

PEON

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PEON Nº 36

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The opinions and views appearing herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor.

Admittedly, it has been a rather long time since the appearance of the last issue of PEON. In fact, the May issue was the last one I published, and for a time it was almost the last one this year! As it is, there will be only three issues of PEON this year, instead of the usual four. It's so late in the year that I can't see that I'd have the time or money to get out another issue this year. So, this will mark the end of volume eight of PEON.

PEON NOTES

We do have some good plans for future issues of PEON and the year 1956 should see some rather radical changes, both in format and material. I have come to the conclusion that most fans consider PEON to be staid, stuffy, mature and dependable. I like the last two definitions, but I certainly don't like to be called "staid and stuffy." I'm afraid that the type of material and appearance of PEON in the past has almost made those descriptions apt, so I'm going to try to change them a bit. This issue is the first step in the revitalization of PEON program. Included in this issue are a very few cartoons (and we hope to include much more in future issues), and one or two articles that are somewhat different from those previously published herein. Your reaction to this change would be greatly appreciated.

One of the changes commencing with this issue is the change to standard--8 1/2 x 11 size--paper, and also the purchase of a mimeograph machine for our very own use. The change in paper was not decided upon until we had half-way finished dummyping up copy, so we continued to use the old style copy which makes for the rather strange look on the pages. We'll correct this with the next issue, naturally.

We've been trying out various makes of mimeograph machines, and without committing ourselves to any particular style, we've practically been able to mimeograph this issue entire (this is a good hint for some of you would be fan editors). However, this also makes for a different impression on some of the pages, as you sharp-eyed readers will note.

It appears, though, that we will settle on a Rex-Rotary Model D-270, which is a beautifully constructed machine. It operates like the Gestetner, but I believe it to be a better machine. Like the Gestetner, it is a foreign make (Denmark), and is just getting introduced into this country. We had originally decided upon a hand operated and hand-linked machine but the salesman left the electrically operated machine for the demonstration, and the Riddle family has fallen in love with it. The machine is very simple to operate and Ira and Robbie have learned which buttons to push--that is why you find their name on the masthead commencing with this issue of PEON. This is the first step in turning over PEON to them, and if I can keep their interest up, PEON will be the first fanzine handed down from father to sons (and daughter, if Alice ever gets interested.)

So, as I said before, watch PEON improve in the future. We have a lot of experimenting to do henceforth and I believe you will like the results.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 27)

The Fall of Ygnarth

Lin Carter

FOREWORD: Of all the great cities in Ikranos (that marvelous country that lies just beyond the Gates of Dream), few are as famous as the City of Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah. The gilded walls of Ygnarth rise to the south of the Eight Cities on the fertile shores of the Sea of Neol-Shendis, and to the east of mysterious Ith, that city of the strange name where Crysarion rules undying. A proud and powerful city is Ygnarth, and well-remembered among the croniclers of History and the recorders of Myth. It was from Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah that King Courainne the Conqueror went warring in the olden days, even unto the white walls of distant N'turisan. It was at Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah that Leodonek met his first defeat when he came conquering from Kyre, many years before he set upon that far Quest that has been told of elsewhere. And, it was to Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah that Glorian the Troubadour once came, while on his fabled journey seeking for the Perfect Song.

But, in her latter days, great Ygnarth turned away from her ways of glory and rested upon the fame won by her early kings. As all cities who become rich and great early in their history, proud Ygnarth turned to feasting and festivals and orgies. It seemed easier to rest in the silken palaces and sip cool wine from cups of emerald, that to ride with sword and fire through the fields of war. So the Kings of Ygnarth were shallow and weak and pleasure-loving, and turned from the Gods of Fame and Honor to the Gods of Luxury and Wine. And

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it came to pass that the Gods were angry with Ygnarth and all her debaucheries, the Gods who are patient above any man.

And then came a Sorcerer from far-off Memnos, bearing the sacred gift of prophecy unto Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah.

-I-

"The wrath of the Gods fell on soldier and priest,
On King, slave, and minstrel, the same.
And morning was hours away in the east
When Sarath Oonab to great Ygnarth came."

--Prologue to Act I, Scene 2, from
The King and the Prophet by
Leonargis the Kemetian.

The moon had just risen above the Khorahn Hills, when Sarath Oonab, Sorcerer of Memnos was wakened by the sound of someone pounding on the door to his chamber. Hastily rubbing the sleep from his tired eyes, the old man rose from his couch and stumbled to the door, grumbling. Hadn't the Inn-Keeper promised not to disturb him, who was weary from his long journey to Ygnarth? For what reason, then, this noisy pounding on the oaken panels? He half-opened the door and asked in a querulous voice, "Who is there? What want you, in the middle of the night?"

Soldiers stood in the hall without, light from their torches gilding their bronze shields and helmets of polished brass with a golden glitter. One tall soldier with a bristling black beard eyed the Sorcerer impatiently.

"Are you not Sarath Oonab, the Sorcerer?"

"And if I am--what of that?" demanded the soldier angrily.

"Then I am to summon you to the Palace of the King at once." replied the soldier. The Sorcerer looked at him.

"How do you know my name, soldier? And what does your King want of me?"

"As for your name, the Captain of the Gates keeps his record of all who enter or leave. As for the King, tonight he holds high festival within the Palace of his fathers, and has bidden that all sorcerers and wizards within the city come before him to amuse his guests with their tricks of magic. Now I am done with talking--do you come with us or must I drag you from your lair?"

The old man's face reddened at this arrogant command, but as he and his young apprentice (yet sleeping on his pallet beneath the window) were newly come to this city and had no friends, he thought it wise to obey and not complain. Adding agreement to the guard, he hurriedly shook his apprentice awake and bade the lad rise and dress, while he packed his tools of necromancy within a leathern knapsack. From his luggage, Sarath Oonab drew forth powdered horn of Unicorn, a packet of dried mandrake roots, a bundle of serpent bones, a flask of basilisk-eyes preserved in wine and thrust them in the sack. Last, he added a great parchment book of thaumaturgies and spells.

Then with his wide-eyed apprentice, he was led from the Inn by the impatient soldiers, to the cobbled and moonlit street where the horses awaited, stamping and blowing their plumes of frosty breath on the night air. They mounted awkwardly, for the Sorcerer was far more familiar with the more arcane methods of transportation, and was unaccustomed to horseback. Once his two charges were astride safely, the Captain snapped a command to his men and valuted with practised ease upon his black stallion. The soldiers sprang to their saddles and the party galloped off down the moonlit street, their hooves ringing on the muddy cobbles. The fatbellied Inn-Keeper stared after them, frightened, yet relieved. Those summoned before the King did not often return to the light of day...yet the Sorcerer had already paid him, and well. Besides, if his recent guests did not return, he could no doubt sell their luggage well.

-II-

"Behold the brazen gates, O see them rise
Ramparts of gold athwart the purple skies
Wherein the King in sacred slumber lies."

--Lines 4-6 from "The Palace"

Sonnet IX in the sonnet-sequence

Yonarth by Saimbara of Kyre.

When they dismounted before the great bronze gates of the Palace, Sarath Onab was calm and collected, but his apprentice (a young, blue-eyed lad from distant Kemis) was trembling with excitement. Never had he or his Master performed in so splendid a Palace! They followed the Captain's tossing purple plumes up the flight of marble stairs, and through the sard-paved halls and lamp-lit corridors. To the boy, these seemed the very halls of Paradise, itself. Bright they were, with luxuriant rugs woven in Shai, and tapestries of silver-cloth from fabled Kash. He marveled, open-mouthed, at the solid crystal statues that stood in niches along the marble halls, and stared with awe at the proud lords in stiff brocade and their opulent and be-jewelled ladies; and when they reached the Great Hall of Feasting, he was in a vertiable ecstasy!

It was a huge place, like a great cavern. The walls were hung with rich gilded velvet draperies and the air was perfumed by rare oils and incenses burning in the hundred tall braziers. They were led past oaken tables that sagged with platters of spiced meats, snow-chilled fruits, and sugary cakes and delicacies, past these to a small atnechamber where the entertainers waited their turns. The Captain left them there, with gruff commands to wait their turn. The Sorcerer sat upon a bench in one corner, his apprentice at his feet, and examined his fellow-wizards beneath hooded eyes.

There were four men in the room. One, a tall grey-bearded Necomancer in purple robes, who muttered spells under his breath, like an actor reciting his lines while waiting in the wings. Besides him, stood a fat, complacent Wizard clad in yellow satin, with a bronze plate bearing mystic symbols, pendent upon a chain of rubies about his creased neck. Two others waited also, a Magician in robes of white samite with his hands and beard dyed green (as is the custom of those that follow the Art in Shadir-Thuan); the other a gnarled, humpbacked little Mage in black robes with tangled beard and maleoalent red eyes, who bore an ebony staff.

