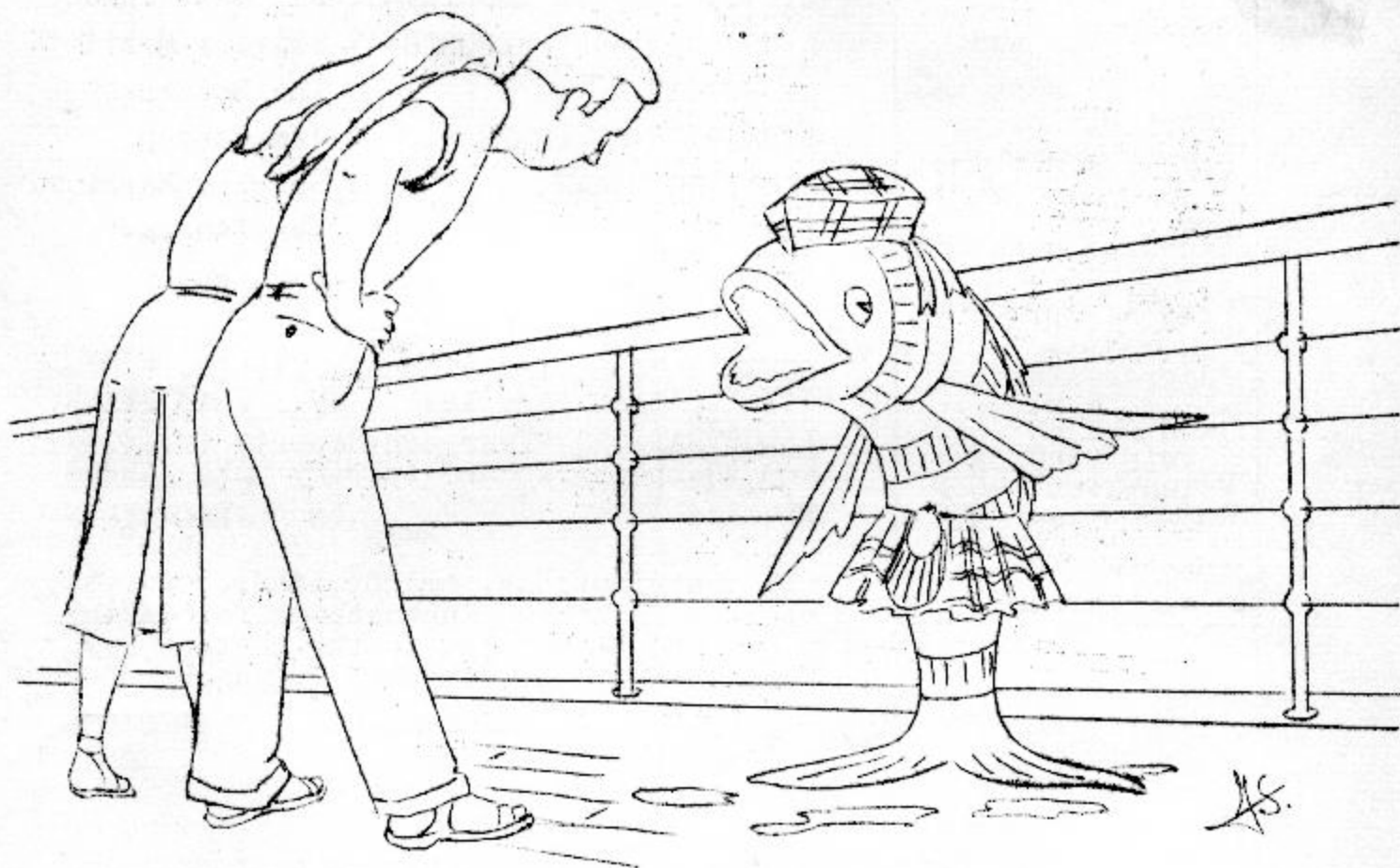


Alpha





VCL.1 - N° 5

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C O N T E N T S

CALLING AL-PHANS	: Dave Vendelmans	P. 1
REPORT ON THE "TWERPCON" AND AN "APOLOGY"	: Jan Jansen	P. 3
	: Ah-Chee Mercer	P. 11
S.F. IN THE LOW COUNTRIES:	Nic Costerbaan	P. 14
A "SUPERWOMAN" REPORT	: Shirley Marriott	P. 16
AMBROSIA	: The Readers	P. 18
LIBRARIAN'S CORNER	: Jan Jansen	F. 23
RAMBLING WOMAN	: Shirley Marriott	P. 24
LAST PAGE	: Jan Jansen	P. 25
LAST WORD	: Dave Nutty	F. 26

COVER : "Och, I'm a bonnie fishie.."
(see page 12) by JEAN STEER
ILLUSTRATIONS "Twerpcen Report" (p.10)
and "Rambling woman" (p.24) by BEN ABBAS
Titling by JEAN STEER

All contributions, bright ideas, bouquets
praise, flattery, suggestions for making
money etc. to be sent to the Editor: Dave
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" ALPHA " - BELGIUM'S AND POSSIBLY CONTINENTAL
EUROPE'S ONLY FANZINE - IS PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY
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AL PHANS!

It happened on July 8th. 1954... My wife and I had decided to go on a short trip to London to see some friends and other sights we hadn't seen for some time.

We admired the old historic buildings and risked our necks in the hysteric traffic and then... the fateful night of the 8th crept upon me as an evered flea creeps on a dog's back.

We were dining with some friends in Palmers' Green (N.13) and had just retired to the salon to have a chat 'n a smoke 'n a drink; when I was suddenly seized with an uncontrollable urge (nope, you're wrong...). I immediately took leave of mine hostess, her two sons, their respective wives and fiancées, my wife, my wife's girl-friend, etc.etc... and took the first available subway train to town.

I alighted at some queer-sounding station and, taking the wrong stair-way, I finally arrived at a strange house, from the door of which some weird and wonderful smells crept into the unsuspecting night air. A horrible sinking feeling came over me and then, as though an alien being had taken possession of my body, I was suddenly propelled through the doorway...

I experienced a queer wrenching sensation and when I opened my eyes (I had closed them) I suddenly suspected the awful truth: I had been transported, in some inexplicable way, into another dimension, some co-existing Universe. My eyes tried to penetrate the strange mist that filled the place into which Fate had so suddenly deposited me and then, finally, I made out a number of indistinct shapes, shapes that seemed vaguely familiar... yes, in fact almost humanoid.

Just when I was almost overcome with the noise that was coming from all parts of the room, I became aware of a separate voice that detached itself from the multitude and forced itself upon my attention. To my utter amazement, it uttered, in perfect English: "Are you by any chance Dave Wendelmans?"... Hardly daring to credit my senses, I came nearer... and then, the truth at last penetrated my simple mind (All right, I know): the "mist" was English tobacco smoke, the "noise" was caused by various groups of home saps, having heated arguments over one thing and another, the "strange room" was the saloon bar of "The Globe" and the "quasi-human shapes" were actually members of the London Circle. Yes, I had actually found it... How Ron Hall, the "voice who spoke perfect English" (that's all right old boy) recognised me I really don't know (Well, I suppose I do look a bit queer). Anyway, I was very glad I came along, because, apart from meeting a charming young lady (that was Pamela Bulmer of course) and some real nice fellows (Ron Hall, Stu Mackenzie, Ken Bulmer, Vince Clarke and a number of others the names of which I seem to have forgotten) I was literally swamped with subs for Alpha (Well, I got on anyway).

In conclusion I must say that I was very glad I came, and I would like to say a personal word of thanks to Ron Hall and Stuart Mackenzie for introducing me to the "Circle" and allowing me to buy them a drink... Should any of you boys (or girls) ever come to Antwerp, I shall consider it as a personal insult.... if you don't look re up.

You'll probably notice that, apart from the editorial and the tail-end of the letter-column. I have not contributed anything of world-shaking significance this time, with the possible exception of a few dirty cracks inserted in what would normally have been quite decent articles (special apologies go to Shirley Marriott and NicO; I suppose it's the animal in me...). Well, the reason is because I've been on a short vacation (methinks it wasn't short enough) which was necessary after the trying, nerve-shattering and strength-sapping convention we had here. So, I decided to take it easy for a bit and let dear old Jan do the lion's share. He loves it really... The trouble with that is, once he starts talking he doesn't know when to stop and so we nearly had a fanzine of about 50 pages on our hands, which may have pleased the subscribers but would certainly have ruined my wife... and Jan's too.

The next few pages of the ish will of course be devoted to the great event of the year... The "Twerpcon;" which took place, on June 31st, 1954, here in Antwerp. As you'll see, it was a great success and the majority of the participants will agree with me, although most of the expected "guests" never turned up. The reason is still a mystery, although we have our own opinion of course. Perhaps the matter will become clearer when you read the various reports.

One of the guests who did turn up was Ken Slater, together with the missus and the kids and a large bottle of Alka Seltzer. There were other bottles too... which were duly disposed of in a most efficient manner, with devastating results (ask Jan, he may be able to tell you more about that, perhaps... although I doubt whether he was in a position (horizontal) to tell anybody about anything that night). I wasn't too clear on certain points myself... I know that Roza came home about midnight (what had she been up to I wonder?) and mercifully put an end to the festivities and put me on the mat. That I managed to find my way home is also obvious because when I woke up next morning there I was... in my own bed. That's what comes of leading a normal and orderly life: no mistakes, no surprises, no fun... and no headaches; you can't beat it.

Now let's see, where was I? Oh yes. The Twerpcon... Well, read the darned report and then you'll know all about it. (Don't skip Ah-Chee's Apology... you'll be sorry if you do).

Now, I must draw your attention to this issue's cover. It wasn't done by Ben Abbas, but by Jean Steer, whose effort, you will agree, is not to be cast aside after a cursory glance. I'm very sorry Ben, but we were afraid your sketch would come too late, so I asked Jean if he would oblige and, being a very obliging chap, he did. Now, when your drawing arrived, I couldn't very well withdraw (?) could I? So I used yours in the "Jansen Report". I trust this arrangement will suit everybody? Ta.

