

fantastic worlds

25¢

summer 1952

THE ARKHAM HOUSE STORY by August Derleth





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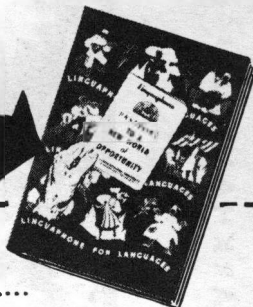
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SUMMER, 1952

CONTENTS

Vol. 1, No. 1

articles

- THE ARKHAM HOUSE STORY ... by August Derleth 7
THE IMMORTAL GAEL by Walt Willis 23
NEW VOICES IN FANTASY: GENE HUNTER
by Harry S. Weatherby 28

stories

- ALL CREMATED EQUAL by Forrest J. Ackerman 16
THE DOOR by Michael Storm 18
THE SOUL-SEEKER by Taby Duane 34

features

- THE FIRESIDE The Editor 4
IN GENERAL..... by Jan Romanoff 5
THE FLIGHT OF AZRAEL - a poem -
by Clark Ashton Smith 15
BOOK REVIEW: The Loose Board in the Floor.. 27
BEHIND THE TYPEWRITER 39

Cover painting, GODDESS OF THE NIGHT, by Ralph Rayburn Phillips.

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WE FEEL like a huge, fat spider caught in its own web. When we quietly went mad and decided to be an editor, we started spinning that web. Our strands --- in the form of letters --- went out to fanzines, prozines, writers' magazines; to friends, foes, fans, and even human beings.

For a few terrifying days we hovered over our mailbox like the spectre of Hamlet's father. The only envelope addressed to us carried a circular on how to develop your bust in 72 easy lessons.

We were despondent. Had train strikes held up our precious mail? Or -- horrors! -- had our announcements been consigned to those dread circular files known as waste baskets?

OUR FEAR was premature.

One morning there was a shuffling of weary feet accompanied by guttural curses, the flash of a postman's gray uniform, and then a plop, plop, thud, swish, swish, swish.

Mail stuck out from our mailbox like the appendages of a thousand-tentacled Venusian!

So it began: Manuscripts, replies, queries arrived in such a deluge that we were busier than fourteen-toed groundhogs. It seemed that every highway, every postal route this side of Vladivostok must be swarming with our mail. We thought of the people behind that mail: the waiting fans, the professionals seizing a moment to send us a manuscript, the newer writers loading their dreams into envelopes and praying, "Please, God, make it be accepted--because if that editor won't take it, no one will!"

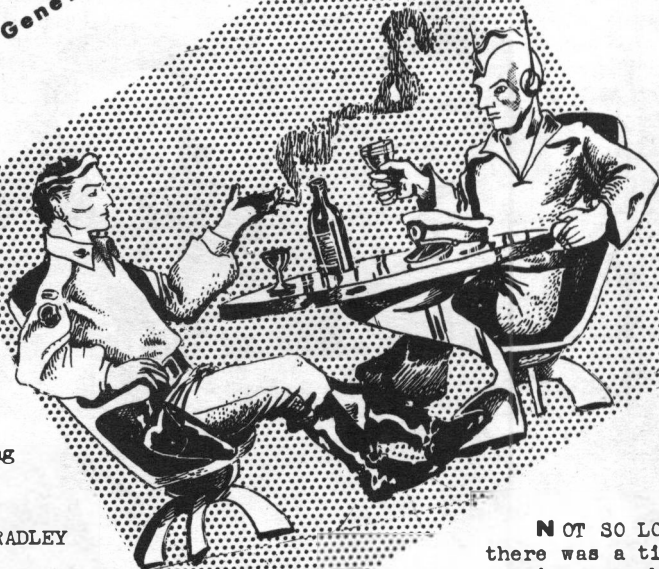
At one time, the mail on our desk was chin-high. It was a desperate situation; but suddenly there appeared, like a genie out of an aspirin bottle, the bright-eyed young man who is now our Managing Editor --- ready and eager, like most amateur and semi-professional editors, to be overworked and underpaid. We were saved.

Now, despite the work, our astigmatism, and the prospect of ulcers, we wouldn't trade Fantastic Worlds for a roast pig with a mouthful of golden apples.

We've enjoyed putting together this first issue. We hope you enjoy reading it.

In General

By the Managing
Editor



Drawing

by

JIM BRADLEY

NOT SO LONG AGO, there was a time when we were naive enough to believe we could have the first issue of our new magazine out as per schedule. But building a magazine from nothing is not an easy task!

Still, it's been fun, as well as work, putting this issue together. We're sure it's been worth the effort. As far as material is concerned, we are trying to maintain an even balance between the professionals and fans -- sort of "where the twain meets." This first issue will bear out that attempt.

We're especially proud of the August Derleth article -- for we feel that it's a "must" for all collectors of imaginative literature. Then, too, there's hardly a first issue that can be considered complete without a word from Forry Ackerman. Ireland's Number One fan, Walter Willis, carrying out a possible plot to undermine the dignity of American fandom, gives us "The Immortal Gael." Clark Ashton Smith, known as the greatest living master of the weird tale, favors us with a poem, "The Flight of Azrael."

Our list of future contributors is extensive: Dr. David H. Keller, Charles V. De Vet, Forrest J. Ackerman, Gene Hunter, E. E. Evans, A. Bertram Chandler, Arthur J. Burks, Stanton A. Coblenz, Lilith Lorraine, Lee Hoffman, Bob Silverberg, Peter Ridley, Clive Jackson, G. M. Carr, Vinna Middleton, James McKimney and Marion Scott and many more.

Length of stories, this early in the game, is already proving a headache. Two or three weeks ago we were forced to reject a very fine story by Bob Farnham -- merely because its length was 6,000 words. Contributors, heed that 2,500-word limit!

Oh, don't forget that our next issue will have a letter column, "Thunder and Roses." We want your suggestions!



August Derleth and fiancée,

Sandra Winters

Photo by Carmie Thompson

In 1939, the calm waters of American publishing were stirred by the introduction of a new book-publishing firm, ARKHAM HOUSE -- the first House to be devoted solely to fantasy. Under the guidance of August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, two Daniel Boones of the fantasy scene, the House flourished until the most dubious onlooker recognized its success and solidity. Today, ARKHAM HOUSE is an institution. Mr. Derleth now tells us the history of that institution.

The ARKHAM HOUSE STORY

by
AUGUST DERLETH

ARKHAM HOUSE was born out of the profound shock of H. P. Lovecraft's death in 1937, though it took two years after to bring Arkham House into being for the express purpose of publishing the hitherto virtually neglected work of one of the modern masters of the macabre, and, secondarily, to preserve the work of Clark Ashton Smith, the Rev. Henry S. Whitehead, and other writers in the genre of the fantastic -- by which, let it be understood, I have reference to all forms of fantasy, including science-fiction. (There is a general tendency among devotees to separately classify science-fiction as non-fantasy, which is on a par with saying that vegetable soup is, after all, not soup.)

The hiatus between the death of Lovecraft and the coming into existence of Arkham House was brought about by two factors. The initial one was the work needing to be done by Donald Wandrei and myself, with the helping hand of the late R. H. Barlow and the assistance of Lovecraft's aunt, Annie Gamwell, to put the stories and poems left by Lovecraft into their proper sequence, and to assure magazine publication for those not yet published.

Secondarily, once the first and major omnibus collection had been put into typescript as THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS, we attempted to find a publisher, hesitating about establishing a business of our own. Shipping a 1,000-page manuscript from one publisher to another, however, is not easy. Moreover, Lovecraft himself had attempted to interest publishers in a less bulky collection of his stories. Both Knopf and Putnam had rejected him. Now Scribner's and Simon & Schuster rejected the omnibus we had prepared. Two years after Lovecraft's untimely death, Arkham House was born out of our exasperation with New York publishers who had rejected his work.



H. P. LOVECRAFT

While my own original plan covered only the work appearing in *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS*, Donald Wandrei envisioned collecting all the work in at least three omnibus volumes, and such appendix volumes as should be necessary. The decision to publish ourselves was not taken hastily. Both Wandrei and I were comparatively impecunious; in addition, I was at the time putting up a house for which a local bank had advanced a considerable loan; much to their horror, I dipped into funds loaned me for my house in order to pay for the production of *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS*.

It is manifest that the name "Arkham" was selected for the House because it was the most readily remembered of Lovecraft's own place-names for various east coast towns. This one was Aslem, Massachusetts, in reality. Arkham was an integral place-name in

Lovecraft's remarkable Cthulhu Mythos, and seemed to us the most fitting name, one Lovecraft himself would certainly have approved. Having committed ourselves, we advertised for advance orders at \$3.50 the copy, and got them to the amount of 150 before publication, at which time the price became \$5.00. Of the production costs, Donald Wandrei advanced \$400.00, and I added the rest of the not inconsiderable amount; so *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* was published, and so Arkham House came into being.

IT TOOK FOUR YEARS to sell out the 1,268-copy edition of *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS*. Actually, what with overhead and other costs, it took approximately that long to earn the original investment in the book. I had meanwhile gone ahead and collected other Lovecraft works, selling many of them without commission or charge for preparing type-scripts for the benefit of Mrs. Gamewell, who showed her appreciation of our efforts when, at her death in 1941, she willed to Donald Wandrei and myself the income from the Lovecraft writings with the sole provision that they be applied to the further publication of the work of Lovecraft. We were thus committed to the program we had outlined, without consideration of expense.

