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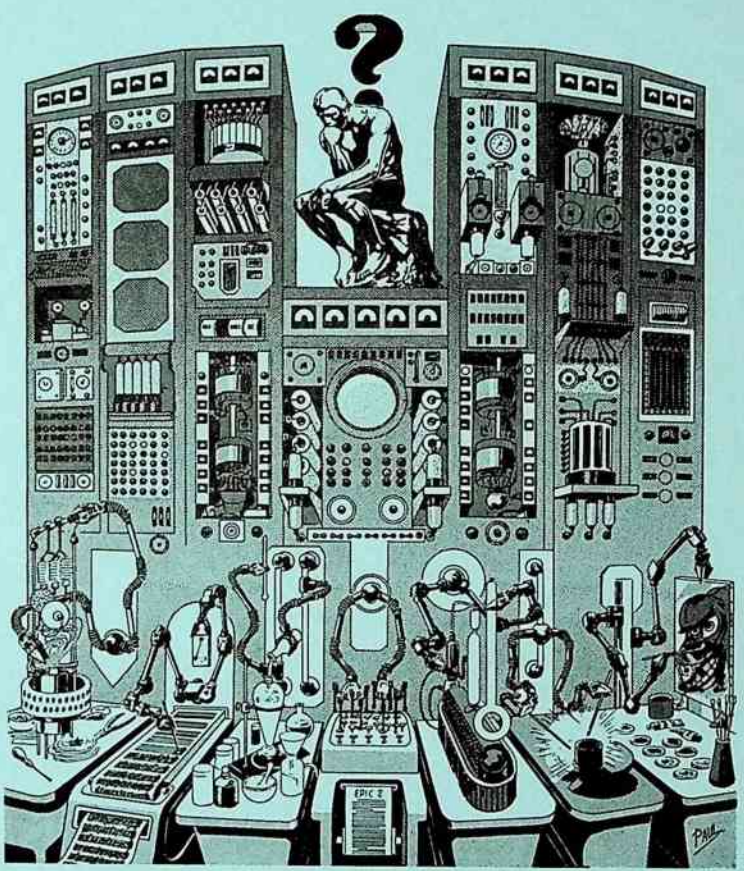

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EDITOR and PUBLISHER

A. Langley Searles
48 Highland Circle
Bronxville, N. Y. 10708-5909

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Lee Becker, T. G. Cockcroft,
Sam Moskowitz,
Lincoln Van Rose

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The Age of Wonder

Eric Leif Davin

I

GERNSBACK, *WONDER STORIES*, AND DAVID LASSER, 1929-1933

Hugo Gernsback published the world's first science-fiction magazine. And the second. And the third. In doing so he launched an era, a pre-Campbellian Age of Wonder, the knowledge of which seems virtually forgotten.

For three years, starting in April, 1926, he had the world of magazine science-fiction to himself as editor and publisher of *Amazing Stories*. That first science-fiction magazine, however, was only one product of the Experimenter Publishing Company, Gernsback's New York-based publishing empire. Others included *Science and Invention*, *Radio News*, the presciently titled *Television*, and *Your Body*, an attractive health publication which competed successfully with Bernarr Macfadden's well known *Physical Culture*. Of these, *Your Body* would prove to be the catalyst for Gernsback's inaugurating *Science Wonder Stories* in June, 1929.

By early 1929, The Experimenter Publishing Company had mushroomed into a profitable million-dollar enterprise which apparently greatly disturbed rival publishing czar Bernarr Macfadden. As has been documented,[1*] *Amazing Stories* alone was selling 100,000 copies, with individual issues soaring to 200,000. The magazine's estimated gross annual income from sales and advertising was $185,000, with a net operating profit of $55,000.

And, in that pre-Depression era, Gernsback and his staff were paid well. Hugo himself got a weekly salary of $1045 (which he sometimes didn't bother to collect); his brother Sydney, the company's treasurer, received $750 a week; and T. O'Conor Sloane, *Amazing's* associate editor, who handled the actual editorial chores, was paid $225. Like virtually all other pulp publishers of that time, Gernsback usually paid authors only half a cent a word, and on publication. (He continued this practice with all his succeeding magazines.) In the 1920's, when he was flush, this policy created few complaints. Authors did eventually get paid——and besides, there was nowhere else to go.

Later the science-fiction pulps, and Gernsback in particular, earned a reputation for under- or non-payment of authors. Horace Gold, a veteran of the era, once described payment rates as "microscopic fractions of a cent per word, payable upon lawsuit."[2] Indeed, Gernsback himself came to be seen as the primary culprit responsible for this system, a reputation which yetlingers.

Donald A. Wollheim recalls that he sold his first story, "The Man from Ariel," to Gernsback's *Wonder Stories* in 1934. He was owed ten dollars——which never came. Wollheim wrote several other *Wonder Stories* authors and discovered that they also had not been paid. He combined with them to hire a lawyer and sue for payment. Gernsback settled out of court with the group for $75, of which the lawyer got $10. In 1935 Wollheim submitted a second story, "The Space Lens," to *Wonder* under the pseudonym of Millard Verne Gordon. It was accepted and published, but never paid for.

*Notes for this article will be found on pages 46-47.

Jack Williamson had similar problems. In early 1932 Williamson received $50 as partial payment for "The Moon Era," which appeared in the February, 1932 issue of *Wonder Stories*. It took two years and the threat of a lawsuit to obtain the rest. For his part, Gernsback claimed financial distress resulting from the Depression. In reply to Williamson's importuning letters, Gernsback begged for patience. On January 21, 1933, for instance, he wrote Williamson that a "serious disaster" had befallen him when the Eastern Distributing Corporation, which distributed his magazines, went bankrupt, causing him to lose "a vast sum of money" and "raising the deuce with our finances."[3]

Yet it does appear that when Gernsback had money, those connected with his organization had——even his authors. At the time it went into bankruptcy in 1929, legal documents revealed that payment was outstanding for only four stories, all of them recently acquired.[1]

The bankruptcy itself makes an interesting story. According to Gernsback, Macfadden had offered to purchase his flourishing publications on three occasions, but he had spurned all the offers. In retaliation, claimed Gernsback, Macfadden conspired to force him into bankruptcy and acquire his company through third parties. On February 20, 1929 three creditors, none of whom were owed more than $2100, simultaneously sued Gernsback for payment. According to New York law at the time, such simultaneous action could automatically force bankruptcy proceedings to be initiated. Eventually Gernsback's publishing empire and his radio station were sold; his creditors, he said, received $1.08 for every dollar they were owed.[4] The April, 1929 *Amazing Stories* was the last issue published under Gernsback's aegis.

He quickly struck back by founding the Stellar Publishing Corporation. This solicited orders for a new magazine, probably from *Amazing's* list of subscribers.[5] Over 8,000 orders flooded in, and within a month Gernsback's second publishing fiefdom was born.

In June, 1929 he produced the world's second science-fiction magazine, *Science Wonder Stories*. It had a "bedsheet" format (8½ by 11 inches), 96 pages, and sold for a quarter. The first issue initiated a serial entitled "The Reign of the Ray" by Fletcher Pratt and Irwin Lester (the latter name was another pseudonymn for the popular Fletcher Pratt). In that first issue's editorial, Gernsback coined the label "science-fiction" to describe the contents.

In July, 1929 he began the world's third science-fiction magazine, *Air Wonder Stories;* and in October——the month of the stock market crash——there appeared the first issue of *Science Wonder Quarterly* (which with its Summer, 1930 number became *Wonder Stories Quarterly*). The Age of Wonder was launched.

Gernsback had always agreed with Emerson that "Men love to wonder, and that is the seed of our science." Indeed it was through wonder, Gernsback felt, that his readers would be led to science. His policy had always emphasized the didactic aspects of science-fiction. His first editorial in the old *Amazing* had declared, "Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading, they are also always instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain——and they supply it in very palatable form." *Science Wonder Stories* was to be no different. All stories, trumpeted Gernsback, would be judged by an editorial board composed of "an array of authorities and educators."

He took with him into his new venture many loyal retainers, including his brother Sydney (who remained treasurer), Irving Manheimer (who became secretary) and Frank R. Paul, "the father of modern science-fiction illustration," an Austrian artist who had painted all of *Amazing's* covers and would paint all those for *Wonder Stories* as well.

But for managing editor Gernsback selected a newcomer to his team. At *Amazing* it had been his habit to set policies, write the editorials, and generally

have the last word——but leave most of the day-to-day work of running the magazine to his associate editor, 77-year-old T. O'Conor Sloane. This now became the task of 27-year-old David Lasser.

David Lasser was born in Baltimore on March 20, 1902, the son of Louis and Lena Lasser, Russian Jewish immigrants. To support his wife and five children his father operated a tailor shop. At the age of fourteen, after only half a year of attendance, Lasser dropped out of high school to work as a bank messenger. "We were a very poor family," he recalls, "and I thought I ought to help out."

When America entered World War I, one of his brothers was drafted and another, serving in the National Guard, was activated for overseas service. David wanted to get in as well, so he lied about his age and enlisted in February, 1918. He was shipped to France, gassed during the Argonne offensive a few months before the Armistice, and hospitalized for about five months. In February, 1919 Sergeant David Lasser was discharged——and was still only sixteen years old.

He then discovered that the government had a college scholarship fund for disabled veterans which not only paid tuition fees but also provided a modest living stipend. Despite never having finished high school, he talked his way into the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1920, and was graduated in 1924.

For the next five years Lasser worked at a series of what he called "dead-end jobs." First he was an engineer in Newark, then an insurance agent, and in 1927 he became a technical writer for the New York Edison Company. In 1929 he was fired by New York Edison for protesting the dismissal of several employees in an economy move. It was then that he applied to Gernsback for the managing editor's position and was hired.

During his first year with Stellar Publishing Lasser juggled the editorial donkey work of both *Air* and *Science Wonder* before they were combined into one magazine titled simply *Wonder Stories* in June, 1930. He also edited the quarterlies and the last three issues of *Amazing Detective Tales* (August to October, 1930). The latter, begun in January, 1930 as *Scientific Detective Monthly*, attracted neither science-fiction nor detective readers, and Lasser was unable to save it from becoming Gernsback's first science-fiction failure.

In March, 1930, meantime, Lasser gathered a group of his New York-area writers together and formed the American Interplanetary Society to educate the public about the feasibility and desirability of space travel. T. O'Conor Sloane had always laughed at the idea of space exploration, and in a 1929 editorial even declared that space travel could never be achieved. Lasser, on the other hand, was a true believer, and saw his affiliation with *Wonder* as a springboard for propagandizing the faith. The writers elected Lasser president, Fletcher Pratt librarian, Laurence Manning treasurer and *Wonder's* associate editor Charles P. Mason the secretary. In the June, 1930 *Wonder Stories* the society announced its existence and goals, and encouraged the formation of chapters throughout the country. Even Jack Williamson in far away New Mexico joined.

Meetings were held in the American Museum of Natural History, and met with immediate success. One of the society's biggest events was held on the night of January 27, 1931, when over 2,500 people heard an address by Robert Esnault-Pelterie, a French "astronaut," on the "unborn science of cosmic flight called astronautics," a word invented by the French novelist J. H. Rosny-Aîné. In addition, the society presented two free screenings of *The Girl in the Moon*, a film by German rocket scientist Dr. Hermann Oberth. A police captain and ten patrolmen augmented the museum's own guards to insure that the crowd did not destroy the museum in a much feared "riot."[6]

At a meeting of the society on April 3, 1931 Lasser called for "an international interplanetary commission to act as a central agency for all information on the development of rocket vehicles and to build the first ship for extra-

terrestrial navigation." But "before that dream can be realized," he explained, "there must be a long period of experimentation. First, the scientists must achieve construction of a meteorological rocket . . . then develop rocket planes for transoceanic service and gradually work out a type that will be capable of a trip far out into interplanetary space."[7]

At the meeting of October 22, 1931 Lasser forsaw "war by rocket." The rocket, he predicted, "will serve as a terrible engine of destruction in future conflicts." Future war "would change from battles of armies to duels between long-distance engines of destruction."[8]

Yet despite the society's efforts at realistic projection and seeming popular success, it also met with ridicule and resistance. Raymond Z. Gallun, an author and another true believer, recalls that ". . . in those early days, the whole subject of space travel, to most persons, was about as reasonable and productive as making mud pies."[9] Even as late as 1949 Dr. Isaac Asimov offered his resignation to the dean of the Boston University School of Medicine to spare that worthy institution the shame of association with a writer of space stories when he learned that his publishers had listed his university affiliation on the back cover of his first novel, *Pebble in the Sky*. (The dean refused it.)[15]

To further their proselytizing work, Lasser felt a book was needed to explain in accessible language the realistic potential of the rocket as a vehicle for space exploration. So in 1931 he wrote *The Conquest of Space*, the first book in English on astronautics. This was favorably received, the book reviewer of *The New York Times* commenting that ". . . the book cannot but capture the imagination of a reader interested in science. After the capture he will find that he has unconsciously absorbed many principles of elementary physics and thus considerabl added to his stock of useful knowledge."[10] This was exactly what Lasser wanted.

In 1932 a British edition was published, and captured the imagination of 17-year-old Arthur C. Clarke, transforming him forever into a fervent champion of "hard-core" science-fiction. "Although there was already considerable German and Russian literature on the subject," he remembers, "*The Conquest of Space* was the very first book in the English language to discuss the possibility of flight to the moon and planets and to describe the experiments and dreams (mostly the latter) of the early rocket pioneers. Only a few hundred copies of the British edition were sold, but chance brought one of these to a bookstore a few yards from my birthplace . . . and so I learned, for the first time, that space travel was not merely fiction. *One day it could really happen.*"[11]

Lasser was also aware of and concerned about other developments around him in Depression-era New York. The massive unemployment he saw everywhere moved him to join the Socialist Party. He voted for their presidential candidate Norman Thomas in both 1932 and 1936 before finally leaving the party in 1938.

In 1932 Lasser also flirted briefly with the Technocracy movement, which preached that engineers and scientists were the only people who could pull the country out of the Depression, and edited the only two issues that were published of its journal, *Technology Review*.

And, while editor of *Wonder Stories*, he formed another organization, the Lower West Side Unemployed League, and began leading it in demonstrations for jobs. It was this activity which led to Lasser's leaving Gernsback; the last issue of *Wonder* he edited was the one for October, 1933.

Throwing himself full-time into organizing the unemployed, Lasser became head of the Workers Alliance of America, a nation-wide agitational organization which became the major representative of the unemployed and of W.P.A. workers during the Depression. As such, he played a significant role in our labor history.

But his role in science-fiction history is just as significant. Coming after the founding of *Amazing Stories* and before the Campbellian "Golden Age," David Lasser and the *Wonder Stories* interregnum tend to be overlooked and neglected

by both fans and historians of science-fiction. Yet in many ways this "Age of Wonder" was extremely formative for the still evolving genre.

For those first years of the Depression, *Wonder Stories* was the dominant magazine in its field, well ahead of *Amazing* and *Astounding* (which began in January, 1930). Under Lasser's editorship, *Wonder* published the first stories of John Wyndham, Clifford D. Simak, Raymond Z. Gallun, Leslie F. Stone, Raymond A. Palmer, Lawrence Manning, Nathan Schachner (who later became secretary of the interplanetary society) and Gawain Edwards (the *nom de plume* of G. Edwards Pendray, who succeeded Lasser as the society's president). Other well known authors who appeared in the magazine regularly were Edmond Hamilton, Manly Wade Wellman, Clark Ashton Smith, Fletcher Pratt, Jack Williamson, John Taine, Stanton Coblentz and David H. Keller.

One indication of the magazine's popularity during the Lasser years came when Raymond Palmer (later the editor of *Amazing*), as chairman of the Jules Verne Prize Committee[12] awarded the first such prize (a precursor of the fan-voted "Hugo") to Edmond Hamilton's "The Island of Unreason," from the May, 1933 *Wonder Stories*, as the best story of the year. Another such indicator was the more than normal frenzy of fan correspondence in the magazine's letters department. Particularly vocal fans who communicated regularly included Bob Tucker, Forrest J. Ackerman, Raymond Palmer and Donald Wollheim. Because these letters included the addresses, the writers were able to contact each other readily; this, along with various promotions, encouraged fan activity to blossom as never before.

A typical promotion was the contest announced in the February, 1930 issue of *Air Wonder Stories*, which offered a hundred dollars in gold to the reader who came up with the best slogan to typify the magazine's contents. British fan John Wyndham won with the alliterative phrase "Future Flying Fiction."

Another such contest, with a top award of $500, was in the Spring, 1930 *Science Wonder Quarterly*: "What I Have Done to Spread Science-Fiction." Third place here went to New York fan Allen Glasser for founding a fan club called the Scienceers and publishing its newsletter, *The Planet*——the world's second science-fiction fanzine. Second place was taken by an Indiana printer named Conrad H. Ruppert, who suggested a week of nationally coordinated fan activities to be called "Science Fiction Week", an idea Gernsback particularly liked. And first place was won by Chicago fan Raymond Palmer for starting The Science Correspondence Club.

Under the stimulation of these promotions and contests fan clubs and fan magazines proliferated, and the shape of "First Fandom" began to emerge.

Wonder Stories also exercised a decided influence on the evolution of science-fiction itself during these years. Before *Astounding* appeared, Lasser was responsible for over half of all the magazine science-fiction being published. Even after this competitor's appearance and the merging of the two *Wonder* titles, he was still choosing a substantial fraction of it——a position which allowed him to shape the direction of the field immensely.

Of the stories then appearing in the SF pulps, Arthur C. Clarke recalls that "Of course the literary standards were usually abysmal——but the stories brimmed with ideas and amply evoked that sense of wonder that is, or should be, one of the goals of the best science-fiction.[11] But Lasser wasn't satisfied with merely evoking a sense of wonder. He also wanted to improve low literary standards and, just as importantly, inject an element of scientific realism into the wild and fantastic fiction then common.

Brian Aldiss has complained that "Gernsback was utterly without any literary understanding," and that all he wanted in stories he published was a diagram.[13] Lasser was equally concerned with lack of literacy and a willingness to accept diagramatically proficient but pseudo-scientific gibberish, stating:[14]

Our policy is aimed more at the realistic than at the fantas-

> tic in science fiction. We find that our readers have wearied a little of unbelievable monsters, unbelievable situations and feats of the imagination that never could become reality. We want imagination used, but we want the author to back it up with a convincing background, so that the reader will find that these things could be true.
>
> We are placing as much emphasis on plot as we are on science ideas, and we feel that if you take even scientific ideas that have been worked out a number of times and have an original plot, that is, an original set of characters and an original set of experiences that you carry them through, that good stories can be written.

Nor was Lasser content merely to state his policy. He also attempted to shape and mold the field by working closely with authors, suggesting ideas, commenting on drafts, and even collaborating, as he did with David H. Keller on "The Time Projector" (July, 1931 *Wonder Stories)*, a tale of a computer-generated prediction of World War II. This editorial stance is apparently at variance with the previous ones of Gernsback and Sloane, who simply either accepted or rejected submitted stories.[15] It may mark, then, the first editorial intervention in the creative process in the field, something for which Campbell later became famous.

Illustrative of this approach is Lasser's correspondence with Jack Williamson concerning his novelette "Red Slag of Mars" (Spring, 1932 *Wonder Stories Quarterly*). The plot originated from an "Interplanetary Plot Contast" the magazine had sponsored; readers were awarded prizes for the best plots, which were then to be worked into publishable stories by its stable of writers. Lasser sent one of the winning plots, contributed by Lawrence Schwartzman, to Williamson to see if he would be interested in wrestling it into shape.

> Admittedly this plot is very amateurish and would have to be revised considerably to make a worthwhile story. So long as you maintain some relationship with the original plot, you have perfect freedom to write your story as you please. What appealed to me in this plot was the idea of the lost race of Martians, and I think you could very well construct your story about that, even neglecting your other characters of the plot. You might, for instance, have the cloud that our author speaks of sweep over the solar system. When the cloud has passed on, the entire Martian race with which we had been in communication has vanished. The story could be the working out of mystery of the lost race.[16]

Williamson worked up a synopsis and sent it to Lasser, who replied:[17]

> I believe if the story is written well, it will be acceptable. I would caution you, however, to be sure to make the incident connected with the Martians convincing and plausible.
>
> For example, you speak of the earth-men deciphering the Martian inscriptions. Now, you must be sure and make it convincing how they did it; for they have absolutely no method of approach to a written language of another world.
>
> Similarly, in recounting the professor's contacting the Martians, you must be very careful to make that convincing too; for, here again, you have the impact of two races who have absolutely nothing in common.

Despite Lasser's attempts to nurture writers and improve its scientific and literary quality, *Wonder Stories* began to flounder financially as the Depression ground on. *Air Wonder* had always attracted fewer readers than its sister magazine and had been merged with it after eleven issues. In November, 1930 *Wonder* contracted to the smaller pulp dimensions, but returned to the larger bedsheet size twelve issues later. In 1932 it dropped its price from a quarter to fifteen cents, below even *Astounding's* twenty-cent price. However, this only exacerbated the magazine's cash-flow problem without significantly increasing its circulation. *Wonder Stories Quarterly* was discontinued after its January, 1933 number; a fifty cent cover price was just too steep for the kids of the Depression, and halving the price came too late to save it.

In the wake of the Eastern Distributing Company bankruptcy——a "misfortune," wrote Gernsback to Williamson, "which left us holding the bag"——*Wonder Stories* missed two issues in the middle of 1933. With the November, 1933 number it regained its monthly status, but only by dropping again to pulp size (this time permanently), by financially reorganizing Stellar Publishing as "Continental Publications, Inc." in December, and by firing Lasser after the October issue, a move he interpreted as at least partly dictated by economy.

To replace him, Gernsback brought in 17-year-old Charles Derwin Hornig ——the first and perhaps the most unexpected of the fan-into-editor transformations in science-fiction. Hornig was a New Jersey fan who had launched a fan magazine called *The Fantasy Fan* in September of that year. He sent a copy to the editor of every professional science-fiction magazine, and one reached Gernsback just as he was firing Lasser. So two months after starting his own fanzine Hornig found himself a professional editor.

He immediately announced a "New Story" policy (comparable to *Astounding's* "Thought Variant" one that began at the same time) which was intended to bury old stereotypes of pulp science-fiction forever. In the meantime, *Wonder's* promotion of fan activities became even more energetic, and would soon result in the formation of the Science Fiction League, fandom's first great club.

Nevertheless, the finances of the magazine continued to decline. Authors went unpaid (except upon lawsuit) throughout 1934 and 1935. In November, 1935 *Wonder* went bimonthly. In 1936 Hugo Gernsback abandoned the science-fiction field and sold the magazine to Standard Magazines, which renamed it *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and installed Leo Margulies as editor. Under this new masthead it survived for another two decades and even attained comfortable profitability for awhile after World War II before ceasing publication with its Winter, 1955 issue.

But the glow of that first Age of Wonder was never recaptured. For those in First Fandom who were present before what Asimov calls "the Coming of Campbell" ushered in the Golden Age, nothing replaced those early years of magic.

Captured by the garish primary colors of a Frank Paul cover, nine-year-old Isaac Asimov picked up his first science-fiction magazine in August, 1929. It was the third number of *Science Wonder Stories*. The first serial he "slavered joyously over" was Edmond Hamilton's "Cities in the Air" (*Air Wonder Stories*, November and December, 1929). The first short story to lodge itself firmly in memory was Hamilton's "The Man Who Evolved (*Wonder Stories*, April, 1931). "Those stories were dear to me because they aroused my enthusiasm, gave me the joy of life at a time and in a place and under conditions when not terribly many joys existed," recalls Asimov. "They helped shape me and even educate me, and I am filled with gratitude to those stories and to the men who wrote them."[18]

"That early stuff of the 1930's, though perhaps crude, conveyed a certain consistent feeling," agrees Raymond Z. Gallun. "In those days there were so many things that, though speculated about as future developments, were still generally considered impossible. So, to read of and imagine doing what can't be done,

seeing what never has been seen, touching the perhaps eternally too distant and strange, had an inevitable enchantment. Therein, I think, we reach the central keynote of the science-fiction of then . . . the word for it is *wonder.*"[19]

For Arthur C. Clarke, for Isaac Asimov, for Raymond Z. Gallun, David Lasser and many others, that long ago time——neglected though it is and today almost forgotten——will always remain the Age of Wonder.

II

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LASSER

T. O'Conor Sloane, Hugo Gernsback's first editor, passed away in 1940. Gernsback himself died in 1967. David Lasser is thus our most senior living science-fiction editor. It is through Lasser, then, that we can reach back furthest into the past——almost sixty years——to unveil many of the dim beginnings of magazine science-fiction during the pioneering Age of Wonder. The following interview was conducted on April 6, 1986. Mr. Lasser was 84 years old at the time.

Eric Davin: *Why did you want to go to M.I.T. in 1920?*

David Lasser: Well, I'd just been discharged from the army and I wanted to find something with a scientific background. Engineering was beginning to bloom then and I thought it would provide me with an interesting, useful and profitable career. M.I.T. had a new program called "Engineering Administration." It was a combination of engineering and business administration. It sounded interesting because I didn't want to be just a plain engineer.

But with only half a year of high school, how did you gain admission?

I said that I would go to night school and summer school to make up what I had lost. I had to use an awful lot of persuasion, but they took me on a trial basis. To illustrate what I was up against, half the students at M.I.T. had not only been graduated from high school, but also from prep schools like Exeter and Andover. So, here was I without even a high school education.

In our first class in geometry the instructor said, "Now, we'll review. Will someone tell us what a function is?" A function, you see, is the relationship between mathematical quantities. So bright David Lasser put up his hand and said, "A function is some kind of social event." The whole class roared with laughter. It shows how ignorant I was at the time.

But it worked out and I was graduated with my class in 1924.

What did you do after you were graduated?

Until I joined *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929 I had a couple of dead-end jobs. I just couldn't find myself. I had no particular background or influence or even direction. So when I saw an advertisement in *The New York Times* that Gernsback was looking for an editor I thought, "Well, I'll look into this and see what it is."

