

DISCORD

Edited by Redd Boggs

Number 7 / October 1960

COGITO

SEEDS OF DISCORD

Brethern, we take as our text, lines 289-294, Epistle 1, of "Essay on Man" by Alexander Pope -- yes, the very same poem that provided Mark Clifton with four titles in two lines of iambic pentameter for a series of fecklessly dull sf yarns. Mr Pope (as I like to refer to him, since I still respect him no matter what Mark Clifton has done) attempts in this poem to "vindicate the ways of God to Man," and the first Epistle ends as follows:

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;
All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear: **WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.**

Voltaire has already made the classic answer to the final statement in that passage, but I am enough of an optimist in the philosophical sense -- at least when I have a beer in my hand and two under my belt -- to take seriously the doctrine that evil is but an element in the perfect Whole and a necessary part at that. Thus I am only a demi-Devil quoting a papal encyclical when I repeat the line "All Discord (is) Harmony not understood" whenever someone accuses me of spreading tension, apprehension, and dissention.

"Medicine, to produce health, has to examine disease," said Plutarch, "and music, to create harmony, must investigate discord." Thus our authority for preoccupying ourselves with those elements of the world which others may denounce as nonconformist and anarchic! We are sercon after all -- sercon as the unAmerican Activities committee, the FBI, the AMA, the white supremacy demagogs, the postal inspectors, the book burners, the marine corps generals, and the bishops of the Southern Baptist church. Let us solemnly consider the theory that a brick tossed through a window may have a certain therapeutic effect and even advance the beginning of the world's Great Age by as much as .16 of a milli-second. Let us tread where angels daren't, carrying a monkey wrench in each hand.

Fellow citizens, let us stand up. Fellow standizens, let us pledge ourselves to oppose fuggheadism in all its hideous forms. (Please, no blood oaths; my weak stomach, you know.) While the ushers are ejecting those dissenters who seek to oppose the fuggheadism of reforming the world by means of a fanzine crusade, I will doff my tin Excaliber which

bangs me in the ribs every time I genuflect before the ikon of St Dwight of Abilene. (Ah, this era of Republican decency!) This harangue should suffice to prove that this fanzine's new title is seriously intended.

I have a list of 44 possible titles for this fanzine, once known as Retrograde, which I considered and rejected. There were a good many others I rejected too swiftly even to note down, and while I can't claim that I started out with 10,000 possible names, as the Ford Motor company did when they named the Ford Falcon, I am sure that at least a hundred titles were considered. Some of them were listed in a letter published in Cry of the Nameless #143 that I didn't intend to see print. What's the address of the NFFF copyright bureau? I may want to use one or another of these titles at some future time.

A permanent masthead with an insignia to be called "Bababadalghar-aghatakamminarronkonnbronntonnerronntuounnthunntrovarrhounawnskawtoohoo-hoordenenthurnuk!" is being designed, and should appear on the next issue. Next issue may also contain some other surprises, but it will not feature part two of "The Lives and Times of a Schmugian Guk."

OZ I WAS SAYING...

H. L. Gold and the other disparagers of the power of fanzines to shake or at least to jiggle the professional world must be rapidly revising their opinions since Cry of the Nameless #142 appeared. To that issue, you remember, I contributed a modest little article called "Follow the Yellow Brick Road," which discussed the Oz books of L. Frank Baum, perhaps the most lengthy study of Oz to appear in a fanzine.

The ink was hardly dry on the issue before the Fawcett World Library rushed out a paperback reprint of The Wizard of Oz (Crest, 35¢). This was certainly a gratifying response to my article, but this wasn't all. A few weeks later the Shirley Temple TV show, Sunday, 18 September, presented an adaptation of the second Oz book, The Land of Oz; and a few weeks after that Reilly & Lee published the first new Oz book by L. Frank Baum in 40 years. This book, The Visitors from Oz, combines 16 newspaper stories about Oz characters that appeared in weekly instalments in the Chicago Record Herald and other American newspapers during 1904 and were never before collected. (This series seems to have been unknown to Martin Gardner and Russell B. Nye, incidentally.)

Betty Kujawa sent me a clipping from the Chicago Tribune which reviews The Visitors from Oz, and the clipping contains a final bit of news about Oz: Russell MacFall of the Tribune staff, who wrote the re-

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view, is working on a biography of L. Frank Baum. All this seems to me to be a pretty solid response to one fanzine article, even an article in the Hugo winner of 1960.

"ELMER GANTRY": NOT VERY CLEAN, NOT VERY GOOD?

The ponytailed girl in the check-out line ahead of me at the drug-store proffered a coin and asked timidly for a pack of Pall Malls. The clerk skidded the coin back and said apologetically, "Sorry — you've got to be over 16." I was next in line; I tossed down 60¢, tucked the Dell paperback edition of Elmer Gantry under my arm, and walked out as the cash register rang like the steeple of the Wellspring Methodist church. But — I wondered later, after having read the book — what might have happened if I had been another teenager in ponytail and pedal pushers trying to buy the Sinclair Lewis novel? Would the clerk have shoved my money back too, and said, "Sorry -- you've got to be 16"?

