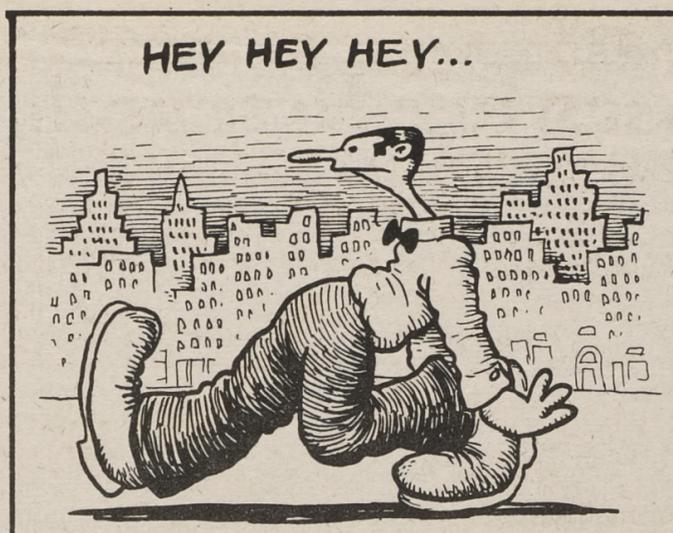


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CONNECTION

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Marvel comics are for real

By MICHAEL STERN

"I hope you keep Iron Man bugged with all his little difficulties; we can't let things get too rosy. Occasionally we like solid action, but let's see more of the hangups which made Marvel original to begin with," Mike Benton, from Bellefontaine, Ohio, wrote to Stan, Archie and George last month. Iron Man was over-reacting to the Mandarin's diabolical defiance. **THA-BRASH!**

Stan is Stan Lee, the 46 year old editor of Marvel Comics and the Shakespeare of his trade. In the eight years since the publication of the first hung-up super-hero saga (Fantastic Four #1), Lee and his fellow Marvels have, with a combination of topicality, psychology, and graphic artistry, steadily transformed the old self-enclosed, timeless comic universe.

"We try to write our books as if they were literature," he said in a recent interview in Marvel's cramped Madison Avenue offices, where its twenty-two titles are produced in three tiny cubicles. An earnest, loping six-footer with a trim Van Dyke and a toupee, Lee has worked for Marvel since he was seventeen. "I figured the other day that I had written more stories and better stories which have been published than any other person since time began. Because I've been writing for these little magazines for thirty years and I've never written less than two comics a week. I don't think anyone in the world can come close to that," he says.

The comic business is relatively unprofitable, and the hours are long. "This is such a tough field," Stan asserts—"you have to be a good illustrator, a good story man, and you have to be fast. A guy like Jack Kirby (Fantastic Four, Thor) or Gene Colan (Avengers) or John Buscema (Silver Surfer) can do three pages a day. Some artists do one page a day. If a fellow does illustrations for some good magazines he may get one or two hundred dollars for a little art spot but we may pay \$35 for a whole page—for six pictures, each of which requires as much work and talent as that one art spot. So to be a comic artist one has to really love the field and be dedicated."

Despite these hardships, Marvel vies with its competitors, hiring away artists much like corporations and universities try to detach each other's executives and faculty members. Just a few weeks ago, Marvel scored a coup by enticing Neal Adams from DC, where he had been busy on Spectre, an imitation of Marvel's Dr. Strange.

Most of Marvel's artists do not live in New York, and many live hundreds or even thousands of miles away. They telephone Stan and he reads them a plot and then they mail in the artwork. While I was in the office, Jack Kirby called from California, where he just moved. Kirby, the originator of the Fantastic Four, is the acknowledged king of the Marvel Bullpen, and has been with Marvel even longer than Lee. Stan took out an envelope of notes, and gave a rapid critique of Kirby's latest FF epic. Alicia, the Thing's blind girl friend, appeared to be looking directly at people and objects. "Give her a glassy-eyed stare," Stan instructed, "and let her seem like she's groping." He also warned that Kirby had included too many villains in another ish (Marvel's issue) and that the readers wouldn't be able to get to know them all. If a story gets lost in the mail, there is a resident emergency team which can fill in if necessary.

In 1961, Lee and Kirby decided that they wanted to make their graphics and plots more interesting. "I had always considered comics a stopgap until I could find time to do better writing," Lee remembers. "Finally about eight years ago, I realized I would be here for a while and why not make out of comics something I would like to read?"

Michael Stern, a junior in the College, is the editor of 'CONNECTION.'

"We started doing our stories differently—in the beginning I wrote all the books and I couldn't keep up with the artist. I'd have three or four of five artists I was trying to keep busy and when I was writing a story for one the other would be waiting for a script and I couldn't keep him waiting but I couldn't stop what I was doing either, so finally, out of desperation I would say to the artist who was waiting: 'Look—here's what the plot will be. You go ahead and draw it and I'll put in the words later. You just make up the pictures as you can.' Then I realized this was a great idea. It works better than writing a script because this gives the artist a chance to draw the story as he sees it."

Now Lee gives only a basic plot to artists—"how the story begins and ends and who the villain is. Then the artist goes home and he draws it. Then I get it and whip it together to make a tight story out of these loosely-woven pictures. I think we're getting the best of the artist and the writer because I am writing the copy according to the drawings in front of me where I can pinpoint the dialogue according to the expressions and so forth. The artist, by the same token, is not hampered by any script and can draw what he wants. If he finds a sequence interesting he may devote four or five pages to it. In writing a script a writer might have only given it three panels or so, not being able to envision it like the artist."

This innovation began Marvel's divergence from the conventions of Brand Echh-ism—Marvelese for the competition, National Periodicals, which publishes the forty-seven DC titles, including the Superman-Batman constellation,



Green Lantern, the Flash, Sgt. Rock, Wonder-Woman, and many others.

National has long been the giant in the field. DC comics sell about 75,000,000 copies a year, compared with Marvel's 50,000,000 a year. (Proportionally, Marvel titles outsell DC's; in the last four years, Marvel has picked up nearly 15,000,000 readers. Spiderman, which recently surpassed Marvel's old best-seller, the Fantastic Four, and has over 5,000,000 readers, is challenging Superman's circulation supremacy.)

DC invented the key structural elements of modern comic narration—the costumed character with a secret identity (Batman, in 1939), and the super-hero (Superman, in 1940). Over the next fifteen years, these forms were developed to about the same point they remained at until the Marvel revolution.

