

THE WORLD'S FINEST FANZINE

BEAM



OUR —
—MASHUP

40% B.S./VOL
(80 PROOF)

TUCKER FRIED URBANE WHIMSY

NONE GENUINE WITHOUT MY SIGNATURE

Signature *Nicolas A. Farey*

EDITED AND BOTTLED BY

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BEAM

THE OCCASIONAL UNOFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

✕ May Tucker's Ghost be Smiling Upon Us ✕

EMINENCE FRONT



"It's a fair cop, but
society is to blame"
"Agreed! We'll be
charging them too..."



It's the present culture that *someone* must be to blame (cf *They Made Us Do It*). Someone else, that is, for heaven forfend any individual should take the onerous responsibility for their actual actions, even when apprehended with crimson appendages.

So I blame Ted White.

I been getting loads of nags about getting into print more (& thanks for the boo, all y'all), but when Ted asks when you're getting a fanzine out, that's more like a royal decree.

Spreading the burden, I thought to tap some of the Unusual

Suspects (see bottom of page 4 for rather sketchy details of this fluctuating group) for contributions, and go gen rather than per this time around, although *This Here...* also has a late (though perhaps not last) gasp with this mailing, wrapping up some ancient locs.

Good arrers!

Nic Farey

**member fwa and Unusual
Suspect**

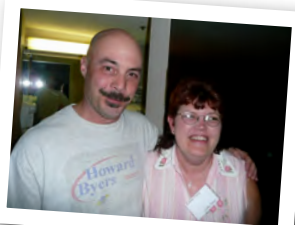
June 2008

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BEAM is edited and produced by Nic Farey, and published in the UK and Europe by Fishlifter Press, US and the Rest of the World by Seven Views of Jerusalem, and online (in full color) probably by the grace of Burns at efanzines.com. If I've sent it to him yet.
.....

All locs, contributions & that should be sent to BEAM, PO Box 178, Saint Leonard MD 20685, USA, or email to unusalsuspects@mac.com
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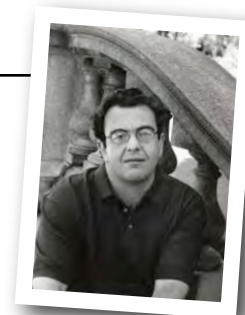
UNUSUALLY IN THIS ISSUE...



Apparent wife-stealer and current Howie Mandel lookalike **RANDY BYERS** takes the point and regales ye with *25 Things About Corflu Silver*. And politics!

PAGE 5

I've corresponded with **PAUL DI FILIPPO** for what seems like ever (er... since the late 80s), so while I was rooting through some old files it was a delight to find *Maybe The Whole Thing Was Mental*, which he describes as "a brief excursion to the Land of the Zines that Time Forgot". I make no apology for giving this the light of day, only for the appropriately unusual delay.



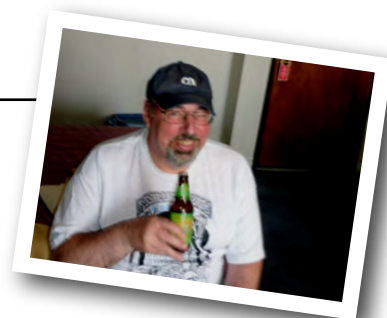
PAGE 8

NIC FAREY in semi-serious mode ponders the Corflu-inspired topic of *Life Among the Manichees*, another in an interminable series of debates about the relative sanity of Arnie Katz. And more politics!



PAGE 16

That Fucking Liar **RICH COAD**, being unable to recall much of Corflu Silver for the pictured reason, weighs in with a tale of sexy redheads, a Turkish giant and an evil CEO entitled *I Was A Middle-Aged Dot-Commie*. (With politics!)



PAGE 18

What gathering of the Unusual Suspects can be said to be truly complete without the Eminence Grise himself. **TED WHITE** graciously relates a tale of *Strange Times at Corflu* for the delectation of the unwashed.



PAGE 21

Mr. Fishlifter **MARK PLUMMER** reports an amazing find: *Cow is giving paraffin*, an apparent index fragment of a UK edition of *Cow is giving kerosene*, which for completeness precedes it.

PAGE 23



Liquor aficionado and legendary bon viveur **JAY KINNEY** is responsible for the awesome BEAM label, which also serves as the logo of the Unusual Suspects. He's been bugging me about doing t-shirts so he can get royalties.



COVER, T-SHIRT, COASTERS, MATCHBOOKS etc...

UNUSUALLY IN THIS ISSUE...



STEVE STILES needs no introduction from me, he's always happy to do that job on his own. Mad love & thanks for the Bo Diddley tribute, crazy man!

BACOVER

ON OTHER PAGES...

Cow is giving kerosene was distributed by **Nic Farey** at Corflu Silver. Copies have since spread further afield, but in view of **Mark Plummer's** find of apparent further entries it is reprinted here. The Sainted One also supplied the Corflu Word Cloud.

"Memorabilia" cartoon by **Dave Coverley** appeared in the *Washington Post* and is probably copyrighted out the ass, so don't tell him.

All photographs are by **Nic Farey** with the exception of page 6 (by **Gary S. Mattingly**), the photo of Nic Farey on page 3 which was taken by **Jay Kinney** (with Nic's camera), and the Paul Di Filippo pic which is almost certainly by **Deborah Newton**. They usually are.

Other illustrations are, predictably, nicked off the internet, notwithstanding the cartoon on page 20. Uncredited text (& lyrics) by Nic Farey. Except for quotations.

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS...

...is the name devised to describe the late-night fangatherings, surprisingly often in the room of N Farey, which are mostly laid-back affairs (more so in the absence of Suspects G Charnock or J Bacon), tending to involve the consumption of Jim Beam, plus whatever fine single malt Suspect C Brialey happens to bring along, and a whole lot of ~~bullshit~~ amenable conversation on whatever topic might arise.

Rather like the premise of the fwa, if you think you might be or might have been an Unusual Suspect at any point in time, then you probably are. If enough of you feel like punting something, there could well be another issue of BEAM. (Prepares for 10,000 word deluge from Irishman For Hire.)

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"You can't be a Real Country unless you have a Beer and an airline - it helps if you have some kind of a football team or some nuclear weapons, but at the very least you need a Beer..."

25 THINGS ABOUT CORFLU SILVER

RANDY BYERS

1. How I got there!

2. Introducing the Corflu 50

The first fans I saw at Corflu Silver were Steve and Elaine Stiles, who were registering at the hotel as I arrived to do the same. Steve and Elaine were attending the convention courtesy of the Corflu 50, a new fan fund created by Rich Coad. The idea is to get a group of fifty people to contribute \$25 each annually toward the expense of bringing a worthy fan to Corflu. The awardee is agreed on by consensus within the group of contributors. We have not yet reached fifty members, so if you'd like to join this worthy effort and sway our choice of next year's beneficiary, please contact Rich Coad.

Oh, and thanks again for the bacover for *Chunga* 14, Steve! Nice to see you again, too, Elaine. Last time was Corflu Badger in Madison, if I don't misremember.

3. Leigh, Lee, or Lorelei of the Red Mists – it's all the same

"Is this WAHF from Leigh Brackett for real?" Frank Lunney asked in the consuite, referring to the WAHF column in *Chunga* 14. "Earl said that she just died last year, so it was possible. But that doesn't seem right!"

"Um, what? No, the Leigh Brackett WAHF isn't for real, although she did write what we quoted. And she didn't just die last year, did she? No, she died before *The Empire Strikes Back* came out, whenever that was. 1979? 1980?"

Maybe Mr. Kemp was thinking of Lee Hoffman, who did die just last year, may she rest in peace. Lord knows I used to confuse the two all the time. Great minds confuse alike?

(Yes, Geri, this is a nudge. Pub your ish!)

4. CorFandom?

Just what the hell is it that fandom is supposed to be correcting?

5. Brought to you by Dr. Byers' Lizard-brain Tonic

It's cupcake time again in Akron, Ohio, and all I got was this lousy lizard hindbrain.

Apparently Ken is now summoning fen, plucking them from the aether by circulating rumors of their arrival. I have seen Widner sing the blues, I have sympathized with Andy Hooper's existential horror at being named GOH, I have heard vicious rumors about the alleged arrival of Shelby. It's pushing two a.m. on Saturday morning, and the party persists in the smoking lounge. None of this addresses the giant badger problem, easily the most divisive issue of the entire convention, if not the most pressing matter of our time. Lizards are as

nothing in the face of a giant badger. Yes, this is how I chose to spend my meager allotment of lines, why do you ask?

