

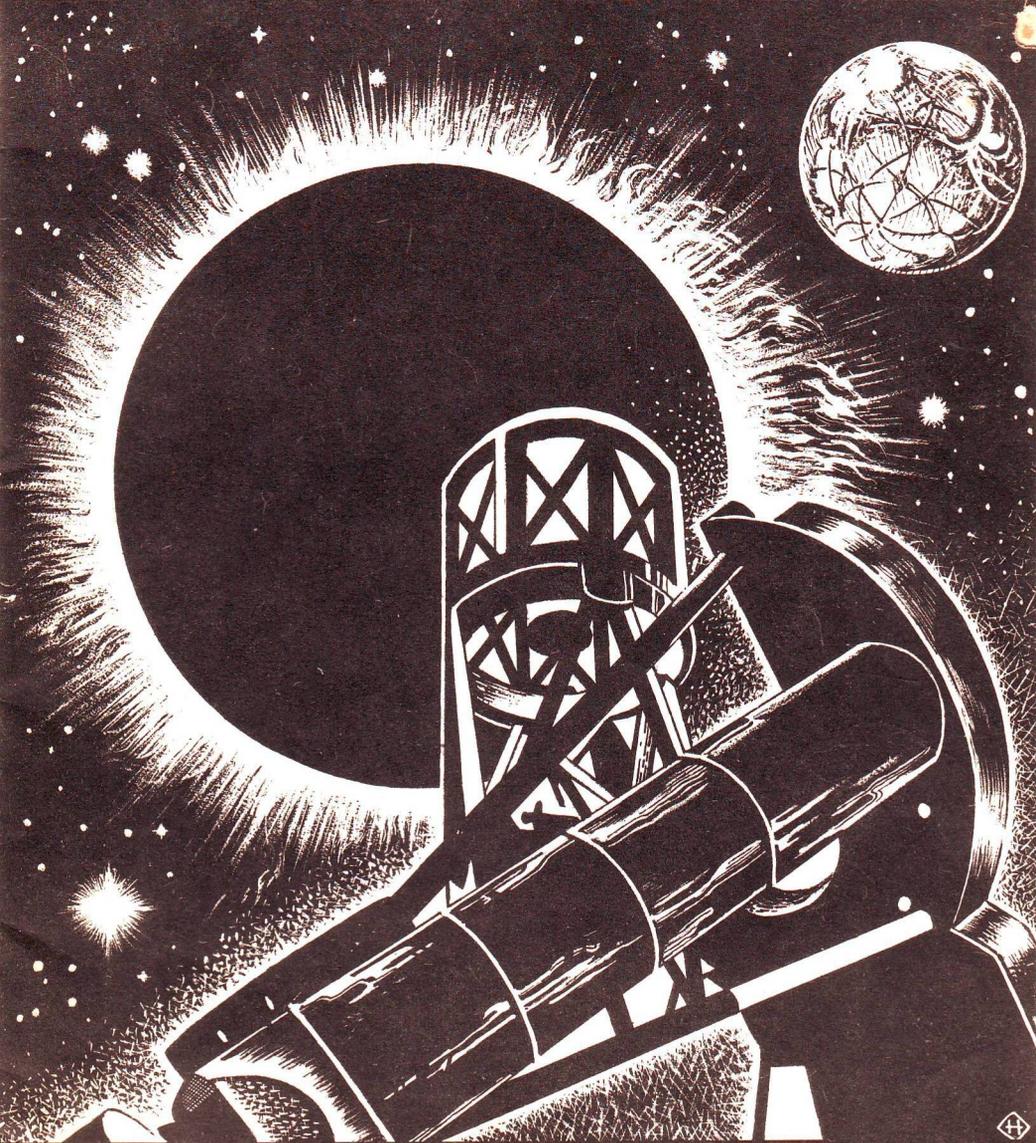
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NEW FRONTIERS, December, 1959, Volume 1, Number 1

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# THE KRISHNA STORIES

L. SPRAGUE deCAMP

Like many older science-fiction writers and readers, I was first really entrapped in the genre back in the twenties by Burroughs' Martian tales. When, after the Second World War, I was getting back into science fiction, the thought occurred: why not write some pure entertainment in the form of light, humorous, swashbuckling, interplanetary adventure-romances - a sort of sophisticated Burroughs-type story, more carefully thought out than their prototypes?

The idea led to fifteen stories of the Viagens Interplanetarias series, including four book-length novels and two novellas. The first of these was The Queen of Zamba, published in Astounding for August and September, 1949, and reprinted by Ace as Cosmic Manhunt. The last published was "The Virgin of Zesh", in Thrilling Wonder Stories for February, 1953. All fifteen have been published except one of the novels, The Tower of Zanid, which Eshbach of Fantasy Press plans to bring out some day. ((The article, by the way, is a little out of date now. The prospective publisher of The Tower of Zanid is not Eshbach, but Lowndes, who intends to run it as the first serial in the monthly Science Fiction Stories.) The most successful was Rogue Queen, not printed in any magazine but published as a book by Doubleday and then as a paper-back both in this country and in Great Britain. Seven stories are laid on Krishna, two on Vishnu, three on Earth, two on Osiris, and one on Ormazd. Most have appeared in book form, either in Twayne's volume The Continent Makers or in Hamilton's Sprague de Camp's New Anthology.

The series thus cannot be deemed unsuccessful, but it was finally killed by a combination of circumstances. The main circumstance was that it was trying to buck the tide of literary fashion. This tide was flowing swiftly away from stories of pure action, adventure, imagination, and wonder, and toward the subjective, emotive, sentimental, psychological, and psychiatric approaches which four or five years ago ((the article was written in 1956)) became extremely popular with the leading editors and, one must assume, with at least some of the readers.

A minor weakness was that the readers, or some of them, found the extra-terrestrial names too hard. As I have said elsewhere, teaching children to read by the sight-reading method may or may not make good readers of them, but it makes them utterly intolerant of words whose shapes they don't recognize. This puts the author of extra-terrestrial romances on the spot. If he calls his Martians Smith and Brown he is ridiculous, but if he calls them Thims and Nworb the readers fidget at the sight of strange letter-combinations.

The stories of this series take place between 2088 and 2168 A. D., earth time. I assume the USA and USSR have been reduced to minor powers by World War III and that Brazil is now the world's leading power. (Not that I think this likely, but it's a defensible assumption for a story.) Vishnu, Krishna, and Ganesha are planets of Tau Ceti, have much the relationships of Venus, Earth, and Mars in our system, but without so wide a variation in size and temperature. Osiris and Thoht are planets of Procyon; Thor, Ormazd, etc. of other stars.

The main events in Krishna's recent past are the breakup of the great Kalwmian Empire, the city-state period around the Triple Seas, and the rise of nation-states, especially the empires of Balhib, Gozashtand, and Dur. The Battle of

Sercon



Zur which started the downfall of the Kalwm Empire, was about 1000 A. D. earth ime.

The Kalwm Empire was overthrown by barbarous steppe-dwellers from the West, whose common name for themselves was Varastuma from their language. These Varastuma overran all the lands around the Triple Seas except a few enclaves of tailed men in the most inaccessible places and the republic of Katai-Jhogorai.

Beginning about 1600, a brilliant city-state culture flourished around the Seas: Majbur, Jazmurian, Hershid, Meozid, and so forth. The city-states borrowed much of the old Kalwm culture preserved in Katai-Jhogorai, which established a loose control over many of them until they shook it off about 1900. Then some of the city-states conquered others, and a series of nation-states emerged, from small ones like Qirib to great ones like Mikardand. The only surviving city-states on the mainland were Majbur and Malaver (which, however, fell to the king of Balhib about 2030).

In the twenty-first century A. D., earthmen landed on Krishna, and soon after them came the reptilian Osirians. The Interplanetary Council was set up and intercourse between Krishna and other planets brought under some kind of control. At first a few lone adventurers and scientists landed on the planet to explore and exploit. Suria and Dhaukia gained their independence from Girej, the degenerate king of Balhib, and the former set up its own capitol at Malayer.

From 2100 to 2150 occur the adventures of Hasselborg, Fallon, Barnevelt, Borel, etc. Kennedy, Abreu, and Keshavachandra are governor, police-chief, and judge at Novorecife. All retire in 2146, with unfortunate results. Kennedy's place is taken by the kindly but alcoholic Glumelin, and Abreu's by the brutal Gorchakov, whose end is told in "The Virgin of Zesh".

Meanwhile another barbarian power is rising on the steppes of Qaath to the West: the Jungava, under a khan called the Kamuran. Ghuur of Uriiq, the incumbent Kamuran of Qaath, conquers Suria and Dhaukia (2140-43) and takes the province of Jo'ol from Balhib. The Tower of Zanid, if published, will tell of the later adventures of Anthony Fallon in Zanid, the capital of Balhib; of the mad King Kir; of the breakdown of the IC's efforts to keep modern weapons from Krishna; and of Ghuur's final attack on Balhib.

As to whether there will ever be any more stories in this series, I suppose I could cook up some, but I fear some editor would have to rattle a bigger purse of gold at me than any is likely to do. Or else (which seems just as unlikely) I shall have to get so rich that I can afford to write purely for my own amusement.

The End.

Chronology of stories by de Camp:

- 2088 The Inspector's Teeth (The Continent Makers) (Astounding Apr 50)
- 2114 Finished (The Continent Makers) (Astounding Nov 49)
- 2115 Summer Wear (The Continent Makers) (Startling May 50)
- 2117 The Galton Whistle (The Continent Makers) (Future Jul 51)
- 2117 The Colorful Character (Sprague de Camp's New Anthology)
- 2120 The Animal Cracker Plot (The Continent Makers) (Astounding Jul 49)
- 2122 Calories (Sprague de Camp's New Anthology) (Ten Story Fantasy Spr 51)
- 2137 Perpetual Motion (The Continent Makers) (Fut Aug 50)
- 2138 The Queen of Zamba (Ace) (Astounding Aug-Sep 49)
- 2143 The Hand of Zei (Astounding Oct 50 - Jan 51)
- 2147 Git Along (The Continent Makers) (Astounding Aug 50)
- 2150 The Virgin of Zesh (Thrilling Wonder Feb 53)
- 2153 The Continent Makers (The Continent Makers) (Thrilling Wonder Apr 51)
- 2168 The Tower of Zanid (Avalon) (Science Fiction Stories May-Aug 58)
- ??? Rogue Queen (no date assigned by de Camp)

(My thanks to Karen Anderson and George Scithers for reproducing the map in India Ink.)

