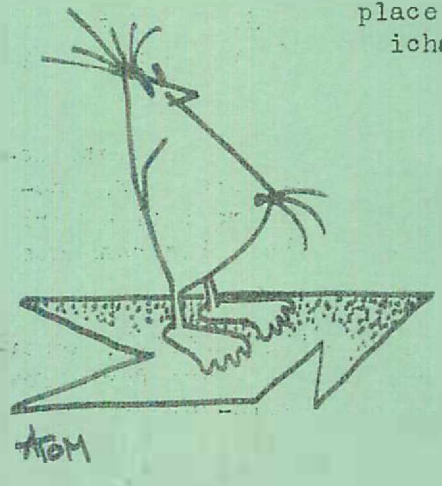
Miss Henderson belongs to that school of writers who like to make transitions by saying (I quote): "and she tugged away from him as she felt all her being waver and dissolve and nothingness roll in, darker and darker" (page 47); "all I took down into the roaring, splintering darkness was the thought of Berthie" (page 73); "the lights went out for me again and I felt myself slide down" (page 76); "I suddenly slid into a warm welcome darkness" (page 108); -- and the one I loved: "I fell forward, my fingertips grazing the curve of Low's cheek just before I drank deeply of blackness" (page 151).

And dig this typical prose: "Karen laughed a warm little laugh... 'There is for me no -- wonder more', Lea whispered into her hands, 'except to wonder where my wonder went' ... Hot tears stung her eyes but would not fall ... Karen broke the bubble with her tender laughter ... 'But - you - din't - know!' Lea sobbed tearlessly ... Lea cowered in the darkness, panic swelling in her chest, fear catching her breath ... The looming wave of despair broke and swept over her ... "

Read any good books lately?

--

LORDS OF ATLANTIS, Wallace West, Avalon, N.Y., 1960. 220 pp., $2.95.



Well, let's see now. If I followed this correctly, it seems old King Chronus (spelled that way throughout) of Mars invaded Earth and conquered Atlantis, leaving his dynasty to rule. Kingpin (or "Pitar") is gouty old Zeus during the time our story takes place, who, with his Pitaress, Hera, rules from the Pitarichal Palace.

Prince Teraf of Hellas has just returned from Mars. Landing, he makes a new friend, Hermes, who is (honest to Christ) a reporter for the Evening Planet ("Have a rough crossing? Do you think the Terran girls are prettier than...") The heavy of the piece is the evil Pharaoh Plu-Toh-Ra of the Egyptian Colony (who has a daughter named Pan-Doh-Ra ((who has a pet pterodactyl named sonny))). Plu-Toh-Ra is up to some hanky-panky with the Tower of Bab El atomic power station, or maybe it's connected with the Pillars of Hercules dam, whose engineer, Hercules, reports funny business. But

Plu-Toh-Ra doesn't fool our hero, who soon catches on to his evil schemes ... because he wears black togas, probably, ("As for you, Egyptian, crawl back into your mummy case...") and also falls for Pan-Doh-Ra who has "golden-black hair",and whom he thinks of, affectionately, as "Panther Kitten."

Honest to Christ.

MEN WITHOUT BONES, Gerald Kersh; Paperback Library, New York, 1962; 223 pp., 50¢.

Gerald Kersh is one of those writers who has never managed to set the Republic of Letters on its ear, but not for lack of trying. His work varies from the well-done suspense-shocker Night and the City to the truly excellent sociological-comic of Fowler's End.

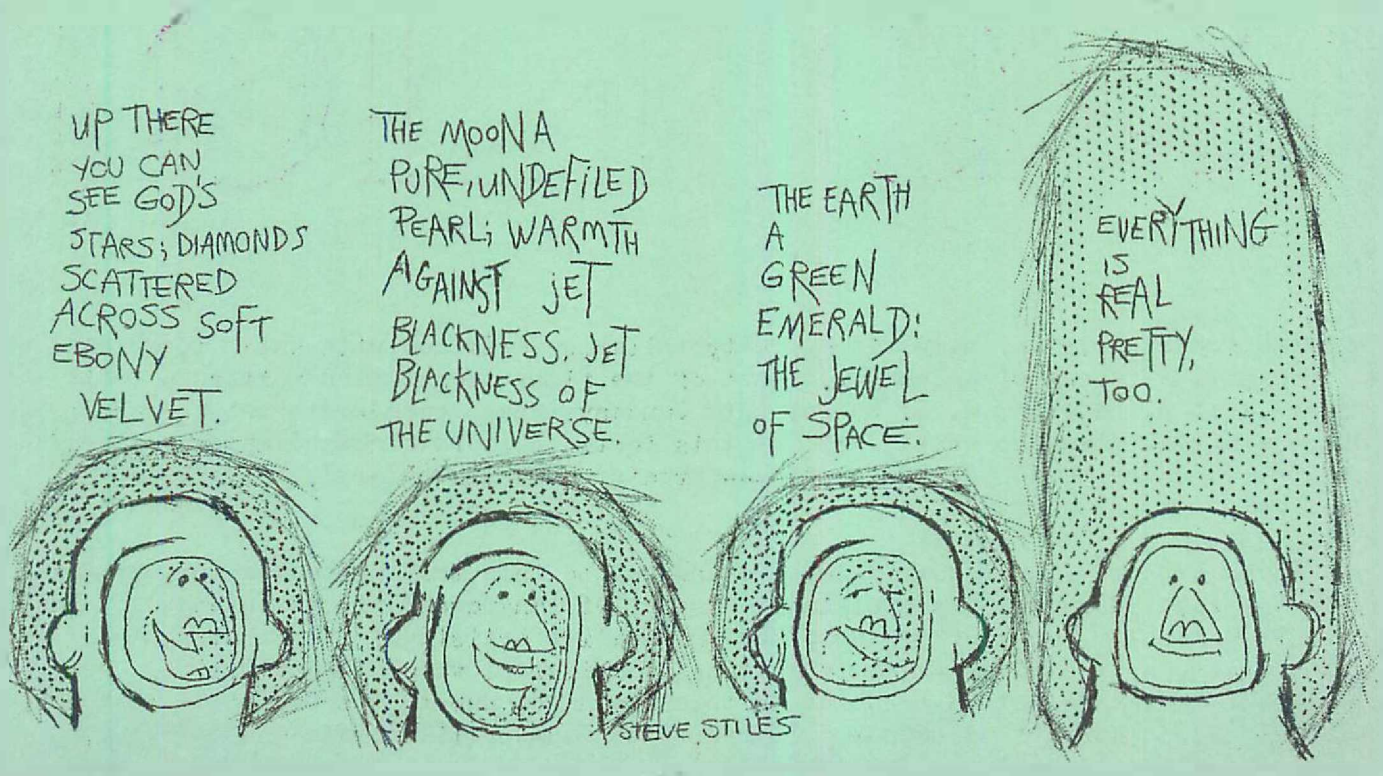
In the microcosm, he has delighted us (--well, me, anyway--) with such things as the novel The Secret Masters (Ballantine, 1953). This new book is a collection of his short pieces, the first such of his that I have seen. They fare from Collier's, the Post, Esquire, places like that.

It's good stuff. Horror, mostly -- straight supernatural, right down the spectrum to psychological-erotic, with occasional Fred Brown pastiches, and here and there a touch of science fiction.

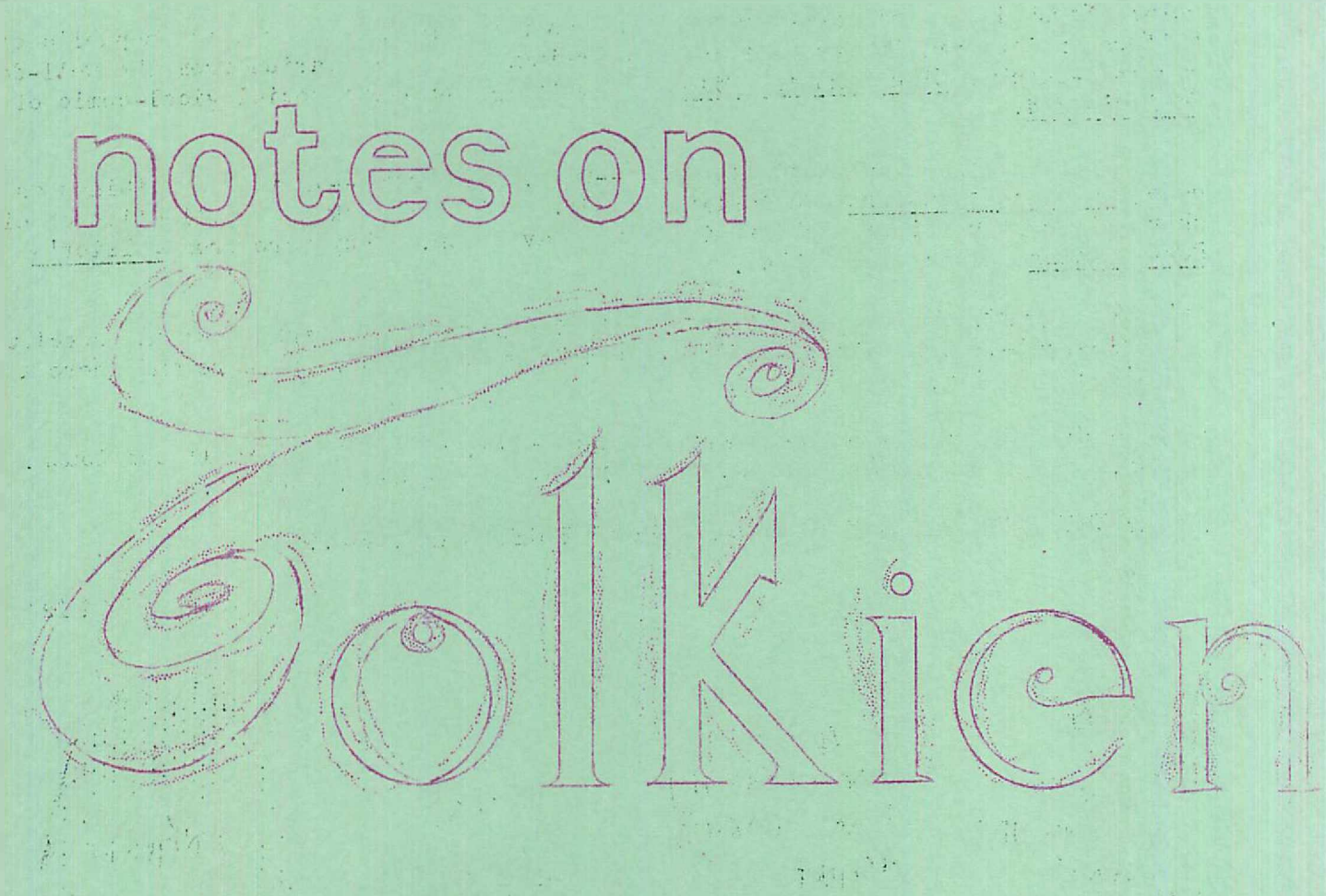
It is a pleasure to see a good solid competent craftsman with a faultless touch. Genius, we have a-plenty. But -- talent? Rarer than hell. Get it.

...and WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE THIRTY FIVE CENT PAPERBACK???

— Lin Carter



part II: names and places by lin carter



The invention of original names is a pretty reliable yardstick with which to measure the imaginative talent of an author. Most of the finer imaginative writers of this century -- E. R. Eddison, C. S. Lewis, Lord Dunsany, even second-raters like Merritt and Lovecraft -- stack up pretty well by this test. Authors of less importance and/or talent -- Andre Norton comes to mind -- create names like "Zarg", "Xaxa", "Gorg", and so on.

As might be expected, Professor Tolkien stands up to this test and comes through with flying colors; indeed, as a professional student of languages, his invented words and names are generally superior to the other imaginative artists of the first rank. (...This test, by the way, is far from being of universal value. Many writers of the highest talent cannot be measured by this standard, due to the fact that they employ or select names from extant cultures, literatures (like Pratt and de Camp), or mythic systems (like James Branch Cabell).)

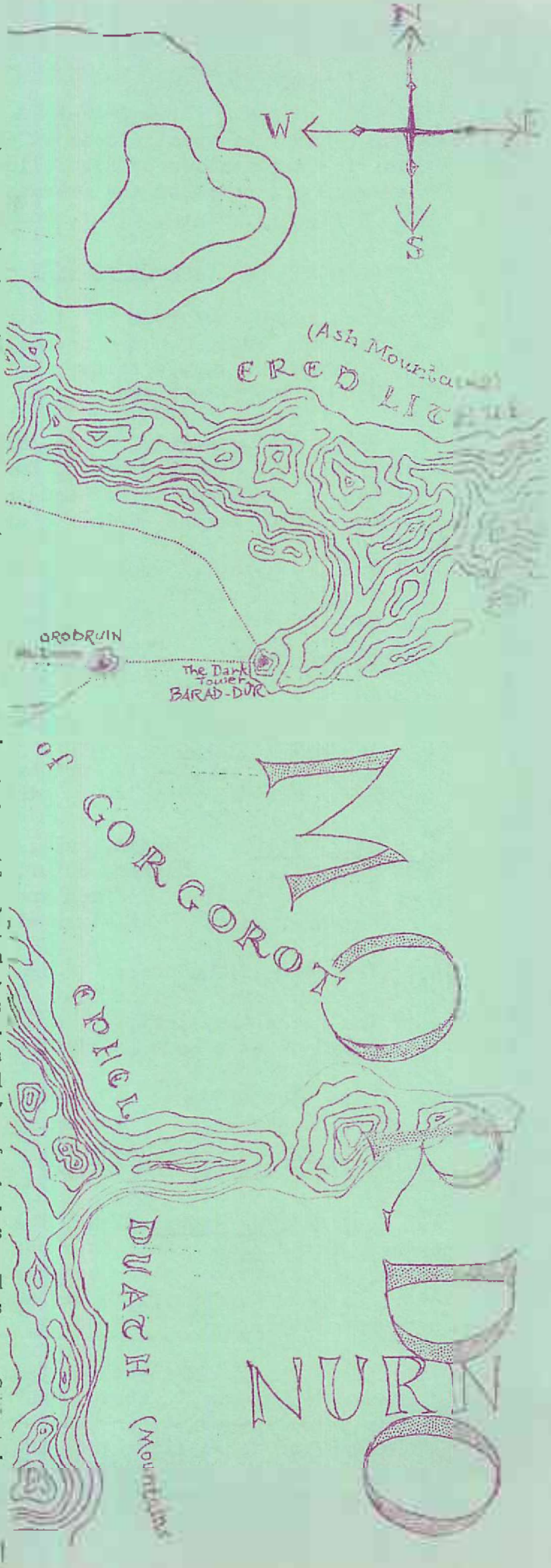
According to an interesting and quite possible story, which I have unfortunately not been able to track down in print, Tolkien's Lord of the Rings had its genesis in an imaginary language (Quenya, or High Elvish) which he invented as a scholarly hobby, then proceeded to create the sort of culture or world in which such a language might originate, ultimately using this material as background for his trilogy of novels. This may very well be so. But whether or not a fact, it remains beyond dispute that his language-structure "works" better than most others. The names and places in the Trilogy are all of - a - piece; the linguistics of one of his Middle Earth kingdoms all hang together -- an imaginative achievement of the very highest order.

Let us discuss, first, the names, and secondly, the places in Professor Tolkien's fascinating Middle Earth.

1. The Origin of the Names

Many writers of fantasy use the opportunity offered them by the necessity of invented names, to play little personal jokes. Thus, Lovecraft used his correspondent and disciple, August Derleth, as the source of the author of one of his non-existent books; the Comte D'Erlette. This is a private joke on two levels, one: a pun on Derleth's name, two: an "inside" joke, revolving on a fact about Derleth that is not common knowledge, i.e., that he is descended from French nobility, that his family when they emigrated to the United States altered the spelling of the family name to "Derleth" from "D'Erlette", and, as American citizens cannot bear titles of nobility, dropped the title of Count. Other than personal jokes, authors sometimes play little scholarly tricks. Thus in his excellent Narnia books (Macmillan), C. S. Lewis called his wonderful lion-god "Aslan". (The Persian word for "lion" is Arslan).

Professor Tolkien is no more immune to this temptation than any other author. I am not familiar enough with his personal life to be able to detect private refer-



ences and puns, but in several places in the Trilogy he allowed himself a small erudite jest for the delectation of his fellow scholars (and gimlet-eyed amateurs like me). For example ... remember the Dwarves whom Bilbo met in The Hobbit -- "Dwalin, Balin, Fili, Kili, Oin, Gloin, Bifur, Bombur, Bofur, Thorin, Dori, Nori, Ori"...?

Examine these verses from The Elder Edda --

9. Then sought the gods their assembly-seats,
The holy ones, and council held,
To find who should raise the race of dwarfs
Out of Brimir's blood and the legs of Blain.

10. There was Motsognir the mightiest made
Of all the dwarfs, and Durin next;
Many a likeness of men they made,
The dwarfs in the earth, as Durin said.

11. Nyi and Nithri, Northri and Suthri,
Austri and Vestri, Althjof, Dvalin,
Nar and Nain, Niping, Dain,
Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Nori,
An and Onar, Ai, Mjothvitnir.

12. Vigg and Gandalf (!) Vindalf, Thrain,
Thekk and Thorin, Thror, Vit and Lit,
Nyr and Nyrath, -- now have I told --
Regin and Rathsvith -- the list aright.

13. Fili, Kili, Fundin, Nali,
Heptifili, Hannar, Sviur,
Frar, Hornbori, Fraeg and Loni,
Aurvang, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.

14. The race of the dwarfs in Dvalin's throng
Down to Lofar the list must I tell;
The rocks they left, and through wet lands
They sought a home in the fields of sand.

15. There were Draupnir and Dolgthrasir,
Hor, Haugspori, Hlevang, Gloin,
Dori, Ori, Duf, Andvari,
Skirfir, Virfir, Skafith, Ai.

As you can see, for The Hobbit alone, Tolkien borrowed eleven dwarf-names from this brief passage of the Edda. And, as a swift look at the Appendix A III "Durin's Folk" demonstrates, the Professor also used here and there in the Trilogy Durin, Nain, Thrain, Dain, Thror, Nar and Fundin ... to say nothing of Gandalf, whom I shall discuss at length somewhat later.

Parenthetically, "Thorin Oakenshield" derives totally from this passage in the Edda. "Thorin" appears in stanza 12 above, and "Eikinskjaldi" in stanza 13 means "Oaken - Shield". For those interested in examining this source further, the Elder Edda is a very ancient work of Norse literature, which was first written down in Iceland in the XI Century by a sage called Saemud the Wise. The book, which bears an amazing re - semblance structurally to the Old Testament, being a haphazard collection of miscel-

laneous books of history, fable, cosmogony, theology, genealogy, proverbs, prophecies, stories and hero-tales, is the original source of all Scandanavian-Germanic literature and myth. Every tale from Pratt-de Camp's Incomplete Enchanter to Wagner's Ring Cycle derives from the Elder Edda, the great fountainhead of Germanic legend. The book from which Tolkien got his dwarves is called The Voluspa, or "Song of the Wise Woman". It is the first book of the Norse "bible", and a sort of Genesis which ranges from the original Creation to the prophesied Ragnarok. The poem Voluspa (according to Henry Adams Bellows, an outstanding authority) is "one of the vastest conceptions of the creation and ultimate destruction of the world ever crystallized in literary form." I think it is, simply, one of the greatest of all poems. The edition used for this article is the version translated by Bellows, and published by the American-Scandanavian Foundation, New York, 1957. It is the standard English version.

(The Voluspa, by the way, seems to have been a fertile source for fantasy writers. Recall the cryptic phrase "Yngvi is a louse!" in The Incomplete Enchanter? "Yngvi" is another dwarf, mentioned in stanza 16, directly following the verses I quoted.)

... But let us return for notes on a few more names, before taking up the places. Many of the names in the Trilogy connote Scandanavia. The Mark (a German word, of course) and Rohan are purely Scandanavian in flavor. "Theoden" echoes the Norse god, Odin; "Denethor" the Norse war-god, Thor; "Eorl" sounds suspiciously like the English title, "Earl", which had its origin in the Danish title "Jarl". The Shire-title "thain" savors of the Danish title, "thane". Recall that Macbeth was "Thane of Cawdor". The Shire festival of "Yule" is, of course, English out of the Scandanavian. Names sprinkled throughout the Trilogy, such as "Haleth Helm's son" have a Scandanavian flavor. Other names, curiously, savor of the Hebrew. Thus "Gil-Galad" reminds me of "Gilead", and "Elessar" reminds me of "Eleazar", priest after Moses. But one can play this game endlessly, and after all the number of possible different combinations of letters in Englsih is very finite.

2. The Meaning of the Places

The geography of Tolkien bears much less resemblance to our world than do his names. Save for the obvious correlation of East-West in the great War of the Ring (i.e., the Shire (England) is in the west, and Mordor (Russia? The orient of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane?) is in the east), it is nearly impossible to correlate his imagined lands with any historical actuality. However, there is still room for scholarly interest...

The earliest happening in Middle Earth's history would seem to be the very ancient division of the Elves into two major races. The Professor tells us that the Elves, the Quendi split in two groups: the Three Kindreds of the Eldar who began westwards to find the Undying Realm in the Ultimate West, and the (unnamed) East Elves, who do not appear in the story. This would seem to indicate that the original home of the Elves is somewhere in the Far East of Middle Earth, beyond Mordor. This division occured in the Elder Days.

The Eldar (the West-Elves, the Three Kindreds of the Noldor, the Sindar or Grey Elves, and a Third Kindred, left unnamed) ventured across Middle Earth and took to the sea. First they came to Numenor ("the westernmost of all mortal lands"), then to the Isle of Eressea, and finally to the Undying Realm itself, which seems to be called Valinor. There the Elves remained, until they were forced to form the Host of Valinor and invade Middle Earth. They broke Thangorodrim and overwhelmed Morgoth and the First Age ended. Most of the Noldor and Sindar returned to the Uttermost West, but some remained behind. They are the elves we encounter in the Trilogy, and with the end of the Trilogy the last of the elves return at length to Valinor.

Now this bears a fascinating and only slightly distorted resemblance to the history of the faerie race as given in the ancient Irish mythological literature. The High Elves are there called the Tuatha de Danaan. They first appeared in history somewhere in the Isles of Greece. They had been exiled from Paradise, and left behind them the cities Gorias, Falias, Finias, and Murias. They came across the world westwards, arriving in the British Isles (according to tradition) in 1472 B.C. They were eventually forced to leave the World of Men, and retreated into Paradise, Tir-nan-Og or Faerie, which then "withdrew" from the world ... much as Valinor withdraws from the mortal sphere.

Curiously enough, the Tuatha de Danaan would seem to be historical rather than mythic. At least there are puzzling references to an otherwise unknown DANUNA people on the Karatepe bilingual; and the DANANIAN tribe is listed, among others, on the temple of Ramesses III. Homer refers to the DANAOI ...

In Valinor, the Undying Realm in the Uttermost West, -- Faerie? And what is Numenor? Simple; Tolkien says the Numenoreans under their last king, Ar-Pharazon the Golden, tempted by Sauron, sought to land in the Forbidden Realm in defiance of the Ban long since imposed by the Valar ("the Powers"). Then; "when Ar-Pharazon set foot upon the shores of Aman the Blessed, the Valar laid down their Guardianship and called upon the One, and the world was changed. Numenor was thrown down and swallowed in the Sea." (from Appendix A, I, pg 317).

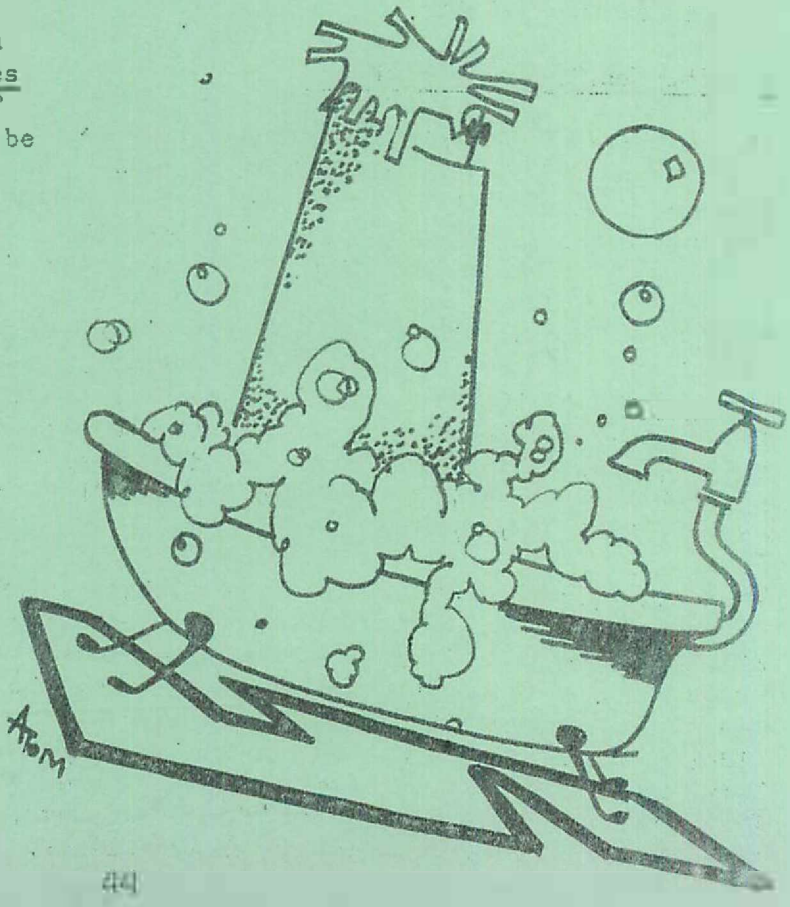
Numenor is Atlantis.

