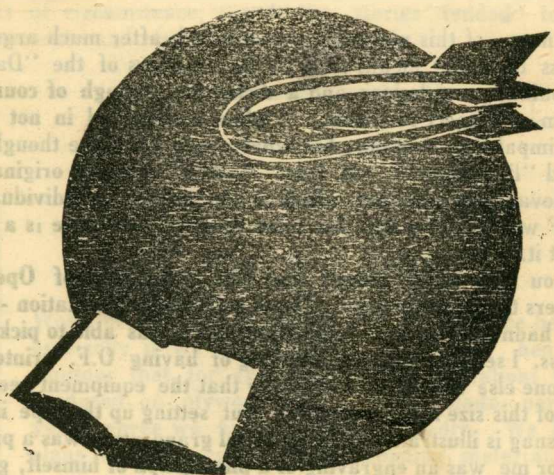
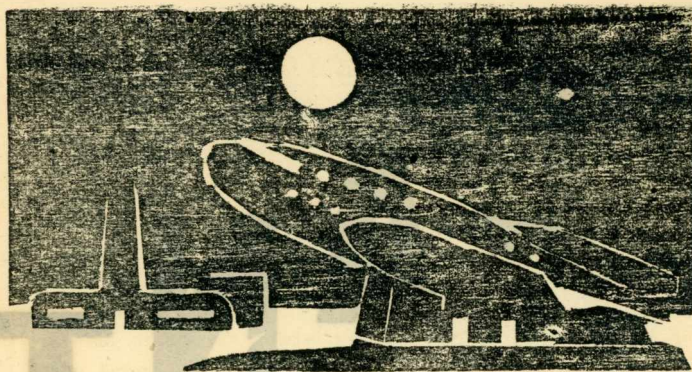


SLANT





LAUNCHING A NEW S-F FAN MAGAZINE, PRODUCED
FOR THE BRITISH FANTASY LIBRARY BY
WALTER A. WILLIS, IN COLLABORATION
WITH JAMES WHITE & DICK MERRITT
WOODCUTS BY JAMES WHITE

Dear Reader,

The name of this magazine was decided, after much argument, by more or less the same means used by the founders of the "Dadaist" movement in painting - a dagger and a dictionary; though of course we authors have more respect for books. I admit we cheated in not taking the first word impaled on our pin, but what would you have thought of a magazine called "Pamphrey"? At least "SLANT" is short, original, and not without relevance to our aims, which are to present an individual out-look on the S-F world. Besides, for some reason I feel there is a vague S-F sound about it.

You may have noticed that this is the first of Operation Fantast's followers to appear in print. This is not vulgar ostentation - it just happened that I hadn't access to a duplicator, and I was able to pick up an old printing press. I see Ken Slater is thinking of having O.F. printed: to him, and to anyone else interested, I may say that the equipment needed to produce a page of this size is not expensive, but setting up the type is quite a job. Another snag is illustrations. My paternal grandfather was a printer, but all he left for me was an engraving of a photograph of himself, glaring over a huge moustache. Not very helpful to an S-F magazine editor, but in desperation I was toying with the idea of running it as a lesser-known portrait of Jules Verne. You may thank my friend James White that you have been spared that experience. The looks are on my mother's side.

Your comments and suggestions would be very welcome. Send them along and I'll put on my green eyeshade and pick the more polite for the next issue.

Yours sincerely,

Walter A. Willis

S.F. TRENDS

Reading through old copies of A.S.F. one often finds nostalgic letters about a 'Golden Age' of S.F., placed at various dates from 1928 onwards. The only thing these readers have in common is a firm conviction that whenever the 'Golden Age' was, it is certainly not now. Actually, of course, it is when they began reading S.F., and if they retrace their steps they are liable to meet with disillusionment. This is specially true with the first decade of S.F., the pre-Campbell era. In those days all an author needed was an improbable idea, preferably involving the spectacular demise of a few million people. Some of these ideas were remarkably ingenious, but they lost whatever plausibility they had by their juvenile presentation. The universe is just too big to be pushed around by Bulldog Drummonds, even one with a lens.

Later authors met the difficulty of introducing a plausible human interest into cosmic plots by the 'worms-eye' technique used in Hersey's 'Hiroshima', the appraisal of extra-ordinary events through their impact on ordinary people. This approach has its own dangers. The characters became the pawns instead of the masters of circumstance, and the stories tended to be full of bewilderment and frustration.

[continued overleaf]

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Won't be any bigger, but it will we hope be better, especially if we can get more equipment. When you consider that, for example, all the illustrations were produced on plywood with a razor blade, perhaps you'll agree we haven't done too badly. We have plans for improvements in the reading material, too.

