FANTASY COMMENTATOR

WINTER
1978 - 79

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Fantasy Commentator

Editor and Publisher:

A. Langley Searles
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Vol. IV, No. 1 --ooo--- Winter 1978-79

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This is the twenty-ninth number of Fantasy Commentator, an amateur periodical of limited circulation devoted to articles, book reviews and verse in the area of science-fiction and fantasy. Subscription rate: $3 per copy. All opinions expressed herein are the individual contributors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the staff. Fiction is not published, but poetry, articles and book review mss. are welcome. No payment is made for material, but all further rights are assigned to the authors. Submissions are subject to minimal editorial revision if necessary. Unless writers request otherwise, communications of general interest may be excerpted for a column of readers' letters.

Olaf Stapledon:

The Man Behind the Works

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

When an author who has achieved some degree of greatness dies, and a summing-up is in order, the magnitude of his achievement is always enhanced if it can be shown that critics failed to acknowledge his virtues during the years he sought to achieve a reputation. No one who has seen Olaf Stapledon's meticulously organized scrapbooks, still extant in the home of his final years, built on Simon's Field, along Mill Hey Lane in Caldy, West Kirby, Wirral, England, could ever make that claim. The literally hundreds of notices, from virtually every major newspaper and book-reviewing medium in the English-speaking world, especially of the early titles Last and First Men, Odd John and Starmaker, must be read to be believed. Many are of extroadinary length, often written by critics whose names are still recognizable and commanding respect.

Stapledon's works are imaginative, deeply philosophical, and involved with sociological and political problems; mind-staggering concepts flood their pages in a torrential cascade. They challenge the understanding of the average reader constantly. Yet the critics and reviewers, perhaps incredibly, seem to have read them thoroughly, comprehended them fully, and been immensely impressed. Review after review pays homage to the author's universe-expanding imagination, to the importance of his philosophical approach, to his social understanding, and to his skill at melding these things together into works that are outstanding examples of the science-fiction art. Some reviewers call him a genius----and in no casual manner. Unfavorable notices are rare. If critical recognition is a valid mark of literary success, Stapledon may be said to have reached the apex early.

There seems little question that it was because of these reviews that Olaf Stapledon decided to become a full-time writer, and to use income from a family inheritance to maintain himself through most of his life from 1932 on. At no time did the proceeds from his published works even begin to pay his living costs, but he understandably decided he had found his métier, and that the advantages in this career outweighed the disadvantages.

With the outbreak of World War II, paper shortages curtailed the size of the editions of Stapledon's works and diverted public attention from the type of

books he was writing. Two titles appeared in 1939: the two-volume Pelican Philosophy and Living; New Hope for Britain, completed earlier and now published with a "Postscript Preface on the War," which acknowledged that some of the contents were already being superseded by current events; and Saints and Revolutionaries, one of the "I Believe" series published by William Heineman. In the war years that followed there was also Beyond the 'Isms, a Searchlight paperback printed in 1942; Darkness and the Light, a sort of Last and First Men in a minor key the same year; and in 1944 Sirius, possibly Stapledon's finest sustained piece of writing. Although it did not appear until 1946, Death into Life was undoubtedly also written during the war years.

As a result of these limited editions (none of which were published outside England until after the war---if at all), the fact that several were topical (and therefore became outdated quickly), as well as the more limited appeal of the non-fiction titles, the quantity, quality and length of the reviews they received diminished considerably. There was, however, some acknowledgement of the brilliance of Sirius, the best of his wartime writings.

Despite this, Stapledon's reputation in England continued to grow, and the magnitude of his intelligence and imagination was widely recognized. After his death the philosophical world that had been the essence of his life, and to whose journals he had frequently contributed, promptly proceeded to forget him. Indeed, I cannot find a single major history of philosophy written in England after World War II that grants him so much as a footnote.

His influence on the science-fiction world, on the other hand, has been profound and self-perpetuating. The concept of galactic empires reflected in the works of E. E. Smith, A. E. van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, and even television scripts of "Star Trek" derive directly from Last and First Men. Alien symbiotic life, engineered changes in the human form, ecology, overpopulation, longevity, the history of future civilizations, and the telling of a story of other worlds from a philosophical rather than an action approach---these are but a few of Stapledon's major thematic contributions to the science-fiction that followed him.

Therefore it was not unexpected, when he flew to America on March 23, 1949 to participate in the Communist-inspired Cultural and Scientific Conference for Peace, that there would be science-fiction enthusiasts like myself eager to hear him. In the company of men for whom time has not diminished my appellation "contemptible", he had little of say at this conference, apparently being used as window dressing to lend the gathering a note of respectability. While in this country Stapledon managed to spend one evening at the Hydra Club, a social group of professional science-fiction writers, but was unable to accept an invitation to a meeting of the Eastern Science Fiction Association. (1)

In the next decade relatively little attention was paid to Stapledon except for the issuance of the collection To the End of Time (1953), edited by Basil Davenport. This is a handsome omnibus volume of some 400,000 words, comprising five major works: Last and First Men, Star Maker, Odd John, Sirius and The Flames, the second, fourth and last being published in the United States for the first time. Because of the incredible flood of science-fiction that was appearing that year, however, the book failed to create a new stir of interest in Stapledon. (2)

Here we must pause to note the specific (and possibly surprising) fact that aside from book reviews, fewer than a dozen articles which by any stretch of the imagination could be called important had been written about the man in all this time. (3) It was not until a decade after his death that the first comprehensive critical appraisal, my own "Olaf Stapledon: Cosmic Philosopher," finally appeared. (4) While researching this work, I became acutely aware that more information about him was needed than was available from secondary sources. Any author

whose main thrust is philosophical and humanistic can have his work evaluated best in context with his own background and personality. In April, 1976 I visited his wife Agnes, as well as Wolfgang Bruech, a man who lived for years in the Stapledon household virtually as an adopted son. The insights they supplied, together with information available from other sources, makes it possible to present a fuller picture of the life, family, personality and motivations of Olaf Stapledon, and to attach more relevant meanings to declarations in his works.

The family has a most distinguished genealogy, with origins traced back to the early fourteenth century. These are found in the Diocese of Exeter Episcocal Register, specifically the book Register of Walter de Stapeldon, Biship of Exter, compiled by the Rev. F. C. Hingeston Randolph, M.A. of Oxford, Rector of Ringmore and Prebendary of Exeter, published in London by George Bell and Sons in 1892. In his introduction Randolph informs us that

> ...Bishop Stapledon was one of the foremost statesmen of his day, and was long the first friend and advisor of King Edward the Second.

Among the services he performed for the king was a special diplomatic trip to France. It is believed that Exeter College, which originally was called Stapeldon Hall, was named in the bishop's memory. Randolph's book also contains a list of all subscribers and the number of copies each one received. Among them was William Stapledon of Lakenham, Lando Hall, near Bideford. The comprehensive record of the Stapledon family tree remains in the hands of Agnes Stapledon.

William Olaf Stapledon was born May 10, 1886 in Wallasey (now Merseyside), Cheshire, England. This is not far from Liverpool. His father was William Clibbett Stapledon and his mother Emmeline Miller Stapledon. The grandfather was founder of William Stapledon and Sons, an agency with offices in Port Said and in Suez, which supplied water and coal to ships passing through the Suez Canal. It was the job of Olaf's father to see that they did so safely. Alfred Holt and Co. of Liverpool, owners of the Blue Funnel Line, were impressed by his experience and competence in maritime matters, and invited him to join their firm's head office in a high managerial position.

The first six years of Olaf's childhood were spent at Port Said, (5) although his mother had returned to England in 1886 to give birth, which proved an extremely difficult one. As a result, Olaf was a rather lonely only child. His closest friend was Rip, a rough-haired terrier which he never forgot and whose literary echo undoubtedly sounds in some of the animals of Stapledon's books.

He got along extremely well with his father, who was a great educator and who had a fine library of classical literature. Many volumes in this were passed on to Olaf and are still in the possession of Agnes Stapledon. He did not get along as well with his mother, who was extraordinarily possessive and fearful for his welfare, though by nature she was a kind and gentle person. Like her husband she also had literary interests; her idol was John Ruskin, with whom she corresponded extensively.

Ruskin---through his mother---appears to be one of the major influences in Olaf's life. Ruskin, the son of wealthy parents, established himself early as an outstanding poet, and eventually became one of the leading art authorities and social critics of the nineteenth century. He was ahead of his time in supporting national education, condemning industry for wasting natural resources and polluting the land, in battling for old-age pensions and championing the organizing of labor. He also advocated the return to a simpler, less artificial life, and this aspect of his philosophy attracted a sincere and adoring cult. Emmeline Stapledon was so firmly convinced of Ruskin's belief that old handicrafts be kept alive (6)

that she procured a spinning wheel. Her cousins supported this enthusiasm, and made a pilgrimage to Brantwood, on Coniston Water, where Ruskin lived. Ruskin's works were always at hand and discussion of them was perpetual in the household, so it is easy to understand Olaf's advocacy for the cause of the workingman, and his enthusiasm for socialism in general.

While Emmeline imbued her son with social science, William emphasized the rudiments of the natural sciences. The boy absorbed enough of both to create that remarkable combination of philosophy, sociology and science whose balance elevated his writings to their level of greatness.

Olaf's agnosticism also derived from his parents. His father apparently subscribed to no sect at all, so any direct religious influence would therefore have had to come from his mother. She was a Unitarian. Unitarianism is an offshoot of Protestantism which rejects the Trinity and the divinity of Christ and believes---like the Jews---that God is a single being. Unitarians do, however, accept the teachings of Christ, emphasizing His ethics and morality. They stress the importance of character, and are known for their tolerance of other religions.

In his mature years Stapledon denied that he was a Christian, (7) although the increasing strain of mysticism in his work from the 1940's on indicated a deep-rooted sense of religiosity. In The Opening of the Eyes his position is that of a "disbeliever in God" because of the hopelessness of finding any final answers through man-acquired knowledge. He also seems to espouse clearly a higher temporal sphere of existence:

> Thus seemingly the scientific temper itself is being forced to conceive that the intricate universe of our extant science is but a province within an ampler, stranger universe. And so we are surely compelled to take seriously once more the thought that this world of time and space is but the threshold to another world. We, who formerly...rejected all wild rumours of the unseen reality, must now, it seems,.... earnestly attend to those who claim access to that sphere, assuring us that all souls are destined to pass over to it. (8)

Olaf Stapledon had six years of elementary education at Abbottsholme, a boarding school located in Euttoxeter, Derbyshire. The founder of the school was Dr. Cecil Reddi, who believed that certain young people should be educated for leadership and responsibility. Olaf performed extremely well there, but one of the things he most clearly remembered about his stay was acquiring a firsthand knowledge of how to wash sheep.

His higher education was acquired at Balliol College, Oxford, where he earned both B.A. and M.A. degrees in history, completing these before the onset of World War I. (It was not until after the war that he received his Ph.D. from the University of Liverpool.) His grades at Oxford were middling. During that period he attained his full physical growth of five feet eight inches and 140 pounds, a weight that seldom varied for the rest of his life. He was muscular, and rowed on the college boating team.

If we can accept A Man Divided as autobiographical, we may infer that Stapledon's first amatory experiences occurred at Oxford. In this book he expresses the view that the protagonist, Victor, knew intellectually that sexual prudery was wrong but was emotionally bound up with it. Victor talks of his experiences while at school with two women, one of them older than himself. Looking back on these liaisions from the perspective of age he is convinced that Freud was wrong, and that there may have been more value in Victorian standards than he was willing at the time to acknowledge. Victor finds his experiences to be satisfying physically but otherwise sterile, and he did not continue or resume these relationships.

The foregoing is a prelude to stating that there is much discussion of sex and sexual mores in Stapledon's novels. Today, when readers are accustomed to accept the raunchiest material without blinking, it is easy to overlook the fact that for their time the cast of all his works is unusually candid and direct. Sexual customs of his fictional civilizations are described just as fully as their science, art and philosphy. Incest is strongly implied in Odd John. The plot of Sirius pivots on the sexual relationship between a woman and a dog with human intelligence. Wife-lending occurs in Last Men in London. When Stapledon's characters describe their sexual education, it is not unreasonable to wonder how much of the author's own experience is being recounted. Freudian analysis aside, the sex in Stapledon's fiction adds rather than detracts, lending another dimension of richness to his best works.

After leaving Oxford, Olaf's father got him a job with the Blue Funnel Line of Liverpool, where he performed various minor managerial duties without enthusiasm. It was his father's hope that he would make a good showing and eventually inherit his own excellent, well-paying position. Olaf liked ships but not the paperwork that went with them. At one point he could not account for £20 of petty cash, which may have been a factor in his eventual leaving.

Following this, he accepted a position as Master at Manchester Grammar school. His favorite teaching technique was setting up events in history like plays and having his class act them out. The noise and activity of this got on the nerves of other instructors, and the job lasted only a year. For short periods after this he worked for William Stapledon and Sons in Port Said, running a motor boat to reach and board ships to see if they needed coal before or after their canal passage. The firm was still in business when Egypt closed the canal after the 1967 war with Israel, in the control of a cousin. Olaf's family---particularly his mother---did not want him away from home, and discouraged even his Port Said efforts. They were also happy when a hoped-for position at the University of Wales fell through.

While working at both the Blue Funnel Line and the Manchester Grammar School, Stapledon had lectured evenings in the Liverpool area at the Workers Educational Association on literature, psychology and industrial history. These lectures frequently stressed left-wing views, for he was deeply immersed in Marxian philosophy at the time. It is probable that such views met with criticism from Stapledon's employers. In A Man Divided his character Victor runs into continuous and severe trouble of that sort too, and tells of arguments with his influential father about it. Not improbably, Olaf Stapledon's chief difficulty in obtaining a permanent academic post was his politics. This was to be true his entire life. He was frequently hired for night extension courses, never a full-time appointment.

He rationalized this in A Man Divided by terming himself only a "second-rate academic", and does the same in Last Men in London, where an influential father gets him a post---as if a man with his accumulated knowledge and ability to write, speak and organize his thoughts were inferior to the majority of tenured professors.

Although involved with Marxist groups and contributing some articles to leftist journals, Stapledon's earliest literary aspirations were poetic. His first book was Latter-Day Psalms, published in 1914 by Henry Young and Sons, Ltd., of Liverpool. It is believed that Olaf's father paid for its publication; he was a good customer of Young, who owned a Liverpool bookshop. The number of copies printed is not known, but was certainly small.

There are strong notes of atheism, social revolution and the plight of the working man in this rare volume of blank verse. There are also two anti-war poems, possibly showing that it appeared after the war began, and certainly show-

ing that Stapledon's pacifism did not (as has been suggested) stem from his own war experiences, which occurred later. We find here as well material that is strikingly similar to that in his final work, The Opening of the Eyes. In the first poem in Latter-Day Psalms, "The City," Stapledon says, "I went into the city to see if there be God." He sees a distraught, harried people, some of them half-starved with death facing them. "The men and women were loathsome, for they had forgotten love." He continues: "I said in my pride, 'If there be God, he shall be no God of mine. I will go my way, and live according as my soul wills.'" Then in the poem immediately following, "Spirit," he sees the lights of the city tremble the heavens' beauty, and "her murmur was music." Some spirit within him seemed to say that there was a God. "But I looked upon the city and rejected comfort, saying, 'Surely thou only art God who dwellest in my heart. And thou rulest the stars.'"