"...and the Undying Lands were removed forever from the circles of the world..."

Valinor is Fairyland.

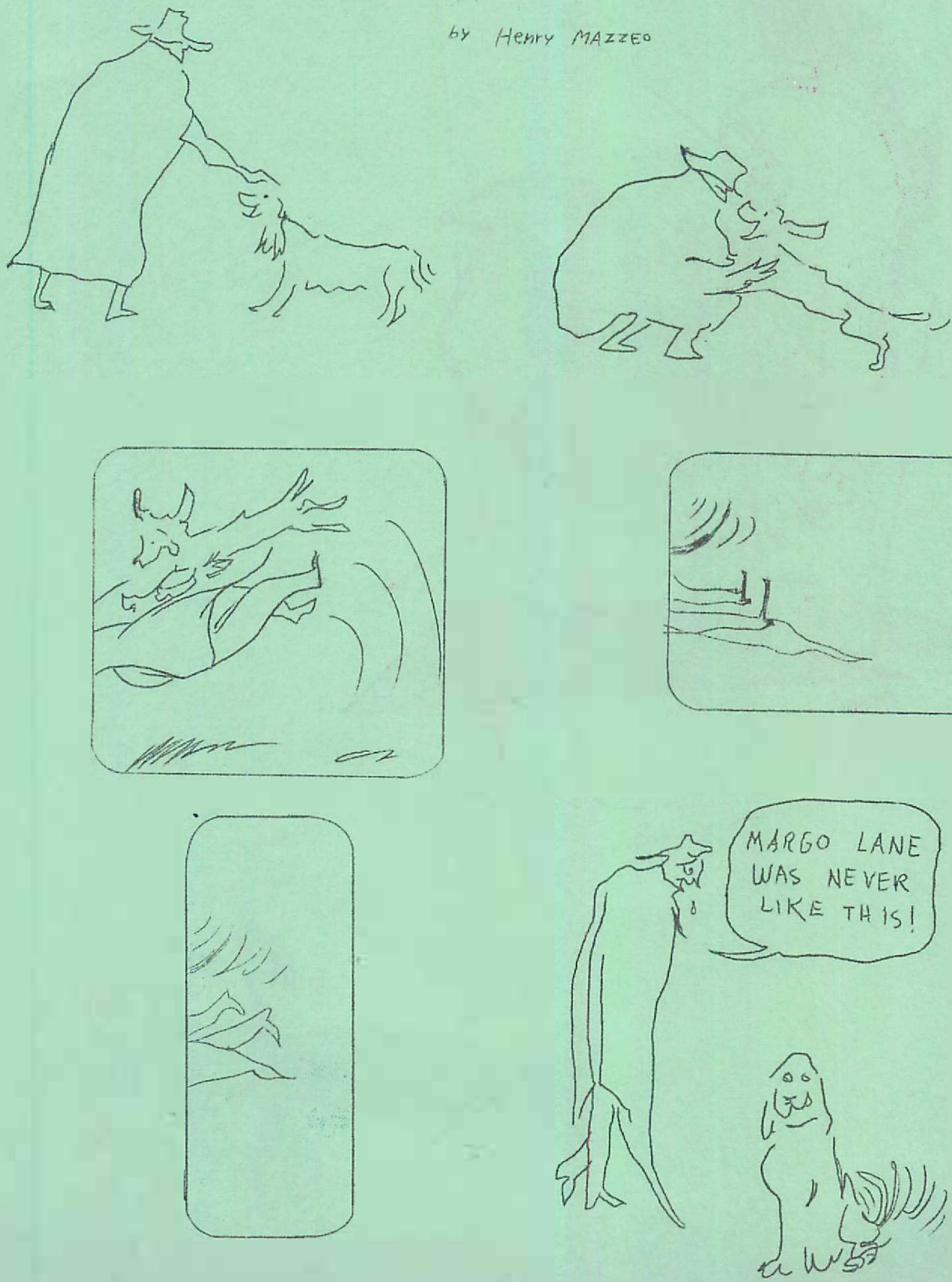
*** *** *** ***

(The next issue of Xero will contain the third part of Lin Carter's Notes on Tolkien, concluding his study of The Lord of the Rings. There will be a bibliography.)



THE Shadow MEETS Snoopy

by Henry MAZZEO



Fanzine Reviews

The Silver Dagger

by Buck Coulson

POINTING VECTOR #7

(John Boardman, 166-25 89th Avenue, Apt D-3, Jamaica 32, New York - irregular - 5 for $1) There is also the possibility of trading, but since the editor claims that his publication is not a fanzine I doubt that he is going to trade for just anything that happens to land in his mailbox. Actually, of course, THE POINTING VECTOR is a fanzine, though not a science - fiction fanzine. It gives rather the impression of a left - wing WARHOON minus the stf talk combined with the front section of KIPPLE. Aside from commentary on international politics, there are discussions of such topics as junk mail, HUAC, raisin wine, folk and filk songs, just as in any modern, progressive fanzine.

The political views are ably presented (though one or two of them sent me frothing to my typewriter) and if you don't like politics this issue is probably worth the price just for Boardman's poem "The Thong of Thor".

AMATEUR ROCKETEER #9

(Amateur Rocketeer, Inc., Room 201. Claypool Hotel, 14 No.Illinois St., Indianapolis, Indiana - officially monthly - 40¢ per issue or $4 per year) I suppose that theoretically this is a professional magazine. It is the official organ of the Amateur Rocketeers of America, it is a 26-page, professionally printed magazine, it is getting some newsstand distribution (well, Mumaw's News Stand in Warsaw, Indiana, displayed it, but then they'll handle anything) and the editor would probably feel insulted if he was offered a trade.

Nevertheless, it reads like a fanzine. (Not necessarily a good fanzine, mind you, but any publication which can come up with a sentence like "At this time it is not planned to fire any rockets on a mail order basis" has possibilities.)

The amateur rocketeers seem rather over-organized to this observer, and the magazine is mostly devoted to organizational problems. Still, it does provide some nuggets of useful information (and large globs of egoboo) to the group, who may turn out to be the fandom of the future. There are four pages of excerpts from Goddard's autobiography, three pages of "Rocket Science" (an attempt to explain the techniques of rocket building and firing in non-technical terms to the interested amateur) and a two-page lettercolumn.

Incidentally, subscribe quick, if you're going to. I happen to know an employee of the firm which prints the magazine (well, you don't think I paid for my copy, do you?) and its future seems a bit doubtful. Of course, its future has been doubtful ever since the first issue and it's struggled along this far, so there is always hope.

UCHUJIN #51

(Tosio Ogawa, Finance Section, Ground Staff Office, Self-Defense Bureau, Hinokicho, Minato Ku, Tokyo, Japan - monthly? - trades?) Actually, I think that Takumi Shibano is the senior editor, but Ogawa is on the staff and I know his address. Actually, there isn't too much I can say about this. It's printed, has a stiff cover, is digest size, has a cover illo that looks like a refugee from GALAXY, and is entirely in Japanese.

I'm sure it's very interesting if one reads Japanese, but after I look at the rather sparse interior illustrations about all I can say is "Don't that there beat all, naow...." One or two copies would make interesting conversation pieces at a fan gathering. (That is, if you enjoy hearing a group of fans chorusing "Don't that there beat all, naow....")

HILLSIDE #1

(Various LASFanS - published by the Trimbles, 222 So. Gramercy Place, Los Angeles 4, Calif. one - shot) This is one of the rarities; an entertaining one-shot. The various writers -- Harness, Lichtman, the Trimbles, Tolliver and Patten -- manage to make their adventures at a Graphic Arts show interesting to others as well as themselves.

Though it does make me feel frustrated: I have to get all my free samples via the post office. No well-stacked babes handing them out (well, the secretary who delivers the mail isn't bad looking, but she's around every day) and no personal demonstrations ... ...of anything. Some people have all the luck.

DYNATRON #10

(Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico - bi-monthly, or so he claims - 15¢) Most of the material here is average fanzine stuff; readable, pleasant, not particularly outstanding. A pleasant way to pass some time -- how much time depending on how often one's four-year old son comes up and demands "Why is that man all chopped up in pieces, Daddy?"

However, DYNATRON has one unique feature; it is, so far, the only important point of contact between US and Japanese fandom. The present issue contains an installment of a regular news column by Takumi Shibano, an article by Aritsune Toyoda, and a letter from Tosio Ogawa. This sort of thing is quite interesting, at least to me. How the other half lives, and all.

Also, this issue contains a vital argument in favor of English becoming the "inter - national" language of fandom. In reply to Harry Warner in the lettercolumn, Tacket notes that a member of the major Japanese fan club sent a copy of UCHUJIN to Radio Moscow in an effort to locate Russian fans. In reply, he received an invitation to list his name on Radio Moscow's Pen-pal listing -- with the suggestion that English be used as a common language between the Japanese and any interested Russians!

AXE #24

(Larry and Noreen Shaw, 16 Grant Place, Staten Island 6, New York - bi-weekly - 10¢) The newspaper of fandom. In addition to news notes (club meetings, marriages, address changes, divorces, libel suits, etc.), Bhob Stewart comments on recent fantasy movies and Xero's own lovable Dick Lupoff reviews fanzines. (Lupoff reviews for Shaw, I review for Lupoff; one of these days I'm going to talk Shaw into doing a review column for YANDRO and complete the circle.) Recommended.

FANAC #83, 84

(Walter Breen, 2402 Gove Street, Berkeley 4, California - irregular - 4 for 50¢) Slightly less up-to-date news than AXE, but more extensive coverage; in fact, FANAC contains all sorts of croggling little news items anymore. Like the one about the Bay Area fan who seems to have some proof that lung cancer in tobacco smokers is actually caused by the poisons in the insecticides sprayed on the tobacco plants. The note says that "there is a good chance that he will be invited, as a result, to some public healt officers' meeting in Moscow later in 1962." If I were he, I wouldn't go -- I know thes industrial cartels. They'll get him in Russia where he can't hurt their business and they'll leave him there.

SCIENCE FICTION TIMES #380

(S-F Times, Inc., P.O. Box 115, Solvay Branch, Syracuse 9, New York - irregular - $5 per year) Well, let's face it gang, the news here may not be as up to date as that in AXE or as extensive as in FANAC, but SFT is the only fanzine in the world which pub - lished a chart of prozine circulation figures with a mistake in it on its front page.

PROBE #2

(William E. Neumann, 2537 South 94th Street, West Allis, Wisconsin - quarterly? - I didn't notice a price mentioned) The first thing that strikes one about PROBE is the cover illustration. I thought his black and white cover on the last issue was pretty bad; this time he has added color. The result is slightly awe-inspiring. (The remain- ing illustrations, oddly enough, aren't too bad; almost any one of them would have made a better cover than the one used.) PROBE is devoted to science fiction. The major feature of this issue is a symposium on "Why I Like Science Fiction", with letters from Clay Hamlin, Roy Tackett, Jack Cascio, Ed Bryant, G.N. Carr, Don Studebaker, Seth John- son, and Harriet Kolchak, and a polite brush-off from Ray Bradbury. A couple of pieces of fiction; one by Roy and Chrystal Tackett is about average and one by the editor isn't as bad as the title ("Mousey Lartrine's Creations"...and no, that is not a type) would lead you to believe. A one-page fantasy by Edith Lynn Kemp is the best fiction in the issue, however. There are several short articles by the editor, "A Night With Bob Bloch

being the only one of any particular interest, and a lettercolumn, which was somehow confusing, despite the fact that some care had been taken to separate the editor's replies from the letter-comments. It had a sort of fuzzy feeling. In fact, the entire fanzine gave me a sort of fuzzy feeling, if it comes to that.

G^2 #9

(Joe and Roberta Gibson, 6380 Sobrante, El Sobrante, California - monthly - 3 for 35¢) One of the odder-appearing "personality-zines", mostly because Joe actually goes in for things like the "speculative science" articles that Campbell is always talking about but seldom publishing. In this issue we have a new theory (new to me, anyway) about the use of Paleolithic "hand axes". Joe stresses that it's strictly a possibility, tossed out for the fun of it, but it seems about as likely as any of the more "respectable" theories (just goes to show, maybe, that a good writer can make almost anything credible). Joe mentions bilingual fanzines: this has been tried in Sweden. I believe that SF-NYTT was the fanzine which for a time had both English and Swedish editions -- at one time a German edition was talked about, but I'm not sure that it was ever published. It lasted about a dozen issues before it apparently became too much work for the editors.

There is usually something in every issue of G^2 that makes me wish that I'd written them a letter of comment when I riffle through the mag for review purposes. Of course, I seldom do write a letter of comment, but I nearly always wish that I had.

NEOLITHIC #21

(Ruth Berman, 5620 Edgewater Blvd., Minneapolis 17, Minnesota - bi-monthly - 2 for 25¢) I'll bet money that Redd Boggs' series on the early days of Minneapolis fandom draws all sorts of praise from the readers. Personally, I will be eternally grateful when the thing is finished and Ruth can devote more pages to something of interest. Early-day Miannepolis fandom may be absolutely fascinating to the would-be fan historian, but I'm not one and I say the hell with it.

Otherwise the mag is quite interesting, despite the green ink (Yes, Ruth, it's pretty. But wouldn't it be nicer if it were legible?) Felice Rolfe gives a brief rundown of British news; this issue is devoted strictly to the prozines and is like unto an appraisal by SF TIMES. Marion Bradley does a fascinating review of a Tolkien-like fantasy novel that I'd never heard of before. $3.25 is out of my price range for fantasy, though: I'll have to wait until Big-Hearted Howard picks up a used copy for 50¢ or so. (I'll review it for BANE's 100th issue....) Various letters are variously interesting. And Ruth is the type writer who can make comments on amateur and semi-pro theater interesting even to me.

DISCORD #16

(Redd Boggs, 2209 Highland Place NE, Minneapolis 21, Minnesota - bi-monthly - 15¢) Turnabout -- Ruth Berman comes in with a sort of interview with Mordecai Roshwald, and I must say it's more interesting than Redd's article in Ruth's fanzine, even though Roshwald doesn't really say much of importance. Anyway, I'm fascinated by her restraint in holding it down to a one-page article -- if I'd had a personal interview with an author of professional stf who is little known to

fandom, I'd have written at least a four-page article titled "I Talked to Mordecai Roshwald: Actually and Literarily!" (I mean, "Roshwald On Campus" is such a plebian title....)

Redd's editorial comments this time reveal nothing much but the fact that he's too lazy to get up and turn off his radio and so suffers through abominable music.. reminds me of the old story about the man who sat on a cactus.

Marion Bradley has a good review of Poul Anderson's sword-and-sorcery novels marred slightly by her personal distaste for "flippancy" in serious fantasy. Personally I enjoyed Anderson's lack of seriousness about the Hero's Problems. (And I liked the Hoka series too .... so there.)

Walter Breen objects to the Hugo given "A Canticle for Liebowitz" on the grounds that it was not a novel, but a collection of novellettes. He has some good points, too, but he'd come off better if he had not tried to compare "Canticle" to other books. "Voyage of the Space Beagle" does not have more continuity than "Canticle"; offhand I'd say it has less. And while "Lord of the Rings" has continuity, it most certainly was never "built up out of smaller units supposedly complete in themselves". Nobody but a few suckers ever supposed that the individual books in "Lord" were complete in themselves; they're no more complete than the three parts of an ANALOG serial.

KIPPLE #23

(Ted Pauls, 1448 Meridene Drive, Baltimore 12, Maryland - monthly - 15¢) I wish he'd raise his price: KIPPLE is too big for a 15¢ fanzine. It makes things embarrassing for profiteers like Jack Gascio and myself.

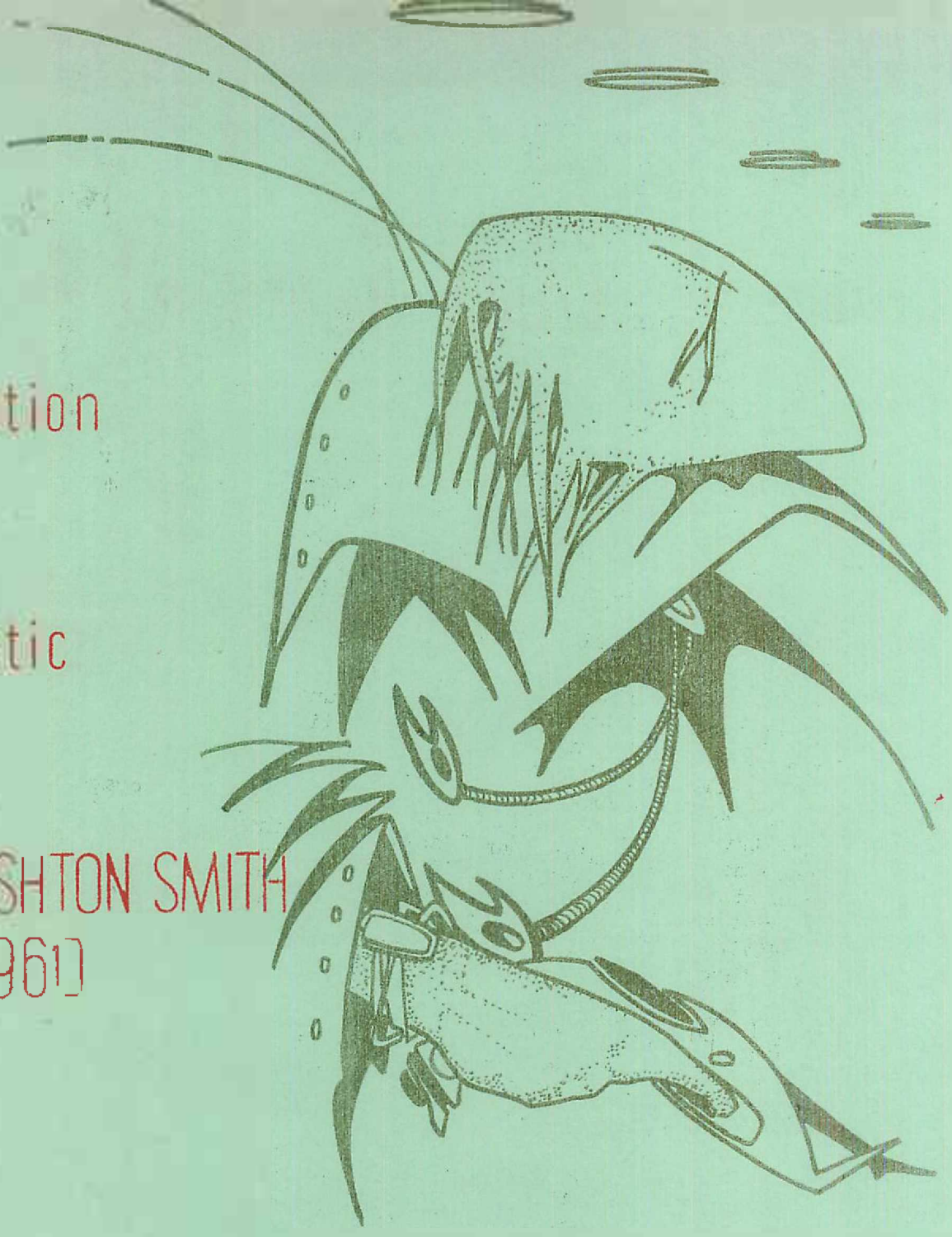
Political-type commentary. Ted feels that Castro has improved the lot of the Cuban people. Personally I doubt that just as much as A doubt the statements that he is "ruining" the island; he's doing the sames things that all the other Cuban dictators have done, no more, no less. Half of Ted's comments on the John Birch Society were on a page that was blank in my copy, but then I've formed my opinion of the JBS and missing a little extra incentive isn't going to hurt me.

Robert Gordis has a good article on religion in the schools (he's agin it) and then there are letters. And letters. And more letters. KIPPLE's lettercolumn is one of the best columns in fandom.

I see they're putting out bubble-gum cards with stf stories on them. Do you suppose that in a few years we'll be coming into contact with bubble-gum fandom?

— Buck Coulson

a dissertation upon the phantastic tales of CLARK ASHTON SMITH [1893-1961]

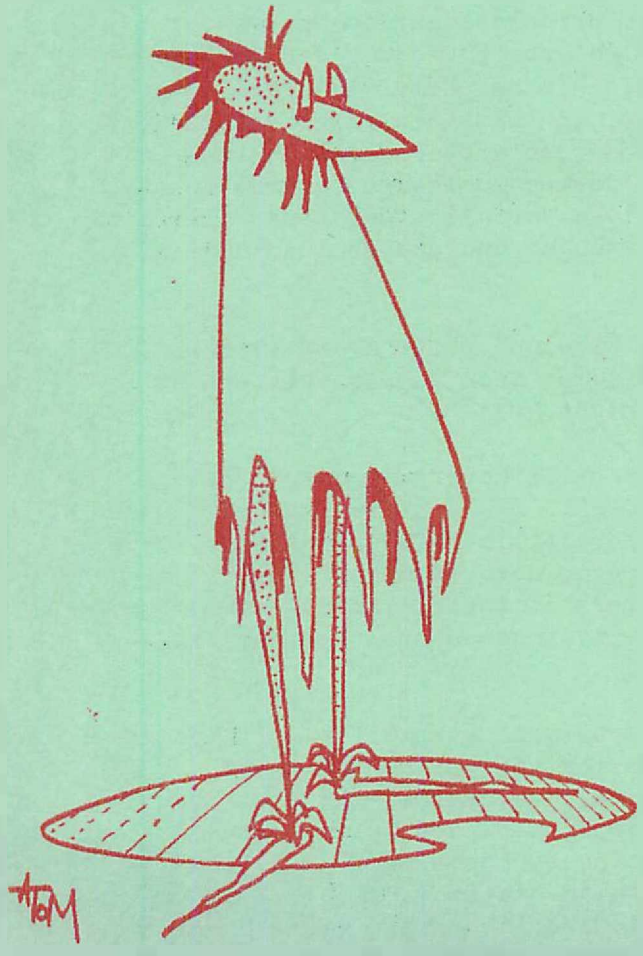


The weird tale has, most unhappily, been frowned upon by self-styled literary critics since the time of Poe, and with the pervading interest in science fiction, it has fallen to neglect almost altogether. Upon occasion, we do see such drab, hack effusions spawned as weird fantasy -- the most notable of these being the erstwhile "Sardonicus", but in reference to a collegiate, whose misfortune it is to be caught in the classroom with a ragged copy of WEIRD TALES, hidden beneath HARPERS BIZARRE -- he gets packed off to the psychiatrist as a prospective sadist, with all due apologies to Mr. Harper. Stuff like "Sardonicus", however, is suitable for filming by some second-rate producer.

However, in spite of the opinions of Mr. Hogus Bogus, Mrs. Polly Wha Dha - and Dr.

the Caliph of Auburn

by H. P. Norton



Dissect Noodle, fantasy is part of our literature, and depends upon the folklore and traditional beliefs passed on from each generation to its successor. Who has not sat up rather late upon a cold, stormy night and dreamed sleepless dreams of imaginary terrors -- conjured up before his fancy by some popular mystery novelist? Who, indeed, has not experienced the thrill of having a splendid

ghost story read to him by some noted actor -- or being artistically interpreted for him, through the recordings of some of the greatest composers of the ages? Only the utterly lost can claim that the realms of the mysterious do not appeal to them!

Symphonic fantasy has never been so clearly or so skillfully translated into modern prose as it has been in the tales of the late poet, Clark Ashton Smith. And may I not be too bold in stating that his death came as a great blow, not only to the connoisseur of the macabre, but to the general reader who was familiar with his writing as well.

The prose tales of Clark Ashton Smith have a haunting effect upon the reader, whoever he might be. Although the spectral element dominates all, also woven in we find the powers of web-like enchantment and gothic wonder which form so much a part of the major work of the author of THE WINE OF WIZARDRY, whom Smith both knew and emulated.

But the world of Clark Ashton Smith was a world of his own creation -- a world of delicate fantasy, opium-tinted mystification, and Oriental splendor. And to this creative dreamer belong the laurels accorded to many of the more respected fantasists of our generation. Although he was a thorough romanticist, and an attractive verbosity expressed itself in his style of writing, Smith had a keen admiration for the classics, particularly those centered around the legends and myths of early Greece and Rome, and thus, his best work can be found utilizing themes of ancient sorceries and elder worlds.

Testimony of this can be afforded verification by what is considered to be the most representative of his short stories -- notaby, "The Double Shadow", the events of which take place in a strangely Illyrian kingdom known as Poseidonis.

