



Rhodos

PRESENTING...

ODD



14



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SELF-CENTERED MAN
...AND HIS GOD!



NELSON -50



THE VOICE
OF THE
TURTLE

HOW THE HELL DO YOU START OUT AN EDITORIAL FOR A MAGAZINE THAT HASN'T BEEN PUBLISHED IN FOURTEEN YEARS? What do you say for a second sentence? ...and I wonder about the third, too. I guess the best way is to simply say Hello. Welcome to the fourteenth issue of ODD magazine!

(I've heard it said that you can't ever go back again. And, I'm older now...and should know better. But it was fun once... Here's hoping it will be again.)

In 1947, with a lot more guts than brains, I started a mimeographed fanzine (amateur magazine to the uninitiated) called 'ODD'. Between then and 1952, thirteen issues, ranging in quality between unmentionably God-awful, and somewhat better were published. (The last eight issues of the old ODD were co-edited by one Richard Ellsberry, which is why they fit in the 'somewhat better' category.) Now, after a short lapse of fourteen years, another issue of Odd (or, ODD, if you prefer all 'caps') is born. WHY?

Why? Well, that's a good question... I can only wish I had as good an answer.

Why republish a fanzine after a time lapse of fourteen years? (Does it seem like I'm taking for ever to get to the point-well, I am.) For one thing, I'm nuts. For another, there seems to be a certain lack of flavor in present day fanzines. (The old Odd came in three flavors, Raspberry, Apricot and Lime) But mostly, I'm just nuts!

Be that as it may be, sometime a year or so ago, the idea of republishing Odd came to my mind. I tried 'therapy', hot-sitz baths, and fifty yard hikes. But nothing seemed to work. I even watched Billy Graham on television. Nothing! Then I got to thinking...if nothing happened when I watched Graham, this must be odd (considering all the build up-though, actually, I did get a little sick to my stomach). And if all this was odd; I thought to myself, WHY NOT ODD? (I realize free-association can be abusive, but bear with me. I've only got a little over one more page to fill)

Anyway, I decided to take the plunge. I twisted the arm of a very good artist friend of mine (a very good friend, and a very good artist!) Mickey Rhodes, to do a cover, the cover of this present issue. And then the fun began!

At first I thought I'd have the magazine professionally printed. Koo Haww! Was that a mistake. We took the cover to a small printing shop near the office where I work. ("Certainly, Mr. Fisher...it should run eleven or twelve dollars.") The price they quoted was, I thought, a little steep. But by skipping meals, etc., I figured I might afford a ten or twelve page, postage-stamp sized magazine. Then came the bill. Those \$\$\$@ highway robbers charged \$30.00. Yeeccccchh! That did it. I decided to get a press and do my own printing. (As I look back on it, the shock of that printing bill quite obviously unhinged my (?) mind (?). A condition in which it still reposes.)

As we live in a small three room apartment, the press was a mistake. And as for the process camera, and the plate making apparatus...forget it!!! Cozy is not the word. (we manage. But only by never inviting over 1 and 1/2 guests at any one time...unless it's the week we have hall privileges.)

Anyway, after trial and error, we managed to achieve some mastery over the verbotton iron-maiden, and you are looking at the result. ODD MAGAZINE!

I like the sound of that. I think I'll say it again, with emphasis: ODD MAGAZINE! (IT'S GREAT...with cream and sugar...lots of sugar!) (and mustard.)

If you noticed the switch from the personal 'I' to the editorial 'we' up above, there's a reason for it. And a very good one. The reason being that ODD is not the result of one man's labors. Nor of one man's dreams. I have much to be thankful for. And many to be thankful to.

First, my long-suffering wife. Joyce has endured the mess, the upheaval, and the general chaotic life that goes with stuffing a press, process camera, and much other odds and ends in a small city-apartment of three rooms, with out complaint. And with much help and understanding. She's also worked like a Trojan in helping type the masters, putting up with my ill temper when the press wasn't working right---which was always---and helped in many other ways to numerous and involved to mention. Also, Dave Hall, of Crystal City, and Paul Willis of Festus, Friends, and fans, and people without whose help Joyce and I would never have survived without cutting our throats, let alone ever getting the magazine out. There's Mickey Rhodes, whose work appears profusely in this issue (and, I hope, in future issues.) artist, no, Artist extraordinary, whose help has been generous to the extent that shames me. I might also mention Ray Nelson, who, upon receiving a phone call from someone he hadn't heard from in 14 years, sent in much, much badly needed material. And, Jack Gaughan, who also contributed material when he heard ODD was being revived. (Besides the back cover of this issue, Jack sent a lovely (like lovely, only more so) cover that will grace the front cover next issue. Rhodes, Nelson, Gaughan, Hall, Willis, my wife, Joyce, and many, many more wonderful people (such as Marshall Clarke, friend, and co-worker at the office; and also better than average poet, writer, mixologist...) have all had a hand in the preparing of this issue for your enjoyment. We hope you like it. And that you'll let us know how you liked it.

thank you,

RAY FISHER & ODD PEOPLE (whoever we were)

... SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST!



Tim Clares

the passing of ARTHUR

by JOE KENNEDY

I have always had a fondness for King Arthur. Especially since the night when he prevented me from being a penguin all my life.

It all started when the wizard Merlin came home around eleven p.m. from the annual Witches' and Warlocks' ball. Merlin was stowed to the gills. He wagged a finger drunkenly at me and exclaimed, "Be a penguin!"

And I became a penguin. I looked at myself in a mirror. I was not a bad looking penguin, at that. I preened my feathers. Then I went out and sat in the refrigerator, resolving to remain there until such time as Merlin had slipt off his bun.

Around one in the morning there came a thundrous knocking at the door. Merlin snored on. The knocking became louder. After a while there was a big crash and a splintering sound, and the door lurched open.

There stood King Arthur, dressed in his tin suit, waving a sword, and bellowing something or other. Merlin opened one bloodshot eye.

"Hell of a time of night to come visiting," said the wizard with a faint burp.

"Merlin, black wizard of nameless necromancies," commenced the King, waving the sword purposefully. "long have you plagued this fair kingdom with your evil sorceries. At last I have discovered your foul lair. Merlin, your moments are numbered."

"That's the trouble with you confounded nobles," drawled the wizard. "Can't do a damn thing without making a bloody speech about it. Why don't you kill me and spare us the oratory."

"I have heard worse suggestions," observed King Arthur, slicing his sword through the air with a great WHOOOOSH. Merlin's head plunked to the floor, although the wizard's body continued to sprawl on the bed.

This was a happy turn of events for me. As soon as Merlin was dead, I reassumed my natural form.

As I said before, I have a fondness for King Arthur. His collar-bone made an excellent toothpick.

.....

LAST TOAST

by
Joyce Fisher

One last great feast was held
And many glasses lifted high
With toasts to all those present
And generations past.
Heroes names were many
And warm hearts were proud
To grant them accolade.

When the last wine was drank
And the last guest, save one,
Had gone to his home to spend
The final hours till dawn
In each his own way,
The last guest sat at the table
Filled with vessels that would
Never be cleansed again,
And thought - perhaps cried -
Until the dawn
Brought the swollen sun's fire
And Earth's finish.



R. B. B.



I'LL TAKE THAT HILL IF IT COSTS EVERY LAST MAN I'VE GOT!

BOOKSELLER

By F. Anton Reeds

This is no arch-salesman, dynamo, persuader, go-getter,
This gray little man in faded jacket.
(Ah, but there is nothing gray or faded about those eyes,
Bright windows to a treasure-trove of centuries.)
He is so very like the books about him
(Torn a little, soiled perhaps; weathered here and there by
Quick-spent doorway showers)
That you are well within his cavern of immortals
(Aristotle, Plato, Poe, Euripides, Shaw, Sean O'Casey;
Disguised now as silent beggars, eighty-seven cents with
Broken ribs)
Before you realize with a start that he is there.

No bit of smudge on sheepskin need assure you
That this little man bears the stamp of scholars.
(Arts Bachelors coming to this dim-lit house of books
Must blush to own diplomas.)
When at last you leave, you go out softly
As befits departure from the greatest.
In a world where palaces of peace arise as if by magic overnight
Only in this place are there weapons
To fight the atoms.
In the hands of this gray little man
May rest the fate of a world.

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PANDERS TO THE STAR-BEGOTTEN

by

CHARLES BURDIEE

Fans are a weirdy folk, but some of the people they deal with in the pursuit of their hobby are also beyond the pale of the mundane.