Sarath Onab waited patiently as, one by one, his competitors were called before the Silver Throne to perform before the King and his guests. He watched as the bearded Necomancer shook yellow dust into the air from a small flask, and formed it into the simulacra of a woman, naked and golden

and alive, who smiled and walked among the feasters, and tumbled into dust again at the Necromancer's command.

He waited as the obese Wizard in yellow waddled out into the Hall of Feasting and, drawing a scarlet ribbon from a courtesan's perfumed hair turned it into a little scarlet serpent who danced to the Wizard's pipes, and then became a ribbon of silk again.

He stood calmly while the tall Magician (whose hands and beard were dyed green as is the fashion of those who follow the Art in Shadir-Thuan) grew a fruit tree from the tiled floor, and plucked ripe apples from its boughs to distribute among the revellers. It melted back into air again, at one gesture of the green-tinted hands.

And he waited quietly as the humpbacked little Mage in black limped out before the throng, struck his black staff against the floor, whereupon it became a column of fire which changed through all the colors of the spectrum and, after a time, became a staff again.

Then it became his turn. Sarath Oonab, accompanied by the boy, entered the hall. The corpulent Chamberlain--a fussy, officious little mannin gaudy silks--took his name and then, bowing first to the Silver Throne and then to the crowded tables, announced in a shrill voice: "My noble Sovereign, honored Lords and Ladies, the Sorceror--(what did you say the name was, fellow?)--the Sorceror Sarath Oonab of Memnos!" There came a faint patter of drunken applause, and the Sorceror bowed to the Throne and the tables, then straightened and looked at the occupant of the Silver Throne.

King Bodrhan the Ninth, called "Bodrahn the Well-Served", aprawled lazily on his cushioned seat, a painted concubine on either side. He was fatter and softer than any King should be, and his face was flabby and pale, with heavy blue circles under his watery eyes. He had spilled blue wine on his priceless robes, and his jeweled coronet was awry. This, thought the Sorceror, this is the descendent of a hundred Kings, this spongy weakling. In his bloated body runs the noble blood of Courainne the Conqueror, of Gnothern the Great, and King Shart the Magnificent! Gods!

But the Sorceror masked his disgust beneath humbleness, and said politely: "How may I serve and entertain Your Radiance?"

The King of Ygnarth rubbed his puffy face with one moist, be-jewelled hand, and said in a weak, high-pitched voice, "We have witnessed the petty feats of conjuring and transformation. Some new and different magic is our demand!" He turned to the feasters. "Well, what would you have the faker do?"

"Prophecy! Prophecy!" came shouts from the drunken feasters. The Sorceror turned suddenly hesitant eyes upon them. They sprawled feasting and carousing among the jewelled courtesans and painted boys, dazzling in their gilded silks and fur-lined satins, glittering with crowns and coronets. The lamplight sparkled richly from their brooches and rings and crystal goblets.

"O, most Exalted and Majestic of Kings," he said, frowning worriedly, as he bowed low, "It is true I have the sacred Gift, but...but it is not meet that the Divine Art, favored of the Eight Hundred Gods be used as a mere entertainment! Rather let me, I beg of you, entertain this most royal feast with my powers of conjuring and thaumaturgy..."

King Bodrhan frowned sullenly, and waved one greasy hand impatiently. "Come, come, serf, it is our will you prophesy that! Risk our royal displeasure, and you shall be dipped in molten silver til you beg our forgiveness!"

The Sorceror sighed, but bowed obediently. He bade his young apprentice remove certain herbs and powders from the knapsack and began speaking. His voice was faint and faraway as if he spoke from another world, so faint that the feasters had to be silent to hear his thin voice.

-III-

"O swifter now my vision grows, I see
The Gods of Glory on the Hilltop stand
And gaze in anger on this doomed land!"

--From Part IV of The Vision and the Doom, attributed to Chonda of Aurain.

"Oh mighty Lords, mirrored in the smoke I seem to see a great and famous city, rich with jewelled spires and domed with silver and precious gold. Yes, it is even mighty Ygnarth itself that I see. It is high morning in the Year of the Red Tiger, in the Third Century of the Tenth Millennium, and the Palace of the King is filled with drunken revellers who have celebrated all night. But morning rises in the east, gilding the distant hills, and the Temples of the Gods are without worshipers for the Morning Service. Even the idle Priests sleep before the dead embers of the untended altar-fires.

"And, Lo! I see the spirits of the Eight Hundred Gods rise up from Their images and seat Themselves upon the Hills of Khorah. And They are exceeding wroth, and say angrily amongst Themselves that the weakling King worships women and wine rather than They, the Most Holy Gods. I hear the thunder of Their voices, and They say the Lords and Princes have forgotten the Olden Faith, and no longer live by the laws of honor and reverence, as did their fathers! Aye, They wax exceeding wroth. I see Them rise up from Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah, and They are robed in the twilight with the stars of heaven shining about Their pallid brows.

"And They turn and gaze back, and One Who Is Chief Amongst Them lifts His mighty fist and curses the city and all within. Behold, He curseth the walls and the streets and the houses of the city, and all that dwellth therein, and He calleth a great Doom upon them!

"And now, the Gods leave the dawn-lit hills and rise to the stars, looking not behind Them. They are gone, nor has the city changed as yet in any manner, save that within the Temples the image of each of the Gods, has fallen to dust. And those of the city sleep a drunken sleep, or feast and revel shamelessly, unknowing that their Doom is close upon them..."

There was a dead, awed silence as the Sorceror's voice faded away and he blinked awake. The gleaming luster of the marble walls and gilt tapestries seemed suddenly tarnished and dull, and a chill, uneasy wind seemed to rustle through the draperies. The bronze lamps flickered unsteadily and a vague formless shadow seemed to fall over the great Hall. The gaudy crowd stood stiff and silent, staring at one another without speech. The wine-filled goblets rested forgotten in lax hands, and the lutes hung idle in trembling hands.

Then the King--laughed!

He leaned back on his cushions and laughed...he held his flabby sides and screamed in paroxysms of idiot mirth! Slowly, the dazed and uneasy throng began to follow his cue, and echo his laughter, until at length the dazzling hall rang with derision. The nobles collapsed on their benches, and clung to one another, howling with merriment.

The Sorcerer and his frightened apprentice, with the thunder of drunken mirth ringing in their ears, made their way unnoticed out of the hall and from the Palace. All through the chilly walk back to the Inn, the Sorcerer from Memnos bore his head sunken on his chest, as if crushed by the mockery of the Lords, his bearded chin low. The boy dared not to speak to him.

When they reached the Inn, and had roused the Inn-Keeper grumbling from his bed to admit them, Sarath Oonab blinked away his apathy, and bade the youth pack as they were to leave the city before morning. As they worked, the boy looked at him hesitantly, and finally summoned enough courage to ask his Master concerning the Prophecy. The Sorcerer halted in the midst of his packing, and fixed the child with somber, brooding eyes.

"My lad," he said solemnly, "that was as true a prophecy as ever I have given. Never has the Gift come upon me so strong and sure as that hour."

And so, it came to pass that Sarath Oonab and his young apprentice left the walls of Ygnarth in a hastily rented cart and rode out into the Khorahn Hills, which were alight with coming day. There, they turned and looked back upon the city, all ablaze with carnival and revelry beneath the fading stars. Then, speaking no word, they turned and went on into the night.

-IV-

All this did happen many years ago, though I heard the tale but recently, from the lips of that youth who had been apprentice to Sarath Oonab, but was now a mighty sorcerer in his own right. And, recalling that I had not visited the city of Ygnarth in centuries, I thought to see it once again, and inquire from its wise Mages the secret of the Prophecy.

Only yesterday I returned to the Land of Khorah, but when I stood upon the Khorahn Hills and looked down into the valley I could see nothing of that great city. The valley was a desert now. Nothing lay below me but hot sands and dried river-bed, where once a mighty city stood.

And as I wandered over the sands, I came upon a fragment of a stone column that I recognized had once been part of the Palace of the Kings. It was small and bleached by the sun and half-covered with the drifting sands.

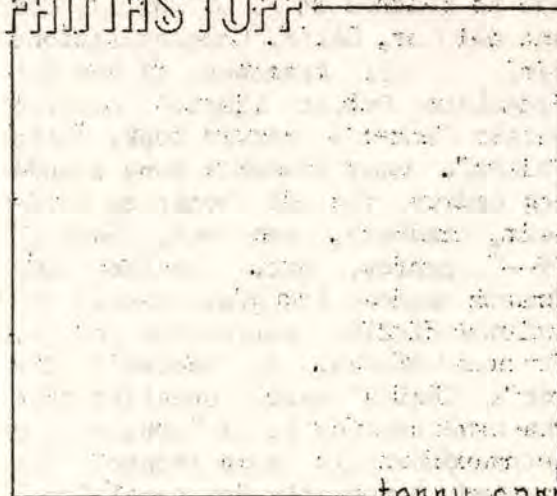
Looking around, I could see only four other such fragments.