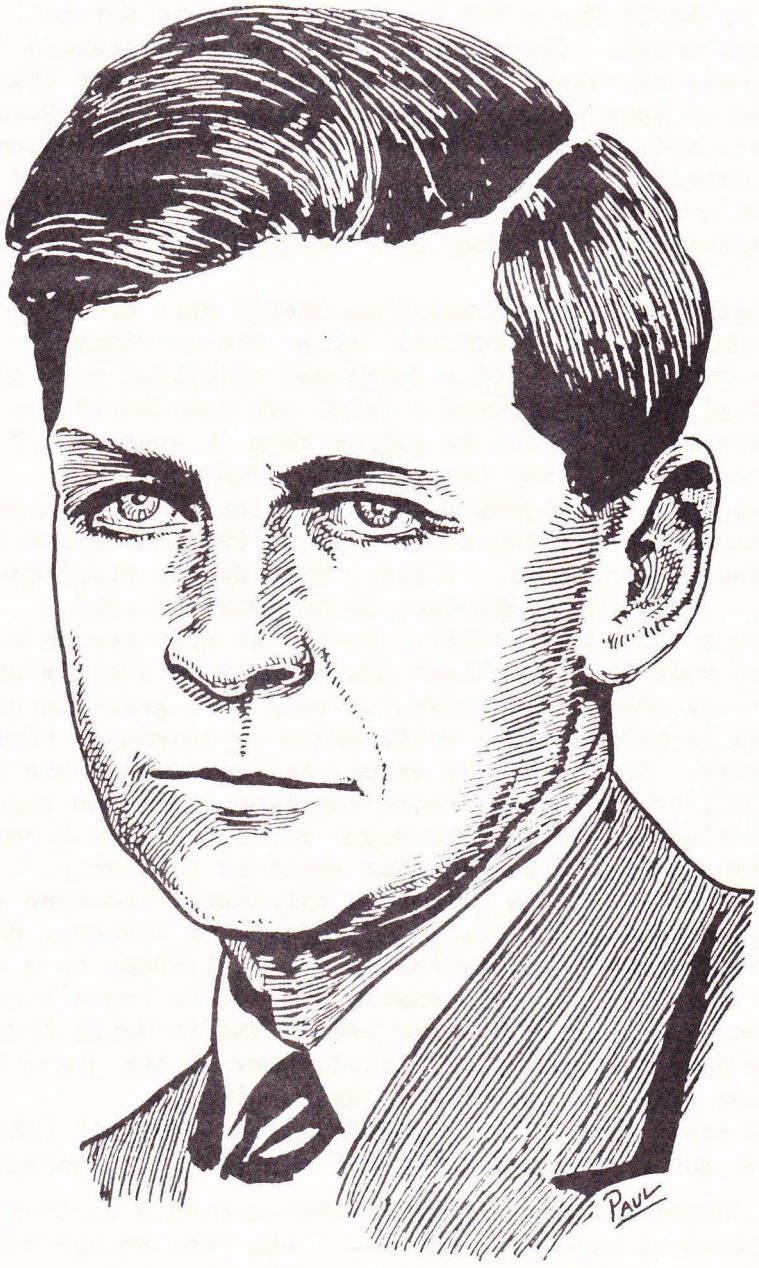
The Opening of the Eyes, forty years later, shows Stapledon wrestling with the same dilemma, but finally committing himself:

> Is this perhaps hell's most exquisite refinement, that one should be haunted by the ever-present ghost of a disbelieved-in God?
>
> No! For there is a blacker hell, not of privation but of present horror. The vacuum itself is hell, the dumb and frightful presence of sheer nothingness. It is all around. It creeps into the soul. It licks and loosens and dissolves the firmest tissues of the soul....
>
> I chose after much heart-searching, vain heart-searching; for you, my divine hallucination, have fallen silent in my heart. And so at last I chose with a shrug of the shoulders....
>
> Either I ride forward on the fiction of your existence, and attempt a deed more formidable, with consequences more far-reaching and more painful; or I choose freedom, discard my illusion of you, and slink back into my lair of safety, but of desolation....
>
> And to go back is to betray only an illusion.
>
> Yet I choose to go forward. (9)

Writing poetry interested Stapledon all his life, though this interest seemed to grow less as he grew older. Poetry is found in all his works, and it ennobles them powerfully. Poems by Stapledon have appeared in a number of publications, including Poetry, a Magazine of Verse, Comment and Criticism. This British magazine was edited between 1917 and 1930 by another master of science-fiction, S. Fowler Wright. (Stapledon's acquaintance with Wright suggests that the two men were familiar with each other's science-fiction.) Wright included poems of Stapledon in two of his anthologies, Poets of Merseyside (1923) and Voices on the Winds (1924). A sheaf of unpublished Stapledon poetry still exists.

Olaf Stapledon married Agnes Zena Miller, a first cousin from Australia, on July 16, 1919 at Friends Meeting House, a Quaker establishment at Reigate, Surrey. Agnes, the oldest of four children, was born in New Zealand on May 25, 1894, the daughter of Francis Edward and Margaret Barnard Miller. Francis was a brother of Olaf's mother, Margaret the daughter of Charles Barnard, a Quaker schoolmaster in Yorkshire. Both parents were British emigrés.

Francis Miller was employed by Booth and Co. of Sydney, an Australian firm that exported animal skins to England. In the course of business he visited England every few years, and on some of these trips his wife and Agnes accompanied him. She made four such trips, the third of these, in 1902, when she was only eight. It was on this occasion that she was first introduced to Olaf, then six-



WILLIAM OLAF STAPLEDON
(drawn by Frank R. Paul)

teen. She remembers her dominating impression was of his extraordinary kindness. Despite the fact that their age difference gave them little in common, he made a special effort to see that her stay was pleasant and spent a great deal of time showing her about. She visited England again when she was fourteen, and found Olaf as considerate and thoughtful as on the earlier visit.

Prior to World War I the family sent her to Europe for a year to study French, German and music. The was deemed to proper education for a young woman at that time, but Agnes regretted afterwards that she had not obtained a more serious academic training at some place like Sydney University. When the war broke out she was in France, and her speedy return to Australia in the company of a New Zealand cousin was considered advisable. While in Europe she had had the opportunity to see Olaf on a number of occasions, this time as an attractive young lady of seventeen and eighteen. As one may well imagine, his attentions became less of a kindly chore.

The engagement and the marriage itself were arranged by letter, with the harmonious agreement of all concerned. After the marriage the couple went to live with Stapledon's parents, who had a large and beautiful home in Caldy. The possessiveness of Olaf's mother proved a trial and they moved to nearby lodgings. Olaf's father solved the problem by buying them a house at 7 Grosvenor Avenue, West Kirby, where the two lived from 1920 to 1940.

Olaf engaged in extensive lecture tours for the Workers Education Association, which was a primary source of income, though it meant he had to travel to nearby communities a great deal. A girl, Mary Sydney Stapledon, was born May 31, 1920, and a boy, John David Stapledon, on November 6, 1923. Not unexpectedly, Olaf proved to be a wonderful father. He was an easy person to live with and would help the children with their problems and later with their studies. Because he had a high degree of manual dexterity, as well as a great interest in things nautical, he engaged in making model boats which he convinced himself were for the children's pleasure. He was a fast eater, and would bolt his food, shove aside his plate, and fall to assembling these model boats at the table while everyone else was still eating. Everyone was happy and no one was bored. The neighbors' children were also beneficiaries of this nautical ingenuity.

Through the 1920's he gave many extramural lectures and taught university extension courses in psychology and industrial history. He also began to contribute articles on sociology, psychology and philosophy to a variety of journals. The serious books on his shelves accumulated, and he began to form his own philosophical theories. By late 1928 these became sufficiently firm that he was willing to challenge one of the leading philosophers of the day, Alfred North Whitehead, at that time professor at Harvard University.

In his essay "The Location of Physical Objects," (10) Stapledon offered an interpretation and then a refutation of certain of Whitehead's theories:

> ...Professor Whitehead insists that nature <u>is</u> that which we experience in sense-perception. All that anyone really does experience in sense-perception is in physical nature---somehow. And though we may infer from our sense-experience to unperceived and even unperceivable features of nature, these features must ever be of the same stuff as those which we perceive. Of that which is "behind the veil of perception" we know nothing. Indeed, to regard our sensed field as a veil, hiding something other than itself, is to pose an unreal problem.

In introducing his comments Stapledon stated that Whitehead's writings were "perhaps more pregnant than lucid and consistent." In this article he proves himself

guilty of the same fault. Aside from the difficulty of following the thread of Stapledon's own argument, it is sometimes nearly impossible to determine what he is attributing to Whitehead and what to himself, or even to be certain which parts of Whitehead's position he is for and which against. What Stapledon appears to be saying is that nothing is what it seems to be, that even the most definite objects may be subject to illusion. An object may not be hard, for instance, simply because it offers resistance to pressure. It may not be round because we perceive it to be circular. It is not in a definite place because physical "evidence" appears to locate it there. He concludes:

> ...An event, if you mean by an event a mere position or volume in a space-time system, obviously is simply located. But such a mere locality is highly abstract. If you mean a factor in the substantial activity which is nature, having passage, contributing character to the universe and prehending it, the event is not simply located. Its location and shape is an abstract from it.

The Journal of Philosophical Studies was a good forum, for among its contributors were names as internationally renowned as Julian Huxley, Bertrand Russell and Harold Laski. However, Olaf Stapledon was not destined to spend much more time tilting with other philosophers. Following the publication of his next book, A Modern Theory of Ethics (Methuen, 1929), which had only a very small circulation and made little impact, he found a new avenue of expression. This was fiction. The result was Last and First Men, published by Methuen of London on October 23, 1930. Jonathon Cape and Harrison Smith, Inc., probably anticipating their own early publication of an American edition, took out an ad interim copyright on the book in 1930. (11) The American edition was published March 23, 1931; it contains a brief forward by the author not found in the British edition. Here Stapledon admits: "I have imagined the triumph of the cruder sort of Americanism over all that is best and most promising in American culture. May this not occur in the real world!" The firm of Cape and Smith was noted for the quality of its authors, having been one of the first publishers of William Faulkner and having on their lists such names as D. H. Lawrence, Robert Graves, Sigmund Freud and Evelyn Waugh, and their books commanded careful attention.

The book sold better in England than in the United States (going into four printings), but the reviews by some of the most prominent literary critics here were nothing short of superlative. There seems little question that the reviews of Last and First Men determined the future direction of Stapledon's life. He would become a writer full-time and a lecturer part-time. He was fortunate inasmuch as he did not have to depend on his writing for a livelihood.

How did he conceive Last and First Men? In a later interview he said: "The general plan of the book came to me in a flash as I was watching seals from the cliffs of Anglesea. Afterwards, I simply pumped my scientific friends for all the information I needed and settled down to write the story from the viewpoint of a man living in the distant future." (12) These friends were, of course, professors at the University of Liverpool.

While there is no reason to doubt that the idea of writing the book was born as Stapledon said, the format of the narrative was quite probably influenced by other sources. I should like to suggest several titles that by subject-matter and availability may well fall into this category.

The earliest of these is Edgar Allan Poe's Eureka (1848). This scientific, philosophical and mystical work is frequently ignored as an insane abberation of Poe's final descent into drunkenness, near madness and death. Reading it

requires intense concentration and is anything but good entertainment. Stapledon, accustomed to the numbing boredom of many philosophical works, would have had the patience to read it carefully.

Poe presents the concept that the entire universe is God and every living thing part of Him. If there is not a great central body around which our universe revolves, there eventually will be one because contraction into a series of central bodies will take place. Poe believes that the universe had a central origin, and that there were many "big bangs" and many universes. He suggests that life exists on many worlds, the presence of which we might not recognize even if we were to visit them. Most important, Poe maintains that as the universe contracts, all the diverse beings on billions of worlds will gradually lose their sense of personal consciousness and achieve a universal consciousness in a cosmic mind. This last is of course the general theme of the later Starmaker, and is repeated in many of Stapledon's books, both fiction and non-fiction.

Two later novels of possible influence are William Hope Hodgson's House on the Borderland (1908; reprinted 1921) and S. Fowler Wright's Amphibians (1924; expanded into The World Below, 1929). The first postulates an intelligent central sun in a universe made up of sentient cosmic objects. The latter has a memorable presentation of humanoid creatures who have evolved as far above man as man has above the apes. An actual connection between Wright and Stapledon has already been cited (page 8).

Possibly more influential than any of these was "The Last Judgement: a Scientist's Vision of the Future of Man," included in Possible Worlds and Other Essays (1927) by J. B. S. Haldane. This details a chronological history of the next forty million years, in a very brief, almost synoptic fashion. There are so many concepts and touches that echo Last and First Men that a full description of the work seems warranted.

The future history of mankind is being broadcast to children on Venus, forty million years hence. The story starts with the creation of the planets by the passage of another star very near our sun. Evolution on the Earth produces man. Civilization appears. Man burns up all the fossil fuels and turns to water, the winds and the sun for energy. Synthetic food is invented, the average life span grows to 3000 years, and the population multiplies. Tidal power becomes the primary source of energy. Parts of the planet are artificially heated, continents are remodelled, and culture reaches a pinnacle of development. As a result of the elimination of natural selection, human evolution ceases.

Civilization eventually begins to stagnate, so by the year eight million the moon is reached by multi-staged rockets. Large metallic sails make it possible to navigate in space by the sun's radiation pressure. Mars is reached before the year ten million, but its inhabitants annihilate the expeditions. Half a million years later the first successful landing is made of Venus.

As the year eighteen million approaches the earth's rotation has slowed and the days and nights are a month long. All ice-caps had previously melted, but now new glaciers begin to form. The cold kills most life on the planet other than man. Experiments begin to adapt the human body for existence on Venus, and eventually a new species capable of subsisting on one-tenth of the oxygen required on earth is developed. All native Venusian life is systematically destroyed and alterations to make the planet habitable for the new humans are made. These grow greatly in mental power and evolve two new senses, one of which places every individual in telepathic communication with every other, creating a communal brain and consciousness which cannot be blocked by the individual. The other sense permits the individual to receive selectively messages involving art, music, literature and philosophy.

This evolution is so swift that those in the last expedition from Earth to land on Venus cannot mate successfully with the altered humans. A completely new species has been created. By the year thirty-six million gravitational shearing forces disintegrate the moon, and its fragments form a ring around the Earth, like Saturn's. The heat generated is so great that mankind has to retreat to caverns beneath the planet's surface. After the ring has stabilized Earth is recolonized. Finally it is proposed to settle the planet Jupiter, and breeding begins to create a stumpy, dwarfed human race of immense physical strength. If this is successful, attempts will then be made to colonize the outer planets. It is also foreseen that within 250,000,000 years the solar system will pass into a region of space where stars are far denser, and efforts can be made to populate inhabitable planets there, even though trips as long as 100,000 years would be needed. The prognostication ends with the sentence: "And there are other galaxies."

In an epilogue, Haldane states that man must work not only for individual happiness but for the good of the community and, by extension, the race; he must plan cosmically, millions of years into the future. (13) Despite its vast scope, The Last Judgement runs to less than 7000 words.

Haldane was already a scientist of renown, having made and being destined yet to make major contributions to the science of genetics. To the general public he was even better known as a controversial populizer of science with leftist leanings. His penchant for science-fiction never left him. He enjoyed Last and First Men, and wrote its author "Where have you been hiding all this time?" As late as 1958 he wrote a letter of enthusiastic praise to Fred Hoyle for the latter's novel The Black Cloud, being particularly delighted with its realistic presentation of scientists and the concept of intelligent clouds. (14)

Once convinced of his true calling, Olaf Stapledon began to reduce his intensive lecturing and special classes to provide ample time for writing. This meant he would be in the house and underfoot even more than previously. Fortunately for his wife he proved to be one of the most amiable of men, unflaggingly even tempered, rarely raising his voice, and seemingly interested in everything, whether related to his work or not. Visitors were welcome and treated with courtesy; Olaf also had the knack of perceiving their personal concerns and involving himself with them. He was not only considerate of his family, but of virtually everyone he met.

Agnes Stapledon had a wide variety of her own interests, including the community, the schools and local activities. She found her husband always ready to hear details of these, evaluate problems seriously, and offer suggestions. Inevitably this resulted in a high degree of amiable reciprocity on her part. Olaf used her for a sounding board for his ideas, and her assistance in the final revisions of his manuscripts helped them attain their polished clarity. A part of this involved checking spelling, which she has said was not one of her husband's strong points. After his death it was she who transcribed the notes for The Opening of the Eyes, with their many difficult to decipher abbreviations, wrote the dedication to the work, and attended to all other details preceding publication.

Olaf's good sense of humor helped their relationship. He always enjoyed good-natured jokes, and entered into the spirit of fun on every occasion. His health was always good, which undoubtedly contributed to his even disposition. For all his easy-going casualness, however, he was extremely systematic in almost everything he did---as is proved, for example, by the extraordinary completeness of his scrap-books. He could never be called an absent-minded professor.

Evidence of his devotion as a parent is still in his home. Wedged in a wall of books, many of them inherited from his father, is a little volume titled

Verses for Mary and David. These are Olaf's original (and extremely well written) rhymes for his children, hand-lettered and illustrated by him in color. Through a good part of his life Stapledon dabbled in painting. At one time he even joinedan art class in London. One result of this, his painting of a harvested corn field, still hangs in the Stapledon home. It shows a good color sense, and a style that lies between realism and impressionism. Some readers will be surprised to learn that he painted the cover-jacket for the English edition of his book Odd John.

