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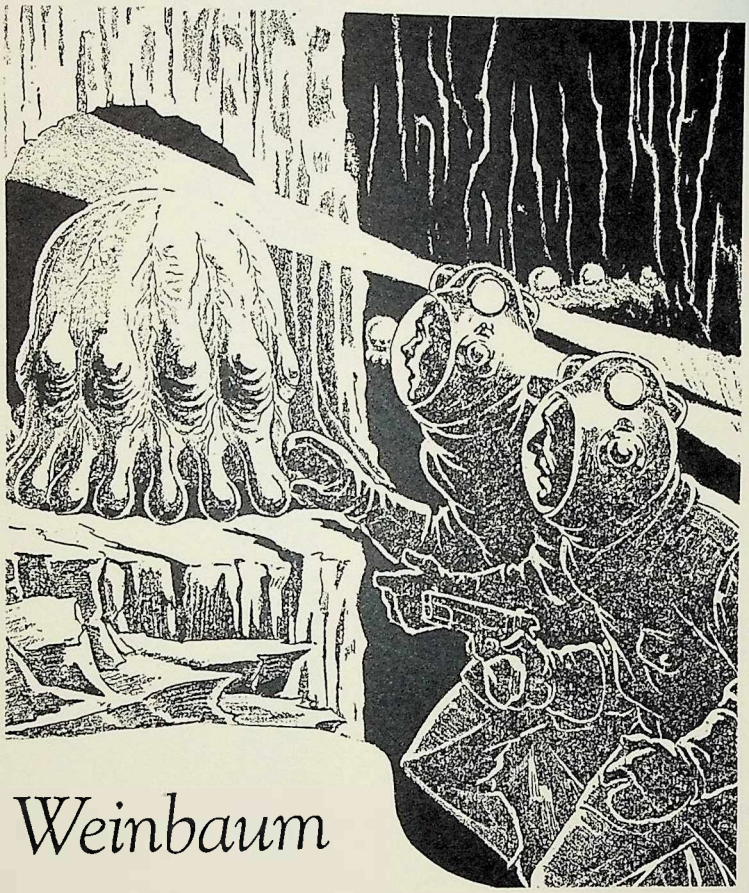
FANTASY COMMENTATOR



Weinbaum Memorial Issue

$5

The cover is an illustration by Elliott Dold, Jr. for Stanley G. Weinbaum's story "The Lotus Eaters," which appeared in the April 1935 issue of *Astounding Stories*.

FOUNDED 1943 ISSN no. 1051-5001

FANTASY COMMENTATOR

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Vol. VII, No. 2 —oOo— Fall 1991

Articles

Verse

Regular Features

This is the forty-second number of *Fantasy Commentator*, a periodical devoted to articles, reviews and verse in the area of science-fiction and fantasy, published semi-annually. Postpaid subscription rates in the United States: $5 per copy, six issues for $25; foriegn postage 50¢ per copy extra. All opinions expressed herein are the individual contributors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the staff as a whole. Material is accepted subject to editorial revision if necessary. Unless correspondents request otherwise, communications of general interest may be excerpted for the letters column, "Open House."

Remembering Stanley Weinbaum

Eric Leif Davin

As I write this it is almost 55 years to the day since Stanley Grauman Weinbaum died at the too-young age of 33. His death on December 14, 1935, less than a year and a half after he exploded upon the science-fiction world, deprived it of a writer who would have been one of the giants of the field. As it was, he nevertheless revolutionized the genre, and he did so on the basis of his very first story, "A Martian Odyssey," which appeared in the July 1934 issue of *Wonder Stories*. In that story Weinbaum (who Ed Naha has called the "alien's best friend"[1]*) introduced "Tweel," an extraterrestrial alien who was something entirely new in the science-fiction world. Unlike the threatening BEM stereotypes which had dominated the literature ever since H. G. Wells, Tweel was a sympathetic creature portrayed, again for the first time, in a suitably complex alien biosphere. Tweel was science-fiction's first truly "alien" alien, incomprehensible in human terms. "Weinbaum's Tweel," says Frederik Pohl, "showed us all how alien an alien might really be, not simply in physical appearance but in basic ways of thinking and behaving."[2]

The innovation was recognized immediately, not only by fans but by fellow authors as well, for the great accomplishment it was. "When Weinbaum rejected the alien monsters or too-human aliens from other planets," says Lester del Rey, "he made the other writers realize how bad their previous conceptions had been."[3] Isaac Asimov recalls that up until then aliens had been mere "cardboard, they were shadows, they were mockeries of life." For that reason alone, Weinbaum's debut "had the effect on the field of an exploding grenade. With this single story, Weinbaum was instantly recognized as the world's best living science-fiction writer, and at once every writer in the field tried to imitate him."[4]

Robert Bloch was then a teenaged member of the Milwaukee Fictioneers. He recalls fellow member Weinbaum as "Dark-haired, personable, with a ready smile and a soft Louisville-acquired drawl" who "seemed much more fond of his extraterrestrials than he was of his earthlings" in his fiction. Bloch thinks this was only appropriate, since none of the humans there elicited as much empathy in the reader as did the aliens. "This, of course, was Stanley Weinbaum's greatest contribution to science fiction. He introduced empathy to the field . . . once it was made and understood, science fiction would never be the same again. In empathy he found the weapon to destroy the Bug-Eyed Monster, once and for all."[5]

Given his formative importance to the creation of science fiction as we know it today, there is an amazing dearth of personal memoirs concerning him. There are, of course, Weinbaum's own autobiographical notes which appeared in the June 1935 *Fantasy Magazine*, but Robert Bloch's personal recollections are one of the few other sources of such information.[6] For that reason, the following interview with Stanley Weinbaum's widow is a welcome addition to our knowledge. Despite the passage of over half a century, she remembered her life with Stanley in great detail and with much fondness. This interview was conducted in two sessions, on August 20 and 27, 1988; for easier accessibility, both have been merged here.

* Notes for this article begin on page 103.

Eric Davin: *Thank you so much for being able to speak to me about Stanley.*

Margaret Kay: Well, this is a particularly high priority to me because I'll always love Stanley. That's no reflection on my present husband, because he loved him too.

So, he knew Stanley?

Oh, my lands, did he know Stanley!? Eugene came here, came to this country, took his papers out in January of '33. That was the month a man named Hitler came into power, and Eugene Kay was a surgeon in a municipal hospital in Hamburg then.

Is your husband Jewish?

Yes, yes. I am too, Stanley was also. But we were all atheists, to tell you the truth. So Eugene resigned from the hospital and he was called before the board an hour later. They said, "Look, if it's because of your religion, we'll call Hitler now, we know him personally, and we'll get you immunity for life."

But my husband said, "Thank you, but no, thank you." He knew enough about history and politics to know that wouldn't stay true. So he came to this country, and Stanley and I met him the first week he was in Milwaukee. We were at a round-table discussion, such as we were always being invited to. We went expecting——at least I expected——to find a little, short, fat, gray-bearded doctor, because they'd said "a doctor from Germany." And then I saw this gorgeous specimen there! We became his best friends, and he even was the one who became suspicious about Stanley's health. I wasn't even conscious of it.

Stanley and I used to have Gene Kay come along with us to anything we were going to do. If he could get away, he would. He was new in his practice there, so he worked very hard. We all went down to the beach, a mob of us, on a Sunday afternoon. Eugene wanted to make a call to his answering service, and he asked, "Can you get me to a phone?"

I said, "Yes, my sister lives a block up the hill, let's go." Going up the hill was a very steep set of steps. Later, Gene said to me, "Marge, did you notice how short of breath Stanley got?" I said, "No, I'm not medically trained."

And he said, "Well, I don't like it. Will you bring him up to my office tomorrow afternoon? I want to check him, and I may end up wanting an X-ray." That was the start of the whole thing. It was in June or July of the year Stanley died. He lasted just that long.

A very good friend, Dr. Bloch, was head of the chest department at the University of Chicago Medical School. Eugene called him and asked him to please come and check out his friend. He checked Stanley out and saw the X-rays. It was exactly what Eugene had suspected. That was the first time I knew he had cancer. This Dr. Bloch told me. He had us come down to Chicago because they had cobalt for radiation treatments there. Back at that time, Milwaukee didn't have any.

I thought Stanley had throat cancer, but shortness of breath sounds like something else.

It was lung cancer. He was a very heavy smoker. I was a very heavy smoker along with him.

Do you still smoke?

No, I don't. Eugene hardly ever smoked——maybe one cigarette every three months, and he didn't inhale. The reason I stopped smoking was that I fell and broke my hip four years ago. We were in Denver at our oldest grandchild's wedding. He was being married on Sunday, and on Saturday afternoon I fell down two steps at a Hilton Hotel in the only spot in the hotel that wasn't carpeted. I landed on the tile, and that night, when everyone else was at the wedding rehearsal, I was parked in the hospital.

It was the first time I'd gone to the hospital and not left something on Eugene's bed for him to find, a cheerful little gift. I couldn't go out and shop, so I thought, he's always wanted me to stop smoking. That's what I'll do. I'll stop and that will be my present.

Now, that was the most idiotic thing a person could do the night before surgery, when you need every crutch you have. But I did it and I've never had a cigarette since.

Good for you! It's never too late.

No, it wasn't too late. I was only 78.

So that makes you 82 now.

No, 81.

When was your birthday?

I was born on Thanksgiving Day, believe it or not. But my birthday falls on Thanksgiving only every few years. So, near the end of November, 1906.[7]

And Stanley was born. . . You asked about that. All our records are at home in the desert. We live in the desert seven months out of the year. We come to our place here for the five hot months. The records are there. . . I think it was 1902. It might have been '03, but I think it was '02. April 4th.[8] Don't forget, this was over half a century ago. I've so many birthdays to remember, with the three children and seven grandchildren....

You said you were at one of your grandchild's weddings when you fell...

Yes; Stanley and I had no children. When Gene and my first child was born, a son, my husband wanted to name him Stanley. I said, "Oh, no. It isn't because of any reason except I'm not going to let anybody think 'What a peculiar thing that is.'" So we named him the way I wanted—Eugene, after his father. Our other two children were daughters. One lives here in Santa Monica, the other in West Los Angeles. Our son lives in Denver. And that's the story of our family.

And we always speak of "the Trunk," because everything of Stanley's, all his originals and everything he had published, is in a trunk. We gave it to our son and he's passed it on to his youngest son, who keeps track of the records and everything.

Are there any unpublished stories there?

You know, I've wondered about that. At one time, right after he died, I went through it and picked out a few things. There's a lot of his poetry—and he wrote beautiful poetry—and *The New Adam*. That was the novel Stanley had planned as his introduction to serious work. It's a very odd piece, and it wasn't published until after he died.

You asked about the Milwaukee Fictioneers. It wasn't a large group, and the members weren't limited just to science-fiction. There was a Western writer. There was a horror-story writer named Bloch, who wrote "Psycho." He came in towards the end. He was just a youngster at the time; we were older. Actually, Stanley had been publishing only a year and a half, two years, before he died at about age 33. No, he was older, because he died on December 13, 1935. See, some things the old gal very definitely remembers!

So you don't think there's anything of Stanley's which was left unpublished, except perhaps some poetry?

Nothing that I would say was science-fiction... You know, he started writing in earnest after "The Lady Dances" was published. That was bought by King Features of Hearst. It was his *only* newspaper serial.

That was published under the name of Marge Stanley, wasn't it?

Yes. It started when I did newspaper work after Stanley started writing. I sold a series of articles to one paper, on a fluke. Then I sold to another, and finally I was working for four newspapers. It was all free-lance——I had only oral contracts. I used the name "Marge Stanley" for my weekly "society" column in *The Milwaukee Sentinel*. I also used "George Jessel" for another series. I had a daily article for *The Wisconsin News*, which was a take-off on Ripley's "Believe It or Not"——something about the local area of Milwaukee. I also wrote book reviews for *The Milwaukee Journal*.

So, you were a writer yourself?

Well, I just fooled around with it. It was very easy. I made my rounds to turn in all my work on Thursday mornings. Thursday was the deadline——you had to have everything in by noon. I got the magnificent sum of ten dollars for each item. But back in the days of the Great Depression, ten dollars bought a lot of food.

Did you meet Stanley through your newspaper work?

No, no. I wasn't doing newspaper work then. I met him the year before I entered college. My sister, who was ten years older than I, was married and lived in Milwaukee. My father and mother wanted to get away from the heat of Texas in the summer——

You're from Texas? And here I thought you were from Wisconsin!

No, no, no. I'm from Waco, Texas.

Ah, West Texas.

No, it's really the heart of Texas, please.

Deep in the heart of Texas! Why did your family move to Wisconsin?

My family never moved there——only my sister did. She married a Wisconsin man, so we began visiting her in Milwaukee during the summer. I had a bunch of friends there. They persuaded my parents to let me go to college in Milwaukee instead of going East. You see, I had been accepted at Wellesley and was supposed to go there. But this whole gang got on their necks pleading, "Please let Marge stay here in Milwaukee." My parents were hesitant. Their other option was Tulane down in New Orleans, because it was warmer. My brother had died two years before of pneumonia. He was in his senior year at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, and they didn't want to sacrifice another child to the snow.

But in that Milwaukee college you didn't have to go outside to change classes; all the dormitories and administration buildings were connected by heated passages with lovely flower arrangements. So may parents said, "Okay, stay there." They didn't anticipate that I'd be sneaking out at night. But I survived!

What was the name of this college?

Milwaukee Downer College. It was a very good girls' school. In fact, it was the first one west of the Alleghenies allowed to award a Phi Beta Kappa. About ten or twelve years ago it ceased being a girls' school and joined with Lawrence College, which was a boys' school. Now they're both co-ed.

Who was the school named after?

It was on Downer Avenue. Maybe that had something to do with it.

It must have been difficult to meet boys if all the students were girls.

Oh, no. That's the reason all the girls loved me, because I knew so many boys in Milwaukee. I fixed them all up with dates. I tell you, if you have boys to pass out among girls, it's just great. The girls love you, the boys love you!

But to get back to how I met Stanley. When I was finishing my junior year in high school the group of girls I went around with in Milwaukee decided we had to do something good. So we began going down to the Abraham Lincoln House in the ghetto. Many black children came there during the day, and twice a week we helped the counsellors take care of these youngsters. Then the counsellors asked four of us girls if we would consider going out to their summer camp for a week or two and be counsellors ourselves instead of assistants. Of course that made us feel very grown up, and we all said yes. For this we needed our parents' permission, which we got.

Now the chap I was going with very much wanted to come out to the camp one evening and see me. I said he had to bring three other guys along for my girl friends. I was only fifteen at the time, so I wasn't matchmaking. I just wanted to take care of my girl friends.

So he brought three other boys along. He even said to me on the phone, "You're going to love one of them, 'cause he likes literature as much as you do. In fact, he even writes nice poetry." It was Stanley. So that was his mistake!

What was Stanley doing at this time?

He was in college. Let me backtrack a bit here. Stanley was always interested in science. When he was a kid he blew up the family basement with his chemical experiments and often managed to stink up the whole neighborhood. He entered Wisconsin University at Madison when he was eighteen, majoring in chemistry.

But he'd also begun to write, and by the time he was a junior he was writing a lot. The head of the English Department loved him. One of Stanley's very close friends in college was Eugene Reich, who was also from Milwaukee. But Eugene couldn't write. He had trouble writing even his name and address! He had to turn a paper in, and Stanley wrote it for him.

The instructor could see it wasn't Gene's work, so he was called in. He finally admitted he hadn't written it, but of course he refused to tell who had. Well, that was as much of a sin as having done it. So they went over the records to find out who Gene knew. It turned out that Stanley was one of his friends, and right away they said, "That's who it is!" They called Stanley in and he said, "Yes, I did it, and I'm very angry about one thing."

"What's that?" they asked.

"You accused Gene Reich of having plaigarized Zane Grey. Now, if I can't write better than Zane Grey, *well!*"

So they suspended Stanley for the rest of the semester. He was allowed to return the next Fall, but he said, "No, I'm not coming back." He walked out and that was the end of it. He never finished college.

Well, Stanley came back to Milwaukee and went into radio. Radio was very new then, you know, and it fascinated him. He stayed in it until 1926, when he wanted us to get married. Then he took a job with a large chemical firm in Chicago as their representative in Wisconsin, Minnesota and surrounding territory.

Now here's something you'll be interested in. In his job he had to call on the purchasing agents of all the different manufacturers who needed chemicals. Stanley kept a little notebook in his pocket, and whenever he was waiting he'd be writing in it. That's where he began *The New Adam;* the manuscript of that novel is all in longhand in little notebooks.[11]

But soon he didn't have a chance to write very much, because all the agents became interested in him. They liked him so much they never kept him waiting long. Purchasing agents always received big presents from the detail men like Stanley, but he never gave any. Instead, the purchasing agents would ask others for extra gifts for a friend and give them to Stanley! We got the most amazing collection of things.

That lasted until the crash of 1929. His chemical firm cut down and cut down and finally went out of business. We'd saved a little, and had the chance

of buying a movie house. Not the real estate, but the lease, on a movie house in Cudahay, Wisconsin, which was a suburb of Milwaukee. This seemed a beautiful idea, because it was already there, it was already established, and it was the only movie house in the town. We figured that soon after we got everything organized and going okay there'd be enough income to live on, and Stanley would have plenty of time to write. That was a wonderful idea. But the stock market crash eventually made the movie crash, too.

You see, the biggest company in town, which employed several thousand men, was B. F. Goodrich Tires. Cudahay was a small community, and and a lot of the workers boarded at houses there. It was also a poor community, and that rent was the pocket money for local people to go to the movies, for their children to go to movies. The single men living with these families had nothing to do in the evenings, and they went to movies, too. It was a beautiful set-up. But when the workers were laid off they left, and that pocket money disappeared. So the movie house had to fold with everything else. We couldn't afford to keep losing money on it.

What did you do then?

Well, we counted up our pennies and found we had enough to live a year or so without work and decided Stanley should just write. I had confidence in his writing and it was the thing he loved doing. So he wrote and wrote. The first thing he worked on was *The New Adam*, but he also did a serial for a newspaper as "Marge Stanley."

Now at this time we had an older friend who became very important to us. His name was Edward Schoolman, and he was a psychiatrist. He'd been studying medicine and planned on being a brain surgeon, which his uncle was. But his eyesight went bad, and they said it would get worse. To stay in medicine, the only thing he could do was become a psychiatrist. That was a novel idea then.

When he finished medical school, his uncle and his father persuaded him to go to Europe and study under Freud, which he did. He came back and opened a practice. This was slow going, of course. In those days psychiatrists weren't a penny a dozen like they are now. But Dr. Schoolman was also a magnificent speaker, and he developed a regular lecture circuit. He was from Chicago, and went out to the Chicago area, to Milwaukee and all the different towns around there giving a series of talks. These were very popular, because people wanted to know what a psychiatrist was.

Stanley and I went to hear one of his lectures. Afterwards Judge Ahrens went over to him and said, "When do you leave for Chicago?"

He said, "I catch a midnight train."

So the judge said, "Come on home with us. We'll have a cup of coffee and I'll have a few of the people here come along."

Well, Stanley was always very popular for anything like that because he was such terrifically good company. I went along, of course, because I was sort of comic relief. This actually started our relationship with Ed Schoolman.

When it came time to break up, Stanley said to him, "We'll drive you to the train."

The next time someone else invited him, and we drove him to the train again. After the third time, he began spending the night at our place. His stories about his patients were simply fantastic. One was the foundation——with the psychiatry left out, and a few other changes——for "The Lady Dances."

The next summer we decided we were going to Ontario in the Kickapoo Valley. The place was a town of about 500 people. We stayed at a so-called hotel, a place which put up the two school teachers who came to take care of the area. It cost us all of ten dollars a week to stay there, including food! Ed Schoolman came out and he'd talk. He told one good story after another. Stanley took notes and I typed them; I was Stanley's amanuensis because he couldn't type. The mech-

anics of the machine distracted him. He'd get interested in that, the way he once took a car apart and put it back together. That's the reason he couldn't type—— he'd want to stop and see what was making the clicking!

Well, we put all these stories about Ed's patients together and got the manuscript of a very fat book. I don't know how Stanley did it, but he found a nursery rhyme which fit in perfectly with each story. So the chapters would be entitled "Little Boy Blue," or "Jack and Jill," or something like that. It was a terrific factual book.

So this used Dr. Schoolman's patients as a way of explaining psychological problems?

Exactly. To lay people. We submitted the manuscript to the publisher Alfred Knopf. This was early in the winter of 1934-35. We got a telephone call from Knopf, because they were quite excited about it. They asked some questions, which Stanley wrote them the answers to, although the book was submitted under both his name and Schoolman's. And then they said, "We're going to send some papers that you and Dr. Schoolman will have to sign." Stanley said, "We'll be glad to." Because this would be an expensive volume to put out——a thousand-page book, maybe——they wanted to protect themselves. Unpublished writers had to guarantee to submit to them the next book or two they wrote.

Two days later we got a devastating phone call. Ed Schoolman had dropped dead. He'd died at the end of a bridge game. Ed wasn't more than in his early forties, and a bridge game couldn't have been that exciting. It was heart-breaking for us. Of course we went to the funeral in Chicago, and when we got back there was the contract from Knopf. Stanley had to return it and tell them that his partner had died.

When did Ed Schoolman die?

It was either the end of May or the first part of June, 1935. And July was when Eugene got suspicious of Stanley's shortness of breath. It almost looked as if Ed couldn't get along without his buddy, because by December Stanley was gone, too. It was a very odd thing.

"The Lady Dances" had been published by this time, hadn't it?

Yes, it had been accepted and we were receiving money for it. We were too proud to take help from our parents, you see. We decided we were going to do it on our own.

It must have been difficult.

It was fun.

Was the book ever published at all?

No. After Ed and Stanley died the book ended up in the Trunk.

Do you remember its title?

No, I don't. What could it have been? We must have had a title, but I just can't recall it. You know, Stanley and I had nicknames for the stories he was working on, and there was one that I think we called "Pygmalion." Wasn't there a play "Pygmalion" about a girl who had tuberculosis? Well, we called it "Adaptable Anna." That was the title!

What was the nickname for "A Martian Odyssey"?

I don't remember. But I can tell you what started the story about the big caterpillars, each of them the size of a boxcar, that went around in circles.[9] One evening Stanley and I were driving. We'd had dinner with Dr. Kay. He had a call to make out in the boon-docks, and we took him. It was a very, very foggy

night. We were sitting in the car while he went in to take care of his patient, and we began talking about the fog. "This would be something for a story," we said. Then the conversation worked around to the famous French naturalist, Henri Fabre. Fabre wrote about caterpillars, ants, moths——fascinating stuff. He told about a kind of caterpillars that walked in chains, each just following the one ahead. And we said, "Oh, wouldn't that be great! It's foggy and they couldn't see where they were going, and they'd just keep following!" That's how one story came about.

Did a lot of Stanley's stories just sort of evolve when he was kicking around ideas with you like that?

I'm trying to remember. I do know that when he was a youngster he fell in love with anything dealing with Nature. That lasted with him throughout life. We still have a book that was on his desk when he was writing, *Natural History* by John Woods. That copy was printed when he was a youngster, in the early part of the century.[10] He'd settle back and read it, and he'd sit back and read Fabre. He even had me reading Fabre, because the man wrote so magnificently.

When Stanley was a youngster he collected things. He had a bookcase in his room with glass front doors. That was his museum. Once he found a wasps' nest, which he dipped in gasoline or something to kill the eggs, and put that in his museum. You can probably guess the rest of the story!

Ummm——he actually didn't kill all the eggs?

His mother was a fanatic cleaner. She was a terrific dame, but she always had to clean. When she did her spring cleaning she opened the bookcase doors and wow! All the wasps flew out! That was the end of the museum.

Was Stanley a farm boy?

No, never. He was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and the whole family moved to Milwaukee when he was still young. His maternal grandmother was a Jessel, and I mention her name because one of the pseudonyms I used in newspaper columns and that Stanley had a science-fiction story published under was Jessel.

You know, at the time "A Martian Odyssey" came out, we got a letter from Mort Weisinger saying he'd like to represent Stanley. This was just fine, and Mort became a friend through the mails. After Stanley died he was just as sweet to me as could be. I went to New York City that summer, because through him I was offered a very nice job there. But Eugene Kay decided for me that I shouldn't take it——so I didn't.

You were offered a job at a newspaper?

No, not at a newspaper. It was on a pulp magazine that ran love stories. They had bought rights to a bunch of short stories from England very cheaply, and were reprinting them. What they wanted was someone who could turn English into "American." You know——changing "lift" into "elevator," saying "hood" of a car instead of "bonnet," that kind of stuff. That was something I could easily do, so Mort had arranged for me to have an interview.

So I went to New York, and that's when I met Mort. He became an even closer friend, and later came out to Wisconsin a couple of times to visit us. Every time we went to New York, Eugene and I would see him and his wife and spend evenings together.

You know, I never mind talking about Stanley, and I've done just about everything to keep his stories alive. About two years after he was gone I had a call from Walter Grauman; does that name mean anything to you?

Well, there's Grauman's Chinese Theater in L. A.

No, that was a cousin of Stanley's, a much older Grauman. Georgie Jessel was also a cousin——*the* George Jessel. But when someone in the family, one of the the Graumans, went down to meet him after a performance, George said, "They didn't know me when I was poor. Now that I have money, those rich so-and-so's——*No*, I'm not going to meet him!"

Well, Walter Grauman was a movie producer, and he wanted to make some movies out of Stanley's stories. You see, the whole family adored him and this Grauman was a little bit younger. His step-brother, who was practically Stanley's age, loved him and was with us an awful lot. He was a doctor, also. All of Stanley's cousins adored him. After Eugene and I were married, the cousins all adopted Eugene and when they met people they'd introduce us as "our cousins, Marge and Dr. Eugene Kay." This was their attitude and it always made life simpler for me. There was no explaining. Eugene was just Eugene, another cousin.

Anyway, Walter Grauman said, "I'd like to do a series of Stan's stories and maybe we'll just specialize in science-fiction after that. We'll introduce the direction with his stories, because they'd make very good movies." I replied, "You know, Walter, there's nothing I'd like better than to keep his stories alive."

He said, "I'm willing to pay you . . . ." and he mentioned such a silly little amount——I think it was to be part of the profit on the movies——that I said, "Look, let me talk to our agent," who of course was Mort Weisinger, "and you get back to me." It just didn't smell good.

I called Mort Weisinger and told him about it. He said, "Marge, I haven't had anything to do with that kind of thing, but this doesn't sound right at all. I don't like it. Give me time to investigate."

When he called back he said, "Marge, it is just absolutely crazy. People laughed when I told them the amount." You know, it's like a 10% finder's fee? They were offering one-half of one per cent, that's just a comparison. And Mort said, "When that Walter Grauman calls you again you just tell him to contact me. Don't make any arrangement. Don't say anything except 'I'm busy, Walter; call my agent.'" And that's exactly what I did. I think that Mort must've given him a good going-over, for that's the last I heard of it.

Is Stanley's sister Helen still alive?

No, I heard a couple of years ago that she had died. We weren't close. She lived in the East, so we hardly ever saw her, and she and Stanley never corresponded. Their mother and father——Stella and Nate——were patients of Eugene's. When Stella fell and had a very miserable broken leg, Eugene had her in the hospital for a couple of months, that's how bad it was. You don't keep people in the hospital for an ordinary broken leg. I went every day to see her.

Stella's younger brother, also a Grauman of course, often came from Chicago to see her. Afterwards I'd drive him to our home and he'd have a drink or two before I'd take him to the station to go back. At those times he told me a lot of stories of the family I hadn't known before. They were great fun for me, as I'd always felt very close to Stan's family. I was only nineteen when I married, and they sort of adopted me.

Anyway, when Stella got out of the hospital Eugene talked to Helen and said, "You shouldn't leave your mother here alone. She'll have to be in a nursing home. It's up to you, of course, if you want to have her in a nursing home, which is a pretty grim life. If not, take her back East with you." And Helen did.

I kept in touch with Stella there. I'd call her on the phone, and we wrote back and forth. When she died Helen never called me——just formally notified Eugene's office, and said she'd be buried at such and such a time.

But we went to the funeral. We called the family in Chicago, went down in both of our cars, and met a contingent, which we took for lunch before going to the chapel where the service was being held.

This was in Chicago?

No, in Milwaukee, where the family cemetery plot was. That's where Stella's husband Nate was buried. After the service Helen walked over and said hello to Eugene and me, and then announced, "We're going back to Ray and Lucia's to have cake and coffee. I don't know if enough is prepared for you as well, but come over if you want to."

Well, if the invitation was put like that, I didn't want to, but I left it up to Eugene. He just nodded his head and we separated. Then Eugene said to me, "You don't want to go, do you?" I replied, "Are you asking me or telling me? You know I don't want to go." And we didn't. That was the last I saw of Helen.

The only other contact we had was when Eugene's office received a copy of Stella's will with a letter from the attorney about Eugene's signed statement that she was competent when the will was made. No personal note saying "You've been very good to my mother and I want to thank you," or anything like that, no! It was simply a formal letter asking "Would you please verify your signature."

When did Stella die?

Well, we moved away eighteen years ago and it must have been six or seven years before that, so she's been gone quite a while.

So we're talking 24 or 25 years ago, in the early Sixties? Stella must have been a very old woman at that time.

Oh, it was a very long-lived family. There's a strange thing about them. Either they lived very long or they died very young. One of the cousins talked about that when another one died——it was sort of spooky. But most lived well into their eighties. Stella was very upset that she didn't get any gray hair. She often talked to me about having her hair bleached, and said, "Everybody thinks I dye it."

Now Stanley's father, Nathan. How old was he when he died?

Oh, Nate was well into his eighties. Eugene had done surgery on him——he had a colostomy. We always had a close relationship. Can you imagine, after he and Stanley were gone, Stella took Eugene, my first-born, in her arms when she came to see him, looked down at the baby and said, "You could have been mine, you know." That was very heart-rending for me. . . .

