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THIS IS OZ-9, produced for the 52nd (December 1968) Mailing of the Offtrail Magazine Publishers' Association by BERYL MERCER of 10 Lower Church Lane, St. Michael's, BRISTOL BS2 8BA, England. A Bugleford Press Publication.

Hello, friends, this is your new AE pounding the keys with personal comments - all the official natter is in OFFTRAILS.

I regret that you will find little or no artwork in this issue. The simple truth is that I can't afford electro-stencils at present, and since Harry Bell gaffiated I don't know of any other British fanartist who is willing to work straight on to stencil. I'm sorry about this, more for Don's sake than for my own, since the N.A. was always graced with plenty of illos when he gambolled through the pages of Ken Cheslin's earlier OMPazine. (Yes, Ken dear, I know I really ought to have a bash at it myself - but I did that in OZ-7, and all the comments I got were very rude !)

Anyway, I hope that you'll all find the contents so absorbing, so brilliantly written and stylishly compiled, that you won't even notice the lack of pitchers !

Another reason for the omission of artwork is simple lack of time. In addition to having taken on OMPA for at least a year, I am now Company Secretary of the British Science Fiction Association Limited. You may wonder how artwork produced by somebody else can take up time - but stop ! think ! what about the cutting-up and patching-in of electro-stens ? To say nothing of Archie's colourful curses when they come adrift on Caractacus's drum during running-off.

And I am deeply sorry to announce that Ken McIntyre, who did most of the illos for OZ-8, died last August of acute pancreatitis. He was a good friend, a very congenial personality, a regular and veteran Con-goer, and the soul of generosity. British Cons will not be the same without him, and his many friends miss him very much.

November 24th 1968.

The above was typed a week or two ago. The main reason why I can't afford electro-stens at present is that Archie is just entering his eighth week of unemployment, having been made redundant early in October. I don't understand employers these days. They prefer to take on young girls, from school-leaving age up to about 22. They train these girls to do a particular job, then the girls usually get married and/or pregnant, and leave. Then the employers have to start all over again. I only got my present (very good) job because I happened to be on the spot, as it were, a temporary typist. And even then I had to go and ask for a permanent job.

It seems that 'in this country, at least - is it the same in America ?), when you're over 40, nobody wants to know you as far as jobs are concerned. and all the valuable experience one has gathered in one's working life of at least 25 years is wasted. MAD !

However, all is not gloom and despondency. Yesterday morning (a Saturday), Archie got up and went to collect the mail from the doormat at about 8.30 a.m. I roused myself sufficiently to take my share of the mail from him, and he got back into bed to read his portion. Yawning, I watched him open an official-looking envelope, wondering vaguely if it might be from one of the umpteen firms whose advertisements for clerks Archie has answered during the past weeks.

The letter-heading said, in bright red letters, "OXO." I frowned in puzzlement even as my eyes automatically followed the typed lines. And then we were both yelling and hugging each other - for the letter was delighted to announce that Archie had won a prize in Oxo's recent "Great Balloon Race" competition.

✓ The prize? A NEW CAR!!! A Hillman Imp.

Which was very good for the Mercatorial ego.

So now our battered old banger, 1955 Morris Minor, cream-coloured under the dirt, with its leaky radiator, temperamental gearbox and one front wing bashed in, can be bidden farewell. Dunno who'll be desperate enough to take it off our hands, in fact I suspect that its eventual destination will be the scrapheap, but at least I'm going to try to get a fiver or two for the thing.

And Archie says he won't quite believe he's won until he actually drives the Imp away ...

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We took our summer holiday during the last two weeks in August, and proceeded in the banger to London and the flat of Daphne Sewell & Jean Muggodj, where we had been warmly invited to stay. The girls threw a party on the Saturday night, which was like a miniature United Nations. Billy Pettit and Al Lewis were there, representing the States; Mervyn Barrett, from New Zealand; Italian Gian Paolo Cossato; and two young Czechs, Jiri (male) and the sweet-faced little Milada (female). Those two unfortunate kids had arrived in London on the very day that the Russians went into their country. They had been held up in Immigration or something, and it was a pair of frightened, bewildered youngsters who turned up at the flat, hours late, and begged in broken English, for news which we could not give them.

But they had guts, those two. Real guts. They did their best to keep cheerful, so as not to spoil things for everybody else. They stuck to their own programme of visits to various London art galleries and exhibitions. They also sat around for hours at the Czechoslovak Embassy, waiting for news - and then apologised profusely for coming back late when they found that we three women had been anxiously waiting up for them. (Jean: "We were afraid you might have done something silly and got yourselves arrested." Milada: "Almost we are arrested - Jiri he throw stones at Russian Embassy, but policeman not looking;!")

After a lot of discussion between themselves they decided to proceed with their 'tour' of European art galleries, and left London a couple of days after we did, to go to (I think) Italy. Last we heard was from Jean, who said she'd had a letter from them last week to say that they were back home in Brno,

"there is all in order till now including the school and the studio as well," they are both busy with their studies and their art, and "we are thinking on you and your friends."

While we were in London, we saw more films than we'd seen during the previous two or three years. We saw "Yellow Submarine", and enjoyed it so much that we sat through nearly two complete performances of it. Great, marvellous, wonderful! Also "Fantasia", which I'd not seen before - I now understand why it's still shown regularly in spite of the fact that it's 28 years old. Delightful stuff.

Nipped into a News Theatre one sweltering hot day to catch "The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film", which was shown at a British Con some years back, before I 'found' fandom. I'm a pushover for Goon-type humour, and this was no disappointment.

Archie wouldn't come with us to see "Lord of the Flies", being quite sure that he would hate it, and I expect he would have, at that. Very impressive - some more remarks about it appear later in this issue of OZ. Shown on the same bill was "To Sir, With Love".

And we took the Czechs with us to see "2001 - A Space Odyssey." Being both artists, they seemed to enjoy the special effects and the colour, especially as there was very little dialogue to tax their limited English. To my own astonishment and disgust, I found myself having a mild attack of claustrophobia at one point and couldn't look - in fact, I think if I'd been on the end of the row, I'd have got up and bolted! Also, I found the sound-track uncomfortably loud at several points.

However, that doesn't stop me thinking that this film is a magnificent achievement, and one which I would advise every SFan to see if possible.

The day before we left London - a Sunday - we took a leisurely river-trip to Greenwich and back. The weather was just right for this, the sun sparkling on the water and just enough of a breeze to keep one comfortable.

The following day we drove up to Peterborough to collect a load of files, books and correspondence from Doreen Parker, from whom I have now taken over the secretaryship of the B.S.F.A. Limited. We had a good natter with her, stayed overnight at her mother's house, and drove back to Bristol next day. There was, of course, quite a lot of mail awaiting us, so we dealt with that, did some shopping, washing, etc., and then on the following Saturday set off again for Kettering and the St. Fantony social weekend. This was a very enjoyable occasion, especially the banquet on the Sunday evening, and the George Hotel is still one of the best I've ever encountered as far as cheerful and willing service goes.

The only flaw in this otherwise happy time was when we learned of Ken McIntyre's death - he had been so looking forward to being with us that weekend.

So, back to Bristol on the Monday, and to work the following day.

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Not much else of note has happened since then. Archie and I stay home most nights and weekends, doing B.S.F.A. work and OMPa work - which we enjoy - wouldn't do it if we didn't! We did take one evening off recently to go and see "Camelot", but were both disappointed. I think this was one of those musicals which do not 'translate' well from stage to screen. And in any case I'd recently read the book - T.H. White's "The Once and Future King" - and I loved it. Mind you, I think Walt Disney made a damn good job of "The Sword in the Stone", which I saw several years ago, and would like to see again now that I've read the book.

The Bristol & District (BAD) SF Group has folded, I'm sorry to say - or at least been suspended indefinitely. Well, it had dwindled down to three regular members (our two selves and Rob Johnson from Bristol U.), and four irregular ones (the Walshes, Mike Scantlebury and Jim Moyles). We did collect a new member not long ago, but since there were only Peter Roberts and ourselves at this new member's first meeting, he hasn't been seen since. One can hardly blame him ...

We did manage to persuade Daff and Jean to spend a weekend with us at the end of October - and the nagging this took to accomplish, you've no idea! The Saturday of that weekend was supposed to be a group-meeting night. We had notified our small flock that visitors would be present and asked them to make a special effort to turn up. So: quite early in the evening, Tony Walsh dropped in, minus his womenfolk. He could, he said, only stay for half an hour or so, as they were all going to a party at a neighbour's house, and he (Tony) was looking forward to raising hell in somebody else's house for a change ...

So we sat around and nattered about books and swopped dirty jokes for a bit, then Tony made his adieux and left. Shortly afterwards Mike Scantlebury arrived - but he only stayed for half an hour, too, then went off to sing and play guitar at a nearby club called The Dugout. Followed Rob Johnson - good old faithful Rob - who did stay the course until Daff intimated that it was time to break it up, by gracefully going to sleep on the couch ...

Not a mad raving Saturday night, was it? And we felt that it was poor compensation for the great party that took place at the girls' flat when we were there on holiday. (Ted Tubb and Atom, sitting on the floor, rowing an imaginary canoe and belting out "The Canoe Song" at half-past two in the morning ... me quaffing Billy Pettit's beer because I'd had too much of Ted's over-sweet pineapple wine - I mean, I HATE beer! ... Jiri and Atom swapping drawings ... the fluffy white Peke belonging to Gerry and Anne Webb, looking more like a Persian cat than a dog, called alternately Chang and Nelson, and answering to neither ... a rather odd girl called Rita saying to Ted, "I've been listening to you talk for the last half-hour, and you haven't said anything yet" ... Ethel telling Billy a story about three houris, and breaking off to ask Al Lewis, "You know what three houris are, don't you?" and Al answering, "Hooray, hooray, hooray!" ... Ethel, again, insisting that it's very difficult for a male author to get inside the skin of a female character, and Ted roaring "Difficult? It's impossible!" ...)

But Daff and Jean swore they'd enjoyed themselves at our place, and that the break had "done them a world of good." Ah, but they're nice girls!

OZ-9 is copyright © Beryl Mary Morcor, 1968. E&OE. Most of the stencilling was done by me, but A. did his own column and also Don's - thanks, love. We proofread each other's stencils, and Archie duplicated the lot. Over and out. ++ BM.

Herewith a brief review of an impressive first novel :

V O T A N

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An historical novel set in Western Europe in the second century A.D.

by JOHN JAMES

This book, written in the first person singular as told by its protagonist, Ehotinus, a Greek, offers a new and unique genesis for the myths of Odin All-father and the Aesir. Mr. James uses the Germanic form of the name, but spells it with an initial 'V' instead of 'W', and intimates right from the beginning of the book (which immediately grasps the reader's interest) that 'Votan' is derived from 'Ehotinus'.

The story begins in Vindabonum (probably the 2nd century equivalent of present-day Vienna) from which Ehotinus departs hastily for the little-known wilderness of Northern Europe. This is as a result of a conspiracy which utilises his affair with the wife of a Roman to send him on the trail of the rare and precious Amber.

Although a certain element of mysticism is present throughout the book, mainly in the field of precognition, this is balanced by the down-to-earth, matter-of-fact style of Ehotinus' narration. There is also a strong strain of humour to offset the grim and often tragic sequence of events; the basic 'joke' is that Ehotinus is a priest of Apollo the Healer, upon whom he always calls in times of stress and danger. It is Apollo who, by subtle and devious means, sends out Ehotinus as the instrument of his vengeance against enemies like Loki, and by so doing creates a new pantheon.