Before Batman's debut in Detective Comics #27, various policemen, spies, and private detectives battled underworld gangs and sinister foreign powers with their fists and occasionally their wits. Batman, from his first story, "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate, combined brains and brawn in novel proportions.

As the strip progressed, Batman's technological aids increased (his utility belt, which originally sported can openers gradually came to include tear gas, boomerangs, a micro-welder, special lighting effects, all-purpose batteries, etc) along with the sophistication of his opponents, who became increasingly differentiated until they too were awarded costumes and special effects (the Joker, Ice-man, etc.) By the mid-fifties, Batman's world was almost completely non-referential: Bruce Wayne lived in Gotham City, fought criminals who were phantasmagorically stylized, and embodied an ideal of aristocratic leisure



Smilin' Stan Lee

PHOTO BY RICHARD HOWARD

that had vanished from the popular imagination during the war.

The landscapes of Batman and Detective Comics (which the Caped Crusader took over completely) were arbitrarily structured to provide plot devices: huge animated advertising posters provided clues to crimes; movie-prop monsters inexplicably being used in downtown Gotham suddenly came alive and had to be defeated; buildings which turn into spaceships; circus animals staged mass escapes; and so on.

Although his secret identity became increasingly important as a story generator, Bruce Wayne never showed any emotion about being considered an idle, cowardly dilettante by the same masses who adored Batman. (Incredibly, Batman wants—in a 1957 edition—the "love and adulation" of his fellow citizens. The Fantastic Four, however, only have fans, who occasionally send them nasty letters, a Goddardesque technique Stan Lee uses to remind people that they are viewing a comic strip.)

Superman's career follows the same evolutionary path. In the 1930's, DC's Whizzer got his super-speed from a transfusion of mongoose blood (now of course, the elixir is limpidly exotic radioactivity) and vanquished, among others, the Killers of Kurdistan. Superman, however, was the first popular embodiment of science-fiction ideas current since Wells' The War of the Worlds: an extra-terrestrial with superior intellect and super-powers. His strip too became increasingly self-enclosed and atemporal, without concrete referents like existing names and places. His opponents changed from gangsters and communists to apolitical super-villains like Luthor.

By the mid-fifties, Superman had spun off historical subsidiaries—Superboy and Superbaby—each enclosed in non-intersecting time-volumes, and super-companions, like his superdog, Krypto. DC editors concocted "imaginary" stories based on "what if's" like Superman marrying Lois Lane or losing his super-powers; developed stories of Superman's babyhood on Krypton and the life of his parents, grandparents, and other relatives; and then made imaginary variations on them. Jimmy Olsen and Perry White grew no older, Lois Lane kept her torch for Superman and her suspicions of Clark Kent's real identity, and Lois and Superman occasionally embraced in an imaginary tale, or even had imaginary children.

DC artwork changed somewhat from Bob Kane's original early-Egyptian style Batman, but it too solidified by 1955, with six rectangular panels per page, a minimum of differentiation of characters' facial and muscular structure, and untextured, two or three color layouts. Plots became either convoluted whodunits with deus ex machina solutions, or ritual battles with ever-recurring villains who miraculously kept escaping from the prisons they had been consigned to a few issues before.

And then . . .

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"We try to think of the books as fairy tales," Stan says. "We have to accept the one basic fairy tale premise that a guy can fly or turn his body into flame or walk on water or whatever, but once we accept that premise, I try to write as though he's a real person. What would happen if you—you—had the strength of fifty men? Isn't there still a chance you might have acne or athlete's foot or trouble with girls?"

"So the same thing with a secret identity—if you had a secret identity it would have to be a problem. You'd be worried about people finding out what you are, you might have your own sober second-thoughts sometime: 'Why try keeping it a secret—if its something to be ashamed of, maybe I shouldn't be doing this. Maybe I should see a psychiatrist.' I try to let the readers see what the character is thinking and what his hang-ups are."

The Marvel secret: superheroes are people too, and like people they age, mature, and have anxieties. For example, the Fantastic Four: Astronauts mutated by a cosmic ray shower, the group only gradually achieves coherence (The Torch hates the Thing and is jealous of Mr. Fantastic because he's courting Invisible Girl, the Torch's sister, and so on.)

These intra-group squabbling reflect a current political reality—the centrifugal forces now operating among members of collective-defense alliances like NATO and the Warsaw Pact; DC's Justice League of America (Superman, Batman, et al) is still back in the old Wilsonian days of Galactic Courts and unanimous combat with rival legions of supervillians.

Johnny Storm (Torch) and Ben Grimm (Thing) gradually overcome their hostil-

symbolized by the costume. A romantic idea, it was transformed by Lee into a means of defining a singular personality, whether Dr. Doom or the Hulk. When the Fantastic Four first appeared, they didn't have costumes. "I tried to break all the cliches and one of the cliches I tried to violate was not using costumes," says Stan. "I think the first three issues we kept them out of costumes and I was besieged by mail. Funny, we never used to get fan mail, but when the FF came out, all of a sudden we got hundreds of letters. The one complaint, the one criticism that our readers had was that they didn't have costumes. So I realized from that point on that costumes are very important to the readers of this type of material. I don't know why." Instead of DC's standard poles of the mad and altruistic scientist, Marvel's staple is the modern researcher who gets into something over his head and, instead of creating a separate Frankenstein, transforms himself into the other. (The Hulk vaguely remembers that he was once Bruce Banner, and the knowledge torments him; Dr. Doom is nasty because he made his face so ugly even he can't bear to look at it, etc.)

Marvel comics broke out of DC graphic format by abolishing the fixed borders between panels and utilizing instead jagged borders, interconnecting panels, full-page spreads, perspective tricks like foreshortening and odd visual angles, and many-colored, highly-textured backgrounds. Dr. Strange and the Silver Surfer boast some of the finest psychedelic art on the market; in some issues, photographs are used to add textural and shading variety.

The transparency of the old kind of comics, with their stilted diction (each phrase must convey a piece of infor-



"The Marvel secret: superheroes are people too, and like people they age, mature (sometimes), and have anxieties."

ity, and—my God!—Reed Richards marries Sue Storm, after a long and stormy courtship, since Sue was also being sought by Namor, the Submariner, who lives underwater in his own magazine. Reed tries to invent a machine to turn the Thing back into a human being, and after a year's identity crisis, Ben decides he'd rather be ugly but useful; his blind girlfriend Alicia decides she loves the Thing anyway. Sue and Reed have a baby, breaking DC's biggest taboo, and so it goes.

