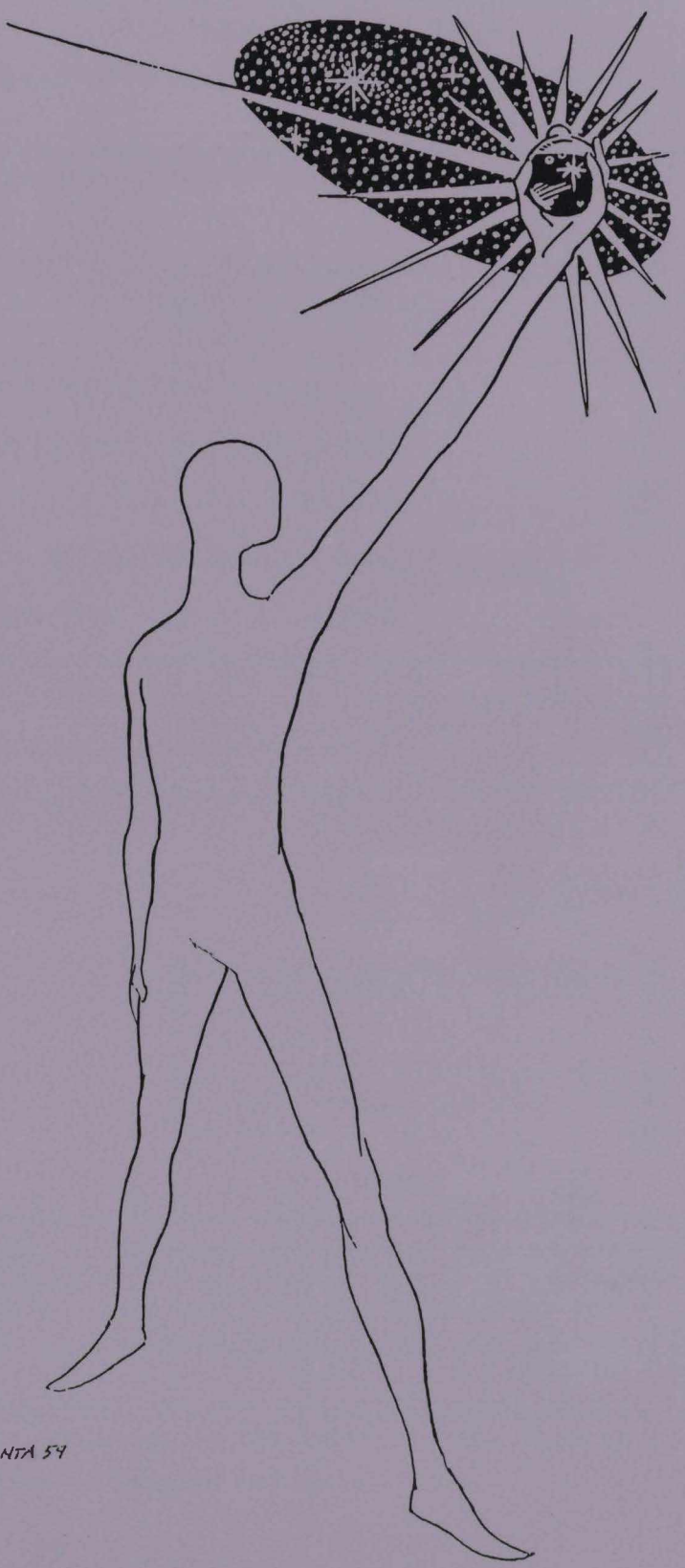
FANTASY COMMENTATOR



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Pages and Pages of Pohl

H. R. Felgenhauer

I

Few have given more to or done more for our science-fiction universe than the "Old Pro," Frederik Pohl. In this new age religion he is today the modern equivalent of an ancient prophet. As a leader in every activity that relates to the field, he lends credence to that well-worn phrase, "living legend."

Mr. Pohl is foremost a writer, a creator, whose fictions are parables which help us understand today's world more clearly, often suggesting plausible options other than those we are currently persuing.

He was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1919, started to write when he was twelve, and made his first sale at seventeen. As a teenaged fan in the 1930's he was a founder of the renowned Futurians. Here he cemented lifelong friendships with, among others, young Cyril Kornbluth (with whom he eventually wrote seven novels and some three dozen short stories) and nineteen-year-old Isaac Asimov (with whom in 1991 he wrote the political/ecological primer/bible *Our Angry Earth* ——a sort of St. Frederick's and St. Isaac's epistle to the environmentalists).

Besides being the last person to collaborate with the mighty Asimov, he was also the first: a 1941 story titled "The Little Man of the Subway." Alas, there was only one other joint effort in the years between, the short story "Legal Rites," also in 1941. Indeed, these two were the only ones Asimov ever wrote with anyone until he and his wife Janet began the "Norby" series near the end of his life.

The Futurians, in their various permutations, science-fiction communes (once described as "dull, drugless, all-male pads") and solo or collaborative writing efforts, formed a hard-core nucleus of what the genre would eventually become. During this early phase of his career, Mr. Pohl wrote an indeterminate number of stories under several pen names——at least a dozen as James McCreigh——many with one or more collaborators.

Young Frederik crossed paths with the established science-fiction publishers and and editors of that era——godfather John W. Campbell, Jr., for example ——and created an impression that quickly propelled him into those rarefied ranks himself. By the age of twenty he became one of Campbell's competitors as editor of *Astonishing Stories* and *Super Science Stories*. There he proceeded to publish his own work and that of his Futurian friends, both singly and in their myriad combinations.

One claim to fame in this period was his buying nearly half of the fiction that Asimov sold. He was the first editor to ask Asimov to write a sequel to one of his tales, and also helped convince him that he should write novels as well as short stories. We all know how famously that idea worked out!

Because of intervening military service, this early phase of his editing career lasted only two years, but he resumed the profession in the postwar period, editing a total of five magazines, most notably *Galaxy* and *If*. The latter's mix of new and old talent won it a "Hugo" three years in a row. Many of the stories he printed also won "Hugos," and work of the authors we think of today as Old Masters first appeared in Frederik Pohl's magazines.

In 1953 he began the first paperback original-story anthology in the field, *Star Science Fiction*, and later he served as science-fiction editor for Bantam Books. During the 1950's and 1960's his influence on the genre was profound.

An additional reason for this was his becoming a literary agent. In this role he represented many of the familiar genre names in the postwar period. During 1951 alone, for example, he sold to the leading science-fiction publishers more fiction than they bought from all other sources combined. He brought back many writers who had dropped out of the field, and a high percentage of his clients soon became household names. He is the only person whom Asimov ever allowed to handle his work.

In 1947 he was a co-founder of the famed Hydra Club, whose meetings were attended by most of the major writers and editors of the era, and served stints as an advertising copy writer. Eventually he returned to full-time writing.

His first postwar story, with Cyril Kornbluth, was *The Space Merchants* (1953). Now considered a classic, this widely imitated novel is credited with having brought the art of satire back to science-fiction and reshaping much of the thinking in the field.

His solo novelette, "The Midas Plague" (1954) revealed more fully an ability to extrapolate current trends to further extremes than his peers, and to use selective exaggeration to expose ideas no one had thought of before. Here, as later, Mr. Pohl confounded critics who claimed he needed collaborators to be effective.

Over the years he has proved himself to be among the very best, and with an output that can truly be called memorable, is probably the greatest "Old Pro" still writing. In 1971 he introduced in "The Merchants of Venus" one of the great science-fiction inventions under the guise of the anomaly of a vanished race, the Heechee. In 1977 they received their own venue in the novel *Gateway*, which promptly received Hugo and Nebula awards. Its sequel, *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* (1980), also won a Hugo and a Nebula—as well as the John W. Campbell Memorial Award.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Pohl has won most of the awards his field has to offer. When he was awarded a Hugo for his writing in 1973 he became the only person ever to win one as both a writer and an editor. Altogether he has collected six Hugos, three Nebulas (including the rare Lifetime Achievement Award) and two International John W. Campbell Awards. He's also won the French *Prix Apollo* and the Yugoslavian *Vizija*.

Outside the science-fiction community he has received the American Book Award, the annual award of the Popular Culture Association, The United States Society of Writers Award and the United Nations Society of Writers Award. His honors are too numerous to complete here. A checklist of his writings would probably take up as much space as this article.

Frederik Pohl is the *Encyclopedia Britannica's* authority on the Roman emperor Tiberius, and his articles have appeared in such periodicals as *Playboy*, *Omni* and *Family Circle*. His books have not only been translated into most major languages, but have been turned into TV shows, plays, movies and computer games.

He is also the author of many works on science, history and technology, and a veteran in political action——writing articles, ghosting speeches, running campaigns. It's not surprising, therefore, that he should have written *Practical Politics*, a how-to manual of the American political process. Although this appeared twenty years ago, it was used as recently as 1989 in the U.S.S.R. by a young man named Boris Kagarlitski to get himself elected a deputy of the Moscow City Soviet!

Frederik Pohl is a member of the British Interplanetary Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He's been president of the World SF and the Science Fiction Writers of America, and presently is Midwest Area Representative of the Authors' Guild after nine years as a member of its council.

He's been intimately involved in that most lasting of fan traditions, the convention, since he attended the very first one in 1936, and as a Futurian he took part in the political infighting surrounding the First World Science-Fiction Convention of 1939.

He's taught s-f in schools for young writers, and has lectured on this and on future studies at over 250 colleges. He has been reporting on the dangers that threaten our environment for more than fifty years——long before it became a stylish subject——both in books and in person. He has appeared on over 400 radio and television programs, discussing everything from ESP and cryogenics to UFOs and "futurology." He's attended international conferences on both science and science-fiction, often sponsored by the U. S. State Department. All of these activities have taken him to Canada, Brazil, the Far East and most of eastern and western Europe.

Currently Frederik Pohl lives with his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Anne Hull (with whom he has a deal that she won't have to take his name if he doesn't have to take hers) in a suburb of Chicago, happily and prodigiously writing some of the best s-f to be found. At the Windy Con of November 1992 in that city Mr. Pohl agreed to squeeze an additional obligation into his already full schedule---his umpteenth interview, which follows.

II

H. R. Felgenhauer: *I was pleased to learn that you represented Isaac Asimov for much of his novel-writing period, and that you also agented movie deals, for this should make you the ideal person to answer a question that's always puzzled me. With so many plot elements "borrowed" from his work by every space opera to hit the screen, why hasn't the Foundation series ever been made into "a major motion picture"? Why would "Fantastic Voyage" be the only supposed "classic" film from his tremendous output?*

Frederik Pohl: I don't know why *Foundation* was never made into a movie, although my general answer to any such question is "Because the film and television industry is run almost entirely by demented little animals." Incidentally, Isaac didn't even write the original of "Fantastic Voyage." The producers gave him the script and he wrote a novelization from it.

How about your own output? I know you sold The Space Merchants *for a tidy sum decades ago, but it was never produced. I've read that* Gateway *and* Man Plus *are supposedly "in development" as feature films. Any progress?*

"In development" is really all I know about where they stand. I hear bits of gossip about what the people who currently own the rights are doing, and they keep their options payments up, but that's about it.

Isaac Asimov and yourself must be the two most prolific modern authors. Arthur Clarke says that between you, you've "written or edited almost/more than a thousand books." Do you know if anyone else has come close to what you two have accomplished?

I've never counted up how many books others have written. I don't even have an accurate count of my own, for that matter. If you count everything——novels, non-fiction, short story collections, anthologies I've edited and so on——it's probably over two hundred, but I really don't know how much over.

The narrative in your Way the Future Was *ends around 1970. Is there any chance of your bringing us up to date? For instance, how did you wind up in the Chicago area?*

I do think of writing more of *The Way the Future Was* sometimes, but it's far down on the list of books I want to tackle. I doubt I'll get around to it.

The reason I wound up in the Chicago area is simply love. In 1984 I married Dr. Elizabeth Anne Hull, who teaches at Harper College. She couldn't move because she was bound by tenure and so on, but I can write anywhere.

I need only recall your line "Chicago was a robot town" to recapture Midas World *from my memory banks. In this story there's a satirical exchange between robots concerning humans blockbusting robot neighborhoods which set me wondering. Where and who are the African-American science-fictioneers?*

They're around: two of the best are Samuel R. Delaney and Octavia Butler.

In Before the Universe *you said you liked humorous science-fiction. Who are your favorite s-f writers?*

My favorites are Robert Sheckley and Philip Klass, a. k. a. William Tenn ——and it's sad that neither is writing much any more.

What authors would you recommend in terms of their having best realized s-f's full potential?

I'd recommend reading Heinlein, Doc Smith, Ursula Le Guin, Sam Delany, early Van Vogt, Gene Wolfe, Jack Williamson, Bradbury, Clarke, Asimov——and oh, about fifty others, particularly H. G. Wells. Mostly I'd recommend sampling them all to see what most appeals to one's own tastes.

While summing up your development as a writer in The Way the Future Was *you mentioned "monkey tricks" you learned with great effort. What are these?*

"Monkey tricks" have to do with boring things like spelling, grammar and punctuation, and with ways of creating character, making stories move, et cetera. They're simple enough to learn, though requiring work——but drudgery to teach. That's one of the reasons why I admire people like my wife, who teaches them at Harper.

Your novella "The Midas Plague" appeared the year I was born——1954—— and was followed two years later by "The Man Who Ate the World." Then there was a gap of almost three decades before what became the last four chapters of Midas World *came out in 1982-83. That's a remarkably long gestation period. Is this a common occurrence with you?*

I didn't intend any sequels when I wrote "The Midas Plague." But, as sometimes happens, some ideas I had on the subject didn't fit into the original story, so I used them in "The Man Who Ate the World" a little later. But there were still further aspects of the fundamental thesis that lingered in my brain. It wasn't until twenty-odd years later that ways of embodying them in stories occurred to me and I began writing them.

I wouldn't say that's my usual way of working, but it's not uncommon. I wrote *The Merchants' War*, a sequel to *The Space Merchants*, more than thirty years after the original, and the remaining stories in *The Day the Martians Came* almost as long after the first one. Other writers may have more efficient work habits——but that's mine.

In your 1940 story "Nova Midplane" a tractor beam is employed. Was this concept already common then?

Oh, sure. Tractor beams were common currency——Doc Smith was using them when I was still in short pants.

And is the skyhook an original concept?

That's not my invention, and I'm not the only science-fiction writer to make use of it. The skyhook was invented by a Russian about twenty-five or thirty years ago. Arthur Clarke used it in a novel——I think *The Fountains of Paradise*——before I did, and several others have since.

It is, in fact, one of only four or five theoretically possible devices for getting into space without rockets. I've used most of these in one story or another: the "Lofstrom loop" in *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon*, the Minsky-Moravec-Forward "space fountain" in my forthcoming *Mars Plus*, and so on.

Mars Plus? *That sounds similar to the award-winning* Man Plus, *revisited after seventeen years.*

Mars Plus is indeed a sequel to *Man Plus;* I wrote the outline and the "bible" for it, but the manuscript itself is being written by Thomas T. Thomas for Baen Books. Whether this is a good idea I can't say yet. I've never worked exactly that way before, but Jim Baen asked me to try it as a favor and I agreed.

Arthur Clarke also let his Rama series languish for a long period before readdressing it as a co-author. Were you influenced by the same sort of reader/publisher pressure to continue a popular story that he experienced?

Of course I do get a certain amount of requests and pressures from editors and fans to continue some published works, but there's only one of me and there are a lot of things I want to write. Generally speaking, I'd rather venture into new territory.

Some recurring concepts in your work are terraforming entire planets and using systematic methods to reduce tensions between individuals and hostilities among populations. In fact, your recent article in Omni *magazine is entitled "Architects of Tomorrow." Would you like to be reincarnated as a planetary engineer, or even as a behaviorist?*

No, I wouldn't want to be reincarnated as a behaviorist or anything else. I *like* being a science-fiction writer, and unless for some reason that was impossible I wouldn't choose anything else.

There's a famous Vonnegut character named Kilgore Trout who could get his wild s-f creations published only in "skin mags." Of course you never had this problem, though your work has appeared in such publications. Is Trout or his creator among your many friends? And what are your experiences in this area?

Kilgore Trout was invented by Kurt Vonnegut after an unhappy visit to the Milford Science Fiction Writers Workshop thirty years or so ago, and is said to have been largely based on Theodore Sturgeon. I knew Sturgeon pretty well, Vonnegut slightly, and like them both.

Very little of my own work has been published in the "skin magazines"——though "Day Million," my favorite among all the short stories I ever wrote, did appear in one. But that's simply because it paid more than s-f magazines. For the same reason, over the years, I've had a number of stories in *Playboy*. I don't write *for* them, though. What happens is that after I've finished a story it occurs to me that one of the higher-paying 'zines might like it, so I send it off; and about half the time it sells. I very seldom actually write *for* anyone. I write what I write and then see who wants to publish it.

You played an influential role in shaping science-fiction through the 1950's and beyond, an era which also saw the birth of other literary currents like "Beat," "Pop," "Gonzo" and so on. Yet throughout this time s-f's popularity grew at a greater rate than they did. What happened?

I have no explanation for popular taste, so I ignore it and write what I feel like writing.

I believe it's fair to call you "King Collaborator." Can you claim everyone from Asimov to Zelazny, or must you be content with Asimov to Williamson?

My book-length collaborations have been primarily with Kornbluth and Williamson——seven or eight each——and I've had at least a dozen with others over the years. But never with Zelazny, though we're friends and have occasionally explored places like China together.

Do you have any new collaborations coming up?

The only others that are in the works are *Mars Plus*, as mentioned, and a science-fiction novel now in progress with Hans Moravec, which you can ask me about later. I do hope to write more with Jack Williamson one of these days, because he's a dear friend and I enjoy working with him. But we don't have anything specific planned.

Are there any other writers you'd like to work with?

Not really.

You're a judge in the "Writers of the Future" contest. You're not on the lookout for new collaborators there, are you?

I judge for "Writers of the Future" because A. J. Budrys talked me into it. When the contest first began I was asked to be a judge and declined——partly because I'm not fond of Scientology, mostly because I feel that as an editor I've already read all the amateur s-f anyone should be required to in a lifetime.

Then Ted Sturgeon, who was a judge, got sick, and A.J. called me up and asked me to fill in for him as a temporary measure, because the contestants were waiting for the results. I agreed, and then stayed on out of inertia. Although I don't support Scientology, I do support efforts of new writers to get published, and I feel the contest is a very good thing for its winners.

And no, I'm not looking for new collaborators——if I were, that would be an inefficient way to find them, since the manuscripts are provided with the authors' names deleted anyway.

I know you prefer doing the final drafts of collaborations, but what's your preferred mode of working with someone else? And have you any favorites?

I don't have any favorites. All of my collaborators were good, but for different reasons. I couldn't have written *Our Angry Earth* with either Cyril or Jack. I do have a *least* favorite, though. That's my dear old friend Lester del Rey, with whom I wrote a turkey called *Preferred Risk* long ago. I love the man, but his way of writing and mine simply don't go together. The reason we're still friends is that, when we finally got the book done, we vowed never to collaborate again as long as we lived.

How did Our Angry Earth *come to be written?*

Our Angry Earth was my idea; I talked Isaac into it. That wasn't hard to do, because he cared as much about the subject as I did, but unfortunately our timing was poor. We'd had a festive dinner in New York to celebrate the beginning of our first collaboration in half a century. As we got up from the table Isaac said he was suddenly not feeling well. He thought it might be flu, but it wasn't;

he wound up in the hospital and never really recovered. So, although he was involved at every stage and approved every word, most of his contribution turned out to be comments, suggestions, insertions and the like.

Some of your Kornbluth collaborations come from unfinished manuscripts. Would you consider performing the same service for Asimov?

Yes, probably, but I know of no such fragments. As far as I'm aware, he didn't leave any unfinished works except his last novel, *Forward the Foundation*, which is being published in its unfinished state. Isaac rarely left anything incomplete for long; he was an extraordinarily efficient producer.

Do you forsee any of your continuing stories eventually dovetailing with each other, the way Asimov's Foundation and Robot series did?

No, I don't want to shoehorn my differing universes into each other. I don't think Asimov should have done it, either——but he didn't ask my advice.

How do you feel about Clarke's estimate that Our Angry Earth *is "perhaps the most important book either of its authors has produced"?*

I can't speak for Isaac, but I suppose *Gateway* is about the best I ever wrote. *The Space Merchants* was very successful, and for twenty years reviews of my new books tended to start with, "While not up to the standards of *The Space Merchants*, this new Pohl is..." Since 1977 they tend to start with, "While not up to the standards of *Gateway*..."

How about that series——will there be more?

No, I don't think there will ever be any more Heechee installments——unless, of course, something unexpected and irresistible occurs to me.

I can think of one possibility here. A scientist has recently claimed identifying the missing mass/dark matter which was central to the plot. He says it has to do with the mass of a subatomic particle called the neutrino, and that as a corollary we must have an "infinite" universe——one that will neither collapse nor expand forever.

There are dozens of different speculations about dark matter. You pays your money and takes your choice. It will take more evidence than anyone now has to decide the facts behind that mystery.

Whatever happened to Janine and her family from Beyond the Blue Event Horizon? *Did she bear Wan's child? For that matter, whatever happened to Wan after* Heechee Rendezvous?

I don't know the answers to those questions. If I ever do write more in the series, we'll probably all find out about them together——but that's not likely, as I've said.

In a blurb for Beyond the Blue Event Horizon *Jack Williamson says he first came across Heechee footprints in "The Merchants of Venus," which is also a chapter, uncredited with prior publication, in* The Gateway Trip. *Was it previously published?*

"The Merchants of Venus" was a novelette I wrote——or at least began——one weekend in my hotel room at a very bad con. It appeared in magazines and anthologies before I ever wrote *Gateway*. One major reason I wrote *The Gateway Trip* was to get that novelette into the same format as the rest of the series.

Recently I ran across a reference to a book by yourself and your wife that tells one story from nineteen different points of view. What is it, and how did it come to be?

The book you're talking about is *Tales from the Planet Earth*, in which nineteen writers from eighteen countries——the People's Republic of China was allowed to supply two because it's so huge——wrote stories on the same theme. It was intended mostly as a fund-raiser for the organization World SF, which shared the royalties.

World SF, subtitled "the international organization of s-f professionals," is an organization started a dozen years ago by Harry Harrison, Sam Lundwall, Brian Aldiss and myself to give people professionally concerned with s-f anywhere in the world a meeting ground. It's especially meant to benefit members who've had difficulty in making foreign contacts because they were restricted by their governments. Since most of these people had no way of paying dues, the support of the organization had to be borne by the rest of us.

You've been quoted as saying, "SF at its best is a mirror in which we see our world, our future and ourselves . . . we know ourselves by our extremes... perhaps thinking about horn-skinned, bloodless aliens from another planet will teach us something about getting along with our own human cousins." You've also been noted for using selective exaggeration of observable features of our society.

This methodology shares elements with the myth and Biblical parable. Can we then view science-fiction as a more benign religion than those which have caused humanity such trouble and suffering in its long climb from slime to stars? And, relatedly: It's been said that science is already a new religion. How do you feel about these views?

We cannot view s-f as a religion. And no, we can't view science as a religion either. Religions depend on *faith*. Science depends on *evidence*. Science-fiction depends——when it's good, anyway——on *plausibility*. Neither has anything in common with religion. Religion has no relationship with reason; instead, it takes the form of, "You have to believe this because I say you'll go to hell if you don't."

Have you been doing any politicking recently? And will politics be popping up again as a theme in your fiction?

Politics is a recurring theme in my life as well as my fiction, but I haven't taken an active part in campaigns lately. I do contribute to candidates I like and once in a great while attend a political event, but most of my political activity comes out of the word processor.

In Gateway, Mining the Oort *and others, you've portrayed lives ruined by drug abuse. Conversely, marijuana use receives kinder treatment. What future would you like to see invented for it?*

I don't *recommend* that anyone smoke marijuana, but I don't regard it as particularly dangerous, either——no more so than cigarettes or liquor, certainly. Years ago I smoked the stuff occasionally and generally enjoyed it. The reason I stopped is that to buy marijuana is to contribute to drug dealers, whom I loathe and fear for their effects on society. If it were legalized I would probably try it now and then again. But as long as it isn't legal, I'm morally unwilling to be an accomplice to those murderous cartels.

Do you feel, then, that the millions of dollars and man-hours lavished on prosecuting pot customers is a grievous waste?

Criminalizing sale and use of psychoactive drugs hasn't eliminated the drugs, it's just created an additional crop of prosperous criminals. We're not very good at dealing with criminals, either. (By "we" I mean the human race in general, not just the United States.)

About the most sensible system I know of in history is the way the Brits

exiled all their baddies to Australia and let them fight it out amongst themselves. Even the Brits didn't do a very good job of it, of course. Their choice of who to call criminals was terribly unfair——and anyway, we've run out of Australias.

Our Angry Earth *says that our politicians must come to their senses; it compares them to prostitutes, and the Reagan-Bush administrations come off worst of all. Your book may have played a role in the last presidential election by emphasizing these themes at a crucial time. Does Clinton——so far——appear to be nearer enough the mark to truly make a difference?*

I have hopes for a better ecological——as well as political——regime now that he is president. How *much* better remains to be seen. But it can't be worse than the moral wasteland of Nixon, Reagan and Bush.

Our Angry Earth *calls for specific pollution taxes to restore the Reagan-Bush budget-cuts in alternative energy research, and also for what eventually became known as the Tsongas-Perot proposals for a 50¢ a gallon gasoline tax. Do you see Clinton supporting such politically inexpedient goals?*

If it were up to me, I'd put a $5 a gallon tax on gasoline right now. That would not only greatly help the environment, but would solve our balance-of-payments problem and neutralize the Arab oil sheiks at the same time. But that won't happen, because Americans are addicted to their cars. If Clinton gets any kind of energy tax at all passed I'll bless his name.

Your awareness of environmental issues dates back at least to your 1940 short story "Vacant World." In The Space Merchants *you postulate a secret worldwide environmental group which fights "reckless exploitation of natural resources." It believes that "this trend may be reversed if the people of the Earth can be educated." With groups like the Sierra Club, Greenpeace and Earth First! active today, have we finally reached a plateau of human understanding?*

Greenpeace et al. have most of the right ideas. But I wouldn't say that we've reached a "plateau of human understanding" because I don't think there is one——we keep learning more and more, and no end is in sight.

You've been writing about storing human life-force and personality electronically since at least the late 1960's, in the short stories "Day Million" and "Schematic Man"; and more recently with the "dead men" concept of the Heechee saga. Now, when someone dies and is stored in such a way, isn't the person in storage actually another person——not the same guy, but a "subsequent" guy, who even with all the original memories is nontheless quite different? After all, the original guy's still dead, isn't he?

Let me give you two answers to this. First, are you still the same guy you were when you were five years old? You don't look the same. Just about every atom of your body has been discarded and replaced. But isn't it still you?

Second, the full answer to this question would take a whole book——and, as a matter of fact, I'm in the process of writing it——the collaboration with Hans Moravec I mentioned earlier. He's the author of the best book I know of about the future of computers, *Mind Children,* and is also head of the Robotics Institute at Carnegie-Mellon University. Our tentative title is *State of Mind,* and the book is a science-fiction novel. Who will publish it and when it will be published I have no idea. We have to finish it first, and that's a slow process. Each of us keeps getting interrupted with other things.

Are there awards you'd like, but haven't won yet?

You bet! Lots of them, from the Nobel Prize on down. But none specifically hungered for.

How can readers find you?

The best place for anyone to contact me would be at a con. Alternatively, he or she could write me a letter. But please, no phone calls. Ever.

One recurring characteristic of your speculative writing——and by far my own favorite——is the prevalence of smoking. You have the nurse spraying ashes all over the cyborg-producing operating theater of Man Plus; *the cigarettes in* The Space Merchants *are symbiotically addicting; astronauts smoke aboard spaceships, space stations and training facilities in* Mining the Oort; *the enervating tobacco brand Valerons in "The Extrapolated Dimwit"; there are "smoking hoods" to silence the screaming meemies in* Gateway; *even the intellectual canines from a remotely distant future in "Best Friend" smoke beef-flavored cigarettes. But smoking has been declared harmful by our surgeon general and is being banned everywhere, including in the White House. What's your reaction to all this?*

It's a despicably filthy habit with few redeeming virtues, but I love it. I've averaged a pack or two a day for nearly sixty years, and although I admit it's stupid as well as offensive to others——whom I do my best to placate by not smoking in their presence——I don't plan to stop.

Thank you, Mr. Pohl.

I hope that does it. My best to you all.

NOTES

In the course of preparing for the above interview I read twenty-one of Frederik Pohl's books——approximately ten percent of his own estimated hard-cover output. They spanned the entire period of his writing career. Several were recmmended by the author himself; others simply appealed to me when I spotted them on bookstore shelves. In addition of Pohl's *The Way the Future Was,* I found Damon Knight's *The Futurians,* Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* and Lester del Rey's introduction to *The Best of Frederik Pohl* invaluable sources of biographical information.

For those who would like to read a more detailed survey of Mr. Pohl's contributions to the genre, with further references, the editor suggests David N. Samuelson's scholarly article in *Science Fiction Writers* (1982), edited by Everett F. Bleiler.

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"The Immortal Storm II"——continued from page 120

Meanwhile *The Futurian* was broadening its science-fiction coverage. The July 1939 issue contained a vignette written especially for the magazine by Ralph Milne Farley; a short interview with Walter Gillings, in which he complained of having to use reprints in *Tales of Wonder* because he was not getting enough quality new stories to fill the magazine; and the conclusion of a two-part series of reminiscences by Julius Unger about the Scienceers, a pioneering fan group. (This last is still of historic interest today.) In "Pathetic Fallacies" John Burke attacked some of the widespread beliefs in the field, such as "The Skylark of Space" being a good story, Frank R. Paul being an outstanding artist, and Stanley Weinbaum being headed for anything except pulp hackdom. He added that fans——including himself——were "conceited egotists" and "political fantastics." This proved also to be the last issue of *The Futurian* to which Harold Gottliffe contributed.

War clouds were gathering over Europe, and they were beginning to affect not only individuals in the field, but presaging change for the entire structure of fantasy fandom.

(to be continued in the next issue)

Forgotten Fantasy Verse

I - ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

A. Langley Searles

Although there are few poets whose outputs are predominately devoted to fantasy, many have at some time found the realm congenial. No comprehensive checklist or bibliography of their ventures into it has ever been compiled; only by wide and continual reading can fantasy poems be located. It seems appropriate, then, to publish as many such examples as can be found, which is why this series has been initiated. Where possible, they will be prefaced by brief biographies of their authors, who now seem as forgotten as their work.

Three factors limit my selections. The first is the date of copyright expiration; in these commercial times it is difficult to obtain permission to print material not in the public domain without charge, even by a non-profit journal like *Fantasy Commentator*. The second limitation is the space available; thus examples will be largely short poems rather than long ones, though existence of the latter will be mentioned in prefatory remarks. Thirdly, my own preference in short poetic forms is the sonnet, so in this series you will find more sonnets than anything else. I believe this is defensible: the form has been employed for over six hundred years, is still used today, and is therefore a touchstone for judging poets of any period.

Arthur Davison Ficke was born on November 11, 1883 in Davenport, Iowa to Charles August Ficke, a well-to-do lawyer, and Frances Davison Ficke. He attended Harvard, earned a law degree at the University of Iowa, and then joined his father's practice, where he remained until 1918. He had begun to write verse as a child, and during this decade published eight volumes of poetry. This included what is considered his best work, *Sonnets of a Portrait Painter*, a sequence of 57 sonnets chronicling the progress of a love affair. Although individual poems from his ten later collections (the last of which appeared in 1942) received praise, it was the opinion of most critics that he had not lived up to his original promise.

The best of Ficke's work is melodious, lyrical and conforms to rhyming metrics. He believed the function of poetry was "not to impart messages, but to explore the depth of emotions," and that in doing so the medium of free verse imposed a handicap. He himself used the form, however, for several long works, including *Mr. Faust* (1913), an adaption of Goethe's romantic fantasy to the current American scene. He opposed modernists' rejection of formalism and, with his friend Witter Bynner, satirized their efforts in *Spectra*, pseudonymously published in 1916.

Ficke travelled extensively, especially in the Far East. His enthusiasm for Oriental art inspired *Chats on Japanese Prints* (1915), which is the only one of his books, ironically, to remain in print. He married twice, and had a brief affair with Edna Millay, with whom he had corresponded since 1912; each influenced the other's work. The last two decades of his life were shadowed by severe illness, first tuberculosis and then cancer, from which he died on November 30, 1945.

Adumbrations of fantasy abound in Arthur Ficke's poetry, and the examples chosen show their wide range clearly. Since he often revised his work, even changing titles, readers may encounter texts differing from those below. For historical reasons I cite the place and date of their first publication:

"A World of Beauty" and "Strange Shadows" (sonnets XLV and LIII of *Sonnets of a Portrait Painter*): *Forum 52*, 249-277 (August 1914); "Perspective of Coördination" and "Speculations of a Mandarin" (titled "World Beyond World"): *Poetry 18*, 28-29 (1921); "Old Wives' Tale": *Poetry 18*, 72 (1921); "Secret Instructions for Reaching Xanadu": *Selected Poems of Arthur Davison Ficke* (1926); I have been unable to locate any prior periodical publication of this last title.

A WORLD OF BEAUTY

A world of beauty and a reign of law——
A glimpse of life's obscure authentic lord——
A link from mote to planet——these with awe
The saint and lover crave, in deep accord.
Yet must the lover oft-times turn aside
From where the saint, sure of his truth, would bound
Powers that, beyond known confines circling wide,
The unproved dominance of dream confound.
Sometimes across the vastness of free sky,
Beyond the orbit of life's charted world,
A wandering spectre of the dark goes by——
A flaming comet out of chaos hurled:
And wise men doubt their wisdom, as that light
Plunges unknown down chasms of boundless night.

SPECULATIONS OF A MANDARIN

Two mirrors, face to face, are all I need
To build a mazy universe for my mind
Where world grows out of world. Dizzy, I find
Solace in endless planes that there recede.
The fifth plane-world, soft-shimmering through the glass——
Surely it has a light more bland than ours?
And in the far ninth hides a world of powers
Unknown to our dull senses. I would pass
Down the long vista, pausing now and then
To taste the flavor of each separate sphere,
And with each vast perspective cool my eye.
Whom should I meet there? Never living men!
What should I love there? Nothing I hold dear!
What would the end be? Endless as am I!

OLD WIVES' TALE

I saw my grandmother's shadow on the wall
In firelight; it danced with queer grimaces
As if her serious soul were making faces
At me, at life, or God, or at us all.
And I, an urchin lying at her feet,
Then caught my first glimpse of the secret powers
That stir beneath this universe of ours,
Making a witches' carnival when they meet.
Across the firelit dusk my pensive mood
Dreamed out to mingle with the waifs of time,
Whose unsolved stories haunt the poets' rhyme,
And in dark streets of ancient cities brood
Like sudden ghosts rising above the grime
With premonition of terror that chills the blood.

STRANGE SHADOWS

There are strange shadows fostered of the moon,
More numerous than the clear-cut shades of day....
Go forth, when all the leaves whisper of June,
Into the dusk of swooping bats at play;
Or go into that late November dusk
When hills take on the noble lines of death,
And on the air the faint astringent musk
Of rotting leaves pours vaguely troubling breath.
Then shadows shall you see whereof the sun
Knows nothing——aye, a thousand shadows there
Shall leap and flicker, stir and stay and run,
Like petrels of the changing foul or fair;
Like ghosts of twilight, of the moon, of him
Whose homeland lies past each horizon's rim....

PERSPECTIVE OF COORDINATION

The circles never fully round, but change
In spiral gropings——not, as on a wall,
Flat-patterned, but back into space they fall,
In depth on depth of indeterminate range.
Where they begin may be here at my hand
Or there far lost beyond the search of eye;
And though I sit, desperately rapt, and try
To trace round-round the line, and understand
The sequence, the relation, the black-art
Of their continuance, hoping to find good
At least some logic of part-joined-to-part,
I judge the task one of too mad a mood:
And prophecy throws its shadow on my heart,
And Time's last sunset flames along my blood.

SECRET INSTRUCTIONS FOR REACHING XANADU

Go eastward from the Bewildered-Dragon Lake
Until the Monastery of the West
Towers straight and high above your head. Then take
The charms which, as I told you, in the breast
Of your most inner robe you've hid, and follow
Their clear instruction: firstly, you will swim
Like a carp up the cataract; then, as swallow,
Lift yourself out of the foaming whirl and din
And forgetting quite all you could ever learn
Of man's astronomy, sweep to the east
Of cool and rosy sunrise. There you must turn
On slow-winged circles till you descry a priest
Deaf, dumb and blind. Go to him. If he thinks best
He will disclose how you achieve the rest.

Eric Temple Bell and John Taine:

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE-FICTION

Douglas Robillard

John Taine has been suffering lately from neglect while some of his contemporaries have been treated fairly well. Olaf Stapledon's books have been reprinted and critical studies of them have appeared; S. Fowler Wright's fiction seems to be out of print, but Brian Stableford's *The Scientific Romance in Britain, 1890-1940* offers an excellent summary of it; and Edgar Rice Burroughs, though a few years older than Taine, has never dropped out of the public consciousness. Sam Moskowitz, indefatigable researcher, has written well about all three of these authors. For Taine, however, we have little beyond period book reviews and James Campbell's study in E. F. Bleiler's *Science Fiction Writers*. His books are hard to get except from specialty dealers. Two of the published novels, "Twelve Eighty-Seven" and "Tomorrow," have never seen print beyond the covers of *Astounding* and *Marvel Science Stories*, though the second, at least, deserves book publication.

But luckily for Taine, he was also Eric Temple Bell (1883-1960), a notable mathematician, researcher, scholar and writer of popular books on his subject. He is remembered and esteemed by mathematicians, and now the Mathematical Association of America has published a full-scale biography of the man by Constance Reid, *The Search for E. T. Bell*.[1]* This sturdy volume, 372 pages of detailed biography with a generous selection of photographs and documents, tells us much that we didn't know about Bell/Taine, and also corrects the misinformation. Bell lied fairly consistently about his early years and background——or, to put it more precisely, he carefully avoided saying things that would have made his life then clear to readers. He was certainly born in Scotland, as he said, but he failed to mention that from 1884 to 1896 he lived in San José, California. He did not even tell his son this. In its earliest pages, Reid's biography becomes a fascinating detective story as she traces Eric Bell's ancestors and his movements. Amateur genealogists, alternately frustrated by dead ends and delighted with discoveries, will especially enjoy this part of the narrative. Why Bell kept his secret Reid does not know, and she does not speculate about it. My own feeling is that if someone deliberately omits any mention of a dozen years of his life, there must be some powerful traumatic forces at work; but we may never know.

From about 1902, when he returned to the United States, the account of Bell's life and career is fairly clear. Here Reid is able to fill in the story with much detail, describing his student years at Stanford and Columbia, his marriage in 1910, his long teaching stints at the University of Washington and then at the California Institute of Technology. She tells us much about his intensive research, the papers he published, and his books about mathematics. All of this is extremely valuable; it gives us a good picture of a brilliant and dedicated teacher and scholar who had a penchant for popularizing his subjects and who sometimes went off in odd directions in his books. Bell's work in the theory of numbers and other topics, embodied in about two hundred papers, continues to be vital.

Although this phase of his career is important and very interesting, science-fiction readers will want to know what the book has to say about John Taine; and here we also learn a great deal more than we ever knew before. He began writing science-fiction novels in 1919, beginning with *Green Fire* (which was

*Notes for this article will be found on page 21.

not published until 1928). Writing mostly when he could put aside academic duties, he finished *The Purple Sapphire* in 1920. Perhaps the biggest surprise is that *The Time Stream*, originally published in *Wonder Stories* in 1931, was written as early as 1921. The accounts of his unpublished fiction will be of interest to readers who have seen their manuscripts listed for sale in catalogs. We get a good idea of how Bell carried out his multifarious writing projects, and some notion of his professional relationships with publishers of mathematics books and science-fiction.

If there is a drawback to this biography, it is length. For the complex tale Reid has to tell, there just aren't enough pages to satisfy our hunger for knowing more. There's more, much more, to say about Bell's work with Julius Schwartz, Oscar J. Friend, Lloyd Eshbach and others involved in the publication of his science-fiction. There's the feud——if that's the right word——with Forrest Ackerman about the right to represent Bell in foreign markets. And of course there's hardly room for more than a squib about each Taine novel. I missed a bibliography so much that I wrote one onto the end-sheets of my own copy. Perhaps the format of the Mathematical Association did not permit the three or four pages necessary, but I think readers would have liked a listing of the science-fiction, and at least a partial listing of other books and a selection of his technical papers, even though such lists are available elsewhere.

Yet there are some real high points: Arthur C. Clarke, who calls John Taine one of his heroes, helps with information about Bell relatives living in Sri Lanka. Bell has a big burst of science-fiction activity at the beginning of the 1920's. *Men of Mathematics* scores a huge popular success. One would like to see some of the correspondence of people who had contact with Bell during the periodic highs of his interest in genre fiction. Perhaps one of the things the book does best is whet this appetite for more, and as a result we may yet see articles and even books explore his professional life and analyze his fiction. Meanwhile, for anyone who admires *The Purple Sapphire*, *The Greatest Adventure*, *Before the Dawn* and, perhaps, *The Cosmic Geoids*, the book is indispensable and gives much pleasure.

Because of Mrs. Reid's kindness, I have been privileged to read two of Taine's unpublished novels and can offer some sort of report about them. I have not seen *Desmond* (written 1922) or *To Be Kept* (as yet undated), but I have read *Satan's Daughter* (written 1923) and *Red and Yellow* (written 1925).

Satan's Daughter has some adventure elements that will remind the reader of *The Purple Sapphire*. The story involves a search for jewels, derring-do in a properly exotic setting, and encounters with people outside the mainstream of civilization. In his essay on Taine, James Campbell has outlined the ingredients of this sort of story, finding its origins in the fiction of H. Rider Haggard, Robert Louis Stevenson, G. A. Henty and other writers popular at the end of the nineteenth century.[2] The motifs are stirring: Haggard's *She* and the Allan Quatermain novels, to take only a few examples, set in a vividly imagined Africa, are archetypes of the fast-moving, entertaining and action-filled stories of wonder. In both *The Purple Sapphire* and *Satan's Daughter* Taine is working similar themes.

However, there are differences in the methods he uses to develop the two novels. In *The Purple Sapphire* there is a strong element of science-fiction in the portrayal of the degenerate remains of a once-powerful and highly advanced civilization. In *Satan's Daughter*, Taine describes an island peopled by generations of pirates and of natives, originally from India and now held captive. The curse of the island is leprosy; the disease has attacked many of the inhabitants, and a generations-long struggle has ensued between those who are tainted and those who are "clean" and separated. There is a fabulous treasure of jewels and money which has been seized over the centuries by the pirates. Some of the jewelry has surfaced in the outer world and excited the attention of treasure hunters. With few elements that can be characterized as fantasy, the novel remains mostly a tale of pure adventure. The plague that is introduced could offer some avenues for

science-fictional development, but the cures proposed seem only current. A whimsical air of fantasy is suggested somewhat by the village of the pirates, built to resemble one in eighteenth century England, and the pirates themselves speak an antique sort of language and brandish outdated firearms, but Taine does not make much of this motif.

We learn the story through the adventures of those in quest of treasure: Major Short, who has tracked down the source of the mysterious jewels; George Eaton, a young member of a gem-trading firm; Johann Smith, a man interned in prison camp during the first world war and now down on his luck; and Smith's wife, Nessie, the usual beautiful woman in Taine's fiction. Hoping for aid from the seller of the jewels, they are subjected to treachery and arrive on the island without a ship or resources. As they learn the true story of conditions, their greed for the gems is deflected by an altruistic desire to help the diseased population of the unfortunate island.

The so-called Satan is Sheba, a beautiful but treacherous young woman; she is the daughter of the "Captain," a leader of the pirate population, and she has an agenda of leadership and deceipt. Falling desperately in love with Johann Smith, she alternates between tricks against the others and attempts to win Smith from his faithful wife. She is unsuccessful, and eventually, in despair, kills herself when it is clear she will lose him. A considerable portion of the story is given over to Sheba's machinations and to her oddly submissive passion for Smith.

Sheba is one of those female characters modelled upon Haggard's Ayesha, and reminds one also of the women in A. Merritt's novels. Taine's treatment of the erotic subject, unusual enough in his fiction, often seems heavy-handed. A *femme fatale* is not part of his repertory; he is more at home with female characters like Rosita Rowe in *The Purple Sapphire* and Edith Lane in *The Greatest Adventure*, women who are attractive, independent, quick-witted and adventurous.

Taine mixes his plot-lines skillfully enough, and the novel is fairly entertaining. It could have been an *Argosy* serial in the 1920's, and one can only guess why it did not achieve publication. When Taine wrote it, some three years had passed since he had composed *The Purple Sapphire*. The publishing firm of Dutton had issued a contract for that novel before he wrote *Satan's Daughter;* and, in fact, he might have been encouraged by the promise of book publication to try repeating his success with a somewhat similar story. He certainly didn't think ill of the book, since in later years he listed it among his unpublished titles. As director of Fantasy Press, Lloyd Eshbach indicated in 1948 an interest in considering the book for publication. In 1951, he referred to a comment of Bell's about seeking movie production for the story. And at about the same time, science-fiction editors and literary agents were looking for Taine material. But nothing came from whatever efforts were made on behalf of the novel.[3]

Satan's Daughter was Taine's novel for 1923. In 1924 he wrote *The Iron Star*, and, in June 1925, *Red and Yellow*. Meanwhile, *The Purple Sapphire* had been published, his first science-fiction novel to go into print; but his next two, *Quayle's Invention* and *The Gold Tooth*, would not appear till 1927, and, in fact, were not written until after the 1924 and 1925 books.

Red and Yellow is different from *Satan's Daughter* in just about every way possible. There is no exotic background for the playing out of the plot; New York, Erivan (in Armenia) and the American Southwest, especially Nevada, are its reasonably familiar settings. There is love interest, but as is usual in most of Taine's fiction, it receives rather casual treatment, as being the sort of thing that just happens in stories; there is no seductress of match Sheba. The characters take their place somewhere behind Taine's main interest, the working out of a plot that will give him the opportunity to comment, often satirically, on modern civilization and its discontents.

Yuri Nazimoff, a Russian entomologist, comes to America as ambassador. As an idealist with a vision of how the human race might evolve into something

finer, he believes that much of the support system underpinning present-day society must be destroyed to make way for change. To carry out his plan, he looses a plague of insects on the country and ruins its agricultural production. People respond with sacrifice and cooperation to attack and destroy the plague; but as the novel ends, it seems that they will return to their old habits once order and prosperity are reassured. Good intentions, harsh actions, even a cleansing of the old ways will not automatically lead the world into a better form of existence.

A number of subplots keep the story moving. Don Travers and his mother, wealthy American inheritors of profits in oil, plan to do some good by taking as wards two Armenian youngsters, Sayat and Jetta Koschak. Jetta, a beautiful girl of fifteen, spends most of the novel growing up to be its love-interest. Sayat, a rather hateful and muddle-headed troublemaker, joins a group of revolutionaries who have cooked up a plan to destroy a huge dam under construction in the Southwest. Some scenes of action include an attack on an Armenian oil field and Nazimoff's well worked-out plan to sow his entomological plague.

The science-fictional element is one that recurs regularly in Taine's work: the world is menaced by some sort of catastrophic event which must be remedied or averted. There are a few similarities between this work and *Twelve Eighty-Seven*, the Taine novel published in *Astounding Stories* in 1935. There, a marvelous fertilizing dust manufactured by the Japanese seems the answer to agricultural production, but its use proves to have disastrous consequences. A major difference between the novels is that *Twelve Eighty-Seven* treats its subject with great seriousness, while *Red and Yellow* displays considerable mocking laughter behind its account of catastrophes.

Taine embroiders his major theme and his subplots with scenes and characters who illustrate his complaints about hamanity. Travers is an important figure in the novel and a sympathetic character, but he seems to take only a distant and academic interest in social problems. The revolutionaries, who might be expected to understand social matters, generally soar "miles above the flat plains of common sense." When Don's ward is captured at a revolutionist meeting, the police captain who brings him home is willing to keep things quiet for a bribe. There is hardly a subject too humble for Taine's satire. Even mince pie is described as a "mysterious compost of indigestibles." Communism comes in for hard knocks: "To the leaders the only true science was a dirty dishwater of lukewarm Marxist socialism; the bourgeois sciences of chemistry, engineering, biology, medicine, and the rest, were mere efflorescences of the decaying corpse of capitalism."

When Nazimoff is to be considered for a research job which will let him work on the problem of boll weevils, Taine does a good parody of a typical hearing by the board of a scientific institute. In some of his harshest criticism he indicates, ironically, that man's reasoning powers have been "somewhat" dulled by civilization's rapid progress; yet in the same breath civilization is attacked as "syphilization." Scenes, comments and judgments are all handled in bracing and pungent language. One gets a full conspectus of Taine's irritable response to the failings of society and its individuals.

A possible failure for the novel's failure to achieve publication was stated by Lloyd Eshbach. Writing to Bell in 1951, he stated that he had read the manuscript and decided not to publish it because much of it was a tirade against the world and readers wouldn't be interested.[4] I would be inclined to modify this judgment by saying that Taine pays enough attention to his plot to make the work well worth reading as a story. I think, too, that readers might well enjoy his critical response to the world he saw. There's a sense of good fun in his sharply worded dissections of the beliefs, actions, motives and foibles of people who hardly ever seem to get it right but act from half-baked agendas.

Compared with the author's best fiction, these two novels seem to be of a lower order of achievement. I had a fairly strong feeling that *Satan's Daughter*

would have got along very well without Sheba's alluring treachery and tragic love. There is plenty of characteristic Taine plotting in this story of great treasure, strange people and a plague to be overcome. Sheba rather clogs the pace of a work that has some important things to say; but of course, given the title, for the author she was the main subject. Perhaps the strongest indictment of the novel is to say that at seventy years old it is showing its age. It is rather too much like some of the *Argosy* serials of the time that we no longer want to read.

Red and Yellow, on the other hand, is a novel that an enterprising publisher might still consider issuing. Although about as old as *Satan's Daughter*, it wears its age much better, and its critique of the world is as accurate now as it was during the 1920's. Of course, it is hard to tell just how any of Taine's fiction would work with today's readers. I suspect that admirers of Taine come from an older generation of science-fiction followers who cherish the past. If we were too young to read his books when they first appeared in the 1920's and 1930's, we saw some of them reprinted in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and Donald Wollheim's *Portable Novels of Science*. Eshbach's Fantasy Press and Crawford's Fantasy Publishing Company also kept Taine going, and Bleiler saw to it that Dover Publications reprinted him during the 1960's. But so far there are no Taine champions for the 1990's.

Still, there are some hopeful signs. Constance Reid's fine biography brings the mathematician and science-fiction writer to life for us and just might spark a new interest in the man's work. Some reprints would then be in order, and, perhaps, a printing of *Red and Yellow* could be something of an event.

NOTES

(1) *The Search for E. T. Bell /Also Known as John Taine;* Washington: The Mathematical Association of America, 1993. 372 pp. 23.5 cm. $35.00.

(2) James L. Campbell, Jr.: "John Taine," in *Science Fiction Writers*, edited by E. F. Bleiler (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p. 75.

(3) Letters, Lloyd A. Eshbach to E. T. Bell, September 28, 1946 and June 14, 1951. A letter from Sam Merwin to Bell, dated February 23, 1949, indicates a great interest in publishing Taine stories and lists the requirements of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Startling Stories*. Julius Schwartz, acting as agent for Bell, was reporting publishing conditions at about the same time. Oscar J. Friend, at Otis Adelbert Kline Associates, also wanted some of Taine's business. Letters about these matters, as well as the letters listed above, are at Cal. Tech.

(4) Letter, Lloyd A. Eshbach to E. T. Bell, August 29, 1951.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The editor is indebted to Sam Moskowitz for supplying the cover illustration and that of Fred Pohl on page 5. The latter is from a photograph taken at the World Future Society meeting in Anaheim, California on August 14-16, 1993, and is reproduced here through the courtesy of Elizabeth Hull and Andrew Porter. "Alien or Kin?" is a revised version of an article that appeared under the same title in the U. K. science-fiction poetry magazine *Star Wine* (1985). The illustrations of Nat Schachner's stories on pages 58-59 are, in the order cited there, from *Astounding Stories* magazine (January, August and September 1937 and August 1935). The portions of "Arkham" and "The Open Window" written by Robert E. Howard first appeared in *Weird Tales 20*, 217 and 337 (August and September 1932) and are reprinted by permission of Glenn Lord. "Peter Rugg the Bostonian" and its

(concluded on page 134)

A Collector's Saga

Sam Moskowitz

During World War II, American science-fiction and fantasy collectors, who had previously concentrated on amassing genre magazines, gradually turned their attention toward hard-cover books. This was in large part due to the influence of Arkham House, whose volumes by H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith and August W. Derleth had given pulp fiction an irresistible aura of respectability. It was also because the average age of science-fiction readers was rising from the teens into the twenties, and because war industries were providing them with incomes which enabled them to spend more generously on their hobby.

Book reviews gained a more prominent place in fan magazines, and little groups of collectors formed and met to tell about their latest acquisitions. Book-hunting could also be great fun, combining the thrill of the search with the exaltation of "finds" bought for a pittance in second-hand book shops. (This was before dealers in second-hand volumes ran only "antiquarian" or "rare" book stores.)

There had always been a few collectors of old fantasy volumes, and among them was A. Langley Searles, who founded *Fantasy Commentator* in 1943, and devoted it largely to discussions of old and new genre books. As an outgrowth of his own collecting efforts he also began compiling a checklist of all genre titles extant; this was published as "A Bibliography of Fantastic Fiction," and distributed from 1944 to 1946 as a supplement to Julius Unger's weekly newsmagazine *Fantasy Fiction Field*. Searles produced twenty-six pages in this manner, reaching the letter "F." He brought out as well a number of "book-a-page" reviews, using the format iniated by J. Michael Rosenblum (1913-1978), a prominent British fantasy collector. In order to devote more time to *Fantasy Commentator*, Searles abandoned these two ancillary projects, and in 1947 turned over what he had done to Melvin Korshak, a Chicago bookseller who had been working on a similar bibliography with his partner, Thaddeus ("Ted") Dikty. Their work in turn became embodied in *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature*, edited by Everett F. Bleiler, which appeared in 1948.*

This was a landmark book, despite the fact that it contained hundreds of omissions and errors, all of which the editor tried valiantly to correct when he published a revised edition as *The Checklist of Science-Fiction and Supernatural Fiction* under his own imprint thirty years later. While the original *Checklist* gave serious collectors a valuable guide to work with, it also worked against them, for it enabled dealers to identify fantasy titles in their stock and mark them with higher prices regardless of intrinsic rarity or lack of it. It became increasingly difficult to find choice items. Indeed, most serious collectors quit touring bookshops altogether, and at least through 1970 found it cheaper and easier to secure their wants through mail-order lists. (That situation has reversed in recent years as dealers' lists began pricing fifty-cent titles at fifty dollars, and the book shops have once more emerged as better sources of fantasy at affordable prices.)

Within a year after *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature* appeared it received reviews in many of the leading science-fiction magazines and even in some leading newspapers. Most of these were favorable. There was considerable discussion of its contents among collectors. A few of them even set for themselves the task of obtaining every book the volume listed. Among these was Dr. J. Lloyd Eaton, who as late as 1952 sent me a list of a thousand titles he still needed, so at that time he was still actively pursuing his goal.

*For an account of this book's genesis, see *Fantasy Commentator VI*, 112ff. (1988).

Inevitably there were titles in the *Checklist* which most collectors had never heard of. These were subjected to much discussion as to whether they were bonafide, since no one had seen them and they had probably been picked up from other lists during compilation. Probably because of its outlandish title, one of these was particularly sought after. This was *The Flying Cows of Biloxi* by Benson Bidwell, whose existence was confirmed by the catalog of the Library of Congress, which credited its 1907 publication to the Henneberry Press of Chicago. Shasta Publishers was also headquartered in Chicago, and in 1948 the dean of literati in that city was Charles Vincent Emerson Starrett (1886-1974), who wrote a column titled "Books Alive" for the Sunday edition of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Starrett's first love was books about books. Perhaps the most celebrated of these was his own *Buried Caesars* (1923), in which he called attention to great authors he felt were fading from critical attention. These included Ambrose Bierce, James Branch Cabell and William C. Morrow, and Starret's work actually succeeded in giving them renewed notice. He helped revive interest in Arthur Machen in America, for example, producing himself two volumes of that author's uncollected work, and in *Seaports on the Moon* (1928) wrote a series of connected stories whose leading characters were such famous authors as Poe, Rabelais and Cyrano de Bergerac. His second passion was detective stories. There his favorite character was Sherlock Holmes, and he can be credited with popularizing the vogue for writing about that well-known figure with his book *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1933), where he is treated as an actual living person.

