XERO
9

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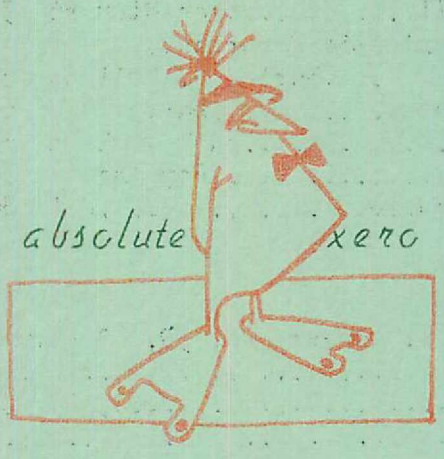
XERO 9

SEPTEMBER

This penultimate issue of the Fanzine of Relativistic Dadaism comes from Pat & Dick Lupoff, 210 East 73rd Street, New York 21, New York. Bhob Stewart is Graphics and Layout Director. Ella Parker is Sterling Agent.

DICKIE'S DIARY



April 15, 1962

confessions of a small-time duper bug

"Vicolor!" exclaimed Walter Breen, holding his copy of Xero 8 open to page 33, jabbing his forefinger triumphantly at a small area about an inch over Alfred Bester's left hand, and at another on a line with Avram Davidson's yarmulke but some inches to the left thereof. I suppose I should explain that Walter was pointing to spots near pictures of Alfred and Avram, on Bhob Stewart's first "Writers at Work" page, not at the gentlemen themselves. As a matter of cold fact, I have no idea where Alfred Bester was at that time; Avram Davidson was nearby I know because Walter, Pat and I, and numbrous other fans were In Avram's apartment attending a surprise party given by the Colonel's lady in honor of his approaching birthday.

But back to Walter and the Vicolor... Walter was pointing to two areas on page 33 where ink of one color shaded gradually into another. It was quite hard to detect, as that particular page had been run in black ink on green paper, then rerun with an overlay in that lovely purplish shade Gestetner calls burgundy, and finally rerun again with a different overlay, this time using both green

and red ink in a process comparable to Vicolor. Walter mistook it for ShelVy's process and I, in my cups as it is my custom to be at Avram Davidson's Birthday Parties, unthinkingly confirmed Walter's deduction.

I'm sorry, Walter, I was too quick to agree. It wasn't Vicolor at all, it was a process that I invented myself, and that is so far nameless. I propose to call it Rextripe because it gives the effect of striped ink on a Rex Rotary or similar mimeo. It won't work on a pad machine, but then you wouldn't need it on a pad machine: you could use Vicolor.

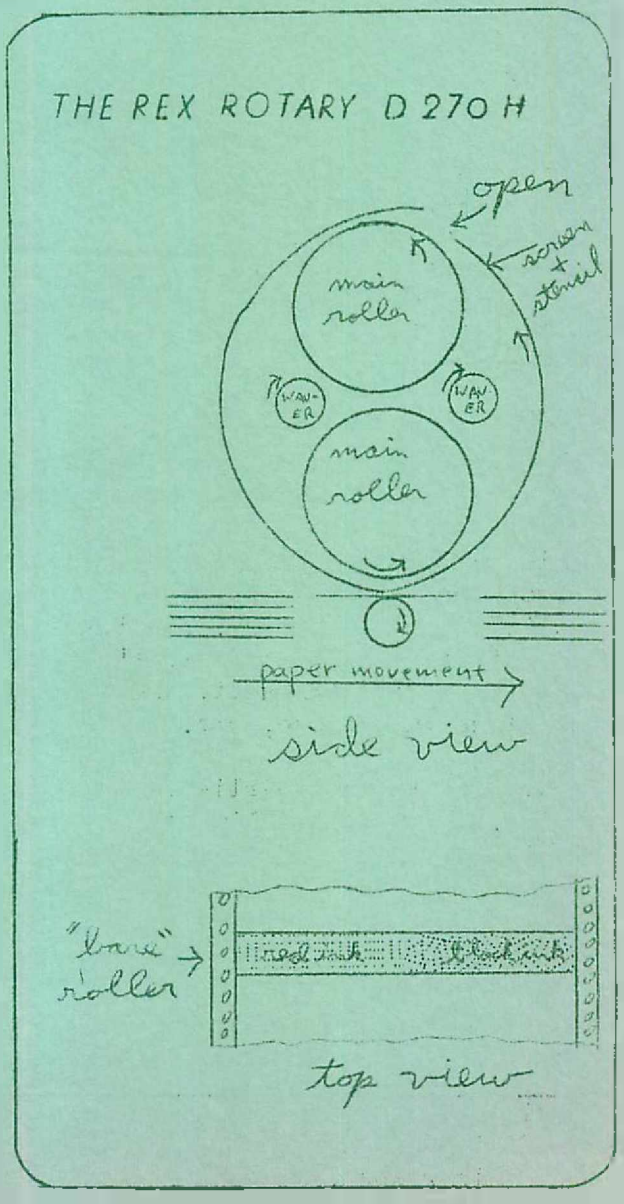
Say, is everybody out there still with me? I have a feeling that a lot of readers don't dig Vicolor, no less Rextripe, and explaining the new process in terms of the older one is pretty futile if that's true.

Okay, let's back up some and talk about mimeographs and color processes. Back about ten years ago Shelby Vick got tired of monochromatic mimeography. Shelby had a conventional mimeograph, i.e, a pad machine. It worked this way: a hollow drum is the heart of the mimeo; a cloth pad is stretched tight around the drum, and a stencil is fastened over the pad. Normally, ink is placed inside the drum. It passes through perforations in the surface of the drum, soaking the pad, and passing in turn through the typing or illos cut on the stencil, to be deposited on paper as the drum revolves.

By conventional means you can run only one color at a time; to change colors you clean out the drum, change pads, and re-ink. With Vicolor you don't ink from the inside of the drum through the pad: you "paint" the ink on the outside of the pad. And you can paint stripes, polka dots, or any other pattern of colors you like, and when you run off your pages the ink will be deposited in the exact pattern of your "painting"...or, to be really precise, in its mirror image.

Vicolor is inapplicable to the Rex. There is no drum, no pad. Instead, there are four hard-surfaced rollers. Two large ones -- about four inches in diameter and slightly longer than a stencil is wide -- are mounted one above the other, with a gap of about an inch separating them. The smaller rollers are mounted parallel to the large ones so that the four rollers, seen end-on, form a diamond shape.

(Actually there is a fifth roller, the impression roller, located below the path of the moving paper and used to hold it against the stencil, but this is not involved in the Rextripe process.)



Next, a silk screen is wrapped around the cylinders. The stencil is mounted on the outside of the screen. On the hand-inked model (and this is crucial: Rextripe will not work on a machine with automatic inking) there is a gap between the ends of the silk screen. Inking is accomplished by applying paste ink directly onto the top roller, through the gap in the silk screen. A few turns distribute the ink onto the four rollwers; when you start your actual run, the ink passes through the silk screen, through the stencil, and onto the paper.

Now, here is why Vicolor is impossible on the Rex: Whereas the entire mechanism of the drum/pad machine rotates on a common axis, with a given point on drum, pad, and stencil being permanently associated...on the Rex each cylinder rotates on its own axis while the screen and stencil revolve about all four cylinders. No "patterned" inking is possible...with one exception: vertical stripes.

You can see why this is so by visualizing the operation of that four-cylinder system (or checking the diagram on page 3). No horizontal pattern because the motion of the rollers and the screen would swiftly smear out any horizontal stripes of ink placed on the roller. But since there is no horizontal smearing* bands of ink placed side-by-side on the exposed roller will be spread in parallel vertical stripes as the rollers and screen are turned. The result, when a stencil is run, is vertical bands of color on the final page. The bands can be any width from a practical minimum of an inch or so up to the full width of the page, and as many colors as there are bands.

For a sample of Rextriping, see the Reiss cartoon facing. That cartoon, by the Way, has been the cause of some controversy in this house. Andy did it for us last year, intending it to be used as the cover of a Cultzine. Pat and I were high on the waiting list at that time -- about third or fourth, I think -- but some pretty rank goings on were under way in the Cult, and the USPOD was investigating, and between revulsion at some of the publications and a frank desire to remain univolved in an indecent mail case (which never came about, by the way) we dropped.

Since then the cartoon has languished. I just don't think it's particularly funny; Bhob thinks it is, and that it Says Something Significant to boot. Using it this way it earns its keep as a sample, whether it's a worthy cartoon or not.

This, by the way, is only my second attempt at Rextriping ("Writers at Work" in Xero 8 was my first), and my first using a 'faxed stencil. Rextripe seems an easily learned process, requiring little or no practice before "live" use. It is not patented. In fact, I'll be both flattered and fascinated to see the results if anyone else tries it, and I'll be most interested to see the results, hear of any problems in its use, etc.

I also mentioned, earlier, that Rextriping is possible only with a hand-inked machine. I have a feeling that it may be possible with a Rex equipped for automatic inking if the auto-inking mechanism is temporarily disabled. There aren't too many Rexes (Rexi?) around fandom -- Bob Pavlat has one I know, and LASFS has another -- but someone might be willing to try it. I'll ask Pat to print any such True Duper Experiences in EI next time. As for the other screen-type mimeos, there are quite a few Gestetners around, and at least one Roneo that I know of. If you can just get that ink deposited, you can use Rextripe on any screen mimeo. How many can get the ink deposited?

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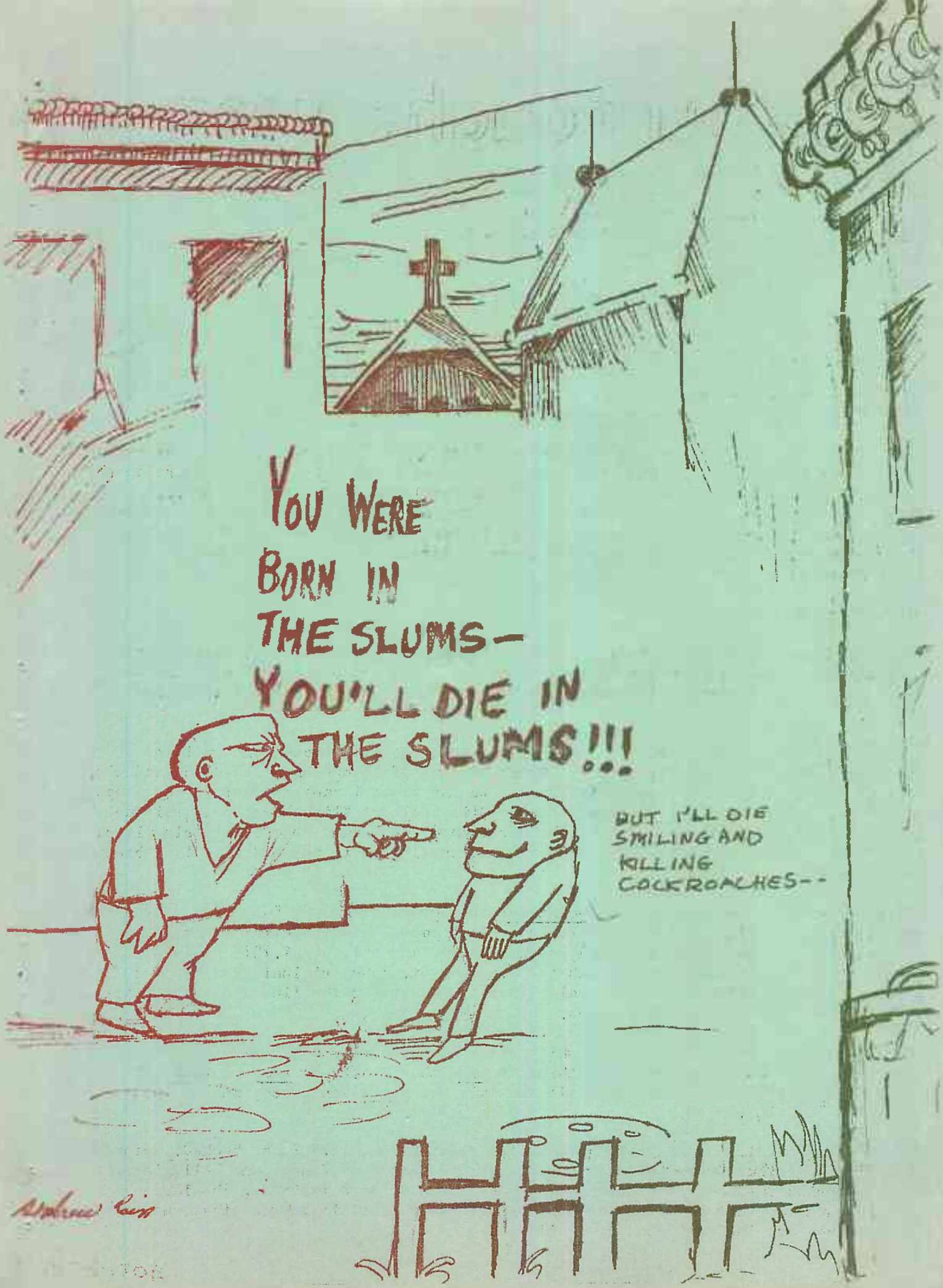
*This is not strictly true. The two small rollers have some horizontal motion in addition to their axial rotation; in fact they are sometimes called waver rollers for this reason. However, the horizontal "waver" is so little that it results in no significant changes in a run of 200 copies with re-inking after the first hundred. This "waver" is the reason for not attempting extemely narrow bands of color.


YOU WERE
BORN IN
THE SLUMS-
YOU'LL DIE IN
THE SLUMS!!!
BUT I'LL DIE
SMILING AND
KILLING
COCKROACHES--

May 17, 1962

it's a burroughs year

Here's why I didn't read Burroughs when I was twelve or fourteen, the ages at which one is supposed to read Burroughs: I thought I was too good for it. Burroughs to me meant Tarzan, Tarzan meant Tarzan movies, and these -- I came of age in the Weismuller era -- were so Saturday-afternoon-kid-show oriented that (even though I faithfully attended Saturday afternoon kid shows) they never inspired me to check into the hardbound inspiration of the films.

I did read one, a Big Little Book edition of "Tarzan and the Ant Men". This I remember, even though I probably read it back when I was about nine, because of one particular scene. Remember the sequence in which Tarzan is captured by the Veltoptismakusians, reduced to their size, and thrown into the slave dungeon where he befriends the beautiful slave-girl Talaskar, who avoids mating by screwing up her face to look like an old hag whenever a guard appears?

Well if you do, you will recall that Tarzan first espies Talaskar as she is preparing dinner over a brazier. At the time I read the story I was only recently aware as to the meaning of the word brassiere, and thought myself rather wicked to know...but there was this girl, clearly described as cooking dinner over a brazier of hot coals and I, being unfamiliar with the word, took it for brassiere, and had the weirdest time trying to puzzle out how or why anybody would use one of those wicked underthings for a charcoal stove!

But I digress.

The world knows Burroughs chiefly for Tarzan's jungle adventures, but stfans who revere him do so chiefly because of the Barsoomian adventures of John Carter and the other heroes and assorted other characters with whom Burroughs populated the red planet.

I never read any of the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, with exception mentioned above, and as a result I always felt just a little bit out of things when fen discussed him, a feeling not as acute but essentially akin to the present pangs I feel in the company of Tolkien enthusiasts. I did read the two Otis Adelbert Kline Mars books reissued by Ace last year, and billed as "just like Burroughs", and found them moderately pleasant light reading for a while, but mechanical and repetitious to the end that they began to pall before very long.

Still, when Dover brought out its beautiful trilogy of "Thuvia", "Chessmen", and "Master Mind" this spring, I could not resist. Good paper, good printing (I think I detect the fine hand of Ted Dikty at work), sewn binding, and all for $1.75! Besides, the volume is copiously illustrated with the J. Allen St. John originals -- paintings and line drawings (I think I am in a small minority who prefer the lines to the paintings) which are worth the price themselves.

In fact, I must confess that for a while after its purchase, the book stood on my shelf untouched -- it was more something to have than really to read. Still, the old gnawing curiosity to know what all the talk was about continued, and so one day I started "Thuvia".

Well, almost needless to say (but not quite, else why say it?) I was hooked. Since then I've read four Burroughs Martian novels, one Carson of Venus, one Pellucidar, two non-series Burroughs books, and some half dozen or more Tarzans. The last are the most numerous not by my choice, but because they exist in the greatest number and because they are the most readily available.

Following the Dover trilogy it seems that everyone suddenly woke up to a fact so astonishing, so fantastic, so incredible, so thrilling wonder that it is almost beyond belief: the estate of Edgar Rice Burroughs had allowed the copyright to elapse on literally dozens of his books...books of the four great series, plus the independent novels. Suddenly Canaveral Press began its ambitious program, saddling their books with the wholly inappropriate drawings of Mahlon Blaine; Ace has announced a series of Burroughs paperbacks; Dover, it is rumored, will follow up its initial success with another omnibus.

And all this time, dozens of Burroughs books have been in print and available here in New York in imported English paperback editions! These I found by sheer accident, stumbling into the Aberdeen Book Store on Fifth Avenue at 31st Street. There are a few in digest size, published by Mark Goulden, but the paper is dry, the print is uneven, and the cover paintings are laughable. Also bearing the Gouldens imprint, and apparently a successor series, are Pinnacle Books, regular ("tall") paperback size. These are superior to the digest-size group, but best of all are the Four Square Books. These are also standard pb size, are impeccably printed on moderately good paper, pretty well bound...and the cover paintings, by Mortelmans, are a continuing series of joys.

As far as I've been able to tell, only Tarzan books are available (although "Tarzan at the Earth's Core" does double duty in the Pellucidar series), but the Goulden set also lists "Carson of Venus". The only drawback is the price. The English price for all these books is 2 shillings and sixpence, as near as I can calculate, that's about 35¢ in real money, and a fair price for the product. Aberdeen, however, sells the things for 50¢ apiece, which is exhorbitant. Their argument, of course, is "We're not twisting your arm. If you think the books are overpriced, don't buy them."

What you can do is write to the English distributors.

They are:

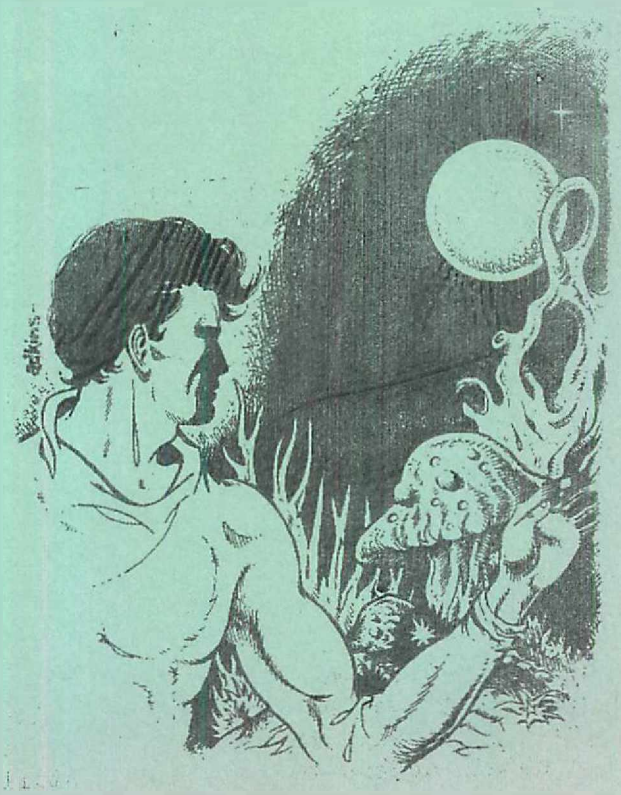
for Mark Goulden and Pinnacle Books

W. H. Allen
Essex Street
London, W. C. 2

and for Four Square Books

Landsborough Publications Ltd.
177 New Bond Street
London, W. 1

But what I was talking about on the previous page is the books themselves. I can see now what makes Burroughs Bibliophiles the loyal devotees they are. Oh, everything that has been said against Burroughs is true. His works are shallow (though not nearly as shallow as some who have not read them think), they are contrived, his characters are often absurd and his plotting is predictable to the last capture and escape.



All his faults notwithstanding, Burroughs imbued his tales with a spirit unmatched in the literature of our field. Time after time, the reader, starting a new Burroughs book, is swept away, his objections left behind and forgotten, as he adventures in the identity of his favorite Burroughs hero. Further, although the plots of Burroughs stories are simple and unoriginal, still the settings and embellishments of them are endlessly inventive.

Tarzan, the series I expected to find least imaginative (prejudiced, you see, by those old Johnny Weismuller movies) is surprisingly the most imaginative. Every book I've read so far has some good gimmick, some of them have several. Tarzan finds a lost city with a golden hoard. Does Burroughs let it go at that? Nossir, he does not. That lost city, Opar, is a colony of Atlantis, no less, cut off when the land of Atlantis sank. Opar's people survive, degenerated through inbreeding and through cross-breeding with apes; their language is now the guttaral proto-speech of the apes. Does Burroughs leave it at that? Nossir, he does not. The ancient Atlantean tongue survives as an ecclesiastical language!

As for Burroughs' weakness of characterization, I believe that he was quite aware of his shortcomings, and learned to compensate for them by a simple device. Take Tarzan, for instance. In the first of the series, the infant John Clayton is raised by apes. All right, it's an old theme, the human child raised by wild beasts. You needn't accuse Burroughs of cribbing from Kipling; the theme goes back to the Romulus legend if not further. But throughout that book, as long as Tarzan is in the company of animals only, he is a convincing character. When he meets a few humans, on his own ground, he remains a fairly believable character. But when he goes to Wisconsin -- as he does in the last sequences of the book -- he starts to look pretty absurd.

In the second book, "The Return of Tarzan", he starts out aboard an ocean liner, lives for some time in Paris where he becomes an absinthe-soaked habitue of the music halls -- Johnny Weismuller never showed me that side of M. Jean C. Clayton -- has an affair with a countess, is challenged to a duel by M. le Comte, etc, etc.

Through it all he is thoroughly unconvincing.

But he makes his way to North Africa, has a little adventure with some arabs (and again puts on a pretty hilarious performance) and finally gets back to his beloved Afrique exotique. And, lo!, he's real again.

Similarly, Carter, Ulysses Paxton, Hadron of Hastor, all on Mars; Carson on Venus; Jason Gridley in Pellucidar; all are believable, because the settings are so exotic that we do not have our normal social orientation, and thus do not know what norms of behavior to expect of Burroughs' characters.

Thuvia, maid of Mars, does not behave as we would expect her to? Wait a minute, how do we know what behavior to expect of a princess born to a race of oviparous humans with a natural life expectancy of 1000 years, living in semi-barbaric city-states upon a dying planet peopled with strange races and still using the leftover trappings of a science dead hundreds of thousands of years? Hey? Thuvia in London might seem absurd. Thuvia in Dusar is perfectly in place. We are the strangers in a strange land as we read of her adventures.

This new-found enthusiasm of mine for Burroughs makes me all the more delighted with a set of photostats provided by Caz Cazedessus of Baton Rouge Louisiana. He sent me stats of the first year's run of John Carter of Mars Sunday strips from the Chicago Sun. Drawn by ERB's son John Coleman Burroughs, the series began, auspiciously, in the Sun for December 7, 1941. Caz has furnished me with stats up to and including Sunday, November 29, 1942, and says that the strip ran on into 1943 but that he has so far been unable to obtain access to the later installments.

John Coleman Burroughs was a fairly adept copier of styles. He illustrated some of his father's books in adequate J. Allen St. John fashion; the Sunday Carter strip is done in pseudo Alex Raymond (Flash Gordon) which improved as the series continued. The story line is not separately credited; presumably, it, too, is by John Coleman. It begins with a fairly faithful recitation of the Carter mythos: the Civil War captain ambushed in Arizona by apaches, the cave, the mysterious gas, and so on.

Once on Mars, however, things start to take a turn from the authentic, and soon Carter and Dejah Thoris are embroiled in some of the wildest and wollaest adventures you can imagine. Dejah, for instance, is by turns nearly fed to some baby durkoos (a species of giant Martian bird), turned to stone, revived but inflated to giant size, shrunk back to normal and finally carried off by the giant chicken men of Mars to their hidden village in the feather forest. So help me. Carter's adventures are similarly bizarre. At the end of the sequence in my possession, Carter, having been swallowed whole by a dragon fish and cut his way out through the beast's scaly back as digestive action is about to finish him, fights his way through a tribe of mud-creatures and finally sets off in the company of the king of the plant men, whom he has rendered ambulatory by cutting him off at the roots...are you still with me?... to find Dejah and rescue her from the chicken men.

Oh, Gaz, Gaz, get me those last twenty-six weeks before I die of the suspense!

1962 is indeed the year of the great Burroughs revival. For those of us who have been complaining that the stf writers have wandered too far from the path of direct and vigorous story-telling...here is the stuff we've been crying for. I for one am glad to have it available again, but I must say that I'm glad it isn't all that we have around.

June 15 - 18, 1962

rog ebert breezes by

There was a Fanoclast meeting June 15, and when Pat and I got home the baby sitter told us that Rog Ebert had called. Rog Ebert! We hadn't seen him since the 1961 Midwestcon, and had hardly heard from him since. He'd contributed several of his curious hybrid prosepoems to Xero, but the last of those had appeared in number 6, last September.

The return number for Rog was the hotel at LaGuardia Airport, and by furious calling and calling back we managed to get in touch with him Saturday, June 16. That night Rog came over for a visit, as did, coincidentally, Coast Guard Al Lewis and Larry Ivie, the latter carrying a Tarzan painting and John Carter painting which he was using as samples.

Rog seemed to have matured considerably since that Midwestcon. Actually, meeting him at the North Plaza Motel had been my first contact with him. Prior to that, just from reading his fanzine material, I had conjured a slim and sensitive, tall sallow hypochondriac, slow of speech and manner. What a surprise! Rog is built like a football player, is full of energy, talks incessantly, and is forever telling bad jokes. At that Midwestcon he had turned a contour chair in the Seascape Room into a space-jockey's bucket, turned his glasses upside down, and had half a room-full of people in hysterics.

But on this trip he had calmed down. After all, he's twenty now.

Rog is terribly, terribly Aware Politically, full of the usual liberal line. He is also an immensely talented young man, and a hustler on top of it. What was he doing

in New York in June, for instance? Well, right after the end of the spring semester at the University of Illinois Rog had engineered himself a job as publicity man for a team of paraplegic athletes en route to New York for the annual Wheelchair Games. From New York the team proceeded -- Roger included -- to South Africa, where they made a tour at the behest of a South African philanthropist out to start a rehabilitation program for injured persons in his country.

While there, Rog told us, he was going to do the research for an article on student unrest, already all but sold to The Nation. When he got home, Rog will have to go to work to write an article on a long-lost-but-now-rediscovered folk singer which is slated for Show.

After a full evening of talk, we arranged to meet the following night at a Chinese restaurant in Times Square, following which Rog would get a tour of the two areas of New York he's eager to see: Times Square/42nd Street, and Greenwich Village. By the time the crowd was assembled in the Chinese Republic (Nationalist, of course) it consisted of Walter Breen (who drew a small crowd on the sidewalk before dinner; people kept waiting for him to start a hellfire sermon), Lin Carter and his poopsie, Gary Deindorfer, Lee Hoffman, Ted and Sylvia White, Rog, Pat and myself. It was a pretty good meal, full of plusdoublegood fannish talk, following which the group became unfortunately separated in the surging mob of 42nd Street. All right, so it was Sunday night. There's always a surging mob on 42nd Street.

Lin and his poopsie Claire, Pat and I, and Rog, made our way back and forth on the Street for a while, but all that happened was that gay types kept trying to pick Rog up because he looked so wholesome and innocent. Then we gave up and went to the Village. Rog's item, "Snippets", is a faithful record of the evening's events from that point onward, and if you don't know the rest of the feghootling that keeps popping up every few lines, it's to your benefit not to find out. Monday, Rog flew on.

June 28 and thereafter

through darkest fandom with notebook and tape recorder

If there is anybody out there who is by now ignorant of the fact that a lady writer named Shirley Camper is doing an article on fanzines for COSMOPOLITAN, he is indeed an isolated soul. There has been so much discussion of the Camper Project, in person and in print since AXE broke the story, that I have no intention here of telling over again all the details of the June 28 phone call, the June 30 interview, and all of the contacts since then.

It does seem remarkable to me that just about once every decade the Big World Out There Discovers Fandom by means of an article in a national magazine. Before the second World War it was TIME that covered the first NYCon. Next time around it was LIFE, a brother-in-Luce, that unveiled the secrets of our arcane microcosm by covering the Nolacon. That would be, lessee, 1951, no? And this year we will have the Chicon III, Mrs. Camper, and COSMOPOLITAN.

It strikes me that there is an excessive amount of excitement in fandom over the Camper article. People are writing letters about the Dire Future that awaits us, the terrible things that this article will bring about. Others -- fewer, I might mention -- seem to think that this is the Best Thing that has ever happened to us ...that the World will be converted to our way of life.

Hey, I've got news for you, gang. You know what will happen when the December COSMO comes out? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. It's happened twice before, and each time the result was exactly the same. The World forgot all about us by the time the next issue of TIME/LIFE came out. Fandom remembered a little longer, but except for a few antiquarians, not very much longer. And COSMO is not TIME or LIFE.

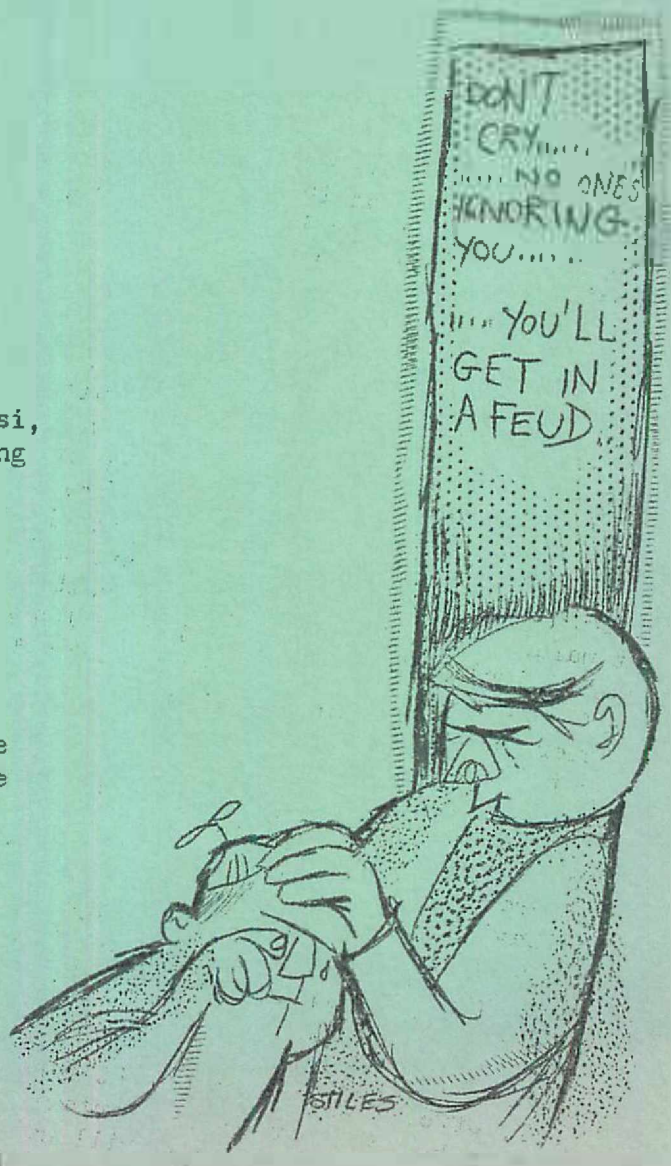
The person I sympathize with is Mrs. Camper. She came upon this thing through her high-school aged son Fred, who is an ardent reader of the humor/satire fanzines, and who happened to get a few stf fmz through the humorzines. When Mrs. Camper first made contact with Pat and me she seemed startled that fandom wasn't just a bunch of adolescents furiously hektoing their little imitation MADs. As soon as this became obvious, my first thought -- and I told Mrs. Camper -- was, "Lady, you don't have the slightest teeniest conception of what you've gotten into."

But Mrs. Camper is a conscientious professional, unlike the authors of some past articles which, purporting to explain s-f, merely spread murk and misconceptions. Mrs. Camper borrowed from me a stack of fanzines three feet tall, and more from Al Lewis and his Electric Fanzine Foundation. And she took a list of names of people to contact.

Here are the ones in greater New York, whom Pat and I recommended to her: Dick Bergeron, Jimmy Taurasi, Larry and Noreen Shaw, Sam and Chris Moskowitz, Ted and Sylvia White. So far I know she has contacted everyone on that list except Taurasi, and after all, Jimmy never tires of telling us that SFTimes is not a fanzine. I do know that Bergeron has put Mrs. Camper onto Walter Breen's classic article on "Other Fandoms" which is, as well, the best short analysis of our own fandom I know of.

Mrs. Camper has also set out to contact Harry Warner and Earl Kemp, and before she is through I am sure that the list will be much longer. Whatever conclusions she reaches, whatever statements she makes about fandom, true or untrue, it will not be without the most intensive study ever made of our microcosm.

For that, whatever other opinion I form upon reading the final article in COSMO, I give Mrs. Camper full credit, and I hope that the result is reasonably in proportion.



July 22, 1962

daddy go tap tap tap

Today this editorial goes on stencil. It's forty days till the official date-of-issue for Xero 9, but it's a big issue (as you've probably noticed), some of the material is discouragingly slow coming in, and if it's to be out in time for the Chicon (I rate it at about a 50-50 chance of that) then whatever is on hand will have to be stencilled now, and worry about the rest when it gets here.

In addition to Pat, Bhob, and myself, this issue is getting to be more of a team effort than ever. Of course Larry and Noreen are playing host to the mimeo sessions, since the Rex is in their house. But Steve Stiles has taken over part of the burden of running Xero off (blame Steve for bad pages, credit me for good ones) ...Frank Willimczyk (or is it Willimiggle?) provided the set type for "The Greatest Shows UnEarthly"...and Chris Steinbrunner again used his sinister connexions to obtain cut-rate stenafaxing.

As of today two articles are still in doubt for Xero 9. One, by Dave van Arnam, is a major examination of the Barsoomian novels I gushed so about some pages back. Dave has been working on it, on and off, since April; if he doesn't make this issue with it, it will be in Xero 10. The other is Roy Thomas's contribution to the "All in Color" series, and is due August 1st. You know about both these articles by now...if they're on the contents page, Dave and Roy came through; if not, not. But as of today, I'm typing with my fingers crossed. Speaking of which I've been composing on stencil with my fingers crossed since page 6, but that's another matter.

One author note this time: Norman Clarke, contributor of "The Greatest Shows UnEarthly", is not the same Norman Clarke who has been known for some years, and who has appeared lately in "The Panic Button". Our Norm Clarke is another Fantasy Film Club recruit who has sold articles on railroading to the professional fanzines in that field, and a few short mystery stories. The photos of "A Yankee Circus on Mars" accompanying Norm's article are swiped from a 1905 issue of "The Theatre", a long defunct journal. If the duping is less than sharp and clear, consider that these were photographs screened and printed 57 years ago, recently photostated, stenafaxed, and mimeographed. A number of people who've read Norm's manuscript, myself included, are slobbering to learn more about that play, but so far no one has been able to supply further information. Not even the author's name. Marion Zimmer Bradley, you're a circus fan and a stf fan all in one...if anybody knows about "A Yankee Circus on Mars" it should be you. Any data?

Speaking of "AYCM", another strange idea was recently suggested...do you suppose none other than Edgar Rice Burroughs could have seen that show at the Hippodrome and drawn from it certain inspiration? The chronology is right; according to Bradford Day's short biography of Burroughs he was travelling in the West at that time, but he could have visited New York on business...or, stranger still...might he not have seen the very same issue of "The Theatre" from which our illos were statted and... Oh no, it's just too much. Or is it?

Charlie Collins, whose "The Fantastic Paperback" in Xero 6 drew requests for a sequel, offers one, but it isn't more of the same. Instead Charlie gives us the low-down on how one particular Fantastic Paperback came to be. Actually, the book is not on the stands yet, and will not be for another sixty to ninety days, but I for one shall look forward to it eagerly.

