




Number 2 / April 1960

 Cogito

"Camerado, this is no fanzine; who touches this, touches a fan." My reasoning is this. The first issue of Retrograde appeared in July 1959, and nine months is the gestation period of a human.

Despite the long interval between issues, my plans for Retrograde have not "firmed up," and this second number is as experimental as the first. Some of you didn't like the salmon-pink paper used last time, so this issue is being run off on Gestetner Mimeo-Wove paper of russet hue, which I think is more attractive and more opaque. A letter department has been added, and other departments will be inaugurated in the next few numbers. As I said last time, these departments will be "recurring" features, as distinct from "regular"; "Log of the Honeybee" has not been dropped, though it doesn't appear here; it will return in future issues. Speaking of the letter department, it's much shorter than it was planned to be, due to the nine-month lapse, and I did not publish a number of letters that normally would have appeared, especially one, titled "Ergo Sum," from Edco. Some of these letters may appear next issue.

Chief difference in this issue is the absence of Gestefaxed illustrations and headings in burgundy-color ink. Though changing colors is relatively easy with a Gestetner color-change kit, it does take time, and it seems a good idea to dispense with as many time-consuming frills as possible in a fanzine intended for monthly publication. "Multicolor work is nice, I suppose," wrote F. Towner Laney in his article "Syllabus for a Fanzine," now being reprinted in "The Best from Spacewarp" section of Spacewarp #66. "All it indicates to me is another press run for some poor mimeographer -- chewing up as much time and energy as it would have taken to run off an additional page of text."

The Gafia press mailing list is slowly being converted to Elliott Addresserette stencil cards. If your address is incorrect or incomplete be sure to let me know, so I can pull the card and type up a new one before the next issue is mailed. And tell me when you change your address too. About half of this issue should be addressed by means of the Addresserette machine, which is a handy little gadget, more expensive but far more useful and versatile than the spirit addressers used, not too successfully, by fans a few years ago, notably by Walter A. Coslet.

In addition to the latest additions to my library listed on page 6, I must acknowledge receipt of two books by Noel Loomis, kindly sent me by Loomis himself, in response to a letter: Cheyenne War Cry (Avon) and

Have Gun -- Will Travel (Dell); and five paperbacks also sent by the author, another first rate western novelist, Will Cook: The Wind River Kid (Crest), Lone Hand from Texas (Popular), Badman's Holiday (Gold Medal), Outcast of Cripple Creek (Gold Medal, England), and Fort Starke (Ballantine). Finally, from Jim Harmon I just received six paperbacks, plus one Big Little Book, by various hands. I won't list all these books, but I must mention the Big Little Book, which is Jimmie Allen in the Airmail Robbery (Whitman, 1936), which Jim sent because of my confessed enthusiasm as a kid for the radio serial, "The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen."

I hope the broadcasts themselves were on a higher level of quality than this Big Little Book. The authors themselves obviously knew very little about the administrative details of a 1935ish airlines terminal -- somebody called the "station master" announces the arrival of planes! But their ignorance is overshadowed by that of the artist. Over a caption of "They fastened their safety belts," he depicts Jimmie Allen and Speed Robertson standing by their plane, tugging at their belts, as if just about to enter, or leave, a stall in the men's room.

Still another book recently received -- too late to list in "A Fan's Library" -- is The Fantastic Universe Omnibus, edited by Hans Stefan Santesson (Prentice-Hall), to be published 29 April. I haven't read it yet (it will be reviewed here soon) except to peruse Bob Bloch's "A Way of Life." I notice that while the typesetter misspelled Quandry correctly he typoed Skyhook into Skybook. Well, at least they spelled my name right, which is more than they did for Sam Moskowitz in one place. It just ruined my day, that's all.