The other report in this ish is by Shirley Marriott and covers the famous (?) Supermencon. I expect this is old news for most of you but still... It would appear, from several well-informed sources, that even science-fiction was discussed at this particular convention, (we'll have to send this one to Ripley). Apart from that though, it seems that a good time was had by all, with the possible exception of the hotel proprietor... but who is he to stand in the way of good clean fun ??? It was clean, wasn't it ?????

Well folks, I hope you'll forgive the somewhat "flippant" character of this issue. Perhaps the next one will be more serious.... perhaps... In any case, let us know what kind of a rag you prefer. It's all the same to us you know. We can be dead serious if necessary. Let's hope it won't be necessary....

So long,



THE TWERP CON REPORT

Well, the day was over. All the weeks of feverish activity and of hurrying the convention to a good ending had dwindled into a mere feeling of "has-been".... The two of us had gone to my place, in company of Ken Slater, the rest having gone their separate ways, as for most of them, the following days meant "back to work" whilst for the rest, a long trip back to their home country. Ken intended leaving on the morrow as well, but as his wife and kids were put up at my place, he had to trail along, and Dave just couldn't leave us be. After all, there was a promise of a refresher at home, whilst I had been draining Dave's stuff during the hectic "pre-con" days, when we were discussing the various aspects of the convention proper, order of events, and suchlike. Anyway, to the amazement of most of the Anglo-Saxon fans, we were still able to WALK home and on getting there, Ken immediately took hold of pencil and paper and, with a flourish, started off: "It was midnight in Le Havre. It was midnight at Berchemel... It was also double brandies... I stopped him there to have a drink and, not quite grasping what Le Havre had to do with conventions, told him not to bother with a report.

Drink to me only with thine eyes and I'll drink your double-brandy.
The lack of Faith, as indicated by the lack of donations requested in Alpha 3, on behalf of our readers, does not allow us to put out a special convention number such as we had intended. However, looking back now, we are both sorry we hadn't let Ken continue just in case... for naturally, although we didn't - nor could from the financial point of view - issue a special issue (ah-tishoo...), we did have to get n° 5 out on the first of August, and we should be able to devote some space to the convention in that. So don't blame us because this is partly filled with conventions. So was Hyphen...
To get back to that dreary tale: The double-brandies didn't last, but we did get out another bottle, to be followed shortly after with still another. I don't know, nor would I like to guess what might have happened had my wife not come home just about midnight, and gently (?) persuaded us to go to bed...
Dave managed to get to his place somehow, and that the stuff was good will certainly be agreed upon when you know that he "felt like a little bird in Spring..." all the following day. This is only an excuse for the miserable account that follows - I just couldn't be everywhere - and Ken, who really kept the Con going, would have been better able to write a report than either of us. However, we, or rather I, am responsible for this, so you'll just have to put up with it. I could talk about the troubles we had organising the convention, but if I did I should undoubtedly need some twenty or thirty pages for that part of it alone. Anyone who has been on a convention committee will appreciate the tasks involved. That we had to do most of the work ourselves is due to the present sorry state of fandom in Belgium. I believe, nay, am sure, that this convention will have done much to alleviate this sorry state of affairs and that the future is rosier.
Seem to have gone off-track again. We'll just start at the morning of "C" day itself: I got up at about five in the morning, a thing which no-one at the office will believe me capable of, and calling on Dave on the way, yes, he was awake too, well almost..., we went over to the convention hall to find the doors locked and no keys anywhere... However, we managed to find a manhole a couple of yards away, so I popped in, nearly broke my neck over the assorted rubbish the cellar

was filled with, but finally managed to find the stairs and made my way up to the hall itself. Dave still is sorry he didn't have a tape-recorder with him at the time, as the sweet words issuing from my dirt-covered puss weren't to be found in any dictionary he perused later. It seems I even used a few in languages I wasn't supposed to know. To proceed however: I eventually found the way up, having had to dismantle a couple of locks on the way, but that is beside the point... Surprisingly enough, we found the hall in a fairly decent condition. The gleaners had done their task very well and the chairs and tables had been set out in the order required for such a ritual. Although the convention wasn't supposed to start before ten in the morning, at eight the first fans showed their faces at the entrance, and enquired in a very shy and helpful manner whether they could be of any assistance. We promptly put them to work decorating the walls and windows with covers and pictures from.... no, it wasn't s.f. More people flooded in with the rain that was pouring down outside. Seems that the Manchester crowd had reserved this for this particular day and sent it over by registered airmail. As most of them were here, we presume that is was mainly because they are so used to the wetness that they have developed gills and webb feet, and can't live long without water. Anyway we'll hope this is the case and not that they came in an attempt to create havoc in Antwerp. If it was the latter, they failed as miserably as the weather itself.

Ken Slater was the first Britisher to arrive on the scene, together with wife and kids, who were dispatched, by car, not by mail, to Jan's place to rest. Ken himself started off the get-together, flitting from one group to another, introducing people he'd never heard of to people he'd never seen. As, on the average, he was only wrong ninety percent of the time, we must congratulate him. As you may have guessed, the other ten percent were chaps he did know. Trust him... Well, he found Walt Willis for us, who had taken refuge in a dark corner of the convention hall, blushing deeply each time a femme came by. Don't know what to ascribe this to unless to the fact that he'd brought White and Shaw along, who seem to have created quite a stir among the women. Anyway, it had gotten near ten, so the various things that should have been discussed were put off until later.

Naturally, the Con was officially opened by Dave, in his incapacity as President of Alpha - Dictator would be more appropriate since he elected himself... (with a bit of badgering from a chap named Jan of course). His message of welcome and the following-up note by Secretary Jansen on the state (and what a state) of the Alpha s.f.fanclub are much too boring to put down in detail. If anyone wants to hear all the rubbish, I presume the Broadcasting Corporation has a record of it somewhere. On the floor, most of the people present were still fraternising with blows and zappuns in the traditional convention manner so they didn't notice what was going on anyway. Both speakers were loudly acclaimed... more I believe, for their effort in organising such a convention than for anything they may have said...

Fans, Mercons and "Supermen", lend me your zap guns (Tromblepike).

A short interlude preceded the speech made by Nico, which is being produced elsewhere in the issue for the special benefit of future publishers of science fiction in the low countries...

Another lull, during which we managed to get hold of couple of L.C. fans whom we pressed with their backs to the bar so they couldn't get away until they had bought us several drinks... Presumably that is where they got the idea from by handling Dave in a similar manner a week later in London. Shirley Marriott, who caused quite a stir the previous day, (having been mistaken for a film-star arriving the same day, and half doped with silly questions (to her) and glasses of champagne before the mistake was discovered), still suffered from a

slight hangover, so that she could'nt take part in a sketch the L.C.C. (London Circle Company) was going to put on entitled "The Flop". Perhaps just as well, as this might have caused quite a row, the "Provincials" being in the majority at this convention. After the midday break, Ken Slater introduced the public to Walt Willis. He did a good job of it too, giving a thorough description of Walt's activities. He must have done a good job, because when he had finished, Walt had turned a bright red. When his time came to speak therefore, he was so reduced to stage-fright that he could only mumble and only the first few rows could hear what was being said. Not that it mattered of course, for if anyone acclaimed this startling character, it was only because of the strange spectacle he made on the stage... We therefore include Walt's piece here for the enlightenment of the public who couldn't make it out:

" Ladies and gentlemen,

First, I should like to convey to this Convention the good wishes of the Northern Irish fans who were unable to make the long and hazardous journey. All of us in Northern Ireland feel particularly pleased that this, the first European Science Fiction Convention, should be held in Belgium. To English fans like Viné Clarke and Eric Bentcliffe the name of Belgium will call to mind nothing more than Marcel Frcust and Brussels' Sprouts, respectively, but we in Northern Ireland remember that our great Irish linen industry was founded by persecuted refugees from Belgium, the memory of whom lives on in countless surnames and place-names in the North of Ireland. Now another gallant and persecuted minority, led by our good friends Jan Jansen and Dave Vendelmans, are founding another great movement here in their own country, that of science fiction. Let us hope they will spin as good yarns as their forefathers.

I notice from the official programme that I am supposed to discuss the merits of the friendly and informal fanmag... If I'd been wording the subject myself I think I'd have substituted another word for "merits". I wouldn't like to claim that the informal and friendly mag is any better than any other type of fanmag. All I can say is that I personally find it more attractive. I can give reasons, but they won't convince you unless you're looking for the same sort of thing in fandom as I am. But then, some people don't know what they're looking for in fandom. Take for instance this letter I got the other day from a new Canadian fan. This fan represents a phenomenon which was bound to occur in fandom sooner or later. For the first time here is a s.f. fan who finds himself in a situation which has been the dream of every fan editor since the first carbon copy fanmag was passed around in the "twenties. He is in complete charge of the equipment of a large print shop. He has access to every type of publishing equipment, from linotype machines to multiliths. Naturally, he is going to publish a fanzine. Naturally, it will be monthly, printed and multilithed on high quality paper in at least three colours, with copious photographs and illustrations. It will have an initial circulation of some 500...

Now, this prospective fan editor has just read "The Enchanted Duplicator" and one of the things he asks me is whether it isn't all right to make use of Mr. Swift's "aeroplanograph" if you can get it for nothing. Those of you who have read "The Enchanted Duplicator" will remember that the blandishments of Mr. Swift (who represents the off-set printer) were one of the temptations put in Jophan's path. Mr. Swift's victims were flown around fandom in the aeroplanograph until their money was exhausted and then deposited outside again.

Now "flying around, looking down on fandom" was actually the way The Enchanted Duplicator put it. There is more to it than the question of mere expense; it is more a question of attitude of mind, of the relationship between the editors and the subscribers.