Starrett's third passion was fantasy. He was an early contributor to *Weird Tales* magazine, and in 1965 ten of his stories were collected in the Arkham House volume *The Quick and the Dead*. In an appreciation of the man in *The Last Bookman* (1968) August Derleth said:

> Even the most thought-of books and bookmen bring before the mind's eye the image of Vincent Starrett, that handsome dog who represents the acme of what it means to be a bookman——a man bursting with book lore, so capable of tossing off the most obscure quotations——an extraordinary raconteur, in whom the art of conversation long ago reached full flower and has been maintained in all of its perfection for decades——a man whose very presence stands for everything a bookman ought to be and in his person is——another capable of infinite writing variety imbued with the charm and legendry of books and dedicated to the proposition that good men may fail the world, but good books never.

This, then, was the man to whom Korshak and Dikty of Shasta Publishers brought *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature* for review. Starrett was kind and generous, but still it was a bit of an imposition to ask him as a favor to deal with a work of such narrow scope from a specialty press in one of America's largest newspapers. Nevertheless he did, devoting to it the entire space of his column in the Sunday *Chicago Tribune* for April 11, 1948, which is reproduced below:

BOOKS ALIVE

BY VINCENT STARRETT

IN FAINTLY frivolous mood, this morning, your master of ceremonies begs to inaugurate a modest research into the lost legend of the "flying cows of Biloxi." Any reader of this department in whose mind may linger recollections of the miracle will confer a favor on its editor if he will drop everything and set them down on paper—supposing them to be printable.

I really know very little about the mystery. Biloxi—one learns by a fortunate encounter with an Atlas—is a Mississippi gulf port, but the paragrafs celebrating its attractions have nothing to say of the city's flying cows. These appear to have been brought to fame in a slight

volume published in Chicago, in 1907, no copy of which is known to have survived—"Flying Cows of Biloxi," by Benson Bidwell (Henneberry Press). The book is said to contain 44 pages and a number of illustrations. Is there a copy in your attic?

It first came to the notice of fantasy collectors, in 1933, when it was listed in Science Fiction Digest and attracted attention by its provocative title. Ever since, book hunters in the fantasy field have been seeking the tale and failing to find it; it has become one of the famous "phantom books" of recent bibliografy.

• • •

"Presumably Biloxi never heard of the thing," says Melvin Korshak, the fantasy-fiction specialist. "When I was stationed at Fort Shelby, during the war, I went down there, one day, and took the matter up with the mayor and a delegation of the aldermen; without result, except that I worried them considerably about a mystery book that took the name of their city in vain. They didn't know anything about the flying cows, either; and they would like to know something about Benson Bidwell, the reputed author."

However, the book once certainly existed, and Chicago was its birthplace. Altho no copy can now be traced, it is listed in the "Checklist of Fantastic Literature," edited by Everett F. Bleiler, just released by Shasta Publishers (5525 Blackstone Av., Chicago), one of the more than 5,000 titles in a fascinating catalog designed to aid collectors of fantasy-fiction in their exhilarating hobby.

In his delightful series of appendix notes, as well as in his scholarly and informative introduction, Mr. Bleiler has many good stories to tell about books famous in his chosen field—he defines the genre with great cleverness — but simply to *read* the titles listed in this unique work is an exciting experience.

Getting this notice was indeed a coup for the fledgling Shasta Publishers. Korshak bought a quantity of the edition, cut out the review, and sent copies to dealers and prominent collectors. (I tucked mine into my own copy of the *Checklist*, where it remains to this day.) Though I own a complete set of *Science Fiction Digest*, and even have an elaborate index to it, I am unable to find *The Flying Cows of Biloxi* listed there, as Starrett claimed. Perhaps his statement was based on information erroneously supplied by Korshak.

In any event, the real hustle to find Bidwell's book began when copies of Starrett's column were circulated. Yet despite all the diligent eyes looking for it, month followed month and year followed year, and no one reported success. Korshak's report about his visit to the mayor of Biloxi began to be regarded as apocryphal, although, on the basis of Bleiler's listing, most collectors believed that the work itself did exist. But was it science-fiction, or even fantasy? It might conceivably be a book of humor, or even poetry.

It may be germane to mention one particular nucleus of collectors who participated in this search. Beginning in 1943 there existed in the New York City area an informal group known as the Collectors' Club. This was most active in the first three years of its life, when it met every other Sunday at the Brooklyn apartment of Julius Unger. Unger was a science-fiction book and magazine dealer and a commercial motive for his hospitality was that his visitors would not only buy from him, but bring and sell him duplicates they had picked up in scavenging second-hand bookshops. The club regulars included John Nitka, Alex Osheroff, A. Langley Searles and myself, and there were occasional attendees which brought the number of participants to as many as two dozen. (A good account of this group appeared in the October 28, 1945 issue of *Fanews*, then the leading newsweekly of the science-fiction fan world.) Almost all of these individuals were avid book collectors, and meetings were devoted chiefly to discussions of their activities.

One of the goals of the group was locating a copy of *The Flying Cows of Biloxi*, possession of which would have boosted the stature of the first to procure it. No one ever did. Years passed, and still nobody claimed to have located a copy of this rarity, nor was any review of it ever published. Gradually it disappeared from want-lists and was mentioned less and less fequently. Eventually it entered the realm of the forgotten.

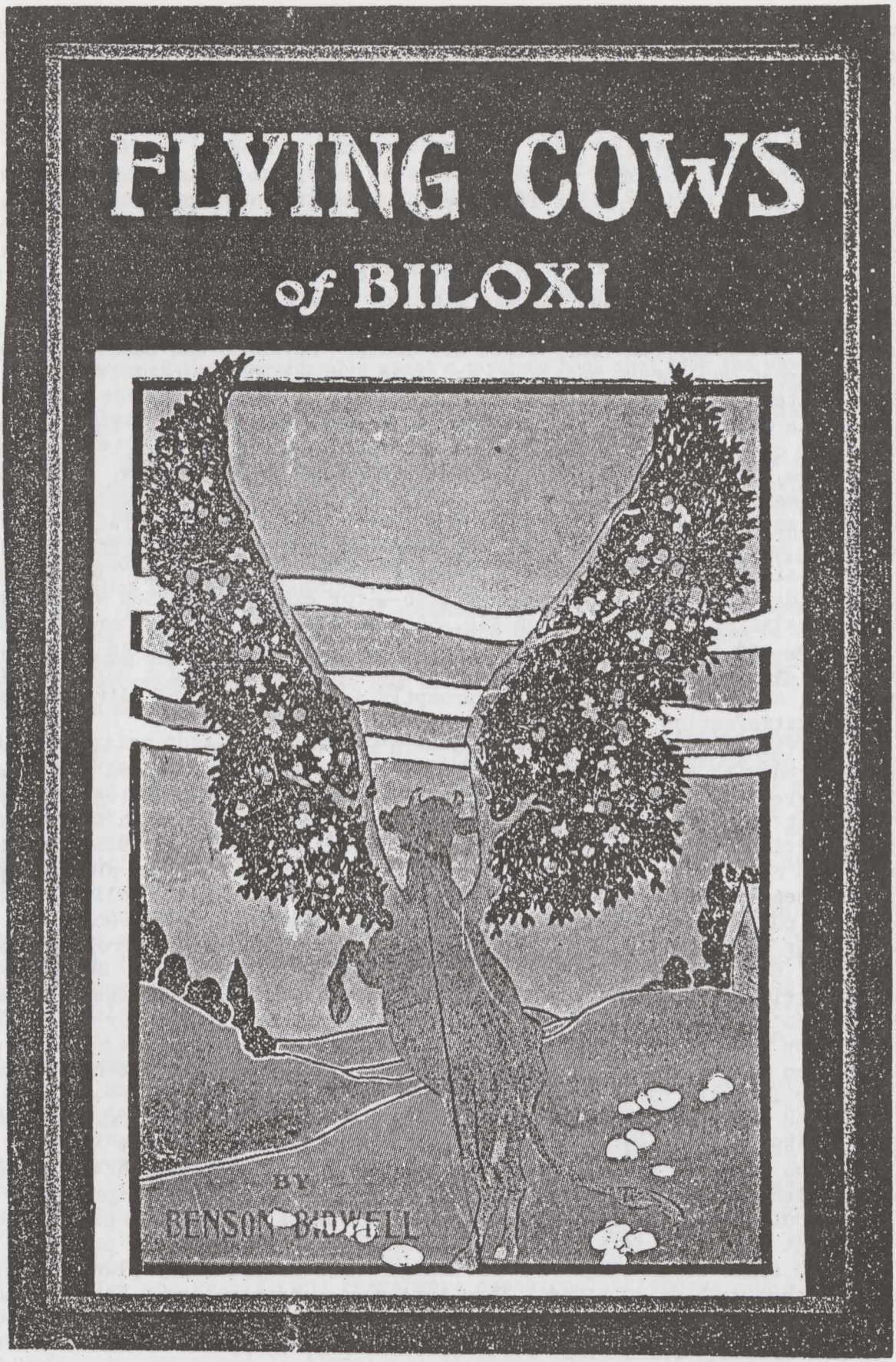
Through the decades my own collection of fantasy and related material continued to grow, until by 1982 it filled four large rooms plus sundry closets and garage shelves. As a result of my regular purchases, I received a number of catalogs from both specialist and general dealers. One of the latter that had me on their mailing list was the Southeast Auction Book Service of Casselberry, Florida, operated by Harry and Barbara Oldford. This firm had acquired the library of Charles Bingham Reynolds (1856-1940), which had remained intact, possibly in storage, for the forty-odd years since his death. Reynolds had been the managing editor of *Forest and Stream* magazine, had made a specialty of collecting books on the Gulf states, and had himself written a definitive history of St. Augustine, Florida. The Oldfields were putting this library up for sale, and their December 5, 1982 list of it included, incredibly, *The Flying Cows of Biloxi*.

Now, what should I bid? I reflected on the possibilities. It was unlikely that many fantasy collectors received this catalog. It seemed even less likely that any who did would remember Starrett's column of a generation earlier. Although the book was extremely rare, bidding too high for it would attract attention and possibly arouse suspicion on the part of the auctioneers. But bidding too low would risk losing it to someone else——for example, a person who collected books on Mississippi. I settled on $16, because bids are usually made in multiples of five, and I hoped to nose out anyone who bid $15. Luck was with me, for On December 7th I received a bill for the book. (This included a buyer's premium and postage, and totalled $23.17.) I promptly sent my check and waited in a state of mingled satisfaction and expectation.

Within a week the book arrived——in mint condition. It was bound in boards covered with purple paper. On the cover the title was stamped in gold above a three-colored illustration of a reddish cow standing on its hind legs and sporting two great wings of foliage bearing oranges. Surrounding both the title and the illustration was a narrow gold border. The volume measured 19.5 by 12.5 cm. (about crown 8vo size). It had 44 pages of text and illustrations plus four pages of advertisements, and was printed on heavy coated paper of good quality. It had indeed been published by the Henneberry Press of Chicago in 1907. Under the name of the author on the title-page is the legend, "Inventor of the Trolley Car and the Electric Fan." Facing the title-page was the photograph of a balding, mustached and grim-faced Benson Bidwell, probably in his sixties. Beneath this was printed, "Who had his first lesson in electricity as a messenger boy for the telegraph company at Toledo, Ohio in 1847." In addition to the cover, the book contained eleven full-paged black and white illustrations. These are not credited, but bear the initials "J. C."

The story is told in the form of letters, the first of which is dated January 3, 1893. The cows of Biloxi are thin for lack of food, yet hanging from the trees too high for them to reach are long streamers of Spanish moss, which makes excellent fodder. It would help if the cows were given longer legs, but then they would be too tall to milk. Bidwell persuades a farmer to give him a cow to experiment with, and sets about finding another solution to the problem.

He forms large wings out of orange tree branches and plants them. He fertilizes them with dried blood. They take root, and new leaves form on the interlacing branches. He fastens the wings to the cow's foreshoulders, and then attaches to its legs a connected rope and pulley system, so that when the cow walks or runs the wings flap and it rises into the air. It soon learns to control its


FLYING COWS
of BILOXI
BY
BENSON BODELL

wings, and soon has no difficulty flying up to eat the moss on the trees. Investigation shows that after a time the blood used as fertilizer is recirculating in the wings attached to the cow; Bidwell finds they have embedded themselves in the animal's flesh and actually formed a union with its skeleton. He demonstrates the success of his experiment at the Biloxi fair grounds to the mayor and a crowd of curious citizens, and refers the matter to the "Department of Science and Evolution" for further study.

Bidwell then sets about the commercial exploitation of his work. He buys half of Deer Island, just off the Mississippi coast, which is covered with trees bearing Spanish moss, and sets about altering more cows. Soon there are a hundred of these, and every morning there is an amazing sight as they fly through the sky to the island to feed. As an added bonus, oranges grow from their wings, and when they mate the cows produce calves which are also winged. So numerous do their flocks become that one lost cow even lands on a ship fifty miles off shore.

This tall tale is actually very well written, and is told with deadly seriousness. Bidwell even attempts a pseudo-scientific explanation:

> . . . we can establish by infallible evidence that man has surely, certainly and positively ascended from the monkey. Now the monkey lived in a tree, and in the early ages a symbolical navel cord connected the circulation of the monkey with the circulating fluid of the tree; and thus the monkey, in reality, is the offspring of the tree; and by reasoning analogically, man is the product of vegetation.

This analogy is of course false. So, it is now known, is the Lamarckian view that acquired characteristics can be inherited cited earlier. However, this had been shown only shortly before publication of Bidwell's book by the rediscovery of the researches of Gregor Mendel (1900) and Hugo de Vries's promulgation of the principle of mutation (1901). Dissemination of that information through the lay community took considerable time.

The inside front cover of *The Flying Cows of Biloxi* is devoted to an unusual advertisement for a companion book, *Benson Bidwell, Inventor*. Its text follows:

> Authentic History of the Trolley Car's Invention, with Personal Reminiscences by Prof. Bidwell Holding Interest Throughout, Press Comment on the Trolley Car, Newspaper Excerpts Showing Wide Litigation, Invention of the Cold Motor.
>
> Also Prof. Bidwell's Various Lectures, Essays, Contributions to Newspapers and Magazines. Short Stories, and other Literary Work, properly edited.
>
> Description of the Development of the Railway Telephone System, by which to telephone from moving trains.
>
> Sketch of the Bidwell Ancestry from Migration from England and Settlement at Hartford, Conn., in 1635, down to the present time, referring to the distinguished men in the family.
>
> The book contains Ten Departments, each devoted to very interesting material connected with Prof. Bidwell's long and varied career as lawyer, citizen, and inventor.
>
> There is not a dull page from cover to cover of the 265-page book, and the parts are of the most intense interest, holding the reader long against his will---it seeming impossible to put the book down before it is finished. Illustrated throughout, well printed and prettily bound. Sold by all News Dealers. Price: 35¢ and 75¢. If not obtainable in your neighborhood, address Benson Bidwell, Publisher, 1595 Humboldt Blvd., Chicago, Illinois.

Benson Bidwell, Inventor is unfortunately not listed in the catalog of the Congressional Library holdings but it seems a *bona fide* title, since the pagination and prices of both paperback and cloth-bound editions are cited. Like its companion, it seems a vanity publication. I have sought a copy, in particular to find out if any of the short stories are fantasy, but so far without success.

Further advertisements in the back of *Flying Cows* support some of Bidwell's claims. One shows a photograph of "Bidwell's Carbonic Gas Compressor," a device "for making ice and all refrigerating purposes, also for use on cars to prevent motors burning out." Another carries a drawing of his "New Car Wheel Axle Cold Motor" for running electric cars. A third has a photograph and description

of his air compressor. All these advertisements refer buyers to the Bidwell Electric Company of Chicago Heights, Illinois, and the machinery shown has the Bidwell name clearly cast on it. There seems little doubt that the man was indeed a manufacturer, and probably also an inventor.

The primacy of his inventions is another matter. Electric railway vehicles date back to 1835, but not until ones bearing their own motors were developed around 1880 did they become commercially viable. No reference book I have consulted mentions Bidwell, and most of them credit F. J. Sprague with engineering the first practical installation in 1887-88. Like the automobile, the urban trolley utilizes a combination of many essential features, and no single person can be credited with its invention.*

In any event, I now owned a copy of *The Flying Cows of Biloxi*. And as an assiduous collector of fantasy books my satisfaction lay not simply in owning such a rare book, but in telling other collectors about it. Anticipating their surprise, interest and congratulations was intoxicating. I could no longer tell my old crony Alex Osheroff, one of the old Collector's Club attendees, for he had died two years before; and another, John Nitka, had dropped out of sight after selling his collection to the University of California. But there were others, some of them living close by. I thought of Allan Howard, who had a large library and was a prominent Burroughs collector; he should savor my news. So should Michael Fogaris, an active fantasy collector since 1933. Both belonged to the Eastern Science Fiction Association, which still met regularly at that time. I headed for the next meeting with pleasurable expectation.

When I saw Howard there I approached him enthusiastically. "Guess what, Allan," I said. "I've located a copy of *The Flying Cows of Biloxi!*"

"The *what*?" he responded blankly.

"*The Flying Cows of Biloxi*. You remember—the book in Bleiler's *Checklist* that everyone was looking for and never found."

"I never heard of it," he said, looking at me peculiarly.

I turned to Fogaris, who had joined us. "You've heard of it, haven't you, Mike?"

"Can't say that I have," he responded, apparently quite sincerely.

I turned in mute appeal to other members present. They all shook their heads.

That night I telephoned Gerry de la Ree, who owned one of the finest fantasy collections in the country. He was also a dealer, familiar with old and rare books; surely he would remember it. "I don't think anyone ever offered it to me," he said. "In fact, I can't recall that I ever heard of the title."

Despite this discouragement, I would not be gainsaid my triumph. There were a few other members of the Collector's Club still active. One was A. Langley Searles, who had recently resumed publishing *Fantasy Commentator*. I no longer recall if I met him or we had a telephone conversation, but I did receive a bare modicum of satisfaction. Langley recalled the work, he said, but he hadn't looked actively for it for nearly forty years. "The odd title stuck in my mind. I always thought it was probably just a curious tale by some eccentric, not serious science-fiction. But I'm glad somebody's found it, so that we'll learn exactly what the story's all about."

Still rather disheartened, I telephoned another former member, Richard Witter. He was a longstanding dealer in old and new fantasy books, and I had patronized him since he had started his business. Surely he would remember! But I was doomed to disappointment. "You know I sell books these days, Sam," he replied, "I don't collect them. So many titles have passed through my hands—thousands of them. You can't expect me to remember every one I heard about over the last forty years!"

*The best concise description of these features that I have found is in the 1913 edition of *The New Student's Reference Work*, edited by Chandler Beach, pp. 601-602.

This appeared to be the crusher, but I had one last hope. Everett Bleiler, whose reference book had started the entire furore, now lived in a nearby town. At the time I happened to be director of the Eastern Science Fiction Association, and extended him an invitation to speak before the group, which he accepted. The date was May 7, 1983, and his topic could not have been more apropos, for he chose to describe the creation of *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature*. What could be more suitable? At some point I would modestly mention acquiring *The Flying Cows of Biloxi*, he would be properly impressed, and then explain to the audience the importance of the discovery.

When an appropriate moment came on the day of his speech I broached the matter and waited for the reaction. There was none. I repeated the facts in more detail, reminding him of the notice given the book by Vincent Starrett. I pointed out that Starrett would scarcely have selected Bidwell's work out of the over five thousand other *Checklist* titles unless Bleiler himself had provided the background on it. "Maybe Korshak arranged it," hazarded Bleiler. "He was a great one for publicity." "But he couldn't have if you hadn't listed it first," I said. "Where did you pick up the title?" "Probably from the Library of Congress catalog," he replied. "I hadn't seen a copy at the time I included it." Eventually Bleiler must have examined the Library of Congress copy, because his *Science-Fiction/the Early Years* carries a descriptive summary of *The Flying Cows of Biloxi*, and gives the year of Bidwell's birth as 1835.

The final episode in this saga occurred when Korshak paid me a surprise visit in 1986. He had dropped out of sight in 1958, and had eventually settled in San Francisco. In the interim both he and his son Stephen had become lawyers, and the two were then visiting friends and relatives in the east. Of course I seized the opportunity to ask about his connection with my collecting saga. Korshak did indeed recall Bidwell's book, though he no longer remembered making inquiries to Biloxi city officials about it. I showed him Starrett's column, which brought a vague glimmering of recollection to his face, but elicited no further details. I had at last reached a dead end.

If this story shows anything, it shows how difficult it is for a historian to establish simple facts, even when one queries the very people involved. I suppose it is also a good object lesson in the ephemeral nature of achievement and the expectation of praise.

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For historical reasons it seems appropriate to add a somewhat lengthy postscript to the above account. It may surprise readers, but Benson Bidwell was not the only author who wrote about flying cows. Another who used the idea was Harry Lincoln Saylor. Saylor was a prolific writer of juvenile books in the first decade of the century, and three of his "Airship Boys" series (eight volumes, 1909 to 1915) are science-fiction. The one that concerns us here is the fifth volume of that set, *The Airship Boys in Finance, or the Flight of the Flying Cow* (1911). The novel was published by the Reilly and Britton Company of Chicago, and carried four illustrations by Sidney H. Riesenberg. (Riesenberg may be remembered for his covers for *Short Stories* and other pulp magazines in the 1930's.)

There is nothing subtle about the opening of the story. Numerous reliable witnesses see a cow sailing serenely through the air over Niagara Falls. It then descends gently to a meadow on the Canadian side, and there an unidentified man and a boy are observed running up to it and then departing in an automobile. Reports of the event, often ridiculed, are spread far and wide, even reaching the big city daily newspapers. To one of these is sent an anonymous letter revealing that the cow was launched by Ned Napier and Alan Hope, two brilliant teen-aged inventors and adventurers; these are the Airship Boys, who have built and flown a variety of airplanes and dirigibles in this series of books.

The purpose of staging this stunt is to gain publicity and attract financing for their projects. In Newark, New Jersey a company is already constructing for them a monoplane made of vanadium steel. To cut down air resistance this has a hooded cockpit and landing wheels which fold up by means of compressed air. It can fly at 120 miles an hour. With it the inventors plan to organize a passenger and freight airline serving New York, Chicago and the cities between them.

Their stunt was accomplished by attaching a rocket motor to the cow, which has been protected by asbestos from being burned. A platform powered by heavy spiral springs hurled her into the air to assist the launch. The crucial point here is that the rocket uses liquid fuel whose rate of flow can be changed at will, enabling its take-off, direction and landing to be controlled. The fuel used is gasoline, and Sayler also suggests a "liquid hydrogen converter." These prescient devices should certainly earn mention of his book in the history of rocketry.

Where did he get his ideas? In 1903 the Russian Konstantin Tsiolkovsky published a plan for a rocket powered by liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen, but it is unlikely that Sayler would have had access to such an obscure theoretical article, even conceding that he was able to bridge the language barrier. As early as 1909 Robert Goddard was studying rocket propulsion, but his work was not published until 1919 and he did not launch a rocket using liquid fuel until 1926. *A Trip to Venus* (1897) by John Munro is one of the very few novels in English mentioning liquid-fueled rockets that precedes *The Airship Boys in Finance*, but it was never published in this country and one doubts that Sayler ever saw it.

He was familiar with Verne's writings, however, and cites the latter's lunar cannon as an example of "reaction travel" that is impractical. Only with a liquid fuel, he maintains, can firing be continuous and controllable. The design he favors is akin to a simple internal combustion engine, and I strongly suspect he was simply trying to adapt the power- train of an automobile for use in a rocket.

This work, as well as others in the series (Sayler wrote all except the last), may well be the most scientifically oriented juvenile novels ever written. In this respect, they even outdo Verne. Sayler not only indulges in extensive technical descriptions, but even includes detailed and labelled diagrams. One is surprised that some of his books were accepted as teen-age fiction at all, for they contain as much sugar-coated science as they do adventure. Perhaps they were redeemed by his smooth writing style, which is far superior to that of most juvenile authors, with the possible exception of Carl Claudy.

Scientific matters, thus, take up almost the entire opening third of *The Airship Boys in Finance* before the actual story gets really under way. The rocket engine itself is described minutely; it is cartridge-shaped, all its physical dimensions are listed, and we are even told the weight of the motor. There are discussions as to how night-flying can be made accurate and safe, and the desirability of being able to refuel airplanes in flight is mentioned. Sayler tells of the need for construction of a compass that will perform accurately in flight, as well as for weather-forecasting instruments and stations that keep pilots informed while in the air. Even the desirability of having hotels and restaurants at airports is touched upon.

To domesticate the story, names of living figures appear as characters. One is Lee De Forest, acclaimed radio and television pioneer, who is portrayed here as adapting the wireless telegraph and telephone stations for air-line communications. (It should be remembered that no radio stations existed at the time.) Another major figure is the legendary financier J. P. Morgan, who is lured by the publicity into listening to these air-line plans, and persuaded that they are a good investment for venture capital. (It should further be remembered that during this period of our history finance, like exploration, was considered a career suitable for teen-agers. Wall Street was a symbol of romance rather than greed; many dime novels were written about adventures there, not the least of them by Horatio Alger, Jr. In fact, until the Great Depression following the Wall Street

crash in 1929, entire pulp magazines like *Fame and Fortune* were steady sellers.)

The most comprehensive article to date on this little-known author is "Harry L. Sayler and the Airship Boys" by the Ohio author David K. Vaughan (in Edward Le Blanc's *Dime Novel Round-Up* for October 1990). Sayler was born February 13, 1863 in Little York, Ohio. He received a Bachelor of Philosophy degree from DePaul University in Greencastle, Indiana, and in 1887 began editorial work on various Indiana newspapers. He moved to Chicago in 1888, securing a position as manager on the City Press Association there in 1890. He wrote introductions to several books and was a frequent contributor to magazines. He was married in 1899 to Nora H. Elliott of Shelbeyville, Indiana, and died May 31, 1913.

Shortly before World War I there was a cycle of airplane books for boys, and Vaughan credits Sayler with initiating this when *The Airship Boys*, the very first in the series, appeared in 1909. Saylor also wrote under three pen names, two of them air series. As Ashton Lamar he wrote the Aeroplane Boys series (eight volumes, ending with his death in 1913); and as Gordon Stuart he started a set featuring the Boy Scouts of the Air (fourteen volumes, 1912-1922). As Elliot Whitney he inaugurated the Boy's Big Game series, in which a different wild beast is hunted in each book. His last contribution to this was *The Rogue Elephant*, the fifth of the series (1913), but it was popular enough to be continued after his death, running to thirteen books before ending in 1923.

All of Harry Saylor's writings show an extraordinary attention to detail, and carry generous amounts of accurate information along with adventure. His books on air travel deserve citation in aviation history for their excellent short-range projections of aircraft construction and passenger- and freight-handling. His "Flying Cow" volume deserves mention not only there, but also in the history of rocketry.

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THE HOUSE OF THE SUN

Westward, an apocalyptic sky:
a churning mass of lemon cloud washed through with sun
collapses down to dusk.

I am here, too,
an integral part of the scene,
moving across hills and fields,
scurrying to the place that will make
the landscape complete,
will set the scene.

And the house is here,
waiting foursquare, cardinal windows walled in flame
under the steep, windowless roof.
It could not be otherwise.
I approach.... Yes, the door opens,
calling me in by swinging motions,
dusty rooms beyond, all greys now
as the last of sunset drains away.

I cross the threshold. Stairs and arches
radiate away from this centre.
I am here. It could not be otherwise.
The door drifts shut; dust scatters;
I move on, starting for the stairs.
The steps slide past beneath——
Gaining the landing, door-vistas present themselves
And more stairs go to the eyeless attic.

I know my door; wordless grime encourages,
and I know my door. I go inwards....

Blinded by darkness, my eyes make out the dawn.
Hushed, it creeps into the sky in a pink mist,
carving the black winter trees against rooftops.
I am high here.

I blink,
and the quiet September afternoon pours in:
tall sky made more limitless by the arena of cloud
stretching terraced from north through east to south.

Then I hear her. I have turned up to listen.
She says what I know, but had hoped not to hear.
The landscape falters; but the scene is here still.

The warmth of the summer night crackles inside the panes
and a bat skims out of the trees
like a darker speck of night.
I am here, and I now know what to do.

Outside, the last edge of day falls
over the horizon.
I gaze behind me into the depths of the gloomy room:
I can go no further.

And the door won't open. I am here.

—*John Howard*

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ALIEN OR KIN?
Science-Fiction and Poetry

K. V. Bailey

Kenneth V. Bailey's professional activities have lain chiefly in the fields of environmental education and educational radio and television. (He was for many years the British Broadcasting Corporation's Chief Education Officer.) In addition to having written media and conservation works, he is author and translator of published and broadcast verse, much of it oriented towards fantasy and science-fiction. Of his nine poetry books, three are exclusively devoted to these genres: *Space Travellers* (1984), *Broomstick Drive: Space-Age Rhymes and Ballads* (1985) and *The Sky Giants* (1989). "The Clarke: Opera Semi-Seria" is a verse sequence published in *Foundation* #41 (1987), the issue celebrating the seventieth birthday of Arthur C. Clarke. Bailey has read poetry, including his own, at several science-fiction conventions over the past five years. As a critic and reviewer he focuses almost exclusively on science-fiction and fantasy, and has contributed to journals in Britain, Europe, Australia and the Americas. He and his wife live on the remote island of Alderney in the English Channel, a few miles off the Cotentin Peninsula of France. There he finds the peaceful landscape, the local legends and the island's sometimes turbulent history, with its Roman-Celtic-Norman origins, perennial sources of interest and inspiration.

—*Steve Sneyd*

The proportion of writers or readers of poetry who also read science-fiction, though unknown and perhaps not very high, may be greater than generally supposed. The proportion of science-fiction readers and writers who are at all deeply involved as readers, writers or speakers of poetry, however, is most likely quite small; in fact there is a considerable body of the more technologically-minded of these for whom poetry probably remains a closed book. Nevertheless there are aspects of both poetry and science-fiction which suggest that the two are actually estranged or separated members of the same family. Such kinship may be more apparent to enthusiasts of science-fiction areas adjacent to and sometimes merging with the territories of fantasy; for the family I refer to is one whose roots lie in myth, curious speculation, early cosmogonies, ancient voyages and story-telling.

The variety of poetry is great; so is that of science-fiction. In their joint context let us consider first the poetic experience and the disciplines of poetry. Image and metaphor are of their essence. They find their expression in

"musical" terms, by which I mean the effect-producing practices of prosody——rhythm, assonance, rhyme, etc. These constitute means by which the percipient imagination is led to reach sympathetically, even empathetically, beyond its normal bounds. When poetry functions in this way it may contract the consciousness of the reader or listener to a diamond point of illumination, while at the same time stretching his awareness towards larger perspectives of the phenomenal universe and its modes of interaction with the individual's own "inner universe." The literatures of science and philosophy, and the expression of experience and imaginative thought in prose, will act powerfully within their own specific parameters of communication, but they can rarely effect release of that lightning insight which the aesthetic impact of poetry makes possible.

Examples from the historian Toynbee and the poet Shelley will illustrate this. In *A Study of History* Toynbee quotes from Shelley's "Hellas" stanzas which, in variations on a Virgilian theme, state the concept of a determined cyclic history, while holding out the hope that a humane ethos may eventually cancel or transcend the compulsive repetitions of the past. Toynbee expresses his own version of that Shelleyan concept as follows:

> [T]he detection of periodic repetitive movements in our analysis of the process of civilization does not imply that the process itself is of the same cyclic order that they are. If any inference can legitimately be drawn from the periodicity of these minor movements, we may rather infer that the major movement they bear along is not recurrent but progressive.

This, if not exactly a scientific statement, is a reasoned one based on Toynbee's own detailed six-volume analysis of "twenty-one civilized Societies." Although it summarizes an interesting and challenging view of history, it leaves the reader with no feeling of having been on a pinnacle, of having received any supremely involving insight; but a reading of the concluding chorus of "Hellas," in which the intellectual/ideological ground is somewhat similar, offers a qualitatively different experience——a "peak" experience. Its first stanza reads in part:

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The Earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
> Like wrecks of a resolving dream.

What Shelley has done is link the cyclic concept to experience of the cycle of changing seasons, the eternal return of spring after winter; and he attaches this by way of a biological/organic trope to images of history. Just as the snake emerges as a new-yet-continuing creature from its cast skin, and just as the earth is the same planet yet with new potential when, with spring, it enters another year with the old one's debris left in the past, so, though basic patterns of human historical behavior survive, there are heroic potentials which may transcend and transform them. The wars, creeds, empires of the past are part of the shed skin. Must these always be repeated in just the same pattern, Shelley then asks, or may there not, as he writes in a later stanza, be a time when "A loftier Argo cleaves the main / Fraught with a later prize"?

Turning now to fiction, a literary medium which involves the reader's imaginative participation, it is in science-fiction particularly that a meeting place may be found for both the historico-scientific or sociological concept, as exemplified in the Toynbee quotation, and the heightened insight and aesthetic feeling generated by Shelley. The blending of these two modes of apprehension, which may occur under the genre's imaginative pressures, can be a strong stimulus to mental exploration, thought experiments and speculation. Among the science-fiction works which can be relevantly cited are those which project actual human patterns onto a far vaster screen, impelling us to see shadows of ourselves and our histories scaled-up in time and space and appearing Brocken-like amidst the

galaxies. Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* sequence, using an "imperial decline" model, and James Blish's *Cities in Flight* tetralogy, with its avowed basis in the historical systemizations of Oswald Spengler, are examples of these. Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and *Last Men in London* trace the rise and fall of successive human biologies and cultures across the solar system, while in his *Star-Maker* he ranges wider to create analogs of the terrestrial phenomenon of cultures burgeoning, atrophying, dying and then being regenerated. Through alien-directed projections, substituting for humans his plant-men, arachnoids, nautiloids and other exotica, he fosters a measure of what Darko Suvin has termed "cognitive estrangement."

Stapledon also introduces forces which are indifferent to the destinies of striving civilizations——the unpredictable, uncontrollable cataclysm, or the entropic running down of physical systems——as H. G. Wells has done in the late chapters of *The Time Machine*. Stapledon paints all such happenings on a vast, impersonalizing canvas. Other writers have described the rise and fall of cultures and empires by cosmic circumstance, tracing them through the fates of well portrayed (alien) characters. Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia* trilogy is a *tour de force* of this kind. In it destinies of races, of species, but also of a credible cast of characters, are determined by planetary circlings within a multiple star-system. He has also miniaturized such epic events in a brilliant short story, "Creatures of Apogee," where a planet's hugely elliptical orbit permits the alternate existence of ice-tolerant and sun-tolerant sentient beings. One extracted sentence graphically conveys the story's flavour:

> Small the world was, and a slave to its lethargic orbit; for in the course of one year, from the heats of perihelion to the cools of apogee and back again not only lives but generations and whole civilizations underwent the cycle of birth and decay, birth and decay.

There is, of course, also that sub-genre, here our particular concern, which mingles poetry with science-fiction or fantasy and sometimes describes itself as speculative verse. At its best it moves the conjectures and questionings of the latter genres to a more rarified or even, paradoxically, a more concrete plane, capturing and reinforcing the strange, the mind-stretching and the unknown in resonant imagery. I take as examples two haikus from Steve Sneyd's collection *We Are Not Men*, and the poem "Cycle's End" by Andy Sawyer. All three are related to the theme we have been pursuing. The first poem, "Eclipsing Binary," recalls obliquely the *Helliconia* type of cyclic astronomical catastrophe:

> old marriage this: no
> words wasted when it's time to
> shut each other up

The second may take imaginings in the direction of the Shelley chorus from "Hallas," doing so seemingly on a downbeat (Spenglerian?) note characteristic of much science-fiction; yet there is in it an imagery and an ambiguity which can turn thought still (but upbeat now) towards Shelley and his "Ode to the West Wind"—— "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!" The title of this haiku is "Welcome to Android World":

> oakleaves cling through winter
> as if still alive: here rules
> the same deception

In the third illustration Sawyer uses, and fuses, the imageries of technology and myth to make concrete the "quicken[ing] of a new birth," a soaring which rises above the chaos of a departure——much as the "winter weeds outworn" of Shelley's snake become "the wreck of a dissolving dream."

> The gold and purple phoenix
> Was silent as it rose from the flames.
> Shaking its wings, it cast spells
> Along the tightness of space.
> The desert, sand on sand,
> Rose, fell, was fused and cooled;

Only later was there sound to wash the motion
And rumble mocking between sky and earth.
And by then,
The bird had long gone.

There, in a metaphor of cyclic beginnings and endings (and metaphor is at the heart of poetry), the organic and inorganic are joined——as they are in Sneyd's "Welcome to Android World," if we may classify his androids as inorganic. Robot automata, yes; they are inorganic mechanisms known to science. With androids, however, we tread that ambiguous borderland between science-fiction and fantasy, a borderland inhabited by aliens, creatures not known to exist, but recruited to fill suppositional and allegoric roles. Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* merges both the alien and the android (his androids are rogue escapees from other colonized planets infesting the earth); in its very title the work provides a perfect metaphoric epitomization of inorganic/organic dichotomy. The android, in its symbolic capacity as the humanly sentient being who is not yet human, points the way to my second illustrative theme, which will be developed on lines similar to those followed in considering cyclic phenomena.

This second theme is one which pervades science-fiction: that of alien minds and bodies. In creating fictive aliens the writer seeks a reflected identity, one in which similarity-in-difference can sharpen self-realization. The manufactured android we have seen to be an "alien," though imagined as close to man in nature. In many examples it has a flesh and blood body; in others a synthesized or inorganic one. It has consciousness, yet it is not unequivocally human. In this it has something in common with those animals which form the template for so many fictive, intelligent, sentient species: the leonines of C. J. Cherryh's *Chanur* novels, the vaguely seal/beaver-like Martian Sorns of C. S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*, the humanoid bears, bulls and cats who are the Underpeople of Cordwainer Smith's "Instrumentality."

Science, of course, knows nothing of such fictive creatures. What it is cognizant of, however, is the terrestrial alien. Like the human being this is a living, experiencing creature, often sharing environments with humans, sensing and interacting with those environments, with other animals and with the humans themselves. Science and philosophy have endeavored to probe the nature of that experience, and to investigate the gaps between human and such alien (animal) sentience. Professor Thomas Nagel has asked the question in his essay "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?", first published two decades ago in *The Philosophical Review*. He concludes that we can only suppose ourselves in the place of intelligent bats——or, he adds (employing a comprehensive word for hypothetical aliens), intelligent Martians, were they to try to determine what it is like to be human. Their mind-structure could be such as to deny them access to facts that the human mind-structure permits humans to comprehend——and vice versa.

The bat, in its world of echo-location, is (along with whales and dolphins among mammals) most strangely remote from our world of perception. In *The Senses of Animals*, Maxwell Knight and L. Harrison Matthews write of the evasive action taken by certain moths "on being 'looked at' by the bat's sonar system..." In his poem "Bat," D. H. Lawrence endeavors to sense the nature of "bat-hood": "A twitch, a twitter, an elastic shudder in flight." The dog is a more accessible mammal, though its mode of consciousness is not ours and it lacks speech; but the sensitive poet may interpret plausibly, while avoiding anthropomorphic extremes. Consider these lines by Richard Goring:

head cocked, quizzical——
my dog watches a woodlouse
crawling the carpet

"Quizzical" is a human attitude/emotion, but here it seems to proper word to use in an attempt to portray the mixture of curiosity and uncertainty occupying the mind of an alert dog as it follows the erratic progress of a strange body.

That, we may say, is a poetry of the empathic moment. There are more complex poems which essay insight into imagined alien or animal experiences as a means toward metaphor or allegory. Thus Aldous Huxley's "Mole" starts with the "old mole-soul" who

> . . .tunnels on
> Through ages of oblivion
> Until at last the long constraint
> Of each hand-wall is lost and faint
> Comes daylight creeping from afar,
> And mole-work grows crepuscular.
> Tunnel meets air and bursts; mole sees
> Men as strange as walking trees?

Here Huxley's stroke of genius is "each hand-wall," a wonderful attempt to "feel" with the mole its tunnelled path. The Biblical allusion to the impact of light on restored *human* sight is adroitly emphasized by the question-mark. (Huxley then develops his theme metaphysically to make light, and eventually transcendental light, the media of further and of ultimate tunelling.)

Rupert Brooke, in "The Fish," uses subaqueous existence as an allegory of the sensual life, to be contrasted with the overarching empyrean of love; but his attempted kinaesthetic fish-experience of a "fluctuant mutable world" is irresistibly real:

> And joy is in the throbbing tide,
> Whose intricate fingers beat and glide
> In felt bewildered harmonies
> Of trembling touch; and music is
> The exquisite knocking of the blood
> Space is no more under the mud;
> His bliss is older than the sun.

In a later poem, "Heaven," Brooke turns piscean metaphor towards satirical skepsis. Now "somewhere beyond Space and Time" his fish trust that

> . . . there swimmeth one
> Who swam ere rivers were begun
> Immense of fishy form and mind,
> Squamous, omnipotent, and kind. . .

This tone is different. The fish is simply being used as human surrogate, anthropomorphically projecting, fantasizing, speculating. The classic poem of that particular kind is Browning's "Caliban Upon Setebos: or Natural Theology in the Island." Shakespeare's Caliban, a truly fantastic monster, is Browning's model. In his poem the creature's actions parallel the deeds of Setebos, the creator and discretionary destroyer, while it muses on their nature and implications. Caliban, for example, mutilates or rewards arbitrarily chosen individuals in a file of seaward marching crabs:

> "Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
> And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
> As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

"So He" is the constant refrain; and at the beginning of that passage the elision ("Say) there, as elsewhere in the poem, indicates Caliban's own ambiguous self-consciousness——either knowing himself as a first-person "I" or as a third-person entity. The opening lines of the work establish this:

> "Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
> Flat on his belly, in the pit's much mire. . .

In such ways Browning identifies Caliban as alien, a creature whose experiential processes need to be probed and coded. When Caliban soliloquizes he is "[l]etting the rank tongue blossom into speech"; and when he becomes intoxicated he drinks the gourd-like fruit mash "Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain...."

Modern science-fiction presents and uses the alien in guises god-like, monstrous, quasi-human and zoömorphic. In some instances the manner of use is to offer a remoteness onto which the human can be projected to achieve a degree of "cognitive estrangement"; in others it is to place mankind in relation to other possible manifestations of intelligence and consciousness, often to deflate the

chauvinism of *homo sapiens*; in all cases the problem of communication is both recognized as a barrier and used as an instrument for estrangement-resolving. The ambiguously god-like and monstrous can be found, for example, in Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* and Philip K. Dick's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. The quasi-human is conceived for purposes of satire in Gulliver's voyages; while in *The Left Hand of Darkness* Ursula K. Le Guin employs a human's confrontation with the hermaphroditic Hainish race, the Getheneans, to raise disturbing questions relating to alienation, prejudice and sexuality. In her other novels, especially *The Dispossessed*, she dwells on problems of communication with humanoid aliens. The peoples of her Hainish Worlds are, in fact, descended from colonizers who also spawned the human race; and in these many humanoid divergences we are confronted with the outcome of variant potentials. When, however, the alien is still further removed from humanoid form, communication becomes more difficult as its strangeness increases——but this very difficulty offers unique occasions for arousing the reader's human self-awareness dramatically. There is such an example in Cherryh's *The Pride of Chanur* when her zoömorphic (leonine) "hani" alien tries, failing language, to understand the mind of her human captive, who is under great stress: "A tremor passed over his face, extressions she could not read. The eyes spilled water...." Later she interprets by empathic intuition: "If his pathetically small ears could have moved they would have lain down, she thought; it was that kind of look."

Illustrators and movie make-up artists only rarely produce a convincing alien. Novelists are more successful. Cherryh is very good at applying the persuasive baroque descriptive touch. Here, again from *The Pride of Chanur*, is her description of the "stsho," another carnivorous race, antithetical to the hani, but trading between worlds with them:

> Methodical to a fault, the stsho could be tedious, full of subtle meanings in their pastel ornaments and the tatooings on their pearly hides. They were another hairless species, thin, tri-sexed and hanilike only by the wildest stretch of the imagination, if eyes, nose and mouth in biologically convenient order constituted similarity.

The only trouble with close description, either graphic or anthropological, is that we may feel we get to know the alien *too* well. The mysterious thrill of encounter is then attenuated. It is here that the poetry of science-fiction and fantasy can be enhancing. Form, language, image, metaphor combine and conspire to reinforce the encounter and evade familiarity. Communication, or the lack of it, may be sensed almost occultly. See how wonderfully Coleridge achieves this when the angelic phantasms appear standing on the corpses of the Mariner's shipmates ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," part VI). Coleridge's description is so simple——but electrifying: "A man all light, a seraph man," and then:

> This seraph band, each waved his hand,
> No voice did they impart——
> No voice; but O, the silence sank
> Like music on my heart.

To exemplify how in extraterrestrial contexts the poetic medium may attain such effects when its subject is the alien——that prime embodiment of the unknown but existent "other"——I cite from two British poets of science-fiction. The first is once more Steve Sneyd. His title alone simultaneously conveys the organically powerful and the cosmically remote, and subtly suggests a zoömorphic ambiguity. It is "Herculid Owlcat":

> watch yourself in eyes
> bigger than starships: you shrink
> from burning focus

This suggests a near-terrifying experience of contact and self-realization. At the same time the title and the basic imagery cut humanity down to size, physically and psychically. The communication is wordless, an ocular reflexive process, for which the medium is light.

My second example is a poem by Stephen Bowkett which, using the imagery of a far planetary landscape and the action of a spacer's exploration, moves to a perfect epitomizing of that which is alien. The poem is simply titled "It."

It
appeared as we rounded rocks
blurred by red starlight,
sharp
with growths of crystal.

In all that sky
and twisting smoke
no-one dared think of home.
Fragments of wind
picked among the world's ashes
as we searched,
dreading a find.

It rose from cover:
twice our height
and greyblack,
still, making no sound.
Shapes beyond shapes
we knew,
and a slow pulsing
film of skin
for eyes.

It lived in crags,
making its home
amid flecks of glass and cinder,
its brain full of fires.

Maybe it thought
and dreamed of the stars.
It stood ten steps away,
a gulf our starships
could never cross.

The alienation implicit in "no-one dared think of home" and "dreading a find"; the silence; the uncertain description of an almost amorphous creature, "its brain full of fires"; the Dantean landscape around it——all these images, formed and half-formed, lead to the perfect oxymoron of the last three lines. These express something of the essence of science-fiction and related fantasy.

In another of his poems, "Meteor," Bowkett captures the moment following the shock of "a sudden reminder that the stars are not asleep"——the moment when again after meteor-streak "stars settle in the night's / ice-metal stillness," and we are driven to wonder and to ask "What else out there"? only to conclude that:

The gulf is too vast, the why
that imagination shudders
from
and dares not trust

It is in precisely such seconds of sudden apparition, or ensuing stillness, that insights into matters of mutability, recurrence, the origins, rhythms, directions and accessibility of other planetary and cosmic life can with great immediacy invade a heightened and speculative consciousness. They sustain an open, never a closed consciousness, constantly expectant, as one key image in "Meteor" expresses it, of "[s]ome sequel when the sky's jewels / flash...."

The several exemplifying poems cited do, I suggest, give substance to the contention with which I opened: that poetry and science-fiction (with its fantasy-extended frontiers) have in many of their manifestations a common concern, although this is pursued through differing creative modes. Poetry acts to use its musical manipulation of words and its structuring of metaphor to create a powerful imagery which reflects man's experience in the diverse but overlapping "worlds" of his existence. Science-fiction, whether closely or loosely linked with the sciences, acts to extrapolate and to speculate imaginatively from the basis of man's observation of, use of, interaction with, understanding of, or estrangement from his multi-faceted environment. In their effects both literary forms may modify, heighten, even transform consciousness within their readers: poetry usually by almost instantaneously realized intuitions and insights; science-fiction more often by gradually, perhaps more rationally, gained adjustment of mental and probably emotional perspectives. What is most significant is that these effects may operate complementarily, and in the distinctive genre of science-fiction poetry may cause the individual reader's imagination to oscillate electrifyingly between one mode and the other.

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LABYRINTH OF STRANGE AFFINITY

(FROM AN IDEA BY ROBERT BOWDEN)

and
we found the remains of the strange city
beneath the great crater of Syrtis Major
where once there'd been subterranean seas

and
in the ruins, the pyramids and domes of a
subaquatic architecture too delicate for air
we discovered, embedded in the sands of Mars
the fossilized
skull of a
dolphin

THE LICHEN MANUSCRIPT / MARS IS A DISTRICT OF SHEFFIELD

as I scratch paths
through lichen circles
on this Yorkshire wall,
a rain of memory
washes segments
of Martian landscape

the 1950's books I read
said lichen grows on Mars,
as a child smearing dreams
I walked jungles of lichen
beneath violet Martian skies
watching a shimmer of canals
beaded with bright cities set
in a weave of strange forest,
tendrils of vermilion lichen
curling, burning with orchids
and crawling with the eyes
of man-tall insects

now,
as I scratch paths
on this Yorkshire wall,
I dislodge the ruins
of Martian cities

ESCALATOR TO ANDROMEDA/ FOR A 1950's S-F WRITER

(TO E. C. TUBB)

he types
"LIFT-OFF:
within 4:42
minutes, no
blue sky"

leans back,
drinks coffee,
exhales nebulae
of cigarette smoke,
stares at the wall &
out beyond the wall
as far as
Andromeda

then, 4:42 minutes
later, he
returns to
the typewriter

—*Andrew Darlington*

Book Reviews

THE CHILDREN OF MEN by P. D. James. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. 241 pp. 24 cm. $22.00.

The year 2021 begins with the ignominious death, in a tavern brawl, of the last man born on earth. He is only twenty-five, and there are still many millions living on the planet, people born before universal sterility struck humanity in 1995, but his death still seems symbolically evocative of his race's fate. That scene introduces the first half of Ms. James's novel, which describes the conditions that have come about in the quarter-century since no more children have arrived in the world.

These events are seen through the eyes of Theodore Farin, an Oxford professor of Victorian history, and told by his ruminations as he writes a diary of his daily life. England, we learn, has become a dictatorship run by the Warden and the four members of his council. It is stable and generally accepted because it retains the familiar, traditional forms of government——parliament, the king, regional councils, all now archaic and almost powerless——and because people have been given freedom from fear, want and boredom. All felons are routinely exiled to a penal colony on the Isle of Man. There is enough food, an increasing abundance of housing, and no one needs to work long or arduously. There is ample entertainment, including the products of state-run pornography shops. Medical care is free. Meanwhile research aimed at restoring mankind's fertility continues, unsuccessfully, and that of all individual men and women is constantly being tested. The first half of *The Children of Men* also gives much of Farin's own history, and fleshes him out as a full-rounded character. He is a cousin of Xan, the Warden, and at one time acted as advisor to the Council of England, to which he still has access.

Although she has written a dozen books, this is Ms. James's first venture into science-fiction. Her imagined situation is by no means new; the concept of universal human sterility goes back to 1805, when Cousin de Grainville's *Le Dernière Homme* depicted its occurrence through exhaustian of the planet's soil and water. More recently, J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962), and *Graybeard* (1965) by Brian Aldiss made solar storms and nuclear testing responsible. In *Red Snow* (1930) F. Wright Moxley posited the phenomenon's appearance without explanation; and like James's, too, his novel deals with the effects on social structure——"People turn to art and sex for relief, with predictable idiotic results," for example. The theme has even been turned to slapstick humor by George Weston in *His First Million Women* (1934), where the effects of a passing comet leave only one man in the world still fertile.

I suspect Ms. James is unfamiliar with all of these, and indeed she is less interested in the broad effects that occupy most of them than in the responses of individuals. "I thought, if there was no future, how would we behave?" she remarked in a 1992 interview. The responses she suggests are twofold: how to face death, which has become not merely an end of self, but incrementally the end of all humanity; and how people, especially women, deal with losing their reproductive function. Reading about the latter in *The Children of Men* gave me a strong feeling of *déjà-vu*, for I had already encountered their reactions elsewhere.

Sixty years ago *Life Everlasting*, by the well known genre author David H. Keller, was published as a magazine serial (it also appeared in book form in 1947). In this novel a scientist perfects a serum that confers immortality on the human race. But there is an unexpected price to pay: freedom from disease and all effects of ageing is accompanied by universal sterility. Keller devotes much of

this work to describing how people react to the situation.

There are striking similarities between his explorations and James's. Both believe that social stability will increase as the population remains static or decreases. Both see a decline in the working week, and the question arising as to what people will do with more spare time (a problem that Aldous Huxley foresaw earlier in his *Brave New World*). Each author forecasts inherent restlessness, more separations or divorces, and an increased desire for pets. Keller's childless women collect dolls and give tea-parties for them; James's celebrate their pseudo-births, wheel them about in prams, bury broken ones in consecrated ground. Both writers posit a flourishing industry that produces dolls in different sizes which match human growth, but here Keller is more inventive. His dolls are literally robotic babies. They can stand and walk (like James's), but can also be bathed, take the bottle, show symptoms of colic, and even grow tonsils and adenoids which have to be removed. The factories which make them are staffed exclusively by men who are eager to be employed there, doubtless because such work is psychologically equivalent to fathering a child. But dolls and robots cannot reciprocate the love they receive, and eventually women realize there is no cure for frustrated maternal desire.

Resolution of this fundamental problem is effected by the two authors in different ways. In *Life Everlasting* it occurs rapidly: an antidote is found which reverses the effects of the serum, and most of humanity chooses to take it and go back to their former state. In *The Children of Men* it is a slower process that takes up the latter half of the book. Farron, disillusioned by negative aspects of the dictatorship, falls in with an impromptu band of revolutionaries who harrass and then are forced to flee from government forces. He grows to love Julian, one of its members, who eventually reveals that she is pregnant. Adventures follow, in which several of the band sacrifice their lives for her, and culminate in a confrontation between Faron and Xan. Xan is killed and Faron takes his place as Warden of England. Julian's child is born, probably symbolizing a Christian parallel that gives hope for the future of the human race.

Except for the facet of coincidence I have described, *Life Everlasting* and *The Children of Men* involve, clearly, entirely different plots; they evolve in different ways and are written in different styles. Keller's novel reflects more simplistic times, and its development relies on values which two generations have led many to question. Its unadorned prose seems almost pedestrian today, but still supports a moving and powerful ending.

James's work is more intricately constructed. It moves more slowly at first as she sets the stage and develops her characters, but its sharp, circumstantial detail always holds the reader's attention, and the tempo gradually increases as the climax approaches. It is also, I should emphasize, beautifully written. Her thoughtful, introspective prose has sometimes seemed out of place in her detective stories (especially such longer ones as *Devices and Desires* and *A Taste for Death*, where it diffuses the vigor of the subject-matter), but here a stronger plot and shorter narrative span make it an asset rather than a liability. I am sure that others will find *The Children of Men* as pleasurable to read as I have, and I recommend it highly. I also recommend to P. D. James that she herself seek out David Keller's *Life Everlasting*, which I feel sure she has never read, for the intellectual pleasure of savoring fictional pathways of thought that so closely parallel her own.

A. Langley Searles

HOCUS POCUS by Kurt Vonnegut. New York: Putnam Publishers, 1990. 320 pp. 21.5 cm. $21.95. (softbound edition: Berkeley Books, 1991, $5.99.)

What can be said about an author who has written several "instant classics," and whose lesser efforts routinely sell in millions of copies?

Well, he's done it again. While not as audaciously speculative as in *Slaughterhouse Five, Cat's Cradle* or *The Sirens of Titan,* Vonnegut's latest book shows a return to top form and qualifies as one of the best of the rest. It doesn't have a heavy science-fiction element like coming "unstuck in time" (*Slaughterhouse Five*) or "ice nine" (*Cat's Cradle*) as the main mode of plot propulsion, but *Hocus Pocus* does explain the entire evolution of life on Earth as no more than an experiment during space exploration by "The Elders of Tralfamadore" ('even the greatest human being in history . . . was nothing more than a petri dish in the truly Grand Scheme of Things"). So in its vision of the future it is indeed speculative.

We are in the year 2001. Any and all available space——like bankrupt colleges, aircraft carriers, missile cruisers and even the underfunded "supercollider" excavation outside Waxahachi, Texas——is being converted into Japanese-owned and -operated prisons. These are racially segregated, and staffed by an army of occupation constituting, in part, the millions of Japanese nationals who oversee their widespread American investments. This has been arranged, ostensibly, for the better facilitation of the war on drugs: "When you dare to think about how huge the illegal drug business is in this country, you have to suspect that practically everybody has a steady buzz on. . . ."

The closest thing to a theme in *Hocus Pocus* is the complicated futility of ignorance, which primarily takes the form of bashing the upper and middle classes (these defined as denizens of lily-white communities bearing names like like "Lackawanna"). The text is an unrelenting list of examples illustrating that precept, strung together into a pseudo-narrative, with such phrases as: "Capitalism was what the people with all our money, drunk or sober, sane or insane, decided to do today"; "rich people were poor people with money"; "the trouble with the ruling class was that too many of its members were nitwits"; "nobody ever gets punished for anything"; "Being an American means never having to say you're sorry"; "so many people wanted to come here because it was so easy to rob the poor people, who got absolutely no protection from the government." And so on.

In Vonnegut's future, gasoline is available only on the black market, the two principal currencies of the planet are the yen and fellatio, and the social security system has gone bust. In fact the entire nation has been thoroughly looted, bankrupted and its assets sold off to foreigners by the ruling class even as it is "swamped by unchecked plagues and superstition and illiteracy and hypnotic TV." The people have taken God's admonition to Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" as meaning that "they had instructions from the Creator of the Universe Himself to wreck the joint."