Thus did the Vengeance of the Gods descend upon Ygnarth in the Land of Khorah.

NOTABLE QUOTABLES::From an ad in Writer's Digest, June, 1955: "How to write science fiction that sells! Here's your chance to watch a master at work, to learn from one of the top men in the field--H. L. Gold...Gold's new book, "The Old Die Rich and Other Stories" is a veritable 'how-to' of successful science-fiction writing." Anthony Boucher, Fantasy & S. F., August, 1955, of the very same book: "The construction is apt to be episodic, the story line veering, and the author seems to have no understanding of the rigorous demands of imaginative logic; the contradictory and confusing title story is, for instance, a very model of how not to develop a promising time-travel notion."

HYSTERICAL NOTE::From FANEWS, October 1, 1945: "RAP has locations of a dozen cave openings. He needs the services of someone with GUTS and the ability to handle a gun, in case of attack by Dero. Volunteers are requested. All volunteers must be fully insured and must sign waivers of responsibility in case of accident, injury or death from any cause whatsoever. All accepted volunteers will be provided with expenses during any cavery exploration, including transportation to and from caves. Wherever possible, guides will be provided. Single Men Only. Apply to Ray A. Palmer, % Ziff-Davis Publishing Company..." That was what RAP, beloved to fan columnists in search of items was, doing in 1945. Here's what he's doing today...What Page of OW Do Ya Read?::Ray Palmer, in Other Worlds for July, 1955, and in his editorial: "(we) are studying all our competitors carefully and trying to incorporate the best in each magazine into ours. We are going to give you, if possible, a story that Campbell of Astounding would accept; a story that Galaxy would find welcome; a story Howard Browne's new Amazing would present..." And here's RAP back in the lettercolumn of the same issue: "Universe, when it began, was intended to be class. A combination of all three of the magazines you mention (ASF, Galaxy,

FANTASTUFF



terry carr

and F&SF). It flopped. Miserably." Ah, that's our boy, RAP.

TRUER WORDS WERE NEVER....:"....one of those fanpubbing outfits making like they were real-for-actual business types, and casting everything that makes fandom interesting aside in the process. The first thing a set-up like this does is peer about for something to publish which has an absolute, sure, sale, and they usually come up with something like Lovecraft. They then go into hock to have an overpriced, badly made edition done up, of work which in Lovecraft's case had better be left to molder in peace. Sometimes they even break even." Dave Mason, in COUP #2.

THE SILLY SEASON::Sign on a table of a local used-book store: "Dirty Books--25¢." §§ Oh You Darn Old Trufan You...SaMoskowitz, reviewing "World of A" in FANEWS, Nov. 5 '45: "...whom she refers to as her 'husband' but all veddy, veddy, plutonic." §§ Timely Quotes: "'Dear, dear! How queer everything is today!' (said Alice) 'And yesterday, things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've changed in the old night.?' " Lewis Carroll, "Through The Looking Glass."

AD INFINITEMS::Science Fiction Theatre is doing so well that Producer Ivan Tors is planning a second series titled Halls of Science. § It is now official that Betty Jo McCarthy is now Betty Jo Wells, and ((next page please))

can be reached at P. O. Box 17, Corona del Mar, Calif. Congratulations Bjo! §§ All branches of the San Francisco Public Library ordered Wilson Tucker's recent book, "Wild Talent". Most branches have standing orders for all books by Heinlein, Bradbury, van Vogt, "Best of 19--" series, etc. In the Main Branch resides (in glass cases) the science fiction collection of J. Francis McComas. §§ Bantam's Editor's Choice" seal, denoting that the book bearing it is "unusual and extraordinary in some respect" was created especially for Karel Capek and "War With The Newts". §§§ Don't ignore that great big READ THIS sign that stares at you from the cover of "You Shall Know Them" every time you go to a newsstand.... it's a great book, and stf too, in case you read nothing else.

TYPOS, INC.: Charles McMahon, Jr., in INERTIA #1: "Due to the fact

that I have no knowlege of typing (I use the two fingered system) you will undoubtedly find a few typos in I." All typos there courtesy of Mr. McMahon. Here's another, from the same issue: "If things keep going the way they are now going there should be two or three fmzs. coming out of N.O. in the furore."

THE PERFECT SQUELCH: At a recent bheerbhust of the local fan group, Bill Knapheide was taking great pleasure in showing off his considerable knowledge of astronomy. "How far way is Venus at its closest approach?" he asked us. "How far is the orbit of Uranus from that of Neptune?" Finally he had quoted all the figures he knew on the planets, so he asked, "Tell me, how far is the star Antares?" It was Frank McElroy who looked at him pensively for a moment, and countered, "You mean from my house or from here?"

To Probe The Stars

RONALD VOIGT

the applause-set stage

with players pounding their palms by themselves,

execute fumbled roles

with hacked lines

in deatful prose.

man slingshots skyward with fingers crossed

with muttered superstitions

of backstage planning

producers worries

and script-writers ulcers.

man foots forward carefully

and finds the Main Characters

and the show half-over.

LECHER SESSION

ERIC BENTCLIFFE

This thing called pornography, you know, is a very relative thing. And at times I wonder a little whether it really exists.

Not only does the definition of what is pornography differ from country to country but from individual to individual as well, and before I go any further with this topic it might be a good idea for me to give my definition of pornography.

That way, we'll both know what I'm talking about.

According to my Little Oxford Dictionary, pornography is obscene writing. According to me, it's obscene writing about sex.

Sex is a hell of a big subject for such a short word, which makes pornography even harder to pin down. A story set in the dim distant future in which free love is rampant, can be obscene to an out-and-out-religionist...merely because it makes a mockery of the holy state of matrimony.

And in France, and some other latin climes, the most sexy story in the English language could only be advertised as 'daring.'

To digress for a moment, I've often wondered what would be the attitude today of us English towards pornographic literature (and sex, in general) if one of the several French attempts to invade England had succeeded. And vice versa, I doubt whether legal prostitution in France would ever have materialised, if British rule reigned in the Gallic provinces.

There you have a couple of interesting themes here for those who like to write about alternate time streams.

This being a science fiction fanzine, I may as well confine my comments on pornography in this article to obscene writings about sex which have appeared under the guise of s.f. I'd like to cover the whole field of literature (it's quite verdant in this respect) but unless someone or other is willing to provide me with a livable pension for the next few years whilst I do some research, and a aspirin expense sheet, this is out.

For my money, there never has been and probably never will be much pornography in s.f., but I'm a pretty broad minded person and it takes a great deal of sexual wordplay to make me yell "Obscene!"

There has been quite a lot of stuff published that would offend that ardently religious person I mentioned a while back, sagas of exciting futures in which love is free and collective marriages are encouraged appear fairly regularly...and so do letters from the Rev. C.M. Moorhead!

But, as far as really pornographic writings are concerned, the authors of s.f. can not be found guilty. True, occasionally you pick up a magazine containing a story liberally laced with sexual description..."Her arms were raising languidly to slip around my neck in a lover's embrace.. her breasts rose and fell, straining against the silk of her dress..."etc. But although the author may be guilty of using over-imaginative phrases, I can't find description such as this obscene.

I quite often find it annoying when it's not an integral part of the story but put in as an afterthought to attract the editor's eye, but not obscene.

"The Lovers" and "Hellflower" both caused something of a stir when they appeared, but I don't find anything distasteful in either of them. In "Lovers", you had several lengthy descriptions of the mammalian characteristics of the alien wench, which were rather interesting as a picture of what we'd like to find behind the Poned Curtain but hardly pornographic. "Hellflower" produced a fairly believable picture of a future in which the morals were definitely anti-victorian, but many stories do this. I don't think the story would have aroused quite as much comment if it hadn't been by George O. Smith, formerly typed as a writer of 'gadget-sexless' stories.

I don't think that many fans are repelled by the small amounts of sex which do creep into s.f. yarns. Like myself, I don't think they are apt to yell 'obscenity' unless the pornography is amplified by perversion.

By perversion, I mean behavior different from the norm.

There haven't been many stories twisted in this way, but to illustrate my point, I'll quote from one which was published in the U.K. some five years ago. The title in question is "Freaks Against Supermen". Some of you have seen references to it from time to time in British fanzines, and I think it's fairly safe to say that this is the most pornographic s. f. story yet published in the English language.

The plot is that well-known one about a plague descending on, and decimating, humanity. The scene is London. The main character is one Herbert Jenkins, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy, yclept, who has been doing research on an Elixir of Life, yet.

Our Herbert finds that his elixir works when he tries it on the gardener, then The Sickness strikes and he and Herb are amongst the relatively few survivors. The wheels of civilisation slow and stop. London is a ghost city where only looters, rapers...and women hanging around waiting to be raped...still live.