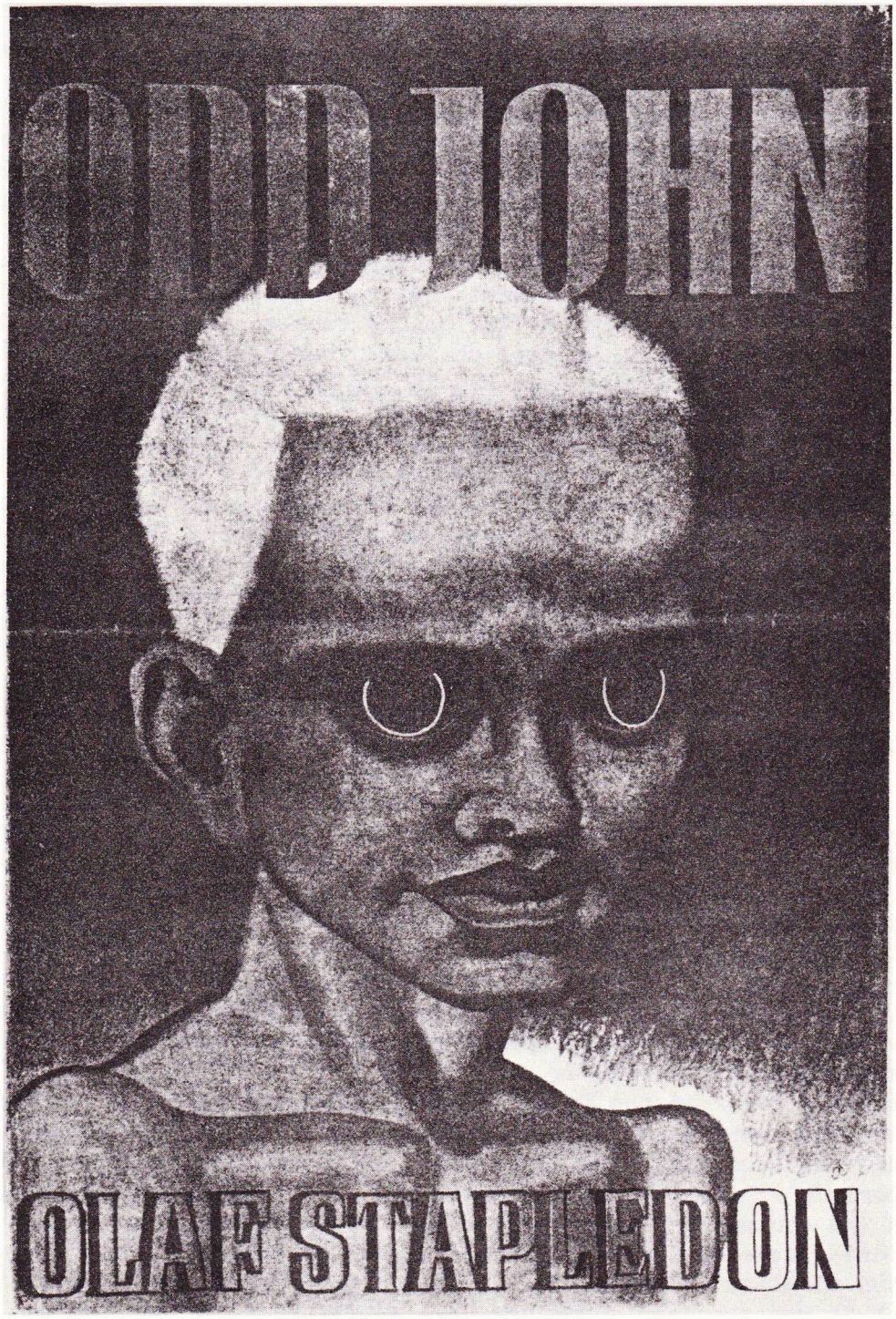
A catalog of the books in his home would have to be made to help determine what he may have read. These are present in literally every room, since his wife was an avid reader with an intellectual curiosity of her own. Serious philosophical volumes are there in great concentration. A cursory examination also reveals George DuMaurier's Peter Ibbetson, David Lindsay's Voyage to Arcturus, Erewhon Revisited by Samuel Butler, the 1929 edition of The Purple Cloud of M. P. Shiel and H. G. Wells' World of William Clissold. (Stapledon, incidentally, had a short correspondence with H. G. Wells, which included a discussion of science-fiction films.) This library leaves us no reason to doubt his assertion that he could not remember ever having read a science-fiction magazine up to the time of writing Star Maker. However, he did admit to having read books by Verne, Wells, and---shockingly for some who might like it otherwise---Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Most of Stapledon's papers (which are willed to the University of Liverpool) his wife wisely insists on retaining until her death. "What is the sense of visiting the home of Olaf Stapledon if the soul and spirit have been removed?" she asks. "People who have some regard, some love, some feeling for his work can secure small satisfaction in seeing just the physical walls and furniture of his rooms. But to find his library, scrap books, diaries and papers actually still in place is something else again. The real essence of the man remains."

The nature of some of the serious works he read and which are in his library is shown in the bibliography of his second book of philosophy, Waking World, published by Methuen in 1934. These are categorized under the following headings: To-Day and the World-Aim, Human Personality, Art, Science, History, Philosophy, and Religion. It is of particular interest to note that Haldane's Possible Worlds is cited. The preface to Waking World reveals that Stapledon could accept criticism and was willing to rewrite when necessary, for he twice refers to a rejected earlier version of the book, and credits five people for helping him revise it into acceptable shape; these included his wife Agnes, E. V. Rieu, a longtime friend and an editor at Methuen, and Professor L. C. Martin of Liverpool University.

He had similarly credited all these three, and in addition Gerald Heard, in the preface to his second work of fiction, Last Men in London. (Heard was to become an important writer of detective stories and science-fiction.) This book, originally published by Methuen on October 27, 1932, was reissued at a lower price in 1934; the printings were small, and copies soon became difficult to find. Perhaps the fact that more than half of it was devoted to the origins, execution and aftermath of World War I, told by a Britain from a British viewpoint to a people who had lost millions of men and no longer constituted the dominant world power, gave it a certain narrow appeal.

I say this because, judged by today's standards, Last Men In London is at best a dull work. Only the device of telling the story through the observation of an inhabitant of Neptune, two billion years in the future, gives it any claim to being science-fiction. It was certainly disappointing to those who marvelled at the unparalled scope of Last and First Men and then found themselves focussing on just a few short years of man's history. There was some outstanding imaginative material about the Neptunian world in the early and last chapters, but those between were outdated before they appeared.



A monochrome reproduction of the jacket illustration for the first British edition of Odd John, painted by Olaf Stapledon himself. The original is in shades of pink, blue and black.

We find the method which was the entire thrust of A Man Divided utilized here for the first time. Doltish man bumbles along, has rare flashes of insight that give him an unusually perceptive view of the human condition, and then lapses back into his customary mindless behavior. This supplements the ability of the protagonist to enter the minds of others and see events briefly from their viewpoints. All this is brought about through the agency of the last human race on the planet Neptune, which is exploring and influencing the past. Its motive is to give those it contacts a clearer perspective of their world, themselves and their potentialities. Yet, as the book ends, Stapledon tells us that these Last Men are already in thier own decline, and are descending into a final period of mental and physical degeneration. Man is being advised, then, by a being that may no longer be his superior. Why listen to a recital of the causes, meaning and results of World War I from one who may be no less confused than his readers?

Interestingly, however, Last Men in London does furnish us a sort of prelude of Stapledon's Odd John. This is in the form of the mentally superior youngster Humpty, who theorizes that he is the first of superior, if not entirely different, race of humans. He is convinced he must either lead the human race or destroy it and create a new species. Humpty, who has a grotesque physique, dies without achieving his aim, but the protagonist of the story, Paul, feels he was a mutant with the capability of raising mankind to a new level.

Considering that it was a patchwork of odds and ends rather than a unified work, Last Men in London received more critical acclaim than it deserved. Reviews were chiefly confined to England, for there was not to be an American printing of the book for forty years. Nevertheless, there is one chapter of considerable interest for the insight it gives to Stapledon's four years in the Friends Quaker Ambulance Corps. His introduction acknowledges this: "The last section of the chapter on the War, though it makes use to some extent of personal experience, is none the less fiction." The action in this chapter is undoubtedly fiction in great part, but the detailed description of the Corps' origin, the type of people in it, and the general nature of its work is unquestionably authentic.

Stapledon tells how the corps was formed by Quakers, who are by religion pacifists, as an acceptable alternative to conscription into the army. To this corps came in addition those pretending to be pacifists and those ineligible for conscription who would have preferred combat. The pervasive guilt of some who were part of the unit and the ambivilant attitude of the populace, which treated its members as either contemptible cowards or as men doing much good, are comprehensively and sympathetically treated.

The army regarded the Friends Quaker Ambulance Corps as an unnecessary appendage, and its members were not trusted in combat areas. They conveyed wounded men and did whatever else they could well behind the battle lines. There were often long periods of inaction during which the men of their own volition cleaned and polished the equipment to standards beyond anything the army would have exexpected. During some of the great battles, when casualties were enormous, the efficiency and tireless action of the corps won grudging approval from the French unit to which it was attached. Members were outfitted in officer-type uniforms with large red crosses on the arms, and although the ethical question was raised as to whether this really made them part of the military, they generally accepted all discipline, issue, methodology and honors meted out. Because they did not flaunt their pacifism, and merged as much as permitted with the war effort, they experienced comparatively little discrimination, although throughout the war and afterwards many carried grave personal doubts as to whether they had evaded combat duty out of actual conviction or cowardice.

In 1932 Olaf Stapledon's father died. His mother was to die three years later. Their only heir was Olaf, who commemmorated their memory by bequeathing a large tract of woods near his parents' home on Caldy's Hill to the public as a park. It is known to this day as Stapledon Wood. I have already mentioned that an inheritance was Stapledon's chief source of income for the rest of his life. This is revealed quite candidly by Stapledon himself:

> ...I live chiefly on dividends and other ill-gotten gains, even while I proclaim that the system on which I live must go. But live I must, or will; and so must, or shall, my family; and as amply as is needed for their development in personality. Having failed to earn enough by honest toil (toil there has been, but of a sort that society does not see fit to recompense adequately), I fall back with due thankfulness on dividends, until such time as the community has the sense to take to itself the ownership of the means of production, and to afford me some less disreputable source of income. (15)

Odd John (Methuen, 1935) is about a human mutation with superior mental faculties and his own standards of morality. It can be considered Stapledon's first novel. The number, length and praise of its reviews---so fulsome and extensive that examination is needed for full comprehension---exceeded even those for Last and First Men. Odd John was easier for the public to read and understand, and promptly secured publication in an American edition (Dutton, 1936). Considering the economic situation of the period, both editions could be judged successful. A working man in modest circumstances might conceivably have survived for a year on the proceeds. The book's popularity was lasting, and it became the author's most frequently reprinted work. It indicated clearly that Stapledon was not only an imaginative story-teller, but that he had the potentiality for becoming a top-drawer novelist stylistically as well. To his detriment, he either did not recognize or disdained to exploit this talent.

Then, in 1937, Methuen issued Starmaker. This was an incredible imaginative achievement. Treating the two billion-year history of the human race in Last and First Men as just one small event, Stapledon goes on to tell the history of the universe. Although the work was not printed in the United States for another sixteen years, it was internationally acclaimed as a truly cosmic literary feat. It elicited an unbelievable outpouring of long, erudite, understanding and appreciative reviews.

It was at this time that Stapledon made initial contact with the world of science-fiction magazines and writers. Eric Frank Russell, who had begun to promote rocketry as a member of the British Interplanetary Society in 1935, had just sold his first story, "The Saga of Pelican West," to Astounding Stories. Russell lived in Liverpool, of which Kirby was a suburb. Stapledon had sent a letter of inquiry to the society (which he eventually joined), and this letter had been read by Russell. He then visited Stapledon, bringing with him copies of the first science-fiction magazines Stapledon had ever seen.

Now Russell was also a contributor to one of the early British science-fiction magazines, Tales of Wonder, whose first issue appeared in June, 1937. The editor of that magazine was Walter Gillings. Quite possibly through Russell, Gillings arranged an interview with Stapledon which was published, together with a review of Starmaker, in his fan magazine Scientifiction.(16) In this interview Stapledon is described as "a slender, youthful-looking man (despite his 51 years), dressed in a sports jacket, grey flannel trousers and an open-necked shirt. With his thick blonde hair parted at one side, and his fresh features, he did not look

a day older than 27." Stapledon gave Gillings his reaction to the science-fiction magazines Russell had loaned him:

> ...I was very surprised to find that so much work of this kind was being done. My impression was that the stories varied greatly in quality. Some were only superficially scientific, while others contained very striking ideas vividly treated.
>
> On the whole, I felt the human side was terribly crude, particularly the love interest. Also, there seemed to me far too much padding in most of them, in proportion to the genuine imaginative interest.

In his introduction to Star Maker, Stapledon says: "At a moment when Europe is in danger of a catastrophe worse than 1914 a book like this may be condemned as a distraction from the desperately urgent defense of civilization against modern barbarism." Admitting that a crisis in human affairs does exist, he still classes himself "with some of those 'intellectuals' who declare that they have no useful contribution to make to the struggle, and therefore had better not dabble in it," feeling his most useful service will be indirect.

This is quite understandable in view of his strong pacifistic leanings, which he epitomized three years later:

> ...I suggest that if a nation is attacked and invaded by a foreign nation, it would be well advised not to defend itself, but to meet invasion with non-resistance. ... The foreign army would enter the country; no army, no air force would oppose them. They would occupy the seat of government; no one would prevent them, but none of their decrees would be obeyed. Many of those who refused to carry out the instructions of the invaders would, of course, be shot. There would be much brutality on the part of the exasperated 'conquerors'. But you cannot in cold blood shoot a whole people. (17)

Stapledon was sadly, naively wrong, as Hitler proved by the extermination of six million Jews. It is interesting to ask what relationships with Jews Stapledon had had up to this time. The only specific attitudes we have to go on are those expressed in his books, and these seem stereotypical. For example:

> ...the Jews were treated with a...combination of honour and contempt....they retained the fiction, if not strictly the fact, of racial integrity. They were still outcasts, though indispensable and powerful. ... The Jews had made themselves invaluable in the financial organization of the world state, having far outstripped the other races because they alone had preserved a furtive respect for pure intelligence. ... In them it was called satanic cunning, and they were held to be embodiments of the powers of evil.... Thus in time the Jews hade made something like a "corner" in intelligence. This precious commodity they used largely for their own purposes; for two thousand years of persecution had long ago rendered them permanently tribalistic, subconsciously if not consciously. ... Though capable to some extent of criticizing the practical means by which ends should be realized, they were by now wholly incapable of criticizing the major ends which had dominated their race for thousands of years. In them intelligence had become utterly subservient to tribalism. There

> was thus some excuse for the universal hate and even physical repulsion with which they were regarded; for they alone had failed to make the one great advance, from tribalism to a cosmopolitanism which in other races was no longer merely theoretical. (18)

Statements far more denigrating of Jews had been appearing in works by science-fiction writers as prominent as Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and M. P. Shiel, whose titles, with recisms intact, had even been published by Jewish firms. What difference did it make? At the time it was as natural as breathing, even among writers, and few people thought anything of it.

But Olaf Stapledon was destined to be confronted with an extroadinary moment of truth. In the year 1939 he was a full-time member of the University of Liverpool staff, a temporary replacement for an ill faculty member. The dean called the faculty together and informed them that the Germans were planning the futures of Jews in Austria as well as Germany, and that an effort would be made to save six Jewish students from Vienna. Despite the fact that their final examinations were only a few months off, some had been told that they would not be permitted to finish, and they were desperately trying to save themselves by leaving the country. Were there volunteers to put up these students for a few weeks?

Stapledon volunteered. A girl refugee from Vienna who was already staying with the family of Prof. Simey of Liverpool University happened to be a friend of one of these students, Wolfgang Brueck, and suggested his name. Actually Brueck was not a Jew by religion, but because his grandparents had been Jewish the Technische Hochschule of Vienna had informed him he would not be permitted to finish. Brueck's parents had been born Jewish, but had been converted to Lutheranism. His mother had died while he was still a child, but his father, a civil engineer, had been sent to a concentration camp. (Miraculously he survived, remaining in Austria after the war was over.)

Brueck arrived at Stapledon's home in March, 1939. Stapledon, meanwhile, had posted a bond to guarantee that he would not become a ward of the community. While happy in having escaped Nazi tyranny, Brueck's feeling of relief was tempered by concern for other members of his family who were still at the mercy of the Nazis. He had a smattering of school English, enough to make himself understood. He was twenty-four years old, a small man with a diffident manner. Adjusting to Stapledon's own children proved no problem; he hit it off well with them from the start. Mary, who was then eighteen, was at home, and Brueck described her as intellectual, kind-hearted and highly feminine. The fifteen-year-old John was away at boarding school. On his return Brueck found him less talkative but a charming and good-natured chap.

Brueck confirmed information from other sources on Stapledon. "You could talk to him about anything," he said. "Somehow he always seemed interested. His sense of humor was excellent---in fact, there was a mischievous twinkle in his eyes most of the time. It didn't matter whether you wanted to discuss an intellectual subject or merely engage in idle banter, he seemed to adjust his mood to the situation. As to his relationship with his family---and now I speak factually and not out of personal friendship---it was of an unusual order. He got along superbly with his wife Agnes. They took walks together, swam together, and she took a great interest in his work and he in hers. His relationship with his children was excellent. He talked to them like adults and equals, not down to them. He never shouted at them.