Incidentally, we could run an article on book-binding for magazine collectors, and we thought it might be interesting to publish a questionnaire to find out what sort of psychological types S.F. readers are. What do you think?

THE EDITOR

The atom war cycle has now ended, and from Campbell's experiments lately it seems we are in for another 'thought-variant' era. I hope he's not satisfied with the crop of corn which has resulted so far; surely the end is not Lafayette? The serials have been better, but paraphysics, the latest fashion among authors, dates back at least as far as Campbell's 'Forgetfulness'. As for 'Dreadful Sanctuary', Russell's only new angle is the import to S.F. of the Dashiell Hammett detective story technique. Very readable, when done as well as Russell does it, but the interest of the story is extraneous to the science, and we may be in as much danger from space 'whodunits' as we were from space operas.

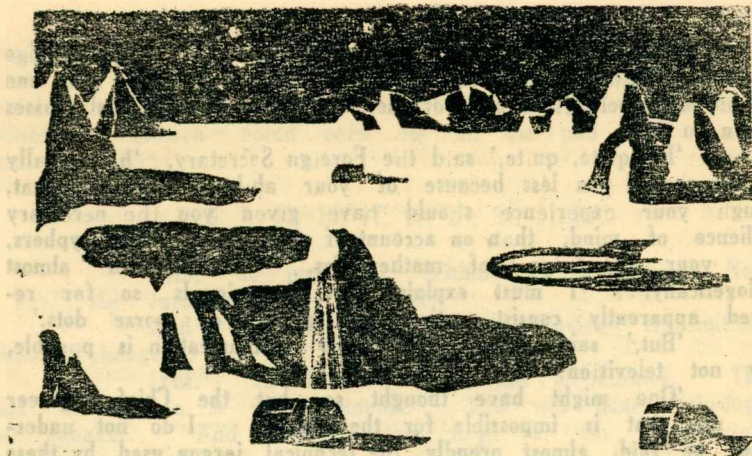
CORN EXCHANGE

Would anyone like this completely original plot? Our space is closed because it is warped by the mass of our universe, which was presumably wandering in hyper-space until it acquired an extra atom from somewhere, reached critical mass, and became a hyper-sphere. There it sticks until one of George O. Smith's bright technicians gets tired of squaring the speed of light and invents a time machine. The moment he sends one atom back into time critical mass ceases to exist, and we are precipitated into hyper-space. If you like you can work in the inevitable paradox by postulating that the atom sent back into time was the one which brought about the initial formation of the hypersphere.

Or this? One of the truly two-dimensional objects in our world is a moving picture on a screen. Suppose our universe is a kind of film projection in a four-dimensional space and the projector breaks down, or the three-dimensional screen develops a hole, or tilts so as to elongate our matter in two dimensions?

Here's one for 'Probability Zero'. Ardent young musician wanting to surpass Toscanini and Beecham, takes a bath in liquid helium, and becomes a super-conductor!

I'M RATHER FOGGED
ABOUT VAN VOGT
SOME HAVE TALKED
OF VAN VAUKT
BUT MAYBE IT OUGHT
TO BE VAN VOUGHT
AND SURELY IT'S NOT
VAN VOTT?



CONTACT WITH EARTH

A SHORT BY W.A.WILLIS

Massen paused on the coir doormat and examined his conscience. It was not unduly clouded, and he knocked softly. Too softly, he thought, and knocked more firmly. Simultaneously there was a peremptory order to come in and, hot with embarrassment, he pushed open the door. The Foreign Secretary continued writing for exactly the time necessary to show that he was an extremely busy man, but equally courteous. Then he looked up and switched on his smile.

'Ah, Mason,' he said, with the odious affability of the public figure, 'Sit down'. Thank God for that, thought Massen, it's not trouble anyway, but what can the old boy want. The old boy came to the point with unusual speed.

'Briefly,' he said, 'I have just been informed that the B.B.C. research engineers at Malvern claim to have received wireless messages from the direction of the moon. I am advised that we can dismiss the possibility of intelligence indigenous to our satellite, and assume that we are being approached by a race which has evolved space travel and is using the moon as a 'pied-a-terre'.

Massen said nothing, and he went on pompously: 'I need hardly emphasise the necessity of treating this information as highly confidential. The negotiations have, of course, been put in the hands of my Department. I know there is no precedent, but it was generally realised that the most suitable Ministry to deal with these alien beings was the Foreign Office: first however we have to find some means of mutual understanding. That will be your job.'

