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Cover: "The Midnight Mail Takes off for Mars" by Elliott Dold, frontispiece from the April-May 1931 issue of *Miracle, Science and Fantasy Stories*.

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Articles

Verse

Regular Features

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The Return of Hugo Gernsback

Sam Moskowitz

PART ONE

I

Historically, 1953 marked the high point in the proliferation of science-fiction and fantasy magazines, with 38 titles and 183 issues appearing that year. By all odds the most unusual and unexpected of these was *Science-Fiction Plus*, an 8½ by 11-inch periodical printed on 50-pound coated paper with six-color cover art and interior illustrations in two colors. Most surprising of all, it marked the return to the genre of Hugo Gernsback, known as the father of science-fiction because he had started it all by founding *Amazing Stories* in 1926. This was actually his second comeback: after an involuntary bankruptcy had deprived him of *Amazing* in 1929 he had reëntered the field, promptly bringing out *Science Wonder Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories*.

Had *Science-Fiction Plus* succeeded, it would have marked a turning-point in the history of such periodicals, for at least two others, *Amazing Stories* and *Astounding Science-Fiction*, were poised to adopt the same large-sized format as soon as their sales-forecasts warranted the move. As it was, the trend was in the reverse direction——away from the standard pulp size to a smaller "digest" format.

Science-fiction magazines had been issued on slick paper previously, but by inadvertence rather than deliberate planning. The February 1931 *Amazing Stories* is an example. Some copies of it were printed on smooth-finished slick stock and some on pulp. At the time it had a companion, *Science and Invention*, which was regularly and designedly printed on slick paper; the printer may simply have run out of pulp stock near the end of *Amazing's* print run, and finished off with whatever else he happened to have on hand.

Gernsback himself had printed issues of *Wonder Stories* on better quality paper. This practice began with the November 1931 issue, when the magazine returned to large size after a year as a standard 6 by 9-inch pulp; the issues were composed of pulp and book paper and occasionally pulp and slick——all in the same print-runs. This continued until the November 1932 number, when the price dropped to 15¢ a copy. Issues with mixed paper resumed again with the April 1933 number, when the magazine resumed its 25¢ price, and continued through the following October, after which *Wonder* reverted to pulp format and paper permanently.

When the fan press broke the news of Gernsback's return in January 1953 it revealed that Frank R. Paul, premier artist of *Amazing* and *Wonder*, would be returning to the field also. But what may have piqued enthusiasts' interest most was the news that I would be managing editor of *Science-Fiction Plus*. Details of its birth, life and death, as seen through my eyes, provide an insider's view of the entire "career" of a science-fiction magazine, which this present work will set forth.

The genesis of my original contact with Hugo Gernsback occurred three years earlier. I then lived in Newark, New Jersey at 127 Shepherd Avenue, a two-family house with two finished rooms on the third floor. One of them served as my combined bedroom and library, and Saturday evenings after I finished work I would hold science-fiction get-togethers there with local fans. Among these were Fran-

ces Forman, a fantasy enthusiast and friend of the family; Corwin Stickney, publisher of the early *Science-Fantasy Correspondent*; Joseph Wrzos, who was to edit *Amazing Stories* in 1965-1967; and the late fan Alex Osheroff (1923-1980). All of us were members of the Eastern Science Fiction Association (ESFA) which, although it met in Newark, was also a magnet for fans in nearby New York City. On February 12, 1950 we were involved in a discussion of possible speakers for our next month's meeting.

We ran through the possibilities, most of whom had either already been guests or who lived too far away to be invited. Our problem was amplified by the fact that this was to be our big, open annual meeting, the one at which we strove to present something extra-special. Frances Forman then suggested Hugo Gernsback. I explained to her that not only had Gernsback never appeared at any science-fiction gathering in his entire life, but since he sold *Wonder Stories* to Standard/Beacon Magazines in 1936 had severed almost all contact with the fantasy field, occupying himself predominately with his magazines *Radio Electronics* and *Sexology*. In fact, when he wrote a promotional editorial for the first (March 1939) issue of *Science Fiction*, it came as a great surprise to readers. (Years later it was revealed that it had been done as a special favor to Louis Silberkleit, publisher of the magazine, who had been a Gernsback employee in the late 1920's; Gernsback had also received a gratuity of $100 for the task.) He also contributed a weak short-short story "The Infinite Brain" to another Silberkleit magazine (*Future Fiction*, June 1942). Aside from these minor exceptions, Gernsback had not participated in the science-fiction world for nearly fourteen years. Furthermore, I had heard from several sources that he had the reputation for declining all invitations of this type.

But Frances Forman, though diminutive in size, was not a shy and retiring woman. "You don't know that until you try," she persisted. Then I came up with an angle. Gernsback, I had also heard, habitually displayed European grace towards women. "*You* call him!" I exclaimed. "We'll put a script together, and you use that sweet, pleasant tone that always gets you a favor when you want it. It'll be a lot harder for him to refuse you than me." She agreed. We trooped out to the corner drug store, which had a New York City telephone directory and looked up Hugo Gernsback. He was listed, and Frances put through the call.

We had prepared a good——and valid——story. Gernsback was very respectful of the scientific community, and several ESFA members were scientists. Among them were Thomas S. Gardner and David M. Speaker. Both had Ph.D.'s, and both had in years past sold stories to Gernsback. They would be thrilled to meet him. He He would have a substantial audience——we expected an attendance of at least 100. We would arrange personal transportation from his apartment to Newark. Following the meeting we would all dine at the Hickory Grill, then the best restaurant in the city. After dinner he would be driven back to his own door. There would be later write-ups in the newspapers. And oh, yes, he should bring his pen with him, for he was sure to be asked for autographs.

Gernsback listened, and then asked that our request be put in writing; he would soon let us know his decision. So on the very next day I composed and mailed him a letter setting forth everything that Frances had promised. I added to this a brief history of the ESFA, citing many of the prestigious guests who had spoken at its meetings. He replied on February 15th, accepting the invitation with the proviso that we get him home by 9 P.M., for he had a previous engagement at that time. This naturally presented no problem. In fact, we felt that the transportation being given him would set an impressive note. It so happened that the family of Sam Bowne, the ESFA secretary, owned an airport service, and Sam would be able to chauffer him to and from Newark in its best limousine.

With his letter of acceptance Gernsback enclosed four of his "Christmas cards." This phrase requires a little explanation. Each Yuletide he would dis-

tribute to colleagues and friends little pocket-sized magazines satirizing prominent publications of the day. These were professionally printed, often in color, and had illustrations by Frank R. Paul and other staff artists. Gernsback composed all of their contents himself; most of them dealt with the future, and contained both articles and fiction. The four he enclosed were *Quip* (1949; a parody of *Quick*), *Tame* (1945; mimicking *Time*), *Jollier's* (1948; a take-off on *Collier's*) and *Digest of Digests* (1946; taking *Reader's Digest* one step further). The first three are really science-fiction magazines; *Quip*, for example, is composed entirely of an account of a fictitious trip to Mars. Gernsback later brought a supply of this with him, and a copy was given every attendee of the meeting.

Little was left to chance in preparing for this. Several hundred notices were mimeographed by Joe Kennedy, at the time one of the leading fans in the country and publisher of the popular fan magazine *Vampire* (and today, as X. J. Kennedy, known as a writer of poetry and children's books). As secondary or back-up speakers I had corralled Willy Ley, already nationally renowned as a writer and lecturer on space travel; Sam Merwin, Jr., editor of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, successor to the magazine Gernsback himself had founded; and L. Jerome Stanton, formerly associate editor of *Astounding Science-Fiction*. In addition, I arranged for Martin Greenberg to bring to the meeting copies of the new anthology of interplanetary stories he had edited, *Men Against the Stars*. Besides Greenberg, Edd Cartier (who had illustrated the book) and contributors Willy Ley, Harry Walton and David Kyle would be there to autograph it. I managed also to get notices of the event printed in two local newspapers. As a result of all this, attendance reached my prediction.

So on Sunday, March 5, 1950 Hugo Gernsback was introduced to the assemblage and ascended to the podium. He opened his talk by admitting that he now read very little science-fiction, and that the few tales he did seemed more like fairy stories than the type he had formerly presented. He gave a synopsis of one such tale without naming it (it was "The Outer Limit" by Graham Doar, which had appeared in the December 24, 1949 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*). A test pilot takes a rocket plane carrying only ten minutes of fuel into space and does not return for ten hours. He explains on landing that he was detained by aliens who, attracted to the Earth by atomic tests there, have quarantined the planet by surrounding it with a layer of matter which absorbs radioactivity and, when a critical stage is reached, undergoes fission, destroying it. This Gernsback described as "unscientific."

He also criticized "The Outer Limits," a current radio program, as not only lacking science but imagination. Why, he wondered, did authors not present truly new scientific ideas, such as the "electric wind" for the propulsion of space ships beyond planetary gravitational fields? (It was not until years later that Arthur C. Clarke and Cordwainer Smith actually did write stories utilizing this concept.)

As to where he got the idea of publishing a science-fiction magazine, Gernsback said that it grew out of the increased circulation of his early *Modern Electrics* when it serialized his novel *Ralph 124C41+*, followed by the popularity of the many genre stories he printed in *The Electrical Experimenter*, *Science and Invention*, *Radio News* and *Practical Electrics*. To get a title for the new magazine, he suggested several to his employees; *Amazing Stories* was the one most of them liked best.

He expressed the opinion that authors have only half a dozen original ideas in their lifetimes; during their careers they only write variations on them.

When he reprinted *The Moon Pool* (*Amazing Stories*, May-July 1927) it was due to the urgings of C. A. Brandt, his literary consultant. He did so with misgivings, because he felt A. Merritt's novel was more a fantasy than true science-fiction. Although readers named it a favorite, Gernsback still claimed that fea-

turing it was a matter of desperation because he couldn't get the type of stories he wanted.

When he started *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929, he had managed to get 8,000 advance subscriptions. This helped subsidize it, and encouraged him to set his initial print order at 100,000 copies.

His decision to make Frank R. Paul the primary illustrator for *Amazing Stories* was based on the hundreds of excellent drawings by him that had appeared in *Science and Invention.* In the portrayal ofmachinery, aliens, futuristic cities and otherworldly scenery Paul, Gernsback felt, had no equal.

His favorite science-fiction author was Stanley G. Weinbaum, whosefirst story, "A Martian Odyssey," he had printed in the July 1934 *Wonder Stories.* (In the introduction to it, which he wrote himself instead of delegating the task to Charles Hornig, he described it as a tale "so new, so breezy, that it stands out head and shoulders over similar interplanetarian yarns.")

He emphasized that despite his appearance at this meeting he had no plans for introducing another science-fiction magazine. However, within the next two months the publisher Frederick Fell was going to issue a new edition of his novel *Ralph 124C41+* with a special new introduction by Fletcher Pratt.

After his speech Gernsback was deluged with autograph hunters. He posed for photographs, including the famous one with Sam Merwin, Jr. (current editor of *Wonder Stories*) holding a copy of the 1950 *Wonder Stories Annual,* which was made up entirely of reprints of stories he had published earlier. Gernsback was then 65 years old and about five feet ten inches tall. His hairline had begun to retreat, and his iron-gray hair was carefully combed across a central bare spot. His nose had begun to take on a prominent curve that had been less noticeable in earlier years. He stood so straight that he almost seemed to be bending over backward. He wore a high-vested pin-striped suit of dark gray, and carried his pocket watch on a chain. He comported himself with courteous European dignity and spoke with a slight German accent. When he moved, he did so surprisingly swiftly.

About thirty attendees feted him at the restaurant for dinner, and Sam Bowne chauffeured him home promptly when the meal was over. The day had been a great success for ESFA and Gernsback alike, and on March 8th I sent him a letter of thanks and appreciation, which he politely acknowledged.

Three months later Gernsback received from Raymond S. Forbes of the German Department at the University of Illinois a request for the titles and dates of any German science-fiction that he had had translated for publication in any of his magazines, along with background information concerning them. On May 16th Gernsback replied, regretting he no longer had anyone in his office to do the research necessary to answer this request. He added in part:

> At one time I went to Berlin and scoured the Reich for early available science fiction.... I secured the American rights for publication . . . of major stories. These were published, if my memory serves me right, partly in *Amazing Stories* and later on in *Wonder Stories* and *Wonder Stories Quarterly.* The translations [into English] were all made in this country and the [U.S.] publications were all first in my magazines.... I am sending a copy of this letter to Sam Moskowitz ... a walking encyclopedia on all these things, and I am sure he will be happy to send you a list of the stories which I published in the above manner.

On the same day he mailed a copy of this letter and a request for help to me. I compiled the list and sent it to Forbes on May 31st. I also sent a copy to Gernsback, along with a letter confirming the fact that I had taken care of the matter.

At about this time the Hydra Club of New York, a group made up of professional science-fiction authors and editors, in cooperation with the Eastern Science Fiction Association, was planning a joint conference in New York City on July 2, 1950. With the hope that he might be willing to attend, I wrote Gernsback. "I wonder if you might find it possible to put in an appearance at this date?" I asked, after describing the affair. "I wouldn't impose on your time to

the extent of asking you to prepare a speech, but I should like to introduce you to the assembly and say just a few words if you are willing and able." In his reply dated June 2nd he politely declined: "I am just out of the hospital after an operation. It is imperative that I get away for a short rest, and will probably do this early in July. Sorry that it won't be possible to accomodate you on this occasion." I never inquired (nor did I ever subsequently learn) the nature of his surgery. His letter was signed "H. Gernsback." This, incidentally, was the signature he usually employed, though when he was on an extremely friendly basis with someone he simply signed himself as "H." If he ever used "Hugo" at all, it was on rare occasions.

II

Apparently the idea of bringing out a science-fiction magazine was now beginning to germinate in Gernsback's mind. In a letter to me dated October 2, 1950 he said, "I understand there is a new slick science-fiction magazine out. I have not seen it on the newsstands at all. Please let me know who the publishers are, as I would like to inspect a copy." He had undoubtedly got this information from the current issue of the news fanzine *Fantasy Times*, which announced that Ziff-Davis was seriously considering changing its *Amazing Stories* from a pulp to a slick; plans were said to be complete, but no date for the change had yet been set. (In actual fact, the slick format was never adopted, the publisher blaming uncertain conditions caused by the Korean War for not doing so.)

My only other contact with Gernsback during that year was sending him a complimentary copy of David H. Keller's book *Life Everlasting and Other Tales of Science, Fantasy and Horror*, which I had recently published under the aegis of The Avalon Company. This he promptly acknowledged on October 12th: "Thank you for the autographed copy of your book on Dr. Keller which looks very good and which I will read at my leisure."

My files show no correspondence with Gernsback during 1951, but this is because we kept in touch by occasional telephone calls, and of these I kept no record. During the month of August in 1952 I recall his telephoning me and asking me to meet him for lunch on Monday the 25th. I happened to have Mondays off from work, which made it convenient for me to accept his invitation, which I did. On the previous Saturday, the 22nd, along with a letter confirming my visit, I received from Gernsback an impressive brochure containing a checklist of all the science-fiction he had published in his magazines *Modern Electrics, The Electrical Experimenter, Science and Invention, Practical Electrics, Radio News* and *The Experimenter*, most of it predating *Amazing Stories*. This had been compiled by the fan Ted Engels, who utilized the company's own files with Gernsback's cooperation. In the letter he also asked if I could furnish for him a list of the publishers who had recently issued science-fiction in hard-covered books. This was easy to do, since for several years I had been preparing annual lists of genre books for Bob Tucker's magazine *The Science Fiction News Letter*.

Hugo Gernsback's New York City office was at 25 West Broadway, about two blocks north of what today is the World Trade Center, close to the eastern terminus of the Hudson and Manhattan Railway——then called the Hudson Tubes. This is a very old section of the city, and the building Gernsback was in had once been a military hospital during the Civil War. It covered a full block and was five stories tall. Some of its facilities were rather primitive; the cage-like doors of its elevators were manually operated and the rest rooms had no hot water. Gernsback's publishing business occupied space on the fourth and fifth floors. A reception room, which also housed a telephone switchboard, was little more than a wide hallway. Originally girls from the secretarial pool took turns as operator/receptionist, but after awhile Millicent Wilde, a tall, trim and very attractive Irish girl in her early twenties had the job more or less permanently.

Gernsback's secretary at that time was Joanne Bishop, a woman in her early thirties; she was nearly six feet tall and proportionally built. As I was later to find, she was very efficient and knew Gernsback inside out. She handled her position very diplomatically and was always loyal to her employer's interests ——as, indeed, were most of the other employees.

Gernsback's own office was a large corner room on the fifth floor, dark-toned and old-fashioned. On the walls were several framed photographs, one of which portrayed the death-mask of the scientist Nikola Tesla. I later learned that Gernsback greatly admired Tesla, and had even printed a series of articles by him in *The Electrical Experimenter*. On learning of Tesla's death in 1943, he arranged to have a death-mask of the inventor made, and this was one of his most prized possessions.

Shortly after I arrived we left for lunch, walking two blocks east to Miller's Restaurant on Broadway in the basement of the Woolworth Building. Today the Woolworth Building is virtually unknown to most Americans, but at one time it was the tallest building in the world and famous around the globe. Its past glory may be realized from the fact that it several times appeared on the covers of science-fiction magazines. Miller's Restaurant was a favorite of business executives, who were plentiful in the neighborhood. Its waiters and service were in the European tradition, and Gernsback fitted right in. He did not wear glasses on the street, but after receiving the menu he reached into his vest pocket and produced a monacle which he placed over one eye. (For longer periods of reading he used pince-nez spectacles, which he always carried in the breast pocket of his suit.) Time has obscured my menu choice, but I recall that Gernsback ordered lamb chops, and when they arrived sent them back on some pretext to be redone.

Gernsback kept up a line of small talk until the meal was over, whereupon he gave me his full and serious attention. "Mushkowitz," (he always pronounced my name that way, since in personal conversation he still had an accent that was more Jewish than German) "I've been very impressed by the depth of your knowledge of science-fiction. I doubt if there are very many who know more about the subject than you do. For example, editors are common——you can get all you want from an ad in the *New York Times*——but experts who really know their subject are rare, and you are an expert. Now, I want your word that what I am about to tell you will not be revealed, even to your family." I assured him that I would keep it in confidence.

"I have been studying the science-fiction field today, and it seems to be burgeoning. The major limitation is that all the magazines are cheap-appearing pulps and digests. There is nothing on the newsstands that by its appearance speaks quality. Further, most of the stories are fairy tales. They don't have any basis in scientific fact, and therefore they lack believability. I am planning to reënter the field with a slick paper magazine carrying stories containing good science, preferably written by scientists. If you remember, when I started *Amazing Stories* I hired C. A. Brandt to select stories for me. Half a dozen people had told me he was an expert on both domestic and foreign science-fiction, and he was a big factor in the success of the magazine. For a short time I also had him working for me at *Wonder Stories*, but I already had two editors working for me there [David Lasser and C. P. Mason] and during the depression a third was a luxury I couldn't afford. Brandt did work on a few issues, though, and these were definitely an improvement in story quality over the previous ones. Now, this is where you come in. As I said, someone to do first reading, copy-editing and proofreading can be obtained cheaply. I'm interested in offering you a job as editor of this new magazine for what you know about the field. The technical details I and my staff can teach you."

At the time I was a driver/salesman for the Hazel Specialty Company in Newark. This firm was a vendor of food specialties, and catered to quality stores

and gourmet shops in the northern New Jersey suburbs. I had been there for nine years. An editorial job in science-fiction was something that I, like many other fans, of my generation, had often dreamed of; but I was not fooled by the surface glamour of such a position. I knew that editorial jobs were frequently short-lived. Yet there were other possibilities. I could always go back to driving a truck if the magazine failed. But I reasoned that the experience could open the way to a career with a much more attractive future.

I first confronted Gernsback with my doubts. I had a secure job, and would be trading it for one of questionable tenure. I also had long suffered from eyestrain, and editing meant continual manuscript reading; it was not impossible that I might have to leave for physical reasons.

Gernsback met the latter point first. He would send me to an eye specialist he himself patronized, paying the cost of the visit. The doctor would examine me, and we would be guided by his opinion on whether or not I could handle the work. (I later did visit this specialist, who examined me and prescribed glasses with which I was able to read very well; time proved, however, that they did not appreciably reduce my tendancy towards eyestrain.)

As far as long-term employment, said Gernsback, no one could guarantee that. It depended not only on the quality of my work but the success of the magazine. He himself would be assuming the major financial risk, and he was not undertaking the venture frivolously. At this point I forthrightly confronted him with his past record as a slow and difficult payer. He replied that the magazine could not be successful unless we not only paid on acceptance but at competitive rates. His magazines *Radio Electronics* and *Sexology* were both very profitable, and he was able to finance a new science-fiction magazine adequately.

We turned then to the matter of salary. My base pay at Hazel was $65 a week, but that was augmented by sales commissions from any new accounts I secured. I worked only a short bus ride from home, whereas a new position in New York would increase my commuting costs and time. Further, I would have to upgrade my wardrobe to work in an office. I wasn't at all sure what to ask for. What were editors getting? I couldn't estimate the prevailing range, and besides, I was a beginner with no editorial experience. So I added $10 to my present salary, mostly to cover extra expenses. The swiftness with which Gernsback agreed made me realize I had probably sold myself short. (Later he hired an art director to work under me at $100 a week!) I consoled myself by reflecting that the opportunity being offered could not be judged solely by starting salary. This turned out to be correct. My entire life was to be changed for the better by accepting this position.

We then went on to discuss the 13th World Science-Fiction Convention to be held in Chicago on the weekend of August 30 - September 1, 1952. Gernsback was to be Guest of Honor there, an award that may have been inspired by his appearance once again on the science-fiction scene at the March 1950 ESFA meeting.

The convention committee had chosen the Hotel Morrison as the official convention site. While perhaps slightly shabby when compared to the city's newer and glitzier hotels, the Morrison boasted a huge, multi-tiered auditorium capable of seating over a thousand. This was called the Terrace Casino, and it could even accomodate numerous exhibit booths. All scheduled events were to take place there, for the convention had a single-track program. A suite of three rooms, furnished luxuriously in reproductions of eighteenth century French furniture, had been reserved for Gernsback at the Palmer House, an old, high-quality hotel situated just off Chicago's famed Loop. His third wife, Mary Hancher, was accompanying him. I also planned to attend the convention, and he asked me to meet him at his suite for a further conference on the proposed new magazine when I arrived in Chicago on August 30th.

Prior to the convention he also sent me a note dated August 27th: "Here is one more job which I would ask you to be kind enough to do before you leave for

Chicago. I should like to get a list of all the little fanzines. Will you please address this to my secretary, as I want to be sure they all get copies of my talk."

Gernsback employed a full-time publicity man named Robert Fallath. Whenever an event of importance took place in his activities or among his publications, Fallath would prepare a release on the matter for the appropriate media. Gernsback was now publicizing his reëntry into science-fiction. He had prepared his Guest of Honor speech, "The Impact of Science Fiction on World Progress," and copies would be sent to all the fan magazines I listed.

The Chicago convention was successful beyond all expectations. Registration was in the vicinity of a thousand——about five times as many fans as had ever attended any previous such gathering. Some attendees may have been lured by the presence of Hugo Gernsback, but there were numerous other attractions. One panel had no fewer than nine editors of science-fiction magazines, and another featured six fantasy book publishers. Such notable writers as E. E. Smith, Clifford Simak, L. Sprague de Camp, Theodore Sturgeon and Robert Bloch were also present. A debate on the authenticity of flying saucers pitted editor Raymond A. Palmer against rocket expert Willy Ley.

Before I could take in all of this I had my prearranged meeting with Gernsback. This ended on a disconcerting note. He began by expanding on what he wanted in his new science-fiction magazine. First, it would be printed on slick paper. Second, there would be no advertising until a stable circulation base had been established. Third, as many stories as possible were to be written by accredited scientists. Fourth, no one was to be told about the magazine until it actually appeared; this included the authors, artists and any others with whom I would have to deal in producing it. He was emphatic on this last point. I was to contact artists and writers who were not working for other genre publications.

His fifth point sent chills down my spine, for it could mean that I might not be editing the magazine after all. "There are several other executives in my company who are giving me a lot of static about starting a new science-fiction magazine," Gernsback began. "They aren't familiar with the field, and they don't know you. They want to see a proposal for the type of magazine you have in mind, and a comprehensive resumé of your qualifications to edit it. I'm sure it's just routine, but if you could oblige me with this information for them to examine I'm sure things would go much more smoothly."

This lent a different complexion to the whole plan. Although to all intents and purposes I had already been hired by Gernsback, I now had to convince a number of other people that the magazine should be published at all. Further, my plan had not only to conform closely enough to Gernsback's model so that he wouldn't reject it, but seem practical enough that neither would they. And on top of that, despite my admitted lack of editorial experience, I had to show that I was still the best man to edit the magazine!

Who were these unnamed parties? I surmised that one had to be M. Harvey Gernsback, Hugo's son, who was nominally a vice president of the firm. Harvey had worked for his father sporadically, unpaid, since 1935, taking other outside jobs for short periods as they came along. During World War II he had been drafted into the Signal Corps as a private and rose steadily in rank. While he was gone the Experimenter Publishing Company experienced a crisis when the entire staff of all its magazines walked out because Gernsback was three months behind in paying them. This was caused by a spate of experimental magazines he had produced over a three- or four-year period, all of which had failed. For awhile he put together these magazines himself with the aid of part-timers; he was very skilled in the technical aspects of production, and knowledgeable in purchasing of paper, printing and art work. The staff rightly blamed the crisis on his poor business judgment which siphoned money from properties that in themselves were profitable, like *Radio Craft* and *Sexology*.

When Harvey returned to civilian life after the end of the war, he at first wanted no part of his father's business, for Hugo Gernsback had a habit of putting him down. However, Hugo's attitude changed, becoming almost deferential, when he learned that his son had attained the rank of major in the army. In December 1945 he invited Harvey to dinner and asked him to come back to the firm as a *salaried* vice president. Harvey was apparently persuaded to do so when he saw a bank book showing $18,000 on deposit. He was also well aware of his father's past mistakes, and did not want a sudden burst of his enthusiasm to lead to just another financial crisis.

The other individual who had to be convinced was Lee Robinson, the sales manager for *Radio Electronics*. Robinson had connected with the right publication at the right time, and become a star at soliciting advertising. In addition to a commission on sales he also received a percentage of the profits of the magazine. If a new science-fiction magazine proved too much of a drain on the company, his take-home pay might suffer.

In my own favor, however, was the fact that if Hugo Gernsback really wanted the new magazine badly enough, he could overrule the other two. But I had to give him the ammunition. I knew I had a tough job cut out for me when the convention was over.