I regard Agnes Stapledon as my mother. My own died while I was still very young, and when I arrived in the Stapledon household I was alone and bewildered. I was treated as a member of the family, virtually became a foster son.

"When I came to England, Olaf was building a new home on a site he had selected in Simon's Field. It was about 100 yards off the nearest road and reached by a rough lane and drive. It faced the ocean and was set on several acres of land. In due course I was assisting him digging the tough, virgin ground, a job which gave me great satisfaction."

By British standards this house is large. It has a good-sized kitchen and an adjacent storage-pantry almost as large. While these are fully equipped, I should not describe them as modern. The extremely commodious dining and living rooms, which adjoin each other, are unusual for their extensive picture windows; these occupy two sides of the dining room and the entire length of the living room, and face the sea. A downstairs hall runs the entire length of the house. The garage is attached, as in most homes built today.

On the second floor a series of bedrooms runs the length of the house. Some of these have sinks with hot and cold running water. At one end of the house, over the dining room, is a small-to-medium-sized chamber that served as Stapledon's work room. There are large picture windows on two sides, and on the others are his research library, scrap books, diaries, notebooks, files and manuscripts still in place. A colored portrait of him hangs in the room, and another is in the hall outside the door. Brueck recalls that Stapledon worked in that room every morning.

Unlike some authors who use people around them as a sounding-board for their ideas, Brueck asserts that Stapledon rarely spoke to him about work in progress. "It was almost as though it was a separate business he was engaged in, which he felt should not intrude on social or family matters," he said.

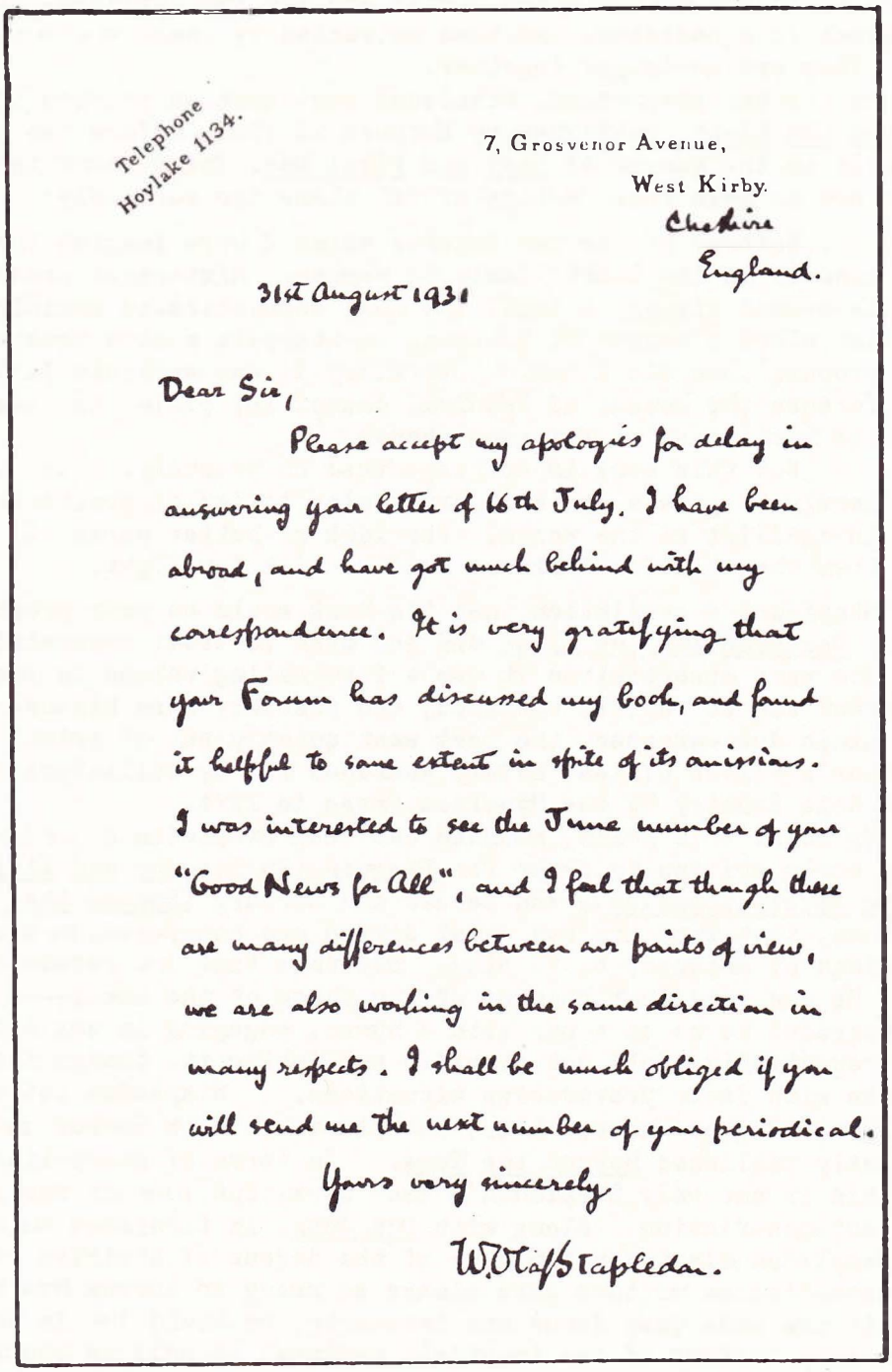
Stapledon attended the cinema, enjoyed going to concerts and ballets and particularly liked the theater. He enjoyed cigarettes after meals, but did not appear to be a heavy smoker.

He believed in regular physical activity. He liked to hike and to swim in the sea. His other activities included mountain-climbing and tennis. When Brueck first arrived the two played tennis daily. Olaf used to remark laughingly that he particularly enjoyed these games because Brueck was the only opponent he he could beat. These games ceased when England entered the war; this was apparently Stapledon's symbolic renunciation of any frivolous pleasure until the Nazis were defeated.

Although he had professed a rather naive sort of pacifism, even after Hitler came to power, Stapledon had an "opening of the eyes" as the Nazi juggernaut swept over Europe and threatened the continued existence of England as a free nation. "As far as Adolf Hitler was concerned," Brueck states with personal emphasis, "I can assure you that Olaf Stapledon put aside pacifism."

Brueck's problems were not over merely because the Stapledon family had taken him in. After the war broke out he was classed as an enemy alien. In 1940 he was shipped to Canada, first to an internment camp in northern Ontario, and then later to a camp at Farnham in Quebec. He was released in 1941 and he volunteered for the army, eventually joining the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers at York. While the war was in progress he finally managed to get his degree in engineering from the University of Liverpool, in 1942.

Meanwhile Stapledon's son, John David, had gone to Abbotsholme and then spent one year at the Royal College of Music. He was in the navy four years during World War II as a radar operator on destroyers in the Mediterranean. One ship was sunk under him, and he was among the lucky third of its men who were not killed or drowned. After this harrowing experience he was transferred to a rest camp at a radar station on Aetna, Sicily. It was at this camp that he met his future wife, a Sicilian girl who worked there. He had accepted army training on the War Agricultural Committee, and this led him to become a farmer, on land Olaf bought



Telephone
Hoylake 1134.

7, Grosvenor Avenue,
West Kirby.
Cheshire
England.

31st August 1931

Dear Sir,

Please accept my apologies for delay in answering your letter of 16th July. I have been abroad, and have got much behind with my correspondence. It is very gratifying that your Forum has discussed my book, and found it helpful to some extent in spite of its omissions. I was interested to see the June number of your "Good News for All", and I feel that though there are many differences between our points of view, we are also working in the same direction in many respects. I shall be much obliged if you will send me the next number of your periodical.

Yours very sincerely

W. Olaf Stapledon.

Stapledon's handwriting was tiny, rounded and neat, usually in black ink. The above example is a letter to the science-fiction author Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie.

for him at Heswall, a short distance from West Kirby. As a hobby he plays the oboe and the English concertina, offering folk dances at family gatherings.

Mary Stapledon earned an M.D. degree, and became a general practitioner. She married an Indian doctor named Shenai and had two children, both boys. She had met Shenai in a bookshop, and been attracted by their mutual enthusiasm for medicine. They are no longer together.

As the war progressed, Stapledon continued to produce books of interest. Darkness and the Light, published by Methuen in 1942, offers two possible futures for the world in the manner of Last and First Men. The author's introduction warns the reader not to take this "worlds of if" theme too seriously:

> ...Neither of the two futures which I here imagine for mankind is in the least likely to happen. Historical prediction is doomed always to fail. The most sophisticated sociologist, let alone a writer of fiction, is scarcely a more trustworthy prophet than Old Moore. Certainly I, who entirely failed to foresee the advent of Fascism, cannot lay claim to describe the next phase of European change.
>
> But this book is not concerned to prophesy. It seeks merely to give a symbolic expression to two dispositions now in conflict in the world. For lack of better words I call them the will for darkness and the will for light.

Stapledon's prediction that the book would be poor prophecy was itself prophetic. Darkness and the Light did not even foretell accurately the course or ending of the war; nevertheless it was a fascinating volume to read. Because much of its content was so rapidly outdated, and possibly also because it appeared with a severely plain dust-wrapper, the book went quickly out of print. It became one of the author's rarest titles, avidly searched for by collectors until it was reprinted in this country by the Hyperion Press in 1974.

Up until this point, Methuen had been Stapledon's primary publisher, except for works written to order for Penguin (Philosophy and Living), Heinemann (Saints and Revolutionaries), and Secker and Warburg (Beyond the 'Isms). It was logical, then, that when his new novel Sirius was completed, he would submit it to his old friend at Methuen, E. V. Rieu. But this time he received an unexpected reaction. He was told that because of the theme of the novel---a sheep dog whose brain is upgraded to be on a par with a human, engaging in sex acts with a girl---the house regretfully could not consider publishing it, though they would welcome future works with fewer provocative situations. Stapledon put the book in the hands of agents Hughes Massey, Ltd., who placed it with Secker and Warburg, who had previously published Beyond the Isms. In terms of story-line and quality of writing, this is not only Stapledon's best work, but one of the greatest masterpieces of science-fiction. Along with Odd John, it furnishes undeniable proof that had Stapledon selected a few more of the dozens of striking concepts which other science-fiction writers were always so ready to borrow from him, and developed them with the same deep focus and intensity, he would be in contention as one of the literary masters of the twentieth century, as well as one of its great literary thinkers. There was much less emphasis on books in the newspapers and periodicals of England than before World War II, but the reviews Sirius received, although short, had the same tone of those given his earlier books. Despite wartime shortages of paper, the book did appear in a second edition.

Death Into Life, a more mystical handling of the theme in Darkness and the Light, appeared from Methuen following the war's end in 1945. It indicated that Stapledon was attempting to deal with an area that could not be probed by material evidence alone. The war is over, and the spirits of all those killed at-

tempt to make sense of it. There are long segments where Stapledon marches into future history as in Last and First Men and Darkness and the Light, but mysticism is omnipresent, almost as if he had given up attempting to solve the philosophic riddle by means of logic.

In 1946 Stapledon tried to analyze the "far reaching transformation of morals and manners" which were a consequence of the war period, and to predict where they might lead. In a slim book Youth and Tomorrow (St. Botolph Publishing Co.) he ends with the chapter "Man Among the Stars," which shows what an infinitesimal speck we are in the great panoply of myriad and probably inhabited worlds. Finally he arrives at the core of his argument:

> Bearing all these considerations in mind, we must surely feel that the practical crisis confronting the human species today is probably no mere meaningless accident. More probably it represents a phase through which all the worlds of self-conscious and other-conscious beings must pass when they reach our stage of development. This thought may give our human crisis an added significance, at least to those who have an inveterate impulse to see their situation in relation to the whole of things. (19)

The Flames: a Fantasy, published by Secker and Warburg in 1947, is Stapledon's return to pure science-fiction. In this 25,000-word novella a group of intelligent beings from the sun are thrown off in a mass of fluid matter. As this cools, they are sealed into a kind of hibernation within the solid rocks that form. When one of these rocks is thrown into a fire, the solar being is revived, and it contacts a man nearby. It attempts to pursuade him telepathically that mankind should create a permanently radioactive zone so that all hibernating solar flames may revive and flourish. In exchange for this, the flames will guide earthmen from serious errors in the progess of their development, and reveal many secrets of nature to speed that development. Fearing that they will take control of mankind instead, however, the man not only resists them mentally, but travels around the world putting out blast furnaces where flames may be living. Locked up in an insane asylum, he is on the verge of being used as their tool when he dies.

This story contains a review of Stapledon's former ideas culminating in the cosmic mind, and I said of it on its appearance:

> ...as the book concludes we find Stapledon still testing his failure, briefly pursuing the closed circle that has led him from God back to God in a vain attempt to circumvent the predicament, and shaking his head in bafflement. The truth is ...that he has reached the limits of his imagination, and is forced to retreat to outlining in greater detail portions of his overall concept. ... He needs to be reminded that there are countless good stories which have outlived inadequate philosophies. (20)

Diplomatic relations between Russia and the United States, which had been steadily deteriorating since the end of the war, became severely strained when a blockade of all land access to Berlin was put into effect by East Germany on April 1, 1948. The purpose was twofold: to force the incorporation of West Berlin into East Germany and to test the will of the West. The United States responded with an airlife of supplies to West Berlin. If the Russians attempted to shoot down the planes there would be war, and if it appeared that conventional weapons would not suffice, Truman implied that the atomic bomb would be used.

As 1949 opened the United States still had a monopoly on nuclear weapons. Russia was conducting a crash program to build its own atomic bomb and the United States intelligence knew it. There was a touch of fright in diplomatic maneuvers as a consequence. There were occasional voices here saying that we should drop the bomb on Russia before she was in a position to threaten us with her own. In science-fiction circles, men as intelligent, educated and well known as Dr. Thomas S. Gardner and Dr. A. Langley Searles stated that pragmatically this was the rational (if horrifying) course to follow, though it was morally unjustifiable.

The decision of the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions to sponsor a touring Cultural and Scientific Conference for Peace can now be viewed as part of the diplomacy of the atomic bomb. It was propcsed at the Wroclaw Congress. It was sponsored by Communists, Communist-sympathizers, dupes and fellow-travellers. It was endorsed by Russia, which sent to spearhead it Dmitri Shostakovich, her leading composer, plus scientists and representatives of motion picture and authors' groups.

Well known figures from many nations converged on New York City, with an estimated 2800 delegates present at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in the last week of March, 1949. Many prominent Americans had been recruited to "front" for the cause, including chairman Dr. Harlow Shapley, Paul Robeson, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, Henry Wallace, Langston Hughes and a list of names that did not stop short of Albert Einstein as a "member-at-large." Many who permitted themselves or their names to be used doubtless reasoned, "After all, why shouldn't a council on arts and sciences promote peace?"

But the conference was puzzling and annoying to the American man in the street, who felt that strained international relations were due entirely to the Russians. After all, our State Department had just issued a white paper, listing the repeated refusals of the Soviet Union to exchange students, information, or engage in cultural activities. With the advantage of hindsight, we can see that Russia, fearing imminent attack by the United States, might be stalling for time by spotlighting peace until she could become a nuclear power and deal from strength; or, even more likely, was justifying developing a bomb at all---when reports of the first Russian explosion appeared, she could claim it was her only alternative to risking destruction.

Into this unreal, phantasmagorical situation intruded the presence of Olaf Stapledon. Outside of England he was known only to a few thousand science-fiction readers. The reason he was considered at all was because the British government refused visas to every other celebrity who expressed a desire to be a delegate. (Louis Golding, famed British poet and novelist, had been turned down and Stapledon was his alternate.) He was invited out of desperate need for the Communist movement to show that there were prominent men in England, closest ally of the United States, who would stand up and talk against her "warlike" behavior.

In his younger days, as has already been stated, Stapledon had participated in revolutionary movements, and his books repeatedly advocate replacing capitalism with a more advance type of government. The flame of pacifism also still burned in him, and though he probably suspected the conference might not be all it seemed, he probably felt that any effort at peace was better than none. British authorities did not make it easy for him. There was scarcely a book he had ever written which did not directly or implicitly espouse aspects of Marxism. He had given pro-Marxist statements in talks and in classrooms. What may have been in his favor was that he had been a pacifist in World War I and his books powerfully support that philosophy. Clearly, his espousal of pacifism was sincere. Another factor was that Stapledon was not a name of consequence to the outside world; his

statements would not have the impact of a celebrity's. Even so, before he was granted a visa Stapledon endured so intensive an official grilling that he was quite disconcerted by the time he told his wife he would be going. Withal, he had to pay all costs of the trip out of his own pocket.