Or take Spiderman: Peter Parker, a milquetoast high-school chemistry major gets bitten by a radioactive spider in 1962 and acquires the powers of a man-sized spider. But, unlike Batman, his fellow New Yorker's (yes, and he even rides the subway) don't like him, and the newspaper he works for part-time launches a hate campaign against him. But even Peter grows up—he goes to college, loses his pimples, goes out with a good-looking chick, and convinces some people that he is a good spider after all. But his secret identity still confuses and pains him—his girl thinks he's a coward, his ailing aunt thinks he's irresponsible, and he oscillates between poles of manic exhilaration and depression.

The introduction of personality and generational change into comics entailed many concomitant alterations in the static conventions of the early 1960's. With temporality came the kinetic art which made Marvel the head's favorite reading (besides Headcomix, of course), a new kind of dialogue and narrative structure, and a new contemporaneity.

Just as the old concept of a secret identity was changed, Marvel created its own cliches. (Like a Stendhalian pseudonym, a DC secret identity provides one with a mask, with the possibility of metamorphosis and escape,

mation necessary for solving the plot puzzle) and lack of characterization, is also absent in most Marvel mags. The number of panels available to the artist and scripter determines the amount of development possible. Marvel comics, unlike DC, almost always contain only one story, usually over twenty pages, and each character or group has its own book. The rudimentary plots are serialized (some stories have lasted a year) and are usually very repetitious. Little information is conveyed in Marvel dialogue; it is largely a collection of incantation and boasts.

"I'm a big fan of Shakespeare," Stan says, "and I love the heavy drama and the heavy humor. It's almost like the feeling you get in the Yiddish theater, where everything you do is heavy and emotional . . . I think dialogue should have a ring to it. I don't think any two characters should speak the same way. I think if you read the competition, every dialogue balloon could be interchanged. Or a character says, 'Oh, there comes a creature. Get out of the way before he gets you. Look out, he's running away.' I mean, that's nothing; it's not writing, its explanation."

Stan characterizes himself as "sort of a conservative radical," and politics have seeped more and more into all of his books. He writes a monthly editorial (in one, he solicited reader's opinions on whether Spiderman should oppose the war, and after a long argument, he now does.), and includes more and more political opinion in the comics themselves.

"We began taking editorial stands about a year ago," Stan notes, "when we realized from the mail we received that our magazines were very influential with kids. They don't seem to want just adventure stories; they want



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R. Crumb: the sacred and the profane

By STEVEN MARX

(First of two articles)

Part I. The Sacred

The disciples went up to him and asked, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He replied, "It has been granted to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven; but to those others it has not been granted. For the man who has will be given more, till he has enough and to spare; and the man who has not will forfeit even what he has. That is why I speak to them in parables; for they look without seeing, and listen without hearing or understanding." (Matthew 13: 10-14)

Although wearing different masks in the two strips in which he appears, (HEADCOMIX, Viking Press, 1968) Schuman the Human has a single identity; he represents Man as Jew. In the opening frames of both strips we hear the accents of his mother's voice:

"He goes forth with his fine mind to FIND GOD! And believe me, he took along a lunch!"
"Schuman, your mother is worried about you."

He also fits the psychological stereotype of the Jew: super-intellectual, paranoid, anal. But most important, Schuman's relationship with God stems from the Old Testament. He could be Abraham or Jonah or Job.

In the first strip, Schuman starts out confident:

"After months of intrigue, I believe I finally have a HOT LEAD . . . in fact, this could be the night."

And yet walking the streets he is fearful:

"A Prowl car . . . I hope they—"

When God finally replies to Schuman's persistent queries, it is with a simple, and unexpected assertion of His power, an AHEM! which communicates the same meaning to Schuman as does the voice in the whirlwind to Job.

Job learns:

I had heard of Thee, by the hearing of the ear
But now mine eye seeth thine
Wherefore I abhor my words, and repent
Seeing I am dust and ashes"

So does Schuman the Human:

Gulp! . . . Er . . . Heh, heh . . . Never mind . . . Well that's showbiz . . . SHEEE!

In the second Schuman strip, he is no longer pictured as a middle-aged salesman. Now Schuman is a stone-faced scientist who has frenetically devoted his life to the systematic search for truth:

All these facts, figures, diagrams . . . and I must fit it all together like a great jigsaw puzzle! A staggering task, but one which I—

Along with Truth, he also seeks the solution to his "behavior problem," and both are close at hand:

I believe I am finally at last getting close to the real heart of the problem! . . . And then . . . And then . . . I'll be happy!

The second Schuman strip also "features" Mr. Natural, Crumb's greatest creation. Mr. Natural is the opposite of Schuman, a man with neither problems nor solutions, a man who is not searching, but who is "there." Crumb sees himself as partaking of both Schuman and Mr. Natural. The self-portrait in "A Strange Case of Derangement" closely resembles Schuman:

The truth is, I'm one of the world's last great medieval thinkers, . . . my plans have all been worked out quite methodically . . . logically . . . this is the bedroom closet where I operate a huge network of radios, sending out incantations, curses, voodoo hoodoo!

Mr. Natural's voice said "hoodoo."
Mr. Natural says, "What's it all for?"

in response to Schuman's search for truth. He says, "Yer crazy," to Schuman's quest for happiness. He wants to put Schuman in touch with reality and release him from tension:

Hey picklepuss! Have you ever investigated a raindrop? But this only makes Schuman more uptight. Sweating furiously, he captures a raindrop in a glass and puts it under the microscope: Inside the drop he finds a little box, which says "Don't open till Christmas." However, like Pandora, he opens it anyway, and inside finds a little bag; the sign on the box now says, "You heard me." He opens the bag and the sign says, "Oh well"; he finds a heart exuding love and the sign says, "What the hell." He experiences incredible wonder, his face is transformed into a rounded human countenance, and at that moment the door opens, two attendants come in, and drag him off