The struggle to sell *THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS* was not encouraging. It was two years before we published another book. Then it was my own collection, *SOMEONE IN THE DARK*, which William C. Weber, turning it down for Scribner's, suggested we issue under the Arkham House imprint. The press delivered 1,115 copies, to sell at \$2.00 the copy. Thus our imprint was kept before the public eye while other Lovecraft works were in preparation. Soon after this publication, Donald Wandrei was forced to sever all

but the most cursory connection with Arkham House (limited to the Lovecraft works), because of his induction into the U. S. Army, where he served four years.

Arkham House now went into a careful study of the cost-price problem. Readers -- some of whom subsequently paid \$12, \$20, \$30, \$70, and even \$100, for a copy of our first book -- complained that \$5.00 was too much to ask for a book. The publishers realized, after SOMEONE IN THE DARK, that \$2.00 was too little. In 1942, Arkham House experimented with a \$3.00 book, the first Clark Ashton Smith collection, OUT OF SPACE AND TIME, in an edition of 1054 copies; and in the following year came the second Lovecraft collection, BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP, again at \$5.00, in an edition limited by wartime restrictions to 1,217 copies.

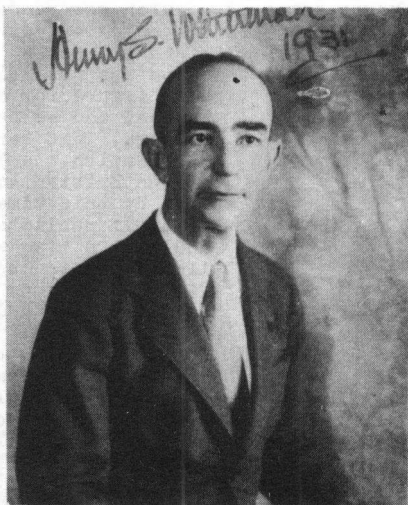
BY THE END of 1943, the slow start of Arkham House was caught up by a manifest selling spurt. It was quite clear that there was a distinct market for collections of fantastic tales, and I began to envision a program of expanded publication embracing every aspect of fantasy, from whimsy to science-fiction, but specializing on the hitherto unpublished, though not scorning works long out of print. It was clear, too, that very few of our first four titles would be left in print by the end of 1944.

In a sense, 1944 marked the first turning point for Arkham House. Before this time the House had brought out four titles in five years. Now came four almost at once -- Donald Wandrei's THE EYE AND THE FINGER; Henry S. Whitehead's JUMBEE AND OTHER UNCANNY TALES; Clark Ashton Smith's LOST WORLDS; and H. P. Lovecraft's MARGINALIA.

Within yet one more year, the list had grown to include my own SOMETHING NEAR; Robert Bloch's THE OPENER OF THE WAY; Evangeline Walton's first fantasy novel, WITCH HOUSE; J. Sheridan Le Fanu's GREEN TEA AND OTHER GHOST STORIES; and THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD, a novel suggested in notes and several fragmentary portions written by Lovecraft, finished by myself in a ratio of about 1200 words to 60,000.

The initial Le Fanu collection, of stories long out of print in America, began the importation of titles from abroad. Since many of the best writers in fantasy were British, it seemed to me necessary to add to our list such names as would bring prestige to Arkham House.

This decision was undertaken at a time when Arkham House had expanded to distribute books under two other im-



henry s whitehead

prints -- Mycroft & Moran, specializing in off-trail sleuthing tales, the first of which was my own "IN RE: SHERLOCK HOLMES" -- THE ADVENTURES OF SOLAR PONS, a collection of pastiches published at the urging of Vincent Starrett, who wrote the introduction, and Ellery Queen (who later wrote the introduction for THE MEMOIRS OF SOLAR PONS, published in 1951); and of Stanton & Lee, for the publication of non-fantasy reprints and cartoon books.

IN MANY WAYS, 1946 was the year of the most expanded publishing program of Arkham House. In that year we saw published Frank Belknap Long's THE HOUNDS OF TINDALOS; Robert E. Howard's SKULL FACE AND OTHERS; Henry S. Whitehead's WEST INDIA LIGHTS; the House's first science-fiction novel, A. E. Van Vogt's SLAN, long a popular serial in ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION; and four British importations, one an original and the author's last book --- Algernon Blackwood's THE DOLL AND ONE OTHER; H. Russell Wakefield's THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE; A. E. Coppard's FEARFUL PLEASURES; and the omnibus reprint of four novels by William Hope Hodgson -- THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND AND OTHER NOVELS.



Post-war increases in publishing costs had not yet reached midwestern printers in 1946, but by the following year the increases were marked, though the Arkham House standard prices of \$2.50 for novels, \$3.00 for short story collections, and \$5.00 for omnibuses did not alter, and could not, for these were tested prices.

The only factor which had altered was the size of Arkham House editions, which now ranged between 2,500 and 4,000 copies per title, though only one edition of any Arkham House book was ever printed, since all books were done from movable type and not plates, and type was not held. We had yet to learn that the best figure for collections of fantasy was 2,000 copies; and we had to learn that our own American writers, who were known only through magazine publication, sold on the whole better than the famous British authors in the field.



By this time, Arkham House had inspired other small publishers to venture into the field, and, at a time when we had just inaugurated publications in science-fiction -- with SLAN -- we found a mushroom growth of competitors snatching at titles we had hoped to bring out. Mounting costs posed a problem in 1947, but we did publish Lady Cynthia Asquith's THIS MORTAL COIL; my anthology of macabre poetry, DARK OF THE MOON; Ray Bradbury's first distinguished collection, DARK CARNIVAL; Carl Jacobi's REVELATIONS IN BLACK; Fritz Leiber's NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS; and, under the Mycroft and Moran imprint, William Hope Hodgson's CARNACKI, THE GHOST-FINDER, a far more comprehensive title than the British edition of almost four decades before, since it contained three new stories, two never before printed, discovered among Hodgson's manuscripts.

Six more titles followed in 1948 -- L. P. Hartley's THE TRAVELLING GRAVE AND OTHER STORIES; Donald Wandrei's novel, THE WEB OF EASTER ISLAND; Lord Dunsany's THE FOURTH BOOK OF JORKENS; Clark Ashton Smith's GENIUS LOCI AND OTHER TALES; my own NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD; and the House's first illustrated book,

Seabury Quinn's *ROADS* -- with pictures by Virgil Finlay. The following year, however, drastically revealed the effects of steadily mounting costs -- only two books were published in 1949: Lovecraft's *SOMETHING ABOUT CATS AND OTHER PIECES*, and S. Fowler Wright's *THE THRONE OF SATURN*.



DONALD WANDREI

THE ARKHAM SAMPLER, a quarterly devoted to matters fantastic, publishing fiction, poetry, letters, articles, bibliographical data, et alia, designed to sell at \$1.00 the copy, sans advertising, was begun in 1948. The magazine's first year did well, possibly because of the serialization of the scarce Lovecraft novel, *THE DREAM-QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH*; but by mid-1949 it was apparent that the magazine could not support itself, and, like some of our books, would not meet its production costs. With a loss running into four figures -- THE ARKHAM SAMPLER cost an average of \$0.50 the copy to produce -- it was reluctantly decided to end the brief life of the quarterly with the second volume. The eight issues of this magazine are undoubtedly destined to join early Arkham House books as collectors' items.

The close of the first decade of Arkham House saw many of its titles out of print and selling for fantastic prices. Many more had been reprinted in various foreign countries, and, in addition, adjunctive anthologies prepared by the editor were being published by Rinehart & Company: *WHO KNOCKS?*, *SLEEP NO MORE*, *THE NIGHT SIDE*. Pellegrini & Cudahy published *THE SLEEPING AND THE DEAD*, *STRANGE PORTS OF CALL*, *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON*, *BEYOND TIME AND SPACE*, and others. Perhaps more significant of all, by 1950 almost a dozen other small houses had followed the lead of Arkham House, and several first-line publishing houses, among them some who rejected Lovecraft's work a decade and a half before, were publishing novels of science-fiction.

By 1951, publishing costs had virtually tripled. It was no longer a joke to say that the typesetter of an average 2,000 copy Arkham House book could earn more money for just setting the type than either the author or the publisher of the book; it was sober reality.

True, Lovecraft's work had by this time spread far and wide; it had appeared in an Armed Service Edition; in magazines and anthologies galore; and in that same year, 1951, both an initial Lovecraft collection, *THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK AND OTHER TALES OF HORROR*, and *THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD*, had been published by Gollancz of London, while a French edition of Lovecraft was in preparation.

Only one book was published under the Arkham House imprint in 1950, and that in a limited edition -- Leah Bodine Drake's



CLARK ASHTON SMITH

print the Lovecraft novel, THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD, and Dr. David H. Keller's TALES FROM UNDERWOOD. At least one further Arkham House book is on the 1952 list -- H. P. Lovecraft's collected poems, FUNGI FROM YUGGOTH.

DESPITE TRIBULATIONS, Arkham House is here to stay. And the tribulations were many, for Arkham House has almost since its beginning operated in the red -- and that despite the fact that I poured into the business no less than \$25,000.00 of my personal earnings from writing over a twelve-year period, leaving other debts to be carried at interest right down to the present.