# BACK TO THE HIGH-ROAD, BOYS!

MARK CLIFTON

Behind fun, delight and entertainment, the solid strength of science fiction lies in its aim to come to grips with some problems that perplex science, either to present an unsuspected problem which we must now start taking into account, or to shed new light on an old problem.

Now science fiction, itself, has a problem; one which many must recognize in view of the controversies over the past two or three years whether science fiction is going to the dogs or is as great as ever. I hope to shed some new light here on this old problem.

It is probably only a temporary problem, we have leaned a little too far towards the fun and entertainment and neglected the foundations of our favorite literature which make it strong and great. Perhaps we need no more than a reminder and definitions to clarify what is happening, to bring us back into a position of balance.

In ascendancy at present is a dominating group of writers and editors who show unmistakable signs of being at least subconsciously ashamed of their connection with science fiction in their desire to push it in the direction of mainstream — like social climbers trying to live down their birth on the wrong side of the tracks.

In the stories selected for publication we are getting the superficial brightness, the tricky ending, the cute story, the happy-ever-after conclusion, the psychotic emotionalism, the reversal of natural law, the ignoring of facts to the point of insulting the intelligence of a child — all the characteristics of the good, slick story. It is quite natural for writers to produce what the editors prefer to buy. Although, to be fair, there must be some others like Clifton who sit and sulk and refuse to produce the silly stuff.

Now like the politician who comes out staunchly and courageously for home, flag and mother, I am all for better writing, alive characters and mature emotional response. But we are now in an era when science has virtually been eliminated from science fiction; when the story dramatizes the effect but must keep silent about the cause; when, in common with the general public, we want to see the marvelous product but please spare us any discussion of the principles that make it work.

This has resulted in a rash of ordinary intrigue, adventure and mystery stories with only a thin coating of science fiction costumes and settings, pure pseudo-science fiction, pure counterfeit. Too often we are ignoring the fact that it takes more than a glassite helmet to make a space pilot out of a cowboy. We are getting the shadow and ignoring the substance.

I do not identify with that group of sad oldtimers who are convinced that we must go all the way back to Tarzan, John Carter, the Lensmen, and Captain Future. I do say there are strong foundations upon which a great literature was built, a literature of which no one should be ashamed. This literature has standards of merit quite distinct from those standards applied to mainstream writing. The standards of mainstream were established three hundred years ago, and aside from normal language evolution there have been no substantial changes in basic ideas of literary merit in that three centuries. This means it is a static art which produces a conventionalized design, and no longer serves a creative function. The mainstream writer is in the position the painter would be if he must still copy endlessly and pointlessly the pictures of Michaelangelo and da Vinci — and he knows it. His frustration is a pitiful thing, and we are extremely foolish and misguided to abandon our strong and virile art form in our attempts to imitate him.

Let's take a brief look at those certain standards of science fiction which are so distinct and different from mainstream, the standards of which have given us an infinitely wider screen on which to paint, and added a depth of dimension impossible within the mainstream framework. There are not just Clifton's ideas of what the standards ought to be, or Campbell's, or any other one man or group. Over a thirty year period, through thousands upon thousands of trial and error experiments in writing and publishing stories, certain elements emerge which we can clarify and crystallize, elements that are to be found in the great science fiction stories that live on, and will be continuing to live on long after today's bright little baubles have been forgotten.

I should define that in presenting these standards I am not talking about fantasy and pseudo science fiction. When science fiction began first to emerge it was not recognized as something distinctive, but was lumped with fantasy on the grounds that both contained the outre element - something out of this world, fantastic. Out of custom this classification still holds, but now we recognize this is the only point of similarity and grouping them together is like saying that since asters and morning glories both sometimes have blue flowers they must belong to the same botanical family. Fantasy is a branch of mainstream, and should be judged by the standards of mainstream. Science fiction should not be judged by the standards of fantasy, for to say that a story is a story, regardless of what it is about, is like saying that transportation is transportation and therefore an automobile should be judged by the standards of a horse.

Similarly, pseudo science fiction has its place. It is an excellent way for the child to graduate from the comic book to literature portrayed in words instead of pictures. It should be recognized, however, that to remain content with pseudo science fiction is a case of arrested development.

Now let's get down to the matter of what is the strength and substance of good science fiction. We can reduce the essence of thirty years of experimentation to four simple standards. All of them are present in the great and enduring names of science fiction. Each handles them in his own distinctive combination, so that the author's "signature" can be read in his work, but none of the greats ignores them, or at least did not ignore them during the period of his rise and height. His star sank as he abandoned them in favor of the quick buck, or in the hopes that if he changed to slick standards he would be noticed by the "Real" authorities of literature.

1. Thinking can be fun, it is not morally wrong to think, and he who does it will not necessarily come to a bad end.
2. Knowledge and reason must be used to solve the problem.
3. Our theme must either be the revelation of a hitherto obscure and unrecognized problem, or we must bring out hitherto unrecognized and obscure evidence and facts which shed light on an old problem.
4. We must come directly to grips with that problem, either to show what may happen if we continue to evade it, or to offer at least one possible solution to it.

Let's briefly examine these four standards to see why they differ from mainstream requirements, why judging science fiction by mainstream patterns is false reasoning, why pulling science fiction too far in the direction of mainstream and fantasy will destroy the substance of what has been a young, strong, virile and great literature.

1. From earliest times to the latest best sellers, mainstream takes the consistent attitude towards the man of learning that either he is a fool or a villain. At that period of a child's development when he first begins to feel twinges of insecurity, when the nightmare of possible separation from his parents is a common experience, when the concept of being lost or abandoned is a terrifying thing, he is taught that Adam and Eve were banished from the security of their home for eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Seeking to know, then, brings the worst of all possible punishments. This is fortified by the medieval attitude towards the science researcher in the fairy story - the sorcerer-witch,

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who memorizes rules and formulae, and brews up concoctions in his laboratory to bring evil spells upon those simpleminded but pure in heart. In the Western story evil brains behind the gang is the lawyer, the banker, the Easterner, the educated man. Poetry yearns to escape the harassments of learning and a return to simpleminded bliss. In the great plays yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look from thinking too much and such men are dangerous. And in the modern best seller the greatest thing that man can ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.

We have to go back in history to find out why mainstream is so dead set against anybody ever learning anything. At the time the still used form and content of mainstream fiction was set, the writer existed at the pleasure and on the bounty of some noble lord. Like the television writer of today, he had to express the sentiments of his sponsor, or lose his subsidy and then possibly his life. The sentiments of the feudal age toward learning was that it was an unworthy thing indulged in only by the unmanly clergy, the clerk who must do something because he was too cowardly to bear arms and not strong enough to till the soil, and those poets and writers who were tolerated as a kind of amusing fool. To decry learning and show its evil consequences was the better part of wisdom for the early writers, and through custom the attitude has been handed down and faithfully copied by writers even today. As in olden times, the mainstream writer of today knows his bread and butter depend upon his saying that the stupid and ignorant are more virtuous and more admirable than those men of learning whom they fear and distrust.

Science fiction broke away from that in an astonishing revolution and courage. Those who claim that a story must be pure entertainment and nothing else have forgotten or never shared that extra dimension of entertainment discovered by science fiction, the participation in an intellectual puzzle, where the keys to unlocking it depended upon the knowledge of certain scientific facts. There was an active mental participation required of the reader who had to think right along with the writer or else be left behind.

The science fiction enthusiast did not consider it unreasonable to be asked to use his intelligence, he grabbed his slide rule and his text book and went to work - and discovered for himself that thinking can be fun. The key opened the door to a whole new dimension of the finest kind of entertainment.

It was the hotheaded arguments over theory propounded in stories that gave birth to the great fan movement in science fiction and gave them a common cause, a feeling of solidarity against the world, however they may disagree among themselves. The fan movement still goes on, but perhaps through the inertia of momentum - for my distinct impression of a recent fan meeting was of ghosts all faithfully keeping watch over an ancient grave out of a sense of duty to tradition.

The most damning condemnation of current science fiction I have yet heard was a scrap of conversation at a literary soiree. The author, who has been selling to the top magazines, made his response without the slightest intent at irony. The giddy, young matron came up to him and said, "My, I'll bet you just have to study science constantly to write those stories."

"Oh no," he answered. "You don't have to know anything about science to write science fiction. You just pick up the patter."

We need to bring back into our stories some meat to chew on, to exercise again our intellectual jaws that are becoming atrophied through lack of use in consuming today's weak, watery pap. In our slavish imitation of mainstream, we are forgetting to provide the nourishment that made science fiction grow strong and great.

2. Forgotten, also, is the realization that knowledge and reason is really our hero, and our apparent story hero is only a symbol through which they operate. True, the too rigid application of this principle gave us the cardboard character,

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& Whodunnit metamorphosed?

schoolboyish emotional response, and the figurative stage placard reading "This is Mars".

Any pro writer knows that from all those possible elements which impinge upon his story, he must select those he wants to develop and bring into sharp focus. Story pace, reader interest, and plot flow cannot be maintained if we try to give equal development of everything. Something has to give, be slighted.