"Earthlings . . . feared and hated other Earthlings who did not look and talk exactly as they did. They made life a hell for each other as well as for what they called 'lower animals.' They actually thought of strangers as lower animals." Does any of this sound familiar?

Unlike this morning's newspaper, however, Vonnegut raps your funnybone on every page with bodacious sentiments, presenting unpopular, uncomfortable and controversial concepts in the guise of humor. For example: "America is Japan's Vietnam"; "I am not writing this book for people below the age of 18, but I see no harm in telling young people to prepare for failure rather than success, since failure is the main thing that's going to happen to them"; "on some planets I'm sure there are people who eat stone, and then feel wonderful for a little while afterwards"; "Jews . . . are trying to get through life with only half a Bible"; "Hiroshima [was] executed without trial for the crime of Emperor Worship."

Even readers not sympathetic toward Vonnegut risk finding themselves disarmed and enchanted before they realize their ramparts are not only under siege, but have already been breached. It's hard to argue with this guy's well conceived and constructed little morality plays.

So why try? Sit back and relax. Enjoy the show. Before you know it, you may find yourself nodding in amused agreement as the author lets loose with such cracks as: "Life's a bad dream"; "a new Ice Age [is] on the way"; "everybody wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance"; "if facts weren't funny or scary, or couldn't make you rich, the heck with them"; "all nations bigger than Denmark are crocks of doo-doo"; and "The epitaph for the planet. . .carved in big letters on a wall of the Grand Canyon for the flying-saucer people to find [are:] WE COULD HAVE SAVED IT BUT WE WERE TOO DOGGONE CHEAP."

"People are never stronger," writes K.V., "than when they have thought up their own arguments for believing what they believe." So, think up some arguments for believing you should buy this book. I think you'll find it great fun.

H. R. Felgenhauer

MARY SHELLEY: Romance and Reality by Emily W. Sustein. New York: Little, Brown, 1989. 478 pp. 24 cm. $24.95. MARY SHELLEY by Allene Stuart Phy. Mercer Island, Wash.: Starmont House, 1988. 124 pp. 20.5 cm. $17.95 (Paperback, $9.95). (Starmont Reader's Guide #36.)

Critical canonization of an author generally requires that the candidate have methodically pursued a career evolving in ever-improving phases, producing a tidy shelf of books which can show "progress" of development and "integrity" of thought. Authors cursed with a one-book success like Mary Shelley present problems. Seldom are they called "great," even if their single contribution outpaces many a lesser classic. (Another example: James Boswell, whose *Life of Johnson* is usually classed as a great book though its writer is almost never called a great author.) Worse, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* breaks loose from the critic's laboratory like the monster itself (misnamed by posterity for its creator, Dr. Victor Frankenstein). Like the monster itself on the prowl, the novel roves through the gloom of horror fiction—and is an alien invader in the black hole of the science-fiction field as well.

Cautious critics stick to Jane Austen, and consign Mary Shelley to fleeting mentions within general reviews of the period. Of late, however, several feminist scholars have come to the rescue, showing that Mary's life and thought were far broader than those of a mere mad poet's wife, goaded into a fit of horror-writing after a night of spooky conversation. (As everyone, we hope, should remember, Mary, her husband, Byron and lightweight Polidori, on a summer's eve lark in 1817, each essayed to write a ghost or terror yarn. "Monk" Lewis had dropped by a few days before, but missed the competitive writing-bee of which *Frankenstein* was the clear winner.)

Emily Sustein has written a full-scale biography, supplanting Muriel Spark's rather dated *Child of Light* (1951), which by the way has been recently reissued. Chapter seven gives the details of *Frankenstein's* genesis and composition, and chapter twenty-two helpfully reviews Mary's changing reputation in her lifetime and since. Appended to the volume is a good bibliography of her works—both books and ephemeral items in periodicals.

Allene Phy's work emphasizes Mary Shelley's place in the fantasy field, specifically in the science-fiction genre; it covers not only *Frankenstein* but *The Last Man* (1826). (There was a rash of "Last Man" works in the early nineteenth century, such as Thomas Campbell's 1823 poem of that title.) Each work receives a full chapter. *Frankenstein*, says Phy, may be "the most influential minor novel of all time . . . one of the most challenging of stories." She explains textual differences between the 1818 and 1831 editions, the latter mostly sail-trimming efforts by Mary to appease that ravenous deity, almighty Convention. There is also a chapter dealing with the monster's career as a movie star, and *The Last Man* is properly placed in the apocalyptic science-fiction tradition. Appended is a good

secondary bibliography which includes most of the important contributions from fantasy scholars. (Though where are Sam Moskowitz's? Thirty years ago, in an essay published in *Explorers of the Infinite*, he placed Mary Shelley in the science-fiction tradition as well as that of Gothic horror, possibly building on the suggestion in L. Sprague de Camp's *Science Fiction Handbook* [1954].)

Phy covers Shelley's entire *oeuvre*, including mediocre Gothic items like *Falkner* as well as her essays, poems and fugitive writings. Despite the saturation of Mary Shelley and allied monster scholarship and popular writing——as evidenced by her own bibliography——Phy's is seemingly the first full-length study that places her subject within the fantasy tradition. It is written with an old-school gracefulness throughout.

And thanks to her hereditary and environmental rebelliousness (parents: William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft), Mary Shelley emerges as a feminist in an age when a woman writer was delicately designated an "authoress" or "poetess" in the literary journals of the day.

Steve Eng

ONE WHO WALKED ALONE / ROBERT E. HOWARD: THE FINAL YEARS by Novalyne Price Ellis. West Kingston, R.I.: Donald M. Grant, 1986. 317 pp. 23.5 cm. $25.00.

When suicide occurs there is seldom, even in a farewell note, a fully satisfactory answer to the question, *Why?* If someone is incurably ill and in intense pain, there may be little doubt; but what of a young person with most of a lifetime ahead, or one already enjoying success in a chosen profession? (Why did Edward Arlington Robinson's Richard Cory, "one calm summer night," go "home and put a bullet through his head"?) We shall never find out, so there is also the frustration of not knowing if the tragedy could have been prevented.

The conventional reason for Robert E. Howard's suicide was his deep love for his terminally ill mother and an unwillingness to go on living without her. While his mother and his relations with her remain at the center of the affair, Howard was a deep and complex person, with his head screwed on widdershins. Like his own character Conan he was a man of gigantic melancholies——but without gigantic mirth. Perhaps some clues to his final act can be found in his own words and actions as recorded by Novalyne Price Ellis, the one girl he dated between 1934 and some weeks before he shot himself on June 11, 1936.

Price first met Howard in the late Spring of 1933. They were introduced by Tevis Clyde Smith, whom she had sometimes dated, and who was a close friend and occasional collaborator of Howard (notably in "Red Blades of Black Cathay," *Oriental Stories*, February-March 1931). As an aspiring writer herself, she was naturally anxious to meet and talk with someone who was reportedly able to sell almost everything he ever wrote. Price kept diaries and journals, and even wrote essays on the conversations she had with Howard. These were apparently composed immediately after each meeting with him, while fresh in her recollection; and as printed here they do carry the authentic ring of his exact words. They also provide the best insight we have into Howard's mind.

Their initial meeting, she writes, was cut short by Howard saying, "I'd better get back, my mother will be ready to go by this time." As they prepared to part, Price's grandmother came walking from the house. "She's the greatest woman I've ever known," Novalyne remarked. Howard seemed surprised. "Greater than your mother?" he asked.

When Price took a teaching job in Cross Plains, where Howard lived, she desired to further her acquaintance with Howard, and took the initiative to call him. His mother answered the telephone and said her son was out of town. Novalyne requested her to ask him to call her on his return. He did not. After several further attempts over the next week it became apparent that Howard's mother had not informed him of any of her calls. So, putting aside her 1934 maidenly

modesty, she went to the Howard home and managed to get past Mrs. Howard. Robert received her in a friendly manner and offered to take her for a drive. On hearing this his mother said, "You go right ahead. Forget me if you can!" Later Novalyne learned from an acquaintance who was present that after they left Dr. Howard had asked, "Mother, are we going to lose our boy?" and his wife had replied, "No, don't worry about that. We're not going to lose him."

The couple rode around and talked, and in the course of their conversation Novalyne found out Bob hadn't been out of town during the past week. At last he said it was time to go home and give his mother her medicine. On another occasion he told her that when his mother had terrible night sweats he changed her bedding and nightgown——sometimes as often as three times a night. Appalled, Novalyne asked why he was undertaking a task that rightfully belonged to Dr. Howard. Bob answered that since his father was always on call for his patients he himself did whatever was necessary for her.

Their subsequent dates were prosaic enough. They mostly drove around and occasionally went to a movie. Oddly, he never seemed to want to be seen or to go with her anywhere in his own town of Cross Plains. There was no great romance. Once in a while he would put his arm around her, and now and then would bestow a chaste kiss. Their conversations were mostly about writers and writing, leavened by Howard's opinionated remarks on many diverse subjects. Yet during the next twenty-one months that they rode, walked and talked, Novalyne felt that she never truly got to know and understand him.

One point seems clear: no matter what they talked about, sooner or later the subject of his mother arose. Novalyne didn't like her very much, and early on sensed that Mrs. Howard was a possessive woman. She wondered if Bob was really dominated by her, was really the dutiful son he appeared to be. Did he really love his mother——or hate her?

He once told her of the kind of woman he called "Eve," who chains a man to a way of life that frustrates him, takes away his freedom to be himself, his freedom to roam the world seeking adventure. But as Novalyne observed, though he was not married to an "Eve" he was chained even more firmly to his mother. She saw him as "a man chained by love and duty to his old, sick mother while he dreamed of another life, another time, another exciting world." He would say, "If it weren't for my parents I wouldn't stay here for a minute. As long as my mother needs me I'm not free." Dr. Howard once told Novalyne, "Robert ought to travel. He'd like England and Ireland. Maybe it's the place for him."

Ostensibly talking about wives, he would go on about how "a woman puts chains on a man and in time he'll hate you for it, for whatever you tie down turns on you with hate." Although Howard said that he didn't think much of him, curiously the same thought surfaces in George Bernard Shaw's *Revolutionist's Handbook*. There Shaw observes, "If you begin by sacrificing yourself to those you love, you will end by hating those to whom you have sacrificed yourself."

Another of his pet raves was extolling the barbarian and the past and downgrading modern civilization. The present world was rotten, doomed, and mankind lived on the edge of disaster. Novalyne was amused by the thought that in the barbarian world of Conan Bob Howard wouldn't have lasted ten minutes.

He also seemed to believe in reincarnation, or at least in racial memory. He told Novalyne that he recalled past lives in which he had lost his best girl to his best friend. Later on, when he learned that Novalyne had earlier dated Truett Vinson, his best friend, he was coldly furious. That came at a time when he seemed on the brink of talking to her about love and marriage. But it was also during one of his occasional black moods, when such thoughts were mixed up with tormenting ones of his mother's dependance on him.

He grabbed Novalyne's arms and shook her, exclaiming, "All my life I've loved and needed her. Now I'm losing her. I know that. Damn it to hell! I want

to live. You hear that? I want to live! I want a woman to love, a woman to share my life and believe in me, to want me and love me. Don't you know that? My God, my God. Can't you see that? I want to live and to love."

Howard would complain of the troubles he had, but said a man could always get out of it if he didn't want to put up with the hell he went through. If a large part of those troubles, his personal albatross, was his mother, why did he take his life when this trouble was nearing its end? Here was his chance to travel to those foreign climes he wrote about in his stories of the Far East. He could travel locally to visit correspondents——to New Mexico to see Jack Williamson, next door to New Orleans where E. Hoffman Price lived, or even north to Providence for night-long talk and argument with Howard Lovecraft.

(continued on page 79)

Two Sonnets*

Robert E. Howard & Lee Becker

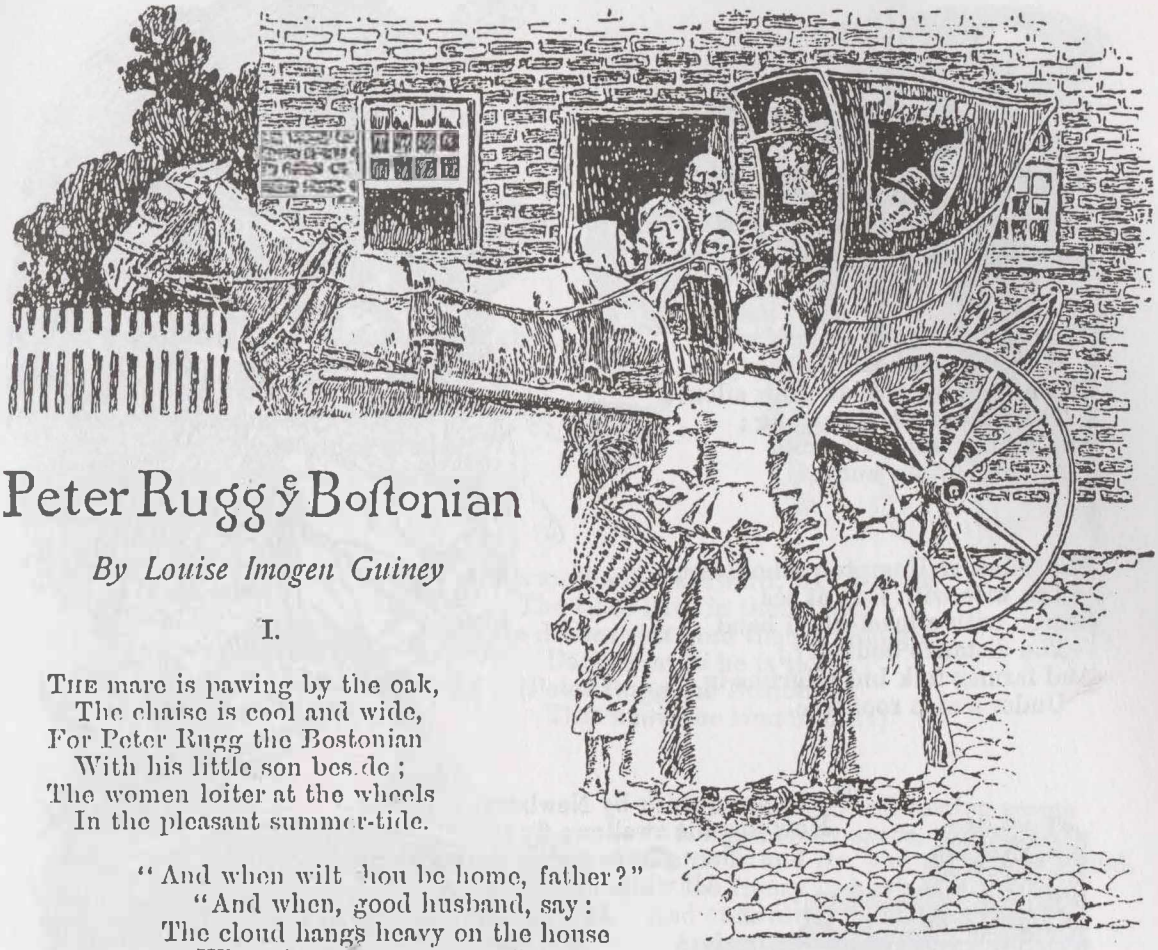
ARKHAM

Drowsy and dull with age the houses blink
On aimless streets the rat-gnawed years forget——
But what inhuman figures leer and slink
Down the old alleys when the moon has set?
What nameless odor, foul and strange, then blows
Against the bolted doors and crumbling sills?
What alien lament wakes echoes——
Or are they answers?——from the nearby hills?
Behind their shutters men still soundly sleep;
Though clasped by faceless dream-begotten spawn
They yet may safely wake from visions deep,
With never thought about that future dawn
When stark on sunlit doorsteps they will see
Their worst nightmares become reality.

AN OPEN WINDOW

The window in that stuffy attic room
Was blocked by books and scattered dusty files;
I did not like their looks, and dropped my broom
To stack them by the walls in quick new piles,
Then snapped the sash-lock back to clear the gloom
With freshness of the midday sun and air.
Instead, beyond those opened panes a tomb
Of darkness loomed; it swirled about my hair
And sent black tendrils past me to erase
Forever from that place all gleams of light.
Beyond its veil what gulfs of Time and space?
What blinking, moving shapes to blast the sight?
I shrank before a vague, colossal face
Born in the mad immensity of night.

*The provenance of these sonnets is given on pages 21 and 146.



Peter Rugg & y Bostonian

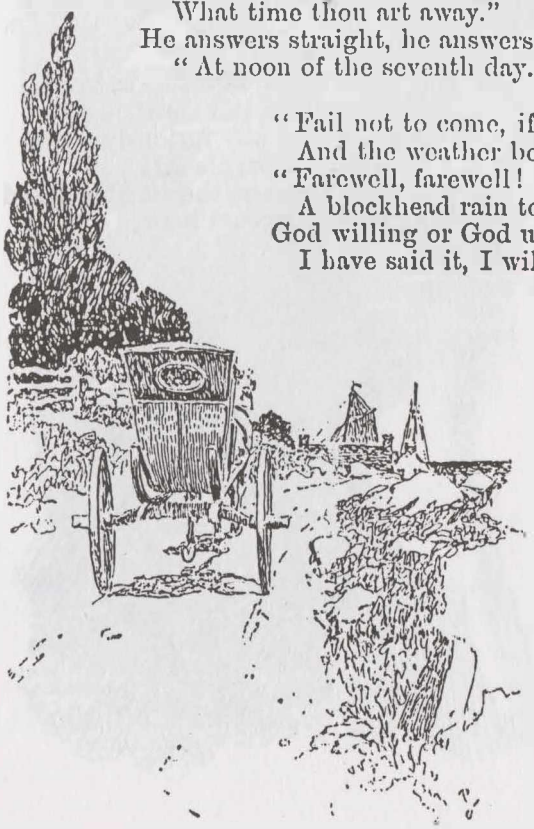
By Louise Imogen Guiney

I.

The mare is pawing by the oak,
The chaise is cool and wide,
For Peter Rugg the Bostonian
With his little son beside;
The women loiter at the wheels
In the pleasant summer-tide.

"And when wilt thou be home, father?"
"And when, good husband, say:
The cloud hangs heavy on the house
What time thou art away."
He answers straight, he answers short,
"At noon of the seventh day."

"Fail not to come, if God so will,
And the weather be kind and clear."
"Farewell, farewell! But who am I,
A blockhead rain to fear?
God willing or God unwilling,
I have said it, I will be here."



He gathers up the sunburnt boy,
And from the gate is sped;
He shakes the spark from the stones below,
The bloom from overhead,
Till the last roofs of his own town
Pass in the morning-red.

Upon a homely mission
North unto York he goes,
Thro' the long highway broidered thick
With elder-blow and rose;
And sleeps in sound of breakers
The second twilight's close.

Intense upon his heedless head
Frowns Agamenticus,
Knowing of Heaven's challenger
The answer: even thus
The Patience that is hid on high
Doth stoop to master us.

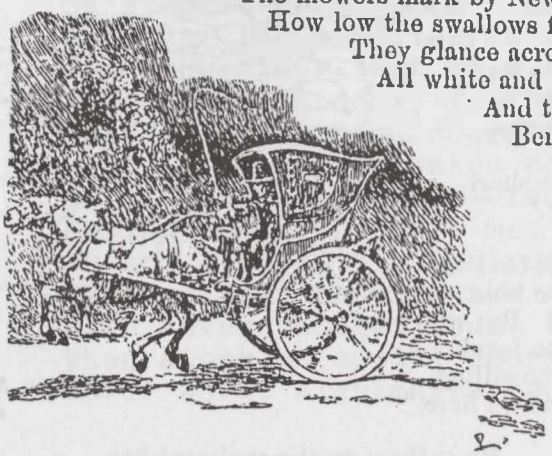
II.

Full light are all his parting dreams,
Desire is in his brain;
He tightens at the tavern post
The fiery creature's rein;
"Now eat thine apple, six years' child!
We face for home again."

They had not gone a many mile,
With nimble heart and tongue,
When the lone thrush grew silent
The walnut woods among;
And on the lulled horizon
A premonition hung.

The babes at Hampton school-house,
The wife with lads at sea,
Search with a level-lifted hand
The distance bodingly;
And farmer folk bid pilgrims in
Under a safe roof-tree.

The mowers mark by Newbury
How low the swallows fly;
They glance across the southern roads
All white and fever-dry,
And the river anxious at the bend
Beneath a thinking sky.



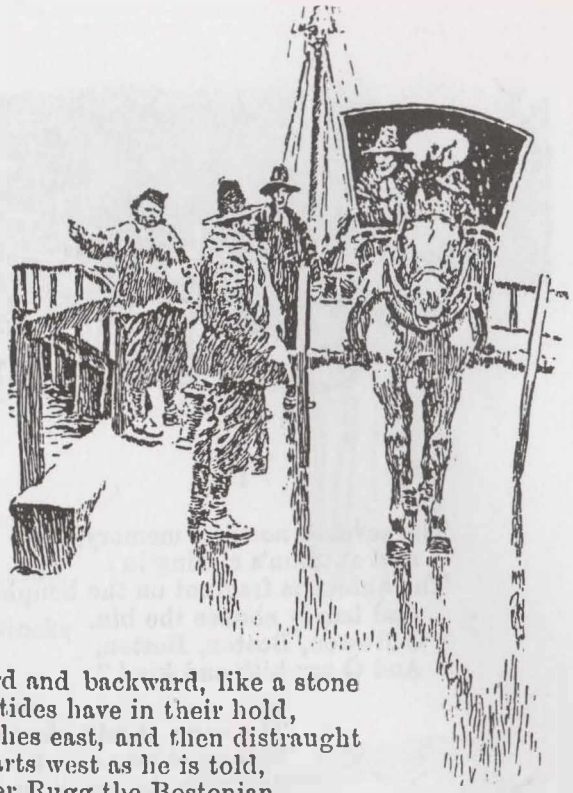
But there is one abroad was born
To disbelieve and dare!
Along the highway furiously
He cuts the purple air:
The wind leaps on the startled world
As hounds upon a hare;

With brawl and glare and shudder ope
The sluices of the storm;
The woods break down, the sand upblows
In blinding volleys warm;
The yellow floods in frantic surge
Familiar fields deform.

From evening until morning
His skill will not avail,
And as he cheers his youngest-born
His cheek is spectre-pale,
For the bonny mare from courses known
Has drifted like a sail.

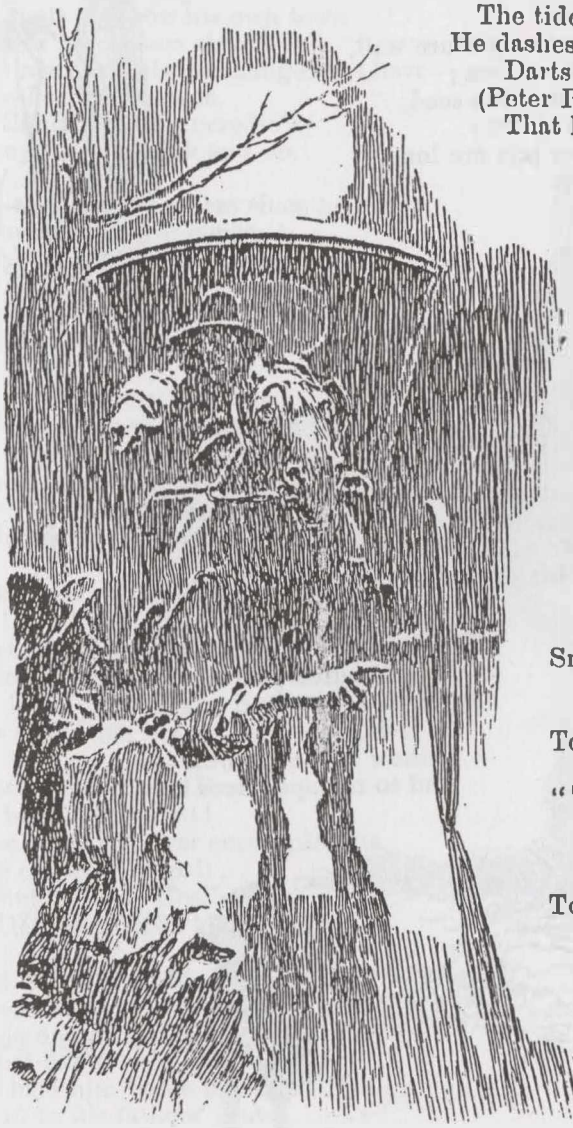
III.

On some wild crag he sees the dawn
  Unsheathe her scimitar
"Oh, if it be my mother-earth,
  And not a foreign star,
Tell me the way to Boston,
  And is it near or far?"



One watchman lifts his lamp and laughs:
  "Ye've many a league to wend,"
The next doth bless the sleeping boy
  From his mad father's end;
A third upon a drawbridge growls:
  "Bear ye to larboard, friend."

Forward and backward, like a stone
  The tides have in their hold,
He dashes east, and then distraught
    Darts west as he is told,
  (Peter Rugg the Bostonian
    That knew the land of old!)

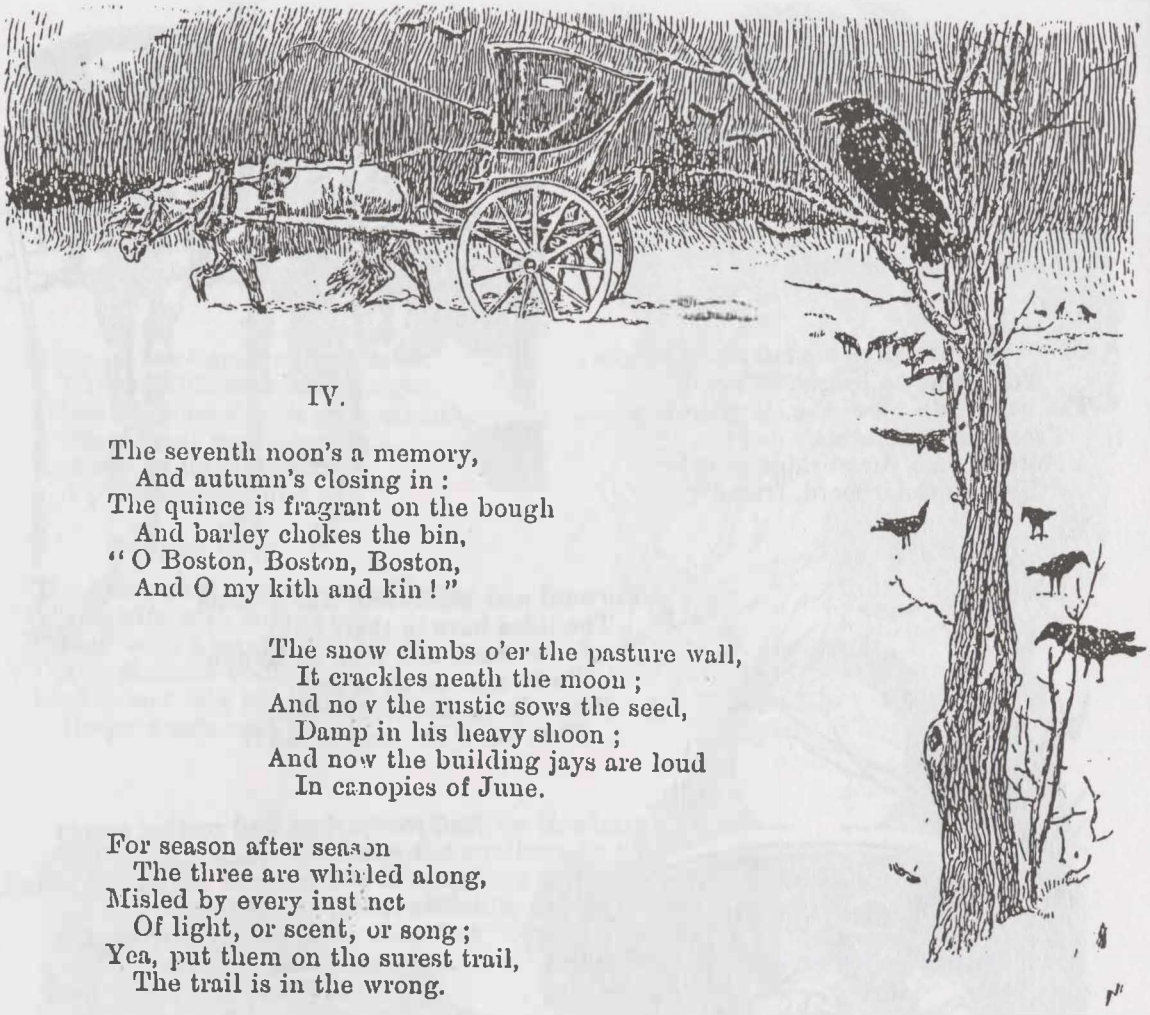


And journeying, and resting scarce
  A melancholy space,
Turns to and fro, and round and round,
  The frenzy in his face,
And ends alway in angrier mood,
  And in a stranger place.

Lost! lost in bayberry thickets
  Where Plymouth plovers run,
And where the masts of Salem
  Look lordly in the sun;
Lost in the Concord vale, and lost
  By rocky Wollaston!

Small thanks have they that
    guide him,
  Awed and aware of blight;
To hear him shriek denial
  It sickens them with fright;
"They lied to me a month ago
  With thy same lie to-night!"

To-night, to-night, as nights
    succeed,
  He swears at home to bide,
      Until, pursued with
        laughter,
    Or fled as soon as
        spied,
  The weather-drenchèd man is known
    Over the country side!



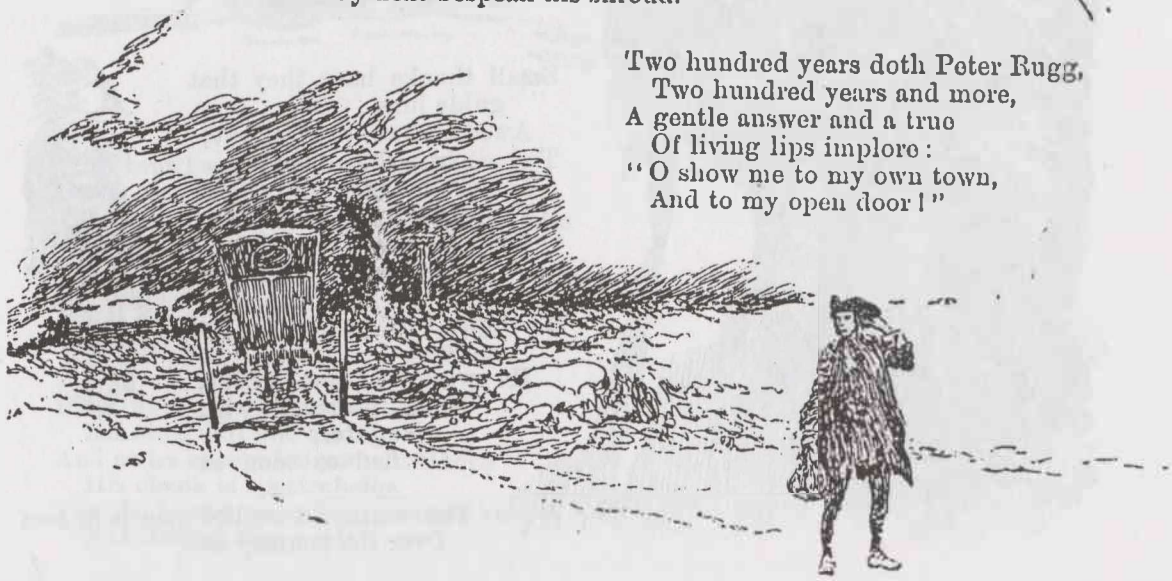
IV.

The seventh noon's a memory,
And autumn's closing in :
The quince is fragrant on the bough
And barley chokes the bin,
" O Boston, Boston, Boston,
And O my kith and kin ! "

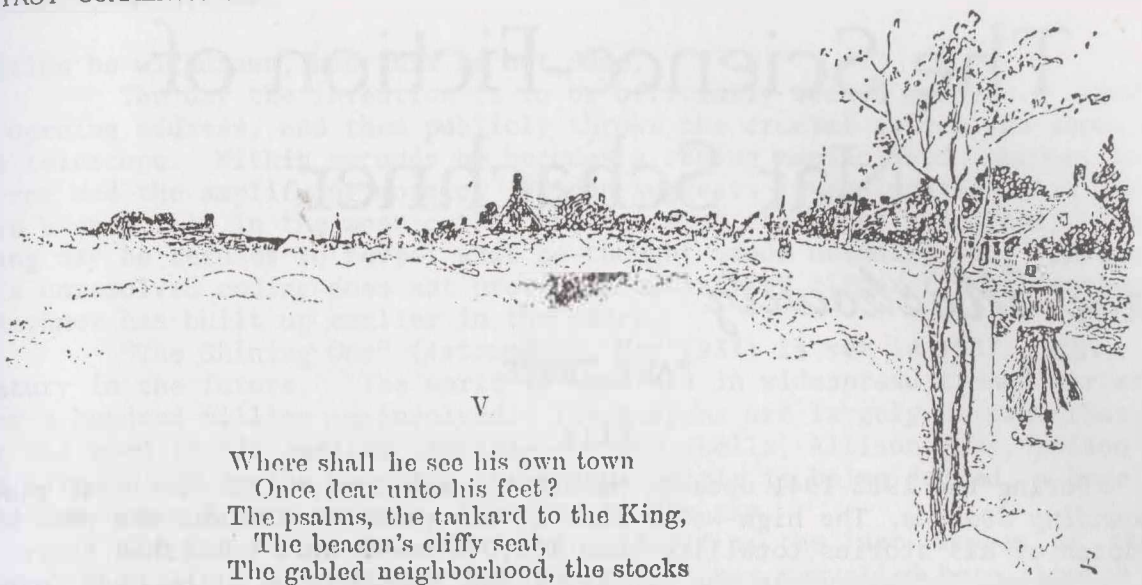
The snow climbs o'er the pasture wall,
It crackles neath the moon ;
And now the rustic sows the seed,
Damp in his heavy shoon ;
And now the building jays are loud
In canopies of June.

For season after season
The three are whirled along,
Misled by every instinct
Of light, or scent, or song ;
Yea, put them on the surest trail,
The trail is in the wrong.

Upon those wheels in any path
The rain will follow loud,
And he that meets that ghostly man
Will meet a thunder-cloud,
And whosoever speaks with him
May next bespeak his shroud.



Two hundred years doth Peter Rugg,
Two hundred years and more,
A gentle answer and a true
Of living lips implore :
" O show me to my own town,
And to my open door ! "



V

Where shall he see his own town
  Once dear unto his feet?
The psalms, the tankard to the King,
  The beacon's cliffy seat,
The gabled neighborhood, the stocks
  Set in the middle street?

How shall he know his own town
  If now he clatters thro'?
Much men and places change that have
  Another love to woo,
And things occult, incredible,
  They find to think and do.

With such new wonders since he went
  A broader gossip copes,
Across the crowded triple hills,
  And up the harbor slopes,
Tradition's self for him no more
  Remembers, watches, hopes.

But ye, O unborn children!
  (For many a race must thrive
And drip away like icicles
  Ere Peter Rugg arrive,)
If of a sudden to your ears
  His plaint is blown alive;

If nigh the city, folding in
  A little lad that cries,
A wet and weary traveller
  Shall fix you with his eyes,
And from the crazy carriage lean
  To spend his heart in sighs.—

"That I may enter Boston,
  O help it to befall!
There would no fear encompass me,
  No evil craft appall;
Ah, but to be in Boston
  GOD WILLING! after all,"—

Ye children, tremble not, but go
  And lift his bridle brave,
In the one Name, the dread Name,
  That can forgive and save,
And lead him home to Copp's Hill ground,
  And to his fathers' grave.

The Science-Fiction of Nat Schachner

Sam Moskowitz

PART THREE

XIII

During the 1932-1941 decade, Nathan Schachner wrote 55 fictional pieces for *Astounding Stories*. The high-water mark of his productivity was the year 1937, when a dozen of his stories totalling some 130,000 words were published there.

"Beyond Infinity," in the January issue, was printed as by Chan Corbett since the final installment of "Infra-Universe" was appearing in the same number under his own name. Here, the Earth has been attacked by several waves of interstellar invaders and its defenses are now finally collapsing under the onslaught of aliens from a planet of the star Antares. But by reading the mind of an Antarean, Earth scientists discover that the core of the "big bang" which created the universe is gradually expanding, destroying the suns and worlds in its path. It is realization of this cataclysmic event that has driven races from other stars to to seek havens elsewhere on planets that may already be inhabited. Defeat seems inevitable for the few surviving Earthlings, who are fighting a desperate rearguard action to give their leading scientist a chance to save them. Schachner imparts a thrilling sense of drama to the description of the people's efforts to gain a little more time in their last redoubt.

The scientist, Peter Loring, eventually succeeds in constructing a device that can transfer the survivors of the human race beyond infinity, to a region where space and time have not yet been born. The device accomplishes this by converting them into immaterial conscious beings of pure thought. Collectively, the survivors will into existence a new universe similar to the one they have left behind. They locate a solar system with an Earthlike planet, and decide to colonize it——all except Loring. He prefers to remain a creature of pure thought, and to observe the development of this new universe. The others assume the material life form of amoebas. In this way, although all memories of a former existence disappear, an evolutionary climb back to civilization commences anew.

With this story Schachner reversed the decline in quality of his recent work. Its major concept is similar to that in his earlier "Entropy," where a new "big bang" renews a declining universe; but here the idea carries a stronger vehicle of action and drama whose metaphysical climax is not outside the genre.

In "Beyond Which Limits" (*Astounding Stories*, February 1937) Jim Weldon has invented a "photo-electric mosaic," which increases images on existing telescopic instruments by 10,000 times. It has been attached to a 300-inch telescope and aimed at a black hole in space. Norvel Sands, who is in charge of the telescope, is to be honored for what is essentially Weldon's invention, but the latter is accepting this in good grace for he is worried by what he thinks he might have seen when he tested the invention in his own observatory. All he will reveal is that beyond the black hole he has glimpsed faint images of still more stars and disturbing, strange shapes. These may be resolved when the larger 300-inch telescope utilizes his invention. Still disturbed, Weldon has suggested that his in-

vention be withdrawn, but this is not done.

The day the invention is to be officially tested arrives. Sands gives an opening address, and then publicly throws the crucial switch and looks through the telescope. Within seconds he becomes a raving maniac, and smashes both the mirror and the amplifying mosaic. Weldon suggests in explanation that there must have been a flaw in the mosaic that concentrated the light unbearably, but to his dying day he refuses to reveal what he thought Sands actually saw. Unfortunately this unresolved ending does not provide a satisfying climax for the suspense that Schachner has built up earlier in the story.

"The Shining One" (*Astounding*, May 1937) is set in 1987, then half a century in the future. The world is enmeshed in widespread trench warfare, with over a hundred million men involved. The weapons are largely the same that Schachner has used in his earlier stories——Dongan shells, Allison guns, poison gas and the like. Just at the moment a tremendous battle is being joined, a huge godlike luminous human figure appears, towering in the sky.

The figure speaks, identifying itself as the last member of the human race from millions of years in the future. It has travelled here through time to warn humanity that it is at a crossroads: if warring does not cease, civilization itself is at an end. But there are an infinite number of futures that will save the race if at this moment a plan of sanity is adopted.

At first most soldiers disbelieve this giant of light, and their commanders order missiles fired at him. They have no effect. They attack with every weapon in their arsenal, but he is impervious to them all, and as bombers target him energy flashes from his fingers and blasts them into oblivion. Following this convincing demonstration the war stops, and a world state arises, led by philosophers, poets and men of science.

The story has a surprise ending. Schachner reveals that the luminous figure is the invention of a weapons-creator, Hugh Wilmot. It is composed of pure light, and hence invulnerable to conventional weapons. The bursts of energy that destroyed the attacking bombers are caused by controlled lightning, Wilmot's latest invention, which he employed for this deception instead of turning it over to the military authorities. Although competently told, this is a routine story.

More effective than "The Shining One" is "Nova in Messier 33," which appeared under the Chan Corbett pen name in the same issue of *Astounding*. The tale opens in an observatory with the star Messier 33, some 900 light years away, under observation. The name of the protagonist (appropriately, it turns out) is John Wayne. He sees through the telescope what appears to be a sword of flame, which quickly brightens until it becomes visible to the naked eye. As he watches, the object grows unbelievably in size, at a rate that would require it to be travelling billions of miles a second. Even Jupiter pales before it in brightness, and a trail becomes visible behind it like the tail of a comet. As radiation from it strikes the moon, that satellite literally shrinks and disappears.

Calculations indicate that this stellar visitor is heading directly for the Earth, and that an area with a radius of thirty miles, which includes New York City, will be affected. Wayne takes a racing plane, which can travel at 400 miles an hour, from his location in Denver to New York. As he approaches, he sees the city shrink before his eyes just before his plane crashes because of the wind that is sucking into the vacuum created. Like the moon, New York City is now a Lilliputian world enfolded in its own space-time. Here the story bruptly ends.

XIV

In the late 1930's serious science-fiction criticism was seldom seen, but there was one small press journal devoted to it, *The Science Fiction Critic*. To its March 1937 issue the veteran British genre fan D. R. Smith contributed an article titled "The Astounding Schachner" which would surely have made its subject

wince if he ever read it. What seemed initially to have roused Smith's ire was the frequency of Schachner's work in print. "I found that for years past hardly an issue of *Astounding* has appeared without a story by this prolific person. This is not the sort of thing that should escape one's notice, and some species of investigation was indicated," he said. Smith also remarked on the difficulty of remembering individual Schachner stories. "It is not that he uses similar plots or scientific backgrounds, but just that in some mysterious manner he hits a dead mean every time."

On the subject of accurate science he said: "Schachner tends to the purely fantastical, talks rapidly about hyperspace, matrices, alien inventions impossible to describe, pseudo-scientific gibberish that, however much we may disapprove, has no base on which to start a quarrel." He also denigrated the author's power of characterization: "Heroes, heroines, villains [are] are all absolutely negative persons . . . . That is why one's pulse never quickens over a Schachner thriller, for no interest in such incredibly artificial puppets is possible." He concluded that publishing such work was very harmful. "That way lies extinction not only for himself, but for scientific fiction itself if every author resolved to write only well enough for editors to buy." Smith was highly respected at that time, and within the limited but influential circle of science-fiction fans his article did considerable damage to Schachner's reputation. For although the number of active fans was not great, their enthusiastic boosterism often did determine the ranking and popularity of a prominent author.

The truth was, the criticisms against Nat Schachner could have been levelled with equal or greater justice against most of the science-fiction writers of *any* period, for in this genre an unusual event is the central point of the story, and mere human beings have but subsidiary roles. As has been said, what happens becomes more important than to whom it happens. This Smith never pointed out.

He also seemed not to realize that sound literary criticism should always be even-handed, including positive as well as negative aspects of what is being evaluated. Thus he failed to relate any of the virtues of Schachner's fiction, which in addition to diversity of plots often involved some very good writing, an acute sense of pace, a high degree of social awareness, and a constant striving for the "thought-variant" concepts which at that period editor Orlin Tremaine demanded and which readers particularly enjoyed. It was also unfair of Smith to label Schachner a hack, for a hackwriter is not simply one whose work appears frequently, but who uses the same old plot again and again——and this Schachner never did.

Appearing as if in contradiction to D. R. Smith was Schachner's "Earthspin" (*Astounding*, June 1937), surely one of his better efforts. The leading scientist of a small European dictatorship (it is not named, but similarities to Nazi Germany are evident) has made important discoveries which enable its leader to launch a plan for political expansion. By tapping the radiation from the sun and the force of the Earth's magnetic field he concentrates sufficient energy to sublimate huge portions of the Antarctic icecap. A colony is established there and supported through volcanic heat, and sets about exploiting the continent's coal, oil and mineral resources.

But the most ambitious part of the plan is to use these power sources to shift the planet's axis, so that the poles will enjoy temperate climate while the country's political enemies will be in polar cold. Although this is actually effected, two American spies who have infiltrated the colony succeed in reversing the change. They themselves are killed in the process, and worldwide holocaust occurs through huge tidal waves and the water from the evaporated icecap flooding everything with torrential rains; but in the end mankind survives to rebuild.

Of interest also is the name of one minor character in the tale, Elliot Dodd; this is similar enough to that of the *Astounding Stories* artist Elliott Dold to suggest that Schachner used the name purposely. Finally, it should be noted

that the idea of altering the planet's axis was by no means new, even then. Jules Verne had used it in his novel *San Dessus Dessous* (1889), better known under its English titles, *Topsy-Turvy* or *The Purchase of the North Pole.*

The June *Astounding* also carried "When Time Stood Still," a Chan Corbett tale which was a sequel to "Nova in Messier 33." Here we learn that John Wayne survived the crash of his plane, but was severely crippled. Nevertheless he had unsuccessfully continued his quest to reverse the shrinking of New York City for the rest of his life. (One of his motivations was that his fiancée, Betty Middleton, had been among those living there.) When he dies, her photograph is put in his tomb.

His descendant in the 99th Century, Jon Wayne, falls in love with the woman in the photograph. When he receives word that the computers have selected his mate (computers appear in Schachner's stories more frequently than in those of any other early science-fiction magazine writer) he retreats to his father's laboratory on Phobos, a moon of Mars, to work on experiments that his ancestor had begun. He finds that reversal of New York City's condition is not possible, but he is able to duplicate the original effect. This he does, travelling from Phobos through subspace and time to New York, where it is still the year 1945. He loses consciousness as his vehicle crashes there——and awakens cradled in Betty Middleton's arms! He decides to go along with her belief that he is the original John Wayne, and sets about making the city survivable by using his greatly advanced knowledge. Much of this tale is implausible, and it does not make as favorable an impression on the reader as did the original.

To his social concerns, Schachner now added that of ecology in his effective novelette "Sterile Planet" (*Astounding*, July 1937). It is the year 4260 and the Earth is dying. Man has cut down all the forests, polluted the water supplies, depleted the soil. The oceans have evaporated and most of the planet has become a vast desert. There are only a dozen habitable places on the continents where pure underground water has collected, and over each is a glass-domed city. Here all moisture is recycled, and sufficient food is raised to support a million people. The rest of humanity lives a precarious, borderline existence around the shores of salt-laden seas in the ocean-bottoms called "The Deeps."

There is one exception to these: a scientifically advanced group that lives not far from Porto Rico. This was founded by a great scientist, and plans to attack New York City through a weapon that weakens the latter's protective wall of force. A renegade from there is captured by the Lowlanders, and all ends happily when he shares with them his plan to release trapped water and regenerate the surface of the Earth.

This is a thoughtful, action-packed story, whose pace and romantic tone remind one of Ray Cummings's novel "Jetta of the Lowlands" (*Astounding Stories*, September through November 1930), as well as the concern for ecology in Laurence Manning's "The Man Who Awoke" (*Wonder Stories*, March 1933).

"Crystallized Thought" (*Astounding*, August 1937) is at once a "thought variant" and a reversion to the fiction formula of the Clayton days, replete with fast action, pseudo-science, inventions made to order, a dark, alien villain, a shining hero, a beautiful, dynamic girl, a trusted aide, and an ending left open for a sequel (which was never written).

The thought-variant aspect rests on the concept that intelligent thought is the underlying substratum of the universe, a tangible substance that can literally be crystallized, and that such crystals retain the thinking abilities of their original possessors. Instead of a "soul" living on after death, it is the essence of intelligence which survives. Utilizing this theory, great minds could be transformed into crystals and bonded together just as today we combine transistors in various electronic devices.

The action portion of the story revolves around Webb Foster and Ku-mer, a Martian scientist (and the tale's arch-villain), whom Foster has beaten in an

election for the title "the greatest scientist of the solar system." Foster owns a space laboratory, a crystal sphere which orbits the Earth a million miles beyond the moon; here he works with his assistant Stet, a huge troglodyte from Titan.

The time is 500 years in the future, when the moon is colonized and is being mined for most of the minerals needed on Earth. From there the Interplanetary Council broadcasts the news that a hundred of the solar system's leading scientists have disappeared, and that it is feared this may be a prelude to an invasion from another star system. Ku-mer was the first to vanish.

A two-passenger Earth ship navigated by Loris Rhom, a young woman, approaches Foster's laboratory. She says she has been pursued by an alien space vessel. Ku-mer then appears, claiming to have been kidnapped by invisible creatures and taken to a dark world six billion miles from the sun. He reveals that the girl is actually Susan Blake, daughter of one of the kidnapped scientists. She is suspicious of Foster, yet wants his help to find her father. But the culprit is really Ku-mer. He is working with a band of pirates on this dark planet, and has conspired to have all the scientists kidnapped. They have been converted together into crystals of thought, which he has been utilizing as one would a computer for combined thinking. Ku-mer is seeking a fundamental equation that will describe the universe; their best efforts are incapable of discovering this, but they suggest it might be done with Foster's help.

Foster is captured and is about to be converted into a crystal when his mighty aide Stet appears. While Stet attacks the minions of Ku-mer, who retreat in confusion, Susan Blake frees Foster. Ku-mer attempts to stop them, but the opposing mental force of the assembled crystals prevent him.

Foster then destroys the pirate stronghold on the dark planet, freeing the crystals which disperse into an existence of their own. Broad hints are given that Ku-mer did not die with the pirates, and may return to wreak further mischief at some future date. This, fortunately for readers, he never did.

XV

All the while that Nat Schachner was steadily churning out good, bad and indifferent pulp fiction for *Astounding Stories* and the horror magazines, he had also been working on something considerably more serious. He had always been fascinated by the panorama of American revolutionary and post-revolutionary history, and had accumulated an impressive personal library of books on the subject. Reading these led him to write a biography of the American statesman Aaron Burr. In 1937 this was published to critical applause. The book reviewer of *The New York Times*, for example, called it "one of the best of all biographies of that curiously exciting figure." The science-fiction world at that time was almost totally unaware of Schachner's scholarly writing, and had the news been widespread would have been surprised to hear of the man's knowledge and industry.

Equally unknown then was a seventeen-year-old science-fiction fan and aspiring writer named Isaac Asimov, who later revealed that he had been strongly impressed by this author's work. A generation later, when he had gained an international reputation, Asimov assembled an anthology of science-fiction stories from the 1930's which were still highlighted in his memory. This was published as *Before the Golden Age*, 1974).* Among those he included was Schachner's novelette "Past, Present and Future" (*Astounding*, September 1937). In the preface and postscript to this Asimov wrote:

> Schachner was one of my favorite writers for the Tremaine *Astounding*. Among the stories I wish I could have included in this anthology . . . were "Ancestral Voices," in the December 1933 issue (the first of the thought-variants, I think), "The Ultimate Metal," in the February 1935 issue, and "The Isotope Men," in the January 1936 issue.
>
> However, "Past, Present and Future" was far and away my favorite among his stories.

*A more detailed account of compiling this anthology may be found in *Fantasy Commentator VII*, 265-266 (1992).

Schachner was alive to the gathering dangers of the 1930s and the mounting threat of Nazi Germany. His stories were filled with social problems therefore, with himself always on the side of the democratic angels.

Asimov's judgment of "Past, Present and Future" was correct. It is indeed well done, although the idea of three men from different eras of time banding together in the future was far from new. John Beynon Harris had already used it in his "Wanderers of Time" (*Wonder Stories*, March 1933), as had Edmond Hamilton in "The Six Sleepers" (*Weird Tales*, October 1935); but somehow, neither of these had the reader-appeal which Schachner generated.

In this story the man from the past is Kleon, a sword-bearing warrior from the age of Alexander the Great. Kleon has come to America with a crew of Egyptians, and has burned the ship of the Greek captain rather than make the agonizing trip back across the fearsome Atlantic Ocean. Remembering what the Tibetans have taught him about suspended animation, he builds a pyramid alongside a volcano. He enters and closes its innermost chamber, carrying with him a substance which will emit measured emanations for 10,000 years. At the end of that time a spring will activate, opening the door of his tomb.

The second character is Sam Ward, an American from our own era who happens to be looking for a site for a banana plantation. He is shown the pyramid, which is thought of locally as the resting place of the god Quetzal, and sets about exploring it. He finds and enters the central chamber, but the door snaps shut behind him. Like Kleon he is overcome by the vapors, and falls asleep beside him.

At some indeterminate period in their future Tomson, a technician from Hispan, penetrates the sealed chamber and rouses the two. The sleepers emerge into a world of city-states whose inhabitants, though scientifically advanced, do not even know of each other's existence. Isolationism had at first created an insular attitude, and following a natural worldwide catastrophe the cities lost touch with one another and developed individially. Hispan is an oligarchy, where a few privileged rulers guide a host of technicians and other workers.

Beltan, a citizen of Hispan, is more liberal-minded than his fellows. Realizing that the city-state where he resides is on a politically dead-end course, he joins Kleon and Ward (who conveniently can speak Greek), and the three men from different eras escape together from Hispan to the outside. Here the first story in what was to become a series comes to an open-ended conclusion.

Its successor, "The City of the Rocket Horde," was published only three months later, indicating that "Past, Present and Future" had been greeted by immediate reader approval. The three companions journey to Venezuela. There they come upon an artificially covered valley. From this rise thousands of transparent, rocket-propelled globules, each containing an armed man. These globules perform military exercises in the air.

The three companions are seized and made prisoners, and learn that they are in Harg, a city-state of Fascist efficiency. People here are bred artificially for their assigned tasks. The women provide ova and procreation is carried out in giant vats; everyone else is neutered, a situation not unlike that we have already seen portrayed by Schachner and Zagat's earlier work, "In A. D. 20,000."

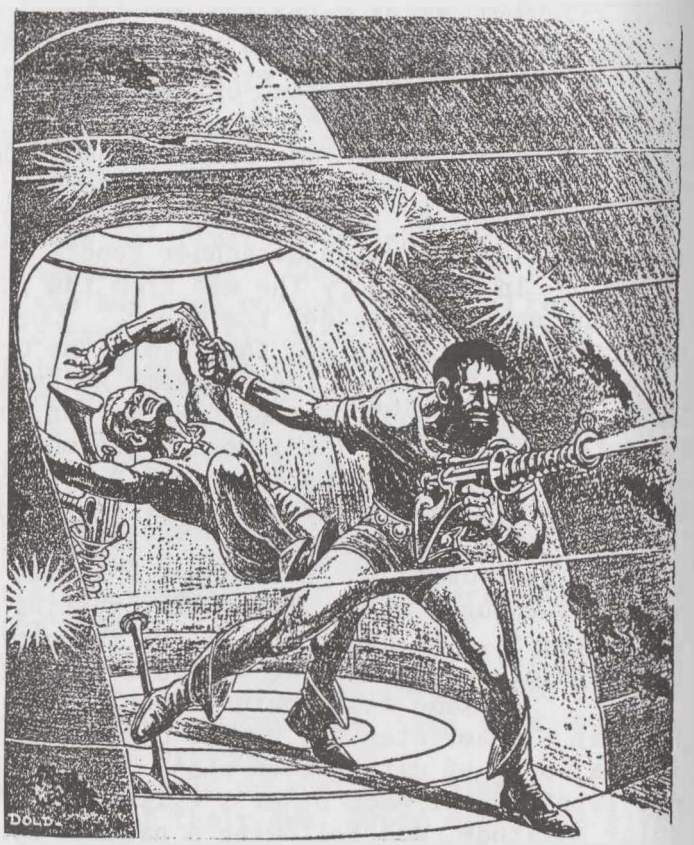
Fortunately one of the women befriends Kleon, and leads him to a rocket ship. He speeds to the rescue of his friends and they then fly north to discover other city-states. This is a good sequel to the original story, underscoring Schachner's detestation of Fascism and stressing the dehumanization and militarism which that type of government inevitably engenders.

In "The Island of Individualists" (*Astounding Stories*, May 1938), the third story in the series, the adventuring trio land their rocket ship on an island called Asto. The inhabitants are highly intelligent beings with wasted bodies and great heads. Underground there is a maze of machines which fulfill their every need in response to motivation by the power of their wills. Each is protected by a field of force, and spends his time ruminating on the complexities, problems and

paradoxes of the universe, oblivious to most of what is happening in the surrounding world.