DICK

this story was once told to me
by a connubial kind of cockney
who whispered of it in
dulcet tones
and into rotgut sherry.

it concerns -- of course
you are not to believe it --
an Ape Man, card
carrying
-- no
pockets --
who swung breezily
through -- uh -- trees ily
and bounced from
bough to nurse
(from the withered paps
of a she-ape).

of course, it was a she ape
whose paps the ape-man
fondled.
nothing queer about our boy.

he picked up apetalk
at an early, surly age
when more than all else
he loved
to lazily
(but, natch, alertly)
loll on the broad and hairy head
of a she elephant.

to keep, however, from going
completely
ape,
Tarzan (for such, revealed by
connubial friend, was
his
name)
pawed through a child's primer which
he discovered one day in
the East Orange Public Library's
mobile unit.

becoming literate at nine,
and acquiring a French
accent at seven, he was
immediately singled out by the
observant apes as an uncommonly
bright fellow
who should be up to bigger and
better things
than the withered paps of a she-ape.

concurring, Tarzan married
Jane, who
was, however, not at the
time fully
informed of the
considerations entering into
her
betrothal. her
father had doubts, but
she pointed out that
he was, after all, just
like him
in all necessary aspects.

the story at this point
becomes
rather hazy, due to
my connubial cockney's
crassness.
he demanded payment
at first blush and
lush that he was, I
refused it.

so from here out the story
becomes
harder
to prove, although
it is to
be taken as
sheer fact

--ROG EBERT

THE GREATEST SHOWS UN-EARTHLY

Norman Chaplin

Thanks to the professional pride of the showman, the colorful fringe area of show business known as the outdoor amusement industry thrives on the fantastic. The relationship is a matter of simple justice. The diversion seeker's eagerness and curiosity will send him far from the places he normally inhabits. No one is more aware of just how far than the showman; it's up to him to make the paying customer's release from reality as novel as he can, and in the course of his job, he has had spectacular success in bringing the utterly impossible to life.

In the United States, the earliest grand champion of the fantastic was Phineas Taylor Barnum, who chose this route as a shrewd means of piercing the public's lethargy. The age Barnum lived in demanded such tactics. It was an era so puritanical that the natural human urge for relaxation had to find its outlet in practical jokes and hoaxes.

Barnum's amateur competition was prodigious. Richard Adams Locke, publisher of the New York Sun, amused himself by giving dutiful accounts in his paper of life among the inhabitants of the moon, as seen through a new seven-ton telescope. A carpenter named Lozier spread the news that the tip of lower Manhattan was to be sawed off, floated up the Hudson, and tacked onto the northern end to keep the island balanced. Thousands collected to watch the operation, and Lozier enjoyed a loud laugh -- from a refuge tucked away on Staten Island.

Elaborate japes like these may have infuriated the populace, but they were necessary. Life was bleak without them. Sanctimonium reigned. Overt entertainment was subject to blue laws. To exist at all, diversion had to be dressed up with some element of the wondrous to stir serious debate. The professional showman was sharply conscious of the profit potential in this, which perhaps was the only thing that set him apart from the intelligent amateur hoaxer.

P. T. Barnum was then creating an uproar of excitement himself. He was responsible for the exhibition of an elderly Negress named Joice Heth.

The Heth controversy gave everyone much to think about. Was she, as she claimed, 161 years old? Her reminiscences of nursing the infant George Washington a century before were convincing enough. And she certainly looked her stated age.

The demand for Joice Heth was so clamorous that Barnum took her to Concert Hall in Boston, where he proved the equal of an interesting competitor. This was Johann Nepomuk Maelzel, a musically-inclined teutonic inventor who had once talked Beethoven into composing Wellington's Victory for a mechanical band he'd contrived. But his fame now rested on the broad shoulders of the Terrible Turk -- a robot chess player.

Clicking and whirring thoughtfully, the automaton played chess with Maelzel while intrigued crowds looked on an wondered. Edgar Allan Poe viewed the performance and condemned the Turk as a fraud, a welcome development for the publicity-conscious Maelzel. In talks with Barnum, Maelzel spoke at length on the value of controversy.

P. T. Barnum was gaining increasing understanding of this aspect of the public mind. When the Joice Heth furor slackened, he announced that the old woman was not a woman at all, but a cleverly designed robot, and the excitement began all over again.

Eventually, when people learned that Joice Heth was indeed humanm and only in her eighties, it mattered very little. (It also turned out, eventually, that the Terrible Turk had a man inside.) In Barnum, the age found precisely what it wanted and needed. He kept regaling the populace with controversial figures like the Fee Jee Island mermaid, and the Cardiff Giant. But these outright swindles, as it happened, assumed only secondary importance in the great showman's career.

Jenny Lind, General Tom Thumb, Jumbo, the impact and vitality of the circus, and many other spectacular triumphs and oddities were also Barnum's. But these, too, are only details. Barnum's real accomplishments were and are far more cosmic. He brought something new into the straight and narrow business of living. His insight, his sure-footed psychology, led people from their prediliction for false alarm wonders. Whether with frauds or honest theatrics, Barnum fought to break down puritan fears of having fun, and the enemy was his.

Barnum's ways and means were taken up by almost every branch of the growing entertainment industry. But his own fascination with the odd found its truest metier in a new form that would have intrigued him very much, if he had lived to see its beginnings.

The form wasn't entirely new. The traditional amusement park seems to have taken primordial shape in England after the middle ages. One of London's foremost institutions for over two hundred years was the Vauxhall Gardens, where people assembled to see rope-walkers, play at ring toss, and the like. A more sophisticated fun center called, for some reason, Jenny's Whim foreshadowed modern techniques of fantastic showmanship. A prime attraction here was a lake where fishermen liked to collect. When an angler accidentally tripped a hidden trigger, a sea serpent jumped out of the water.

The name and definition of the amusement park developed at the turn of the twentieth century, an age in which two showmen named Frederic Thompson and Elmer Dundy became renowned across the country for their lavish forays into fantasy. In many respects Thompson and Dundy embodied the bigness and boldness in which thdir era gloried. When they formed their partnership in 1901, world's fairs were enjoying an international craze.

It was a time that found an enormous impact in their panoramic displays of cultural and scientific wonders. Progress was a fixation: everything, even the century ahead, was new. People were certain of a brilliant future, the world was getting better and better. Life was more prosperous, more worldly, more rewarding than it had ever been (in the estimation of some, more than it ever has been since). Thompson and Dundy's first world's fair attraction couldn't have been better suited to the age -- it was an illusionary thrill-ride called A Trip to the Moon.

A Trip to the Moon had a great psychological head start on it customers. Not certain of what to expect past the gates, people were startled to find a strange bat-winged [illegible]ne. They filed aboard. The wings began flapping, the ship swayed a little... soon, spotlights picked out views of the earth below, a convincing effect created by projecting slides from the plane's conning tower in diminishing perspective. This was followed by complete blackness. Then the plane rocked fiercely. Lightning streaks zapped though the dark, winds bellowed, thunder crashed...it was an arid-minded rider indeed who didn't yield to the illusion of being far from terra.

The storm subsided. The plane stilled, and a calm pink glow began spreading -- to reveal the surface of the moon. A gangplank was lowered. Riders walked down into the lunar dawn, and were greeted by midgets...or rather, moon men.

These selenites were the ride's only artistic flaw. Sophisticates, while much taken with everything else about the ride, found the moon men themselves a little too cute. They handed out green cheese, pattered snappily, danced, and sang a popular tune of the day: "My Sweetheart's the Man in the Moon."

But once the lunarians were done with, the ride's supercharged sense of wonder reasserted itself. People crossed the lunar surface to cave entrances that led to a maze of tunnels. Chambers housing extraterristrial wonders were reached through these caves. The maze eventually brought riders to the exit, which was disguised as the mouth of a moon-monster that gaped across a chasm spanned by shaking bridges.

Fred Thompson and Skip Dundy later gave A Trip to the Moon a permanent home in Luna Park, a million-dollar extravagence that established the team as prophets of the amusement business. Luna wasn't the first modern amusement park in the world, but its two forerunners -- which, like Luna itself, were located at Coney Island -- in no way approached Thompson and Dundy's visionary scale. Luna's exoticism, bigness, and after-dark glow caused an immediate sensation.

Response to A Trip to the Moon was so wide-eyed that Thompson used the formula again and again. In Luna, he followed its success with A Trip to the North Pole; it, too, proved a bonanza. No one could resist the notion of gliding beneath the Arctic in a submarine, with weird marine life peering through the portholes. A mermaid floated by at one point, while Eskimo guides spieled excitedly.

Carbon copies of Thompson and Dundy's illusions appeared hastily throughout Coney Island. Within a year an imitation of Luna Park itself arose just across the street.

Called Dreamland, it tried hard to exceed the pace set by Luna. It was larger and even more glamorous, with a prodigious score of illusions and thrill rides. Dreamland also relied heavily on a long-since vanished amusement contrivance called the cyclorama. These shows usually re-created some famous disaster by means of models, projected images, explosives, fire, water, electrical effects, and weirdly complex machinery. Casts of hundreds, onstage and backstage, were needed to put the shows across. They made the customer a mere spectator, but they were too convincing for him to want to be personally involved.

Between Luna, Dreamland, and independent amusement operators, Coney Island bristled with disasters. Johnstown and Galveston were flooded, San Francisco burned down, Mount Pelee erupted, Vesuvius buried Pompeii, the Port Arthur naval battle blasted away, Richmond was besieged, and the earth was destroyed...not too far from where it was created.

The End of the World and Creation were both Dreamland offerings. Little seems to be known about the latter. The structure that housed the show gave the park its trademark, a giant plaster archangel whose grandly curving wingspread formed the entrance portal. In the show, one saw the universe and earth in the throes of creation. Animal life crept across earth's surface. The finale was the advent of Adam and Eve.

The End of the World was also handled in the grandiose style Coney Island visitors had come to expect. It, too, was entered beneath the wings of an angel -- Gabriel gazing down at the midway, trumpet posed. Once inside, the show's patrons found themselves passing through the Human Forest.

The Human Forest had just one link with the show itself: it was drawn from Dante. The End of the World cyclorama was inspired by Dante's vision, carefully patterned upon Dore's etchings. Past the Human Forest lay subterranean caves. In them were plaster representations of Dore drawings, and at the end of them, the show proper. Earth's surface quivered, volcanic eruptions blasted rock and lava, finally...the earth blew up in a vast display of pyrotechnics.

Matters didn't stop there. Anyone who wished to take the next step could do so by seeing the Hereafter show. Based somewhat on Faust, Hereafter featured a large chorus that thundered selections from Gounod's opera while the soul of Orpheus descended into hell, with demons dancing a ritual around him. On both popular and critical fronts, the show was considered pretty awesome -- but for good measure, the customers were given a tranquil look at heaven, too.

Hereafter's designer, William Ellis, had another top drawing card in Dreamland. Called the Hell Gate, it was an aquatic thriller in which a little boat bounced riders through fierce rapids and spun them giddily about in whirlpools. The Hell Gate building, like Creation's, was one of the park's most distinctive. It had the facade of a Gothic castle. Peering down from its turreted roof was an enormous, Lovecraftian thing with bat wings that sprawled indolently across the battlements.

For all these wonders, and the three million reach of lavish settings that surrounded them, Dreamland found it difficult to keep crowds pleased. Its stately, pure-white towers and mansions failed to create the right kind of atmosphere. It had no bazaar. Compared to the blithe spirit of Luna Park, Dreamland seemed sedate, serene, and pointlessly arty.

But it tried. Through seven years of highly competitive effort, Luna and Dreamland strove to outdo eachother point for point. And the battle gave the public great entertainment. The Devil Ride, War of the Worlds, Hades, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Battle of the Submarines....

Luna had fifty-one Bantoc headhunters war-dancing at the park gates. Dreamland countered with 212. Dreamland had two scenic railways -- Across the Great Divide and The Swiss Alps (scenic railways actually were scenic at the turn of the century). Luna shaded them both with the Dragon's Gorge, an indoor gravity ride that wound its proudly-boasted 4,800 feet of track through Havana, Port Arthur, the Rocky Mountains, the bottom of the ocean, and the "caves of the lower regions."

Luna had 250,000 electric light bulbs. Dreamland used that many alone to light up its central tower. Luna boosted its count to 500,000 light bulbs. And so it went.

These two titans of the industry gave the four hundred amusement parks around the country the pace to match. "White City" parks, a chain of frank Dreamland imitators, arose. Luna Parks, carbon copies right down to the name, were everywhere -- London, Paris, Berlin, South America, Australia. Amusement centers were a muscular arm of show business in a way that is difficult to imagine now. And all of them packed the crowds in with fantastic marvels.

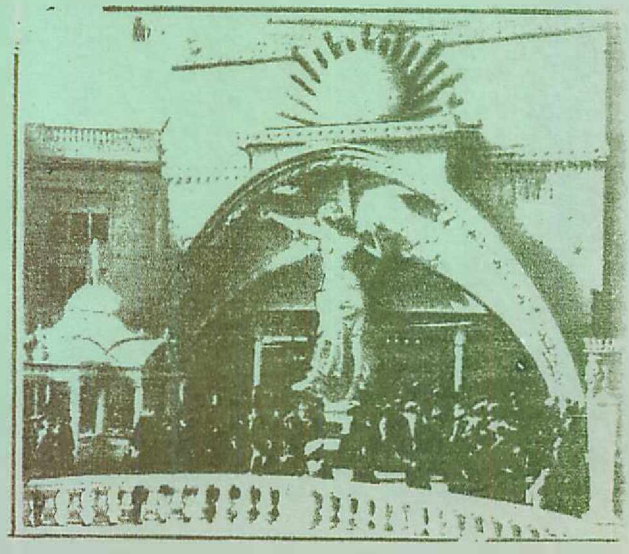
A popular draw at many parks was the walk-through called Niagara Falls. The elevator-descent that formed the show's entrance provided the customers with some built-in ballyhoo. A roaring began to resound around them as they dropped, and the air turned damply chilly. A guide herded them out of the elevator and along the stony banks of a subterranean cata - ract. As they stood watching the waterfall, a guide gave some facts and figures, then mentioned Niagara's legendary haunt, the Maid of the Mist.

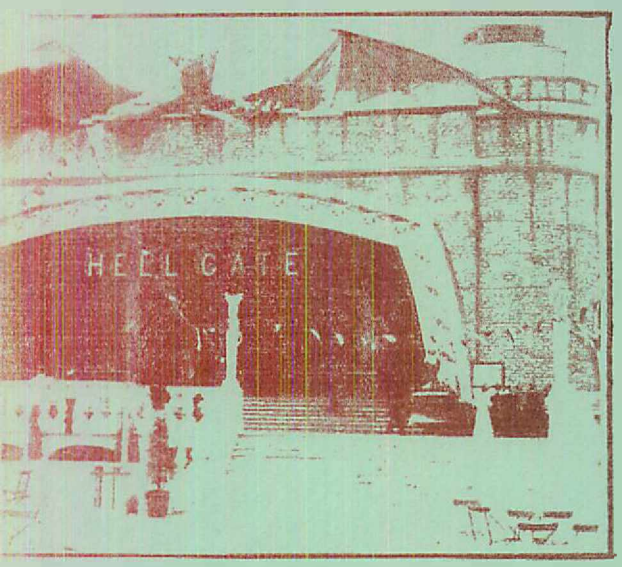
It was as fine a cue as ever graced a spiel. The cavern grew dark at the mention of the words. Winds began roaring. Lightning flashed. And in the cataract, the transparent form of an Indian girl appeared. She floated upward through the falls, chanting a tribal incantation. The guide then narrated as wraithlike figures acted out the legend.

Since the era had its sights aimed at a bright tomorrow, futuristic themes also poured gold into boxoffices. The flying machine was excellent grist for the show biz mill, though air-minded showmen were not strictly a turn of the century phenomenon. Balloon flights had been popular with crowds in Europe since the 1700s. There were, as well, some intrepid experimenters. One nineteenth century daredevil attempted to fly by means of taffeta wings attached to his arms. He launched himself from a tower in a French park. Once airborne, he flapped with a fury. And as it happened, the wings did give him some buoyancy. He emerged from his pioneer venture with nothing worse than a broken nose.

New Jersey's Palisades Park had a great affinity for aviation, even to the extent of maintaining a flight experimental center. The

creation





hell gate

giant dirigible "Boomerang" was on hand for modern minded thrill-seekers, but the park's most noted use of aeronautics had to do with it advertising. Palisades struck an innovation in hard-sell techniques. A balloon flying the park's banners dropped low every so often over Hammerstein's Roof Garden Theatre on Broadway, enabling the pilot to yell down to captive audiences.

Amusement park airmen sometimes suffered the indignities that fall to all true trail blazers. A little box kite powered by a bicycle chain and manned by foot pedals was once launched with great ceremony from the top of the Shoot-the-Chutes in Dreamland. Its inventor was an eccentric shoemaker who wanted desperately to have a hand in developing tomorrow's airships. He was happily nervous about this fruition of a cherished dream. The pilot mounted the plane's seat. He signalled his readiness for the much - publicized trial flight. Expectant crowds craned necks and kept eyes on sky.

The pilot pedalled frantically. The little plane moved from its perch, and promptly dropped into the ocean.

Dreamland was quite preoccupied with the future. On one of the park's piers was the Leap Frog Railway, a curious invention that purported to show how railroad accidents would be averted in tomorrow's world. Two railway cars filled with riders hurtled toward eachother at a harrowing pace. At the cliffhanging moment, the rails ahead of one car raised and formed a ramp over the other. For some reason, the device never was put into use on the country's railroads.

Though much of Dreamland's career was a struggle against overwhelming competition, it was credited with at least one accomplishment, and the praise was far from faint. Dreamland crowned the Coney Island of its day with a final touch of radiance. Songs like the evergreen "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland" celebrated its visionary elegance. Maxim Gorky wrote an oft-quoted tribute to the Island's beauty in an essay, Munsey's Magazine called it "The magically realized dream of a poet or painter," literary leaders like Albert Bigelow Paine and Richard Le Galliene outdid themselves to catch its spirit in print.

Their efforts have definite validity as period literature; being more than just documentation, their descriptive passages do not make such comical contrasts to the current Coney as might be supposed.

But one description, written by an anonymous scribe who viewed the Island from the sea at night, doesn't stand up so well:

"I, standing close to the silent figure at the wheel, saw far across the restless black (ocean), a glow-worm shimmer on the Atlantic Coast. Beyond it, pallid on the sky, was the overglow of a great city. But this glow-worm, which shone with steadier glare, lay low upon the sea line, and from its narrowing tail, from time to time, there rose a fountain of green and crimson and golden fire which hung above it in the lazy air. And when I, curious, turned to the gaunt seaman at the wheel, and asked what it was that shone there...he replied...'Coney Island.'

"So that was Coney Island -- the real Coney Island of whose fame the land was full... Coney Island, with all its mad music softened by distance... Coney Island, the beautiful... the largest amusement resort in the WORLD!"

This graceful growth was due largely to the fantasies of Fred Thompson and Skip Dundy, who became perhaps the most flamboyantly wonderful showmen of their era... for a little while. Both men were considered tough, aggressive types, but neither really had much drive. They succeeded only because their partnership complemented eachother's talents perfectly.

Dundy was a sharp, shrewd businessman with little talent; Thompson was a fine architect, designer and artist with no head for business. But a good deal more than their work was involved. Dundy's hands were kept full by Thompson's heavy drinking and lavish spending, and only Thompson had enough pull over Dundy to keep him from gambling away their profits. Dundy was a skirt-chaser with such a vengeance that the Coney Island grapevine throbbed with rumors. Did he really have a mirror - panelled room secreted away somewhere for pursuit of l'amour? Oddly enough, Skip often fell into emotional fogs that he fondly felt were flaming affairs of heart; he relied on Thompson's straightforward advice to keep him on earth.

The mutual checks they held on eachother gave them strength and will and fabulous success -- for all of which, they never really had a sober moment in their lives. Dundy was in love with circuses. An important feature of Luna Park was the seasonal booking of Hagenback's Animals, one of Europe's finest big top institutions. Among the performers assembled at Luna was a "high act" with a billing unequalled for sheer bazaaz -- Dracula, the Aerial Contortionist.

Fred Thompson had an odd fancy for elephants, possibly because they were living embodiments of the outlandish bigness showmen like him have always had a taste for. Luna had, or claimed to have, the largest show herd of elephants in the world. When one of Thompson's favorites died, he upholstered a chair with its hide, using its feet for the legs.

Thompson and Dundy didn't arrive at such a point of gracious living overnight. They had their lean years. Fred Thompson, once a fifteen dollar a week draftsman, first thought of A Trip to the Moon one night when hunger wouldn't let him sleep. Dundy had been bored with his job of court clerk. He liked show business, entered it, and lost fortunes.

Thompson and Dundy's failures increased their determination. In the finest tradition they were daydreamers with a great goal. They reached it, and perhaps inevitably burned themselves out in so doing.

But much was still ahead of them. In 1904, their chief backer -- the maverick gambler John W. Gates -- suggested that they attack Broadway itself. Thompson conceived a showcase for spectacle modelled after the indoor circuses, or

hippodromes, popular in Europe. The team's five million dollar Hippodrome Threatre opened in April of 1905, and subsequently became a theatrical legend.

Opening night at the Hippodrome revealed the mammoth extent of its aims. A crowd of six thousand, including the likes of Harry Payne Whitney, Gladys Vanderbilt, Stanford White, and O. H. P. Belmont, crammed into the theatre's block-wide lobby, overflowing out onto 43rd Street, spilled back along Sixth Avenue. First-nighters, familiar with Thompson were amused to note that sculptured elephant heads formed the tops of columns, dominated the lobby decor, and supported the box seats. Promenades led to cafes, bars, lounges, restaurants, and to a built-in zoo that did double duty by housing animal acts.

The great wonder of the Hippodrome was its colossal stage. Big enough to accommodate six hundred people, and scenery units two hundred feet long, it was an engineering feat as complex as the Panama Canal. A sixty foot slice of it could be dropped and flooded with twelve feet of water for aquatic acts. The rest of its one hundred ten foot depth was divided into bridges that hydraulically raised and lowered. The stage was terrifically strong: it had to hold up more than ten tons of scenery (overhead cranes were needed to move flats and props), besides the performers, and, of course, dozens of elephants.

It was a stage that easily permitted a giant-scale combination of Dundy's love for circus and Thompson's love for fantasy -- A Yankee Circus on Mars.

This musical had about as much plot as an extravaganza was expected to have, but its direction and stage managing caught its moods with surprising intimacy for a production of such gigantic scope. It opened with a bankrupt circus struggling through a halfhearted stand in a backwoods Vermont village. Sheriff Pennybigger, "a power in the community", makes his entrance and ends the show. As he tries to sell the circus at public auction, an airship (no one called them spaceships, in 1905) lands; out of it steps a man from Mars.

Astonishment. But more astonishing still, the Martian buys the circus. He explains that his ruler, King Borealis, is anxious to see a circus. Indeed, so is the entire planet Mars. Packing their show into two monster airships, the circus people take off grandly for the red planet. Curtain.

Act Two -- The Royal Courtyard of Mars, with a pair of twenty foot high dragons arching over the throne of King Borealis, flanked by immense, tentacled totem poles. A production number is in process, using one of the Hippodrome's best-known gambits: elephants driving automobiles filled with extras. The sequence is interrupted by the arrival of the airships from earth. The circus performers debark and set up their show. With an acrobat leaping from a springboard and over the backs of lined-up elephants, the circus promptly begins.

And that, aside from a dash of love interest provided by Princess Aurora Borealis, accounts for her story. But story wasn't important. Six thousand people were amazed by the vast parade of live, non-illusion marvels that danced across the titanic stage. And their applause sent hundred of would-be crashers into paroxysms of frustration, when finally King Borealis placed his world at the feet of the Yankees and their circus.

Critics were as lavish as the play itself. "One would indeed have to go to another planet to see a better show," a reviewer summed up, "there isn't one on earth."

luna park

Thompson and Dundy were eventually squeezed out of the Hippodrome by John W. Gates in a managerial dispute but the Shuberts, who took the reins, ran the house along its established lines. In 1908, The Battle of the Skies predicted nuclear warfare between America and the United States of Europe. Set in the cosmically distant year of 1950, the play opened with an American city living in anticipation of an enemy air attack.

A remarkable bit of prophecy, this. But otherwise author-producers R.H.Burnside and Arthur Voigtoin foresaw only the Gernsback Era. The hero, an inventor, is in love with the daughter of an "Air Fleet General", whose assortment of balloons and dirigibles ("even a few planes", marvelled one critic) stands ready to meet the infernal invader. The general is relying on the inventor's newly perfected radium gun -- which, along with his daughter, is stolen by European spies. The Fleet goes into action and recovers both, but not before the enemy has outfitted its air force with radium guns of its own. The attack is launched, and the battle of the skies is on.

The plot convoluted a little, but who cared? As spectacle, the attack on the unnamed city was sheer magnificence. No mere single street set would do for the Hippodrome. Skyscrapers and building tops stretched away in eye filling perspective. Above it, a huge array of blimps, balloons, and planes sailed along on wire cables, flashing colored beams downward and zapping the city to glory.

Afterward, for what must have been symbolic reasons, a tidal wave arose under gold lighting and swept the ruins clear. This emptied the stage for an "Apotheosis of Victory" pageant. Chorus girls in red, white, and blue costumes were arranged on a backdrop trellis to form a giant American flag, a finale that inspired the audience -- six thousand strong -- to set up a thundrous din of applause.

If he regretted the loss of the Hippodrome, Frederic Thompson, by 1908, had much else to keep him busy. He had a new interest in yacht racing, plenty of money (Thompson once gave the captain of his yacht thirty thousand dollars for beating a speed record by thirty seconds), and a string of hit plays on Broadway. He devoted himself now to straight theatrics.

Thompson was enjoying himself immensely. He had his own way now; Skip Dundy had been dead for over a year, killed by a heart attack soon after Thompson married an actress named Mabel Taliaferro. But without Dundy's restraint, Thompson stood at an unrealized crossroads.

In Luna Park, the midget selenites in A Trip to the Moon found fewer and fewer people to amuse. The ride had grown stale, as had a good deal of Luna. Season followed season with nothing new.

The tragic third act of the backstage drama that was Thompson's life had begun to play. The breakup of his marriage in 1911 left him dazed. He covered his feelings by concentrating on being a Character. He was the great American showman, and he reveled in the status. He wrote magazine articles, spent fortunes, and drank himself half to death.

He eventually declared himself bankrupt, and Luna Park came under the management, or mismanagement, of an advertising magnate named Barron Collier. Thompson drifted off to obscure ends, and died of acute alcoholism in 1919.

Other things were happening, none of them good. One of the worst fires in New York's history levelled some thirty acres of Coney Island attractions, including all of Dreamland Park, in 1911. It wasn't long afterward that the amusement business generally faced serious trouble.

Managers tended to blame the upswing of a new competitor -- movies -- but the real bete noir of the amusement park was found in something totally unrelated. It was the automobile. The wide, lordly vistas of enjoyment opened by the horseless carriage appealed to the middle and upper classes, who had been the parks' chief supporters. The view of a crowded, noisy midway from a driver's seat seemed pretty commonplace, even grubby. So 'autoists'..."scorchers"... they had many names...would drive off to the countryside, and get stuck with maddening motor trouble out in the middle of nowhere.

But the car came on apace, as did something else to make life more complicated. World War I raised a big question mark in people's minds. It rendered the current outlook on life naive, and a little smug, forcing the downfall of many of the old ways. Amusement parks no longer held any illusions; the war shattered them all.

As Coney Island went, so went the amusement business, and Coney was inherited by the masses. The well-to-do crowds gave way to a great influx of low-grade suckers, who kicked over all the old traces. The neglected, archaic cycloramas were dismantled, making room for ten cent girlie shows and penny arcades.

The story of Luna Park's economic and artistic decline is long, and rather sad. One detail sums it up pretty well. A top attraction in Fred Thompson's Luna was an act in which elephants slid down the Shoot the Chutes; by the 1930's the elephants had been replaced by pigs. In 1944, one of the Island's interminable fires cut down half of Luna. A second fire chopped a little more away, taking with it the structure that had housed A Trip to the Moon. A third left the old park a black ruin that blighted the area for years. Today, a ghastly apartment project stands on the former playground like a vertical Levittown.

As for the Hippodrome -- it, too, declined. In 1935, Billy Rose attempted to bring back its glamor by producing Rodgers and Hart's Jumbo as its closing vehicle. But the Broadway climate had changed. Rising production costs made extravaganzas too risky, and Jumbo was a near miss. It drowned in red ink, but it at least enabled the Hippodrome to close, as it had opened, with a splendiferous bang.

Amusement parks generally survived well by adjusting to different crowds and a faster tempo. Some parks even managed to retain their glamor.

Glamorous or shoddy, however, amusement resorts had to offer speed and pace after 1920. Thrill rides really had to thrill. So, partly as a descendent of the cyclorama, partly as a "flat ride" variant, the dark ride was evolved. Evolved by whom? No records seem to exist. One sign of how much water had rolled over the dam was that theatrical writers no longer considered amusement parks important enough to report on.

But a British show business chronicler named Maurice Gorham has written an interesting appreciation of the dark ride!

> "...few shows pack so much excitement into so small a space. Your car dashes through closed doors, round sharp corners, into darkness and out again into light that always reveals something horrible... This (show) uses artificial screams, though when there are customers inside, there is usually no lack of genuine screams."

These genuine screams are sometimes piped onto midways via hidden mircrophones, an effective ballyhoo. Some dark rides rely on one final shock, so the gillies outside can see riders emerging from the tunnel in states of agreeable fright.

There is usually much more now to provoke fright than there used to be. Dark rides, until recently, weren't especially ingenious. Riders could always be certain that hanging threads would brush their faces, that bloated heads would light up to the loud buzzing of electrical relays, that crashing noises would r resound and sirens scream. But the dark ride is now becoming a wondrous thing to behold.

Their effectiveness has been much enhanced by the development of "black light." This process relies on the fluorescent properties of certain chemicals under ultra-violet; it creates the sort of vivid-glow lighting effects a Fred Thompson would have loved. The movements of tableaus, too, have become more complex. These rides also have cohesion where they once were random assortments of shop-worn monsters and Things; they are now, as a rule, pegged to definite themes.

The dark ride is easily adaptable to themes -- it can be designed and re-designed to fit whatever notion strikes those who manage it. Freedomland's "Santa Fe" quarter has its multi-level Mine Caverns ride,* Disneyland its blacklit excursion through Snow White's forest. Kennywood Park in Pittsburgh recently renovated its tunnel ride with a jungle motif to tie in with a local TV kid show. The dark ride's very nature, plus its recently-acquired element of class, has come to make it distinctly a modern counterpart of the old-fashioned cyclorama.

The more things change, the more they stay the same, as some wise old head once remarked. In the wake of Disneyland, the large-scale amusement park has made a welcome resurgence. It may perhaps fall upon evil times again, but its impossible wonders are too deep a part of show biz lore to wane completely. As long as people need a far remove from an often tiring world, the fantastic showman will be around to open the way for them. Like the human imagination itself, he's one of the eternals.

-- NORMAN CLARKE

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*Freedomland's tunnel rides were designed by Special Effects, a blacklight specialty concern in Colorado. Another amusement device entrepeneur is the Outdoor Dimensional Display company of Bill (Bat Boy) Tracy, whose fanged, slant-eyed bats are the most elegant horror props ever conceived outside the gates of Universal Studios. It's interesting, if not significant, to note that the initials of Outdoor Dimensional Display spell "odd".


BENSON & BENSON & H
KISS THE
OFF MY
Bang!

It was a chill afternoon, about fiveish or, perhaps, sixy. An Octoberal wind whined and scurried down the street, sending autumn-coloured leaves flickering between the scabby knees of the gauché urchins gaming on the sidewalks. A dog was micturating, with gamine lawlessness, in the gutter as I edged my motor into an empty spot. It was a brindle-hued, short tufted Bull Dyke, obviously male. (We get accustomed to noticing such details, in "the Business"). I parked my car and got out, slamming the door shut. It was a good machine, a retooled '36 Abattoir, with a Mozarella Mach-IX, oxygen-cooled engine, 436.5 hp., 6-litre displacement, with chromium plated ostracism. It came complete but I had added a few special extras, like the deadly little 9-calibre Bavarian-made Oubliette I had clipped under the gloves-cubicle, just to be on the safe side. "Be prepared" is our motto in "the Business".

jim carter

My digs were up three flights. I went up, thinking of her with every lithe step. Tanya, with her champagne-coloured hair .. Coterie's '29, I should hazard, although a true connoisseur might claim it matched Outré's '37 more closely. We rarely have time for that sort of thing in "the Business". There it's cut and rip, hit and run, zig and zag, and if you have enough margin of leisure between "Assignments" to cleam and lubricate your deadly little shoulder-holstered Serengeti, you're the lucky one. Still, it's Drill, you know.

And I was also thinking of a drink. God, did I need something, anything...just a chilly little tumbler of saki sprinkled with oregano (a trick I picked up from a retired chicken-plucker in Weyawega, Wisconsin, during an "Assignment"). Sprinkle on the tangy old oregano and toss her down straight. Hits the old tonsils like a stengun slug...but more refresh-

BLOOD PATÓIS

ing. Yes, first a drink, then to relax...a little Mantovani on the stereo (a double-woofered Genito-Urinary with a Swedish hand-crafted tweeter feedback action over beryllium points, in buffed-mahogany cabinet by Cliché. Nothing fancy.) ...drape my flanneled legs over the waxed walnut of the cocktail table, inlaid with coke-bottle-tops in a fine Old World mosaic design by Voyeur, and sink in the foam-rubber luxury of my sofa (a burlap covered sprawler with knee-action sprockets by Grand Rapids) ...then, comfy, soft lights pulling deep glints of apricot and beige from my unframed Norman Rockwell over the shelf of Pound, Eliot, Auden and Sneary...and Tanya there, with the whiff of Chinese pepper-steak sprinkled with tangy risqué, oozing from the cool pastel kitchen ... Tanya in my arms again, her slim blonde loveliness elastic and soft in my lean arms, her firm breasts (cupped in their firm leather cones by 'My Little Secret') thrusting into my flannel jacket (a custom-tailored four-buttoned Italian Continental with lapels of buffed serge, slashed with pipettes of matched suede) ...ah, it would be good to get up to my digs and relax. We rarely have time for that sort of thing in "the Business". 'L' frowns on unproductive leisure. And 'L' is the "Chief".

Outside my door, habit took control again. I stood to one side of the dyed-oak panel, one lean brown hand snaking to my holstered Serengeti, ice-blue eyes narrowed in a fighting grin that just bared my upper incisors...the other hand inserting the key in the lock. It was a deadly little Yale, buffed carbon-steel with a backed double-interlocking set of countersunk edelweiss, hand-crafted by Pseudo. I unlocked the door, flung it open and, with the same lithe fluid movement, sprang into the room, landing on the balls of my feet, left hand raised in a karate-block, right hand pointing the stubby little Serengeti about the room. All clear? Within moments I had checked the shower-stall, under bed and couch, closet and soiled-linens hamper. All was clear, as we say in my profession.

I relaxed. Tossed my hat, a black suede dip-crowned Prince Laronne with tufts of simulated pampas-grass slanting debonairly from the rakish band of corded hemp, onto the point of a Nubian assegai in corner, relic of a past "Assignment". Shrugged out of my topcoat, a rubberized, hand-burled, dun-leather ninebutton job from John's Bargain. I reached for the liquor cabinet --

Then the phone chimed softly. B-flat, I should hazard, although a musicologist might say 'sharp'. Little time for that sort of foofraw, you know, in "the Business". Using my hand-buffed corduroy gloves, I picked up the instrument, keeping a watch on the roof from the window. Could be a trick.

But it was ... Tanya!

"Slash oh oh seven point five here," I said, noncommitally.

Then: "Oh, it's you, Cherie... What's that? 'Clast meeting tonight? Yes, dash it all, I had forgotten. And in my own flat, too, I'm the "host" as we say. But, Tanya... Oh, very well. Pass the word to 'L' that I'll be busy tonight. Use the scrambler, of course, don't know if the Lunies have tapped my line or not, but we can't take any chances. Not exactly Drill, you know. Right-o. Slash oh oh seven point five, over and out."

I slid the receiver back in its black-plastic machine-tooled cradle, and, snaking one lean brown hand into my left breast jacket pocket I removed a collophane-wrapped packet of imported Caryatids, and a Ronson 77-0 igniter in double-calumniated aluminum case, with duo-synchronized flint-action by Weirdo. I shook one slender gold-tipped cigarette out and inserted it be-

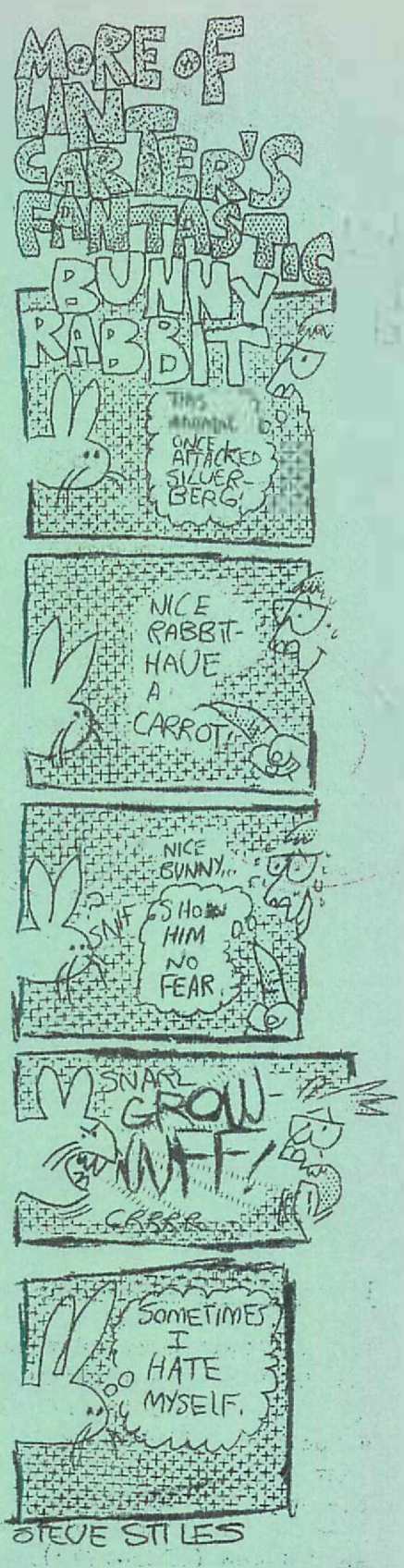
tween my thin lips. As ever, in moments of deepest cogitation, a thick medium-brown semi-colon of hair fell over my left temple (puckered, as it was, by a thin white scar from a Bronx street-arab's kris). Damn the luck, I sub-vocalized harshly. Where was my memory? If Tanya could recall these details, why should they slip my mind?

