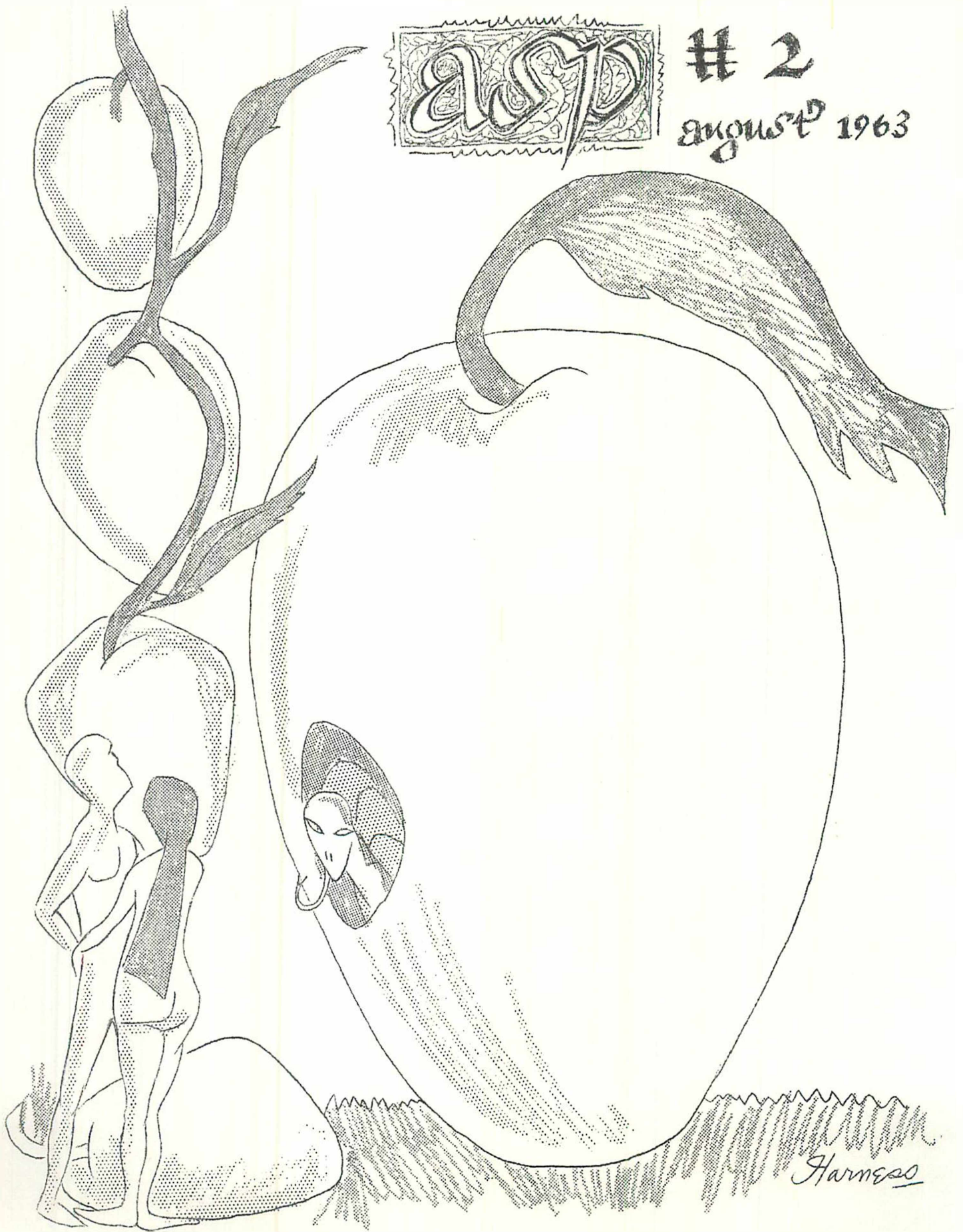
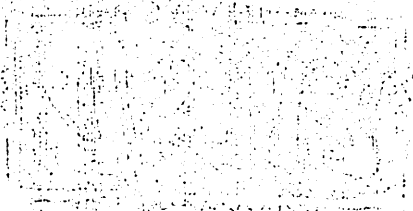




# 2  
August 1963



*Harness*



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# VENOM

Mimeographed by omtapress

Cover is by Harness, as is the back cover --if there is such a thing. Any interior illos will be by Ray Nelson or Rotsler. Headings by Gretchen Schwenn.

Contents this issue: A short editorial, mailing comments and an opinionated article on the Martin affaire by me, mailing comments by Gretchen--if she has recovered enough from Andy Main's discase to be able to write them.....

If all this seems to have an air of improvization about it--you're so right!

one year is double jeaporody or something. Anyhow, my moving at this time is responsible for the little time I've had to work on ASP.

For the benefit of such collectors as may be in the audience--if any--ASP #1 appeared in the March 1962 OMPA mailing. Never waste a title I say.

My new house is in north Oakland, fairly close to the Berkeley line. It's a fairly old white-stucco building built on the side of a hill. The roof of the big double garage is somewhat lower than the front porch. Eventually I hope to install a multilith in the garage, but that's a dream for the future. The house itself has a large living room with a fairly large dining room connecting off it in the form of an L. There is no wall between them, so together they form quite a large area to jam full of books and records and fanzine files.... The kitchen is of reasonable size and there are two small bedrooms connected by a bath. There is a small laundry room for beer making and a large basement for beer and tool storage. The small back yard is fenced in, but some more will probably have to be done to it to make it Frodo proof. And there seems to be plenty of closet space. The house is not ideal by any means, but it seems much more than adequate.

