

This is the all-purpose fanzine of Samuel Edward Konkin III, published irregularly (semi-monthly, approximately) for exchange with other Science Fiction fanzines, locs, artwork, filks and other fannish and sercon material, and for the following Amateur Press Association, *nu*, *Alarums & Excursions*, and any others the editor is invited to join. **clear ether!** is available only for trade, letter-of-comment, art, fanwriting, or in APA. All correspondence should be sent thusly: New Libertarian Enterprises, P.O. Box 1748, Long Beach, CA 90801, Personal: SEK3. □

This issue is Number 20 (of Volume II) and is intended primarily for *LASFAPA* 5 (February 11, 1977), *APA-NYU* 23 (March 3, 1977), and *Frefanzine* 4 (Whenever). Next issue: D&D for A&E: "Demons of Law."

ROMANTICISM

I haven't exactly been a closet romantic, but I have let philosophic-aesthetic arguments simmer on the back burners of my mind for a long time—at least in print. Good reasons exist for this.

First, I have not made myself an expert on aesthetics, as I have in the fields of Theoretical Chemistry and New Libertarianism. People *pay* to hear my views in those areas. Second, it's not particularly fannish, unless you want to start fan-feuds or Plunge All Fandom Into War, neither of which was my intent. Third, my fannish (psychic profit only) writing is just that—fannish and not sercon.

Not that I have been hiding my views. After all, I published John J. Pierce's *Renaissance* as a supplement to my old *New Libertarian Notes*, for a couple of years. And while it could be guessed that I agreed with Pierce on Eschatological Romanticism about as much as he agreed with me on New Libertarianism, there was no question as to which side of the barricades I am on. And, of course, the title of this fanzine expresses what Ayn Rand calls my "sense of life."

Two events have prodded me to speak out explicitly. One was reading *Star Wars*, which I will deal with in the next section. It generated hope for me again. The second was Jeff Rignenbach's appearance at the Forum for Philosophical Studies in January.

Now Rignenbach was an objectivist, though he's evolved into a more libertarian position. Still, he leans heavily on Ayn Rand, and cites her *Romantic Manifesto* favorably. Not only that, but he favorably mentions Tolkien and several fantasy writers of the 1890s to 1920s. He even seems to be familiar with much modern SF. So naturally I looked forward to his "Decadence, Science Fiction, and Libertarianism" and told all the fen I could to come out.

Ghu, but I'm glad they didn't. Outside of the frefen, the attendees were mostly what Phil Osborn calls "objectivist churchgoers," nodding at the "sermon" and applauding when the right phrases are uttered. Oh, a couple of fannish libertarians were there who truly liked the talk—but then they think Harlan Ellison is great a lament the passing of the New Wave. Less said about them, the better.

I have already forgotten too much of the details of Rignenbach's position to give a blow-by-blow refutation. His thesis rested on identifying certain periods of history as culturally decadent (yes, he defined his terms carefully and the talk hung together self-consistently), noted the prevalence of fantasy written in those times (he included SF as a subset of fantasy) and concluded that such periods were times of snubbing the nose at weakened states and correlated both the eras and some of the

writers and artists with libertarianism.

His case was well-made, well-presented and tight. To refute it, I had to attack at his basic definition—decadence. My question was not *what*, but *why*? Why define the term in such a way as to rehabilitate it?

Decadence means a falling away, a crumbling of the old order. Both of us could agree that the word meant this, and was taken as such by most who used it. And, in truth, we could both look at the collapsing order in history and rejoice at its demise. And, even farther, we could despair at the new orders (World War I, Depression and World War II periods) that followed.

In all these periods of decadence arose those who were to carry the seeds of the *renaissance*. Here I parted company with Rignenbach, for this was a term "he knew not." And now we come to the crunch.

Let me be as clear as possible on this issue here. What I am talking about is *not* values per se, what I am talking about *here* is the *mode of expression* of those values. Rignenbach and I agree down the line on basic values, which is why we are both libertarians. Life, property, liberty are all top of our lists—but how do we act or illustrate or symbolize or express this? Here we differ.