Some of the characters, like Loki, Sigmund and Freda, bear names familiar to students of Norse mythology. Others, such as Donar, appear to be newly-minted characters until the book is nearing the end, when it suddenly dawns upon the reader that they, too, are recognised members of the same legends.

Some characters from Celtic mythology are also involved when Ehotinus visits Britain and exchanges "professional credentials" with the Druids by demonstrations of magic. The resultant 'mixture' of Greek, Norse and Celtic characters, seasoned with Germanic tribes and Roman imperialism, makes for entertaining and absorbing reading. A very good first novel, and I look forward to reading more of Mr. James' work.

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VOTAN : Originally published by Cassell & Company Ltd., London. This edition published by The New American Library Inc. \$5. 233 pp.

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VOTAN was loaned to me by Keith Freeman, who is a personal friend of the author. Keith had read a copy of OZ-8 which contained Bobbie Gray's article on Celtic mythology, and he asked me to send a copy to John James. This I did, and I received the following letter in reply:

Huntingdonshire.

11th September 1968.

Dear Mrs. Mercer,

Thank you for your letter of 5th September, and for the magazine. I hope you enjoy VOTAN; ... there is a successor, NOT FOR ALL THE GOLD IN IRELAND, which you might also like, if you order it from all the libraries you have tickets at. You will find there that my 'ero stays in Paris with Jules Maigret in his office on l'Isle de la Cite'.

I regard any attempts to make sense out of Welsh mythology with some suspicion, especially if the unfortunate worker has not enough Welsh to know that Gwyddel is an Irishman and that he speaks Gwyddeleg, although he lives in Iwerddon. The important thing is that Welsh is a fossilised language and has changed so little that with modern Welsh you can read tenth, or indeed sixth century Welsh with little difficulty.

Now in spite of this, very little written material has survived from the pre-Saxon period. These are the stories usually grouped together as the Mabinogion, although they don't seem to be very closely related to me. (The main link in fact is that they all appear to have taken their present form in Monmouthshire or East Glamorgan, as shown by the use of -wya instead of -odd as the ending of the third person singular aorist of the regular verbs.) Now, if we are trying to put together some account of the beliefs of the early Welsh from these few documents, we are in much the same state as if we were trying to reconstruct the main tenets of Christianity if we only had St. John's Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews, or if we only had the apocryphal Gospel of Barnabas and Revelations. We have only a tiny fragment of evidence; we don't know how representative it was of the whole, and we don't know what has been lost.

Further, we must beware of this temptation to try to make a theology out of other people's beliefs. This need for a Theology, that is for a completely consistent and self-coherent account of the origin of the world with a dependant system of morals is something which you only find when we get as far as a monotheistic or an anatheistic (no God necessary to the system, like Buddhism) religion. That is, it doesn't begin to appear till later Judaism, sometime after the Babylonian captivity. But if you have religion but not A Religion, if you believe in Gods Many and Lords Many with their local appearances and shrines and quite specific powers and cares, then you can't possibly compose a theology; which is what Mrs. Gray obviously wants to do; you only have beliefs in odd stories, and about good luck.

There isn't enough material about Celtic religion to make a theology, or even a real mythology. Rees and Rees, 'Celtic Heritage', try to make a coherent whole of Welsh and Gaelic written material, (without reference to modern folklore.) Ann Ross, 'Pagan Celtic Britain', describes the mass of physical material, statues and the like, and tried to make a coherent whole out of that. Read the two books, and you find it hard to credit that they are about the same country and period. Then read Rachel Bromwich on the Triads and Norah Chadwick on the Druids, and you will be even more bewildered.

Let's face it, the Mabinogion is a mass of wonderful material out of which anybody can quarry what he likes and no one can contradict him and say "This could not have happened, this is not what it means." And good luck to anyone who does quarry.

I've tried a novel in which I took as a working hypothesis that Pryderi and Manawyddan in their travels represent real persons in Britain. The main thing about them is that they are Kings, but they are travelling incognito in Britain, and going from city to city. And Pwyll Pryderi's father has literally gone underground. So I thought it would be plausible to put this not earlier than A.D. 100, before which there were for practical purposes no cities in Britain. And if the wanderers were Royal fugitives, then local nationalistic resistance with loyalty to defeated monarchs à la Prince Charlie could not have lasted long after A.D. 150, when the last rising of the Brigantes resulted in the end of indirect rule. O.K. But, could it not have happened after A.D. 300, when the cities were past their peak and national resistance was stirring again? anybody can do this. But you must in honesty call it fiction or it-might-have-been. On no account are you justified in saying "This happened so", or "This is what men thought", because that would be unscholarly and dishonest.

One last word. I have lately come back to live near Cambridge and got at the University Library again with its couple of million volumes. What is remarkable is that when you want to chase up any one particular topic, say the West Indian Buccaneers, you find that there are in fact very few books in existence, and most of them just repeat each other. Sad.

If you are short of material you may print that, or even send it as it is to Mrs. Gray.

Yours faithfully,

John James.

I had a letter from Keith at the beginning of November, in which he said that he had managed to find NOT FOR ALL THE GOLD IN IRELAND in the library, and liked it very much. At present I am so busy with one thing and another that I daren't go anywhere near the library, otherwise I shall have my head stuck in a book instead of getting on with all the typing I have to do. It's bad enough having to pass George's Bookshop every evening on my way home from work ...

In an earlier letter, Keith also said (after having read OZ-8): "For the first time, I think, I've now read what it feels like to be a ~~fiction~~ initiate of St. Pantony. You were, of course, lucky that we watered down the Water-from-the-Well with Vurguzz!" "Computer programming is not boring IF you like it. Sounds trite - but what I mean is that each problem must be approached as a new challenge. It's the same, in a way, as crosswords. Some people find them boring, others consider each crossword a new job. If they get fed up doing (say) the General Knowledge one in the Sunday Express, they change and try to do the Skeleton one - or swop to another newspaper. They're still crosswords but can be approached afresh. This is one reason for the fairly quick turnover of computer programmers in jobs."

Well, I'm a confirmed crossword addict - have been for years - but I think I'll still stick to my present job, in which I can legitimately bawl out heads of depts. at times. Not much fun in bawling out a computer!

Anyway, I passed on John James's letter to Bobbie, as he suggested, and asked for her comments, which appear hereunder. I know this must be madly frustrating for those of you who haven't yet seen OZ-8, but I'm sure you will eventually, and then you can 'catch up.'

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Many thanks for the letter and enclosure. Well, now, you didn't tell me you knew John James - is he a fan? I have read his book "Not for All the Gold in Ireland", which is a most delightful story. I wish I could have thought up a tale like that based on the Mabinogion.

The books he mentions I have read, with the exception of Rachel Bromwich on the Triads. I agree, it is hard to believe they are about the same country and people, but one must quarry where one can, always bearing in mind that many authors just take in each other's literary washing.

As for trying to make a theology - it never occurred to me that I was trying to do that. In fact, I believe in a previous article in VAGARY (or maybe it was a lecture I gave to a local group), I pointed out that when studying Celtic mythology, legend, folklore, and the few facts that have survived, it is like trying to do a jigsaw with a number of the key pieces missing. The Celtic mysteries are something different again, even though poor old Iolo Morganwg has since been accused of forgery and God knows what else. But even if he did invent all or a lot of it himself, he certainly put down some good groundwork for reviving Celtic occultism.

My Welsh extends to about three or four phrases and "Johnnie Bach", but I think I am one of millions with mainly Celtic ancestry who cannot speak Celtic - my Welsh sister-in-law can't, either. But as for Welsh being a fossilised language - I have a Welsh dictionary here, published by Christopher Davies Ltd. of Llandeby, Carmarthenshire, and edited by two Welsh scholars. These two scholars rightly point out that Wales can be proud of her long literary tradition, unbroken from about the sixth century to the present day, but that the language has changed much since, undergoing several shifts. i.e. 1. Early Welsh, from the development of the language from Brythonic to the end of the eighth century; 2. Old Welsh, from the ninth to about the end of the eleventh century; 3. Mediaval Welsh, from the beginning of the twelfth to about the end of the fourteenth century; 4. Early modern Welsh, from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth; 5. Late Modern Welsh, from the sixteenth century (translation of the Scriptures in 1588) to the present.

The authors go on to point out that, although the written language has become more or less standardised, there are still four main spoken dialects, thus: 1. Venedotian, spoken in Gwynedd or North West Wales "Y Wyndodeg"; 2. Powysian, spoken in Powys (North East and mid-Wales) "Y Bowyseg"; 3. Demetian, spoken in Dyfed or South West Wales "Y Dyfedeg"; 4. Gwentian, spoken in Gwent and Morgannwg (South East Wales) "Y Werhwyseg".

So I would not call Welsh exactly a fossilised language. Still on this, some time back Bill asked one of his clients, a Welsh teacher, why someone did not make an attempt to start translating all the treasures in private hands

throughout Wales. He said that an attempt had been made, that a panel of scholars had been set up, but before long they started disagreeing with each other over the meanings of words - it seems that depending on how it was inflected, the word could have about fifteen different meanings. A panel of scholars was probably a great error - it must have been if they all fell out with each other. Perhaps what is really needed is a dedicated amateur scholar, with a good knowledge of the Welsh language and literature from way back, with the time, patience and money to seek the truth in those parts of Wales where our forward-looking technological dynamic productivity has not yet made a breakthrough which leaves no stone unturned or avenue unexplored. In short, places where the gobbledygook of the steaming nits in Whitehall is treated for what it is. One dedicated man could probably do a lot more than a panel of scholars who always fall out with each other.

Incidentally, I do know someone who follows the old Celtic religion - or what there is left of it - and who claims to be descended from the genuine druidic families, and I don't mean the lot in London who run around in white nightshirts. The one thing we both have in common, apart from an interest in things Celtic, is an irritation at the way people go around gibbering that witchcraft is the old religion. I think Margaret Murray did the old religion a great disservice when she called her book "Witch Cult in Western Europe." It would have been nearer the mark to have said the Pagan Cult in Western Europe. Anyway, as far as I know the Celts did not even have a name for witches. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that witchcraft - the really nasty stuff - was to the old religion what Satanism is to Christianity, but so much time has gone by that I doubt if we will ever know the truth.

Oh, yes, I am aware that Gwyddelon meant Irish. In fact, the story is told that Moelmeod, a Celtic king circa 430 B.C., built a road across the country which he called Sarn Gwyddelin - the Irish Road, which was later corrupted into Watling Street. Curiously enough, quite a bit of information can be found in the books issued by the Covenant Publishing Co. as long as they are read carefully. These are the British Israelites, hence the care which has to be used when reading the stuff. Once you know the method, it is fairly easy to sort out the few facts from all the theory. When footnotes of sources are given, one is on reasonably safe ground. What should be ignored are the paragraphs written as though they are statements of facts, but which do not give any source whatsoever. But to be fair to these people, in their efforts to prove their theories, they have uncovered quite a number of facts or reasonably adduced them about the later Celtic history of these islands.