In the meantime Gernsback had his Guest of Honor speech to deliver. A long table had been set up on the stage, and among the celebrities seated there with him and his wife were Judy May (the director of the convention), Ted Dikty, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert Bloch (who was filling in for Murray Leinster), E. E. Smith, Clifford D. Simak, Walter Willis (the fan Guest of Honor from Northern Ireland), Willy Ley and Raymond Palmer. Bloch introduced Gernsback, and after the introduction the audience gave him a three-minute standing ovation.

"I well remember when, in 1911, I first started to print science-fiction stories regularly in some of my magazines," Gernsback began. "Most authors that I approached agreed to do a few stories provided I did not use their real names! For many years we encountered this difficulty, simply because many of the authors of the time thought it might hurt them with other publishers if they became known as science-fiction writers. ... Then, after I had brought into life the world's first science-fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in 1926, suddenly science-fiction became respectable! The intelligensia, scientists, engineers, professors of various ranks, became regular readers——even the nobility, to wit Lord Mountbatten, and others enrolled in the ranks."

Gernsback went on to point out that many of the great inventions in history had been anticipated by science-fiction writers, but the writers got no credit——even though, he quoted Dr. Michael Pupin as saying, "To discover the need for an invention constitutes fifty percent of the invention itself." Therefore he felt that the science-fiction world should press the patent office for the creation of a "provisional patent." For many years the office demanded that a working model of every new device be presented in order to secure a patent. A period of time should now be allotted in which those who are granted a provisional patent can attempt to build such a model. Often, as in the case of some of his own predictions, science had not evolved to the point where this could be accomplished. But a generation later a working model might have been built, such as one vindicating Gernsback's own prediction of radar. Such new ideas could be designated by a special symbol. He pointed out that applications for patents on the ideas of a submarine and on radar were refused because *the patent office found descriptions of them in science-fiction stories.*

At the conclusion of his talk he received another standing ovation. The next day the Gernsbacks flew to Atlantic City for a short vacation. His speech had been a success, and the publicity gained by his appearance at such a large gathering, where his historic accomplishments in the field had been reviewed, could only help his new project.

III

Gernsback was due back in his office on Monday, September 8th, so I had to have my proposal and resumé prepared by that time. On Sunday the seventh I sat down at my typewriter at nine in the morning and began composing them. I worked continuously through the day, finally finishing at eleven that evening. The proposal came to 28 double-spaced pages, and the resumé of my qualifications to 21. I prepared two carbon copies of these; the original and the first carbon were for Gernsback, and the second carbon for my own files.

My proposal led off with reasons why there should be a new genre magazine at this time at all. I pointed out the heightened interest in science that had caused a recent boom in science-fiction magazines. I alluded to past claims of high circulation by *Amazing Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, which indicated that potential readership was there, and asserted that a magazine which was distinctly different in content and format might dominate the field.

I plugged for a large-sized format, like *Radio Electronics*, with slick paper. It would be the only science-fiction magazine of this size and paper quality, and would stand out among its competition. (Actually I had no choice here; Gernsback had already told me that was what he wanted, and years later his son Harvey stated that he had been in complete accord with his father on this point.) The difference between us was that I preferred a very bulky paper stock to give readers the impression of generous content. I formulated a 25¢ cover price, but but costs were to make this unrealistic. I suggested that since we were employing smooth-finished paper we could use half-tone illustrations as well as line cuts. For easy reading the type should be large.

I felt we should cater chiefly to the adult reader, that the old concept of slanting a magazine toward those with a mental age of twelve was outmoded ——especially since that group already had some 450 comic books to choose among. We ought to put out "a magazine with a mission," one that would inspire, warn, educate and, above all, entertain. Stories should be scientifically plausible, and should seek to impart a sense of wonder. We should strive to cover the widest possible spectrum of science-fiction, including humorous stories, although outright fantasy was to be avoided. The writing should be modern, but straightforward rather than sophisticated or esoteric.

Especial emphasis ought to be placed on developing new writers, since we wanted a cadre that would slant their work towards us. There were so many magazines on the newsstands (24 in the genre at that time, and before the year's end the number would be 39!) that the size of the market did not require established authors to write for a new publication. We should contact the better old-time writers not contributing to the present field and determine whether they could meet modern standards. To encourage new writers we might initiate a perpetual short story contest. I pointed out that the majority of our stories would have to come from direct solicitation and working with individual authors, since no slush pile, regardless of size, would bring in enough acceptable manuscripts to fill the magazine. In fact, it might take several years to build our own team.

I preferred, partly on account of these limitations, to use one reprint in each issue. This would also make it possible to buy foreign stories. A good reprint is always preferable to a poor new story. I knew that with my own extensive collection I could pick reprints that scarcely anyone had seen previously (which for several years I later did on a monthly basis for the Ziff-Davis magazine *Fantastic Science Fiction*.)

My suggestion for payment of contributors was three cents a word on acceptance to established authors who wrote what we wanted, and no less than two cents a word to others. This, I emphasized, would do no more than make us competetive; but higher rates would probably get us no better material in the large market that then existed. I felt there should be one science article in every

issue, and that these articles should be exciting and futuristic.

At that time the artwork in most of the magazines in the field was weak. I wanted strong artwork, for the artists were really the salesmen of the magazine. Gernsback already had Frank R. Paul, and I thought we should add at least one other regular who was strong in areas where Paul was weak, such as human figures.

For departments I suggested an editorial, preferably of the type that Gernsback himself used to write; a digest of science news; reviews of books in the genre; a readers' column; and space-fillers that announced forthcoming stories.

Blurbs for the stories should be "direct, provocative and informative, and not sensational or melodramatic." A panel of scientists, like that in the old *Wonder Stories*, should be considered for prestige purposes and to give the magazine a scientific tone. Gernsback's name should be prominently displayed on the cover, since many readers would remember him.

The resumé of my qualifications had one unusual quality. Throughout its text I bolstered my every claim, without exception, with documentary evidence. I planned to bring the documents themselves to Gernsback along with the resumé, so that he would be able to check the accuracy of any statement I made.

I opened the resumé by saying, "Mr. Gernsback is the third person in recent years to approach me with an offer to edit a science-fiction magazine. I have declined past offers because I did not feel that the publishers had a fair chance of success, so consequently I was in no great hurry to resign from a good, solid position." Normally such statements are contrived for bargaining purposes, but in my case it was true. I was currently talking about the idea with Robert Klausner of the Guild Steel Products Corporation, a metal brokerage firm only a few blocks from Gernsback's office. In 1952 the tax rate on corporations was high, and Klausner was hoping to invest profits in some new enterprise whose expenses could be written off against them on his income taxes. He was aware of the current boom in science-fiction publishing and had contacted me for exploratory discussion. This had actually been going on when I began my negotiations with Gernsback.

I then stated that I thought Gernsback's ideas about a new science-fiction magazine were practical; I was therefore now willing to leave my present position and risk the magazine's success. I gave four reasons for my willingness to do this: I was confident of my detailed knowledge of every aspect of the science-fiction field; now was the time, if there ever was one, for a new magazine of the right type; Hugo Gernsback's name would be an asset; an editorial position presented opportunity and prestige. I emphasized, further, that since science-fiction was a spcialized field employing a man who understood it thoroughly was of prime importance.

I now had to contend with my chief weakness. My formal education extended only through high school. I had to show that my qualifications made me equivalent or superior to someone with a college education. To do this I cited three pieces of evidence. First, an article by Max Herzberg, a nationally known educator and author of some firty books, in which I was referred to as "learned and enthusiastic" (*Newark Evening News*, April 13, 1947). Second, I noted that I had lectured by invitation on science-fiction at New York University on December 13, 1950. Lastly, I had ghost-written a Master's thesis which had received an A+ grade, and which had subsequently been professionally published (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, November 1952).

As personal character references I gave David M. Speaker, who in years past had sold fiction to Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*; Thomas S. Gardner, who held a Ph. D. and worked as a research chemist; and A. Langley Searles, who also had a Ph. D., and was an assistant professor at New York University. All three were scientists, and I felt they would impress Gernsback more than any literary men whom I might list. I also quoted Bob Tucker's report in the October 1951 *Science Fiction News Letter*, which commended my probity as head of a committee accounting

for the finances of the New Orleans Science Fiction Convention.

I established that I was an authority in the field by quoting my listing in the refernce volume *Who Knows and What* as well as pertinent statements in the fan press. I summarized the contents of my immense library, and even included photographs of it to buttress its extent.

To exemplify my background in science-fiction as a writer and critic I cited stories I had sold to *Planet Stories, Comet* and *Uncanny Tales,* and the upcoming anthology edited by Garret Ford, *Science and Sorcery*; my history of fandom, "The Immortal Storm," then appearing serially in this magazine; and the hundreds of articles written about the genre for the fan press and the professional magazines *Astonishing Stories* and *Fantastic Novels.*

I cited my experience as a literary agent specializing in science-fiction (during 1947-1948, in partnership with James Taurasi) and as a publisher (David Keller's *Life Everlasting and Other Tales,* 1948). (Keller, incidentally, was an author discovered by Gernsback himself back in 1928.) I showed that I was interested in science by noting my correspondence with Albert Einstein and Fred Hoyle, and cited being credited for working for better science in science-fiction in a recent issue of *Life* magazine (May 21, 1951).

Finally, I emphasized that I was an experienced publicizer and excellent organizer. I had organized the first National Science Fiction Convention (Newark, N. J., 1938), the first World Science Fiction Convention (New York City, 1939), and the leading fan club in the East (ESFA), for all of whose meetings I had acted as program director. This indicated that I could not only coördinate the elements necessary to produce a magazine, but promote it as well.

Then I did something that in retrospect I regard as remarkable. I put together exhibits to document every one of the statements I had made. These filled a good-sized box which I brought with me to Gernsback's office on September 8, 1952, along with the copies of my proposal for the new magazine and personal resumé, each bound as a separate brochure.

Harvey Gernsback was in the office with his father. Harvey Gernsback was very thin, with a high forehead and large eyes, and presented an almost cadaverous appearance; though he was smiling, his attitude suggested caution. I I thumped my heavy box of exhibits down on Hugo Gernsback's desk and handed each of them their copies of my two brochures. More amused than startled, Gernsback asked if I had brought my lunch with me.

"No," I replied. "Everyone who applies for a job stretches the truth a little. I have simply brought you proof of every claim I've made. I'm going to leave this evidence here and you can check it as your leisure."

"And what's this?" he asked, weighing my brochures in his hands, "Your latest novel? Do you expect me to read all this?"

"I went to the trouble of writing it, so I hope you will," I responded. My psychology was to overwhelm them, and the overkill proved effective. There was so much that they couldn't possibly take the time to check my every statement——and if they had, they would have found each was accurate.

The three of us went to lunch at Miller's, and Hugo let Harvey draw me out in the conversation, which wasn't difficult. I was 32 at the time and family finances had forced me to abandon science-fiction writing for a more reliable income. I had spent the past nine years driving a delivery truck, but at the same time I had also expanded the firm's sales and brought in new accounts. The latter earned me commissions in addition to my salary. The problem was that I had become so efficient a driver that the company didn't want to promote me to full-time salesman. In that sense, then, I was in a dead end. It was time to make my move into another occupation, and this seemed a good opportunity.

I described the current science-fiction market, which I had always followed closely. I told them I kept up with the field by buying every book, magazine and associational item in and about it that appeared anywhere; I attended all

major conventions, many regional meetings, and was welcome at gatherings of smaller groups such as the local Hydra Club. On the side, I was a book dealer specializing in science-fiction.

(continued on page 214)

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Fun Back at the Ranch

Everett F. Bleiler

The illustration for "The Lost Comet" by Ronald M. Sherin, which appeared on page 260 of the June 1927 issue of *Amazing Stories*, offers an unusual aspect of Frank R. Paul's art. In addition to showing a scene from Sherin's story, it documents some of the personalities of the Experimenter Publishing Company.

The figure on the lower right corner, who by a clever device of composition dominates the illustration, is recognizably Hugo Gernsback. He stands magisterially as sponsor of the scene, with a hand on the chair of the first seated figure; this is recognizably T. O'Conor Sloane, Ph. D., the managing editor of *Amazing Stories*. To Sloane, as the staff member with the most imposing academic record, goes the honor of looking through the telescope, which, as a humorous touch, is not an astronomical telescope, or even a captain's telescope, but an amusement device like the coin-operated "rubberneck" instruments familiar from beaches and parks. Possibly intentionally, since Paul's perspectives are usually beyond reproach, the telescope is not really pointed at the comet.

The figure on the left in a light smock, as counterpoise to Gernsback, demonstrating the comet, is Frank R. Paul. As he smilingly points to the wonder, with an air of having produced it himself, most of the other personalities stand in poses of astonishment.

Above the head of Hugo Gernsback is a partial image that resembles the obituary photographs of Joseph H. Kraus, long a staff member.

It is possible that the man with the bowler hat (which probably embodies an in-joke) is intended to be Wilbur C. Whitehead, one of the "literary editors" of *Amazing*; there is some resemblance, though not close, to the photograph in Whitehead's obituary notice in the September 1931 *Amazing Stories*. In that photograph Whitehead does not have a walrus mustache.

As for the other three figures, I don't recognize them. They may simply be fillers, without identities. One might expect to find Carl Brandt in such a group picture, but I don't recall seeing photographs of him.

Paul, I have read, did not use models for his figures, but worked from an extensive "swipe file" of clip art. Indeed, some of his figures are obviously commercial images that he redrew. But in one other case he may have invoked the the living world. On the cover of the October 1933 issue of *Wonder Stories*, illustrating Frank Kelly's story "The Moon Tragedy," is a nude male, whose groin is modestly concealed by a burst of radiation. Oddly enough, the man looks very much like Bernarr Macfadden, an advocate of nudism and Gernsback's *bête noir*.

Editor's note:

I have shown this illustration to several older fans in efforts to confirm, and hopefully add to, the identities Bleiler assigns above. The only comment I received contributing further information came from Sam Moskowitz. I quote from his letter to me dated May 8, 1996: "The man on the extreme right closest to the comet could very well be Carl Brandt. The figures assigned to Gernsback and Sloane show close resemblances, but the one claimed to be Paul doesn't look like him to me. The man on his left with glasses is a lot like Sidney Gernsback, except that Sidney had a full head of hair. ... While working for Hugo Gernsback I saw Kraus only once, but it's my impression that he too had more hair than is shown here."

The LOST COMET

- By Ronald M. Sherin -

My Futurian Days

Jack Robins

Editor's note: Jack Robins ended his reminiscences about Sam Moskowitz in the last issue of this magazine with the revelation that he had begun writing his science-fiction experiences, but that they were not yet complete. The following material, written in 1955, constitutes some of the earliest notes for these. The incidents related are not in chronological order, nor are all of them complete; but when I read them I felt they were both interesting and historically valuable, and at my urging the author agreed to their publication here. I hope their appearance will encourage him to write further for us in the same vein.

One of my most vivid memories is of John B. Michel. He started out as an honest-to-goodness Wellsian socialist. He was strongly influenced by the attitudes depicted in H. G. Wells's fiction. It was Johnny's stated opinion that science-fictionists were socially motivated but did not know it. He felt that by talking about it he could awaken fans to the role he visualized for them. For a time, during the middle thirties, he studied Marxist literature, flirted with the Young Communist League, and perhaps even believed in communism. But, as a typical Wellsian socialist, he would only *talk* about social reform. Never would he ever dare to *do* anything practical to bring his ideas of future society into fruition. Yet he enthralled his fellow fans. As poor teenagers having little to look forward to during the depression-torn days of the middle and late 1930's, we listened entranced to his visions of a time when one could get whatever he needed, free or at a nominal price, from any department store. And as sex-starved adolescents in those pre-pill days, we drooled when he predicted that sex would ultimately be regarded as nothing more difficult than going to a restaurant for a meal. A fellow would meet a girl he liked, and if this feeling was reciprocated, she would agree.

Of course, many other fans were annoyed at being told that science-fiction envisioned the political future, and that its fans were to be the leaders who showed the flock, the mass of people, how to get there. The general attitude was that science-fiction was sheer entertainment, and nothing Johnny would say or do could change their minds. With tongue in cheek he rewrote Marx's Communist Manifesto as a call to science-fictionists to "awake."

At that time several fans in my area had gathered into a club called the International Scientific Association (ISA). We met periodically at the home of William S. Sykora. One day we found ourselves locked out of his basement, with no other meeting place to go to. This broke up the ISA. What made Sykora do this? I am not sure; I have never seen anything he has written on the subject. Was it Johnny's leftist ideas and the way he interested and perhaps influenced the rest of us? Was it a general paranoia, as some people felt? Or was it that most of the members were more interested in writing than in science? I remember debates on whether science-fiction led readers to become scientists, an attitude Sykora supported, or whether it induced in readers a desire to write, the view held by Michel, Wollheim and Pohl. Whatever it was, it turned Sykora sour on us. So that was the end of the ISA meetings, and the end of the club journal.

What were we to do? Was this to be the end of our group? Was it to be the end of my only link to a group of people I admired, the end of my contact with science-fiction fandom? I expressed my concerns to the others as we gathered in discussion at an ice cream parlor the day of our lock-out.

There was another question to be answered. At a previous science-fiction conference Wollheim had been elected to form a committee to organize a world

Science Fiction Convention, to occur at the same time as the New York World's Fair of 1939. Would that be dropped?

Donald Wollheim and Johnny Michel were close friends. Together with Frederik Pohl, they really did enjoy the friendship of the group of us who had made up this ISA club. They also had contacts with many other fans in New York. These three then assumed leadership in organizing a new group. And in line with Johnny's Wellsian ideas, this was to be called the Futurians, since we all looked towards the future of mankind. We met at first in homes, later in a hall, and still later in apartments which were jointly rented / tenanted by various members, and given such exotic names as The Ivory Tower.

Who were the Futurians? The nucleus consisted of those members of the ISA who had been excluded from Sykora's basement——Johnny Michel, Don Wollheim, Fred Pohl, Walter Kubilius and myself. Because of the wide contacts in fandom by Wollheim and Michel, others were attracted to join the group at various times: Robert Lowndes, Cyril Kornbluth, Dirk Wylie, Richard Wilson, Isaac Asimov, Daniel Burford, David A. Kyle, Leslie Perri, Herman Levantman, Elsie Balter and Damon Knight. Others, whose names I have forgotten, wandered in and out of the group. Initially, the youngest was about fourteen and the oldest, Don Wollheim, was in his early twenties. The Futurians could only loosely be called a club or an organization. They were really an association, a loose configuration of people with common interests. For the most part, we were would-be writers.

What held us together? It certainly wasn't Johnny's ideas, which were sometimes joked about by several of the group. Probably the most important thing was simply that we liked and enjoyed being with each other. I lived in a slum neighborhood in Brooklyn, and felt very different from other kids in the street. They were rough and generally anti-intellectual, and I was unable to associate with any of them. I doubt whether they had ever sat down to read a book that wasn't required in school. I, on the other hand, was an avid reader. If I hadn't joined the ISA, I'd've been an unhappy loner. Associating with Michel, Wollheim and Pohl was like being in a new and exciting world. Here were people who not only read books, but had ideas and stimulating intellectual interests. They induced enthusiasm in me. I felt that these were the people with whom I belonged.

We did interesting things together. Once we attended a meeting of the American Rocket Society and heard a lecture on liquid fuel rockets. The lecturer may have been Robert Goddard. One July weekend a group of us took the IRT subway to the last stop in the Bronx and walked several miles to Tarrytown, Johnny with his hand in a sling and I snapping pictures with my newly purchased second-hand camera. Once there, we found ourselves starved. We stopped at a diner, but most of us couldn't afford more than a fifteen-cent item: a quarter-head of lettuce drowned in Russian dressing. But at the time it seemed like nectar of the gods.

Michel and Wollheim mimeographed fan magazines and sent them and letters to other fans and fan groups. We shared ideas, sometimes snapping out thoughts that could be used in Johnny's articles. A recipient of our barbed comments was invariably Sykora, who never seemed to let us alone. Not only had he destroyed the ISA, but, together with Sam Moskowitz and James Taurasi, had usurped the role of organizing the 1939 World Science Fiction Convention. Then, to top it all, he had barred Michel, Wollheim and Pohl from the convention hall. To us, Sykora was *the* dictator, the epitome of Fascism in science-fiction, the ruler who imposed his will no matter whom he hurt. I must say, though, that having John W. Campbell's full backing, Moskowitz, Taurasi and Sykora did put on a good convention.

After being together on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, we would have supper at a Chinese restaurant, where at the time you could get twenty—five-cent meals (then the limit of my resources), continuing enjoyable conversation as we ate. Michel once asked me, as the only one present attending college, was a Chinese meal nutritious. I didn't have enough information then to answer; but wher-

ever you are now, Johnny, I can finally say, *Yes!* A Chinese meal *is* nutritious.

Wollheim had as deep an influence on us as Michel. Don was sharp, witty and clever. Even at the time of the early Futurians, he already had a collection of every past and current science-fiction magazine and many books of science fiction and fantasy. What was more impressive was that he had read every item he owned, and could describe the plots of most stories.

Don had strong opinions about these stories, and I personally substantiated many of his recommendations. When Dr. E. E. Smith came out with the first Lensman novel in *Astounding Stories*, Wollheim grimaced in horror. "A lens?" he said, shaking his head in disgust. "Boskone?" He did not like the concept of using a lens to transmit thought. Smith told us that the lensmen were the saviors of civilization, and Boskone was its enemy. Don went so far as to write a tongue-in-cheek essay using the author's own words to prove that Smith's civilization was a dictatorship and Boskone a democracy. Yet Donald did love Smith's writings. He once told me he had read the "Skylark" stories a dozen times.

Wollheim was really the mainstay of the group. He was the most practical one among us, keeping the Futurians together no matter what difficulties were encountered. He was the one who worried about rent, bills and food, and even about the welfare of his friends. It was he who encouraged Lowndes to write the letter that got Robert his first job as editor.

I think our best activities were our walks. During these we would recite poems we had memorized, sing songs, exchange news, simply enjoying each other's company. Some——Pohl in particular——wrote witty science-fiction lyrics to Christmas carols which we sang much to the bewilderment of passersby. I remember that on one walk a pebble had slipped into my shoe and I sang out, "I feel a pebble in my shoe, in my shoe." Dick Wilson continued with "And he doesn't know what to do, what to do," and we all went on to complete the song.

The most interesting walks occurred when Kornbluth, in his deep, resonant voice, told a shaggy dog story. This, you will remember, is a long, pointless tale with a futile, inconclusive ending; what holds the listener are the details, which can be varied inventively in each telling. Cyril could enthrall us for hours as he strung out the story interminably, each time in a different way. On days when Cyril couldn't be with us, someone else, usually Lowndes, would take on the task of telling the story. We never tired of this.

Often we would go to an ice cream parlor. Once I found myself tight for cash. I had to reserve a nickel for subway fare, since my home was too far away to walk. The group wanted sodas, and I wanted one too. So I borrowed a nickel from Kornbluth. The next time we met he reminded me of it, and I paid him. About a week later, he reminded me again. Had I paid him? I wondered. I wasn't absolutely sure, so I paid him again. When he tried this a third time I rebelled, saying "Didn't I pay you?" Sheepishly he nodded. Yet I couldn't get angry at him; I don't think anyone ever could. That was Cyril's way——bold, daring, always thinking up wicked tricks to play on his friends, especially especially when he had nothing else requiring his attention (like Sykora).

Occasionally Cyril was sarcastic towards me, making me a little afraid of him. He had a sharp tongue, and usually I could never think up a reply quickly enough to counter him. Yet he could be as sweet as anything, which I pleasantly found out. Because of the depression, the government had set up a job-training program for young people up to the age of 25. Under the National Youth Administration I was taught lathe-working and milling operations. Since there were no daytime openings, I had to come in during the midnight shift. This was fortunate, however, becuase since that shift was less crowded I had a better chance to use the few machines available and didn't need to wait in line. One day, who should I see coming into the shop dressed in coveralls but Cyrial Kornbluth. He treated me as if we were two comrades in a foreign country, not once using a sarcastic word.

Once I took a long walk with Fred Pohl, and we stayed up to watch the dawn (worrying my mother, of course). He told me he often stayed up to watch sunrise. There's nothing more conducive toward mutual understanding and deep friendship than a long, unhurried walk. Later, according to Isaac Asimov, he and Fred took long walks together, usually discussing story ideas, most probably Isaac's.

During one walk, Fred tried to explain what it was that made Lovecraft so popular. "Well," I said, "give me an example of a Lovecraft story." Fred obliged. "A crew of men," he said, "use a powerful boring machine to drill miles and miles into the ground. Suddenly, they find a cavity where none should exist. They're puzzled, and want to find out what is there. One man, Harold, volunteers to go down in a cage. He maintains contact with the rest of the group by radio. As he descends, he reports what he sees at different levels. Finally he reaches the mysterious cavity. "It's large, and seems empty," he says. "I'm stepping out." There is silence for a moment. "There's nothing here," he says. "It's just an empty cave." Then they hear him yell, "Hey!" and nothing more. They call, "Harold! Harold!" over and over, but there is no answer. They keep calling, debating the while whether to send another man down. Suddenly a voice comes on the radio and says, "Hello?" "Harold!" the man monitoring the radio exclaims gladly. "We were worried about you. What happened?" The voice answers, "Harold? Harold isn't here," and the radio goes dead. "This," claimed Fred, "is a Lovecraft-type story." Later I repeated it to Wollheim. "That's not a Lovecraft story," said Don, "It's a Fred Pohl story."

Fred and Leslie Perri (one of the earliest female fans) were planning to get married, and for some reason thought it would be ideal if they and other Futurians could live in an apartment together and share the rent. Fred found an apartment. Michel, Wollheim, Lowndes and Kornbluth moved in first. Pohl and Perri delayed. Finally Fred told the others that they could not join them. The four still living in the apartment then found the rent was too much for them, and they were forced to move. They were so peeved at Fred that on the last day they dirtied up the place, relishing the anger the landlord would heap on Pohl, since the apartment had been rented in his name. To consummate their vengeance, Kornbluth wanted to put mimeograph ink on the inside doorknob of the entrance before closing the door for the last time. But Wollheim would have none of that. "Then how about butter?" pleaded Cyril. "We have to do something!" Wollheim agreed to butter. But the moment Don was out the door, Cyril gleefully took out the ink and poured it on the doorknob until it was black and gooey. Then he carefully snapped the door shut, and we left. I was there and saw it all.

Having tried living together as a group, the fellows decided they liked it. They found another apartment in Brooklyn, nicknaming it The Ivory Tower. Here the tenants included Dick Wilson. This was probably the first commune in science fiction fandom. I was able to join them one night a week; I slept over every Wednesday, paying a dollar each time for the privilege. But the fellows were so poor that Donald, in setting up the dinner schedule, stated we would have to have spaghetti every single night. I suggested, "Maybe we could have something different on just one night a week." "No, spaghetti every night!" Wollheim said flatly. But I persisted. "How about macaroni one night a week?" He relented, smiling. "Yes, I suppose we *could* have macaroni one night a week."