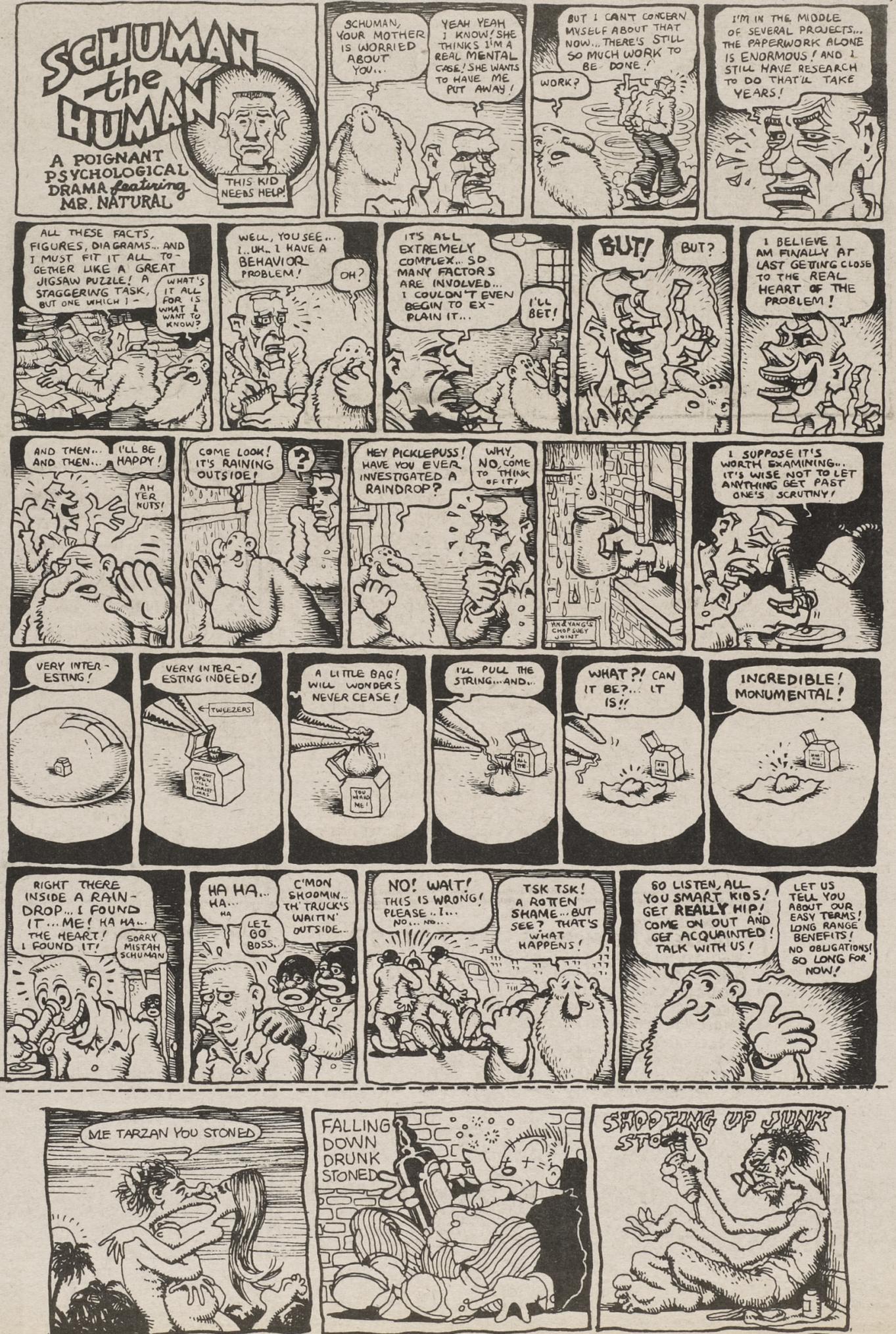
screaming to the loony bin. Instead of following Mr. Natural's advice, Schuman immediately put the raindrop under the microscope and violated all the cautions of nature. Discovering love, truth and happiness through technology and without spiritual preparation (perhaps taking acid) saved him and freaked him out at the same time. Both Schumans "Find God." Both lose their heads. In the last frame, Mr. Natural feels pity yet can do nothing for Schuman, and offers the whole story as a commercial for his own brand of "natural" salvation:

Tsk Tsk! A Rotten shame . . . But see? . . . That's what happens! . . . So listen, all you smart kids! Get really hip! Come on out and get acquainted! Talk with us! . . . Let us tell you about our easy terms! Long range benefits! No obligations! So long now!"

All of Crumb's Mr. Natural-Flakey Fount strips center on a similar encounter between subtle teacher and thick student. Flakey is not a Jewish intellectual searching for God like Schuman however; but rather a gentile searching for a Mediator. (My wife points out that Flakey is also the guy in the hair tonic commercial looking for a solution to his dandruff problem.) Mr. Natural conscientiously tries to comfort and enlighten him but they use language on two different levels of meaning and communication is finally impossible.

For example, in "Mr. Natural in Death Valley" (ZAP #0), Flakey comes to visit Mr. Natural in the desert where he has been meditating for 40 days. Flakey wants, "just a couple of straight answers, mister!" As in "The Man from Afganistan," (HEADCOMIX) Mr. Natural first tries to avoid what he knows will

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Steven Marx is an instructor in the English Department.

Headcomix

Kozmic Kapers

Schuman the Human
 BETTER KNOWN AS "BALDY" HE GOES FORTH WITH HIS FINE MIND TO FIND GOD! AND BELIEVE ME, HE TOOK ALONG A LUNCH!

AFTER MONTHS OF INTRIGUE, I BELIEVE I FINALLY HAVE A HOT LEAD!

THERE ARE THOSE WHO CONSIDER ME UNSTABLE... THE FOOLS! THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF MY EFFORTS...

"IN FACT, THIS COULD BE THE NIGHT!"

IT'S TEN AFTER TWO... HMM...

A PROWL CAR... I HOPE THEY-

AWEM!

GULP!

ER... UH... HEH HEH

NEVER MIND...

WELL, THAT'S SHOWBIZ!

SHEEE!

YOU'RE A GOOD KID, FLAKEY! I LIKE YOU... NOW TELL ME WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS!

WELL, I... SOMETIMES IT'S ALL SO PAINFUL AND CONFUSING! I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!!

YOU'RE LOST, MY BOY! IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER OF GETTING YOUR SELF UNDER CONTROL!

WHAT SHOULD I DO, MR. NATURAL?

SOB

WHEN YOU ARISE IN THE MORNING, YOU SHOULD DO LAST NIGHT'S DIRTY DISHES... THEN YOU SHOULD SING A SIMPLE MELODY (OF YOUR OWN CHOICE)... THEN YOU SHOULD CALL SOMEBODY UP (NOT ME)... THEN GO TO THE STORE... BUY SOME ASPERAGUS!

YES? YES?

THEN MEET A NEW PERSON, GO HOME, TAKE LSD, SAY A PRAYER, BREATHE TEN TIMES, STAND ON YOUR HEAD, SET YOUR WATCH, TAKE A SHIT, PICK YOUR NOSE, SQUEEZE A TIT...

