

COCKATRICE number four, spring 1963. Published occasionally for the Fantasy Amateur Press association by Redd Boggs. This issue is intended for circulation with FAPA mailing #103. The famous bibliographer William Swan Sonnenschein changed his name to William Swan Stallybrass. (Ref. Collison, Indexes and Indexing.) Cockatrice insignia to the right is by Richard Bergeron. The Gafia press.

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Nothing ventured, nothing lost.

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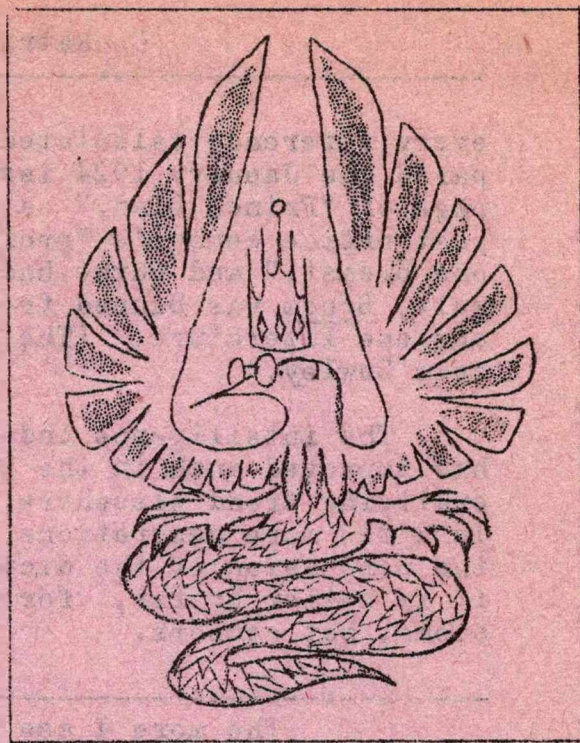
### Breasting the Tide

I have been studying the little magazines of late. Little magazines -- i.e., the non-commercial avant-garde journals -- are much like fanzines and are therefore fascinating. Numerous titles used by fanzines were first used by the little magazines (Pegasus, Fantasia, Outsiders, Smoke, The Outlander, Chanticleer, Horizons, Opus, Fanfare, Orion, and many others), and at least one little magazine (Aesthete, 1925, issued by Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, Hart Crane, et al) was produced at a one-shot session.

Slightly more visible to the official eye than fanzines, and just as daring and outspoken, the little magazines have suffered frequently from charges of purveying "lascivious literature." Two cases I've seen chronicled are especially interesting. One is described by Margaret Anderson in her autobiography, My Thirty Years' War. Miss Anderson published The Little Review (1914-29) in which James Joyce's Ulysses ran serially for three years. Four instalments were seized and burned by the post office:

It was like a burning at the stake as far as I was concerned. The care we had taken to preserve Joyce's text intact; the worry over the bills that had accumulated when we had no advance funds; the technique I had used on printer, bookbinders, paper houses -- tears, prayers, hysterics, or rages -- to make them push ahead without a guarantee of money; the addressing, wrapping, stamping, mailing; the excitement of anticipating the world's response to the literary masterpiece of our generation...and then a notice from the Post Office: BURNED.

Even more fantastic is the case of Broom (1921-4), under its later editors, Matthew Josephson and Malcolm Cowley. In the November 1923 issue Broom published a story by one Charles L. Durboraw, a Chicago paperhanger, called "An Awful Storming Fire, of Her and I on a Journey to the Secret of the Sun, by the author who solved the mysterious riddle," which raised the ire of the post office censor. Fortunately he did not discover the story till the magazine had passed through the mails, but he issued threats to crack down on "anything the least bit off-color" in future numbers. Forewarned, the editors carefully omitted



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every reference calculated to raise the post office's ire when they prepared the January 1924 issue, but overlooked one item in the very first page of "Prince Llan," a philosophical narrative by Kenneth Burke. The post office censor's "professional conviction" was that "every woman has one breast," and Burke had referred to plural-breasted women. As a result, Broom was banned from the mail under the postal laws referring to obscene literature. (The incident is related in Exile's Return, by Malcolm Cowley.)

The intelligence and taste of the United States post office hardly has improved much in the past 30 or 40 years, it seems, despite the liberalizing trend elsewhere. However, we can look forward with confidence. In a few more generations, perhaps even the post office will fall under the persuasion of the dictum, heartily endorsed by all humanists, that it is better by far, for heaven and the future's sake, to burn, not books, but censors.

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The more I see of dogs, the better I like people.

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#### Committee Day in the Ivy Room

"My dear young lady!" I started to cry protestingly, gazing into the yawning pools of her slitted dark eyes. And then I stopped to bethink myself, and all was lost. Whatever she was, she was no lady.

"My dear young -- " However green and freshly leaved she was in the glasshouse of my heart where all edible females find root-room, I could see middle age racing down the tiny canyons surrounding her eyes as I stared at her with astonishment.

"My dear -- " Heaven grant, I thought fervently, that this woman with the braying laugh and thick wrists and ankles never becomes my dear! If I commit myself to this, who knows what may follow?

And so I looked into her muddy, red-rimmed eyes, and husked feebly, "My!"