I loved those commune days, and once surprised the group with a little play I wrote about them, "The Ivory Tower." They enjoyed it, too. I have since written two sonnets——my only two——reflecting the influence those days had on me.*

We encouraged each other to write. Those early shaggy dog story fests turned out to be good training for plotting and writing science-fiction. Some of us, like Kornbluth and Pohl, became prolific. I developed a mental block from my deepseated fears that I would never earn money and would be dependent on my par-

*These are given on the bottom of page 178.

ents for the rest of my days. The reason, of course, was despite having earned a B. S. degree in chemistry I couldn't get a job until eventually, through pull, I landed one as a delivery boy at fifteen dollars a week. My parents had warned me over and over that one couldn't make a living by writing. Yet I wasn't earning anything as a chemist, either. Fred Pohl encouraged me to write, going so far as to have me describe incidents and send them to him for criticism and evaluation. But it took years and a steady job before I could once again tackle science-fiction.

Lowndes ghost-wrote and mimeographed a newsletter called *Science Fiction Weekly* in early 1940; I believe he did so for about fifteen dollars a week, which helped pay the rent. I seem to recall that his name did not appear, although he obtained much of the news and did all the work. One March day I prevailed on him to print an April Fool's Day issue. "Make it an extra one, so readers can't complain they're not getting their full subscriptions," I suggested. "And we can call it *Science Fiction Weakly*." Hesitantly at first, then with more enthusiasm, he agreed to the idea. I wrote three of the four stories in it. One was a rendition of the conversation that ensued on my finding a baby cockroach in my dessert at a Chinese restaurant. The discussion was not about finding it, but on what it should be called——a "chick" roach, a "puppy" roach, a "kitten" roach, or what. The second item was based on my knowing that Asimov was trying to write and sell science-fiction. I faked the story that he had been found dead of heart failure upon receipt of his first check, an enormous one, from John W. Campbell, then the editor of *Astounding Stories*. I no longer remember my third contribution, nor who wrote the fourth. The issue appeared as edited by "Slowend," which was an anagram for "Lowndes."

As an organization, the Futurians never formally ended——it just dribbled away. Formalities such as marriage, earning a living, or being invited by the government to take part in World War II caused attrition. I went to the west coast to help build liberty ships, one of the few jobs I could find even though the war had supposedly created a shortage of skilled labor. Fred Pohl and others became members of the armed forces. Those that remained, Michel, Lowndes and Wollheim, kept something going despite the war, but the spirit was no longer the same, the comradeship not as deep.

After the war, the ties binding the Futurians together loosened even more. All of us obtained jobs of one kind or another Most of the Futurians did indeed become writers. Ultimately I acquired a Ph.D. in chemistry from the Polytechnic Institute of New York and moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania. Asimov got a Ph.D. at Columbia University and moved to Boston. Donald Wollheim and Elsie Balter married and had a daughter; all three became professionals in the field, eventually setting up the publishing firm of DAW Books. Fred Pohl has been an agent,

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THE MIND OF MAN

The mind of man sits snugly in its tower
Imagining itself as fully free
To loaf, or play, or work its every hour.
It thinks in height it has security.
From height the earth is small, the people ants,
The problems small and easily ignored.
Who need to care, to be participants
In futile deeds of dubious reward?

But, mind of man, the darkness presses near,
A swamp that reeks, that threatens to unwind.
And while so smug, enmeshed in thoughts of power,
Can't you feel a growing, subtle fear
That deep below an evil force will grind
And topple, crush your fragile Ivory Tower?

•

OUR PAST FRIENDSHIP

The years have pressed their marks upon us both.
Our pasts are faded photos of the truth.
We hunt through timeworn views of early growth
For long-lost scenes and pictures of our youth.
How close we were those dim and distant days!
We found in each a strong and ready wit,
A friendship warm and bright, a fireside blaze,
A bond it seemed that fate could never split.

That villain, time, has changed our shapes and minds
And pushed sweet friendship down to memory,
A dusty dot in mental storage space
Which springs up now and then, as time unwinds
Our lives' last cherished coils of melody,
To share once more its glorious embrace.

•

an editor (I believe he was the best editor *Galaxy* and *If* ever had), a writer, speaker and world traveller; he even organized some of the more prolific Futurians into The Futurian Literary Society, a group which faded away just as had the parent organization. Michel married, but led an unfulfilled life and died tragically. Kornbluth went to Chicago during the war, at first using his NYA training to become a mechanic, later succeeding as a full-time writer. Dirk Wylie married and tried to become an agent, but died an early death, from what I do not know. Damon Knight became a writer and a teacher of science-fiction.

Somehow nothing remains the same. I have fond memories of the group, but that is all they are---memories. Yet trapped within those memories still remain feelings of the warm comradeship in those early Futurian days.

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"Recent Publications"—concluded from page 290

From the major publishers, two anthologies edited by Gardner Dozois struck me as particularly attractive, *The Good Old Stuff* and its companion *The Good New Stuff* (St. Martin's Griffin, $15.95 and $17.95). They contain what the editor calls "adventure SF in the grand tradition," and cover, respectively, the 1948-75 and 1977-98 periods. You get 33 above-average stories from the genre pulps—nearly 900 pages—in these two heavy-covered trade paperbacks, plus suggestions for further reading and interesting prefaces. There's plenty of entertainment here.

—*A. Langley Searles*

NEW COLORS AND OLD

Bruce Boston

Pomegranate blue. Stormsilk. Raw orchidine.
Auraviolet sun blur through the xellor trees.
A windy opalescence plashing shadow play
with the olvre cumuli of an orangedown sky.
Dark-light dappling the untouched landscape,
the metacolored flora and surrealistic fauna
of this brilliantly hued otherworldly world.

If your thoughts could frame a shelter
for the tossing trees, if your heart could
preserve the unique life forms that abound,
if you could nourish these wilds untamed,
you might christen every color — plumbaro,
szale, levantura — and savor every shade,
you might discover passions equally unnamed.

Soon others will pass through the xellor trees,
others by the hundred and the hundred score,
sporting colors ordinary and long overused,
born and bred on some other starflung world.
They will come in a ragged unending array,
trampling the spectra of painterly scenes,
invading these wilds with undeclared war.

They will see your land with leaden eyes,
sun and shadow a stage for their strife,
lay claim to the forest and all it contains,
with unrefined passion and everyday lies.
"Colors?" they'll say, raising their palms,
shading their eyes to censor each sight,
squinting to block out the glorious light,
"Only for children and artists and fools!
Abandon your madness and join us in life."

From Oz to Solaris

An Interview with Neil Barron

Everett F. Bleiler

Editor's note: This interview was conducted by mail in the period from December 1996 through April 1997. In the transcription below SF stands for fantastic fiction.

Neil Barron: As a prelude, I should emphasize that what I say is going to be based mostly on the imperfect memories of a healthy 63-year-old whose association with fantastic fiction began in childhood. I've consulted records when I had them, but I've never been an archivist and retained papers, correspondence, etc. from day one as Sam Moskowitz apparently has.

Everett F. Bleiler: *As probably the foremost SF librarian, even though you don't hold an official specialist title, how did you get into this racket?*

The answer to that goes back a long way. I'd better start at the beginning. I was born in Hollywood, California on March 23, 1934, and spent my first eleven years in the San Fernando Valley, mostly Burbank. I probably read a lot of the standard fare for kids of that time, but have no distinct memories of fantastic fiction as such aside from fairy tales, myths and legends, pre-Code comics and similar materials. Somewhere in the mid-1940s I discovered the pulps of the period, and distinctly recall Bradbury's early tales in *Planet Stories*.

About that same time, or possibly during the war years, I discovered the Oz stories and eventually acquired the entire series by Baum and his multiple successors. Baum was a distinctly American voice, in contrast to European fairy tales, and he introduced elements not found in traditional children's literature of his period, such as machines. Tik-Tok was one of the first robots in children's literature, for example, and Glinda the Good lived in a lake on a domed platform that could be lowered below the water's surface.

I think I also read a few of the Roy Rockwell novels from the 1930s, and I clearly remember that I read a fair amount of Burroughs, notably the Mars, Venus and Pellucidar series; the Tarzan tales never appealed to me. If I ever read any of Heinlein's juveniles I've forgotten them.

Would you sketch in a little of your family background?

In 1945 we moved to San Antonio, Texas. This was partly because my mother had been born there, and still had relatives in the city, and partly because my father decided to go into partnership there with my then-uncle. They made commercial display fixtures, with my father handling the sales end of the business. My mother, as was traditional for the period, didn't work outside the home.

San Antonio then was far different from today. I recall that even the main street was unpaved. The river, today a key tourist attraction, was an open sewer. And I had a few brushes with segregation, mostly on public transit. I wasn't sympathetic to the practice and had an occasional run-in with bus drivers.

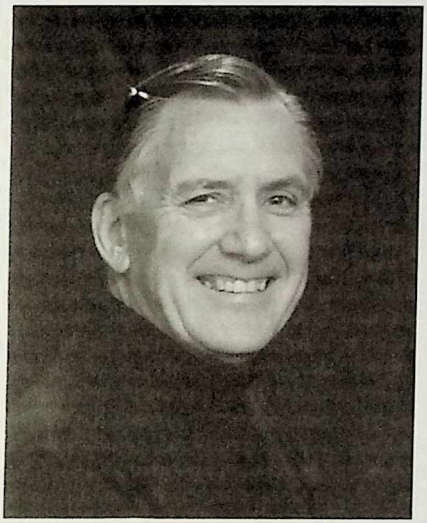
Anyway, my mother's magnolia-scented memories quickly evaporated when she was confronted with postwar San Antonio, where housing was in short supply. My father says the business did okay, but couldn't support two partners adequately, so in early 1947 he sold his share and we returned to southern Califor-

nia. There he entered the plywood and hardwood industry, holding a variety of senior positions——sales manager, vice-president, etc.——in several firms over the next thirty-some years.

If therewas a standard issue southern California suburban white kid then, I probably qualified. I'd gone through grades one to six with a lot of friends and anticipated continuing with them in junior high. Instead, I spent the seventh and half of my eighth grade in San Antonio's schools, where the only thing I clearly recall is that I learned more about the Alamo than I ever wanted to know.

So, my memories are of a placid, middle-class life, disrupted only by these two moves eighteen months apart. But as I look back, I realize they had a significant influence on my personality development. They broke friendships I had made and, I suspect, forced me to turn inward and develop personal interests.

Back in California, I completed junior high, and then went on to high school and community college in Pasadena. My parents never pushed me toward any particular career, although I vaguely recall their suggesting I consider law. Perhaps this was because my mother's father, who died when she and her two sisters were adolescents, had been the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. Having worked briefly in a law library some years ago, and seen what a dreary literature it has, I've no regrets about not pursuing a law career.



Neil Barron

When did you get more deeply into SF? Were you associated with any of the West Coast fan groups?

By the late forties I was reading at least some of the pulps, such as *Astounding* and later the new *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Galaxy*. I'd discovered fanzines, among them *Fantasy Advertiser*, published then by Roy Squires in Glendale. He later became a close friend whom I visited several times. Like many others, I lamented his death from cancer a few years ago. He published my first writing in 1950, a book review, when I was sixteen. Before he died he returned the one-sheet typescript of that review, which he'd kept for some 35 years. I find that more amazing, astounding and weird than almost anything else I know.

About the same time I learned of and joined the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. At that time it met in the basement of a decaying hotel in downtown L. A., grandiloquently called The Prince Rupert Arms. I was living in Pasadena, and I recall driving the 25 or so miles to the LASFS meetings with someone named Paul. I think the LASFS is the oldest continuing fan club, dating from the year of my birth. It was there that I first met SF authors——van Vogt, Heinlein, Bradbury, Kuttner and others I've long since forgotten.

In August 1997, while visiting friends attending a film convention in Glendale, we went to one of the weekly Thursday evening LASFS meetings. The site was a stand-alone building in a business strip; like the Prince Rupert, It had a down-at-the heels appearance. There seemed to be more women present than I recall from those long-ago meetings in my youth, but if I were forced to characterize the group I'm afraid the word *nerd* would come to mind. I wonder if a 63-year-old visitor to those gatherings I went to half a century ago would've described them similarly!

The period from about 1949 to perhaps 1952 was the only period of my life when I could have been considered a Trufan. But even then I didn't read SF to the exclusion of anything else.

Did you have any experiences with any of the fringe groups that were strong around SF in those days?

I'd read enough to conclude that Dianetics was a crock, and its reincarnation as Scientology later confirmed my views. I took a course in observational astronomy in high school and read in that field——Arthur Eddington, James Jeans and later Fred Hoyle, whose Reith BBC lectures, *The Nature of the Universe*, were published in 1950. I'd acquired the seminal Ley-Bonestell collaboration, *The Conquest of Space*, a year or so previously. So, when I discovered Stapledon, he didn't have quite the impact he might have with his discussion of chronological magnitudes; I'd already been exposed to those concepts.

I have an anecdote from those years readers may find amusing. Around 1952 a high school friend, who later became an astronomer and college instructor, joined me for a drive to San Diego to attend an early Westercon. The Hale telescope on nearby Mount Palomar had been operational for about three years, so we visited it. It's as impressive today, by the way, as it was then, even in comparison with other observatories I've seen since, such as those on Kitt Peak near Tucson. On our drive up we stopped for lunch at a small restaurant called Palomar Gardens (which is still there). At the edge of the gravelled parking area was a miniature observatory about seven feet high. We looked in and saw an eight-inch reflector with rust spots on the mirror and the interior coated with cobwebs and dust. While we waited for lunch we noticed a dozen or so people who seemed to be expectant. We were told that Dr. George Adamski would soon talk to them about his experiences with flying saucers. Sure enough! Out he came and talk he did, about travelling aboard a saucer with Venusians, as I recall. His acolytes believed every word. When he paused for questions, I asked if he'd observed saucers with the telescope adjacent to the parking area. "Yeah, yeah, of course! I observe them there regularly." Naturally my apparent skepticism irritated his followers; you don't question Santa Claus. With the British occultist Desmond Leslie, Adamski went on to write *Flying Saucers Have Landed*. He died in 1975.

The only SF writer I can recall from that Westercon was Fredric Brown, whose *What Mad Universe* and short detective fiction I'd read. The latter featured two take-no-prisoners brothers, who I'd suspected were autobiographical. I couldn't've been more wrong. Brown was short and slight, with a thin mustache and a quiet voice. I recall he was pleasant and liked to drink, a habit I hadn't yet taken up.

Did your activities in SF continue after high school?

Yes, in junior college I founded or co-founded the Space Time Club. All I can recall of it was its fiasco in the yearbook. One member, a semi-professional photographer, took a photo of the group standing on the steps of a building. Another, who became a film animator, cut out our images, mounted them on a drawing of the rings of Saturn he'd made, and photographed the result. It looked quite impressive in the yearbook, but its effectiveness was somewhat compromised by the name given us——the Christian Science Club. Even the yearbook faculty advisor couldn't help laughing at the mistake. Looking back at it decades later, I can't blame him.

SF was still found mostly in the pulps then, though the specialty publishers had been issuing hard-covers for several years, and mass market originals and reprints were beginning to appear. I wasn't much of a systematic collector, although I'd acquired a set of *Unknown* and a long run of *Astounding*, plus other pulps I've forgotten; I think *Weird Tales* and *FFM* were among them. I sold them all years ago.

What did you do after junior college?

That was in 1953. I transferred to UCLA, thinking I might major in mathematics or engineering. After a semester with fellow nerds, I decided that these fields weren't for me. But I didn't know what other major made more sense, so I asked my draft board to move me to the front of the line. I knew that Congress would drop the educational benefits for servicemen following the truce in Korea, and I needed them to finish college.

After two years in the army, one in Heidelberg, I was discharged, worked for a few months as an engineering aide, and then resumed college, this time at the University of California Riverside campus, which was then the experimental liberal arts college of the UC system, with about 900 students. While working in the library there (now the location of the massive Eaton collection) I flirted with majoring in English, but found the academic study of literature repellant. My degree, after dropping out for awhile, was eventually awarded in an interdisciplinary social sciences major——political science (the subject of my undergraduate thesis), anthropology and sociology. During military service and later in college I don't think I read any SF——or if I did I don't recall any.

If you'd lost interest in SF, what reawakened it and led to the first edition of Anatomy of Wonder?

The genesis goes back some time. Partly because of the moves to and from San Antonio as an adolescent, I had developed relatively eclectic reading interests. I spent a lot of time in Pasadena's public library (then and now one of the better ones in southern California), teaching myself a number of research skills, which I refined as an undergraduate. An interest in publishing and bookselling had developed in my high school years, one I still have, although by this late date not with any thoughts of a career. But I did have some such ideas then, and I faintly recall applying for positions as a publisher's rep while in college. I'd seen first-hand how undercapitalized and poorly managed many bookstores were (and still are, especially antiquarian bookstores). But the motivation, to say nothing of the experience, knowledge and capital, to enter bookselling was lacking. Then, after a few post-college years working for an industrial loan company, I concluded that the business world didn't appeal to me.

But I'd had good mentors at UCR's library, and concluded if I couldn't make a living selling books, I might by lending them. So I enrolled at Berkeley's library school in the sixties and got my master's, after a one-year interruption for Peace Corps service as a librarian in Pakistan, an unsatisfactory experience I wrote about in the *Library Journal*.

After work at the Queens Borough Public Library and at Columbia, I was offered an excellent position at Sacramento State College, whose library director I'd worked for at UCR. By this time married and with an infant, I moved to Sacramento in mid-1967. I worked for the university library there until the fall of 1970, when I (mistakenly) accepted a position with Baker and Taylor, a large book wholesaler in New Jersey which wanted to enlarge the academic library portion of its business.

Although I've no memory of reading SF from the mid-fifties to the late seventies, I must have followed the field from afar, for I wrote the first of my three articles for *Choice*, a monthly book review magazine for academic and larger public libraries. It appeared in the January 1970 issue, and was titled "Anatomy of Wonder: a Bibliographic Guide to Science Fiction." Follow-up articles came out in the September 1973 and October 1979 issues.

In that first article I referred to the newly-founded Science Fiction Research Association, although I don't think I joined the SFRA until a few years later. I also said, "I am therefore preparing a list of books recommended for libraries desiring to develop a basic core collection adequate to support an occa-

sional undergraduate course or two as well as to provide the relief of unrequired reading, and a more comprehensive list for institutions desiring to offer a more ambitious program, perhaps on a graduate level. The assistance of well-known critics, collectors, libraries and others will be sought."

So that was the genesis of Anatomy of Wonder. *How did the guide develop from the articles?*

I honestly can't remember the details very clearly. I think I approached Peter Doiron, a librarian who was consulting editor for a series of bibliographic guides that Bowker was publishing. Four of these were listed opposite the title page of the first edition of *Anatomy of Wonder*, which appeared in the summer of 1976 as a $14.95 hard-cover and an $8.95 trade paperback.

I also can't recall how I selected the contributors for this edition, some of whom I invited to contribute to later editions. The primary literature took up about 85% of the main text, a reflection of the relatively rudimentary state of the secondary literature in the early 1970s. (Most of these secondary works were superseded by more comprehensive works annotated in later editions.) Reviews were very favorable, and the book was chosen by the American Library Association and *Choice* as an outstanding reference book. It sold 4648 hard-cover and 4627 paperback copies.

How was your personal life progressing by this time?

Well, when the first *AOW* was published I'd been living in Florida for about three years, working as a district sales manager for the World Book encyclopedia. By then I had two children, an eight-year-old daughter and a ten-year-old son. My wife had recently completed a practical nurse program and was beginning work. Unfortunately the marriage had gone sour, and we divorced that year. I returned to California in late 1976, still working for World Book, but this time to northern San Diego county. About a year later I met my present wife, Carolyn, who worked part-time for WB. She was also divorced, with two of her five children still living at home. We were married in 1978 and have lived in Vista since then, although for some years as empty-nesters. She had majored in lit at Penn State. Her interest in fantastic literature is, like mine, modest, although she's enjoyed many of the books I've selectively chosen for her. The third and fourth editions of *AOW* and my fantasy and horror guides are dedicated to her.

How about the later editions of AOW?

The second edition, published in the summer of 1981, was much closer to what I'd originally had in mind. I'd always been irritated by the ingrown, insular nature of SF, as if it had sprung fully developed from the forehead of Hugo Gernsback in 1926. That was part of the motive to include coverage of the more important non-English SF literatures. There are six of these in the second edition and thirteen in the third. The secondary literature had grown rapidly in the 1970s as SF courses proliferated on American campuses (though rarely abroad, then or now), and this edition provided relatively thorough coverage of this burgeoning literature. The second *AOW* was priced at $32.95 cloth, $22.95 paper, and sold 4519 copies. Reviews were again excellent, and it was nominated for a Hugo.

The third edition was an updated and enlarged version of the second and was also nominated for a Hugo. It was published as a hard-cover only, first at $39.95, followed by two price increases, and sold 4043 copies.

The fourth edition appeared eight years later, in February 1995. It's about the length of the third, allowing for the difference in type-size. Coverage of untranslated SF was dropped in favor of a more comprehensive treatment of primary and secondary literature. I wrote much less of this *AOW*, relying more on contributors, several of whom were new. I included every improvement I could think

of and decided this would be the last *AOW* I'd edit, having plowed the fields a tad too often.

Have you ever considered working up a basic list or two for libraries? The number of titles in AOW *seems too large for determining purchases.*

One of my hopes was that libraries would use the volume's best books listings as a collection-development tool. They wouldn't take long to check against current holdings, but I suspect few libraries did so. I did contribute a condensed listing to the September 1977 issue of the now defunct *Wilson Library Bulletin*, though.

Turning to SF scholarship, in which you double: Movements come and go in literary scholarship, but from my point of view——off and on, about 60 years in the field——the most striking development has been the emergence of women, both in women's studies and women scholars. Do you think this is mirrored in the survey of college courses in the November 1996 issue of Science Fiction Studies?

Over 400 courses are described there, most of them taught by men. They might have a bias towards or against women's studies or feminism, though I can't detect any such statistical pattern. The addenda showing which books and authors are most widely assigned has Ursula Le Guin in first place on both, and a handful of women on both lists. For a genre where there's about a 70%/30% male/female readership——I'm relying on the annual *Locus* surveys here——the addenda seem fairly well balanced, even if heavily weighted toward the so-called golden age of SF.

We have no comparable study from, say, thirty years ago, when SF began to achieve grudging acceptance in curricula, to make a historical comparison. But obviously women have written key works of value to today's readers, and these are adequately represented in the addenda——though personally I might find some of the titles weak (Atwood's polemical *The Handmaid's Tale*, for instance). Based on course descriptions, some instructors are busily grinding axes, but for academics this is nothing new.

What do you think of the run of college courses described?

As I scanned the course descriptions and read the individual essays about teaching SF, I found the three most common approaches described by James Gunn: the "great books" survey, the historical approach, and the ideas/contemporary problems treatment. I feel that the individual interests, personality and teaching skills of the instructor are much more important than what approach is used. I suspect that current trendy "schools" of literary analysis are widely evident, from deconstructionist to semiotic to Marxist to feminist. If not used dogmatically, they can sometimes provide useful insights not otherwise available. Courses in science-fiction, Utopias and other areas of fantastic fiction are now an established part of American (and possibly Canadian) academe, though most assuredly not elsewhere. But I suspect that on most campuses they're still considered marginal, and viewed with suspicion or disdain by English Departments.

Have you noticed an improvement in general and specialist reference books and studies over what we used to have? And in the quality of scholarly writing about SF?

Yes, most assuredly——but that answer has to be qualified in major ways. Through the four editions of *AOW*, 1976-1995, the percentage of the total pages devoted to secondary literature increased steadily. In the most recent edition, 450 pages are devoted to the five fiction chapters, while 363 pages——45%——go to those devoted to secondary literature and research aids (excluding the indexes). And remember, these are guides only to the better work. Of course distinguished work is still uncommon, as the "best books" listings indicate. Certainly bibliographic coverage, at least of the literature in English, is very thorough. The

changes from the the first (1979) to the second (1993) edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* are another measure of our "control" over the field, as well as its increasingly amorphous nature.

As I look through the list of the best historical and critical studies in the last *AOW*, I see a lot of first class work by academics (many of them former fans), general critics, and writers of fiction (Aldiss, Blish, Carter, Stableford). On the whole they're well written and accessible to the non-specialist. Many of their ideas and arguments have shaped my own understanding of SF. Not in this list are the many more pedestrian studies annotated elsewhere in the guide, a lot of them disfigured by the clotted prose too many academics prefer.

In such classification I do have a personal preference: I favor the type of analytical work which promotes discovery in the reader in the sense used by a 1938 Nobel Prize winner——seeing what everybody has seen, but thinking what nobody else has thought. If I had to choose one critic who has best exemplified scholarly breadth, analytical skills and a clear, sometimes trenchant prose style, it would be Brian Stableford. Unlike too many academics, his reading is very wide, his interests catholic, and he has the remarkable ability of linking ideas and authors infrequently dealt with by others. The leading article in the November 1996 *Science-Fiction Studies* is an excellent example of this work. I consider it disgraceful that he hasn't been awarded a Pilgrim by the SFRA.

From your librarian's point of view, what needs to be done in SF?

Foundations for study of SF are widely available; however, the 65 library collections described in the fourth *AOW* are scattered across North America, Australia, England and Europe. Most of the primary materials are non-circulating, which usually means a scholar would have to visit a given site to consult the less common materials. Recent development of the very large holdings database called OCLC (Online Catalog Library Center) permits alomst anyone anywhere to locate copies of SF books, many of which can be obtained through traditional interlibrary lending. Magazines, manuscripts and similar materials may or may not be photocopied. The Internet is of very limited value, since little primary material is available electronically, only in some cases the bibliographic information about holdings.

Again, from a librarian's view, do you think that the serious academic courses in SF are being served by the present accessibility of texts? Or, to put it another way, is teaching being hampered?

Popular fiction isn't normally acquired by academic libraries, so I suspect that most faculty members teaching SF rely chiefly on personal copies of desired texts or in-print titles that students buy. It's long been obvious that SF course-content is often shaped by what's in print at the time of the course, and often that's not what the instructor would like to teach. And since popular fiction titles rarely remain in print for more than a few years, what's assigned has to change, too. Although 400+ SF courses are being taught today, that's still not enough to justify publishers keeping in print even a core of "classic" texts. There are strategies to get around this, but it remains a serious restraint upon both teaching and scholarship.

One way to include more writers whose best works deserve more study is to rely on anthologies of shorter pieces. But instructors who find none of these suitable must skirt illegality to assemble their own photocopied selections of stories that aren't in print or readily available.

In general English studies I gather that relatively brief, relatively untechnical biographical/critical texts on individual authors are reasonably viable. What do you think of this in terms of SF?