Look at it this way: There is no point in putting sugar-tongs on the table when entertaining friends who know you're accustomed to grubbing around in the bowl with your fingers. Similarly, there is no point in trying to impress fans if what you really want in fandom is friendship. A glossy elaborate magazine only erects a barrier between you and your readers, and only partly because there is something about professional-looking printing which produces pomposity. Anyone who wants friendship and amusement out of fandom would be far better advised to stick to the humble mimeograph and pour his energy into getting and writing good material for his mag. If he wants to show off his printing capabilities and resources he should join one of the numerous non-fan amateur journalism associations, the members of which seem to spend their time producing elegant presentations of utter rubbish. Of course, it may be that what you want out of fandom is power and influence. But here again I think you're on a bad bet. There are only about 200 or so actifans. If you increase your circulation above that number the only thing your readers will have in common is an interest in science fiction, and all you will be able to run are reviews and such. And if there's one thing that's obvious at the present time it is that there is not sufficient interest in this type of material to support a large circulation fanmag. When science fiction was scarce, fanmags like Gillings' Fantasy Review were able to exist by directing people to sources of supply. But now we're all suffering from a surfeit of the stuff. I think most of us who grew up in the lean years feel a constant sense of frustration at being unable to read all the s.f. that's going. It worries us to think we might be missing something and we don't feel any sense of gratitude to people who run after us, describing just what we're missing, and how good it is. No, it seems to me that, at the present moment at least, there is no place for this type of magazine. Science fiction is not enough. On the other hand, the smaller your circulation's, the wider your choice of material. With a restricted circulation you can approximate your fanmag to the status of a personal letter, in which anything goes. Your contributors can write unaffectedly about the things which interest them personally and your readers will feel in a more intimate relationship with the magazine, which they'll demonstrate by writing the letters of comment that will probably mean much more to you than money. The proof of this is that the 200 or so actifans I mentioned manage to support - normally at least - some 50 or 60 friendly and informal magazines, whereas the entire body of half a million science fiction readers support only about two amateur magazines with a circulation of more than 500. And both of those are aimed mainly at collectors, who are a race apart. "

To come back to the convention report... I don't know whether Walt had quite finished when the sudden burst of applause cut the air. I noticed that he seemed only too glad to get away from the stage, and I suspect he must have found an effective disguise, as later on a search of the hall and nearby premises failed to produce him.

The convention then went suddenly haywire... which seems to be the usual thing for conventions to do. Ken Slater again surpassed himself, being at the same time Speaker, actor, page-boy and Ghu knows what else. Just as well, as we would have been stuck, most of the persons having previously claimed to turn up and do their piece, not having been found anywhere...

At Ken's frantic appeals, Dave and I ran to the scene to find out what was really intended by his arm-waving. Ken wasn't able to find any of the chaps who were supposed to be on then, and though we tried our best we couldn't get hold of them either. I pity the chaps that told any Belgian fan their name after the convention was over, as I doubt whether they'd have been able to get back home if they had...

For over an hour Ken managed to keep the show going. It's a pity I can't tell you about this, both of us being too busy searching for the missing speakers; but reports afterwards told of magic tricks and the flying about of various objects. After a glance at the bottles in Ken's car later on, we know where he got the spirits from... it must have been an hour or so later that a shattering noise was heard from the right hand side of the hall, one of the windows disintegrating under the pressure of a couple of feet, a body, and... a beard. Even though I had been warned, this sudden appearance rather unnerved me; after all, he had said he would land on the roof. It was therefore only natural that, once the first reaction of fright had passed, Bert was welcomed with a hail that shook the foundations of the building and covered the floor with a thick carpet of whiteness. Recovering rapidly from the shock and brushing the hail from his beard and shoulders, Bert was suddenly lifted up and carried on the heads of several volunteers and deposited in a heap on the platform, where he promptly took over from Ken, who was almost ready to pass out. It's a funny thing though, but several people were under the impression that this was another of Ken's tricks.

It took about another fifteen minutes before the noise subsided sufficiently to hear what was being said. At the back of the hall, the Guest party was behaving rather noisily and I had to intervene and quieten them down personally, explaining who this distinguished visitor was and why I was so glad to welcome him, whereupon the representative of the area just stared at me, gulped once or twice and started muttering under his breath. I didn't catch on then and only later did I realise what had happened to the poor guy.

When the hall had finally quietened down, Bert took hold of the mike and booming began to bestow his wishes etc.. upon the members present, especially the readers of Authentic, who were cheering him almost continuously in between words. At least I imagine that that was the meaning of the subdued voice in the background.

I really don't know how Bert manages to remember all the things he proceeded to tell us about. Starting off with rather a short, and uninteresting account of the voyage by motorbike to Peru, he really got bet up when he described his first meeting with a native fan.

Do you manage to fall off your motor-bike as often as I do ???

As this specimen (the native fan), also happened to be carrying an ancient copy of Authentic, you can guess that the conversation proved most interesting. He then told of the immensely more adventurous trip by sailing ship to Lima, in company of several authentic femmes... Unfortunately, the Belgian censors cannot devote any space to this epic of fandom. Lima was duly reached however, much to the disappointment of several conventionneers, and here Bert gave us a glowing account of the various fanorganisations in that fair city. With an unimaginable wealth of detail, he described the fabulously rich libraries every club possessor; the thousands of books and bound magazines stacked on immense shelves, from floor to ceiling. The leather-covered armchairs adorning every room, the magnificent gold-inlaid cabinets where the catalogues were located on small printed index cards, by author, title, subject, length, and first lines. The bars, smoothly polished with nickelchrome finish, where drinks are available all the time, - mostly free of charge, unless one had the unfannish attitude of disliking Beer and Halböl and preferred the gaseous variety of drinks. The regular Cuban cigars, which fair maidens in pulcover costumes thrust upon you.. The blank checkbooks, just waiting for your signature, in case you left your own at home... and last but not least, the immense gold-encased first volume of Authentic, already two feet thick and still incomplete....

The hours fled by and it was already growing dark outside when we had to call Bert's attention to the fact that everyone was fast asleep and that the train had already been held up for more than an hour and would he please hurry as several government officials had to use the same train and were desperately needed at Ostend. The ovation that accompanied him as he went out will long be remembered by the citizens of Antwerp and nearby communities. In fact, the town authorities asked Bert, or intended to anyway, to do this stunt every month as the noise was far more effective for air-raid precaution exercises than the regular warning system - (everyone was under cover in just over a minute).

They must have mistaken poor old Bert for a "siren".

By this time, we were a couple of hours behind schedule, and the rest of the programme was rushed through. Bob gave us a film show, with: "The men who couldn't work miracles" as the main feature. This wasn't a great success however, coming just after the brilliant demonstration of Ken Slater earlier on. Greetings arrived from France in the form of Messrs. Renault, Gallet and Spriel, who pronounced themselves in favour of less humour and more science-fiction and were surprised they didn't get any support from those present. From Holland we had Ben Abbas, who arrived rather late, speaking about the annoying dates people always picked to hold conventions on and on the subject of Dutchmen writing letters in English to phlemish phans. This was followed by Teun Van Ingen who really went into deep waters defending the Adamski theory of flying crackpots and shattered windows. Jan Hillen wanted to start off on a discussion of scouts and their good-torn-a-day effort in connection with s.f., but had to be kept from the mike as it was already getting too late. There was an excellent fanned panel, comprising Dave and myself, on how to run special issues, followed by the professional panel of belgian s.f. personalities. Luckily most of the members were too far gone to notice that the stage remained empty during that part of the programme. A few more Belgian fans had a short say-so about their various activities in their respective localities, this taking up exactly one precious minute, being followed by the official opening of the ball. The band (Vendlofan's Ragtime Five) was composed of Dave at the drums, Wim Struyck at the piano, and Jan and Ken at the bar. Needless to say, this was the very last item on the programme of a convention that will long be remembered at Antwerp, in the lower countries and in every place where fans carry on their untiring work of bringing future events to this age.

We could say more about the multitude of compliments received from all over the world from the various fan who attended, but as it would take another issue to print all these letters and comments, we shall have to desist. Our thanks again to all those who joined in and we sincerely hope that next year YOU will give us the financial help we requested but did not receive this year, and which would have allowed us to issue a really smashing souvenir number. Still, never mind, we'll be Twerpeconning again in 1955....

-O-O-C-O-O-C-O-

Special "CON" letter - section -

From H.J. CAMPBELL : ... I was glad to get your letter, with the reply deadline set for June 30th., because I've been meaning to write you for some time (since I first heard about Alpha) and have been putting it off. This makes sure I do finally write.

The Queen has graciously granted me permission to sail in one of Her submarines to the Twerpecon on June 31st., so make sure you have a big welcoming delegation to meet me. My idea is to go by sub to Ostend, and thence by helicopter to Antwerp, where I will parachute down

One of the advantages of a "flowing beard", I presume? ...

onto the Municipal Hall. If you can give me some time on your programme I'll be grateful because I'd like to say a few words about the rise of fandom in Peru. So do please tell everybody that I will be there. I shall return to Ostend by elephant train and anybody who wants a lift can come with me...

All right then, I'll see you all on June 31st.
(signed) Bert.

-o-o-o-c-

From Jan Jansen,

Dear Bert, Thanks for the very welcome letter. I expected the contents would be something like that and can but utter meaningless noises of gratitude for your trouble. I'm beginning to flatter myself on that bright idea of setting a deadline for reply. Will have to do just that to about half of my correspondents, if they act upon it the way you did. Not that it always helps...