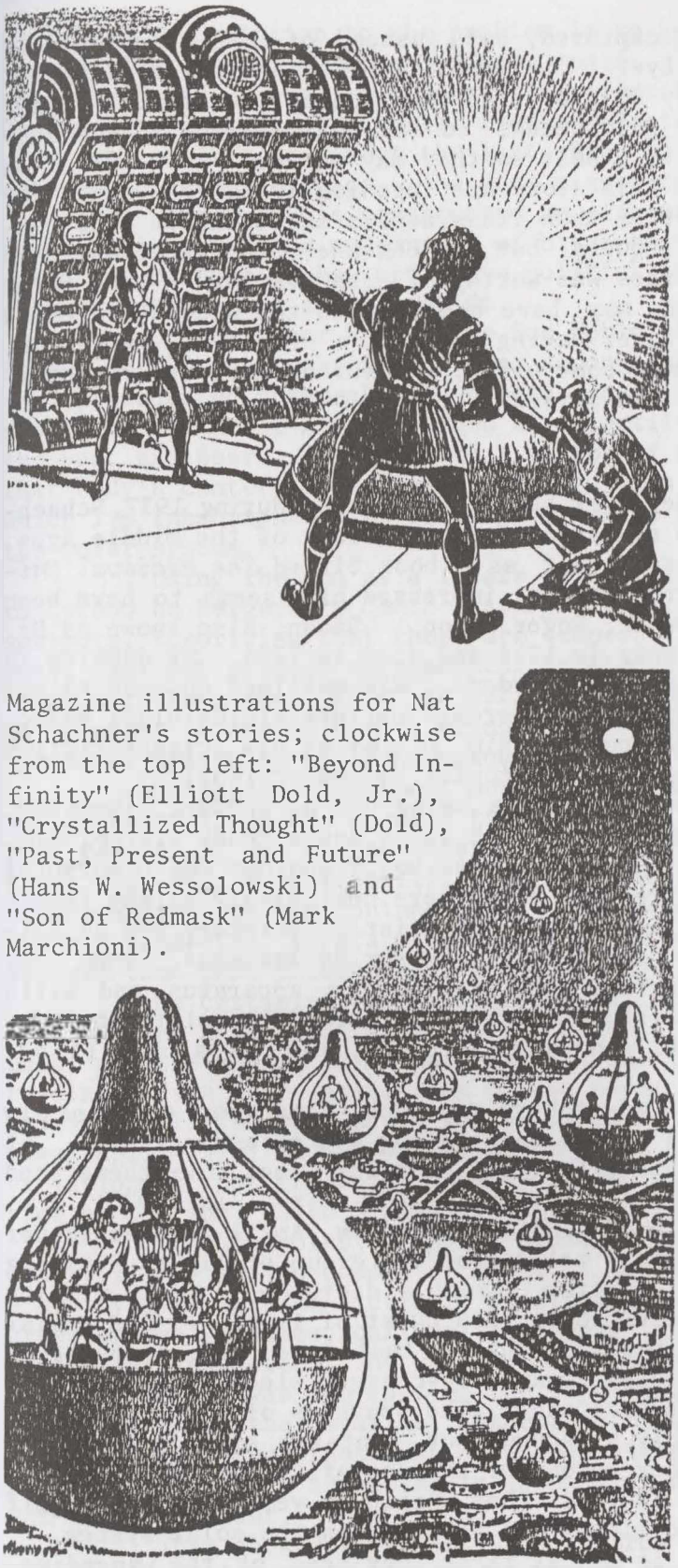
But there is one exception. This is Ras, a more primitive being than the others, who still harbors a lust for power. He has left the island to join the minions of Harg, believing that together they can overcome the rest of his fellows on Asto. His plan succeeds, although hundreds of Harg vessels are destroyed during the fighting.

Meanwhile, the three companions hold off the invaders long enough to analyze the workings of the machines which support Asto, and to have them make more fuel for their rocket. They then fly off in search of other city-states on the planet.



They find one in a most unlikely place. While their ship is cruising at a high altitude it is suddenly drawn even higher by some irresistible force. They find themselves in Dadelon, a city surrounded by a globular shell of transparent quartz that is kept thirty miles high by "negative gravity." This its inhabitants had constructed in order to avoid the plagues which regularly decimated them while living on the surface of the planet. But in escaping one fate they have fallen victim to another. Over the years their greater exposure to cosmic rays has increased the rate of mutations, so that by the time of Kleon, Ward and Beltan's arrival people are radically different from one another. In this bizarre menagerie some individuals have tentacles instead of arms, some are stunted dwarfs, and others elongated like snakes. Yet they themselves are entirely accustomed to such diversity, and indeed regard the sameness of their three visitors with amusement.

Danger threatens when the pursuing rocket horde of Ras and the Hargians locate the city and attack it. The Dadelonians prove too individualistic to defend themselves as a unit, but are scarcely helpless. Their gravity intensifiers send hundreds of Harg ships to their doom. Some of the invaders are mentally paralyzed, others are disintegrated, according to the diverse powers of these mutants. One fine episode is the duel between the force field of the su-



Magazine illustrations for Nat Schachner's stories; clockwise from the top left: "Beyond Infinity" (Elliott Dold, Jr.), "Crystallized Thought" (Dold), "Past, Present and Future" (Hans W. Wessolowski) and "Son of Redmask" (Mark Marchioni).

permind Ras and the gravity-controller of Dag, a fat, cheerful, chocolate-loving Dadelonian who sees humor in everything, even in his own impending death. (There is an echo here of Oscar, a character in Weinbaum's classic story "The Lotus Eaters," which had appeared three years earlier.)

"City of the Cosmic Rays" is in every way a superior story, combining action, new concepts, satire, humor and a sense of wonder; but for complete appreciation of its virtues the reader should have first perused all its predecessors.

This series of stories ended with "City of the Corporate Mind" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, December 1939). As the adventurers are rocketing over what was once the Mediterranean Sea, a huge pseudopod reaches up from the water and drags their ship down below the surface. They find themselves in an underwater city. Strange humanoid creatures with webbed feet, fins and lidless eyes swim toward them. Despite resistance, in which they injure many of their attackers, they are captured.

The city is called Lyv, and its inhabitants are bred so that their physical characteristics suit their occupations. All seem controlled from a central source, and together they constitute a single organism, with each living unit playing its role of maintainance like cells and blood components do in the human body.

The adventurers are not harmed, and each is assigned a task in maintaining Lyv. Beltan is put in charge of its motor-ganglion system; Ward is stationed on the surface to transmit information back to the central control; and Kleon is given scavenger work, to defend against intruders.

At this point the city is discovered by the marauding rocket horde of Ras and the Hargians. Lys manufactures additional individuals to meet the invasion, and although losing six of its own people for every attacker who is

killed, eventually triumphs. Ras is captured, but instead of being punished is made into one of the brain cells of Lyv. The totality of the other brain cells forces him to conform, and eventually he finds the cooperation pleasant. Meanwhile, the three time-adventurers gain access to the control room of the city long enough to bring its activities to a halt so they may escape.

The imaginative details in this story are ingeniously handled, and "The City of the Corporate Mind" reads better than its synopsis might imply. The ending left an opportunity for further sequels, but if Schachner ever wrote any they were never published. The entire series was worthy of preservation in book form, but this never happened either. This may have been due to the wide differences among the protagonists' backgrounds never having been made clear or exploited. They remain cardboard figures who never come alive, and furthermore never contribute individually to the progress of the series.

XVI

In addition to all the other work he had undertaken during 1937, Schachner was also then avidly studying the educational institutions of the Middle Ages. The fruits of research appeared the next year as a book titled *The Medieval Universities*. In that period the figure that most impressed him seems to have been the great scholar and scientific prophet, Roger Bacon. Bacon, also known as Dr. Miribilis, is believed to have been born in 1214 and died in 1294. He dabbled in optics and alchemy, and knew how to make gunpowder. His writings on such things caused him to be jailed twice on suspicion of heresy and practicing black magic. Not surprisingly, then, Schachner incorporated him in one of his science-fiction stories, "Lost in the Dimensions" (*Astounding Stories*, November 1937).

Bacon has stolen a time machine from a being out of another dimension. This conveyance can also travel in space, and with it he has already visited Mars. Mardu, the being from whom he stole the machine, has built another and is pursuing Bacon. Both suddenly appear in the present, drawn here unwittingly as the result of a scientist's experiment. Mardu kidnaps the scientist's secretary, and is followed by her fiancé and Bacon in a chase through many worlds and eras. When they finally catch up to him a burst of gunfire shatters Mardu's apparatus and kills him, and the girl is rescued. Bacon returns to his own period to relate the marvels he has seen, such as the automobile and the airplane, and as a result becomes a legendary prophet.

By choosing a routine cops-and-robbers approach, Schachner completely misses the opportunities here to tell a more fascinating and absorbing tale. It seems quite possible, however, that his effort may have furnished the theme and possibly the background for James Blish's later novel, *Dr. Miribilis* (1970).

With "Negative Space" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, April 1938) Schachner returned to thought-variants. This story tells about a group of lights flashing on and off in space near the orbit of Jupiter across a distance of fifty million miles. A spaceship entering the zone explodes in a burst of light. The cause is diagnosed as an area, or hole, of negative energy that acts like a source of positrons. As ordinary matter containing negatively-charged electrons enter it, the two types of particles annihilate each other. The sparkles of light occur because interplanetary space is not truly a vacuum, but contains small numbers of molecules which are destroyed when they encounter this negative zone. Further, the zone is expanding. Calculations indicate that within a year it will engulf the Earth, turning it into a nova and wiping out all life in the solar system.

The Interplanetary Council is not at first convinced of the impending danger, and sends out an expedition for leisurely investigation. The entire fleet is destroyed in a burst of tiny novas. The cumulative effect of all the increased radiation has caused Earth temperatures to increase almost ten degrees; ice-caps begin to melt and crops grow prematurely.

The solution to the problem is to get enough ordinary matter into the zone so that it will become ordinary space. This will reduce its size enough to save the Earth. Some two hundred space vessels a day are propelled into the zone. Uneven distribution of material requires last-minute correction, and one navigator gives up his life to direct the last ships toward the proper locations to counteract enough negative space, The zone misses the Earth by only five hundred miles.

Schachner has constructed an effective story. His concept of negative space anticipated the modern one of black holes, and he provides a particularly effective picture of how obtrusive politics can jeopardize the very existence not only of nations but entire worlds.

On the other hand, "The Sun World of Soldus" (*Astounding*, October 1938) is one of the most unbelievable and unconvincing of all of this author's stories. An unprecedented outbreak of sunspots occurs, disrupting interplanetary communications for months at a time. Then a projectile arrives on Earth; it has come from the sun, and bears a message that a race of Earthlike beings live in a world at that body's center. The sunspots are tunnels reaching to this inner world from which its inhabitants plan shortly to emerge and conquer the inhabited planets of the solar system.

Using the sun as a locale for civilization in science-fiction goes back to Cyrano be Bergerac's *Comic History* (1662); his characters land on one of the sunspots, theorizing that these are temperate areas, not unlike our Earth in climate. But our present astronomical knowledge requires Schachner to posit something more than just "rays" to rationalize human survival there. His failure to do so makes it impossible to wring drama out of thwarting yet another invasion of the solar system by would-be conquerors.

Unhappily, the short novel "Simultaneous Worlds" (*Astounding*, November and December 1938) has no more to recommend it than "Sun World of Soldus." An entire replica of our planet exists, superimposed on its electrons from another universe. On this more scientifically advanced Ultra-Earth the familiar forces of European dictatorship contend with the democratic Americas. The two earths are somehow connected; events on one affect the other, and this leads to a conflict between them that is too confused and bewildering to summarize here.

No criticism of this work seems too severe. The plot is contrived, inventions are assembled to order, the scientific "explanations" are sheer doubletalk, and the ending is so unclear that one feels uncertain what one has been reading. Even the central idea of the novel is old-hat. The twin-earths concept had been utilized earlier in Edison Tesla Marshall's "Who Is Charles Avison?" (*Argosy*, April 1916) and Edgar Wallace's short novel *Planetoid 127* (1929). The only variation is that these two authors placed their "other" Earth on the opposite side of the sun, while Schachner superimposed the two in a sort of double image.

At this point we should pause to remember that since May 1938 John W. Campbell, Jr. was in complete charge of *Astounding*, and was feeling his way toward a new type of science-fiction. He discarded the phrase "thought-variant" to describe unusual stories, calling them "nova" stories instead, and used that designation far less often. He was also seeking and cultivating new talent. "Simultaneous Worlds" was the last of the super-science type fiction that Nat Schachner would write for the magazine. Except for the last parts of his "Past, Present and Future" series (and these may have been accepted well before they were published) all his productions appearing in *Astounding* from 1939 on bore an entirely different literary slant.

This showed first in "Palooka from Jupiter" (February 1939). For those who do not follow comic strips, it should first be explained that Joe Palooka was the creation of cartoonist Steve Fisher, and was widely known in the 1930's and 1940's. Joe was a farm boy with a weak mind and strong muscles who was molded into a heavyweight boxing champion. He gave rise to the expression "you dumb Pa-

looka," indicating someone of physical strength but mumbling mentality. Schachner was using the name more as a casual slang word——if indeed the title was his, and not Campbell's. A grotesque, saucer-eyed, bulbous-nosed humanoid, less than five feet tall, materializes on the lap of a fat woman in a crowded New York City subway car. The stranger claims he is from the planet Jupiter, and that his name is Pilooki, which soon becomes Palooka. He has been sent here by a matter-transmitter to ascertain whether the Earth is suitable for Jovian colonization. He lives on the core of Jupiter, on a solid world the size of the Earth. (A similarity to "The Sunworld of Soldus" is immediately apparent.) A radioactive atmosphere repels the gaseous mass surrounding this core, and internal heat warms it.

The Jovians wish to come here because the lower gravity will make their life easier. Since Earthmen already work for a living, says Pilooki satirically, there is no reason why they cannot work for the Jovians and be no worse off. He sets about building a matter-transmitter to return him to Jupiter so that he can file his report, and no one can stop him for he is surrounded by a force screen no weapon can penetrate.

Pilooki's presence has had profound political effects. The European dictatorships, believing all this is a ploy by the democracies to undermine them, prepare for war, But the tables are turned, for when they arm their people, the governments are overthrown. Revolutionary democracies are formed, and these prepare to resist any Jovian invasion. In the end Pilooki, before he leaves, informs everyone that the Earth is unsuitable for the Jovians after all, and that he intended only to frighten them so that they would throw off their despots and unite. This climax is only mildly effective.

"World Don't Care" (*Astounding*, April 1939) wedded a sociological viewpoint to a more sound, scientific base. A plague from outer space hits the solar system in the future, at first attacking only Martians. Earthmen become fearful of catching the disease from Martians who are living on their planet. These fears are justified, for the virus apparently mutates and begins attacking the native population. The Martians are then packed aboard a space ship and sent into exile.

Rejected by all civilized worlds, they head for the unexplored moons of Saturn. They land on Titan. The terrain is bad, but they have equipment to extract oxygen and water from the rocks, seeds that will grow in the rubble, and if they seal themselves in caves their supplies will last them for a year. Eventually a report is received that the deadly virus cloud has passed through the solar system, and that it is safe for the Martians to return to the Earth.

Here Schachner returns to the basic theme of the interrelationship of races, and his science is more believable and factually based, as it was in his earlier novel "Exiles of the Moon." The title of the story refers to the impersonality of the universe as to the fate of man. The environment is neither friendly nor unfriendly, merely neutral and uncaring.

Schachner continued in his new vein with "When the Future Dies" (*Astounding*, June 1939). A glowing, green spaceship, emanating fearful heat, lands in France. It sends out globes which display similar manifestations, and which are unaffected by any human weapons. Soon most of Europe begins to emigrate, and research laboratories are set up in remote Antarctica to find a solution to the problem of the attackers. Within nine months the entire human race is all but wiped out. It is determined that the atomic weapons which are needed would require a century to develop.

Then a dramatic breakthrough occurs: a time machine is perfected. This the researchers will use to travel to the future to find the scientific advances which will surely have created a means for dealing with their adversaries. The machine departs. Upon its return the remaining Earthmen are breathless with expectancy. The time travellers tell their stunning news. There is no succor, because the human race has no future. The invaders have won!

This story is loosely organized and ineptly plotted. The ending is obvious two-thirds of the way through, and readers were evidently put off by this, because in *Astounding's* "Analytical Laboratory," which measured their response, the story rated only fifth best in the issue where it appeared.

"Cold" (*Astounding*, March 1940) was the subject for an excellent astronomical cover of the planet Uranus painted by the artist Gilmore. The title derives from the site of the action, a satellite of Uranus called Ariel. Here the mean temperature is -265° F. and falls fifty degrees lower if the sun is eclipsed. Ariel is the sole source of a mineral called Armorium, which the entire civilization of the solar system depends on for energy, and for which there is no substitute. Three veins of it are being mined there, the richest of which has been calculated to last for generations; now, however, it seems to be running out. Earth and Mars immediately send out competing space fleets to secure the remaining supplies, but Ariel has force screens that can easily hold out against them.

On Ariel itself the Earth and Martian colonists are growing increasingly uneasy with one another, and Schachner's plot centers on the increasing suspicion of each faction. Primitive Venusian Troglos do the actual mining, and Earth men and Martians supervise them in pairs so that one race cannot doublecross the other. The climax is reached when a pileup of rubble breaks the legs of one of the Martians. When the Earthman returns alone for help, he is fired upon by Martians who believe he has killed his Martian partner.

The situation is resolved when an explosion designed to hold back the Troglos exposes the main vein of Armorium. It turns out that the miners had been working across it instead of following it, and the contemplated reserves actually do exist. That information ends the impending war of the planets. This is a very good story, carefully conceived, with all the elements of action and plot falling logically into place.

"Space Double" (*Astounding*, May 1940), Schachner's next effort, did not equal that standard. This tells of privateers who have built a robot that simulates the commands of a spaceship captain. By means of this they plan to commandeer a vessel once it is in deep space. Their plan almost succeeds, but is foiled at the last moment by an alert crew-member, who takes control of the robot and orders it to destroy its creators. Adequate writing does not conceal the chief weakness of the story, which is that the futuristic trappings are incidental; it could have been set anywhere, not just in outer space.

XVII

It should be remembered that during all these years since 1934, Schachner continued to contribute sadistic fiction regularly to such magazines as *Horror Stories* and *Terror Tales*, and that these sales—especially since he was selling less to *Astounding*—were important to him. Not only did they provide a living, but they helped subsidize his extended historical researches. We have already seen two results of these, the books *Aaron Burr* and *The Medieval Universities*, and Schachner was now planning to write a series of historical novels aimed at the mainstream book market. His days with the pulps were drawing to a close.

(His former collaborator Arthur Leo Zagat had meanwhile abandoned the science-fiction pulps entirely in favor of the detective and sadistic fiction markets. He was selling at least twice as many stories as Schachner to the latter, and such sales provided the bulk of his income.)

In the meantime, John Campbell had started a companion magazine to *Astounding Science-Fiction*. This was titled *Unknown*, and was devoted to fantasy fiction; its first issue was dated March 1939. Its writing standards were high, and Schachner was pleased to sell there a novelette titled "Master Gerald of Cambray." This was also based on his research, and appeared in the June 1940 issue of the magazine.

Gerald Cambray, a professor of Latin at Harvard University, suffers a dizzy spell and recovers to find himself in France in the year 1263. He wanders about the streets, appalled by the filth of Paris in this era. Of course no one has ever heard of Harvard University, and he speaks Latin with what listeners feel is a strange accent. Fortunately he is taken under the wing of a chance acquaintance, Guy of Salisbury. Guy helps him find a room on the street of scholars, and he begins to recruit students and teach them Latin. The status of the students is precarious; they are despised by the peasants, and there are frequent fights between the French and the Scots. The university buildings are decrepit.

Cambray also teaches modern astronomy, and this leads to his downfall. His "theories" become a sensation among his students, but religious leaders find them heretical. Eventually he is turned over to the clergy and hanged. Among his meagre possessions Guy of Salisbury finds a book printed in Latin. He has humored Cambray out of pity, and is stunned to see printed on its title-page "Harvard University Press, 1937."

This is as much a descriptive tour of a thirteenth century university as it is an adventure tale of a modern man stranded in the past. The combination is instructive and fascinating, and enables Schachner to utilize his historical researches to good advantage.

Also very much concerned with history, whether valid or imaginary, is a non-fantasy, "Test for a Tartar" (*Argosy*, April 8, 1939). *Argosy* magazine had been in gradual decline for a number of years but was still very much a prestige market, paying higher rates than most other pulps. Schachner may have been persuaded to submit there by his old friend Arthur Leo Zagat, who had resumed writing science-fiction in 1937 because he could sell it to *Argosy* more lucratively.

"Test for a Tartar" describes a scheme that leads to the empowerment of Genghis Khan as leader of the Mongols. During a drunken revelry of all the Mongolian chiefs, they are induced to join in a brutal follow-the-leader test of wills. This aims, through appealing to their pride, to reduce the chiefs to a subordinate position of power. The ritual proceeds through the slaughter of their favorite horses to the killing of their favorite wives. Khan, who has no wife to sacrifice, comes out ahead and slays his challenger, thus ascending to leadership of all the Mongols. This horrifying episode may actually have happened, but it reads more like an invention of the author's fertile imagination. Though repellant, it is very well done.

Nat Schachner's last science-fiction story that year was "Runaway Cargo" (*Astounding*, October 1940). It centers about "Tycho dust," named after the crater on the moon where it is found, a small quantity of which is capable of blowing up a five-square-mile area. Agents from a union of Asiatic nations overpower an Earth station on the lunar surface, seize its Tycho dust, and load it on an unmanned rocket which is aimed to strike greater New York. Two men from this moon base pursue the deadly vessel and succeed in deflecting it from its fatal course. Although the story is related in a tense and dramatic manner, Schachner's insistence on inventing pseudoscientific devices to order leaves one unsatisfied.

XVIII

At this point we must backtrack a couple of years. Ziff-Davis, a Chicago publisher that put out slick-paper magazines like *Flying*, purchased Teck Publications, chiefly to acquire the latter's viable *Radio News*. Along with this magazine they also received *Amazing Stories*. They had never ventured into the pulp magazine field, but decided to take a chance, since their distribution facilities were far better than Teck's. They hired Raymond A. Palmer, an active science-fiction fan and writer, to edit *Amazing*, which was launched under this new regime with its June 1938 issue. The magazine was such a success that a year later Ziff-Davis brought out a companion title, *Fantastic Adventures*. The major difference

between the two was that *Fantastic Adventures* printed not only science-fiction, but sheer fantasy with no scientific base whatsoever. Both paid competitive rates (a cent a word on acceptance), and among the authors solicited was Nat Schachner.

His first story for them was "The City under the Sea" (*Amazing Stories*, September 1939). When it was written passenger-carrying ocean liners were still common, and Schachner posits three of these giant vessels disappearing fifty miles from New York City. Gerry Van Dine, son of one of the ship-line owners and an inventor of some ability, sets out to investigate the disappearances in a submarine of advanced design he himself has built. This is capable of resisting tremendous pressures, and can therefore travel far below the ocean surface.

He descends into the depths and discovers one of the liners, which has been sunk by a mine. While he and his associates are in diving suits investigating the wreck they are captured by fishlike men who breathe through gills. Van Dine is taken by them to an underground city where he meets Galon Petrie, a man supposedly lost on a previous underwater expedition.

Petrie proves to be the villain of the story. He engineered the sinking of the liners and constructed this underwater retreat. He also conquered the fish people, and took a girl, Marion Dale, from one of the doomed vessels. Van Dine forms a **liaison** with the leader of the fish people, rescues the girl, and floods the retreat, thus drowning Petrie and his cohorts. He and Marion Dale return triumphantly to New York in his submarine. "The City Under the Sea" is a thoroughly routine piece of science-fiction.

Schachner also wrote two other stories for Ziff-Davis. These are fantasies, and appeared in *Fantastic Adventures*. Although some of the "explanations" he had invoked in his thought-variants were wildly imaginative and suggest that Schachner ought to have been able to write this type of fiction, that did not prove true. He was probably too literal a thinker to write good fantasy. Both "The Return of Circe" (August 1941) and "Eight Who Came Back" (November 1941) are inept, forgettable efforts. The latter is of mild interest through utilizing a theme which John Kendrick Bangs made famous in *A Houseboat on the Styx* (1895)——resurrecting famous men of the past and having them act together in the present——but Schachner does little with it. He was simply not a natural fantasist.

Nor was he destined to write much more science-fiction. 1941 was the last year his work appeared in *Astounding*, and of the three stories published there only "Beyond All Weapons," in the November issue, embraces his customary themes.

John Martin, the protagonist, is rousted out of bed during the night by members of the Desco, the secret police force of the world. He is taken to the office of its dictator, called The Director. When questioned, he tells the latter that a superior being from the planet Saturn called The Master will take over the planet July 4th, and that The Director will be killed. Surprisingly, The Director does not hold him, but grants him a sabbatical leave from work. This Martin uses to travel all over the world, spreading the story about The Master.

Revolts begin to break out, and on July 4th a mob storms The Director's stronghold. As it does so a huge figure appears above it, seemingly walking on air. Weapons have no effect on it. The Director's guards turn on The Director and kill him, fulfilling the prediction.

It turns out that The Master is a three-dimensional projection of John Martin himself. He has used this and his knowledge of psychology to bring about the unrest leading to the final overthrow of a dictatorship. Although the ending of the story seems obvious, it is well written and was topical at the time.

The other two tales show a distinct departure from Schachner's usual themes. Through all his years as a writer, except for several matters involving the American Interplanetary Association, he had never incorporated his legal knowledge into his literary work. Now, very probably under the editorial goading of John W. Campbell, Jr., he produced two stories based on space law.

The first of these was "Old Fireball" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, June 1941). Its major figures are Simon Kenton, president of Kenton Space Enterprises, an interplanetary tycoon; Sally Kenton, his spoiled but spirited daughter; and most importantly Kerry Dale, formerly a member of Kenton's legal department, who has resigned because he cannot get a raise after working there a year. The villain is Jericho Foote, owner of Mammoth Exploitations, a company competing with Kenton's.

Kenton's men find a small asteroid which is practically pure electromagnetite. This is a very valuable mineral, for it is the only material known that can be used to line atomic furnaces. Dale, while checking the orbit of Kenton's valuable discovery, discovers it is on a near-collision course with another asteroid. He buys that asteroid, and when Kenton's nestles into his claims salvage rights. Under space laws this is allowable, and Dale collects $100,000 from an irate Kenton.

The legal aspects of salvage in seafaring situations are thoroughly established and internationally accepted. This adds a domesticating quality to the tale, but at the same time diminishes its novelty. Nevertheless, the story is well written, and may be the first deliberately devoted to the space law theme.

"Jurisdiction," a sequel, was illustrated on the cover of the August 1941 *Astounding*. It involves the same cast of characters. Using the $100,000 obtained from Kenton, Kerry Dale has purchased an old space ship and organized his own company, Space Salvage, Inc. He hears a distress call from his old ship, *The Flying Meteor*, and investigates to find it drifting helplessly. It has discovered an outlying asteroid with a vein of almost pure thermetite, a non-radiating fuel for atomic engines that is worth millions. But Jericho Foote's men have boarded and disabled the ship, seized the ore it has mined, and are heading away in their own vessel to register a claim in Foote's name. Since an asteroid becomes the property of the first person to register an ownership claim, it will become Foote's.

Dale offers to tow the crippled *Flying Meteor* back to port in exchange for its pilot's signing over to him all rights to the asteroid Kenton's men have discovered. Since they expect to lose it to Foote anyway, they agree. But instead of heading, as expected, for Planets, the registration office in the asteroid belt, Dale rockets towards Ganymede, which is fifty million miles closer. There he claims the asteroid as a distant satellite of Jupiter, and therefore under that planet's jurisdiction. This voids Foote's claim.

"Jurisdiction" was an acceptable story for its period, but it is doubtful that this space-law theme could have sustained Schachner for much longer. He was now competing with a new stable of highly competent young writers Campbell was developing for *Astounding*—Isaac Asimov, Lester Del Rey, Robert A. Heinlein, Clifford D. Simak, Theodore Sturgeon, A. E. van Vogt and others. With the war drawing many of these into the armed forces, of course, his talents would have been sought and cultivated; but the question had by this time become academic. Nat Schachner had lost interest in writing for the pulps, for he no longer needed to. He and science-fiction were at the parting of the ways.

But before describing his new career we should record one last event occuring in the genre during 1941. During that year there is mention of an additional Schachner story that has never been published. The background is as follows: Late in 1940 F. Orlin Tremaine returned to the field as editor of a new magazine titled *Comet*. For this he solicited contributions from well known authors, among them Nat Schachner. Schachner complied, sending Tremaine the manuscript of a story titled "Vanished Universe." Whether this was newly written especially for him, or whether it was an earlier reject of *Astounding*, we can only speculate. In any event, it was announced in the July 1941 issue of *Comet* as "A Smashing Novelet of the Galaxies." But *Comet* folded with that number, and "Vanished Universe" has never been printed. I suspect it was a thought-variant that did not meet Campbell's new policies, and that the manuscript may still exist.

XIX

Nat Schachner now decided to devote his writing time to mainstream fiction. The tremendous success of Hervey Allen's *Anthony Adverse* (1933), Kenneth Roberts's *Chronicles of Arundel* novels (1930-34) and especially his *Northwest Passage* (1937), and above all Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) showed how eager the American public was for exciting historical romances, and Schachner was one of many authors attracted by the lucrative earnings they offered. Starting in 1941 he wrote four of them, one every year. All received generally favorable critical reviews and all sold well.

The first was *By the Dim Lamps*, which was set in New Orleans and its environs during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period. The book reviewer of *The Cleveland Plain-Dealer* was one of its most enthusiastic advocates, calling it "A really remarkable panoramic novel . . . [and] a splendid addition to our growing library of books that record the complicated processes whereby the American spirit came into being." *The Saturday Review of Literature* said that Schachner had created "satisfying excitement, credible adventure, [and] a good story. And almost all of it would be magnificent in technicolor." The authentic background was noted by several reviewers, including Herschel Brickell of *The New York Times*, who characterized the work as "an excellent example of how much can be done in fiction with research as the basis," and noted "its rousing narrative quality and the sharpness of its characterization." The only negative point critics made was that *By the Dim Lamps* lacked the glamour of *Gone With the Wind*; but this, it should be noted, was an almost universal complaint then levelled at historical romances.

Judged by today's standards, where hardcover best-sellers enjoy printings in hundreds of thousands at ten times the list price, Schachner's achievement appears modest; but in 1941 it was quite acceptable, financially equivalent to selling eight or ten stories to *Astounding*. It also made Nat Schachner the envy of his fellow pulpsters, most of whom dreamed of writing a successful mainstream novel.

Schachner followed this with *The King's Passenger* (1942), which was based on the history of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia in 1676. The reviewer of *The New York Herald-Tribune* described it as "historical fiction as Americans have come to love it. Full, salty, vigorous, defiantly true and unadorned, it is as rewarding entertainment as one could hope to find." And in comparing the book with another published that year on the same theme *The New York Times* reviewer stated that "Mr. Schachner, beyond all argument, bears the palm for color and violence and sheer excitement." *The King's Passenger* was optioned for a movie, but its anti-British segments made production improbable during the war period, and Hollywood was never interested in it afterwards.

The background of *The Sun Shines West* (1943) is Kansas during the years 1854-61. On this a love triangle with a bitter ending is imposed. "The picture the author conjures up of American frontier life is starkly honest and unforgettable," said the reviewer of *The New York Herald-Tribune*, and that of *The Weekly Book Review* felt "the final tragic climax of the story carries with it the full impact of truth." *Book Week* called Schachner "a careful and conscientious craftsman," and *The Sun Shines West* enjoyed the same success as its predecessors.

His last novel was based on the life of Dante Aligheri, and his love for Beatrice and titled *The Wanderer* (1944). "It is a tribute to Mr. Schachner's capacities as a historian that the novel does not depend upon the character of Dante for its vitality," wrote N. L. Rothman in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. "The other characters do have a life of their own, and form a live and stirring segment of historical pattern. Mr. Schachner has made good use of his historic research." Although this typified the preponderantly favorable comments the book received, two reviewers dissented sharply. Sterling North, in *Book Week*, called it sentimental and overwritten, "strewn with purple passages, and naively worshipful toward Dante. It does not plumb the sordid, twisted depths from which welled the

longest and most painful description of hell ever put on paper." And in *The Weekly Book Review* John Erskine said in part, "Mr. Schachner in earlier books has shown his enterprise and his competence as a writer of historical romance, but this time his courage, in my opinion, runs away with him. He has chosen a very large subject already immortalized in great literature, and he has tried to condense it in a novel of medium length. . . . the result naturally enough is good history, but it is not what the subject would suggest, a work of fiction or romance or poetry."

It should be emphasized, however, that critics approached all these novels seriously. Their reviews were detailed, often running to 800-1000 words, and in hardly any were positive comments absent. Nat Schachner's reputation as an author of successful historical romances was by this time secure, but to him these represented just a stopgap, undertaken, like the writing of science-fiction, only to subsidize the work he really wanted to do. The researches into American history which he had begun in 1933 were now close to full realization.

XX

Nat Schachner lived to complete three major works. The first of these was a 250,000-word biography, *Alexander Hamilton*, which appeared in 1946. "Not merely good, but very good," wrote Gerald W. Johnson in *The New York Herald Tribune*. "It is in fact, in this reader's opinion, the best life of Hamilton that has yet been written." Avery Craven in *The Chicago Tribune* called it "A splendid biography of Pulitzer Prize quality." Other reviewers were equally praiseworthy. One of the reasons for this was Schachner's ability (probably stemming from his legal experience) to clarify the often intricate web of legislative politics in Hamilton's time, and to incorporate all of his material into an integrated narrative that a lay reader could follow. There are no loose threads, and minor details are always made relevant. As Dumas Malone remarked in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, "It is not an interpretation but a story. It moves along briskly in a way which Hamilton himself would have approved of; and, like him, it does not pause for philosophical speculation." Another reason is the meticulousness of Schachner's preparation, which T. P. Peardon emphasized in *The American Political Science Review:*

> Of the fifty-five manuscript sources he lists, some thirty or thirty-one were not used by previous biographers of Hamilton. Others, including the Hamilton manuscripts in the Library of Congress, are exploited fully for the first time in such a work. In addition to manuscript material, the author used over one hundred printed original sources and over seventy-three printed secondary ones. On the basis of all this impressive research Mr. Schachner is able to make many corrections in the standard edition of Hamilton's *Works* by J. C. Hamilton and by Henry Cabot Lodge. Yet this is all done without the slightest taint of pedantry or affectation. The material is marshalled with the skill of a master and the story told in good workmanlike prose.

This same meticulous care characterized Schachner's finest work, *Thomas Jefferson; a Biography*, which was published late in 1951. It is twice as long as the work on Hamilton, and originally appeared in two volumes (in later printings these are bound as one). "The biography itself, over a thousand pages of text and documentation, is an amazing compilation of fact, which for sheer informational value alone will make it indispensable for any library of American history," said Herbert Cahoon in *Library Journal;* "it is extremely interesting, superlatively informative and has the highly desirable quality of great objectivity." "For the average reader with an interest in history and biography" Orville Prescott of *The New York Times* called it "the best Jefferson biography I have ever seen."

But postwar literary fashions were changing. What reviewers were looking for were not simply detailed chronologies of the lives of historical figures, but greater illuminations of their characters. Schachner wrote objectively in the spirit of Montaigne, while critics were coming to prefer more interpretive theorizing. A number of their reviews complained of this lack, even while admitting

that his book was, as one of them admitted, "the best complete biography of Jefferson available." It remained in print for over fifteen years despite this trend, and had Schachner been able to update it during that time it might have survived even longer.

The last major historical work written by Nat Schachner was *The Founding Fathers* (1954). This dealt with the important men and events of the first twelve years of the United States of America. The domestic and international problems our young government faced then seem insurmountable. Indians raided our western frontier settlements while on the east we were simultaneously threatened by the possibility of war with Great Britain, France and Spain. Foreign nations confiscated our ships and passed laws endangering our commerce. Yellow fever was so rampant that congress had to seek out an unaffected community rather than meet in Washington or Philadelphia. There was no national income tax and the central government was always in financial trouble. Yet somehow, the union muddled through.

Schachner gave an up-to-date account of this period that reviewers, although they deplored its paucity of philisophical interretation, reported on generally favorably. It was termed "important," "informative," "lively and dramatic" and supported by "meticulous scholarship." Like its predecessors, it sold well.

During the postwar period he also produced several lesser works based on his historical researches. The most notable of these was an adaption of one of his biographies for high school students, *Alexander Hamilton, Nation Builder* (1952). Critics gave this probably the most uniformly favorable reviews of any of his books. *The Church, State and Education* (1947) may also have been intended for school use. I have seen neither this book nor the pamphlet *Joe Worker: the Story of Labor,* a copy of which exists in the Library of Congress; I suspect the latter was one of the many sponsored publications which were printed during the war for educational purposes. Schachner also wrote a few brief historical articles for *The American Mercury* and *The Saturday Review of Literature.**

From 1945 to 1951 Nat Schachner acted as Editorial Consultant for The American Jewish Committee. This group was organized November 11, 1906, and its major purpose, according to its constitution, was "to prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews, and to alleviate the consequences of persecution." For this organization he wrote *The Price of Liberty* (1948). This book not only detailed its history, but also summarized the trials and tribulations of world Jewry during the 1906-48 period. It is readable and informative, and still of reference value today.

In his early writings, when he was still collaborating with Arthur Leo Zagat, Schachner did not mind making his villains foreigners——for example, the Japanese in "Exiles of the Moon." But in his later years there was none of this at all. That this occurred by design and not accident is shown by his article "Pulp Writers Have a Job to Do," which appeared in the August 1945 issue of *The Writer:*

> Innocently, without meaning to do so, we've set up a set of stereotypes for our readers. At the first crack of the name—Spinelli, Epstein, O'Hara, Privilovski, Schultz, Hip Sing; Svenson, Pancho, George Washington White—the reader knows exactly what to expect; and rarely is he disappointed. We've made a pattern of a race, a religion, a nation or a group for him. *And that pattern sticks.*
>
> As a matter of fact it would probably be one of the best contributions the writers could make at this time if they systematically introduced what one might call anti-stereotypes. Stories about Negro physicians. Jewish war heroes, Frenchmen who are loyal to their wives, etc., should be the order of the day.

This was a very forward-looking suggestion——indeed, one that even a generation later was seldom adopted. Schachner's own pulp days were past, but it is interesting to speculate if, given the chance, he himself would have attempted to compose anti-stereotypical fiction.

*A listing of his non-fiction periodical work appears at the end of this article.

XXI

Although his work had not appeared in the science-fiction pulps for a number of years, Nat Schachner had not been wholly forgotten, and efforts to lure him back were occasionally made. One of these I made myself during 1953 while editing *Science-Fiction Plus*. I telephoned him, and gave a number of reasons why it was a good time for him to consider writing for the field again (one was that the payment rates were three times what he last got there). I believe I also asked to see "Vanished Universe," the story Tremaine had announced for publication in *Comet* before that magazine collapsed in 1941. Schachner seemed somewhat interested, but I never followed up on the matter because *Science-Fiction Plus* also ceased publication at the end of that year.

Martin Greenberg was more successful. At that time he headed Gnome Press, a specialty publishing company in New York City. He wanted to print Schachner's space law stories, but they were too short to make up a book. He therefore asked Schachner if he would compose another in the series. Schachner was pleased and flattered at the suggestion. "Imagine, someone wants these old chestnuts," he remarked to his wife Helen. To make up the needed wordage he wrote a long concluding tale, leaving the first two virtually unchanged. All three appeared in the form of a novel called *Space Lawyer*, which Gnome Press issued in 1953. The final story begins as chapter eight (page 103) of the book, and as science-fiction it is the most traditional and least legal of them all.

The leading characters of the series, Kerry Dale and Sally Kenton, have fallen in love. She agrees to marry Dale, but not until he loses a contest with her father Simon, not always affectionately known as "Old Fireball." Dale, while still smarting from this rebuff, learns that a recently discovered comet has been found to be composed of rare minerals, and sets out to assess the report. Simon Kenton learns of Dale's action, and to negate it persuades the Interplanetary Commission, which has jurisdiction over such matters, to declare an official starting date for all exploratory expeditions there. Dale's head start is now illegal.

Dale does not know this, so Sally sets out in her own personal rocket ship to tell him. But she overestimates her vessel's range, begins to run out of fuel and air, and is seemingly doomed. Weak S.O.S. signals from her radio are picked up by Dale, who backtracks. He sights her ship, breaks into it, and pulls her out, almost dead. After his desperate resuscitation efforts, however, she recovers. Her father, having received notice of Sally's rescue, takes off with a racing pilot navigating his modern ship to recover his daughter and then reach the comet.

Meanwhile the villain Jericho Foote and his men have beaten both to the comet and are busily mining its riches. Though a tiny world, it proves to have the same gravitational pull as Earth and a breathable atmosphere. But the comet is incredibly radioactive, and therefore the time anyone can remain on its surface is limited. Dave's party then lands and, leaving the pilot in charge of the ship, begin to examine the terrain. They discover caves and the ruins of an abandoned city with mummified, pigmy-sized humanoid figures.

While they are exploring, Foote's men attack Dale's ship. Unable to get his defensive cannon into working order, Dale's pilot takes off alone, but at the same time radios frantically for assistance. His call is picked up by both a space patrol ship and Sally's father. Dale's men return and engage Foote's men, routing them and killing several. The rest take off in their ship, but are captured by the space patrol. They commence mining in Foote's excavation, gambling that the radiation will not kill them.

Finally Simon Kenton arrives, along with a Ganymedian official who tries to arrest Dale for trying to circumvent the legal starting time for the cometary exploration. In response, Dale quotes an overriding law: The Interplanetary

Commission has jurisdiction only over the solar system and the comet is not a member of that system, but merely a passing visitor.

The situation is finalized by outside forces. Astronomers calculate that the comet is heading towards a collision with the planet Jupiter. Further exploitation is therefore impossible. However, the minerals Dale's party has extracted are worth a fortune. Dale goes into partnership with Kenton, and Sally agrees to marry him.

Although there is a teen-age feel to the plot development, the book nevertheless reads as exciting, if typical, space adventure. Schachner tries hard to achieve depth in characterization and to some degree succeeds with Kenton, mostly by stressing his temper and language, and very mildly with Sally by portraying her willful, devil-may-care behavior; but his ability——or efforts——to create full-dimensional figures seem weak here, as in most of his other science-fiction. (This quality is much improved in his historical novels, perhaps because of the opportunity afforded by their greater wordage and panoramic acope.)

In *Space Lawyer* I find him also singularly uninventive in the creating of space terms. The book is replete with nautical references, and at one point he so far forgets himself as to have a character on a space ship grab a "strut," which makes the reader think of a World War I fighter plane. And although not unaware of the life-threatening danger posed by radioactive emanations, Schachner surely underestimates them considerably.

There seems little doubt that all the wordage in *Space Lawyer* was composed at high speed and involved virtually no rewriting. Yet the reviews the book received within the science-fiction field were at worst tolerant. Damon Knight, the most acerbic critic of the period, described it as follows in *Future Science-Fiction:*

> People with a taste for the sharp operator hero who flourished in American popular fiction during the thirties, and people with an insatiable appetite for bad science fiction will like this old series from *Astounding*. I confess to a sneaking fondness for it myself; the story moves fast and simply, as mechanically exciting as a pinball machine; it's wonderfully relaxing——because the author has done all the work, what there was of it——and nothing is required of the reader, not a moment's thought, not even an emotional response.
>
> The formula is simply an amalgam of Mr. Tutt and Colin Glencannon, lifted bodily out of context and dumped into space.

P. Schuyler Miller, popular author and reviewer in *Astounding Science-Fiction*, had this critique:

> These short stories . . . [are] science fiction variants on Peter B. Kyne's then popular "Cappy Ricks" stories, in which the smart, young lawyer outsmarts the smart old tycoon. Since the author is an accomplished lawyer as well as a biographer and historian, the legal gimmicks make sense. The stories themselves are and always have been pure entertainment, as Kerry Dale hornswoggles his former employer, Simeon Kenton of Space Enterprises Unlimited, and woos the beautiful Sally, the Old Fireball's daughter.

Space Lawyer was also reviewed favorably, though less perceptively, by Robert Frazier in *Fantastic Universe Science Fiction*.

Comments in the mundane press were equally tolerant, including those of two critics well acquainted with the genre, Basil Davenport and H. H. Holmes (Anthony Boucher). In *The New York Times* Davenport called it "fairly amusing," although redolent of "an inescapable aroma of *The Saturday Evening Post* in the Twenties," and in *The New York Herald-Tribune* Holmes described the book as follows:

> Despite some crudeness in characterization, the light heart and high spirits of all this jiggery-pokery rank it with Ken Crossen's *Once Upon a Star* as the year's most amusing sheer space opera; one hopes that Mr. Schachner may take time off from his well reputed historical biographies to give us more of Kerry Dale, in more adult and unhackneyed situations.

Science-fiction today has become a field where nearly a thousand hardcover and paperback books are published annually. It seems ironic that over the years Schachner's work has been so seldom reprinted there. His novelette "Past, Present and Future" was admired by Isaac Asimov, who included it in his anthology *Before the Golden Age* (1974); and "The Eternal Wanderer" was chosen for the de

luxe three-volume set of *Astounding Stories, the 60th Anniversary Collection* in 1990. Beyond that, one looks for his name in vain. Yet for over a decade Nat Schachner was, if not the most prolific author in the genre, certainly a contender for that title, with upwards of eighty stories to his credit. And while quantity does not always make for quality, it does indicate that he succeeded in pleasing the readers of his time. Indeed, during the 1933-38 period he was the chief contributor to Orlin Tremaine's "thought-variant" policy in *Astounding Stories*, and there is evidence for believing that a number of those were written to order after editorial consultation.

The sociological content of Schachner's science-fiction has not gone unnoticed, however. A number of his stories have been discussed in Paul Carter's *The Creation of Tomorrow* (1977) and Frank Cioffi's *Formula Fiction? an Anatomy of American Science Fiction, 1930-1940* (1982). Isaac Asimov, who read his work at the time it was first appearing, also noted this. "Schachner was alive to the gathering dangers of the 1930s and the mounting threat of Nazi Germany," he once wrote. "His stories were filled with social problems therefore, with himself always on the side of the democratic angels. . . . when I came to write *The Foundation Trilogy*, there were times when the voice of Schachner sounded in my ear."

XXII

Late in September of 1955 Nat Schachner began to suffer from chest pains. After several days he died abruptly of a heart attack on October 2. He was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery at Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. On his gravestone the family placed the inscription, "Time cannot erase the vastness of his vision, the keenness of his intellect, or the power of his pen." Obituary notices appeared in such national media as *The New York Times* (October 3, 1955, p. 27), *Newsweek* (October 17, 1955, p. 79) and *The Wilson Library Bulletin* (December 1955, p. 296).

H. G. Wells, Jules Verne and even the later Philip Wylie all regarded their science-fiction as a stepping stone to more serious later works. All have been proved wrong; their science-fiction increases in reputation with passing time as that of their mainstream work diminishes. But for Schachner the opposite is true. His early genre writing was indeed a prelude to successful novels and serious historical studies, and it is for these that he gained the most fame. All of them sold well in this country, all but one were simultaneously published in Canada, and three were reprinted in England. One——*Aaron Burr*, his first and perhaps the most controversial of his historic excursions——is still in print today.

His untimely death deprived both his family and his readers of much. First of all, he left behind, half-finished, a sequel to *The Founding Fathers*. Second, he was unable to update his biographies, which would probably have kept them in print for many more years, generating royalties and maintaining his name in the critics' eyes. Last, he never lived to see his accomplishments officially noted, for his entry in *Who's Who* did not appear until the 1956-57 edition.

What of the man himself? Nat Schachner's career shows him not only as a thinker, but very much an activist. A typical example was his attitude towards space travel. Here he did not simply portray fictional dreams, but he implemented them. He joined the first American space travel society, gave talks and wrote articles on the subject, and actually participated in building experimental rockets and formulating fuels for them——all at a time when pioneering in such activities ranked with believing in fairy tales. He was also an activist politically. He leaned towards socialism, an attitude reflected in his fiction, and was a strong supporter of technocracy. For an account of his politics and his personal characteristics, I cannot do better than quote from the January 24, 1991 letter to me from his daughter, Barbara Schachner Brunner:

"My father detested all dictatorships, right and left, and greatly ad-

mired the democratic state of Czechoslovakia formed after World War I. When that country fell before Hitler's onslaught he immediately foresaw the approach of the next conflict. Athough socialistic in outlook, he was not a member of the Socialist Party. He did vote for Norman Thomas, but more out of disgust for the Democrats and Republicans, saying there was little to choose between them, than because he desired a fundamental change in our system of government.

"Long before 'Women's Lib' my father believed women should have equal opportunities for education and work, and because my mother was one of the few working women in her circle, my parents' life at home was considerably like that of young couples today; they shared such household duties as shopping, cleaning and cooking. "Over many vacations they drove through all of the mainland forty-eight states, visiting every one of the national parks, as well as Mexico and lower Canada. After World War II they were the first in their circle to visit Europe, which they did in the manner of the old Grand Tour. Car rentals were not yet in vogue, so they travelled in their own Ford, which was shipped to Europe by boat. Both of my parents loved travel, and as it happened my father's last words to his doctors concerned a trip to Spain he was planning.

"He was a great lover of art, and on his travels made a point of visiting as many galleries and museums as possible; and naturally he enjoyed all of those in New York City. He was very fond of classical music, and not only played WQXR on the radio continually but had a fine collection of records of opera singers of the Met in the Caruso period. Despite being a city dweller he was knowledgable about wild life, and could identify all the trees, flowers, birds and butterflies of the Northeast region.

"My father was of course a wide reader. His literary favorites were Jane Austin, Henry James, Anthony Trollope, Keats, Milton, Shelley and, as you would expect, Dante. His interests covered every conceivable field——philosophy, history, education, politics, science and all religions. His wide knowledge and avid range of interests set him apart from most people in the minds of all who counted themselves fortunate enough to know him. He was truly a Renaissance Man.

"Although admired for his extensive knowledge, respected for his achievements and loved by his intimates, there was nothing of the 'prima donna' about my father. Indeed, he was the least petty or prejudiced person I have ever known. Not only was he unpretentious himself, but he disliked pretentiousness in others. I remember him above all as a reasonable, fair-minded man who would offer counsel only when asked."

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Author's note: In preparing this article I am indebted to Helen Schachner and Barbara Schachner Brunner for information and discussions, and to T. G. Cockcroft for noting the story "Protoplasmic Station" in chapter IX.

CHRONOLOGICAL CHECKLIST OF PERIODICAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY NAT SCHACHNER

Letters, *Astounding Stories 7*, 136 (July 1931) and *12*, 141 (December 1933).
Letter, *The Saturday Review of Literature 16*, 9 (October 16, 1937).
"The Truth about Aaron Burr," *American Mercury 45*, 194 (October 1938).
"Do School-Books Tell the Truth?," *ibid.*, 414 (December 1938).
"Jefferson: a Slippery Politician," *ibid. 46*, 49 (January 1939).
"Ethan Allen: Pioneer Realtor," *ibid. 47*, 433 (August 1939).
"Pulp Writers Have a Job to Do," *The Writer 58*, 243 (August 1945)
"The Legacy of Alexander Hamilton." *American Mercury 63*, 720 (December 1946).
"Jefferson, the Man and the Myth," *ibid. 65*, 46 (July 1947).
"Hamilton's Nemesis," *The Saturday Review of Literature 37*, 18 (July 10, 1954).
Portraits of Schachner appeared in *Newsweek 10*, 38 (September 20, 1937) and *The Saturday Review of Literature 29*, 14 (June 15, 1946).

THREE POEMS

Steve Sneyd

SETTING OUT HER STALL

let out in just more
than nothing she gloats when sharp
whistle comes her way

sound carving this air
is truly alien green
shipload foraging

between start and end
of joy is whole star-ocean
uncomprehended

DAYS OF GLORY

broken the rocket
taking the Southern

Treaties from signing
and split in two

present and past the pilot
helpless fell asleep a child

watching waiting
for Godot

going home felt safe
forever

in the car's
back seat the moon

above peeping
round to smile

face of grandmother he didn't
know

her from
a shattered doll it all

seemed remote in redness
of eyes closing against light

holding afterimage
close as toast

he seemed to give
up against his will

what he most held
onto seemed to give

birth
bit by bit to

the planet like bed to be
carried to rushing soft up

between his legs to
meet him

welcome back put down
the weight you bore

too long round
a heavy world

you belong here for good now
loyalty can no longer

split now you are
just what Mars New Earth needs most

new soil fit for heroes

DESIGNER OF STARSHIPS

days after his life's
whole work fled from his grasp out
to endlessness lay
long before him as winter
blue shadows stride out
over snow-streaked furrow; his joy
flown up without him

• •

MYOPIA

Samarkand and Camelot,
Carcassone and kings:
Where legends live, and ruins rot,
Sands conceal all things.

Humans come and build once more,
Blind to what's below,
Oblivious to time's barred door——
Better not to know.

Ignore pictorial evidence
Rockets carved on bone——
Nor ever ask who carved immense
Helmets out of stone.

——*Steve Eng*

Bram Stoker's "Dracula": Eros or Agapé?

Edward W. O'Brien, Jr.

The late Victorian novel *Dracula*, by Irishman Bram Stoker, has shown enduring vitality since it was first published in 1897. It has never been out of print. Since 1922 countless movies have been made from it, starring Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney, Jr., John Carradine, Vincent Price, Christopher Lee, David Niven and Louis Jordan. Vampire fiction inspired by it has frequently bloodied the pages of such magazines as *Weird Tales*, and new vampire paperbacks are glutting the market even today. Perhaps the strangest and most baroque of such modern tales is *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) by Anne Rice. But although more talented writers than Stoker have attempted tales of the undead, *Dracula's* popularity, complexity, and thematic depth still make it the greatest one ever written.

Stoker's peculiar genius was to create a vivid character out of an historical figure by turning him into a vampire. As many readers are aware, his Count Dracula was once the very real Vlad Tepes, prince of the southern Roumanian principality of Wallachia in the fifteen century. The father of Vlad Tepes had been called "Dracul," which means both dragon and devil. The title "Dracul," bestowed by the Holy Roman Emperor, meant that Vlad was expected to war against the invading Turks, scourge of Christiandom. As a reigning prince, Vlad Tepes was cunning, cruel and politically cynical. The bloodthirsty cruelties he inflicted included impalement, dismemberment, blinding, castration and boiling people alive. Yet he is also remembered in local folklore as a brave soldier who defended Roumanian soil against the Turks from 1448 to 1476, when he died in battle. This, then, was the warrior-prince that Stoker's creative imagination brought to the London of the 1890's as a *nosferatu*, or vampire.

What makes his novel such an enduring and endearing classic of horror fiction? One way of answering this question is to compare *Dracula*, as the author wrote it, with critics' interpretations and with the latest cinema version, that of Francis Ford Coppola, which was released in the autumn of 1992.

I have long been struck by the contrast between the novel which I know and love, and what critics have said about it. George Stade, Leonard Wolf and Margaret Carter have written interesting and provocative comments on the work, especially Wolf in *The Annotated Dracula* (1975). Modern critics, however, usually write with such a secular mind-set that they miss the essence of *Dracula*, which is a horror story containing a clear-cut Christian world-view. Stoker was actually writing a Christian allegory.

George Stade, on the other hand, stresses the work's sexual symbolism. In his introduction to the Bantam edition he says that it reveals what we all repress, especially Eros, and claims that Stoker viewed sex as bestial, satanic and depleting——all vampiric notions. "The prevailing emotion of the novel is a screaming horror of female sexuality," he writes unconvincingly. Stade believes Stoker puts down women as inferior to men, and also claims his book is prurient.

Many contemporary critics see the vampire's blood-sucking as a sexual act for both attacker and victim. Yet *nosferatu* also drain the blood of children and animals; are these sexual encounters, too? Am I naive to think that vampires want sustenance, not an orgasm? "The blood is the life," says Dracula's minion, Renfield, quoting the Bible (Deut. *12:* 23).

Critics like Stade and others are on much firmer ground when they suggest that *Dracula* is concerned with basic human themes such as longing for immortality, hunger for power, fear of death and the dead, our tendency to sadism, and the conflict over our love and respect for the daylight sweetness of rationality and civility, as contrasted to unholy night-time desires for evil and the occult.

Though director Francis Coppola and scriptwriter James V. Hart call their film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, it differs radically from Stoker's text. For example, Jonathon Harker's wife Mina, a major character who goes to Transylvania to arrange for the count to purchase a house in London, is made into a sexy reincarnation of Vlad Tepes's first wife! At the end of the film, Mina turns against her husband and all her trustworthy friends and is reunited with Dracula as he finally dies. This is not a reasonable extension of the author's intentions, but an outright mutilation of the plot.

Another major departure from the text in Coppola's forty million dollar production is the exponential increase of sexual activity which he and Hart pump into the plot and the special effects. They have adopted the premise that if a Victorian novel shows even a vague possibility of desire or a sexual encounter, then it must actually have happened and should be shown explicitly—whether the author intended the inference or not. Even Leonard Wolf, who acknowledges the "religious Component" in the work, says of the eroticism in the vampire myth: "More than any earlier film, Coppola's *Dracula* makes this meaning explicit." Coppola's characters seem always driven by uncontrollable sexual desire, but a close reading of the novel shows no justification for such deeply Freudian rendering.

For example, Stoker portrays Lucy Westenra, before she becomes a vampire, as a wholesome and chaste young woman engaged to Arthur Holmwood. In Coppola's adaptation, she loves pornography, enjoys torrid sex with Dracula, and masturbates with open mouth as she hungers for his embrace, well *before* she becomes a *nosferatu*. The script and screen footage are explicit.

