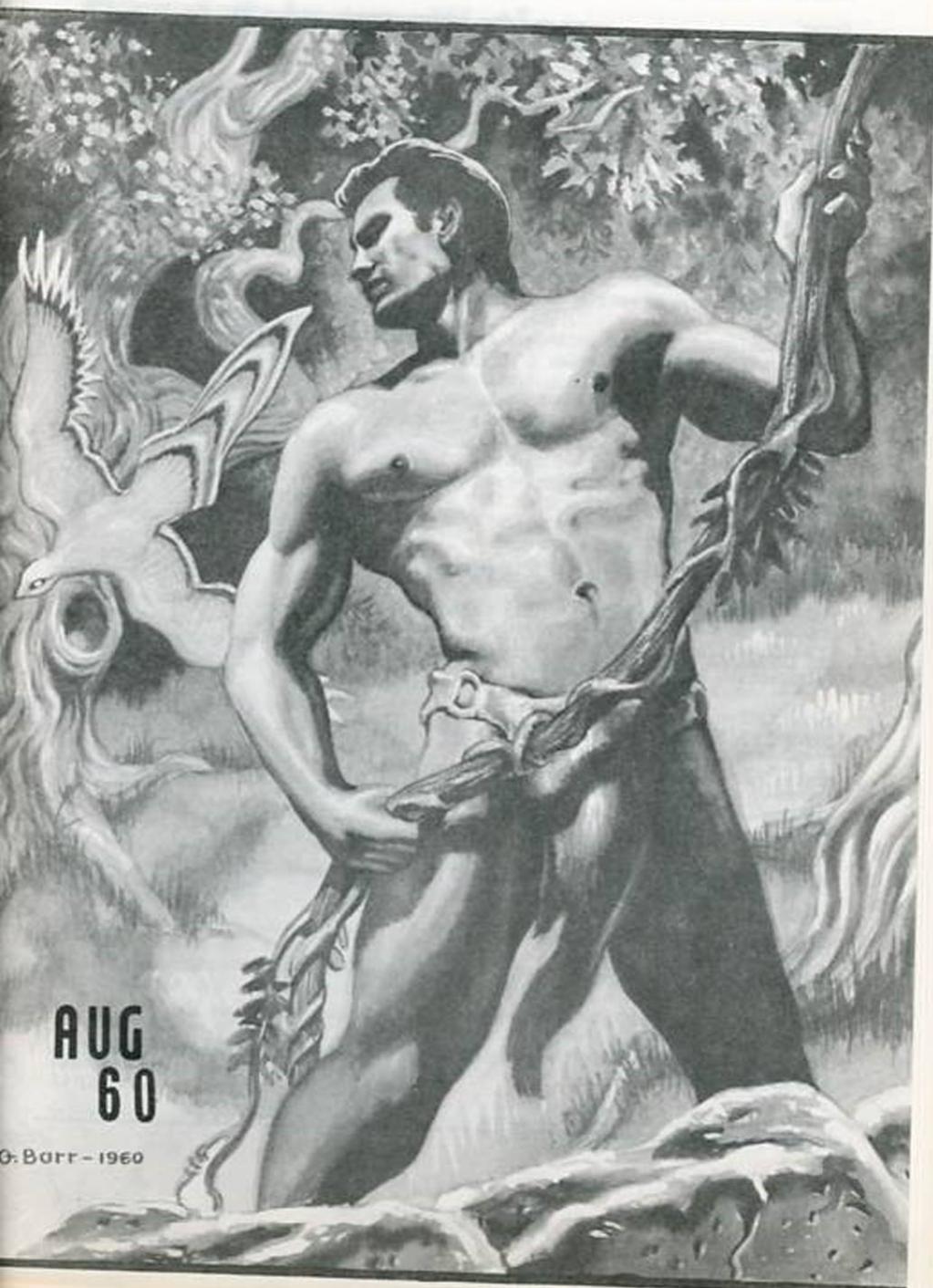


NEW FRONTIERS



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G. Barr - 1960

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Good Science Fiction --

Where Is It? Damon Knight

(Speech delivered at the 17th World Science Fiction Convention, Detroit, Michigan, September 6, 1959.)

I have kind of a ridiculous announcement to make... When I was first asked to speak, I wrote a more or less voluminous paper on the subject of bad science fiction. Then the committee informed me that they wished me to speak on "Good Science Fiction". My remarks will be brief...

Before I get into that, though, there's something I have to explain. Some of you may not be aware that in the year 1933, I was eleven years old. And in that year I bought a copy of a science fiction magazine, and it hooked me. I have it right here -- this is it, the August-September issue of Amazing Stories. The cover is by Morey -- his pink and blue period.

Now, about a week ago, I dug this magazine up from the box where I keep them, and reread some of these stories. But even before I reread them, I remembered them pretty vividly, considering that this magazine is twenty-six years old. One that I remembered particularly well is the first one in the book, "The Meteor-Men of Flaa", by Henry J. Kostkos. This one really sent me, and what's more, it still does. Briefly, this is what happens: You, see, this scientist discovers that there's life a thousand miles above the surface of the earth, on what he calls the neutrosphere. Now this turns out to be a layer of pink cloud, about the consistency of marshmallow, on which you can walk if you have snowshoes on. So they get up there in a spaceship, which kind of cozes up through the layer and then settles down on top of it -- and they find that the place is inhabited by funny-looking web-footed men with three nostrils, who call the place "Flaa". And they make everything they need out of solidified gas -- tables, chairs, booze, and so on. Well, the good guys up there are about to be attacked by the bad guys, so the hero and his buddy join in with their sub-machine guns, and win the war -- but they get chased back to their spaceship -- which incidentally won't go any more because the pink cloud layer cuts off the magnetic rays. So being besieged in this spaceship, they use a flame thrower on the besiegers, and set fire to the entire place. Naturally when the cloud burns up, they fall through, so they're all right -- and as they go down under power, they see the burning bodies of the meteor-men falling past them.

Well, I'm not trying to tell you that this story doesn't have any virtues. For one thing, it has a terrific smash ending. And there's a certain good-humored simplicity about it. But as you can tell, in some ways it's a pretty cruddy story, for 1933 or any other year. Just the same, it hooked me. And I think I can tell you why.

Here was something that gave me the same kick as fairy tales used to, only in a much stronger form, because these were things that I believed might possibly be true.

Now this is the point. If my experience was typical, and I think it was, people turn to science fiction for a blend of two feelings -- fantasy, the roller-coaster shock of fantasy -- and reality, the instinctive feel of reality -- the feeling that this might be true.

Now if I'm right, this is rock-bottom basic. If we forget either of these two things, we start losing our audience. And I think we are forgetting one of them, and we are losing our audience.

I'm talking about that sense of reality, and rather than try to describe it, I'm going to read to you a few lines of a piece of writing that I think has it.

Some of you have probably recently read this. It's the first instalment of "Starship Soldier", by Robert A. Heinlein. The narrator is describing what it feels like to be loaded into a capsule in a spaceship, ready to be dumped out like a cartridge from a gun.

It's better after you unload. Until you do, you sit there in total darkness, wrapped like a mummy against the accelerations, barely able to breathe -- and knowing that if the ship gets hit before they fire you, you haven't got a prayer, you'll just die there, unable to move, helpless. It's that endless wait in the dark that causes the shakes -- thinking that they've forgotten you... the ship has been hulled and has stayed in orbit, dead, and soon you'll buy it, too, unable to move, choking. Or it's a crash orbit and you'll buy it that way, if you don't roast on the way down.

Then the ship's braking program hit us and I stopped shaking. When a female pilot handles a ship there is nothing comfortable about it; you're going to have bruises every place you're strapped. (...)

But Captain Deladrier knows her trade. There was no fiddling around once the Rodger Young stopped braking. At once I heard her snap, "Center-line tube... fire!" and there were two recoil bumps as Jelly and his acting platoon sergeant unloaded -- and immediately: "Port and starboard tubes -- automatic fire!" and the rest of us started to unload.

Bump! and your capsule jerks ahead one place -- bump! and it jerks again -- precisely like cartridges feeding into the chamber of an oldstyle automatic weapon. (...)

Bump! -- I was used to number three-spot; now I was Tail-End Charlie, last out after three squads. It makes a tedious wait, even with a capsule fired every second; I tried to count the bumps -- bump! (twelve) bump! fourteen -- with an odd sound to it, the empty one Jenkins should have been in bump! --

Now I don't know about you, when I first read that, I felt like a cartridge being bumped along in that tube, and my hair stood on end.

That is not typical science fiction writing. Heinlein's identification with his viewpoint character is so absolute, and his attention to detail so careful, that he shows you one picture, with everything fitting together, and you have to believe it, at least for a moment, just as you have to believe a photograph.

With Heinlein, uniquely among present-day science fiction writers, you feel that what he writes about might very easily be possible, simply because the man knows so much and writes so carefully. But please notice that you can have this feeling about something that actually is completely impossible. I had it about "The Meteor-Man of Plas". When I was eleven.

Here's another example, this one from Paralandra, by C. S. Lewis. Ransom comes to after his journey to Venus and finds himself floating in a warm ocean.

There was no land in sight. The sky was pure, flat gold like the background of a medieval picture. It looked very distant -- as far off as a cirrus cloud looks from earth. The ocean was gold, too, in the offing, flecked with innumerable shadows. The nearer waves, though golden where their summits caught the light, were green on their slopes: first emerald and lower down a lustrous bottle green, deepening to blue where they passed

beneath the shadow of other waves. (...)

There was a wave ahead of him now so high that it was dreadful. We speak idly in our own world of seas mountain high when they are not much more than mast high. But this was the real thing. If the huge shape had been a bill of land and not of water he might have spent a whole forenoon or longer walking the slope before he reached the summit. It gathered him into itself and hurled him up to that elevation in a matter of seconds. But before he reached the top, he almost cried out in terror. For this wave had not a smooth top like the others. A horrible crest appeared; jagged and billowy and fantastic shapes, unnatural, even unliquid in appearance, sprouted from the ridge. Rocks! Foam! Beasts! The question hardly had time to flash through his mind before the thing was upon him. Involuntarily he shut his eyes. Then he found himself once more rushing downhill. Whatever it was, it had gone past him. But it had been something. He had been struck in the face. Dabbing with his hands he found no blood. He had been struck by something soft which did him no harm but merely stung like a lash because of the speed at which he met it. He turned around on his back again -- already, as he did so, soaring thousands of feet aloft to the high water of the next ridge. Far down below him in a vast, somentary valley he saw the thing that had missed him.

Well, this thing turns out, of course, to be one of the floating islands of vegetable matter, but this encounter between Ransom and the island is just impossible unless one or the other were under power, or unless the molecules of the water were moving in two opposite directions simultaneously. Lewis' interplanetary romances are very full of this kind of thing, his ideas about physics and astronomy are very unformed, and yet his stories are among the most vivid and irresistibly believable stories of interplanetary travel ever written.

Possible, or not, Lewis' Venus, and his Mars, project a unified picture which has all the sore authority because it isn't borrowed from anybody. It comes fresh out of Lewis' unconscious, and it's uniquely his. Now God knows this is hard to do, and in fact I think you have to be a mystic like Lewis to do it at all. But this is just one way to achieve the feeling I'm talking about.

Here's another one. I won't tell you the title and author to begin with; see how many of you recognize it.

This day when it had light mother called me a retch. You retch she said. I saw in her eyes the anger. I wonder what is a retch.

This day it had water falling from upstairs. It fell all around. I saw that. The ground of the back I watched from the little window. The ground it sucked up water like thirsty lips. It drank too much and it got sick and runny brown. I didn't like it.

Mother is a pretty I know. In my bed place with cold walls around I have a paper things that was behind the furnace. It says on it SCREENSTARS. I see in the pictures faces like of mother and father. Father says they are pretty. Once he said it.

And also mother he said. Mother so pretty and me decent enough. Look at you he said and didn't have the nice face. I touched his arm and said it is alright father. He shook and pulled away where I couldn't reach.

Today mother let me off the chain a little so I could look out the little window. That's how I saw the water falling from upstairs.

That's from "Born of Man and Woman" by Richard Matheson. Well, Matheson did it simply by getting inside his monster and staying there. The story is convincing because of its integrity, and because the very limitation of your vision in this story gives it a kind of instantaneous impact, like a series of horrific lantern-slides blinking on one after another.

Here's another one. The Sun Dial by Shirley Jackson. A woman is walking down a familiar path between hedges, in a mist, and everything somehow seems to have gone all wrong.

(...) Distantly, clouded, Aunt Fanny saw the hard whiteness of marble, and then through a break in the mist a narrow marble pillar. "Fancy," she cried out, moving forward and holding her hands guardingly before her, "where are you?"

"Here," Fanny called back.

"Where!"

"In the house."

The voice died away and Aunt Fanny, tangled in mist now, began to cry helplessly. "Fancy", she said.

"Aunt Fanny", but it came from far away.

Stumbling, Aunt Fanny went forward, hands out, and touched marble, but it was warm and she took her hand away quickly; hideous, she thought, it's been in the sun. Then she thought, why, this could be the summer house and I am only turned around; we could have strayed from the path and come into the garden by another way and that would be why it looked strange; this is certainly the summer house and it is silly of me to cry and stumble and be frightened. I shall go into the summer house, she thought, and sit down quietly on the bench, and when I have recovered myself I shall either call until Fanny finds her way to me -- the wicked girl, to run away so -- or I shall wait until this mist clears a little -- and it must, of course; it is an early morning mist, a trifle; the sun will sweep it away; I have been in fogs many times worse than this and never been frightened; it was only because it was unexpected; I shall sit in the summer house until I am able to go on. (...)

She stumbled, and put out her hand to catch herself against the marble pillar, but the mist cleared briefly and she saw that she had caught hold of the long marble thigh of a statue; standing soberly on his pedestal, the tall still creature looked down on her tenderly. The marble was warm and Aunt Fanny drew her hand back and screamed, "Fancy, Fancy!" There was no answer, and she turned and ran madly, putting her feet down on flowers and catching herself against ornamental bushes; "Fancy!" she screamed, taking hold of an outstretched marble hand besides her, "Fancy!" stopping just short of a yearning marble embrace, "Fancy!" and turned away crazily from a marble mouth reaching for her throat.

I've quoted these examples to try to show that the quality I'm talking about can be present in fiction all the way from realism to the purest fantasy. The best stories in Unknown had it, because those writers were able to convince you that the horrors they wrote about could be real, that they weren't just conventional sprites and goblins. I haven't exhausted all the possible ways of doing it, by any means. There are too many to count. But I can tell you one way you can't do it: You can't do it by taking your subject lightly, by kidding it, by being cute, by writing just for kicks or for money. You can't do it if you start out by assuming that what you're writing about is not to be taken seriously.

And science fiction magazines today are full of stories written with that attitude. These are pleasant little intellectual games -- nobody really believes in them, so why bother? Or else: science fiction is read by a bunch of clods whom I despise, so I will show my contempt by writing the kind of crud they like.

Now look. At eleven or thereabouts, a story like "The Meteor-Men of Plas" goes over great, because you haven't got the knowledge or experience to tell the difference. You read everything and you like just about everything. But then

as you get older you get finer discriminations, and you begin to notice that the science fiction you're reading is becoming sort of thin and superficial. You go on reading it, for the ideas, or partly out of habit, but sooner or later, perhaps in your twenties, you are likely to discover, to your disgust, that you have been debauching your mind with this pap. So you throw the magazine down and go look for a biography, or a book on psychology, or even a contemporary novel -- anything, so long as it has some content. And that is perhaps why even the fans today don't read science fiction and don't discuss it; that's why the bulk of the readership is made up of a floating population of teen-agers.

Now this is a bad situation, at least for the minority of us who care about science fiction that an adult can read without spending. And we writers have been contributing to it by knuckling down to editors who want clever triviality, or their own rambling ideas fed back to them, or anything but honest fiction.

I've been using the word "reality" here, and running the risk of confusing it with realism of the sweaty undershirt variety. But I want to say a word about that kind of realism, too, because I think it's something else that we too often overlook. In hack science fiction stories, almost invariably, you will notice that the hero has no father and no mother -- he was spontaneously generated in a clothes hamper -- no brothers or sisters, no relatives at all. He has no occupation, unless it's something glamorous like newspaper reporting or building a spaceship in a private laboratory. He has no religion. He has no politics -- the only time you ever hear the word mentioned is when a U. S. Senator comes into the plot to foul things up by his natural stupidity. He may have a girl friend, but if so she is a paper doll cut out of a love pulp magazine, and the hero's relations with her are as formal as a square dance but not as lively. He does not go to the bathroom, get his hair cut, go to the dentist, pick up his suit at the cleaner's. He doesn't get sick, unless it is some strange Martian disease.

Now heaven knows it would be a bore to read a magazine in which the characters did all these things and nothing else, but when they do none of them it's a sign that the writers have cut themselves off from real life. I want to call your attention to Heinlein's declaration, in the Advent: Publishers book, The Science Fiction Novel, that s-f is a branch of realistic fiction. It would be nice if we could try harder to earn that label.

The End

Errata for How Frontiers #2:

Cover: change 'JAN' to 'JUL'

page 4, line 14: change 'facts' to 'fact'

page 9, line 6: change 'unfortunated' to 'unfortunate'

page 12, heading: change 'IN' to 'FOR'

page 15, line 24: change 'locomotion' to 'locomotion'

page 23, line 34: change 'bak' to 'book'

page 25, line 42: change 'Get's' to 'Gets'

page 26, line 31: change 'and' to 'to'

page 29, line 1: change 'self' to 'himself'

page 31, line 3: change '56' to '46'

page 35, line 26: insert '44' before "This is!"

Arkham House

Enters Its Third Decade

August Derleth

Arkham House begins its third decade in a mood of cautious optimism, for, only so little as five years ago sales of Arkham House books had reached an all-time low, a figure which has been increased by tenfold at the beginning of the twenty-first year of existence for the only publishing venture of its kind in the English-speaking world, if not, indeed, in all the world. And it begins this third decade with the publication of a long-deferred book by one of the most popular authors in the domain of fantasy -- The Abominations of Yondo, by Clark Ashton Smith, in April, 1960.