That last "Assignment', probably. Trying to keep P.E.A.L.S., master espionage group of the Lunarians, a dangerous Foreign Power, from learning whereabouts of the new meeting-place of the Fanoclasts. Bit of the old roughhouse near the end of the caper, had shaken me up a bit. Clever devils, those Lunies. Man known as Moskowitz working in team with an agent called "Rabin." Clever swine. They had subverted one of our own people, chap named White. With me at Sandhurst in '47. Good agent, but sloppy. Karate-chop across the epaulette-tendon of the left wrist had put the blighter out of action for a bit. I laughed sardonically. Be a long time before he would send any mimeography out through the Network again!

I grinned, coldly, allowing the bitterness to seep through the interstices in my reserve. Had to let loose of the old reins once in a while, in this profession. What I needed was Tanya, saki, Mantovani on the stereo, a few pages of Tarrano the Conquerer in its Louis XIV binding, to steady the nerves....

But -- no go. Not Drill. I had an evening of duty ahead; no time for mere relaxation in cultural pursuits. I would need all of my wits about me. And no time for...regrets. Not now. Tanya's cool blonde loveliness must wait. Nor, I thought bitterly, could I indulge in my tumbler of chilled saki stippled with tangy oregano. Slip once in this game, and you're out of the field. Couldn't allow the old bubbly to dull the keen edge of my intelligence. I would need my every resource about me tonight...to keep Bhob from doing a cartoon of my digs, to restrain Reiss from going through my folio of original Analog covers...and (I thought, grimly, a tiny vertical crease of tension forming between my inky, scowling brows) and to side-step the Silverbergs, in case they tried to corner me into admitting I had not read Revolt on Alpha C....

Allowing the harsh blue smoke of my Caryatid to seep through the interstices in my nostrils, where I had not quite avoided a vicious back-handed slice by a native Tango, I sank back in the kitchen chair and stared coldly at the toaster. It was a deadly little General Electric, with duo-toast action, in buffed crome. What an evening lay ahead. An evening of tension and danger... the rapier-like play of naked wits against stolid torpor... devilish cunning at odds with icy, calculated ennui...why, the devils would even try to squeeze my dues out of me, unless I was keenly alert... maybe even get me to sub to Xero! But I laughed shortly, what did I care? This was living. This was joie de vivre, as those clever swine, the Borsht, say, in their native pate de foi gras. And, after all, without this knife-edge danger, this ennervating battle-of-wits, what else in life was there for a man of my calibre? Life would be too tame. At any rate, I was accustomed to it, I could not live without it.



After all, it was "Business".

part III: sources and influences by lin carter

notes on Tolkien

Introduction to Part III

In the first part of this study of The Lord of the Rings, I attempted to demonstrate that the Trilogy, far from being an isolated literary mutant, was merely the most recent and perhaps the finest example of a very old and honorable school of literature, which could be called "Epic Fantasy". I traced the descent of the major elements in the Trilogy down from the Homeric epics, through the Medieval chansons de geste and Grail-romances and into the novel or prose-romance, down through the fictions of William Morris (1834-1896) and Eric Rucker Eddison (1882-1945).

Part II of this study uncovered some of the sources of the names and places given in the Trilogy, and underscored the strong influence the Old Norse Elder Edda had on Tolkien--in particular, as a source for dwarf-names. Of the thirty-odd dwarf-names given in the Trilogy, fully nineteen come from the Edda, where they are also dwarf-names, as for example "Nar and Nain, Niping, Dain / Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Nori," given in The Voluspa (the first book of the Elder Edda), stanza eleven.

The purpose of this third part of my study is to present the theory that the single basic source of the entire Trilogy is the Norse or Scandinavian mythos...in particular, the Siegfried legend.

1. The Siegfried Legend

The Elder Edda is one of the world's most fascinating books. It is immemorially ancient, its sources lost in the pre-history of the wandering nomadic peoples who eventually settled in Scandinavia and became the Norse. No one can say precisely when or where the various tales in the Norse mythos arose, but they were first written down in Iceland, a colony of Norway, by Saemund the Wise (1056-1133). The manuscript of Saemund (called the Codex Regius) is now in the Royal Library at Copenhagen.

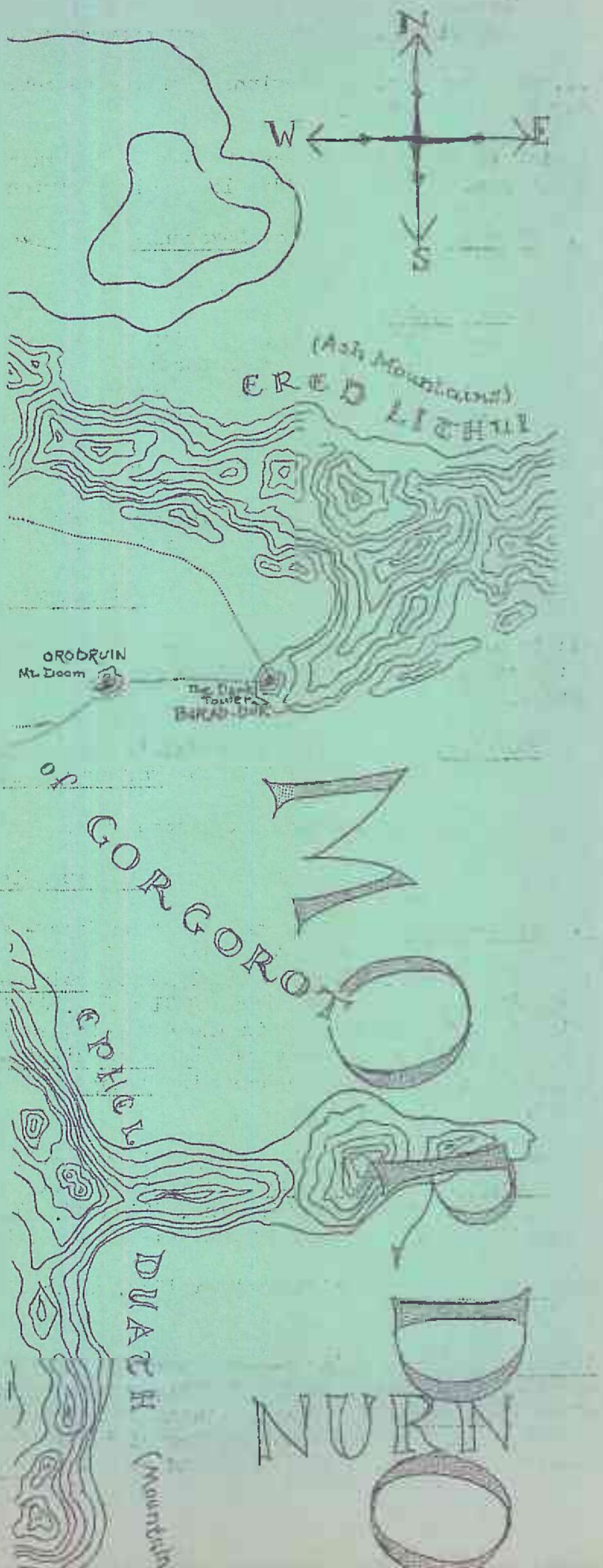
The Elder Edda consists of thirty - five books, most of them in verse. It is the Bible of the Norse religion and our oldest source of all that is known of the Norse myths and legends. In particular it concentrates on the great Siegfried legend, the story of the slaying of Fafnir the Dragon, the taking of the Hoard of the Nibelungs, etc.

The legend of Siegfried is one of the world's great stories, worthy of comparison with the Matter of Troy, or the King Arthur Cycle, or the Quest of the Sangraal. Originally, in the Elder Edda, the tale takes this form:

> Sigurth the Volsung slays Fafnir the Dragon and takes the Hoard, or treasure, of the evil Dwarf, Andvari. He arouses Sigrdrifa the Valkyrie from her magical sleep, and woos her for King Gunnar, who weds her as "Brynhild". Gunnar gives Sigurth Guthrun to wife. Later Gunnar and Hogni slay Sigurth for the Hoard.

Even in this early form the main elements of the tale begin to emerge. Among the Hoard of Andvari are "rings of gold", and the dying Dragon makes this prophecy to Sigurth (in Fafnismol, 20)

> "And the rings thy bane shall be"



In the Guthrunarkvitha, also stanza 20, Guthrun, weeping over the corpse of Sigurth, says:

"Gunnar, no joy the gold shall give thee,
The rings shall soon thy slayers be."

...which shows us the beginning of the concept of the magical ring which is the curse of its bearer.

I wish to trace this story through its further evolution in other works, but first a few more details of Eddic lore which Tolkien borrowed:

A. Mirkwood In the book Lokasenna, the eighth book of the Edda, stanza 42, we see this:

"Loki spake:
The daughter of Gymir with the gold-dust didst thou buy,
And sold thy sword to boot;
But when Muspell's sons through Myrkwood ride,
Thou shalt weaponless wait, poor wretch."

and in the fifteenth book of the Edda, we read:

"Maids from the south through Myrkwood flew,
Fair and young, their fate to follow"

Volundarkvitha, 1.

all in all, "Myrkwood" is mentioned about seventeen times in the Elder Edda. The notes to my edition explain the term as "a stock name for a dark, gloomy magical forest."

Shadowfax The name of Gandalf's great steed may come from "Skinfaxi" ("Shining-Mane") in the Vafthruthnismol, the third book:

"the best of horses to heroes he seems"

Vafthruthnismol, 12.

C. Dwarf-Names Besides the nineteen dwarf-names Tolkien took directly, there are a few others he borrowed which are not used in the Edda as names for dwarfs. "Frar," mentioned in Voluspo, 13, is probably the origin of Tolkien's "Fror". "Gimli, son of Gloin"..."Gloin" occurs in the Edda as a dwarf; "Gimli" ("fire" or "gem") is the name of a magical mountain in Voluspo, 64. "Balin", of course, comes from Le Morte d'Arthur ("The Story of Balin and Balan"). "Gandalf" ("Magic-Elf") occurs in Voluspo, 20, as a dwarf...but about him, more later.

To return to the Siegfried story: in the XIII Century, Snorri Sturluson composed the Younger, or Prose, Edda. This is largely a retelling of the original, somewhat embroidered. He calls "Sigurth", "Sigurd". The manuscript of the Prose Edda is currently in the library of the University of Uppsala.

The Volsunga Saga, written about 1270, also calls him "Sigurd", and expands the story a trifle.

Beowulf, the great Anglo-Saxon epic, composed about 750 A.D., gives a capsulized version of the myth, calls him "Sigemund". The tale of the Slaying of Fafnir is given in Beowulf, 13, where a thane of King Hrothgar's recounts it, drawing a parallel between that tale and Beowulf's slaying of the monster Grendel. As we shall see, later on, Tolkien found much in Beowulf to use.

The mightly German national epic, the Nibelungenleid, gives us an almost-final version of the legend:

> Siegfried hears of Kriemhild's beauty and rides to woo her at Worms. He kills the two Nibelungs, Shilbung and Nibelung, and seizes their Hoard, and from the Dwarf, Albric, he takes the Tarnkappe of Invisibility. He also slays a dragon and bathes in his blood, thus becoming impervious to all weapons, save for a spot on his back where a falling leaf stuck, keeping the dragonblood from his flesh at that spot (much as Achilles was dunked in the Styx and became invulnerable, except for the heel by which his mother held him).
>
> Gunther, King of Worms, and the plotter Hagen, persuade him to woo Brynhilda the Valkyrie for the King. He does, and weds Kriemhild as King Gunther marries Brynhilda. The queens quarrel, and Siegfried is slain by Gunther and Hagen.
>
> Kriemhild, who inherited the Nibelungen-Hoard, them marries Etzel (the historical Attila the Hun), who later decoys Gunther and Hagen into his kingdom and kills them, revenging Siegfried.

When Richard Wagner composed The Ring of the Nibelungen (starting around 1850; complete libretto first published 1863) he went straight to the Nibelungleid on the advice of his good friend, Franz Liszt, and began shaping his stupendous tetralogy from the materials of epic myth. The complete Ring was first performed at Bayreuth August 13th to 17th, 1876.

Wagner attempted to reconcile the various conflicting elements in Nibelungleid and Volsunga Saga, and to succeed in this he transmuted the entire story. It was reconstructed, however, by a master artist, and thus the Siegfried legend took its final form after more than one thousand years. Wagner's plot is this:

> In Das Rheingold, Alberich the Dwarf learns from the Rhine Maidens that the piece of gold they guard beneath the river, if ever fashioned into a ring, will impart great magical powers to its possessor. Angered when the Rhine Maids elude his lustful grasp, he seizes the gold and forces the Dwarf-Smith, Mime, to fashion it into a ring of power.
>
> Meanwhile, Wotan, King of the Gods, persuades the two Giants Fasolt and Fafner to build the Valhall for him, promising to give them the Goddess Freia. When they complete the job, Loge the Cunning talks them into taking the Ring instead, playing upon their greed, he says:
>
> "It gives, when to golden
> Ring it is rounded,
> Power and might unmatched;
> It wins its owner the world."
>
> The Giants agree, and Wotan and Loge visit Alberich, who has made himself King of the Dwarfs by power of the Ring. They trick him into demonstrating the shape-changing powers of the Ring, and capture him in his toad-form, forcing him to surrender, not only the ring, but the Tarnhelm of Invisibility and the golden Hoard of the dwarfs. He does so, but places a curse on the magic Ring:
>
> "As a curse gave me the ring,
> My curse go with the ring!
> As its gold
> Gave measureless might,
> May now its magic
> Deal death evermore!"

The Gods give the two Giants the treasures, although Wotan (feeling the curse of the Ring), is loath to surrender it. Then the two Giants, also feeling the deadly curse, battle for the Ring and Fafner kills his brother Fasolt.

In Siegfried, third play of the tetralogy, the Dwarf-Smith Mime attempts to mend the broken sword Nothung for the youth Siegfried, but fails and the Hero welds the sword himself.

With the Nothung, Siegfried slays Fafner in dragon-shape, not striking at his armoured parts, but sinking the sword into his soft, unprotected breast. The dragon dies.

Accidentally tasting the dragon's hot blood, Siegfried discovers he can understand the language of the beasts. He overhears a small forst bird twittering. The bird, who had watched the slaying of Fafner, says Siegfried should go into the cave and find the Tarnhelm --

"And could he discover the Ring,
It would make him the lord of the world!"

As Siegfried is in the cave taking the Nibelung-Hoard, and searching for the Ring and the Tarnhelm, Alberich and Mime reach the cave, quarrel for the Ring, and come near to killing each other. Alberich flees when Siegfried emerges with the treasure. Mime tries to get the Ring from Siegfried, and attacks him, whereupon Siegfried kills him.

Siegfried then rescues the Valkyrie, Brunnhilde, from the magic fire, and the great story spins itself out to its conclusion.

2. Elements of the Siegfried Story in the Tolkien Trilogy

Now in the Siegfried myth, as it stands in its final form, we have a certain number of story-elements. Among them are the following:

A. The dragon guarding treasure

B. The magic gold ring which gives its bearer great power but a deathly curse

C. A talisman of invisibility

D. The slaying of the dragon through its unprotected breast

E. The broken sword which was mended again

F. The quarrel of the dwarves for possession of the Ring, resulting eventually in the death of one

G. The wicked little dwarf who possessed the Ring and was perverted and maddened by it

H. The fact that the Curse of the Ring brings not only death but a sort of moral decay or greed-for-possession to all who bear it

All of these eight elements are found, both in the Siegfried mythos and in The Lord of the Rings. Professor Tolkien had altered these elements in some details such as combining the invisibility talisman (the Tarnkappe, or Tarnhelm) and the Ring into one magical talisman which confers not only considerable magic power but also the gift of invisibility to its Bearer -- but in the main he has hewed rather closely to the Siegfried elements. Smaug the Golden and Fafner, both dragons capable of intelligent thought and speech, both guard a hoard of treasure that belonged originally to the dwarfs. Both are slain through a soft, unprotected part of their breast -- Smaug in the spot left unshielded by his "diamond waistcoat", through which the black arrow of Bard pierces.

Professor Tolkien has even duplicated the scene in which the Hero learns the speech of birds and is given wise advice by the forest bird...in The Hobbit, Chapter XV, the raven Roac son of Carc brings word to Thorin that Smaug is dead. And the scene in which Alberich and Mime quarrel for possession of the Ring is duplicated in the struggle between Meagol and Smeagol, which ends in Gollum's first murder for the Ring. And the detail of Wotan the All-Father, who feels the pull of the Ring and is loath to surrender it to Fasolt and Fafner, is equivalenced in the Trilogy when Gandalf refuses to become Ring-Bearer "because even he might be tempted to use it." And this brings us to the question of Gandalf.

3. The Figure of Gandalf

I suspect that many readers, like myself, found Gandalf the most interesting single character in the Trilogy. At first glance the old man appears to be a familiar archetype -- the Friendly Magician combined with the Wise Old Man, to use Jung's labels. His position in the Fellowship of the Ring is little more than that of Merlin Ambrosius in the Fellowship of the Table Round, or of Miramon Llaguor in the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion (in James Branch Cabell's The Silver Stallion). The Friendly Magician is a common figure in Epic Fantasy -- Doctor Vandermast in Eddison's Mistress of Mistresses (1935); Meliboe the Enchanter in Fletcher Pratt's The Well of the Unicorn (1948), and so on.

But upon closer examination, we begin to realize that Gandalf is more, much more, than just an ordinary wizard. At the time of Bilbo's birthday party in Fellowship of the Ring (as revealed in the chronology in Appendix B), Gandalf is already at least two thousand years old. In fact, much more, for this is only the measure of his lifetime in Middle Earth! The Appendix says:

> "...the Istari or Wizards appeared in Middle Earth. It was afterwards said that they came out of the Far West (i.e., Valinor, or Faerie) and were messengers send to contest the power of Sauron...they came therefore in the shape of Men, though they were never young and aged only slowly, and had many powers of mind and hand. They revealed their true name to few."
>
> (underlining mine)

This reminds us that "Gandalf" is only the name by which the Grey Wizard was known in certain lands. His name among the Elves was "Mithrandir" or "Grey Pilgrim", and it is recorded that he took different names among other peoples. This also reminds us of the habit of Odin, or Wotan, who, when he visits Midgard (or Middle-Earth, the Lands of Men), takes different names, and goes in the shape of Men. Some of the names the God Odin uses in the Elder Edda are: the Old One, the Wanderer, Ygg, Herjan the Leader of Hosts, Sigfather, Hropt, Tveggi, Hor the High One, and so on. His usual appearance is that of a tall old man with a grey beard, wearing the tattered blue cloak and carrying the staff of a pilgrim, his missing eye concealed by the low brim of a slouch hat -- a very good likeness of Gandalf, with his wide-brimmed, peaked Wizard's hat, grey cloak, beard and staff.

"Gandalf" is a Norse word meaning "Magic Elf", certainly apropos if he came from Valinor, the Tolkinian version of Fairyland. But does Odin ever pass for a magician? Yes --

> "Then Othin rose, the enchanter old"
>
> Elder Edda, Baldrs Draumar, Stanza 2

And a little further on, in the same book, stanza 5, line 2, he is referred to as "the father of magic", and elsewhere in the Edda as a "God of Magic".

I suspect that Gandalf the Grey Wizard, thousands of years old, who takes upon himself human guise and various names, who is capable of passing through death and emerging more powerful than ever, is Tolkien's version of Odin, playing a role similar to that of Merlin. In Cabellian parlance, I feel that Gandalf is the Hervendille of the Trilogy, the Wandering Demiurge masquerading as Man.

4. A Final Note as to Names

I doubt if Professor Tolkien started out with the Siegfried story in mind. Probably the story just grew by unconscious accretion...the Norse mythos is part of the cultural heritage of Western Europe and known to all of us. The Siegfried Saga appears as a poerful literary influence in the works of Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Britain, Germany. It is still alive and still with us. Edith Simon's brilliant novelization of the tale (The Twelve Pictures) appeared only a few years ago. But at some point, Professor Tolkien realized what he was doing, and sat down to check through the various incarnations of the Siegfried story which I have described here. We know this, for he uses facets or elements which only occur in one place: such as the struggle between Mime and Alberich for the Ring, which occurs only in Wagner; or the list of Dwarf-names in the Edda, which is not in Wagner; or some of the names in Beowulf below, which occur nowhere else. In some cases we cannot tell exactly where he derived a certain name. The first part of this study attempted to outline the descent of the Tolkinian epic through William Morris and E. R. Eddison: there is a character called "Gandolf of the Bear" in William Morris's novel The Well at the World's End, book four, chapterII. "Mirkwood" is mentioned in Morris's The House of the Wolfings. (Note, in this connection, that William Morris did a translation of the Volsunga Saga into modern English called Sigurd the Volsung, which is probably where he got the name himself:)

Many of Tolkien's names come from the Elder Edda. Besides the dozens already noted, he got Frea (of the First Line of the Kings of the Mark, given in Appendix A) from Freya, Goddess of the Aesir. "Gram", also in the First Line, is from "Gram" a sword of Sigurth in the Regismol, the twenty-first book of the Edda. The idea of the Ring's being "heavy" to the Ring-Bearer may come from the enchanted necklace, Brisingamen, which Freya got from the Four Dwarves in the Ninth Book of the Edda.

> "Brisingamen is dragging me down...
> Brisingamen is fair, but I find it heavy...."

The necklace is cursed and bane to its wearer, as is the One Ring. "Gondor" may come from "Gondul", a Valkyrie mentioned in Voluspo, 31. But the best derivation is -- "Gondor" is a province of Ethiopia. The Professor has a good Atlas:

Does Galadriel owe something to Gerda the Alf-Queen? Compare your mental picture of the beautiful Lady of Lothlorien to this description:

> "In spite of the cloud that hung over Asgard all was fair and peaceful in Alfheim. Gerda, the radiant Alf-Queen, made there perpetual sunshine with her bright face. The elves loved her, and fluttered round her, keeping up a continual merry chatter, which sounded through the land like the sharp ripple of a brook over stony places; and Gerda answered in low, sweet tones, as the answering wind sounds among the trees."
>
> A. & E. Keary, The Heroes of Asgard

Notice also how Tolkien borrows Wagner's idea of the broken sword Nothung for the tale of Aragorn. "The Swrod Reforged" was one of the tokens that proved him the True King.

Many of the names in Beowulf were used, slightly adapted, by Professor Tolkien. Names from the Mark, Rohan, and Gondor and the Heirs of Anarion, such as Eorl, Earnil and Earnur come from names in Beowulf such as "Eofor" in Beowulf, 36; "Eormenric" and so on. "Eomond" of the Third Line of the Kings of the Mark, comes probably from "Eanmund" in Beowulf, 36. "Eomer" is directly from "Eomaer" in Beowulf, 27.

"Frodo" comes from "Frada" in Beowulf, 28.

E X P L I C I T

--Lin Carter

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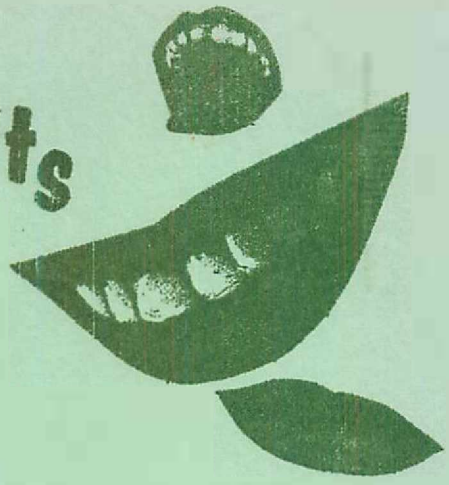
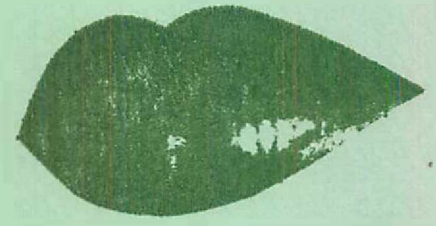
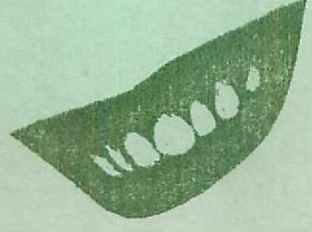
snippets



...and--
...they're showing charlie chaplin movies,
by god,
in the front part, let's go
and see them!
--yes, but--
haahaaha...but you're
the only one
laughing, dear
--yes, haa--
but
--which one was ours?--
(in red, that one; there)
--our check?--
...and this fellow collected roots, kept them in
bottles,
labeled and all--collected them from
all over the
world...
one dollar eighty-three cents--
--(one doesn't want to bore one's poopsie,--does-one?)
--but you like sylvia...--
(that's not true of marie)
--pure middle class; i do not like that kind of person--
(i don't consider you a fan; you're sort of nationalized
by right
--rite?--
of marriage)
i like conventions...
after the ~~fanoclast meetings the cigarette~~
butts stay
until the next fanoclast meeting...
look, they're showing charlie chaplin movies, by
god
--...(and so when he died his son thought it would
be a good idea to have a casket made of all
these ~~roots,--and--~~ so he hired a carpenter to
build the casket, but when...)...--
twenty-three cents apiece.
thank you, ma'am,
...we went to bed, and then the doorbell rang. it
was george nims raybin and 27 little teenage fans...
(i know i'm early but i have noplace else to go)
...oooooh....



ROG EBERT



BOOKS
LIN CARTER

COL. DAVIDSON DEPARTMENT

OR ALL THE SEA WITH OYSTERS, Avram Davidson; Berkley, N.Y., 1962. 176 pp., 50¢.

Now as this just happens to be the (thus far) only and firstest book Col. A. Davidson (U.S.M.C., Ret.) has written, it is just naturally a good collection because he crammed all his goodies to date therein.

You will recall the title story from Galaxy, 1957, the fortean one about coathangers copulating in closets and bicycles multiplying ... and stories like My Boy Friend's Name is Jello and The Golem from F&SF. The latter is one of the most skillful little things I have ever seen in fantasy: a comic treatment of the golem theme, mingling elements of science fiction and gothic horror in a sort of framework of yiddish humor. It sounds very difficult to write, but it is a pure delight to read.

Also among the sixteen stories here is the short novelet Help! I Am Dr. Morris Goldpepper, also from Galaxy, 1958, which struck me then and strikes me now as very possibly the gawdam funniest story I have ever read in a science fiction magazine.

Also present are stories of "straight" science fiction, straight gothic pieces in a blackwoodian vein, literary curios like the one called King's Evil, a period piece from the Regency period written in the style of the era.

In a word, there is something here for just about every taste in fantasy. Avram Davidson's fiction has always seemed to me outstanding among the more recent crop of writers in the field ... it is written with skill, style and charm with a certain warm touch of gentlemess, quiet humor and -- humility? -- that is missing from most writers, at least in our field.

As a stylist, the Colonel bears comparison with Sheckley, Bradbury and Sturgeon. In that comparison, I feel he stands out as the least self-consciously arty and poetic, the only one with self-control, the best plotter, and the one least given to Unfettered Purpleness.

Long may he wave.

BURROUGHS GALORE

THE MONSTER MEN, Edgar Rice Burroughs; Canaveral Press, N.Y., 1962. 188 pp., $2.75. Illustrated.

Does everybody know by now that the Burroughs estate carelessly and foolishly failed to renew copyrights on the first couple dozen ERB titles, when the 27-year limit came around, thus releasing into public domain lots of goodies? Guess so.

The first set of reprints, illustrated by the distinguished (but highly unsuitable for Burroughs) contemporary American artist, Mahlon Blaine, are now available. These comprise A FIGHTING MAN OF MARS, THE MOON MAID (retitled THE MOON MEN), and THE MONSTER MEN.

Reset in clear, large type; rebound in pressed paper a la Gnome Press; with rather attractive jackets also by Blaine -- they are good editions of rare items and truly fine bargains at their low price.

I shall review only THE MONSTER MEN, principally because it is the only one of the set I have purchased (principally because it was the only one of the set I had not read before). This is a curio involving a Frankenstein plot, laid on the jungle isles in and around Borneo, involving:

1. A Mad Scientist who wants to Create Life
2. The Beautiful Scientist's Daughter
3. An Evil Associate
4. The Most Handsome, Noble and Pure Monster in the History of the Frankenstein Stories

Somehow or other, in a typical ERB plot, all hell breaks loose and everybody goes around chasing each other. The Monster chases the Girl who is carried off by a Chimpanzee and the Mad Doctor and the Pirates and More Monsters and the Evil Associate are also chasing or being chased for 188 pages, and everybody has a High Old Time, except maybe the Pirates and also the Head-Hunters (I forgot about them. Sorry.), who get it in The Neck.

By page 188, all sorts of things have happened.

1. The Mad Doctor has realized How Evil it was to try to Create Life
2. The Monster and The Girl are In Love
3. The Other Monsters have decided to Get Away From It All and go live in the Jungle with the Chimpanzees
4. The Pirates, the Head-Hunters and the Evil Associate have got it in The Neck

If I seem to be making fun of all this, I don't really mean to, but I hardly think ERB wrote it seriously. I like this sort of thing, it is light literary entertainment and Burroughs was the complete master of that sort of thing.

And it has a clever, refreshing, very unexpected Twist Ending that I was unprepared for and which left me gasping!

... Well, anyway, breathing heavily.

HARLAN THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

ELLISON WONDERLAND, Harlan Ellison; Paperback Library; N.Y., 1962. 191 pp., 50¢.

This is a catch-all, or grab-bag, of Ellison's short stuff -- sixteen stories in all -- dating from 1956 to 1962. There are Unknownish things like Gnomebody here; straight sf like Commuter's Problem; sturgeony things like Do-It-Yourself -- a pretty good average over-all science fiction collection.

Ellison's best to date has been the novel MAN WITH NINE LIVES backed up, in Ace, with a selection of his shorts. That novel was one of the most exciting pieces of sf in recent years -- taut, vivid, imaginative, a sort of second string Al Bester, but very good stuff.

These short stories, tho ... I somehow get the feeling they were written with the Absolute Bare Minimum of talent, imagination and skill he thought he could get away with. They are skimpy (skeletal is a better word), often "cute", frequently displaying a sad tendency to turn off flashy writing and jazzy narrative instead of solid craftsmanship.

The end result is disappointing ... and why the hell are all these pocketbooks costing us 50¢ now?

CURRENT BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

DREAMS AND FANCIES, H. P. Lovecraft; Arkham House, Sauk City (Wisc.), 1962. x plus 174 pp., $3.50.

Alone of the specialty houses that blossomed just after World War II, Arkham House continues year after year to remain in good solvent condition, still publishing important books of high literary merit, beautifully printed, bound and jacketed with extremely fine taste.

This one, howsomever, is a sport or curio (that's the third time I've used that word in these reviews...must find another word) of little general interest, appealing only to collectors of the "Everything There Is", or Forrest J Ackerman, brand.

It consists of several delightful Lovecraft letters about his wild and woolly dreams, together with a half-dozen stories written around the dreams.

Among the stories (which are largely from his early Dunsanian period) are some of my particular favorites, such as The Doom That Came to Sarnath (1919), Celephais (1920), and the novel -- perhaps the most successful of all his novels -- The Shadow Out of Time (1934).

While it is easy to understand why Arkham House wishes to keep the Lovecraft name before the public, and has a natural desire to continue making money off his work by reprinting it, it's hard to see why this book was published. How much nicer it

would have been if they had re-issued Shadow, or other book-length novels such as Herbert West, Reanimator (1921-22) or Charles Dexter Ward (1927-28) in individual volumes all their own.

However, it does have a simply gorgeous jacket by Frank Taylor.

SOME WILL NOT DIE, Algis Budrys; Regency, Evanston (Ill.), 1962. 159 pp., 50¢.

This is (to me) an utterly pointless re-write of AJ's 1954 novel FALSE NIGHT, written during his apprenticeship and not particularly, I am sad to say, improved upon in the new version.

It is difficult to believe that the same man who wrote ROGUE MOON, truly an sf masterpiece, could write this story. Dull, wearying, episodic, heavy-handed, predictable ... well, I don't know. Sometimes I wonder.

Now that AJ is heading Regency Books he seems to be, not unlike his distinguished predecessor H. Ellison, observing the time-honored custom among editors, commonly known as "Buy Yer Own Stuff and Screw 'Em All" gambit.

And this is another pocketbook that makes me wonder why they are all costing 50¢ now.

ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D., Philip Francis Nowlan; Avalon Books, N.Y., 1962. 224 pp. $2.95.

This is the hoary original of the Buck Rogers strip (a fact, surprisingly, not mentioned anywhere on or in the book). Despite the rather apologetic preface (of the "Quaint old relic, ain't it boys?" sort), I find it neither quaint nor amusing ... but a tough, tight, fairly well-told (for its period) story, very much deserving of this hard-cover permanency in its own right ... regardless of its value and interest as a historical or associational item.

Anthony Rogers (sic), excavating in 1927 for radioactive minerals, is overcome by the radiation and conks out, his body perfectly preserved for 492 years. He awakens in 2419 to find America a savage wilderness, long ago overrun and conquered by Yellow Hordes of the Han Empire who rule from their air-cities aloft.

The modern Americans are green-clad foresters, guerrilas armed with advanced technological weaponry turned out by subterranean factories, fighting a war-of-attrition with sabotage thrown in, to get back their land from the Degenerate Mongoloids.

Nowlan's narrative style is smooth and even, and he achieves a certain tension and excitement. His unfortunate tendency to stop the story dead every other page, every time somebody picks up a radiophone, and spend two paragraphs giving you technical details ... well, it's the only mark of "age" I can find in the book, and was standard operating procedure in the Gernsbackian (or Pre-Heinleinian) Era, and the author can hardly be criticised for using it.

Incidentally, a fact also not noted anywhere in, on, or outside the book: This is actually both the Buck Rogers stories, Armageddon 2419 A.D. and The Airlords of Han, combined in one volume.

Reprinting these two famous Nowlan stories is a Good Thing and I think it were real nice of Good Ole Avalon Books to do so and at such a realistic price, too. Now, if we could just persuade them to reprint Nowlan's other big story, Space Guard from ASF, May, 1940....

ALL THE TRAPS OF EARTH AND OTHER STORIES, Clifford D. Simak; Doubleday, Garden City (N.Y.); 1962. 287 pp., $3.95.

You know, I'm REALLY not in a bad mood today. Even though I have already in this column knifed H. Ellison, skewered A. Budrys, poignarded Arkham House -- and am about to take the old scalpel to Cliff Simak for publishing this book, when he should have known better. Actually, I'm in a tip-top mood today, merry as a lark on the wing, bubbling over with brotherly love and fondness for Littul Children, Home, Mother, The Flag, The Good Books and Carl Sandburg.

But, Good People, Cliff Simak has sprung a gasket or something. Maybe it's because Doubleday has put out three collections of his shorts in as many years, or something, and the blood is rushing to his head.

Anyway: the title novelet in this collection is so long, so bad, so dull, so lacking in human interest, so emotion-soaked, so boring, so badly over-written, that it gives the whole book a bad flavor, and sicklies o'er the entire collection with the pale cast of crud.

The rest of the stories seem to be typical mediocre Simak.

Gee I wish he would write another book like CITY. I bet he wishes he could, too.

RETURN TO OTHERNESS, Henry Kuttner; Ballantine, N.Y., 1962. 240 pp., 50¢.

It strikes me as sort of sad, to realize that Hank Kuttner is having more books published after his tragically early death, than he did during his lifetime. He was one of the very few s-f/fantasy writers we cannot very well do without -- a prolific and brilliant, highly talented, creative and original man with immense variety and skill in his craft. God bless him, I wish he'd lived fifty more years.

This collection of only eight stories, contains a Hogbens story and The Proud Robot ... the very best of all the wonderful Gallagher stories, as well as The Ego Machine (apparently a previously unprinted story), not to mention Gallagher Plus.