I said a couple of paragraphs back that the Celts had no word for witch, but what they did have - if the word is that old - is one called gwyddoniaeth which meant science, and gwyddonydd meaning scientist. Perhaps in the old days it could have meant learning and the learned one. Or it could have been derived from an old word. When the Saxons, who arrived as invited immigrants and then took over, 'met' the language, it is possible that the g was not pronounced in the east, so what the Saxons heard may have been wyddonydd, and possibly the nearest they could get to pronouncing it would be 'wicca' - which word is now claimed to mean the Craft of the Wise. Which the Saxons busily set about destroying, hence our lack of material from pre-Saxon days, even in the west or Wessex, where they were Gewissao, that is, confederates of the Mysterious

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Cerdic - or Ceredig, to give him his correct Celtic name. Gwyddonydd - wicca - witchcraft! All theory, of course, but I do wonder.

But as for my being a theologian - cor! In the article I sent you, I do not recall saying "this happened so." I might have said this might have happened, or this may have been what men thought - but not "this is what men thought" - if I said the other I have broken one of my own rules. One I made in the days when I was reading one of Lewis Spence's books about Atlantis when, referring to this place, he prefaced a sentence with "We all know that -- " I was so irritated I throw the book across the room and snarled, "We don't all know - we may not even believe in the dump - this is presuming too much." And, as I once pointed out to Bruce Burn, I have never claimed to be a scholar. But all anyone can do is to go on studying in the hope of finding a nugget of information here and there. In fact, a young friend of mine who seems to have enough time to spare is keeping in touch with people in the west who do have a lot of the old stories, legends, myths and bits of local history to weld together. She may end up in many years' time like Iolo Morgannwg - found dead with bits of manuscript all over the house, as he said he had been travelling all round the Celtic areas trying to get down old lore before it was completely lost. A couple of friends gathered all his notes together and published them, with the Welsh editors agreeing he had uncovered a literary gold-mine, then this was inevitably followed by yells of fraud, and that he had made it all up. If a fraud, it was a damned brilliant one, but one would have thought that if such were his intention, it would have been found in coherent script in his house, instead of scraps of paper all over the place. Something else we shall probably never know for sure.

++ Roberta Gray.

From "The Age of Scandal", by T.H. White. (Penguin, 4/6d.)

"... in the end, to cure the hiccoughs, he set light to his own night-shirt, and burned himself to death. It was to prove that he was not afraid."

(referring to John Mytton, an 18th-century eccentric.)

From the "Sun", August 14th 1967:

"A 50-year-old Tanzanian, who admitted killing and eating his father, wife and three children, asked the court: "I ate only members of my family, so who was I offending?" He pleaded guilty to witchcraft and may now be charged with murder."

DEPT. OF AM's GEMS ...

Female Blue Meanies wear blue meanie-skirts.

Half a horse is better than no thoroughbred.

You can't get small-fox if you've been vixenated.

READER'S CRAMP

I was full of good intentions to make notes about every book I read, but said intentions simply paved a few more miles of the road to hell ... what with holidays, and work for the BSEA, and B&D Group meetings ... Anyway, I'll list my reading, and add notes where I can remember noteworthy things.

Now that we are living nearer to the city centre, I patronise the Central Library more frequently. Early on, I discovered a shelf of books by a prolific authoress named Angela Thirkell. I first encountered Miss Thirkell during the war, when I was a member of a book club, and received a copy of her book, "Growing Up." This book enchanted me, and avid readings of her other novels have not lessened the enchantment.

It's a hard thing to define; all the books are interconnected, and all are concerned with the doings of 'County' folk, from upper middle class and landed gentry to minor and major aristocracy. I don't understand why I like the books so much, for they are snobbery incarnate; all the servants "know their place", and refer to their employers as "Madam" and "the Master". All the children have Nannies or Nurses, and inevitably attend public schools and then Oxford or Cambridge. A Socialist government is always referred to with hatred as "They" and "Them."

And yet ... some of the servants are quite tyrannical, having to be humoured at all times because they give notice at the drop of a hat. "Such a nuisance, but I must go and have a cup of Nannie's dreadful nursery tea, otherwise she will take offence and have a migraine for days ..."

Miss Thirkell obviously likes her 'people' to be reasonably happy; a person who has an unhappy love-affair in one book will be neatly paired off with someone entirely suitable in a later one. Unfortunately I haven't been able to read the books in sequence, as I would have liked, but it doesn't detract a great deal from my enjoyment. For instance, the last time I 'met' Lady Cora Palliser, she was weeping (most surprisingly, for she was a practical and forthright young woman), because her brother, Lord Silverbridge, heir to the Duke of Omnium, had just got engaged to Isabel Dean, whose former fiancé had died in Italy during the war. (He was a Captain, of course!) Lady Cora was crying because all the young men she had known, and one of whom she might have married if any one of them had asked her, were all dead. Today I took out "Happy Returns" - and discover to my intense satisfaction that Lady Cora is now Lady Cora Waring, having apparently married (in a book I haven't yet read), the nephew and heir of Sir Harry Waring, whom I met in the first Thirkell I read, "Growing Up."

Sounds complicated? And a bit breathless, perhaps? But that's how these books are! One gets so involved with all these people in all these different towns and villages and estates (but all in the mythical county of Barscotehire,

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the original invention, I gather, of Anthony Trollope), that occasionally one puts down the book and muses, "Now let's see - Lucy Adams - name's familiar - oh, yes, she used to be Lucy Marling, and married Sam Adams, the ironmaster of Hogglostock - and her brother Oliver was being tiresome with an unrequited passion for the happily-married actress, Jessica Dean ..."

Never having moved in such high circles of English society, I wouldn't know if the picture presented is true to life or not. And I don't much care. Most of Miss Thirkell's ladies are so gloriously silly and naive and utterly feminine that I just can't help being intensely interested in them. I know quite well that if I ever met such people as these in the flesh, they would probably look on me as "not one of Us, my dear," and be excruciatingly, chillingly polite. But in Miss Thirkell's pages, I love them all.

Her place-names are equally delightful - Winter Overcotes and Winter Underclose, for example - and in the war-time books one meets refugees from a mythical country called Mixo-Lydia.

I've only just started reading "Happy Returns", but if I come across any choice examples of the innate silliness I mentioned, I'll quote them later.

Herewith a list of Thirkell books I've read since last May:

✓ COUNTY CHRONICLE; WILD STRAWBERRIES; AUGUST FOLLY; THE BRANDONS; BEFORE LUNCH;
A SECOND ANGELA THIRKELL OMNIBUS (comprising "August Folly", "Summer Half", and "Pomfret Towers"); NORTHBRIDGE RECTORY; MISS BUNTING; LOVE AT ALL AGES; and the one I took out today, HAPPY RETURNS.

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Veering well away now from the English "upper crust", I have developed an interest in Celtic mythology, the occult, magic, etc. This arose from a rather unnerving personal experience, which in turn led to a most interesting correspondence with Bobbie Gray. As a result, I have bought several books on these and allied subjects, and borrowed others from the Central Library.

BOOKS PURCHASED. "The Cosmic Doctrine", by Dion Fortune. Rather heavy going, though I keep getting the feeling that complete illumination is, tantalisingly, just beyond my mental grasp. I'm reading it aloud to myself, a chapter or two at a time, in the hope that it will eventually penetrate by a kind of 'mental osmosis'.

"Psychic Self-Defence", by Dion Fortune. This was a direct result of the unnerving experience I mentioned. I am a basically cheerful, level-headed person, not given to hysterics, or "moods" without some definite cause. Last February I suffered an unaccountable fit of deep depression which I simply could not shake off by laughing at myself or getting mad. Out of a growing, weird conviction that I was being "got at", I yelled for help to the only person I could think of who was equipped to provide such help - and I got it. (Thanks, Bobbie.) On the basis of that, and the information given in this book - well, if anybody tries another psychic "oh-nasty" on me, he/she/It will find me prepared and hitting back! Oh, I find the human mind an eternally fascinating subject ...

"The New Dimensions Red Book". A series of interesting and widely diverse articles, and a few poems, on occult subjects.

"The Mabinogion". (trans. G. & T. Jones.) This is a collection of fragments, all that are left of the ancient Celtic myths. I have been interested in Greek, Roman and Scandinavian mythology since childhood, but oddly enough it's only recently that I have tackled the "home-grown" product. (See Bobbie's article in OZ-8). These legends are not easy to follow; various scholars and translators differ in their interpretations, and many of the Celtic gods have more than one name.

"The Western Mystery Tradition", by Christine Hartley. Very interesting, even though it strains the credulity at times. There are passages where the author's thread of reasoning, in an effort to relate one 'fact' to another, is so thin as to be virtually non-existent. Nevertheless I learned a little more.

"The Once and Future King (Camelot)", by T.H. White. I revelled in this; the first section was used as the basis for the Disney cartoon, "The Sword in the Stone", and the other parts for "Camelot". Here, as in no other book I have read on the Arthurian cycle, the characters are invested with warm, fallible humanity. Beautifully written, often outrageously funny - and one passage was so moving that I sighed "Aaaahhh ..." over the lump in my throat, and read it again. (This reaction croggled Archie no end!) It was the Badger's dissertation on 'God and the Embryos' (in "The Sword in the Stone"). In fact that entire chapter was highly reminiscent of "The Wind in the Willows", which is another long-standing favourite of mine.

"Elidor", by Alan Garner. In my opinion, not quite as entertaining as his previous two books (mentioned in OZ-7). However, since all three books were written for the juvenile market, perhaps it isn't fair to judge them by adult standards. In any case, the occult element was well-represented, and there was plenty of excitement and action for the four children involved in the yarn.

BORROWED FROM THE LIBRARY. "The Supernatural", by Douglas Hill & Pat Williams. Large, lavishly-illustrated tome dealing with many aspects of the occult, witchcraft, mediumship, poltergeists, magic, etc. I found it absolutely fascinating.

"West Country Folk Tales", by Llywelyn Maddock. Some of these I had come across before, perhaps in a modified form, proving that some folk tales don't necessarily belong exclusively to one particular region. An entertaining collection.

"The Glastonbury Legends", by R.F. Treharne. This is another subject which is so shrouded in antiquity that there is frequent disagreement between historians as to what actually happened. The Glastonbury pilgrimages certainly provide incontrovertible proof that there exists a vast weight of belief in the legend that St. Joseph of Arimathea visited Glastonbury, and there planted his staff which miraculously became "the flowering thorn." One school of thought goes even further, in maintaining that Jesus also visited the town. It's now several months since I read the book, but I seem to recall that Mr. Treharne set forth, almost apologetically, well-founded theories to refute both contentions. I'll have to read it again and refresh my memory - oh, why didn't I take some notes!

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"Arthur : Roman Britain's Last Champion." This is by an author with the incredible name of Beram Saklatvala; it interested Archie more than me, being strictly historical with little or no reference to legend.

"Witchcraft Today" : Gerald Gardner. Bobbie hasn't much time for, or patience with, Gerald Gardner; nevertheless I found this book of interest, notably for Gardner's insistence that the vast majority of witches - modern ones in particular - are not the evil old hags, consorting with Lucifer, as depicted and persecuted by religious bigotry.

"Everyman's Book of Ancient Customs": Christine Chaundler. Can't remember a great deal about this one, except that in many cases it gives the ancient - and often pagan - origin of customs which are still practised to-day. E.g. Cornwall's "Furry Dance", and May-day revels.

