



Number 3 / May 1960

COGITO

THE MEAL EQUALLY SET

On page 14 of Thursday's morning paper, squeezed in between an automobile ad and the condensed daily instalment of Advise and Consent, an AP dispatch reported that the F. W. Woolworth stores had reaffirmed their policy of refusing to serve Negroes at lunch counters in the south. Company president Robert C. Kirkwood told stockholders at the annual meeting that Woolworth would continue to adhere to "local customs established by local people for the conduct of business in their community."

I went downtown Saturday noon, and curious to know whether this news had inspired or depressed pickets who on recent weekends had been patrolling in front of the local Woolworth store, I walked over to Seventh and Nicollet. Chill rain was drizzling out of a gray sky, but the sidewalks were crowded with Saturday shoppers.

There were pickets, sure enough, near the main entrances of Woolworth, clustered under the dripping awnings; there were none at the side entrances where there were no awnings. Two signs were in sight, though indifferently displayed, and I could read only one: "Don't shop here!" The only activity centered around four or five earnest young people who were passing out handbills to people entering or leaving the store. All these pickets were obviously college students, white, intelligent, open-faced. A well-dressed young Negro woman who seemed only to have happened along and got caught in the rain, watched them with an amused smile. She was the only Negro in sight, and the only person aside from myself representing spectatordom.

I unlimbered my camera and put myself into Dean Grennell's shoes (I wished he wasn't wearing wet ones) to decide what would make the best picture. I decided that I would try a picture from inside the store out into the wet through the front windows, and as I pushed toward the door one of the pickets put a handbill into my grasp. I rejected it coldly -- I, a contributor to CORE! -- with the instinctive resentment of one who hates to be forced into reading anything he did not freely choose. I seemed to recognize the sincere, polite young man; he was the political science major who makes liberalism a way of life, a familiar figure at all good colleges. This autumn he will be ringing doorbells on behalf of the Democratic candidate.

I had time to snap and develop only one Polaroid print of the picket line before all the pickets drew into a huddle for a moment and then

dispersed. They seemed to melt away into the rain, and the last I saw of them were the two young men shouldering their signs and slogging off in the rain along Nicollet avenue. Perhaps they had another store to picket this afternoon.

I glanced around the store. The pickets obviously hadn't persuaded many customers from entering the store. Swarms of people, some of them perhaps here only to wait out the rain, squeezed the aisles between departments like small-town folk at a carnival. The caramel corn, pastry, and pizza pie counters were doing more business than the girls could handle. A dozen customers stood elbow to elbow at the snack counter over pie and coffee, and across the store at least 85 people crowded the stools along the looping counters of the luncheonette while others waited impatiently behind them, eager to partake, I suppose, of the Fresh Strawberry Ice Cream Short Cake Special 23¢ each waitress advertised on a big placard pinned to her uniform. None of the people at the snack bar or the luncheonette were Negroes. The Minneapolis store of course does not practice segregation, but there were no Negroes in the store.

Outside the gray rain was pelting down even more heavily, pasting a hundred discarded handbills to the glistening sidewalk. The handbills were printed on a glossy stock that seemed tentatively to resist the wet. I picked up one, shook off the water, and carried it away with me as a souvenir. It had been printed for the local NAACP and an organization called Students for Integration. The other discarded handbills lay brightly in the rain, but they must have been beaten into illegible pulp in another hour.

THE ROUND FILE

It seems to me that almost everyone I've ever pulled for to win TAFF has lost out. This time, hoping that the process is still operating, I am pulling for Eric Bentcliffe and Sandy Sanderson. (Of course I am voting for Mal Ashworth.) # U.S. commissioner of education Lawrence Gridley Derthick is obviously not a science fiction fan. Asked to comment in Miami Beach, Florida, on a recent ruling banning Aldous Huxley's Brave New World and George Orwell's 1984 from Miami's public school libraries, the commissioner said, "I've never heard of these books, and I don't think it would be prudent of me to discuss them." # I wince at the use of the term "firmed up" on page one of last issue, even though I framed it in quote marks. Like, man, I conscientiously refrain, jargon-wise, from falling under the influence of pseudo-beatniks and Madison avenue all these years, and then succumb. But perhaps it is safe nowadays to use such slang; now such terms are passe rather than de rigueur. When everybody else has constipation, I get diarrhea. # "'Sick, sick, sick!' sobbed Giles Habibula." -- The Legion of Space, p 119. # The local paper, somebody told me the other day, is communist controlled. "You can see for yourself," he said. "Almost every day there are two or three stories about Russia on the front page."