We are introduced to the hero, Pharpetron, apprenticed to the sorcerer Avyctes... "And in (his) master's marble house above the wide sea" he pens his tale "with hasty hand, scrawling an ink of wizard virtue on the gray, priceless antique parchment of dragons." Avyctes conjures up the demon Oumor, the nature of whose powers are not entirely known to him, and is devoured by its shade. His neophyte, who relates the tale, is likewise doomed to a similar death. We see, in this tale, a goodly portion of Smith's powers of imagery. As in Beckford's VATHEK, we are confronted with a mummy, this one of "gaunt umber", whose presence is deemed necessary for the incantation. Although the theme of this tale is obviously a variation upon the Sorcerer's Apprentice legend, "The Double Shadow", skillfully wrought and draped in classical imagery, emerges as a masterpiece of story telling.

The classical atmosphere prevails also in "The Dark Eidolon" where a civilization is destroyed beneath the hooves of colossal steeds who come "anon like a swift-risen storm" and later disappear into the very bowels of night.

With Clark Ashton Smith, the world of ancient Greece still hovers at our doorsteps, as it did to some extent, no doubt, with H. P. Lovecraft, his contemporary, the germ of whose "The Tree" owed itself to Smith's suggestion. It is quite remarkable indeed that both of these magnates were self-educated, and even more remarkable that they were held in awe by the more formally scholasticated members of their circle. I would not be going too far to say that their powers of creativity touched upon the sublime -- and at times even surpassed it!

The genius of Clark Ashton Smith, however, I find to be more vitriolic -- it imparts a greater knowledge and appreciation of life than does that of his contemporary. Lovecraft, in his writing, centers his tales towards death, graveyards, and the charnel -- whereas Smith's landscapes are more robust and active. This does not mean to say that either is inferior -- but Lovecraft cast discriminating eye upon what he termed the futility of "pretentiousness" and "gaudy pomp" and Smith states in his SPELLS AND PHILTRES, a bit cynically: "The modern intolerance toward 'the grand manner' springs too often in vulgar minds by all that savors of loftiness, exaltation, nobility, sublimity, and aristocracy."

Lovecraft also emulated "the grand manner" with certain reservations. In none of his tales does he cast aside his New England mannerisms and, to some extent, prejudices. His Huguenot acquaintance dissimilarly shows a lack of regional confinement, and his tales pour forth a sensuousness that Lovecraft could not project, and what is even more distinctive, the former can be nearly identifiable with a Gautier - like Gallic touch. In "The Maker of Gargoyles" Smith introduces two demons, one carnal and lecherous, and the other a ravager killing without intent or purpose. In "The Disinterment of Venus" a statue of that goddess, unearthed in a monastic garden, becomes imbued with voluptuous life. One cannot but notice the throwback upon the Pygmalion theme. In "The Enchantress of Sylaire" and "The White Sybil", we are confronted with beautiful sorceresses, realistically and enticingly described, boasting a delightful ancestry, whose strains bespeak of Hanns Heinz Ewers and the Arabian Nights. Needless to say, in these, as in many others of Smith's tales, we are haunted betimes with the old Frenchman's "Ivory and Marble" overtones -- the credo of the classical Gallic neo-renaissance of the 1830's.

In many of Smith's tales, also, though not in all, we find the recurrent motif of poetic justice. It is indubitably of classic origin -- but it has nonetheless been identified with romanticism. Take for example the melodramatic hero-villains of Lord Byron with their Schedonistic scowls -- storming across four or five cantos, and welcoming their melodramtic fate -- as if it would alleviate all the ill effects of their Joan Crawford-like delusions. Poetic justice is still more prominent in the simpler themes of the gothic romance. Hence -- Ambrosio carried off by the devil -- an appropriate punishment for his three-fold offenses: fratricide, matricide, and incestuous love; and the scheming Count Montorio, murdered by his sons at the instigation of his dispossessed brother -- and the inevitable ruin of Ippolito in the same romance for his uninhibitive worldliness.

As a more characteristic instance, need we go further? We find in Dumas' celebrated COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO justice meted out somewhat strongly against the enemies of Edmond Dantes. In the indisputably gothic "Colossus of Ylourgne", the tables are turned on the evil Nathaire, and in "The Black Abbott of Pthuum" white magic triumphs over unholy forces. No less than the legend of Lot's wife could have influenced the theme of "The Devotee of Evil" where the central character is turned into an ebon statue as punishment for his unhallowed curiosity. And in a similar manner, the unapprenticed conjurer meets his fate in the earlier "Treader in the Dust".

Dark contrast is provided by such tales as "Genius Loci" and "The Hunters from Beyond" where the innocent fall prey to dark forces -- although mind, someone like the Reverend Montague Summers might presume with a mere modicum of unctuousness: "They could have avoided it if they wanted to!"

*** *** ***

The taste for moral fable also introduces itself in Smith's tales. It might be interesting to note, that although he writes of runic or exotic "other worlds", Smith still maintains a forthright interest in those qualities which form so much a part of human behaviour. I might cite particularly, reference to his short sketch "The Last Incantation", included in his second omnibus volume LOST WORLDS (1944). The aged warlock, Malygris, invokes the spirit of his childhood sweetheard, Nylissa, but when her shade stands before him, he recognizes not his youthful love. Addressing the viper with whose aid he had summoned her, Malygris reproaches it for flaws and imperfections which he beheld in the ghostly representative of his lost Nylissa. But the serpent, looking upon him, replies, "No necromantic spell could recall for you your own lost youth or the fervent and guileless heart that loved Nylissa -- or the ardent eyes that beheld her then." This reproach could well be applied to ourselves who, in later years, lack the spontaniety and candidness which form the most prolific and, oftimes, richest attribute of youth in directing itself toward objects of appreciation.

Tales like "The Enchantress of Sylaire" and "The Holiness of Azedarac" also possess that moral quality. In the former, the hero tosses aside the magic mirror designated to reveal the supposed inherent evil of the enchantress. This reminds us to depend upon experience rather than hearsay, in forming judgements upon others. In the latter the monk, Ambrose, learns that the obvious evil of Azedarac was potent for many centuries while he lived -- and when he died, it was his lot to be raised to the full rites and honors of his church. A bit far-fetched? I should think not -- when one reviews the terrific extravagence and ceremony accorded at the recent death of an individual who was, while he lived, one of the most depraved and lawless monsters of the present century!

The modern "graveyard school" which permeated the better quality pulps in the first half of the century -- I refer particularly to WEIRD TALES -- had also drawn Smith's genius into its scope. The ghoul theme, through this periodical, had ascended to a more direct prominence, and was rescued somewhat from its ill-deserved oblivion.

The legend of the ghoul, referred to copiously by Summers in his meticulous THE VAMPIRE: HIS KITH AND KIN, is primarily an Oriental one. It is dealt with in the pages of the Arabian Nights, and references to it can also be cited in such works as Beckford's VATHEK, and in the metaphysical verse of Poe. The two latter deal with the supernatural aspects of this legend, which centers itself about an inhuman creature who feeds upon corpses to survive, but its ubiquitous appetite does at time extend itself to the living. However, it might be particularly noteworthy to mention that the ghoul's psychological aspects were dissected in noxious detail by the Marquis de Sade, episodes of whose JULIETTE draw from actual case histories revolving around human ghouls and their atrocious mania. No less an imagination than that of E. T. A. Hoffmann became so impressed with the ghoul theme as to develop a tale about it, which he included in his THE SERAPION BRETHREN.

However, it was not until the beginning of this century that the subject had once more arisen in literary circles. I refer, of course, to the sardonic pen of Ambrose Beirce, whose tales, permeating with "tombstone gibe", indirectly run the subject dry. But it was about this time also, that the conventional ghoul was spun forth by E. L. White, in his somewhat crudely wrought, though grotesquely powerful, "Amina". Twenty years later, the tradition was broadened in the pages of WEIRD TALES.

Thus the literature of the ghoul boasts a fine registor of contemporary tales, the most notable of which are: "The Loved Dead", by C. M. Eddy; "The Chadbourne Episode", by Henry S. Whitehead; "Clay", by C. Hall Thompson; "The House of the Worm", by Merle Prout; "The Outsider", "Pickman's Model", "The Rats in the Walls", and "The Hound", by H. P. Lovecraft; "The Horror in the Burial Ground", by Hazel Heald; "The Pacer", by Messrs. Derleth-Schorer; "Far Below", by Robert Barbour Johnson; "The Grinning Ghoul", by Robert Bloch; "The Graveyard Rats", by Henry Kuttner; "The Ghoul", and "The Nameless Offspring", by Clark Ashton Smith.

Of Smith's two tales, "The Nameless Offspring", by far is the more effective. Surmounted with an atmosphere of haunting terror and dread, and leading off with a quotation from the hideous Nekronomikon itself -- "The Nameless Offspring" is a creepy tale of gothic horrors, taking place in modern Britain, at the manor house of Sir John Tremoth, where his lady's mind snaps because of a fatal experience in the crypt. The appearance of "the nameless offspring" upon the scene is expertly introduced by subtle hints and doubts -- and it is quite notable that in this tale, the ghoul betrays no exclusive dependence upon an Oriental ancestry. Thus we are not confronted baldly, with a graphic image of this eldritch monster as we are in "Amina" and "The Chadbourne Episode" -- for the two latter tales depend upon the portrait for their effectiveness, without dedicating any space to shade -- and in the final denoument, when we are cognizant of the nature of the "nameless offspring", we find ourselves comfortably thrilled, and left without any ill-feelings in the pit of our stomachs.

As a sort of tribute to this friend H. P. Lovecraft, Smith penned a Poe-esque epitaph in the form of a tale called "Who Are the Living?", which has since been retitled as "The Epiphany of Death." This tale exhibits a sombre power, which characterizes the better part of Smith's later work. A man strolling among the tombs with a companion is surprised to find the body of his friend decompose before his eyes, and maggots feasting upon his decaying flesh. Believing he is alive still, he appears to behold the victim's lips atremble, as if he would speak, but nay -- it was in truth only the movement of the conquerer worm as he sallied forth from the mouth of the corpse. A most sardonic epitaph indeed -- in commemorating the death of Lovecraft, and that fine era of weird gothicism, which died with its master. Or did it?

Much of Smith's work, as we have seen, avows acute apprcciation which is easily distinguishable from mere imitation. Truly, in his clear, flowing prose, and in his gifted, forthright imagination, he can boast no peer. It is interesting to note of his encompassing knowledge of Baudelaire, Beckford, Poe, Homer, Sterling, Gautier, Maturin, and Fort -- and of his keen recognition of their powers. And it is also noteworthy to record his histrionic ability to merge the best points of their styles, without descending to unconscious "cropping".

However, I find that his greatest tribute was meted out to Baudelaire, whom he translated copiously from the original French, and to Beckford, whose extravgent spirit haunted Smith's imagination most profusely. No greater proof of this need be cited than his magnitudinous completion of the regency eccentric's "Third Episode of Vathek" which sparkles cleverly with the familiar Oriental wit and corridors of onyx. The halls of Eblis swim before us once more -- and once again the reader is called into that portentious subterrestrial kingdom of the damned, where victims are heralded through its portals by bats' wings flapping demoniacally at the gibbous moon. Smith's terrible abbeys of baneful decadance remind us of Fonthill, and the luxurious breath of Araby lures us again and again into the spell-binding magic of his prose. Is it not befitting that we dub him, with sincere and regal appreciation of his artistic genius, Caliph of Auburn -- as we have dubbed his precursor, less genuinely perhaps, Caliph of Fonthill? No doubt, when Smith met his death, his spirit fled Eastward -- though we, of the Occident, still possess his soul.

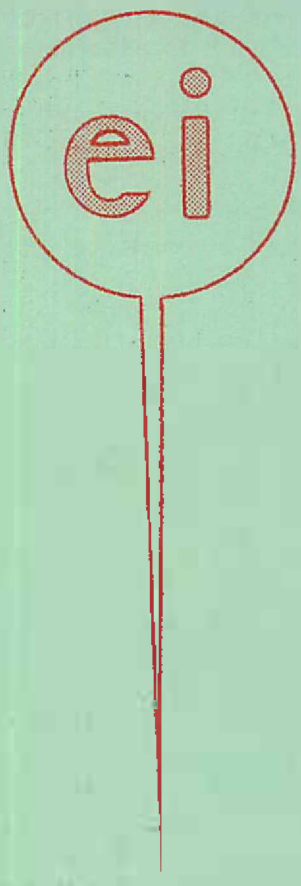
The best of Smith's tales have been collected in four volumes: OUT OF SPACE AND TIME (1942), LOST WORLDS (1944), GENUS LOCI (1948), and THE ABOMINATIONS OF YONDO (1960). A fifth, TALES OF SCIENCE AND SORCERY, remains in the offing. I await its arrival with impatience. His poetry, typified by "The Hashish Eater", reminds us in its all encompassing sensitivity and charm of that of Shelley. And his artistic accomplishments also bespeak of infinite, higher spheres than our own.

The death of Clark Ashton Smith followed that of the much admired and assiduously reviewed Himingway. And if time effaces Smith's writing from our heritage, it will blot out a school of thought emulating sensitivity, in favor of a purely contemporary one which knows only selfishness and bits of information carted away upon wearying travels -- whose god is war, and slums of foreign metropoli providing the only outlet for its carrion tainted brain-spawn.

When students of literature one hundred years hence will be forced to read the contemporary titan, they will yawn, as if to say: "Voici un homme qui puisse ennui!" And when a fortunate one lights upon a rare volume of Clark Ashton Smith's memorable tales, which will, like as not, be mewed down by canting hacks, he will cry out to the very heavens in the thankfulness of ecstasy: "Voici un homme qui fasse enchante!"

> For thou, with elysium key, unfetter'd the souls
> Of many -- And now, the night shade of thy fancy
> Echoes alone, with renewed vigour,
> Your peerless visions to the attending stars!

H. P. Norton



conducted by pat

HARRY WARNER

423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland

The only thing wrong with your poll is that it doesn't permit the individual to say how strongly he feels about these things. I've expressed opinions on them, but many of the matters seem to me to fit into the what difference does it make? category. The 11th item is the real trickster. My answer would really depend on the situation: whether the alternative involved just my life or was part of a decision that would affect most of the nation. I can imagine circumstances in which I would follow Patrick Henry's credo if only my own life were involved, although I'm certainly not the heroic type and I'd have to be pretty old or in poor health or the object of a vendetta by the Communists to follow the old motto. If the circumstances involved the fate of persons who would be affected by my decision without the possibility of their making their own choice, I wouldn't hesitate for a moment to say better red than dead for them.

This was a splendid Xero, which I incidentally read all the way through while I was still in Philadelphia, in the hope that I might deliver oral comments to you Sunday afternoon. I imagine that I'll always visualize that bed in the Penn-Sheraton, every time in the future that I happen to reopen this issue and look at the John Berry story, because that's where I read it, and reading about a strange bed in a strange bed seemed quite appropriate and memory-catching.

There probably isn't any cosmic significance in the movie use of the title of Heinlein's book, and he might not even be aware that it's in the Bible. The combination of words is a natural one that might bob up in many places. I found it just the other day in "On the Beach" in a slightly varied form, just one extra word interspersed as I remember. In just the same way, I come across the statement, "It certainly is a wonderful thing" in almost exact form about twice a week in non-fannish places. The book reviews are excellent, although Lin doesn't seem to be aware that Orlando is actually a near-Silverlock as a capsulization of the history of English literature.

I read the Tolkien article, but the more I read about Tolkien, the less inclined I am to read his stories. I predict a revulsion against them within the next two or three years paralleling the one that occurred against Lovecraft back in the late 1940s, simply from sheer surfeit of material on the topic.

Willis must bring back memories in every fanzine editor of roughly similar experiences in early publishing days. Of course not every fanzine editor has had a press explode in his face, but that could hardly be more trying to the emotions than the first time the hecto jelly ripped apart or the ink pad on the mimeograph clogged up. But I have the strangest sensation that I've read this Slant Story very recently somewhere. Maybe Walt is covering the same era in his series for Ethel Lindsay.

Donald E. Westlake says some telling things about the mess that stf is in, but he unconsciously reveals some equally enlightening things about himself. For instance, he doesn't seem to have suspected the probably truth about the episode when he put Campbell into a story. Whether or not JWC realized what had happened, Campbell undoubtedly recognized that here was a real, living character that was drawn from life, not the cardboard hero that pulp writers normally draw out of plotto. Of course it's absurd to complain that one can't sell good science fiction: if the prozines won't buy it, no sane person would deny that it shows up regularly in book form.

Buck Coulson's reviews continue to be about the best fanzine dissections appearing. I note with alarm that his realism is being imitated by several fans who can't do it nearly as well, and criticise for the sake of saying nasty things.

I doubt that I ever read a comic featuring the Spectre, but the review of his activities was pleasant and I shall pounce if I should ever run across a cache of the things at some public auction.

The letter section doesn't inspire too much comment. I can point out that the Max Beerbohm story described by Avram Davidson is "The Happy Hypocrite," which has made at least one paperback appearance to my knowledge.

STEVE STILES

1809 Second Avenue, New York 28, New York

First of all, let me congratulate you on the sheer cleverness of using that cover by ??????; such originality! Such skill! I admired his polished lines, his cool mechanical imitation, his flashy dialog. I wonder who ?????? is. /Someone who breathes smoke and fire. -PL/

The layout used in this issue was the best I've seen yet; I'll bet I've said that in each issue, but it's true, bigod. Bhob is getting more polished in each issue.

The John Berry story was one of his better ones. I must admit that I read illegally though, since I'm not married, and just a Teenager of the World, and maybe not even the.

Lin Carter's book reviews were all liked, mainly since Lin has the same opinions and tastes that I have. His evaluation of Heinlein's "Stranger" is pretty much what I semi-consciously felt. My only disagreement with him is that I think "Double Star" is better than "Citizen of the Galaxy"; but then that's just personal preference, which doesn't count for nuttin' in an argument. While at the Philcon I was reading Brendan Behan's "Borstal Boy", and I was all set to rush up to you with a section in which Behan is referred to as - quote - a stranger in a strange land - unquote.

The Slant Story reveals one of the elements one has to have to become a BNF: sweat, like. I could never, never, never go to all that trouble for a fanzine. There have been moments in which I have thought that I've gone through hell, but it seems that I've only been in purgatory. Willis & Cohorts really descended to the dark depths to publish.

Donald Westlake - whom I've never heard of - produced some of the most substantial and realistic reasons for not writing sf that I've ever seen. His piece also had a tremendous sense of organization about it. I was pleased to see that he covered not only the monetary reasons for not writing it, but artistic ones, too. I was growing a bit sick of the "Well, ya gotta eat!" school of thought. It's a hell of a shame that a field with limitless possibilities for themes is tied down by three or four incapable - and in cases, unimaginative - big-shots. (And by the way, I particularly liked the illo arrangement on page 29) By the way, what story was it that the lead character was patterned after Campbell? /Mr. Westlake, data please?/ I don't believe that readers' lack of reaction is a principle reason for sf's decline; I interpreted the mention of everyone (at an ESFA meeting) remembering an old story, and no one knowing of a story published a month ago, as being proof that today's stories lack "meat". Of course, however, nowadays there is an unreasonable nostalgia for old sf; the Weird Tales piece might have been known solely because it appeared in a rare magazine, and was pubbed in the "good old days". The good old days for me is 1950-1955.

It's tough to be nostalgic at 18.

COLONEL AVRAM DAVIDSON

410 West etc///Day of the First Snowfall /61

Dear Abu-Ken and Um-al-Ken,
Greetings and Genuflections, and a Health unto his* Navel:

Or, as we say in our native Dóric, a gezint ahf zyne pippick. Lo, this is the first time I've seen snow in November in many a year. When I was a boy, and there were wolves in Westchester, snow used frequently to fall in November, my uncle, Dai Beigel, snoring like a porpoise in the parlor after a surfeit of turkey, and frost riming all the window-panes... But I perceive there is a questinn in your mind, I perceive you are perturbed, even conturbed, it does you credit, and I will hasten to answer: Why (you wish to know: and rightly, too), after all my good resolutions of regular work-schedules and no larking around till after finishing that novel with which my name is legally linked to that of Harlan Ellison, and, after having given over a night and a day to the PhillyCon, am I now writing to Xero (ah gezint, etc.) instead of working? Well may you ask. Because, sir, because my collaborator, instead of delivering over to me the MS of Chapter Two, in order that I might continue with Chapter Three, and sic sempre et passim, has vanished off the face of the earth and into a blinding snowstorm. Rumors that he was seen entering an opium den just off of Mott Street, and kept by a Malay of the most evial reputation, will, I trust, prove to be untterly mistaken, and himself the mere victim of a most cruel misconstruction. I am much more disturbed by the fact that, in the year 1879, a Harlan Feibelman walked into a snowstorm in East St. Louis (Mo.) and was never seen again; whenas in 1929, a snowstorm walked into a Harlan Nesselrode in Center Falls (R.I.), and he was never seen again. You will, with your keen mind, have already attained the kernel in the nut, viz: Is someone collecting snowstorms? What has Science to say about all this?

It is, then, to annul the diquiets of my present situation that I turn with relief to the droll cartoonings on the jacket of Xero 7. My compliments to the chefs. As to the identity of the cartoonist, it is obviously William E. Neuman, of SCIENCE FICTIO READER fame, unless, perhaps, it is his brother Alfred.

MAD on the Tragedy of Oedipus Rex: "How's your mom, Oed?"

Which brings us to the question of: "Where Heinlein got it", "it" being the phrase,

*K.B. Lunoff's.

"A stranger in a strange land." It appeared, you say, in the moompitcher, THE THING, based on, I believe, Jno C Campbell's WHO GOES THERE? although, not, you say, in the book itself. "The religious aspects of his /Heinlein's/ novel would point to the Biblical source, but in the light of the appearance of THE THING /i.e. before the book, STRANGER?/ /EI, yes/ the long arm of coincidence seems to be stretching m-i-g-h-t-y long." And you repeat: "Any Campbell-Heinlein-Bible scholars in the house?"

Well, sir (and madame, if the case might be), It is demmed pitiful when a man who is, shall we say, reasonably literate and reasonably educated, is, on the basis of having appositively used a Biblical quotation, accused by implication of having borrowed it from someone else -- Jno Campbell, Chas Lederer, Ben Hecht -- or some source so esoteric only scholarship can determine it. What this means, if we cut the crap, is, "I, Richard Lupoff, am not familiar with the Bible, who am a modern and scientific American; hence, Robert Heinlein, who is also a modern and scientific American, is not familiar with the Bible: hence, if he has appositively used a quotation from the Book of Exodus, copies of which are devilish hard to find, he must have gotten the idea from one of that trio of well-known Biblical Scholars, Campbell, Lederer, and Hecht -- although it is, I suppose, just barely possible that he said to himself, 'I will arise now and write a novel with religious aspects, prior to which I'll have some researchers dig me up a copy of the Book of Exodus.'"

Well, sir, I snum.

Mr. Heinlein has been described in print as "a Methodist", and whilst it is true that adherence to this Persuasion does not by itself guaranty such a application to Scriptural searchings as it would have when the great John Wesley was alive and roaring like a lion, I think it not improbable that Mr. Heinlein may have -- at least -- have attended at a Sunday school where more attention was paid to Texts and less to finger-painting than now be the case; might -- at least -- in the normal course of readings have read that Book which no man can call himself educated or literate without having read. I do not think it necessary, really I don't, to consider that the long arm of coincidence, in this case, stretches mighty -- or, if you prefer, m-i-g-h-t-y long.

Allow me one further prod at your by now doubtless prostrate corpus. MR. ODDITY: SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D., by Charles Norman (Collier, N.Y., '61, 288 pp; 95¢, and most dammably disfigured by a multitude of typoes), contains an Appendix entituled, "Dr. Johnson and A SHROPSHIRE LAD". Mr. C. Norman is bent on proving the influence of Johnson on Housman, and, while he proves his case, it is without such scratchings at his left ear by extending his right arm behind his head as is the following:

> There is another translation from Horace, which Boswell ascribes to Johnson's sixtieth year, beginning
>
> Clouds do no always veil the skies,
> Nor showers immerse the verdant plain --
>
> lines which appear in Housman as
>
> The skies, they are not always raining
> Nor grey the twelvemonth through;
>
> but perhaps /he concedes/ these Horatian echoes are best explained by Housman's and Johnson's common familiarity with the Latin original.

And there was the fellow who happened to hear a rabbi leading the XXIIIrd Psalm and commended him on being broadminded enough to quote from Mary Baker Eddy -- this story, though dreadful, for the fellow was a Jew, is true.

What have we come to?