He landed in the United States on March 24th, and was stunned to learn that being the only British delegate to get a visa had made him notorious. He was now a symbol, not just a person. He appeared in all the group photographs, and was prominently spotlighted in Life magazine's April 4th issue, both speaking at the pdoium and in conversation with a fellow delegate. His entire twelve-day sojourn was a whirlwind of activity. "I have been desperately rushed, and indeed have not had a spare half hour to deal with my correspondence," he wrote me in a letter March 30th, "and am wondering whether I can survive the wild rush of American life until I leave for England by plane on Monday!"

I was able to see him, though not meet him, on March 28th, when he participated in the tour stop at Newark, N.J. In Russia, the government had ruled that no American diplomat could travel outside the Greater Moscow area. Reciprocating, the United States refused to permit Russian delegates to leave New York City. That meant that Shostakovich and many other big guns of the conference could not travel to Newark, just a few miles away. Despite that, it was easy to see on a smaller scale just what Stapledon had been experiencing. A thousand people on the street and sidewalks waited to watch the delegates enter the Mosque Theater. There were marching pickets from veterans' groups of every denomination in addition to a large bloc of Ukranians, all carrying signs.

The program itself was an interminable harangue against our State Department and the Catholic Church. No one spoke in favor of either, not even the Catholic priests on the peace circuit. This went on for three hours with a pause only to take up a collection to help pay expenses of the conference. Stapledon was one of the very last speakers. He moved stiffly forward in response to the introduction of Millard Lampell (author of the script for the movie A Walk in the Sun), who concluded by saying, "The author of that magnificent fantasy, Last and First Men, Dr. Stapledon has told me that the reason he is speaking here today is because he does not want to be the last man in the world."

Stapledon denied being either a Communist or a Christian, "though I am, however, a Socialist, as are the majority of my countrymen." He considered the American attitude towards the conference very immature, and cited a British cabby who in driving him to the airport said, "Tell those Yanks to stop putting it over on us." He was very worried about the adamancy and belligerence of the United States, feeling it could lead to war. To the Russians he suggested that the triumph of their system might be much further off than they dreamed. He ended with the plea, "For God's sake, let's get together!" Stapledon's performance was weak, and when I wrote him as much he replied that he had been extremely tired, and not at his best. (21)

When Stapledon landed in England, the Associated Press quoted him as saying, "I was amazed to see great excitement and worry in the United States about the prospects for a forthcoming conflict. There may be a war at any moment."

In September, 1949 the U.S.S.R. tested its first atom bomb; our monopoly on the weapon was ended. At the end of that month the Berlin blockade was terminated, ostensibly because the billions of tons of food, fuel and supplies flown into the city made it a futile exercise, but most probably because Russia no longer needed to prove itself. It, too, had atomic weapons.

Stapledon had been taken and he knew it. He had permitted himself to be used in the name of peace, but he had also been abused. He had listened to the

meaningless diatribes of his fellows. He noted that not since the first day of the conference, when Norman Cousins of the Saturday Review of Literature spoke against it, had anyone been permitted on the rostrum who might do the same. He knew the Marxist philosophy of the end justifying the means and did not agree with it. This event marked Stapledon's complete break from the Communist movement as a vocal supporter. The schism was reflected in his very next book, A Man Divided, where the protagonist has become the "British Lenin," stumping for the cause. In the end, however, he decides to disengage himself from Communism, and gives his reason:

> "The turning point," he said, "was when they expected me to write articles in the local press to the effect that the organization of the unemployed was entirely spontaneous, and not inspired by the Communists.... When I protested, they replied that it really didn't matter lying, even to personal friends, if it was for the Revolution.... We had many long and heated arguments, in which they simply insisted that the Revolution justified any means whatever.... In the end I said I wouldn't do the job, and if they pursuaded someone else to do it, I would publish the truth." (22)

The same thought is found in The Opening of the Eyes: "If one must reject the comrades, it is not because they work for a world-wide revolution. For in the world today revolution, a painful social change, is the only hope. But what sort of revolution to the comrades desire, and by what methods to they work for it?" (23)

Not long after his return to England Stapledon met his long-time friend E. V. Rieu in London. Rieu describes the meeting in these words: "He had reached the goal of his thinking; he had come to terms with reality; and comprehension had been added to acceptance. There was a note of serenity in his bearing which it is a pleasure to remember, now that he is gone."

Agnes Stapledon regrets now ever having let those passages remain in the introduction, but at the time she had no inkling that posthumous interest in her husband would achieve its present intensity. "It is much too simple and too final," she says. "I hope that Olaf was actually as serene in his thinking as Rieu believed him to be---but if he was serene I don't believe it was because 'comprehension had been added to acceptance.' I believe, rather, that he came to terms with reality by preparing himself to surrender the struggle to comprehend and agreeing to accept the reality unquestioningly whatever it might turn out to be. Did he actually renounce Communism and Socialism? He had never been a member of the Communist party, but he continued to admire some things about the Communist philosophy, just as he continued to detest some attitudes and actions of the party members. He never abandoned the socialist ideal in which he included all that was best in Communism, but equally he was openly critical of the Socialist party. He was too modest a man ever to believe that he had the final word to pronounce either for anyone else or for himself. But I think his 'acceptance' was open-minded---therefore serene and at peace." (24)

Wolfgang Brueck met Stapledon in London for the last time about three weeks before his death. Brueck then had a job in London, and joined Olaf, Agnes and Mary for a meal at a Polish restaurant near Victoria Station. The four had a very pleasant evening and parted at Tottenham Court Road. Stapledon ate relatively little meat. He enjoyed vegetables and they comprised a good part of his diet. At the time of that last meeting Brueck remembers that Stapledon looked extremely fit, and showed not the slightest indication of that shortness of breath which is sometimes an advance indicator of circulatory problems.

(continued on page 32)

The Remaking of Man

by OLAF STAPLEDON

Human nature is like our English climate. No one can be sure what it will do at a particular time and place, but we all know it will be mostly dull or bad, and that it cannot be altered. That, at least, is the common view. Yet both the climate and human nature change. There have been ice ages. There have been ape men. No doubt our own inborn nature is much like that of the earliest true men. But man has only been man for about a million years, and his future may be very much longer. The perfected men who are to come will probably regard us as quaint prehistoric monkeys, dignified by a mere spark of humanity.

But let us think of things nearer home. There is one sense in which man is changing very quickly. The man in the street today is mentally a very different being from his counterpart of even two hundred years ago. He may be born very much the same, but he has been moulded by a very different world. And clearly in so far as we control the environment, we control human nature itself, at least in a superficial sense. Further, we have our clever biologists and our bold eugenists. They want to change man's inborn nature, too. Already they have learnt a few surprising tricks, and probably within a century or two they will have learnt many more. Almost certainly, then, attempts will be made sooner or later to remake man, not only superficially, by changing his circumstances, but radically, by selecting and influencing the germ cells of successive generations.

Now "remaking" man may very easily turn out to be mere monkeying with man. There are two kinds of monkeying. Either you know what improvements you want, and not know how to produce them, or you may know the technique, without knowing what it is you really want to do. In the case of man, both these dangers are very great. The problem of technique we must leave to the scientists, bearing in mind, however, the kind of alterations which may be possible, sooner or later. The question for us here is whether human nature ought to be changed at all, and if so, in what direction.

I, for one, am sure that our present human nature needs altering; and the general direction of desirable changes I would summarize in this way. They should afford me a richer, wider, deeper, more subtle, more accurate experience of this amazing world. Further, they should help me to see more clearly what is really desirable. Finally, they should enable me, in every kind of situation, to take all relevant facts into account, and behave always with supreme tact, intelligence, insight, foresight, so that always the best possible results follow.

That I should be thus remade, or you, is impossible. But do we not desire that a race of beings far happier and more vital than ourselves should some-

day occur? I for one hope that the creation of such a race will become in time the constant policy of all mankind. And although this radical remaking of man is not practical politics today, already some of the preliminary steps need no longer be dismissed as fantasy.

There is one obvious way in which either man himself or his world must be improved. Little by little the great diseases, such as cancer, tuberculosis, heart-disease, digestive disorders, nerve and brain disorders must be abolished. So must also all the special troubles of women. And maternity must cease to be a grievous burden. Man remade must have the health and vitality, the beauty and perennial youth, of the mythical heroes.

This leads to the question of longevity. If only we could keep young, most of us would certainly desire to live much longer than the normal span. But, from the point of view of the race and the far future, would it really be good that the lives of individuals should be longer? The brevity of human life certainly enables the species to keep on starting again with a clean slate. Think of whatever historical period you most despise. How lamentable if that generation had occupied the earth forever! On the other hand, very much of our short life-time is spent in merely overtaking our seniors. And no sooner have we become properly equipped for carrying on the work of the world, than our powers begin to fail!

From the racial point of view, then, two complementary improvements are needed. In the remote future, when the race has reached its prime, the individual must live much longer than is possible today, say a thousand times as long; but also his youthful suppleness and vigour must continue till death. In fact, senility, not only extreme senility, but that blunting of percipience and slow dying of the mind, which with us begins before middle life, must be abolished.

It is not desirable that the individual should live forever, since that would prevent any further improvement in the inborn nature of the species. Even a lengthening of the life-span would raise a serious population problem. Obviously, if all men and women are to last for many thousands of years, reproduction must be greatly reduced. It must be regarded as a very rare and noble privilege. And those to whom it is not permitted must turn their energies in other directions. We are sometimes told that parenthood is a function without which the human spirit cannot flourish. I do not believe it; but, if so, then here is another respect in which we must change human nature. A function which was very important in early days may well have to be restricted before man can become mature.

Perhaps it will be possible some day to increase man's sensory powers. Sight, for instance, cries out for improvement. Future man might see ultra-violet and infra-red colours. And he might analyze our present primary colours into several new ones. Moreover, by equipping his eyes with many more microscopic units of sight, he might become capable of much more detailed seeing. Similar improvements might be devised for the other senses. Perhaps entirely new senses might be created, such as direct awareness of minute electrical changes. Memory, also, might be so perfected that the individual's whole past would be accessible to him. Creative imagination, too, might gain new wings.

Great improvements will probably occur in man's intelligence. I myself, who am perhaps not much below average intelligence, find much difficulty in coping with my own unimposing income-tax returns. Imagine a man of the far future entering our present world and discovering our social and economic confusion. He would see the solution of it all in a flash, just as we solve those little problems that small children bring us, with tears of despair. "Why," he would say, "this is what you must do, and this." And (still greater miracle) he would probably have such powers of persuasion that he would actually get us to do the sensible thing. Imagine him also talking to our scientists and philosophers. "My dear fellows," he

would say, "your theories are unnecessarily cumbersome and fantastic. Try this new starting point, and all will be clear." And then (greatest miracle of all) he would get them to share some fraction of his own insight.

By far the most important improvements in man I have still to mention. Today incalculable misery and waste of life are due to sheer imprudence and selfishness. Most of us are forever failing to resist momentary temptations, even when we know that our lasting welfare is at stake. And as for loving our neighbors as ourselves, we seldom have enough imagination to realize them as human beings at all, and even when we do we almost never regard them without prejudice in favor of ourselves. Now, as I see things, all this has to be altered, either by nature or by artifice. The man and woman of the far future will, of course, be each of them a vivid personality; but also each one of them will imaginatively realize, not merely a few intimates, but the whole race, as a glorious community of fellow workers. They will no more be tempted to private interest before public interest than we are tempted to test our razors by cutting our own throats. In fact, as I see it, their neural organization will be so perfect that they will always choose to do whatever is seen to be best in the light of all the circumstances.

Yet they will not be moral prigs. Probably they will not care anything for righteousness as an end in itself. They will just be sane, with an order of sanity quite impossible to us. Imprudence and selfishness they will regard as mere madness.

Some of you think, perhaps, that a race of such inordinately perfect beings would lack all the variety of character and caprice of conduct that make us so fascinating to the novelist, and so unreliable in real life. Yes and no. Reliable the remade men and women would certainly be; but they would not lack diversity. On the contrary, I should expect them to regard us as mere sheep, afflicted with a most wearisome sameness and poverty of character. For their own nature would have a far more complex gamut on which to play infinitely diverse themes of temperament.

Do not think, either, that they will be bloodless highbrows. They will enjoy food and drink and play with the zest of children. They will delight in their variegated and colourful world with a barbarian fervour, yet also, perhaps, with piety. They will love each other's exquisite bodies no less than their subtle minds. Their whole instinctive nature, no doubt, will have been remade and harmonized; but far from being subdued, it will be enriched and completely shameless. They will surely be devoid of those conflicts and obscene repressions which distort and cripple our minds so often without our knowing it. On the other hand, they will not make the modern mistake of supposing primitive instinctive fulfilment to be all that matters.

Then what, you ask, will these far future and tiresomely perfect beings do? Their most serious racial enterprise will be concerned with matters as remote from us as ours are from a rabbit. Perhaps they will once more be striving to remake man for some high destiny beyond our comprehension. Perhaps, since there is a limit to the weight of brain that a single organism can safely carry, they will need to put all brains into some kind of telepathic union with one another; so that, for certain purposes, all may function together as one brain, capable of some higher order of experience. Perhaps they will have discovered that man's true end is to contemplate and enjoy the whole world of space and time and living forms, with whatever insight he may, before the ultimate frost destroys him.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The above article appeared originally in The Listener (V, 575; April 8, 1931); the editor is indebted to Sam Moskowitz for making available both this and the drawing on page 9, which was published in reduced size in Science Fiction Plus (October 1953, page 65). He is also grateful to the late J. Michael Rosenblum for supplying the reproduction of the Odd John jacket shown on page 15.

Tips on Tales

Short Reviews of Books Old and New

by A. LANGLEY SEARLES

George R. R. Martin's Songs of Stars and Shadows (1977): This pocketbook short story collection is a distinctly mixed bag. The best entries show a talent for evoking that romantic and nostalgic mood reminiscent of oldies like del Rey's "Helen O'Loy" and Williams' "Flight of the Dawn Star" and some of the backgrounds in C. L. Moore. Two of these are "...For a Single Yesterday," a nice survivors-of-the-next-war tale that I found as good as the author's "Song for Lya" and "With Morning Comes Mistfall," and the almost as fine "And Seven Times Never Kill Man." Somewhat behind this pair are "The Tower of Ashes" and a collaboration with Howard Waldrop, "Men of Greywater Station"; both are competent if not top-drawer. The least satisfactory of the stories here are "Night Shift," called a slice of gritty realism, but strictly Dullsville, and "Night of the Vampyres," just one more hackneyed account of nuclear blackmail almost totally lacking human interest. Neither is written in Martin's customary effective style. Between these wide extremes of quality lie three titles that are pleasant enough but not particularly memorable: "The Runners," "The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr" and "Patrick Henry, Jupiter, and the Little Red Brick Spaceship." All nine entries in this collection have already appeared in magazine form (details are given), and there is a brief introduction in which Martin discusses their backgrounds. Mixed bag or not, the two best stories certainly make Songs of Stars and Shadows well worth owning; they are not only among the best work the author has written, but certainly rank among the top stories of the 1970's.

George R. R. Martin's Dying of the Light (1978): The backdrop and much of the opening atmosphere for Martin's first science-fiction novel---serialized last year in Analog as "After the Festival"---is imaginative and almost poetic. It is the world of Worlorn, once the site of a decade-long interplanetary festival, but now on a darkening course that will carry it out of the galaxy. Its abandoned cities and shadowed forests make a promising locale, but the action superimposed on them is routine derring-do, conflict with shallow motivation and not enough depth of focus to make the characters memorable. I haven't checked the magazine version against the book for revisions, but my disappointed impression is that reading either one once would be enough.

The Best of Edmund Hamilton (1977): When I was growing up, the name Edmund Hamilton in science-fiction was synonymous with the word "hack." But looking back now over forty-odd years in the field, and conning this new representative collection of his lifetime writings, I feel I might have been more charitable. I should have been more perceptive, too; every so often a Hamilton work turned out unexpectedly well, and this should have warned me against such labels. For example, I can still recall the surprised pleasure with which I read his "Prisoner of Mars," a novel

which (I learned from the author's "Afterword" here) he wrote in less than three weeks. What I am leading up to is the repentant realization that Hamilton was an exceedingly competent (and often underrated) craftsman. After rereading most of the 21 chronologically arranged entries in this collection, I can also see he continued to evolve and improve all his life. Some of the very best stories, really fine jobs like "What's It Like Out There?," "Requiem" and "The Pro" were written late in his career. (There are quite a few well known authors one can't say that about---Murray Leinster, for instance.) Anyway, don't be put off by the lurid dust-wrapper (a buxom wench being rescued from a B.E.M.); this book is well worth permanent shelving. It contains also a foreward by Hamilton's wife, the late Leigh Brackett, which adds a number of interesting sidelights about his personal life and writings.