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"Carry the Torch of Liberty! Believe in FooFoo!" -- The Nucleus #3 (1940)

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#### The Race of Heroes

(Extinct Species Division)

"Most men, even the bravest, shun the savage bark of the automatic, the ferocious boom of the revolver, until they are forced to it. But Nick Carter never waited until he was forced to fight. He liked to go out and get in the way of bullets purposely...." -- Death Has Green Eyes, by Nicholas Carter, Vital Publications, Inc., 1946, p 5.

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"Where the goverante gesticulates lente and walks andante."

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Resting Girl

Dark windy hair blows up, blows over,  
from the young head on my shoulder.  
April again stirs grass and clover,  
and day, year, heart, grow older.  
As so, too, the sweet, young, intemperate,  
the scent within whose hair  
quickens pulse and in the heart (oft bled  
before by love) kindles the ashes there.  
Thoughtless of love, of death,  
alive in the soft green  
years, blue-eyed, serene,  
she rests, here even, easy breath  
marking off the moment and the hour,  
while April's wind spills petals from the flower.

-- August Derleth

(Reprinted from Sky Hook #6, spring 1949, page 18, in the forty-seventh FAPA mailing. Since I do not have a file of Skhk to hand, this poem is reprinted through the courtesy of Bruce Pelz and Fanzines Unlimited.)

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Empire State building

Edifice Rex

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So Sad, So Strange

The growing town was garish with filling stations, drive-in hamburger stands, motels, along the main street stretching like a carnival midway through the heart of the community. Civilization had arrived in the long interval I had been gone. But I was not prepared for the changes that had come to the air base, several desert miles outside the town.

Grass! Trees! Slack-clad wives hanging up laundry in the hot white New Mexican sun! At least the sun was the same -- or perhaps it wasn't. Had not even the sun cooled a little over the years? Or did it take a warmer ray, now, to drive the chill from my bones? As I drove from the town to the air base, I entertained some vague notion of stopping at the main gate and applying for admittance. To -- what? I could see nothing I might remember.

I could see that the tar-paper barracks were gone. So were the unpaved streets. And the pit latrines. Of course the B-24s were gone forever. Hardly anybody here, I supposed, would even remember that antique bomber. The planes had migrated somewhere else -- I saw the last of them go and then the B-29 filled the hot blue sky over this desert and the mountains hemming it in. They went away and never came back. Well, of course not. The B-24 was only a little more airworthy than a 6x6 GI truck. And where they cruised, six miles up, the sunlight was pocked with the claw-prints of their natural enemies.



That was a long time ago. It was even before the night that a thousand suns blazed up across the desert, and before the time of the rockets and the missiles.... We lived in another world back then. The bombers never came back. Nor did some of the men who flew them.

For some reason I had lived to return. Was it I? Was I really the same man who left here nearly 20 years ago -- nearly 20 years ago! -- clad in itchy O.D.s and a steel helmet that made me feel topheavy? No, surely that man was not me. I could see him fleeing like a ghost down the shadowy corridors of my mind, like the wing-lights of a plane skimming off the asphalt runway, bound for somewhere in a hurry. Or was he real? And I the ghost?

The blue mountains to the east and the west, the snowy drifts of the White Sands were the same. Nothing else was.

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"The smylere with the knyf under the cloke."

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#### And Miles to Go

"Damn the woman! What miserable luck to encounter her here! I need a drink bad."

"Whew! I don't blame you. What a shrew! What a bitch! And that fishmonger voice! Here you are. Say when."

"Sir, you are speaking of the woman I love."

"I've got news for you, bud. That woman's mother couldn't love her. What in the world happened between you two?"

"I don't honestly know. Some blight of disenchantment on her part, which she has successfully projected onto me, though so far as I am aware, I am innocent of the treason most treasonable and the other dark crimes she accuses me of. She reacts the same irrational way every time we happen to meet. She seems to suppose I am trying to meet her as if by chance to patch up our quarrel."

"So the woman is a fool on top of everything else."

"Just proud. She simply can't believe that I have absolutely no desire at present to see her or contact her. It makes me unhappy to receive such treatment as you just witnessed at the hands of the woman I have loved for as long as forever is. In any case, she has no part of my life now, and I have no wish to make her part of it. She has been placed very gently and carefully in a large blue bottle with a tight cork on it. I prefer to leave the cork firmly in place."

"Seal the cork with wax and toss the bottle in the ocean. There are other women."

"I have heard that beautiful legend. In any event, having been forced to live, and live without her, in spite of everything, I cannot



waste the rest of my life mooning after the woman. The poet consecrated a single night of memories and of sighs to Rose Aylmer — not all nights. In the same spirit I consecrate a single hour to Her. The ritual will have to suffice. I have a long way to travel before dark and I shan't waste my time staring back over my shoulder.... That's enough whiskey, thanks. Damn it, hold the water! I'll drink it neat."

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"O you who are sheathed in ice, even you, you too, will love some day."

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### The Breen Hells of Heart

William Blake "was urging nonjealous and nonpossessive love" -- Walter Breen reports in Null-F #32, winter mailing -- "as early as 1793, when The Marriage of Heaven and Hell appeared." Though not dated, that work seems to have been engraved in 1790, not three years later, though critics disagree on the point. (See the introduction to The Poetical Works of William Blake by John Sampson, page xxx.) In any case, why Walter mentioned the work in connection with "nonjealous and nonpossessive love" is a little puzzling; it seems to me to have little reference to such an ideal.