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A FAN'S LIBRARY

Valkyrie's Volume

THE FANTASTIC UNIVERSE OMNIBUS* came to me, as well as to a number of other fan editors, as a review copy. It was good of the publisher to distribute so many free copies, but perhaps it wasn't so extravagant of him as it sounds. Perhaps he has belatedly discovered the enormity of his mistake in publishing the book and is merely unloading copies he knows now he will never be able to sell.

At the time the book went to press Prentice-Hall must have been naively unaware that science fiction is dying -- or at any rate is in such a bad way that the very term is superstitiously shunned by editors and publishers in the know. Prentice-Hall blunderingly labelled the book science fiction right on the front of the dust jacket, not realizing that sf works must never be called that, but must be sold as -- well, one isn't sure what. What indeed is Galaxy supposed to be, in the mind of the prospective buyer, if not a science fiction magazine?

Moreover, on the back of the dust jacket The Fantastic Universe Omnibus prints a painful blurb on science fiction as a genre that reads like something written in 1953: "Each year literally tens of thousands of readers throughout the world are becoming attracted to science fiction. It is fast establishing itself as a new and exciting form of literature...." Hans Stefan Santesson, who edited Fantastic Universe magazine and this book, must have had incredible luck in discovering this publisher, and we can almost fancy the scene which must have led to the publication of this book....

Mr Santesson has visited the Prentice-Hall offices to peddle a manuscript titled The Influence of Grandma Moses on Modern Islamic Art, and there is obviously little enthusiasm for such a book in Englewood Cliffs. Mr Santesson steals a glance at the grandfather's clock in the office, wondering if he can reach the headquarters of Beacon Books before 5 o'clock, and as he reaches wearily for his burnoose, Mr Prentice, a kindly old gentleman with white hair and whiskers, peers through his pince-nez, and says keenly, "Bit down in your luck, old chap, aren't you? P'raps Mr Hall and I could...well, fare back to N'Yo'k is a bit steep, you know, ferry and all..." "Rather," says Mr Hall, nodding till his celluloid collar squeaks. He reaches toward his waistcoat pocket, and Mr Santesson has the momentary illusion that he is going to bring forth a ha'p'ny-bit or a thruppence.

"No no!" Mr Santesson says hastily. "Praise Allah, I have a job. I'm in the publishing game myself -- oh, I'm just an editor now, of course, but someday, sirs.... You see, I edit a string of magazines." Mr Prentice and Mr Hall beam at him compassionately, obviously delighted at this living example of the soundness of Horatio Alger precepts. Mr

* The Fantastic Universe Omnibus. Edited by Hans Stefan Santesson. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960. \$3.95.

Santesson feels impelled to continue. "My present ambition is to move up to editing girlie magazines. Currently I'm working on detective and, er, science fiction magazines." He hides a blush in the folds of his burnoose. "Oh, it's clean and honorable work, of course. Some days I have to meet only one or two authors -- "

"Science fiction?" says Mr Prentice, tickling his nose meditatively with the plume of his desk pen. "What's that?" "Your pardon, effendi?" says Mr Santesson, doubting his ears. Mr Hall suddenly wheezes, "Haaarr! Quaint term, that. Science -- fiction. I shall have to remember it. Tell my wife at dinner." "Samyak samkalpa!" mutters Mr Santesson under his breath. Thinking quickly, he says aloud, "It's a new but exciting form of literature. Now, the magazine I edit is called Fantastic Universe, a title adapted of course from Sir James Jeans...."

"Fantastic Universe," says Mr Prentice, marveling. "It is, isn't it?" Mr Hall, already so full of wonder that he cannot appreciate another marvel, turns to practical matters. "And is yours one of the leading, er, science fiction magazines, Mr Santesson?" "One of the top ten," Mr Santesson says largely. DA Damyata!...