Jesus, he was a good writer. Hardly a bad page in the book. Tight, smooth craftsmanship in every story, and the wacky, irreverent Kuttner flavor throughout.

For this one I don't mind paying 50¢. Get it and agree.

THE MASK OF FU MANCHU, Sax Rohmer; Pyramid, N.Y., 1962. 191 pp., 40¢.

I think it is peachy keen the way the boys at Pyramid are bringing the Sax Rohmer stuff out again in paperback, book by book in series-order too.

This old-timer (1932), a fine Oriental-Gothic chiller in which the Wicked Doctor makes like the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan and almost raises the Yellow Hordes in a jehad against the West is the sort of scalp-tingling spook opera we enjoyed in our teens, and you can't hardly get that kind any more.

Nayland Smith is back again, the poor old guy, weary and worn to a frazzle chasing the Doctor all over hell and gone, frustrating his Evil Plans and struggling against his sinister hordes of Dacoits, Thuggee-stranglers, poison flowers, spiders and what all, and getting grayer and more pooped in every book.

You'll like it. Hey! This one is only 40¢ -- is the boys at Pyramid trying to spoil us?

TERROR, Robert Bloch; Belmont, N.Y., 1962. 157 pp., 50¢.

Speaking of Thuggee! R. Hassenpfeffer Block, or Bloch, or something, -- easily the most prolific Dirty Fro around these days (seven books in less than two years, count 'em, S-E-V-E-N) -- has a little murder mystery here with people getting knocked off in a gory way all over, and a Stolen Hindu Idol of Kali the Black Goddess of Death and Murder and Income Tax Evasion, & a couple Gorgeous Dolls, and well you know...

Oh, by the way, this is by the author of PSYCHO. Just thought I'd mention it in case you didn't know....

(50¢ again ... maybe I'll start going to the Public Library or something....)

THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND, William Hope Hodgson; Ace Books, N.Y., 1962. 159 pp., 35¢.

Well, this is just one of the modern masterpieces of gothic fiction, a real chiller, an authentic classic of the field, and (although not Hodgson's best, for which I nominate the magnificent THE NIGHT LAND) beautifully told, wonderful reading. Ace is to be congratulated for bringing this out, and let's see GHOST PIRATES and THE BOATS OF THE GLEN CARIG too, huh Don?

This is the tenth Arkham House book in paperback, and that's okay with me because they are good books and everybody ought to be able to get them. 35 CENTS ... fantastic!

WITCH HOUSE, Evangeline Walton; Monarch Books, Derby (Conn.), 1962. 159 pp., 35¢.

This is the eleventh, but it's a clinker. Wimmin can't write, or anyway this one can't.

... AND LET ME SAY AGAIN I DON'T LIKE PAYING NO LOUSEY FIFTY CENTS FOR NO LOUSEY PAPERBACK BOOKS!

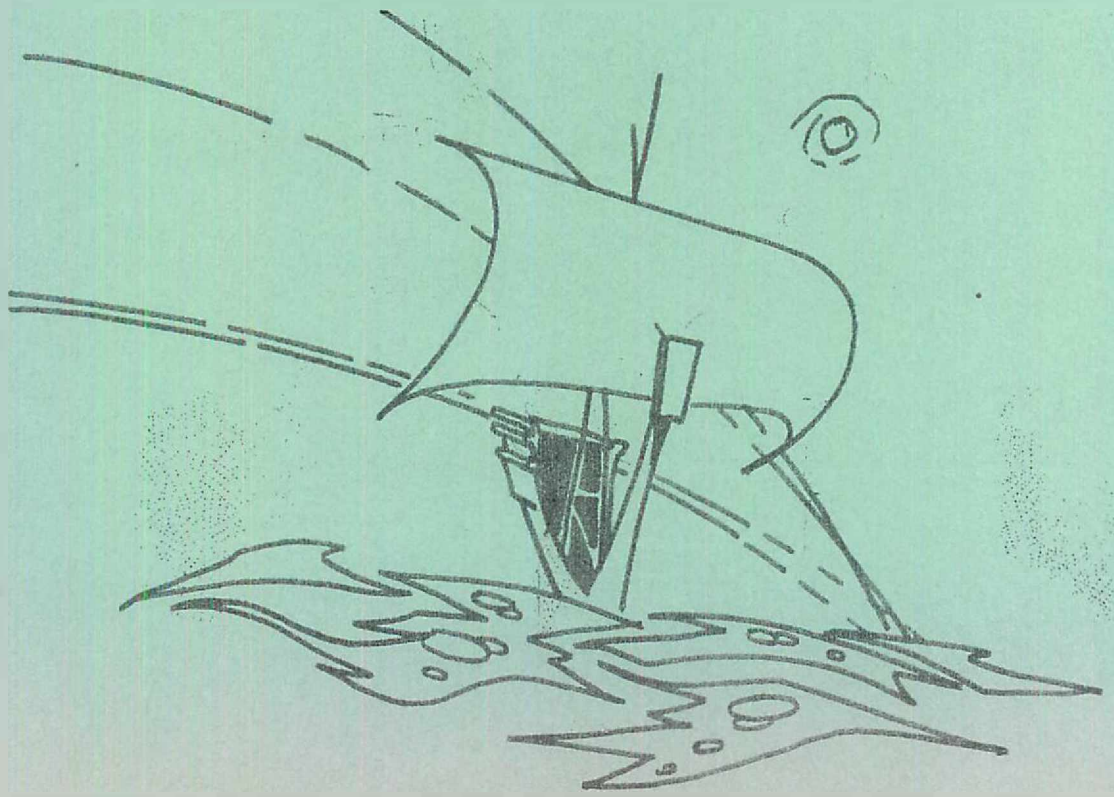
PIPPIN'S JOURNAL, Rohan O'Grady, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1962. $3.50.
230 pp., illustrated by Edward Gorey. ...Guest review by Pat Lupoff.

This will be a strange little review about a strange little book that appeared a few months ago and created very little stir in the world at large; absolutely none, that I have been able to detect, in fandom.

The book carries a second title, Nineteenth Century fashion, of "or ROSEMARY IS FOR REMEMBRANCE", this plus a front-cover blurb immediately caught my eye. The blurb reads: "A nuclear physicist withdraws from his own world to an earlier period of adventure and romance -- and the beginnings of a fatal curse."

The hero of the book is indeed a young nuclear scientist named John Montrolfe, who suffers from a weird deformity...a twisted neck, from which deformity all male members of his family have suffered for as far back as records or recollection exist. John comes to England from Canada to claim his inheritance, a gloomy old English manor known as Montrolfe Hall. (There, is the atmosphere getting spooky enough for you?) One blustery, blowy night, some weeks after John has been at the manor, he dreams about a beautiful girl of about fifteen, and awakens from this dream with a passionate desire to dream about the girl again. He does so and soon realizes that he is falling in love with the child. Then, one night his dream comes to a tragic and inexplicable end, and thereafter, try as he may, he cannot again dream of the girl.

But by a convenient coincidence, John discovers a secret diary long hidden in a secret drawer...and then things really begin to happen! The story now loses much of its supernatural aspect and becomes a charming romantic adventure concerning highwaymen, a kidnapped girl, hidden treasure and a Secret Code. By the time the scene returns to the present, as it finally does, we know all about the mysterious dream girl, how John Montrolfe got his hideous deformity and who he really is. Although the plot of this book is certainly not an original one, it is told with spirit and charm, and the characters and events are vividly depicted. PIPPIN'S JOURNAL is definitely a book to read in front of a roaring fire one cold winter's night, with a glass of brandy in one hand and a gooey marshmallow in the other.



V IS FOR VERGIA AND VERTIGO

(GUEST REVIEW BY BOB TUCKER)

I hold a peculiar place of honor in my little community, a certain elevated respect that is not accorded the common louts on the street. I am a consultant. I am regarded as a Wheel in Literature, a sounding board of Culture, and my valued advice is often sought by those with knotty problems falling within my general province. I mean to say, from time to time the local librarian will ask me: "Silverberg has a new book out. Is it worth buying?" And I will screw up my handsome features into a fearful grimace, clutch my stomach and groan with agony, the meanwhile uttering piercing shrieks and stomping the floor.

"I get the message," she will solemnly say.

On other, rarer occasions the poor woman will have committed the foul deed before seeking advice. She will have already purchased the book but, nervous at the prospect of offering it to the public untested, will ask me to make a preliminary reading before the volume is placed in circulation. "Be sure to mark down the page numbers on a slip of paper," she will instruct me. By this, she means that I am to jot down the pages containing the erotic passages, saving her valued time in finding them later. When I turn in such a slip she will read them immediately, because often, after the book goes into circulation, some reader will seize the scissors and clip them for future reference.

Only last week she did this wretched thing to me, offering me a brand new volume for private preview, with the usual request that I tell her what it is all about. She said in effect that here was a brand new science fiction novel, by a new writer, and would I please brief her on it.

The Other Side of the Universe (Twayne, New York, 1961)

Well, I have read it but I am totally unable to comply with her wishes. I have a hazy idea as to its contents and I believe I understand the author's intent. But I have grave doubts that even the author, Mr. Kurt Dreifuss, knows what it is all about. He reveals himself as a most confused fictioneer.

At heart, it is the story of a new utopia, a Dreifuss version of utopia embracing Dreifuss reforms in education, social life, commerce and politics. It can not properly be called a novel; the book contains 224 pages and it is not an exaggeration to say that easily a hundred of them are filled with long-winded speeches and lectures extolling the good life on this new planet. Similarly, it is not science fiction although I certainly found it fantastic. (Have patience, gentle reader, we'll get to the good parts in a moment.)

At times while reading it I thought of E.E. Smith, particularly in those passages relating to the turgid love affair between the handsome Earth hero and the throbbingly beautiful goddess he found on this other planet, Vinibus.

> "Vergia, darling, I love you!"
> She did not answer, but clung to him, her face upturned, her eyes melting into his as rapturously he kissed her again and again.
> They were in love, the Man from Earth and the woman from Vinibus.

At other times I found myself thinking of E.E. Evans, particularly in those scenes where people bumble around grunting and groaning and exclaiming their undying love for all living creatures. (Don't step on that grasshopper -- he's kinfolk!)

> "Ah!" she cried, "it is good to be alive, to sense the throbbing and bursting of kindred living things all striving for the ecstasy of life and light."
> "Which brings us back to the subject!" observed Yonne with a mischievous protest in his voice.
> "Yes," she said.
> "Tell me all about it." He leaned forward and drew up his legs, clasping them with his arms like a little boy ready to hear a story,
> It was to be a story, but one for which he was not quite prepared!

But most of all I kept thinking of the author and the thing he had committed to paper; I kept wondering what strange mesmeric force he exerted on the publisher. In some chapters the author seems to be extolling Thoreau's way of life, urging us all to get right with Walden Pond before it is too late; in other places he plugs the simple communal way of living that was said to be universal at the time of Christ, or perhaps it is the Oneida Community he favors. Certainly he advocates the pastoral scene, with only enough industry to meet the physical needs of his people for he hacks hell out of greedy capitalism, work quotas, the amassing of unneeded wealth, mindless workers and dirty cities. His new world is almost all a woodland dell, with farms to raise only the necessary food and underground (or at least concealed) factories to produce only the necessary shoes, clothing and machinery. In passing he completely disavows our educational system and replaces it with a new one.

But to the story: it takes place in 1926. Remember that date.

The hero, a handsome adventurous youth of 27, had won his pilot's wings during World War I and now, in 1926, he is a test pilot for a research firm. On the day the story opens he is orbiting the earth in what I can only assume to be a multimotored monoplane made of metal. Hard details are lacking; the author sins more than once in that respect and the reader must invent certain necessary vehicles to carry the story forward. From scraps of description and conversation dropped throughout the book this aircraft has a pressurized cabin, possesses more than one motor, is made of metal, has a truly astonishing fuel capacity, and seems to be a monoplane. (From all this I pictured an ancient Ford Trimotor which flew on some hazy date during my childhood.) Our dauntless hero is "flying through the upper stratosphere at the very fringe of Earth's gravitational pull. He had brought the plane into orbit as planned. It raced along its prescribed arc about the Earth. All went well."

But not for long it didn't. The craft veered suddenly from its "orbit" and plunged into outer space, the controls went awry, the instruments failed to respond, "the oxygen and pressure equipment ceased to function and the air in the cabin grew thin." (No explanation of why these things happened.) Poor little hero! Sight grows dim, his mind reels and then blacks out. Bingo -- he crosses space, thirty million miles of it. (And I think it serves him right for getting so close to the edge of that gravitational pull.) Upon the return of consciousness the pilot finds himself above an alien sea, espies a handy continent, and casually sets down the craft on a sandy beach. Where? I suppose it is Venus -- the author plays it cagey. Vergia lives there and the natives call the place Vinibus; the author will say only that it is "Earth's next planet, thirty million miles away."

Venus has a mean distance of 26 million miles so it will do for a guess. The aircraft did some fancy travelling to cross that gulf, too. "On and on (it had) raced ... 20 ... 30 ... 40 miles per second, the speed of heavenly bodies." Well, some heavenly bodies if he is referring to solar objects, and he misuses speed for velocity, but damme! if I wouldn't like to watch that flimsy aeroplane attain forty miles per second and then slow down for a Venus landing. It would be worth the price of admission.

Now: our hero is on the beach, and out of the cabin he pops with nary a thought about the atmosphere. Lo! a fearsome beastie is rushing him. Is he eaten? Is he carried off to some loathsome lair? Is he gored and trampled on the spot? No indeed, for a wondrous goddess appears from the "tropical jungle" in the background and calls off the beast with tender words. Whammo -- our boy falls in love. She is a seven sector callout and he is a red-blooded American boy. And, as she confides later, she instantly guessed that that he flew over from Earth.

He quickly learns the language so that he can get closer acquainted and she quickly consents to teach him, for it is the author's desire to launch the long-winded speeches touting the new utopia without further delay. Everybody and his grandmother lecture and speechify at the drop of an earmuff. Drop your earmuff for a moment and listen to a fair example.

A jolly festival is approaching.

On a certain annual festival day, all the children of Vinibus go into the woods and fields to help the birds, beasts and insects prepare "for the coming of winter" to the tropical jungleland. They build nests, warrens, anthills, mud-holes and briar patches, I gather, to aid and comfort their little friends. A young girl has been chosen as leader of the local group, and she collects her little charges in a forest clearing to give them a pep talk:

> "We are assembled here today to honor our unlike kin. Though we have not yet traveled far along the path of Vinibin life -- we are but on its threshold now, this life as Vinibins, wondrous adventure that it is, and inexplicably cruel as it is good -- we feel already, each of us, a yearning to fathom its hard antimonies, to harmonize the sinister and the beautiful that it fosters in ourselves. We ponder ceaselessly this dualism in our lives, in all lives to be sure, but most assuredly in those of Vinibinkind.
>
> "We long for reconciliation of this contradiction in our concept of a good life. It does not seem complete or willful that our Vinibin goals should be conceived and carried out in terms of pillage and destruction of all other living beings; that all our unlike kin who strive as we to feel the light of life, should have but one alternative: To serve our Vinibin needs or perish!
>
> "This cannot be the end and aim of Vinibin endeavor: That we should be a dreaded specter in the life experience of all our unlike kin; that Vinibin pleasures should be realized in harm alone to them. As once the Gylu matched its lyric note in savory taste of tender flesh upon our Vinibin palate; so countless Vinibusian species still seem but to live for Vinibin ravishment upon the unresisting tissues of their tender bodies!"

She's giving them hell because their ancestors were meat eaters. At the end of the pep talk everyone bursts into song, chanting the glories of the fecund soil, the blowing winds, and their little pals, the insects.

And off they go romping into the underbrush to build homes for them. (The meanwhile, no doubt, stomping hundreds underfoot in their gay, carefree rush to build the first anthill.) "They formed in small groups, each carrying a tool, or portion of a nesthouse or some other material to set about their task of protecting the animals and plants of the forest against the coming winter." The hero, who has been listening agape, "breathed a sigh of relief as he heard their merry voices and laughter ringing joyously through the woods."

Touching, eh?

Vergia has a kindly father, of course, who is also one of the planet's chieftans, of course, and the wayfaring Earthman is invited to live in their treehouse until he recovers his health. Vergia also has a younger brother who is a whiz at everything he touches: he is an able bricklayer, a consumate musician, and an experienced meteorologist attached to the nearest weather bureau station. He is so good at this last (as is the weather-watching network) that a hurricane catches them one afternoon while they are sitting around in the woods lecturing each other about the joys of Vinibin life. They don't have such storms often, but "when they come they sometimes rock the planet!"

This particular disturbance is a planet-rocker because it is also howling and rocking seven thousand miles away, in the opposite hemisphere, endangering a group of world leaders who are meditating life's inner meanings while camped on an island. At once our trusty hero volunteers to warm up his plane and rescue the stranded leaders, and at once the doughty meteorologist volunteers to go along as navigator -because he is familiar with the upper atmosphere.- Now begins the most astonishing journey of the narrative, a journey which easily resurrected my sense of wonder. The young meteorologist causes to be brought to the beach several barges loaded with various fuels and miraculously all of them will burn in the plane's mighty engines. Next the young man produces a sheaf of maps and accurately charts the route they must fly to reach the island. Off they go into the wild blue yonder, again flying above the storm in the upper reaches of the stratosphere. Without stop, without refueling, that wondrous plane flies seven thousand miles and drops down through the clouds to find the island precisely beneath them!

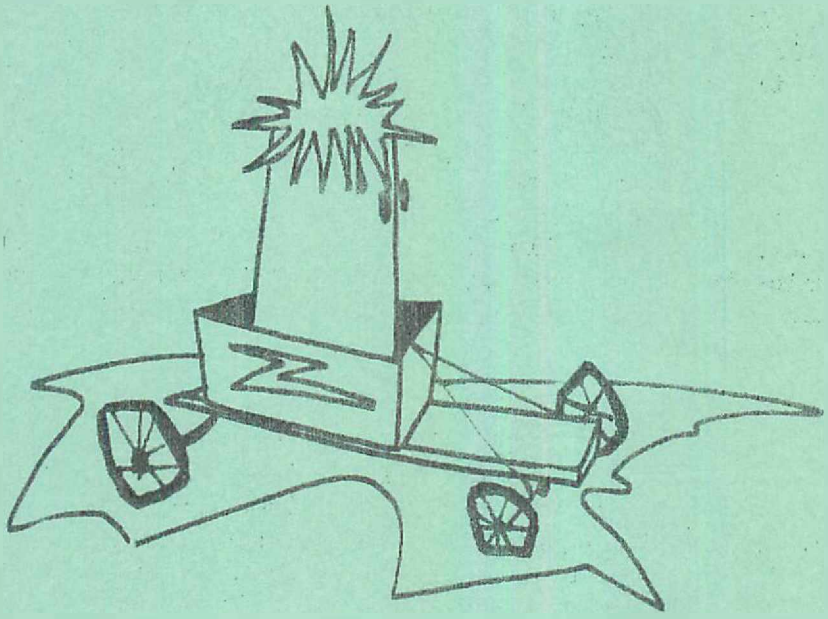
A startling discovery is made. The hurricane has veered away, leaving the island untouched and the meditating council safe from harm. There is no need to land, to warn or rescue them. And so, with a smile in his eye, our hero turns his craft about and flies back another seven thousand miles non-stop.

Or almost non-stop. He doesn't quite complete the fourteen thousand mile round trip because, for some fool reason or other, these two rover boys decide to drop down through the hurricane (which is still raging) to have a look at something or other. Disaster strikes. The storm hits them, jostles them, nearly wrecks them and does succeed in almost tearing off one wing. They land in a grainfield only by the skin of their teeth, the wing crumpled and hanging useless against the fuselage. Leaving the plane, the dauntless pair strike off across the muddy field under a pouring rain, to slog the two or three miles to the nearest town. Once in town they send messages to Vergia and her kindly father, assuring them that they are safe and that the hurricane missed the island of retreat. That done, they hunt up an engineer and order a new wing for the plane. The good engineer, of course, wants to see the plane for he has never made anything like that before.

Our uncomplaining hero is prepared to slog the three miles back through the storm to accomodate the engineer, but that worthy tells them it isn't really necessary -- they can be there in a few minutes by public conveyance. Whereupon they enter a cage somewhat like an elevator, and the trio find themselves in the grain field barely a quarter of a mile from the aircraft. It seems that that particular point was a regular station stop for the public conveyance.

No one but the disenchanted reader has the wit to ask:

a) why didn't they use the conveyance an hour ago?
b) what in hell is a station stop doing in the middle of a grain field?



The engineer inspects the damaged craft, makes a few quick sketches of the wing and fuselage, and assures the pair a new wing will be ready in two days. And it is. (I thought of George O. Smith.) (So all right, Andy Young, let's have no more bitching about stupid engineers.)

The small remainder of the story is anti-climactic. The boy wants to marry the girl but no one on Vinibus can understand his ideas of marriage. Venus appears to be a sort of love-em-and-leave-em world, or else a love-em-and-hang-around-until-you-get-damned-tired-of-her-face-place. Children are packed off to an orphanage and that is that. Vergia, being Vergia, is the kind no red-blooded American boy would dream of deserting short of death so he pops her into his trusty monoplane and off they go for Earth with the cheers and songs of the Vinibins ringing in their ears. The natives give them a rouser of a send-off. From all over the planet the best bands, orchestras and choruses journey to the beach, while offshore a thousand ships lie at anchor to watch the take-off.

> The Quiloth orchestra struck up the now famous anthem dedicated to 'The Stranger, Man' and all the choruses joined:
>
> "Oh, Kinship of All Living Things,
> In this thy consumation lies,
> That from sidereal vistas springs
> A harbinger of Heaven's ties!"

(I didn't know whom to think of. Some self-acclaimed fannish poet, perhaps.)

Summation:

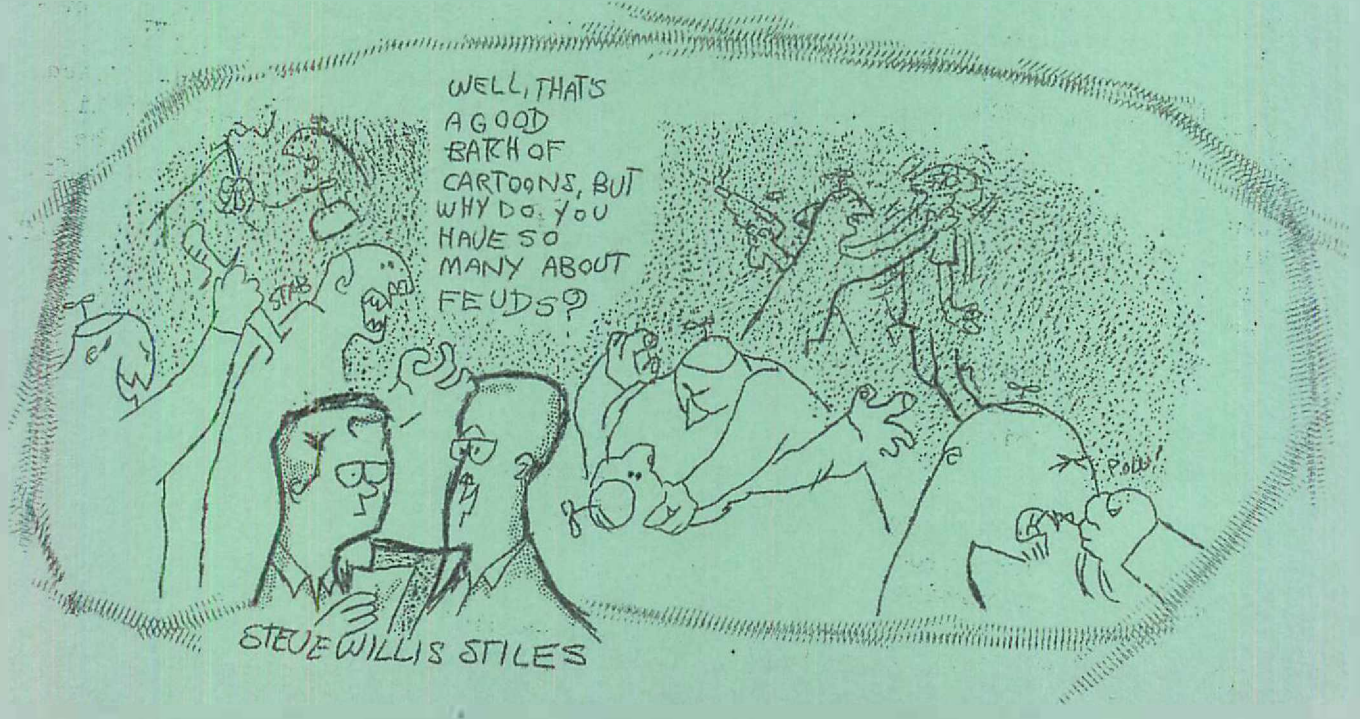
Despite the expectations of my librarian (and perhaps the publisher) it is not a science fiction novel; there may even be honest doubt that it is a novel.

It could have been an engaging utopia if only the author had been true to his intent and desire, had been rigidly consistent in the fabrication of it, and had exercised care in the avoidance of blunders. (And if his editor had remained awake and aware of the duties of his job!) I question a wooday, rural world which contains credit card charge accounts, sophisticated machine shops, shipyards, television, fuels for piston engines, underground conveyances, a worldwide transportation scheme and other modern appurtenances which require cities and city populations to support them. I question a tropic jungle which knows a winter season and which resembles a stand of timber anywhere in the American midwest. I question a meteorologist so expert in alien skills that he can navigate accurately seven thousand miles on his first flight, and so bad that a hurricane needs to hit him before he realizes it exists. I question a hurricane at least seven thousand miles in length and two thousand miles in width, a hurricane which has so completely boxed in an island that rescue ships cannot get nearer than a thousand miles, a hurricane that suddenly veers away and never touches that Island.

It could have been an entertaining utopia if only the author had been a more practiced fictioneer. The book is written in the style of 1926 and suggests that it originated in or about that year; the later insertion of modern terms and inventions only creates an abundance of anachronisms. All characters speak one of two languages: either the sophomoric stammerings of bashful lovers or the overblown rhetoric of tailwind pedagogs. The two languages are sometimes horribly misplaced, as witness that incredible speech thrust into the mouth of a child.

It is easy to understand why the manuscript was written but difficult to understand why it was published.

BOB TUCKER



THE MOON MEN, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Canaveral, N.Y., 1962. 375 pp., $2.75.
(Guest review by Dick Lupoff)

Burroughs is best known to the World for Tarzan and to the Microcosm for John Carter, but his greatest single work is THE MOON MEN, consisting of a two-hundred page novel and two nearly-100 page novellas, originally from Argosy, 1923 and 1925. THE MOON MEN is little known because of its rarity and because it is an independent novel, although connected with the Mars series.

It is a fine example of many of Burroughs' techniques; for instance, the device of "framing" a story: THE MOON MEN does not begin with the main narration, but instead is introduced by a traveler on the transoceanic liner Harding. The occasion is Mars Day, June 10, 1967. On this day, after twenty-seven years of fumbling exchanges between Earth and Mars via a Gridley Wave-like device, a complete message has been received for the first time: a greeting to a sister-world, datelined Helium, Barsoom.

Our anonymous traveler (Burroughs?) meets an Air officer who seems strangely sad in the midst of the universal gaiety of Mars Day. The officer takes over the narration, explaining a wildly complex theory of reincarnation, future memory, and the non-reality of time (a repeated theme in Burroughs, used notably in Pellucidar). The officer, Admiral Julian, explains that he is Julian 3rd. He explains that he was also Julian 1st, his own grandfather, killed in France in 1918. In his present incarnation he was born in 1937, but he will tell the story of his grandson, Julian 5th, whose memories he possesses fully and who "was born" in the year 2000.

Now, preliminaries aside, Julian 5th speaks through Julian 3rd, and proceeds with the main narration. In it, following the establishment of remote communication between Earth and Mars, the two planets attempt an exchange of spaceships. Mars launches hers first, in 2015, but the ship goes astray and is lost in the void. Earth launches her ship, the Barsoom, in 2024. Julian 5th is captain. Lieutenant Commander Orthis, a warped genius, is second in command. En route to Mars, but actually short of the orbit of the Moon, Orthis goes berserk and destroys the control mechanism and the radio of the Barsoom. The Barsoom flounders toward the Moon, a crash being prevented by the repelling force of the Lunar Eighth Ray with which the ship is equipped; the Barsoom drifts into a lunar crater, only for its crew to find that the craters of the Moon are not merely dead volcanoes, but shafts which lead completely through the surface of the Moon and into its hollow interior where, lighted and warmed by a gigantic luminous mist, is a complete world including plant and animal life, human beings, and a civilization of some advancement!

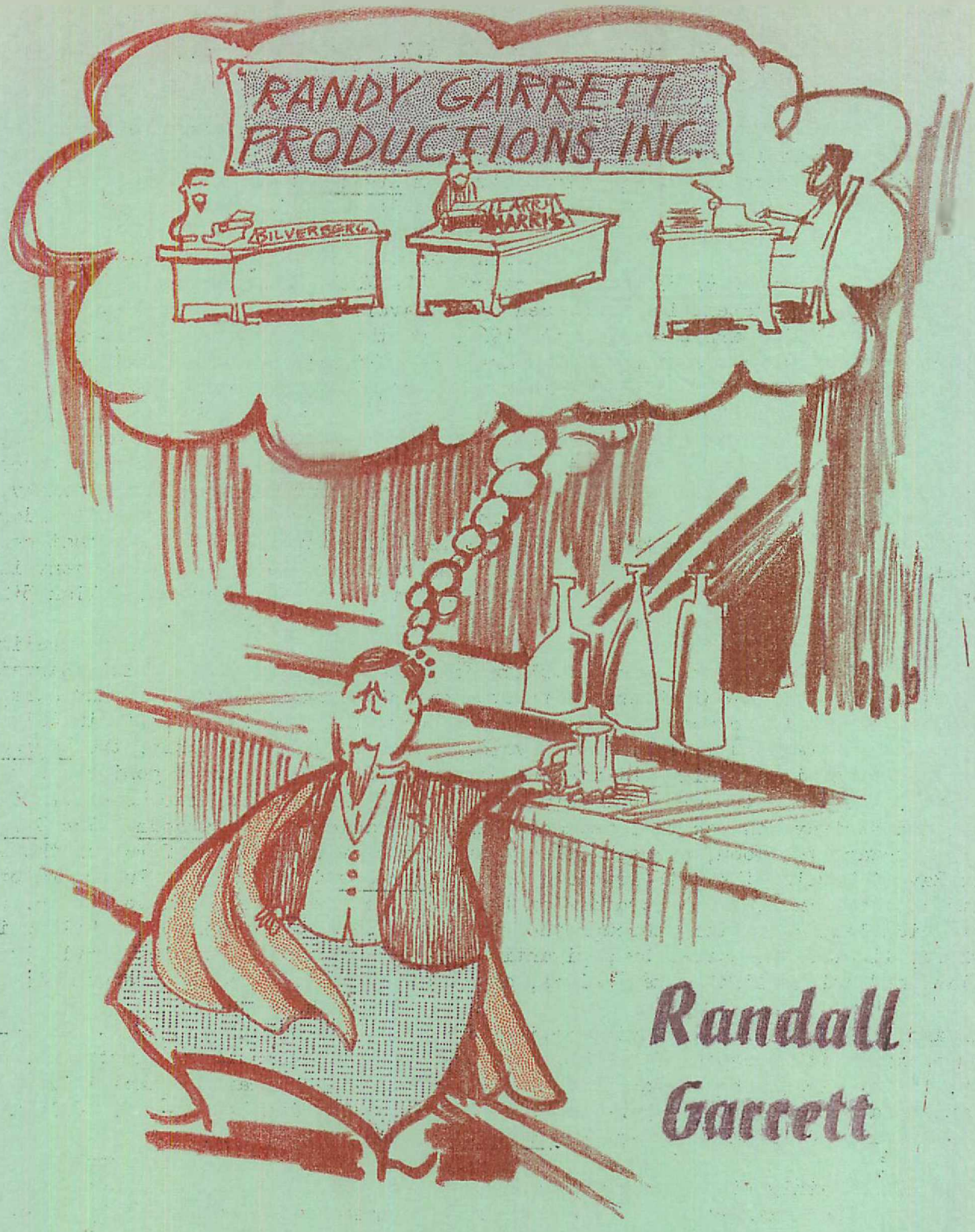
Julian and Orthis undergo a lengthy series of adventures with the centaur-like Va-Gas; Julian escapes with a captured princess of the highly-civilized human Laytheans, Nah-ee-lah. Orthis leads the Va-Gas into an alliance with the human but uncivilized Kalkars; they attack and destroy the Laytheans but Julian escapes with Nah-ee-lah. Julian and Nah-ee-lah make their way back to the Barsoom and return to Earth.

The second story in the book deals mainly with the adventures of Julian 9th, following the conquest of a peaceful and disarmed Earth by a fleet of Kalkars equipped and commanded by Orthis. Julian 9th lead an heroic revolution; his arch-foe is Brother General Or-Tis, a descendent of Orthis. A civilization of conquered pastorals and arrogant occupiers is painted by Burroughs; we also learn that the Kalkars, after the death of Orthis, have fallen to near-barbarism themselves. The revolt fails...

...but in the final story of the book, Julian 20th leads the "Americans", now fallen to Amerind-like nomadism, in their final triumph over the Kalkars. This story alone is full of cleverly-planted surprises: the fate of the true Amerinds, the identity of a mysterious race of Californian dwarfs, the ultimate fate of both the Kalkars and the Americans....

If you read only one ERB book, make it THE MOON MEN. It is truly Burroughs at his best.

Note: the drawing on page 75 of the Canaveral edition is wrongly identified. When you have read the book you will know who and what is portrayed; until then, just ignore the cut-line.



WRITERS AT WORK

by bhob stewart

THE MAKING OF A FANTASTIC PAPERBACK

CHARLES M. COLLINS

Some months ago the editor-in-chief of a long-standing paperback publisher negotiated with me to edit a collection of supernatural fiction. The anthology was recently completed; it has been accepted, and is scheduled for publication at the end of this year. This is the story of the book: of its conception, evolution, and final materialization. Because it happened to me, it is a highly personal story, and simply a "behind-the-scenes" account of its development in the intricate network of some publisher's production mill.

Because it is a fantastic paperback, Dick Lupoff has been interested in its progress, and thinks that many readers of Xero may well share his interest. He asked me to start at the very beginning, outlining each phase of the book's growth from the time I first conceived of the project to its completion in the spring of this year. Now it seems rather difficult to ascertain a starting point. The genesis of the idea goes back through many pleasurable years as a devoted aficionado and private collector of fantastic literature and outre lore. To commence at some amorphous point in time, way back there, would mean penning a kind of personal memoir the content of which would generate a questionable amount of interest. Yet the concept of the anthology had its origin long before negotiations were made or contracts signed. I find too that the telling of this tale must include an appreciation of sorts -- that it must embody some tribute to a person whose unwavering faith, friendship, and conviction in me through several dark and precarious years has enabled me to gain a foothold in a profession that is extremely meaningful to me, and motivates me to give my best and most resolute effort to whatever work I may be fortunate enough to contribute to that field.

The man of whom I speak is Michael de Forrest. He is presently editor-in-chief at Avon Books, and was one of the originators as well as one-time co-owner of America's first paperback bookshop. I suppose I have haunted bookshops much as the alcoholic haunts gin mills. It was almost inevitable that I should discover the Pocket Book Bookshop, and rather auspicious that there in this first and now, alas, no longer existent bookshop began the evolution of my initial professional contribution to the field. The genuine feelings of warmth and welcome extended by the two proprietors far exceeded my patronage, and the shop was, consequently, soon to become one of my regular and favorite purlieus. At that time Mike had recently obtained a position in the sales department of Avon Books, while working evenings in the bookshop. At dusk, after a dreary day of work, or looking for work, I would often retire to the Pocket Book Bookshop, and in the dark obscurity of the small alcove where stock was kept and purchases registered, over cans of beer and countless cigarettes, we talked -- and there, no doubt, Mike learned of my interests in fantastic literature.

It was in the early days of 1958 that Mike first proposed an anthology of horror tales which I would edit for Avon. He was in an excellent position to place my ideas in the proper hands, and asked if I might be interested in such a project. I became intoxicated with enthusiasm that night as I envisioned the realization of a long-time dream and hitherto silent ambition. The concept, as all such neophyte visions are, was grandiose. I would put together a giant collection devoted to tales of lycanthropy. The package was called SOME LIVE BY BLOOD ALONE, and contained several old favorites, some rare and obscure masterpieces, as well as a few representative contemporary macabre achievements. The collection was aimed at a threefold goal. First it would present a representative collection of supernatural fiction from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Secondly, it would bring back long out-of-print tales obtainable only in rare, high priced hardcover editions. Thirdly, it would present works by some of the most distinguished men in the genre who dabbled diabolically in the black arts and who shared a common predilection for the vampire, werewolf, and sundry blood-sucking creatures in a low-priced, mass market paperback.