Mainstream can give full attention to the development of character and emotion, for to be popular with its readers it cannot say anything which surmounts or antedates the conclusions of Aesop. Thus the character becomes all important and the theme merely the stage through which he moves. It is the personal triumph of that character which must conclude the story, and the writer will blithely negate natural law, change the basic matrix of character, and insult the intelligence of a moron to get that personal triumph for his hero at the end. In our imitation of mainstream, we have likewise switched polarity, and now it is not reason and knowledge which triumphs, but the individual, and often at the cost of sacrificing knowledge and reason.

To narrow down our magnificent screen to the myopic concern with the love or triumph of a trivial individual is a terrible thing to do even though it will bring a sale to the Post instead of Astounding.

3. Recently an author who was defending today's inconsequential, pure time-passing, light entertainment, no-point-no-purpose story was challenged to recall even one new concept which had been advanced in the whole of the last year's stories. He responded that it was an unfair question. Perhaps, yet once upon a time the lowliest fan would have rattled off a dozen before he stopped to catch his breath. Once upon a time the story which did not tantalize with an idea new even to science fiction readers was automatically relegated to a minor position, beneath notice.

From experience I know that it is extremely rare that a new concept can be developed within the frame of a short story, and the best we can expect from the short is an interesting twist on an old idea. But the novelette or novel which does not advance a new idea or a series of new ideas has no genuine excuse for its existence — or certainly not under the label of science fiction. It is time we raised a howl for being handed counterfeit in place of the genuine.

4. A wide search of best sellers in the mainstream reveals that their best and only solution to the enormous problems facing mankind is escape — run away and hide, head for the hills, pretend the problem isn't there and maybe it will go away.

But it is not in character for Americans to run away and hide. Science fiction has enormous new themes to develop, all the magnificent challenges of today's problems which the mainstream writer ignores, and all that extrapolation reveals of the possible futures. Perhaps the trivial, imitative story of today is only a phase and we will outgrow it. There's hope for that, for while our people are standing around anxiously hoping to be noticed by mainstream authorities, the great writers in mainstream are anxiously studying these unique and powerful standards which have been developed by science fiction in the hope they can bring new life, vitality and meaning into their own works.

So perhaps our anxious little writers and editors may give us a semblance of genuine science fiction after all — by imitating the mainstream writers who are imitating science fiction.

A somewhat more positive approach is to be proud of our heritage, to realize the strength and beauty of this unique art we have developed, to realize that we have barely begun to write, that there is no limit to its potential.

Readers can turn a critical eye upon the novelette or novel to see if it truly

contains those elements which have made science fiction great. Some editors say they pay no attention to the griping of the fans, but a voice is still a voice, a letter still a letter, and thirty-five cents still the price of a magazine (no longer wholly true)). If demand is made upon the editors for a return to substance in stories, the editors will in turn demand it from the writers, and the writers will, in turn, start digging into the rich ore of scientific development once more, instead of writing off the cuff or imitating the latest mystery, intrigue or adventure yarn.

It is not a question of going back to some dear, dead days of science fiction, but of fixing our direction and cutting our way through the maze of purposeless wandering that leads us nowhere.

The End

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ROBERT BARBOUR JOHNSON

# CAN WE LIVE WITHOUT FANTASY<sup>1</sup> FICTION?

It looks as if we're going to have to, whether we like it or not! At least for the time being. So we might as well start getting used to the idea.

Which will take some doing, as our British cousins say, at least to those of us who've been passionate devotees of that form of literary expression over our entire lifetimes. We find ourselves today in an extremely bad way. Science fiction, also, is feeling a slump at the moment; and the fan publications are filled with the wail of its adherents. But those boys just think they've got troubles! Nearly a dozen magazines devotedly exclusively to their subject are still being issued, both 'hardback' and 'paperback' books dealing with 'Sci-fi' themes pour from the presses. The quality may have declined somewhat, that is a matter for debate. In quantity, also, there has been a decrease. Half a dozen titles have folded within the last few months; and more are said to be on the way. The subject may be in the doldrums, but it certainly is not dead!

But those of us whose major interest has always been in what is loosely termed 'fantasy', in weird and occult and supernatural tales, in 'goose-pimp-lers' and 'hair-stirrers', find ourselves today in the worst situation we've ever known. It is not in the least a matter of declining quality with us, it is almost total disappearance. To be specific, the number of tales even bordering on the supernatural published in the year 1958 numbered less than two dozen! Most of these were in one magazine, Fantasy and Science Fiction, whose major interest is admittedly much more 'latter' than 'former'. Not one single book, either 'hard' or 'paper' appeared in the stores. ((Since this was written Wollheim and Conklin have had anthologies of fantasy published in paperbacks.)) No periodical devoted wholly to the subject is being published anywhere in the world, to my knowledge; and none is expected in the foreseeable future. One might even say that matters in the realm of the Abnormal are definitely not normal, or even that the Undead is dead!

Which state of affairs, though it would seem natural in any preceding era and not even arouse comment, is incredible to those men and women who were born since the beginning of the Twentieth Century. For our generation has been blessed (if one may use that word, regarding the Unblessed!) by such a visitation of ghouls, vampires, efrets and whatnots as has no counterpart anywhere! We have experienced a remarkable flowering of occult literature, an apparently endless flow, of such quantity and excellence as to be unique in history. The popular mind tends to associate such writings (if it thinks of them at all) as associated primarily with the Gothic period in Europe, or Victorian England;

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certainly not Twentieth Century America. And yet far more weird and supernatural tales have been published since 1900 than in all dark and superstition-ridden ages put together! Such tales were rare and almost unique phenomena in days when people really believed in such things. Only in our modern, hard-boiled, sophisticated period, when belief in them was supposedly at its lowest ebb, did such stories achieve real popularity! I admit I don't understand this paradox, myself. I only off it as a fact.

No one really knows how many such stories were published in the last forty or fifty years. No complete compilation exists, or could exist. But even the most conservative estimate would run into the tens of thousands. Almost five thousand were printed in one magazine, Weird Tales, alone. As for books, whole library shelves of them have been printed; one collector known to me has eight thousand of them, practically all since the turn of the century, and he is still collecting. If he gets them all he'll probably have to move out of his own house. The thing was a flood, a tidal wave of print, that engulfed us for decades. A supply so plentiful that no one ever dreamed it would run out.

It was, moreover, almost universal. There is hardly a publishing house in the world, large or small, that has not brought out at least one such volume. And every magazine, no matter how 'conservative', has gone along; even the staid Ladies Home Journal and McCall's -- if you think I'm joking recall Daphne Du Maurier and "The Uninvited".

But the really unique development of our century was the emergence of whole magazines devoted entirely to such stories, with not a single one of any other sort in their whole history. This truly was a new species of magazine; no one ever dreamed of such a thing as far back as cuneiform bricks. Even the ghost-loving Victorians, while they had such periodicals as Blackwoods and the Black Cat which offered many such stories, never evolved a one hundred percent supernatural magazine. There probably would not have been, then, enough readers to make it pay even had it been invented. Yet our modern age has seen the development of not just one such magazine, but more than a dozen! And often several of them flourishing, and selling, at the same time.

It may seem hard to believe, but facts are facts. I'm not listing, you understand, magazines that simply featured occasional stories, or ones that made a specialty of them, a la Blackwoods. There were many of these. Blue Book, for example, in twenty-five years of publication never appeared without one such story, and often had three or four in one issue. The old Argosy (as distinguished from the present 'fact' periodical) was all fiction and was seldom without a weird novel being serialized in each issue, it published almost the entire works of A. Merritt and most of Edgar Rice Burroughs, along with scores of short stories. Colliers published both of Sax Rohmer's supernatural novels, Brood of the Witch Queen and Grayface, along with all of his other novels, and so on. Even detective magazines were not exempt, Black Mask, the best of them, featured a supernatural story in each issue, captioned the "Daytime Story", because it was supposedly too horrible to read at night. If we were listing such, we'd have to name almost all of them. I could even find you a dozen occult stories in the files of the Saturday Evening Post, or even Esquire.

But these don't count. What I'm talking about are magazines devoted solely to weird fiction. I'm concerning myself only with periodicals devoted wholly to the Unholy (to make a pun almost bad enough to get into a science fiction convention.) And so, of course, it is only fair to start off with the one magazine that called itself just that; that proclaimed the contents in its title.

Weird Tales was the oldest, the best, and the most famous of them all. It began way back in 1923, with the magician Houdini as backer, and lasted until five years ago; a span of a mere thirty-one years. Every famous weird writer of our times has written for it, and most of the really great tales of all history

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have been published in it. It subtitled itself, "The Unique Magazine", and I suspect it will remain so forever. It had probably the highest literary standard of any periodical in history. It was the main outlet of a dozen of the world's most renowned horror writers, including the great H. P. Lovecraft, himself; and, purely as a byproduct, it published the first 'quality' science fiction in this country (which it called 'interplanetary fiction' because there was then no name for it.) No other periodical on earth will ever approach THAT record.

But Weird Tales, while it was the pioneer, soon had company. No sooner had it pioneered the field than a rival, Strange Tales, appeared ((Sep 1931)). It had a more elaborate format, and much the same 'stable' of writers; only Lovecraft never appeared in it. Yet, strangely, it did not survive, lasting less than two years. But it was of high quality in every way, most of its stories have been preserved in anthologies, and in all but duration it compares to Weird at its best.

Not quite such high quality were other competitors of the same period. The unique string of 'horror' magazines edited by Rogers Terrill is an example. Mr. Terrill, himself, was quite literate; he later published the new Argosy. But his occult ventures certainly were not! At one time, in the late '30's, he had no less than three of them going; Ghost Stories, Terror Tales and Horror Stories. All can be described by the one word, oversexed. They were the most lurid magazines of their era — which was not noted for prudery. Terrill would not buy a story in which, at some point or other, the heroine was not completely nude, and either raped or threatened with rape by some monster. It was a curious formula, but it paid off; one of his magazines actually achieved a circulation of half a million copies, an all-time record, in its genre. Not one story he ever printed was anthologized, or has survived. The magazines were tripe, no other description is accurate. But some quite prominent writers contributed, lured by his fantastically high rates but under assumed names (I confess to having done it a couple of times myself, in lean periods, though under such heavy aliases that they have happily never been penetrated.) But I actually never read a copy of the magazine through, the atmosphere of perversion and morbidity was a bit too gruesome. However, there is no denying their popularity; and they survive as treasured collector's items for any fan lucky enough to get hold of a copy. You can't read it, but boy, can you excite your friends with it!