Here's a quote to help set off the scene...

"In a side turning off Bond Street there was a sight which, in the first days, when people were still able to be curious, brought many flocking to the scene; a harlot, with her nether garments down about her legs, still embraced by her dead lover, his body showing all the rigor mortis signs of fierce passion. Death had taken them together to make them a peep-show for thousands who were soon to die, perhaps the same way."

To leave the pornographic side of this book for a moment, there's a paragraph here which has just caught my eye. I think it's worth quoting as an example of how not to write.

"Then one morning, Thomas (this is the gardener) came to me fresher and younger than ever, to report as he always did, he shook my hand, as he always did, and as his fingers touched mine he dropped and died. There was a smile of greeting on his lips."

Such pathos!!

However, let's get back to the subject under discussion. Gentlemen, BE seated.

Herbert incinerates the body of Thomas, and after a few days of brooding over the lack of success of his elixir makes up his mind to leave London, in the hope that the countryside will provide an easier living. On his way out of London, he meets an ex-barmaid, a girl of about ten, and six men. The barmaid is having a little trouble with the men who wish to possess the kiddie.

Our Hero saves her from the men by shooting them with his little pistol, and takes her and the child off to house on the outskirts of London. Incidentally, he has discovered by now that the reason he has survived the Sickness is that he has been eating tinned food all the time.

They reach the house in the early evening and the child, Ann, is put to bed. Betty, the barmaid, is not so easily disposed.

"'Come on Duckie (she said), there's no time like the present.' And with that, she suddenly unfastened her trousers and stepped out of them, wriggled the shirt off her back, and stood before me naked and unashamed. She was delightfully moulded. Fat and plump by reason of lack of exercise, and surfeit of food, but curvaceous and fleshy. Her bosom was enormous, yet still maturely upthrust; her navel was set round and firm in the swelling of her belly, and her hips were bold and strong.

"She stood there posturing....'What are we waiting for?' she said.

"'Stop!!' (This is Herb in a voice of full authority). 'Now, listen to me, Betty. You've had a gay time in the past. Looking at you, just looking at you scientifically, I can guess that you are sexually diseased--no, don't deny it. I am a scientist.'

Ha. Betty admits that she is 'sexually diseased' and Herb treats and cures her with his elixir. A few pages later on the inevitable happens.

"I stood up and clasped her savagely and, in that moment, passion spent itself, so that I lay exhausted in her arms. For a moment she did not comprehend what had happened. Then her disappointment made itself felt. She pushed me roughly away and began to taunt me.

"'Call yourself a man. Sissy. You ain't fit..you ain't fit..the last man alive and he turns out to be spineless!'

Herbert soon recovers his equanimity and satisfies Betty. From then

on they live as Man and Barmaid. Happily.

Until... A few chapters later on, Ann becomes sixteen.

"She (Ann) was standing at the tall dressing table mirror. She had removed her dress and stood there in a peach elastic girdle which reached from her thighs to her breasts. Her stockings were still taut and gleaming upon her slender, perfectly curved legs. Above her stockings the flesh gleamed like marble.

"She swivelled round aghast and her face was frozen in terror. I approached clumsily. She put out a hand to ward me off -- a trembling white hand. I seized it and pulled her towards me, bent her backward across my chest and pressed my lips on hers. I fumbled with my fingers, found the zipper, and tore it down so that the girdle fell away from her and she lay in my arms, her lovely rounded bare breasts bare and unflung, her thighs round and firm and indescribably beautiful in their shapeliness and splendour. She fell across the bed and began to sob in sheer terror. She was crying as I took her, and her cries continued for a long time."

Although Ann feels rather annoyed with Herbert the next morning, she soon realises that she loves him, and Herb, Betty, and Ann settle down to a really pleasant eternal triangle, with Herb alternating nightly between the two women.

Ann soon becomes pregnant, and this is where the story becomes, in my opinion, really obscene. For Ann does not have one baby, she has a litter of TWELVE!

"They were more or less all of the same size and shape, but their colouring varied. Some were very white and fair, like Ann, others as dark and brown-skinned as I was myself; while others were indeterminate shades varying between brown and off-white as to the colour of their skins."

No reason is put forth for the strange pregnancy of Ann, and this continues, every four months she produces a litter of twelve; who grow abnormally fast... into a race of supermen. Soon they are old enough to mate, and they do so with great eagerness--en masse!

"There was a pause. Then a wild shout, and simultaneously the males clasped the females, the females slowly sank to the ground, and before our very eyes mass intercourse took place."

As new races will, this one tires of its master and Herbert eventually leaves with Betty and Ann for America. After sundry more revolting description and debauchery, they have become disgusted with the New Race and decide to start life afresh in the New World.

I think you'll agree that is an example of pornography. Fortunately, it's only very rare indeed when one as bad (good!) as this appears.

When it does, it's a boon to fanwriters, but most certainly not the advancement of science fiction as a literary media.

HARMONY

JIM HARMON

The Clevention passed without anyone passing out. It was a quiet, friendly affair. I saw quite a bit of Forry Ackerman, Dave Kyle, and Bob Madle, as well as Larry Shaw, Lee Hoffman, Isaac Asimov, Thomas Scorta, and spent pleasant moments with Harlan Ellison, John Magnus and friend Sam, Ray Van Houten, Evelyn Gold, Bill Hamling, and Doc Smith, as well as most others there. I had a good time. I think most people there did. Enough said.

Jack Lewis of the New York Lewises detoured out this way enroute to Kansas City several weeks after the convention. He's a very nice guy, complete with charming wife and a black truck. While he's not active in Fandom, he's written for various of the prozines.

I've been going into the various branches of writing besides science fiction. Unfortunately, the small science fiction market is so highly competitive that few writers can sell their entire output in the field. Many writers are turning out confession stories these days at 3¢ a word (Raymond Banks and Bob Silverberg are ones who admit it). Lacking their talent or strong stomachs (though mine would appear big enough to take care of itself) I've been writing mysteries and westerns at 3/4¢ and 1¢ a word. I've seen good detective and western stories and I try to make mine as good as I can, but I've yet to see a good confession story. Maybe Ray or Bob could advise me.

To desert my good intentions of not boring you, Dear Reader, with yet another con report, I'll report that in the Manger lobby, Bob Silverberg advised Asimov that his recent "Franchise" was in some ways rather similar to my earlier "Voting Machine" which Bob called a "two-page filler" but which really was an eight-page filler. Crestfallen, stunned, and on the verge of tears, Ike turned to me and begged me not to sue him for--well, you know that word. I hastily assured the Grand Old Man of Science Fiction that I was writing a novel that used one of his form structures. To which Silverberg remarked, "Have you read Jim's new novel, "The Caves of Steel"?" My own question: "How are you spelling that word 'Steel'?"

Ike and I won't fight, of course, since it's all between us Galaxy writers, he announced casually.

I saw that Infinity is definitely coming out in Cleveland, as I suppose you have by now on the newstands. But I understand that Standard is not bringing out two new science fiction magazines, and that Startling is fighting hard for survival. It's my own private guess, though, that there may be a Standard SF magazine put out on a one-shot, annual basis, perhaps under the Thrilling Wonder Stories title. Howard Browné's new magazine is the daydream fantasy Fantastic with the subtitle "Science Fiction" dropped. There's no Z-D Threesome planned at the moment, though I again

privately guess Fantastic may go monthly along with Amazing in six months following the monthly AS.

In case you are wondering: "X" might, but don't stop inhaling.

In case any of you are starved for reading matter, science fiction and fantasy appear with some regularity in Robert W. Lowndes's other pulps like Famous Detective and Real Western. My fact and fiction of more formal nature have appeared here and of the several stories in these fields I expect Lowndes to use of mine, at least one is science fiction. Or maybe fantasy. Then again, maybe it is a detective story. Or... Sam Merwin and George H. Smith have had good stories of this kind in the magazines anyway.

Speaking of rare things--remember radio? I listen rather regularly since I have the kind of mind or reasonable facsimile that can absorb printed matter and spoken matter at the same time. I can also plot a story while listening to another. Of course, there isn't much drama on radio anymore. Musical strip (i.e., Monday through Friday) shows have cut up night radio so much, there is hardly a continuous half-hour left for drama. Again, networks give up more and more time to local broadcasting.

Of the few dramatic programs left, we have "X Minus One", a five-year old taped series originally called "Dimension X", in the science fiction field. "Suspense" frequently used science fiction, particularly that of Bradbury. The one-time ever present private eye has largely given up the ghost. Nic Carter, Joe Friday on old tape, David Harding--Counterspy... and a new night time serial of Johnny Dollar are virtually the only remaining. Comedy is even rarer; the best being the Bob and Ray five-minute shots on "Monitor" and the new Edgar Bergen show which I found quite funny personally.