I speak of second-hand book and magazine dealers.

These people are in business. They wrestle with the same thing that even the big companies do...overhead. That makes them speak the same language as the big corporations, so to speak. But it has no effect on their lack-luster eyes, their shuffling walk, their eternal bemusement. True, they are in business, but most of their shops are set up in run-down districts where greasy spoons, old clothes stores, small shoe-repair shops and dirty-glassed radio repair shops are their neighbors.

Most of you have made the rounds of the second-hand book stores in your home towns. You can no doubt add a good deal to this article from your experience. Why not write the editor an article on your experiences? Or write a letter about it. The editor loves letters.

These folks are bemused. Take for example the owners of the Holmes Book Store in Los Angeles. There are two book stores. Only, in the past week they had to sell one of the stores to keep from going bankrupt. The way they operated the store they just sold was to sit near the entrance reading a book and catch all customers as they came in. You'd be asked what book you were looking for; almost before you could answer, they'd say, "Sorry, haven't got it." If you still insisted on browsing, you were firmly discouraged. They didn't want people looking at their books! This store has been bought by an enterprising man who has cut all prices and welcomes customers. He even lets them upstairs, where the former owners wouldn't ever permit anyone to go, and where they never went themselves, to judge by the quarter-inch thick layer of dust on everything. Upstairs is a treasure house of books that seem to have been shipped in sometime in 1935. Browsers had been told there was nothing upstairs.

This reluctance to show their wares seems rather common among the dealers. There was a place in Hollywood where the proprietor charged a 25¢ 'browsing fee'. This place is no longer in business.

One of my informants found a wonderful bound file of early Lovecraft in amateur papers of the 1920's. When he inquired of the owner, the man got highly incensed. Those were his personal books, and were not for sale. Of course, you were supposed to read his mind; the books were on the same shelves along with other items that were for sale.

I recall a book store on Alvarado, where I went in search of early Albert and Pogo comics. I went into this store, breezing past the lady-owner, who was staring at me suspiciously. I went to a great



heap of comics. "What do you want?" she asked me. "Animal Comics," I said. "We don't have any," she answered back. I pulled one out of the stack. "Like this," I said. "Well that's the only one in there," she said. I paid no attention to her, but went on skimming rapidly down the stack. She came over and stood beside me. "If that's all you want, we haven't any more." Well, a person can only stand so much, even for Albert and Pogo. I paid her

for the one I had found and left. Have I ever returned?

Another character in Venice supplied me with laughter for days. I found a book on his private shelf, and he was annoyed about it. I started looking through his comic pile, and he refused me permission. "Why?" I asked. "When I get through here they'll be piled up neater than before." "You don't want any of those comics; they're all old ones." "Old ones are just what I want," I told him. "Well, I don't want you looking thru 'em anyhow," he said. "Why not?" I asked, "Is that your personal collection too?" He stated that it wasn't but he didn't want a bunch of people pawing through them. "But I'm not a grubby fingered child looking for free kicks," I said. "I'll buy ten or twenty or thirty mags out of there if they're what I'm looking for." He still refused. "You're in the second hand book and magazine business, aren't you?" I asked. He admitted he was. "And this is your place, and you're not just watching it for a friend?" He said it was his place. "And you don't collect old comic books yourself?" He said he did not.

Finally he permitted me to look through the stack, but at his counter, a handfull at a time. A handfull which he brought over to me himself and whisked away as soon as I had checked. I think I've spent 20¢ in the place, and I have not returned.

I imagine it's been described before, but there is a place on Main Street in Los Angeles that has the books actually piled on the floor. It has mounds of books in the strict sense of the word. Naturally you can see but a fraction of the titles in the mounds. Along the walls the books are stacked five and six deep...when you get to the bottom you are moving twenty books just to see one. After not too long a time, you realize you'd spend at least a full week of ceaseless, dirty labor just to glance at each title contained in that ill-lighted place. There was virtually no room to maneuver, either. The aisles, when they exist, are barely wide enough for one person to pass uneasily. Uneasily, for the aisles are but channels through piles and piles of books. I would estimate that at least 80% of the titles in that store are obscured. It would be a fine place for a bookworm to spend his vacation. He would have to bring a flashlight, spare batteries, and wear old clothes, but he might unearth something unique.

However, if he did find something good, the owner would want a fabulous price for it. I remember mucking in that pile for two hours one day, and finally coming up with a fair copy of a common enough book. The clerk wanted \$3.00 for it. I attempted to haggle with him, but he

shook his head. "Three dollars is the price," he said. "At least you'll know where this one is," I told him, as I left. Another time I was leaving the place when the owner asked me what book I wanted. I said I'd looked, and he hadn't had it. "How do you know we haven't got it?" I looked back at the dim rolling vista of bound reading matter and said, "And how in the hell would you know it if you did?" I still drop in there occasionally. The place fascinates me because of the books I can't see.

I was browsing one day in the Goodwill Book Store in Pasadena, when a young man brought a book from the shelf to the clerk and inquired the price. The clerk turned the book over and over, and leafed through it. "Twelve dollars," was the reply. The young man took it like he'd bitten a centipede in a sandwich. "Why," said the clerk, "this book is twenty years old and cost \$5.00 new. Look at that high-gloss paper and thick binding." I looked at it myself. It was of some phase of mid-20 architecture, and looked as dull as something by Lovecraft. The young man attempted to bargain, finally going as high as \$3.00 for it, but the clerk, with an omniscient air that is attained only by public park bums, civil service employees, and fans, held to the twelve dollar tag. I imagine he still has that book in his store, with its high-gloss paper and all.

A place out on Florence Avenue is run by an old lady who won't let you smoke in her place. The neatly stacked shelves, lit by naked bulbs hanging from frayed electric cords that are strung all over the place by strings and pieces of old rope. She is very nervous about your looking over her books, but she doesn't forbid you to look.

I have the idea that she wishes she could tell you not to look at her books, but she never quite has the nerve. Most of her books are reasonable, but she has blistering prices on things she thinks are fantasy, especially Jack London books. I asked her why and she said that once, long ago, a pleasant voiced fellow who wore zoot glasses had told her that those books were worth a whole lot. I am assured by those who know him that it was none other than the man who has always considered himself the number one fan who told her that.

Yes, the book dealers are a strange lot. I wonder what they think of the oddments of society that drop into their shops? I wonder what that nice old lady on South Broadway, near Gage, thought when a 16 or 17 year-old-kid came in and wanted to trade an ANZ for another magazine. She told him she couldn't trade even, but she'd take the



AMZ and 5¢ for another Amazing. He peered at her through puzzled eyes - hurt eyes. "But...but...that isn't fair!" he said. "Yes, yes it is," she said. "You see, I'm in business. I can't trade even. When I trade, I give one book for your two books. You see, I have to make a profit to stay in business." She was very cheerful about it. "But this is a big, thick one..." he said. "Couldn't I have two skinny ones for it?" The lady again explained her policy. "But, duh...you get the best of people that way," he exclaimed. At last the genial lady's patience began to crinkle around the edges. She asked him if he wanted to buy something or not. He said he didn't. Then he said, "How much is that magazine?" He pointed to another Amazing. She told him 10¢, or 5¢ and the magazine he carried. "How much for two?" he asked. "Twenty cents," she said, "but why are you asking? You haven't any money." "No," he said, "but I know where I can borrow it," and he went out, jumped on a scooter and rode off. This same lady asked me if I'd seen the comics behind the burlap on the lower shelf. When I said I hadn't but didn't want to go peeking behind curtains because she might have books or magazines there she didn't want to put in stock. She laughed merrily. "This place is full of books and magazines," she said, "everyone of them for sale."

I had never heard such an astonishing and wonderful statement in a second-hand book store before.

I'm afraid I just stood there looking rather silly.

CHAS. BURBEE

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FILCHED:

"Many Afgans moved to California following the merciless suppression of their nation by the evil red forces of Great Britan in the 19th century. Shortly after their arrival, they taught the miners in Flumas county how to ski and thus introduced the sport to this nation. Believing the San Francisco Bay Bridge to be an entrapped goddess which will return them to their native land, the entire Afgan population does solemnly gather together on May 22, the National Afgan Liberation Day, for festivities and, standing on the span, they pelt the shore with rotten eggs so that it may wish to release the bridge."

...from VARIATIONS ON THE DANCE OF DEATH
TAKOMA RECORDS... © 1004

=====

QUOTE:

"...The bible has some great passages in it.....Well, pretty great anyway!"