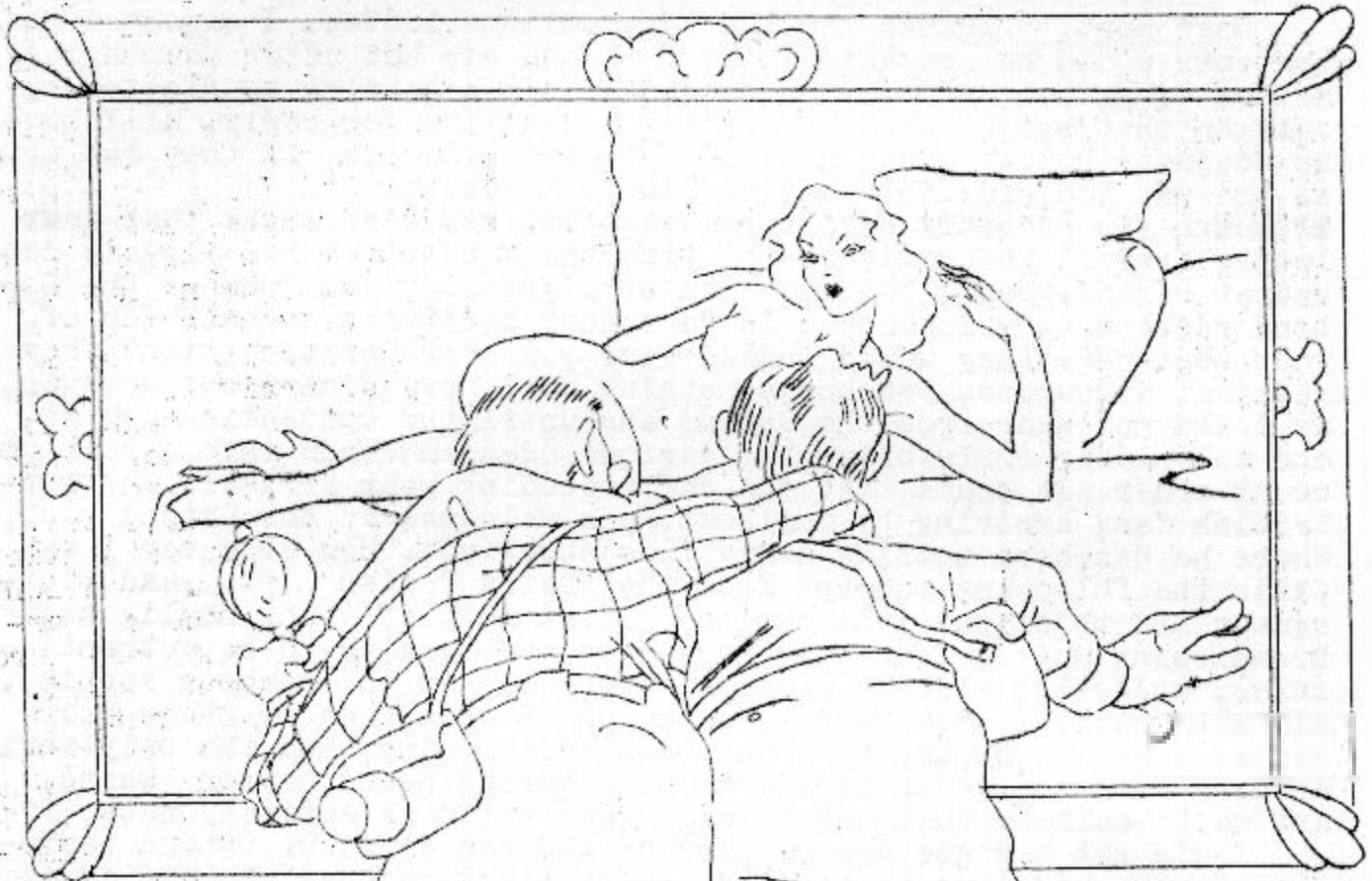
Although you probably haven't realised it, you were lucky that your letter arrived here only at the time the submarines had already docked at Ostend. Yes I believed you straight away and 'phoned the Ostend faction to welcome you in "a manner befitting a gentleman of your stature". They would indeed give you a "proper reception" they replied. Somewhere, somehow, something must have gone wrong however, as I did not hear from the Ostend end until the convention was on, and only later could bring the various odds and ends into a semblance of order. It seems that the day preceding your arrival, another British fan, arriving by mailboat, was welcomed at the Ostend club, where he has been telling nasty lies about you. How else can I explain the following excerpt from the "Daily Toiler": "... and riot-squads had to be put into action against mobs of young hooligans, brandishing weird, fantastic magazines, pertaining to be authentic tales, molesting elderly people, especially in the harbour section. Although several have been arrested on charges made by their bearded victims, no explanation has been forthcoming, and the only words issuing from the young hooligans were: "wrong beard, wrong beard..." Are we to believe that our growing generation is entirely nuts ??? "

I did get a vague description of the fan from our Ostend representative, who seems to be glad now that the sub had already arrived and discharged its passengers; and the sudden disappearance from the convention hall, immediately following your appearance there, clinches the matter. Undoubtedly it must have been Stu. He does admit being minus something, so don't judge him too harshly. After all, you did escape. Unfortunately, I didn't know about all this until after you had left, as otherwise I should have warned you. Not having heard of any further disturbances however, I presume you did manage to get back safely. Luckily I had not told anyone the method of your return, besides, who would dream of looking for you on the back of an elephant?

Thanks once again for the generous show, by giving us so much of your valuable time, first by coming here and secondly by helping the programme along. Slater was really tired out trying to run the whole show, taking the place of Torry, Stu, Vinó, Tubb and others who failed to turn up, although they were somewhere around... Several others didn't arrive at all, and only one, Ah Chee, was polite enough to send us an apology and the reason he had missed the show.

Did I tell you they had to revive Ken with some Alka Seltzer when you took over? No, I thought not; that train wasn't going to wait all day. I thought the slides you brought along to illustrate your talk, with the big shots and especially the femmes, were smashing.

Especially the... you know. Bet you Tucker'd give you fifty quid for the original. Unless Tubb led the auction of course.....
 You could be of some more assistance. From various accounts in the newspapers and from hearsay, I've been trying to trace all the missing creatures, and believe I have been able to trace some. With your wide spread... authority I wonder whether you could check up on these:
 1.- You may remember the large painting near the platform... The Goja thing I believe. Well, it's missing... I know Forry and Ech have been hanging around the thing all blasted day (except when they were urgently required elsewhere) and wonder whether you could check to see if either of them has added anything in that line to their collection?



2.- Have you heard of Tubb lately? I read a rather incoherent statement of a sole survivor of the mailboat sinking, about a wizard of a salesman, auctioning the blooming ship, from mast to screw, which would have been all right if he hadn't insisted on immediately dismantling the parts he had sold.

3.- I never got to see Norman Wansborough, though he intended coming with a busload of fans. I did notice however in the Police/Pepper that a busload had been put in jail for a couple of days for blocking the Scheldt tunnel, first with a batch of flying saucers for kids, and afterwards flooding it with their water pistols...

4.- According to the latest custom reports, an increase of 500% on the smuggling of illegal weapons into the country was recorded the last week in June....

5.- The police also had their hands full the day after the Con, hauling in a procession of Englishmen, walking about in the pouring rain. Is that a peculiar habit of certain anglo-saxons?

6.- A spidery-legged creature was found wandering about the park a few nights ago, carrying a soap-box and now and then starting a declamation on nav installations, until they ran him in for giving away military



Apology...

Naturally I wanted to attend the Twerpecon - who didn't? So I talked things over with my sister, who also wanted to go - in spite of the Convention date being her birthday. Anasthesia, her name is. She's a bit of a dope, but the boys all say she's a stunner - knocks 'em flat.

"The regular services are all full up," I informed her. "There's a hull crowd of Northern fans sailing from the Humber, and all the Dover and Harwich boats have been hired by the London Circle for the round trip."

"Can't we join the Queen Elizabeth at Southampton, and arrive with the American fans?" she asked.

"She's all booked up except for the lavatories," I returned. "And we can't have them, because it'd be dangerous when they get to Flushing."

"Well, what CAN we do then?"

"Well," I suggested, "perhaps we could hire a fishing smack."

"~~New~~ whoever," Anasthesia demanded flatly, "whoever wants to be smacked with a fish?"

"Dunno," I answered, "unless maybe another fish of the opposite sex. But talking of fish - we might swim."

"Impossible," she declared. "The moths have been at my Bikini."

"Does that matter?" I asked, not unreasonably.

"'Course it does, stupid. The thing isn't watertight now."

Eventually we compromised, and duly embarked at Skegness on my rubber blow-up mattress. We made pretty good progress until the wind got up, when the jagged edges of the waves soon punctured the mattress, and we were left floundering in the water.

Just then, to our intense relief, a ship appeared. "Ship ahoy!" we shouted in unison.

On the ship, a man raised a megaphone to his lips. "This reply comes to you by courtesy of Lock-Jaw Chewing Gum!" he shouted into the storm. "Ahoy there yourselves! And remember - Lock-Jaw Chewing Gum ~~NEVER~~ is guaranteed NEVER to shrink!"

"Throw us a lifebuoy, quick!"

"Never fear," he yelled back at us. "So long as you hold a policy with the R.I.F. Life Assurance, your loved ones will always be able to hold their heads above water!"

"But we haven't got any loved ones!" I hollered desperately. This was a lie of course - at any rate so far as I was concerned. I still had myself. But it had the desired effect, because he threw us a rope.

"This rope," he shouted, "is woven from 1,000 separate strands of Lock-Jaw Chewing Gum - just one example of the thousand separate uses to which this wonder product can be used!" Then we were scrambling aboard.

"Welcome, castaways," he greeted us. "And may I make a suggestion? If you want to be in the swim, always wear a Hydro-Gentzen Beach Costume, the Bigger and Better Bikini."

"Thank you very much indeed," I returned politely. "But you can't skip the commercials, eh? We happen to be shipwrecked."

"Well - now and again, perhaps. But not often. You see - I'm the Flying Luxemburger!"

"The Flying WHAT?" we chorused.

"The Flying Luxemburger. I'm condemned to rove the seas eternally until redeemed by the love of a maiden pure and uncontaminated by commercial advertising."

"Why, that's wonderful!" said Anasthesia. "That's - that's me!"

"Oh, is it could be but true," sighed the Flying Luxemburger.

"But she is," I corroborated. "She works for the Society for the Prevention of Commercial Advertising. Haven't you seen their posters? ---IT PAYS NOT TO ADVERTISE ---ADVERTISING IS THE LAST REFUGE OF THE INCOMPETENT ---HE WHO ADVERTISES HAS LOST HIS SELF-RESPECT---"

"We hope for great things," put in my sister smugly. "Though I'm forced to admit we haven't been very successful to date ---"

With a ringing shout of triumph the Luxemburger folded her in his arms, and amid a sudden blaze of coruscating glory the happy couple soared heavenwards and out of my sight.

I was just wondering whether the seamen spoke English or whether I'd have to try some ~~seamanic~~ semantics on them, when with a thump Anasthesia and the Luxemburger landed on the deck again.

"What's up?" I enquired. "Won't they let you in?"

"My passport's not visaed," said the Luxemburger sorrowfully.

"But I thought Heaven and Luxemburg had a reciprocal treaty to do away with visas."

"They have. But my passport was issued in Hell, and you still need visas from there."

"What's the difference?" I asked. "Passports are always infernal things, whoever issues them."

However, there it was, and the ship had perforce to begin the search for a Heavenly Consulate. We sailed all night, and as dawn was breaking I suddenly found myself bursting into song.

"I love to go a-wandering

Along the ocean bed - Fred," I chortled.