But, no more than at its inception, illusions do not persist at Arkham House. It would seem to me folly to maintain that, because sales had increased by ten times over 1955, fantasy is on the threshold of a major resurgence. That there is a certain renewal of interest cannot be denied; so much is reflected in the supernatural and the macabre, for, growing up in a world of which technological advance has made much science fiction obsolete, it is the realm of the weird which offers the unchallenged frontier that space offered to the young reader two decades ago.

One curious development which has taken place over the past few years is a reversal of the sales pattern at Arkham House -- whereas in our early years, the summer months were the doldrum months for sales, now they have achieved pre-eminence; the June-September months regularly outsell any similar number of months in the year, whereas previously the October-February period was always held to be best in sales. If any speculation is to be made about this reversal, it may be that the dreadful fare on television during the summer months, with the constant reruns and the inferior material offered, has driven more and more people back to books.

Arkham House was not founded in any illusion about the wealth of readers willing to pay \$3.00 and more for collections of supernatural stories; and perhaps only because a hardheaded business policy was continued in Arkham House in existence today. Much as I, personally, would like to publish six to ten books a year under the Arkham House imprint, it is perfectly manifest to me that the trade -- that is, the direct mail buyers plus the book shops -- cannot absorb more than two titles in this field per year, in exceptional circumstances, perhaps three, for as long as Arkham House confines itself to two titles, its patrons will buy both, but extension of the list invariably results in selection of one or two titles and defections from the ranks of buyers for the others on the list, with the unhappy result that the entire line suffers.

Even so, it is today the active backlog which helps to keep Arkham House publishing. No single title at Arkham House in recent years -- with the possible exception of The Survivor and Others by H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth -- had enough advance sales and orders to permit payment of the printer's bill when it fell due, out of income from sales alone. For, if enough readers pre-paid for enough copies of each title as announced, there would, manifestly, be

more titles being published.

But if illusions have no place at Arkham House, it cannot be denied that illusions about Arkham House have flourished. One seems to be that publishing under the Mycroft & Moran and Stanton & Lee imprints has sapped the financial backbone of Arkham House. This is not quite true. Every Mycroft & Moran book published has paid for itself and is in the black. So have about half the Stanton & Lee list; such books as Bill's Diary, Evening In Spring, Oliver the Wayward Owl, Bright Journey, and Mind Over Wisconsin -- three of these reprints from plates bought from Charles Scribner's Sons the original publishers -- are well into the black. Indeed, Bright Journey has gone to press three times for a total of 4,588 copies, exceeding the print order for any Arkham House title. But books like Wisconsin Earth, a reprint trio, and Sac Prairie People, a book of new short stories in a serious vein (the most favorably reviewed book ever sent out by Arkham House-Mycroft & Moran-Stanton & Lee), are only about 50% paid for and thus remain in the red -- but not substantially. It will probably astonish some readers to learn that the slowest books to pay for themselves at Arkham House included one by a veteran science-fictioneer, The Throne of Saturn, by S. Fowler Wright, though A. E. van Vogt's Slap was one of the best selling Arkham House books.

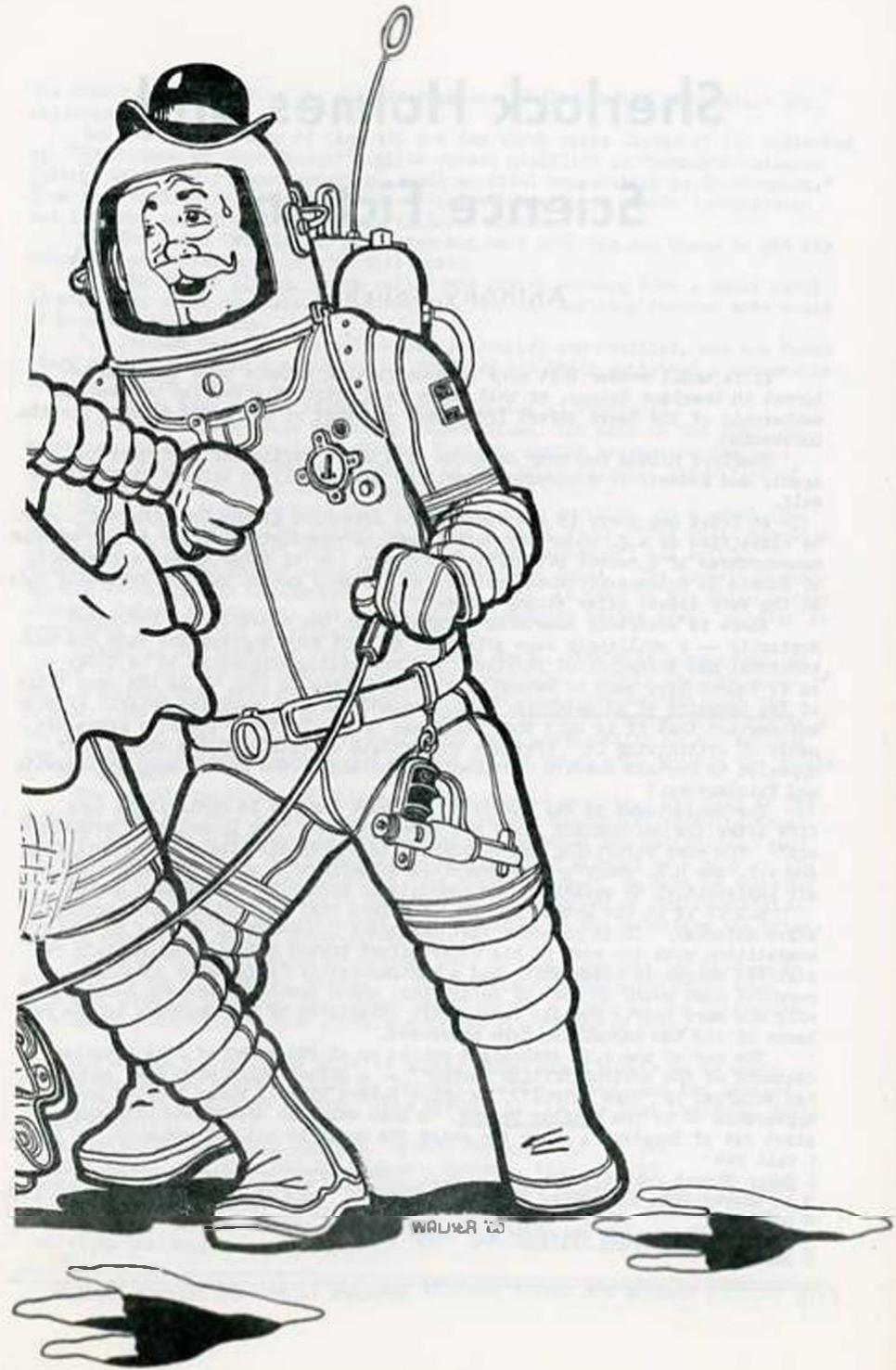
The best-selling authors at Arkham House have been comparatively few in number: H. P. Lovecraft -- of course, Ray Bradbury, Clark Ashton Smith, A. E. van Vogt, and perhaps Robert E. Howard. Selling almost as well under the Mycroft & Moran imprint have been my Solar Pons stories, each collection of which has met publication costs in record time after release -- The Return of Solar Pons, for example, within three months after publication! Yet these sales have not been such as to do more than cushion the costs of coming books, though the ideal situation would, of course, be for published books to earn enough to completely pay production costs of new titles. This does not happen, and is not likely to happen at a publisher so relatively small in operations as Arkham House, particularly in a time of spiraling costs.

The publishing program, as Arkham House ventures into its third decade, is ambitious, but cautiously so. We expect to follow, in October, 1960, our new Smith collection with the long-awaited vampire novel classic, Invaders from The Park, by Greye la Spina. We hope to begin 1961 with H. Russell Wakefield's Strangers From Sheol, and we expect to publish in 1961 also an anthology of new poems of the macabre entitled Whoats and Marvels. For this anthology material is currently being collected; such poets as Jesse Stuart, Leah Bodine Drake, Clark Ashton Smith, Donald Wandrei, George Abbe, Sydney King Russell, Dorothy Quick, Manly Wade Wellman, Lin Carter, Felix Stefanile, R. H. Barlow, Joseph Payne Brennan, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, Leslie Nelson Jennings, Joseph Joel Keith, Loring Williams, Frank Belknap Long, Vincent Starrett and others already have sent in new poems, for the most part not only not anthologized but never before collected in book form.

The immediate program beyond 1961 includes publication of my own The Trail of Cthulhu, if circumstances permit. The Reminiscences of Solar Pons -- with an introduction by Anthony Boucher and a chronology by Robert Patrick -- will come in late 1961; and then -- Pleasant Dreams, by Robert Bloch -- The Horror From the Hills, by Frank Belknap Long -- Worse Things Waiting, by Manly Wade Wellman -- and in 1962, twenty-five years after his death IF I can prepare the lengthy manuscript in time, the final, long-promised Lovecraft omnibus, the Selected Letters.

The remainder of the list promised in Arkham House: the First 20 Years must come after these titles -- and will, if Arkham House patrons continue to support this venture.

The End



Sherlock Holmes and Science Fiction

Anthony Boucher

It is small wonder that many science fiction authors have taken an interest in Sherlock Holmes, or that there is a noticeable overlap between the membership of the Baker Street Irregulars and that of any World Science Fiction Convention.

Sherlock Holmes had many contacts with s.f., particularly through the Agent; and indeed, to a certain extent, he actually lived science fiction himself.

At least one story in the Canon, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man", must be classified as s.f. under any definition: a speculation on the as yet unknown consequences of a recent scientific discovery. As to other direct experiences of Holmes in science-fictional matters we can only guess; but the available data, at the very least, offer strong hints.

There is assuredly something suggestive in the character of Professor Moriarty -- a chillingly sane scientist so much more horripilant than the conventional mad scientist of fiction. And how highly suggestive to us today -- as it cannot have been to Watson or even to Holmes in 1891 -- is the very title of The Dynamics of an Asteroid, "which ascends to such rarified heights of pure mathematics that it is said that there was no man in the scientific press capable of criticizing it" (Perhaps the British scientific press should have appealed to certain obscure continental scholars of the period such as Lasswitz and Taiolkovsky.)

For conjectures as to the nature of the book (and as to Moriarty's long life after the Reichenbach fall) see Robert Enoch's "The Dynamics of an Asteroid"² For more surprising conjectures as to a possible link between Moriarty and s.f. see H.W. Starr's "A Submersible Subterfuge"³, which attempts (not at all implausibly) to establish the identity of Moriarty and Captain Nemo.

But it is in the untold stories of Holmes that we find the most provocative material. It is possible that the Agent (conceivably wishing to avoid competition with the work of his other client Edward Malone) deliberately restricted Watson to cases which had a contemporarily "acceptable solution. A parallel case would be that of Solar Pons, whose agent Mr. Drelth published only his more nearly prosaic cases until stimulated by Mr. Reynolds to the release of the two chronicles here presented.

The ear of the s.f. enthusiast pricks up at the sound of "the singular contents of the ancient British barrow"⁴ -- a phrase which upon Poul Anderson has enlarged in "Time Patrol"⁵, in which Holmes himself makes a brief anonymous appearance -- or the Matilda Briggs, "a ship which is associated with the giant rat of Sumatra, a story for which the world is not yet prepared."⁶ (Has

¹ Vall 904

² Baker Street Journal, Oct. 1953, n.s. 3:4:225/233

³ In Leaves From the Copper Beeches, Harberth: Sons of the Copper Beeches, 1959

⁴ Gold 709

⁵ Fantasy and Science Fiction, May 1955, 8:5:3/34

⁶ Suss 1219

the time come yet in this age with so much more understanding of mutation and gigantism!)

But most fascinating of these all are the three cases listed at the beginning of "The Problem of Thor Bridge", which Watson qualifies as "complete failures (which) will hardly bear narrating, since no final explanation is forthcoming." I am sure that every Irregular knows by heart these three superb tantalizers; but I cannot resist quoting. These failures involved

"...Mr. James Phillimore, who, stepping back into his own house to get his umbrella, was never more seen in this world.

"...the cutter Alicia, which sailed one spring morning into a small patch of mist from where she never again emerged, nor was anything further ever heard of herself and the crew.

"...Isadora Persano, the well-known journalist and duellist, who was found stark staring mad with a match box in front of him which contained a remarkable worm said to be unknown to science."

Was there ever a more evocative brief catalog of Fortiana?

Quite aside from these Holmesian adumbrations, the name of the Agent remains immortal in the annals of science fiction, partly because he numbered among his other clients Edward D. Malone of the Daily Gazette, chronicler of the exploits of Professor George Edward Challenger (1863 -).

Well, to be more precise, chronicler of 3 such exploits, in a novel (The Lost World), a novella (The Poison Belt) and a short story ("The Disintegration Machine"). A longer short story ("When the World Screamed") was written by Malone's friend and former rugby teammate, Peerless Jones. The longest investigation attributed to Challenger, The Land of Mist, is told in the third person although Malone is present, and is probably a pastiche by the Agent, written as propaganda for his own spiritualistic beliefs.

Indeed we may probably date Challenger's death, otherwise unrecorded, as before 1926, date of the publication of this pastiche. Surely the Professor, more litigious than even Mr. Frankland of Laffer Hall, could never have refrained from bringing suit against the Agent for publicly "converting" him to a belief that he "had, in fact, for many years been unscientific in his methods, and a formidable obstruction to the advance of the human soul through the jungle of the unknown"⁷.

The Agent's pastiches of Holmes are variable in quality. The play of The Speckled Band may well be the best (and most nearly canonical) dramatic treatment of the Master; and the lighter near-parody sketches are delightful. And however vigorous may be our condemnation of The Crown Diamond as a play or its minutely preferable fictionization as "The Mazarin Stone", we must be thankful that the Agent was, as Kenneth Pearson has put it, "fonder of Challenger than of Holmes"⁸, and therefore refrained from bestowing on the detective the privilege of conversion to the spiritualist belief.

The authentic Challenger adventures are, in their own way, as impressive and enthralling as those of Holmes. I am not alone in the conviction that, were they also as numerous, Challenger would occupy a place in the literature of science comparable to that of Holmes in the literature of crime.

But we are too prone to think of Arthur Conan Doyle solely as an agent -- for Watson, Holmes himself, possibly Mycroft, Malone, Jones, and the descendants of Brigadier Etienne Gerard. (One wonders if, in the last instance, Doyle

⁷ Thor 1242-1243

⁸ The Professor Challenger Stories, London, Murray, 1952, p. 316

⁹ Conan Doyle: His Life and Art, London, Methuen, 1943, p. 165

¹⁰ This is a world of if which I explored in my novel Rocket to the Yarnup (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1942, as by H. H. Holmes), dealing with the heirs of the agent of the chronicles of Dr. Garth Dorringer, patently an American parallel to Challenger.

may have also acted as translator.) We forget too easily that Doyle was in his own right a magnificent storyteller — and some of his best stories, too, are science fiction.

Two in particular deserve especial commendation:

"Danger!" written in 1913, predicted with great prophetic accuracy, even in small details, the consequences of a submarine blockade which would prevent any food-ship of any nationality from reaching the British Isles. When it appeared in the Strand for July, 1914, naval officialdom dismissed the threat as meaningless. Admiral Sir Compton Doolittle, K.C.B., in an extraordinary instance of unintentional and exact compliment, felt "compelled to say that I think it most improbable, and more like one of Jules Verne's stories than any other author I know."¹¹

"The Horror of the Heights", an earlier story foretelling peril to aviators from a hitherto unencountered race of aerophagous altitude-dwelling monsters, is a fine example of a not too rare phenomenon in science fiction: a story which has been "outdated" factually by later discoveries, but which remains symbolically and poetically valid and still exciting.

Since Sherlock Holmes, then, lived surrounded by, and occasionally in the very thick of science fiction, s.f. writers are ever happy to pay tribute to him — as in these stories of his impact upon Americans in the future and upon the furry denizens of a remote planet, of his successor Solar Pons, his cousin Dr. Vermer and his Martian counterpart Svaloch (of the Street of Those Who Prepare Nourishment in Ovens) and of his triumphant survival when almost all else of human culture has perished.

The End

The foregoing article will serve as introduction to the soon-to-be-published hardcover book, The Science-Fictional Sherlock Holmes. The contents are

- "The Martian Crown Jewels" by Poul Anderson
- "The Adventure of the Misplaced Hound" by Poul Anderson and Gordon R. Dickson
- "The Adventure of the Snitch in Time" by August Derleth and Mack Reynolds
- "The Adventure of the Ball of Hoostradamus" by Derleth and Reynolds
- "The Anomaly of the Empty Man" by Anthony Boucher
- "The Greatest Tertian" by Anthony Boucher
- "The Return" by H. Beam Piper and John J. McQuire

In addition this article will appear in the July, 1960 issue of The Baker Street Journal.

The Science-Fictional Sherlock Holmes is available from

Robert C. Peterson
2845 South Gilpin Street
Denver 13, Colorado

for \$3.00, postpaid.

On the SF Screen

MIKE DECKINGER

Jules Verne never had it so good.

In the short space of six years, three of his novels have been adapted to the screen, with elaborate treatment. In 1954 it was Walt Disney's superlative Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea with James Mason scoring an outstanding portrayal of Captain Nemo. Two years ago there was the little known film version of From the Earth to the Moon starring Joseph Cotten, which strayed from the original Verne theme to bring in all sorts of nonsense that one finds today. And today, it is Journey to the Center of the Earth, which is undoubtedly the best screen adaptation of a Verne novel out.