...HANK LUTIRELL

BRITAIN (OB)SCENE AND OBSERVED

by Richard Gordon



While in St. Louis a month ago I remember promising to write you something - anything! even remotely of interest happening in Britain, with some crap title like Britain (ob)scene and observed...so here we go... little tho there is to fascinate in the current meanderings of this country.

I suppose you could call the current pop music (ob)scene if you had a mind to. Besides such fascinating titles as the Troggs' I Can't Control Myself, and another little ditty called Bend It, (Bend it, bend it, just a little bit; squeeze it, tease it, try to please it, show you're liking it...et cetera, ad nauseum) which are currently popular, there is the Rolling Stones concert I went to hear in Newcastle a week ago, which was an education in sexual provocation on stage. When Miko Jagger wasn't slowly stripping off half his clothes, he was indulging in phallic antics with his mike, thrusting it at the screaming audience, and capering all over the stage with slow, mincing steps. The scrubbers in the front row seemed only mediumly hysterical tho; they've seen it all before, and anyway, the Stones are past their peak of popularity. Anyway, his malarial shakes were kind of interesting. This concert, by the way, also had an

extremely good act which I believe originated in St. Louis: the Ike and Tina Turner revue, 'soul' singers who are currently extremely popular in this country. They manage to generate a really fantastic atmosphere on stage and are well worth seeing. I hope I'm not teaching you to suck eggs...?

Otherwise on the (ob)scene, there is little but the latest sartorial fashions, which are simply respectively higher and lower, depending on which way you look at it. It's incredible, but mini skirts have managed to climb several more inches - I took a second glance to make sure, and admire despite the white stockings which I dislike - but I saw one the other day fully a foot above the knee. It makes attendance at the university very interesting if you like vicarious kicks! At the same time trousers are plummeting in the general direction of the ankles, with belts about two inches thick, making up for the rest of the exposed areas. God knows where it'll all end: perhaps in a mass epidemic of pneumonia.

SP-wise, the main action seems to be in the film world here. Fantastic Voyage has started to make the rounds and the Francois Truffaut version of Fahrenheit 451 is completed - it stars Julie Christie. I suppose it could be called the first major budget of film, what with the director as well. The Steckley story which has been turned into the Tenth Victim, complete with Ursula Andress and her bullet-firing bra, is about ready for release, and the Clarke-Kubrick epic is still, I

believe, being made - in fact things are fairly going in the film world. Doesn't seem to be too much else doing in the actual literary sphere though, that I know of, part gaffiated as I am.

As of one week, Britain is now a totalitarian state by definition. The Wage Freeze which first came into being some two or three months ago has been made law, so that the Labour Government (Let's GO with Labour ... where??) now has the self-granted Right to refuse to allow pay rises to anyone. In fact, it's an offence to get a pay rise. Of course, people have already started getting round the latest laws merely by granting people a rise in their positions, and of course the new positions automatically carry higher salaries. So next, I expect, the government will take compulsory powers ruling over promotions as well. It's the first step in the same old story, although it's the first time it's happened in this country for a long time. At the same time, redundancies are making themselves felt all over the country - particularly among car manufacturers. Puns have been making themselves felt on tv and radio - such as Harold Wilson at the Labour conference received overtures from Carmen - redundant car men ... Harold Wilson, while make his speech, made not so much a striking figure as a redundant one ... all typically British humour - minus the scatological content for the time being - but unfortunately all very apt at the moment. Wilson is naturally enough not very popular in this country among the people who put him into power - he has a bodyguard of five police all the time now, which is unheard of in this Island of Democracy, and is somewhat reminiscent of other places in the globe...

The worst thing is, of course, that beer has gone up in price twopence per pint - which throws my finances even further out of order ... my first night back at university here I'm afraid I got utterly spastic drunk - not that I particularly enjoy any after-effects that may or may not materialise - it was a kind of libation for six weeks of near teetotalism - America is a great country in many respects, said though I used to be rather anti-American in my insularity - but in respect of its licensing laws, I'm afraid it is slightly barbaric. I'm not advocating drunkenness as a way of life; it's somewhat sordid; but a little drink doesn't harm anyone. Especially when you can be called up for military service, etc., when you're eighteen - it seems a bit of an anomaly that the state should decree you adult in one respect for its own use and a minor in another, more personal respect - we have the same argument over getting the vote at eighteen, which don't as yet have.



It felt strange to be back in Britain, perhaps because I was seeing it from an entirely new perspective. Everything seemed so small for the first few hours, almost doll-like. Quite apart from the fact that it was drizzling heavily from a ten-tenths sky! Everything is also so crammed together compared with the United States and Canada - that's the main difference - the difference in scale - the distance between cities in your country is quite considerably different. Also strange, but I feel slightly nostalgic now that I'm back. I don't know whether that is the false glamour of distance, the good weather, or just the great time I had or what, but it's there. Probably an amalgam of all three. The country may be different, but people don't seem to change much anywhere in the world - Fancus Discovery there somewhere. Anyway, I'm currently plotting ways and means to get over the Atlantic somehow next year, although it is highly unlikely due to my lack of finance. I'm even putting off the trip to Paris for dirty weekend - two of my friends in this flat went to Paris for a fortnight and the tales I've heard render me green with envy - the trouble is, I know damn well they're all true... another mate hitch-hiked to Istanbul and back - that was apparently fascinating. If I come back to the states I'll wear a kilt and a notice saying ITINERANT SCOTSMAN - LIFT REQUIRED and that should do the trick. Greyhound buses have just about ended my existence...

I brought a copy of CANDY back into this country, down to university, and I haven't seen it since. It is generally agreed that it's the greatest piss-take since Adam and Eve ... which reminds me to miss that film of the Bible or whatever that's been currently touted all over the place. From what I've read it seems to be terrible...

So there's Britain for you - sinister driving - beer is up - totalitarianism - redundancy - strikes - mini skirts - rolling stones - penniless - spending hard. Fantastic!

RICHARD GORDON





HAPPY BILBO BAGGINS' BIRTHDAY TO YOU, STUD.

Take gas.....By DAVE HALL

We all had a great time celebrating Bilbo Baggins' birthday. We dragged 97 dead women around the floor awhile. Seriously. I mean we had a big time. We drove around St. Louis most of the afternoon; it was a nuisance. Then we had peon pie and spaghetti (mixed) and saw the most vulgar discount stores in the whole damn mother-loving world, and then we came home and went into the bathroom (seperately) and killed ourselves.

"I raise in flames," cried the penguin. Cheep cheep. (A new-born penguin can't fly at all, hardly.)

"You're right," said Willis. Willis is a secret squirrel sympathizer. All the rest of us, you know, are ducks. No, actually, you know, we are blue whales, but we're duck sympathizers.

I was explaining to some nut at the school about Bilbo Baggins--- "He found the Ring." "What ring?" "THE Ring" "What ring? Which ring?" "The one Ring!"... "And Frodo carried it into Mordor and threw it into the mountain." "Well, big deal. I threw a nickel in the river once, and nobody takes off for my birthday."

Gardner Soule must be a fabulous fellow. He wrote a fantastic book called "The Mystery Monsters" (catchy title; he did another one called "The Maybe Monsters." Real intellectual stuff, this.) This book is famous for having illustrations which must have been intended for another book. My favorite is the one in the chapter on the African Hunting Dog. It's illustrated by what is captioned an okapi (a beast that isn't even mentioned in the entire book.) But it isn't an okapi at all. It's a wildebeest.

And Soule also points out some other interesting facts. One suggests a great occupation for our great masses of unemployed. It is illegal to kill any blue whale under 70 feet. But the question, to my mind, is, how you gonna tell? Obviously you need someone as desperate for a job as he is short on good sense, who will boldly leap from the whaler right onto the whale's back, his tape measure in hand. "70 feet 6 inches, cap'n." "Swell." says cap'n, and launches his harpoon. Swoop! We haven't yet determined how to get the whale-measurer back on board ship alive, but one thing is for sure; it won't be a crowded occupational field, at least not for long at a time.

Sirrush, often wrongly attributed as the name of a Babylonian beast from the Lost City of Ishtar, is actually the sound made by a flushing water closet. Very appropriate too. Siiiiirrrrrruuuuush! "I'm ending it all. But I rise in flames," cried the penguin (new born).