Indeed, such was the popularity of this 'weird' (in both senses of the word) type, that even it produced imitators. I'm sorry I can't give you a list of their names, I simply don't recall them, but there were at least half a dozen of them. Mercifully, none lasted more than a couple of issues. These 'went the whole hog' on sex with such labels as Sex Torture Tales, and such like. They were so objectionable that the newsdealers were said to handle them only with tongs! If you come across a copy of one you probably won't dare show it to anyone. You'll just keep it — preferably under glass — because of the aroma. The normal bind reels at the thought of their readers, not to mention their presumably 'two-headed' authors. I am as interested in sex as the next man, but somehow or other, skeletons and faceless apparitions do not stimulate me in that direction. But in those days they must have done so to many, judging by the sale of magazines like these. It must have been a more morbid era than we thought.

There was, however, at least one passable item among all these dubious ones. Its title was Dime Mystery Magazine; sister magazine to the magnificent Dime Detective, which gave us Dashiell Hammett, 'Cardigan' and many other greats. Dime Mystery, however, never produced any great writers, or any great stories either. Its yarns were also slightly oversexed, and crudely written to boot. The necessity of always being cast in a 'detective' mould (a la Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin, though Jules never appeared there for some reason,) further handicapped them. But they were fast moving, dramatic and often

original; and they were authentic weird tales. I confess to reading them frequently, with pleasure, if not profit. Though somehow, I was never sufficiently moved to make a contribution; though I did contribute occasionally to Dime Detective. The magazine was well put together; with striking, if lurid covers. It survived until a few years ago, though it changed its policy to conventional detective stories in its last days. But the early issues will repay reading, if you don't mind pulp style.

None of these, of course, were serious competitors to Weird Tales. But in early '39 a really powerful challenger appeared. It, too, was an authentic fantasy magazine; indeed, to many, it is still THE fantasy magazine. Its name was Unknown (later Unknown Worlds), and it was a real tour de force, comparable to The Circus of Doctor Lao in the book field. And, alas, like it, a terrific financial flop. No other periodical of our times caused such excitement among connoisseurs, yet it lasted only thirty-nine issues, and then folded. Apparently, it was simply ahead of its time. The public was not yet educated to its 'off-trail' approach; though they certainly became so later. It profoundly influenced all the best science fiction magazines of today, especially F&SF — not surprising since Boucher was an enthusiastic contributor. Among its other contributors were de Camp, Sturgeon, Ron Hubbard and a score of others now equally famous. It also introduced a brand new approach, humorous and satirical, rather than morbid and sinister. (As perhaps the best example, Divide and Rule; to my mind the best satire on American civilization ever written, which appeared in its second and third issues.) It seems incredible that a magazine of such quality should not have been a howling success. That it should have failed miserably can only be classified as a greater mystery than any Unknown published.

A less successful venture, a few years later, was the Avon Fantasy Reader, which began after World War II. Format, quality and appearance were alike excellent. It was the first FANTASY magazine to appear in 'pocket size' (and the first to be priced at 35¢); setting a style copied by all the flood of science fiction magazines that came along during its lifetime and that has now become universal ((with the present exception of Satellite)).

And finally, of course, appeared Fantasy and Science Fiction, the only one of the lot still surviving. Its excellence is known to all, so there's no need of elaboration. It is not, however, a true fantasy magazine; though it has published some splendid supernatural tales, and discovered several weird writers, Richard Matheson in particular. But it is primarily a science fiction magazine, and does not pretend to be anything else. It is included here chiefly because of its title.

But while all these other publications were rising, and flourishing ((more or less)), and declining and disappearing, Weird Tales, like Old Man River, was still 'roll, roll, rolling along.' Growing a bit grayer and a little wearier with each passing year, publishing fewer and fewer stories in each issue. It was declining somewhat in quality, as its best writers died off, or became too spavined to use their typewriters, changing editors, format and even color — but keeping going, somehow. And even in its dotage, it discovered Ray Bradbury. It never completely lost its excellence, or its influence.

Indeed, it was chiefly through Weird Tales that the vogue of supernatural book publishing was launched. Away back in 1939, two Weird Tale writers, August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, formed a hypothetical 'publishing house' in order to bring out one book, the collected stories of the recently deceased H. P. Lovecraft. They never expected to publish but the one volume. They used the name of Lovecraft's famous imaginary New England town, where most of his stories were laid. (Railroad agents are still molested by people trying to buy tickets to Arkham, Massachusetts, believing it to be a real community! Librarians are tormented by readers trying to borrow a copy of the Necromicon.)

ref?  
Dept of Psychol. & Ed.

If that is not a tribute to genius, I don't know what you'd call it.)

Arkham house, however, caught on and flourished, the only firm of its kind in all history, dedicated solely to the publication of occult fiction books. It is, indeed, still going; it will have at least one title on the stands this year. It has brought out over two dozen books, most of which are collector's items today, and worth double and treble their original value. (Copies of The Outsider and Others sell for as high as \$30.00 and will probably go much higher.) Arkham House books, as a class, compare in format, appearance and editing with the best. They set, indeed, just about the highest uniform standard of publishing excellence of our time. They enjoyed great success, as long as the firm stuck to Weird Tales reprints and even a few fine original novels and expansions of 'Old Master' fragments. Only when Derleth, operating alone during his partner's war service, began to run off into 'Vern' cartoon books, pastiches with 'Solar Pons' and other strange trivia of no conceivable interest to his established clientele, did profits fall off. If there is a return to original policy ((which seems to be the case)), it is quite possible that the firm will succeed as in the past. ((See Derleth's article, 'The Wheel Turns' in Volume 2, Number 2 of Amra, Box 682, Stanford, California.))

Other firms rushed into the field that Arkham had pioneered; there was a whole spate of weird anthologies, which lasted for years. (So many, indeed, that were reputed to be anthologies of anthologies!) Early 'paper-backs' also experimented eagerly with weird tales, along with science fiction reprints. They even published a few good originals (Matheson's I Am Legend is a classic example), competing right on the stands with Mickey Spillane! In the last few years, however, though there a few 'sci-fi' titles, the supernatural has nearly disappeared. 'Paper-backs' have returned to their beloved standard themes of romance between white girls and gentlemen of color, 'shooting' westerns, grime and amour on 'Tobacco Road'. One often wonders who on earth reads such junk; with their eternal 'gangrene' jacket colors, morbid approach, and abominable style. Most of them are certainly 'horror stories', of a sort! But not exactly the sort we're talking about.

So we'd best return to the magazines, which are, or rather were. This is, more or less, a complete tally of them, and an amazingly impressive list it is. There are one or two more that might perhaps be counted. The Arkham Sampler, for example, a quarterly published for a couple of years by the firm; which, though mostly non-fiction, also included a few original stories. Ray Palmer had Mystic which, in its first few copies, published both occult short stories and novelettes. Mr. Palmer's singular reluctance to pay his authors (he has, so far, not even paid for the sales in his first issue, which included one of mine!) led to a slight shortage of material after word got around. So he was forced to change policy and Mystic became a second-rate copy of his excellent fact publication, Fate. It still survives, but precariously.

And there was some assistance from abroad, also. We do not include a number of English magazines that appeared at one time or another, and occasionally got into the hands of an American collector. For if we were to mention foreign magazines, we'd need an encyclopedia, instead of an article! The vogue, in these years, has been more or less worldwide, and no complete listing of such periodicals is available.

But even without them, it is an awe-inspiring array. No other 'specialized' branch of fiction, with the possible exception of the detective tale, can offer a counterpart. What it means was that an entire generation of Americans, throughout their whole lifetimes (up to now), had always a selection of such stories available at the nearest news rack; with often as many as half a dozen titles at once to choose from.

And, what is more important, a whole group of talented, and even brilliant,

American writers were enabled to write such stories for their entire careers, to build reputations solely in the field of weird writing, and still make a living. No other literary era has ever offered such an opportunity. Poe, Bierce and the others were isolated phenomena, almost freaks, in their time. But here was a whole coterie, solely dedicated to it. True, they made very little money, in comparison to other fields. The greatest of them all, H. P. Lovecraft, actually died of malnutrition due to small earnings. Most of the others worked at trades, or had private incomes, to supplement the small pay. Some, such as Bradbury and Matheson, were seduced into the greener pastures of science fiction, or even of Hollywood. But most of them were a dedicated lot, and kept on, solely for love of the game. They'd still be doing it, those that survived; if there were any place they could get them printed.

But, unfortunately, there isn't. The blow fell with devastating suddenness. We had grown so accustomed to the steady supply over long decades, that most of us assumed it would go on forever. Few of us noticed a steady decline in the last few years, until finally Weird Tales was carrying on alone. It was actually heavily beset by debts, though no one knew it, there'd been no profit for a long time. Its editor could barely make both ends meet. Then finally the blow fell, with devastating suddenness. The magazine deceased.

I am still not sure how much I, myself, had to do with it. For I had sold a story to Weird Tales, only a few weeks before that final debacle; the first I'd sent them in many years. It was a story with a queer history. The original had blown up in the London 'blitz', along with the agent who was handling it; one other magazine that had tried to publish it had failed before it could do so. This, along with its general morbidity of tone, had led me to believe it as something of a jinx; I wasn't sure that it COULD be published. Perhaps I should have warned Dorothy McIlwraith! I wonder, now, because the magazine folded forever, less than a month after the purchase. My yarn was never printed, after all, Perhaps it will never be printed. Perhaps it is just as well.

