

"The Large Economy Size."

(Written April 30, 1952.)

"Papfenstein's Monster"
(Revised May 20, 1952)

May 1, 1952 May 31, 1952 NOTE

June 12 June 23 NOTE

SRL
Atlantic

Thoughtful
~~Real~~ controversy over vital
issues is usually strictly
verboten; the substitute is
usually ^{either} outright defamation of
character or the ^{whining} petulance of
the gossip columnist.

Indeed there are ^{fat little} magazines
devoted to refining and digesting this
stuff so that only the pure part
remains.

Like an itchy small boy with
the hives, I can't ^{seem to} keep my hands
off "The Giant Economy Bug" which
I sent you several weeks ago. I now
enclose the latest version which I
have re-named "Pappenstein's
Monster."

I hope you will not idly
reject this thing (if it appeals to
you) because you know as well as I
that the prospect ^{of} it ~~could~~ ever
appear ^{ing} in almost any other mag in
America ^{run from} ~~the~~ down to pitch dark.

Or have our writers and
editors become at last both ^{the} creators
and helpless victims of the Popperstein
reader?

THE LARGE ECONOMY SIZE

by
John O. Vollmer.

The great bulk of non-fiction writing appearing in our ^{popular} magazines ^{today} is as smooth as old brandy, as soothing as an old lullaby -- and as empty of intellectual content as a gourd. ^{for the most part it} ~~It~~ ^{has degenerated into a} form of infant pabulum made from a rigid formula guaranteed to prevent growth in the child. ^{at the same time most} Most of it is written with a brisk air of conviction, a perky sort of brightness, but the end result is ^{wholly} intellectual starvation.

Reading this stuff day after ^{day} is like trying to live on ersatz food: one has a temporary sense of repletion, occasionally even of satiety -- but in all the while slowly dying of mental malnutrition. The sad truth is that a whole vast segment of the American reading public is suffering from a curious form of intellectual hunger. The flood of this literary hogwash ^{has} today reached epidemic proportions.

THE LARGE ECONOMY SIZE

~~Virtually all non-fiction writing in large-circulation American magazines today is pervaded by a brisk ^{air of conviction} cheapness, a perky windiness, and a good deal of outright intellectual starvation. Reading this stuff day after day is like ^{the} ~~trying~~ ^{to live} living on a diet of ersatz steak: one has a temporary sense of repletion, occasionally even of satiety--but is all the while slowly dying of mental malnutrition. The sad truth is that a whole vast segment of the American reading public is suffering from a curious sort of ~~mark~~ intellectual hunger.~~

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South Korea..." a typical smooth "think" piece might begin. Naturally the reader is at once beguiled by such an impudent notion, and is thereby wheedled into discovering why the writer thinks we should have--or should not have--intervened in Korea, winding up with the not entirely original notion that the course of history might have been changed if...

"On October seventh 1938 Cora Kennedy possessed an arthritic husband, an old Chev ^{one hundred and} and thirty-nine dollars" another of the cornier of these pieces might begin. Is gay, indomitable Cora downhearted? Hell, no. Instead she parks her arthritic spouse with a maiden aunt, leaps into the Chev, and sails out to found a thriving diaper service or--aided by a simple faith in God or just plain mysticism--discovers the therapeutic properties inherent in wild hazelnuts. "Today," the piece winds up, "Cora Kennedy is president and chairman of the board of Kennedy Products, Inc. with branches in all 48 states and the Virgin Islands." Now ain't that just dandy?

In this sort of magazine writing certain commandments have grown inviolate. Always there must be the angle--known to the trade as the "gimmick"--and always there must be a beguiling opening gambit or a series of glittering baits to coax the jaded reader onward. Shock 'em, sock 'em, but at all costs make 'em read! Intimate personal revelations are always good. Or, better yet, the tacit promise of the straight inside dope.

"The hard business is not a hard example of necessary."

her husband was cured by hazelnuts, and just won a hundred-yard dash. The opening of this piece is not a hard example of necessary.

"Only three men in the world know who Stalin's successor will be," begins another piece by a man who has just spent six happy weeks, ^{glued to a bar stool in a Moscow} in the bar of a ^{snave} hotel in Moscow. Several thousand words later we learn that the big three are ^{from "unimpeachable authority" or "an informed} Joe himself, Joe's secret fairhaired boy, Vladimir, and an aged monk in Joe's ^{himself, at least initially} old hometown back in Georgia. One is presumably thrilled to be privy to such ^{softly} world-shaking revelations. One is also being gassed to death by literary wind.