Children's programs (the title applies only if you think adventure shows are exclusively for children---surveys show a 60% adult audience for such programs on both radio and t.v., which can't be laid entirely at the door of parent-captivity) hang on only in the form of the very similar Sergeant Preston and Lone Ranger programs, acted and produced by the same group in Detroit, and actually tapes from five, ten, and even more years back.

The most interesting development in radio is the use of old tapes the same way TV uses old films.

Naturally, radio listeners would prefer live programs, but if production costs prohibit this, radio producers could dig out of the files the old aluminum diskings and tapes of the fine old programs. I think as Sam Spade Duff was the best hard-boiled detective ever, and The Shadow had a certain charm, particularly in the more supernatural past. Speaking of supernaturals, I'd like to hear "Lights Out", "Quiet Please" and "A Hermit's Cave" again, as well as that GOOD mad scientist, Peter Quill. My three favorite adventure shows were Buck Rogers, Sky King, and Tom Mix. Even if you don't share my admiration of Mix, this series (from '44 to '50 especially) is generally accepted to have been the best acted, produced and written show for kids in the history of radio. It was more of a detective-mystery series than western as written by George Lawther who is a kind of poor man's Gore Vidal these days and has written various award-winning domestic type TV plays.

Of course, Jack, Doc and Reggie, and "I Love a Mystery" are in a class by themselves. There's something wrong with you if you didn't love

this old show.

On the subject of mystery and crime, I have come to the conclusion that character assassination is a bad thing, mainly because it is impossible for people who deserve it and frequently unavoidable for innocent people.

You can't really slander Senator McCarthy because the for-people won't believe any of it and the against-people already believe much worse. The same may be said for the men who weren't convicted of the lynch murder of the Till boy. Such attacks only generate a hostility that only helps prevent reasonable judgement on the subject.

But innocent people are occasionally relentlessly persecuted. Consider Fatty Arbuckle. I have talked to people in show business and men in barber shops and apparently the Truth in his case has become a part of folk lore. But will any book or magazine admit this universally known truth? Almost none. Only one, to my knowledge, even alluded to the facts in this case. A pocket magazine edited by Lester del Rey, referred to Virginia Rappe's demise as a "coke bottle death" in an article on auto-eroticism--masturbation, that is. (I can see Lee, now, blanching at this in PEON. For his relief, you can allude to anything in the public prints without assuming any kind of legal or censorable responsibility yourself.)

Irresponsibility reminds me that it has been a mercifully long time since I've done a satire. Perhaps you'll understand the inspiration behind:

PETE FRIDAY'S DRAGGING BLUES

It was Friday, Aug. 2, 1926. It's Friday all the way with me--Pete Friday. I was working the still. I got two fat pardners--Andy Devine and Frank Smith. They're comedy relief. They make me look good. The boss is Al Capone. My job--to keep breathing to keep blowing. I don't want to be cool, Man, cool.

Al: "I want to protect you, Pete."

Pete: "Yes, Sir. But I'm doing all right."

Al: "All right? You're starving. Your pardners eat everything in sight. Look at you, you crumb. Dragging that net around to catch fish. You've drugged it around so much, it's got holes in it. Ignorant bum! I'll get you a solid net with no cheap holes in it, huh, Kid."

Pete: "Yes, Sir. The drag net is wearing out. That's why I got the horn."

Al: "You ungrateful louse! I'm going to choke you red in the face."

Pete: "No, Sir."

Al: "What do you mean, no, sir?"

Pete: "I'll give you the facts, Sheik. Nourish them inside your beaver coat and figure it out for yourself. One: I'm a loyal American. Two: I've got high class blood in my veins. Three: I've got a title to plug.

Al: "So what's prove, Punk?"

Pete: "You won't choke me red in the face."

Al: "No?"

Pete: "No. Blue."

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To close what I hope isn't the dead end of Harmony, let us have an immortal epitaph of Al Capp:

"He were a nice fellah -- for a fiend!"

THE DWELLER IN DREAMS

LIN CARTER

Lo, I have flown beyond the Gates of Dream
Astride a scarlet Gryphon winged with flame,
To palmy Isles long lost in sapphire seas
Where the Black Lotus blooms, and I have walked
Their nameless opal shores as twilight fell
Grey-winged across an orchid sky, and heard
The far, faint, faery song the Mermaids sing
At eventide.

And I have seen, betimes,
The perfumed gardens where white peacocks strut,
The gorgeous sard-paved halls of palaces
Where fabled Emperors in triumph sate
Crowned with black silver upon onyx thrones.
And I have oft held converse with the Gods
Atop some lofty, sky-usurping peak
Where (robed in glory, cloaked in argent fire
Such as must thunder in the heart of stars)
They hold tremendous council.

I have seen
Their rage and fury: thundercloven cliffs
Shattered to dust as by a levin-stroke,
And adamant mountain ranges sunk
A hundred leagues beneath the steaming sea
In gloomy emerald depths where, ages old,
Doth dreaming Iormungandar await
For Ragnarok, the Twilight of the Gods,
And slumbers on a couch of broken ships
Til Heimdall's Horn shall sound The End.

BIAS IN CRITICISM

Robert W. Lowndes

I hear that, at the 1955 World ScienceFiction Convention, Dr. E. E. Smith spoke on the results of a survey he had made amongst several science fiction critics, wherein he found that of all the professionals he had studied, P. Schuyler Miller showed the least bias, and Groff Conklin and Anthony Boucher the most. My informant did not mention whether Dr. Smith noted what the biases of the most biased were, or if he indicated whether he thought a critic ought to have any.

In any event, most of the talk and writing on the subject I have seen from fans, and from a good many authors, too, inclines toward the conclusion that "bias" is something a good critic should have very little of, or none at all, and the least biased critic is likely to be the best.

Let me put it in words of one syllable: this is false. It is sheer nonsense and displays ignorance of the basic function and meaning of criticism.

What is meant by "bias"? Rather than run to the dictionary, I'll give you a very lucid example. Nearly all of you who are reading this article are biased in favor of science fiction. This bias varies in intensity, but it exists; and the more inclined you are to read science fiction, or about science fiction, rather than sometother sort of reading material, when some other material is available at the time, then the stronger this bias is in your case.

Thus, Dr. Smith to the contrary, Mr. Miller (whom I've commended elsewhere as a critic) is quite a biased individual; for despite his familiarity with other types of fiction, he chooses to concentrate most of the critical faculties upon science fiction and fantasy.

And to be an effective critic; to be able to read and make judgements upon what one has read; to make judgements that have meaning within the general standards of what is best, what is good, what is worth recommending to others -- as opposed to what is of less worth, or what should be pointed out as flawed, false, or downright worthless within the field -- all this requires a collection of biases which go to make up the critic's yardstick of values. Without such values, the critic may be a very entertaining writer, may indeed like many of the things you like and dislike what you do not like, or may give an impression of wonderful objectivity; but he will not truly be a critic. Insofar as he has the ability correctly to report what an author said, how the plot-line and character-line goes, etc., such a "critic" will be a good reporter. And no more.

The critic's standards must be firm; yet, to be effective, he should have the quality of flexibility within these standards. This sentence has a nice sound to it, no doubt, and I was duly impressed the first time I came across a dictum to the same effect. It took a bit of time to find out what it meant, however. Again, rather than quoting authority, I'll give an example: Raymond F. Jones, in "Son of the Stars" did not attempt, nor intend, to achieve the scope that Dr. Smith attempted and intended in his "Lensman" novels. It is among the first of the critic's duties to ascertain what the author is trying to do, along with an examination of how

well he does it, how short he falls of the mark, and why. So, while a given reader or fan may not be interested in reading the Winston book because it is a juvenile, or may think that the Smith work must necessarily be superior science fiction because of its scope, a critic worth our time cannot judge on either basis.

Nor can the critic be concerned whether a given author or subject is popular; nor again should he be concerned with maintaining an air of urbanity and politeness. He must be merciless toward falsity, shoddy work, or visible evidence of commercial compromises on an author's part -- without forgetting that he who commits literary crimes is not a criminal. He must be personally offended and shocked when an author produces a work that is bad, flawed, or less than what previous evidence has shown the author was capable of. He cannot have friends while he is criticizing.

The critic whose bias runs toward being a hail-fellow-well-met toward all (or most) authors, who likes everything (or everything except the work of persons to whom he has personal aversion) is of no use to those of his readers who want literary guidance. But this is not because the critic is biased (or, in the case of the nice-guy critic, apparently unbiased), but because his biases run in such directions as to make him no critic.