There have been several changes in my animal situation. Frodo is still with me as are Habakkuk and Deuteronomy (son of Muff Muff and Gideon). But Gideon disappeared and Muff Muff was run over. The new additions are Lilith, a calico queen, who was a housewarming present last year from John and Bjo, and Jonah, her black and white sone by Deut. You'll undoubtedly be hearing more about all these later. Also briefly on the scene was Genesis, a beautiful grey queen, by Heathcliffe out of Haunt. But alas, the wench is dead.....

Not much else has been happening this last couple of years. I still have the same job and the same pattern of living. I have been too much involved in conventions --to the great detriment of my correspondence (I owe letters to a goodly portion of FAPA) and my fanzine producing, but I'll straighten up and fly right once '64 is safely past.....

# le affaire martin

This Ed Martin business seems to be going on and on... But of course when someone regards any question as "a matter of principle," it does tend to go on and on. I'm not sure just what principle is involved here, it tends to vary according to who's talking, but the matter does seem to merit critical examination, even if only for the reason that Harry Warner and Redd Boggs feel so strongly about it.

There have been so many emotionally-loaded overtones and colorations drawn in by one side or the other that it is difficult to separate the emotional push-buttons that have set off the various reactions from the true principles in the case, but it may be just as well to try to do so.

In simplest terms, then: one side feels that Ed Martin was illegally and/or unjustly dropped from FAPA; the other feels that Martin may have been unjustly dropped, but he was not illegally so. Furthermore, having had their good faith in the matter attacked and reacting to this, they cannot properly evaluate the question of whether or not he was unjustly dropped.

There is one side issue that may be disposed of: no one feels that Martin would have made a valuable member of FAPA. The strongest statement I have heard in his favor is something along the lines, "One more worthless member wouldn't hurt FAPA any." At least one of the members protesting Martin's ouster had previously blackballed him because he thought Martin in his previous membership had been a definite liability. In fact before le affaire Martin a large part of FAPA had expressed antipathy towards Martin; however, from matters of principle or inertia, he was not blackballed.

So this is a pure case of principle. Objections to Martin's ouster do not come from his friends and well-wishers; they come from people really concerned about what they feel to be a violation of ethics. In some cases tempers on both sides have been raised because of previous personality conflicts, but this is irrelevant to the main issue.

And the point is perfectly correct. Your ethics aren't worth a damn if your rules of right behavior don't apply to the people you dislike as well as to the people you like.

There seems to be a lot of static about just what exactly did happen when Martin was dropped. Harniss and others have published confused accounts to the effect that the L. A. fans in FAPA got together, decided Martin should be dropped and discussed the best way to do it. These stories have been denied--and I believe the denials. Undoubtedly there was some discussion about the matter. It's only natural that if two or more FAPAs are gathered together, they'll discuss FAPA matters that may be of concern to them at the moment. But this is an entirely different thing from a conspiracy. And to say or imply that there was a conspiracy is, I think, being quite unjust.

There still remains some confusion about what did happen. But I believe John Trimble. After many rather violent and intemperate attacks had been made on him he said that regardless of what other L. A. fans may have been thinking or saying about the matter, that he, as Secretary-Treasurer, independently came to his own decision that Martin was a most undesirable member and that he should be dumped if any legal means could be found to do so.

This seems a reasonable position, providing the means adopted are legal. If they are not, the officer in question is certainly subject to impeachment. In this particular case, however, I think it was a mistake to use this procedure as Martin, while evidently a worthless member, is not so undesirable as to justify it. I believe that even John has admitted that he made a mistake here. And considering the strength of the attacks made upon him and Bjo and their perfectly natural reactions in return, this demonstrates rather strongly that he is trying his best to be fair and objective about the matter. Whatever your disagreements with John on the matter, it still seems obvious that he acted in good faith.

But John maintains that his decision, although perhaps inadvisable, is still perfectly legal, and that he pointed out to Martin his perfectly legal channels of appeal.

And these are two different points. John's decision may be inadvisable or unjust as hell, but still perfectly legal. I think that a lot of people involved in this discussion are confusing these two points. They are not the same, and the ethics in each of these matters is entirely different. I think it may help to treat them differently.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of unjust, I believe that John's decision is perfectly legal. It has to be. It is part of the Secretary-Treasurer's duties to check on the FAPA member's renewal credentials, including whether or not they have 8 pages of original material. The Secretary-Treasurer has to make this decision. There is nothing in the constitution requiring his decision to be a wise one. Or even an accurate one. How the hell could there be? That's why there are channels of appeal--to provide relief for a perfectly legal but unjust or unwise decision.

The merits of John's decision do not enter into its legality. It seems clear to me that Martin's material was not "reprints" in the strict sense of the word. But I wasn't the Secretary-Treasurer. John was. He had the legal right and responsibility to make a decision. He made it. Whether or not it is a correct decision has nothing to do with its legality.

But there have been cries that once John admitted his decision was a mistake, it was his business to correct it. Or the business of a subsequent Secretary-Treasurer or some other FAPA officer to correct it.... Now this is illegality. And chaos. If officers start overturning any decision they may happen to disagree with, we indeed have a government of men, not laws.

