



THE PHANTAGRAPH



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(fantasy fandom's oldest existing fanzine)

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OF MAN, SCIENCE FICTION WEEKLY, LE VOMBITEUR,
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Donald A. Wollheim

Editor & Publisher

Elsie B. Wollheim

John B. Michel

Co-editor

Art editor

98-50 67th Avenue, Forest Hills, L.I., N.Y.

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LITERATURE IS THE BUNK

By Romney Boyd

When fans first start reading science-fiction, its fascination is usually so great that they read it exclusively. Nothing not fantasy and not compulsory is likely to cross their eyes for a long time. And in many cases this concentration on fantasy alone continues for several years.

It is probable that occasionally these fans may feel twinges of uneasiness. They are aware that they are reading something the rest of the world does not consider to warrant much attention; they have heard somewhere of the worthlessness of pulp literature; perhaps they feel that they may be lacking something in not keeping up with the world of regular literature and in missing the works of fame.

Actually there is little to worry about for examination later in life will reveal that most popular writing is the bunk. Because a fan of several years ago was too busy reading Astounding Stories to bother with Gone With the Wind, which he knew everyone was reading and raving about, is no excuse for having to go back later on and read it. He missed no -

thing. Nobody bothers with it now. The book had no lasting value; it was nothing lost, it now seems. The same is true of 99% of current best-selling literature. If it is non-fiction, it usually will not stand the test of two years' passage; if it is fiction it will not be remembered either after two years.

Those books that are worth while can be encompassed in plenty of time after the fan has passed out of his phase of concentrated fantasy. There are perhaps thirty books or so in literature that could be regarded as worth reading. Real American or English literature does not actually date back more than a century in readable sane literature. Shakespeare, a handful of Nineteenth Century authors, an assortment of Twentieth Century writers. That's all for a minimum that would keep any fan up to snuff in non-fantasy literature.

Fans shouldn't feel conscience-stricken when they haven't read stuff people are raving about. If it's good, it'll keep. If it isn't good, your eyesight can find more interesting use.

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LINES OF AN UNFINISHED POEM

By Roy St. John LeClaire

Softly the synthetic moon
Hurling over plains of grey
Sets its corporeal tune
At the end of Martian day.

Out of arbors, rocky, drear,
There sprouts ~~the~~ new-born fuzz.
Their twin-antlered heads appear;
They emit the warning buzz.

The slippered beast that stalks at night
Lays now its nose to grasses blue
The spo

RITUAL

By Venard McLaughlin

These are your altars, Man:

A snouted, sweating, steel-clad tank
With smoking jaws and bloody flank,
A-prowl in fluid deadly rank.
This is your altar, Man.

And high above--the echelon
Intent with death to hurtle on
To make of living, carrion.
This is your altar, Man.

Beneath the sea a lone steel shark,
In silence through a gray-green dark,
To rise, to kill, to find a mark.
This is your altar, Man.

Those well-sung pits dug deep in mud,
Anointed fresh with human blood,
One added stream to world-wide flood.
This is your altar, Man...

This your sacrifice:

The temples tall youth might have made.
The temple thoughts now left unsaid;
The ills of men they might have stayed.
This sacrifice, O God.

The songs, the words, they might have sung,
The secrets dread they might have wrung
From earth; the courage of the young.
This sacrifice, O God.

The better world their lives could find
In tune with life and God's own mind,
The course of stars they might have lined.
This sacrifice, O God.

The loves, the joys they might have known,
The seeds of good they might have sown,
The flags of right they might have flown.
This sacrifice, O God.

These are your altars, Man,
And this your sacrifice;
What is the world you plan
For this your sacrifice?

(Venard McLaughlin, the author of the above, admits freely that it is by no means a great piece of work. But we publish it because it does have certain feeling, McLaughlin is, in our opinion, one of the most talented weird fantasists we know--and yet only two of his stories have appeared in the known prozines: "The Silence" and "The Hands". His fantasies are entirely unique, his conceptions startling and different. Failure to recognize his gift has been one of the more regrettable blindnesses of Campbell, Guedinger, and McIlraith. But Venard McLaughlin will yet be heard from--and in the bigger markets.)
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STAR SONNET

"Stars, did you say? The sky holds many a star;
Pinpoints of light that awe the savage heart,
Jewels of brilliance, flaming o'er the mart
And desert, and the sea; strange lands afar--
They shiver where the bones of centuries are,
Within the purple cosmic vaults they sleep,
And are reflected on the surging deep--
They wink with scorn in winter and in war."
'And now that man at last will conquer them,
Will their enchantment change, be commonplace?"
"Ah, no! for in the vasty void they swim,
And reign forever in the depths of space."
'Is that because a Hand has set them there?'"
"Who knows? They are eternal, wondrous, fair."
--Raymond Washington, Jr.