John Gunther's Eden for One: an Amusement (1927): Not many people who remember Inside Europe and the author's other best-selling reportorial books of the 1930's and 1940's realize that Gunther's earliest efforts were novels, still less that one of them is a fantasy. Eden for One tells about a young man who is given the power to have all his wishes granted, and how this power defeats all his efforts to achieve happiness, or even to undertake his chief ambition, the remaking of the human race. He finds that the eternal life and youth he has wished for merely make him lazy, and that happiness is nothing but an illusion. Unsatisfied in love, in ambition, in personal relationships, he ends by renouncing his gift and spending his last day with the woman he loved but never won. Despite the serious theme, Gunther writes with a light, unpretentious touch in the form of a fable. Eden for One is a rather short novel, running to little more than 30,000 words, and rolls on at such a fast pace that the average reader can finish it in a couple of very pleasant hours.

R. Norman Grisewood's Zarlah the Martian (1909): In trying to perfect a stronger substitute for glass, a young inventor inadvertently produces a substance that is susceptible to certain rays being projected by intelligent beings on the planet Mars. And by making a sheet of this new substance he succeeds in receiving a "televised" picture from that planet. Communication is easily established, for the Martians have long possessed superior telescopes that have enabled them, by reading signboards, to learn the many languages of Earth. But all this is merely a prelude to an exciting Burroughs-like adventure story. By a combination of his own invention and the use of Martian "super-radium" the inventor's mind is transported to Mars and occupies the body of a dweller there. (The Martian's, at the same time, occupies his body on Earth.) He sets about exploring the planet and (of course!) falls in love with Zarlah, a beautiful Martian. He confesses his love and is willing to renounce it, as he can scarcely use another person's body to house his mind for the rest of his life. But Zarlah confesses that she knows of the experiment that brought him from Earth, and it is he whom she cares for. She then sets out in her "air-car" for the planet Earth! He follows her in his own, and by a freak of fate the two ships (which were never intended to be capable of interplanetary travel) land on one of the Martian moons. Everything is explained, and the two are eventually able to leave the satellite and spend the rest of their happy days on Mars. To us this plot is distressingly familiar---but it wasn't in 1909, and neither was the fast pace of Grisewood's writing, which is strikingly less leisurely than that of his contemporaries, such as England, Serviss, Giesy and so on. Zarlah the Martian would make a valuable addition to one of the classic reprint series, such as Arno and Hyperion have produced, as a prototype of the fantasy adventure story.

Robert Silverberg's Trips in Time (1977): This is a slimmer collection than the editor's earlier Voyages in Time (1967)---it has only nine stories instead of a dozen---and is confined to the narrower theme of floating "back and forth along the time stream in ways even more intricate than those imagined by the old pioneer, H. G. Wells." This is an interesting modern niche to explore, but it is also an over-

gimmicked one, and selections like Zelasny's "Divine Madness," Randall's "Secret Rider" and Van Vogt's "Seesaw" unfortunately fail for just that reason. Also the first pair are too arty and all three are too confusing. Another entry, Silverberg's own "Mugwump 4," is simply too timeworn (no pun intended); its basic idea was developed---and developed much better---over fifty years ago by May Sinclair ("Where Their Fire Is Not Quenched"). Three of the remaining stories, Sheckley's "King's Wishes," Leiber's "Try and Change the Past" and Peter Phillips' "Manna," are pleasing, competent and often clever; I enjoyed them. The best items in this collection are "An Infinite Summer" and "The Long Remembering." Christopher Priest is occasionally more vague than he needs to be in the former, but succeeds overall in evoking a haunting mood that is warmly effective. It is a tribute to Poul Anderson that in the latter he won me over with his trip to prehistoric times, a subject I thought I had outgrown many years ago. I don't recommend you buy this book for just these two stories, but if you don't happen to own the best anthology of this kind already---which happens to be Van Doren Stern's Travellers in Time---you could probably do worse.

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OLAF STAPLEDON: THE MAN BEHIND THE WORKS
(continued from page 26)

On September 5, 1950, Olaf Stapledon chopped wood. He felt more tired than usual, and Agnes pursuaded him to lie down on the couch in the study. She went to Haswell that afternoon to visit her son.

On September 6th the two were joined at supper by Agnes' mother, who was staying with them at the time. Olaf had little appetite and ate scarcely anything. After the meal he carried a tray of plates into the kitchen. He put the tray down on a cupboard and collapsed, falling backward and hitting his head as he fell. He was dead before the family could do anything to assist him. The cause of death was later given as a coronary arterial occlusion. Deposits had built up, culminating in the attack that ended his life.

Brueck received a telegram from John the next day, informing him of the tragedy. Agnes retained her surface calm, but two days later, when Brueck visited her, she finally broke down and cried, remembering an old Australian saying: "If a strong gale blows in the evening it takes the souls away." She suffered terribly before time eased the loss.

Willam Olaf Stapledon's ashes were scattered to the winds on the cliffs of Caldy, near Simon's field.

NOTES

(1) A fleeting reference to his Hydra Club visit is found in Hell's Cartographers, where Harry Harrison writes, "It was at Fletcher's place that we all met Olaf Stapledon when he came to the city." (page 80) The reference is to Fletcher Pratt's apartment at 32 West 58th St., New York City. One of the attendees has informed me that Stapledon just held a drink, looked pleasant, and made small talk. The event was a purely social one.

(2) This superb collection was eventually "remaindered" in bookstores for 89¢! It is notable for Davenport's interesting introduction, but from a completist's standpoint has the disadvantage of omitting some forty-five early pages from the text of Last and First Men because they seemed no longer topical.

(3) These are:
(a) "The Philosopher of Fantasy" by Walter H. Gillings (Scientifiction, June, 1937)

(b) "The Philosophical Novels of Olaf Stapledon" by John B. Michel (The Alchemist, Summer, 1940)
(c) a biographical sketch in Twentieth Century Authors (1942), edited by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft
(d) "Olaf Stapledon" by J. B. Coates in Ten Modern Prophets (1944)
(e) "Between the Devil and the Deep Sea: the Philosophy of Olaf Stapledon" by E. W. Martin in The Pleasure Bond (1947), edited by Malcolm Elwin
(f) "The Flames; a Fantasy" by Sam Moskowitz (Fantasy Commentator 2, 157; Winter 1947-48)
(g) "Men of the Space Age" by Walter H. Gillings (Fantasy Review, Dec. 1948-Jan. 1949) reports the content of Stapledon's extemporaneous speech at the Oct. 9, 1948 meeting of the British Interplanetary Society; note: this is not the same as his prepared speech which was printed in the Journal of the British Interplanetary Society (November, 1948)
(h) "Peace and Olaf Stapledon" (1950) and an abridgement, "Bold Man in New World" by Sam Moskowitz; the former is a brochure limited to 112 copies, the latter appeared in Shangri-La (October, 1949)
(i) "The Vision of Olaf Stapledon" by Basil Davenport, the introduction to To the End of Time (1953).

(4) It was first printed in Fantastic Science Fiction Stories (June, 1960), and reprinted in the British Science Fantasy (#48, 1961). It was then included in my book Explorers of the Infinite (1963), and has remained in print since that time.
(5) Much of the description and local color in chapter 16 of Odd John doubtless derives from Stapledon's memories of this city, both in his childhood and his early adult years.
(6) Her cousin, Edith Hope Scott, emphasized this in her book on Ruskin, The Gild of St. George.
(7) At the Cultural and Scientific Rally for World Peace, March 29, 1949, he said, "I am not a Communist, I am not a Christian, I am just me."
(8) The Opening of the Eyes, p. 85.
(9) ibid., pp. 23-25.
(10) Journal of Philosophical Studies (Jan. 1929).
(11) An ad interim copyright protects a foreign work for five years in the United States, but if it does not appear in an American edition within that period it lapses into public domain. The book was duly published in 1931 and a formal copyright then taken out in the name of the publisher.
(12) ref. 3a, p. 8.
(13) Haldane credits as one of his sources Space, Time and Diety, where "...Professor Alexander...suggests that the end toward which 'the whole creation travaileth and groaneth' is the emergence of a new kind of being which will bear the same relation to mind as does mind to life and life to matter." Samuel Alexander (1859-1938) was Professor of Philosophy at Victoria University, Manchester; his Space, Time and Deity, a series of Gifford Lectures, was published in 1920.
(14) In reviewing the former Lord Chancellor Birkenhead's World in 2030 (1930) he trenchantly noted 44 examples of plaigarism from his own essays and stories incorporated with no other acknowledgement than an introductory note that he was following in the footsteps of "Verne, Bellamy, Wells and Haldane."
(15) Waking World, p. 11.
(16) ref. 3a.
(17) Waking World, p. 249.
(18) Last and First Men, pp. 85-86.
(19) Youth and Tomorrow, p. 111.
(20) ref. 3f, p. 170.
(21) ref. 3h, p. 10.
(22) A Man Divided, pp. 123-124.
(23) The Opening of the Eyes, p. 67.
(24) personal communication, Agnes Stapledon.

Lovecraft's Literary Executor

by GEORGE T. WETZEL

Who was Lovecraft's literary executor? Without question Robert H. Barlow during his lifetime was considered to be by those involved with Lovecraft's writings, by the general public, and even after his death by present-day Lovecraft scholars. But how did Barlow become nominated to this position?

A few months before Lovecraft's death his aunt, Mrs. Annie E. P. Gamwell, by chance saw him write a document consisting of two leaves of notes; these he placed in a used envelope labelled "Instructions in Case of Decease," which he then set among personal papers he kept in a cabinet in his room. (1)

When Barlow arrived in Providence shortly after Lovecraft's funeral, she showed Barlow this document, which included directions for him to attend to certain matters. Mrs. Gamwell copied it in longhand, saying "she wished the original as a sad momento," and gave Barlow the facsimile and the original envelope.

The text of the original document can be established only from this purported true facsimile. What does it say? The first page begins, "All files of weird magazines, scrapbooks not wanted by A.E.P.G., all original mss. to R.H. Barlow, my literary executive." (Lovecraft obviously meant "executor.")

Before we go further, we should inquire exactly what a literary executor is. De Camp states that "While common in the literary world, the office of literary executor has no legal standing. The literary executor is merely someone whome the testator recommends as qualified to tidy up his writings: to sell rights yet unsold, to arrange for completion and publication of works in progress, and so on. The executor may take this person's advice but is not bound by it." (2)

Another authority states that the function of a literary executive is to handle an author's unpublished manuscripts after his death, offering the example of Ernest Hemingway, who empowered one for such a purpose. (3)

Jones' Legal Forms includes this example: "As I have various and sundry mss. which have not yet been published, I appoint _____ as my literary executor and bequeath to him as such all my mss., papers, and letters, and desire him to have such of them published as it is practicable...." (4)

Did Lovecraft's "Instructions...." follow the unanimous canons of these authorities? Decidedly not. In fact, what wishes the document does contain are not specified that Barlow perform, an oversight from which it might be argued that they pertained to someone else as their performer. When you think about it, the functions of a literary executor follow closely those of a literary agent, the difference being that the author is dead in the first case and living in the second. All the document says about manuscripts is that they are "original," not that Barlow was to publish them or have them published. Nor does it designate him to make testamentary disposition of magazines and books; that chore is only inferential.

Because of these irregularities, it is appropriate to deliberate if the document is legally valid in its other features. We are struck immediately with the realization that it lacked the formal construction required in a will (it is neither dated nor signed by witnesses). There is no record that the original holographic document was ever submitted for probate. And the surviving facsimile is

not in itself prima facie evidence that its contents are a letter-perfect facsimile of the original.

But what of the remainder of its contents? In addition to the distribution already spoken of, there was the statement that "Mrs. D. W. Bishop, 5001 Sunset Drive, Kansas City, Mo., owes H. P. Lovecraft $26 for revision work." It seems obvious that Lovecraft was using a literary executor to collect debts for literary revisions as well as for disposing of his literary possessions.

What the executor of Lovecraft's will, Albert Baker, thought of the document seems certain (as will be later shown): he would have preferred to ignore it, since it infringed on his own duties.

On the back of page two of the "Instructions..." facsimile is penciled an undated note from "Bob" to "August" inquiring if two excerpts were from completed scripts or were plans for contemplated stories. We may assume these two persons were Barlow and Derleth, and the two excerpts probably the mss. fragments mentioned in an exchange of letters between Baker and Barlow which I shall cite later in this article. The point is that Derleth may actually have read this facsimile of the "Instructions..." (5)

Several days after his arrival in Providence, Mrs. Gamwell signed a contract with Barlow. This contract unquestionably made him Lovecraft's literary executor, where the "Instructions..." could be only surmised to do so. The latter merely bequeathed the manuscripts to Barlow; however, the contract did not only this, but also stated that Lovecraft had "expressed a wish and desire" that Barlow handle "publishing and republishing the said mss., published or unpublished." Lovecraft may have communicated this to Barlow verbally, but such understandings are hard to authenticate if one of the parties is dead. The final clause in the contract obligates Barlow to pay Mrs. Gamwell all receipts less a three percent commission of the gross amount received. (6)

The ink was hardly dry on the contract before August Derleth began attempts to impress Barlow that the contract was void. Derleth began with the claim that he held releases for almost everything Lovecraft had had printed. This was probably based on an authorization that Lovecraft had given Derleth in 1936 to market a book collection of his stories. (7)

Next he warned Barlow that since the latter was a minor the contract might be invalid under Rhode Island law. (8) He followed this with the reminder that Lovecraft had appointed Julius Schwartz as his agent in 1936, (9) implying that this took precedence over any posthumous appointments made by heirs. (Here Derleth contradicted his own claim cited in the paragraph above.)

Derleth's final argument was that Mrs. Gamwell lacked legal title to contract out the Lovecraft manuscripts. Only Sonia Davis, his widow, could do so, he implied. (10) But Rhode Island is one of the few states where marriage does not automatically revoke a spouse's prior will made prior to marriage. (11)

Were Derleth's admonitions to Barlow self-serving harassment or merely friendly advice? Whatever the psychology behind them, their effect was apparently to dissuade Barlow from actively agenting Lovecraft's manuscripts. Sometime between April 5, 1937 and June 23, 1938, he voluntarily relinquished his role in favor of Derleth. (12)

If the reader finds this conclusion unacceptable, there is Barlow's own explanation: he told Baker that he stood aside voluntarily in favor of Derleth's superior opportunities in the market place, and that he was recuperating from an illness of long duration. (12) In slightly different phrasing he reiterated almost the same story to Robert A. Lowndes six months later. (14)

It is important to ask if this meant that Barlow terminated his contract. I would say that he never did. Here is the evidence: First of all, during June, 1938 he proceeded unilaterally to publish and copyright in his own

name Lovecraft's Commonplace Book, and confided to Claire Beck, its printer, that Derleth had "no power to interfere." (15) Second, Baker, in October, 1938, complimented Barlow for giving Derleth a free hand in marketing Lovecraft material, and not invoking his agreement with Mrs. Gamwell. (13) Third, in December, 1938 Barlow published and copyrighted in his own name Leaves II, containing three unpublished story fragments by Lovecraft. (16) I believe two of these are the same ones referred to on the back of page two of the "Instructions..." Fourth, in 1940 and again in 1943 Barlow contributed to Golden Atom five Lovecraft items; four of these were in the public domain, but the fifth was theretofore unpublished. (17) Last of all, he contributed to The Acolyte in 1942 and 1943 six Lovecraft pieces; three were in the public domain, two were unpublished, and one comprises excerpts from a letter whose copyright status I do not know. (18) Had Barlow terminated his contract, he could scarcely have done these things with impunity.

We should also remember that this contract obligated Barlow to pay Mrs. Gamwell a commission for any publication sales made. After The Commonplace Book appeared she received ten dollars. This seems to be the sole cash disbursement made. (12) The periodicals cited above were products of amateur journalists, who traditionally pay for submissions with copies of their publications rather than in cash. Whether Mrs. Gamwell received these, or whether Barlow notified her of their appearance, we do not know. Gratis printing of such Lovecraft items would not necessarily amount to a breach of contract, for Barlow could argue that they were unsaleable elsewhere.

Mrs. Gamwell's letters to Barlow, though diffident to an extreme, occasionally reveal vexatious feelings. Whether these result from importunities she may have received from Derleth to remove Barlow as literary executor is hard to say. But there is an alternative explanation for her growing disillusionment with Barlow. After he left Providence, says de Camp, "he answered letters vaguely, late, or not at all." (19)

When Barlow did write, the effect was obstructive. For example, he attempted to discourage Derleth from including "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" in The Outsider and Others, saying that Lovecraft had told him he was dissatisfied with it. Barlow even attempted to enlist Mrs. Gamwell's aid, but she agreed with Derleth, who argued that a writer is not always the best judge of his own work. (20) Barlow was within his rights in taking this stand, yet seemed unwilling to act in more than a purely advisory capacity. But by declining to oppose the combined Derleth-Gamwell "majority" he seriously weakened the authority of his literary executorship.