GEE... ALL THAT'S KIND OF HARD TO REMEMBER.

The ideology of 'academic freedom'

By GARY SHAPIRO

To most teachers and intellectuals "academic freedom" designates the precious value of free inquiry and the thorough investigation of all questions. Professional academics and the liberal intellectual community usually maintain that this freedom is a universal and timeless value; it is important to remember that it came to be historically important in the Enlightenment when intellectuals began to see their responsibility in terms of providing critiques of existing social institutions as a means of promoting human freedom. Great champions of intellectual freedom like the philosophes and Kant are obviously in this tradition. How then is it possible for radicals—and especially radical intellectuals—who claim to be concerned with the basic problems of oppression and liberation to repudiate their own cause by denouncing academic freedom or attempting to limit its value? One radical answer is that "academic freedom" as it is often used no longer has the libertarian content that it once did; we must expose the distortion of the concept and restore its fuller meaning with attention to the present prospects for intellectuals in this society. (The liberal finds it too easy to denounce the apparent paradox involved in a libertarian "attack" on "academic freedom"; as with Marcuse's notion of repressive tolerance the failure lies in refusing to see that the contradiction is within himself and his institutions, not in the writer's words).

I am not speaking of the question which is often raised as to whether other values take precedence over academic freedom. Certainly there are immediate and pressing human needs—survival and minimum welfare—which must exclude study when it is necessary to make a choice. The case has often been made that the problems outside the university are so pressing that they cannot be ignored merely for the sake of preserving academic freedom for a few. Rather than entering into that controversy I question the basic terms in which it is discussed, namely, the assumption that the university is today a sanctuary of academic freedom in the traditional sense of the phrase.

Today "academic freedom" plays a basic ideological role in justifying the university's participation in a corporate and militaristic society. It does so only because those who frequently employ this concept have largely perverted its meaning. This becomes especially clear when we examine some of the uses which presently are being made of the idea of academic freedom. An example at hand is the statement called "The University as a Sanctuary of Academic Freedom" which was circulated at Columbia by part of the liberal establishment.

The statement begins innocuously enough, even if it is, perhaps, a bit self-righteous: "The tradition of the university as a sanctuary of academic freedom and center of informed discussion is an honored one, to be guarded vigilantly." The statement then goes on to say what freedom is: "the rights of professors to teach, of scholars to engage in the advancement of knowledge, of students to learn and to express their views, free from external pressures or interference." I have emphasized the last phrase because it is crucial to understanding the present liberal-conservative interpretation of academic freedom. Apparently it is believed that the SDS disruption of classes was an "external pressure" on the academic community which endangered its freedom. In reality, "external pressure" can hardly come from the university's own students who, as a matter of fact, were protesting the institution's growth. Gary Shapiro is an instructor in the philosophy department and a graduate of the College. He is a member of the radical New University Conference.

ing complicity in American imperialism and racism. The "academic community" is not a relatively closed group sharing common objectives of advancing knowledge, but contains within it whole schools, institutes, and groups of academics whose obvious function is to aid imperialism (School of International Affairs, S.E. Asia Institute, Jason project etc.). I for one resent being called part of the academic community if it implies that I share the goals of those who do such work. Finally, what kind of freedom is endangered by dis-

universities will take a major role—if so then the university need not be concerned with external interference except as a challenge to its authority—not as an impediment to its academic freedom. As for that, Professor Brzinski of the School of international Affairs gives us a fairly clear vision of what will happen in the neo-capitalist university: "The largely humanist-oriented, occasionally ideologically-minded intellectual dissenter, who sees his role largely in terms of proffering social critiques, is rapidly being displaced

tual exercise to attempt to fathom why the official reasons given for denying credit to ROTC are not equally applicable to the divisions which serve the CIA, the State Department and the corporations. Having traditional academic freedom as an ideal might lead us to question a School of International Affairs whose function is to turn out CIA men and other agents of U.S. imperialism rather than to analyze the nature of third world rebellions and other large social movements without "external pressure or interference." It might lead us to wonder why the Business School does not make the slightest pretense of evaluating the U.S. economy from many competing points of view, but simply trains people to administer it smoothly.

In fact NROTC is only the tip of the iceberg of military-corporate influence at Columbia. Only a few departments have been left relatively untouched by its demands, and even they often manifest a bureaucritization of form in teaching, standards of academic excellence, and even the intellectual conception of the area of study, all of these developments having occurred at the same time as the growing intrusion of the military-industrial state onto the campus. The "value-free" social sciences, even in such reputedly liberated parts of Columbia as the College and Graduate Faculties show the growing cohesion of the requirements of the warfare economy and the substance of the curriculum. People must be taught to accept the system and trained to administer and rationalize it. Consciousness must keep up with social change—thus the need for "generalist-integrators." Accordingly, the prevailing view in the social sciences is one which studies the way in which various systems function and maintain their stability; since the R.S. is one of the main systems studied, the results obtained comprise a knowledge of how to deep things going with the least possible adjustment and admiration for the way in which a society which performs so many "disparate actions" can be given an "overall intellectual integration." The social scientists, of course, reject the notion that they place any premium on the stability of the system—this is just their "objective" way of studying things. This one-sided emphasis on functionalism and system-stability masks an allegiance to the status quo and an anxiety about the disruption of its orderly processes. Disruptive students are like third-world guerrillas; the ringing announcement at the end of the statement mentioned would not be out of place in a Johnson/Nixon speech on Vietnam: "It is our intention not to surrender the safeguards

I was once a student in a seminar on revolution in recent centuries. In one of the first classes the teachers said that the interesting thing about the United States was that it had been able to buy off its intellectuals. They smiled wryly.

Housing is very difficult to get around Columbia; junior faculty don't have it any better than students. Although I had signed up with the faculty housing office by last fall they were still able to offer me nothing. My wife and child were out of town and I was desperately looking for a place for us to live. One day the Columbia housing office called and said that I could see a "senior faculty" apartment which had been turned down by all its potential occupants. I hurried to see it. It was not bad as many apartments go, but its several large windows in the front rooms all faced the new School of International Affairs. Nobody wanted to look at it directly.

ruptions of classes and other protests directed at the way in which the university is becoming an integral part of the ruling apparatus? It is the freedom for teachers now in the university to be listened to and for their students to listen to them and "express their views" (in the way which the teacher deems appropriate). This is the "freedom" of the authoritarian classroom. One might have supposed that academic freedom was an ideal for the university community as a whole, and that it meant freedom within this community: freedom to challenge prevailing views and substantive evils, freedom for all perspectives (especially those critical of the society) to be elaborated and explained. This is closer to the academic and intellectual freedom sought by the Enlightenment.