The debacle left a gap so appalling that most of us were simply unable to contemplate it. People would just not believe that Weird Tales was gone forever. How else account for the persistent myths of its revival. They have been floating around ever since, and will not die. There was a whole avalanche of them at the time of the Oakland 'Westercon', all who attended will recall them. And they reached a crescendo at the New York 'World Con'; where the resumption date was not only named with alleged definiteness, but Donald Wollheim was announced as editor. There was absolutely no truth in any of it, of course; the date has long passed, now, and nothing happened. Wollheim appeared as 'consulting editor' of the new science fiction magazine Saturn. Even when this was known, rumors persisted that Saturn would be at least partially a weird. However, it never did show any tendencies in that direction, it is now a straight detective publication, and, so far, not even a particularly good one.

Which leaves the fantasy crowd exactly where they were — without a voice. And with no prospect of one in the foreseeable future. The possibility existed, of course, that one of the science fiction group might move into the vacated area, by shifting policy. Being already 'set up' and 'going' concerns, it could have been done without too much expense. For some reason, anticipation settled on Fantasy and Science Fiction as the logical candidate. And indeed, it has made some moves in that direction. It has taken in a number of the old Weird group, notably August Derleth; and enlarged its space for that type of tale as much as possible. But after all, F&SF is probably the most 'established' in policy of the whole group; it has spent long years laboriously building up a particular type of fiction, unlike any other; and an audience that reads it for such stories. It would be sheer editorial madness to throw all this away, at this late date; and start in on a brand

new line, just to acquire a few extra followers. And, frankly, it is doubtful whether many of the Weird Tales devotees could be won over, in any case. They, too, preferred high literary standards, but they liked their tales a bit rawer and gorier than have so far appeared in F&SF. And it must be admitted that 'Great Cthulhu' and his bloody cohorts, stalking many-tentacled and ravaging through its pages, would probably frighten a higher percentage of its present readers! The effect would be about like a herd of elephants, stampeding through a U. of C. physics lab. The two types are simply too far apart to be blended peacefully, even by the most skillful editing.

No, the only possibility is a brand new publication. And that, unhappily, is not likely these days. There's a shortage of Houdini's, to finance such; and an even greater shortage of Dorothy McIlwraiths or Farnsworth Wrights, willing to labor almost entirely for love. For remember, not a single one of all the fantasy periodicals ever made any real money; and most of them were complete flops. It is hardly a recommendation for new ventures. Especially is this true of the better class ones. The very attempt to set an elevated standard, with high artistic concepts, automatically alienates that portion of the reading public with most of the cash, these days. Witness the sort of tripe that floods the news-stands. If a new weird publication should appear in the future, it would probably be much more along 'Rogers Terill' lines, which would at least 'jerk the boobs', in Mencken's classic phrase, and bring in some revenue. Even Weird Tales, itself, would be compelled to do that, if by some miracle it should revive. For it has large debts against its name that would have to be met, somehow. Only a much larger circulation could hope to do that. And that means appealing to the moron element, whose idea of a terror tale is Mr. Boris Karloff clanking around, carrying some female in a nightshirt! They may not be true connoisseurs; but they're the ones with money in their pants. The cultured ones, in these times, are lucky to have pants. It would be far better to let the publication die, and be remembered in all its glory, than to have such a revival.

And, indeed, the possibility of any new magazine succeeding nowadays is extremely remote, in any case. With even the old, established ones toppling like trees in a hurricane; with such landmarks as Collier's and American closing their doors forever, what earthly hope is there for a new and untried one? Especially in a field that has never known a real success.

No, let us not delude ourselves. The odds are a thousand to one against any new weird magazines appearing in the foreseeable future. The odds, indeed, are against ANY new successful magazines, on any subject! They are simply going out of fashion. There are going to be darn few of them in future years. They even may disappear altogether, and in our own time. For if one thing is already painfully clear about the World of Tomorrow, it is that people are going to do much reading in it! They are going to be far too busy looking at three-dimensional, color TV sets, dancing in super night clubs, or whizzing about in helicopters or space ships. If they read at all, it is going to be serious reading, out of books. The magazine is already obsolete; that is the painful truth. It no longer supplies a basic social need. It is quite possible that many of us now living will see a magazineless world. (Since we've seen at least a third of them debase, within the last two or three years, that's not really much of a prophecy.)

And, painful though it is to admit it, civilization COULD exist without them. All of the great civilizations of the world, up to now, did not have such things. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, even the Renaissance people never read a magazine in their lives. Nor, for that matter, did George Washington. And yet they seemed to have achieved a fairly high cultural stand — almost comparable to our own present one, of Marilyn Monroe, atom bombs, and Elvis Presley!"

So our lament over the disappearance of occult fiction may be only the consideration of one small drop, in a very large bucket. It may be only one tiny facet, in a totally changing social pattern. We may indeed, be rather like a

citizen of San Francisco in 1906, standing amid universal destruction, and only seeing the destruction of his backhouse.

And it might even be that the passing of the magazines will do no harm to the field, in the long run. It could even be a blessing in disguise. For it could well be that writers were never intended to be able to make a living, and a reputation, by writing such tales exclusively. It might be better if they were forced back to the old way, of writing them only for love, as a hobby or a literary exercise; and publishing one only occasionally, in books — generally of other kinds of stories. That, after all, is the way all truly great tales in the field were produced. Our modern 'mass production' methods produced nothing to compare with it. Nor can any of our modern 'professional' weird writers measure up to the rank amateurs who created the great masterpieces of the past. To a couple of working newspaper men named Edgar Allen Poe and Ambrose Bierce; to a housewife called Mary Godwin Shelley; to a professional soldier, Arthur Machen; to a college professor, William James; to a cathedral antiquarian named Wakefield; and a physician called Whitehead; or for that matter, a couple of amiable 'light' novelists, E. F. Benson and Edward Lucas White, who wrote trivia like Dodo Wonders and Andivius Hedulio for a living; or a teller of Indian Army tales like Rudyard Kipling writing weird tales was not a profession. Each and every one of them earned his living in some other way, and wrote his masterpieces solely for his own, often secret, edification. They were thus able to give them the infinite care and loving preparation, by which alone, any real masterpiece can be prepared.

For the supernatural story is the most difficult of all literary forms. It is comparable only to Old Masters in painting, or the Venus de Milo in scripture. It requires not only genius, but endless and painstaking effort on the part of the writer. For it is literally making something out of nothing, of creating a completely non-existent being out of sheer moonshine, who will impress people as real, who will actually move their emotions, and frighten them out of their wits — and yet, like the little man, he 'isn't there at all!' That sort of thing just isn't something you can toss off, in a few moments, or even hours, in order to sell to a magazine, get a check for a hundred bucks, and buy your wife a new coat. It simply isn't done that way, at all, and never has been. And when your modern crop of writers, who alone had an opportunity to do it that way, tried — well, let's be polite about it, and say that the results were 'lesser masterpieces!'

If super-mechanical TV gadgets or whatnot takes over the whole field of human expression — why then, it won't matter because literature itself will be finished. And probably Mankind, along with it, the human race won't last long without it. We'll end up as one of our great horror writers once portrayed it — sitting in a dark cell, staring at a picture on a wall, while it slowly starves to death, spiritually as well as physically.

But as long as stories are printed, a certain percentage of them will be weird tales. And, indeed, all the visible signs point to them increasing in the future. For the World of Tomorrow is going to be a pretty weird place, as even our first faint glimpses reveal. The world in which our ancestors wrote their masterpieces provided little in the way of atmospheric stimulation for such creations. There was little that was eerie in a gothic pastoral landscape, or even a Victorian country lane. But our modern 'city civilization' with its stark dead streets of midnight, its morbid horrors and perversions, its exudations of evil and misery, with the dread shadow of the plutonium cloud hanging over all, ready to destroy universally — it is an incubator that cannot fail to shape writer's minds in only one direction. And, of course, when the first ships take off for the stars, what they will find there —

So let's quit mourning for the past, however glorious, and look forward. We Weird Tale fans may well be on the threshold of the greatest renaissance ever.

# FANGAB DELUXE

E. EVERETT EVANS

Saturday evening, December 28th, 1957, Thelma (that's T. D. Hamm) and I were very much privileged to be hostess and host at one of the most fabulous gatherings ever held in fandom (or prodom, if you want to be that technical, although all the participants were fans before becoming pros, and still are.)

The occasion was a party in honor of Doc Smith. As you may know, Doc ("Skylark"; "Lensman") Smith recently retired from his mundane job as cereal chemist-engineer. He and his lovely wife Jean bought a trailer, and now on purpose to go hither and yon as the spirit moves them.

Fortunately for us, it moved them for a time to Southern California. Naturally Thelma and I seized on this opportunity to entertain them.

Knowing that Doc wanted to meet certain friends, and to make friends of others he had heard of or read of for years, but had not met in person, we started phoning and writing invitations. With the exception of A. E. van Vogt and E. Mayne Hull (Mr. and Mrs. vV), who were out of town, every one accepted. Last minute business prevented Ray Bradbury from coming. But look at the list below, and see why I used the word "privileged" when I said we entertained these people.

First, of course, Edward E. and Jean Smith. Then it just happened at this time Leigh Brackett is out here working on a movie script, and she and Ed Hamilton, her husband (or if you prefer, Leigh is Ed's wife), were here from their home in Ohio. There were also Henry Kuttner and Catherine L. Moore (another Mr. and Mrs. team); Mark Clifton; one of the very first of the famous women science fiction writers, Clare Winger Harris; S. J. Byrne (John Bloodstone) and his beautiful wife Joey. Rog Phillips and his wife Honey drove all night from Oakland to be here. One of the most avid fans in the field, Spring Byington, came to meet some of her favorite authors. Agent Forrie Ackerman was here, and one of the old Slan Shack inmates, Walt Liebscher, who has just sold his first story.

(We wish you could all have been here, too, but the smallness of our house severely limited the number we could ask.)