Sounds like a very close family. They seem to have taken you to their bosom.

Well, I want to tell you something. Nobody could have been more understanding and more——more going-right-along with what Stanley wanted than I was, and they all knew that. Anything that Stanley wanted, I managed to make happen. He was a dreamer! He was a true poet, a true dreamer!

This is the kind of thing Marge had to manufacture: Ed Schoolman once said to us, "Look, one of my patients gave me a due bill on a hotel in New York and I'd love to go, but I can't afford to take a trip now." Remember, this was in the depths of the Great Depression, and he had his wife to support, two boys in school and so on. But he said, "If you all could find some way to make the trip, and take me along, then I would stay with relatives and you could use the due bill. You'd simply register as Dr. and Mrs. Schoolman."

So Stanley said, "I'd love to go," and turned to Marge and asked, "Can we afford it?" I replied, "You know darned well we *can't* afford it, but give me until tomorrow and I'll have an answer for you."

Now, my mother used to come to Milwaukee for the summer every year——my father had died way back——so I went to her and said, "Mom, how'd you like to visit the family in Philadelphia?"

"Oh, I'd love that."

So I said, "Okay, here's the proposition. We'll drive you down if you will take care of the gas and oil and the motel bills on the way."

"Oh fine, of course!" Momma was well-heeled, and this was just a joy for her. So we went. We left her in Philadelphia with Poppa's family, with whom we were very close, and the three of us went on to New York. That's the sort of deal I had to manufacture!

How long were you in New York on that trip?

Oh, maybe five or six days.

Did Stanley use the trip to meet any editors and writers there?

No. I think it must have been before "A Martian Odyssey" was accepted. But I went over to King Features and met the editor there, so it was after "The Lady Dances."

Did you do any further travelling with Stanley?

We couldn't afford to. But we would go to Texas whenever my parents treated us to the trip.

How long were you and Stanley married, altogether?

Nine and a half years.

How long was your courtship? You mentioned he came out to your summer camp——when was that, by the way?

Let's see. . . . We were married in 1926, so that was probably 1924. Yes, it had to be in the summer of '24. That night we just walked away from everybody else, talking about literature, poetry and so on, and he turned to me and said, "I'm going to marry you."

That was sudden.

Yeah, how do you like that? Of course I just laughed and let it go. But as time went on I dropped off with everybody else and it was only Stanley.

What attracted you to Stanley, besides his love of literature?

Oh, God! He was handsome enough to be a movie star. I think there's a picture of him on the jacket of *The New Adam*. Now *that* is a story. . . .

There was a guy in the Fictioneers named Raymond Palmer who went to Chicago to work at Ziff-Davis Publishers. He wrote me and said they were willing to publish *The New Adam*. Well, anything to keep Stanley's stories alive and have 'em in print, so of course I said yes.

He said, "Well, they have to have $500, but when they settle with you for the stories they will also pay the $500 back."

Well, I never saw that $500 again, not a penny! What happened, I don't know. But the novel was published, that was the main thing.[12]

You never received any royalties at all from The New Adam?

No, and we were never paid for "A Martian Odyssey" either.[13]

That's amazing!

No, it was just *Amazing Stories!*

Well actually, since it was published in Wonder Stories, *it's a wonder of a story!*

Okay. But some things of Stanley's were published in *Amazing Stories*, right? Now let me tell you about "A Martian Odyssey." I was amanuensis for Stanley. He'd sit and write, maybe 10,000 words a day, all in long-hand on pulp paper

that I'd bring back from the newspaper office for my work and Stanley's. I'd be in the other room, he'd bring in what he wrote, and I'd type it. When we took a break we'd split a cigarette and smoke it. So I typed "A Martian Odyssey."

Did you comment on the stories as you typed them?

Well, I read them; you know, we always discussed these things. I mean, we had fun with them! We commented on ugly ridiculous things to do to the stories——you know, it made life fun.

Anyway, I mailed in "A Martian Odyssey." When they sent back the acceptance Stanley came in simply in a dramatic fury——he was a very dramatic guy, anyway——in a fury, out of his mind! "You sent it in under my name!" he cried. "Now my name is ruined for good! Nobody will ever read anything I write. I want to do *serious* writing!" And he went on and on and on.

Was he joking?

No, he was serious! He hadn't known that I mailed the story under his own name, and this had him bugged but good! But I calmed him down.

What name did he want to use——Marge Stanley?

Well, I don't know——it might've been John Jessel or something like that. I was using Marge Stanley for my society column at *The Milwaukee Sentinel*.

That sounds as if Stanley didn't have a high regard for science-fiction.

He had regard for the *possibilities* of science-fiction, but not——now, this isn't very nice, but he said it was pretty sad that none of the authors knew how to write English. Jules Verne, yes, and H. G. Wells, yes. But actually, if you stop to think about most of the s-f writing at that time, it was kids' stuff. Even the plots weren't very good.

I take it you didn't like much of the stuff being published, either.

May I tell you something? I didn't read much of it. But there were a few of Campbell's stories I liked. And a little later, Heinlein came along. I liked him. The reason——you remember the blind astronaut?——he used poetry. This is the kind of thing that means something to me. But the other stuff? You know enough about this, you have to admit it was pretty poor.

So, the only science-fiction you really read was Stanley's?

Oh yes. I lived Stanley's.

He was upset that "A Martian Odyssey" was published under his name, but the story was instantly popular and successful.

Isn't that amazing? It really went over big. And that was just the beginning. In only a year, when we were in Chicago for the second series of cobalt treatments, his parents brought down a letter saying that Mort Weisinger had made arrangements for one of his novelettes every month in one of the science-fiction magazines. They even said they'd also publish his short stories in the same issues under his "John Jessel" pseudonym. In fact, we'd already sent something in under that name.[14]

So things were just opening up. . . .

Right. But here we were in Chicago, and I knew it was all over, though Stanley didn't. So I called Mort Weisinger. Now in those depression days, when money was tight, making a long-distance call during the day was something. But I was under pressure, and I had to tell him we couldn't sign anything——and that if Stanley *did* sign anything, and had me mail it, it just couldn't be done.

Stanley wasn't aware how serious his illness was?

No. But he was feeling miserable. I told him, "You have a mass on your lung and that's why you're having these treatments, to dissolve it. You'll have to be patient. It's going to take time. When you're feeling better you can go on writing."

I'm trying to remember Larry, the one from the Fictioneers who wrote Western stories——F. D. R. said he read them and always kept some about. I can't remember Larry's last name off hand, and I hadn't thought of him until now. Anyway, Larry used to come over practically every day to sit and chat with Stanley.[15] Then Stanley got to be very hoarse, and talking wasn't easy for him, though he didn't know it was taps.

When did he realize it was taps?

He *never* did. I told Dr. Kay what I'd told Stanley, so that if Stanley asked him he'd go along with what I said. I remember so well Eugene looking at me as if I was out of my cotton-picking mind. He came in every day to check on him, but Stanley didn't say anything to him that day. His cousin, Dr. Sam Grauman, knew about the whole thing. I told him about telling Stanley this story, and that he seemed to have swallowed it, and Sam said, "I want to tell you something, Marge. It's the brightest people who can be fooled the easiest."

Do you think if Stanley knew the truth it would have depressed him too much?

I just couldn't visualize Stanley knowing he was dying. I just couldn't allow that. He was much too live a person. He loved everybody, everybody loved him, and the world was always a bunch of roses.

He didn't suspect, even going into the hospital for the last time?

No, because we came back home then, and he had visitors. Three young chaps from Chicago had written, saying they'd like to meet him, and they came up from Chicago to do so. I was under such pressure then——I can't remember their names. Was there someone connected with science-fiction named Otto?

There was Otto Binder.

Was he from Chicago?

I think so.

If he was ten or so years younger than Stanley he could have been one of them.[16] Stanley was so pleased when they came! Later, when we went back to Chicago for his treatments, he said, "How about calling those chaps? Ask 'em to come over and say hello." He was very friendly, very warm, thinking that one of those days everything was going to be perfect.

So he never knew, right up to the end?

No, no. Not the slightest idea.

Did he keep writing during this time?

I'll tell you what he used to do, mainly. I would do my book reviews and give them to him to look over and give me his opinions. He'd clean 'em up. I purposely wanted him to keep busy because lying in bed I don't think he was capable of doing real writing. At first he was able to write, but he was too weak towards the end. . . . You know, all this seems like a thousand years ago, and yet it seems like yesterday.

Yes, some memories always stay vivid, no matter from how long ago....

Eugene's father died a couple of years after we were married, and he had ordered a tombstone for his father's grave. He told me we ought to go out and see it. So we went, and as we were walking away he said, "Are you sure it was okay?" You see, he didn't know any of the customs here for tombstones and such. He'd picked out a very plain, simple little tombstone, and seemed worried about it.

I said, "Do you want to know something? Come here." I walked him two graves away and there was Stanley's. Eugene said, "Do you mean that if you hadn't wanted to prove to me that the one I chose was okay, you would've gone away without going over there?" I replied, "Stanley isn't there. It'd be a pretty sad thing to think of Stanley as being down in there." That was my feeling.

Why am I telling you these things?

Perhaps because it's been a long time since anyone asked.

Isn't that odd?

But I understand what you mean. I've felt the same. . . .

All right, then you know what I'm talking about. . . . I just hope that one of these days, whatever caused that feeling for you will clear up as nicely as mine has, so that only the beautiful memories are left.

Somebody once said to me, "How come, if Stanley and Eugene are so unalike. . . ." And I replied, "That's what makes life simple." I am a very lucky person. I'm doubly lucky because I *know* I'm lucky. A lot of people are lucky, but they don't know it. They don't appreciate it. But I'm lucky, I've had two of the swellest guys going. . . .

So, Stanley liked having fans?

Oh, yes!

Did he get a lot of fan mail?

No. If any fan mail went to his publishers, they never bothered to send it to him. It amused me that they wouldn't do that, because we met some people who would exclaim, "Oh, you wrote 'A Martian Odyssey'! I couldn't help writing you when that came out!" But we never got their letters. This happened to us several times. When we met people and they said that, I wondered, "Why on earth——?" But his attitude was, so what?[17]

When Stanley died, did you receive any letters from fans?

Not a word from a publisher, anything. From Mort Weisinger, yes. And our friends outside the writing game were very attentive. I'll never forget one of them, a very brilliant woman, who wrote to me, "Don't you just know that Stanley couldn't simply die like a normal person? He had to do it very glamorous-like."

That was really true. Just as he got his toe-hold in writing and was able to go someplace with it, he had this lung cancer. Now it's a common thing, of course, but young people didn't have it that much then.

I want to tell you something. Cancer is worse in the young than in the old. I'm very conscious of that, because I just had cancer surgery this spring, and they didn't even have to give me treatments afterwards. They got it all out. On next Monday morning, Eugene goes back to have a little done; the major work was done a year ago, but there's a little recurrence. But, you, see, he's 88 and I'm 81. At our age cancer doesn't get as strong a hold, I guess. One of these days I'll ask Eugene to explain to me why this is so.

Also, medical technology is so much more sophisticated now.

But when younger people get it—— Our younger daughter's husband just had colon cancer, which is one of the nastiest. It had spread to the liver and

he's under therapy now. His chances are very slim. It's a nasty, nasty thing!

Oh, by the way. Didn't one of Stanley's stories——yes, I'm sure! One of his stories mentioned a cancer-like growth.

Yes! Now, which one was it?

Well, when you find it one of these days, pop me a note and tell me.[18]

Sure. You know, that's one of the things I meant to ask you. A number of his stories near the end did deal with cancer treatments, using radium to treat cancer, things like that.

Stanley used to talk to other people about the ideas in his stories. He discussed the brain abnormality of the chap in *The New Adam* with Schoolman. Later he discussed things with Eugene to get background which he'd use.

And he asked Eugene about cancer treatments?

Right. About different kinds of treatments.

Yet there was really no connection between his own cancer and dealing with that subject-matter in his stories?

No, because he never knew that he had cancer. He just didn't.

Did the science-fiction magazines publish any death notices or eulogies?

Frankly, I don't know.[19]

You didn't hear anything, though?

No. I want to tell you something. I went through a strain there for many months. When you go through such a strain, many outside things just don't seem real to you. You don't consider them. You're simply doing your job. My job was to keep Stanley going, keep him blind to the fact of what was really happening, and to do things which would be gay and happy for him to know about.

I remember the night of the funeral my mother'd come up from Texas. She and I were sitting there when Eugene——Dr. Kay——walked in. He looked at me and said, "Marge, you don't have to keep that smile on your face any longer. It's over with." My face had got frozen into a smile but I didn't realize it until he said "You don't have to do that now."

Almost as if you were in shock and didn't know what you were doing. . . .

Well, I was under deep pressure. As I said, Stanley's cousin, Dr. Sam Grauman, was aware of the situation. Now, he's another one who died young. He moved to Arizona, I've forgotten where, and was in practice there when he died.

The other cousin, Tony Myer, also died very young. It's amazing——they either live to be very old or they die fairly young.

What was your maiden name?

Hawtof. The rabbis have told me that it's a Hebrew word which means an accent mark, like an umlaut or such. That I found very interesting. Anyway, Papa was born in Russia, but it isn't a Russian name.

How did your family get an unusual name like that?

I don't know. My father and his father had that name, and it goes way back.

Was the fact that you and Stanley were both Jewish a consideration for your family? Did they say you had to marry a Jewish boy, not a goy?

No. And Eugene and I never said that to our children. Their attitude was, you marry whom you want to. Just know what you're doing. On my own, I did-

n't consider marrying out of the race, though not because I was religious. As I told you, we were really atheists, but when you have Jewish blood in you, you're Jewish, period! Actually it's very fine, and I'm proud of my cultural background. I've never been ashamed of it. But I just can't believe that there's somebody upstairs, you know, guiding things.

The reason I would never have married anyone who wasn't Jewish was because I'm the kind of person who likes to have children, and the children would've been neither fish nor fowl. Even though a lot of people can marry outside their culture and be very happy, I was always a little worried that if you had an argument it'd come up——"Okay, that's your background, you're Jewish!" I never had that with any friends, thank goodness. And it just happened that each of the two guys I fell in love with enough to marry were Jewish!

Was Stanley very conscious of his Jewishness?

No. We were very alike that way.

Assimilated, eh?

Yes, right!

Tell me about your wedding day with Stanley. What was the date?

May 30th, 1926, which was Memorial Day, the day they sell carnations. We picked that so we'd always have a holiday on our anniversary, so we could go out and do things.

That makes sense. Did you have a Jewish ceremony?

We were married right in my family home in Waco, Texas. The little rabbi we had performed the ceremony. It wasn't a big knock-down thing. For the wedding itself it was just family and the very closest friends. Afterwards there was a reception where everybody got to kiss you. I hated having people kiss me like that! To me, they were doing it just as a matter of course, because they were supposed to. So I wore a very big hat which flopped down over my face so it was hard to get at me.

How was Stanley dressed? Did he wear a tuxedo?

No, it was a day-time wedding. He wore a dark suit.

Did he have a carnation in his lapel? After all, it was that *day!*

It *was* that day! Okay.

Let me ask you about Stanley's early life. What started him writing? Did he have any kind of literary influences as a youngster? Any uncles or parents who read?

No, no one at all like that. One of his closest friends was Horace Gregory. He was an excellent poet. He had the chair of poetry at Sarah Lawrence College. The first thing he became well known for was a translation of Catullus, a Roman poet.[20] You know, to be a good translator of poetry, you have to be a damned good poet! *The Rubiyat* would never have become known if the translator hadn't been a good poet himself. Anyway, both Horace and Stanley wrote poetry.

Horace was a spastic youngster. He didn't get around well. In fact, the first time Stanley brought him over, when he came to see me, my parents were a little worried. "Was he drinking before he came?" they asked. It wasn't a matter of drinking; he just didn't have his balance right.[21]

When Stanley was of high school age he did writing. Then he'd go over to Horace Gregory's house. There he met the other uncle Gregory who wrote *The Encyclopedia of Wisconsin.* Of people who might have influenced him, Horace is the only one who could fit that description.

Do you think he had much influence on Stanley?

No, they were simply very good friends. Later we used to see him and his wife——Mary Ann, or something like that——when they came out. She was a poet also. I've forgotten her very difficult last name, which she wrote under.[22] She was Jewish; Horace Gregory definitely was not.

Do you remember the name of the place, the artists' colony in upstate New York? Yahoo?

Chatauqua?

No. There was an immensely rich couple who had a large estate sprinkled with little cottages where artists and writers were invited to spend their summers. If they had children, they could take them along. There was someone to take care of the children of these "geniuses."

I know the type of writers' colony you're talking about, but they wouldn't call it "Yahoo," would they?

Isn't that funny? Why did I say "Yahoo"? I don't know. But Horace and his wife were always invited to go there.[23]

Was Stanley ever invited to go to some place like that?

Oh no. It wasn't even two years, was it, between the publication of his first story and his death? But he had the fun of knowing that he was published... And he never again, after that, had a canary about his name being on science-fiction stories.

Just that first time?

I think it was just a matter that he could put on a straight show for me. He always liked to give it an interest.

If he wanted to be a serious writer, what turned him to science-fiction?

I think he felt that it could be done in good English. Not only that, he loved Nature and was drawn to such man-made scientific things as radio and X-rays. He *liked* all of this.

Do you recall how he got the idea for "A Martian Odyssey"? What was unusual about that story was its very sympathetic portrayal of an alien.

Wasn't that marvellous? Tweel!

At that time, all the aliens in science-fiction were very threatening, hostile.

When you stop and think of his stories, I don't think there were any that were really very threatening. But he really came up with some very fantastic things.

Did he ever kick these ideas around with you before he wrote them down? You mentioned the caterpillars, for instance.

Oh, sometimes he'd say, "What do you think of this? What do you think of that?" We'd chew it around and think about it, but Stanley was his own man. He'd go and write the thing the way he felt it.

By the way, "Adaptable Anna," the story with the plain, sick girl who was put under treatment and came out beautiful, but with no conscience[24]——we found out that it was being made into a movie. I guess Mort had told us. He got us tickets, and we watched it being made. It was really exciting.

Later we saw it in one of the movie houses in Milwaukee.

What was your opinion of the movie?

I'm trying to think what it was. Oh, this was a heck of a long time ago, my friend! I really don't remember the movie in detail, but it wasn't objectionable in any way. I remember clearly only the way my two daughters got such a kick out of being there, and when their brother got off the boat from England they just couldn't wait to tell him.

Was Stanley obsessive about writing once he got an idea for a story, or did he work in bits and pieces?

He took everything very much in his stride. He was a very casual kind of person. But he loved his writing and never had to be encouraged to do it. He wanted to write about ten thousand words a day, and he stuck to it.

He was a regular writer, then?

Right.

Did he get up in the morning and immediately start writing, or did he write at night?

No, it was all done in the morning. In the afternoon we'd go swimming, or do other things.

So he wrote every day?

Yes, right.

What kind of things did he read?

There was no special thing; he read everything. He was an inveterate reader. He started one practice when he was a youngster: if he looked up one word in a dictionary, he'd also read the ten words above and below it. One of his favorite readings as a youngster was the encyclopedia. He didn't look for any special thing—he'd just go through it, reading for pleasure. And he retained *everything*. He had the most retentive memory going. He read everything that he encountered. Everything!

You said that you didn't read science-fiction that much. Did Stanley?

I guess he did. He usually bought the magazines, but buying them wasn't a *must* with him.

Did he buy other pulp magazines also?

No.

Just science-fiction?

Right.

But didn't he try his hand at romance stories?

Yes, he wrote some, but he wasn't very proud of them. He thought it'd be quick money. But we didn't send even one of them in. Maybe we just didn't get around to it, but I know. . . . You see, I took care of that.

You handled the business side?

Yes. As I said, it was up to me to make things happen.

It's very strange that he could be so very unconscious of money, and yet write golf club romances and things like that—now, in retrospect, it seems sort of amazing. He wrote 'em, I typed 'em up, and then we never sent any of them in!

Why was that?

I haven't gone into the thing to think about it. . . . I was thinking of what all was in the Trunk.

There might be some of those romance stories there?

There must be. I'm sure they're in there, everything is in there. But I haven't seen that trunk for years, now.

Why would you not send the stories out? This was the Great Depression, you were hard up, and he wrote them because he thought they'd be "quick money"—— maybe because he wasn't proud of them?

I think that must have been it. We let them sit and never sent one in.

Why did you decide to send in "A Martian Odyssey"?

To me, "A Martian Odyssey" was an excellent yarn. It's just such a *smooth* thing. Anybody could enjoy reading that. You don't have to be a fan of science-fiction to like it. Stanley's writing was always polished. He never *tried* to polish it, he just wrote polished.

Did he do many drafts or revisions?

Never any! If you looked at his hand-written manuscripts you would see that every word is the same as in published form. One draft! I typed it and I never changed a thing.

That's absolutely amazing!

I know it! I guess that's why he was shocked at what poor writing was being published. I think that was the reason he blew his stack when "A Martian Odyssey" had his name on it, because who would think that anybody who really knew how to write would write *science-fiction?*

He didn't want to be associated with that stuff!

Doesn't it sound like it? But he got over that. I don't remember how I worked around to calm him that day. Instead of being upset, I was a little bit amused! I think part of it was for show, and I was the whole audience!

Did he go on for some time over his real name being used?

Enough so that I would remember it very well! (Chuckles.) Storming up and down! Throwing his arms around! Running his hands through his hair! And I broke out laughing. He looked at me simply scandalized that I could laugh at something like that. Then he came over and knelt down and put his head in my lap and began laughing himself.... It was quite a life I had with him.

Was he always telling jokes?

He had a terrific sense of humor.

What were some of his favorite activities? What did he like to do?

Everything! He liked sports, he liked eating, he liked music, he liked lectures. Anything intellectual he liked——but without making a point of it. We went to lectures just because it was what we were interested in. That's why we went to hear Schoolman on psychiatry.

What were some of his dislikes? Were there things he simply couldn't abide?

No. Things he didn't like he could just ignore. He didn't bother with them. Nothing ever really worried him. He was a very easy-going chap who felt things would always come out okay.

Did noise bother him when he was trying to write?

No, but there was no noise around. One day a downstairs neighbor came up and said, "Wasn't that a terrible thing last night?" We said, "What?" And she

said, "Why, the fire engines right under our windows here!" At first we thought the neighbor was kidding, but no. We'd slept through the whole thing.

Sounds like Stanley was very placid, very tolerant, very easy-going.

Very tolerant, very easy going——but never placid. That'd be the *last* word I'd use to describe him. But quite a guy!

How did the two of you know "A Martian Odyssey" was so popular? Did you read the responses in Wonder Stories *magazine?*

Well, first from Mort Weisinger. Then we bought some of the following issues of the magazine to read the letters from the readers there. We were very gratified that the story was mentioned and that sort of made up for the *terrible* thing of his name being attached to it.

So, he decided to write science-fiction after that?

Yes, though he still went on writing other things. But first we had to make a living. We were too proud to....

How did *you make a living at this time? You mentioned that the movie theater didn't pan out, that you weren't paid for "A Martian Odyssey," and that the book with Schoolman fell through. How were you two making a living?*

That's a good question. I mentioned that I worked for four different papers. At that time, forty dollars a week was a lot of money. You see, you're used to what things cost nowadays. But back then I could go into a produce store and buy what they called a "soup bunch"——a bunch of vegetables to make soup, two or three tomatoes, a handful (and the grocers had big hands!) of green beans, a couple of onions, celery, and a few potatoes——all that together for ten cents! Instead of making soup, I'd separate these out for different meals. So we didn't have to stint.

We'd share cigarettes, as I've said. Stanley'd come in and say, "Let's take a break." He'd light a cigarette, take a couple of puffs, and we'd pass it back and forth. The way they do with marijuana now, we did with tobacco.

We didn't even realize we were being frugal. We just did what we had to do, and that was that. We also received gifts from our parents, and that was a very big help. For the last few years, they owned an apartment building in Milwaukee, and we had an apartment there for free. *That* was a big help. It was always a little bit of a hurt to me that we accepted that, but there was no choice. So with free rent and the little ol' money I was making, we were able to get by.

So Stanley could spend most of his time writing....

Yes. We wanted to have a baby, so we'd started saving, because we knew it would cost about $1500 with the hospital stay, the doctor, etc. But that money went towards his going to Chicago for treatment, the hospital bills there, and so on. It was a very handy amount to have then.

But ironic.

Yes, it really was.

Did Stanley ever get letters from editors asking him to revise stories?

No. Even in "The Lady Dances," the first thing sold to King Features, they didn't change anything, just cut it up for serialization. By the way, the money from that was very important to us in those days.

Did you ever write to any editor who didn't pay for Stanley's stories, asking for payment?

Oh, I wrote to Gernsback, but we never got any satisfaction.

Did he reply at all?

I never wrote to him *directly*. I wrote Mort Weisinger and *he* went after Gernsback. Just a few years ago I read something about Ziff-Davis selling out to to somebody. It was after we retired to the desert, which was eighteen years ago. When Eugene retired we travelled at first, but he had a heart attack and now, with my fractured hip, our travelling days seem to be over, so we bought this condominium. Anyway, after we retired here, I wrote to Ziff-Davis and said, "Now that you're dissolving yourself, I wonder if you'd like to pay a long-standing debt. I think it'd be only fair if we were paid *something* for *The New Adam*, at least the $500 that Ray Palmer collected."

I never got an answer. Of course I didn't expect one, but I thought I'd just let 'em know there was a debt outstanding and that they'd been unfair.

When you sent "A Martian Odyssey" off Mort Weisinger wasn't your agent.

No, no. I sent it direct. But after that, everything went through his hands. He had a partner, Julius Schwartz, but Mort was the one I knew and dealt with.

Do you know if Weisinger ever tried to collect for "A Martian Odyssey"?

I imagine he did.[25] Mort was an awfully decent guy, but very naive. Did you ever know him?

No, I didn't. Why did you think he was naive?

Well, Mort had had a story published, and in it was a character named Henry Kay. This was the name of Eugene's brother, a New York realtor. We were there then, so I telephoned Mort, saying I was Miss Soandso at Fairchild, So-on and So-Forth law office. "I want to tell you," I said, "that we're serving papers on you because you used our client's name, Henry Kay, without permission."

You could just *see* Mort beginning to sweat! I kept on feeding him this line and got him really hysterical. He almost died! He was going through all sorts of explanations. After about ten minutes I couldn't help feeling sorry for him, and I broke out laughing. "Oh Lord, Mort," I said. "How you can bite on things!" So I felt he was rather naive, but an awfully nice guy.

And my God, how he made use of the writing field! He called us up one time to say he was going to be in Chicago for Sara Lee pastries. Sara Lee wanted a short biography of herself to be enclosed with her cakes, so she'd contacted Mort to come and interview her and write it. So, sure, he went out, and he was paid well for it.

He'd often have things published in *The Reader's Digest*. They used to say, "Mort, we want such-and-such a story about this town in Italy," or whatever. "We have arrangements with some other magazine to publish it, and afterwards they will condense it for us." They'd pay Mort a fee plus expenses, and he'd have a great trip! He did a lot of that stuff.

Sounds like you were very good friends with Mort. Was Stanley also good friends with him?

Stanley never met him! After "A Martian Odyssey" was published, we got a letter from Mort, saying that he was very impressed with this story, and if Stanley didn't have an agent he'd like to represent him. We thought, "Goody, goody, goody!" and of course answered "Yes." It was very, very pleasant. Mort told me later that he didn't have any clients at the time——he was just selling magazine subscriptions door-to-door.

Any time a magazine accepted a story, they'd send you a letter by air mail. Our postman knew that meant good news, so he used a special ring when he

rang our bell. When King Features accepted, that was the first time we had a long distance call from a publisher. They said they'd accepted "The Lady Dances," and were sending a contract to sign. When I hung up I screamed, "Stanley, come here quick!" I told him about it, and we were jumping up and down. Now, our dining room was being painted at the time, and the painter was up on the step-ladder doing the ceiling. He got excited too and began jumping up and down, crying, "I'm seeing a live author! I'm seeing a live author!" And he fell off the ladder and broke his leg! So, we got him in the car and drove him to Dr. Kay's office to have his leg set.

You know, the basis of "The Lady Dances" was a true story from Schoolman. Of course what wasn't told in that was the reason she needed a psychiatrist, and that is how Stanley got ahold of the story. He placed it in the South Sea Islands, but they had nothing to do with it. It was simply a complete disguise.

Of all things that Stanley wrote, what is your favorite?

I think "A Martian Odyssey." Not that I like it *because* I feel it's going to live forever; I mean that no matter what the circumstances are in civilization, *that* is a story any person could enjoy. Do you agree?

Yes, it's a classic.

Exactly!

Did you like everything *Stanley wrote?*

Of course, especially the poetry, and in particular the poetry he wrote to me! All the books he gave me would always have a poem he wrote in the front. When he died I had a line of his poetry engraved on his watch, and gave it to Dr. Sam Grauman. For another cousin, Tony Myer, I had a short line of Stanley's poetry engraved on a gold pocket knife. I always loved his poetry. He really did magnificent stuff.

Has his poetry ever been collected and published?

No, no, no.

Does it still exist?

It's in the Trunk, and it's in my books, which have been divided among the three children. Originally, you see, Eugene and I had a five-bedroom house. Almost every room was lined with bookshelves, floor to ceiling. When we broke up our big house we had to dispose of many things, and so we gave the books to our children. My personal books, from when Stanley and I were going together, and after we were married, all had his poems on the front pages.

Did Stanley write love poetry when he was courting you?

Of course! Why do you suppose his poetry was my favorite? He was very romantic that way. In fact, when he handed me the first section of "Black Margot"[26] he put a fake front page on it which said, "Dedicated to the Original Black Margot." That was me. Romantic things were always going on.

You both once ran a movie house. Did you go to many movies yourselves?

