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#10 #10

Yes, I know what 'crifanac' means, but what is critical fan activity?

 BIRDSMITH is a publication of the Society for the Preservation of Robert Bloch.

"Bloch is the only true Ghod."

This publication is sole agent for arranging reservations for the semi-annual pilgrimage to the shrine in Weyauwega. Take the kiddies along. Family rates available.

 I wonder if Laney actually intended his own name to be forever linked inseperably with homosexuality in the fannish lexicon?

1929 WAS A LONG TIME AGO

BLEEN--I suspect Blanchard N.D. has a higher ratio of actifans to total population than Oberlin, Ohio.

PICKLE BLOCH FOR POSTERITY. - waw

CHAOS--People pick the damnedest things to reprint. And this was originally snagged out of the middle of a letter by Ballard. I accused him of getting all his not-poetry by that method (he failed to either confirm or deny). I know that's the way NanShare got some of her Am-So Poems. However, it's not really fair to label me a critic of not-poetry as such. Since this was originally designed solely for Ballard's eyes it was meant only to amplify previously expressed views that not-poetry was great art in the hands of one A. Rapp, and an impassable quicksand when attacked by anyone else. And at the time I wrote it I was unaware there was another not-poet of major stature, although I quickly learned better, as you have probably already observed in the latest OUTSIDERS. "Kismet" gets my vote for the greatest not-poem of all time. Loved re-reading it. A noble defense, sir. But what would have happened if you'd chosen someone else's not-poetry for an example and been modest, at the same time. One thing I did appreciate seeing again, though.....I'm proud of having managed to rhyme 'medieval' and 'mischievous' and am quite confident I can safely claim to be the first to have done so.

 "The not-poet is the greatest of all not-artists".....not-Oscar Wilde.

CONTOUR--Odd, I must have encountered it before but Willis Conover's name was completely new to me as a one-time stfan although his name pops up three times in this mailing. Of course, it is quite familiar to me in his other incarnation. I guess you could say he is a BNF in jazz fandom. At least METRONOME gives his experimental outfit a lot of publicity (incidentally, I was under the impression he conducted that group and was a performing and arranging musician on his own rather than an impresario in the Norman ((Gene and Granz)) pattern. Am I wrong?). And he has an album on the BRUNSWICK label called "House of Sounds". Don't really know much about him since I got disillusioned with most 'experimental' bands about the time Boyd Raeburn threw in the towel and Stan Kenton decided dance halls were below his dignity. For truly exciting experimentation I'll take the records of Duke Ellington's first twenty years, any day, in preference to anything more recent.

For those of you still unaware of the dual identity, the Boyd Raeburn referred to on the preceding page does not live in Toronto nor consort with Gerald Steward.

Wonder what the odds are against the combination of two such unusual names combined twice? Not as high as you might think, I suppose. I learned there is another Vernon McCain, living not 30 miles from where these words are type (Ontario, Oregon) a few years ago. Very annoying to find I'm not unique. And now some other McCains are trying to crowd into fandom. Is nothing sacred.....? Opps, pardon, I forgot Bloch.

· this is page two

The above interlineation was specially designed to please Redd Boggs.

FIENDETTA--It wasn't a book about Gettysburg. Just a short story. And I am only relying on hearsay that it was the Prime Minister who wrote it, not the other W. Churchill. However, it seems not illogical. I know he's dabbled with fiction, at times; history is his field. For all that I know, history could be the other Winston Churchill's field, also. I've never read anything by him. But it sounds like precisely the mischievous sort of thing the Churchill of this century would delight in pulling.

BLOCH IS THE ONLY TRUE GHOD!
(ri cher, smoother, longer-lasting.)

GEMZINE--I never read "ReadersDigest" so can't comment on the item you quote but even if I had I wouldn't necessarily accept it as gospel truth. That publication is not exactly known for it's accuracy, you know. Inspirational as Aunt Susie's bonnet, of course but they usually wind up on the losing end when they try to tackle some slightly-less-head-in-the-clouds publication like ~~xxx~~ TIME or the NEW YORKER. And I question whether any publication can reliably inform you that the residents of a certain area have cut their population solely by abstinence and late marriages. I know this is going to come as a terrible shock to you, GMC, but people have been known to indulge in the sexual act, even when not married. Catholics, even. If necessary, I can quote references. And since such acts are not every single one recorded for posterity at the Town Registry, any publication which tries to tell you about the wonderful virtues of a certain area are out on a very thin and shaky limb. And, you know, Gertrude, it is just within the realm of possibility that those little devices for keeping a family within reasonable limits ~~xxxxxxx~~ so popular in nearby Catholic France just may have been imported (in small numbers, of course) for use by the practical Irish.///I agree that Dave Mason's comment about the desirability of everyone sharing an equal amount of poverty was the most asinine in the mailing but yours about Jan Jansen runs it a very close second. Do you really consider national boundaries so sacred? It seems to me that the only qualification Jan Jansen needs to express his opinion of anyone else in the world is to be a human being, living in a country with freedom of speech, and an awareness of the actions of others. I could wish that the subject under contention was someone other than McCarthy, you and I having expressed our opinions on this matter at considerable length for a very long time (and I suppose at this late date no harm can come of revealing that the last three years FAPA wrangle over the Wisconsin Senator was a direct result of an argument which occurred during a visit at your home) with certain emotional overtones. But this is basic, and has no particular relationship to Joe. If Jan Jansen as a Belgian has no write to criticize Senator McCarthy, an American, then G.M.Carr, as an American, is equally repre-

