

TOM FOSTER

STARLING! STARLING! STARLING! STARLING! STARLING! = HICI =

STARLING

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NOTEBOOKINGS

This column last issue was about the Midwestcon; about what it has been like for me in some years past, and what it was like at the most recent one. Don Fitch's letter in this issue will give you some idea of what was said, if you missed it or don't remember; this issue I want to write a little about two other conventions: Ozarkon and the Toronto Fan Fair.

The Ozark Science Fiction Association started putting on Ozarkons in 1966, partly because a number of us had attended a Midwestcon in 65 and liked it, as I mentioned last issue. The first Ozarkon was small, with a pleasant and just recently married Ted White as guest of honor. I certainly enjoyed the convention, among other things I met Lesleigh there, the convention was her family's introduction to fandom. It was also at that convention that the St. Louis group formally announced our intention of bidding for the 1969 convention. Ted, then bidding for a worldcon was polite about our ambitions, but I think somewhat sceptical -- such an unexperienced group! -- but I guess everything turned out okay. The stated goal for that first Ozarkon, and those that were to follow, was to try to put on what was mostly a midwestcon-like, informal convention, but at the same time provide a little programing. It is a good formula, I think.

The tone of the Ozarkons changed very little in 67 and 68: Roger Zelazny and then Harlan Ellison were guests of honor, we showed some more movies, provided "a little programming" and a generally informal, socially-oriented convention. The hotels for the first three conventions were all down town, near cheap places to eat, and not the very best hotels in town, so there wasn't more than a minimum amount of trouble in accommodations. With each year there tended to be more out of town fans coming in, and more parties -- the first convention had been a little bit short in the party department. Ozarkon 4, in 1969 -- well, that was replaced or perhaps combined with the St. Louiscon, and that was a Whole Other Story.

This year's Ozarkon was held at the Sheraton Jefferson, a Class Hotel. GoH was Alexei Panshin, and attendance was small again, as was to be expected. In many ways the convention was a complete drag.

A number of reasons: the hotel didn't dig the long hairs, I was hassled in the lobby; "Hay! Are you a guest here!?" "Er. . .no, I'm a . . .delegate to a convention. . . ." "Yah? Well, okay. . ." But watch it, his eyes said. The other guests of the hotel didn't dig any of the fans, it was incredible! A Catholic ladies group, a bunch of Jehovah's Witnesses, a Navy Unit Reunion. Every time I got on an elevator, people would gasp and push their kids behind them so I couldn't hurt them, or something. The town seemed unusually dark and dirty and up tight -- I used to live in St. Louis, and thought I knew what the town was like -- but it seemed like the town had gotten nastier. And I guess I have changed too. People didn't used to gasp when I got on elevators. (In fact, they still don't in Columbia.) Aside from the banquet, there was no programing, that was a mistake; we could have used a few movies at least. There were less out of town people than there might have been.

A lot of people didn't like the convention at all. Nothing much could have been done for one small group -- local people, and not OSFA members, who were expecting Ozarkon to be another St. Louiscon, with lots of programming. But better organization would have helped a lot, and more pleasant surroundings would have helped even more. Now, I enjoyed the convention, it was a chance to visit with friends in St. Louis I hadn't really seen in a long time, and it was a chance to visit with those few fans from out of town. We had a fine all night roaming party, unpleasant only when we ventured into the St. Louis night for something to eat. And the convention didn't cost me anything, I even made some profit with my book and magazine huckstering.

Anyway, the fact that so many people had not enjoyed the con, and in consideration of how nasty we had found St. Louis, Columbia fans began thinking about putting on the next Ozarkon. Actually, it was Creath Thorne who suggested the idea, while sitting in my living room. Of course! Why not! we flashed. Columbia has lots of good convention facilities, because of the university we have lots of conventions here, even though Columbia is still basically a small pretty friendly country town. We had lots of ideas, you know: a dance with a local band, films, both professional and amateur -- one Columbia fan is an amateur film maker, and President of club of film makers, a daily newsletter from Weltanshauung Publications, a nice (empty in off-season) motel with a swimming pool. . .well, lots of talk, you know? We took the plans to the St. Louis club and presented our bid: "say, OSFA, how about letting Columbia put on the next Ozarkon. Only a hundred miles away, a nice highway. . ." Before we left for the Toronto Fan Fair, it looked like they would let us do it, when we got back they had decided no. I suppose we could have put on another convention -- but we decided not to. The world doesn't need another regional sf convention.

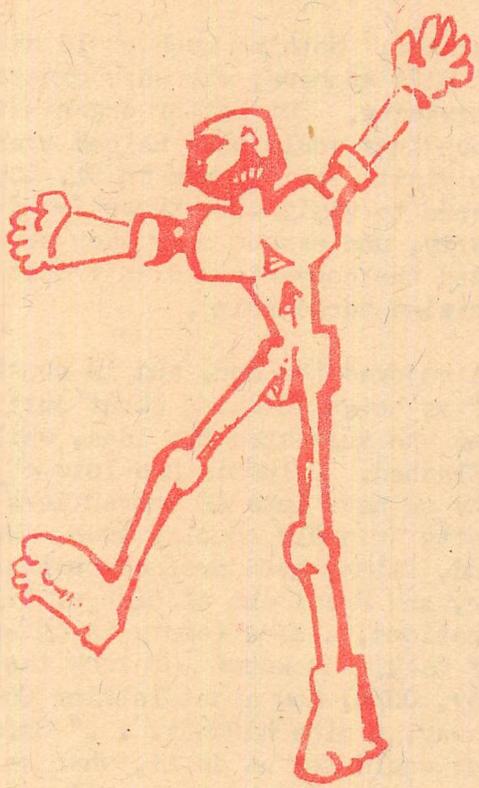
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The Toronto Fan Fair was the best convention of the last con season for me. I took my vacation from work (earlier cons were attended on weekends off and sick leave), and we drove off through the great Midwest and North and Northeast. Wonderful drive, we didn't hurry, took two days and slept over night in a fine park. Got to Toronto a day earlier, so we looked over the Canadian National Exposition, a giant amusement park. What can I say about the convention? I didn't attend any of the day time program, but rather sat in the huckster's room paying for the whole vacation and visiting with lots of people. The parties were somewhat scarce, but the company on the convention hobby was good, and the movie program was excellent -- some heavy Ed Emshwiller films, among other things. The convention seemed well organized from my viewpoint (behind the huckster's table, and roaming about at night), and Toronto seemed a really nice town, very clean and much less up-tight than -- say, St. Louis.

On the way back we stopped to visit Buck & Juanita Coulson. I prevailed upon our kind hostess while there to think about writing a column for Starling about some of the things she had written to me about in letters of comment.

The Coulson's had just moved when we arrived. May I say they are one of the best organized households I have ever seen, and a science fiction fan's dream. An office, with all the just read and ready for review books neatly by Buck's elbow, Juanita's current fiction project by her typewriter, the mimeograph off to one side. A huge library, all neatly arranged on shelves in a special room, closed off from the rest of the house so the cats couldn't get in. Most of their fanzines were still in boxes, but they tell me they plan to get them organized Real Soon Now -- and for once I believe it possible.

How long have I wished I could have my book and magazine collections properly organized? You've given me inspiration!



+ Juanita Coulson +

Dance to the Music

It was a kind of weird time, and in many ways not too great a time, to be young -- the late 40s and early 50s. The McCarthy Era. Not Clean Gene but Dirty Joe. Joe McCarthy was looking for Commies, and the horrible part was that at that time the silent majority was with him. There was no fair-sized chunk of the population that was young and liberal and with-it. For a long time it seemed as if there weren't any people who dared to disagree. Anything the Establishment didn't like or hadn't encountered before was suspicious, and probably subversive. And they had a great deal more power than they do now, simply because there were so few of us on the other side.

At that time I considered myself a Republican, just because all my family had always been down-the-line Republicans. (Someday I'll tell you how I started out as a parlor conservative and ended up becoming progressively more radical as I entered my dotage.) And I had never thought much about civil rights until I got to college. I'd gone to a completely integrated school before (only game in town, that's why it was integrated), and it took the subtleties and horrors of campus life in marvelous old Mucie, Indiana, to open my eyes. I joined a little and frequently futile group devoted to brotherhood. All we wanted for our off-color members was a fair break; it was, after all, a state college and supported with tax funds from all citizens whatever the hue.

We got investigated. It was really laughable because we were such a tiny and ineffective group. (All we could do was dress our most conservative and try to have ~~Christian-Thing-To-Do~~ talks with local restaurant owners and college officials. . . . who usually gave us the "well yes but we mustn't rock the boat" routine, and there was damned little we could do when they did. There weren't enough of us to strike and nobody had thought about more violent means of protest yet.) Somebody protested about our little campus organization. It was shameful that the college was harboring what was obviously a radical Commie group.

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I stood around with my mouth open a lot when I heard about this. Me? Me who even voted for Eisenhower? Me with a family that thought anything left of far far right was beyond the Pale? It was to laugh.

But we must be Commies (always with a capital, then) because we had whites and blacks and orientals all together there in the same room!

The college looked into matters discreetly, talked it over with our faculty sponsor, who was a bit of a cross between L. Sprague de Camp and a grizzly bear and nobody I'd want to argue with about anything, and the college answered whoever had brought up the charge. Well, yes, it was somewhat odd and peculiar that there was this group with these shocking morals -- like white girls and black boys in the same organization, outrageous! -- but that they couldn't find anything outright Communist about us, so maybe it was all right to let us go. It was just a passing fad, surely, and eventually we'd all come to our senses and be ashamed of our behavior.

We didn't though.

I even discovered what I'd been looking for in music all my life via that little interracial group. Because we associated with the campus blacks, the whites in the group were regarded as so outré that most of our peers politely ignored us. Which was okay, because except for a very few, they were largely freebies anyway. A juke box in the student union building became our property. It had the usual assortment of crooner crap that the bulk of the college population thought was "dreamy". But the supplier had also slipped in a few goodies, and whenever our gang met there for cokes and conversation, we fed in the quarters and got Ruth Brown and The Clovers and other groovy people. (Only then we called them "crazy" and "terrible".) Stan Kenton was borderline. Being white he was acceptable to the middle of the roaders, but most of our bunch also enjoyed his stuff. . . especially his experiments in just how many brains a man can blow out through a trumpet.

For years and years I had liked a certain type of music without knowing what to call it or what to ask for. I hadn't heard of something called "R&B" until I got in with these cats at college. I'd mention that I liked something or other and they would say yeah and nod. . . wow, they knew what I was talking about. I was getting awfully tired of blank stares before I discovered that group.

It was hard to get the records I wanted, then. Some of it was generally available, but mostly it didn't filter out to the sticks. You had to know somebody in Chi or NYC and have it mailed to you, at great risk. . . because some of it was still going on 78s and those were tres fragile.

One of the first records I latched onto was Ruth Brown's "Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean" on Atlantic. (Damn, I wish these things had dates on them. I've been staring at the label and trying to figure out if the numbers code to some particular month and year, but they don't seem to.) We all enjoyed it on the juke. . . as much for the nervous expressions on those clowns at the other end of the room, studiously avoiding looking our way and concentrating on their whist (for ghu's sake!) game. But I got tired of feeding the juke box and finally managed to get my own copy.

And then everything got all chewed up about the time Bill Haley made such a smash doing the background in Blackboard Jungle. All of a sudden R&B was sort of melding into a new form called Rock and Roll. The major difference seemed to be that a lot more white musicians got into the act. Jerry Lee Lewis came tearing across the stage right alongside Little Richard and Chuck Berry.

(Berry, of course, was one of the greater pleasures of that era. We watched him go from somebody virtually unknown and unappreciated by a large segment of the population to a guy very very much in demand. . . with his material still being recorded by all sort of people and now recognized for the listenable stuff it is. I just hope he was wise enough to save his pennies during the boom, because it took a while for the pendulum to swing back his way after that initial cha-woom.)

I collected a lot of early Haley records because I enjoyed the hokey now-it's-black-now-it's-white sound. I also picked up material here and there (not as much as I should have, I realize now) by Little Richard, the Moonglows, the Clovers, Kid King, Jerry Lee Lewis, La Vern Baker, Joe Morris. . .

They're still pretty playable. The Ruth Baker 78 hasn't much fidelity left, of course, and a lot of the Berry's I bought on 45 singles have since been gathered into albums and rereleased. I assure some listeners that the fidelity wasn't all that great on the originals. You didn't get typped. You've just been spoiled by stereos and hi-fis.

Just a month or so ago I saw Jerry Lee Lewis on Ed Sullivan's show, of all places. When he first hit our world, his hair was bleached and much longer and wilder than it is now. The piano technique. . .if that's the word I'm looking for. . .was the same. A little more lively in those days, but then Lewis was younger then. A lot younger. The strange part is that Lewis looks younger now than he did then. All of the vast plethora of "Rock and Roll Movies" made during the 50s were in black and white. . .or nearly all. Except for The Girl Can't Help It, which was a special case. So that when you saw these alleged movies, you saw Jerry Lee Lewis in compatible black and white. . .in which his hair didn't look yellow or platinum, it looked white and snowy. And he had the face to match. The face is the same, but now he's let his hair go back to some natural color like brown. The result is that he looks like he discovered a fountain of youth and frankly it makes me feel a little jealous. Maybe it was that 13-14 year old girly he married who kept him young past all reason.

In future columns, I'd like to get into things like those innumerable rock and roll movies and what personal appearance tour looked like to the audience in those days, about "going" and how it was possible to get high on music without any outside help.

I'd like to venture an opinion on the difference between rock and roll of those days and the rock of now. Intensity. And fun. I don't necessarily mean enjoying oneself. I mean laughing at oneself. It was obligatory in early rock and roll movies or personal appearances for the performers to go through certain bits that everybody recognized were exactly that and were done for one reason. . .so everybody could have a giggle. We enjoyed it, but it wasn't all that wild. When the sax player got stuck and really fond of a note

we could all stand up and shriek "Go"! But it rarely gave anyone the urge to ball right then and there. The intensity, or perhaps the anatomy affected, was different. Chuck Berry performed as a near clown. His scoots and capers and pyrotechnics were part of his music. I'm sure, now, some Panthers would put down such antics as Steppin Fetchitism. All I know was at the time I was very very hip to the black movement, and the blacks, then, didn't resent it. They reveled in the idea of this cat laying it on everybody and raking in the dough for doing so.

In rock and roll you felt like stomping your feet. In fock you feel like a spring is being wound up inside you. . .or at least you do if you're riding the music all by itself with no outside help.

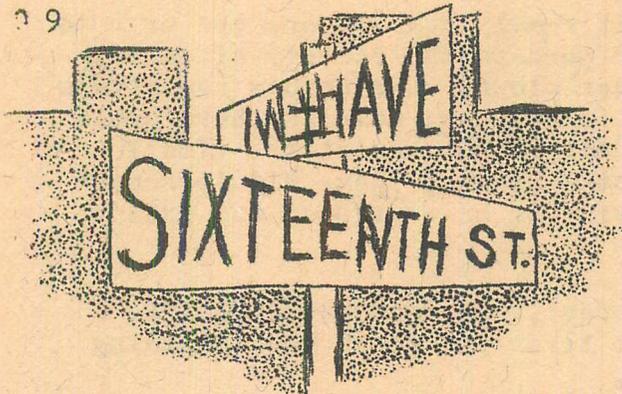
It was a great deal of fun, and it was subtly different, to be young and alive when rock and roll hit like a bomb, than it is, I suspect, to be young and alive now that heavy rock, acid rock, is the thing. It is more intense, less giggly, maybe not the same sort of enjoyment. Pleasure, yes, but with a left corkscrew turn.

Actually, I think my greatest pleasure has been to be alive, period, during both eras. It would be nice to be perpetually young, but since I can't, I like to keep my musical thinking young, at least.

I keep waiting and waiting for that urge to strike me to wrinkle my nose at something and say "They don't make music like they did in the old days." But it doesn't. When I play an old rock and roll record I imagine I have some of the same reactions to it that someone twenty years my junior would have: fun, a bit corgy, kind of isn't-it-interesting. I probably get only one additional, nostalgia. But nostalgia for what I was doing and the people I was with at the time I first heard the record, or when I heard it some special time. Gee that was nice.

But it's nice now, too. The music is marvelous, and considering my past attitudes, I assume for me the future lies ahead, and I can only like the music of tomorrow at least as much as I like the music of today, and of the 50's. When I quit liking new sounds as they issue, I shall arrange for my funeral, because I will be dead.