I had absolutely no experience in running a magazine, but when I met with Gernsback he was attracted by my M.I.T. degree. He and his brother were Germans, and were attracted by good education. The degree sold them, even though I was a complete novice as an editor. As far as science-fiction was concerned, I'd read H. G. Wells and a couple of others, but otherwise I was a complete novice in science-fiction as well. Anyway, Gernsback hired me at a salary of about $70 a week, and that was a lot of money in those days.[20]

Since you were such a complete novice, why did you think you were qualified to edit a science-fiction magazine?

I was willing to try new things. I find in life that one should try things and not be repelled by seeming obstacles. That's why I'd applied to M.I.T. If you apply yourself and you have intelligence and the will and imagination, you can usually work it out.

What kind of a person was Hugo Gernsback?

He was a very cultured and well educated man. I think he had some inventions to his credit. Both he and his brother, who was his partner, were fine people.

Now you always have problems, differences of opinion, in any work situation. For example, once I was on the job and began to look into the stories that were being submitted, I was dismayed by the low quality of many that Gernsback had already accepted. Gernsback had been accepting the stories himself until I was hired. I thought that some of these were pretty terrible from both a literary and a scientific standpoint. So I immediately had a long talk with Gernsback abou this. I told him if *Wonder Stories* was to amount to anything we had to do better.

At that time *Amazing Stories* was our big competitor. I said to Gernsback that if we wanted to compete with *Amazing* we had to lift the quality of the stories. We needed more imagination in the stories, we needed a sound scientific basis, and, since these were appealing mainly to young people, there should also be a socially useful theme to inspire the readers.

Gernsback agreed with this, so I was given a free hand. Therefore, I examined the stories that were submitted quite rigidly and rejected a great many of them, even stories from authors who had previously been accepted.

How much editorial control did you actually have?

I had 90% control over what appeared in the magazines. The Gernsback brothers wanted final review of what I had accepted; after all, they were the publishers. But they were involved in a lot of other things and pretty much left me alone to run the magazines. It went to the whole question of what stories to accept or not to accept.

Did Gernsback have any kind of an editorial board of experts that evaluated the stories?

No, it was just me.

I understand it was his policy at Amazing *to leave much of the day-to-day operation of the magazine to his managing editor. Was that true at* Wonder?

Yes, insofar as the editorial aspects were concerned. The business aspects were handled by other people. There were a lot of mundane details to take care of. When I started I had no assistant. I was the entire editorial staff. There was a secretary, but that was it.

At the same time you were editing Science Wonder Stories, *you were also editing other Gernsback magazines, including* Air wonder Stories.

Yes, *Air Wonder Stories* took a lot of time. Since it was a drain on my time and energy to be editing so many different magazines, he finally hired an editorial assistant for me. This was Charles P. Mason. He remained on the payroll until Gernsback sold *Wonder* in 1936.

But I was a young man then. I was 27 when I took the job, and young men have lots of energy. It was also an enjoyable job. I liked what I was doing. It was an imaginative field that opened up a vast number of new aspects of life.

There was no limit on your imagination. You could become immersed in stories of the future, and I found it fitted well with my temperament.

Gernsback once said that his ideal formula for a "scientifiction" story was 75% literature and 25% science. What were your criteria?

Well, you had to have a good story which would stand up. The science formed the background. But if the story itself wasn't any good, then the science part was useless. Let's assume there's a new development in science, say in radio. I would think about the development and say, "Now I wonder if this could be made into a story?" Once I had an idea, I'd write to a particular writer I thought could handle it and present my idea; if he could write a good story around it, we'd be willing to accept it.

Do you remember any writers in particular?

No, my memory is poor, very poor in that area.

What if I mention some names? Do you remember Fletcher Pratt?

Oh, yes; sure, sure. Of course I remember him. He became the librarian of the Interplanetary Society. He was a little fellow with heavy glasses and had a fine mind. We worked together quite well. I liked his stories.

How about Laurence Manning?

Oh yes, sure. We were very good friends. Manning was a very fine looking person——tall, well proportioned. He had a very agreeable, charming, outgoing manner. He wrote good stories also, and he was a very imaginative fellow. We published a lot of his stories. He became treasurer of the Interplanetary Society.

How about Jack Williamson?

Only very vaguely. I don't think we ever met.

Here's a name I'm sure you'll recall. How about David H. Keller?

Oh, yes. He was a medical doctor, a very scholarly person. He was very genial, full of humor. I really liked him.

It's good of you to spur my memory with these names. They come back as if out of the blue when you mention them. These are all people I had a personal association with, as you can see.

You worked particularly closely with Dr. Keller, didn't you? You published a long story with him, "The Time Projector."

That's right. "The Time Projector" was based on a machine which could take all the facts governing a given situation, analyze them, and project its future development. In other words it was a master computer, but we didn't have anything like that at the time. In the story the scientist who developed the Time Projector discovered there would be a great war which would decimate the earth. We were talking about a computer projection of World War II. But the hero reckoned without the feelings of ordinary people faced with disaster. They got together and killed the scientist.

How did you come to collaborate with Dr. Keller on this story?

It was my suggestion that we collaborate. It was my story idea and he was interested in it. He had the skill to do it right.

I liked his stories; they were very *human*. Some science-fiction writers are *in*human in their approach. They can't deal with people. Keller had a feeling for people; he knew how to portray them and their reactions. I liked that approach.

All the covers of Wonder Stories *were painted by Frank R. Paul. . .*

Yes, that's right. I liked his work. We often worked together in that I would suggest an idea for a painting and he would suggest ideas also. He was quite talented. I met Frank Paul many times, but I just can't recall what he was like as a person. This was almost sixty years ago.

What was your impression of the science-fiction field at that time—— the first years of the 'thirties?

It was an *emerging* field still trying to find itself without much of an historical basis, not much tradition. A lot of stories had a flimsy basis, both scientifically and literarily. I can't speak for *Amazing* at the time, but as far as *Wonder Stories* was concerned, the standards weren't very high.

But I felt at the time that science-fiction could, and *should,* become an important field of literature. As science took over more and more of our life, the *meaning* of science, the future of science, how science would affect our lives would become extremely important. And there were cases where science-fiction stories stimulated inventions and scientific development. I'm thinking here of the satellite communications system proposed by Arthur C. Clarke.

Was the low quality of stories because the science-fiction writers of that era just weren't that good, or was it because Gernsback was willing to settle for anything that came his way?

Gernsback just wasn't willing to devote the time and the energy necessary to develop good writers. As I said, he had many other interests and he just wasn't willing to spend the time on it. And if the publisher doesn't care, then the writers won't care.

I tried to combat this tendancy on the basis of specific instances. I would get a story and I'd say, "Well, this story has possibilities, but it's not developed." So I'd send it back to the author and tell him what I thought about it and suggest revisions. I tried to be not merely critical, but also coöperative with the writers in a positive sense. Gernsback wasn't willing to invest time to do that. There were some authors who didn't like their stories being rejected, and the idea that they had to do much more research or work on them; but on the whole it worked out well. I think my approach was helpful to them and to the field.

Gernsback also had a reputation for not paying writers. Was that a problem while you were his editor?

We used to have fights about that. He felt, I believe——maybe because of his German background——that the very fact that the authors were published should have been compensation enough. But I felt that if you wanted to encourage these writers to devote the time and energy and imagination needed for better stories, they should be properly compensated.

I can't remember how much I knew at the time about the financial situation of the magazines——if they were making money, how much, and so on. But Gernsback was certainly *proud* that he was the publisher of the magazine.

How did you come to write The Conquest of Space?

Many of the stories we published in *Wonder Stories* dealt with space travel. I felt that most of them were very poorly done. They were unconvincing as to the method of getting into space and what happened in space.

So I researched the problem. I spent evenings poring through technical journals and scientific books and became familiar with rockets. The rocket, I discovered, could not only operate where there was no air, but could operate *best* where there was no air.

And like a clap of lightning it suddenly struck me that here was the instrument which could conquer space. So I gathered together a group of writers, some of those you mentioned, and I told them about my research. I told them we ought to do something about this to make people more aware. They agreed, and we formed the American Interplanetary Society in March, 1930.

I then concluded that we needed a book which would explain in realistic, accurate but understandable scientific terms how space could be conquered and what the conquering of space would mean for humanity. So I wrote the book.

When I tried to find a publisher, most didn't think it was a viable idea. One publisher told me, "If you write this as fiction, I'll publish it, but not if you treat it as something real." Moreover it was 1931, in the midst of the Great Depression, and fewer books were being published and bought.

How did you finally find a publisher?

We didn't. We published it ourselves. The writers and I put up the money. Most of the writers had full-time jobs and did their science-fiction writing on the side, so they had incomes. We got a printer, called ourselves the Penguin Press, and distributed it. The book didn't sell very well; I may have earned about $50 on it. It went out of print after that initial print run.

A year later, in 1932, we put out a British edition. Arthur C. Clarke has written in articles and told me that when he was a boy in England he bought it, read it, and it was my book which convinced him to go into science and science-fiction writing.

Ten years later, in 1941, on the floor of the United States Congress, I was denounced by a Congressman——and I'm quoting here——as "a crackpot with mental delusions that we can travel to the moon"! And the entire U. S. House of Representatives roared with laughter at the idea.[21]

How did you come to be denounced as a crackpot on the floor of the House of Representatives?

Well, I'd been in the Workers Alliance, you know. President Roosevelt had asked me to take a post where I would help return the jobless to private industry. I had suggested to him that a Job Corps training program be established, and he liked the idea. He proposed it to Congress and asked me to come aboard as a consultant. You see, in the ten years of the Depression there were millions of young people who had never *had* a job; they had no skills, no training. My view was that they needed training so they would be qualified for jobs.

However, since I had led many delegations of the Workers Alliance to Congress to chide members for not giving more help to the unemployed, some of them were getting back at me. It was a way of ridiculing me by ridiculing my ideas. Moreover, I was also called a radical for my Workers Alliance affiliation, even though I had resigned in protest against the efforts of Communists to gain control.

But in any case in 1981, fifty years after the book came out, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics had a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Interplanetary Society and the book's publication. The Interplanetary Society had changed its name later to the American Rocket Society, which then finally became the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. So in a way our organization is still in existence half a century later.

In a big celebration in Los Angeles, the A.I.A.A. honored me as the founder of the Institute, and gave me a plaque as its first president. Last year I was invited to Stockholm for the International Astronautical Federation meeting, and this year they invited me to the first meeting of all the former presidents of the A.I.A.A. for the end of April. But after recently having undergone a heart operation, I reluctantly had to decline.

Still, it's interesting to recall that our little group of science-fiction writers from *Wonder Stories* in effect founded that prestigious organization. That's an amazing example of science-fiction's having a great influence in the development of space exploration.

What kind of activities did you want to promote when you and the writers at Wonder Stories *founded the Interplanetary Society?*

We wanted to stimulate interest in space exploration as a real possibility. We encouraged the formation of chapters around the country to propagandize the idea, and we carried out experiments to develop the then primitive and unpredictable rocket. We used the magazine as a vehicle for obtaining recruits. There were quite a number who were interested. It was a going concern.

Did Gernsback approve of using the magazine in this fashion?

Oh, yes. He observed how it would help the magazine. It was a reciprocal thing. He was for anything which would help it and advance science.

The Interplanetary Society was the seed. The seed sprouted, but it didn't bloom fully at the time because the Depression was in full force. People were interested in simply staying alive and not going out into space, so we were swimming against the tide. And the Depression went on and on until the war came in 1941.

Around that time The New York Times *ran an editorial chiding Robert Goddard, the rocket pioneer, for wasting his college's money on rocket experiments.*

That's right. I was in communication with Goddard at that time. He approved of what we were doing, but didn't want to join us. He was getting a stipend of $25,000 a year from the Guggenheim Foundation to send rockets up a couple of miles to sample the upper-levels of the atmosphere. The purpose was to help develop rockets for reporting on the weather.

Goddard felt that if he joined us he might lose his stipend for associating with those wild science-fiction people. I just can't tell you how difficult it was to convince people we could actually travel into space!

What later happened with the Society?

Well, although it was started by science-fiction writers, a new group of scientists and engineers started coming in who were mainly interested in the development of the rocket, **not simply** travelling into space. That was too far-fetched for them. They felt the very name "Interplanetary Society" was a hindrance and invited ridicule. So they changed it to the American Rocket Society. Eventually it became the A.I.A.A. But I'd left the society before that.

There were a lot of unemployed in the Greenwich Village neighborhood where I lived in New York. I'd say that 80% of the mostly Italian residents were out of work. They were in a really desperate situation. I felt a responsibility to help out, to do something about it. So I formed a little group of these people from the neighborhood to represent them at City Hall. That grew into a city-wide organization. We used to go down and meet with Mayor LaGuardia and agitate for jobs or relief. Stories about us began to appear in the papers. In 1935 it grew into a national organization, the Workers Alliance, with me as president.

How did Gernsback feel about your activities?

[Laughter] He didn't like them. I don't blame him. I don't think he was politically opposed, though I never knew his political views. But I was spending time away from the job. These demonstrations and meetings with Mayor LaGuardia were during the day when I should have been at my desk at *Wonder Stories*. So one day he called me into his office and said, "If you like working with the un-

employed so much, I suggest you go and join them." And he fired me.

But I think he had an additional reason. The magazine was in trouble financially. By then I knew that kids just didn't have the money to buy the magazine. Gernsback had to cut costs where he could. So after he fired me he hired a young kid to replace me at half my salary. That was a big savings for him.

While I could understand Gernsback's view, I felt the most important question before us was not travelling into space but saving the country——if it could be saved——from this dreadful plague of unemployment. We never had anything like it before or after, with a quarter of the entire work force out of work. I think it was eighteen million at that time. Before 1933, when Roosevelt took office, there was just nothing for them. Hoover was president, and Congress was opposed to assistance. They thought it would all just go away. But the breadlines were everywhere. People had been thrown out of their homes, dispossessed. The farmers were going bankrupt, banks were closing. The country was really in terrible shape. I felt that this was the important question of the moment and space would have to wait. I think I did the right thing, but I paid heavily for it.

Was it a natural progression for you to go from science-fiction to agitating for the unemployed?

It was the Depression and what it did to my mind, especially in those four years before Roosevelt came in. In those four horrible years I was going through a mental revolution.

There were so many horrible things that happened. For example, the stock market had gone up and up in the late 'twenties. After the crash of 1929 many stocks went down to about 10% of their previous values. Then stories of terrible market manipulations were revealed.

I felt that we needed a political change. Not a revolutionary change, but a peaceful change to bring us up to what a lot of other countries were doing for their citizens.

In some accounts I've read you're called a Socialist. Were you?

Yes, I joined the Socialist Party in '31 or '32 while I was still editor of *Wonder Stories*. I remained in it for four or five years. Then I felt that while the Socialists were people who had dreams of what they *might* do, it was Roosevelt who was really doing things. So I became a supporter of Roosevelt.

And yet you were very critical of Roosevelt up until 1936, weren't you?

Yes, there was an early period when he hadn't found himself. He came from a patrician family and may not have been aware of what was happening in the country. But I think our Workers Alliance may have had some effect on him. I used to get in to see him or Mrs. Roosevelt, either alone or with a delegation, and I pleaded the cause of the unemployed long and hard.

Being a great, shrewd politician, he didn't want to commit himself to things he couldn't carry out. But by 1936, with the New Deal laws, the unions had built themselves up and became a great political force to him. So there developed the kind of atmosphere in which he could move.

You left the Workers Alliance in 1940. Did you work with the job training program you mentioned earlier?

No, Congress blocked my appointment. Those congressmen who opposed me had written into the job-training law a statement that said, "No part of these funds shall be paid to David Lasser." It's significant that after I had been kept out of that program many Congressmen may have been ashamed of what they had done. A year later a separate resolution was introduced to repeal that action against

me, and it was passed without dissent. In any case, it had been illegal, contrary to our Constitution, which prohibits legislation against an individual.

So I had a period of unemployment myself. Then when the war came, I was asked to join the War Production Board. I remained with them until the end of the war. Then Averell Harriman, Secretary of Commerce, asked me to join his staff. When the Marshall Plan was launched to rebuild Europe, Harriman was named to head it in Paris. He asked me to join him to work on the serious problems of the Communist-influenced European labor movement, which was hostile to the program.

However, the same Congressmen who'd blocked me on the other position now arose to oppose me again. They had written into the law a section on eligibility of employees, and claimed I came under the heading of people who were not allowed to work. I appealed and proved that all charges against me of Communism were wrong. But with the exception of Harriman, the officials in the organization were too timid to oppose these political forces, and I was blocked again.

In 1950 you became Chief Economist for the International Union of Electrical Workers. Where did you receive your economic training for that position?

At M.I.T., as part of my original training. I worked with the I.U.E. until 1968, when I retired.

What have you been doing since your retirement?

All during the years I had been brooding over the injustices done me by twice preventing me from taking important government posts with the charge that I was a Communist. No proof had ever been offered, and in fact I had proved over and over again that I had been a loyal American.

So when I retired I determined to correct those injustices. While my sophisticated Washingtonfriends warned me it was impossible, I persisted. These efforts finally paid off. Eventually I received a letter from President Carter, dated April 2, 1980, clearing me and adding, "Your loyal and valuable service to this country in both public and private sectors has won you many friends and admirers."

Then I turned my mind to a consideration of the status of mankind, not only on earth but in this universe, and its origin. I wrote a long poem about it entitled "Some Say Creation Came..."

I decided to write a book on our origins and real meaning, dwelling on the possibility that our universe is only a part of a larger and vaster body, and that in turn part of a still larger one, like a series of balls each encased in a larger one, going on to infinity. But then in my research over several years, I discovered many distinguished university professors were publishing books with similar themes. I asked myself what I could contribute in the face of that? So I abandoned the book project.

Then the State Department asked me to undertake a series of visits to a number of European and Asian countries to present the truthful picture of the American labor movement in order to counter efforts of the Communists to win over these countless millions of working people.

Finally, in 1982, at the age of eighty I asked myself what I would do with the rest of my life. I recalled that in 1970 I had started and abandoned a science-fiction novel. It dealt with a crisis in the affairs of mankind that required complete unity of purpose and action of all countries to save us. Thequestion was whether we possessed the vision, wisdom and courage to meet this challenge. I reread what I had written, and with the state of the world even more dangerous than in 1970, I decided to return to the project with a broader outlook and, perhaps, more skill. It's now progressed to the point where I'm looking for an agent.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

I think it's significant and perhaps symbolic that after sixty years and at the age of 84, I return to science-fiction as a means of expressing some of my deepest feelings and make, perhaps, my final contribution. Happily I still have my mental and (thanks to a recent operation) my physical faculties. I believe they will remain with me until I complete this task to my satisfaction.

In any case, I have put aside all other activities to concentrate on finishing the book. I hope it will make a contribution to our dangerous and unstable world.

III

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES D. HORNIG

To replace Lasser as managing editor of *Wonder Stories*, Hugo Gernsback brought in 17-year-old Charles D. Hornig. The choice of someone so young and inexperienced astounded many in the science-fiction community, not least among them Hornig himself. Sam Moskowitz speculates that "Gernsback had to gamble on a kid like Hornig because he was in no position to hire a top man, not just because of money, but because his reputation as a payer and employer had sunk so low that qualified men avoided him."[22]

As we have seen, the financial condition of Gernsback's publishing empire had continued to worsen. Horace L. Gold remembers visiting the 98 Park Place offices of *Wonder Stories* around this time. "Park Place was once like London's Fleet Street," he recalls. "But it was run down when Gernsback was there. His office was a stinking, awful, shabby place."[23] Isaac Asimov recalls that *Wonder* and *Amazing* "were declining steadily in 1934, and neither was received regularly at my father's newsstand."[24] Late in 1935 both went bimonthly. "During 1936 those doddering ancients . . . continued to weave downhill. . . . *Wonder Stories* was so poorly distributed that . . . I hardly ever saw it. The March-April, 1936 issue was its last. It was dead."[25]

Gernsback sold *Wonder* to Beacon/Standard Publications, which published a number of magazines under the editorial supervision of Leo Margulies. In August it returned as *Thrilling Wonder Stories* with Mort Weisinger as editor. But it was no longer Hugo Gernsback's magazine. After 78 issues (twelve as *Science Wonder*) *Wonder Stories* and the Age of Wonder were over.

Gernsback briefly and unsuccessfully returned to the field in the 1950's as the publisher of *Science Fiction Plus*, with Sam Moskowitz as editor. At that time, however, Gernsback's editorial practice seems to have been dramatically different from his style at *Wonder Stories*, and this deserves brief mention.

Lasser and Hornig have stated independently that Gernsback essentially adopted a "hands off" editorial policy. According to them, except for personal friends (such as Laurence Manning or David Keller, who was also a business associate), Gernsback never communicated with any authors concerning editorial (as opposed to financial) matters. Nor did he have anything to say to either of them concerning stories. Both were given a free hand in running the magazine, and what appeared (or didn't appear) in *Wonder Stories* was solely the result of their own decisions. The editorial laissez-faire appears to represent also a sharp break from Gernsback's early practice at *Amazing Stories*. Moskowitz says, for example, that he has extensive correspondence between Gernsback and Edgar Rice Burroughs (among others) concerning requested changes in some of Burroughs's stories which appeared in *Amazing*. In addition, Moskowitz's own experience under Gernsback was quite different.

"As editor of *Science Fiction Plus*," he says,[22] "every story I thought was good had to be approved by Gernsback and also by his son Harvey. There were many stories the two of us thought were bad which he accepted over our disapproval.

He was constantly demanding rewrites, and usually not for the better! ...I couldn't even get an illustration printed without Gernsback's approval (and we sometimes ran five to a story), and he was constantly having the artist redraw them."

It would seem, then, that Lasser and Hornig enjoyed a moratorium from Gernsback's original and later "hands-on" approach to editing. What could explain their editorial freedom? Moskowitz suggests that Gernsback's financial condition might have been the determining factor. In the early days at *Amazing*, Gernsback dominated the field and could demand anything he wanted from authors, who had few alternatives. And, recalls, Moskowitz, "When I went to work for him, he was paying three cents a word on acceptance and his rates for illustrations were at least as good as any of them, so he threw his weight around.

"The possibility exists," continues Moskowitz, "that since Gernsback was paying very little at *Wonder Stories*, and very late, he was in no position to be fussy. He might have been grateful for anything Hornig could get into the magazine under such conditions, and the reason he did not correspond with authors was that they would ask him for money he owed them. *I think that is the answer.*"

Hugo Gernsback has acquired an enduring and unenviable reputation, especially among the veterans of First Fandom, as a penny-pinching skinflint. But perhaps this odium is not fully deserved. It now appears that he never really recovered from the *Amazing* debacle. *Wonder Stories* was in straitened finances from the beginning, and remained so until its death. A recent examination of Laurence Manning's papers shows that even he was not being paid at the end.[26] And Hornig states (*vide infra*) that employees at *Wonder* frequently missed paydays simply because Gernsback didn't have enough money in the bank to cover their salary checks.

Certainly Manning, a preferred writer and a well-liked close friend of Gernsback's, would have been paid if Gernsback had the ability. Likewise, there is no reason to believe he would have risked not paying his editors and his office staff if he could have done so. But if he couldn't pay his writers, at least they didn't hear from him demanding endless revisions. And if he couldn't pay his editors and office employees, at least he could give them a free hand. It was the best trade-off Gernsback was able to offer.

The following interview with Charles Hornig was conducted on August 2, 1986. Mr. Hornig was 70 years old at the time.

Eric Davin: *How did you become a science-fiction fan?*

Charles Hornig: The same way a lot of fans did, by discovering science-fiction. That was just by chance. I remember the date: August 12, 1930. I was fourteen years old, and usually every day during the summer my mother gave me a quarter to go to the movies.

But I'd already seen every movie in town, so I walked into this drugstore which had a newsrack. I saw this magazine cover which showed the Chrysler Building being uprooted in flames. It was very exciting. It was the September, 1930 *Amazing Stories*. I bought it out of curiosity and walked across the street to the library and began reading it.

Within minutes, though, the librarian threw me out. "You can't bring that kind of trash in here!" she said. So I took it home and read it there. And I was hooked. It had an installment of "Skylark Three" by E. E. Smith and a number of other good stories. It was like an LSD experience, a sort of opening up of my mind, a feeling of awe and wonder——it was fantastic!

I soon discovered *Wonder Stories* and a few months later *Astounding* and then *Weird Tales*. Soon I was collecting all four. I'd save up my nickels until I had quarters and I'd buy every one I could. That went on for two or three years. Then I thought I'd start a fan magazine. I'd've had no idea what a fan magazine was except that I'd been buying back numbers of magazines from a man named

Carl Swanson of Washburn, North Dakota. He sent me fliers of other fan activities and one of them was a copy of *The Time Traveller*, an early science-fiction fan magazine. I said, "Gee, I ought to be able to do something like this." I got in touch with publishers and writers in New York like Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger and a few others, and I began meeting with them regularly. They encouraged me to put out a fan magazine. So I did. I got it printed rather than mimeographed and called it *The Fantasy Fan*. It ran for eighteen issues.

The way I got with *Wonder Stories* was by sending a copy of the first issue to Hugo Gernsback, as well as every other editor and fan I knew, in order to build up a subscription list. It just happened that at that time he was becoming dissatisfied with David Lasser, whom I learned all about through you.

So, I received a telegram from Gernsback——I lived in Elizabeth, New Jersey, about fourteen miles outside of New York, and didn't have a telephone——saying he had an interesting proposition for me if I'd come over and see him. I had no idea what it could be about. This was in July, 1933, and I was working full time for a lawyer typing briefs for five dollars a week while his secretary was on vacation. I took a day off, went into New York, and met Gernsback.

Can you describe that meeting?

Well, Gernsback looked a little disappointed when he first saw me. He expected someone a little older. Even so, I looked older than I was. I had to assure him I was seventeen before he'd believe it. I just sat there dazed. I couldn't believe I was talking to the great Hugo Gernsback! He was my hero, "the Father of Science-Fiction" and all that. It was like a dream.

And despite my age he wanted to hire me! I think he felt that because I was a super-enthusiastic fan, completely addicted to science-fiction, any story I liked would also be liked by other fans, most of whom were boys about my age. It seemed to work out. Of course, I knew nothing about literature, but that didn't matter; science-fiction wasn't literature. A good story was one that stirred the imagination and created a true sense of wonder.