Production cost rises, which have been steady without a retrogression, since 1946; postage cost increases; the rising cost of overhead and clerical labor -- all these factors have combined to make publishing for the small publisher far more difficult than it has ever been before. Moreover, publishing activities have encroached severely on the editor's own creative time. Yet it is an enduring pleasure to reflect that, could he have willed it so, H. P. Lovecraft would certainly have accomplished as much for those too often forgotten little classics of the strange and macabre.

Arkham House recently released its 1952 bulletin, the last to go to all its addresses now on file; henceforth, to trim costs, announcements will go only to people ordering directly from the House.

But Arkham House has survived fluctuations in both sales and costs which would have pushed another House to the wall. It has in hand a great many more projects and will go on as long as its editor goes on.

collection of fantastic poems, A HORNBOK FOR WITCHES. In 1951, my own THE MEMOIRS OF SOLAR PONS appeared as a Mycroft & Moran book-- and the poems of Clark Ashton Smith, THE DARK CHATEAU, came under the Arkham House imprint.

The 1952 program has been begun with production and distribution handled by Pellegrini & Cudahy for the book trade, with my anthology of weirds, NIGHT'S YAWNING PEAL, which brings back into



"H. P. L." -- an interpretation by Virgil Finlay

AN ARKHAM HOUSE CHECKLIST

<u>Published Books</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Copies</u>
* THE OUTSIDER AND OTHERS, By H. P. Lovecraft	1939	1,268
* SOMEONE IN THE DARK, by August Derleth	1941	1,115
* OUT OF SPACE AND TIME, by Clark Ashton Smith	1942	1,054
* BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP, by H. P. Lovecraft	1943	1,217
* THE EYE AND THE FINGER, by Donald Wandrei	1944	1,617
* JUMBEE & OTHER UNCANNY TALES, by H. S. Whitehead	1944	1,559
* LOST WORLDS, by Clark Ashton Smith	1944	2,043
* MARGINALIA, by H. P. Lovecraft	1944	2,035
* SOMETHING NEAR, by August Derleth	1945	2,054
WITCH HOUSE, by Evangeline Walton	1945	2,949
* THE OPENER OF THE WAY, by Robert Bloch	1945	2,065
* GREEN TEA & OTHER GHOST STORIES, by J. S. LeFanu	1945	2,026
THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD, Lovecraft & Derleth	1945	3,041
THE HOUNDS OF TINDALOS, by Frank Belknap Long	1946	2,602
THE DOLL AND ONE OTHER, by Algernon Blackwood	1946	3,490
THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND AND OTHER NOVELS, by William Hope Hodgson	1946	3,014
SKULL-FACE AND OTHERS, by Robert E. Howard	1946	3,004
WEST INDIA LIGHTS, by H. S. Whitehead	1946	3,037
FEARFUL PLEASURES, by A. E. Coppard	1946	4,033
THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE, by H. R. Wakefield	1946	4,040
* SLAN, by A. E. Van Vogt	1946	4,051
THIS MORTAL COIL, by Cynthia Asquith	1947	2,609
DARK OF THE MOON, ed. by August Derleth	1947	2,634
DARK CARNIVAL, by Ray Bradbury	1947	3,112
REVELATIONS IN BLACK, by Carl Jacobi	1947	3,082
NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS, by Fritz Leiber	1947	3,084
THE TRAVELLING GRAVE AND OTHER STORIES, by L. P. Hartley	1948	2,047
THE WEB OF EASTER ISLAND, by Donald Wandrei	1948	3,068
THE FOURTH BOOK OF JORKENS, by Lord Dunsany	1948	3,118
GENIUS LOCI AND OTHER TALES, by Clark A. Smith	1948	3,047
ROADS, by Seabury Quinn	1948	2,137
NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD, by August Derleth	1948	2,067
SOMETHING ABOUT CATS, by H. P. Lovecraft	1949	2,995
THE THRONE OF SATURN, by S. Fowler Wright	1949	3,062
A HORNBOOK FOR WITCHES, by Leah Bodine Drake	1950	533
THE DARK CHATEAU, by Clark Ashton Smith	1951	563
NIGHT'S YAWNING PEAL, ed. by August Derleth	1952	
TALES FROM UNDERWOOD, by David H. Keller	1952	
FUNGI FROM YUGGOTH, by H. P. Lovecraft	1952	

Mycroft & Moran

"IN RE: SHERLOCK HOLMES", by August Derleth	1945	3,604
CARNACKI THE GHOST-FINDER, by W. H. Hodgson	1947	3,050
THE MEMOIRS OF SOLAR PONS, by August Derleth	1951	2,038

* Out of Print

Released to Other Publishers

THE WORLD OF NULL-A, by A. E. Van Vogt (to Simon & Schuster)
SLAN, by A. E. Van Vogt (to Simon & Schuster)
GATHER, DARKNESS!, by Fritz Leiber (to Pellegrini & Cudahy)
AWAY AND BEYOND, by A. E. Van Vogt (to Pellegrini & Cudahy)
CONJURE WIFE, by Fritz Leiber (to Twayne Publishers)

FORTHCOMING: ARKHAM HOUSE

THE ABOMINATIONS OF YONDO, by Clark Ashton Smith
THE PURCELL PAPERS, by J. Sheridan LeFanu
INVADERS FROM THE DARK, by Grege La Spina
XELUCHA AND OTHERS, by M. P. Shiel
THREE TALES, by Walter de la Mare
SELECTED LETTERS, by H. P. Lovecraft
THE GREEN ROUND, by Arthur Machen
STRAYERS FROM SHEOL, by H. R. Wakefield
BLACK MEDICINE, by Arthur J. Burks
MR. GEORGE AND OTHER ODD PERSONS, by Stephen Grendon
THE TRAIL OF CTHULHU, by August Derleth
PLEASANT DREAMS, by Robert Bloch
COLONEL MARKESAN AND LESS PLEASANT PEOPLE, by Derleth
and Mark Schorer
STRANGE GATEWAYS, by E. Hoffmann Price
KECKSIES AND OTHER TWILIGHT TALES, by Marjorie Bowen
WORSE THINGS WAITING, by Manly Wade Wellman
ORSON IS HERE, by Howard Wandrei
SELECTED POEMS, by Clark Ashton Smith
STRANGE HARVEST, by Donald Wandrei
PORTRAITS IN MOONLIGHT, by Carl Jacobi
LONESOME PLACES, by August Derleth

FORTHCOMING: MYCROFT & MORAN

THE PHANTOM-FIGHTER, by Seabury Quinn
PRINCE ZALESKI & CUMMINGS KING MONK, by M. P. Shiel
NO. 7, QUEER STREET, by Margery Lawrence
THE RETURN OF SOLAR PONS, by August Derleth



The FLIGHT of AZRAEL

BY CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Scene: an immense and darkling plain,
remotely lit by the sunset of the last day.
Two demons, passing from the interstellar
deep, have paused on an isolated hill-top.

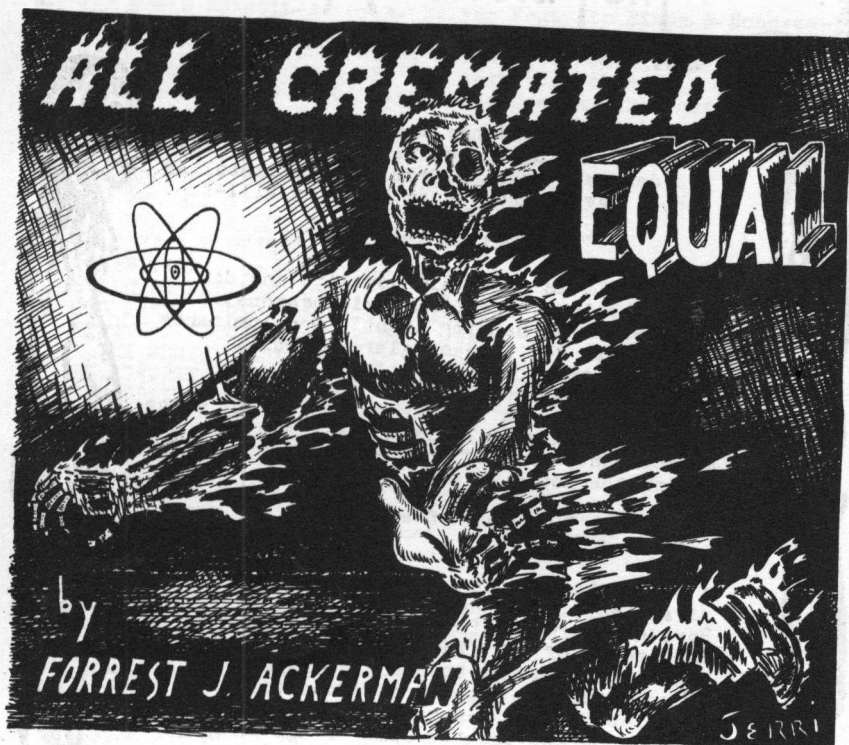
First Demon :

WHAT WORLD is this, all desolate and dim
Under the lone, phantasmagoric heavens,
Great with the hanging night? Yon luminance
Is lurid as the furnace-glare of hell,
Seen from the contiguity of gloom
Of a Cimmerian region. All the air
Flags heavily, as beneath the weight of wings
Invisible and evil -- from the plain
No movement, save of shadows mustering
Behind the heels of day.