+ Earl Evers +

This is just a rap, not Fan History. If the whole story of the Sixteenth St. slanshack is ever told, Mike McInerney will have to tell it -- he founded the commune, and he's the only one who lived there continuously from its inception in 66 to its death in 69. But I was either living in the commune or visiting it almost every day for most of the three years, so it's partly my story too.

The fall of 1966, right after I got out of the Army, was one of those periods of my life I'll never forget. It was partly my head, and partly the commune, but the total effect was one of those "Golden Age of Fandom" things. Head Fandom was just forming -- old heads like me were finally starting to Talk About It, and fans by the dozen were starting to smoke pot and drop acid and finding a whole new world opening up.

In a way, it was a fannish version of what was happening in the Haight at exactly the same time, except that Head Fandom appears to be a viable "alternate life" thing and the Haight eventually declined and fell. (The reason for this is, no matter how we run down fans for being lazy and unambitious and unable to cope with mundane life, most of us are actually reasonably competent, reasonably stable people.) Oh, the ingroups change, and the fads and interests change, but the same people who started dropping acid in 66 and 67 are still around, still dropping acid, and are usually happier and more creative than they ever were. I don't know of a single Trufan who even claims he's been hurt by drugs, or had others accuse him of it; and an influx of junkies, speed-freaks, bikers, and outright criminal types into fandom just wasn't possible: we had enough structure as a group to prevent it. Fandom has been showing absolute No-goods the door for twenty years, and we can still remember how when the need arises.

But I digress. Back to Sixteenth Street. The place itself was two six-room apartments with a living room wall cut down between them to make one enormous U-shaped aptment. (For people interested in such things, the wall was cut down by no less a personage than Ted White Himself, though the rumor that he employed the Cult Axe for the job is, I think, an exaggeration.) Mike and Barbara Dodge lived in the East wing of the U; I lived in the other, generally along with one or more other fans. The double living room at the bottom of the U was, for a couple of years, one of the Focal Points of Head Fandom.

We held FISTFA meetings every other week, but most of the time you couldn't tell if it was meeting night or not, because there were always between two and twenty fans in that living room, rapping, smoking grass, playing records, reading fanzines or SF or comics from Mike's collection, or what-have-you. There was very little real paranoia, and no reason for any -- we were never busted or even visited by cops -- even though, by actual report, you could sometimes smell grass out on the street in front of the building. (The commune,

by the way, was on the fifth floor.) It's hard to describe, but the place gradually developed an aura that can only be described as "psychedelic". It gave you a contact high just to walk in and sit for an hour or so. That sounds like BS, I know, but too many people said they felt it for it to be called an exaggeration.

With between three and six heads living there all the time, we had just about every "psychedelic aid" you could think of -- a couple of home-made light machines, groovy objects to touch, all sorts of posters and paintings, a damn good folk and rock collection, and lots more. Most of it was Mike's doing -- he wasn't doing much writing or even talking at that period of his life, but applied real effort and creative talent to finding things to groove on and turning other people on to them.

For instance, soon after I moved there, Mike and Gary Deindorger got me into painting for the first time in years. Eventually I was doing huge Jackson Pollack things on 3X3 foot pieces of carpet material that lots of people really grooved on -- play a black light or color organ over them, and they'd vibrate just like the viewer was on acid. And it was almost entirely the atmosphere of the commune that got me to do it. During the same period, Gary did an enormous Tibetan Devil-God mask, five feet high, on my bedroom wall that moved people so much a non-fan friend of mine finally freaked out on it and painted over it. Not only painted flat paint over it, but put a bunch of crosses and anti-hex over it. (I thought the guy was out of his skull, but it shows what sort of power the painting had.) Barbara did a couple of paintings which were later printed up as posters and sold.

A secret apa for heads was born and died at that time, and TAPS became a focal point for Head Fandom as well. But most of the really groovy events were in-person stuff. Group trips, with tape-recordings catching some of the spirit in sound. Excursions to rock concerts, the Staten Island Ferry, Coney Island, and all sorts of places. The commune was also the gathering place for out of town Head Fans who happened to be in NY -- it seemed like there was always one or more around.

And as long as the commune lasted, more and more of our friends and frequent visitors started turning on and getting a lot out of it. There was a spirit of creativity and vitality about the place that I've never seen before or since -- something like the best communes in the Haight at its best, but somehow better because of the structure of organized fandom around it. The Haight, even at its best, had an awful lot of very young, very messed up kids around; we generally only had a couple at any one time. Most of us were in our middle twenties, or older, and most of us were what you'd call genuinely creative people, including a number of pro writers and artists. (I'm not even going to try to name the "group". It included just about everyone you can think of if you start naming people you think of as Head Fans, and a few people you aren't going to think of.)

Of course, we had our troubles too, lots of them. But the over all effect was of a place that literally turned people on just to be there. When Mike and Barbara and Dan Goodman and I moved to San Francisco, we tried to set up a similar commune in the Haight, but somehow the same sort of group of Head Fans just didn't get organized around us. The people were here, but they just didn't seem interested in forming a group. Paranoia in the Haight was part of it, I suppose. Also, that sort of thing was no longer really new, so the enthusiasm just wasn't there.

(continued on page 16)

WITH MALICE TOWARD ALL

For this column on H. G. Wells, you can blame J. J. Pierce, the readers of Starling, and Wells himself. Most recently, Pierce's misunderstanding of Wells made me decide to finish an article I'd started several years earlier, after readers objected to one of my columns that mentioned Wells in passing. Back then in Starling #10, at the beginning of a column devoted to books by Zamiatin, Huxley, and Orwell, I used Wells as an early twentieth-century example of pessimism concerning the future of men and society. I mentioned in passing that most critics picture Wells as a chubby little font of optimism, interesting only as a prolific intellectual journalist. Letters in Starling #11 disputed my interpretation of Wells, politely informing me that: 1) Wells's early novels are just good stories, without the deadly serious intent that filled his later fiction, and 2) anyway, Wells is much better thought of by critics than I supposed. And finally, besides these reasons for writing this article, there's Wells himself. Wells is there, wherever a science fiction fan turns; in the genre's historical development, its popular appeal, its literary respectability--Wells is inescapable as SEE ROCK CITY signs in Tennessee.

As a starting place, as we try to understand what he was trying to do and how he went about it, let's look at Wells's changing picture of himself. In a letter to Arnold Bennett, June 15, 1900, Wells objected:

why the Hell have you joined the conspiracy to restrict me to one particular type of story? I want to write novels and before God I will write novels. . . The Imagination moves in mysterious ways its wonders to perform. I can assure you that I am not doing anything long and weird and strong in the vein of The Time Machine and I never intend to. I would as soon take hat and stick and start out into the street to begin a passionate love. If it comes--well and good.

Earlier, in an article on the novels of George Gissing, Wells had said that

to see life clearly and whole, to see and represent it with absolute self-detachment, with absolute justice, above all with evenly balanced sympathy, is an ambition permitted only to a man full grown. It is the consequence of, it is the compensation for, the final strippings of disillusionment. "There am I among the others," the novelist must say, "so little capable, a thing of flimsy will, undisciplined desires and fitful powers, shaped by these accidents and driving with the others

to my appointed end." And until that serene upland of despair, that wide and peaceful viewpoint is reached, men must needs be partisans, and whatever their resolves may be, the idealizing touch, the partiality, the inevitable taint of justification, will mar their handiwork.

This kind of remark fits an image of the novelist as Artist, serene in his fashionable disillusionment, concerned only with enunciating what he feels.

It's somewhat startling, then, to find Wells saying, a few years later, "I am a journalist. . . . I refuse to play the "artist." If sometimes I am an artist it is a freak of the gods. I am a journalist all the time and what I write goes now-- and will presently die." During the break obviously, Wells has abandoned work that tries to be valuable in itself and thus gain a chance of surviving time; he wants writing that can be applied now, and is willing to give up any chance of literary immortality for an immediate effect. He has left the "serene upland of despair." He is writing with and by a purpose. In particular, Wells comments in the introduction to his collected Works written long after he had turned to "journalism":

A group of questions shapes itself steadily and progressively: "What is the drive in me?" "What has it got to do with the other drives?" "What has it got to do with the spectacle without?"

Again and again the author returns to this group of inquiries; he takes this or that aspect of the drive in this or that relationship and experiments with possible answers. Since the human mind is a very firm implement and abstract and philosophical phraseology still very unsatisfactory, it has perforce to use symbols and help itself out with concrete imaginations. These writings are sometimes stories, sometimes fables and fantasies; sometimes they are discussions posed in relation to an attitude rather deliberately assumed. The idea of producing a "finished work" was never strong at any time in the writer's mind. Some of the earlier books were very carefully written. . . . but most of these writings are sketches, some. . . quite broken-backed sketches, intended to carry an idea of a group of ideas over to an interested reader and lacking any pretension to "finish" or "execution" or any of the implicit claims of the set and deliberate and dignified work of art. . . . It is far truer to call them Journalism than Art.

Defining the "ideas" that have concerned him, in the same introduction Wells says that

Certain ideas appear very early and develop. There is, for example, a profound skepticism about man's knowledge of final reality. While the writer was still a science student he was seized by the idea that time is a dimension of space differing only in the relation of human consciousness towards it, and that Newtonian space and



sylogistic reasoning are simplifications imposed upon us by the limitations and imperfections of our minds. This line of thought leads to the recognition that such ideas as the idea of Right and the idea of God may also prove to be relative and provisional, that they are attempts to simplify and so bring into the compass of human reactions what is otherwise humanly inexpressible.

And another leading idea that grows throughout these writings is the idea of a synthetic Collective Mind, arising out of and using and passing on beyond our individual minds. What we call Science is, in the writer's way of thinking, the knowledge of this Mind; and it develops a will for collective effort and a collective purpose for mankind. A very large proportion of these writings plays about with this group of ideas. It is the basis of the writer's socialism and of his international interpretations. The theme of several of the novels is the reaction of the passionate ego-centered individual to the growing consciousness and the gathering imperatives of such a collective mind.

It is the writer's belief that human society is now undergoing changes more rapid and more profound than have ever happened to it before, and that a world community is steadily and swiftly replacing the practically separate national and racial communities of the past. Himself a child of change, born in a home that was broken up by failure in retail trade, and escaping only by very desperate exertions from a life of servitude and frustration, he has been made aware of, and he is still enormously aware of and eager to understand and express, the process of adaptation, destruction, and reconstruction of old moral and intellectual and political and economic formulæ that is going on all about us. Indeed all these volumes are about unrest and change. Even in his novels his characters . . . are either change-driven and unable to understand, or . . . they are attempting desperately to understand, and still more desperately attempting to thrust at and interfere with change.

Some tension exists between Wells's main ideas. Science is a main tool in change, and Science is based on belief in man's ability to comprehend and control his life through rules--which he discovers through experimentation and theory-making. Yet Wells is aware of man's intellectual weakness, his tendency to malform and misapply theories. Wells finds an out, however, in the very ideas of change, of man becoming part of something better than he presently is. This escape from futility leads him naturally to books like Men Like Gods or Star-Begotten, as he imagines man transcending his present limitations by working in imperfect science and by involving himself in the developing Collective Mind.

What does all this mean in Wells's fiction. A careful study of one work can tell us more than a rushed survey, so let's examine an early short story, "The Sea Raider." The story opens with the complacent tone of a popular-science article:

Until the extraordinary affair at Sidmouth, the peculiar species Haplo-teuthis ferox was known to science only generically, on the strength of a half-digested tentacle obtained near the Azores, and a decaying body beaked by birds and nibbled by fish, found early in 1896 by Mr. Jennings, near Land's End.

Note that the story's subject is described as "extraordinary" and "peculiar" --quite restrained excitement. In fact, David Y. Hughes, "H. G. Wells: Ironic Romancer," Extrapolation, VI (1965), 32-38, explains how in this story and others Wells used "virtual transcriptions" of contemporary popular scientific writings to begin his tales. But the beginnings may be deliberately misleading; the tone of interested detachment becomes less and less appropriate as the story proceeds. Certainly the story's central character, Mr. Fison, learns better. He encounters Hapteuthis Ferox first with a spirit of inquiry, as he walks across a rocky beach at low tide to examine a cluster of strange shapes near the water. He has no thought of danger; he is, after all, a proper stolid Englishman, and so "He approached his mark with all the assurance which the absolute security of this country against all forms of animal life gives its inhabitants." Even after he discovers that he has been approaching a group of cephalopods devouring a human body--even after he barely escapes alive--his intent is "to secure assistance and a boat, and to rescue the desecrated body from the clutches of these abominable creatures." Thus he attempts to carry out the activities proper to a responsible, science-oriented man: explore--understand--master. The men who accompany Mr. Fison back share that outlook, and when their boat arrives on the scene they are disappointed that the tide has come in and the monsters apparently gone. Then tentacles are thrown over the side of the boat. Suddenly the men realize that the brutes do not respect human dignity. Hill, one of Mr. Fison's companions, is dragged overboard, and the other men just manage to save themselves. Looking back at the scene, feeling "as if he had suddenly jumped out of an evil dream," Mr. Fison sees things in terms generally fitting the tone of the story's opening:

there were the sky, cloudless and blazing with the afternoon sun, the sea weltering under its pitiless brightness, the soft creamy foam of the breaking water, and the low, long, dark, ridges of rock. The righted boat floated, rising and falling gently on the swell about a dozen yards from shore. Hill and the monsters, all the stress and tumult of that fierce fight for life, had vanished as though they never had been.

Yet the softness of nature, formerly seen as merely an interesting subject for pleasant examination, is mixed with memory of the struggle--and the fact that nature is "pitiless." Realizing the futility of further effort, Mr. Fison is left "aimless and helpless." He stumbles back to shore and takes no further part in attempts to examine the creatures or to guard against them.

The last section of the story has the same tone as the first. The writer--the personality Wells has set up--evidently has learned nothing from Mr. Fison's experience. After speculating that the creatures may have come to shore originally because they developed a taste for human flesh, the writer is complacent enough to remark that "perhaps the most astonishing fact in this whole astonishing raid" is that "we have not the slightest knowledge of the subsequent movements of the shoal, although the whole south-west coast was now alert for it," and to conclude:

whether it is really the last of these horrible creatures it is, as yet, premature to say. But it is believed, and certainly it is to be hoped, that they have returned now, and returned for good, to the sunless depths of the middle seas, but of which they have so strangely and mysteriously arisen.

Thus the story ends with the same of polite interest that began it, as shown in the mild adverbs "strangely" and "mysteriously". Remembering, though, how Mr. Fison's complacency was shattered, and realizing that we are not only completely ignorant about the monsters but evidently helpless to protect ourselves against them, a reader is unlikely to be reassured. "Certainly it is to be hoped that they never return, but can it be believed? I think not.

Elsewhere, in earlier columns, I've discussed "The New Accelerator," The Time Machine, and The Island of Dr. Moreau; I won't repeat myself. But I'd say that in Wells's early writing--and I think that means the best of his novels and short stories--there is little sign of man being able to understand and master his universe, only repeated proof of his frightening failure, of his feeble wilfulness.

In later works, written while Wells was becoming convinced of the novel's moral significance, we can see an interesting mixture of hopefulness and despair. The War in the Air, for example, describes civilization going to pieces as the result of a war fought with fleets of dirigibles and airplanes. On the one hand, the story is calmly interpreted from the viewpoint of a future historian: "To men living in our present world state, orderly, scientific and secured, nothing seems so precarious, so giddily dangerous, as the fabric of the social order with which the men of the opening of the twentieth century were content." But in the events described, Wells emphasizes the misuse of scientifically-designed weapons. Here is his picture of New York being bombed by German dirigibles:

one of the most cold-blooded slaughters in the world's history, in which men who were neither excited nor, except for the remotest chance of a bullet, in any danger, poured death and destruction upon homes and crowds below. . . . As the airships sailed along they smashed up the city as a child will shatter its cities of brick and card.

Wells stresses, however, that really to blame were the ignorant masses who had not taken the trouble to gain a clear understanding of their world:

In the soul of all men is a liking for kind, a pride in one's own atmosphere, a tenderness for one's mother speech and one's familiar land. Before the coming of the Scientific Age this group of gentle and noble emotions had been a fine factor in the equipment of every worthy human being. . . . But with the wild rush of change in the pace, scope, materials, scale, and possibilities of human life that then occurred, the old boundaries, the old seclusions and separations were violently broken down. All the old settled mental habits and traditions of men found themselves not simply confronted by new conditions, but by constantly renewed and changing new conditions. They had no chance of adapting themselves. They were annihilated or perverted or inflamed beyond recognition.