This epic is given a complete spectacular treatment, released by Twentieth Century Fox, in Cinemascope and color. The fine cast includes James Mason, Arlene Dahl, Pat Boone and Peter Ronson. Evidently the build-up given to this picture was worth the effort, too, for it is the second highest grossing Cinemascope picture that 20th Century has made (the first was The Robe). And in addition, it is an unusually long picture running as it does for two hours and fifteen minutes.

The story manages to stick pretty close to the Verne novel, swerving only at times from the original plot. Professor Otto Lindenbrook (James Mason) accompanied by a young Scots student (Pat Boone), the widow of a recently murdered Swedish professor (Arlene Dahl, as the widow), an Icelandic guide (Peter Ronson) and a duck which goes by the name of Gertrude enter the volcano Sneeffels, hoping to follow a route blazed 300 years ago by Arne Saknussen, an explorer who entered the earth and was never seen again.

The color photography at first is dismal due to photographing obvious stage settings and could have been easily shot in black and white. As most openings do, the first 30 minutes or so are concerned mainly as an introduction to the characters we are to meet. The screenwriters have penetrated Verne's nearly deadpan style and added humor in many spots, which only serves to make the film more enjoyable. Wisely, there is not an excess of humor in this picture but just enough to keep you interested.

The little band go through many interesting experiences together: Mason and Boone are thrown in a warehouse full of duck feathers, they are chased by a rolling, thundering papier-mache rock in a cave on the way to the center of the Earth (which rock could have been avoided by climbing up the sides which was quite feasible at several points), and they are also pursued by the murderer of Miss Dahl's husband; a descendant of Saknussen who intends to claim the discovery for himself. He is a pure stereotype of all the villains you encounter in the movies, always seeming a little seamer and rougher than the next person.

However, once into the center of the earth, the magic that Hollywood has at its disposal is fully revealed. And what effects they are! The interior shots were photographed in Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico. Hollywood added chambers full of gems embedded in rock, underground seas, great gypsum deposits, huge mushrooms, and even monsters, most of which were in the book. But the monsters encountered below are merely anticlimactic, the other adventures overshadow the monsters' bellowing and ranting. (They are not models either, but actual lizards blown-up to the size of dinosaurs by trick photography.) The most these scaly beasts ever do is frighten the explorers and chase them. The monsters will prove interesting to the juvenile members of the audience, but we "oldsters" can pretty well ignore them. It seems no matter where you turn, these days, a whole flock of howling dinosaurs pop up.

The whole journey is one continuous exciting adventure from beginning to end. And (happily) Hollywood has resisted the temptation to have Miss Dahl become involved in a love triangle during the trip, and practically nothing is said of romance. We can be thankful for things like that. And we can also be thankful for Gertrude, the pet duck, who provides some entertainment on the way.

The finale, after the intrepid little band manages to survive a fierce buffeting on the sea in the center of the earth and are deposited in Atlantis, is ridiculous. Atlantis is magnificent and the special effects are superb, but the whole idea of being blown out of a volcanic crater in a giant sacrificial cup (which is what it resembled) and being propelled by a rising stream of escaping lava and gas is completely absurd. And that's what makes the ending so much fun.

Even though the ending couldn't happen, seeing it, on the screen was quite amusing. In fact, the whole film is extremely amusing. The thin edge of suspense that prevails manages to sustain interest in even the most uninterested film-goer. The magnificent sets should bring awe from those who attend the local cinemas once a month or so. The acting is competent, also, even if the duck is the champion scene-stealer of all time.

There were many brave things in the picture, such as the time the guide kills one of the dinosaurs with a steadily aimed spear, or when Pat Boone battles with the villain. However, in my opinion, the bravest thing of the entire film was James Mason speaking in a Scottish accent.

For those who must have romantic endings, Pat Boone returns to marry James Mason's daughter as promised in the beginning.

Even if you don't like science fiction movies, you should enjoy Journey to the Center of the Earth, which proves that with some skillful re-writing, an old classic can be dressed in its Sunday best to emerge as a thrilling new comer.

The End

VIEWPOINT

Volume 3
Number 2

SPRING 1960

Formerly PSI

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The Cold Eye

ARTHUR WILCOX

This is the first instalment of a regular fanzine review column.

I tried a review column once before, and derived from it nothing more than involvement in a number of minor-league feuds with indignant faneds and their partisans. No benefits whatever accrued to me. Still, I think I'll try it again. The first attempt was long ago and in another fandom, and besides, the sine is dead. I have, I believe, learned a few things since then, and I know that fandom has. There is a saturity today that was lacking then, and perhaps my well-meant criticism won't inspire the incredulous wrath that greeted my previous effort. And anyhow, I'm pretty sure I've learned something about tact since then.

You're entitled to know something about my view of fanzines and fanzine reviewing before I ask you to give attention to my pronouncements. I do not (repeat, do not) believe that a fanzine should be judged by the same standards that one would apply to, say, a new novel by Vladimir Nabokov — or even, for that matter, to a story in Galaxy. Our genre is sci. generalia, and I think ought to be judged on its own terms. But understand me: to judge fan publishing on its own terms does not mean to be kind to juvenile ideas or slovenly language or puerile feuding or bad grammar. We have, in our microcosm, superior writers of prose like Warner and Grennell and Willis, and learned men like Boggs, and perceptive and sensitive editors like Raeburn, and querulous grammarians like Leman, and verse technicians like Rapp, and informed critics like Busty. These examples make it plain that there is a high enough standard within fan publishing for us to make judgments on our terms. In this store, fanzines will be judged not against Shakespeare and Homer, but against the best fanzines. And it seems to me that that is setting a sufficiently selective touchstone.

As to policy: APAsines will not be reviewed, except in the case of generalzines which are included in APA mailings, as Stiefantasy. Cosmine and the occasional Orus. Many sines will receive no mention, since I think it's better to use the available space to say what ought to be said about a few sines than to dole out twenty words each to every one that comes to hand. I think that incomparably the best fanzine review column in the business is Harry Warner's in Cosmala, and I will, as a matter of policy, ape certain features of Harry's column. I shall not be concerned with quality of reproduction, except where it is unwholesomely illegible or where illustration is the point of the publication; it has long struck me that a finical concern with reproduction quality has long been characteristic of the very worst reviews. And I shall use no numerical rating system. If I can't get my opinion across by using words, I have not any business writing this column.

New Frontiers, of course, is a quarterly magazine, and each instalment of this column will therefore have a three months' accumulation of fanzines to review. It follows that the monthly magazines will usually have three copies on hand, and so their individual issues will probably not receive their just dues. This is the case with Cry of the Nameless (Elmer Busty, Box 92, 920 Third Avenue, Seattle 4, Washington, 25¢ or 5/\$1.00). Numbers 135, 136 and 137 are on hand for review, and since these three issues total a staggering 214 pages, it's clear that a detailed resume is impossible.

No. 135 is Cry's 10th anniversary issue, and runs to a sumoth 102 pages. The other two are, respectively, 46 and 66 pp. Eighty-one pages of all this Gostetnering are taken up with "The Ooon Goes West", John Berry's travelogue-on-report, and it would be hard to find a better use for eighty-one pages. Berry is affable, modest, ingratiating, and clearly filled with a sense of wonder at being in Detroit and crossing the U.S. and visiting Seattle. This account seems certain to be one of fandom's classics, and cannot be too high-

Blotto Otto co-authored the conreport THE COLD EYE in Psi-Phi #4, ok BOP1 17

ly recommended.

The rest of the material in these Cry's pages ranges from outstanding to unreadable; but the Berry narrative can carry any amount of inferior matter. You ought to read Cry of the Nameless.

Also on hand are Nos. 49, 50, 51 and 52 of Fanac (Terry Carr, 1818 Grove Street, Berkeley 9, California or Ron Ellik, Apt. #6, 1909 Francisco Street, Berkeley 9, California; 4/25¢ or 9/50¢). There's not much left to say about this indispensable newsletter. It won -- and deserved -- the Hugo. What is there to add? Only this: if you aren't a subscriber, send in a subscription now. You'll more than get your money's worth in the riders alone. These four issues, for example, carry the following riders: Gambit's # 33 & 34; Hobgoblin # 2, 3 & 4; and Fanachronis #2 -- all good stuff, by, respectively, Ted White, Terry Carr and Dean Grennell.

Next we have Digit #1, free from Theodore R. Cogswell. The circulation is limited, Ted says, "to SF writers and a few personal friends," so I'm not going to enter the address. But it'll be worth your while if you can get hold of a copy.

This is a continuation of Ted's PITFCS Special Series, but it's considerably more ambitious than its predecessor. Gone is the ditto; instead we have an exceptionally neat quarter-size, photo-offset magazine of twenty-four pages. (I guess it's photo-offset; here's what IRC says about his reproduction: "Actually the production process is quite painless -- I just snap a picture and then push a button... And, since the cost of this is almost nil -- I can get four pages on a single photostencil -- I can send it out for free.")

Most of the issue is by Cogswell, himself; he has written verse ranging from a blues to a fascinating exercise in verbal pyrotechnics and puns a' la Annexan's Wax, and a couple of avant garde vignettes, and a legitimate tongue-in-cheek set of Freudian "Notes Toward a Definition of Science Fiction" and an exceedingly clever satire on theology called "Hints as to the Nature of The Loved One." He also sets a competition called "The Little Eben Gambit", in which readers are invited to write verses after the fashion of a blasphemous quatrain of Cogswell's.

Ted has a blazing wit and a facile and talented pen and an immense fund of learning. But he has also a great fault in his sophomoric choice of subject matter. Blasphemy and bawdiness, however funny, can become tedious when you're helped to too large a portion. Nevertheless, this represents one of the high points in the current bundle for review.

Year after year YAPA has voted William Rotzler its best artist. The reason why is clearly evident in two new books of Rotzler cartoons, Son of the Tailcoated Dragon and The Tailcoated Dragon Meets the Wolfman. These books tempt one to make comparisons with Thurber and Steig and Abner Dean, and indeed there are superficial points of resemblance. But Rotzler is, on the whole, entirely individual, with a wit and style all his own. He consistently manages to say some pretty wise things in some pretty funny cartoons, and you could do worse with a couple of bucks than to buy these books. They're expertly stencilled and beautifully printed (presumably on the LASPS Gestetner) by Ernie Wheatley.

Yandro (Robert & Juanita Coulson, Route #3, Nabash, Indiana; 15¢ or 12/(\$1.50) goes on and on (we have #'s 84 & 85 here) without ever being spectacularly good or spectacularly bad. One sometimes wonders why it is that an editor who possesses the critical abilities Coulson demonstrates monthly in his review column should regularly turn out so undistinguished a fanzine. I have yet to see an issue of Yandro that made me cheer. On the other hand, I have yet to see one that was unreadable. Yandro is a dependable middle-of-the-road kind of fanzine.

It did, however, deviate from its placid normality in number 84, when, for the first time within the ken of man, it carried a rider. This was an eight-page printed curiosity called Pal, issued by something styling itself LyzoPublications. You are strongly urged to avoid this oddity.

Triode #17 (Eric Bentcliffe & Terry Jeeves, 47, Alldis Street, Great Moor, Stockport, Cheshire, England; 20¢ or 6/(\$1.00) seems to me to be fairly typical of the current Transatlantic fanzines. It's beautifully reproduced on a fine grade of paper, it's satisfactorily thick (38 pp.). It's expertly laid out, it's profusely and skillfully illustrated and it's very dull.

Just why this should be true is difficult to explain but there it is. John Berry and Bentcliffe and Jeeves and Harry Warner and "Penelope Fandergaste" and George Locke are presented, and you'd think that something sparkling would result, but somehow it fails to come off. One wearies, after a time, of the ingrown faanishness of so many of the English fanzines, and there is a special café that results from the millionth account of one Britfan's visit to another, or to a place of historical interest.

Kind you, I'm not saying that all English fanzines are dull. I have now before me a notable exception, Agorapha #15 (H.P. Sanderson, "Inchmerry", 236 Queen's Road, New Cross, London, S.E. 14, England; 20¢ or 6/(\$1.00). This, I think, is one of the top sines being published on either side of the Atlantic. It's consistently lively, literate and interesting, and in addition there's usually enough controversy in an issue to add spice to the dish. (Sandy and Ted White are still at it, by the way.) As is usual, the best part of the current issue is "Inchmerry Fan Diary", which I consider to be the best regular feature in any fanzine. If you don't get Ag, I think you should.

Back on this side of the water, we find PROPENSITY #7 (Bruce Pelz, 980 Figueroa Terrace, Los Angeles 12, California; 15¢ for a sample copy) and all thanks are due editor Pelz for unearthing and printing Bloch's 1951 Holacon speech. This was the speech in which Bloch flayed the press for its "humorous" treatment of SF conventions. Why, asked Bloch, should a science fiction convention invariably be ridiculed while plumbers' and bird-watchers' conventions receive straightforward handling? The speech is funny, but it also makes its point in no uncertain terms, and I'm most happy to see it in print.

The rest of the sine is something of a letdown, with two reprint items and yet another Gilbert and Sullivan parody. The letter column is a good one, though, and the magazine is very well edited indeed. If Pelz doesn't burn out he will, I predict, and as one of the very top faneds.

Stefantasy #44 (William M. Danner, R.D. #1, Kemmerdell, Pennsylvania; "Price seven shillings, except for your copy which is free") is a thing of beauty. The usual superb Danner printing is here, and an ATOM cover in color, and one of Grennell's very finest columns, and several of Danner's famous satirical advertisements. There's also one of the funniest things I've seen in years, a photo of a monument to Brigham Young, which bears an inscription that must be seen to be believed. Stef is unquestionably one of the finest things in fandom, and is recommended without reservation.

ARRA #9 (George Solithers, Bx 52, Eatontown, New Jersey; 20¢/1, 6/(\$1.00) is all about Conan the Barbarian, Robert E. Howard's pulp hero. I can best review it by quoting the book report of a fourth-grader who was assigned a book about birds: "This book tells me more about birds than I care to know." That's how I feel about ARRA and Conan. But if you think you'd enjoy worshipful exegesis of the Howard canon, ARRA is for you.

By anybody's standards, Gregg Calkins' Copala is one of the top fanzines; number thirty is due, but Gregg hasn't had time to produce it. He has, however, put out an interim publication, appropriately entitled Interim 29/30, as he says, a "peace offering". Most of the sine's five pages are taken up by Walt Willis' "The Harp That Once or Twice", and the rest by Gregg's always-interesting editorializing. You'll like this one.

And this, scientifiction fans, exhausts both myself and the editor this time around. The following zines have been slighted and should do better with their next issue: Ellis Mills' UR #7; Bill Donaho's Habakkuk #1; Weber & Pfeifer's WRR #4; and Bob Lichtman's Pal-Phi (First Amish). There are also a few which should receive unfavorable notice, but they shall remain nameless.

Until next issue, then.

The End

THE COLD EYE

FORTHRIGHTLY

Letters

Morris Dollens, 4372 Coolidge Avenue, Los Angeles 66, California

Dear Norm,

A short reply to Mr. Carr in your last issue, if it isn't too late. There are a lot things I don't care for, such as oyster stew and be-bop and other musical monstrosities, but I try to avoid them, tho I'll admit to occasional violent spells of grumbling on such things, despite my feelings that others may like such things.

I have as yet to see a satisfactory definition of art, or as Mr. Carr would probably have it, Art. I can't claim to be well schooled in art, having had only one year at the Minneapolis School of Art, 20 years ago, and I did not do much art work for almost 8 years afterward. Then I got involved in doing some sketches for astronomical films. Many of the paintings sold at conventions are the result of these comparatively simple bits of work. The fact that I have learned to turn out a satisfactory design in a couple of hours enabled me to turn a few dollars when I needed them. These cover paintings were the scenes from the film work and since they were to be seen only a few seconds on the screen, they are to be viewed in sequence, and certainly don't look arty alone. But I feel that they are interesting, simple designs, and certainly some people must like them, for I have sold almost 500 of the things. (I can hear a shudder up San Francisco way -- to misquote a famous saying, "Somebody up there doesn't like me!) Maybe there are those people who just can't see anyone doing so much work, obviously of only moderate quality, but consider that much of it was done to make a few dollars -- and there is no profit in doing a painting that takes a week and selling it for an average of \$10, and then giving the con a cut of 1/3, paying for materials, shipping, etc.

I talked with Ron Cobb on his art work -- he did not know how much time he spent on his work, but I imagine most of his better paintings take upwards of 30 to



40 hours -- doing such for amateur mags is not economically worthwhile, unless the painting is done for some other purpose, and the fanpub is an extra give-away. This is not even a practical amount of time to put in on a pro-mag cover that brings in about \$100 minus shipping, materials and a \$15 agent's fee and such. But of course Mr. Carr is talking about Art, not making a living -- this can get involved so I'll save it for another time.

I'd be the last one in the world to say I have reached the ultimate in anything, for I am trying to learn, within the time and energy I have -- and both are running out. Once I was young and ambitious, but after being cheated and chiseled by customers in filmwork, photo and portrait shops, fan publishers who ordered \$25 photo-montages and then finally paid \$1 on account, never to be heard from again, such things as Mr. Carr's comments don't mean much to me. I presume he prefers mathematical designs as art, or perhaps the incoherent "modern" blobs now being passed off as Art -- or just the feeble fan art consisting of gun-slinging young men in tights so often depicted in fan mags.

I realize that the limitations of reproduction of any of the fanmags, especially the mimeographed ones seems to limit the quality of any artist shown. I've done such much decorating of cardboard that some fan might be pleased to know I will be making some changes -- from now on, all my work will be done on Masonite. Some old paint, some old paintings, new base material. This ought to evoke some comment.

I hope you are able to continue the magazine -- despite the critics' comments, I think you are doing quite a job while being stationed in your service position, so this considered, keep at it, and if you only get your own satisfaction out of it, and some experience, and a few readers who enjoy the booklet, that is something of value. It's an expensive hobby, and I hope yours pays for itself in time. Perhaps later, when you are out of the service, the experience will prove of further value -- the little magazine I put out some 23 years ago gave me some pleasant moments and experiences, tho I am ashamed of the results now, of course.