Probably not -- but I am afraid that this book is slightly more dangerous than a pack of Pall Malls to the morals of American youth. In any country where goodness and purity were truly respected, this book would be burned by the state executioner and the author drawn and quartered. The recent Hollywood movie starts out with a warning that "Elmer Gantry" is a controversial picture and is not recommended for children. It is only right that such a preliminary warning be given, lest innocent youngsters see the picture and straightway lose their faith in their religion, church, and minister. But the movie, after all, deals with only five chapters of the book — less than one-fifth of a rather lengthy novel — and not the most faith-shattering portions at that. In the movie Elmer Gantry is said to have been expelled from a theological seminary and he is portrayed as a traveling revivalist of no particular denomination.

In the book we discover that though Elmer was indeed "fired" from the Mizpah Theological seminary of the Northern Baptists, he was nevertheless an ordained minister who had occupied the pulpit of a country church, and his credentials were still in force. After the end of his brief career as an evangelist Elmer returned to the church itself, this time the Methodist church, North, and his climb, not only in the church but in the esteem of earnest fundamentalists everywhere, is rapid. At the close of the book he has been appointed to the pulpit of the Yorkville Methodist church of New York City and the executive secretaryship of the National Association for the Purification of Art and the Press.

Sinclair Lewis seems to have modeled Elmer Gantry after two famous ministers of the 1920s: Dr William L. Stidger, a go-getting Methodist preacher of Kansas City, and Dr John Roach Straton, pastor of New York City's Calvary Baptist church, who was known as the "fundamentalist pope" of the era. He has missed none of the vaudeville and salesmanship techniques, the "comic opera claptrap" and hokum that these gospel crusaders used to fill their churches, and Elmer Gantry is possibly the most effective book on the art of winning congregations and influencing wealthy parishioners ever published. However, the methods which are so successful for Dr Gantry are hardly edifying to anyone outside the profession. Indeed, the hypocrisy and buncombe inherent in Elmer's "Lively Sunday Evenings" and other gimmicks might even disillusion and infuriate a devout Christian who believed in the homely virtues.

The movie grapples only ineffectually with the nature of hypocrisy as revealed in the antics of evangelists and ministers. We gain the impression that Elmer himself is hardly "sincere" in his belief; we aren't too sure about Sister Sharon -- she says she is sincere, but she doesn't suffer any moral qualms about breaking the seventh commandment, and she is no less effective as an evangelist. Burt Lancaster, playing Gantry, is so far from being a spellbinder and bunk artist -- despite a dutiful paraphrase of at least one famous Billy Sunday sermon -- and the revival tent enthusiasm is so far from being convincing that the picture turns out to be innocuous and as toothless as Jeeter Lester's hound.

The novel, on the other hand, far from being enduring literature, still retains most of the bite and belly-laugh that Sinclair Lewis mixed into it 33 years ago. Its only sympathetic characters (outside of a few weak-minded, weak-kneed women) are two skeptics within the church: Dr Bruno Zechlin ("that suspected victim of German beer and German rationalism") and Frank Shallard, who loses his pulpit and falls a victim to mob violence for being frank about his doubts. There's still enough dubitant dynamite in it to depopulate half the Sunday schools in the United States and Canada next Lord's day.

And yet Elmer Gantry is sold at every drugstore and newsstand to any innocent child who can shake 60¢ out of his piggy bank or snatch it from his mother's purse, while the movie "Elmer Gantry" discourages attendance by children unaccompanied by their parents, and Pall Malls are kept safely out of the hands and mouths of all teenagers under 16. And some people wonder why juvenile delinquency is still increasing!

THE HUGOS: CONTINUED

Bob Jennings has an idea regarding the Hugo awards that differs from some of the others in being a good idea. It might even prove to be a workable idea. "I would suggest," he writes, "that either the con committee or a specially selected group look over all the science fiction output of the previous year, and arrange a listing of all eligible books and stories that seem to be outstanding. This listing can then be presented in some fanzine or sent along with the nominating ballot."

He adds that the listing would not be binding; voters could cast their ballots for eligible works not listed. "The list would merely bring to the voter's attention some of the better stories of the year. Memories fade fast, and such a list might jog some pleasant memories or cause people to dig back in the stacks and the shelves to reread and compare, and thus to make some intelligent choices."

This is, I think, an excellent suggestion, even if it doesn't stand much chance of being adopted. The first difficulty to be faced would be that of finding someone willing and able to compile the list. Unless Moskowitz, Kemp, Wood, or someone like that would undertake the job as a volunteer, I despair of finding someone to take on such drudgery. There would also be the difficulty of placating the authors and others whose works were eligible for the award but did not make the list. Theoretically, at present, all works start out with an equal chance of winning the Hugo. If a list of suggestions were circulated with the ballot, the works on the list would hold a clear advantage over those works which were not listed. The only solution to this problem would be to list all

eligible works in all categories, and the job of compiling such a list would be far more difficult than that of choosing a list of "bests."

Jennings also suggests that after the nominations are complete a one-shot be published showing exactly what stories were nominated and how many votes each received. "This, I think, is the thing that is needed most at present: a way for the nominating public to see that their votes have been tallied and their favorites helped." This too is a worthy suggestion. Perhaps such a list of nominated stories and their votes could be published in one of the con Progress Reports.