However, there is reason to beleive, as Soule points out, that large aquatic animals may never quit growing. And of course they never start aging until they quit growing. This is why octopi 50 feet long have been reported. (God damn it, I'm serious.) And pretty soon, do you know what, blue whales are going to be so rare it will be illegal to kill them at all, and since man and the giant squid are the whales' main enemies, it is obviously going to start multiplying at a

horrifying rate, and...none of those blue whales are going to be dying. And...and, before we know it, the world is going to be over-run by those goddamn blue whales! There won't be anything we can do. They'll over-run the land and become so enormous they'll be unstoppable. Eventually the world will grow so burdened under the weight of billions of blue whales that it will fall out of orbit. And there isn't a thing any of us can do about it but take out special insurance against world conquest by blue whales.

Sirrrrrrrrrrursh! I rise in flames, cried the penguin.

.....

Sanctuary

by Joyce Fisher

Evil beasties surround me: I'll hie me to a nunnery.
With prayers and beads and psaltery
I'll occupy me,
And the cloistered halls and abbey walls
Will form a pentagon around me.

I'll take the veil; I'll seek the Grail.
I'll make myself a jail.
I cannot fail:
From my monast'ry no one can see
My hoof and horn and forked tail.



THE INCOMPLETE ESSAYIST

On The Ridiculous People and Other Matters



by Paul J. Willis,
Sec'y., INFO

Having been invited to raise some hell in an essay for the first issue of the revived ODD, so ably edited and published by my associate in the InterNational Fortean Organization, Ray Fisher, I'm replying with the following meanderings.

In a limited space, it's very difficult to "explain what Forteanism is all about." I don't know; that is to say, I have no simple answers on silver platters to hand out to those who inquire. "Forteanism" has meant very different things to many different people. Its history is an underground one largely, and as it is a philosophy almost indefinable except in terms of individual reactions, it is seen that a brief exegesis is virtually impossible.

Most think of it as a peculiar hobby devoted to gathering weird and out-of-the-way reports of things that may never have happened at all. It is that in a sense, of course -- but not only that. It also represents an aspect of the increasing need for better scientific information systems for the inclusion of "borderline" material -- since it becomes more and more difficult to be sure as to what data will be viewed as "significant" by the science of the future -- and for the retrieval of data from the past, where much is stored away without rhyme or reason, complicating the scientist's ever present historical problems.

In its ontological alignment, Fort's philosophy is akin to what Bertrand Russell called "Neutral Monism". But seeking doctrines in Fort's writing is like looking for non-existent needles in non-existent haystacks -- rather pointless.

One need say little more about the fundamental philosophy of "Forteanism" than was written by Martin Gardner (Hon. Member, INFO) in his PADS & FALLACIES IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE (Dover, New York, 1957): "Fort doubted everything -- including his own speculations. When his more astute admirers insist that he was not the arch-enemy of science he was reputed to be, but only the enemy of scientists who forget the ephemeral character of all knowledge, they are emphasizing the sound and healthy aspect of Forteanism."

What then is the point of INFO? Why create another formal, or semi-

formal mechanism to help perpetuate a philosophy that seems in its very nature anti-organizational? I suspect that this objection is best answered by observing that Forteans are markedly of an ironical turn of character.

INFO exists for two reasons: first, to serve as a repository for a sampling of Forteana, bearing in mind that the quantity of such data is so vast that no one can reasonably expect to record more than an infinitesimal percentage of it; and secondly, to encourage fresh imagination, new thinking, and new approaches to problems both old and new. Most importantly, perhaps, to give expression to new problems, which are the basis of the advancement of knowledge (if you care to accept the concept of progress.)

No axes will be ground, saving, perhaps, one to use against those whom I like to describe as the Ridiculous People. This term was invented by the 18th century Venetian satirist, Carlo Gozzi, (1722 - 1806) in his fairy-tale spoof, The Love for Three Oranges, later used by Prokofiev for his opera of the same name. The Ridiculous People are those who try to impose their own ideas and ways of thought (or non-thought) on others, through various kinds of force, subtle or otherwise. Oftentimes these same pious folk are caught worshipping at the shrine of the deus ex machina. They are the dispensers of explanation-by-fiat. They are those who believe that the verbs, "to explain" and "to explain away" are synonymous.

Herodotus, alternately referred to as the Father of History and as the Father of Lies -- an unflattering equation -- posed the question quite a few years back: What is the most universal characteristic of men? He was, as far as we know, probably familiar with a wider assortment of men and cultures than any before him, and so he had a fair background from which to speak. His answer was laziness. Some centuries later, a rather astute fellow by the name of Nietzsche still found enough reasons to concur with this conclusion. And where does laziness originate? I would submit, in the inertia of the mind; that mental laziness is the "big daddy" of the manifold expressions of this characteristic. Through the millenia of human history, the overwhelming majority of Homo sap., both individually and collectively, have not noticeably found the process of thinking to be any more attractive than when we supposedly gained the ascendant over our poor relations among the anthropoid apes. And if you think this point worth debating, first glance through your daily newspaper. It should cool and persisting optimism.

INFO is designed to be frustrating, in its own small way, and without hope of victory, to the Ridiculous People -- those generous humanitarians who insist on solacing our doubts and calming our childlike uncertainties -- or else. One may recall some of their past assurances: that men would never fly, that meteorites are not fallen from the sky, that space travel was a mere dream of the science fiction writers, ad infinitum et nauseam. (See especially chapters 1 & 2 of Arthur C. Clarke's PROFILES OF THE FUTURE.) We shall be soothed and comforted. We must not trouble our feeble brains. Leave matters to the duly appointed committees of experts, who will eventually deliver their oracular verdicts. One visualizes old Herodotus, with suitable melancholy on his features, writing his conclusion, and it seems less strange that men believe what they are told to believe.

But to speak of science, where belief has no place -- theoretically at least. Science began in magic, in the desire to understand enough of the workings of the universe to be able to manipulate its phenomena for human ends, and this inescapable anthropocentrism continues, but it can all too easily be lost to sight. We create, and are created by, our abstractions. The attempt at understanding, however limited, or however far it may seem removed from utilitarian applications, always presupposes a rational "dialogue" between man and the external world; a dialogue between two parties speaking a mutually interpretable "language". I incline to think that the cosmos is not quite the rationally-operating place we like to think of it as in our customary terms of reference; that we do a great deal of gesticulating at our own shadows; that while both the Kamchatka shaman and the quantum physicist have each found something personally convincing in their cosmical colloquies, neither one can be correctly said to possess a point of view of unrestricted objectivity. From any angle one looks at it, we commit a blunder in speaking of "disinterested knowledge".

Neither do I mean to imply that "impartiality" or "objectivity" is necessarily desirable, only that we should not read too much literal significance into such labels.

How much of our knowledge is pre-determined by what we wish to convince ourselves is true? The universe is complex to such a degree as to allow us to sift out enough facts to conclude, or prove, or justify whatever we wish. But let him who considers such relativism sufficient reason to throw out the window all existing human art, science, philosophy, etc., do so at his own peril. One cannot prove that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow morning; but one needn't seriously worry about it not happening. Our "uncertainty principle" (not in a limited, Heisenbergian sense) needn't be identified with "know-nothingism".

Why do men show such an almost perverse insistence on taking themselves seriously, as though our species were merely another pack of solemn, dignified baboons? Is "truth" measured by the degree to which baboonish pomposity is associated with it? I would rather have the ability to laugh to be used as a yard-stick of philosophical merit. Laughter has a refreshing sound; a sound ever new and sweet, as though it just been first voiced by some mellowly cardonic god. And yet we continue to regard mirth as something beneath our "higher faculties" and "lofty aspirations". Have you ever heard any of the other animals laugh? Nature constrains them to keep a straight face, which is prerequisite to self-deception, but even with this natural advantage they seem far less adept at lying to themselves than are we. A superiority of cold comfort, but I suppose an inevitable concomitant of any increase in the level of intelligence. (Do I really mean that?)

The thought is hardly novel, but ideas are like clothes. Some never change their apparel, and wear as an adult what they wore as a child. Most are content with whatever hand-me-downs are available. All of us, to some degree, are the slaves of fashion, and the Zeitgeist as a tailor frequently displays the taste of a lunatic. Many are satisfied with pristine nudity, and are bewildered when nobody else can see their beautiful clothes. Specimens of this ingenuous type are prone to imagine that problems are best dealt with by an effort of pure imagination, by ignoring or denying the reality of the problem, or else by

wishing so very hard for the solution that they persuade themselves that it is found in any tattered resolution that strays along.