Possibly Walter meant to refer to Visions of the Daughters of Albion, which did appear in 1793, and which contains such lines as these:

I cry: Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the  
mountain wind!  
Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks  
water,  
That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all  
the day,  
To spin a web of age around him, grey and hoary, dark;  
Till his eyes sicken at the fruit that hangs before his sight?  
Such is self-love that envies all, a creeping skeleton,  
With lamplike eyes watching all around the frozen  
marriage bed!

The vision in the following stanza is probably meant allegorically: The woman Oothoon lies on a bank and watches while Theotormon and "girls of mild silver, or of furious gold" enjoy themselves in "wanton play, in lovely copulation, bliss on bliss." But the poem is based on the doctrines of Mary Wollstonecraft and shows how sexual love is distorted by laws and convention. Sexual love, for Blake, was part and parcel of all love -- human brotherhood, divine love -- and if a person were incapable of the first, he was incapable of the other as well.

Visions of the Daughters of Albion represents life in a golden age, when lust and jealousy are forgotten, but Blake may have toyed with the notion of attempting practical water-brotherhood. He and his wife were members of a Swedenborgian community in London in 1789 when six members were expelled because of their "perverted view of Swedenborg's doctrine of concubinage." This incident, and the fact that Mary Wollstonecraft, according to her biographer, wished to enter the household of Henry Fuseli as a "spiritual concubine," may have been the source of the old



stories that Blake proposed bringing Mary into his house as an inamorata to live with his wife and himself. His wife objected, and the idea was abandoned.

This story and another famous anecdote related by his biographer gave Blake a lurid reputation in the Victorian age. A caller once discovered Mr and Mrs Blake sitting stark naked in a summerhouse in the garden. "Come in!" cried Blake. "It's only Adam and Eve, you know!"

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"Abstinence sows sand all over / The ruddy arms and flaming hair."

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### A Letter from Jean

Boston, Massachusetts

"I went down to the beach this morning, and watched the waves. The tide was unusually high, and the waves startlingly impressive for our quiet embayment. Usually the waves, even at high tide, are little more than ripples (the great nor'east storms of song and story are generally nor'west around here, and blow the ocean out to sea, as it were), but today there were breakers that looked and sounded like breakers, and so I went down to watch. Nearly got my feet wet, too. Occupational hazard for us Trained Observers.

"Around, say, 4 p.m., I noticed that we now had an unusually low tide, and after watching it for a while from the window and thinking what a pity it was I couldn't go down and look at it, it dawned on me that there was, indeed, no earthly reason why I shouldn't go down and look at it (I get that way sometimes), so I donned my great big waterproof boots and other essentials (coat, scarf, mittens, nonchalant attitude), and set off.

"The breakers, way way off, made a constant undulating roar, rather than individual breaker sounds. Gulls wheeled occasionally overhead, although as it got darker I noticed there were hardly any in the tidal pools that had been so crowded an hour earlier. There was land behind me and land on either side of me, but where I was, there was a lot of nothing -- wave-marked sand and pools and ripples of water.

"It's a funny thing, but when I'm in a house looking out at a grey near-sunset sky and a lonely beach, I feel terribly lonely and depressed and frightened, but when I'm out in it, all alone -- sometimes even hundreds of miles from home and friends -- I don't feel lonely at all anymore. Sort of odd, but not lonely or frightened. I feel as though I am in the world, and not just superimposed on it.

"So I regarded the water, and waded out into it as far as my boots would allow, and realized that I could not, in fact, reach the line of breakers that indicated a sand bar about 30 feet away, and wandered along up the beach towards the Point. I found out where all the birds go -- out to a sand point where the rivers run into the Sound. There were piles and piles of them there. I stood awhile, watching them fly away, when I noticed a small pink cloud. My, I thought, see what an odd



effect the post-sunset-sun is having on the clouds this evening. The cloud proceeded to rise, and turn into the full moon. Bejabers, thought I, so much for Trained Observers.

"I walked into the rising moon until I reached the very end point where the Sound and the river meet, and stood a while, pondering, and then came back, slowly."

jR

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"Remember the Serpent"

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Robot's Soliloquy

What was that feeling? Once -- no more --  
I felt it. . . . Running my machine  
That stood nearby the workshop door  
I looked upon a scene

Where people, idly foolishly,  
Were lying, strolling in the sun,  
While all around them I could see  
The world's work left undone.

And then, a giddiness -- a pain --  
Assailed me and blanked my whirling mind;  
My power-plant's current seemed to wane;  
My eyes grew dim, half-blind.

An untraced thought crept through my head  
And spoke strange things. I felt that I  
Must leave my place, and walk instead  
Beneath the hot blue sky.

An overseer found me then,  
Unmoving, staring toward the field;  
They brought me here into this pen,  
Behind this leaden shield.

What was the trouble that bright noon?  
They probed my workings, said it queer --  
Was some short-circuit righted soon?  
This room -- why am I here?

(Reprinted from Banshee #4, March 1944, edited by Larry Shaw. The poem was written in 1942 or thereabouts and originally contributed to Larry's subscription fanzine Leprechaun. Larry sent me a copy of Banshee a few years ago; the poem came back to me with a certain alienated majesty.)

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"The Whole is One"

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A Visit to a Whorehouse (Just Fictitious, Mother)

So far I haven't heard about any fans who have taken up the current fad for 50-mile hikes. Now there is a dangerous statement if I ever heard one, and I have, because I listen to myself talk all the time and I find that I am addicted to making perilous remarks, although commonly they are of the variety of "Oh those lovely green eyes" and "I love you" -- the latter being, of course, the most dangerous statement of all.