"Maori Myths & Tribal Legends" : Antony Alpers. I took this one out of the library because I am also interested in the legends and customs of Polynesia (as in the opening chapters of James Michener's "Hawaii"). Many of the Maori legends are extremely bloodthirsty, some of them even involve cannibalism. There is a deep underlying symbolism which is not easy to follow, but it's an extremely interesting book.

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"The Dawn of Magic" : Louis Pauwels & Jacques Bergier. This was loaned to me by a colleague at work. I have never read a book which is so fascinating and yet so madly frustrating! The fascination lies in the actual material, much of which was completely new to me; the frustration was aroused by the terribly inept method of presentation. For a start, although two authors' names are featured, the book is not a collaboration; it is written in the first person singular by Pauwels, with references to Bergier which do not begin until at least halfway through. The text begins with a fairly exhaustive survey of alchemy as practised in the past, and its possible applications to modern science. Then it begins to roam all over the place, flitting back and forth from one subject to another, frequently promising further references to various matters and never fulfilling the promise. The occult beliefs and practices of Hitler and his top Nazis are described; Hitler himself is presented as a very ordinary stolid sort of man who was frequently possessed by occult intelligences which would have been termed demons a few centuries ago. Insane decisions which resulted in complete disaster - such as sending the German army into Russia completely unequipped to face a Siberian winter - are explained by a Nazi belief in a weird "fire versus ice" theory.

1/10/62
Thinking it over now, one thing occurs to me, causing me to shake my head in wonder more at the naivete of the Nazis rather than their crazy beliefs and practices. If Pauwels is to be believed - and I don't see why not, in view of the mass of detail he presents - then the Nazis were fighting the war on two levels. The material level of guns, bombs, ships, aircraft, etc.; and the psychic level of initiations, incantations and dark occult manifestations. The Allies hit back vigorously on the material level; I wonder if the Nazis believed that there was no resistance on the psychic level? If they did so believe, then that was one of their biggest mistakes - because there was such resistance. Gerald Gardner gives instances of it, and there must have been many similar 'pockets' of psychic resistance which have remained secret for obvious reasons.

Maddening though it is, I shall probably try to buy a copy of this book for myself. If only somebody like Isaac Asimov had written it!

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I have, of course, read a lot more books in the past eight or nine months than those listed above. However, I want to/a short piece on one author in particular, so I'll just list most of the others:

All issues of The Magazine of Fantasy & SF, up to and including September 1968. (There's always at least one story worth reading in this magazine.)

ANALOG, May, June & July 1968. I borrowed these to read Poul Anderson's serial, "Satan's World", it being a Nicholas van Rijn story. This one began promisingly, but the third instalment failed to live up to that initial promise. Not up to standard.

"Psychogeist", by L.P. Davies. Not very good.

"Journey into Darkness", by Frank Belknap Long.

"Out of my Mind", and "Not Before Time", by John Brunner. Well worth reading.

"The Man Who Wrote Dirty Books", by Hal Dresner. One of two books loaned to me by Gray Boak. He found this one highly hilarious. Archie found it mildly amusing. I thought it was a load of tripe.

"John Goldfarb, Please Come Home!" The second of G.B.'s loans. He thought it not as funny as the Dresner book. Archie thought it was 'yecchhy' and didn't finish it. I thought it was hysterically funny, and now have my own copy!

(Quote from an elderly lady of my acquaintance: "Well, it'd be a funny world if we were all alike")

"3 Times Infinity", edited by Leo Margulies.

"Year's Best SF", edited by Brian Aldiss & Harry Harrison. I understand from Brian that this anthology more or less takes the place of the defunct "SF Horizons". Whatever the reason for its publication, it's a very good collection, including stories by Silverberg, James Thurber, Chandler, Ballard, Leiber, Ellison, etc. There is a "Credo" by James Blish, an introduction by Harry, and an "Afterword" by Brian.

"Legends for the Dark" edited by Peter Haining.

"I Love Galesburg in the Springtime", by Jack Finney. A collection in Finney's characteristically nostalgic style, which I find very appealing.

"English Maiden", by Frank Swinnerton. A story of three generations of very English stock, centred around a girl called Sally - the story begins with her birth. Sort of Thirkell without the whimsy and the nutty flavour!

"The Spanish Bride", by Georgette Heyer. The first of Miss Heyer's books I've ever read. It might well be the last - except that Doreen Parker tells me that I couldn't have picked a worse example of Heyer to start with, and I should give her another chance by reading another one! Well, I might - but I found this one boring in the extreme.

"Lord of the Flies", by Louis Golding;

"To Sir, With Love", by R. Braithwaite.

I bought these after seeing both films on a double bill in London. I can't really give an objective opinion of the first, because the boy who played "Piggy" in the film bore a startling resemblance to my younger son, even to the asthma, and I therefore got slightly more involved with the film than I would otherwise have done. The second film was made memorable, of course, by the beautifully restrained acting of Sidney Poitier, and the memory of this really brought the book to life.

FRANK YERBY - MISOGYNIST ?

In my "Books" feature in OZ-7, I wrote the following:

"BRIDE OF LIBERTY, by Frank Yerby. I don't think I've ever read a bad Yerby book. Oh, he's not very highbrow, sure, but he takes care to get his facts right for his historical novels, as in this love-story set against a well-drawn background of the American War of Independence."

I've read quite a lot more Yerby since then. And now I'm beginning to think that I was wrong when I said that I've never read a bad Yerby book. As the late Professor Joad would have said, "It depends what you mean by 'bad'." His descriptive writing is excellent, the pace of his action rarely flags, and he has been a consistent best-seller ever since his first book, "The Foxes of Harrow." Which is one that I haven't read - and somehow I don't think I ever will, now. Because ...

I suspect that Mr. Yerby doesn't like women. More than that, I suspect that he despises women.

"Floodtide" was the first Yerby book I ever read. It was set, as so many of his books are, in the Deep South of America, in the time of the Spanish-Cuban war, with the work of the American Abolitionists as a kind of counterpoint. And the love-theme followed the pattern which is a standard feature of almost every Yerby book I've read.

The hero is usually born on the wrong side of the tracks, or the wrong side of the blanket, or both. His main ambition is to rise in the world, to become rich and powerful. Sometimes, as in "Fair Oaks", he wishes to regain the family fortune and estate lost by the scandalous and extravagant behaviour of his father. He is intelligent, strong, matures at an early age, and is as proud as Lucifer. Most important, he is as virile and masculine as all-get-out.

His first task is to get himself educated, so that he can feel on equal intellectual terms with the men whose social circle he wishes to enter and to dominate, finally. Next, he sets out to make money, being sometimes not very scrupulous as to the means. The hero of "Fair Oaks" is one Guy Fawks (an unfortunate choice of name; apparently Mr. Yerby's knowledge of English history is not as good as his knowledge of the American variety!). To make his fortune, he enters the slave-trade and goes 'black-birding.'

There are always at least two main female characters in the hero's life. Usually there is some reason why he can't at first have the one he really wants and loves, so he contents himself with somebody else until the main love is free. Or until he discovers that the second woman is more suitable for him than the first one would have been.

Also, there is nearly always a semi-villainous female. Never entirely villainous, mind; she's usually beautiful, if nothing else. She has to be, I suppose, otherwise Our Hero wouldn't get involved with her and take her to bed. This latter is necessary to the progress of the story, so that (a) Our Hero's True Love shall catch them in flagrante delicto and tell him that it's All Over (only it never is, of course); or, (b) The S-V. woman's husband shall catch them i.f.d. and call Our Hero out for a duel (O.H. doesn't want to fight the husband, because the poor cuckolded guy is a friend of his, and the S-V. woman isn't worth

shedding good male blood over); or, (c) he runs like hell when he discovers that the S-V. woman is angling for marriage.

The passage which really opened my eyes to Frank Yerby's opinions of women occurs in "Benton's Row":

"Poor little Martine. She'd had a rough life. But I never could have married someone like her. Didn't even dream she was hoping for that. She was good for one thing - the best at that - absolutely the best I've ever met. The hell of it is that the only way a woman gets to be that expert is by lots of practice. Shop-worn goods. We Bentons may be the world's greatest whore-mongers, but we don't marry them."

See what I mean? Now, maybe this was part of the much-vaunted "Southern code of honour" (and if it wasn't, I expect any OMPA members living south of the M.D. line will hasten to set me right!) - but this attitude crops up time and time again in Mr. Yerby's books, which are not all about the Deep South of America - though most of them seem to be.

According to his books (and remember that, apart from other books such as "Gone With the Wind", such books are all I have on which to base my opinions) - it is part of the Southern male's way of life to hop into bed with any female he takes a fancy to, and who is willing - and this whether he himself is married or not. But he only marries 'quality.' It also seems to be part of his way of life to flog the hide off his wife's back if he catches her indulging in the same practice, and to call out the man who has cuckolded him - if, of course, said man is of the same social status as himself. If not, he flogs him too, or pistol-whips him, or engages in some similar unsavoury sport. Or, if he does not wish to soil his hands, he sends servants to deal with the offender.

Yerby's women are always beautiful. They're also intelligent - have to be, I suppose, otherwise they wouldn't be fit mates for the lusty heroes. But not too intelligent, of course ... Beauty and brains. Pride, too - which, after some preliminary sparring to rouse the hero's mettle ("I like 'em with a touch of Bitch'n'bitters") is gladly surrendered forever to the hero's masterful attack, in exchange for sexual ecstacy.

In more than one book, Yerby quotes what seems to have been a well-known saying in the South: "The only free things in the South are a coloured woman and a white man." Maybe that was true; I wouldn't know. Perhaps it still is; again, I wouldn't know.

But I'd like to read just one book by Frank Yerby in which he gives his hero more than great physical courage - the kind which sent Guy Fawks out to duel with the master swordsman Kilrain Mallory, when Guy had never handled a sword in his life; more than one kind of moral courage - which sent the same Guy Fawks to sea when he found he was deeply in love with Pilar, wife of his generous benefactor and adoptive father, Captain Travis Richardson. When young Guy fell in love with, and mated with, Cathy, who adored him, Guy's father was scandalised and had her sent far away. She was 'poor white trash', and 'no fit mate' for a Fawks. Guy was upset at first - but finally came to agree with his father. I'd have thought more of him as a man if he'd gone after Cathy and married her anyway. She wasn't a fool, by any means, and it wouldn't have taken her long to learn the ways of the society in which Guy wished to move.

Come to think of it, I'd like to read a Yerby book which has a woman as its main character. I wonder if there is one? Somehow I doubt it; I also doubt that he could write one, although I may be doing the man an injustice.

To me, the fact that Yerby's semi-villainous women are usually much more interesting, their characters more sharply defined than those of his 'good' female creations, is significant. Does he find it easier to write about bad women because he feels that good ones are few and far between?

Take Morgan Brittany, for instance, the 'bad' woman of "Floodtide." By the standards of any so-called civilised society, Morgan is completely unprincipled - yet she has her own strange code which would, I think, stir the darker aspects of any woman's psychological make-up. "People are never good just for goodness' sake," she says. "People are only good because they are afraid. That's where I differ. I'm not afraid. I'm absolutely free of illusion and that is impossible. The world won't permit that. It kills such clear ones. It will kill me, finally."

"A woman can stand anything - except being bored. Men never realise that."

"No woman's chastity has ever been endangered by a man's base passions. Quite the contrary. It is only put in jeopardy by her own. Where you men got the idea that a good woman hasn't any carnal emotions is more than I can see. Or that there is such a thing as a good woman ..."