Rignenbach and I could both look at the 1920s, for example, and see the decadence of the old order as a good. We could both enjoy libertarian H.L. Mencken's razor wit, disemboweling the old mystique of the State. But, I suspect if I had lived at that time, that socially, while Jeff was in the drawing rooms decrying the fate of poor Oscar Wilde, I would be in the coffee shops with the Socialists and New Dealers, grooving on their crusading fervor even as I would be telling them who wrong the values they had which motivated such enthusiasm were.

Let's return, then, to Science Fiction (which I, for one, do not consider a subset of fantasy). Rignenbach sees Verne as a decadent, since Verne acknowledges Edgar Allan Poe as an inspiration. Well, Rignenbach can have the loathsome writings of Poe should he desire, but I have read Verne—even in French—and he's no decadent. He brims with recovered or discovered values, not lost ones. He celebrates the coming of the future, not the fall of the past. Goshwowoboyboy, look at Captain Nemo's neat sub!

Rignenbach embraces Wells, and he can have him. I care not for the gloomy end-of-mankind, we've nothing to look forward to stories. But when Rignenbach reaches for Heinlein, I say him "nay!", Wells influence or not.

And Rignenbach has not read Doc Smith. Much can be said against the *Lensman* series and even more against the *Skylark* series which I cannot deny. His science was almost deliberately obsolete or fantastic, his heroic characters could have used some more personality, and his villains a bit less. And the ultimate paternalism of the Arisians rankles.

In Smith's favor is the grandeur: the whole cosmos involved in a grand struggle. Yet not even this is that which has made me a diehard Smith fan, and even brought me to re-reading his stuff. (With all due respect to C.S. Lewis, I cannot spare the time in my finite lifespan to reread books or see movies I have already seen.)

What Edward Elmer Smith, Ph.D., evokes in me is in his "cardboard" characters. All are brimming with life, with enthusiasm, with purpose and goals. They *knew* the universe is basically black and white, A and not-A, good and bad, and that appearances of "grey," of middlelessness-of-the-road, of agnosticism, are just traps and ensnarements for the unwary.

Nor are his villains mean, petty and insignificant (nor, ultimate of horror, inexorably omnipotent). Marc C. Duquesne is grandly wicked, but no whimpering or *angst* for "Blackie." If he's caught, well, that's the risk, and now how does he get out to perform the next deed of badness? For he will get out—there's no middle way about it.

And Smith could portray non-heroic evil, grandly as well. The Overlords of Delgon are grand—but disgustingly evil nonetheless. And with the Eddorians, especially, Gharlane, he managed to combine both portrayals.

Look at the heroes and heroines. They perceive the wrongs, though they must work at discovering all of them. But there's never any flagging of spirit (*esprit*), Right is to be fought for and Wrong is to be fought.

That's the world I wish to inhabit. No, we don't need Eddorians and Boskone and zwilniks—we've got plenty of their counterparts around. It's the way, the *manner* of living and dealing with reality that I admire. Kimball Kinnison fought for an order I would probably want to subvert—but battling him would be a joy.

The questions about "realism" (especially social realism), "reality," "naturalism" all beg the question. What is "real"—the boot endlessly stomping the face or the hearty "Clear Ether!" and off to the stars? The answer is both exist at given times and places. The real question is "what do you choose to embrace?"

And thus do I condemn the New Wave, the Harlan Ellisons, the "slice-of-life" school, and the existential mainstreamers. I do not condemn their values—I may even embrace some. (God knows Harlan Ellison has exhibited some libertarian tendencies.) I do not condemn their exposure of injustice and oppression—let the muck be raked! I do not even condemn their style—let a thousand plumes blossom!

I condemn their embracing of the gutter. I condemn their attempts to rub my nose in it. I condemn their covert—and often overt—assertions that this is the *only* way, that heroic self-confidence is a sham but waking up as a giant cockroach, helpless against bureaucracy, is "real."