hensible in daring to voice any criticism of Jan Jansen, a Belgian. Or do only elected officials merit this special immunity to criticism from anyone in their own populace. In that case you have never had the right to criticize Stalin, Hitler (both elected officials) or any other member of the government of any foreign nation, past or present. And your hero, Joe McCarthy, had no right to attack Clement Atlee (who occupies a position as an elected official in Britain very similar to Joe's here) in the summer of 1953. This swipe at Jansen is about the most disgusting thing I've seen in FAPA since Laney's scurrilous little comment on Ackerman back in 1951 when Ackerman had casually mentioned that he'd never particularly wanted to have a son. Tell Jansen what you think of him, criticize the Belgian politicians, the Belgian monarch, or even Jansen's religion, if he has one. But don't try the cowardly reaction of trying to gag Jansen with statements that as an outsider and 'foreigner' he has no right to speak. The British fans tend to lean over too far backward the other way in refraining from comment on our domestic policies and I think an exchange of ideas among fans of different countries is healthy. And Jan is no more a 'foreigner' than you are, Gertrude. It depends solely on where you are viewing the situation from. To Raeburn and Steward you're both foreigners.

The sick brown fox slumped over the lazy dog's back.

With 24 hours perspective, the above sounds a little harsh and, while I don't intend to retract any of it, I think perhaps I should clarify it. I've frequently disagreed with Gertrude in the past, and deplored some of her actions, and even the mental processes by which she arrived at them. But there was always respect for the opposing views and the mind that held them. In this case, there is not. Frequently, people will claim others are interfering with their freedom of speech when, actually the others are merely exerting their own freedom of speech to express criticism. But that is not the case here. This is not answering the expressed criticism but striking at a vulnerable spot in order to suppress the criticism entirely. Without attempting to imply any inferiority or superiority on either side a person who represents a minority, who is 'different' from the majority, tends to be diffident, and less apt to exert his rights. In FAPA, individuals who are not U.S. citizens are definitely in the minority. And fans are notoriously thin-skinned. By choosing to attack Jansen in this fashion GMC is reacting precisely as if she'd refused to answer a criticism but instead attacked the critic because he had a black skin and, being 'different', had no right to speak. Or, to bring it a little closer home, let's consider another minority... 'difference'. It is just as if I denounced Gertrude Carr for daring to discuss birth control, on the grounds that she is a Catholic and has thus surrendered her freedom of choice in the matter and thus her views have no right to consideration. I doubt if Gertrude would appreciate that. But Catholics are in the minority in FAPA, G.M.C.C. And your views do differ from those held by most of the rest of us. Although Karen Anderson tossed some unreasonable insults your way, so far no FAPAN has tried in any way to interfere with your right to express your views, and it is unpleasant to see you acting in that fashion toward someone else.

HORIZONS--Since my comment, HIGH FIDELITY has run an article about the difficulties of retaining tapes in top-notch condition indefinitely. I wrote them a letter inquiring about what could be done to lengthen the life of tapes. Certainly, considering the unbelievable progress

in 1947

made in recent years in music-on-discs (after all, how probable/would the idea of seven minutes of music on one side of a 7-inch disc.... two and a half minutes more than could then be squeezed onto the 12" record.....sound. But five years later EP's appeared and it wouldn't surprise me to see a full symphony squeezed onto a seven inch disc within my lifetime) there surely is room for similar ingenuity in music-on-tape which hasn't received anything like the same attention. For discs we now have diamond needles, polyethylene envelopes, radioactive ionizers, and all the rest of the paraphernalia. I'm willing to grant my own suggestions (air-proof or refrigerated cabinets, or a special device to unwind and rewind tapes periodically) were undoubtedly completely impractical. But I was speaking from ignorance. Surely there are methods of attacking the problem. Tapes are growing more and more important and while storing on vinyl discs may be all very well for the big record companies and networks what is the average record-collector or music-lover who possesses music on a tape he wishes to retain permanently to do, when the music has never been available on a vinyl record in the first place? Vinyl pressings are prohibitively expensive and I doubt if acetates would serve the purpose. However, HIGH FIDELITY ignored my letter so it looks as if tapes are in for no aid from that corner.///Are you sure you actually saw "The Country Girl"? This is about the most fantastic review I've read since TIME's blooper in reviewing "Three Musketeers" back in 1948 when they said June Allyson (killed about two-thirds of the way through the picture) retired to bucolic life with Gene Kelly in the final reel. I thought of doing a detail by detail rundown on each of your criticisms but decided it isn't important enough to merit the space. If "Country Girl" were a really outstanding film instead of one which falls just short of a worthwhile goal a refutation might be worth writing. I do agree on one point; Crosby's reformation was completely unconvincing. But I can't think of any well-done film on alcoholism ("Lost Weekend" and "Come Back, Little Sheba" come most readily to mind) where the motivation wasn't similarly unconvincing. But I think it is impossible to produce any motivation for reform which would not be unconvincing. To a normal person it appears so beyond reason that a person should be so sunk in degradation as the true alcoholic is that a person in that condition seems beyond any appeal. If they let them selves get into that shape in the first place what could ever induce them to return? But the fact remains that alcoholics do reform; and I suspect there real-life motivations would seem just as inadequate as Hollywood's versions, or even more so. Which merely goes to prove the old saw that real life does not necessarily make convincing fiction.