—JoHn Hardin, *Nine Lines Each* 52

6. Fanzines brought home from Vegas

Motorway Dreamer, ed. John Nielsen Hall; *Been There Done That!*, ed. Steve Stiles; *Future's Past*, ed. Elaine Stiles; *Inca* 3, ed. Rob Jackson; *Random Jottings* 3, ed. Michael Dobson; *Light in the Bushel* 7, Richard Brandt; *Skug* 17, ed. Gary S. Mattingly; *Whistlestar* 7, ed. Lenny Bailes; *Nine Lines Each* 51, 52, 53, ed. Ken Forman, JoHn Hardin, Ben Wilson, Andy Hooper; *Amazing Instant X-Ray Egoboo Scanner*, ed. Graham Charnock; *No Sin But Ignorance* 48, ed. Claire Brialey; *Cow is giving kerosene*, ed. Nic Farey; *Outlaw Mutation Boogie* 65, ed. Mark Plummer; *No Award* 17, ed. Marty Cantor; *Void* 17, ed. Greg Benford, Ted E. White

7. Where have you gone Charles Burbee?

I bought the copy of *Void* 17 listed above in the auction. It appears it was published in 1959 or thereabouts. This copy was addressed to Charles Burbee, and the following items are checked off in the You Are Receiving This Because column:

* *We'd muchly like a contribution from you for a future issue*

* *This is a complimentary copy*

* *We still have hopes of reviving you from your mummy-like current state of suspended fanimation*

8. Meanwhile in the Virtual Con Suite ...

08:00 ceemage : I think we have the first interactive
08:00 ceemage : we had an excellent view of Mark's bum
08:01 ceemage : for the first 10 mins
08:01 BohemianCoast : What are they looking at?
08:01 BohemianCoast : Are they looking at us?
08:01 BohemianCoast : You need to look at the camera
08:01 ceemage : we know, randy
08:01 Absarka : We hear you...
08:01 IanSorensen : Talk to camera guys
08:01 ReplyHazy : Always the director...
08:02 BohemianCoast : Hogsback Burma Star Ale
08:04 ustreamer-25992 : Has the con stopped now?
08:04 eFanzines : Shelby Vick has left the room
08:12 DianCrayne : Show us your knickers, then!
08:13 I-94 : Commando
08:13 jpurcell-1 : nice art
08:13 ceemage : steffan covers are like macroons
08:13 IanSorensen : Show us Dan Steffan
08:13 ceemage : you can never have too many of them
08:13 I-94 : Shiny
08:13 CurtPhillips : It's always Charnock...
08:14 PeterVorzimmer : Lollocs, hmmm...
08:15 jpurcell-1 : Andy H: loved the play reading
08:15 ceemage : we saw the rehearsals at least

25 THINGS ABOUT CORFLU SILVER

RANDY BYERS

08:15 AndyPorter : Srt of. Sound not good.
08:15 CurtPhillips : I see Marty! Hi Marty!
08:15 IanSorensen : Hear play fine. Didn't get a lot of the jokes
08:15 jpurcell-1 : something is making me want to put in callout balloons with the words POW and ZANG! in them
08:15 AndyPorter : Nice suspenders
08:16 IanSorensen : I LIKE bad jokes
08:16 IanSorensen : Known as the Thief of Badgags

9. Everybody's a critic



10. The reason for the visit

Where else would you see Murray Moore, Sandra Bond, Bill Bodden, Shelby Vick, Gregg Trend, Pat Charnock, and Ross Chamberlain in the same room?

11. What did you think the slots were for?

This was my first visit to Las Vegas since the family passed through on a road trip when I was a child. I was fantasted by the utter ubiquity of slot machines. There were slot machines in the airport. There was a slot machine in the taxi. You had to pass through banks upon banks of slot machines to get to hotel registration. There were slot machines in the hotel elevator. There was a slot machine in the headboard of my bed. When I threw back the sheets, I found a slot machine in the bed itself. Boy, did the bells ring when I fed that slot! All night long!

12. Mundane politics

While splitting an apple fritter with Robert Lichtman, I sat talking with him and Elinor Busby and Don Anderson about the US presidential campaign. Don said this was the first time that none of the candidates interested him, and he didn't know who he was going to vote for. Elinor and Robert were both of the school that they were happy to vote for anybody other than a Republican. I missed my opportunity

to explain that this is the first time I've ever been excited about a presidential candidate: Obama.

My apologies to John Hertz for this intrusion of mundane politics into the fannisphere. Double apologies to Nic, Mark Plummer, and Jay Kinney, who were subjected to my drunken rant on the subject at one of the Unusual Suspects gatherings. Perhaps a little bit more excitement than's good for me!

13. Not seen on the Pine Creek Canyon hike led by Ken Forman on Friday

Yurawanka Arch. But I saw it on the map and sniggered with Charnock.

14. Branding Fandom®

This space reserved for a cartoon by Dan Steffan.

15. Undormanted fans

This was Lise Eisenberg's coinage for fans like Graham Charnock and John Nielsen Hall who return to the fold after decades of gafia. Or was it Hope Leibowitz's coinage? Now if we could only make them undemented too!

16. Early days of a better fandom

I had the pleasure of sitting in a group with Jack Speer and Art Widner in the non-smoking consuite Saturday night. I had never spoken with Jack before. They wanted to know if I had heard Art sing on Friday after opening ceremonies, and I said that I had.

"Did you hear the words?" Jack demanded.

He'd caught me there, because I'd actually been talking to the Virtual Con Suite while Art sang, and hadn't heard the lyrics. I stammered before Jack's peremptory question. Turned out later that Art, fellow First Fan, had been singing a filk that Jack wrote back in the day.

"Wanna fanzine?" I asked quickly, reaching into my zine bag.

"Got one," Jack said, and both he and Art laughed at me. But he took my zine and looked through it. Art told him it was worth reading.

I felt pleased, all in all. Jack Speer was reading my fanzine! On Art Widner's recommendation! Wish I'd told Jack how much I liked his piece about Laney that was reprinted in *Ah Sweet Laney*. It's pretty damned brilliant.

(Copies of *Ah Sweet Laney* are still available from Pat Virzi. All proceeds from sales go to support Corflu.)

17. A damned good question

Got on the elevator with a bag of fanzines and beer. I discovered Pat Virzi and a stranger. "I'm going to drop a load

25 THINGS ABOUT CORFLU SILVER

RANDY BYERS

of *Chungas* on the Fishlifters,” I said to Pat. “They’re handling the British mailing.” She grinned appreciatively.

Later I saw her in the consuite, and she told me that after I got off the elevator, the other woman asked, “What’s a chungu?”

18. Accentuated differences

“Pile isle,” Mark Plummer said.

“I’m sorry?” said the waiter.

“I’d like a pile isle,” Mark explained carefully.

“A pale ale,” Rich suggested to the waiter.

“Now *you* sound like an Aussie,” I told Mark.

“Anybody from Northern England who comes here can’t help it,” Jim Young claimed. “They hit the American accent, and it immediately makes them start sounding like an Aussie.”

But I thought Mark was from the Midlands! And that infamous Queenslander, Nic Farey, is most assuredly a London boy.

19. Radio, radio

Andy asked me to perform in his radio play, “The Price of Pugwash”. I had played a lead role in his play at Boston and had been scarred for life by the stage fright, but he assured me that Baldy Walloon was a minor part. Not that he was typecasting for that name! I’ll tell you what, though, Aileen Forman is da bomb onstage. Lise Eisenberg, Lenny Bailes, Lloyd Penney, and the Millses were all terrific too. Bill Mills is indeed a bit of a ham, which went very well with Andy’s faanish cheese. But Aileen, Lise, and Lloyd were the true stars.

20. Going with the flow

Belle Churchill told us about a friend on Hawai’i who lived by a lava flow. You had to walk across it to get to his house. She told us that one night she was tired enough that she slept on the lava. Boy, was she steamed when she woke up in the ocean!

21. Fandom of the grayin

Like Andy Hooper said on the panel about whatever it was that the panel was about, it isn’t that fandom is graying, it’s that fans these days are coming to fanzines after they are already gray. Yes, Bill Mills, I’m looking at you! Harder to tell with Roxanne. And I’m a good example of this myself. I mean, when was the last time we gave Best New Fan to a teenager? (Um, hang on ...)

22. Here’s mote in yer eye

When Nic mentioned that he had stayed with John and Eve Harvey on his trip to England for his mother’s funeral last year, it suddenly struck me that when I had stayed there on my TAFF trip in 2003, the Jim Beam they offered me had been left there by Nic.

“That was Black Label, wasn’t it?” was his response when I asked.

I met the Harveys for the first time at Nic’s Corflu Valentine in 2002, and at the end of the con Eve suggested that I run for TAFF. Just so I’d finish off the bottle of Beam cluttering their shelves, I suppose. Fair enough!

23. Such sweet sorrow

The last fan I saw at Corflu Silver was Nic Farey, aka the Werewolf of Fandom. Nic gave me a werewolf hug. But hold on, actually the last fan I saw at Corflu Silver was Dr. Rob Jackson, who shook my hand relatively limply after Nic’s hug. Except, no, the last fan I saw at Corflu Silver — well, in Vegas anyway — was Lloyd Penney, whom I saw at the airport heading purposefully toward what I supposed was his gate as I waited in line for food in a terminal restaurant. Not that the restaurant killed me!

24. E-mail message dated Tue, 29 Apr 2008

Hi, Mark. Terrific to see you at Corflu, as always. I went upstairs in my house last night expecting to find you and Claire and Nic with a bottle of Jim Beam, but all I found was my housemate sipping some orange juice.

25. A quarter century of Corflu

It’s worth celebrating the fact that Corflu has lasted for 25 years so far, with no signs of faltering. All hail the Mothers of Convention, Lucy Huntzinger, Allyn Cadogan, and Shay Barsabe, who started the ball rolling in 1984, and to everyone who has taken their turn in the barrel and kept the ball rolling since. All hail Joyce Katz, the Queen of Corflu Silver. All hail her minions, too, especially her three right hands, Arnie Katz, Theresa Cochran, and James Taylor. Special thanks to James for much sensible advice and information. Y’all put on another terrific edition of Corflu. We’ll try to return the favor!

26. Corflu Zed

So next year it’s my turn. Corflu Zed in Seattle, details TBA. Come to our house, and we’ll throw a party for you. Come be the life of the party. Find your way into a conreport, even if you have to write it yourself. Let’s have a ball, and keep it rolling.

MAYBE THE WHOLE THING WAS MENTAL

PAUL DI FILIPPO

Every dedicated SF reader can recite the canonical magazines, and the mighty authors who debuted and flourished therein. The rollcall is an Olympian one, full of majesty and nostalgia.

First came the proto-genre magazines, such as *All-Story* and *Argosy*, publishers of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Cummings and Murray Leinster. Closely following was *Weird Tales*, home to Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. Then came the birth in 1926, Minerva-like from the brow of Hugo Gernsback, of *Amazing Stories*, and the inner-mirrored pulp walls of the sf genre were instantly erected, wherein the early zines and writers (Keller, Williamson, Hamilton) could thrive as in a humid greenhouse. Campbell's *Astounding* remains the archetype of SF zinedom, its holy trinity Asimov, Heinlein and Van Vogt. With the arrival in the fifties of *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, doses of literary values and satire were injected, and we applauded Sheckley, Dick, Avram Davidson, and Sturgeon. Later, somewhat outside our bounds, *Playboy* and *Omni* arose as hospitable mansions for Bradbury, Gibson and others. And Asimov's, *Interzone* and *Science Fiction Age* continued to showcase the newest talent.