Even the great Catholic scholar, Dr. Van Helsing, a man of prayer and iron self-control, arch-foe of the count and leader of the group pursuing him in London and Transylvania, is portrayed by Coppola as lusting for Mina; in a climactic scene before Dracula's castle, when they are alone together, he sexually embraces her. Under Stoker's pen, Mina is always a paragon of restrained and refined Christian womanhood, truly a noble person; but in the film she is reduced in this scene to a ravening slut. Hart's screenplay: "Mina responds, excited, possessed. She laughs giddily, bouncing on her haunches, wolfen, savage. She looks at Van Helsing. Her fur robe has come open, exposing her nipple; she brazenly leaves it open. She moves slowly toward Van Helsing, shameless, uninhibited." Incredibly, Mina then tells Van Helsing that Lucy, too, harbors "secret desires for you. She told me."

There is certainly no justification for any of this in Stoker's text. Nothing of the kind happens or is even implied there. In fact, the author's handling of this long passage shapes one of the most effective set-pieces of his novel, a gem of artistic suspense and supernatural horror. Mina, having been bitten by a vampire back in London, is herself very slowly beginning to change into a *nosferatu*; and although Van Helsing is afraid, he has God's protection and all is well after that long night of menace. It is sad to see such a powerful and carefully controlled scene ruined in the movie.

Coppola and Hart also erode the character of Jonathon Harker who, in the novel, is a proper gentleman, modest and chaste, faithful to his fiancée Mina. On screen, he ecstatically succumbs to multiple sexual attacks by the three vampire women in Dracula's castle. The scene is orgiastic. In Stoker's narrative, however, only one of the three actually approaches Harker, who pretends to sleep. He *is* severely tempted, and confesses to strong desires (which he calls wicked) to be kissed; the vampire-woman kneels and puts her lips and teeth to his throat. Dra-

cula then enters the room and throws her aside. *Exeunt omnes*. Harker has been considered both prudish and prurient; he is neither. As Stoker created them, Lucy, Mina, Jonathon and Van Helsing are healthy and chaste Christians. But liberal, secular critics will not accept the reality of such virtues as charity and faith; they equate these qualities to superstition and prudery, the quaint "conventions" of Victorian religion as expressed by the trappings or habitual responses of popular Christianity. They dislike treating Christian morality as if it were real and binding; instead, they speak of "Victorian" or "middle-class" morality, trying to relativize it. They are unwilling to acknowledge morality's real existence and its demands on the human conscience in all ages. In *Ends and Means* (1937), for example, Aldous Huxley writes:

> I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning, consequently assumed it had none, and was able without difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. For myself, as no doubt for my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially a matter of liberation from a certain kind of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.

Reading *Dracula* for its erotic content is as reductive as reading Dante to learn about Florentine politics. There is indeed some eroticism in *Dracula*, but it has been grossly magnified. It is regrettable that Coppola, who himself has a Catholic background, failed to depict the underlying meaning of Bram Stoker's novel, and chose instead to commercialize and sensationalize it by violent sexual imagery. Stoker's romantic story is religious and spiritual in theme, but Coppola uses its powerful symbols, such as the crucifix, simply to heighten his film's drama. For me, the most revealing evidence is the scene where the vampire-women are crawling over Harker on his bed. Around his neck he is wearing a crucifix. One of the vampires bites it in two and it pathetically slides away. Human sexuality is thus made to dominate human spirituality.

After reading Stoker's novel, you are uplifted; but after seeing Coppola's movie, you are revolted and left with a feeling of degradation. In typical modern style, the movie blurs the distinction between good and evil, for Count Dracula is sometimes shown as good, while other characters are often shown as evil. The major characters are changed beyond recognition, and the original meaning is lost.

I believe that to discern and appreciate the underlying intent of *Dracula*, one must read it with the eyes of Christian faith. Though scriptwriter Hart sees vampires as "delectable," and though contemporary writers of horror fiction often view them as misunderstood, noble and tragic (a Peter Straub character even calls them "beautiful"), Bram Stoker clearly shows the misery of vampiric, satanically-inspired existence. He depicts the darkness, stench and filth of evil. He shows the vampire's callous indifference to human life, even infant life, reveals his manic association with blood, with rats and bats, mist and fog; with cold rooms in deserted houses, with wolfen savagery, domination, cruelty and murder—all epitomizing the loneliness and emptiness of evil.

In stark contrast to that desolating horror, which is the dark side of his novel, Stoker also brings forth the warmth and health and beauty of genuine Christian life. And here is the essence of *Dracula:* it depicts the battle that the faithful wage against spiritual evil. The vampire is pursued by a group of brave people who are lead by Dr. Van Helsing, a Catholic using scripture, church doctrine and sacramentals to defeat the count. This stalwart band is engaging: the men are resolute, the women appealing and honorable; their victory is reassuring. They are morally good people.

Dracula is actually an exciting novel, an intriguing blend of macabre terror and warm humanity, steeped in traditional morality and faith. In fact, it is so old-fashioned a story that I wonder if a modern, hard-core devotee of horror fiction would care for it. Instead of the cold secularism and its attendant persiflage so typical of today, Stoker provides a setting where love, prayer, loyalty, devotion and God's presence in the struggle against evil are taken for

granted. Therein lie the work's fundamental appeal and power.

Further, although Coppola and many others see *Dracula* as "a dark mirror of Victorian obsessions," it is really a Christian allegory. Count Dracula is a type of anti-Christ——as Van Helsing suggests, "an arrow in the side of Him who died for man." The count is a murderer and a liar, a purely negative force who destroys what God has made: innocent human life. Where Christ gave His blood willingly so that others might live, Dracula *takes* the blood of others so that *he* can live. In this vein, as Wolf notes, the count offers "foul versions of the Christian sacraments." Van Helsing refers to Mina's forced exchange of blood with the count as a "vampire baptism." Van Helsing himself typifies the archangel St. Michael in warring against the vampire. As the active man of faith and knowledge, he is like the warrior-prince of the heavenly host; he is pitted against the undead reincarnation of the warrior-prince Vlad Tepes.

In his essay "Elements of Christ-Likeness in *Dracula*," the evangelical critic Randall D. Larsen points out that in announcing the coming of the vampire to England Dracula's minion Renfield plays the role of anti-John the Baptist to Dracula's anti-Christ; Dracula offers immortality in the vampiric realm, a kind of perverted salvation.

When humanists or liberals who are hostile to the Church consider the religious sensibility of past ages——of, say, Christians in Victorian times——they sometimes try to nullify religious faith by reducing it either to an unintelligent fanaticism or to middle-class conventionalism——an empty, mechanical, conformist outlook. They prefer not to concede that Christians of former times could ever be intelligent, scientific or artistic. Above all, they are unwilling to admit that if Christians are fully committed they could also be up-to-date, mature, creative, socially responsible people. Any modesty or chastity among such people will be scorned as folly, or the virtue in these qualities will be simply denied. So it goes with the best of Stoker's characters, Van Helsing and the Harkers. Wolf and Coppola/Hart degrade Van Helsing, who is portrayed as frivolous, erotic and a little mad, while the Harkers are shown as wildly unfaithful to each other.

What these critics miss, or dismiss, is that in *Dracula* religion operates on two levels, external and internal, and that these two are intimately related. There is, of course, much external use of the crucifix, holy-water and also the Host by the central characters in their struggle with Dracula. But these objects are not mere trappings, because their effectiveness derives from sincere faith and God's cooperation. For example, early in the novel the rosary figures in three scenes. In the first of these an old Catholic woman offers her beads to Harker because of her deep concern for his safety as he prepares to leave for Dracula's castle. A good reason for concern! As an Anglican, Harker hesitates, but when she says earnestly, "For your mother's sake," he accepts the gift. The scene moves us by its simple human love and acceptance. There is no trace of Gothic melodrama. Seen with the eyes of supernatural faith, the rosary is neither magical nor useless, but a conduit for God's grace if used reverently. In the second instance the presence of the rosary calms Dracula's momentary rage; and in the third Harker's wearing the beads brings him comfort and strangth, as the prayers in his journal show.

The internal Christian faith of the vampire-hunters——especially of Van Helsing and the Harkers——seems too strong to be explained away as mere conventional Victorian conformism. As Larson points out, "Their convictions are too deep and earnest to be considered simple cultural trappings." And the others——Seward, Morris and Holmwood——also join the solemn, prayerful pact to pursue Dracula to the death. Together they form a sort of Church Militant, with Van Helsing as expert guide who reckons their mission as fighting for Christ against the forces of evil. He and Mina Harker not only voice the noblest Christian sentiments and

ideals, but their behavior at all times fully matches these.

Mina's faith never falters, even when she comes partially under the vampire's influence. She continues to trust God and to behave as a loving, selfless human being, full of kindness and mercy, even hoping for the vampire's eventual salvation. She is a person of Biblical knowledge and frequent prayer. Van Helsing says movingly of her, "She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth." Each in his own honorable way, five men loved this splendid woman, of whom her husband wrote, in the concluding note to the narrative, and alluding to his son who had been born a few years after Dracula's destruction: "This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake."

Daniel Farson's biography of his great-uncle Bram Stoker, *The Man Who Wrote "Dracula"* (1975), gives no definite information as to whether Stoker himself was a practising Christian, but certainly he did write a macabre novel which has a Christian world-view, one so vivid and haunting, so weird and yet so humanly wholesome, that the world has never forgotten it. It is a book of flesh and blood, and of the grace of God.

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Book Reviews——continued from page 46

Robert E. Howard was a man of swirling, conflicting moods, thoughts and beliefs. He railed against death and felt it was a shame that life was taken from the old when it was all they had left. To him, "the death of a man in full vigor of his life is not sad. Such a man has more than his life."

He did want to live and love, but was trapped by a misplaced and misguided sense of responsibility: what he thought of as his honorable duty and obligation to his mother, even unto death. Did he feel that he must also accompany and help her through the gates of the hereafter? With his belief in reincarnation did he assume that death did not matter? And was it his pessimistic dislike of modern civilization that induced him to leave it? It may be significant that at this crucial time he was experiencing a prolonged writer's block. Did this cause him to feel he was losing——or had lost——his reason for being? Finally, did he really love Novalyne Ellis, but feel he had lost her to Truett Vinson?

As can be seen, this book raises more questions than it answers. Even so, it surely tells us more about Robert E. Howard than we shall ever learn from any other source. I recommend it highly, and to devotees of this writer it is of course indispensable.

Allan Howard

DREAM PROTOCOLS by Lee Ballentine, with collages by Richard Kadrey. Beach Grove, Indiana: Talisman, 1992. 95 pp. 25 cm. $9.95. (Special limited edition, $40.00.)

The structuring of a collection is always a likely key to the overall vision of a poet. Moreover, authors who use epigraphs have usually seriously pondered their choice. *Dream Protocols* contains 36 poems written between 1976 and 1991, not arranged chronologically but under three thematic and epigraphed headings. They should, then, be considered both thematically and in the light of these epigraphs, as I shall do here.

The first group of thirteen poems is headed "Fin de Siecle" and carries as epigraph a passage from Anaïs Nin's *House of Incest*——a fantastic recollection of the sun's planets, ending with a Mars whose vegetation is a "rusty ore," while "Light there had a sound and sunlight was an orchestra." The last of Ballentine's poems in this section, which repeats the title "Fin de Siecle," both echoes the

metamorphoses of media in the Nin quote and creates its own apocalypse of elemental angels, astronautical disintegrations, organic and mechanical omens, bird trails and contrails. In this poem (as elsewhere) solar imagery is pervasive: "The sun wears a cracked face at the close / of the age. . . ."; and a line of birds "splits the day star / into two cups of gold. / Spilling them out like urine...." With a shift of metaphor, solar mutation again occurs in "The Evolution of Computer Graphics" ("A hot klaxon of the sun"); and in "Mars Needs Women" "...the dawn sun disappears / on an April morning / eroded to a stunning yellow dollar." In these, as in many other transpositions, Ballentine gains effect from juxtaposing the splendid and the commonplace, as in "Fin de Siecle," where "White matter of the sun pearls down / the metal rails of the video monitor." Or the idyllic may merge with the grotesque——"I wept at the carapace on the stair / discarded by my love descending" ("Malaria").

Part II is "After the War" and is preceded by lines from Novalis's *Hymn to the Night* describing how Death interrupted the revelry of a mythic people "with fear and dread and tears." In poems of this section bombs, brains, quarks and viruses exchange identities and functions; sickness, surgery, wreckage and (a repeating trope) loose or falling teeth provide metaphors: "——your bare chest / was broad as a Christmas platter / and heavy with sores ("Eidolon"). The most sustained poetic metaphor of this section is an alchemical one, "Paracelsus is Dead." In following the movements of a night-guard through a chemical research laboratory, it creates a reductionist dirge:

> "At the Hague a mass of lead was
> in a moment of time——changed into gold
> by the infusion of a small particle of stone."

There follows self-dissolution and death, but the poem ends allusively on an upbeat note with three lines in quotation marks:

> Eyes——clear organs made of laboratory quartz.
> Behind that——rippling uncertainty.
> Behind that——sudden uncertainty. 1541. Paracelsus is dead.

The anti-reductionist thrust of this is skilfully contrived. The "miracle" of transmutation occurs as in the Pauline text where "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption," alchemical gold being the incorruptible metal. Gerard Manley Hopkins drew on much the same analogical complex in "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" and in the "immortal diamond" alchemy of "That Nature Is a Heraclitian Fire."

Such subtle allusive, and often elusive, significations are perhaps most apparent in Part III, titled "Far History Elegies," the epigraph for which is from Nietzsche: "Reason is only a ladder / to lead us up to the highest place.../Desire is the actual essence of man." In "Ventriloquism" Caliban appears in his Browning as much as in his Shakespearian guise, demonstrating a pitiless microcosmos in the flutterings of a thorax-pinned moth. "The Archive," a poem markedly postmodern in mood, has at its center an appeal for whatever it is that some other intelligence might supply:

> So we ask your aid——our searches have failed
> and noon of the great day is near
> when entropy (so we believe) will turn itself
> and close the up-timepaths to us
> and give our vector over to new organisms.

The response is austere. The cosmos is no more than an archive of past images/events "wrapped in canopic fields," offering only a prospect of diminishing probabilities. Yet the promise of some kind of ontological identity is not withheld, for the questioner/petitioner's "little solent of spacetime" may be transported (the resonance Johannine?) "To a place already prepared for you / where no two minds may occupy the same truth."

To voice a personal judgment, the best poem in this section and possibly in the entire collection is "Crackbrains," "a fanfare for Amon," Amon being one of

the poet's allusive personifications, evocative of the Egyptian all-embracing creative god. The other personification, Crackbrains, is sensual, instinctive animal man——man of the limbic system who, consumed and subsumed and perhaps ultimately jettisoned, loses significance upon the singer's entering the "fields of Amon," even maybe becoming "a new Amon." The fine pastoral closing stanza of this poem is redolent both of the Psalms and of a classical eclogue.

Individual, distinctive, demanding as his verse may be, we find throughout the three sections instances of Lee Ballentine's sensitivity to other literary styles and insights. Thus in "The Reddleman" he transposes the figure of Thomas Hardy's itinerant sheep-dyer *cum* bush chemist into a contemporary mechanician. "The Pileup" could be seen as possible homage to J. G. Ballard; its tenor, however, is nihilistic rather than sexual. One cannot read "The River," a poem of the wasteland (and one of remarkable beauty) without catching Eliotian echoes——first the Eliot of "The Fire Sermon" and then, in lyrical and climactic apotheosis, the Eliot of *Four Quartets*.

Ballentine's style of composition is free verse, sometimes flowing, sometimes rhythmically staccato, with restrained yet effective use of assonance and internal rhyme. The kaleidoscopic patterning of imagery is less restrained, and while exciting can lead to obscurity in detail, though seldom as regards the poem's overall purport. Obscurity is sometimes enhanced (if that is the right word) by idiosyncratic punctuation or elision, though these departures can also achieve striking effects. Such virtues and vices are particularly well exemplified in "A History of the B'Smillah Madonna," and in the opening lines of "Infection":

> The sun leaps.
> The soliton of my brain lobe begins to sing
> its half pair solo.
> Mercy the jazz of my flesh.
> Mercy in a copper-jacket-muzzle-velocity.

His verse can be metrically innovative: instance the irregular, unrhymed couplets and quatrains of "While," and the inticate word-play in "NALO":

> Hedgehogs
> Hedgerows.
> Row houses.
> Fire hoses.
> Battle stations.
> Charity patients.

What is most pleasurable and imaginatively stimulating, however, is the wit, perception and inventiveness exhibited in descriptive image and analogy——"...the rain channeling from your shoulders / like falls of solemn papertape" ("Solatium"); in "Eidolon" (the death-angel in a hospital), "The ward heaved under the battery of your wings, like a moth under a wren"; from "Frank Is a Very Dangerous Man" comes the onomatopoeic simile "...a bell in a decrepit scaffold tolls twice,/ The second time sounding muffled——like the sound of a wrench dropped on a truck fender." This virtuoso play with the metaphoric is often combined with semantic elipsis which borders on the pun, as in the opening lines of "Salvager": "Tunnel where vision migrates / your channel of edges vibrates evening and morning." Such visual and aural images have their counterparts, in a different key and a different medium, in the other content of the collection.

Richard Kadrey, columnist, musician, science-fiction author and artist, contributes (including the cover) six collages. They are surrealistic; but, while the surrealism of Ballentine's verse is in its imaging——for the most part overspilling and multifarious, in fact distinctly neo-romantic——Kadrey's is soberly and sombrely classical, his images sharp and discrete. The collages are in no way directly or literally illustrative of the poems, but they do complement them in that they make play with graphic image-concepts in ways comparable (allowing for

the classical-romantic dichotomy) to the play with verbal image-concepts exercised in the poem.

The elevation of Christ on the cross, overflown by a single Bleriot-type monoplane, placed opposite "The Evolution of Computer Graphics," with its ghostly electronic Christ figure and its refrain "San Francisco è mort," is a case in point. The placing of Kadrey's most brilliant collage opposite "One System of Thrall" is another. That collage spreads the dissection of an exposed brain (the dead visage Danteësque in appearance) across the Doré/Van Gogh depiction of prisoners endlessly circling a jail's high-walled exercise-yard. The magazine *Omni* has a lively record of selecting paintings from past and present artists as various as Magritte, Dali, Michel Henricot, H. R. Giger and Michael Parkes to accompany texts and stories. (One by Parkes faces a story by Richard Kadrey in the August 1986 issue.) It is rare to find a collection of verse where this kind of bi-media complementarity is so well achieved——here through a convergence of conceptual insight accentuated by startling contrasts of aesthetic style and technical approach. It is an association, almost a symbiosis, which enables the book itself to make a unique artistic statement.

K.V. Bailey

I. ASIMOV / A MEMOIR by Isaac Asimov. New York: Doubleday, 1994. 562pp. 24.5cm. $25.00. (Book club edition, $11.98.)

A celebrity, Isaac Asimov, has departed this plane, but he has left us a record of his life rarely matched in elaborateness or specificity. This book was initially expected to continue from where his two previous autobiographical tomes, *In Memory Yet Green* (1979) and *In Joy Yet Felt* (1980), broke off; but as the subtitle indicates, *I. Asimov* abandons chronology and is written by subject. There are 166 of these, ranging in length from less than a page to almost 5,000 words. (The whole book, by the way, comes to about 230,000.) A lot of it is recapitulation of material from his earlier autobiographies, but interspersed with this one finds accounts of Asimov's life never previously revealed. Despite his candor, however, I feel that he is often less than open, never presenting readers with *all* significant details.

What he does admit here for the first time is that until he reached his thirties, he was less than a success in everything except his writing. This was due to his inability to get along with people, particularly superiors. At home he fought constantly with his sister Marcia. At school he was less than popular with his fellow students because of a know-it-all attitude and a touch of arrogance. Although in retrospect he writes fondly of his experiences with the Futurian Society and the people he encountered in it, the Futurians at the time regarded him as an abrasive nuisance. In college he failed to get along with his instructors and was not accepted by other students. This was in part due to an irrepressible tendancy to correct anything he regarded as an error or a mistatement——usually in less than a diplomatic manner. In the army he did not click with other recruits or with his superiors. "My history, well into middle age, was marked by my inability to get along with my fellows and my superiors," he writes. "Even as a professor at a medical school, I demonstrated this unlovely aspect of my personality . . . so that my job was constantly at risk."

This admission may seem incredible to those who have known Asimov only in his later years, where he always represented the epitome of affability. He does not recall making any deliberate effort to change, but as the years passed he did gradually become more mellow, and in doing so found friendships that had eluded him earlier. This change may have come about through the realization that there were areas where he was less than competent, and that his own brilliance had distinct limitations. For example, he pointedly states that, given his druthers, he would have preferred being an historian, but doubted his qualifications.

That said, it should be emphasized that throughout his life Isaac held exalted opinions of his intelligence and abilities. Readers and lecture audiences regarded his expressing them as a form of exaggerated humor, but he truly believed every one; and those who peruse his memoirs, if they ever doubted this, should note how often they are forcibly introduced through the chapters.

Asimov's bitterness against his first wife, Gertrude, also manifests itself repeatedly and with some vehemence throughout the book. He says that she never loved him, and demonstrated this more and more as the marriage unwound. Her lack of affection made the hours he spent alone writing seem like an escape from reality. Although he is very specific about the dates of events he discusses—he kept a diary for most of his life—he fails anywhere to mention her death or his feelings about it. (Gertrude died of breast cancer in 1990.)

He is reticent about the reasons for his divorce, but does devote most of one chapter to *a* reason: Gertrude smoked (and had since before the two married). As a lifelong non-smoker, Isaac found he could not stand rooms filled with cigarette smoke and a house with littered ashtrays. He even blames the fact that his son David was born weighing only six pounds on his wife's having smoked continuously during her pregnancy. He is consistent here; all his life Asimov campaigned against smoking in the various clubs to which he belonged, but members remained immune to his protestations, smoking even when he himself was a speaker.

Of his two children, David and his younger sister Robyn, he loved Robyn more. David, according to Asimov, had never been able to hold a job or to support himself his entire life, and is sustained by a paternal stipend. Robyn he describes as well-adjusted, intelligent, beautiful and successful.

Isaac is an acrophobe, an individual with an inordinate fear of falling. This has kept him from flying, except on one occasion when the army transported him to Hawaii by plane during his period of service. He recounts the chilling effect of being lifted in a cherry-picker on one ceremonial occasion, so severe that when he was brought down he was temporarily unable to walk because of his fright. He also reveals his liking for confined spaces—claustrophilia—preferring always to write in a room with its shades down under artificial light. (So, many will remember, did H. P. Lovecraft.)

Isaac Asimov's extreme sensitivity is not only shown in this book but echoed in the testimony of friends. Over the years he has softened his views on some who have "hurt" him, but turned almost vicious on others. Politically, his outlook is liberal and humanistic, and he tends to denigrate those with a conservative outlook. This was a major reason for his eventual dislike of Robert Heinlein's later writings and, by extension, for the man himself. He says this negative opinion solidified on reading Heinlein's volume of letters, *Grumbles from the Grave* (1989), which he characterizes as "mean spirited."

When Al Capp began to express conservative views in articles and in his comic strip, it provoked Asimov to write a one-sentence complaint which was published in *The Boston Globe:* "Am I the only one who's grown tired of Al Capp's anti-black propaganda in his comic strip Li'l Abner"? Capp demanded a written apology under threat of lawsuit. Despite Asimov's fears, the suit never materialized (Capp was a public figure and therefore open to such criticism). The "Li'l Abner" strip declined thereafter, but the reasons Asimov give for its demise seem scarcely credible.

Although most of his business relationships were friendly, his astuteness in handling them is well documented. He once received $20,000 for a one-hour lecture, and David Kyle recalls overhearing a telephone conversation in which he closed a deal that gave him $750,000 for the reprint rights to the Foundation series.* I think this shows that Isaac was very liberal with *words*, but very conservative when it came to *money*!

(continued on page 92)

*"I Remember Ike," *Mimosa* #12 (July 1992), p. 15.

Science-Fiction and Poetry:

An Interview with Duncan Lunan

Steve Sneyd

Duncan Lunan lives in Scotland, where he was born on October 10, 1945. He is a graduate of Marr College and the University of Glasgow, where in 1968 he received an M. A. (Hon.) degree. Since 1970 he has largely been a self-employed author. His works on science include *Men and the Stars* (1974), *New Worlds for Old* (1979), *Man and the Planets* (1983) and contributions to nine other books, including *Fantazia* (1990), edited by Samo Resnik. In addition to over sixty major articles, he is the author of numerous shorter pieces, including a monthly astronomy column which has been appearing in British magazines and newspapers since 1983.

Lunan has written some thirty science-fiction short stories, which have appeared in such well known periodicals as *Amazing Stories*, *Analog* and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. Many of these, as well as his articles, have been reprinted and have been translated into other languages. He held the post of science-fiction critic on the staff of *The Glasgow Herald* from 1971 to 1985, and managed that newspaper's annual genre story competition from 1986 to 1991. He edited the anthology of science-fiction by Scottish writers *Starfield* (1989), and teaches the annual "Science Fiction and Writing" class (20 weeks) at the Glasgow University Department of Adult and Continuing Education.

He has been a member of the Association in Scotland to Research into Astronautics (ASTRA) since 1963, holding various offices including, beginning 1990, that of President. In 1978-79 he was manager of the Glasgow Parks Astronomy Project, for which he desigened and built the first astronomically aligned megalith in Britain for 3000 years.

Duncan Lunan has used poetical quotations extensively in his own written works, and has for some time been involved in promoting genre poetry. The following interview, completed on January 12, 1993, is chiefly devoted to exploring these aspects of his interests.

• • •

Steve Sneyd: *How did you first become aware of science-fiction related poetry?*

Duncan Lunan: I began reading science-fiction seriously in 1962, after I joined what was then the Scottish branch of the British Interplanetary Society, which became ASTRA nearly two years later. Until then my genre reading had been entirely space related: Arthur C. Clarke, Fred Hoyle, etc.; but paradoxically, joining a space-flight society broadened my horizons. I came across SF poetry in Judith Merrill's "Annual Best" anthologies and *The Best of Fantasy and Science Fiction* volume, which led me to the magazine itself. Then Sandy Glover and I joined the Glasgow Folk Centre and we experimented a bit with SF in folk music. (This was long before "filk" as it exists today.*) We even got hold of the sheet music for "The Green Hills of Earth" from the BBC use of it in "Journey into Space" and did

*"Filk": science-fiction folksongs. These have words on genre or fannish themes, written either to traditional melodies or to music composed in folk fashion.

our own version from the Heinlein story; we sang it on the stage a few times, but it didn't go over very well.

There was an awareness on the folk scene that John Brunner wrote SF as well as anti-nuclear protest songs, and when I went to the 1965 Worldcon I discovered that the SF and folk music worlds had a great deal of similarity, although there wasn't much crossover. And I knew by this time that authors like Poul Anderson were drawing on traditional themes and images in their fiction, so I did the same virtually from the outset of my adult writing. "Proud Guns to the Sea,"* a story I wrote under pressure from my then agent, begins with a quotation from "Henry Martin," which inspired the whole story. But I took some poetic license with it, so you won't find that particular version in the Child collection. There's a verse from "Scots Wha Hae" in "The Day and the Hour," and "In the Arctic, Out of Time" has three from "Farewell Nancy." The starting point for that last story was a humorous introduction to "Lord Franklin," which Martin Carthy gave at my folk club in Prestwick in 1968. The first drafts of those stories were written in the '70's, at the same time as "Proud Guns...," when folk was still my major hobby. The poetry remained a fringe aspect till much later.

And that was through the conventions?

Yes, mainly. There was a gap between 1968 and 1974 when I didn't get to the cons, and I know there were discussions on poetry in that period. I was a speaker at the "Beyond This Horizon" festival in Sunderland, which included a major SF poetry element; an account of this has been published. Then there was a "Poetry Soirée," organized by Lisa Conesa at the Tynecon 74, which included John Brunner reading the "Mustapha Sharif" poems from his story "Web of Everywhere." We got into a discussion at the interval and became so absorbed that we forgot to go back into the hall!

By then your serious non-fiction books were being published. These were closely argued overviews of the known facts and extrapolative possibilities, yet you gave space in them to poetry extracts. Why?

Well, I do have a degree in literature! I've always been attracted to the imaginative use of quotations, right from when I read Clarke's *Exploration of Space* as a child in the 1950's. My three non-fiction books took so long to do (sixteen years, altogether) that in the meantime I'd found apt quotes for most aspects of the subject. To begin with I thought of them as light relief, but when I had to argue with editors who wanted to cut them, I realized they had more serious purposes. Obviously the ones under the chapter titles are to put readers in the right mood for the topic, which verse can sometimes do very powerfully. In *Man and the Planets*, for instance, I started off "The Resources of the Outer Solar System" with two lines from Owen Hand's song "My Donald":

> Ye ladies wha smell o' wild rose,
> Think ye, for yer perfume, tae whaur a man goes....

Owen's referring here to ambergris, a product of whaling. Now, since the valuable resources of the outer solar system are likely to be organic compounds also, it's a perfect opener. Very often when I put a quotation in the text it's intended as a kind of "sleeping policeman"†——I'm changing from one aspect of a topic to another, and I want the reader to pause and become aware of that.

I didn't always win these arguments. Paul Barnett, who edited *New Worlds for Old* and *Man and the Planets*, just couldn't see what I was getting at with such page-layouts. For him the priority was how many lines of type he could save if he

*A reference list of works cited in this interview is given on page 92.

†"Sleeping policeman" is the British term for a bump across a road that forces traffic to slow.

didn't use my format, so a lot of the prose quotations were deleted or run back into the previous paragraphs.

Occasionally I use a quotation I've been saving for years for just the right spot. The first one in *Man and the Stars*, for instance, is from *Paradise Lost*, the lines ending "...every star perhaps a world of destined habitation." That had impressed me as striking way back in my schooldays. Incidentally, it's from Book VI, so it disproves Bernard Levin's amusing contention that *Paradise Lost* doesn't really exist, because all quotations that we see from it occur in the first 81 lines of the text. I've proved the rest of it isn't filled up with old cricket guides and railway timetables!

Another example is "The Undiscovered Planet" by Norman Nicholson. That wasn't on the school syllabus, of course, any more than the astronomical bits of *Paradise Lost*, but was in the edition of *The Faber Book of Modern verse* we were working with, and I quoted the second half in *New Worlds for Old*. I should add that in the 1960's I had unpublished novels which used bits of those two quotations as titles.

Or it may be that some quotation has stuck in my mind for other reasons. The one from *The Faerie Queene* which I used in *Man and the Stars* stood out, when I read it at the University, because it's a reference to a folk tale, one I'd drawn on in fiction myself. (It's stanza 54 from Book III, Canto 2——and Shakespeare used it too.) It was the perfect heading for my chapter on face-to-face meeting with an Other Intelligence: how do you behave?

> And as she lookt about, she did behold,
> How ouer that same dore was likewise writ,
> *Be bold, be bold*, and euery where *Be bold*,
> That much she muz'd, yet could not construe it
> By any ridling skill, or commune wit.
> At last she spyde, at that room's upper end,
> Another yron dore, on which was writ,
> *Be not too bold*....

Something else that happens, usually because my books take so long to write, is that I can make one quotation comment on another. In *Man and the Planets* I was reluctant to re-use the quote on Venus from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" which Clarke has in *The Exploration of Space*:

> Hesper [Venus] were we native to that splendour, or in Mars,
> We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their evening stars.
> Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and madness, lust and spite,
> Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peaceful light?

But I came across a line written in 1886 by the astronomer Richard A. Proctor that I couldn't resist putting with it: "...if there is a London on Venus the Londoners there must be of singularly strong constitutions." That's beautiful because he wasn't referring to Tennyson's poem, and he didn't know just how extreme conditions on Venus really are.

If I use a well-worn quotation, at least I want to do something original with it. Everyone knows T. S. Eliot's lines beginning "We shall not cease from exploration...." But the next nine from *Little Gidding* have exactly the same imagery as Tsiolkovsky's, writing in the 1890's about contact with other intelligence in "Dreams of Earth and Sky." So I used the Tsiolkovsky quotation in *New Worlds for Old* to head the late John Macvey's guest chapter on "Life in the Solar System," and the longer Eliot one to head my own chapter, "The Case for Continuation."

Aside from a couple of brief quotes in chapter headings in Man and the Planets, *the inclusion of verse there is limited to the section called "Taming the Giants." Is there a particular reason for this?*

That was a tough section in both solar system books. In *New Worlds for Old* I split it into two chapters, and used verse as a heading! The real problem is Jupiter, because there's so much to say about it. Intellectually, you may be

aware that Jupiter and its moons are a solar system in miniature, but when you write about them in detail within a larger book the fact really comes home to you. It seems to take forever, and after that there are four more planets and *their* moons still to go! Using Edwin Morgan's "Moons of Jupiter" poems in *Man and the Planets* was a breakthrough. It allowed me to write that section as a dialogue between my text and his verse. The only other long chunk of poetry in the book is in the section on terraforming, where I used the speech Shelley gives to the Moon in "Prometheus Unbound."

Did you choose Morgan's poems simply because of their special appropriateness to the text, or do you see something special in his "voice" as a science/science-fiction poet?

"Yes" to both questions. I had lectures from him when I took my degree, but I wasn't aware of his SF poetry until 1979, when ASTRA was working with the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow to create a major exhibition, "The High Frontier." The Voyager-Jupiter fly-bys had just taken place and I had been to the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to acquire high-quality negatives of the imagery. *The Glasgow Herald* sponsored a huge blow-up of Io and Europa over Jupiter's southern hemisphere, which was the central image of the exhibition. Morgan wrote his poem sequence, the Third Eye Center arranged publication of *Star Gate*, and he came to the exhibition to give a reading. I had very little to do with that, but I did ask him if I could quote the poems in my own book, and one thing led to another from there. Everything just fitted together.

Has Morgan inspired any kind of "school" of SF poets in Scotland, or is he a lone voice there writing in this genre?

I imagine he'd point at once to predecessors who used the imagery of science, especially Hugh MacDiarmid, who co-translated Martinson's *Aniara*, a book-length sequence of SF poems. What Morgan has in common with major prose writers like Alasdair Gray and Naomi Mitchison is that they all regard SF as an area they can enter or draw from at will, not as some kind of special field or ghetto. Almost all the Scottish genre writers also write non-fiction, by the way, and I think that's another aspect of the national voice. I tried to show in *Starfield*, an anthology I edited, that Scottish SF is distinctive because it blends the national respect for science and technology with a mystic Celtic heritage. That gives you fantasy with unusually solid backgrounds, SF with a powerful sense of atmosphere, and extraordinary books like Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, which are both. Some critics disagree with me here, notably the poet Donald Saunders in *The Glasgow Herald*. But then, he isn't one of the poets who crosses into the genre. To answer your question more precisely, there are other poets producing an occasional work with an SF or fantasy theme——Liz Lochhead, for example——but nothing that you could call a "school."

The other Scots poet you extract from, Buff Wilson, writes in modified Scots rather than "network" or "standard" English. Is there much SFnal poetry written in Scots? And do you see scope for development in this, as there has been with many other kinds of Scots language poetry?

Buff Wilson was a singer/songwriter in the Folk Song Club I ran in Irvine in 1966-70. Only days after the Moon landing, he came in with a song based on a *Herald* article, pointing out in the days of Border raiding the worst of the lot were the Armstrongs, and that their chief henchmen were the Nixons. (Neil Armstrong was later made a Freeman of Langholm, but Richard Milhous Nixon hasn't done quite so well.) Incidentally, in "the winds hae swang the warld" at the start of the extract, from the serious verse at the heart of the song, Buff's quoting from Hugh MacDiarmid. It's not identified, so it would make a good trivia quiz question: "Where does Duncan Lunan use a quotation from Hugh Mac Diarmid?"

One good thing about quoting that song in *Man and the Planets* was that I got the full set of words, and was able to start singing it, and then gave them to Gytha North for inclusion in *The Old Grey Wassail Test.* I used several other folk songs, for instance "The Rocks of Bawn" (Kevin Mitchell of Stramash gave me that) and Owen Hand's "My Donald." But Buff's song is very nearly unique: there are two at least about Yuri Gagarin, by Roddy Macmillan and Matt McGinn and that's it, as far as I know. As regards poetry, the only one writing anything SF-related in Scots that I know of is alburt plethora, and he's done only a couple——"Venjinss," which is in *Starfield,* and a short one, "The Twilight Zone."

Surely "alburt plethora" isn't his real name?

In Scots law, you can call yourself anything you like, without the formaility of a deed poll, as long as it's not for purposes of deception. Gordon Dick, who collaborated with me on an article in a recent *Analog,* has just changed his name to Gordon Ross for personal and family reasons. But alburt has gone the whole mile——he's even forced the DSS to let him sign on that way,* Then again, a lot of people think Duncan Lunan is a pen name! I've traced the derivation of "Lunan," and——appropriately——it's astronomical. So when I meet the kind of bore at parties who asks, "Do you write under your own name?" my reply is, "In my field I'd be daft not to."

With any of your books, did you encounter problems with the publishers over these inclusions? And were poets cooperative over their work appearing in these kind of contexts?

No trouble with my own publishers, apart from Paul Barnett's wish to save space, nor with the poets and songwriters themselves. But dealing with previous publishers and copyright holders was like running through a minefield. Originally I intended to prefix every chapter in *Man and the Stars* with a line from the show *Paint Your Wagon,* but the fees would have been astronomical, just for the first edition. And since the book went through ten editions, it would have been incredibly expensive. I had to come up with substitutes very fast, and I'm pretty pleased with the result, but I was lucky to get away with it. I chose some Australian verses which I thought were traditional, and then found out they were by Banjo Paterson. Fortunately his publishers didn't make an issue of it.

One aspect turned out very well. I approached Sydney Jordan for permission to use a quote from "Jeff Hawke," his comic strip in *The Daily Express,* and all kinds of interesting things followed from that. I wrote stories for his "Lance McLane" strip in *The Daily Record,* he did the cover for *Starfield,* and now he's illustrated several articles for me and for "With Time Comes Concord," the novella I've just sold to *Analog.*

The one really bad incident involved Edwin Morgan's poems in *Starfield.* Once Orkney Press decided to go ahead with the book everything had to happen in a great rush, and Edwin was out of the country when the agreements were being drawn up. But he had supported the anthology project all the way, over five years, and had assured me that there was no problem about adding "The Particle Poems," which Howard Firth of Orkney particularly wanted me to include. So we went ahead; and with the text already at the printer's, I suddenly discovered that Edwin couldn't sign our agreement because he'd assigned his copyrights to his book publishers. *They* wanted a fee which was 250% of the entire advance for the book! They claimed there was no such thing as a *pro rata* contract for anthologies, and maintained that the other contributors should be happy to hand over their royalties for the privilege of sharing a book with Edwin.

*Signing on with the DDS: Attending the Department of Social Security Offices to prove one's availability for work and eligibility for benefits. This is a very bureaucratic organization; hence, the implication of alburt plethor's obstinacy/persistence in getting them to accept his name in his own chosen form officially.

In the end, they got a down payment from us, to which the other contributors agreed with great reluctance. One threatened legal action if it happened again. Even that down payment was as much as Edwin would have got if the book proved a complete sell-out. We've also had to accept restrictions on overseas sales and can't produce any other edition which includes his work, or else the whole astronomical fee they first asked for would become due. As a result, the Polish translation won't include him, which is very sad since he's one of the major stars of the collection. The other Morgan poem affected was "The Dowse," which he'd also given me permission to quote in a scientific paper and in an article——I didn't even bother to ask what royalty they'd want for that!

Another quotation I found out about in time to drop was a few lines of Tolkein's which I wanted to use in *Man and the Planets*. A year or two later, I got a letter from Allen & Unwin asking why I hadn't paid them; I wrote back, "You asked for so much money that I took it to be a polite form of refusal."

I've spoken to a number of poets about this situation. About half of them said they had to surrender their copyrights so that somebody else could be tough on their behalf, or else they'd never make any money. The other half said they'd never part with copyright in any circumstances, which in my view is the way things should be. I've turned down a position on the editorial board of a scientific journal because they insist on surrender of copyright, which is becoming a new form of tyranny in the academic world now that reputable commercial publishers no longer do it.

You spoke on poetry in 1988 at the English LUCON convention, where you were guest of honor. But long before that you'd been organizing SF poetry readings at Scottish cons, during a period when poetry had no presence at all at English ones. Is there a "national difference" in the response to poetry of the respective SF communities?

No, I think you're being unfair to England. The first reading I organized for a Scottish convention was in 1985, with John Brunner, myself, and Edwin Morgan represented by Alasdair Gray. The following year we had Diane Duane, Edwin Morgan himself, and me. At the Edinburgh Science Festival in 1989 we had Edwin, John Brunner and myself. These events drew small audiences, maybe twenty or thirty people, who seemed quite interested. As I said, the Third Eye Centre arranged Edwin's SF poetry reading in 1979——the first specific one, I think——at the "Heigh Frontier" exhibition which I organized overall. But the director of the Third Eye Centre was Chris Carrell, who set up the "Beyond This Horizon" festival in Sunderland in 1973, and that included poetry. There had been readings and discussions at English cons before that, and of course afterwards. There was one scheduled for the Eastercon in 1969, which I didn't get to (I think that was the one where some goon threw a glass at a woman poet from America; in intercepting it John Brunner was cut, and had to be taken to the hospital to have the wound stitched). So SF poetry was in the conventions and arousing strong feelings even back then.

With your experience at such readings, including bringing major poets like Morgan to the ALBACON, do you feel, in retrospect, that such audiences are receptive to poetry? Either then, now, for the future——or all three?

Audiences at these gatherings haven't been large, but as I've said they have seemed interested. As long as quality and interest can be maintained, I feel attendance can only grow. What we don't have yet is the kind of meeting I attended at the 1984 Worldcon in Anaheim, where you had the same kind of numbers but they were *all* poets——or at least poetry readers. I gave a reading to a non-SF night like that just recently, "Poets and Pints," a group which meets monthly in Ayr. Some of them told me they were worried about what I was going to read, but to their relief they were able to understand it all. An odd touch was that "Poets

and Pints" was organized by Drew Moyes, who was the organizer of the Glasgow Folk Centre, back at the beginning of everything we've been talking about. But the important thing was that an audience who knew only Edwin Morgan's work got on very well with a whole range of other SF poetry.

What did you give them?

All personal favorites, of course. A lot of them were one-offs, like "Time, Gentlemen, Please" by John Francis Haines and "I'm glad to report the law of entropy isn't always true" by Samo Resnik. I read some of John Brunner's work; some out of Paul Dehn's *Quake, Quake, Quake*, an anthology I learned of through reading extracts in one of Judy Merrill's collections; some from "Aniara"; and a couple by Richard Hammersley of the Glasgow SF Writers' Circle. These last are from a series, not yet published, called "The Fear of Winter"; *West Coast Magazine* was going to put it into book form, which I still hope to see. I wanted to include it in a *Starfield 2*, but unless there's a big change in sales of *Starfield* number one I'm afraid there won't be a sequel. I had intended to read others, including yours, Steve, but there wasn't time. What used up the time was that I had a big batch of poems that Jonathon Post had sent me; and when I read his "You Leave Me Breathless" it went down so well listeners wanted to hear more.

That reminds me——Resnik's poem appeared in ASTRA's magazine, Spacereport, *and your journal,* Asgard, *published one by Jennifer Tifft, "The Astronomer's Daughter." Yet ASTRA is a spaceflight society: do you print poetry regularly?*

If it's good enough! I didn't edit either of those issues, but I did put the poems forward for consideration, and Chris O'Kane and Iain Girdwood, respectively, decided to include them. I'm editing ASTRA publications at the moment, and I'd certainly include new poems, on merit, or earlier ones if they went well with other material we were using. I could even imagine an all-poetry issue, because ASTRA's brief is "to stimulate and encourage public interest in all aspects of space research and all related subjects." I was on the committee that drew up the constitution, including the aims and objectives, and we wanted to be sure they left us free to do anything we thought was worth doing.

We've covered your spaceflight books, magazines and Starfield. *Are there any other channels for poetry that you've been concerned with?*

It's not a big one, because it didn't involve publication, but a couple of times in *The Glasgow Herald* short story competition that I ran, we awarded runner-up places to poetry. Poetry couldn't win, however good it was, because this was a competition to find a short story that, with an introduction and an illustration, would take up one page in a newspaper. We had runners-up which were too short, or too long, or too esoteric——the first story we ever had was from Richard Hammersley, and was written in advanced, "future" English. (I included it in *Starfield.*) And we had one in old Scots, which I'd like to use in *Starfield 2*——if that's ever realized. But none of these could be winners, however much we admired the writing. And that went for the poems as well; all we could give them was encouragement.

You've had a long involvement with the poetry of others; do you write SF or speculative poetry yourself?

The "Poets and Pints" people asked me that, too! The answer is that where my creativity comes out in verse, the bent seems to be for parody, usually of songs. Back in the '60's, Sandy Glover and I wrote so many that they were known collectively as "The Lunan-Macartney Song-Book." I've gone on doing it at a lesser rate, usually in collaboration with other people, and there were a number which I thought and Gytha thought were good enough for *The Old Grey Wassail Test.* The better ones are breaking out of parody: "Space and Scotland" has the

same tune and structure as John Watt's "Fyfe's Got Everything," but doesn't quote it. "Mythcon XV," which I wrote with Leigh Ann Hussey, has the tune and structure of a music-hall song, "The Rawtenstall Annual Fair," but again isn't a parody. The one I'm most proud of, "The Falklands Arthur MacBride," John Braithwaite and I wrote one epic night. It's about the late David Proffitt, a friend of ours in the Navy who re-enlisted at the start of the Falklands conflict for a compulsory five years more when he'd already done twenty. It wrecked his plans for the future. We made it Army instead of Navy, so it wouldn't make trouble for him. The song started as a parody of the original "Arthur MacBride," which is an Irish anti-recruiting song; but in the final version there are only two parodied lines, so we think it's good enough to be a true sequel to the original.

As for poems, I've written only two which I can mention without embarrassment, and neither's been published. One's a parody of T. S. Eliot called "Unemployment." The other is a sonnet called "Avarice": it was an exercise in a writing class where we each had to cover one of the seven deadly sins, so maybe it takes some external motivation to get me to write "proper" poetry. Mind you, even then I had to break the rules: it's rhyme-scheme is ABCDEFGHIJKLMN. This just happened, without my consciously trying for it. I'd never heard of unrhymed sonnets before.

You've talked about inspiration from folk music, and said you're much less involved in that now. So has poetry taken over?

Not primarily, though Edwin Morgan's lines do keep creeping in. If I can find a publisher for an updated *New Worlds for Old*, he's given me permission to call it *The Fold of the Sun;* and the knowledgeable reader will find others in the novel series I'm trying to sell at the moment.

Ideas and images come from all kinds of sources, and music's always been a big one. My first commercial sale (though it wasn't published for seven years!) was "Derelict," a story which came to me while watching Leonard Bernstein conduct "The Rite of Spring"; but the principal image was from Anglo-Saxon literature, which I'd been studying the year before.

For a long, long time my main source of inspiration was simply walking on the beach——I was brought up at the seaside, in Troon, and afterwards lived in Irvine. Glasgow doesn't have a beach, but after four years I found a substitute: live jazz. These days I always take pen and paper along with me. That's also a great way to get to know the musician, because when they see me writing one of them always gets detailed to buy me a drink and ask who I'm working for——is it *The Glasgow Herald* or the DSS? There are a lot of jazz references in the novel series. But, as I said, the poetry's in there too, making itself felt.

Finally, how do you see the future of genre poetry, both generally and in Scotland specifically?

Up here, the emphasis seems to be on bringing it to a wider readership: the Edinburgh Science Festival, "Poets and Pints," etc. There's a theater project called Cottier's in the West End of Glasgow which has asked me to organize a series of nights commemorating Gagarin, Apollo and Sputnik, and Edwin Morgan took part in the Apollo one. Unfortunately, the second time he took the stage, the restaurant upstairs was roasting potatoes and set off the smoke detectors, so the building had to be evacuated! He's also offered to talk to the SF writing class I give At Glasgow University's Adult and Continuing Education Department. Maybe that would encourage more people to try their hands at writing it.

These are small developments, but maybe that's how it should be in poetry——working with small numbers rather than big public audiences. Leave them to the folk tradition! The last poet who tried to cross that gap was Wordsworth, and he didn't get very far.

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Book Reviews——continued from page 83.

What will probably interest readers most are Isaac's capsule descriptions of the authors, editors and publishers he has associated with during a lifetime in the science-fiction field.

He regarded encountering John W. Campbell, Jr. as one of the most important things that ever happened to him, and praises him bountifully. But he has some negatives to impart: "He was talkative, opinionated, quicksilver-minded, overbearing. Talking to him meant listening to a monologue." Yet he rates the man as having had the greatest positive influence on his science-fiction writing.

Second important was Fred Pohl, who for a number of years acted as his literary agent. He regards Pohl as one of the most intelligent men he ever met. There is no mention here of the previous statement from *In Memory Yet Green* that Pohl had withheld substantial sums from clients when his agency collapsed. Pohl

eventually paid back all but $1000 which Asimov gave him in exchange for all his future commissions on work sold. This rankled him so much that he writes, "I have never had a literary agent since, and to be honest I've never wanted one."

He is candid about relations with the head of Gnome Press, Martin Greenberg (who should not be confused with Martin H. Greenberg, the anthologist who later collaborated with Asimov). Gnome Press published *I, Robot* and the Foundation trilogy for the first time and, says Isaac, rarely paid him, no matter how vigorously he protested. Eventually he bought back the rights to these works, and in doing so had the last laugh, for reprintings brought in huge royalties which he did not have to share with anyone.

Asimov regarded Clifford D. Simak as seriously undervalued both as an author and as a human being, and characterized Lester del Rey as "one honest man." Theodore Sturgeon often hit him for loans, but "always repaid." (However, this was not true of advances on books Sturgeon failed to produce.) Harlan Ellison was, "underneath, a warm, loving guy"; H. L. Gold "was talkative and opinionated... and much more likely to be bad-tempered than the invariably sunny Campbell"; and he found Robert Silverberg "serious and grave . . . though he had a keen and effective sense of humor."

Of Arthur C. Clarke he remarks, "Despite his ego he is an extremely lovable person and I've never heard a bad word seriously said against him." He characterizes L. Sprague de Camp as "shy" and holds him in great affection. Jack Williamson is another "beloved figure" (second only to Cliff Simak, says Ike). "His writings in the 1930's were among the stories I loved most."

Cyril Kornbluth was "the most erratically brilliant of the Futurians," writes Asimov. "He was not really a pleasant person." Donald A. Wollheim "was not a handsome man.... There was undeniable force to him, however, even though he was as dour as Cyril...." Of Randall Garrett he writes: "He and I were equally convivial, noisy and extroverted. The difference was that he was a heavy drinker and I don't drink at all." "Tony Boucher's rejections . . . were so gentle and courteous they could easily have been mistaken for acceptances." "On occasion," he says, Hal Clement "has pointed out errors in my science essays, but does so with such kindness and even diffidence that it would be impossible to get annoyed over it." Ben Bova was Isaac's good friend. "When I was incapacitated for a time in 1977 I asked him to substitute for me in certain talks I was unable to give. He obliged me and in doing so, asked that the payment for the talks be sent to me."

Asimov's realization that he is near death permeates the entire volume. The descriptions of his painful medical problems underscore the conclusion that these were his greatest enemy in the last fifteen years of his life. Towards the end of *I. Asimov* he is understandably bitter that his brilliant and satisfying career must shortly terminate.

He had a heart murmer which had been detected in 1942, though this did not keep him out of the service. His father had suffered from angina, and toward the end this affliction became part of Isaac's life too, manifesting itself even in walking. On May 18, 1977, in his 57th year, he suffered a heart attack. Tests indicated that his arteries were badly blocked. On December 14, 1983 he had a triple by-pass. He was not told at the time that the heart and lung machine's action during the operation can damage the patient's kidneys; this may have happened to him, since kidney failure was as much the cause of his eventual death as heart trouble. In 1989 his mitral valve had "sprung a leak," and he was retaining a great deal of fluid, necessitating hospitalization again. Further surgery was deemed too risky, and he eventually returned home, though in weakened condition. There his condition gradually worsened, and he returned to the hospital, where he died on April 6, 1992, with his wife Janet and his daughter Robyn at his side.

It is comforting to learn here that Isaac's second marriage, to Janet Jeppson in 1973, was successful and happy; its warmth helps ameliorate the sadness

that shadows the late pages of this memoir. Isaac dedicated it to her because she prodded him to start work on it on January 26, 1990, while he was still in the hospital, and sent him back to writing it when he was being distracted by other topics. His diary records his finishing the manuscript on May 30th.

Janet has added an epilogue telling of events occurring after that date. Her husband wanted the book published right away, so that he could see it before he died, but this was not done. She does not say why, but notes that Doubleday "wanted it severely shortened," and that she edited the manuscript after his death. Perhaps the publisher felt some material was too personal, possibly even legally actionable. That would have put Doubleday on a collision course with Asimov himself, who had always adamantly opposed any tampering with his prose. In any event, Janet was a sympathetic editor, saying she believed "the book should be left much as Isaac wanted it." I doubt if much wordage has been lost, therefore, but I regret that he would be prevented from seeing his memoir by petty controversy.

The chronology of Isaac Asimov's books at the end of the volume is awe-inspiring testimony to his industry and enterprise, but study of it reveals more than a hundred anthologies done by others, short items of 7,000-8,000 words, titles authored predominately by his wife, collections of published articles and brief juvenile texts. Even after these are subtracted, however, the number of those remaining is monumental.

Overall I found *I. Asimov* eminently readable and completely fascinating. Its arrangement in short "scenes," written as they arose in the author's memory, makes dipping into it for short periods at random as diverting as reading through from the beginning.

Sam Moskowitz

ROALD DAHL / A BIOGRAPHY by Jeremy Treglown. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1994. x-322 pp. 24.5 cm. $25.00.

If I were asked to name the greatest modern practitioners of the fantasy short story, I would surely choose John Collier and Roald Dahl. Both specialized in tales of the the unusual, the outré and the horrific, many of which are so effective it is impossible to forget them. Different selections of them are constantly being assembled and reprinted to satisfy demands of new readers.

So far we have one slim biography of Collier, but there are four of Dahl. He himself wrote two volumes of reminiscences, *Boy* (1984) and *Going Solo* (1986), which dealt with the first twenty-five years of his life, Chris Powling's *Roald Dahl* (1983) covered most of it, and Barry Farrell's *Pat and Roald* (1969) concentrated on the lives of both him and his wife, the actress Patricia Neal. (Her autobiography, *As I Am* [1988], is also rich in information.) Do we need another? Reading Treglown's shows clearly that we do. All the previous ones present their subject as he wished to be seen——fantasized, disinfected, always a sympathetic figure. Here in this book are the facts behind the myth, and they are a breath of fresh air after all the years of studied adulation.

Roald Dahl was born in 1916 of Norwegian parents living in England. His father Harald (1865-1920) was a successful Wales ship-broker, his mother Sofie (1885-1967) a daughter of the naturalist Karl Hasselberg. Roald grew up in Cardiff with his mother and four sisters. Though good at games he was academically weak, but succeeded in getting into a middling public school, Repton.

After Repton he joined Shell, the international petroleum company, and in 1938, after training, was posted in Tanganyika (now Tanzania). When World War II broke out he promptly enlisted, and succeeded in getting into the R.A.F. There he learned to fly——and loved it. Early on he suffered a fractured skull from a forced landing, but recovered in time to take part in the British evacuation from Greece in 1941, where he shot down five German aircraft. He began to suffer black-

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Science-Fiction in the Depression

Mike Ashley

Editor's note: This article is adapted from chapter XXVII of Mike Ashley's forthcoming book on Hugo Gernsback. An adaption of chapter XXII, "Sons of Super-Science, has already appeared in this journal *(Fantasy Commentator VII*, 49 [1990].)

By 1932 science-fiction could no longer escape the Great Depression. It was not only having an effect on the publishers, writers and magazines, but also on the very purpose and content of the genre. Hugo Gernsback's first setback came in December 1931, only three months after his new financial deal had refloated *Wonder Stories* (which he had announced would be discontinued) and allowed the expansion of *Everyday Science & Mechanics* under the aegis of the newly-formed Publishing Company of America. According to Samuel Schiff of Stellar's accounting department, in apologies for non-payment he mailed to authors in February 1932, "our bank closed in the early part of December and our funds were tied up. The State Banking department advises us that a dividend will probably be declared during the month of March, at which time we will be pleased to remit to you for the amount due."

The main effect at this stage was that Gernsback delayed paying his authors. A number of them still remember it plainly. When Eric Leif Davin interviewed Raymond Z. Gallun in 1988 he asked him when his financial trouble with Gernsback began. Gallun recalled that it had begun early in 1932 with "Revolt of the Star Men." That story was published in the Winter 1932 issue of *Wonder Stories Quarterly*. Gernsback had already made payments for some of the stories in that number during early February, so clearly his cash-flow problems began later that month. Jack Williamson has the same recollection in connection with "Red Slag of Mars," the story he had based on an idea submitted by Laurence Schwartzman in the magazine's plot contest. This was published in the Spring 1932 *Quarterly* but, as Williamson recalls in his 1984 autobiography, *Wonder's Child*, Gernsback's checks "had quit coming." Clark Ashton Smith wasn't paid for his collaboration in the plot-idea competition either, and his contribution, "The Planet Entity," had been published even earlier in the Fall 1931 *Quarterly*. However, Gernsback apparently still had sufficient credit with his printer and distributor for his magazines to continue appearing.