I think the other reason Gernsback wanted me was because he could save money. I didn't know it at the time, but I later learned that David Lasser, whom I was replacing, was paid $75 a week.[20] When it came to finances, Gernsback said, "Well, what do you think your starting salary should be, in the light of your extreme youth and inexperience?" I very meekly said, "Well, $25 a week?" And he said, "Let's just say $20 to start."

I know now, of course, that if I'd asked for $35 or $40, I might have got $30 or $35, but I was happy to be hired and would have worked for nothing if he'd asked me to. I learned from you that Gernsback later boasted to Lasser that he'd hired a replacement for half of what he'd been paying Lasser. I wish that had been true, because then I'd have been making $37.50 a week! But I guess even Gernsback was ashamed to admit he was really paying me less than a third of what he paid Lasser. Still, in those days $20 a week was lots of money for a seventeen year old boy when men with families were sometimes lucky to make $15.

Then he gave me the manuscript of a novel, a translation of something German——I forget the name of it. He said, "Take this home over the weekend and edit it." He also gave me a mimeographed list of proofreader's marks. I was to return on Monday with the edited manuscript and my parents' permission. Then I left. Before I went home, though, I took the subway to the Bronx to tell Julius Schwartz about it. He couldn't believe it, either!

My parents were delighted to have me working. That was the depth of the Depression and we had very little money. I still had a year and a half of high school to finish, but I did that by going to night school for the next four years. And I went to work as editor of *Wonder Stories* on August 7, 1933——almost 53 years ago to the day!

How did your parents feel about your science-fiction interests before this?

They seemed to be indifferent. But my mother loved to brag. After I became editor of *Wonder Stories*, she'd go around saying I was editing *The Saturday Evening Post*. She exaggerated a bit! Although she didn't understand what was going on, my mother was supportive. And I was earning $20 a week and paid for my room and board, so that was a help.

Would you talk about your working relationship with Gernsback? For instance, how much control did you actually have over what appeared in the magazine?

I had total control over what appeared in the magazine. The one thing we all liked about Gernsback and which kept us with him, despite his poor rate of pay and his employees having to hold paychecks for weeks upon weeks at a time, was that he gave everyone a free hand. He was good to work for in that way. He didn't stop you from doing anything. He didn't criticize your work unless there was something really wrong. So, I was totally free to reject or accept stories. Of course he never saw the rejected stories, but in the two and a half years I worked for him he never once disagreed with me over a story I accepted.

The practice was for me to read all the stories which came in. Maybe one out of twenty was worth considering. If I wanted to accept any story I wrote an evaluation on a special cover-sheet which was then attached to the manuscript. I described what I liked about the story and why I wanted to use it. This was passed on to Gernsback, and he'd send it back with an "OK" on it. That's all he ever did. So far as I know, he never contacted authors in any way, except his friends like Laurence Manning or David Keller. He gave me free rein. I wrote to all writers criticizing their manuscripts, suggesting re-writes, whatever. Also I wrote all the editorials, handled "The Reader Speaks" column, wrote all the blurbs and captions, and chose the work of all artists except for Frank Paul.

There's only one story during my tenure that Gernsback ever paid any special attention to. That was "A Martian Odyssey" by Stanley Weinbaum, which was a real find. Now, *that* story *was* literature——it was really well written stuff. It had personalities, characterization. Perhaps for the first time it showed an alien creature on another planet from a favorable viewpoint, as something other than a horrible monster. This character Tweel was something cute, sorta like "E.T."

I was very excited by this story, and I wrote a very enthusiastic note to Gernsback on the cover sheet. He paid close attention to it and agreed about its quality. In fact, he wrote the blurb for it himself, which is the only time I can ever remember his writing the blurb for a story. He knew it was a good one.

Now Julius Schwartz, who was an agent at the time, thought he stole Weinbaum away from me and *Wonder Stories*.[27] You see, Weinbaum lived in Milwaukee, and Schwartz told me he wanted to let Ralph Milne Farley and other Milwaukee writers know they had a fellow science-fiction writer in town, so he asked for Weinbaum's address. But the real reason he wanted it was to become his agent and take his stories to other, higher-paying markets.

Well, that may be true, but I wasn't at all unhappy to give him Weinbaum's address, because I was a fan before I was an editor. I wanted the writers to get a break. If Weinbaum could get a cent or a cent and a half a word from *Astounding* instead of having to sue Gernsback for half a cent, more power to him! So I was happy to see Weinbaum sell to *Astounding*, although I did get a few Weinbaum stories before Schwartz took him elsewhere.

Did Gernsback ever write comments on stories which he would pass on to you for forwarding to the authors?

No, he never did that. He never had anything to do with any of the stories except for that one Weinbaum story. Once in a while Gernsback would give

me a story he had selected, but it was always something from Germany which had been translated by Fletcher Pratt. There were two or three novels like that. Evidently he got them at a very low rate, or maybe free——I don't know. They were never very good from our American standpoint——very heavily scientific, dry and boring as far as I could tell. But I had to print them because Gernsback personally selected them.[28]

What was your personal relationship with Gernsback?

It was mostly formal. I never knew him on a personal basis. After all, he was old enough to be my father, and I was in awe of him. Oh, he would send me postcards from Europe when he went on vacation, things like that. But I and everyone else on the staff always called him "Mr. H." This was in contrast to "Mr. S.," his brother Sydney, although I didn't see him very much.

But Gernsback was always friendly. I can't remember him ever being angry or critical about anything I did.[29] Now if I asked for a raise, he was very hesitant about it. But I seldom asked for a raise.

Did you ever get one?

After I'd been editor for six months I learned what Lasser had been getting, so I wrote Gernsback a long letter in which I said I thought I'd proven myself and should be getting fifty dollars a week. He called me into his office and said, "This is ridiculous!" and we both laughed about it. Then he gave me a five-dollar raise, so I was getting $25 a week. I eventually wound up with $27.50; that's the highest I ever got.

But remember, this would be like $300 today. For a young man, what I earned was not bad money. I lived handsomely on my wages. I was taking weekend trips to Pittsburgh and Norfolk and Boston on buses and trains, as well as a vacation to California. At the same time I was contributing to my family, so I was doing OK.

What was it like in the office?

I worked in a very small, dingy, smoky office. I'm now allergic to cigarette smoke, and I think one of the reasons is working in that very tiny office with C. P. Mason puffing away on his pipe and a guy named Kraus[30] smoking a cigar and a secretary who also smoked. Luckily we were there only about six months before we moved to larger quarters.

Did Gernsback also smoke?

Not that I know of. I never saw him smoke.

Did people around the office ever talk about David Lasser?

I heard very little about him except that he was so involved with his socialist activity that he wasn't paying enough attention to his work at *Wonder Stories*, so Gernsback let him go. No one said much of anything else. Now, I did did get the impression——I don't know how——that he was in the Socialist Labor Party. I was surprised to learn from you that he actually was in the Norman Thomas Socialist Party, which is what I was in. But I never met Lasser in the party.

You were a member of the Socialist Party, then?

Yes, I joined in 1940 or 1941. But I dropped out eventually. There was a lot of bickering going on, and I didn't feel it was doing much good. There were two factions at each other's throat all the time. They weren't accomplishing anything, so I got out. But I always voted for Norman Thomas. I always went to his lectures and talks, and I liked him very much. I also got to know his brother Evan quite well.

Evan Thomas was a doctor, and he provided the blood test that my wife Florence and I had to take to get married. Before we were married Florence was his secretary. Evan Thomas was at that time executive secretary of the War Resisters League, and a leading pacifist of the 'forties. My son is named after him.

A few years ago, after the Freedom of Information Act was passed, I wrote for a copy of my F.B.I. dossier. Of course, what they send you is so full of blackouts I don't know where anyone got the idea there was any freedom of information. But one thing that got through the censors was a report that I'd married the *daughter* of Norman Thomas! The closest I got to that was to marry the secretary of his *brother*. The F.B.I. had so many things wrong it'd be laughable if it wasn't so tragic.

I'd like to ask you more about your run-ins with the F. B. I. and your experiences as a Conscientious Objector during World War II, but I'd first like to clear up a few things about Wonder Stories. *For instance, what was the "New Story" policy you began championing with the first issue that came out under your auspices?*

It was just a matter of personal prejudice in stories. I preferred what would now be considered a very old-fashioned type of science-fiction. I wanted stories that were really plausible and logical and based upon known facts. A story had to be *possible*.

I wrote authors very long letters when I rejected stories, telling them exactly why. For instance, one author had a story about a tree given some sort of growth hormone so it never stopped growing. It became thousands of times larger than the earth. "Where did the tree get all that building material?" I asked him. Things like that I rejected.

How did this type of story differ from what had been published under Lasser?

Well, a lot of the "New Story" policy was just propaganda. That is, if I liked the story and it was scientifically plausible, I looked for new ways to present old themes. Of course there was no way I could really make any demands. I had to take what I could get, and I got last choice because Gernsback paid the least and the latest. That made things really difficult. Still, I got quite a few good stories simply because the field was so small at that time. Even if *Astounding* rejected a story, it might still be good and I might eventually get it.

But I think propagandizing did encourage people like Otto Binder to produce this sort of story. Binder was one of my favorite writers, not only because he was good, but because he also took suggestions. If I had an idea for a story that I personally couldn't write, he would work it into one. I couldn't get others to do it. I can't remember any particular ideas I gave him, but we printed quite a few of Binder's stories.

How would you describe the science-fiction field at that time?

Very exciting. It wasn't accepted as good literature, of course. The term "science-fiction" appeared nowhere except in the field itself. No one else knew what science-fiction was. Perhaps, at most, there were 50,000 people in the *entire world* who indulged in it at that time. The circulations of the magazines ran to no more than twenty, thirty or forty thousand copies. It was a very limited field.

Also the idea of travelling to the moon was considered crazy. My sisters would ridicule it, and so did almost everyone else except a few other young fellows like me. There were few females in the field. We had a couple of female writers, Leslie F. Stone and Amelia Reynolds Long, but very few female fans. There was Virginia Kidd, who became a well known agent. Later on Judith Merrill came along. It was mostly boys in their mid and late teens. That was fandom.

Oh, there might have been a few oddball adults. They tell me Ethel Barrymore used to read science-fiction in the 'thirties. I imagine a number of other adults also read it but kept it a dirty little secret because it wasn't respectable. Only a kid would admit to reading science-fiction.

What did you think of the quality of the writing?

Well, at seventeen years of age I was not a great literary critic. I didn't even know what literature was, except in school they forced us to read Dickens and stuff like that. Looking back, I'd say that science-fiction then was a very low grade of literature. It wasn't literature at all, except for a few writers. Basically, the technique for writing science-fiction did not include great literary ability. Characters weren't developed. The emphasis was all on science and the sense of wonder and amazement. But then, youngsters weren't too concerned with psychology and character development anyway.

So you primarily looked for that "sense of wonder"?

That was the main thing. The idea that you should really be amazed at what was happening in the story——that it would just grab your mind and open up mental vistas for you, as it did for me in the first place. The idea of time travel and alternate worlds just blew my mind, as I think they did for a lot of others. It was the ideas which carried the stories. Of course there had to be *some* writing ability, but it didn't have to be really literary, like you'd find, say, in *The New Yorker.*

Besides propagandizing the "New Story" policy, did you try anything else to guide or shape the field?

I had an article in *Author and Journalist* entitled "How to Write Science Fiction,"[31] which was rather presumptive of me. I wrote it when I was seventeen, but I was eighteen when it appeared.

At that time people in the office didn't know how young I actually was; they thought I was at least in my twenties. But when this article appeared, the magazine said I was seventeen. Then people began calling me "The Boy Wonder." I told them, "Oh, no. That was long ago. I'm an old man now——I'm eighteen."

But in that article, which I don't have any more, I told people how to write science-fiction. It all had to do with this emphasis on science I mentioned previously.

How would you or the writers find these "amazing" ideas?

A lot of them came from the scientific news of the day. A lot of things were happening. In 1930, for instance, the planet Pluto had been discovered. That started a whole series of stories about Pluto. Writers got ideas from the sensational science news in *The American Weekly,* which appeared in Hearst newspapers on Sundays.

They'd also take ideas from each other a lot. For instance, H.G. Wells wrote stories with ideas which would still have been considered new in the 'thirties. If you remember his story "The New Accelerator" he had a way to speed up your metabolism so much you could move too fast for people to see you. So, a new story could be worked out of something like that.[32]

You mentioned earlier that Otto Binder was one of your favorite authors. Who else did you like?

Laurence Manning. Manning actually got ¾¢ per word because he was a friend of Gernsback's, and he was one of the better writers. Dr. David Keller I liked very much. I liked Raymond Z. Gallun. Ed Hamilton, of course. And Jack Williamson was one of my favorites.

(continued on page 39)

Regression to the Dawn

*Allan Howard**

To think of a story involving youthful castaways on a deserted island is to bring to mind the innumerable boys' adventure series so prevalent sixty and more years ago. This type of novel, which was on the wane even when I first made its acquaintance, featured uncomplicated adolescents in innocent and perilous adventure calculated to thrill the youthful mind.

At the other end of the spectrum is William Golding's remarkable and classic *Lord of the Flies* (1954), which has gone through dozens of printings. It is a horror tale of the degeneracy of the human condition and psyche when restraints from without are removed and there is no corresponding restraint from within. A group of boys stranded on an isolated island rapidly regresses to savagery which ends in sudden realization and shame only when adult authority reappears on the scene.

In a similar setting is *Children of the Morning*, a posthumous novel by Walter Lionel George, which has many parallels to *Lord of the Flies*. Although a splendid work, it seems today to be entirely forgotten. It was first published in this country in 1926 in *The American Weekly*, and was quite possibly purchased (or recommended) by A. Merritt, who was then on the staff of that publication. It was brought out in hard covers the following year by Putnam's, and seems to have sold moderately well.

A ship full of mixed nationals, mostly children, founders in a storm while fleeing a Venezuelan port and the destruction after a tidal wave hit the city. A combination of bad luck and incompetence sets 73 of the children, aged five to eight, adrift in a lifeboat without adults. A day and two nights later the boat beaches on an uninhabited island and the children scramble ashore. The island, once some 325 square miles of low-lying fever swamp, and shunned by men for a hundred years, has in that time been transformed by an earthquake into a tropical paradise.

Being children, these waifs of civilization are yet closer to savagery, and the land in which they find themselves is ideally suited to nurture savages. With but vague and dwindling memories of a former life and no guide but their own desires, they grow up according to their own instinctive natures. Because of their polyglot heritage, a blending of tongues produces a unique "national" language.

The central characters are Dzon (John) and Elnor (Eleanor), who almost from the first are constant companions. Dzon, whose nature is inclined toward peace and order, eventually drifts unacknowledgedly, and partly by default, into leadership of the island's free democracy. His opposite number is Tsarl (Charles), the biggest boy in the group, who is brutal, stupid and arrogant ——a complete primitive. Tsarl eventually takes to the hills and is joined by sycophants who admire his strangth, and by others who feel out of place in Dzon's "civilized" community.

The naked innocents, living at first in an eternal present, begin to grow up. They gradually stumble on the concepts of weapons, tools, hunting, housing and agriculture. The making and preserving of fire takes sixteen years to discover. The first to don flowers, feathers or shells does so as self-adornment for its own sake. As with fashion everywhere, it is taken up by all. Complete

*The author is indebted to Sam Moskowitz for furnishing biographical information.

nakedness became a shame, though felt only by not being dressed in style. Sex is discovered at the usual age, although it is scarcely understood. At the average age of fifteen, much to their bewilderment, the women begin to produce children. And these children become the real savages, with neither shadowy tradition nor memories of a past life to guide or confuse them.

A religion emerges, based on a vague fear of the unseen "Ankel," who evolved from the memories of a German boy, who when he was naughty had been told he would be taken away by a long-vanished black-sheep uncle. This dread deity gives rise to an inevitable priesthood in the person of Zulien (Julian). Sure in the knowledge that he is the mouthpiece of God, Zulien, in true primitive style, soon incorporates the rising sun into the worship of Ankel.

With reason poorly developed and instinct strong, the people remain savages and split into two main tribes. While Dzon's democracy muddles along, Tsarl has become a heavy-handed chief and dictator. Dzon institutes monogamous marriage by public declaration of intent, while Tsarl's hill people are polygamous. Eventually Tsarl, by reason of his superior strength and belief that he is the son of Ankel, declares himself possessor of all women. This causes him to lead a woman-stealing raid on Dzon's settlement. In retaliation Dzon takes an expedition into the hills, but is overwhelmingly defeated and is forced into hiding with a handful of followers. Tsarl, moving down from the hills, takes sovereignty over all the other inhabitants. In time, disaffected singles and couples slip away into the jungle and form a third tribe. The dissolute Tsarl is finally prodded by Zulien and his wily lieutenant, Bloo, into taking a punitive force after the runaways, and finds they have joined with Dzon. Tsarl is again victorious, and this time captures Elnor.

Having reached the top of his little world, Tsarl attempts to cap it all by consummating his long-standing desire to add Elnor to his harem. True dawn-woman that she is, Elnor slips a knife into him. With his death Tsarl's little empire disintegrates and Dzon picks up the pieces. True democracy returns to the island, but as time passes the people grow restless. Happiness and contentment are not enough. There is no spice to life where danger and excitement are absent and where no one dominates or can aspire to dominate. Revolution breaks out, and Dzon and Elnor are forced to flee for their lives. Doing what no one has ever thought of before, they take to the sea in a dugout canoe. Eventually they are picked up by a United States warship. An armed party returns them to the island where they find fire and slaughter in progress. We are left to conjecture what happens after that.

In addition to telling an extremely fine, rousing story, George seems to be making the point that humanity is a rather perverse species. If one removes challenge and makes life safe and secure, people will deliberately place themselves in the path of inconvenience, uncertainty and danger.

Children of the Morning is excellent, whether read symbolically, on the level of a simple lost race story, or as an anthropological and sociological insight into the rise of a primitive culture. The history of the children is a history of mankind in microcosm and of the growth of language, religion, schisms, wars, dictators and revolutions. Whereas Golding's adventure plot is subordinate to his allegorical symbology and a vision of totalitarianism, George's approach is to tell a straightforward narrative against a sociological backdrop.

W. L. George was born March 20, 1882 in Paris of British parents, and was part Jewish, most likely through his mother. He was educated in France and Germany, and spoke English with an accent. He started as an analytical chemist and then went into engineering; he studied for the law, but did not finish. After serving in the French army George went to England at the age of 23 to work in a commercial office. In 1907 he began to write on social, economic and political topics for London magazines. His *Engines of Social Progress* (1907) became an of-

ficial handbook of the Japanese government. In 1908 he married Helen Porter and became a correspondent for various papers in France, Belgium and Spain. He was a belligerent pacifist——if that is not a contradiction of terms——and was against the concept of nationality, possibly because of his Jewish heritage. He believed that people "should not be trusted, but led."

George started writing fiction to gain wider acceptance for his political beliefs. His first novel, *Bed of Roses*, was published when he was 29, and had prostitution as its theme. It and other early novels——he wrote fifteen in all——became best-sellers in England and America. *Caliban* (1920) is the most famous.

After his first wife died in 1914, George married Helen Agnes Madden, the daughter of Col. Travers Madden of the Bengal Staff Corps. They had two sons. His second wife died of blood poisoning on December 10, 1920 in Houston, Texas while they were visiting America. In 1921 he married his third wife, Kathleen Geipel, a novelist (*Purity* [1926] and *Put Asunder* [1930]).

George repeatedly endured waves of personal unpopularity or adverse opinion because he thought more like a continental than a proper Englishman. (It has been only recently that England has begun to consider itself as part of the European continent.) As a section officer in the Ministry of Munitions during World War I George turned members of a club against him because of his graciousness towards a pacifist leader there. In 1919 he advocated councils where local bodies would choose representatives who were peasants (workers) and soldiers as deputies to the government (as in the Soviet Union).

As a champion of feminism George found himself very popular when visiting the United States. The most pronounced characteristic of American women, he said, was their "vivid intelligence." He himself described his book about America, *Hail Columbia!* (1921) as "random impressions of a consertive English radical." George also wrote many short stories and favored an O. Henry type ending. He expressed himself as not interested in "old ruins and Rembrandts and cathedrals. . . [but] in machinery and concrete ways of doing things, and vital things of life."

In 1925 George became afflicted with what we can in retrospect recognize as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease). While dying of this, and understandable only by his wife and secretary, he dictated three novels which were published posthumously, one of which was *Children of the Morning*. He died on January 20, 1926.

• • •

Days of the Dryad

almost as if we liked each other
sitting our lives away together

like river clay afternoons
heavy with drink so many
peering through drizzle beyond the door
all these years believing dimly
we see hills of the closed land
beyond Silver Delta's tongue

as she gets older it grows
easier to see her true
through leaves half-frayed half-fallen
once so sweetly newly
hid heart of her inner structure
so we believed it soft.

sometimes to pass the useless time
we repeat dull with unison
story of Black John who loved her
crying crazed after "not sure 'twere
reed or tree, till moving it slavered
'ee"; until she it they die we have

no excuse to plead to be let
to cross the water

and beg for our replacement

Steve Sneyd

Book Reviews

MODERN SCIENCE FICTION AND THE AMERICAN LITERARY COMMUNITY by Frederick Andrew Lerner. Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1985. 344 pp. 24.7 cm. $26.00.

This misunderstood book has been unfairly clawed by some academic critics for not being something other than what it claims to be. The author's claims are set forth very precisely at the beginning of the preface:

> 1. What picture of modern American science fiction was formed in the mind of the American reading public?
> 2. How was modern American science fiction received by certain groups of Americans whose profession it was to deal with literature?
> 3. How have these changed during modern American science fiction's first fifty years?

All these Lerner accomplishes with monumental documentation (45% of the total text is taken up with notes, sources and a bibliography). The reviewers' pique might be understandable if this were one of the earliest books on the genre, but there have been several hundred of them and it is perfectly legitimate for a scholar to explore exhaustively a single aspect of science-fiction; and the aspect chosen here is not mere aesthetic fluttering but one of primary importance.

I am sorry to say that this is not the first time Lerner's work has been slighted. When a bibliography of bibliographies and reference works was compiled and edited by Marshall Tymn, Roger Schlobin and L. W. Curry in 1977 (*A Research Guide to Science Fiction Studies: an Annotated Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources for Fantasy and Science Fiction*) it failed to list in any manner Lerner's pioneering *An Annotated Checklist of Science Fiction Bibliographical Works* (1969). This omission is hard to attribute to mere carelessness, since a copy of the latter biblio was given to every attendee of the organizational meeting of the Science Fiction Research Association, of which Lerner was a founder.

He has nevertheless plugged ahead uncomplainingly and we now have this new volume, which is equally worthy of recognition. He has taken as a representative sampling 94 science-fiction authors, each of whom has had fifty or more stories published between 1926 and 1970, and an additional eight others who have won major awards (like the Hugo or Nebula) between 1971 and 1976. Some authors were Canadian, British or Australian, but no attempt was made to survey those in other countries whose work was not available in English translation. (This limitation is reasonable, since influence of other foreign writers was minor.)

Lerner then examined over a thousand reviews of books by these authors, as well as articles about science-fiction *outside* the science-fiction magazines, specialized academic publications and fan magazines, so that he might determine the general acceptance of science-fiction, not just the attitude of the in-group. (He did not live up to this admirable objective in the case of my own books of biography and criticism, however; after first noting their widespread acceptance by libraries and general critics outside the field, he cites negative reaction from a single critic within it; an irrelevant——and misleading——qualification.)

In the early chapter "What Is Science Fiction?" Lerner does a good job of touching all bases on early elements of publishing (before the formal science

fiction magazines), making good use of the scholarship available, almost all of which he later terms "amateur" as opposed to "academic." In making this distinction, which he does not do out of snobbery but in order to attain one of the objectives of his book, he should have reminded readers of two important things. First, the contribution of "amateur" scholarship at this writing represents about 95% of the fundamental research in science-fiction; the contribution of "trained" scholars is still pitifully minor. Second, when the medical, dental or veterinary associations had laws passed to license their practitioners, almost without exception these laws contained a grandfather clause, so that those who practiced such professions before the passage of the law were automatically licensed. The reason is obvious. At that early stage, most existing practitioners knew more about their art than did newly-qualified university graduates. And that is exactly the situation prevailing in science-fiction today: the amateurs are actually the academics, while most of the truly qualified and professional critics are Lerner's amateurs!

In describing the progress that has been made, Lerner mentions that a number of journals have been set up, primarily by the newer universities, to publish and encourage research in the field: *Extrapolation, Science Fiction Studies, Foundation* and *Journal of Popular Culture.* His case is stronger than it appears, for he might have cited others: *Alternative Futures/The Journal of Utopian Studies,* an elaborate quarterly co-sponsored by The Rensslear Polytechnic Institute and The University of Michigan, ran for four years; and *Cthulhu Calls* (a magazine about science-fiction despite its title) from The University of Wyoming lasted as long. Four other respected journals published all-science-fiction issues, too: The University of Manitoba's *Mosaic* (Spring-Summer, 1980), Northwestern University's *Tri-Quarterly* (Fall, 1980), The University of New Haven's *Essays in Arts and Sciences* (August, 1980) and Purdue University's *Modern Fiction Studies* (Spring,1986).

In reviewing many of the comments made by mainstream critics and specialist magazines outside the science-fiction field, Lerner validates the point that criticism was friendly and understanding, and not at all hostile. Particularly during the fantasy boom of 1949-53 the newspapers, including the more prestigious ones like *The New York Times* and *The New York Herald-Tribune,* began to devote space to science-fiction reviews, either departmentalizing them as they did mystery and detective fiction in their Sunday book sections, or running them in their daily papers. *The Saturday Review of Literature* frequently gave feature space to science-fiction, and it was considered a valid subject for inclusion in the spectrum of high-circulation popular magazines like *Life, Holiday, Look, Collier's* and *Newsweek,* science magazines like *Science,* socialist magazines like *Science and Society,* religious magazines like *Catholic World,* and those aimed at the intellectuals like *Harper's.* A dozen or more critics were extremely perceptive, noting that an unreasonably high percentage of science-fiction being written at the time was downbeat, pessimistic and anti-scientific. Though highly praised by some, the work of Ray Bradbury was soundly condemned by others as anti-science.