"And when I do, I always bring

My knapsack on my head - Fred. Fol de ree - - -"

Anasthesia promptly took up the refrain.

"I get among the bladder-wrack

And squeeze them till they pop.

I thus inflate my old knapsack,

And float back to the top."

"Why," said the Luxemburger suddenly, "we must be over the Doggerel bank. Catch a fish, somebody." One of the crew threw a net in, and presently hauled a green-and-red striped monstrosity out of the water. The latter fell on the deck, sat up, and began to speak.

"Och, I'm a bonnie fishie

Frae aot the ocean braw,

And wi' your kind permishie

I'll stay right here an' a' ," it recited.

"Gracious, - a doggerel fish!" Anasthesia exclaimed delightedly.

"It isn't," the Luxemburger returned. "It's just a MacKerel. Throw it back."

"Wait," I cautioned. "Excuse me, Jock, but is there a Heavenly Consulate hereabouts?"

"Och," said the fish, "it's the Pearly Gates you'll be wanting. Right doon among the oyster beds."

So we wished it good luck and threw it back in, and set sail for the oyster beds. There the Luxemburger got his visa without any trouble, and once more he dramatically clasped Anasthesia in his arms and the two of them soared away upward and out of sight.

Within a minute they were back again.

"Well," I greeted them, "what is it this time?"

The Luxemburger was furious, and no wonder. "The heavenly so-and-sos," he raved. "They won't let her redeem me without a pawn-ticket."

"H'm," I mused. "That's an awkward one. Didn't mean a prawn-ticket by any chance, I suppose?"

"Do prawns have tickets?" enquired Anasthesia.

"Come to think of it," I said, "I can't remember ever hearing of any!"

We mull'd over the problem for a bit. "Pawn-ticket," I repeated. "Pawn-ticket. Pawn-ticket!"

"Hey!" cried my sister suddenly. "How about a pee-oh-ar-en-ticket?"
"Porn-ticket," I reflected. "Sounds possible, certainly. Only - what would it be?"

Then it struck us all together. "A seat at the Folies Bergères!" we howled in chorus.

"Come on," ordered the Luxemburger, happy again. "Paris, here we come! And while you're in Paris, remember that the best, most enjoyable souvenirs are snaps taken with your own Nu-Look X-Ray Camera. Nothing is hidden - nothing forbidden."

And it looks as if we guessed right. Because when the happy couple went into their next apothecary my sister had the precious ticket clasped rapturously to her bosom, and this time they seem to have stayed up there. I wonder just who the ticket WAS wanted by?

Before sailing away into Limbo, which lies beyond Ultima Thule, the sailors obligingly set me ashore on the Belgian coast. I knew it was Belgium, because everything was double. The country claimed to be Belgique-Belgique. I walked up a road boasting the name "Rue de la Mer-Zeestraat". An homme-man stood under the lanterne-lantaarn on the coin-hock.

"Quelle date est-il, Wat datum is het, s'il vous plait, als 't U belieft I enquired.

"First of July, cock," he replied in English.

I'd missed it.

. O c O c C c O c O .

Continuing "AMBROSIA" from page 22 :

HOWARD DEVCRE : Got Alpha recently. It's surprisingly good. In English
===== already. I locked the cover over and said to myself :
"Mine Ghot, ain't it had enuf us poor damn collectors got to buy Swede
and Boesian mags and books that we don't can read. Now I'm getting fan-
zines that I CAN't read either." Oh well, I'll stack it with the 250 cc-
pies of Swedish JVM and someday maybe some kindhearted old Dutchman
will read it to me... You guys got lots of nerve trying to put on a
convention.....

+++ I didn't know Americans had to use Dutchmen to read to them in
English. We have been told that our English was very good, but I didn't
know it was that good.... Well, maybe we haven't a lot of money, but
we do have a lot of nerve, and, judging from the results of the Twerp-
Con, it was well worth the trouble don't you think ?

alphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalphalph

Continuing "CON" letter-section from page 10:

.. secrets. He was returned to England.

7.- I could list several more, but why bother ??? Next time, as soon as
our guests arrive, we'll chain them to a pole, stick a label on them and
keep them there until they've said their piece. That should do the trick...

Normally, we should have had a large intake left over, but guess what ?
After worrying for months over his empty treasury, our dear Harry was so
overawed with the load he received that he went right out and treated
practically the whole town. Luckily, the police hauled him in, thinking he
had committed a robbery. We cleared him just as he cleared Alpha.

We had to dig into our purse to run this issue off, which explains the
delay of a couple of days. Had to wait until pay-day to purchase the paper.
Dave is swearing at me already because he wants these stencils and that
copy of this letter, so please excuse the hurried closing of this mean-
ingless epistle. If you can help, please do. And thanks for the men-
tion of Alpha. We'll do the same some day.

The Authentic Twerp,

Jan.

A STUDY OF THE CAUSES OF THE GROWTH OF DUTCH INTEREST IN IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE IN THE LIGHT OF RECENTLY ADVANCED THEORIES OF SPACE-TIME CURVATURE, HUMAN BEHAVIOR (IN PERIODS OF STRESS), MASS PSYCHOLOGY, UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLES AND RANDOM FACTORS, AGGRESSIVE SELLING AND ADVERTISING, TELEKINESIS, EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION AND THE PROBLEM OF THE FLYING - SAUCERS.
+++++

(Paper read at the Antwerp Science-fiction Convention held at Antwerp (Belgium) on June 31st, by Dr. N.O.N. Scense, of the Municipal University, The Hague (Holland))

The object of this article is to demonstrate that the publication of a science-fiction magazine has a fifty percent chance of becoming a success, when it is effected with the greatest care and after careful evaluation of the data that modern science can place at the disposal of the publishers.

This is illustrated by the case of the recent Dutch professional science-fiction magazine "PLANET", where both publisher and editor went to great lengths to ensure that their endeavor would not follow the example of their predecessors.

Mr. Costerbaan, the Editor, tells us that he had sensed the desirability of such a publication for some time before plans were actually developed (undoubtedly a clear case of extra-sensory perception of future events). A full description of this period will shortly be appearing as a supplement to Dunne's "An Experiment in Time", which is expected to appear as an Ace Double Pocketbook towards 1st. April 1955.

To the student of human behavior under all circumstances, but especially in periods of stress, it will be quite clear that at one moment he would go so far as to approach a publishing house with an account of his premonitions. After extensive research, Mr. Costerbaan located a publisher who had in his possession a blue-print of the recently developed Nucleometer, a device for measuring stresses in the spacetime continuum. This instrument is more fully described in the October issue of "Astounding Fiction-Science", our well-known American contemporary.

With the nucleometer it proved possible to follow the world-lines of optimal probability of material objects into the not-too-distant futures and the fact was clearly established that some hitherto unrelated objects would undoubtedly combine into a more complex organisation that could very possibly be a Successful Dutch Science-Fiction Magazine, even when random factors were being taken into account. Of course, this research period lasted quite a few months and there is evidence that Mr. Costerbaan's desire to become the Editor of this particular magazine had by then become an obsession. It seems however, that he realized, after seeing his dianetical auditor, that this exertion was largely due to an engram, incurred in his youth (He was not vaccinated against engrams). By application of a few bottles of "Eols" gin, he was soon as well again as he would ever get.

His publisher was partly a follower of Heisenberg's "You never can tell..." and partly convinced by the evidence supplied, even more so when the nucleometer corroborated Mr. Costerbaan's esped opinions.

After it was decided to start the magazine, preparations had to be made to get it on the newsstands and in the bookshops. Mr. Costerbaan launched an advertising campaign which used all methods of modern propaganda. By direct mail folders and posters, retailers and consumers were approached in a subtle way. The appeal for booksellers was mainly the promise of a generous discount, progressive with the number of copies sold, although Mr. Costerbaan never went so far as to allow a discount of one hundred percent to those who sold more than five copies (as rumour will have it).

Consumers were approached by simple slogans and intriguing headlines which were certain to arouse the interests of that part of the Dutch population that is inclined to that type of literature.

Afterwards it was proved that ninety percent of those bought a copy of the magazine. The other one, Jan Hillen of Wassenaar, got himself a sample copy, free...

Meanwhile, one particular problem had to be settled. It was mainly a semantic problem and analogous cases are found in Korbszyski's "General Semantics". In this case it was: "How to name the magazine?" A mass-psychological evaluation of the Dutch vocabulary and the corresponding trends among the adolescent population proved conclusively that titles such as "Astounding, Fantastic, Amazing, Strange, Thrilling and Wonder" would only provoke the interest of those who had hardly any buying power. This was corroborated by an extensive market analysis.

But semantics provided a solution, entirely adapted to the requirements of this selling and advertising problem. The title "Planeet" was chosen for its simple pronunciation in the melodious Dutch language. Everybody able to read could pronounce it.

Seemingly no other associations were attached to this name, although the matter of the student of occultism who subscribed for twelve issues still has to be cleared up.

Having the magazine printed and published was largely a mechanical problem which presented no particular difficulty and will be of no interest to the reader of this paper.

"Planeet" hit the market on January 1st, 1953 and in the course of the month the first copy was sold. Reports from retailers indicate a slowly rising consumer interest, reaching its peak in the third week of March, when not less than eight copies were sold in the Hague alone. Since then, no reliable figures have been obtained.

As stated in the first paragraph, this article aims to demonstrate that a science-fiction magazine has a fifty percent chance of becoming successful when all factors have been taken into account. In other words: "It will sell" or "It will not sell". That is an even chance. Unfortunately "Planeet" was among the ones that did NOT sell.

Modern science can do a lot for commercial enterprises in establishing the right business climate and providing solutions for all sorts of problems. But the publisher was right. There's always Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty: "You never can tell..."

N.O.

"HOLLAND IS A LOW, LYING COUNTRY AND IT'S DAMNED ALL AROUND".

SUPER(WO)MANCON REPORT

After a very eventful journey from London to the regions of unexplored Lancashire, which took us almost twelve hours, we were confronted with the sight of a very drab hotel in a very dirty square. This did not really surprise me, but the fact that the sun was shining did, because everyone knows that rain was specially ordered for the London Circle. Although eighteen of us originally started out, only seventeen arrived; the motorbike belonging to Bert Campbell broke down somewhere on the way and nothing further was seen of him. Somebody remarked that Ghu had finally claimed him, but this point has not yet been confirmed.