We have come to p 17, with Andy J. Reiss's droll and clever "Pretty Far/Off Broadway" and "Non/Make Out." I refrain from similarly doting upon Bhob Stewart's "An Attendant Lord at 72nd & Les" because I don't get the reference. If you tell me it's from the Book of Leviticus, I'll shit. /Bhob, who is a modern and scientific American, says that the reference was indeed Biblical; I know not more specificallY than that. PL/

Lin Carter's Notes on Tolkien, part I, theme and form, is scholarly, literary, and informative; it is also well-mapped, and generally layed-out (laid-out? lain...) in the clear and tasteful manner which helps make Xero such a pleasure to read. On p 2 Professor Carter points out (and, I hasten to add, so far as I know, correctly) that "Tolkien's epic occurs upon Middle-Earth...our own Earth at an earlier pre-mythological age, and certain incidents within the architecture of the tale itself /a lovely turn of phrase, a felicitous phrase/ identify it with our world..." Now, I have not yet read the entire Trilogy -- I read THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, and on finishing wished it had been itself a trilogy, that I might have read it more slowly and not felt so overwhelmed with its richness, almost cloyingly so. And after a year's time I read THE HOBBIT, which preceded the Trilogy and paved, so to speak, the way for it.

The references to the town (or Town) of Men in THE HOBBIT, and the illustrations of it by Tolkien himself, would seem to place the story in the period of the Lake Dwellers; and this might perhaps give us a date or dates for it; at least a date for the earliest time it may have perhaps been intended for; I believe that historians now believe that Lake Dwelling lasted much longer than was formerly believed. Not having at hand a modern work of historical reference, I would prefer not to guess. Readers?

And another matter -- the Geography of the Trilogy. Could it, one wonders, (well, I wonder, dammit! Don't come the heavy publisher on me!), be identified in any way with the geography of Europe at the time of the earlier Lake Dwellers? Would someone familiar with English topography care to locate The Shires, and plot the rest from there? Did the English Channel yet exist? Had those large areas of land now submerged beneath the North and Baltic Seas yet sunk? Or does the direction of the Quest lead elsewhere. Surely with some laborious effort it can be calculated how fast the questors would have moved, approximately, making allowances for their having shorter legs (at those times they went afoot -- no, confound it, I know their legs were just as short when they rode pony-back: pedant, picker of nits, publisher), and so attempt to lay out their journeyings and the whole Topography of Middle Earth -- that part of it -- and see how it compares with Ancient and Modern Geography -- if, indeed, it does at all.

The tak is not one for me. I commend it to Professor Carter, or Ted Johnstone. I shall await with pleasures the results of their toils. On p 24, line 6, I venture to suggest that "Eddison" is a foofle for "Tolkien." Yes? /Lin?/

The Slant Story is doubtless invaluable to historians of our genre (you got that sly "our" didn't you? "Neofan Avram Davidson," that's me in your very own words), but as Willis, and not as history, it is not vintage Willis. Fit-ty. (And you should choke on your very own words; "Neofan" indeed; do you know I'm a card-carrying member of First Fandom (dues unpaid)? With probably the longest gafiation on record, 1955, I think, 1961; cheest...)

Buck -- Coul -- son -- in -- the -- Twen -- ti -- eth -- CENT-u-ry!!!complains that the readers of PARSECTION "aren't volunteering indormation; they're being prodded in order to produce reactions." Well, Buck, after all, would you volunteer indormation? My dictionary (Bulwinckle's Post-Collegiate) defines it as:

> 1. The state of wakefulness; neither sleeping, hibernation, nor estivation. 1. Archaic. A foundation for travellers; a lodging-pace; hostel. 3. Nautical. Warping the weft on a binnacle-boom. 4. Law. Occupation of the same bed by man and wife for three or more

hours between curfew anc cock-crow, wherebye, failing evidence to the contrary, uccage, soc-cage, and livery of seizin, be supposed to have occurred consumately (Obs.)

Which one you have in mind, Coulson?

All in Jolor, etc., I'll say no more on't, save that in proportion to Xero as a whole, this sort of nostalgic padimuluctuating seems to be steadily, and satisfactorily, shrinking.

I now come to a matter which has caused me a semi-sleepless afternenn, vide-licit Steve Stiles' vertical cartoonstrip by name LIN CARTER'S FANTASTIC BUNNY RABBIT (it will never catch on with the syndicates, Lin & Steve): Why are rabbits called "BunnY? Bulwinckle says of this only, "A pet or familiar name for rabbits, conies, or squir-rels." That's a big help. If anyone can tell me why rabbits are called "Bunny" I'll tell him why cats are called "Pussy."

And because Walt (Himself) Willis called me "a perpetual joy" -- right here -- here -- where are your eyes? -- p.49, line 5, not counting his name & address -- so I'm donating my two Arkham editions of utterly depraved Lovecraft to the WW Auction Fund. Dustwrappers; not in mint condition, address your bids to Larry Shaw while the supply-lasts. OUTSIDER and BEYOND THE WALLS OF SLEEP.

Guy Terwilliger, out there in Boise, Idaho wists (that's wharrit says) all the more that he had the courage to open a paperback bookshop in Boise. Guy, come closer so that I won't have to talk so loud, and I'll tell you my sadsad story. Many years ago I had a brilliant idea: having read the Bemelmans story of the restaurant which served only cutlets, but from all kinds cutlets, I had the bril. idea to open a bookshop which would sell only paperbacks books. And for my locale I had in mind San Francisco, notoriously bookstore-prone, or Intellectual Berkeley-by-the-Bay, seat of U of C. So I wrote to my friend Stan Anger, who lived in IB.b.t.B., asking him to look around & tell me what he thought, & offering a partnership. Stan looked around. He looked around steadily. He looked around thoroughly, And finally he wrote that such a bookstore had no chance, no chance at all, and certainly none in the SF Bay Area...

You still with me, Guy? Well, so I stayed put, and opened not, because Stan was a keen observer of the economic scene and a great reader of reports to consumers and he knew how many threads per sq inch and what it meant that carloadings were up on the Union Pacific, etc. And so, three or maybe four months later, a cat named Law-rence Ferlinghetti, who probably doesn't know a carloading from a condom, opened, in San Francisco, the City Lights Bookshop, first all-paperback bookshop in the gah-amn world; and then he opened another, and then...

And so that's how I excaped being the Millionaire Paperback Bookshop King, Guy, and if you want to open, so open.

On the top of these sad recollections, Ethel Lindsay calls me a hoot. I hope this is good.

And when I say I'd like the Original Bhob Stewart cartoon of me, I mean the ORIGINAL; that's what I said, diddle I? I don't care if it was drawn on the back of a Lydia E. Pinkham label: I want it. So quit wiggling and wriggling and fork over. /So be it. I dont wan't to upset you worse. PL/

Peter Schug protests that his poem, MESOPOTAMIA "HAS SO got a rhyme." Well, you know, he's right, it has. A rhyme. One (count it) one rhyme

screams a mimi yelling maybes
snark will bite her give her rabies

After all, plum pudding hasn't even got one plum, so what am I complaining about? Anyway, rhyme or not, more, P. Schug?

My network of agents has just reported that Harlan Ellison did not, after all, remain in the opium den of evial reputation just off of Mott Street; he was only buying a bag of lichi nuts which they deal in, wholesale, there, opium denning not being what it used to be. Where did he go after that, instead of here with the MS? Why, to a milk-bar in the upper west 40s, where he consummated a deal for the sale of a collection o his science fiction stories to Gold Medal Books (you listening, Don Westlake?), an outfit which wouldn't buy a collection of my science fiction stories if I threw in both the Windward and Leeward Islands for lagniappe. Listen, so long as my collaborator's happy? Huh? You know what I mean? Maybe now we can finish our contraced novel.

What, Don? Er...uh...no. It's not science fiction.

James Blish refers to "the way British magazines do when" they want to close a correspondence that's been going on too long. They do it like this:

"This correspondence must now cease."

/And speaking of correspondence which must cease, Colonel, Sir, and of James Blish... we have before us a cutting and apt letter from Mr. Blish's arch-rival in the Matter of Mr. Amis. Reluctant as I have been to cut off the Blish-Kyle exchange for fear of permitting either party an unfairly advantageous last word, I think that that correspondence must cease. If neither party objects too violently.... PL/

(Box 1487, Rochester 3, New York)

Enjoyed Lin Carter's discourse on epic fantasy very much. I am awaiting his further literary adventures into Middle Earth with much interest.

I have a minor objection to Mr. Carter's treating the Eddison fantasy-epics as a tetralogy. THE MEZENTIAN GATE, A FISH DINNER AR MEMISON, and MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES (the internal chronology is in that sequence) relate some seventy-five years in the history of the world of Zimiamvia. The events pictured here have no direct connection with those that take place in the World of the Worm in THE WORM OUROBOROS. I would suggest that the first three books form a trilogy and that the WORM is a single-volume epic-fantasy separate from the other. There are a few points where the World of the Worm is equated with Zimiamvia but this seems as unreal as the equation with the planet Mercury. Finally, Eddison himself refers to the first three volumes as his Zimiamvian trilogy in the Letter of Introduction included in THE MEZENTIAN GATE.

Mr. Westlake's "Don't Call Us..." seems a little bit too vindictive. Granted that his comments on the financial rewards of sf writing are all too true, but why does he have to be so bitter? He's not the only writer who thought the editor was a complete idiot for spoiling the writer's masterpiece. To end all this I'll mention that de Camp, far from "not doing much of anything", is writing some excellent historical novels and has somehow managed to leave the sf writing field without feeling personally insulted by it.

/De Camp documents your note, George, back in the "lit'ry disc's" section, a sort of special one-shot letter-excerpt department in this issue.

/As for Westlake's choice of method in handing in his resignation as a stf writer, it was of unquestionable courage but highly questionable prudence, but that is his own business. However, rumour hath it that a number of Odd Occurrences followed the publication of "Don't Call Us/We'll Call You". Dick and I hope to get a report on them for Xero 9, but don't count on it. Have you seen Westlake's new detective novel, 361, by the way? -PL/

JACK CHALKER
5111 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore 7, Maryland

Although I have reveived Xero Comics, this was the first Xero Itself that I had seen, and I'm going to do something that I almost never do -- write a letter of comment.

Cover: Most absurd guess? Dave Prosser. /Pretty absurd, Jack, but the Xero Prize (a dog-eared copy of Flying Saucers Magazine) goes to Steve Stiles who guessed Steve Stiles as the mystery artist. The mystery artist was Steve Stiles, who is about as absurd as you can get, and so.... -PL/

Books: Glad to see Lin Carter coming out with our minority who liked "Stranger in a Strange Land". I did, and I was surprised at the reaction of most fans. I thought that the novel was better in its later stages than at first, and Harshaw the truly enjoyable character of the book. Perhaps we are just too damn psi-weary? On 6xH, however, Lin and I differ. I will admit that, should a collection of Heinlein's worst tales be published, "Jerry is a Man" should head it up. However, that tale was not in 6xH, and, by and large, that collection was very entertaining. Admittedly, it was no philosophical or earth-shaking book, but it was Heinlein writing just for fun -- pure, entertainment. "Our Fair City" remains a minor classic of Heinleinesque humor. "They" is one of the finest psychological horror tales ever written. "Hoag" is an enjoyable, although not extremely important, fantasy. "And He Built a Crooked House" remains, in my mind, a very humorous and enjoyable tour de force, an exercise in mathematical foolery which is all too seldom seen. /Have you seen "Fantasia Mathematica? -PL/ On the other hand, I would agree that "The Man Who Travel[illegible] in Elephants" should go into that "worst" collection. Note, however, that "All You Zombies" is a simple re-hash of the theme Heinlein did so well before in the more humorous and entertaining "By His Bootstraps", and is, for the most part, trite and pointless -- a writer letting off a little free and otherwise unusable imagination. If it hadn't had Heinlein's name on it it would have been rejected. Particularly, say, with my byline or yours.

Notes on Tolkien: Unfortunately, I have never read any of Tolkien's works, due mainly to their price tag of $5 per volume (I never pay that much for anything unless it is worth ten times the price, which the new reprints aren't), and so it was of only casual interest to me. /Come on, no excuses. Try the library. Course, I have Tolkien staring me in the face and (blush) I've never read any of it either. -PL/

Slant Story: What ever happened to those kind of fanzines? Shed a tear.

Don't Call Us / We'll Call You: Well, at last somebody's come out and said it. It's all true, of course, /Is it?/ that's almost universal knowledge. I'm glad to see it finally down in print with all its horror and tragedy -- WHY AN ENTIRE FIELD OF LITERATURE IS ROTTEN LOUSY, by Donald E. Westlake. Listen -- I liked Jack Vance, Bob Bloch (curiously not mentioned among the escapees although he's a prime example) and all the others. It hurts when you remember that each one has had old SF kick him in the teeth. Point: Couldn't Westlake be sued for libel for some of his remarks? Particularly by Campbell? Yes, I know he didn't say an untrue thing in the entire article and every one of your readers knows it -- but does Campbell? Do any of them?

/Wow, I hope nobody gets a notion to sue Westlake, because as his publishers we are co-responsible. However, if it came to that, the defense would probably be more safely based on Fair-Comment-and-Criticism rather than Truth.

/I mean, Westlake could hardly prove that Cele Goldsmith is a misplaced schoolmarm, but when one enters the public prints as by becoming a magazine editor, one opens to more comments than does, for instance, a book-keeper or a housefrau. -PL/

ETHEL LINDSAY

Courage House 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England

I sent off the political poll airmail earlier, we are in the throes of a work-to-rule in the Post Office at the moment, so don't be surprised if things take longer than usual to come to you. It speaks volumes for the kind of work rules our PO has -- that when they are adhered to, mail piles up by the ton load and they have to stop accepting parcels and periodicals! Will look forward to the result of the Poll, if you are right in thinking that there is more "Right" in fandom than is apparent, it will be very interesting to find out why they keep so quiet. For some time now I have found myself taking an interest in American politics and trying to understand the workings of your political system. Once one has grasped the fact that your "Left" is about equal with out "Right" things fall into place more easily. I vote for a political party because there is no other alternative, but I do wish mankind would think up one. On the whole I am not drawn to the politician as a species, he seems to be the type who is prepared to make too many compromises with his principles. The jockeying for power, too, is never a pretty sight.

I enjoyed all the contents in this issue, particularly the notes on Tolkien, not that I am a fan but this gave such a good write-up of the fantasy field, and related him to it so well, that I think I may try again with him.

Willis is as always superb. I too have had some experience of the heartbreaks involved with a printed zine, and I always was amazed at the patience the Slant crew must have had. When I was a member of the Glasgow club we ran one issue of a printed zine called Haemogoblin. I set up one line of type and then retired and left it to a more patient guy. I well remember the night the club gathered to collate the zine! The cover and two of the interior pages had very black illos - lacking experience we did not realise how fraught with difficulties this could be. Alan (the printer) brought along the sheets and to our convulsed mirth we discovered that he had laid a sheet of toilet paper over each dark illo. Nothing daunted we sent them off but the inky stained fingers at the receiving end must have cursed us some!

Was fascinated by the glimpses into Analog's editorial office revealed by Don Westlake. On this article I would say no one could possibly blame him for not writing SF, in fact it's a wonder anyone does!

I am running out of adjectives to describe my admiration of the way Buck Coulson conducts his fanzine review columns. One of the things I cannot understand is how he manages to do so many at the same time as doing them so well. After all he produces a monthly fanzine too. To say nothing of the number of letter he must write. I wonder if he ever goes to sleep!

I see Walt has decided he must tell you that strictly speaking the last cover is not very like him. Mind you, there was a resemblance, mostly about the eyes. If asked, I would say...he is quite good-looking. Is there any fan who is really handsome, I wonder? The British ones are fairly ordinary in their looks, Norman Shorrock being the one who comes closest to the classic mold. Most American fans seem to wear glasses, due no doubt to poring over sf and kindred material. But a truly handsome fan...have we such a one? A really handsome man is a bit of a shock, I wonder why they are so rare. I don't mean merely good-looking but hands me in the style of Robert Taylor when he was young. I don't think there are fewer handsome men than there are beautiful women due to the amount of care a woman will spend on her looks. A really beautiful woman usually does not have to bother, unless she is vain of course.

/What do you mean, no handsome fans? Why there's -- ow! -- there's, er, well -- no! -- youch! yow! -- my own husband. Okay, now will you stop twisting my arm, Dick? PL/

JOHN BAXTER
P.O. Box 39, King Street Post Office, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Many thanks for Xero 7. I sent off a couple of my zines this morning as a trade, but comparing them with your latest effort I wish it were possible to get them back from the P.O. Fair shames me to see you people putting out such nicely-reproduced, excellently-written stuff. /Uh - blush! -PL/

I've enclosed the political poll sheet you issued with the zine. As you point out, foreigners are hardly qualified to comment on American political issues, especially those of a domestic nature, but it's possible you might be interested to hear what sort of ideas are generally held by people out here in the boondocks. Certainly, Australians are interested in the big American political matters. When the last election was on, the US Information Service was swamped with calls for progressive figures, and one of the stores which had a score-board in itd window was packed out for two days. Ironically enough, interest in the issues at the last Australian federal election was so low that over 10% of votes cast were informal, i.e., wrongly filled out, or not completed at all.

About the poll...I liked Eisenhower in the 56 poll because he seemed to have done a good job in the preceding years, and there was no indication that he would fail to do so in another term. Of course when his administration fell apart in 59 and 60, it became obvious that another, preferably younger man was needed, and Kennedy had the sort of self-confidence that the job seemed to require at that time. It now seems that, underneath all that boisterousness, there is damn-all in the way of statesmanship or original creative thinking, but maybe I am judging the man too soon.

From over here, the foreign policy issues are perhaps a little clearer, because we are not involved as much in the consequences of any decisions that may be made. I don't think that any person in the US, no matter how objective he may be, can help thinking of a political crisis in terms of "What will happen to me?". To you, Berlin means bomb shelters - to us, relatively safe from the direct results of Atomic war, it's a news story, nothing more. I think, in general, the American foreign policy is too short-sighted and too blunt. The administration seems unable to think past the present crisis, and all over the world "brush fires" are springing up which are allowed to build up past all safety limits before anything is done about them. The Latin states are a good example - first it was Cuba, then Brazil, and now there is trouble in Peru and Colombia. Aside from the relatively useless American States organization, there's nothing there to control disturbances of this sort. A little extrapolation on the part of the Pentagon brains might do a lot of good.

I also think the Kennedy government is too anxious to stand up for its "rights". This stand on Berlin, for instance, is far too dogmatic. It has only managed to anger the Russians, and in a world like this, whete it only takes a spark to set everything off, that's courting danger. No doubt the US thinks it can draw a line and dare Russia to step across it, but this is a trick which only works with bullies who, basically, are afraid of the person they're threatening. I don't think the Russians are afraid of the West. As Heinlein pointed out in his SeaCon speech, they are normal intelligent people, just like us, dedicated to their particular ideals and as ready to fight for them as we are to fight for ours. And they have weapons which are as good as those of the West, if not better. I think trying to threaten this kind of country is foolhardiness and nothing less.

The biggest beef I have with American foreign policy is that it is taking too much upon itself. Those making the decisions over there don't seem to realise that if they go into the soup, then every other "Western" country in the world go in too. If the Russians attack and conquer the United States, then England, Europe, Scandanavia and Australia too will be fair game for them. I didn't vote for Kennedy, and I don't

support many of his actions - why then am I supposed to take the punishment if he makes a wrong moves? I think it's about time Kennedy started thinking in terms of the whole world rather than his own national pride.

I didn't fancy the Berry very much, but the following two items - that book column and "Notes on Tolkien" - were magnificent. Your rediscovery of Lin Carter (by his absence from fmz since the demise of Inside, I assume he was lost) /Wasn't lost--he was hiding -PL/ and your foresightedness in persuading him to write for you are undoubtedly two of the year's biggest milestones. Carter is a scholar, perhaps the only at present apparent in the fanpubbing field (Harry Warner is a marginal contender for the title, but in fandom rather than sf). His work shows a deep knowledge of the genre in which he has specialized, and the way he uses that knowledge shows that, in addition to an encycloperic memory, he has great intelligence and perception. He writes in an extremely literate style, never tedious nor yet oversimple. He has humour, a rare commodity among sercon fans. In short, he's a bloody treasure, and you two are the luckiest faneds in the world for having him on the contents page of Xero.

/You know what you've done, Baxter? Carter is already among the most highly-paid of our staff writers, and now he'll swell bloody treasure headed want another raise, and we'll have to give him another ten per cent or lose him to some higher-paying market like "Logic at Work" and I hope you're satisfied. -PL/

Westlake's piece is just like AH, SWEET IDIOCY warmed over, although hardly as well written. It's so reminiscent of the old days of fandom, when no gafiate felt he had actually departed until he had alienated everybody on his mailing list. Remember.... .."and in conclusion, I'd like to say to all organised fandom, 'I hate your guts!'." (That's an actual quote, though I don't recall who wrote it). It seems that the pro field, or at least that part inhabited by Westlake, is getting equally petty, now that things are not as rosy as they were.

I just don't trust items like "Don't Call Us, We'll Call You". There's no objectivity to them, just a lot of angry epithets and character smearing which I find very dis - tasteful, not to mention highly suspect. I have no illusions about John Campbell's ability as an editor (which is tenuous to say the least) but this is the first occasion on which I've seen him described as an "egomaniac", and until I've heard a few other qualified persons level this charge, I'll reserve judgement. Mills may be "incompetent", but again, I don't think much of Westlake's ability to gauge character, so no comment. Ditto Goldsmith and Pohl.

BOB LEMAN
257 Santa Fe Drive, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

As the new owner of a duplicating machine, I am most tremendously impressed by page 29, here. How did you get the solid black? I ask as one who seriously seeks instruction. In my last issue I essayed the duplication of a few simple illustrations, with, as you may remember, results that were most horrid. The machine itself is, I think, capable of duplicating well anything that's fed into it. I want to learn what to feed in.

/Those ATomillos on page 29, last issue, were stenafaxed, like all our ATomillos. The electronic stencilling technique not only spares the artist from the uncertainties of the stenciller's stylus, it also permits use of solids and/or shading techniques impossible with conventional equipment.

/The purple bem on page 46 thish was a full-color ATom drawing (suitable for framing, which it will be). Bhob suggested that we have it 'faxed just to see what would happen; Chris Steinbrunner had it done for us, and -- lo! -- the machine did a tone conversion of the original colors! -PL/

Lin Carter, from whom we've heard all too little for a long time, is very fine in the reviews. He does a first-rate capsule on "Stranger in a Strange Land", and also on "Three Hearts and Three Lions". Of course, my enthusiasm may simply be due to the fact that I agree with him. /I don't -- with regard to "Stranger", which I thought one of Heinlein's weakest. But I agree that he reviews well even when I do not see eye to eye regarding a particular book. -PL/

He's interesting, too, on Tolkien, although the first half of the article has echoes of a term paper for English 12 b. Lin points out, quite correctly, the useful technical device of beginning the action of a dream-world tale in familiar surroundings, so as to lead the reader step by step into the fantasy land. I wish he'd gone into this a little further. In the Titus Groan books, for instance, there is nothing of this kind done, and surely Gormenghast is as real a fantasy-world as anybody's created in the past century. On the other hand, Eddison starts "The Worm Ouroboros" in an English country house, with an Englishman as his chief character, and though some jiggery-pokery involving a bird gets his Englishman to "Mercury", where he sees the inception of the novel proper. That's the last we hear of the Englishman or the bird. For at least the first half of the book this reader, at least, kept waiting for the Englishman to turn up and get into the action. He never did. He had, as a matter of fact, no reason for being in the novel at all. He is a serious flaw in the book (which, it seems to me, has already about as many flaws as the average reader cares to put up with) and constitutes a pretty good argument for skipping the mundane introduction. Lin is something of a scholar in these matters, and I'd be glad to see his views on this. In any case, don't mistake this sidetrack for an objection to the article. It was fascinating, and should send the Tolkien fanatics into ecstasies.

/[illegible] it.

Bob, see what you have done? Up goes Carter's pay another ten per cent. Grrr! -PL/

JAMES MORIARTY

c/o Richard Kyle, 95 West Gilman Street, Banning, California

Well, I used a writing plate, all right. The trouble was, I didn't use it right. I wasn't able to get into Riverdale, so I went down to the local stationery store for the writing plate and stencils and styluses (or styli if you are of Latin extraction) and mimeoscope (whatever that was). The store had recently changed hands.