Well, after we bought it and things went haywire, we had to run the projectors ourselves. That was for only a very short time. It was a disappointment but we didn't go to pieces over it.

Did you and Stanley like to watch movies?

I guess so, though we didn't have a favorite movie star.

But I'll bet you liked Charlie Chaplin!

Oh, I *adored* Charlie Chaplin! His pantomine was fantastic. Who could *not* have liked him?

Exactly! And did Stanley like Chaplin also?

I'm sure he did, but don't forget, movies cost money, and we weren't about to spend money on that. Instead, we preferred to go without them, and a few other things and instead go to the legit.

You liked going to the theater, then?

Oh, yes, yes. And to concerts, etc.

Did Stanley like Shakespeare?

Oh, yes. Helen Hayes used to do wonderful Shakespeare....

All this makes me think——I've talked to you about a lot of personal things. You have too much Marge in this interview.

But some of that "Marge" is mixed up with Stanley, and it's hard to separate the two. That's interesting, you know.

That's something you have to know about me. If I love a person, I'm mixed up with them. The first year we were married Eugene opened something for me and got a scratch on his hand. He handled too many infectious things and he got blood poisoning. While he was laid up with this, his nurse called about a child he'd delivered. The child was two years old and they thought he'd swallowed a thumb tack. He told her what to do, and said that if the child didn't pass it within 24 hours he'd have to get an X-ray.

Well, this was in the depths of the Great Depression. X-rays were costly. So as he hung up he said, "The first thing I'm going to do when I get okay is buy an X-ray machine." So I said, "Who's going to run it?" "I'll get a technician," he replied. "You're being crazy," I said. "You don't charge half of your patients, anyway. I'll study it."

So I went into doing X-rays. Through some pull I got into a veterans' hospital and studied it. Then in being at his office, doing X-ray work, I learned how to sterilize things. I already knew how to give injections; the nurse I had the last two weeks Stanley was alive taught me, in case he had terrific pain when she was off duty. She taught me by demonstrating with an orange.

And always, from there on, when Eugene's nurses were on sick leave, or went on vacation, I filled in at the office. So, you see, I involve myself. It's just normal for me to be a part of my husband's life.

Of course, so in talking about Stanley, there's going to be a little bit of Marge mixed in there!

When you ask Marge about Stanley, she can't let go of him. The great thing is, there's a pride in Stanley which Eugene has which is beautiful. It's just terrific. He was pleased I'd be talking to you about Stanley. This morning when he came to kiss me good-bye, what he whispered to me was very nice. "You see, Stanley is a part of us." There's never been any resentment. It's just beautiful.

I like to hear that. I wonder, are there any photos of you and Stanley still remaining?

I don't recall bumping into any for years, now. Originally, yes. But by degrees your family grows, you run out of space for things. Then when we moved from our big house I turned the Trunk over to my son. He still hears from Ackerman. It's funny, I must be around the corner from Forry Ackerman, but I've never called him.... Did you read *Space*?

The novel by Michener? Yes.

Well, if you read the first edition, you saw a misspelling of Stanley's name. I wrote to Michener and I received a letter full of apologies. He wrote that he'd caught the mistake too late to do anything about the first edition, but that future printings would have the correct spelling.

Speaking of authors who've dealt with Stanley, what about the Sam Moskowitz comment I mentioned in my letter? His observations on the women in Stanley's stories?[27]

No comment! Absolutely! Do you blame me?

I guess not, but perhaps if you'd rather not respond to Moskowitz, you'd like to talk about why there were so many heroines in Stanley's work?

I think you ought to know the answer to that.

I could guess.

Okay! But for someone to put a dead person under analysis is nauseous. But I'll leave it up to you.

If you don't want to comment, and that's perfectly all right, why don't we talk about Ralph Milne Farley?

Oh, isn't it odd? As I recall——and don't forget, this was 3000 years ago——I think he was descended from a signer of the Declaration of Independence. I don't know why that sticks in my mind.

Frankly, this idea of Stanley having done a lot of work with him is *not* so. It was only a couple of times. Stanley *never* saw him outside the Fictioneer meetings. Larry Keating was the only Fictioneer he was really close friends with. He didn't know any of them when he first went to the meetings, but he and Larry hit it off.

You might be interested in knowing a bit about Larry. I know he's dead by now, because the last time I saw him he was a shuffling old man, and this was before we left Milwaukee eighteen years ago. He started writing as a young man just to pass the time away. He had TB and was in a sanatorium. He was restless and so he began writing, never expecting to do anything with it. He ended up making his living that way.

Life takes strange turns.

Right.

Well, if Stanley never met Farley——

Oh, he met him at the Fictioneers' meetings. Evidently he said, "Let's do this story together." I recall it sort of vaguely, because of having done the typing.... Don't forget, I was busy with these four different papers I was working on, and there was a little bit of housekeeping, too. Not much, but a little bit. But I think there was the first half of a story, something about the sea——

"Smothered Seas"?[28]

Yes. What Stanley did was write half of it and then send it to Farley. I guess he wrote the other half. I didn't pay much attention to it, really. And there was one other thing done by the two of 'em, but I don't remember what happened with it.

"Yellow Slaves" was another collaboration——[29]

Well, I don't really remember anything about it. I just vaguely remember a sea story, but I have no idea what it was about.

Do you know whose idea it was to collaborate? Was it Stanley's?

It wasn't Stanley's, no. He got a kick out of the fact that this guy, who'd been doing it so long, had said, "Let's do something together." But it was water off a duck's back.

So Stanley didn't put much effort into the collaboration?

Oh, no.

How did he feel in general about collaborations? Did he prefer to do things on his own?

Well, as I told you, he was his own man. But he got quite a kick out of it.... I don't know how it came up at one of their Fictioneer meetings. Even when these were held at our place, I never joined in; in fact, I usually got out of the house. They'd go to each other's houses, and when they came to our apartment I just took off. I'd have the food prepared and then they were on their own.

Stanley also got a kick out of another of their ideas. They said what fun it'd be to take a plot and have the Fictioneer writers....

Do a round-robin?

No, have each write his own story around it. Completely different stories in their own veins. Wasn't that a cute idea?

Did they ever do it?

I don't remember, because I can't recall anything of Stanley's which was done with a made-up plot. You see, Stanley always did his plots before he started. He didn't outline them on paper, just in his head. He knew where he was going.

Did he also have the story-titles? Or wasn't that important?

I don't think it was particularly important to him, no.

Do you recall how Farley came to finish "The Dictator's Sister" after Stanley died?

I can't remember. You know, I was sort of in a complete haze at that time. It had been, how many months? From June until December. How I did my work, I don't know.

And kept Stanley's spirits up, also.

Right! That's just it.

I wondered just how Farley fitted into that, since there were a number of collaborations——

No, there was not a number! That, I assure you. If anything else had both names on it, it was a fake! Those are the only two I recall at all. I can't even remember typing the second one, the "slaves" thing. But if I did, I did. I know there would be nothing else except those two.

And there was no one else that Stanley collaborated with at all?

No, never.[30] You know, when you stop to think about it, his career was a very quick chapter. Do you remember what year "A Martian Odyssey" was published?

Yes, it was 1934.

Okay, in 1935 he was gone! Before that, "The Lady Dances." But that's all.... Any other questions?

I just wanted to ask why you think Stanley had so many heroines in his

stories, which was unusual for that time.

Well, don't forget, he was a very romantic person. This was a good part of his make-up.

But in most of the stories of the Thirties, especially the pulp genre, women were clingy and weepy, sort of like Fay Wray in "King Kong."

No, that wasn't his idea of a woman! A dame to him was a glamour princess, not a clinging woman.

Do you know what became of this Raymond Palmer?

He became editor of Amazing Stories. *Did you know that?*

No. I'm glad he had some luck. Is he still alive? If you ever bump into him, just for the heck of it, ask him about *The New Adam.*

I read an interview with Ray Palmer about two years ago, so I think he's still alive.

I thought it would be fun for you to say to him, "Where's the money?"

Too bad you couldn't collect for "A Martian Odyssey" also. It's shocking if that was never paid for!

Well, it was fun to see it in print. It was fun to make a stir. That story's been published in several different languages, you know.

Yes! Do you, or does your grandson, or whoever owns the estate, still get royalties on Stanley's stories?

I'm sure he does, on everything that's published. Ackerman keeps in touch with our son. Gene sent me a letter just a few months ago about giving Ackerman permission to use a story. There'd be no money in it, but that's okay because Gene feels the same way I do: Keep 'em going!

NOTES

(1) In *The Science Fictionary: An A - Z Guide to the World of Science Fiction Authors, Films and TV Shows* (New York: Worldview Books, 1980), p. 355.

(2) Pohl, Frederik: *Science Fiction Chronicle,* January 1990, p. 30.

(3) Del Rey, Lester: *The World of Science Fiction, 1926 - 1976: The History of a Subculture* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 84.

(4) Asimov, Isaac: "The Second Nova," in *The Best of Stanley G. Weinbaum* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), pp. x, ix.

(5) Bloch, Robert: "Stanley G. Weinbaum: A Personal Recollection," *ibid.,* pp. 301-302.

(6) For those interested, however, biographical information can also be found in the following: *After Ten Years: A Tribute to Stanley G. Weinbaum* (1945), edited by Gerry de la Ree and Sam Moskowitz, which contains a eulogy by his sister Helen; "Stanley G. Weinbaum: A Comprehensive Appraisal," by Sam Moskowitz, *Fantasy Commentator III,* 135-150 (1951), which also contains a checklist of his works; "The Wonder of Weinbaum" by Sam Moskowitz, in *A Martian Odyssey and Other Classics of Science Fiction* (N. Y.: Lancer Books, 1962); and "Dawn of Fame: The Career of Stanley G. Weinbaum" by Sam Moskowitz, in *Explorers of the Infinite* (N. Y.: Ballantine Books, 1963). As for the fiction itself, *A Martian Odyssey and Other Science Fiction Tales,* edited by Sam Moskowitz, (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1974) contains all 22 of his short stories; *The Best of Stanley G. Weinbaum* (see reference 4) carries half of them; and his novelette "Dawn of Flame" is included in *The Mammoth Book of Classic SF: Short Novels of the 1930's,* edited by Isaac Asimov, C. G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg (N. Y.: Carroll & Graf, 1988).

(7) I. e., November 22, 1906.

(8) April 4, 1902 is the correct date. Some references still list the year as 1900.

(9) "The Planet of Doubt," *Astounding Stories,* October 1935.

(10) *Natural History,* by John George W. Woods (1827-1889), was first published in Britain in 1853. It appeared in numerous editions, including several adapted for young people, and remained in print until 1937.

(11) *The New Adam* was not begun until 1934. The novel meant here is probably *The Mad Brain,* which is known to have been written at about this time.

continued on page 124

The Marketing of Stanley G. Weinbaum

Sam Moskowitz

INTRODUCTION

This article presents, chiefly in chronological order, transcriptions and summaries of Stanley G. Weinbaum's business correspondence from 1932 until his death. Most of the items comprising this correspondence are a part of his literary estate, from "the Trunk" (as described in the previous interview), and are used here with permission of Margaret Weinbaum Kay and her son Eugene Kay, Jr. I am indebted not only to them, for the use of these materials, but to the extraordinary cooperation of Norman Metcalf, who photocopied and shipped them, and to the liaison of Eric Leif Davin, whose outstanding interviews with important figures of fantasy have been appearing in *Fantasy Commentator*.

I believe readers will find much that is historically significant in this compilation. It confirms suppositions and fills gaps in our knowledge of science-fiction publishing, describes editorial policies of the 1930's, tells about the earliest agents in the field, and, most importantly, it deepens our understanding of Weinbaum himself.

Let me emphasize, however, that this work is not intended either as a biography of the man or an assessment of his writings. Those desiring further information in these areas should read my two earlier articles, "Dawn of Fame: the Career of Stanley G. Weinbaum" and "Stanley G. Weinbaum: a Comprehensive Appraisal."* Both, fortunately, are still in print.

On November 21, 1934, in response to a letter from his agent Mortimer Weisinger saying that Desmond Hall (the associate editor of *Astounding Stories*) had urged him to write another story like "A Martian Odyssey," Stanley G. Weinbaum wrote, "As for 'A Martian Odyssey,' I'm a little puzzled as to just why that damn thing did take so well; I thought it was lousy, and can't quite see why Hall prefers it to some of the others."

This is a not unknown reaction of writers whose first or early stories have been big hits, and who resent the inference that their subsequent work has failed to equal or improve upon them. For example, annoyance in varying degrees was displayed by C. L. Moore over persistent praise for her "Shambleau" (*Weird Tales*, November 1933); by Henry Kuttner for "The Graveyard Rats" (*ibid.*, March 1936); by Theodore Sturgeon for "Microcosmic God" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, April 1941); by Isaac Asimov for "Nightfall" (*ibid.*, September 1941); and by Philip José Farmer for "The Lovers" (*Startling Stories*, August 1952).

Writers do not always understand that novelty in handling and plot plays as great a role in gaining unusual popularity as does intrinsic literary merit. The unique inventiveness, style and psychological viewpoint of the alien in "A Martian Odyssey" (*Wonder Stories*, July 1934) were instantly recognized, and Weinbaum's mastery of the art of story-telling maintained the work's preëminence for later readers. It is understandable that editors would ask for more of the same fare.

*These appear, respectively, in the author's book *Explorers of the Infinite* (1963) and in *Fantasy Commentator* #25 (1951).

But in the fictional marketplace instant popularity does not always translate into ready sales, nor does exceptional literary skill ensure routine acceptance. Each magazine and book company has its own "policy," which its editor and publisher will swear is solely responsible for its success. And as his correspondence confirms, Weinbaum did not have an easy time establishing himself.

In his youth he had strong poetic aspirations, and wrote much verse. Throughout his stories, indeed, we find bits of verse inserted. Among his letters is preserved a lone missive from a former college teacher, Helen White, who wrote him on November 21, 1922: "In case you may have no other copy, I am returning this little poem to you. I think it is a magical little thing, particularly in its sound. As I have told you before, I hope you will go on from this wizardry of verse to poetic depth and significance. My best wishes to you in your work with verse."

But the economics of the Great Depression turned Weinbaum from verse to fiction, for his earliest business records indicate that he wrote a novel aimed at newspaper syndication entitled "Tropical," a love story about a Russian girl in the South Seas. During that period most newspapers, dailies and weeklies, large and small, ran serial fiction. Usually this was romance, aimed at women, but sometimes also adventure and mystery stories. Such fiction was generally provided by a number of large syndicates; the authors' fees were small, dependent on a newspaper's circulation, and paid separately for each paper printing a work. Often illustrations were provided with the stories, which were typically written to have numerous narrative breaks to facilitate publication in short installments.

"Tropical" was submitted to King Features Syndicate, Inc. of New York City through the agent M. J. Nash McCrae, and its receipt acknowledged on December 14, 1932 by George W. Finley, King's fiction editor. Weinbaum had used the pen name Marge Stanley for the novel, since he thought a love story would have a better chance of acceptance if seemingly written by a woman.

On January 9, 1933 Finley returned the manuscript, but in an accompanying letter said that he would be interested in seeing it again if it were cut from 80,000 words to 60-65,000. "By the way," he added, "please delete a few thousand exclamation points in your text. I, too, have a weakness for —— !!! etc. (sotto voce) Yes, I used to write advertisements." Apparently Weinbaum revised the novel along these lines, for we next hear that readers' reports were favorable, and on March 15, 1933 Finley asked for an autobiographical sketch. No copy of this has been found; it would be interesting to read how Weinbaum adjusted his own and his wife's backgrounds to suit that of an imaginary woman author.

It was not until June 1, 1933 that an offer was made for the novel. In the interim it had been titled "The Lady Dances." For exclusive world newspaper rights King would pay Weinbaum half of the fees it received from participating papers in the United States and Canada, and a quarter of what it received for use in the rest of the world. King also asked for a 90-day moving picture option from the date of the first newspaper serialization. Weinbaum was again asked for autobiographical material and a photograph. At this point agent McCrae seems to have disappeared entirely from the proceedings. A final contract was mailed to Marge Weinbaum on June 17, 1933.

In the interim, agent Robert Thomas Hardy of New York City sent back a manuscript entitled "The Story of Light," apparently non-fiction, with the comment "Frankly, I shouldn't know just what to do with a paper of this type." Several short stories——their titles are unknown——had been submitted along with "The Story of Light," but Hardy said he would not read them unless paid six dollars each. His offer may not have been accepted, since no further correspondence on the matter is extant.

At this point Weinbaum's novel *The Mad Brain* was submitted to King Features, which acknowledged its receipt on October 20, 1933. The work recasts the Jekyll-and-Hyde theme, dealing with a man who has a small second brain which at

times increases his proclivity towards evil.* This rather slow-moving work is interesting because it mentions *The Necronomicon*, revealing that Weinbaum read *Weird Tales* and had encountered the work of H. P. Lovecraft. From that reference, and from its style, I suggest *The Mad Brain* is an earlier work than "Tropical," and may have been written as far back as 1927-28.

We know that *The Mad Brain* must have been sent also to *The American Weekly*, for on October 25, 1933 Hal Ward sent Weinbaum a friendly, flippant letter. "I read the book and saw that it got to Merritt's desk," he wrote. "He, being uncommonly occupied with editorial matters at the moment and for many days thereafter, didn't get a chance to give the story his personal eye. It went to a third member of the staff who, knowing that our fiction is on hand for many months to come, gave you form no. 76, or something. . . . Really I liked the yarn and I saw possibilities in it for us, although *The American Weekly's* fiction is not, strictly, any of my dern business." He suggested that the manuscript be submitted again the next March.

On December 27, 1933 King Features returned both *The Mad Brain* and a story titled "Without Love," which Finley said "seems too dryad-satyr for general newspaper syndication. It has some story merit but I regard it as immature (I almost said 'amateur')——something like the eloquent Louise's tales of 'On Wisconsin' co-ed days."

Weinbaum's breakthrough came in the form of a letter from *Wonder Stories* dated January 2, 1934 and signed by Hugo Gernsback. It read as follows:

> Dear Mr. Weinbaum:-
>
> We duly came in receipt of your story, "A Martian Odyssey," which the writer personally enjoyed reading, and we wish to congratulate you on this story.
>
> We are scheduling this for an early issue in our magazine and think that perhaps this story warrants a sequel along the same lines and along the same vein.
>
> We shall be glad to hear from you, and trust you will remember us with further stories.

Another love novel was rejected by King Features on February 17, 1934. "The rumba-rhymes that introduced *Mistress Money*, and her suggested aliases, were excellent," wrote George Finley, "but the same cannot be said for your latest novel ——for newspaper syndication, at least. A wager on virtue is not unknown, as you realize, to literature; in fact the current hit play——*Sailors Beware!*——is a strikingly vivid illustration of such a love gamble."

A letter from Charles D. Hornig at *Wonder Stories* dated February 19, 1934 may have eased this rejection slightly. The sequel to "A Martian Odyssey," "Valley of Dreams," had been accepted. (It appeared in the November 1934 issue.) Hornig also requested further contributions.

On March 12, 1934 Hal Ward wrote a jocular letter from *The American Weekly* suggesting that *The Mad Brain* be submitted again with "the new opus, if you feel that it falls into Classification #69."

The first newspapers to carry "The Lady Dances" were the Salt Lake, Utah *Tribune* and the Oakland, California *Post-Inquirer*. They paid $30 and $50 respectively for the privilege, half of which went to Weinbaum. George Finley congratulated him on his sales to *Wonder Stories*, and said he was hopeful of placing "The Lady Dances" "in a respectable number of papers before 1934 wanes." These hopes were realized, for on April 21st King Features reported that seven more newspapers had taken the work. These were the Battle Creek, Michigan *Moon Journal*, the Bea-

*A detailed description of this novel appeared in *Fantasy Commentator* #15 (1947).

ver Falls, Pennsylvania *News-Tribune*, the Davenport, Iowa *Times*, the Portland, Oregon *Journal*, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, the Decatur, Alabama *Daily* and the Hartford City, Indiana *Times-Gazette*.

These appearances prompted Weinbaum to make inquiries at book publishers to see if they had any interest in the novel. Those contacted were Claude Kendall (which did not want to see it unless all rights were involved), Farrar and Rinehart, Edward J. Clode, Julian Messner, Alfred H. King, William Godwin, the Macauley Company, Carlyle House and the Vanguard Press. (*The Mad Brain* had already been submitted to Vanguard and rejected on April 23rd as being "a bit out of our field.")

Mistress Money had been sent to Julian Messner, which rejected it with an encouraging comment: "The book has so much of merit in writing and plot, that, in a more fortunate era, I should certainly want to take the commercial chance involved. . . . However, in the present condition of the book market, I must tell you that I cannot publish it." The novel was then sent to Claude Kendall, which rejected it on May 22nd.

In the interim *The Mad Brain* had been sent to Julian Messner; he rejected it, but enclosed some heartening comments from his wife Kathryn: "I certainly feel that you have real talent. We have both been impressed with your work, but I feel that the fundamental fault with both your novels is that they are really short story plots written in novel length and they move too slowly because of this. I think *The Mad Brain* particularly would make a fascinating short story." In retrospect this seems a valid and penetrating criticism of this work. Messner told the literary agent Monica McCall, of the International Literary Bureau, New York City, about Weinbaum, and she wrote him on June 7th, asking if he would care to work through her agency. Her offer was eventually accepted.

Meanwhile a filler of some sort had been offered King Features and rejected May 5th by Finley with the explanation, "'Personalities' was submitted to the editors in charge of such quasi-puzzle features and their verdict is that the newspaper market is not right for such brain teasers at present. So we're returning your script with thanks for showing us this semi-sibyllic cerebrator." An unspecified work was sent to the syndicate operated by the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* and turned back June 7th by J. M. Catoggio of that organization. On June 16th it also declined *The Mad Brain*.

On June 8th the first reference to *The Black Flame* appears in the form of a perfunctory rejection by Donald Kennicott of *Blue Book* magazine. Apparently Weinbaum had written the novel during the first six months of 1934; and since *Blue Book* had just finished serializing Balmer and Wylie's "When Worlds Collide" and "After Worlds Collide," the magazine had seemed a suitable market.

Perhaps the most important communication Weinbaum received at this time was a letter from Julius Schwartz dated June 18th. He and Mortimer Weisinger ran the Solar Sales Agency, and were the world's first agents to specialize in science fiction. By a ruse, Schwartz had obtained Weinbaum's address from Charles Hornig, and wrote that he had received a request from a magazine editor he did not name (it was Desmond Hall of *Astounding Stories*) for a Weinbaum story. If suitable, the story would be paid for at the rate of a cent a word on acceptance. The editor, said Schwartz, was looking for a story as good as "A Martian Odyssey" or its sequel. Was Weinbaum interested? Schwartz revealed that the agency had "just started," but that among its clients were David H. Keller, Francis Flagg, Edmond Hamilton, John Russell Fearn, Neil R. Jones and P. Schuyler Miller. The agency would charge 10% of the selling price, but only if a sale was made. Weinbaum agreed to these terms, and on June 24th Weisinger wrote him a letter of thanks and said he was awaiting a story.

On June 22nd Hugo Gernsback wrote Weinbaum, pursuing his interest: "We liked very much, the stories which you submitted some time ago. We could use some further material from your pen, and hope you will send some additional stories in

before long. Please advise the writer if we may expect some soon." Here we see the initiative coming directly from Gernsback, who had unquestionably been impressed by the two Weinbaum stories he had purchased, and possibly by early reader response to "A Martian Odyssey" as well.

Meanwhile Weinbaum sent his novel *Mistress Money* and "Pygmalion's Sepctacles," a new science-fiction short story, to Monica McCall at the International Literary Bureau. She took on the former, but turned back the latter. "The story I do not think is marketable. It is phantasy, which is practically impossible to sell," she wrote him on June 26th. She looked forward to seeing *The Mad Brain* "if it is still available."

Weinbaum sent this to her promptly, along with *The Black Flame*. She acknowledged these on July 3rd, promising she "would read them as quickly as possible." *Mistress Money*, she said, was already in circulation; and on July 9th she reported that "*The Black Flame* is interesting and I have put it into circulation."

For the Solar Sales Agency Weinbaum wrote "The Circle of Zero." Weisinger acknowledged this on July 3rd, saying it "was swell, and I don't think we will have any difficulty in selling it to the market that ordered it, which, by the way, is *Astounding Stories*." (*Astounding*, however, rejected the story.)

At this point, Charles Hornig made the biggest mistake of his short editorial career. In response to Gernsback's request Weinbaum had submitted "Flight on Titan." Hornig summarily rejected it. "Our chief objection to your story is that it contains nothing new——it is hackneyed——that is, based on just plain adventure on an alien world, which has been used too often in science fiction during the past ten years as the basis for stories. We are looking for *new* ideas. . . . You seem to have a much greater facility for composing in a light vein than for tackling heavy, dramatic material. We suggest that you stick to the type of story like 'A Martian Odyssey' and its sequel." While "Flight on Titan" did not have a new idea, it featured several of the novel alien creatures which usually enliven Weinbaum's fiction, had a good human-oriented story line, and embodied his smooth, delightful writing-style.

On August 15th, Solar Sales received a second rejection for "The Circle of Zero," which they had then sent to *Wonder Stories*. "Our chief objection to Mr. Weinbaum's story is that we now have one on hand by Edmond Hamilton propounding practically the same theory (which is new——that is, it has not appeared in science-fiction since 1928, to our knowledge), and we couldn't use two so much alike," wrote Hornig. Hamilton's story was "The Eternal Cycle" (*Wonder Stories*, March 1935), in which the universe dissolves and reforms indentically as before.

Desmond Hall had rejected "The Circle of Zero" because of weak science, Weisinger wrote Weinbaum on August 29th. He apologized for the two rejections of the tale, and said he would try it at *Amazing Stories*. If it was accepted there, he would not charge the usual commission. He urged Weinbaum to send the agency more stories. Weinbaum responded with four: "Flight on Titan," "The Worlds of If," "Parasite Planet" and "Pygmalion's Spectacles." Weisinger was confident that he could sell them all, and sent the first two to Hall at *Astounding*. "Pygmalion's Spectacles" he delivered to *Story* magazine, a prestige publication of the 1930's with a reputation for literary quality. In his letter of September 6th Weisinger made a very significant statement about magazine policies of the period: "Bear in mind that plenty of science——heavy gobs of it——is absolutely essential for all science-fiction stories these days. Stories with a paucity of science are being rejected faster than light. . . ."

Meanwhile Weinbaum had received no payment for "A Martian Odyssey," and wrote to *Wonder Stories*. His response was dated July 26th, and was written by Samuel Scheff of the Accounting Department: "With reference to your inquiry of July 22nd, we endeavor to make payment on publication. However, during the summer months of the year, that is from June to September, we make payment to contribu-

tors approximately ninety days after publication." Not long after this, Weinbaum enlisted the aid of Schwartz and Weisinger in collecting what was due him. Their persistence apparently was annoying, because on September 10th Hornig wrote Weinbaum as follows: "Mr. Gernsback has advised me to inform you that we would appreciate it if you will send your future contributions to *Wonder Stories* directly to our offices, rather than through literary agents. We prefer direct contact with our authors." Schwartz then suggested an arrangement whereby Solar Sales would continue to submit the stories, but that checks would go directly to Weinbaum, who would return the agency's 10% commission. In a letter of September 23rd, which affirmed this policy, Weisinger informed Weinbaum that "Flight on Titan" was "okay with Mr. Hall. We're expecting a check from his mag any day now." But "Pygmalion's Spectacles" had been rejected by *Story*. He enclosed a copy of his fan publication, *Fantasy Magazine*, and asked Weinbaum for an interview or autobiography.

How many fan letters reached Weinbaum personally is unknown, but examples from four writers during 1934 were retained in his files. On July 6th Forrest Ackerman wrote, asking for his autograph. Soon after this Weinbaum received an interesting communication from Anatole Krasanoff, a Russian-born student. He had read "The Lady Dances," and although he found it "charming" overall, he noted that it contained many errors about his motherland, and enumerated its philological, geographical and illogical mistakes. The first of a number of fan letters by John R. Pierce was dated October 12th.* Pierce was then a graduate assistant at the California Institute of Technology, and went on to head the Telestar experiments at the Bell Telephone Laboratories; he was already a professionally published author of articles and science-fiction, and is remembered today chiefly for his science articles which appeared in *Astounding* and its successors under the pseudonym "J. J. Coupling." "I distinctly remember the first issue of *Amazing Stories*, and many since then," he wrote, "yet I can honestly say it is my present impression that in all my reading of pseudo-scientific magazines I have encountered no others as acceptable as your two stories." The fourth fan who wrote Weinbaum was Alvin Earl Perry of Rockdale, Texas. He had been a contributor of columns and poetry to *Fantasy Magazine* and *The Fantasy Fan*, and his November 3rd letter asked for an autographed original manuscript. Weinbaum wrote all his first drafts in longhand, and kept a carbon copy of each of his stories. He sent one of these to Perry, who acknowledged its receipt on January 9, 1935, but which of the two, and which story it was, were not stated in the correspondence.

Weisinger acknowledged receiving an autobiographical sketch from Weinbaum in a letter dated October 15th (it eventually appeared in the June 1935 issue of *Fantasy Magazine*). He expressed puzzlement as to why Desmond Hall would prefer "Flight on Titan" to "The Worlds of If." "My only solution is that he likes your carefree, souciant style in it." He also revealed some hitherto-unknown information about himself: "The January issue of *Super Detective Stories* will carry a short-short of mine, 'Tell Tale Ticket,' under the nom-de-plume of Tom Erwin Geris. The reason I used a pen-name was because they have a department there offering twenty dollars for the best short-short by a *new* writer. I won, though illegitimately. But what the hell, twenty bucks is twenty bucks. If you rearrange the letters in Tom Erwin Geris it spells Mort Weisinger."