Sincerely,
Morris

Frank D. McSherry, Jr., 314 West Jackson, McAlester, Oklahoma

Dear Sir:

The first issue was superb and better than the second. I liked the Roy Hunt cover better than the Dollens, tho' both were fine. Fewer letters, please. One or two illos, if the quality of them can be kept as high as your covers' quality, would add to the magazine. I wouldn't list the typos in the previous issue -- you're printing a fan magazine, not a legal contract. Most of the typos were trivial and the meaning clear to the reader without any list of "Errata" in the next issue.

It seems to me that the strength of *LF* is in its articles, informal, thoughtful, and informed. R. B. Johnson's and Mark Clifton's were outstanding. I would like to see more of these, or rather of that quality. The book review section should be kept small and the fan mag reviews even smaller. The Andersen article was best in the second issue. Thanks for the comment on the Fitzroy Verne -- it may save some money for many fans.

How about a section on books not known to many fans -- books of high quality such as Zimatin's *We* or Tokavig's *Last Devil* or Flecker's *Marie* -- reviews of good books of the past as well as the present? I had hardly heard of the first until a reprint came out and Knight so enthusiastically reviewed it in *F&SF*. How many others are there like that I've missed? Perhaps a dept.-- "My Favorite Unknown Book"! This boasting of book reviews is not to imply, by the way, any contradiction of my preference for articles, long and strong ones. How about a

series of photo-reproductions of the covers of first issues of, say, Atounding, and other early collectors' items? Just suggestions--.

Best of luck to you and your fine magazine -- you're doing a swell job.

Sincerely yours,
Frank D. McSherry, Jr.

Shelby Vick, P.O. Box 493, Lynn Haven, Florida

Dear Norm:

First, let me officially welcome you and MF to Florida. (The Florida C of C appointed me an official ambassador of good will, so I'm duly qualified.

Next, let me argue with Bob Lichtman. Specifically when he was defending modern s-f and intimating it's as good as old TNS, SS and ASF stories. Says he, "...if you were to go back and re-read Startling and T&S and ASF...would you really enjoy them as much as you did then?"

Now, strangely enough, that is exactly what I have been doing! As the current crop of sf has been dwindling. (I'm referring to quality, not quantity.) I've been going back in my collection and digging out old mags: SS, TNS, ASF, F&SF and even Planet Stories. My memory being what it is, I can re-read old stories that I once read and greatly enjoyed, and still recall either little or none of it; seldom enough to ruin reading it over. You know something? Even an old Planet usually has more interesting stories in it than any four or five mags you might pick out from your newsstand! Nobody's trying to turn up new thoughts any more, or new twists to old thoughts. And while I was digging back, I also found a stack of old fanzines. In a January '52 So I found a column that pretty well predicted the current trend. Forthwith, a few quotes.

"The truth of the matter is, the only way the world could suddenly take in science fiction is by a sudden change in sf -- science fiction cannot convert the world; the world, instead, will convert sf. ... Publishers, their eyes naturally on the dollar sign, are changing sf to suit the public, which is the only way. But whenever the new sf has spread over the world, and everybody knows what it is, we'll ((fandom)) still be in the same boat. People will understand what they're reading then, but they would probably be as blank as ever if you handed 'em a '48 Atounding." (Incidentally, the title of this sparkling column so imbued with foresight was "Shelby Vick". You can decide for yourself who the columnist was.)

Unfortunately, sf has about gotten there. Nearly anyone could pick up the average sf mag and read thru it. They might not enjoy the stories, because they prefer Star Trek Post or Fala, but they should have little or no difficulty in understanding them. What! You say this is because science has caught up with sf? But this is the same thing! Like in Fredric Brown's What Mad Universe! -- if the common people understand space tales, this means that they are now only stories, adventure tales, NOT science fiction. True sf should be full of imaginings far beyond the average ken.

(And by the way -- what HAS happened to fantasy? The once-great F&SF is now F&SF, and about all else there is consists of -- ugh! -- Shock. Are there no more burlesques?)

ShelVic

((Thanks for the welcome to Florida. I'm sure Wally Weber appreciates your defense of Planet Stories. As for what happened to fantasy try some issues of Science Fantasy, from England. At least there is one mag which tries to preserve fantasy.))

William F. Temple

Dear Norm,

I read with interest what I could understand of Poul Anderson's defence of fictional science. When I got to parts like "I finally compromised on 3c/4. This means a proton kinetic energy of 466 Mev and mass of 1.5 times rest..." I skipped lightly over them. Ideally in the view of Campbell-Anderson-Gernsback types (henceforth "CAOs"), I should have reached for wet towels and textbooks on physics and mugged it all up.

However, experience teaches that more than likely it would be a waste of time. Long ago Verne had me conscientiously chasing wild geese over the technical data on his space-gun. Nothing is quite so impossible as yesterday's disproved scientific theories. Alice In Wonderland is more possible. Any purely fantasy story is. I've a hunch that the wind of time will soon blow Poul's paper spaceship onto the scrapheap -- the only form of propulsion it's likely to get.

This'll not stop CAOs from producing these mental exercises nor technical types from enjoying every figure of them. Arthur Clarke used to try to bully me into appreciating them, cracking me on the skull with his slide-rule. Wasted fury. They wouldn't take.

On the other hand, my attention is held without exhortation by the changing patterns of light thrown on the eternal verities, on human emotions, and human and non-human relationships by s-f stories.

I'd be irritated by an author who purports to be telling a story about a group of characters on a train and keeps dropping the narrative to wander on about piston rods, exhaust ports, feed pipes and regulating valves. After all, the story's the thing -- if you're looking for a story.

It all boils down to what you're looking for -- a mental or an emotional experience. Some people prefer detective stories replete with maps and time-tables -- abstract problems. Other prefer Raymond Chandler -- and human problems. Some prefer Mozart, others Tchaikovsky.

Perhaps there should be a new magazine especially for CAOs -- called Amazing Theories. Let them there expound their super-drives, over-drives, under-drives and so on, minus the functionless ornaments, dangling like dolls from the Christmas tree of Theory, which the author pretends are actors in a drama.

In short, story-tellers should write with pens and not with slide-rules.

All the best,
yrs Bill Temple

Allen Bass, 1-D-J Wadsworth Street, East Hartford 8, Connecticut

Dear Norm:

Well, I have a few comments and so I'll go thru once again the January New Frontiers (listed as the June issue on contents page). Enjoyed the whole issue as I anticipated. You improve New Frontiers with every issue, your back-log seems to be nearly used up, at least I noticed nothing that was obviously dated. Not that I did not enjoy the slightly dated material in your first. I did! The articles were excellent.

Mr. Ted E. White's letter seemed a bit needless. No one can keep track of all the various titles used in fandom publishing. If your title had been Stellar he would have had a very good point in protesting, but only your organization used the name Stellar Enterprises. To be correct and on a similar basis I think Hugo Gernsback could protest. He used it long before Mr. White ever issued Zin

or Stellar. Hugo Gernsback used it in the early 30's. Any one can easily check this. Mr. White states he copyrighted several issues. But, I see you have copyrighted everything so far, and I'm under the impression Mr. Gernsback did, too. Basically it strikes me that copyrights don't really enter into the matter at all, but, because you used the word "Stellar" in a secondary phrase, a word that is certainly common enough in our field, Mr. White expects you to change the title of your publishing house. Confusion, he says -- hum? How many professional magazines have used titles such as Cosmic, Fantastic, Fantasy, Future, Space, or Science Fiction? They were used prominently in the actual titles of magazines and not in a remote way such as the publishing houses. Plenty of confusion there at times, but I've seldom heard of editors objecting or trying to get the others to change their titles. Perhaps I'm being a little harsh, but it seems to me his whole attitude is a little preposterous. Noticed his mention of ... (quote) ... and a number of others noted for professional material. (end of quote.) Perhaps he wrote this letter without ever seeing New Frontiers, because I believe de Camp, E. S. Evans, Mark Clifton, Poul Anderson, Mr. Olsen, Jr. and Mr. Coblenz are not exactly in the minor leagues.

Well he didn't say you had to, he just asked!

Bob Olsen, Jr.'s article was my favorite of the issue. Unfortunately, I came from years after Mr. Olsen and so have read little by him. The few I have read I liked as a whole. Many authors write science fiction for idealistic reasons as expressed by Mr. Olsen and because they like it... and don't stop to think about how big their check will be. Authors like this stayed with the field through times more trying than I can imagine and helped more than one magazine become a standard by accepting the much lesser pay rates when they could have gotten much more from other fields.

Your book reviews are the top as usual. One you missed is Joseph Payne Brennan's The Dark Returners published by Macabre House in New Haven, Conn. There are nine stories in this little horror-collection, all very good. The book is high priced -- \$3.00 published without a jacket -- and contains only 70 pages and is limited to 150 copies.

Your book reviews are a real service, as are the fanzine reviews.

Sincerely,
Allen Baes

((Ted White had a legitimate complaint and was entitled to have something done about it. Granted, there has been a lot of duplication between prozine titles and formats, but that doesn't excuse any of it. The reason for not reviewing The Dark Returners was that it was sold out prior to publication and with only 150 copies there was not much chance of anyone acquiring a copy.))

Edmund R. Maskys, 723A, 45th Street, Brooklyn 20, New York

Mr. Metcalf:

"Paper Spaceship" was very good -- I never noticed or appreciated these fine points while reading the story. However, I have one question: With the matter-transmitter on board, was it really necessary for the ship to carry all of its fuel? Couldn't it restock via this gadget every so often and save on the tanks; it seems to me that no matter what the cost of transmission, this should so cut down the ship's size that it would be more economical. (The ship could hold a week's supply, a month's or even enough for one complete maneuver (such as acceleration to $v/c = 3/4$, or deceleration) to save transmission time and lining up; even in the last case the mass ratio would drop from 17.8 to 4.35.) The next two items were interesting, but I find nothing in them to comment

on -- except that Anderson does to some extent refute Coblenz by showing that at least a few authors are interested in science fiction.

Good lettercol too, but if you do use interior illos as suggested, don't go overboard and leave out all the text! Two or three interiors should be enough.

I thot #1 was just so-so, but that #2 was great! Keep up the good work -- we need a mag like yours, now that Inside comes out once every year or two. You could vary your title headings a little, tho.

Best of luck,
Ed Maskys

John Pesta, 619 Greenleaf Street, Allentown, Pennsylvania

Dear Norma,

I'd like to thank you very much for sending me New Frontiers. In general, it's a very good effort, and my comment will run, to some orderly degree, from cover to cover.

And I wasn't overwhelmed by the front one! You, having the means to put out good illos, should not have to settle for tripe like that Dollens thing. First off, the formula cover has walked greener pastures, having long devoured any virtue as a thought-provoking of illustration. Dollens picked, moreover, a formula that is, I would say, the most hackneyed of any -- there are only about three that merit this order. Yet I'm wondering how and where in this physical universe the rock that his ship is sitting on could be located. It must be one heck of a big planet or whatever to see two galaxies spinning like that in the background. The galaxies are probably dwarfs themselves. Or else my perspective is all wrong! Now it seems that I must say this: if provoking thought is needed to make good of illos, then maybe - just maybe - Dollens has it, since if nothing else, he made me think. But reason should outweigh "why-not-ness" in your type fan -- this I will take up below.

Poul Anderson argues for more science foundations in fiction stories and goes on to write a five page science column, nothing short of a tragedy. I believe the only thing that kept me going through the first few pages (two or three) was a hint at the author's reasons or methods for writing this sort of thing -- perhaps this eventually came, but I gave up hoping. Then, to top off a dull quarter hour of this, upon turning to the last page in quest of a summary of sorts (OK, this is cheating...) I discover that this story has appeared over a year ago, and what I have been reading in favor of the tale, is of a long-dead work. Naturally I'd never seen this astounding in which his tale appeared. There will be those that claim that I can't comprehend Anderson's deep science, or my mind is so wandering that concentration is entirely wanting. Both, to an extent, are true; I argue that Poul was too technical in his article, and could have used (should have) a more literary style -- at least some kind of style -- in writing his column. Someday I'll try again, but for now it's a wasted attempt.

Bob Olsen, on the other hand, was nothing short of delightful. It was one of the smoothest autobiographical sketches a person could ask for, and I was feebly stunned to, upon finishing the article, count six pages of material. It seems Olsen made excellent use of that style fans demand when reading a straight fact -- this kind of fact -- article, and perhaps Bob's association with fandom was his mainstay here. It seems Olsen actually sat down with the purpose of writing a good article for fans. This he really did, whereas Anderson seems to be writing at the readers, rather than for them. Now, it strikes me that I might be seeming unfair to Poul. I don't know really just for whom the article was intended. But being that it appeared in a fanzine, it seems only natural that it was intended for fans, and should have been presented in a lighter style.

Coblentz opens with a sentence that I thought was simply terrific. "...there are no such things as the old science fiction and the new; there is only science fiction..." and he goes on to qualify his statement with a zoological analogy. This is great, and it bears with it much import. SF, thought of as a literary device always dragging itself (mostly dragging) through the past decades, and always hinting at new schemes, prognosticating new vistas, is nothing short of classical material. I believe it was Olson who said that sf fans were seldom amazed at new developments in applied science, and were among the first to obtain them if put on the market. In these points, it would seem, the authors were practically coached in their articles, so interrelated are they.

I depart from Coblentz's views, though, when he demands a strong backlog of science for a story. I'm not for this, and many a time a story is ruined when it is written for science and not fiction. Then again I'll never like a story more because there's some science in it. This can only make it worse -- a good fantasy story: imaginative and psychological will always rate a warmer berth with me.

The letters were mostly interesting, though if the crowd of pros who wrote you continue to do so, your column will look like a fannish "who's who upstairs". I agree with everyone who wants an editorial. This is absolutely necessary! There is nothing better than a small page or two of your convictions -- miserable or whatnot -- to get a reader into the mood of the zine. You'll have to install this in future issues -- and not that scabby thing on the last page.

In summary, you need a longer editorial, definitely interior artwork, and up-to-date columns: no more of this Anderson stuff! Looking forward to the next ish and the Darleth article, I am

Sincerely yours,
John Festa

((According to Dollens his scene is located at the end of the universe. Regardless of this, it is nowhere stated that Dollens has so depicted a literal transcription of reality. If imagination is to be ruled out of illoes where would we be? As for your reactions to Anderson's piece see some of the other letters in this ish. And what's so much of a crowd about two pros? Editorials are too much work and there probably won't be one in this ish.))

Shangri-L'Affaires, 980) White Knoll Drive, Los Angeles 12, California

Terra House
P.O. Box 336
Berkeley 1,
California

Dear ~~Shangri-L'Affaires~~ Lurking,

We know very well to whom this letter is going, and its destination and purpose will be quite clear.

In the latest delivery of mail from the United States Post Office, there appeared copies of New Frontiers with the above address. The address seems to be from "California".

We'd like to inform you that we have been publishing both effectively and ineffectively since the late '30's a fanzine with the return address including the word "California", which has thus far seen 125 issues, in general circulation. The title has been changed to protect the guilty and to carry on feuds. Many issues were not only large, but were of a general nature as other club fanzines

were very thoroughly absorbed. During this period, we have printed articles, stories, and artwork by E.E. Evans, Mel Hunter, Ed Clinton, Albert Kernhuter, Henry Kuttner, Forrest J. Ackerman, A.E. van Vogt, Robert Heinlein, Norman D'Avenue, Jerome Bixby, John W. Campbell, Jr., George W. Fields, Bob Bloch, Wilson Tucker, Harry Warner, Jr., Marion Zimmer Bradley, Fritz Leiber, E.S. Smith, Ph.D., Laurence Durney, Mark Clifton, Chad Oliver, Theodore Cogswell, Ray Bradbury and a number of others noted somewhat for professional material. To obtain a quasi protection for this publication would be impossible.

Granted that copyrights cannot cover a word alone, the fact remains that for close to 25 years, and over a total of at least 125 issues, our fanzines have been using "California" in our address, and its content in many ways overlapped that projected for New Frontiers. Mainly, you are using the English language, paper, stamps, and fandon.

Therefore, we are asking that you consider changing the name of your return address, or whatever, to something different -- perhaps more appropriate to the title of your fanzine. We are not about to issue lawsuits over the matter, but it does seem only fitting in avoiding confusion.

Whatever your decision, we would appreciate hearing from you on this (as well as unmasking who lurks behind that imposing title).

Yerz,
U.S.S. John Trimble,
Editor

Ted White, 107 Christopher Street, New York 14, New York

Dear Norm,

The second issue of NF received, and I am prompted to a number of comments, plus a couple of contributions.

I notice little signs of imperfection here... the cover date is "Jan 60" and at the top of the contents page it says "June 1960"... some of the right-hand margins don't quite stay even... the ink is a rather washed-out grey... but other than these signs that you're still going at it for the first couple of times around, the zine measures up pretty well. I've already told you what I think of those horrible out-of-line and ragged headings... I hope you'll avail yourself of arttype or someone else's services in this respect.

The letter looks stuffy in retrospect, but since I had no idea who would be on the receiving end, it was the best I could do. I always feel much better when addressing an individual than some faceless entity -- the letter brings out the "business-correspondence" in me. I'm glad in any case that there were no hassles... and the apology was unnecessary.

The material itself seems to follow a central theme, as each author bemoans in his own fashion the lack of science in sf today. Odd, is it not, that the leading "science" mag, ASFA, has fostered more anti-science fiction in the last several years than any since the Shaver Amazing. Anderson's article is quite dated, but very interesting, since I only recently read the Bertley book of The Energy Stars. Anderson makes it quite obvious why most sf is not this thoroughly thought-out: it is painfully time-consuming, and many authors (most of those in Campbell's stable) are simply not well enough equipped. Speaking personally, I find it just about impossible to write a good science fiction story -- I can't even plot one. If I needed all this, I'm sure that even if I could plot and write that well, I'd still be stumped.