And as they stand guilty, I offer no punishment but to give them what they want—as far as it can be done. I agree with them that they are neauseating, that *their* lives are meaningless, that *they* can have no hope or escape, that *they* would have made the world better by never having been born. I will be glad to reflect back to them the gloom aimed at me and my kind of people, deflect the mud and slime back to them to add to their wallow.

Then I and those like me walk away from the Omelas, and away from the Whimper of Whipped Dogs, and stride up the ladder to our hyperspace cruisers, blaster strapped to our waists, the gleam of righteous goals in our eyes, and with a wave we bid each other—not the ex-human grovelers below—a farewell hail and blast-off to action.

"Clear Ether, fellows!"

◆ NOTICE OF MEETING ◆

"Law and Chaos: from Greek Myths to Moorcock" A symposium for fans, D&Ds, and even philosophy freaks to be held at 1838 E. 7th Street, Apt. 3, Long Beach (near Cherry Avenue). 4:00 P.M. Saturday, February 26, followed by party. Hosted by Samuel Edward Konkin III.

STAR WARS—AT LAST AN SF MOVIE?

A Doc Smith scenario turned into a Heinlein juvenile sums up my impression of the book *Star Wars*. Oh, there's a bit of Asimov robots and Cordwainer Smith compassion and Herbert mysticism and Saberhagen Berserker-machine and... It's all very derivative, and the characters won't be recommended as models in the English courses.

As an SF novel, it has only to recommend it that "sense of life" I talk about in the preceding section. But even with that, it just doesn't have enough new idea material (remember, this is *science fiction*) to justify its publication.

Suppose it was a movie, though? The picture changes. For never has all that been in a movie. The *Clear Ether!* sense of life, the Smith cosmos, Heinlein characterizations, Asimov, (C.) Smith, Herbert, Saberhagen, Anderson, et al. have never been filmed in whole or in part.

That's why, to the shock and consternation of my friends and foes, I have asserted flatly that there never has been a Science Fiction movie, or, if you insist on dragging 2001, *Logan's Run*, *Planet of the Apes*, and such into the genre, no *good* SF movie has been ever made. And you can keep your "Robbie the Robots" and "Night of the Horrors from the Living Fathoms Devouring Cincinnati."

Thus does *Star Wars* kindle hope that maybe, just maybe, if they don't screw up getting from book to screen, we'll finally have a real Science Fiction movie, with all that goshwowoboyoboy which turned us on to the genre. And who knows, they may even decide to film the originals: Smith's *Lensmen*, Heinlein's "juveniles," (C.) Smith's morality plays, Asimov's empires and robotic mysteries, deCamp and Pratt's satire fantasies, Saberhagen's Berserkers, Laumer's satirical SF, and on and on.

Oh, it could be turned into anything from *Lost in Space* to *Space 1999* by the time the moviemakers get through with it. But the author is also the director, and he knows his stf—er, stuff. We have a chance. We can hope for film developed in clear ether!

STRANGE HORIZONS by Sam Moskowitz

The book fits the title, for it has a strange feel to it. Part of it is the fact the chapters are self-contained (as they might be, written as separate articles originally). Part of the feeling comes from the arcane subject matter, for much of the book focuses on SF and pulp fiction of the 1890-1940 period, before the time of most fen. Yet Moskowitz reels off facts in a manner akin to a faned of today talking about LeGuin, Niven, Geis and Roger Elwood.

It came as a review copy a few months ago, and though I had listened attentively to Senior Fan Moskowitz at ESFA meetings a couple of years ago, I was not in a hurry to wade through reams of obscure fannish facts until I noticed the first chapter was on SF and Religion. Well placed, for naturally, I had to look to see what he said about Lewis (one of my favorites), and the Inklings, and Cordwainer Smith... sure enough, he had them all covered, perceptively, and said something new and different. And, being Sam Moskowitz, he fit it in with the rest of the genre.

And so I had to follow through, chapter after chapter, including a fascinating one on a totally obscure era of "Future War" fiction—but what clearly was the beginning of fandom and wargame overlap which evolved to the modern fannish Diplomacy games and Dungeons &

Dragons. And the chapter on Charles Fort, so fair, explaining his points, listing his important friends, pointing out Fort's influence on SF pros...and then lowering the boom. A quick, rational analysis of what Fort said leaves him and his epigones neatly eviscerated on the examination table.