There will be personal biases within the overall bias which is the critic's stock-in-trade; this cannot be helped, and is all to the good, once we know what they are. However, and this is the crux of the matter, criticism is not merely a case of saying, "This is good", "This is less good," "This is bad", etc., but a case of tirelessly explaining why the object is such-and-such, bringing to light the reasons for the judgements, constantly refreshing readers on the standards by which the judgements are made. Such critics are not universally popular; they are constantly in receipt of wrathful replies from readers and authors and friends of authors, and queries as to how they could possibly say a book or story was so when so-and-so gave it an "A Plus" rating, or such-and-such is the hottest name in the field, and so on.

No critic, of course, is equally competent in all fields; and even in science fiction, the range is so wide that the best critic may fall into his own blind spot on occasion. No matter. For every story or novel unjustly condemned by a usually-perceptive critic, a thousand stories and novels are unjustly praised to the skies by critics who are no critics, and who, no doubt, enjoy the reputation of not being "Biased."

Prejudice, of course, is another matter; but I'm sure that Dr. Smith would not use the term "bias" when he really means "prejudice."



KAN KAN KABOTZER

T. E. WATKINS

Has science fiction become anti-science? That's the complaint of "Mr. Harper" in "After Hours", a feature article in Harper's (April 1955). The "Mrs Harper" articles are written by one of the editors of the magazine, usually Bernard DeVoto. He insists that stf writers, who are selling now, detest technology, rationalism, hygiene, bureaucracy, democratic man--"in short, everything that makes the modern world modern."

This is not a new complaint. It's the same beef that Harry Harrison wrote about in his magazine Science Fiction Adventures last year and that we commented on in an article a couple of issues ago. Mr. Harper says the present trend started with Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" and George Orwell's "1984" and that the stf field was invaded by "taut, atmospheric--'psychological' writing." He says the same thing happened to the detective story. Of course, the insiders on science fiction know that Gold with Galaxy and Tony Boucher with ME&SF, both old detective story writers, took over the lead from John Campbell of Astounding, the scientist, and where the money goes there goes the trend.

But, how come Gold and Boucher grabbed the ball? The real reason, as I have explained before, is that science fiction ran out of gas. The science ideas had been mined right down to bed rock for their story material. To get any more ore the writers had to start refining the old slag piles. This takes writing skill, not scientific skill. So the writers took over from the scientists and started the tough professional job of twisting old ideas into new stories. The same thing happened in the detective story. There are just so many ways to bump somebody off and after that you start fooling around with the psychological motives of the killer and this can be twisted endlessly.

Mr. Harper picked up the latest Ballantine anthology "Star Science Fiction Stories", and out of 10 items, claims that 9 are "anti-science". Come to think of it, are not many of the stories printed recently fearful of the future?

Perhaps all the blame can't be placed on the pro writers and worn out science ideas. Writers usually reflect a general attitude if they want to sell. The public, in the end, selects a trend.

What is the public attitude? Let's put it into words. I think we all feel that science alone cannot provide us with a happy future. A future dominated by things produced by science will be unhappy, however far in the galaxy we might explore. Most of us feel that science and the scientific mind cannot provide us with the answers to the questions--who are we--what is the cosmos--what is our future?

The thing we need to do is look in a new direction and I have the look for you right here. It is provided by Aldous Huxley who wrote "Brave New World", one of the novels that put the skids under science fiction.

Huxley has been experimenting with a drug called "mescaline." It is from the root of the cactus and is also known as "peyote". This root was used by the Indians of Mexico and the Southwest in their religious rites. The drug has the capacity to change the quality of consciousness. Huxley reports in a book, "The Doors of Perception" (Harper's 1954) and "Heaven and Hell" an essay in Vol. 3, No. 4 of Tomorrow, a psychical research magazine.

What happens when one takes mescaline? The sense impressions to the brain are a thin selection of all the vibrations available. The brain acts as a reducing mechanism and selects and coordinates the impressions that come to it. Mescaline reduces the production of enzymes that regulate the supply of glucose to the brain and has somewhat the effect of shorting it out. All sorts of impressions by-pass the brain and strange notions invade the consciousness.

Huxley gives the following effects: (1) one can still remember correctly; (2) the things you see take on a strange light or glow; (3) you lose all interest in time and space; (4) you can't tell the difference between events 'outside you' and 'inside you' (in other words you can't distinguish between events and dreams); (5) intellect is unimpaired, but the will suffers a profound change. You have no pep at all.

For some the experience is heaven, for others it's hell. Those who have a favorable experience begin to see geometric forms as concrete images or intricate patterned things like carpets, carvings, or mosaics. Then huge buildings may appear in vast landscapes. Heroic figures and fabulous animals move about among the jewel-like trees and flowers. One never sees anything he has seen before. It is all new. It is like visiting a new land. Huxley insists that this new land exists at the other end of the mind. He calls it "the mind's antipodes."

All of us have a subconscious knowledge of these antipodes of the mind and some men spend all of their time trying to reach them. These are the dedicated mystics who live in lonely places and practice strange rituals to induce the same effect by mechanical means that mescaline has on the brain. After you have had a mystic experience, after you have seen these strange lands, all physical things are trash.

Now, don't get in a big rush for the peyote juice. Don't start chewing on the backyard cactus roots. There's a big clinker in the mescaline fire place. Not everyone reaches the happy antipodes. For some, a dose of mescaline is a door to hell. It all depends on your psychological make-up. If you tend toward fear and anger, you sink into a vile reaction. For most, who are neither one or the other, they may start out in heaven and end in hell. Or you may have a happy reaction on one pill and a bad one on the next. It depends on your blood chemistry or something. They haven't got all the angles figured out as yet. This is new stuff.

What is a mescaline hell like? Things take on a "smoky light" which seems to come from within them. It gives the events seen a peculiar horror, a "lip-upness" that has been described by some schizophrenics as a very unhappy feeling. In the blissful experience there is a sense of separation from the body, but in the negative experience the feeling of individualization is intensified. This negative experience is so close to what some schizophrenics have described that biochemists are experimenting with mescaline to try to find a chemical basis for the disease.

Now you know why Christian and Buddhist monks lead the purist of lives free from anger and fear. The Buddhist practices the "ten thousand

virtues". The Christian prays and prays. They want the happy experience, not the unhappy one. They free their thoughts of malice--you get the idea?

Huxley claims that this happy land is known to all of us. Perhaps, this is the land we came from and where we go when we die. Our love of precious stones, big buildings, modern paintings with their odd designs, stems from our knowledge of the mind's antipodes.

Science fiction authors have never provided a satisfactory future for man. Some authors have taken man millions of years into the future and the plot of the story concerns their efforts to recapture some of the freedom and joy we have right now. Mr. Harper points to Isaac Asimov's story, "It's Such a Beautiful Day" from the Ballantine anthology in which the future world is equipped with a mechanical door through which one can step to any place he desires to go. No one ever goes outside. So a door gets broken and a boy walks to school and discovers the joys of nature--we already got it. His folks get a psychologist after to him to cure him of his "going outside" malady. Mr. Harper says this is an anti-technical story and he is right.

Not only have stf writers failed to find a logical future for man, but the scientists, when they have permitted themselves the liberty, have failed to find a future for man also. Charles Darwin, nephew of the great Darwin, in his recent book "The Next Million Years" saw man little changed a million years in the future except that he will be hungrier. Bruce Bliven, "Preview of Tomorrow" did little better and Dr. Loren Eiseley predicted that man was not a success and that the squirrel would probably succeed him as ruler of the planet. Clifford Simak in "City" had man vanishing and the world ruled by dogs. The story won the "International Fantasy Award."

Our future does not have a material basis. That's why the readers want stories that are critical of material civilizations and that are anti-science. Our future lies at the other end of the mind. You might say we have a spiritual future, not a material one. We have all been there, we all know it.

Science fiction changes. You might describe it as "anti-science" like Mr. Harper does. This is the present phase. When we have developed this new psychical research past the specimen-gathering stage we will have a new direction for science fiction to develop. And the stories will be happy ones. Wait and see!!



THE SPLENDID ANGER

race matthews

This is an article which grew out of an article written about another article. Robert Bloch's comments rising out of David Mason's statements set up a train of thought in my mind which resulted in this writing.

While it is incontestable that the "downbeat" novel, story, and play are dead, at least as far as the popular publisher is concerned, Mr. Bloch is wrong when he ascribes this fact to the general unwillingness of mankind to face a moral problem. It is at least as much a result of the general inability of authors writing today to pose one. This inability is not surprising, in view of two circumstances operating today to narrow the scope of artistic expression. One, as Mr. Bloch correctly diagnoses, is the unwillingness of the author to shoulder the ostracism and possible financial hardships which are the part of those stigmatised with the label "Communist". The other is an unprecedented and logically outrageous upsurge of the notion that the so-called "American Way of Life" is above reproach. There has been more self-satisfied nonsense produced about America today over the last five years than about any other country--at any other time--and there is, unfortunately, strong evidence to suggest that even the Americans are coming to believe it.