§ § §

A MATTER OF IDENTITY. Is Don Berry, author of the new best-selling novel Trask (Viking, \$4.95), the science fiction fan and writer, who wrote, among other things, "Man Alone" (If, Oct 1958)? Is Alexander King, author of two best-sellers and featured guest (they tell me) on the Jack Paar TV show, the same Alexander King who illustrated the original edition of Charles Fort's Lo!? Is Daniel Keyes, author of two fine F&SF stories, "Flowers for Algernon" and "Crazy Maro," the same man who was on the staff of Marvel Science Stories about 1951? If they are, I wonder if they'll admit it?

§ § §

O TEMPORA! DEPARTMENT. (A continuing feature, I'm afraid, in this fanzine.) A UPI dispatch in the Minneapolis Morning Tribune, Wednesday, 20 April 1960:

Tulsa, Okla. -- Angry parents Tuesday demanded the removal of a Tulsa high school English teacher who assigned a modern novel with four-letter words for her students to read. The teacher, Mrs Beatrice Levin, assign-

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 RETROGRADE is edited and published monthly by Redd Boggs, 2209 Highland place N. E., Minneapolis 21, Minnesota. Associate editor: Marion Z. Bradley. This is issue number two, April 1960. This fanzine is available for letters of comment or by trade, but not for cash. The decoration on page 4 is by Richard Bergeron. The Gafia press.

ed the book The Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger. She called it "beautiful and moving." Eight parents called it shocking. So did Dr Charles C. Mason, superintendent of schools.

Dr Hiram Alexander, principal of the school, Edison High, informed the irate parents that the book would be removed immediately from Mrs Levin's reading list. But he said he wouldn't fire the teacher. "We all make mistakes," he said. "She's really a good teacher."

Two of the parents pulled their students out of Mrs Levin's class. A mother, whose daughter complained that the book is smutty, said, "I try not to interfere with her choice of books. But she and I both agreed it was not fit to read."

The Catcher in the Rye is the story of a 16-year-old boy who goes underground in New York for 48 hours when he is overwhelmed by the perplexing circumstances of his life.

If that crazy goddam last paragraph sounds familiar, it's because it is. I mean it's practically a quote from the backcover blurb of the Signet paperback edition. As for the rest of this news item, I'm not going to say a word. I'm speechless. I really am.

The Morning Tribune headlined that story "Teacher Assigns Profane Reading; Parents Outraged." This reminds me of Dr Walter C. Alvarez' medical column in which he was talking about brain damage. He wrote:

Many years ago a man in Massachusetts was tamping gun-powder into a hole. The powder exploded and the crowbar he was using went through the top of his head. As I remember, he walked to the hospital.

He got well and today one can see the crowbar and his skull in the museum of the Harvard medical school. About the only change noted in the man was that he was more profane after the accident than he had been before.

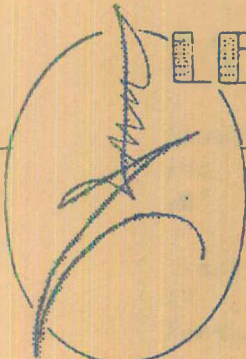
Well, I suppose you can't really blame the man.

§ § §

THE ROUND FILE. I seem to be loaded with notes from and about newspapers this time. Here's a note about an item I neglected to save, unfortunately, from the St Paul Pioneer Press, Thursday, 3 September 1959. A boy, 10, was the only passenger on a city bus driven by a driver "who apparently made up his route as he went along." The bus followed no known route for a Rapid Transit bus, and after a while the boy became frightened, screamed, and was let off. His parents complained to the police, but they had no reports of any wayward bus. # Clifford D. Simak wrote a series of articles for the Minneapolis Star recently, titled "Our New Front Yard," describing the solar system. The series was illustrated by Morris Dollens. # The Emsh cover on the June 1960 Galaxy is a dead (and I do mean dead) ringer for the famous Van Dongen cover for "Firewater" (ASF, Feb 1952), which as I say elsewhere was my favorite sf cover of the past ten years. # Thorne Smith's novel The Bishop's Jaegers will become a Broadway musical starring Dagmar sooner or later. "Sooner or Later" is the name of the show; the opening date is October. If the production is successful, Smith's fame may zoom upward again after the decline of the last dozen years. # Wanted: a copy of Authors in Paradise, by Alan Griffiths.