But our purview today in this space has nothing to do with such fine writers and famous magazines, so integral and central to the full-bodied development of the handsome, galaxy-spanning creature that is modern SF.

Instead, we're gonna talk trash.

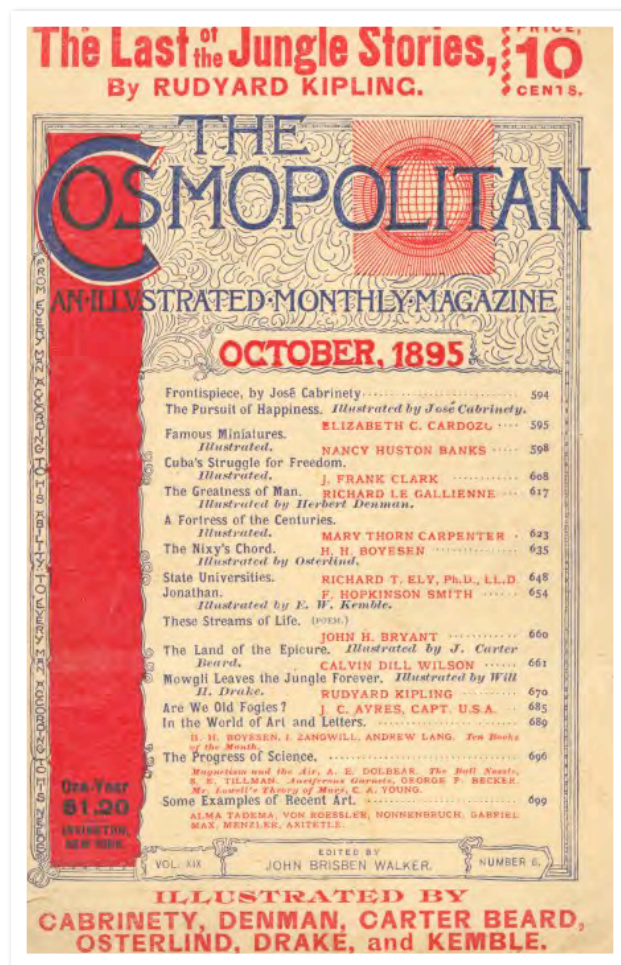
We are going to take a brief excursion to the Land of Zines That Time Forgot.

This is a land I have visited at my mortal peril, a land whose borders enclose only overstuffed junk shops, yard and garage sales, flea markets, used bookstores, curbside heaps of attic and cellar rubble. In these dangerous locales, under the stern gaze of lunatic storeowners and irate householders, I have shuffled through stacks of crumbling pulp, cracking open warped hardcovers, breathing exotic spores and molds, just so I could conduct you on a tour of oblivion-drowned periodicals. These rightfully unremembered publications are filled with the quasi-literary output of the damned, the sub-hacks, the inept, the preterite. Writers who labored clumsily and in vain, who had absolutely no connection to our beloved genre or any effect upon it, who justly sank without a trace. Writers who reinvented the wheel every time they sat down at their typewriters (and it always turned out to be square).

So set your bullshit detectors on minimal sensitivity (there's no sense in getting overwhelmed), hold tight to my inky, smutchy hand, and step smartly back with me one hundred years...

Long before Helen Gurley Brown and her big-hair, deep-cleavage philosophy, there was a monthly magazine called *The Cosmopolitan*. In the year 1895, they were well into their twentieth volume; at least two decades later, they were still around. No flash in the pan, these folks. Yet who speaks of this periodical now? (Only the erudite John Clute, perhaps, who mentions it in his entry on Arthur Reeve in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*.)

Even our institutional memories, the libraries, are purging their buffers of *The Cosmopolitan*, if my experiences are any valid measure. For it is in the form of deaccessioned hardbacked literary editions that I encountered this zine. Massive, partially leather-bound volumes with knurled, gold-lettered spines, each holding six-month's-worth of densely laid-out text and pictures on 7"x10" pages, all tossed into a fruit-crate at an outdoor booksale, going for a whopping buck apiece. How could I resist?



The volume under our perusal is the one incorporating the monthly issues for November through April, 1895-6. Lavishly

MAYBE THE WHOLE THING WAS MENTAL

PAUL DI FILIPPO

illustrated with both engravings and photos, as well as one gorgeously tinted lithograph per issue ("Printed on the *Cosmopolitan* lithographic presses"), this was a general-interest magazine unlike any we know today, in our splintered culture of niche-marketing. Stories and poetry ran side by side with non-fiction of every stripe, from articles on big-game expeditions ("Walrus Hunting in the Arctic Regions") to makeup advice from Sarah Bernhardt. (Maybe Helen Gurley Brown wasn't so far away!) Travelogues to distant lands ("The Story of the Samoan Disaster") coexisted cheek-by-jowl with updates on scientific breakthroughs ("Submarine Boats"), inspirational homilies ("Honest People"), sports ("A Word about Golf, Golfers and Golf Links in England and Scotland"), proto-tabloid bits ("Actresses Who Have Become Peeresses"), current events ("The True Story of the Death of Sitting Bull"), book and theater reviews, and craft advice ("Dreams in Woven Thread"). It's as if today there were some magazine that combined *US News and World Report*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Glamour*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Popular Mechanics* and a dozen others into one title.

One additional feature which is going to stand out in contrast to later magazines is the lack of advertising. At least in this bound format, *The Cosmopolitan* boasts no ads of any sort. True, magazines of this period frequently segregated their paid ads into front and back sections, which may have been stripped out upon binding (when an index was also added). But the fact that the editorial matter is so self-contained and separate from any tawdry salespitches is astonishing to modern sensibilities.

Now, a few years before our particular volume was compiled - in 1892, to be precise - *The Cosmopolitan* serialized a work by William Dean Howells, which was later collected in book form under the title *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894). It is neither the famous and respected Howells, peer and friend of Twain, nor his "romance" which is our immediate focus. But as we'll see, his work forms the "inspiration" for the one we want to examine. So let's take a look at it.

A Traveler from Altruria is a kind of indirect, off-center Utopia, involving as it does a visitor from a perfect republic who finds himself in Howells' contemporary America. Although we never bodily visit Altruria, its existence informs every page of the book, serving as the foil which sets off - to great disadvantage - life in the relentlessly mercantile United States.

Narrated in the first person by a pompous, self-centered novelist (who yet remains wiser and more honest than any of his fellow citizens), Howells' book is eminently readable - compelling, actually - despite consisting almost entirely of ideological arguments in dialogue form. (However, the minimal scene-setting and characterization that does exist is masterful, done with the economy and brilliance of a

polished professional writer.) As the narrator conducts his Altrurian acquaintance around the New England resort town and vicinity where he's vacationing, a probing spotlight is cast on the insanities of capitalism and dog-eat-dog Darwinism. Social problems which remain constant monuments even today are pinned down, dissected and answered with fairly detailed Altrurian alternatives.

The Traveler's mysterious attraction to women (mentioned more than once), as well as his human yet alien perspective, conjure up thoughts of Heinlein's Valentine Michael Smith. SPeculation about the growing divide between workers and bosses ("Why, it is as if [they] were not the same race, or kind of men!") anticipates Wells' Eloi and Morlocks. And explicit references to past Utopias site the book knowledgeably in a rich historical context. In short, this is an accomplished, heartfelt ancestor which modern SF should reclaim.

But naturally, the same cannot be said about its unauthorized "sequel".

In the November, 1895 issue of *The Cosmopolitan*, we find "The Discovery of Altruria" by Sir Robert Harton.

Now, right off the bat, we're gonna have some problems with "Sir Robert Harton". He narrates his tale in the first person, representing himself as an Englishman who happens to be a professional African explorer. Since he ostensibly disappears by the story's truncated ending into a country that does not exist, I think we can safely assume that "Harton" is a pseudonym for an AMERICAN writer, perhaps even one on the staff of *The Cosmopolitan*.

Sir Bob begins his tale by telling us that due to being abroad, he's just caught up with the Howells account of Altruria on a visit Stateside. Reading the Howells novel reminds Sir Bob that *he himself* knows of legends about a similar Utopia somewhere on "the Upper Congo". (This cannot be *the* Altruria, of course, since that place was specified by Howells to be an island continent as big as Australia. But Harton is nonetheless going to sharecrop the Howells work in his title, presumably because it's already famous.) Without a moment's hesitation, Sir Bob decides that he will dedicate his hitherto self-indulgent life to piercing this guarded lost civilization, and hits up the board of *The Cosmopolitan* for funds "for an expedition of two or three years' duration if necessary." Presumably telling him to save all his receipts, the editors agree, and Sir Bob is off.

After some sub-Haggard Dark Continent adventures, our intrepid narrator eventually succeeds in finding a mountain pass that brings him over the border of his Utopia. From the heights, he sees a vast populated plain with two cities, "the larger [of which] I rightly judged ... to be the capitol of Virland."

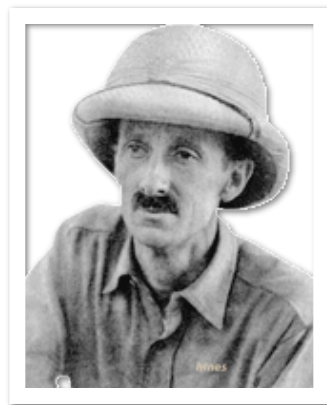
MAYBE THE WHOLE THING WAS MENTAL

PAUL DI FILIPPO

Where this instant designation for the country comes from is never explained. As best as I can conjecture, the writer at this point finally realized that *his* imaginary place could not be identical to Howells' Altruria, and so coined a name on the spot.

descending into Virland (which turns out, by the way, to be populated with *white* men, the offspring of English and Dutch castaways), Sir Bob eventually stows away on a factory's pneumatic cargo pod and emerges in the capital, where he is promptly captured and somewhat reluctantly sentenced to death in a week's time, to preserve Virland's security. Whoa, that Virland's rough on tourists! No whit dismayed, Sir Bob resolves to learn all about Virland nonetheless. Thus ends installment the first.