Incidentally I was amused to note that all candidates pumped-for in Retrograde #4 won Hugos except for the candidate for short story, where Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon" won instead of Philip Jose Farmer's "The Alley Man."

THE ROUND FILE

Bob Tucker reports that Houghton Mifflin is bringing out a hard-cover edition of Kurt Vonnegut's The Sirens of Titan, which was originally published as a paperback by Dell in 1959. "Someone else must think it has merit," he says. # Alfred Bester as book reviewer in F&SF, replacing Damon Knight (retired), hasn't been the success that Bester the novelist and short story writer was and is. But he contributes an occasional pointed observation, as when he reports (in the November issue) that Nine Tomorrows is a second-rate collection and censures Asimov for becoming "carelessly familiar with his public and his craft." There's a comment that cuts true and deep. (But Bester says the stories in Nine Tomorrows come "mostly from the pages of, shall we say, the lesser science fiction publications." It includes stories from Galaxy, If, ASF, Venture -- and F&SF!). # Bester has a two-part serial coming up in F&SF, I see. Are they going to title it "The Burning Spear"? # This department is assembled largely from a file folder into which I stick notes and clippings that seem interesting but when I'm ready to use them seem pointless and dull. Accordingly I dump a number of clippings at this point, saving only one: it's from



"GOODBY, ARTHUR SUMMERFIELD!"

the Minneapolis Morning Tribune of 9 August, datelined London. A survey conducted by a British insurance company shows that women are safer drivers than men, and have fewer accidents because they are "less inclined to take chances, they drive more slowly, and are less likely to drink intoxicants during a journey." But here is the sentence from the news-item that especially fascinated me: "Men may have things on their minds which will detract from their driving concentration." Hear that, girls? It's too bad you aren't able to ponder this matter. # Richard E. Geis' second novel for Newsstand Library, Like Crazy, Man (U-144, 50¢) appeared at the end of August. It's much less interesting than his first one, Sex Kitten, reviewed in Retrograde #4, although it is set in Venice California, which -- Dick would have us believe -- is the wickedest town west of Sodom and Gomorrah. I wonder if Dick has finished the book in which, he reports, a judge named Roscoe Yngvi is depicted hearing a case involving a sawed boat belonging to a man named Courtney. # The brand-new logo for Amazing Stories (I welcome the return of the old title) has already been altered -- and improved -- on the November issue. The Emsh cover illustrating Blish's "And Some Were Savages" looks like something assigned by Campbell. Even so, it's good. # On 4 October 1957 Soviet scientists launched Sputnik I, the first man-made satellite. On 4 September 1960 I saw my first man-made satellite with my own bare eyeballs. It was Echo, the balloon-satellite which is, they tell me, the most spectacular "moon" so far. After watching it swim rapidly upstream through the constellations, gleaming and fading as it tumbled along, till it disappeared into the earth's shadow about 45° above the eastern horizon, I had great difficulty in suppressing a desire to rouse the neighborhood, proclaim the impending end of the world, and lead everybody to the nearest hilltop to pray. # In exchange for some U. S. sf magazines Mal Ashworth has sent me a bundle of British newspapers fresh off the newsstand. These were the first British papers I've read since shipping out of England in 1945 and they proved highly entertaining. One of the minor fascinations about them is their practice of indicating the whole number of each issue on the masthead. The News-Chronicle I received, for example, was number 35,608. I briefly held the notion of trying to hit number 35,608 of this fanzine; then I figured out that I couldn't reach that issue at the present speed till 5916 A. D.

JERRY, LORD OF THE JUNGLE

From an enterprise called the Studio of Famous Promotions (Dealers in Modern Thaumatology), P. O. Box 6122, Cleveland 1, Ohio, comes a petition form to be signed and sent to "an authorized and qualified Hollywood studio" on behalf of "Conan the Colossal." The form is headed "A Brobdingnagian Appeal By Fans and Followers of Conan the Cimmerian," and the first two paragraphs contain some of the most fascinating reading anywhere:

Periodically, in American literature, there appear heroic fictional characters displaying such superlative personalities and attributes as to capture the imaginations of the entire civilized universe.

In the fabulous tradition of TARZAN -- JOHN CARTER -- JERRY SIEGEL -- SUPERMAN -- Robert E. Howard's "CONAN" deserves the maximum recognition financially and culturally and dramatically; -- on television, in comic strips; in motion pictures, etc....

Hell with Conan; let's see a movie about Jerry Siegel's adventures!