Included were such gems as D. Scott-Moncrieff's SCHLOSS WAPPENBURG, Bram Stoker's DRACULA'S GUEST, and a horrific masterpiece by Hanns Heinz Ewers, THE SPIDER. The Ewers piece was later used in Donald Wollheim's paperback anthology MORE MACABRE (1961). Several months after submission my presentation for SOME LIVE BY BLOOD ALONE was rejected on the grounds that it was too much for the connoisseur and not enough for the mass market.

There is an amusing postscript concerning the ultimate fate of this collection. Once it was rejected by Avon, I decided to place my outline with another publisher. I handed the material over to my agent, and thereafter put it out of my mind. It was now going into the fall of 1958, and my agent had submitted the presentation to a relatively new paperback publisher at that time. Several months passed without a word from them concerning the anthology. Inquiries from my agent about it were given vague, noncommital replies. Finally he was told that the entire idea had been rejected, but the material was being held in one of the editorial offices awaiting a signature on the rejection slip. Twice my agent attempted to have the presentation picked up, but both times returned empty handed. Then, early one crisp September morning, I received the rejection slip in the mail. It had, I must say, been most beautifully signed by the executive editor, only there was no accompanying manuscript. I read the rejection slip once more to discover that my eight-page presentation, which could have been enclosed for (in those days) just an additional three cents, was being returned to me via express. I immediately wrote to the executive editor explaining to him that the script had been submitted through my agent, that it had been called for twice, that my agent maintained a pick-up service for such rejections, and that the material should be sent back to my agent in the manner requested when the script was first submitted.

Lo! About two days later a huge van pulled up to my house, and from it was extracted my eight-page presentation along with a bill charging me with a minimum shipping fee of close to two dollars. On principle I refused the envelope. It was returned to the publisher who also refused it. Then ensued some correspondence with the express company trying to clear up the situation and attempting to regain my manuscript, but all this while, nary a word in reply to my letter from the executive editor. The express company stood firm and would not release the script until someone accepted the charges. I decided to let the matter drop, not really needing the presentation since I had a duplicate copy somewhere about the house. A year passed without pursuing any further publication plans. Then, under the impression that the original script had long been lost and forgotten, I once again heard from the express company. This time I was informed that the manuscript was being held in their office, but, during the year, had gathered fantastic storage fees. Would I kindly come down, pay the charges, and pick it up. Another letter from me followed once more explain-

ing the situation, and still holding to principle. To this day I have not heard from them, not have I received my manuscript. I can only think that it sits in some obscure corner, buried under innumerable useless and unclaimed articles, gathering the mold and mildew of time, but probably worth a fortune in storage fees.

Though SOME LIVE BY BLOOD ALONE had been placed in that cerebral receptacle wherein rejected and dormant ideas either take on new shape or quietly die, Mike yet remained undaunted, and was still of the opinion that I could put together a collection worthy of Avon. It was in the early part of 1959 that he told me Avon was now in the market for a supernatural anthology, and asked whether I was still interested in the project. I accepted with glee, and immediately set to work. This time a new vision sprung to mind, but I decided to limit the anthology for the most part to stories by contemporaries. It was called MASTERS OF THE MACABRE, and included were such familiars as Ray Bradbury, Robert E. Howard, and David H. Keller. Added to this I offered C. M. Eddy, Jr's necrophilic grisly THE LOVED DEAD, Guy Endore's grim science-fantasy masterpiece THE DAY OF THE DRAGON, the macabre horror of D. Scott-Moncrieff's cannibalistic NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH, and the strange, grotesque, nightmare world of the contemporary Japanese writer Edogawa Rampo's (a verbal translation of the Japanese pronunciation of Edgar Allan Poe) THE HELL OF MIRRORS.

The presentation was finished, turned in, and like the former, rejected. This time, it seems, I had lost out to Groff Conklin who had also been approached by the hierarchy at Avon for a collection of supernatural horror. His anthology, BR-R-R!, appeared in the latter part of 1959, and contained ten tales by well known contemporaries in the field, including Ray Bradbury and David H. Keller. In all modesty, and in full awareness of Mr. Conklin's many fine contributions to the field, I honestly believe that MASTERS OF THE MACABRE was a more interesting compilation than BR-R-R! insofar as the off-beat quality and variety the story content offered, as well as the wide range of versatile moderns gathered together in one paperback volume. This time, I did not pursue the idea any further, but buried all my material in an unmarked desk drawer filled with past rejections where to this day it rests in peace.

For the next couple of years there was an absence of weird tales from the new lists of Avon, though they continued to publish science fiction from time to time and they did reissue their 1947 collection of H. P. Lovecraft, THE LURKING FEAR AND OTHER STORIES under the title of CRY HORROR! In 1961 Mike became editor-in-chief at Avon. One of his first ventures in the realm of fantasy-horror was to reprint in a beautiful package the Orion edition of Jan Potocki's obscure but brilliant Decameron of Gothic horrors, THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT. This met with some fine sales in the New York area largely due, I believe, to the tantalising cover and thoroughly engrossing copy. Few devoted readers of the Gothic romance knew of Potocki's sinister masterpiece until Anthony Boucher acclaimed the hardcover Orion edition. It was rather phenomenal that paperback sales reached such a vast readership outside the circle of fantasy-mystery enthusiasts.

With his ascent to editor-in-chief, Mike found it necessary to terminate his interest in the Pocket Book Bookshop. He and his family moved to outer suburbia on Long Island, thus curtailing our convivial meetings wherein grand but unrealized visions were born. But in the fall of 1961 I heard from Mike again. This was the beginning of the first concrete plans for the book which is now well under way towards completion. This time, however, I had some reservations about the assignment. Mike wanted a collection of ghost stories somewhat similar in format to the new defunct television series GREAT GHOST STORIES. Frankly, I was not very keen on the idea of a traditional ghost story anthology as my first contribution to the field. Moreover, I found that the results of a Halloween promotion display of fantastic literature I had designed in a paperback bookshop last year proved that weird-horror far outsells

the ghostly tale. But despite my personal feelings, I realized this was a far better opportunity than I had ever had. I knew too that the only way I could propery express my appreciation for the interest and conviction Mike yet held for me was to take the assignment and put my best effort into it.

I returned to my books, and spent the next few months reading, reading, reading. Gradually I found myself replacing selected ghost stories with tales of terror, and once more a grand vision took shape. The presentation that resulted was A TREASURY OF GREAT GHOST STORIES -- from Charles Robert Maturin to John Keir Cross. It was an anthology spanning close to two hundred years of supernatural literature. I ranged from almost legendary tales set down at the peak of the Gothic era by recognized masters of the Schauer-Romantik to contemporary pieces of nightmare-psychological horror.

Few of the stories had been previously anthologized, even though many had achieved an almost classic stature. None, to my knowledge, had ever appeared in an American paperback edition, and all observed the major themes from lore and legend that have become basic in the field. The stories were selected from magazines and publishers dedicated to printing supernatural horror which had, for many generations, thrilled a countless number of readers. And finally I had an anthology three times as large as that which was required. Then, through an involved and unrelated chain of events, I met Haywood P. Norton.

The presentation had been submitted to Avon, the contracts had been signed, and I was in the process of cutting the collection down to the 60,000 word maximum set in the editorial department, but with the meeting of Haywood Norton, the anthology began to take on a new shape. He offered me the first Englsih translation of a long short story by E. T. A. Hoffmann and volunteered his enormous library of supernatural fiction, including a vast number of Weird Tales magazines, for my perusal. I was delighted though deluged with the new-found sources. I discovered stories I definitely wanted to use, others I would hold for substitutes or alternates, if needed. In between I had to get out a number of letters requesting reprint rights.

Meanwhile, Haywood was giving me the Hoffmann translation piecemeal as he finished each section. I saw from the start that it would present some problems. First of all the story was too long. Secondly, it was extremely Gothic, and, consequently, subject to the shortcomings of its period. The structure was unever, the language somewhat verbose, the exposition far too long (the actual story did not begin until page 11), and some action and motivation was contradictory. Moreover, the translation was too close to the involved Germanic sentence construction, and finally it did not seem to be the type of story Mike originally outlined for the package. And yet it was a good story containing a power and grandeur and shock quality which I felt outweighed its shortcomings. The fact that it was similar in style to their already popular reprint of THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT, and that this translation would represent a first English-language appearance of a work by one of the most gifted innovators in the field, gave me the impetus to set to work it into a shape and form that could be included in my package. The final consideration was that THE FOREST WARDEN, for that was its title, is an unusual tale coming from a writer we usually associate with a lightness of style, a bizarre whimsy, and a satiric humor interjected into the most macabre plot concepts. Now the fevered genius of E. T. A. Hoffmann becomes manifest in what Haywood considers the finest of all his somber performances.

The work was written during the siege of Bamberg by the troops of Napoleon. During that time, Hoffmann was subject to lengthy periods of depression, and often contemplated suicide.

The tale, originally appearing as THE FOREST WARDEN, received limited circulation in a Bamberg periodical early in 1814, and was later modified as IGNAZ DENNER and included in Hoffmann's second collection of tales, the renowned NACHTSTUCKE (TWILIT SKETCHES).

This first unaltered version gave stimulus to the preoccupation with the problem of evil in the early works of Dostoyevsky, and was hailed by Pushkin as being "written with a raven's quill dipped in midnight blackness." Haywood's translation is based on the first (1814) version. It has been slightly edited and condensed in its final form. The story ran some 17,000 words. The anthology was already too long, and a number of fine stories were being removed to bring it down to size. If THE FOREST WARDEN was to be taken at all, I knew I would have to edit it down and tighten the structure. Thus I cut a long description of a raid which did not advance the plot in any way, and digressions such as an exposition of the judicial procedures in effect in Hoffman's day. All the scenes essential to the basic story were kept intact, including the horrific climax which, violating strong taboos of its day, was excised from later German editions.

The theme of THE FOREST WARDEN concerns a diabolical quest for the elixir of life. Within there is much that is wild and beautiful, more that is spectral and grotesque.

The actual work on THE FOREST WARDEN consisted of three drafts. The first was Haywood's. I did a second which was returned to Haywood for corrections and revisions. This was next passed on to my agent who offered suggestions to tighten the plot, and who pointed out many overlooked redundancies. Subsequently I did a third draft, polishing, and, with much regret, cutting some 4,000 words. The job took about a month and a half to complete. It was then ready for my package which was shaping up but which bore little resemblance to my original presentation.

Up until the end I found myself making changes in the contents, and rushing out letters to clear the rights to new 'finds'. Now it is in the hands of the editorial staff at Avon. I am told it has been accepted, and will bear my title, FRIGHT, and will probably be out in November or December of this year. It has been a long, involved, and often tedious job -- a job I thought I could put together in a month or so, but which actually occupied a good part of my spare time these past six months. The telling of this aspect remains to be set down.

Just what is the job of the compiler, what are the problems of his task, what is the procedure, and what is a presentation? This is what I can speak of, but from manuscript to bound volume still remains and dark and wondrous mystery to me -- an event I find quite marvelous. I suppose I have gone about the business end of it as a complete novice, and what I now have to relate may be regarded as anything but professional -- but at any rate this is the way I went about it.

First step was the reading and selection of material. This is the most anjoyable, most time-consuming, most frustrating, most important, and never ending task. Up until the very end I found myself considering material to be added, and forever looking for something better to replace what I already had. Obviously whether or not the presentation is accepted rests on the material submitted. It is, at the same time, frustrating because so many good stories must be rejected for one one reason or another, and working towards a deadline means a vast wealth of sources must go untapped. Limitations must also be observed. The anthology could not exceed a certain number of words lest it incur great additional production costs. The stories should fall under the general aim of the book suggested by the editor. The modern mas market audience must, I had learned from previous experience, be kept in mind.

Several months passed, and after continuous reading I had a selection of fourteen stories and a good number of substitutes. The next problem to present itself occurred when I made a word count. The anthology ran far beyond the 60,000 word maximum, and this was before THE FOREST WARDEN. Cutting began. This was based first of all on the difficulty of tracking down several authors for reprint permission. Several fine public domain stories were scrapped because of an archaic style which felt would detract from the mass market appeal. Several stories were omitted because I just could not obtain rights, and in the end it came down to deciding what I felt would be the better of two. The rejected piece was held in my backlog of alternates. I had eight tales left after trimming the collection down to 60,000 words, and this was still before THE FOREST WARDEN.

Meanwhile the presentation had been written, and submitted outlining the original fourteen stories. The contract had been based on this presentation, and my duties were stated. I would have to clear the rights to all the stories, make a manuscript copy of all the tales used, and have this material in their office within six months time. My presentation consisted of a table of contents, an introduction to the anthology in which my aims were set down, a synopsis of the plot of each story with (in the case of a somewhat obscure author) a little biographical information, an approximate word count of each story, and finally information concerning the copyright status of every story excluding those in public domain.

Next came the clearance of rights. This was an involved business which often required voluminous correspondence to procure the rights to one story. Letters went out to the Library of Congress (they offered no help whatsoever), the Mystery Writers of America, the Author's League, as well as to publishers, agents, and individual authors. Gradually replies came in, but many necessitated further correspondence extending this aspect beyond the deadline.

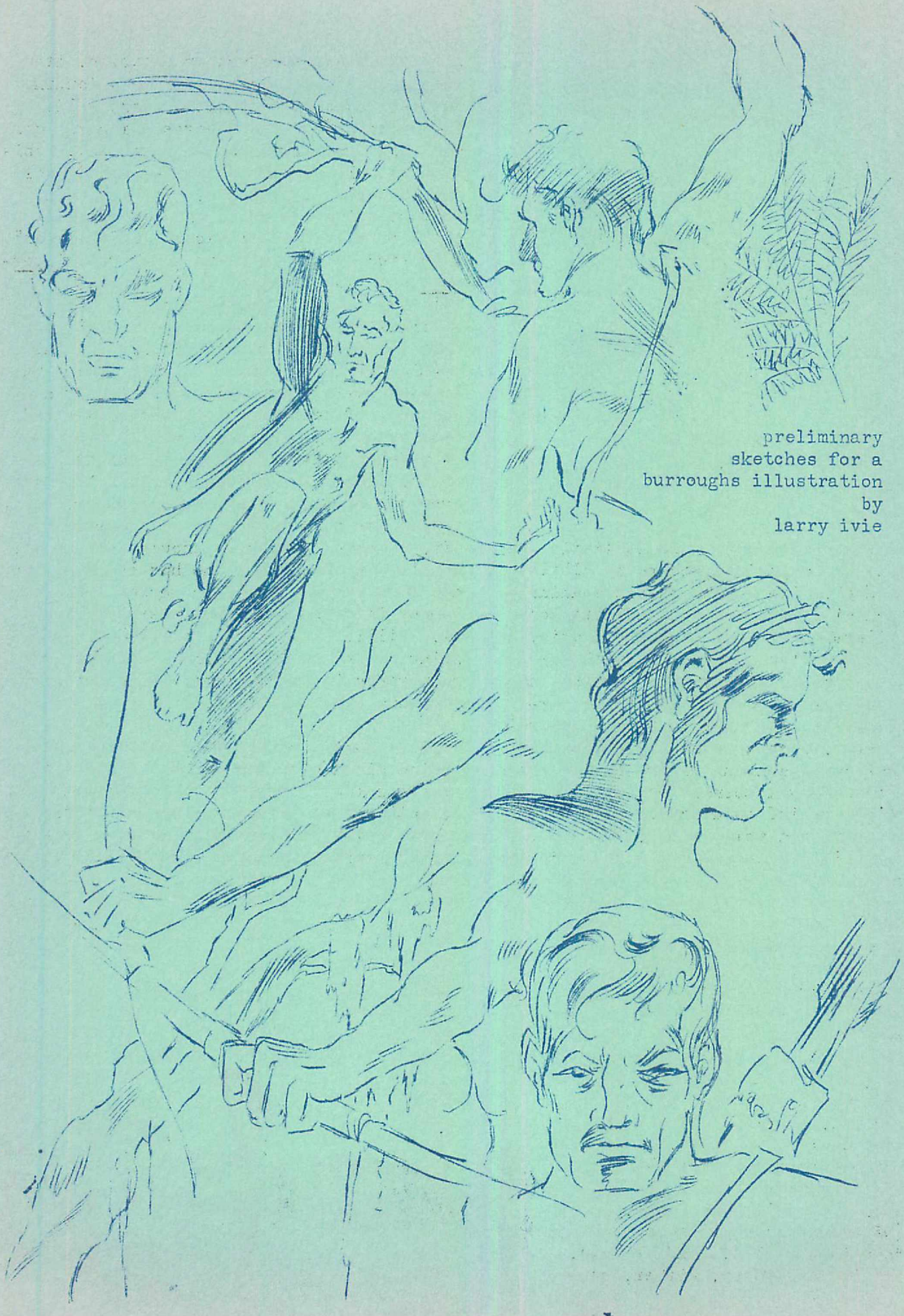
Between letters, I worked on the second and third drafts of THE FOREST WARDEN, and began the tedious job of typing up the stories as permissions came in. I wrote another introduction to the anthology and changed its title to FRIGHT since it was no longer A TREASURY OF GREAT GHOST STORIES. After finishing an introduction to THE FOREST WARDEN, my package was complete, and was placed in the hands of Mike de Forrest, who now controlled its ultimate destiny. Yet even at that time there was still another problem to be faced: with the inclusion of the Hoffmannpiece, notwithstanding the 4,000 words cut from it, the anthology would again exceed the word maximum. It was submitted anyway because I still entertained some doubts as to the reception of THE FOREST WARDEN. It still might be considered rather wordy and dated by the uninitiated to fit into the package. It was time, I decided, to let Avon pass editorial judgement on the selected tales.

About three weeks later I heard from Mike. The anthology had been accepted, and I was told that the editorial department was quite enthusiastic about it. Better news yet was that the translation had also been accepted, though two other tales had to go to make room for it. The front, back, and inside copy had been written, and the cover was in preparation.

As it now stands, the anthology contains six long stories of supernatural horror. It will be called FRIGHT, as far as I know, and includes Hoffmann's THE FOREST WARDEN as well as pieces by Sheridan Le Fanu, Seabury Quinn, and H. P. Lovecraft. I feel satisfied with the stories selected, but have some regrets that only a small handful can be used from the vast amount of material available. FRIGHT is still far from the grand vision of a treasury of terror -- a great paperback omnibus of tales spanning several centuries of supernatural fiction.

I am grateful for the cooperation of the Mystery Writers of America and the Author's Guild in helping me trace writers and agents in my quest for reprint permission, and I must express a word of thanks to the many who offered suggestions, opened their libraries to me, and who kindly made available so much of the material I wanted to use. Among them are Haywood P. Norton, George Townsend, Lin Carter, Sidney E. Porcelain, August Derleth, Leo Margulies, Seabury Quinn, and, of course, Mike de Forrest for making this vision a reality.

Finally, I felt a certain duty and responsibility as editor to both the longtime fan and aficionado as well as to the wholly new mass market audience that has been created with the advent of the paperback. I do not, however, feel that FRIGHT is a compromise somewhere between the two. I sincerely believe FRIGHT offers some very fine yet not frequently reprinted tales by the very great writers of weird fiction. The longtime fan will, no doubt, recognize some of the stories collected in FRIGHT, but many will discover them for the first time. If they are discovered or re-discovered with a joy tinctured with a slight, elusive dread, then I shall feel richly rewarded in my capacity as compiler.



preliminary
sketches for a
burroughs illustration
by
larry ivie

Reviews of:

AMRA
SILVER DUSK
WILD
FILMINDEX
POINTING VECTOR
PANIC BUTTON
KIPPLE
HKIPLOD
LOKI

As Ed Wood has remarked on occasion, it's getting hard these days to find a fanzine devoted to science fiction. Take AMRA, for example (25¢ from George Scithers, Box 9006 Rosslyn, Arlington 9, Virginia). This accents bold heroic fantasy -- mainly bold heroic poetry this issue, with the main feature being the music and the current total of 45 verses of "Young Man Mulligan", supported by the drinking song from Silverlock and "The Thong of Thor" reprinted from POINTING VECTOR. (Without notice of prior publication, either -- tch.) I can't say that I'm particularly overwhelmed by this particular issue (which is #21, by the way). I enjoy ballads and filk songs and even obscure references to science fiction and fantasy embodied in same, but somehow the grim determination evinced by the members of the Young Man Mulligan Society to outdo everyone (including eachother) in producing verses for this overgrown epic turned me off. I mean, enough is enough, and as far as I'm concerned this one had enough a year ago when it was ten or so verses long. The longer it gets, the less interest I have in it. Still, for overall excellence, AMRA is going to get my Hugo ballot, and you WARHOON supporters in the audience can go perform the usual anatomic feat.

If your taste runs more to little literary magazines, there is SILVER DUSK #1, with a free sample available from Bill Bowers, 3271 Shelhart Road, Village of Norton, Barberton, Ohio. Frankly, I've never cared much for this type of publication; neither the verse nor the sketches move me particularly, and there's just a touch of preciousness about the whole thing. But it's such a relief to see a first issue that can stand on its own merits, without being given handicap points because it was produced by a teenage neofan, that I can overlook the defects. Not to mention that it's a relief to discover a fanzine devoted entirely to serious verse and fiction which is readable at all. SILVER DUSK may not be the greatest fanzine ever produced, but it's far and away the best fiction-oriented fanzine to appear in the last several years.

Then of course there is the newly awakened interest in comic book and the current crop of satire mags. Unfortunately, XERO COMICS is not a typical example of the field. WILD #8 (20¢ from Don Dohler, 1221 Overbrook Road, Baltimore 12, Maryland) is a much more average specimen. It is devoted to amateur satire in the manner of MAD, CRACKED etc. It isn't very funny. (Of course when you come right down to it, SICK, CRACKED, etc. aren't very funny, either, so

actually Dohler hasn't done too bad. It's sort of like a flying saucer fan who puts out a better publication than Palmer's.) If you really care for this sort of thing.....

Then there are fans of science-fiction movies. (Yes there are, incredible as it may seem.) Several of these have worked out a FILMINDEX which lists the names and producers of what seems like several hundred science fiction and horror films, from "Angel on My Shoulder" to "Zombies of the Stratosphere". It also contains some Stenfors artwork, most of which is better than the original pictures. Interested parties may apply to Alan Dodd, 77 Stanstead Road, Hoddesdon, Herts, England, with 20¢ in hand.

Well, will wonders never cease? HKLPLOD #2 (25¢ from Mike McInerney, 81 Ivy Drive, Meriden, Connecticut) is actually devoted to science fiction! After an editorial in which Mike states that his object is to please the faaans, the fans, and the pros (good luck, Mike, and where shall I send the flowers?), there is a "guest editorial" by Don Studebaker which eulogizes Henry Kuttner. After a first paragraph in which he says that "Kuttner's power, ability and genius far outstripped Heinlein" which is interesting but hardly supportable, he gets down to the usual tributes. Kuttner was a great fantasy writer, and numerous people have said so, leaving Don very little in the way of originality to work from.

Following this is the major article of the issue; a discussion of space opera by David H. Keller, in which he concentrates mostly on the example of George O. Smith's "Nomad". Quite well done. Mike Deckinger has a trivial item, but I did get one chuckle out of his mention of the drunken fan who attempted to tell him all about "the religious story that Jack Chalker didn't like". (I wonder if someone will try to tell me about it at the Chicon?) For the faaans, there is a mildly humorous bit of faan fiction and a moderately good letter column.

LOKI #3 (15¢ from Lt. David G. Hulan, 228-D Niblo Drive, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama) is supposed to be devoted to fantasy, but some science fiction occasionally creeps in when the editor isn't looking. This time we have reviews of The Once and Future King, the first issue of UNKNOWN, and Lord of the Flies. (It seems Capricorn has brought out a paperback edition of this one for $1.25; smugly I announce that I'm getting my copy of the Penguin edition from Ken Slater for 35¢ plus postage.)

Frankly, the material in LOKI isn't anything exceptional, though it isn't bad. The fact that it is one of the few fanzines which I read immediately upon arrival is due strictly to the fact that I like the editorial personality. The Hulans strike me as fans that I want to meet some day, and until I do meet them I can enjoy their fanzine. It has a pleasant, easy-going quality which you can't hardly get mo more.

FANZINE REVIEWS

BY BUCK COULSON

A few fanzines are primarily political journals. One of the best of these is THE POINTING VECTOR (5 for $1 from John Boardman, Apt D3, 166-25 89th Avenue, Jamaica 32, New York). In a way this is unfortunate, because the legibility of the issues I've received varies from eye-straining to non-existent. I wish John would stick to the writing part and turn the publishing over to Ted White, or George Scithers or Don Dohler, or George H. Wells, or anybody. John is way too far left for me, politically, but I would like to be able to read what he's saying, if only so I could froth at the mouth over it. (Oops; I see he notes that issue #8 was dittoed by Steve Stiles, so I retract my statement. He shouldn't have his fanzine published by anybody. Anybody but Stiles, maybe.....)

It isn't all politics, either; there are sick jokes, sicker verse, a description of "Wolf Chess" (are you listening, Fred Galvin?) in #9, and various other tidbits. POINTING VECTOR should be on anyone's list of ten best fanzines. (Anyone except Gem Carr, that is....)

Combining politics and satiric humor (though not always in the same articles) is PANIC BUTTON, The Fanzine That Made Good. This costs 35¢ from Les Nirenberg, 1217 Weston Road, Toronto 15, Ontario, Canada and you're too late to get in before the rush; Les reports that he expects to sell 700 copies of the current issue (#9) and 1000 copies of #10. Les has been getting plugs from newspaper columnists and tv shows, and has come to the point where he's actually paying cash for contributions. Probably the most croggling item this time is "Impressions of Robert Welch", by G. M. Carr. (I mean, he advertised it in the last issue, but I thought he was kidding.)

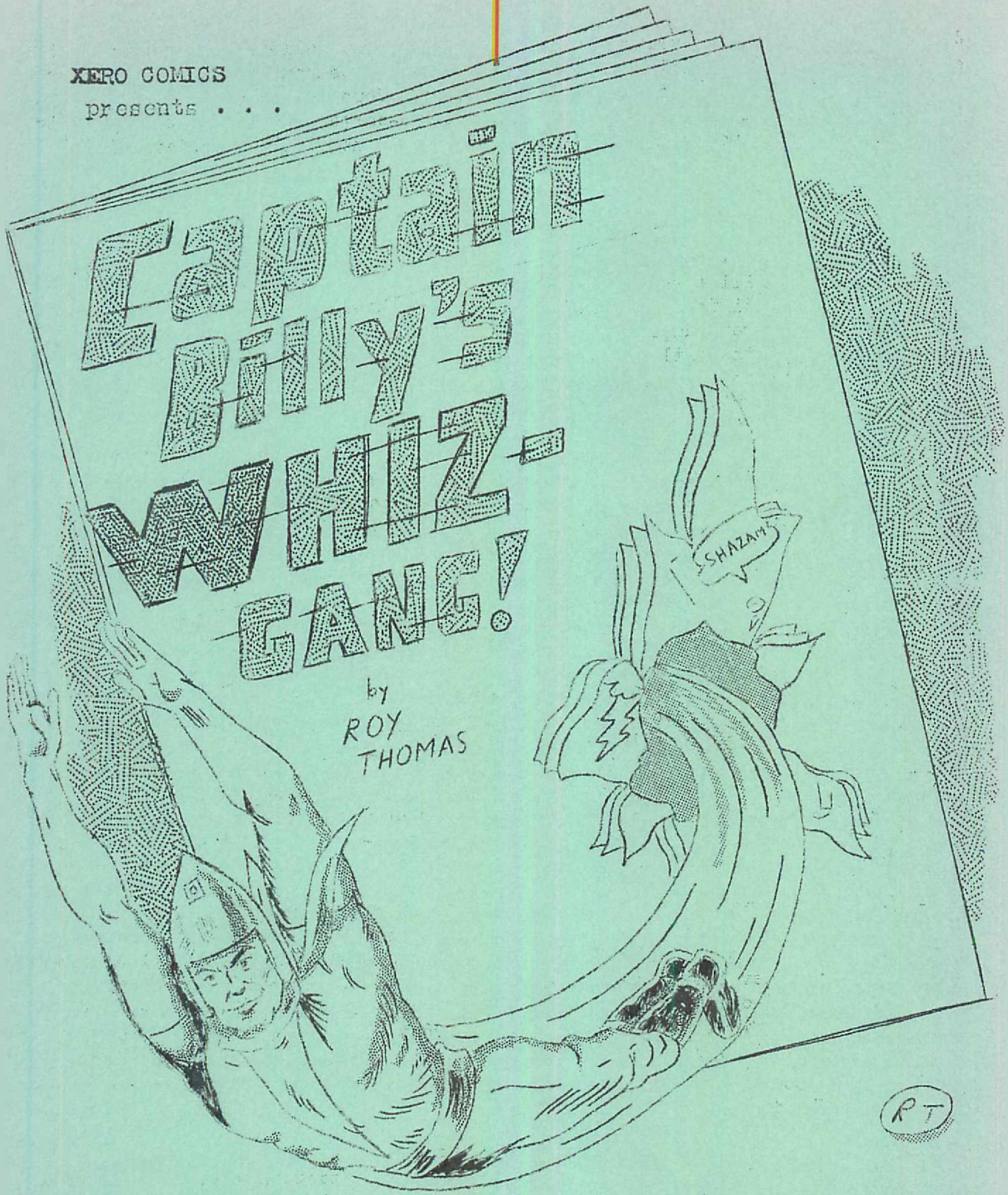
Les is not only a liberal, he has now come right out and said that the US ought to be glad to shell out all sorts of cash to our "allies" because they are protecting us. I mean, it's not mutual protection or anything; we're just buying mercenary troops, like King George's Hessians; and the other countries could get along perfectly well without us (as long as they have our money, that is). On the other hand, he is against any hint of US "isolation", so presumably he feels that we are to be protected even if we don't want to be, and no matter how many noble allied lives it may cost.

Sometimes I wonder how people let themselves be worked into such untenable arguments, anyway. At least it's amusing to the spectators.

KIPPLE (15¢ from Ted Pauls, 1448 Meridene Drive, Baltimore 12, Maryland) is devoted more and more to the idiocy of the great American public as revealed in newspaper accounts and to review of, primarily, non-fiction books. Ted comments on science-fiction, too, but his main interest is in science, particularly in the various sciences and philosophies relating to man. The letter column, which is the heart of the magazine, is devoted more to the newspaper accounts and related ideas than it is to the reviews. In issue #27, Marion Bradley makes a statement that startled me: "To me, the job of reading, reviewing and commenting on fanzines is still the most interesting and meaningful in fandom." Not that I object to reading fanzines (well, some fanzines) or to the idea that reading them is interesting -- I have my doubts about how meaningful it is. But the idea that reviewing the beasts could be either meaningful or intensely interesting is a new one on me, and like most people with a new idea I reject it utterly. I accept that a neofan needs some form of checklist to give him a vague idea of which fanzines are worth wasting his money on, and the editor of a new fanzine needs a few places to announce to fandom at large that his offering is available. Anything else is sheer frivolity and the chief benefit is that my various review columns save me from writing numerous letters of comment each month.

XERO COMICS

presents . . .



. . . AND ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME, Part Nine

A long, long time ago, during what is sometimes still called, affectionately if not accurately, the "Great War", a large publishing company was born. Of course, the troops who witnessed this blessed event were doubtless unaware of it at the time -- all they saw was a mimeographed joke-and-cartoon paper put out by their captain, William Fawcett, and entitled somewhat flamboyantly, "Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang."

But, as the song says, it was the start of something big.

After the war Fawcett continued this paper as a professional magazine, and an occasional copy still turns up in the used-magazine shops: digest-sized, saddle-stitched, not too different in appearance from the "Army Laffs" type magazines published to this very day. Since war does not really teach us any lessons, Fawcett even kept the title "Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang", a title which passed, in a small way, into the very fabric of our culture. If you doubt this, listen carefully to the lyric of the song "Trouble" from the Broadway musical / Hollywood movie "The Music Man".

"Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang" was the first venture of what was later to become Fawcett Publications, publishers of movie magazines, women's service magazines, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera -- and comic books! If the underscoring and exclamation point leave any doubts in the reader's mind, it is with the latter type of publications that this article is concerned.

It seems that even twenty years of peacetime publishing did not diminish the erstwhile soldier's veneration for his humble beginnings. For, upon entering the comic-book field in 1940 at a time when the mushrooming success of Superman was making the fantastically-endowed costumed hero the ideal of American youth, Fawcett's first major underwear-character was Captain Marvel, the first of the innumerable comic-book captains to appear, alias Billy Batson, appearing first in WHIZ COMICS # 1. And does it take a gypsy mind-reader to tell that almost coincident with this he also started a magazine called SLAM-BANG COMICS? Then, having run out of titles reminiscent of his career as a military leader, Fawcett came up with, almost at the same time, a third comic-book called MASTER COMICS. Or had he?

SLAM-BANG COMICS, with a bunch of nondescript characters headed by a hero named Diamond Jack, soon perished, but it would appear that the others were successes from the beginning, especially WHIZ with Captain Marvel. At least National Comics thought so, for they immediately launched suit against Fawcett for creating a "direct imitation" of their Man of Steel. The suit lasted a dozen years without ever reaching the final trial stage and was eventually settled out of court with Fawcett's agreement to cease publication of comics featuring the members of the Marvel Family (something it was doubtless ready to do by 1953 anyhow) -- but that's another comic-book article.*

At any rate, during this period of slightly more than a dozen years, Fawcett was the # 2 publisher of comics, right behind National in most ways and ahead in others. (CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES, for example, had a circulation in excess of 2,000,000 copies each month at its peak, versus SUPERMAN's all-time high in the neighborhood of 1,500,000.) Of course, next to the Big Red Cheese and the other members of the Marvel Family (Junior and Mary, primarily, although there were others including

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* Which has already been published, by the way: "At Home with the Marvels" by Otto Binder, Xero 3, January, 1961. Please do not send for a copy, they were all gone many months ago.

Uncle Marvel, Hoppy the Marvel Bunny, Black Adam ((a villain)), Levram ((another)), three Lieutenants Marvel, and Steamboat Willy, De Harlem Marvel), the rest of the Fawcett characters have a tendency to sink into relative insignificance, but the fact remains that a few of them were pretty darned good, and the rest could at least hold their own with some of National's lesser features like Mr. Terrific and others. And so, ignoring for the most part the Marvels, let's take a look at some of the super-doers who composed the second string of Captain Billy's Whiz-Gang.

Casting aside the fact that all of the features to be discussed would fall into the general category of super- or costume-heroes, it would seem that, for purposes of identification, three distinct if occasionally overlapping groups can be differentiated.

First of these would be the category of "Crime-Fighters". Virtually all of the National super-doers would have fit under this classification, which I distinguish from the second, that of "War-Heroes", costume heroes whose popularity and activities rested largely if not solely on their wartime doings. A third and relatively minor group would be that of the "Magicians", who are distinguishable from the other two not so much by purpose as by methods of action.

I

Most popular of the crime-fighters not connected by nature to the war probably was Bulletman, who first appeared in NICKEL COMICS # 1, dated May 17, 1940 (only a few months after the February 1940 debut of the Cheese himself). Yep, you read right: this mag cost a nickel, for which you got 56 pages (the same number you get today for 12¢) on long-wearing paper with no advertising except one or two house-ads and a back-cover ad for Mechanix Illustrated, a house-ad itself as MI was, as it still is, a Fawcett Publication. Sounds dreamy, don't it?

The first issue of this primarily experimental comic, as I said, featured Bulletman, "scientific marvel of the age, whose super-powerful brain and perfectly-trained body enable him to overcome all physical obstacles in waging his tireless battles against the forces of evil", a description which could have fit any number of underwear boys in the early 40's.

His origin, done rather primitively both artistically and story-wise -- for example, the captions were printed at the bottom of the panel about half the time and rarely belonged there logically -- was pretty typical, too. Pat Barr, "fearless police sergeant", is ruthlessly gunned down by mobsters, leaving his young son Jim an orphan. The boy, waiting impatiently for the day when he can don a lawman's uniform, studies criminology and ballistics like a fiend, to the exclusion of more normal boyhood activities. He even works for a long time on "a crime cure" intended to cleanse the human body of all germs and thereby, in some mystic way, to rehabilitate even sworn criminals. ("Crime is a disease"?)

However, when Jim goes to take the entrance examination, he finds that years in the college laboratory have taken their toll. The first panel on page 2 shows him jauntily entering the police department door; in the second he comes out, dejectedly mumbling:

"I've failed. Too short... too skinny... bad marksmanship... This would have broken Dad's heart if he'd lived."

However, Jim's laboratory training stands him in good stead, for he is soon working as a civilian police laboratory criminologist, living up to his childhood nickname of "Bullet Barr" with his work in ballistics.