Rather than an inherent flaw in man or an irreversible natural process, this problem can be corrected. It is a danger about which something can be done, and at the end Wells reminds his readers that they must do something before it is too late. One of his characters, reminiscing comments:

You can say what you like, he said: "It (the final war) didn't ought ever to 'ave begun."

He said it simply--somebody somewhere ought to have stopped something, but who or how or why were all beyond his ken.

Beyond that, Wells's books become more and more determinedly optimistic, less and less interesting to those of us who are unable to be quite so optimistic.

It's worth noting, though, that Wells himself returned to the gloom of his early attitudes at the end of his career, and it dominated his last published piece of writing, the essay Mind at the End of its Tether. Writing at the end of WW II, with the atomic bomb offering the possibility of still more hideous conflicts to come, Wells imagines a superhuman Force determined to wipe the world clean of Man:

Our doomed formicary is helpless as the implacable Antagonist kicks or tramples our world to pieces. Endure it or evade it, the end will be the same, but the evasion systems involve unhelpfulness at the least and in most cases blind obedience to egotistical leaders, fanatical persecutions, panics, hysterical violence and cruelty.

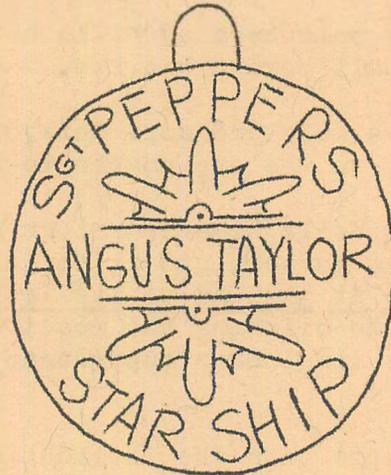
Other commentators on the change in Wells's attitudes and thus the content (and quality) of his works, include the following: Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romance (Manchester, 1961); Mark R. Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-utopians (New York, 1967); and Anthony West, "The Dark World of H. G. Wells," Harper's, 214 (May 1957), 68-73. And this list of recent critical articles seems to prove that I was wrong on one point; Wells is receiving quite a bit of admiring attention these days. The key word, though, is "recent." I'll stand by my statement that older critics sneered at Wells as a mere journalist. Personally, I felt for years that Wells deserved more recognition than he received, and I became increasingly aware that I'd been oversimplifying Wells--when I discovered Bergonzi's book and found that we agreed to an embarrassing extent on interpretations and evaluations. I discovered the other critics while doing research for my Ph. D. dissertation. So, yes; Wells is being revaluated, and consequently raised in estimation, as a natural result of better understanding of his work. The difficult thing--the difficulty about ending this article--is picturing Wells as a science fiction writer, since most of his best work carries an explicitly negative attitude toward science. Perhaps what's really needed is a new definition of science fiction.

Perhaps that's what I'll devote my next column to.

* * * * *

(Continued from page 10: Sixteenth Street)

I've heard that VALSFA used to be something like I've described, but it wasn't when I was there. I've also heard that the Portland Strangers were similar, though with considerably less dope around. Right now I don't know of a single fan group, or non-fan group for that matter that has the same atmosphere. And I'd very much like to find one, because it was really a groove. END



BIG BROTHER AND THE WHOLENESS QUESTION

"It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen," is the first sentence of George Orwell's 1984.

Some stories don't waste any time in telling you they are different. From the beginning they challenge the reader to discover the basis of their uniqueness, to understand a new reality that the author is describing. The success of the reader in this endeavor depends partly on his own faculties and partly on the completeness inherent in the author's own description of his new reality. A writing of any sort should be complete in itself: everything that the reader needs for assimilating the piece should, if it is within the author's power, be included initially. This is almost universally accomplished in mainstream fiction, which generally assumes the viewpoint, or "world system", inherent in the reader's culture. (Sandy Pearlman, in Crawdaddy 11, defines a world system as "a comprehensive way of doing things, of looking at and organizing them.") But since the science fiction author so often works through the mode of different cultural contexts, his problem is to make the reader familiar with these without destroying the flow of the story.

DANGEROUS VERSIONS

The most obvious, and least satisfactory, method of doing this is through conversations between the story's protagonists explaining the situation in which they find themselves. This method is illustrated at its worst on the covers of most comic books -- ("Say your prayers, Garbage Man, not even you can clean up our electro~~ic~~ process now!!" "GASP! When Campaign Manager unloads his latest batch of rubbish our national psyche will be as polluted as Lake Erie!!") -- and at a somewhat higher level in the main conversation between Montag and Captain Beatty in Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, to give an example. The second method is to work in background material gradually, in bits and pieces, as we are always being told Robert Heinlein does. Both these methods ideally provide the reader with all the clues necessary to a complete understanding of the story's context within the framework of that single story. There is a danger

here that by not making a radical enough break with the "real world", an author may sacrifice some of the essences of science fiction for sake of better communication with the reader.

THE TERMINAL BEACH BOYS

But there is a third method, one that assumes a cultural context other than the reader's own, but does not provide him with an understanding of that context within the framework of any single story. This is the world-system method of writers like J. G. Ballard and Cordwainer Smith. The existence of Ballard's own world-system is attested to by the similar settings of some of his stories (Vermillion Sands) and by the similar psychological and symbolic landscapes of his stories, but most particularly by the logical processes of the Ballard Universe. Ballard has constructed a self-contained universe with an interior logic not necessarily explainable in terms of our universe. This interior logic cannot be understood through any one story, but only through a process of gradual assimilation. Through his many short stories and through the four novels in which he successively destroys the world by air, water, fire, and earth. Ballard builds an overall framework within which the individual stories may be understood.

A WORLD-SYSTEM OF DIFFERENCE

Now, the sf field has its own larger world-system, which differs from that of mainstream writing. The sf world-system is general, scientific, society-oriented, while that of the mainstream is individual-oriented. The average sf reader grows up with the medium, becoming an addict at an early age. This makes it hard for the average mainstream author to write good sf because he is not familiar with the conventions and the world-system of sf. In this sense there is a parallel between sf and rock music.

THE SQUARES OF THE COUNTRY

Rock music, the distinctive art-form of the second half of the 20th century, is deeply embedded in its own cultural context. This is what Richard Meltzer means when he writes: "The unit of rock significance is the whole of rock 'n' roll," in CRAWDADDY #8. An older generation that has not grown up with the new music finds it practically impossible to comprehend the rock world-system, a fact that has been recognized by Marshall McLuhan (Note: War and Peace in the Global Village). Sf and rock are both environmental. Each has its own general world-system and therefore a fairly identifiable audience. But the rock audience is much larger, since the rock world-system is oriented to the whole post-war quasi-Western cultural environment, while the sf world-system is essentially that of the scientist. Only a small portion of the population is scientifically-oriented, while, on the other hand, about half the population of most Western countries is oriented to the post-war environment.

BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Sandy Pearlman contends that the essence of science fiction is the summoning of alternative world-systems. In which case, parallel-world stories might be considered the quintessence of the sf plot, though not necessarily of the sf form. In The Man in the High Castle Phillip Dick goes out of his way to indirectly note the sf quality of the book by reference to its alternate-world counterpart,

The Grasshopper Lies Heavy. The implication of The Grasshopper Lies Heavy is, of course, that one world's science fiction may be another world's science fact. (Which brings us to John W. Campbell and ANALOG. But we won't go into that, other than to note that Mr. Campbell seems to be the best evidence we have for the existence of alternate worlds, since he apparently lives in one.) Pearlman thinks that the Beatles have bypassed science fiction, since their world-system is not an alternative one. Except for the exploits of George Harrison, he reasons, the Beatles have been content to view our world critically without offering an alternative.

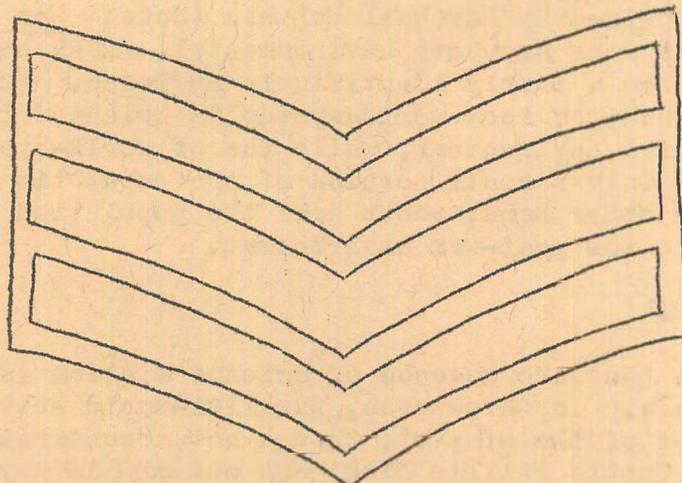
THE DOORS INTO AUTUMN

If it is doubtful that the Beatles have in fact summoned an alternative world-system, it is none the less undeniable that the Doors have accomplished that very feat. And, so, perhaps, it is not entirely coincidental that the Doors' songs are reminiscent of some of the darker fantasies of Ray Bradbury. For the Doors do indeed inhabit "that country where the hills are fog and the rivers are mist; where noons go quickly, dusks and twilight linger, and midnights stay...that country whose people are autumn people, thinking only autumn thoughts," to quote from The October Country.

THE TWAIN SHOULD MEET

The eclecticism of rock is probably its most outstanding feature. Rock synthesizes without being synthetic, unlike science fiction, which too often is synthetic without synthesizing. Is sf's parochialism inherent in its world-system or not? Rock has demonstrated the possibility of a world-system which is not isolated, but drawn from without. The "New Thing", however you care to define it, may be pointing this direction. Writers like Ballard and the late Cordwainer Smith may be leading the way to a kind of writing that is science fictional in form as well as in content. But it means that sf fans will have to become more receptive to influences from outside the field:

Let us swim to the moon
 Let us climb through the tide
 Surrender to the waiting worlds
 That lap against our side. (The Doors)



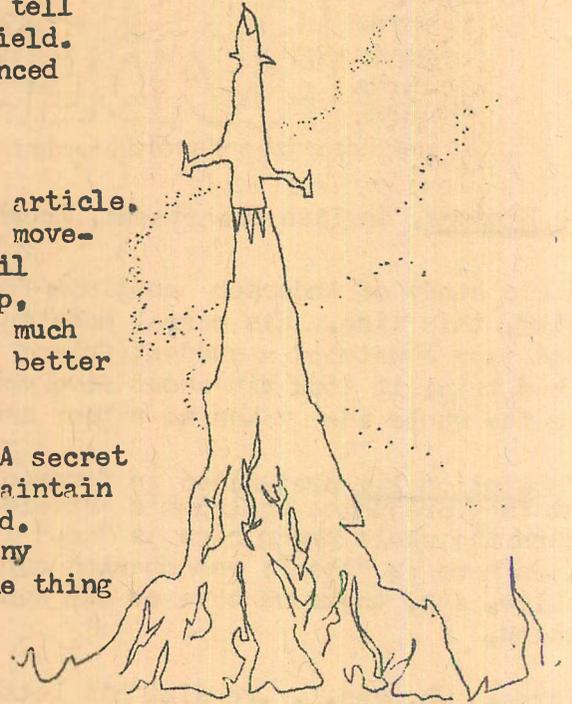
(reprinted from Kallikanzaros #6 with the kind permission of Angus Taylor, who will be continuing his column in Starling.)

What Pierce apparently doesn't recognize is that abuse and snobbary on one side does not justify the same in reciprocation. If he wants to convince people that Old Wave is better than New Wave, convince them. Don't tell them that you're going to squeeze them out of the field. "You have not convinced a man because you have silenced him."

+ Yes! --HL

Also want to make a short observation on Lesleigh's article. She mentions quite accurately that there is a large movement among radicals to junk the space program. Until recently I could have been numbered among that group, because it did not seem ethical to me to spend that much money on space when the money could be used so much better elsewhere. But I read a book that changed my mind.

The book was called The Report from Iron Mountain. A secret Presidential committee met to decide what to do to maintain our society if the military machine were deactivated. How could we spend out money? Leaving aside the many frightening, startling conclusions they came to, one thing stands out in particular relevance to the space program. We would have too much money, and no where to spend it. Our economy produced so much that we could eliminate poverty, disease, and so forth in a very few years. After that point there would be no place to spend it. The space program might present a partial outlet for our surplus productivity.



Space travel is important, and we should continue our programs, but not at the expense of domestic, mundane problems such as poverty, education, and racial equality. What we need is a reordering of our programs, not the destruction of them.

Rald Boggs, Post Office Box 1111, Berkeley, California 94701

Starling #15 strikes me as significant, amusing, distinctive and dead-wrong in spots. No doubt this letter will be about the latter quality, but probably the other qualities named ought to be emphasized equally.

Four people this time devoted their columns to reviewing books, and I can hardly choose among them. They were all interesting and informative. However, Creath Thorne's review of The Beatles: The Authorized Biography provides me with the best opportunity to cavil. First of all, I disagree with Creath when he asks for "criticism and writing about art" that reaches "a level. . . intense, highly charged, very emotional." Now that isn't what I want. The work of art itself exists, after all, and can be studied by the reader himself, in most instances. He needs, perhaps, some facts about the work of art -- what technique is used in its creation, for instance -- and the artist -- what school he belongs to, maybe -- but mere subjective responses on the part of the critic don't help much in his appreciation of the work. Creath's notion of what constitutes good art criticism is typical of French criticism, particularly of the graphic arts, and dismally reminds me of the writings of Malraux and others.

Creath's review is far more informative than emotional, thank heaven, and is full of fascinating facts and quotes. Not the least of these tidbits were the two quotes from "John" (I forget this Beatles last name), in which John compares the Beatles with

Beethoven. This is not only egotistical, but staggering in its stupidity. One can forgive the egotism, remembering that Beethoven himself was egotistical, but the stupidity is too much to bear. Creath quotes John as saying, "Everyone's the same inside. You need desire and the right circumstances, but it's nothing to do with talent, or with training or education. . . . Someone wants to bust open this whole talent myth, wise everyone up. Politicians have no talent. It's all a con." John confuses talent with training and education. Even if it's true that "everyone's the same inside," which I won't buy right off, people do differ in training and education, and while I would agree that politicians are "conning" people, they do it by using tricks of oratory and rhetoric, and knowledge of psychology that most people don't have. Maybe the Beatles and Beethoven were "the same inside," but Beethoven's music was incomparably more skilled, sophisticated, and complex, merely because he knew a lot more about music and the techniques of composition than all four Beatles will ever learn in their whole lives.

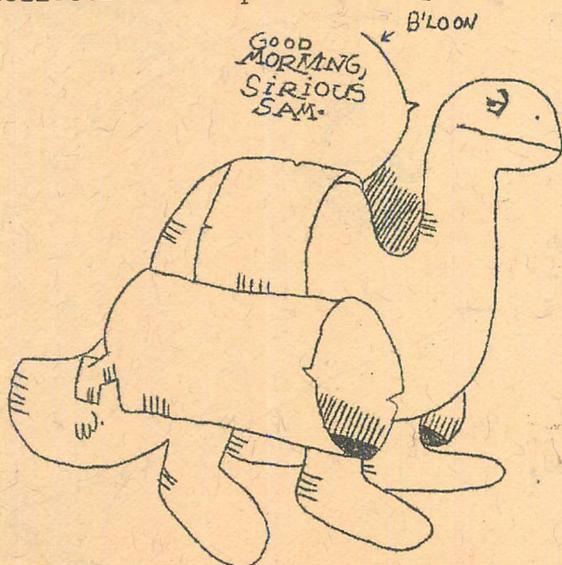
+The Beatles, especially John Lennon, made a lot of remarks like this when they first became popular. They seemed to be almost overwhelmed at the extent of their influence. They seemed to find it hard to reconcile their personalities with the picture painted by fans. Thus, they became a bit cynical about anyone who was considered great. It was the fans who first compared them to Beethoven. -LL

Even more astounding was John's contention, revealed in the other quote, that Beethoven, like the Beatles, wasn't at all concerned with "art," and was "just knocking out a bit of work." As anyone knows who studies the life of Beethoven for ten minutes, Beethoven was an idealist of the first water, and aiming at far more than making "people like it" with his music. The Beatles prattling about art is a little like the proprietors of Howard Johnson prattling about gourmet food.