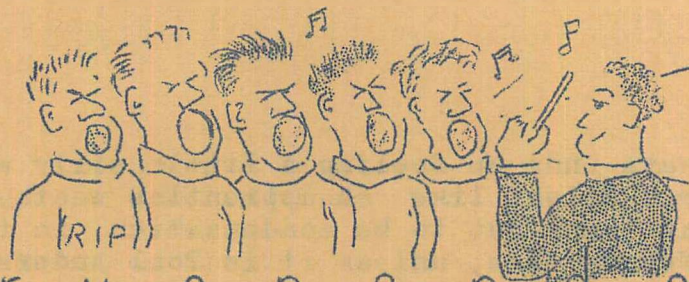
REVIEWING STAND

A REVIEWER always ends up feeling a little silly when he confronts a minor work of James Blish, like an apprentice weatherman sent to report on a storm that turns out to be condensation in the upper air of a zeppelin hanger. Nobody else, unless it is Poul Anderson, has ever been more magnificently prepared to write science fiction merely because no one else has ever so successfully spanned within himself those two disciplines which are supposed to be contradictory and perpetually at war with each other: science and art. Blish has done relatively little to justify such an estimate, it is true; he has written one masterpiece, a number of near-masterpieces (including The Triumph of Time, about which there is supposed to be a Secret, and Get Out of My Sky, the most underrated short novel of the past decade), and numerous little teacup tempests like "And Some Were Savages" (55.4+29.7+25.5baba(f,i)ax) in the November Amazing. But no one who has read much Blish ever doubts it.

And yet here he is: Blish scaled down to read like Randy Garrett -- surely the most incongruous situation since the night Henry James read Whitman to Edith Wharton. (He really did, you know, an event that inspired Randall Jarrell to the simile, "much as Mozart used to imitate, on the piano, the organ.") All his great imagination and god-like comprehension have been focused on the task of creating goods that editors like Campbell buy at so much per yard. The result reminds one of a three-ring circus erected and performed for the express purpose of selling popcorn and pink lemonade at the concession stands.

The three-ring circus was mentioned for a purpose. My associate editor may disagree, but I have always considered the three-ring circus one of the most foolish entertainments ever invented. Too much is going on at once to allow the spectator to center his attention on, and appreciate, anything. In his stories Blish, with his unparalleled grasp of all essentials of the world he has set up, calls our attention to too many things at once, till we lose sight of everything and are left with only a general impression that a lot was certainly happening.

When we reconsider the matter, of course, we discover that we were wrong: very little was really happening. There is little movement in a Blish story; his characters twitch once, sometimes long and violently, and then are finished for good. The rest is post mortem. The rest is the maddening whirl of Mr Blish himself in action, a far more frenzied and passionate activity than any of his characters have energy for. The author is everywhere, pointing, probing, analyzing every element of this circumstance that the twitch created. Blish seems to know everything -- and not generally, but technically -- and before he is finished this world that was alive for a heart tick has been unscrewed and revealed down to its last supergalactic atom. We understand why the characters were not allowed to do more, for even as much as they have done is more than the author can handle, and we understand why he doesn't write more full-length masterpieces: the mixture must be kept as thin as possible to prevent the author from spending the rest of his life discovering its ultimate possibilities. In a small story like "And Some Were Savages" the author emerges at last, slightly disheveled, triumphant, smiling thinly, with more data brought up alive and kicking than anybody else dreamed was there. But sometimes one feels a little sad about the shuddering corpse he yanked it out of. That's the story there on the slab, lying cold and unclaimed.



c h o r u s p o n d e n c e

MARIJANE JOHNSON

Retrograde #5 really hit me between the cyoballs and they lit up and shot sparks in all directions.

The reason for the pyrotechnic display was Jim Harmon's "The Sounds of Dreaming." He couldn't have picked a better radio program to begin with than "I Love a Mystery." I lapped it up like a happy kitten eating cream, and I have a hunch that the statement about women not following the program will bring forth a few remarks such as mine. I was pretty much of a sprout when they started, but I aged enough as they went along to get a thrill out of Jack Packard's voice. Besides, we gals like swashbuckling adventure too, and Doc and Reggie tossed in good fun along with the swash.

I don't remember the later programs, though I ran into one now and then. But we were in the throes of moving, and then getting a business started, and radio sort of took a back seat. But this article brings back fond memories, and I'm looking forward to the rest of the article about "I Love a Mystery." Some of the other programs listed in the heading also strike familiar twangs on the old memory strings. (Spokane 22, Washington)

HARLAN ELLISON

It has been far too long since I exchanged words with you, and though I have religiously been coping Ted White's copies of Retrograde and enjoying them immensely, I am sorry my first re-correspondence with you should be to wallop someone. But after thoroughly delighting in Jim's re-creation of "I Love a Mystery" in #5 I came across Bill Conner's letter. Appalled? Yeah, I guess I was.

While this sort of pseudo-liberal flapdoodle is not new to me (two years with the U.S. army in Georgia and Kentucky, associating on off-duty time with "suth'n intellectuals," filled me with it), its presence in Retrograde, surrounded as it is by sense, reason, and good manners, set me back a bit.

Conner's sort of "liberalism" strikes me as the sheerest hypocrisy, the most vulgarly ostentatious flaunting of racist tendencies and a laughable breed of provincialism native (it would seem to me) to Ohio. Conner finds the NAACP detestable because they have -- after decades of knee-bending and subservience -- stopped screwing around with The White Massa' and begun to effectively machine and market their product: equality. Look -- this is no longer a game whose point is sparing the feelings of southern whites -- whose attitude is that "Negroes are all right -- in their place" -- and as a consequence the NAACP has started to outfit and conduct itself like a battle machine. More power to them, I say. If you play a professional game, don't count on amateurs. The best amateur can always be beaten by the best pro.