But I am sitting here writing this little article -- at least it is little so far, but I have only started it -- nearly two months before the FAPA deadline. Which shows how dutiful I am. As soon as I finish it, I will chop it into stencil wax, probably tomorrow night between dinner and the time the neighbors start to hammer on the walls to protest the rattle of my typewriter disturbing their sleep (i.e., 7:05 p.m. PST or PDT, as the case may be).

I can confidently, if not serenely, predict this: Just as soon as I whack the final period of this article into the stencil, attesting to the fact that I haven't heard about any fans who have taken up the 50-mile hike fad, I will begin to have my nose rubbed firmly in the indisputable fact that nearly everybody in fandom has taken up the fad. I will be called to the phone to listen to Lee Jacobs tell me that he is walking from Van Nuys to Whittier and has run out of beer in Studio City. I will visit the LASFS and behold Bruce Pelz clomping into the Silverlake gymnasium (in his street boots), having walked all the way from Mariposa avenue. (Every place in the Los Angeles area is 50 miles from every other place.) I will... Oh hell, what's the use?

But as I sit here on 16 March 1963 (6:55 p.m. PST), I can confidently (though again not serenely) say that I haven't heard of such goings-on as yet. And as a matter of fact, right now (6:56 p.m. PST) I am nourishing pink notions of being the very first fan to take up the 50-mile hike fad.

The only thing is, what egoboo would be involved if I were the first fan to walk 50 miles? Would the distinction be enough to gain me a mention in Fancyyclopedia III? And would that make a 50-mile walk a suitable way to spend the weekend? I think, realistically, I ought to have some greater incentive before I undertake the 50-mile jaunt.

I have already hinted to a few friends and admirers that I might be persuaded to make a 50-mile hike if somebody will make it interesting. (For the benefit of any squares in the audience, "make it interesting" is a euphemism for "laying a small wager" on my ability, or rather inability, to complete the 50-mile hike.) So far, though, nobody seems willing to haul a hundred dollar bill out of his pocket -- I find hundred dollar bills quite interesting. Possibly nobody can face the prospect of my being gone for eight or ten hours or however long it would take me to finish the walk.

Jim Harmon has made the only interesting offer so far. "Well, Redd," he drawled in his southern Illinois accent, "if you'll find a whorehouse 50 miles from here and walk all the way there, the treat will be on me."



Now of course this is a pretty safe offer because a glass of water, including the kind with ice cubes, is always free of charge even in a whorehouse, which is the most mercenary institution in the world aside from General Telephone.

We can pretty well picture the scene. I come limping up the main street of Los Womanos (Note: I use the town of Los Womanos only for purposes of illustration. I do not know if Los Womanos is really 50 miles away from here. Furthermore, I do not know whether Los Womanos has any whorehouses in town. In fact, when you come right down to it, I don't even know whether there is such a town as Los Womanos. It may not even exist on this time-track. I invented the name right down in the depths of my fine mind not 38 seconds ago, PST).

I come limping along the street of Los Womanos -- to resume -- and decide to patronize the first whorehouse in sight: the Blue Room (all whorehouses are called the Blue Room), right between the Safeway and the Thrifty Drugstore. Now then. I enter the red-leather-and-chrome reception room of the whorehouse and with bloodshot eyes behold the luscious form of the receptionist, Miss Renata Sigafos.

"Can I help you?" asks Miss Sigafos, who looks like she could help just about anybody.

"Yes," I rasp weakly. "Water!"

Now in case your name is Sigafos and you resent the implication that anybody, especially a woman, bearing that proud name would become a prostitute, please remember that this is an illustrative anecdote. As a matter of fact, I invented Miss Renata Sigafos at the same time I invented Los Womanos. However, I know more about her than I know about Los Womanos. I know, for example, that she was forced into whoredom through the machinations of a white-slaver named Hugo L. Summerstopper, who sat next to her at the movie "Andy Hardy Gets Spring Fever" and jerked a hypodermic needle into her thigh. (Miss Sigafos always says, with a wry chuckle -- which is distinct from her malted barley chuckle -- that this incident cured her forever of watching the late late show in the apartment of somebody she hardly even knows.)

But, back at the whorehouse: Miss Sigafos is so taken aback by my simple request for water that she instinctively punches the buzzer that summons one of the girls on duty, a honey blond, 38-26-36, suitably attired in a mint green wrap-around dress, 5-inch heels with peek-a-boo toes, and not much else, a package utterly without flaws except for a small brown mole on her left breast, named Angela....

But regretfully I must bring this little illustrative anecdote to an inconclusive end here; I know you are all faunching to read the whole report on my attempts to obtain a glass of water -- and nothing else but a glass of water -- at the Blue Room whorehouse, but you won't read it here. Too bad. The repartee between myself (known to half the world as a wit, or something like that) and the blond whore with a little mole on her left breast named Angela was really pretty amusing. The blond whore is sort of a wit herself. You ought to hear what she named the nipple on her left breast!



But the neighbors on all sides of this apartment are banging on the walls (7:03 p.m. PST, tonight) and I must sign off. For the benefit of the postal censors, searching desperately for pornography in the chaste pages of this fanzine and hastily scanning the last line of each article for clues to its whereabouts, I will add this statement: This has been an essay on Motor Lube.