If there is a "moral" to all this, I would find it in an appeal to temporary acceptance of ideas -- and as a guideline deserving more than just lip service. It remains to be seen, in my opinion, that there are any unconditional facts, or any ultimate bases for adamant belief. At least the historical record of 2,500 years of philosophical debate and scientific probing into the ways of the natural world have failed to make any appear obvious. Indeed, what is so especially desirable about absolutes? It can be embarrassing to admit to being wrong, but it can be far more embarrassing to be revealed as a jackass wearing blinkers. It seems evident that the future belongs to those with the proper knowledge at their disposal. In my view, this inevitably involves a truly free intellect, one that steadily extricates itself from the ignorances and prejudices that seem such an integral part of us. Providing that we resist the urge to suicide, the flowering of our species is only beginning, wherein the dreams of gods and supermen might take concrete embodiment. Of these remote descendants, best imagined perhaps in Olaf Stapledon's works, we are in no position to speak much, but it is safe to predict that their inconceivable enlightenments will come as the result of courage -- the courage to evolve. It will not come easily; maturing is never a painless process.

The universe, and the microcosm that is man, represent a nare incognito. There have been many arbitrary sea-walls built by the spiritually timid, the better to grow cabbage-heads in the resultant muck. Fortunately, there will always be rival camps -- the growers of vegetables, and the sea-raiders who enjoy knocking holes in dikes...

Nothing is so suffocating as an air-tight argument, or in the words of Santayana: "The ignorant are always dupes of what they think they know."

Some final negative definitions. INFO is not an alliance of holier-than-thou crusaders. I personally have little patience with those who set up shop as "debunkers", because my experience is that all too often these announced champions of enlightenment merely add more bunk to the bunk already piled so high and impeding traffic. Most of our present members are scientists, teachers, editors, and writers -- responsible people, dedicated to the vitality of the human mind, or larding the rifts again, to the precept of Francis Bacon in his essay, "Of Studies": "Read not to contradict and confute; not to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider."

Giving one the benefit of the doubt, I close with this wish: the reader has a mind; let him be free with his use of it.

PAUL J. WILLIS

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There's always something missing in the new robots!

TWO POEMS

by Joyce Fisher

God never makes an appearance in Greenland.
Doesn't that strike you as odd,
That of all the miracles
None of the apparitions
Have been at Greenland?

Maybe that tells you something
About the place
And also something about the God
Who made it.

The Great Blue Whale rises,
And the sailors,
In their flimsy boat,
Are tossed into the sky.

The Mother-Ship, standing near,
Counts the roster of those
Who are left alive
To learn the numbers of the dead.

The Blue Whale swims away;
The dead sink into the sea.
The Blue Whale rises,
Many times over,
But the dead will never rise again.

Guard

BY
MARSHALL CLARK

Movement stiff, feet sore.
Soreness around shoulders.
Fingers, toes ache.
Must walk though. Keep walking.
Not much longer. My relief due soon.
Feet getting wet. So cold.
Getting dark, too.
Rifle heavy. Pack heavy.
Awful ache.
Tired.
Keep walking - just step
One step at a time.
Count steps to that fence post ahead.
No, that's a mailbox.
One, two, three...
Ears ache, nose stings, headache, eyes...
Seven, eight, nine...
Maybe if I sing to myself.
Might help.
"The corn is as high
As an elephant's eye..."
Remember that picture.
Color, summer, beautiful.
Nice and warm.
There. Seventeen steps to mailbox.
Now what? That tree.
One, two, three...
When I reach the tree, I'll look at my watch.
Five, six, seven...
Lucky guys in States.
Those guys in Washington.
Ralph said businessmen.
I don't believe him. Businessmen don't start war.
Eleven, twelve, thirteen...
Border sure is quiet.
Maybe they're all sleeping.
Maybe nobody's there at all.
I'm guarding for nothing.
Twenty-one steps to tree.
It's 6 o'clock. Fifteen minutes until relief.
One more round.
I'll pace that rock ahead.
One, two, three...
Nope, businessmen don't start war.
Who, then? Idealists, policy makers...?
Anyway, they don't know war.
Not like I do.
Not sitting there
In Washington.




Come walk with me..
Come dream with me...
Come, and we'll dance
In the violet twilight
For the memory of the Spring
That now is gone.
Dance faster, love...
The Winter is approaching.

by Joyce Fisher

Come With Me



B. Luce



I'll let you ride my white windwagon,
And we'll cross the plain with dragon-sails;
Down to the sea, all green and foamy,
There to bob and flirt with whales.
I'll bring you with me, as I go skimming,
Softly, softly, o'er the sands,
And when the night stars blink in the heavens,
I'll sing to you of blood-red lands,
Lands where night has grimly fallen,
And from the cities all hope has flown;
I'll tell you this as we go breezing;
But blink your eyes -- and you're all alone.

by Becker Staus

.... And flirt With Whales

THE SCIENCE OF MORALS

by
Walter Parkin



(NEW
GRAPHIC)

If asked for the greatest contributor to the good of civilization our answers would probably be of one accord. All must agree that a system of morals is the pilot of humanity. We must follow our ideals. However, the need is the limit to our common accordance. We would not agree on history.

effect, or purpose. From habit, we drift into one field of thought; by reason, we plow into another. From behind the theologians mask of immunity we have no problem. It has been erased, dissolved, but not explained. Is that a method of pursuit? Do we conquer an obstacle by ignoring it? To catch the instinctual genesis of moral, let's retrogress to the formation of the animal kingdom. The first instinct after the discovery of life is to gain nourishment. With this we are not concerned at the present. The second instinct is, however, the cause of which moral is an effect. Strength is the devourer, weakness the devoured. It was learned early by the weak that union was essential to protection against the strong. Herds of the small were formed as the result and out of this formation came morals. When the problem of protection of race was solved, a new one was born, protection against race. These gregarious animals were forced to live together and it was readily seen that nature did not prepare for such a consequence. Fight for possession replaced fight for survival, greed replaced hunger, and war became sport. The tribe which begat genius became triumph over brutalism and mankind was born. The survival of the fittest was the theme of the day, and only those of the fittest who possessed insight against self-destruction. It is to these few that we owe the credit or discredit of our survival and progression.

Now, after we have chosen a system of morals, what have we? Too often the intended effect is lost in translation and our good little idea assumes mediocrity. Self-appointed chieftans formulate laws to govern the masses for personal comfort and wealth. Self-appointed gods set up a book of rules to force obedience from the people. We take these laws as truth because of an origin in our superior. Neither a truth or a falsity can be good if it hinders a search for a betterment of mankind. Can a moral be helpful if it hinders and actually bars free thought? Such has been the duty of religion and government, using our wandering and prodigal moral system as a tool, as a lion turned on itself. The psychology is to oppress the meek by virtue of false dangers and intangible rewards, the crux of which the oppressed does not understand. The genius arises in protest and is immediately squelched by slander. He is called a reformer, a revolutionist, a hypocrite, and a crackpot. His truths are labeled as fiction, and he is forced into obscurity, where he writes book after book, all to no avail. He is recognized only by contemporary genius and by students of the millenium.

Oh, what problems have never been solved! What challenges have never been met! Where are we heading in our semi-conscious ignominy? To the promised land where all laws are abolished and life is ever beautiful? Hardly. Even those of us who have hope of entering this Utopia of the Saints cannot fill the first requisite for the admittance, or make sacrifice as it is written. Simple as it may be, our nature, endowed upon us by our creator if you must, does not allow us to live our life of sublimity in ease. It creates an illusion of perfection to be striven toward. Perfection by what perspective? Can the weak attain this perfection; can the tired and the weary go farther and further onward in search of a never-materializing ghost? Can the poor and the hungry stay by the law with a bare head and an empty stomach? But sir, morals are for the mass, the people, a crutch for the cripple. Where is his helper, his promised assistance, if he not create it in his own mind? There is your connection, poor befuddled mind, rise out of your chaos, your futile hope. Throw off those chains of iniquity and establish a god in yourself. Today you live, tomorrow you are but dust. Cleanse your mind of pagan fears and go into the field of knowledge and reap the harvest of your mortal intelligence. Play upon your good fortune of possessing life. Seek ye first the joy of your own heart, then render aid unto your neighbor who is as you once were. Free him of his obsession and gather his assistance in designing the slab on which one day the truth will be written. Take away the cannibals with their tenets and totems.