The sudden end of Fantastic Universe before this book appeared must have been a shock to Prentice-Hall, but probably not to Santesson. He must have known that the magazine hadn't a very promising future, and he must have edited this collection of stories with the idea of saving for posterity a few of his favorite tales from a soon-to-be-gone-and-forgotten magazine. The stories he has borne with a "Ho-yo-to-ho!" from the battlefield of the newsstands into hardcover Valhalla are some of them quite good. Santesson has limited his choices -- probably from the purest of motives -- to the four years in which he edited the magazine, but the collection does not convey a single, distinctive effect, as the F&SF anthologies edited by Boucher did, for example. Fantastic Universe was too far down on the scale to attract many stories written especially for it and for its editor, and it is difficult to build a special personality out of a conglomeration of manuscripts stained by John Campbell's sandwiches, Horace Gold's potato knish, and even Larry Shaw's Rheingold.

The only impression of an editorial personality here comes from Santesson's apparent weakness for robot stories and, perhaps not too oddly, from an accompanying belief in the importance of "human interest" in science fiction. These two elements find curious expression in one story included here: David C. Knight's "The Amazing Mrs Mimms." Knight seems to be one of the writer breed who presumes that "human interest" centers largely in the activities of nice little old ladies out of soap opera and the novels of Grace Livingstone Hill. Knight's little old lady, to make her properly science fictional, is a time traveler and one of a group of bourgeois Eumenides who meddle in human affairs all the way through human history to make things come out right. In other words our human problems are no problems at all. At the end of the story Mrs Mimms is called off the job by a sudden emergency and her place is taken by a clockwork figure who, perfectly miming Mrs Mimms, takes over her task of directing human destiny. So much for "human interest."

The robot stories include one, an inconsequential one, by Isaac Asimov, and an effective one by Harry Harrison written in the Asimov

I CAN'T HONESTLY SEE what qualifications John Kennedy has for the presidency. I mean, for God's sake, where does he get off declaring himself presidential timber? These are questions, notice, and I'm willing to listen to answers. Like you, I would choose Adlai Stevenson over either Kennedy or Nixon. Actually, Nixon seems to have functioned usefully in his high office; he has made enemies almost entirely on the basis of his personality. I am not an ardent supporter of Nixon, but I am not sure he wouldn't make a better president than Fighting Jack. The latter seems to be a prominent candidate on the strength of his sex appeal. (His wife is also one of the most beautiful women I know of; she would surely be the most beautiful first lady in history. I've seen pictures of the allegedly "beautiful" Dolly Madison.) Some time back, Playboy ran an article on the Cult of the Aged Leader. I think there is also a Cult of Youth in this country. So we get a young, pretty Kennedy instead of a slightly wrinkled, shopworn Stevenson.

LETTER FROM MOUNT CARMEL

BY JIM HARMON

I don't think "anti-chance" is absolutely necessary to explain anything. I suppose eventually such unlikely things as the appearance of life on Earth would occur by chance. But the structure of the human mind provides us with an intuitive belief in an extra-normal unity and direction to the universe. I realize very well that this intuition may be absolutely false, perhaps only a safety valve to help us maintain our sanity in the face of our eventual certain death. But it is simple enough to deny this intuition in effect, if not application. I've merely exercised my intuition in this matter. I don't know whether it goes toward the truth or away from it. But it seems too simple to just say things are as you see them, how they look on the surface. Nothing else is that obvious and simple; why should reality be? Things don't get simpler and simpler; they get increasingly more complex, the farther you go into them.

This is in case you feel "Letter from Mount Carmel" should have some more philosophy in it. It's okay with me if you think the feature needs a little Action with accounts of my various brawls. If you think it also needs some Sex I will supply you with some Frank Harris type memoirs.

I got in a fight on the way home from the Economou shindig in January. I went into the men's room at the bus station in Danville, Ill., with a sack under my arm containing some paperbacks I bought in Chicago and other things. A big Negro guy in a bill cap tore at the sack, slurring, "You got some good books there, huh?" He started to drag out a copy of Adam Reader, but I disengaged that, and showed him a copy of a fanzine, Earl Kemp's SaFari, instead. I said, "This is just like a trade magazine -- it wouldn't be of any interest to anybody but me." He said, "Oh, you don't understand. I dig that, man. Why, I'm taking a course in math at the college and I'm doing some poetry." Just how he knew the fanzine had something to do with writing, I don't know. He went on,

"Maybe I can give you some ideas and you can give me some ideas." He started to force me back toward the toilets in the rear. "Maybe," I said and somehow disengaged myself fairly easily and started for the door.