The spreading of science-fiction to the classroom is well documented, starting with the big breakthrough at the college level when this reviewer was invited to be Guest Lecturer on the subject at New York University in 1950 and at Columbia University in 1953, which led to the first bona fide course at The City College of New York in 1953 and a subsequent country-wide proliferation.

Introduction of science-fiction on the secondary school level receives lesser treatment, but that is understandable, for it is extremely difficult to document. I can furnish a little information from my local area, however, which I shall put in print here for the first time. The pivotal figure was Max Herzberg (1886-1958), who was then literary editor of *The Newark Evening News* and principal of Weequahic High School in Newark, New Jersey. Herzberg had a long-standing liking for science-fiction, and frequently chose books in the genre for

favorable review. In the late 1940's he started a discussion class in science-fiction, and I worked with him at that time on a projected science-fiction anthology for high school use. Most importantly, Herzberg was also chairman of the Selection Committee of the Teen Age Book Club. In 1951 he and I had several discussions about whether to choose, for the first time, science-fiction titles for club selections, and I was able to convince him that although the move would set a precedent, it was by then both timely and appropriate. And since the Teen Age Book Club was a national organization with a large membership, this decision was widely influential. In his article "Fiction That Outstrips Science" (*Scholastic Teacher*, October 8, 1952) Herzberg rationalized the new policy as providing "the best" for "a growing army of S-F fans." By the time it had appeared, the first three selections had already been offered the membership; they were *Mission Interplanetary* by A. E. van Vogt, *Beyond the Moon* by Edmond Hamilton and *The Green Hills of Earth* by Robert A. Heinlein.

Lerner also documents well the acceptance of science-fiction by libraries, which actually created a market for expansion of more titles in hard covers. On this subject he is particularly well qualified to speak, since he is himself a librarian by profession.

The harsh criticism by several reviewers of this volume is scarcely complimentary to their alleged expertise. To me it reveals that they have little understanding of what true scholarship is. The thousands of references cited in this book are destined to provide grist for the mills of generations of scholars on innumerable facets of the field. If Lerner himself does not elaborate on them in future work I predict many others will enhance their reputations by climbing on his shoulders. My only general complaint is that at times he seems to waver between giving the real facts, as provided by his own carefully researched documentation, and succumbing to the glib and conventionally shallow interpretations favored by the Johnny-come-latelies in the field. Fortunately, his instinct for accuracy won out, and time will justify his choice.

Modern Science Fiction and the American Literary Community is a book that no reference library should be without. It should have the highest priority on the list of anyone doing research in science-fiction, for its main thesis has been splendidly realized.

Sam Moskowitz

DAYWORLD by Philip José Farmer. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1985. 320 pp. 23.5 cm. $16.95

Philip José Farmer is one of the honored masters of science-fiction, and this is his most recent book. It is the first in what will probably become a new series, whose idea comes from the author's short story "The Sliced-Crosswise-only-on-Thursday World," which takes place in the year 2214 A. D. The events of *Dayworld* occur in seven distinctly different, wild Manhattan life-styles of a millenium later, in 3414 A. D.

Farmer continues the popular science-fiction tradition of passing on warnings to us little guys regarding manipulations of science by the powers-that-be for their own personal gains by presenting a world government rooted in our modern ideas and dilemmas. With slogans like "only by being watched may you become free," references to the "ancient philosopher" Woody Allen, and proposals to implant every adult with microtransmitters that would constantly emit each individual's coded I. D., this government's satellites and local tracking stations would allow its officials to pin-point anyone's position within a few inches, thus effectively stripping humanity of any privacy whatsoever. (This idea isn't new, of course: Olaf Stapledon proposed an even more constricting version over forty years

ago in his novel *Darkness and the Light.*) Overpopulation has been solved by assigning each person one day per week to live. The other six days the people are "stoned," that is, kept in a state of suspended animation. Each body thus lives seven times a normal lifespan——one day a week at a time——in one reality of an Earth which has seven separate realities. 300,000 people a day live on the island of Manhattan; but the total population is actually 2,100,000. By becoming seven separate worlds they have speeded passage of the seasons, which the inhabitants perceive as lasting only a few waking days. All this unfortunately results in a society of sluggish change that loses six generations for every generation born.

Opposing this nefarious system, and chafing under its restrictions, is a rebel group possessing an elixir of artificial origin which extends life seven times the seven that the government has already extended it. This elixir is a symbiotic organism which, when implanted in a blood vessel, cleanses plaque from the arteries and suppresses other ageing processes of human cells. It is a secret the rebels are willing to kill to preserve, because it allows their most important agents to live seven separate lives——one each day of the week. This so-called "day-breaking" life-style is constantly threatened by the world government's spying and strict regulations.

The hero in Farmer's interesting background but unsurprising plot is Jeff Caird, who was supposedly named after Thomas Jefferson. He is a rebel "day-breaker," actually a new person every day, who finds each of his selves threatened when the authorities close in on him, causing each self-image to clash with the others. He finds that his different roles juggle him, rather than vice versa. He also finds his rebel group all too willing to sacrifice him to preserve their secret. Later he learns that if therapy fails to cure multiple personality disorders he will be relegated to gather dust in some vast warehouse along with billions of other forgotten "stoned" souls.

Near the end of the book the world goverment steals the rebels' secret and keeps it for the exclusive use of the ruling class. This, I am sure, is a neat excuse for Farmer to continue his saga in a future novel at least as long as this one; but on its own *Dayworld* does seem to make the effective point that instead of accepting the powers-that-be's secrecy and lying it is better for humanity to take on the dangers of democracy along with its benefits——you can't have one without the other.

Should you buy the book? For all its complexity and occasional cleverness *Dayworld* does leave a rather pot-boilerish taste in the mouth, especially at its apparently inevitable hard-cover price. There are far worse pot-boilers cluttering up the field, it is true; but unless you're a Farmer collector I'd recommend waiting for the paperback printing.

H. R. Felgenhauer

URANIA'S DAUGHTERS / A CHECKLIST OF WOMEN SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS, 1692-1982 by Roger C. Schlobin. Mercer Island, Wash.: Starmont House, 1983. xiii-79 pp. 20.8 cm. $6.95 (paper). Starmont Reference Guide no. 1.

Roger Schlobin's scholarship is well known and respected in the academic circles of science-fiction. His work has a reputation for comprehensiveness and depth. He has been published not only by small firms like Garland Publishing, but also by large and respected university presses. I therefore looked forward with eagerness to *Urania's Daughters.* I had hoped to learn more of female genre writers, and anticipated this work going far in filling the vast *terra incognita* which is women's science-fiction. However, while this work may be, as Schlobin describes it, "The largest checklist of women's science fiction to date," that honor is due more to the paucity of competition than to the quality or comprehensiveness of Schlobin's work.

Urania's Daughters purports to be a checklist of 375 [*sic*] female authors covering 830 [*sic*] science-fiction, book-length, English-language novels, collections, and anthologies published from 1692 to 1982. Like Newton, Schlobin stood on the shoulders of giants and acknowledges his debts to the reference works of Bleiler, Tuck and Reginald, among others.

But the problems begin immediately with his sub-title, *Women Science Fiction Writers, 1692-1982,* which turns out to be a misnomer. The 1692 work to which he refers is Gabriel Daniel's *A Voyage to the World of Cartesius,* an English translation of the French original. Unfortunately, Schlobin did not stand on the gigantic shoulders of Webster, whose *Biographical Dictionary* tells us (among other things) that Gabriel Daniel was a prominent French historian and Jesuit priest——and very much male.

This misstep not only truncates Schlobin's subtitle, but leads us to another male author nestling among the females ones: Gabriel Tarde. According to Schlobin, "Ms." Tarde wrote *Underground Man,* a work also translated from the original French and published in London with a preface by H. G. Wells in 1905. However, *Webster's Biographical Dictionary* tells us that this Gabriel, too, was a French *man*——as well as a prominent sociologist, criminologist and professor of modern philosophy at the College de France.

Now, it is true that there are many sexually ambiguous first names on the list, and in his "Introduction" Schlobin notes that he probably "included a few that should not have been . . . because of gender-difficult names." But these examples surely do not fall into a "gender-difficult" category. While I'm perhaps willing to concede that, say, Jean Delaire (who wrote *Around a Distant Star,* 1904) *might* be a woman, the Gabriels do not share such ambiguity——their spellings are the standard male variants of that given name. This male specificity is highlighted by Schlobin's inclusion of Gabrielle Long (a. k. a. Marjorie Bowen) among his authors.

So, eliminating Gabriel Daniel's 1692 work, Schlobin's new subtitle would be ". . . *1753-1982,*" for 1753 is his next oldest listing. But here we run into a problem we don't need Webster to correct. The 1753 listing is for *Micromegas: a Comic Romance,* written, Schlobin tells us, originally in French by a woman named Francoise [*sic*] Voltaire! By the easy expedient of tacking an "e" on the end of Francois Voltaire's first name the most renowned of French philosophers has been annexed by Schlobin for his little checklist!

Well, that takes us up to 1755, and here (at last!) we finally *do* find an authentic female author: Eliza F. Haywood, who in that year published *The Invisible Spy* under the pseudonym of "Explorabilis."

But, while we at last have a woman, we also have the problem of incompleteness, for Schlobin really *could* have found earlier women (even earlier, in fact, than Gabriel Daniel) simply by checking Lyman Tower Sargent's *British and American Utopian Literature: 1516-1975* (1979)——hardly an esoteric source. Sargent, along with other sources Schlobin has overlooked, would also have vastly increased the number of his entries. For instance, Sargent tells us that in 1655 Lady Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, published *The Inventory of Judgements Commonwealth,* the first Utopian novel written by a woman! Or, if her series of specific reforms doesn't qualify as science-fiction, surely her later work, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), about a utopia at the North Pole, certainly does——and is still a quarter of a century earlier than Gabriel Daniel!

Nor does one need arcane reference works to add to Schlobin's list. For instance, the easily accessible *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* of Peter Nicholls (also, for some reason, not cited as one of Schlobin's sources) lists a number of female writers he omits: Doris Pitkin Buck, Marie Corelli, Margharita Laski, Mar-

jorie Hope Nicolson, Polly Toynbee and Vita Sackville-West——and this list is in no way exhaustive.

Similarly, the otherwise useful "Directory of Pseudonyms, Joint Authors, and Variant Names," included at the beginning of this checklist, contains some glaring oversights. Where, for instance, is Idris Seabright, the pseudonym of Margaret St. Clair? G. A. Morris isn't mentioned as a pseudonym of Katherine MacLean and, while we are told that Marjorie Bowen is a pseudonym of Gabrielle Long, there is no mention of "Joseph Shearing"——who is also Gabrielle Long.

In his "Introduction," speaking of academic work on female science-fiction authors, Roger Schlobin writes, "while science-fiction scholars may have been quick, they still have not been thorough."

To that we can certainly say, "Amen!"

Eric Leif Davin

SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND WEIRD FICTION MAGAZINES edited by Marshall B. Tymn and Mike Ashley. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985. xxx-970 pp. 24 cm. $95.00.

This lively yet scholarly volume instantly joins the ranks of basic science-fiction and fantasy references without which the researcher in these areas will be rendered a competitive cripple. Imagine a book that has a historical description and critique of virtually every magazine in or related to the science-fiction and fantasy fields with essential bibliographical data about each. It has roughly 600,000 words of material, and includes a substantial quantity of noteworthy foreign language publications and even fan magazines. While the work is the labor of many hands, the lion's share was contributed by the British enthusiast Mike Ashley, and a remarkable job he has done on it.

This is not the work of a group of bumbling amateurs whose aim exceeded their grasp. The editors have succeeded in assembling a master reference that as a unified whole is not likely to be surpassed, though lengthier and more detailed accounts of individual publications or publication units will undoubtedly appear in the future. It also represents a stern admonition and a formidable challenge to the academic group that has, up to now, largely ignored or sidestepped the very existence of the 50,000 or more stories collectively contained in the publications described, and attempted to create a discipline of science-fiction and fantasy without them. To examine this volume and realize that many who aspire to scholarship are ignorant of all but a few of them, that some know little of *any* of them, and yet that all still fatuously hope to make a meaningful contribution to the field, is to understand why most writings of academics in the genre have been so widely disdained and ridiculed.

Beginning as early as the 18th Century, but overwhelmingly during the 19th and 20th Centuries, magazines and even newspapers have been the cradle of science-fiction. Literally all of Jules Verne's work appeared first in periodical form (many in the magazine he himself edited for almost half a century). Almost all the science-fiction novels and short stories of H.G. Wells were printed in periodicals before appearing as books. Indeed, Wells acknowledged that he obtained some of his ideas from other authors who appeared in the very magazines to which he contributed. Magazines continued to be the spawning ground for most good science-fiction (and a very high percentage of mainstream fiction) at least through the first half of the present century. The reason is simple: they paid more. Only the most popular and prestigious authors could make a living though books alone.

One of the reasons magazines paid more was that their production costs were subsidized by advertising revenue. The amount of this revenue was determined chiefly by the size of the magazine's audience (its circulation) and by the nature

of that audience——i. e., was it the type and composition that would buy the products advertised. As advertising agencies became more sophisticated they discovered that while men earned most of the money, their wives made most of the buying decisions and did most of the outright purchasing. It became desirable, then, for the magazines to demonstrate to potential advertisers that they not only commanded a large audience, but that their audience possessed discretionary income and was heavily composed of women.

Until the late 1920's the only competition magazines had in the field of entertainment was the moving pictures——silent ones, at that——and the movies were not a medium for national advertising. To attract readers, the magazines bid against each other for the most popular authors whose work appealed to women. Editors found that women would read westerns and detective stories, providing they had a strong love-interest; but they were not fond of science-fiction. So we find writers as well known as H. G. Wells, in order to get the big dollars from the high circulation of *Collier's*, turning from s-f to write "The Soul of a Bishop," appropriately subtitled "a Novel with a Little Love in It." *The Ladies' Home Companion* was glad to pay $70,000 for first serial rights to a Zane Grey novel. At the time moving pictures were paying him only $25,000 a story, so it can be seen that to a top author the magazines represented a market superior to any other in existence. Of course if Zane Grey wanted to sell to the magazines he had to make sure that his westerns had a powerful love-interest——and they did!

If men, who did not care as much for such women-oriented material, wanted low-priced fictional entertainment they had to turn to the pulps——the adventure, detective, western and air titles that by printing on cheap paper could make a profit from the magazine's selling price alone with little or no advertising. The pulps stressed the most widely purchased types of fiction. Science-fiction was not one of these, and by the early 1920's it had largely disappeared from both the pulps and the mass-circulation magazines.

This left a gap which was soon filled. Hugo Gernsback, who had been publishing science-fiction as a matter of policy in his periodicals *Science and Invention* and *Radio News*, launched the first all science-fiction magazine in 1926. He found a ready-made audience of people who had few sources of their favorite reading matter. Certainly it was not nearly as large an audience as detective or western fiction enjoyed, but since there was no direct competition it was large enough to be profitable.

Those who were already authors of science-fiction, and those who wished to write it, found their market was limited to Gernsback and his later imitators. A sale to the mass-circulation, women-oriented magazines was as likely as winning a million-dollar lottery. Sales to book publishers were chancy. What is not widely realized today is that up until 1950 book publishers paid advances of no more than $125-500 for a standard novel. (Even the lesser pulps, on the average, paid better than that for first serial rights.) Science-fiction magazines were therefore by no means a substratum market for science-fiction; they were the *best* market, and except for a few near-geniuses like Wells, Huxley, Stapledon and Orwell, they got the most advanced and provocative science-fiction *first*.

Beyond that, many high-ranking mainstream authors like Philip Wylie, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Howard Fast, C. S. Lewis and even George Orwell are known to have read the pulps and gained inspiration from them. Further, all of these but Orwell have at one time or another voluntarily contributed to them——even at rates far below what they were accustomed to getting. It is true that Stapeldon's themes, like those of Wells, appear in scores of outstanding later works in the science-fiction pulps. On the other hand, one would have to be an extremist not to recognize that these magazines have also been a source of background in works of Franz Werfel, Doris Lessing, Robert Nathan, Ayn Rand and many others. There is a clear symbiotic relationship between the science-fiction pulps and the majority of mainstream authors whose science-fiction has appeared first in book form.

Finally, let us remember that a writer who sold to the magazines first had a chance of being paid at least twice for the same work. Even if he sold all rights initially, should a book or a foreign reprinting occur he would usually get *some* return. Well known authors, of course, could insist on selling the rights to their work in piecemeal fashion, and naturally maximized payments for each.

At the present time the paperback book has taken the place of the specialized pulps. In this form novels, on the average, sell better than collections of short stories. Hundreds of original science-fiction paperback novels appear annually. Note the contrast: when magazines predominated, they featured short stories——not because these were necessarily preferred, but because the format did not lend itself as well to the complete novel. (Novels were published, of course, but split up into short story-length installments.)

Today's boom in hard-cover books also evolved from the pulp magazines. Even before World War II ended, specialty book publishers were printing limited editions of stories from the fantasy pulps; they sold very well and were being collected. By 1950 mainline publishers like Doubleday and Simon & Schuster were offering science-fiction in hard covers. At first most of what they published were magazine reprints, but gradually they ran out of suitable material and had to rely on original works. By the 1980's the wide popularity of science-fiction had put genre hard-covers on the best-seller lists so frequently that most publishers issue them and libraries routinely procure them.

All the foregoing is a prelude to stating that any scholar who is not well versed in the periodical background of science-fiction is at a severe disadvantage in competing intelligently with those who are. Just as few youngsters are likely to be successful in high school if they have skimped the learning skills of grammar school, so are those who want to do serious work in science-fiction as severely hampered by not being acquianted with magazine fiction and all its collateral embellishments. To be quite serious, there should be a college-level course on the science-fiction, fantasy and weird magazines——for which this book could serve as a fine reference text. The pulps are perishable, but already academics like Thomas Clareson have begun to make many of them available in microfiche form. Selected individual issues have even been reprinted in entirety. Most of the magazines themselves are still available from second-hand sources in reasonable quantities, with the digest-sized ones from 1943 on being literally a glut on the market. Indices of the fantasy pulps in great variety and quantity have also been available for a long time. The number of university libraries with major collections in the genre is growing. But still only the smallest beginning has been made on indexing the reference material found in the specialist science-fiction magazines. A fine example is Mike Ashley's *Complete Index to Astounding/Analog* (1981), which catalogs not only all the fiction and non-fiction, but the letters in the readers' columns as well. Those doing research on genre authors, for example, will certainly find useful the dozens of letters by Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson, James Blish, Anthony Boucher, John Brunner, Ray Bradbury, John W. Campbell, Jr., Arthur C. Clarke, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert A. Heinlein, August W. Derleth, L. Ron Hubbard and a great many others, some of them written before the individuals had ever sold a story. But no reference book has yet been compiled of articles *about* science-fiction and its practitioners in the fantasy magazines. That seems incredible when one considers that there may be several thousand of them, many probably carrying information available nowhere else!

Beyond that, the special issues on themes I have seen in academic magazines and books show particularly clearly that closer acquaintanceship with periodical science-fiction is needed. Frequently they make little or no reference to the historically important stories on their subjects which preceded those they do discuss. Great enthusiasm is inappropriately expressed over a story that is but a copy of earlier and better ones——its only distinguishing merit being that it was handily available.

In preparing this compendium of information, the contributors have made extraordinary use of many of the sources discussed. For each entry they provide information index and reprint sources, as well as data on foreign editions and anthologies taken from the magazine. They even add location sources. These last are usually repositories that might be generally accessible rather than private collections (though where none such exist they might have listed private collections to confirm a title's existence). There is also a publication history for each entry, which includes information on editors, and even a special index of cover artists.

While the editors do not claim completeness in the area, they do list and comment upon several hundred foreign magazines in the genre, as well as those series of anthologies (both hard-cover and paperback) whose regularity of appearance approximate periodical publication schedules. And with bravery above and beyond the call of duty they even include a beginning listing of outstanding academic and fan magazines in the field.

As I am familiar with all the English-language fantasy magazines, and own a representative quantity of those in foreign tongues, I can state with certainty that the descriptions of these found here are largely accurate, and free from major errors. A few errors do exist, but they seem either errors of interpretation or ones caused by accepting second-hand information at its face value instead of consulting primary sources. As a reviwer it is obligatory that I point out some of these, if only to facilitate corrections for future editions.

In the very comprehensive account of *Amazing Stories* we are informed (p. 18) that "Beyond the Pole" by A. Hyatt Verrill was "the first new story which [editor] Brandt accepted. . . ." This leaves the erroneous impression that there had been no original stories in *Amazing* previous to that; but actually (page 17) it has already been correctly stated that the first new story was G. Peyton Wertenbaker's "The Coming of the Ice," which appeared in the June, 1926 issue——four months earlier. To avoid ambiguity the Verrill statement should be reworded. In discussing the magazine's symbolic covers of 1933 (page 23) the artist's name is incorrectly spelled "Sigmund" instead of "Sigmond." Mackinnon is incorrectly given as the publisher (page 23) when it should be Lee Elmaker, President of Teck Publications. Abner J. Gelula's story "Automaton" in the November, 1931 *Amazing* is claimed (page 27) to be "the first SF pulp story to be filmed"; it was never actually filmed——only optioned.

The first editor of *Astounding Stories* was Harry Bates. For many years it was believed (and even asserted by Bates himself) that he had had no prior acquaintance with the field, and that incorrect version appears here (page 61). But in 1981 it was revealed that he had known about science-fiction for at least a year before accepting the editorship, and had even written a story that had been pseudonymously published in *Amazing Stories Quarterly*. (See *Fantasy Commentator V*, 147 [1984] for an account of this.)

For a time Bates's assistant at Clayton Magazines was Desmond Hall. He and Bates collaborated in writing a series of space adventure stories featuring the character Hawk Carse which were very popular at the time. Hall was born in Sydney, Australia in 1909 or 1911 (in autobiographical sketches written fourteen years apart he gives two different dates). He came to the United States with his parents in 1916, and was later graduated from the University of California. He began writing in 1927, and apparently became acquainted with Bates through selling two novels to *Wide-World Adventures* magazine, which Bates edited. On a trip to New York he visited Bates, and was offered the job of assistant editor of *Astounding*. He stayed in New York in that role for nine months, and then went back to California, though he continued to write for Clayton as D. W. Hall. When Street &

continued on page 48

above:
David Lasser in the 1930's

top right:
David Lasser in the 1980's

middle right:
Charles Hornig in March, 1940

bottom right:
Charles Hornig in May, 1980

"The Age of Wonder"——continued from page 25

Did you ever meet any of these authors?

Yes. I met Jack Williamson several times. He gave the impression of being a New Mexico cowboy, which was actually what he was. He had a Western drawl and he walked and acted and looked just like a cowpoke. You'd never think he could sit down and write his wonderful stuff.

Dr. Keller was a great guy. I visited his home a couple of times in Pennsylvania, where he was the supervisor of a mental hospital. He also came into the New York office frequently because he was the editor of Gernsback's *Sexology* magazine. That was the first serious sex magazine, a scientific magazine which discussed sexual matters that were greatly taboo at the time.

Dr. Keller was a better writer than many, but his manuscripts were terrible to edit because he typed them himself and they were horrible. Not only was he a poor typist, but his grammar was poor, his punctuation was all wrong, and he couldn't spell. They took a lot of editing. But once you cleaned them up you had good stories.

Did you meet Laurence Manning?

Several times. He come into the office because he was a friend of Gernsback. Once in a while we'd have an office party and he's be there. He was a quiet, mild man, very good looking.

You mentioned Fletcher Pratt as a translator of German stories for Gernsback...

Right. He was also a very quiet, unassuming middle-aged man. I think he smoked a pipe. An ordinary looking man——nothing special about his looks.

Wasn't he also a historian?

That's right. He was a military historian. He'd done a lot of work in that field, but I didn't read it because I wasn't interested in it.

Did you ever meet Leslie Stone?

Yes, once. It was an interesting adventure. It was over the Labor Day weekend of 1935. I had an old jalopy, a 1926 Chrysler. Julie Schwartz and I decided to take a trip around for several days visiting fans and writers within a few miles of New York. So we drove to Pennsylvania and stayed overnight with Lloyd Eshbach in Reading. Then we went on the visit William Crawford, who later became known as the Father of small press science-fiction publishing. Then we went on to Ohio and West Virginia.

On the way back we stopped in Washington, D. C. Leslie F. Stone was living there with her husband. We spent a long Sunday afternoon and evening with them, talking until about two o'clock in the morning. Unfortunately, I can't remember anything about the conversation. But she was very pleasant, a good looking young woman. She was an exceptionally good writer, too.

I was also probably the first one in the field to meet C. L. Moore. Catherine was already writing for *Weird Tales*. She knew quite a bit about science fiction, but she wrote a very distinctive type of story that was more fantasy than science-fiction. She lived in Indianapolis at the time, working as the secretary to the vice-president of the Fletcher Trust Co. When I drove across the country in 1936, after *Wonder Stories* folded, I dropped in on her at work. We went out for lunch together and had a very nice talk. She was an attractive young woman, very beautiful, very pleasant. She told me she wanted to go to California also—— and eventually she did, and married Henry Kuttner.

Did you ever meet Amelia Reynolds Long?

Yes, on the trip with Julius Schwartz in 1935. After stopping at Esh-

bach's, we went on to Harrisburg, where she lived. On seeing her we were really shocked. This was 1935, but when she opened the door to greet us she was dressed as if it were 1865. She wore high, buttoned shoes and very old-fashioned clothing. She wasn't an old woman, only about thirty or thirty-five, but you'd swear you were back in the days of Lincoln.

She also had very shifty eyes. She wouldn't look straight at you. Quite a weird character! We had only a brief conversation at the door because she didn't invite us in. We weren't expected, and I think she was embarrassed because we just dropped in. She was a strange one!

How about Clark Ashton Smith?

Oh, yes——another strange one. He was quite a good friend of mine, although I met him in person only once, on a trip back from California in 1938. He helped me start *The Fantasy Fan*. I obtained the addresses of a number of writers somewhere, perhaps from Forrest Ackerman. So I wrote to Smith, Lovecraft, Derleth and a number of others. All of them sent me manuscripts to publish free of charge in *The Fantasy Fan*. Unfortunately, these are now in the common domain because I didn't copyright anything. Derleth later used a lot of these stories in his Arkham House books.