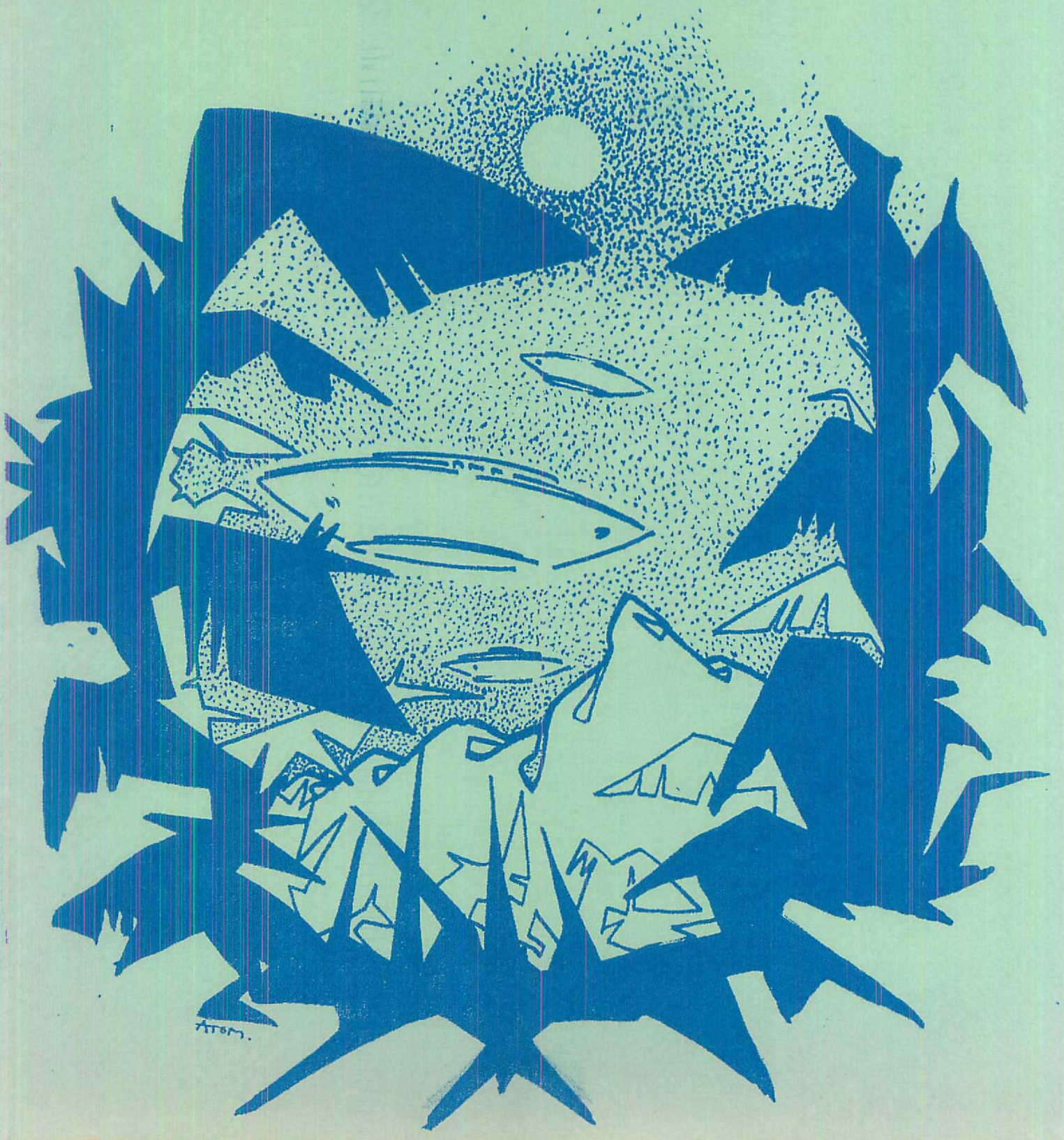
"Writing plate ... ... plate?" said the woman behind the counter, nodding and smiling to a customer on my right who would not come in until the next day. "Oh ... ... writing plate ... ... Mimeograph? I don't know much about ... ... mimeograph machines. I've only worked with Hectograms and Multilicks. Huh ... ... here we are ... ... writing plate. To bad the instructions ... ... are ... ... torn off. It's ... ... the only one I ... ... have. 'Fraid I don't know how you use it, I'm sorry. Don't ... ... you ... ... write on it, and then put it on the mimeograph ... ... drum? Oh, yes, that's the ... ... stencils. I've only worked with Hectograms and Multilicks. Order one with the instructions? Yes ... ... we could, surely. Let's see, this is ... ... Tuesday ... ... and he'll ... ... be in Thursday so we could have it next Monday unless he forgets in which case it'll be ... ... the ... ... third Wednesday after the second Friday of the first day ... ... You'll take it? But it doesn't have instructions. We'll be happy to order ... ... one with ... ... You'll take it? Now stencils! No, these are styluses ... ... uh, styli ... ... Styli! Here we are. We have only the very fine ball point and then these with the little hooks on the end, and I don't know what they're ... ... for ... ..."

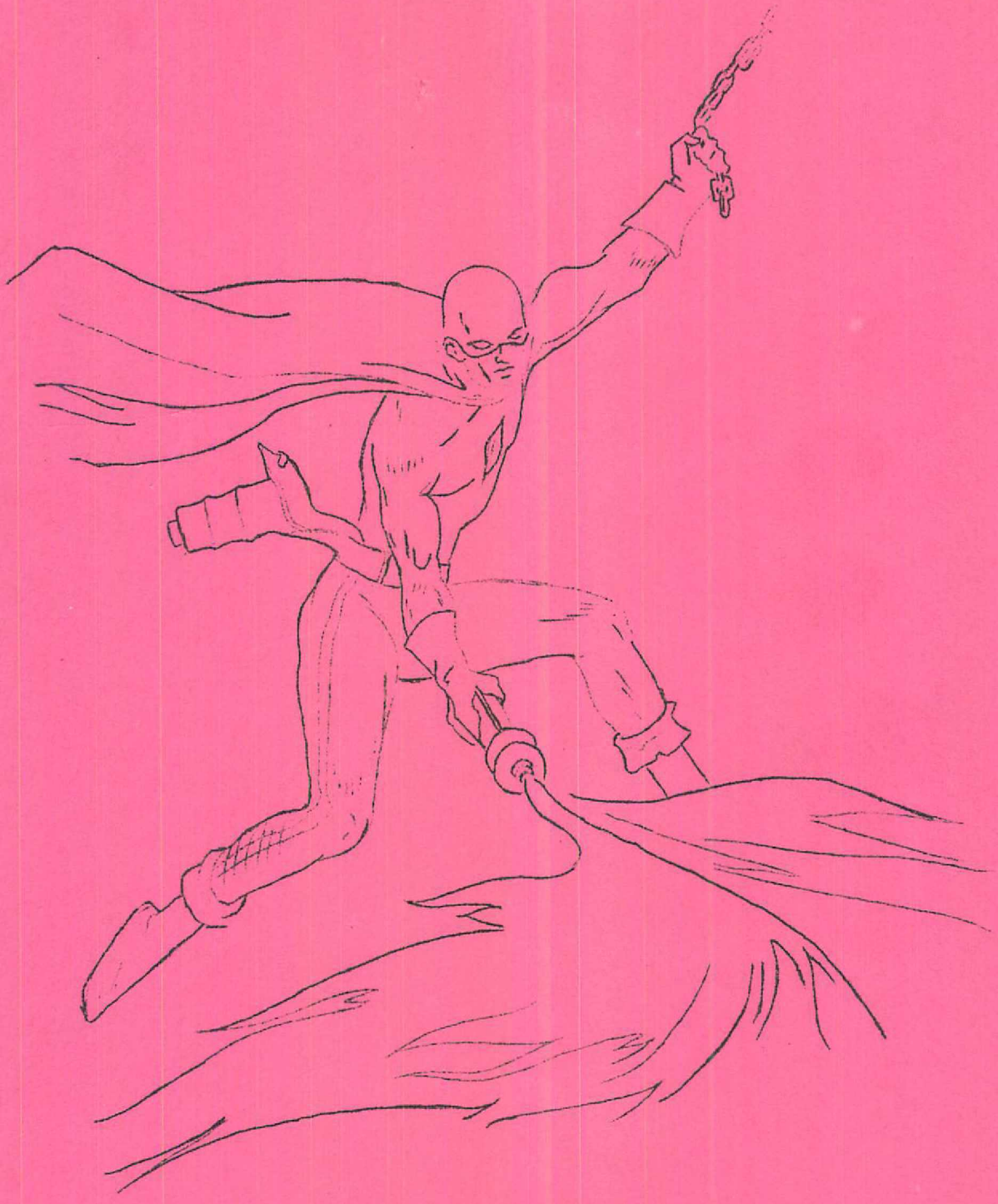
The rest of the conversation was similar, but it seems unnecessary to repeat it. I took my instructionless writing plate and my stencils and my very fine ball point styluses home, put a table lamp under the glass top kitchen table (a catalog at the shop had given me an idea of what a mimeoscope was) and set to work experimenting with my ammeter. The writing plate. I finally decided that its sole purpose was to provide "tooth" for the

stencil, but since some of the gunk from the stencil came off on it when I drew directly over it, I figured it should go <u>under</u> the drawing I was copying. (It didn't seem right that the writing plate should get all that wxy gunk all over it.) I tried the idea out with a piece of carbon paper instead of a stencil and it seemed to work fine; it gave a much clearer line than it did without the writing plate. So then I drew up all the drawings that way. After I surveyed the unhappy results....

/...you redrew the worst ones,/ and came up with a darned creditable set of illos for Kyle's article. Next time....PL/

/See you all in Xero 9; write but don't expect to see the next issue until September or so. Oh, we're busybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusybusy./





Xerox Comics 8

NUMBER EIGHT IN THE SERIES 'ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME'

by Richard Kyle

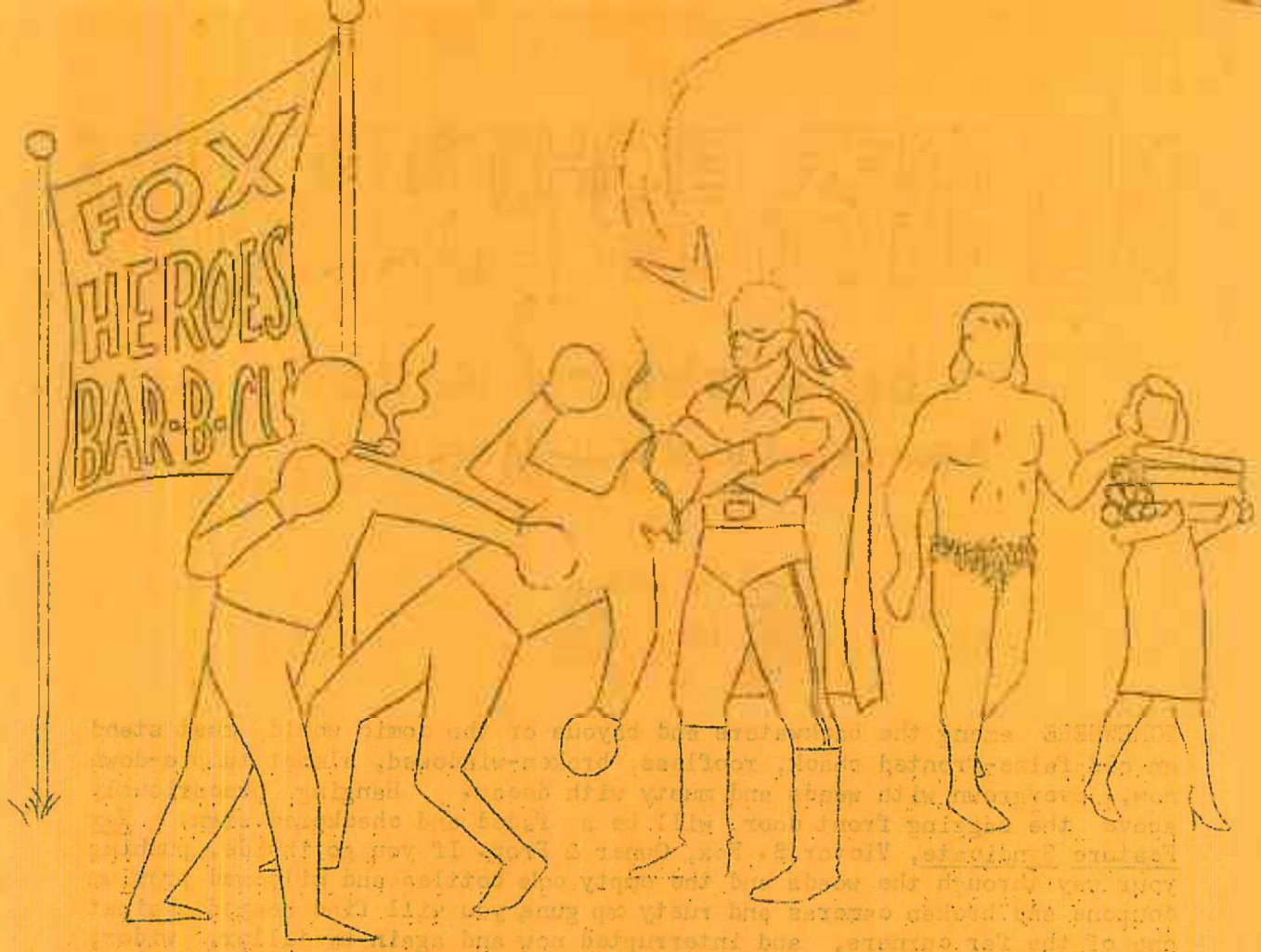
drawings highjacked by Jim MORIARTY

SOMEWHERE among the backwaters and bayous of the comic world must stand an old false-fronted shack, roofless, broken-windowed, almost tumble-down now, overgrown with weeds and musty with decay. Hanging precariously above the sagging front door will be a faded and checkered sign: Fox Feature Syndicate, Victor S. Fox, Owner & Prop. If you go inside, pushing your way through the weeds and the empty cola bottles and mildewed premium coupons and broken cameras and rusty cap guns, you will find heaped against one of the far corners, and interrupted now and again by taller, wider, Esquire-sized magazines, a ragged stack of old comic books --- none of them well preserved, not even the newest issues. In fact, if you thumb through them, you'll notice a peculiarity of the climate here. Only the older magazines are in passable condition; the newer ones are the ones that smell of decay.

By now, you'll probably have seen enough to satisfy you. You'll edge your way back to the door and --- watching the sign doesn't drop on you --- you'll shake your cuffs out and then you'll go on your way.

You shouldn't. You should stay a while. Something important happened here ...

... the education of Victor Fox



Who's who at the bar-b-cue: With Green Mask looking on, "News" Blake (with pipe) and "News" Doakes (with cigarette) decide who'll be the Mask's aide. Pipesmoking Blake clearly has the inside track. In the background, Samson and Joan Mason, Blue Beetle's girl friend, return from a firewood hunting expedition. While Blue Beetle jealously awaits Joan, Domino (clutching a bottle of pop from a case he's just filched at a deserted soft drink stand nearby), the Green Mask's boy assistant, miffed because the Beetle has been upstaging them in Mystery Men Comics, tries to conk him on the head with his boomerang. As usual, it goes astray, and Green Mask is going to get it in

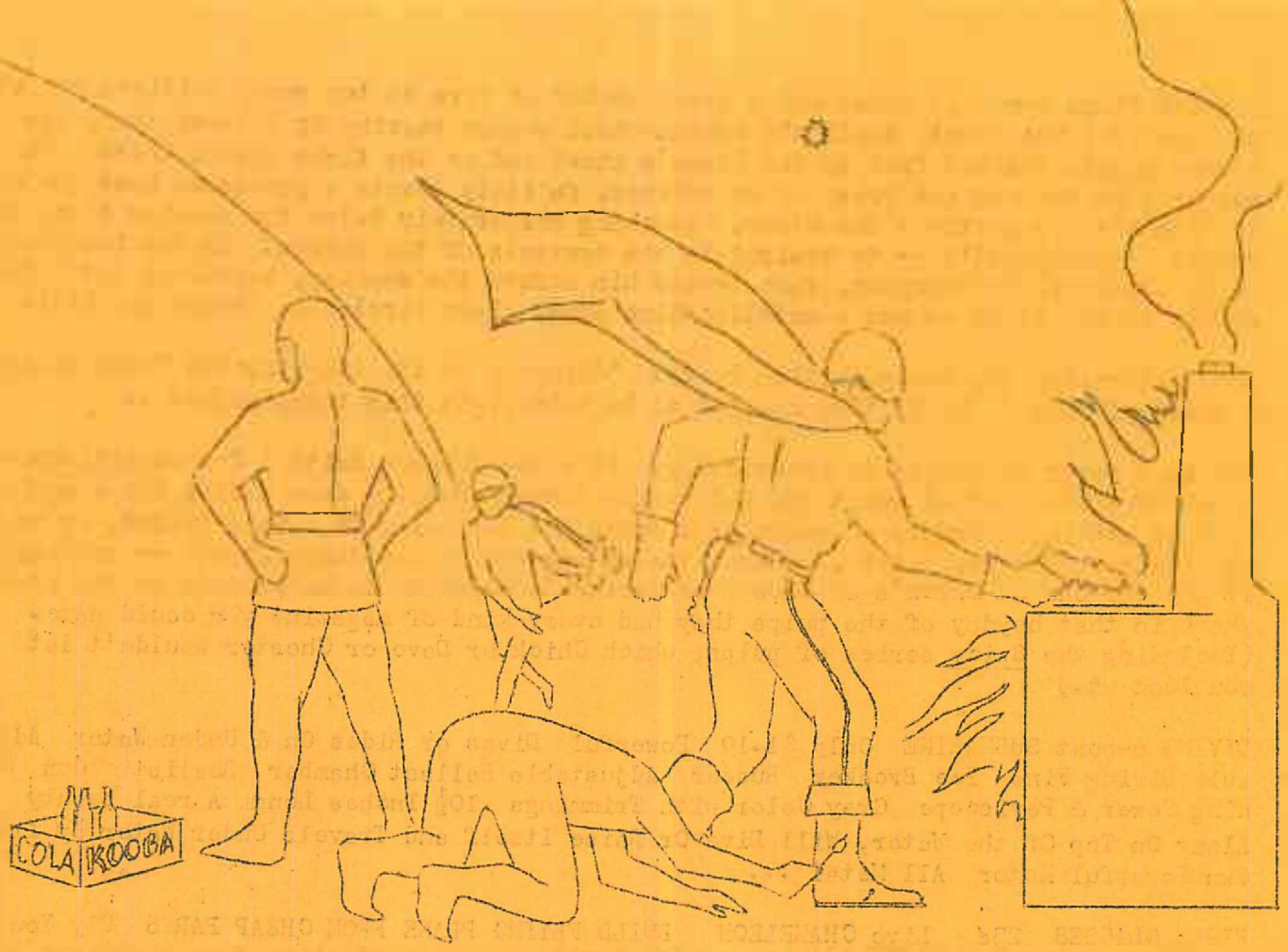
* * *

I

In April 1939, just a few days short of one full year after Superman had picked up his first automobile, Fox Publications, Inc. issued Wonder Comics, the pilot model of the Fox chain, shortly to become Wonderworld. By the end of 1941 Victor Fox was publishing a string of nine comic books, had placed one of his heroes on radio coast to coast, was competing monthly with Esquire in a men's magazine featuring such writers as Jerome Weidman, Chester B. Himes, and Irving Wallace, and was energetically promoting a "new thrill" soft drink containing vitamin B_1.

Offhand, you'd say Victor S. Fox was a success.

Wonderworld certainly was, anyhow. At a time when most comic book art was cartoonish Wonderworld's feature, the Flame, was rendered with a skill and style that has seldom been surpassed --- maybe it never has. And mixed in with the usual hack work of the period were such strips as "Yarko, the Great --- Master of Magic," "Spark Stevens -- of the Navy," and "Dr. Fung -- Master Sleuth of the Orient," all substantial secondary features.



the neck again. At the barbecue, the Flame, his Flame Gun set on full automatic, is attempting with little success to get the charcoal burning. Meantime, Rex Dexter of Mars, tempted beyond human endurance, prepares to give the Flame a hotfoot. That bright star shining above the Flame heralds Stardust the Super Wizard, who is travelling as usual on highly accelerated light waves. Stardust is in a quandry. He has perceived Dexter's dastardly intent but he left his Hotfoot Extinguishing Ray at home, and his all-purpose Fire Extinguishing Ray would put out the barbecue, as well. Decisions. What's for barbecue? Fox, of course ...

* * *

None of them were great characters, and only the Flame was a memorable one --- but the other day, when I came upon them after an absence of more than twenty years, I recalled each one with a fidelity that nostalgia alone cannot evoke. A world that is gone came back to me.

It was the eleventh issue, March 1940 ... The cover, of course, was by the illustrator of "The Flame." His name was given as Basil Berold, and because it is a curious name, it may have been his real one. (Most of the pseudonymously drawn Fox strips were signed by good old American-sounding names, no matter what the artists really called themselves. Floyd Kelly, Charles Nicholas, and Arthur Dean were, at one time or another, actually George Tuska, Larry Antonette, and S. R. Powell.) As usual, the cover was marvelously complex and beautifully rendered.

In the upper-left, the Flame, clad in his skin-tight yellow uniform and the distinctive red mask that fitted snugly over his eyes and head, his red, calf-length boots striding in the air, his red cape billowing behind him, dangles by one gauntleted hand from a chain thrown over the side of his speeding airplane as it roars through the logotype. In his free right hand, drawn from its red, cylindrical holster, is the

massive Flame Gun. It spews out a great comber of fire at two enemy soldiers and at the fanciful but grimly realistic cannon-sized weapon rearing up between them, its stubby muzzle trained full on the Flame's chest and on the flame symbol there. One of the men, in the cap and brass of an officer, futilely levels a ponderous hand gun on the Flame's mid-section; the other, crouching desperately below the searing fire, attempts -- frantically -- to manipulate the controls of the weapon. In the background, other soldiers, infantrymen, race toward him across the smoking, barbwired battlefield, rifles at the ready -- and a metallic-blue enemy plane circles in toward the kill.

And, naturally, the cover caption reads: "Clinging to the wing-tip the Flame unleases a blast of fire." Well, they managed to be half-right this time, anyhow ...

The back cover is almost as interesting. It's the Johnson Smith & Co. advertisement. A lot of times that ad meant the difference between putting down a dime for a comic book or waiting a couple of weeks or a month and borrowing it from a friend, or -- if he hadn't bought it, either, because the ad was old or not there at all -- trading for it two for one at Chick's or Dave's or Chester's Magazine Exchange down on the avenue, where in that heyday of the pulps they had every kind of magazine you could name. (Including the Spicy series of pulps, which Chick or Dave or Chester wouldn't let you look at.)

DIVING u-boat SUBMARINE Only $1.19 Powerful Dives or Rides On & Under Water Adjustable Diving Fins Ice Breaker Rudder Adjustable Ballast Chamber Realistic Gun Conning Tower & Periscope Grey Color with Trimmings 10½ Inches Long A real beauty Zips Along On Top Of the Water, Will Dive Or Raise Itself and Travels Under Water By Its Own Powerful Motor All Metal ...

FIELD GLASSES 25¢ Live CHAMELEON BUILD FLYING PLANE FROM CHEAP PARTS Fly Your Own Plane! Book of plans telling how to build a low priced plane from junk yard parts. 10 lesson Flying Course Ground School. Price 25¢.

Johnson Smith & Co. would sell you anything your childish mind could conceive of. And in the very small print some things it couldn't. DANCE HALL TO WHITE SLAVERY Thousands of white girls are trapped into white slavery every year. Explains in vivid detail true stories of devilish schemes to lure innocent young girls. Price 25¢ LIVES OF HOTCHA CHORUS GIRLS 10¢ Yes, the Johnson Smith & Co. advertisement was always in the back of your head when you plunked down your dime. A new ad must have been looked forward to eagerly by every publisher in the business ...

The inside front cover listed the winners of a recent contest -- the early Fox comics had contests at the drop of a beany -- and Norma Richerson, Box 86, Hardesty, Oklahoma was the first prize winner. Across from this announcement was the first page of "The Flame"...

*****

The Flame's splash panel, embellished with a medium-sized "The" in script and a huge "Flame" in a vaguely Eastern style of lettering, a noncommital "by" and an Old English "Basil Berold" -- as well as a minor forest fire of flames and a bust drawing of the Flame himself -- contains the legend:

"Greedy for power and territory, King Rodend, ruler
of the tiny Balkan country of Kalnar, sends his forces
against the peaceful kingdom of Dorna, an act that
threatens to throw the entire world into war ..."

And then the story begins. It is not the usual Flame story of giant metal man-carrying spiders attacking New York and climbing through the city as though it were a collection of twigs, or of an invasion of super-tanks capable of boring their way through any obstruction; this one tells of his origin as well -- and even the eight-panel page of the time (today's six panel page was not yet standard) allows little elbow room for the usual dramatic complications. I'm going to tell it to you, however, for it could serve as a virtual template for the early Fox comics. And what fascinated us, in another time, should always interest us, now.

At intelligence headquarters in the capital of Dorna two uniformed figures pace the floor: an elderly, white-burnsided man, tall and erect; a young and beautiful blonde girl. Wearily, the man turns to his companion. "I'm afraid, Maria, that our forces haven't a chance."

"Why? Because of Rodend's fire cannons?"

"Exactly! Nothing can stop them! Asbestos burns like thunder before them."

"I know just the one to stop them." Maria clenches her fists. "The Flame!"

"The Flame? What do you mean?"

"Listen," Maria says, "I'll tell you his story..."

Twenty-five years ago in the Chinese city of Ichang, close by the Yangtse River, a son was born to the Reverend Arnold Charteris and his wife. In season, the river became a flood, and Charteris, knowing the end was near, placed his son in a basket, put a small locket around his neck, and set his makeshift cradle upon the water.