(Don't forget that this is Yerby, speaking through Morgan's mouth !)

"There are no good women, in the sense that you Southerners think. There are women who lack opportunity to be as promiscuous as they'd like to be; there are women who are afraid, and there are women who are cold. That's all. And even the cold ones are that way because their men are stupid and clumsy and lack finesse ..."

"Women ... simply do not think like men. They have a fine, instinctive contempt for logic. A woman - any woman - can watch some poor, bedraggled daughter of joy being ridden out of town on a rail with complete vindictive satisfaction, and commit adultery the next night with the same complete satisfaction and absolute self-justification because her husband has committed the most heinous of all crimes - that is, he has bored her to tears."

"No woman has the slightest interest in the act of love itself. ... She may not find physical love repugnant ... She may enjoy it hugely. With a woman, it is always something that just happens as the result of something else, ... there's no word for it, though you might call it romance. The scene, the moonlight, the music, the tender flattery, the little attentions ... to a woman these are the main event. That's why no woman in her heart of hearts gives a fig about feminine fidelity, or chastity, or any of the other nonsensical ideas you men dreamed up to protect your jealous interests. She knows what she does with her body isn't important, as long as she's smart enough to avoid the consequences ..."

And there's a lot more in the same vein, all part of Morgan's "teaching Ross about women." "Ross stared at her. Much of this, he had to admit, made sense. It fitted in with so many things that he himself had observed ..."

What makes it doubly unfair is that Yerby has some very sound ideas concerning liberty of the individual - but these are always expounded by a male character, never by a female. For instance, Peter, hero of "The Old Gods Laugh", says:

"I went into the Korean War unwillingly, unconvinced that there was anything to be served by killing. Or even that there were any principles to life at all. I came out of that war a little changed ... I had discovered a principle or two ... that a man ought to have a house. With a garden around it. And a fence around that garden. And a gate to that fence. ... On that gate should be a sign saying 'No Trespassing.' ... The state is made for man, not vice versa. That man comes first. That is, co-operation on weighty matters must always be respectfully asked, not required. Or, as old Abe put it: Of, for and by."

"The things I got into this disagreement over ... that little house. That little woman in that house. That little vine and fig tree. And that gate that you, the Prime Minister of the Soviet Socialist Republics, the President of the United States, or Fidel Castro, can't come into unless I invite you. Which I would, of course. Give you a drink. Talk about baseball, bull fighting, fly fishing. Let the little woman trot out a home-baked cake. Make you very welcome, friend. As long as you are - a friend. Which adds up to enjoying my company and leaving me the hell alone."

"Those," Martin said, "are very rare principles, comrade !"

"Aren't they ?" Peter said. "Men have been dying for ten thousand years, trying to make them stick."

Yes. And they are still dying in an effort to 'make them stick.' In ten thousand years, one would think that they might have done better than that. One might also point out that, if this is the brand of masculine logic for which, to re-quote Morgan Brittany, women have "a fine, instinctive contempt" - then perhaps we women have a lot more sense, and higher principles, than Mr. Yerby gives us credit for ...

But I think he would be quite indignant to have any such meaning read into his best-selling books.

One last point which again I find significant: Mr. Yerby has made his home in Spain. And I believe that I am correct in saying that nowhere in the western world (possibly in the whole world - I am neither well-travelled enough, nor well-read enough to be sure of this) are men so strict with and jealous of their women as the Spaniards are of theirs ...

From the "Sun", September 18th, 1968:

"A 20-year-old girl bit a policeman on the leg during a demonstration in Parliament Street, London, on July 7, Bow Street court heard yesterday. The girl, Miss Miki Costello of Elephant & Castle, was fined £5 on a charge of assaulting a police officer and given a conditional discharge for 12 months on a charge of possessing an offensive weapon."

Her teeth ??

THE COLUMN WHERE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN BUT SELDOM IF EVER DOES

OH DIDN'T HE RAMBLE

by ARCHIE MERCER

TRUTH AND SEQUENCES This column goes to stencil feeling somewhat out of sorts. Temporarily maladjusted, even. For, due to the activities (or, rather, the conspicuous lack of same) of Heinz Arenz, it looks very much as if it will see publication before its immediate predecessor in OZ 8. Fred it all, I can't as a consequence even talk about the D===== D== B== ! Still, there are no doubt fresh topics for consideration. Such as, er, yes:

JUMP IN THE DUSTBIN, AND DANCE... was the title of a record that the Goons never, apparently, made after all. In Bardsley, near Oldham, Lancs, however, it seems that the procedure is first to empty the bin, then to dance on its erstwhile contents. At any rate according to the "Sun" newspaper for Saturday August 3rd 1968. Anyway, a 36-year-old housewife (the inclusion of her exact though utterly irrelevant age adds vividness to the story somehow) is reported to have complained to the council that when a mechanical road-sweeper arrived to empty a public litter-bin outside her house, the driver first emptied the bin into the road, then danced up and down on the rubbish for 20 minutes finally driving his machine over the debris and away, leaving broken glass in the road. At her complaint the council sent the machine back, and our somewhat distraite heroine was treated to yet another terpsichorean exhibition before the road was pronounced clean.

Statements were taken both from a council spokesman and from the dancer himself. The former tended to disbelieve the matter, mainly on the grounds that the machine would pick up the material perfectly well without such prior treatment. The dancer, however, is reported as saying: "I have my own little dance routine worked out when I am on the sweeper. I enjoy stamping around on the rubbish - I take no notice of what anyone says." And goes on to say, contradicting the council spokesman, that the machine won't pick up rubbish that has not been so treated.

All that's wanted now is for Equity to strike because he's in the wrong union...

NEVER MIND THE COLOUR, FEEL THE TASTE... One of many features of contemporary life that continually cause me concern is the extent to which food is adulterated. If it isn't extra vitamins it's preservatives, or if it isn't preservatives it's non-fattening sweeteners, or if it isn't

what I just said it's colouring matter. The procedure in the latter case is: take some food of an accepted colour; cook the colour out of it; add some nominally tasteless dye to put the colour back again (or an approximation of the colour, anyway); then put it in the shops. I think there ought to be a better way, though offhand I'm not entirely sure what it is in any given case.

Here's a ripe one, though. The "Sun" again, Saturday July 13th 1968, reports a row in the strawberry industry. English strawberry-growers objected when a local yoghurt factory imported strawberries from Germany at the height of the English season. The factory manager replied that his customers wanted strawberries that, in the yoghurt, both looked and tasted like strawberries. The local product either had white centres - whereas the customers expected redness throughout - or tasted wrong. His suggestion was that English strawberry-growers should seek to perfect a variety that could be used. The National Farmers' Union, representing the growers, replied that it would be more to the

point to use the local white-centred product "with a safe colouring matter".

So much for the image of the Noble Farmer labouring to give us good natural food.

Ironically enough, the same edition of the "Sun" carried on another page the incidental information that "recently" (whatever that may have been) the Japanese "sent a consignment of strawberry jam back to Britain because it contained more colour additive than they thought fit".

My sympathies in this instance are entirely on the side of the Japanese. I am also somewhat ashamed that we, with all our much-vaunted social legislation, should have allowed them to outstrip us in this particular matter.

NELSON WOULD TURN if he were to notice a headline in (again) the "Sun" for
IN HIS GRAVE June 27th 1968. At least, when I saw the words "U.S. BID
FOR SENIOR SERVICE" staring me in the face I did for one
dizzying moment visualise a serious suggestion on the part of some element of
the United States government that they should take over the British Navy lock,
stock and floating dock. I looked again and saw it was ... something strictly
commercial, an American tobacco firm announcing its interest in the possibility
of its absorbing a British one, the latter being best-known for its brand of
cigarettes called "Senior Service". Ah well. The navy's safe once more, I
guess.

A UNIVERSAL A couple of months ago, on a Saturday that was not a BaD S.F.
CRY OF Group meeting-night, there was a knock at the electric bell.
'CORKSCREWS!' We opened it, and there stood Tony Underwood with an unfamiliar
face at his back. (He had his own in its usual place, I hasten
to add.) The face belonged to a certain young man named Bob Sloper. Bob had
noticed in some old magazine a small-ad for the Group giving the Walshes' tele-
phone number. Now the Walshes were at that precise moment trying to balance
Tony Underwood (who had called in while passing through Bristol) on one hand,
so to speak, and a gaggle of their own relatives on the other, and it wasn't
working out very well. So Tony (still Underwood) did the obvious thing, viz.,
drove over to the Sloper residence, collected Bob and brought him over here.

So the three of us did our best to induct Bob into our ways. Bob worked,
it transpired, in George's bookshop at the top of Park Street, Bristol's biggest
booksellers - a find indeed. The main trouble was that he only seemed to want
to talk about books. Anyway, we told him to come back the following week,
when it would be an official club night.

Came the night, and Bob duly materialised. So did Peter Roberts. How-
ever, it being at the height of the holiday season, that was the lot. We sat
and talked books with Bob, played "Alice's Restaurant Massacree" which Peter had
brought over (Bob was not impressed), and so on. Bob has not been seen or
heard of since. However, the book-talk reminded me of an unsatisfied quest
that I had long harboured. Had he, I asked, ever heard of a book by Lewis
Carroll called either "Bruno and Sylvie" or "Sylvie and Bruno" ?

He hadn't. Peter had, however. There was an omnibus volume of Lewis
Carroll in the central library, he told me, and it was in there.

There was indeed. And so it proved to be.

"The Works of Lewis Carroll", edited by Roger Lancelyn Green, is about as
"complete" a selection of Carroll's works as can reasonably be expected. It
was published by Paul Hamlyn Ltd. ("Spring Books") in 1965, and runs to over
1,100 pages. Included are both Alice books (with the Tenniel/illoes) plus a
few variant texts, both parts of "Sylvie and Bruno", a collection of (mainly
nonsensical) short stories, "The Hunting of the Snark" and various other non-
sense verses, "Phantasmagoria" and various other humorous ditto, some serious

poems, a lot of assorted mathematical and literary puzzles, the rules of several original games, a diary of a tour the author took to Russia and back, a number of learnedly humorous (and often hilariously brilliant) university-based squibs and satires he wrote for the edification of his fellow-dons, and some serious essays. All this plus an eight-page introduction by the editor. And between the various lines, I was delighted to find myself getting glimpses of the man himself, his whys and wherefores, his likes and dislikes, what, in short (as Beryl would say) made him tick.

And he comes through as a nice man. I like him. If I was his contemporary, and if I was honoured by knowing him, I'd be proud of it.

For one thing, there's his attitude to religion. The son of a Church of England rector (about whom it would be interesting to know more), he was himself deeply religious, and was ordained deacon. He took no higher ordination because, says Green, "he felt himself unsuited for parochial work". Probably, my guess is, because of his stammer. However, he took the line that the essential feature of Christianity was "love", and that the more anti-love aspects of the Bible should be played down as much as possible. And it was the "love" angle that he tried to impart to his numerous child-friends. Also, and perhaps more uniquely, he recognised that this love was not exclusively a prerogative of Christians, that an atheist (for instance) could be an equally worthy and desirable person. He was, in fact, a broad humanitarian.

For a man with such a fascinating mind, Green rather oddly says that "his pupils found him dull". Partly, no doubt, because of the above-mentioned stammer. But I also suspect that to a great extent it was he who found them dull. Because, particularly in those days when a university education depended more on parental means than on individual ability, a lot of them probably were very dull indeed.