LARK--No, #8 was done on a typewriter.....what we call a Western Union typewriter. I'm afraid I'd have a difficult time cutting a stencil on one of our teleprinters since they type only on a thin ribbon of tape./// How do I distinguish between 'technical fidelity' and 'musical fidelity'? Well, as I understand it (and I'm no expert) it is possible to use instruments to measure the performances of various pieces of reproduction equipment and ascertain to exactly what percentage the original sound is faithfully reproduced (I understand in the case of a good amplifier it is well over 99%). This I would call technical fidelity. But it is possible to play very distorted music through this equipment....music distorted at the source, and you would have technical fidelity without musical fidelity. On the other hand equipment which would appear woefully inadequate if submitted to the technical testing mentioned above, has been known to produce wonderfully attractive music (some of the recordings with a great deal of realism and live presence made in the 30's with all frequencies above 6000

this is page five

cut off, would be an example). This is musical fidelity. The actual sound produced may vary more from the original than in your more polished set but it is true to the spirit of the music and the intent of the composer. Similarly I understand the very small inaccuracies and flaws in an amplifier make for far greater unpleasantness in listening to music than those in the loudspeaker although the loudspeaker is the weakest link in the sound reproducing system, technically....but it's distortions happen to be pleasing to the ear, relatively speaking, and to fit in well and unobtrusively with the music. In the instance of which I spoke, the music was far too poorly recorded to hope to produce really listenable music as it stood; but I hoped that by eliminating some of the distortion and cancelling out others with further distortions (probably losing some frequencies along the way) I would actually produce something closely enough approximating the original that I could listen to it with pleasure. Incidentally, since writing that, I moved into a very large apartment in an old building and have found a very pleasantly resonant little corner between a wall of old plaster and the side of a bureau which meet at a 90° angle which adds richness to the sound of my admittedly inadequate present speaker when I place it facing into this corner. When I play those records with that particular setup there is enough diffusion of the more unpleasant noises on the record and enough reverberation bleeding from one section into the other that it does make acceptable listening with no other alterations.

I used to think they called them naval oranges because they were imported
by sea.

RAMBLING FAP--There comes a time when it ceases to be modesty and can only be classed as ridiculous self-deprecation. And you've reached that point, Gregg, with these repeated disclaimers of skill at writing. There was a time when I might have agreed with you...but that was before you started saying this sort of thing. Yes, Gregg, I also remember corresponding with you when you lived in Southern Utah. And I remember the Calkins of those days very well, a youngster with absolutely nothing to recommend him except enthusiasm and likeability. Although I've witnessed this amazing flowering of the late teens in several fans it continues to amaze me. How can a person improve so tremendously in such a short time. If any of you doubt the change go back and read some of those OOPSLA letters to Samx Mines. The Calkins of today writes smoothly, compellingly and with biting honesty. I think I can honestly say not more than five or six FAPans excel you in writing at all, and none in your own particular approach, of which this issue is the best yet. You've grasped the most important rule of writing....have something to say and say it as directly and clearly as possible....and brought to it a certain level-eyed awareness, plus understanding and acute observational powers which produces perfectly splendid results. It would have to to keep me fascinated through almost an entire magazine devoted to....of all things, guns! Even Grennell and Ballard have failed on that subject. And might I add there is now an unmistakable firmness of character and basic dignity I wish I could match. Your writing is now lucid, enjoyable, and always welcome....typical of the special delights of FAPA....and I wonder if your own attitude toward FAPA hasn't changed?///I recall a day spent on that same range. But mine could hardly have been more different. I not only didn't qualify as expert, I didn't qualify, period. Outside of one or two childhood experiments with a beebie gun I'd never fired a firearm in my life until the day I went on that range. I don't recall what the

this is page six

qualifying score was (it's undoubtedly lower in the Navy than in the Marines...ability to fire a rifle hardly being the most valuable skill a sailor can possess) but I believe I fell 21 points short of it. We were supposed to have had some preliminary practice with live ammunition on a shorter range a few days earlier, and the rest of the company had, but as I recall I had been called in to Regimental Headquarters that afternoon to present evidence against a couple of just recaptured AWOL boots. Result was that I spent all afternoon in front of the Headquarters technically 'guarding' the two. I suppose there are a few people in history who've gone onto that range in Camp Pendleton with less preparation than I, but I suspect they are very few. Since neither my eye nor my co-ordination are sufficiently good to have ever made me anything special, in that line, anyway, the results were not calculated to be very impressive.

