

(An Open and Shut Letter)
(to Persons like Pogorus)
(by Forrest J Ackerman)

In this mailing, among the hectographed items, you will find a little publication put out by the San Pedro Pair, wherein I am chided, derided and insulted for my views on les femmes nues. Provided with an advance copy of the former Fandamn; a name which I coined, incidentally, years ago in the knell number of IMAGINATION!, when, in Voice of the Imagination, then the readers' column, I captioned "Faint Praise from Fandamn"; I had intended to formulate a reply to the Foo's under quite different circumstances than my present surroundings permit. Perhaps I should not make the attempt, for I certainly shall not be able to do myself justice, smack on top of the harrowing experience of being jerked out of civilian life--strenuous, strange, distasteful. I do not even have the article here to refer to and refute, point by point. And if memory fails me--well, it seems like a million years have passed since a couple weeks ago when I was among the living.

Morojo's comment, on reading the piece of petulance resulting from Vom's routine rejection of Pogo's submission, was simply "silly," and for her part she would have left the matter there. I have ignored repeated thrusts from other sources, but this effusion was the straw that finally broke the dromedary's dorsal development. In other words, my patience wore thin.

Item a., as I recall, was a disrespectful attack on my spelling. What was it called--"schoolboyish"? Or it was implied that I am illiterate. Hell's bells, I'm a damn good speller. Paraphernalia. Subcutaneous. Syllogism. Pterodactyl. Ephemeræ. Digitalis. Amanuensis. Mnemonics. How's that for just ripping a few off at random without a dictionary? Scientificinematorially. Sespicallifedulistisespialladocious! Naturally, I know that they know that I'm not actually illiterate; but the epithet scarcely applies to a member of the California Scholarship Federation, the Quill and Scroll--facts with which I believe Pogo familiar. Pogo at least should have heard of my straight A record in High School English, and know that my college major was English. Regardless, a Civil Service Senior Typist rating has high-standard spelling implicit in it; while my work with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was not of a nature to admit of faulty spelling. The fact is, if I emphasize it myself, that I can spell damn well in orthodox English--Ackese is no evasion but a rather systematized simplification. Do you hear any "l" in could, would, should, etc.? So I omit it. Do you detect any "b" sound in doubtful? It's doubtful! And if kite, why not lite, tite and so on through (thru) the nite? We have dispensed with the spelling question, once-for-all, I trust. I am composing and stenciling this myself, so see what flaws you can pick out in it. I may make a mistake or two--I'm working under a severe strain--but I maintain that the spelling herein will stand up under close inspection as pretty near perfect. I could do it any time with equal ease. But I don't happen to approve of it. It isn't progressive.

How about this mental, moral or whatever kind of disorder of mine it's supposed to be. You cannot make me believe for one minute that either Pogo or Rus Wood seriously believes that I should visit a psychiatrist. But it sounds so sophisticated to recommend it. My reply is poor but honest: Go jump in the lake! You and your co-signers and their wives--I consign you all to the watery depths of San Pedro Bay for being all wet anyway.

What has being married's got to do with an appreciation of feminine beauty? The friend from whom I have secured the majority of my unretoucheds is happy middle-aged husband with two grown sons, who photographs McCoy girls as a hobby. This is one of the hobbies of one of our most respected stf. authors, too, whose letter to me on the subject has been a great source of consolation to me on each occasion that I have been confronted with frothings of those who simply do not understand. All this stuff about being crazy about what one knows least about, and the supposition that, emerging from a state of suspended adolescence, I discovered sex simultaneously with my introduction of Vornaidens: Fish tish and posh tosh! Gosh, I knew there was something I liked about women long and long ago, before I could put my finger on it. (!) In about 1923, when I was only six years old, I recall seeing the Italian spectacle, "Dante's Inferno," in which the inhabitants of Hell, if my memory serves me well--wore quite unclad. And at that early age--before sex had begun to burgeon in my virgin composition--I distinctly recall being pleased with the proportions of the women's torso's. I can hardly remember the time when I did not know girls were the prettiest people. If it were perfectly permissible, according to our mores, for everything but a woman's face to be exposed, then undoubtedly I'd be thought vile in some quarters for wanting to take the veil from the face of Hedy LaHarr.

It is not that the subject is an obsession with me--really. It's like this, no analogy being absolute, but as illustrative examples: I ignore the convention about a gentleman's walking on the outside of a lady. I always walk on the inside. Superficially, I annoy myself as much with the enforced custom of walking thus as the convention I discarded. If you will think, not shallowly, with me a minute, though, you will see that someone has to make the breaks, set the examples. So I am satisfied that it doesn't make a damn bit of difference any more which side of a woman a man walks on, and I walk on the "wrong" side all the time just to help humanity along so the day may more quickly come when one may with impunity from scorn walk free-born beside a woman as is exigent. I seem to have forgotten the other example I had in mind, but I think the one will suffice. I shall emphasize my Patch Policy in regards to fantasy nudes only until the whole subject has become accepted and commonplace by the prudes...

Making the full circle and getting back to English, I'm afraid Pogorus is going to regret hiser correcting me on the misuse (sic) of the word emasculated. As I conceive it, neither of them knew the exact meaning of the word when they ran across it, referred to a dictionary where they were delighted to discover they had a tuch on me, because the defition read something like "to rob a male of virility." ((Typographical errors in foregoing line, should read: ...had a butch on me, because the definition read... etc.)) I spoke of "emasculated" feminity--paradoxical description--but no ignoramus' mistake. The quotes, Pogorus, the quotes! They clearly indicate, to anyone familiar with the fundamentals of writing, that here is a word used in not its usual sense. Irony: A "fine" romance (with no kisses). Grotesquerie: "Tiny" Waldo. Doubt: Amazing is a "stf." mag. Etc. Get the pernt? If there is a word to express the same thing in the feminine sense, I do not happen to know it off hand. I might have created "defeminized" to fit the occasion: "to rob of feminity." Instead, I chose the quixotic combination of the irresistible force and the immovable object, so to speak. Sorry you didn't understand. But, then, there are so many things you don't understand.

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