But it still may be argued that John could have reversed his own decision. Perhaps he could have, but even if he could, that would be his responsibility and entirely up to him. But in any case I think it would be a most unwise precedent. If this were started a Secretary-Treasurer would have to face all sorts of appeals from his friends about how they really meant to get their dues in on time or this review wasn't really a reprint since they paraphrased it, etc. No, there lies Pandora's box.

And while much of the rhetoric being used in Martin's behalf is couched in terms of "we want a government of laws, not men" and/or "Give us a just administration of the laws,"... this rhetoric is inappropriate. It seems to me that the concern about Martin is not a desire for just administration of the laws, but a desire to see justice done in spite of the law.

Well, O.K., this is a legitimate position. I do think however that for the sake of justice, clarity, and as little emotional hassle as possible, rhetoric appropriate for the position of "just administration of the laws" should not be borrowed to support "justice in spite of the law." Also I don't see that attacking the good faith of either side is any way to clear up the matter or in any sense to see justice done.

The main principle of the "Justice in spite of the law" group seems to be that one FAPA member should be treated like another, that the law should be applied with equal rigor to each member. This is fine—up to a point, but there are always special circumstances. So it seems to be O.K. to sign petitions to abate the rigor of the law for friends and/or people you think have contributed to and are valuable to FAPA. Or even for a not quite legitimate goof-up—like Terry Carr's forgetting to send in his dues. This is accepted. I don't hear any loud outcry about the injustice of having Terry Carr as a member of FAPA. Even FAPA members who think these petitions shouldn't be signed, are often glad that they have been and seem well content with a FAPA with these reinstated members.

This does not prevent the full rigor of the law being applied when the members think it should be.

The law was just a little bit over rigorous with Martin. But obviously he would have had no difficulty in getting a petition signed. Hell, I would have signed it myself. (I wouldn't have if I thought Martin had goofed, but I disagree with John's decision.) He probably wouldn't have had to circulate a petition even.....A proper and all.

But since Martin did none of this, what could the officers do? At least as officers.... They are supposed to uphold the constitution, not to subvert it—even in the interests of justice. Perhaps in an emergency this could/should be disregarded. But I fail to see how *le affaire* Martin can be regarded as an emergency.

It is true that any of the officers could have circulated a petition to reinstate Martin if they had felt strongly about the matter. But so could have any other member. I tend to think that complains about the injustice done Martin are not resting on as firm a moral base as they might when they come from people who have not circulated a petition themselves—or helped to do so. Even if they regarded it as a lost cause. After all, doing nothing, they make it even *loster*....

Well Ruth Berman did put forth a petition—and it failed. I wonder how many members didn't bother doing anything about this petition because they assumed it was illegal, coming from a w/ler?

It also seems relevant to ask: How much justice is due a person who doesn't demand it for himself? (Assuming he is an adult capable of handling his own affairs.)

But I disagree with the point that people who didn't send Martin advice on how to appeal and urging him to do so are not in a good position to complain. I think that the major desire of this side is not to see Martin in FAPA, but to have everyone involved admit that a mistake has been made and then to rectify it. This is a slightly different kettle of fish. Justice has been offended. Retribution must be made.

But it's not as simple as that. Yes a mistake has been made, if you will, a bad mistake, an unjust mistake. Nevertheless, two wrongs do not make a right, and since Martin did not take the channels open to him, I can't see any way of correcting the mistake that is not at least as bad as the original mistake. Except, of course, 33 signatures on a petition.

There might be difficulty getting them though. Martin's behavior was not calculated to win friends and influence people. Even some of his original supporters seem to have changed their minds. He did behave like a whinning brat. Of course this has nothing to do with the principles involved, but people do react to this sort of thing. Especially if they don't see the principles involved or quite agree with their all importance.....

And for that matter the rhetoric applied by Martin's supporters doesn't exactly seem designed to win anyone to their point of view, consisting as it does of reproaches hurled at the evil doers. It would seem more useful to first convince people that evil has been done and that something should be done about it.

Well, pretty obviously this is going to change no one's mind about anything. Actually I suppose it is a plea for tolerance, addressed principally to Martin's supporters. I ask you to recognize that many of us on the other side--if not all of us--are concerned about the ethics and justice of the matter, and that we aren't just ignoring the matter because it is inconvenient and/or we are more interested in getting rid of Martin than in justice. There is room for legitimate disagreement here about just what is the ethically right and just thing to do....

In closing let me apologize for some loaded words and phrases I've used here; however I am trying to be honest and these phrases reflect my attitudes towards the positions held--though not to the people holding them. Misguided though they be, I respect them very much.

But there have been many loaded words used on this matter--mostly by Martin's supporters it seems to me. Of course they are very much concerned and maybe I'm prejudiced. And they are in a sort of rhetorical bind. It is difficult to strike an ethical position without seeming to hold yourselves very superior both to the evil men against you and the clods who haven't thought about the matter at all. I've tried to avoid that here.

Who's afraid of blank, white space?

# Vibrations

Boggs - CELLOPHANE HEAVENS A very lovely and entertaining bit, Redd; a delight and all that. I enjoyed it immensely.

Nancy Rapp - TORRENTS I hope things are a little less hectic now, Nan and that you and Art are having a good time in Italy.

Warner - HORIZONS Did you read the record reviews in HIGH FIDELITY ten years or so ago? I thought they were pretty good--especially those by C. G. Burke. But then he always agreed with me....