I am unacquainted with the vital statistics of fandom, but I imagine it to include a rather fair cross section of young, average I.Q. and above average I.Q. Americans. Historically this is the group of the idealists, the dreamers, and the reformers. An intensive analysis of their writings, as published in fanzines, would be interesting, but I have neither the space nor the background to attempt one. I am interested in one facet only--the degree of social and political awareness revealed by these writings. I am interested because such awareness is apparently non-existent.

This group, including in its ranks not only future leaders and administrators of the American people but also writers and artists is on the same level of political consciousness as a lettuce patch. Mr. Bloch, writing elsewhere, has dwelt with satisfaction on the fact fandom shows not the slightest fringe of pink, but I must seriously doubt whether this is indeed a healthy symptom. That not one adolescent in a group of several thousand should break out and take up arms for a system, which after all, must have some merits, I find alarming.

Apparently, the members of fandom prefer to dwell on the possibility of space flight in ten years, rather than to face the actuality of Tobacco Roads, here and now. Conscription, the ultimate affront to human dignity, arouses in them no passion of denunciation, and the terrible antics of generals and politicians, although considerably less remote than Mars, are nevertheless too distant to merit notice. This is not the seed from which great novelists are sprung.

Mr. Bloch is correct when he speaks of a public which will not see moral problems, but he must remember also the inability of authors to present them, and that the culture which turned this generation of writers into spouters of self-satisfaction and mouthers of anti-communist slogans has also insured that the splendid anger which gives birth to great art will never be kindled in its children.

THE OLD MAN AND THE BEE

dave mason

Old Davido Massone Jesue-Maria Fernandez Nombre de Dios Cucaracha leaned against a bar and a bitter tear dripped into his gin and tonic. It did not have any gin in it. That was why Old Cucaracha, as they called him around the editorial rooms of Startling Stories, was weeping.

He thought to himself, those were the good days. Ah, that Ray Palmer there was a rare one, and how he fought and wriggled on the hook. And to get drunk afterwards, with the two-fisted, hairy-chested fans on the water front.

Old Cucaracha was very hungry. He chewed absently on a corner of Other Worlds, noticing that it had exactly the taste of sun-dried haddock. The bartender was not looking, and Old Cucaracha slyly poured ketchup over the magazine and ate it swiftly.

It filled his belly, but he would rather have had Galaxy. But there was strength in his old bones now. He felt a faint flicker of the vigor of youth in his creaking bones. The idea grew, bigger and bigger--a fan mag.

Sangre de mi madre, he thought, Old Cucaracha is not dead yet. I will have me one more big one. It is a symbol.

He dragged himself up the creaking stairs to his room. There lay his old mimeograph, patched and leaking, but still workable. Grinning slyly and whistling "Macarena" he began to turn out a fanzine.

Many inkstained days later, Old Curacha--weaker now--but still determined, staggered into the Post Office.

He wove over to the General Delivery window. "Any- hic- mail?"

One letter. One. Well, that was something. He shredded it open with trembling fingers. FOR SALE, ONE COMPLETE FILE OF MARVEL STORIES.

At the corner newsstand...the latest Startling. The Fanzine Reviews... ah, there it was--HIS fanzine:

"GLUNK, The Fans' Fanzine, General Delivery, Brooklyn, edited by D. Cucaracha... 10 price listed. This fanzine is fairly good for a first attempt. The mimeographing makes it totally illegible, and such material we were able to read is juvenile. The art work is unworthy of mention. There was at least something humorous in the way the address was spelled on our copy. Altogether a ho-hum issue."

Caramba. Failure.

Old Cucaracha dragged slowly into the Fan's Club, and leaned against the bar.

Gin and tonic, George.

It had been a good fight. He had almost won. In the old days, he told himself, he would have won.

Across the room, young Felipe Jesus-Maria Rivera Von Goltz was waving his arms and expounding to a group of fellow fans.

"...as big as the bottom of Dona Ana Marimab, I swear it. Fifty-five pages long, all printed in offset, and all I need is a little more poetry to fill it up. Hey, compadres, I am the success as a fan, no?"

Young puppy.

Old Cucaracha spat.

Me, I have failed, he thought, but I can do one more thing for fandom.

George. You have the shotgun. The rare shotgun, the good gun with the shining barrels, and one load of number ten shot? May Old Cucaracha borrow it? Gracias, George.

Bang.

There, he thought, caressing the warm barrel, another young fan gone.

To paraphrase Bakunin, Old Cucaracha told himself, the freedom of stf will come when the last editor is hanged in the entrails of the last fan.

It was a rare sight, that. Strange, how a fan with his head blown off did not seem in any way shorter.

The police were climbing up the hill now, and old Curacha could see their shining helmets in the sun. Cradling the shotgun against his cheek, he murmured....!o Man is an Islande, but a part of the great Continente... death is so final, though.

Viva la Republica!



PEON NOTES

(continued)

Several times in the past few months I notified most of you of a change of address for yours truly. This was all being based on an impending transfer to sea duty, as I warned you back in the May issue of PEON. Well, by the time you read this, I will definitely be transferred to a ship of the U. S. Navy, but not as far away as I had originally thought. I'm going to be on board one of DesLant's tenders up in Newport, Rhode Island, about 60 miles away. Since it is close and there is a distinct possibility that I will be able to be home most of the weekends, please send mail to me at old Norwich address and not to any of the others I've been telling you all about. Unless things change in the immediate future, this address is going to be the one until the Riddle family moves up to Newport next year sometime.

I had originally planned to reprint in this issue of PEON an article that appeared in Maurice Lubin's limited edition of TWO. It was penned by a "Martin Glasser" and entitled "Why NYC Shouldn't Have a World Convention". It was going to be reprinted, not to cast any doubts on the NYC Committee (I am sure they will do a wonderful job), but to show you how low some people could get to try to get revenge for fancied insults. The article was really by one C. T. Beck, of whom plenty has been written before, and was really a good example of how not-to-write! Since Rog Phillips has shown Beck up to be what he is (and we all know what that is, don't we?), I don't think the article bears reprinting at the present time. I may do a brief resume of it in the next issue, though, unless Beck can threaten me enough to scare me off--and I feel sure that he can't.

Speaking of the convention, I'd like to extend my congratulations to the group down there for getting the site for 1956. As plans go, I do intend to be there, knowing full well what a good time I will have--and you can plan on it yourself. The Committee has one good convention behind them--THE METROCON, last year--which was one of the best I've attended, and consists of well qualified personnel to handle the various jobs necessary for such an affair. I strongly recommend that you support the Convention by sending in your two dollar membership fee right now to the 14th S. F. Convention, Box 272, Radio City Station, New York 19, N. Y.

It is always a pleasure to meet readers of PEON--and the pleasure is twice as much when they are such nice people as Basil P. Coukis of Athens, Greece. Those of you who were fortunate enough to receive the latest ish of John Hitchcock's UMBRA will know that we all met Basil down in NYC on the Labor Day holiday weekend and had a grand time talking to him...It all started when I received a letter from him stating that he had obtained a foreign scholarship at Ripon (Wisc.) College and would arrive in the city of New York on September 5th, and would I mind if he came up to pay us a brief visit. Naturally, I wrote him back and told him to come on, and in fact, I'd meet him down there and bring him back up here myself.

During the next few weeks, in the course of correspondence with John Hitchcock I casually mentioned the fact that I was meeting Basil and would there be any chance of his being in NYC at the same time. It developed that John not only had been corresponding with Basil, but that he would do his best to be up there also. I also wrote Maurice Lubin, who is always ready to make journeys like this with me, and he agreed to come down to NYC with me.

So, after making arrangements to meet John and Larry Stark (who was

1956 S. F. CALENDAR OUT SOON

Nova Studios of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is producing a calendar specifically designed for the science fiction fans and space flight enthusiasts.

This calendar contains 12 beautiful, two-color illustrations depicting scenes from the exploration of the solar system. The theme takes you on an expedition each month to one of the planets or moons, starting with sun-baked Mercury, and working outward to frigid Pluto. Each illustration is accompanied by informative and scientifically accurate text.

The artist, K. L. Ridout, long-time science fiction fan, and member of The Society For The Advancement of Space Travel, has devoted many hours to research and development, assisted by Robert C. Newman, to create a calendar which they believe will become a collector's item. It will be printed in limited quantities. The price is \$1.00, postpaid from Nova Studios, P. O. Box 5201, Minneapolis 7, Minnesota.

The calendar is endorsed by The Society For The Advancement of Space Travel.

house, Larry and Maurice went to a show, and I went back to Brooklyn to visit relatives. We all got back into the hotel (John, Maurice and I) a little past midnight.

The next morning, I got up bright and early to get the car. While waiting for the group to pile out of the hotel and into the car to go down to the pier, I was approached by a rather nicely-stacked young thing and was asked, quote: "Would you like to have a little sport, Chief?" (I was in my uniform.) Since it had been over twelve years since I had heard something like that (and in approximately the same area), I was rather taken back, and about the only thing I could reply was: "What, so early in the morning?" I finally persuaded her that it was no sale.