JIM HARMON writes a

LETTER FROM MOUNT CARMEL



I was up at my aunt's, sitting reading. I was on page 296 of the 415-page, complete and unabridged Avon 50¢ edition of Crime and Punishment. Luzhin had just walked in on Katerina Ivanovna's wake banquet -- in type tinier than my typewriter's -- you have to get your eyes within three inches of the page before you lose the illusion that the pages are merely striped -- when the mailbox clunked and I went out to get the mail. No checks. No magazines or fanzines. One letter from you saying that I should read Crime and Punishment. I went back in, read your letter, laughed, cried, and raged in appropriate spots, and tucked you between the sheets with Sonia, for a bookmark.

Thanks for the western paperbacks. They arrived safely. However, a curious phenomenon (no joke!) -- when I opened the package the books were burning hot to the touch. So hot I think they might have flamed or at least charred if I hadn't opened the package just then. My mother suggests that they merely rode next to the truck engine, but the wrappings were cool and those books were too hot. I suspect spontaneous combustion, but I've had several recent experiences with fire. Could I be a pyro poltergeist?

I reread some Poe lately. "The Masque of the Red Death" held up the best in my opinion. I was disappointed with "The Fall of the House of Usher." I was remembering some excellent dialog in this story, and was surprised to find it didn't contain any! I must remember this dialog from a radio version. I remember one scene: Usher is describing to the narrator how he returned home and found his little sister was now a juicy, gorgeous blonde -- "But I never touched her, you must believe me!" I saw the story on TV once and waited to see if they would dare this line -- they didn't -- and here all the time it must have been some radio writer who invented it. Funny how you can misremember.

I saw a couple of theater movies on a double bill recently: "Jack the Ripper" and "The Mummy." I felt like going out and there's just one movie theater in town now. These certainly weren't anything to write away from home about, but I will. They were put out by different companies but both were written by the same man, I noticed: Jimmy Sangster, who seems to be Very Big in horror pictures just now. They were a notch above the absolute stupidities of the Teen-age Werewolf variety, but inferior to the subtler, atmospheric horrors of the Val Newton-Karloff school of two decades ago. "Ripper" used that rare filmic technique of incorporating a color sequence into a black-and-white movie. It was crudely effective. I remember the color shots in "The Picture of Dorian Gray," which were so subtle that it wasn't until afterward that I recalled the switch from monochrome to Technicolor.

"Mummy" was all in glorious color, which destroyed the mood of oppressive doom entirely. I kept expecting the Mummy to break into a song and dance: "They call me the Mummy, but I want to be your Big Daddy,

Ba-by; I want to shake, rattle, and roll these bones, like I did in Five-oh-oh-oh B.C."

Things look black for the entire science fiction magazine field. The day of the fiction magazine is about done, let's face it. With the folding of Bob Lowndes' westerns, there are no western fiction magazines left. Possibly Pines is still publishing Ranch Romances quarterly; if so, it's the very last western and the last pulp in traditional pulp size except for the new detective Tightrope, a companion to the late Fantastic Universe, which may still be going. There are a handful of detective magazines barely hanging on. In science fiction we have Galaxy, If, F&SF, Amazing, Fantastic, and ASF, plus the American edition of New Worlds, and some "borderline" books: Shock, Fear. Fear, incidentally, seems to me a genuinely good magazine. I would say that it was the best new magazine since Worlds Beyond. I hope it lasts longer.

While one or two magazines may survive or a new one pop up from time to time, I'm afraid the influence of the magazine on the science fiction field may dwindle to nothing. I don't know how fandom can survive all this. The sf genre may even disappear, to turn up only rarely as an oddball book or story. Let's hope that Hugo Gernsback remains in good health. We may need him to come forth at 95 to restore recognition to the field.

Note: "Letter from Mount Carmel" was compiled from several letters from Jim Harmon not originally written for publication.