'Tis funny, Harry, but The Girl, the Gold Watch and Everything around here without any mention of Thorne Smith being made. The usual remark was "UNKNOWN plus sex." But now that you mention Thorne Smith I do see the similarity. I like Thorne Smith better though--that insane wackiness he has seems somehow more satisfying, even more realistic than the logical, rational wackiness of the UNKNOWN school. But the UNKNOWN-type fantasy can be much funnier; perhaps there's always a little bit of horror or fear hidden away in Thorne Smith.

Eney - OH, BLOODY HELL! Well at least you made the post mailing.

Leman - THE VINEGAR WORM Glad to hear that someone is taking TNYBR apart...But is it strictly cricket to call it TNY instead of NYT? One does say THE TIMES, of London. But THE TIMES of New York?

I thought your "folk song" was quite amusing.....

F M Busby - SERCON'S BANE The Roy J Snell books I sort of remember were about boy scouts, camp life, the great outdoors, all that stuff. Of course he might have written others.

McPhail - PHANTASY PRESS. To me that's the best cover on any PHANTASY PRESS that I've seen. It came out very well.

Jacobs - THE RAMBLING FAPS Shame upon you, Sir, causing confusion to poor, innocent collectors! And I bet you aren't even ashamed of yourself. But it was one of the best zines in the mailing.

It's really a shame the degeneracy that overtakes these California fans when they get to New York.....

Elinor Busby - SALUD A brick house with four bedrooms, and only \$12-15,000 sounds fantastic to me. Such a house in the Bay Area would cost around \$20,000 I imagine.

I see by your comments to Terry regarding style that we have similar attitudes on the subject. But I don't mind style contributing effect or adding to the atmosphere or mood, just so long as it doesn't interfere with the progress of the story or much worse be the story. But then I guess, if someone is a wordhappy type, the "silken-swift type of thing could never interfere....Sigh.



Silverberg - AK K A D - Congratulations on your "new career". I'm glad that you are now able to do something that you think is worth doing. And your account of it and how it happened was the most interesting thing in the mailing --to me anyhow.

L.A. Fandom - Let's Throw Redd Boggs in the Pool! I enjoyed this one-shot, especially the tactful way Redd managed to wiggle out of it all. That man is a born diplomat!

Brown - POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC - The Last Night of Doubt is by far the worst play I've ever read. Not only is it lousily written but the content is about equal in significance to that of mailing comments dashed off at the last moment to meet a deadline--like these for instance--boring platitudes and half-thought-out ideas trundled forward to fill up space. Argggggggh!

I must admit however that I have probably started plays equally as bad but stopped reading them after a page or two. This one I stuck to to the bitter end. On the other hand one reason I stuck to it was because it is so bad it is fascinating. If it were somewhat better, I would have put the thing down in disgust.

Paul Stanbery, genius? Ha! Genius presupposes some taste and judgment--even where one's own work is concerned; if a genius produced anything remotely like this, he would suppress it at once. But a genius, or even anyone with a modicum of talent, would be incapable of writing anything this bad--even with a monumental hangover on the 4th day of a convention; he couldn't even do it deliberately. There are limits.

Evans - CELEPHAIS I've actually never paid any attention to street lights in any town where I happened to be. The only exception is Austin, Texas. There they have very high towers every few blocks and these towers are covered with strange blue lights. The over-all effect is one of bright moonlight. Very strange.

Ballard - WRAITH I'm afraid I'm addicted to coffee. Can't seem to wake up in the morning without it. But still I only drink 4 or 5 cups a day. Dave Pollard used to drink around 30 cups a day. Then his doctor told him he'd have to cut it out. So he did--cold turkey. For 3 weeks he slept 14 hrs. a day and had blinding headaches....then his metabolism went back to normal.

Boggs - COCKATRICE With all your references to nostalgia when I began the closing filler story with Niky talking to Jack I made some sort of mental slip and thought you were talking about "One Man's Family." g

California seems to agree with you, Redd. At least it seems to be having a good effect on your writing. I think your writing in both of your zines this mailing is the best I've seen from you since I've been in fandom. And that is very good indeed.

Carr - LIGHTHOUSE \* Graham Terry, sometimes your taste croggles me; after all these years I guess I should be used to it but I confess that nowadays I always turn to "Unabashed Egoboo" to see what you've chosen now. But this time you really amazed me; why there are things on your list that must be there for their content. Can you be weakening? Could I have hastily skimmed over some gems of style? Gadzooks.

Pete, you mean the Peace Marchers were wrong? I know I'm out of touch--being very apolitical these days--but that doesn't sound like the good ol' Socialist Party of yore.... Just what is it's position nowadays? Peace With Honor? (Just in case someone gets the wrong idea, I think Kennedy handled a very messy situation very well.)

White - NULL-F Just what did Norm Clarke think of your record reviews, Ted? Also, while I think about it, in numerous discussions both with me and with others, verbally and in print, some sort of attack has been made on your position regarding music, the main point usually being something along the lines that you aren't at all interested in music and/or its emotional content, but rather in the techniques of the musicians playing it. But in your rebuttals you always ignore this point. Now I'm damn sure you could put up a good argument here, either denying that you felt this way or justifying feeling this way. But you never do. You sort of ignore the whole point as if it were irrelevant or the people making this point, serious. Then you go back to discussing music--except you never mention anything but the technique of the musicians. Sigh.

Speaking of technique, while pseudo-Campbellian sounds like a fine swear word, just what does it mean? And for that matter you seem in good form this issue, slashing right and left, with blood and gore dogging your footsteps....

Walter. Yes, Ardis's Christopher is a most remarkable child. Self-possessed, outgoing and well-behaved. And he can handle that holy terror, Poopsie, who is two years older! Remarkabl@ child.

