

THE DEVIL'S WORK  
Volume 1, Number 46  
January, 1981

from Norm Metcalf, P.O. Box 1368, Boulder,  
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for the Feb 81 FAPA mailing though it may  
not appear until the May 81 mailing.

YHOS #17 - ART WIDNER

As for crocodile tears for departed prozines I think that in a great many cases the lamenters were mourning the loss of "their" lettercolumns. Some of them have admitted to me that their "comments" on the stories were camouflage. They hadn't read the stories, and had no intentions of reading the stories. They only wanted to see their names in print in prozines. (This reminds me of the fan who wanted to know how many dollars I would charge to publish his name.)

My crocodile tears are shed for Unknown Worlds, the Campbell Astounding, Hoffman's Adventure, Hoffman's Romance (which was meant in the secondary sense, the ambiguity probably killed the magazine) and some potentials of other magazines which were never really realized.

Sure there have been stories of space colonists agitating for independence from Earth. Do you remember the stories of Robert A. Heinlein? And I imagine someone has rewritten into sf the story of the Icelanders losing their independence to Norway due to fifth column activities. Instead of westerns on Mars we've had politics on Mars.

THE GOD OF THE MONTH CLUB - ARTHUR D. HLAVATY

Your amusing satire reminds me of tuning around on AM one evening (yes Widner, people do listen to Ancient Modulation). I was intrigued when I heard this.

"Howdy there friends and neighbors out there in radioland. This is WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia, bringing you the top gospel and western tunes out of these here hills. But first folks, before we get to our number one tune, we have a little commercial for you. Send in \$5.00 today to WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia for your autographed photograph of the Lord Jesus Christ. We only have a limited supply of these photos, folks, so hurry and send your \$5.00 today to WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia. But don't worry if you don't get your \$5.00 in fast enough. We will have a surprise consolation package for you. We can't tell you what's in it, it will be a real surprise. So remember folks, send your \$5.00 for an autographed photograph of the Lord Jesus Christ to WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia right away. And now folks, our number one tune..."

HORIZONS #161 - HARRY WARNER, JR.

Your comments about acceptance or rejection of good sf by editors brings up the point that some of them (perhaps most, or even all) are basing their decision not on "absolute quality" but on what they perceive the marketplace will sell the most of, i.e., crud. What some editors seem to be concerned with is not "Is this story any good?" but "Is this lousy (pick a category) story saleable?" This seems to explain the attempted marketing of imitation Burroughs, the marketing of Talbot Mundy as being in the Howard and/or Lamb tradition (actually Howard was in their tradition, many of his passages are plagiarized from their stories), etc. What percentage of sf stories are trying to be sold on their merits?

Your remarks about dittoing your collected works made me think that Zane Grey should have produced a dittoed version of Riders Of the Purple Sage. And someone should write a biography of Grey titled Writer Of the Purple Prose.

THE CONTINUOUS BRIAN EARL BROWN #6 - BRIAN EARL BROWN

Personally I have nothing against well-done 100,000 word novels and I can think of a number that I have enjoyed of that length or longer. Your preference for sf novels shorter than 100,000 words I think is probably partially explainable by the many sf authors who can't write well enough to sustain 100,000 words. Thus I don't consider it a limitation, but a challenge.

SAMBO #30 - SAM MARTINEZ

Thanks for the background info on H. G. Wells' involvement with movies. His collaborator R. W. Paul's notion of projecting movies surrounding the viewer has been used in various training simulators as well as for entertainment.

Your claim for the 1960 version of The Time Machine as "the first great sciece(sic)-fiction film" interests me. What previous near-contenders do you disqualify and why?

DAMBALLA #40 - Chuck HANSEN

You're not the only fan I know that has trouble reading the pro writings of their ex-fan contacts. One such fan said that he kept visualizing his neopro buddy in their quarters reading his attempts and this recollection made it impossible for him to sit down and actually read the stories. Myself, I find it interesting to see what my former fellow fans have accomplished.

Which Talbot Mundy stories written before 1916 or after 1931 with the exception of "The Valiant View", The Thunder Dragon Gate and Old Ugly Face would you consider to be outstanding, and why? I'll stand with my statement that his peak stories (with a few exceptions) were published between 1916 and 1931 (and there were some duds in that period).