This brings me to Greg Shaw, who, in the letter column, wonders why I couldn't have "said something nice about Sergeant Pepper, which even the most confirmed fuddy-duddies. . . always seem to find some worth in." By hastily departing every time somebody was going to play this album, I managed to avoid hearing it except for once when I was bound and gagged and sat on by a Beatle fanatic. The one time was sufficient, and I don't think I'll ever be the same. My mind, that dwells on happy and cheerful things rather than on horrors, has managed to dispel most of the recollections except for the general impression of the cries of rutting cats and of

more pointl ss racket than a freeway interchange. I do remember some inane ditty called "Rita, Rita, mee-ta ree-da" (or however), which struck me as a fairly standard novelty tune, on the order of, if not as amusing as, "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

Greg is wrong when he says that I have "obviously missed the essence of what rock is all about." It's all about millions of bucks pouring into the pockets of record companies, music publishers, concert impresarios -- usually not the musicians themselves. All too often, so I have heard, they end up like the unfortunates screwed by Chester Anderson (as Greg describes



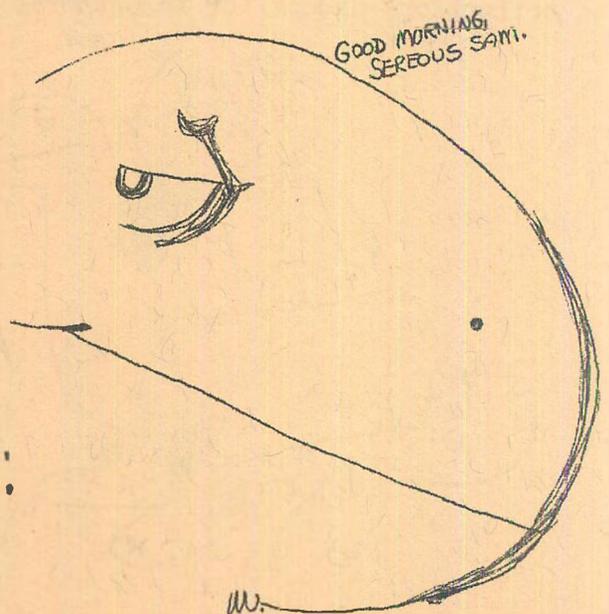
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elsewhere in Starling #15), not getting paid at all. Rock music is of course popular, commercial music, perfectly comparable to commercial music of the past. My students in English 1A and Subject A occasionally wrote me impassioned essays in support of rock, which they insisted was Different in being more realistic and anti-Establishment than music of the past. When asked for examples of this tendency, they squeezed out the opinion that rock music didn't talk about Romantic Love, but rather Free Love. Wow, to say the least. Free love doesn't strike me as anti-Establishment. The woman is now being propagandized to become a whore instead of a housewife -- dividing herself among many men instead of devoting herself to just one. So of course she has all the more opportunity to help increase the population, which is all to the benefit of Gerber's Baby Food and General Mills.

Anyway, "love in current popular music is still pretty romantic in that it is mystical. Greg himself quotes part of a "little song" from the Kundalini Yoga that says "all love surround you, and the pure light within you guide your way on." There's some nice realistic love for you. Whether Christian or Yoga, religion is the opiate for the people, and there's a nice pipe of yen-shee for you. The sudden fall of the revolutionary spirit into mysticism -- demonstrated in concrete fashion by Bob Dylan's plagiarism of the old Wobbly song, "Joe Hill" into "I Dreamt I Saw St. Augustine" -- is a dismal phenomenon of our age.

Earl Evers, 1327 Leavenworth St, #118, San Francisco, Calif. 94109

Thanks for sending me Starling. I'm getting back into genzine fandom these days after a two-year retreat into the small apas and in-person fanac, and for about the same reasons Greg Shaw gave -- a large segment of general fandom is finally coming under the influence of the Spiritual Revolution. (Or whatever you want to call it. I wish someone would come up with a name less ambiguous than "The Movement," a term which has always struck me as more appropriate to a bunch of Central American peasants sharpening their machetes for the neck of the local hacendero than to a group made up of millions of reasonably well educated but still average young people. There has never been a group like this in history -- couldn't be, because technology has only recently made such widespread education possible -- and I'd like to see someone come up with a name apt enough and handy enough to become a household word.) And I take this change in fandom as a very good sign indeed.

Fandom is always a couple of years ahead of the population at large in picking up new fads and trends, so I'm really glad to see so many young fans making constructive use of the new ideas and lifestyles. (There's nothing mysterious about fandom being unusually receptive to new ideas -- just being interested in imaginative literature indicates a certain liberality and flexibility of mind, and anyone able to publish or write for fanzines is verbally oriented, meaning he can be moved to belief or action by words. So new trends are taken up by a few fans, talked and written about in fanac, and if they're at all worthwhile they quickly spread through fandom's communications net of fanzines, correspondence, and in-person contact.) For the last couple of years, I've been a member of the small group ahead of the pack, now I'm finding everyone else catching up. I'm not the sort





who considers being one of the ²⁴ first people in a group to get into something new an indication of my superiority or anything like that -- I was simply in the right place at the right time to get exposed to some ideas, and being young and at loose ends, was not too committed to any lifestyle or set of beliefs to resist them. So by the time most people first heard of Tim Leary, I'd taken over a hundred acid trips, and by the time they'd heard of the Diggers, I'd lived in a commune for close to five years. I never entirely left fandom, mostly because most all my best friends were fans or former fans, but we sort of retreated into our own sub-fandom, called "head fandom" sometimes, with periodic ventures out to Convert the Heathen. Now the rest of you seem to be catching up, and I'm glad yo see it, partly because I can now have a larger group of friends, but mostly because the changes in fandom are

probably indicative of changes for the better in society as a whole. And Ghod knows those changes are needed. . .

If I didn't have fandom as a probable indicator of the future of the culture at large, I'd be a lot more depressed and pessimistic than I am. The drug movement is a two-edged sword and a very sharp one. It's done a lot of good and it's done a lot of harm, but my experiences in fandom show that the good seems to happen to one distinct group of people and the harm to another. One type of person smokes grass and drops acid and becomes more aware, more creative, and less susceptible to brainwashing and mental inflexibility. Most fans fall into this category, or else are the sort who experiment briefly with psychedelics and get scared off -- they aren't helped, but they aren't hurt either. A few go deeply into acid and the powerful psychedelics and spend a lot of time re-arranging their mental conditioning and restructuring their personalities, and often appear pretty out of touch with the mundane world while they're doing it, but they also eventually end up living "a normal productive life" again -- I've seen a number of this type of person end up doing very well in creative fields, especially pro SF writing. I can't think of a single example of the second type of person in fandom, though doubtless there are some -- the person that goes into drugs to "escape reality" and ends up doing just that. Most of these end up living in the street or in really raunchy communes doing nothing but smoking grass and dropping acid if they're lucky or getting strung out on hard drugs if they're not. These are the people the anti-drug propagandists make so much of, though they seem to be a small minority of drug users, and I think they're mostly people with serious mental or emotional problems to start with -- people who would become alcoholics or some sort of criminal or eventually just quietly go crazy even without drugs. Also some borderline cases that might have lived a "normal" life indefinitely if powerful drugs hadn't kicked them over the edge. (This is a serious problem to consider when you

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talk about legalizing drugs and the eventual place of drugs in society, but as far as I'm concerned, this society is in such rough shape that we need all the acid heads we can get, we need the flexibility of mind that taking a good many acid trips gives anyone with the self-control and moral courage to trip safely and deliberately work on his head. My experiences in fandom and the Hippy Movement have shown me that drugs are definitely a powerful force for good as well as evil, and that we need the good too desparately to discard it because of the evil.

Or take the peace movement -- I've seen it grow from the property of a few "professional" pacifists, a few extreme leftists who preached peace only because it was the Party Line, and a few acid heads liberated enough to see that war just is Not Good to a nationwide movement. Again, fandom, if it's really an indicator of the general trend, (and before someone starts arguing that it isn't, I'd better say I can't prove that it is, it just looks that way to me), we really are going to have peace within a couple more years. Right now, even fans I'd have considered downright reactionary three years ago are writing anti-war letters to their congressmen, and lots of "silent majority" type fans are even out there demonstrating against the war. The same goes for life-styles, and morality, and quite a few other things -- fans seem to be adjusting to living a worthwhile life in this mechanized world, so I think there's real hope everybody can.

Greg Shaw, 64 Taylor Dr., Fairfax, CA. 94930

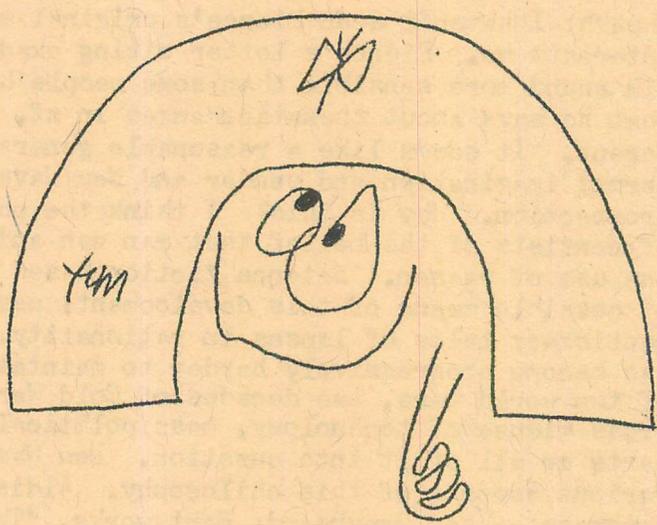
It's kind of funny reading my "Polymorphous Pree-vert"; it's so long since I wrote it that it all seems ^{new} to me. I'm glad I wrote a lot of this stuff down when I did, because I've forgotten all sorts of details by now. Also, I wonder what people must think of me while reading this. At the time I wrote it, my attitude was "gee, I actually did all this crazy stuff, Imagine that!", but now it's more like "Good grief, how could I have ever been involved in such madness?" I think of this especially as I read Harry Warner's letter, because he's quite right in implying that I was irresponsible to sit by and allow such plans to be made. It's true, I was irresponsible. But then, by way of some slight defense for my former self, I'm sure I never for a moment seriously thought there was any chance of the Westercon Acid Test actually occurring. I may have given a different impression to make the story a bit more suspenseful, but in truth it was never more than a wild fantasy. But I suppose there may be an alternate universe somewhere where it actually did happen. . .

Don Fitch, 3908 Frijole, Covina, Calif. 91722

I've never attended a Midwestcon, am reasonably straight-looking, and am hardly a member of the Younger Generation (the medical company with which I served in Korea is holding a 20th anniversary reunion next month), but I know what you mean. I'm of a (lower) middle-class background, with a Strange sense of values (I forewent buying any new clothes for a year, in order to pay for a copy of the 1636 edition of Gerard's Herbal) and am something of a Slob, dressing much more for comfort than for appearance. I've attended some Westercons and Worldcons at rather expensive hotels, and have felt. . .somewhat uncomfortable. I would like to be Above Such Things, but I do not feel at ease in the presence of those Beautiful People who spend so much time & money on their outward appearance, and who exude the impression that everyone else ought to do the same. It wouldn't be too uncomfortable, except that I usually find myself, at cons & other fan situations, associating mostly with what must



seem to the straights to be very Freakish Individuals. At cons in California, this is usually moderate enough to be a mere vague unpleasness, which can be shoved into the background, but it is there. That's one reason I liked the Francisco-Torres Westercon this year -- a College Dorm hotel is not uncomfortable luxurious and inapropriate, and. . .there were none but fans in the hotel. The objections I heard to wierd costumes &etc. were based on aesthetic grounds, with far-outness not entering into it at all. (And the only complaint about the night skinny-dipping came from one of the hotel guards who creebed "It was scheduled to start at ten, and here it is 10:30 and it hasn't begun yet.")



There is some Generation Gap in fandom -- more now than there used to be, if my 8-year experience/memory is a just guide. As a member of the Older Generation, I tend to try to assign Responsibility (if not Blame), but this doesn't seem to be clear cut. The Stuffy and Bewildered oldsters and the Rejecting-the-Establishment-&-Maturity youngsters are a small minority which can be neglected/ignored. I find a lot of older fans distinctly Limited, Predictable and Dull, after a while -- but the same goes for a lot of the "hippy-type" younger ones. People with an 80%-of-their-lives interest in rock music, the drug scene, and recent movies have little in common with those who have only a (largely abstract) 20% interest in these topics, and vice-versa. Lines of demarcation are by no means always clear-cut, and relations between the two divisions are usually amicable (neither Age nor Yough has a patent on fugghead-edness), but conversation and activity groups do form largely along chronological lines.

Probably little can or should be done about this, but the fan/mundane antagonism at conventions is something else again. If Creath goes through with his idea of holding a con on his upper 20-acre alfalfa pasture, I hope to make it, and the same goes for the backpack into the sierras Regional being talked about by some NorthWest fans. On a more practical level, I hope fans who are organizing such things make a point of selecting slightly down-at-the-heels hotels/motels/restaurants for cons &etc in the future -- then we're less likely to be bothered by the snobs (or them by us) and the Management will not be worried about alienating the trade which spends more and tips better.

One more thing which bugs me to the extent of making such events Downers, sometimes -- a number of the younger and (perhaps trying-to-be) freakier younger fans make a point of playing the Game of Putting on the Straights. Too often this is uncool, in that it provokes uncomfortable retaliation, and at best it seems --dreadfully petty.

John Boston, 2109 Blakemore, Apt. 4, Nashville, Tennessee 37212

Thought I haven't seen Pierce's original manifesto, the Second Foundation controversy interests me. Pierce's letter citing examples of what Pierce means by good sf makes him sound more sensible than some people have made him out to be. I'll buy some of what he says about thematic changes in sf, though my attitudes about it are quite different. It seems like a reasonable generalization to talk about Old Wave (hate those terms) imagination and wonder and New Wave pessimism -- I would say pessimism and introspection. Why is this? I think the philosophical underpinning of most Old Wave sf consists of the belief that man can and should survive, prevail, and develop through the use of reason. Science fiction based on this premise usually involves exploration of possible means of this development; pessimistic Old Wave sf usually consists of cautionary tales of lapses in rationality, e.g. "The Midas Plague." This world-view has become progressively harder to maintain in the twentieth Century; the experience of two world wars, two decades of Cold War, an unremitting arms race and the general gross misuse of technology, mass political irrationality, etc., have tended to call parts or all of it into question. New Wave sf generally seems to deny or dismiss various aspects of this philosophy. Aldiss' stories envision no human development or progress -- see Greybeard, Earthworks, "The Impossible Star." Dick's novels, beginning with The Man in the High Castle, are a series of assaults on reason as a means to knowledge. Ballard doesn't attack reason, he ignores it, exploring completely non-rational relations between man and environment. Attempts to reconcile recent experience with the Old Wave viewpoint have led to some absurd results; Farnham's Freehold comes to mind, where Heinlein's Hero, that epitome of competence and rationality, winds up hiding in a cave, armed to the teeth -- and is still glorified by the author. Nowadays I find it much easier to "willingly suspend belief" for Dick and Aldiss than for Heinlein.

— ZING! —

Alex Eisenstein, 6424 North Mozart, Chicago, Ill. 60645

One of Sander's remarks on Wells brought me up short: "In The Time Machine, Wells shows us that the human race is at the mercy of evolutionary forces beyond its control." Well, in a sense, yes, but this is a very misleading statement, for in another sense it is quite erroneous. Man is not so much the victim of forces beyond his control as the causative agent of the forces acting upon him; the evolutionary forces are well within the grasp of Man before the millenia of decadence envisioned in the story, as evidenced by the Earthly Paradise existing above ground in the future world. The degenerative schism of the human species into Eloi and Morlocks is the result of a cruel, artificial isolation of the two social classes -- a very unnatural selection, one that could have been halted at any time by the ancestors of the Eloi but for their growing callousness and sloth. By the time the society has sunk to the level of existence discovered by the time traveller in A.D. 802,701, the formerly exploited class (now a separate race, or perhaps even a separate species) has become the exploiter, and a new unnatural form of "evolution" has been instituted -- selective breeding of the Eloi as livestock.

I realize that Joe's analysis was merely a brief comment embodied in the review of another book and could not, of necessity, be amplified in a paragraph such as the above, but it is nevertheless a specious assertion, especially coming from a person who appears to be a serious student of Wells's writing.