After hours of tossing and bobbing on the swirling current, the tiny basket, swept swiftly along through the raging storm, suddenly disappeared into a small cavern opening. Into the murky depths it sped, finally coming to a country overrun with exotic flowers and plants growing in wild confusion. "I hear a baby's cry! It comes from that basket in the river! By Tao! It's a baby! Sent by the gods to succeed our recently deceased Grand Lama!" Picking up the foundling, the Buddhist priest hurried to his lamasery. "Look, Brethren! Heaven has given us a new leader!"

The child grew into manhood. For hours, he jousted and wrestled with the other youths, strengthening his naturally powerful body; and in feats of magic, too, his prowess far excelled that of his teachers.

One day, a band of explorers, one of them Maria, stumbled upon the Utopian valley. "May I see that locket you are wearing?" a visitor asked the High Lama. "W-why, it contains a picture of the Reverend Charteris! Remember him, James? He was drowned in the flood -- say, this must be his son!"

Two hours later, after they had spoken to the priest who found the child, young Charteris was called to the old man's study. "Your place is in the outer world, my son! You must go! Tonight I will reveal to you my most potent secret of magic -- tonight, you will be given the power over flame!"

That night a great procession filed its way from the palace, led by the son of the Reverend Charteris, still clad in the blue robes of the High Lama. Behind him, at the head of the train of monks, the old priest walked, bearing a golden ceremonial cushion. Striding between two jade pillars, from whose crests burned twin white flames, they ascended to a broad marble dais lying at the feet of a massive, towering green Buddha. The priest kneeled upon the golden cushion and gestured, and as layers of smoke began to form in the air about them, young Charteris removed his robe of office and stood waiting for his trial and investiture.

The old man raised his arms. Charteris -- clothed in white fire, entwined in the layers of curling smoke -- soared upward above the face of the huge idol. Transfigured, he grew larger and larger, until he drawfed the priest below him. Green rays of energy burst from the staring Buddha, and for a time, Charteris became one with the flame.

Then it was over. Power greater than any other man's was his. He was the master of flame... The next day the old man and his pupil exchanged farewells. "My son, you leave us armed with potent mystic powers -- use them for good!"

"It will be so!"

Maria concludes her story. "So you see, the Flame is the one man who can help us! He will do as I ask...."

Suddenly the door is thrown open and a tall, muscular man strides into the room. "Flame!" Maria cries.

"I came as soon as I received your message."

Told of the power of Rodend's fire cannon and Dorna's inability to stand before them, the Flame agrees to help. Running out to his plane, he leaves for the front immediately.

Small fire guns are brought up as he dives over the trenches, and the enemy attempts to burn him from the sky. The Flame passes through unharmed. Fastening a chain to the fuselage, he climbs out on the wing of his hurtling plane. "Here's where you get a dose of your own medicine!" he cries, and grasping the chain, he goes over the side.

The Flame hedgehops across the battlefield, swinging from the end of the chain, and Rodend's soldiers begin to panic. The great Fire Cannon is brought into action: "Nothing can resist that!" The Flame dives toward it, and as the monstrous weapon roars, his own handgun looses a bolt of fire at its muzzle. And: "unable to find an outlet, the searing flames expand, and the gun is blown to bits."

Landing in the midst of the smoking remains, the Flame's fists lash out. Rodend's soldiers, dazed and frightened, cry for mercy, raising their arms in surrender. Soon the soldiers of Dorna take charge of his captives, and he wings his way toward the headquarters of the cruel King Rodend...

In his chambers, Rodend, a Hitlerian figure with a small mustache and a wild tangle of hair falling across his forehead, broods over his war maps. An aged servant enters.

"You rang, sire?"

"Poke up that fire -- it's getting chilly in here."

As the old man stirs up the burning logs, the Flame, arms crossed over his chest, materializes from out of the crackling blaze. Rodend and his man-servant fall back in fright.

"What do you want?" screams Rodend, drawing his heavy automatic pistol.

"I have come to give you your due!" The Flame tears Rodend's pistol from him as though he were an awkward child, and like a pneumatic hammer, his gauntleted fist pounds at King Rodend's face.

"Spare me! I beg of you. I will do anything you say, anything!"

"All right, here's what I want you to do...."

Early the next morning at intelligence headquarters in Dorna... "Maria! Maria! King Rodend has ceased fighting and...."

"I know -- here's a note from the Flame: 'Glad to have helped. Don't hesitate to call on me when you need help to overcome evil....'"

And the story is over.

In those nine Osterized pages, blending together chunks and pieces of Shangri-la, the story of Moses, the theory of reincarnation, technologically isolated super-scientific weapons, mythical European kingdoms, magic, and mysticism, are a whole dead world. The world before World War II. Today, the story seems uninspired and centuries away; then, it evoked an array of aging but powerful and contemporary symbols, our final compromise with the 19th Century and its simultaneous belief in science and magic, democracy and autocracy, romanticism and realism.-- and in the symbol of the Flame it evoked, too, less gracefully, less felicitously than Jerry Siegel's conception of Superman and his origin, the new and idealistic symbol of the 20th Century.

It is easy to laugh at the superficial, paper-doll images of the men who ran around in public in their long underwear yelling. "Up, up, and away!" and "Shazam!" and other inanities at the top or their lungs or sniffing hard water formulas or driving Batmobiles 6around as though they were Model A Fords or living "in the caverns beneath the New York

World's Fair" -- or hedgehopping battlefields dangling from the bellies of airplanes while trying to pot the soldiery with revolver-sized Flame Guns.

But it is not so easy to laugh at the hearts of these paper dolls. Most, like Raggedy Ann's, had "I Love You" written on them.

It may be that the popular literature of the '30s and early '40s is unique in history, for from the pulp magazines' the Shadow and Doc Savage, through to Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel and the Flame, the heroes fought for idealistic beliefs of justice and right, and not for personal profit. Not even the folk heroes of the past can make that claim -- the taint of personal interest clings to almost all of them. And it is the simplified world of the comic strip where symbols can artistically replace representative realism more easily and convincingly than any other story-telling medium, in which the Idealist reached his flower. Idealists are sometimes funny. Idealism never is. The measure of those brightly costumed refugees from the Charles Atlas ads is not their preposterous appearance, but their symbol as men with the power to satisfy any desire, satisfying their desires by doing good. It was naive of them, perhaps; I don't think it was childish.

The costume heroes brought another unique thing to the kids sitting out on the back stoop at home -- or in the pool of shade behind the school cafeteria at lunch time -- while they read comic books and talked comic books: Liberation. Mythologies and fairy tales have always placed a penalty on the possession of supernormal powers by men. Icarus fell. Cinderella tripped. But Superman never fell -- and if he did, what difference would it make? Billy Batson might trip, sure, but a quick "Shazam" would get him out of trouble. For the first time in mass literature, physical liberation from the confines of the ordinary brought reward to the hero, rather than disaster.

Coulton Waugh, in his history of the comic strip, takes up the masked costume hero and wonders: Why in the United States of America should "justice be hooded"? Like many others before and since, Coulton Waugh missed the point.

Charlie Chaplin, in his most successful pictures, played a noble and honorable man who was a victim of circumstance. A king disguised by nature and a cruel society as a tramp, his low station in life and his inadequate body hid his real worth. The great pathos of those pictures was achieved by suddenly revealing that the wretched and laughable little figure on the screen was a man, just like you and me, who was doing the best he could in the shape and circumstances life had imposed upon him. City Lights, perhaps Chaplin's finest motion picture, tells of his love for a blind girl, and of his efforts to obtain money for an operation on her eyes -- even though he knows that when she sees him she may reject him. For the blind girl only knows him for what he really is, for his kindness, his goodness, his innate nobility. She does not see the false picture of him the world sees and laughs at as he struggles through one ordeal after another to obtain the money her eyes need.

Trash, too, can use the materials of art. It is no accident that the Shadow was Lamont Cranston, rather than Lamont Cranston the Shadow. Nor is it an accident that Clark Kent was really Superman in disguise. They were the prototypes of their kind and the most nearly perfect in conception, and their message was not that this ordinary man concealed an extraordinary man, but that this extraordinary man concealed an ordinary man -- that the world did not commonly see the real person behind Clark Kent's glasses or Cranston's urbane but not unusual appearance. The costume and the masks revealed the real individual by hiding the superficialities of his day-to-day aspect, just as the girl's blindness revealed the true character of the little tramp.

The costume heroes said that men could be vastly more than they were, and that they were vastly more than they seemed to be. And there, in those swarming little rectangles, they demonstrated it.

"The Flame" was not a great strip -- it was Berold's marvelous gift for anatomy and garish realism that sustained it -- and in its attribution of mystic as well as scientific powers to the Flame, the symbolism was weakened; nonetheless, when you were not quite ten and the spirit of things counted far more than their styles or -- even -- their content, it was something you looked forward to.

It is far easier to criticise art than trash. Art appeals to the emotions and the intellect; trash appeals to one or the other, but never to both. Yet the perennial success of the over-intellectualized trash that passes for "litterary" fiction and the enduring popularity of the over-emotionalized trash of writers like Gene Stratton-Porter, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jack Woodford, Zane Grey, and Mickey Spillane (and Chester Gould and Jerry Siegal) demand understanding; for sometimes the spirit of first-rank trash is more important than the content of second-rank art. And since with trash it is the spirit of the thing that counts -- in the end, the only thing that counts -- the customary standards of art criticism can never apply.

If we want to see "The Flame" and the others for what they really were, we must understand, as we understood then, what they tried to be, not what they actually achieved, nor what we believe art might have made of them.....

Magicians were very big in those days too. There was Ibis, the Invincible, in Whiz Comics, and Zatara, in Action -- and Yarko, the Great, who came right after "The Flame" in Wonderworld.

Yarko had a time of it. He was usually pretty well drawn himself, but he often had to associate with as ill-drawn a crew of rascals as you could find anywhere. Even the police were out of proportion in the March issue, and I imagine it really offended Yarko, a fastidious dresser and a man who clearly believed a gentleman's right arm should be as long as his left (but no longer). Apparently, Yarko himself was drawn by one artist -- a man with a speaking acquaintance with anatomy -- and the rest of the strip was filled in by whoever was handily. I'd guess it was a big month for Yarko when his own artist would illustrate the rest of the strip, too.

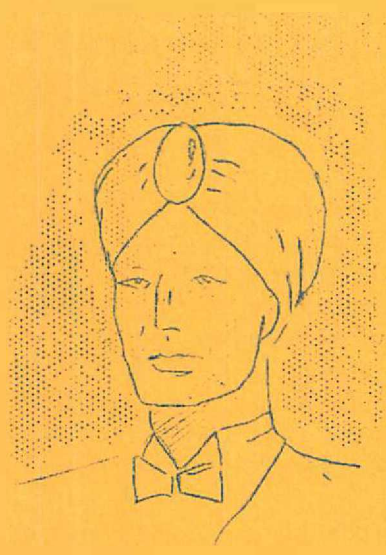
Despite his name, Yarko was an American-looking fellow, tall, with agreeable but otherwise undistinguished features. He completely lacked the department store dummy appearance of Mandrake or the reputed ugliness of Warlock, the Wizard, in Nickel Comics. As I said, Yarko was a fastidious dresser. He wore a white tie and tails, a red cape, and an ochre turban with a blood-red gem in the center of it. When he went to bed he took off the cape. He was a rather fastidious talker, too. In this episode, "Captain Debit of the Homicide Bureau" calls on Yarko, and Yarko says, "Hello. To what may I credit your unexpected visit?"

Well, Yarko may have been a magician, all right, but he was no seer.

It seems an East Indian Seventh Son of a Seventh Son is attempting to find two jewels -- the twin jewels of blood -- whose possession will give him reign over all India. One of the stones is traced to a gang of American thieves. After three or four of them are found dead, Captain Debit decides it's time to request Yarko's help because, "I am the laughing stock of the town." Yarko takes a look at the bodies and goes home to bed. After he has taken off his cape and gotten under the covers, white tie, tails, turban and all, and turned out the lights, two East Indians attack him. It appears the other Twin Jewel of Blood -- the Ada-La-Hoda -- is in his turban. Yarko kicks them out of bed, knocking one head first into a large vase conveniently located at the foot. Then, through magic, he turns the other one upside down and makes him spin like a top until the police arrive.

A few months later the Seventh Son of the Seventh Son gathers his people together once again. He is no quitter: "The famed Yarko has sent us the Ada-La-Hida, but he still possesses its sister. We must get it!"

Yarko, who had returned the Ada-La-Hida because the sight of it killed any but the rightful owner, suddenly appears in a vision. "Ture!" he intones, "You are the Seventh Son of the Seventh Son of the Order of Aribah, but you have erred in your ways, and do your sire hath given you only the Ada-La-Hida! He entrusted me with the other which I wear on my turban. Were you to be given the Ada-La-Hoda, you would become very powerful... Power turns the heads of men. There would be eternal tumult in India. Make no further attempts to gain it!"



The Seventh Son of the Seventh Son of the Order of Aribah looks properly convinced. Maybe because the vision of Yarko is as big as a house.

Actually, this is a rather tame Yarko adventure. He once took on an army of men conceived up out of mandrake roots, and wrestled to the death with the astral body of a black magician while they were both hundreds of feet tall. Unlike the other comic book magicians, Yarko dealt largely in the metaphysical and the mystic, rather than in "simple" magic, and if the content was not often distinguished, the spirit was....

After Yarko came "Shorty Shortcake. "Shorty" was signed by "Jerry Williams" who was actually Klaus Nordling, the artist for "Spark Stevens" later on in the book. Although Shorty was drawn in the animated cartoon style of the time -- a huge head, with coat-button eyes and shiny Rudolf Valentino haircut, a tiny body, and arms and legs like lengths of garden hose -- there is a liveliness that comes from an understanding of the comic book medium. (If Basil Berold had a major fault, it was that he was primarily an illustrator, rather than a comic strip artist.)

Although you'd never guess it, Shorty is in Guatemala this month on [illegible] Professor Gnu, who is a very sore, if not actually mad, scientist. Gnu has invented an "H_2O Magnet" which draws "all of the waters of the countryside" to his door. Shorty, who doesn't want to pay a dollar a glass for a drink, heists the magnet, nearly drowns in the flood that follows, is captured by Gnu's oversized carrier pigeon ("Carrier Pigeon 40 x Normal Size Product of Professor Gnu" the sign on the birdcage reads), is almost eaten by a thirty foot earthworm, saves himself by gulping a little of the professor's Enlarger Fluid, busts out of Gnu's laboratory, grows a mile high, is struck by lightning, and rained on until he shrinks (that's what Professor Gnu needed all that water for), and finally soars off in a glider presented in appreciation for his accomplishments ("Gee thanks," says Shorty)....

"Patty O'Day -- Newsreel Reporter" follows. It was a nothing strip: "Death to ze American!" "Come on, I'll lick the bunch of you!" "He's unconscious!" "Good! Too bad he has fallen down this well! Ha-ha!" "You murdering beasts!" "We only follow orders!".... 9

Then, on page 32, where the modern comic book peters out with an ad for a blackhead extractor or a genuine cardboard "Frontier Cabin" "big enough for 2-3 kids" ($1.00 a cabin, 5 for $4.00), Wonderworld presented "Dr. Fung -- Master Sleuth of the Orient." The credit says "Arthur Dean"; actually it was drawn by S.R. Powell, an old timer who took over the "Shadow" comic strip from Vernon V. Greene and who is still active today.

Dr. Fung was a small, bald man, with a white mustache and goatee, and glasses that fell down over his nose. He was aided by Dan Barrister, a blond American considerably taller than Dr. Fung, who wore calf-length boots, blue riding breeches and jacket, a white shirt and a black necktie. In this episode, Dan had quite a time with that necktie. Right after a tough fight he had to strip it off and open his collar at the throat -- to show he'd really exercised (kind of like old time vaudeville dancers who used to throw off their coats and roll up their sleeves to indicate they really meant business) -- and then get it tied again and that tough collar button fastened again before the next panel.

"Invited by his old friend, Alzea Rapkut, to inspect a mysterious pit," the flash panel reads, "Dr. Fung takes Dan Barrister to his house in ancient Persia...."

Well, you'd know it. The hole's been there for years, but the minute they look over the side, "By Allah's beard!" (as Alzea Rapkut puts it) the earth heaves and cracks open, throwing Dr. Fung and Dan Barrister headlong into the pit. They fall for hours. Then: "Dan! We're slowing up! We're beginning to float down! Someone is behind this!" Finally they fall into an enormous glass jar and are seized by green, apelike creatures with suckers for fingers and built-in unicycles for legs who bottle them up in glass cylinders and ship them through an overgrown department store pneumatic tube.

At the end of the trip, standing before her throne, is a good-looking blonde girl in red shorts and halter. "Earth people!! At last my prayers are answered!! Please take me back to the land where I was born. I'm sick of being queen of these horrible creatures!" Her name is Rima, and she fell into a seemingly bottomless ravine years before while exploring the Himalayas with her father.

"Can't you speak louder, girl?" Dr. Fung asks, "I can hardly hear you!"

She doesn't dare to, though, because -- although she can whisper in double exclamation points -- the green things are very sensitive to noise.

Suddenly: "Dan, look!" cries Dr. Fung, as the girl throws her arms about him for protection. A green creature twenty feet high rolls into the room on his organic unicycle. 'It is 'He'!" screams the girl, "'He' is angry! 'He' will kill you!!"

"Dan!" yells Dr. Fung, "Shout! Quick man! Scream your loudest!"

Dan screams, "He" claps his hands over his ears, and they race for the "suction elevator" that brought them -- Rima is going to reverse the "gravitation machinery" controlling it. At the last second "He" dives into the shaft, too, and is carried to the surface, unable to gain on them because "the pressure is even." (That scream of Dan's must really have shaken him up, otherwise "He" would have reversed the "gravitation machinery" himself.) As Dr. Fung leaps from the mouth of the pit he calls to his waiting friend Rapkut (a patient man, evidently) for a gun, and kills the monster as it emerges.

"Back to my own people at last!" says Rima, and then she clears up any doubts about her age, "I was only six years old when I fell down there fifteen years ago! How can I ever thank you?"

"Your happiness is enough!" says Dr. Fung, who, despite his vigor, is apparently too old for the game. Barrister, however, is up on his addition, and knows what a girl's talking about when she tells him she's over eighteen. His hand reaches for her waist.

A psychiatrist's might reach for his notebook.

"Ted Maxon, The Phantom Rider," by Cecelia Munson is next. The source of Miss Munson's inspiration is revealed in the closing panels: "Who are you, mister?" "Who am I? I am the Phantom Rider, the friend of those in trouble! But my real name must always remain a secret." The Phantom Rider adjusts his mask, and "with a 'Hoof it, Streak!' he is gone -- to reappear when needed..."

Tex was shortchanged all around. He didn't even have a kemo sabe...

In those days almost every comic book ran a two-page humor strip. In Wonderworld it was "Don Quixote in Modern Times" and it was about Don Quixote in modern times...

Klaus Nordling, like most of the early comic book artists, was no wonder with a pen; unlike most of them, with his cartoonist's feel for exaggerated action and foreshortening, he made up for his lack of finish. His strips moved. Although he was never in -- say -- Jack Cole's league here, his comic book sense was superior to any other Fox artist, except, possibly, Dick Briefer.

For Wonderworld (aside from "Shorty Shortcake," which was done in his usual style), he drew "Spark Stevens -- of the Navy," an adventure strip paralleling the service movies Hollywood had been making for years: two women-chasing, action-hungry, free-wheeling, light-hearted buddies who were always beating up on spies -- when they weren't beating up on eachother over a girl. Nordling did the job well. And reading them today is much more pleasant than looking at Pat O'Brian and James Cagney on TV. Spark and Chuck seem like nicer guys.

They were big guys, too. None of this Cagney fancy-dan stuff with the fists. Spark and Chuck were willing to take one to give one, and you couldn't beat them, not if there were a dozen of you, in anything like a fair fist-fight. When they were taken out, they were taken out with a gun or a knock on the back of the head -- or some other unfair, unAmerican, method. Chuck was bigger and blonder and had a heavier jaw. The jaw was a giveaway, of course: Chuck was stupider as well. Spark (although he had a hell of a punch, naturally) carried a normal sized jaw, so that meant he was the smart one of the two. Smart enough to get the strip named after him, anyhow.

This month they're "in the native quarter" of Guam, complaining bitterly about the scarcity of women. (Spark and Chuck spent all their time in the tropics, I guess, for they always wore whites. And no matter what happened, they kept them clean. Some guys have a knack.) Suddenly, a white girl calls "Hsst! Say --" from a second story window. A rough hand immediately claps over the girl's mouth and she is snatched from sight. Spark and Chuck run upstairs, and one, two, three, four, knock out the red-suited, totally bald villain (no hero ever knocked out a villain with a fringe over his ears) and his three gorillas. The girl is "the Colonel's Daughter"; and when she discovered the spies stealing military maps from government files, they "spirited" her to their hideout.

While she has been talking and Spark and Chuck have been listening with both eyes, the inconspicuous man in the red suit has crept to the wall behind them. He presses a lever and a Murphy bed falls out, knocking Chuck and Spark unconscious. ||

When the thugs finally wake up, they wonder: "Wot'll we do wit' 'em?" But Red Suit has a solution: "Spider Cavern. Vit the dawn come also the spider! Ha! Our two sailors vill never see the sun again!"

Well, just as the night is lifting, gobs manage to free themselves "by rubbing their bonds against the jagged rocks." And just in time, too, for here come the spiders, and you've never seen anything like them. They skipped dinner the night before -- and maybe the midday snack, too -- and they are hungry. Spark and Chuck climb the walls of the cave frantically, but the spiders hurry after them in a mass so thick it looks like an overwrought shag rug.

"Holy ---! They're gaining on us!!" says Chuck.

'Gotta match?" asks Spark, cooly brandishing the blackened end of one of the clubs they have been fighting the spiders off with. "Lucky these guys left these oil-soaked torches behind..." Spark explains, and they hurl the burning torches into the writhing, hungry carpet crawling toward them. The spiders, who must have been on a heavy diet of high-test gasoline, ignite with a gusto that would have delighted C. B. DeMille, and Spark and Chuck, coughing and wheezing, follow the smoke (Chuck, the wit, calls it "Eau-de-garbage") as it drifts to the entrance.

There, they take cover behind a couple of boulders, and when Baldy and his pals show up to see how breakfast went at Spider Cavern, one, two, three, they capture the spies and herd them into the mouth of the cave. Spark hurries off to get help, and Chuck, intent on keeping the spies holed up in the cavern, does not see the menacing figure creeping up behind him. That's when Spark proves the strip was named after the right hero.

"I wondered where the fourth guy was!" he exclaims, whopping a rock on the spy's head just as he was about to plug Chuck. (It proves, too, that Spark could count, and that was more of a rarity in the comic world than you might imagine -- as was shown recently in "The Several Soldiers of Victory.")

The sailors rush back to the village to save the Colonel's Daughter. But she has already been saved: "Lucky we came along and untied ya, or you'd have starved to death in there," two soldiers are telling the girl as she gazes up at them in rapt admiration. Hearts burst out of her balloon as she exclaims, "My heroes!"

And Spark and Chuck -- as their movie counterparts always did -- lose the girl again. (In one episode, they saved <u>two</u> girls and double dated. They were dollars and it looked like the boys were home free at last, but then the girls got to gossiping and exchanging fashion news and recipes.) But next month they'll try once more...

The last story in the book was "K-51 -- Spies at War," a middling strip drawn by Powell under the name of "Barron Bates." It was all scrunched up in ten and eleven and even twelve panel pages. You virtually needed to be Tiny Tim to read it.

Page 64 closed the magazine on a note that would thrill any young sucker's heart:

A b s o l u t e l y F r e e ! !
<u>T H E C O M I C S C O P E</u>
reg u. s. patent office
<u>Not a toy but a real projector</u>
A New Amazing Invention Show your own films at home --- charge admission --- run real new movie parties. Now you can screen comic strips in your own home and make them in any size and in full color and give a real movie show. Nothing to buy. Everything free.

Well, almost free. You actually sent in three coupons (one from each of the Fox magazines of the time) and fifteen cents "to cover the cost of mailing."

A friend of mine tore the coupons out of magazines in a second hand store, sold a grocer back some pop bottles he'd just pilfered from the storeroom, and sent away for the new amazing invention. He got his money's worth.

The "Comicscope" was a flat chunk of cardboard, brightly and crudely printed with pictures of the current Fox heroes, which could be folded into a small box; and a glass lens as lumpy as the bottom of a pop bottle, and a fourth the size, inserted into a short, black cardboard tube. When the box was assembled there was a hole in the front for the lens and one in the bottom for a lightbulb, and a slit in the side to push the sample Comicscope strips through. It worked -- once you'd sealed up all the gaps in the seams of the box with masking tape and squeezed into the blackest closet you could find -- but it was hardly worth it. The Comicscope strips were abominably drawn and printed, not in full color, but in red and black on a saffron background. You couldn't use regular comic strips, naturally, because the printing came out backwards, and besides, who'd want to cut his comic books in little ribbons about two inches wide.