Gary. I think that in your elaboration of your statement "To be successful as a writer, one of the most important things is to learn how to observe, and then to choose your words so that they best convey the flavor of your observation!" you have confused two different things, conveying mood by choice of words and rhythm of language and selecting appropriate details from a mass of observations to best convey the meaning you see. They are very different things; some writers excel in one; some in the other; a few have both.

While it's not exactly the point that Harry Warner, Buck Coulson, etc. have in mind, I agree with you that animals in general suffer more fear and terror, not to mention pain, than do bulls in the bull ring. (in the slaughterhouse)

No, Gary, you disremember Jungle Tales of Tarzan. Tarzan was not hung-up on this female ape. He was actually just like a normal American boy. He saw that all the other apes had girl friends and he wanted one too, to be in the swim and sort of like a trophy and all.....But in love with her? Nasty ol' sex? Perish the thought!

You slash very well, Gary, but in general I think I prefer Ted's slashing to yours, even though it's much more ferocious. When Ted slashes, you know goddamn well he's wounded and is hitting back (or he feels wounded anyhow.) With you I usually get the impression that you are slashing just to be clever--which is not quite as excusable. But I admit I admire the technique. Of course rumor hath it that you are now on a kick of being "completely honest with yourself and everyone else" so you probably aren't consciously putting down people just to show how clever you are. And maybe not even unconsciously. But it sure reads that way.

And by the way...if the grapevine is correct, being completely honest with yourself and with everybody else are generally two incompatible goals. Your unconscious is just as much a part of you as your conscious; it's also very crafty and stubborn. If the silly conscious blabs all that it knows, the unconscious will take damn good care that the conscious doesn't know what is going on. If you really want to "Know Yourself" you should take some such attitude as this: "I want to know; if I don't feel like it I won't act on the knowledge until I feel able to and I certainly won't tell anybody, but I want to know anyhow, know things about myself that I disapprove of, perhaps that will revolt me." With this sort of attitude you can find out a hell of a lot, but if you insist upon acting or talking about what you find out--until you get used to it--you won't find out very much. The unconscious is very efficient.

And why am I putting you down? I dunno. Maybe I'm in a bad mood.

POSTMAILINGS - Sylvia, yours was received first—and enjoyed, but with packing and all I just can't locate it and can't remember the name of it.

You are right about the great game of "Psychology"; it can indeed be a vicious game.....

Coulsons - VANDY Even though Buck is regretablely dropped from the masthead because of forced lack of activity, Coulsons it still is.

From all I've read on the subject—and heard from women—so-called "vaginal orgasm" consists mostly of psychological satisfaction, including both the "joys of surrender" and the satisfaction gained from giving pleasure to a beloved lover. Sounds pretty thin to me.

Bob Tucker. Even though your Las Vegas article didn't appear in the last mailing I want to comment on it. I enjoyed the article very much, but you seemed to have experienced a totally different Las Vegas from the one I did. I think probably the main difference is that you were comparing Las Vegas prices with small town prices, while I compare them with New York and San Francisco prices. I kept marveling at how cheap everything was.

I have heard—and I believe it—that the gambling casinos price their food, liquor and entertainment as "loss leaders" to drag in vacationists, figuring that once the suckers are there, they'll lose enough at gambling to more than make it up. Along these lines casinos in Los Vegas sponser trips from L.A. and casinos in Reno sponser trips from San Francisco. So for a minimal \$5.00 or so you get a plane trip to and from the dens of iniquity. In addition you get coupons for drinks, meals, gambling chips worth considerably more than your original outlay.

I've paid \$4.00 for a meal in Las Vegas which I would have to pay at least \$10 to duplicate in either N.Y. or S.F. And I got considerably better service in Las Vegas. Also, the surroundings were much more plush, but I don't care terribly much about that. And top-flight entertainment is almost always available with a "ringside table" to be had for the asking since 99-44/100th% of the crowd is hypnotized over the slot machines or gambling tables. Sometimes you don't even need a reservation, but can wander right up to the ringside table with your drink in your hand. I think Las Vegas, and to a lesser extent Reno, with Lake Tahoe coming up fast, is a wonderful place for a vaction, providing you have no temptation to gamble. And I detest gambling.

There is one area though where the casinos haven't been able to restrain themselves from clipping the customer: lodging. Room rents are not cheap and they double on the week-ends. However, one can still stay at some of the outlying motels and come out all right.

Pelz - ANKUS ichabodings is good even though not quite equal to a Brandonization of Marquis.

Hi yourself, Bruce. But it's not your gung-hoing I dislike... I like people to be gung-ho about the things I like. What I don't like is for people to take them over and start translating them into their own terms. You know how sequels by different authors are always panned.....

Supersquirrel was the greatest—although I can easily see why both Walter and Ron dislike it so much. But that's the best caricature of Walter I've ever seen. But don't you think the dialogue in the last panel should have been "Oh, Good Grief!" Not "Oh, my Gosh!"

Morse - THE BULL MOOSE Very interesting account of Arthur. I disagree with you somewhat about the Saxons though. God knows they had their faults, in fact they were brutal barbarians, but compare them to the inhabitants of pre-Roman Britain and they don't look so bad. And while of course it is just as much a comment on Roman rule as it is on the Britains, Roman civilization was a strictly grafted-on affair which was withering away even without the help of the conquerors. There were individual exceptions of course, but they weren't enough to maintain the land. In fact the Saxons, Angles, Jutes, etc. conquered, not through their own strength, but through the weakness of the "inhabitants of the land."