Meanwhile, of course, he has not abandoned his great desire to perfect a "crime-cure", and, thinking that at last he has developed one, he tries it on himself to test its effects. Predictably as hell, he wakes up the next morning with splitting pajamas due to remarkably accelerated growth and bulging muscles. He tosses his bed around and knocks a hole in the wall to celebrate. Then, lest his new stature attract undue notice, he goes out and buys a new wardrobe of oversized clothing and goes to work.

Naturally, nobody notices the fact that he has grown several inches in height and many beefy pounds in weight overnight. And, also naturally, this very morning a gangster is cornered at his impregnable hideout. A newspaper headline blaring "Do We Need a New Robin Hood?" sets his mental processes working and in no time at all, what with his accelerated brain power, he designs a bullet-shaped Gravity Regulator Helmet which enables him to fly. At the same time he "salvages a costume that will strike fear to evil-doers", so the book says -- it looks pretty harmless to me, unless crooks are afraid of pin-headed crimefighters -- and zooms off.

In no time at all Bulletman has captured the cornered killer and a few other assorted hoodlums and has achieved great fame. One newspaper even offers a $1000 reward for a photo of Bulletman, which Jim mails to them with instructions to send the money to the police pension fund. The newspaper does not print the picture, however, so Bulletman decides to investigate. What does he find? "Don't miss the next great issue of NICKEL COMICS", but I do miss it, and if anyone has NICKEL COMICS # 2 and will tell me what Bulletman found, I will be mightily grateful. For kids in 1940, however, it wasn't much of wait, considering the fact that the short-lived mag came out every other Friday (with never-realized plans to come out <u>every</u> Friday). Even biweekly, it was the greatest frequency any comic ever had, tied later for a short time by the hugely-popular CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES.

Actually, after a somewhat mediocre beginning, Bulletman turned out to be a pretty good feature, especially when the art was taken over by Mac Raboy. Bulletman's costume, which originally consisted of a yellow neckerchief, a tight red shirt slit to the belt to show off his bulging chest, and yellow riding-pants plus boots ...was modified somewhat (whether for the better or not I leave a moot point): the gravity helmet was improved so that it now attracted bullets harmlessly that would otherwise have struck the mighty but not impregnable Jim, as well as enabling him to fly. And, as happened so often in those days (and these), he picked up a partner in his Crusade Against Crime. This was his long-time girl-friend, Susan Kent, daughter of the police chief, natch -- who became Bulletgirl soon after the feature began and continued in the series until its demise, giving the strip, I always thought, a strong resemblance to the old Hawkman feature in FLASH COMICS.

Later on -- much later on -- Bulletman and Bulletgirl were joined by a little boy in a costume-party Bulletman suit, whom they humored in a few adventures...and even, for a time, by a Bulletdog, complete with Gravity Collar. But those were minor developments and mentioned only for the record.

When the apparently impractical dream of NICKEL COMICS folded, Bulletman survived by moving into MASTER COMICS, where he soon proved popular enough to earn (as did an astonishingly large number of those early Fawcett heroes) his own comic, the first issue of BULLETMAN appearing in 1941, only a year after that first swig of the supposed crime-cure. With its logo printed in silvery metallic ink, a beautiful Raboy cover and excellent interior artwork, this first issue is today a rarely seen mouthwatering collector's item.

In 1941 its sixty-eight pages cost exactly one thin dime, and you could have as many copies as you could lug home from the newsstand, as long as your dimes held out. Sob!

Like most super-heroes of that day, Bulletman fought a large array of unusual criminals. In BULLETMAN # 1, for example, the crime-buster battled a costumed crook named the Black Spider, a monkey-faced villain known as Dr. Mood, and a nameless but terrifying giant in excess of twenty feet tall. Also, in one later story foreshadowing the Injustice Society stories in ALL-STAR COMICS, he and Bulletgirl fought three of their old enemies who had combined into a "Revenge Syndicate". There was the Weeper, who always cried before killing his victims; the Black Rat, a superstrong guy who in costume looked just like a rodent; and the Murder Prophet, who always foretold evil and then made his prophecies come true. These three, before pulling a crime, would always throw dice to see which of them would be the leader for that evening's crime, but the Flying Detectives brought them to an untimely end in a flaming building. Small loss.

Bulletman's switch into MASTER COMICS came at an opportune time for that magazine. It, like NICKEL, had started off in an experimental format. Price at 15¢, MASTER was billed as the "World's Biggest Comics Book" (sic) and, in one sense at least, it definitely was! Though its 52 pages were somewhat fewer than the ordinary 68 of that glorious day, the size of the pages was roughly the same as that of today's LIFE magazine. Back in those halcyon pre-WWII days not only Fawcett but Fiction House as well could put out tabloid-size comic books; but whereas the primeval jumbo-size JUMBO COMICS had only one-color printing, MASTER was all in color for a dime-and-a-nickel...shortly cut to a mere dime for the giant MASTER.

Begun as a monthly, MASTER featured for a short time a thoroughgoing Superman imitator called Master Man, who was consistently if immodestly billed as "the world's greatest hero". Originally a skinny kid as young "Bullet" Barr had been, he was given some magic capsules by a "wise old doctor" and grew up into the strongest man on earth. He wore a sort of page-boy costume, with blue shirt and right red pants, and built himself a lofty castle of solid rock on the highest mountain peak in the world. From there, it says here, he could see all the evil in the world and "race to destroy it instantly."

Therein lies an interesting point about these Fawcett heroes -- very few of them could fly. Bulletman could, of course, but that was by means of a mechanical device, albeit a marvelous and compact one -- the Gravity Helmet. But Master Man (in imitation of the earliest days of Superman and Captain Marvel) and the rest of Fawcett's non-Marvels could not. Master Man could run like the devil, though, and in the first seven-page story he outran raging winds, a speeding automobile, and a falling bomb. In virtually every way he was like D.C.'s Superman, so National sued him, too, for once perhaps with more justification than that of commercial greed, and Fawcett dropped him at once. I doubt that he had anything near the potential of Captain Marvel, anyway.

At about this time, MASTER became a regular-sized comic and, after featuring for a while a hero named Minute Man (to whom we shall come in due course), began to cover-feature the recently-created Captain Marvel Jr., with unsurpassed drawing by our friend Raboy. So Bulletman had to wait for his own comic to receive that particular type of glory. BULLETMAN COMICS lasted well into the middle 40's, much longer than most of Fawcett's non-Marvel magazines about a single character.

Mr. Scarlet, of the soon-to-follow WOW COMICS, was as much an imitation of the early Batman as Master Man was of Superman. An attorney in his secret identity (when he worked, which was far from always), this mustached crime-fighter wore a suit that contained enough red to wake up John Birch himself, though in later days some silver trimming was added; he had no real super-powers, and, like the early Batman also, used a gun when the occasion demanded. Of course he picked up a kid partner, Pinky, in WOW # 4.

As was pointed out in a recent issue of COMIC ART, Mr. Scarlet was featured often in several tales per issue of WOW during its early days, thus coming about as close to obtaining his own comic as a costume-hero can come without actually achieving this goal. The inclusion of Mary Marvel as a regular feature drove him off the cover, however, and limited him to one story per issue. Due to the excellent coverage of the Crimson Crusader of Justice in the COMIC ART article, I'll move on to characters who have received less attention.

Two costume-heroes worth mentioning briefly under admittedly imprecise heading of "Crime-Fighters" are the Devil's Dagger and the Hunchback. The former was another Batman type, but wore a black tux and half-mask, red cloak, and top hat, and, by utilizing a lethal dagger as well as a not-infrequent pistol, was featured in the first few issues of the giant MASTER.

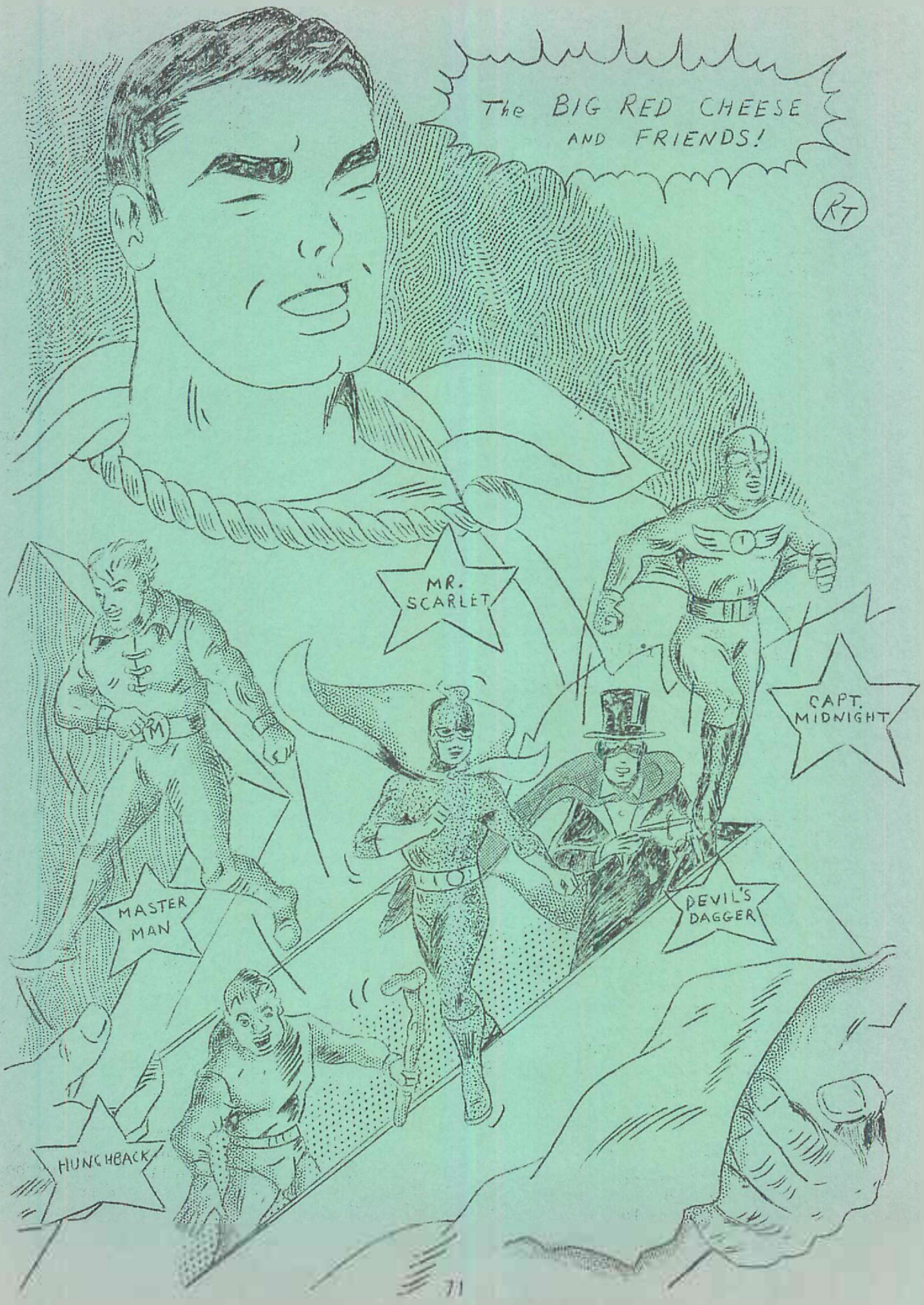
More interesting though not much longer-lived was the Hunchback, who in actuality was a rather handsome young man who donned a grotesque disguise to frighten criminals, whom he evidently assumed to be quite superstitious. (Remember Bulletman above? This all harks back, I suppose, to that crazy lost bat that fluttered in Bruce Wayne's window one moonless night....) The Hunchback wore a set of green tights, devoid of ornament, and he either donned a fright-wig or arranged his otherwise immaculate hair into the semblance of one, and carried a gnarled T-shaped crutch. With the crutch he battered criminals, vaulted walls, and on at least one occasion deflected a knife hurled at himself so that it was imbedded -- fatally -- in the throat of a criminal. In another story the Hunchback traced a criminal conspiracy, leaving corpses scattered in his wake, to the police commissioner himself. To dispose of the master criminal he merely seized him by the throat and, with detailed pictorial representation, I assure you, throttled the life out of him. A brutal, fascinating, mutation of the costume-hero.

One character who could undoubtedly be mentioned under either this or the ensuing category of "War-Heroes" is the quite-popular Captain Midnight. Originating in a Dell comic entitled THE FUNNIES in the late 30's, he was a World War I aviator, a real captain code-named Midnight for a special mission. After the war he came out of retirement, not as a real costume-hero, but just as an adventurous aviator.

Soon the hero of a popular and long-lasting radio series as well as a movie serial, he was picked up by Fawcett in 1942 and revitalized into a costume-hero wearing a modified avaiator's suit in red, a purple-blue helmet with goggles that doubled as a mask, and the symbol of a winged clock-face on his manly chest. Still accompanied by his Secret Squadron, and still basically an aviator, Cap cut quite a formidable figure, whether dealing with criminals, or, as he often did during the days of World War II, spies.

Fawcett revised his origin in the first issue of CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT (he started off with his own comic book, without first sharing the pages of a WHIZ/WOW/MASTER type variety comic with other characters, as most Fawcett heroes did.) In his alter-ego (whoops) of Captain Albright, famed inventor, he had decided to retire from the rigors of crime-fighting, doing good for his fellow man as a scientist instead. However, with the rise of the Axis menace, he decided once again to become Captain Midnight, using his inventive powers personally against the enemies of the nation. The first issue even features a cover depicting Captain Marvel himself welcoming Captain Midnight into the fold.

In the actual comeback story, Albright is kidnaped because of a new invention of his which the Nazis want to get their mail-clad hands on, but, left alone in a locked room, he changes into Captain Midnight and, climbing into the next room in typical daring manner, mops up the enemy agents.


The BIG RED CHEESE AND FRIENDS!
RT
MR. SCARLET
CAPT. MIDNIGHT
MASTER MAN
DEVIL'S DAGGER
HUNCHBACK

One of the most fantastic and appealing things about the comic-book Captain Midnight was the web-like projections between his arms and his sides...or rather, presumably, the arms and sides of his costume. Called gliderchutes, these enabled him to parachute at will from planes or buildings without fear of injury. What I always wondered was, What happened to them when Cap wasn't using them? They just seemed to disappear: now you see 'em, now you don't. But anyway, the thought of being able to glide around like a flying squirrel always fascinated me. Wheeeee...

After the war, Captain Midnight lasted longer than most of the Fawcett heroes having a basis in the war, probably due largely to the continuing popularity of his radio show. With the war over, the comic book followed ambivalent paths. Midnight had always fought criminals, and he continued to do so in an equal proportion of the stories. In place of the percentage formerly devoted to war, there was now a science-fiction trend, with fantastic inventions, invaders from outer space, and all the rest of that crazy Buck Rogers stuff.

Even with the death of the comic, Captain Midnight has hardly been forgotten. A rarity and a sport in the comics industry, Captain Midnight was owned, not by a publisher, but by the Wonder Company, the manufacturers of Ovaltine. Ovaltine had sponsored the long-lived Captain Midnight radio series, and Ovaltine now sponsored a new television series of Captain Midnight adventures. (If you haven't seen it as such, reruns are still occasionally telecast, under the name "Jet Jackson" in deference to Ovaltine's proprietary interest in the name Captain Midnight.)

II

From the transitional figure of Captain Midnight it is only a short step (from red to green, to be exact) to another popular Fawcett hero, Spy Smasher. These two heroes were similar in a great many ways.

Actually, when he started out as a supporting hero in WHIZ # 1, Spy Smasher wore a more-or-less standard aviator's suit of brown, decorated with a red diamond on the chest (a symbol never explained in all the years it was used), and a brown helmet-and-goggles, the goggles again serving as a mask as did Captain Midnight's. As a gimmick in the early issues, Spy Smasher's face was usually hidden or simply colored in black so that his facial features -- if you can call them that, considering the inferior artwork in the early tales -- were unseen. The reader was challenged at the end of some stories to guess the secret identity of Spy Smasher. However, unlike the later Sparkman who used the same gimmick with <u>three</u> possible secret identities, Spy Smasher had only <u>one</u> -- that of Alan Armstrong, one of the apparently unending supply of millionaire playboys who during World War II aided the war effort as costume heroes.

Within a few issues, Spy Smasher's basic costume was changed from brown to the more colorful green (no explanation in the story), and it was obvious to all concerned -- if indeed it had ever been a secret -- that Alan Armstrong was the mystery man. Obvious to all except the ever-present fiancee and potential father-in-law and the other characters in the strip, that is. Also in 1941, but <u>before</u> the costume change, Spy Smasher gained his own magazine, which he kept for a few short issues. A new and much better artist was brought in and the stories rose above the pitiful (even for comic books) level of the 1940 WHIZ stories.

Spy Smasher remained in WHIZ until the end of the war, at which time, under the mistaken assumption that there were no more spies to be smashed, he abandoned his costume for a trenchcoat and became a private detective called Crime Smasher. He didn't last long enough for anybody to count the issues, but the sad downfall of

Alan Armstrong illustrated a point particularly noticeable in these Fawcett "War-Heroes" (and those of other publishers, for that matter). Almost without exception these characters died off within a short time after the end of World War II. Even the mighty Captain America of the Timely group switched to a weird story comic for a short time and then disappeared altogether. It was as if the holocaust of the 1940's produced the need for this type of heroes, and they appeared in abundance, but, with the end of hostilities, they had no worlds left to conquer (or defend). Fighting crooks alone, perhaps, did not generate as much excitement, so that the heroes that were military in nature began to die off.

Of course, this point can be stretched to excess, as by the end of the 40's most of the super-heroes were dead or dying and the comic-book business itself had fallen off considerably due to various factors, but still it's worth wondering about. During the war Spy Smasher, for instance, had fought a fabulous array of Jap and Nazi villains, most notable of whom was his virtual antithesis, a stout little German named America Smasher, but after the war -- nothing.

Probably the most colorful of Fawcett's various war-lords was Minute Man who, when danger called, wrapped an American flag around himself -- at least, that's how his rather baggy costume always looked to me -- and was fit as a fiddle and ready for war. Even more than Spy Smasher, who had at least a gyrosub (you never heard of a gyrosub? It was a sort of combination tank/submarine/vtol aircraft. Now you know.) for flying to other continents in a hurry, Minute Man was a hero who fought spies and enemy agents on the home front. Though ostensibly a private in the US Army (he went to OCS and made lieutenant later on) he always found the opportunity during any emergency to duck behind the nearest latrine and change into a slimmed-down version of Captain America. For a short time during his adventures in MASTER COMICS he fought crime-and-spies without a mask, somehow preserving his secret identity nonetheless, but soon after he got his own short-lived comic he donned a small half-mask as a sop to the comic-reading masses.

Unlike that of some of the other strips, the artwork on this series was generally fairly good -- or, if not that, at least somewhat dramatic. Most of the stories of Minute Man in MASTER were done by Phil Bard, whose work is at least mildly reminiscent of that done by Simon and Kirby around the same time. There were some eye-arresting villains, too, including some vampires and an unexplained phenomenon call the Skeleton, a ten-foot Nazi monster which somehow managed to be one of the creepiest villains I ever encountered in a comic book.

In connection with Minute Man, a few words might be said about one great difference between National and Fawcett in handling their stables of super-doers. Unlike the D.C. group, Fawcett featured a large number of cross-over stories in which two or three of its heroes would get together for an adventure of especial interest. For example, a Nazi-hypnotized Spy Smasher battled for months with Captain Marvel in the early WHIZ issues; Bulletgirl appeared in a story in MARY MARVEL # 8; Spy Smasher and Captain Midnight teamed up at least once in AMERICA'S GREATEST COMICS, Fawcett's fat 15¢ answer to DC's WORLD'S FINEST COMICS. One of the best of these cross-over stories occurred in MASTER COMICS # 41.

As the tale opens, the members of the "Crime Crusaders Club" -- Captain Marvel Jr., Minute Man, Bulletman & Bulletgirl -- all regulars in MASTER -- are having a meeting when Junior discovers that the flag-draped one is lost in thought, looking unhappy and perplexed. Upon questioning, it is revealed that Minute Man is in the midst of a bond sale campaign and that "everyone in the country has contributed with the exception of one class"...the criminal class. So Minute Man, seizing upon an accidental suggestion of Captain Marvel Jr., decides upon a treasure hunt of sorts to raise the money he feels hoodlums should pay to the war effort.

Soon afterward, pamphlets are distributed by the other Crusaders saying that Minute Man is selling chances on himself: "Buy a Bond and Get a Shot at Minute Man!" Gathering in an abandoned amusement park, as stipulated, the criminals hand over their guns to Bulletman and Bulletgirl, having been previously promised full immunity from arrest till midnight. To raise additonal funds, the Flying Detectives sell back the crooks' guns for $100 apiece, with bullets similarly priced.

The result is a rather interesting chase, with one crook attempting to cheat by using a hand grenade he has smuggled past Bulletman. However, it is caught in mid-air and exploded harmlessly by Junior. Attempting to flee the area in a racer, Minute Man himself crashes into a road-barricade set up beforehand by the wily criminals, and is knocked unconscious. As they line up to shoot the unmoving figure, however, a mysterious cloaked and monocled Nazi with a thick accent shows up and declares that he intends to take Minute Man to Berlin with him. While he points a loaded pistol at the crooks, Minute Man escapes in an airplane, only to be shot down by the hoodlums, who steal their own aircraft from a nearby base and give pursuit.

Parachuting into some construction works, Minute Man figures he can escape before the crooks touch ground, but becomes hung up and helpless. The cloaked Nazi approaches and levels a gun at him -- and then turns out to be his old friend Bulletman in disguise.

As the flying crime-buster helps the entangled Minute Man get free, the latter inquires of him as to their exact whereabouts. "Why, we're on the outskirts of Weston, Pennsylvania," replies Bulletman.

"Swell, I made it!" cries an exalted ultra-patriot as he bolts away. "I'm going to spring my trap!"

"I don't understand," queries a puzzled Bulletman, "It's not midnight yet. Aren't you going to keep your word?" (Comic book characters are very moral.)

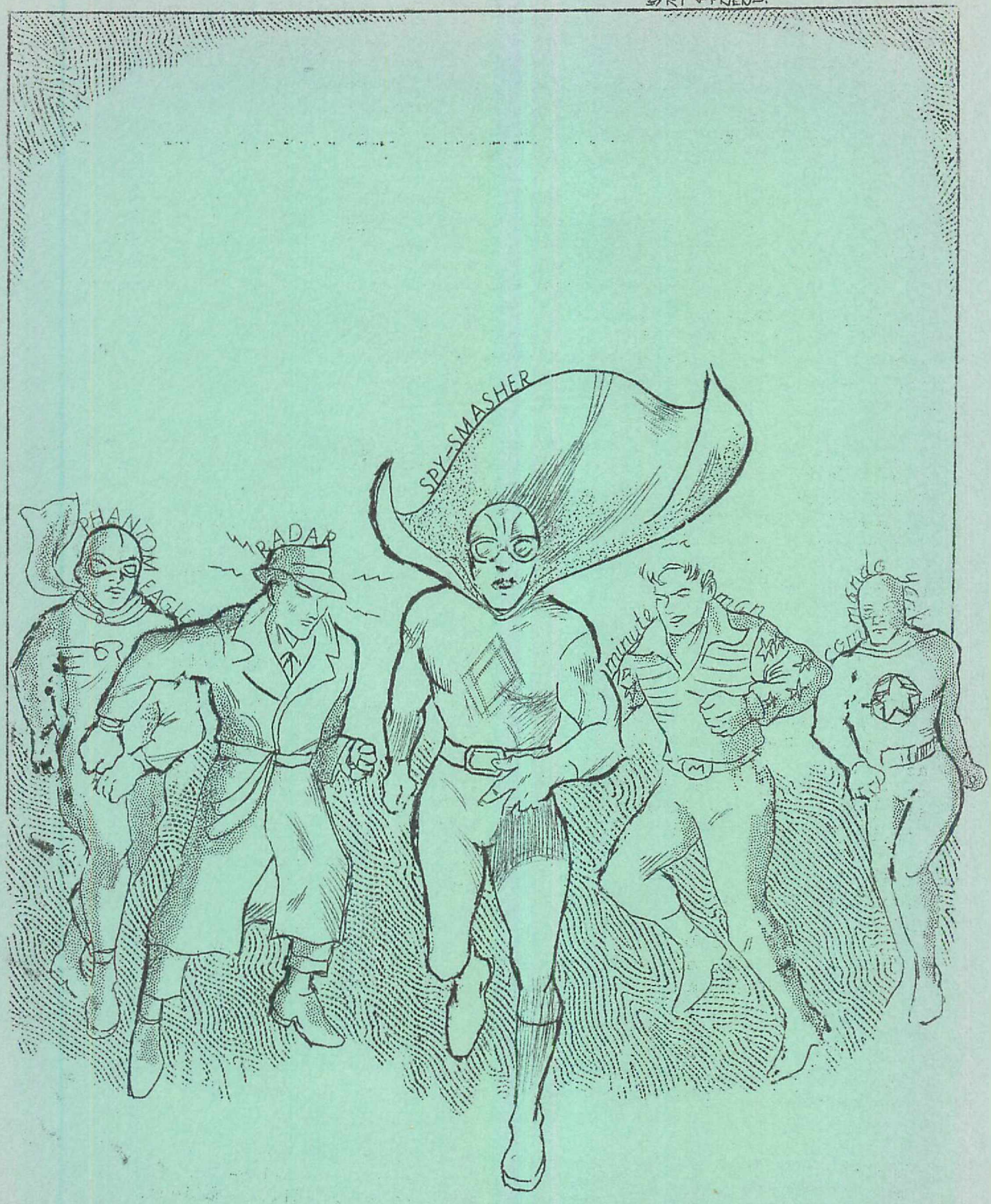
"Only an hour left till midnight!" come drifting the cries of the crooks, who are still in hot pursuit. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Minute Man comes rushing at them. Naturally, mere tommy-guns cannot stand against his mighty fists, and the hoods are soon all neatly confined in the jaws of a friendly steam shovel. "Yer a liar!" they cry as one man to a disappointed-looking hero who explains that, to the contrary, he has merely led them eastward into a different time zone. It <u>is</u> midnight in Weston Pennsylvania.

Chalk up $100,000 for the war bond drive, courtesy of Minute Man. And as a small lagniappe of irony, the readers knew that Minute Man's secret identity is Private Jack... Weston!

Minute Man presents something of a paradoxical figure among these heroes. Evidently popular enough to have deserved for a short time his own comic as well as a featured spot and a number of cover-shots in MASTER COMICS, he perished before the end of the war. Outlasting him by some years were a couple of relatively minor war-types from WOW COMICS, Phantom Eagle and Commando Yank. The latter was a gray-and-blue clad eager-beaver of the Spy Smasher type, except that most of his fighting was done abroad. His secret identity was Chase Yale, war correspondent (and, after the war ended and until his demise, a "roving telecaster".)

Quite similar in some ways was a character even closer to the Captain Midnight type, Phantom Eagle. In his regular identity of "young Mickey Malone", the baby-

SYRT + FRIEND.



faced soldier whom his sergeant constantly refers to as "too young to fly", he spends most of his time wiping the wings of the airplanes on the English base where he is stationed. However, in his spare time, he has built his own secret fighter plane -- a not inconsiderable feat, when you stop and think about it -- and has started a career fighting Nazis on his own.

Along the way he also picks up a sort of Boy Commandos of the air, a group of youngsters from various Nazi-occupied countries who all have their own private warplanes and who, under the command of Mickey, go forth to battle the Nazis under the aegis of the Phoenix Squadron, so named in the confident expectation that their respective homelands will someday rise from the ashes of German occupation. The Phoenix Squadron used to disappear at the end of each story, when their continued presence might prove embarrassing for Mickey. By the way, isn't it funny how none of these enlisted costume-heroes ever got arrested for going AWOL? Steve (Captain America) Rogers and his pal Bucky used to get guardhouse duty galore, but Jack Weston, Mickey Malone...never!

At any rate, in his orange grease-monkey suit with an eagle on the front, the Phantom Eagle flew his own raids into Nazi territory, and whenever he flew over, Mickey Malone's Sergeant Flogg was very stern and disapproving. "It ain't good for morale to have one guy bargin' off by himself that way," Flogg grumbled, "but he sure gives them Nazis a headache." Not too articulate, but accurate. After the raid, natch, Flogg usually questioned Malone as to his recent whereabouts and always received the pat answer: "Just catching up on some sleep, Sarge. Anything exciting happen this afternoon?"

After the war the Phantom Eagle more or less abandoned his Mickey Malone identity altogether, and, under the auspices of a private international airline, became a sort of "guardian of the airways", as the subtitle of his strip now read. He also kept up a sporadic hunt for a legendary Golden Chalice on which was engraved the Formula for Peace. He still looked all of fifteen, too: I'm surprised no one ever asked to see his pilot's license. He lasted (as did Commando Yank) into 1947 or so by converting to civilian activities, but there was a noticeable lack of vitality in both these features after the war ended and the editorial stock of war stories (cleverly published as "secret war archives") were used up.

Curiously, one of Fawcett's most interesting "War-Hero" types was not even invented until 1944. In May of that year, in CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES # 35, a young army private named Pep Pepper, during an exhibition boxing match in which the Big Red Cheese is unable to lay a super-powerful hand on his dogface opponent, demonstrates his ability to read minds. He then turns briskly around and slugs Major Stuff, his commanding officer, announcing that his superior officer is actually a Nazi spy. When the real major shows up, Pepper's wild tale is credited. And so when he announces that he also has "radar vision" (in addition to being able to read minds, which is how he avoided all Captain Marvel's blows) which allows him to see over long distances, Captain Marvel is well ready to believe his statement that a super-missile has just been launched toward them by the Germans so that the Cheese is able to fly and intercept the missile.

Such a talent is naturally invaluable to the Allies, and Pepper is soon discharged from the army and flown by Captain Marvel to a secret meeting-room where he is ushered into a dark room containing the leaders of the Allied nations. Roosevelt, who is present with Stalin, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek, explains that the darkness is necessary so that Pepper cannot read their minds and appoints Pepper the vanguard member of an international police force which is to maintain peace after the war ends. Until then he is to work unofficially under the code name of "Radar".

Immediately thereafter the Radar series began in MASTER COMICS, more or less replacing the now defunct Minute Man. Ordinarily wearing a green plaid trench coat and an artificial mustache, Pep Pepper had only to take off the lip spinach and reverse his coat to white-side-out and, presto, he was Radar, the International Policeman. Now that, by gosh, is a secret identity if I ever saw one, unmatched until the recent Mystery of the Jaguar's Missing Mustache.

Captain Marvel appeared in Radar's first story in MASTER to give the new hero a briefing (and to try and see if his own popularity would rub off, or at least assure the new feature a first reading), but Radar soon proved that he needed no help and for the next couple of years he was on his own. When Fawcett started a short-lived comic-book idea entitled COMICS NOVEL in 1947, the first issue starred Radar in a well-written, feature-length battle with a sinister-looking villain named Anarcho, Dictator of Death. A full-fledged RADAR comic never emerged, however. The recent JOHN FORCE, MAGIC AGENT comic put out by the American Comics Group was a conscious or unconscious copy of Rader, but it has evidently gone to an early and apparently deserved grave.

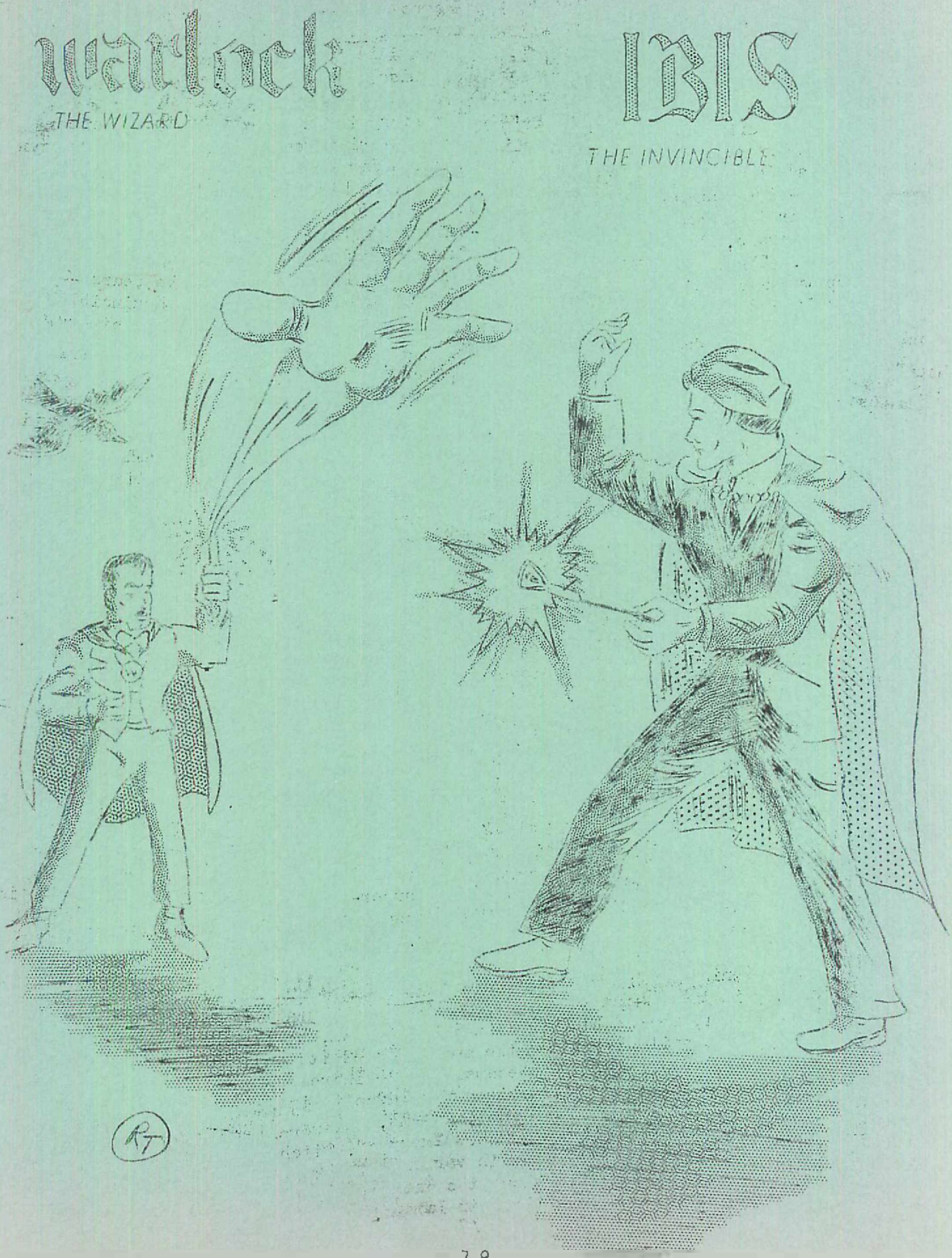
III

Significant among the several magicians which Fawcett carried over the years -- and proportionately there were a fair number of them -- was Ibis the Invincible, who appeared in WHIZ # 1 and all issues thereafter and who, like so many others, had his own comic for a short time in the early 40's.

For the origin of this unusual hero, we are taken to about the year 2000 BC, and to Egypt, where the new ruler, known affectionately as the Black Pharaoh, wants as his bride a luscious princess named Taia, who, however, is "under the protection of Osiris, the god of justice". To combat this state of affairs, the Pharaoh summons a master of black magic to conjur up Set, Egyptian god of darkness, who for his part then gives the Pharaoh control over a number of demons which are then used to turn Egypt -- which had formerly been a "land of free men", we are informed with more fervency than historical accuracy -- into a state of slaves. The good Prince Ibis objects and is imprisoned for his pains, but escapes when he obtains the mystic Ibistick, a sort of magic wand with a silly-looking bird (that's an ibis) represented on it. The demons and the Black Pharaoh are defeated but in the battle the lovely Taia, who is also beloved of Ibis, is fatally wounded by an arrow, or so it seems at the time.

Grief-stricken, Ibis orders the Ibistick to kill him also, only to find that the wand can never be used to harm him. As it turns out, this prevents a tragedy of coincidence, for Taia has only been put to sleep for a mere 4000 years by the potion on the arrow. So faithful Ibis uses his super-sparkler to do the same to himself, so that he and the princess awaken at the same time -- 1940 -- though in different lands due to some meddling archaeologists.

After this beginning, which has overtones of Romeo and Juliet, the Mummy movies, and Hawkman, Ibis turned out to be a pretty good and durable character. Attired during the early years in a black suit and red turban, he later added a purple cloak (which he still later lost as the strip neared its end). He survived longer than most Fawcett heroes, possibly because of the increased interest in horror comics around 1953. In fact, he survived the Fawcett line altogether, being sold along with a few others to Charlton Publications, who featured Ibis for a time in a comic book called DANGER AND ADVENTURE. Though ogres, witches, et al (that et al also includes further encounters with various Egyptian deities including Charon and various demons) appeared throughout the career of Ibis, these tales became noticeably more gory and monster-filled in later days.


wallack
THE WIZARD
IBIS
THE INVINCIBLE

One Ibis story in particular I remember as having made a deep impression on me at about the age of seven or eight. It concerned a demonaic character who was the personification of the fear that mankind has in all ages felt of darkness, and who resembled a skeleton in priestly robes with a col over its head. The story began with this Fear killing a frightened caveman in the dim past, and ended in a grisly fight between this creature of man's own imaginings and Ibis the Invincible. When the Egyptian prince managed to utilize his Ibistick to destroy the horror and observed that "Now mankind need never live in fear of darkness again", I recall a completeness of sympathy and identification that I have never felt with any character in any form of literature. Such stories were the exception, of course, but they did exist.