I have mixed feelings about book-length studies of individual SF authors, or authors associated with SF. Few major publishers issue such studies; perhaps they think the market is too small, which I suspect in most cases it is. In the last *AOW* only 47 authors are the subjects of monographs, many of which were written while their subjects were still active in the field. And that means they date rapidly.

For most SF writers, book-length studies probably can t be justified—not on the grounds of lack of interest (although that would often be the case), but because their work isn't of sufficient quality or complexity to warrant extended analysis. That's probably why many of the studies come from specialty publishers like Starmont and Borgo and have been relatively short—rarely more than 200 pages. For many of the 75 authors discussed in your *Science Fiction Writers*, essays of just a few pages may be all that's necessary.

What's the future of SF in non-research libraries?

SF books and magazines are relatively scarce in academic libraries for reasons I've given earlier. SF books, plus occasionally a magazine or two, are common in public libraries, which are demand-driven, and therefore acquire a lot of popular fiction. My sense is that there's little attempt to acquire the best SF, either as published or retrospectively—that is, checking holdings of books designated "best" in *AOW* and acquiring those in print that aren't owned.

The review media most public librarians see provide inadequate coverage of SF, and it's almost invariably categorized and shelved with fantasy, on the doubtful assumption that readership is the same for both. Because SF, like other genre literature, often appears only as original mass market paperbacks, such paperbacks are rarely cataloged even when acquired, often as gifts. They're usually dumped on a spinner rack or two, or on labelled shelving; they can't be used for interbranch or interlibrary lending, since the online public access catalogs, the successors to the card catalogs, don't list them. The Library of Congress, which one would hope would provide leadership in this area, catalogs relatively few mass market originals of any kind.

Is there such a thing as a specialist SF librarian? Should there be?

Some librarians who have responsibility for the larger SF collections are relatively knowledgable, although their responsibilities are rarely limited to SF materials. The special collections department usually houses SF materials, other than books which circulate, along with many other (often disparate) materials. With so relatively few large SF collections, I don't see much need for a specialist SF librarian, as long as competent advice or help is available for acquisitions or bibliographic control.

Since SF is so ephemeral, is it worth tying up money building collections of newly published material which is likely to be discarded in a few years?

Fiction accounts for most of the circulation in public libraries. For that reason alone it is purchased in large quantities, since its high circulation suggests the public interest is being served. That in turn insures continued budget appropriations and employment of library staff. Since there's usually a fixed amount of shelving available for fiction generally, or for SF in particular, the collection has to be weeded regularly. The basis for weeding is relatively low use; literary merit has almost nothing to do with it. (In my more cynical moments I suspect that literary merit and high usage are inversely correlated.) In multibranch systems, the last copy of a hard-cover book being considered for discard is sometimes transferred to the central library, which acts as a backup for the branches and thus serves as an archive of sorts for the occasional borrower who wants an older title—older being defined rather casually as, say, five years or more after publication/acquisition.

What's the future of SF in and out of libraries?

In libraries it will remain one of the standard genres, probably bought more on the basis of the previous popularity of the author, less on the basis of reviews. Among genre fiction, SF (including fantasy) is usually eclipsed in circulation by romances and mystery/detective fiction, but it is a long-established staple and is likely to to retain its readership——mostly adolescent males——as in the era of the pulps.

Very few libraries shelve horror/supernatural/weird fiction separately, nor are spine-labels used except in rare cases. Most electronic catalogs don't bother with any special subject-heading for such fiction (or, as a general rule, for fiction generally), so interested readers have long since learned to browse the adult general fiction shelves for, say, Bloch or Lovecraft.

Stableford argues in "The Third Generation of Genre Science Fiction" that SF was a magazine-based genre for the 1930-1960 period, by which time mass market paperbacks began to replace the magazines and were the entry-point for new readers. This continued for the next thirty years, during which SF films and TV became a more prominent part of the mix of all films and TV programming. He argues that SF "is now solidly based in the TV medium. There are now as many commercial magazines devoted to TV science fiction as there are sf magazines and their collective sales are an order of magnitude higher, while paperback books tied to TV series are at least as numerous as sf novels, and have far higher unit sales."

Additional evidence of the dominance of non-print media is provided in John Seabrook's "Why Is the Force Still With Us?",* a study of the Star Wars film trilogy, which was re-released in a digitally enhanced version to a new generation. Does it surprise you to hear that the Star Wars action figures, most of which are bought by adult dealers as a speculation, were the best-selling toys for boys and the second overall best-seller, after Barbie?

How much all this will affect public library collections of SF is hard to say, since many of these media-related books, notably novelizations, are mass market paperbacks, which usually enter libraries as uncataloged donations. But I have seen plenty of Star Trek and Star Wars hard-cover spinoffs in cataloged collections, so we can confidently assume there'll be a lot more in years to come. Whether they will replace more "serious" SF books is probably beside the point, since "quality control" in SF book selection (as I noted earlier) is itself mostly a fiction.

What about the resources of the computer world, the internet for libraries on the level of the ones you work with?

Based on my limited use of the net, on my reading, and on lengthy conversations with others, I share the views expressed by Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray in their 1996 book *Computer: a History of the Information Machine:*

> ...people are surfing the net to visit shopping malls, explore magazines, and view trailers for forthcoming movies. But beyond these initial novelties, people quickly tire of the Internet and run out of patience trying to hunt down elusive documents in the chaos of information overload. Certainly there is a great deal of information on the Internet for the technically sophisticated, but for the ordinary user there is not a great deal out there of interest, and what there is is very difficult to find. There is far more hype than reality.

A recent book I've only seen cited is Michael Wolff's *Net Sci-Fi: How to Find Sci-Fi in Cyberspace.* That Wolff uses sci-fi suggests most sites discussed would contain trivial information, addresses of chat rooms where people can parade their ignorance and other "cutting edge" novelties. The Internet has rightly been characterized as the world's largest vanity press, since almost anything can be or has been posted to it somewhere. The traditional library also has a lot of misinformation, of course, but at least it's designed with *some* quality controls to exclude the worst.

**The New Yorker* magazine, Jan. 6, 1997, pp. 40-53.

After seeing what new technology can——and cannot——do, I conclude that traditional printed books and magazines are going to be dominant for the indefinite future, and libraries will still be filled mostly with them. Electronic databases are very useful for certain types of directory information (telephone numbers, say), but sustained reading of computer screens gets very tedious *real* fast. Even whan the present cathode ray tube terminals are replaced with flat screens, similar to those used in laptops and calculators, they still are (and will remain indefinitely) a great deal less convenient than conventional printed books.

What about the not-immediately-forseeable future for, say, a researcher? Would you make the same forecast?

Convenience might be sacrificed if the economic incentive was great enough. Imagine a system that could be created if legal and other problems could be solved. You'd go to a kiosk or simply dial up the service. Using a series of menus guiding you to citations of a million or so electronic texts, you'd select the one you wanted. Then you'd punch in encrypted credit card information, insert a blank diskette, and press "enter." The stored electronic text, including illustrations, would be transmitted to your diskette, you'd be debited, the publisher's account and the author's royalty account would be credited, etc.

You'd have a reading device, line or battery powered, about the size and weight of a hard-cover book. (Other reading devices might be available, too.) You could keyboard marginal notes, flag "pages" electronically, search or print out the text, etc. Many (probably most) of the electronic texts would be like the books you ordinarily buy——you read them once, put them on your shelves, and ignore them until you move. If it were a printed book today, acquiring it might cost you, say, $25. Of course the technology of this imagined system would cost you something, amortized over the years you used it, but for the moment let's ignore these fixed initial costs. The trouble is, scanning an electronic text, even on a well-designed reader (SONY already makes one, but little software——text——exists), is for most people *much* less preferable than reading a printed book. So, at what price-point will you give up the convenience of the book for the savings? If the electronic version saved you 10% over the cost of the printed version, you'd probably say no. If 20%, still no, but with some hesitancy. 40%? Maybe. But 70%? Press "enter" to transmit!

Price-points, as retailers call them, are crucial in your decision making. This is evident in what's been happening to multi-volume encyclopedias. Microsoft bought rights to the supermarket Funk & Wagnalls set, upgraded it, added A/V features, and markets it as Encarta, either by itself or bundled with a PC. World Book, which accounts for two-thirds of all encyclopedias sold in North America, was slow to jump onto the multimedia bandwagon. But recently it linked up with IBM, and now sells as two CDs for about $80, roughly a tenth the delivered price of the 22-volume printed set and two-volume dictionary. The latter is still being offered to homes and libraries, though whether sales will be sufficient to justify its existence is conjectural; libraries will want the conventional printed version, but whether this is a large enough market is uncertain. The Britannica, meanwhile, has gone the online route entirely, relying on an annual user fee.

Or consider today's CD-ROM, one of which can store several hundred novels. So tomorrow you can buy a CD with the best 500 SF books, unabridged, for $50——a dime a book. Or all 43 issues of *Unknown* for $25. Let's assume you already have the hardware to read the CD. Would you spend the $50 or $25? With today's technology, I think most people would say no. Tomorrow ... who knows?

How about CD-ROM supplanting the microfiche or microfilm, both of which to me, anyway, are the least convenient way to read anything, what with often poor reproduction, worn film, expensive equipment and uncomfortable milieu. Personally, I'd be delighted if I could buy, say, Clareson's Early Science Fiction Novels,

which runs to almost 100 microfiche cards and costs a mint, on CD-ROM. Comments?

As I've suggested, economics will probably determine which storage media will survive. Traditional books will continue to be preferred by most people for most purposes. CD-ROMs, along with film laser discs, may soon be replaced by DVDs (digital video discs); text can be stored on them as readily as images and sound. How much it would cost to encode the Clareson collection on a CD or DVD I don't know. Suppose it was only a few thousand dollars; recovering even that small amount from buyers would be tough, since the appeal of such works is so limited.

Project Gutenberg, which puts "classic" public domain texts on the internet, has converted only a thousand or so titles, most of which are likely to have all the appeal of those comprising Mortimer Adler's folly, Great Books of the Western World. If CDs/DVDs cost about what an audio CD does today, and a playback unit costing $200-300 or less were available (instead of the $1500-2500 PC system now required), then the consumer market *might* make disk-storage cost-effective. But I'm not holding my breath.

What are your own future plans?

My last project in the fantastic fiction field is a revised one-volume edition of my 1990 guides, *Fantastic Literature* and *Horror Literature*, to be published by Scarecrow Press, probably in the winter of 1998-1999. Coverage of the primary literature here will be more selective, but the scope will be wider. The volume will carry information about online resources, teaching fantasy/horror literature, poetry and a section on comics. About 15% of the earlier guides is duplicated. The organization is very much like that in the last *AOW*. The text is littered with website addresses.

My reading in recent years has largely ignored fantastic fiction, although I've continued to review some of the secondary literature. I'm continuing to coördinate the sections on fantasy, S-F and horror for *What Do I Read Next?*, the guide to pop fiction that Gale Research has published annually since 1991. I also contibute news and reviews to the *SFRA Review*, and occasionally do reviews for *Publishers Weekly* and others.

I'm considering writing a historical, analytical study of book reviewing. It would require at least some travel for research and interviews, and I wouldn't undertake it unless I could get grant money. Another project is simply an idea for a series of books in a uniform format for the general reader as well as for libraries. It's too early to be more definite.

In the course of winding down I've sold most of my fantastic fiction collection, retaining only some favorites plus a very select collection of reference works.

In March 1999 I'll officially retire, but I may continue working a couple of days a week at local branch libraries. My work for the Gale annual will presumably continue. My wife and I had considered moving after my retirement, but for financial reasons this looks increasingly unlikely. Our home is mostly paid for, and moving, even to a relatively low-rent area, would probably involve a significant additional expense for housing. Whether this expense would be covered by interest on the money received from the sale of our home is something we'd have to investigate carefully.

Thank you very much, Neil. I'm sure everyone wishes you an active and happy retirement.

• • •

("The Erosion of Wonder"——concluded from page 193)

The world is white outside and gray within. I accept that. I think life will be more peaceful. Silence will become my mother tongue. There will be discoveries and revelations. But no upheavals. Perhaps some color will come back into the world for me.

THE DAY ALL TIME STOOD STILL / A GHOSTLY INVASION

Andrew Darlington

a solar eclipse
stills the sky,
at every point
of the world,
and endures

he watches
a twilight he's
imaginatively prefigured
in the continuum of dream
by the scent of sunken roads
and sky-tall termite towers
in the chill of world's end
beneath this same eclipse

grown-up weird, he's a
death-fixated philosopher
without philosophy, a
psychic epidemic bonded
to malevolence, his
unheated Geneva room
a thermometer
of anxiety states
in trembling darkness

from
frozen Athens beneath a
black rage of sky, above
a trireme shelled in ice,
negotiating mazes of
temporal scintilla through
the obscuring blizzards of
Kathmandu, he reaches the
high Tibetan crater by the
hollow mountain of Yeti,
guarded by dead souls
in shambling bodies

he's drawn by the scent
of long-dreamed roads to
a crater something between
a snowflake crystal
a conjuring trick and
a mutilated haiku, and there,
in sub-atomic asteroid
fragments in coils older
than the Silurian he finds
the fractured city
leaking time,...

the solar eclipse
stills every sky, wind
wanders through the empty
eye sockets of Rome,
the Tiber flows East
into the Adriatic, owls
glide through the silent
ghastliness of Crete
searching for living trees

and
vines grow through his
skull, grown decapitated,
crazed with visions, he's
falling upwards into a
howling pit of black sky,
suddenly assaulted by
the familiar scent of
sunken roads, standing
by sky-tall termite towers
in the chill of world's end
beneath eternal night

as the
solar eclipse
shifts, and the
world endures,
an empty Geneva room
trembles in scintillations
of new light

The Erosion of Wonder

Neil Barron

It has long been a cliche that adolescence is the time during which one develops an intense interest in science-fiction, the so-called sense of wonder. In his recent book, *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of*, Tom Disch argues, "That truism is no longer true, for science-fiction has come to permeate our culture to such a degree that its basic repertory of images ... are standard items in the fantasy life of any preschooler. As for twelve-year-olds of our own era, nothing science-fictional is alien to them."

While I started reading the genre intensively in the late 1940's, at about fourteen, it wasn't to the exclusion of everything else. I'd also read a number of popular astronomy books (Jeans, Eddington, early Fred Hoyle), so the impact of someone like Stapledon was lessened. For two or three years I was a fan, a member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and even a co-founder of a high school group, the Space-Time Club.

As I matured, science-fiction simply became one of many interests, and far from the strongest. That's still true, in spite of editing four volumes of *Anatomy of Wonder* and doing a lot of reviewing over the years. Why this erosion of wonder? I suspect it's at least partly because, for reasons many non-SF readers share, I can no longer sustain Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief."

Consider a handful of key assumptions, usually implicit, that help make much of science-fiction credible. When I was a fan, astronomers estimated that the age of the universe was about three billion years, and the very search for extraterrestrial intelligence was a bit suspect. Today the estimated age is about fifteen billion years, and it's routinely believed that intelligent life exists elsewhere. I wouldn't flatly rule out the possibility, but the evidence is heavily inferential and to me not very credible. (I dismiss as delusionary, or at best anecdotal, tales of alien visitations, abductions, etc.).

Okay, let's skip ETs; there's still a big universe out there to explore, even if it's empty of other intelligent life. But remember that its exploration is going to be done mostly from earth- and near-Earth-based sites. From the brief arc of Yuri Gargarin in 1961 to today, fewer than four hundred humans have been in space, only a handful of them as far away as the moon. Yes, there'll be more in the 21st century, but given its enormous costs and complexity, to say nothing of needs felt to be far more pressing (feeding the world's rapidly increasing population, say) manned space flight will probably involve a vanishingly small number of people; it will inspire yawns by most, along with frequent opposition by elected officials and by citizens with opposing priorities. Goodbye planetary colonies and thin-lipped space captains blasting nasty aliens. Worm-holes, space-warps and similar notions that leapfrog present constraints are little more than the patter H. G. Wells found useful to domesticate his tales.

How about time-travel? Extremely unlikely, although I've enjoyed a handful of stories that made effective use of it. No one has bettered *The Time Machine*, but Wells had no interest in the actual mechanics of such travel. Alternative histories/worlds? Again many ingenious stories have used the theme, and the best of them, like the best science-fiction using any other theme, illuminate our own lives and milieux.

All right, maybe we're alone, and almost all of us will have to make the best of this often sorry world, the only one we'll ever know, developing a sense

what the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno called the tragic sense of life, to temper, or reveal the fatuity of, the juvenile optimism or simple-mindedness of most science-fiction.

But if we're to have the possibility of tragedy we must have heroes. SF has a long history of superhumans, often possessing paranormal powers, from *The Food of the Gods* to *The Hampdenshire Wonder* to *Odd John* to van Vogt's slans to the wish-fulfillment fantasy of *The Children of the Atom* or *Childhood's End* or *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.*

Maybe we can *manufacture* our superhumans through genetic engineering, rather than relying on occasional unpredictable "sports" that come along. I'd be more reassured if there were greater agreement on the desirable traits of such superhumans. In any event, there's little doubt that such engineering will play an increasingly important role in the next century, with more consequences, good and bad, that are precisely what the more gifted writers are well qualified to explore. Much of the genre predictably dates, but a handful of works, such as *Brave New World,* continue to gain relevance as time passes.

What I charitably call the intellectual foundations of much SF have crumbled for me, and have been rejected out of hand by those who rarely or never read it. Contrary to the bloated claims of enthusiasts, who find their intellectual liberation only in SF, with all of space-time as a background, I find there far too often emotionally sterile landscapes, however intricately described or cleverly developed, increasingly in multi-volume sagas, all soon to be at a theater near you. (The reason for this was discussed in my introduction to the 1976 edition of *Anatomy of Wonder.*) In the words of the British critic and poet, Martin Green, quoting his *Science and the Shabby Curate of Poetry:*

> It is universally agreed that the people one meets in these stories, even the good ones, are unconvincing and uninteresting by comparison with quite a low grade of conventional fiction; they are neither freshly observed, deeply explored, nor carefully selected; they are often pulp magazine puppets, and badly manipulated at that. Everyone is agreed about this fact; but people differ widely about its interpretation. For most readers with literary training, this disposes of science fiction altogether, because, unconsciously or not, they identify literature with the moral-psychological exploration of personal relations. The anthologists, of course, insist that this fiction cannot be judged by that criterion, because it is attempting something quite different. So far one must agree with them; but they go on to maintain that science fiction *cannot* offer interesting characterization, because that would over-involve the reader in the individual character and distract his attention from the species or the society or the experiment which is the main subject. This argument I find unconvincing.

Green wrote that in 1963. Has the SF of the last 35 years undermined his argument or proven him wrong? I think not. But even though I no longer find much of it plausible, memories still linger. Like you I have explored the dead sea bottoms of Barsoom, joined Carson Napier in the misty forests of Venus, admired Martin Padway's efforts to prevent darkness from falling, worshipped "she who must be obeyed," sensed a Mr. Hyde on the fringes of my own consciousness, and witnessed the Time Traveller thirty million years hence, shivering on a dying earth. Names jostle one another: Campbell, Capek, Doyle, Merritt, Robida, Stapledon, Verne, Weinbaum, Wells, Williamson, Zamiatin, joined by Aldiss, Blish, Clarke, Pohl, Sheckley, van Vogt and Vonnegut; and then I glimpse Bishop, Bradbury, Brunner, Compton, Dick, Disch, Ellison, Heinlein, Lem, Malzberg, Silverberg, Sladek, Sturgeon, Tiptree and Waldrop. Still other figures huddle indistinctly on the fringes of memory.

Is there any example that even roughly parallels my own erratic journey through the field? The closest analog I can think of is the life of David Selig, the protagonist of *Dying Inside,* whose tragic sensibility opposes the facile optimism of too much science-fiction. His final words can serve as mine:

(concluded on the bottom of page 190)

Lilith Lorraine: a Postscript

Steve Sneyd

At this writing it is some eight years since my article on the life and work of Lilith Lorraine, "Empress of the Stars," was published.[1]* During this time enough new information on this neglected fantasy poetess has accumulated to warrant a follow-up summary. The additional information comes from personal cummunications (most of which I have solicited) and the written record. Both enable us to expand and particularize our picture of Lorraine.

I shall deal with the written sources first, saving additional instances that have been found of her published verse for some future checklist. One of the most interesting facts that have surfaced is her ongoing link to the fan magazine *Starlanes*, which in effect succeeded Lorraine's own publication *Challenge*. *Starlanes* was published in Ferndale, Michigan by Orma McCormick, who was aided for some numbers by Nan Gerding as co-editor. It began as a single-sheet monthly dated January-February 1951. During 1951 subsequent issues increased in thickness, so that by #8 (dated Winter 1952) the magazine comprised 20 pages; and by 1953 it had added a subtitle, calling itself "The International Quarterly of Science-Fiction Poetry." *Starlanes* not only published verse by Lorraine, but enjoyed her financial support.

A typical instance is the mention found of the Avalon Citation of Merit offered to the outstanding contributor in each issue. Thus in #36 (undated, but 1959) an announcement under "Prizes" on page 12 reads as follows: "Lilith Lorraine offers a choice of prizes for the poem she considers to be the best in issues 36, 37, 38 and 39. Winners may choose Avalon membership for one year, *Flame* for one year, or any of the following books: *Indispensable* (The Poet's Deskmate), *Wine of Wonder* (science fiction poetry), *Not for Oblivion*, *The Lost Word* (poetry textbook), or *The Story of Avalon*, illustrated, by C. Lamar Wright." This issue, incidentally, notes Alpine, Texas as the editorial base for Lorraine's magazine *Flame*, and intriguingly mentions an associate editor in England, Geoffery [sic] Johnson, whom I have not yet traced. *Flame* was said to accept "only distinguished free verse and quality traditional poetry" for publication.

I am indebted to Sam Moskowitz not only for his earlier comments on my article,[2] but for access to the minutes of the Eastern Science Fiction Association, at whose April 6, 1952 meeting Lilith Lorraine was guest of honor. Unfortunately, because of their brevity, these minutes are more tantalizing than revealing, saying merely that "she explained how she came to choose her pseudonyms" (without noting what they were), "how she came to write science-fiction" and "her difficulties getting Hugo Gernsback to accept her work." These minutes also say that she gave her views on poetry and literature, including her belief that "what this country needs is more imagination, contending that only in poetry and science fiction can it be found." She spoke of hopes to "start a real s-f slick at some indefinite time in the future," plans toward which the minute-taker was clearly skeptical.

In comparison with such contemporary documentation, personal recollections are inevitably impressionistic. They cannot be ignored, however, even when lacking detail or precision, for comparisons often show agreement which increases probability.

*Notes for this article will be found on pp. 198-199.

This is the situation with the memories of Larry Farsace, long-time fan and editor of *Golden Atom* (1939-1943). In his February 9, 1993 letter to me he speaks of Lorraine going temporarily to Cuernavaca, Mexico to start World Poetry Day, leaving Vera and Duverne Kenrick of New Orleans, mother and daughter "cosmic poets" (the latter later to become Larry's wife) in temporary charge of the Avalon World Arts Academy. He also says that Lorraine had been first choice as guest of honor at the first Nolacon (New Orleans, 1951). As she was still detained in Mexico, however, she sent a speech to be read for her by Duverne Kenrick. But according to Larry, the convention chairman, because of Lorraine's absence, then declared Fritz Leiber, Jr. the guest of honor.

An inquiry kindly included on my behalf in her "Bookmarks" column by Judyth Rigler, book editor of the *San Antonio Express-News*, brought a letter and a telephone call to her which she apparently recorded *verbatim*. Both independently cite a physical feature of Lorraine which no previous correspondent ever mentioned, one which would seem significant in assessing her personal psychology and interests, particularly in the occult: she had a deformed hand.

In his letter to Ms. Rigler, John Igo of San Antonio stated that he had "first met Lilith when she was a critic/judge at the Southwest Writers Conference in Corpus Christi, 1962," and notes that she "had a deformed thumb, with a double pad ... from the knuckle it was roughly heart-shaped, [with] two nails.... She enjoyed holding items in that hand (I forget which) to test the reactions of those she was handing things to."

The telephone call to Ms. Rigler, on May 19, 1993, was from Dr. Barbara L. Riley of Floresville, Texas. In this she gave her recollections of the time in 1956 when, as a twenty-year-old university student, she lodged with Lilith and her husband in Alpine. "She told me of characteristics inherited from English ancestors: hemophilia (therefore no children) and a double thumb (complete with nails) on one hand."

Both respondents cite other descriptive details which add vividly to our picture of her as a person. Before detailing these, however, we should note the information John Igo recalls hearing from those who had known Lilith Lorraine before he met her——indeed, her time in San Antonio during the war and earlier. From "disciples and/or colleagues," including Alice Clay Hall, Margriette Montgomery, Aline Carter and Eve Jo Allpress he learned that when it was founded, the Avalon organization was "dedicated, oddly, to the memory of Richard Lovelace," and that Lorraine "also headed (with turban) an enthusiastic group of young people called the Sacred Order of the Ultra Violet Ray." At some point she "buried a time capsule on Sunshine Drive, San Antonio containing poets' favorite lines." Mr. Igo notes that she had previously advertised this plan in *Poetry* magazine with the message "Poets, bury your poem in Texas for $5" and that, bizarrely, "the capsule was a child's casket donated by her relatives, the Dunns, who operated a mortuary in Corpus Christie."

This letter also gives us a little more information about one of her pen names. It cites a meeting at which she said she "had published over 6000 poems and had about 600 more waiting," and admitted to using a "battery" of pseudonyms because "women were not welcome" in science-fiction. She added that she had taken her best known one since "Lilith was Adam's first wife, a troublemaker."

That independence of mind went along with an enjoyment of bright colors (she "often wore red, orange and green satin clothing," said Dr. Riley, perhaps to go with her "golden key to the City of New Orleans"). Clearly, while willing to stand out against official opinion (John Igo states she was "witheringly scornful of the Texas poet laureateship ... because of the brazenly political method of selection"), she was also able to shed the role of the "grande dame of Texas poetry,"[3] and put a companion at ease. "She always included me in any gathering, luncheon or activity, " said Dr. Riley. "For a very timid, naive, twenty-year-old

girl this made me feel very special! We would talk for hours about philosophical things, ideas and thoughts about anything and everything." Dr. Riley also recalled a parrot named Coda, adopted by Lorraine when its owner went abroad; and the fact that she could type at the rate of 120 words a minute, which might help explain both her prolific output and her ability to deal efficiently with an immense correspondence.

In contrast, John Igo describes her as "slow of movement and deliberate of speech," adding that she was "stocky, about 5'4" or 5'5" tall," and had a ruddy complexion.