Also, while the amalgam between Saxon and Norman civilization seems far preferable to either of the original cultures, if I had to choose, I think I'd take the Saxon. The Normans offend my morals and the Saxons merely offend my taste. Norman civilization was rigid, authoritarian, dictatorial, cruel; the Saxon was easygoing, tolerant, lax, brutal. Norman civilization certainly possessed many more graces, but Saxon offered much more scope to the individual. There are more important considerations that whether or not the trains run on time or the roads or kept up, even though these do have their own importance.....

Economou - PHLOTSAM Phyllis, how could you? You will be sorely missed. But that's the best farewell to "fandom" I've ever seen. Snif.

Eney - TARGET: FAPA I think you put the long-bow down too much. You do point out its limitations, but those limitations were essentially that until the invention of gunpowder it was not enough to win battles--you had to seize and hold the strongholds as well. And the strongholds were mighty fortresses that usually had to be starved out. Gunpowder changed all this. But nevertheless, even during the pre-gunpowder period, it was still necessary to win battles; and the longbow was a deadly weapon that still possessed more range and firepower than any other weapon ever invented until well into the 19th Century when rifles were finally perfected. (Individual weapon I mean.)

I have always heard that the longbow fell into disuse principally because of the long and arduous training necessary to become skilled in its use. Social conditions changed and boys were no longer willing to devote themselves to the craft. (By the time you were a man--it was too late; you couldn't become a real expert unless you began early.

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Well, that finishes the 103rd Mailing. However I remember in days gone by there was a discussion going on fraternities. I recall both Gregg Calkins and Terry Carr saying that they couldn't understand why some people were so down on fraternities. Well boys, you must remember Liberal habits. They will keep fighting battles long since won. In the first part of the 20th Century the Greeks completely dominated campus life--and they were snobbish as hell: to get in you had to be white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, with money, athletic ability, or perhaps a pleasing personality. And unless you were a Greek you didn't stand a chance of any campus office, honor, or social distinction. And your sexual opportunities were sharply curtailed. There were always rumblings, but successful revolt didn't occur until the Roosevelt era. WWII helped, but the real coup de grace was not given the Greeks until the post-war influx of veterans. And still on many campuses--particularly the large state universities, the Greeks still have the same attitudes of yore (although there are many break-thrus even here), but they no longer have the power and if they are of the snobbish type, generally exist in a vacuum.

It's also worth noting that even early in the century, in small colleges (mostly way out in the sticks) fraternities were not like that, but were really social clubs.

# Literary Criticism

by Gretchen Schwenn ✱

It is impolite to apply literary criteria to the productions of amateur publishing associations — so, at least, I read in a number of the apazines through which I have been browsing for a long time now. It may be so. However, many impolite deeds are done in this world, even by me.

Apazines are filled with material written in a variety of the standard literary forms. It would be hard to imagine that no one would think of considering it literature — that is what it is, good or bad.

Poetry and drama are two of the most important forms of literature; one sees little of either in apa publications. . . . . Nonetheless, the "little magazines" are amateur publications of a nonapa variety. In these is most of the serious poetry published in this country. (Of course I am not referring to poets of the past, in their reprints.) There isn't much serious poetry printed in apazines, and what little there is, is rarely good, with the exception of verse parody. But verse parody may be better considered in the category of satire.

Published drama is a rare thing today, almost as rare as stage productions. The latter rarity may cause the former, in part. Here is a puzzle to enliven sick conversations: "If Shakespeare were writing his plays today, who would produce them?" This is not a rhetorical question; it has some interesting complexities.

Fiction is sparsely represented in apazines. On the other hand, it is fiction that sells most readily in the market. Perhaps anyone who can write good fiction would prefer to sell it (provided it is not too good to be a commodity), than make a gift of it to the apa. Well, this may in part be the reason. I think there are other reasons, too, of which I offer one. Really serious fiction, unlike satire, poetry\* or the essay, needs space in which to develop its theme. A book-length MS, even a short novel, is not a chore of typing, stenciling, and mimeography that any reasonable person would greet with cries of joy.

Articles and essays are the stock-in-trade of the "serious" apazine. Some of these are quite good, and some of them are lamentably "serious". Too much preoccupation with the idea, to the detriment of literary form (and even grammar, at times) can reduce an essay to self-parody. Of course, any category of literature can be serious, but overweening seriousness, to the point of vanity, will kill anything. This is where a writer of satires has an advantage, if he knows how to use it.

Many varieties of satire are common in apazines, the parody above all. Pure satire, in the manner of Swift or Peacock, is not usual, but I have seen some occasional, excellent examples. Irony enlivens much of the writing, and is often used for itself alone. Amateur publications excell in the entire field of satirical modes.

Memoirs, diaries, and letters abound in apa publications. If the ink holds up, historians of the future will judge much of the private life of this era by the writings in apazines. And why not? Apa writers may not consider themselves examples of the average man, as indeed they are not, for the average man does not

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\* lyric poetry

indulge to a large extent in diary-keeping, reminiscences, or lengthy correspondence; these are a rather traits of the intellectual stratum. Historians are not so naifs that they do not allow for this. As we live in a time when intellectuals are conditioned to feel shame and to deny that they are intellectuals, I will say no more.

And literary criticism is the basic fare of apazines. Sometimes it is criticism of a genre, such as sciencefiction. Sometimes it is labeled as a book review. Most of it is called "Mailing Comments."