When we had all found our rooms, which were scattered in odd places all over the hotel (peculiar ideas of block bookings the northerners do have), we all congregated in the convention hall, waiting for something to happen. As nothing did materialise at one o'clock, we went in search of lunch. We were soon scared off by the prices in the hotel restaurant, so a crowd of us found a Chinese restaurant to eat in (chopsticks not compulsory). In the afternoon, there was a lecture on radio-activity and one or two other items on the programme actually took place. but as was expected, most of them did not. The good thing was that none of the people who were attending let the failure of the official programme worry them; they were all too busy drinking and arguing with people they did not know. Before the evening was half over, most of the true fans were well on their way to being completely scizzled, so that when the film was shown I saw at least three fall asleep and quite a large proportion of the others were too busy knecking to realise quite what the film was all about (I know I was) - (Shirley on you Shamey).

About a quarter past ten, the official programme for the first day came to an end, and after going out for supper, we rassed into Stuart Mackenzie's room for a party. Admission was only granted to those with passports (them as had paid ten bob towards the booze). As usual, all husbands and wives were changing partners, and the rest were taking advantage of the fact. It was amazing the rate at which the drinks disappeared, although Dave Newman kept the wardrobe door locked. At about three thirty, most people, who were capable of staggering the distance, went to bed... They had to carry me... (Who's they? and whose bed???)

Sunday was determined not to let us down. When I awoke at seven, the floods had come. Sometime in that short period whilst we had been asleep, the rainmakers had done their work and very successful they were at it. They have a very efficient alarm system in Manchester. As you know, the natives cannot afford to buy alarm clocks, so at all unGhu-like hours they ring the Cathedral bells, and as the hotel is only just across the road from there, we received the full blast. However, most of the fans showed their complete indifference to them by staying in bed until after ten o'clock, which meant the hotel would not serve them any breakfast. The only thing wrong with that was the fact that the nearest café which was open seemed to dislike fans; anyway, the proprietor nearly threw a dozen of us out, but we finally left of our own accord before he had the opportunity.

The programme for the second day included a demonstration of Telepathy and the "Trial of Bert Campbell", but as he has not put in an appearance, somebody with a false beard deputised. This was about the best part of the whole two days. The speakers were Tubb for the defense and Jeeves for the prosecution. Witnesses included John Brunner and Daphne Buckmaster. Dave Newman was Judge and although

no official decision was made everyone enjoyed it.

Towards the end of the trial, Stuart Mackenzie started to talk about the survey he made amongst fandom and it seems that they have come to the conclusion that group marriages should be allowed. They (the men, not the femmes) agreed that there should be five women to three men, but why that figure was chosen I do not really know (Safety in numbers probably →).

Of course, as soon as the bar opened again, the hall emptied quite miraculously and the whole thing finished at half past nine or thereabouts. On Sunday, the party was held in a room on the top floor (where it was thought we wouldn't annoy the other residents, as fans were billeted on either side). I do not think there were so many people in it, but I do know that there were three couples and a few stray men sitting on one bed (the sardines had nothing on us). A few of them drifted off about half past one so that gave us all a little more breathing space. Stuart, Jim Rattigan and a couple of others were industriously throwing empty bottles out of the window. Luckily there was a canal below, so the only thing that got hit was the water.

On the way back to my room, at about four in the morning, we came across the night porter and he followed us all the way (somehow I don't think he trusted us) but disappeared when we said good-night outside the door (Really?). Monday morning, everyone was busy saying farewell to everyone else, whilst outside it was still pouring, and the 'bloody provincials', to crown it all, were having a procession, which they informed us lasted all day (Are they really web-footed?) The procession completely blocked the road we wanted to use, so when we did finally manage to leave, at twelve thirty, we made a forced detour to reach the outskirts. Even though we did not leave till twelve thirty, we made quite certain that everyone locked out before twelve, because otherwise they get charged for an extra day. We arrived back in London about quarter past eleven at night. On the way back, we stopped at Litchfield to see the cathedral, and we all agreed that it would make an excellent convention hall: it was large and there didn't seem much to break... (except the poor "provincials" hear's!)

We left our mark in the hotel in the form of a seventh fandom beany adorning the head of a statue on the hotel's main staircase and Ghed knows how many stains on the carpets. Actually, I think they must have realised what they were letting themselves in for, because they made us change our convention room from one which had just recently been decorated to one which looked as though it had not seen paint since the day the hotel was built. Of course, everyone knows that the northerners are ruddy ignorant, but you should have heard the comments they made about the taxi some of us travelled up in. In fact, I think the only reason that it did last all the way was just to spite them.

Oh well... another convention is over, and we all returned home decidedly poorer, but I think we all thought it worth while, especially as the programme was even worse than we had hoped, and we didn't have to do anything to help it along.

All I need to say, in conclusion, is : " HURRY UP THE NEXT ONE".

S.M.

==M=M=M=M=M=M=M=M=M=M==

AMBROSIA

WE found the following
extracts interesting!
Let's know if you did!

TEUN VAN INGEN: In the latest Alpha was an interesting note about myste-
=====
ricus car-window "shatterings"; didn't know they occurred
in Belgium too. They were discussed in Fate recently. Can't you give more
particulars in the next issue?

§Teun has since then been supplied with all the various clippings &
has turned them into an article, set aside until next ish owing to
lack of space in this one.

NIC OOSTERBAAN: You chaps in Antwerp are real FANatics concerning mail-
=====
ing dates and so on. For a quick turn-round go to the
Fort of Antwerp, is one of the slogans they use there, I believe.

§Indeed, so it is. But when you consider all these fans, eagerly
awaiting that next Alpha issue, you can't blame us for being rather
anxious to get it to them without undue delay, especially when caused
by promised material coming too late for inclusion!

PETE VORZIMMER: Alright, Jansen, I've got a bone to pick with you. No, a
=====
few bones. First, let me say that I can't blame you, for
you are of foreign extraction, but you sure as hell do run incoherent in
many places in your last two letters. There is definitely no Abstract
supplement as Abstract now comes out monthly. I am definitely sorry that
I did not send you 2, 3, or 4.... And, here is one of those bones I was
talking about--just what, in my letters to you was "low quality of taste"
... Another seeming incoherent sentence: "Damn it, why don't you write your
self, I'll mark it SNF Pete." What in the continental H--L does that
imply?.. The issues are coming, tra la, tra la, Take it easy.....

§Alright, bedroom, you asked for it! I dare anyone, having received
Abstract n°1, and not the other following issues, to have the cheek
of saying there are NO supplements. After all, we USUALLY believe
whatever the editor mucks his contents page up with! And do you
really expect me to admire your taste when you refer to me as the
"ugly cuss"? As for the SNF: you did say, you should know some BNPs
get them to write for you! From that sentence I make it that you
consider yourself to be a SNF, this to be translated, judging from
your current stock of letter-paper as Sexy & Nudes Fan. And whilst
I am, not as you say, from foreign extraction, but truly a native
(don't pun) of Belgium, there's only an odd couple of fans that
can say the same in your country!

GEORGE WHITING: (talking about Athens SF Group)... the whole set-up arose
=====
more or less by accident (most fanclubs do) when a
Greek friend called at my house, and seeing my stf collection, asked to
borrow some - it grew from there. Incredible is the demand exceeds the sup-
ply, hence the organisation arose to increase the supply and reduce the
costs. I have tried to interest them in fandom in general, and fanzines
in particular, without any success. The odd fanmags I have collected and
distributed have usually been unintelligible to my Greek friends. Just
imagine for a moment showing someone with no previous knowledge of fan-
dom, an average science fiction fanmag (to give it its full title) with
references to WAW, Dero's Great Ghu, Chuck Ferris, cons, etc. Try explaining
WAW, who he is and what he represents to fandom - easy? - try it. Many
of the fanzines I showed them, perhaps ~~Warrior~~, evoked the comment: "Do
men actually waste their time and money in producing these childish
things?, and why the peculiar language? (no comment). I enclose a specimen
of one fanmag we received from the States. (again no comment.)
Another fanmag I received and produced at a discussion, was Eric Jones'
CON-SCIENCE (a Tricde production). I spent the whole evening trying to

explain this one - very difficult as you can imagine. For example one Gent asked: "What is this 'zap gun' referred to so frequently?" With a slightly red face I explained it is a water pistol. "A water pistol?" said another gent blankly. "Do you mean," my previous inquisitor continued, "that people go round squirting water at one another when they attend these cons?"

I did my best, but whilst agreeing that it might be humorous, they remained puzzled and slightly bewildered. My friends read only the better type of science fiction and can see no point in publishing fanzines or indulging in other activities beloved of fandom. They cannot see what these activities have to do with reading and enjoying science fiction as literature. They agreed that a magazine devoted to literary discussion about sf might be of interest, that was as far as I got. I wish someone would produce a simple introduction to fandom plus a fanterm dictionary and reasons for zaps, WAW, cons etc.

§Same here. Just your luck that TELIUS' first ish was done the way it was. I shuddered myself. How about entreating poor WAW to do that job himself? Not on the lines of the TELI though, I was occasionally puzzled over that myself.

ARTHUR COCK: A while ago I tried, without success, to find some local fans ===== to form a local club. Studying whether to make it a membershipless club, or rather, one member. Maybe it would attract more local attention. Sent in a report of the first meeting to the papers. No membership quoted? Been at the con this weekend, and had an enjoyable time. This -- being the first personal contacts I had made with some of the shining lights of Anglofandom. I'll spare you a report. You'll be getting plenty from others better able to paint a picture of the proceedings...

§Seems as if everyone I know, except Shirley, had the same idea. Hers was the only convention report to arrive in form of letter. Though I have enjoyed the various reports in fanzines. Hats off for BEM. I had that before the week was out!

ERIC JONES: You will, perhaps, have satisfaction in knowing that you were ===== not the only fan who missed the Supermancon... Last it, so did I. The Bug/bugs - or whatever it was - bit me on the week previous to the Great Show, and laid me flat on my back over the preceding week. As I lay there praying to Ghu Klono, Foo-Foo Bheer (and even Hic!) to release me from the bondage of the bed, I knew that I would never make it, although I was already booked to attend... As you say in A: "Well, there's always 1955!" But perhaps some-one - such as the Medway - will put on a show sometime this year and I'll make up for lost drinking and nattering time.