So now Mr Conner, and all the status quo types who've sunk decaying roots in the southern soil, are bugged. Sure, they're bugged. They named the game, set their own rules, and are now calling foul when the opposition decide the rules are fixed Caucasian fashion. Well, now ain't that too damned bad. As Rich Elsberry put it once. "Frankly, I'm underwhelmed."

Conner's idiot innuendoes about his sons and daughters marrying Negroes stink of the bigotry that is causing the black man to rise up in righteous wrath all over the world. Baby, face it: you can keep a lid on a boiling pot of garbage only so long. Then your walls are going to get splattered good and heavy. Marry a Negro? When it comes right down to it, that depends of who, and why. I'd much rather spend the rest of my days looking at a Dorothy Dandridge than a Marjorie Main. The same holds true at any level.

I'm not trying to paint myself as a big upholder of the rights of man, or a liberal bohemian, or any other such thing. It just seems to me the easiest way to live: judge individuals, not groups. Generalizations always trip you up: they just don't hold, they have holes big enough to drive the battleship Missouri through. All this "I'm as good as the next man" jazz bugs me, because having served in the militia where they propound this (in theory, at any rate), I found out I was usually better than the next cat. So equality is to me a nebulosity, like love or justice or heroism. What Conner appears to be tootling about is status in degree: a degree he has set, not a degree each man can earn for himself.

And that, brother rat, is anarchy. But since he comments that he might in the future want to seek asylum in Russia, I figure he's already emotionally equipped for the jobbing they give you over there, so why wait, color-conscious Conner -- why not make reservations for the Kremlin right now? It's obvious you're as comfortable in America (with the tide of history washing as it must) as a cobra at a mongoose rally. And come to think of it, I wouldn't want my sister to marry you, either.

In a later letter Harlan reports on issue #6: Received it today. Enjoyed it thoroughly. Either Jim Harmon has one of the most amazing eidetic memories going or he's a lovable fraud, perpetrating his hoakery in the interests of us all, and our valuable nostalgias. Either way, "The Sounds of Dreaming" was delightful. It carried for me the same sort of thrill I received at the Pittcon when Les Nirenberg (who is, incidentally, one of the fan finds of the year -- a thoroughly likable, non-hollow goodfellow) came up with an old copy of All-Star Comics circa 1943. Once again I saw Dr Midnite, the Atom, Hawkman, Johnny Thunder, the Spectre, and those beloved Wheaties ads in which the Zero and the Spitfire were offered for 10¢ and a Wheaties box-top (send to Jack Armstrong, who else?). By the way, if anyone has any of the old comics (1941 to 1945) they might want to loan out to a guy who is only now coming to understand why others collect them, for reading purposes only, I'd be most grateful.

Jim Blish's points about The Sirens of Titan were joyously welcomed. I too encountered the book when it first came out and was set back afire by its youthful vigor and almost relentless inventiveness. It is indeed unfortunate that those who gave out the awards did not see fit to pay it more heed.

Whatever we may think of Cele Goldsmith's tastes in science fiction, let us face it, gennumen, we never had the caliber of writing, the lofty lineup of writers, and the sheer sparkle of current issues under the hand of Browne, Fairman, or even RAP, with fitful periods of "quality" production as exceptions. Cele has found herself one of the major markets remaining for sf in our time, and she has used this knowledge well. The woman (and she's quite a doll, by the way, for them as hasn't seen her long, svelte frame) is doing a man's job. And for a guy who often feels as though we should demand our ribs back, en masse, that is quite a statement of faith and favor. (New York 14, New York)

BILLY JOE PLOTT

I think Bill Conner conveyed the most reasonable comments on the integration business. The south gets knocked all the time for its race problem, yet nothing is said, race-wise, about the gang fights, sitdown strikes, home bombings, etc., in the north. Sure, I'm biased toward my section of the country, but I think the south is being pushed into integration in an unseemly manner. You can't break a century and a half of tradition

overnight, as some people seem to want to do. Don't get me wrong; I think segregation is unconstitutional and that integration should be enforced, but I wouldn't go around here broadcasting patriotic ideas like that.

Jim Harmon's article brings back vague though pleasant memories of the radio era I was familiar with in my short lifespan of 17 years. I am not sure that I ever listened to "I Love a Mystery," but the account of the dauntless trio on the plateau in the Andes seems strangely familiar to me. I used to spend hours listening to "Superman," "Inner Sanctum," "Tom Mix," "The Green Lantern," "The Shadow," "Nick Carter," and dozens of others. I wish they had some of those old stories on today.

"The Secret Museum of Fankind" makes me melancholy, or as Holden Caulfield would say, "It depressed the hell out of me." I wince with pain as I glance through the few copies of Quandry that I have on hand, and see what I missed by not being around fandom then. These were given to me by Roger Dee, former fan and pro, who seems to have permanently gaffiated. They are truly a work of art from a period when southern fandom was at a feverish peak of quality fanaticism. I pray to ghu that a revival may be instituted through the Southern Fandom group, and that once again the south shall stand among the greats of fandom. (Opelika, Alabama)

BOB FARNHAM

The discussion regarding the race question interested me from a sidewalk observer's view. That question is a burning one in these parts, and has been ever since the asinine supreme court dissolved the private covenants. Always present is the possibility of strife (outright shooting war) between the whites and blacks. To judge from what I see here it would be no surprise to be awakened in the middle of the night and find a black hand holding a gun to my head or a knife to my throat.