(This is the only installment that's illustrated, by the way, as the editors plainly realized that later ones contained nothing to depict! We get a cameo of Sir Bob in a pith helmet, a scene of him amidst the peaks, and an aerial shot of the mountain bowl containing a misty Virland.)



Over the next four installments, which cover the fictional span of only a day or so, absolutely nothing will happen to Sir Bob except that the head honcho of Virland, Mar-Nol-Fay, will lecture him on history, ethics, managerial doctrine and Jesus, all the while pressing Virlandish books on him to read. (Although there was a similar emphasis on piety expressed in the Howells book, it came across as a

truly mysterious mystical experience attained by those who had totally abandoned their selfish selves.) Unlike the stimulating dialogues in *Altruria*, the monologues here are enough to put an espresso-addict to sleep, even though the social problems Sir Bob identifies are identical to those singled out by Howells. The most passion raised - and one reason why I suspect "Harton" of being a professional Grubstreeter - occurs in this speech by Mar-Nol-Fay on the evils of the old way:

"Here, again, this frightful system of competition steps in. A good exhibition of its workings is made in the literary world. It takes the literary man, throws him into chains, and forces him to turn out masses of stuff, not his best thought, but rather the most voluminous ramblings, in response to the cry of 'ten thousand words at fifty dollars per thousand'. From

the hour that he hears this cry he deserts philosophy and rushes through life intent only on the pursuit of the dollar."

Right on!

Sir Bob gets no tour of the hinted-at electrical wonders of Virland, which were plainly beyond the capacities of the author's imagination. AN old-fashioned sailboat ride is the best "Harton" can provide. And as for the grand equality of humanity, Virland boasts dining clubs with servants!

By the time of the March issue, everyone involved - readers, writer and editors - must have been losing patience with Sir Bob and his glacial, dimwitted prose. Because right in the middle of one of Mar-Nol-Fay's interminable lectures, we suddenly find an interpolated NOTE BY THE EDITOR. It turns out that all previous installments have been posted down the Congo River by Sir Bob as a literal message in a bottle! Lately, none have been forthcoming, and the editors assume the worst (or the best): Sir Bob has bought the farm, and Virland must remain forevermore a secret. Yet fear not: "Should it prove true that the life of Sir Robert Harton has been cut off, his work may even then not prove destitute of results."

Well, true. We know it earned *someone* at least fifty dollars per thousand droning words.

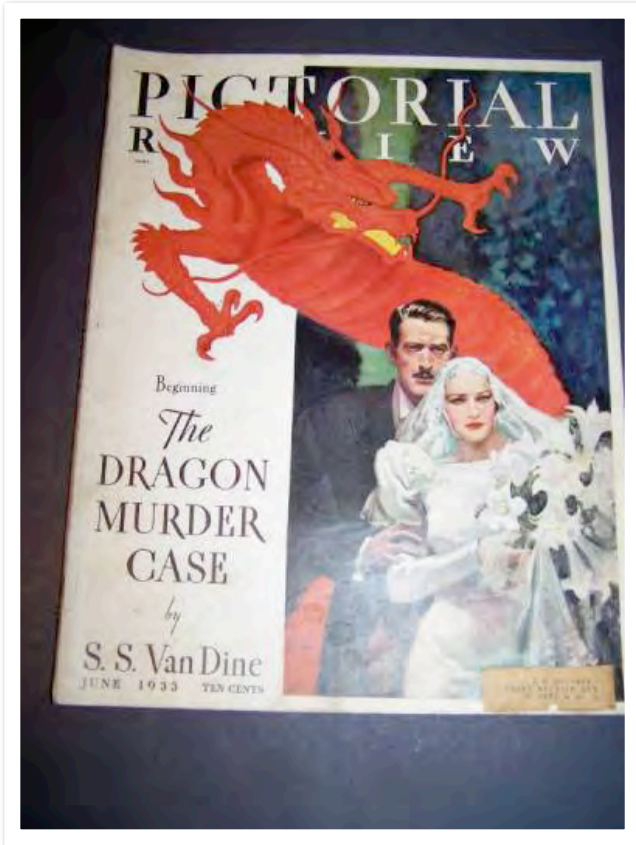


We now leap almost forty years ahead in time. Since the heyday of *The Cosmopolitan*, America has experienced the First World War, the Roaring Twenties, Prohibition, the Crash, and now finds itself sharing the resultant Depression with the rest of the world. A vast array of magazines is flourishing, however, providing entertainment and information to a Netless, Nintendo-less, TV-less public in a kind of narrowcasting perhaps even more extreme than our own current spectrum of zines. *Southpaw Aerial Detective Quarterly*, anyone? Let's pluck from the newsstand a copy of *Pictorial Review*, for June of 1933, with its dimensions a whopping 10½"x14", its cover devoted to S. S. van Dine's "The Dragon Murder Case"

Despite its misleadingly bland, newsweekly title, the *Pictorial Review* is nothing more or less than a completely done woman's magazine, full of fashions and fiction, recipes and homemaking hints, as well as the odd proto-feminist piece ("Madame Secretary: The illustrious Frances Perkins - a study of the first woman in the Presidential Cabinet"). With color covers and only one or two color interior pages (adverts only, natch!), it relies on superb, Art-Deco influenced drawings to illustrate all its fiction and many of its articles. And so our eye is caught by the deft, two-color shadings on page ten.

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PAUL DI FILIPPO



A sleek young woman clad in translucent harem pyjamas and clunky jewelry sits sidesaddle on a cushion-strewn couch, the arm of which bears embedded controls. A strange hassock-like device with a crystal top beams an image onto the wall before her. The scene in this “photoplat” shows a rather dour youthful chap dressed in a belted technocratic robe with sigil. He’s standing amidst lab equipment, clutching a book. The caption reads: “I told you I’d spot in on you if I had time. Anyway’, he added, ‘you ought to be in your exercise kite’”.

And that’s how we first encounter “Telerad” (“Looking ahead to LOVE and LIFE twenty years from now”), by one Gerald Mygatt.

This story is the highpoint of our itinerary, in terms of professionalism and conception, so pay attention and enjoy yourself, because it’s all downhill from here.

We open on a character named Christopher Harlan. (And what a resonant SF name, with its daring yoking of Priest and Ellison!) Harlan is anticipating the birth of his daughter, one eve in 1932. Upon her due appearance, he speculates on what life will be like for little Shelby when she’s twenty. AND with that subtle hint, we jump to the far-off year of 1952.

Shelby is the dame on the couch, pampered yet feisty product of this future. (We know she’s feisty since she goes so far as to call her world’s rulers “a conglom of old exhausts.”) The priggish dude “spotting in” on the telerad is her beau, Richard. And the world they live in is - not surprisingly, for a Depression-wracked America - a dystopia.

The telerad is a kind of cameraless television; “masterwaves” from a central source initiate a broadcast Big-Brother fashion, sometimes without your consent, and this technology now dominates the country, the power behind the paper government. “Obviously the Government and the Telerad Corporation were required to work in harmony ... [but] the Corporation controlled all communication between the Government and the people.” All business and socializing and recreational travel is conducted via the screen, with only rare personal visits. This agoraphobic state of affairs is reinforced by the spread of a mysterious “bacterium X ... a new form of paralysis [that] attacked people’s arms and legs.” The whole country, in other words, is experiencing virtual reality and AIDS forty years ahead of schedule. (The whole country, that is, except those three bold teleradless rebel states: Maine, Louisiana and North Dakota!)

Richard, we soon learn, is a noble, pompous, self-sacrificing twit who works for Health Control (hence his Armani labcoat). Shelby, it seems, is rather tired of his stiff and prim ways, and when he refuses her a birthday visit in the flesh (heh-heh), she realizes that their married future looks more and more unattractive. When Richard signs off with an admonition to get ready for telerad group aerobics (led by Richard Simmons, no doubt), it’s the last straw. Shelby grabs some handy pinking shears and snips the telerad’s “inductor loop”, nearly electrocuting herself in the process.

When she awakes, who should be standing tenderly there in the flesh but a handsome telerad repairman named Bill, who happens to be an ex-classmate (virtual) of Shelby’s. In the manner of romance fiction since time began, they quickly confess their buried love for each other and vow to flee to Maine as rebels. Luckily, Bill has his repair gyro standing by, and they fly off.

After a dramatic nightflight they arrive in Maine, where they learn a vital secret: bacterium X preys only on those who don’t get enough exercise! Whew! Fortunately for Shelby, she’s done her aerobics faithfully and can make the transition to an active life. Or, as one of the Downeasters tells her, “You’ll learn to use your nose - and your legs as well as your arms and hands. You’ll learn a conglom of things if you stay here. You’ll learn that the human body is something besides stomach and ears and eyes, which is what your telerad has just about reduced it to. No wonder the X is wiping out the race!”

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This speech is sealed with her first kiss from Bill, and the *Pictorial Review's* own telerad photoplat screen fades to black.

Mygatt moves his story swiftly along. His dialogue is colloquial, he goes to the trouble to invent some neologisms, he's refreshingly anti-authoritarian, somewhat prescient and only a little dumb (would women really ever literally *gild* their legs?). This story could have easily run in any of the SF pulps of the era, and in an alternate universe somewhere, Sam Moskowitz is probably compiling *The Collected Stories of Gerald Mygatt*.