Massen swallowed. 'But Sir,' he stammered, 'My knowledge of terrestrial languages won't be of much use in dealing with one that probably belongs to none of the phonetic or ideographical classes known to us.'

'Er, quite, quite,' said the Foreign Secretary, 'but actually I have chosen you less because of your ability as a diplomat, though your experience should have given you the necessary resilience of mind, than on account of your work with cyphers, and your knowledge of mathematics.' He coughed almost apologetically. 'I must explain that the signals so far received apparently consist entirely of groups of morse dots.'

'But,' said Massen, 'if radio communication is possible, why not television?'

'One might have thought so, but the Chief Engineer tells me that is impossible for the present. I do not understand,' he said, almost proudly, 'the technical jargon used by these fellows, but he said something about synchronisation, and I gather that any alien system of transmission is extremely unlikely to be suited to our present types of receiver. 'However,' he concluded hastily, 'I have every confidence in your ability, my dear Mason, and do not hesitate to call on any assistance you may require.'

.....

'All bloody well,' thought Massen, as he climbed into the car, 'but how could you learn a language by sound alone? That's expecting too much of onomatopœia.' By the time he reached Malvern the problem seemed no nearer a solution and he could only hope that the aliens would think of one for him.

It was obviously a matter of urgency to acknowledge the message as soon as possible, and when he reached the room which was being hurriedly prepared for him he asked to hear the recordings. While he waited he asked the Engineer for a report.

'Well, Mr. Mason—'

'Massen.'

'Sorry. Well, the signals started, or at least were first heard, at 10-30 this morning. They consist of an amplitude modulated transmission on about 75 megacycles, carrying a pure audio-frequency note of 2,400 cycles. Since there is only one A.F. we have been able to use considerable amplification, with audio filters and negative feedback.'

'Thanks,' said Massen, 'but—' At that instant the

recording came on. The message consisted of 'pips' like those of the Greenwich time signals, but transmitted very rapidly and divided into groups by almost imperceptible pauses. Massen noted each dot on his pad and counted them carefully:

1, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31, 37.

'Hm,' he muttered, 'arithmetical progression? No.. .. Yes.' He turned to the Engineer.

'And this message is still being transmitted, without change?'

'Yes. At intervals of about 13 minutes. The next is due in a few moments. You will hear it through this speaker. And here is the key of our transmitter, for your reply.'

'Good,' said Massen, 'then would you please answer with a group of 41 dots. They have sent us the first 12 prime numbers, and by replying with the thirteenth we tell them that they are in touch with someone possessing a knowledge of mathematics.'

As the last dot sped on its journey a tense silence fell on the room. The wait seemed endless, but after only two minutes the alien transmission began again, with what seemed a new eagerness. Massen could hardly control his fingers as he noted the dots. The first human to communicate with extra-terrestrial beings! The message was long and very fast, and he was unable to examine it as he wrote. But when it had ceased he looked at the mass of dots in dismay. He counted them hurriedly:

9, 17, 5, 16, 2, 13, 1, 9, 2, 5, 5, 2, 9,
1, 13, 2, 16, 5, 17, 9, 16, 13, 13, 16, 9,
17, 9, 1, 3, dash, 1, 8, 5

He searched desperately for some relationship among these heterogeneous numbers. He was still searching after they had been repeated a dozen times. Sick with failure he walked to the window and gazed despondently at the cloudy sky.

All at once he was attacked by an overwhelming sense of catastrophe. He whirled round, but there was nothing unusual, except that the Engineer had left the room. He stared vacantly at his desk, and the realisation struck him like a blow that the signals had stopped. The implications stunned him. The aliens had abandoned their project

in disgust at human, at his, obtuseness. The message would prove to be absurdly simple and humanity would revile him for having bungled their greatest opportunity. The-
The phone rang, and he lifted the receiver clumsily. It was the Engineer. 'It's all right, the receiver's O.K. The moon has set, and we needn't expect anything more until 7-50 to-morrow morning.'

Massen felt better after sandwiches and coffee in the Cafeteria. 'I wonder,' the Engineer was saying, 'why they don't just land on Earth? I suppose they're short of fuel?'

'More likely they want to make sure of a friendly reception.'

'Yes,' said the Engineer, 'I suppose they might easily land in some barbarous place and be attacked.' He eyed Massen sympathetically. 'What are you going to do next?'

'God knows,' said Massen, 'play the recordings again, I suppose.'

At 1 a.m. the recordings were still being played, and the Engineer had gone to bed. Massen was lying back in his chair and resting his eyes. His brain was tired too, but he could not afford to sleep. There was no time to waste, he thought, staring at his watch.