Others had greater problems. On April 28, 1932 William Clayton ordered editor Harry Bates to shift publication of *Astounding Stories* from a monthly to a bi-monthly schedule, and to drop payment rates from two cents a word on acceptance to one cent on publication. By then *Astounding* had just started to make a profit, and Bates was hoping this state of affairs would be temporary. A letter was sent to their regular writers which said in part: "I am hoping and expecting . . . that this will result in our skipping one or two of the profitless summer and early fall issues, and that thereafter our normal monthly schedule will be resumed; this, however, is in the lap of the gods, and is all bound up with conditions throughout the country in general and those in the hapless publishing business in particular."

Actually it was Clayton's problem than the nation's. When Robert W. Lowndes met Harry Bates in the 1950's he learned further details. Clayton had been operating in joint partnership with his printer, by an agreement that either one could buy out the other. In 1932 Clayton's accountant advised him to do so.

It proved a foolish thing to do at the time, but Clayton's acquisitiveness got the better of him. The price was due the printer in four installments, with a first installment of $150,000. When the final installment came due Clayton found himself short by some $25,000. Edward Foley, another employee who Lowndes met in the 1960's, speculated that this was because Clayton had been betting heavily on the horses.

Under further terms of their agreement, failure to make that final payment would force Clayton into bankruptcy. Trying to fend this off, he began to suspend publication of magazines that were either money-losers or only marginally profitable. The instruction to stop *Astounding* was issued October 27, 1932, and was to take effect after the January 1933 issue. But a month later, realizing he had on hand enough material for a further number which might bring in some revenue, Clayton had Bates put out one final *Astounding*, which was dated March 1933.

Meanwhile other problems were emerging. In mid 1932 the Eastern Distributing Corporation, which handled many of the independent pulps, went bankrupt. In writing to his authors Gernsback remarked that the event resulted in the loss of "a vast sum of money." This was probably true. Distributors' payments were routinely three months in arrears, allowing for the time-lapse between the date a magazine was received by them from the printer and when moneys were remitted to them by dealers after it came off sale. Let us take *Wonder Stories* as an example to quantify this. With an estimated monthly sale of about 75,000, payment for three times that, 225,000 copies, was involved. Assuming a 40% mark-up to the distributor and dealer, Gernsback would be losing 60% of 225,000 copies at 25¢ each, or $33,750——in those days, a considerable sum. (He probably also had additional losses on his other magazines.)

Other publishers, some less financially viable than Gernsback, suffered too, but many survived. Some even prospered. An interesting case in point is Popular Publications, then run by Henry Steeger. Steeger, fresh from college, had established the company in 1930 with a capital of $20,000. It had barely begun to make a profit when it was hit by the Eastern Distributing bankruptcy. By good fortune, however, in November 1931 Steeger had launched a new magazine, *Dime Detective*. Detective stories were becoming more popular than Westerns, and *Dime Detective* had a new policy, that of emphasizing weird menace. Since it promised unusual detective fiction and also sold for only a dime, it captured an audience. Sales rocketed. Steeger promptly added other titles to his line, including the notorious *Dime Mystery*, gradually expanding his empire to one of the biggest in the pulps. A decade later he was even able to buy out the Munsey chain.

It was possible, then, to make a success in the pulps during the Depression. The Street & Smith Company provides another example. This long established firm started a revolution in April 1931 when it launched *The Shadow*. This was the first of the hero pulps. It was followed by *Doc Savage*, and later by Popular's own *The Spider*. All these titles sold for ten cents each and had circulations in the hundreds of thousands.

Gernsback did not have an equivalent market to build upon. His most successful title, *Radio Craft*, kept him buoyant during this period, but did not offer opportunity for expansion. Clearly, then, he had to recognize the new restrictions of the market. With the Fall 1932 *Wonder Quarterly*, issued on September 15th, he cut the number of pages from 144 to 96 and halved the cover price to 25¢. Likewise the November 1932 *Wonder Stroies* dropped from 25¢ to 15¢, and with the next issue the page-count fell from 96 to 64. Although this made *Wonder* the cheapest of the science-fiction pulps, it was also the slimmest.

The lower price may have maintained the magazine's circulation, but it is unlikely to have increased it, and thus there would have been a reduction in the income it generated. Even the reduced cover price of the *Quarterly* was too high at a time when 25% of the country's male population was out of work.

The last issue, dated Winter 1933, appeared on December 1, 1932. It forecast that another would appear the next March 15th, but it never did. Instead, Gernsback restored 32 pages to the monthly, beginning with the April 1933 number. He also took the gamble of raising the price back to 25¢.

Yet there was a plausible reason for doing this. By that time he probably knew that *Astounding*, which sold for 20¢, had seen its last Clayton issue. He probably anticipated that its buyers might now turn to *Wonder*, for although the two magazines doubtless shared a common core of readers, there were likely to be a fair number more who had never bought *Wonder* previously.

In fact, the worst of the depression may have passed by the winter of 1932-1933, with the introduction of Roosevelt's New Deal, which addressed welfare needs of the unemployed workers. By and large, those publishers who survived 1932 continued. William Clayton did not. He fought through into 1933 in an attempt to recover his publishing empire, nearly succeeding, but in the end the odds against him were too high. His magazines were put up for auction, and a number of them, including *Clues* and *Astounding*, were bought by Street & Smith. Bates did not go with the deal, although another Clayton editor, F. Orlin Tremaine, did. A new *Astounding* was launched in October 1933, and as we know, it made history. Clayton ended his days, which were not many more, as a travelling liquor salesman.

Amazing Stories managed to survive and published some good stories, although it lacked the sparkle and vivacity of *Wonder*. This was mostly due to the pedestrian editing of T. O'Conor Sloane. Although still intellectually alert for his age (82), he seemingly could not take science-fiction seriously. His scientific attainments dated back to the dawn of harnessing electricity, and he sought unsuccessfully to thrill readers with editorials on the light bulb. Sloane published a number of reprints in the magazine, most of which were even then extremely dated and often only distantly related to the genre. The best of them was Fitz-James O'Brien's "The Diamond Lens"; the worst was probably "The Good Natured Pendulum" by Everett Hale. The magazine was kept alive by Neil R. Jones's Professor Jameson stories, and some lingering contributions by David H. Keller, Bob Olsen and P. Schuyler Miller. Somehow *Amazing Stories Quarterly* staggered through 1933, though with fewer issues and an increasing number of reprints. One final issue appeared in the fall of 1934, but to all intents the magazine died with the Winter 1933 number, released in November.

In 1933, with the field virtually to himself, Gernsback could have made a killing. David Lasser had developed a number of new authors, and other popular writers at *Astounding* must have been looking for a market—even Gernsback's. Although he was tight for cash, had he invested what he had in developing *Wonder Stories* and paying good rates he could have scooped the field. But he did not. Instead, he made two moves—one bizarre, the other a life-saver. The former was launching *Technocracy Review;* the latter was setting up a new company, Science Publications, and founding *Sexology* magazine.

Gernsback had long had an interest in scientific sex education and in health culture. In October 1926 he had published a successful book on the subject, *Your Body*, which he then converted into a regular magazine, resulting in a rivalry with Bernarr Macfadden. In more recent years, through his Norley Book Company, he had issued a number of similar volumes, such as an *Anatomical Manual*, which was generously embellished with photographs and colored plates, and a limited edition of Dr. William J. Robinson's *Sex, Love and Morality*, which, "because of its unusual frankness," was offered only by subscription. There is no doubt that all these books sold well, and Gernsback felt that he had tapped a lucrative market. Despite the Depression, the employed professional man would be more interested in, and more readily able to buy, a magazine about sexual problems than he would the escapism of *Wonder Stories*.

Gernsback issued *Sexology* in June 1933, and seemingly did so almost on

impulse, despite the background I have just outlined. So quickly had the magazine been assembled that it had no table of contents and a spurious editor---Maxwell Vidaver, M. D. The editorial stated its *raison d'être:*

> At the present time there exists no magazine in the United States on sex hygiene and sex education. It is a curious commentary upon our times that where there is an abundance of obscene literature published in the United States today, there is not a single magazine, outside of professional medical magazines, of a strictly serious and scientific nature, devoted to this subject. There is so much mis-information on sex matters today, there is so much sickness and unhappiness directly traceable to ignorance in sex information, that the publishers feel that SEXOLOGY, a serious magazine, will do a tremendous amount of good to correct such mis-information and help make the world a better place to live in.

Gernsback emphasized that *Sexology* would operate strictly on the educational and scientific level. "If you expect to find smut in this magazine you had better not buy it," he warned. "You will not find it in its pages."

Gernsback now had another crusade. If he could not cure all the world's ills by promoting scientific achievement, he might do so through sex education. He had, in fact, struck a gold mine. In its handy pocket-size, *Sexology* instantly caught on, shifting to monthly appearance from its planned quarterly schedule with the second issue. With the third, David H. Keller was brought in as editor, and he remained so until 1938. He also edited the new companion magazines that Gernsback launched in the wake of *Sexology's* success: *Popular Medicine* (starting September 1934) and *Facts of Life* (starting January 1938). This kept Keller too busy to write much fiction in the mid- and late 1930's, but it sustained Gernsback as a publisher. With the success of these titles and the further bolstering of *Radio Craft*, which remained popular, he was able to weather the Depression and beyond.

Technocracy Review was another matter entirely, and represents an odd experiment on Gernsback's part. The basic tenet of technocracy was that there should be a scientific review of the administration of all the nation's resources. It had grown naturally out of the aftermath of the first World War when, with increasing use of technology in industry, it was felt that technical experts should have a greater hand in advising the nation's administration amd economy. Technocracy had taken a back seat during the relatively prosperous 1920's, but it came to life and gathered force during the Depression; by 1932, with the formation of the Committee on Technocracy, it took the United States by storm. With the economic upheaval the technocrats, dominated by Howard Scott, were advocating an end to the capitalistic system and rise in social, even communal, control. Gernsback saw nothing in technocracy that had not already been proposed in science-fiction. but he did see in it an opportunity to promote the genre. He gave over his editorial in the March 1933 *Wonder Stories* to studying "Wonders of Technocracy":

> Now that the world has suddenly become Technocracy-minded, the average reader of *Wonder Stories* will probably look on the furor as rather strange. So far as the aims and aspirations of Technocracy are concerned, they are nothing new to science-fiction. When the Technocrats tell us that our economic system is all wrong, and is obsolete, an anticipation of this can be found in the writer's book "Ralph 124C 41+" (written in 1911) under the chapter "No More Money." When Technocracy tells us that we will shortly have to adopt a four-hour working day for five days a week, that is not news to science fiction readers either. Hundreds of stories have treated on this point. Indeed, there is very little that Technocracy offers that has not been anticipated in stories from H. G. Wells down to last month's issue of *Wonder Stories*. Every reader of science fiction has lived in the future so long, that he is probably amused that the rest of the country has found a new plaything in Technocracy.
>
> Everything that the machine age has to offer, many of the possibilities arising from the reign of the machine, have been anticipated by authors of science fiction for many years. Indeed, it would be most interesting to take every statement made now by spokesmen of Technocracy and check up on some of the past science fiction stories. I am certain that practically all the statements now made can easily be found in the writings of our authors.

> And that, of course, shows vividly that the great mission of science fiction is becoming more recognized, day by day. This is the triumph of our readers over those who scorned science fiction. If science fiction can make serious people sit up and take notice, and THINK about the future of humanity it will have accomplished tremendous good.

Gernsback was especially concerned that the unemployed would blame technology for their predicament rather than welcome the fact that the new machine age would increase productivity and thereby expand the nation's wealth. Ultimately the situation of all workers would improve, allowing them more money and leisure time. He had already discussed the subject at length in an earlier editorial, "Wonders of the Machine Age" (*Wonder Stories*, July 1931) which, though it does not use the word technocracy, is nevertheless a technocratic essay. In this important article Gernsback decried the scaremongers who pointed at the machine as the cause of the nation's ills. Instead he maintained that the machine was the solution to the problem. He blamed people for the Depression, not mchines, saying, "I have always felt that the present depression is purely psychological rather than physical. . . ." The editorial had been written because of the increasing number of stories Gernsback was receiving (and rejecting) wherein the machine was portrayed as a "Frankenstein monster," and where humanity revolted to destroy all machines, reverting to a pre-industrial golden age.

The very existence of such stories emphasizes how closely science-fiction reflects the age in which it is written. Its origins are rooted in the industrial revolution and a growing awareness of science. As the darker aspects of industrialism took hold science-fiction became increasingly bleak; authors denigrated technological advances, attempting instead to portray stable golden ages. The main advocates of this type of fiction were socialists: Edward Bellamy in the United States and William Morris in England. Bellamy (1850-1898) made his forecasts in the ground-breaking *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888). He projected a totalitarian state where science is controlled and harnessed, and a true social utopia achieved. Morris (1834-1896) rebelled totally against the machine-state, and in *News from Nowhere* (1890) portrayed a peaceful, idealized pseudo-medieval world where goods were produced only by manual crafts. He also wrote a number of pseudo-historical fantasies that marked the birth of modern fantasy fiction.

The same thing began to happen in America in 1931 with the birth of the sword-and-sorcery subgenre. This was predominant in the pages of *Weird Tales*, and its chief pioneer was Robert E. Howard (1906-1936). Unlike Morris, Howard was not a socialist, nor was he driven by the same reformist zeal. He had a fascination for the Celtic Age in pre-history, and wove it into his very first story, "Spear and Fang" (*Weird Tales*, July 1925). His tales about such primeval heroes as King Kull and Brank Mak Morn culminated in the appearance of his most popular character, the mighty barbarian Conan of Cimeria ("The Phoenix on the Sword," December 1932). Here again, these stories were popular because they transported readers away from the complications of the machine age into one of frontier simplicity, where primal man was pitted against nature.

Gernsback would of course have none of this. His whole world was based on technological advancement. "Without it there could be no science fiction," he concluded in his July 1931 editorial, though in order to redeem itself it had to give thought to the beneficial effects of the machine on man. But despite what Gernsback may have believed, the truth is that science-fiction writers had paid little attention to the social consequences of technology. They had concentrated on the invention and the wonders of super-science; only a few writers, like David H. Keller, had given any thought to the effects it might have on society and the individual.

By 1932 the tide could not be stemmed. David Lasser had already urged writers to bring realism into the genre. They had applied this to space travel, but now, with economic pressures, began applying it to the rest of science-fiction.

Some of their motivation probably came from the European novels Gernsback was reprinting. His prime reason for doing so was economic, since he could acquire them more cheaply than from American writers, even allowing for the cost of having them translated. Of special significance here is *The Death of Iron* (1931) by S. S. Held (*Wonder Stories*, September through December 1932), which shows the social upheaval that occurs when iron everywhere suddenly oxidizes and crumbles.

The pulp author who took social change closest to heart was Nat Schachner (1895-1955). (Since Schachner is the subject of a long article now being serialized in this magazine* he is dealt with only briefly here.) In his science-fiction he explored many consequences of social reform, starting with his novel "Exiles of the Moon" (*Wonder Stories*, September through November 1931). In "The Time Express" (December 1932) he dealt with a future civilization which had abolished machinery, showing it far from Utopian, and followed this with four stories that presented technocracy in a positive light (March through June 1933).

Other writers also considered the area. Edmond Hamilton, for example, showed in "The Island of Unreason" (*Wonder Stories*, May 1933) what might happen when rebels against society are imprisioned on an island with no form of government and no technology. He portrays living in this primitive state as hell, but shows that even under such conditions the rational, scientific mind can triumph.

Perhaps the most thoughtful commentaries on social evolution related to scientific achievement are to be found in the fiction of Laurence Manning. Manning (1899-1972), a nurseryman and former lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Air Force, wrote a series of five stories under the heading "The Man Who Awoke" (*Wonder Stories*, March through July-August 1933), the first in the pulps to depict a sequential future history based on existing and projected trends.

The initial story comments on the social problems of the 1930's. Norman Winters, the protagonist, goes into suspended animation and awakes in the pastoral pleasantness of the year 5000. In this age metals are carefully conserved and farming is unknown. Everything needed by mankind——food, housing, clothing and fuel——is provided by trees. People are divided into colonies, and each colony is ruled by a Forester. Foresters measure civilization from a time two thousand years earlier, when the Great Revolution overthrew the Wasters "and True Economics lifeted her torch to guide the world on its upward path." The Wasters were the governments of the twentieth century. A Forester explains this to Winters:

> Fossil plants were ruthlessly burned in furnaces to provide heat, petroleum was consumed by the million barrels, cheap metal cars were built and thrown away to rust after a few years' use, men crowded into ill-ventilated villages of a million inhabitants.... That was the age of race-fights where whole countrysides raised mobs and gave them explosives and poisons and sent them to destroy other mobs.
>
> ...But for what should we thank the humans of three thousand years ago? For exhausting the coal supplies of the world? For leaving us no petroleum for our chemical factories? For destroying the forest on whole mountain ranges and letting the soil erode in the valleys? Shall we thank them, perhaps, for the Sahara or the Gobi deserts?

Here Manning was forecasting not merely an economical revolution, but the Green Revolution. Along with earlier anti-exploitation stories by Hamilton and Miller, this series marks the start of ecological science-fiction in *Wonder Stories*. Manning, Lasser and Schachner were not only members but office-holders in the American Interplanetary Society. It seems more than a coincidence that these three should also be the most vocal in *Wonder Stories* about socio-economic reform.

Lasser was, in fact, becoming more involved in the rights of the unemployed. Where he lived, in the Greenwich Village section of New York City, the majority of the Italian residents were out of work. Lasser felt a strong responsibility to help, so he formed a group to represent them to the local government. By 1933 he was more involved with the unemployed than with the Interplanetary So-

**Fantasy Commentator VII*, 160-179 and 292-303 (1992); *VIII*, 52-73 (1993).

ciety. As he recalled in an interview in 1986: "The country was really in terrible shape. I felt that this was the important question of the moment and space would have to wait."*

It was inevitable, therefore, that he would work closely with his writers to help promote social reform in science-fiction. It was also inevitable that he would be chosen to edit a magazine like *Technocracy Review*. The magazine may even have been issued at his suggestion, though he no longer recalls how it came about. The first issue, dated February 1933, was launched January 5th. In his editorial Gernsback stated that he was keeping an open mind on the subject of technocracy, and that the magazine would show no bias. All views would be allowed expression. He contributed his own opinions in the article "The Machine and the Depression," which reiterated his July 1931 editorial. The second issue carried articles by Gernsback and Lasser, as well as others by such nationally known writers as Norman Thomas, C. C. Furnas and the scientist Frederick Soddy. But it did not sell well, and Gernsback dropped it. Moskowitz has suggested that an additional reason may have been that Gernsback was "made uncomfortable by the company he was keeping." The Technocrats, under Howard Scott, were certainly a radical group, encouraging revolution, and he may have feared Communist infiltration.

Lasser's involvement with the unemployed was becoming total. His local group grew into a city-wide organization, and by 1935 would evolve into a national concern, The Workers' Alliance. He devoted less and less time to the editing of *Wonder Stories*. In the end, Gernsback summoned him to his office and fired him, saying, "If you like working with the unemployed so much, I suggest you go and join them."*

Lasser's dedication to his new cause probably made the severance inevitable, but it is regrettable that he left when he did. In a little less than two years he had literally turned the field on its head, and a more mature, reflective and realistic quality of science-fiction was emerging. Had he spent another year or so as editor, building on this reform, he might well have revolutionized the genre.

Gernsback probably had other motives for firing Lasser. *Wonder Stories* was losing money, and he needed the capital to launch *Sexology*. He sought to reduce overhead, therefore, wherever he could. Lasser's salary was $70 a week—— a high wage at that time. By sacking him, Gernsback would be free to hire someone else at a lower cost. His eventual choice was Charles Hornig, a sixteen-year-old fan who was publishing a journal of his own, *The Fantasy Fan*. Gernsback hired him in August 1933 at $20 a week, for an annual saving of $2600.

This saving helped, but was not enough, for Gernsback had other problems. He was over a year behind in paying his authors. Some had signed contracts with Stellar Publishing Corporation, and were receiving payments only belatedly. Others were threatening him with legal action. The amount of money involved was considerable. *Wonder Stories* contained around 75,000 words of fiction an issue; a year's backlog would come to 900,000 words which, at half a cent a word, totalled $4500. That was much more than the Lasser/Hornig change saved.

There were two ways out of the dilemma. Gernsback's other companies—— The Popular Book Corporation, Techni-Craft and now Science Publications——were all profitable. They, or one of them, could have loaned Stellar Publishing Corporation the funds needed to put *Wonder* back on its feet. But this, of course, would have reduced Gernsback's cash flow. He chose instead to dissolve Stella. As its liabilities exceeded its assets, this amounted to voluntary liquidation. The arrangement would almost certainly have been supported by Gernsback's printers and suppliers, who through contractual arrangements had probably already been paid; the only ones losing out would be the authors. Indeed, many of these may not even have known about the maneuver, for *Wonder* continued to appear, though now under

**Fantasy Commentator VI*, 11ff. (1987).

aegis of a new company, Continental Publications. Full details of the arrangement may never be known, but they involved Sidney Gernsback, Hugo's brother, moving to Chicago where he remained in charge of the family enterprises until his death in February 1953 at the age of 76.

These events took place in the summer of 1933. *Wonder Stories* skipped two issues, combining the July/August and September/October numbers, because sales were always lower in that season. (*Amazing Stories* did the same with its August/September numbers.) Lasser had already purchased enough stories for these two issues, so there would be ample time to look for his successor. This also gave Gernsback several weeks to dissolve Stellar and launch Continental. By late August, then, his position was secure. He had survived the Depression, reduced his overhead, written off past debts, and launched a highly successful new magazine, *Sexology*.

Gernsback had one further change to make. Despite the popularity with readers of the large ("bedsheet") sized *Wonder Stories*, sales had not improved. With the November 1933 issue, the first under Hornig's editorship, the magazine shrank back to the usual pulp size. That number appeared on the newsstands October 1st. A month earlier *Amazing Stories* had also reverted to the same format. Ten days before that *Astounding Stories* reappeared under its new Street & Smith ownership. Here was another of those Jonbar hinges on which the future of science-fiction pivoted. A new world was about to dawn.

• • •

THE ROCKETS THAT REACHED SATURN

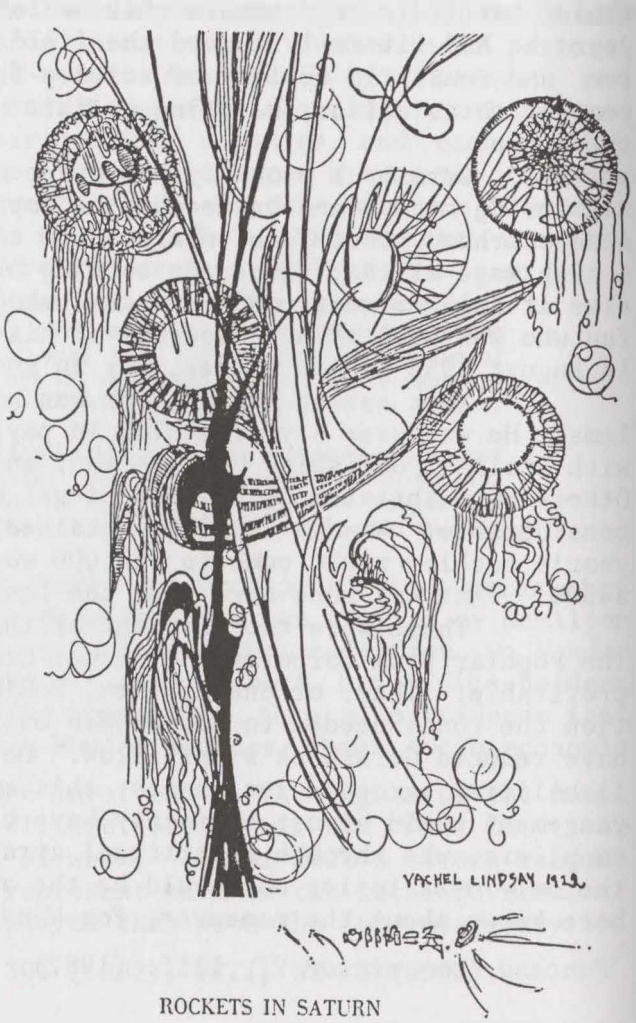
On the Fourth of July sky rockets went up
Over the church and the trees and the town,
Stripes and stars, riding red cars.
Each rocket wore a red-white-and-blue gown,
And I did not see one rocket come down.

Next day on the hill I found dead sticks,
Scorched like blown-out candle-wicks.

But where are the rockets? Up in the sky.
As for the sticks, let them lie.
Dead sticks are not the Fourth of July.

In Saturn they grow like wonderful weeds,
In some ways like weeds of ours,
Twisted and beautiful, straight and awry.
But nodding all day to the heavenly powers.
The stalks are smoke,
And the blossoms green light,
And crystalline fireworks flowers.

Vachel Lindsay



ROCKETS IN SATURN

Book Reviews——continued from page 94

outs from his injury, however, and was invalided home. Shortly thereafter he was posted in Washington as assistant air attaché with the British embassy.

The war had intensified the city's role as the combined social and political center of the country. Anybody who was anybody lived or circulated there. Dahl met many notables and made himself liked. This was easy——he was craggily attractive, an excellent conversationalist, and at six feet six a striking figure in uniform. These characteristics were not lost on women, who in those wartime days greatly outnumbered men, and he was not slow to take advantage of it. We have the word of one of them that "Roald didn't make passes at women; the women ran to him." He mingled with statesmen, authors, newspapermen, Hollywood moguls and stage figures (including the French actress Annabella, with whom he remained on close terms for the rest of his life). He also had the good fortune to become a protegé of the philanthropist and power broker Charles Marsh, who smoothed many paths for him. It was a glittering fantasy world, and Roald revelled in it.

Officially, says Treglown, his duties "were to represent British air interests and liase with representatives of Allied air forces." Unofficially, they included gathering information for the British Strategic Intelligence Service. His professional writing began here, too. He concocted a highly fictionalized account of his plane crash and showed it to the British author C. S. Forester, who placed it with *The Saturday Evening Post*. It appeared there anonymously in the August 1, 1942 issue as a factual report titled "Shot Down over Libya." (Dahl later claimed he lost the $1000 the *Post* paid him while playing poker in a group that included the then senator Harry Truman.) In any event, his writing career was off to an impressive start.

Dahl was soon selling to such other top-paying markets as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *Collier's* and *The New Yorker*. Simultaneously he was not only adopting as his own life history the exaggerated versions of it that appeared in his fiction, but concocting a veritable mythology about himself and his exploits that he kept revising and adding to year by year. For example, it is not true that *The New Yorker* accepted his every submission. Treglown has found that the majority were actually rejected. Nor were his manuscripts so meticulously crafted that they were always printed without a single change. He did work hard on some, but others were so bad they had to be practically rewritten, and editors tore their hair over them. Before Dahl became well known, in fact, he couldn't sell some at all. Of the eighteen stories in his first collection, *Someone Like You* (1954), ten——over half——had had no prior publication by the time the book was scheduled. Even the prestige of an impending Alfred A. Knopf imprint could coax only three more acceptances at the last minute. (You will be surprised to hear that one of these was "Lamb to the Slaughter," which turned out to be his most famous story.)

It is likewise untrue that Dahl's work was instantly popular everywhere. It caught on in the United States, but in his own country his early books appeared later than they did here——sometimes over a year later——and got far less praise from reviewers. Treglown also writes that he may have plaigarized another author. The evidence he cites is that "The Bookseller" (*Playboy*, January 1987) has exactly the same plot as James Gould Cozzens's "Foot in It" (*Redbook*, August 1935; later anthologized under the title "Clerical Error"). This is a serious charge and deserves more than the offhand mention he gives it. I doubt, myself, that any purposeful plaigarism was involved. Dahl got many of his story-ideas from conversations with others. If this one was received that way, with neither his informant nor himself aware of its origin, he could have used it quite innocently. Note that the gap between the appearance of the two stories is over fifty years, which is ample time for the idea to get into oral circulation. This is comparable to another double use of a striking plot which Treglown might have mentioned: Cleve-

land Moffett's "The Mysterious Card" (1896) and Ralph Straus's "The Most Maddening Story in the World" a generation later.

Jeremy Treglown's own background (he was editor of *The London Times Literary Supplement* from 1982 to 1990) probably helped gain him access to publishers' files, where their correspondence with Dahl still exists. Principals in these firms were usually willing to be interviewed. Thus we have a pretty complete record of Dahl's relations with all his editors, which constitutes a valuable and interesting part of this biography. These were seldom smooth. He was not only tough to deal with——a hard bargainer——but notoriously touchy. His letters show him as petulant, demanding and insolent. Eventually he so alienated his American publisher that the head of the firm, Robert Gottleib, wrote him in 1981 in part:

> In brief, and as unemotionally as I can state it; since the time when you decided that Bob Bernstein, I and the rest of us had dealt badly with you over your contract, you have behaved to us in a way I can honestly say is unmatched in my experience for overbearingness and utter lack of civility. Lately you've begun addressing others here——who are less well placed to answer you back——with the same degree of abusiveness. ... I've come to believe that you're just enjoying a prolonged tantrum and are bullying us.
>
> Your threat to leave Knopf after this current contract is fulfilled leaves us far from intimidated. Harrison, Bernstein and I will be sorry to see you depart, for business reasons, but these are not strong enough to make us put up with your manner to us any longer....
>
> To be perfectly clear, let me reverse your threat: Unless you start acting civilly to us, there is no possibility of our agreeing to publish you. Nor will I——or any of us——answer any future letter that we consider to be as rude as those we've been receiving.

Dahl liked to live well, and was constantly concerned about earning enough money. He did so not in the area of adult fiction, where he desperately wanted to be recognized, but in that of children's books. He wrote twenty of them, and they were——and still are——fabulously successful. Millions of copies have been sold, and Dahl became rich. At his death, on November 23, 1990, they made up most of the royalties coming in from his work, which totalled some £3,000,000 a year.

There are streaks of mysticism in Dahl's fiction, particularly in his earliest book, *Over to You* (1946). Some of his stories ("The Sound Machine," "The Great Automatic Grammatisator," "William and Mary") are outright science-fiction. Not many readers know that he is also the author of a s-f novel, *Sometime Never* (1948), one of the earliest (if not the first) of the post-Hiroshima books about future nuclear war and the end of humanity. (You won't even find it in Bleiler's checklists.) He wrote it during the spring and summer of 1946, three years before the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. His chief technical source was Einstein's article in the November 1945 *Atlantic Monthly*. Dahl worked hard on it, but the novel was (justly) a critical and commercial flop. It has never been reprinted.

Dahl was profoundly influenced by the style and subject of a book he encountered in his early teens, Ambrose Bierce's *Can Such Things Be?*. These ghost and horror tales probably led him, in the late 1950's, to turn his attention to supernatural fiction. He read extensively in the genre; in fact, he recorded exactly how extensively: 749 stories. From these he picked two dozen that were to be dramatized for a TV series. But plans for it fell through, and Dahl put away all his notes (though he claimed he kept up with the field for the next two decades). Finally, in 1983, he whittled the twenty-four original choices down to fourteen, and these were published as *Roald Dahl's Book of Ghost Stories*. To my mind it is a strange, unbalanced collection, and I regret that Treglown doesn't discuss it or its background. Surprisingly, he doesn't mention the book at all, certainly a striking omission from what is supposed to be a substantial biography. Another even stranger omission, incidentally, is the full date of Roald Dahl's birth, which is nowhere to be found in the volume. (It happens to be September 13, 1916.)

Dahl comes across as a vain, boastful, argumentative and manipulative man. He loved to make scenes, both in public and private. He had a streak of anti-Semitism. He was constantly unfaithful to his wife. But he was also generous, both to friends and strangers. He loved his children——in fact, children generally——and never could do enough for them. After his wife's stroke, he not only vigorously supported all the therapeutic measures to help her recover, but literally goaded her into doing so; had he not, her acting career probably would have been over. His will provided that half his estate go to a charitable foundation. This makes grants for medical research, and has funded down-to-earth projects like helping to build a library for epileptics and buying a minibus to transport epileptic children. Yes, Roald Dahl was a thoroughly contradictory person. Treglown quotes a family friend saying that "almost anything you could say about him would be true." He worked under stress continually. An account of all his physical afflictions would fill a page. He suffered from back problems all his life. He went through periodic periods of depression and dependancy on alcohol, pain-killers and sleeping pills. He had a hip replaced in 1977. A 1985 operation for colon cancer was apparently botched and had to be redone. His daughter Tessa says that near the end of his life he was in such agony that he embraced her desperately, crying out, "What am I to do?" (This from a man who had difficulty showing emotion and usually kept his aches and pains to himself!) Yet through all this, although he constantly feared his writing would dry up, it never did.

He suffered personal tragedies as well. In addition to his wife's stroke, his oldest daughter died of measles at the age of seven. His only son was hit by a car and took several years to recover. A few months before his own death his step-daughter succumbed to a brain tumor at only 27. To his credit, he took these things, too, in his stride. He never stopped work and he never gave up.

Although Treglown received cooperation from Dahl's friends, acquaintances and business associates, he reports little help from the family, because Tessa plans to write her own account of her father. His book is, then, an "unauthorized" biography, which inevitably makes for gaps. One wonders, for example, about Roald's relationships with his half-siblings; we are not even told if they were part of his father's new family at Cardiff.

But even working under this handicap, Treglown has produced a work that seems not only informative but balanced and fair. It is well written and absorbingly interesting throughout. And I like his summation: of Roald Dahl's work he says, "a handful of his stories for adults are among the most memorable written by a British author since the beginning of the Second World War." His work, yes——that is the most important thing of all.

Lincoln Van Rose

IN COILS OF EARTHEN HOLD by Steve Sneyd. Salzburg, Austria: The University of Salzburg, 1993. xiii-239 pp. 21 cm. (Distributed in the U. K. by Mannon Press, 12 Dartmouth Ave., Bath BA2 1AT, England, £6.50; in the U. S. by Anne Marsden, 1052 Calle del Carro #708, San Clemente, Cal. 9267-6068, $15.)

For the past decade readers of *Fantasy Commentator* have been encountering Steve Sneyd's verse on these pages; now they have an opportunity to sample a wider selection of it in this new, comprehensive collection. There are some 180 poems here, perhaps a twelfth of his published output, drawn chiefly from current work, and chosen from typical rather than early or experimental efforts. They offer a wide variety of subject-matter, falling both within and outside the genre.

There is no doubt that Mr. Sneyd has developed and polished a style very much his own. It is economical, dense and compressed. Every word counts. Even punctuation is eschewed. An analogy might help the uninitiated to comprehend this fully: In the 1920's and 1930's contributors to *Black Mask* magazine were encour-

aged to prune their wordage ruthlessly; and from their efforts there gradually emerged and became accepted a lean, spare type of prose. This bore the same relationship to its predecessors as the verse you find here bears to "ordinary" free verse. (That comparison, which occurred to me several years ago, may be more apt than I realized: in a foreward to *In Coils of Earthen Hold* Mr. Sneyd says he was indeed influenced by "crime and thriller fiction, Chandler and Ambler and their many powerful successors.")

This stylistic density varies. The compression seems visually greatest in such pieces as "The Pleasures of Retreat," "I Would, Wouldn't You?" and "Over the Wall Is Out," where the lines are longer and there are no "verse" breaks, than in "What We No Longer Can," "Return to the Grand Canal, Mars" and others where the eye is taxed intermittently rather than continuously, and there are clearly discernible intervals to pause and draw mental breath.

These remarks are intended to be descriptive, not critical. Most difficulties——if they are difficulties——disappear on rereadings, or when the poems are spoken aloud; and that is surely the best way for judging *all* poetry. I should also expect that they would show their potential most transparently when the author himself, who knows them intimately, was reciting them.

In addition to the foreward, where Mr. Sneyd confesses that poetry is for him "a permanent but not disabling illness," he has contributed fourteen pages of concluding notes. These recount autobiographical details which are often related to the poems themselves and the eight chronological headings under which they are grouped in the book. We learn that he was born in England in 1941 and began writing verse at the age of sixteen because of a challenge. To a school classmate he remarked that he had spontaneously just memorized two short pieces by Edna St. Vincent Millay,* receiving the response, "Why memorize other peoples' poems? Write your own, as I do." We should be grateful that he took this advice.

These notes include as well a number of theoretical speculations that analytically inclined technicians of prosody will find interesting, and helpful explanations of regionalisms and geographical references in the texts. Mr. Sneyd is himself aware that "the compression of Latin writers" has influenced his work. Of course we can go only so far here. Because nouns in our tongue don't take case-endings, we can't hope to duplicate in English the effects attained by Roman poets (I think here especially of Catullus), but he often valiantly tries to, anyway!

Over a quarter of the poems in this volume fall into the fantasy genre, chiefly science-fictional. Mr. Sneyd's background reading in this area has been wide; he mentions Aldiss, Asimov, Brunner, Clarke, Dick and Moorcock, and one can infer a number of others. All his efforts are competent, crisp and neat; many are very moving. I found his brief, haiku-like ones particularly memorable; here are a few:

BEGINNING WITH THE MAGELLANICS

worlds fall apart, split
like slates from old roofs: war of
sleepless, past caring

YOU'LL FIND MORE MONEY AND TIME INSIDE

message on the egg
in alien metal said:
it kills intruders
almost like a human dream
my old master said

NEXT TIME STAY BACK ON EARTH

travel hyper and
when your son ignores you
excuse he uses
is he isn't born yet or else
you died parsecs back

SETTLERS AT THE CORE

under the hundred
suns we wither: no starships
come to pull our ploughs

ON NEARLY AWAKENING

devising the words
to explain the world would be
easy if they obeyed

(We've already seen another quoted on page 34 of this issue.) As you can see, Steve Sneyd is a realist, sometimes pessimistic, usually wry, always uncompromising. Among the longer poems I have other favorites: "The Timeland Politician," "The Greatest of These," and the beautifully understated "Coming to Set You Free," which summarizes war in just seven lines. There are memorable phrases, too, like "bright lips to kiss dead heroes / wars to make sense of space." Readers will find many more in this fine collection.

*This is a mental slip: the poems were written by Eleanor Wylie and Ralph Hodgson.

Lee Becker

THE IMMORTAL STORM II

A History of Science-Fiction Fandom

PART ONE

Sam Moskowitz

INTRODUCTION

The Immortal Storm / a History of Science-Fiction Fandom, was serialized in numbers eight through twenty-eight of *Fantasy Commentator* (1945-1953). However, the last two installments, comprising chapters XLV and XLVI, were not published there until 1986 (see *Fantasy Commentator III*, 196 [1953] for an account of this). Consequently the complete work first appeared in hard covers (ASFO Press, 1954). I had been composing the work for Langley as fast as he had been printing it, so when his magazine ceased appearing in 1952 I ceased writing. My research files remain intact, however, and I have often thought of returning to the work.

It had intially been my intention to bring the text at least up to the entry of the United States into World War II. In this continuation I hope to accomplish at least that much——or, should a natural termination of the narrative lie a little beyond that point, to carry it forward to a more appropriate conclusion.

The Immortal Storm covered American fandom through the year 1939. But when I broke off writing, I had dealt with fandom in England only through 1937. It is obligatory, therefore, to fill first that two-year gap, most of which I have done in this initial installment. Meanwhile a complete history of British fandom from its beginnings has been appearing in installments from Robert Hansen in London (1988-). He intends carrying his history through to the present, and has so far done a superb job, even in treating those early times before he himself was on the scene. Except to check my own research for accuracy, I have not utilized Hansen's history, hoping that by working independently, chiefly from fan publications of the time, I might be able to offer a fresh viewpoint and perhaps flesh out some portions in more detail. Later I shall begin updating American fan history.

It should also be noted that for the sake of consistency my own activities will be referred to in the third person, just as they were in the original work. I shall also write with little or no recapitulation, assuming that my readers are familiar with the text of what has come before. (If they are not, *The Immortal Storm* can still be obtained for $34 in a handsome, illustrated hardcover edition from The Hyperion Press, 45 Riverside Ave, Westport, Conn. 06880.)

Finally, there is the matter of nomenclature. Since I decided to retain the original title for this continuation, something must be done to keep the old and the new works differentiated. Henceforth, therefore, I shall refer to them as volume one and volume two. But since after serialization *The Immortal Storm II* may appear as a separate book, its chapter-headings will start from unity.

I

THE RISE OF THE SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

During 1938 the Science Fiction Association (SFA) came close to holding a monopoly on active fans and fan activity in Great Britain. It had been formed at the First British Science Fiction Conference held on January 3, 1937 at Leeds. Although the conference's *Official Souvenir Report* claimed an attendence of "about twenty," Eric Frank Russell, who had been there, stated there were thirteen, and an extant photograph of the group shows only eleven. The report names fourteen: Russell, Arthur C. Clarke, Ted Carnell, Douglas W. F. Mayer, J. Michael Rosenblum, Herbert Warnes, Harold Gottliffe, G. A. Airey, Maurice K. Hansen, Leslie Johnson,

Walter Gillings, B. Saffer, A. Miller and A. Griffiths. Whatever the number present, it was clearly modest.

Some of the attendees were members of an American organization, the Science Fiction League (SFL). It will be remembered that during 1935 several British chapters of the SFL had been formed. The largest and most active was the one at Leeds, headed by its founder, Douglas Mayer. Although Hugo Gernsback and Charles Hornig, the league's original movers, were no longer on the scene, in 1937 the organization was still being sponsored by *Thrilling Wonder Stories*.

On January 10, 1937 the Leeds group formally dissolved its association with the SFL, and voted to become a branch of the new SFA. It urged all other existing SFL chapters in Britain to do the same, and recommended that they establish SFA chapters in London, Manchester and Liverpool, the larger population centers of the country. They also voted to designate the Leeds group as the SFA headquarters chapter.

But these votes were by no means unanimous, nor were all members of the Leeds SFL chapter present when they were made. At the January 24, 1937 meeting J. Michael Rosenblum, even then a leading science-fiction collector, mounted opposition to severing the chapter's relationship with the SFL. He pointed out that the Leeds members had received worthwhile publicity from *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (which, incidentally, continued to give the SFA coverage even after it had dissolved the SFL connection). Rosenblum was backed by Harold Gottliffe and several others.

By the time the smoke had settled there were two separate fan groups in Leeds. The smaller, with nine members, was the new SFA chapter under Douglas F. Mayer's direction; the larger, under Harold Gottliffe, was the old SFL chapter, with seventeen members: J. Michael Rosenblum, Eric Moss, Bernard Cohen, James H. Gilmour, Austyn G. Snowden, Percy Friedman, John Moss, Frank Meilin, George Thomson, Mire Goldblatt, Mathias Rivlin, John D. Lewis, I. Crowther, Donald Price, E. Rose, Harold Solk and of course Gottliffe himself.

Were there any unspoken factors involved in this schism? Scanning the names on the Leeds SFL roster brings one possibility to mind. Though the Jewish population of England at the time was very low——around 300,000——a large majority of the members were of that ethnicity. There might, therefore, have been racial undertones to the split.

The next event to occur lends credence to that possibility. Three SFL members continued to participate in the SFA: Rosenblum, Cohen and Gottliffe. The latter, in fact, still retained his post as SFA treasurer; he continued to solicit memberships and collect dues. Now the SFA had begun to issue, beginning with the February 1937 number, an official club organ called *The Science Fiction Gazette*. This was a single-sheet mimeographed publication giving the latest news of the organization. Without warning, Gottliffe issued his own fourth (July 1937) number, which had every appearance of being an official publication. Almost simultaneously Mayer also put out the bona fide issue of the same date. When Gottliffe's copy was received, Mayer, together with Herbert Warnes and George Airey (respectively assistant secretary and——now——treasurer of the SFA) hastily produced a a fifth number, *also* dated July 1937. In this they called Gottliffe's action "degrading," implied that it was a device to secure funds illegally for his personal use, and suspended Gottliffe, Rosenblum and Cohen from the SFA "for a period of three years, the suspension commencing today, July 13th, 1937. After July 1st, 1940, they may rejoin, subject to the approval of the members and officials of that time. They must be made to realize that although science fiction fans are notorious at ignoring conventions, there are some things which even a fan must not do, and disgracing a science-fiction society is one of them."

Apparently the expulsion did take affect, because no Leeds SFL member is listed as attending any British convention sponsored by the SFA up until the out-

break of World War II. The group either stayed away voluntarily, or were led to believe they were not welcome. Nor did any of their contributions appear in SFA publications until 1939, except for a reply to the SFA's allegations.

This appeared as an "Editorial Note" in the July 1937 issue of the fan magazine *Novae Terrae*: "In connection with the disagreement in Leeds Mr. Gottliffe and his supporters ask us to state: (a) That new members accepted by 9 Brunswick Terrace [Gottliffe's address] are official members of the SFA. (b) That people at 9 Brunswick Terrace consider themselves at least as well qualified to receive monies on behalf of the SFA as anyone else and that all money taken will be accounted for. (c) That these people consider expulsion of certain members null and void."

Unlike Leeds, Nuneaton, the second oldest British SFL chapter, opted to become affiliated with the SFA on February 22, 1937. At the same time arrangements were concluded to make *Novae Terrae*, edited by Maurice K. Hanson of Leicester, the official organ of the SFA. Meetings were held at the home of Dennis Jacques, a major figure in producing the magazine. At the first of these five members were present, including D. R. Smith, a trenchant critic of science-fiction whose work had appeared there as well as in America's *Science Fiction Critic*. It should be noted that since *Novae Terrae* was one of only two fan magazines in existence in Britain (the other was Walter Gillings's *Scientifiction*), its affiliation with the SFA was of considerable importance in the recruiting of new members for the organization. In 1937 the chapter also issued *The Bulletin of the Nuneaton Branch*, a local news organ comparable to *The Science Fiction Gazette* of Leeds. It lasted only three or four issues, and practically nothing is known about it.

There had been SFL chapters in Barnsley and Belfast, Ireland, but when the SFA contacted them it was found that they had been dissolved. The Yorkshire chapter, founded in late 1935, had likewise broken up. The chapter in Glasgow, Scotland still existed and did remain in touch with the SFA, but if it ever affiliated with the organization no formal announcement was ever made.

The next significant event that occurred was the founding on October 3, 1937 of a London branch of the SFA. G. Ken Chapman, who was to become the largest science-fiction book dealer in England, was elected president. The membership included some of the nation's best-known fans and semi-professionals, among them Edward J. (Ted) Carnell, Arthur C. Clarke, William F. Temple, Walter Gillings and Eric C. Williams. The immediate effect of this was that Clarke and Carnell became associate editors of *Novae Terrae* with the October 1937 issue. This came about because Maurice Hansen, its editor and publisher, had moved to London. His helpful associate Dennis Jacques had stayed behind in Nuneaton, and additional hands were needed to maintain the publication on its regular schedule.

Immediately the personality of the magazine changed. The page-size was increased and it was now mimeographed in blue ink instead of black, a trademark it retained for the rest of its existence. In that same number there also began what turned out to be a lively debate. I shall describe this in some detail because it illustrates the interests and thinking of British fans at the time.

It opened with an article titled "Fantasy vs. Science" by the young fan C. S. Youd (better known in later years as the writer John Christopher). In this he classified science-fiction into four basic types: First, "Cosmic wild west" like Anthony Gilmore's Hawk Carse stories; second, thought-variants like "Born of the Sun" by Jack Williamson and "Before Earth Came" by John Russell Fearn; third, "scientific" stories like E. E. Smith's "The Skylark of Valeron"; fourth, "artistic," well written stories such as Don A. Stuart's "Twilight" and "The Time Stream" by John Taine. Into the last class he also put the science-fiction of H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. He himself preferred classes three and four, and predicted that they would outlive the other types. He also made a prediction which has not been borne out: that Jules Verne's work would not stand the test of time.

Arthur Clarke, who at that period hardly knew who Youd was, vigorously disagreed with these views, and said so in the next (November) *Novae Terrae*. His rebuttal, titled "Science Fiction versus Mr. Youd," made the point that no one "will dispute the fact that without style no story, no matter how novel in conception, can be good science fiction. But the converse also holds true——splendid writing cannot redeem a story based on scientific absurdities." He offered as an example Donald Wandrei's "Colossus." He felt that E. E. Smith's stories had "seldom been beaten," and that Weinbaum was a good example of a writer who combined good writing with good science. One element need not be sacrificed for the other. As it turned out Clarke also thought highly of Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. He believed it was permissible to invent a totally new science as long as it was consistent with what we already knew, and excused thought-variants when they stayed within the bounds of logic.

What he most objected to, he said, were stories based on the distortion of scientific laws and truths. He then cited *The Time Stream* by John Taine as a story which stepped outside the bounds of present knowledge yet which was so self-consistent that "we can watch with joy and admiration." This he contrasted with such "not so good" examples as the thought-variants of John Russell Fearn. He ended by stating, "The cold, calculating fan who doesn't care a damn for style is a figment of Mr. Youd's imagination. Accurate science and good literature——we want them both, and until we get them we won't be satisfied."

Careful examination reveals that the two not as far apart as they may have thought, but Youd nevertheless replied in the January 1938 *Novae Terrae*. He cited a poll taken by the Glasgow SFL chapter concerning good science versus good writing which showed there were advocates of both extremes. He called Smith's "Skylark" novels impossible, but redeemed by good writing. He disagreed on the value of "Colossus," calling it "beautiful" even though it may have violated the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction theory. The strong point of both Clark Ashton Smith and Lovecraft was their ability to portray "human reactions to alien things." But overall he felt that "science and literature cannot go together."

As one of the editors of *Novae Terrae*, Clarke had the advantage of being able to reply in the same issue, which he promptly exploited. He made four points: First, he objected to scientifically impossible creations, such as the monster in J. Harvey Haggard's "From the Vacuum of Space" being able to propel itself through space "by jerking his side tentacles." Second, he disliked "Colossus" because it had the Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction do things that it wouldn't. Third, he had referred to Lovecraft as "bunk" in a purely friendly fashion because that writer's style could so readily be burlesqued. Finally, he was as pleased as Youd to see the "Science Discussions" in *Astounding Stories* replaced by the readers' letters column, "Brass Tacks."

At this point editor Hanson stated that he would not entertain any more counter-rebuttals, thus bringing the debate to a close. But during its progress *Novae Terrae* had been printing other articles dealing with the purpose of science-fiction. Douglas Mayer's "Wake Up, Fans!," in the December issue, expressed the view that its adherents should work towards future sociological change. In "What Purpose, Science Fiction?" (January 1938) Donald A. Wollheim stated that it was a method of preparing the public for innovations of the future, and the fact that it had already spawned the American Rocket Society and the British Interplanetary Society was justification enough for its existence. He went even further with "Commentary on the November *Novae Terrae*" in the same issue, promoting the cause he had already advocated in the United States: "You may not favor the Communist outlook but if you keep your mind clear and watch the world, in two years you will be with us. Meanwhile let us work together. SALUD, Comrades!"

At the same time membership in the SFA continued to grow. The July 1937 *Novae Terrae* announced the formation of its first international branch in Los An-

geles, California. Its members included Russell J. Hodgkins (the director), Forrest J. Ackerman, Roy Test and T. Bruce Yerke. The name of the group was changed from the Los Angeles Science Fiction League to the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. The move came as a surprise to other American fans, for Ackerman was a director on the board of the Science Fiction League. Los Angeles published one of the outstanding fan magazines of the period, *Imagination!*, and that became the official organ of this branch of the SFA.

Other prominent American fans, such as Claire P. Beck, H. C. Koenig and Jack Speer, also joined the organization during 1937. Singularly, the British made no great fanfare over these developments. One had the feeling that they were not really enthusiastic about having chapters so distant and potentially powerful that they could not be controlled; except for the money from membership dues they probably would add little to the SFA's effectiveness. Also, some fans joined because it was the easiest way to get *Novae Terrae* regularly.

In support of its recruiting efforts, the SFA brought out two additional fan magazines during its first year. One was *Tomorrow*, "a quarterly review of British science-fiction and scientific progress," whose initial issue was dated Spring 1937. It was half-letter-sized, mimeographed in purple ink, and had stiff covers. These had been printed earlier by Harold Gottcliffe at "The Nova Press," which was simply a small printing press he used from time to time for fan efforts. It was edited by Mayer, and its twenty-four pages were devoted to non-fictional material. The second issue had a silk-screen cover, since by the time of publication Gottliffe had split with the SFA. It is interesting chiefly for printing an interview with a representative of Atlas Distributors, a company which sold and circulated back copies of American science-fiction magazines. Atlas claimed that they received their stock by regular freight shipments, and that they were not "ships' ballast."* *Tomorrow* operated under the slogan "What is good enough for today is much too bad for tomorrow"; in its mimeographed format it lasted for four issues.

The Autumn 1937 issue announced publication of the SFA's second magazine, *Amateur Science Stories*. Its objective was to publish worthwhile fiction by new writers, and it had a selection board to judge submissions. This was composed of Douglas Mayer (the editor), Edward Carnell, Maurice Hanson, Harold Warnes, Dr. W. A. Gibson and Festus Pragnell (who had sold fiction to *Wonder Stories* and *Amazing Stories*). To underscore this objective, the magazine adopted a format something like a manuscript——the pages were legal-sized and were mimeographed in purple ink. The first issue, dated October 1937, contained but a single story, "Mr. Craddock's Life Line," by Temple Williams. (This was a pen name for William F. Temple, and was good enough to be later bought by *Amazing Stories*, where it appeared under the author's own name as "Mr. Craddock's Amazing Experience" in the February 1939 issue.)

The second (December 1937) number carried two stories by Eric C. Williams, a London member, and "Travel by Wire," Arthur C. Clarke's earliest published science-fiction. Cast in article format, this dealt with transmitting solids by wire, and the problems of utilizing the invention. The final issue (March 1938) offered two more stories by Clarke and another by Williams. The editor claimed that *Amateur Science Stories* was discontinued because there was not enough material of a high standard to fill it; and in truth the fiction had indeed been well above the usual fannish quality.

Meanwhile, more and more fans from other English cities were joining, making the nuclei for forming additional chapters. By the end of 1937 the SFA had a membership of eighty, and the circulation of its official organ, *Novae Terrae*, was nearing two hundred. Something else was happening then, too: the location of the headquarters chapter, the organization's power base, was shifting.

*For the history and significance of this, see *Fantasy Commentator VII*, 202-203 (1992).

Leeds was still irreconcilably split into two factions, greatly limiting its effectiveness. The London chapter was now larger, had become the site where *Novae Terrae* was published, and had more members with high profiles. Clearly, a transfer of control could not be far off.

Before dealing further with the SFA, however, it seems appropriate to pause briefly to describe a situation readers may be unaware of. While the United States is often thought of as representing the cutting edge of modern technology, this is not always true. England, at that time, supported no fewer than *five* different rocket societies. These were the British Interplanetary Society, the London Rocket Society, The Manchester Interplanetary Society, the Leeds Rocket Society and the Paisley Rocketeers, located in Scotland. (The first of these, which was the largest and most active, is still in existence.)

What particularly concerns us here is that *all* of these were being run, or had been widely infiltrated, by science-fiction fans. Some had even been *formed* by fans! For example, Edward Carnell served as editor of *The Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*; Eric Frank Russell served as the society's librarian; and Leslie Johnson was secretary-treasurer. Douglas Mayer and Walter Gillings contributed to the *Journal*. Kenneth Chapman was secretary of the London branch and Arthur C. Clarke was its treasurer. Maurice Hansen was a member and William F. Temple later became publicity director and journal editor. Similar penetration could be cited for the other rocket societies as well.

II
BRITISH SCIENCE-FICTION PUBLICATIONS, 1938-1939

As the SFA grew in power, the Leeds SFL chapter members found themselves more and more like isolated outsiders. But they did not give up. Gottliffe and Rosenblum, using Gottliffe's little hand printing press, produced *The Bulletin of the Leeds Science Fiction League*, its first issue dated January 1938. To increase its circulation Rosenblum, who had become a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA) in the United States, distributed that number through the society's quarterly mailing of Spring 1938.

(Rosenblum was not the first Britisher to join FAPA. Edward Carnell, who had contributed to American fan publications for several years, was a charter member of the organization, and had distributed six issues of *The British Interplanetary Society Bulletin*——a different publication than its *Journal*——which he edited, to its Fall and Winter 1937 mailings.)

The first issue of Rosenblum's publication, which had only two pages and was printed in conventional black ink, described the Leeds chapter's January 9, 1938 meeting. (A fuller account of it appeared in the February issue of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*.) The feature was a talk by A. C. Snowden relating the history of the chapter, the resignation from it of Douglas Mayer (at which members cheered), and the successful efforts of Rosenblum to save it. Gottliffe told of his visit to the Manchester Interplanetary Society and director Eric Burgess, and his discussion there with J. Broadbent about the use of cordite as a rocket fuel.

The second Leeds *Bulletin* was dated March 1938. It had expanded to four pages, sported a cover printed in green ink, and carried the slogan "The Fiction of Today Is the Fact of Tomorrow." It, too, was distributed through FAPA. There were reports of two meetings, a book review, and a page of news, including the information that *Amazing Stories* had been sold to the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company.