A follow-up letter dated October 22nd said that *Astounding* had rejected both "Pygmalion's Spectacles" and "The Worlds of If," but it also carried the good news that it had accepted *both* "Flight on Titan" and "Parasite Planet." Weisinger had received $212 for these (9200 plus 12,000 words at a cent a word); he had deducted Solar's commission, and enclosed his own check for $190. This was the first money Stanley Weinbaum had received for his science-fiction writings.

On the same day Weisinger wrote a full-paged promotion, urging him to

*Not to be confused with his son, John J. Pierce, editor of *Galaxy* (1977-78) and author of numerous articles on science-fiction.

join the American Fiction Guild, an organization composed primarily of pulp magazine writers. Some fifty science-fiction authors were members, claimed Weisinger, and he named over a dozen prominent ones. Five professionally published stories made one eligible for membership, and dues were ten dollars a year. The guild was organized into regional chapters, and it published a monthly bulletin. Weinbaum joined promptly, and received a letter from Weisinger dated October 30th thanking him for doing so. He became a part of the Milwaukee chapter, whose membership included the beginning weird fiction writer Robert Bloch, the western story writer Lawrence Keating, and science-fiction authors Ralph Milne Farley and Arthur Tofte.

When Weinbaum joined the guild it had just completed its annual election, and the officers' roster read like a *Who's Who* of pulpdom. The new president was Norvell W. Page, who wrote novels for *Operator #5*. The vice-presidents were Erle Stanley Gardner, famed detective story novelist; Albert Richard Wetjen, sea story writer; Leo Margulies, Editorial Director of the Standard Magazines chain; Willard Hawkins, who had contributed to *Weird Tales* and was publisher of *Author and Journalist*; Sewell Peaslee Wright, prolific contributor to *Astounding* in the Clayton era; and Carroll John Daly, an early writer in the "hard boiled" school of detective stories featured in *Black Mask* magazine. The secretary was Wallace Bamber, who had taken over *Amazing Detective Tales*, and Viola Irene Cooper was treasurer. New members interested in science-fiction who enrolled at this time included P. Schuyler Miller, Eando Binder, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach and Raymond A. Palmer. Their memberships, along with Weinbaum's, were announced in *The American Fiction Guild Bulletin* #10, dated November 5, 1934. Palmer, who was then a Milwaukee resident, paid Weinbaum a visit, and was thus the first personality in the field that he met.

An especially significant letter was written to Weinbaum by Donald A. Wollheim on October 25th. After expressing his appreciation for Weinbaum's stories he asked if Weinbaum would tell him whether he had been paid for them, what the rate of payment was, and how long after publication payment had occurred. We do not have the text of Weinbaum's reply, but Wollheim reported (*Terrestrial Fantascience Guild Bulletin*, April 1935) that Weinbaum "did not divulge his experiences. He merely said that as his work was handled through an agency, he could scarcely be a party to our action. He evaded answering directly, whether or not he had received any payment for his stories by merely ignoring that point." Wollheim wrote a follow-up letter on November 5th, stating that he himself had not been paid by *Wonder Stories* for his story "The Man from Ariel," that he intended to sue Gernsback for the ten dollars owed him, and that he was being joined in this suit by Chester D. Cuthbert, Henry Hasse and W. Varick Nevins, who had also not been paid for their published stories. Weinbaum politely put him off, saying that he expected to take care of the matter in another manner.

Meanwhile, efforts to sell Weinbaum's novels were continuing. "The Lady Dances" had been turned down by William Godwin on July 18th. Monica McCall of the International Literary Bureau wrote on August 3rd, "I am offering *The Mad Brain* to one or two magazines which feature that type of story. I do not see it as a publisher's book, as not only is the subject-matter against it . . . but the book is rather repetitious and monotonous. It is something like hitting the same note on the piano time and time again. 'The Lady Dances' has gone over to Mrs. Messner, who is always anxious to see everything that you write." Soon after this *The Mad Brain* was rejected by both *Modern Fiction* and *Weird Tales*. Both Weinbaum and his agents apparently then gave up on the novel, for there is no further reference to it in these records. Many years later a small fantasy publisher issued it under the title of *The Dark Other* (1950).

At the International Literary Bureau, probably at some time in October, Monica McCall's handling of Weinbaum's manuscripts was taken over by Gideon Kishor. He reported that *The Black Flame* had been turned down by *Red Book* and *Delineator*. However, he got some reaction from *Amazing Stories*: "The story is very good, but

there is too much love and nudism. . . . There is one other objection: the 'flying rings' (page 110) are too much like the ones used by Arthur Train in the book *The Man Who Rocked the Earth* (Doubleday Page, 1915). If the description was changed to triangles or cubes instead of rings, then it could not be construed as a plagiarism. Also, a shorter length is better for our needs. If the author would care to make the above-mentioned changes, we would be very glad to re-read the story."

Now, from 1926 onwards, Hugo Gernsback had C. A. Brandt, the greatest known collector of science-fiction at the time, select fiction for *Amazing Stories*. For a short period in 1931 he had done the same for *Wonder Stories*. But all along, despite ownership changes, he had continued to review science-fiction books for *Amazing*. This reference to a rather obscure book, which T. O'Conor Sloane, the editor, would not be expected to recognize, leads one to infer that Brandt at this time was either an occasional reader or a consultant for *Amazing Stories*.

The reply, obviously written by Stanley Weinbaum but signed as by Marge Weinbaum, was dated November 17th and agreed to make the suggested changes. Some important additional information was added: "It happens that as originally planned, this story was conceived as a series of episodes covering the imagined sweep of future history, and I have on hand the first episode in the form of a novelette of some twenty-five or thirty thousand words. . . . I'll get this version into shape and send it to you. It has never been submitted heretofore, and I'd greatly appreciate your opinion of it. And I am now completing another novel which I hope is suitable for the light fiction field or newspaper serialization." The novelette referred to is "Dawn of Flame," without question the most literary and skillfully written of all Weinbaum's science-fiction, and this letter to Kishor establishes for the first time the period when it was written.

In a letter dated November 19th Weisinger informed Weinbaum that Florence Bothner, first reader and editorial secretary at *Amazing*, had approved "The Worlds of If." He then went on at great length urging him to write some detective stories, since Desmond Hall was also associate editor of *Clues* magazine, and might be favorably inclined towards his work. He proudly added, "*Popular Detective* has accepted two of my stories, 'Rope Enough' and 'Atomic Alibi.' *Spicy Detective Stories* has accepted my 'Little Often Annie.' . . . Speaking of pen-names, have you seen my article on them in the current issue of *Author & Journalist*? The editor has since ordered a sequel and it is now in his hands, titled "Pseudonym Sidelights." Weisinger also remarked that "the financial situation at *Wonder* is being cleared up. I'm sending Ray [Palmer] a check in a day or two for his story in the current issue ["The Time Tragedy," December 1934]. I'll be able to send you a check from them within three or four weeks." Because of the work for the Solar Sales Agency, he concluded, he had found it necessary to resign from the staff of *Fantasy Magazine*.

By this time Weinbaum found dealing with two agents too complicated or he had become dissatisfied with the efforts of the International Literary Bureau on his behalf. To extricate himself, he wrote Weisinger on November 21st, asking him to take *The Black Flame* back from International and handle it himself. Should the story be sold, he offered to pay a commission to both. He intended to send "Dawn of Flame" to Weisinger and offered him the choice of either turning it over to Kishor or offering it himself. Weinbaum wanted Weisinger to handle all this because he himself was too embarrassed to do so. He also added that he would try to "drum out" a detective story in the near future.

On November 27th Weisinger replied that he was willing to help. "I am seeing Mr. Kishor this week and will explain the entire situation to him. What I would like to do is to handle the manuscript for him. If it sells he gets the check and takes ten per cent, remitting to you the balance. We'll not charge you anything for this service BUT, we would like to have full jurisdiction over the sequel." Apparently Weinbaum had previously sent him the manuscript of "The Lotus

Eaters," one of his most famous stories, for Weisinger added that Hall had liked it "very much, particularly the echo scene. Incidentally, Orlin Tremaine, the editor, has the final say on all your stories. But Tremaine never reads anything that Hall turns down." (This confirms that Hall was *Astounding's* first reader.) "Hall has intimated to us that he will go bi-weekly very soon,"* he concluded, and I'm trying to wangle . . . a cover for one of your yarns."

On December 3rd Hornig wrote Weinbaum that *Wonder Stories* had accepted "Pygmalion's Spectacles," but his letter was followed immediately by another from Gernsback (reproduced on the opposite page).

Although there was justice on his side, Gernsback may have put his case a little too strongly. Over many years, for example, John W. Campbell was known for super-science epics similar to those of E. E. Smith. When he decided to write mood stories like "Twilight" and "Night" he deliberately adopted the pen name of Don A. Stuart so as not to confuse his readers, and this worked out well. Weinbaum later did something similar when he used the pen name of John Jessel, though his motive was to enable him to have two stories in the same issue of a magazine rather than to identify different styles of writing.

Small checks from King Features for "The Lady Dances" continued trickling in, and on December 6th George Finley offered Weinbaum $200 to have the work distributed through the firm's "Big 4 Services." This was an arrangement where fiction was supplied to small newspapers already type-set on pressed matrices that could simply be slotted into the alloted space. (The larger papers would set such features in their own type.) An attempt to sell "The Lady Dances" in England to the Amalgamated Press failed, and the International Literary Bureau announced the rejection December 7th.

The economics of the time were reflected in Weisinger's letter to Weinbaum of December 11th, in which he apologized because the check he had sent for "The Lotus Eaters" had bounced. He enclosed "a new unbouncable one." (It is intersting that Weisinger often derogated Gernsback for slow payment when his own checks were often even less reliable.) Weinbaum had shown him Gernsback's letter, which he commented "merely bears out what I have been telling you right along—'A Martian Odyssey' is a worldbeater." He also reported having seen Gideon Kishor, who agreed to Weisinger's handling *The Black Flame* provided the sales commission went to International.

On December 19th he informed Weinbaum that beginning January 2, 1935 he would start a new job as first reader (one of five) with Standard Magazines. The firm then published ten periodicals: *Thrilling Detective, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Adventures, Thrilling Love Stories, Thrilling Western, Popular Western, Popular Detective, Phantom Detective, Sky Fighters* and *Lone Eagle*. He acknowledged receiving Weinbaum's story about changing the course of the Gulf Stream, "Shifting Seas," and said he had taken it to *Astounding Stories*. He had left the revised version of *The Black Flame* at *Amazing*, which had turned down "The Worlds of If." "Parasite Planet" was scheduled for the February 1935 issue of *Astounding*, and "Bacon Head," another new story, had been rejected by *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Weinbaum was now planning *The New Adam*, although so far he had labelled it only as his "superman story." Evidently he had discussed it at a meeting of the Milwaukee Fictioneers with Ralph Milne Farley, for in a letter dated December 21 Farley offered him suggestions on how to open and close the novel.

On December 26th Charles Hornig wrote that *Wonder Stories* had accepted "The Worlds of If," and implied that its sequel, "Bacon Head," might be also. Two days later he wrote that it indeed had been, and that its title would become "The Ideal." This was an unusual tale about a predatory machine that smashed cars and sucked the gasoline out of their tanks.

*Although this change was seriously considered, the magazine's circulation never rose high enough for it to be implemented.

WONDER Stories

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December 4, 1934

Mr. Stanley G. Weinbaum,
3237 N. Oakland Avenue,
Milwaukee, Wis.

Dear Mr. Weinbaum,

The writer just got through reading your story, "Pygmalion's Spectacles."

This, while a nice story, I believe considerably inferior to your previous two stories, not that it is not a good story, but because it is not your type of story.

I wish to go here at some length to explain to you just what I mean: Editors, as a tribe, would like their authors, if this is possible, to stay within their domain, if I may call it in these terms. For instance, Howard Chandler Christy is famous for his covers, they are usually of a certain type. O. Henry was famous for his certain type of story with a surprise ending. Sousa's marches can be recognized even though you never heard them before. In other words, they had a certain atmosphere.

Your former true stories struck an entirely new note in science fiction. Not only the editors, but the readers too were favorably impressed with this type.

Now then, the reader will expect you forever to write this type of story because it made a success. Any deviation from the formula will be disastrous in your future writings, and I would urge you to keep to the old formula if you possibly can.

Let me have your reactions.

Cordially yours,

WONDER STORIES

Editor

H. Gernsback
FB

Early in the fall of 1934 Desmond Hall and Orlin Tremaine were assigned the additional duties of working on a new Street and Smith magazine titled *Madamoiselle*. The first issue, dated February 1935, appeared on the newsstands in January. Sales were good, and as a result Tremaine ended his work there and Hall was transferred to the *Madamoiselle* staff full-time. His leaving *Astounding* was revealed to Weinbaum in Weisinger's letter of February 18, 1935, and is confirmed by the fact that Tremaine began personally dictating answers to fan letters. One of these, a copy of which he sent to Weinbaum, was his reply dated January 11, 1935 to George M. Clark of San Antonio, Texas: "Thank you for your interest in giving me your reaction on 'Flight on Titan.' [As] the author . . . is new to *Astounding Stories* I cannot refer you to any other work that he has done, but I can assure you that we intend to encourage him. We have already scheduled his second story, 'The Lotus Eaters,' for the April 1935 issue of *Astounding*, and I feel sure you will enjoy that just as much as you did his first effort."

Money still was coming in from "The Lady Dances," $10 arriving from King Features in their letter dated January 28, 1935. A novel titled *Golf Club Gossip*, subject unknown, was received from Weinbaum by International January 28th, but on February 15th Monica McCall returned it with the brief comment that readers thought it "much too slow for popular consumption."

Mort Weisinger, now well ensconced in his editorial position at Standard Magazines, wrote on February 18th that Farley's wife had been in New York during the previous week, and that he had introduced her to his boss, Leo Margulies, and to science-fiction writers Arthur J. Burks, Paul Ernst and Norvell Page. "Your two novelettes 'The King's Watch' (which Schwartz and myself considered very good) and 'Shifting Seas' are still being considered by Tremaine, and I expect to get word from him this week," he continued. "Keep writing science-fiction novelettes for Tremaine along the style of 'The Planet of Doubt.' I think we will get a check on that one soon."

In collaboration with Edward Schoolman, a psychiatrist, Weinbaum had written a collection of psychiatric case histories titled *What It's All About*, and submitted it to International. In turning it back Monica McCall commented: "I am afraid I do not quite agree with you that it is particularly original ... what Dr. Schoolman has done is to condense in one volume much that has already been said. I find the book far too long."

On May 7, 1935 John Pierce sent along another enthusiastic fan letter. He liked "The Lady Dances," which he had just read in a local newspaper. He had enjoyed "Flight on Titan" and "Pygmalion's Spectacles," and enclosed a poem he had written about the latter.

On May 11th Weisinger reported that "Shifting Seas" had been turned down by Tremaine, but that he was still holding "Planet of Doubt" and "the other of the series——he can't make up his mind about them. He was ready to reject the first when Schwartz told him he was crazy——that it was the best of the lot. So Tremaine is holding it and will read it again when he's in a more receptive mood. He does admit, however, that your stuff has pulled lots of favorable fan mail. I think he will eventually buy it——the fans have been howling too loudly.

"Schwartz brought your two yarns aimed at *Madamoiselle* up there, and Hall seemed glad you were still thinking of him.

"Lester Dent, of our New York chapter, is doing a lot of radio stuff now and is paying ghost writers whose plots he approves $500 for a ghosted Doc Savage book-length. He accepted one of mine the other week, and I've got to produce sixty thousand words this month to finish the thing, . . . called *The Stone Death*. . . ."

Weinbaum wrote Weisinger May 31st that he was collaborating with Farley on a story for *True Gang Life*, and would get to work on "the algae idea" (a collaboration that became "Smothered Seas") after he saw Farley at the next Fictioneers meeting. Farley had informed him, he said, that there would be a complete

change in editorial policy at the magazine as the result of J. Bruce Donahoe having succeeded G. R. Bay as editor. Farley felt it had become "frankly pornographic."

True Gang Life was put out by the Shade Publishing Company of Philadelphia, the same firm that in 1931 had published the occult fiction magazine *Mind Magic* under Bay's editorship. Shade was also a distributor. *True Gang Life* had begun with the November 1934 issue; it was a letter-sized pulp of 96 pages that initially sold for 25¢, and then dropped its price to 15¢. Farley had been a contributor to *Mind Magic*, so he obtained the commission to contribute a cover story every month featuring a character named Jim Grant. Usually he supplied the prospectus and got other pulp writers to do the story for him; for example, E. Hoffmann Price wrote "Tong War" in the May 1935 issue. Shade also published a unique pulp called *Scarlet Adventures*, featuring women and pseudo-sexy fiction. Shade was known as a low payer (probably no more than half a cent a word), and this had to be split with Farley, so Weinbaum's primary motive for writing the story must have been that it was a guaranteed assignment. It ran to about 20,000 words, and appeared as "Yellow Slaves" in the February 1936 issue.

The next letter Weinbaum received from Hugo Gernsback contained very interesting news. It is reproduced on the next page.

While no newsstand edition of *True Supernatural Stories* ever appeared, Gernsback went so far as to register the title. In order to do so he had to prepare what the trade terms a "dummy" or "ashcan" edition. Since this is done only for trademark purposes, there are rarely more than five or six copies printed. I own a copy of the ashcan edition of *True Supernatural Stories*. It is dated October 1934 (showing that Gernsback had been working on his idea for some time), is priced at 15¢, and carries on the cover the legend: "Short Stories, Novelettes, Complete Novel." It is numbered "Volume A——Number 1," and published by Gernsback Publications, Inc. It carries a logo drawn by Frank R. Paul. In its twelve well-printed pages are three stories:"The Epiphany of Death" and "The Ghoul" by Clark Ashton Smith and "The Other Gods" by H. P. Lovecraft. All three are reprints from Charles D. Hornig's fan magazine, *The Fantasy Fan*.

We have no record of any reply Weinbaum may have made to Gernsback, but we know that he told Schwartz about the matter, for Schwartz commented on it in his letter of June 9th:

> So Gernsback wants you to write for his new supernatural magazine . . . ? Well, you might write him a letter telling him that since he makes a living editing magazines, you make a living writing stories. And since he wouldn't think of editing a magazine for nothing, you couldn't think of writing for nothing. In other words, ask him to pay up for the stories published in *Wonder*. . . . Tell him you're not so high as to demand 3/4 of a cent a word as Laurence Manning gets, but you think it only fair that you be paid off your ½ cent. You might also make an arrangement with him as per Edmond Hamilton, to write a series of 6,000-word stories for $25 each, on *acceptance*. . . . I'm holding on to *The Black Flame* until the psychological time arrives to submit it somewhere. And would it also be O. K. to submit the story to *Wonder* (later on) and make an agreement that if the story is acceptable you'll take $200 for it, on acceptance? The story is 60,000 words long, remember.
>
> I just finished "The Adaptive Ultimate" and I think it was swell. Original idea plus! I hope Tremaine agrees with me. As Weisinger probably told you, Tremaine didn't think "The Planet of Doubt" was up to the standard of your other yarns, and wanted to reject it. However, because I thought it was the best of your yarns (and I do think so!) he has held on to it. . . . He hasn't read "The Red Peri" yet, but I don't think he'll take it. . . . I'm afraid the pirate angle to the story will kill it. Tremaine is out after new ideas, especially in the novelettes, and 19,000 words of "The Red Peri" is a little too much. . . . He turned down "Shifting Seas" because he claims he saw or read the basic idea in a printed story some years ago. It's up at *Amazing Stories* now and C. A. Brandt (who reads all the stories first) has commented "fair to good." On a hunch I'm going to resubmit "Circle of Zero" to *Astounding*. . . . Which gives me a sudden, brilliant thought. If your next story is going to be out of the usual line why not alter the preparation of your manuscript, and I'll submit the story under a pseudonym, so that Tremaine will think I'm handling the work of a new author? How about it?

The two love stories submitted to Hall at *Madamoiselle* were titled "Girl in Love" and "Don't Tell Tony"; both were rejected. Schwartz said he would try them at *Serenade* magazine, an elaborate slick published by the Woolworth Stores.

TELEPHONE WALKER 5-0730-31-32-33

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HUGO GERNSBACK

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PUBLISHER OF
WONDER STORIES
RADIO CRAFT
OFFICIAL RADIO SERVICE MANUALS
SHORT WAVE CRAFT
EVERYDAY SCIENCE AND MECHANICS

99 HUDSON STREET

NEW YORK

May 24, 1935

Mr. Stanley G. Weinbaum,
3237 N. Oakland Avenue,
Milwaukee, Wis.

Dear Mr. Weinbaum,

We are getting out a new magazine very shortly in which the supernatural will be featured. Please note that this is not a ghost story magazine but it will feature true supernatural experiences, either sent in by our readers or occurrences which are printed in the daily press and for which there is not a ready answer. Such subjects as telepathy, psychic powers, occurrences in nature which seem supernatural and for which there is no explanation today, will be dramatized in this magazine, similar to what TRUE STORY Magazine does with love stories.

The keynote of this magazine will be that facts and names must be mentioned. For instance, if you can quote from a scientific magazine or from some other source that such and such occurrence took place, the real names should be given.

Of course, the stories must be dramatized in such a manner that they will hold the readers interest. They must be swift-moving, and yet breathe truth throughout the story. It is, of course, not required to have a solution as most supernatural things of this type have no solution. Extra sensory occurrences, such as carrier pigeons, dogs, and cats finding their way home have no ready solution because we simply do not know them today, and while they may work on some natural law, to us of today it seems supernatural.

In connection with this magazine, we will pay on acceptance for all stories accepted. I am getting a number of stories together, and would like to hear from you by return mail if you have anything to offer. Before you write the story, or stories, it would be best to give me a short outline of each story so that you will not write a story for nothing as we might have some other similar ones on a similar subject already on tap.

Let me know what you think of the plan by return mail, and please keep this confidential as I do not wish to have anyone informed of this until we are actually coming out with the magazine.

Cordially yours,

H. Gernsback
FB

Hall later said that he felt the characterizations in Weinbaum's love stories were not quite up to par, and that he seemed to confine himself "to the old plot of secret love." He did suggest, though, that the yarns *Madamoiselle* turned down be submitted to some love pulp magazine. Schwartz informed Weinbaum that "The King's Watch," which had been rejected by Tremaine for *Clues*, was being sent to another Woolworth magazine titled *Mystery*.

After the urging of Schwartz, Tremaine finally accepted "The Planet of Doubt," paying $100 for it. Schwartz took his commission and sent $90 to Weinbaum on June 17th. At the same time he acknowledged receiving the manuscript for "The Mad Moon." *Amazing Stories*, he said, had rejected the revised version of *The Black Flame*. Finally, he pressed Weinbaum to select a pen name so that Tremaine could be sold two stories for the same issue of *Astounding*. He thought "The Adaptive Ultimate" was a good story to start out with here. On July 19th Weinbaum wrote back, expressing agreement and choosing the pseudonym "John Jessel."

This last letter crossed in the mail with a July 20th postcard in which Schwartz announced that *Wonder Stories* had agreed to take 6000-word short stories from Weinbaum at $25 each on acceptance. "I also persuaded Paul," he said, to send you the original draft of the cover illustration for 'The Ideal' which you probably have received by now." This must have been one of the preliminary drawings Frank R. Paul did for approval before beginning the cover itself; these were sometimes of excellent quality. (The final cover painting, reproduced on the September 1935 issue, was framed by Gernsback, but in 1953, along with eleven others, was thrown out of his 25 West Broadway office with the trash. By good luck I happened to be working late on *Science-Fiction Plus*, which I was editing for him at that time, and salvaged all of them.)

On the same day Hornig sent a letter confirming the arrangement (though he did not explicitly say, "on acceptance"). He asked for another sequel to "A Martian Odyssey," and said he was proud to have "discovered" Weinbaum.

On June 24th, tiring of the lack of progress in getting paid, Weinbaum wrote to Norvell W. Page, president of the American Fiction Guild, asking if their lawyer could do anything about collecting from Gernsback the money owed him. This he estimated at $135 for "A Martian Odyssey," "Valley of Dreams" and "Pygmalion's Spectacles," plus another $80 for "The Worlds of If" and "The Ideal," neither yet published. He had written Gernsback but received no reply. He had also queried Schwartz recently about the possibility of legal action.

On June 24th Schwartz replied:

> Regarding suing *Wonder*——now we're in a pickle. You can sue and collect, but what would be the chances of making future sales there? Now that you have the $25 per 6000 word story agreement, do you think it'd be the wiser thing to do? In other words: either sue *Wonder* for the dough they owe you, and forget about future sales there, or hope they'll pay you eventually, meantime getting the $25 on acceptance. . . . Send your stories to me as usual and I'll deliver them to *Wonder*. If they're rejected, they'll be returned to *me*. If they're accepted, *you'll* be notified, and the check will be sent to *you*. You can return the 10% commission.
>
> I'm going to retype the first page of "The Adaptive Ultimate" using John Jessel, and I'll try to explain to Tremaine that he (Jessel) had been doing work in other magazines and that he'd like to crash *Astounding*. . . . Tremaine hasn't made any decision on "The Red Peri," but he won't comment on the pirate angle should he reject it. He hates to hear authors' plots, or suggestions for revision. If you want to rewrite the yarn, omitting the pirate angle, he'll say go ahead if you want to, but he won't say whether your chances would be better for a sale. He's funny that way. He says it's your plot; so go ahead and write it. . . . I don't believe it would be any good to submit *The Black Flame* to *Astounding* under the John Jessel name, or any other name. It just isn't the type of serial *Astounding* is looking for.

Weinbaum was meanwhile pursuing the possibility of a movie sale for "The Lady Dances," and received acknowledgment of its manuscript from Wertheim & Norton, Ltd. of Hollywood. He also received a rejection letter from George Finley of King Features: "None of our staff readers, including the undersigned, likes your outlined *Mrs. Highmore Plays Fate——Blue Blood——Taken on Faith* serial. Of course, many far-fetched stories are published, but the synopsis indicates to us

that this would be an altogether too extravagant yarn!! About the only plausible character . . . would be Max Rassel and even he (or his surname) makes me think of ex-champion Baer. . . ."

Otto Binder, half of the Eando Binder writing team, had visited Weinbaum and began a limited correspondence with him on July 25th. He forwarded a copy of the December 1934 issue of *Astounding Stories* containing "The Irrelevant" by Karl van Kampen, and described a similar story of his own that had been rejected by the magazine. In this, a scientist accelerates a missile around a circular track to the speed of light and determines that

> the mass does not increase to infinity, nor does the length decrease to zero, nor does the time element suffer distortion. He finds, to his utter amazement, that the projectile does, however, pass out of the known physical world and become completely independent of magnetism, gravity and all that sort of thing.
>
> Our visit to Milwaukee will always be a pleasant memory to us, especially because of the stop at N. Oakland St. You wanted to know what in your stories makes them so universally liked by the science fiction reading public, and the answer is——realism and humor. Humor is hard to achieve, especially in a science fiction story, and that of course makes your achievement doubly commendable.

The "us" in Binder's comments refers to William Dellenback and Jack Darrow, two Chicago fans who accompanied him. He further reported that the three were bound for New York on July 26th, and that while in Milwaukee had also visited Farley while he was working on the collaboration with Weinbaum.

On July 10th Weinbaum wrote three very important letters. Apparently Weisinger had finally prevailed in his efforts to get Gernsback to pay for the published stories. In a letter to Samuel Scheff, treasurer of Gernsback Publications, Weinbaum agreed to four monthly payments of $25, $50, $50 and $45, beginning in July, covering all the stories that *Wonder* had published to date. "Mr. Weisinger has full authority to receive these payments as my agent," he concluded. "I shall be very glad also to authorize him to submit further stories for the consideration of your editors."

The second letter was written to Norvell Page of the American Fiction Guild, asking him to halt any action against Gernsback on Weinbaum's behalf contemplated by his lawyer, a Mr. Wildberg.

The third letter had unpleasant news for Julius Schwartz: "Have been laid up as the result of a tonsil extraction for the past several weeks, but expect to be able to send you stuff at a pretty steady rate from now on. . . . As to the name John Jessel, I picked it because it was my grandfather's name, and I happened to have done some local work under it. . . . I suggested to Mort that you might try *The Black Flame* on King Features, since that is the outfit that bought "The Lady Dances" from us. If you do, you'd better retype the title page and make the author Marge Stanley, since that is the name under which we sold the other."

Schwartz responded on July 14th:

> Farley had previously told me about your tonsil extraction, and I hope things are better now. Darrow, Binder and Dellenback were very impressed by their visit at your place a couple of weeks ago. They spent five days in New York, at which time Mort, Charlie Hornig and myself showed them the sights. . . . Received "J'ai Perdue un Livre (a Tale of Peace)," and it'll go to *Madamoiselle* pronto. It's a darn good yarn, and I hope it's the sort of stuff Hall wants. It's a queer yarn, and in my opinion belongs in the better class magazines.
>
> One good thing about Mort is, that he seems to have *Wonder* in the palm of his hand. He's pretty good at collecting from them when he sets his mind on it. I haven't received "Smothered Seas" (née "Algae") from Farley yet, altho I understand it's finished. *Love Story Magazine* turned down those love yarns of yours, and they're now at *Thrilling Love. Detective Story Magazine* turned down "The King's Watch." *Weird Tales* turned down "The Circle of Zero." but his rejection is encouraging. . . . I'd like to try *The Black Flame* on *Wonder* and a few book companies before I submit it to King Features.

Schwartz then asked Weinbaum to contribute the opening chapter in a round-robin story, "The Challenge from Beyond," that a group of authors was being asked to write as a feature for the third anniversary issue (September 1935) of *Fantasy Magazine*. Weinbaum did contribute, and though short (about 800 words), his portion was his-

torically important, for it dealt with vortices or "holes" in space. E. E. Smith, who also wrote a part of this story, may well have got the idea for "The Vortex Blaster," a later tale, from Weinbaum's contribution.