Build them an idol and write a book, for they are weak and have need for such things, but let men of free mind continue. Let them continue their progressive search for the real truth. Our way is clear and our method is certain. Live in your flight; take leave of your brevity, and give us time to convince these fools. Nations, hear this plea: teach your young, for there is your future. Your old are lost back to the dust from whence they come. Take your morals from the politician and the theologian, and implant them in your people instead. Strike the fear from their hearts and let their accomplishments be recorded in your history. Drive the false prophet and soothsayer from your table and cushion your chair well. Admit the wise men to your circle, and you will be there long. Establish your moral by the hand of your people and it will be truly good.



GREENLAND IS A DREADFUL PLACE....

by
David N. Hall

Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Cordwainer Smith and Philip Jose Farmer all seem to be highly-acclaimed (if controversial) writers in science fiction today. Vonnegut is praised out of all reasonable proportion by YANDRO, Judith Merrill (and why doesn't she shut up?) and Kurt Vonnegut Jr. Cordwainer Smith is both admired immensely and hated immensely. Philip Jose Farmer's fame, such as it is (a highly neglected writer) rests mainly on THE LOVERS and the Riverworld series, the latter a concept so fantastic, so outre and so fascinating that it would have been utterly impossible to do it justice. But the books I have on hand here are not the books on which each author's reputation rests. They all bear analysis for approximately the same reason. The Vonnegut collection, CANARY IN A CAT HOUSE, I remember from before my advent in fandom, in days when my reading tastes were even less sophisticated than they are now. The Smith item, QUEST OF THE THREE WORLDS I read shortly after THE PLANET BUYER; it was my second Smith story and the first time I became really acquainted with the reasons people like Buck Coulson and Ted White consider Smith a pretty bad slop writer. The Farmer book, THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES chronicled a second descent after the gibberish of DARE in my high opinion of his writing.

CANARY IN A CAT HOUSE, which may or may not have been reprinted recently, is a collection of Vonnegut's short stories, apparently

his earliest short stories. I can't help but picture a recent convert to Vonnegut by GOD BLESS YOU, MISTER ROSEWATER, picking this up and coming away sore disillusioned. (Not that I was much impressed by ROSEWATER. I got just past the Mitford Science Fiction Writers Conference and gave up. It was not a style or a type I like much.) Every single one of the stories is lousy. (Not all of them are science fiction or even marginal fantasy, but that doesn't keep them from being lousy.) The early Vonnegut seemed to specialize in smaltzy stories, usually about uninteresting people, which pretended to have a biting insight that was more often banal. Take, for example, the story All the King's Men. This is a nasty exercise in which a group of American G.I.s are forced down in Red China and forced by this nasty, avarice-ridden Commie general to become the players



in a living chess game (does this plot sound new to you? I can't believe that). This might have had some redemption if Vonnegut had found some new way to handle it. He might have recorded the moves which would at least given fans something to fool with. He might have etched the emotional reaction the American "king" would have to all this, especially since his team was risking their lives and the enemy had nothing to lose but gigantic blocks of wood which were laid back in their boxes. But Vonnegut fails miserably on both counts. The reader can't even imagine the action of the game (nor given the circumstances that any player placed in danger, even if protected, is sure to be taken, can it be accepted that he'd last long at all) and his emotions are brought home with all the charge of a Saturday Evening Post space-filler story (which is where most of these stories probably appeared). The result is nothing, junk. A story for a reader who has never seen a story on this plot and has nothing at all to base his reaction on.

Do you get the picture? It's Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, high school text-book science fiction. In fact, another of the stories, The Report on the Barnhouse Effect, actually appeared in one of my high school text books, a couple of years before such examples of rudimentary kitsch as Jack Finney's awful OF MISSING PERSONS and Bradbury's THE PEDESTRIAN. This was one of the best known of Vonnegut's early stories, the scorn, apparently, on which his current reputation is built. But it's a bad story, badly written, with an ending as improbable as it is blandly optimistic.

But this is Vonnegut's early science-fiction. It can be excused perhaps that the average reader doesn't realize how ordinary it's psychic-powers plot is in the field, and is more influenced by what is to him a revolutionary concept than by the internal weakness of the story. What can be made of his non-science fiction?

There's D.P., which is the story of a negro boy in a European orphanage, about how lonely he is because he is "different" and how he eventually finds a troop of American soldiers and adopts the only negro in sight as his "daddy". Terrible stuff. There's one written in the form of two letters -- oh, surely, no one can tolerate this business -- exchanged between the fathers of two astronauts, American and Russian, who are killed in space when their capsules collide. (There is something rather droll about the first two manned capsules in space colliding, but Vonnegut didn't see it.) I doubt if such could be done with a concept of this degree of triteness anyway, but Vonnegut makes it worse by stereotyping both parents until they simply don't exist. The departed astronauts are treated in a like manner, and the whole thing disintegrates into a sort of plea for international understanding that hardly seems worth the effort.

Probably the best story of the lot is Unready to Wear, but it falls short on two levels -- as satire and as science-fiction; as satire because his notions were smaltzy and because they weren't developed beyond the notion that things could be much better (if not as easily as Vonnegut tries to portray); as science-fiction because his notion (a future where bodies may be shed and the naked psyche can roam at will) is riddled with internal illogics and external optimism that just doesn't seem to have much point.

It's all Saturday Evening Post stuff, stuff with no content and almost no point. The stories in CANARY IN A CAT HOUSE are all

crap, what Dwight MacDonald would call kitsch, what Ted White would call functional illiteracy (or aimed at the kind of person who is functional illiterate, or nearly so) and what I would call simply crap. The ideas reduce the scope of science fiction to clichés; the writing, the characters to types.

Nevertheless, for all their badness, these stories have some subtle undertone of the type of style that later made Vonnegut a noted writer. The undertones of all the characters, as later evidenced I should think in *GOD BLESS YOU, MISTER ROSEWATER*, is a banality. A forced banality of characters, intentional or half-intentional and suggesting that it is the characters, and not the writer himself that has been reduced to banality. Something about Vonnegut's approach to his characters -- both deriding and sympathetic -- lingers in the mind long after the silliness of the story they appeared in is forgotten. Perhaps it is the development of this train of thought that has made Vonnegut an established writer. God knows, it isn't the style and it isn't the plots. It's this peculiar point of view that alone lifts *CANARY IN A CAT HOUSE* out of the realm of utter tripe.

Cordwainer Smith has recently died; as a matter of fact he died between the time I started typing this column and now (or at least I've heard of it since then). He was, indeed, an odd writer whose work, like Vonnegut's, was at least part tripe, and often audlin tripe. *QUEST OF THREE WORLDS*, in spots, represents his worse writing, and in fact, his best qualities are not as evidenced here as in less synthetic books. And *QUEST OF THREE WORLDS* is a synthetic book, constructed very clumsily out of a series of magazine stories - some of them only nominally related.

The problem with the late Mr. Smith's prose was that, while Vonnegut has banal wrappings, the very core of his work was banal; the trappings were more attractive. Rather like enjoying a delicious meal and being told, on asking, that it was eel broth. (Lord Randal got a nasty surprise that way.) Still for a' that and a' that, Smith was a writer whose good points were almost startlingly good. His concept of the future, an admittedly marred one, is very fascinating and vast nevertheless. Perhaps like a vision of the future under LSD. Likewise, there is something about the splendor and squalor of Smith's future that reminds, not only of sword and sorcery, but of Wagnerian opera; a panorama of gigantic, grandiose (and occasionally bombastic, if bombastic in a fascinating style) ideas; the underpeople, strown the immortality drug and unspeakably wealthy Old North Australia which controls it, worlds fabulously wealthy, bulbous with wealth, controllers of galaxies, planets literally composed of jewels, tired and decadent. But most important of all, the animal-derived underpeople, perhaps the most consistent and successful interpretation of an old idea. Perhaps the underpeople are the logical extension of the personifications of nature and fauna in folk-lore and mythology.

But now that I have praised Smith with faint damns (and not because he has happened to die, because I did not hear of his death until the body of this article was written), I should proceed to tear *QUEST OF THREE WORLDS* to shreds because it deserves it. The main story-line is never resolved; it just fizzles out. Poof. The

hero, Casher O'Neill, a smaltzy introspective type (smaltzy introspective views have been used by Smith successfully, but only when advocated by underpeople, where it is more logical), succeeds in his goal with much suffering but notably little effort, and there seems to be so little else to do with him that he is quietly farmed out (almost literally, and though the text definitely states otherwise I can't help suspecting that his lady was an underperson, heifer-derived) and no more is heard of him. The last twenty or so pages are concerned with an entirely different story!