It is instructive to see why this broader intellectual freedom and sanctuary is not mentioned in the statement. If we turn away from the traditional rhetoric of the statement to some more serious observations and proposals of some of its signers we begin to see that the academic freedom they praise is freedom for the corporate university to perform its functions in the economic-military system without interference (I hope that not all signers of the statement endorse the following quotations; if they do not, they should begin to reflect on what they do mean by academic freedom.) Daniel Bell envisions the future society as being led by "the research corporations, the industrial laboratories, the experimental stations, and the universities." (Quotations from Bell and Brzinski are from Noam Chomsky's "The Menace of Liberal Scholarship" New York Review of Books 1969.) The individual leaders will be "the scientists, the mathematicians, the economists, the the engineers of the new corporate technology . . . not only the best talents, but eventually the whole complex of social prestige and social status will be rooted in the intellectual and scientific communities." As technology becomes continually more complex, the corporations and military find the university an indispensable supplier of trained manpower and researchers. Perhaps we are on the verge of a new stage of capitalism in which the

either by experts and specialists, who become involved in special government undertakings, or by the generalist-integrators, who become in effect house-ideologues for those in power, providing overall intellectual integration for disparate actions." Professor Brzinski is tireless in defending the freedom of "house-ideologues" to teach their classes how to intellectually integrate "disparate actions" (Vietnam, racism, the growing dependence of the economy on weaponry and waste); as for those who proffer "social critiques" of the system, nobody will interfere with their academic freedom—they will simply be "displaced." (Columbia has a long tradition of firing social dissenters, dating from the time of Daniel de Leon and Charles Beard; it has been revived since last spring.)

This new concept of academic freedom is very much like the relatively new concept of free enterprise. The latter is an amalgamation of two ideas—free market and private enterprise—

"Today 'academic freedom' plays a basic ideological role in justifying the university's participation in a corporate and militaristic society. It does so only because those who frequently employ the concept have largely perverted its meaning."

which seemed to the laissez-faire economists to describe freedom within the economic system. The production and exchange of goods was thought to take place by free contracts among independent individuals. In corporate capitalism there is no "free" market and no "private" enterprise—there is free enterprise, meaning capitalism unchecked by any "external pressures" such as concern for human life or welfare. In the university there is no real freedom" of these sections of the apparatus of domination. It would be an interesting and somewhat grotesque intellec-

of freedom that men have erected at great sacrifice over several centuries." The implication that freedom has already been realized (in the U.S. or at the university) is of course inconsistent with the classical liberal and democratic tradition which always saw freedom as something to be extended to more people and to new areas of life. There is a need to discuss just who and what is free within the university, rather than to repeatedly invoke a phrase that has lost most of its original content.

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'Academic freedom'

[continued from c-6]

In the Government department, political theory is fast disappearing to be replaced by comparative government—the study of how different systems function. Political theory, after all, raises those sticky questions about freedom and human values made fashionable by such “humanist-oriented . . . intellectual dissenters” as Locke, Rousseau, and Marx. (Political theorists are not being denied their freedom, simply “displaced”). In introductory economics students learn how the capitalist system functions; if they have questions about the course or the orientation they must go to the section-men, one of whom recently admitted that he knew nothing about other economic systems. If one challenges such narrowness of vision or attempts to point out that the ideology of the classroom is related to that of the government he is an enemy of “academic freedom.”

The ideal of academic freedom is a powerful and moving one for most intellectuals. When we attempt to envision the world which we desire to create, we hope that inquiry in all areas of thought and action will be free, that all points of view will be heard, and that the place of criticism will be respected. We believe this because we consider ourselves, at least potentially, members of a rational community—one

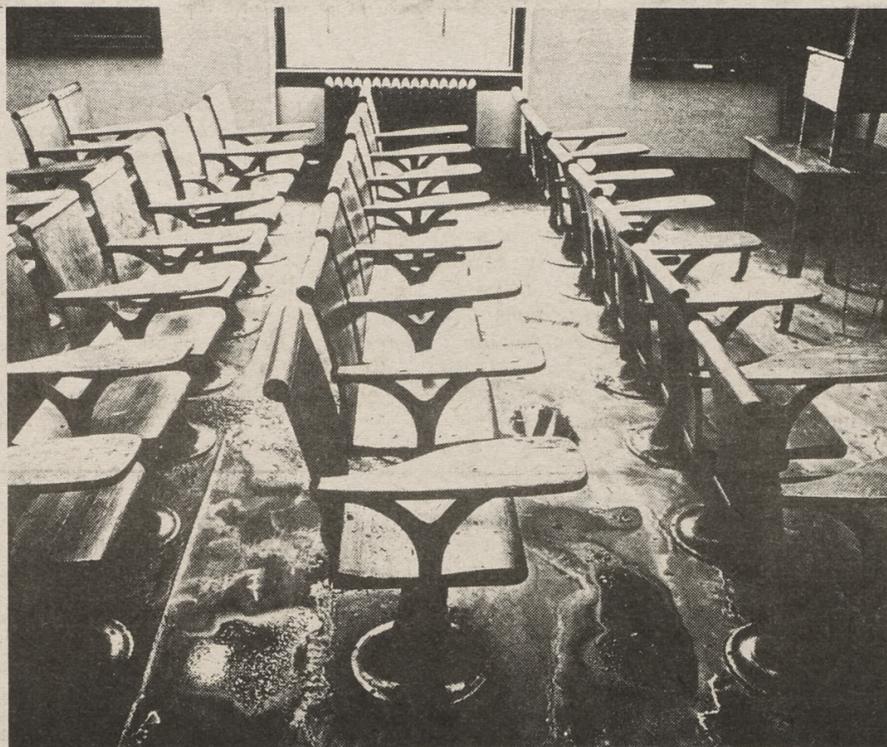


PHOTO BY RICHARD HOWARD

which is genuinely democratic in its communication, inquiry, and action.

It is an illusion to suppose that outside of a few humanistic fields Columbia or any other major American university approaches that ideal. This is hardly surprising; Columbia gets about half of its money from the government

and is run by trustees who represent Lockheed Aircraft, the District Attorney's office and other freedom-loving interests. It might be excusable that many liberals do not see the connection; it is grotesque that they can protest against a few disruptions of classes in the name of an ideal which

is daily dishonored at Columbia in large areas of the university.