On July 22, 1935 Julius Schwartz wrote Weinbaum with considerable glee that Tremaine had dispatched a $100 check for "The Adaptive Ultimate." "I suggest you devote *all* the interplanetary stuff (and occasional 'different' stories) to the Weinbaum name, and have ordinary science fiction under the Jessel name. Also, don't forget to prepare your manuscripts different for the two names." Of interest also was his statement, "I'll . . . write to Baird at *Real America* and find out just what sort of 'unusual' fiction he wants. Maybe this is a chance for "The Circle of Zero"!

To comprehend the nuances here fully, readers need some further background. Edwin Baird was the first editor of *Weird Tales* and its companion *Detective Tales*, which began in 1923. These magazines were jointly owned by Clark Henneberger and J. M. Lansinger. To provide funds to carry on *Weird Tales*, which was failing, Henneberger sold his share of *Detective Tales* (the more profitable of the two) to Lansinger, and Baird went along with Lansinger as editor. The magazine changed its title to *Real Detective and Mystery Stories* (because Street & Smith threatened a lawsuit for infringement on the name of its own *Detective Story* magazine) and continued, with Baird at the helm, until 1933, when the depression economy sank it.

At that point Lansinger launched a new periodical, which Baird edited, *Real America*. Subtitled "the Outspoken Magazine," this was a letter-sized slick-paper publication of 64 pages selling for 25¢ and featured articles of commentary on important topics and personalities of the day. In giving his requirements to a writer's magazine in 1935 Baird had requested "unusual" stories, but so far he had not printed any fiction.

Because he had been editor of *Weird Tales*, Schwartz thought he might entertain submissions of fantasies. In replying to the latter's inquiry, he wrote that he wanted "any type of fiction as long as it is out of the ordinary. We have no restrictions and no taboos. The subject may deal with any subject under the sun—love, adventure, sex, mystery, or anything else. The only thing I insist on is that our stories be as different as possible from those published in other magazines." So on July 29, 1935 Schwartz hopefully mailed "The Circle of Zero" to Baird. In a letter of the same date he acknowledged receiving "The Point of View" from Weinbaum, and said that "Smothered Seas" had arrived and been submitted to *Argosy*.

On July 27th Weinbaum wrote Schwartz that he was "glad to get the John Jessel name started with Tremaine. . . . I think I will do another under the pseudonym and will send it to you sometime during the week. I already have the basic idea for a biological yarn, but will have to work out the plot a little more completely."

Otto Binder wrote Weinbaum again on August 4th, informing him that the author of "The Irrelevant" was actually John W. Campbell, Jr., and that the letter discussing it at length in the readers' department, published as by "Ima Kemist," was actually from E. E. Smith, who made his living as a cereal chemist. Binder also commented on science-fiction in general: "I feel it is merely a specialized form of fantasy fiction, which includes weird, supernatural, and all other highly imaginative stuff. It is fairy-tale material, despite the editors' insistence that it is knowledge in sugar-coated form. . . . Smith's stuff is the most incredible conglomerate of pseudo-scientific hash ever served, and [John Russell] Fearn's is glorified Wizard of Oz."

Somewhat unsettling was a letter from Weinbaum to Schwartz dated August 6th, with the message, "Have been laid up again with some sort of imitation pneumonia as a complication from the tonsil extraction, and as a result the John Jessel story is still in the process of being finished."

Schwartz responded August 12th: "Hope that 'imitation pneumonia' doesn't get serious, and that you'll be banging away at the typewriter again soon." The check that had been sent for "The Adaptive Ultimate" had bounced. "I've informed Weisinger of it, and he's sending you a duplicate. . . . Will really try and see that it doesn't happen again." *Argosy*, meanwhile, had rejected "Smothered Seas"; and despite the agreement with *Wonder Stories*, Scheff was still delaying payment on the excuse that he had been on vacation.

Weisinger's follow-up letter, dated August 16th, contained a replacement for his bounced check, along with a lengthy explanation of why the original had not been good. He also enclosed three post-dated checks totalling $90 from Gernsback. These, he commented, were good. "My own publisher Ned Pines (of Standard Magazines) tells me that Gernsback is pretty solid. As a matter of fact, Gernsback edits our *Mechanics and Handicraft* at his place——though we own it. So don't worry about them. I am assured by *Wonder* that you'll get the balance due you in about a month. Minus our commission, that makes $58 due you on your *Wonder* account.... I'm sorry to hear that you've been ill——and I do hope you make a speedy recovery. *Astounding* can use some more Jessel yarns——and I promise to pay off in unbounceable lucre."

There was no excuse for Weisinger's checks to bounce, since he was working and had a regular salary. But his letter furnishes us with some new and interesting information. Popular science magazines require special procedures and maintainance of a special staff. Over the years Gernsback had become an expert in this area, and was then publishing *Radio Craft*, *Short Wave Craft* and *Everyday Science and Mechanics*. So when Pines decided to launch *Mechanics and Handicraft*, it would have been easier and cheaper for him to farm out the editing and assembly to someone else than recruit, organize and maintain a staff of his own. (The first issue of *Mechanics and Handicraft*, a quarterly, was dated Spring 1934, and offered 96 pulp-sized pages for 15¢. Each issue was illustrated by Paul, and contained a scientific article by C. P. Mason.)

The important point here is that Gernsback was making money on the deal. This money——whatever the amount——probably explained Weisinger's suddenly being able to collect what Gernsback owed Weinbaum: there could be (and maybe even was) pressure from Pines if he did not maintain financial stability by settling outstanding accounts. This infusion of funds also came at a most propitious time for Gernsback. His own *Everyday Science and Mechanics* had just reduced its price to 10¢, cut its size from 96 to 48 pages, and was to appear bimonthly. The money from Pines helped pay the salaries of his staff members, at least one of which he would otherwise have been forced to let go.

The Black Flame had been sent to *Wonder Stories*, and Hornig returned it August 16th with the following comments:

> Our chief objections to your story are as follows: It really hurts me to turn this back, for it is excellently written and held my attention throughout. However, the main objection is that it is essentially a love story, with the science fiction incidental. Your best stories ("Odyssey" and sequel) contained no love interest at all, to speak of. Love, to many of the young minds who read our mag, is a weakness in a man. The ending of the story is unsatisfactory. Also, I did not find a convincing reason why Thomas Connor should awake after being dead over a thousand years. Your plot is quite a bit hackneyed also——suspended animation, common people plan revolt on government, etc.

In his letter to Weinbaum of August 18th Schwartz repeated his apologies for Weisinger's bounced check, and went on to say:

> I have some dandy news for you. Tremaine has accepted "The Red Peri"! I guess he didn't object to the pirate angle after all. Your check for $170 is enclosed——and I'm quite sure it won't bounce. Since Gernsback came across with the checks I have let him have "The Point of View." If it's accepted, they'll have to pay $25 on acceptance as per agreement. "The Circle of Zero" was turned down by *Real America*. I can't think of any more markets for this yarn, but it'll see print some day! . . . I sincerely hope that your illness doesn't develop into anything serious, and that you'll soon be banging away at the typewriter again. I can use a John Jessel yarn now.

On August 19th Hornig wrote Weinbaum, "This is to inform you that we have accepted "The Point of View," which you submitted to us for our consideration. I will do my best to get it into our December (1935) number, though I don't want to make any promises. Ultimately, I'd like to see at least one of your stories in the magazine every other month, and I wouldn't object if one got into every issue." The very next day Samuel Scheff mailed Weinbaum a $25 check in payment for the story, so the arrangement for payment on acceptance was indeed being kept.

In that same vein Weisinger wrote on August 22nd:

> I'll be collecting from *Wonder* again for you very shortly, and with all that dough you and Marge should take a brief vacation. Don't try writing while you're feeling ill— you won't be able to recognize the story after it's off the typewriter.
>
> As Palmer may have told you, my own firm (Standard Magazines) is contemplating putting out a new science-fiction mag, tentatively titled *Thrilling Marvel Stories*. When we do put it out, we'll buy *Cosmos* from *Fantasy* for the first issue, publish it complete with all the names on the cover, and change the title to *Interplanetary!* Palmer, who has two chapters in the original version, one under the name [Rae] Winters, wants you to rewrite that chapter, so we can include you among the headliners.
>
> I wish you'd study our horror magazine, *Thrilling Mystery*, and do a ten thousand worder for us along the lines of Paul Ernst's "Blood of Witches." . . . Elva Farley wrote me that *Argosy* didn't like your collaboration with her husband. It's now up at *Astounding*.

Otto Binder wrote Weinbaum on August 24th, reviewing and praising his recent stories, particularly complimenting "The Lotus Eaters": Oscar hits the high for philosophy, or call it riddling riddles, or answering the unanswerable, at least in one way. Donnerwetter!——it was good."

"I still can't get over the fact that 'The Red Peri' sold," wrote Julius Schwartz on August 27th. "Not that it is a bad story, mind you. But it isn't the *Astounding* type of yarn. I guess it's your fine style of writing. Whatever you do, no matter how stale your plots may become, don't lose that gifted style of writing you have! . . . I really hope you'll soon recover from your ailiment. . . . Hall turned down 'J'ai Perdu un Livre'!"

On August 23rd Weinbaum had written Schwartz, "The sawbone at Billings and the U. of C. have diagnosed the trouble as mere inflammation of the lung or something, so I expect to live, anyway, and as soon as the treatments ease up, I'll get to work to finish the Jessel yarn."

Mort Weisinger had turned over four of Weinbaum's love stories to the agent Lurton Blassingame, who was more expert in selling to the slick magazine market. These were "Girl in Love," "Don't Tell Tony," "The Love Mode" and "She Tried to be Bad." (This last was not the same as an unpublished novel with the same title.) Blassingame wrote Weinbaum that he didn't think they were quite good enough for the main-line slicks like *Collier's* or *Red Book*, but might stand a chance with some lower-echelon publications like *Serenade* and *Ainslee's*. He criticized plot-triteness and frequent emphasis on petty incidents, but complimented Weinbaum's humor, dialog and good characterization. He asked for a revision of two of them, and concluded, "I am enthusiastic about the possibilities shown in these stories. If you will really work at your writing, studying the magazines and polishing your dialog and narrative, you should be producing *Collier's* stories before 1936 is out."

Weinbaum replied to Blassingame on September 10th, saying he would do the revisions, but added, "Mort may or may not have mentioned that my volume has suffered considerably because of a current siege of illness, so that I hardly know whether to attempt the *Redbook* story which you were kind enough to suggest. If there is no pressing deadline on this——that is, if five or six weeks is sufficiently prompt for them still to consider the yarn——I should very much like to try."

The only important news Schwartz had to report in his letter of September 10th was that he was submitting *The Black Flame* to the publisher E. P. Dutton.

The synopsis of a story to be titled *Sensation Girl*, a planned collaboration with Lawrence Keating of the Milwaukee Fictioneers, was turned down by King Features on September 16th.

The receipt of "Proteus Island," prepared under the John Jessel pen name, was acknowledged by Julius Schwartz on September 16th. He added, "Incidentally, no use writing any yarns for *Wonder* for awhile, since Gernsback has gone to Europe and no stories can be accepted for awhile. I'll tip you off when Gernsback returns." This aside is important, for it validates the belief that Gernsback was indeed the final arbiter in accepting all stories for the magazine, a task he did not delegate to others. The balance of the evidence shows that Gernsback always maintained a hands-on role throughout his entire editing career.

"The King's Watch," which Weisinger had urged Weinbaum to do for *Clues*, had been rejected by Tremaine, who edited that magazine. It had also been turned down by *Thrilling Detective*, *Popular Detective* and *Detective Story Magazine*, and Schwartz now recommended that it be released to Blassingame, to see what he could do with it. "I went up to see Tremaine last week," Schwartz continued, "and he did nothing but rave about 'The Red Peri'! He's giving it the cover on the next issue (November 1935). He's very enthusiastic and wants you to continue the series. He can use about three novelettes (say 15,000-worders——about 50 typewritten pages) during the next year. He's is no hurry to get them, but just wanted to tell you that they're O. K. He says they'll make *Astounding's* readers forget about Anthony Gilmore and his pirate, Hawk Carse! . . . No word yet on 'The Mad Moon.'"

The International Literary Bureau was ready to give up on the Weinbaum novel *Mistress Money*. It had been rejected by all the major newspaper syndicates, wrote Monica McCall on September 24th. But on October 1st there was good news from Julius Schwartz, who said he was "happy to report that Tremaine has taken your 10,000-worder 'The Mad Moon.' . . . Tremaine has also bought 'Smothered Seas,' and I'm sending that check on to Farley. Gernsback is back from Europe, in case you want to do more 6,000-worders for *Wonder*," he concluded.

On the next day Weinbaum wrote Schwartz:

> I just want to acknowledge receipt of check and also the news of "Smothered Seas." Looks as if you were going great guns this year; in fact, I guess that this almost sells everything you have of mine except a couple of outright duds. I'll try to get you two or three stories this month, since I'm now back at work to a certain extent, although it's still pretty slow. I think that perhaps the best thing to do is to take a few shots at *Astounding* with a couple of interplanetaries first, and then do a 6,000 worder for *Wonder*. This last means only a couple of days work after I get back into the swing of it. Am of course greatly pleased that Tremaine liked "The Red Peri" and I'll turn out a sequel to it in the next month or so. Have to go back to Chicago for a week of those damn x-ray treatments the first of next month, so I think I'll wait until after that to work on the sequel, and spend the intervening time in turning out some interplanetaries. . . .

Mort Weisinger wrote Weinbaum on October 13th, saying: "Blassingame likes your French-titled yarn——calls it a good literary piece——and he's trying it with *Story*. He got a swell letter about one of your yarns that almost sold to *Ainslee's*. He's a darned good agent, handles the work of Norvell Page, Hugh B. Cave, Wyatt Blassingame, George MacDonald, James Duncan, and half of the New York writing tribe. He also agents some of my own stuff."

An ailing Weinbaum wrote Schwartz the next day:

> Your letter arrived just in time to be answered with the accompanying story, a 12,000-worder called "Redemption Cairn," which I think has some of the qualities Tremaine liked in "The Red Peri." That is, it has some new gags in the line of science, but the story interest is stronger than the scientific, if you get what I mean. . . . So that's the first one finished on schedule, and I am starting at once on another. Have an idea for a humorous science fiction story but I know that these sometimes received unfavorable reactions, so I thought I'd ask your opinion. Of course "A Martian Odyssey" was in some ways a humorous story, so perhaps one can get away with it if the humor is in characterizations rather than in language. Most of the ones I have read seem to depend on funny ways of telling instead of funny characters and situations. . . . Farley and I are talking over another collaboration, and I expect to turn out the first draft of it while I am having the next series of x-ray treatments. I figure that since x-ray treatments shoot the devil out of you, I might as well spend the time on a first draft for Farley, since it will all be gone over anyway ("The Dictator's Sister").

Schwartz acknowledged receipt of "Redemption Cairn" on October 17th, and said he would "hold it a little while" before submission, since Weinbaum stories were secheduled for the coming three issues of *Astounding* (November 1935 through January 1936) and he didn't want to take a chance on overloading Tremaine and getting a rejection.

On October 24th Blassingame wrote that he didn't like Weinbaum's "Chain Gang," which was not fantasy. "It is too unpleasant, really a semi-literary story with a very limited market. I'll try it on a few of the magazines, but I doubt if we can place it."

Weisinger wrote Weinbaum on October 27th:

> Julius tells me you're doing a sequel to it ("The Red Peri")——a fifteen thousand worder. Tremaine likes the first so much that we can get you a very fast check on the sequel. Speaking of checks, Tremaine sent us one yesterday for a 35,000 word story by H. P. Lovecraft (*At the Mountains of Madness*). Lovecraft had originally given the thing to *Unusual Stories* (published by William Crawford) for free publication. We asked him to let us try it on *Astounding*——and he said it wasn't worth the postage! However, we did eventually persuade him to send the thing to us, and now we're handling his entire output. . . . As soon as I get a breathing spell, I'm having lunch with Tremaine and will see what I can do in the way of raising your word rate over there. You certainly deserve an increase. The only other guy who ever got a raise is Donald Wandrei, and he isn't so very hot these days. Writes well——but doesn't produce enough. He could make a fortune if he were as prolific as the Burks-Bruce-Page boys.

Ralph Milne Farley had recently sold a story to the publishers of *Spicy Adventure* and *Spicy Detective*. On November 3rd Weisinger wrote him about this: ". . . in connection with the spicy magazines, do not study any issues marked with a star on the cover; they are issues put out for the censors, and the sex is very mild in them." (The Spicy group put out two editions, one for states where the authorities did not interfere with their distribution and another for those which had hard-nosed censors.) Weisinger also suggested that Farley and Weinbaum collaborate on a science-fiction action tale slanted towards *Top-Notch* magazine. In the margin Farley wrote "This being up to S. G. W." and forwarded the letter to him.

Apparently Weinbaum was already in agreement with this collaboration (see his letter of October 14th), but the market at which it was being aimed may have seemed dubious to Schwartz, for on November 13th Farley wrote him: "Re 'The Dictator's Sister,' the reasons I consider it more slanted for *Top-Notch* than for *Astounding* are: 1. It seems to me to be more like 'The Man Who Met Himself' (*Top Notch*, August 1935) than like 'Smothered Seas,' i. e. the adventure element predominates over the science fiction; and 2. the science is wholly possible. . . . I hope that Weinbaum will soon be able to tackle it. He has almost reached it on his agenda." (Weinbaum did little if anything more on "The Dictator's Sister," which was finished by Farley, and eventually published under Weinbaum's name as "The Revolution of 1950" in *Amazing Stories*, October and November 1938.)

On November 4th Schwartz wrote Weinbaum that Tremaine had turned down "Proteus Island" without giving any special reason, and suggested that it be revised so as to include more action. Weinbaum never lived to do so, but on learning that Jessel was a pseudonym, Tremaine later bought the story. It appeared in the August 1936 issue of *Astounding* under Weinbaum's own name.

"Well, we're back on the selling side again!" wrote Schwartz on November 18th. "Tremaine has just accepted 'Redemption Cairn,' so am enclosing a check for $108. Your stuff is going over great with the readers, Tremaine tells me."

Weinbaum replied the next day: "Lord knows I am pleased to get your check on 'Redemption Cairn,' because right now I'm just about at the bottom. That is, I've been in Chicago to have some x-ray treatments again, and am now flat on my back recovering from them. God knows when I'll be able to get some real work done, and I hope that perhaps in a week or so more I can start."

On November 8th Blassingame wrote Weinbaum that "For Love or Money" was thought to be "marketable," and added a handwritten P. S. to his letter saying that "*Cosmopolitan* liked 'She Tried to be Bad,' and wants to see more." On November

27th he wrote: "I am returning 'High Seas and Murder' because the story, though excellently written, is a bit too slow. I tried it on *Detective Fiction Weekly*, *Complete Stories* and *Blue Book* magazines which do not demand a great deal of action, and they found it too slow; consequently I don't much think there is any use in continuing it with the cheaper markets. You have done a swell piece of writing but there isn't enough bang-bang to bring in a check. It is semi-slick stuff but the slicks don't run 10,000 word yarns today." (The story did eventually appear under the title "Green Glow of Death" in the July 1957 issue of *Crack Detective and Mystery* magazine.)

Schwartz returned "Proteus Island" for revision on November 27th, saying, "Remember 'Shifting Seas'? *Astounding* turned it down, and I submitted it to *Amazing Stories* about six months ago. They liked it, but didn't want to accept it as they were overstocked. I told them to hold on to it anyway. Result: I just was notified that *Amazing* has accepted it, and will pay $45 for it upon publication. That means you have now crashed every science fiction market."

At this point an undated letter was sent by Weisinger to Marge Weinbaum, evidently in response to one from her informing him that her husband was gravely ill. "I'm hoping that by this time Stan is feeling much better. You don't have to tell me how much you kids are in love——Jack Darrow and Otto Binder's compliments would make you both blush. I'm really hoping to meet you both in the very near future and get acquainted personally. . . . Stan is really a good writer, sweet lady, and it's no wonder he sells most everything he writes. . . . Take good care of him, Marge. And if he doesn't want to rest and reaches for the typewriter instead, handcuff him to the bed."

Intent on cheering Weinbam, Julius Schwartz sent him a long letter on December 13th, quoting a long list of compliments of his stories from readers of *Astounding*. "It may interest you to know that I've written an article for the next issue of *Fantasy Magazine*, titled 'Fantasy Fiction Analysis——1935.' The results show that you were the *best* author in 1935, and also had the most stories published, ten."

It is doubtful that Stanley G. Weinbaum ever read that letter, for on December 14, 1935 Julius Schwartz received a telegram from Raymond Palmer which read: WEINBAUM DIED THIS MORNING."

——oOo——

(Notes for "Remembering Stanley Weinbaum"——continued from page 103)

(12) Sam Moskowitz has obtained photocopies of the complete financial records of the Schwartz-Weisinger Literary Agency, which represented Weinbaum in most of his s-f sales after "A Martian Odyssey." After examining them, he informs me that they show a payment of $400 in 1939 to the Weinbaum estate by Ray Palmer for book and magazine rights to *The New Adam*. (For this reason, no additional payment was due when the novel was serialized in *Amazing Stories* during 1943.)

(13) This conclusion is questionable. In June 1935 Weinbaum agreed to take $170 in installments for the first five stories Gernsback had accepted for *Wonder Stories*, which would have included payment for "A Martian Odyssey." (See pages 117-118.) The Schwartz-Weisinger records, however, show no commissions recorded for sales of any of these stories. Perhaps they agreed to waive them, since $170 was considerably less than the $210 Weinbaum calculated was due him on the basis of the magazine's official payment of half a cent a word. But Moskowitz says Schwartz believes that the commission was remitted to the agency by Weinbaum himself, because *Wonder Stories* paid him directly.

(14) "The Adaptive Ultimate," which was published in the November 1935 issue of *Astounding Stories*.

(15) This is Lawrence A. Keating, who later for many years wrote the leading "novel" for *Complete Wild West*, a companion magazine to *Amazing Stories*.

(16) Otto Binder was born August 26, 1911, so he was indeed almost ten years younger than Weinbaum. He did live in Chicago at the time.

(17) Although their editorial offices usually forward mail at the request of the writer, it is not the policy of most pulp magazines to send authors specific comments received on their stories. Editors do assume that they read such letters as are published in the readers' columns, however.

(18) "The Lotus Eaters" and "Proteus Island" among others.

(19) There were editorial comments in both *Astounding* and *Wonder Stories*.

(20) Horace Victor Gregory was born April 10, 1898, the son of Henry Botton and Anna Catherine (Henkel) Gregory. He began studies at the University of

Wisconsin in the summer of 1919, and was graduated in the class of 1923 (Weinbaum was in the class of 1924.) On August 25, 1925 he married another Wisconsin graduate, Marya Zaturenska, by whom he had two children. He received a number of awards for his verse, including *Poetry* magazine's Lyric Prize (1928) and the Bollinger Prize for poetry (1965). He died on March 11, 1982. His autobiography (*A Cycle of Memories*, 1961) does not mention Weinbaum.

(21) During infancy Gregory had contracted tuberculosis of the bone. This affected the upper vertebrae of his spine, which caused paralysis of the left hand and foot, and a tremor in the right hand.

(22) Marya Zaturenska was born in Russia September 12, 1902. She emigrated here in 1910, and in 1914 became a naturalized U. S. citizen. She was graduated from the University of Wisconsin Library School in 1925, and received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1938. She died on January 19, 1982.

(23) Could this be the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N. H.? No N. Y. location has been identified.

(24) I.e., "The Adaptive Ultimate."

(25) See pp. 108ff.

(26) This was finally printed as "Dawn of Flame."

(27) Moskowitz has suggested (*Explorers of the Infinite*, p.308) that Weinbaum had "a powerful fixation on the concept of the superwoman who is tamed by love of a man. Evidence of domination by a strong woman somewhere in his life? Evidence more probably of his subconscious wish to meet a woman who was his intellectual equal."

(28) Published in *Astounding Stories*, January 1936.

(29) Published in *True Gang Life*, February 1936.

(30) Technically, he collaborated with a number of other s-f writers of the time through producing a chapter in "Cosmos," a round-robin serial novel distributed with *Fantasy Magazine*.

• • •

THE MEDIUM

Spirits rousing out of air——
they are here and shut between
gasps of time that dead men share
with the graveyard and the bell
that swings their bones with music down. . .
and down. . . down. . .
where cold Caesar fell
open eyed. I know a man
who fed his wits with such as these
to guard himself from tall, dark streets
where women's flesh grew white and trees
were frozen in an iron square. . .

And on him came a caravan
of noises that went through his veins. . .

He smiled at ghosts, then took a bride
from old, green Egypt, for her breath
filled his lungs with ancient prayer,
till, he too, closed his lips and died.

——*Horace Gregory*

LAST CITIZEN OF EARTH

'Tis sickening! I'm near to death
Of this foul gas, the putrid breath
Of yon damned comet. I'm alone
With all men dead. Who could have known,
Who could forsee, and what prevent
This ghastly, cosmic accident?
Has Mankind-really lived in vain
After such aeon-bitter pain?
After the toil it took to shape
A human creature from an ape?
And after all the fruitless power
To make an ape from something lower?
You sun! You're looking sickly too,
With your smoke-dimmed anaemic blue!
You're as far gone as I. You're weak
And ill, and grown extremely meek
Beside that cometary flame.
Well, it took more than Man to tame
Your fire; but now you've lived your span——
I've lived you down, and in me Man
Outlived you! Surely I'll admit
That you were at the first of it,
That you were there when things began,
Some little time ahead of Man.
But Hell! At death a moment's worth
A million cycles just at birth!
Your blue's turned pink. You're growing weak;
Your orb's as pallid as her cheek——
My Love's. She's dead some hours, and you
Have just this minute to live through.
You wouldn't laugh if you had seen
The way we spent last night, between
The comet-rise and your returning
To make one last, insipid morning.
Look at her, Sun! After today
There's no more death, and no decay——
No life to die! It just confirms
That Death died too when died the Worms.
He perished with his own foul brood——
The Angel starved for want of food!
Well, Sun, to die's to make amends;
Let's say at least we parted friends.

You're dying, Sun! There pales your red!
And I'm not dead——not dead——not——

——*Stanley G. Weinbaum*

• • •

BALBATHON

Ancient towers streaming
Shadows on the sand:
The city's doomed to dreaming,
Unlikely long to stand.

See the City crumbling,
Fissures breaching walls,
As towers, spires, come tumbling
And rubble fills the halls.

Thus a frightened City
Offers up its prayer.
And thus the gods take pity:
They topple it with care.

——*Steve Eng*

Weinbaum's College Years

R. Alain Everts

When the Ballantine paperback collection *The Best of Stanley G. Weinbaum* appeared in 1974, Isaac Asimov introduced it with a discussion of what he termed the first three novas in science-fiction writing. The first was E. E. Smith, whose "Skylark of Space" appeared a little over two years after the founding of *Amazing Stories*. The third was Robert Heinlein, whose first tale was printed eleven years later. The central nova was Milwaukee's Stanley Grauman Weinbaum, perhaps the most talented of the trio, and like Doc Smith one of numerous fantasy authors from Wisconsin. Both Smith and Heinlein went on to long and prolific literary careers; but Weinbaum's, for all its brilliance, lasted less than eighteen months.

Despite this, a poll conducted in 1968-1970 by the Science Fiction Writers of America voted his first published short story, "A Martian Odyssey," as the second best ever written during the pre-1965 period, just behind Asimov's "Nightfall." Today Weinbaum is not only still widely read and immensely popular, but is considered a seminal author in the genre. He was one of the very first to introduce realistic characters and dialog, men and women who behaved and interacted normally, as well as truly alien creatures unlike any that preceded them. Finally, he wrote in an easy, lucid style, and if such a thing is possible, was a born poet.

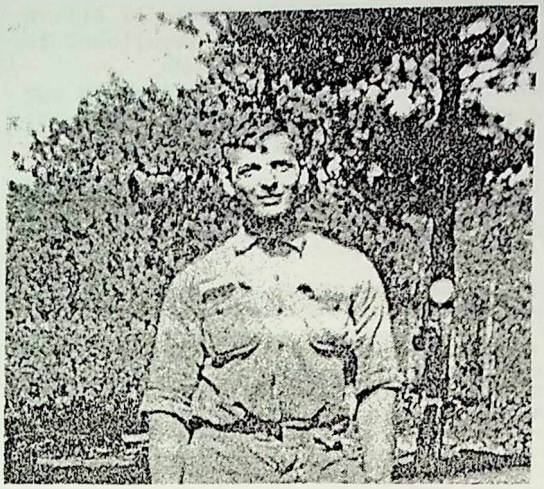
Aside from a brief autobiographical sketch, however, until very recently little has been written about his life. Science-fiction reference books, such as those edited by Bleiler, Gunn, Nicholls, Smith and Tuck, often give erroneous or misleading statements about his education, and sometimes do not even cite his correct birthdate (April 4, 1902). I have already described his family and early upbringing elsewhere,* and here I shall deal chiefly with his college years.

Stanley Weinbaum was graduated from Riverside High School in Milwaukee on June 17, 1920. He had excelled in his courses there (which included five years of mathematics, four each of English and Latin, and one year of French), finishing with an overall average of 94.8 and earning the rank of class salutatorian. His interests were shown in his involvement in many of the students' organizations, including the Science Club and the school literary publication, *The Mercury*. He was associate editor or editor on the staff of *The Mercury* during 1917-1920, and contributed to it often. The earliest of his literary efforts to survive is "The Last Battle," in the December 1917 issue, a story describing an imaginary ending of World War I in late 1921.