Is BEYOND AWARENESS essentially the work of a FAPA member?

SPACESHIP--I take mild exception to your classifying Judith Anderson as an actress who projects the same personality in every play. I've never seen her on stage but the two movies in which she was most memorable seem to me to have been played about as differently as anyone could ask. What did the malevolent spinsterish housekeeper of "Rebecca" have in common with the worldly, slightly-decadent and more-than-slightly erotic aunt in "Laura"?///I never dreamed your casual comments in letters about revisions on your novel covered such a mass of outrageous fortune. Now I know I don't want to try a novel for a long, long time to come. I can think of nothing more disheartening than selling a novel and then having to completely rewrite it from scratch.///Agree with you (although with less enthusiasm) about Kornbluth's ability. Are you as puzzled as I about some of the things appearing in HORIZONS recently? I'd always considered Warner the most reasonable person in FAPA and also one of the mildest. Not that I object to this new facet. It's interesting, but a trifle jarring.

Redd, I hope you noticed I mutated the interlineation again in this issue.

TARGATE....mmmh, that should be TARGET: FAPA!--The occasional crossbars on my 'I', that issue were due to a habit I acquired on standard typewriters of hitting the Capital Shift whenever I typed that word. But on a W.U. typer there are no capitals, only little squiggly lines....and since I'm not a Boggs/Speer type perfectionist I rarely use correction fluid if there is an error of only one letter, just type over it.

But, sir, I'm already the Billy Graham of fandom.

What follows is a letter column. No, BIRDSMITH's never had a letter column before but REVIEW did have. For those of you who were unaware of it, I've been more-or-less publishing a more-or-less non-apa zine for a not too determinate period in the past. But I don't anymore. Kaput. The feature I liked best (because I didn't write it) was a column "Letter from London" by Britifan Bill Morse. I have a half-promise from Bill to continue writing it in BIRDSMITH (several REVIEW readers suggested the idea) although it looks like there won't be one available for this issue, the final REVIEW having appeared quite recently. The only other feature I didn't write was the letter column and I got such a kick out of sorting out embarrassing-in-print items from my correspondence that I'm unwilling to quit. So it is being transferred, as of this issue. Many of the comments are about REVIEW, of course, but for non-readers of that magazine I

this is page seven

should add that some of the letters which sound most mysterious in referring to earlier events have nothing to do with REVIEW. I pull anything I feel worth reprinting (well, yes worth, also perhaps, but I meant that to be 'worth') out of my correspondence. I try to print primarily items which are worth reading in themselves without necessarily knowing the history of whatever controversy they refer to.

READER'S INDIGESTION

WRAI BALLARD

Agree with most of Verdan's points (in "For Whom the Joe Blows", a follow-up article to the Richard K. Verdan piece in the SPACESHIP circulated in FAPA mailing #69) as he makes them although some equally good writer could come along and touch the subject from an exactly opposite viewpoint and I'd agree with his points too. Both seem to forget one thing..a book is a book and a good book is a good book, and if it is a good book with leaders and people who can and do change the world it is a good book as much as one about the "little people". So I refute this by saying as a rule I might tag along with the "little people". But Verdan loses one point with his argument when he says "The cursory reader (and most Hornblower readers are cursory readers) is hard-put to name a single other member of the supporting cast." Verdan does have one foot safely in a bucket with that "cursory reader" for by that if someone can name supporting players, he automatically stops being a "cursory reader". I can remember a number of characters from Moby Dick, but I bet I could, without too much effort, remember 40 characters found someplace in the Hornblower books. Try this one on Eney too. But of course we are not "cursory readers".

ROBERT BLOCH

You raise an interesting point in your letter: how many fans can manage to dislocate a finger while removing their pants?

This is one of those questions which no amount of quibbling or even learned critical speculation can possibly answer. I would suggest that the only way to come to a satisfactory conclusion is to put the matter to a test.

Perhaps at some convention it might be possible to get a large-cross-section of fandom (carefully selected as to age, I.Q., and motor coordinative abilities) into a large room for the purposes of mass pants-removal. A careful check could be maintained, and statistics tabulated. The results might well be published in some form similar to the Tucker surveys.