But the sad fact is that this is nothing new. Very few sf stories have ever been as well-thought-out as Poul's or Bob Olsen's. Jules Verne was a freely imaginative person who did not allow even the science of his time to dissuade him, and even those "scientifically accurate" Gernsback Amazing and Wonders were

check full of impossibilities or simply amusing fantasies. Even many of Olsen's stories, particularly the fourth-dimensional ones, fall into the "science fantasy" category. I find it amusing that even today scientists like Hoyle when writing "science fiction" tend towards inconsistent fantasies (like Quasian's Ride). The giants of the ASF 1939-43 era, Heinlein, van Vogt, Asimov, Kuttner, etc., wrote a great deal more "science fantasy" than "straight" sf. Their stories seemed plausible, which was all that was necessary. Today we have Blish's Triumph of Time -- a very "scientific" story -- in which the "science" is, I have been assured by those educated enough to know, sheer gobbledegook. It may help Anderson to scientifically plot out his backgrounds and devices, but so long as he can write a convincing story, I don't care how he does it. I enjoy his flatly impossible "Time Patrol" stories in AS&SF just as much.

Olsen is amusing in places and right in a lot of places. Very good article. Coblenz says little that hasn't been already said by just about everybody.

The book reviews -- unsigned; yours? If not, please initial them -- don't seem nearly as perceptive as in the first issue. Too often they're capsule recaps of plots. Try latching onto the reviewers from the old Inside stable. It is a cinch that despite Inside's current existence, it is not publishing often enough to use all their output. These reviews are weak.

The fanzine reviews aren't bad, but again simple contents listing with vague if any value-judgments are kind of weak. I do like the idea of hitting at least briefly all the issues you've received between reviews, but perhaps you could put the accent on one issue or item and discuss it with more depth as well.

I'm glad there is an editorial this time, even if such a skimpy one. Editorial personality in a zine is very important for any zine.

yhos,
Ted

((Thanks for the contributions. As you see elsewhere in the ish they have been used. The justification slipped because of fatigue. This ish doesn't have any because of the rush to get it out and we're still way behind deadline. Verne went to a lot of trouble checking up on the science in his stories but then he quite often goofed. His intent was good, though, and it made a powerful impression on the reader. The book reviews in the first two issues were done entirely by the staff, this ish some outside help is in evidence. And what do you think of this ish's fanzine reviews?))

Bob Anderson, Box 696, Dade City, Florida

Dear Mr. Metcalf,

Many thanks for the copies of New Frontiers. Your publication is excellent! The articles in both issues were good, despite some slips. Your book reviews are very well done. I also enjoyed the fanzine reviews very much. Let's have some of them. Please, a bigger lettercol. I'm for mostly printed material in the mag with, say, one artist represented in each issue. Does Hannes Bok do any offset illos, if so he would be a good lead off man. I think your idea of having authors write their autobiogs and biblios is great. Alfred Bester would be a good starter. And then later on how about bios and biblios of such masters as M.R. James, J. Sheridan Le Fanu, the one and only Kuttner, Lovecraft (naturally), also Clark Ashton Smith, Poul Anderson, and Philip K. Dick. That's all my comments on the mag itself.

Can any knowledgeable fan tell me where I can get a copy of Walter W. Lee's Spring '55 issue of It containing the thirty-three page checklist of sf, fantasy

and horror films. Say, for \$3.00.

Does anybody agree with me that Knight's book reviews are a bore? Does anybody disagree!

Just one more thing: this week I'm starting a "write in letters to Bob Anderson Crusade" - WILTBAC. My program is a simple one, a mutual exchange of biases, ideas, pet peeves and homages to Clark Ashton Smith and other greats of weird fame, among other things.

Sincerely,

Neofan Bob Anderson

((I think Lee revised his checklist and brought it out separately not too long ago. Can anyone out there tell Anderson!))

Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6, Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, England

Dear Norman,

I felt rather breathless at the end of Poul Anderson's explanation of how he got the science into his story. It is really quite amazing the amount of work that can go into a story like this, which I never properly appreciated before. I shall remember it the next time I feel tempted to 'skip' the technical parts!

Stanton Coblenz quotes a story which I have not read and therefore would hesitate to defend. However if I take his meaning clearly, he wishes an explanation of how a character would get into space before beginning to detail the story of what happened there. Surely, this at the beginning of every story would make, by repetition, rather boring reading! The author is assuming that given getting into space is possible, so the rest may follow. Slabs of scientific information which are there merely to instruct the reader I don't think a good idea. What one should gain in knowledge must be as a necessary part of the story. I would say that the first criterion of a sf story is that of all stories -- to entertain -- that some knowledge of scientific matters and logic come with sf, is an advantage. The second without the first is an article in slight disguise!

I thoroughly enjoyed your book reviews, thought they were very workmanlike. I don't know why Terry criticizes your fanzine reviews, I thought they were competently compressed.

I sniff at your editorial though -- too slight -- you are trying to dodge it. I fear! C'mon out where we can see you!

very best wishes,
and many thanks,
Ethel

((Terry objected, seemingly, to the fact that the fanzine reviews were written uncritically, which was deliberate. However, in this ish the first reviews have taken a new tack, with intent to see what the readers' reactions will be. As was mentioned previously the editorial staff is very lazy and doesn't take kindly to the idea of writing an editorial.))

Mike Deckinger, 85 Locust Avenue, Millburn, New Jersey

Dear Norm,

Back in 1952 Fantastic Worlds first began to appear. Then there was Inside in practically the same format but it was devoted to more satirical material. Both of these seem to have been long gone. However, in New Frontiers, I see

qualities of both departed zines embodied. I happen to think that half-size zines look much more professional than the full-size ones, and photo-offset only enhances the quality. However, I certainly hope the life-span of ME is far longer than both those zines, for in this era of zines being born and dying practically on the same day, we need a good sercon zine.

The cover was outstanding. This really surprised me, for after the boo-boo Dollens pulled with the recent cover on SHARBY, I was ready to disregard any of his future artwork. But as long as he keeps the figures out of his drawings, and puts in astronomical scenes, then he has a true work of art.

Anderson's article would be more at home in astounding (Analog, excuse me) where his story appeared, rather than here. I must confess that I am not a physicist and the heart of the article just did not make that much difference to me. I think it would have accomplished more good if it was in Analog a month or two after the serial. Anderson isn't the first one to delve into subjects about which he writes, though. I can remember in Startling when Fletcher Pratt had a novelet titled "The Long View" about a silicon planet and then an article explaining the basis behind the story.

Olsen's article was extremely interesting, in fact I'd say it was the best in this particular issue. Sort of reminded me of Johnson's article last issue. This particular type of "author-insight" articles are extremely interesting, and I hope you'll be able to get more. Well, if nothing else, it should prove that none of the old pulp writers got rich doing their writing. The quote of Bernard de Voto's that he cites from Harper's is enough to send any of fan into screaming hysterics, de Voto obviously knows nothing of which he speaks, or else he would not make any such definitive and assinine statements. I wonder if his opinions have changed any today?

Sorry, but I tend to disagree with Mr. Barry who says the features should be expanded to include promag reviews. Sure many of us read them, but the majority of those that buy promags and are active fans are very small. And another thing, the promags are not aimed at the fan, but the science-fiction fan. And there is a great difference between these two. Only Pentastice Universe has been kind enough to admit that organized fandom does exist, and does more than simply stage conventions, as witness Belle Dietz' column in it. And on the other hand, John Campbell seems determined to do everything he can to keep his zine as unfannish as possible. That'll be the day when there's a fanzine review column in astounding, and there is this nonsense about the title change to Analog, and if Campbell has done ridiculous things in the past, this tops them all. Most prozines completely ignore fandom, why shouldn't fandom do the same?

The book reviews were well written and quite comprehensive. It's interesting to note that every review of the Woolrich book panned it, as you did pretty much. I like the way you give the worlage of each book. I have a few comments on it, though. First, in your review of Loinster's Four From Planet Five, you could have stated that it was first published in the Sep 59 Amazing as "Long Ago, Far Away" and furthermore, I don't think it was abridged. Also, let me assure you that van Vogt's "The Chronicle" did not appear in ASF Oct-Nov 56. Could it be that you meant to type out 46? It seems more likely. Other than that, the reviews were surprisingly good, and the way you combined the good and bad points with the synopsis was commendable. Now these are what I'd call intelligent reviews.

SIN cerealy,
Mike Dockinger

((Some of the old pulp writers got rich, but not writing sf. Both de Voto and Olsen are dead. And Mr. Barry could subscribe to Speculative Review from Dick Eney, 417 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria, Virginia to keep up with the prozines. As Campbell has said when he eliminated fan chatter from "Brass Tacks" ASF will only publicize activities which would interest a significant portion of the readers. "The Chronicle" is from 46.))

Bob Coulson, Route J, Wabash, Indiana

Dear Norman,

A few comments on the last issue. Artists? I think Dollens is a good cover choice; I'm not sure I approve of him doing every cover in the future, since I prefer variety, but if you insist on having one artist for your covers then Dollens is a good choice. (I think I said that in my review; oh well, so I'm redundant.) Possibles for interior artwork would be Adkins, Barr (definitely Barr) Cawthorne, and Gilbert. Maybe Dave Prosser as well, if you could persuade him to do stf illoos instead of his usual Gothic horror types. (I like his Gothic horror illoos, but I don't think they'd fit the science-fiction air of ME.)

I have read a few of the stories mentioned by Coblenz and few of the contained science. Pseudo-science, yes; but I think there is about as much real science in today's stf as there ever was. The approach to it has changed, but it's no worse -- the only happy medium between the editing of T. O'Connor Slocan and that of H.L. Gold occurred during the '39-'44 "Golden Era" of ASF; it seems to be a freak that will not be repeated.

Yours,
Bob

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland

Dear Norm:

I can at least give you a few comments on the second issue. I think it's an improvement, although you're probably continuing to get letters from fans who feel that somehow you're being extravagant for using offset in a format that so closely resembles homespun mimeography. Of course, that doesn't apply to the cover. I like it very much, although I hardly imagine that there is any spot in space where two spiral nebulae would be visible in this manner. Come to think of it, prozine artists have overlooked the pictorial possibilities of a fairly closeup view of a nebula. I'm not astronomer enough to know if they get less impressive as you approach them, like certain mountains.

Poul Anderson leaves me hopelessly behind in "Paper Spaceship". If this was the best he could do by brushing up a few days on forgotten knowledge, I'd hate to think of what would emerge if he really concentrated on science for a couple of months. This is not to say that I object to this type of scientific background and verification. I just don't understand enough of it to feel sufficiently impressed.

I somehow got the idea that Bob Olsen was dead, and I hope that this article means that he's still with us. The things that he says are a clear demonstration of what was right and wrong about pioneer magazine science fiction. The time and care that went into it, the technical and scientific background of most of the writers and editors, are the things whose lack shows up so severely today. And the situation isn't likely to change, because it's so much easier to put this kind of knowledge to profitable use today; back in the '20's and '30's, such knowledge had little effect on one's paycheck. Now, if those good things in the old days had been combined with just one other important matter, recognition that it's important to figure out how men will react to new inventions after you've figured out what the new inventions will be like, we would have had even better stories.

I don't like Stanton Coblenz' suggestion that science fiction writers should give up the battle of characterization without a shot. It can be done. Weinbaum made real entities out of his REI's while they retained their other-planetary

natures. Simak and de Camp showed what can be done with characterizing animals under changed conditions, and Heinlein proved you can create memorable human-type characters in stories about the future. At the same time, it might be well to accept another hint in this article, and divide the literature into two categories, science fiction and future fiction. Science fiction usually takes place in the future, but stories about the future can be westerns or detectives instead of being science fiction, as we've learned by so many mediocre prose in recent years.

The book reviews continue to be among the best appearing in fanzines. And the fanzine reviews continue to be badly outdated.

It's strange that on the very page where you complain about over-priced Verne reprints, you run an advertisement for a "special on non-fiction quality paperbacks". I'd hate to see Stark's regular price for these titles. Most or all of the 85¢ titles he lists are available at 3/6 in their British paperback form, and I suspect that that is what he's selling. They can be had at cover price, about 50¢, plus a few pennies' postage from Ken Slater's Fantast, Ltd. On the other hand, Stark's offer of Science Wonder's for 75¢ apiece is the biggest bargain in huckstering history, because I don't think there's a collection in the world that contains most of those issues that he lists from the middle and late '30's and early '40's.

After writing to you the last time, it suddenly occurred to me that this legend about Lovecraft's death from malnutrition might have had a semi-factual basis, after all. Cancer victims quite often die of malnutrition in the sense that the malignancy prevents them from getting enough nutrition to keep them alive. The misunderstanding might have arisen that way.

Yrs., Ac.,
Harry

((Anderson says that he is better at lab work than at theory, so what he can accomplish must be really something. Bob Olsen is dead. Ben Stark has this to say: "You tell Harry Warner that these 85¢ books may be 50¢ in England but he can add on the cost of writing, the cost of the money order, customs duty, postal inspection fee and I hope a little deserved profit. They are no more expensive than Penguins. He can't get them for 50¢ in this country.")

EXCHANGE

Send six [6] science fiction pocket books + 25¢ and receive 4 different of paperbacks in exchange. All in new condition or will match condition you send.

Also, I am interested in Edgar Rice Burroughs books, magazines, etc.

Please write what you have to sell or trade.

M. Paris
160 Byron Street
Youngstown,
Ohio



BOOKS

THE MEZENTIAN GATE - E. R. Eddison. Elek Books, Inc., London, 1958, 30s. xiv + 241 pp., frontispiece, tables and maps. Available in this country from J. Ben Stark, 113 Ardmore Road, Berkeley 7, California for \$5.00, postpaid.

It seems no affectation, but natural, to call Eric Rucker Eddison mountainous.

Imprimis, in this bootlicking age a writer who made no compromises, who invited his readers to follow him if they wished but destroyed nothing in his world to ease their path stands forth like a snowpeak seen across empty plains.

Secundis, this private world is not the author's navel enlarged, with every academically fashionable symbolism in its calculated place, but massive and turbulent as a storm rising over high ranges -- and as full of lightning.

Tertius, at its best the author's craggy language, however difficult to master, rewards the effort with an enormous overlook, and an unexpected glimpse of wildflowers in the lee of some glacial boulder.

With so much to praise, it may seem niggling to pick at flaws. Yet they certainly exist, and on the same scale as the virtues. I have neither time nor patience for a critical dissection, which would in any event be as ludicrous with respect to Eddison as it is with respect to Aeschylus or Shakespeare. But a few remarks on the more conspicuous features of a large territory may not be out of order.

The Mezentian Gate is the last Eddison we shall ever see. The author appears to have had forewarning of his own death, in 1945, while working on it. At least, a prefatory note, here printed, suggests as much. Still more revealing is the structure of the book itself. Having completed the first seven chapters, it resorts to detailed synopses of the bulk of the narrative. But the final chapters, and three important intervening ones, have also been finished. Thus, in Eddison's own words, The Mezentian Gate as we have it is "a full-length portrait in oils of which the face has been painted in but the rest of the picture no more than roughly sketched in charcoal. As such, it has enough unity and finality to stand as something more than a fragment."

Though last to be written, it is the first of the Zimianvian trilogy in terms of that world's history. Indeed, the series was written backwards, so that Mistress of Mistresses, which appeared more than twenty years ago, starts where It leaves off, while A Fish Dinner in Memison occurs during the time span covered by the latter, whose narrative overlaps and interweaves with it. Since Eddison planned at least a tetralogy, perhaps more, we can only wonder how much else he had in mind. For instance, what connection does The Worm Ouroboros have with Zimianvia? Presumably there is some, for Lessingham appears briefly in the worm as a spectator, while he is crucial to the trilogy.

This is not the place to recapitulate the plot, but some background is required. Zimianvia is not simply another universe. It is the universe. Our own was created for a while, during that memorable fish dinner, and pricked into non-existence by Florinda's bediamonded hairpin when she wearied of it. Only she and King Mezentius saw its millions upon millions of years of history, compressed into one eternal moment; only they entered it during that moment, to live as humans in the incarnations of Lessingham and his loves. But Florinda is a guise of Aphro-



Bjo

dite, and Mezentius is the Omnipotent, Her Love. These are not Their only aspects; They are also, simultaneously, such people as Amalie and Rosma, as Barganax and the Zimianian Lessingham, and many more; but in the course of all these lives, Florinda and Mezentius alone seem to become aware of Their true identity.

Our world is, then, "a misconceived and, were it not for its nightmarish unreality and transience, unfortunate episode in the real life of the Gods." Yet Zimiania is not heaven. It is solid earth and rock, with seas and seasons; its people are mortals, who eat and sleep and love and worship and fight and die. The difference is that Zimiania is an ideal world. Not a happy one -- in fact, tragic -- but tragic in the Aristotelian sense, without the distractions and pettiness and small sordid side issues which make our finest hours completely noble only in retrospect. We are the flawed, shadowy imitation, whose brief existence proved so troubling to the Two Almighty. In Zimiania, while the various incarnations of the Lover and Aphrodite are the most real, the most heroic and complete figures (though mortal too, and only rarely conscious of who they really are), the lesser persons -- even the animals -- have a wholeness denied us. "In that world," wrote Eddison in his Letter of Introduction, "men and women of all estates enjoy beatitude in the...sense of...activity according to their highest virtue," even though this may be the predatory virtue of a Morius Parry or the dog-likeness of a Gabriel Flores.

The Zimianian trilogy chronicles in all some seventy years of its history. All but about two of these years are covered in *THE*, often synoptically but at critical points in close detail. (Or so Eddison planned it.) We begin twenty years before the birth of King Mezentius, follow his career as he unifies the realms of Fingiswold, Mazarria, and Herek, and end with his death. But only in the last chapter do we know what the Gate is.

I have explained so much because further discussion would be almost impossible otherwise. As said, Eddison makes no concessions. You enter his world as you would enter some foreign country, set down and left to discover its landscape and people and ways for yourself. You must pay close attention to what you read, and sometimes you must read it again.