God knows that many of the manufacturers of this pap are adroit enough. ^{many of them are supple writers possessed of supple minds.} They have obediently learned all of the commandments and have faithfully

^{observed rigid} followed all of the taboos. Conformity is their watchword and one could rarely ^{Through he may bludgeon you with facts, and never, never} guess which of them wrote his pieces unless he signed them. ^{Like the Mposed slip of a spinster,}

^{the writer on his} must they let their facts show. ^{state a solemn fact and} That is the ultimate obscenity; that is ^{your facts show or let's} commandment Number One! Bedizen your facts, sugar-coat them, reflect them with ^{let your reader suspect} mirrors if you must, but upon pain of rejection never ^{let your reader suspect} that you may be exposing him to a germ of genuinely original or stimulating idea. For above all he must leave your piece as unruffled and empty as he came to

it. One can no longer escape the notion that the bulk of our periodical writing, like the products of Hollywood, is cynically directed at the minds of ^{the mental horizons of}

a six-year-old children. ^{what this must be doing to the readers, not to} ^{mention to the writers themselves, is faintly appalling to contemplate.} There must be no meat, no guts, no anger. The package must glitter and

come wrapped in hygenic cellophane just like in the accompanying ads. ^{yes, it} ^{is infant} ^{pabulum of uniform grade detailed in} the large economy size. Under the fluent pens of these writers everything from

foreign policy to frigidaires becomes a gimmick; a suave, bright, urbane, sophisticated unfolding of a jig saw puzzle that turns out, lo, to have been no puzzle at all; either that or ^{before.} a puzzle that is created where indeed there was no puzzle ^{at all.} One puts up his money and takes his choice. Anyway there'll be a prize-fight on Channel Two in twenty minutes. Tomorrow all will be forgotten.

identities must not be divulged
of whom is omitted for the sake of
of identity on the page
Library license

never

Why must this sorry state of affairs prevail? Is it that there are too ~~damn~~ many magazines demanding too much pap and--conversely--too few initiates (that is, writers who have learned the ^{magic} formula) writing way too much about that which they do not know, and about that which they do not genuinely feel? Is it true that the lack of any emotional as well as intellectual involvement in the subject is at once the curse and sure signpost of this sort of writing? ^{emptier} One thing is sure: there goes ^{the really} ~~At any rate~~ the net result is that the ~~comparative~~ handful of stimulating thinkers in our midst who also have the gift of words are either being driven to adopt the glib formula or are being driven over to the low-circulation, low-paying literary or esoteric periodicals. In the one field their message necessarily remains beclouded by pap and in the other it is completely ignored by the Great Starved American Public. The latter are the losers both ways.

It is a frequently repeated and doubtlessly sound proposition that an informed public opinion is ^{one of the} a basic keystone of a sound democracy. One wonders how informed and sound the opinions are that are being ^{currently} nourished on this ~~epidemic hogwash~~ ^{unending diet of pap.} ~~One also wonders whether there is an editor in our midst with the courage and vision to rise up and try to~~ ^{crack} ~~this arid formula~~ ^{rid the popular magazine world of} ~~Equally important, is there a reading public remaining in this country that would keep him from starving while he tried it? Step up, folks! Don't miss our next installment that begins: "Phillip Panther, editor, awoke one morning with an~~ ^{sticks} ~~magazine devoted to purveying pap, three Cadillacs, a hundred and~~ ^{and} ~~thirty-nine thousand dollars. He wanted suddenly to start a magazine for adults."~~

Read all about it, ^{some} folks! It's a ^{convy} story.

2nd draft.

Apr. 30, 1952

~~Starvation Among Plenty~~

All caps → ~~The Large Economy Size~~ ^{living on a diet of}
^{by} John D. Volker ~~trying to~~

Virtually all non-fiction writing in American magazines is today ^{is} pervaded by a brisk cheapness, a perky windiness -- and intellectual starvation. Reading this stuff ^{day after day} is like ^{consuming} eating ersatz ^{food}: one has a temporary sense of repletion, ^{occasionally even} of satiety -- but ^{is all the while} the content is devoid of ^{slowly} malnutrition.

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South Korea..." ^{smooth} "one of these articles a typical ^{think} piece might begin. ^{Naturally,} The reader is at once beguiled by such an impudent notion, and is thereby ^{baited and} coaxed into ^{discovering} ~~reading~~ why the writer ^{have} thinks we should -- or should not have -- intervened in Korea, winking up with the not entirely original notion that the course of history might have been changed if...