I suggest that you and I make it our business, should we ever foregather at a convention together, to conduct this particular experiment and determine the answer in the interests of science. Naturally, we'll have to split up the work.

You can be in charge of the male fans.

Generously

Bob.

REDD BOGGS

In regards Verdan's article, I'm a little confused as to what Verdan believes, on account of some statements here do not jibe with statements made in the Spaceship article as I remember it. Therefore, I'll skip over most of the present essay and comment mainly on the section which was in answer to my previous comments in Skhk.

In the first place, I concede, of course, that there's room for both types of fiction -- that which gives the big picture and that which gives the small picture, from the "common man's" viewpoint. My points as before are merely (a) the big picture is no less valid than the small, and (b) the big picture is a good fiction technique used by every great writer down to the eighteenth century and by many since. Verdan seems to feel that the big picture is being handled by too many unskilled writers; that's true, but in science fiction, I think the technique is especially effective because of the necessity of sketching in a whole alien-to-us culture: it is easier to show the culture from the vantage of someone who stands above the culture and looks down at it rather than of one who is, as it were, lost in it. There's the old principle at work that one who is deep in the woods can't see the forest for the trees.

Verdan claims few sf writers can turn out a "convincing Key Figure." (I seem to be commenting on the part of the article I was going to leave. Oh well.) I maintain that it is easier to deal with Key Figures and the big picture than it is to take us down into the depths of the culture and show us the little picture from the viewpoint of a person who doesn't know much about his world. It's pretty easy to show the large workings of a galactic empire, but it is infinitely harder to show us home life and day-to-day living in a culture that will be a thousand times more changed than the US has changed since 1776. I imagine George Washington could visualize the general outlines of the governmental and military organizations of 1955, but he couldn't come close to foreseeing the evolution of home life -- TV, electric lights, vacuum cleaner, frozen foods, corn flakes, and Davy Crockett caps. There is also the problem of making the day-by-day life of a middle-class middle-age common man interesting. Few writers have the imaginative or the narrative skill to work with the subtle details of the small picture.

Verdan's examples from mundane literature, meant to bolster his thesis as to the value of the picture of the culture from the common man's viewpoint, are not very convincing. He'd have sf writers emulate Mark Twain in Huckleberry Finn. Well now. Huck Finn was not exactly a "Shaper of the world's destiny," but he was definitely not one of the "little people." Essentially he may be considered to be one of the nobility of the American West, for he was both (a) white and (b) footloose. Both characteristics are important, for they allowed him to travel through the culture of that day and give us a wide picture of life in that society. Being a Negro, Jim hadn't a chance to go into the parlors that Huck entered, and being a good conformist who stayed home and tended to business, Tom Sawyer couldn't do it either. Huck's book is therefore much more revealing of life in the Mississippi basin around 1850 than Tom Sawyer's was and Jim's could ever be. Huck's status of a white man and his calling of a wanderer set him apart from the common man Verdan would have us think he was; he is, in effect, a knight or a hero.

Verdan mentions Sir John Falstaff, too. No common man, he -- note the "Sir." And if Verdan will consider a moment he will realize that Falstaff does ex-

this is page nine

actly the thing that RKV objects to on the part of sf heroes. Instead of behaving himself by drinking sack with ordinary folk, Sir John hobnobs with a "shaper of the world's destiny" -- Prince Hal himself, the future King Henry V, hero of Harfleur and Agincourt. Instead of fighting (sic) in an obscure part of the field at Shrewsbury, Falstaff insists on being exactly where such Key Figures as Sir Walter Blunt, Hotspur, Prince Hal, and the King himself are contending.

Right back at Verdan, we might ask him in turn if he thinks that The Iliad would have given us a better picture of the Trojan war if it were told from the viewpoint of an "average" Achaeon or Trojan rather than from the viewpoint of such heroes as Achilles, Diomedes, Hector, Paris, and the rest? Or whether Shakespeare's great tetralogy would have been greater if instead of depicting Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Hotspur, etc., he'd taken a common soldier for a hero? We could also ask him if James Joyce's Ulysses wouldn't have had at least as much stature if it concerned Eamon de Valera instead of Mr Bloom?

To conclude this commentary on a minor note, I disagree that Ishmael in Moby Dick emerges "with vastly greater stature from the outside view" than does Ahab. On the contrary, Ishmael fades from view during the course of the book and it is Ahab who dominates the latter two-thirds of the book. A comparison of the two men, Ahab and Ismael, reminds one of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson -- perhaps not a completely valid analogy but not an unjust one. And I never heard of Conan Doyle's works referred to as the Dr Watson stories.

RON ELLIK

Reading Bill Morse's column reminded me of your comments last ish on THEY'D RATHER BE RIGHT and the whole Clifton-Apostolides-Riley series; and incites me to comment on it from behind a bulwark of incomplete knowledge I picked up direct from Clifton's mouth at the convention. I asked him why the then-current serial in Astounding was half-written by Riley instead of Apostolides, and he answered "Alex Apostolides is a very bright young man who does not like to work."