Second Demon :

IT IS the Earth,
A hoary planet, old in wrath and woe
As any hell. Red pestilence and war
Have now refunded to the usuring wind
The breath of all its peoples. Azrael,
Delivering now the town and necropole
To one decay in night's enormous tomb,
Prepares him for departure. From afar,
Seest thou not the towering of his wings,
Like thunder on the sunset? Widening,
Those vans involve and stifle half the light
With bat-like folds and ribs: on further stars,
Or worlds unknown of the outer infinite,
He now intends the darkness of his course;
On Algol's planets haply poised, he will
Make permanent the sable sun's eclipse,
Or round some vast Antarean satellite
His shadowed arc will broaden to a sphere,
Oblivion's black and perfect globe...On Earth
He comes no more: the very worms have died
In the scarce-nibbled carrion; the thin wind
Will write man's epitaph in shifting sand,
And the pale unfading arabesques of frost
Adorn and fret his ghoul-forgotten tomb.

It was a most remarkable advertisement. For only ten cents, it offered a solution to the greatest problem of Earth. . . .



Illustrated by Jerri Bullock

BOMB AWAY and falling!

Audry and I joined you in holding our breaths that appalling moment several years ago when Bikini was an atoll instead of a sun suit, and science geysered her waters into a cauliflower of tortured molecules. The radio report scared Wifey. It didn't exactly make me feel like Superman.

It was probably a mistake, shortly after that, to take Audry to see "The Beginning or The End." But you remember how that season MGM's "atomic documentary" was on more people's lips than any strike, scandal or soda pop. It hit hard. It bit deep.

So the picture made Audry more nervous than ever. One night a couple of days later she was leafing through Junior's favorite, INTERPLANETARY STORIES, to see if she approved of the artwork. (Of course, she'd already torn off the cover; and confidentially, I wouldn't have minded if Audry had looked more like the babe on it.)

Anyway, Audry ran across the ad.

"Bill, what could this mean?" she asked me.

"What, honey?"

"It says ATOMIGEDDON at Hand. Learn sure way to avoid destruction when the Atomic Armageddon predicted in the Bible comes. Send ten cents for information on how to be safe.

"Oh, that's just a gag. Haven't you ever heard of those, honey? You send a dollar for a guaranteed formula on how to get rich. Then they send you back a slip of paper that says, 'Work like a d-a-m-n (in deference to Junior) fool and never spend a d-a-m-n cent.' Or they offer a 'Genuine Etching of the Father of Our Country' for \$2, and send you a \$1 bill in exchange. It's just a racket."

"But how can you be sure, Billy?"

"It is, Audy -- believe me. Don't go wasting a dime now, answering that silly ad."

SO THE COLD WAR came, settling over two hemispheres like a prolonged winter that refused to thaw. We little people shivered and shuddered at each thermal thunderstorm.

And then one day not so long ago --you remember it-- came the Red Letter Day, as we might call it. For the secret was out: Our atomic supremacy was no longer unique. Bad People have the Bomb now, too, and the future looks bleak.

It was just last week that I was reading Matt Weinstock's column in the Los Angeles DAILY NEWS, and he was quoting an elderly blind lady who had contributed a thought for the day. She'd begun with the old, bitter rhyme:

"After two thousand years of Mass,
We've got as far as poison gas."

Then she'd elaborated on it: "If we persist with our wars, our cold wars and our rumors of wars, some forlorn individual at some future time, say 50 years hence, may dolefully paraphrase it into:

'After eons of time of planning doom,
We've achieved at last the atomic tomb.'

So it was a startling coincidence that I turned from that to the old planet magazine of Junior's that was still kicking around the living room. I thumbed through it and, with a shock, realized that a small section had been snipped out of the ad department.

I chuckled softly. The "Atomic Balm" business, of course. How could Audry fall for an obvious gag like that?

Well, the "formula" finally came. The cure-all for global catastrophe, the guarantee for protection against the indefensible. I didn't dream anybody could deliberately be that corny, and certainly not while next door to Judgment Day. Maybe they better drop the first bomb on Iowa.

Can you imagine what some Gyp-the-Sucker had the incredible nerve to tell the Little Woman for her dime?

"WHEN THE ATOMIC BOMB FALLS,
KEEP YOUR HEAD AND DON'T GO
A L L T O P I E C E S !!!"

THE DOOR

A masterpiece of terror and tenderness

by Michael Storm

ON AND ON the boy ran, through the cold labyrinth of winter-whitened streets, through the complex mazes of gambrel-roofed colonial houses. On and on, the tight, choked sobs from his thin chest nearly obscuring the sloshing clatter of fourteen-year-old feet on wet cobblestone.

The myriad city-sounds pierced his spinning mind like mocking laughter. The metallic grating and clanging of trolleys, the whiney of a startled horse, the shouting from an inquisitive policeman -- all, like laughter, making him feel cold and naked and alone.

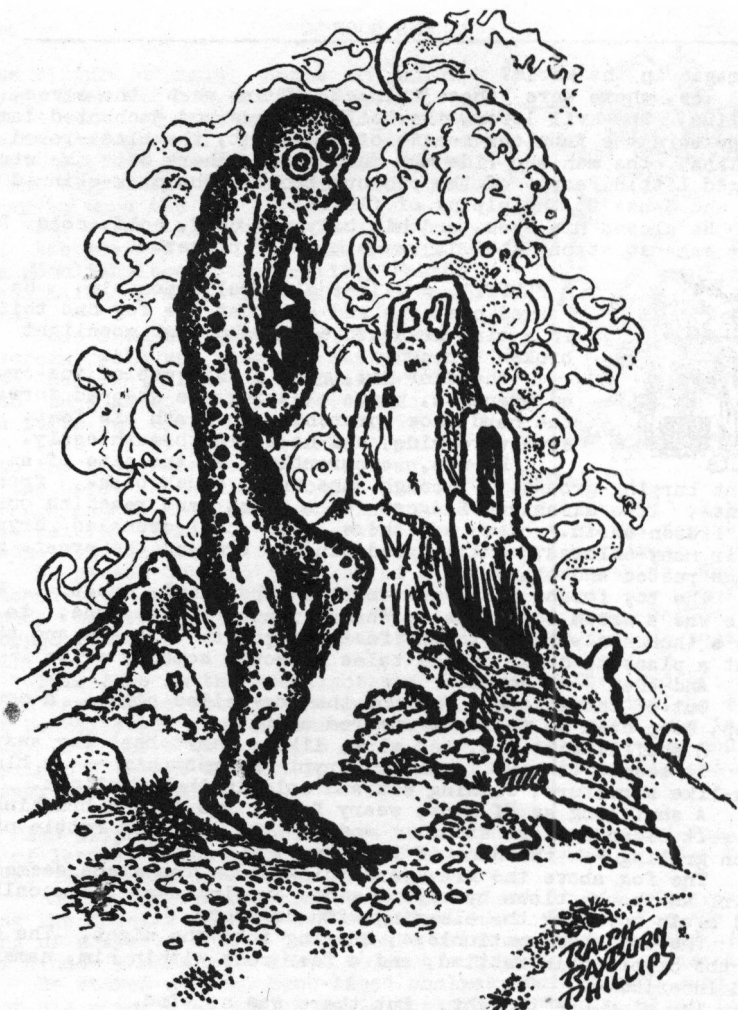
Suddenly he realized that the sounds had faded and that the streetlamps had become dim and far away. Through misted eyes he beheld a dusk-softened country road, and he realized that his crazed dash had carried him far beyond the limits of the city. To his left was forest, a dark, mute mass of gnarled elms and oaks, and above it, a gray cloak of fog, its thin fingers filtering ever downward to embrace vine-encumbered branches.

He ran into the forest, into the merciful darkness, tripping once and stumbling, but at last stopping and kneeling by a fallen, moss-covered log. He put his arms on the log and buried his head in them. Although his sobbing had ceased, the tears on his gaunt cheeks were huge and heavy.

There was silence, complete save for the pounding of his heart and the rasp of his rapid, shallow breathing. He liked the darkness and the silence, for they were kind, like old friends. He wanted to sink deep into them and be a part of them forever, free from searching, critical eyes.

Then his mouth became a hard, grim line. Never, never would he forget this day. Never would he forget how those in the place he called home had criticized him, mocked him, destroyed the life and the dreams within him. He spent too much time in reading of the strange, the unearthly, they said. He was lost in the worlds of his own imagination, was apart from reality.

"We'll never get to the stars," they snapped cruelly. "Why



do you keep reading about them?" And, "Why must you keep reading those terrible stories about dead people and fairies and magic? There are no such things. They don't exist. There is no magic in the world."

He blinked hot, smarting eyes and rubbed thin, delicate fingers over his wet cheeks.

Yes, they wanted him to be like the hollow people in the city, believing in nothing, moving like soulless machines, their hearts as cold as the steel buildings they inhabited.

Suddenly a chill of fear streaked down his spine. What if these people were right? What if there were no strange things,

no magic in the world?

Yes, where were these things? Where were the elves, and goblins, the evil lores, the boiling brews and enchanted lamps? Where were the fabulous beasts of the night, the black-robed magicians, the men who ride the moonbeams? Where were the stumpy-legged Little People of the picture books, the dark-skinned women who dance to the piping of flutes?

He closed his eyes, and his body was cold, cold, cold. Despair came so strong that it was a kind of prayer. . .



A BRUPTLY, a silver glow fell upon him. He opened his eyes and saw that the fog had thinned in a tiny area above him and that moonlight had broken through.

Ahead of him, past a thin web of ice-crust-ed branches, was a clearing. He stepped forward, the hard snow crunching beneath his feet. His eyes were wide, and he stared breathlessly.