A year later more of Mrs. Gamwell's doubts bubbled to the surface: "I am so glad you have told me how affairs stand concerning my Howard's work and your great work with the mss. You see I know nothing except that Derleth was doing so much and I have hesitated to ask either of you for I feared mixing things up." (21)

Whatever her suspicions and dissatisfactions were, Mrs. Gamwell eventually confided them to the family lawyer, who on October 7, 1938 sent the following letter to Barlow at his Kansas City address:

> Dear Sir:
>
> I as Executor of the Will of Howard P. Lovecraft, have recently been informed of the Agreement between you and Mrs. Annie E. P. Gamwell, dated March 26, 1937, relative to the Manuscripts of Mr. Lovecraft and the publication, typed or in longhand, of the same, and to pay her all receipts from such publications less a 3 per cent commission to you.
>
> Also, I am informed that she permitted you to take Mr. Lovecraft's Manuscripts, file of Weird Tales and weird magazines, and the books of Dunsany, Clark Ashton Smith, Sam Love-

man, and Frank Belknap Long Jr. and many other books and magazines. This was done without my knowledge or consent as his Executor. I am informed that said Manuscripts, Weird Tales and and weird magazines and said authors' books are of substantial value; and Mrs. Gamwell's financial affairs are so poor that she will need all that can be derived from his Estate.

Mrs. Gamwell has informed me that she was rushed by you the day after the funeral and when she was in no proper condition to act to do what she did. Mr. Lovecraft's Estate is so small and in such a state that even his funeral expenses have not been paid in full. She and I are willing that you have the other books and magazines of a general and not a weird nature as they do not have substantial money value.

I understand that you have passed on some of the manuscripts to Messrs. August Derleth and Donald Wandrei with a view that they edit the same and secure their publication in some magazine or magazines which they are willing to do without charge so that Mrs. Gamwell receive the entire sums obtained, without any commission deduction. This would be beneficial to her, and as you are a friend of hers, I infer that you will be disposed to do what will be for her benefit. Mrs. Gamwell recently received from Claire Beck $10 for a published Commonplace small pamphlet of an amateur nature, and this is the only amount received from you by her after the year and a half that has lapsed since you got the manuscripts.

I understand that you are in Mexico or perhaps now in California, and not in a position to accomplish the publication of his writings, and further that you are a minor of the age of eighteen years, and so could not make a valid contract.

Therefore under all the circumstances I must request and demand that you return to me as Executor all said manuscripts, file of Weird Tales, weird magazines and said authers' books now in your possession or under your control, and keeping only such other books as of a general and not a weird nature.

I hear that you are or have been ill, but let me hear from you as soon as you are able to do so. If not at this time convenient for you to pay the cost of the return, I will pay the same. I am mailing a copy of this letter to Claire Beck at 27 P. O. Box, Lakeport, California.

Barlow's reply to Albert Baker's letter was dated October 12, 1938 and is as follows:

Dear Sir:

Your letter of October 7th has reached me here in carbon copy. I am recuperating from a long and dangerous illness, but will endeavor to answer it, beginning with a recapitulation of certain events. When Howard Lovecraft died, he left a manuscript memorandum (prepared in the autumn of 1936)---doubtless still in the possession of Mrs. Gamwell---regarding the disposition of his library and literary works which he did not consider of sufficient importance to incorporate in the formal will. This specified "all my manuscripts to go to R. H. Barlow, my literary executive", and, further, "first choice of weird books and magazines to R. H. Barlow." I have a copy of this which Mrs. Gamwell wrote out for me, but wishing also to have her legal confirmation, had the contract of March 26, 1937 drawn up. Now as to matters covered by this contract:

(1.) Manuscripts (holograph): were involved only in the case of two or three weird fragments of a few pages each, written ca. 1922; and also in the case of non-weird productions done on commission as ghost-writing. Of the extant weird holograph Ms. from his pen, all but four had been given me during his lifetime, accompanied by letters of presentation. (These four are in the possession of Messrs. Samuel Loveman, Duane Rimel, and a party unknown to me.) I have deposited the majority of those I have in a public collection for preservation, but since they are personal gifts of a date previous to his death, they do not concern us here. The typescripts and carbon copies I took charge of in March 1937 are only of textual value, rather than bibliographic.

(2.) Books from his library: I selected two cartons of these with the permission of Mrs. Gamwell, and added them to my private library which is now temporarily in storage. You will recall it was his wish that I have these, as he said in life and recorded in his Instructions in Case of Decease. There was also a file of Weird Tales and a few issues of another magazine I had bound and given him...all of which returned to me under these sad circumstances. Other books which I had given to him I did not take, though Mrs. Gamwell offered me them; though I did take two small still-life paintings she gave to me. As recently as a month ago she authorized the sending of these magazines (previously stored for me in her home) to me; an operation performed by Claire Beck.

(3.) My position as agent for the Ms.: In March of 1937 there appeared no other person to act in this capacity. With Mr. Derleth's later offer to do so I have cooperated fully, at no time invoking the contract despite labour and expense which I have incidentally contributed. This has been explained to Mrs. Gamwell. I would not, however, as you assume, be unable to accomplish publication myself if such action were desirable. It is merely that I stand aside voluntarily in favour of Mr. Derleth's superior opportunities. As for delay in publication, if Mr. Derleth has accomplished the sale of a collection or anything aside from pulp publication, he has not troubled to inform me. The Commonplace Book was taken from a manuscript given me in 1934, as you may observe from the text, and the payment sent her was less obligatory than a token of sincerity.

I am sorry that Mrs. Gamwell believes---as you state---that I "rushed her" in fulfilling Howard's instructions. It had been my hope to reach Providence before his death---when I could not, I went to give what small aid I could. As she will tell you, I knew his literary affairs better than anyone else, and it is not without significance that he wished me, and not Mr. Derleth, or Mr. Wandrei, or some other person, to take care of them.

A copy of this letter will reach Mrs. Gamwell---I am moved by the keenest desire to cooperate with her; but in view of the above-mentioned circumstances, not, perhaps, fully known to you, cannot feel obliged to comply with your demands. It is immeasurably depressing to be confronted with such an attitude over the gifts and will of my dead friends.

Baker replied promptly as follows on October 19, 1938:

> Dear Sir:
>
> Your letter of the 12inst. received and contents noted, particularly information as to some matters not previously known to me and especially your statement under 3 of your letter....

Here Baker quotes the first two sentences from this part of Barlow's letter.

> Understanding that you have and will cooperate with Mr. Derleth, irrespective of Mrs. Gamwell's agreement with you, Mr. Derleth as I understand not asking for any commission on any publication of the Lovecraft Ms., I do not see why I as Executor am further interested, as my desire was to avoid possible conflict between two or more persons exercising literary executorship and to preserve any substantial rights of the Estate for the benefit of Mrs. Gamwell. All appears to be very friendly to Mrs. Gamwell, and she merits and needs help of good friends.
>
> Relying on your cooperation with August Derleth, and with Donald Wandrei to any extent the latter can aid Derleth, and giving them a free hand in editing and securing the publication of the Howard S. Lovecraft writings without regard to your agreement with Mrs. Gamwell, I withdraw my demand as his Executor contained in my letter to you of October 7th.
>
> I think that there has been some misunderstanding which could have been avoided if you and I had been so situated that we could have had a personal interview and discussed the matter.

A number of interesting things become clarified by this exchange of letters. Besides faulting Barlow for carting off sundry personal possessions of the deceased, Baker raised the issue (quite possibly as a bluff) that Barlow's minority impeded him from making a valid contract.

Barlow's defense for removing the possessions was to cite Lovecraft's "Instructions..."; the issue of his minority he ignored. Barlow may well have known that a minor is not forbidden by law from entering into contractual arrangements, and that although such a contract is binding on both parties, only the minor has the option to break it with legal impunity. (22) His designating as merely "a token of sincerity" the ten dollars sent Mrs. Gamwell after publication of the Commonplace Book may indicate that the latter was but marginally---if at all---profitable. Baker's second letter refers to matters he had "not previously known." One wonders if he had actually seen the "Instructions..." document. In any event, his handling of the issues raised by Mrs. Gamwell was hardly satisfactory to her, in the light of her subsequent letters. When Barlow sent her his correspondence with Baker, she responded: "I know that legally I was too hasty ... and let you have the items Howard suggested, not waiting for legal authority.... I must go see Mr. Baker---I want to know what he thinks of your letter." (23) And a second month later she wrote Barlow: "I simply must not worry any more over the books and magazines I let you have---I must have peace! Legally I had no right to give anything away and some have been very jealously looking into my rights---but I am not able to stand any more nervous strain." (24) This leads us to the conviction that not all of the agitation this lady felt was due to any peccadillos of Barlow, for the "some" can refer only to other interested parties.

By September, 1938, then, it is apparent that Lovecraft's literary executor---de facto---changed from Barlow alone to a combination of Barlow and Derleth.

Between then and January, 1941---the exact date is unknown---this strange dual entity evolved into an even more unprecedented quartet consisting of Derleth,

Wandrei, Barlow, and the "estate of Lovecraft" that "worked in concert." After Mrs. Gamwell died in 1941, Derleth stated that her estate filled the vacancy formerly occupied by the Lovecraft estate. (25) In the sparse statements about this quadripartite body's policy deliberations I have never seen either the Gamwell estate or its executor, Ralph Greenlaw, mentioned as actually participating in any way.

The next account of this composite group appeared in August, 1950, when it had inexplicably mutated into the triumvirate of Derleth, Wandrei and Barlow. Elimination of the Gamwell estate's representatives and heirs was never explained. We know of the mutation because of its reaction to a request of James W. Thomas.

Thomas was a student at Brown University when he selected Lovecraft as the subject for his Master's thesis. He wrote Barlow for permission to view the Lovecraft letters and manuscripts in the John Hay Library. (26) When the thesis was finished, he offered to send Barlow a copy to read, but never received any answer. (27) This, as we have seen, was not uncharacteristic of Barlow. (19)

Thomas' faculty advisor liked the thesis well enough to recommend its publication. Thomas felt that since Derleth and/or Arkham House apparently owned the Lovecraft literary rights, he would have to approach Derleth for permission, and...well, Derleth had a reputation for being difficult, didn't he! (28)

Winfield Townley Scott, a poet and journalist on the staff of the Providence Journal, was approached as a middleman to smooth the way. Scott had written a number of essays on Lovecraft and his works, and had contributed to the Arkham House book Marginalia. Thereafter, Thomas sent a copy of his thesis to Derleth shortly after mid-June, 1950. (28)

Soon after receiving the thesis, Derleth read it and wrote Thomas that he was against publication because it was biased in favor of Sonia Greene, and also because it did not present the whole man. But he would refer it to Barlow and Wandrei, and abide by the result of a three-way vote. When Thomas informed Scott of Derleth's reaction, Scott replied candidly, "Of course the reasonable response to August Derleth is balls. If only, unfortunately, it were not he who has you by them." (29)

Before any vote could take place, Thomas elected to refute Derleth's criticism. He wrote him that his thesis made no pretense of presenting the whole man. He denied any bias in favor of Sonia Greene. If the thesis supported Sonia's account of their married life, the evidence was drawn from Lovecraft's own letters, not from any fabrications of Thomas.

Derleth now wrote Barlow that his personal decision was negative, but that he would be guided by Barlow's reaction. (This careful approach, and its appeal to Barlow's vanity, contrasts sharply with his handling of the earlier dispute over reprinting "The Gates of the Silver Key.") He also told Barlow that Thomas had seen only the letters Lovecraft had written his aunts; that Thomas' portrayal of Lovecraft paralleled Sonia Greene's---in Thomas' words as "sexless, sapless, supine, selfish, a sissy, a Mama's boy"; that Thomas could not portray the whole man, which only the letters to others would disclose; and that Thomas had diligently chosen passages to show Lovecraft's racial prejudices. (28)

Thomas was never informed on the result of the vote. In fact, he doubted one ever took place until I assured him that a letter on the subject (but not the vote's result) exists in the microfilmed record of Barlow's papers.

The result of all this is that Thomas' thesis has never been published in its entirety. An abridged version has appeared (30), which Thomas agrees is "horribly butchered." Neither have the letters quoted in the thesis been included in Lovecraft's Selected Letters---or, if they have been, the passages supporting Thomas and offensive to Derleth have been expunged.

Thomas goes on to say, "Encouraged I suppose by the fact that Derleth had permitted publication of the bowdlerized version, I wrote him again about per-

mission to bring it out intact as a book.... He replied with an offer to read the ms. once more. Sending Eisner a full ms. for Fresco had left me with only one copy of my own, so I wrote Steve, suggesting that he send the Fresco copy on to Derleth. I never heard further from either Derleth or Eisner." (31)

The reason for presenting the Thomas incident in such detail is to show the tremendous influence that Derleth had over control of Lovecraft material.

Derleth later stated that the "obligation that Barlow had as literary executor of the HPL work came to Arkham House after Barlow's death in 1951." (32) His use of the word "obligation" is interesting, for no legal succession could in any way be based on any of Lovecraft's "Instructions..." The contract between Barlow and Gamwell might be transferred or assigned to another person, since it involves money and property. (33) But would not the death of both parties effectively terminate it?

There are other possibilities. Barlow could have conferred this "obligation" (empty as I believe it is) by some written instrument. He could, for instance, bequeathe it in his will. But did he leave a will? His brother, Wayne Barlow, did not know. On the other hand, the intestate distribution of Barlow's estate proves that either no will existed or none was found. (34) And none of this explains Derleth's claim that Arkham House became Lovecraft's literary executor.

Not only is this succession shrouded in mystery, but also the non-performance of certain duties associated with the office. I sought in vain for copyright renewals of some twenty Lovecraft stories published in Weird Tales. Later I hired the Copyright Office to certify if one them, "the Rats in the Walls," had ever had its copyright renewed. They reported that it had not been. As Barlow died in the first year that copyright renewals should have begun, he can be absolved of any blame. That must fall on August Derleth as director of Arkham House, if indeed he/it became literary executor.

The Lovecraft family lawyer, Albert Baker, is on record in 1938 as recognizing the existence of a literary executor---not so much because of the "Instructions..." document (which clearly conferred the office on Barlow) as the controversy which had arisen between him and Derleth. It is here that obscuration first begins, and as a layman I fault Baker greatly for not resolving this conflict in definitive terms. As it is, we are left with ambiguity: did he accept the precatory "Instructions..." or simply decide, not wishing to spend more time on the case, to recognize what was occurring and allow it to continue? Baker's second letter to Barlow (page 39) nowhere states just whom he considers Lovecraft's literary executor to be, and one tends to sympathize with Mrs. Gamwell, who remained puzzled and irritated after the exchange of letters. The main thing determined was that Barlow voluntarily was allowing Derleth to act for the literary portion of the estate, and this had already been operationally decided before Baker intervened.

The second obscuring factor is Barlow's continued passivity. From what evidence we have, I should judge that he gradually lost interest in Lovecraft as his attention centered on his own developing career from the early 1940's on.(35) Perhaps he also lacked the will to do more.

Whatever his faults, Derleth was vitally interested in Lovecraft. He has been characterized as a "doer," an active, hard-working person not likely to allow trivial niceties to stand in the way of an important goal. (36) Why, then, would he neglect to renew the Lovecraft copyrights? The answer is, he could not. According to copyright law, only certain persons may renew copyright: the author, his widow, his children, or the executor of his will (and, by extension, the literary executor if appointed and recognized by the executor of the will). (37) To renew, Derleth would have had to show the Register of Copyrights unequivocal evidence that he or Arkham House had become Lovecraft's literary executor. And this, without a relinquishing statement from Barlow, he could not do.

We have no knowledge of any attempt that Albert Baker---if he was still living---may have made to renew these copyrights; as executor of Lovecraft's will, he was eligible to do so. And although divorced from Lovecraft, his widow may also have been eligible, but here again we have no evidence that she ever tried. One is entitled to doubt if Derleth would have enlisted the help of either; this would not only have reduced his control, but invited legal complications as well. Finally, Derleth himself died in 1971.