Why Fox peddled the Comicscope is a puzzle. There was obviously no money in it -- the fifteen cents must really have gone for handling and mailing costs -- and although new Comicscope strips cost a fair amount, they were so crummy it is hard to believe Fox had any genuine expectation of selling them. The Comicscope must not have boosted sales for his comic books, either, for you almost never saw an old Wonderworld with one of the coupons missing. Of course, he may have used the names of those who answered for an advertisers' sucker list, but the chain carried so little outside advertising even this seems unlikely.

The real answer is probably that Fox was a promoter. Promoters will promote things, even when there's no money in them, just to keep their hands in -- rather like Dr. Snaffleblocker, the Hollywood physician in one of Jack Woodford's rare non-sex novels, who was discovered as the story opened performing an abortion on a chipmunk....

And finally, the back inside page carried ads for two new Victor Fox comic books, Science Comics and Weird Comics. Further along, we'll take a brief look at them.

This was the eleventh issue of Wonderworld Comics, March 1940.* A year earlier the competition hadn't been as stiff. But now things had changed. Superman was appearing in a

*After this article was completed and in Dick Lupoff's hands, I discovered a letter by Ron Graham in Alter-Ego, a comic book fan magazine published by Jerry Bails of Inkster, Michigan, indicating that Wonderworld Comics had an earlier incarnation as Wonder Comics, and featured "Wonder Man" rather than "The Flame." Neither my memory nor the great stack of Fox comics Bill Thailing had lent me were of any help. I asked for more information from Mr. Graham, and he referred me to David Wigransky of Washington, D.C. Here is Mr. Wigransky's reply:

"I had the first issue, May 1939, of Wonder Comics, which was also the first Fox Publications Inc. comic book. I lent it to Monte F. Bourjaily (head of the comic art studio which illustrated most of the Fox comics of that time: 1939-41) about six years ago, and he never returned it. The numbers and dates were consecutive, so that none were skipped when it became Wonderworld Comics and starred 'The Flame' rather than 'Wonder Man.' However, I don't know the exact issue the change took place.

"'Superman' of course began in Action Comics #1, June 1938, so I think 'Wonder Man' was the second superhero in comic books (or at least tied with 'Batman' which I think also began in May 1939 in DC's own Detective Comics.)

"Bourjaily told me DC Comics filed suit against Fox Publications, claiming 'Wonder Man' infringed upon their character 'Superman.' And even though they were successful, I guess by the time the case was won there were so many and varied superheroes springing up that they decided any more suits of this kind would be ridiculous.

quarterly all his own. So was Batman. Captain Marvel was just getting off the ground. The Human Torch and Submariner (we called him "Submarine-er") were going great guns. Jay Garrick had breathed the hard water formula and become the Fastest Man Alive. And yet, because of Berold and because in 1940 we still responded to fragments of beliefs and feelings and attitudes of the 19th Century that Wonderworld exploited, the book, if it had lost ground, remained far more thrilling and competitive than a present-day comparison with the other -- the mainline -- comics would seem to allow. We took Superman's and Batman's and the others' way of looking at things with us (as they took ours). We didn't take Yarko's or K-51's or Dr. Fung's or even much of the Flame's.

But in its day, it was a good comic book. And it was the best of the Fox chain.

II

Wonderworld was an immediate success, and five months later Fox brought out Mystery Men Comics. It featured Fox's most enduring characters, Green Mask and Blue Beetle; a science fiction strip by Dick (Frankenstein) Briefer called "Rex Dexter of Mars," and Klaus Nordling's "Lt. Drake -- of Naval Intelligence." Other than a two-page "Hemlock Sholmes and Dr. Potson," by "Fred," a remarkable cartoonist who did wonderfully wild and corny two-pagers for almost every comic book outfit in the business without ever (as far as I know) signing his name, the rest of the stories are without interest. There is the usual magician and ~~the~~ usual secret agent and the usual western abd the usual Cecelia Munson derivation, this time from Fu Manchu.

"Green Mask" and "Blue Beetle" were pretty usual, too. It is probably the secret of their success.

(Note cont'd from preceding page) "'Wonder Man (or, I think, 'The Wonder Man,' with 'The' in fine print -- I'm only going by memory) was more of a 'Superman' imitation than the others, I guess, as his alter ego was also that of a newspaper reporter. He had blond hair, and an all-red costume (the belt may have been yellow). All I recall about the costume is a short cape, a little less than waist-length. The strip was illustrated by Will Eisner, though I'm sure he signed a pen-name, which may have been the phonetic 'Willis Nerr' (anyway, I do know he used 'Willis Nerr' at some time). 'Wonder Man' had about the same powers as 'Superman' I should say -- although they weren't gone into as thoroughly, so perhaps he didn't have ~~all of them~~ (such as x-ray vision). I hazily remember that Wonder Man had no 'origin'; the series just began with his alter ego going ~~overseas as a war correspondent, and then switching to his super-identity to fight~~ a bunch of Nazi soldiers (they were called something else, of course, as we weren't yet at war with Germany)."

The change from Wonder to Wonderworld took place some time before the sixth issue, apparently, for I've seen a reproduction of this cover in Mystery Men Comics 3. Since it was common practice for distributers to require that three full issues of a new monthly magazine be printed before they would handle it, it's very likely Wonder Comics lasted into the second issue ~~and~~ perhaps as long as the fourth.

Although Wonder Comics and "Wonder Man" founded Fox Publications, their influence on the Fox magazines and the comic field seems negligible. So Wonderworld Comics and "The Flame" even though they came along a few ~~months later, would~~ still appear to remain the significant Fox Publications comic book and character in the formative months of the company. But an interesting fellow, that "Wonder Man."

RK

And when Fawcett Publications started its line, one of the original entry was Master Comics, featuring, you guessed it, "Master Man". ~~Master Man~~ had a rather mundane origin: pills and exercise and such, but it got him, too, to the same state as the original Superman. He was very strong, could withstand a lot of punishment, run at great speed and for great distances, leap fantastically but not really fly. He was pressured out and replaced by Minute Man, a non-super superpatriot, who in turn gave way to Captain Marvel Junior who ran in Master Comics for a full decade, to the very end.

RL

In the beginning, "Green Mask" was drawn in a style halfway between "Reg'lar Fellers" and early "Red Barry." Green Mask wore dark blue tights with a yellow stripe (down the side), skin-tight pale blue doublet and trunks, a massive, nail-studded leather belt, cavalry boots, a dark blue, crimson lined cape --- and a close-fitting dark green mask that covered his head and eyes and knotted in the back to fall in two trademark streamers. The artist, variously called "Walter Frame" "Michael Barrett" and "Jerry Logen," was obviously no reader of Esquire. (Berold, who did the marvelous covers for Mystery Men, or the color control men, even tried changing the colors of Green Mask's costume in an effort to devise something more compatible with that mask --- but nothing came of it.)

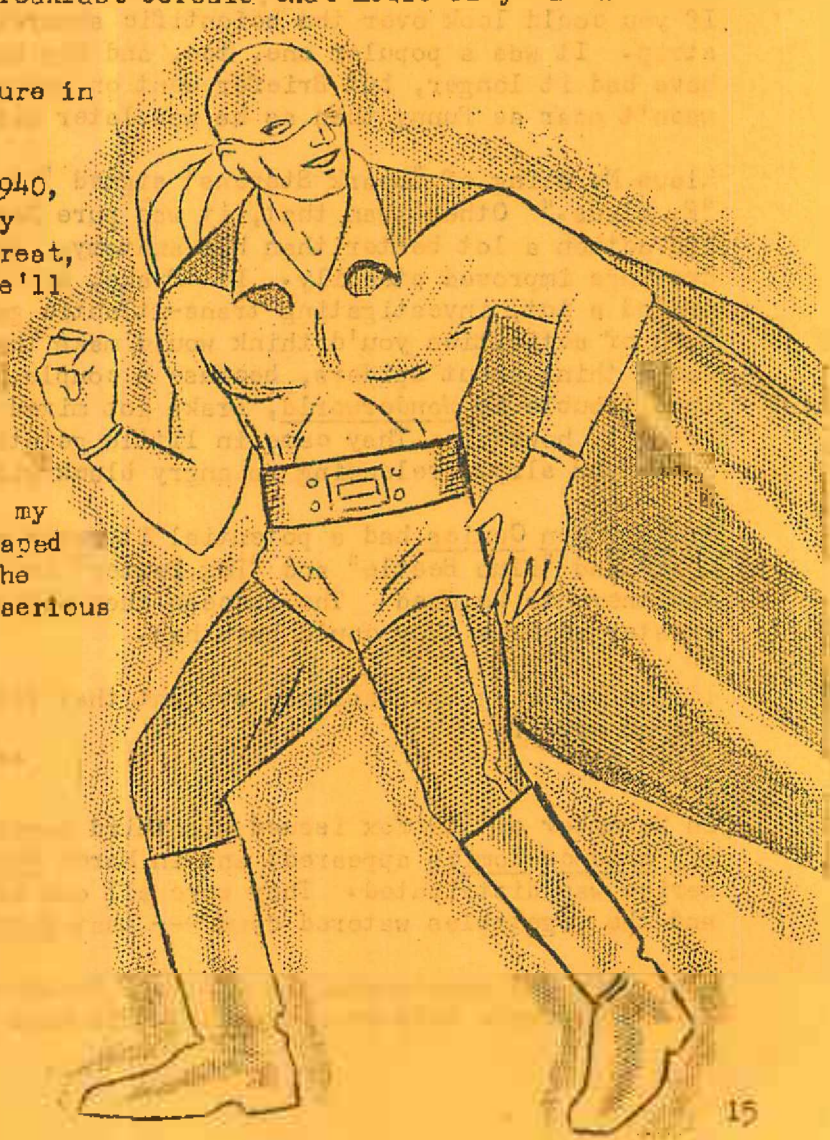
Aided by "the only man who knows the Green Mask's real identity," a reporter named "News" Doakes, he solved a number of uninteresting crimes that bored the police, rather than baffled them, into inaction.

In later issues, under a variety of indifferent artists, he acquired an off-stage identity as Michael Shelby, the son of a murdered senator who had opposed gangsterism; gained super-powers from a "Vita-Ray"; picked up a bumbling boy assistant named Domino, who — fittingly -- threw boomerangs; took on a new aide named "News" Blake ("News" Doakes was probably too undistinguished a name for a Vita-Rayed superman to associate with); and finally lost most of his super-powers when it became clear his future lay in being a Batman imitator.

In the summer of 1940, Green Mask acquired his own comic book, ultimately outlasting all the Fox heroes, except Blue Beetle, and many of his betters in other magazines as well. It is not only in politics and breakfast cereals that mediocrity has a certain staying power ...

"Blue Beetle" began as a secondary feature in Mystery Men. Within a half-dozen or so issues he opened the book. His own bi-monthly magazine appeared in February 1940, and soon afterward he had a twice-weekly radio program. His durability was so great, he survived Fox Publications itself. We'll come back to him ...

Dick Briefer was no science fiction artist. His spaceships looked like hot water heaters installed by a mad plumber. He was no science fiction writer, either: "Look, Dr. Harvey! Are my eyes deceiving me, or is that a cone shaped planet I see in the glass?" Yet, when he worked on it, as he did in many of the serious "Frankenstein" stories, Briefer had a certain way with horror and pathos that transcended his writing and illustrations.



Right: Michael Shelby as the Green Mask.

The first "Rex Dexter of Mars" strips display his early style at its best, before he began to splash the ink around in big, loose, broad, black strokes -- and some of them display his talent for story, as well.

Rex Dexter of Mars, "Here on Earth -- 2,000 A. D.," helps save the planet from a terrible menace. For this he receives the acclaim of Earth. But two issues later, Dexter brings a huge, fright-maddened Kong-like creature to Earth for exibition. When it runs amok, destroying and maiming, he is forced to kill it, stabbing into its brain through one of the half-human beast's bulging, horrified eyes. Earth forgets its acclaim, it demands his death, and so Rex Dexter's friend the President of Earth is forced to exile him. His fiancee, Cynde (pronounced "Sin-dee" Briefer tells us), reavows her love and joins him as he ventures from planet to planet. Eventually, Earth forgives Rex, and he returns now and again to aid us.

If you could look over the scientific absurdities, "Rex Dexter" was often an entertaining strip. It was a popular one, too, and Rex had his own comic book for a while. He might have had it longer, but Briefer went on one of his periodic humor binges -- and he wasn't near as funny then as he was later with the "Frankie" Frankenstein yarns ...

Klaus Nordling of "Spark Stevens" signed "Lt. Drake -- of the Naval Intelligence" as "F. Klaus." Other than that, it was pure Nordling, a man who handled his blacks and his action a lot better than his anatomy. The stories were good fun, though, and his drawings improved steadily. Lt. Drake, a blond chap with a tickler sized mustache, got around a lot, investigating trans-Atlantic gamblers, opium smugglers, and such -- the kind of activities you'd think would make the Coast Guard jealous. Nordling must have had a thing about spiders, because a couple of months before Spark and Chuck had all that trouble in Wonderworld, Drake got mixed up with them, too. These didn't come wall-to-wall, however. They came in little gelatine capsules that melted in your bedclothes while you slept, releasing an angry black widow ...

Mystery Men Comics had a potential it never realized. Under an adroit publisher, "Green Mask" and "Blue Beetle" and "Rex Dexter" could have become outstanding: the material was there to be used. The success they achieved in their imperfections hints at the greater success they could have had.

It was becoming increasingly evident that Victor Fox was a promotor, not a publisher. Nor an editor.

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In November of '39 Fox issued his third magazine, Fantastic Comics; the following January Science Comics appeared; and in March Weird Comics, the last monthly of this first series was distributed. They were all out of the same stewpot -- the meat picked off and the vegetables watered down --- that Wonderworld and Mystery Men had been ladled from.

Fantastic was outstanding in one way, though. It published the most preposterous and grotesque comic hero ever created. His name was Stardust.

The feature character, however, was a reincarnation of Samson. "Out of the mist of history comes the mighty Samson... Like his ancient forebears Samson pits his tremendous strength against the forces of evil and injustice...." Samson was a thick-muscled, old-fashioned, Middle European looking fellow with long blond hair, blue thonged sandals, and a pair of woolly trunks that looked more like a mass of pubic hair with delusions of grandeur. In later issues he put a belt on, but it didn't improve the effect much.

The early Samson stories were compounded out of Wonderworld's greatest flaws. Rather than true comic strips, they were a series of tableaux; and where Basil Berold could rise above his weakness here, and make a virtue of it, "Alex Boon" could not. The nameless European backgrounds, the 19th Century kings and rulers and iron men in their stiff collared uniforms, the super-weapons that merely belched larger shells and more poisonous gasses, and had been invented in the last century by Robida or Verne or Wells -- these could have been surmounted and advantageously used, as they were in Wonderworld, if as in Wonderworld, they had been tied to a contemporary symbol such as the Flame. Samson, standing there in his reincarnated carcass, hairy, natural-looking pelt, and shoulder-length hair, was hardly that symbol.

Soon, the artwork was modernized -- if not improved -- and Samson took on a vaguely Anglo-Saxon appearance, the locales were moved nearer home, the villains Americanized, and Samson provided with a boy assistant, David, who, although he scarcely seemed adolescent, was similarly clad (beside Samson, who was always lifting him out of harm's way

he looked about the size of a wet fox terrier). The improvements wangled him his own bi-monthly magazine -- but they didn't cure the basic weakness, which was Samson himself....

"Professor Fiend," by "Boris Plaster" was a two-pager that was four pages long. It was drawn by "Fred" of "Hemlock Sholmes and Dr. Potson" (who also drew "Billy Bounce, the Kid Detective," occasionally, for Mystery Men, and -- among a legion of others -- "Mike, the Mascot" and "Mortimer, the Monk," for Columbia Comic Corporation's Big Shot Comics). "Fred" was wild, and he wasn't subtle ("Eureka! I've just invented a bladeless knife so people can't cut themselves while slicing bread!"), but for some ungodly reason he was funny. He still is.

It is "Stardust ---the Super Wizard," however, who will ensure immortality for Fantastic Comics. No commentary, no copy, can do him justice. You must sit face to face with the real thing. Anything else is like watching the last days of Pompeii with your eyes closed.

> "While a secret army of spies and murderous terrorists conspires to undermine business, and the government," says the flash panel, "a distant radio call is picked up in America -- a message transmitted from somewhere out in space!"

Then, leering up out of the comic book page, we see these spies and terrorists, beetle-browed, incredibly prognathous, their short, thick muscular necks seeming to reach up for their flat and receding foreheads to haul them even further down. Imagine Basil Wolverton, the creator of Lena the Hyena in "Li'l Abner," doing a dead serious job.* Imagine something worse. Now -- perhaps -- you have the villains of "Stardust" in mind. The story begins:

> "Listen to this, you mugs! Stardust is coming to visit the earth! He's the super crime wiz who is busting spy mobs on a lot of planets! Boy, will he be on our necks!!"

The broadcasting companies fill the air with details that terrify even our big-shot public enemies --

"Stardust, that master mind of the universe, with a mysterious knowledge of criminals, and their plans, will arrive on our planet to-night! He is traveling at amazing speed, on highly accellerated light waves! At 9:45 his powerful light will be visible in the direction of Mars, and at ten o'clock he will land some place in the U.S.A. to begin a merciless clean-up of spies and grade-A racketeers..."

The leaders of the secret army of spies and terrorists call an emergency meeting... "...his scientific use of rays, has made him master of space and planetary forces," their radio proclaims; "the gas of a certain star has made him immune to heat or cold."

"We must destroy him as soon as he arrives!" the terrorist leader shrieks. "Get him in the dark! Use the typhoid germs, and poison gas on him! Use our Hot-X Fusing Liquid on his apparatus! Take him apart with the atom-smasher! Turn the new shredding guns on him! Get him out of the way!"

But then the radio goes on: "...Stardust carries artificial lungs that enable him to breath safely, under any conditions -- he uses new spectral rays, that can make him invisible or as bright as the sun -- he wears a flexible, star-metal skin, controlled through rays from a distant sun and rendering him indestructible by chemicals, or by electrical or violent force!"

Well, that stops the terrorists: "He's so superior we won't be able to touch him! We had better lay off him for a while, and go on with our work. This is the night We're

*Of course Wolverton did serious work. "Spacehawk" in Blue Bolt Comics was a darned good space opera, and ran for quite a while. Later on, Wolverton did at least one cover for Weird Tales of the Future, a very bad cover, and much of the interior art for "WTF," this considerably better than the cover, but not up to "Spacehawk."

RL

scheduled to bump off the president -- we ought to do the job before Stardust gets here let's use our expanding bullets, and send our two best shots!"

The two killers are about to plug the President when there is a sudden blinding flash; as it disappears, Stardust steps forth to say, "You are now in the power of Stardust!"

Take a blond, long-necked, ten foot tall octomorph -- a thin ten foot tall octomorph -- and laminate him with great bulging muscles until his head pops up out of them, disproportionately small, like the head of a man wearing six overcoats, clothe him in a purple, square-necked, skin-tight uniform with a wide, red-spotted, yellow belt, and yank out every tooth in his head, replacing them with a set of choppers two sizes too small. You now have a duplicate of Stardust, the Super Wizard.

Next, the terrorists send bombers over Washington with their new Liquid Flame Bombs. Stardust wipes out the planes with their own bombs, and durns his attention to terrorist headquarters.

"Adjust the long-range automatic finder ... get a focus and smash him into a fog!!" screams the leader, directing work on the huge atom-smasher, which looks like a metal-spined red and blue boiler standing on an enormous pogo stick.

But: "When Stardust feels the finder being focused on him, he releases his powerful Boomerang Ray, and the atom-smasher smashes itself ... The spies flee in panic."

Stardust uses his "Magnetic Ray" to draw the spies and terrorists within reach. Then he picks them up and throws them out the window, using his "Suspending Ray" just before they crash on the adjoining roof top. Then, releasing his "Secret Ray," he brings in front of the terrorists the skeletons of the innocent people they have killed. Using another --- unspecified --- ray, he transports an office full of G-men to the roof top to take the spies and terrorists into custody.

Above you, are the leaders of the spy army, with my compliments! In five minutes they will drop! Good luck!" says Stardust, flashing away into space.

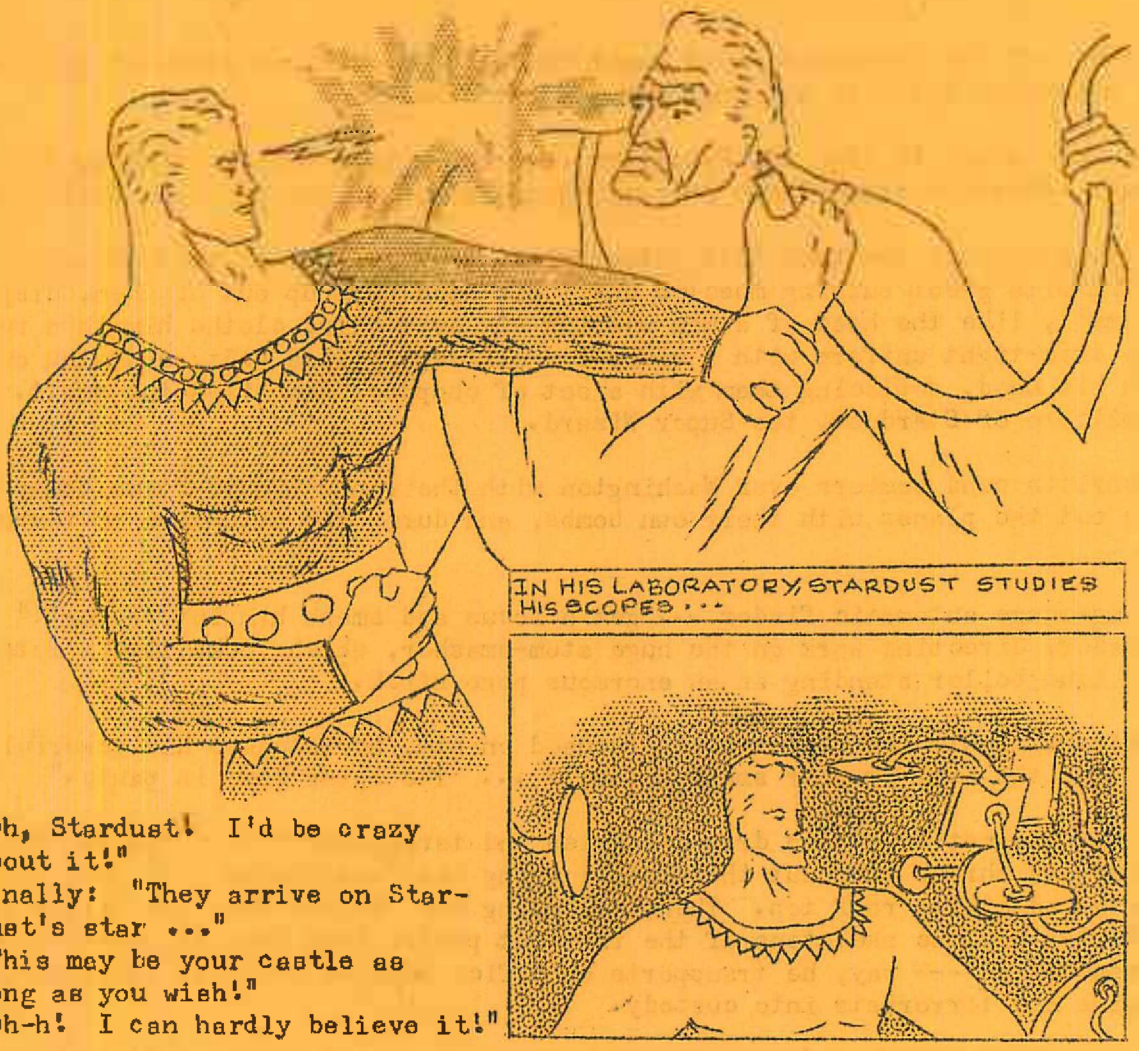
The G-men's eyes follow his vapor-trail until it vanishes. And then one says: "That's Stardust! And we didn't have a chance to thank him!"

And: "In the next exciting issue of Fantastic Comics, Stardust battles "Rip-the-Blood!"

Whoooh!

A year later, Stardust found love. Rushing to Earth to save the planet from enormous vultures a mad Venusian scientist named Kaos had unleashed --- he got here, by the way, "in his tubular spatial, travelling at terrific speed on accellerated supersolar light waves --- Stardust arrives in time to rescue a girl the fiend had ordered up for himself. Evidently feeling that it is no time to take chances with rays, Stardust rams the vulture carrying her head on, without even mussing a hair. The dead beast drops the girl and "the girl begins falling." At the last moment, Stardust swoops down and saves her. Then:

"Are you hurt?"
"I think not! But I'm terribly upset and scared.
"Shall I take you back to your home?"
"Oh, please, don't take me back! Those birds have wrecked our home and killed my parents!"
"You must feel terrible! But isn't there some place you'd like to go?"
"I'm all alone in the world, but you're so kind I'd like to be with you until I get over my fright!"
"But I have duties to attend to!"
"Oh, please take me with you! I'll try not to be of any bother!"
"Would you like to come to my private star for a while? It's very restful there!"



"Oh, Stardust! I'd be crazy about it!"
Finally: "They arrive on Stardust's star ..."
"This may be your castle as long as you wish!"
"Oh-h! I can hardly believe it!"