Man, how the gab did fly. If there was any subject not dwelt upon during that long evening, I can't imagine what it was. We even talked about science and fantasy fiction. Just like fans everywhere, each was asking the other author the whys and wherefores of this and that story, and the ubiquitous question, "Where do you get your ideas?"

Quite a lot of real science, actual and in the works, was discussed, and some rather startling things were hinted at. I'm not too clear on just what can be mentioned in a publication like this, or what is semi-classified still. But such things as "the variableness of 'C' in the Einsteinian equation  $E = Mc^2$ "; and "the Gunther Effect", were only parts thereof. So was the nearness of anti-gravity becoming useful, as well as force fields; the discovery of matter (including its protons, neutrons, etc., etc.) that is 1800 times smaller and finer than normal matter, and interpenetrable with it.

And so on and on into the night.

Naturally, with Spring Byington there, one heard considerable talk about "December Bride", and about Verna Felton, Pete Porter and others of the cast, and how those Video programs are put together and the special problems, with emphasis perhaps on the writing technics.

There was talk of various philosophies, of cooking recipes, atomics and

missiles and "sputniks" and manned artificial satellites and interplanetary vessels, and how to travel faster-than-light, and how to communicate with aliens.

Mark Clifton led the praise of Doc Smith for his being the first one to break the chains that bound man (in fiction) to the moon, Mars or Venus, and gave him all the galaxy and entire universes to play around in. It was the general consensus that if it had not been for Doc's contribution of these concepts of scope, science fiction as such would have been very short-lived, indeed.

There was talk — very derogatory — about a recent science quiz in The Saturday Review, and from that to the way in which most magazines and critics outside our field are prone to look down their elongated probosci at such "drivel" as stf, entirely disregarding the fact that there have been many magnificent stories in our genre, JUDGED AS LITERATURE BY ANY STANDARDS. It was admitted there were stinkers, also, but that one finds these in every type of literature, even those these critics deign to regard as worthwhile.

One needs mention only C. L. Moore's "Bright Illusion" to show what we meant about magnificent literature.

I heard plans for forthcoming stories and books by the various authors, some of which I forgot to ask permission to reveal. I can tell, however, that Doc Smith has accepted a revised-edition pocketbook version of The Skylark of Space; that the "Personnel Man" stories by Mark Clifton are to be added to and collected in book form; that quite a few non-stf books are in process by several authors, as well as new stf stories.

A certain writer, who shall be nameless, came up with the suggestion that he write "I Was a Teen-Age Spaceship", which everyone agreed was a most worthy project, and one the movies would undoubtedly snap up immediately.

Oh, yes, at various times we ate, and Lord only know how many pots of coffee were consumed. Or perhaps "Mom Shafer, who prepared them, kept count.

Several brought books of other writers, who were to be present, to have autographed. Thelma and I broke out several from our own collection we had not previously been able to get signed, and our list of personally autographed books is now greatly augmented.

Man, what a fangab that was!

The End

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

The Old Science Fiction and the New - Stanton A. Coblenz

My Motive In Writing Science Fiction - Bob Olsen, Jr.

Paper Spaceship - Poul Anderson

artwork by Morris Scott Dollens

plus reviews of fanzines and books, letters from you.

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A special meeting of THE HYBORIAN LEGION will be held at the Detention, 6 Sep 59. All lovers of Conan are urged to join.

# BOOKS

THE MOON MAKER - Arthur Train and Robert W. Wood, Dawn Press, 1958, \$3.00 (Fran & Ken Krueger, 332 So. Abbott Road, Hamburg, New York) (11-84 pages, 40,000 words)

Here we have the legendary sequel to The Man Who Rocked the Earth. The Checklist of Fantastic Literature considered The Moon Maker to be mythical. Our thanks to the Kruegers for rescuing it from Limbo and what Ken thinks was the Nov. '17 through Jan. '18 Cosmopolitan.

The book is interesting, of historical significance but reading it is a series of shocks. Train and Wood seemed to have written it between breakfast and lunch. Professor Hooker, a specialist in comets (p. 17), is trying to solve "a not extraordinarily difficult problem in astronomical mathematics", (p. 20). The problem is stated to be merely a calculation of the Flying Ring's velocity in interplanetary space, (p. 21). He decides it should be turned over to Thornton, senior astronomer at the Naval Observatory, (p. 17). The decision was made because the problem was in Thornton's line (p. 19). Yet Hooker is a specialist in comets, which surely have velocity my dear authors. Thornton begs off and suggests the problem be turned over to the "research professor of applied mathematics at the new National (sic) Institute." So we now have two astronomers incapable of solving an astronomical problem.

We now move on to the Flying Ring (a flying machine capable of dominating the earth). The fuel supply is described as critical (ps. 28 & 30). Yet the Flying Ring is to be aimed directly at Medusa (p. 33). Naturally, given such an orbit, the Ring will miss the asteroid so it has to be compensated for (p. 42) thus wasting more fuel. Hooker then discovers that he omitted the moon from his calculations (p. 49-50). Then comes the realization that he's lost, (p. 50). Two paragraphs later Hooker announces them to be 10,000 miles from the moon. He then decides to turn the power off so that the Ring can land by gravitational force, (Goodbye, Ring!).

Meanwhile Medusa is hurtling through space on its destructive orbit with the peculiar ability of being a dual-velocity asteroid. The speed is variously given as "nearly 19 miles/sec." (p. 24) and 90 miles/sec. (p. 65).

Even more confusing is the speed of the Ring. At the end of the first hour velocity is 15 miles/sec. (p. 28). With the engines turned off a terminal velocity of 20 miles/sec. is reached (p. 39), 7 miles/sec. (p. 44), 68,000 miles/hr. (18.8 miles/sec.) (p. 44), 20 miles/sec (p. 46).

When Professor Hooker finally settles Medusa into orbit (hence the title), our dual-velocity asteroid manages another trick. It is able to orbit the earth at two altitudes, 18,000 miles (p. 69) and 120,000 miles (p. 79).

So what do we have. Two astronomers incapable of solving problems in astronomy, an asteroid which apparently shifted into overdrive and a Flying Ring which continually changes speed in free fall.

In spite of all this it's still a fair story. The story moves right along with only occasional kicks by the authors. When one considers the age it is a good sample of the best that early sf produced.

The book is probably out of print by this time so if you want a copy you had better keep an eye out.

THE PATH OF UNREASON - George O. Smith, Gnome Press, Hicksville, N. Y. \$1.20 to \$3.00, 1959, 7-185 pages plus postscript (63,000 words).

The book bears a copyright date of 1958 but wasn't mailed until 2 Apr 59. The story is rewritten from "Kingdom of the Blind", Startling, Jul '47.

George O. Smith is back with his best novel since Highways In Hiding. The problem in the story revolves around the Lawson Radiation. What is it and why do those people doing research on it retreat into amnesia? Dr. John Pollard, a researcher (naturally), has amnesia as per usual. What is unusual is that he sets about regaining his lost memory. How he does it, and the results thereof is what makes the story. G. O. Smith has written a story of people plus gimmick, the people dominate the story while the gimmick is essential. A far cry from some of his stories such as "The Impossible Pirate", ASF, Dec. 46. There are elements from an odd combination of stories here, ergo, Dreadful Sanctuary, Sinister Barrier, with their Fortean motif, and Raymond F. Jones's "Noise Level". But the book is G. O.'s own, read and enjoy.

THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS - John Wyndham (John Beynon Harris), Ballantine Books, N. Y. # 299K, 35¢, 1959, 7-189 pp. (81,000 words).

A reprint of Ballantine's hard cover edition of '57.

This the excellently underplayed invasion of earth by ? The invasion results in the pregnancy of nearly all the females of Midwich. In due course they give birth to strange humanoids far above mankind in their potentialities.

What would you do if all of your children were revealed as your intellectual superiors, incapable of being dominated by your ego? Would you be frustrated? The people of Midwich offer no exception. This is the story of how the Zellabies, the Gayfords and others respond to the challenge.

THE FALLING TORCH - Algis J. Budrys, Pyramid Books, N. Y. # G416, 35¢, 1959, 7-158 pp. (56,000 words).

The story is rewritten from "Falling Torch", Venture, Jan. '58, "The Man Who Did Not Fit", ASF, Mar. '59 and possibly something more that I've missed. (Paging Renfrew Pemberton). Michael Wireman, son of the President of the Earth Government in Exile on Alpha Centaurus IV (which has moved within four light-years of Earth in 2469 A. D.), is dropped on Earth to act as liaison with Franz Hammil who held a reserve commission in pre-invader days. The guerrillas do not appeal to Wireman and so he surrenders to the Invaders. The Invaders have classification tests for all citizens. (One bit of puzzlement which Budrys doesn't clear up is why and how Dr. Hobart was taken in by the Invaders ten years prior to their invasion of earth. See pages 106 and 13, 20, 27, 92, etc.) Wireman doesn't fit in with the Invaders, hence the ASF title. The lines about the stranger alone and afraid in a world he never made apply here. Since the opening of the book reveals the ending it's fair to say that Michael Wireman remade the world. If not in his own image, at least in a fashion fairly understandable to himself.

Budrys isn't writing science fiction this time. The story could be laid tomorrow, yesterday or anytime in any welfare state with only a slight rewrite. The Invaders cause no fundamental changes on Earth. The Government-In-Exile could be in London prior to the Battle of Britain. Michael Wireman could be another Tito (modified version). Even the paperback blurb writer sensed this: "This was the 25th Century, but men still fought as they had back to the dawn of time — ", " — a tense story of a future with strange parallels to our own time."

Wireman is an example of the passive hero, yet one who by his very lack of initiative causes events to happen, and happen in his favor (believe it or not). Wireman seems to be a symbol of what you and I and the fellow next door would be in time of crisis. The only difference is that Wireman consistently wins.

Reading any portion of the story will give you a pretty good idea of what the rest of the story is like. Perhaps its main attraction is the unusual nature of the Superman.