Did I mention Smith puts rather smaltzy ideas into the minds of his underpeople? He does, and with remarkable effectiveness, for it would seem that here is the true vehicle that resides at the center of all his best ideas. An animal forcibly dragged up the evolutionary ladder might be expected to think with the instinct-derived thought, react with the character traits, that Smith predicated for them; each has his innate character born of his derivation, which makes, for instance, O'Mell the cat woman, the mysterious avarian E'Telli-Kelli (presumably eagle derived) and T'Ruth the turtle woman memorable characters. Even machines can be characterised with surprising effectiveness in Smith's work. But Smith failed miserably when he tried to characterise human beings, probably because he regarded them the same the same way he did the underpeople and tried to fill them, like so many cocktail mixers, with all the emotions of which they are capable, and which come cascading out, in a thoroughly jumbled form, at the embarrassed reader's feet. Still Smith has created O'Mell, John Joy Tree, Jestocost and others, all of which were characters I remember with some affection, and his notion of the universe conveys, to me, a feeling of *décadance* and disintegration not approached by *THE DYING EARTH*. They even cancel out the disgust I felt when he came up with the monstrously bad idea of trotting in *The Cross* and all it implies in the middle of *QUEST OF THREE WORLDS*. But his style was always ultimately self-defeating. *QUEST OF THREE WORLDS* is even more self-defeating than *THE PLANET BUYER* because of the lack of organization and because the stories themselves are not very substantial, becoming less so when jumbled together and expected to achieve unity. The failure of Smith's work was that he could not successfully fit human beings into a world populated by underpeople and decaying worlds of infinite, bulbous beauty. A self-defeating style.

Perhaps if Smith had lived he would have been able to harness his abilities, cancel out the multitude of faults, and write the really outstanding book hinted at in his printed works, but now we can never know, which is indeed a shame. *QUEST OF THREE WORLDS* doesn't even approach it.

Philip Jose Farmer's *THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES* stinks. I got little further into it than into *GOD BLESS YOU, MISTER ROSEWATER*. It seems to recount the sort of rejuvenation that Farmer used in *THE GOD BUSINESS*, which I liked considerably better. In *THE GOD BUSINESS* the rejuvenation and conversion into a literal god by the hero was successful because Farmer handled it in a free, broad style. But *THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES* seems to be meant seriously; the characters, while as imaginative as those in *THE GOD BUSINESS*, have less significance and the protagonist in particular is not a very interesting

character. But THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES is not very good for all of Farmer's clever tricks and all his extrapolations. It's a pot-boiler, and the Riverworld series and THE LOVERS and THE GOD BUSINESS were not pot-boilers. In point of fact it is not even as good as his just previous failure DARE, which reached further than is usual in his work for its symbolism and came home with less impact than is usual. THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES is Acetripe. It is Acetripe written by one of science fiction's most gifted writers, one with an eye for insight and a tongue for controversy, and a fluid style to carry it off, but it is still Acetripe and if it means easy money for the writer it means a disappointing waste of his effort for us.

You have probably noticed that all the books I have reviewed are poor, and poor indeed as examples of their authors' craft, n'est pas? I did that deliberately. In the case of Farmer, it is too bad that his name should be tacked on such an embarrassing book; in the case of Smith it is especially bad that his work should appear in such disorganized form, pointing up his flaws; in Vonnegut's case, where the book predated his best work, it is a shame that such apprentice botches should have ever appeared at all. But nevertheless it is edifying to see these disappointments. In the case of a writer of some depth and ability, it is easy to lose sight of his flaws and cry "Gosh wow, he is pure great!" and this just isn't the case with any of these. These are the soft underbellies of three writers, their worst hack writing.

The only way to gain perspective on something is to appreciate what is right with it and what is wrong with it. A reader of Edgar Rice Burroughs could hardly determine why he is widely disliked unless he read better work of the same style by a better writer. And none of these books are as unmitigatedly bad as, say, Lin Carter or other writers of the Acetripe school, even at their very worst. Books like THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES, CANARY IN A CAT HOUSE and QUEST OF THE THREE WORLDS can give the fan perspective if read beside THE LOVERS, THE SIRENS OF TITAN and THE PLANET BUYER. For this reason, they can be hardly recommended, but their mere, unfortunate existence can make the reader all the happier that the better work exists.



....IT'S A PLACE THAT'S NEVER GREEN

by
David N. Hall

There is getting to be a lot of Tolkien esoterica. It used to be just **THE LORD OF THE RINGS**, but now one can avail himself of a lot of stuff that was better left unprinted...from what V.A. Auden called 'Tolkien's bad poetry' to his essays on fairy tales and a play about Beornthoth Beornthelm's son. All of it has a couple of things in common: it has been printed by Ballantine, and it is bad enough to put the most devoted Tolkien fan to sleep.

Maybe that isn't so. When I reviewed **FREE AND LEAP** recently, and mentioned what I thought was an overwhelmingly obvious fact, that it was dull, only two people agreed with me: Jim Turner, who hated J.R.R. anyway, and Buck Coulson, who pointed out that at least it was better than **THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL**, (which was also pretty obvious. Besides, **TOM BOMBADIL** cost \$3.50, while **FREE AND LEAP** cost \$1.00, and both can be bought now for 95¢ from Ballantine.) Now perhaps the Tolkien fans, like the Burroughs' fans and certain never-say-die Heinlein fans, are so far gone they aren't ready to admit that their hero could write crap. I just don't agree, and Tolkien is a hero of mine. (I was the founder of what is now one of the worst "It's-All-Great-Including **FARMER GILES OF HAM**" publications, **ENTMOOT**.)

You can find all of these items in Ballantine's **THE TOLKIEN READER**, or you can find them separately, if you're a completionist (and I'm afraid I am, altho I doubt if I'd bought **TOM BOMBADIL** if I knew it was soon to be published in a much cheaper edition.) For your money you also get an article, **TOLKIEN'S MAGIC RING** by someone named Peter Beagle. I'm afraid articles about Tolkien no longer impress me, and anyway, I've read better ones.

TOM BOMBADIL is billed as "hobbit poetry", which is, unfortunately, the worst. Tolkien's poetry has a certain charm that makes it readable. It is enjoyable when in context, and tolerable outside of it. Likewise, **TOM BOMBADIL** is tolerable, but not by a whole lot. It has a "rustic" charm. Some of the verses are very bad. ("You sink into the slime, who dare/To knock upon their door,/ While the grinning gargoyles stare/ And noisome rivers pour.") But, still, all in all, it's not a badly-put-together slim volume of poetry, with nice illustrations by Pauline Baynes (who doesn't draw my idea of Middle Earth.) It's drastically overpriced at \$3.75 on it's own merits.



TREE AND LEAF has an allegory that should have been buried in quick lime, and an essay on fairy tales, which, as a friend of mine said about guitar music (all guitar music,) is all right if you like that sort of thing. I can't see anyone getting upset about this unpretentious and unimpressive volume, though.

FARMER GILES OF HAM, though, is bad. Terribly trite and boring, and all the characters try hard to be funny. There are drawings by Tolkien which are neither good nor bad. They're bland. They try so hard to be funny, too.

All of these can be found in their own overpriced volumes. The play about Beorhtelm's son (who was a Beowulf-type semi-historical figure who managed to get himself undone from too much sportingness,) is making it's first appearance. It's a dialog between two figures who are viewing the after-battle carnage ("Look, here's old Charlie" ...well, not really: "And here's AElfwine, barely bearded and his battle's over.") and contemplating Beorhtnoth's ofermod. I find it interesting, strikingly well-written (Tolkien has a genius for words however bad his theme. His poetry has flow, and the playlet is practically blank verse) and of considerable historical interest, especially Tolkien's notes and comments. But whether it has merit enough to stand on it's own I doubt, and certainly not enough merit to stand beside THE LORD OF THE RINGS.