He was, apparently, at the site of an ancient burying-ground. Through the snow stuck black, frosted stones, like misshapen fingers of a giant hand reaching out of the frozen earth. Here and there were half-crumbled crypts, their many-colored, small-paned windows broken, the ornate gratings rusted and black.

The boy forgot his tears and the ache in his chest. Why, this was a dream come true! What a place to sit alone, to let one's thoughts wander to the farthest edges of space and time! What a place to dream of the tales he would someday write!

And then -- a sound.

Out of the silence, out of the fog-veiled night, a sound; deep, deep down in the snow-covered earth.

A shuffling it was, and slow, like a heart-beat far away.

It seemed to come from the crypt nearest him --- a black, box-like structure, shining wet and cold in the moonlight.

A shuffling as of slow, weary feet, and then a brushing as of soft flesh against stone. And at last the low rattle of an iron grating --- the door of the crypt.

The fog above the graveyard thickened. The wisps seemed to swirl as though blown by silent wind, cutting away the moonlight and again covering the clearing with darkness.

The boy stood motionless, staring into the night. The door of the crypt again rattled, and a fear rose within him, nameless and indefinite.

The wind, he thought. But there was no wind.

A visitor at the tomb of some long-dead ancestor, perhaps, oblivious to the passage of time, to the coming of night. Or perhaps someone like himself, searching for solitude.

Hinges squeaked and grated; a door opened. At the bottom of the stone steps leading up from the door was -- movement.

The boy started to call out, but his tongue, like his mind and body, was paralyzed.

The shuffling continued up the crypt steps, and a man--or a man-shape--rose against the blackness of the crumbling stones.

Again, the boy started to speak, but his throat was numbed by icy fear that swirled within him like a rising sea tide. There was something odd about the man's stiff, awkward movements, something irregular and alien about the massive shape. And in the cold air was a stench, a foulness, like some atroc-

ious mixture of dank, stale air and decayed flesh and hot, moist breath.

A shaft of moonlight crawled across the burying-ground, played for a second over the black gravestones, then shifted to the crypt. The fog-thinned light fell squarely upon the man's face.

For a terrible, breathless eternity, the boy stared, his gaze frozen to the ghoulish face, the horrible hands, the hellish profanation of the human form.

Then from his quivering lips burst a scream, wild and ringing, carrying far into the night like a thousand-voiced echo in a great valley, bouncing back and forth and never dying.

Eyes bulging, he turned and ran. Into the blackness he ran, ran, ran, over the hard, crackling forest floor--through masses of twigs and vines that tugged at his clothing like seizing fingers. But at last he was out of the forest and on the wet, icy road, still running, his heart pounding.

He paused once to look behind him. He saw nothing. When he reached the lights of the city, when he heard the familiar sounds of trolleys and human footsteps and human voices, he stopped running. Slowly, a realization came to him. He began to smile.

This face in the moonlight was what he had dreamed of! He could never describe it, he realized, and if he tried, he would not be believed. But he knew now, as surely as sight was in his eyes, that there was a magic in the world, that strange and inexplicable things did exist. This night had been, indeed, the answer to a prayer. . .

YEARS slipped by. There were buddings of leaves and fallings of leaves. The city grew and the forest grew, and a boy's bones lengthened into those of a man.

And so the slender, gaunt-faced man sat in his study, stirring the thickly-sugared coffee before him. Except for the purring of a sleek, dozing cat, it was quiet and almost like night, for window shades were drawn to shut out harsh summer sunshine.

He stared at the book-lined shelves before him, and back went his memory, as easily as to yesterday, to that night in his boyhood and to a certain door and to a squeaking and a shuffling and a mad flight through fog-choked forest.

Yes, he thought, I can tell them now. They may not believe, but they will read what I write. They will hear.

And he seized his pen, and in an irregular, scrawling hand, began to write:



PHILLIPS

The Outsider
By H. P. Lovecraft, Esp.

FANTASY BOOKS FOR SALE

- Send For Free List -

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I also buy fantasy.

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904 Forest Ave.,
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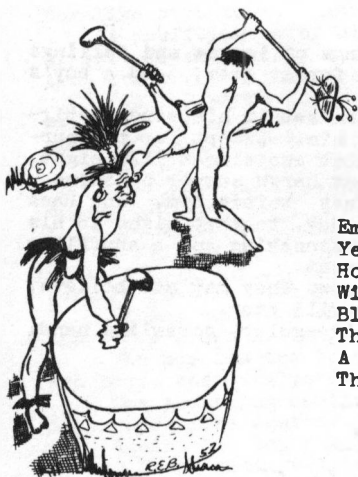
Mr. J. A. D. of Detroit credits me with boosting his income from \$3,500 to \$10,000 a year. . . . Mr. B. B. of Denver writes: "I have made \$600 so far—and I have barely started." Mrs. E. C. D. of Calif. writes: "I have been so busy writing as a local newspaper correspondent, a shopper's column, and a woman's column now running in five weeklies. And just sold a short article to McCall's at 25c per word. Zowie!"

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DESTINY ?

Emerald planet: Filled with thought,
Yet scorning thinkers with derision.
How soon a Cosmic grave be wrought,
With mad, black suicidal vision?
Blindly, stumbling back, they brave
The pathway whence they came.
A race to darkness and the cave;
Then.. Whom to stone first, for the blame?

--Barbara A. Kurtiak

THE IMMORTAL GAEL

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An obscure chapter in the
history of Irish fandom..

by **Walt Willis**

ONE DAY in his ceaseless combing of the second-hand book-shops of Belfast, my friend and co-editor, James White, was rewarded with the discovery of a 1935 issue of **WONDER STORIES**. Concealing his emotion as best he could, he bought it from the trusting dealer for merely six times its face value and hurried home in triumph, reading as he went.

Like any true fan, he turned first to the readers' departments. There, in faded gray and brown, was the startling intelligence that a Chapter of the Science Fiction League had been formed in Belfast under one Hugh Carswell. The address was given, and with a thrill James realized it was no more than twenty minutes' walk from where he was now rooted to the pavement. Inspired by Moskowitz's **IMMORTAL STORM**, James immediately decided to track down this hitherto unknown founder of Irish Fandom.

The address was one of a long row of identical houses in a

in a working-class street. The door was opened by a middle-aged woman with a truculent expression.

"Mr. Carswell?" asked James, politely.

She gave him a suspicious look and would probably have slammed the door in his face if it hadn't been for the fact that James is roughly a mile high and wears heavy round glasses which make him look like an electronic brain in walking-out clothes.

She contented herself with gradually reducing the width of the aperture until she was in danger of cutting her head off.

"Which Mr. Carswell?" she asked warily.

"Hugh," said James.

"Me?" she retorted angrily. Her mustache bristled.

"Not you," said James. "Hhhhh-ugh. Hugh Carswell."

Malevolently, the woman seized her opportunity for further obstruction. "Which Hugh Carswell?"

NOW I HAVE the sober type of mind that mentally falls off every bridge before I come to it. If I had been going to make this call of James', I would have cased the joint first. I would have looked up the house in the street directory to make sure the Carswells were still there after 17 years. Then I would have looked up the Register of Electors to see the names of all the people in the house who were of voting age. Finally I would have walked past the house a few times and then had a pint in the nearest pub and seen what dirt I could dig up. Such intelligent preparation and brilliant detective work wouldn't have made the slightest difference, of course, but it would have been fun.

"Er.....the one who's interested in science-fiction," said James at last.

The woman looked at him blankly. It seemed to come naturally to her. Obviously, she was waiting for him to say something intelligible. She didn't seem to think there was much hope.

"Signs fixin'?" she asked. "What signs?"

Faced with the task of giving a definition of science-fiction, James quailed. It was a pity he hadn't been studying his Campbell carefully or he could have said: "You know--fictional extrapolation from current or potential psychical or technological development." If he had, I venture to say he would have remained master of the situation.

As it was, James could only fall back on his copy of the 1935 WONDER STORIES. He started to open his coat so that he could draw the magazine out of his large pocket from inside rather than drag it through the

smaller outer opening. Even in the direst of extremities, James is very careful with magazines.

As he undid the buttons, the woman looked at him with the expression of a cover girl on TRUE DETECTIVE. I don't know whether she thought he was going to strangle her, or what--probably what--but she had her mouth lined up for screaming when he produced the magazine.

This anti-climax took her breath away, and she waited while James opened the magazine and began to search hurriedly for Hugh Carswell's name. Of course, he couldn't find it. James is very shortsighted. He is the only fan who leaves nostracks between



his eyetracks. After reading a fanzine he has enough mimeograph ink on his nose to run off another copy. And news about the SFL never hit the front pages of WONDER. It was usually concealed among the advertisements, and this was where James eventually ran it to earth.

NOW JAMES is a very high-minded character--and not only in the sense that his head is often surrounded by cirrus clouds; and he is very fond of science-fiction. The result is that he has arrived at the stage where the advertisements in science-fiction magazines simply do not exist for him. He probably knows vaguely that there is something on the parts of the page that aren't devoted to the fan departments, but I don't believe he could for the life of him tell you what it is. So it was quite natural for him merely to pass the magazine open at the correct page.

The woman started reading, speaking aloud. "RUPTURED?" she read, "THROW AWAY THAT TRUSS!"

"No, no," said James, aghast. "Further down."