^{October 7th seventh} "On 1938 Cora Kennedy possessed an artistic husband, an old Chew and thirty-nine dollars ^{one of the more corners of these} begins ^{another} ~~the~~ piece. Is gay, indomitable Cora downhearted? Hell, no.

Instead ~~she~~ parks her arthritic spouse with ^{a maiden} ~~an~~ aunt,
leaps into the Chev, and scuds out to found
a thriving diaper service ^{-- aided by a simple faith in God} or discovers the
therapeutic properties inherent in wild
hazelnuts. "Today Cora Kennedy is president
and chairman of the board of Kennedy Products,
with branches in all 48 states and ~~the~~ the
possession. Virgin Islands." Now ain't that dandy?

Always there must be the "gimmick"
In this sort of ^{magazine} writing certain
commandments have grown inviolate. Always
there must be the ^{the} ~~gimmick~~ angle -- known
to the trade as the "gimmick" -- and always there
must be a beguiling opening gambit or a
series of glittering baits to coax the fabled
reader onward. Shock 'im, sock 'im,
but make 'im read! Intimate personal
revelations are always ^{better yet!}
~~Anecdotes~~ good, too. Or, the promise
of the straight inside dope.

"Only three men in the world
know who Stalin's successor will be," begins

another piece, by a man who spent ^{six weeks} a month in Moscow. Several thousand words later we learn that the ^{big} three are Joe himself, Joe's ^{secret} fair-haired boy, and an aged monk in Joe's old hometown ^{in Georgia}. One is presumably thrilled to be privy to such world-shaking revelations. One is ^{also being gassed to death} dying of by literary wind.

God knows that ^{most of} the manufacturers of this pap are adroit enough. They have ^{obediently} learned all ^{of} the commandments and all of the taboos. And never, never ^{have faithfully followed} do they let their facts show. ^{That is the ultimate obscenity that} ^{must} Commandment Number One! Bedizen them, sugar coat them, do it with mirrors, but ^{upon pain of rejection} never let your reader suspect that you may be exposing him to the germ of a genuinely original or stimulating idea. ^{For above all he} ^{must} leave your piece ^{unruffled and} as empty as he came to it.

The net result is

Why must this state of affairs ^{prevail?} ~~that~~ One ~~possible~~ big reason is that there are too ^{damn} many magazines demanding too much pap and ^{conveniently} too few ^{united} ~~writers~~ ^{writers}.

who have learned the formula) writing ^{way} too much
about ^{that} which they do not know, ~~about~~ and
about that which they do not genuinely feel.

The net result ^{of all this} ~~of this state of affairs~~ is that the
comparative handful of genuine thinkers in our
midst who also have the gift of words
~~unless they write a book~~ are either driven ^{to} adopt the formula
or ~~are~~ driven to the low-circulation
literary or esthetic periodicals. In the one
field their message ^{necessarily} ~~is~~ clouded and in the
other ^{it} their message is ^{completely} ignored by the Great
Starved American Public.

Is there an editor in our midst
with the courage and vision to rise up and
try to crack this ^{stagnant, stultifying} formula? Is there a ^{reading} public
remaining in this country that would keep him from
starving while he ^{tried} ~~was trying~~ it? Read ^{the article} our
next ~~month's~~ installment that begins: "Phillip
Panther awoke one day with an arthritic
magazine, an old Cher, and thirty-nine
dollars." Find ^{out} all about it!

1st
30,
Apr 24, 1952

THE LARGE ECONOMY SIZE

Certain commandments
are ^{grown} inviolate.

Non-fiction writing ^{in virtually all} for American magazines is today pervaded
by ^{bright} cheapness, a ^{clear note} ~~perky~~ ^{sort of} ~~artistic~~ windiness and a
hell of a ^{lot} sort of intellectual malnutrition. The article must
open with a "gimmick," a ^{tingling} ~~massive~~ shock, of which
the opening of this piece is a fair example. "If

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South
Korea..." is the sort of thing ^{we mean}. A series of baits
are offered the ^{guided} reader to ^{begin to coax} ~~coax~~ ^{plum} to continue;
beguiling little ^{or perhaps the implied} anecdotes, ^{casual} promises of
inside dope, — "Only three men in the world
know who Stalin's successor will be..."

God knows that the manufacturers of
this stuff are adroit enough; ^{even} their worst efforts
usually contain the germ of a stimulating idea;
^{but} and, never, never do they let their facts show
through

There is ^{no meat,} ~~no~~ guts, ~~no~~ anger.