Anyway, Smith lived near Auburn, California. That's about thirty miles east of Sacramento. He met me at the hotel bus station and drove me to his isolated cabin. He lived way out of town on top of a mountain in a tiny cabin all by himself. However, he had decorated the place in the fashion of his writings. For instance, he had a rock garden in which every single rock was a gargoyle. He was also a good painter, and his weird paintings were hanging all over the walls. It was all very bizarre. Smith was probably Lovecraft's best friend, although they never met.

I understand Lovecraft was also pretty weird.

Yes, he was. He was a recluse. He was very tall and thin. He didn't dress in an old-fashioned style, but very plainly. He looked like an undertaker, with a very somber appearance, but he was actually very good-natured. I met Lovecraft a number of times, but the only time I remember well was in 1935, two years before he died. He was about 44 then, and was living with his aunt in her house right off the Brown University campus in Providence.

Lovecraft despised anything modern. He never went into downtown Providence. Hated it. He took me on a guided tour of Providence and showed me sights that hadn't changed for 300 years——mostly graveyards. He loved them. Except for cars parked in the distance, you could easily imagine it being 1635 instead of 1935. He could also pronounce words which no one else could, like "Cthulhu," or whatever that strange god of his was. You'd choke trying to pronounce that word the way he did. It started way down in the bottom of his throat.

Could you pronounce it the way Lovecraft did?

[laughter] No, I'd choke right here if I tried! But we had quite a correspondence between us. Years later, when I was hard up, I sold my correspondence to somebody in Texas.

Did you ever meet Raymond Z. Gallun?

I always pronounced it like "gallon."

I think he pronounces his name to rhyme with "balloon."

Well, it's nice to know that after all these years. No, I never met him, although he was one of my favorite writers and I've been reading his stuff for over half a century.

Didn't you meet Isaac Asimov around that time also?

As a matter of fact I did, but I didn't realize it. He was in the Futurians, or on the edge of that group, and lived on Long Island at the time. I was reading one of his anthologies a few years back. He had little blurbs before each story telling how the story came about. In one of these he said, "Charles D. Hornig is the only science-fiction notable who has absolutely no talent." I got a kick out of that, so I wrote to him and said, "I come to New York frequently, and I'd like to meet you. I don't think we've ever met." (He'd also written in that blurb that he'd never met me.) So on my next trip to New York I went to his apartment near Central Park. He greeted me and said, "You know, I discovered that we *did* meet, back around 1939[33] when you were out in Brooklyn. I found it in one of my old diaries.

Then he showed me these voluminous diaries he's been keeping since the early 1930's, and said he was going to use them to write his autobiography, which he's since done. Asimov can tell you on which day thirty years ago he had a flat tire! I don't think anyone could stand to read them unless they were dyed-in-the-wool fans of his. Just too much trivial detail. But neither of us recalled that 1939 meeting. Except for his diaries, we'd never have known it.

So we had a very nice afternoon and he showed me his collection of Asimov books, big cupboards filled with them in every language in the world. Asimov has a tremendous ego, but he deserves it because he's a genius. He's got a brain that absorbs everything. He can write a book a week——as fast as he can type. He has no secretary. He has no agent. He does everything himself. He just recently got a word processor. And despite doing everything himself, he's now put out 300 books. It's just amazing.

As a result of that meeting I wrote an article called "The Greatest Non-Talent in Science Fiction," which was published in *Galileo* in 1979. It was sorta tongue-in-cheek, demonstrating how I was the greatest non-talent. There was a bit of autobiography, but basically I advised science-fiction writers who didn't have a great deal of talent how to succeed in the field.

Was there anyone you didn't hit it off with?

The one author I had unpleasant experiences with, unwittingly, was probably the greatest editor in science-fiction——John W. Campbell, Jr. Campbell was a very popular writer when I was still fourteen or fifteen. He'd written novels which had appeared in *Wonder Stories*, *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, and so on.

One day about 1934 Campbell walked into my office. He'd not joined *Astounding* yet and was still just a writer. He brought with him a great pile of short stories which he told me I could publish. But, he said, "I have to have a cent a word for them." Now this was double our going rate, so I said, "Well, I'll have to talk to Gernsback about that because he doesn't generally pay that much." And Campbell said, "Well, you let me know. If you pay a cent a word you can have them."

I read them immediately and *none* of them was any good. Evidently he was trying to pawn off on me stuff he'd written as a child or a young man, things he'd had in a drawer for ten or fifteen years that no one else would buy. Probably he thought, "What does this kid know about anything? He'll be glad to publish anything by John W. Campbell!" But I just couldn't do it. I passed them on to Gernsback and told him, "I'm sorry, but I don't think any of these are worth publishing, and anyway he wants a cent a word." Gernsback agreed.

So I called Campbell and I rejected them. After that I never got along with Campbell. At conventions he would purposely snub me. Campbell was a great one for hating people. Then again, I was "inferior" to him. I didn't know science properly and I couldn't write for *Astouding*, so I wasn't worth much in his eyes.

But I humbled myself enough once to ask Campbell for a job. Years after I'd left *Wonder Stories* I tried again to get back into science-fiction, so I wrote to him asking for a job at *Astounding*, which he was then editing. He replied, asking me to come in and see him. I went and he told me "No." I think he only wanted to see me crawl. But that was the only unpleasant relationship I had with any of the authors.

What about Frank Paul?

He was probably the most likeable person in the field. He was full of sun and laughter and smiled all the time——always pleasant and cooperative. I was fascinated watching him work as he painted covers for *Wonder Stories*. The art studio was in another room. First we were at 98 Park Place behind the Woolworth Building, and then in about April of 1934 we moved to 99 Hudson Street, about a mile uptown.

Paul did most of his painting and black-and-white art work right there in that studio. I'd make suggestions and he'd paint some of them. Usually what he did was read the story——he liked science-fiction——and he'd get ideas from the story. Generally, his own suggestion for an illustration would be the best.

Paul had other clients he also worked for, and another office somewhere else in downtown New York. One day in 1936 I visited his other office and found he was painting something really odd. "What's that?" I asked. "That's a cross-section of the New York subway," he said. "There's going to be a new magazine out called *Life* and they want to run this." So even after *Wonder* folded, he did all right.[34]

So most of the ideas for Paul's paintings he thought of himself?

Yes, although if I had an idea I *really* thought was good, Paul would generally go along with it. He'd take ideas from anyone, but generally his own were the best. We had a lot of other artists as well. Them I told specifically what I wanted and they'd just go home and do it. These were all interiors, because Paul did all the covers.

If you remember Paul's work, a lot of his characters, even for the 1930's, looked old-fashioned or European. They were wearing knickers, for one thing. Even then only little boys wore knickers——we didn't wear long pants till we were about fifteen or sixteen years old then. Paul was weak on painting people. But he was great on the weird stuff and the machinery.

What was the state of fandom at that time?

There was a lot more enthusiasm, and it dealt with science-fiction more than it does now. Now it's personalities. You go to a convention today and you hardly hear anything about science-fiction. In those days it was the stories, the ideas. We felt exclusive because we were an outcast society. People didn't accept science-fiction, so there was a lot of camaraderie which you don't see today. We were on the outskirts of civilization. We all had friends and relatives who laughed at science-fiction, so we sought each other out for companionship.

Of course there were also a lot fewer of us. For instance, the first World Science Fiction Convention in New York in 1939 had only about 200 or 250 attendees, and we thought that was a big deal.

Didn't you organize the Science Fiction League while at Wonder Stories?

Right, and that was the first real organization of fandom. It was Gernsback's idea, but I did all the organizing. Gernsback had already established a Radio League to support his radio magazine and thought a science-fiction league, composed of officially chartered local clubs, would be good for the magazine. So he he told me to set it up. I really enjoyed the work. We chartered chapters, sent out membership certificates which were beautiful scrolls, and the idea really took

off. The League got a lot of isolated fans in touch with each other, and local chapters just seemed to mushroom all over the country.

But some fans didn't like the idea that it was sponsored by and designed to support a commercial magazine. So they splintered off from the League and things grew in that direction, too. We had chapters all over the world. It went very well for a couple of years until *Wonder Stories* folded. After that the League folded also, but the fans kept on. And at least in inspiration, all the fan organizations of today can really be traced back to that beginning.

Sometimes there's a more direct connection. For instance, the Los Angeles Science Fiction League, which I helped organize in 1934 and which had Forrest Ackerman and Ray Bradbury as members, became the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society, which is still in existence today——half a century later. It's probably the longest-running organization of science-fiction fans anywhere.

So, we had a pretty good time in fandom. I even had a reconciliation with Leo Margulies, who died in 1975. You know the story of how I left *Wonder Stories*, don't you?

Tell me.

Well, Gernsback finally ran out of money and sold *Wonder* to Beacon Magazines in early 1936. Our last issue was dated April and their first one was dated August. But they changed the name to *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. Beacon had a lot of other magazines which all had the word "thrilling" on them——*Thrilling Detective*, *Thrilling Western*, and so on. They had about six editors working under Leo Margulies, who was Editorial Director of the house. In fact, one of those editors was my friend Mort Weisinger, an original fan along with Julie Schwartz. Mort had started working for Margulies in January or so of 1936. So when Gernsback sold *Wonder* to Ned Pines, the publisher of Beacon magazines, he said to me, "Maybe you can get with Beacon." I called up Margulies and told him I'd been editing for two and a half years and would like to join his staff. He said, "That sounds great. I'll have to talk it over with Pines. Call me back Monday."

So I figured I'd be hired. I didn't know how I'd do there, because you had to do a lot more than just science-fiction; you had to read detective stories, westerns, a lot of other things. But with the purchase of *Wonder*, they needed a specialist in science-fiction. Then over the weekend I began thinking: "Mort Weisinger is working for Margulies, and he knows science-fiction. Maybe I'm not needed after all."

Then on Monday Margulies said, "I'm sorry, but we can't use you here." He seemed rather abrupt. I asked, "What did Mort have to do with it?" He said, "None of your business, son!" and hung up. I guess I wasn't supposed to have asked about that. But I figured Mort had probably said,"What do you need Hornig for? I know science-fiction." And in fact he did become editor of *Thrilling Wonder*.

Three years later, at the 1939 convention, I finally got a chance to talk to Margulies again, this time on a friendly basis. He was a nice guy if you could get to know him.

Had Gernsback given you much warning that the magazine was folding?

No, but I gradually got the idea. For instance, two months before the end I got a request from Finland from a publisher who wanted to reprint some of our stories. I went to Mannheimer, who was the business manager, and asked him if it was all right. He said, "Yeah, I guess so." Then I tried to make a pun, saying "Well, I guess this'll be the *Finnish* of *Wonder Stories*!" And Mannheimer said, "You *bet* it's the finish." That was my first warning. Two months later Gernsback sold out. I left in February, 1936.

What did you do after leaving Wonder Stories?

I couldn't find another opening in the field, so I sort of went off in other directions. I bought a large-sized paperback entitled *100 Ways to Make a*

Living. In the 'thirties everybody wanted desperately to make a living, so it was a good seller. I thought I ought to be able to find one way that worked out of a hundred. The book had pictures and descriptions of all kinds——you could invent your own chemical formulae, invent products to sell, and what not.

One way was putting out special editions of small town newspapers. It told you how to put out commemorative editions. I got three or four papers temporarily interested, then they dropped the idea.

Or you could be a representative for European corporations. So I called myself Hornig Consolidated Service and, at nineteen years of age, wrote to several English corporations saying,"I want to be your American representative." They all wrote back and asked for a list of companies I already represented. So that didn't work out. Another way was public typing. Well, I could type and I figured I could make some money at that, since it was what I'd been doing before I started working for Gernsback. And it was the only thing I really did make money at.

Then I found out that this book I was following was another one of Gernsback's ideas! He was behind it!

So I took off for California. I spent about four weeks in Los Angeles, met a number of L. A. fans, and became good friends with Forrest Ackerman. He was still living with his grandparents at the time. Even then he had the largest sciience-fiction collection I'd ever seen, although it didn't fill three garages and seven room as it does today. He'd been collecting since he was ten and had everything in the field up to that time.

But you just couldn't find a job out there unless you were a native Californian, so I went back to New York. In the Fall of 1936 I finally got a bookkeeping job with a photo-engraving company uptown. That lasted for a year and a half, but they were paying only $18 a week. I decided that wasn't enough, so I went back to California——and so on and so on.

During the war you were a Conscientious Objector. Did you belong to a pacifist church?

No, it was just the way I personally felt when I became certain we were going to get into the war. I wasn't going to be part of it. I wasn't going to kill anybody. Since that seemed to be the main occupation of an army, I wasn't going to serve. But I'd never even heard of the term "Conscientious Objector." I I had no idea there was a recognized position, or that there was this draft status you could request. I thought they'd probably just take me out and shoot me when it came time to register for the draft. I didn't know anything!

I thought of escaping to the South Seas——that seemed far enough away from the war. The place I picked was an obscure little island no one had ever heard of called New Caledonia; I figured no one would ever find that place. Of course, to show you what I knew of things, that island became a major battlefield of the Pacific war, so it's just as well I never made it.

But by the time I registered for the draft, which I did in Elizabeth, New Jersey in 1940, I'd become more knowledgeable. And I registered as a Conscientious Objector. But Elizabeth was very conservative politically, and I decided my local board wasn't likely to classify me as a Conscientious Objector because I wasn't a Quaker or a Mennonite or a Brethren or a member of any other peace church. I decided to go to Los Angeles, where I felt I'd have a better chance. My draft registration was transferred there and I did indeed get a C. O. status.

Then I was drafted for civilian alternative service and sent to Cascade Locks, a Civilian Public Service Camp in Columbia Gorge, Oregon, a beautiful place. It was an old Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, and was run pretty much like the C.C.C. We worked for the Forest Service putting out forest fires, maintaining forest trails, and that sort of thing. I enjoyed it very much, and made a lot of friends among the other C.O.'s. It was the first community I'd ever really be-

longed to. We've kept in touch, and in fact I just got back from a camp reunion. This was 1942, and our most prominent camper was the movie star Lew Ayres. He was with us for about seven weeks before he succeeded in getting his 1A0 status changed so that he could choose his own corps when joining the army. He wanted the Medical Corps and eventually he got it.

I really hated to leave Cascade Locks, but I decided I just couldn't stand the regimentation any more. It was run like a prison. They told us we had no rights any more, only privileges——which they then took away. After they cancelled all our furloughs, I decided that I'd rather be in an honest prison than in a hypocritical prison. So after a year I just walked away one day and never went back. I knew the F.B.I. would come for me, but in the meantime I had a few months of freedom. I went back to New York and I married Florence.

Then the F.B.I. arrested me and sent me back to Oregon, which had jurisdiction over my "crime." I was tried and sentenced in October of 1943 to three years in prison. I served a year at McNeil Island, a federal prison in the state of Washington, and then I was paroled to work in a Seattle hospital. My daughter was born while I was in prison. I have two children and four grandchildren.

Actually, McNeil Island had an absolutely beautiful setting. We had the sun rising behind Mt. Ranier in one direction and setting behind the Olympics in the other. It was an absolutely marvellous place to spend a year if you had to be in prison——certainly better than New Caledonia would have been!

What have you been doing since World War II?

Well, I did a lot more *before* World War II than I've done since. In Seattle I caught pneumonia, and they agreed to transfer me to Los Angeles, a more clement climate. We were in L.A. for about three years, working for various hospitals. Then I worked for the Hospital Service of Southern California. Blue Cross started in 1944, and this was one of the first Blue Cross plans in the country. In 1948 I was replaced at that job by IBM computers.

Now, my wife and I are both pacifists and we saw an ad in the *Fellowship* magazine, which was put out by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the leading Christian pacifist organization of the day. The Fellowship was looking for an office manager and a secretary for A. J. Muste, who was then the most prominent pacifist. We thought we'd fill the bill. We wrote them, and they accepted us. So we moved back East and lived around New York and New Jersey for three years.

We came back to California in 1952, moved into this place, and we've stayed here for the past 34 years. Most of that time I've worked preparing income tax returns. It seemed to be the most practical, because I work only fifteen weeks of the year and I don't have to work the rest of the time. I like that. Of course, I do a year's work in those fifteen weeks. I work twelve hours a day, seven days a week. But I'd rather do it that way.

Have you kept up with the science-fiction field?

Not really, though I do read science-fiction frequently. I read anthologies and I subscribe to *Analog*. I'm reading Asimov——he's my favorite author right now. But I don't really keep up with the field, and I certainly can't keep up with fandom. They lost me back in the 1950's when there was such a proliferation of magazines. I just couldn't keep up. So I just pick at them here and there and occasionally I go to conventions.

Are there any you're looking forward to?

Well, I'll tell ya. The next thing I'm looking forward to is Forrest Ackerman's seventieth birthday bash in L. A. He's having a big blow-out at the Biltmore Hotel, and he expects me down there for it in late November. We've known each other since we were teen-agers, so I can't stand him up now! [35]

NOTES

(1) Moskowitz, Sam, "Amazing Encounter" part II, *Fantasy Review* #89 (March, 1986), p. 9.
(2) As quoted by James Blish in "Introduction——the Function of Science Fiction," to *The Light Fantastic: Science Fiction Classics from the Mainstream,* edited by Harry Harrison, New York, 1971, p. 7.
(3) Jack Williamson has kindly made available to me for this article his correspondence with Hugo Gernsback and David Lasser.
(4) Ref. 1, p. 10. Actually this represents the ratio of assets to disbursements at the time of the bankruptcy. Because of administration fees creditors would have received slightly less (about 95% of their claims, according to an estimate published in *The New York Times* on April 3, 1929). But because of a New York State tax claim that was appealed all the way up to the Supreme Court, matters were not wound up until late 1935, by which time these fees had eaten up even more of the funds. The final figure was 85¢ on the dollar.
(5) Although Gernsback denied this source during the bankruptcy proceedings.
(6) *The New York Herald-Tribune,* Jan. 28, 1931.
(7) *The New York Times,* April 4, 1931, p. 28, col. 2.
(8) *Ibid.,* Oct. 23, 1931, p. 26, col. 4.
(9) Gallun, Raymond Z., *The Best of Raymond Z. Gallun,* New York, 1978, p. 326.
(10) *The New York Times Book Review,* Jan. 10, 1932. The book was also favorably reviewed in *Books, The Saturday Review of Literature* and *The Boston Transcript.* It was noted as well in the science-fiction community by C. A. Brandt (*Amazing Stories,* Nov. 1934); by then, of course, it was long out of print.
(11) *Ibid.,* March 6, 1983.
(12) Not to be confused with the Jules Verne Prize, which was sponsored, starting in 1927, by the French magazine *Lectures pour Tous.* Hamilton's story beat out such worthy competition as Moore's "Shambleau," Wandrei's "A Race Through Time" and Keller's "Unto Us a Child Is Born." For details of this see Palmer, Raymond A., "Spilling the Atoms" in *Fantasy Magazine,* vol. 3 #1 (March, 1934), p. 20.
(13) Aldiss, Brian W., *Billion Year Spree,* New York, 1973, p. 209.
(14) In his March 22, 1932 letter to Jack Williamson.
(15) Asimov, Isaac, *In Memory Yet Green,* New York, 1979, p. 573.
(16) Letter, Lasser to Williamson, Dec. 24, 1931.
(17) Letter, Lasser to Williamson, Jan. 6, 1932.
(18) Asimov, Isaac, *Before the Golden Age,* Garden City, N. Y., 1974, p. xiv.
(19) Gallun, *op. cit.,* p. 328.
(20) The correct amount is $65.
(21) That statement was made by Democratic Representative Martin Dies of Texas. Republican Representative (later Senator) Everett Dirkson of Illinois led the fight against the WPA budget and introduced the amendment to bar payment of funds to Lasser. Both Dies and Dirkson lived to witness Neil Armstrong's moon landing of July 20, 1969.
(22) Letter to the author, August 14, 1986. Unless otherwise footnoted, all other quotations attributed to Moskowitz here are also from this source.
(23) Conversation with the author, August 21, 1986.
(24) Asimov, *op. cit.,* p. 578.
(25) *Ibid.,* p. 728.
(26) Letter, Moskowitz to the author, Oct. 19, 1986.
(27) Schwartz's own account of this appears in *After Ten Years: a Tribute to Stanley G. Weinbaum, 1902-1935,* collected by Gerry de la Ree and Sam Moskowitz (Westwood, N. J., 1945), p. 15, and was summarized in Moskowitz's *Explorers of the Infinite* (New York, 1960), p. 300.
(28) Gernsback paid a low flat rate for these stories, but in his letter to the author of November 10, 1986 Moskowitz says that Gernsback told him he also

paid Fletcher Pratt to translate them, so foreign reprints "frequently ended up costing him *more* than new stories." Moskowitz also believes Gernsback was responsible for the French and British novels that were sometimes serialized, which seems likely. These included *The Fall of the Eiffel Tower* by Charles de Richter, *The Green Man of Graypec* by Festus Pragnell, and *The Perfect World* by Benson Herbert. "Unfortunately," notes Moskowitz, these foreign reprints "were not as swift-paced as American material and did not have the same acceptance."

(29) "In contrast," remembers Moskowitz, "when I worked for Gernsback, he was often irritated and petulant (a good word to describe a frequent attitude of his) with the help." (Letter to the author, Nov. 10, 1986.)

(30) This was Joseph Kraus, who had been with Gernsback since the 1920's and who, with C. P. Mason (who wrote under the pen-name of Epaminondas T. Snooks), edited Gernsback's *Everyday Science and Mechanics*.

(31) It appeared in the July, 1934 issue, and was reviewed briefly by Raymond A. Palmer in *Fantasy Magazine* (Sept., 1934, p. 36).

(32) And often was, e. g., Stanton Coblentz's "Triple-Geared" (*Astounding Stories*, April, 1935). The theme is still in use today: see John D. Macdonald's *The Girl, the Gold Watch and Everything* (1981).

(33) At the May 7th meeting of the Queens Science Fiction League in Astoria, N. Y.

(34) This is part of a larger drawing of the United States titled "What President Roosevelt Did to the Map of the U. S. in Four Years with $6,500,000,000." It appeared in the Jan. 4, 1937 issue of *Life*.

(35) The author is grateful to Sam Moskowitz for his comments and for reading an early draft of parts of this article. Further commentary on this article (letter, Moskowitz to Searles, June 16, 1987) will be found on pages 63-64 of this magazine.

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Pulp Dream

Dreamt of pulp magazines again last night,
Not the brown-edged, desiccating copies
So much prized by the venal and the vapid,
But mint numbers bright with gaudy covers,
Glaring logos and graphic action art
(Black-jack-wielding felons in five o'clock
Shadow slugging it out with handsome, sinewy
Heroes brandishing huge, self-righteous guns);
Each immaculate issue, edges yet untrimmed,
Leaping out at me (*Detective Story Weekly*,
Clues, *Crimebusters* and two *Black Masks*!),
All eagerly seized, paid for, carried away,
Till sudden break of day and crumpled bedsheets
Proclaimed——oh, yeah——I'd been suckered again.

Joseph Wrzos

Book Reviews——continued from page 37

Smith procured *Astounding Stories* in 1933, editor F. Orlin Tremaine, who had been a Clayton executive and was now working for Street & Smith, offered him the associate editorship of *Astounding*, which he accepted.

Much of the routine work on that magazine was done by Hall, including handling correspondence with agents, authors and readers. (Jack Williamson remembers responding to a solicitation from Hall in late 1933.) He was undoubtedly an asset to the magazine, but in the otherwise excellent entry on *Astounding/Analog* in this book there is a misunderstanding of the role of an associate editor and a misstatement as to the length of Hall's service. On page 64 it is stated that "the transfer of power to a new general of managers was accomplished when Campbell was brought on board, first as assistant editor replacing Hall, and later as overall editor."

Actually, Hall did not remain in his post for much more than one year. Some time before September, 1934 he was transferred to *Madamoiselle*, a new magazine whose initiation Tremaine was also overseeing. (Because he had formerly edited a number of women's publications like *True Story* and *Miss 1930*, the company thought he could devise a successful new slick paper magazine of this kind.) The first issue (February, 1935) was the only one he worked on, but Hall remained on the staff of *Madamoiselle* for some time, though he never became editor-in-chief. His career thereafter has never been described, but I suspect he reverted to his original occupation of free-lance writer; he sold fiction to the pulps and wrote at least two books, *A Woman of 50* (1948) and *I Give You Oscar Wilde* (1965).

Hall's place with *Astounding* was taken by R. V. Happel, who may already have been a Street & Smith employee. (Happel had sold a story to *Amazing Stories Quarterly*——"The Triple Ray," Fall, 1930 issue——so he had some familiarity with science-fiction.) He appeared at the Third Eastern Science-Fiction Convention at Philadelphia on October 31, 1937 with the title of associate editor *after* Campbell was already on the job. Campbell was up against his first deadline and could not attend the convention as he had promised to do; he had typed his talk and given it to Happel to deliver. After reading it Happel answered questions about *Astounding* for nearly an hour, exhibiting complete familiarity with the magazine. What became of Happel has also apparently never been investigated.

Thankfully, this book expresses reservations in listing the Swedish magazine *Hugin* (1916-18) as a science-fiction periodical; the best evidence we have indicates that it is not, despite an unsubstantiated claim that unfortunately has been repeated on several occasions without investigation.

The claim that Donald Wollheim supplied the Canadian *Uncanny Tales* with Futurian reprint material for a quarter of a cent a word (Page 686) is not quite correct. Actually the Futurians donated their material free of charge!

To cite further minor corrections might leave the impression that this fine and comprehensive compilation is unreliable, so I shall desist. The information supplied has a very high overall degree of accuracy. It is also the most exhaustive volume of its type in existence, and it is immensely readable. Every library will find the volume an irreplacable asset for its reference section. It is sure to amaze a researcher who thinks he knows it all, and will prove invaluable to those with open minds.

Sam Moskowitz

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BERNARR MACFADDEN

AND HIS OBSESSION WITH SCIENCE-FICTION

PART TWO: MACFADDEN SEEKS HIS AVALON

Sam Moskowitz

In spite of being middle-aged and of below-average height, Bernarr Macfadden gave the appearance on the stage of a veritable titan while travelling with his entourage in England. This he did by employing the tricks he had learned from strong man Eugen Sandow. He would oil and powder his body so that every muscle was accentuated. He would pose against a velvet background, wearing a tiger skin. He would be framed in a box-like platform under multi-colored spotlights, while his audience was kept in gloomy semi-darkness.