I do not object to sitting beside a black man to eat, to riding beside one in a public conveyance of any type, to working by the side of a black man -- I did just that for 25 years with the ICRR in Chicago -- but I do stand firmly for segregation when it comes to residential districts and shopping centers.

As I say, I worked, ate, even slept beside the black man for many years and I learned something of them. They will steal the pennies from a dead man's eyes. They are absolutely untrustworthy. They stink like the devil in a stewpot. And while some are outright lazy, most of them will work and work good.

Wherever they congregate, property values fall. Wherever they move in dirt and filth accumulate. The street where I last lived in Chicago is now the center of the south side black belt; it has lost its grassed lawns, its trees and fences. The buildings look and smell like hog pens. Garbage is thrown from the windows as from a ship at sea. Let those who will take the black man. I don't want him.

Down here they keep to themselves or somebody gets shot or lynched. The difference between northern cities and southern cities is the difference between the sun and the moon. Our streets and alleys are kept clean. Properties are kept in beautiful condition at all times; parks and forests likewise. There are no longer so many of the so-called hillbilly cabins; most have been replaced by decent living quarters. I got a shock when I was driven through Georgia in a car and saw the dramatic differences between conditions here and those in Chicago, and I will never return to the north to live.

Lest I be classed as a damn rebel I'll say here that I was born in Chicago January 5th 1906 and lived there until I was kicked off on a disability pension in March 1950. Within the next ten years Chicago will consist of an entirely black population. The whites are pushed around there far worse than the blacks are here. And here, if the blacks behave themselves they are damned well treated. Even if they don't, they get better treatment than they deserve. (Dalton, Georgia)

EC: "Wherever they congregate, property values fall." This would seem to be a very good argument for integration, which would help eliminate all-Negro districts.

PEGGY SEXTON

I'd like to reply to Bill Conner's letter. I will completely concur with him in thinking that the supreme court has no right to tell him or anyone whom to marry or to invite into his home. Things like that are of such a personal nature that they should not be interfered with. (Certain regulations we have now against bigamy, marriage between close relatives, child marriage, etc., excepted.) But there is one statement of his that I will fight tooth and nail, and on purely pragmatic grounds of economics and Realpolitik at that. No matter what my personal convictions are, I'll do Mr Conner the courtesy of refraining from any starry-eyed sermons about brotherhood. His statement is this one: "I believe in gradual integration in the south; no radical change should be suddenly forced on a society."

Gradual integration? The south has had a chance to gradually integrate for almost a century. Even the supreme court doctrine of "separate but equal" was not carried out in practice in the south as a whole. It may have been in certain places. The ruthless economic exploitation which supplanted slavery has backfired on the people who started it. It has hurt the people who have been kept in poverty by that exploitation, on economic and educational levels, and it has hurt the exploiters themselves, by their being deprived of a large class of potential consumers.

The long denial of educational opportunities to Negroes has hurt them as a group AND the United States as a nation because of the number of potentially productive people it has eliminated from the labor market.

I don't know whether Mr Conner keeps up with the world political situation, but it is a hard ugly fact, from which there is no escape, that we have to live on the same planet with the Russians, and there is scarcely a schoolchild in the Soviet Union who has not heard of Little Rock. They are using our own weaknesses against us in their propoganda, and all the sweet high-sounding words we can say about "brotherhood" and "democracy" will get nothing but horse-laughs as long as we act on a Stone Age level.

The U. S. is short on skilled labor and high-class brains. Unless we use all the human resources we have, we are going to lose both the ideological war and the race for space. That means all, with no distinctions on the absurd basis of physical appearance.

I hate to say this, because I have strongly pacifistic personal sentiments, but when reason and exhortation have done so little good in 100 years time, and when everyone else in the world is looking over our shoulder, it appears that the only recourse left is the sudden force which you deplore, Mr Conner. Whether you like it or not, we have no choice. Marry whom you like, make friends with whomever you like, hate the NAACP, but for God's sake live in the twentieth century. (Living in the twentieth century happens to be a choice which was forced on you by your parents.)

Wait a minute. Maybe you do have a choice. You can learn to speak Russian at gunpoint. (Hebbronville, Texas)

HARRY WARNER JR

How in the deuce do you ever find the courage to drive a sharp pointed staple so mercilessly through those immaculately reproduced, otherwise perfect pages? It's all that I can do to steel myself to mark the date of arrival on the wrapper with my little rubber stamp, and the rubber stamp doesn't touch the magazine itself. I even seem to detect lighter-than-normal cancellation on the stamp on the part of uneasy postal employees.