What a difference a mere seventeen years can make, when you toss in a Second World War orders of magnitude bigger than the First, which culminates in atomic weapons and inaugurates decades of barely controllable, wildly accelerating technological change. The bound volume of the 1915 *Cosmopolitan* hardly differs from the 1895 one, but what a gap separates the June 1933 *Pictorial Review* from the September 1950 *Mr... A Man's Magazine*!

Our first two magazines were slicks, printed on glossy paper, funded and backed by real, professional publishers, aiming for some degree of respectability. *Mr.* is none of these things. Both in its attributes and in the culture it reflects, it is the very antithesis of this philosophy of genteel publishing.

Printed on 8½"x11" paper that resembles the particle-speckled stuff used in elementary school math classes, chockfull of sleazy cheesecake, ads for fly-by-night companies and their shoddy products, crude illos and second-hand photos, *Mr.* is the semi-illiterate spawn of a world where all the old standards have been chucked out of the window in a mad dash for profit. The words "chump" and "easy mark" come readily to mind in defining the philosophy of the operators behind *Mr.*, who doubtlessly changed their offices as fast as the law caught up with them.

A man's preoccupations as defined by *Mr.* - the way of life which all red-blooded American males had so recently fought and died for - consisted of baseball, boxing, fishing, big-game hunting and, of course, babes. The reader's vicarious

interests might momentarily extend to narratives of true crime, prison life, movies, the gorier incidents in history and - you got it - babes. If this magazine were a person, it would be a low-rent Dennis Hopper, reeking of testosterone and cheap whiskey, wearing over his bowling shirt a bar-b-que apron that said "Kiss Me, I'm the Chef!"

Should it surprise us, therefore, that this zine boasts the worst piece of "fiction" yet?

Based on this one story, "The Spheroid Svengali", I can affirm that its unknown (and perhaps unknowable) author, Hy Steirman, ranked below even Ed Wood in competence, taste, intelligence, and in blind unwavering belief in his own "talents". There are not enough words in the critic's vocabulary to identify the mistakes in this "narrative". As a famous physicist was fond of saying to his benighted peers, "You're so far off, you're not even *wrong*!"



"The Spheroid Svengali" (labelled a "fantasy", just in case we're too dumb to get it, and illustrated with completely irrelevant stills from Korda's *Things To Come*) opens with a radio dialogue between one Solon of Control and the surnameless Jimmy, who's piloting Spaceship Sunbar. Jimmy, it develops, is on his "83rd attempt to break the mysterious barrier" that exists 100,000 miles out in space from Earth. With him is his robot, XL, "which he laughingly called Axel". Jimmy's just that humorous kind of guy.

On this trip, Jimmy is using his new "atomajet-reverse" drive. This new propulsion method saves on conventional fuel, which is good, because on all past 82 trips, Jimmy's used "fuel enough for a round trip to the Moon", which of course is actually twice as far away as the barrier. But as we shall see later, Steirman's knowledge of the solar system is not redoubtable.

Things are tense as Jimmy nears the barrier for the 83rd time (although you'd think he would be bored to tears by now), and Steirman wants to inject a little comic relief. So he has Jimmy feed Axel by dropping a "plastic globule of oil" through the convenient hole in the robot's shoulder. Axel signifies his delight by "licking the oil that had spilled out of its gaping jaw". Then, at Jimmy's request, the loyal automaton plays some Rachmaninoff by twisting "the flat dial set into his metal body just above the navel". This is a

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crucial bit of foreshadowing, so we should pay more attention to it than Steirman does.

Well, eventually Jimmy penetrates the barrier to a distance of 200 miles, then stops, mired in some kind of stellar quicksand. And this time, he is contacted by the cosmic intelligence who maintains the barrier. On this, the 83rd insult, the intelligence's patience has worn out, and he's going to destroy Jimmy and his ship. At first, Jimmy thinks he's cracking up. "Maybe the whole thing was mental?" It's a question the reader is bound to be asking himself by now. But as the startling information pours in from a disembodied voice, Jimmy is forced to concede that no insanity could match the startling reality.

The intelligence, it turns out, resides on - or actually forms; Steirman is not clear on this point, as on so much else - the satellite Deimos. This spheroid Svengali (eureka!) is dedicated to protecting Mars, which is Jimmy's ultimate destination. Why? "Because Mars holds the secrets of all life for all the universe." Hell, I'd wanna keep that for myself, too!

Deimos prepares to crush by unexplained remote means the ship Sunbar and Jimmy. But Jimmy's giant intellect, working overtime so that we can smell the neurons frying, comes up with the solution. He orders robot Axel outside the ship to play music! And it works! Released, the ship accelerates towards Mars, at the stated rate of 4000 miles per minute, which should get him there in a mere month or so. Hope Jimmy's got enough supplies, but I kind of doubt it. Wait - Mars is swelling visibly in the porthole, so everything is fine!

I'll let Jimmy explain his brainstorm now, as he soon does to the relieved Solon.

"Everything had to do with sound. How could his voice reach me from the satellite? It must have been through sound. I deduced that sound waves formed the barrier and held me like quicksand. With musical soundwaves preceding us by penetrating our ship and space, we could pass through the barrier."

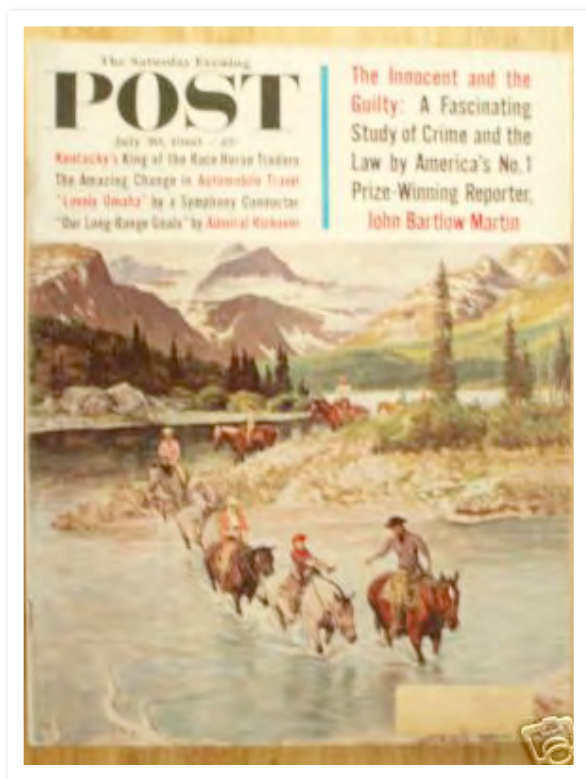
Yeah, right Jimmy. Maybe you'd be interested in some of those investment opportunities in the back pages of *Mr.*



It might seem strange at first to lump *The Saturday Evening Post* into the same class as these other three magazines. Still fondly remembered today, if only as the home of Norman Rockwell and host to visiting SF nobility like Heinlein and Bradbury, the *Post* might seem too respectable and high-class to step up to the stage with the ineffable *Mr.* But that nostalgic image of the zine dates from its halcyon period. By the time we pick up the issue for July 30, 1960, we are dealing with the sick man of zinedom. The 'Sixties and

everything they stand for are going to kill off this oversized dinosaur (like *Pictorial Review*, a lavish 10½"x14"). Already there's a tawdry, plaintive, disgruntled, confused miasma hanging about its pages, best exemplified by the title of Admiral Rickover's thinkpiece in this issue: "Where Do We Go From Here?". In the world at large, rock 'n' roll has clobbered Lawrence Welk, the Beatles are just under the horizon, and the *Post* is plainly on its knees like a poleaxed steer.

This can be the only explanation for why they would have printed such a travesty as "Planet of the Condemned", by Robert Murphy.



The illo for this story still has the power to shock today. Mainly because of its awesome awfulness. The unsung genius G. Solonevich has assembled a pastel alien landscape out of crumpled paper of various textures, overdaubed with some painted vegetation. Standing in the foreground is a rocket which looks exactly like a silver vibrator - slash - "marital device", its fins and landing jacks made from the tin legs of cheap compasses of the circle-drawing variety.

Dragging our eyes from this majestic scene to the actual text, we meet our protagonists. Alec Moncrief and Jerry Bozemann are astronauts. We can tell them apart, because

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Murphy handily labels Alec “sardonic” every time he refers to him. It must have been Murphy’s favorite new word. Bozemann is “philosophical”, a regular dreamer who likes to personify their wonderful new rocket, which is described by the omniscient narrator with a lot of ersatz Simak sentimentality and schmaltz.

Neither of our heroes appears to hold military rank, which does not stop them from reporting eagerly to one General Blunt when he summons them from their inspection. (One pictures the General wearing a Phillies Blunt t-shirt.) On the way to the office, we are treated to some of Moncrief’s sardonic stream of consciousness, in which he recalls and recounts some childhood nastiness involving some lab mice which had bitten him. “I gave them electric shocks to get even and finally cut half an inch off their tails.” Obviously a victim of nursery-rhyme conditioning.

As with the music incident early on in “The Spheroid Svengali”, we would be well-advised to mark this important passage with a darker hi-liter than Murphy uses, since it is the pivot around which the shocking denouement will dizzily spin.

In his office General Blunt introduced our amateur astronauts to Doctor Kost. (These names - what allegory!) Kost issues some startling news. “We think there is a planet in our system that was unknown until recently... It cannot be seen by optical telescopes [because] there is on this planet an element not known to us... This element acts upon light, repels it or bends it.”

As you might guess, General Blunt is keen to get his hands on this new Stealth-like element before the Commies. He dispatches the trio immediately to this new planet in their untested, unprepped rocket.

There is a major authorial ellipsis separating the inevitable drop into unconsciousness which our trio suffers immediately following the launch, and their landing on the mystery planet. Quite understandable, since this gap saves Murphy from having to detail the direction or duration of the flight. Anyway, our author is more interested in describing the aura of this strange alien world, which can be seen quite well from up close, despite the presence of the light-sequestering new element. It’s mainly pink and rosy, and makes the astronauts feel all over queer, as if they had read *The Martian Chronicles* in one sitting on an empty stomach.