The package glitters and comes
^{wrapped} in cellophane. It is the large
economy size.

the ^{fluent} ^{of these writers} ^{everything} from
 Under ^{their} pens foreign policy
 to frigidaries becomes a gimmick;
 a snare, ^{urbane, sophisticated} bright, unfolding of
 a jig saw puzzle that turns
 out to have been no puzzle at
 all; either that, or a puzzle ~~is~~
 is created when ^{indeed} there was no
 puzzle at all. ~~By~~ One puts up
 his money and takes his choice.
 There'll be a ^{prize fight} ~~boxing~~ match on Channel 2 in twenty
 minutes, ^{anyway}
 Tomorrow all ~~is~~ forgotten. ^{↑ will be}

minutes, anyway.

1st T / /

THE LARGE ECONOMY SIZE

Virtually all non-fiction writing in ^{large-circulation} American magazines today is pervaded by a brisk cheapness, a perky windiness--and a good deal of outright intellectual starvation. Reading this stuff day after day is like living on a diet of ersatz steak: one has a temporary sense of repletion, occasionally even of satiety--but is all the while slowly dying of mental malnutrition.

The sad truth is that a whole vast segment of the American reading public is suffering from a curious sort of intellectual hunger.

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South Korea..." a typical smooth "think" piece might begin. ~~Practically~~ Naturally the reader is at once beguiled by such an impudent notion, and is thereby ^{wheedled} ~~coaxed~~ into discovering why the writer thinks we should have--or should not have--intervened in Korea, winding up with the not entirely original notion that the course of history might have been changed if...

"On October seventh 1938 Cora Kennedy possessed an arthritic husband, an old Chev and thirty-nine dollars" ^{another} ~~begins one~~ of the corner of these pieces. Is ^{gay} indomitable Cora downhearted? Hell, no. Instead she parks her arthritic spouse with a maiden aunt, leaps into the Chev, and sails out to find a thriving diaper service ^{or --} ~~aided~~ by a simple faith in God or ^{just} plain

^{mysticism} discovers the therapeutic properties inherent in wild hazelnuts.

"Today" ^{the piece winds up,} Cora Kennedy is president and chairman of the board of Kennedy Products, Inc. with branches in all 48 states and the Virgin Islands." ^{just} Now ain't that dandy?

In this sort of magazine writing certain commandments have grown ^{angle--} ~~inviolable~~ ^{inviolable}. Always there must be the ~~angel~~ ^{angel}--known to the trade as the "gimmick"--and always there must be a beguiling opening gambit or a series of glittering baits to coax the jaded reader onward. Shock ^{em,} sock ^{em,} and make ^{em} read! Intimate personal revelations are always good, too. Or, better yet, the ^{tarit} ~~promise~~ of the straight inside dope.

"Only three men in the world know who Stalin's successor will be," begins another piece by a man ^{has just} who spent six weeks ^{the bar of a hotel in} in Moscow. Several thousand words later we learn that the big three are Joe himself, Joe's secret fairhaired boy, Vladimir, and an aged monk in Joe's old hometown ^{back} in Georgia. One is presumably thrilled to be privy to such world-shaking revelations. One is also being gassed to death by ^{a hot} literary wind.

God knows that many of the manufacturers of this pap are adroit enough. They have obediently learned all of the commandments ^{have} and ^{rarely} faithfully followed all of the taboos. Conformity is their watchword and one ^{could certainly} would never ^{guess} ~~guess~~ ^{which} ~~write~~ ^{of them} wrote ^{these} their pieces unless ^{his} they ^{be} signed them. And never, never must they let their facts show. ^{your facts,} That is the ultimate obscenity; that is commandment Number One! Bedizen ^{reflect them} them, sugar coat them, ^{if you must,} do it with mirrors, but upon pain of rejection never let your reader suspect that you may be exposing him to a germ of genuinely original or stimulating idea. For above all he must leave your piece as unruffled and empty as he came to it. *One can no longer escape the notion that (Quot A)*

Why must this ^{sorry} state of affairs ^{prevail?} prevail? ^{it} One big reason ^{is} is that there are too damn many magazines demanding too much pap and--conversely--too few initiates (that is, writers who have learned the formula) writing way too much about that which they do not know, and about that which they do not genuinely feel? *Is it true that lack of emotional as well as intellectual involvement is at once the curse and signpost of this sort of writing? At any rate the*

stimulating reports ~~The~~ net result of all this is that the comparative handful of genuine thinkers in our midst who also have the gift of words are either driven to adopt the glib formula or are ~~is~~ ^{over} driven ^{low-paying} to the low-circulation literary or esoteric periodicals. In the one field their message necessarily remains ~~is~~ beclouded by pap and in the other it is completely ignored by the Great Starved American Public.