The other magicians were, by and large, an uninspiring lot when compared to the magnificent Ibis. Warlock the Wizard in NICKEL COMICS was somewhat interesting, though. Accompanied by a raven named Hugin which perched on his shoulder, Warlock went about practicing his white magic as comic-book wizards were wont to do. He possessed his own magic wand, called the Golden Hand, which resembled a fist-shaped popsicle and which, growing to gigantic size when Warlock spoke the magic word "Abraxas", would carry out the wizard's command by grabbing beautiful girls away from evil ogres and such like. He died with NICKEL.

Others were a monocled magician named El Carim (spell it backwards) in the bedsheet MASTER COMICS and Balbo, the Boy Magician. There was also an Atom Blacke, Boy Wizard, but he was primarily a precocious inventer so he doesn't count.

As time went on, the preponderance of costume-heroes in comics of the Fawcett line, as in other lines, went. There were a number of good characters who don't fit into this category. Nyoka the Jungle Girl, straight from the Saturday matinee, was one of the most famous ones; Lance O'Casey was a fair-to-middling high-seas adventurer for a long time in WHIZ; the Companions Three were not bad as general adventure-type adventurerss and Captain Venture was a fairly promising semi-costume hero who somehow aborted after the earliest issues of WOW. Fawcett's western heroes make a complete -- and large -- category themselves, the best and longest-running title being Golden Arrow, the Robin Hood of the West, for many years in WHIZ COMICS and for a while in GOLDEN ARROW COMICS.

One excellent adventure strip was Doctor Voodoo, a time-travel high-adventure serial beautifully drawn by Raboy in WHIZ using the no-balloons style developed by Hal Foster and Alex Raymond for Prince Valiant and Flash Gordon.

Perhaps it is significant, however, that as ghost stories, teenagers, and war tales filled the pages of Fawcett comics prior to the 1953 decision to drop all comics along with the Marvel Family group, the last adventure-hero to be introduced by Fawcett was Captain Video, an offspring of television, the medium which many blame for the decline in the comic-book business.

At any rate, in 1953 the last of Captain Billy's Whiz Gang died. They had not been totally without influence, however, nor will they soon be forgotten. There had been movie serials based on Captain Marvel, Spy Smasher, and Captain Midnight; the last-named still had a full life on TV ahead of him. The Big Red Cheese in particular had enjoyed an immense popularity which had manifested itself in tee-shirts and wrist-watches (I had one and it worked beautifully -- I wish I still had it!) and other paraphernalia. And, to quote a letter from Xero publisher Dick Lupoff, received in the course of preparing this article:

"Did you know that Fawcett is now publishing Dennis the Menace? It ain't much, but at least it's a Fawcett comic and... someday... who knows?"

Who knows, indeed?

conducted by pat

H. VINCENT LYNCH

(220 W. 24th Street, New York 11, N.Y.)

I take typer in hand primarily to rise to Col. Davidson's challenge, i.e. "If anyone can tell me why rabbits are called 'Bunny' I'll tell him why cats are called 'Pussy'." I developed an etymological theory on both origins that was no less brilliant for being completely wrong, then chanced to discuss the matter with a friend (Col. Davidson's query turns out to be the season's best cocktail-party conversation stopper). Said friend, Herb Cheyette of CBS' legal department, went off and brooded about it, and perchance got the entire CBS research department brooding about it, then sent me a letter of which the following is an excerpt:

"Apropos of our conversation Saturday night, there is a philologic axiom made popular by Sir Walter Scott in Ivanhoe that the English names for live animals are Anglo-Saxon, i.e., ox, cow, pig, sheep, deer, but the names for meat on the table were all French, i.e., venison, pork, mutton, steak, indicating that the Normans left the care of the animals to the natives but permitted them to eat very few.

"Young cats and dogs, while not eaten, were both Norman and Anglo-Saxon household pets. "Kitten" is derived from the French, but "puss" is an ancient word probably of Indo-European origin which occurs in English, Icelandic, Norwegian, Lithuanian, the Casgar dialect in Afghanistan, and South Tamil. Despite its lineage, "puss" is supposed to be onomatopoeic, resembling the hiss of a cat. For a dog, the Anglo-Saxon word was "whelp" (see also: mongrel and cur), and the French "puppy" derived from the French "poupee" meaning doll and loosely applied to the young of all animals.

"Unlike the words previously mentioned, "rabbit" is Walloon in origin, the Anglo-Saxon being "cony". Presumably "rabbit" was brought over by the Normans. All this is leading up to the fact that no scholar has been able to find a satisfactory derivation for "bunny" except to note that it was originally "bun" and first appeared in English in 1587."

Whew! A veritable CBS Report -- I can practically hear Cronkite delivering it. Getting back to my own researches, while Herb was exploring Iceland I was doing my own tracking, and got "pussy" as far as the onomatopoeia theory and "bunny" to and beyond "bun". That is, the original meaning of bun seems to have been any rounded protruberance, such as a blister, or the well-known baked item or -- the short stumpy tail of a rabbit.

Herb's scholars seem to be a cautious, conservative lot. I for one buy the onomatopoeic explanation of pussy completely and I go along with this "tail" explanation of bunny, too. Scorn 'em if you will, Mon Colonel, they call cats pussy because that's what they call eachother, especially when they're mad, and they call rabbits bunny because of their buns of tails.

This issue of Xero was up to its usual high, Xeroic standard, once I eased myself past all that frightfully compelling business of the Poll and its findings. Ah the eternal struggle of the Misers vs. the Moochers! (Or, is Fandom motivated more by Greed or Grouchiness?) The labels "Conservative" and "Liberal" sound more dignified, I suppose.....

In an issue full of provocative articles I found to my own surprise that Mr. Kyle's sad tale of the downfall of Mr. Fox had really the most to say. There for awhile I was reading along supposing it was only about comic books, then I suddenly saw he was saying much more, about much more about the world you and I inhabit along with the lamented Mr. Fox. Indeed, Xero may ultimately be remembered primarily as the source for some of the writings of Mr. Richard Kyle.

I was a little disappointed in Mr. Blish's contribution. It would have been rather interesting, you know, had Mr. Blish gone ahead and discussed theological SF. And, if I've got my dates wrong, please bring me up to, but didn't the fifties bring forth Dragon in the Sea (or Under Pressure/21st Century Sub)? Now there's a theological SF novel that did make a theological point! I'm probably just reflecting my Protestant bias, but this was the big one in that narrow category as far as I'm concerned.

H.P. Norton has a grand style, to be sure, and made me want to go off and read some of those C.A. Smith tales, even though I have never warmed to Beckford or most of the others of the Gothic school. But he goes and violates my Rule #1 for Critics -- Don't don't don't attempt to prove your writer's gifts by casting scorn on someone else's. It proves nothing about Smith to say he deserves more remembrance than Hemingway.

Let me now return once more to where I began - the Colonel's letter. I think, Colonel D, Sir, you have overreached yourself in attacking our noble Xeroic Editor. You accuse him, in effect, of simply assuming Heinlein could not possibly have picked up the expression "stranger in a strange land" from the Bible. Hold, Sir! His surmise is based on the application of the phrase specifically to an alien from another world in a science-fiction film RAH can be presumed to have had considerable interest in, when it was first released. And if the phrase in the film sent him back to the Good Book to check, well, Mr. Lupoff never said nay.

The Thing was an s in a s land, as was Moses before him (or should I say Moses' son? Perhaps he should have been really subtle and called it "Son of Moses" and let us all figure out the phrase from that. I am no Sky Masterson myself, but I can thumb a Concordance as well as a six-shooter. Indeed better, since I have never once come close to shooting off my toe with a Concordance).

As long as we're on this subject, let me give you a new one to chew on. In 1946 the distinguished anthropologist Loren Eiseley wrote a book called The Immense Journey. In it he describes how he kept a catfish alive through the winter in a tank in his basement. With the coming of spring the creature, obeying a faulty instinct, leapt out, seeking new streams, and died on the floor. Of him Eiseley says "he had for me the kind of lost archaic glory that comes from the water brotherhood" (underlining mine).

/Okay, how's this: cowboy lost on a muddy trail, storm raging; our hero turns introspective and reflect that "Too long had he been a stranger in a strange land." You'll find the passage on page 30 of Bloody Wyoming, a western novel by Al Cody.

And: Henchman speaking to Dr. Thaddeus Bodog Sivana on page 1, volume 1, number 1, of Captain Marvel Adventures, 1941: "Don't worry, boss - no human enemy can lick you." Dr. S. replies: "Ah, but Captain Marvel is more than human -- and he must be given a rival who is also more than human." (Underlining mine.)/

It saddens me to see even Xero succumbing to Creeping Deindorferism.

STEVE STILES

(1809 Second Avenue, New York 28, New York)

I still am fascinated, somewhat, by that cover. Ah, well do you know that I love a good old experiment, especially in the direction of art; this one was successful enough to be justified.

Next time, by gollies, I'll have to finagle you people out of a few spare sheets of assorted artwork, and layouts. I was out job hunting last Friday, and I was just thinking how I could claim the contents page layout was my own. Well, I did have a small part in it. And, by the way, what is the idea of crediting that Trend illo to "Gugg" (whoever he might be)? /Ho, ho, staff secret. -PL/

The illo by Bhob on page seven was very nice; everyone I showed it to liked it. Bhob and I had sort of an argument about whether it was predominantly a vertical or horizontal illo, and most Visual Arters pronounced it horizontal, which means I win. Ha, ha!

I must say I was appropriately shocked by Bob Shea's statement in regards to the Larry Shaw special. Lack of understanding is not a condemnation of a government, or principle, but if you don't understand what your government is trying to do, or rather, how the administration is trying to achieve its aims, you should look at the results of its actions before deciding whether they know what they're doing. The idea that "those in authority over us are in a better position to know what is best for us than we are" has resulted in many rather pathetic -- for the people -- situations throughout history. Granted, those in authority should be in a better position, but there are some who don't take advantage of that position.

/Neither you nor Bob seems to have given any attention to the matter of how "those in authority over us" got there. The answer is (if you believe in the social contract theory of government rather than divine right or natural aristocracy) that we put them there. Further, at our elections we either keep them there, or put others in their place. If we take "their" word regarding what's good for us, I'll bet a nickel that it is "Keep us ins in", and where do we go from there? -PL/

I also prefer the middle ground in political thought; I am naive (quotation marks) enough to think that both right and left wings have good points...this was regarded as something approaching treason at my old school, Politically Aware Music and Art. They couldn't decide whether I was a liberal Conservative or a conservative Liberal.

Blandly skipping over "The Slant Story" which I find rather difficult to comment on, I suddenly am confronted with "Fandi", fandom's answer to a masculine Orphan Annie. I rather envy Dorf's vehicle for reentry into this microcosm; "Fandi" is superb. I feel slightly sorry for those who had the misfortune to miss Bhob Stewart reading the strip aloud; like watching Lipshitz putting the finishing touches on a piece by Henry Moore.

I wonder what, in James Blish's opinion, constitutes an anti-Christ. In Messiah John Cave was not the anti-Christ in the strict biblical sense, but merely set up a philosophy that rather unconsciously (on Cave's part) "replaced" (duplicated) Christianity.

Delighted to see the question of what will happen on New Year's Eve, 1999. Actually, for me, it's not too far away; barring war (which is pretty hard to do) the chances are that I'll manage to reach 56 (which isn't too old these days...and will probably be much younger than). I imagine that a great number of people will be quite nervous as the minute hand ticks closer to 12. The last few years before that will doubtless be ridden with an upsurge of superstition, hopefully not reaching the hysteria level.

FREDERIK POHL

(c/o Galaxy Publishing Corporation, 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, New York)

Thanks for printing my comments and for sending me the current Xero; I don't suppose you meant to set me off again, but the letter from Jack Chalker gives me pain. It isn't Chalker's fault, of course. He hears "inside stuff" from a pro, so naturally he takes it as gospel. But it isn't gospel. In fact, what it is, it's hot air.

It simply is not true that the reason bad science fiction appears is that good science fiction cannot be sold. There is no truth in it at all. Good science fiction always sells. (I'm not talking about average-competetent yardgoods, although it is probably true there too.)

What is true...but quite irrelevant...is that some writers find they can make a faster buck by writing junk than by writing good stuff. Sometimes this is because they have learned to push an editor's buttons. Sometimes it is because they are kidding themselves, and what they think is good stuff is really junk too, just a different kind of junk.

However, any writer who has the talent to write well, and the integrity to do so instead of bellyaching about the obstacles in his path, will inevitably get his stories into print.

He may not make as quick a sale, or realize as large an immediate cash return, as the hack. Some of what are now considered important contributions to science fiction took a while to get published. Ray Bradbury wrote reams of stories before he was selling at all consistently. Jim Blish's A Case of Conscience went through three editors before IF had the wit to buy it. Some of my own favorite stories wound up in the penny-a-word magazines, and The Space Merchants was turned down by seven sf book publishers before Ballantine took it on. Etc.

But...Bradbury went on to become about the highest-paid sf writer in history, by sticking to what he thought he should write; A Case of Conscience got a Hugo; The Space Merchants has had some twenty-odd editions, including more than a dozen foreign languages; etc. I mention these particular cases because I happen to have some personal knowledge of them; there are many others. The point is that virtue does triumph. The fast buck is not necessarily the best buck. The truly pathetic -- and exasperating -- thing about the "inside stuff" peddled by Westlake and others is that it is based on a fallacy: Any writer who writes deliberately bad stories cheats not only his readers but his own bank account, because the good stories will still be earning him money when the trash has long been only a distasteful memory.

It is true, of course, that a lot of editors are difficult people to deal with. (So are a lot of writers -- and for that matter, a lot of fans.) It is even true that they print a good many bad stories. But they are not allowed to send out their magazines with blank pages. They have as a class printed every good science fiction story that has ever been written, either in a magazine or in a book, and, you know, you really can't do any better than that. If the really good stories aren't enough to fill the publishing schedule, then they have to print some which are not really good; if more good stories were written, fewer bad stories would be published; and if more good stories are not written the one and only place where the blame can be laid is on the writers themselves.

Conceivably some of the editors could be a little more active about seeking out good stories. Some of them have sometimes seemed a little torpid. But that is one hell of a long way from saying that they all actively refuse to publish good stuff because they like the bad stuff better.

The proof of this is very simple; it rests on the statement I made above: Every really good science fiction story that has ever been written has made its way into print. I have made this statement a number of times over a period of years, within the hearing of just about every pro alive, and no one has yet come up with the exception that would disprove it. If anyone does, I will at once do two things. First, I will abjectly beg his pardon. Second, I will buy the story for GALAXY.

...

PS...By the way, I can add a couple to the list of the "refugees" from science fiction who have come back into the fold -- for GALAXY and IF, anyway. Jack Vance had a very good complete short novel in the August issue of GALAXY. Ray Bradbury is in October. Judith Merril probably also October, or within an issue or two thereafter. I forget who else was on the list, but I have a Heinlein serial for IF, a Hal Clement complete short novel also for IF -- in fact, by about the end of the year both magazines should be shaping up just about the way I want them. Meanwhile I admit some of the stories are less than perfect ...but see above.

BETTY KUJAWA

(2819 Caroline Street, South Bend 14, Indiana)

Two weeks ago tomorrow Xero, Bug Eye, and Warhoon all arrived at 3:15 -- four minutes later we got the worst storm in history of our town -- tornados by the bagfull -- havoc, destruction...I was without electricity for the next twenty-three LONG hours -- all about us chaos, utter chaos...is there any connection? I was looking (eeeeek) at that (shudder) colorful cover of Xero when all hell broke loose...hmmmm.

Next time either put a warning on the envelope or include dark glasses -- my eyes aren't what they used to be. /Uh-oh...how about this issue's cover? -PL/

Tell Mr. Davidson that 'bunny' is the diminutive from the Gaelic word bun which means stump, and not, this doesn't make much sense to me either. But Avram does not have to tell me the meaning of the term 'pussy' in return...Gene says he knows that meaning and he will tell me himself, thank you just the same.

Merci for the Introductions to the writers. The Norton article on the late Clark Ashton Smith I really relished. I, myself, found it, as you said, utterly charming. Hope you do get more from him in the future.

Holy mackerel there!! Putting that "Fandi" comic strip on stencil from a blue inked ball-point pen drawing is croggling to say the least. Bhob need a new pair of glasses when he finished? Whoosh whatta job! The cartoon was enjoyed and chuckled over by this reader. I salute Bhob and Gary.

The Poll Report takes the cake as the best thing in this issue -- and in case you haven't been told this over and over again by now this issue of Xero is finer and better than ever. /Aww, blussh. -PL/ The results of the poll were close to what I had expected...that fandom is not really that liberal, as is commonly supposed. And the excerpts from letters were terribly interesting and illuminating. Bob Shea in particular.

We shall see, those of us who are still about the place if, when 2000 AD comes round, the crack-pots and fanatics again rise and roar about the End of it All. Blish's article excellent, as were all the comments on Westlake. I'm hoping for a reply from him. /So are we, but time is running short, and there is none yet.PL/

That papal people leader pun Avram mentions, I have spread far and wide throughout South Bend and Chicago -- ducking and running each time, of course.

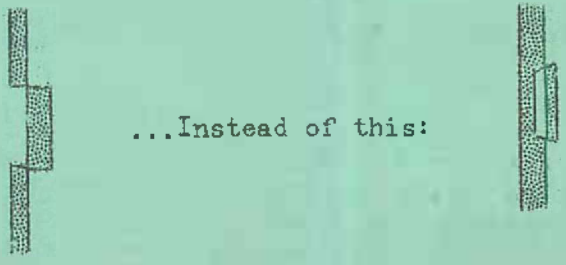
"Writers at Work" is delightful. More please. Merci for book reviews...articles... artwork...paper...reproduction...just don't be asking us to return this issue in case you run out, cause you sure as hell ain't gonna get mine.

RICHARD KYLE

(95 West Gilman Street, Banning, California)

Now a report on Xero 8. It was another excellent issue, of course, despite the lengthy stretch of yellow journalism in the back of the magazine. Really, these comic book people....

Bhob's cover was a good idea. But it flopped. I think it might have worked if he had displaced the whole stripe, instead of just a section of it. Like this:



The drawing is crude, but I think you get the idea. The fundamental problem, aside from the fact it's not immediately legible, is that it is not really logical. It seems as though it is, superficially, because of the shortening and widening of the displaced sections, and because of their ultimate reversal of position. The trouble is that the letter "O" is not made up of a series of vertical lines, and the "logic" of something like this must spring from the "O," not from secondary things.

If the whole stripe had been displaced the way it is in the first sketch, I think it would have created the impression of a continuous curve, instead of a batch of lines of varying heights -- and Bhob could still have used the gimmick of progressively increasing the displacement.

Or something. On rereading I can scarcely figure out what I said myself. Anyhow, the cover was a good try, and the colors and stripes were pretty.

[Bhob replies:

"There was a technical goof on the continuous curve. I had planned a right-hand bleed, but the offsetters claimed this was impossible because of paper-grippers. We wound up with a "C" instead of an "O".]

The inside drawings were so varied it makes any kind of a rating tough. Because of the reproduction, Atom's stuff has a slightly unfair advantage. His work for pages 2 and 70 seemed the best to me. Bhob did one of his finest jobs -- that isn't just a phrase -- on the layout and drawing for "Another Goddam Pole." As you may remember, I didn't care for Stewart's artwork when I first began reading Xero. One of us has improved greatly. I also thought the Bester half of "Writers at Work" was marvelous (the Davidson half was so-so, but quite adequate). I'll look forward to the second and third in the series. Stiles's work is improving all the time -- and it was good to begin with (although I suspect he may have been concealing his weaknesses by limiting his subject matter). [Don't we all?] His cartoons on 16 and 39 were best; I'm no intellectual, so I preferred 39. The "Lift off!" job was good, too, but the drawing seemed too Andy Reissish for Steve Stiles who has a fine style for himself. When Stiles turns pro, he ought to make a fortune.

Layout seemed a little more experimental this issue, and generally not up to par. [Experimental, si! Up-to-par, sometimes. With an art editor of Bhob Stewart's originality and talent, Dick and I encourage him to be as experimental as he wants. The result is sometimes a brilliant success, sometimes a brilliant failure, but seldom the tried-and-true--and-dull.] Buck Coulson, who seems to have a hell of a time layoutwise, got it gggllllkdck across the throat again; and the second page of the "Caliph of Auburn" was rather disorganized (although the lettering was as good as you could want). [I disagree, agree, agree, in that order.] The biggest blow was "EI", however. Nobody who writes in as gently feminine a style as Pat could possibly look like that drawing. Come on. I won't comment on the drawings in the comic book section. They appear somewhat uneven. These comic book people....

And now the prose.

I was happy to meet all those chaps in the "Introducing" section of "Absolute Xero". This fellow Kyle sounds remarkably talented and mysterious. A writer, under a dark and hidden name, of many tales of violence and death. A contributor of letters to such wildly diverse publications as Xero, SFT, and Discord. A creaking ancient, buyer of the first Superman story ever published, who yet retains the strength and hot vigor to batter at the cupola of one of the living ivory towers of science fiction. Gad, what a figure!

Yet I suppose the fellow is more a fan of science fiction than a science fiction fan, and that accounts for the publications he reads in the fan field. Probably he sold a very few detective stories, rather than a number. And despite his long-standing emotional fondness for the union-suited heroes of yesterday, he likely has an intellectual fondness for factually supportable arguments and is willing to say so.

On the square, though, this is the first time anyone ever wrote even a thumbnail sketch of me -- and it is a curious experience. It's strange how much more interesting people sound than they really are. Or maybe it depends on how you put it, as Philip Wylie demonstrated in Finley Wren.

The other people sounded more interesting than Kyle. I hope they are. I rather expect it, too.

"Another Goddam Poll" surprised me. I didn't think there were that many Conservatives in sf. Maybe there aren't. Maybe the issues that once divided the Progressive from the Standpatter, A-Fair-Shake-for-the-Masses against A-Full-Pocket-for-the-Plutocrat-and-the-Masses-be-Damned, have been resolved. Maybe now that the rights of the masses have been pretty well recognized by everybody, it is no longer correct to divide people up as Liberal or Conservative, Progressive or Standpatter, because they are Democrat or Republican. Maybe a real Progressive is a man who wants us to explore Space and to enlarge the size mf man -- regardless of what party he belongs to, or whether he is pro- or anti-labor, or what. And perhaps a Standpatter is a guy who thinks Space and all this "so-called scientific stuff" is a bunch of crap -- regardless of what party he belongs to, or whether he is pro- or anti-business, or what. Maybe, in the big sense, economics is no longer the main political issue in this country.

Anyway, I was happy about the results of the poll.

You know, in all my life I've never read a Green Lama story, and I've always wanted to. I'll lend you a first issue of Dr. Yen Sin by Donald E. Keyhoe, featuring as Yen's opponent Michael Traile, the Man Who Never Sleeps (no joke) if you'll lend me a Green Lama story. Yen was pretty good. It's been a few years since I read the magazine, but it seems to me he was just about the ideal Fu Manchu type (including Fu Manchu, regrettably). /Our two issues of Green Lama Double Detective (that was the way the logo came out) are on loan to a writer who is working on an AICFAD article on Green Lama. The pulp was successful enough to inspire two completely successful comic-book series, several years apart. As soon as we get them back, it's a deal. -PL/

"Fandi". Hey, that's quite a thing, uh? Missy Bates was great, and so was the rest of the strip. Offhand, I'd think Bhob could have licked the blue ink problem by laying a sheet of red celephane over the drawing. That would have made the blue look near black. Or maybe it wasn't that simple, um? Whatever the case, it was worth it. Good men, Deindorfer and Stewart.

Blish on theological sf was good. The guy puzzles me, though. Why does he make such statements as? Del Rey's "For I Am a Jealous People" is "still so hot a property that nine out of ten people who know it won't even talk about it"? I guess I'm the tenth person and so is almost every critic. When the book first came out, I seem to remember (no promises, but I seem to) that the story was generally reviewed in sf without any great disturbance. I think the consensus was that it was a generally fine job marred somewhat by a pulp plot. And I think that is a sound evaluation.

Pohl, de Camp (I've just reread Lest Darkness Fall for the third or fourth time -- and I still like it), Davidson (Papal People Leader, one of the world's greats), and Wollheim were all interesting.

The yarn Westlake was apparently talking about seems to have appeared in the May Analog. And if it is the story, Westlake reveals his utter lack of story sense. He must proceed wholly by instinct when he writes. It seems evident from internal evidence that Westlake wrote the story -- in the original version -- entirely from the viewpoint of Jeremy, a private soldier with weak bowels, who crawls, whines, whimpers, and cold-sweats his way through the whole novelet. Now Campbell has to sell some magazines. Who is going to be interested in a "hero" like this? Westlake, maybe. So Campbell took the one strong character in the story and had him turned into the hero. It isn't artistic, maybe, but by God it is commercial. Westlake says the original version was the best. Well, from the standpoint of form, it was, probably; but from the standpoint of readability the original version was vastly inferior, if things were the way they look to be.

Westlake couldn have learned something from the changes Campbell ordered. It's too bad he didn't choose to.

(And I also suspect, by the way, that if Campbell could get an author or two who could write what Campbell wants -- as Heinlein did in the '40s -- Analog would be one of the best sf magazines ever printed. I think I had an insight into what he's aiming for a couple of issues back, and I can see his problem. Have you ever seen the woodcuts, and such, artists made years back of the strange beasts explorers had encountered on their expeditions? The artists had not been there; they had only the explorers' descriptions to go on, for the most part, and they could only draw from those, using their own knowledge of similar seeming animals. Elephants were turned into the damnedest, unlikeliest looking things. Gorillas became animated mountains with saber-tooth tusks. All that sort of thing. I think that's what many of Campbell's writers have been doing with his ideas. And coupled with the fact that Campbell himself has probably gotten only a quick squint at the critter he wants drawn up, the results have not been too admirable.

(But as a consequence of this insight into Analog and Westlake's woodenheaded behavior, I have considerably more respect for Campbell's current work -- and a hell of a lot more sympathy.)

Lin Carter on "Books" is well conducted. I don't dig stories where "man is a pitiful and doomed survival at best," and so I don't think I'd be able to read Aldiss's book. Or Dark Universe. In all likelihood the writing is brilliant, but to say something really well you have to know something of what's inside the soul of man. I don't know about Galouye, but Aldiss seems to spend most of his time inside the large intestine.

Well, there was a time, in England, in the early '40s, when Gerald Kersh did set the Republic of Letters (maybe over there it was the Kingdom of Letters) on its ear. Or something near to it. And Night and the City is far more than a suspense shocker. It will be alive when many other books are dead. It seems to me that Kersh is one of the most important Unfullfilled Authors of our time. He has the "faultless touch" Carter mentions, all right, but it is a pity he never quite managed to hold on to what he grabbed back in the '30s and early '40s. It was something pretty damned important. Lord, he could write.

If you get a chance sometime, pick up An Ape, A Dog, and a Serpent. I don't think it's been published in America, but I'm not sure. It is one hell of a book. /I'll try the British Book Centre here in New York. We do have Kersh's Fowler's End; Dick, Larry Harris, and Joe Sanders all think it is one of the funniest novels around, not to mention its other qualities; I found it quite boring, but that was several years ago and I may try it again some time. -PL/

"Notes on Tolkien" was not as entertaining as last issue, but the subject matter could hardly be expected to produce high adventure or belly laughs. A good job, though, and I look forward to the final article. (This is a good argument for publishing a piece of this kind in its entirety, rather than serially. The necessarily slow parts are helped out by the quicker sections. But I suppose nothing else could be done in this case.)

By God, Norton on Smith was charming. The first few paragraphs threw me, but he soon came through in proper manner. Much of the charm, I'm afraid, is in Norton's pose, but it's still there, regardless of the cause. Davidson on everything topped "EI" handily. I'd rather read his letters than almost anybody's stories. Did he ever try selling letters? They might have gone. I'm sorry, I only glanced through the comic book section. Frankly, I can't take any writer seriously who writes: "Landing in the midst of the smoking remains, the Flame's fists lash out." These comic book people....

ETHEL LINDSAY

(Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England)

This certainly is a marvellous issue: the cover quite took my breath away...and I do think it is a good idea introducing your contributors this way. I found the poll results about the most interesting thing I had read in aeons. I was particularly taken with Bob Shea's statement of position. You know I think this is probably what the majority of fans feel. An arbitrary Right and Left is pretty silly when you think of it, nothing is that straight-forward. Over here we have just seen the emergence of the Liberal party again, our middle-of-the-road party, and this is quite obviously due to the obvious fed-upness with the extremes of the other two parties. Our next general election ought to be verra interesting to watch!

I was sorry to see "The Slant Story" finish, it has been good to read. And Gary Deindorfer surprised me with that strip cartoon, I did not know he did such work, and this is very well done. Bhob's work stencilling "Fandi" reminds me that I must congratulate you upon the beautiful production throughout Xero. I do like to see such care taken - believe me, it is worth it: your fanzine stands head and shoulders above the majority in this respect.

The discussion of the Westlake article had the usual effect upon me. When I read something like the Westlake article I think: "Now that's true!" Then I read a rebuttal and I get annoyed that I had not thought out these things for myself. Oh well, I suppose it is a good thing to be able to see both sides of a question, but sometimes I wonder if I don't overdo it. /I had the same feeling about both the original Westlake article and the several rebuttals. If Westlake now offers a counter-rebuttal, I suppose he'll convince me again, too. -PL/

The "All in Color for a Dime" half sends me into a reminiscent mood. I cannot share your nostalgia but I did have my own brand. I read a thing called THE SCHOOLGIRL which contained a set of characters which were the exact replicas of the Billy Bunter series. There was even a Bessie Bunter who had the same type of dialogue as Billy. Apart from this one mag, though, I steered clear of the girl mags and read all the boy's. I also preferred the boy's school stories to the girls, they were more exciting. I was an early hand at swopping and by this method was able to obtain a weekly mag whose name has receded into the distant past. THRILLING something. Featured fantasy and horror stories mostly of the gothic type. I wish I could remember more details but I would be only about 9 or 10 at the time. I know I hid them from Mother as I was sure she would forbid them.

BUCK COULSON

(Route 3, Wabash, Indiana)

I'd be willing to agree with Bob Shea's idea for making tuition payments to parochial schools tax-deductable. I'm against any direct federal or state aid to them, not so much because of separating church and state but simply because I oppose giving money collected from the entire population to institutions which are not run for the benefit of the entire population. Public schools are (theoretically, at least) open to every child. If any group decides that their children deserve something better, then it is up to that group to pay for providing what they want. (This goes for segregationists as well. If they want to send their children to private schools, fine; that's their privilege. But when they try to use state tax money to pay for those private schools, then they need to be brought up short.) On second thought, I'm not even sure that I agree with deducting the tuition payments. It's a good point, but it does have drawbacks.

I've read Lin Carter's "Notes on Tolkien" twice, and it still breaks down to a claim that authors who steal their characters' names from earlier literary works are "finer imaginative writers" while those who make up their own names are clods. And I don't know about you, but seems sort of contradictory from here.

If H.P. Norton had used his different-drummered English on an author that I cared more about, I might have enjoyed it; as it is, I gave up on the third page and went on to the letter column. Shame on you, for allowing Avram to attribute your typo to my inaccuracy. Maybe you thought I'd be flattered by the assumption that I'd actually heard of "indormation" previously, but.... /On the contrary, we thought that you meant indormation but had typo'd it as information: Dick generously corrected this as he stencilled your column. -PL/ Anyway, he can't fool me with his Bulwinckle dictionary; Bullwinkle is a moose and a teevie star and he never wrote a dictionary in his life.

Tell Ethel o' course I go to sleep. Let's see now...if I'm not mistaken I got 3 hours sleep in the early morning hours of March 19, and I got in a whole 8 hours over Christmas vacation.

HARRY WARNER

(423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland)

Maybe I just haven't disposed of the rest of my sense of wonder but I react strongly every time I run across something like your recent explanation of the future of Xero. There is the normal sadness that this too will pass, but there is a leavening of excitement. Each time, I think that this may be a fan who really does see into the future and is not predicting but giving a factual explanation of his was to those for whom it is still will be. I felt the same way when Rich Brown was giving all those details on his impending gafiation. However, even if you are simply planning the future, not interpreting it, I intend to continue to enjoy the present as long as it contains such pleasant issues of Xero. /It was neither prediction nor explanation, Harry, but intention. Of course we have no intention of gafiation, or even of quitting the fanpubbing field. It's just that there are other kinds of fanzines than Xero, many different varieties of fanzine than the large and elaborate genzine, and Dick and I want to try our hands at something different. I suppose we could keep the name and numbering of Xero, and thus maintain some sort of tenuous continuity, but it seems more appropriate to bring this fanzine to a final and orderly halt, and then start fresh with something else. -PL/

But I can't think why you continue this segregation of the comics material in the face of the integration opinions by so many valued readers. The long article in this issue on the Fox comics has importance for two messages over and above its descriptive content. Accidentally or purposefully, Richard Kyle has drawn an unstated parallel between the death throes of the Fox enterprise and the conniptions into which the science fiction prozines have gone in the past few years: frantic graspings after the useless straws of sex and flying saucers and fact articles, when what they obviously need is solid science fiction stories. Then there are the speculations about the selfless heroism of the comic characters back in those war years and the disillusionment that followed. This brings back to mind the question that nobody has answered for me: why was there nothing after World War Two like the anti-war plays and novels and movies that followed the first conflict? Even the name given to World War One was cynical -- it got that name long before WWII arrived -- and all during the 1920's there were plays in which militarism and jingoists and American Legionism got theirs. Anything of this type that got published or produced after 1945 remained obscure enough that I can't remember it. A conspiracy of the capitalists or the immediacy of a threat from Russia right after VJ-Day are the only possible explanations that occur to me.

The results of your poll confirm quite well the thesis that I developed in an IPSO mailing: that fans are actually quite conservative and hidebound in their ways of thinking, even when they claim adherence to liberalism or leftish tendencies. I argued on the basis of the hysteria that a Shaver or a Degler creates in fandom instead of the laughter that they would inspire in most fields of interest and the classification into "lunatic fringe" of things that are simply far out or untested like Dean Drive or flying saucers. The other conclusion that your poll might produce is that it is useless to find substantial differences between fans and random groups of intelligent young Americans, in anything other than their interest in stf and its resultant publishing and congregating effects. I don't think we'll find anything statistically significant to prove a major difference, any more than there is proof that active fans have different preferences in prozines than the silent readers, as most prozine editors insist. I liked very much the Shea letter. I don't quite have his faith in the government's likeliness to make good decisions. But I feel just as he does regarding the ignorance of the person who knows only what he reads in the newspapers and hears over the air.

Willis found a wonderful ending with an excellent philosophy for "The Slant Story", and I hope that you can persuade him to do a sequel for Hyphen for publication elsewhere, if Xero really has a very short lifespan ahead. /Do you really think that a retrospective type article would be appropriate for a magazine still being published? -PL/ "Fandi" was splendid enough to cause me to wonder if a generation hence, there won't be come future equivalent of Xero, this one devoted to recalling the wonders of the comics in the fanzines in the days when Stiles and Deindorfer and Bjo were still young enough to raise a stylus.

I have put a fondness for the tales of Clark Ashton Smith down as a sin of youth. His fiction got remarkably bad as I encountered more and more good writing in mundane literature. But there was a time when I thought so highly of him that I picked one of his stories ("City of Singing Flame", I think) when Startling Stories picked a bunch of fans as the people to choose reprints. I tried my best to suspend belief in Smith's verbosity and clumsiness while I read this article, but I didn't have too much luck. Lovecraft for all his equally large faults can be re-read because he left something of himself in the stories. When you return to the Smith stories you find in them not a man but a dictionary. /Bulwinckle's?/

The letter section impressed me as Avram Davidson and a lot of inferior letter hacks. That's always the case when he produces comments. Him and his failure to carry out the idea about a paperback book store in the Bay area. I can't forget how I did everything but write the necessary letters when I realized that there were all types of anthologies except those devoted to stf in bookstores. I'm pretty sure that even a person of my obscurity could have talked his way into editing some of the pioneers in the field, judging by the way the publishers began to turn them out a few months after I failed to carry through my idea. I think Ethel Lindsay would have thought Dale Hart a really handsome fan in 1940; I haven't seen him since, so I don't know if he's getting older, and showing that situation.