ALGOL/STARSHIP WIN 78-79 - ANDREW PORTER

Porter: Your list of categories not to be found in the "new" Starship did not include Bat Durston stories. Shame on you, hi.

As for bookstore sales vs. subscription sales to your fanzine, I can't rely on dealers stocking copies locally. I suspect that this is a widespread malady of fanzines sold in bookstores. The proprietors aren't sure how many to order, they don't want to be stuck with back issues tying up space and capital. So it is either patronize a mail-order sf dealer or subscribe. And for those fans living in areas where there are no walk-in bookstores mail order seems to be the order of the day.

"the phenomenon of mail order SF is one peculiar to this field" is certainly a true tautology. I suspect that you meant that mail order of books and magazines is unique to SF. In that case you're wrong.

Susan Wood: Your article "Women And Science Fiction" does not discuss Haggard's Ayesha series (which admittedly are borderline sf, if that). Instead of having females to whom events could be explained (one of your pet peeves), Hag-

gard reverses this. The "hero" has to sit around and listen to Ayesha explain whys and wherefores, Horace Holley (and various permutations of the name) have to listen to her lectures. Allan Quatermain was conned into visiting her by Zikali so that, in part, Allan can listen to her lectures. Since the ultimate motivation is traced to a feud between Isis and Aphrodite the females rather have their day (and many of those) in these four novels. (I'm surprised that Ayesha did not invent radio so that the entire world could listen to her.)

The archetypal "dark woman" in sf is probably Lilith, centuries earlier than your examples and probably their direct or indirect inspiration.

The subjection of women in our culture owes a great deal to Paulist theology with his notions of women's inferiority, the need to abstain from sexual feelings due to Christ's imminent return (within Paul's lifetime) and probably some sort of combative feelings with regard to pagan feminism. The deification of the Virgin Mary when added to Paulism have resulted in a great deal of what you are criticizing in this article.

I'm surprised that you didn't deal with Leiber's "Conjure Wife", a very interesting examination of alienation between the sexes.

Effinger: Was your story "New York, New Orleans" inspired by Clemens' spoof in Life On the Mississippi about extrapolating the shortening of the Mississippi so that "as any fool can plainly see in 978 years Cairo and New Orleans will be a mile and three-quarters apart and joined together under a common mayor"?

Charnas: Thanks for distinguishing between "propaganda" and "message".

STARSHIP/ALGOL SPR 79 - ANDREW PORTER

Alexei and Cory Panshin: Your ascribing the late 30's decline of sf to loss of belief in the "old biological vision" seems to be reaching too far. A more immediate cause could be found in the general decline of all pulp magazines of the time due to economic circumstances beyond their real control (often known as "The Great Depression"). Argosy, Adventure, Blue Book, Short Stories, etc. had all declined along with sf (though 1932-33 seems to have been the nadir of sales for all the pulps). The deliberate decreasing of the quality of Amazing Stories and Wonder Stories (as Thrilling Wonder Stories) seems to have been aimed at finding an even lower common denominator with the resultant hoped-for sales increase. Campbell had the contrary notion, that of increasing sales by increasing quality.

Campbell's "Who Goes There?" does not present a new vision of reality. An earlier version in which Jesus exercised the Gadarene swine has the same outlook, all alienness can be controlled, subjected to humanity, etc.

In considering Campbell to have been a prophet of ecology and to claim that the science of ecology was forming during Campbell's early years as editor of Astounding is to attempt to revise reality. The notions go back at least to the Persians in the time of Zoroaster, and are right there in the Book of Genesis wherein man's knowledge disrupted the ecology of Eden.

This essay offers a combination of genuine insights and special pleading.

McIntyre: Houghton, Mifflin have a long history of publishing excellent and

offbeat fiction. They're the publishers of Sabatini, Rhodes, Buchan, etc.

Apparently you don't realize that Gernsback published a good many H. G. Wells' stories when you contrast his career in the U.S.A. with England and H. G. Wells. Wells was one of Gernsback's leading authors.

Since Gernsback did publish Everyday Science and Mechanics as well as Science and Invention your suggested alternative to Gernsback's publishing of Amazing Stories is ironic. Blaming Gernsback for the pulp tradition in sf is doubly ironic. The readers of Gernsback's Amazing Stories, Amazing Stories Annual, Amazing Stories Quarterly, Air Wonder Stories, Science Wonder Stories, Wonder Stories Quarterly and Wonder Stories were quite proud that the magazines were NOT pulps. Read the letter columns of the times. Read the magazines. Read the denunciations of Astounding Stories (published by William Clayton and edited by Harry Bates, not Gernsback) for being the first sf pulp and thus degrading the field. Read the anguished letters when Amazing Stories became a pulp (long after Gernsback lost control). Gernsback's last issue of Amazing Stories was Apr 29, the first pulp issue was Oct 33.