Is there an editor in our midst with the courage and vision to rise up
and try to crack this stullifying formula? ^{Equally important, is there} ~~Is there~~ a reading public remaining
in this country that would keep him from starving while he ^{tries} ~~tried~~ it? ^{Don't miss} ~~Read~~
our next installment that begins: "Phillip Panther ^{editor,} ~~(~~awoke one ^{morning} ~~day~~ with an
arthritic magazine, ^{devoted to pap, three Cadillacs,} ~~an old Chev,~~ and thirty-nine ^{thousand} ~~(~~dollars." ^{Read} ~~Find out~~ all
about it!

Insert A

~~One cannot escape the notion that~~
the bulk of our periodical writing,
like the products of Hollywood, ~~are~~ is
cynically directed at the minds of a six-year-
old children.

(Insert B)

Insert B
accompanying

Q There ^{must be} is no meat, no guts, no anger. The package ^{must} glitter and come wrapped
^{hygienic} in cellophane. ^{just like in the ads.} It is the large economy size. Under the fluent pens of these
writers everything from foreign policy to frigidaires becomes a gimmick;
a suave, bright, ~~urbane~~ ^{lo,} urbane, sophisticated unfolding of a jig saw puzzle
that turns out to have been no puzzle at all; either that, ^{that} or a puzzle is
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and takes his choice. ^{Anyway} There'll be a prize fight on Channel Two in twenty
minutes, ~~anyway~~. Tomorrow all will be forgotten.

¶ It is a frequently repeated and doubtlessly sound
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keystone of a sound democracy. One wonders how
informed and ~~how~~ sound the opinions are that are
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Panther, editor, awoke one morning with an ~~arid~~ magazine devoted to ~~pay~~ ^{surveying}
three Cadillacs, and thirty-nine thousand dollars. ~~Read all about it!~~ ^{pap,}

↑
*He wanted ^{suddenly} to start a magazine
for adults."*
H Read all about it!

Apr
May 1, 1957
3 Final =
All heavy

GIANT
THE ~~LARGE~~ ECONOMY SIZE

by

John D. Voelker

The great bulk of non-fiction writing appearing in our popular magazines today is as smooth as old brandy, as soothing as an old lullaby-- and as empty of intellectual content as a gourd. For the most part it ~~has~~ ^{is} degenerated into a form of infant pabulum made from a rigid formula guaranteed to prevent growth in the child. ^{One must admit that} At the same time most of it is written with a brisk air of conviction ^{and} a perky sort of brightness, ~~but~~ ^{But} the end result is sheer intellectual starvation.

Reading this stuff day after day is like trying to live on ersatz food: one has a temporary sense of repletion, occasionally even of satiety-- but ~~is~~ ^{is} all the while slowly ~~dying~~ ^{dying} of mental malnutrition. The sad truth is that a whole vast segment of the American reading public is suffering from a curious form of intellectual hunger. ~~The flood of this literary hogwash~~ ^{has reached epidemic proportions with a flood in the land today has} ~~has today reached epidemic proportions.~~ ^{AT}

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South Korea..." a typical smooth "think" piece might begin. Naturally the reader is at once beguiled by such an impudent notion and is thereby wheedled into discovering why the writer thinks we should have--or should not have--intervened in Korea, winding up with the not entirely original notion that the course of history might have been changed if...

"On October seventh 19⁴8 Cora Kennedy possessed an arthritic husband, an old Chev and one hundred and thirty-nine dollars" another of the cornier of these pieces might begin. Is gay, indomitable Cora downhearted? Hell no. Instead she parks her arthritic spouse with a maiden aunt, leaps into the Chev, and sails out to found a thriving diaper service or--aided by a simple

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faith in God or just plain mysticism--discovers the ~~the~~ therapeutic properties inherent in wild hazelnuts. "Today," the piece winds up, "Cora Kennedy is president and chairman of the board of Kennedy Products, Inc. with branches in all 48 states and the Virgin Islands. ^{And, oh yes, Cora's} ~~Her~~ husband was cured by ^{of his arthritis by} ~~her~~ hazelnuts, and ^{she} ~~he~~ just won a hundred-yard dash. ^{and} Now ain't that just dandy?"

In this sort of magazine writing certain commandments have grown inviolate. Always there must be the angle--known to the trade as the "gimmick"--and always there must be a beguiling opening gambit or a tinkling series of glittering baits to coax the jaded reader onward. The opening of this piece, the Lord forgive us, is not such a bad example. Shock 'em, sock 'em, invade their minds by false pretenses if necessary, but at all costs make 'em read! ^{Invasion of personal} ~~Intimate~~

^{Intimate} personal revelations are always good. Or, better yet, the tacit promise of the straight inside dope.