He also gives a fascinating account of how she read poetry aloud: "Her speaking voice was never raised/loud, but strongly projected and articulate——she could be heard in any size audience, always as though ... chatting confidentially three feet away." This, added to an obviously "pure dedication to her calling, and pure integrity," enabled her readings to achieve strong impact. "She read poetry by *thought units*, disregarding line endings in favor of sentences, so that rhyme (important to her) dissolved into sound patterns and textures *within* sentences."[4]

This description furnishes an important reason why Lilith Lorraine's poetry is still able to speak with freshness and verve to a younger generation whose experience of, and taste in, verse are attuned to quite different overt forms. It also suggests a deep dichotomy in her thinking between traditional rhymed forms and the approach of free verse.

I now turn to another source of information entirely, Lilith Lorraine's FBI file, recently released to me under the Freedom of Information Act. The file as received consisted of seven documents totalling eleven pages; the earliest was dated 1941, the latest 1949. (Two further pages were witheld on the grounds of various permitted exemptions, and of course the names and addresses of informants on the pages that were released had been blacked out.) I found the late commencement date of the file surprising; I expected that her earlier fiction, which could be described as socialistic, would have drawn attention to her before 1941. As I imagine must have been true of many such files, its opening was triggered by the external suggestion that Lorraine harbored Communistic views and connections. Its continuation——indeed, its reopening after having been closed in 1943——was due to the persistence of such suggestions. The vagueness of these, as will be seen, illustrates vividly how easy it was, during Cold War times (or even during World War II, when the U.S.S.R. was ostensibly an ally), to become the subject of an FBI file.

Lorraine's was opened on September 15, 1941 under her married name, Mrs. C. L. Wright, though at the end of the year reregistered to include her maiden name, Mary M. Dunn. Both this and the second document, dated April 16, 1943, give as her "aliases" Lilith Lorraine and Zerada. Since the first is of course a pen name, it is possible that the second is also——and may be one of the missing ones I referred to in my earler article.[5]

To quote the second document: "She was convicted and sentenced in California on a charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor ... subsequently jumped her bond ... fled to Mexico with her husband. Mrs. Wright is still a fugitive from justice in San Francisco." No further details are given. The inherent unlikeliness of such a status seems shown by Lorraine's subsequent return to the United States, and her relatively high profile there; it may represent a false rumor that was circulating at the time, one of the legends which accrete to powerful literary personalities.

This same document gives her physical description: "Height 5 ft 8 ins, Weight 160 pounds, Eyes ?, Hair black, Complexion ruddy, Build large-chested, slender legs." Under "Nationality" the rather extraordinary term (reminiscent of time-travel), "Aztec-American." The informant rather unkindly said that Lorraine was "supposed to be a poetess," noting that in her poetry she "refers to the 'New Freedom'," and pointed out her role as "National President of the Society of Au-

thors and Composers," whose address is given as The Avalon Poetry Shrine, 621 Sunshine Drive, San Antonio. The document closes with a reference to a November 1, 1942 interview with Lorraine by the FBI at its San Antonio field office.

The December 10, 1943 report notes that "she is reported to be wealthy, to be a poetess, and a fancied intellectual" before more specifically and informatively stating that she was "Until recently a writer for the *San Antonio Express*" and the *San Antonio Evening News*: "subject employed on the paper October 15, 1942 ... quit on her own accord Aug. 28, '43." (This adds useful dates to her biography.) "She said that her reason for leaving the paper was to spend her full time publishing *The Raven*, a periodical magazine of poems." At this point the FBI closed Lilith Lorraine's file.

Following a witheld page (no date supplied), the next document originates over three years later, the reopening of the file stemming from a complaint from Montreal, Canada, where the Avalon National Poetry Shrine had opened a chapter, along with another in Niagara Falls, Ontario, "within recent months."

The complainant, citing the Shrine's "announced aims to discover, train and inspire those who possess poetic talent and bring poetry to all the people for the healing of the world," then specifically attacks the article "Capitalism Comes to Judgement" in the March-April issue of Lorraine's magazine *Different*. Picturesquely (it must be a rarity for verse to appear in FBI files!), a quotation from one of her poems in the same issue is cited as evidence that she "seems to be an advanced radical":

> Gone are the last ineffable delights,
> Evoked from witches' urn and wizard-spell——
> But nations sell their souls in scarlet rites,
> And gold is still the currency of Hell.

This last complaint had been addressed to J. Edgar Hoover personally, and the FBI replied with a politely noncommital letter dated April 3, 1947. Along with that reply are noted numbers of other files, not released to me. These, taken in conjunction with a reference in the next (May 16, 1949) document (to a bulletin of October 8, 1948 titled "Avalon World Arts Academy, Security Matter") would imply that some sort of wider check on that organization had been made.

The final document is dated May 16, 1949. In it, Lorraine is denounced on the basis of an overheard private conversation——more precisely an argument—— in which she and her husband had, in the complainant's view, opposed rearmament and defended the USSR as against the USA on the grounds that the former had less crime and permitted Christianity to be taught. The complainant noted that Lorraine "lives at a country house some 7 miles from Rogers, Arkansas called Avalon" and that "she is also a public lecturer." With unintentional humor he adds, "I never heard her lecture but once, and that was a lecture to me and my wife."

At this point the file ends, having cast at least a little more light on the impact of a powerful personality and added a few specifics of date and place to the record.

If the FBI was ever concerned with assessing Lilith Lorraine's attitude toward World War II through the public record, it might have better done so through analyzing her long poem *"They"*, which appeared in 1943. I have found no mention of it in the national press, though it was briefly noted by Francis T. Laney in the Summer 1943 issue of his fan magazine, *The Acolyte*:

> THEY. by "Lilith Lorraine" (Mary M. Wright). Avalon Press, Route 8, Box 83-F, San Antonio, Texas. Price, 35¢.
> THIS BROCHURE is Lilith Lorraine's latest publication, and consists of a very ambitious 52 stanza poem of "prophecy". To my mind, They failed to live up to its advance billing as "a daring venture in verse which will knock the lid off"---this reviewer is inured to radical predictions ---but nevertheless this fine piece of work struck me as a most successful attempt to say in poetry what the more future-minded stf authors

> have been saying in prose. Though not strictly fantasy, and marred by an occasional stanza not up to Lilith's best work, They should appeal to all poetically inclined fans. (FTL)

The work seems important enough to warrant a more extensive commentary than this, so I shall end this postcript on Lilith Lorraine with a review of it.

This long poem consists of 64 four-line stanzas, whose first, second and fourth lines rhyme.[6] It represents a remarkable verse attempt to place the second world war in the context of a greater cosmic conflict. In the introduction to its reprinting in her collection *Let the Patterns Break* (1947) the authoress tells us that it "was composed literally to the blare of radios and the thundering of orators ... while holding down ... a job ... with a large daily newspaper," and the poem conveys fully the urgency of a message requiring——indeed demanding——action through understanding.

"They" flows swiftly and smoothly, is compellingly easy to read despite its length, and exhibits some true felicities of language. I feel, however, that it is fundamentally flawed in a way that the finely controlled shorter work in her *Wine of Wonder* collection is not. There are two important reasons for this.

First, amid all the sound and fury, it is hard at first reading to disentangle a coherent thread of thought because the seamless flow of verse tends to hide it. Second, Lilith was attempting too much. She sought not only to match the stress of the time, with its urgent demand for high ideals which would justify the war's human costs, but to incorporate as well all her own agendas—— among them such ideas as a need for social justice, the concept of exiles from the stars living secretly on Earth, poets as the epitome of these, and the need for a powerful (indeed, almost totalitarian) leadership of the Good to combat hell-spawned Hitlerite Evil. While rich in inspiration, she simply lost control of her material at the level of intellectual rigor.

Nevertheless, the piece is fascinating, not only for the gallantry of its ultimately failed attempt to utilize the imagery of "high SF" in the service of an immediate political situation and her own naive, exhortative message, but also for sheer beauty of language and image.

Religion and space war, man as puppet and man as agent of destiny, poet as star-born and poet as destined leader, people's war and leaders' war——all of these show glaring contradictions and glaring dichotomies, and seem inextricably muddled in 49-year-old Lilith's thoughts as she wrote, yet her instinct for hypnotic verbal music remained sure.

The lines below, for example, sum up in images of crystalline simplicity the very core of genre literature's appeal to the sense of vision and wonder. They are the more remarkable for having been written at a time when the immediate demands of conflict could so easily have blotted out any wider perspective with the fog of war.

> For when the Dawn-Man, creeping through the dark,
> Looked up and saw the stars, there leaped a spark
> Out of the voids to his bewildered soul——
> Thus Poetry was born——a triumph arc——
>
> A rainbow bridge by every dreamer crossed
> To star-flung citadels, no longer lost;
> To sup with winged Companions and to weave
> Tomorrow's luminous patterns, star-embossed.

NOTES

(1) *Fantasy Commentator VII*, 206ff. (1992).

(2) *Ibid.*, 315-316 (1992).

(3) She is so described in the introduction to Aline Carter's poetry collection *Doubt Not the Dreams*. John Igo writes of her as an "inspirational high priest and prophetess," adding that to her, poetry "was almost a religion."

(4) Italics mine.

(5) There is no listing for "Zerada" in either volumes 1-8 of Grainger's *Poetry Index* (covering the period 1925-1970) or in volumes 7-28 of *The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* (1925-1970), although Lilith Lorraine's name appears occasionally in both.

(6) The difference between the number of stanzas I noted in the reprinted version of the poem and the fewer cited by Laney in its 1943 brochure form seems too large to be explained by any error in counting. It seems probable that in revising the work for publication Lorraine decided to add twelve more stanzas to the original version.

(7) In addition to the acknowledgements already given in the text of this article, I also owe thanks to Sam Moskowitz for furnishing a copy of the ESFA meeting minutes; to Ned Brooks for the text of *"They"*; and to Donald Franson, Vincent Clarke and Greg Pickersgill for access to *Starlanes* and other fan magazines of the 1950's.

• • •

Two Sonnets

Lee Becker

ADVERTISEMENT

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2018 model, Wellsian style
With floor of genuine Victorian tile,
Bars of quartz and polished ivory rail,
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PARABLE

Why are these creatures fretting on their sphere
That whirls serenely round a glowing star?
What is their discontent? Why do they peer
Aloft for company, seek signals from afar?
What are these tiny metal shards they rear
To fling in space, however much they mar
And darken their own atmosphere,
On some far planet's face to make a scar?
These heedless, scheming mice would leave their lair
And for a cheese mirage blindly coerce
All lesser things to work their will. Beware,
Restless nibblers of the universe——
Take care, if you would live! Remember that
Wherever there are mice there is a cat!

REMEMBERING SAM

I ended an editorial note for "Remembering Sam" in the last issue of *Fantasy Commentator* with a request that others who knew Sam Moskowitz add their reminiscences of him to those then being collected. Several more people have done so, and I am happy to present their contributions below. Included also are a few remarks reprinted from sources I had not seen when assembling the previous selection. As before, all of these are printed in alphabetical order, regardless of their dates of composition or length. —*Editor*

MIKE ASHLEY

There is no doubt that Sam Moskowitz shaped much of my life. Perhaps I can't attribute all of my fascination with the history and minutiae of science-fiction to him——I know that Robert Lowndes, P. Schuyler Miller and L. Sprague de Camp all contributed to that——but somehow Sam led the way. In fact, I began by modelling myself on him. (Whether that's for better orworse I shall leave others to judge.) I sometimes consciously stop myself and think, "This is how Sam would write this sentence——how would *I* write it?" Such admonishments aren't a criticism of Sam; they're more a criticism of myself as I struggle constantly to find my own voice from beneath the shadow of someone who, for me, gave science-fiction a shape, meaning and history more than any other commentator or critic.

I'm not quite sure when or where I first encountered Sam's name or work. I know it must have been during a very intense period in 1963 or 1964 when I was starting to build my collection of magazines and books. I have a feeling his name tumbled at me from several directions. Two things, however, I can date precisely.

Firstly, I had seen a review of Sam's books *The Coming of the Robots* and *Exploring Other Worlds* in the August 1963 issue of *New Worlds*. At that time I knew nothing of specialist bookdealers, and didn't discover Ken Slater's Fantast for nearly another year. So I ordered those two books from the local W. H. Smith's bookshop in Sittingbourne, Kent, where I then lived. It took ten months to fill the order——I finally got them on June 13, 1964. But those two anthologies opened a wide world for me. Hitherto I had little knowledge of the history of the science-fiction magazines or the dates of stories. By then I was already amassing a s-f library, and remember being fascinated by stories from the 1930's I found in the anthologies edited by August Derleth. They and the ones I read in Sam's anthologies seemed to have a vivacity about them which the recent ones I was reading in *New Worlds*, *Analog*, *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* lacked (though I did find that quality to some degree in *Amazing Stories* and *If*). It was this feeling of a "sense of wonder" which Sam so often commented upon.

Secondly, I became intrigued by the argument in the pages of *Analog* between Sam and P. Schuyler Miller about H. G. Wells and *The Time Machine*——especially the April 1964 issue. All of this appealed to the completist fanatic in me. I don't think that characteristic had anything to do with Sam orwith anyone else. I am by Nature a compulsive completer of lists and a researcher for information. I've been that way for as long as I can remember——certainly from the mid-1950's, when I began compiling lists of rulers of countries and of islands and rivers and seas. You name it; I would catalog it. Anyone aware of my books will know that they're always filled with lists. And my fascination isn't just with the lists themselves——that's only part of the fun. The real delight is in filling in the gaps. My whole writing career has revolved around this: filling in gaps in knowledge, bringing more information together to gain a better picture of the subject.

Sam did this in abundance, and it was what appealed to me in his work more than anything else. His writings stirred in me the realization that there

was a lot more science-fiction out there, both in the genre magazines and in other sources, than was first apparent——certainly more than was readily available. Moreover, there were relationships among these stories, so that you could trace the history and development of themes through the years from very early days. At times I think Sam exaggerated temporal influences here, but the potential remains intriguing. I continue to delight in working back and finding early authors who had ideas (whether wholly original or encouraged by others) on the various individual themes in s-f and fantasy. It's a delight which has spilled over into other fields of writing, especially mystery fiction and the wonderful world of the fairy tale.

The real clincher came when I was sent a copy of *Explorers of the Infinite* to review for *Fusion*, a new fanzine that Jim Grant of Christchurch in Hampshire brought out at the end of 1964. Just at that time I had also started to read Sam's articles in *Amazing Stories* which later formed the book *Seekers to Tomorrow*. I became so hooked on these that I not only reread them constantly, but began to search for the magazines and stories he cited. It's difficult to know whether, had there been no Sam, I'd've become so compulsive about amassing a large collection of my own. I'm sure it's in the genes, so I probably would have. But it was Sam's work that gave me a basic framework.

All this became the cause of my first book, *The History of the Science Fiction Magazine* (3 volumes, 1974-76). The first volume is co-dedicated to Sam, and with very good reason. Until then, I felt much trepidation about writing him. Although I had undertaken research with other writers and authorities, somehow I felt that Sam might feel I was trespassing into his territory, and so it was with considerable apprehension that I sent him a copy of the book in March 1975. I was immensely relieved when he responded. He was pleased with it, flattered by the dedication, and he encouraged me to continue. He also pointed out a small error I had made. Pointing out errors became a regular item in his letters to me; perhaps doing that gave Sam the feeling that he still always kept the upperhand. I didn't mind this——we are always learning.

Our correspondence was not what you would call regular. In fact, often he did not answer my letters, especially if I was asking for details in an area of research which I suspect he felt was his domain. He was, however, happy to write about his own published works and about any area where he was not undertaking research or planning a book.

He was particularly interested in my own research about Algernon Blackwood. "Had I ever reached the stage of [compiling] a book of critical biographies on supernatural and horror writers, he would have been among the first" of its subjects, he wrote me in a letter dated August 5, 1981. This did not prevent him from providing his own views about Blackwood's work and items he had in his file folder on Blackwood.

I was very pleased when Sam reviewed *Science Fiction, Fantasy and Weird Fiction Magazines*, a volume I had co-compiled with Marshall Tymn.* He praised it it at length (the review comes to about 3000 words), stating what a "remarkable job" I had done on it, provided related historical commentary on the pulp field, and noted some of the book's small errors. Interestingly, he also provided some informative background material on the assistant editors of *Astounding Stories*, especially Desmond Hall and R. V. Happel. Now, when I was working on the book I had written Sam about Hall and Happel. This was one of the letters he did not respond to, showing that Sam was willing to share data where he could, but not if it meant he couldn't keep an upper hand somewhere.

I met Sam only once. I'm not a great fan of conventions——you seldom meet all the people you want to, but somehow always those you'd prefer that you didn't. Moreover, far too many people smoke, and I'm afraid I regard smoking in company

Fantasy Commentator VI, 34 (1987).

as vile and inconsiderate. However, thanks to Vincent Clarke, who lives a scant twenty miles from me, I finally got the opportunity to meet Sam on September 25, 1983. As Vincent has already recounted, we ended conversing for several hours on our own. I can't recall the details of everything we talked about——I wish I'd taken a tape recorder!——but we did cover a lot. Our discussion ranged over such subjects as Ambrose Bierce, Hugo Gernsback, Robert Duncan Milne, Homer Eon Flint, R. F. Starzl, Anne McCaffrey, Henrik Dahl Juve, Olaf Stapledon, Eric Frank Russell, Leo Margulies, Alden H. Norton, Donald Wollheim, Algernon Blackwood and, of course, Sam himself. I suspect those names don't come together in one conversation very often!

I found Sam very personable and friendly. Perhaps it was rare for him to talk with someone who could chat about such minutiae; and there were none of the airs and graces that could come across in correspondence. He was free with information in our discussion (I wish I'd asked him again about Desmond Hall!). It was perhaps because he was not having to spend time delving into his records or committing himself in print.

Although we both expressed the hope that we'd meet again, we did not. Sam's health seemed to deteriorate after our meeting, and he was in and out of the hospital. We still exchanged letters, though again he was cautious about proffering data. I was especially pleased when in one letter (November 21, 1987) he commented that he regarded me, along with Brian Stableford, "as easily the two most outstanding science-fiction researchers in England." That was praise indeed from Sam, and it didn't matter that he said it in the middle of a paragraph where he was correcting an apparent error I'd made in an article on William Hope Hodgson!

In my last few letters to Sam I kept urging him to complete the books he had been planning for years, especially the final volume of his *Science Fiction in Old San Francisco* and his pioneering research on Ambrose Bierce. In his last letter to me, dated February 5, 1994, he reflected on his poor health and periods in and out of the hospital. His last words were: "You can imagine with the hospital stays and recuperative periods I had to concentrate on staying alive rather than getting work done."

Now that he's passed away I suspect there is much that will not be salvaged from his papers and much therefore left undone. I shall miss that tremendously. Every new book or article by Sam was a delight. Even when he was at his most infuriating he was still fascinating. And even though I hope I now have a voice of my own, I know that Sam's spirit still drives me on.

——*Letter, August 18, 1998.*

RONALD BENNETT

Oh hell, not Sam Moskowitz! Another great loss, not only as a science-fiction fan, but as a nice guy, too. When I first heard of him, way, way back, he was always mentioned as something of a joke, someone whose writing was turgid, strained and ultra-serious, someone entirely without humor who always spoke with a loud, loud voice. Well, with me he was always great and exceedingly kind. I last met him over here when a convention had taken over the halls of residence at Manchester University while the students were away on their Easter break. I happened across him sitting on a bench in the courtyard one fine evening (rare in the U. K. at Easter, believe me), and we sat for a long while and chatted about Things Fannish. No humor? Well, he took a ribbing that evening but gave as good as he got. It was the highlight of that convention for me.

——*Trap Door* #18, April 1998.

HARRY HARRISON

There we were on Sunday, November 6, 1938, a motley bunch of teenagers in Jimmy Taurasi's cellar, signing the by-laws of the newly organized Queens Science

Fiction League. There I was, along with Will Sykora, Thomas S. Gardner——and Sam Moskowitz. So I've known Sam for almost sixty years. I watched him grow into an overweight truck driver with a cigar stuck into his mush. Then watched him lose weight——and cigar——and mutate into the sleek editor of a frozen food magazine.

But that was just to keep the money flowing while he devoted the rest of his life to science-fiction. There Sam was many things, both in and out of fandom. But he was a fan, first last and always. And I shall miss him. Never endowed with much of a sense of humor, he could take a lot of ribbing and not mind it. I remember at some convention I caught him coming out of a meeting of the Burroughs Bibliophiles (a masterly oxymoron there). "Hi, Sam," I said. "Is that William or Edgar Rice?" Deeply serious, he responded, "William could have learned a lot from Edgar Rice."

I agree with John Clute. The science-fiction I grew up with is now a thing of the past. It was a nice, homey, friendly world where all of the writers knew each other, and the BNFs as well. Each death of a magazine, each death of a friend, diminishes that world.

We were broke, but I think we were happy. I note from the QSFL by-laws that the annual membership dues were one dollar. Or ten cents a month for ten months, if you couldn't lay out a monstrous sum like that at one time.

——*Ansible* #119, June 1997.

JOHN HOWARD

Sam Moskowitz is someone I should dearly have loved to meet, or at least heard talk about science-fiction history and his part in it. He has been a name in the field for me ever since I was a teenager, when I came across him mentioned in Isaac Asimov's *Before the Golden Age.* Not long afterwards I found a paperback of *Seekers of Tomorrow,* and I was hooked on the history of science-fiction as well as the genre itself. I enjoyed a brief correspondence with Sam after I'd ordered a copy of *The Crystal Man* from him. Along with that book he also sent me a copy of *Three Stories* as a gift, both warmly inscribed.

It turned out that he had read my article on August Derleth's sf in *Return to Derleth II,* and made favorable comments on it. (Although I could never tell whether or not he thought I'd plagiarized an article I later learned he had written on the subject not long before, one which I hadn't——and still haven't——ever seen. I think he was rightly exasperated at unacknowledged borrowings from his original research and conclusions.)

I also bought from him the hard-covered editions of *Seekers of Tomorrow* and its related volumes, for I still rate them highly as part of my reference library. He sent them in a sturdy cardboard box, which I kept in my kitchen to put empty bottles and jars in, ready for recycling. On it are his name and address, in his own handwriting. So nothing is wasted——glass, cardboard; and I have a constant reminder of a man whose researches and enthusiasms have given me so much enjoyment and enlightenment for over twenty years.

——*Letter, June 20, 1998.*

ARNIE KATZ

Sam Moskowitz's death hit hard. It aroused memories of a man who changed my life for the better. I don't know where I'd be as a professional writer/editor without his tutelage and support, but I know where I've gotten with them.

It's a big debt. I'm glad I acknowledged it to him, both in person and in writing, while he was alive. Now he's dead, and I'm battling my usual reserve to share those thoughts with you.

Most fans harbor cast-iron images of Sam Moskowitz. His joke at the Ny-Con 3 banquet——"Don't step in the oompah!"——probably sums up their opinion.

My feelings don't depend on convincing anyone who feels that way that he/she is wrong. Everyone has flaws, and SaM was no exception to that rule. He could be loud, coarse, self-involved and inappropriate. If those were his flaws, and they were, they don't negate his incalculable contribution to fandom, his many estimable qualities as a human being, and his positive effect on my life. We're all diminished by our imperfections; but some people have great positive qualities against which to balance them.

As often happens, more people think they know all about SaM than really do——especially in fandom and science-fiction, where everyone has heard of him. I knew him there. By the time I entered fandom in 1963, SaM had become the lightning rod for sercon fandom, much like Ted White is for my favorite backwater eddy. My feelings about Sam the Symbol back then were pretty much what you'd expect from a semi-hippie faaanish fanzine fan.

If things had stayed that way, I'd have no reason to write this. If SaM and I had stayed in our separate social sets, our slight contact would've produced no particular effect in me. But things *didn't* stay that way. He hired me as editorial assistant for *Quick Frozen Foods* magazine, my first full-time editorial job. I worked with him for about four years, saw him every day, and had many opportunities to just sit around and talk. I shan't claim that we became bosom buddies, but I think I got some insights into his personality.

One article won't rewrite SaM's fannish legend. It would surprise me if anything I write here changed anyone's view; SaM's image is much too firmly established. But I think there's more here than a legend and an image. Let me tell you about the guy I know.

I thought my first science-fiction convention, the 1963 Lunacon, would be momentous; but I never imagined that a chance encounter there would change my life. I didn't expect to meet someone who would play such a pivotal role in my career. More accurately, I never expected SaM to be that person.

If you'd asked before Lenny Bailes and I hopped the bus and subway to Manhattan, I'd have guessed that the most significant person I'd meet would be Judi Sephton, my first fan contact. I'd noted her cute photo in her fanzine, *Free Radical*. What teenage guy *isn't* interested in nubile college girls?

Of course there was already one person of considerable importance to me at this Lunacon, Lenny Bailes. We'd hunted back-date magazines together, co-edited our first fanzine, and now were venturing into face-to-face fandom shoulder to shoulder. He was literally with me every step of the way as we climbed the endless staircase to the top floor of New York's Adelphi Hall.

We huffed and puffed into the meeting room a few minutes before the con was scheduled to start. By a fan tradition we didn't yet know, we were a half-hour early. Young fans scurried to complete preparations. It didn't take long to spot Sam Moskowitz. Several men in suits stood aside from the bustle, chatting in a tight circle.

Not that their conversation was private. How could it be when one guy had a voice that shook the walls? I don't recall the subject, except that it was some obscure point of science-fiction history of no interest to me. I did notice, however, that the orator digressed from his monologue to solve one con crisis after another. When someone called him "Sam," Bailes and I guessed his identity. Even two kids on the hobby's outer edge had heard of Sam Moskowitz. We knew of him primarily as a science-fiction anthologist and historian, but I quickly saw that he was a power at this Lunacon.

Lenny and I observed more than we talked, except to each other. Eventually I worked up courage to exchange "hello's" with SaM after the panels and the speeches. I didn't attempt any real conversation, mostly due to shyness. SaM's gruff manner and stentorian voice gave any stranger reason to hesitate. At that time and place, it didn't take much to make me hesitate.

In the ensuing years our fannish paths seldom crossed. I saw him at the monthly Eastern Science Fiction Association meetings in Newark. There, First Fandomites ruled the little world which existed in the antiseptic conference room at the Newark YMCA. Its conservative, bookish members cared passionately about Hans Stefan Santesson.

These ESFA contacts scarcely enlarged on our Lunacon meeting. SaM was in charge, and I was part of the audience. The club's rigid structure, which emphasized a program and guest speakers, didn't allow much socializing until fans went to an after-meeting restaurant. There, naturally, people sat with their friends. SaM, Chris and their crowd had its table, and ragtag young New York fandom had ours.