With its third (June 1938) number the *Bulletin* changed its title to *The Futurian*. (This had nothing to do with the Futurians in the United States, who did not adopt that name for themselves until several months later.) It was also expanded in size and printed on better paper. In adopting a new slogan, "The Independent British Science-Fiction Magazine," it emphasized that almost every other

British fan publication of that period was either sponsored by or connected with the SFA. Perhaps, too, the Leeds group hoped to fill a gap which had suddenly formed in the field. *Scientifiction*, the finest of British fan magazines, had just ceased publication with its March 1938 issue. This offered room for a newcomer, especially if it adopted a broad, serious policy.

Reflecting Rosenblum's interests, *The Futurian* began to concentrate on collecting and genre history. The feature article, Reginald Stevens's "An Early Science Fiction Author," was the first to deal with the work of George Griffith, a British writer popular in the 1890's and the first decade of this century who is now known to have been a strong influence on H. G. Wells. The issue also contained the announcement that George Newnes, Ltd., a British periodical publisher, was to bring out a new magazine called *Fantasy* in July 1938.

Fantasy was the second professional science-fiction magazine to appear in Britain within the space of a year. (The first was *Tales of Wonder*, edited by Walter Gillings. After a surprisingly successful trial issue dated Summer 1937, this was brought out on a quarterly schedule starting with the Spring 1938 number. It was handsomely produced on a good grade of paper, had full-cover covers, and ran for a total of sixteen issues.) *Fantasy*, edited by T. Stanhope Sprigg, featured new stories by John Russell Fearn, Eric Frank Russell and John Beynon Harris. It was an outstanding publication, but wartime paper shortages brought it to an end a little over a year later after only three issues had appeared.

A weak attempt to expand the Leeds chapter's influence beyond its city environs was attempted. For the British equivalent of forty cents, joiners from outside would receive *The Futurian*, free advertising space in it, a membership card, the right to participate in contests, use of the chapter library (presumably by mail) and (for a nominal additional charge) printed note-paper. Their only duty would be to send three letters a year to the chapter or to any member of it.

To the same end Rosenblum continued to widen his contacts with American fans. An exchange of advertisements with James Taurasi's *Fantasy News* and Russell Leadabrand's *Unique* was arranged. Fredrik Pohl wrote a regular column called "Americanews" for the magazine, and Taurasi contributed artwork to it. *The Futurian* also affiliated itself with Cosmic Publications in the United States, under whose umbrella six fan magazines were being published: Louis and Gertrude Kuslan's *Cosmic Tales*, Bob Tucker's *D'Journal*, Taurasi's *Fantasy News*, Alex Osheroff's *Science Fiction Scout*, Olon F. Wiggins's *Science Fiction Fan* and Moskowitz's *Current Fantasy*.

With the third (January 1939) issue the magazine expanded from four to fourteen pages, but in its editorial Rosenblum wrote significantly: "We are most gratified by the reception of our publication in the U.S.A., but here in Britain there appears to be a deepset apathy." Apparently the SFA's ostracism of the Leeds group was still being maintained by most members. And with that issue *The Futurian* declared itself "An amateur magazine published in England in the interests of Fantasy enthusiasts throughout the world," thus abandoning a national appeal for a universal one. The expanded news columns reported (rather late) the December 25, 1937 death of author Karel Capek, and sounded a note of glee over a survey in *Novae Terrae* having received only thirteen responses. This survey, which had appeared in its November and December 1937 issues, had asked questions about what readers liked and disliked about the magazine's policies and material. Considering its length and elaborateness, the number of replies did not seem low.

Meanwhile the SFA's elaborate preparations for a second convention were coming to fruition. This was held in London on April 10, 1938 at the A.O.D. Memorial Hall. Forty-three fans came——a very satisfactory attendance. The majority of those gathered were celebrities in the field or prominent fans. They included John Russell Fearn, John Beynon Harris, Benson Herbert, William F. Temple, I. O. Evans, Walter Gillings, Leslie Johnson, Maurice Hanson, Douglas Mayer, Edward J. Carnell and Harry Turner (an artist). As of this date control of the ISA passed from the Leeds branch to London.

The speakers included Professor A. M. Low, president of the SFA; Benson Herbert and John Russell Fearn, science-fiction writers; and Douglas Mayer. Two of the talks are of historical interest to us: Mayer's, entitled "Psychology," seemed to be an endorsement of America's communist-leaning "Michelism" movement. Fearn's was a defense against criticism his stories in American magazines had received. He noted that his fiction there under the pen names of Thornton Ayre and Polton Cross had been highly praised, indicating that his critics were stimulated by his name alone, and not the quality of his fiction.

Naturally Walter Gillings was besieged by attendees, for there was great speculation as to what would happen to his fan magazine *Scientifiction* now that he had become a professional editor. Would he continue it now that *Tales of Wonder* was to appear on a regular schedule? The answer was "No." *Scientifiction* would be combined with the SFA's *Tomorrow* under the latter title, and would appear quarterly instead of monthly. The editor would continue to be Douglas Mayer.

The first issue of the new *Tomorrow*, subtitled "The Magazine of the Future," was dated Spring 1938. It was a handsomely printed letter-sized periodical of sixteen pages, and carried twice the wordage of *Scientifiction*. Among its entries were articles by Benson Herbert, Festus Pragnell, Leslie Johnson, Walter Gillings, Prof. A. M. Low and I. O. Evans. Evans's was of particular interest. It told the story of *The World of To-morrow / A Junior Book of Forecasts*, which he had edited for the publisher Dennis Archer in 1933.

This highly unusual volume contained 32 illustrations that depicted the course of future progress. Innovatively, these were printed on transparent sheets of a plastic film called Diophane which were bound between leaves of the text, achieving an almost stereoscopic effect. The covers were made of a thick material called Rhodoid, and depicted a scene from the film *Things to Come*. Holding all these parts together was a cloth band labelled Neo-Ne-ett Tape-Slot. Although the binding was designed to be stainless and washable, the modern materials from which the book was made were affected differently by temperature changes, so that it warped badly in storage. In any event, the few fans who obtained it were particularly intrigued by reproductions of illustrations by Frank R. Paul, H. W. Wesso and Leo Morey, all taken from *Amazing Stories*.

Related to the book was a World of Tomorrow series of cigarette cards which the Imperial Tobacco Company had engaged Evans to provide for advertising Mitchell's cigarettes. They totalled fifty numbered scenes, and included stills from *Things to Come* and illustrations from *Amazing Stories*. One was included in each package, and those buying the cigarettes regularly might acquire the entire set. Complete sets were also sold as a unit. The back of each card carried descriptive material about the scene depicted. Distribution was timed to coincide with the release of the *Things to Come* film. (Cigarette cards were not uncommon in Britain at that time. Imperial Tobacco had earlier issued a set to promote Turf cigarettes that featured Sherlock Holmes characters which is much in demand by collectors today.)

Evans achieved considerable stature among fans for these efforts. He was a civil servant who wrote on astronomy and other scientific topics. After his retirement in 1956 he edited two science-fiction anthologies, translated several novels by Jules Verne (including some never before put into English), and wrote a critical biography of that author.

The new *Tomorrow* impressed everyone who received it. John W. Campbell, Jr. and Leo Margulies, editors of *Astounding Science-Fiction* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, both pronounced it the best fan magazine they had ever seen. Even Hugo Gernsback expressed pleasure on seeing it. The second (Summer 1938) issue of the magazine was equally impressive, but suffered from having too many articles related to science; in retrospect these seem out of place, since such material was widely available in popular science magazines. One such article was Edward Lang's "Time Travelling." Lang, who had read J. W. Dunne's popular book *An Experiment*

with Time (1926), believed that time travel was possible only by hibernation or through dreams.

This article is important only in that it prompted a reply from the famous science-fiction author M. P. Shiel——his only contribution to a fan magazine. This appeared in the next (Autumn 1938) issue of *Tomorrow*. Shiel contended that time travel was "absurd" because when the voyager passed the date of his death he would no longer exist, and when he went back before his birth he would not yet be born. He also felt Wells was wrong in thinking that material objects possessed the quality of "duration." This was false, he said, because we are all made up of atoms which are in constant motion; therefore the atoms, ourselves and everything we regard as solid are changing instant by instant. He also debunked dreams as a possible agency for time travel.

Shiel was then 72, and living in a rural area near Horsham, where he claimed he ran six miles a day to keep in good physical shape. His thirtieth novel, *The Young Men Are Coming*, had just appeared the previous year, and was as full of his imagination, prejudices and stylistic eccentricities as ever.

On May 22, 1938 the SFA gained new strength with the addition of a chapter in Manchester. This was headed by Harry Turner, who would later make a reputation for himself as a professional science-fiction artist. Other localites included Fred Tozer (the treasurer), S. Davies (librarian), E. S. Needham and G. Ellis. The local membership was not large, but at its first meeting there was an excellent turn-out from other chapters to cheer them on——Vic Gillard, Douglas Mayer and J. A. Miller from Leeds, Maurice Hanson and Arthur Clarke from London, and Leslie Johnson and Abraham Bloom from Liverpool. Also present was Philip S. Hetherington, an aggressively pro-communist fan of the period.

Johnson and Bloom were so enthusiastic about the gathering that on June 21st they inaugurated a Liverpool branch of the SFA. They were particularly proud of having induced H. O. Dickinson, a professionally published writer, to join. (He was the author of "The Sex Serum" [*Wonder Stories*, October 1935] and "The Giant Bacillus" [*Tales of Wonder*, June 1938].) The elected officers of the branch were Leslie Johnson, president; J. Allison Free, Jr., secretary; N. Weedall, vice-president; H. O. Dickinson, treasurer; and F. D. Wilson, librarian.

In every sense of the word, the summer of 1938 marked the peak of the Science Fiction Association's importance and power. It had active domestic chapters in five cities and reached out to the United States as well. It had sponsored two national conventions and was planning a third for 1939. Finally, its members controlled two fine fan magazines which had gained international circulation and respect.

Incrementally, a little more seemed added to the pot when the Leeds branch decided that notices of their meetings in *Novae Terrae* were not enough and opted to produce a monthly publication of their own. This they called *The Scientifictionaleodensian*. (When asked what this odd title meant they defined it as "The inhabitant of Leeds who reads science-fiction.) The first issue was dated October 1938 and was edited by Albert Griffiths, a member who had first joined the Leeds SFL chapter in June 1935. By profession he was a research chemist. Assisting him was F. Victor Gillard. The publication was mimeographed in purple ink on two legal-sized pages; it printed reports on chapter meetings, notices of coming events, biographical sketches of members and gossip about the group. It lasted for three issues, maintaining the same format in all of them.

As the year 1938 drew to a close, clouds were beginning to gather on the SFA horizon. First, the Autumn issue proved to be *Tomorrow's* last. Its production costs were much too great to be supported by the fan audience of that time——either actual or potential. Second, the December number of *The Scientifictionaleodensian* carried news that was both disquieting and prophetic: Maurice Hanson would shortly resign his editorship of *Novae Terrae*, the association's flag-

ship publication. What actually happened was that it was discontinued altogether with the January 1939 issue.

Too much work and too little appreciation were the reasons given. It had been carried on as a volunteer project, predominately by Hanson, Carnell, Temple and Clarke. Beginning August 18, 1938, production had been facilitated by the latter two offering their living quarters at 88 Grays Inn Road as an unofficial gathering place for London branch SFA members. This became the scene of informal weekly meetings, and the storage of the association's library. It should be emphasized that *Novae Terrae's* demise had nothing to do with poor quality; during its existence the magazine had become a major historical repository of the British fan movement——and, perhaps inadvertently, of the science-fiction world in general.

These losses were to some degree compensated for by the entrance on the Liverpool scene in September 1938 of the fans David McIlwain and John F. Burke. They proposed publishing an official organ of that SFA branch to be titled *The Satellite*. Burke would be the editor, McIlwain his associate. But unlike previous British fan magazines, this one would include fiction——chiefly because both editors aspired to become writers. (In later years both succeeded, Burke under his own name and McIlwain as Charles Eric Maine. In fact that pseudonym was first used in the magazine's inaugural issue for "The Mirror," a short fantasy.)

The Satellite was an octavo-sized, hectographed magazine of twenty-four pages. What was singular about it was its frank political orientation. From the very beginning it printed material against Michelism and the fans associated with that movement. Although as editor and publisher Burke must have agreed with these views, McIlwain and Youd seemed to be their chief exponents, the latter writing as "Fantacynic." Thus in "The Rational Viewpoint" (*The Satellite* #1, October 1938) he said:

> There exists in this benighted world, a peculiar creature known as the "Michelist," which may be found haunting the remainder shops for S. F. classics; or, alternatively, spending its time shouting "Hear! Hear!" at Communist meetings. This creature, through some strange warp in its mental make-up, seeks to Improve the World; and hopes to achieve this wonderful Utopia of its dreams by stuffing Science Fiction with inane propaganda. It believes that Mssrs. Binder, Fearn, Cummings, etc. should turn out Socialistic Science-Fiction, even at the risk of starving to death on a mound of rejection slips.

Beginning with its March 1939 number *The Satellite* printed a satirical column by the Fantacynic devoted to ridiculing the Michelists, particularly Donald Wollheim and Robert Lowndes. About Wollheim he wrote: "It has been rumoured by various irresponsible persons that DAW (which I understand to be a recent acquisition by the New York Zoo and commonly known as Michy, the Almost Human) is standing for President of the U. S. A. in 1943. . . . When one of our special reporters called on Michy, he apparently mistook his uniform for he said immediately: 'I am completely innocent——it was him what did it——you can't do this to me!' Our reporter gently enlightened him as to his identity and received the following message:

> Fellow workers, unite! In the last issue of *Orrible Stories* was published a story in which the villain was a Russian. Let us march in a body to the Editorial Offices of this anachronistic, anti-progressive periodical and hang the rat of an Editor. Be brave, Comrades, your leader is with you!

Of Lowndes he wrote:

> In fan circles there is a close tussle between D. W. F. Mayer for the Scientimuchtoomuch and dear old standby Lowndes for his reverent unveiling of the Wollheim god. The latter is so good that I must quote for the benefit of the unfortunate few who may have missed it:
>
> "Because he [DAW] is an extremely sensitive individual, a visionary of the highest type, and a keen intellect, he realises that, under all shallowness and childishness of fans lie the same soulfelt [*sic*] desires for a finer, better world and higher developed humanity that he feels. . . . He cannot endure to see them in a mental rut, and all unaware of it. After all, he's human."*

*This is quoted from Lowndes's "Wollheim: The Most Fan," *The Science Fiction Fan*, October 1938, p. 10.

McIlwain carried his heavy-handed attack on Michelism and those promoting it into *Novae Terrae*; the following is quoted from his article there titled "Rationalism Simply Explained" (September 1938):

> A Michelist is a low form of scum that infects certain parts of fandom, and seeks to corrupt science-fiction by injecting indolent propaganda into the world's best literature. It is a species of communism, but a species that has lost sight of the basic principles of the cult, and founded a new fetish of Utopia via science fiction. One might as well hope to marry a Broadway flapper by reading *Breezy Stories*.

Such sniping was not unlike that which the Michelists themselves had pursued for years, particularly when they thought they had their opponents on the run. What is particularly interesting is that these British fans had become anti-Michelists without having had any contact with the American fans who were fighting the movement. Evidently their opinions derived solely from what they had read about it in American fan magazines.

With the June 1939 number of *The Satellite* these jabs at the Michelists temporarily ceased, and the Fantascynic's column was dropped. "The reason is that Sally [*The Satellite*] is no longer an independent publication, and must, perforce, pull its punches in the future," he wrote. With that issue the magazine became not just an issuance of the Liverpool SFA chapter, but the official organ of the entire organization, replacing *Novae Terrae*; divisive material was not welcome.

It should be mentioned that *The Satellite* had always included entries of general interest. For example, it began in its January 1939 issue a four-part round-robin story titled "Citadel of Dreams," with installments written by David McIlwain, Frank D. Wilson, C. S. Youd and John F. Burke. Conceived in the Dunsanian fashion of Lovecraft's "The Quest of Iranon," it told of a man who takes a strange drug and awakens in a Utopian land where famous men spend a semi-corporeal existence after they die. Here any desired object can be materialized at will by mind control alone. The being who shows our protagonist about is H. P. Lovecraft himself. The illusion dissolves when the words "John Russell Fearn" are inadvertantly uttered. (This Utopian existence is similar to Peter Prospero's *Atlantis*, 1828.) Youd also contributed other fiction and poetry, and there were provocative articles by Maurice Hanson and William Temple. A regular readers' column printed letters, including ones from the American fans Louis Kuslan, Robert A. Madle, R. D. Swisher, Bob Tucker, Harry Warner, Jr. and Richard Wilson. A coup for *The Satellite* was the announcement in the April issue that Youd had made his first professional sale. His poem "Dreamer," which had appeared in the magazine the previous October, had been bought by *Weird Tales*. (It was published there in March 1941.)

Despite the promise of a policy change, the July 1939 *Satellite* featured McIlwain's article "A Michelist on Mars," which ended with a Martian addressing the space traveller as follows:

> We want to convert you to our way of thinking whether you like it or not. We think that science fiction should be used to put over communist propaganda to the unsuspecting public. Sugar-coated socialism, you see? We think that all science fiction stories should have a sociological basis. We think that science fiction is a tool with which we can help to achieve Red Utopia...a pathway to applied communism...a hitch-hike to the Red Revolution. That is our theory——and we want you to back us up. It's called Chimelism after its inventor. Well——what say?

But more important from the standpoint of unifying British fandom was the evidence in this number that the SFA had made a rapprochement with its enemies in the old Leeds SFL chapter. A notice——the first in a SFA publication——was printed advertising J. Michael Rosenblum's publication *The Futurian*, and readers were urged to subscribe to it. Further, a letter from Rosenblum was published in the readers' column.

Despite all these happenings, the SFA was still riding high. Its third annual convention in London on May 21, 1939 attracted a record attendance of 48.

The gathering was chaired by G. Ken Chapman, and the master of ceremonies was Ted Carnell, who read to the audience a long letter of congratulations from *Thrilling Wonder Stories* which offered publicity (despite the fact that SFA members no longer belonged to the Science Fiction League).

Among the speakers were Maurice Hugi, who argued for more logic and less fantasy in science-fiction; Arthur C. Clarke, who described the experimental attainments of the British Interplanetary Society; Sidney L. Birchby, an active fan and collector, who read remarks by John Russell Fearn, who could not attend; Dr. A. M. Low, whose talk on "Science Fiction as Seen by a Scientist" was the longest on the program; and L. V. Heald of Liverpool (whose first story, "Warning from Luna," under his Charnock Walsby pen name, was appearing in the current *Tales of Wonder*), who spoke on "Science Fiction and Everyman." An unexpected speaker was W. J. Passingham. He had written two science-fiction novels, "Atlantis Returns" and "The World Behind the Moon," which had been serialized in *Modern Wonder*, a high-class boys' weekly that featured popular science and science-fiction. Passingham offered practical advice to would-be authors based on his own experiences.

Others present at the convention included John F. Burke, H. C. Chibbitt, W. Devereaux, Edward Ducker, John Edwards, George Ellis, E. J. Foster, Walter Gillings, Maurice Hanson, Philip Hetherton, Ronald Holmes, David McIlwain, A. Jansen, Harry Kay, Douglas Mayer, Eric Needham, R. C. Rookes, William Temple, Harry Turned, Eric Williams, Frank Wilson and C. S. Youd. A comprehensive report of the convention by Ted Carnell appeared in *The Satellite* for June 1939.

When *Novae Terrae* closed shop with its January 1939 issue, it announced that its obligations would be taken over by a new magazine to be titled *New Worlds*. It was to be edited by Carnell with the assistance of G. Ken Chapman, and published by them with the help of Maurice K. Hanson and Frank Edward Arnold. The first issue was dated March 1939, and labelled "A Chapman-Carnell Publication." *New Worlds* had a British letter-sized format (11¾ by 8¼ inches), and was "issued free to SFA members." (It also sold to non-members at the American equivalent of ten cents a copy.) The chief difference in policy from its predecessor was that *New Worlds* published occasional fiction.

The first story was "Empyrean Rendezvous" by John Victor Peterson, then a promising new author who had been discovered by John W. Campbell, Jr. This was an unsuccessful mixture of fantasy and science-fiction, poorly organized and grossly overwritten. If I had to guess its origin, I should say it was inspired by Chester Cuthbert's "The Sublime Vigil" of four years earlier.

The non-fiction in the issue rated better. Frank Arnold had an article titled "Is Weinbaum Over-Rated?" which concluded (with qualifications) that he was. Writing as Thornton Ayre, John Russell Fearn contributed the article "Concerning Webwork," which was defined as "A complicated mystery wherein all the strands are drawn together in the last chapter to form a complete whole." "Ayre" thought that Weinbaum had "humanized" the genre, contributing to a great breakthrough. In a bit of fantasy under his own name, titled "Science Fiction 1950," Fearn predicted that at the end of the next decade the majority of science-fiction would be "humanized," producing authors who wrote best-sellers.

In the April *New Worlds* Harry Kay responded to Arnold's article with a piece titled "Pro-Weinbaum." Since Weinbaum wrote predominately short stories, Kay felt he should be compared only to writers specializing similarly. He felt that Weinbaum "dealt with ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances," and praised him for creating a consistent historical framework of the future in all his stories. He had shown some of these to a mainstream critic, he said, and had received a generally favorable response.

The May 1939 number ran the most controversial article to appear in the magazine's history, Sam Moskowitz's "The Inscrutable American Angle." This told how Americans viewed British fans of that period. It deplored their tendancy to

run down American science-fiction in order to praise the new *Tales of Wonder* (which was composed predominately of American reprints). While support of British fan magazines by American fans was strong, this was not reciprocated: few Britons subscribed to those in the United States. The British also, he claimed, assumed an air of superiority when comparing their own publications to those from abroad. On their part, while Americans appreciated the positive qualities of *Novae Terrae* and *Tomorrow*, they found them a bit too stiff and dry for their taste; *The Satellite* and *The Futurian* were regarded as more fun. As to British fans best liked in the states, he listed Burke, Carnell, Gillings, McIlwain and Rosenblum among others. He ended the article by politely inviting a British rebuttal.

He got it in the very same issue in John Burke's "The Inscrutable British Angle." Instead of lambasting it, Burke generally agreed with the Moskowitz appraisal. He concluded by saying, "Still, taking it all round, that article needs some attention by British fans——there's too much truth in it to be ignored."

In the last (August 1939) *New Worlds* Rosenblum presented "The British Angle," which made two interesting points. First, British fans were not as dependent as Americans on magazines, having long enjoyed a tradition of science-fiction books which provided ample reading in the genre. Second, when British fans were first introduced to American fan magazines the majority of these were "fourth rate" and left a bad impression. In 1939, to the contrary, there were many good ones worthy of support. But the fact was that the British did not share the American habit of collecting fan magazines. Despite these differences, he felt that British fans liked and admired their American counterparts.

By this time Donald Wollheim, who usually felt obliged to disagree with anything Moskowitz wrote, joined in with another "American Angle" in the same number. He contended that Moskowitz spoke only for himself, and did not reflect the views of the majority of American fans. In his opinion *Tales of Wonder* was superior to any current American science-fiction magazine despite being heavily composed of reprints; these, he maintained, had "stood the test of time."

British fan magazines, he claimed, had "reached a point of maturity. . . incomprehensible to Moskowitz and hence impossible [for him] to enjoy." He suggested that Moskowitz liked *The Futurian* and *The Satellite* "because the former is 'a Cosmic Publication'," and the latter made fun of the Michelists. "If Burke chose to substitute SM for DAW some day, we would hear a different tune from Newark." As for lack of support for American publications, Wollheim cited the relative poverty of the British. This came as news to American fans, most of whom were teenagers whose income averaged no more than a dollar a week, chiefly from family allowances.

In the same *New Worlds* issue his compatriot Lowndes continued the Michelist line with an article titled "*Unknown*——and the New Escapism." The first (March 1939) number of Street and Smith's *Unknown*, featuring adult fantasy, had recently appeared. Lowndes felt its effect would be soporific, lulling fans into a dream-world. When they emerged into reality he predicted some might even commit suicide.

An article "Reverie" by Arthur Clarke (who had become assistant editor with that issue) contended that science-fiction did not need "thought-variant" ideas to advance, because there were infinite ramifications of older ideas to explore. Indeed, he claimed he could think of only two truly original ideas before the appearance of "Sinister Barrier" in the first *Unknown*: "The Human Termites" by David Keller (*Science Wonder Stories*, September through November 1929) and "The Smile of the Sphinx" by William Temple (*Tales of Wonder*, Autumn 1938).

Among the American fan magazines which had made a strong positive impression in Great Britain was James V. Taurasi's *Fantasy News*. This appeared weekly, and ran from two to eight letter-sized mimeographed pages. While it covered the entire field, it emphasized news about the professional science-fiction magazines. Possibly inspired by this, Leslie Johnson, John Burke, E. G. Ducker, and L. V. Heald in Liverpool joined efforts to put out a news sheet in England

along the same lines. They called it *Science-Fantasy Review* and it began biweekly appearance with the issue dated May 15, 1939, which had four mimeographed pages.

There was a tendancy in the publication to editorialize the news rather than present it "straight." For example, in reporting on the British Interplanetary Society's urging rockets for war use, editors remarked, "We are to take it, then, that the invention of even more methods of wiping out human beings is in keeping with the idealistic spirit of those noble pioneers of the British Interplanetary Society." (The German V-1 and V-2 rockets that were fired on London showed that the society's suggestion was clearly prescient.)

In the third (June 12th) issue Walter Gillings thanked American authors for coming to his rescue when he couldn't obtain enough original material locally to keep *Tales of Wonder* going. By this time Abraham Bloom and Ron Holmes had been added to the staff, and the magazine was doing a very good job of keeping the British informed of what was going on in the world of science-fiction.

With its July 1st issue *Science-Fantasy Review* added a four-paged supplement of articles, just as *Fantasy News* had done earlier in establishing itself. Since Burke was a member of the staff it was perhaps inevitable for the following item to appear in the August 15th number: "Who is D. Wollheim and what is a Michelist, if at all? Why do so many SFAers dislike him? Is this a question of international diplomacy?" Another remark which time has modified was "We've heard that Sprague de Camp gets ideas for stories from John Campbell, then writes them up in his own style."

A month before *Science-Fantasy Review* was founded another new publication appeared on the scene. C. S. Youd, a frequent contributor to *The Satellite*, began issuing *The Fantast* out of Eastleigh. Although listed as a "companion magazine," it was in many ways more elaborate than *The Satellite*. It was larger sized, carried twice as much wordage, and boasted a pictorial cover. (The Scotch fan-artist Osmond Robb drew the one for April.) This carried a story by David McIlwain, an article by John Burke and a long poem by Arthur Clarke, "The Twilight of the Sun." D. R. Smith contributed a review of the tenth anniversary number of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and a letter commenting on a recent issue of *The Satellite*. The second (May 1939) *Fantast* contained a plea on the front cover to subscribe to *The Satellite*, "a miniature bomb-shell and then some," and started a serial by The Fantacynic called "Fanopolis." There was also an anti-Michelist slur by Don J. Cameron (quite possibly a pseudonym): "DAW (New York). Yes, I realize that you're only wanting to please fandom. Why not try suicide——that would be sure to raise a laugh."

While superficially different, *The Satellite* and *The Fantast* had much in common. They were always mutually supporting and their policies were alike. A scanning of their contents-pages showed the same contributors. A single small coterie of fans——chiefly Burke, McIlwain and Youd——produced both. In a country where fewer than a dozen fan magazines were extant, they gave the illusion that there was more activity than actually existed.

Harry Turner drew the cover for the July *Fantast*. This also had a story and a poem by Harold Gottliffe. (This may be further evidence for a rapprochement between the SFL and the SFA, but since *The Fantast* was not an official SFA publication we cannot be certain of this.) Poems by John B. Michel, the originator of Michelism, began to appear with the September issue. Here editor Youd also wrote, ". . .we might as well be in the fashion and add yet another to the votes of censure passed on Moskowitz at al. for their ban on Michelists at the recent "world" SF convention." (A note of hypocricy is evident here, since neither Youd nor any other British fan had publicly objected to the expulsion of Cohen, Gottliffe and Rosenblum from the SFA, nor to their exclusion from two subsequent national conventions.) Finally, a letter column, "Fantast's Folly," was instituted. This carried lengthy letters from both British and American fans.

(continued on page 13)

Pioneer Publisher

An Interview with Lloyd Eshbach

Eric Leif Davin

Lloyd Arthur Eshbach was present almost at the creation of modern magazine science-fiction. As a teenager he sold his first two stories on the same day, October 14, 1929, to two of the world's first science-fiction magazines, *Amazing Stories* and the brand-new *Scientific Detective Monthly*, the latter a short-lived sister publication to Hugo Gernsback's *Science Wonder Stories*. In those halcyon times when the postal service made more than one delivery per day, the morning mail brought an acceptance from T. O'Conor Sloane for "A Voice from the Ether," while in the afternoon came another from David Lasser at *Science Wonder* for "The Man with the Silver Disc." Sloane finally got "A Voice from the Ether" into print in 1931, and more than forty years later Mike Ashley published it again as a representative story from that year in the first volume of *The History of the Science Fiction Magazine* (1974).[1]* Over the course of that decade Eshbach wrote 39 stories, selling 34. He wrote fewer in the 1940's, but sold all of them. He went on to publish a total of more than fifty short stories, and sixty years later his *The Land Beyond the Gate* tetralogy gained him an entirely new audience of fantasy fans.

But it is not as a writer that Eshbach made his greatest mark on the history of science-fiction. Rather, his importance lies in having pioneered publication of the genre in hard covers. Without question, science-fiction entered a new stage when Gernsback launched *Amazing Stories* in 1926. The next two decades, when it was a magazine phenomenon, were formative. The trail-blazing authors of that period were breaking new ground, establishing new literary conventions. Nevertheless they viewed their work as essentially ephemeral, having no life beyond a month on the newsstands in some garishly illustrated pulp. The possibility of a more enduring existence for their efforts—of, say, relative immortality between the covers of a book—was inconceivable.

Even so, this had to be the next stage of the genre's evolution and, with the end of World War II, some in the science-fiction world began to conceive of this possibility. Eshbach was one of these. Mainstream publishers had not yet been convinced of the financial viability of science-fiction. There had been a few early anthologies from the commercial firms, such as *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction*, edited by Donald A. Wollheim in 1943, and *Adventures in Space and Time*, edited by Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas in 1946. But most mainstream houses remained unconvinced of the profitability of the genre, and were reluctant to chance experiments in its direction. Into that breach stepped Eshbach and his Fantasy Press, a small specialty publishing house he launched in 1946. He followed by establishing Polaris Press, a short-lived companion, in 1952.

Technically, Fantasy Press was not the genre's first. August Derleth's Arkham House had published *The Outsider* in 1939. But that was a collection of horror stories by H. P. Lovecraft. And while Arkham House would and did issue an occasional purly science-fiction volume, its stock in trade remained horror, fan-

*Notes for this article will be found on page 134.

tasy, and particularly the work of Lovecraft. There were also others who felt that science-fiction should move to the book publication stage——Tom Hadley, Ken Krueger and Donald Grant of Buffalo Books, and Martin Greenberg and David A. Kyle of Gnome Press——and who launched specialty presses at roughly the same time as Eshbach.[2] But with the exception of Gnome Press, founded in 1948, these other efforts were transitory, producing perhaps one, perhaps a handful of books, and then fading. Fantasy Press, however, survived and thrived for a dozen years, gathering into handsome hard-cover volumes some of the best magazine fiction in the field. The authors thus assured of recognition and longevity in this manner included such early giants as Stanley G. Weinbaum, E. E. ("Doc") Smith, A. E. van Vogt, L. Sprague de Camp, Jack Williamson and John W. Campbell, Jr., who as editor of *Astounding* was attempting to take science-fiction yet a new stage further. In addition, in 1947 Eshbach edited and his Fantasy Press published the very first book *about* the genre, *Of Worlds Beyond: The Science of Science Fiction Writing*. In this were the papers from a symposium of seven science-fiction writers——Campbell, de Camp, van Vogt, Williamson, Smith, Robert A. Heinlein and "John Taine"——which Eshbach himself had organized.

By 1958 commercial publishers had begun to awaken to the fact that science-fiction fandom bought books. Their entrance into the field as competitors with more money and infrastructure support ended the virtual monopoly of the small specialty houses. According to Eshbach, Fantasy Press therefore sold "a trailer truck-load" of its stock to Donald Grant, while Marty Greenberg of Gnome Press also bought, at most, a couple of hundred books from its inventory. At the time, it was thought by some that Gnome had bought both Fantasy Press and its entire inventory, a story Eshbach contends was bruited about in order to stall Gnome's creditors.[3] If so, the ploy was but partially successful, for the firm struggled on for only a few more years before folding.

In a larger sense, the end of Fantasy Press didn't matter, since it had served its purpose. It had made possible the evolutionary leap of science-fiction to a new stage of existence. It had demonstrated that there was an audience for science-fiction between hard covers. It had kept the flame alive until the torch could be passed to a new kind of publisher. The inconceivable had become reality. Primarily for this reason Lloyd Eshbach was made Guest of Honor at the seventh World Science Fiction Convention at Cincinnati in 1949. Forty years later he was given the Milford Award for "Lifetime Achievement in Fantasy and Science Fiction Editing" for his work at Fantasy Press, and for the same reason First Fandom inducted him into its Hall of Fame.

Lloyd Arthur Eshbach was born of Pennsylvania Dutch stock on June 20, 1910 in Palm, Pennsylvania. He was brought up in Reading, and attended school there until the tenth grade. In 1931 he married Helen Margaret Richards, with whom he had two sons. Although active in the science-fiction field, he supported his family mainly as an advertising copywriter, manager and sales representative for a series of department stores, paint companies and publishers.

In 1983 he returned to science-fiction in a big way. In that year he edited and introduced *Subspace Encounter*, an unfinished novel by "Doc" Smith, and also edited and introduced *Alicia in Blunderland*, a parody by his friend P. Schuyler Miller, which had originally appeared as a fanzine serial half a century before. He has also written his memoirs of the age of specialty presses, *Over My Shoulder / Reflections on a Science Fiction Era*. He followed this in 1984 with his popular *The Land Beyond the Gate*, the first of a tetralogy which concluded with *The Scroll of Lucifer* seven years later. These fantasy novels re-established him as a writer in the field.

In 1988, at ICON 7, the State University of New York at Stonybrook awarded Lloyd Eshbach the Raymond Z. Gallun Award, which it administers, for "Outstanding contributions to the genre of Science Fiction." After hearing Eshbach's praises sung, Ray Gallun turned to him and said, "Gosh, I had no idea you'd done

so much!" Now in his ninth decade, Lloyd Eshbach continues to do much and betrays no hint of retiring from the field with which he has been identified all his life.[4]

This interview was conducted on February 3, 1991. Mr. Eshbach was 80 years old at the time.

• • •

Eric Davin: *Why don't we start with some personal information? Can you tell me a little about your wife?*

Lloyd Eshbach: Well, when I made my first sale, in 1929, I called up my intended, Helen Richards, to tell her. I later married her, and we were married for 47 years. She died of pancreatic cancer in 1978. Donald, my elder son, died of lung cancer in 1990. My younger son Daniel is 46, and lives just a few miles from me. He has two sons. Donald had three children, so I'm a grandfather five times. The Eshbach name will be around for ahile.[5]

How did you meet Helen?

We met in church in Reading. She was eighteen and I was sixteen, but I looked older than my age and she didn't know I was two years younger. When she found out, she broke off with me. She wouldn't be going with a kid! A couple of years later we picked things up again, and finally married in 1931.

Was she also Pennsylvania Dutch?

Well, "Richards" was originally "Reichert," a German name, so we had the same ethnic background, but her family hadn't spoken Pennsylvania Dutch for generations.

What was your family background?

On my father Oswin's side we came from a long line of farmers who emigrated from the Rhine Valley of Germany in the St. Andrew galley. They came over to escape religious persecution, but I don't know what it was. On my mother's side I believe we are half Jewish. Her ancestors came over from Switzerland in the same year. They were all landowners, businessmen, farmers and what-not.

My mother, whose maiden name was Kathryn Leeser, had a really marvellous mind. But she married at fifteen and had six children, so wasn't able to develop it as much as she might have. I remember once whan I was nine or ten and I was home from school because I was sick. To keep me entertained, Mom started reciting poems she'd memorized in school. She recited *a hundred of them!*

I got my creativity from her. My dad used to read my stories and say to me in amazement, "Where'd you *get* this?" I'd point over my shoulder and answer, "From Mom." She was absolutely in favor of my writing. In fact, she just about burst with pride when I started making it. She wasn't demonstrative, but boy, she just beamed! Naturally this pleased me.

What about your schooling?

I left school in the tenth grade. You see, I always hated and loathed math. I learned ordinary arithmetic, because I knew I'd use it. But when it came to algebra and geometry, I didn't know anything about them and I didn't want to. I found a good student who let me copy all his papers so I got good grades, but I didn't understand any of it. When I got into the tenth grade he was in another class, so I got zero's for the couple of months I was there. My dad, who encouraged me to study harder, said if I flunked math I'd have to quit school. I said, "Then I may as well quit now, because I know I'm going to flunk. There's no way I can make up my deficit."

So at age fifteen I quit and went to work as a sign-painter's apprentice. Originally I thought I was going to be an artist. Seven months later I be-

came a show-card painter in a department store. Then I moved into white collar work for the rest of my life. During the Depression I worked in a variety store as a window decorator and show-card writer. Through my writing on the side I got a copy-writing job in advertising--and so it went.

Have you even regretted dropping out of school?

Nope. No one's ever asked to see a diploma. Everyone just assumed that I was not only a high school grad, but in most cases that I was a college grad. I never claimed to be, but I also never corrected them. However, I did work on a doctoral dissertation once--not my own--because I needed the money. It was on the Agrarian Movement as represented in the work of Theodore Dreiser and two other well known writers I no longer remember. I finished the first chapter for the guy. It was just a matter of editing; I found I could cut the wordage in half without losing anything. But it was boring as all get-out, and my conscience bothered me. I couldn't go on with it. So I told him to find another sucker. He must have, for he eventually got his degree.

Do you feel you may have missed out on some knowledge by dropping out?

No, I've been an omniverous reader all my life. I don't put much stock in it, but my I.Q. once tested at 145. I started writing science-fiction when I was seventeen and selling it when I was nineteen. I once read an entire college freshman chemistry text just to get the science I needed for one story! I've done the same kind of research for other stories. I'm one of those freaks who can speed-read if I want to. I've absorbed so much in so many different fields that I don't feel I've missed a thing in not getting any diplomas. Recently I was contacted by the Reading High School Alumni Association. They wanted to make me the Alumnus of the Year at their summer reunion. I told them I'd never graduated. So they're going to give me a Lifetime Achievement Award instead, and add me to the list of alumni anyway. That's the equivalent of an honarary high school diploma, I guess.

In my high school science class I used to raise my hand to answer every question. No matter what it was, I knew the answer, so after a while the teacher stopped calling on me. Once I mentioned in passing that the moons of Mars were called Demos and Phobos. The teacher was amazed, and asked me where I'd learned that, as they weren't named in our textbook. I didn't want to say that I'd got it from *A Princess of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs, so I simply said that I'd read it somewhere.

I've also been blessed with a good memory, but in recent years it's begun to fail me in the matter of names. Five minutes after hearing someone's name I've forgotten it.

You mention Burroughs. How did you become interested in science-fiction?

From my older brothers' copies of Munsey magazines, where I read all the Burroughs Mars stories, Merritt's "The Moon Pool" and so on. This was long before *Amazing Stories*. I had four older siblings (as well as a sister who was three years younger), and each week one older brother bought *Argosy* and the other bought *All-Story*. They cost ten cents a copy, and that was all each could afford in a week. I had access to their magazines, but I had to be very careful about how I handled them. My brothers were very particular about their collections.

My next older brother wanted to write, but he never got beyond the first page of anything. He was into sports and very rough in his grammar. He did have a creative mind, but lacked the technical skills of writing. He became a candy maker. Meanwhile my eldest brother became a mechanic.

What was it about this type of literature that excited you and your brothers?

It was the sweep, the opening of new worlds, the imagination. But, understand, we read *everything*. I read all the Frank Merriwell stories, all of Horatio Alger, not just science-fiction and fantasy——but that appealed to me most.

You mentioned your mother reciting poetry. Did you get your love of it from her? I know of some poems you published in Wonder Stories.

Not knowingly, but I enjoyed reading poetry. In junior high school, about the seventh grade, I discovered I could make things rhyme. I decided to try writing verse and found I could. I submitted some to a column called 'The Poet's Corner" in the school newspaper. In the next issue of the paper "The Poet's Corner" was all my work! I thought, hey, this is fun!

At that time I was going to be an artist. I was in a special arts class and I did illustrations for the school paper. I even sold some paintings at the age of eleven——some visitor from New York wanted to buy all I had. Well, I sold them, happily. I can still draw anything I can see, though I can't create a picture from just a mental image. Both my brothers had the same ability. But when the school paper started publishing my verse, I decided I liked that better.

My first prose appearance was also in the school newspaper, when I was in the eighth grade. It had a page entitled "I think." I had written an essay in response to a question in civics class and the teacher, Katherine Haage, put it in the paper under that heading. Then she asked me to write a short story for the next issue. So I did. I still have it, and it isn't bad for a thirteen-year-old kid. It was a sports story. Then she asked if I'd write another. So I wrote a longer one, which was published as a two-part serial. That's when I decided to become an author instead of an artist.

In the Thirties I tried everything. I wrote juvenile stories for Sunday School papers. In the Forties I wrote mysteries. My niece is a successful writer, and just after she graduated from high school we collaborated on several love stories. They were published under the name of "Judy Schuyler." From about 1934 to 1936 I edited a journal for the Galleon Writers' Guild, an Italian writers' club in Reading, and I wrote some verse for it. Then I started acting as an agent for a lot of local versifiers. I'd send out their material as well as my own. I wrote quite a bit of verse at that time. But I wouldn't call it poetry, even though some appeared in a number of poetry journals.

Why?

Because poetry is something which is going to *live*, and I don't think we have a right to determine whether anything we write will live. I consider Robert Frost's work poetry. The same applies to a lot of the old-timers——many, but not all of them.

Why did your teacher think you could write fiction when all you'd written for the school newspaper was an opinion piece and some verse?

I have no idea. Up until then I'd never thought of writing any fiction. Katherine Haage was really responsible for my becoming a writer. She was a civics teacher, and didn't even have me for English composition. I don't know why she thought I could write.

When I tried to write my first science-fiction story, "Up from the Pit," it was a very bad imitation of A. Merritt. My second story was a ghost story. The third was "The Valley of the Titans." The first draft of that was rejected; I rewrote it and later sold it to *Amazing Stories*. It appeared in March 1931.

What was there about A. Merritt that excited you?

His vivid, wild imagination. That fascinated me. And his purple prose, as they called it, certainly appealed to me. Now, while I read everything by Ed-

gar Rice Burroughs that I could get my hands on, I never tried to imitate him. Both Schuyler Miller and Jack Williamson also——I won't say actually imitated——but were deeply influenced by Merritt. But when the editor of *Amazing* compared my story to Merritt's "The Moon Pool" and "The Metal Monster," I thought, hey, this is getting too close for comfort. So I stopped imitating him. Anyway, by that time I'd learned how to write and felt I'd found my own style.

Besides Merritt, who else excited you?

H. P. Lovecraft's "The Colour Out of Space" is one of my favorite stories. "Doc" Smith excited me, but not so much that I wanted to write like him. Beginning with "The Skylark of Space" I enjoyed all his stuff.

However, when I completed his unfinished sequel to "Subspace Explorers," published by Canaveral, I purposely imitated his style. He'd been using me as a sounding-board during the original writing. He'd call from Florida or California or Illinois or whrever he happened to be, and we'd discuss it. He also sent me a copy of each portion as he went along. When "Doc" died Fred Pohl sent out a notice asking if anyone had unfinished Smith manuscripts which might be completed. I had some, and either I sent them to him or——we were both living in Chicago at the time——he may have come to get the manuscripts himself. I can't remember, but it doesn't matter because nothing ever came of it.

Then I was reading and offering suggestions to Dave Kyle, who was writing "The Dragon Lensman" under contract with Pohl. I was the Kyles' house-guest at the time. Fred had sent Dave a lot of Smith material he thought might be of use. In it was a manuscript of this unfinished "Subspace Explorers" sequel. Lo and behold, notations with my initials were in the margins. It was my old copy!

So with Dave's permission I took it home, photocopied it, and sent the original back. I'd mentioned to Dave that somebody ought to complete the work, but he didn't think it could be done. Fred didn't think so either, which is why he'd never done anything with it. They thought there wasn't enough to go on.

But "Doc" had discussed it with me, and I knew what he had in mind. No one else did. I looked it over again and decided I could finish it. I contacted his daughter and got her permission. I also asked her to look for the very first draft he wrote. She found it, and with all the material I had I put everything together, writing about 12,000 words myself to complete it. And I defy anybody, no matter how rabid a Smith fan, to point out where "Doc" left off and I began. (So far, no one's been able to.) Berkeley issued the novel in 1983 as *Subspace Encounter*. (The original title had been *Subspace Safari*.) I suppose I'd have been entitled to call it a collaboration, and I debated doing that, but I finally decided, No, it's "Doc's" story and I shouldn't. So it was published as "Edited and with an introduction by...."

Just recently a complete holograph manuscript of *Subspace Safari* came to light, and is now in my possession. Apparently it was never retyped and the handwriting is very hard to decipher. This dates from the time "Doc" decided to make the work part of a trilogy. He planned to write an unrelated novel set in the same universe as *Subspace Explorers*, but with totally new characters. A third novel would connect these two, but would become the second of the series. This was *Subspace Safari*, which I had "completed" and which had appeared as *Subspace Encounter*. Confusing, isn't it?

After starting out as a writer, in 1946 you became a genre publisher. What led you to launch Fantasy Press?

You might say it was "Doc" Smith. After the war I was working at Glidden Paints in Reading. I got a badly printed postcard from Tom Hadley in Buffalo, New York, advertising publication of "The Skylark of Space" as a book. I dearly wanted to own a copy, so I promptly sent him three dollars and waited. And waited.

Hadley had launched Buffalo Books immediately after the war. His mother was a well-off heiress, and gave him $5000 to publish a book he wanted to put out. Supposedly Ken Kreuger and Donald Grant were co-partners, but basically the project was Hadley's. Grant went into the military, and I don't know what happened to Kreuger. I eventually recommended to Hadley that he change the name of the firm to "Hadley Publishing Company," because "Buffalo Books" said nothing and he was the sole operator anyway.

Well, *Skylark* never came, so eventually I wrote a letter of complaint to Hadley, asking where it was. In return I got a phone call from him, in which he apologized profusely. This set a pattern for our subsequent relationship. There had been delays, he said. There would always be delays. In the meantime, he'd published Taine's *Time Stream*. He asked if I wanted my three dollars to go towards that, and order *Skylark* when it was actually published. I agreed.

It turned out that Hadley was one of the most disorganized people you could imagine. He dealt with me entirely by telephone. He had no mailing list. He never kept records of any kind, and never wrote letters. He just tried to deal with each order as it came in, and then threw the letter in a big box and never looked at it again.

Well, *Skylark* finally came out, but then I learned that he'd never heard of the concept of review copies! I told him to send me ten copies and I'd make sure it got reviewed. I sent them out, including one to *Amazing Stories*. On the basis of the review there the entire press run of about a thousand copies sold out.

Because of all this, I'd printed up some stationery for Hadley and started doing other things for him. I told him to send me the box of all the orders he'd ever received and I'd turn them into a mailing list. He did, and I compiled a list of about a thousand names and addresses. Then, since he never wrote anyone, I started answering his mail for him. One day I got a letter from the Spokane Better Business Bureau on behalf of an irate fan in Washington. A book he'd paid for had never arrived, and the bureau wanted to know what was going on. I decided I'd gotten in too deep, and called Hadley to tell him I didn't want to do this for him any more. He said that was okay, as he was thinking of getting out himself.

Meanwhile my co-workers at Glidden knew all about this, because Hadley was always telephoning me at work and I had to tell them what was going on. So I just turned to them and said, "How would you guys like to start a book publishing company?" I wasn't really serious——just joking. But to my surprise, two of them immediately agreed. "How much would it take?" they wanted to know.

These two were Andrew J. Donnell, who was the artist on a newsletter I produced for Glidden, and Herbert MacGregor, assistant sales manager for the company. Donnell agreed to do the art work and MacGregor agreed to handle the packing and shipping. Then MacGregor pulled in his next door neighbor, Lyman Houck, who was an accountant for an insurance company, to keep our books. I'd do everything else. Each of us chipped in $20, and the total of $80 launched Fantasy Press. Donnell designed a letterhead for us, and I composed a letter announcing our first publication, Smith's *Spacehounds of IPC*. We mailed the latter to everyone on the list I'd compiled for Hadley, and got enough orders to pay for printing that first book. We were immediately profitable, and in our first year had over $25,000 in sales. And it all happened because I wanted to own "Doc" Smith's stories in book form!

After a dozen years, Fantasy Press finally shut down in 1958. You say most of your stock went to Donald Grant, who was then back in the specialty press business, and that no one ever bought the company itself. Yet most of the reference books say that Gnome Press took over your stock, and that Greenberg bought you out. How did that happen?

I think it happened because I wasn't on to what was happening at Gnome

and probably unwittingly aided this impression. I allowed Greenberg to reprint Smith's *Gray Lensman*, which Fantasy Press had published. What he did was produce a facsimile edition from the original, even keeping the "first edition" notation on it——though he did add the Gnome Press name. Perhaps this confused the identity of the two presses in people's minds.

Also, I arranged to have the company I was working for print the last two books Gnome published. One was Campbell's *Invaders from the Infinite* and the other was another Smith title. Greenberg never paid for the last book, by the way. As a side point, David Kyle, supposedly co-equal partner with Greenberg, never got a penny out of the operation. This may have contributed to the confusion as well.

But the truth is that Gnome was *not* a continuation of Fantasy Press in the slightest way. My company just folded and the stock went primarily to Grant.

After not having written anything for quite awhile, you're now writing fantasy. What got you started again?

The death of my wife. She died in 1978. I'd actually started writing my reminiscences, *Over My Shoulder*, before she died. It was a long, drawn-out process because it required extensive correspondence with the agents, writers and other publishers involved. Then I visited Dave Kyle and read his first draft of *Dragon Lensman*. I offered him some criticisms and suggestions which he followed. That made me think, hey, maybe I can do this again, too. The first thing I tried was a science-fiction novel. I figured if I could write a thousand words a day, in sixty days I'd have one.

Which do you find easier to write, short stories or novels?

Novels are much easier. The first two stories I sold were 12,000 and 13,000 words. The third one was 20,000. The fourth was 13,000. Now, I did write shorter pieces, but I've always been more comfortable with the greater length. These weren't novels, of course. And until I started writing again the length of a novel scared me. All those pages——that was quite a challenge! Oddly enough, now it doesn't bother me at all.

Which novel was this that you began work on?

You haven't seen it because all the editors rejected it. It was a space opera, a world-saver, based on an old idea. I'd actually thought of the plot some thirty years before, and I just started writing it off the top of my head. I can do that; years ago I usually did. I showed it to Don Wollheim once, and he said it would have sold right away in the Thirties, maybe even the Forties, but not now.

So I rewrote the beginning, outlined a new middle and end, and sent it to my agent. He sent it to Shelley Shapiro at Del Rey, who rejected it because of its hackneyed plot. The new beginning seems okay to me; in fact I think it's excellent, and I believe she thinks so too. But she said the plot was ancient——and it *was*. I've come up with a new plot now, and I'll *still* sell the blooming thing! I haven't done anything with it so far, though.

Well, I wrote that in the allotted sixty days. Then I finished "Doc's" novel, which I told you about. I followed that with *The Land Beyond the Gate*. It now has three sequels,[6] though I wrote it without any sequel in mind. However, I put in the portals, gates to other worlds, in case anybody wanted one. At the time I had no idea at all what was beyond those gates.

When Lester Del Rey accepted *The Land Beyond the Gate* he wanted only two very small changes. They were both science-fictional, and he said they should be deleted. Science-fiction fans will tolerate fantasy, he said, but fantasy fans don't like science-fictional intrusions. So I cut 'em. Then he said, "If you have a sequel in mind, I'd like to see it."

So I immediately came up with not just one but three, and sent him outlines for all of them. On the basis of these we signed a contract and he sent me

an advance payment before I'd written a word! Then he sent me a check again after I completed each novel. The first book is now in its fifth printing, the second in its fourth printing, the third in its second, and the fourth has just come out. I think the third, *The Sorceress of Scath*, is better than the first two. And the fourth, *The Scroll of Lucifer*, really winds things up.[7]

Did the acceptance of these novels surprise you?

By Del Rey? Not really. I thought the first one was a good book, and that Lester would go for it. But as far as the market is concerned, you never know. That's a sheer gamble. Today, with space in bookstores at a premium, the merit of a book doesn't always mean a whole lot.

You must have been in your late sixties when you started writing again. How did you accomodate yourself to current tastes and styles?

I had no trouble at all, really. I just wrote what I wanted to write. I haven't read much of the new generation of writers. Most of the new stuff I don't care for, and I don't want to write like that. I don't want a lot of sex and gore and four-letter words. Fortunately Lester liked what I did.

Also, fantasy doesn't age as much as science-fiction.

That's correct. But I still think I can make a saleable manuscript out of that first science-fiction novel, and I'm stubborn enough to keep on trying.

Do you think that writing fantasy made it easier for you to get back in the field?

Probably so. There's more fantasy than science-fiction being written now, and more bad fantasy than good fantasy. So, if you can write good fantasy, you should have no trouble selling it. And personally, I enjoy reading fantasy. Therefore I'm doing what I want to do.

I also do a tremendous amount of research in the mythology of ancient peoples, such as the Celts who figure in *The Land Beyond the Gate*. In *The Scroll of Lucifer* I introduced the mythology of ancient China and India.

Lester now has the synopsis of a new fantasy trilogy that takes place in 2350 B. C. The first locale is Egypt, the second one is in Crete, and the third is in Akkad, which was a successor to Sumer. I've done extensive research on them already, though I still don't have an okay on them. Until I get this I don't want to mention the trilogy's overall title.

Do you feel you've slowed down in your writing?

Yes——but I've slowed down intentially. I've gone back to writing in longhand. I used to do all my composing on a typewriter. I went back to longhand because I write better that way. When things are going well I average about a thousand words a day. That comes to about three legal pad pages.

Right now I'm struggling with a short fantasy story. I have to write one of 4000 words for Pulphouse Publishers. It's for an anthology of my stories which will be titled *In Wonder's Way: Tales from Seven Decades of Science Fantasy.* It'll have a story of mine from each decade, starting in the Thirties. I'm writing the one for the Nineties now. Not many writers can match seven decades of publication. Anyway, this story has to be short because there's a space limitation. The book can't be longer than 30,000 words.[8]

You're eighty now, so if you hang on for just another decade, you can write a story in 2001 as well!

That's a good idea! Actually longevity runs in my family. My older sister is still alive at 90, and I had two great-grandparents who lived to be 100 and 101.[9] My father died two months short of 85. My oldest brother died at 84.

In the meantime, I'm working on seven projected novels, including the outline of one set in the modern-day Scottish Highlands. That part of the world fascinates me——I own thirty or forty books on Celtish mythology alone. This is a story I mentioned just casually to Lester. It would be a single novel, not part of a series.

What's your normal writing routine?

Generally I try to write in the morning, when I'm fresh, but sometimes it doesn't happen until late in the afternoon and occasionally not until late at night. As I've said, I shoot for a thousand words a day, but I don't limit it to that. If I happen to write two thousand, fine; if I can get only five hundred, well, that's okay too.

Do you write seven days a week?

Often, but not religiously. I know Fred Pohl writes every day. I suppose Asimov does, too. But I usually write five, maybe six days a week. Sometimes seven. Occasionally, none. It all depends on how things are going.

Do you do all your research first, or research as you write?

I do an awful lot first, and then some more while I'm writing. Things often turn up in the writing that require more research. By the way, I have a personal library of some four thousand books. I live in what used to be a frat house of Albright College. The rooms have fourteen-foot ceilings, so there's plenty of room for them. I have seventy books on mythology alone, few of them on Greece and Rome because my interest in other areas of the ancient world is greater. I found you can't rely on the public library, for it just doesn't have all the specialized books you need.

How many drafts do you write?

I write a draft of a scene in longhand, which may be four or five pages. I type that up, making changes as I go; that's my second draft. I then edit the typescript. But if in typing I run into things which change the direction of the story, I may have to go back and rewrite portions on my legal pads. When I have a completed typescript I go over the whole thing, noting changes on the copy. Finally, I have a professional typist do the final draft. So, usually three drafts.

Lester does the copy-editing on my books himself. I was told by his associate that this isn't the usual practice, but we've been friends for a lot of years. I just received from Ballantine the copy-edited galley for *The Scroll of Lucifer*, and there wasn't much editing done. My final draft stayed pretty much final.

Invariably Lester has input which can change things substantially. In *The Sorceress of Scath* I had what I thought was a finished novel when he pointed out that there were two major scenes which, while interesting in themselves, didn't really advance the story. And he was right. So I took them out and rewrote the last half of the book. Actually, that led into a much more interesting avenue with new developments. Rewriting is one of the necessary hazards. That's why I'm not going ahead with my Egypt-Crete-Akkad trilogy until I get Lester's okay.[10]

Looking back, what's your favorite story or novel from all you've written?