10. X THE SECRET MUSEUM OF FANKIND

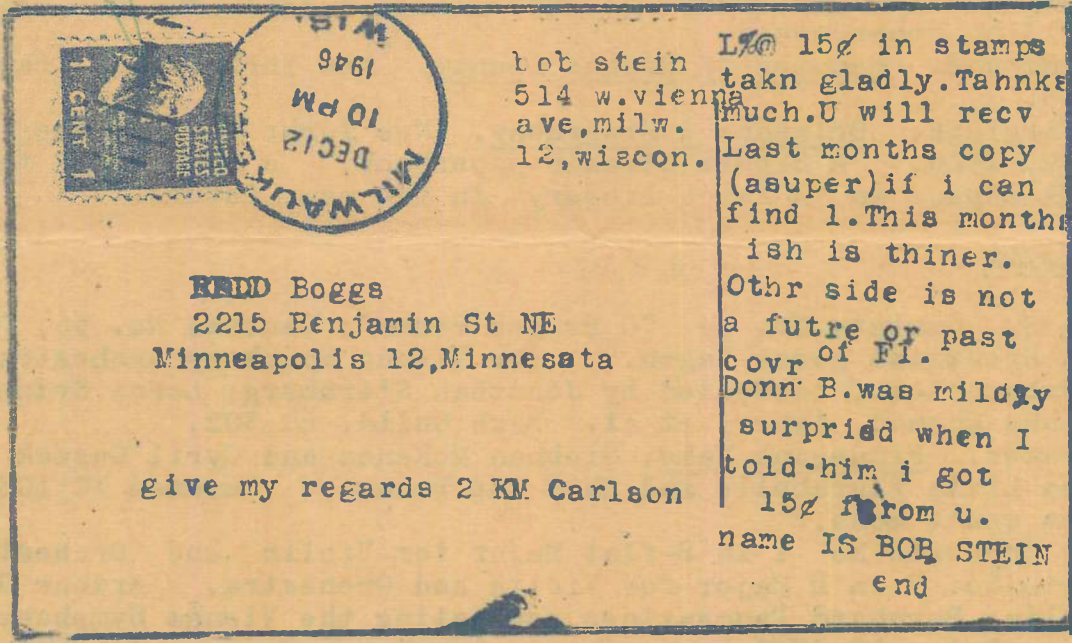


EXHIBIT #2. Postcard from Bob Stein of Milwaukee, Wis., postmarked Dec 12 1946, which began a long correspondence between us and resulted in our co-editorship of Tympani, biweekly fanewsie, launched in March 1947. Gestefax copy of the original.

A FAN'S LIBRARY

→ acquisitions: ←

BOOKS

- Ellmann, Richard. James Joyce. New York: Oxford University press, 1959.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. Tender is the Night. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n/d (1959?). The new papercovered edition.
- Fremantle, Anne. This Little Band of Prophets: The British Fabians. New York: The New American Library, 1960. Mentor paperback.
- Hyman, Stanley Edgar. The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952. I have owned the Vintage paperback (1955) since it first appeared, and bought this hardcover edition to obtain a missing chapter, "Edmund Wilson and Translation in Criticism."
- Kazin, Alfred. The Inmost Leaf: A Selection of Essays. New York: The Noonday press, 1959. Paper covers.
- O'Connor, William Van. Campus on the River. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell co., n/d (1960). Paper covers.
- Sarban. The Sound of His Horn. New York: Ballantine Books, 1960. Paper covers.
- Tyndall, William York. The Literary Symbol. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University press, n/d (1958). A Midland paperback.
- Warren, Austin. Rage for Order: Essays in Criticism. Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan press, 1959. An Ann Arbor paperback.
- Warren, Robert Penn. The Cave. New York: Random House, 1959. A gift from Miss Alta Peterson. I trust it is a gift, and not a loan. I would be embarrassed.
- Wilson, Edmund. Memoirs of Hecate County. New York: L. C. Page & co., 1959.
- Woolf, Virginia. Orlando: A Biography. New York: The New American Library, 1960. A Signet Classic paperback. A review of this novel will appear in "A Fan's Library" in the near future.