After one fall 1963 ESFA meeting, Sam read the Pacificon II committee's attack on Walter Breen to his table——and, through the miracle of his resonant voice, to the entire restaurant. Occasional side comments communicated SaM's viewpoint. *The world science-fiction convention committee said it, so it must be true.*

The document never got a more stirring reading than SaM gave it that day. His own penchant for mock-heroic prose meshed with the material. I'm sure he convinced many eavesdroppers, including some fans, that the Pacificon had dealt with a menace in a mature, just and competent way. I sat there, stunned. I didn't know much about fandom, and Sam's rendition was luridly persuasive. Yet it rubbed me the wrong way. Amid ringing declarations of moral certitude and fannish indignation, I couldn't bring myself to hop on the bandwagon.

In that moment of hesitation, our fannish paths diverged. I stopped going to ESFA meetings after a couple more Sunday afternoons. I joined the Fanoclasts, went to an out-of-town college and earned a small reputation as a fannish fan as co-editor of *Quip* and then *Focal Point*. We inhabited different circles, had no friends in common. SaM became that strange dude who'd perpetrated the Exclusion Act, sued Ted White, fought with fans who had criticized the rigor of his research, and supported the campaign against Breen.

Things changed after I began looking for my first job after college. My then-roomie Andy Porter suggested I try E. W. Williams Publishing Company, which already employed him in its production department. A staff editor there had gone on a bender and got fired. When the editorial assistant moved up to fill the vacancy, it left the bottom rung invitingly vacant.

So I went to be interviewed by the assistant publisher at Williams and the editor of its *Quick Frozen Foods* magazine, Sam Martin. (He used "Martin" in this aspect of his career, due to an early brush with anti-Semitism.) Would fandom be a barrier between me and my prospective boss? I didn't think SaM would hire me if he knew much about my fanac——I wasn't exactly the scholar of his dreams.

It turned out that SaM knew no specifics of my fan career, but he did know I published fanzines. That turned out to be the best of all possible situations; I got credit for being a fan and no demerits for my wicked, wicked ways. In fact, a history of fan publishing impressed him more than my B. A. Although I believe he had at least a hazy idea that my fanzines weren't must reading for him, SaM liked the potential of anyone who had enough interest in literary pursuits to publish periodically.

So I was hired. Over the next several years, SaM taught me the rudiments, and the subtleties, of writing and editing. He pushed me hard, but his patience and understanding helped me over the inevitable rough spots and setbacks.

I had worked for only three months as editorial assistant when the guy who'd moved up to assistant editor quit in a tizzy of inflated self-importance. Apparently he thought he should be running the company. Those in a position to make that adjustment thought he wasn't even doing his own job very well. That's why he seemed vaguely surprised when no one tried to talk him out of quitting when he threw a mid-office tantrum.

As editorial assistant, I'd learned to answer the phone, file the picture, and——incredibly!——proofread copy for *Quick Frozen Foods*. My writing and editing consisted of composing and assembling the promotions and hirings page in the magazine.

When the assistant editor walked out, my co-workers toldme not to dream of a promotion. Editorial assistants generally stayed at least a year in that role. (The only exception in memory was the ill-starred fellow who'd just quit.) Nonetheless, I went to SaM and asked for the job. His immediate response was negative, and for exactly the reasons the staff had predicted.

But the tide turned when I invoked fandom. His great affection for the hobby of his youth overcame his reluctance to promote another eager upstart. Although I tiptoed past a few potentially embarrassing particulars, I described my fanac. He was surprisingly sympathetic, especially when he realized I had co-edited a biweekly newszine. In the end, he gave me the shot. "Okay, Arnie," he said. "You've got to come up with two features, one about frozen baked goods and the other about frozen fish, for the next issue."

I'll never forget taking my first feature into his corner office. I was sure its scintillating quality would astound him. Probably earn me an on-the spot promotion, I figured. I sat there, eyes wide, as his pencil demolished my clumsy attempt and erected a cohesive, polished article in its place.

SaM's professionalism impressed me as much as his speed and sureness. He could have gloated over my numerous neophyte mistakes or taken credit for the article, but he did neither, dismissing his overhaul as ordinary editing. "Everybody gets edited," he told me.

SaM encouraged a "try anything" attitude that has stayed with me. Time after time he threw me into uncharted waters. It made for some anxious days, but it also accelerated the learning process and propelled me forward in my career at a speed I might otherwise never have achieved.

I'd see him batting out complete feature articles faster than I could have hunt-and-pecked "The quick brown fox...." His ability to structure these and generate meaningful content set a standard to which I still aspire. SaM was like a one-man editorial department.

Over the years, warily, we began to talk about fandom. He constantly surprised me with his broad-minded attitude toward my zines. I'm sure that he'd rather have seen me tread in the footsteps of A. Langley Searles, but herespected my right to go my own way.

In more recent years he often wrote enthusiastic letters to *Folly* and *Wild Heirs*. He enjoyed the fannish spirit——and why not? After all, SaM did his part to create our microcosm. He invented faan fiction, launched cons and clubs, and wrote innumerable fannish articles back before World War II, when it was all getting started.

Changes in fandom, many of which he himself abetted, made him an anachronism. Bullying and doctrinaire Marxism aside, Donald Wollheim's social conscience and non-stefnal interests are more in tune with today's fanzine fandom than Sam's earnest devotion to imaginative literature. Yet he wasn't a total Neanderthal. While we were working late together one night, he confided that he thought the Exclusion Act was stupid, and that he had known that even at the time. According to him, he'd arrived at the Nycon to find that his co-chairmen had thrown out Wollhim and the rest. He couldn't see how to reverse it, for he felt he owed Taurasi and Sykora loyalty——but he sincerely regretted it.

One thing we shared was an interest in the history of science-fiction fandom. One of my dearest possessions is a copy of the 1974 reprint of *The Immortal Storm*. I've read this several times since Bob Tucker sold me a copy (since passed along to Art Widner) in the mid-sixties. SaM's mock-heroic prose makes it a compelling memoir of fandom's early days, and his account of the roots of fan-

dom are informative; but to me *The Immortal Storm's* most absorbing sections derive from his own intense, personal involvement.

I shall forever be grateful for what SaM taught me, and I fancy my success made him a little proud, too. He even came to enjoy my fannish fanzines, though they hardly exemplify his own unwavering commitment to science-fiction.

The Immortal Storm swirls forever.

——*Xtreme* #5, August 1997.

JOHN LANGE

I admired the wonderful picture of Sam on the cover of the last *Fantasy Commentator*. It conveys something of his warmth, intelligence, wry, understated, eccentric good humor, and his *joie de vivre*. How well he rebounded from the misery and handicap of his throat operations! How zestfully, at last, he came back to us, surmounting and disregarding transformation, embarrassment and pain, wheeling energetically with that electronic wheelchair for a voice——thriving, chipper and articulate, the new Sam of old. He was not only zealous, hard-working and learned, a scrupulous scholar and researcher, but a courageous man.

Once I came to know more of him and of science-fiction, over the past few years, I have concluded that he was a great man as well. If the genre endures there will come in time other scholars, with their strengths and weaknesses, their various and valued contributions; but there will never be another Sam Moskowitz. This is not simply because of his prodigious, unique profile of powers and talents, nor because of his precise, formidable memory and incredible attention to detail, but simply for historical reasons. Along with some of the senior princes of science-fiction, members of First Fandom, he was there at the beginnings——at the earliest conventions in 1937 and 1939, for example. Indeed, he relocated and rescued from oblivion some of the genre's most important earlier pieces. He was also an eyewitness to the blossomings of its modern phases, and throughout it all was not only a fan, collector and advocate, but an able writer, commentator, historian and teacher as well.

Science-fiction will never be the same without him.

——Letter, August 14, 1998.

ROBERT LICHTMAN

I met Sam Moskowitz only twice, at the 1993 and 1996 Worldcons. At the first, he inscribed my copy of *The Immortal Storm*: "A record of fandom's infamies for posterity." "Not excluding your own?" I asked. He nodded "Yes" and looked rueful. I liked him for that.

——*Trap Door* #17, April 1997.

ROBERT A. MADLE

If ever there was a Renaissance Man in the science-fiction field, that man was Sam Moskowitz. He discovered it at the age of thirteen, and it consumed the rest of his life. Over a period of 64 years he first graduated from reader and collector to a super-active fan; then he had a brief fling as an author for the genre pulps of the early 1940's; this led to editing and anthologizing, and, eventually, to research, an area in which he was so superior to others that comparison is futile.

He lead a normal depression-era life until he saw the March 1933 issue of *Wonder Stories* in a store window. This introduced him to the Science Fiction League, in which he and another fan, Robert Bahr, formed a chapter in 1935. That in turn led to Sam's discovery of fan magazines——then affectionately known as "fanmags" or "fmz"; the current term "fanzines" did not come into use until 1940.

Among the first of these that he encountered were the Science Fiction League chapter organs, such as Chicago's *Fourteen Leaflet* and *The Brooklyn Re-*

porter. He was fascinated by such publications because they discussed the science-fiction scene in detail. In those early days of fandom that revolved almost entirely around the genre pulp magazines—*Wonder*, *Astounding*, *Amazing* and to some extent *Weird Tales*. Soon afterwards he discovered *Fantasy Magazine*, that marvellous early production of Conrad Ruppert and Julius Schwartz, and other amateur publications, such as William Crawford's *Marvel Tales*. Once exposed to these, Sam was in deep forever.

Like most early fans, Sam had the urge to communicate with other science fiction lovers. Fanzines gave him this opportunity. I first heard of him in 1937 when John Baltadonis showed me the ms. of an article he had received for his fanzine *The Science Fiction Collector*. It was titled "Case History," and discussed the importance of Hugo Gernsback to the field. The ms. was hand-written, and both Baltadonis and I felt a hand-written article had to be too adolescent to use. (We were all of sixteen at the time!) That was not the end of "Case History," however. In 1939 I was to feature it in my own *Fantascience Digest* as "the first article ever written by Sam Moskowitz."

I was happy and proud to do this because in the brief space of those two years Sam had not only become well known, but one of the most popular and prolific of fan writers. His articles were appearing everywhere, and were almost invariably interesting and original. Their subjects covered all aspects of the field—collecting, publishing, history and activities of its fans. In addition to contributing to the fan presses himself, he also set up a manuscript bureau: he would solicit articles from fans and professional authors and send them to needy editors. There were a number of fanzines that Sam literally kept alive in this way.

Much has been written about the fan feuds of the late 1930's. These developed chiefly in the pages of fanzines; in those days there were about fifty of these, and perhaps twice as many active fans. Cliques appeared. The Chief Feuder of them all was probably Donald Wollheim; if someone did or said something that he opposed, he would do his best to make his victim leave fandom.

Feuding culminated in who should sponsor the First World Science Fiction Convention in 1939. Holding this had originally been Wollheim's idea, but he dissolved The International Scientific Association, the organization that was to sponsor it. However, he soon formed The Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction to fill the slack. In opposition, Sam and his group formed New Fandom. And it was this group that gained sufficient backing to put on the convention. As history shows, Wollheim and several of his colleagues were not allowed to attend. To his final days, Sam felt that out of revenge they would have done everything legally or illegally possible to disrupt and disorganize proceedings so that the convention would fail.

Most Philadelphia fans, including myself, were allied with Sam and his co-workers, William Sykora and James Taurasi, and in general supported them; but while I feel Sam had every reason to believe his action was right, I personally felt no one should be refused admittance. Nevertheless, the convention *was* held, it *was* successful, and it became the template for all future Worldcons. It also left behind some scurrilous nicknames: Sam was termed the Newark Neanderthal, Sykora was Oily Will, Taurasi the Il Duce of Flushing Flats, and the Philadelphia fans were called the PSFS Hoodlums.

All of this (and much, much more) is covered in vivid detail in Sam's remarkable history of early fandom, *The Immortal Storm*. I feel this is the work for which he will be most remembered, his crowning achievement. He had for years planned to revise and update this book, and indeed had begun writing a sequel that supplements and continues it, *The Immortal Storm II*. I know that he had obtained more information, some of it extremely important. For instance, in 1956 I had got in touch with Allan Glasser, an early fan best known for being the editor of *The Time Traveller*, the second earliest fanzine in the field. Glasser left fandom

after being accused of plagiarizing a story from an old *Argosy* magazine and selling it to *Amazing Stories* in 1933. Glasser is handled very negatively in *The Immortal Storm*. Sam and I met him at the 1956 New York World Convention, where he told us many interesting things countering this coverage. That may have been the point in time when Sam began to assemble notes for revisions, but they were unfortunately never completed before he died.

During World War II Sam spent two years in the armed forces, but was released for physical reasons in 1944. That was earlier than most members were discharged, which enabled him to resume his science-fiction activities when other fans could not. It was during this period that he began to write *The Immortal Storm*, which ran serially in *Fantasy Commentator*, starting in late 1945.

The fantasy writer David H. Keller had always been one of Sam's idols. Shortly after the end of the war he and Will Sykora began making plans to publish what would be the first collection of his stories in book form. Unaware of this, Jack Agnew and I were considering the same idea. We wrote to Sam, who set up a meeting between all of us and Dr. Keller, at which an amicable agreement for publishing his work was made. This resulted in two books: *Life Everlasting and Other Tales*, which Sam and Will brought out under the aegis of The Avalon Company in 1947; and *The Solitary Hunters and The Abyss*, two short novels which the Philadelphia group issued in 1948 under their imprint of New Era Publishers.

Sam tells an interesting anecdote that I think is worth repeating here. It occurred a few years later, while he was editing *Science Fiction Plus* in 1953. He happened to be working overtime one evening, and paused for a break to stretch his legs. In the hall he met the janitor pushing a cart bearing the canvases of several original paintings. Sam stopped him to examine these. There were ten of them——all original magazine covers by Frank R. Paul. Gernsback, said the janitor, had told him to clean out the basement. Needless to say, instead of being thrown out all the Pauls went home with Sam that night. What makes the coincidence involved in this situation even more striking is that it was the *only* occasion Sam ever worked overtime for the magazine!

Sam Moskowitz has been called the world's foremost authority on science fiction. There is no question that this is true. One way of showing this is by scrutinizing the anthologies he edited. Not only did he delve deeply to select stories which had never before been reprinted, but he accompanied these with detailed notes giving both their backgrounds and those of their authors.

He edited some forty anthologies under his own name, and ghost-edited another ten for others. These comprise a wondrous group of books that tell the history of science-fiction itself. No other anthologists have ever done this, or could have, for they lack the background knowledge required. For example: several anthologists stated that nothing worthwhile had been published before John Campbell became editor of *Astounding Stories*. This was because they had no knowledge of the earlier material. To dispute this, Sam assembled a successful anthology that included *only* stories that had been printed before Campbell became an editor.

Sam has said that everything he accomplished in the field came about because he was always at heart a science-fiction *fan*. (The fact that he probably made more money writing than most professionals is irrelevant.) It may well be why his research has been so spectacular. Purely from the aspect of fandom, I would rate Sam as one of the two top fans of all time. The other is, of course, Forrest J. Ackerman. The two are different in many ways, but both have devoted their entire lives to the field; call it a tie for the Number One Fan.

It's difficult for me to realize Sam is gone. He was unique, and the immortality of his name is assured. Goodbye, old pal——there'll never be another like you!

——adapted from contributions to *Science Fiction Chronicle* (June 1997) and *RAMblings* #2 (January 1998).

ANNE McCAFFREY

I have always been deeply sensible of the debt I owed Sam for buying my first story, "Freedom of Race," for his magazine *Science Fiction +*. He also did some necessary but unobtrusive editing of the ending, not only to fit the required 1,000-word length but also to strengthen its message.

But he did much, much more for this new, insecure author he had found; he took her to a Newark s-f club meeting at which she met Ted Sturgeon and, obliquely, showed her what the world of science-fiction was like. He gave her suggestions and help which were certainly good advice for Anne McCaffrey.

He was a kind and generous person, and we always did a routine when we met at conventions about how he started me on my career. Which indeed he did, and which I have ever since acknowledged with gratitude and appreciation.

We are all that much poorer in losing Sam Moskowitz, and I shall never forget him. None of us who knew him, however briefly, will. What better epitaph could he have? Yes, Sam, we'll remember you!

——*Locus*, June 1997.

HERMAN MOSKOWITZ

The last issue of *Fantasy Commentator* brought back many memories of Sam, and of times and people now long gone. I think back to the late 1920's, when he built up a magazine route to earn spending money, selling *Liberty, The Saturday Evening Post* and others. The family lived in Verona, but not long after the 1929 stock market crash we lost all sources of income and had to move to the congested confines of Newark. Sam lost his customers, and the local distributor was almost as upset over losing his ace salesman.

Even though Sam was only ten, he already seemed to know how to do things and was able to take charge. All the very young ones in the family looked to him for advice and leadership. He even established a reputation in school that helped us, too. I learned of this unsuspected legacy one day when I was caught talking in study hall. I was called to the platform, expecting the worst, but instead the teacher asked me if Sam was my older brother. On stating that he was, I was told I had a reputation to live up to. Some years before he had memorized Poe's poem "The Raven" and recited it on the school stage. The teachers had never forgotten this feat; they asked me about him and sent their regards.

Sam was interested in science-fiction for as long as I can remember, and while in the army——he was in the Tank Destroyers unit at Camp Hood——he sent me money from his pay to buy all the current magazines for his collection. I recall riding my bike around the city to find them. All the boys in the family were to follow him into the service and, thankfully, we too survived.

In the early postwar years I remember Sam's fan friends coming to visit our small apartment; how adult and grownup they all seemed! There was Jimmy Taurasi, Ray Van Houten, Will Sykora, Dick Witter, Allan Howard and Tom Gardner with his wife and delightful little daughter, who was about three at the time. I can remember the many verbal skirmishes as they debated youthful ideas and opinions, which always made their visits interesting.

Several times, if I was well behaved, I got to go to Slovak Sokol Hall on Morriss Avenue in Newark on those Sundays when the science-fiction club that Sam headed would meet, and I would see even more such fans. I used to get a kick out of seeing Sam, Joe Wrzos and Alex Osheroff talking together, young and full of pep, as they set off exploring scond-hand book shops.

As time passed the family scattered, and in later years I saw Sam infrequently. Despite the many health problems that plagued him near the end of his life, he remained much the same cheerful person, and rarely complained. He would still talk of his many friends, and as Langley returned to active fandom his name would be mentioned more often.

Upon visiting Sam's grave recently I noticed a military service placard had been put down. His friend Alex Osheroff lies nearby, similarly marked.

——Letter, May 17, 1998.

MARC RUSSELL

A few years ago I became interested in tracking down the title and author and title of a story my father told me he had read in a s-f magazine in the early 1930's. In desperation, I finally sent a letter to the almost-official historian of the field, Sam Moskowitz. Although I was a total stranger whom he had never heard of, he took the time to write me a rather long letter detailing the results of his research on the question. That's the kind of guy he was, and he will be sorely missed.

——*Locus*, June 1997.

ANDREW WILLIAMS

Sam Martin, whose real name was Sam Moskowitz, came to work for the late Edwin W. Williams at *Quick Frozen Foods* magazine (*QFF*) in 1955. He served first as managing editor, but was named editor in 1959, when Mr. Williams founded *Quick Frozen Foods International* (*QFFI*) and devoted his attentions to that publication.

Over the years Mr. Martin became one of the leading U.S. authorities on the frozen food industry. He was a frequent speaker at industry meetings, visited factories and operations around the country, and was an indefatigable researcher. In 1960 he originated *The Frozen Food Almanac* that, in a much changed international format, is still an annual feature of *QFFI*.

He stayed on as editor of *QFF* after Mr. Williams sold the company to Cahners in 1966, and continued to guide the magazine after Cahners sold it to Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (HBJ) in 1973. In an odd bit of publishing history, Mr. Williams bought back *QFFI* in 1975, Harcourt keeping *QFF* and the *QFF* Directory. In a decision he briefly had cause to regret, Sam remained with HBJ.

HBJ then somehow got the idea that Mr. Martin and the magazine were dinosaurs: it fired him, and embarked on a radical redesign of *QFF* with a "modernized" format. But the makeover was a disaster, and a year later HBJ had to beg Sam to return and run the magazine his own way. He continued to edit *QFF* until 1980, when there was another parting of the ways: Ed Williams invited the veteran chronocler of the U.S. food industry back to *QFFI* as associate publisher. Despite health problems, including surgery for throat cancer that stilled his once-booming voice, he kept at it until reaching retirement age in 1985.

——*Quick Frozen Foods International*, July 1997.

GARY K. WOLFE

The first historical essays about science-fiction I ever read were those by Sam Moskowitz which appeared in *Satellite Science Fiction* in 1958-1959, when I was just passing the archtypal s-f reader age of twelve. Twelve-year-olds aren't noted for fascination with literary history, but they're big on finding excuses for what they do, and Moskowitz's litany of big names——Poe, Doyle, Wells, Shelley, Verne——provided a lot of useful ammo when accounting for my reading habits to skeptical parents and teachers. Along with his later essays for *Amazing Stories*, these enthusiastic historical sketches with their Barnum-like claims served as a useful reading-list for beginners. Science-fiction was no longer whatever appeared on the newsstand each month, but rather something with an imposing history and identifiable traditions.

By the time these essays were assembled into landmark historical books, *Explorers of the Infinite* (1963) and *Seekers of Tomorrow* (1966), I was finishing

high school and starting college——and beginning to discover there were a handful of other critical and historical works about s-f as well. The very few academic studies, such as those by Bailey and Franklin, were much more rigorously developed, while the essays of in-house critics such as Blish and Knight were infinitely better written——but it always seemed to me that it was Moskowitz who had opened up the doors, who very nearly invented the field of modern science-fiction history insofar as it existed outside the fanzines. He may well have helped to give rise, then, to a whole generation of scholars and critics in the field, simply by demonstrating that s-f history was there to be mined. Through bombast and sheer determination, he unearthed its artifacts the way Heinrich Schliemann unearthed Troy——searching when nobody else was, making miraculous discoveries, and then shamelessly flogging what he had unearthed.

Like Schliemann, Moskowitz was never comfortable with professional academics. His methodology——which became the model for much fan scholarship——consisted of obsessive accumulation of undifferentiated detail, often from sources coyly withheld, seldom shaped by critical perpective or even rhetorical organization. "His sole critical principle," James Blish once wrote, was "of infinite regregress." And his style, not to put too fine a point on it, was inimitable; once he tried to praise a favorite writer by claiming, "Merritt proved that plausibility was no limitation to the most extravagant exercise of the imagination." When academics, along with other writers and critics, began to find inconsistencies in his work——even as they themselves built upon it——he must have felt somewhat betrayed, resentful that pups who commanded far fewer facts about s-f than he did were now teaching it in universities. (This was another area he pioneered with his evening courses at the City College of New York in the early 1950's.) The first time I met him, at an academic conference where I had come to receive an award, he was genuinely agitated that someone who had written such a "terrible book" as mine should be recognized. (In a fanzine review, he implied that it was a sure sign of the Decline of the West, and felt similarly appalled at other academic works about s-f.)

And yet the academics finally did give him recognition. The Science Fiction Research Association presented him with its lifetime achievement award, the Pilgrim, in 1981; and the most recent academic history of s-f, Brooks Landon's *Science Fiction after 1900*, still refers to him as "the dean of SF historians." While much of the material from *Explorers of the Infinite* and *Seekers of Tomorrow* has been superseded by later scholarship, his historical anthologies such as *Science Fiction by Gaslight, Under the Moons of Mars* and *Science Fiction in Old San Francisco* are indisputably original and significant contributions to the history of the field. And his anecdotal history of early fan squabbles, *The Immortal Storm*, should be on everyone's list of guilty pleasures. If, in excavating his Troy, Moskowitz sometimes misread the evidence, frequently piled it in unsorted jumbles, and often presented it with a flourish of off-key trumpets, it hardly mattered in the end: he was there first.

——*Locus*, June 1997.

JOSEPH WRZOS

The editor extends apologies to the author and to readers for an undetected typographical error that distorted the ending of Mr. Wrzos's remembrances in the previous issue. The last paragraph of his contribution should read as follows:

All of this——Sam's lifetime of dedication to science-fiction, his years as a leading fan, professional editor and innovative historian——I was fortunate enough, as one of his confidants, to observe from a front-row seat. Only now that he is no longer with us, however, am I beginning to appreciate the depth and the breadth of his influence, not only on myself but on all of his close friends in the field. And I'm also beginning to understand something else significant about Sam: sheepskin or not, he was probably the best college professor I never had.

A Collector's Collector

AN APPRECIATION OF OSWALD TRAIN

Darrell C. Richardson

Although I have been an active reader and collector of science-fiction and fantasy for over fifty years, I did not know anything about its fans and fandom until around 1943. One of the first fans whom I ever contacted was Oswald Train. In 1944 I visited him in his home in Philadelphia. Through all of the years since, until his death on January 22, 1988, we remained the warmest of personal friends. Without detracting from any friendship I have had, I can truthfully say he was always the closest friend of all. It seems appropriate, then, on the tenth anniversary of his passing, that I should record a little about the man for the benefit of those who did not know him, or did not know him well.

Ossie, as he was called by almost everybody, was born in England on June 8, 1915. His father moved to the United States in 1922 and became a coal miner in Western Pennsylvania. The rest of his family emigrated to this country a year later. Ossie worked for awhile in the coal mines in Barnsboro before the Trains moved to Philadelphia in 1935. There, during much of his later life, Ossie was a cabinet maker and wood finisher. Early in this occupation he cut parts of three three fingers from his left hand while using a power saw. He was also plagued by a speech impediment, stuttering or stammering, which hewas never able to overcome entirely. This handicap did not interfere with his singing, however. For many years he sang in the choir of the Episcopal Church, of which he and his family were active members.

Ossie Train was not only one of the early science-fiction fans, but an important and active one. He was among the founders of the Philadelphia Science-Fantasy Society in 1936. Other friends and founders of this group were John Baltadonis, Robert A. Madle and Milton Rothman. He was a co-editor of *The PSFS News*, the club's fanzine, from its first 1937 issue until early 1939; and during the war years of 1943-1946, when he was practically holding the club together by himself, he edited and published it alone.

Ossie played an active part in what has been called the first true science-fiction convention, held in Philadelphia on October 22, 1936. This was attended by fans from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He was also present at the first World Science-Fiction Convention, which met in New York City in June 1939, and at all the conventions in the 1940's which followed. He was a friend of many of the early fans, collectors, writers and publishers in the field, and contributed articles to a number of fanzines. Early on he became known for his comprehensive collection and his bibliographic knowledge in the genre.

My first contact came about through his reading one of my letters, which was published in the April 1944 *Fantastic Adventures*. In it I listed a number of obscure Edgar Rice Burroughs items I needed for my collection. Ossie was an avid Burroughs fan, and wrote me; this proved to be the beginning of a long friendship. He himself owned one of the better collections in this area, and remained a loyal and active Burroughs fan all his life. We found and traded rare ERB items with each other through the subsequent years.

Ossie also possessed one of the finest H. Rider Haggard collections in all the world. This was not only complete in terms of both English and American first editions, but contained also many special and deluxe editions, Haggard letters, and even original manuscripts.