Without any clear lines of command, Moncrief nevertheless takes over, dispatching Bozemann and Kost to search for the new element. Despite doing no tests on the atmosphere, they blissfully set off without suits. Moncrief watches them stride off, noting plants bearing “strawberry-like fruits as big as automobiles”. (This poignant scene obviously had a

tremendous effect on the young Woody Allen, who would later use the motif in his movie *Sleeper*.)

Uh-oh. *We* know the sight of those giant fruits should have Moncrief worried, but he’s too busy thinking about his plan. He’s going to kill his companions. Why? Oh, no reason, really. He’s just too “cynical and sardonic” and wants all the glory of this pointless mission for himself.

But Bozemann and Kost frustrate Moncrief’s plans by failing to return at the agreed-upon time. So Moncrief must set out, suitless. And that’s when he meets his doom.

Those lab mice he tortured as a child? Turns out Moncrief’s own grandpa was a rocket scientist, and shot the abused rodents off as test animals on an early unmanned rocket, after which they were never heard of again. But we know what happened to them, don’t we? They landed on this very world, miraculously survived the unplanned crash, and now, they “had so increased in size through mutations and the growth rules of this place ... that they were as big as dinosaurs.”

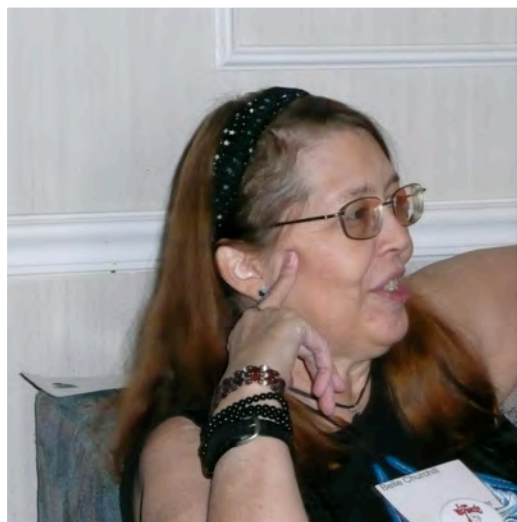
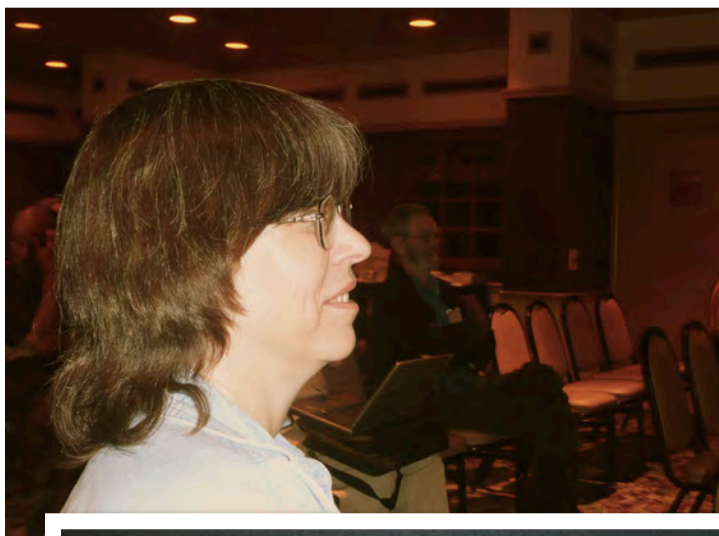
Well - Moncrief runs but he can’t hide. A final writerly masterstroke on Murphy’s part in an abrupt switch back to the POV of Mission Control, where Moncrief’s radio-transmitted screams resound.

So, as these monster mice - all perhaps with their tails half an inch short in true Lamarckian fashion - sardonically munch on the cynical Moncrief, we regretfully close the pages of our last Zine that Time Forgot and step back into the present, resolving that no matter how bad any given story in the next issue of our favorite SF magazine might appear to be, we will never, *ever* utter another complaint again



BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE ARROWBIRDS: COR! FANDOM

COR!FLU SILVER PHOTOS



LIFE AMONG THE MANICHEES

NIC FAREY

I picked up a couple of books (and a tattoo) while sojourning for a diverting few hours in Venice Beach on the roundabout way back to DC from Corflu Silver. One was “Complicated Shadows” (the life and music of Elvis Costello), a decent read now done, while the second was “A Tragic Legacy” by Glenn Greenwald, yet another in a seemingly interminable series of unconnected tomes, all with the common predication that Bush 43 is possibly the worst President the country has ever endured. (I tend to agree, hence I buy such books either out of a desire for more bolstering arguments or some masochistic impulse to store up more evidence for this view.)

Greenwald uses (in fact overuses) the epithet “Manichean” to describe King George’s worldview and that of his cohorts, stating outright that it is this attitude which informs all of his decisions and actions.

The followers of the prophet Mani (210-76 AD approx) had as their basic credo the concept of two primordial natures: light and darkness. One lived in complete peace, the other in a state of permanent internal conflict. The universe was supposedly created by the Living Spirit as a (temporary) result of an attack by the realm of darkness on the realm of light. Manicheism, although heavily dependent on Buddhist religious traditions, was nevertheless somewhat influential on the Christian Church until declared heretical in the 2nd century AD. In fact, the Roman Emperor Theodosius I issued a decree that Manichaeans should be put to death (382AD), perhaps prompting the conversion of Augustine of Hippo from Manicheism to Christianity five years later (and three years before Theodosius declared Christianity the sole legitimate religion for the Roman Empire. Augustine became a vocal opponent of Manichaenism, and for many centuries most of what was known about the religion came from his critical viewpoint and writings. (Source: Wikipedia)

The Bushies’ “Axis of Evil” dualism is therefore often described as “Manichean”, but according to Dan Skinner, an instructor of political theory at the University of New York, this is simplistically incorrect. Skinner writes:

Like Bush, the Manicheans carved the spiritual world up into two categories -Good and Evil- but, as orthodox dualists, they believed that the forces of Good and Evil were not engaged in some continuous and messianic struggle, but rather that their contrasting presence was the very basis of the spiritual order. For the Manicheans, this dualism constituted the structure of the spiritual world that framed each individual’s relationship with reality. Everyone, they believed, would benefit from identifying the presence of Evil within themselves and should endeavor a personal journey to allow Good to dominate. Evil could never be eradicated; it simply wouldn’t make existential sense to think it could be.

(GMU History News Network, 9/27/04)

He continues to opine, interestingly, that not only is Bush’s “faith” un-Manichean, it is also unchristian, since Augustine, Aquinas and Anselm (the “Doctors” of Catholic theology) actively rejected the idea of any such conflict between Good and Evil. Augustine in particular, writes Skinner, “rejected the idea that Evil really existed as a concrete entity, for to admit this would be to admit that God creates Evil”.

Whether it is inaccurately called “Manichean” or not, I see some of the same binary reasoning in the espousal of the “Core Fandom” ideal in its sense of rejection of much if not all that is external, or perhaps even subsequent to some mythical guidelines inscribed on tablets brought down from the mountains by Earl Kemp sometime in centuries past. I’m sure I’m missing a lot of the point somewhere, but I was rather jarred by Arnie’s taglining of CfAg as “the Core Fandom World Convention”, when I had been under the distinct impression that Corflu was “an annual convention of fanzine fans”. (Bill Bodden: “What is Corflu?” from corflu.org.)

Now to be honest, I’m not entirely even sure what “Core Fandom” as a concept even means. If you’d have asked me for a good guess, I might have suggested a bunch of old white blokes with inky fingers and one over-developed bicep from cranking some Flintstone-like duplicating machine, but all with an unswerving devotion to actual science fiction in some pure undistilled form, probably voting in their first Past President as Lucian of Samosata (c. AD 125 - 180), arguably the first true sf author (“A True History”). Now this of itself is all well and good, and I actually like the idea of such “core group” ideals - although there’s an implied elitism I don’t much care for, and I feel also there’s an implied devotion to, or at least respect for paper publishing, which is carried on admirably by such young whippersnappers as Chunga and Banana Wings as well as the revived old guard of InTheBar. But how comfortably does that sit alongside Arnie K. Hubbard’s prolific online activities, and indeed CfAg’s “Virtual Consuite”. So allow me a little confusion.

Perhaps there’s a better term for it all. “Fundamentalist” has too many bad connotations. I think I might like “originalist” as a description for the kind of old school fan, which I feel has less of an elitist overtone, but does open the door to images of, say, Shelby Vick plowing a field with a yoke of oxen while John Coxon zooms above wearing a jet-pack...

Mind you, you got two pretty strong reasons for adhering to “Core Fandom” as a quasi-religious principle:

- (1) The t-shirts are fuckin great!
- (2) Cheryl Morgan makes an excellent Antichrist.

ROLL OVER, BOB LICHTMAN

NOT CHUCK BERRY

Gonna write a little loc I'm gonna mail it to my local faned
Gonna ask em when they're gonna put the next issue to bed
Roll over Bob Lichtman, they said that *Trap Door* was dead...

The temperatures risin', and Hooper's blowin' a fuse
Byers and juarez are tryin' to make it look like news
Roll over there *Chunga*, you sucked since issue two (but at least I read it...)

Well if you feel you can write it, go get your cover and get Stiles to draw it
Fold it over and staple 'er up now, get the cover and go collate it
Fold it over, roll over Garcia, tell Art Widner the news

Early in the votin' it ain't even worth a-notin',
That Nic Farey is full of booze
Colin Hinz is in the middle, Lloyd Penney is a riddle
Joyce finds it hard to choose
Roll over Mark Plummer, buy Claire Brialey some shoes!

Arnie writes like a demon, someday he'll do something new
We got the Weberwoman, who knows what she's gonna do!
Long as we got ink, it's all about the 'boo!
Roll over Rob Jackson!