BOB BRINEY

(319 Beacon Street, #10, Boston 16, Massachusetts)

Each issue of X. is more impressive than the last. I hope that I have done (or if not, will be allowed to do) whatever will ensure me a copy of numbers 9 and 10 -- letters, money, human sacrifice, the complete works of Sax Rohmer??? /Hey, now, that last offer of yours... I don't think there is room here for the complete works of Rohmer, but if you would care to write an article on the complete works of Rohmer, we'd love it for Xero 10. After all, our first issue had an article on one Rohmer book; it would be nice to finish with a major article on him. -PL/

I enjoy Lin Carter's "Notes on Tolkien" very much, even though I haven't read the Ring Trilogy; I was diverted a fraction of the way through the first volume and never got back to it. (I no longer feel uncomfortable at making this admission since reading that Pat has not read the books either...) /Neither has Dick. We're an uneducated pair. But we have both sworn a Great Oath to read them Real Soon Now. Except that Dick has lined up several Burroughs books, some Mundy, Nine Stories by Salinger, and Conversations with Stalin; while I have an equally tall pile of non-stf awaiting me. But, Real Soon Now. Maybe next year./ Regarding the DANAOI, mentioned by Carter as being mentioned by Homer -- they were the followers of Danaus, an Egyptian, who is credited with introducing the technique of crop irrigation in early Argos. The term Danaoi (or Danaae) later became one of the many generic terms for the inhabitants of Greece, in Vergil's Aeneid there occurs the line "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes...," usually translated as "I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts."

The "Fandi" comic strip was highly enjoyable. The more I see of Doindorfer's writing, the more impressed I become.

At one time I had a vast enthusiasm for Clark Ashton Smith's stories and poetry (I memorized "The Hashish Eater" -- all 583 lines of it -- and used to recite it at people...), and still derive much pleasure from re-reading many of them. I found Norton's "dissertation" on CAS generally enjoyable, but rather absurdly adulatory in places. ".../his/ powers of creativity touched upon the sublime -- and at times even surpassed it!" Indeed! Even Derleth's jacket blurbs don't go quite this far. The best of Smith's stories, including most (if not all) of those mentioned by Norton, were written in the 1930's. From the time of the publication of Out of Space and Time until his death, Smith wrote no prose worthy of attention, and much of his later poetry, though technically impeccable, suffers by comparison with his early flights of fancy.

One of the qualities of Smith's prose which is not mentioned explicitly in Norton's essay is the strain of sardonic humor which occasionally shows itself, as in "The Weird of Avoosl Wuthoqqan" and "The Voyage of King Euvoran" and in the endings of several other stories.

BOYD RAEBURN

(189 Maxome Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada)

So I received Xero 8, and read it all in a rush, and flipped, and I plead with you to keep sending me copies. /Why -- how many copies of Xero 8 do you want?/ My reaction (which you seek) to the cover is "Hmmmm". Sorry I can't work up more enthusiasm over what was obviously quite a bit of work.

Poll results were interesting. I'm sorry you couldn't work up anything out of the answers of the non-USA members. /Well, we had hoped to, but there were only about half-a-dozen such ballots, and some were used to comment on US politics while others were directed at the situations in their respective countries: too much difference in whole approach to correlate meaningfully. -PL/ "Barry's simple program of turning the clock back to the days of President McKinley" I am a trifle weary of these constant cracks about Goldwater and co. wanting to put the clock back, without elaboration. In this instance I ask, In what way does he want to turn the clock back, and what is baad about what he advocates? People are forever putting down Goldwater without explaining WHY they are putting him down. Apart from that, a cursory look over Shea's article again finds me in general agreement with his views. (It is a little while since I read the article, and thus it isn't fresh in my mind, so possibly there are points on which I disagree with him, but on the whole he seems SOUND.)

"Fandi" was GREAT. It was well worth the work Bhob had to do to put it on stencil. Deindorfer is a treasure to be bound with hoops of steel and like that. /"Fandi" came within a trice of being rejected. Dick mentioned in the last issue the way it looked when it arrived; he was just about ready to send it back to Gary. But Bhob read through it and said "This has great potential. Let me work it over a bit." That's what a good art editor can do for you. -PL/ ...and what is so cute about the name "Derek", Mr. Carter? It's a perfectly good name, and not at all cute.

All this exhaustive analysis and scholarly discussion of Tolkien is all very well for the Tolkien fans, but it doesn't do much for the apparently small (but sturdy) band of readers who are BORED by Tolkien. While few in numbers, some of us have the perspicacity to recognise the immense superiority of Mervyn Peake's "Titus Groan" and "Gormenghast" over Tolkien, and I only wish somebody of Carter's scholarship would do for Peake what he has done for Tolkien. /As a Titus fan myself, I must say that I'm very pleased to hear you say this (not meaning to offend the Tolkien fans, of course). As for the study of his works...how about your writing it for Xero 10? -PL/ I note that on page 42 Carter uses "dwarfs" for the plural of "dwarf" and this cheers me immensely, for Tolkien always says "dwarves" and all the Tolkien fans write "dwarves" and the OED doesn't recognize that there IS such a word. /This is obviously Dictionary Month in the EI Dept./

"The Education of Victor Fox" was SUPERB. I am not interested in old comics per se, and I have never seen any of the comics discussed in Xero, but this I enjoyed immensely. I sincerely hope that the AICFAD articles are reprinted in one lump. /Well not for sure, and surely not right away, but maybe someday./

ROBERT SMITH

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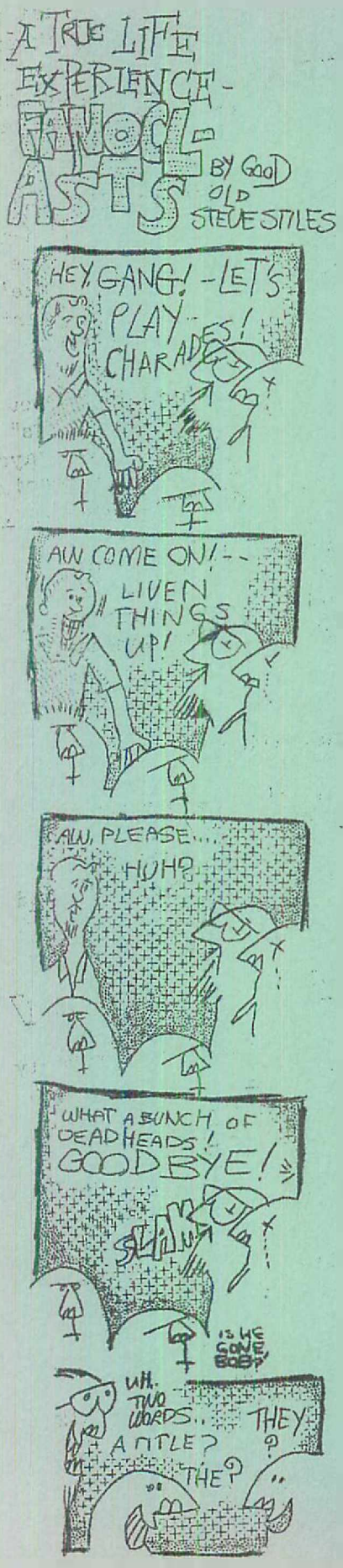
I can't thank you for sending me a copy of Xero 8 /Now there's one for you. Some people say "I can't thank you enough for sending..." but you!/ because you didn't - I ~~pinched~~ borrowed John Baxter's copy - but I can and will thank you for the pleasure I got out of reading it. That cover...! Have you realised that probably around 160 fans (you mention the circulation figure someplace) /It went up to 190 last time. This time, who knows?/ are now suffering from extreme dilation of the peepers? You don't believe me? Try gazing at the "O" in the title, top and bottom at the same time! But I like it. /Like dilated eyeballs?/

I usually back off from hefty thick fanzines because I'm well aware that probably only some 30% of the contents are likely to be of interest to me personally, but dammit, people, I lapped up every bit of this Xero of yours! /Say, are you the same fellow who used to devour YANDRO and complain about its taste?/ This hasn't happened since...umm, INNUENDO the last, I'd say, for me. It's a fan's fanzine and no mistake. (How come there'll be no more after #10?) /See reply in Harry Warner's letter./

Hmm. I note you words on the forthcoming Chicon at the bottom of page 5...are you sure science fiction will get a mention at this wingding? It may be the impetus for fanac to come, but whether that'll have anything to do with good 'ol stf is another matter. If I may filch the last line from "The Night the Old Nostalgia Burned Down" -- Eheu, fugaces! -- (whatever that means, but I'm sure it fits....) /Of course stf will get a mention. It's to be part of a talk along with sanity and the law./

"The Slant Story" made wonderful reading. I always knew a lotta work went into that dear old fanzine, but Walt has, in this story, allowed us all to share in the sweat, toil and enthusiasm that went into SLANT, and I could kick myself for having missed the earlier parts! /Don Fitch has secured permission to reprint "TSS". Now it's up to him to do it. -PL/



I enjoyed Blish's "discussion" on theological stf. Now, before you scream: "but...it wasn't meant to be enjoyed!", let me make that clearer. Blish managed to turn an article with the rather straight-laced title of "Theological Science Fiction" into something readable, stimulating and enjoyable; he wrote in a lighter vein than, say, his WARHOON column, which I have read, pondered on, but rarely enjoyed. Possibly because this item in Xero was more or less in letter form, I guess. I wasn't aware that "For I Am a Jealous People" had raised that much controversy or uneasiness amongst the readers (I presume Blish means the readers when he refers to people who won't talk about that short novel), but I imagine that if it had appeared in a magazine the heated discussion wouldn't have died away yet, hum? I consider it a great yarn. /Agreed./

Lin Carter writes a mean book review column. Despite the fact that I, personally, wouldn't rave over the Aldiss book, and that I didn't particularly agree with Carter's views on feminine writing and the "People" series, I must admit to a liking for the column overall. At least he's honest; the fact that Lin Carter didn't like the book, series, etc., doesn't mean that you won't, because he tempts one to investigate for themselves. More please. /Done./

Lin's "Notes on Tolkien" I found of particular interest because my own experience with this author has been only The Hobbit so far, and this article is fairly good background before tackling the Trilogy. Hmm...so that's who "Yngvi" was, eh? I'm sure that once upon a time in our tiny microcosmos the fact that "Yngvi" had been unmasked would be excuse enough for an article on the critter himself, but now ...a three line paragraph...sob! The Sense of Wonder has disappeared from fandom, maybe. I look forward to the concluding part of this study (even if I have to ~~XXXXX~~ borrow Baxter's copy once again).

At the risk of being stricken from YANDRO's mailing-list I must admit that Buck seems to do a better job for Xero when it comes to fanzine reviews than for his own publication. Buck might be interested to know that a Japanese interpreter friend of mine recently translated most of a copy of UCHUJIN into English, but he was reading the zine at the time so my notes are rather messy (they were scribbled frantically on old envelopes). I despair of ever sorting them into any sort of review for publication. It is curious that no decent artwork has appeared in this Japanese fanzine, because the rest of the publication is of fairly high standard and the average Japanese magazine is normally well illustrated. I didn't think SF-NYTT ever had English and Swedish editions -- it did usually sport quite a few pages in English from Alan Dodd, but I stand to be corrected, of course.

H.P. Norton on Clark Ashton Smith was fascinating, though I doubt very much that I'd go overboard for that author to the extent that Norton apparently does. I would have liked to see slightly more space devoted to his poetry, but perhaps that's a separate "dissertation", hmm?

Xero has a pretty swingin' letter-column, due, no doubt, to the presence of Avram Davidson and his absolutely fantastic method of commenting. (I wonder how many non-fan readers of F&SF would believe that this is the gentleman who edits their favorite prozine....) I would like a collection of Avram's letters, so's when I'm feeling low and ready to curl up into a ball I could grab 'em and laugh my way into insanity. Wonderful! Being torn to shreds by the good Colonel would probably linger with one forever, but what an experience! Jack Chalker, I note, asks what happened to those kind of fanzines -- refering presumably to SLANT -- and this causes me to wonder when we last saw a fanzine using lino-cuts for art.

By Sherlock Holmes out of the Goon Show I find it difficult to believe in "James Moriarty". /Well, we have no more evidence of his reality than we have of any other fan we've never met. But whether he exists or not, he draws nicely. -PL/ Anyway, I had the same sort of difficulty when I attempted to purchase ditto masters and carbons in Sydney once; the charming redhead was quite confused and communication was bloody near impossible until we sorted out that when I said "ditto" she meant "spirit-duplication", and calling masters masters almost had her in tears. Oh well, she wasn't a bad looking Charlie, though....

JOHN BAXTER

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Well now, that is what I call a cover! None of this half-hearted eye-catching -- it jumps out and gives you a knee in the visual groin./Just like a whole-hearted mad dog?/ I don't know how much trouble the thing has caused me, what with people stopping me in the street and asking "What in hell IS that thing?", the whole office staff arriving one morning in dark glasses...yes, very vexatious but worth it, I suppose, just to have anything so startling in the collection. I'm currently in monastic-like seclusion, preparing myself for the cover of Xero 9. If you should see my obituary notice in FANAC some time after September next, you'll know that a diet of locusts and wild honey and stopping up the seven bodily orifices with sweet-smelling herbs is not proof against Bhob Stewart's fiendish colour sense.

Why do you go to such lengths to stress that Xero will fold after the tenth issue? I counted at least three mentions of this depressing fact in the first couple of pages, which is three too many. It's no doubt very considerate and noble to make it clear to possible traders and contributors that they cannot depend on getting issues after the end of this year, but it's so depressing. Every few pages I started to think, "Why bother? The thing's folding soon anyway. It's not as though my comments would encourage them any." It always helps when writing a loc (helps me anyway) to think that, in some way, you're assisting the editor by commenting. Even if it's only rah-rah egoboo, there's always the chance that this will inspire him to greater heights and the next issue will be as good, if not better than the one you're writing about. If you criticise the production of the zine, you can expect to see some of those criticisms taken to heart in future issues, and if you send material, why, there it is on paper pretty soon, gladdening the heart of everybody, even the editor. But with Xero...well, it's just one foot after another and the grave at the end. Reminds me of a determinedly cheerful tea party at the Eventide Homes. Naturally I comment -- Xero deserves all the praise I can lay my hands on because it's one of the best magazines I've ever seen, and certainly one of the most enjoyable. But my heart isn't completely in it. Why publicise your impending demise? I hope you don't think that any of us are going to be happy to see you go? /Uh, well, we didn't really mean to emphasize it so much. Just that, rather than simply stop - bang! - in the midst of everything, or quietly peter out, we would bring Xero to an orderly halt. That's all. -PL/

Steve Stiles's cartoon was a honey. Great stuff. /Goshwow! Steve is sitting right here in our living room and blushing lividly. -PL/

Blish is always good, and this "Theological SF" article/letter/thing, he is better than usual, although it is like watching the merest ripple of a muscle on a giant's back. You think "Wow! But what could he do if he really tried?" I hope he gets at the subject a little more one of these days. It deserves a more thorough study than Blish was able to mount in these two and a half pages. One thing I might mention is your title "Theological Science Fiction," and your claim that said "theological" sf was "something remarkable and beneficial" produced by sf of the '50s. Are you sure you mean "theological", not "religious"? It's my feeling - and this was borne out by Blish's remarks and examples - that you are treating the two words as if they were interchangeable. They aren't. Theology, according to my faithful dog-eared dictionary /Ghod, another dictionary?/ is "the science treating of God and His relations with man". (Hardly complete, but this is the Little Oxford - my big Webster's is not around at the moment). As far as I can see, most of the books categorised by Jim as "theological" are actually no more than merely "religious" books, dealing as they do not with a deity Himself but with the effects on the human race of a belief in that deity. To my mind, this is several degrees removed from truly theological science fiction. Theology may not be a "science" but certainly it is a systematised study of a subject and one governed by certain rules that would necessarily have to be applied in any plot that was truly theological. I can't feel that any writer has yet managed to write a science fiction story along theological lines, although A CASE OF CONSCIENCE comes close because it is primarily concerned with a heresy and the Church's attitude to that heresy, not with the philosophy behind their disapproval. Ruiz Sanchez is a typical science fictional protagonist attempting to work within and come to terms with a partially unexplored scientific field. The conflict of CONSCIENCE was not so much that of the priest's abstract belief and the obvious truth evidenced by the Lithian society, but rather that between the mechanics of his belief and the belief itself. By the rules of theology, he couldn't believe the evidence of his eyes; the problem was to find a way in which these conflicting elements could be reconciled without denying either. I don't believe Blish succeeded, but he certainly came closer than any other writer to creating a truly scientific religious, i.e., theological, novel.

"Strange, slightly different-drummered use of the English language" says Dick, being mighty careful not to commit himself as to whether he thinks H.P. Norton's article is good or bad. Well, take my word for it - it's a stinker. That's pretty blunt, I guess, and if it trespasses on your editorial taste, sorry. The thing just struck me that way, is all. Writing is art, I feel - perhaps the highest art of all. It is all very well to take liberties with English - with any language - in a letter or in conversation, but when one is writing for publication, it would seem to be essential that a writer at least take some notice of the rules under which he is creating. Norton doesn't. His grammar and syntax, his punctuation...urk! And some of those phrases are incredible. "As a more characteristic instance...", "With Clark Ashton Smith, the world of ancient Greece still hovers...", "...Baudelaire, whom he translated...", "The modern graveyard school which permeated...". This may represent "strange, different-drummered" prose to you, but in my opinion it is nothing more than the published maunderings of a writer on nodding acquaintance only with elementary rules of grammar, punctuation, and writing in general. You have a perfect right to publish such work if you feel the theme and the writer's knowledge of the field (which is, I concede, apparently considerable) justify his shaky command of the language, but to attempt to explain, even glorify his ineptness is not entirely logical. /I don't think H.P. is inept. I think unusual is more the word. Some liked it, some didn't: check back through this EI and pick up sides. Seriously, I would not contend that "Caliph" was good prose in any conventional sense, but I considered it experimental writing of considerable interest and a certain...grotesque?...charm. -PL/

...and that's our eight pages of letters for this issue. The loc's following Xero 6 were substantially less numerous than usual, but, conversely, those we received were on the whole longer and better than the average batch. I wonder why. See you all -- well, not you two, Bob and John, but 'most everyone else, I hope -- in Chicago.

PAT

/Stop the duper or something...well, anyway, here are some more letters that came a little bit later than the rest. Most notably, this first one./

DON WESTLAKE

Sorry to have taken so long to answer. Frankly, I wasn't sure whether I should answer or not. My agent advised me to stop, and since he has done more for me in my writing career than almost anyone else I can think of, and since he is a knowledgeable man in this business, his advice carried a lot of weight. On the other hand, you people had been kind enough to send along Xero 8, which did contain comments and questions which shouldn't be left up in the air. So this letter will be my last chapter on the subject, and I'll try to make it inoffensive. The people I offend, it seems, don't tell me about it; they call my agent.

Point number one: I have never tried to imitate anyone's writing style, Frederik Pohl's or anyone else's, and hardly think I could even if I did try. I have tried, however, to aim at editorial interests. In Mr. Pohl's case, I had to go on the basis of the stories he had written rather than the stories he had bought, for obvious reasons. (By the time he wrote the letter which appeared in Xero 8, he still had two stories in inventory that Gold had bought.) If the implication that I was doing a pastiche was contained in my article, it was unintentional. The point of my "'phoney' inside stuff" was that I was aiming at the market and nothing more. In other words, the story I had written had no merits other than as an example of aiming for a particular market. And so, a lousy story.

Which brings me to Avram Davidson's suggestion that I'm not a science-fiction writer at all, but wandered into the field by mistake. This idea had never occurred to me before, but now that it has been suggested, I must admit it might be true. I gave up Perry Mason for science fiction when I was fourteen, and read science fiction voluminously for the next six years, until the Air Force took me at twenty. In 1958, when I started the drive to become a self-supporting writer, it was to science fiction that I returned, compiling a library of about five hundred magazines, being Galaxy and F&SF complete, Astounding back to 1948, and a batch of secondary magazines, and it was only after having waded through all this that I decided to branch out to the mystery field and see what I could do there. My first sale, in 1953, when I was nineteen, was to Universe Science Fiction. My sales in 1958 and 1959 were about half and half, mystery and science fiction. All of this might sound like the beginnings of a career as a science fictinn writer, but obviously the appearances are deceiving.

Let's pursue Avram Davidson's idea. The first stories I sold in both the mystery and science fiction fields were nothing spectacular -- the mysteries to Hitchcock were the drab droll dreck used as ballast in that magazine, the science fiction was summed up by Mr. Pohl's comments on SPY -- but gradually I think I improved. In mysteries anyway. As my 'slanting for the market' became less conscious and worrisome, I could concentrate more on the story itself, and so the stories began to have more meat on their bones. I imagine that this is normal development of a writer in any field; first, conscious agitated 'aiming' at the market, gradual mastery of the conventions and taboos and interests and typings in that market, and so gradual freeing of the concentration for the story itself.

This process happened to me in the mystery field, but it didn't happen in science fiction. I never got beyond stage one. When the chance came to send a story to Galaxy with guaranteed sympathetic attention, I honestly didn't know what to do with it. If I muffed it, I would come close to closing a market. I was still in stage one; slant the story. That was in 1961, and I still hadn't found a firm footing in the field.

On those few occasions when I thought I'd taken a small step forward, I was immediately returned to Start, either by a No Sale or a slant-oriented revision. The Campbell story about the Colonel is a fine instance. (It was in the May issue of Analog, to answer the

questions.) In the original, the Colonel showed up at the end of the story. There was no secret organization of psuperman in the Air Force. The point of view never deviated from Jeremy. It was a story about a person. God knows it was no masterpiece, but it was a story. (In this connection, Harry Warner's idea that the Colonel was a "real, living character", implying some sort of complexity and depth in the characterization, just ain' so. Analog is full of Secret Societies with Strange Powers, and the Colonel, under one name or another, runs them all. You will find this same character in spy stories. He's the Chief of Counter-Intelligence, the hero phones him in Washington every once in a while, and his name is Mac.) At any rate, I for one am more interested in a person, who suddenly and shatteringly learns he is a teleport, who doesn't want to be a teleport, and who more than half suspects he's lost his mind, who struggles through the problems thus created -- aggravated by the fact that he can neither control nor repeat the initial teleportation -- and works things our to some sort of solution or compromise with the world, than I am in all the Secret Societies and Mystical Powers in the Orient. But the writing and rewriting of that story kept me vigorously marching in place, backm there at stage one.

So you see, Mr. Davidson may be right. I had read more science fiction than mystery. I was more interested in science fiction, and had sold my first story to a science fiction magazine. But it was in the mystery field that I could adapt myself to the requirements of the market and then go on to stories -- and books -- that fulfilled, for me, more than the simple requirements of the market. In science fiction, once I had fulfilled the requirements of the market, I never had any elbow room left. Using that Colonel story again, once that man and his Secret Society took over the story, it became impossible to do anything with Jeremy, my teleportee. Instead of his taking his own risks, fighting his own way through to triumph or defeat, the story became a Mystical Inner Circle affair. Jeremy still struggled, but he was no longer his own man. His every move was planned and anticipated by the Secret Society, and the whole story became the recounting of an initiation into the club. All it lacked was a badge with a decoder on the back, for spelling out Ralston. Phooey.

Could I have fulfilled the market requirements with that story, and still have written a story that interested me? No. Is that a flaw in my writing ability? Maybe. I have not thought so, but maybe it is. If so, it's a flaw that seems to bother me only in science fiction.

Point number three: At a certain risk, I must point out that at least one sentence in Frederik Pohl's letter is balderdash. This is the crack about "other markets" having "lower standards" than the science fiction magazines. He must be referring to those non-science fiction editors so obtuse as to buy stories and/or books from me. Among these other editors are Lee Wright, a Senior Editor at Random House, generally accepted as being the top mystery editor in the United States, and possibly in the world. Bucklin Moon, of Pocket Books, who is also no slouch. The good people at T.V. Boardman in England, Gallimard in France, Mondadori in Italy, and so on and so on, who have bought various foreign rights to my books. Hans Stefan Santesson, William Manners, and Ed McBain, who have bought short pieces from me in the mystery field. The people at Dell, who have bought reprint rights to my mystery novels. If in Frederik Pohl's world these people have "lower standards" than the six science fiction magazines which have not yet joined their sisters in silence, than either Mr. Pohl or myself is living in a parallel universe.

Point number four (and last): My article, in twenty-five hundred ill-chosen words attempted to say one thing: science fiction is neither an artistic nor a commercial field. Avram Davidson suggested I was in the wrong pew. L. Sprague deCamp objected to my cavalier ignoring of his non-science fiction output. Frederik Pohl complained about my "'phoney' inside stuff". Though I'd stated that I'd never written a science fiction novel, Donald Wollheim wondered why he hadn't seen anything submitted from me. The letter without a name /That was George Heap's/ thought I was too vindictive. John Baxte thought I was too petty. But until one of these people directly disagrees with the statement -- science fiction is neither an artistic nor a commercial field -- they haven't said a damn thing.

/Speaking of last chapters, here is one in another little dispute. To re-cap: James Blish's review/article "Some Notes with Regard to 'New Maps of Hell'" appeared in Xero 4. Richard Kyle, taking certain points of disagreement with Blish, wrote a letter of rebuttal which appeared, because of scheduling problems, in Xero 6. Blish offered a counter-rebuttal in Xero 7, following which Kyle offered a...what are we up to now? oh yes...counter-counter rebuttal, which I did not select for EI in Xero 8, in hopes of avoiding drawn-out acrimony.

/I left it unprinted with a small pang of conscience, not wishing to give either party an unfair unrebutted last word, however, and Richard Kyle has asked that we either publish this, his "last chapter", or else send it on to Blish personally. So here is his final word in the dispute. (Aside to Jim Blish: the unfair-last-word principle still applies, and if you wish a chapter of your own, the next installment of this column will be open to you for that purpose.)/

RICHARD KYLE

Until I saw James Blish's letter in Xero 7, I didn't really understand what "semi-literate" meant. For although Blish can write, he cannot read.

Item: "...((Kyle)) asserts that those who praise Amis's book are simply licking his eminent boots. (I leave out the part of the argument which says those who damn the book are also licking his boots, as being too subtle for the likes of me.)" I didn't say that at all. I said the extremes of emotion (the "shouts of praise and screams of outrage") this trivial and inadequate little book produced were not warranted by the book itself, which should have died a silent death, but were produced -- in the main -- by the name and status of the author. As poor relations excessively praise and damn the rich -- out of a sense of their own inferiority -- so, I thought, much of science fiction praised and damned New Maps. Nothing very subtle there. And I excluded Blish from this group: "It is beyond me, though, why James Blish, who is certainly no poor relation..." It must be tough when you can't read.

Item: Blish objects to my "demand that sf...'show proper respect for the man who made it'" (evidently thinking I was refering to Campbell). Well, I didn't say that either. I said "...the men who made it," and it so appears in my copy of Xero. Nor did I "demand" they be esteemed for their accomplishments; I said I thought it was time they were. And I do think so. What would science fiction be like if there had never been an Astounding Science Fiction, if there had never been an Olaf Stapledon, if there had never been a Robert A. Heinlein? These men are absolutely critical to the development of science fiction (as, say, writers like Henry Kuttner and A.E. vanVogt and M.P. Shiel are not, no matter what the quality of their individual stories may be) and they should be remembered along with Verne and Wells and Gernsback. No good book can exclude them, no matter what its point of view may be.

Item: "...((Amis)) does not so say ((that Campbell is a crank)), though Mr. Kyle marks the word 'crank' as though he were quoting somebody..." Amis doesn't, eh? Page 130 of the Ballantine edition: "One imagines ((new young writers from 'ordinary' fiction))... above all, kicking out the cranks who seem bent on getting science fiction a bad name -- John Campbell, the editor of Astounding..." Blish could have learned this if he had used the "excellent" index he has spoken of. (My quotes around excellent seem to trouble Blish. They're there to show his praise of the book extends even beyond the text to the good, but in view of the length of the book, not exceptional index.) But, of course, the man doesn't read. He doesn't even read the books he reviews, let alone the letters he criticizes.

Item: "No, Mr. Kyle..." Blish says, addressing me directly. Not only doesn't he read the books he reviews and the letters he criticizes, he doesn't read his own letters, either. For right at the top of this letter he writes: "Maybe this Amis discussion is wearing out and you (Lupoffs) should call it closed... If you need a place to start

I suggest here..." If you did cut, Pat, how would I ever read it? /I guess I could have sent it to you./ I guess James Blish doesn't read anything.

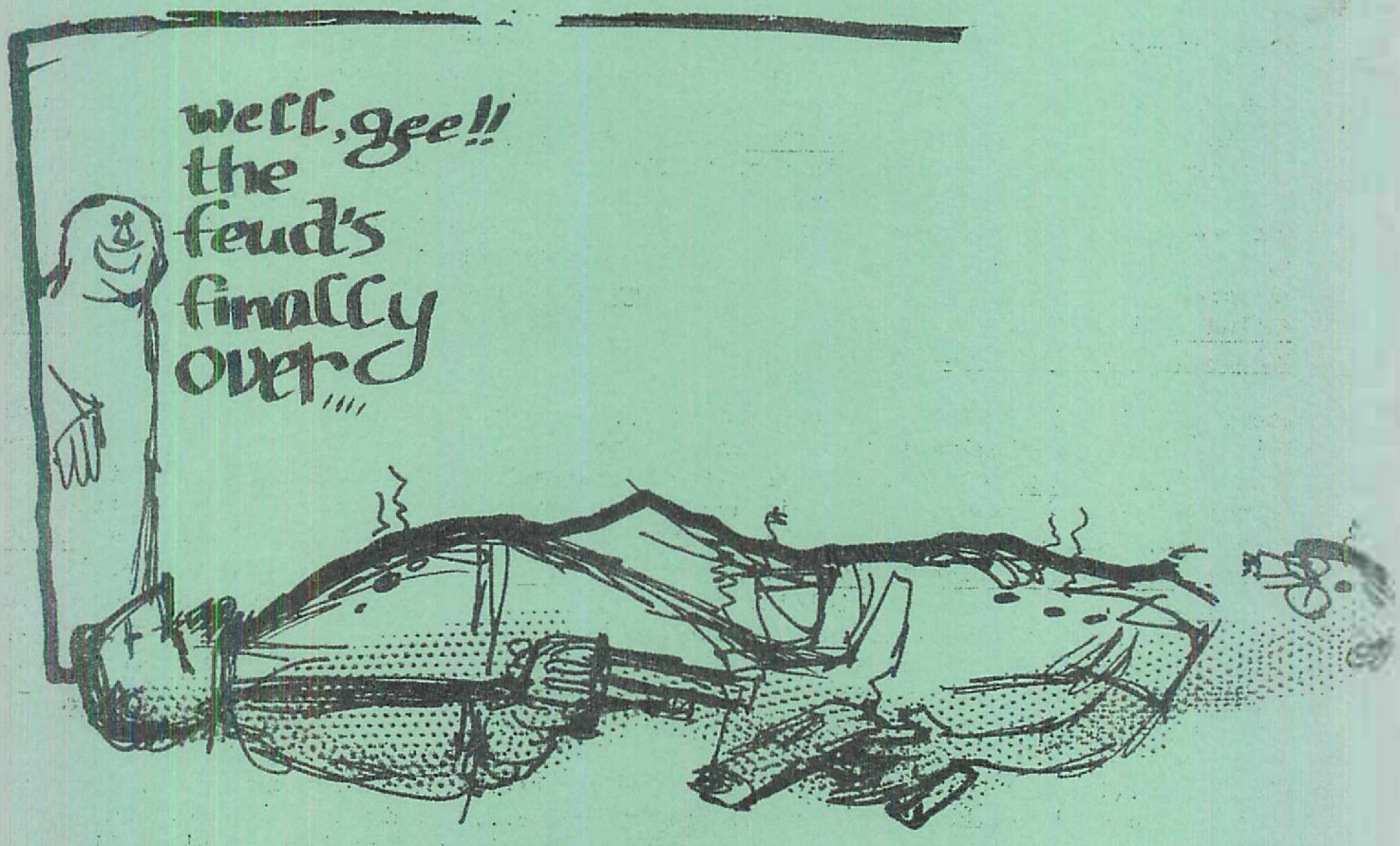
Item: "No, Mr. Kyle, sf is not Melville..." I never said it was, of course.

Item: "...and John Campbell is not the Albert Schweitzer of our field." You know, all along, I never did really think he was. I didn't even mention Schweitzer's name, matter of fact.

Item: Etc., etc., etc.

I'd send Blish a McGuffey's Reader to help him out -- but I'm afraid he might try to hunt up McGuffey to give him his reader back.

It sure must be tough, though, not being able to read. All the things you miss. Dick and Jane stories. And Fireman Joe stories. And Winnie the Poo. And Raggedy Ann. It sure must be tough.

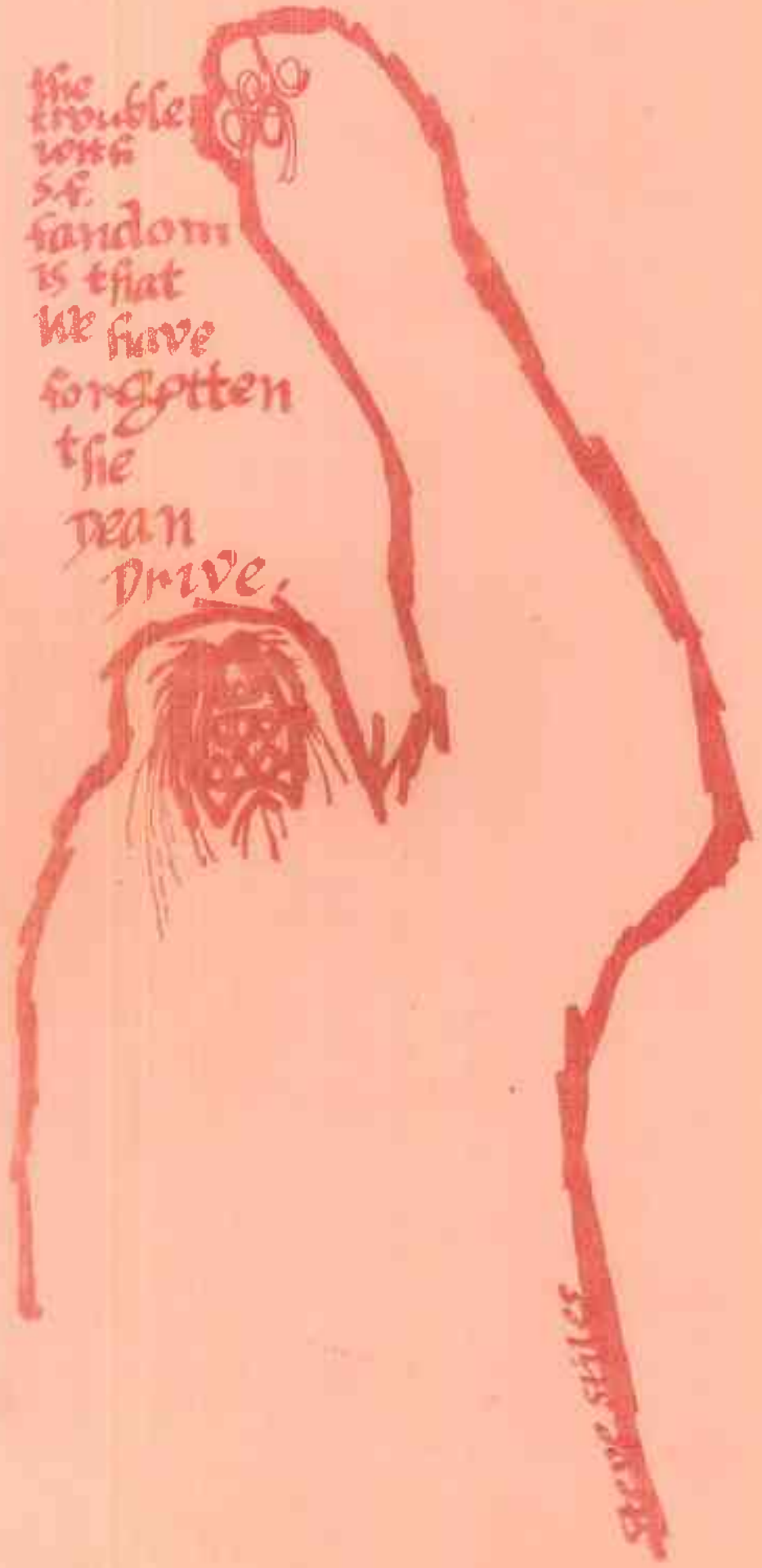


/And to finish off the issue, here is the shortest letter we've ever published in Xero. It's the first we've ever heard from the writer, but if he continues in the present vein, we're sure it will not be the last./

ANDY ZERBA

(315 DuPont Street, Montgomery 6, Alabama)

I have just read Xero 8 and I think it is the best fanzine I have read yet, but I'll probably change my mind when I get around to reading more fanzines.


The trouble with SF. fandom is that We have forgotten the Dean Drive.
Steve Stiles