I'm afraid Bill Conner's letter demonstrates unwittingly the enormity of the gulf in the way of thinking between parties on the Negro question. He refers to integration as "radical social change," and it doesn't seem to me to be even a minor social change, but simple removal of prejudice. Complete equality for the Negro in every phase of American life would seem to me less of a social change than the institution of peacetime conscription or the introduction of social security or even the switchover from appointment to election for United States senators.

I also feel that a white woman comes much closer to belonging to another race, in comparison with me, than a Negro man. The American Negro man or the Russian male or the Tibetan male is much more likely to think and feel and react like me than an American woman. In this sense, I think that all marriages are mixed and that it might be a good idea to try white-black marriages for a while to determine if a greater proportion of them would be happy for the participants than the present white-black systems. The last figures I saw indicated that one out of three marriages ends in divorce and another of those three is either thoroughly unhappy or broken by separation of one kind or another.

I enjoyed Jim Harmon's article, but my record of transgressions is becoming increasingly serious: in addition to never having read the Oz books as a youth, I am one of the quite scarce handful of persons who never listened to "I Love a Mystery."

Mercy, I'm going to have to watch that Ted Pauls puppet. People will begin to lose their confidence that there is really more than one fan in Maryland, if this minion unleashes such praise toward his creator. (Hagerstown, Maryland)

JOHN TRIMBLE

I enjoy receiving Retrograde for several reasons, but the main one, I think, is because I can read it while working. You see, I'm a salesman, and I do a lot of waiting in foyers and such, purchasing agents being the busy men that they are. So I like to take a few magazines or fanzines along in my briefcase so that I'll have something to read while waiting. Most magazine stories and articles are too long, however, and I don't really enjoy being interrupted when I'm in the midst of something like that. And the magazines furnished by the businesses are invariably something on the world-shaking order of The Paper and Twine Journal, or Western Laundry Review, or American Hardware Magazine. So fanzines remain. And most fanzines, like the pros, print articles a little too long or involved to read during a short waiting period such as I undergo. But your zine, Redd, fits the part like a glove. It's interesting, concise, and still meaty enough to be interesting. Retrograde, the salesman's friend.

Bill Conner: That supreme court nonsense of yours is just that: nonsense. The day the court has the power to force you to have certain friends or to invite certain people into your home, etc., will also be the day when it'll be too late to get out of the country, as you say you plan. Witness Germany, 1938. (Los Angeles 12, California)

BILL DONAHO

Bill Conner is wrong on a couple of points. One thing I am not quite clear on about his attitude: Is he against mixed marriage for himself and his children alone or for other people as well? If for other people, does he have in mind forbidding mixed marriages? If so, what justification does he give for this?

Aside from his opinions, Mr Conner is wrong on a couple of points of fact. (1) The NAACP has never campaigned in any way for complete social integration and/or integration, only for equal protection under the law and for equal job opportunities and equal treatment in public places. (2) Mr Conner finds Negroes unattractive on a psychological level, not a physiological one. There is nothing inborn or instinctive about his reaction to Negroes. It's social conditioning. (3) Nobody has to create the picture of the Negro as a second class citizen. Unfortunately he only too obviously is.

What makes Mr Conner think that the south is ever going to accept any part of integration unless it is forced on them? Each minor step is resisted with as much fury and heat as if it were the complete social integration which he fears.

Just in passing I wonder why he thinks he can let or not let his "future sons or daughters date and marry Negroes." Of course it is very unlikely that they will want to; undoubtedly they will be brought up with Bill Conner's prejudices just as Bill Conner was brought up by his parents with their prejudices. But if they did

-- just what does he think he could do about it? He doesn't have to agree to let them. He can't stop them.

Somehow I find it side-splitting that few white Protestants would tolerate the Christian ethic. Naturally I knew this, but to find one admitting it! (Berkeley 10, California)

SCOTTY TAPSCOTT

Never managed to get hung on western pulpzines myself. My tastes in that direction run strictly to Clarence E. Mulford, whom I should humbly nominate as the Dean (hyahh! get them puns outta here) of Western Fiction Writers. A few weeks ago I picked up a couple of rather battered Bar-20 volumes in a secondhand bookstore for an outlandish price and brought them home. A friend of mine's son, aged about 13, saw me reading one of them and the next day proudly presented me with three volumes of Zane Grey, saying they were "a lot better than that old Hopalong stuff." The little wretch. I hastily deposited them in the appropriate receptacle, and I hope to hell that the garbage man didn't notice what he was hauling away from the Tapscott residence. Ghod! What if word got around that I owned such stuff...?

Oddly enough, I was agreeing with what Bill Conner had to say until I turned the page and read the rest of it. The NAACP is, in this kid's opinion, an outfit with an admirable goal but idiotic tactics. It is somewhat like Thurber's "bear who could leave it alone." Regardless of the right principles involved, attempts at blockbuster integration in the south will in the long run cause more ill-feeling and racial antagonism than they will solve. It isn't that there is something intrinsically wrong about "forcing a sudden radical change upon a society," it's just that it is unworkable. I don't say that it shouldn't be done; I merely say that it can't be done.