If Joe Sanders perhaps rashly oversimplifies Wells, then Jim Turner truly ushers forth a fatuous declaration of the relation of Wells to D. G. Compton, et al.: "H. G. Wells is the obvious forebear of Mr. Compton's method: the single, all important event which changes everything. . ." This method is hardly limited to Compton and a few other

English writers (Christopher and Wyndham); though Wells advocated this approach to the construction of fantasies, neither Wyndham, Christopher, nor Compton can really be called Wellsian writers to any greater degree than most other sf authors: Wells crystallized almost all of modern fantasy; it would be difficult to find a modern sf author not indebted to Wells, and most of them have, at one time or another, utilized Wells's ploy.

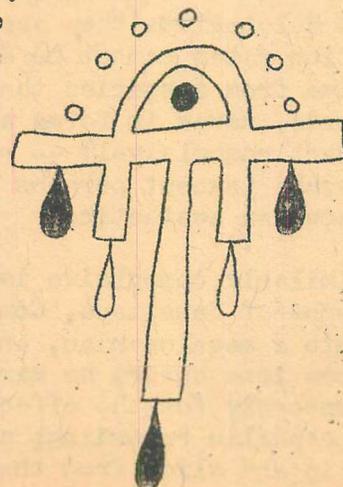
Basically, the Wells dictum is valid (and adhered to) only for fantasies set up in the present; for stories of the distant future, it obviously cannot be followed. Even Wells, in his first "scientific romance," The Time Machine, did not follow this principle once his setting changed to the future; to be sure, a particular social tendency is the prime agency of change, but this alone does not create the world of the Eloi -- the absence of animal life but for butterflies, the generally paradisaical topography, the White Sphinx. . . and there are the later world of the dying Earth that the traveler visits, with their resurgent dominance of arthropods and extreme physical degeneration of Man.

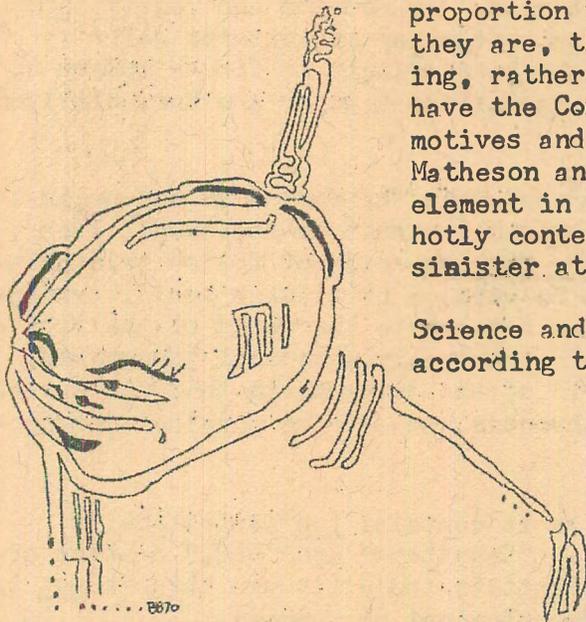
Synthajoy obviously violates the Wellsian rule, as it contains two "fantastical" elements rather than the prescribed singularity -- "Sensitape" and "UDW," neither of which are even hypothetical considerations of scientists today (though this is not to say they have no basis at all in the observed psychological phenomena).

Interestingly enough, Synthajoy evinces a couple of the major qualities against which John J. Pierce exhorts most vehemently. It concerns itself, on the personal level, with the petty jealousies, neuroses, and psychoses of the characters and, on the philosophical level, presents the work of science as intrinsically evil. The actual experiential effect of the device -- "Sensitape" -- is never described directly, and never explained clearly; it remains a Nameless Horror throughout the book. It does not reproduce sensation, but somehow the emotional auras associated with sensation (or intellection, or creation, or playing the cello. . .). So far as it is described, however elusively, it appears to be an instrument that trespasses on the soul in the process of recording the psychic vapors or emanations which become the stock in trade of Sensitape, Inc. In other words, Compton presents it as intrinsically unclean, immoral, and unholy, despite the fact that it seems to have no psychological or physical ill-effects on the general run of subjects to whom it is applied, for both recording and transmission purposes (excepting Thea Cadence, who goes utterly crackers with loathing after her first experience of commercial Sensitape; however, Mrs. Cadence has been an unhappy woman since very near the beginning of her marriage, afflicted with a highly artificial textbook form of frigidity.) With the advent of Synthajoy, the ultimate in distilled ecstasy, the heretofore impalpable evil emerges incarnate: the Synthajoy tape kills Thea's lover, Tony, by entirely suppressing his ego with unnatural pleasure . . . it nullifies his soul, in a manner of speaking.

This is science fiction?

This is nothing more than the quintessential anti-science fiction over which Damon Knight once howled in anguish, back in the days when he Searched for Wonder in various review columns. Nowadays, as Pierce reports, the doyen of Milford has shifted his footing. . . but has yet to retract his original condemnation of both Frank Robinson's The Power and Richard Matheson's The Shrinking Man, the two books which suffered most (and undeservedly so) from his anti-science attacks: the original critique of these novels remains untouched in the second revised edition of In Search of Wonder, published in 1967 (the original edition was issued





in '56). The Power especially is a book maligned out of all proportion to its actual faults -- all of which, such as they are, the author committed merely to keep the plot moving, rather than for any dark, malevolent deceit. Now we have the Compton book, a novel truly borne of the fraudulent motives and mysterious hatred that Knight once imputed to Matheson and Robinson. The anti-technological, primitivist element in some of the works of Ray Bradbury, a matter hotly contested by fans in the past, pales beside Compton's sinister attitude.

Science and technology produce monstrous evil by definition, according to Compton. He provides no rational reason for Tony's death via the Synthajoy tape; Edward Cadence mouths some mumbo-jumbo ("We knew alien patterns might set up a dangerous period resonance. . ."), but it doesn't fool Thea Cadence: ". . .we can only accept so much joy. . .Tony Stech was given too much. It killed him."

Oddly enough, the only people who suffer adversity because of the discovery -- except for Dr. Cadence himself -- are those who realize its noxious propensities. Perhaps this is the author's way of demonstrating the true insidiousness of the invention. . . and of course Edward Cadence, the only non-innocent of the bunch, must die because he is, underneath all that cool and dedicated exterior, really a nasty megalomaniacal blackguard.

Back to Pierce: The way J.J. characterizes the New Wave is certainly one method of doing so, but I don't think it is the best means of identification, for it depends on rather extrinsic characteristics -- as many people have been quick to point out to him in the specific instance pessimism. The characteristic that I feel is most intrinsic to (and indicative of) New Wave writing is the externalization (in the world developed for the story) of the purely internal feelings and attitudes of the author. In this way the events of the narrative may occur without substantial cause, or without any rationale whatsoever; likewise the elements of the setting -- all established and directed by auctorial whim and fiat. Just so may a Drowned World regress into primeval jungle, populated by primitive flora and fauna that reassert their mastery through prehistoric giantism. . .all in the space of twenty-five years, supposedly because of high mutation rates resulting from increased solar radiation -- despite the fact that the great majority of mutations, outside of a J.G. Ballard novel, are so deleterious they are usually self-deleting; despite the probability that high mutation rates cannot be effective in producing new varieties in such a short span of time from a species that do not propagate with enormous volume and rapidity (in other words, never in forms any higher than insects). Just so do Ballard's characters act and react compulsively -- not from any rational motive, nor any plausible urge of the psyche (except perhaps inexplicable madness), but impelled rather by the author's peculiar aesthetic.

Similarly compulsive is the characterization is Synthajoy: to convey the Evil Presence of Sensitape, Compton turns Thea into a frigid but green-eyed lunatic, Edward into a megalomaniac, and Tony into a cynical martyr (he martyrs his idealism and his love long before he martyrs his conscious existence). Their motivations are contrived expressly for the effect of discrediting the invention and its new manner of electro-encephalic recording; also, in the erratic course of the story, their original values slip and slide from their grasp without much struggle or more than perfunctory later regrets.

No one in the book ever stops to think that the device might easily be modified for direct empathic connection of two or more willing participants, and as easily marketed; this realization would compromise the author's prior assumption that the nature of the work performed is inescapably a repugnant, demonic invasion of the sanctity of individual personality.

That the phenomenon is first used for the treatment of mental illness, that it practically eliminates the most dread and widespread -- and formerly incurable -- psychosis of the day (UDW: "Uncompensated Death Wish" -- sort of like Christian Science in reverse), hardly mitigates the dominance of Compton's negative representation -- the process involved in medical treatment is identical to that used for commercial purposes, and the same tapes occasionally appear in both capacities (e.g. "Relaxatape" and "Sexitape"): the purely psychotherapeutic varieties eventually lend themselves to more sinister use as means of penal rehabilitation/retribution; and UDW is ultimately portrayed as less an unfortunate malaise of modern society than a necessary and reasonable escape. The clincher is a passing reference to "special addictive tapes" that lose "full frequency response" after playback. . . certainly the silliest horror of the book, for true addiction is a physiological one.

The ultimate proof of the pudding, however, lies in the reaction of Thea Cadence to a recording made by another manufactured culture hero, one Klaus Beldik, distinguished symphonic conductor. The passage revealing her recollection of the tape surely ranks among the most insufferably pretentious, vague, and unconvincing descriptions of non-existent experience that may be encountered in all of science fiction:

To buy (with money) what Beldik had recorded (for money) was to compound a moral felony. The music lived in him as in a noble place, echoing down the generations of his sensibility, lit by his intellect, fired by his passion. It didn't matter that the palace was being let out to a five shilling visitor. It didn't matter that somewhere in the design of the palace there must be a flaw. Beldik knew the music's subtlest changes, shared himself with it, loved it as I felt it loved him. Some people say the truth loves them. Without a doubt music loves Klaus Beldik. To experience the tape was to trespass on that love, on that act of love.

Mrs. Cadence emerges from the experience shocked and appalled: "I was shocked. . . I was appalled. . . too appalled to do anything but get away. . ." But not too overcome to rant and rave at everyone she encounters in Trafalgar Square, about "The soul's degeneration."

All my theoretical objections. . . were nothing. I talked always about something I had not myself experienced, declaring it in theory to be an evil. . . Now the thing had entered my soul and I knew.

Without a doubt there is more at work here than the instability of the character called Thea Cadence.

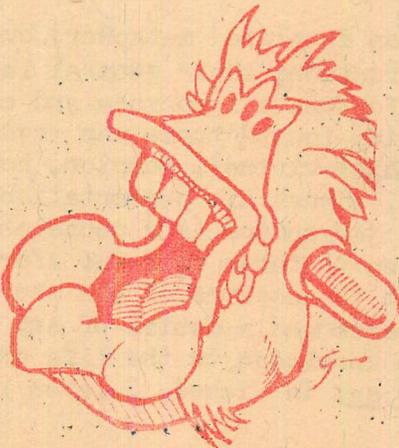
New Writers (as well as New Wave writers) often dwell on involuted metaphor, overwrought style, outre image, complex or non-linear construction; their general lack of regard for scientific substance may be due more to misfortunate ignorance and carefree indifference, than to willful affrontery or active malice toward those who revere science (or those who merely regard credibility as a major virtue). Compton, however, is not primarily concerned with innovative contortions, though his presentation partakes of several vogueish mannerisms. A thin miasma of jargonized (and occasionally quaint) pseudo-technicality, obviously intended as a sop to those with the aforementioned reverence, pervades the whole narrative. Yet the essence of the story consists of a back-stabbing of the abstract ideals of science and a denial of any reasonable hope for the humanistic application of scientific knowledge to the life of man. In fact, this book all but screams that Knowledge, per se, Is Wicked. . . even knowledge of one's fellow human beings.

³¹
Syntha Joy is a prudish book, as one might easily infer from the priggish excerpts of British newspaper reviews on the back cover of the Ace edition, with their delighted apprehensions of lurid expose' . . . a prudish book, not so much in choice of words or phrases, but in selection of incident and detail, in descriptive manner, and of course in general attitude, which is one of unremitting repulsion. Within its pages, life is seen through an obscuring veil, most of the important part of the body beneath already excised or enervated. Compton expressed a rampant fear of science, including the new modes of human contact and experience that it may create. To my way of thinking, this sentiment is immeasurably more heinous than a gutted spider and a Shrinking Man who doesn't disappear on schedule.

damon knight! -- where are you now that we need you?

Lesleigh's bit is a welcome contrast to the present cant of the "radical left" -- unfortunately, I'm not too confident that it would change any minds. This anti-space exploration attitude is now well-entrenched among the "moderate" so-called liberals as well. . . witness the insipid and silly whining of Barry Malzberg in his editorial for SFWA Bulletin #26. Now that it's Nixon's space program, they studiously forget that John Kennedy's "New Frontier" originated as a reference to the frontier of space. You know: if Nixon says he's supporting it, all good party-line liberals must oppose it. Wonderful support, that cuts NASA personnel-funding in half -- among other drastic cut backs.

I'm always irked by people who clamor, "If we can send a man to the Moon, why can't we solve our social problems on Earth?" or "The money wasted on Space could be better spent on poverty programs, etc." It's useless, of course, to point out to such people that NASA funding, if eliminated, would fall into the military budget because the military would essentially take over all space projects for development of astronautic weapons-systems; right now they're held back by the excuse that a large-scale military space program would duplicate much of the effort expended by NASA. It is also useless to indicate to "left-wing" critics that the military budget for one year dwarfs the entire NASA space program; I have heard on several occasions that one year of spending on the Vietnam War is equivalent to all monies spent on manned spaceflight up to the first lunar landing. They don't seem to understand that the achievement of space travel, vast exploit that it is, nevertheless can and does accomplish its goals essentially through brute physical engineering; social reformations are not amenable to that approach because the social sciences don't have an equivalent "technology." A lot of money goes down rat-holes in social programs which aren't set up properly to achieve their goals; money per se is not (yet) the answer to all social ills, whereas, ultimately it is the only stop-gap in a hardware-oriented program like that created for the space missions.



Even the present ecology flap shouldn't involve conflict with the manned space effort, for the later is the one area of industrial technology that is forced to consider environmental factors; certainly, if continued and extended to its ultimate end (establishment of self-supporting offworld colonies), it must force home lessons to the wayward of earth? (Not to mention providing insurance for the survival of mankind. . . somewhere.)

WAHF: Louis A. Morra, Jerry Kaufman, Eddy E. Bertin, Robert Bloch, Jerry Lapidus, Rick Stoker, David Hulvey, Dan Osterman and Greg Benford.

+Jim Turner+

THE CIVIL WAR AND ME

The first thing I did when my neighbor Dick Stauffer told me that, even this long after the Centennial, he and others still reenacted Civil War battles was be amazed. The second thing I did was get in on it.

Since then I have been to three reenactments--all at my home town of Pilot Knob, Missouri, where from twelve to fourteen hundred men died in two hours back in 1863. The first year, 1968, was pretty poor, in fact, even though I had lots of fun and couldn't wait to go again. I was armed with a borrowed musket and hardly a shred of uniform.

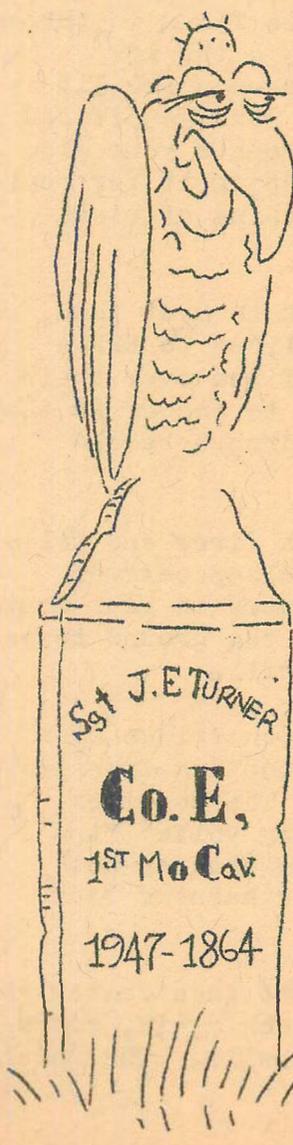
In 1969, I had a full uniform and my own rifle. More troops showed up, the weather was a little cooler; it was twice the affair of the year before. And again, this September, I went with a larger group than other years, was soaked to the bone, froze, and had almost as good a time as at 1969's reenactment.

Why did I do these things? It's expensive, inconvenient, the weather is wretched, I hate sleeping out in the open, and the eats aren't up to being dogfood. But then why go to science fiction conventions?