The strong points are Moskowitz's fannish idiom (at least, to me it's a strong point), his erudition, comprehension, and of course, subject matter. The weakness comes from a tendency to cram just a bit too much and probably more those with a less than a fannish fascination with facts we'll feel snowed under in many places.

Although I have read all the prozines acknowledged as first printers of this material, I had managed to miss all the numbers with these articles. Thank you, Scribners. Now that I know what I was missing, I would feel an Incomplete Fan were it to be taken away from me. Yes, it's recommended.

EN GARDE AT THE RIPOSTE OFFICE APA-nu 22

Only one comment and that is I have not yet received my copy of that disty. It was supposed to be collated last Thursday, and I waited until this Tuesday, but still no zine. Well, maybe it's the Postal Monopoly's fault...

Frefanzine 3

All comments on the previous disty should be collated elsewhere. Needless to say, it's been a long time between disties, and my comments were written up and printed in *CE! 15*. Fresh disty comments next ish, but I do have one for the new OE: set a deadline and stick to the damn thing.

LASFAPA 4

ToC Whoops! Notice I got the name wrong. I thought *LASFAPA* was a take-off from *LASFS*. Actually, I prefer *Los Angeles Scientifiction Fans' Amateur Press Association*. ¶ Hope to make it to Leprecon. May have a ride with Santa Monica SFALBers.

Tim Kyger No, you don't need to introduce yourself. (**All hail Discordia!**) ¶ Your reasons for joining *LASFAPA* fit perfectly my analysis. Thanks for being such a good datum. ¶ If you think L.A. fandom is insular, try New York fandom! (No thanks, I already have...) *LASFandom* is positively cosmopolitan in comparison. ¶ As you know, I can't share your enthusiasm for space statism. Perhaps we can reconcile with a drink to the memory of D.D. Harriman? ¶ Your writing letters to politicians has given me an idea for a sequel to my old *NLW* editorial (which freaked out Richard Friedman): "Bullets, Not Ballots." The sequel would be entitled, "Missiles, Not Missives." [Hi, Vic!]

Sarah S. Prince I attended the University of Wisconsin from 1968-70 and the nearest Con I could find to attend was St. Louis' Worldcon. Only fan club in Madison was the Tolkien Society. So pardon me if I have this picture of the Midwest as a vast fannish wasteland. (I have been to Rivercon and Kubla Khan Klave, but I hardly consider Kentucky or Tennessee as part of the "Mid-West.") I for one would enjoy any fannews from your backyard to dispel that image.

Lee Gold I too had to hitch up my disbelief-suspenders quite high to read *Ringworld*. Frankly, I simply ignored the luck of Teela Brown as nonsense uttered by deluded characters, and enjoyed the Puppeteer and Kzin. ¶ Also went through a Norton period. ¶ The *L.A. Times* omes in plastic bags? Never heard of newspapers doing that

before. ¶ 300!

Kathy Good Doublespaced fanzine? Conspicuous consumption! ¶ I suppose Catdom is a Way of Life, too. **Nate Bucklin** So have you figured out the reasons for the APA? How do they square with my analysis?

Rebecca Lesses Kees' permit is just as much an infringement of freedom in the Netherlands, or on the moon for that matter. (I do hope you aren't getting massive doses of Cultural Relativism at Radcliffe.)

Dan Goodman I suppose from your vantage point, my referrals to Partyarchs sounds like an internal squabble. If so, then I'll have to increase my vociferousness until the idea gets across: "They" are not "Us." I don't like guilt-by-association, and surely you won't begrudge me forestalling it? ¶ Come now, Dan, Heinlein has changed his views since "Coventry." The Heinlein of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* has come a ways from *Starship Troopers*. ¶ Nonsense, Social Darwinism was most cogently put forward by Herbert Spencer, an anarchist (who later recanted and backed down to minarchy under pressure). I can't even think of any Social Darwinists making any pleas to the State, but I'll be glad to hear any example you can come up with. (By the way, can we move this discussion to *Frefanzine*?) ¶ Well, maybe you're lost to Charles Williams, but I just got a letter from John J. Pierce who's now become a Williams' fan. But don't feel badly; my anarchochristian friend Andy Thornton has trouble taking Williams too (though were both Lewis fans). Perhaps it's an acquired taste, like fine tobacco?