Then he would lecture on the diet and calisthenics that had developed this paragon of virile muscularity from the wasting body of a dying, tubercular child. Was it a gift of God, a heavenly miracle granted to only a fortunate few? Not at all! Any man could possess such a physique if he followed Macfadden's directions——and the way to start was by buying his exerciser and books.

These books proclaimed vegetarianism as the "Royal Road to Health." They recommended sleeping on the ground to absorb "vital magnetism" from the earth to increase one's dynamism and life-span. The first step in curing any illness was to diet——or, preferably, to fast; medication was usually to be avoided.

Every word Macfadden uttered, whether on the platform or in casual conversation, was recorded by a stern-faced, maidenly secretary, and was grist for later talks, articles and books, or dispensed to the local press for publicity. While he was speaking, Macfadden constantly squeezed wire compressors in both hands to strengthen his muscles. One of his drawbacks was his rather high-pitched voice——a deep bass would have conveyed an aura of health and strength better——but that was something neither diet nor exercise could correct (although an advertiser in one of his magazines claimed they could).

Macfadden's audiences never learned that his "perfect" body had defects. For example, he could not stand England's wet, chilly climate. Cold and dampness which properly dressed people took in their stride caused him to suffer inordinately. He was always, perpetually, cold and shivering. He attributed this to the fact that he had trimmed away the excess, insulating fat possessed by the average indulgent individual. No one was told that while on the third day of a fast he had fainted in public, falling on his face and breaking two front teeth; for days after this he remained delirious. (It has been said that "most people die from being themselves"; Macfadden was to die at the age of 88 from dehydration incurred by trying to cure his jaundice by fasting.) And as to his vegetarianism, his favorite London restaurant was Simpson's-on-the-Strand, where he gorged himself on roast lamb and boiled beef. None of these things, however, diminished his showmanship in any way.

His most difficult problem was covering his expenses and paying salaries of his aides. To increase the publicity needed to attract more attention to his act, he turned to *Physical Development* and *Beauty and Health*, the British periodicals he controlled. In these he launched a nationwide contest for Great Britain's "Perfect Woman." Entrants were to submit photographs and a description of their physical specifications and life achievements. The winner would receive, in addition to flattery and fame, £100. This was not an inconsiderable prize, since in 1912 £100 could sustain a British worker and his family for an entire year.

The contest was so newsworthy that the press picked it up, and Macfadden was inundated with thousands of entries. Additional furore was provided by their screening. In January, 1913 the winner was finally announced. She was Mary Williamson, daughter of a Baptist family in Halifax, a small industrial city southwest of the great industrial center of Leeds. Mary worked in a carpet mill, and was nineteen years old at the time.

From the standpoint of a physical culturist, her qualifications were considerable. She had started life as a weak, feeble infant, and had built herself into a specimen of perfect health. She stood five feet five inches tall, weighed 142 pounds, and measured 38½-25-31. She was blonde with blue eyes and a peaches-and-cream complexion.

In the realm of competitive sports she ranked very high, having won 60 prizes in water sports and other athletic accomplishments. She had twice finished the fifteen-mile Thames River swimming match. She was a member of the Royal Life Saving Society, having received a silver medal for saving one life. Aside from all her other qualities, Macfadden was ecstatic to learn that she had never been vaccinated, being convinced this caused tuberculosis, pneumonia and catarrh.

On the cultural side, Mary's favorite stories were scientific fantasies, and she was quoted as saying, "When I had a chance I read the imaginative stories of H.G. Wells in the magazines." Macfadden's strange ability to attract people interested in science-fiction and fantasy had once again come to the forefront.

Macfadden paid Mary's expenses to London, garnering, as he had expected, tremendous newspaper publicity. There was, however, a hitch to her collecting the £100 (which Macfadden may not have been able to pay): she was to accompany him on a 4½-month physical culture tour with all expenses paid, but at no salary. She (and her parents) agreed.

As she travelled on this tour she began to learn more about his idiosyncracies and beliefs. Not unexpectedly, he performed a regimen of the most extraordinarily strenuous exercises every morning. He ate only two meals a day, believing that human beings did not need more. He not only admitted that he was formally uneducated, but seemed proud of it. Although he liked to sing, he was utterly tone-deaf. He showed virtually no interest in art. He devised a number of recipes, his favorite being pea soup, which liked to cook himself; Mary found them all quite good. "He pinched women's rears, like H.G. Wells," she said. Increasingly he read less and less of works other than his own, which may have been due to advancing far-sightedness which he was unwilling to concede. Nevertheless, Mary said of him: "His words seemed to convey a Wellsian characterization of superphysical lovers leaping from a far planet to the earth in order to fly off again with muscular maidens."

After some months on the tour he asked her for a date, which was to be a twenty-mile hike. When they stopped at the half-way point he asked her to marry him. He told her they were the world's most perfect man and woman, and should have the world's most perfect children. She accepted, and they were married on March 5, 1913. "We were like red-hot astral beings meeting in space," Mary wrote in her diary. During this period she discovered some disturbing aspects of his character, one of which was that he was a cheapskate. He took her to a pawn shop to select her wedding ring. To save money, he had her cut his hair. The clothes

he bought were expected to last 25 years——and most of them did. And Macfadden never did give his wife the £100 prize money that she had won.

Because of his early fear of water, Macfadden did not learn to swim until late in life, and never very well. Despite this, while at the beach at Brighton, in order to show off his prowess to others, he ventured too far out and was caught in high waves and an undertow. He was incontestably drowning when Mary sized up the situation, and though several months pregnant, swam out and hauled him back in a virtually unconscious state. She bore a baby girl while in England, giving in to her husband's demand that its name begin with the letter "B." In all Macfadden had six children, four daughters (Beulah, Beverly, Braunda and Bryneece) and two sons (Brewster and Byrne).

In 1914 Macfadden learned from his lawyers that it would probably be safe for him to return to the United States, provided that he kept clear of anything considered pornographic and did not dabble in politics. So, suffering from the damp, chilly weather of England and thoroughly tired of scraping to make ends meet, he put his English holdings together and booked passage home on the luxury liner *Lusitania*. Macfadden's name, which had been removed from *Physical Culture* magazine while he was away, reappeared when his autobiography began to appear in the December, 1914 issue.

His loyal friend Charles Desgrey, who had maintained the viability of *Physical Culture* during Macfadden's absence, now signed everything back to him as he had promised. Desgrey's sister, Susan Wood, signed back the healthatoriums. But Macfadden did not live up to his part of the bargain, claiming that Mary had been made a business partner, and that he could not give away what was rightfully in part his spouse's. Desgrey took Macfadden to court in an effort to obtain the one-third interest in the business which he had been promised——and lost. He thus suffered the fate of many trusting men who do not confirm verbal promises with legal agreements. For all his efforts he gained nothing more than whatever salary he paid himself for two years, and also eventually lost his position in the company, for his contract was not renewed when it expired in 1917. Susan Wood fared somewhat better. Although the healthatoriums were eventually closed as unprofitable, she was retained as an employee of Macfadden until her death.*

Getting a piece of the business, however small, was a good thing for Mary, but she had another surprise in store for her on reaching the United States. Macfadden introduced her to a young girl whom he said had belonged to a woman who died while undergoing treatment in one of his hospitals. She had begged him, he said, to take care of the child, and he had been paying her expenses ever since. He persuaded Mary to rear her as their own. She became their adopted daughter Helen.

In the company's Flatiron Building offices Mary was installed as the first reader of all manuscripts. The titular editor of *Physical Culture* was Carl Williams, but he was apparently little more than a puppet in Macfadden's hands. The magazine had printed little science-fiction during Macfadden's absence, but that was now remedied. John Coryell was asked to write a new series of Utopian stories with a physical culture bias.

The series was called "A Modern Gulliver's Travels," and the first story, titled "A Voyage to Purora," appeared in the August, 1915 issue. Its unnamed protagonist is a lineal descendant of Lemuel Gulliver, and plays much the same role as the latter did in Swift's work. When visiting in Mexico he is shocked by the lack of morality he sees, but when he attempts to reform the natives they set upon him and he is forced to flee by jumping into a small boat in a nearby river. This carries him out to sea, where after several days' voyaging he is beached on the shore of an unknown land. Its inhabitants, much to his discomfiture, go about in the nude, and are amused and disgusted at his embarrassment, which they attribute to his being ashamed of his own ugly, overweight bulk.

*Further comment on this paragraph will be found on page 63.

Among these people is a Miss Perkins, nicknamed "The Degenerate" by the others because she insists on wearing clothes. She loans the visitor a pair of scratched dark glasses, which she once wore, so that he will not be offended by the sight of nudity. He is astonished to learn from her that these people are highly civilized and actually very modest and retiring; their nakedness does not seem to arouse lewdness or lust although they are not sexually naive. Infidelity is unknown, and children grow up normally. If they have a vice, it is the worship of the beauty of their bodies.

Our hero cannot resist trying to reform these people, however. As a result, he is accused of having a filthy mind and he and Miss Perkins are put on his boat, and headed back out to sea. Here the story ends. Macfadden, of course, had always advocated nudity and nudist colonies for physical health, and "A Voyage to Purora" was clearly a satirical response to his having been brought up on obscenity charges for holding a beauty contest in New York in 1905.

"A Voyage to Babyland," the second story in the series, followed in the October, 1915 issue of *Physical Culture*. Our modern Gulliver has returned to the United States, where he tells of the horrible people he has visited to the Antonious Cornstalk Society, "that noble band of men and women who spend their money so freely in furthering my efforts to enforce on others that rigid morality with which the name Cornstalk is associated," and requests funds for an expedition to Purora to make the people there wear clothes. This was obviously aimed at Anthony Comstock, founder and secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Vice, who had pursued Macfadden so relentlessly. When asked for the cooperation of the United States Navy in sending a battleship to Purora to enforce modesty, officials suggest instead that a post office be established there. (It was the post office's threat to have *Physical Culture* barred from the mails that had been at least partially responsible for Macfadden's leaving the country.)

The good ship *Antonius Cornstalk* sets out for Purora with a cargo of clothing,but is wrecked by a storm. All are lost except our new Gulliver, who is washed up on a tropical island. He finds a village that appears to be populated by nothing but children, all of them robust, healthy and happy, playing in the streets and squares. A sage describes to him the island's history. Originally women and children had no rights. It became clear that progress could be made only through thinking of the welfare of children first. Women were given power to control the birth of their children, and divorce of incompatible couples was made easy. There is no problem with rearing children, for people are glad to take care of any child, even one born out of wedlock. No woman is asked who the father of her child is. Every opportunity for creative development is open to children and they are fully educated in matters of sex as well as everything else.

Gulliver is appalled at the people's having given up the "sweet, shy modesty of the past with its holy blushes of shame and its charming mystery." He excoriates the villagers for their depravity in revealing to children that they were not found under cabbage leaves or brought by a stork, and hails a passing steamer to be rid of the place.

Serialization of a major new science-fiction novel was begun in the September, 1915 *Physical Culture*. This was *The Man Who Never Died* by Robert Alexander Wason. One of its chief characters is Amorio, a young woman of 28 who has been reared from the age of three on a sheltered estate surrounded by three rings of protective walls. Farming for the needs of its inhabitants is carried on by two aged deaf-and-dumb men, and Amorio's only other visitirs are some equally old tutors, whose instruction is limited to the world of the ancient Greeks. She is also taught French, German and Spanish, but not English. Amorio has never been permitted to leave the enclosure, and her only companions are two giant dogs. As the novel opens she has become increasingly restless as a result of clandestinely reading a romantic French novel. This novel, which has been dropped by a low-fly-

ing plane, lights in her a desire for similar excitement, and introduces as well a set of values different from anything she has experienced or been taught.

Long portions of the novel are told from Amorio's viewpoint, and its thrust is a battle of wills between a young woman raised to the epitome of feminine health and an enigmatic man of youthful, godlike appearance and truly phenominal physical strength who is actually 400 years old. For generations this man, who calls himself Andreas, has been acting as a hidden chessplayer, influencing people's lives with the goal of breeding superior human beings through genetic and envirionmental influences. He is the only person in history who has ever lived long enough to conduct such experiments. And just when he is ready to take this superb young woman, whose life, health and education he has completely controlled to the next step in his long-range plans, her reading this French novel has completely disrupted all the training his instructors have given her.

To make matters even worse, the young pilot who has dropped the book lands his plane nearby with the idea of meeting her. From him the girl learns she is living on an isolated estate in the Adirondak Mountains, and for the first time hears something of the outside world. At this point Andreas appears. He immobilizes one of the dogs which attacks him at Amorio's urging——he seems to possess, in addition to immense physical strength, mental powers so great they can hypnotically influence others——and easily overcomes Jeffrey, the young flyer. He is about to kill Jeffrey, but spares him because of Amorio's pleading.

Andreas suggests to the girl that they become mates but she is willful and contrary, telling him forthrightly that she will not commit herself until she has seen other men. She insists that Andreas buy her modern clothes (including a corset, which requires considerable strength to lace and fasten) and take her to the city. On the dance-floor of a New York restaurant they meet Jeffrey, and he and Andreas have a second confrontation with Amorio again intervening.

Eventually she agrees to marry Andreas, feeling nevertheless that she is his Pygmalion, and neither will ever satisfy the other. Some weeks after the marriage she insists on a fast automobile ride. Their car is smashed, and although Amorio is unhurt Andreas's hand is severed at the wrist. While filled with remorse, Amorio's concern is lessened by the matter-of-fact manner in which Andreas accepts his injury. She plots with Jeffrey to leave her husband, but the two are interrupted by Andreas. They are incredulous to see that his missing hand has been restored. Jeffrey snatches a rapier from the arms hanging on the wall and repeatedly attempts to run Andreas through, but Andreas easily parries the thrusts and sends his opponent reeling with a blow to the chin. Jeffrey falls on a javelin that had been dislodged from its mount by the fighting; this penetrates his jugular vein, and he lies bleeding to death.

When Andreas had been in peril Amorio at last realizes that he was the man she loved after all. But because she encouraged Jeffrey, she feels she would be responsible should he die; and if he does, it would be an irrevocable barrier between her and her husband. Then Andreas hints that he might yet be able to save him. "If you can give him life," whispers Amorio, "there is no world for me except your world, no man but you, no future but the fulfillment of your plan, no laws but your wishes." Andreas and his servants take Jeffrey to the laboratory and operating room; a few weeks later, healthy and hearty, he bids them farewell.

Now Andreas reveals his secrets. He is none other than the famous Flemish anatomist Andreas Vesalius, who was born in 1514. He was not lost at sea in 1564, as historians have reported, but made his way to India, where he learned much from the Yogis and Hindu fakirs. At that time many female babies were sacrificed by throwing them to the crocodiles in the Ganges; he saved some of them and used them in scientific experiments. In India he found one of the lost tribes of Israel. He selected a group of them as assistants and travelled to Tibet, where he found more of the lost tribes, still retaining their religious customs. There he cured

the Grand Lama of an ordinarily fatal disease and was given great wealth. Among the Hebrews was a man over 100 years old who, during long fasts, had visions that showed how common substances could be used to repair cells of the body indefinitely, and from these visions deduced new scientific rules which worked in practice.

Andreas adapted these to his own experiments. He learned how to nourish human organs outside the body and discovered that the individual cells in each organ have a nucleus from which the entire organ will regrow if stimulated properly. Andreas then began replacing his ageing, worn-out organs with new ones, utilizing selected Hebrews he had trained as surgeons, and gradually became young again. In an emergency, he had no reluctance to take an organ from a living human being for his experiments, saying, "If I live long enough to carry out my plans, the day will come when every child born into the world will live as long as the world lasts. . . ." He then tells Amorio how his even more daring vision began:

> I was aware of the marvellous vitality and prepotency of the Hebrew people, and I was convinced that if I could just get a few families who would obey my teachings as they had obeyed theirs, I could rear a race which would be immortal. When I left India I took some of these Hebrew children with me, the oldest four years old. I had vast stores of treasures and ... I travelled westward. . . . There was no place in Europe which suited me, so I purchased an oasis in Northern Africa . . . . [where] the children were taught in a language of my own invention. They would know only what I taught them, they were to be *my* people.

These, then, were Amorio's ancestors. For 300 years he has controlled their lives, and through selected marriages and regulated envirionment finally produced Amorio herself, the woman who would mate with him and complete his genetic experiment. Already he has been a prime mover behind the scenes, shaping the course of many world events without anyone being the wiser. His ultimate aim is eventually to eliminate "fear of poverty, fear of disease, fear of death."

Amorio acknowledges his aims, but says she cannot live on by taking the lives of others. Andreas then tells her the choice will be hers: if she wants him to discontinue his great work and ultimately die with her, he will; if she chooses to live on immortally, so will he. To her this is an offer of true human love. She would not have accepted him for his long-range motives alone, but for love she will help continue his work.

This is a highly unusual novel. It can be seen as a variant of the Garden of Eden portion of the Old Testament. Amorio is Eve, reared in a circumscribed world away from the vices of those around her. Jeffrey is the snake, tempting her with the apple of knowledge. Andreas is God, who has created an Eve for his own purposes, and perhaps also Adam, when he stands ready to relinquish immortality and appear to Amorio as no more than an ordinary human being. His involvement with the Lost Tribes of Israel could symbolize the stiff-necked trait of Biblical Jews of debating with their creator and vexing him greatly. Although science is not in the forefront of the story, it is sufficiently intrinsic to make the novel a work of science-fiction; the mystical means so often found in tales of immortality are totally absent.

Though somewhat Victorian, the writing is otherwise well handled. The philosophy in the story overpowers the usual Macfadden propaganda, but such elements as the value of fasting, nudism, proper diet, vigorous exercise and so on do appear throughout the work on a subordinate level. It seems unlikely that *The Man Who Never Died* would have been written on speculation and submitted freelance to *Physical Culture* magazine. More probably it would have to have been discussed and ordered. And since Macfadden's favorite elements are given only lip-ser-

vice, it was most likely bought by John Brennan, who had come to the magazine with substantial newspaper experience and contacts Macfadden was unlikely to have had. The illustrations by Otho Cushing, at least two of which accompanied each of the six installments, were uniquely stylized. They are instantly recognizable as Utopian, and the artist's ability to use the white background of the page to give his figures a three-dimensional quality is outstanding.

The author, Robert Alexander Wason (1874-1955) was no magazine hack. He was the author of at least eight hard-cover books, the most successful of which were the three featuring his character Happy Hawkins. He was not primarily a writer of fantasy, the closest to it (aside from *The Man Who Never Died*) being the short story "Knute Ericson's Celebration," which appeared in the horror anthology *Grim Thirteen* (1917), edited by Frederick Stuart Greene.

In 1915 the Munsey publications *All-Story Weekly* and *The Argosy* were the backbone of science-fiction, featuring Burroughs, England, Stilson and other exciting authors of the "scientific romance." But we can now clearly see that there were two other paralleling types of science-fiction developing at the same time, both in non-fiction magazines. On the one hand there were the Utopias and satires of Macfadden's *Physical Culture*, with an emphasis on health and diet. On the other Hugo Gernsback, beginning in the May issue of *The Electrical Experimenter*, was writing monthly chapters of "Baron Munchausen's New Scientific Adventures," which featured future science and technology.

Earlier in this article I stated that both Gernsback and Macfadden had originated and patented numerous inventions. As a teenager Gernsback devised a successful layered battery, and one of his first businesses was manufacturing batteries for Packard cars. He patented over 100 inventions, and in the fields of electricity and chemistry could work as a professional. The well known science-fiction artist Alex Schomburg remembers putting together a radio from a kit sold by Gernsback; when it didn't work he went up to Gernsback's office, where Gernsback took his set apart, found the trouble, and had it working in a few minutes. To add icing to the cake, he left with a paid assignment to draw radio schematics for *Practical Electrics*, his first paid freelance assignment!

Though not as prolific as Gernsback, Bernarr Macfadden was by no means a hopeless inventor. Even after she divorced him, Mary Macfadden admitted that he showed promise in the area. He devised a machine to alleviate writer's cramp in an era when many authors still wrote manuscripts by hand. He patented a shaving mirror with a fan to prevent it becoming clouded in steamy rooms. When his office space later got too crowded he personally designed and had built double-decker cubicles so that employees could utilize the overhead room. This led to a patent for a double-decked subway car, not unlike the type used today on the Long Island Railroad. A primitive water-washed air-conditioning system that he patented was actually installed in Trommer's Brewery and the Majestic Hotel in New York City. He also was responsible for a Peniscope for increasing potency, a rail car to carry passengers down aisles in department stores, and an electrically powered device for pumping fresh air into closed offices. Perhaps Macfadden's interest in inventing helps explain his enthusiasm for publishing science-fiction!

With the June, 1915 issue it was announced that Brisben Walker was to be the new editor of *Physical Culture*. This was an incredible coup. At the age of 67 Walker was a living legend. He had purchased *Cosmopolitan* in 1889 and converted it into one of the great, low-priced mass-circulation magazines of the 1890's, along with *McClure's* and *Munsey's*. He ran a steady stream of articles on air-flight and as many on the "horseless carriage," even producing special issues on these subjects. To the science-fiction collector he is known for the many science-fiction novels that he serialized. Among the earliest of these were William Dean Howells's famous Utopia, *A Traveller from Altruria* (1892-93) and Camille Flammarion's *Omega: the Last Days of the World* (1893). Walker created the reputation

of H.G. Wells in the United States by serializing *The War of the Worlds*, superbly illustrated, in 1897, *The First Men in the Moon* (1900-01) and *The Food of the Gods* (1903), and probably also caused the purchase of *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), even though he had sold the magazine to William Randolph Hearst a year earlier. Other worthwhile science-fiction appeared in *Cosmopolitan* under his aegis, including "A Matter of Interest" (1897) by Robert W. Chambers, a two-part novelette about the reappearance of dinosaur-age creatures which made up a portion of his later book, *In Search of the Unknown* (1904).

Before buying *Cosmopolitan* Walker had been a very successful business man, making a fortune before he was 30, losing it, and making another by the age of 40. He had bought the company which manufactured the Stanley Steamer, convinced the steam car would be the "horseless carriage" of the future. In that mode he produced the Locomobile; but despite its impressive performance he gradually lost the wealth accumulated as publisher of *Cosmopolitan* as competition from gasoline-powered vehicles became overwhelming, and was now reduced to accepting the editorship of *Physical Culture*.

Macfadden devoted three full pages in boxed large type to extolling the virtues of Walker and the benefits that might flow to *Physical Culture*. But Walker was well known as a man of iron will who brooked no opposition. Nothing had ever been printed in *Cosmopolitan* without his close overseeing and explicit approval. With a man like Macfadden as his boss, a brief tenure was inevitable. Walker departed four months later, with the September, 1916 issue, though the two men remained outwardly on good terms. Whether he had any affect on the magazine's policies in the short time he was editor is conjectural. He did have a featured article, "A Plan for Congressional Health," some time later in the April, 1917 issue, which stressed the need for a healthy legislature if the country were to have rational guidance, but this may have been written while he was editor and held for later publication.

Walker could also have still been editor when "Hercules Jones" by James Hathaway was purchased. This novel was serialized in five parts, beginning in the December, 1916 issue. It had obviously been custom-written for Macfadden and supervised every paragraph of the way, and James Hathaway may well have been a pseudonymn for John Coryell. Hercules Jones is a ridiculed 96-pound weakling who by eliminating alcohol and tobacco, staying away from doctors and adopting vegetarianism, muscle excercises and fasting (incongruous as this last seems for a 96-pounder) gradually builds a fabulous body and is able to accomplish remarkable feats of athletics. What makes this story a fantasy is the special food he eats, which is a major factor in making him not merely strong, but actually a superman.

One might ask, does not building oneself into a superman by eating miraculous food contradict Macfadden's regimen of gaining health and strength? The answer is that on several occasions Macfadden himself marketed a superfood, and this story was intended to inculcate the belief that such foods existed. He had introduced a cereal trade-named Strengtho, which was made up of all-natural ingredients and which had to be cooked. It was a good product, both nutritionally and flavorwise, but because it contained no preservatives it had a short shelf-life. As a result it lost out to products like Kellogg's corn flakes, which had a long shelf-life and additionally did not have to be cooked before use.

There is an amusing sidelight to this. Macfadden tested his cereal on dogs and got such poor results that for the rest of his life he hated dogs, and even extended his dislike to most other animals. There were never any pets in the Macfadden household. Indeed, his hostilities frequently stemmed from single incidents of this type. His campaign against corsets, for instance, was said to have been incited not because of any concern for women's health, but because corset stays had once accidentally got into the works of a machine he was tinkering with and wrecked it!

The idea of the major *Physical Culture* serial of 1917 may have been Coryell's, not Macfadden's. Coryell had written the first of the Nick Carter detective series, and had gone on the produce scores of other detective stories. His "Cyclone Adams, Athlete Detective" combines crime-solving ability with health and strength. The protagonist becomes a fabulous athlete through dedication to Macfadden's body-building principles, and because a healthy body makes a healthy mind, this gives him a Sherlock Holmes level of mental acuity to make deductions from insignificant signs and clues.

The rise in popularity of motion pictures in the United States at this time inevitably attracted Macfadden's attention. With his fortunes once more on the rise, he had the capital to produce some of these himself. Under the auspices of Macfadden Pictures his first production was *Zongar* (1918), a whirl of muscled men and Amazonian women that might just possibly qualify as a fantastic film, and which John Coryell novelized for *Physical Culture*. During the coming years Macfadden made dozens of moving pictures. All of them lost money, but he probably regarded them as a form of promotion for his health sanitariums, restaurants, magazines and books. The best film he made was *Wrongdoers*, which starred Lionel Barrymore, Henry Hull and Anne Cornwall.

One remunerative thing did come out of this venture into motion pictures. Macfadden had brought his wife's brother James to the United States and had given him a job in one of his New York penny restaurants. James was promoted to a position of assistant in Macfadden Pictures, where he showed such ability that he was made manager of all of Macfadden's foreign enterprises. These were so successful that they eventually accounted for a third of his total income. James Williamson died when a passenger ship he was on sank at sea.