People start filtering in on Friday evening, tired from the trip, already drunk, wandering if the restaurants are going to be as bad as last year, registering, trying to find the john at the bivouac (it's locked, of course,) and meeting the people they haven't seen since the Wisconsin Field Situation or the Battle of Sabine Pass. You lean against cars and watch people putting up tents and wishing you could afford one yourself while the bottle goes around.

The troops run the gamut--Major von Frankenburg is a retired U.S. Cavalryman; there are teachers, shipping clerks, a couple of freaks from Arkansas, high school kids trying to find somebody to buy beer for them. There are a few women, some in authentic dress. A huckster sets up some books and buttons and insignae, various other militariae, on the hood of his car.

Back and forth into town they go, looking for restaurants or food to be cooked in camp, searching zealously for liquor stores. Half the encampment is drunk by dark. Sergeant Ken Meek of the 1st Kansas Infantry brought his banjo this year. We sing along, Old Dan Tucker, Dixie, Yankee Doodle, Rally Round the Flag Boys, somebody square dances, gives up and switches into a flogging hora, I and two other members of the 1st Mo. Cavalry perform an alcoholically sincere version of "Banks of Sicily." The boys from Arkansas have a tape portable playing the second Band album over and over, waiting patiently to sing along with "The Night They Drove Old Dixie



Down." People frantically trade drinks. Conversation waxes: "Have some of this. They call it Rebel Yell 'n it beats your Jim Beam to hell...You're a good boy to be a Yankee, buddy...I can't find my tent, somebody tell me where my tent is...Well if Lee had listened to Longstreet...I'm going to Hardin next year for the reenactment of the Little Big Horn...Sure you can crash in our tent...Of course it'll rain tomorrow...Gentlemen--to General George Custer and the Seventh!...Watch it, some sonovitch is running around with a saber...Pardon me, Yank, is them ladies there with you all?"

The day comes in a drenching rain. The temperature had fallen ten degrees in the last hour. Your hair hurts. The restaurant charges you \$1.10 for bacon and eggs with grease. Back to camp. Shine your brass, rub saddle soap into your stiff wet boots, investigate the damage the night air did to the perfect bore of your musket, wonder vaguely how you came to wake up in some nearby field at four am. Sit and load cartridges, watch units drill with pained expressions. Dicker with the other people in the unit over who's going to be stuck with carrying their flag. Point out helpfully that you own most of the guns and therefore aren't worrying about it. Lurch is a hassle so forget it and head for the battlefield.

You form up with the rest of the Union army around old Fort Davidson and wait for the Confederate Army to advance. Pickets spot their battle flags in threes, skirmishers fire their first shots, slowly giving ground through the low brush. The gray smoke drifts on the wind. The fuses on the cannon are lit as the artillerymen cry "Fire in the hole," and run back as the guns go off and spread their newspaper wadding over the field. The thought crosses your mind that a hundred and seven years ago at this time somebody was doing it for real as you bite the end off a stapled penny roll and pour sixty grains of black powder down the barrel of your musket.

As the Federal skirmishers fall back, the Union army comes out to meet them, advancing on the invaders, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in two lines to trade volleys. The front rank kneels to reload as the second rank fires over their heads. The Rebels fire sporadically. Their artillery begins to answer as they form up. The volleys spurt raggedly across the field as men drop here and there.

The front rank falls back three paces past the rear rank which fires and falls back. By the third volley, you can't load fast enough. You clasp several cartridges between the fingers of your left hand or keep an extra in your mouth. You wait your turn to fire as you watch armed men pace across the ground toward you. Someone blows retreat and the officers call to fire at will.

Pour back past your own artillery and make a stand by the wooden bridge over the moat. The artillerymen are overwhelmed, their revolvers popping frantically like firecrackers. A charge is ordered to recover the guns. The Bagpiper from the 54th Highlanders starts down the bridge as a deafening volley rips over his head. You grab your rifle barrel which you forget is burning hot and run down after him screaming, the Federals betting the Southerners back before them.

The Confederacy falls back, selling its ground slowly at first, then faster as its retreat turns into frantic withdrawal. It reforms to attack again, comes back over the ground. You fall back up the bridge, firing at will. The Rebels

come up the bridge, yelling savagely and dropping in droves until the entire Confederate army of fifty or more men lies in a heap on and around the bridge.

The Battle Director blows his whistle, the dead rise and both sides parade before the spectators and line up to receive their commemorative medals. Back to camp to lock up your gear and off to the banquet where you pay a dollar for (sad to say) one dollar's worth of food.

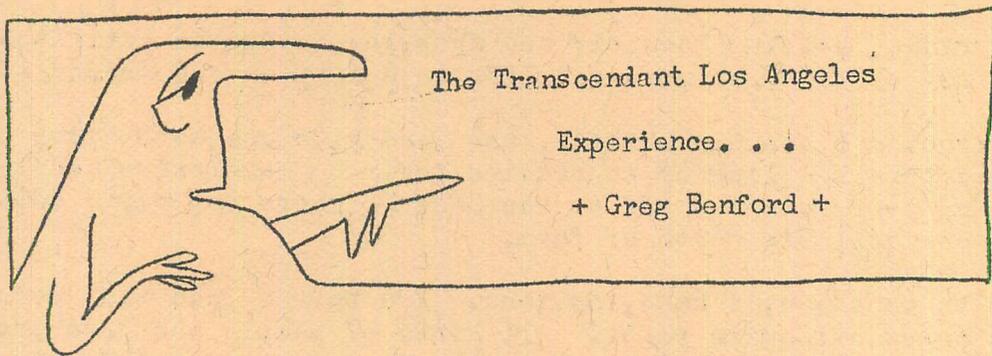
Similarities to cons are, I hope, obvious. You have a good time even though nothing ever comes off quite right. All kinds of people who have promised faithfully to be there don't show up. One of the big events promised this year was a military ball at the gym of the local high school. It was typical high school dance. The girls were on one side of the bleachers, the boys on the other. When I graduated from there seven years ago there was a big cutout of a tiger gathering dust in the corner. It was still there. There was a hillbilly band, four guys playing rythm guitar--The Tennessee Waltz and assorted evergreens. I split about the time two girls got up from their side and began subtly to dance toward the boy's side.

Transportation, place to eat and sleep are invariably traumatic. I was lucky. My mother lives only a couple of miles away so three others and I crashed at her place the night after the battle before we started the voyage back in a pickup truck.

Some people have told me that they find the idea of such vicarious violence repugnant. I had a few doubts about it myself when I started. The business of refighting a battle where men were killed and mutilated on the same ground where they were killed and mutilated, especially when you do it with the main idea of simply having fun, of retreating into childhood and playing war not with toys but with real guns, many of which undoubtedly killed and mutilated men scarcely a century before, raises valid questions.

I was surprised to discover a number of freaks and conscientious objectors participating happily. I was surprised to discover that the Southerners--with minor exceptions--were quite nice people and by and large not much more bigoted than the people of Missouri I grew up with. I found out how easy it is to get carried away and caught up in even an episode of mock violence and what it feels like to club a rifle in your hands and want--for a split second before you recover your wits--to really smash somebody's head in with it.

And to be in a position where, if the guns had had bullets in them, you would have been dead, is at least interesting. It is a humbling feeling that makes not only the past but a lot of the present uncomfortable real. I commend it to everyone.



On 12 November I went to LA to attend a meeting of the American Physical Society, Plasma Physics Division. I gave a talk there too, unrehearsed. I'm cultivating a new style of public speaking -- almost no notes, no total outline, few slides. It leads to a conversational style that contrasts well with the usual scientific manner of compressed detail, weakness on implied assumptions and just plain boring, inconsequential stuff. Most physicists are lousy speakers; most people are lousy speakers. I may not be any better but if I am going to be lousy at least I can be relaxed about it.

But I didn't spend a lot of time at the meeting, of course. I saw Calvin Demmon twice, went to a LASFS meeting with him and saw that crowd and the Nivens. Calvin is in good shape. He seems leaner and better able to cope with the awesome world.

Despite others' opinions, I don't find Larry Niven dull. He has a lot of ideas, but his intelligence isn't of the verbal sort highly prized in fandom. He isn't quick with the right word; he isn't witty. Sid Coleman's remark at the StLouisCon was quite appropriate: Fanshin can make up better characters and is maybe more people-sensitive than Larry, but he can't extrapolate or think as well. Anyway, we talked for a long time about The Future and Hard Science and other old wave stuff.

All this was merely buildup for Friday, when I went out to Rotsler's. Sparks! Naked Ladies! Arabesque tents and mink rugs! He has an interesting house, full of contraptions and eccentricities. I watched the tail end of a Naked Lady Photo Session (yes...) and we talked with one of the NLs who stayed on; had delicious dinner; listened to music whilst watching gloom and fog roll over the twinkling fireside hopes of lower LA; breathed the heady carcinogenic air of the Hollywood Hills. There, amid his collection of pornography and photos of the moon, Wm. R lives a life on indulgence and creativity. It is a Neat Place.

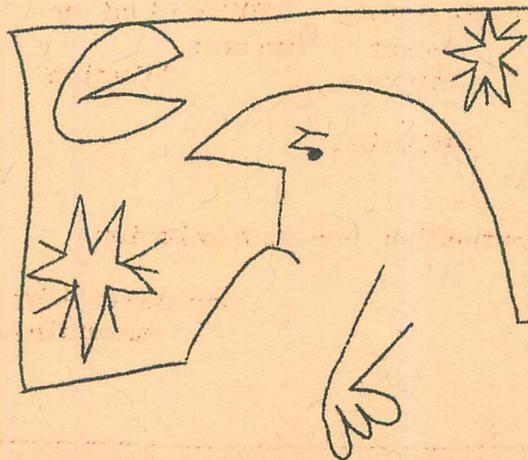
From Wm.R's we (Wm, Jim Benford, me and the NL) went to Harlan's. I can't really describe Harlan's house, except that it's cluttered with toys and artifacts and books and art, almost all of it very good. It has personality sticking out all over it. Harlan took me into his back office and showed me parts of AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS. It is going to be one hell of a book. 65 authors, totaling 400,000 words in two boxed volumes; illustrations by Emswiler; stories by such as Benard Wolfe, Vonnegut, and everybody else worth reading. 35,000 words from Ursula LeGuin, a 41,000er from Richard Wilson. Out May of 1971. The original DANGEROUS VISIONS had already paid 9¢/word to its writers. I wonder what this one will make? We get to ok the forewords written to our stories, too.

Calvin was aghast at the LASFS meeting. "I haven't seen those people for 5 years or more, and I thought of them as friends, but when I walked in there they barely answered my Hellos," he said. His wife, Wilma, worked for some years in the mental division of a hospital, a ward for permanent residents. When she met some fans in the early 60s she told Calvin that the people at LASFS had a lot of the twitches and gestures and mannerisms she'd noticed in the disturbed patients she dealt with. The same intent noting of details, the weak jokes and strained conversation, everybody trying to get in a little spark and dazzle, almost as though they were trying to live up to some ideal of brilliant conversation they'd heard about but never seen practiced (or recognized for what it was). Anyway, we decided it was a good thing the LASFS was around because otherwise those people might freak out if they were in the normal world, and that would cost the taxpayer money to see that they were put away. "Jeez," said Calvin, "5 years was too soon to go back. Next time, maybe 20."

Harlan is much better in small groups. I had never before noticed how quick and intelligent he is. He's fast, but not deep; his fiction shows that clearly. And he has never forgotten a bit of business, a one-liner, a quip. He can reel them off, respond to a situation, make up a monolog, quicker than anyone I know. He seems calmer and less uptight at home. I still don't think I'd like that sort of life, though, if I can be permitted to get up on my pedestal for a moment. Not enough quality and depth and things worth doing in it, for me. I met the editor of Essex House Books at Harlan's -- or rather, the ex-editor. He went to the San Francisco film festival & came back to find his job gone. Is looking around for an alternative to the animal fuck books he might have to do if he stays with the publisher . . .

Los Angeles is a strange, jigsaw puzzle of a place. There are LASFS types and mad dopers, Harlan and Calvin, Rotsler and Bjo. I can see what Bob Silverberg finds so fascinating about the place: it's like no other civilization on Earth, unique. The gut effect of LA is to convince everyone there that they can be anything. Each moment is new, fresh (even if the air isn't): You can move two miles in LA and become a new person, change friends, change jobs, change sexes. LA is anything and everything.

Even though I don't like it, I must admit it's the most American of our major cities. All faults and virtues reside there. And, like a journey into the deeps, the memory clings to you long after it should have faded. Small wonder that most of writers seem to come from there.



THE POLYMORPHOUS FREE-VERT CONCLUSION

38

COMCO

+Greg Shaw+

In the first installment we covered some of Chester Anderson's more interesting plans that never materialized. In the second, we described his two happenings, the Invisible Circus and the Bedrock. These, while remembered fondly by many were only flashes in a pen that has been flashing constantly for a long time. In this third and final installment of my remembrances of Chester Anderson's nine months in San Francisco, we'll go into what was undoubtedly his most important creation, in terms of its lasting effect on underground culture.

Probably his most important contribution to the San Francisco head community was the Communication Company. I've mentioned before how he purchased (on credit) a brand new Gestetner 366 mimeo and a Bestefax electronic stencil cutter in February 1967. Shortly thereafter the first product of the Communication Company appeared on Haight St., a single mimeoed page that read in part: "OUR POLICY: Love is communication. OUR PLANS & HOPES: to provide quick & inexpensive printing service for the hip community; to print anything the Diggers want printed; to do lots of community service printing; to be outrageous pamphleteers; to compete with the Establishment press for public opinion; to publish literature originating within this new minority; to produce occasional incredibilities out of an unnatural fondness for either outrage or profit, as the case may be; to do what we damn well please."

It wasn't long after this sheet appeared that I visited the apartment Chester shared with Claude Hayward and his wife for the first of what was to be a long series of occasions. It was located on Duboce Street, sort of on the borderline between San Francisco's Mexican and Negro slums. The apartment itself was like a fanzine publisher's LSD trip. The whole place, to begin with, was a mess; dirty clothes strewn about the floor, dirty dishes piled in the kitchen, the six or so poorly-illuminated rooms filled with boxes of mimeo paper piled to the ceiling, hundreds of stencils and lettering guides and sheets of transfer type cluttering the work tables, sheets of paper, printed and otherwise, all over the floor. In some of the rooms were mattresses on the floor. The only room that approached a semblance of neatness was the living room, which itself supported a goodly quantity of the mess.

Claude and his family were archetypal Diggers. Messy, unwashed, dressed in rags. Their hair hadn't been brushed in years, from the looks of it. Claude was a lot like Abbie Hoffman, but without Abbie's humor. He was in awe of Chester.

Chester himself was always cheerful and great fun to be around. He was also busy all the time; in fact he found it necessary to consume a respectable quantity of diet pills as often as they were available in order to stretch his time as far as it would go. On an average, I'd say half a dozen people a day came in with things to be printed. Maybe twice that many would come just to visit Chester, some just people he'd met on the street, but mostly artists, writers, activists and the like. When nobody was around and there were no orders to fill Chester would spend his time writing.

Beside his "serious" writing (things like Butterfly Kid) Chester liked to experiment on the side, and some of the essays he put out on the street through the ComCo were masterpieces of avant-garde writing that must have gone over the heads of most of the hippies who chanced to look at them.

For the first couple of months the ComCo did little but put out free bulletins for the Diggers, the Mime Troupe, the Sexual Freedom League, and other such organizations, and an occasional public service flash about batches of bad acid being sold on the street or something of that nature. During this time, however, things were very busy around the Duboce St. pad, because the ComCo was publishing an entire book. Chester gave me the manuscript the first time I went to his place, because he knew I would dig it. He was right; it blew my mind. I still think it is one of the most innovative science fiction books of the past few years, though fandom doesn't seem to have paid much attention to it.

The book is "INFORMED SOURCES: DAY EAST RECEIVED" by Willard Bain. I don't know where Chester found Willard. He had worked for a few years at a wire service in San Francisco, then quit and wrote this fantastic book. He sent it to a few publishers, had it rejected, and put it away. He wasn't, incidentally, aware that it was a work of science fiction. At any rate, Chester got hold of it somehow and arranged to publish it. All 140 pages of the manuscript were run through the Gestefax exactly as they were, and then 500 copies were run off on the Gestetner. This was "Manuscript Editions Number One" and it is dated 3/67, though it sat around for several weeks waiting to be bound. Eventually the copies were sent to all members of the Underground Press Syndicate, lots of publishers including science fiction houses, various reviewers, and some of Chester's friends. An unfavorable mention by Judith Merrill was about all that came of this edition. A second edition, also of 500 copies, was published in September, identical except for a jazzed-up cover. "Manuscript Editions Number Two" was also published, under the title "INFORMED SOURCES: NIGHT EAST RECEIVED", also by Willard Bain, consisting of 102 pages of poetry, essays, and miscellaneous writing. "INFORMED SOURCES: DAY EAST RECEIVED" was eventually picked up and published by Doubleday, to the astonishment of all of us who had read it in the Manuscript edition.