The chair skittered against the wall as he burst into the ante-room, where a weary technician was lifting another disc.

'Can you slow down that turn-table?'

'Sure. How's that?'

'More. Yes, that'll do.'

The dots began to resemble fog-horn blasts. Massen took off his watch and set it down before him.

Half an hour passed, and the technician looked up again as Massen flung open the door.

'You can pack up now. Everything's all right.'

.....

'The clue,' he said, gulping his breakfast coffee, 'was something that did not appear in my transcription of the message. Actually, the pauses between the groups of dots vary in length, but so slightly as to be imperceptible to

our ears until the recording was slowed down. Evidently these beings have a much more highly developed sense of deration than us. More rapid metabolism, I suppose. Anyway the message actually reads like this.' He wrote:

9,17 5,16 2,13 1,9 2,5 5,2 9,1
13,2 16,5 17,9 16,13 13,16 9,17
9,1 3, dash, 1, 8, 5.

'So what?'

'Don't you see,' Massen exclaimed, 'The co-ordinates of a graph! Plot these points, connect them, and you will find you have drawn a circle and a diameter. They have sent us a picture! With patience they could draw anything the same way.'

'And the numbers at the end?'

'The value of Pi expressed in the 12 scale of notation. Presumably they want to know our scale so they can send larger numbers, and thus more complicated pictures. It will be enough to reply '3, dash, 1, 4, 1, 7.'

As they waited beside the transmitter key the Engineer asked, 'What do you think they'll send us next?'

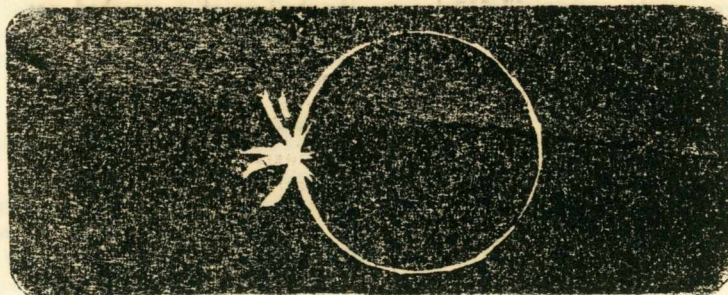
'I don't know,' said Massen, 'Theoretically we could learn one another's language this way, but it would be a slow job. I expect they'll just arrange a landing or a television contact.'

'Well, I think the world owes you a vote of thanks, Mr. Mason,' said the Engineer.

Earth's first diplomatic representative was much too happy to protest.

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T H E E N D



TELEKINESIS AND BUTTERED TOAST

Dr. Rhine's study of parapsychology has now been published in England, and those of you who read Williamson's 'And Searching Mind' will notice with interest that the experiments in telekinesis were performed with a pair of dice. These the subject had to will to come up 'sevens', i.e. 6&1, 5&2, or 4&3, and the results were such as to rule out chance as an explanation.

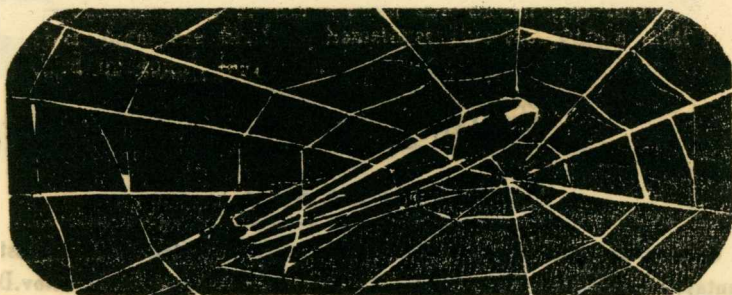
There seems accordingly to be no doubt that telekinesis (the control of inanimate objects by thought) does frequently occur. But how are we to reconcile this conclusion with centuries of human experience of the obdurate intractability of certain material objects, in particular buttered toast. As the old poet says:

I never had a piece of toast,
Particularly long and wide,
But fell upon the sanded floor,
And always on the buttered side.

The explanation undoubtedly lies in Dr. Rhine's apparatus. It will not have escaped the incisive intelligence of my readers that the total of the numbers on the opposite sides of the two dice is also 7. It is now clear that the apparent success of the subject's will is really an abject failure: THE SIDES ON WHICH HE WAS CONCENTRATING ARE ACTUALLY UNDERNEATH.

It is not however necessary to conclude that material objects are activated by a malign intelligence. Indeed the apparent anomaly we had discovered provides us with a valuable clue to the mode of operation of the telekinetic faculty. Its effect is apparently to increase the gravitational inertia, or weight of the object concentrated upon. Thus, the butter on the toast, which has, for the entire period of its fall, been assailed by the whole power of the human mind, in agonised concentration, acquires enough extra weight to turn the piece completely round in mid-air. I need hardly add that the same force acting on molecules of water easily explains the delay in the boiling of a watched pot.