Through the year 1918 *Physical Culture* had remained the same size as most of the large-circulation pulp magazines, namely 6¾ by 9½ inches. But a new wave was sweeping the magazine field. As we have seen (page 35), advertising agencies were throwing the bulk of their dollars towards publications that appealed to women. At the same time they were demanding a bigger showcase, a larger page-size for displaying the products of their accounts. Increasingly, the printing plates for advertisements were being standardized for an 8½ by 11 inch page, and magazines with smaller pages lost advertising automatically if agencies would not authorize reduced sized plates being made. *Physical Culture*, although its articles appealed primarily to men, had always run features aimed at women, and from the earliest days its editorial stance had shown a strong feminine bias. So as not to miss the chance of getting its share of this advertising, the magazine increased its page size to 11¾ by 9 inches with its February, 1919 issue.

The policy of the advertising agencies also directly influenced the material that all advertising-supported periodicals chose. The fiction they ran had to have a strong love-interest, and non-fiction had to be slanted to satisfy women readers. To use a euphonious platitude, magazines became "woman-oriented." This was amply demonstrated by the featured novel *Possessed* by Cleveland Moffett that *Physical Culture* began to serialize in its February, 1919 issue. This had obviously not been written to order, but purchased for its appeal to women.

Cleveland Moffett was at that time a very well known playwright, novelist and writer of non-fiction. He had been noted for his outstanding articles on new scientific advances, one his most unusal describing the transmission of color pictures by wire claimed for a Polish inventor (*Pearson's Magazine*, October, 1899). Much of his other work was similarly opportunistic. He capitalized on Upton Sinclair's exposé of the Chicago meat industry, *The Jungle* (1906), to write a novel describing the unsanitary conditions among New York bakers, *A King in Rags* (1907), and upon current strife between capital and labor to produce *The Battle* (1908), a an outstandingly successful play. Soon after World War I began Moffett sold *The Conquest of America in 1921*, a novel of future war, to *MacClure's Magazine*, where

it was serialized in four monthly installments beginning with the issue of May, 1915. Although on the surface it seemed just another exciting future war story, it showed a prescient understanding of how air power would affect warfare in the future. Moffett's prediction that Germany would urge Japan to attack the United States was prophetic, though in his story it is the Germans who launch the invasion. In the end the combination of a new type of torpedo plane with a superior torpedo invented for the occasion by Thomas Edison turns the tide after parts of America have already been occupied.

The most astonishing part of *The Conquest of America in 1921*, however, was the lengthy special introduction prefacing it when it appeared in book form in 1916. Here in several thousand words Moffett supported the controversial thesis that war was good for mankind, stemming from a natural instinct whose operation evolutionarily brought the genetically best-qualified peoples to the fore. To declare world-wide peace would be unfair, he said, to those nations that were still developing and had not yet conquered as much land as they were capable of; it would leave nations like Russia, Great Britain and the United States in possession of the majority of the world's best real estate, with no way for developing nations to get any piece of it. It had always been suspected that some writers of future war stories had more than concern over national defense in mind, but Moffett was one of the very few——M. P. Shiel being another——who openly preached war's virtues!

To lovers of fantasy Moffett was best known for his short masterpiece "The Mysterious Card," which when published in the February, 1896 issue of *The Black Cat* helped establish that magazine's reputation as a source of truly different and unusual fiction. It was so popular he wrote a sequel, "The Mysterious Card Revealed," for the August, 1896 issue. And although the two stories together were scarcely 10,000 words long, they were successfully issued as a book in 1912.

For those not familiar with with these tales, and because of their relationship to *Possessed*, I shall summarize them briefly. In the first, a businessman visiting France is in a café when a woman walks past him and places a card on the table at which he is seated. On it are twenty words, handwritten in French. Since he cannot read French, he shows it to the manager of the hotel where he is staying——and is immediately evicted. When the police see it he is thrown in jail, and the American Consul who secures his release tells him it was obtained only on condition he leave the country within 24 hours and never return. When his business partner reads it, he terminates a relationship of many years standing, and on seeing it his wife deserts him. Finally he succeeds in locating the woman who placed the card on his table, dying in a hospital. He shows her the card and implores her to tell him what the words mean. She starts to speak, but dies before she can utter a word. And when he finally glances again at the card, the wording has faded from sight.

In "The Mysterious Card Revealed" it is discovered, through the use of a medium, that the businessman was possessed by an evil *other*. Because of that he had in the past committed heinous crimes of which he had no memory, his normal personality being congenial and philanthropic. The woman who dropped the card was a medium who had discerned his condition; she had written a note and had drawn pictures to make him aware of it. But he could not see the pictures or read the writing. The card showed that he had robbed his partner of a fortune, slashed to death numerous innocent women, and even strangled his own baby. Others who viewed the card were able to see these things, and reacted to them in a normal manner.

The new novel *Possessed* uses these very same elements. Penelope Wells, the protagonist, returns from France where she has been nursing wounded soldiers. She has been hearing voices, and is in a highly agitated state. Her behavior alternates abruptly between that of a caring woman once again in love and a sexually agressive coquette called Fauvette when in an amorous mood. A medium warns her that she is possessed by evil spirits, and the case for dual personality seems undeniable. As Fauvette she plans to have a child by illicit relations; when nor-

mal, she wants to adopt a child. It took a four-part sequel titled *The Truth About Women No One Tells* (October, 1919 through January, 1920) for Penelope to exorcise Fauvette and beging to piece her life together. The novel and its sequel were popular enough to be combined into a single book that appeared in 1920.

The influence of Mary Macfadden seems clearly evident in the selection of thse two novels for *Physical Culture*. She was first reader for the magazine at that time, as we have seen, and is known, like her mother, to have believed in spiritualism and been very superstitious. In contrast, Macfadden did not believe in such things at all and abhorred religious rites connected with death.

(to be continued)

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Song of the Eternal Sailors

From Liverpool to Shanghai, the waterways we roam.
The wave roar and the salt spray, they are our only home.
Across the dark Sargasso, into the wailing winds,
The wages of the past have covered all our sins.

Old chorus: Ah the sea so bright and eager,
O the ocean dark and wide
Let the waters answer for us all!

Odysseus was the captain as we rowed across the waves.
We left the cyclops blinded in the hollow of his caves.
We saw the singing sirens, but we could not hear their call
Their beauty like a burning brand shone on us one and all.

We sailed out to the ocean edge before the earth was round,
Where homeless winds upon the sails made such an empty sound.
Like men without a country, but for the country blue.
The maps are always changing, the shoals are always new.

We rode with peglegged Ahab and how the man did rave!
His wooden limb is floating in the waters of his grave.
We scanned that thin horizon for a plume against the sky,
And when we manned the longboats, we let the good steel fly.

With Nemo on the Nautilis we moved beneath the seas,
Alive under a rippling sky with seaweed for our trees.
At forty fathoms down below the silence reigns supreme.
The streets we left behind exist as no more than a dream.

And now we've fled the mother world and sailed out into space
As misfits, outcasts, pioneers of all the human race.
Across the Magellanic clouds, propelled by solar winds,
The wages of the past have covered all our sins.

New Chorus: Ah the stars so bright and eager,
O the light years dark and wide,
Let the vacuum answer for us all!

Bruce Boston

Tips on Tales

Short Reviews of Books Old and New

Stephen King's *It* (1986): I'm always leary about a new title coming out from a mega-author, because publishers too often see it as a chance to jack up the cover price. Case in point: In hard covers *It* costs $22.95. Granted, at 1138 pages it's a gigantic book, but it unfortunately provides an excuse to price "regular' hardcovered books at "only" $19.95. Compare a paperback fantasy taken at random off my bookshelf, Kathleen Sky's *Witchdame*, with King's latest paperback novel, *Thinner*: both have the same number of pages (320) and came out in the same year (1985)——yet *Witchdame* has a cover price of $2.95, while *Thinner* sells for $4.50. Does it cost more to typeset and print a word written by Stephen King than a word written by Kathleen Sky? I don't think so.

Let me say up front that I do like Stephen King——I've read every one of his books in sequence as they appeared. Like Lovecraft, when King is good, he's excellent; but when he's bad, it's abysmal. For the most part, luckily, *It* is mostly good stuff.

Back in 1958 six kids, all of them misfits, did battle with a nasty, formless *thing* that was killing children in Derry, Maine, taking shape from its victims' nightmares. The kids battle It, think they have defeated it, and make a vow to return and fight if ever It manifests itself again. Of course, It does indeed begin to kill again, in 1985, when our young heroes are all grown up, and have lost their belief in magic and talismanic things. The story oscillates between 1958 and 1985, between kids and adults, and between both confrontations with the monster that lives in the sewers of Derry.

At first you might think, "Uh-oh, it's another group-of-people-bound-together-by-a-dark-secret-from-their-distant-past story," but it's more than that. The characters of the children are remarkably well drawn, with natural and smooth descriptions. Most authors fail miserably when telling a story from a child's point of view, but King pegs his twelve-year-olds without a single offbeat. At times I found *It* to be reminiscent of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

To get fullest enjoyment out of this novel, you should probably be conversant with monster movies (from which much of the kids' horror is drawn), and rock and roll music, which forms a powerful backdrop to the story. (In fact, the overall inspiration for the book seems to be a Bruce Springsteen song "No Surrender," which King quotes.) You will also notice quite a few inside jokes——characters with the names of real editors and authors, references to WZON, King's own Maine radio station, and so on——but they are subtle, and not annoying.

The general horror of the plot begins to build, but the unrelenting string of small shocking incidents begins to grow tedious (some even misfire), until we expect each character will have his/her horrible-incident-of-the-day. The book is somewhat clumsily constructed, with so many flashbacks within flashbacks within flashbacks that the reader becomes lost, and wonders if Stephen King is following a drunken muse. Many details just don't dovetail neatly, but then one can almost always count on King letting his story-control slip at the end. The most serious flaw in this novel, however, is its incredible amount of padding: a thin book can absorb a few extraneous scenes, but an already overweight one like this surely has no conceivable need of the literally dozens of unnecessary scenes bur-

dening it. Without exaggeration, at least 200 pages could be dropped from *It* without inflicting any damage.

King learned patience and subtlety in *Christine* and *Pet Sematery*, and he learned how to write a long, tedious book in *The Talisman*; here he combines these skills to write a long, sometimes-subtle and generally effective novel. According to the postscript, this one took four years to write, and it's not a book you'll want to skim through. The words are carefully chosen and the images smoothly polished, without the sloppy feel his prose occasionally carries.

Succinctly: *It* is like an out-of-shape football player, with lots of flab but still plenty of muscle underneath. Had Stephen King given his novel a workout to bring it into shape it could have been one of the masterpieces of all horror fiction.

—*Kevin J. Anderson*

C. J. Cherryh's *Merovingen Nights #1: Festival Moon* (1987): This is a strange hybrid, even by the standards of other Shared Worlds anthologies. And if, like me, you often begin such books in the middle by reading a favorite writer's story first, beware! Some of the editor's choices——Robert Lynn Aspirin's effectively grim "Two Gentlemen of the Trade" and Nancy Asire's comic "Cat's Tale" in particular——do stand up by themselves as separate stories. But if, for instance, you tried to make sense of Chris Morris's "Night Action" without reading the 255 pages that came before it, you'd be lost. That's because *Festival Moon* isn't quite sure if it wants to be a short story collection or an extremely complex, unruly novel with eight co-authors! The whole structure of the book's eccentric: Cherryh's title "story" alternates, a scene or two at a time, with the stories/chapters of her various co-contributors.

This first *Merovingen Nights* anthology also serves as a sequel to Cherryh's novel *The Angel with the Sword*. Six centuries ago a mysterious alien race, the Sharrh, devastated the "lost" Earth colony on the planet Merovin. The terrified survivors rebuilt with the bits and pieces of what was left. From this developed a rather low-technology world, where firearms are known, but sword fights are still commonplace, where electric lights are a luxury, and where poor canal-dwellers live in the shadows of the wealthy's towering homes.

Cherryh's main characters are Altair Jones, owner of a one-woman poleboat that plys the dangerous and dirty waters of the canals of the great city of Merovingen, and her lover, Tom Mondragon. Once a follower of a fanatic cult (the Sword of God), he has become an agent for the local governor's son, Anastasi. This makes him a target of several sets of hostile agents and thugs. In the Byzantine maze of Merovingen everyone is scheming, no one can be trusted, and life tends to be short, if exciting.

The other writers concentrate their efforts on different characters, but for the most part they work on converging plot lines, weaving in and out of the story of Jones and Montdragon. This adds further to the wheels-within-wheels complexity of the book.

Any novel which shifts its viewpoint constantly can be difficult to follow. And here the varying approaches of several authors to what is essentially a single narrative (as opposed to several independent stories with a common background) exaggerate the problem. It's not that the book is bad; Cherryh & Co. are all skilful wordsmiths. But art by committee is seldom if ever great, and this book is an example of why. Despite all the exotic elements, the intrigues and the power games, the social and political complexities, the adventure and derring-do, everything seems just a bit too familiar. It's a case study, despite everything, of the Shared World format, complete with maps and Mercedes Lackey's humorous essays on the local flora and fauna.

A final caveat: This book leaves a number of loose ends dangling, thereby making it a lead-in to an inevitable second anthology. Indeed that one, called *Fever Season*, is slated for publication this Fall. I'll be waiting for it, though with something less than bated breath.

—*James A. Lee*

Simon Hawke's *The Time Wars Trilogy* (1984): If you're ready to put your mind on cruise control and go with the flow of a rousing science-fiction adventure series, this may just suit your mood. It is available in three separate Ace paperbacks: *The Ivanhoe Gambit* (#1), *The Timekeeper Conspiracy* (#2) and *The Pimprenell Plot* (#3). Each book stands alone fairly well, but to savor their fullest flavor they should be read consecutively. The possibility of a single volume collecting all three (which would run to some 600 pages) probably depends on reader response, but to me it seems a natural.

The premise of the series is that time-travel has been perfected and citizens of the far future fight their wars in the past by joinging ranks with existing armies in a selected "present" so as not to disturb the time-lines. There are Referees who oversee all this and a Temporal Corps to go back and straighten things out whenever a "time-split" seems likely.

The series follows the adventures of Lucas Priest and Finn Delaney, Temporal Agents, as they struggle to maintain the delicate equilibrium needed to preserve time-lines while constantly fending off the efforts of the "Mongoose," a maverick temporal agent and master of disguise who has his own plans for exploiting the past. These three books use as their settings 12th through the 18th centuries, and it wouldn't surprise me if Hawke kept cranking them out; there are lots of centuries left!

His writing style is vivid and colorful, with nice touches of humor that sometimes turns to satire. I do have one complaint, however. It's bothersome to me that the residents of the past never seem to question what's going on when, in order to get out of a deperate situation, our heroes drop their swords in favor of their trusty modern weapons. But men who have just been dissected by a laser beam rarely ask questions, right?

When you're tired of struggling with that Philip Dick book you've been meaning to finish for some time or have seen all the *Battlestar Galactica* reruns twice and still crave more action, these are the books to turn to.

—*Stuart Napier*

Elna Stone's *The Visions of Esmaree* (1976) is set in the rural southeast during the mid-1930's, and follows five years in the life of a psychic child. Esmaree MacMillan receives explicit though fragmentary visions of current and future events involving the townspeople, visions which she at first does not recognize for what they are, but thinks of as memories or information imparted in forgotten conversations. The theme isn't new, but its potential is still considerable, and its psychological possibilities sufficiently varied to make the substance of an interesting novel. Unfortunately Ms. Stone seems interested only in trying to write another *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She does not concentrate on Esmaree's visions, or integrate them with their background to make them memorable; even in the climax of the story they seem tacked-on and unnecessary. The plot plods, and parts of it are left dangling and unexplained. I found the work disappointing and, in places, downright dull. A much better constructed recent novel along these lines is Stephen King's *The Dead Zone* (1979) (which I feel certain owes nothing to Elna Stone's pedestrian effort), where a small-town setting is placed in appropriate perspective to a paranormal central theme.

—*A. Langley Searles*

Open House

Letters From Readers

Contributing Editor Lincoln Van Rose comments:

This is a short coda to Sam Moskowitz's letter (*Fantasy Commentator IV*, 187 [1981]) in which he asks for additional information about the author R. Norman Grisewood and his writings. Sam mentions that Grisewood also wrote *The Drifting of the Cavashaws* (1913), a book he had never seen. Recently I was able to read a copy of this, so I can tell readers something about it.

It turns out to be a romance which takes place on a yacht travelling between New York and the West Indies. It is smoothly written, and into it Grisewood has crammed almost everything that could happen in seagoing adventure——there is a mutiny, a love triangle, a storm, a kidnapping, a mistaken identity and several brisk fights with guns, knives and fists. There is also much saccharine, overpolite social conversation that was already out of date well before the book was published. There is only a single, and very slight, fantastic element present: one character is an expert hypnotist, and uses this ability to ingratiate himself with others, particularly the heroine. As Sam suspected, the novel is not, of course, science-fiction.

The four full-page illustrations by Warren Y. Cluff barely escape the label "amateurish." I can't report on details of the book's original binding because the copy I read was borrowed from a library, which had rebound it in sturdy buckram. I suspect *The Drifting of the Cavashaws* is a great rarity, but it's certainly not worth hunting for!

We hear next from Sam Moskowitz:

The actions of Charles Desgrey that I describe on page 51 of this issue may sound unbelievable to readers, and they seemed so to me when I first learned of them. Would any level-headed business man risk entering into such a gentleman's agreement? Yet the account is supported by Macfadden's wife Mary, who attended the trial, and should certainly have known what was going on——see page 178 of her autobiography *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips* (1953). Some day I hope to be able to search the legal records of the case to check her statements.

I should also like to comment on some of the points raised in "The Age of Wonder" in this issue. Both David Lasser and Charles Hornig claim they had absolute autonomy in the selection of mss. when they worked as editors for Gernsback on his science-fiction magazines. I find this almost impossible to reconcile with my own experience in the same situation, where he read *every* story, overruled me on many, wrote me long memos, and frequently corresponded with authors directly, suggesting changes and rewrites. It is true that some changes he asked for were in memos to me, and that I transmitted them; I suspect the same thing happened with Lasser and Hornig——and that is not autonomy.

There is some hard evidence against Lesser's and Hornig's claims. Mike Ashley not long ago obtained photocopies of Neil R. Jones's correspondence, and found in it letters from *both* Gernsback and Lasser offering suggestions on his

stories. Secondly, we can be very certain that no one ever worked on the covers of his magazines but Gernsback himself. The cover of the June, 1933 *Wonder Stories* is a perfect example. It illustrates "Captive of the Crater" by D. D. Sharp, wherein an explorer falls into a bottomless crater on the moon, continues to fall through the moon until he emerges on the other side, falls back, and goes on oscillating until he finds a way to save himself. Now, this idea had been used only once before——in Gernsback's *New Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, which appeared back in the old *Electrical Experimenter*. Its development in both stories is almost identical. The only plausible way Sharp could have got his story accepted would be for Gernsback to have given him the idea. Thirdly, both Lasser and Hornig, on taking over the editorial reins, inherited a backlog of accepted material from their predecessors. Over this, they apparently had no autonomous control, for they say nothing about sending any of it back——which was technically possible, since authors were paid on publication, not on acceptance.

Finally, there is the matter of the novels in *Wonder Stories*. During Charles Hornig's regime there were fifteen of these, appearing as two- or three-part serials, and by his own admission Gernsback chose all of them. Charlie had autonomy, then, only over the remaining short fiction. How much did that amount to? *Wonder Stories* had 128 pages, and after deducting what was taken up by ads, departments, contents-page, illustrations, fillers and the serials (which often overlapped) we find he was responsible for only about 30 pages (or 21,000 words) of fiction per issue. But there are still more subtractions. First, the backlog I cited above. Second, Gernsback dealt with Manning himself, and while Hornig was editor five novelettes and short stories by Manning appeared. Third, a few foreign short story translations were printed. And finally, there's the cover story by Joseph Kraus, a former employee, that Charlie probably didn't handle.

I don't mean to denigrate Charlie Hornig's role, but the facts above certainly show that during his three years at *Wonder* Hugo Gernsback clearly was involved in *most* of the fiction that was published.

E. F. Bleiler writes:

I was pleased to see, in Sam Moskowitz's review of my *Supernatural Fiction Writers* in the last *Fantasy Commentator*, that Sam on the whole regards the set favorably. At the same time I feel I should answer some of his critisisms. I shall not try readers' patience with a prolonged reply, but hit mostly a few general points.

But before I do so, I must make a confession. I am abashed at Sam's statement that I floundered in my *Science Fiction Writers*. I must have taken too seriously other critical comments, as when Thomas Disch singled out my papers for praise, and when the SFRA Pilgrim Committee officially described them as among the best in the volume. Since the book included work by Brian Aldiss, John Clute, Peter Nicholls, Brian Stableford, Colin Wilson and other luminaries, I felt good about it. But now Sam has destroyed it all with a piscine metaphor.

Now to his criticisms. First, the selection of subject-authors. As Sam grants, no two qualified persons would make the same choices in a work like this, and space is obviously limited. Someone must be left out, and deciding on who is difficult. Everyone, I suppose, would agree that J. S. Le Fanu, M. R. James, and H. P. Lovecraft should be included. But would there be agreement about Mary Braddon, Henry S. Whitehead or Frank Owen? Actually the choice of subject-authors in *Supernatural Fiction Writers* was not arbitrary. While I do take responsibility for the final selection, the initial lists were submitted to the sixty-odd contributors and to a couple of outside critics, and their criticisms were taken seriously. Authors were added and authors were dropped. As for the omitted ones Sam lists, I have read them all and would stand by my decision to omit them. (I

assume that by "Stecker" Sam means "Gerstaeker".) [*This was an editorial typo, not Sam's error.*] The set focused on English-language authors and foreign authors important in the English-speaking world. Symbolists and absurdists do not belong in the set and were not included.

Second, fullness of the "selected bibliographies." As the title indicates, the references do not pretend to be complete. My own practice, when writing, is to list only those books and articles I have used, not to pad for the sake of impressing readers.

Third, the entry for Poe. Sam did not read this thoroughly enough. Its point was that Poe was a great author, even though his critical reputation has varied over the years. (I do not mean Griswold by this, but 20th century critics like Eliot and Winters.) Poe's up-and-down reputation is a commonplace of scholarship and can hardly be questioned.

Fourth, Hodgson's "The Voice in the Night." Yes, Sam is right in citing my goof in *The Guide to Supernatural Fiction.* He is the first to spot it, and it embarrasses me. I don't understand how it slipped through, for I have read the story many times. On the other hand, Sam should have recognized figurative expression in my description of it in *Supernatural Fiction Writers.*

Fifth, changed opinions. Sam says that I changed my mind about certain Hodgson stories between 1976 or so and 1984. This is true. I see nothing wrong with changing one's opinion. When I prepared for the Hodgson article, I reread the material and some things looked a little different. Surely it is better to reevaluate works periodically than be petrified in the enthusiasms of one's teens.

Six, A. Merritt and his writings. There would be no point in arguing here whether Merritt is or was a great writer. My own feeling——and I know that Sam doesn't agree——is that most of Merritt was fine for an adolescent of fifty or sixty years ago, but that he has not worn well; that it is difficult to read some parts of "The Conquest of the Moon Pool" and *The Ship of Ishtar* without laughing, or "The Metal Monster" without taking No-doze. . I do not deny, though, that Merritt was a very important writer historically, or that his work should be read——for historical reasons. Thus, I placed two of his books in my part of the addendum to the new edition of Neil Barron's *Anatomy of Wonder.* As for Merritt's "Three Lines of Old French," I am amazed at Sam's objection to my calling it World War I propaganda. Of course it is. The battles on the Western Front may have ended in November, 1918, but the attitudes continued long after this. (Sam should reread the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs from this period for another example.) What on earth does Sam think it *is* about if not as I described it?

Finally, Merritt's present critical standing. Sam cites authorities to support his view that Merritt is still riding high. Here are a few others that take an opposite point of view. According to *British Books in Print* there are no editions of Merritt in print in the U. K. This has been the case for many years; nor, from what I have been able to check, have *The Moon Pool, The Ship of Ishtar, The Metal Monster, The Face in the Abyss* and the minor works ever been printed there. This is not the mark of a much beloved or critically esteemed writer. In this country, *The Moon Pool* and *Dwellers in the Mirage* are out of print; is there no demand for them? Merritt is not even included in Cowart and Wymer's *Twentieth Century American Science Fiction Writers.* Brian Attebery, in *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature,* dismisses him as an imitator of Edgar Rice Burroughs. In *Billion Year Spree* and *Trillion Year Spree* Brian Aldiss states in effect that Merritt is read only by "faithful aging followers" because of childhood conditioning. Diane Waggoner, in *The Hills of Faraway,* dismisses Merritt as "a good read." In their Merritt article in *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia* Peter Nicholls and John Clute call him verbose and sentimental, and his attitudes toward women "rather silly." Darko Suvin, in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction,* says of science-fantasy in general, but mentioning Merritt, that he agrees with the "stricture of the late

James Blish." Pierre Versins's encyclopedia states, "on doit bien admettre que rien de tout ceci ne peut nous toucher profondément." And in his review of Sam Moskowitz's *A. Merritt: Reflections in the Moon Pool (Science Fiction Studies #39)* Gary K. Wolfe concludes that "A. Merritt is not as widely read and loved today as his supporters think he is."

Walter Wentz comments:

I became involved in the Merritt project about twenty years ago, when I published a brief bibliography/biography of the man, and then began collecting (with Tom Cockcroft's able assistance) materials for a vastly enlarged second edition. When it became obvious that, given a family and a regular job to maintain, I would never get around to that second edition, I was relieved to hear that Sam Moskowitz was on the job. I sent him all the Merritt photos and marginalia in my possession (having edited some poems, etc. into their present form from many fragmentary mss.) and sat back to await the results. The wait was worth it.

Sam's book is, I think, *the* definitive reference to Merritt for the forseeable future; any errors and omissions must be the result of his having to research and wade through an incredible mass of material and bring it into some sort of useful order. In this he has been successful.