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I talked with Elmer, yes I did, actually and literally.

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### More Fannish Clerihews

(Exactly as rejected by  
Kipple and lost by Day\*Star)

#### FATHER TIMELESS

Hugo Gernsback  
In French or in English rates a braaack!  
He's a bore in both tongues; well, that's  
how it goes:  
Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose.

#### A LA CARTER

Vernell Coriell  
Makes even Forry yell  
"Uncle!" when he says Edgar Rice  
Burroughs always wrote nice.

#### SCHIZO-FUNIC

They say that Claude Degler  
Was really a reg'lar  
Feller, but that Don Rogers  
Was one of them crazy codgers.

#### INTERLINIAC

"Guns and furnaces are both heaters," said DAG,  
"Gad! What a lovely gag!  
For a Golden Apple it will do,  
But I still need one to lead off Grue."

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The Land Where Erased Tape Recordings Go.

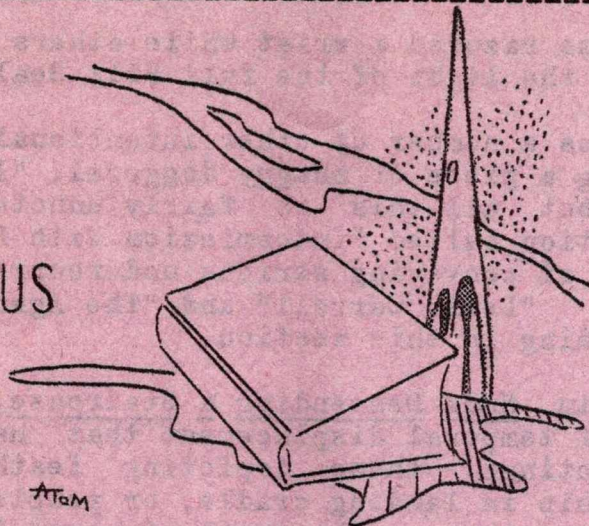
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### Are You the Feather of This Child?

I hope the library didn't mind my rolling around on the floor today. I tried to laugh quietly. I was looking for a copy of Stewart's Names on the Land and found instead a number of books about naming the baby. As I riffled through one of them, alert for any distinctive and unusual names I might use in a sex novel, a scrap of verse by Emily Dickinson caught my eye. Various names listed in the book proved to be annotated with passages showing the use of the names in literary works, and under the girl's name "Hope" was quoted the Emily Dickinson poem, "Hope is the thing with feathers"! Ah yes. Just the name for the post-atomigeddon child.



PARNASSUS



ON JETS

Pussycats in Red Weather

NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE, by X. J. Kennedy. Garden City: Doubleday & company, Inc., 1961.

"When you offer a first book of verse," says X. J. Kennedy in a modest preface, "it may be presumptuous to admit your debts to people." In the interests of lucidity, filter out the modesty and the sentence will read, "...it may be presumptuous not to admit your debts to people." Every young poet, even the most original and sui generis, inevitably derives to a certain extent from other poets: Shelley, Tennyson, Whitman, Auden, or Nick Kenny. One predecessor X. J. Kennedy owes something to is a fellow named Joe Kennedy.

I am probably the only reviewer of Nude Descending a Staircase who remembers Joe Kennedy, unless there have been fanzine reviews of the work I haven't seen. I read some of Joe Kennedy's poetry, the prototype of X. J.'s poetry, a decade or thereabouts ago and I remember being very impressed with it. As I sit here, 2017 miles from my file of Green Thoughts, I find myself unable to recall any specific poem of that early work aside from one that struck me as ludicrous -- a poem in which JoKe attempted a striking image and ingloriously went down swinging. This was uncharacteristic; the poems were usually full of vivid imagery and well-turned phrases that succeeded.

The present X. J. Kennedy is notable for the same things that Joe Kennedy possessed. One can even discern that he is a science fiction fan, or a former fan, by reading these poems. He contributes one science fiction ballad, "The Man in the Manmade Moon," which is amusing and of a higher order of creation than Nelson S. Bond's "Ballad of Blaster Bill," although hardly more than superior fanzine material. This poem describes the sad end of Airman Beale who was tapped to man an artificial satellite by a "mechanical brain" which discovered that he scored "such an absolute norm" that he was abnormal. The poem is perhaps most remarkable for the lines describing the satellite's effect on Earth:

As he lay on his face in outer space  
And snored off his mid-day meal,



Some razored a wrist while others kissed  
By the light of the full Bill Beale.

The book contains a number of other intentionally light and humorous verses, including a piece of shaggy doggerel, "In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus One Day," but all this is fairly unnoteworthy. Some of the light verse in a section called "Intermission With Peanuts," however, is a successful attempt at conveying serious undercurrents in deliberately casual descriptions. "Lewis Carroll" and "The Aged Wino's Counsel" are particularly outstanding in this section.

All the poetry in Nude Descending a Staircase, serious and light, displays that love of temporal displacement that has spawned a hundred Astounding cover paintings: those depicting feathered Indians backgrounded by a spaceship in landing cradle, or people in medieval costume fingering futuristic weapons. The group of poems titled "Inscriptions After Fact" are built largely of this science-fictional effect; one poem in the section, "Theater of Dionysus," contains little else:

Over stones where Orestes fled  
The sonorous Furies  
Girls hawking flyspecked postcards  
Pursue the tourist....