She gave him a peculiar look and started reading lower down. "SEX FULFILMENT!" she read mechanically. "Love life...normal sex relations...frustrations....anatomy....problems....full diagrams....outspoken...medical profession....plain wrappers...."

She stopped, horrified. Her worst suspicions were confirmed. She tried to back away and close the door. Since her head was still outside, she succeeded only in elongating her neck a full six inches. This was fortunate for James, because it delayed the delivery of her scream long enough for him to disclaim all responsibility for the advertisement, and to wave the cover in her face; It was a pleasant little painting, showing a few cubic miles of futuristic machinery and a couple of thousand terrified humans being devoured by tentacled monstrosities. Its idyllic charm seemed to have a quietening effect on her.

"Oh, you mean our Hughie," she said. "He used to read them books."

"Is he here?" asked James.

"No."

"Well, where is he?"

"He's away," she replied defensively.

"Where?" asked James, not noticing the warning signs.

She gave him a hostile look, this time more of hate than of fear. It started at his head, and after some time arrived at his feet. James' feet are rather big. Suddenly James realized that this was Belfast, where there are other organizations besides the SFL, and that some of them do not take kindly to strangers who ask questions about their members.

He looked down the street. A number of lean, hungry-looking men seemed suddenly to have manifested themselves, huddling against walls and obviously not looking at James. They had their hands in their jacket pockets, where they seemed to be holding something. They didn't look like pipe-smokers.

James quickly tried to explain that he was only interested in magazines. One of the men caught the word "magazines" and



jerked his head toward another man down the street.

"Them books," said the woman, with all the scorn of a rabid non-fan. "Hughie doesn't read them things anymore." Her tone implied that no grown man would.

James took another look down the street. The men seemed to be drawing closer, menacingly, like James Mason in spy movies. He'd better go, he told himself. But the instinct of the true collector was still stronger than the will to survive.

"Did Hughie leave any of them--those books?" he asked.

But he was already walking away. He knew what the answer would be. He'd been through this, many times. True enough, the ritual answer came, in the time-honored words with which collectors all over the world awake screaming:

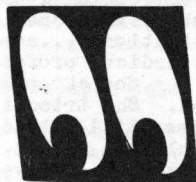
"Oh, there was hundreds of them in the attic, but they were threw out last week. If you'd only come then...."

SO JAMES had hardly bothered waiting, and was already striding past the nearest of the menacing men. He gained the safety of the main road with a second to spare; otherwise this account of our researches into the early history of Irish fandom would have been even shorter.

We wonder: Did Ackerman ever have trouble like this?

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book review :

The LOOSE BOARD in the FLOOR

by R. DeWitt Miller



WE ONCE READ a science-fiction story called "The Man With The X-Ray Eyes." Through some technological miracle, the main character was able to see through all material objects.

We'd like to nominate Mr. R. DeWitt Miller as the newest candidate for that title--except that the objects of his vision are the dogmas, follies, and falsities of the human race.

For quite a few moons, Mr. Miller has been called "... one of the world's foremost authorities on psychic phenomena and the mysterious. ." He has authored approximately 1,000 stories and articles as well as his little classic, FORGOTTEN MYSTERIES, reprinted as TRUE STORIES OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

Now Mr. Miller has turned his remarkable powers of observation to fiction. THE LOOSE BOARD IN THE FLOOR is the story of a bear (stuffed), an elephant (stuffed), and a rabbit (also stuffed), who pry up a loose board in a nursery floor. Armed with only an almanac and a mail-order catalogue, they venture into a land which, if the term had not been over-used, we would describe as fabulous.

But the adventures and misadventures of these three musty musketeers are in no sense juvenile. Theories of Sex, Einstein, and Space and Time alternate with high adventure.

Being a bit curious about the background of this unusual book, we asked Mr. Miller for a few words. Here is his reply:



"I HAVE BEEN ASKED many times what prompted me to write THE LOOSE BOARD IN THE FLOOR. At first I tried analyzing myself. Then I tried analyzing the stuffed animals with whose exploits the book deals. I have finally abandoned the analytical approach and now offer the readers of FANTASTIC WORLDS the exact

facts of the case as described in the following paragraphs.

"If I may quote myself, I wrote this book 'out of a weariness with the foolishnesses of our time.' The inspiration for the book--if it had any inspiration--came from a stuffed rabbit who stands beside the fireplace in my bedroom. The book was written during two years time, and the work was done in all sorts of odd places---on the beach at Malibu, California, just before dawn in my study at home, in a strange out-of-this-world place in Los Angeles known as Fern Dell while a miniature waterfall splashed beside me, in the mountains while snow was caressing the pine trees outside the window, in a number of bars, and--I suppose--in a number of strangely interesting and vivid dreams which sleep bequeathed me.

"As to the theme -- ask the stuffed bear. He will know, if anyone does.

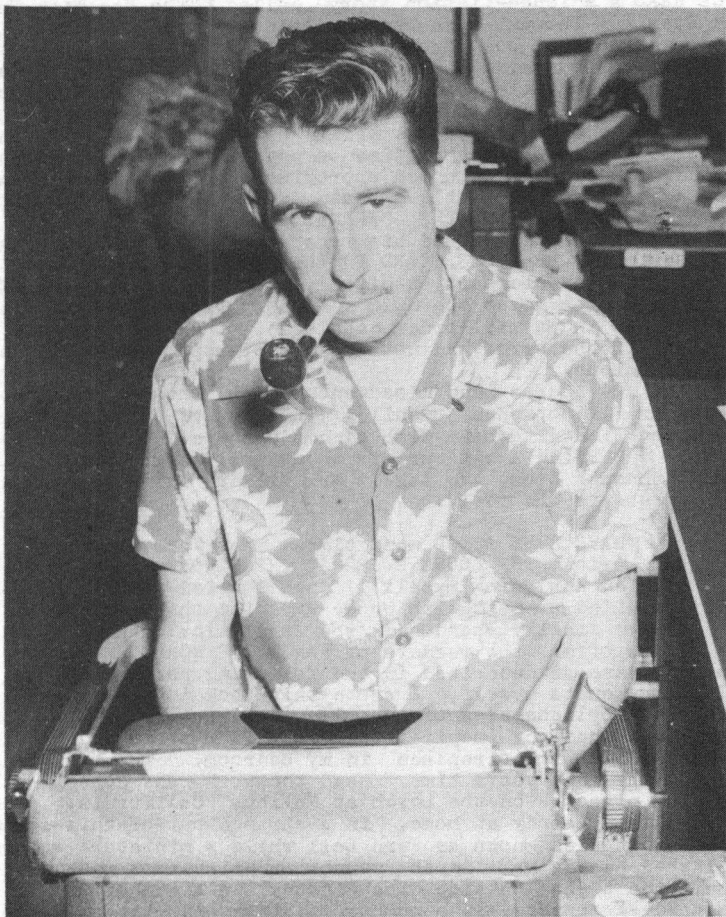


Sincerely yours,

R. DeWitt Miller"

New Voices in Fantasy:

by Harry S. Weatherby



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Surrounded by breeze-stirred palms, caressed by tropic breezes (so we like to think), a new and talented writer is arousing murmurs of delight in editorial offices. He is Gene Hunter of Hawaii, currently employed by the U. S. Navy. To give FANTASTIC WORLDS this interview, H. S. Weatherby has sought out the young genius in his lair.

WE WERE VISITING the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gene Hunter--sailors Tom Covington, Delbert Brock, Van Couvering, and myself--at Hilawa Veteran's Housing just two miles from the Pearl Harbor gate.

The Hawaiian afternoon was filled with dreamy, radio-wafted guitar music, enlivened with laughter of neighbor children, and humanized by the juvenile antics of Stephen Hunter (age 2½) and beautiful baby-girl Leilani Gene Hunter.



Luncheon was eagerly devoured by guests, family, and pets. Black Panther, half of the Hunter menagerie, "meowed" and smacked a taloned paw at the new puppy. Daisy backed away, her canine feelings hurt.

We settled back, and then came my question:

"Now, how about some facts concerning one Gene Hunter?"

"Hummm! That's an interesting subject," Gene said. Desperately, he seized a bright-covered magazine that was lying near by. "Not to change the subject, but have you seen the new issue of FUTURE?"

Shy, these men of letters!

ALTHOUGH SEEN in occasional repose, Hunter's six-foot height speaks of decisive movement and swift, virile action. Hunter isn't your pseudo-scribe afflicted with Communistic wonts, repeated tours of mental institutions, anti-social tendencies, alcoholism, and sprees of morbid suicidal intent--as the cinema would have us believe.

Instead, he's an average healthy male. Paradoxically, he is both a man's and a lady's man. All man and American, that's Gene. Besides being the proudest father you'd care to see, he's an ardent devotee of Mexican photogenic "Art."

After considerable coaxing, Gene began, "I was born at Montgomery City, Missouri, January 4th, 1926." He hesitated and thumbed an unruly mass of dark-brown hair from eyes equally brown. "Civilian occupations were many after high school at Jefferson City, Missouri, and Long Beach, California. They included those of magazine salesman for COLLIER and LIBERTY, a printer's devil, then a pin-boy at a bowling alley. There was one college semester managed with the G. I. Bill of Rights at Pasadena, California.

"Then I became an assistant theatre manager, molder in a pottery, worked in the Circulation Department of the PASADENA INDEPENDENT NEWS. Then came an abortive attempt at selling television sets. But Californians weren't interested in TV then."



Gene relaxed his 141 pounds, the brown eyes shining with mirthful reminiscence. "And despite it all, I also found time to marry Artie--the nicest gal in the world."