Who is Lovecraft's literary executor at present? Unless some interested party is willing to undertake a complicated, time-consuming and expensive litigation to establish himself, it is this layman's opinion there is none. In any event, virtually all of the important Lovecraft works, save his letters, are now in the public domain. There is little left to fight about. (38)

NOTES

(1) H. P. Lovecraft, Marginalia (1944), p. 348.
(2) L. Sprague de Camp, Lovecraft: a Biography (1975), p. 430
(3) Samuel Kling, Your Will and What to Do About It (1971), p. 141.
(4) Jones' Legal Forms, vol. 3 (1962), p. 1027.
(5) H. P. Lovecraft, "Instructions in Case of Decease," p. 2: a facsimile, purportedly in Mrs. Gamwell's hand (in the John Hay Library).
(6) George Smisor: contract between Robert Barlow and Mrs. Gamwell, signed March 26, 1937. This was found among the Barlow papers microfilmed by Smisor after Barlow's death. This and other Barlow papers were supplied to me courtesy of Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., who is not responsible for opinions expressed herein.
(7) De Camp, ibid., p.421.
(8) Smisor: letter, Baker to Barlow, Oct. 7, 1938.
(9) De Camp, ibid., pp. 420 and 430; Willis Conover, Lovecraft at Last (1975), p. 226.
(10) De Camp, ibid., p. 430.
(11) Robert A. Farmer, How to Avoid Problems with Your Will (1938), pp. 58-60.
(12) Smisor: letter, Barlow to Baker, October 12, 1938.
(13) Smisor: letter, Baker to Barlow, October 7, 1938.
(14) Robert A. Lowndes, Le Vombiteur (II, 8), April 1, 1939.
(15) Smisor: letter, Barlow to Beck, July 2, 1938.
(16) Redd Boggs, "Leaves: a Botanical Rarity," Fantasy Commentator (III, 1), Winter 1948-49, pp. 14-19.
(17) Golden Atom, Winter 1943: "Notes for 'The Round Tower'," review of Ebony and Crystal, "Phaeton"; March 1940: "Astrophobus"; Dec. 1940: "Ad Criticos."
(18) The Acolyte, Fall 1942: excerpts from letters; Spring 1943: "Poetry and the Artistic Ideal"; Summer 1943: "Continuity", "Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction"; Fall 1943: "the Beast in the Cave"; Spring 1944: a rejected draft of "The Shadow Over Innsmouth."
(19) De Camp, ibid., p. 430.
(20) Smisor: letter, Gamwell to Barlow, July 27, 1937.
(21) Smisor: letter, Gamwell to Barlow, July 8, 1938.
(22) Robert A. Farmer, What You Should Know About Contracts (1969), p. 18.
(23) Smisor: letter, Gamwell to Barlow, Nov. 13, 1938.
(24) Smisor: letter, Gamwell to Barlow, Dec. 30, 1938.
(25) August Derleth, letter in "Open House," Fantasy Commentator (II, 4), Fall 1947, p. 146.
(26) Smisor: letter, Thomas to Barlow, Nov. 18, 1949.
(27) Smisor: letter, Thomas to Barlow, March 24, 1950.
(28) Letter, Thomas to Wetzel, Nov. 18, 1972.
(29) Letter, Scott to Thomas, Sept. 12, 1950.

(30) Fresco, Fall 1958
(31) Letter, Thomas to Wetzel, Nov. 18, 1972.
(32) Derleth, Thirty Years of Arkham House (1970), p. 3.
(33) Amuel Kling, The Complete Guide to Everyday Law (1970), p. 113.
(34) Letter, E. Wayne Barlow to George T. Wetzel, Nov. 16, 1972.
(35) De Camp, ibid., pp. 431-432.
(36) A. L. Searles, personal communication.
(37) Stanley Rothenberg, Legal Protection of Literature, Art and Music (1960), pp. 126-127.
(38) These last two paragraphs have been appended by the editor. In slightly different form this article appeared originally in the privately distributed journal Continuity (III, 1), October, 1976, pp. 30-41. The author wishes to acknowledge helpful additions by Continuity's editor, Scott Connors.

---oOo---

Book Review

by LINCOLN VAN ROSE

THE FUTURIANS, by Damon Knight. New York: John Day, 1977. viii-205 pp. 21.5 cm. $10.95. Also available in the Science Fiction Book Club edition, $4.50.

The focus of this book is the Futurian Society, founded by a group of New York City fans in the late 1930's. It was small, with fewer than two dozen members, though an outer circle of about as many more sympathizers and hangers-on, in and out of the area, found its aims agreeable. Knight deals primarily with the backgrounds, interpersonal relationships, accomplishments and life-styles of the group's core, chiefly those of Cyril Kornbluth, Robert Lowndes, John Michel, Frederick Pohl, Richard Wilson and Donald Wollheim.

The book is written as informal reminiscences, though Knight supplements his own recollections with those of other participants. These were tape-recorded, mostly in 1975, and are often quoted at length. All seem candid, and note is usually made of the few times when they are contradictory. They are rich in both trivial and lurid personal detail.

Yet several charter members of the Futurians, and most of its outer circle, remain shadowy figures throughout. Knight doesn't say whether he has simply not bothered to contact these people, or whether they could not be reached. While interesting and important, therefore, The Futurians is a less complete historical document than one might hope to see. But it is still very worthwhile indeed, and contains journalistic revelations that, if those cited were less mellow, certainly would invite litigation.

The Futurians were a group of individualistic, Leftist Bohemians who dominated much of the Northeastern fan scene from early 1937 to early 1939, lasting until broken by a schism in 1945. Though there were differences and disagreements among them---James Blish, for example, was pro-Nazi, and Wollheim so square he didn't drink, smoke, swear or enjoy off-color stories---they were always mutually supportive, appearing much more unified than they really were.

Several published amateur journals, and two (Wollheim and Michel) founded the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, an organization still in existence. Pohl

and Lowndes became well known as able editors. Most were also talented writers: names such as Asimov, Kornbluth and Merril are familiar to readers today, and a few of their efforts, such as "The Little Black Bag" and "Only a Mother" rate among the field's classics.

What of their beginnings? Many Futurians, as the author points out in the book's tantalizingly brief analytical chapter, were isolated from their contemporaries in youth. No less than seven lost a parent through death or divorce; at least five were only children; there were catastrophic illnesses in many families; and almost all were (as sociologists today would say) economically disadvantaged. These things fostered introversion, avid reading, a fondness for escape literature, and strong empathizing with imaginative replacements for the world about them. "Most of the Futurian writers perceived themselves as underdogs," says Knight, "and had strong feelings of resentment toward those they believed were keeping them down...."

Doubtless this, plus the lingering effects of the depression, interested many of them in Communism, though some (David Kyle and Wilson, for instance) never took it seriously. Their individualism, however, made it necessary to invent a nominally disinfected substitute for it, Michelism. The fact that Michelism was very little different from Communism is beside the mark; what is important is that it was set apart by differences the Futurians themselves invented. Their mock religion, Ghughuism, probably arose similarly from a combination of this same individualism and normal youthful iconoclasm.

Wollheim was leader of the Futurians and dominated the group. This was due not only to his own capabilities, self-confidence and age (he was the oldest) but to two other factors Knight might have emphasized more: he had money (his father was a successful urologist) and time (he was unemployed). Finally, he had acquaintances who were in psychological need of being led.

Not surprisingly, enemies and causes abounded. First there was Hugo Gernsback, who preferred to print stories in his magazines without paying for them. After Gernsback had been vanquished there was Michelism. Most durable of all was the feud with William Sykora and his supporters, which trailed several years through dissolved and broken fan organizations and two science-fiction conventions.

We are told a little about Sykora, but not enough. This is not Knight's fault; Sykora declined to be interviewed. It is certainly clear, however, why he and Wollheim clashed. Sykora also had much leadership potential and capability; he had money (from a regular job), age (he was a year older), followers, and a cause. But he had less free time than Wollheim, and in the long run showed less staying power and stability. (Indeed, he might well have departed from the scene earlier but for buttressing by Sam Moskowitz, a fan alienated earlier by Wollheim, who proved a steadier and more formidable opponent.) In the microcosm of fandom there just wasn't room for two opposing personalities as strong as theirs. Ostensibly, their differences were merely doctrinal. Actually there was much more to it, but Futurians are still misinterpreting the matter; consider Knight's quotation of Wollheim here:

> "...I didn't know it at the time, none of us knew---what the hell, we were kids---but it's a classic paranoid thing, this feeling that 'I have a mission, and I can't quite explain it to you common people, but you must have faith in me and follow me.' And, you know, it sounded good. Sykora believed that science-fiction was going to lead somehow or other to some great I-don't-know-what. And he had a good precedent for it, because Gernsback was writing the same kind of thing ---how science would save the world, and so on...."

But think about it---<u>were</u> there really any basic differences? Was Sykora's "mighty

mission" to sell science any more paranoid than that of the Futurians' "to educate fandom politically"? And what's this "we were kids" stuff? Wollheim was twenty-three, Sykora twenty-four! They may have thought and acted like pubescents, but chronologically they certainly weren't.

Let us follow this train of thought further: Psychologists tell us that one reason bright people frequently do not have rewarding careers is that their very brightness conspires against success. When young, they can satisfy scholastic demands with such ease that they never learn good study habits. If they go on to college they suddenly encounter for the first time competition from people even brighter or more willing to work than they: those who cannot adjust perform poorly or drop out. Forced into the commercial world, this fault may lock them up for life in dead-end jobs.

Consider the Futurians, who by common agreement were supposed to be very bright indeed. Though some skipped grades, Knight tells us that "many" never even finished high school. And of those attending college, apparently only Asimov was ever graduated. Wollheim, for example, quit in less than two years; Lowndes lasted only one semester. Nor were they alone: Sykora was also a college dropout.

The standard answer to this is that times were hard, and it was better to take a job. But this is fallacious rationalizing. In the first place, Wilson was the only core male Futurian who worked regularly. (I don't mean to be chauvenistic here, but Knight is often vague about the activities of the women in the group.) And secondly, most Futurians, as New York City residents, were eligible to attend the city college system tuition free. Only one ever did.

It seems reasonable to conclude either that most Futurians were socially maladjusted for their ages, or else that they weren't that talented after all. Knight rejects the latter conclusion, and I agree with him. They just took longer than most people to grow up. And this is in fact admitted: Virginia Kidd states candidly, "Almost everybody was callow, in one way or another." "Callow, or extremely unattractive, or both," adds Judith Merril. Knight himself called them "a gallery of grotesques."

Unwillingness or inability to cope with adulthood often leads to tragedy, and I don't know which is more depressing, the way some Futurians wasted precious talent over the years, or the traumatic deaths of five of them, three, according to the details Knight presents, possible suicides.

Michel provides the most notorious example. He literally frittered away much of his life in continual acts of self destruction. From the evidence, I should say he was as good a writer as Asimov, maybe a better poet than Lowndes. Yet he was seldom motivated to realize his potential. Knight describes the restless deterioration of Michel's later years in harrowing detail and concludes---rightly, I think---"that he really deeply felt certain rather shallow things. And maybe that was the tragedy of Michel, that all his depth was in shallow places." Ironically, his death came also in a shallow place: he was found drowned in a frozen stream in no more than a foot and a half of water.

The end for Cyril Kornbluth, probably the most talented of all the Futurians, hurt even more because everyone could see it coming. A victim of malignant hypertension, he simply refused to follow a regimen of tranquillizers and abstain from salt, tobacco and alcohol because "he didn't want to live that way. So he went back to all his bad habits, and like the doctor said, he died within a year." He was only thirty-four and had just been offered the job of editing The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. How right A. C. Benson was when he remarked, "most people die of being themselves"!

After all the sturm und drang, how many eventually came to terms with their problems? Certainly some, like Michel, never did. (And I doubt if Sykora ever has.) Lowndes seems close. For others, it is harder to say. But I don't

think it is any coincidence that the most successful Futurians of all were those who spent the least time in this unhealthy, ingrown atmosphere, or who accepted the articles of faith there only marginally. Asimov, Knight, Kornbluth, Pohl and Wilson fit this category. The war helped, too---essential industry and the draft pulled many out of this perpetual cocoon.

What about Wollheim? Certainly he has been successful. For him it was probably easier; he was always more of a realist. The efforts of the Futurians to politicize fandom were a woeful failure, and with the fading away of their Goldstein, Will Sykora, there were suddenly no more battles left to fight. It was everybody for himself again, as it usually is in life. Besides, Wollheim had always kept his troops at arm's length. He was the least Bohemian of the lot. He lived at his own house, never continuously at any of the Futurian apartments. He liked to roister about with the others, but he liked the comforts and amenities of conventional security better. His friends might divorce and sleep around, but he made a stable marriage and still enjoys it. He "presented a good image to the public", and never hesitated to work within the system. He liked to blast the bourgoisie, and ended by becoming one of them. When you can't lick 'em, join 'em.

Knight's book does not cover events in chronological order, and I recommend that buyers reread some of Moskowitz's Immortal Storm (say from chapter twenty on) before tackling The Futurians unless their memories for fan history are longer than mine. With that background, things fall into place much more easily. You can also enjoy comparing two "opposing" views of the same events. I am told that when The Immortal Storm appeared some criticized it as biased, but on reading the two books consecutively, I find that Knight is far harder on his cohorts than Moskowitz ever was. I wonder what the reaction then would have been if Moskowitz had written that Wollheim "loved combat", had "an instinct for intrigue", and a "need for mastery"! Several anti-Futurian gibes of the time are also confirmed. Take "Wollheim's stooges", for instance. We read here that many Futurians did indeed follow his wishes obediently. Probably the father image played a more important part in his leadership than many people realized. But surely the blame is not all his: it takes two to tango. And it was Pohl and Kornbluth, not Wollheim, who wrote that novel of manipulation, The Space Merchants.

I found only three errors in the book, all minor: First, the size of the earliest Amazing Stories is actually slightly smaller than this piece of paper (page 2). Second, whatever anybody may have said at the time, Kornbluth's malignant hypertension simply could not have originated in the way Knight describes (page 156): that is as near medical impossibility as you can get. And finally, Gernsback was actually about six feet tall, which is by no means "short and slight" (page 2); perhaps, psychologically, that is the way the Futurians wanted to see him. The decorations and chapter-headings can also be faulted; these are in Art Deco style, reminiscent of the period a decade earlier than that being depicted. But none of these trivial matters should deter anyone from buying this book; it is one of the most entertaining and valuable additions to fan history we have seen in a long, long time.

Knight merely recites what he has found, and seldom moralizes. If I have made the Futurians seem a fractious and unhappy group, sulking in their tenets, it is because that is how they seem to me. If the book proves anything, it is that science-fiction is not a place where one may rationally hope to spend his entire life and energy. As a fan, for a hobby, yes. As a part-time writer or editor, yes. But full-time there, if you want to live well and intelligently, no. Just as anyone may aspire to be president, so at some point do most people eventually give up the idea. Here lies the Futurians' greatest failure; and their greatest interest to the reader lies in seeing how long it took them to realize it, and now close some of them came to beating the odds.

New Fungi from Yuggoth

by LEE BECKER

Unity

When he came back to town, the older folk
  All said that John had just his father's size
And face and mien, but their sons would joke
  About how slow he was to recognize
His friends, and how so much of their old days
  He'd clean forgot in ten years he was gone.
Too bad his pa was dead---their eyes would glaze---
  He'd disappeared the day that John had gone.

If they'd asked me, I could have told them how
  John's grandpa disappeared the same way, too,
And looked the twin of his own son, I trow.
  Throwbacks, coincidences aren't new,
But this I know, when looking at the son:
Grandfather, father, John are not three men, but one.

The House

Over the ridge the April wind blows bold
  And green is softening edge of fallow field;
The buds on farmyard apple trees now yield
  To calendar and sun's new warming gold.
But in that ruined house the air stays cold
  With a darkness time and season never healed,
As though a bit of winter had been sealed
  In a cocoon no Spring can e'er unfold.

Why is this place to all so long accurst?
  Why always shunned by birds and beasts and men?
Are ghosts here, by some ancient trauma nursed,
  Or something further yet beyond our ken?
Hardest to fathom of all are haunted lies
Where none knows what there lurks to exorcise.

The Stone

When he was plowing in the far North tract
  Seth cursed the harsh New England soil again
As the plow blade hit a treacherous stone and cracked.
  The stone was wide and flat, and Seth vowed then
To dig it up; 'twas just the one, he said,
  To make the new barn step they needed sore.
The horses dragged it out, and Seth's sons Jed
  And Zeb wedged it in place below the door.

That was the year that all the cows went dry;
  The crops were poor, the horse threw Jed and broke
His leg, the pigs caught fever and would die.
  No one blamed the new stone step, though folk
Wondered at the symbols on it rains had cleared
And at that strange carved creature's face that leered.

Companion

In childhood afternoons I used to sit
  Just on the pasture's edge beside the oak;
I held my arms out toward the trunk, a bit
  Higher than my closed eyes, and spoke
The words that I had dreamed and memorized.
  I turned around, and he was always there.
I'd never be alone, I realized;
  A lost father, then, seemed somewhat less unfair.

That was long ago. Today, once more in need,
  I stand beside the oak with arms aloft,
Eyes shut, to call anew the magic creed,
  To feel his touch again, assuring, soft---
Does he not know the loneliness of men
Becomes with age but that of boys again?

The Well

They covered the well when he was just a tot
  Said my old neighbor; after the time the hired
Girl took fright at something there---and not
  At night (when quick imagination's fired)
But June daylight, the sun high overhead.
  He looked around. "A day like this, in fact."
I asked him what she saw. "She never said.
  Came back wide-eyed, went to her room and packed."

He paused. "She wasn't the only one. You know,
  If I were you, I'd leave that well alone."
I smiled and pushed the loosened capstone, slow,
  Aside the rim, and carefully went prone.
Blue sky shone back to me from the water-line,
In it a head---with a face that wasn't mine.