RECORDS

- Bach, J. S. Cantata No. 34, "O Ewiges Feuer"; Cantata No. 56, "Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tagen." The Vienna Symphony orchestra, Vienna Chamber choir, conducted by Jonathan Sternberg; Lorna Sydney, alto; Hugues Cuenod, tenor; et al. Bach Guild, EG 502.
- Joyce, James. Finnegans Wake: Siobhan McKenna and Cyril Cusack Reading Anna Livia Plurabelle and Shem the Penman. Caedmon TC 1086. "My foos won't moos."
- Mozart. Concerto No 1 in B-flat Major for Violin and Orchestra; Concerto No. 7 in D Major for Violin and Orchestra. Arthur Grumiaux, violin; Bernhard Paumgartner conducting the Vienna Symphony orchestra. Epic, LC 3230.
- Renata Tebaldi Sings Verdi. Selections from "Il Trovatore," "La Forza del Destino," and "Otello." London frrr, 5520.
- Vivaldi. Concertos Nos. 9, 10, 11, and 12 from "Il cimento dell' armonia e dell' invenzione," Cpus 8. "I Musici," Felix Ayo, violin. Epic, LC 3443.

CHORUSPONDENCE

JOHN MAGNUS

Retrograde is exciting. I just read it over two cream-cheese and nut sandwiches, and must say that I enjoyed the fanzine most. The reasons for this are many and personal. For one, it gave me more genuine egoboo than I've had in years. I've always borne secret pride for the apparent influence of the Saturday Morning Gazette and Rumble, which no one else seems to have noticed. In addition, I am grateful for the fine distinctions you have drawn among various types of small zines. In all, your discussion of modern minizines is thorough and satisfying.

The unique trade paranoia of book dealers is fascinating, and I have enjoyed bugging them with their own bait, as you have. I was once treated to a lecture, with examples, of how the recent throng of Hungarian refugees tracked up magazines they probably cdn't even understand, then walked away, probably with one or two under their bulky clothing. When he told me they should be sent back to Hungary, I muttered as Slavically as I could, winding up with a carefully inflected "nyeh potrzbie" as I stalked out. John Hitchcock had carefully tutored me in the pronunciation of this noncommittal epithet, and at last I found good use for it.

The moral-semantic exegesis of G. M. Carr is sublime. The multiple untruth, or meandering premiss, or unmapped dogmatism, or whatever, is one of my hobbies. I am actually collecting 3x5s of sample techniques, which Ted White has referred to in print as "argument-stoppers."

As if to make Retrograde a perfect epiphany of my fanpubbing aspirations, you close with a pastiche of Harmon. To me Jim Harmon is one of the most satisfying fan writers about, in terms of scope of interest and personality of style. (Baltimore 11, Maryland)

MIRIAM CARR

Odd, is it not, that we are still OK if we go to see Charlie Chaplin flicks? I mean, people still look at me askance when they see that I have Paul Robeson records. No kidding. I even have a record of him singing the "Internationale." But of course it was bought during WW2 and at that time people were learning Russian and learning the "Internationale" and all and Russia was our gallant ally. And now Robeson is a dirtier word than Russia is, practically, and some people (more than I'd like to count) suspect my loyalty or would suspect it, if they knew that he is still my favourite basso.

We can still respect and admire Chaplin the performer as long as we despise Chaplin the man. But not so Robeson and some of the others. People are so damned odd. Like I dig F----- F--- as a singer, but many of my college friends that I was sick in the head or at least misguided horribly, because how could I dig a woman who is a self-admitted lesbian? Every time I said "So what?" or "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," they looked at me for some signs of homosexuality and said "But she's a pervert!"