"When did you first get interested in science fiction?" I asked.

He pursed his lips. "I was ten years old when Dad's books, the Tarzan series and Princess of Mars stories, first got my attention. Two years later -- and much to

Mom's horror -- I borrowed a neighbor's stack of pulp science fiction magazines. That was the start, and I read every bit of science fiction I could find. There were piles of musty, dog-eared copies which kept me awake till ungodly hours -- the weird collection -- and I even wrote bons mots to the editors.

"Sold out my collection years ago. A foolish move, for now I'm collecting again.

"Of experimental writing I've done little, though there have been personality articles, newspaper columns, some ghosting on material from other writers, sport events, and one detective story now in the working.

"My experience with editors has been pleasant. Science fiction editors have, from the start of this writing career, sent me encouraging letters. My work is now handled by the Forrest J. Ackerman Fantasy Agency -- a fortunate literary association."

Stories Gene has sold are "Bargain With Beelzebub," FANTASY BOOK #2, 1947; "Journey," FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, Feb., 1951; "The Betrayers," AMAZING STORIES, Sept., 1951; "The Pagans," which will be seen in either FUTURE or SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY; and "Faint-Heart," which (if we dare mention it) is scheduled for publication in FANTASTIC WORLDS.

Gene tells us, "VARSITY considered a story of mine for many moons, but sent it back, and the yarn was published in Charles Lee Riddle's PEON....

"No, I've tried no non-fiction for commercial markets. But there are two science fiction short stories I'm now whipping up." Gene laughed, his pleasant disposition quite apparent.

STEPHEN, bringing his toy car to Gene's knee, cried: "Daddy! Daddy!" A wistful expression crossed Leilani's face. The cat and puppy began a furious game of "Bite and Run."

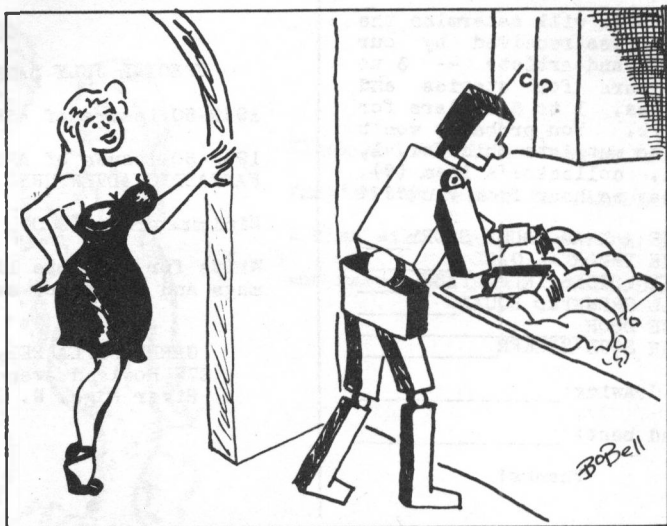
"We'll wind this up quick," Hunter averred, "so I can give the kids some attention. My future plans include two more years in the Navy; then, I hope, an editorial job on a trade magazine or employees' newspaper in Southern California. I've been assistant editor of a civilian employee's publication, THE CENTER RELAY, since I continued Navy duty here on Oahu, Hawaii."

Quite determined, he added, "But I want to turn out a lot of science fiction, too. Eventually, I want to free-lance for all science and fantasy markets. Sierra Madre, in California, seems logical for the new home town. Artie and I would like a ranch-type house."

He sighed. "Well, Harry, does that tell you enough?"

Yes, it did. According to many literary people, young writers often flounder around a few years to the dissatisfaction of both themselves and their employers. Yet this may be all to the good. No one can pour from the pitcher of life without a full supply of human experience. Hence the myriad early and valuable jobs taken by younger authors.

Gene Hunter exemplifies the younger American writer: not a long-haired, moody aesthete, but a good husband, genial host, perfect father and provider. And quite possibly, a future science fiction "Great."



"NOW IF YOU COULD ONLY MAKE LOVE!"

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These books contain secret teachings that may enable you to live a better and happier life in the New Age.

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Any of the above 35¢ each - 3 for \$1.00

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BROTHERHOOD OF THE WHITE TEMPLE, Sedalia, Colo.

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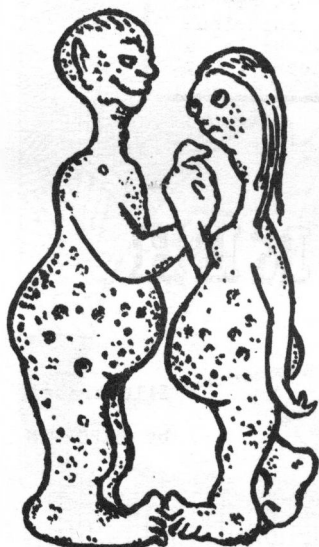
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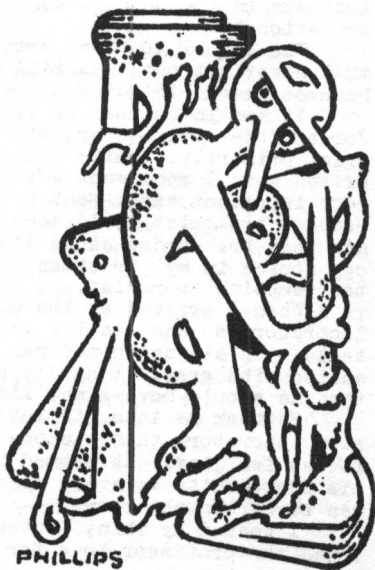
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PHILLIPS

Zlack and Zlill are lovers true;
They're natives of Far Sirius.
A kiss will turn their gills to blue
And make them quite delirious.

People on Alpha Centauri
Are often lost in a flurry
Of Actions quite malicious.
Thank God they're fictitious!



PHILLIPS

THESE ARE certain doors of science, sayeth the philosophers, which had best remain closed. Toby Duane, a favorite contributor to the fan-magazine FAN-FARE, tells a tale of a man who opened such a door. . . .

the SOUL-SEEKER

by TOBY DUANE

Illustrated

by BERGERON

THIS IS A STORY about the human soul. It isn't a pretty story, but it's true.

You know how it started if you read the Sunday Supplement articles in The Chicago Syndicate--and those articles were pretty sensational.

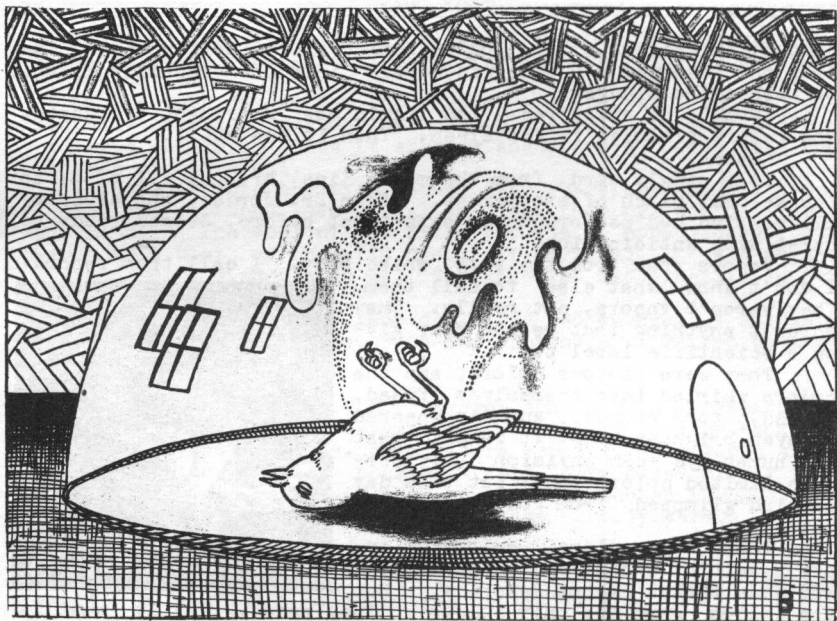
The sequel to those articles was more than sensational. But that never got out, not till now. Now, it isn't going to matter because no one is going to believe me.

It was in October of last year that I came to help Dr. Carl Jordan, the Soul Seeker, with his experiment. Jordan was a biologist primarily, while I'm a physicist at Cal Tech. I was surprised when I received Jordan's letter requesting my help in a very important experiment he was undertaking. I wondered how in Hades a biologist could need the aid of a physicist. But I hadn't seen Dr. Jordan since I'd nearly flunked his elementary biology course in my freshman college days, and the invitation was too tempting to resist.

When I arrived at the university, I found my way to the new laboratories and was let in by Carl Jordan himself. He was a tall, yet slender-boned man with a shock of black hair heavily salted with gray. I hardly recognized the man. He'd grown older than he should have since I'd last seen him.

He took me into his laboratory. It was a large, more expensive laboratory than the one the college had formerly owned, but it was familiar. It seemed that Dr. Jordan had indelibly stamped his personality on every microscope, every test tube, every Bunsen burner in the room.

I tossed my thin, autumn jacket onto a clotheshree and followed the professor to a far corner, where some intricate apparatus was set up.



As my questioning gaze roved over the mechanism, Jordan told me what it was.

"You remember, Toby," he said slowly, "how that old atheist, Dr. Miller, used to argue with me about religion?"

I certainly did! The cartoonists of the school paper used to have a field day with this long-standing feud.