I'll throw in a few favourite quotations here. A comment on somebody's answer to one of his mathematical puzzles which was published in a magazine: "...it is interesting to know that the question 'answers itself', and I am sure it does the question great credit: still I fear I cannot enter it on the list of winners, as this competition is only open to human beings."

Part of a verse from the nonsense-story "The Legend of Scotland":

"Lorenzo dwelt at Heighington,
(Hys cote was made of Dimity,)
Least-ways yf not exactly there,
Yet yn yts close proximity."

And the quotation with which I opened this bit of Rambling, which comes from the nonsense-story "The Walking Stick of Destiny". I quote it more fully:

"...At length a voice said 'now!' and at the word the right-hand cat fell with a heavy thump to the earth. Then an Awful Form was seen, dimly looming through the darkness: it prepared to speak, but a universal cry of 'corkscrews!' resounded through the cave, three voices cried 'yes!' at the same moment, and it was light. Dazzling light, so that the Magician shuddering closed his eyes, and said, 'It is a dream, oh that I could wake!' He looked up, and cave, Form, cats, everything were gone: nothing remained before him but the magic scroll and pen, a stick of red sealing wax, and a lighted wax taper.

"'August potatoe!' he muttered, 'I obey your potent voice.'....."

BUILDING IN The building-site I was mainly concerned with in my recent job
THE ROUND included a rotunda. The various charge-hands could never decide for sure whether to spell it "retunda" or "retunder". And one labourer said to me one day, in all seriousness: "I can't understand why they don't have a square rotunda."

READER'S
COUNTER-CRAMP

Although Beryl's and my tastes in reading are far from identical, they do possess considerable common ground. I don't propose going into what I alone have been reading just now, but I would like to take up one or two points I see sticking out from Beryl's book-column in this issue. I'll remark at once that I have never read anything by either Angela Thirkell or Frank Yerby. Possibly I might enjoy Thirkell - though not, I think, to the extent that Beryl does - only there are so many of the perishing things, and I have this "thing" about chronological sequence, and so I simply haven't the heart to give them a whirl. As for Yerby, I have never possessed a yen to read him, and if anything, I now have even less of one.

Now for the overlap, then. The Mabinogion, yes. I have a vague project in mind (that certainly won't be started for a while, if at all) to catalogue all the characters mentioned therein in order to help chart cross-references. On a second reading within a couple of months, I spotted several occasions when apparently the same character crops up under variant names. Anyway, that's very much for the future if, as I say, ever.

I read "The Western Mystery Tradition" - which is a treatise on history, myth, etc., with occult overtones rather than "straight" occult - and can only echo Beryl's comments.

They ought to hold a protest-march in the version of Middle-earth in which "Elidor" is partly set, carrying placards reading UNFAIR TO UNICORNS. Because it is.

Treharne's "The Glastonbury Legends" was apparently written mainly for the consumption of the devout. After proving with copious scholarship that there is not a shred of evidence that either of its two alleged visitants was ever anywhere near the place, he chucks a crumb to his disappointed public by agreeing that Glastonbury is nevertheless a thoroughly fit and proper place to which pilgrimages should be made because despite all the lack of proof there just might be something in it after all. More or less.

One of the many infelicities about "The Dawn of Magic" is its title. Not that I can suggest a better one - first it requires re-writing into some kind of coherence, when a title would probably suggest itself. The part about World War II being waged largely on the "psychic level" was particularly interesting - and illuminating. Only I read the evidence somewhat differently to the way Beryl has done. Certainly, people can gather together secretly in fancy dress and posture and incant till they're blue in the face and probably elsewhere as well - but that in itself won't alter anything that they don't happen to come physically into contact with. But it would appear that the Nazi rulers did two specific things, or types of thing: (a) they diverted thought and effort from material matters into what they saw as the supernatural; and even more relevantly (b) they organised their material assets according to nonsensical instructions from this same pseudo-supernatural. It wasn't the supernatural itself that helped to defeat them, that is - it was simply belief in it.

And finally, John James's "Votan". Although the author claims that he wrote it purely for fun (and his enjoyment, I may say, shows clearly) the thesis on which it was based made me stop and think - and think hard. It therefore ranks as distinctly intriguing. On reflection, I consider it more likely that the Teutonic pantheon did not come rapidly into existence at such a late date as the story would have it, but arose more gradually over the preceding millennium or three. On the other hand, it is only too likely that at least some of the accepted elements of the mythology did take shape so recently, and much in the manner that Mr. James suggests.

Incidentally, I did notice one basic ingredient of the mythology that the author has (presumably deliberately) overlooked, namely the distinction between the Aser (Aesir) and the Vaner. If I notice one such, doubtless there are others that I don't. Anyway, like Beryl, I too look forward to more from this author.

THE POOL OF TIERS The recently-introduced two-tier system for inland post in this country has come in for some hard knocks from just about all conceivable directions. There are signs now that people are beginning to lose their hostility. Which to my mind is a Good Thing, because I've been basically in favour all along.

For the benefit of overseas readers of OZ, I'd better explain that the system involves the abolition of "printed rate" as such, together with one or two other archaic "special rates", and the substitution of a second-class rate with no attendant restrictions about what can or cannot be sent thereby. That is, anything that can be sent first-class can be sent second-class, up to 1½ lbs. in weight. Second-class postage is cheaper, but first-class gets priority treatment.

So far as the printed rate was concerned, the arbitrariness of it always used to infuriate me. It was as absurd as it would have been to decree, for instance, that letters written in red ink should incur more (or less) postage than those written in blue ink. In practice, the regulations concerning admissibility of matter for the printed rate were seldom adhered to - but there was always the possibility that postal clerks might decide to see that the rules were enforced, as some of them used to. Now at a stroke all the top-heaviness of the old system has been heaved into history.

So three tiers - uh - cheers.

Where the Post Office did go wrong was in the way they put the change over. For one thing, they combined it with an all-round increase (at any rate for lower weights). Whilst this is obviously convenient for themselves, they should nevertheless have applied the two elements at least six months apart, in order that the public could judge the two-tier system on its own merits. Also, there was some very ham-handed publicity associated with the change, which appeared to be trying to claim that the public was lucky to be allowed to pay extra for such a magnificent postal service.

This brings up another point. The service these days is not as magnificent as it should be. In recent months, several letters or small packets consigned to this address have failed to arrive. Other people we know of have had the same trouble, and still more is reported frequently in the press. This of course is sheer inefficiency, nothing whatever to do with the change to two-tier post. Two-tier post is usually blamed none the less.

Oh - I'm getting my points out of sequence now, a penalty that has to be paid for my habit of composing straight on to stencil. As a carry-over from the paragraph immediately above this, I would point out that the cases quoted in the press are usually of letters delivered months or years late, letters delivered to altogether the wrong address, or letters found in supposedly empty (or otherwise inappropriate) mail bags. And as a carry-over from the next paragraph again going up, the initial efforts of the Post Office (now, I believe, superseded) deliberately to delay second-class matter although there was no need to, deserve a big raspberry. The "justification", I gather, was that so far as possible it was wrong for second-class mail posted on a given day to be delivered anywhere until all known first-class mail posted the same day had been. Like ner and boo.

AM

P A T E (R) \ L A M A (I) S O N

=====

... by PETER MASON.

It always seems that no matter where a Con is held, the food is 'absolutely lousy' - or so Con reports would have us believe. I knew that food in hotels was often bad but I didn't realise it was so consistently bad. If it is poor, then there must obviously be some reason for it, and if it isn't as bad as it is made out to be, then there must be a reason for complaining about it to such a degree. This, perhaps, is the only subject I am qualified to write on, as I am in catering, but I think that the most obvious reason for the name of catering to be blackened has very little to do with actual food or hotels.

The easiest way to explain it is in the context in which I originally read it, which was in a book on psychology. One section of the book dealt with racial hatred. There had been a lot of research into it, and it turned up some interesting facts, e.g. : contact with racial hatred propagates more racial hatred than does contact with the actual race being hated. In one case it went to such an extreme that a small group of Americans were hating a non-existent race called the Pyreneans - though of course these might have been the Basques.

In the case of fans, it seems to me that, having read so much in Con reports about bad food and bad hotels, they go off to a Con expecting to find these poor conditions - and of course they do.

This, however, does not involve the problem of mechanical failures and managerial shortcomings, but these are the easiest of all to explain. Any mechanical failure is not likely to be repaired because the maintenance staff are taking their holiday and can't be reached. And the management? Well, people are the most difficult entities to deal with, and if you have to deal with them face to face, it's ten times worse. By the end of the day nerves and tempers are rather frayed, but this must not be allowed to show, so it often results in an "I don't care" attitude, especially among the lowly trainee assistant managers who seem to catch it from all sides.

By now, I expect you people who have attended many Cons, and are subjected to hotels far too often, are counting off on your fingers the number of mediocre hotels you have stayed in, compared with the good ones. So I'd best start dishing out a few reasons why this is so - but first I'd like to explain something about hotels from a staff angle.

Catering is not the easiest profession to get along in; for that matter it's a very difficult one at times. One hotelier, speaking at a catering college prize-giving, said of the (managerial) students that they would not have come into catering if they had wanted a job with a forty-hour week and regular holidays. Instead, many of them will work seventy hours a week, or even longer, and at the end of it they would have the satisfaction of a job well done. Of course, in my opinion this hotelier was suffering from delusions of some sort. The most I ever feel after work is relief, or just plain tiredness. As for the satisfaction, there is often little or nothing of it left at the end of the day to compensate for one's other feelings.

Another instance to show how backward the industry is came from a friend of mine. One of the ex-cat two graduates I know had got a job in a hotel as a trainee manager, and during all the public holidays he was expected to work. Except, last Christmas they decided he probably wouldn't be needed, which was fair enough. But there was a black side to it: they wanted him on call right through Christmas just in case he was needed, so he hung around the hotel for three days. These days counted as time off, and he wasn't paid a pittance for them. This was the first time I'd heard about this sort of thing, but since then I have found out that this is standard practice.

I myself might have been caught like this if it were not for the fact that I have a decent boss and a rather cushy job; but one thing is certain - I am not getting caught like that in the future.

You might by now think that catering is a mug's game, or that I'm exaggerating a bit. I assure you I am not exaggerating at all. The point is that staff often put up with this kind of treatment because they know that after their apprenticeship (I am referring to trainee managers), which is often short compared with those of other trades, they can just up and leave. This, I know, is the same with all jobs, but in catering it is such an accepted thing that, during an interview, if you are asked why you left your last job, the reply "I felt like a change" does not conjure up pictures of a person who is unable to settle in any job for very long. Seasonal work means that most staff have to change their work at least once a year.

So, when you finally find yourself free to move, you can move almost when and where you want to - as long as there is a job to go to, that is. Most of these people are young, of course, and for themselves they create rounds of parties during the season. If anything it is this sort of thing which holds staff to the catering industry, but even these people eventually drop away as they grow older.

I seem to have wandered a bit from my original train of thought, but I think that the last few paragraphs illustrate the fact that there are skilled and unskilled personnel working together in the same places, doing the same jobs. The only difference is that the skilled people stay in catering with their eyes on positions higher than the ones they already occupy. As for the unskilled, who may be just as good at their jobs as the skilled staff, all they are in catering for is the parties, and the sun and beaches in the summer.