"Only three men in the world know who Stalin's successor will be," begins another suave piece by a man who has just spent six happy weeks glued to a bar stool in Moscow. Several thousand words later we learn from "unimpeachable authority" or "an informed source whose identity must not be divulged that the big three are ~~it~~ none other than Joe himself, Joe's secret fairhaired boy, Vladimir, and an aged monk in Joe's old hometown back in Georgia. (That the informed source and the writer himself made it at least five initially in on the know is ~~somehow~~ omitted ostensibly on the theory of literary license.) One is presumably thrilled to be privy to such world-shaking revelations. One is also being softly gassed to death by literary wind.

God knows that many of the manufacturers of this pap are adroit enough. Many of them are supple writers possessed of supple minds. ^{But they} ~~They~~ have obediently learned all of the ^{also} commandments and have ^{mortally} faithfully ^{new} observed all of the rigid taboos. ^{They have grown afraid of ideas.} Conformity is their watchword and one could rarely guess which of them wrote his pieces unless he signed them. Though he may bludgeon you with facts, never, never must the writer ~~ever~~ let his facts show. Like the exposed slip of a

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There must be no meat, no guts, no anger. ^{as like} The package must glitter and come wrapped in hygenic cellophane just like in the accompanying ads. ~~Yes, it is infant pabulum of~~ ^{The U comes in and is} uniform grade ^{giant} retailed in the ^{large} economy size. ^{one} ~~One~~ can no longer escape the notion that the bulk of our periodical writing, like the products of Hollywood, is cynically directed at the minds of ^{retarded} six-year-old children? ^{all} What this must be doing to the mental horizons of the readers, not to mention to the writers themselves, is faintly appalling to contemplate. Under the fluent pens of these writers everything from foreign policy to ~~frigid~~ frigidaire becomes a gimmick; a suave, bright, ~~subtle~~ sophisticated unfolding of a jig saw puzzle that turns out, lo, to have been no puzzle at all; either that or a puzzle that is created where indeed there was no puzzle before. One puts up his money and takes his choice. Anyway there'll be a prize-fight on Channel Two in twenty minutes. Tomorrow all will be ~~ga~~ forgotten.

Why must this sorry state of affairs prevail? Is it that there are too many magazines demanding too much pap and--conversely--too few initiates (that is, writers who have learned the magic formula) writing way too much about that which they do not know, and about that which they do not genuinely feel? Is it true that the lack of any ^{real} emotional ^{and} ~~as well as~~ intellectual involvement ^{with} in the subject is at once the curse and sure signpost of this ^{barren} ~~empty~~ sort of writing? One thing is sure: the net result is that those of the really

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It is a frequently repeated and doubtlessly sound proposition that an informed public opinion is one of the basic keystones of a sound democracy. One wonders how informed and sound the opinions are that are being currently nourished on this unending diet of pap. ~~Good by pap one does not mean freedom~~ One also wonders whether there is an editor in our midst with the ~~nerve~~ ^{free} courage and vision to rise up and try to ^{from the grip} break the popular magazine world of this arid formula writing? Equally important, is there a reading public remaining in this country that would keep him from starving while he tried it? Step up, folks! Don't miss our next installment that begins: "Phillip Panther, editor, awoke one morning with a slick magazine devoted to purveying pap, three Cadillacs, and a hundred and thirty-nine thousand dollars. He wanted suddenly to start a magazine for adults."

Read all about it, folks! It's a sorry sorry story.

Old first page.

THE GIANT ECONOMY SIZE

by

John D. Voelker

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THE GIANT ECONOMY SIZE

by

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There follows the ~~usual~~ ^{some} splendid
rival ^{junior} ~~junior~~ ^{various} ~~various~~ ^{men} ~~men~~.
regrets of the

necessarily
, based upon conjecture and
rumor, of the ^{reputedly} flaming jealousies
wracking
within the Politburo.

Politburo (It is always

comforting to envisage one's rivals as being destroyed ^{by} from internal ^{causes})

~~Post fact~~

The compulsions to write are usually, ^{too often} as ^{purely commercial} synthetic ^{and}
as the ^{end} product. ^{is a remarkable} There ^{is} waste of creative talent
^{is presumably} ^{able to} ^{captured} ^{inspiration once and}
^{hour or so} ^{as} ^{smooth} ^{and the hour...}

It is a war of gnats.