To be sure personal universes are not unique in literature. At this late date, all myth is of the genre. Among the outstanding modern examples are James Branch Cabell's *Biography of the Life of Manuel* (which follows a history later cancelled by Madoc and rather carelessly rewritten by the Horns); Fletcher Pratt's *The Well of the Unicorn*; and, of course, though it purports to relate to very ancient terrestrial events, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Each of these has its own comic personality, from the somewhat repetitious light irony of Cabell to the utterly convincing blend of high heroism and honest practicality which Tolkien has created. Of them all, I think, Eddison's is the most difficult to penetrate.

In part this is due to his style. He wrote a majestic quasi-Elizabethan prose which can reach heights difficult to find elsewhere. "The year was turning golden to all ripenesses, of late flowers, and fruit, and (albeit yet far off) fall of the leaf. In this light of early morning the yew hedges that run beside the terraces were covered with spider's webs wet with dewdrops, a shimmering of jewels on mantles of white lace: a beauty ever changing, and with a hint of things altogether strengthless and ephemeral. No bird-voice sounded, except twitterings of swallows in the sky or exclamations from the Duchess's white peacocks, whose plumage was like woven moonbeams, and the eyes in their tail-feathers were like woven moons when they displayed in the slant rays of the sun."

Or, in a less gentle mood; "He rowed on in silence. On his left, and behind him over Sestola, night was rising fast. To larboard the sun had set in an up-piled magnificence of blood-red and iron clouds. Astern, above the Queen's head as she sat facing the rise of night, her face no longer to be discerned in

this growing dusk, Antares began to open a red eye flashing with green sparkles in a rift of clear sky to the south. The wind was fallen again. The King, with eyes on that star of bale, rested on his oar: seemed to listen to the stillness."

Perhaps Eddison is at his very best in such brooding evocations of things to come. This thundercloud sense dominates the last chapter of TM especially, and gives it a force deriving from the actual things shown -- the only way that the literally infinite theme of the book could have been approached. But there are also enough passages of other kinds, tender, voluptuous, merry, cynical, on to the swiftest physical action.

Yet in all frankness, so many long sentences and long words can get in their own way. It is not that I object to them in themselves, only to their frequency. And while I have selected a couple of fine descriptive passages, it must be admitted that many are not so successful. They tend to speak in generalities and metaphors, whereas the human consciousness normally focuses on a single specific thing at a time -- not on many torches in the night, but on one, with only a peripheral awareness of the rest. Where an exact sense datum is offered, in any of these books, it is often lost in the sheer ornateness of language. Eddison's world is rich; it can be explored almost indefinitely, each reading discovering something new; but not many details leap right out of the page, as they do, for instance, in Homer.

Eddison's characters talk the author's language, too. As a result, they all sound much alike, both men and women. While it is true that real-life humans do not speak as briefly and to the point as most fictional ones, yet few go into long oratorical periods to make the simplest statements of fact. King Mardanus to the philosopher Vanderkast: "You are bruted to me, you, to have uttered here, this instant afternoon, prognosticks and probabilities ((some would call them im-probabilities, but let that pass)) touching certain noble persons, guests at our wedding feast."

But this is of a piece with character itself. For these Zimianian person-ages think and act as they talk. They are not cardboard figures -- they do have individual characteristics -- but their singleness of mind is simply not human. (Eddison was dead wrong when he said of Zimiania that it was "like the saga-time; there is no malaise of the soul." Since he himself translated Egil's saga, I wonder how the complexities, duplicities, and meannesses of that most alive hero could have escaped him, even among the grand virtues. Egil Skallagrimsson is flesh and blood; Lessingham is marble, made alive and hot no doubt, but still marble.)

In this connection I miss the mechanics of existence in Zimiania. Every-thing is great enterprise and deep policy -- never any question of how to replenish the royal coffers, or battles lost because the army caught cold marching through the snow. As it stands, at least, TM has not a single peasant or merchant in it; the towns have market places, but we see no marketing being done; the tech-nology is medieval, but there is no hint of difficulty in erecting palaces down whose stairs six horsemen could ride abreast, not to mention grosser workaday problems like sewage disposal. Material goods exist when and where they are wanted; no athletic feat is too strenuous; the mightiest endeavors can apparently be sustained forever, without even a wish to slack off and rest.

My objection must not be misunderstood. In Eddison's own terms, which we have to accept if we are to read him at all, this is perfectly logical. Zimian-ia is not Earth, and its people are not human. What we confront is a Platonic ideal of heroism. It is only that I feel far more at home in the world of Tol-kien, where there are brave particular deeds but no incessant Bravery. As Eddi-son himself intimates, his works can better be called poetry than novels.

And certainly such epic poetry is the sole way of coming to grips with the riddle which haunts all his books: of even posing the question. Eddison was not a sheltered daydreamer, but a successful man of affairs. It may have been his

victories more than his human share of defeats which lead him to wonder: what comes after victory. The problem is hinted at even in his historical novel, Sivriptom the Strong, whose hero's good fortune is to die while young. In The Horn O'Roberta, when the great enemy has finally been overcome, time itself is turned back so that the war may be eternal. In the other two books of the Zimianian trilogy, the Creator and His female counterpart Aphrodite live out many mortal incarnations, which contest with each other for no apparent ultimate reason but the contest itself.

And in TM, the next question is asked: What hope beyond this endless play-ing of self-created games has Omnipotence? I shall not give here the answer which the book gives, almost in the final sentence. It could not be set down anyhow, for the book itself is the whole answer. Read it and see. And see too how much we have lost in the passing of E. R. Eddison.

Paul Anderson

THE OBVIOUS ONES - Jerry Sohl, Rinehart, New York, 1959. 3-245 pp., \$2.95, 33,000 words.

Jerry Sohl's science fiction stories have always been of the "thriller" type in which the science is only a barely plausible (if that) peg on which to hang the action. Viewed strictly as stories, however, they are not bad books. Sohl has the knack for turning out good "thrillers" in which the action hangs together well, and is usually decently motivated. His forte is the I'm-invol-ved-in-something-mysterious element, which brings about immediate reader involve-ment, and which has been carried to considerable lengths by Patrick Quentin in the mystery field.

Recently Sohl produced his first mystery novel, Prelude to Peril, and I am bound to say that it was far superior to his stf novels. Perhaps he too has suspected this, for his newest "science fiction" novel is only thinly so -- less so in fact than Robinson's controversial The Power -- and probably more deserving of Lippincott's blurb, "A novel of menace", than the one it actually sports: "A new novel of science fiction."

The Obvious Ones of the title are several of the seven members of an alumni group living in the Los Angeles area. Strange things begin happening to them, driving them to their deaths; the first two by suicide and the last a man-slaughter victim. As the story unravels, we find that before dying, each of these men had "caught" something which inspired a fear or hatred from all those around him, directed at the unlucky alumnus. The first two could stand the alienation of their families only a week before suiciding; the third, a neurolog-ist, approaches the "disease" more scientifically, armed with self-awareness, and is on the verge of prematurely revealing the mystery when he is forced from his car when it runs out of gas, and is killed by a passerby. Needless to say, the plot shows its omnipotent hand here.

At this point the narrator "gets" the "disease", and there follows an un-motivated scene of nightmares when the narrator, instead of returning home im-mediately upon discovery of his "ailment" tries to reach a parking lot where his car is located. He is attacked by dogs, cats, and men, nearly all of whom hate him rather than (with previous victims) fearing him. When, over half a day later, he reaches his car, he finds his keys and money are missing--along with most of his clothes.

He sleeps in the car and wakes up to discover the "disease" gone, but it reappears later that morning after he has returned to his apartment. At this point the narrator realizes what has caused the "disease" and decides one of the three remaining alumni must be the villain. After some eliminations, this party is ferreted out, and accidentally dosed with the full strength of his own poi-sonous solution. He suicides. End of book.

The "science" consists of the gobbledegook necessary to convince us that a solution applied to the skin can almost instantaneously act upon the nervous system and sweat glands so that the victim throws off a "scent" which will act directly on those surrounding him, stimulating the cortices of their brains, and thus "down the sympathetic branch of your autonomic nervous system to the adrenal glands." For some reason the victim is immune to this "scent", so that he will be unaware at first of the changes in himself. (The problem of two so treated victims encountering each other is one that the book does not even broach, unfortunately...) I found myself unconvinced.

The science is actually thin doubletalk, as with most of Schli's stories, but the problem, for the duration of the book, is gripping and well enough presented, and the characterization is competently handled (although the villain is inadequately motivated). Thinking the book over in retrospect will demolish it to a large extent, but if it is at your local library, it is well worth taking out for an evening's entertainment.

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FIRE PAST THE FUTURE - Charles Eric Maine, Ballantine Books, New York, #360K, 5-160 pp. (69,000 words), 1959, 35¢.

((This originally appeared in *Amazing*, Dec 59, as "The Big Count-Down" and then was serialized in *New Worlds* #81 Mar 59 to #83 May 59 and then was published in hard covers by Hodder and Stoughton.))

Like the kid in *Peanuts* who jumped into a pile of dead leaves holding a wet lollipop, the reader emerges from this novel with quite a few fragments sticking to his memory. Of the author's ten books, it is the only one I have read for which one can find reason to excuse the publishers.

As usual, Maine's contempt for science fiction, its readers and its writers is evident in elementary errors, slips of dialogue and sheer inattention. All but one of the eight major characters (the narrative viewpoint character) are said to be scientists, but Maine apparently has never met one. Those in the story are constantly exchanging such remarks as "In science there is always an explanation for the inexplicable." Everyone in the book is supposed to be American, but by page 8 they are already referring to stew as "M and V". (The hero says he would prefer it iced.)

The science not only includes but depends upon such characteristic, long-familiar bloopers as:

(1) "...Space curvature shows the presence of a gravitational field. The stronger the field, the greater the curvature." (This statement, insofar as it is accurate at all, is completely redundant.) "But if you bend space the other way you create conditions of negative gravity." (Which way is the other way?)

(2) "...Here on earth a falling body accelerates at thirty-two feet per second every second, and keeps on accelerating. If it could keep falling long enough it would eventually attain the speed of light." (A body falling from infinity, which ought to good enough to fit anybody's definition of "long enough", would strike the earth at a velocity of seven miles per second.)

As the first example shows, Maine is here joining the long list of authors to take a tussle with relativity, without (as example two shows) even a vague grasp of freshman high school physics. As was wholly predictable, he is finally thrown flat on his back by the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction, which despite its apparent simplicity seems to be the number one deadfall of sloppy science fiction writers. I hope that some day such a writer will explain to me why he finds it so easy to accept that a body can have infinite mass, and why invariably he ignores the "zero length" clause that goes with this impossible condition.

But I started out to say that this novel has merits, and it does. Essentially it is a murder story to the model of *And Then There Was One*. Of the eight

major characters, all isolated on an atoll for a government sponsored test of Maine's idiot theory of gravity, six have been killed by the time the test takes place, and the other two are at each other's throats. Since these two are the hero and his beloved, all this makes for considerable tension, most of it well handled. There are excellent scenes of suspense, stalking, inter-personal conflicts and violence, and one which is genuinely eerie (plus one which should have been but wasn't). The reader has already been told that the hero committed the first murder, and that the heroine has committed the last one, but the other four are entertainingly difficult to account for until Maine is ready to let you in on their mechanics.

"Mechanics" is about all there is to it, however, since it turns out that nobody has been responsible for his own actions and hence the murders are all unmotivated so far as the characters are concerned. The "real" murderer is a deus ex machina, whose existence is first deduced by the characters from no evidence at all, and then turns out to match the deductions at every point.

In short, like 99% of all hybrids between the detective story and science fiction, *Fire Past the Future* won't satisfy the addicts of either specialty.

James Bligh

WE CLAIM THESE STARS! - Paul Anderson, 5-125 pp., abridged, 45,000 words (bound with) *THE PLANET KILLERS* - Robert Silverberg, 5-131 pp., 47,000 words, Ace D-407 1959, 35¢

The Anderson half is a literate, highly readable, light entertainment. It originally appeared as a 38,000 word novelet in the June, 1959 *Amazing*. The present version has been rewritten and expanded by Anderson and abridged by Ace. A vague sort of sequel appeared in the December, 1959 *Fantastic*.

Anderson's novelet is a space opera, but a space opera with a difference. The difference is in the quality of the writing and the characterization. Captain Dominic Flandry, Terran Naval Intelligence is a real person with all the virtues and vices of a human being. His opponents are neither black nor gray but a mottled spectrum. And as for situation Anderson has divided the known galaxy between the oxygen breathing Merseians and the Terrans with the dispersal of their inhabiting the gas giants such as Jupiter. The Merseians are slowly nibbling at the Terran Empire and into this situation comes a telepath with limited range; and an attack on a Terran outpost; strange wolf-like, intelligent pawns in the game and Captain Flandry.

The background minutiae are lovingly built up to aid in depicting the people of various species who take part in the game. This gives us such as the telepath enjoying Richard Strauss, and Flandry enjoying the wine, women and song.

The Silverberg half is expanded from "This World Must Die!", *Science Fiction Adventure*, Aug 57 (US) and Nov 58 (GB), where it was 14,600 words long. The story has suffered from being padded too much. It is now routine space opera. The Terran Security Service's giant computer had decided that the planet Lurion must be destroyed and thus Roy Gardner is sent. He observes the ritual tortures which constitute the main amusement of Lurion and has to make a report on whether or not the planet should be destroyed. Figure out the rest of the story for yourself, it's no great strain. The most redeeming feature is the social consciousness exhibited by Gardner. His own doubts as to the wisdom of destroying Lurion provide most of the interest.

PAGAN PASSIONS - Randall D. Garrett & Larry M. Harris, 5-158 pp., Galaxy Publishing Corp., New York 14, New York, 1959, 35¢, Beacon Books #263, 52,000 words.

This montage of corn is supposedly the story of the return of the Greek

pantheon from three thousand years of oblivion. William Forrester, mortal, is selected to take the place of Bacchus/Dionysius. He decides that all is not as it seems. The time for thinking comes between drinking bouts which means the story drags along. It might have been great fun if it were shorter.

THE QUEST OF KICALIHDR - Leonard Wibberley. G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1959, 0-190 pp., 38,000 words, \$3.50

If you are expecting another "Wet Magic", Sword In the Stone, etc. then forget it. Wibberley's novelet of a parallel universe in which the Duchy of Grand Fenwick is the first nation to reach Mars and dead people commune with "an immense power, the source of all life, which lived in infinity." (p. 53), to regain their mortality, is not a particularly good one.

Wibberley brings in King Arthur, but the King is merely an onlooker to his own quest, which is actually quite incidental. Princess Pamela, a Windsor of a couple of decades hence (and across) seems to be the heroine and motivates some of the middle scenes of the book. Chuck Marmers, an exchange student from Santa Barbara, California provides a bit of motivation and ties the Arthur sub-plot in with the Pamela sub-plot. Gibber Brown, ditch-digger, manages to highlight the England of the times which has come very close to the welfare state dreamed of by many Socialists. Sir Timothy Bors, who refuses to attend his own funeral, reveals the plight of the nobility in their conflicts with the state. The most interesting character, Merlin, who is cast as a modern-day Royal Automobile Club patrolman doesn't have much to do.

There is very little development of any sort in character, plot, background, etc. Perhaps this may go on record as the longest vignette in stf.

THE MENACE FROM EARTH - Robert A. Heinlein, Gnome Press, Inc., P.O. Box 161, Hicksville, New York, 1959, 7-255 pp., \$3.50

This is the first of two collections of Heinlein's stories from Gnome and will bring to book form under Heinlein's name all of the stories outside of the Future History series except, "Solution Unsatisfactory", "My Object All Sublime", "Pied Piper" and "Beyond Doubt".

The first story is "The Year of the Jackpot", Galaxy, Mar 52, Shadow of Tomorrow: The End of the World, which has been slightly revised from the original appearance. Heinlein proposes that the human race has lemming-like characteristics and is headed for extinction. This is the story of the end.

"By His Bootstraps", astounding, Oct 41, Adventures In Time and Space. Diant Anthology of Science Fiction strikes at the theory of causation with four variations of the hero roaming through time and causing one another to cross time so as to enable the ancestor to become existent.

"Columbus Was a Dope", Startling, May 47, Travelers of Space is a short vignette of the man who liked it on the moon, and didn't want to push off further into space.

"The Menace From Earth", F&SF Aug 57, New Worlds, Oct 57 is the light-weight but enjoyable story of a boy and a girl on the moon who have their lives disrupted by a gorgeous woman from the earth.

"Sky Lift", Imagination, Nov 53 is a vignette of man's devotion to duty and the reaction of his superiors. It isn't what one expects of Heinlein either. There is little development for the wordage.

"Goldfish Bowl", astounding, Mar 42, The Best of Science Fiction, with a plot derived from the first chapter of "Genesis" is the extremely good puzzle story of what engineered two columns of water off Hawaii.

"Project Nightmare", Amazing, Apr-May 53 is the story of atomic warfare with psi-men thrown into the picture who are capable of detecting and preventing atomic blasts.

"Water is For Washing", Argoay, 1947, The Argoay Book of Adventure Stories. is a rather effective story of the man who hated water and came to California's Imperial Valley to escape the same. The only trouble was that an earthquake disrupted the equilibrium of the dunes below Mexicali and the valley was flooded by the waters from the Gulf of California.

THE UNPLEASANT PROFESSION OF JONATHAN HOAD - Robert A. Heinlein, Gnome Press, P. O. Box 161, Hicksville, New York, 1959, 7-256 pp., \$3.50.

The higher price than usual for Gnome Press books is justified by the better quality binding and paper plus the extra pages.

The contents are the title story from Unknown Worlds, Oct 42 which has a very unrevealing ending, but not a trick one. Slightly rewritten it might have made the grade in ASF but the effect would have been lost. Hoad's profession is quite prosaic, his particular job is something else which most of us would probably refuse serious consideration to. This is at the top of Heinlein's form.