The ideology of “academic freedom” is now being heard from strange sources; when Nixon jumps on the band-wagon perhaps a few more liberals will be disquieted. As we move towards the Bell-Brzinski vision of the corporate university with the corporate society let us hope that more students and intellectuals will realize the irony contained in the defense of the university as “sanctuary”: “Academic freedom and the sanctury of the campus . . . cannot be invoked by those who would subordinate intellectual freedom to political ends.”

Professors Bell and Brzinski have a more accurate perception of the reality: the “sanctuary” is already being used for political ends. In the words of the New University Conference statement on the student rebellion—

if the university were a democratic institution, if it stood against racism, if it refused to serve imperialist and militarist ends, if it were genuinely diverse in the interests it served and in its internal composition, then there would be no special need for challenging it—and community might be possible on the campus. But then, too, it would have a difficult time surviving in a society such as ours.

The death of baseball

By DAVID LEHMAN

I fear that magic has fallen upon evil days. When Hector Lopez and Tim McCarver replaced Pee Wee Reese and King Kong Keller, that was the death of baseball.

I remember in 1959, when the Yankees were in last place, it was May, and the first time the Yankees had sunk so low in how many? fifteen years or so. Marty Glickman was on the radio before the game, with Gussie Moran, of women's tennis fame. And the Yankees had just purchased Hector Lopez. After the advertisements, after

Merkle meats are so good, good,
good
Taste and quality: understood
It's heard all over the neighborhood
A great big mmmmm . . . for
Merkles!

Gussie Moran asked Marty Glickman about the trade. And Marty said, will, it seems to me that Hector Lopez might supply what the Yankees have been needing all Spring: a good all-around man. The outfield. The entire infield. Pinch-hitting. And in a pinch: first base. But Hector Lopez was the death of baseball because he was trying to be a throwback to the old days, when a man could play six or seven positions, when a man hustled. Hustling was ninety per cent of the game. The Yankees finished in third place that year: they climbed back. But it was the end of the Yankee reign in the American League. DiMaggio, Raschi, Lopat, Rizzuto: gone.

And when Marty Glickman did announcements for the Yankees that year: that was the death of baseball. You see, he had done them for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1957. With Gussie Moran.

With Merkle Meats. And you just can't shift from the Dodgers to the Yankees and not witness the death of baseball. That man Walter O'Malley.

The first name of baseball I had ever heard was Joe DiMaggio. From my father, who came from Europe, who was a Dodger fan because one morning in Brooklyn in the forties two men were yelling downstairs. They were making fun of the Dodgers. But names were names then: the magic of the name, Joe DiMaggio. Duke Snider. Sal Maglie. Not Dennis McClain. Not slicked up black hair, but beer, and lots of it.



Mickey Mantle: gone.

I remember 1957. That year Raul Sanchez, a southpaw, tossed for the Cincinnati Reds. And when he brushed back Junior Gilliam the rest of the Dodgers rushed out into the field. Vince Scully went wild behind the mikes. I was listening in the bungalow in Spring Valley. And Roy Campanella and Gil Hodges tossed Johnny Temple around. They played catch with him. Baseball was a game of blood and guts, and fights, like General Patton. Raul Sanchez never pitched again for the Cincinnati Reds.

The last time I was in Ebbets Field Jackie Robinson danced off third base.

Everyone in the park knew he was going to steal home plate. And then he did. In a flash, the man in front of me, the biggest, beefiest Negro ever to walk on the face of this planet jumped up and down screaming, Jackie's stealing home! Jackie's stealing home! blocking out the action from me. I never did see Jackie steal home. But I shall never forget the shiny white teeth of his smile when he doubled home the winning run in the sixth game of the 1956 World Series against the Yanks. Clem Labine won that game for us, 1-0, in ten innings.

And who was the best centerfielder? Mickey Mantle, Duke Snider, or Willie Mays?

The point is that in last year's World Series, when Detroit took the last three straight from St. Louis, we were all rooting for Mickey Lolich. And he came through, winning three for Detroit. Sure, we were glad. But the Series could have been fixed and no one give a damn. I don't even know who plays centerfield for anybody anymore,—and that's my position.

I tell you, there is just too much social-consciousness and politics in the air today. The youth of America are becoming committed. We are disregarding the real youth, Baseball in the Bronx. Mel Martin baseball books: mystery coupled with home runs. The legends of baseball: Home-Run Baker. Fresh Frankie Frisch and the St. Louis Gashouse Gang.

When we were kids and we lived in the country the men used to play ball. And we were serving lemonade on the sidelines. Now, all us “poets” play ball in Central Park. But there are too many of those Little Leagues so we never get a field. I have forgotten where I placed my baseball cards, as I've forgotten my Davy Crockett cards, the Alamo, and my coonskin cap. Are there any baseball cards left? And how much are they worth to you, neighborhood kids?

Marvel

[continued from c-3]

a whole ethos, a philosophy, within the framework of the comic character. They seem desperate for someone to believe in—I guess McCarthy filled the bill for a while. Now, I have to resist taking myself too seriously."

Marvel projects, over-all, good middle-of-the road Jewish liberalism, in contrast to the staid, WASPish Republicanism of DC. "I try to present all sides of every question," Stan says. "Iron Man and Captain America are sort of our more conservative concessions to the Birch Society (laugh); Spiderman, Hulk, Silver Surfer, they're the liberals." In the "Crisis on Campus" Spiderman epic, the protesters (who want their university to construct low-rent housing) are sadly misjudged by the press, arrested, and jailed; when a cop pulls his gun, he is restrained—"fair" reporting. The Hulk is always battling the military-industrial complex; but the general trying to kill him is a nice guy. (And Marvel does print war comics; they sell). On the other hand, Iron Man (in reality Tony Stark, industrial tycoon) is an apologist for imperialism; Dr. Strange tells some hippies in the street to drop back in; and Randy Robertson, a black militant who calls Spiderman "Whitey" is told by his father that "the rules are the same, no matter who the players are..." Blacks and hippies appear regularly in Marvel's urban crowd scenes, a far cry from the sterile Aryan purity of DC's Metropolis; but Marvel was embarrassed when its first black super hero, an African philosopher-king with "jungle senses," turned out to be named the Black Panther, and tried to drop the "black" from his name.

