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# SPIROCHETS

## G. LEGMAN: A FOOTNOTE

Like many other fans, I first beheld G. Legman bursting over my mental horizons with his satirical "Epizootics," which William Atheling Jr calls a "crudely ferocious attack upon L. Ron Hubbard and Dianetics." This appeared in Legman's little magazine, Neurotica (issue #7, summer 1950), which was widely circulated in fandom at that time. Through the years I discovered that, though little known in America, Legman enjoyed in fandom an underground equivalent of his enormous reputation abroad. Such fans as Bill Blackbeard, Jean Cox, Walter Breen, and Roy Lavender corresponded with Legman occasionally and quoted him frequently. Gretchen had corresponded with Legman for many years. Last January she received a letter from him postmarked La Jolla, in which he revealed that he was now a writer in residence at the University of California in San Diego.

This information arrived shortly after we heard a rumor that Legman was performing in a St Louis night club, of all things and all places.

The letter also reported that Legman would be performing, not in a night club, but in two lecture halls in San Francisco and vicinity in February, and Gretchen and I made plans to attend. Legman's lecture was to open a University of California extension series on Censorship and Obscenity; his talk was to be titled "The New Freedom: Freedom for What? -- Problems of Obscenity in Modern Folklore and Life." He was to appear at 2000 Life Sciences building on the Berkeley campus 24 February, and at Richardson Lecture hall, 55 Laguna in San Francisco the next night.

We were unable to attend Legman's lecture in Berkeley, but we left a message for him at his hotel, the Beverly-Plaza in San Francisco, and next morning he phoned Gretchen. He offered to get her into the lecture free (he didn't think there would be a full house), and suggested having a short chat afterward.

Unfortunately we arrived too late at Richardson hall to meet Legman beforehand; nevertheless we went in free, since there was no one guarding the door. We walked in and stood for a while in back, where another person was lounging, listening and snorting audibly as Legman lectured from the podium down in front. "The guy doesn't know what he's talking about," the man muttered to us. "That bastard is nuts."

I squinted down at Legman. I had expected a middleaged beatnik type. Instead, Legman looked positively dapper in a wellmade suit that was quite continental in style. His necktie was conservative. Physically, Legman has white hair, carefully combed, a neatly trimmed grey mustache, and an alert and cheerful looking face. He was quite a dignified and impressive figure.

We found two seats in the back row and listened to Legman talk. He was already well into his lecture. He seemed to be singing old songs, original enough 15 years ago, but familiar refrains today.\* He spoke of the way the repression of simple, "normal" sexuality results in sadistic deviations; he mentioned the notorious productions of Irving Klaw and of Mickey Spillane, among others. He seemed to find such things offensive. "Love on a mountain-top may be pleasant and beautiful," he said, "but Candy is something else again." We're being sold, he insisted. He does not object to homosexuality between consenting adults, he said, but he objects to a situation wherein only sadism and homosexuality can be treated realistically in literature and art. You can say almost anything you want about sex on the printed page, he said, as long as you paint it as something degrading and disgusting. He pointed out that the "new freedom of expression" is neither very free or very liberal because one is not allowed to describe sexual acts as sources of pleasure and enjoyment. He advocated less censorship of the literary treatment of "normal" pleasurable sex.

As Legman continued to speak, I glanced around the hall to see if there was anybody I knew in the audience. Almost immediately I noticed a man only a few rows ahead of us who looked from the rear (disclaimer!) very much like Kenneth Anger, whom I had seen occasionally at the LASFS, and only a week or two before at a showing of four of his films (including "Fireworks" and "Scorpio Rising") in a University film series. During the question and answer period after Legman's talk, the man got up and stomped out. It was indeed Kenneth Anger.

After the lecture, Gretchen went up and greeted Legman. Since he wouldn't know me from Orville Prescott, I remained in back of the hall. Later I wandered out into the corridor. The man who had taped the lecture came out, lugging the tape recorder. He asked me if there was a drinking fountain nearby. I pointed one out to him, and he went down to it, and stood stooped over it a long while, gulping water. Just then Legman came rushing out. "Where's John?" he asked me. I pointed to the man at the drinking fountain, and Legman walked down the hall toward him. While they were conversing, everybody who had been clustered around Legman at the foot of the platform emerged from the lecture hall. Gretchen was talking with Faith Petric, a friend of hers from her stay in the Bay area in 1963, and a friend of Legman's first wife. Faith remembered me from my visit to her home last autumn during the Pacificon.

Legman returned to the group and suggested, "Let's all go out for a beer. Is there any bar around here?" Gretchen offered to drive everybody to a bar, but as it turned out, there was a bar, the Libra, just a block away. We walked there in a group. Legman looked askance at me, and Gretchen introduced us. Legman's palm was soft but his grip was firm. Close up, he was quite short in stature, but no less impressive.