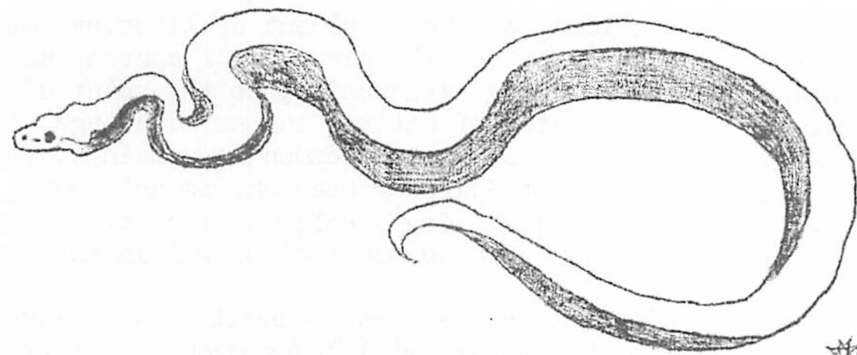
I think a greater self-consciousness of form would benefit amateur publications. Essays, articles, satire, letters, memoirs, all have a long tradition whose study is interesting and productive. (So does grammar — this comment is not directed at everyone.) Drama may be temporarily in hibernation, but poetry is not, despite occasional groans heard. The hundreds of "little magazines" are full of it, good and bad, and a substantial amount is published in hardcover. The art of theoretical criticism, essays, satire — all the letters— survives well indeed; there are quite a few commercial magazines dedicated to them, and there are hundreds of fanzines and apazines.

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In the FAPA mailing # 103 the distribution of material by literary form was as follows ( to the nearest quarter-page, poetry by number of lines):

Poetry	115 (lines)
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Drama	63.50 pages
Criticism and reviews	45.00
Essays and articles	32.75
Memoirs	36.25
Fiction	4.00
Satire	9.25
Letters	5.50
Miscellaneous	3.25
Business	19.00
	218.50 pages, poetry and art excluded

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Cellophane Heavens, R. Boggs, "Adventures on a Velocipede".

This is a very interesting parody. It resembles some earnest combinations of timesheet and shopper's notes that I have seen in apazines, but of course its ultimate source is the "modern" (at least forty years old) school that includes Hemingway, Hammett, Kerouac, and oh so many others. This style has been often parodied, but rarely with success, for sometimes the original itself provides quite adequate hilarity to the critical reader -- one is left with the feeling that a copious quotation would be the only burlesque possible. Yet Boggs, in the succinctness of four octave pages, has managed an elegant laugh at the whole school -- a laugh often attempted in professional, and even apan, parody, but one which has usually broken of its excess weight. It is a laugh well needed, for the continual influence of these writers is entirely too unconscious in most of us.

The mannerisms parodied had a great surge outward with the popularity of Hemingway and imitators. This cataloguing of personal detail, minute-by-minute, was once intended to provide a simple, inarticulate-male realism, and this was effective until someone noticed that not all Males are, or have been, inarticulate. Say, almost none of the writers, philosophers, statesmen, whathaveyou, of the past. Nor is the peasantry of other countries, except to visitors with little command of the language. I have spent a number of years among peasants in other countries, and have found expressive and complex human beings among them, in the same percentage as any other social stratum. A competent writer would present them in depth; no one could do this who insists upon forcing them into allegorical Masculinity -- masculinity of a type born in the myths of urban USA.

I quote Boggs in a beautiful example of the first-person travel narrative in the "realistic" manner: "The sun kept rising higher in the sky till I thought it couldn't get much higher. I was right. Soon it started to get lower."

The vocabulary of "Adventures . . ." is not that of Kerouac and mimics, but Boggs has caught neatly the feel of deadly aimlessness. Too much criticism and too many of the parodies of Kerouac have foundered on the perversions, the sex, and the four-letter-words, but these are not important to what is truly wrong with Kerouac et Cie.

Yet it's not the existance of manneristic writers and superficial writers which torments me as a critic. It's not even all the books in imitation. I want an end to the countless, unknowing adoptions of the insipid and the shallow that flood the magazine tales, the paperbound and hardbound novels, the literary publications (commercial and noncommercial), and even personal correspondence. In apazines there are too many unconscious Hemingways and Hammetts engaged in describing, drearily, their trips and routines, or itemizing collections and thoughts, in a manner of the most lustful monotony. But the superficial is boring.

Poetry, drama, and (nowadays) fiction are called the major literary arts because it is thought that a special talent is necessary for them. Other forms are called minor, but this is not because they are less interesting. It is believed that they are less difficult, that anyone can learn to utilize them competently. If we omit people too lazy to work a little and others so sheeplike that they accept the prevalent mode in all things (ha!), then this is probably true. One is not born with a literary style imprinted in the brain cells by the Almighty Novelist. Most style is picked up from the prevailing culture -- it even affects the born Shakespeare. Unfortunately, pseudo-realism, in all its variations, is the prevailing popular culture. But it is not the only culture we possess. Writing in English has a long history.

As a casual listing, I suggest diarists try John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys, Horace Walpole, Fanny Burney, Johnson and Boswell, The Greville Memoirs, The Creevey Papers, . . . and many, many others. Let collectors look at the reference

division of any good library, or even the Golden Nature Guides. There are quite a few ways of listing and discussing a collection, without need to imitate an automobile parts catalogue with irrelevant, sexual overtones.