Of course, this creates uncertainty about being able to get staff when you want it, but worst of all, it creates bad service. (I'd better point out that one can never get enough professional staff, so one has to make do with the rest.) This is not the whole story, but the rest is rather obvious if you think about it. Like so much else it's wound up in financial red tape. Rises in costs have forced cuts all round. But if staff is cut, then output will go down. So cut the staff anyway and get a tim*... Catering itself has been

* Peter's ms. is hand-written; I think this is the word he's put, but I don't pretend to know what it means! My fault - I guess I should have read it more carefully when I first received it, and asked P. to elucidate! Too Late now, though.

forced into the grip of a revolution which originally started in the home, and this is one of the caterer's greatest complaints. His equipment is often no more than scaled-up domestic equipment, and it is costing him money.

It is inevitable that in the midst of catering's rebirth we should come back to money. Producers of kitchen equipment in the last few years have been looking closely at the needs of catering, and have come up with a few odds and ends such as micro-wave cookers. They will go on looking at it and producing new equipment, and the food suppliers will go on finding better ways of preserving food.

In the next twenty years, who knows what will happen? Restaurant food from vending machines, perhaps, and so-called catering managers reduced to sweeping floors and refilling the machines. A lot of people would disagree with me, especially those in catering, who are such a conservative lot anyway.

However, on the other hand perhaps I'm too radical. But at least to my mind, unlike so many of them, I can see how catering is changing, and see the effects of those changes.

The whole of this article could probably have been put into one paragraph, like this: The reason for bad hotels and restaurants is that their methods, equipment and food all belong to a different age. Change and modernise they must, but modernisation does not always mean an increase in quality.

But if I had put it into one paragraph, I would not have been able to illustrate the point that catering is only just breaking out of its infancy, and changing from an art to an industry.

++ PM

DEPT. OF HEARD-AT-WORK:

"I'm going for an interview for a better-paid job. I need the money - my wife's threatening to give up her paper-round!"

Definition of a straight actress : one whose vital statistics are 34 - 34 - 34.

"Stop picking your face!" "I'm not - I'm putting spots on it!"

THE ONCE AND FUTURE CAMEL

Camelot;
Camel cold;
Camel in the pot
Nine days old.

AM

(with apologies to Mushling, who does not approve of such treatment)

THE

NAKED ARTICHOKE

ELOPES

by

DON STUDEBAKER

1 Box Modess (a brand of sanitary napkin)
1 Bottle dishwashing liquid
1 bottle Crisco oil (for cooking and salads)
1 bottle Ajax Cleanser (for scrubbing things)
1 bottle instant coffee
1 cake of soap
1 box of Bufferin (a brand of buffered aspirin)
and a copy of

A Bride's Guide to Hand Care.

Ameeriica, Ameeriica, Gawd shed His grace on Thee...

Who, might I ask, originally, took the hemiolas out of God Save the Queen?

--did I ever want to do a thing like that? Well, it was New Year's Eve, and it...

~~xxx~~

Day, bright and sunny, car well oiled and petroled, and we went away, way out to a little town whose name I've forgotten. A little town where marriage licences are sold: which licence one ought to get if one is going to go through the civil contract part of the thing.

Which, in California, is advisable.

The Laws are stacked in favor of it.

➤ Marriage as capital contract, as money-bondage.

You see, if you are merely copulating, and you are both over twenty-one, it's perfectly all right; even if you aren't married.

But! If you decide to live together, even if you aren't copulating, it's illegal. It's 'Lewd and Illicit Cohabitation'.

Ramifications.

If you want to live with your elderly maiden sister you are subject to prosecution, however unlikely prosecution may be. The same with your mother.

Yes, that's right, there's a law to accuse you of...

Implications.

You are not supposed to love people. Not in this country. Not today. You are not supposed to develop loyalty or deep friendship. Men and women are supposed to do that thing, and that's all.

If it goes any further, you need a licence.

You see, it's not sex that's being taxed these days. Sex is basic, you can't stop it.

It's emotion that's being taxed. You can't develop strong feelings without paying a penalty. Let all them folks out there do it, but don't let them feel anything for each other !

Further implications.

Further data.

ONE OUT OF EVERY FOUR MARRIAGES MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF (free !) AMERICA ENDS IN DIVORCE.

(Excrement)

I suppose it must make a lot of money for the lawyers. After all, they have a lot to do with the kind of laws that are made. They are the keepers of the Gormenghastly book of precedents by which we (free, in the land of the free, in the free land which has more laws telling us what we can not do than any nation in the history of the world) must freely live or face free prosecution. It is they who (smoking dope in their little houses in Suburbia, campaigning fiercely against the out-of-date, out-of-fashion Pot laws) work with this unwieldy big body of CRIME and make their living from it.

Which is not to criticize or say that they are not good men and idealists. It is only to say that they have missed the point completely, and made a profit. From all the broken marriages that were never marriages at all. From all the divorces made in heaven out of compassion for the suffering participants; which at least is better than binding people permanently, with no hope of freedom if it doesn't work.

There has been some progress made in treating symptoms.

The problem is in thinking that marriage is something that everybody ought to do. --And in connecting it with sex.

(Taken in Historical Perspective, of course, it is apparent that Marriage did once have a very real reason for being connected with sexual and social functions. There is even, I will admit, some vestigial necessity for maintaining the connections.)

--But it's spiritual, to begin with !

Independent of sex, or even gender, and it has to do not with men and women, but with people and love.

Look around you and consider:

Everything you have ever learned about Man-Woman love, about Falling In Love; the whole schtick, in fact: is the product of the perversion of the ideals first developed in the Middle Ages by people like Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Friends, Erich Fromm's 'Instant Personal Intimacy' can happen between men, between women, between men and women, young and old, black and white, even between humans and animals; if the two concerned haven't been conditioned from the first minute of their lives to keep it from happening. --In America, generally speaking, fathers shake hands with their three year old sons!

Friends. Stop. Consider.

It's been only forty years since a man got his erotic stimulation by contemplating how flat-chested his girl was. It's been less than a hundred since his jollies were gotten by thinking of her excess avoirdupois.

If you cut away all the conditioning, you will discover that erotic attraction is dependent on (a) psychological attitude, and (b) neural endings.

Try this.

Sit in the dark, naked.

(If you haven't got much will-power, have yourself blindfolded, and your hands tied so that you cannot determine anything for yourself.)

Have several of your friends draw straws to see which one gets to perform the experiment. Make sure they are of mixed sexes, otherwise you have a great evening but you don't learn anything.

Now, whoever gets the shortest straw gets to turn you on. No fair using any identifiable part of their body either. Strictly a test of their skill. --It's best if you have at least two short straws, by the by, so that some comparison can be made.

(The results are obvious. You will either be turned on by any touch, be it male, female, or whatever, or, you will not be turned on by anybody. The latter is likely if you are well-conditioned by all the popular myths.)

A piece of velvet, the soft, warm muzzle of a pony, the languor of a cat, the smell of willow trees budding in the heat of a springtime swamp, a perfume made just right for the wearer, the Ravel String Quartet, the incredible taste of a ripe (do you dare to eat a) peach or a ripe (lush in the May Wine watering your mouth) strawberry.

Tiny neural endings in your skin, taking in data, letting you decide (and you must decide, interpret, otherwise it's just electricity) what the world is like, letting you decide about the nature of pleasure and pain.

Then what about Love ?

This--

Deeper, perhaps shorter, perhaps longer, not to do with touch at all, not to do with taste, with sight, with smell, through all these channels, but emotion, pure emotion, but not pure; not that way. --Because it blends, it teaches, it tells the nerves what to want, how to expect, what to react.

An instantaneous, shared intimacy.

(Falling in love, à la Erich Fromm.)

When someone else's happiness is essential to you.

(Love, à la Robert Anson Heinlein.)

A problem (joyeux) so big I plan to spend a life or two writing about it, putting it in test tubes, looking at it through a microscope (and also a telescope), packing it into tablets and dropping it down my gullet, letting it course through my veins in bigger and bigger doses.

Having to do more with interface relations than with intercourse. But yet--

Communication.

(Communication: Everything from a punch in the nose to a piece of Ass. --Theodore Sturgeon)

Communication: Everything that is important in Human (or other) life. Life.

Reverse Entropy (Courtesy James Blish).

Life: my business, my purpose in being, the filling of which with everything I spend all my time in.

Life
Communication
Love
Sex

Marriage, which is where we started, made of those things in varying proportions, a very important part of some of our ritual lives.

When hurt, we run to hide and recover. When alone, we repair to seek companionship. We cook and share our food and water. We lie in each other and entertain the neural endings, treating sundry subtle ills in a manner built-in to us. (What other medicine so pleasant to take? What other medicine so effective, when taken according to prescription, if full dosage? --But have we lost the prescription? Are you feeling well?) The shared intimacy, the emotion, the need to make someone else essentially happy, the full use of the bodies we live in, the...

Business-like, Social Contract?

Just what the hell has Love, has Communication, has Sex, has Companionship, has Convenience, even, for God's sake, bland convenience, got to do with

- 1 Box Modess (a brand of sanitary napkin)
- 1 Bottle dishwashing liquid
- 1 bottle Crisco oil (for cooking and salads)
- 1 bottle Ajax Cleanser (for scrubbing things)
- 1 bottle instant coffee
- 1 cake of soap
- 1 box of Bufferin (a brand of buffered aspirin)
- and a copy of
- A Bride's Guide to Hand Care.
- ?
- ?
- ?

America, America, where one out of every four marriages ends in divorce. The California, best to offer, symbol California, American Way of Death Cal-

ifornia, better much better than average California, where sex is permissible but love is discouraged by laws that make it difficult for two people to get together (other than sexually) to see if they can live together compatibly, to adjust to each other, to learn the difficulties of love-marriage-friendship; unless they purchase a licence.

Unless they go to a little town somewhere in Straightland, or a big town somewhere in Oakland, and spend (spendspendspendspend) money (moneymoneymoney-money) and make it commercial and Big Time and permanent-if-you-don't-want-economic-disaster.

We won the first skirmish.

We seem to have a bit of free sex.

But it would almost seem that we have lost the war to free love.

Day: Bright and sunny.

Car: Well oiled, and the tank full.

Destination: I think it's called Martinez. It's where you go to get a marriage licence. A licence to prevent you from being prosecuted for living under the same roof with your wife. A licence, somewhat like a Dog Licence.

(A marriage licence tells you that it's All Right to be in love and to love one another. A Dog Licence, I presume, tells you that it's all right to love your Dog, or possibly prevents you from being prosecuted for Lewd and Illicit Cohabitation with your Dog.)

Keep in mind, you can do that thing all you want.

Sunny, and bright, and a little frightening, which it shouldn't be.

You shouldn't be afraid to start something beautiful. You shouldn't have to bring a lot of economic reservations into that part of your heart reserved for love. Damn it all! You shouldn't have to PAY CASH for love!

Sunny and bright, and the hills green with grass, spotted brown with cattle grazing.

We took the long way, I think, because the country is very beautiful. The hills are something like Wales, but there is a noticeable lack of castellation. Farm houses, hills, fences, little towns, dust covered weeds and flowers by the side of the asphalt road, and an occasional tract of Suburbia to blot, with a clean, sterile, uniform beige or grey or white, an otherwise deep and lovely landscape. We talked very little, turned on the radio, held hands as I drove. I don't remember the music. Usually, I remember the music, but Diana...