The place was deserted, but somehow I wasn't frightened. I have been frightened by less sinister things, but not this. I was opening the door when he slammed it shut with his shoulder and grabbed me by the lapels. "How about a dime so's I can have some coffee?" Now I would have given him a dime except I had spent every penny of my change at the last rest stop and had nothing less than a five dollar bill. I wasn't going to let him have that. I tried to open the door again but he held it shut and wouldn't let go of my collar. So I drove my elbow into his guts and gave him a judo chop at the side of his neck. He staggered back and sat down in the urinal trough, looking at me with frustration, fury, and reproach. I went out and immediately got back on my bus.

I'm not too sure that I wasn't too violent with him. To shorten the story: A guy down in his luck asked me for a dime and I hit him. But at the time, it seemed the proper response. He was a big son-of-a-gun -- six two or so -- about my weight but more muscular -- and I don't know how I would have come out if he had been able to retaliate. Besides, he looked the type to carry a switchblade or a razor. So maybe I was lucky. Given a second chance at the same situation I think I would try harder to talk my way out of it. At any rate, as you can see, if there's one thing that really puts me in a killing mood, it's having a door closed on me!

You asked me about Judith Merrill's "That Only A Mother." That's the only way you'll ever learn -- by asking questions -- so I don't mind a bit. It's been a few years since I read the story, but the point of it seemed to me to be that mother love would cloud the woman's eyes so she couldn't see the defects of her baby, although it was such a monster that only a mother could love it. You think that mother love would do just the opposite, do you? Does your mother see every little flaw in your character? But I hope this clarifies it for you, a little. If you have any problems about the moral question of "The Turn of the Screw" or the symbolism of Moby Dick, feel free to ask me. I'm always glad to help. That's what I'm here for.

I read Classics of the Silent Screen the other day at the library. Very interesting book. The stills of "Intolerance" and "Birth of a Nation" were impressive. Even the stills. I would like to see the movies. I endorse wholeheartedly the few pages on Tom Mix. These give Tom just as much credit and praise as could be given him, and hint rather darkly that it's only a self-consciously arty convention to prefer William S. Hart to Mix, since there is more interest in, letter response to, etc., Tom Mix movies than any other silent pictures at all.

The G. G. Fickling books are copyrighted by Gloria and Forrest Fickling, so I suppose it's a husband-wife writing team, or brother-sister, possibly. They are absolutely outrageous -- you can't believe a word of them. But somehow they are good fun. They are about Honey West Private Eye, who never gets through a chapter with all her clothes, and deal with homosexuality, incest, cannibalism, devil worship, torture, mass murder, detectives who wear disguises, and like that. Can both Jim Harmon and Dean Grennell be wrong? Try one sometime.

CHORUSPONDENCE

BOB STEIN

When I received the copy of Retrograde I was mildly interested in learning what you were doing in the fan world these days. When I came to the reproduction of the postcard from me I was vastly amused. I don't remember it at all, but I sure recognize the typing. It hasn't improved much over the years.

Nine months between issues is a heck of a long time -- and it's kind of an amorphous creation at that. But as someone remarked, "What good is a newborn baby?" -- so I will wait to see what this new babe develops into.

Your book collecting seems to run heavily towards westerns and literary criticism. Kind of an unusual coupling. My own library was getting too big for the room available, so I gave away a lot of stuff. I've kept the books of a technical nature, including early books on radio and automobiles -- and late ones too -- plus the stuff on photography. Lately I've been collecting material on hi-fidelity.

As for your comment on the Tulsa incident, I haven't read the book in question, but considering Salinger's reputation as a writer it's more than a little silly -- especially considering what people read today outside school. As for the last paragraph, the news writer felt that the reader ought to have a notion of what the fuss was about, so he picked up a copy and rewrote the blurb. Logical thing to do, seems to me. It's probably what I would have done. Though I grant you, if it's as inaccurate as most blurbs, it's not a very good description of the book.

Your comment on the Walter C. Alvarez note is worthy of The New Yorker.