Roll over Pete Weston!

Roll over John Nielsen Hall! (wot?)

Roll over Jay Kinney!

Roll over Mark Plummer, and buy Claire Brialey some shooooooooooooooooooooes!!!!

I WAS A MIDDLE-AGED DOT-COMMIE

RICH COAD

This story is not a fairy tale but there are parts that feel so far-fetched, so different from the mundane realities of today, that it should, at least, start like one. There are characters, too, that might come from a fairy tale. There are the sexy redheads, female and male. A giant coder. A Turkish giant. A German. Dogs. And The CEO. He, as much as anybody, is the villain. When he appears feel free to boo and hiss. If he appears suddenly and with sinister intent at the back of the stage warn our heroes with cries of "Look behind you!". But let's get started.

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, in a place not so very far away, there was a US President who led a country of peace and prosperity. The worst thing that people were able to say about this President is that he couldn't keep his trousers up. His Vice President was widely ridiculed for claiming to have invented the internet although he never had, either invented it or claimed to. And this invention was bringing in great prosperity to many as the possibilities for new ways of selling stuff dazzled Wall Street investment banks and Menlo Park venture capitalists alike. Amazing new companies like Webvan, Pets.com, and Kozmo were upending the hoary old economic theories that said you had to make a profit with dazzling presentations of click-throughs, market-share, and pro-forma quarterly results. It was the best of times; it was the - no I'm not going all Dickensian - it was the best of times. Money flowed freely and if you knew how to write PERL or Java or PHP then a job offer and a substantial raise was just a phone call or e-mail away.

So it was that our hero (that would be me) came to work at iSyndicate in San Francisco's South of Market district, known now by the more trendy moniker of SOMA. iSyndicate had an actual plan for making money - it would aggregate content from many sources and package these for web sites that wanted to display the latest headlines or weather forecasts or whatever. A secondary business was to allow anybody to upload their own comics, writing, music, or videos for potential inclusion on other sites at a modest fee. This was 1999, keep in mind, long before Web 2.0 Social Networking sites or DIY content aggregators like YouTube were dreamed up. Before RSS made syndication really simple. And, unfortunately, before advertising had become a viable way of financing a web site. But there was something there - I just found this with a quick Google: "I signed up for an iSyndicate account and within five minutes I had some of their content on my Manila site. It's very cleverly done." This is by way of a justification for the tales that follow - we did work hard to deliver a great product but that's not as interesting as the parties.

Parties in SOMA in 1999 were marketing opportunities. Jared, iSyndicate's first director of marketing, was hired

primarily for his ability to bar-hop while talking up the company to all the other bar-hopping dot-commies without getting too drunk. He was also savvy enough to know that there was no reason for iSyndicate to host parties and pay for all that booze; no, a better idea was to go to parties for places like NextMonet.com with a bevy of iSyndibabes and let them know just how much art-related content was available at a easy-to-handle low-cost subscription from your friendly neighbors on 9th Street. But partying can sometimes get out of hand and land everybody in a heap of trouble. Or, worse than trouble, in a mandatory HR sponsored sensitivity training session.

Sitting in the bean bag chair on the mezzanine, next to the Dig-Dug machine, just in front of the pool table, with Audrey, the sexy redhead director of Software Engineering - an aside, here - the development team at iSyndicate went to watch robots fight and I was in line to get a beer when Audrey came up and asked me to get one for her; instantly the security guard was lecturing me about how I couldn't buy a beer and corrupt my young daughter that way until Audrey just glared at him, stomped her foot, and said "I'm his *boss*, man!" and, yes, she did look that young which probably came from her youth sleeping on the ledge of a Cray supercomputer dreaming of the day she'd have one of her own to write really cool programs on (I'm NOT making this up - I swear!) - sharing the bean bag as we listen to HR types tell us what is and is not appropriate in a business environment and wondering why we were all made to suffer for the sins of the no-longer-employed-here VP of sales. For it was he who had brought this ignominy upon us. At the office Christmas party there was a silly tradition of the bosses saying a little something about each of their employees and presenting them with a joke award and gift. I, for example, was awarded Most Appropriate Name while the DBA was awarded Most Likely To Listen To The Backstreet Boys. So the VP of Sales gets to his turn and starts with a little speech.

"Boy, I am *really* drunk. Joel [the CEO - feel free to boo and hiss - ed.] reviewed what I had to say and sent back that maybe I should tone down the raunchiness somewhat. Dude, you're getting so corporate!" So he proceeded to embarrass each of his sales people until he neared the end. "Now, I don't know if she has tasted the fruit but I'm sure she has licked the trunk... to Liz goes the Most Likely To Become A Lesbian award!" to which he added a can of whipped cream as the prize.

"You bastard!" cries Liz, before effectively spraying the entire contents of the can of whipped cream over her boss (soon to be ex-boss) then running from the room in tears.

If you are ever tempted to try a similar jest at work I advise against it. You'll be fired. And, much worse than that, all of

I WAS A MIDDLE-AGED DOT-COMMIE

RICH COAD

your erstwhile colleagues will have to suffer through sensitivity training due to your insensitivity.

Not all parties end up that way, though, and iSyndicate did host a number where software engineer and DJ Jelo played a pile of thump-thump-wheel music and people writhed about with glow rings on their arms and legs and necks. It was all a bit like that rave seen in the second Matrix movie which may not be a total coincidence since iSyndicate was getting TV ads made by the same FX house who had done the graphics for the Wachowski brothers. (You can be one of the few to actually see this ad at <http://donloeb.com/blog/category/isyndicate/> - although NBC supposedly aired some during the NCAA basketball tournament in 2000.)

There was a rumor that we were going to get Mahir, the Turkish giant, to an iSyndicate sponsored event. Mahir was one of those internet phenomena that have sadly become less likely to appear as the internet has matured. A tall, good-natured, Turk with limited English, Mahir became famous for his unassuming manner, his evident joy at meeting people, and his favorite phrase: I Kiss You! Getting Mahir to your dot-com in late 90's San Francisco was a bit like getting Andy Warhol to your club in late 70's New York. Lots of free publicity and envy from all your peers.

As it turned out, we never did get Mahir in for a visit but we did have our very own coding giant in Eric. Eric was a large man with a large laugh and a large appetite for riding roller coasters. He wrote for COASTER! magazine which is pretty close to fanzine writing and happily took multi-thousand mile trips to try out a new roller coaster. Eric had also worked out the arcane, telex-based, command syntax of the AP news feeds (coming to us on an OS/2 box just to make sure that something kept this OS alive for IBM) and how to extract that to display on our news ticker. This was Joel's (the CEO - boo!) hubris at its worst. The New York Times office had a headline ticker in Times Square so Syndicate was damned sure going to have one in SOMA. Never mind that traffic raced by on 9th Street at 35 or that the building was too short to be seen from the nearby freeway, this was going to be an icon! So Eric rigged it up and a steady stream of AP headlines crawled along the side of the building only occasionally breaking for "All your base are belong to me!".

Eric's giant size and love of roller coastering had instilled in him a sense of fearlessness which came in very useful at the first (and only) all iSyndicate developers vs sysadmins soccer match in Golden Gate Park. We, the developers, had a strategy. The strategy primarily consisted of "Stop

Wolfgang!" figuring that he was German and bound to be good at the sport. So we kept Wolfgang double and triple teamed, probably breaking all sorts of arcane off-sides rules in the process. Still, Wolfgang *was* German and did know how to play and sometimes he managed to break through the blockade and run streaking downfield towards the developers' goal. And Eric. The goalie. The fearless giant goalie. As Wolfgang flew towards him Eric held his ground until, at the very last minute, with nary a thought of himself, he flung himself at the galloping boots of the German dynamo and seized the ball! Such courage helped the developers beat the sysadmins 2-1 and never did you see such a sore and wounded bunch of computer geeks as limped, moaned, and groaned their way into the office on the following day.



But drag our sorry asses in we did. Because, when all was said and done, we believed that we were building something of value. We drank Joel's kool-aid with the full knowledge that his previous start-up

had been called Galt Industries. ("Who is John Galt?" asked the perceptive Jay Kinney when informed of this.) In addition to admiring Ayn Rand, Joel was a pretty charismatic speaker, equally able to charm finance officers at Bertelsmann and NBC out of millions of dollars as he was able to convince everyone working at iSyndicate that soon the company was going to be a billion dollar company, acting as the premier content aggregator and redistributor for an ever expanding number of web portals throughout the world. Competitors like Screaming Media (started by Jay Chiat of Chiat/Day advertising fame) and Yellowbrix (a pallid imitator, we thought, since their technology merely pulled headlines and clicked through to the originator's site (hmmm... RSS a-borning)) would be crushed beneath the objective superiority of the objectivist technology created objectively at iSyndicate.

For a long time, Joel's vision did not sound like mere hype. In the three months after I started the company grew from about 50 employees to over 200. Things were cramped with desk abutting desk and only narrow passageways that could be threaded through to keep the fire marshal if not happy at least not closing down the joint. Space was getting to be such an issue that even the pool table and Dig-Dug arcade video game on the mezzanine were threatened. From the sales departments one would hear the mad ringing of bells as new deals closed and mo' money, mo' money, mo' money came piling in. One salesman even broke a million dollars in sales in a day. But, like being a real estate agent in 2003, these salesmen really did not have to do anything to get their commissions. The word was out that iSyndicate could deliver and help get a top-flight web-portal going quickly and

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relatively inexpensively. Portals for everything, from military.com to christianity.com to politics.com, were starting on an almost daily basis. All were selling advertising as the way to get revenue so they all needed to have the best material to pull in the web-surfers to view the ads. We were sitting pretty in the middle of a frenzy.