DR. E.E.SMITH
WAS SOMETHING OF A MYTH
DISILLUSIONMENT IMPENDS
AFTER 'CHILDREN OF THE LENS.'



O F F C O U R S E

I wonder how often reader speculation makes authors change their plans? It's possible that the future history of the Galaxy was changed by one Robert Griffin, who in the April 1946 A.S.F. may have shaken Azimov to his Foundations by guessing that Stars' End was imaginary, a Seldon device to encourage Terminus; the next in the series was inconclusive, very much delayed, and should perhaps have been called 'Now You've Seen It.' Then in August 1947 Warren Rayle suggested that in the hands of a less capable author Lord Clane would turn out to be a normal man, the others being the mutants. Perhaps Van Vogt was not so very bright after all: anyhow he has since left the twilight of the 'Gods.' Thank you, Warren.

TWO SUGGESTIONS

I do wish Mr. Campbell would stop giving away the plots of the stories in A.S.F. by those clever little introductions. [Personally I much prefer to be not quite sure what a story is about after reading it; which is why I like Van Vogt.] In the time saved maybe he could find the paper for the 16 pages which disappeared in March, 1947, or even for Unknown. This famous paper famine, I must say, seems slightly incredible to anybody who tries to lift one of those technicolour catalogues the Americans call 'slick' magazines.

WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

Talking of Unknown, does anyone know when the stories in the current British reprints first appeared? Are we still ploughing on to October, 1943, or are we on the second trip through, living on reject: from the first? Sometimes I've thought we must be on the third or fourth lap.

Please address all correspondence etc. to;
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 170, UPPER NEWTOWNARDS RD.,
 BELFAST, N. IRELAND.

A V A I L A B L E

One for any item on Want List	Two for any item on Want List
Fantasy, (Newnes) 1939 - No.2	ASF[BRE]1939 - Aug.Sep.Oct.Nov.Dec.
Fantasy, (Temple Bar) - Nos.1,2,&3	do. 1940 - Jan.Feb.Mar.Apr.May.
New Worlds - Nos 1,2,&3	Jun.Jul.Aug.Sep.Nov.Dec.
Outlands, 1946 - Winter	(Oct.-Jan. contain 'Gray Lensman')
ASF(USA Edn.) 1944 - June	do. 1941 - Jan.Feb.Aug.Sep.Oct.
do. 1945 - Feb.	do. 1942 - Jan. 1943 - Jan.
do. 1946 - May	do. 1944-48 - Any issue
Weird Tales 1937 - Dec.	The Creator - Simak
do. 1947 - Jan.	R.U.R. - Capek
Fantastic Adventures, 1947 Cct.	In The Midst Of Life, Bierce
Avon Fantasy Reader, No.1	The War Of The Worlds, Wells
Burn,Witch,Burn, Merritt	Holy Terrors, Machen
Crisis 1992, Benson Herbert	The Camberwell Miracle, Beresford
Odd John, Stapledon	Erewhon, Butler
A Princess of Mars, Burroughs	The Moon Conquerors, Romans
Chessmen of Mars, do.	Strange Romance, Benson Herbert
In the Days of the Comet, Wells	Death Rocks The Cradle, Neil Bell
The Sleeper Awakes, do.	Into The Fourth Dimension, Cummings
Food of the Gods, do.	Wings Across Time, Arnold
Can Such Things Be?, Bierce	The New Machiavelli, Wells
Brave New World, Huxley	The Lost Stradivarius, Falkner
Green Isle of the Great Deep, Gunn	Topper, Thorne Smith
Swastika Night, Constantine	Microbe Hunters, de Kruif
Tales of Mystery & Imagination, Poe	Island Of Captain Sparrow, Wright
Lady Into Fox, Garnett	Nordenholt's Millions, Connington
Picture of Dorian Grey, Wilde	The Expanding Universe, Eddington
The Evidence for the S'natural, Tuck	Wireless World, 1938-'48
Experiment with Time, Dunne	Electronic Engineering, '45,'46

W A N T E D

American editions only: 3s. each offered: copies acceptable in any condition	
ASF1934, Apr.July, Oct. to Dec.	ASF1943 All issues
'35, All except May&Dec.	'44, Jan.March April May July
'39, November,December	'45, Jan.March, April, October
'40, All issues	'46 December
'41,2, All issues	Unknown, All issues