I found your review of the Merritt book in *Fantasy Commentator* #35 cogent and thought-provoking. I think you have revealed the truth behind his florid early prose in your comment on his rewriting and polishing his stories; as an editor, Merritt was perfectly aware of what the public wanted, and his style evolved dramatically in his later novels. In the early 1920's, readers of "escapist" fiction in the popular press (which tended to lag a few decades behind "serious" literature stylistically) actually enjoyed flowery, polysyllabic prose; but by the time of *Creep, Shadow!* and particularly *Dwellers in the Mirage*, Merritt was capable of a stark, powerful style that formed a pleasing contrast to his more flamboyant passages. Many popular fantasy writers, such as Edgar Rice Burroughs, scarcely evolved their style at all over long periods.

As to whether enjoyment of Merritt is "limited to youth," I can't say—certainly if TV and declining educational standards continue to erode the vocabulary of youth, many of them won't be able to interpret him anyway! Yet the popularity of his novels continues, and speaking as an editor myself, I think I have one idea why this is so: each story contains a good, meaty kernel of imaginative invention, which retains its appeal for new generations. (Recently I noticed a comic-book adaptation of "The Women of the Wood" which recast the hero as a Viet Nam veteran!) However, in an era of fast-food reading, whether a reader is able to appreciate Merritt's poetic fireworks may determine whether or not he ever gets to that kernel. Certainly the older stuff is rather dated now, but it has helped inspire a couple of generations of fantasy writers (cf. Kuttner's *The Dark World* and numerous others), so Merritt will continue to exert a considerable influence on fantasy fiction, even if at second- and third-hand.

Writes Mike Ashley:

Although Sam Moskowitz has found some interesting data on Macfadden's position in early s-f publishing, I still feel he's going overboard in his position in the evolution of s-f. His reasoning in the third paragraph of page 261 is a little strained, to say the least. One could equally well argue that had Macfadden failed in his attempts to take over Gernsback he might have issued his own s-f magazine. Also, Gernsback's financial activities were such that if Macfadden hadn't attempted his ploy others quite possibly might have—and history would still have happened as it did, with the time-stream finding new gullies along which to flow.

I'd like also to correct one statement. Sam mentions on page 267 that *Sandow's Magazine* published William Hope Hodgson's first professional work in its February, 1903 issue. It's his first *professional* work, true, but there's an earlier item than that in the August, 1901 issue, with the ungainly title "Dr. Thomas's Vibration Method Versus Sandow's." It even has a photo of Hodgson's right arm. You may be interested to know that Ian Bell, who has published a few chapbooks relating to Hodgson is putting together a book of essays about the man, and he's planning to reprint this first piece alongside an article by Richard Dalby on Hodgson's physical culture kick. I've also found a "lost" Hodgson item called "On the Bridge," a piece written the wake of the *Titanic* disaster. It isn't a story, but journalism in a fictional framework making the point of how often people take for granted all that's going on about them aboard ship to prevent disasters happening, and how, when one does happen, they are quick to apportion blame. In fact I've traced a number of apparently unknown Hodgson pieces, and am beginning to wonder how many more there are.

From New Zealand contributing editor T. G. Cockcroft comments:

I've been getting a lot of simple pleasure from Lloyd Eshbach's *Over My Shoulder*, probably in part because I have been a small publisher myself. His accounts of these small publishers are interesting, although not always complete. One of the books announced for publication by Fantasy Press before it closed down was one said to be written specially by Harry Stephen Keeler; I wish Eshbach had told us something about this. I think there was a firm called Venture Books that published one book by Richard S. Shaver, and got as far as advertising a book by Stanley Mullen——*Kinsmen of the Dragon*——which eventually was published by Shasta. (I think Mullen gave the Shaver book a favorable review in *The Gorgon*, his fan magazine.) Eshbach doesn't mention this or Trover Hall, another short-lived publisher; this produced *Puzzle Box* by Anthony More, a pseudonymn of Edward or Edwin M. Clinton, Jr.

A book to be called *The Biblion of A. Merritt* (a bibliography) was advertised in *Fantasy Advertiser*; this was to be "a Lyman & Lambert limited edition"; L & L *may* have been an established publisher (or possibly something like Gorgon Press), but didn't achieve even one book. There's no reason why Eshbach should have included publishers that produced nothing at all, of course! I think Gorgon Press also issued a booklet containing one story by Mullen, *Sphinx Child*; this may have a cover by Hannes Bok.

Eshbach may not have known that both F.P.C.I. and Shasta seem to have planned to publish at least one book by M. P. Shiel, and I have some recollection of Morse's bibliography of Shiel being in a Shasta list. The book by Shiel himself was *The Splendid Devil*, which has in recent years been published by Squires and Morse under another title——I think *The New King*. Crawford of course published the bibliography; the other book was a Shiel omnibus to contain five of his novels, which Morse described in the letter column of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* for June 1949 (page 125).

Here are a few other comments on *Over My Shoulder:*

Page 81: The interesting story Eshbach tells about the auctioning at the "Torcon" of "a particularly beautiful Virgil Finlay cover original from *Fantastic Novels*" may be somewhat inaccurate. According to Harry Warner in *All Our Yesterdays* (page 270), this was for "The Devil's Spoon" (so it wasn't a *Fantastic Novels* cover, that story being reprinted in its companion), and Moore secured it for $76——and the other bidder was Alfred Prime. Also the *whole auction* only produced "in excess of $400.00"——though even this was a record.

Page 84: Surely Palmer never had anything to do with the magazine *Fantastic Universe*! This should be *Fantastic Adventures.*

(continued on page 78)

Voyagers through Eternity

A History of Science-Fiction From the Beginnings to H. G. Wells

PART VII

SAM MOSKOWITZ

Similar in tone to "Scheherazade" is "Some Words with a Mummy" (*The American Review*, 1845). In this story, Poe tells of discovering an Egyptian mummy that had been preserved in the precise condition of "death." An experiment at reviving it through the use of a galvanic battery is successful. It then turns out that the mummy had not been really dead after all, but in a cataleptic state of suspended animation for 5000 years.

The mummy then converses with the group that has revived him, speaking "very capital Egyptian." Revival by an electric battery, he tells them, was known to the science of his day. A comparison of ancient and modern technological achievements is made. The beautiful architecture of the Washington, D. C. capital is described. The mummy tells of a columned architectural marvel fully two miles long that was still standing in his day. When told about railroads, he remembers his people had ". . .vast, level, direct, iron-grooved causeways, upon which. . . entire temples and solid obelisks of a hundred and fifty feet in altitude" could be conveyed. The modern manufacture of steel is branded an inferior advance to the perfecting of copper edging-tools used to carve obelisks. Democracy had already been tried in his day, and given up because it degenerated into mob rule. Our steam engine is not new, but had been demonstrated by Hero in ancient time. The mummy is not bested until he is asked if he had anything to match the patent medicines like "Ponnonner's lozenges or Brandreth's pills." Leaving at this small triumph, the narrator, dissatisfied with his nineteenth century, promptly resolves to get embalmed and then be revived in two hundred years, so that he may learn who will be president in 2045 A. D. The satire, slapstick and banter found here pervaded many of Poe's stories throughout his career, and echo a phase of his personality that has been submerged through the concentration on his masterpieces of horror and terror.

A terror tale which has much in common with science-fiction is "The Sphinx" (*Arthur's Ladies' Magazine*, January, 1846). Through his window the protagonist sees a winged monster "far larger than any ship of the line in existence." It has four wings he estimates as a hundred yards across, with the pattern and

coloring of its hair forming the image of a death's head. As he watches, the creature utters a chilling cry and disappears behind a hill. He describes it in detail to a friend, who produces a book containing an account of an insect known as the Death's-headed Sphinx, which "has occasioned much terror among the vulgar, at times, by the melancholy kind of cry which it utters, and the insignia of death which it wears upon its corslet." As he reads, the insect, one-sixteenth of an inch long, is wriggling up a spider's web on the window; at a distance of one-sixteenth on an inch from a viewer's eye, framed against the background of the hill, in perspective it would indeed appear as large as he thought it.

The pervasiveness with which elements of science-fiction appear in Poe's writings, from the beginning of his career to its very end, is unmistakable. He did not simply pen a single science-fiction tale, "Hans Pfaall," which by happenstance put the proper elements in focus for others to adopt. Rather, he is author of a substantial body of work which, when properly analyzed, is seen to fall in the science-fiction genre, and which collectively has become an overwhelmingly powerful influence on writers who followed him. Poe wrote at least fifteen tales of genuine science-fiction, and for so great a literary genius that is a large number indeed.

As Poe reached the final years of his life, with periods when he was quite irrational, he concentrated a great portion of his remaining lucidity on a summation of his scientific and mystical beliefs. The sources of his beliefs may be traced, without difficulty, through his own references to great scientists and philosophers preceding him or comtemporary with him——but they remain, even today, highly advanced views. These he summed up in a 40,000-word statement titled *Eureka: a Prose Poem* (1848).

In this work, subtitled *An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe*, Poe supports the theory of spontaneous creation, proposing that all matter rose out of nothingness and began to move away from a central point of origin. He believes there were many of what we would call "big bangs," and that galactic clusters both within and beyond the reach of telescopes all have such a central origin. There may or may not be a central body around which our visible universe revolves; but if there is not, there will be one because eventually, Poe feels, the universe will contract back into a series of single, central bodies.

Mystically, the entire universe is God and each segment a part of Him. Every living thing is part of a diffuse, all-encompassing deity, including those things we are not even aware are alive. "These creatures are all too, more or less conscious Intelligences; conscious, first, of a proper identity; conscious, secondly, and by faint indeterminate glimpses, of an identity with the Devine Being of whom we speak——of an identity with God." As the individual elements in the universe coalesce into oneness, so too will living things lose a sense of personal consciousness and achieve a general consciousness.

The ideas expressed in *Eureka* are very closely paralleled in such later masterworks of science-fiction as William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland* (1908), Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker* (1937), Clifford D. Simak's *Time and Again* (1951) and Arthur C. Clarke's "Guardian Angel" (1950).

Most critics and researchers of Poe have lacked a scientific background and hence have given *Eureka* short shrift. Indeed, when he put it into book form, Poe said he desired it to be judged only as a poem or a work of art. It is not good entertainment; it requires concentration to hold the attention, and if not read carefully gives the impression of a mind slipping out of control. But it is scarcely that. When studied with patience its context becomes clear. It is a lucid presentation of the most advanced thinking on the nature of the universe and man's relation to it that Poe had encountered, along with his own personal evaluations and commentary. He sums up his intention at the outset: "I design to speak of the *Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical——of the Material and Spiritual*

Universe:——of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition and its Destiny."

In his final years, and even his final months, Poe lectured frequently on the theories in *Eureka.* They affected him powerfully, and one of his purest works of science-fiction was obviously written to spotlight the book. That was "Mellonta Tauta" (*Godey's Lady's Book,* February, 1849), whose first few thousand words paraphrase *Eureka's* introductory sections. The story is written in the form of a letter "On Board Balloon 'Skylark,' April 1, 2848." The balloon can hold 400 passengers and fly a mile high; as it speeds across the Atlantic at 150 miles an hour the narrator berates its slowness. In his age railroad trains on fifty-gauge tracks travel at 300 miles per hour. Telegraph wires are floated on the surface of the ocean instead of laid on its bed. The moon has been reached, and observations on construction by a non-human Lunar race, mechanically far in advance of ours, are mentioned. New York has been destroyed by an earthquake, and artifacts from that old city are objects of great puzzlement, particularly a cornerstone dedicated to the memory of George Washington on the anniversary of Cornwallis's surrender. In speculating why Cornwallis should have surrendered, it is conjectured that there was cannibalism in those days, and he was going to end up as sausage. Poe again expresses his contempt for a democratic form of government as rule by a mob, as in "Some Words with a Mummy."

Though not a polished work, "Mellonta Tauta" does show many of Poe's literary abilities and a great deal of his imagination. It can be particularly rewarding to the reader whose interest is primarily in his science-fiction.

By now the sands of time in Poe's hour-glass were running out. He was a famous literary name, and had his health and working habits been good, he could have made a respectable living from lectures, revisions and the sale of his work. But his health was poor; his heart was in bad shape, and he appeared to have brain damage. He had returned to drinking, and was going on benders that lasted as long as three weeks. His productivity decreased at the very time when it would have been most financially rewarding.

In 1849, when gold fever was sweeping California, Poe once again turned to the idea of the hoax. "If you have looked over the Von Kempelen article which I left with your brother," he wrote Evert A. Duyckinck on March 8, 1849, "you will have fully perceived its drift. . .I thought that such a style applied to the gold-excitement could not fail of effect. My sincere opinion is that nine persons out of ten (even among the best-informed) will *believe* the quiz (provided the design does not leak out before publication) and that thus, acting as a sudden, although of course very temporary, *check* to the gold-fever, it will create a *stir* to some purpose. I had prepared the hoax for a Boston weekly called 'The Flag'——where it will be quite thrown away." Duyckinck was co-publisher of *The Literary World,* the first magazine made up primarily of book reviews and literary criticism to be published in America.

But Duyckinck rejected the piece. Poe then sent it to *The Flag of Our Union,* the Boston fiction weekly, where it appeared April 14, 1849 under the title "Von Kempelen and His Discovery." This pretends to be a report on a German scientist who has invented a chemical method for transmuting lead into gold. Poe hints in context that the account is a hoax, once stating that the story has an "amazingly moon-hoax-y air," and a second time referring to "Maelzel, of Automaton chess player memory." (In his article "Maelzel's Chess-Player" [*Southern Literary Messenger,* April, 1836] Poe had exposed as a fake the "automaton" chess-player exhibited by J. N. Maelzel.) The story made no impact at all, although it showed that Poe's penchant for writing science-fiction in the hoax tradition never left him.

By then the end was not far off. By a superhuman effort, Poe turned a successful critical and financial tour of Richmond into a drunken debauch, which

ended October 7, 1849 in the Washington Hospital, Baltimore. There, deliriously shouting, "Reynolds! Reynolds! Oh, Reynolds!" (the name of the man who had inspired him to write "Pym"), he himself now slid over the brink of that final cataract.

XVII
THE FABULOUS FANTASIES OF FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN

Poe's death was but the beginning of his recognition and influence, which continue to this day in the poetry, fiction and criticism of many nations. In fiction, his approach dominated the short story form, particularly in works of horror, detection and science-fiction. Even during his lifetime a young Irishman, Fitz-James O'Brien, was imitating his style with unique results.

O'Brien, born in Cork of a well-to-do family, was a substantial contributor of verse to Irish and British periodicals. In the year of Poe's death he inherited his father's estate; he also inherited some $40,000 from his grandfather. In those days that was enough money, with careful management, to enable one to retire for life. But O'Brien had acquired expensive tastes, and spent all of it in a little over two years.

He emigrated to America, landing in New York with his last $60. But he had introductions to the leading literary lights of the city; and with his effervescent personality and fine social manners he quickly ingratiated himself with New York society, was welcomed at exclusive clubs, and continued his elaborate style of living, eventually becoming a focus of the first literary Bohemia in the United States. Almost immediately his contributions began to appear in American magazines.

His early efforts at fiction had already been printed in England, and displayed evidence of his later highly imaginative inclinations. His serial "The Phantom Light" (*The Home Companion*, January 3 through February 28, 1852) has many references and an atmosphere which imply the supernatural, though technically it is awkwardly constructed and written. The humorous fantasy "An Arabian Night-Mare" (*Household Words*, November 8, 1851), published anonymously, may be his work. It is based on the legend of the evil djinn Eblis, a disobedient angel who was cast out by God for his insolence, and became what we now regard as the Devil.

In the United States one of his first stories was "The Wonderful Adventures of Mr. Papplewick," a quasi-science-fictional account of a man who literally has become a human magnet and makes a living working for Barnum. It was serialized in *Diogenes Hys Lanterne* beginning March 13, 1852 and terminating May 8, 1852 incomplete, with several weekly installments skipped. *Diogenes Hys Lanterne*, published by John Brougham, was a humor magazine, and O'Brien wrote flippantly in the expected style.

A very direct influence of Poe on O'Brien appears in "The Man Without a Shadow. A New Version" (*Diogenes Hys Lanterne*, September 4, 1852), which simulated Poe's prose poem "Shadow——a Parable" (1835). (The style and technique of this work have also been copied closely by such later writers as Lovecraft, Dunsany, Beaudelaire and Clark Ashton Smith.) In "Shadow——a Parable" seven men engaged in revelry in a closed room to lock out the plague view the appearance of a shadow, which speaks to them in the composite voices of the thousands they knew who had perished. In O'Brien's version (which also includes elements of "William Wilson") the shadow follows the protagonist everywhere, is mistaken for him, incurs double expenses for him, and after running up a huge debt vanishes from the boarding house where he lives——much in the manner O'Brien himself probably vanished from boarding house after boarding house when his credit was exhausted.

While Poe would have been a sad and solitary figure for a shadow to follow, O'Brien would have been an exciting if not exhausting one. He was of medium

height, but powerful, muscular and athletic. Had he gone west he would have been as comfortable as in Bohemia, for he was a superb horseman and accounts of his precise shooting with a handgun match the best legends of the Old West gun-twirlers. He could be delightful company, but was arrogant, argumentative and a boozer frequently involved in quarrels. Even though times were difficult then for the free-lance writer, when O'Brien got a large check he would fritter it away in riotous living, with never a thought to paying debts as basic as those for his restaurant meals or living quarters. As a result, he usually lived on the precarious edge of poverty. He was reputed to come often to the aid of the underdog, but this was not necessarily true of Jews, for he was fundamentally anti-Semitic, a phase of character some of his most famous stories clearly show.

O'Brien made no bones about his debt to Poe, openly acknowledging it in "Fragments from an Unpublished Magazine," which appeared in the December, 1852 issue of *The American Whig Review*, a periodical in which, appropriately, "The Raven" had been printed a few years earlier. To this he also contributed a great deal of verse, much of it weird and supernatural in theme. His prose already showed a fantastic bent. "A Voyage in My Bed," in the September, 1852 issue, is a smoothly done dream experience which belongs with his truly off-beat material. "The King of Nodland and His Dwarf" (December, 1852) is a Swiftian satire which in addition tocriticizing social conditions in England sets forth the case against slavery. Such veins of social protest run persistently through many of his poems and short stories. It is predominately aimed against the suffering society inflicts upon children and animals; though a positive quality, it descends at times into sentimental bathos.

In 1853 O'Brien began writing regularly for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, sometimes contributing a number of items anonymously and appearing in almost every issue. "A Dead Secret" (November, 1853) relates the story of a suicide as told by the dead man himself, and shows good narrative pace and high interest. Its atmosphere forshadows that of his best later fantasies.

During his lifetime, O'Brien's poetry was very highly regarded. When the critic William Winter assembled the first posthumous volume of his works, *The Poems and Stories of Fitz-James O'Brien* (1881), the poems led off the book with a 142-paged segment, and the stories were placed last. Time and the judgement of critics have laid the onus of triviality on most of his verse, but those poems with a supernatural cast have a fine narrative flow and in their narrower canon are more likely to survive. The long narrative poem "Sir Brasil's Falcon" (*United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, September, 1853) reads extremely well. Here, a knight kills his falcon because three times it has dashed a drink of woodland water from his thirsty lips, only to find that the water was poisoned by a dragon's saliva. In remorse, the knight returns to the body of the dead falcon and waits for death to join him with the spirit of his noble bird.

In "Hard Up" (*Putnam's Magazine*, July, 1854) there are hints that the weird and science-fiction tales he was to write were already in gestation. Telling of a financially strapped author (unquestionably himself) he refers to a fictitious story called "The Animated Skeleton" and then to "The Phantom Telescope," still in manuscript, which "shows a greater originality and power than anything of Poe's or Hawthorne's." The latter might be a forerunner of "The Diamond Lens."

O'Brien's talents were sufficiently adroit to include playwrighting. At the end of his first year in America Lester Walleck produced to good reviews his play "My Christmas Dinner." His two-act play, "A Gentleman from Ireland," opened December 11, 1854. This presentation of the problems of an Irishman in England was light, witty and well acted, and proved popular. It was revived on numerous occasions, and remained in print long after its original printing of 1858. It was followed on December 27, 1854 by O'Brien's adaptation from the French of "The Sisters," which also had an excellent reception.

Exuberance over successful playwrighting may have temporarily halted O'Brien's progress in other areas, but the appearance of "The Bohemian" (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, July 1855) was the start of his swift dash toward literary recognition as perhaps the most skilled American short story writer of that period. This work derived its substance from two subjects also used by Poe, the finding of lost treasure (as in "The Gold Bug") and mesmerism (as in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"). To these O'Brien added the philosophy of Bohemianism and a realiistic contemporary setting uncommon in that period.

A young New York City barrister sits in his office awaiting his first client. He makes a precarious living by free-lance writing. The girl he loves happens also to be the daughter of a writer who earns barely enough for survival, so there is no hope of immediate marriage. A man enters his office who describes himself as a Bohemian, who offers a definition of Bohemianism and its philosophy, and who possesses extraordinary powers of mesmerism. He places the protagonist under his control without effort. What he wants is the cooperation of the young man's girl friend who, he has determined, has powers of clairvoyance. He hopes that these qualities, under his own mesmeric direction, will help pinpoint the location of lost treasure. His experiment succeeds, for she locates buried riches on Coney Island, and the two men dig it up. But when the young lawyer returns the next morning with his share of the findings, he discovers the girl dead from the mental strain of the experiment. The story ends with the lines: "Below the stairs, in the valise, lay the treasure I had gained. Here, in her grave clothes, lay the treasure I had lost."

Considerable skill at dialogue (the basis for his success as a playwright), a convincing pseudo-scientific background, and a rapid narrative pace are displayed in the story. Like many others, it revealed New York City in 1855 as already the metroplis of America. By then its population was climbing towards 600,000. It was the transportation hub of the nation, and connected to the rest of the world by ship. Its hotels were among the finest anywhere. Central heating was becoming widespread, gas-lights illuminated the streets, and stores provided every conceivable necessity and luxury. An important financial community had been established in Wall Street, and in the theaters plays written in America were being produced. New York had also become a flourishing center of publishing where many writers struggled to make a living by full-time writing in the manner of Poe. These men lived, met and caroused like the Bohemians of a later period, and their prince was Fitz-James O'Brien.

They frequented several haunts, but their favorite was probably Pfaff's at 645 Broadway, an establishment known for its ale and German pancakes. Most of the literary lights who sat at the long table in its cellar are forgotten today, but were accorded considerable respect in their era. Among those who have left their imprint are Thomas Bailey Aldrich, author of that perennially popular novel *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870); the poet Walt Whitman; Edmund Clarence Stedman, an outstanding editor and anthologist; Ada Clare (Jane McElhaney), actress and author; Harry Clapp, author and editor; the artist Sol Eytinge, Jr., who drew several sketches of O'Brien; the writer William North; and many others. In 1866, Georges Clemenceau, a physician, author and later Premier of France, would be in attendance. Aside from testing one's capacity for drink, a favorite game was to see who could write a poem of a given number of lines the fastest. O'Brien was frequently the winner in this, and even dashed off in such haste his productions were often good enough to sell. It was a literary milieu in which there was good fellowship, ready exchange of ideas, and a feeling of belonging to a coterie that probably deserves as much acclaim for its robustness and talent as the later, far better publicized Algonquin Club.

Out of this happy period arose "The Pot of Tulips" (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November, 1855). Though a ghost story, a link to reality was the re-

minder that it was located at the spot "tamed down into a site for a Crystal Palace. Madison Square was then a wilderness of fields and scrub oak, here and there diversified with tall and stately elms. Worthy citizens who could afford two establishments rusticated in the groves that then flourished where ranks of brownstone porticos now form a landscape; and the locality of Fortieth Street, where my summer palace stood, was justly looked upon as at an enterprising distance from the city."

The teller of the story decides to spend the summer in an "old Dutch villa, which was previously owned by the late Mr. Van Koeren, a Dutchman, so suspicious of his wife, that when a child was born two months premature he refused to believe that she had not been unfaithful." He would have nothing further to do with her, and deliberately encouraged the child to lead a life of dissipation and vice, cutting him off when he married. As the years pass, both Van Koeren's wife and son die. On his own deathbed, through a strange communication with the unknown, Van Koeren realizes he has been wrong in his treatment of them, but dies before he can put things to rights. None of his money is found. Later, however, his ghost and the ghost of his wife appear, carrying a pot of tulips like the one painted above the mantlepiece. Behind this is found a secret closet concealing the details of his investments, which can go to the wife and daughter of his late son. This tale is aimed at mystifying rather than frightening the reader, and O'Brien handles its development with consummate skill.

(to be continued)

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"Open House"——continued from page 67

Page 135: Eshbach mentions *Beyond Thirty* as being (or having been) a possible Polaris Press book——among others. The reader will naturally interpret that as meaning that he didn't reprint this story. But on page 187 of Heins' bibliography of Burroughs we learn of two cheaply produced paper-covered editions of his stories, one *The Man-Eater*, the other *Beyond Thirty*, that appeared about 1955, of which "Upon our inquiry in 1963, Mr. Lloyd A. Eshbach admitted to being the anonymous publisher, stating that he had brought out 300 copies of each title."

Page 308: Eshbach says of the dust-wrapper for *Under the Triple Suns* that "for this cover painting Hannes Bok had employed a new process. . . ." That process may not have been so new. Five years earlier it was used and described on the dust wrapper of Leinster's *Sidewise in Time* (1950).

Page 309: "It is rather well known that 'Hannes Bok' was a pseudonym. Wayne Woodard was his real name. This was first revealed by Calvin Beck in 1974 in a Gerry de la Ree book——*Bok, a Tribute to Hannes Bok*. . . ." But for readers of *Science Fiction Times* this would have been no revelation, for that periodical carried the same information ten years earlier, in its August, 1964 issue.

There are also a few minor misprints. The correct title of Ray Cummings' story is *The Man on the Meteor* (page 35), Derleth's book is *Village Year* (pages 151 and 415), Keller's is *The Lady Decides* (page 389), and Smith's should be given as *Second Stage Lensmen* (pages 213 and 362——though Eshbach got it right on page 411). T. O'Conor Sloane's middle name is misspelled on page 42, as is Joseph Clement Cole's on pages 175 and 393.

But enough of this! You will be thinking I must be similar to the man mentioned in Schorer's biography of Sinclair Lewis, whose hobby was the proofreading of published books.