THE CHANGELING WORLDS - Kenneth Bulmer (Complete & unabridged, 47,000 words)

VANGUARD FROM ALPHA - Brian Wilson Aldiss (abridged) (35,000 words) Ace D-369 35¢, 1959.

The Changeling Worlds is a pleasant time-passer from Bulmer. The gimmick on which the story hangs is that the Galactic society of the 70th century is composed of four types of worlds. Two types (black and red) are taboo to the inhabitants of the golden worlds. As the story unfolds you learn that the golden worlds are the homes of the idle rich, the white worlds are the homes of the working rich, the black and the red are homes for the down-trodden people without space travel. These are all combined into the Frome Federation, which is cone-shaped with the apex, naturally, at Earth. No one visits Earth, yet all are descended from Earthmen, conscious of speaking good English and are nostalgic for Wales.

Richard Makepeace Kirby is a member of the Makepeace Set, antagonistic towards members of the Arbutnot Set and is yet a true cosmopolitan. The Sets spend their time in a series of parties on the golden worlds. Some members of the Sets look with disfavor upon the way of life. The ones who decide to do something about the situation are either missionaries or agitators upon the taboo worlds. Kirby's brother is murdered because of his missionary activities and so to Kirby is revealed The Truth about the Golden Worlds and What He Must Do To Remedy the Situation.

Despite all this the story is well told. The characters are without volition, they are merely run through their paces to exhibit the social system. We never actually see the system as it affects Kirby, his friends, and the malcontents.

Vanguard From Alpha is apparently abridged from manuscript as it is slightly longer than the magazine version ("Equator", New Worlds 75 & 76, Sep & Oct 58.) The plot concerns Tyne Leslie's attempts to avenge the death of his friend, Allan Cunliffe, who was murdered by Murray Mumford on the Moon. The three are there to investigate a mysterious object just outside the Roskian area on the Moon. The Rosks claim to be resting after a two-generation flight from Alpha Centaurus (this answers the question raised by Ace's title of 'Alpha What?'). At any rate the Rosks are granted an area on Sumatra and one on the Moon. Evidence turns up that the Rosks are the scouts for an invasion. And so Tyne Leslie's search for Mumford is complicated by earth's security service.

Aldiss, as demonstrated in shorter efforts, is quite adept at building characterization. His talent is not put to full use in this action story. Perhaps the story may be expanded to permit greater emphasis on people as was done with Non-Stop (Star-Ship in the U. S.).

ARKHAM HOUSE: THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS 1939-1959 - August Derleth, Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, 1959, 54 pages, \$1.00.

The booklet is subtitled "A History and Bibliography" and is just what is claimed. There are nearly 14 pages of history, a page and two fractions devoted to a publishing forecast (if sufficient people will buy his books these will see publication), a complete listing of all published titles with their contents (including Mycroft and Moran plus Stanton and Lee titles), a list of books distributed but not published by Arkham House and finally a listing of all out of print books.

The booklet is well printed on good quality paper with cardboard covers.

Since only 700/775 copies were printed those who are interested in Arkham House will want to order this item soon.

STAR SCIENCE FICTION STORIES NO. 5 - ed. by Frederik Pohl, Ballantine Books, N. Y. 1959, 7-159 pp., 35¢.

Here we have "Trouble With Treaties" by Katherine MacLean and Tom Condit. It is a pleasant variation on "First Contact" with a great deal of the story seen through the eyes of the aliens, directly and with the aid of telepathic Terrans.

A vignette by Richard Matheson, "A Touch of Grapefruit" is an example of 'EXTRAPOLATION' which better could be classed as a 'reductio ad absurdum'. It chronicles the growth of Los Angeles from the Pacific to the Atlantic and beyond. It is played strictly for laughs and leaves one wondering what Southern California's All-Year Club and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce will think after reading it.

Robert Silverberg's "Company Store" reads like a Galaxy reject. The same atmosphere of frivolity is here, it is almost identical to several hundred others in Galaxy. The reason it would be rejected by Galaxy is that the story is too sane, not that it is a Shining Example of Clearness. The plot concerns a colonist on Quellac courtesy of Planetary Colonization, Inc. He is beset upon by a robotic travelling salesman from the Lesser Magellanic Cloud (the robot is capable of teleportation though it doesn't always use it.) P. C., Inc. has rigged up a new type of Company Store, one without any possible competition, or so they thought. The colonists are bound by an iron-clad contract. The robot's goods are far advanced over what the Company sells and are much cheaper. The robot insists on menacing his life and the Company won't protect him. The ending is one easy guess.

Chan Davis's "Adrift on the Policy Level" is another extrapolation. This time the content is serious. Given a universal chain of command such as now is enjoyed by the Armed Forces there will be developed techniques and technicians for surmounting the obstacle. J. Albert LaRue is Professor of Plant Metabolism, J. Albert LaRue discovers that the planned economics of West Lapland, Churchill and Great Slave are being attacked by the enzyme, oxidase epsilon. The next step is to have this fact brought to the attention of the top. Davis has given us an excellent portrait of how two men go about tackling the chain of command.

Pohl need not wait to read Gavin Hyde's third story, it is here as "Sparkie's Fall". Regardless of what Mr. Pohl says the first was in the May, 1953 if as "The Contest". The present story might better have been left unpublished. Even a desperate fanned might hesitate before accepting a plotless, characterless, mash of nothing.

Algis Budrys' "Star Descending" gives us another version of Padgett-Kuttner's "Private Eye". If you invented a remote scanning device, what use would you make of it? Kuttner chose to have crime suppressed, Budrys has the inventor set up Spot Dialogue to aid the patron in any situation by giving him the right cues. A second inventor shows up with the same device and begins "Operation Snafu" in order to bring the first inventor to terms.

Daniel F. Galouye's "Diplomatic Coup" shows the systems of Sol, Centaurus and Sirius asking for membership in the Greater Galactic Community. The GGC is a shining example of the theorem that inefficiency increases with the eighth power of the size of the bureaucracy. Galouye has one of the better stories in this book which isn't saying much.

Arthur Selling's "The Scene Shifters" is with Davis' story one of the two best in the book. Movies are beginning to have the stereotyped scenes replaced with

more original while being shown in theatres. Mammoth Pictures is affected first. They find the villain by finding the one person common to all pictures which have been redone. Sellings builds up to a satisfying climax. As a whole this is a serious burlesque of Hollywood pictures.

And finally we have Rosel George Brown's "Hair-Raising Adventure", which chronicles Sam as he deciphers a Scythian hair-restoring recipe from 450 B. C. What the Scythians were doing with writing at that period is never explained. Throw in a wife who prefers money to Scythian inscriptions, a hair-restorer manufacturer who is after the recipe for the perfect hair-restorer, a witch doctor from Kenya and let boil on the pot. When the end is reached you have just another pot-boiler.

The collection as a whole isn't too good. There are no really outstanding stories. There are two good stories and one good vignette, three competent stories MacLean & Condit, Silverberg and Galouye, two so-so stories by Budrys and Brown and one out-and-out clunker by Hyde.

THE COMPLETE FAAN - John Berry, John Berry, 31, Campbell Park Avenue, Belmont, Belfast, Northern Ireland (available from F. M. Busby, 2852 14th Avenue, West, Seattle 99, Washington for 35¢) 50 pages, bound with tape and cardboard.

Bob Shaw's introduction, "None But the Loony Heart", lifts the mask from the Goon to reveal -- John Berry, did you say?, no the Goon.

Berry takes over with the contents and acknowledgments and then we are off to Northern Ireland, haunt of the Goon, headquarters for the Goon Defective Agency (which doesn't figure in this collection).

"Crank Case" shows him running off Retribution in his office during the lunch hour. Humdrum you said. Not at all, read Berry and see what can be done with a mundane theme.

"Rust In Peace" shows Irish Fandom holding last rites for Bob Shaw's bicycle.

"Garden of Weediness" reveals that Berry's thumb is any color but green.

"Star Struck" shows Berry thirsting for knowledge of the firmaments and discovering a stationery comet.

"Earwig, Oh, Again?" is propaganda regarding Irish Fandom's majority of insect haters. For another example see James White's "Patrol", New Worlds, # 55, Jan '57.

"Horizontal Fanac" shows Berry in bed, determined to continue with fanac.

"The High and the Mighty" is another example of wife vs. fanac.

"Sweating In Every Extempore", Irish Fandom is contaminated with punsters, Forry and Barney Bernard should be ranged against Willis on Video.

"Arrested Development" tells how Bob Shaw was convinced of his ignorance on such subjects as currents in the Upper Adriatic and their effect upon shrimp, stone images on the Wallaby Peninsular, etc.

"Sense of Wonder" details how Berry met Ken & Irene Potter without benefit of recognition signals.

"The Compleat Faan?" gives Berry's criteria for being one such.

In addition Berry gives serious consideration to the best fanz covers, best letters (I should have said most fascinating), the person who has done the most for fandom, the outstanding publication, the most intelligent faan he has met, best illustrator, the fanzine he thought would never accept him, and his favorite critic. There is an egoboo index (if you care to use it in that fashion.)

It will be too late by the time this appears to contribute to the Berry Fund. So I will say only to join the Detention and meet Berry in person if the fruition of Busby's and the Falasca's has come to pass.

THE FOURTH "R" - George O. Smith, Ballantine Books, N. Y., #316K, 5-160 pp (69,000 words).

G. O. Smith has an apparent original here. The story isn't of the type that Startling went for.

James Quincy Holden's parents invent an educating device. This one is less far reaching in its implications than Bossy of Clifton and Riley's They'd Rather Be Right. By means of what sounds like non-oscillatory positive feedback (which Smith admits is quite a feat) the Holden Electromechanical Educator enables anything a person reads to be permanently incised in his brain. It does not confer immortality, super-human powers or the like. It merely gives one an enormous, always accessible fund of knowledge. It conveys the three "R's"; Reading, 'Rit-ing and 'Rithmetic but not the fourth "R", Reason.