Martinez: Small town itching to grow painted fashion new on everything. What passes for modern this year in evidence everywhere.

We parked the car, pumped money into the parking meter, and laughed a lot. We weren't considering all this boring philosophical stuff. We were just going to get a licence, a silly non-convenience. Something to make what we wanted legal.

We walked the halls of Justice (I think it was Justice. I think there were courts for the criminal in the same building. I think it was like that,

with Law infringing always the province that is said to belong to love. I think, but I remember most Diana...) and, true to traditional form, went first into the room where they do sell dog licences.

Couldn't they build a little cottage or something for the selling of marriage licences? It might help to maintain the air of romance which our culture considers so vital.

We took out all our papers and handed them across the counter to the pretty young girl who waited smiling at us. Blood tests to prove we had no venereal disease. Driver's licences, birth certificates; God only remembers what silly papers. Things to make one conscious that marriage is a DEADLY SERIOUS BUSINESS, not to be taken lightly, and certainly not (if the bureaucrats have anything to do with it) enjoyed.

"That will be ten dollars," the pretty young girl behind the counter said.

Diana took out her cheque book.

"To whom shall I make out the cheque?" Diana asked.

The girl flushed red.

"Oh, I'm sorry, but we can't accept a personal cheque. It's against the rules."

"But my brother was here just last week, and you accepted a cheque from him," I protested.

"Well," said the girl, squirming with embarrassment, "It's a new rule." Her color darkened. "In fact, it was just put into effect this morning. I'm awfully sorry, but I really can't accept the cheque. --But if your bank has a branch here in town I imagine they'll cash one for you. And if your bank hasn't got a branch here, there may be other places that will cash one."

"Oh."

Back out through the halls, without the licence.

"I suppose there are people in this great, noble and free country who would pass a bad cheque in order to get a marriage licence," I said.

Down the street, ask a policeman, down the street, and away from the big government building, and there was a branch of Diana's bank, and they cashed the cheque, first checking the cheque to see the cheque checked and was not for too much.

"This sort of thing always happens to me," I said, on the way back to the big government building with the dog licences. "I hope you won't mind a life like this."

"No," Diana said, and she squeezed my hand. "And it won't be dull."

So we laughed.

(Life continues like that. A squeeze of the hand puts many things right.

The morning we were married, in the flush green of day, on top of Mount Tamalpais, on the breast of the sleeping maiden.

First we called Doctor Strip, who was to do the civil part of the ceremony.

He was gone.

Where ?

To perform a wedding, his son said.

--But we were the wedding, and he was supposed to wait for us at his house. He didn't know where we lived ! And he certainly wouldn't be able to find the Grove by himself.

Panic.

(How appropriate !)

The phone rang, and it was all a mistake. He had gone to get gas for the car.

A touch of the hand, calm.

My son Hap arrived with his car, and we all piled in. Off to Doctor Strip's house, thence forward, the good Doctor following in his own car because he would have to return early.

To the slopes of Mount Tam, the wrong left turn, and we were suddenly lost in the Redwood forest. Around and around in circles, Doctor Strip's face in our rear view mirror registering first surprise, then rank disbelief as we passed one landmark the third time.

Finally, at the top, through the woods, through green glens and mossy piles of rocks, along a path, up a steep slope, and we were in the Grove. Which, for once, was empty of both tourists and the fewnets of cattle and deer.

The ceremony went well, with Doctor Strip intoning the civilities and Hap reciting the sacramental text and manipulating the symbols.

--It was, in fact, a beautiful ceremony.

Birds sang around the six of us, the day was cool, slightly crisp, and incense floated in the breeze. Candles flickered and the little brook behind us sang counterpoint.

After the ceremony there was a meal. Doctor Strip joined us, but did leave early. Later it turned cold, and Diana's warm hand was there, the two of us wrapped in my great green cloak, warm with each other...)

Back into the big government building, back down the Just wood paneled halls, past the dog licence department, into the little office where the pretty girl held our marriage (or so, no doubt, she thought) ransom for ten U.S. green dollars, which we gave her.

"Thank you very much," she said with a trite (but sincere) smile. "Good luck, and... Oh !"

She reached under the counter, drew out a pastel pink and blue plastic bag of squarish lumps, and handed it to us.

"Here ! A little something to help you get started right. Goodbye, and good luck !"

"Thank you," we said, and went out to the car, and then and there unwrapped our Bridal Pack, courtesy of the merchants and manufacturers of

1 Box Modess (a brand of sanitary napkin)
 1 Bottle dishwashing liquid
 1 bottle Crisco oil (for cooking and salads)
 1 bottle Ajax Cleanser (for scrubbing things)
 1 bottle instant coffee
 1 cake of soap
 1 box of Bufferin (a brand of buffered aspirin)
 and a copy of

A Bride's Guide to Hand Care

for which we are properly grateful and do extend our most heartfelt thanks.

And then we started laughing.

Laughed as we threaded our way through the streets of Martinez, laughed as we picked up two hitch-hikers, laughed as we delivered them to the pinball parlour where, they assured us, we could get a good hamburger.

Our laughing slowed down a little while we ordered a lime malted milk at the counter: but our demeanor burst again when we caught sight of a juke box festooned with carven knights and shields, the whole thing glowing with fantastic purple light, just like the last act of Parsifal. And from the juke box's gut, Jefferson Airplane was meticulously declaring the bolero of White Rabbitt.

XXXXX

There is a dust witch comes around and shows you old age, and the need to live fast and furious. She tells you to take, because you won't be here long, and after that is nothing. (Which is a lie, but which might as well be the truth for the now body you live in.) She says you gotta take what comes along, and never you mind others, never mind you may hurt somebody, just make you sure you don't get hurt yourself. She shows you that life is ugly, and ruthless, and must be played for all it's worth, now, while you've got the chance.

And, of course, she's right.

But she's only half right, and somewhere in you, you know that, or you're already dead.

Life is ugly and ruthless, and it must be played for all it's worth, now, while you have the chance, or it can't be played at all. That's why you're in the game.

But life is beautiful too. A pile of shit is there for you to fill with flower seeds, turn over, use, and make your life bloom. Life is ruthless. It will take away and change, and spoil for you, with flowers of an alien purpose, if you aren't careful, if you don't work and pay close attention. Life is ruthless. You can't let a single chance for beauty or happiness pass you by.

Think about that.

How many times have you taken the profit instead of the pleasure?

Think about that too.

Take, but make sure you give too. Remember that taking is the other half of giving. It will balance. If you don't balance your intake, you get constipated.

Play it for everything it's worth. Play hard and fast and pretend tomorrow is the end. But play it by That Kule, baby, the one with two sharp edges. See how much fun it is.

The dust witch comes around, wiggling her fingers, closing in on your heart, making you work harder and harder, enjoy it less and less.

Laugh her in the face. Hear the sound coming out of you, feel it break the old age old mask you wear (how old are you ? Twenty six, thirty five, merely sixty ?) and play, I mean play, twice as hard as she ever dared, but on the other team !

The most dangerous liars always tell the truth first, for corroboration.

~~XXXXX~~

---And somewhere past the lime malted, past the old home of John Muir, who loved the Trees, whose home is now a National Park (and that's something Good the government has done), where bees sing in the lazy warm afternoon, where there are incense cedars and a multitude of other curious trees, where figs and apples and oranges and loquats are heavy on trees and land being restored, where the Ranger loaned us the money to make the tour because we were young and in love, where there are other buildings, and roses, roses pink and white and red engulfing verandas, arbours, everything, flowers and dust and summers and winters and springs, Autumns that never touch tall palm trees, lobelia blooming by the path, time endlessly suspended...

~~XXXXX~~

Mr. & Mrs. Donald C. Studebaker are reasonably proud, not to mention overjoyed, to announce the birth of their son, Ian Michael.

~~XXXXX~~

.....

Don Studebaker,
Berkeley, California, U.S.A.
1968

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To fill up the odd page and so avoid waste, which Archie hates, I have resurrected a couple of locs on OZ-7 - which is the one that you have all seen! The first is from JULIA STONE, who is a long-standing friend of Mary Reed, and 'the other half' of what was once Banbury fandom. Julia now lives in Oxford.

Thanks for the copy of OZ-7 which you gave me at the Con. The front cover was a change from most of the zinos I've seen, and the back cover came out rather well.

"The Natter-Box" was less like an editorial and more like what its name implied, a natter. Reading it brought back memories of the weekend Mush, Churl and I spent with you before you moved.

"Oh Didn't He Ramble" - he sure did! - but all the same I'm inclined to agree with him about the roads in this country.

"Books" - I'm pleased that they wren't all SF books, it does make a refreshing change, I've only read two of the books you mentioned. "The Weirdstone of Brisingamen" - I read it once and hated it. The tale itself was O.K., but the way in which Alan Garner wrote it spoilt it for me. In one or two places it dragged on and on, and then when it started to get going again in the last few chapters, it came to an abrupt end. Perhaps if I read it again I may enjoy it more, but I did expect something better.

The other one was "All Fools' Day" by Edmund Cooper. I think he's great, and I'm sure you'll rave over his new one, "A Far Sunset" - don't know if it's in pb yet, but the cover on the book I read was fantastic. I suppose you have read "Transit"?

(+ (I sure have - that's the one that got me hooked on Cooper. "A Far Sunset" is now in pb, and is advertised in Ken Slater's latest catalogue. Must get it! I understand there's also another one out in hard covers, called "Five to Twelve" - read that one yet? Thanks a lot for writing.)+)

From ARTHUR CRUTIENDEN of Welwyn, to whom also thanks for his interest:

Re "The Letter of the Spirit" in Archie's column, I have an idea that at one time all Acts of Parliament and bye-laws (the former at least) had a preamble of the type A. proposes. In "Independent Member", Sir A.P. Herbert's autobiography of his life as the Junior Burgess (+ (not you, Brian!) +) for Oxford University, he tells how he tried to revive this practice. (I think you'd enjoy this book). Wonder just how many laws would be amended or scrapped if a commission reviewed 'em all?

A.'s third piece, "If I were a private member", is also covered in A.P.H.'s book. He gives details of various bills he introduced as a private member, including one in verse! I learned a lot about Parliamentary practice from it.

"No Escape" - enjoyed it but 'twas not of your best. Ha! who am I to criticise? Cover illo is good - seems we both like flying wings. My fave, though, is a Yank product - or should I say "was"? The one that appeared in "War of the Worlds" and dropped an A-bomb. That was a really beautiful aircraft. I'd like to get some info on it - any idea who made the film?

(+ (Sorry, $\frac{1}{2}$ r - no. Ask Vic Hallett, I expect he'll know. Thanks for writing,)+)

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NOVEMBER

=====

On the day of the crimson sunrise
When I was young,
Young enough to be
Breathlessly
Entranced by the fiery
Panorama before my eyes;
I watched the silent song
Of flame transmute into glowing gold.

+ + +

There were poppy wreaths in the city,
As red as the morning skies.

+ + +

On the day of the crimson sunrise
When I am old,
Old and tired,
Walking hopelessly under the fired
Firmament;
Will life and joy and sanity
Be gone, destroyed, all spent?
Will there be poppy wreaths in the city again,
Recalling the beginnings
Of madness and of pain?
Will the petals, rustling like dry dead wings,
Wander on the hot wind's breath,
As the grim tapestry
In the Eastern sky speaks not of beauty,
But of blood and death?

++ BM.