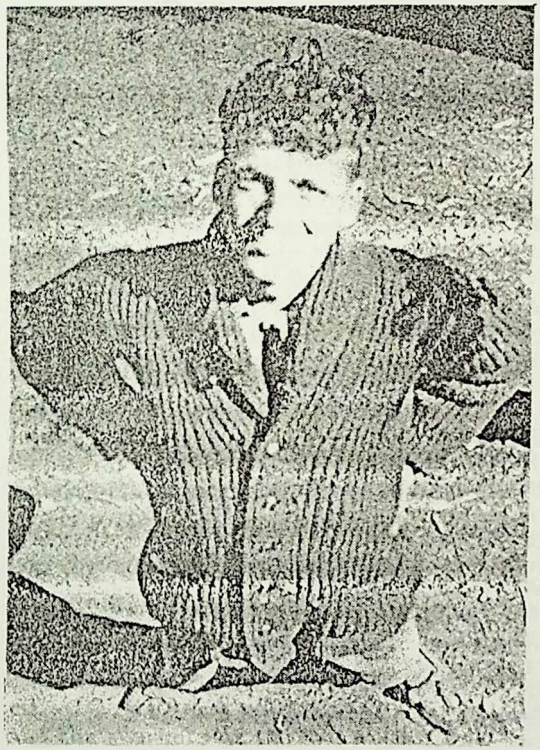
Encouraged by his high grades, he applied for admission to the prestigious University of Wisconsin at Madison, where many of his friends were also enrolling, and was accepted for the Fall 1920 semester. In celebration of this, and with the reluctant consent of his parents, he accompanied five friends on a two-week camping trip in the woods of northern Wisconsin, near the town of Eagle River. (This trip was so memorably successful that the group repeated it in the summer of 1921.)

In September Stanley set off for Madison. Here he boarded with the McKitricks, formerly neighbors of his family in Milwaukee, at 315 North Murray St. It is interesting to note that this is about half a block from 823 West Johnson St., where August Derleth lived while attending the university in 1926-1930, and even closer to 307 North Murray, the address of Horace Gregory; Gregory, a classmate known to Stanley in Milwaukee, was later to become a famous poet. (None of these buildings still exist, having been razed to make way for a new dormitory.)

*In *Stanley Grauman Weinbaum*, pts I-IV (Madison, Wis.: The Strange Co., 1990-1991).



Stanley Weinbaum
at summer camp,
1920 or 1921



In 1920 there were seven colleges at the University of Wisconsin: Letters and Science, Music, Engineering, Law, Agriculture, Medicine and Library. Weinbaum entered the university with an interest in chemistry, and therefore had a choice between two of these schools, Engineering and Letters and Science. After conferring with a faculty advisor, he registered on September 20-22 in the latter. Whether this was because the former had the more difficult introductory chemistry course, or because most of his friends chose the one in Letters and Science, is not known. Subsequent events suggest that he did so because the other courses available in Letters and Science appealed to his developing literary interests, as opposed to those required for earning a degree in mechanical engineering.

In any event, in his first semester at Madison Weinbaum took mostly required courses, including analytical geometry and Freshman English, besides chemistry. His English section was taught by Professor Robert Elkin Neil Dodge (1867-1935). For Professor Dodge's class he wrote an amusing and "ingenious" (as Dodge annotated it) tale, "A Mid-Semester Fantasy," which is still extant. This is set in Madison in the year 2230 A. D., and describes a speeded-up world where mathematics dominates everyday life. Peoples' clothing is decorated in bold geometric patterns, locations—even streets—are designated graphically instead of by names, and all artists see "their lines and curves as equations."

In this first semester there occurred the first of two unfortunate incidents which curtailed Stanley Weinbaum's university career. He assisted a friend and future fraternity brother in the College of Commerce, Eugene Reichenbaum (later Eugene Reich, 1902-1972), by helping him write, or writing for him, an essay for one of his courses. A letter from the chairman of the university's Committee on Discipline gives the details involved (see the next page). When confronted, Stanley admitted his complicity in the affair, and he too was punished by being required to earn extra credits for graduation.

Confidential THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Committee on Discipline

January 25, 1921

The Committee on Discipline met in Room 22, South Hall, at 5:20 o'clock, to consider the case of Eugene Reichenbaum, C. C. 1, charged with dishonesty in English 1-a.

Present: Bradley, Twenhofel, Wagner, Rae (Junior Dean), Goodnight (Dean of Men), Blanchard (Adviser), Sandidge (Instructor), and Miss Gullord (Stenographer).

The case was presented by Mr. Sandidge. He stated that Mr. Reichenbaum handed in a theme which was far beyond anything that one would expect from a student in freshman English. As all of his previous work had been very poor, Mr. Sandidge submitted the theme to two fellow instructors, who agreed with him that the theme could not be the work of Mr. Reichenbaum. Mr. Reichenbaum was then called in and after an hour's grilling in which he was given every opportunity to explain, he still insisted that the work was his own. He was then told that the case would be submitted to the Discipline Committee. The next morning he came to Mr. Sandidge and told him that a fellow student had written the theme for him.

When questioned by the Committee, Mr. Reichenbaum stated that while he was writing his theme a friend came in and read it, and then asked him why he always wrote in the realistic style. Sitting down beside him the friend talked over the writing of the theme with him and helped him write it. When asked why he didn't tell his instructor that when he first asked him, he countered by saying that they asked him what book he had gotten it out of. Mr. Sandidge, however, stated that he was definitely asked if it was his own work. Mr. Reichenbaum stated that he considered it his own work as it had not been dictated to him.

After discussion, it was voted that Mr. Reichenbaum be required to earn ten extra credits before graduation, and be placed on probation to the end of the year.

GEORGE WAGNER

Chairman

The university regularly sponsored campus lectures on topics of general interest to which all students, faculty and members of the community were invited. It seems plausible to assume that Weinbaum attended many of these, for they frequently dealt with topics that interested him, and which appear in his verse. We may note that in one of them (October 1920) the well-known author Hamlin Garland (whose daughter and son-in-law were both contributors to *Weird Tales* magazine in the 1940's) spoke on "Recollections of the Middle Border."

In February 1921, during his second Freshman semester, Stanley changed his curriculum from a chemistry major to a non-special program. The latter consisted mostly of the courses required for graduation, and would enable him to return to chemistry if he wished, or else choose some other subject to be decided on later. He probably made the change because it enabled him to pursue his increasing absorption in writing. By that spring he had begun contributing to the major campus publication, *The Wisconsin Literary Magazine*, and was also regularly writing essays and fiction for his classes and love poems for the various girl friends he had on campus. Fellow contributors to the *"Lit"* at this time were Margery Latimer, Kenneth Fearing, Horace Gregory, Alfred Galpin and Earl Hansen. Stanley's first piece in the *Lit* was "Lunaria," printed in the April 1921 issue. It is a poem

of 114 lines, in which he uses otherworldly scenes and invokes his favorite theme of loneliness in a sombre, arcane atmosphere.

When he returned to Madison for his sophomore year in the fall of 1921, the McKitricks had gone back to Milwaukee, so Stanley moved around the corner from their former residence to a boarding house at 824 West Johnson Street. He continued to write for the *Lit*, mostly poetry (some of which I believe appeared pseudonymously) and a few stories, chiefly on fantasy and antiquarian themes. The most ambitious of these is "Semiramis" (published in the January 1922 issue), a 248-line epic poem of Egypt, which he wrote in the lush style of such turn of the century poets as Andrew Lang, Stephen Phillips and George Sterling. Verse eight of the work follows:

> For naught to him were stars that roll
> Across the harpy-haunted heights,
> The flame of her divining bowl,
> Wherein she gazed those magic nights;
> Never for him inspired flights
> In thought-winged cars up to the stars:
> He never knew the satellites
> Of ruddy Mars.

For some years there had been a small but significant number of Jewish young people attending the university, and for those who were religiously inclined there was a campus organization called the Menorah Society. But there were no Jewish social clubs or branches of national Jewish college fraternities. Late in 1919 an informal Jewish group calling itself the Octosa Club asked the university for recognition as one of the former. On January 14, 1920 the Dean of Men notified the Octosa Club that the University Senate and the Committee on Student Life and Interest had givem it official approval as a campus student organization. The Octosa Club was the precursor of the Tau Club, whose members later in that year petitioned to become a chapter in the national fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau.

Although eventually successful, progress of the Tau members towards their goal was not always smooth. On October 20, 1920 the Menorah Club challenged the plans for a national linkage "on the ground that the interest of Jewish students are better served by having no separate Jewish fraternities." Dean Goodnight commented to the Zeta Beta Tau headquarters that on this matter the university did "not wish to offer advice since we feel that you will be better able to solve the problems justly than we should be. We are glad to be able to say, however, that, if you should decide to place a chapter at Wisconsin, we believe the group which is now petitioning to be well worth the trust." That group consisted of Weinbaum and seven of his Milwaukee acquaintances, who then formed the "octo" in "Octosa." Eventually local problems were resolved, and in April 1922 the Alpha Kappa chapter of Zeta Beta Tau was established on the University of Wisconsin campus in apartment 301 at 509 North Lake Street. (This building is still standing today, and houses a Walgreen's drug store on the street floor.) Stanley's role as one of the chapter's founders was noted in the campus newspaper, *The Daily Cardinal.*

Meanwhile his sophomore year progressed successfully. In March 1922 he was elected to the Board of Directors of *The Wisconsin Literary Magazine* and he continued to earn satisfactory grades in his courses. He persevered in writing verse, and in the second part of his poem "Two Sunsets" limned a moving portrait of the end of the world, a topic that had interested him since high school.*

But the Spring term ended on a discordant note. During the final examinations Stanley unwisely allowed the girl seated next to him to copy from his paper in English 30. Their instructor, Helen C. White, caught them, and the two were summoned to appear before the University Committee on Discipline. There the girl defended herself and was penalized, but apparently allowed to continue. For some reason Stanley chose not to appear with her. Was this a case of gallantry,

*This is reproduced on page 125.

an unwillingness to contradict whatever story she might present? We do not know. But since he was absent, the committee left his case in abeyance until its next meeting in the fall.

After the summer vacation Stanley returned to the campus in September 1922, moving into the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity apartment, and registering for his junior year of classes. He did finally appear before the Committee on Discipline; but because this was his second infraction, and because his responses were judged unsatisfactory as well as tardy, the committee must have felt it had little choice. On October 11, 1922 he was indefinitely suspended from the University of Wisconsin, to which he never returned and from which he was never graduated.

His teacher, Helen White, wrote her mother that the affair was "a sickening business, because the two youngsters are unusually clever. Indeed, the boy had genius, I think. . . ." She kept in touch with him for several years after his suspension, and continued to encourage his poetry writing.

A number of other well-known writers attended the University of Wisconsin during the 1920's. The Gregorys were graduated in 1923 and 1925; poet, author and screenwriter Paul V. Gangelin left about the same time Stanley did; and Wisconsin pulp writers August Derleth, Raymond Z. Gallun, Mark Schorer, Clifford D. Simak and Arthur R. Tofte were all there before 1930. But in the realm of science-fiction, Stanley G. Weinbaum became the most famous of them all.

His four brief semesters at the university were by no means wasted, for they provided the combination of opportunity, encouragement and sophisticated criticism that are essential for an apprentice writer. All evidence clearly shows he used them to his advantage, and that the experience made an impression which never left him.

EVOLUTION

aquarium-green striplights glow,
lap around the primally dark
Bar alcove, shimmering his
hooded eyes to dark pools
unblinking
while he muses
" seems it happened this way,
a crazy lungfish a million+ years ago
sprouts legs to walk on,
grows fingers to grasp with,
grows eyes to see the land,
grows a nose for snorting air,
grows its brain to co-ordinate
said evolutionary gimmicks.
so it walks and it grasps,
breathes and co-ordinates,
hangs around a million+ years or so,
and generally louses up.
so hey!
don't you think it's time
it went back to the sea?"
washing a webbed hand
over his scaled forehead
in the low-level
aquarium-green
glow....

—*Andrew Darlington*

STONE DEMON

Oozing out of the rock
It squats on the cobbles with
granite claws;
We stand before the monster,
And bring our offerings for it to crush.

The mouth is fixed in a rigid grin——
It has swallowed its pride!

We raised it with the magic words:
Rock breaks scissors;
It can only be banished by:
Paper covers rock.

It watches warily as we circle round,
Unsure of our ritual, wanting only
to be fed.

Now we must say the incantation
Before it grows too strong,
Sending it back to the caverns,
Letting it rumble underground.

A neatly wrapped parcel, the demon
disappears.
Only a dent in the cobbles, the smell
of brimstone, remains.

—*John Francis Haines*

Book Reviews

SCIENCE-FICTION / THE EARLY YEARS by Everett F. Bleiler with the assistance of Richard J. Bleiler. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1990. xxvi-998 pp. 28.5 cm. $75.00

The overwhelming surfeit of science-fiction available in the last quarter of this century makes it hard for some people to realize how scarce it was only a couple of generations ago. Followers of science-fiction and its allied genres of fantasy and the supernatural then were constantly searching for new stories to read and, when these were lacking, for old ones which had been missed. They saved what they encountered, becoming collectors. They exchanged information with other enthusiasts. And with the advent of *Science Fiction Digest*, the first major fan magazine, such information began to take the form of a bona fide checklist. In its first (September 1932) issue, the *Digest* instituted its "Service Department," which printed lists of science-fiction books, as well as stories which had appeared in mundane periodicals such as the detective and Munsey magazines.

Within a decade, the increasing amount of new material gradually caused a single path of general inquiry to divide. One of the resulting new routes covered books in the genre. There were probably a dozen checklists in the process of composition and/or circulation during the 1940's, and the most complete of these (my own) was being serially published (1944-1946). The first to be finished was Everett Bleiler's *Checklist of Fantastic Literature* (1948).

The second path concentrated on indexing genre fiction in periodicals devoted to it——the science-fiction, fantasy and weird magazines themselves. This was carried on piecemeal by a number of fans who published their work independently in many places; these were first collected by Robert C. Peterson in 1949 and (with other data) by Don and Brad Day in 1952-53. The most prolific contributor here was probably William H. Evans.

Evans was also the most indefatigable researcher to follow the third new path, that of cataloguing genre fiction in the mundane magazines. Much of his work was published in *Fantasy Commentator* during 1944-1952, and was included in *An Index on the Weird and Fantastica in Magazines*, the Day compilation cited above.

Here I must note a demarcation. What have been cited so far have been *checklists*——simple listings of story-titles and their authors. Strictly speaking, these are not *bibliographies*, though they were occasionally called that; and they gave no descriptions of what the stories were about and offered no critical comments on them (although my own booklist did append broad subject classifications). The first listing to add these was, not surprisingly, also done by Evans. Under the title "Thumbing the Munsey Files" it began serial publication in *Fantasy Commentator* in 1944, and ran for fifteen installments before ending in 1952. That column, then, marks an historic beginning of a process which has now culminated satisfyingly in the vastly comprehensive compilation before us, *Science-Fiction / the Early Years*.

The correctness, completeness and critical balance of this work should be assessed with care, since it is clearly going to be used extensively as a reference and a short-cut by scores of future critics writing about science-fiction. I have therefore spent considerable time sampling its entries, and am pleased to report that Bleiler earns a high rating in all three of these essential characteristics. (What few complaints I have and what omissions I have noted will be cited subsequently.)

With some exceptions, for historical reasons, the 3000-odd stories here date from the nineteenth century up to the year 1931. Bleiler describes each in appropriate detail (150-2000 words), and adds a sentence or two giving his opinion of its quality and importance in the field. Authors are given thumbnail characterizations, with dates of their birth and death when known.

This material is arranged alphabetically by author in a legible, two-columned format. For those who don't happen to recall the author of a particular story, the book carries a title index. There are also three other indexes, which make the material even more accessible: one of publication dates, one of magazine sources, and a long motif and theme index. This last should be particularly useful to scholars, and even includes a listing of the years in which individual stories take place. Bleiler gives as well a list of the science-fiction reference works he consulted, and helpful abstracts of books by Blavatsky, Fort, Donnelly, Lowell, etc. which supplied many of the ideas and backgrounds for early science-fiction, but which are now passé.

In his introduction he grapples with the perennial problem of defining the genre, coming up with the following (pp. xi-xii):

> . . . Science fiction is not a unitary genre or form, hence cannot be encompassed in a single definition. It is an assemblage of genres and subgenres that are not intrinsically closely related, but are generally accepted as an area of publication by a marketplace. Science-fiction is thus only a commercial term. . . .
>
> Unlike supernatural fiction, which is unitary in nature, science-fiction has no single thesis. It is built up principally out of three types of fiction, with creep-overs and overlaps from another three. The exact interpretation of these component types has varied from time to time, creating a fluid genre and endless dispute about boundaries.
>
> These three major components of science-fiction are the quaisi-scientific story, the lost race story, and the future story. . . .
>
> Other literary subgenres that are occasionally included in science fiction are the scientific detective story, the story of prehistoric life, and the story based on abnormal psychology.

He supports this with description and discussion, and uses his definition to justify what he includes in and excludes from this book. I find his arguments persuasive and rational, although I am not comfortable with minimizing the connection between science-fiction and supernatural fiction, and cannot accept his rejecting as unsatisfactory the term "fantasy" (as typified, say, by *Unknown* magazine). To me, these three areas have always constituted a continuum——or, to use symbols employed in logic, intersecting circles.

On the basis of his definition Bleiler also devises a classification system for some 600 motifs in science-fiction. While these are detailed and encompassing, I think it would have been historically appropriate to note somewhere the existence of the decimal classification system for the genre that was set forth by Jack Speer and elaborated by Alastair Cameron, and to comment why it should be rejected, since it covers much the same ground in handy numerical fashion.

One of the most interesting sidelights is the author's justification for hyphenating "science-fiction," which I found pleasing because it approximates my own belief, and is the reason why the term has appeared that way in this magazine since 1943 (p. xi): ". . .since English usage normally hyphenates compound words that mean other than their components, of the two forms that are met, 'science-fiction' and 'science fiction,' the hyphenated form is to be preferred." With this book, though my stance has never wavered, I have been turned from a die-hard into a revisionist!

Information-seekers will find one exclusion from this otherwise densely inclusive compilation: works printed for the first time in science-fiction magazines. Thus there are no references to such outstanding stories as "The Colour Out of Space," "A Scientist Rises," etc.; Bleiler doesn't do *all* of your research for you. This means that several historically important science-fiction writers

(e. g., Stanton Coblentz, E. E. Smith) do not get entries anywhere at all, and also that you cannot judge the importance of many others by how many of their works are listed. (I am being descriptive and monitory here, not pejorative; this is just the inevitable result of a reasonable exclusion.)

What of the individual entries themselves? They are uniformly well written and their subjects maturely critiqued. Of course there are a few opinions I don't agree with. For example, I like Hodgson's *House on the Borderland* better than Bleiler does; I should have tipped the anti-Semitism argument the other way in Shiel's *Lord of the Sea;* and I feel if he had read *The Venture* Bleiler might have rated more highly Robert Grisewood, perhaps the first science-fiction author to write the fast-paced interplanetary adventure for which Edgar Rice Burroughs became famous. But these are trivial matters; one shouldn't expect complete coincidence of opinion.

Omissions? I estimate that there are perhaps two or three hundred stories which fulfill the author's requirements which you will not find here, and I believe I could supply a few dozen of them. (Here are a couple of my favorites, both by well known authors: E. F. Benson's "Sir Roger de Coverley," a nice time-travel tale in *Woman* magazine for December 1927; and Edward Lucas White's amusing story of invisibility, "A Transparent Nuisance," in the June 17, 1906 number of *The New York Herald.*) But such a listing might leave the impression of gross deficiency, which it is not. Most of the missing titles are buried in ephemeral magazines difficult to find today—*Smith's, Young's, Detective Dragnet, Secret Service, Flynn's Weekly,* the group known as the "shudder pulps," and so on. The mere thought of wading through them would make the most ardent researcher quail, and I doubt if more than a handful in the entire meretricious lot would have sufficient quality to be worth a critic's asterisk. Nevertheless, there are a few less rare journals which should be checked out, like *Sunset* magazine and *The Bellman,* which I know from my own researches do contain fantasy (White's "Amina," for example, appeared in the June 1, 1907 number of the latter). In any event, things like this can easily be remedied by a supplemental volume, if the Bleilers can be persuaded to undertake it.

The proofreading of this book seems excellent—I encountered only three typos in my perusal: p. xii, col. 1, line 19 up; p. xiv, col. 1, lines 34-35 up; and p. 665, col. 1, line 9 down, where Garrett Serviss's middle name is misspelled.

Overall, we have such a fine work here that one feels guilty and ungrateful to criticize it at all. Bleiler notes that he personally read every item described. This, according to Pareto's dictum (or, for those not philomathically inclined, Sturgeon's law), translates into about 2700 stories. Well, how would *you* like to wade through a substandard book each day, every day, for six years, the length of time Everett Bleiler spent on this reference volume? That, in concrete terms, represents *just one part* of the vast amount of work embodied here. *Science-Fiction / the Early Years* is difficult to overpraise, a wonderfully indispensable book for every scholar and historian in the field. And if, like myself, you really enjoy science-fiction, you'll find reading it a very great pleasure.

A. Langley Searles

ASTOUNDING DAYS: A SCIENCE FICTIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Arthur C. Clarke. New York: Bantam Books, 1990. 259 pp. 21 cm. $8.95 (softbound).

Those who enjoyed Clarke's *Ascent to Orbit,* which describes his scientific career, now have a delightful companion-piece that tells about his involvement in science-fiction. It overlaps the former in helpful ways, and is a wonderful compendium, full of bits and pieces from the "Clarke-ives." It is also, as you might well guess from the title, at once a tribute, history and autopsy of the famous magazine *Astounding Stories* through the reigns of its first three editors,

to whom the book is gratefully and affectionately dedicated: Harry Bates, F. Orlin Tremaine and the legendary John W. Campbell, Jr. Clarke calls the magazine "the quintessence of pulpdom, pure and unashamed."

The book opens by describing the first issue of *Astounding* he ever saw, turns back a couple of months to its debut, and then systematically examines the contents of practically every issue——stories, authors, illustrations, editorials, even the letter columns——for the next thirty years. He quotes in full the editorial from issue number one, describes the cover illustration on number two, and then explains the effect they had on the rest of his celebrated life.

Throughout, he takes pleasure in pointing out both the "transcendental silliness" and the eerily far-sighted predictions of these pioneering writers, one of whom was an employee of Thomas Edison. Thus he states that "science-fiction should go back to the gutter, where it belongs," and then nostalgically ushers in such arriving stars as Asimov, Bradbury and Heinlein.

Perhaps most enchanting of all is his presenting some synchronous vagaries of history. For example, Campbell's editorial extolling atomic possibilities for U^{235} actually appeared the same month that Albert Einstein composed his famous letter of warning to President Roosevelt. Another "expert" is quoted as stating flatly in 1943 that "there is no future for war rockets"——just as the V2's began to rain on London. Campbell and his magazine were investigated, and ordered by the authorities to desist from printing such speculations which, unbeknownst to the public, the Manhattan Project was turning into reality.

Clarke illuminates the dawn of the Space Age by firsthand information; as spokesman for the British Interplanetary Society since the mid-1930's, he constantly generalled running battles against "experts" who claimed that space travel was impossible. Before 1939 he once even called on his post-war pal Wernher von Braun to back him up. And during World War II, he says, "my service nickname was 'Spaceship.'"

The book is chattily self-indulgent, often wandering far afield. Thus, in reflecting on tearing up his unneeded and undelivered acceptance speech at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in 1969 he says, "When I ran into Mel Brooks years later, I snarled: 'Mel——you stole my Oscar!'" (*The Producers* beat out *2001*.) Or when he remarks, "Stanley Kubrick once earned a modest living as a chess hustler in Washington Square"; or, "Kubrick once said to me, 'Tell Wernher I wasn't getting at him.' [in *Doctor Strangelove*] I never did, because (a) I didn't believe it and (b) even if Stanley wasn't, Peter Sellars certainly was."

Clarke points out that "For good or ill, the fantasies of my youth had become the international politics of my adult life. . . would President Reagan ever have made his famous 'Star Wars' speech . . . if he hadn't seen so many movies? We have already met Darth Vader——and he is us." "We must grow out of our fascination with 'technoporn'. . . . Guns are the crutches of the impotent." Clarke invented the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) in 1946, but admits that he is not proud of it. And on the Holocaust: "No——I never knew what was happening in the concentration camps. But I suspected it, and in my position I could have found out. I didn't, and I despise myself for it." Wow.

Thinking back to the mid-1940's Clarke reminds us, "In the course of a single year, two of the main themes of science-fiction——space travel, and the ultimate weapon——had ceased to be playthings of the mind. Dreams had turned. . . into walking nightmares. Among writers, a new sense of responsibility——even guilt——was abroad, and from now on would be reflected in all their work."

Astounding Days is utterly absorbing, a fascinating and delightful book. You must get it.

H. R. Felgenhauer

POLY / NEW SPECULATIVE WRITING edited by Lee Ballentine. Mountain View, Cal.: Ocean View Books, 1989. 319pp. 25.5cm. $16.95 (softbound).

It would be possible to expend many thousands of words attempting to define "speculative writing"——indeed, ongoing debates in such periodicals as *Star Line*, the journal of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, have done just this without coming to a satisfactory conclusion. One major reason for the difficulty is that the debate is an attempt to hit a moving target, for speculative writing is an ongoing process of experimentation. It attempts to find, then burst through, the limits of technique, subject-matter and even form as it erodes boundaries between poetry and prose, scientific symbolism and words, machine and human "creativity." The time, in other words, when "speculative" was little more than a term adopted to overcome the blinkered attitude of mainstream critics towards science-fiction has long gone. Today speculative writing, particulary in poetry and in prose-poetry, is an expanding wave-front whose limits even its participants would not or cannot yet begin to set.

In a thoughtful five-paged introduction to *POLY*, Lee Ballentine makes clear this still-fluid nature of the field, and hence tne inevitable fact that there must be a certain tentativeness about any claims made for the anthology. In his own words, *Poly* is "a loose-drawn net collecting many voices."

He also emphasizes the way the volume reflects "the entente between science and surrealism." To this end, work by some members of the original surrealist movement is included, enabling the reader to see for him or her self the way the surrealist approach has fertilized the writings of many whose own roots are firmly planted on the science-fiction side of this entente.

Nearly fifty writers are represented, some as individuals, some in collaborations, some in translation, and, in one case, in extended dialogue. The following list of contributors to *POLY* indicates its extraordinary spectrum of of speculative voices from a variety of traditions:

Vance Aandahl	Bruce Boston	David Gascoyne	Edward Mycue	William Stafford
Diane Ackerman	Ray Bradbury	Otto Hahn	Jonathon Post	Steve R. Tem
Ivan Argüelles	David R. Bunch	Mark Hamburger	Kathryn Ratala	Georg Trakl
Hans Arp	Andrew Darlington	Michael Hamburger	Peter Redgrove	Yves Troendle
Lee Ballentine	Peter Dillingham	Andrew Joron	Mark Rich	Tristan Tzara
Douglas Barbour	Tom Disch	Mark Laba	Edouard Roditi	Nanos Valaoritis
Alberto Blanco	Jack Foley	David Lehman	Horatio Salas	Gene Van Troyer
	Robert Frazier	David Lunde	John O. Simon	Al Zolynas

To list the contribution of each of these, with commentary, would not only result in a review of inordinate length, but also deprive the reader of many surprises. Yet to confine myself to a selection which I found of particular interest creates another distortion, both of the almost musical way in which insightful editing has made different sections resonate together and illuminate each other, and of the true "cutting edge"-nature of the selection as a whole.

Part of the reason for this is to state honestly that much in *POLY* is genuinely difficult, even after several readings——difficult to "grasp and hold" not just for those whose ideas about poetry are implicitly bounded by preference for traditional forms and vocabularies, but even for someone long attuned to free verse poem structures. There is therefore a temptation for the reviewer to praise those pieces which have proved, either immediately or under close rereading, accessible and pleasurable or impactful or both, while avoiding mention of those that still elude the mind's grasp, to whatever extent.

With that caveat, this review will briefly mention a handful of items which have proved particularly memorable and illuminating, even though they do not necessarily represent fully those parts of the anthology which most directly confront the speculative writer's struggle to achieve new languages, new forms, or—— to paraphrase Jeff Sawtell's remark about the surrealist painter Ernst——new ways of fooling the mind in order to enlighten it.

Curiously, this anthology contains almost no examples of hypertext, the technique nowadays offering concrete poetry an escape route, via computer-capability-suggested effects, from a dead end of self-imitation. The only exceptions here occur among work by Peter Dillingham, who as editor of *Cthulhu Calls* did much to pioneer both outlet and audience for speculative poetry——and, indeed, for non-traditional form science-fiction poetry generally. Particularly intriguing is his use of a dual text to provide, in a sense, "hard prints" of the separate yet linked workings of the brain's left and right hemispheres. (There is an interesting, though probably coincidental, parallelism with experiments in "destabilizing" his own poems by signal deprivation, based on the brain experiments of Dr. Christopher Evans, reported by Brian Aldiss in his book *The Shape of Further Things*, 1970).

Moving on, "The Warehouseman," which forms part of David R. Bunch's ongoing verse/prose novel *Moderan*, ends with a flattening after-taste of sentimentality but is still a fascinating contribution to the debate over whether speculative poetry should——or indeed can——have narrative thrust, since here experimental form and typography aid, rather than disrupt, the flow of this anecdote about a robot-dominated society.

Ballentine comments that breaking the mold of the artist as someone alone is "a special project of *POLY*." The relevant section, "Communicating Vessels," embraces both collaborations and translations. Of the former, perhaps the most intriguing is a sequence by Tom Disch and David Lehmann. Using six fixed words which had to be included, and sestina forms, they first produced a separate poem each, and then a series of increasingly fused pieces. The sequence carries a certain crossword-puzzle element, but results in fascinating snapshots of poetic minds in action.