"Crazy Joey" was based on Apostolides' college life--this anyone could figure out. "What Thin Partitions" might be based on Clifton's own career possibly. "They'd Rather Be Right" was, of course, a continuation of the earlier short story about Joe, the telepath, who could very easily have quite a few personality traits of Alex Apostolides. The two professors were extrapolations of Alex' own teachers--I'd figure from having read the stories and knowing approximately where Mark lives, that Alex attends either the University of California at Berkeley or Cal Tech.

One can cite endless examples of how a small-town Joe Blow can be portrayed as a hero--Ishmael, Tom Sawyer, etc., as Master Critic Verdan has done. However, I was thinking (today is Wednesday, the time is eight thirty, and Disneyland is on the teevee in the other room) about Walt Disney's attempts at making a movie out of True-Life Adventures--the lives of beavers, lions, etc.

Now, it is reasonable that Disney shoots thousands of feet of dull film ... that will not contribute to the final product and cannot be used. The thousands of feet he does use are hard-earned feet indeed, shot from behind

this is page ten

scarecrows and hideouts that look to the subject as part of his environs.

Take his now-current deal about lions killing other animals. He doesn't know when the female lion or the Big Cheese himself is going to stop sleeping in that nice, warm African sun and go out to enjoy a little ham and eggs on the hoof. Same with Martin Johnson--his wild animal scenes are one still out of a million. He has to pick and choose amongst all the dreary, dull happenings in the life of a wild animal who is not the least bit interested in making a hit on Broadway, just to find half-an-hour's worth of entertainment for a popcorn-chewing audience who are dead certain within themselves that all of this is shot at the Bronx zoo and concerns lifeless, well-trained-but-quite-toothless lions.

The average sf author cannot conceivably burden himself with the unimaginably dull doings of the middle-class consumer/producer of tomorrow. His books' value lies in how well they transport the reader to the future, how well they shock him with technocracies and abhor him with grandiloquent speeches of conquest over primitive worlds or solar systems. His readers are enthralled by the fear and tenseness gripping Lt. Ezra Dalquist sitting on top of an A-bomb, or shocked into immobility by the spinning of the sun and moon overhead as The Time Traveller moves the levers on his Time Machine into the future.

The science-fiction author is concerned primarily not with ideas, not with people, not with gimmicks. He has to transport his reader into another time, not especially into another civilization, and give him not an escape from this reality but another reality to substitute temporarily that the reader may return from it and look again, maybe appreciate more the one he has to bear constantly.

LEE HOFFMAN

Mostly I wanted to join the Bloch is Ghod movement. Will pickled fragments be distributed to charter members of the true believers' club, or will it be preserved whole in the shrine?

It is surely pleasant to see the Letter from Bill Morse. I've always been fond of Bill. Well I remember that his radio was always on in N'Orle'ns because he had paid extra for the use of it and meant to get his moneys worth. I wonder if Bill recalls Cyrano d Bergerac and breakfast in the drug-store balcony.

Regards Verdan's item, Ishmael may well be a "trivial" person, but damned if I remember a ~~single~~ single incident aboard the Pequod that I'd call "trivial". ~~And we~~ And we ready by Mr Verdan's hand, "In the hands of a really skilled writer, even the Queequags can be interesting". I guess I'm old fashioned but I thought that this curious save was interesting, no "even". about it.

Sorry if I disappointed Ron Ellik by failing to be sufficiently condescending, or to lend him my complete file of Quandry, if that is what he was hinting about. I thought all he wanted was permish to reprint. I know what young fans feel like. I was one once myself. So were you, Flabbergasted L. McCain. I had the same trouble with Lionel Inman (Who's Inman?) when I was young and foolish. BNF's don't get to be BNF's by crying because they're neos. They just be neos to the best of their ability and suddenly one day they discover that they and their fellow neos are the BNFs and the

this is page eleven.

people they thought were BNFs are all old ex-fans. There is plenty of room for laughing with and/or at people in fandom. There is even room for self-pity which is one of the happy pastimes of many young fans. That's one reason they drift into fandom.

((May I applaud that last paragraph heartily. I once took 2500 words to say the same thing. v.l.m.))

RICHARD GEIS

A thought struck me about two weeks ago to the effect that the one sure instinct in man is the urge for survival; first on an individual basis, then on a race basis. I mean that a man will surely sacrifice himself if he is convinced that by doing so he can save or help save the human race. The species must survive at all costs. It seems to me, in light of this pretty well proven instinct, that if it is shown clearly that if man indulges in an all-out atomic war the race will die, then doesn't it follow that man will instinctively NOT indulge in an ALL-OUT atomic war? I don't rule out local wars...they seem about the only way that nationalistic policies can be implemented sometimes, but a really big war seems more and more not inevitable to me. I believe that the survival instinct in man will save us. This is nature's automatic reign on our ornery nature. A built in 'thou shalt not'.