With all this out of the way, Chester turned his attention to the community outside again and soon embarked on a campaign that was to earn him a lot of enemies and eventually lead to the loss of effectiveness suffered by the Communication Company late in the summer of 1967.

Think back, dear readers. It is April, 1967. For two years there has been a thriving community of artists and musicians in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. Word has made its way around the country that "it's happening in Frisco" and there's been a steady stream of freaks pouring into the city. The summer of '66 had been unbelievably groovy, and everyone who'd heard about it wanted to make sure he was around for the next one. It was all set to happen,

and even though there were a lot more people in the Haight than there had been ⁴⁰ in '66, they were basically cool people and it looked like there was a good chance we could all have ourselves one hell of a blast during the coming summer. People in the community started talking about a "Summer of Love", plans were made for free music in the parks and other goodies.

Then the "Media" (you all know who they are) found out about it. Reporters from Time, Life, Look, Newsweek, Post, all the wire services, and a host of lesser publications were on Haight St., and each and every hippie was suddenly a Spokesman for the "hippie movement". Somebody was quoted as predicting that 500,000 kids would be coming to the Haight for the summer, and the show was on the road. Across the country headlines were aghast. The mayor of San Francisco declared that hippies were not wanted here and the newspapers the next day read "Mayor declares war on hippies". A bitter controversy arose.

Without all the publicity there wouldn't have been a chance of more than a few thousand kids showing up here. With all that was being said about San Francisco, however, it was plain that we would have to prepare for the arrival of something approaching the predicted number of youthful visitors, and about twice that number of extra tourists.

Chester Anderson was one of the first to pick up on what was going to happen. On 4/16/67 he issued a four-page missive entitled "Uncle Tim's Children" which is well worth reading. It was later reprinted in hardcover in a collection of "underground essays". It was an extremely polemic tract, the gist of which was that in the coming summer the Hip Merchants of Haight St., owners of bead and poster stores, the publishers of the Oracle and in general anyone who stood to profit from the tourist trade on Haight St. in the coming summer were a pack of villains who should give a share of their profits to the Diggers to help feed and clothe the hordes of hungry stranded kids who'd be coming. It ended with: "If anyone but the diggers undertakes to feed the hungry, comfort the sick, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked & restore some measure of human dignity to Uncle Tim's children, I'll be very much surprised. If any of these mercantile phonies proves me wrong, I'll apologize in print in the grandest style imaginable. But I don't really expect to have to. The hucksters will find it easier to denounce me than to correct themselves, that, oh my brothers, is exactly what they'll do. But at least we all know now exactly where they're at. Remember that."

It was a pretty strong attack, and it provoked quite a reaction. The people Chester was attacking weren't really evil exploiters. There were still many idealistic people in San Francisco who shared a vision of a new world of spiritual values and honesty and truth. In their idealism they happened to be blind to the fact that this wasn't the time and place for it to happen. Typical of the reactions was this letter from Steve Hughes, a Haight St. merchant, which Chester printed and distributed:

"Chester Anderson...we love you...but you are over-concerned with delineation, with divisions within the community. Ours is increasingly an organic community, and though there may appear to be such divisions as for example between "diggers" and "hip merchants", when each person involved is stripped down to his basic attitudes and values and to the wisdom of his soul, he is essentially one and the same person. In this age of transition, we, the transitory figures, must keep in the forefront of our minds the unity which is our foundation, the unity which yields the strength and freedom to carry our love.. the thing that is really responsible for this confluence of seekers in San Francisco."

Yet⁴¹ the only people who were thinking about what the kids would eat and where they would sleep were the diggers and Chester Anderson. Nobody else believed the summer could possibly be that bad until it happened.

And it really did happen, too. Something like 200,000 young "hippies" passed through San Francisco that summer. What seemed like a million billion cars full of tourists drove down Haight St., in fact for about four months it took at least an hour to drive the four blocks of Haight between Masonic and Stanyan. A bus tour of Haight St. was instituted. The sidewalks were full, overflowing into the streets with a mixture of lost lonely kids looking for "love", drug users and peddlers of every variety, and various con artists. Rapes, assaults, rip-offs, became common. Haight St.'s first murder occurred.

Through all this Chester was doing his best to help. Publications such as "Dope Sheet" (four pages of the most honest, meaningful information ever published about drugs and what to look out for when you use them) were printed up and distributed in large quantities.

The Summer of Love wasn't scheduled to begin until June, however, and after all the smoke and hot air resulting from "Uncle Tim's Children" had cleared away, there were still almost two months to go before anyone would be proved right or wrong. This left plenty of time for Chester Anderson to undertake other projects.

Like, for example, destroying a leading rock group. The folk-rock, Good Time Music thing had been big in '65 and '66, and the Lovin' Spoonful had already passed their peak, but they were still a band of considerable importance when Chester took them on.

I don't know how well the story of the Spoonful got spread around; it was totally ignored by the straight press and the music press, and had only slight coverage in the underground press. For the benefit of those who aren't familiar with it, here are the facts:

Steve Boone and Zal Yanovsky of the Spoonful were approached in San Francisco by the police and told that certain charges and evidence against them (I never found out the nature of these charges) would be dropped if they'd co-operate in setting up a bust for them against a fellow named William Loughborough. Loughborough was a friend of theirs and manager of the Committee Theater in S.F., which specialized in anti-establishment satire. He was also a friend of Chester Anderson's.

They introduced an agent to Loughborough, who sold the agent 2 lids of grass. Loughborough was busted. The story got around San Francisco pretty fast. The Spoonful announced they were cancelling their scheduled concert (they have never played again in the Bay Area since) and local resentment became, for awhile, pretty strong. Some people went so far as to throw away their Spoonful Records.

But none went so far as Chester, who printed up a sheet describing the crimes perpetrated by the Spoonful and urging everyone who had any conscience to never listen to their music again, advising friends of the group never to speak to them again, and suggesting that chicks refrain from balling the offenders. This essay was sent out to all the underground media in the country. When only one paper (the Berkeley Barb) ran the article in full, Chester issued a second statement, saying in essence that everyone who hadn't picked up the story was a Fink. The closing two sentences capture the tone of the essay: "As long as

the Spoonful continues to play and make money, as long as you pretend it didn't happen, or whatever other copout you care to make, you are all shit. Either the UPS means something, in which case we expect to see full coverage of this hypocrisy, or else the Underground Press Syndicate is nothing more than the same old America shit in a bright new polyethylene extruded psychedelic wrapper."

A couple of other papers, including the East Village Other, picked up on the story as a result of that sheet, but a great deal was not made to do about it. The Spoonful faded away, and no one can say how much of their fate was influenced by Chester Anderson.

The summer of '67 was a very heavy experience for everyone in the Haight, especially for Chester, who had taken upon himself the responsibility of being the conscience of the entire hip movement in San Francisco. He really wasn't doing much other than composing bitter, angry essays and putting them out on the street, but it was still more than most people were doing. I have quite a few of these essays at hand, but this installment has already become too lengthy and I doubt that they would have much meaning for anyone who wasn't there that summer. I don't really need to quote from them, anyway, to make the point I'm trying to lead into, which is that by August the tension all around was pretty high. The ComCo went into hiding for awhile, moved from their Duboce St. digs to a house on Arguello, which it took me a couple of weeks to find and finally split up in early August. For awhile there were three Communication Companies: Claude Hayward's, in San Francisco, Chester's ("in exile") from Hollywood, Florida, Chester's old home town, and one in Corte Madera (near S.F.), in cooperation with Chester, run by Freddy, a young man who had been one of Chester's helpers in the early days of the ComCo, and "Solomon Hershey" who in reality was Willard Bain. The house in Corte Madera was also Bain's home. Two issues of a "Haight/Ashbury Newsletter", dated 8/4/67 and 8/19/67 were written by Chester in Florida and published in Corte Madera. Shortly thereafter, all three Communication Companies disappeared.

Chester stayed in Florida for awhile, then went to Hollywood, Calif. and became manager of a band called the United States of America. The band split up and Chester went back east, to New York, where he shortly took over the editorship of Crawdaddy Magazine, which at that time was a rock magazine. Chester turned it into a science fiction/astrology mag, with a little music on the side. Crawdaddy then folded for awhile, to be reincarnated as a tabloid newspaper, somewhat like Rolling Stone, under a new editor.

Chester Anderson remains outrageous to this day.



MEN ARE OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE EARTH

Excluded from life in a forced devotion of energy to survival. We have plunged into a luxury of impoverishment. Money has reckoned the soul of America. The state imposes the elements of survival: frozen foods. Each element appears to be a liberation and turns to servitude.

Condemned to the slavery of working for freedom
Private appropriation is an appropriation of things by means of the appropriation of people.

Organization of appearances: worker imitates boss imitates president imitates god (or his only begotten son).
A fundamental unity lies in the notion of sacrifice and is sustained by myth.

The disappearance of material poverty has revealed the mediocrity of existence itself.

The managers of social peace call for coexistence -- forever!
Too late.

Now is the end of abstract temporality.

Now is the end of the alienation pole.

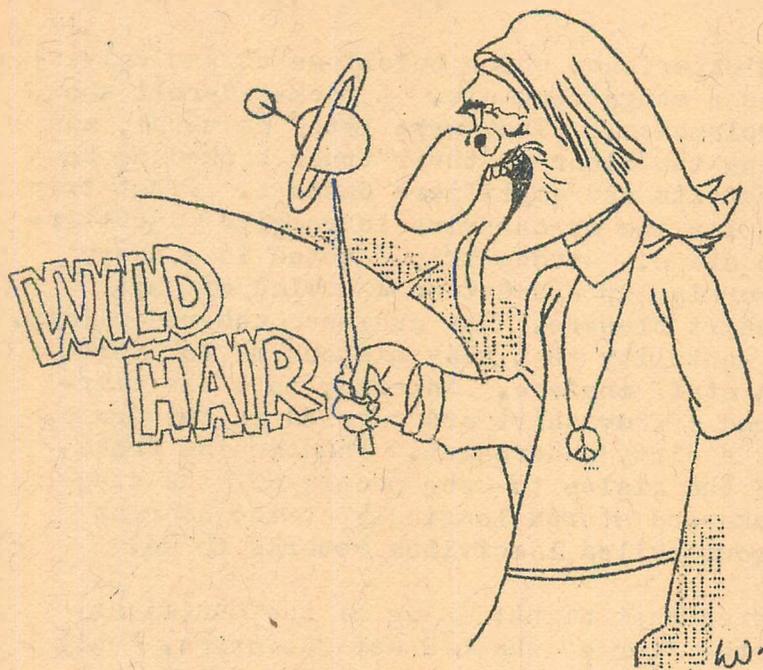
Death has eaten like a cancer into the heart of life.

We demand a miracle -- Get rid of suicide and the desire to be dead rather than death itself.

No more neighborhoods, boundaries, restrictions. Our heritage of archetypes has been appropriated by Bernard Baruch. And we don't want it back!

And so, beyond the struggle against regimes whose vision of paradise is the cybernetic welfare state (this is the battle of radical politicians) lies the vaster struggle against the fundamental and natural conditioning we have been developed in. -- Isms and governments only play an episodic role -- the unnatural state of the universe will only disappear with the last traces of hierarchial power -- the only power men have over other men.
Turn on your own creativity -- stop being a consumer.
Realize your power -- autonomy -- stand on a street corner waiting for no one. Stop surviving -- start living.
Congress has just broken through to the precipice of eternity.

ejaculated by the communication company (ups) 6/1/67 what are you doing in this ghetto of catshit, broken bottles, sneering square arsehole-lickers, polluted catholic clergymen, perverted cops, leslie irish, adulterated drugs, longhaired exploiters, sodomite sailors, black fire and white trash? What kind of sucker are you? What do you suck? Bend over, spread your cheeks, time & a half for overtime. And whose shit are you, little freakout?



+ Bob Tucker +

Something was amiss. I was used to waking up with the sun (or six or eight or ten hours after the sun) and staring at the big blue sky overhead, scarcely a sneeze and a yawn away beyond the windows over the bed. Now, that glorious view was subtly changed: the blue sky seemed darker, the sunlight less bright, the whole day appeared dimmer in a manner that was troublesome -- I thought my sight was fading. I thought Los Angeles smog had crept all the way to the Prairie State. I thought the local skunk works was polluting us.

My unease was heightened each morning at the breakfast table. I began to find *hair* in my eggs and fried mush. Dimly, I noticed the kids inspecting me across the table. The oldest couldn't quite conceal an amused grin: oatmeal dribbled out of the open corners of his mouth. The next in line, still young enough to retain a modicum of respect for his elders, stared furtively but dropped his eyes to his plate when I returned his stare. The youngest just sat there gaping, filled with a sense of wonder, and I suspected he had been pawing through the covers ripped off Planet Stories and hidden from sight. After about a week I caught a secretive conversation.

Youngest: "Who's that man eating with us all the time?"
 Oldest: "That's dad, you clyde."
 Youngest: "Well, what's the matter with his head, then?"
 Oldest: "That's his hair; didn't you ever see hair before?"
 Youngest: "Not on him. It's hanging down in his eggs."
 Middlest: "Shuddup and eat. Don't let on."

A week or so later I discovered my hearing was fading as well. Old age! I thought in panic. Senility, and me only 98! No sight, no hearing, and next thing I'll be on the Papa waiting list!

A friendly neighbor, an old poker buddy, contributed to my declining years in an unexpected way. I stepped out on the back porch one dim Spring morning to fill my lungs with several gulps of fresh ozone wafting in off the fertilized fields, and called a cheery quip to the fellow working in his garden. Somewhat to my surprise he began pelting me with dirt clods. "Dirty unwashed

commie hippy!" he cried in righteous anger. "Black Panther lover! Marxist fink! Go back to Moscow where you belong!" A clod took me alongside the head as I ran back inside the house.

But I half enjoyed a rather stragg^g experience which befell me at the university where I'm sometimes employed as a stage mechanic. A rock-and-roll show was booked in, "Moonbaby and the Cyclamates." They were late, as usual, and a full house was impatiently stomping the floor as their truck backed up to the door. I helped carry the instruments and amplifiers onstage. First trip I lugged in an electric guitar, and imagine my surprise to receive a scattering of applause as I put it down on stage. Second trip I toted in a heavy amplifier, but by this time I was working up a sweat so I peeled off my sweater and carried it onstage in shirt sleeves. The audience cheered wildly. It filtered through my over-thirty mentality that they mistook me for various Cyclamates, carrying their own stuff onstage. Entering into the spirit of the thing with gusto, I whipped off my shirt and carried in the drums, wearing nothing above the waist but a dirty undershirt. Pandemonium broke loose. Ushers raced to the head of the aisles to keep people off the stage; security men hefted their nightsticks and stared longingly at the nearest heads. Pretty coeds in the front rows called lascivious remarks to me.

I suspect that audience was bewildered that night: none of the musicians playing the show were identical to the "three" who had set the stage. Only Moonbaby was easily recognized and accepted because my chest was flat.

I started having trouble with my belt; either my waistline had suddenly broadened or my trousers all shrank overnight. Imagine my dismay when I discovered the cause: I was thoughtlessly tucking my hair into my trousers along with my shirttail and trying to cinch it all up tight. But the unkindest blow of all came from my wife. She took me aside one day and mutely pointed to a long, erratic but feathery trail in the dust leading from the bedroom to the bathroom. It looked like I had dragged a frayed feather duster from one room to the other. The trail was made by own hair, now toughing the floor.

Today, while on the way to work at the theater, I was whistled at by an incredibly young groupie.

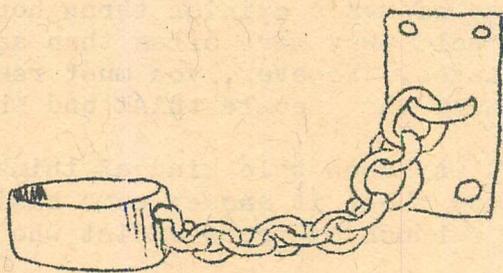
All this because of one simple act. Last winter I got tired of my crew cut and let it grow out.