Works of Burroughs and Haggard comprised only a small part of Ossie's holdings, however. Overall, he truly had one of the greatest science-fiction and fantasy collections known. Indeed, it was so large and comprehensive——it numbered in the thousands——that its description would fill a book. It included complete sets of titles (mostly in first editions) of virtually all the gteat writers in the field in the English language. It was especially rich in British editions. Ossie owned hundreds of truly scarce and out-of-the-way fantasy books, among them many known to only a few expert collectors and bibliophiles. Over the years he was called on to furnish information by more than a dozen bibliographers for their published compilations.

Nor were his interests confined to this area alone. He amassed an outstanding collection of mystery, detective, suspense and crime stories, as well as those of other authors whose work happened to interest him (Kenneth Roberts and F. van Wyck Mason, to mention a couple among many).

In 1947 Ossie founded the Prime Press, one of the early specialty publishers of science-fiction. The other partners were Albert Prime, James Williams and Armond E. Waldo. Lloyd Eshbach, a close friend and founder of Fantasy Press, was his advisor in the project. Another close friend who advised him on editorial and publishing matters was Donald M. Grant, founder of another specialty publishing house.* Twenty years after starting Prime Press, Ossie established another venture: Oswald Train, Publisher. Through the years he published many important books, including several reprints of scarce, early titles by famous science-fiction and detective writers.

Although he was a complex person——literally, a man for all seasons——and is generally thought of today as an important editor and publisher, he should also be remembered as a Collector's Collector. He was equal to the best. Over years, by persistent, patient effort, he succeeded in finding rare books that few others could locate, eventually building a magnificent collection.

Ossie never married, though for awhile he was engaged to a girl in England. They visited back and forth over the Atlantic two or three times, but the knot was never tied.

Ossie died of a heart attack at the Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. His death was sudden and unexpected, for although in later years he developed some heart problems, he had otherwise enjoyed good health most of his life. He was survived by his brother Sidney, two nephews and a niece. He was preceded in death by his father, his mother and a sister.

Oswald Train was a person much appreciated by those who knew him. I am thankful that I could have been his friend for over forty years. I loved him like a brother. My sons considered him a member of the family. We will all miss him. I hope he will be long remembered, not only for his contributions to science-fiction scholarship and publishing, but because he was awarm and wonderful human being.

• • •

"The Return of Hugo Gernsback"——continued from page 172

IV

It was at this meeting that I began to get clues as to why Gernsback was interested in going back into the science-fiction field. Most of them I did not comprehend fully until I received additional information years later, but it is pertinent to this story to coördinate them here.

Following the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, Gernsback was inspired to expand his publications. He felt that the war would end soon and so would the current paper shortage. (Actually paper remained in short supply for

*Eshbach has given detailed histories of these (and other) firms in his book *Over My Shoulder* (1983).

several more years.) He struck on the idea of putting out a magazine for the general public on atomic energy. No matter that most information on the subject was still classified; he was obsessed with the conviction that there would soon be atomic-powered airplanes, automobiles, trains, homes and industry. He was certain that the publisher who first tapped this market, as he had tapped radio before World War I and tried to plug into television in 1928, would profit hugely.

He even chose a title for his magazine, and hastened to register it. In order to do that, the Trademark Bureau of the United States government requires that an actual publication be produced, that copies of it be sent to the Library of Congress and the Trademark/Patent Office, and that proof be furnished that the publication in question was actually ordered, paid for, and sent through the mail. (Such proof is preferably in the form of signed letters, of which a minimum of two, from different states, are needed.)

To meet these requirements, most publishers issue a small publication carrying the chosen title, often called the "ashcan edition." Generally no more than a dozen copies of it are printed. Gernsback did indeed produce an ashcan edition for trademark purposes. It was titled *Popular Atomics*, was dated February 1946 and priced at ten cents. It was photo-offset, and had twelve pages. The text and illustrations were those segments devoted to atomic energy which had appeared in his 1945 publication *Tame*.

With great difficulty Harvey Gernsback, who was working for the company at the time, talked his father into delaying issuance of the magazine until a consumer market for atomic-powered products manifested itself. Gernsback chafed at this restraint, fearful of losing precedence in the new field; but, as it became obvious that a market for atomic-powered products was not developing as he had expected, he reluctantly agreed to await a more propitious time.

Then the London trade publisher Leonard Hill brought out a periodical titled *Atomics* in July 1949. It was not aimed at the general public, but at companies which might supply components to the atomic energy industry, or use radioactive materials in processing. This included manufacturers of electronic apparatus, protective clothing and equipment, laboratory materials, food processing equipment and consultors in the field. *Atomics* was quarto-sized, and averaged thirty pages of text plus varying amounts of advertising. Its covers generally featured black and white photographs. In addition to news of atomic energy it ran such technical articles as "Chromatographic Technology in Radioisotope Separation," "A Review of Geiger-Müller and Special Counters," and the like.

Hugo Gernsback was beside himself when he first saw this periodical. While it did not take the popular consumer approach he envisioned, it nevertheless meant that he could no longer publish the first atomic energy magazine. I have no record on how long the trade journal survived; the last one Gernsback received was the fourteenth issue. Since each number carried fewer than ten pages of advertising, I suspect it was probably being subsidized by the firm's older, established publications, such as *Petroleum, Food Manufacture, Building Digest* and others.

Meanwhile something else had been going on which changed the picture for Gernsback's firm: the postwar rise of television. Gernsback moved early to take advantage of this. One of his magazines, *Radio Craft*, dealt with electronics; he changed its name to *Radio Electronics*. Its circulation boomed and the firm's coffers fattened on advertising from companies eager to reach people in that industry. By 1950, then, Gernsback had ample funds to launch a new publication, something he very much desired to do——even though Harvey was still fighting his rear-guard action against *Popular Atomics* and Lee Robinson was warning that there were no advertising prospects in such a magazine.

Then came the March 1950 meeting of the ESFA, where Gernsback was the featured speaker. Suddenly Harvey and Lee saw a ray of hope. Hugo was becoming

interested once again in the field where he had pioneered. The invitation to be Guest of Honor at the 1952 Worldcon apparently diverted his thoughts in this direction still further, and he began talking openly about reëntering science-fiction. His son and Lee saw this as a way out of the *Popular Atomics* dilemma. Science-fiction was an area where he had once been successful; he knew something about it. At the time it was also an area that was booming. They were willing to go along with his bringing out a science-fiction magazine if he would drop the idea of an atomic energy publication. Hugo agreed, providing it would be high class and dignified, printed on coated paper. That appealed to Harvey; and as far as Lee Robinson was concerned, whatever the advertising prospects were, they would be better for a slick magazine than for a pulp. This, then, was the background behind the appearance of a new science-fiction magazine from Hugo Gernsback.

Before the Worldcon, Gernsback had already been grappling with the possibilities of a suitable title for his new magazine. At the convention luncheon, which has already been described, he handed me a small publication marked "confidential" in red. It was an ashcan copy of a magazine titled *PreScience Fiction*. "'Prescience' means 'foreknowledge' or 'foresight,'" he explained. "An excellent title for a science-fiction magazine."

"I don't think much of the public knows the meaning of the word 'prescience,'" I said. "Possibly if the title were *Pre-Science Fiction* they might understand it better."

He didn't argue. "Take the magazine home with you and think about it," he suggested. "Now, I want you to do me a favor. Write me a letter requesting a copy of it by name, enclosing ten cents. I need to get it trademarked."

I did as he requested. The magazine had twelve pages, was half-letter sized, and photo-offset; its cover was by Frank R. Paul, and it was dated September 1952. The contents had been reprinted, illustrations and all, from *Digest of Digests*, the 1946 edition of the annual satiric magazines which Gernsback wrote and distributed as yuletide "cards" to his acquaintances. (This one was inspired by the current vogue for digest publications, of which Gernsback estimated there were some 600 extant, and poked fun at the *Reader's Digest*.)

The leading story in *PreScience Fiction* was "The Electronic Baby" by "Grego Banshuck" (an anagram of Hugo Gernsback), a fictionalized prophecy of the production of human beings in an incubator in place of a mother's womb. (It was later reprinted in the May 1953 issue of *Science Fiction Plus*.) The second story was a scientific mystery titled "The Superperfect Crime," credited to Beno Ruckshagg, another anagram of Hugo Gernsback; it posits a murder committed in a locked room by projecting microwaves through its wall onto the head of a sleeping man. (Radar Range, the first microwave oven, had not yet come onto the market.)

At the Worldcon luncheon Gernsback also invited me to dinner at his New York City apartment on Friday, September 19th. His apartment was in a large residential building at 263 West End Avenue, just north of 72nd Street. There for the first time I met his wife, the former Mary Hancher. She had been his maid and cook, and he had married her in 1951 following his divorce from his second wife, the former Dorothy Kantrowitz. Mary's father had been a coal miner and her family was of Polish extraction. She spoke and dressed in a very cultured manner. Following the meal, which was served by a maid, Gernsback led me to his study. On a shelf in this small room were several photographs of his wife, one of them showing her in a bathing suit, and in a bookcase I recall seeing a fifteen-volume set of the works of Jules Verne. (What most impressed me, however, was the stunning original painting by Frank R. Paul that hung just outside the study. This showed the Earth as viewed from the moon, with a round anti-gravity spaceship in the foreground; it illustrated a scene from Gernsback's own series of tales, "Baron Münchausen's Scientific Adventures," and was reproduced on the cover of the February 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories*.)

Gernsback wasted no time in getting down to business. We've carefully examined your prospectus and credentials and we find them very impressive," he began. "We're inclined to give you the spot as editor of the new magazine. It's not certain yet, but we may call it *PreScience Stories* unless I can come up with a better title. The important question now is, When can you come to work so that we can get started?"

"Well," I replied, "I've been with the Hazel Specialty Company for nine years. They've been very good to me, and I've become an essential part of their system. It's only fair that I give them three weeks' notice so they can hire and I can train a new man before I leave. Of course, that wouldn't prevent me from accomplishing some preliminary work at home." As an employer himself Gernsback seemed to appreciate my feeling obligated to give ample notice, and after a little discussion it was decided that I would report for work on October 13, 1952.

The rest of the evening was devoted to a monologue on his part, mostly rehashing ideas that I had already heard. He did tell me, however, that he already had a cover for the new magazine; it had been painted by Alex Schomburg (an artist originally discovered by Gernsback in 1925), and showed a man with a Buck Rogers-like rocket attachment soaring over a city. What he did not tell me, and which I discovered later, was that this cover had been painted several years before for the first issue of the aborted *Popular Atomics*. He also said that he had received a report from Dr. Horovitz, the eye specialist I had visited, saying that there was nothing wrong with my eyes that could not be corrected by proper reading glasses, which he trusted I would procure before coming to work.

I left feeling elated. It was heady becoming the editor of a science-fiction magazine, let alone one to be published by the Father of Science-Fiction, Hugo Gernsback himself. But on the way home I began to have misgivings. I had neglected to clarify several important points about my employment. So on the very next day I sent him a letter outlining these.

I asked that the terms of my employment be set forth in a written contract, which would cover three major points. The first was salary, to be $75 a week, as we had already verbally agreed on. The second was a minimum guarantee of employment, which I felt should be six months. This would be no hardship on him, and give me time to look around if the job terminated before that. The third——and this had been at his instigation, not mine——was that I would receive a percentage of the profits (if any); I suggested 7½%.

I added that I was willing to discuss these terms further if they were not satisfactory. If he had no objection to them, I asked him to send me two written copies of them. On September 22nd he did so, asking me to sign one copy and return it to him in a letter marked "personal." I complied the next day, adding in an accompanying letter that by the time he received it I would already have given my notice to the Hazel Specialty Company.

Meanwhile Gernsback, imbued with enthusiasm for his new project, wasn't letting any grass grow under his feet while waiting for me to start work. He began to solicit manuscripts from authors he had published in his earlier magazines and whose work he liked and remembered. One of these was an electrical engineer who taught at Cal-Tech named John Scott Campbell. His most famous story was "The Infinite Brain" (*Science Wonder Stories*, May 1930). He had contributed material to *Radio Electronics* and also had single stories in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Astounding Science-Fiction*, but had written nothing since 1948. Gernsback induced him to write a story for the new magazine, and after the dinner at his apartment had given it to me to take home to read for my opinion. He had not read it himself, he said; and if he had shown it to Harvey, I never learned what the latter thought of it. At that point, the story was untitled.

In it Campbell posits the invention of a device which enables people to merge their minds and memories with others'. It is even possible for humans to

link with animals in that manner. Use of the device spreads, and soon almost all individuals, through what is called "the great melding," are united into a single planetary mind. The world becomes a happier place; people are friendlier as they understand one another. But the averaging out of intellects submerges superior minds, and incentive is stymied. The world begins to decay, finally becoming a Utopia in reverse. (This prompted Gernsback later to name the story "ɐıdoʇnU".) I read it, and on October 7th wrote him I felt it was not publishable as it stood. Its science was strictly pseudo-, but it did embody a clever idea; if revised by the author or edited by myself it might become a suitable story for us.

He had also given me several of his Yuletide "cards" to update. They were *Quip* (on Mars), *Newspeek* (on World War III) and *Tame* (on atomic energy). With the help of Joseph Wrzos on the first, I suggested revisions that would make them all suitable for reprinting.

V

Within a week after Gernsback had told me I had the editor's job I began what I knew would be my main task, contacting science-fiction authors who might contribute the the magazine. Although I knew almost all of them, either personally or by correspondence, this was a formidable task. First of all, I could not reveal specific details about the magazine or who was to publish it because of Gernsback's insistence on keeping these secret. Second, at that time it was a seller's market. Throughout 1952 there were rarely fewer than thirty science-fiction titles on the newsstands, and a dozen of them paid two cents a word or more for accepted material. Even *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post* were open to submissions. The better authors did not need a new market, putting me at a distinct disadvantage.

Nevertheless, starting in late September (and though still working days for Hazel Specialty) I began my new duties. Evenings and weekends I sent out over thirty letters to authors asking for manuscripts. These were not simple formal requests, but letters of 700 to 1200 words, individually composed on the basis of my own knowledge of the author addressed. Where appropriate, I followed up these with telephone calls.

The initial results were not encouraging. Some authors replied, politely but usually equivocatingly. Others did not reply at all. A few dusted off old rejects and hopefully sent them along. One of these was Otto Binder, of the old writing team "Eando Binder," who was then doing narrative lines for the science-fiction comics. Along with a pleasant, chatty letter (which included a plug for his brother Jack, who had illustrated for the fantasy pulps in 1936-41, and who now wanted to return to work there) he enclosed the manuscript for an admittedly five-year-old unsold story, "Prison Planet." This I relayed to Gernsback with the comment, "Too trite and corny. Primarily only an action story. Science-fiction only by courtesy. Am asking him to try again with something more current."

This seems an appropriate time to broach another matter. In the past critics have put forward the theory that Gernsback himself did little or nothing to help his authors, leaving day-to-day routine management to hired underlings. This is simply a myth which should be put to rest. It has not only been unequivocally disproved by his extant correspondence with a number of people who wrote for his magazines, but is confirmed by all my subsequent experiences with him. It is no coincidence that his chief operating officers were called managing editors, and that he retained the title Editor-in-Chief for himself. Like all efficient businessmen he delegated what he could, but always involved himself when he felt it necessary. For example, he rarely read the "slush pile" of submissions, but did read (and commented on) every story a managing editor recommended for acceptance, frequently writing to their authors concerning them. His hand-written comments appear regularly on office correspondence, and often suggestions which writers received from managing editors were those Gernsback had earlier imparted

to the latter verbally.

Another instance is Gernsback's letter to John Scott Campbell regarding the story he had submitted. It ran to two full pages of single-spaced typing and commented in careful detail on all important aspects of it. It exhibited also Gernsback's typical mixture of tact and candor, as the portions quoted below show:

> Let me say that your manuscript, which was received here, has the honor of being the No. 1 manuscript (received) for the new magazine. In the future this may mean something. ... Several of us went over it and I have some criticisms to offer. All of us seem to agree pretty much on the same lines. Sam Moskowitz is going to be Managing Editor, and he saw it as well. (Please keep this to yourself as it is not yet known, and information is not to be released until the magazine is actually out.) You have a very good idea here, but something will have to be done to make the manuscript acceptable to us, because we are setting our sights pretty high and the way the manuscript is now is not completely in keeping with what we are trying to achieve.

Dr. Campbell replied promptly:

> I just received your letter of yesterday and I am yet in the process of digesting your very thorough analysis of the story. It is by far the most penetrating and well expressed criticism that I have ever had and I cannot express too strongly my appreciation. I agree with the several points you make, and they suggest an approach to the central idea which I shall go to work with. I feel sure I can make the deadline you mention....

As planned, Monday, October 13th was the first day I reported to work. Gernsback had arranged for a private office for me, but it was not yet ready. As a temporary measure he installed me in a corner of the mail room, which was on the fifth floor, directly across from his own office. To keep me occupied he asked me if I could edit out or paraphrase the technical language in an article by Leslie R. Shepherd, a consultant to the British Interplanetary Society, which he intended to use in his proposed new science-fiction magazine. This article, titled "Interstellar Flight," had surfaced as a paper read to the society in London on February 2, 1952, and had been published in the July 1952 number of its journal. It contained some fascinating material on temporal dilatation effects, where time would pass more slowly for occupants of a spaceship travelling near the speed of light than for those living on the surface of the Earth. That concept had already appeared in science-fiction (for example, it was intrinsic in the plot of "To the Stars" by L. Ron Hubbard [*Astounding Science-Fiction*, March and April 1950]), but Shepherd was here giving the precise scientific basis for it. His paper was addressed to readers well educated in physics, however, and therefore contained equations, technical language and abbreviations that would not have been followed by the average layman. My assignment was to make it easily understood without sacrificing its scientific precision. I struggled with this task for most of the morning before concluding it would be wiser to send the article back to Shepherd himself for simplification.

Gernsback, whatever his other faults, did not try to economize by limiting his staff. He always had an adequate number of employees to put out his publications, and supplemented them by hiring consultants. That meant there were a lot of people for me to meet who would be important in launching a new and as yet unnamed magazine.

One was Fred Shunaman, editor of *Radio Electronics*, the power-base of Gernsback's business. Shunaman and his staff were housed in a large, loft-type office, not dissimilar to a newspaper editorial room. He had originated in Leominster, Massachusetts, but his family moved to Canada, where they took over a large Saskatchewan wheat farm. He had been born in 1901, and was thus old enough to have been a customer of Gernsback's early Electro-Importing Company. His long-standing interest in radio had been supplemented by following science-fiction since the appearance of *Amazing Stories* in 1926. He had contributed to several small newspapers and worked for years as a radio technician (including a stint in

Shanghai), and was thus well suited to his job. He welcomed me to Gernsback Publications, and offered to give any assisntance within his power. As it turned out, his wife was to prove more helpful; under her maiden name of Angie Pascale, she worked as production manager for *Radio Electronics*. My experience in turning out fanzines was woefully inadequate for producing a professional slick magazine, and her hands-on aid, plus the precise instructions of Gernsback himself, taught me skills that became life-long career assets.

Occupying a small office of his own was Frank R. Paul, a legendary illustrator in the science-fiction field. What impressed me most about this office were its Spartan appointments. It had only a drawing table and chair set next to the window, an assortment of artist's colors and brushes, and two tanks of compressed gas for his air brush, in the use of which he was highly skilled. He came in two days a week, spending the others chiefly in another private office at the Oxford University Press on East 84th Street; some of their educational volumes carried as many as a hundred of his illustrations. He had a third workrooom at 71 Fifth Avenue, and yet a fourth in his Teaneck, New Jersey apartment. As might be guessed, Paul was a workaholic. He was also a kindly, sociable man, who could talk and work at the same time with equal concentration. The speed at which his illustrations took shape amazed me. He was ambidextrous: both his hands were in constant motion, and he rarely made a false start. I often saw him simultaneously spraying his air brush in one hand and wielding a conventional one with the other.

One of the editors of *Sexology* was Hugo Gernsback's daughter by his second marriage, Bertina Baer. She had a delightful sense of humor, taking after her father in that regard, and also did some illustrating.

Another legendary employee was H. Winfield Secor. He had started with Gernsback before World War I as an editor of *Modern Electrics*, and held a variety of editorial posts on *Science and Invention*, *Radio News*, *Everyday Science and Mechanics*, *Television News*, *Short Wave Craft* and now *Radio Electronics*. Hundreds of articles, many of them penetrating and provocative, had carried his byline. He was a chunky man with a rabbit-like face, perpetually scurrying around. Although pleasant enough, he rarely spoke. He never stopped working, but aside from being energetic displayed none of the qualities that had made him so prominent in the past. He seemed to have been relegated to the status of a workhorse, chiefly at a secondary level, and mostly for *Radio Electronics*.

For as long as he had been in business, Hugo Gernsback had published pamphlets and books as well as magazines. He now had a separate book department, and it was run by a man named Martin Clifford, who had read a good deal of science-fiction in the past. He was short and energetic, with a thick head of hair. I found him very friendly but when I arrived on the scene he was also very busy, because the book department was expanding rapidly; the rising tide of public interest in television was carrying him along on the wave. He had joined the firm in 1950, coming from a position of supervisor at the Pierce Radio and Television School in New York City. Earlier he had been an engineer with the Sperry Gyroscope Company. Eventually he was named vice-president of the Gernsback Library, scoring successfully with works he had secured on television, radio servicing and high fidelity. Much of his volume came from direct mail sales.

In connection with my new position I had to fill out various forms for the accounting department. This was presided over by a small, shifty individual named Joseph Bund. He seemed to regard me with suspicion as someone who had come to raid the Gernsback larder. I learned that initially he had been employed as an office boy, but when Gernsback was unable to secure a replacement for the bookkeeper who was leaving, the latter had shown him how to handle the job. To everyone's surprise, he had managed to fill the position with reasonable competence.

The office manager for Gernsback Publications was G. Aliquo. Everyone called him by his last name, and he signed all his memos with that, so I never learned what the "G." stood for. Aliquo introduced me to the two salesmen in the

advertising department, Lee Robinson and John J. Lamson. Robinson was senior of the pair, but had been slowed down by a recent heart attack. Both were good-natured and tolerant, but I was to have little to do with them since no advertising was being solicited for the new magazine.

Another staff member with whom I was regularly involved was Robert Fallath, who managed promotion for the firm. Gernsback was very publicity-conscious, and had announcements sent out for almost every issue of his magazines. These went to each of the regional divisions of the Kable Distributing Company, which he patronized, as well as to newspapers and consumer and trade publications. As the magazine I was editing progressed, Fallath would periodically inquire what each issue contained that might be worthy of notice, or would be prompted by Gernsback to promote some particular feature that had appealed to him.

During my work I was to pay a daily visit to the office of the company's circulation manager, Adam J. Smith. In the sale of every issue circulation expertise was, at the very least, as important as its editorial or art work. Smith was built like a football player (and may very well have been one, since he had a game knee). He understood and performed his job well, and I made it a point to stay on friendly terms with him. With him as an assistant was Gernsback's youngest daughter, Jocelyn. I judged her to be in her late teens or early twenties, very attractive, with a pleasant, easy-going temperament.

Readers familiar with technical radio and television magazines know that they are full of schematic circuit diagrams. Although Paul was capable of drawing these, they ideally required someone who was thoroughly familiar with electronics. Gernsback employed a full-time man who did nothing but draw these diagrams. His name was William Lyon McLaughlin. McLaughlin was about 50, sported a red mustache, and was beginning to bald. He had a good working knowledge of magazine production, and taught me a couple of useful shortcuts that I have used continually in my editing career. His presence underscored the fact that Gernsback did not economize on production, but staffed adequately for his needs.

Within a few days my office was ready. It was a sizeable corner room, well windowed, about forty feet down the hall from the space occupied by the *Radio Electronics* group. After a man had been brought in to paint my name on the door Gernsback called me to his office.

"You know, Moskowitz," he began, "You can't be expected to do this job all by yourself. You're going to need help, and I'm going to get you an assistant. In fact, I've already arranged for one. She'll be coming in next Monday [November 3rd]. She has a very distinguished father."

I was at once puzzled and suspicious. Outside of a first reader, should manuscripts start pouring in, I really didn't help to run one monthly magazine.

"Her father is Professor Donald H. Manzel, connected with the Harvard College Observatory, and the world's leading authority on the sun." He paused, and then added with obvious pride, "He used to write for me, you know. He was a a regular on my old *Science and Invention*."

"Can she type?" I asked, unimpressed by this background information.

He smiled a little sheepishly. "She's a graduate of Radcliffe, a highly educated girl."

"But can she type?" I persisted.

"I don't think so," he replied, "but I'm sure she can learn. And with her education she should be a great help to you on other aspects of the magazine."

I couldn't help showing my disappointment. "You know, typing is very important. If she can't type I'll have to handle all the correspondence while she sits around and watches me work."

Gernsback shrugged, from which I concluded (correctly as it turned out) that he had hired this girl as a favor to her father. Furthermore, if he hadn't

(continued on page 229)

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

You seem to find it hard to breathe.
Have some oxygen——it ought to help.
That better? Good. Now we can talk.
Where are you from? Earth? Where's that?
The spiral arms? You've come a long way.
We don't usually expect to find
Such far-off life travelling in space.
Must check you out——can't have you all
Galumphing the Galaxy as if you owned it——
We've standards to maintain, although it seems
An imposition to a junior world.
What are you called? The Human Race,
Well, Human Race, we're civilised here——
You'll make a decent life-form yet.

CHRONONAUTS

We looked at history and thought we'd check
Some of the "facts" against the evidence.
We came back in silent, humbled, greyfaced shock
But glad that we had seen it for ourselves——
Uncertainty was ended; we were rich
With knowledge that at last helped to make sense
Of what had up to now been just conjecture
From here in the safety of the future.

We went ahead and found that though our species
Had not yet managed to destroy itself
A lot of what we saw left us uneasy:
The sheer madness of the pace of life,
The lawless hells of cities seemed quite crazy,
So hints of progress came as a relief.
But back here in the haven of the past
We saw that much we knew would soon be lost.

WHO'S THERE?

"Did you hear a knock?" "I don't think so."
The crew fell silent and strained to catch
The sound of space hammering the hull.
"You're imagining things——there's nothing there
But radiation and vacuum. Nobody knocked."
The crew relaxed and returned to their tasks,
No longer afraid. Knock knock, knock knock.

—— *John Francis Haynes*

Book Reviews

SOLUTION THREE by Naomi Mitchison. New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1995. 183 pp. 20.5 cm. $10.95 (softbound).