The reason so much science fiction is defective is because the accent is still on the plot twist, the gadget, the social idea, and not enough on the person in the story. Mostly the characters in science fiction are just that; characters. They very seldom emerge as individuals.

I see no reason why a story involving VIPs could not present a world of the future as well as a story involving the garbage man. Who can legitimately suppose that a story about a futuristic garbage man will present an "objective, overall picture of a possible future"? And by the same token the VIP story is one-sided in the opposite direction.

I damn both Verdan and Economou...on this point.

For Verdan is objecting to a formula that has been overused. Even so, if a good writer took that formula and invested it with people instead of stock characters, the novel would be acclaimed a classic...at least by most fans.

But, of course, the formula itself is juvenile and dedicated to the moron readership who like the Hero-overthrowing-Tyranny. It is aimed at the broad mass of readers, not the intelligent few. For even in science fiction as in every other field, the mass of readers is pretty stupid. They don't like to think, and making them do it in a story is not good business. They won't buy the magazine. At least, so says Howard Browne. He doesn't want to realize that there are enough intelligent readers of science fiction to support a magazine. But we don't doubt it, do we Vernon? No-o-o-o-o-o.....

"By giving the hero enough importance, they are relieved of the necessity of doing anything else to make him interesting." Ah..... I couldn't have said it better.

So, on the whole, aside from that one little quibble above, I think Verdan hit the nail on the head. And the Logical conclusion is that magazine sf will probably continue to run mostly crud to satisfy the crud audience. Only

this is page twelve

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in hardcovers and perhaps in original pocketbooks can we expect to find the kind of science fiction Verdan outlines. Too, it could be done on a small-scale private printing basis...if there were for sure enough readers who would buy the books so as to at least assure a small profit.

Home cooking is where the heartburn is.

MONITORING RADIO

I don't see very much television but the more I see of it the better radio seems. As it happens, the more of television there is, the better radio tends to become. Television has siphoned off radio's mass audience and with it went many of the more objectionable features of radio's "golden age".

The things radio did worst, or the things television can do as well or better, tended to be the most expensive to present. With the big sugar daddies all deserted to video, radio has had to tighten its belt, with a decided improvement in overall silhouette. All is not yet utopia along the etherlanes. A bit of daytime listening presents the depressing fact that all the soap operas have not yet converted to kinescope and cathode tube. And the deadeningly stereotyped crime shows are, unhappily, one of the more economical type programs. The Mutual Network, which used to have some worthwhile programs, hasn't a thing left worth listening to, being given over entirely to these detective programs, children's shows, and Gabriel Heatter.

But elsewhere the picture is brighter. News and music have always been radio's special skills and they are becoming more and more widely programmed as tv proves its ineptness at both. One could wish more of the music were live and less canned, but radio still spends a considerably larger sum employing musicians than does television. And musicians wages being what they are one can't be too demanding of radio, now that it's accustoming itself to its austerity diet. The comedians, the variety shows, the hackneyed half-hour and hour 'dramas' in which the great classics of literature, stage, and screen were mercilessly butchered are all gone from the loudspeaker to the 21-inch tube. The interview and discussion programs which radio can handle as well or better than tv are becoming more common.

Hard times, and the fact that the lost audience seemed to include all the lowest-IQ types have combined to make radio more mature and listenable in a very brief time. A few of the big names of the bad old days, Fibber McGee and Molly, The Great Gildersleeve, Amos and Andy are still with us on a daily basis in a more economical format but even Eden had its wormy apples.

Necessity and economy have led to daring in programming and some interesting new techniques have been explored. It is possible to hear Clifton Fadiman and several entertaining colleagues, once a week, devoting a full half hour to simply good conversation.....uninterrupted by commercials.

NBC and CBS, who had the awfulest of the multi-million dollars shows in the old days, have been leading the new movement, whose most interesting product has been several shows on these two networks during the last 15 months which broke with several ancient radio traditions.

this is page thirteen

In the old days no program ran over an hour. For reasons of efficiency in huckstering all but a very few were cut to half an hour. The new shows relax, take off their shoes, and stay a while.

The older shows were severely pigeon-holed. It was comedy, music, drama, news, etc.....not two or three or all of them rolled into one. Even the variety shows such as the Ruddy Valley hour of the 30's followed a rigid formula and were expected to adhere to their own specialties, not wander around sampling the wares available in their neighbor's preserves (a happy exception was the night Fred Allen and Phil Baker, whose shows appeared consecutively, exchanged guest appearances and more or less ran their two shows together with Allen lampooning "Double or Nothing" with contestants in "Allen's Alley" and later wandering into the Baker program, ~~xxxxxx~~ asking questions of bona fide contestants and generally breaking things up).