Kay Jones So other people have been into traffic light incantations? Darn! Another unique weirdness out the window. Since I've got into D&D, I've been working out the incantation for mini-fireballs to throw at the lights. They always give up first. ¶ I've seen that list before, at UW and NYU. A sort of Chemistry Department *Samizdat*.

Celia Chapman No comments, I guess you lucked out.

Forry Ackerman Glad to see things have picked up for you.

Bruce Pelz I still think we'll have a majority of LASFAPA's who are not APA-L. Come to think of it, you were on the outs with APA-L way back when I was in; are you doing both now? ¶ Is it true you taught Don Rickles everything? (Yes, yes, I like Don Rickles sometimes.)

Alan P. Winston It was *not permitted* that you be in the same class as your sister? What kind of fascist bullshit did you have to put up with as a kid and where was this mini-Reich? ¶ Your background sounds similar to Neil Schulman's. Swap growing-up stories with him at some Con or LASFS after-meeting or SFALB Party. ¶ "Paying money in black" (if Kees doesn't answer first) is dealing in the black market—i.e., screwing the State and getting supply to meet demand.

Rita Prince Winston Hail Eris@ If you're interested, one of the authors of *Illuminatus*, Robert Anton Wilson, has a regular column in *NLW*: "Illuminating Discords." I'll sell the back issues containing his column on request. We also have an interview with Wilson in *NLW 39* (our Worldcon issue). ¶ Any girl who hates rain and loves *Illuminatus*! can't be all bad. Wait a minute! You're not a...*shudder* Trekkie, are you? ¶ Maid Marian with a crossbow? Not exactly canonical, you know.

Tom Digby Steps have been taken in that direction. I read from my news service recently that some professor was having his students get drunk before drivin and then showing them films of their actions afterward. Welcome to Digbyland! ¶ Do you really think they can learn math

without learning arithmetic? How do you explain the overwhelming failure of New Math?

Victor Koman And that's *dry* Sugar Crisp! ¶ Why does it feel like I've heard this all before?

Harry J.W. Andruschak Glad to see you made minac again, Andy. Hate to lose you. ¶ The kind of politicians to support State space flight are those being paid off by the space lobby and/or have space contractors in their constituency. "Forward looking?" Come on, Andy, you're more realistic than that. "Wallet-ward and vote-ward looking." ¶ Too bad you had to choose between your family and LASFS. Would it help if we threw in SFALB?

Ted Johnstone I refuse to write comments to bloody minutes of a meeting. Show yourself, sir. (No, no, I didn't say "expose yourself," you friggin' fetish exploiter!) (And I'll keep throwing these in-jokes at you until you holler "Thrush!")

David Schlosser You're going to hate me, but I buy almost the entire Marvel line every week (at Wonder-world) as they come out...and then give them away!

N. Campbell Shapero Cambell? A good, stfnal name, sir! ¶ Remember, Nick, that *I* wasn't driving, Vic was. I drew out the positions and he could ask for a verbal description at any time. Care to get together a cross-country Convoy or charter bus to SunCon in which D&D would be played continually? ¶ I was at OrcCon, but didn't see you there. I'll bring *Terra Supra* to LosCon III, and *Wargrypt* if enough's finished. (The latter one is orthogonal alignment/morality.) And will you have access to your world, good sir? ¶ The repro on your second page in my copy is virtually unreadable. Too bad, you're worth reading.

COMING SOON: Worldcon plans, LepreCon Report, LOSCON III Report, maligning and distorting the characters of fans of good standing, and battenning down the hatches for the storm of comments elicited by this issue. *Please do not send letter-bombs through OE for collation; see P.O. Box on page one.* —SEK3



"Having a good sense of life means never having to act."