"The Man Who Traveled In Elephants" ("The Elephant Circuit") Satum, Oct 57 is a slice of life without plot which carries its impact in the buildup of the mood. Its nearest relative which comes to mind is a certain story by E. M. Forster.

"---All You Zombies---", F&SF, Mar 59 fails the Jack Smurd test, e.g., 'Would this story have been accepted if submitted by Jack Smurd?' It's another time travel story along the lines of Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps" except more complicated and with less story. By the time the chronology is straight in one's head, one has a tendency to yawn and say, "So what?"

"They", Unknown, Apr 41, Science Fiction Terror Tales: Terror In the Modern Vein, is a very neat tale of paranoia which deserves the reprinting it has seen.

"Our Fair City", Weird Tales, Jan 49, Beyond Human Ken, is the humorous story of the sentient whirlwind which dabbled in politics. A very good example of Heinlein in a lighter vein.

"---And He Built a Crooked House---", ASF, Feb 41, The Pocket Book of Science Fiction, FFM, Dec 51 is a wry takeoff on Los Angeles, its architecture and its people. The four dimensional house that Teal built with foundations in L.A., a window inverted in the ocean, one looking down from the top of the Empire State Building and one in some alien dimension and one opening into the outre landscape of the Joshua Tree National Monument is another example of humorous Heinlein and a very good one.

This is a good buy for those of you who don't have the stories in their previous appearances or for those who collect Heinlein, or for those who merely wish to read good stf or fantasy. Why don't you try to get your local librarian to order these books after you've purchased your own copy?

A TREASURY OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION - ed. by Anthony Boucher, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 1959, 2 volumes, 9-527pp., 7-522pp., \$5.95, 600,000 words

This tremendous bargain in wordage contains twenty-four stories, most of which have been in book form before.

John Wyndham's Re-birth (Ballantine, 1955, Michael Joseph, 1955 as The Chrysalids) is one of Wyndham's best novels and deals with a post-atomic holocaust world.

Richard Dering's "The Shape of Things That Came", F&SF, Oct 51 is a light-weight tale of time travel in the early F&SF manner.

Ry Bradbury's "Pillar of Fire", Planet, Sum 48, The Other Side of the Moon is another one of Bradbury's sermons against book-burning and destruction of things past. This is an early enough Bradbury to be concerned with plot and storytelling rather than pure stylism.

Robert Heinlein's "Waldo", ASTOUNDING, Aug 42. Waldo and Magic, Inc., is the familiar story of the man who was suffering from muscular weakness and takes his social tendencies to an orbital satellite where he exercises his inventive talents.

Philip K. Dick's "The Father-Thing", FASE, Dec 54 is a little horror of the things which grew in the shape of people, ate the person whom they matched and then took their place.

C.L. Moore's "The Children's Hour", ASF, Mar 46 is here credited also to Henry Kuttner, since it's a rather academic point, why worry? It is a strangely moving story of a man searching back into his past to uncover the enigma of his sweetheart.

C.M. Kornbluth's "Comez", The Explorers, The Mindworm, New Worlds #32, Feb 55 is a biting satire of present day military tactics in dealing with an untutored genius in mathematical physics.

George P. Elliot's "Sandra", 7, 1953, FASE Oct 57 is the quietly convincing story of slavery in these United States sometime in the future, or rather in some parallel universe, since the error in the magazine version is preserved on page 371.

Joel Townsley Rogers' "Beyond Space and Time", All-American Fiction, Feb 38, Super Science Stories, Sep 50 is a story which might better have been left unpublished. The overwritten, goshwow, look-what-we've-got-here style coupled with the hackneyed ideas (fairly fresh at its original appearance) hardly qualify it for reprinting.

Poul Anderson's "The Martian Crown Jewels", Klery Queen's Mystery Magazine Feb 58, FASE Apr 59, The Science-Fictional Sherlock Holmes is the excellent pastiche of Holmes laid on a future Mars with the investigator, Syaloch, who lives on The Street of Those Who Prepare Nourishment in Ovens.

A.E. van Vogt's The Weapon Shops of Isher, which is forged from "The Sec-saw", ASF Jul 41, Beyond Time and Space, "The Weapon Shop", ASF Dec 42, Adventures in Time and Space, and "The Weapon Shops of Isher", Thrilling Wonder, Feb 49 colorfully closes out volume one. Together with the sequel, The Weapon Makers, we have the story of Robert Hedrock, earth's only immortal, and the Empress Imelda who battle for supremacy with the weapon shops on one hand and the forces of empire on the other.

Volume two opens with Poul Anderson's Brain Ways, Space Science Fiction, Sep 53 (an uncompleted serial entitled "The Escape"), in which he tells of the effects of earth passing out of a neural inhibiting field with resultant increases in mental ability of every animal (including man).

Malcolm Jameson's "Bullard Reflects" ASF, Dec 41, Bullard of the Space Patrol, is a nice gimmick story of space pirates.

Oscar Lewis' The Lost Years is a parallel universe story of Abraham Lincoln's coming to California after he recovered from the shooting in the Ford Theatre. A nice piece of historical fiction told in the form of contemporary accounts.

Judith Merrill's "Dead Center" FASE, Nov 54, The Best American Short Stories 1955 is another one of Merrill's sickly sweet stories of the women-who-brave-our-Interstellar-Frontiers. In these everyone behaves like an emotional idiot to carry the plot onwards.

George O. Smith's "Lost Art", ASF, Dec 43 is one of the few stories in the Venus Equilateral series which wasn't included in the book of the same name. The story isn't part of the main sequence of events involving Don Channing. Smith's entry is probably the purest example of a sf problem story in the grand old manner to be found in this anthology.

Arthur C. Clarke's "The Other Side of the Sky", London's Evening Standard, Infinity, Sep-Oct 57, The Other Side of the Sky, is a series of fictionalized essays on space satellites.

Robert A. Heinlein's "The Man Who Sold the Moon" from The Man Who Sold the Moon, sets the stage for "Requiem" and shows how Delos D. Harriman gains control of the moon and sets earth on the road to the stars.

Nelson S. Bond's "Magic City", ASF, Feb 41 is the story of isolated matri-

archs in a future United States who have reverted to a superstitious knowledge of the past, and how one clan mother sets out to New York City to discover Death.

E.B. White's "The Morning of the Day They Did It", The New Yorker, 1950, The Second Tree From the Corner is a slight bit of pseudoscientific nonsense.

Henry Kuttner's and C.L. Moore's "Piggy Bank" ASF, Dec 42 is a robot story somewhat in the vein of Galloway Gallegher and Joe but much more serious. The problem is how to take control of a nearly invincible robot whose only built-in obedience belongs to a dead man.

Mildred Clingerman's "Letters From Laura", FASE Oct 54 is another story which profitably have been omitted. This is a bit of nonsense dealing with a Grab Bag Tour back through time to the labyrinth at Knossos and to a meeting with the Minotaur.

Alfred Bester's The Stars My Destination, And Hell's My Destination (announced under that title but didn't appear), Dog, Tiger and finally "The Stars, My Destination", Galaxy Oct 56-'an 57. This is an awfully close plagiarism of The Count of Monte Cristo (which is admitted by Boucher in his introduction) and is also second-rate Bester.

The title is misleading since not all the stories are great nor, if you want to be ultra-strict, are all the stories science fiction. The title is apparently chosen to match Doubleday's mystery anthology. All in all, there are quite a few hours of good reading here even if you have read most of it before.

THE HERD OF TIME - Wallace West, Gnome Press, P.O. Bx 161, Micksville, New York, 1959. 11-256 pp. 95,000 words, \$1.20 to \$3.50.

This bargain novel has been rewritten from "En Route to Pluto", ASF Aug 36 The Best of Science Fiction, "The Lure of Polaris" Thrilling Wonder Stories, Oct 49, "The Herd of Time" TWS Aug 52 and "Captive Audience" TWS Jun 53. The result is a dramatic and slightly hilarious novel in which characters do develop slightly and all in all the story is fairly realistic. The jacket blurb is rather over-enthusiastic but sticks to the facts in contrast to the blurbs coming from other quarters. If you have read the original stories buy the book anyway. They have been rewritten completely to form a homogenous whole, and the time spent in reading it is well repaid.

THE SHUTTERED ROOM AND OTHER PIECES - H.P. Lovecraft and divers hands, Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, \$5.00

Twenty years ago the first collection of H. P. Lovecraft's stories, The Outsiders and Others was published by August Dorleth and Donald Wandrei, thereby laying the foundation for a publishing house that has become renowned for the weird and fantastic in literature. It is only fitting after many books published in this genre, that Arkham House should return to the writings of the man who inspired their initial publishing venture. First, this is not king-sized as were the first two Lovecraft books. Not at \$5.00. Those days are over. However, the book has a good thickness and heft.

The title story, "The Shuttered Room", takes one back to good old Lunwich with a batrachian horror linked to the town of Immsmouth. The following shorter piece, "The Fisherman of Falcon Point", takes us to Immsmouth and Devil Reef and what the fisherman caught in his net on one moonlit night. Next in line is a chapter entitled, "Juvenilia and Early Tales" seems as though Lovecraft had a craving to write at the early age of six and made up a sea-thriller complete with map, titled, "The Little Glass Bottle". This was written in 1896. Later, others followed under such titles as: "The Secret Cave", "Mystery of the Graveyard", "The Mysterious Ship", "Poetry and the Gods", "The Street" and "The Alchemist".

In 1919 a story by the name of "Old Rugs" came into being at the advent of

Prohibition and written solely for one of Lovecraft's correspondents, an Alfred Galpin. Alfred, who up to this time, had never made the acquaintance of Demon Run, decided that it might be an experience to bend his elbows a bit before the closing date. Purchasing one bottle of whiskey and one of port wine, he takes himself off to the Wisconsin woods and does a bit of hoisting. He manages to return to town with no one the wiser as to his condition and later relates his adventures in a letter to Lovecraft. Lovecraft, of course, was strictly anti-grape and in an amusing and melodramatic story, he wrote "Old Bugs" with Alfred playing the lead role. It is a sordid story also, and one that the WCTU could have used for propaganda. We can imagine that, Master Alfred, on having read it never again went to the Wisconsin woods to imbibe "bugjuice".

"Lovecraft in Providence" is Donald Wandrei's account of a weeks visit with the master, seeing his books, the countryside, a trip to Boston to view the locale of "Pickman's Model", the development of Cthulthu and its correct pronunciation, the proposed book, The Shunned House, hoodwinking Farnsworth Wright and how "The Shadow Out of Time" and "At the Mountains of Madness" were sold to Aspounding Stories.

"Idealism and Materialism: A Reflection" is an essay in which Lovecraft expounds at some length upon the theological delusions of mankind. The ideas contained in this piece may bring to mind discourses by such authors as Olaf Stapledon and Winwood Reade in his Martyrdom of Man. It will be pointed out that Lovecraft had no established religious beliefs but filled the gap with his own creations. The answer to this might be found in his analogy about the boy who preferred The Arabian Nights to Bible tales.

Other full-blooded articles in the book are by August Derleth; Robert Bloch; Dorothy C. Walter and Alfred Galpin; Lin Carter's long feature, "H.P. Lovecraft: The Books", "H.P. Lovecraft: The Gods"; "Some Observations on the Carter Glossary" by T.O. Cockcroft and "Notes on the Cthulthu Mythos" by George T. Wetzel, are all invaluable background studies.

William Crawford explains how the first Lovecraft book, The Shadow Over Innsmouth, first came into being. Reproduced with this article are the four Frank Utpatel illustrations originally used in the text. Among the other features are photographs of H.P.L. and two used in his stories, "The Shunned House" and "St. John's Churchyard for the Unnamable".

"Dagon", "The Strange High House in the Mist", and "The Outsider", all reprinted from the first book, The Outsider and Others complete the volume.

Send five 'frogskins' fast-like to Derleth for this book before they are all gone.

Roy Hunt

DR. FUTURITY - Philip K. Dick, 5-138pp. 53,000 words (bound with) SLAVERS OF SPACE - John Brunner, 5-118 pp., 45,000 words, abridged, Ace Books, 23 West 47th Street, New York 36, New York, D-421, 35¢, 1960.

Dick's story is revised and expanded from "Time Pawn". TGS Sun 54 and is a very competent tale of a doctor snatched from 1958 forward into time to restore a man dead for thirty-five years. The situation is complicated by time travelers going back and forth from the farthest future to the 16th century when North America was being conquered. Into a really strange world of the future Dr. Jim Parson is catapulted without orientation. He tries to save a woman's life only to have her request death as soon as she regains consciousness. The average age of the population has been reduced to fifteen. Death is the pervading influence underlying most actions. But, there is an underground which saves Parson from exile on Mars and from then on the situation develops with all the complexity of van Vogt, with most of the attention to character that we have learned to expect from Dick's later works.

By comparison Brunner is writing out-and-out space opera. Derry Horn, hu-

man, has a moment of compassion when a blue-skinned android is murdered. This leads him to find the murderer. The quest extends across the galaxy to the then frontier worlds. The situations are out of Drawer 505, the characters out of Drawer 391, the plot from Drawer 234. The writing is better than usual and makes the entire brew readable. And this novel would probably be banned by Governor Farnus if he ever read it because of the digs which it takes at segregation between the humans and the androids.

THE STARS ARE TOO HIGH - Agnes H. Bahnsen, Jr. Bantam Books, 25 West 45th Street, New York 36, New York, 1960, #A2048, 1-183pp. 86,000 words, 35¢

This is a reprint of Random House's hardcover of last year which received mention in the American Radio Relay League's QST. There is a bit of radio lore used and misused in the book. As a matter of fact, the entire book is a series of misses and misuses. Everything is mishandled, characterization, plot, logic, use of facts (a velocity of 50,000 feet/minute which the author finds so frightening is only 570 miles/hour. p. 5), etc.

Love interest is introduced seemingly to keep the plot moving but it is handled in such a sophomoric fashion as to make one laugh. The stock characterizations are here, the anti-Nazi German scientist, the flying saucer direct from a Hollywood with dim green illumination throughout, the young, idealistic man who hopes to save the earth, the older man motivated by a desire to do something for the country that made his rise to fortune in the best Horatio Alger tradition possible.

Bahnsen is trying to preach a sermon here on a theme compounded from the conviction that man himself is not enough, man is not meant for the stars, man can only be saved by some exterior force such as in Max Ehrlich's The Big Eye. The sermon and the lack of skill slow down the story to such an extent that one has to force one's self to read the story.

One for the remainder shelf where it will undoubtedly repose in dust for a couple of years until Hollywood buys it for the next Grade-2 movie.

MURDER IN BLACK LETTER - Poul Anderson, The Macmillan Company, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York 11, New York, 1960, 182 pp., 62,000 words, \$3.50

Trygve Yamasura is back for the third time, first in Parish By the Sword. (see MF #2), "Stab in the Back", The Saint Mystery Magazine, Mar 60. This time he is more of a bystander than protagonist but the book loses none of its effectiveness due to this.

There are derivations from earlier works starting with the dedication to the master detective of them all and proceeding to Anthony Boucher's The Seven of Calvary and Dr. Ashwin (and there is a Dr. Ashwin in the present volume) plus a medieval sect to be reckoned with.

As has been said before and will be doubtless said many times after this, Anderson is rapidly becoming one of the masters of sf with his deft characterization and plotting blending to form a greater whole. He has now carried this talent over to the mystery field with great effectiveness. The elements of melodrama are here but so superbly are they handled that the story seems real, the characters four-dimensional.

THE HAUNTED STARS - Edmond Hamilton, Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1960, 7-192 pp. 64,000 words, \$2.95.

Edmond Hamilton is an old pro at writing and it is this talent which is so effectively displayed in The Haunted Stars. There are occasional traces of overwriting but they don't slow down your reading of this fast-paced novel. While there are a few slips in the background details the main body of the story is carried along quite neatly. As for the story itself it is another variation of Hamilton's man conquering the universe which he made famous years

ago. But Hamilton's story telling has matured now to the point where he can handle the characterization along with the sense of wonder in voyaging to Al-tair. And the story is not actually sf but rather pseudoscience since the methods used to unravel the secret of the Vanryn were very aliphahod. The "scientists" make assumptions and then look for verification for their dreams. Now intuition has its place but even Hamilton admits that they were lucky, indeed. And so they happily went off to the stars. The various subplots are handled well and the ending is several notches above typical space opera.

THE MAN WITH NINE LIVES - Harlan Ellison, 5-133 pp. 47,000 words, abridged (bound with) A TOUCH OF INFINITY - Harlan Ellison, 5-123 pp., Ace Books, 23 West 47th Street, New York 36, New York, #D-413, 1960, 35¢

The Man With Nine Lives is Ace's title for what Ellison prefers to call The Sound of a Searth under which title a portion of it appeared in Amazing Stories sometime in 59 (my collection is missing the issue, so can't give the date). A further portion appeared in the Feb 57 Science Fiction Adventures as "Assassini".

The book is written with a sweeping style and lofty aims which have somehow fallen short. In his attempts to characterize the hero Ellison seems to have tried too hard. He depicts a moral coward who tries to build up enough strength to "revenge" himself on the man who took his sweetheart away. To accomplish this our hero inadvertently apprentices himself to a gigantic computer. The computer sends him out to various worlds and into the minds of some of the creatures on these worlds. His release comes from being able to set the forces into motion which will render these worlds fit for human habitation. And these scenes are the most interesting in the book, even though they add little towards the development. Ellison's imagination is able to create very vivid and outre situations for the hero to cope with but when the climax comes it reveals understanding of how to write the novel but not the skill to perfect the job.