What you said about everybody buddying it up with Gem Carr at conventions when they hate each other in print really seemed significant to me. When I met her at the Solacon I just said Howdoyoudo and staid away from her as much as possible. When I was forced to be with her I more or less ignored her because I was scared to death of her. Nobody told me the tradition of "We feud with her in print and just adore her for being such a spunky old lady in person." And if they had, I just wouldn't have been able to adjust to that kind of reasoning. I'm not built that way. But one thing I do know, the Seattle people I'm acquainted with have nothing to do with her in person anymore because of the way they and their friends have been treated in print. She terrifies me, not because she has hurt me -- she hasn't; she has tried to but didn't get me on a sore spot. But because she ran Willis out of FAPA, and the

way she attacks people's beliefs in such a vicious way. But mostly she scares me because she is so dangerously loud and because so many people are taking up her ways. (Berkeley 9, California)

LOUIS RUSSELL CHAUVENET

That's a rather peculiar note you have at bottom of page 9, Retrograde #1. The question as to whether something made perfect by God would necessarily remain perfect eternally is probably a trivial one in the sense that we have neither the knowledge of God nor the taste of eternity sufficient to arrive at a meaningful answer. But this does not mean that the question could not be argued both ways. I see no evidence in the world as I know it that anything therein exists in a changeless condition. And if everything is subject to change, it follows that an object originally made perfect will become less so in the course of time, since perfection could not be improved on, and any change would therefore imply a loss of perfection. Your note, "Of course," is out of place.

The real trouble here lies in the naive assumptions behind the original question. The universe as far as we can find out much about it seems to be a dynamic rather than a static affair, and perfection, if it is present at all, is to be looked for in a process or possibly the end result of a process, rather than in any particular object or being that may happen to exist in a certain form at this particular time.

If every two words in Retrograde produced this much response, you might find yourself reducing the size of future issues....

It pleased me to see Art Widner's familiar signature on the last page.

Your notes on the McCarthyite were of some interest, since I seem to recall Bob Pavlat showed me a late FAPA mailing in which there occurred some fantastic publication called a Gemzine; even without being able to recall the author's name I somehow feel this must be what you had in mind. (Silver Spring, Maryland)

BOB LICHTMAN

The Peanuts and Pogo books sell quite well around here, too, for the bookstores are eternally almost out. No matter what time of month I come in to browse (I seldom buy, just browse you know) they're nearly out of stock. Occasionally a friendly clerk (always female, 55-ish, wearing glasses) will tell me that they never seem to have enough of those books to go around. Another B*I*G item around here is the Jules Feiffer books, Sick Sick Sick and Passionella and Other Stories, which sell at exorbitant prices but sell out even faster than the other humor books mentioned. And, by George, they're really much funnier. Especially parts of the Other Stories in the latter volume. You really must read through the very last item in the book, entitled "Boom." Words fail me in describing this particular story. The lead story is extremely funny too. But not as tearfully hilarious (and weirdly true) as the one called "Boom."

Say, whatever did happen to that "stinky poem" Widner was inquiring about? You should really tell us about such things, Redd. (Los Angeles 56, California)

EC: Oh, very well. The "stinky poem" Widner mentioned in that 1947 postal was one he had had published in The Fantaste, c. 1941. I liked it, and with his permission revised it and submitted it to several "little magazines." I believe one of them finally accepted it and printed it during 1947.

THANKS also to everybody else who commented on Retrograde #1. These people include Ed Cox, Ted Pauls, Liz Wilson, Len Moffatt, Richard Bergeron, Joe Kennedy, Ruth Berman, Les Gerber, Billy Joe Plott, Guy Terwilleger, Wally Weber, Ellis T. Mills, Bob Lambeck, Marty Fleischman, Dick Ryan, Wilkie Conner, Hal Shapiro, Jim Harmon, Richard Elsberry, Bob Farnham, Rod Frye, Jim Moran, Marion Z. Bradley, and possibly others. Due to the long lapse between issues, I may have forgotten to list a few fans who commented, but every letter was appreciated and enjoyed. Please write again.