Although not included in "Communicating Vessels," the dialog between the two poets William Stafford and Gene Van Troyer offers many valuable insights both into the way such dialog fertilizes ideas and clarifies concepts, and into the relationship between poetry and science-fiction——and, yet more generally, between science and writing. It is tempting to quote this dialogue extensively, but two instances must suffice. From Van Troyer: ". . .putting words to things, employing language to describe the world, is a kind of measuring and quantifying." And from Stafford: ". . .all of us . . . find our way into contact with outside 'reality' by means of states of the mind. . . . Dealing directly with reality is impossible," ("Ambitious to Wake Up," pp. 122 and 125). This recognizes a gap which many contributors to *POLY* try to overcome through use of techniques analogous to the jump-cutting in movies. They produce precise fragments which, depending on both their own skill and vision, and the perception and openness of the reader, may or may not add up to a gestalt that brings a genuine grasp of some reality, be it of our commonly accepted world, a surreal one, or a science-fictional vision.

As Stafford says, "We need freedom to fail, to try out our wilder ideas." This "free space" *POLY* generously provides; yet it also provides many pleasures, instances where experiments with form are so successfully fused with a reminting of familiar s-f imagery, or with the birth of new visions which are at the heart of the genre, that even those least patient with non-traditional verse will, if they read open-mindedly, find genuine enjoyment.

Into that last category I should put, without hesitation, the beautiful science-infused poems by Peter Redgrove included here (hitherto unpublished, it should be noted). Vance Andahl's haunting "Owleaters," Andrew Darlington's "Fight in the Cave of the Moon Butchers," Robert Frazier's "Fissionary Dreams" and Andrew Joron's "Beacon" are further instances where form and content unite to trigger a genuine sense of wonder in any reader open to feel that emotion, even when encountering it in a perhaps unexpected format. In "When Silver Plums Fall" Bruce Boston makes something totally new out of the clichéd situation of being trapped in a decaying orbit, and Jonathon Post (Voyager II mission planning engineer) pro-

duces a remarkable Curie poem, "Sweet Radium." (As a brief aside, those tempted to feel that an anthology like this would be full of writers remote from science-fiction or the science communities will find several beside Post where linkage to one or the other is umbilical.)

It would be possible to continue at length quoting from among the "high points" here, but I think sufficient has been said to show that much work in *POLY* represents "finished art." For a collection of this breadth and diversity, even those who may retire defeated from some of the entries because they seem at once almost impenetrably dense and irreconcilably fragmentary will certainly find enjoyment enough to justify the purchase——especially at this price.

The production of this anthology is excellent. The typeface is clear and pleasing, and there is ample white space to allow the work——and the reader——to breathe. Peter Loschan's charcoal artwork, though irrelevant in many ways, does not detract from the quality of the book.

It is traditional for reviewers to end their comments with a complaint. All I have left to remark by way of cavil is that in just two instances contributions seem to have been included because of the writer's name rather than the nature of the piece. The first of these is Ray Bradbury's "To Ireland No More" in the section titled "Singularities." Not only does this rather tedious and overlong poem of nostalgia not fit the section's editorial description ("short pieces of writing so compact in effect that their logic is inescapable"), but it is not even good Bradbury. The other unfortunate inclusion is a once-lost film script by the famed British surrealist, David Gascoyne. "Procession to the Private Sector" is an interesting, if not wildly original in a surrealist context, prewar example of its genre. It certainly deserves publication——but not, I think, in *POLY*, where the kinship between the "willed dazzle of surrealism . . . and the commitment to extrapolation in s-f" (to quote Stafford again) has already been better and more tellingly illuminated elsewhere, and where "the cutting edge" is at issue, not the recycled.

To illustrate one last time how that science-fictional/surrealistic interfacing has shaped today's speculative poetry, let me end by quoting in its entirety one of the great pleasures of the "Singularities" section, Mark Laba's "Card #27." Like so much other work in *POLY*, this couplet belongs as much to, and in, science-fiction as any much-loved Ace Double, S. O. W. and all.

> You monster sacrificing yourself to a mountain of glass,
> you're not immortal, just a yellow jewel of blood.

Henry C. Dyens

THROUGH THE PALE DOOR: A GUIDE TO AND THROUGH THE AMERICAN GOTHIC by Frederick S. Frank. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. xvii-338 pp. 23.5 cm. $45.00.

Probably the most prolific Gothic scholar alive is Frederick Frank, author of numerous articles on the subject as well as the 1988 bibliography of Montague Summers (pioneer and prototype Gothic enthusiast). His books include *Guide to the Gothic* (1984), *The First Gothics* (1986) and *Gothic Fiction: a Master List* (1988). He has also contributed an historical essay and annotations to two books of the same name——*Horror Literature* (1981) edited by Marshall B. Tymn and *Horror Literature* (1989) edited by Neil Barron.

Thus has Frederick Frank, with colleagues Devendra P. Varma, Richard D. Spector and Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, helped secure and furbish the Gothic castle of scholarship so lovingly built by Montague Summers. Frank, especially, has tried to lower the drawbridge across the moat that separates Gothicism from the rest of the literary-scholarly world.

An abiding problem here has been the very use of the word "Gothic." It

was a derisive term in the eighteenth century, and conventional literary historians have long tended to short-shrift Walpole, Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis and like authors as aberrations symbolizing the failure of the Age of Reason in the conflagration of the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars. The poet Shelley, for instance, is praised for having "outgrown" his Gothic impulses (mostly horrible juvenile verse). Where, one wonders, would one pigeonhole his wife, the author of *Frankenstein*? Early science-fiction writer? A pre-feminist lady-of-letters? This is still a debated question.

But just as the standard Gothic novelists are finally gaining academic attention, so is the adjective itself encountering resistance in the contemporary horror field. In *The Weird Tale* (1990), S. T. Joshi justifiably finds the term "ghost story" inadequate for the modern weird tale——and then adds, "I similarly find the term 'Gothic fiction' very clumsy for anything written subsequent to Poe." On the other hand, Keith Neilson (in Barron's *Horror Literature*) states his belief that Stephen King has more in common than not with the classic Gothic authors.

Probably the Gothic *modus operandi* can now be thought of as transferred from English to American literature. Of course the horrors of today are different from those of two centuries ago; but literary aims have changed little, and tactics of the authors are fairly similar. So it remains for someone like Frederick Frank to trace a continuum from Charles Brockden Brown and *Wieland* all the way to the fiction of Stephen King and Peter Straub.

Frank has taken as title for his book a phrase from Poe's poem, "The Haunted Palace" (itself encased within the tale "The Fall of the House of Usher"). His introduction is a bibliographic essay, which argues that "nightmares, fears, monsters and demonic anti-myths routinely lurk beneath American optimism and smug confidence. He wages a good battle against the prim (and obviously repressed) type of critic who asserts, usually too vehemently to be convincing, "that the Gothic was an inferior genre incapable of high seriousness and appealing only to readers of questionable tastes" (such, I imagine, as this reviewer, who wrote his first letter to August Derleth in 1956).

Through the Pale Door is number 11 in Greenwood Press's "Bibliographies and Indexes in American Literature" series; it comprises an annotated bibliography of 509 texts. Some of these are novels; some are short stories that appeared in periodicals or general short story collections; and some are from collections that are Gothic in entirety. Even a few poems are singled out for annotation. Each numbered entry (conveniently, these are alphabetized) is followed by a "Research Source," directing the reader to pertinent background, critical or biographical. There follows, usually, a critical synopsis of the plot. In many books plot-summaries can often take on a computer-like mindlessness, but Frank's pithy, epigrammatic style makes his annotations pleasurable reading; in assessing "Chickamauga," for example, he says, "No one awakens from a Biercean nightmare." But what makes this work especially valuable is his critical perspective of the Gothic, which enables him to postulate such linkages as Lovecraft's "The Shadow Out of Time" and its "subterranean decor" with the "abysmal interiors" of Beckford's *Vathek*, and King's *Pet Sematary* with Hawthorne's "Rappacini's Daughter."

There is also a year-by-year chronology of titles, a short secondary bibliography, and a Bleileresque "Index of Themes, Motifs, Events, Character Names." The last embodies occasional chuckles such as "CORPSE, CADAVER, BODY: animated or peripatetic . . . as hidden or rotting relative. . . ." (as opposed, of course, to merely rotten relatives); "DECAPITATION: see HEADLESSNESS"; "EXECUTION. . . fascination with. . . ." (How about "SCHOLARS, GOTHIC: morbid obsessions of"?)

Frank's book is handsomely bound in gray cloth, with white lettering on black panels stamped on both the cover and the spine. It is a reference work that is well worth owning, and I strongly recommend it.

Steve Eng

THE WEIRD TALE by S. T. Joshi. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1990. 292 pp. 23.5 cm. $27.50 (cloth); $12.95 (paper).

In this set of critical essays our leading Lovecraft scholar deals with the work of Algernon Blackwood, Lord Dunsany, M. R. James and Arthur Machen, authors singled out in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" as outstanding practitioners of of the weird tale. For good measure, he adds two more on Ambrose Bierce and H. P. Lovecraft himself. Although they were written, says Joshi, because he liked these writers and wished others to also, he is not merely descriptive, but deduces what he feels is the world-view of each author, and relates it to their stories. Thus Machen's writings support his renunciation of science, Blackwood's show his mystical linkage with nature, Dunsany's a dislike of industrialism, and Bierce's his contempt for human beings and their institutions. Joshi then shows how their views affected, and became altered and included in, the fiction of Howard Lovecraft.

To Joshi, M. R. James has no world-view at all, which may account for his rating him below his fellow-writers and emphasizing the admitted limitations of the type of story he preferred. But surely James's world-view is clear: it is that of a conventional Anglican. Do not the tenets of a major Christian sect constitute a *Weltanschauung*? If belief in good and evil seems simplistic, we should reflect that James wrote ghost stories for recitation at Christmas (a religious festival) to an audience primarily of boys.

Relating these authors' fiction to their philosophical outlook lifts these essays above the level of being merely instructive and interesting (which they certainly are). Joshi has taken the trouble to read *all* the output of each writer, not just the genre contributions, and the extra effort shows. What also shows is his ability to compose terse, informal, no-nonsense prose. It is very refreshing to read sound criticism uncluttered by academic jargon. Some of his suggestions are novel and persuasive—for example, his defense of Dunsany's late fiction and his reasoned departures from accepted judgments (as when he rates "A Descent Into Egypt" on a level comparable to "The Willows").

The essay on Lovecraft is the longest in the book, and also the best. Joshi discusses Lovecraft's philosophical position as an aesthetic materialist; his renunciation of supernaturalism; his Dunsanian period (challengingly, without ever citing "The Cats of Ulthar" or "The Strange High House in the Mist"); his imaginary books and pantheon of deities (never using, thankfully, the phrase "Cthulhu Mythos"); and the bounds of his knowledge. Throughout he marks the changes in Lovecraft's views over his lifetime. These sections are excellently—often elegantly—done; and with two exceptions I have no quarrel with the positions taken on controversial points. Here, I cannot agree that "we must still regard this whole elaborate myth cycle . . . as Lovecraft's greatest achievement." Evidence for this sweeping claim is lacking; and against it is Joshi's own judgment that "The Colour Out of Space," where these elements are totally absent, is "perhaps the most perfect story Lovecraft ever wrote." The second point is Lovecraft's use of mind-transference in his fiction. Joshi claims this is consistent with a materialistic outlook, but his argument is unconvincing and, I feel, easily refuted. Apart from these, just about everything in this part seems scholastically well buttressed.

There is a helpful preface and an introduction to these essays, in which I was pleased to find many of Lovecraft's stories described as "quasi science fiction"; perhaps in a few more years we shall finally see the adjective "quasi" disappear, for (as I have pointed out elsewhere) there is no doubt that they are indeed *bona fide* science-fiction. Joshi also wrestles here with definitions for the weird tale; I suspect that it may, as Bleiler says of science-fiction (see the quotation on page 132), be merely a commercial term.

Besides a thorough index, the book carries a critical appendix commenting on articles previously written about the authors treated, and a bibliography listing these, as well as the genre fiction they wrote. The only major omission I

found there was Samuel D. Russell's "Irony and Horror / the Art of M. R. James"; this surprised me, because it is the most comprehensive critical article ever written about the man (over twice as long as the essay here) and because it appeared in *The Acolyte*, a journal Joshi cites. No matter. *The Weird Tale* is pure pleasure to read, and makes a superb addition to the library of every reader and collector.

A. Langley Searles

Colonyship Capers

"His work gained a mountain glaring with the dawn yet by contrast his amatory verses, written for other youths to address to their girls, contain some impudent and sinister stuff."

——"Chatterton, 'The Marvellous Boy,'" *Chambers Encyclopedia.*

in the streets these are only frugal when cheerful; when opposed or when
a power failure causes the Marzan Personal Governor
installed in all in the interests of state
to fail to work they become rowdy, rough until the power comes back

ah but the thought of permanent departure
causes a curiously frantic search for some companionship
even though journeying will be utterly uncompanionate

in that era when all unhuman life is gone like all of us
people like us will confuse tortoises with hedghogs
parrots with angels
hung in midair over Fifth Ave the latest gimmick wedding
preparing a coupling a union before going to the long sleep
marrying a guy looked like her exhusband cold menacing
like unlit Xmas tree like overhead the patiently waiting colony ship
unlit because coldsleepers need no lighted portholes
and robot captains see cat-well in the dark

in the hydroponics ripe earthstar
brown curlhorn fungus has taken over
as in toilets cellars survival bunkers best fit of all parameters
to survive so robot gardner encourages the easy road

rare as actors fart or get hiccups in a movie
voices on this ship——even the honeymooners
we briefly glimpsed are still cold and condensed in dew

some joker before launch stuck on one cubicle seethrough
a sticker advertising Malmsey wine the taste
princes drown in till the end of time

it is a perfect cornucopia of mindless hope
the motionless corridors smell of stale
Xmas pud of attempts to turn on a fused-out radio
of long-dried apples in a dead man's yard

in the minds ghosts of ideas of Earth of new worlds move
pain in longdead limbs long cut off gangrenous
these are winter fools without an audience
save only future-voyeur poets lying liars that they care

what present DO you give to mark the Foreverth anniversary
of this unconsummated union, us to our time, you to yours?

Steve Sneyd

BERNARR MACFADDEN

AND HIS OBSESSION WITH SCIENCE-FICTION

PART SIX: THE LAST SCIENCE-FICTION IN *PHYSICAL CULTURE*

Sam Moskowitz

The 1928 issues of *Physical Culture* magazine began to show an increasingly sophisticated appearance. Frequently the covers were either retouched photographs or portraits conveying the impression that the contents would have great feminine appeal. This was indeed the case. For example, the June 1928 issue contained over a dozen articles directly aimed at women, such as "Freckles Should Not Worry You," "Quicksands of Sex Ignorance," "Shall We Eat Raw Food?" and "A Perfect Bust for Every Woman." The sepia section showed more photographs of women in bathing suits than men displaying their biceps. Additionally, the number of stories was increased, sometimes reaching five an issue. Predictably these were slanted towards women, which inevitably meant that fewer were science-fiction. But this did not mean elimination of the genre, for in that same June 1928 number began a seven-part lost-race serial titled "The Isle of Unchanging Youth" by Grant Hubbard. "Grant Hubbard" was a house name used by a number of staff authors at Macfadden Publications, which meant that the novel had been ordered by "management"—probably Macfadden himself, for its overriding theme was that youth could be extended indefinitely if people employed his regimen for frequent fasting.

The story starts at sea aboard the *Jennie S. Moulton*, a whaler. Seaman Joe Freeman is in love with Lois, the unhappy wife of the brutal captain, Cyrus Beldon. Beldon treats his wife so cruelly that, although pregnant, she attempts suicide by leaping overboard. She is rescued by Freeman, who later delivers her child in the absence of Beldon and most of the crew, who are out in small boats hunting whales. The vessel eventually founders and is deserted by its captain and all of the crew except Freeman and Lois, who has locked herself in a cabin; but the two are rescued by natives in an outrigger.

Here, due to an editorial blunder, the third part of the novel was run in place of the second, though there is a brief synopsis of the missing installment. This told readers that Joe and Lois were taken ashore, and were becoming acclimated to the native customs when Cyrus Beldon suddenly appears.

All of the native islanders appear to be in their twenties, and are muscular and slender—there is not an obese individual among them. Beldon, observing Freeman's obvious solicitousness to Lois, tries to kill him. He is stopped by the natives, who drag him to a high cliff overlooking a deep bay. First a woman and her child are forced off and fall into the waters below, and then Beldon. As the woman and her child flounder in the sea an octopus of stupendous size seizes them. Beldon disappears.

All the people now enter a period of religious observance. Though they may drink unlimited amounts of water, for seven days no one is permitted to eat. Even babies may not be nursed. (The woman who was pushed off the cliff with her child had disobeyed this dictum.) Such periods of fasting are responsible for the

apparent perpetual youth of the people; some are actually over a century old. The spiritual leader of the natives is a very aged man named Fu-Ar-Kee; he lives in an isolated, sacred valley, and the beautiful girl Fu-Oh-Nah (who despite her apparent youth is over a hundred years old) acts as intermediary between him and the rest of the people.

Freeman, after fasting for a time, loses his feelings of hunger; and following a fast of 27 days he is advanced to the status of "Sacred One." But Lois is caught feeding her weakening baby the juice of an orange, and is forced to leap off the cliff. Freeman learns what is happening and jumps in after her. He recovers consciousness in the sacred valley, where Fuh-Oh-Nah has managed to bring Lois and her baby. There they live for a time happily until Beldon reappears.

He knifes Fu-Ar-Kee, but before the old man dies he appoints Freeman as his successor. Freeman and Fu-Oh-Nah confront Beldon in a terrific battle on the cliff-top, all three ending up in the pool below. Beldon is killed by the fall, and the native girl, who secretly loves Freeman, dies from an octopus bite. But Freeman, because fasting and clean living have of course increased his strength, succeeeds in killing the octopus, and thus frees the people from their superstitious worship of and sacrifices to the creature. Lois, Freeman and the baby, who is named Beth, live happily on the island, remaining eternally young. But Beth, when grown, returns to civilization with a castaway. There she begins to age, and decides to return to the island, where she regains her youth.

Although the author of "The Isle of Unchanging Youth" is not known, he was clearly an experienced hand, for the novel is professionally plotted and written. The action and tension are maintained throughout, though the incessant preaching of Macfadden's claims for fasting (he advocated it even for curing toothaches) often become obtrusive.

Physical Culture had printed science-fiction since 1904, at first continuously and then intermittently. The last major work in the genre to appear in its pages was "The Devil's Highway," written by Harold Bell Wright in collaboration with his son Gilbert, whose pen name was John Lebar. (Gilbert Wright by then had already had two novels published under this pseudonym, *The Doubtful Year* and *The Lighted Lantern*, neither of them fantasy.) Though once well known, the Wrights are forgotten today, so it seems pertinent to sketch their background.

Harold Bell Wright was one of the top best-selling authors in American literary history. The manuscript of his first novel, *That Printer of Udell's*, had been rejected by a variety of publishers. One day Elsbery W. Reynolds of The Book Supply Company Distributors of Chicago heard Wright, who was a preacher, deliver a sermon in that city. He was so impressed that he struck up a friendship with the man, and though his company had never themselves ever published a book (and never would publish any others except those by Wright), he undertook printing and distribution of that novel in 1903. Reynolds's firm was a mail-order house, and had no bookstore outlets, but through the mails it managed to dispose of almost half a million hard-cover copies of a work by an unknown writer.

Wright's second novel, *The Shepherd of the Hills* (1907), solidified his reputation, and through multiple motion picture remakes and reprintings may still be remembered today. Like all his other fiction, it cloaked a sermon of good winning against evil in an inspiring story where an ordinary individual prevails over obstacles of nature and man through steadfastness, clean living, common sense and a faith in God.

This formula produced a number of bestsellers, including *The Calling of Dan Matthews* (1909), *The Winning of Barbara Worth* (1911), *The Eyes of the World* (1914) and *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent* (1919). By the end of the decade Wright's hardcover sales came to ten million copies. The Book Supply Company spent as much as $100,000 promoting a book, going so far as to have them listed in Sears & Roebuck catalogs (which distributed as many as fifteen million copies a year). It

also contracted with Reilly & Lee, publishers of the "Oz" books, to take care of bookstore sales.

When Reynolds was taken ill in 1919, Wright terminated his connection with The Book Supply Company and negotiated an agreement with Appleton & Company. But this publisher never did as thorough a job of promotion as Book Supply, relying solely on bookstore sales and tending to ride the coat-tails of Wright's immense popularity. This was concentrated among working men, housewives and rural families, many of whom never bought any other hardcover books except their Bibles. Literary critics reviled him, as much for his financial success as for the inadequacies in his fiction, which was not only simplistically plotted but simplistically written (Wright even hired a schoolteacher to check the prose in his manuscripts). But during the 1920's he received substantial renumeration by selling first serial rights to his novels to such prominent journals as *Country Gentleman, Cosmopolitan* and *McCall's Magazine*. Moving pictures were made from seven of them.

The stratospheric expectations of the 1920's and the depression of the 1930's, however, made many cynical of Wright's homespun philosophy, and eventually the major portion of his audience was too financially depressed to afford the luxury of buying hardcover books. By the time "The Devil's Highway" appeared he was no longer a best-selling author.

It is entirely possible that both the plot and writing of this work was all or predominately the work of Wright's son Gilbert, and that he lent his name to it merely to help sales through what remained of his reputation. He did not need the money; an early life of hardship and illness had made him provident, and he remained a wealthy man until his death. Nor had Wright ever written anything before that even remotely resembled science-fiction, and there were no capsules of speculative thought anywhere in his books, such as are found in the non-fantasy novels of T. S. Stribling. Nevertheless, *Physical Culture* probably paid a good price for first magazine rights to "The Devil's Highway" because it had previously published science-fiction successfully, even though the genre was very uncommon in mass-circulation women's and family magazines. Serialization was begun with the October 1931 number and concluded with that of March 1932. Like most of *Physical Culture's* fiction, each installment was handsomely illustrated.

The protagonist of the story is Fred Ramsey, an athletic, intelligent young physicist. Ramsey is about to leave the laboratory of a Dr. Gordon, who conducts experiments with high-frequency radiation, for a new post at Pacific University. There he will work with Professor George Weston, a world-famous authority in that field.

The title of the story derives from a stretch of arid, sandy waste between Yuma, Arizona and Altar, in northwestern Mexico. To the natives there it is known as *el camino del diablo*, "the road of the devil," because of strange happenings that have occurred there. Ramsey himself has had an odd experience in the area while exploring it with his cousin Jim Crawford and Dr. Mills, a biologist. They see an unusual low volcanic rim and decide to head for it. Out of nowhere there appears an Indian named Juan, who offers to guide them along an easy route to its perimeter. But instead, he manages to lead them circuitously away from it, and by the time they had planned to leave they have not reached their objective.

At Pacific University Ramsey becomes acquainted with Professor Weston's daughter Alma. She confides to him that she is worried about a sudden change in her father's behavior. Though originally always very caring and concerned about her, he is now distant and cold, and seems totally obsessed with his work in the laboratory. He has also become more materialistic, concentrating on accumulating wealth and has become very cynical about the world in general.

Ramsey notices that Weston has constructed a strange headpiece, and that this is a wireless transmitting device for mental messages. One of these is directed by Weston towards the volcanic cone Ramsey's party had tried to explore.

In conversations with Ramsey and Crawford, Dr. Mills sets forth what is the guiding philosophy and "sermon" of the novel: a scientific cast of mind must always be balanced by a spiritual outlook. To substantiate this point of view he cites the case of Dr. L. Munsker. Munsker is a scientist with a great mind but is intrinsically evil, and has not hesitated to make a fortune through his invention of a new poison gas. He typifies a wholly materialistic outlook. It turns out that Munsker and Dr. Weston are in touch with each other, and that Munsker finances and directs Weston's research.

The strange headpieces, or headcaps, are one result of this research, and Weston takes Ramsey into his laboratory and demonstrates their powers. They are powered by uranium, and utilize a new form of mental energy called "ethericity." Not only can they be used to transmit messages telepathically, but with the proper mental emanations they can reduce a dead plant into separate molecules or restore a nearly dead one back to life. They can reform broken objects, and even create a limited antigravitational effect.

Ramsey is taken by car back to the Devil's Highway, and then escorted by the Indian Juan and another man to the isolated volcanic rim and down into the central cone. Here a huge laboratory facility has been constructed, all artfully camouflaged so as to appear from the air to be lava formations. It is powered by subterranean heat, and is entirely self-sustaining; many men work there.

This laboratory is run by Dr. Munsker, whom Ramsey meets. Munsker is repulsively deformed, and is described as having a crooked back, spindly legs, spidery arms and a gigantic skull. He was reviled since childhood for his ugliness, and reveals to Ramsey that he seeks power because he wants to settle his score with the world.

Munsker explains that his discovery of ethericity and his experiments with it are responsible for the seemingly supernatural phenomena reported on the Devil's Highway, and that ethericity can be subverted to many other uses. He himself carries an "ethericity box" for protection, for example; this can blot out a person's thought at a distance.

Ramsey discovers a method to shield himself from registering on an ethericity screen. This so impresses Munsker with his ability that he offers to train Ramsey to be his second in command. But there is a condition: Ramsey must agree to undergo a special treatment to eliminate his emotional responses so that he can concentrate solely on scientific research. He consents, and after the treatment writes a very cold letter to Alma, severing their warm relationship.

Alma tells Crawford, and the two decide to investigate. They fly to the volcanic cone. Munsker uses his ethericity powers to fuse the engine's magneto. The plane crashes, killing Crawford, but not before Alma bails out and parachutes safely into the laboratory complex.

Munsker decides to subject the girl to "spiritual and mental scientific experiments" to see if she can be subverted to his cause. Alma, confident in her own mental stability, agrees. She is taken to the control room, where points of light on a map indicate locations of agents and of "Munsker tubes" all over the world. He tells her the frightening news that when he presses a button on a little black box strapped to his waist atomic breakdown will spread from these tubes and destroy their surroundings.

He then subjects Alma to the dehumanizing radiations——but instead of affecting her, they act upon him. He presses the destruct button, there is an explosion, and Munsker dissolves into dust particles. But there is no world-wide atomic disintegration; instead, the effect of the anti-emotional treatments on all of Munsker's workers, as well as Ramsey and Weston, are completely reversed. Apparently unselfish love and a spiritual outlook have somehow won out over evil.

While true science-fiction, the story-line in "The Devil's Highway" is very superficial and the writing barely adequate. The idea that spiritual quali-

ties must temper scientific advancement was scarcely a new one at the time. The authors nibble at the consequences of thought-control and teeter on the edge of portraying atomic power, but apparently lack the background to present its utilization and suggest rational consequences. Why Wright and his son chose to tackle a plot so far outside their accustomed precincts is a mystery. Nevertheless, the novel was published as a book by Appleton later in 1932.

(to be concluded)

Southwest Haunts

Octavio Ramos, Jr.

I

At the top of the hill between Los Alamos and Española sits a large white cross. Many other crosses litter the southwestern landscape, from the mountains that sit across the ocean near Santa Barbara to the outskirts of Texas. These crosses have many meanings: they mark a place where someone died or where a tragedy——a massacre or plague, perhaps——occurred; they act as portents, past or present; or they mark some Hispanic or Indian holy place. The cross that divides Los Alamos and Española, for example, signals the *Santuario*, one of the many old churches that attract the faithful and the tourist alike.

Nothing better symbolizes the southwest than the simple cross; note that the symbol is not a crucifix, thus removing (but not eliminating) its Christian significance. Three cultures inhabit this tough land: Anglo, Hispanic and Indian. Each culture had and has its own beliefs and superstitions, and this fact has created a montage of interesting and disturbing incidents that some call paranormal.

The open southwestern landscape, with its vast deserts and long stretches of sagebrush and yuccas, heightens the illusion. By day, cacti take on strange forms, cattle-skulls or arrowheads can be seen in impossible-to-reach caves, and for no reason rocks appear suddenly to move or crash. The sun turns blood-red just before it sinks below the horizon; the wind howls as the cabin or house settles in for the night; crickets, cicadas and other insects sound their mating calls; and great areas of open space which by day burned with a mirage-inducing heat now grow pitch-dark and cold.

The people, too, add to the atmosphere——people willing to tell stories about every fact of the land and its inhabitants. But not all of the stories explain the land; some are themselves mysteries, whether told by the campfire or inside well-lit Santa Fe galleries. To tourists, they seem but cautionary and culturally interesting. To some natives, however, they are the truth.

II

The story of *La Lorona* (The Weeping Woman or Crying Banshee) has many variations, each united by a common thread. It begins with a tall, beautiful woman whose most alluring feature is her long black hair. Born a peasant, she lives her days working in the fields or helping take care of the children of older women.

Her exquisite beauty, however, catches the eyes of the rich *cabelleros*. Some of the young men begin to steal her away at night; soon the young girl learns the manners and graces of the establishment, becoming a favorite in society. But the dream does not last long. The young woman becomes pregnant. Unmarried, she becomes an outcast as well. The lusty *caballeros* disown her, as do both society

and the peasants. With her twin babes, she then leaves the village in disgrace.

Through carelessness or by her own hand, the twins drown in a ditch soon after. When the woman sees the dead children——or realizes what she has done——she begins an unstoppable fit of crying. All around the village the *Llorona* appears, her mourning not once ceasing. The once-aloof villagers try to give comfort, but the woman disdains any pity. Her once-beautiful hair becomes tangled and infested with vermin, and her white dress turns brown and then black from endless wading in the waters that surround the village. She refuses to eat or sleep. Constant weeping destroys her melodic voice; she now shrieks hoarsely. This goes on for several weeks, until one day the *Llorona's* wailing ceases. Her body is found floating face down in the very ditch where her children died.

In the same tradition of Juan Diego discovering the *Milagrosa*, it was a man who first saw the apparition of *La Llorona*. In this part of the tale, however, variations crop up. Before citing these, it must be said that the *Llorona* has been seen countless times, always near water, by a varied cast of people. She always appears as a black-haired woman clad in a blindingly white dress.