Buzzing as of gnats.

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There must be no meat, no guts, no anger. All must be urbanity and gladness. The package must glitter and come wrapped in hygienic cellophane just like in the accompanying ads. The pabulum comes in uniform grade and is re-tailed in the giant economy size... Can one longer escape the notion that the bulk of our periodical writing, like the products of Hollywood, is cynically directed at the minds of retarded six-year-old children? What all this must be doing to the mental horizons of the readers, not to mention to the writers themselves, is faintly appalling to contemplate. Under the fluent pens of these writers everything from foreign policy to frigidaires becomes a gimmick; *turns out, lo, to have been no puzzle at all; either that or a puzzle* a suave, bright, sophisticated unfolding of a jig saw puzzle that is created where indeed there was no puzzle before. One puts up his money and takes his choice. Anyway there'll be a prize-fight on Channel Two in twenty minutes. Tomorrow all will be forgotten.

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Read all about it, folks! It's a sorry sorry story.

harrowing

a vast
are ~~the~~ accumulation of ^{mental} scars ^{gained} from

I enclose a critical essay called
"Pappenstein's Monster." My qualifications
to write it ~~are~~ ^{devoted reading and} years of ^{and} exposure to the
~~subject~~ ^{subject} matter. It is my personal
emancipation proclamation from paper.

Sincerely,

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Please return

THE GIANT ECONOMY SIZE

by

John D. Voelker

The great bulk of non-fiction writing appearing in our popular magazines today is as smooth as old brandy, as soothing as an old lullaby--and as empty of intellectual content as a gourd. For the most part it is a form of infant pabulum made from a rigid formula guaranteed to prevent growth in the child. Viewed as exercises in rhetoric and editing most of these pieces are beautifully written, brisk with conviction and bright as a counterfeit dollar. But the poor reader is too often left afflicted with a bad case of mental malnutrition.

Reading this stuff day after day is like trying to live on ersatz food: one has a temporary sense of repletion, occasionally even of satiety--but all the while is dying of slow intellectual starvation. The sad truth is that a whole vast segment of the American reading public is suffering from a curious form of mental hunger. A flood of literary hogwash is abroad in the land; it is fast reaching epidemic proportions.

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South Korea..." a typical smooth "think" piece might begin. Naturally the reader is at once beguiled by such an impudent notion and is thereby wheedled into discovering why the writer thinks we should have--or should not have--intervened in Korea, winding up with the not entirely original notion that the course of history might have been changed if...

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Latest (2)

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5/16/52 Papenstein's Monster

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by

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The great bulk of non-fiction writing appearing in our popular magazines today is as smooth as old brandy, as soothing as an old lullaby—and as empty of intellectual content as a gourd. For the most part it is a form of infant pabulum made from a rigid formula guaranteed to prevent growth in the child. Viewed as exercises in rhetoric and editing most of these pieces are beautifully written, brisk with conviction and bright as a counterfeit dollar. But the poor reader is too often left afflicted with a bad case of mental malnutrition.

Reading this stuff day after day is like trying to live on ersatz food: one has a temporary sense of repletion, occasionally even of surfeit—but all the while is dying of slow intellectual starvation. The sad truth is that a whole vast segment of the American reading public is suffering from a curious form of mental hunger. A flood of literary hogwash is abroad in the land; it is fast reaching epidemic proportions. Indeed there are ~~many~~ fat little magazines devoted to refining and digesting the stuff so that only the pure pap remains.

"Had Truman been drunk the day the Reds invaded South Korea..." a typical smooth "think" piece might begin. Naturally the reader is at once beguiled by such an impudent notion and is thereby wheedled into discovering why the writer thinks we should have—or should not have—intervened in Korea, winding up with the not entirely original notion that the course of history might have been changed if...

"On October seventh 1948 Cora Kennedy possessed an arthritic husband, an old Chev and one hundred and thirty-nine dollars" another of the corner of these pieces might begin. Is gay, indomitable Cora downhearted? Hell no. Instead she parks her arthritic spouse with a maiden aunt, leaps into the Chev, and sails out to found a thriving diaper service or—aided by a simple faith in God or just plain mysticism—discovers the therapeutic properties inherent in

wild hazelnuts. "Today," the piece winds up, "Cora Kennedy is president and chairman of the board of Kennedy Products, Inc. with branches in all 48 states and the Virgin Islands." And, oh yes, Cora's husband was cured of his arthritis by her way with wild hazelnuts, and has just won a hundred-yard dash. Now ain't that just dandy?