Miriam Carr's letter: Paul Robeson has been making something of a comeback; there were two LP records of his available the last time I looked in the catalog. Logically we should consider the artist's work apart from his personal life. A few years after they are dead this happens anyway. Wagner is a perfect case in point. Only a few musical historians know (or care) what a s.o.b. he was in his personal life. Today we judge him by his music. (Milwaukee 12, Wisconsin)

MIKE DECKINGER

I received Retrograde #2 today, and if it is not a zine but a fan, as you say, then I must apologize, for I have committed grave indignities on this fan. I mean, how would you like it if someone examined your pages or fooled around with your staples?

I like the paper you're using better than the kind you used on issue #1. It seems thicker and imparts more of a sense of fannishness. Ghu knows why it does, but it just does.

I'd be interested in learning what the four-letter word in The Catcher in the Rye is. "Love," "darn," "heck," perhaps? I suppose you know of the move to ban Donald Duck from the movies and comics, because he never wears pants. He's guilty of indecent (or induckent) exposure. What next?

Harmon's letter was very interesting. I saw the films Jim refers to. Jimmy Sangster, sometimes along with Barre Lyndon, writes most of the scripts for the Hammer films and many other British films. It's interesting to note that the Technicolor sequence Jim mentions, where the Ripper is flattened into jello beneath an elevator, was made especially for American audiences, and did not appear in Britain. "The Mummy" is one of the weaker Hammer films. I wonder if Jim ever saw "Horror of Dracula," which is a veritable classic.

I would like to keep receiving Retrograde and I'd also like to see it on a more regular schedule, if possible. And how about prying something literary out of Marion Z. Bradley. Just give her the encouragement. (Millburn, New Jersey)

EC: Well, of course. They don't even HAVE elevators in Britain.

BILL DANNER

My homemade spirit addresser works quite well, and usually gives more legible results than my address on the current Retrograde, for which many thanks. It's a nice looking job and the dark blue on tan is quite legible. But what's wrong with black on white?

I don't recall seeing the copy of If with "Man Alone," but wonder if you know that Thomas Beers had a serial by the same name in the SEP many years ago, in the '20s or early '30s. I remember it chiefly as being about a big brawny mill-worker or some such whose wife ran off with another man and left him with a new-born baby which he nursed himself, personally. I wondered then and still wonder if any such cases have ever been known.

Well, now -- I'd like to have a copy of Authors in Paradise, too, though I never heard of it before. But I've read and reread Strange News from Heaven, and am sure I'd like it. If you manage to snare it, I'd much like to borrow it sometime. Speaking of books, have you read Mervyn Peake's trilogy about Titus Groan? If not, you're missing something. (Kennerdell, Pennsylvania)

EC: Addresserette stencil cards seem to need to be used several times before they yield satisfactory results. The addresses on this issue should be more legible. #
Well, I recall an article in a 1935ish Sexology titled "Milk from Male Nipples."

HARRY WARNER JR

The little item from Tulsa reminds me of the catastrophe that I might have caused in Hagerstown, if I'd been just a trifle more absentminded. I was in a local junior high school to take a picture, someone due to appear in the photograph was later than the others in arriving, and to pass away the time I was reading a D. H. Lawrence paperback that I happened to have in my pocket. When the missing person showed up, I dutifully put the book onto the shelf of the school library, where I was waiting, and was ready to leave before I realized what odd consequences might result.

I see nothing improbable about Jim Harmon's western paperbacks being hot. They could have been riding near something hot long enough to become heated all the way through, then the wrappings could have cooled off during the brief time after they were delivered. Paper is good insulating material and it would take a long while for the inner portions to reach room temperature without being unpacked.

In general, this is as incredible a job of reproduction as I've ever seen in fandom. I found two letters on which the ink had spread a tenth of a millimeter more than desirable and there was an eyetrack on the last page, but outside of that you might very well have spent those entire nine months bringing this issue's appearance to perfection. (Hagerstown, Maryland)

BOB LEMAN

And how did you like Mr Ellmann's big book on James Joyce? Peggy bought it for me for Christmas, and it seems to me that it's a good solid collection of the facts and a competent piece of scholarship, but far from inspired. Doubtless Ellmann accomplished what he was trying to do, and one shouldn't criticize a book because it's not a different book, but I'd hoped for some exegesis and criticism along with the biographical facts. It did move me to go back and reread Dubliners and A Portrait and Ulysses, though. I am, of course, a sucker for material about writers and writing. This probably has the same basis as the urge to read about ball players that one finds in the man who once thought he'd become a big leaguer but later took the sensible path.