Some stories describe her running along the river bank, her hair flying in the breeze and her young face scarred by agony; she runs as if in desperation, crying out in pain. In other versions she appears as an aged and heavily wrinkled woman sitting mutely on a mule or ass; the two wander along banks of water, and when anyone approaches, the apparition turns into a ball of fire.

The oldest of the stories has the *Llorona* wading hip-deep in some body of water, searching for the drowned infants. If disturbed, the apparition will at first scream in agony——a scream that can never be forgotten, and which will become the heart of nightmares where the *Llorona* becomes a skeleton with bleached white hair. It will float along the water, screaming in agony until it encounters land or some obstruction, like a bridge; then it will fade from sight.

La Llorona has been given many meanings. Some parents tell her story to their young children so that they will shun water-holes at night. Others say that because she murdered her children the *Llorona* now wishes to do the same to others; in this version she has become a spectre preying on the young. Alternately, her fate is viewed as one due guilty parents: those careless with their children risk suffering the same pain she did long ago. Whatever the interpretation, she is one of the few ghosts that actually kills. Even today, a child's death in a ditch or river strengthens the myth.

The Hispanic population understands that the spectre's search for her children will never end. She will continue to grieve as long as children continue to drown. In New Mexico, even with aggressive campaigns to prevent children from pleaying near ditches, many drownings still occur each year. And at night, just above the wind and the crickets, *La Llorona's* voice cries on.

III

Kachina dolls are Indian spirits captured in a combination of wood, clay and feathers; sometimes the dolls also wear turquoise and/or silver. The maker chooses the spirit's color(s) and creates a beautiful image. Many spirits exist in these forms——the Blue Cricket, the Eagle Dancer and the Dark Lizard, to name a few.

It is important to remember that a *kachina* is truly a spirit, as a young Albuquerque couple soon discovered. While shopping in Santa Fe's Old Town, a woman I shall call Kate spots a beautiful black-feathered *kachina* in a small store. She buys it——not for the spirit it contains, as many people do, but because of its vibrant colored feathers. She takes the doll home, and soon strange things begin to happen.

Because her husband works at night, Kate usually stays up late. But soon her nocturnal hours become tainted with a sense of fear. While watching TV

one night, she hears a jingling sound just above the sitcom's dialog and laugh-track. When she lowers the set's volume, the noise goes away. If she increases it again, the jingling begins anew. Several days later, the sound becomes easily recognizable: it is as if someone is shaking a set of small bells to a steady beat. The noise always stops when there is complete silence in the house.

Deciding that her husband's odd hours and dangerous work (he is a police officer) have made her a bit nervous, Kate avoids television and radio, and takes up reading instead. The noise does not recur, but is replaced by another sensation: the aroma of perfume. It does not come from outside the house, and gradually increases to an intolerable level. It seems strongest to her for several minutes after her husband has come home. She tells her husband about these experiences, but he cannot smell or hear anything.

Then for several days neither the perfume nor the smell appears. Kate relaxes, and begins to watch TV again. But one Friday evening things change suddenly. While drowsing over a late program, she senses both phenomena return together. But this time Kate is not frightened; instead she feels sexually aroused. As she opens her eyes, she sees on her bedroom wall the shadow of her *kachina.* The *kachina,* however, always occupies a shelf of its own in the living room. The shadow disappears, and when she walks into the living room she finds the *kachina* still in its usual spot. Now very nervous and confused, Kate telephones her husband. A duty-sergeant at the police station informs her that her husband has not shown up for work. He adds that he had missed every Friday for the past month.

Subsequently, in much pain and sorrow, Kate discovers that her husband had begun an affair with another woman. At the divorce trial, the scent of that woman's perfume came as no surprise——she had smelled it long before. One interesting note: Kate never did discover her *kachina's* spirit, but it remains in her home.

The empathy of sensuousness, the smell and the shadow-apparition seem to be portents. Some would say that the spirit of the *kachina* communicated with Kate in the only way it could, hoping to be understood. After Kate's discovery of her husband's affair all paranormal occurrences ceased, and have not since returned.

Most *kachina* owners claim that they either searched for a spirit continually, and bought the appropriate doll regardless of cost, or that something inexplicable attracted them to a specific one when they were window-shopping.

IV

The Devil's River winds through Del Rio, Texas, and it is in the brush country surrounding it that what began as a unique experience developed into something more. In late 1834, John and Mollie Dent found themselves close to this river. John, a trapper, set about his trade while Mollie awaited the birth of their first child. The next May she had a wide-eyed baby girl —— but the event proved tragic, for Mollie died soon after giving birth.

In an attempt to find help, John headed for the Pecos River, but he never made it. Some days after this, Mexican sheepherders found the bodies of the couple, but there was no sign of the baby. Near Mollie's corpse, however, the men spotted wolf tracks. The scenario seemed clear: a pack of wolves had carried the baby away.

For the next several decades these sheepherders, Indians and gold-fevered miners told stories over their campfires of a child, then later a woman, who ran with a pack of wolves. Most accounts described her as tall and lean. She had long hair, wild eyes and long legs. Her ribs and pelvis were oddly proportioned, as if she ran on all fours. Some said that this Wolf Girl attacked sheep like a member of the pack; others, that she even suckled young wolf pups.

By now this Wolf Girl should be long dead, but tales about her persist. Current sightings describe her form as misty, almost white. Some witnesses report

that an odd howling, scream or yelp precedes her apparition. This lasts only a few seconds, and most of the people who claim to have seen her say that she either vanishes or runs away at an unbelievable speed.

The Seminoles, who refused to enter the territory surrounding the Devil's River during the 1800's, speak of the Wolf Girl in guarded whispers. Perhaps they know something we don't.

V

The *Llorona*, the *kachina* and the Wolf Girl legends show how three cultures have mixed in a rugged, unforgiving land. The vast southwestern landscape is filled with huge open spaces and deserts, some of which hide ghost towns or abandoned mines, while others conceal unexplored caves and caverns. These add their background and atmosphere. The many religions, including Catholicism, spiritualism and *Santerismo*, contribute their nuances as well.

The tales derived from these legends all have a dark and forbidding cast. They make the night pitch-black, turn the wind into a howl or cry, and transform cacti into shadowy animals or men. They show that the southwest harbors not only great beauty, but unfathomed mystery.

Tips on Tales

Short Reviews of Books Old and New

Roger Zelazny's *The Last Defender of Camelot* (1980) is a fine collection of stories and novellas, as could be expected from one of the field's top stylists. The sheer story-telling skill displayed here is exceptional, and the reader is rewarded with richly detailed, alusive and symbolic prose——writing, in other words, that is both artistic and exciting. Additionally, the structure of the book will interest those wanting to appreciate better Zelazny's place in the recent history of science-fiction——for this is also a retrospective collection, taking us from 1962 up to 1979.

This allows us to witness firsthand the author's development, observing how he has changed and how he has stayed the same. The changes are largely evolutions in the craft: a talented wordsmith tests and perfects an ever-wider range of narrative techniques. Interestingly, also, each story is prefaced by a brief, often amusing historic sidelight——how the tale was written, an editor's reaction to it, and so on.

Possibly the most intriguing facet of all is what remains consistent throughout the collection: a series of recurrent themes that reveal the workings of the author's mind in a way no biography ever could. In fact, the book might almost be divided into three distinct sections——if, of course, it wasn't already locked into a chronologic structure. One theme, evidenced by his very first sale ("Passion Play"), is of the machine yearning to imitate and exalt, and finally become human. "The Stainless Steel Leech" is a mildly comic variation, and "For a Breath I Tarry" (identified by Zelazny as his favorite novelette) is another striking example.

Other variations include "A Thing of Terrible Beauty," involving a telepathic alien's obsessive desire to understand human feelings as the world ends. And the theme comes full circle in "Halfjack," the book's last entry, where a human cyborg can experience true joy and fulfillment only in the strange but beautiful embrace of his starship.

Another major theme is an ironic, often tragic form of redemption. A

shining example is the post-holocaust novella "Damnation Alley," which tells how a brutal convict reforms after being forced to take part in a mercy mission——only to find himself unable to tolerate the role of a hero. In "The Engine at Heartspring's Center," a man's love of life is restored on a space colony, only to be snatched away; and in "Comes Now the Power" a lost man is rescued by a dying, telepathic girl. The book's fine title-novella is also in this class——a richly told story of a semi-immortal Lancelot opposing a revived (and quite mad) Merlin, who plans to "save" the modern world.

The third major theme is perhaps less dramatic, less personal. It is Zelazny's fascination with the allegorical——sometimes blended with the satirical and/or the wryly humorous. "Auto-Da-Fe," "Horseman!" and "The Game of Blood and Dust" all fit into this grouping. And there are also a few odds and ends that don't fit any of the patterns I've suggested——among them "Is There a Demon Lover in the House?" (a straight horror/fantasy), "No Award" (a s-f/crime story), and a tale of a strange, alien race ("Stand Pat, Ruby Stone"). All are entertaining, but seem to lack the mythic grandeur and emotional power of those embodying deeply held, personal themes.

Overall, this is an excellent collection, and I can recommend it without hesitation.

——*James A. Lee*

Susanna J. Sturgis's *The Women Who Walk Through Fire* (1990): "To walk through fire," says editor Sturgis, "is to face the questions, to risk being singed, to be changed utterly." Can short stories have that much power? Readers of James Tiptree's "The Women Men Don't See" certainly thought so when it was first published. And that, of course is the key——publication. With seemingly fewer magazines publishing short fiction all the time (*Starshore* and *Space & Time*, for instance, have recently ceased publication), it is likely that many short stories don't have the chance to be proven powerful except for their inclusion in anthologies. If so, this anthology is the proving ground for a particularly challenging collection of feminist fiction.

It is the second in a series, focusing, as did the first (*Memories and Visions*, 1989), on woman-centered fantasy and science-fiction. It does not contain "Male hero, female supporter stories, no matter how well-written." Beyond that distinction, however, the field is wide enough to include all women's experiences. The woman as hero (or "hera," as Sturgis prefers) becomes so by meeting challenges——sometimes in sword-and-sorcery fashion, sometimes simply in becoming a mother; she discovers the goal may be only the beginning of the test, and in many cases finds that as a result of the quest she "no longer fits, or wants to" fit in her society.

Some entries here, as those by Phyllis Ann Karr ("Night of Short Knives") and Eleanor Arnason ("A Ceremony of Discontent") mark writers well known in the field. But it is the less familiar names, such as L. Timmel Duchamp ("The Forbidden Words of Margaret A"), who contribute the most disturbing and powerful work.

The news journal *Locus* said of Sturgis's first volume that "Every story is readable and many are more than that. . . ." For anyone struggling with the questions raised by the complex society of the 1990's, *The Women Who Walk Through Fire* is definitely "more than that." It is mandatory reading which will not leave you unmoved.

——*Anita Alverio*

E. J. Rath's *The Sixth Speed* (1910): Speed boats that can reach 120 miles an hour are nearer fact than fiction today, though a launch sleeping ten that will attain two miles a minute at the sixth speed is still beyond our capabilities. Of course it was even further from realization, and a more exciting concept, eighty years ago, when this novel was written. It tells of a frustrated inventor named Sander-

son, who determines to get revenge against a millionaire who fired him from his position of chauffeur. With the help of a fellow mechanic, Sanderson constructs the *Projectile*. He recruits eight friends who think as he does for a full crew, and begins a new career as a pirate. Yachts of his former employer and the latter's rich friends are his prime targets. How romance and patriotism finally get Sanderson back on the right track makes an interesting if not a memorable story. E. J. Rath (a pseudonym for the writing team of Corey C. Brainerd and Edith R. J. Brainerd) is noted primarily for comedies. This work, plus a couple of fantasies in *Munsey's Magazine* from the same period, gives him also a toehold in the science-fiction field.

—*Winston F. Dawson*

Mike Ashley's *The Mammoth Book of Short Horror Novels* (1988): This fine paperback collects ten novellas, or novelettes, written during the past century by both well known and not-so-well-known authors. Some of them are good, some very good, and some are excellent. There are over 500 pages of them, and they represent all types and styles in the genre. There are classics like Blackwood's "The Damned," Conan Doyle's "The Parasite" and Onions's "The Rope in the Rafters," which you may already know, but which are still worth rereading. There are modern works like Stephen King's "The Monkey," David Case's "Fengriffen" and "Nadelman's God" by T. E. D. Klein, which also will repay rereading. But "The Uttermost Farthing" by A. C. Benson, reprinted here for the first time from the rare posthumous volume *Basil Netherby* (1926), should be new to almost everybody, as will be John Metcalfe's "The Feasting Dead" (1954), whose only appearance was as a now long out-of-print Arkham House title. "There's a Long, Long Trail a-Winding" by Russell Kirk and "How the Wind Spoke at Madaket" by Lucius Shepard complete the book. Ashley has written an introduction for it, and has also supplied short prefaces for each story which are at once historically informative and thoroughly interesting. I applaud his choices and recommend this anthology without reservation. It's also bargain-priced.

—*A. Langley Searles*

Sidney J. Marshall's *The King of Kôr; or, She's Promise Kept* (1903): This book is a sequel to Rider Haggard's novel *She* (1886). The more famous the novel, the more do readers relish sequels, even when (as with Marshall's effort) they lack the impact of the originals. So if you enjoyed *She*, this follow-up may prove interesting; but if you did not, I can't recommend it. Marshall liked *She* very much, and when years went by with no sign that its author would continue the tale, he hastened to do so. (Haggard did write a sequel, of course, and when it was published in 1904 as *Ayesha*, and then followed by two more related novels, *The King of Kôr* was deservedly forgotten.)

Most of Haggard's characters reappear. Through the medium of Michael, the new body-servant of Leo Vincy and Ludwig Holley, Ayesha comes to them in spirit form and leads them back to Kôr. She promises Holley that he will never be alone, for although she remains faithful to Leo she produces a soul-mate from the spirit world for Holley. Ustane comes from there to Kôr, and continues his contest with Ayesha over Leo. The action is often complicated, and is punctuated by long, windy discussions. (*She* had plenty of spiritualistic philosophy, but Marshall goes Haggard one better.) You may not agree with his philospophy, but he does try hard to rationalize it. The loose ends are eventually tied into a happy ending; everyone dies and live placidly (and presumably indefinitely) in the spirit world.

This book is no longer a rare collector's item, for it was republished in 1978 by the Arno Press in New York, and it may actually still be in print.

—*Winston F. Dawson*

A SHEAF OF SONNETS

The Robe

What witchlike spell weaves here its deep design
And sells its pattern to the ignorant buyer?
Oh lacelike cruelty with stitches fine
Which stings the flesh with its sharp mesh of fire!
God of the Thief and Patron of the Liar,
I think that it is best not to inquire
Upon whose wheel was spun this mortal thread,
What dyed this curious robe so rich a red;
With shivering hues it is embroiderèd
In colors changing like unsteady eyes.
I think the filigree Medea's wreath.
Oh, treacherous splendor! In this lustrous prize
Of gold and silver weaving, madness lies.
Who purchases this garment——Sire——buys death.

Anna Hempstead Branch

The Deserted Chapel

The stair, descending from a broken door,
Lies hollowed smooth and deep by centuries
Of patient tread. But this is heard no more;
Instead, beneath the ancient, sheltering trees,
Surpliced white in pentecostal bloom,
There tumbles past these steps an eager spring
Which fills to overflowing its new flume
And choirs the silence with its murmuring.

Below this ruin lie remains of stone
That pagans set, foundations earlier pilgrims
Wrought——like this abandoned, overgrown.
Are all man's gods parged thus by nature's hymns
Or do their followers still haunt old climes
With shades of monks and druids from dead times?

Lee Becker

Acknowledgements: "The Robe" is reprinted from *Sonnets from a Lock Box* (1929). "Old Tenants" first appeared in *Poetry 7*, 278 (March 1916). "Appointment" is from *Poetry World* for July 1931 (vol. 2, #12, p. 3). "Nightmare" was first published in *The New York Times* for November 4, 1959; it is copyright by *The New York Times* and reprinted by permission. "The Deserted Chapel" is new, and appears here for the first time. "The Medium"is from *Chelsea Rooming House* (1930). An abridged version of "Southwest Haunts" appeared in *The Gate 5*, #3 (October 1990), pp. 2-3.

Old Tenants

Suddenly, out of dark and leafy ways,
We came upon a little house asleep
In cold blind stillness, shadowless and deep,
In the white magic of the full moon-blaze;
Strangers without the gate, we stood agaze,
Fearful to break that quiet, and to creep
Into the house that had been ours to keep
Through a long year of happy nights and days.
So unfamiliar in the white moon-gleam,
So old and ghostly like a house of dream
It seemed, that over us there stole the dread
That even as we watched it, side by side,
The ghosts of lovers who had lived and died
Within its walls were sleeping in our bed.

Wilfred Wilson Gibson

Appointment

They wondered long which stone you would prefer——
Smooth marble slab or rought-hewn granite shaft.
I still remembered how you often quaffed
The chill sharp clearness of this autumn air
And wondered if, along the golden stair,
You paused remembering, too, the day we found
The first flame-colored leaves upon the ground
In siftings scattered, that small winds could stir.
They think the thud of earth can prison you
Beyond the call of any left behind;
But I know well that soon you will be due
To walk again with me through shortening days
Along small lanes that turn and bend and wind
Still further through the blue October haze.

Clarice Butterly

Nightmare

He thought, in his great weariness, to mount
The gentle palfrey of oblivion,
And so be borne, dim miles beyond his count,
Through peaceful country safely to the dawn.
Instead, by evil chance, he seized the snarled
Dark mane of a wild hellion whose back,
Bony and bleak as driftwood, and as gnarled,
Wrenched him with tortures equal to the rack.
Up sweating, straining heights, then, wildly neighing,
Down sickening drops into the foul abyss,
Head echoing mad hoofbeats; groaning, swaying,
He clung to his satanic mount, till this
Fantastic steed jack-knifed in mid-distress
And tossed him headlong into consciousness.

R.H. Grenville

Voyagers through Eternity

A History of Science-Fiction From the Beginnings to H. G. Wells

PART XII

Sam Moskowitz

The simplistic use of a large gun as a means to initiate space travel has seemed so improbable that there has been a tendancy to downgrade Verne's moon novels. But careful reexamination strengthens their status and elevates their stature among nineteenth century interplanetary fiction. Historians have either failed to credit Verne with planning to use rockets for landing his projectile on the moon or ignored his brilliant use of them to change the course of a projectile in flight. This is a forecast so accurately prescient as to overshadow totally his using a gun for take-off. Nor should this be surprising, for the amount of science and technology that he crammed into his novels——making them virtual sugar-coated textbooks——is truly immense, and probably exceeds that of all writers of interplanetary fiction preceding him combined.

Why do Verne's moon stories rank so low in modern-day critical esteem? I suggest it stems for accepting as true a piece of misinformation found in a popular (and otherwise quite reliable) reference book by Willy Ley, *Rockets*. This was first published in 1944, and reissued in regularly updated versions for nearly a quarter of a century until the author's death, a period coinciding with a high public interest in rocket development and space travel. After its last revision in 1968 as *Rockets, Missiles and Men in Space* it also appeared in a paperbacked edition. Upwards of 150,000 copies were sold. In his book Ley gives Verne credit for associating the reaction principle with a cannon, although deploring his making people associate a cannon-shot with space travel. But in describing *A Tour of the Moon* he is oblivious to the fact that the expedition's crew gets back to the earth by using rockets to break out of their orbit around the moon.

Because he could read French and German, and because his wife Olga could read Russian, Willy Ley in articles and in his book *Rockets* was able to describe foreign science-fiction that was then unknown or little known in America. But in this area he made several errors which are still haunting us. One of the most regrettable was his claim that the Russians had started a science-fiction magazine in 1907, to which Jules Verne had contributed, and which was still being published. This first appeared in Ley's 1941 review of George Waltz's biography of Verne in the newspaper *PM*. In his *Galaxy* magazine column for February 1963 he amended its date of origin to "about 1903," gave its title as *Mirpriklusheniva* (*World of Adventure*) and claimed to have personally viewed 1923 issues. But later researchers who examined a file of this periodical at the Library of Congress found that it printed merely adventure stories, much like *Argosy*, and only occasionally ran science-fiction. (Interestingly, it reprinted stories in the 1920's from American magazines such as Gernsback's *Science and Invention*, notably A. Merritt's "The Metal Emperor," which appeared as "The Lightning Witch.") Ley confessed his error orally in 1966, but never put the admission into print, so that whenever historians encounter the original statements, the story is exhumed again. Unfortunately

this erroneous claim has been incorporated also into several reference books.

That it was Verne's handling of the theme, and not merely the timeworn idea of a trip to the moon that won public approbation, is shown by the present obscurity of a work that had appeared a year earlier, *The History of a Voyage to the Moon with an Account of the Adventurers' Subsequent Discoveries. An Exhumed Narrative Supposed to Have Been Ejected from a Lunar Volcano.* This was published in London by Lockwood and Company in 1864, and supposedly "edited by Chrysostom Trueman of the Manse, Kirkfield." Except for the claim in the introduction that he was "a Clergyman of the Established Church of England" nothing is known about the author. Because he makes several interesting contributions to the genre, and because no reference book seems to have dealt with these, I shall describe his work here in some detail.

The narrative was found by Trueman inside a banded stone ball which he dug up from his yard. It purports to be from the moon, and is signed by Stephen Howard and Carl Geister, who claim they embarked for the moon from the Rocky Mountains in 1859, and are now stranded there, unable to return. Howard, an Englishman, meets Geister while in Germany attending the University of Gottingen, and the two become friends. While they are later visiting Spain, Geister discovers an old manuscript in which a monk describes searching for gold in California. While building a mound on the bank of a river for defense against marauding Indians, he happens to mix earth from the river bank with other earth from inside the mound. When water is poured on this mixture a chemical reaction forms a substance which reverses gravity, and causes the entire mound to rise into the air.

Geister and Howard travel to America, find the spot mentioned in the manuscript, and repeat the monk's experiment. With practice, they find they are able to duplicate the anti-gravity effect at will. They discover also that the effect can be negated by interposing a piece of sheet-iron. This means that they have both the means of propelling a spaceship and a way to control it.

The descriptive material on the nature of the universe and the theoretical aspects of space travel found in this book is as accurate and as comprehensive as anything Verne ever wrote; and the notion that an anti-gravitational substance could be synthesized does away with the illogical notion that it might be found already existing somewhere on the face of the earth.

What this novel describes, more thoroughly than any previous to it, is the systematic methodology of building, navigating and living in a space ship. Howard and Geister even build a sealed chamber to test their plans for the regeneration of air. Into this they repair with food, water and plants to absorb carbon dioxide and liberate oxygen; after a month the air is as good as it was when they entered. They then set about planning the spaceship itself.

This is called *The Lunaviot*, and its parts are fabricated elsewhere and then brought to the site of the gravity repellant-making materials. The floor of the ship is heaped with rich soil and lushly covered with plants. Two round balls at the top are filled with the anti-gravity substance with iron shields positioned horizontally below, rendering it inactive. When they are dropped, the ship rises. Their intermediate positions control the rates of ascent or descent. (In *The First Men in the Moon* H. G. Wells used a similar system of shields and anti-gravity material, raising the interesting question as to whether he had read this novel.) Water for the plants is recycled: "The ceiling was slanting, and covered with sheet tin, so that, as the vapour arising from the soil was condensed, it would easily trickle down and flow into pipes, again conveying it to the soil."

After it is assembled, the space car is carefully tested in the upper atmosphere, and it proves capable of withstanding the pressure differential. But there is one erroneous forecast: space, which the astronauts expected to be black, turns out to be a brilliant white. (This same notion was used almost a century later by Eando Binder in his short story "Set Your Course by the Stars," [*Astound-*

ing Stories, May 1935].) But they construct a telescopic device which enables them to see their objective despite the brightness of outer space.

Weightlessness is noted, although this occurs gradually as the distance from the earth increases. As the astronauts approach the moon, they find it has an atmosphere. They miscalculate their rate of descent and crash, but are not killed. At this point the first section of the story terminates.

The second part, titled "The Ideal Life," is completely different, being an elaborate description of the civilization found on the moon. The impact of the crash landing breaks loose the two globes filled with matter-repellant material; this flies off into space, effectively stranding the astronauts. The atmosphere proves breathable, but as darkness sets in the cold becomes acute, so they first build a fire from the wood of the smashed space-car, and then a shelter from the same material.

The next morning they sight humans of small stature, reveal themselves, and demonstrate their origin by drawing pictures. They are on the dark side of the moon, the one always turned away from earth, which turns out to be the only part of the satellite suitable for life. (The earth side is waterless and barren, although legends say it was once inhabited.) The nation they are in is called Notal, and is Utopian in character. There are no diseases, no predatory creatures (not even fish in the waters), and a delicious fruit provides a perfectly balanced nutritious diet. Socially the country is a paradise, but scientifically it has not advanced as far as Earth. People live to be about seventy, but show none of the physiological deterioration of ageing. There is one deerlike animal that is used for drayage, but the fastest form of transportation is a bird four times the size of an eagle, which can be saddled and carry a man on its back. It rains every night but not during the day. Much fine art, drama, music and literature exists, although there are no printing presses and books must be transcribed by hand. The Notalians believe there are innumerable worlds in the vastness of the universe which are capable of supporting life. Most interesting is their opinion that the only true and continuing love is selfishness, because all other forms of love are ephemeral——thus anticipating the philosophy so eloquently presented by Ayn Rand.

Up until this point in the narrative the author says little about religion, but on the moon he discovers evidence that the Lunarians all lived on Earth in a previous incarnation. Those who sacrificed unselfishly and received short shrifts there were given a "makeup" life on the idyllic moon, though with all memories of their prior existence erased.

Howard and Geister make five copies of their experience, and put them in metal balls encased in rock. These are suspended over a live volcano. When the volcano erupts, the moon's light gravitational pull is incapable of pulling back all the debris, and the balls fly off into space, one of them falling into Trueman's garden.

In its use of an anti-gravity substance, and in its three-part format of adventure, moon flight and final description of a new world, *The History of a Voyage to the Moon* seems close to George Tucker's earlier *A Voyage to the Moon*; but in presentation and use of scientific rationalization it seems closer to the genre fiction that came after it. It still reads well today.

As the nineteenth century progressed, there was an increasing tendancy for writers of interplanetary journeys to indulge in scientific speculation, even in shorter works. Thus the story "First Through Trip to the Moon," attributed to "Two Fugitives from a Mad House," published in New York in the magazine *The Great Republic Monthly* for August 1859, clings to Poe's theory that space was not empty of gas. The authors, believed to be one or both of the sons of the owner, Sidney and/or Alvin Oakes Smith, hypothesize that all space is full of tenuous gas, and that the gravity of the planets and their satellites captured this gas in disproportionate amounts. The characters of this tale, one a man of some means and the

other an inventor, escape from an insane asylum. They build a steam-powered ship with windmill-like wings, accelerate it down a long stretch of rail, and as they attain a speed of 200 miles per hour achieve flight. After continuing for three weeks towards the moon their engine gives out; they miss their target and fall into a cometary orbit. But the orbit is unstable; it gradually decays, and the astronauts plunge to their deaths in the sun.

It is interesting to note that the authors write the entire story in the first person, and never rationalize any way for its getting back to the earth; this is a literary device not commonly adopted for another fifty years. It is also notable that the same issue of *The Great Republic Monthly* contains the article "Lunar Origin of Meteoric Stones," which discusses Laplace's theory of the lunar origin of meteorites invoked in *The History of a Voyage to the Moon.*

There were other types of space travel stories current, often well written and entertaining, which received modest recognition compared with that which greeted Verne's. One rarely discussed is Charles Rowcroft's *The Triumphs of Woman* (London, 1848). Rowcroft (1796-1856) was a popular writer remembered today for his earlier fiction about Australia, such as *Tales of the Colonies.*

Dr. Asterscop, a German astronomer, sees in his telescope what appears to be a fiery comet that is heading straight for his house. It is actually the passage through the air of Zarah, an inhabitant of the new planet that has just been discovered by Leverrier (Neptune). By touching the proper phrenological spot on the astronomer's bald head he instantly absorbs the latter's command of language, and informs him that he has travelled to the earth at the speed of light by the magnetic propulsion of a special talisman. This talisman also has the power of transmuting base metals into gold (which he demonstrates). Zarah himself also possesses these same powers, but in a lesser degree.

A servant girl who has watched Zarah's demonstration tells her boy friend, who steals the talisman and, unable to control it, disappears into the sky. Zarah sets out in search of it, for without the talisman he cannot return to his home planet. After a series of adventures in other European countries he recovers it, and returns to Neptune. He returns a year later, however, for he cannot forget the astronomer's daughter Angela, with whom he has fallen in love.

Although *The Triumphs of Woman* is quite anti-feminist, the misogyny is handled with a light touch, and is not serious enough to be called polemical. The book is really little more than an adult fairy tale, with scientific patter being used to explain the marvels introduced, and it is thus a transitional work falling between ancient romantic fantasies and modern science-fiction.

Because Verne's early novels were a phenomenal early success in France, biographers have often assumed that he received immediate acclaim abroad as well. But he did not. His work had not even been published in the United States when on March 27, 1867 he departed for New York from Mersey, England on *The Great Eastern.* This ship was a marvel of the age. It was a steam-powered sidewheeler, and had been constructed at the cost of almost four million dollars. It could accomodate over two thousand passengers, and was virtually a floating palace.

Verne made constant notes of everything he observed aboard, and used the material in later books. When *The Great Eastern* docked in New York on April 10th huge crowds were on hand to watch and to cheer celebrities whose accomplishments are now forgotten. Jules Verne and his brother Paul were not merely unrecognized, they were totally unknown. They lodged at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, then probably the country's finest, and set about visiting the major cities of New York state, with Niagara Falls as their prime objective. They stayed only five days, and were back aboard *The Great Eastern* when it departed April 15th. In every way the trip had been for business, not pleasure.

(to be continued)

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