Blaming Gernsback for ghettoizing sf is legitimate. Whether this was good or bad is another matter. But blaming the Gernsback Amazing Stories for being a low-quality pulp is inaccurate. It was a fairly-literate bedsheet magazine with such contributors as H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, A. Merritt (a pulp author yes, but not your usual "pulp" author), Julian Huxley, etc. And denigrating pulps by their poorest examples is an insult to Adventure, Blue Book, Argosy, All-Story, Short Stories, Romance and the other medium-to-high quality pulps of the time.

Patrick McGuire: Your comment that "These are not the shrinking, helpless heroines of Edgar Rice Burroughs..." makes me wonder which ones you had in mind. La of Opar, Victoria Custer, Dian the Beautiful, whatever her name was in "Seven Worlds To Conquer"/Back To the Stone Age, etc. hardly fit this description. Victoria Custer passed her exams to become a cavewoman with a field examination. La of Opar felt herself a match for Tarzan. The women of Pellucidar despise the men from above precisely because the men are shrinking and helpless compared to the women. While Dejah Thoris and Jane Porter are not in the same category as Dian the Beautiful they're not exactly in the helpless class all of the time.

Thanks for pointing out that C. J. Cherryh has something of interest to offer. With all the deluge of sf these days a few Mount Ararats pointed out by such Noahs as you are welcome.

Lupoff: While indeed Darkness and Dawn may be the first novel about a naked man and a naked woman alone in the ruins of civilization and attempting to rebuild civilization, there was a much earlier set of stories (now edited into one) about a naked man and a naked woman alone at the beginnings of civilization. England may well have decided to revise The Book Of Genesis.

Please keep on reviewing these earlier works.

SAGEBRUSH, SADDLES, & SIX-SHOOTERS - DON MILLER

David Bates: It's interesting to see that Hopalong Cassidy films were some of the B movies that Harry Sherman wanted to make amends for by producing Four Faces West. FFW was supposedly one of the finest western films and one of the worst flops at the boxoffice in the history of movie westerns. Since I enjoyed

a good number of the Cassidy movies I'd like to see one of the better ones on a double bill with FFW. I haven't seen FFW and wonder what Sherman did better.

Miller: Riders Of the Purple Sage is far worse than you state. The locale is fictitious despite various claims of authenticity. everything is visualized in superlative monochromes (Lassiter's black clothes, sage turning black and purple at the same locale (feasible under certain lighting conditions), Jane's white clothes, thousands of identically-colored cattle being stampeded by identically colored rustlers, etc.). Mormonism is badly distorted. The descriptions sound as if the novel takes place around Johnson Valley or House Rock Valley. But in the sequel it turns out to have been east of the Colorado and south of the San Juan. The whole thing is a fantasy western.

As for sf/fantasy elements in westerns nearly any western will do. Grey's are in a never-never land (at least those I've read). Faust's are also in a never-never land. Faust goes one further and introduces the Greek god Pan. For authenticity you'll have to read Eugene Manlove Rhodes, Wilbur C. Tuttle, Eugene Cunningham, etc. They aren't as popular as the fabulists and probably because their stories are authentic.

#### WHAT THE DORMOUSE SAID 7 - MARC ORTLIEB

Your tongue-in-cheek denunciation of Swedish fandom on the basis of "Yngvi Is A Louse" contains a pair of oversights. Poul Anderson has said that Yngvi may refer to English as well as the Yngling. This may explain your mystification as to why de Camp & Pratt's prisoner would say "Yngvi Is A Louse". And the royal house of Sweden isn't descended from the Norse pantheon, whether lousy or not. It's French, placed in power by Napoleon Bonaparte as part of his Continental System (predecessor to Hitler's New Order).

You've reminded me of the past episode when a French mathematician and a Brooklynite were riding along on a horse-drawn vehicle. The drover and the horse both became lost. The mathematician volunteered to find the way. But his companion protested. "You can't do that. You'd be putting Descartes before ~~de~~ horse."

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