I can hardly believe it myself. If we can have primitive art, why can't we have primative trash? If Grandma Moses and Mickey Walker can become famous, why shouldn't "Fletcher Hanks"?

(I can see Hanks now, standing proudly before his one-man show. He'd be blond, of course; balding probably -- ectomorphs have fine hair and usually begin losing it fairly early; thin -- there might be the suggestion of a pot belly, though, after these twenty years; tall, surely. And long necked. Those early maturing, hard muscled, strong jawed, mesomorphs who made his teens miserable trouble him some yet; and even now Hanks may have difficulty talking to the prettier feminine patrons. And the dark ... well ... the dark still bothers him a little, and he always reaches around the corner to turn on the switch in the gallery washroom before he actually goes in.)

Edmund Pearson once published Queer Books, a marvelous sampler from eccentric novels and speeches and stories. Today, he would have included "Stardust."

Science Comics and Weird Comics didn't even have a "Samson" or a "Stardust" to leave to posterity.
The titles of some of Science's strips tell the story: "The Eagle" (this was a few months after "Hawkman" appeared in Flash Comics), "Electro" ("Jim Andrews, electrical scientist, is working with a pair of giant electrodes ... 'Good heavens! There's going to be an accident here!'"), "Cosmic Carson" (by "Buck Rogers" curent artist, George Tuska, and fully as good), "Marga, the Panther Woman" (Van Dorf, a mad physio-biologist, escaped into the heart of the African jungle from an asylum. He had been confined there for attempting to produce a race of people with the blood of panthers fused into them. As hostage, he brought a beautiful, white, blonde nurse with him ...")

Weird featured "Thor, God of Thunder," a reincarnation of Thor, god of thunder; then, when this reincarnation didn't go over, "The Dart", a reincarnation of "the ancient Roman racket buster, Caius Martius." Reincarnation-wise, Victor Fox was scraping the bottom of the barrel. In private life, the Dart was Caius Martius Wheeler, a timid high school teacher of Roman history; Thor was a guy whose girl kicked sand in his face. "Thor" mutated into Peter Thor, an explosives expert who was able to fly around in a red and blue costume as "Dynamite Thor" by periodically exploding little charges of "Dynamite pills." Weird also carried another of Fox Publications' alliterative "science fiction" strips, "Blast Bennett" (altogether, there were "Blast Bennett," "Cosmic Carson," "Perisphere Payne," "Space Smith," "Flip Falcon," and "Sub Saunders"). There was "Birdman," too, but he was no "Hawkman" copy: the feathers grew right out of his hide. Unless he knew a chicken plucker, it's unlikely he had an alternate identity.

As if to make up for all this, Basil Berold worked overtime on the early covers. They are some of the most well-drawn, damnedest comic covers ever printed. One -- in the second issue of Weird -- has remained in my memory for twenty-one years.

In the center of the page -- her flesh translucent below the neck, displaying her skeletal structure and the outline of her body -- stands a beautiful blonde girl, eyes staring blankly ahead as though she is hypnotized. Before the girl, connected to a cabinet studded with dials and buttons and knobs, is a huge white crystal ball blazing with an orange corona. Its rays, apparently fluoroscoping the girl's body, illuminate a garish laboratory crammed with bizarre vacuum tubes and insulators; they illuminate, too, the rectangular panel in the wall behind her, and the immense, swarthy man -- his Eastern face hideously contorted -- clad in a dark turban and robe with a figured red sash, who looms menacingly, massive arms reaching out as though he is about to mug or strangle her.

Blue robes billowing in the right foreground, a totally bald, vaguely Mayan-looking man crouches over the controls of the crystal ball. On his head is a peculiar apparatus resembling a switchboard operator's headphones, but from its top two calibrated structures are thrust and miniature arcs of lightning play between them.

On the left is an open Egyptian mummy case. In that case, fully wrapped, except for his face and the right hand is a husky man with distinctively English features. The free right hand holds a .45 calibre automatic pistol, and a shaft of fire leaps from its muzzle to the chest of the Mayan, whose gnarled hands are twisted in agony.

The caption reads: "The mummy stirred...a gun flashed and blasted the fiend into eternity.

The astonishing thing about all this is that it damned near looks real. The crazy picture looks almost convincing. The cover illustrates nothing inside, and for twenty-one years I've been trying -- from time to time -- to concoct a reasonable explanation for the scene.

I haven't had any luck.

III

A time of consolidation and expansion followed. New titles were issues, but all were based on established Fox Publications characters. Although Science Comics and Rex Dexter went under, Samson and Big 3 (Fox was always a promoter: the comic featured "Blue Beetle," "Samson," and "The Flame") took their place. With these two, the four surviving parent magazines, and Blue Beetle, The Flame, and Green Mask, Fox had a stable of nine comic books by the end of 1940 -- not bad for a man who'd published his first one a year and a half before.

Now, with comics taking up less of the publisher's time, Fox magazines began to advertise something new. It was called "Kooba Cola." It was "America's Greatest Nickel Value," "A New Thrill!" "The Long Tall Drink That's Tangy and Cooling as an Ocean Breeze. And the good-looking blonde said, "I'll take Kooba with the new tang and extra zest -- America's favorite cola drink with Vitamin B_1."

I've never met anyone who even heard of Kooba Cola, let alone actually drank the stuff. It must have been sold somewhere, though, for soon contests were started and a premium campaign began. (You could get a raincape for 195 Kooba bottle caps, although by that time you'd probably be so waterlogged you'd hardly need it; and a basketball for 745 caps -- after all, your grandchildren could play with it.)

In July of '41, while all this was at its peak,. Swank Magazine (no relation to the current publication), "For the Man Who Knows," ogled the newsstand customers for the first time. It was a tall, saddle-stitched, Esquire-sized magazine, listing V.S. Fox as publisher, and packed with Esquire-style girlie cartoons (Michael Berry, Bill Wenzel), pin-ups (you'd never recognize Dinah Shore), articles (a chapter from Irving Wallace's recent The Square Pegs -- that one about George Francis Train, who ran for dictator of the United States and posed for Phileas Fogg of Around the World in Eighty Days -- appeared in the January '42 issue), fiction (Jerome Weidman, Chester B. Himes), and departments (Hy Gardner, Leo Guild, Caswell Adams -- and the anonymously conducted "From the Bachelor's Bar," which revealed, among the White Horse Whips and the Whiskey Collinses, the ingredients of a "Kooba Cooler": "Fill a tall glass with ice cubes. Add juice of lime or lemon. Pour in one small whiskey glassful of Bacardi Rum and fill with sparkling Kooba Cola.") It claimed a reader audience of 1,300,000.

To the public, things must have looked good for Victor Fox.

IV

In the space of months Kooba Cola vanished, Swank collapsed, Blue Beetle left the air, and Fox's comic book chain fell to pieces.

Swank's actual circulation was nearer 100,000 than 1,300,000. Fox was figuring ten to thirteen readers per copy. All promoters are optimists.

Swank had its virtues, quite a few of them. But it had its faults. It was too cheap for the Esquire readers, and too high-class for the people who say "high-class." Fox tried to pump up circulation with cartoons that were a little startling for a mass circulation magazine twenty years ago: In September, a dishevelled brunette smirks at the reader, "It always makes me feel better." And a near nude blonde leers from the January issue, "...then I said, I'm going as 'New Year's Eve'... eating my apple won't stop me." Unlike Playboy's nudes, the cartoons didn't help Swank on the newsstands, and the only advertisers they attracted were peddlers of men's girdles, and elevator shoes. By March '42, even the Kooba Cola ad had vanished. But then, by March '42 Kooba Cola itself had vanished.

Soon, Swank followed it into oblivion; unlike Playboy's format, nobody ever successfully copies anything of Esquire's.

Maybe Kooba Cola had its good points, too. Perhaps a publisher with a healthier string of comics could actually have established a new soft drink through his magazines alone. But Fox's magazines were sick, now. They could not even sell themselves, nor could the "Blue Beetle" radio program, for it, too, was gone. Borold had left "The Flame" and soon Wonderworld and The Flame died. Daylight was showing through the cracks in Fox Publication false front. The other magazines, badly dated now, went one by one, leaving only Green Mas and Blue Beetle.

By 1946 Fox had a whole new line of nine comic books, with Green Mask and Blue Beetle for the anchor men, but even though the new corporation name, Fox Feature Syndicate, sounded important, the new title were weak: Cosmo Cat, Zoot, Wotalife, Jo-Jo the Congo King, Rib Tickler, Rocket Kelly, and All Top. None of them were monthly and titles changed frequently. Fox tried new promotions and new premium campaigns. Nothing would have helped but better art and better stories. Green Mask folded. In desperation he turned to crime comic books: Murder Incorporated, Famous Crimes, and Crimes by Women. Even Blue Beetle was dominated by "true" crime yarns and the title character almost vanished from the covers. By 1948, the Fox magazines, despite excursions such as Meet Corliss Archer, a teenage comic, were leaning heavily on jungle queens and scantily clad costume heroines like Phantom Lady to do what only better stories and illustrations could do -- and Corliss wasn't above showing a little thigh, herself.

Of all his original titles, only Blue Beetle was left. The character of the strip had been changed so many times it had virtually no buyer image at all. Fox was in deep troubl

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In the beginning, Blue Beetle was probably an accident. Something to bolster up the Mystery Men title. The third issue, for example, leads off with a nine page Green Mask yarn; Blue Beetle is buried in a four-pager toward the back of the book -- he doesn't even have the finishing spot. But there were no human relationships to bring life to "Green Mask" as they had to the comic book leaders, "Superman," "Batman," and "Captain Marvel," and the others.

Sure Green Mask and "News" Doaks worked together, but the reporter was only a handy news source; Green Mask did without him easily enough -- and Green Mask's private life was so utterly anonymous you began wo wonder what he was covering up. Without the mask, maybe he was Rin-tin-tin.

Blue Beetle, however, needed his friends: Dr. Franz, who had devised his mailed costume, and helped him with disguises and scientific identification work; Mike Mannigan, his heavy-set, semi-comic -- and unsuspecting -- pardner in his real identity as Dan Garrett, a rooky policeman; and, after the strip developed, Joan Mason, reporter and Garrett's girl friend. (Garrett dumped an equivalent of Green Mask's "News" Doake, a dishevelled newshawk named Charley Storm.)

Cliches they were, but they allowed plot development and reader identification and brough at least a semblance of "real life" to Fox's magazines, where most of the heroes didn't seem to have a close friend in the world. It's no wonder Blue Beetle soon became Mystery Men's most popular character.

He wore Blue tights of a special lightweight mail, a close-fitting, thigh-length blue doublet and hood of the same material, a leather belt with a blue beetle symbol set into the center of the yellow buckle (which contained a secret compartment for skeleton keys and such), and a black domino mask. In costume, Garrett looked much like a medieval knight stripped of his trappings, standing in his naked body armor.

Garrett's pardner on the police force, Mike Mannigan, was convinced -- no matter what heroics Blue Beelte performed -- that he was a criminal, and although he frequently helped Blue Beetle capture crooks, when the work was done Mannigan tried to capture him, too, They hit eachother over the head so many times their skulls should have looked like scale models of the Andes.

It was probably this gimmick that interested the radio producers. It gave the show the predictable, mechanical format they needed for broadcasting: Dan Garrett and Mannigan on patrol duty, a crime is committed, Garrett evades his pardner and becomes Blue Beetle, solves the crime with the help of Dr. Franz or Joan Mason and the hindrance of Mannigan, and finally escapes Mannigan's clutches to become Rookie Patrolman Dan Garrett -- who missed the whole thing -- once again. It should have interested them, anyhow, because this was substantially "The Green Hornet's" format -- and it was doing very well just then.

By September of 1940, "Blue Beetle" was on fourty-four stations from coast to coast, twice a week, including WMCA, New York, and KSAN, San Francisco. And like "The Green Hornet," each episode was complete in itself, something of a novelty then when serials were still going strong.

Then, like the rest of Fox's paper empire, the "Blue Beetle" radio show went under.

Trying to find the right formula, Fox tinkered with the strip continually. The writing was never good -- it never realized the inherent possibilities of the characters -- but the anonymous artwork, crude in the beginning, improved under an artist of some skill and style -- and then declined again at the hands of the like of Larry Antoinette (who also drew "Sub-Zero Man" for Blue Bolt Comics) and others. For a time, possibly inspired by Tick-Tock Tyler, "The Hour Man," Dr. Franz came up with "Vitamin 2-X" for Garrett, a concoction that gave him temporary "super-energy."

By the winter of 1945, however, Blue Beetle was quarterly, drawn with astonishing ineptitude by a cartoonist named Stoner (the "official" name of the artist was "Otis," and it endured through several cartoonists, just as had the original "Charles Nicholas," and, a little later, "Walter Swift"). Fox had come up with a new circulation gimmick: readers sent in their photographs, and each issue a boy and girl were selected to accompany Blue Beetle on his adventure. The strip had given up resemblance to the original; Blue Beetle now had super-powers, including flight, and only Joan Mason remained of the original format -- she was the kids' chaperone.

The gimmick, as usual, didn't pay off. But Fox had a new one by late '46: "Green Premium Coupons." They were printed in every issue of Fox comics, and they were really a bargain, a lot better than S & H Green Stamps. If you saved every coupon from every Fox magazine published, you could have gotten -- free -- a pair of boxing gloves after only seventeen years, or a magic set or wallet after twelve and a half. The only disquieting note was that Fox Feature Syndicate reserved the right to withdraw without notice any or all of the premiums at any time.

By now, Blue Beetle had lost most of his super-powers and was making his living again as a rookie patrolman. Stoner was still at work, and the drawings were worse than ever. But Blue Beetle was bi-monthly once more; maybe the premiums gimmick worked for a while.

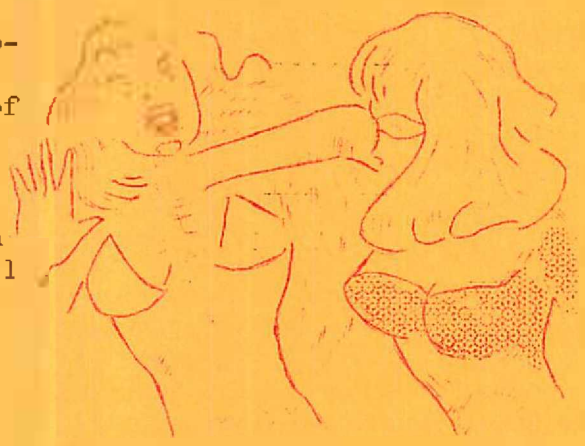
Less than two years later, those kids saving up for boxing gloves discovered they should have sold short. Fox was pushing crime comics now, and Blue Beetle had moved up to a monthly. A new "Blue Beetle" artist -- a considerable improvement on Stoner -- was at work and the strip had returned to something resembling its original format.

Then the bottom dropped out. Sales fell off and Blue Beetle went bi-monthly again.

Fox, who had sexed up stories a la Fiction House to raise circulation, now went a step further in an effort to stay in business. And with the instinct of a man in the wrong business, he did the thing that has destroyed marginal publishers again and again and again. What Victor S. Fox did led directly to the establishment of the Comics Code Authority. His magazines were not the only ones, nor was he principally responsible, but without Fox and the publishers like him, the Code would never have come into being. Censorship of adult literature is an evil thing. Censorship of a child's literature, by someone other than the parents, is not a good thing -- but it is a better thing than
the license that permitted Victor Fox to publish as he did.

The Fox Feature Syndicate and Blue Beetle turned toward the sado-masochists, the fetishists, and the other hangers-one in the borderlands of sexual neuroticism.

The May 1948 issue began with a story about a beautiful, long-haired, blonde who had devised "the biggest plan in the world" for making money. Clad in a filmy leotard, cut to the thigh on either side, and a halter with shoulder-length, fingerless gloves -- typical fetishist costume -- she begins a campaign of murder. On page two, she drives a knife into the throat of "the debutante of the year," just after the girl has undressed for bed, and drops her calling card, a miniature sphinx, in the blood that runs out upon her breast. On page three, she plants another knife between the breasts of a strip-teaser dressed in bra and panties. The girl she murders on page eight shows only a bit of thigh as she takes a knife in her throat. Why did the killer do it? "They think I'm mad, eh? Just wait'll I've killed a half a dozen prominent women...as the Sphinx! Then I start snatching them and their friends will fall over themselves to pay ransom! They'll know I mean business!"



In the next, July 1948, issue:

"Seamen perished in plastic webs! Such was the nightmare woven with the skill of the spider by a sombre team who hoodwinked justice until BLUE BEETLE himself decided to become entangled in the case which was plotted by a twisted brain, then fulfilled by a mistress of murder, "THE BLACK WIDOW!"

That first line would fascinate a psychiatrist

The Black Widow's dress, supported by two narrow straps, plunges to the waist in the front and back, and at the sides it is slashed from waist to hem, revealing her thighs and hips. The bra cups, with her nipples as the center, are two spider webs. She wears French heels. Virtual duplicates of this costume may be found in the most extreme fetishist drawings and photographs.

The Black Widow carries a device that ejects filaments of plastic similar to spider webs. She sprays the faces of her victims with this goo, and as they strangle to death before her, she leaves her sign, a dead black widow spider upon their bodies. Why? "...I have quite a

score to settle with the Navy! One stupid seaman left me at the church... And forty years ago my father was disgraced with a dishonorable discharge! No... We hold no love for the Navy... Neither of us!" Ultimately, she and her father, the mastermind, capture Mike Mannigan and Joan Mason, and take them to the cellar of their home, where, against one wall, an enormous plastic spider web is woven. In the concluding scene, the Black Widow deliberately kills her father with the plastic spraygun as he dangles from the center of the web, obstructing her clear shot of Blue Beetle.

You do not have to be a Frederick Wertham to read the meanings of these stories and their words. Nor even know much about sex symbolism.

These stories were sold to boys and girls. They were sold to children without sexual experience, searching for the meanings and relationships of sexual experience. The Black Widow and the Sphinx must have helped them in their search.

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I don't know how much longer Blue Beetle was published. Fox Feature Syndicate went on. Later that year, the third issue of Crimes by Women appeared. The cover displays four attractive women, guns in their fists, their clothes in tatters, attempting a jail break. They are trapped on the top of the prison wall, and the guards are machine-gunning them. "You asked for it...sister!" a guard yells as he shoots a blonde down. The brunette, her eyes bulging, cries "Aaagh! My leg!" The redhead fires back at the guard tower. "Here's one fer luck!" she screams. And the other blonde, the best looking one, kneels in the foreground, a blazing sub-machinegun cradled in her arms. "Try this in ya belly ya louse!" she says.

Eight years before, the Flame's foster father had sent him out into the world from the pages of another Fox magazine. He had said, "My son, you leave us armed with potent mystic powers -- use them for good!"

Victor Fox had come a long way.

V

Blue Beetle made his final appearance in the mid-'50s.* The Fox Feature Syndicate was dead at last, and Blue Beetle was headlined in a special issue of Space Adventures, a Charlton Publication. His performance in costume was only a token one, irrelevant to the story, and Dan Garrett -- still a rookie cop -- solved the crime in his other blue uniform, the one with the badge on it.

It was a sign of the times that he spent almost a page trying to figure out a way to get rid of Mike Mannigan and into costume. In the old days he'd have told Mannigan there was a lead he wanted to follow up; by '54, he wrecked the patrol car -- "realism" was in.

The decline of the idealistic super-hero, and the ascendance of the all too mortal hero-victim and hero-villain -- culminating in the Feldstein EC comics -- was inevitable. When America entered World War II, our eyes had been turned inward for a decade; Steinbeck, Saroyan, and Caldwell, each an idealist, were our leading writers. We carried that home-grown idealism into the war, and, at war's end, we discovered it had not been enough. We discovered, too, that some of it had been false. Saroyan, who depended so much on his personal vision, cracked wide open in The Adventures of Wesley Jackson; Caldwell became an aimless hack; Steinbeck a more conscientious one. As a nation we turned first to disillusionment, then to self-examination and self-criticism, then to self-revilement and despair and apathy. Our literature followed us. And our popular literature, of course, did too.

In science fiction, Galaxy appeared on the scene as the last wave of disillusionment ebbed, and rode the tide of caustic self-criticism to success with Ray Bradbury's

*Well, not quite. There was yet another appearance of the Blue Beetle in an "IW" reprint comic in 1961. The comic was called, for some reason, The Human Fly, and lasted only one issue. As with all IW comics to date, distribution was spotty at best. The material, also as in all IW comics, was reprinted without copyright credit.

RL

"The Fireman," published in book form as Fahrenheit 451, and Kornbluth and Phil's "Gravy Planet", which Ballantine Books issues as The Space Merchants. And then Galaxy -- and much of the rest of science fiction -- went out with the tide and came back in with self-revilement and despair.

It has been suggested that, beyond her nature as a person and as a sexual symbol, woman symbolizes the world to man. Perhaps this is so. If it is, it may explain the hatred of woman in our post-war, Cold War, literature (and life), for we have surely hated the world we live in. Perhaps it explains the success of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer, and Ian Fleming's James Bond stories, and the countless other, similar, stories of "detection." In any case, the post-war detective story has mirrored our disillusionment, too.

War or no war, however, the decline of the super-hero was inevitable. The rhythm of idealism, disillusionment, self-criticism, self-revilement, despair -- and then, when the emotions have exhausted themselves, the founding of a new optimistic realism on the sound principles of the old idealism, followed by the creation of a new idealism, is an inevitable one itself. Already, in the comic world we are seeing, perhaps, in the revival in somewhat altered forms of the costume heroes of the past, the first signs that the cycle is making a full turn.

Maybe even Blue Beetle will come back once more....

The decline of Victor Fox and his magazines was inevitable too. He began with a remarkable artist, Basil Berold, and a seller's market for the comic book costume hero. But popular fiction and trash mirror their times, they do not -- like art -- create them, and Fox, by 1941, was a man out of his times. Whatever his age, he was born twenty-five years too late.

Even so, he might have survived as others have. But Fox was always a promoter, never a publisher or editor. Like all promoters, he could never understand that you can't sell people entertainment -- not with prize contests and premiums -- they have to buy it. Nor could he understand what every good editor and publisher knows, and what the bad ones seem never to believe -- despite the bleached bones of too many magazines to count -- that you can always sell sex, but you can never sell depravity, not in the long haul, not in the competitive market. The public only pays for what it wants. And most people have a mean streak of decency in them.

This was Victor S. Fox's education. He began his career in his best blue suit, standing in line for a high school diploma. He ended it, blue jeans gaping at the knees, being drummed out of kindergarten.

—Richard Kyle

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By way of a PS, it should be noted that Fox Features also attempted newspaper syndication -- both national and abroad -- of features such as Blue Beetle (drawn by Jack Kirby) and the Hawk (drawn by Will Eisner, although pseudonymously). They didn't last.

RK

ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME

THE SERIES SO FAR...

In response to popular demand (East Coast Al Lewis agreed to demand it in exchange for being permitted to tape our record collection) here is a summary of the "All in Color for a Dime" series to date. The column marked art# refers to the article in the series. The column marked is# refers to the issue of Xero in which the article appeared. Author is obvious, but artist, note, refers only to the swiper/stenciller. The original artists involved are generally mentioned in the articles themselves. Title and topic is also obvious, with the latter in parenthises on the lower line.

art#	is#	author	artist	title and topic
1	1	Dick Lupoff	Tom Hief	The Big Red Cheese (Captain Marvel, other members of the Marvel Family)
1.1	3	Dick Lupoff	Sylvia White	Shaz-Urk! (additions and corrections to 1)
1.2	3	Otto Binder	" "	At Home with the Marvels (additions and corrections to 1)
2	2	Ted White	" "	The Spawn of M. C. Gaines (beginnings and development of the DC comics chain)
2.1	3	Ted White	" "	Son of the Spawn of M. C. Gaines (additions and corrections to 2)
3	3	Jim Harmon	"	A Bunch of Swell Guys (All-Star Comics and the Justice Society of America)
4	4	Don Thompson	Maggie Curtis	Okay, Axis, Here We Come! (Timely group /Capt America, Human Torch, Namor/)
5	6	Dick Lupoff	Sylvia White	The Several Soldiers of Victory (Leading Comics and the Seven Soldiers of Victory)
6	6	Dick Ellington	" "	Me to your Leader Take (Planet Comics and the Fiction House group)
7	7	Don Thompson	Maggie Curtis	The Wild Ones (The Spectre and Dr. Fate)
8	8	Richard Kyle	Jim Moriarty	The Education of Victor Fox (Fox group /Flame, Green Mask, Blue Beetle, etc./)

Additional AICFAD articles will appear in the final two issues of Xero, later this year, after which the series will be transferred to Don Thompson's fanzine Comic Art.

Before you waste any effort writing for back issues, there are none available. Sorry. If you live within visiting distance of New York, you are welcome to look over the file set of Xero: otherwise, you're strictly on your own for the time being. Some time in 1963 the entire series (or at least that portion appearing Xero) may be collected, republished, and offered for sale. Plans are still nebulous, however, no orders are being accepted as yet; details will be announced if/when plans become more solid.

RL