In this sort of magazine writing certain commandments have grown inviolate. Always there must be the angle--known to the trade as the "gimmick"--and always there must be a beguiling opening gambit or a tinkling series of glittering baits to coax the jaded reader onward. The opening of this piece, the Lord forgive us, is not such a bad example. Shock 'em, sock 'em, invade their minds by false pretenses if necessary, but at all costs make 'em read! Intimate personal revelations are always good. Or, better yet, the tacit promise of the straight inside dope.

"Only three men in the world know who Stalin's successor will be," is the arresting opening line of another suave piece by a man who has just spent six happy weeks glued to a bar stool in Moscow. Then follows a familiar rehash, necessarily based upon conjecture and rumor, of the internal jealousies reputedly wracking the Politburo (it is always a pleasant superstition to picture one's rivals as being destroyed by weevils from within), accompanied by some sprightly vignettes of the various glowering junior iron men. Several thousand words later we learn from "unimpeachable authority" or from "an informed source whose identity must not be divulged" that the big three are none other than Joe himself, Joe's secret fairhaired boy, Vladimir, and an aged monk in Joe's old hometown back in Georgia. One is presumably thrilled to be privy to such world-shaking revelations. One is also being softly gassed to death by literary wind.

God knows that many of the manufacturers of this pap are adroit enough. Many of them are supple writers possessed of supple minds. But they have obediently learned all of the commandments and have faithfully observed all of the rigid taboos. They have also grown mortally afraid of new ideas. Conformity is their watchword and one could rarely guess which of them wrote his pieces unless he signed them. Though he may bludgeon you with facts, never, never

must the writer let his facts show. Like the exposed slip of a spinster, that is the ultimate obscenity; that is commandment Number One! Bedizen your facts, sugar-coat them, reflect them with mirrors if you must, but upon pain of rejection never state a simple fact and let it go; and never, never let your reader suspect that you may be exposing him to the germ of a genuinely original or stimulating idea. For above all he must leave your piece as unruffled and empty as he came to it.

There must be no meat, no guts, no anger. All must be urbanity and gladness. Knock-down controversy is strictly verboden and mavericks need not apply. The package must glitter and come wrapped in hygenic cellophane just like in the accompanying ads. The pabulum comes in uniform grade and is retailed in the giant economy size. Pap, one must remember, is a soft easily digested food designed for infants and invalids... Can one longer escape the notion that the bulk of our periodical writing, like the products of Hollywood, is cynically directed at the minds of retarded six-year-old children? What all this must be doing to the mental horizons of the readers, not to mention to the writers themselves, is faintly appalling to contemplate. Under the fluent pens of these writers everything from foreign policy to frigidaires becomes a gimmick; a suave, bright, sophisticated unfolding of a jig saw puzzle that turns out, lo, to have been no puzzle at all; either that or a puzzle that is created where indeed there was no puzzle before. One puts up his money and takes his choice. Anyway there'll be a prize-fight on Channel Two in twenty minutes. Tomorrow all will be forgotten.

Why must this sorry state of affairs prevail? Is it that there are too many magazines demanding too much pap and--conversely--too few initiates (that is, writers who have learned the magic formula) writing way too much about that which they do not know, and about that which they do not genuinely feel? Is it true that the lack of any real emotional and intellectual involvement with the subject is at once the curse and sure signpost of this barren sort of writing? Are the compulsions to write too often as commercial and synthetic as the end product itself? One thing is sure: the net result is that those of the really

stimulating thinkers in our midst who also have the gift of words are either being driven to adopt the glib formula or are being driven over to the low-circulation, low-paying literary or esoteric periodicals. In the one field their message necessarily remains crusted and beclouded by pap and in the other it is completely ignored by the Great Starved American Public. The latter is the loser both ways.

It is a frequently repeated and doubtlessly sound proposition that an informed public opinion is one of the basic keystones of democracy. One wonders how informed and sound the opinions are that are being currently nourished on this unending diet of pap? One also wonders whether there is an editor in our midst with the courage and vision to rise up and try to free the popular magazine world from the grip of this arid formula writing? Equally important, is there a reading public remaining in this country that would keep him from starving while he tried it? Or have our editors and writers become at last both the creators and helpless victims of the Pappenstein reader?

Step up, folks! Don't miss our next installment that begins: "Phillip Panther, editor, awoke one morning with a slick magazine dedicated to purveying pap, three Cadillacs, and a hundred and thirty-nine thousand dollars. He wanted suddenly to start a magazine for adults."

Read all about it, folks! It's a sorry sorry story.

PAPPENSTEIN'S MONSTER

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