The other half is a collection of shorts from various sources. "Run For the Stars" SEA, Jun 57 is a fairly competent story of a man who is forcibly re-educated, how well you will learn as the story progresses. "Back to the Drawing Boards", FV, Aug 58, has a poor buildup to a nice gimmick ending and then tacks on an anti-climactic twist. "Life Rutch", IK, Apr 56, is an out-and-out problem story with all clues fairly well presented and a proper solution. "The Sky Is Burning", IK, Aug 58 is a sort of fantasy which falls flat on its face with efforts to be scientific and poetical at the same time. (Not that it can't be done, but that it isn't done here.) "Final Trophy" Super-Science Fiction Jun 57 is one of the two best stories of the bunch. It concerns a man who ignorantly violates a taboo with the best of intentions. The other fairly decent story is "Blind Lightning", FV Jun 56. This shows a stranded xenologist playing the part of U-lysses in the cave of Cyclops with a telepathic being on Elestone.

This volume is recommended for Ellison fans and those who want to read something different. Ellison has a rather unique exuberance which only partially shows through the pages of this book. It is rather more fully revealed in the introduction which is consequently the best part of the book.

THE GOLDEN SLAVE - Poul Anderson, Avon Book Division, The Hearst Corporation, 959 Eighth Avenue, New York 19, New York, # T-388, 7-192 pp., 74,000 words, 1960, 35¢.

Anderson uses some of the research presented in "Who Were the Aesiri?", in Volume 2, #3 of Amra, Box 52, Eatontown, New Jersey (20¢/copy) in providing background for this Cimmerian Odyssey. Readers of P. Van Hook Mason's historical novels may recognize the plot and the players thereof but be baffled by

the players thereof. Instead of having his hero gallivanting around untouched by the civilization which confronts him, Anderson's Eodan (a sort of pun as it turns out) has soul-searching moments worthy of the sagas. After Eodan becomes involved in a love triangle Anderson chooses the middle way out and resolves the mess in a satisfactory manner. The pattern is familiar to Conan addicts but Eodan is more grown-up and has less traffic with sorcery to make any sort of substitute. This work does not compare with Bengtsson's The Long Ships but considering the shorter length Anderson has done well.

NEW MAPS OF HELL - Kingsley Amis, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 9-161 pp, 1960, \$3.95

Amis has here the best survey (and in some ways the most unsatisfactory) of the field by a comparative outsider since Basil Davenport's. This is rendered less surprising by his confession that he has been reading sf since he was twelve, back in the middle thirties. Amis has kept more-or-less up-to-date with the good and the bad. Thus he is able to discuss the third "Monster-Issue" of Super-Science Fiction along with Eric Frank Russell, Poul Anderson and other lights of sf. The main source of irritation in the book is the over-emphasis on crud and subsequent omission of the better sf. Crud is crud, everyone knows it is there and why waste entire pages discussing it.

Another failing is his leaning toward the Galaxy type of story in which some portions may be good but the entire story is less than the sum of its parts. However he does point out some flaws in what he discusses.

The entire book is written with skill and wit, somewhat akin to Damon Knight but with a less caustic typewriter.

Most readers of MF should probably enjoy the book despite the high price tag.

EIGHT KEYS TO EDEM - Mark Clifton, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 13-187 pp., + 1 pp., 64,000 words, 1960, \$2.95

As Clifton's letter in the last issue mentioned he is trying to re-introduce thinking into sf. In order to do this the present work was written. It is cast in the form of the novel but in actuality is along the lines of an essay, one enquiring into the nature of things. Clifton sets up bogeymen for the "hero" to rationalize. When he has finished with one he must go on to the next. And in time the "hero" realizes that there is a fundamental ratiocination underlying all the phenomena, the "eighth" key to the planet Eden. With the opening chapters jumping around from character to character in order to present the problem and the shallow characterization of anyone in the story we realize that the actual protagonist is not Calvin Gray, Junior Extrapolator, but rather man's ideas of the physical universe. The reader can go along for the ride, but there's more fun in speculating about the nature of the enigma Clifton sets up.

A great writer of literature might have tackled this in a different manner. There would be the characters to portray, the action to slowly reveal itself, and then the nature of the problem to be solved would gradually coalesce. We would be rewarded by many things, real people, the environment in which they live, etc. The basic problem would be surrounded by many entanglements. Clifton has stripped all this away and presented an idea with the barest nod towards story telling. So if you're looking for great literature go else where, this is an actual specimen of the novel of ideas. But in doing this the reader is left outside, an intellectual observer rather than being inside the protagonist feeling the full range of his emotional and logical makeup. Clifton is telling us these things, not letting us feel them. While I'm not decrying EKTS I would like to see the same situation dealt with by another writer from the so-called literary world. But for some reason they don't deal with such subjects and we have to find this sort of thing in sf. (And if anyone knows of an exception I'd

be glad to read it.)

THE PURCHASE OF THE NORTH POLE - Jules Verne, Ace Books, Inc., 23 West 47th Street, New York 36, New York, 5-159 pp., 44,000 words, # D-434, 35¢, 1960

This is a sort of sequel to From the Earth to the Moon & Round the Moon in that it involves the Baltimore Gun Club and some of the characters from the previous two stories. Its last appearance in the U.S. was as a serial in Amazing Stories, Sep-Oct 26. The neglect is rather easily explained after reading the story. Characterization is used to satirize certain assumed characteristics of various nationalities, not to reveal individual personalities. The plotting is perfunctorily done compared to some Verne's other novels and the plot stops while we are lectured on various geographic facts in Verne's usual manner. Yet in spite of all this the story retains one's interest and is worth reading if you are at all interested in early sf.

AGENT OF VEGA - James H. Schmitz, The Ozone Press, Inc., P.O. Box 161, Hicksville, New York, 5-191 pp., 74,000 words, 1960, \$1.20 to \$3.00

Agent of Vega isn't a novel as such but rather a collection of four stories, "Agent of Vega" ASF Jul 49, "The Illusionists", formerly "Space Fear", ASF Mar 51, "The Truth about Cushegar", ASF Nov 50 and "The Second Night of Summer", Galaxy Dec 50. They haven't been greatly tampered with and each story still stands on its own two feet. Schmitz isn't greatly concerned with characterization although he makes some gestures in that direction, notably in "The Second Night of Summer". Instead he is more concerned with showing us the administration of justice in the Vegan Confederacy. Schmitz anticipated Bester's The Demolished Man in using telepathy for crime detection although they're hardly the same type of story. Bester was being flashily brilliant, Schmitz is more traditional. But in "The Second Night of Summer" Schmitz is a more human mood. But all the stories are still worth rereading.

THE FANTASTIC UNIVERSE COMPILERS - ed. by Hans Stefan Santesson, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1-270 + viii-xv pp., 1960, \$3.95

Since no one else would reprint most of these stories Santesson has taken it upon himself to join ASF, Galaxy, F&SF, Startling-Thrilling Wonder and If in compiling an anthology of stories from his magazine. The contents range from almost great to mediocre and demonstrate just what made If a second-rate zine, that is Santesson's willingness to print stories and "articles" which had little appeal to the majority of his readers even though they may mean something to a small minority. Probably the most extreme example present is the Bloch story which has little meaning except to possibly 500 people.

First off is Asimov's "First Law", Oct 56 which illustrates another failing, that of printing anecdotes instead of stories. Now an occasional anecdote is fine but a whole magazine filled with little else month after month becomes wearisome.

William Tenn's "She Only Goes Out at Night", Oct 56 is a fairly decent story and a rather unusual vampire tale.

Arthur C. Clarke's "The Pacifist", Oct 56, Tales From the White Hart is another short-short anecdote which most of you have probably already read.

Avram Davidson's "The Bounty Hunters", Mar 58 is another short-short which is better than most in this collection.

Dorothy Salisbury Davis's "The Muted Horn" May 57, is a decent fantasy story which deserves reprinting.

Robert Bloch's "A Way of Life" is no doubt puzzling to most of the readers with its punchlines and inner-circle jokes only to be appreciated by fanzine readers (and I don't refer to NE). Fans have applauded Hans for printing this

but Bloch's story would be better off in a fanzine where it would be appreciated and wouldn't lose readers.

Harlan Ellison's "In Lonely Lands", Jan 59 is another example of Ellison's experimenting with new ways of presenting his talents. It is modeled after some of the pseudo-literary tales but comes off better than those usually do because of Ellison's sincerity.

A. Bertram Chandler's "Fall of Knight" Jun 58, is one of the longest puns on record.

Myrle Benedict's "Sit By the Fire", May 58 is in the tradition of Zenna Henderson's stories of The People and is worth reading in its own right.

L. Sprague de Camp's "A Thing of Custom" Jan 57 is extremely competent but lacking in interest. And it seems that the reason that it is so boring is that de Camp has done the same story before and the present example is merely another variation of the basic theme behind "Proposal", etc. without the sparkle which made those stories stand out.

Judith Merril's "Exile From Space", Nov 56 shows the humanization of an alien and is a fine story right up to the end where the entire mood is spoiled by the mechanistic ending.

Larry M. Harris' "Mex", Jan 57 is another anecdote which might well have been omitted.

David C. Knight's "The Amazing Mrs. Mixes", Aug 58 for a change is a story although not too good. The situation is better developed than the characters and both are rather awkwardly handled.

Henry Slesar's "Ty Pather, the Cat", Dec 57 is out and out fantasy and one of the best stories that Slesar has written which isn't saying much.

William C. Gault's "Title Fight", Dec 56 is a rather ridiculous story of robots engaging in pugilistics with humans. The basic assumption of robots weak enough for the fight is too much to swallow.

Sam Moskowitz' "The Golden Pyramid", Nov 56 is a gag story whose ending will come as no surprise to anyone who has read Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey". If Moskowitz can go around finding derivations from everyone else's works in those of various authors then surely we're entitled to say that Weinbaum is the inspirer of this story.

"Felix Boyd's" "The Robot Who Wanted to Know", Mar 58 is a fair tale of a robot who masqueraded as a human in order to further pursue his researches into human emotions, particularly love.

Robert Silverberg's "Road to Nightfall", Jul 58 is probably the most powerful story in the book and the most relentless in following through all the implications of the basic premise. We are presented with a New York turned cannibal after an atomic war cuts off most of the food supplies.

Harry Harrison's "The Velvet Glove", Nov 56 is a competent story in the best tradition of sf but lacking that smooth handling and careful writing which make a story great.

The only trouble with this book is that it is a representative cross-section of If and having to read it makes one want to avoid the magazine itself. And probably the only reason the magazine survived as long as it did was the shortness of the stories in it. This allowed more stories per issue and with a variety of stories which appealed to small groups (such as Bloch's to fandom) "articles" on crackpot subjects which appealed to smugger nuts, etc. the readership could be kept fairly large. But even these readers must have gotten tired of wading through the crud for an occasional decent story.

OUT OF BOUNDS - Judith Merril, Pyramid Books, 444 Madison Avenue, New York 22, New York, 7-160pp, 35¢, 1960.

This is a collection of seven stories plus an introduction by Theodore

Sturgeon.

"That Only a Mother", ASF Jun 48 is Merrill's first published sf story and reveals two unfortunate tendencies about her writing. The first one which isn't always present is the habit of writing "trick" endings which are telegraphed by either the title, the story, or both. In "Survival Ship" the so-called trick ending is the one which I expected, the only logical solution to the situation. To try and palm this off as a trick ending is rather irritating. And to find two more stories of this type in the present collection is annoying. The second fault is one of lack of skill. Merrill isn't Conrad, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, etc. Instead of getting us inside the character and seeing the world outside from that character's viewpoint we're told that the character has such and such reactions, emotions, etc. But still Merrill is concerned with such items which partially makes up for the deficiencies. At least one would rather read one of Merrill's stories than most issues of Galaxy. "That Only a Mother" was first read about ten years ago and in the interval the only remaining memories were of an atomic war, mutations and separated parents with a child. In contrast Conrad's "The Secret Sharer", which was read about the same time, still brings back memories of the plot, even more vivid though, is the turmoil in the mind of the man who concealed the fugitive. Merrill's story upon rereading shows what made it forgettable, the lack of interior vision.

"Peeping Tom", Startling, Spr 54 contains both faults delineated above. This concerns a GI who acquires esp talents in the Near East and then returns to the States to set the neighborhood bussing with the change in him.

"The Lady Was a Tramp", Venture, Mar 57 (as by "Rose Sharon") was apparently written especially for Venture since it uses doubletalk to appeal to the prurient instincts. While no doubt such an approach can be successful this particular story is weakened by the attempt.

"Whoever You Are", Startling Dec 52 did manage to avoid one rather obvious trick ending for which a slight buildup was begun. But it is an attempt at studying the reactions of human beings when confronted with aliens under carefully controlled conditions. The implication is made that humanity is unable to accept any sort of love but that of self. Personally I'd like to see Merrill write another story around this central theme and instead of dealing with 'webs of force around the Solar System' restrict the scene of action so as to concentrate on the inter-personal relationships.

"Connection Completed", Universe Nov 54 is one of the two most satisfying stories in the book. It accomplishes what it sets out to do with a minimum of fuss and bother. There is no reliance on trick endings or poor characterization to carry the story. We go through the evolution of the protagonist's acceptance of a fellow telepath, we're not told that it happened, we're shown how it occurred.

For "Dead Center" see page 42.

"Death Cannot Withstand", ESF Feb 59 was written in collaboration with Algis Budrys. According to Merrill the story was whipped into shape by Budrys, if so then we must give thanks to him for providing the other satisfying story in the book. The tale concerns a woman who is haunted by her husband who can't properly die until she releases him. Since it's a flaw in her character which is holding him the attention to character provides the meat of the story while Budrys seems to have converted it from a jellyfish to a vertebrate.

Merrill seems to be improving which is only natural. She is one author who is conscientious about her work and thus endeavours to better the story. She does not seem to be particularly at ease handling mechanistic frameworks for stories such as in "Whoever You Are" but does better when the setting is rudimentary and the attention can be concentrated on the central characters. A change in viewpoint from outside of a character and telling what that person experiences to the inside and letting us see just what the person's attention is focussed on and how it operates would vastly improve the story. Of course

this demands more time and skill, the skill is there, and developing, the time seems to be lacking. And with the state of the market today who's going to spend the time?

THE ALIENS - Murray Leinster, Berkley Medallion Books, The Berkley Publishing Corporation, 145 West 57th Street, New York 19, New York, #0410, 5-144 pp, 1960, 35¢.

These stories are all highly competent Leinster stories. And that's probably one of Leinster's biggest obstacles to further recognition. He's been around now for over four decades turning out competent stories (with a few lesser stories thrown in) most of which are written in the same straightforward style and utilizing a quite vivid imagination to create situations which just might become the humdrum world of tomorrow. Apparently to Leinster the future is familiar and he manages to communicate this to his readers. Instead of being forced to go along with the author in a flight of the imagination Leinster will take you along if you're willing to view the scenery with him. Assuming that the world of tomorrow follows the patterns laid down by Leinster and that the Post is still around his stories would no doubt sell as contemporary stories (such as his present stories sell there now).

The contents are "The Aliens", ASF, Aug 59; "Anthropological Note", ESF, Apr 57; "The Skit-Tree Planet", Thrilling Wonder, Apr 47; "Thing From the Sky", original.

TWISTS IN TIME - Murray Leinster, Avon Book Division, The Hearst Corporation, 959 Eighth Avenue, New York 19, New York, # T-389, 1960, 35¢.

The remarks above also apply to this collection comprising "Rogue Star" (original), "Dear Charles" (under the pseudonym of "William Fitzgerald") Fantastic Story Magazine, May 53; "Dead City", Thrilling Wonder, Sum 46, Fantastic Story Magazine, Jul 53, The Ultimate Invader which well deserves all the printings it has seen. Leinster has managed to pack an urgency and fear of the unknown into this story that is lacking from some of his other stories. "Sam, This is You", Galaxy May 55 is slightly less convincing because the violation of the theory of causality is in immediate human terms. "The Other Now", Galaxy Mar 51; "The Fourth-Dimensional Demonstrator", ASTOUNDING, Dec 35, Sidewalk in Time is slapstick comedy which was rather unusual to find in sf magazines of the mid-thirties. "The End", Thrilling Wonder, Dec 46 might have served Hlish as a springboard for his Triumph of Time (although the probable sources lie in speculation, scientific or otherwise, outside of sf). And in spite of Les Flood there is no title story, that's the collection he's copyrighting, Les. But you're right about the miscount.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following people for contributing towards improving the headings:

RARU KEMP

TED WHITE

SHELBY VICK

and to

BOB TUCKER

for services above and beyond the call of duty.

/s/ The staff and readers of SF

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EDITORIAL.....

Well, this ish is being finished on 9 Jun after being started 2 Mar which sort of shoots that quarterly theory to bits. And being slightly cautious this publication will hereafter be labelled "irregular" which is merely facing the facts. However, if anyone wishes to complain about the schedule rest assured we'll be back as soon as possible.

Response from last issue's query as to artists desired has brought some results and you're seeing a bit of them in this ish. And, to quench some rumors that were making the rounds concerning Dollens and the covers this time the cover will probably be by Barr. But, Dollens will be back.

William P. Meyer has asked that we abstract book reviews from the prosines and present them to the readership. This sounds like a fine idea. What do you think?

Response to the idea of having author's autobiographies has been slightly in the affirmative so next ish might see results along this line.

Another item which is slated to appear is a continuation of Sam Moskowitz's The Immortal Storm by Harry Warner, Jr. Harry plans on filling in a few details from the thirties that Sam overlooked and then going forward to the Distantion. Material soon to appear includes articles and long book reviews by Ragnar Banham, Fritz Leder, John Boardman, Bob Tucker, Bob Leman, Richard Enay, Philip Jose Farmer, James Elish, Frank Balknap Long, etc. And in addition our regular features, "The Cold Eye" and "On the SF Screen" by Wilcox and Deckinger.

And we must give our thanks for the support shown to WJ, your letters, trade zines and money (and not necessarily in that order) are the foundations for our continuance. And, please, feel free to write in and voice your ideas. Don't be put off by the thought that someone else will probably do so, send in your letter, yourself. We welcome suggestions as to subjects for articles, other features desired, etc.

J. Ben Stark

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