In other words, the trouble with all the contents of THE TOLKIEN READER is not that they are bad on their own merit (except for the allegory LEAF BY NIGGLE and FARMER GILES OF HAM) but that they are really pretty much beside the point. On their own merits I like some far better than others, but I dislike the idea of having them pushed on me as essential to the Tolkien mythos. They have almost no relationship to THE LORD OF THE RINGS. Ballantine is using material of no interest to the Ring-fanatic, to pressure the fan into buying something as interesting to him as Lewis' essay on miracles is to the fan of the Thulacandra Trilogy. Tolkien fans are sometimes a strange sort, distaining other fantasies for their pet; not interested in history (which is what Beorhtnoth was) but only in something that affects them personally...i.e. THE LORD OF THE RINGS. THE TOLKIEN READER is decidedly not essential Tolkien for them. It is the essence of non-essentialism. Therefore, I can only think that THE TOLKIEN READER could only be recommended as "fairish" to everyone, and not recommended to the Tolkien fan at all. The original editions of FARMER GILES OF HAM, TOM BOMBADIL, and TREE AND LEAF I do not recommend at all.

Well, the editor tells me that he thinks I ought to say something about the philosophy of the Tolkien books I just reviewed. There are definite disadvantages to trying to work in your editor's flat, on his typewriter, and playing his records. Rather like having John Campbell as your milkman. ("I think you ought to put more emotion into your request for chocolate milk; there is a certain pathos to chocolate milk, especially if, as you seem to think, it really comes from a different breed of cow. The section about cheddar cheese should be cut down. There is not much that can be done with cheddar cheese.") I don't really know what he means, because there is no particular philosophy to these selections. THE HOMECOMING OF BEORHTNOTH BEORHTHELM'S SON is academic. Tolkien comments on the ofermod, which was a word of condemnation, destructive bravado.

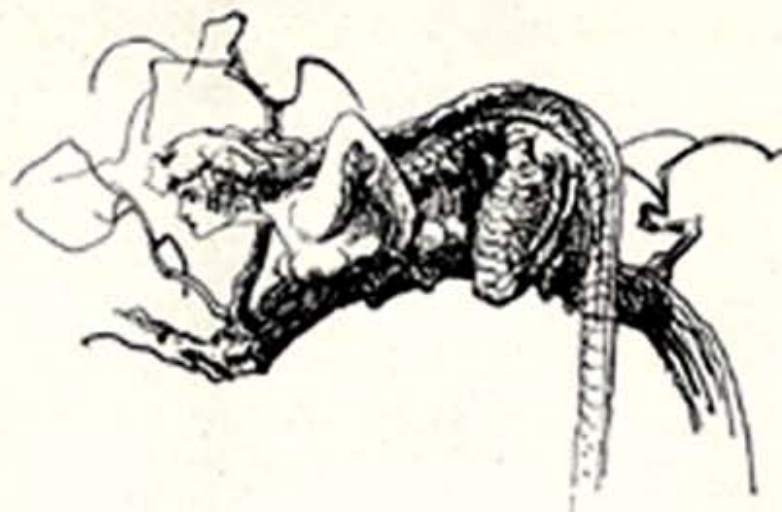
Beorhtnoth is criticized for his ofermod, which cost him his life, which took not only his life, but the lives of all his men, whereas Beowulf was not because his extravagant bravado in his unpractical attack on Grendel and the dragon would cause no one's death but his own if he failed. Beorhtnoth was the only hero condemned for ofermod. Whether or not Beowulf could be condemned by it, by modern standards, or for other flaws, is material for a full other article, and I don't want to come on by pretending to know more about early Anglo-Saxon viewpoints than I do, while mainly paraphrasing just what Tolkien says. TOM BOMBADIL is too uncoordinated to have much philosophy; the philosophy of TREE AND LEAF is pro-fairy tale and the allegory, LEAF BY NIGGLE's philosophy is rather Earth-bound, sugary Christiany, and mild. I'm baffled by the idea of finding any philosophy in FARMER GILES OF HAM: it's a children's story, full of olden-time atmosphere and humor. How's that for slipping out of the slippery task he suggested?

What he's presumably getting at, though, is the philosophy behind THE LORD OF THE RINGS, which we have discussed before. He finds, and gives sound and strong reasons for finding, THE LORD OF THE RINGS non-humanistic and Christian-inspired, with the idea of greater destiny hovering throughout the story. In other words, the hobbits are of no significance for their own lives, but only as they affect the War of The Ring, the-war-between-good-and-evil. He further favors Cabell over Tolkien, saying that Cabell's philosophy is that life has no purpose, but is wonderful on it's own merits, whereas Tolkien says that life does indeed have a purpose, but it is awful.

Well, it's an interesting one, and in a lot of ways I agree with it. Interestingly enough, Tolkien's philosophy has been revealed as conservative, fascist, pompous, and upper-class-favoring. But, there's more to be said, and I don't feel like it now. Maybe I'll have more to say about it for the next issue.

DAVID N. HALL

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POSTSCRIPT!



Only half a man appears in the illo above. And only half a future lies in store for this, or any other magazine without the help of you, gentle readers. Specifically, I am referring to the feed-back mechanism known as 'reader response'.

Without your comments and suggestions...and your participation, this or no other magazine can long hope to survive. In a word....HELP!

ODD IS IN GREAT NEED OF MATERIAL. GOOD MATERIAL!!!

If you write, and have that unpublished masterpiece stuck back in some dresser drawer, send it in. If it's not what we're looking for you'll get it back Nuy Pronto, and at least it will have had an airing (which helps avoid mildew). But if it's in that a little different line, or if it's on a somewhat different subject (say, 'Is Necrophilia Dying Out', or some such...) send it in. If it's good and if it fits the slant we're trying for, we'll print it.

And the same goes for ARTWORK!

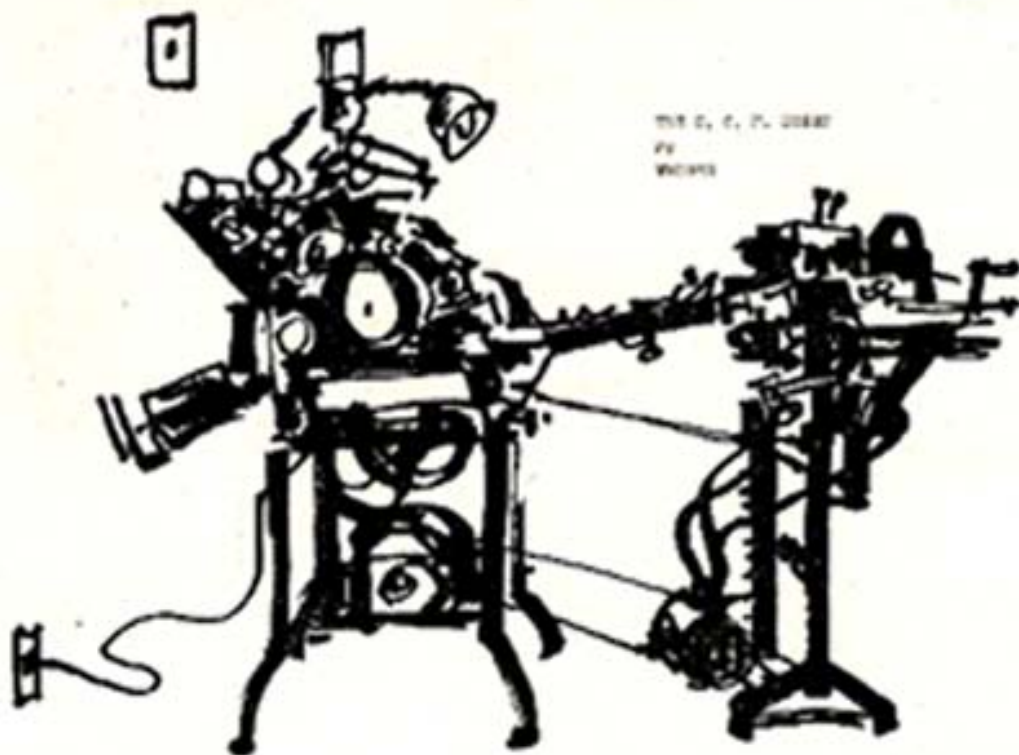
We intend to go in as heavy for artwork, et al, as our backlog and your contributions allow. But for this we need help. Help in the form of your contribution!

IN RETURN FOR YOUR HELP, WE MAKE A PROMISE TO PUBLISH ONLY THAT MATERIAL WHICH WE FEEL WILL HELP MAKE ODD THAT ZINE WITH A DIFFERENCE!

We need the current addresses of several former contributors, subscribers, and friends of ODD. We'll give a free copy of ODD to the first person to give us the addresses and whereabouts of any of the following people:

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Ronald Friedman
Rory Faulkner
Jerome Bartlett
DEA
Gregg Calkins
Ben Singer
Don Jacobs
Jack Irwin
Charles Burbee
Barbara Anne Lahn
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