§Sorry, but I derive no satisfaction whatsoever from that. Except perhaps, that should we meet at the Con 55, we both have an excellent reason to/come extras together.

ARCHIE MERCER: Looks like I done the wrong thing, doesn't it. Everybody ===== else doesn't subscribe, and gets a 22-page free issue for not doing so. I, apparently alone, DO subscribe, and all I get is an 18-page follow-up, packed with letters saying how good the other one was. If I'd known of your existence previously, in time not to subscribe, I might have got one too! Never mind - I won't be subscribing to Beta. For the very good reason that the only word I know in Flemish is ESTERBLIFF, and even then I don't know how to spell it. However, I certainly hope Beta has every success and all the usual. From what I can see, Alpha seems to have it already. I suppose that once 20 million Beneluxers are receiving their Beta's regularly, you'll carry on with Gamma. I suggest it be printed in Morse Code, translated into two-dimensional braille, and with invisible ink. Just think of the fun you could have re/setting imaginary stories and articles that people never sent!

§Why do we have to put up with such grumblers, Chuck?

JIM MacARTHUR: I read about your magazine in the Supermancon Combozine, and while I make no claim to belong to Anglo Saxon fandom -note the address- I am sending sub to Alpha partly as to help you on your way, and partly because as long as I have money, I intend to read every fanzine I can get. Please don't send a stamped addressed envelope for me to write to you (as you mentioned having sent to others, in the Combozine), I'll probably write anyway.

§Thanks, Jim. We don't usually spend our money that freely. I have since found that I do better sending a letter with insufficient postage on it. People usually complain. Note for Stu - letters to Europe 4d - or don't you ever look at the cancellation stamp on the envelopes, and Pete - postcards 2 1/2d. Thanks, too. Seems I'll have to reconsider my opinion of Scotsmen. No more jokes!

STUART MacKENZIE: This gives me a thought. Suppose we have 1000 male fan. Each marries a non-fan, and converts her (he'll have to if he wants domestic peace). They then produce their average 2.6 children and inculcate in them the glory of fanatic. From 'y' year, say 5 years to produce the brats. Then wait 25 years. You now have 2000 middle aged fans, 2600 young ditto (assorted sexes), and each of these marries a non-fan, converts spouse, produces average 2.6 brats, wait 25 years. Each couple (2600) produce 2.6 brats = 6760. Each brat marries a non-fan, produces 2.6 brats = 17576 brats. At the end of eighty years there are 2000 dead fans (who don't count), 2600 old fans, 6760 middle aged ditto, 17576 marriageable ditto. Repeat and wait 20 years. Then there are 2600 very old fans, 6760 old fans, 17576 x 2 = 35152 middle aged, and 45697.6 young. Total fan population now, by direct breeding ONLY 90,209.6 fans, in a mere 100 years. On top of this, add external conversions, which should be good for at least 50000 of all ages. Now there are 140209.6 This .6 of a fan bothers me. I think we'd better make him an entire fan, don't you? 140210.

By now, however, there is another thing. After years of impassionate research, seeking a new way to synthesize Bheer, Campbell creates a new artificially-inseminated artificial artifact arrangement for absolutely assuring automatic android synthesis. (Short name AI7AS.) The process goes into production, using a secret compound, (a hair of Bert's hisute appendage), stale Bheer, old fanzines, hypnotapes, mad professors and cybernetic controllers. Every android works. Every android is a fan? Bert can hardly churn them out fast enough, for each and everyone is pre-natally hypno-indoctrinated to be a fan and a subscriber to AUTHENTIC both (only a machine could do this). His production rate stabilises in y+50 to a mere 25000 a year. He recalls the old ones (they are tired) (§reading Authentic? and so we have in y+100 -1250000 android fan. Fan population; 1390210. I shall then start a fanzine....

§I'm not greedy, but how about a couple of hundred of these fan? Don't want to monopolise all of them for I do you? And, Stu, I'm not sure, but I seem to detect a note of antipathy to Bert in the above. I may be wrong, but....

DEREK PICKLES: ...Watch out for interesting items from 197 Cutler Heights Lane (Bradford 4, Yorks, England) in the very near future.

§Thanks for the new Phantas, Derek. Sure enjoyed it. Readers can obtain a sample copy of this publication from the address as given, it "being on the house!" Letters of comment will be considered as subscriptions. Recommended!

MICHAEL ROSENBLUM: Very nice to hear from you. My name is Michael, but fandom has called me Mike for many years. Also Mick and Mickey (§not Mouse, surely?) at times. I don't mind at all what I am called unless, as the saying goes, I am called late for dinner. It is a pleasure to send a copy of the NEW FUTURIAN anywhere it is appreciated. Although I have been more or less in retirement for the last six or seven years -as you will have seen- I still have managed to have a sort of birdseye view of fandom. I noted your name a few months ago --you

know there once was a time when I knew everyone in fandom in Britain; and most of those in USA. So that I feel sometimes that I should get to know all those interesting-sounding newcomers. But though the spirit is willing - the time just isn't there to do it in, now that I am a staid suburban type of businessman. So I hope that you will understand if I do not answer your letters very quickly or very fully....

§Sure, Michael. It's not everybody has time to spare to write endless letters upon the slightest pretext. Oh, George, here's a fanzine your pals might like. Straight, although it won't refuse humorous articles. Plenty of bookreviews, and even literary reviews. Only 9d a copy too, and quarterly, from 7 Grosvenor Park, Leeds 7, England. Excellent fare for the "serious" fan, or for others wanting a change from the fannish 'zines, at the moment in the majority.

WALT WILLIS:but please forgive me until autumn. Even to do the very ----- minimum necessary to re-assure people that I'm still alive is more than I can manage just now...

§Well, I did start worrying. Especially so when I received Hyphen under the imprint of Vine Clarke. I even started wondering whether this was done to get Vine's conscience cleared up! And two typos in YOUR name!

§§§O.K. Dave, you take over. And don't start moaning I didn't leave enough space for you. You can always get some more stencils and paper cut of your pocket (not Alpha's!).

+++ The blooming cheek of some of these foreigners (sorry Yan).. Well thanks for leaving some space! I'll try and be economical, although I fear I'll have to include practically the whole of the following "feature letter", at the risk of buying extra stencils and paper, trala trala.. It's from:

RFDD BOGGS: There's such a bewildering array of exotic addresses on Alpha's inside front cover and back page that I'm not sure to whom I should address this letter. Anyway, it's meant for all of you who are responsible for publishing such a fine fanzine as Alpha. I enjoyed it tremendously, and not just as a curiosity from the area we've heretofore held to be the waste places surrounding Anglo-American fandom, much as the awful desert circles the land of Oz. Your fanzine lacks more British than American - which isn't surprising I suppose - but the content has a unique flavor that I haven't encountered in any fanzine before, not even in the infrequent writings of Georges Gallet of France. I suppose I'll have to call it the Continental flavor, though I'm no happier with that vague term than you probably are. Anyway, I like... I liked Abbas' deftly drawn cover, but was even more pleased with the titling-and-rocketship on the contents-page, which I presume was done by Jean Steer. Very fine. The layout of the contents page was also excellent. Your mimeography throughout was first-rate. What sort of a machine do you use? The Wanderers wasn't a bad little story, but hardly rated four pages. I'd rather have a four-page editorial section and a one-page story... "Astronomical Survey" managed to be interesting, though it conveyed little information new to me. Speaking of astronomy, I don't think seeing Jupiter's moons with the unaided eye is quite so unusual as Eric Bentcliffe makes out. Other keen-sighted people have done it and aren't those moons visible thru an ordinary pair of binoculars?... "Shooting Line" appears to be a burlesque of "Firing Line" by George C. Smith, but I'm not sure I'd have recognised the fact if I hadn't read "Venus Equilateral" again recently. The climax of this thing was amusing, but I fear it will not add anything to Walt's reputation. I don't know about Terry's... I liked "Librarian's Corner" but why didn't Jan get a by-line? (?)... Every fanzine I pick up has a letter from Walt Willis. This one in "Ambrosia" was fine, but he said exactly what I'd have liked to say about the phenomenal rise of "Alpha". Well, not exactly what I'd have said if I had the opportunity: He said it better than I could... "Last Page" was an excellent column of ramblings...

(continued on page 22)*****

Very good. Who was responsible for the semi-interlineation "if my Dad hadn't been so shy I would have been born two years earlier?". That was worthy of "Hyphen" itself.

+++ These are the kind of letters we like best, not because they contain a lot of compliments - although I'm sure you'll forgive us if we blush with pride - but because they give a thorough and sincere commentary on the 'zine from the first 'till the last page. Thanks Redd. The machine I use is a Remington Rand. I'm not sure about Jan's. I believe it's a portable. Duplicating is done at my office with a "Gestetner" (automatic)... You'll notice I've lengthened my editorial and avoided all stories in this ish... Jan was responsible for that crack about his poor old Dad. I think he ought to be very grateful for the old man's shyness. He might have been two years older now...

SHIRLEY MARRIOTT: ... although I nearly committed murder to get to Belgium for this week, it did not work out... so it will probably be around September when I finally hit Antwerp (poor Antwerp will never be the same again) I want to come when some of the big American bands are there...

+++ We're all looking forward to meeting you in the flesh Shirley... When I say all, I mean Jan and myself of course, not our wives. As to the American Jazz bands, I don't know which ones will be here around that time but I shall certainly find out. After all, I'm a Jazz fan myself...

MAURICE LUBIN: ... I think you have made terrific strides with "Alpha". Keep up the fine work. In just a bit I'll send along some money for a sub to your 'zine. Hope you can find something to send me. I would like to get fans in my vicinity interested in trading and sending S.F. overseas...

+++ Thanks for the sub Maurice. We can sure use it... I will try and send you something as soon as I have some spare time... (Oh dear...)

BOE TUCKER : The fourth issue of Alpha arrived here yesterday, and many, many thanks for same. I thoroughly enjoyed it over the previous issues... especially issue number three, which never arrived. Several weeks ago, the postman stuck in my box an empty wrapper. It bore my address and your stamps so I knew it was from you. The contents had been lost somewhere en route however and some postal clerk somewhere along the line wrote me a note on the wrapper, calling my attention to the fact that it was empty. I thought this was very sporting of him. Judging by your remarks and some of the letters appearing in the fourth issue, that third one must have been good. If you have one to spare and don't object too much to spending another stamp on me, I'd really like to see it.