In "Where Are the Snows of Yesteryear?" we discover how the heroes and heroines of the heroic age have disappeared and become natural and mechanical effects in our own age: "Dierdre, her combustive hair / Filaments of wavelengthed air" and "Heroes struck on Homer's lyre / Strummings of the AP wire." Nature is further considered in mechanistic terms in the poem "Airport in the Grass," which describes a place where "Grasshopper copters whir" and "A red ant carts / From the fusilage of the wren that crashed / Usable parts."

All these juxtapositions of today and yesterday, nature and machine, are fairly conventional provender for the poet, but here are redeemed by Kennedy's lively insight and phrasemaking talent. There are a number of impressive if not truly memorable poems in this collection. In addition to those already mentioned, I would name "Solitary Confinement" and "B Negative" as among the best.

But even the best of the poems in Nude Descending a Staircase are basically thin and disappointingly narrow in scope. Many start out from trivialities inferrable from their titles: "At the Ghostwriter's Deathbed," "Leave of Absence (for An Instructor in Composition)," and few are in earnest labor to say anything profound. These poems seem to be mere exercises, and not strenuous ones at that. If we can judge from his quatrain "Ars Poetica," X. J. has a theory of artless art:

The goose that laid the golden egg  
Died looking up its crotch  
To find out how its sphincter worked.  
Would you lay well? Don't watch.

After such knowledge, Kennedy is inevitably at his best at his lightest, like breakfast rolls. While I am not one to sneer at an arti-



ficer who manages witty conversational and deft verse such as this, I am sorry to discover that Joe apparently lost nerve after such thundering failures as the ludicrous poem I perversely recall from Green Thoughts. He has the ability to succeed in efforts far more sustained and impressive than these. I wish he would be more daring.

I have mentioned X. J. Kennedy's ability to conjure up vivid images and hone striking phrases. This ability can be seen at work in the title poem, wherein the poet attempts, very successfully, to render in verse the effect of Marcel Duchamp's motion-painting of the same name:

Nude Descending a Staircase

Toe upon toe, a snowing flesh,  
A gold of lemon, root and rind,  
She sifts in sunlight down the stairs  
With nothing on. Nor on her mind.

We spy beneath the banister  
A constant thresh of thigh on thigh --  
Her lips imprint the swinging air  
That parts to let her parts go by.

One-woman waterfall, she wears  
Her slow descent like a long cape  
And pausing, on the final stair  
Collects her motions into shape.

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"I know I am august (I don't know about september)."

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The Cooing '20s

WHERE THE BLUE BEGINS, by Christopher Morley. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & company, 1922.

RUTH FIELDING AT CAMERON HALL, by Alice B. Emerson. New York: Cupples & Leon company, 1928.

SILENT SEX, by Jim Harmon. Hollywood: International Publications, Inc., 1962.

Christopher Morley (1890-1957) was a minor figure in the world of letters who is already undergoing the painful process of being cold forgotten. He still exists tenuously in the public mind as the author of Kitty Foyle, his 1939 novel which became Ginger Rogers' Academy Award-winning movie and a short-lived soap opera in the 1950s bylined (but not actually written by) Carlton E. Morse, but for scant else.

Morley's essays and poetry -- as much as I have read of it -- are quite insufferable, aside from a few trenchant lines in Mandarin in Manhattan, but some of his novels display more than average talent and even glimmer occasionally with what is usually referred to as a certain charm. As a bibliophile I remember Morley with especial affection as



the author of Parnassus on Wheels and of its semisequel, The Haunted Bookshop, and I keep wistfully browsing through his other works nursing the wan hope that I will find something equally delightful.

Such novels as Thunder on the Left and The Man Who Made Friends With Himself possess some of the impressiveness and tedium of a roulade: they are flourishes created especially for the display of virtuoso talent; surface-music arpeggios. Where the Blue Begins is another such: a lyrical run on a single note; and at this late date it sings rather thinly to my ear.

Where the Blue Begins is sometimes termed a fantasy and may be in the library at 915 South Spacebourne for all I know. All the characters in it, except one figure, are dogs, though this fact doesn't dawn on the reader till late in the first chapter. There seems to be small reason for the characters to be dogs -- less reason than there is for all the characters in a Disney cartoon to be animals. In the latter case, it is largely a convention which UPA and others have done little as yet to eradicate, but perhaps it is true that one feels more at liberty to guffaw loudly when it is a caricatured dog or cat or rabbit that gets bombed or bopped. Morley's motive is more obscure because his doggish characters behave quite like human beings, at least within his context. If they were described as humans, the novel would not be much changed.

The book has its moments, particularly in the description of the mad sea voyage during which the protagonist, Gissing, advances from the status of stowaway to that of staff-captain and then, involving Captain Scottie in complex theological questions that keep him shut up in his cabin pondering the matter, takes over the wheel and steers the ship at whim all over the North Atlantic.

The voyage ends in a bay where Gissing imagines that the landscape has "a curious foreign look." Going ashore he comes upon a tramp cooking a stew over a small bonfire. This "ragged and dingy vagabond" -- the only human being in the novel -- Gissing worships as God. Looking back at the ship, he finds that "The great shining breadth of the ocean had shrunk to the roundness of a tiny pond. And the Pomerania?... There, beside the bank, was a little plank of wood, a child's plaything, roughly fashioned shipshape..." Is it a dream within a dream? The whole rationale of this development confuses me completely.