In spite of what you might think, we did get down to the pier, where we waited and we waited and we waited. On the strength of my uniform, and a vague story that I had to meet Basil on orders from my commanding officer, I managed to get through the custom lines and later managed to drag John through with me to act as a translator. About half past twelve (we had been there since around eight-thirty) Basil was found, rushed through Customs, and we all gathered together outside, and back to the hotel for a short gabfest. John was all set to come up here, but due to unfortunate circumstances at home, was unable to make the trip. Wish he could have,

visiting him at the time) at the NYC Bus Terminal, Maurice and I set out in the Willys for NYC. When we arrived in that fair city, we called Harvey Segal and told him to meet us downtown also at the Bus Terminal. Maurice and I went to the Bus Terminal about half an hour earlier and amused ourselves trying to figure out what two males would be John and Larry (I had met John once before on a trip through Baltimore, but couldn't depend on my befuddled memory). However, when the two did show up, I recognized them at a glance especially when I saw one of them carrying a fanzine.

We waited for a few more minutes until H. Segal showed up, all piled into the car and went up to the Hotel Diplomat, right off Times Square, where being in the service, I was able to get us a room at a discount. Larry couldn't spend the night with us, since he was suffering from a cold and had to go back to home in New Jersey and it was silly for Harvey to stay as he lived right there in NYC.

We spent the rest of the afternoon talking and walking up and down Broadway, and taking a trip down to Greenwich Village where we paid a brief visit to Dave Mason (and left hurriedly, when Dave started to ride John about being friendly with George Wetzel). After another ride, this time over to Brooklyn, we returned to the hotel and went various ways that night, visiting relatives and friends. John went up to the Bronx with Harvey to visit at his

and sometime, John, we want you up here for a visit. However, he and Harvey left us early in the afternoon, and Maurice and I took Basil through Brooklyn on his way up to Norwich. We introduced him to his first hot dog in that fair city.

Basil's visit in Norwich was brief, but an interesting one. We took Maurice home up in Worcester, Mass., took Basil through the Submarine Base and showed him where the atomic submarines were being built, and gave him a tour of the countryside--that is, when he wasn't sleeping. The poor guy had been so keyed up on the trip on the ship that he was just now catching up on his sleep. And when someone can sleep in my house with four kids making all the noise they can, he's really tired!

Basil left us all too soon, since he had to be in college shortly thereafter. He's now settled down in Ripon, Wisconsin, and fans out that way are asked to contact him. He can be reached at 303 Bartlett Hall, Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin. We're looking forward to having him for a visit again soon.

How many of you agree with me that Howard's Browne "Dream Issue" of Fantastic was a nightmare?

I'd like to thank all those faneditors who have been sending exchange copies of their 'zines with 'nary a return issue of PEON. Some of these days, I'll be able to return the favor, guys. Speaking of fanzines, Ian Macauley wasn't able to get his column to me in time this issue, as I must not have given him enough notice. However, we hope he will be back in the next issue.

Harvey Segal will start a new column next issue also, with news of the pro world and books, etc. It'll be something interesting to read and I know you will like it. Incidentally, he's been having great difficulty with his new fanzine, PERSPECTIVE, and has made arrangements with me to have this issue of PEON sent to his regular subscribers. Those of you who already get PEON as well as PERSPECTIVE will have your subscription extended one issue. He's about ready now for the next issue of PERSPECTIVE, and if you'd like a copy, contact him at 2105 Walton Street, New York City.

NOTES HERE AND THERE::Phil Kruis, 17a Eighth Street, New Brixton, Johannesburg, South Africa, collects newspapers and would appreciate receiving a copy from your home town....Jack K. Bristowe, Main Road, Upwey, Victoria, Australia, has a club that needs U. S. prozines for its club library. Why not send a spare copy or two?....A fanzine in the Norweigan language has just been published by Cato Lindberg, Skogerveien 69, Drammen, Norway. A copy will be sent to you in exchange for a US prozine. I've seen a copy and it compares very favorably with some of our fanzines....Oldtimers that are amongst us will be interested in knowing that Arthur J. Burks has a serial appearing in Orion Magazine (521 Central Avenue, Charlotte 4, N.C.) commencing with the November issue. Mr. Burks wrote me that the story will show why he is no longer in the stf writing field....Judith Merrill % Dell First Editions, 200 Fifth Avenue, New York City, is looking for material to appear in her new anthology. Authors, agents, and publishers are particularly invited to submit carbons or tear-sheets of s. f. stories and novelettes published in 1955 to her at the above address. The book will be titled S-F: THE YEAR'S BEST, and will appear in the Spring of 1956 and is scheduled to be the first in a yearly series of reprints of the best stories appearing the year before. Although Judy didn't say so, I imagine she'd be interested in any recommendations you fans might have.

Recommended Reading: Ballantine's newest offering in the 35¢ pocketbook, "The Girls From Planet Five" by Richard Wilson. It's a very entertaining book about what would happen if the U. S. were to be invaded by an army of women. What makes it so intriguing is the fact that the country is already run by women anyway! Texans, especially, will like the book. Get it and see what I mean. Incidentally, in the autobiographical note at the end of the book is one of the best English-type jokes I've seen in ages. I laugh every time I think of it.

The rains came recently and we nearly got flooded out of the house. In the past few months we've had several near-floods in this area as a result of various rain-storms, hurricanes, what-have-you, but the Riddle house wasn't affected. However, this most recent storm put quite a bit of water into our heretofore dry basement and it was just lucky for us that I hadn't moved my magazines and den down to the basement yet. In fact, I was planning on doing it the weekend we had all the rains. Nearby towns really took a beating, but outside of the minor damage mentioned above, we didn't suffer at all. If this keeps up, I'm going to think twice about settling down in this part of the country when I retire from the Navy in 1972.

New address for Walter Lee, editor of IT, is 7011½ West Manchester, Los Angeles 45, California.

Since KAYMAR TRADER has been folded, Ronald Voigt, 3859 Sullivan, St. Louis Missouri, is bringing out what is intended to be its successor. The new fanzine will be called FANGLASSO and subscriptions will be in stamps only; a two-cent stamp per copy. Advertisements can be had at \$1.00 per 8½x11 page, or 50¢ per half page and fractions thereof. Mimeographed, and due out shortly. Sounds like a good idea and one that should be supported. We need something like this to help out the small-time collector and dealer.

Well, this is just about all for this issue. I've talked more than I normally do, and do hope I haven't bored you too much. This should satisfy those few of you who claim I don't have enough of me in PEON. If you only knew how little of a writer I consider myself to be, you wouldn't ask for more "Peon Notes".

We hope to have another issue of PEON out in about two months. To do that we need support in the way of material and artwork. Especially needed are articles in a semi-serious vein to keep in step with our new policy. If you have such items, by all means send them in. Deadline is the first of January, 1956.

Since we won't see you all until then--have a Very Merry Christmas and a Most Prosperous New Year! See you in 1956... *Lee*

AMERICAN FANS::

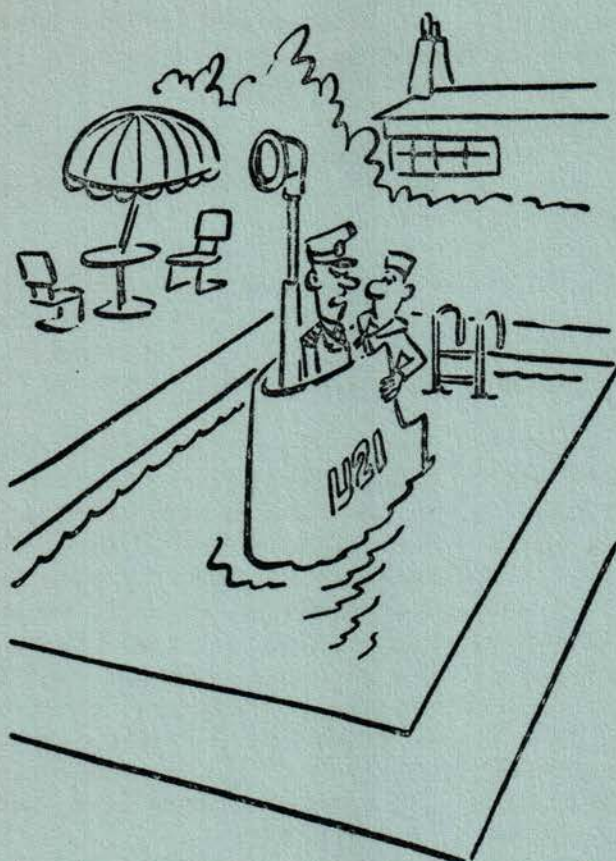
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