THE (ALMOST) ETERNAL CON

BY LESLEIGH WUTRELL

46



I don't think many people are aware that, besides science fiction judged by First Fandom to be worthy of its award, David H. Keller also wrote a book called The Eternal Conflict. There are very few things a title like that could refer to and, not surprisingly, in this case it refers to the 'war' between the sexes. Now I have been told that the good Dr. Keller was a racist, so it is not surprising that he was also a sexist. The two often go hand in hand. Once you begin labelling some members of the species homo sapiens as inferior, it is easy to continue eliminating everyone, except of course yourself, from the ranks of superior beings.

Dr. Keller has not written an Uncle Tom's Cabin of sexism. His book is more of an Uncle Remus Stories. A colleague of the good Doctor's informs us in the Introduction that the book is to Freudian psychology what Alice in Wonderland is to mathematics; that is, a fantasy interpretation of a more serious subject. He also praises the book for the clever way it weaves together sexual symbolism and says that only a trained psychologist will be able to catch it all (indicating to me that only such people would even care to look for such symbolism in everything they read).

Then there is the book itself. It concerns a god-like woman who spends her entire existence searching for satisfaction. After many episodes, replete with sexual symbolism, she thinks she has found it in a boy child whom she has caused to be created by various ugly means. When the boy grows up and wants to leave her to get married, she finds that she has never really been satisfied and so kills herself. Now I think (not being a psychologist I can't be sure) that Keller's main points are that the sex act and the creation of a new life especially mean death. More than this, he feels that women will never be satisfied as long as they do not realize their place in life. And guess where that place is? Certainly not as man's equal. So the eternal conflict is that between man and nature trying to keep women in her place, and the foolish woman trying to get out of it. The poor woman never realizes that she can never be satisfied anywhere else, so her fight is actually a self-defeating one.

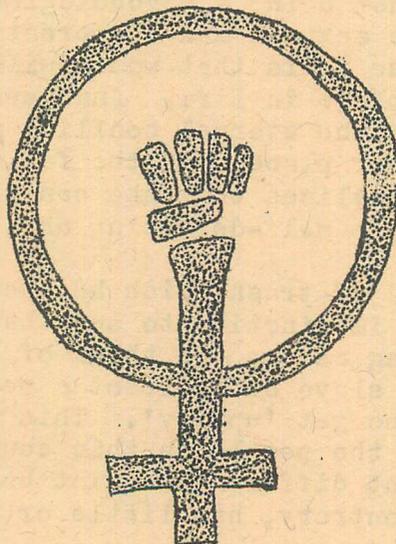
This is an example of the kind of trash which has been feeding sexism for centuries. It doesn't take much imagination to see that this same way of thinking encourages racism. As long as one can think of the black as an inferior who really is happier as a slave or at least a second class citizen, it isn't hard to put down any blacks who get 'uppity'. This way of thinking is not very fashionable now among many of the people in this country. The fact that no one has ever proved any significant differences exist between races, and all current knowledge point to the contrary, has little or nothing to do with the way people think.

⁴⁷ Similarly, no one has ever proved that any sex differences make women or men inherently inferior to the other. It simply has been fashionable for many hundreds of years in Western Culture to think of women as inferior. It is possible that a survey of man's opinion throughout his history would show this way of thinking to hold sway more often than any other way of considering the relation of the two sexes. However, you must remember that there is a tenuous connection at best between what people think and what is really true.

Just how and why does this kind of thinking perpetrate itself? Is it really based on fact? Does it answer some basic need in men (and women)? Or is it the work of a bunch of propagandist who have been with us through the centuries?

There are many elements involved in answering the question why. Foremost among them is that desire, seemingly common to all humans, to divide the world into 'us' and 'them'. The best sort of them are weaker, easily controlled and exploitable people. How nicely women fit that role! They are either weaker or can be made so by denying them the possibilities of physical and intellectual development. Since they are a part of the society all ready, it is easy to steer them into inferior roles and so control them. And thus controlled they can be readily exploited as cheap labor. Besides, they have the added advantage of being desirable sexual partners, at least to most men. Ah, but here's a rub. A lot of men, whether they wish to admit it or not, like their sex partners to be equals. This sort of duality lead to the use of young boys and hetar-ae for sex partners among the Greeks.

There are other possible reasons for this sort of attitude. As human beings became more and more interested in the ownership of things (or perhaps as more and more things became available for ownership--particularly land with the advent of food raising), they also became concerned with passing these things along to their offspring. But there is a problem. Motherhood is fairly obvious, but it is only "a wise child who knows his father." There are two solutions. One is matriarchy and a lot of people tried it. The other is patriarcy. But this only works if you can be sure the woman's kid is yours. One way to insure this is to keep her so subjected to you that she wouldn't dare have children by anyone else



(or at least you're sure to find out about it if she does). This seems the more difficult solution, but an equal or even greater number of people tried it, including our ancestors.

Perhaps at one time people even had slightly more real reasons for considering women inferior. Since women generally have less physical strength than men (though they have more stamina), they were at a disadvantage in situations where every bit of strength was needed, such as in hunting with weapons like club and spear, or in agriculture after the invention of the plow. However, in economies where strength makes little difference, such as in societies whose agriculture is of the mainly hand type, women quite often do now have the inferior role in society. (Which kind of economy do you think our society has?) Also, since women are the childbearers and main child rearers, they had to stick to the home most of the time when this was the only activity they had time for, and so were denied the educational advantages of the outside world. But most of these reasons are of the same type which consider a diabetic inferior--without insulin he is less fit than other people, but with it there is no difference.

But, a sexist might say, if women aren't inferior why have so many people, including women, believed this lie for so long? Culture is quite a clever creature, and finds ways to perpetuate itself, and its attendant beliefs and superstitions. The culture and personality theorists found out long ago that many, perhaps all cultures, tend by their institutions to create a rather limited range of personalities, a group of people with a specific way of looking at the world. Since most of the persons in the culture have this type of personality, they tend to alter institutions even more in this direction. This leads to the sad spectacle of cultures made up almost entirely of neurotics or paranoids where people thought normal in our culture, would be thought sick in theirs. Sexism tends to perpetuate itself in the same way.

If for some reason or another a lot of people in a society come to believe that women are inferior to men, they can set things going that will insure this view a long life. For instance, child raising is thought to be a main indication of the kind of personality being created by culture. How does one who thinks women are inferior raise their children? Obviously, boys are educated and told often what great things are expected of them, while girls are given little or no education and told to expect to lead the simple-minded life of a housewife and mother. Every day in every way the lesson of male superiority is inflicted on them. Their brothers are fussed over, their fathers may express disappointment over the fact that they are not boys. And their mothers; as Simone De Beauvoir says in The Second Sex, women are filled with disappointment at the poor lot their life has been and are determined to see that their daughters fare no better. The mother pours all her ambition into her sons and all her disappointments into her daughters. Children raised in such an atmosphere cannot be expected to feel otherwise than their parents.

This view is reinforced not only in the home, but throughout the society. The religion quite possibly preaches the inferiority of women, their teachings based on the word of some women-haters of long ago such as St. Paul or Thomas Aquinas. The history of the society may reflect this attitude, even the literature does. Our own culture is based in great part on the misogyny of the Biblical Jews, and our literature from Chaucer on is full of examples of evil women. How can a culture based on the idea that woman lead man out of Paradise do otherwise but hate her and try to keep her in a subordinate position.

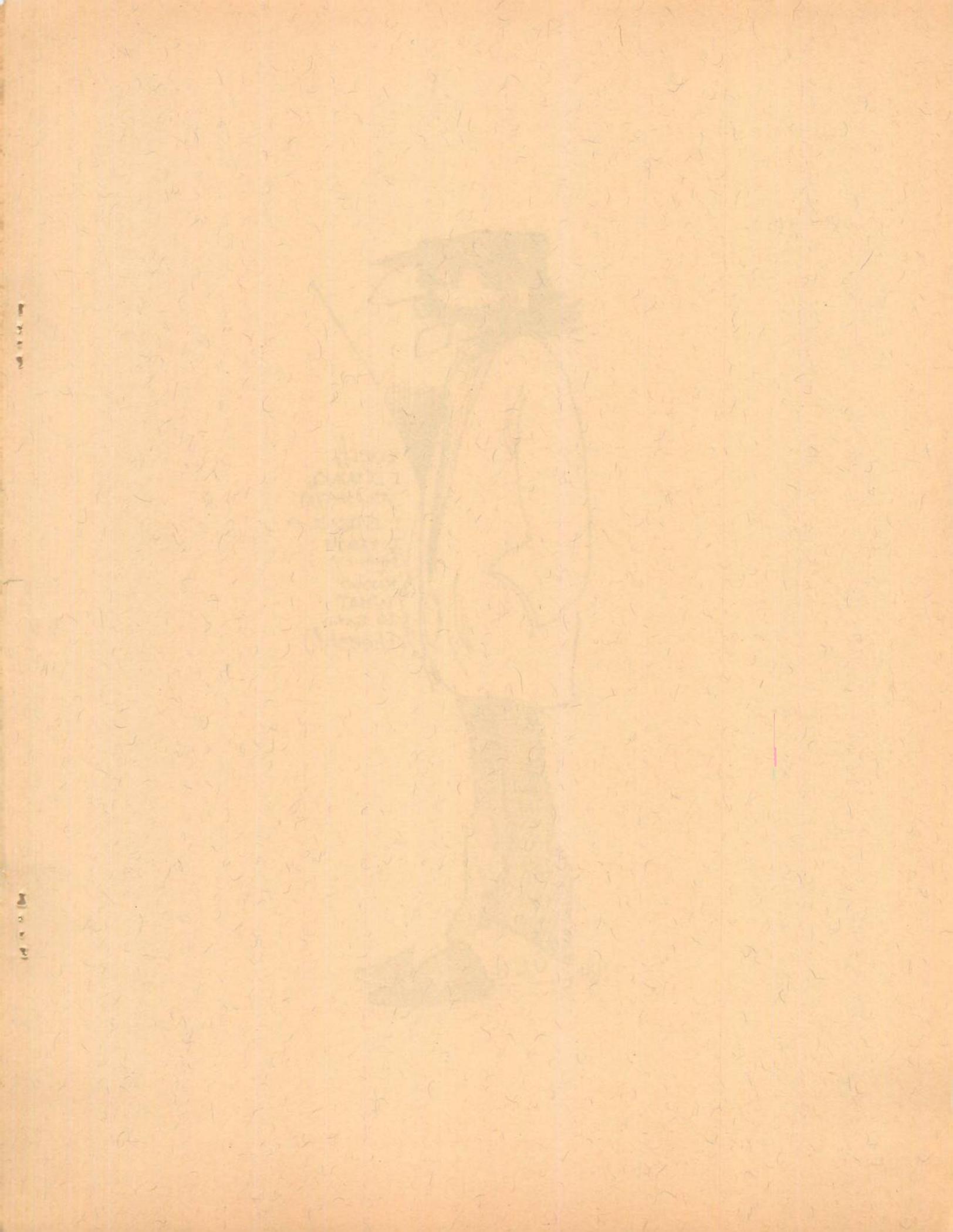
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Even in their everyday life the members of this society are exposed to the idea of women as inferior. The uneducated wives make poor intellectual companions for their husbands. This lack of education is compounded by the woman's confinement to the unstimulating atmosphere of the home and society dictates that this is the way it should be. A woman who challenged the order will be subject to the enormous pressure of social disapproval, and may even be violating laws established by the rigid society. No wonder there have been few great women in the history of Western Society (great in the male idea of achievement). The women generally are forced to stay 'barefoot and pregnant' while the men seek intellectual companionship among the males in the outside world.

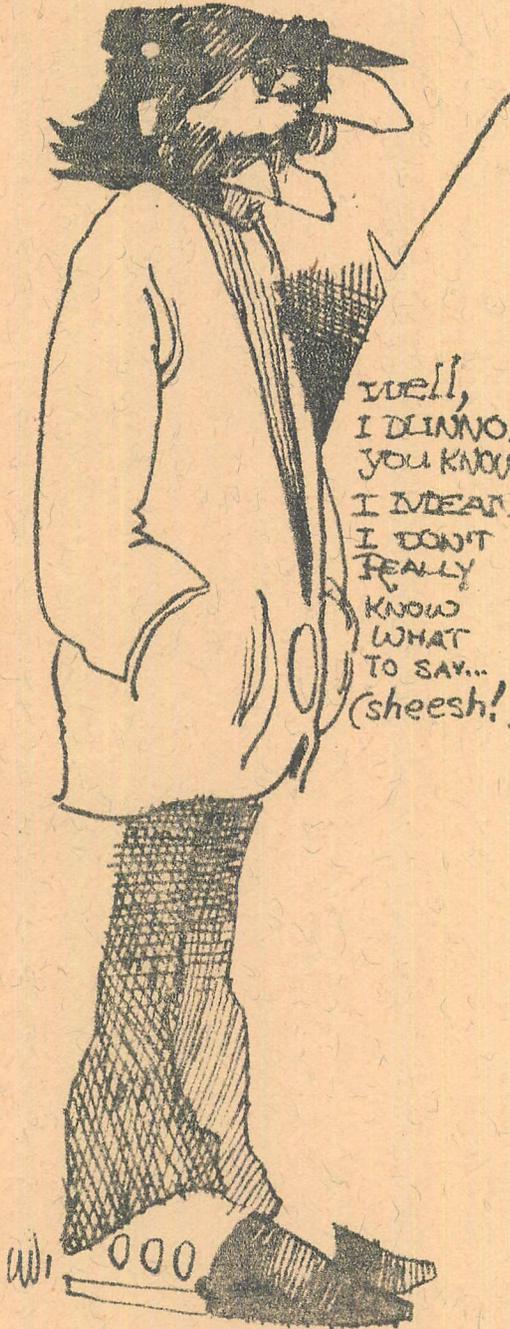
One cannot escape this way of thinking even in their entertainment. The ideas of women's inferiority is everywhere reinforced. Even science fiction is guilty of it. The pulps were full of beautiful but stupid heroines who always managed to foolishly get captured by the villains and monsters, and never managed to escape without the aid of the Hero.

Even today science fiction is not free of this sin. While the field is congratulating itself on escaping the use of black and oriental stereotypes, books still come out which feature stereotyped women characters, ones which are inferior to the male characters of the book. An example of this is a book which was published just last year, The Warlock in Spite of Himself by Christopher Stasheff. On the surface the book seems a delightful tale of an intergalactic crusade by democratic planets to prevent the spread of totalitarianism to more primitive planets, as played out on the world of Gramarye, founded by the Romantic Emigrés. As an added twist, on this planet, magic really works (an original idea, huh?). The main character is Rod Gallowglass who very much resembles Anthony Villiers, even to the point of having a Faithful Cybernetic Companion who reminds one of Torve the Trog. I must admit, I rather enjoyed the book until I saw what Mr. Stasheff was doing with his female characters.

There are two main ones in the book, Gwendolyn, a witch who aids the hero in his attempt to keep Gramarye free for democracy. The other character is Catherine, queen of the world who caused all the trouble by becoming offended at her one ally among the power-hungry nobles. While both characters or more or less good, Gwen is treated as the better of the two because she does what Rod tells her to. Catherine, on the other hand, attempts to assert her independence from the nobles who had advised her and his son to whom she was betrothed. The trouble is ended only when Rod and the young noble take a firm hand with the queen. "Rod looked at him, frowned. 'Why, spank her. Smack her so hard she'll have to stand till next Sunday.'" This is their method for keeping the queen from 'interfering' in the climactic battle. Obviously, Stasheff believes that trouble can only result when women get out of their place.

All these things contribute to a society where women are considered inferior to men, where they are confined to very limited roles in society, where they cannot compete with men. Were women really less capable than men there would be nothing intrinsically wrong with this type of society. Were this the case, everyone should be happy with the arrangement. But like the slaves in an earlier period, not all women buy the lies society has been selling. They have seen in schools and in business women can compete with men and sometimes best them. They have found that women are not inferior, and that they do not like being considered as such. Since no one has ever offered any evidence that a society based on this assumption is best, there is no reason not to give women equal opportunities with men. This will not be easy, but the task will be made even more difficult by people like David H. Keller and Christopher Stasheff.





Well,
I DUNNO,
YOU KNOW,
I MEAN...
I DON'T
REALLY
KNOW
WHAT
TO SAY...
(sheesh!)

W. 000