And to mix live music with recorded music was unthinkable. In fact, until after the end of World War II, neither of the two major networks would think of letting a single recorded note pass over their sacred microphones for fear of instantly and foreveraftermore losing their entire listening audience. What happened, instead, was that they lost ~~xxx~~ Bing Crosby to ABC, who continued just as popular with his taped shows as his live ones had been. That ended that nonsense.

But still the two were not combined. A record show couldn't afford live talent, except perhaps for an interview, and live shows looked down their nose at anything recorded. Result was a certain lack of flexibility since you had your choice between listening to millions of dollars worth of talent in the note-for-note performances on records you were probably already familiar with and with some little known disc jockey filling in the interludes or a smoothly produced network show which featured undeniably live talent in original performances but which, for reasons of economy, was restricted to one artist or group of artists for the entire program. And frequently these were of lesser calibre than those heard on the record shows.

The first program I know of which broke through these various traditions was a Saturday afternoon show lasting several hours on CBS a year ago last spring called, I believe, "Road Show". Various live artists including not-too-well-known but tastefully jazz piano stylist Johnnie Guarneri were regular features and there were also guest artists, none of them too well known. During the several hours this was on the air these artists would perform occasionally....there would be news, jokes, contests, etc. and reports of highway conditions for people on the road, in between. There was also recorded music. It wasn't too good a show, but it was a start.

Several months later, almost simultaneously, two Sunday afternoon shows appeared; "On a Sunday Afternoon" on CBS and "Weekend" on NBC. The former I consider perhaps the most skillful blending of these diverse elements yet. There was an orchestra and chorus under the direction of Russ Case, one of the all-time jazz greats, Teddy Wilson, leading a trio, guest stars, and carefully programmed records. These weren't just the latest releases as is the case with most disc shows, network or local. They were attempting to create an effect and dug up the best records for the purpose. I recall one of the early shows featured several long out-of-print Fred Astaire records from the 30's. "Weekend" featured no live music and tried

to be a 'magazine of the air'. I found it an applaudable attempt which was overambitious and flopped badly. But their evening show, "Sunday with Garroway", a sort of high class disc jockey affair in which Garroway played music and interviewed very Big Name guests proved an admirable running mate for CBS' "On a Sunday Afternoon".

Latest in the series is a program which goes all-out with all these trends. It's received tremendous publicity and hoop-la. It's called "Monitor" and lasts a full 40 hours from early Saturday morning to midnight Sunday. It is by far the most ambitious attempt of any of the programs mention.

It rather reminds me of a habit my Father used to have which infuriated my sister when she was unfortunate enough to be in the same room. He would tune from one station to another listening to each any place from two to ten minutes each, before turning on. My sister used to expostulate, "You just get interested in it when he tunes it out." It is also an excellent description of "Monitor".

There is livemusic, recorded music, commentators, both humorous and serious, interviews, philosophy and just about everything else you can imagine. Lots of all of it but not very much at a time. There is a harking back to the early days of radio and the enthusiasm for distant stations. Your ears are assaulted with trans-Atlantic interviews which are one part interview to four parts static. The microphone cuts in on a Carl Sandburg speech just in time for you to hear a tremendous laugh from the audience, the result of a mot you missed. Sandburg talks well and wittily for ten minutes and just as he seems about to arrive at the point of his speech, "Monitor" tunes you out and over to Europe to listen to an auto race. They had bragged they were reviving the live music remotes of the 30's. These have a nostalgic charm, being inextricably associated with the golden days of popular music when it was at its best. One of the factors which destroyed them was that the hour and half-hour programmings were trimmed first to 25 minutes, then to 15 minutes, and even 10 minutes. There wasn't ~~xxxx~~ time to establish the necessary mood. "Monitor" sometimes, in a burst of generosity, gives you even a full 10 minutes of music. More typical was the treatment given to Les Brown on the first show. For economic reasons Brown has probaly the most skillful large band in operation today. "Monitor" took you to the Palladium specially to hear him; you heard two minutes of theme song, with two announcers talking over it about the good old days, a rendition of one of his most famous hits, and two more minutes of theme with announcers in front of it. And there are few delights to equal that of listening to some interesting music, recorded or live, and have a larynx dame called "Miss Monitor" come on and give you a weather report on top of it or, more frequently, have the thing faded out in the middle because, like my father, "Monitor" lacks the patience to listen to the entire performance. There is a very annoying sound effect, the 'Monitor theme' used for this purpose. It seems hard to believe a program which features such talents as Garroway, Fadiman, Henry Morgan, Roger Price, and similar entertaining people could be so distressingly bad...and what is distressing is that so many parts of "Monitor" are so good, if they'd only let you listen to them for a reasonable time.

I doubt if "Monitor" succeeds. Comparatively few listeners must possess the grasshopper-type mentality to enjoy a constant kaleidoscopic type entertainment, with no surcease. Those, like my father, who do enjoy such things can get the same effect by tuning around the dial. It's doubtful if they have the patience to stay tuned to Monitor, anyway.