At the opening we see five year old Holden's parents murdered by their best friend, Paul Brennan. The motive is possession of the educator. Holden smashes the feedback mechanism which cripples the educator since there are no plans and only Holden can rebuild it. (To prove his point Smith uses the illustration of Heathkits, a perfect example of someone being able to build a piece of electronic gear without understanding how it works.) After thus rendering Brennan helpless Holden decides to leave. He fails in realization due to lack of understanding of human nature. The next attempt is thoroughly planned and succeeds.

The next portion of the book is devoted to showing how Holden makes a living by writing for the children's magazines, rebuilds the educator and acquires two more plot elements in the persons of a housekeeper and her daughter. The housekeeper memorizes recipes, sewing patterns, etc., the daughter is forced to acquire an education.

As with most young people Holden desires his independence. He already has de facto independence so he starts proceedings for de jure independence. This brings Holden to the fourth "R" and a bit more.

While the story is not great it is still more than competent. In contrast to some other writers Smith does not ignore the concomitant facets of his invention. We see here more than merely Holden's job of educating himself. Smith answers the questions of what the educator means to other people, its effect on society, the unscrupulous uses to which the device could be put, and most important of all, what use he will make of it after he has acquired what he deems to be a sufficient education.

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# FANZINES

UR # 6 - Ellis T. Mills, P.O. Box 244, Carswell AFB, Texas, available only for trade or comment (preferably good), no subscriptions, c. quarterly, mimeoed.

Here we have zealous zanyness (all lawyers please call at P.O. Box 35 between 0800 and 1015) in an excellent format. The mimeographing is more than legible. An offset cover has both the Gorgon of Charnel 11 and a genuine Unsatisfactory Report (the USAF should take heed). Incidentally, if you need mimeo work Mills is ready for a price. Being a T/Sgt he needs the dough more than we A/2C.

Inside is material concerning the Gorgon's horror movie series on KFJZ-TV, film reviews, editorial commentary, a reprint of Bob Leman's expose of rock and roll, a song composed by the Gorgon and a friend (?), a proclamation commemorating the 100000000th anniversary of the invention of fire together with an ironical listing of the benefits conferred by fire during the course of history, ramblings by Sid Birchby, an advertisement for rings of power (Ted Johnstone, front and center), "Straight Talk" being a letter to Congress from a Louisiana editor, a pronouncement in French (I hope) which looks promising of humor from what little I can decipher, the SAC Ten Commandments which should be read by all potential Schweiks, Aschs and the like and anyone who enjoys the military (being in ATC I am partially free to express my opinions of SAC which I refuse to do), a moth-eaten cartoon, several English highway signs and a bacover by Eva Firestone.

Portions of the mag are reminiscent of Mad, others of Mills and his various contributors. UR has something in the way of humor for most people plus some sercon reviews of popular entertainment media (TV, radio and sf films).

INNUENDO #9 -- Terry Carr, 70 Liberty St., San Francisco 10, California, available only for trade or letters of comment, no subscriptions (any received will be converted into bheer), irregular, mimeo.

Terry leads off (not that far off) with "Inn a Mist", an editorial rambling over Carl Brandon, Terry's wedding (proposed for a fire house) and other topics of interest such as a cartoon of the Bheer Khan Tower to the Moon.

Bloch has a letter to Carl Brandon expressing faith in his existence and postulating that Carr and Ellik are frauds devised by Brandon to test the faith of fandom.

Harry Warner's "All Our Yesterdays" exhumes another old fanzine. This one being not a stf fanzine but a Science Fan mag somewhat along the lines of Willard Hawkins' 'Explorers League' and their bulletin.

Ron Bennett has the next-to-last installment (eventwise) in his Solacon report.

Bill Donaho tells of driving back from the Clevention in a senile Willys.

A bulky letter section closes the ish.

For all-around excellence the mag is hard to beat so send a letter to Carr pleading for a copy.

CRY OF THE NAMELESS #127, May, 1959, Burnett R. Toskey, Box 92, 920 Third Avenue, Seattle 4, Washington, available mainly for money, 1/25¢, 5/\$1/, or 12/\$2 and seconarily for letters of comment printed in the ish, contributions in the ish or reviews of your mag again in the ish, monthly, Gestetnered.

Regular features which make this month as always are the Busby's chatter (a large part of the mag's personality), featured reviews, letters and fan fiction. The Minutes of the Nameless Ones and a well executed cover are perennial.

This ish has a definite theme of The Little Man Who Became King and then Found That the Job Was Too Big.

John Berry's "Fandom Denied" is one of these. An 'LNF' is converted into an 'overnight' BNF with a rather large Achilles' Heel.

Len Moffatt's "...Rise and Fall..." deals with a subsidizer of fanzines, his own and FANAC.

Ed Cox's "John Rolf's Fantabulous Time Traveling Device" has a variant on doppelganger's produced via time machines with a possible solution for the problem.

Reviews are handled by Pemberton (mags), Gerber (books) and Brown & Lichtman (fanzines).

A hefty lettercol contains nonsense, seriously unconstructive criticism and just plain humour.

Send \$2.00 to Toskey now before he emulates the pros and raises his subrates.

AMRA V2 # 3 - George Scithers, Box 682, Stanford, California, 1/20¢, 5/\$1, irregular (that's what the man says, but, it is close to monthly), lithographed.

Amra features plenty of artwork by such as Adkins, Gilbert, Wilson, Scithers, Barr and others. (Barr has an excellent cover coming up on # 5). The written portion is devoted to swashbuckling fantasy (mainly Conan) though George wants more variety within the swashbuckling framework. (Let's help him out with articles and humor on someone other than Conan.)

This ish contains minute notes on the artists, and editorial to match and the same-sized lettercol.

Most of the rest is devoted to the meat of the subject.

Poul Anderson's "Who Were the Aesir?" delves into the question and comes up with an answer that would and does satisfy most people.

Buck Coulson's "Conan: A Social Commentary" examines Conan through the eyes of a leftist.

Steve Schultheis' article on a "...very curious manuscript..." reads like a filibuster. It purports to be a map of the Hyborian Age with some remarks. Fun but rather overdone.

George Scithers draws parallels between Howard and his character Balthus of the Tauran. While interesting it can be carried too far (witness the Baker Street Ireggular who 'proved' that Mr. Pickwick and Sherlock Holmes were identical.)

Roy Hunt's "Conan of the Reavers" tells of another Conan who preceded the Cimmerian by six months in publication. In addition Roy lists some non-Conan stories which he feels should see book publication.

AMRA V2 # 4

The main features of this ish are P. Schuyler Miller, L. Sprague de Camp, and John D. Clark's revision and updating of "The Informal Biography of Conan the Cimmerian", Miller's listing of the Conan stories (with the assistance of Glenn Lord) and de Camp's "Exegesis..." which is clarifying the sources of

Howard's sources.

In addition Liz Wilson has a bit of nonsense on dragons.

SCIENCE FICTION TIMES #'s 314, 15 & 16 from Science Fiction Times, Inc., P.O. Box 115, Syracuse 9, N.Y., 1/10¢, 20/\$2, \$2.40/year & \$15/forever, mimeo.

They claim to be semi-monthly but the mag has been arriving more or less monthly with two 'issues' stapled together.

For those of you who are interested in pro news for historical interest subscribe. Occasionally they are first with the news. How stepping it up and getting there first as often as you used to? At any rate read about Super-Science Fiction planning to fold if monsters aren't big enough business, the 1, 125th meeting of LASFS, the Detention, what mags hit the stands several months ago, ASF and its plan to go to 50¢ with an increase in pages to 192, etc.

FANAC #'s 38, 39 & 40 from Terry Carr, 70 Liberty St., San Francisco 10, Calif., letters of comment preferred to subs (4/25¢, 9/50¢), c. bi-weekly, mimeo.

Obeying the old adage of being there first with the most Ellik and Carr continue to send out the news (fan-oriented with regard to SF Times). If you don't mind a slight amount of bias in favor of the Publishing Giants go ahead and receive Fanac. If you do mind you can always start another suit, Fanac will be glad to publish the details.

One word of caution, Terry is pruning the mailing list so if you want the mag do something.

SHANGRI-L'AFFAIRES # 42 & 43 - Al Lewis, 2548 West 12th Street, Los Angeles 6, Calif., trade, comment or money (20¢/1, \$1/6), c. monthly, Gestetnered.

#42 contains among other things Ted Johnstone's rendering of the minutes of LASFS, a profile on George Fields, the last installment (eventwise) of Ron Bennett's Solacon Report, fanzine reviews by someone willing to hide under the name of Eustace Southington Plunkett or esp, Carr and Ellik with columns (this time dealing with the N3F and visitors to the Carr domicile), some more of Carr's Face Critturs, LASFS style, and letters.

The contents are uneven, granted, but Lewis is just beginning to shape up Shaggy. The only person who can remake the mag to your taste is you, so contribute, comment or otherwise help out.

#43 in addition to minutes has a profile on Ted Johnstone by Rich Brown, more fanzine reviews, a rambling article by Fritz Leiber on various fans, etc. he has known, more letters and an excellently reproduced cover by Bjo with some sort of significance (or am I looking too deeply). Rick Sneary has an open letter to Campbell in which he points out what he thinks is wrong with the present day ASF. Ellik is back with "The Squirrel Cage".

#44 should be along any day says Al Lewis. Get the mag if you want to keep up with LASFS or just what the club has to say about sf, fandom or anything else anyone wants to blow off steam about. Variety is the keynote so let the LASFS know you're alive by getting with it. (unpaid political advertisement).

BJO FOR TAFF. (a non-partial advertisement, see the rest of the mag)

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Other Argosies also available.

Magazines listed above are mostly in very good to mint condition. Many other science fiction magazines -- U.S. and British. What do you want? Subscriptions taken for British magazines. British non s-f pocketbooks and books available.

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(continued inside back cover)