Does Morley imply that dogs dream of becoming men? But the dream, the rest of the dream, does not end at that point. For Gissing returns home -- a thoroughly human home, with furniture, curtains, typewriter, furnace -- and finds it as solid and substantial as ever.

One reads a book like Where the Blue Begins partly to savor the atmosphere of a vanished era. Alas, this book tastes of little of the 1920s. Perhaps it appeared too early in the decade to capture much of the familiar flavor. Still, one remembers This Side of Paradise (1920) and The Beautiful and Damned, published the same year as Morley's novel, both of which distil the essence of what we, looking back with quaint nostalgia, refer to as the jazz age. Morley, as sentimental as any of his readers, was still living in the vanished era of pre-world-war 1, and one must search elsewhere for a fresh nip of the 1920s.



In a book called The Mind on the Wing: A Book for Readers and Collectors (1947), Herbert Faulkner West suggests a number of "new paths" for book collecting. One of these paths has been taken in recent years by a number of fans I know of, including Ted White, Bill Evans, and myself. West advised the collecting of "books by writers for boys and girls, not the rare paper juveniles, but the books by Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, G. A. Henty, Edward Eggleston, Edward Stratemeyer, and so on. These," he adds, "are seldom reprinted and are vanishing fast."

Actually I have not made a serious attempt to collect such books on a large scale, but I have spent some time of late searching out representative selections of the juveniles I read and enjoyed in my boyhood. Since I migrated west, I have acquired examples of such "series" as Tom Swift, the Rover Boys, the Motor Boys, Don Sturdy, and others. Even this rather casual interest in such material apparently is suspect among some people. Not long ago I contributed an article to Jim Harmon's Radiohero, a fanzine devoted to "golden age" radio, and thereby found myself accused of being part of a "sick" cult of people who are dwelling unhealthily in the past and wallowing too deeply in blue nostalgia. As a matter of fact, while I suppose that nearly every innocent pleasure an adult has was first experienced in childhood and that that fact has much to do with the preoccupation, I think I am notably unencumbered by any nostalgic regard for the past or my past.

I bought Ruth Fielding at Cameron Hall for a dime at the Sea-hawk bookstore on Vermont and reread it with quiet amusement. I did not enjoy the Ruth Fielding books as a child, but read them -- and nearly everything else in the town library -- when I had exhausted the supply of boys books. Partly, I suppose, I disliked the books because I was teased by my friends for reading "girls books"; partly, I suppose, I disliked the books because they were obviously not of my era at all, but dealt with a world vanished beyond the turn at the start of world war 1.

The Ruth Fielding series must have begun sometime around 1905 and had thus been going on for 23 years or more at the time of the present volume. During this time Ruth had been allowed to grow up little by little, not as we all do but by fits and starts, like a comicstrip heroine. In the first book of the series, Ruth Fielding of the Red Mill, she was an orphan, sent to live with her "miserly uncle." This is a common theme for children's books, found in such works as The Children's Pilgrimage and -- in its most delightful form -- Heidi. But from reading Janet E. Brown's fascinating little book, The Saga of Elsie Dinsmore (University of Buffalo Studies, Vol. 17, No. 3), it's clear that the Ruth Fielding series was originally a popularized watering-down of the famous Elsie books by Martha Farquharson, the last of which appeared in 1905.

In later books Ruth Fielding finished boarding school and college and entered such adult professions as Red Cross nursing and motion picture writing and producing. Although this destiny is far from that allotted Elsie Dinsmore and her children, Ruth Fielding's chief charm to a reader of today derives from the same thing that put me off when I read the books as a child. She comes straight out of a vanished world, a world far more distant and quaint than the world of the 1920s. For busy career woman in Hollywood though she is by the time of Ruth Field-



ing at Cameron Hall, Ruth still exists in a strange lavender realm where innocence and piety were deemed cardinal virtues -- the same world that Christopher Morley's Where the Blue Begins harks back to.

Ruth's difficulties in deciding between a career and marriage might still form the theme for a popular girls book in 1963, but other aspects of this novel must have been at least 20 years out of date when the book first appeared. As Jim Harmon points out, children's books are written first of all to appeal, not to the child, but to the parent who buys them. (My copy of this book is inscribed on the flyleaf, "To Helen, from Father, Dec. 25, 1928.") The difficulties inherent in this necessity must have been especially great in the 1920s, an era of violent social changes, and must account for the absurdities in Ruth's behavior and the odd ambivalence of the author's attitude toward her.

The author faced the problem of giving Ruth a life of adventure such as her boys-books rivals such as the Rover Boys enjoyed and still presenting her as a demure and proper young lady. Obviously the impropriety of a girl getting involved in violence of any sort inhibited the writer throughout the book. Thus, in the first chapter, Ruth is directing a silent movie during which an actress nearly walks into the whirling propellor of an airplane. Only Ruth notices the danger, and since she is "distinguished for her ability to think fast," the reader supposes she will dash forward and rescue the girl. Instead, she "deliberately" motions to a stagehand "to turn off the engine." She has averted the danger and still remained a lady. Late in the book she threatens to accompany the daring pilot who is scouring the area by air, looking for her missing sweetheart, but of course she never does. She finally rides to the showdown battle crouched on the floorboards of a car and waits "anxiously" in the car while the male characters fight the crooks.