There were six of us in the group: Gretchen, Faith, a man whom I did not know, Legman, a woman accompanying Legman, and me. We all sat in a booth and drank beer. Legman and the woman sat across the table from me. The woman looked like the well-dressed executive's companion. She was blond, downswept in front, upswept in back, dressed in a lowcut gown, with furs around her shoulders. I do not know whether she was Legman's new wife or not. She said nothing at all. Legman guzzled his

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\* Of course this is due in good measure to Legman himself.

beer rapidly. As he drained the last of it, she slid her own partly empty glass in front of him and set his empty one in front of her.

Legman was affable, but vague. He mentioned that Kenneth Anger had walked out earlier, apparently offended by Legman's remarks, then returned, only to walk out a second time during the question and answer period. He said the audience was "heavy" tonight, aside from a few responses like Anger's. I asked him about the Berkeley audience of the previous evening. "It was swinging," he said, perking up a little. "I suppose there were lots of beards in the audience there," I said. He shook his head. "I didn't see any," he admitted. This was puzzling. No beards in a Berkeley campus audience? Was his lecture attended only by the Responsible Element on campus? Was Mark Van Louchs there? Legman had said "fuck" in the course of his Frisco lecture -- this in a talk sponsored by the University. A few days later several UC students were arrested for saying the same word on campus.

There was more conversation, but not much. As he finished the last of the other glass of beer, Legman announced, "I'm afraid we'll have to break this up. It has been a long day." Gretchen and I offered to drive Legman and his girl to the edge of Chinatown, the corner of Bush and Grant, where he said he wanted to go. He readily agreed, and they climbed into the back seat. Legman made good use of the trip by smooching passionately with the girl, while arguing heatedly with Gretchen.

At Bush and Grant, he thanked us for the ride, shook hands, and, taking the girl's arm, disappeared into the night.

#### MAY THIS WITCH HOUSE BE SAFE FROM TIGERS

Someone had just shot a tiger, his jaw full of snarling teeth. To prevent someone from being hurt by the exposed teeth, a workman was busy pasting large paper labels across the gaping mouth. A packet of these labels was torn open by the wind, and one glued itself against a nearby tree. I walked over and looked at it. The label read: "Shot by Johnny Burbee."

This was a dream I had some months ago (23 November 1964).

#### THE DEATH OF SCIENCE FICTION REVISITED

Outside of Shangri-L'Affaires #70, the greatest disaster in publishing of late must be Analog for February 1965. There is a grimy little rewrite of "E for Effort" by Mark Reynolds called "Photojournalist," and a lead novelet, "The Mailman Cometh," by Rick Raphael. Raphael deserves an essay all by himself. Suffice it to say he seems to be the most incompetent chucklehead ever to be nominated for a Hugo ("Code Three"). After reading "The Mailman Cometh" with staring eyes and rising gorge, I turned to Jerry Todd and the Flying Flapdoodle (thank you, Paul Kalin) to cool my brain.

Then of course there is the April Galaxy. C. C. MacApp (who?) rewrites the old fairy tale of the people who are turned into exquisite little statuettes, which I first read in one of the Oz books. Larry Niven (who?) tells the story of the Sorcerer's Apprentice -- only this apprentice holds "doctorates in physics, mathematics and philosophy" -- who

turns on a machine, and is not able to turn it off. He also gets lost in space-time. But the story ("Wrong-Way Street") is nevertheless quite readable, and what more can you expect these days? Galaxy is going all-out for cute "alien" names this issue. Three of the five novelets are called, respectively, "Death and Birth of the Angakok," "A Wobble in Wockii Futures," and "War Against the Yukks." Echh.

DECLINE AND FALL OF FANDOM DEPARTMENT

"J. Edgar Hoover, in a three-hour interview with 18 newswomen, disclosed that as a result of the Warren commission report, the FBI is now sending the names of 'every kook and beatnik' is has on file to the Secret Service, whose job it is to guard the President. The names number in the thousands, he said." (Los Angeles Times, 19 November 1964)

A FESTIVAL OF W. ARTHUR BOGGS

Edith acquainted me with the work of a great namesake of mine last autumn when she gave me an armload of old "little magazines" she had acquired in the past few years. In a magazine called Stem, published in Tampa, Florida, I discovered Professor W. Arthur Boggs who is (or was) associate professor of English at Portland State college, no less.

W. Arthur Boggs has become a particular enthusiasm of mine, and when you've read a few of his poems you will understand why. I am proud of W. Arthur Boggs, although, so far as I know, he is no kin of mine.

Sophisticated Epithalamion

The bride in white, the groom in black,  
each hair in place (a noble grace)  
the wedding night a torture rack  
so nobly planned, now tied and damned.

The Final Miracle (1)

When the laws of nature bend and break  
(Atoms vaporize into the void,  
Molecules dissolve, all matter flake)  
God's attire will be destroyed.

Day of Judgement (2)

When purple fire burns gaseous cross the void  
Devouring galaxies in requiem,  
When atoms have collapsed to naught, destroyed  
By their own violence -- all time will end.

-- W. Arthur Boggs

This is all great stuff. Indeed, I haven't read anything of such high literary worth since I last read a singing passage by Henry Stine.

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"...and grab your socks."  
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