Stan has tried to open up the editorial decisions of the magazines to his readership. He reads nearly 2000 fan letters a week, and often solicits opinions on specific policy questions (he acquiesced to overwhelming demand to keep the black in Black Panther.) Marvel invented the no-prize, a package of bubble-gum awarded to any reader who

can point out a factual mistake of inconsistency in any issue, and unlike DC, makes no pretence of trying to explain inexplicable mistakes. Stan admits he was wrong, and emphasizes the tautological nature of the comic universe in his replies—"We can roll our own erudite explanations as we go

along," he answered one earnest girl trying to explain the difference between white and black magic in Dr. Strange.

All of these innovations have not been without effect on the world of Brand Echh. A recently-tabulated do-it-yourself poll showed that Marvel has nearly 20% adult readers, compared to DC's

estimated 4%. "The competitors were really asleep at the switch" in 1961, Stan recalls. "It was very funny—when they did pick up on it, and they tried to imitate us, they imitated all the wrong things. Like they'll think our books are selling well because we use crooked panel borders. Years ago I used to get reports—because we know all the people who work at National and they come back and tell us a few things. They have a big conference down there and suddenly decide that our books are selling well because they have a lot of words on their covers and we took all the words off our covers. Or they decided our books were selling well because of the way we colored the titles. So they tried to color their titles like ours so we changed our colors. But it never occurs to them that our books are written better and that the artwork has more sincerity."

DC comics have begun to change in the last year; women's skirts have come off their ankles; Robin has Janis Joplin records, etc. The contemporary has entered in politics as well; instead of vague references to huge red claw nebulae trying to take over their sector of the galaxy, Superman goes to fight in Vietnam and zaps a few battalions of Vietcong per page. Hippies are portrayed as either communists or dupes; the underground press crops up in the form of "It's Your Bag," a "scandal-sheet" which guesses Batman's secret identity. 'Nuff said.

Stan is himself interested in the underground press, and interviewed me for a few minutes about it. He is impatient with the boundaries of propriety set by the Comics Code (he says it is "very strong"), which stipulates that crime does not pay, sex is bad and drugs unmentionable, and that characters must not have teeth that look like fangs, among other things. "I don't think there's any farther we can go and still keep it as a comic magazine," he says of his format. "I think we do enjoy any kind of experimenting we can think of, but now what we're doing is essentially repeating ourselves. If we get any further out, we won't have a comic book, and hopefully, we may do that sometime." Hopefully.



R. Crumb: the sacred and the profane

[continued from c-4]

be an essentially fruitless exchange, Confused at first, Flakey is soon utterly stoned by the profusion of apocalyptic imagery. But Mr. Natural suddenly brings him down by dismissing "the whole shtick" as a put-on:

Meanwhile, a multitude of celestial voices will sing round about you and the earth shall smell of roses evermore! GOOD DAY!!

Mr. Natural's next miracle is to point to a mirage of a city in the distance, which again Flakey takes as real, and again must learn is illusory. The put-ons are intended to clean out Flakey's head by showing him the vacuousness of the 'letter' of revelation. They succeed if eliciting as unconditioned and honest a response as he is capable of:

Sometimes it's all so painful and confusing! I just don't know what to do!!

but when Flakey persists, Mr. Natural gives him a version of revelation designed to fulfill his expectations:

Sigh... Okay... You shall be visited by seven dragons, each with seven tongues of fire! But that's not all!... A virgin shall burst forth from the sky, standing in a golden flaming chariot! In her right hand she will hold a snake and in her left a crescent moon!...

Mr. Natural how begins to try to convey "spirit," to heal and teach by using language as a metaphor:

When you arise in the morning, you should do last night's dirty dishes... Then you should sing a simple melody (of your own choice)... Then you should call somebody up (not me)... then go to the store... Buy some asparagus!

Flakey thinks he can follow - "Yes? Yes?" - Mr. Natural continues:

Then meet a new person, go home, take a bath, say a prayer, breathe ten times, stand on your head, set your watch, take a shit, pick your nose, squeeze a tit...

But the vision fails, for Flakey is trapped in the literal:

Gee... all that's kind of hard to remember...

and Mr. Natural, with exasperation, shouts TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT! Confused and discouraged, Flakey turns to leave, screaming with frustration, "Ah yer NUTS," and is answered by, "Don't you WISH!" At this point the old man offers the final revelation; he appears to Flakey transfigured: "His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as the light" (Matthew, 17:2). This is the "straight answer" for which Flakey has been searching, the truly straight answer to all questions, the answer that can perhaps only be articulated in the words of the child's joke with which Mr. Natural concludes:

Hey... know what? That's what!

Mr. Natural's child's joke is a "Kosmic Kaper" of the sort that Crumb himself plays in many of the frames of "Abstract Expressionist Ultra Super Modernistic Comix" (HEADCOMIX) and

on the inside back cover of ZAP number zero, a jest about "Nothing." And it is characteristic of Crumb's wit that he should recognize a Zen koan in a kid's game. For although Mr. Natural is a man of endless subtlety, breadthless experience and depthless wisdom, his ultimate insights and his unique appeal stem from his childishness, a childishness expressed in silliness and wonder. The inside front cover of ZAP number zero contains another Crumb self-portrait—Mr. Sketchum Is At It Again!—which makes the affirmation of Innocence explicit. Seated in the cliché pose of the cartoonist at his desk, the phony smile of Howdy Doody's Buffalo Bob pasted on his face, Mr. Sketchum introduces us to ZAP COMIX:

"ZAP" Comics will contain all the latest in humor! Audacious, irreverent! Provocative! you Bet!... And just Chock Full of Surprises! Every page will be jampacked with thrills and laffs!

As he walks through his office, passing a window, he notices a dot on a building across the way. He zeroes in on it through a telescope, each frame bringing it closer and closer...

It's a kid! And he's waving to us from

all the way over there! Must be miles! Isn't it amazing?

In the last frame, glowing like the transfigured Mr. Natural, Mr. Sketchum concludes:

See what I mean? Things like that are happening all the time in these comic strips... Wow! Don't miss a single issue!

And the front cover takes us even further, showing a naked hairy man in foetal position, surrounded by a placenta of electric charge—ZAP!—his umbilical cord plugged into a wall socket.

Jesus spoke of childlike consciousness as the prerequisite for salvation. (Matthew 18:3) But he advised his disciples to combine the innocence of the dove with the wariness of the serpent. (Matthew 10:16) As a teller of parables he embodied this combination in himself, distinguishing the sheep from the goats by the way they responded to his stories. R. Crumb provides a telescope through which we can rediscover the child within ourselves. But we must see and hear; for "the man who has, will be given more, till he has enough and to spare; and the man who has not will forfeit even what he has."

Zap and Headcomix can be obtained at the New Yorker Bookshop.