"A few years ago," he continued, "I decided to prove the existence of the soul. I know it sounds strange, but I think I've almost done it. I'll show you how the apparatus works."

BUT I'M TAKING too long to tell this part of the story. This is the part that, if you read those newspaper features, you'd already know. It became my problem to devise and improve the apparatus which would prevent the soul from escaping a dying body and to create a method of making it visible.

A crazy idea, of course. Yet it was as if a confidence, an enthusiasm, flowed from the lanky body of Carl Jordan and into my own.

I plunged into the work, taking an extended leave of absence from Cal Tech. At first I wasn't overly enthusiastic, but as I worked on, as I came nearer my goal, my spirits rose. At the final testing (to which reporters and scientists were invited) I was perhaps even more excited than Dr. Jordan himself.

Well, you've seen the pictures. Most everybody has. But you don't know what it was really like. You can't. Film can only reproduce a tenth part of the splendor that we witnessed on that first night we saw a soul.

The huge soul trap (as it was nicknamed by the newsmen) was the center of attraction as dubious reporters and men of science crowded around. Within lay a small white rabbit, alive but sub-

duced by chloroform. Dr. Jordan bent over it, deftly opened the trap and inserted a hypodermic needle into the rabbit's flesh. He pushed the plunger.

"Now," he whispered. The liquid was a draught of death. The rabbit trembled in its sleep. Then it was still.

"Watch."

That single word from the man's lips brought all of us to the keenest pitch of excitement. Even Dr. Jordan, who alone of all mankind had performed the experiment before, seemed ready to burst with anticipation.

Vapors rose from the soft, white body. I call them vapors. I don't know what else to call them. They weren't vapors, not really. They weren't anything that we had ever given a scientific label to.

They were riotous colors, and the colors whirled into themselves, fused, danced, tore asunder, and disappeared in even brighter hues. It is said that the human eye can envision only certain limited color spans; but this day mankind glimpsed from god-height pure beauty.

There were colors, colors of every possible shade and description, and some that I cannot describe. But the colors were not only colors. They were.... Well, what is life, anyway? The colors were contentment in a sun-split hollow. They were munching popcorn at your first circus. They were kissing your first date beside a crumbling garden wall. They were racing clear and free through a fragrant, open clover-field and they were suddenly seeing that $E = mc^2$. They were, well, what were they? -- everything to some, something to everyone.

The spell persisted for a long, long time. Nobody said a word. We merely watched. And as we watched, we caught something else, something not of fear, not of anger, not of indignation, not quite of any of these, but something else.

And perhaps it was my overwrought imagination, but I seemed to feel an even greater serenity, an even greater greatness, a calmness beyond all else, as Dr. Jordan exploded into sudden movement and tore aside the confining wall of the prison.

That Something hovered for a moment. It hovered there before us, before the cameras, before eternity. Then it was gone.

I DIDN'T STAY much longer. The Cal Tech people were becoming impatient. I had to get back to my own research problems. During the week that followed, I was already making preparations to return to California.

But in those last few days we did more experiments, and often their results seemed beyond analysis.

We saw the soul of a dog: larger than that of a rabbit, yet less colorful, tinged here and there with an indefinable ugliness -- but still noble withal.

We saw a canary's soul: tiny, perfect, a jewel among jewels, with hues that were not hues but heavenly bells tinkling in celestial harmony.

We saw the soul of a wild rat, the first really monstrous-



looking soul: small, rough, ugly. It was not incongruous with the matted hair, the foam-flecked lips of the tiny corpse that lay beneath it.

On the last day we saw the soul of a white rat. It had accidentally bumped up against Dr. Jordan's carelessly shoved-aside hypodermic needle. I saw it stagger and decided to see what the soul trap might reveal.

I threw it into the trap, turned to the visual-aids I'd developed, and switched them on. I switched them off again after a few moments. The soul of the white rat was no more pleasant to observe than that of the wild one. If anything, it was worse. The incongruity discouraged me. Civilization had done little for the rat species.

I was glad it was the last day. I'd had enough. I was satisfied to get back to my neutrons and protons. I wanted no more of souls. . . .

I'D BEEN BACK at Cal Tech for several months when I received an urgent summons from Dr. Jordan's lab assistant to come back. I chartered a plane and was there before morning. It was a snowy day. Chill winds danced, tossing a cold, damp blast of air into your face and down your neck when you least expected it. With a feeling of relief, I let myself into the smelly warmth of the physics building.

The assistant was waiting for me outside the lab.

"This way," he said. "I can't stop him from going through with it. He won't let me in unless you're with me."

I followed him. "What's the old boy up to?"

"He's dying."

The soft words stung me. I gasped. Dr. Jordan? Dying? We approached the partition at the far end of the laboratory. A woman waited at hopeless vigil beside the door.

"This is Dr. Jordan's secretary," the assistant said. "Miss Norma Warren, Dr. Toby Duane."

"Thank God you're here, doctor," she said. "He won't let us in. If we try, he screams like a maniac. Can you do something?"

"The old fool won't leave well enough alone," the assistant added, as if I'd know what he meant.

But even then, I think I did know.

I entered the small end of the lab.

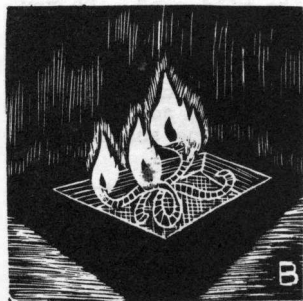
It looked the same as before. The apparatus still stood at the far end. Only now, the trap had been enlarged. It was big enough to hold a man's body.

And it did hold a man's body. There, on a small, hard white mattress, lay the emaciated form of Dr. Jordan. He looked up at me. He'd installed a microphone so we could hear him, and he spoke weakly:

"The cameras are running."

I said nothing. The assistant and secretary crowded behind me.

"I hope my soul is photogenic," said Dr. Jordan. He grinned. Then he died. That was it. He'd waited all this time for



me. Then he joked, and then he died. I stepped forward. "Please get him out of there," Miss Warren pleaded. "You mustn't do this. Please get him --"

"This is what he wanted," I murmured.

But there was nothing in the soul trap. Had it failed? No, the vision system was not functioning.

"His soul is hovering there," I said, shivering.

I could almost imagine that I could see it without artificial aid, a great volcano of stupendous energy swirling in the trap above the body.

"That button will allow us to see it. Will you please push it, Miss Warren?"

"No!" she exclaimed. "No, no, we mustn't. Let him go!"

I clenched my fists. "This is Dr. Jordan's crowning achievement. Push it!"

The assistant stepped forward. "I think Miss Warren is right. How do we know what we'll see? We'd be better off not knowing."

I grunted my contempt and strode to the button. I pushed it myself, saying, "Afraid we'll see a spirit like those of the animals?" I laughed. "We've advanced far beyond any animal."

Miss Warren gasped, a short, thick intake of breath. She turned half away. I no longer looked at her after that one glance, no longer watched her as she fainted. . . .

LATER, I destroyed the films that had been taken. The others, of course, agreed to complete secrecy. And as I have said, you won't believe this, so everything's quite safe.

It isn't a nice thing. It isn't one bit nice. Remember how the rabbit's soul was pure and clean, the dog's tainted? Remember how the white rat was even worse than the wild one? Do you understand the terrible meaning implicit in these simple facts?

I didn't, or else I would have followed the assistant's advice. Oh, perhaps you're thinking Man is a soulless beast. No, there you're quite wrong. Dr. Jordan, one of the finest men who ever lived, had a soul. I have a soul. You have a soul.

It's a big soul. A big one. And its grotesque shape is absolutely, awesomely, loathesomely, malevolently black!





AUGUST DERLETH, we once thought, must be some kind of mutant -- possibly equipped with three brains, seven hands, and the endurance of Mighty Joe Young. No other possibility seemed to explain his voluminous production as a writer. Contributor to over 300 different magazines, author of some sixty books ranging from fantasy to serious novels and poetry, and master-mind of Arkham House, Mr. Derleth has achieved a place at the very top of the list of prominent American writers.

FORREST J. ACKERMAN is a unique personage --- he is the world's only professional science-fiction fan. You know much about him, and you'll know more when you read THE ACKERMAN STORY, by Sam Sackett, in our next issue.

WALTER WILLIS, the incorrigible Gael of Belfast, Ireland, is the possessor of one of the freshest viewpoints that fantasy fandom has encountered in many years. In a recent poll conducted by QUANDRY -- America's most popular fanzine edited by our gracious art editor, Lee Hoffman -- Walt was voted the best fan humorist, and his own magazine, SLANT, the best fiction zine of 1951.

The Door is the first published story of MICHAEL STORM, a young California writer -- a musician by profession. He tells us, "I write for my own pleasure, for the satisfaction of seeing my make-believe characters and worlds achieve the closest possible approach to reality. If readers and editors enjoy what I write, then I am doubly content."

HARRY S. WEATHERBY, HM1, U. S. Navy, is a fantasy fan of long-standing and former editor of those two excellent weird-zines, SHIVERS and BLACK SKULL MAGAZINE. His tales have appeared in numerous fanzines, in THE LINK, OUR NAVY, and many others.

TOBY DUANE is a New York fantasy fan. Much of his work has appeared in FAN-FARE, edited by W. Paul Ganley. He says, "While I like to write stories, I like to think of myself as a scientist. However, I am still paying out money for degrees rather than raking it in from them -- and as an author I am not quite drowning in a roomful of the coveted green stuff."

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