Despite its antique moral code, Ruth Fielding at Cameron Hall mirrors the 1920s in some details better than does Where the Blue Begins or even a book like The Great Gatsby. The latter novel's attention to the human situation makes it difficult to concentrate on other aspects. The Ruth Fielding book has no people in it; thus the material circumstances of the jazz age appear unencumbered by people who of course are much like we are, because people don't change.

Part of the 1920s that is reflected, however distortedly, in the Ruth Fielding book is the world of Hollywood in the silent era. This same world forms the background for Jim Harmon's recent sex novel, Silent Sex -- a background that is distorted once again, partly by careless anachronisms (people talk about "Amos 'n' Andy" in 1926, although the program didn't begin till two or three years later), partly by the requirements of the medium. Hollywood of the 1920s is a happy choice as the setting for a sex novel because it looks in retrospect like a place where such improbabilities might have happened, if anywhere. But of course they never could.

James T. Farrell once pointed out that the products of the mass media offer their audiences "a moral holiday" (the phrase is William James'): Through popular books, movies, and TV shows, people can escape from reality and real problems into a world where such problems do not exist or are easily solved by Democracy in Action. Sex novels go fur-



ther. They offer an immoral holiday to the reader. Here the fantasy takes several forms: On the physical level, everybody in such books is a sexual athlete and can indulge in sex interminably without ennui or enervation. On the philosophical level, sex is presumed to be even more important than it normally is, even in this age of sexual preoccupation. But the overriding fantasy is that sexual activities can take place -- and do take place -- easily and freely, without visible restraint by moral code or watchful authorities. To this end, the forces of the law and of "righteousness" appear only in carefully diminished form. In some sex novels, it is taboo even to mention the police, though this is partly because of police censorship which cracks down on some sex novels not to uphold the moral code but to preserve the virtuous name of the police. (The famous case of the paperback The Sex Life of a Cop, which was driven from the stands in many cities by the furious fuzz, indicates that this is not entirely a foolish taboo.)

In many sex novels virtue triumphs in the end and "bad" people suffer horrible punishment -- almost as harrowing, sometimes, as that meted out in fundamentalist religious tracts. This ending is necessary to add piquancy to the sexual fantasy: Sex is more fun to some people if it is shown to be "evil." But the happenings in a sex novel like Silent Sex could never quite take place in our era or even in a wide-open era such as the 1920s. Bob Wilkins and Jenny Jordan, protagonists of Jim Harmon's novel, are strangers in a strange land even in Hollywood of the silent screen, and will live, if at all, only in the not-too-distant future. A good case might be made for calling all sex novels science fiction.

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Tom Swift and His Big Tunnel

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Hot Line

"Hello? (Get off the line, operator!) Hello? Jack? Jack, this is Niky. I'm fine -- and you? And the wife? Ha ha, the little foibles of pregnant women! Listen, Jack....I was wondering: You don't have any relatives in New York state, do you? Everybody close to you is up in Massachusetts, right? What? Do I sound like something's the matter? I do? Well, as a matter of fact --

"I'd better come right out with it, Jack. There was a slight contretemps in one of our missile centers this morning. One of our top generals somehow smuggled in a bottle of vodka and got a little tipsy. Well, ha ha, you know drunks. In staggering around the control board, he accidentally hit his hand against a button. Just a little button. The general will be reprimanded, needless to say. Leave it to us.

"And, well, Jack, you know that city in New York state that's named She -- Sch -- Well, it's spelled S-C-H-E-N-E-C-T-A-D-Y. You pronounce it. As you know, it's a place of less than 100,000 population -- a target of only #3 priority. It isn't as if it were New York City, with Grant's Tomb and the Radio City Music Hall.... Yes, yes, Jack, that is definitely what I do mean to imply. You are 'way ahead of me!



"Well, as a matter of fact, Jack, I'm afraid it must already have happened. You know General Telephone; it took so long to get a connection. Has anybody heard from She -- Sch -- that city -- in the past half hour? The point is, Jack, it was an accident. You know it was an accident. I'm telling you it was an accident. And you're not going to be mad, are you, Jack? You're not the type to hold grudges, I'm sure. So tell me, Jack, that -- Hello? Hello? Jack? Jackie boy!!!"

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"There are many good pieces still to be written in the key of C Major."

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Jim Applewhite Dreams in Springtime

Now the landscape gets richer and richer.

His sleep strips naked the world, the sky, the light,  
And the immense leaning-forward of desire  
Relumes the thirsty golden blight  
That sucks his dreams dry with its starving air.  
The trees flicker like X-rayed nerves. A hawk  
Winks in the wide sun. Like crazy talk  
Nations of clouds drop profundities  
Of shadow, passing and repassing. O,  
Now the dandelions are letting go.

He sees an autumn like a red deep mirror  
And breathing stuffs his dream's mouth like a dank cloth.  
His figure drops no darkness on the ground.  
The joists of skies lie piecemeal on this plain,  
And Plato dreams he dreams inside this dream.

He forswears the epic trash the blood  
Bulges with. He undresses, undresses, undresses.  
He peels off the life that cuddles the bed  
And the dream. Pure light he sees.

By his vague waking side loving flesh  
Rears and mutters toward the daybreak.  
His poverty cannot guess what turn it must take  
When it encounters his awakened wish.

Outside, the pretty season squanders its wealth.

-- Fred Chappell

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"Then Crockett remembered the Cockatrice Egg."

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