+++ We've had lots of requests for "back numbers" (so soon?) but we just haven't got 'em anymore. We've given all we had (good job we're not women eh Jan?) and now we've only one copy left of each ish between us... and we're not parting with that one for love or money...

DALE R. SMITH : Issue No 4 of Alpha arrived to-day. I am surprised and delighted. I am not sure why a copy was sent to me but I am certainly most pleased that it was. I was most astounded to discover that Alpha is an English language publication... You have a very good thing in Alpha and I trust that it will continue. Can I possibly get a copy of each of the first three issues to complete my file? And put me down on the sub list for future issues.

+++ More requests for back numbers... Sorry Dale. Thanks for the sub and the mags.

Librarian's Corner

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DILIGENCE IS THE WORLD'S UNDOING. Such is the translation of the above title, an original science fiction novel by a Dutch author. I must admit that I started reading the book with evil forebodings. Original science fiction? After the poor results that I have come across very occasionally in the last couple of years, this was only natural.

Imagine my surprise then, to find this book both an excellent novel, AND a very good science fiction one at that. It struck me the situation might be compared to finding the Martian Chronicles in a Scion edition.

The author tells us the story of a thinker, a philosopher, would perhaps do better, well-read, with a life of varied activities behind him, and at the time the novel starts, on a tour of the US as assistant to a lecturer. A glimpse into the future brings us to the first experiment on matter transmission of a living being, where Alec is invited to be present. Back to the present, where it concerns the novel, at least, continuing Alec's travels. The start of the Pousekovsky family project, undertaken with financial aid from industry and state alike, and located in the district where Alec spends his holidays, form the background in the first part of the book, and further on constitute the real base upon which the novel depends.

Alec considers the world to be doomed to become just a mass of robots, without any better instincts, and tries to convey this belief to the, not too beautiful daughter of the professor; she, logically, tries to bring him to other thoughts, whilst working on synthetic hormones to cancel out all symptoms of unhappiness in humans.

This would not make up a science fiction novel, but when one takes into account the matter transmitter, which the professor himself tries out, with bodily success, the science angle is getting more and more interesting. The point of the immaterial soul, not transmitted, but left floating around, is excellently described. Luckily that here the hormones of his daughter prove useful. One of the sons has erected a radar-viewer, enabling him to see the planets in detail, discovering one where humans are living, although the speech cannot be taken down. Films however are taken.

Another son, (it is a family project as you see), has managed to complete a translating machine, capable of translating, not only every language, but also lipreading any spoken word, into flawless English. This is of course used to decipher the film.

The plot suffers somewhat from 'overloading', which needs, in places, careful reading. And us thinking there were no authors available with a truly unlimited imagination. It is impossible to give a complete outline of the book on the space available, but you can gather from the above that this really is science fiction, first class.

Personally, I would consider the novel, where the literary angle is at stake, equal to Brown's "The lights in the sky are stars" (Project Jupiter), although from the sf angle, this book is better (The new one that is.)

Critics have found only praise for the literary qualities of the novel, and I lay myself down to their opinions, as they are far better qualified than I to judge on this.

I therefore recommend the book to any fan able to read Flemish (or Dutch) and should any be able to obtain the book locally, will gladly arrange for it to be sent against cash. The book is worth the price asked, very carefully published, and excellent science fiction, the best recommendation of all.

Jan Jansen.

RAMBLING WOMAN

He asked me to write for his magazine; something different, but keep it clean. I racked my brains for something new, ANYTHING to interest you, but all I could think of thru' the night, were Bess in space-ships and the speed of light. Horrible beasties ran around my brain; when I thought I'd lost them, they came again, followed by fans with large bottles of booze and a front-cover dame with nothing to lose. The titles of books which I read years ago, and movies which no decent place would show. How does one find a theme to use? To me there

doesn't seem much to choose: either you write about Tom and Joe, people that half the fans don't know, or you rummage thru' sewers for this and that, and print the results as a cosy chat. Running down fans they've never met, is a habit a lot of columnists got. So as I don't hate any fans I've seen, I cannot come forth with something mean. The minutes come and the hours go, but still there isn't much to show: of course I know that the saucer which fell, is not much about which to tell. But I thought that you might be glad to know, that it did not have very far to go. It was only cruising above the town, preparing to blast all the buildings down. It was really quite an enormous thing, considering it only had four to bring, and they were only half our height; it had come from a place beyond our sight. The government tried to keep us away, telling us it was something the Reds made that way; but still that is something you already know, as it happened so long ago; and still the clock goes ticking on, which means another minute is gone.

The only time I turned back the hours, I found myself with the oddest powers, view-

wing the great primeval seas and coal whilst it was still living trees. I saw the place where the ages dawned and I watched whilst Man in the ocean was spawned. I witnessed it when the last Ice-Age went, and was there when Atlantis to the sea-bottom was sent. Man to his destiny slowly rose, for the path was hard that he finally chose, and as I into the Future look, I read to you from the nearest book. Man set his foot upon the road of Space, because the Universe's most far-flung race, and bolstering up this yearning to roam, he has made everywhere his home; but as he has learned how not to fight, a human ship is a welcome sight. Now as the clock is striking once more, and the shadows lengthen along the floor, and the stars appear beyond my door, the darkness bids me "Say no more...".

+++++

Shirley Marriett.

the beginning of the end is staring right at you. Cf this issue, anyway. Not sorry to see it go, as it is even now already two days late, which will mean a probable delay of five days against our rigid (?) publication schedule. I wonder whether we'll be able to be ahead of the fans who are undoubtedly sharpening pencils to note down sarcastic notes intended for either of us. We deserve it!

THE LAST... PAGE

Not that we're worried about it. I have been thinking of blaming it on the bad influence of the London Circle on Dave, but as he undcuttedly would change his editorial, and make me the culprit, I'll refrain from my intention.

Remember the strange request I received last time? The one I have now had beats it by far. To quote, and translate: "We weren't half surprised to receive your magazine. I had heard about it from your father, but couldn't understand what it was about. Does it sell well in Belgium? I haven't heard of it over here! Do you print it in Flemish as well? How did you start a thing like that?..." That, dear fans, is from a letter written me by relatives in the US, Bound Brook, N.J. to be exact. Is there a willing young fan around to go and do the explaining? Not being fans, they are still ignorant about the existence of sf, as various requests for mags couldn't be filled because of the lack of such magazines in their community.', and I'm rather dreading the prospect of explaining the thing, and receiving a reply asking to explain the four page explanation already given. They'll catch on later, I suppose.

By the time you have finished this issue, would you take no. 4 and reread the editorial? Thank you!

I am rather doubtful about the reception this issue will receive on the continent. I'm afraid that any good opinion George's good friends may have had up to now, will be completely shattered. This could be considered as a wholesale attempt to sell Wadsworth to the fans here. It isn't! And becoming more and more careful about rash promises, I'll say, we'll try, I must stress, try, to behave confanlike in the future. If they would only tell me what they expect that to be.

Thanks to Messrs Spriel, Delplace & Bar, for some really constructive criticism on this point. Won't the others join in? We've had our fun. Now let's hear your side.

I usually make up a short review note of every fanzine as it comes in, to include in the next edition of Last Page. So this time. Only when I started making the notes into an agreeable whole, I found I needed some six pages. Well, we're already putting an extra couple of sheets into this issue, so I could choose between just mentioning the name of all those received, there wasn't much more rock, or just taking one or two. I prefer neither, and will refrain from saying anything. Will for the time being forget they exist.

The review column will be back in our next issue, here I go again, making rash promises, but in the meantime I have personally acknowledged, and sort of reviewed, every fanzine received so far, so I will hope that the lack of reviews here will be forgiven.

Though I am personally inclined to forget their existence, please don't start on the same track where it concerns Alpha, and especially Belgium and Holland, write in will you?

Other than the Dutch novel reviewed elsewhere in this issue, there isn't much available on the market in Flemish. I was nearly sold on a copy of SLAVES OF WARS, but found out in time that it was only a story about the second world-war. ISLANDS IN THE SKY will be published by the same firm who gave us the three juveniles some months ago. The translation of this has just been finished. Now for correction, type-setting, etc.

Space Fiction mentioned here last issue seems to have folded. Not surprised.

Both French magazines still going strong-French translations and even original work appearing in ever increasing proportions.

In Germany an Institute for Space travel will be opened this autumn.

I have had the pleasure of meeting two new fans in Brussels yesterday.

Charles Far, lawyer, and Maurice Delplace, student, show an earnest desire to help Alpha out of civilian.

You'll be hearing more from them in future copies. Although both are more inclined to the serious side

of supporting it, neither are devoid of a sense of humour. So that I can not hope they enjoy this one!

Talk about travelling. Visited him again about ten days ago, had a nice chat about sf and related items, and afterwards popped over to Nico's

place to say Hi!

Still hoping to get to Paris next month. Would like to meet the guys

there behind Mutton, the Rayon Fantastique, and the others grouped in

the Club.

Remember the talk about people mis-using stamps I sent them on behalf-

addressed envelopes? Well, the person I referred to, wrote about a week ago although not because of the note in

Alpha. His small undoubtedly is too thick to be penetrated thus easily.

However, someone else did, to whom I was not referring. Perhaps this person will read this, and note it. I

don't get mad over things like that unless they take over a year!

Other than Alpha, Janac has had a rest from here. Any persons I still

owe letters to: will be back again a few days after this is mailed out,

so you might be patient, please. May I take the liberty of recommending the Burdman's new sf books

recently published?

Project Jupiter (originally the stars in the sky are lights - almost, the other way around!) by

Fredric Brown and Star Science Fiction Stories were the first two

published, and worth the y/e asked. And that just about winds up this

column. So it says on the stamp, so that I have but a few more lines to write. Please really be running

down. A holiday would certainly be appreciated, but knowing the egotism

of our ex stenographer, I'm sure I won't get them. Delia's see, one day

rest... and the addressing? Pan,

Right of reply : IF I HADN'T BEEN SO DAFT, YOU WOULDN'T HAVEN BEEN BORN AT ALL.

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