"Adventures on a Velocipede" does not make the mistake of Catch-22 -- continuing a delightful satire to the point-of-no-return. "Adventures . . ." is brief, apt, and well-put-together. The pleasure of reading a first-rate parody should not be as rare as it is.

Horizons, # 94, H. Warner.

This issue of Horizons contains one poem, a story, and quite a bit of literary criticism and memoirs. The description of a job in the ticket office at the railway station was very interesting, giving some clear pictures of a confounded and confused bureaucracy. I also caught the feel of the author's emotions, and of the hospital, in the article about his broken hip. Warner has a gentle style that nonetheless makes its point clear.

The Vinegar Worm, Vol. II, No. 5, Ed. R. Leman.

What is the point of "Curds and Goster Meal"? Twenty-seven lines from a folk-song, reprinted in order to slip in as the next-to-the-last line, "Let's ban the atom bomb today." Humour does often exist in incongruity, but there is more to it than that. Is this a shaggy-dog poem? It needs delousing.

"My Vacation" is said to be written by Nancy Leman, Grade 4. I don't believe it. You have to be old and corrupt to be quite that "cute". When a cute little girl presents poor Daddy as an utter martyr, all inadvertently, of course, one senses something behind the arras. This one needs deratting.

Sercon's Bane, # 16, F. M. Busby.

Man, I never criticize myself, especially when he's bigger than I am. However -- I have a request. You state at the bottom of page six, "This has been an exercise in Tantric Yoga." (You can't be referring to "erected by a race of ambulatory jelly doughnuts," no, no.) Anyhow, I can't find the Tantrism in this issue. Please send diagram.

And a question -- why did they stop calling you Boozby?

If the Aleutian Islands bothered you, reflect on this: "It is a well-known fact that the female heart has predominant weakness for military uniforms, that of the cavalry-man ever having the preference." -- von Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis.

Salud, # 16, E. Busby.

Your defense of bullfights is concise and deadly as the moment of truth. If those who commonly attack bullfights didn't use such fallacious expressions, one might be able to respect their position. I would grant that it makes sense for a vegetarian Buddhist to disapprove of bullfights, but the usual tourist who is aghast and walks out from the arena, is the same person who later orders a steak, rare, of course, for supper. An even worse variety is the type who shows his disapproval by yelling at the bull, "Kill that torero!" An average humanitarian. Of course, he may think he is rooting for the underdog, in which case I would like to drop him off in a large, fenced field inhabited by one angry underbull. My humanitarianism comes out in a desire to educate, you see.

Let's Throw Redd Boggs in the Pool, Southern California FAPA Cartel.

I hope it shocks no one that I included the lines of "Song for a One-Shot Session," by L. Moffatt in the count of poetry in this mailing. This is a good, competent job of verse for a song. It's a great deal more to my taste than the pretentious asininity I encounter with anguish, over and over and over, among those who think POETRY is just something you write out of the depths of your unique heart.



It must be unusual to be unique, for some of these POETS assure me that the status can be lost by contamination. The fine creative fire is lost, you see, if you learn how to tune your guitar.

Ellik writes part two of "fictionalized accounts of actual dreams," and will not say what I think, except to comment that the dreamer's unconscious is not one I'd care to have in my head. By the way, all unicorns are male; they seek out the female virgin of the human species and lay that nice, big, red and white horn in her lap, for reasons known only to unicorns, of course, of course. All rams are male, too. That takes care of the "good side." . . . I yearn to say more, but I won't. It isn't quite fair to judge a man by his unconscious, especially when he doesn't know he has one.

The entire issue was unusually coherent, for a one-shot. It was lacking some of those really unusual efforts I have seen elsewhere. It's very difficult to write fifty lines of material that says not one thing at all. This is not to imply that I haven't seen this accomplishment in other one-shots.

Cockatrice, R. Boggs, is one of the really well-edited apazines I have seen. Criticism, poetry, and satire nicely balanced one with the other, nothing too long or too brief. The only suggestion I can make is that FAPA circulate a petition to refuse resignation to Boggs

Poor Richard's Almanac, # 15, R. Brown.

This issue contains an essay by Brown, on the genius of Paul Stanbery, and a 63½ page drama by Stanbery. I would not lament the lack of writing in drama these days, if all I could read were this sort of thing. I have never before read anything so poorly conceived and written, at least not at such length. It is a pretentious imitation, although the author may not know this, of half-a-dozen types of modern drama. The soliloquies are incredible — a matrix of cliches, larded with phrases adapted and adopted from Shakespeare and the Bible. Of course, the characters in the play talk to the audience and discuss the fact that they are in a play — but life itself is a play, you see. The characters are also symbolic, of course, which is the complete excuse for their absolute lack of depth, inconsistency, and the mediocrity of their every word.

I could not completely criticize this play in less than ten times its length, but a sample might indicate something about the author's ability. Here is a Negro, trumpet player, talking in Stanbery's notion of jazz talk: "I can get drinks anyplace I like, see there. I've got the constitution behind me, see. I'm cool stuff on the coast, man. I'm rich. You know, Rockefeller-stuff." Also: "When you swing you are not, so swing boy." Ah, well, the only true way to appreciate this play as it merits, is to read it word for word. It's a very unusual thing, for most writers of this abysmal incompetence don't finish what they begin. And of those few who do finish, many have the commonsense not to publish, or have a friend who has the commonsense to warn them. Paul Stanbery's "The Last Night of Doubt" is uncommon. A real collector's item.