When you said the "Firewater" cover was by Van Dongen I immediately said, "He's wrong. It couldn't have been." I then checked, and of course you were right. It seems to be the sole convincing human being he's ever drawn. I'll agree with you that it's one of the all-time outstanding covers.

The idiot behavior of the Tulsa parents doesn't surprise me; we lived in Tulsa for a couple of years, and this seems like fairly normal Tulsa behavior. Apart

from the obvious reasons for deploring the actions of these dummkopf, I have another reason for disgust: academic and undergraduate circles are to a considerable degree slaves of the notion that if a thing is banned it necessarily follows that it is good. It is in precisely those circles that the Salinger cult flourishes most, and this loony book-burning cannot but cause them to elevate Salinger to an even greater eminence. He's a good enough writer, in his own precious way, but he's certainly a minor writer, and I think the existence of the cult at the universities may have a deleterious effect on American writing in the future. Says Cassandra. (Rawlins, Wyo.)

ROY TACKETT

I cannot say that I am in complete disagreement with the idea of controlling the books available to the school age (even high school) set. As of now I would vigorously protest any attempts by any agency to tell me what I should or should not read. I have been out of high school for almost two decades, however, and in the intervening time have read several thousand books. There have been several, both fiction and non-fiction, that I have no desire to have my own children come into contact with until they are mature enough to handle them, and that means beyond the school age.

The trend in book control for the young, though, tends toward the ridiculous. Huckleberry Finn is banned in New York because of certain supposed derogatory references to Negroes. The Wizard of Oz and others along the same line are banned in Miami because they "don't teach the children the realities of life." Both cases are equally asinine. The trouble with anyone exercising censorship is that objectivity is an extremely rare commodity. (Laurel Bay, South Carolina)

JIM CAUGHRAN

I think I liked better the salmon paper than this brownish whatever-it-is; the other seemed brighter. Here the darkness is somewhat bothersome. I sympathize with your not wanting to change inks on your machine, but mourn the passing of the several-color bit.

I can't agree with Chauvenet on perfection. If something is perfect it isn't corruptible, since to be corruptible would be to be less than perfect. If change means a loss of perfection, then obviously something perfect doesn't change. This would seem to rule out the possibility of perfection, and it might well. One can conceive, however, of a sort of dynamic perfection, changing to be perfect with respect to a given situation. Oh well. Thank goodness nothing achievable by man is perfect; the logical problems would give us no end of trouble. (Berkeley 9, California)

Like Jim Caughran, BILL SARILL (Cambridge 40, Mass.) preferred the salmon-pink paper used for Retrograde #1 to the present russet ("Russet?" he says. "The Gestetner people must be colorblind"), but almost everyone else approved of the present paper. JOHN TRIMBLE (Los Angeles 12) thinks there's a place for colored inks in fanzines despite the Laney opinion quoted last issue (I agree), but adds, "Hell, with that beautiful blue ink on Gestetner's magnificent russet-colored paper, you don't actually need multicolor work." John also approves of the "micro-elite" type used here. It actually isn't micro-elite type, John, but I'm glad you like it. BOB FARNHAM (Dalton, Ga.) reports a rumor that fantasy is coming back as science fiction goes out. He also predicts "a flareup and bust" in the matter of G. M. Carr, and says he has his own opinions "of those who are after her scalp." LES NIRENBERG (Toronto) notes my preference for classical music and asks, "What, no jazz?" -- adding that he "always thought sf fans were automatically jazz fans." The only jazz records I have, Les, are two old 78s of Bunk Johnson, given me circa 1951 by F. Towner Laney. ROG EBERT (Urbana, Ill.) read The Catcher in the Rye about a month ago, thought it was "a wonderful book," but questions the wisdom of assigning it to high school students. Most of them would read it, he feels, for the same reason people read Mickey Spillane. Letters from LARRY SHAW and SETH JOHNSON were crowded out, but may appear next issue. I also heard from EARL KEMP, JOHN BOSTON, ED MESKYS, VERNELLE CORIELL, VIC RYAN. Thanks!