One of my favorite writers, Octavia Butler, says in *More Than 100 Woman Science Fiction Writers* (an annotated bibliography edited by Sharon Yntema), that science-fiction is "the best way to imagine cultural possibilities in societies that don't exist. [One] is then free to write about racism, sexism and class divisions in a very different world." Since I read for information on how to live in and change the current world, I also read science-fiction. This genre, it seems to me, is the place where one can posit solutions to problems and discuss positions without getting into specific political or social arguments. In my reading here, I want to know *women's* ideas on our human dilemmas, not just those of the canon's *male* writers. However, except for the work of just one or two women writers, I've not noticed much, if any, *new* science-fiction since the early 1980's tackling the problems women face. (Yes, I do read fantasy, but that has a different type of attraction for me——its pure entertainment value.)

So when I was asked to review *Solution Three*, I jumped at the chance. According to the biography in this new edition, Naomi Haldane Mitchison was born in 1897, and grew up in a world of intellectual and social privilege. Her father was John Scott Haldane, a celebrated physiologist, and her older brother was J. B. S. Haldane, the famous science writer, physiologist and geneticist. Among her childhood friends were Julian Huxley, a zoologist and popular science writer and his brother Aldous, who wrote *Brave New World*. Her mother, Louisa Trotter Haldane, was an independent-thinking suffragist who encouraged Naomi to consider medicine as a career. Surrounding the family were other professional women: Elizabeth Haldane, writer and first Scottish woman Justice of the Peace; Florence Buchanan, a physiologist; and Marie Stopes, a paleobotanist who became widely known as a birth control educator. Mitchison herself achieved a good reputation as a biologist. Yet while having a healthy respect for scientific endeavor, she chose instead to focus on writing. She did not, however, abandon scientific inquiry even as she lived her life as a social reformer, educator and politician.

My friend Bill Hall called my attention to Brian Ash's capsule description of *Solution Three:* "...the entire population is produced by cloning and all physical relations are homosexual" (*The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 1977). Like most citations in this work it's succinct——but, in my opinion, it misses the point. It should at least be noted that the book was actually written in 1970, and not first published until 1975. That's almost thirty years before Dolly, the adult-cloned sheep, and the fifty mice-clones in Hawaii! The book-jacket blurb is more appropriate: "Like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland, Solution Three* presents a future society in which reproductive control and homosexuality shape a more equitable life for all, eradicating aggression and racism, curbing overpopulation, and providing a dependable food supply for the world." The joy of the book is that this solution *does not work*. The scientific answer to these problems turns out to collide with the laws of natural selection and human psychology. How, now, will the benevolent Council which rules the world handle this new situation?

In the Clute/Nicholls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Brian Stableford terms *Solution Three* a dystopia, which I cannot understand. By the encyclopedia's own definition, a dystopia is a hypothetical society *worse* than our own. Perhaps

Perhaps it is the mandatory homosexuality which garners this label (although one wonders if mandatory heterosexuality has made our world any better). Anyway, the society presented sounds clearly utopian to me——no wars, enough food, enough wealth for all. More than that, this is a world where the governing Council listens and responds to the concerns of the populace, even when that response necessitates a policy change.

Mitchison offers us "clone mums" carrying to term genetically engineered babies, who replicate the genes of the "He and She" founding figures. The mandatory homosexuality controls the population, decreasing its numbers to keep the new earth sufficiently supplied with food globally, thus ending one reason for war. And, based on the Council's reading of history, same-gender relations are, anyway, the key to true love.

But, as I said, this "utopia" does not work. At the end of the book, the head of the Council says, "You can get to a place by a hundred roads. ... We have done right. But also we can change that right. Gently." So there's a hint of an upcoming revised code to incorporate the new knowledge learned by the experiment of Solution Three.

Most books one picks up now jump right into the action on page one——current readers are said to demand it. *Solution Three,* however, casually sets the scene and does not get to the action until Chapter Three. That is one criticism I have of the book; I would have tightened it by cutting some of the descriptions, or at least inserted them as later flashbacks. (However, I do realize that the story was written almost thirty years ago when the author was 78.) In any event, after this initial scene-setting the story moves rapidly, and provides plenty of action and tension.

I have not read (though I am looking for) Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) which Ynema saya "is about the adventures of a vegetarian communications expert who explores unknown planets," and which the Clute/Nicholls encyclopedia calls "a radiant book." If it is anything like *Solution Three* or the short story "Words," which she wrote for Green and LeFanu's anthology *Dispatches from the Frontiers of the Female Mind* (1985), at a time when she claimed that she felt "somewhat out of sympathy with mainstream feminism," then you'll be subjected to another review of one of my newly-found, must-read authors.

Anita Alverio

DARK TALES & LIGHT BY Bruce Boston. Concord, Cal.: Dark Regions Press, 1998. 68 pp. 21.5 cm. $6.95 (softbound). COLD TOMORROWS by Bruce Boston. Baton Rouge, La.: Gothic Press, 1998. 35 pp. 21.5 cm. $6.00 (softbound).

As fine as I've made this author's previous books to be, *Dark Tales and Light* is the one I've so far enjoyed the most. It contains ten short, sardonic pieces, including three from the popular "Accursed Wives" series, which are also among my personal favories. One of this trio, "Curse of the Cyberhead's Wife," received honorable mention in *The Year's Best Science Fiction*; another, "Anesthesia Man," the same in *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*. All ten stories represent their writer at his Bostonian best.

The book is a true anthology, since the contents have appeared in separ- issues of seven different magazines. "With Vorpal Sword in Hand" involves a coarse biker inadvertently coming into possession of the weapon which had slain the fabled Jabberwock. It is imbued with the frenzied beast's spirit; naturally, dementia and mayhem follow. "Anesthesia Man" introduces someone lost in his own demented nightmare somewhere in cyberspace. "Pest Control" combines first-contact with an alien species and a soured marriage; the outcome is hilarious enough to make you laugh out loud.

"Pulp Woman Gets Her Man" introduces a female superhero who wreaks revenge and reaps rewards in her quest to right wronged women. This could easily

start an interesting ongoing series. "On Spending the Night Alone in a Haunted House: a User's Guide" is a severed tongue-in-cheek primer on how to survive precidely what the title states; sixteen helpful hints are given.

"Curse of the Simulacrum's Wife," "Curse of the Hypnotist's Wife" and "Curse of the Cyberhead's Wife" continue this inestimable series of the trials and tribulations of unfortunate women who insist on wedding icons and archetypes from the time-honored traditions of the science-fiction and horror genres, and "Striker Out" lends a Bostonian skew to the *film noir* universe.

The final tale, "Love in Babylon," follows the fortunes of an all-powerful sybarite, Lord Aragant. His chronic passion for freckles leads him inexorably to a *femme fatale* known as The Speckled Lotus. Her virginity is restored on a daily basis. It's a tale of love and lust and star-crossed fates, with a warm and fuzzy conclusion that leaves the reader wishing for more Bruce Boston.

Here I was lucky, for *Cold Tomorrows* arrived in my mail box shortly after I had finished *Dark Tales and Light*. This is a collection of eighteen poems, atypically *not* organized around a specific theme. "The only unifying factor here," as Boston points out in his concluding "Author's Note," is that most of them "were completed in the last year and a half, though some were begun many years ago...."

Five have never previously appeared elsewhere; the others, sometimes in slightly different form, have been printed in eleven different publications, including the 1993 *Rhysling Anthology*. Boston also warns us that *Cold Tomorrows* is "less strictly rooted in sf, fantasy and horror than my other collections." That may be true, but readers should still expect plenty of mental calisthenics.

I think here of a stanza from "Scenario for a Muse Cycle": "he spent far too much time / nailing the speculative muse / and getting nailed in return / nailed on the cross of speculative imagination / the cross of passionate infinities / the cross of our lady in vain"; and of the ending in "After the Last": "After the last sleep / claims us all / in the depths of night, ... you might invent a universe / so different from any you have known / that its stellar parameters / ... will leave you mercifully stranded right where you belong."

Boston picks away at the edges of reality, exposing them to the light, bending and twisting until he can display to us a new view that on our own we had never seen. Thus in "The Last Existentialist": "no-dimensional objects / have been sensed / at the edge of nausea"; and from "Unextinctions": "Nature does have a sense of humor, / It is a dark and wild one. / And having violated her / more than once too often, / we have now become / the object of her mirth."

We hear a ring of truth speak through the printed words, and often this hits home like a quiet revelation: "You have never seen an alien./Not in any true detail. / And somehow you sense / that this is as it should be." Nothing is ever quite the same after being exposed to the talents of Bruce Boston; he seems to infect one's very perceptions. His poetry is something to cherish as well as enjoy, for it always stands up to rereading. *Cold Tomorrows* is another proof of this.

H. R. Felgenhauer

SCIENCE-FICTION / THE GERNSBACK YEARS by Everett F. Bleiler with the assistance of Richard J. Bleiler. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1998. xxx-730 pp. 28.5 cm. $65.00.

In the eight years since publication of their monumental reference book, *Science-Fiction / the Early Years* (hereinafter, *SF/TEY*) the Bleilers have not been idle, and this new companion volume will be eagerly welcomed by all serious followers of the field. In different ways it at once complements, extends and restricts the scope of its predecessor. It restricts by confining the sources examined solely to science-fiction magazines; it complements by summarizing stories from these in the 1926-1930 period, which *SF/TEY* (designedly) omitted; and it ex-

tends the latter's reach through the year 1936, which marks the end of Hugo Gernsback's dominance in the field.

Most of the features that made *SF/TEY* so comprehensive are repeated or have their counterparts here: bibliographies, helpful introductions, title, author, motif and theme indexes, and so on. There are also new ones which are certain to be useful: an index of authors' letters in the magazines; a separate listing for poetry; one of anthologies where cited stories have been reprinted; the contents of the magazines by issue; and an article on their illustrators.

The main portion of the volume, which comes to over 500 pages, is devoted to descriptions of individual stories. As in *SF/TEY*, Bleiler read each one of these in the magazines where they were initially published, never depending on secondary sources. This was an immense job, for by count there are 1835 titles. There may be some fans (a hundred or so, perhaps?) who once read most of these for pleasure as they appeared; but to do so purposefully today, in half the time, and then compose an accurate and insightful precis for each, still retaining one's literary sanity, is a truly monumental task. Bleiler estimates that 85% of them have never been anthologized, which gives you a rough idea of their quality. (He is too kind to add, as I might have, that 85% of those anthologized probably never should have been.)

In any event, the critiquing of authors here is eminently just. I scanned for some of my own favorites, finding them equitably treated, and then for some I could always have lived without, which were as fairly handled. (Bleiler even says a few good words for S. P. Meek, a hack whose fiction usually came from the very bottom of the pulp barrel.) I suspect, however, that devotees who idolize such authors as H. P. Lovecraft, A. Merritt and Stanley G. Weinbaum may have their feathers ruffled a bit by his candid comments. One nice touch in this section, incidentally, is routinely noting sequels, even when these fall outside the time-frame of the book.

Two features of *Science-Fiction / the Gernsback Years* are particularly impressive. One is the analysis of the work of the most influential artists in the fantasy pulps in this period, Brown, Dold, Morey, Paul and Wesso. This has never been done in depth before, and Bleiler provides insights most readers will find extremely interesting. Although most of the language here can be followed by educated laymen, I think some of the technical terms employed might either have been set forth in simpler fashion, or else preceded with a little background. I doubt if many readers are familiar with "'brutal' art deco" or with "the Duesseldorf school"; and while they may gather from context the meaning of "vertical repoussoirs" without reaching for a dictionary, there are times when even that is of little help. Webster defines "leptoproscopic," for example, as "having a face index of 90-95." I'd guess that the word, roughly, means "narrow," which certainly would be simpler to say.

To aid our understanding, Bleiler also takes us backstage, describing the everyday office practices of creating, buying and editing illustrations. He concludes with a competent overview of the printing process, especially that by which colored magazine covers are reproduced. This helps readers understand most of the limitations inherent in pulp publishing, and appreciate the efforts of everyone involved to surmount them.

The second feature which particularly impressed me is the history of the periodicals themselves. It is more extensive than that in the Tymn/Ashley compilation, *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines* (1985); and as usual, when controversial points arise, Bleiler gives even-handed summaries with supporting and detracting evidence for each. Some of his conclusions I believe are also new to print. The conflicting details and interpretations of the 1929 Gernsback bankruptcy, for example, are especially well treated.

I have a little minor carping to append. I should have included in the

bibliography Mike Ashley's *Complete Index to Astounding/Analog* (1981), which is still useful to readers; and since the comments by Bernard De Voto and Phil Stong on science-fiction have been (quite appropriately) indexed and quoted, I think it would have been pertinent to add as well those from Basil Davenport's review of Stong's *The Other Worlds* (*The Saturday Review of Literature*, September 27, 1941), which are just as supportive but less well known. I had also hoped to find the science-fiction in *Weird Tales* continued here from *SF/TEY*; but perhaps indexing this, along with that in books and post-1930 mainstream magazines, is being reserved for a later compilation.

Finally, a brief summary of my thoughts. Like its predecessor, I find *Science-Fiction/the Gernsback Years* not only a quintessential reference volume, but a user-friendly delight. It is sturdily bound in heavy red cloth, its two-columned format is clearly printed, and the proof-reading is impeccable. It's also just plain enjoyable——one of those books that, like a dictionary, you can either consult selectively for need or dip into at random sheerly for pleasure. No library or serious devotee of the field should be without it.

A. Langley Searles

DON'T DREAM / THE COLLECTED HORROR AND FANTASY OF DONALD WANDREI, edited by Philip J. Rahman and Dennis E. Weiler. Illustrated by Rodger Gerberding. Minneapolis: Fedogan and Bremer, 1997. xv-394 pp. 21 cm. $29.00

Ah, to be back in those days of sixty-odd years ago, when shoggoths last through the lilacs roamed, Cthulhu slept in the cellar with the dog, *The Necronomicon* was bathroom reading, and members of the Order of Dagon rang doorbells, instead of Jehovah's Witnesses!

But unfortunately one cannot go back, and must read Donald Wandrei's posthumous collection in terms of the present. And perhaps I'm not the right person to review this book, for some of it now seems like a mannered pose (the gloomy, musty mage in technicolor) and I am annoyed by too much grue (protagonists turned into blood puddings).

I kept wondering, what was Wandrei trying to do——or did he know himself? Is his work an exemplification of Lovecraft's defense of supernatural (or other?) horror: that it is a fact of psychological life, must be accepted as such, and thus is a suitable topic for letters? Or is some of his fiction an anticipation, a leaking crack, of his later outpouring degeneration? Are there any answers? Probably not.

In any case, the present volume, with the usual Fedogan and Bremer generosity, contains twenty-seven stories, twelve "prose poems," and two miscellaneous pieces, picked from various sources. Several of the stories are science-fiction horror; the rest are supernatural of various sorts. On the whole, Wandrei was a clean, clear writer on the surface, though some of the supernatural material suffers from the chronic adjectivitis characteristic of the school. In the stories there are, of course, action concessions for the market. In the prose poems Wandrei's language is rhythmical and assonant, even if usually overcolored and overdone; but then, subtlety is not a characteristic of this school.

Wandrei apparently did not regard his fiction highly, considering it hack work for a buck; but if he really meant the criticism, I think he was too harsh, for some of it is interesting if one can accept the conventions. I find him most telling when he attempts local Minnesota regionalism, as in "Strange Harvest," though the story breaks down in terms of internal logic; and I've regretted, as with other collections, that he didn't do more in this vein.

The volume also contains an excellent afterword by Duane Olson concerning Wandrei's litigations, and an introductory memorial piece by Helen Mary Hughes-

don, a former neighbor and protogée/friend. An odd point here is her use of the term "pseudo-scientific fiction" for science-fiction. One wonders where she has been for seventy years.

Recommendation? If you are in basic sympathy with the mode, *Don't Dream* is a good, rich collection of material, much of which is not available elsewhere. Are the stories entertaining? Some are, and that's really the important thing.

Everett F. Bleiler

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Women Didn't Write Science-Fiction!

Eric Leif Davin

I belong to a science-fiction club in Pittsburgh called PARSEC (Pittsburgh Area Realtime Scientifiction Enthusiasts Club), and we hold monthly meetings where lively discussions often develop. A particularly interesting session took place there in June 1998 on the topic "Women in Science-Fiction." Leading the discussion was a panel of three members: Christina Schulman (who writes reviews of s-f books for one of the two local newspapers), Anita Alverio and Fruma Klass. Fruma was accompanied by her husband Philip, who was in the audience.

Philip Klass is better known in s-f circles as the author William Tenn. Between his genre debut in 1946 and 1960, after which his stories appeared only irregularly, he was a leading figure in the field. One reason his later output declined is that he returned to school to acquire academic credentials. After obtaining these he became a professor at Pennsylvania State University, where he remained from 1966 until his retirement. There he taught courses on writing and science-fiction.

Mrs. Klass began by remarking that she had no idea why she was on the panel, and could make no sense of the discussion topic. Were people supposed to talk about women s-f writers? Women as s-f characters? Or some sub-sector of the field, which might be designated "women's s-f"? She simply didn't know, and, with that, exhausted what she had to say on the subject.

Christina Schulman interpreted the topic as dealing with women characters, and felt there had been a distinct change in the way the genre treated women. Not only were strong female characters now being created by both women and men, but male authors were making more of an effort to deal with *emotion*, something female authors had traditionally seemed better at doing.

Then Anita Alverio spoke. In doing so, she ignited a heated discussion between herself and Philip Klass which dominated the rest of the session. In college Alverio had immersed herself in the Western classics, and had been graduated with a degree in English Literature. After college she had discovered and become fascinated by science-fiction. Following a period of intense reading of almost everything in it that came her way, she decided to focus solely on women writers. She felt she already knew what the men had to say——she had a degree in that!——and what women were writing resonated with her more. Life isn't a dress rehearsal; we can't do everything we'd like to, and specializing in the work of women s-f writers seemed both more interesting and personally important to her.

This struck Philip Klass as sacrilege, a betrayal of the humanist tradition which made no distinction among ideas along gender lines. By not reading the work of men, he claimed, Alverio was denying herself access to the greatest minds in both the genre an in literature as a whole.

Then he added some comments which I found astounding, coming as they did from someone who was both a prolific writer of science-fiction and a college professor who taught the subject. By thus limiting herself, he stated, she was consigning herself to a very small circle, since there were no women writing s-f before World War II! He then went on to claim that he himself was responsible for introducing the very first woman writer to the genre, Judith Merrill! She was a friend of his and wanted to write s-f, but complained to him that she didn't know how to portray convincing male characters. So, he said, he had told her to concentrate on her strengths. "Write something that only a mother would appreciate," he told her. She did; and "That Only a Mother," published in *Astounding* in 1948, became her impressive genre debut.

"What about Claire Winger Harris?" responded Alverio. Harris was the first woman to publish in the genre magazines, beginning with "A Runaway World" in the July 1926 *Weird Tales*. Her story "The Fate of the Poseidonia" (*Amazing Stories*, June 1927) won third place in one of Gernsback's contests, and seven more of her stories appeared in his magazines over the next three years. All of these have also been collected in book form (*Away from the Here and Now*, 1947).

Klass replied that he had never heard of her. Nor had he heard of Leslie F. Stone, another early woman s-f writer. Nor Amelia Reynolds Long. Nor L. Taylor Hanson. Nor Lilith Lorraine. Nor—— At this point he irritably complained that feminist scholars were always coming up with obscure names like this, claiming that they were early women s-f writers——but he had never heard of them, and *he taught science-fiction!*

I was truly shocked. I had presumed that anyone with Klass's background would be as familiar with these names as such younger devotees as Alverio and myself. The s-f world, we thought, was a rather small one, where everyone knew everyone else. Further, it seemed to nurture a historical awareness of itself more than mainstream literature does, by, among other things, reprinting its early classics in myriad formats. But perhaps this world is——*and was*!——more parochial than we thought.

When I mentioned the above incident to A. Langley Searles, the editor of this magazine, he observed that it was an interesting occurrence. "Finding gaps in the knowledge of supposed experts isn't that unusual," he said. "In 1959, for example, Kingsley Amis gave a series of lectures at Princeton surveying science-fiction without ever mentioning Olaf Stapledon, one of its greatest practitioners. He'd just never heard of him. But this raises another question entirely: how much did *other* prominent writers in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's know about the history of the field——particularly about their female peers?" He went on to note that Leslie F. Stone seemed to think that she herself was the first female s-f writer, blissfully unaware of all the others preceding her, as had Lilith Lorraine.*

This PARSEC discussion was enlightening, then, not so much for what it tells us about Philip Klass, but for what it suggests about the entire circle of well-known writers he was a part of at the time——Heinlein, Merrill and others. If those most intimately involved in the field——the most prolific authors——knew as little about its history, then those less involved might be forgiven for believing that women didn't write science-fiction!

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"The Return of Hugo Gernsback"——continued from page 221

hired her, he probably wouldn't have got me any assistance at all, so I should be grateful for small favors. "What's her name, by the way?"

*Work by literally dozens of women s-f writers, both in and out of the pulps, appeared during the 1920-1945 period. See, for example, the lists which have been compiled by Norman Metcalf in *The Devil's Work 2*, 293, 331-8 and 358-60 (1994-95).

"Elizabeth," he responded. "She's moving down from the Boston area, and renting an apartment in New York City." He paused before continuing. "I've got another surprise for you." He reached into a drawer of his desk and pulled out another ashcan edition. It was titled *Science-Fiction Plus*. I remembered he had once used that phrase as a headline for a house advertisement (it was in the November 1930 issue of *Wonder Stories*, I later found). It was labelled "Vol. A, No. 1," was dated November 1952 and had twelve photo-offset pages. It contained four titles reprinted from his 1946 Yuletide "card." I didn't think the title was so bad; anyway, the decision had now been made. The new science-fiction magazine had now been trademarked, and I no longer had to work with an untitled publication.

On the next Monday, as promised, Gernsback ushered Elizabeth Menzel into my office and introduced her. I judged her to be about 22 years old, to weigh about 135 pounds, and to be attractive. She had excellent skin, and her nose was slightly aquiline. Though soft-spoken, she proved to be strong-minded and a firm believer in women's rights. We decided that she would keep records of all manuscripts received and their dispensation, create a style-book, and, after she had acquainted herself with the new magazine, work up orders of procedure.

(to be continued in the next issue)

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Recent Publications

BRIEF NOTES OF INTERESTING FANTASY ITEMS

Those who enjoyed Andrew Darlington's account of *Nebula* magazine (*Fantasy Commentator* #49) will be pleased to know that all of Walter Willis's columns of chatty reviews and opinions which were printed there from 1952 to 1959 have now been collected into an attractive booklet titled *Fanorama*. This runs to nearly a hundred pages, and includes for good measure the half-dozen later columns (1960-1965) that were published elsewhere. These still make enjoyable reading, and are of much historical interest. Since the booklet is limited to only 150 copies, it is also likely to become a collector's item. Remit $10 to Robert Lichtman, P. O. Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442, who will ship you this bargain postpaid.

Since the booklets of Bruce Boston's work reviewed on page 224-225 of this issue were published, his fine s-f poem "Confessions of a Body Thief" has appeared as an attractive, collectible broadside (write him at P. O. Box 6398, Albany, California for details of its availability). The publisher of Boston's *Cold Tomorrows* (Gothic Press, 4998 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808-3043) has available as well ($6) his excellent collection *Conditions of Sentient Life*. Of the other genre items on its list, all of which are sent postpaid, I especially recommend the complete six-issue run of *Gothic*.

Two recent items of The Purple Mouth Press (new address: 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn Georgia 30047-4720) are worth acquiring, *An Island in the Moon* ($3) and *Quest for The Green Hills of Earth* ($5). Both are profusely illustrated. The first is Gavin O'Keefe's edited version of William Blake's incomplete ms. of 1784. The second has the complete text of "Quest of the Starstone" (1937), where parts of the title song were first cited, plus all the other completed renderings written by various hands and the music for one version by Joseph Kaye.

The long-awaited expanded edition of Steve Sneyd's Arthurian poems, *What Time Has Use For* has just appeared from K. T. Publications in England; it is available in the United States for $12 from its American distributor, A. Lupack, 375 Oakdale Drive, Rochester, New York 14618. This work has been widely praised, and is highly recommended to all readers.

(concluded on page 179)

BACK NUMBERS

#31 Further description of Edward Lucas White's unpublished s-f novel about life in 25,000 A.D., and the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#33 Moskowitz describes the first college course on s-f, and Lloyd Eshbach tells the history of Shasta, an early genre publisher.

#34 Mike Ashley researches Algernon Blackwood's early history and Blackwood himself describes how he got story ideas. More about "Plus Ultra" and a continuation of "Voyagers Through Eternity." Letters about Lovecraft.

#35 Articles by Moskowitz on Stapledon, by Ashley on Blackwood, and S. T. Joshi on Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

#36 Begins serialization of Moskowitz's account of Bernarr Macfadden's obsession with science-fiction. Also articles by J. J. Pierce on survivalist s-f and by Gary Crawford on the fantasy writer Robert Aickman.

#37 Eric Davin interviews the early editors of *Wonder Stories*, David Lasser and Charles D. Hornig.

#39 Eric Davin interviews Frank Kelly, s-f writer of the 1930's; Mike Ashley describes the middle years of Algernon Blackwood; Moskowitz continues his account of Macfadden and his "Voyagers Through Eternity" history.

#40 Sam Moskowitz describes the s-f in the writings of T. S. Stribling; Mike Ashley and Deborah Elkin tell about Hugo Gernsback's early publishing experiences and his relationship with H. G. Wells.

#42 The Weinbaum Memorial Issue, featuring an interview with his widow, articles on his college years and correspondence, and early photographs.

#43 Moskowitz begins a serial article of Nat Schachner and concludes his account of Bernarr Macfadden; Andrew Darlington describes Conan Doyle's fantasy and s-f; and Steve Sneyd tells of the s-f poet, Lilith Lorraine.

#44 The Isaac Asimov Memorial Issue. Four articles on Asimov; also an article on Lovecraft and continuation of Moskowitz's serial on Schachner.

#45 & 46 are combined into a gala 50th anniversary double issue: interviews with Frederik Pohl and Lloyd Eshbach; articles on Taine's unpublished novels and on s-f pulps during the Great Depression; fantasy verse by Robert E. Howard and others; and the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's sequel to "The Immortal Storm." (Count this issue as two numbers when ordering.)

#47 & 48 comprise another double issue: articles on Bradbury, Whitehead, Flint and Starzl; interviewing E. F. Bleiler; Moskowitz's serials continued; an index to letters in *Weird Tales*; book reviews; letters; and much more.

#49 Articles on Poe, Whitehead, Boston and Hubbard; an interview with Steve Eng; book reviews; continuation of Moskowitz's histories.

#50 The Moskowitz Memorial Issue. Articles by Sam, and remembrances of him by friends and acquaintances. Also material about H. P. Lovecraft, Stanley G. Weinbaum and Steve Sneyd.

The above issues (some in small supply!) are available from the publisher. Price, postpaid in the U. S.: $5 each; any eight, $35; any twelve or more, $4 each. Foreign postage is 75¢ per copy extra. Remit to:

A. D. Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, N. Y. 10708-5909