But as far as Conner's other objection to the machinations of the NAAetc., I wonder what kind of a definition of "first class citizen" he could give which does not include complete social integration? I firmly, but firmly, agree that every man has a right to select his own friends and/or associates, and that nobody has the right to dictate to others who these should be. But, if a dominant class of people in a society (e.g. American whites) rejects a whole class of other people in the same society on purely irrational grounds, from their company, can the rejected class still be regarded as "first class citizenry"?

If Bill happens to find Negroes unattractive, that's fine and swell. His privilege. But he can't defend any attempt to force his own values onto others, as he apparently would love to do ("I don't believe in mixing the races"). And the business of not wanting to marry a Negro because he wants his children to look like him is completely absurd. By this reasoning he shouldn't want to marry any woman at all, since the issue of all mammalian sexual reproduction will receive only half of its genetic makeup, and hence of its general physical appearance, from the father. To carry through the ideal of "having the children look like him," he will either have to perfect some method of autogenesis (which, were I of a crude frame of mind, I should heartily recommend), or else find a wife whose genetic makeup is 100 per cent recessive to his own. (Eugene, Oregon)

DICK SCHULTZ

"The Sounds of Dreaming" by dear old pro Harmon may have been intensely interesting to Jim Harmon and some of the antediluvian fen who were cognizant of their surroundings when Hitler was being successfully staved off by the magnificent tactics of Chamberlain, but a review of this nature fails to hold my interest. It reminds me of nothing so much as the old medieval theologians' discussions as to how many angels could dance on a needle.

My comments in the letter column might deserve a little broadening, since it is likely that some people will jump down my throat. First off, any comments on

sex education should refer to the record of the nudists, who manage to teach their children about sex early and still raise their brood as God-respecting citizens. In fact, it has been noted that the frankness of the nudists toward sex does much to inhibit the usual adolescent experimentations with sex, and is thus more moral than our ordinary puritanical society that equates sex knowledge with sin.

Discussion of sex, sex knowledge, and the viewing of a naked body -- which must surely be God's most perfect creation -- are not automatically a sin, and I claim that our laws and customs on the subject are harmful to the individual and to the character of our society as a whole. Do you think Beacon could stay in business in a society where honest love is not something to be kept to the bushes and the bedrooms? That the neuroses and mental illnesses that infect our society like a cancer could remain in a society dealing with sexual fears and mistakes openly and honestly? The answer can only be no.

We haven't heard any comments from you on this yet. Or do you agree in substance, though you may disagree in detail? I have always noticed that people who are on the same side of an argument can find more to disagree about among themselves than they can with those who are on the other side. (Detroit 34, Michigan)

LES NIRENBERG

I got the biggest laugh out of what was probably the smallest item in issue #5, and that is the bit on the Survival Facts pamphlet. This reminds me of one of those "Science Fiction Theater" abominations in which this guy and his girl friend are the last ones left after an atomic attack. Anyway I envisioned these two survivors crawling out of the debris, and the guy, who is very hip, pulling the paper from his pocket and saying, "Let's try to make it to the radio station as fast as we can, honey, because we're the only survivors, and we'll win the giant jackpot."

Your local radio station could have saved a lot of money simply by printing a small card which read, "In case of attack, run like hell!" This would have had more effect morale-wise, I think, than that cockomamie thing they sent around. It seems to imply, "Okay, kiddies, relax, turn on your radio, listen to the hit parade. Stock up on food and booze. Win valuable prizes. The person with the worst radiation burns wins a 1960 Chevrolet, kindly donated by Ketcham & Beetem Motors. To be eligible, contestants must phone WPBC before midnight on Atomigeddon day." Wonderful people with sick ideas. This is, I think, a perfect illustration of the futility of civil defense. Agreed?

I think the reason so many people misunderstood your account of the incidents at the Woolworth picketing is that they have come to expect a fanzine to contain the opinion of the faned. I don't think there is a single fanzine today that reports for the sake of reporting, or entertains for the sake of entertaining. That's why I've come to the conclusion that fandom is really a cocktail-party-by-mail. Someone once observed that the only purpose of the cocktail party is to give a number of people a chance to talk about a lot of blah. In other words they talk only to hear themselves talk, not to entertain or inform the people they talk to. So I think most fans expect your opinions whenever you write something, and they sort of don't know what to say when you report something like the Woolworth fiasco.

Jim Harmon's article is fine, but why hasn't anyone ever written about my favorite soap opera, "Myrt and Marge"? (Toronto 15, Ontario)

I planned to include comments on issue #6 as well as #5 in this department; however, as you see, only one comment on #6 squeezed in. Next issue I'll try to include letters from Bob Tucker, Betty Kujawa, and Don Wollheim, along with comments on this. I also heard from Claude Saxon, Jo Knuth, Vic Ryan, Emile Greenleaf, Mal Ashworth, Helen Urban, Bob Jennings, Les Sample, Bill Danner, Ed Cox, Craig Cochran, Don Franson, Bob Lich'man, Ed Meskys, Len Moffatt, R&R Rucker, George Wells, the Lupoffs, Joe Patrizio, Ethel Lindsay, Peggy Rae McKnight, Lee Tremper, Bill Thailing, John F. Anderson, and Don W. Anderson concerning #5. Who did I miss listing? Thanks to all!