So pretty, in fact, that one day an expensive lawyer came to the office and explained to us all about S-1 filings and quiet periods and blackouts. We were going to go public and all of us were going to become wealthy! The stock market had a real appetite for dot-coms at this time - companies like theglobe.com could debut at \$9.00 a share and be selling for \$64.00 a share by the end of the day. Arch competitor Screaming Media had gone public and received a juicy infusion of cash but not a skyrocketing market value. At the time we were planning to do the roadshow and become a Nasdaq listee, though, some sanity was starting to come back to investors. Enough, in fact, that after the Nadaq took a 5% drop in April of 2000, the iSyndicate IPO was postponed to wait for more favorable market conditions. Needless to say, those improved conditions never appeared.

Instead the shakeout that everybody had known was coming came and came hard. Very hard. While six months earlier it seemed that just mentioning the word dotcom turned on the money spigot, now it emphatically turned off the spigot and usually removed the pipe attached to the mains. Advertisers began withdrawing from internet sites as if there really weren't hundreds of thousands or millions of people viewing their ads. At iSyndicate our bread and butter, web portals, started to disappear. But new possibilities seemed to arrive regularly - WAP encoding for sending data to mobile phones, smart links embedded in the text of articles, AP photos delivered with AP text (AP streams them separately and a referenced photo may or may not ever arrive), video delivery, etc. One little project had us all jumping through hoops - Major League Baseball wanted real-time game updates along with a pile of other services and we had a hard 6-week deadline. Eric, our fearless goalie, saw the writing on the wall and decided he didn't want to be party to ever more desperate attempts to stay afloat. He quit and bugged off to Thailand for a month.

Well, you know what happens here. Eventually, mere weeks after being told that the promised bonus money would be paid "next month", we're all gathered into a room and told the company can no longer meet payroll so here's the final separation check and a promise to send the bonus someday. A skeleton crew is kept on to help transfer assets when the company is finally sold. The rest of us (and much of the skeleton crew, too) repair to a SOMA bar and proceed to get riotously drunk. It helped that the bartender thought that the 25 year old Macallans whiskey was a well drink and sold it at \$5.00 a shot.

So that was my eighteen months as a dot commie. Possibly the oldest one south of Market. The first nine months were the most enjoyable time I've ever had working anywhere. The last nine months weren't so good. So, did I learn to value a stable employer from the desperate straits gambling on a start up had placed me in? Hell no. I took a week off and started at another startup.

It failed too but that's another story.



STRANGE TIMES AT CORFLU

TED WHITE

It was around midnight in Las Vegas – about the time for that city’s denizens to be stirring themselves for a night on the town. I was at a small party in a penthouse suite in the Plaza Hotel, in downtown Las Vegas, enjoying a sip of something that was single malt, and holding a typical conversation with my host, Nic Farey. That is to say, it was a *robust* conversation, conducted with occasionally raised voices, as well as raised glasses.

There was a knock at the door.

The room grew silent. Nic rose from his seat and went purposefully to the door. “Yes?” he said politely.

I couldn’t see the person outside the door from where I was sitting, and I could barely hear his quiet voice. But it *sounded* like he was saying, “Nick Fury?”

Nic agreed that he was Nic Farey.

“Nick, I’m sorry to interrupt you at a time like this, but you’re needed at headquarters.”

“Headquarters?”

“SHIELD hq. Local hq, that is. Down on the Strip. Located in that replica of the Sphinx.”

“Look, man,” Nic said, backing away from the door, “I don’t know –”

An arm clad in black shot through the doorway, and a black-gloved hand seized Nic.

“Hey!” Nic shouted, struggling. Stupified, the rest of us in the large room looked on, unable to act, although I saw Mark Plummer half-rise from his place on the sofa opposite me, and Nic’s wife, Bobbie, let out a squeak.

Before we could galvanize ourselves, Nic was gone.

Frank Lunney said, “Shit, I shoulda grabbed him, held on to him.”

Jay Kinney was already at the still-open door. “Where’d he go?” he said. “Where are they?” I joined him and we stared down the hall. No one was near the elevators. Then we heard a *clang* from overhead, like a fire door slamming shut, and then the very loud sound of a helicopter.

“Jeeze, look!” Frank said, standing at the big picture window. Mark was next to him. In the night sky, well-lit by Las Vegas lights and its own blinking navigational lights, was a helicopter, rising up and away from us, heading in the direction of the Strip.

* * *

Bobbie was pretty upset. She wanted to call the hotel’s front desk, call 911, call the police, *do* something. But what? What could we really tell anyone? What had we really seen or heard? There was a lot of booze in that suite – open bottles, half-filled glasses. Nic was gone and we’d seen a helicopter. Coincidence? And had that guy, *whoever* he was, really called Nic “Nick Fury”? What was that all about?

Claire stayed with Bobbie and the rest of us trailed back down to the smoking consuite, feeling dispirited and uneasy. I joined Frank.

“Didja hear about Nic?” Frank was asking Arnie Katz.

“No. What about Nic?” Arnie asked, suddenly concerned. This was, after all, his and Joyce’s Corflu. Was there a problem? “Is there a problem?”

“He’s been kidnapped,” Frank said. “Abducted. Right out of his own room – that suite on the top floor. We were there when it happened.”

“You’re kidding! Really? How –?” Arnie rose to his feet, suddenly energized, agitated, obviously feeling the need to do something. “What – what’s being done about it?”

Frank shook his head. “Right now? Nothing. We talked about it. Some of us think it’s a stunt that Nic staged for our benefit.”

“But there was that helicopter,” I said.

Jay walked in and joined us. “That was weird,” he said. “That helicopter. Sounded like it took off from the hotel’s roof.”

“As a matter of fact,” Ross Chamberlain chimed in, “there *was* a helicopter overhead a few minutes go. It rattled the window, it was so loud.”

“You remember that, Arnie,” Joyce Katz said from her place on the sofa. “Sit down. There’s nothing you can do now.”

We all sat down. I popped open a Diet Pepsi fresh from the room’s mini-fridge, and Joyce opened the box on the coffee table in front of her, and conversation turned elsewhere.

* * *

It was about an hour later that I joined Jay in the short trek down the hall to the non-smoking consuite, mostly because I felt the need to do some circulating – both socially, and of my blood. “Getting up and moving around every so often” was about the way Jay put it.

I wandered through the rooms of that suite, making a brief pit-stop in the bathroom, and was noshing on some cheese and talking to Jack Calvert when Nic Farey walked into the room. He had a cat-ate-the-canary look on his face.

Jay and I immediately made bee-lines for him from different parts of the room, confronting Nic simultaneously.

“Where’ve you been, Nic?” Jay asked.

“I can’t tell you,” Nic said, almost smirking. “There still any beer in the bathtub?”

“Of course there is,” I said. “But, Nic, Bobbie was awfully worried about you.”

“Thanks, Ted,” Nic said, putting his hand on my shoulder. “I know she was, and I’ve already seen her and put that to rights, so don’t you worry about that.”

“You’re all right, Nic?” Jay asked.

“I am, Jay. I have a new tattoo in a place I can’t show you, but I’m fine.”

At that point Frank came in and immediately shouted, “Nic! You’re back!” Which alerted everyone in the room to the fact that Nic had been *somewhere else previously*.

“Yes, Frank,” Nic said, turning to greet him, “private parties are all well and good, but I like to get back to the main convention – what there is of it at this hour – every so often, you know.”

Frank gave Nic a bemused look. “You’re not going to tell us, are you?”

Nic gave Frank a beatific smile. “Tell you what, Frank? It’s all good. You know that.”

“They probed you, huh?” Frank said, shrugging.

Nic laughed. “Where’s that beer?” he asked and then headed for the bathroom.

He never did tell us. If you want to know, I guess you’ll have to ask him yourself.

COW IS GIVING KEROSENE

FOUND BY NIC FAREY

The original of this document, apparently a fragment of a biographical index, was found between pages 101 and 102 of a 1970 edition of *The Atrocity Exhibition* in Foozles Book Outlet, Pigeon Forge, TN, presumably having been used as a bookmark.

Note 1: Several entries were defaced or damaged to the point of complete illegibility, and three “Y” or “Z” entries were annotated with the familiar vulgarity for the female sexual organs, all in what appears to be green ballpoint pen.

Note 2: This entry partially obscured by mold and/or an undetermined stain. “Warhoon” was inferred by the three clearly seen letters and by holding the page fragment up to the light.

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COW IS GIVING PARAFFIN

FOUND BY MARK PLUMMER

The original of this document, apparently a fragment of a biographical index, was found inside an empty bottle of Jim Beam in the penthouse suite of the Plaza Hotel in downtown Las Vegas, shortly after the hotel had been occupied by a conference of lawnmower salesmen and before the building was abandoned after an unexplained chemical accident in May 2008.

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WEREWOLVES OF FANDOM

NOT WARREN ZEVON



I saw a werewolf with a rolled-up fanzine in his hand
Walking through the Corflu hotel in some pain
He was looking for a place to KTF
Going to find Ted White and start to complain
Ah-ooooooooo...

Werewolves of Fandom

If you hear him howling about your colophon
Or that your page count is too thin
He could spindle, fold or mutilate you any time
Werewolves of Fandom again

Ah-ooooooooo...

Werewolves of Fandom

He's the hairy-handed gent who ran amuck in print
Lately he's called Shelby Vick a failure

Bacon, stay away from him

He'll rip your pages, Jim!

I'd like to meet his collator

Ah-ooooooooo...

Werewolves of Fandom

Well, I saw Pete Weston walking with the Queen

Doing the Werewolves of Fandom

I saw Christopher J Garcia walking with the Queen

Doing the Werewolves of Fandom

I saw a werewolf locking Banana Wings at Trader Vic's

His font was perfect!

Ah-ooooooooo...

Werewolves of Fandom

Huh! Draw blood!

CORFLU WORD CLOUD

This word cloud was generated using <http://wordle.net> from the text of Nic Farey's conrep in *Banana Wings*, and submitted by the Sainted Plummer.





ELLAS OTHA BATES

DECEMBER 30 1928 - JUNE 2 2008

“BO DIDDLEY”