Oh, brother! Man alive, that's difficult.... I suppose *The Land Beyond the Gate*. I enjoyed writing that story, and I enjoy rereading it now! That may sound vain, but nevertheless I really like it.

By the way——here's something I don't think has ever been mentioned: my collaboration with P. Schuyler Miller. We broke into the science-fiction magazines around the same time. I recognized the Merritt influence on his work and wrote him. He admitted the Merritt influence. We became correspondents, and then

friends. Eventually we arranged to rendezvous in New York City, where we spent a day together. In the course of that day we decided to collaborate on a novel. We would have two lead characters; he'd write one character's viewpoint and I'd write the other. Well, I wrote my half, but he never finished his. I still have my half and what Schuy wrote of his, which come to about 45,000 words together. One day I just may complete the thing! It'd have to undergo some major changes, though.

Another thing which isn't generally known is that I have a complete unpublished "Doc" Smith novel——a murder mystery. I did some revising and polishing of the first chapter, and George Price at Advent will bring it out in a collector's edition. And that's the end of the "Doc" Smith material.[11]

Speaking of "lost" novels, didn't you once announce that Fantasy Press would be publishing a novel by Harry Stephen Keeler, the noted mystery writer?

Yes, and after Fantasy Press folded I sent it, with Keeler's permission, to Marty Greenberg at Gnome. It was a time-travel story in which the hero met himself. It was written with logical plot development, but in the typical Keeler complex writing style. He did make an utterly fantastic idea convincing, though. But Marty didn't like it.

Anyhow, Keeler sent it to a firm in Portugal, which printed it in Portuguese——the only time it was ever published. There's a Keeler society in New Jersey or Maryland which once wrote me about it. They'd been trying to trace the novel and found out about this Portuguese edition, but were never able to find a copy. I've kicked myself all over the lot for never photocopying the manuscript while I had it in my hands. So far as I know, it no longer exists.

It sounds like Heinlein's "All You Zombies...."

I never read that.

Or "By Your Bootstraps."

Yeah, that sort of thing, where the hero goes back in time to meet himself. Keeler wrote the most complex, involved stories, and this novel was like that. One thread which leads to another thread which leads to another. In fact, he even drew charts to follow all the ramifications of his plots. I have a copy of an article he did for *Author and Journalist* in which he discussed these charts and his almost mathematical plot complications.

Did you ever try anything like that?

I tried it to see how it would work, but found it was too mechanical. I like to just let things flow. I still have a general idea of where I'm going. The synopsis of that trilogy I sent to Del Rey totalled 38 pages. I described the beginning, the ending, and some of the middle of each novel.

When I write a novel, I outline each chapter just before I begin it. I don't outline subsequent chapters until I'm ready to start them, because things may change in the current chapter which would change the later ones. Nothing is carved in stone; I plan as I go along. There are some authors who write totally blind, with no idea where they're going. I can't do that; I always have the ending in mind. I know where I'm going, but the route I follow may change.

Getting back to publishing, I believe in 1955 or so, as a Polaris imprint, you put out two Burroughs novels, "Beyond Thirty" and "The Man-Eater...."

Oh, I'll have to tell you about those. By the way, they weren't anything like Polaris books, and no Polaris imprint was involved. I got copies of the stories from Ozzie Train, because I wanted one of each for myself. Then I realized that other collectors would want them, too. Copyrights on both had lapsed into the public domain, though I didn't check into that at the time. As it happened, there wasn't any need for secrecy.

I had a gal who did some typing for me type them up, two book pages on a single sheet. I had them reproduced cheaply, not by mimeograph, but something comparable. Offset printing, not the good offset printing of today, but on letter-sized sheets. I hand-stapled 300 copies of each. Then I had a color stock cover printed, and sold them for three dollars a copy. They weren't copyrighted and no publisher was named because I thought at the time I might be violating copyright. Today I don't even have copies of my own! That's the story behind those two.

I've been selling, over the last year or two, some items I've held on to a long time. At one time I considered publishing *The Skylark of Space* in a format to match the other Fantasy Press "Skylark" books. Julius Unger, the New York fantasy dealer, urged me very strongly to do this. He said he'd buy 500 copies on publication. While I was considering this, I had A. J. Donnell make a black and white drawing for the cover. I also had the binder make a binder stamp. They gave me a proof on the blue cloth that I used for Smith books. Eventually, however, I decided against publishing it.

But Donnell held onto the original drawing, and recently I sold it for him to Barry Levin on the West Coast. I think he got $800 or $1000 for it. Just last week I came across the cover proof in my files. I mentioned this in a letter to Levin, and he offered me $175 for it. Well, I mailed it to him, believe me! It's a unique item.

Where did Ozzie get copies of the Burroughs novels?

He had original tear-sheets, or perhaps typed copies. "Beyond Thirty" had been published in a pulp magazine like *All-Story*—I can't remember which—and "The Man-Eater" had been serialized in some newspaper.[12]

Did you get much feedback on those Burroughs novels?

None. Not even from the Burroughs people. They probably never heard of them. Those 300 copies are real collector's items today. Awhile back Barry advertised one of them in his catalog for several hundred dollars.

Since you're interested in history, let me ask you this. If you could travel in time back to any event in history, what would you like to see?

Oh, my word! [pause] My goodness, that's an impossible question! My thoughts flow from ancient Sumer to ancient Egypt to the ancient Scottish Celts. But I don't know. I've never given such an idea a thought.

Okay, let me narrow the field a bit. If you could visit any science-fiction event of the past, what would that be?

Possibly to watch Wells or Verne write one of their novels. But then, it mightn't be interesting just to watch someone write. You know, my mind has just never gone in that direction.

What other plans do you have besides writing the trilogy you spoke of?

Well, I'm liquidating "Doc" Smith's science-fiction at the request of his daughter, Verna Smith Trestrail, which is how the sequel to *Subspace Encounter* came to light. I think the most collectable item may be a 350-page holograph synopsis in a desk diary of the entire Lensman series, from *Galactic Patrol* to *Children of the Lens*, which he wrote before beginning his first Lensman novel. That should be very desirable. I'm not getting a penny out of this, by the way. Outside of Verna, the family doesn't have any interest in science-fiction, and doesn't know what to do with the stuff. So I've taken it in hand as a way of paying thanks to "Doc."[13]

Also, I've edited and written an introduction for the complete stories of an old English author who wrote under the pseudonym of "Fionna McCloud." Mc-

Cloud was very popular and influential in his time. In fact, Merritt got the idea for "The Woman of the Wood" from one of his stories. I collected all of them, which are now in the public domain, and sent them to Donald Grant for publication. He agreed on their high quality, but at this moment it's not clear what will happen to this collection. I'm also sketching out ideas for a number of other novels.

You may not know it, but I happen to be an expert lapidary and a fairly good silversmith. I was a rock hound as a kid. I'd read a book from the Reading Public Library called *The Boy Mineral Collector*. I got what I thought was a knapsack and a stone-mason's hammer——they turned out to be a gas-mask bag and a shoemaker's hammer——and went around the countryside collecting minerals. Over the years this interest gradually faded.

But when I was in Chicago in the early Sixties as an advertising manager for Moody Press, of the Moody Bible Institute, I took a walk along the city's Antique Row one day and stopped in a junk shop. There was a box of rocks, somebody's collection. It had some really nice stuff, including one of the best examples of tiger's eye I've ever seen. I bought maybe half a dozen of the rocks for peanuts.

Back in the office afterwards I mentioned to somebody that they took me back to my childood. He said, "You know, they teach lapidary work through the park system here in Chicago." I didn't know anything about that, so I investigated. I found that it cost only $1.25 a month for instruction, and you could go there up to eight hours a day and five days a week if you had the time.

So I signed up. After work I went there a night a week, and I took to it like a duck to water. I'd been going to classes sporadically for about six or eight months when I learned about a competition to be held by the Chicago Lapidary Society. I decided to enter.

Like everything else I do, I went into it whole hog. I do nothing by halves. Some of the other students would go up to the instructor and say, "Mitch, what do you think of this?"

He'd answer, "If you like it, that's all that matters."

But I'd go up to him and say, "Mitch, what's wrong with this?"

And he'd reply, "Well, it doesn't have the shine it should have," or something like that. And he'd teach me stuff the other students never heard of because they weren't sufficiently interested.

I was learning silversmithing as well, and combining the two to make jewelry. So I designed a piece for the competition, which I entered. I'm looking at this very moment at a trophy on top of one of my bookcases which says "Best of Show." I won it for this first piece I ever put into a competition! The next year I won two second places. The year after that was the last one we were going to be in Chicago, so I said to my wife, "I'm going for broke," and I entered nine pieces. I won Best of the Show, four firsts, two seconds and two thirds!

I have a shop in my basement with about $5000 worth of equipment. Diamond saws and polishers, grinding wheels, the whole works. A regular lapidary outfit. Now and then I spend a couple of days working on stones. When I was on the road I'd stop at any rock shop I saw. If I liked something I bought it, because I figured I might never see it again. So now I have a hugh accumulation of rough——enough to keep me busy if I live to be 150! I love the work.

Also I love the idea that each of these unique stones I turn out will be worn by someone. You can't find any commercial stuff like mine. Right now I'm turning out stones for Laurie Edison, a silversmith in San Francisco who operates a shop called The Sign of the Unicorn. I met her at a world con where she was exhibiting. She buys all her stones from me, several thousand dollars worth so far, and I'm sending her another shipment in a week or two. But I told her that'll be the last one for about six months, because I'll be concentrating on writing.

I want to get on with my new trilogy!

NOTES

(1) "A Voice from the Ether" was also collected in Martin H. Greenberg's *Amazing Stories Science Fiction Anthology: The Wonder Years* (TSR Publications, 1987), the contents of which differed generally from the Ashley anthology.

(2) The Buffalo Book Company was the first of these ventures. Later, Tom Hadley continued alone with the Hadley Publishing Company. The Martin Greenberg of Gnome Press should not be confused with the current prolific anthologizer Martin H. Greenberg.

(3) This point needs to be emphasized, since it differs from that found in reference books. I have this version from Eshbach himself. Curiously, the older one is repeated even by the official curators of the Eshbach archives and papers. With others in the field, these can be found in the Department of Special Collections at Temple University, with Tom Whitehead, long active in Philadelphia fandom, as head curator. In the listing of Temple's Eshbach-Fantasy Press holdings, Register #37, June 1981, p. 14, it is stated that he sold both "the company and its stock to Gnome Press." This, says Eshbach, is "a total lie." Donald Grant purchased the great bulk of the stock and the company itself was never sold to *anyone*.

(4) Gallun himself died of a possible stroke April 2, 1994 at age 83. The SUNY-Stonybrook Raymond Z. Gallun Award, established by the Gallun estate, continues to be awarded to those who have contributed significantly to science-fiction.

(5) In August 1994 Eshbach told me that he also has five *great*-grandchildren, with another on the way.

(6) *The Land Beyond the Gate* was published by Del Rey Books in 1984. Its sequels are *The Armlet of the Gods*, *The Sorceress of Scath* and *The Scroll of Lucifer*.

(7) As of August 1994, all four novels are in their fifth printings.

(8) Due to financial problems, Pulphouse discontinued the series before Eshbach's anthology could be published. This year he has been expanding his 4000-word story to novel length. In the meantime, his agent is seeking a publisher for the erstwhile Pulphouse collection.

(9) Eshbach's sister died two years later, age 92.

(10) Since this interview took place, Eshbach has finished the first installment of his projected trilogy and sent it to Lester Del Rey. After accepting it, however, he retired from Del Rey Books in the Fall of 1991. On May 10, 1993, he died of a massive heart attack at age 77. Meanwhile, Eshbach's novel has not yet been published, and the other books in the trilogy have not been written.

(11) In the summer of 1994 Eshbach gave the work a "necessary and thorough editing" and sent the final results to Advent. It will be published under the title *Have Trench Coat, Will Travel*.

(12) "Beyond Thirty" was published in the February 1916 issue of *All Around Magazine*; "The Man Eater" appeared as a six-part serial in the *New York Evening World*, November 15-20, 1915.

(13) During the night of March 12-13, 1994 Verna Trestrail died in her sleep at age 73. Eshbach is continuing to handle "Doc" Smith's estate.

SONNETS OF SPACE

Lloyd A. Eshbach

THE WANDERER

Through vaults of blackest night a flaming globe
Sweeps by, majestic, like a star set free
To wander on the endless, spatial sea,
With golden lace its train, a kingly robe.
The worlds it passes in its careless flight
Glare after it in jealous rage, for they
Can never leave their dull and weary way——
The speeding comet vanishes from sight.

Long years go by; in space appears a glow,
A sphere of light; the wanderer comes back.
And as it speeds upon its destined track
The planets smile, for now they know
The comet is not free to wander far——
But bound by cosmic laws like every star.

THE MARTIAN CRY

Red dust enfolds our world, a crimson blight
That fills our empty seas with arid death.
In dull despair we sink through wells of night
So deep, so parched, we choke and gasp for breath.
Unending thirst flows flaming though our veins,
Destroying life and hope; yet hope lives on
And raises croaking prayers for cooling rains
To lave our burning sphere till drought is gone.

We see a green and youthful world in space,
The lusty Earth, with water it can give
to check the doom that menaces our race,
And help a dying planet, Mars, to live.
Canals and seas are thick with dust, and dry.
We must have water, Earthmen, or we die!

DREAM

Once deep within the realm of sleep I lay
And dreamed a dream. Beneath the sunless sky
Of hoary Thog I saw a globe of gray
And hairless flesh. On tendril-stem its eye
Rolled serpent-like to scan a passageway
And from its maw an ululating cry
Called to its mate within a dome of clay.
Its mate——I knew it suddenly——was I!

And I——a *blob* of flesh with eye coiled tight——
Sagged deep in sleep and dreamed a fearful dream.
I saw upon a world ablaze with light
A jointed, upright form that made me scream.
They called it man, that thing of strange design;
I dared not wake lest that mad form be mine!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS——concluded from page 21

Howard Pyle illustrations was originally published in *Scribner's Magazine 10*, 737-743 (December 1891); further information about Louise Guiney's poem will be found in this issue's "Open House." "The Rockets that Reached Saturn" is from the author's book *Going-to-the-Sun* (1923). Copies of "The Wanderer" and "The Martian Cry" were kindly supplied by T. G. Cockcroft, and are reprinted by permission of the author. All other material in this issue of *Fantasy Commentator* is new and is being published for the first time.

——*A. Langley Searles*

Voyagers through Eternity

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

Sam Moskowitz

PART XIV

XXII
EDWARD EVERETT HALE AND HIS EASTERN CONTEMPORARIES

We turn now to an unlikely writer of science-fiction, the Unitarian minister Edward Everett Hale. Hale's family had launched *The Daily Advertiser*, a respected Boston newspaper, and he himself had been a mentor and contributing editor to *The Atlantic Monthly* since its first issue of November 1857. The *Atlantic* was, arguably, the best of all the nineteenth century American literary magazines; its contributors included Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, Lowell (who was its first editor), Emerson, Holmes, Whitman and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

It was on stories he wrote for this magazine that Hale built his literary reputation. The first to gain attention was "My Double; and How He Undid Me" (September 1859), which tells about a man who finds a look-alike to perform his more monotonous duties while he enjoys the interesting ones. That was followed by his famous "Man Without a Country" (December 1863). This describes the life of Philip Nolan, a young man who is condemned to remain a prisoner forever aboard American warships, never permitted to read or hear a word about his native land—all because in a rash moment he had expressed that very wish. So convincing and logical was this story that thousands of readers accepted it as truth. Hale's writing style was light and witty, and he was proficient at creating bizarre situations in familar settings.

The pages of the *Atlantic* were always open to unusual fiction. Its very first number included Fitz-James O'Brien's classic fantasy "The Diamond Lens," and two years later it printed his masterful novelette "The Wondersmith" (October 1859). Little known, but quite possibly influential on Hale, was "The Trial Trip of the '"Flying Cloud',"" which appeared there anonymously a month later. It was written by Jason Rockwood Orton, a newspaperman on the staffs of *The Binghamton Courier* and *The New York Weekly Review* (a musical journal), who already had published plays and poetry to his credit.

This tells of an inventor taking a group of reporters on a trial run from Baltimore to San Francisco on his cigar-shaped, steam-powered airship. The trip is to take only four days. The ship is a lighter-than-air craft which travels at heights above atmospheric storms, and can average thirty miles an hour. (Orton's explanation of how passengers are able to survive these extreme altitudes is, however, scientifically untenable.) The ship is capable of accomodating three hundred people plus freight, and carries a week's supply of fuel. Two steam-driven paddles which operate like propellors supply the motive power.

During the trip a Frenchman attempting to plant his flag on a snow-covered mountain crest is almost lost in an avalanche, but there are gentler moments, as when the ship descends for a picnic into a lost valley "where even buffalo have

not trod." The real drama of the story arises when the entire company lapses into a stupor from lack of oxygen and the narrator awakes to find a giant "aerolite," which emits electric shocks, orbiting alongside the vessel. The crew is aroused and power applied to drop them to a lower level where the air will be denser. The "Flying Cloud" is eventually lost in a lake when a fire in its engine room forces it down; the survivors reach civilization and tell their story.

This may seem an unusual tale to appear in a literary journal at this time, but the public always showed great interest in the conquest of the air. Orton mentions in passing a comparably designed aerial steamship assertedly being constructed by M. Petin in Paris, which was described on the front page of *Farmer and Mechanic* for September 4, 1852. This craft was suspended by three balloons, and shares a number of features with Orton's fictional dirigible. In a real sense his story belongs to the category of hoax fiction popularized by Richard Adams Locke and Edgar Allan Poe, since it is presented as an investigative news report.

A decade later Hale's remarkable novella "The Brick Moon" was serialized in the *Atlantic* in three installments (October-December 1869), and was followed by a short sequel, "Life on the Brick Moon" (February 1870); these were combined under the former title when first appearing in book form (*His Level Best*, 1873). In a later edition of "The Brick Moon" issued in 1899 the author wrote: "The account of the first plan of the moon is a sketch, as accurate as was needed, of the old chat and dreams, plans and jokes, of our college days, before he [Hale's brother] left Cambridge in 1838." These were probably elicited by "The Moon Hoax," which appeared while the two were attending Harvard. (We know that Hale read Locke's work, for the narrator in "The Brick Moon" mentions it.) And if we add the idea of orbiting from "The Trial Trip of the 'Flying Cloud'" (which Hale as a contributor to the *Atlantic* would surely also have read), the genesis of his conceiving an artificial Earth satellite becomes clear.

While it was known at the time that an object captured by the gravitational pull of the Earth could orbit it as a satellite, Hale was the first—either in fiction or fact—to plan the construction of an artificial satellite with that very purpose in mind. He also had a practical use for it: it was to be a visible guide for mariners. His concept of launching it into space with a catapault, while well thought out, could not have generated a high enough velocity to succeed.

"The Brick Moon" is important and interesting enough to warrant a brief summary. A village in a wilderness area is established as the working site. An apt description of how necessary funds are raised is given. The satellite's outer surface of brick is logically explained as necessary to resist the heat generated by tearing through the atmosphere at unprecedented speed. The satellite is huge, and whole families take up residence in it during construction in preference to using the tents provided for them. The launching occurs accidentally, and for a long while the builders have no idea if the people asleep in it at the time have survived.

The search to locate the brick moon after it is in orbit is particularly well described. The project's sponsors buy a deserted observatory, and systematically attack the problem of establishing its position and communicating with the people aboard it. It turns out that an atmosphere has clung to the satellite and some lichen and seeds have survived the journey into space. Under the more powerful radiation of the sun higher forms of plant life evolve quickly, and the entire surface of the brick moon becomes green. The climate is tropical; moisture condenses from the atmosphere and it rains regularly. There are 37 souls residing on the satellite, men, women and children; they live inside and cultivate the surface. Fortunately, supplies for the entire construction camp, including food, had been stored inside the satellite while it was being built, so for the time it takes to develop their own agriculture the inhabitants have plenty. It is realized that there is no way they can be rescued, so they must make the best of the situation, which is not without certain philosophical and social advantages.

Of course the speed of evolution depicted for plants is impossible, nor would the brick moon carry enough atmosphere with it for survival; but Hale probably knew that, and was stretching poetic license in order to convey a social as well as a scientific message. What he conceived was not only an artificial satellite, but a veritable space station capable of communicating with its mother planet. He tackles some of the problems quite scientifically, particularly that of establishing an orbit and the question of communication. Locke rather unoriginally projected life on Luna and fascinated the public with its nature. Hale's conception was much more original, and also may be the very first to suggest the complex habitats in space that are being seriously discussed today. "The Brick Moon" is clearly a landmark work.

Edward Everett Hale was also responsible for a commendable bit of scholarship that involved a fantasy tale. He discovered that the name California, which was given the present state in 1535, was first used by the Spanish author Garcia Ordoñez de Montalvo in his novel *Sergas of Esplandian* (1510). Montalvo's California is an island located "at the right hand of the Indies." It will be remembered that finding a route to the Indies was a major objective of Spanish exploration in the New World in the sixteenth century. The romance was very popular prior to most of these expeditions, and went through several editions; it could easily have been read by their leaders or carried along with them.

California is inhabited by fierce black Amazons. They breed and train griffins, creatures with the body and hind legs of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle, and ride them into battle as winged cavalry. As part of their diet these griffins are fed the male babies born in this society. The heroine of the novel is Queen Califia, who enlists on the side of the Turks in their campaign against the Spanish. Her minions swoop down on the walled and fortified Spanish cities, distracting their defenders long enough for the Turks to mount the walls and capture them. But the problem is that all humans look alike to the griffins, and after decimating the Spaniards they attack the Turks.

Joined with the Turkish king the Amazon queen then agrees to meet the Spanish king and his son in combat; whichever pair wins will be declared victor in the war. After a bitter battle the queen and Turkish king are defeated. During the combat Califia has fallen in love with the king's son, but he marries another. But if provided with a noble of suitable rank to marry, she agrees to convert to Christianity and change California into a dual society of males and females. This is done, and California discards its matriarchal ways.

Hale translated all segments of Montalvo's novel that contained references to California, and with his comments these were published as the lead feature in *The Atlantic Monthly* for March 1864. In April 1872 he delivered a paper before the American Antiquarian Society claiming credit for establishing the etymology of the name California, and this seems to have remained unchallenged.

Another short story of Hale's, which is by no stretch of the imagination science-fiction, deserves mention in this history because it once appeared in a science-fiction magazine. That was "The Good-Natured Pendulum," originally published in the January 1869 *Atlantic*. It deals with schoolboys who want to get out of class early in order to pick chestnuts and walk home on the unlighted country roads before nightfall. To accomplish this, one of them sneaks into the classroom early and adjusts the pendulum on the clock there so that it will beat at twice its normal speed. The story tells of the boys' headlong rush through their studies so as not to give themselves away, and of their ultimate success. Unbelievably, this tale was reprinted in the May 1933 *Amazing Stories*, along with a blurb by its octagenerian editor, T. O'Conor Sloane, justifying its inclusion on the basis that it was a lesson in science. He had every now and then slipped in stories that could scarcely be justified, but this was the most blatant stretching of the boundaries of the genre he ever committed. On several occasions Sloane had

even chided his readers for believing in the possibility of space travel (something, it might be remembered, that H. P. Lovecraft had done also). Printing "The Good-Natured Pendulum" might be excusable if there had been an unexpected wordage gap to be filled, but this was not the case. That same month *Science Fiction Digest* reported that *Amazing Stories* had 33 stories on hand awaiting publication, several of them of the same length as Hale's.

By contrast, his "Hands Off," which appeared in *Harper's Magazine* for March 1881, was bona fide science-fiction of so advanced a type that it appeared rarely until F. Orlin Tremaine, the editor of *Astounding Stories*, inaugurated what he termed "thought-variant" stories in 1933. It told of superior creatures dwelling outside the cosmos who decide to interfere in human history. They help Joseph escape from his captors before they reach Egypt——before he interprets the pharoah's dream and urges storing grain from the rich, fat years against the lean ones to follow. Joseph returns to his father and keeps his peace with his brothers. When the seven lean years come, since his destiny has been altered, there are no extra stories of grain in Egypt to aid the people. His family is wiped out, Egypt is destroyed, and in continuing waves all history is changed. In the end, mankind destroys itself to the last person. This "alternate worlds" story precedes Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* (1919) by over a generation, and poses the same philosophical question: what would be the result of altering a seemingly minor event in history?

Hale has on occasion been noted by followers of Utopian literature for "My Visit to Sybaris," which originally appeared in the *Atlantic* for July 1867. It is another adventure of Frederick Ingham, who is featured in several of his stories, including being the narrator in "The Brick Moon." This time he is performing a service for Garibaldi and is travelling in Italy to Gallipoli. On the site of ancient Sybaris, in the heel of the Italian boot, he happens on a city that is virtually isolated from the rest of the nation. It shows some scientific progress, such as steam cars heated by petroleum, but the government has concentrated predominately on refining the social aspects of civilization.

All youths are required to marry while young or leave the city. Registration for military service is voluntary. Libraries must remain open 24 hours a day. While many individual homes exist, there are also block-sized communes, each with a central kitchen, library and playground. Citizens receive old-age pensions, but these are held to an absolute minimum to discourage dependence upon them. Umbrellas are provided as a municipal service, and must be returned when the rain has stopped. Children attend school four hours a day and six months a year, three in the summer and three in the winter, and at these schools no teacher may use his or her own text book. Companies whose trains arrive late are fined, as are people who are late to appointments. Women have the right to vote and may also join the military service. When visiting, people must make some gesture of departing periodically so as to enable their hosts to be rid of them gracefully when they are overstaying their welcome. The rather bland satire in this story is redeemed by the light style in which it is written.

Hale's sister Lucretia was also a writer, and is remembered chiefly for her "Peterkin Papers" series for children. Two of her other stories have a genre interest. "The Spider's Eye" (*Putnam's Monthly*, July 1856) explores the concept that a hall with perfect acoustics might possibly carry to a sensitive person in the right seat an actor's *thoughts* as well as his voice. She also contributed an above-average fantasy to the February 1858 *Atlantic* titled "Queen of the Red Chessboard." This concerns a chess queen which turns into a human being, and after savoring the life of a flesh-and-blood person chooses to return to the chessboard. Both stories have been anthologized; and the latter adds a touch of poignancy to the author's usual display of considerable writing skill.

Another woman writer who utilized the theme of expanded hearing ability

was Florence McLandburgh. Her novelette "The Automaton Ear," which appeared in *Scribner's Monthly* for April 1873 was also included in her collection *The Automaton Ear and Other Sketches* (1876). The narrator of the story works for years to perfect a mechanical device which will detect the attenuated chords of speech, music and background sounds that have been released in a given location in the past. He tries the device out on an elderly woman and it is successful. But when she refuses to return it, he kills her to reclaim his invention and proceeds to hide her body. The situation is resolved when it is discovered that the inventor has been mentally disturbed for years, and that he neither created the automaton nor killed the woman.

Several other stories in McLandburgh's collection have fantastic themes. Two of these are "The Feverfew" and "The Anthem of Judea." The former is about a man whose illness makes him powerless to resist impulses which are completely contrary to his nature; the latter tells of a frail orphan girl who literally radiates music when asleep, and the strange force which overcomes the organist who has adopted her. All the stories in the book deal with music and mental aberration.

Until about 1870, the appearance of science-fiction was still fugitive and sporadic. A disproportionate amount was probably published by *Beadle's Monthly*, a short-lived magazine that aspired unsuccessfully to compete with *Harper's*, *Scribner's* and the *Atlantic*. Its March and April 1867 issues ran "The Wonderful Balloon Excursion," an interplanetary novelette by John Weatherby, as a two-part serial. This dealt with a trip to the planet Saturn, and was filled with scientific impossibilities. The author knew that they were impossibiliies, however, and proposed the most extraordinary theories to rationalize them. Two-thirds of his story is actually devoted to explaining how a balloon might travel from the Earth to Saturn and back again.

If hydrogen is permitted its maximum possible expansion, says Weatherby, it might carry a balloon to unprecedented heights, and a special rubberized silk bag is utilized to make that possible. Traversal of the several hundred million miles between the two planets is accomplished by what he calls "the spiral effect" Because the entire solar system orbits with a spiral motion, the balloon need not travel the true linear distance. "...the actual locality in space now occupied by the Earth, may, in any conceivable time, even the shortest, be occupied by Saturn . . . so the position now occupied by Saturn may in any time be occupied by Earth. At last the one planet may so nearly approach the locality lately filled by the other as that the extreme verge of the atmosphere of the planet arriving may impinge upon the extreme verge of the portion of space recently occupied by by the atmosphere of the planet which has lately departed; and the atmospheres of the planets extend immensely further into space than is generally thought to be the case." This, says Weatherby, is merely a digest of the full explanation to be found in his book *Mental Cosmos*. Are we stretching prophecy to say that this may be the first historic expression of what is now called a space-warp?

Here, as Poe claimed in "Hans Phaall——a Fable," outer space is discovered to be light, not black as generally believed. The author realizes that temperatures and pressures his balloonists will encounter present problems, and they are provided with warm clothing and tanks of oxygen and nitrogen to breathe. His pseudoscientific presentations have been so long, however, that little space has been left to describe their findings. Saturn is found to be a beautiful world inhabited by intelligent humanoids, but when they display evidence of hostility the explorers beat a hasty retreat for their home planet.

Several other tales in *Beadle's* fall in the genre. "The Master of Carbon" by Frank H. Norton (January 1867) tells of a man who can make diamonds from magnetized water. Norton was a frequent contributor to *Harper's* and other magazines of the period. The June 1866 number contained an ambitious tale of a man in great pain who takes an overdose of opium and finds his intelligence released

and conveyed away from the Earth. He observes at close hand the side of the moon which does not face us, and is carried through the asteroids. He discovers that Mars is a volcanic, fiery place, that Venus is inhabited by a God-like race, views a planet with six moons (Jupiter), and continues to the edge of the solar system. He even travels to other stars, which have planets like our Sun, and finally observes the catastrophic end of the Earth. At this time he gratefully awakens from his hallucination. The story is "A Flight into the Sky," written by Alfred Street.

Still another woman writer, Mary L. Bissell, was represented by "Thawed Out" in the January 1870 *Putnam's Magazine*. In a sprightly modern style she describes an expedition to the North Siberian Islands to see if the prehistoric mammoth still exists, since ivory has been found in abundance there. There are no mammoths, but the party finds a gigantic, twelve-foot-tall man frozen in the ice. He is thawed and revives, but all attempts to communicate with him fail. After a few hours he visibly begins to age before their eyes and dissolves——but not before he writes a message which no linguist can decipher. The story is well done.

Edward Spencer's "The Tale of a Comet," a two-part serial in the same magazine (May and June 1870), has a more ambitious plot but is badly overwritten. Its protagonist is Raimond Letoile, a handsome, pleasant young man who has an incredible memory and is a mathematical genius. He is, however, seemingly ignorant of the most elementary knowledge of how the world operates. "He could not seem less one of our own people had he been dropped upon this Earth . . . a full-grown stranger, accidentally snatched from some other sphere where the customary interchange of thought is through the medium of mathematical formula." Investigation of Letoile's background reveals that all his credentials have been forged. He is placed under the guidance of the story's narrator as a private pupil.

The narrator has a girl-friend, Cherry, a wholesome, cheerful woman. She is attracted to Letoile, who reciprocates her affection. A new comet sweeps into the skies and is photographed by an astronomer. To his astonishment, when the photograph is developed, instead of showing simple a ball of light, it shows an arrangement of strange characters in an unknown language. When Letoile happens to see this he clearly understands it, for he shows great distress; but he will confide the reason only to Cherry. All she will say is that we should be happy that Letoile was with us for awhile, implying he must shortly leave.

The story concludes when what seems to be a meteor breaks loose from the comet and plunges to earth, apparently near a riverbank where Cherry and Letoile are trysting. Just as suddenly as it has dropped it soars upward again and disappears. When the narrator arrives on the scene he finds Cherry alone, and Letoile is never seen again. She asserts he told her that he came from a planet in the system of the star Arcturus, and that he has now returned there. It is evident that the "meteor" which separated from the comet was a spaceship.

Planting an alien among us was not a new idea even in 1870; what is different is the complete omission of a moral message. This is no fable of a Christ-like clone appearing on Earth for the good of mankind, but simply a tale of a humanoid from another world far in advance of ours being deliberately placed here for no other purpose than gathering information. As a plot complication he is attracted to an Earth woman, for whom he develops a deep affection; but his alienness, superiority and obligations do not permit him to sustain the relationship. Perhaps the most effective use of the theme in this century is "The Children's Hour," written by C. L. Moore under the pen name of Lawrence O'Donnell (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, March 1944), where parents arrive to remove their adult-appearing child back to his own world before he becomes too involved with an Earth girl.

Immediately following "The Brick Moon," a story of some importance appeared in *Putnam's*. "Was He Dead?"(January 1870) was written by the distinguished physician, researcher and author S. Weir Mitchell, and deals with an experiment to bring an executed criminal back to life. The body of a hanged murderer is secured while his blood is still warm, and before there is minimal damage to his heart.

Blood is drained from one artery and pumped into another leading to the brain. By manipulating the corpse's arms it is hoped to get the heart beating at least long enough to reinvest the body with a brief moment of life. The experiment succeeds, and the criminal revives long enough to confess the murder and robbery of an old woman, a crime for which another man has been convicted. The story is actually a murder mystery, solved through tests on blood spots that were found at the scene of the crime, and the science-fiction portion a mere appendage. "Was He Dead?" was anthologized in *Future Perfect* (1966).

Among the science-fantasies considered outstanding in this period, but with which time has not dealt kindly, is "The Life Magnet" by Alvey A. Adee (*Putnam's*, August 1870). An American student studying in Germany meets a century-old scientist, whose features and longevity remind one of the Wandering Jew. He has invented a means of transforming awareness and life force from one body to another by means of a device he calls a "life magnet." Using this, he has prolonged his own life at the expense of others'. On a pretext, he attempts to steal the life force of the student; but the latter awakes during the process and reverses it, thus retaining his own personality. However, he has at the same time acquired a part of the old scientist's life-force, and this includes personalities of his past transfer-victims. These the student cannot suppress; and eventually he commits suicide rather than be always subject to uncontrollable impulses of others.

XXIII
WILLIAM HENRY RHODES AND HIS WESTERN CONTEMPORARIES

As the population of California grew following the end of the Civil War, there were increased literary stirrings in the San Francisco area. The city was in the throes of a great spiritualistic fever, and its magazines and newspapers frequently printed not only stories of the occult and the supernatural, but ones which with increasing confidence we can label science-fiction. The most well-known journal there was *The Overland Monthly*, edited by Bret Harte, which began publication in July 1868. This magazine was to the West Coast what *Harper's* was to the East, a thick magazine of fiction and non-fiction of serious literary pretension. Its first issue printed "The Diamond Makers of Sacramento" by Noah Brooks, which describes a machine that makes artificial diamonds. It blows up before it can get into full production, but the author swore that it was "founded on the actual experience of a California genius who actually did produce diamond dust by exploding carbonic acid under enormous pressure." Brooks was highly regarded, having been a friend of Abraham Lincoln, about whom he later wrote a book. He wrote several other tales of borderline science-fiction, all characterized by considerable skill.

One of these is "The Haunted Valley" (*The Overland Monthly*, September 1868). This is a fantasy about an enormous face, "both stern and kindly, indicating great vigor despite advanced age," which seems suspended in air in a remote California valley. The artist who first views the face sees it several times, and eventually plunges to his death in a ravine while running towards it.

Possibly his best story from the period is "Lost in the Fog" (*Overland*, December 1868). A ship is caught in an almost impenetrable fog some distance off San Francisco. After drifting aimlessly about they find themselves in the harbor of a small town, where they anchor. Everything in the town is Mexican——the architecture, dress, language, even the flag. They learn that no one visits the town, and discover that an impassable rift inland separates it from the rest of the mainland. The town is named San Ildefensa, and for forty years its people have been waiting for the government at Mexico City to contact them. They are not aware that California is now part of the United States, and are unfamiliar with any recent history. The ship returns to San Francisco, where the seamen tell

their story. No one has ever heard of this town, and despite an intensive search it is never found again. The reader is left with the impression that the mist was a gateway to the past, and that the town exists outside our time continuum. A related theme of a city that appears for a day every hundred years appears in Friedrich Gerstäcker's "Germelshausen" (1862), but "Lost in the Fog" predates the first translation of the latter from the German (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, September 1876).

Apparently earthquakes were very much on the minds of Californians even in those days, for the April 1870 *Overland* carried Harwood Lathrop's "A Pioneer of 1920," in which a man of that year muses on the great San Francisco earthquake of 1870. All that is left of the city is an island in the Sacramento River. There an Utopian civilization has developed. Fruit and vegetables grow and mature more rapidly, and people live longer. The story peters out, however, without the potentialities of the situation ever being realized.

At this time the influence of Poe's and Locke's hoax fiction became apparent on the California scene. The Saturday, May 13, 1871 number of *The Sacramento Daily Union* carried an alleged news feature titled "The Case of Summerfield," purportedly submitted by a San Francisco correspondent with the initials "W. H. R."

A man named Gregory Summerfield had been pushed to his death from the rear platform of a Pacific Railroad train by a man named Leonidas Parker. When the case against Parker was brought before Justice of the Peace James G. Wilkins, he declared it justifiable homicide and Parker was released. Upon his death a document describing the background of these events was given to the newspaper.

The story it details is a bizarre one. Summerfield has discovered a chemical which, when added to water, will cause it to burn——and, more important, start an uncontrollable chain reaction. He demonstrates it before a horrified group of San Francisco officials by consuming an entire lake. If he should dump this chemical into the Pacific, he claims, all the oceans of the world would be consumed in a conflagration that would probably destroy the planet. And this he threatens to do unless the city gives him a million dollars. Only half of this can be raised, but officials offer to take him to New York City, where they will obtain a loan for the rest. Summerfield agrees, and along with a committee he starts out. During the early part of the trip he is pushed off the train to his death.

The June 10, 1871 *Daily Union* ran a follow-up story titled "The Summerfield Case Again." This summarized the original account and presented court documents and depositions to confirm the air of authenticity. These stories were reprinted by other newspapers and created widespread agitation, because the second story had additionally stated that a notorious bandit was seen riding away from the scene and that the feared chemical was not found on Summerfield's body.

Reporters on competing newspapers were not slow to figure out that the initials "W. H. R." stood for William Henry Rhodes, a literary-minded San Francisco lawyer already widely known for his writings under the pen name of "Caxton." Even after that news was abroad, however, Rhodes offered in the *Union* for May 18, 1871 to show to any visitors to his office "positive proof" for his stories.

At that point Rhodes had written a wide range of stories, essays and poems under his pen name for almost twenty years. In 1856 he had also edited a short-lived newspaper, *The Daily True Californian*, but was not particularly known for fantasy. Despite that, as early as 1844, when he was studying law at Harvard, fellow attorney William H. L. Barnes said of him in the introduction to the memorial volume of collected writings *Caxton's Book* (1876): "His fondness for weaving the problems of science with fiction, which became afterwards a marked characteristic of his literary efforts, attracted the especial attention of his professors; and had Mr. Rhodes devoted himself to this then novel department of letters, he would have become, no doubt, greatly distinguished as a writer; and the great master of scientific fiction, Jules Verne, would have found the field of his efforts

already sown and reaped by the young Southern student." None of these early efforts have been identified. They may never have been published. It is possible that they represent some of the entries in *Caxton's Book* for which no place of original publication can be located. Several of them do not employ the hoax mode which mark Rhodes's fiction from 1871 on, but actually do fit into the fantastic adventure, legend and lost race categories. They may, then, be these early "missing" stories.

"The Earth's Hot Center" is a hoax story which has a December 12, 1872 date in the text; it was published at some undetermined date in 1873, probably in the *Daily Union*. It describes reportorially creation of The International Board for Subterranean Exploration, jointly founded by the United States, France, Great Britain, Russia and Belgium. This proposes to establish the nature and thickness of the Earth's crust by drilling a vertical shaft downwards. At 37,810 feet below the surface an underground explosion forces lava upwards, inundating a small town. The drillers are unable to stop the lava flow, and if it continues it is predicted that the Low Countries will be covered and that a natural bridge across the English Channel will form,joiningthe Channel Islands to the mainland. The entire focus is on underground exploration, and the scientific background is outstanding and believable. It does not reveal its hoax nature with any literary wink of the eye, and is very adroitly handled.

Rhodes's "Phases in the Life of John Pollexfen" tellsof a scientist researching assiduously on a way to produce color photographs. He believes he can succeed if he uses a human eye for his lens, and contracts with a girl tosell him one of her eyes. Despite a lawyer's protest that such a contract is illegal, the girl is determined to proceed. She is forestalled by her fiancé, who gives his eye in place of hers. The experiment succeeds, and Pollexfen receives a pension from Emperor Napoleon III for his invention; the couple marry and live happily.

Internal evidence shows that "The Telescopic Eye" was written in 1876; it may have been the author's last story, for he died of Bright's Disease April 14th of that year at the age of 53. It is believed to have appeared in *The San Francisco Evening Post*. John Palmer has been apparently blind from birth, but at the age of nine it is discovered that while he cannot discern objects near him, he can see them clearly thousands of miles away. He describes objects on the moon as if in the same room, including vegetation and life forms. When asked to look at Venus, Mars and Jupiter, his vision is poor, and it is concluded that his eyes focus best at 240,000 miles. John is supplied with a telescope which brings Mars within that distance and he shouts with elation. A sequel was probably intended, but Rhodes never lived to write it.

His best story, "The Aztec Princess," is another whose place of publication (if any) has never been ascertained. It is also Rhodes's longest, coming to some 25,000 words, and contains the remarkable statement, now scientifically accepted, that South America and Africa were once joined in ancient times.

An exploration party sets out to find and explore the ruins of the lost Central American cities of Uxmal and Palenque. After experiencing an earthquake and a volcanic eruption, a vision of a beautiful Aztec princess appears to the explorers, speaks the word "Palenque," and vanishes. She appears again when they are trapped in an underground cavern, and with a touch of her hand levitates them so that they rise hundreds of feet into the air and soar across vast forests to their destination. (This is by no means sheer fantasy, for Rhodes offers a page and a half of theoretical explanation for the neutralizing of gravity.)

The party arrives at a marvellous white-walled city, where they find an advanced civilization with a language based on musical consonants. The explorers meet a Frenchman who has preceded them, and with his help learn to translate the hieroglyphics that comprise the race's written language. They leave, but later make a return trip to the site, and encounter only broken ruins, obviously thou-

sands of years old, as well as the engraved face of the princess who guided them, and are forced to the realization that they had been caught in a time-warp which transported them into the distant past. The tale is rich in variations on the lost race theme, many of which have been used over and over again since Rhodes's work appeared. Despite this it remains one of the most rewarding stories of its type ever written, and well deserved its recent (1974) reprinting by the Hyperion Press.

A related work is "Legends of Lake Bigler," where the Aztec cities of Uxmal and Palenque are referred to once again. There are two separate episodes gathered under this title. The first is an Indian legend of lovers from different tribes who are forbidden to marry, and after a tryst are sealed in a cave to die. When the cave is opened years later eerie sounds issue from it, frightening away all who seek to enter. The second episode has its own title, "Dick Barter's Yarn; or, the Last of the Mermaids." This is a fascinating legend about an amphibian race of indians which lived in a large lake and could breathe under water. They intermarried with a local tribe and their hybrid offspring are now extinct.

William Henry Rhodes was born July 16, 1822 in Windsor, Bertie County, North Carolina. He was educated at Princeton and Harvard, receiving a law degree from the latter in 1846. In that same year he published a book of verse titled *The Indian Gallows and Other Poems.* He practiced law in North Carolina and Galveston, Texas, where he became closely acquainted with Sam Houston. In 1850 he moved to California, and while continuing to practice law supplied San Francisco newspapers and magazines with a non-stop stream of articles, essays, stories and verse. He was active in politics, and in 1856 became one of the leaders of the San Francisco Vigilance Committee, which took the law into its own hands and drove criminals out of the city. Science, especially astronomy and chemistry, was an obsession with him, and he maintained a small chemical laboratory in his home. A gregarious man, he was one of the founders of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, and one of its popular writers of occasional verse for special occasions. He was a superb speaker, and with a full head of hair and an "Uncle Sam" beard he cut an imposing figure.

Rhodes married Susam Harrison on December 29, 1859 and with her had four children; one was named Arthur Pym, indicating Rhodes's devotion to Poe. As recently as the 1970's a grandson, Arthur Pym Rhodes, Jr., was still residing in California, as was a great-grandson, Caxton Pym Rhodes.

Rhodes's fondness for literature did not help his legal practice, for he gained the reputation of neglecting the law in favor of a hobby; despite his popularity he was passed over for political appointments and legal councilling alike, making his life a continuous financial struggle. Following his death, the collection and publication of *Caxton's Book* was undertaken by friends more to aid his widow than to sustain his literary reputation. This was extremely fortunate, for had not his work been put into book form we might not be reading it today, and the role the author played in the development of science-fiction might remain forever in files of unread and unreadable yellowed newspapers.

Despite the impact they made at the time——and the fact that "The Case of Summerfield," at least, was widely reprinted——these "accounts of imaginary discoveries," or "scientific hoaxes," were going into decline. Yet long after bald attempts to fool the reader passed out of science-fiction, fragments of the device continued to appear. They were used to lend an air of authenticity and believability to fantasies as wild as Merritt's "The Metal Monster" (1920), and are found in explanatory prefaces, such as in "Beyond the Farthest Star" (1941) by Edgar Rice Burroughs and Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain* (1969). Although more diluted by the passing decades, they remain still with us today.

(to be continued in the next issue)

Open House

Letters From Readers

Sam Moskowitz writes:

I have three obituaries for readers of *Fantasy Commentator*.

William Stephen Sykora, veteran and controversial science-fiction fan, died of a urinary tract infection on June 7, 1994 at the Astoria, N. Y. Medical Center, his daughter Anabelle Kolar told me. He was born of Czech parents on August 16, 1913 and was approaching his eighty-first birthday. Sykora was educated in New York City schools, studied three years at Cooper Union, and spent his early working years as a tool designer in the X-Ray Division of the Westinghouse Corporation.

He was an avid home experimentor, and was introduced to science-fiction by the August 1924 issue of Gernsback's magazine *Practical Electrics*, which carried Robert Jorgensen's story "When Sound Was Annihilated." He continued reading such stories in *Science and Invention*, and bought *Amazing Stories* when its first issue appeared.

Sykora's fan-related activities began with a letter to *Science Wonder Stories* in January 1930. He corresponded with the fan and author Milton Kaletsky in 1931, and produced a publication titled *Amateur Scientist* under the aegis of The Amateur Experimenter's League. Both the League and the publication were absorbed in 1934 by the International Cosmos Science Club, an organization composed of science experimenters and of science-fiction fans. For them he produced *The International Observer*, a mimeographed club magazine with colorful silk-screened covers. During its last days in 1933 he was also a member of The Scienceers, a pioneer fan organization, and tried to get its members more interested in science-hobbyist activities.

On January 8, 1935 Sykora applied for and obtained charter #10 for the New York Chapter of the Science Fiction League. Along with co-members John B. Michel and Donald A. Wollheim, he was expelled on June 12, 1935 for activities against the League.

He was one of the attendees at what came to be called the First Eastern Science Fiction Convention held in Philadelphia on October 22, 1936. He also was on the committee presenting the unnamed second convention in New York on February 21, 1937 which drew over forty attendees, including authors Otis and Allen Adelbert Kline, Manly Wade Wellman, Otto Binder and the artist Charles Schneeman. Sykora was elected chairman of that affair.

Among his unverified accomplishments was the claim that he had effected the first transport of mail by rocket. On September 22, 1935, with the aid of philatelist Herbert Goudket, he placed letters in a rocket that was fired and travelled several hundred feet at Holmes Field, Astoria.

Sykora made several attempts to create a group for producing science-fiction films. In January 1938 he organized the Scientific Cinema Club, but it was broken up by the Futurians after holding a single meeting. Later that year he organized The Scientifilmakers; this made several films, the most successful of which was one of scenes at the First World Science Fiction Convention in 1939, particularly of the softball game.

He was on the committee to organize the First National Science Fiction Convention (Newark, N. J. 1938) which was chaired by myself. Many celebreties were among the 125 fans attending. This was the group which voted to support, in conjunction with the 1939 New York World's Fair, the First World Convention, which I also chaired. The sponsoring body of the latter was an organization known as New Fandom, and Sykora, along with Raymond Van Houten, James V. Taurasi and myself, were its founders. Sykora was also a founding member in 1938 of the Queens SFL chapter, the one most involved in that world convention.

He was a reporter on Taurasi's *Fantasy News*, the leading genre news source of the day. With the December 1939 issue he took over its publication, issuing it weekly for two years, and then at increasingly greater intervals up to 1963, when he relinquished control to Kenneth Beale.

Sykora married Frances Alberti, a Long Island City resident, on August 18, 1940. In addition to a son who died as an infant, the couple had four daughters, Annabelle, Carolyn, Hope and Frances. After their marriage the Sykoras lived in Elmont, New York, and then in Arbutus, Md. There he obtained war work and set up a part-time print-shop called The Fantasy News Press. Julius Unger's *Fantasy Fiction Field* was printed there during this period. He also worked then in Baltimore as a compositor for The Waverley Press.

While the war was still in progress he returned to Long Island City and obtained a job as a compositor for the Alfred Johnson Printing School in New York City. As he had done in Baltimore, he rented a shop for part-time printing at 859 Freeman Street, naming it the Clareon Press.

On September 8, 1946 he reformed the Queens SFL chapter, holding meetings at his home. Under the sponsorship of this group he held four consecutive annual science-fiction conclaves, one-day affairs with prominent speakers, among which were L. Ron Hubbard. The first of these was held on September 12, 1948.

During the heyday of specialty fantasy book publishing Sykora and myself formed a partnership called The Avalon Company; this published a single volume, Dr. David H. Keller's *Life Everlasting and Other Tales* (1947).

Family problems led to the breakup of his marriage in 1969, and thereafter he was seen only on rare occasions, years apart, at science-fiction gatherings. Strong leftist leanings and emotional volatility cost him jobs and friendships, so that the last years of his life he lived very much alone, dependent primarily on social security for income. Today, despite the long list of his early activities in the field, he has been almost forgotten.

William F. Benthake, a tireless collector in the science-fiction field, died suddenly early in August 1994 of a probable heart attack.

He was born April 8, 1918 and lived in Jersey City, New Jersey. His only living relative is his brother John.

He had been involved in genre activities since the 1930's, particularly in Philadelphia, Long Island and northern New Jersey. He qualified as a member of First Fandom, a group of those who read, collected and/or were active in the field before 1939. He was a member of the Eastern Science Fiction Association from the late 1940's until its dissolution in 1988, and regularly attended regional conventions and conferences——the Philcon in Philadelphia, the Icon in Long Island, the Phrolicon in southern New Jersey and the Lunacon in Westchester County, New York.

During World War II he served in the armed services in the Pacific area, and was a survivor of the battle for Guadalcanal.

Until his retirement Benthake was a television repair man for RCA. A radio ham with his own call letters K2EFN, he was well known to hams throughout the country.

In his later years he specialized in collecting autographs, sometimes buying a dozen copies of a single work and then getting them signed by the author and/or the artist. With anthologies he would try to get as many contributors as possible to add their signatures to the book.

During his lifetime Benthake had built up and disposed of several collections of science-fiction books and magazines. At the time of his death he had thousands of autographed items in his collection. Unfortunately he had never provided for their disposition, and his brother, unaware of their value, gave the collection away to local libraries and non-science-fiction friends; some of it may even have been disposed of as trash.

Although the news may not be topical, I should also mention a death that does not seem to have been reported elsewhere. Frederick Shunnaman, an avid science-fiction fan and for fifteen years an editor on the staff of Gernsback's *Radio-Electronics*, died in March 1991 at the age of 89.

We hear next from Lee Becker:

The editor has asked me to give readers the background of the sonnets on page 46 of this issue. In the Fall of 1979 I was rereading August Derleth's fine anthology of genre verse, *Dark of the Moon*. As I perused Robert E. Howard's contributions, I was struck by the brevity of his "Arkham." Just four lines, I noted, more of a fragment than a finished work, particularly with its question-marked ending. Might it have been just a thought he'd jotted down, and later given up developing? I read it again, noting that its rhyme and meter fitted the beginning of a sonnet. Had Howard himself, I wondered, ever thought of it that way?

As I sat musing four new lines came tumbling into my mind and I jotted them down. Well, if this was to be a sonnet, here was the octet! I reread Howard's other entries in *Dark of the Moon* to help put me in his mood, but my mind remained blank. So I dated what I'd written——October 9, 1979——and went on to other things.

I did not return to them for several weeks, but when I did I could see how the piece might proceed. I worked on it over the next few days, completing the sestet on November 24th.

But I felt distinctly ambivalent about accomplishing this enforced collaboration. What would I think of someone who appropriated my own lines, and then grafted his words onto them? On careful reflection I didn't think I would object——especially if what I'd written had already been published, as Howard's had. So I put away this sonnet for a year or so, then polished it a bit, and brought it to Langley.

"I like it and I'm willing to print it," he said, "but why don't you finish the job?" I must have looked blank, for he added, "Howard wrote *two* of these four-liners. They were originally published in back-to-back issues of *Weird Tales* magazine." I admitted that I'd seen only one. "Well, I'll get you a photocopy of the other," he said. "I think it would be tidier if you could make it into a sonnet, too, and then have both appear together. I'll also have to check to see if copyrights need clearing. And it would be nice if I could get some associational Howard material to publish at the same time."

In due course I had a copy of the second Howard fragment in my hands. If it were to be expanded into a sonnet I could see that his four lines would comprise the ending. I used a well known fantasy gambit as the theme, and altered the tense in the penultimate line to fit the new beginning. My notes show that I wrote the first six lines on March 24, 1981, and after a considerable delay finished lines 7-10 on May 11, 1985. By this time I was feeling less diffident about my "collaborations" because in the interim I had learned that Howard himself had had no compunction about appropriating other writers' ideas.

I shall be happy to see these hybrids in print, whatever readers think of my methods. By the middle of 1986 I concluded that I had said just about all I had to say in the poetic medium, and since then I have been content to leave it to younger genre poets who, judging from what I read in *Fantasy Commentator*, still have ideas to expound, and do so better than I could have.

Louise Imogen Guiney's ballad on pages 47-51 is a poetic casting of "Peter Rugg, the Missing Man" (1824), a short story by William Austin. Andrew E. Rothovius, who has long studied Ms. Guiney and her work, writes as follows:

I was fascinated to see how Louise Guiney transposed the Peter Rugg story into something distinctly her own. By the way, her standard biography (Henry G. Fairbanks' *Laureate of the Lost*, 1972) doesn't mention either the Lovecrafts or the four letters she wrote about them to F. H. Day that are cited by de Camp in his *H. P. Lovecraft: a Biography* (1975). (Day was her Platonic boyfriend, whom she would have married at a drop of the hat had he been the marrying kind.)

I am convulsed with laughter at de Camp's misconception of Guiney as "an unmarried Victorian woman ... indifferent to the practical sides of life." She was an earthy Irish Catholic (what she wrote about wanting to swap the good queen for somebody like Nell Gwynn was anything but primly Victorian)! And the variety of expedients she devised to earn a living (Catholic poetry having no New England market then) show her as both practical and inventive.

She also did *not* prefer "to spend her time on scholarly monographs about forgotten seventeenth century poets"—can Henry Vaughan be forgotten?——but wrote articles for *Harper's*, *Scribner's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*.

BACK NUMBERS

#29 Articles on H. P. Lovecraft, Olaf Stapledon and Stapledon's own forecast of man's biological future.

#30 Articles by Sam Moskowitz on C. L. Moore and Olaf Stapledon; by Stapledon on telepathy; the first installments of a biography of Edward Lucas White, and of a description of White's unpublished s-f novel of life in 50,000 A.D.

#31 Continuation of the White serials and the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#33 Sam Moskowitz describes the first college course in s-f, and Lloyd Eshbach tells the history of Shasta, an early s-f publisher.

#34 Mike Ashley reveals his research into Algernon Blackwood's early history, and Blackwood himself describes how he got story ideas. Conclusion of the serial articles on Edward Lucas White, and the continuation of Moskowitz's history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#35 Articles by Moskowitz on Stapledon, by Ashley on Blackwood, and by S. T. Joshi on the history of Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

#36 Begins Moskowitz's account of Bernarr Macfadden's obsession with s-f, articles by J. J. Pierce on survivalist s-f, and Gary Crawford on the fantasy writer Robert Aickman.

#37 Eric Davin interviews the early editors of *Wonder Stories*, David Lasser and Charles D. Hornig.

#38 Everett Bleiler reveals the inside story of how *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature* came about; Eric Davin interviews s-f author Raymond Z. Gallun.

#39 Eric Davin interviews Charles Hornig about his wartime editing years and Frank K. Kelly, s-f writer of the 1930's; Mike Ashley describes the middle years of Algernon Blackwood; Sam Moskowitz continues his account of s-f and Bernarr Macfadden, and his history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#40 Sam Moskowitz describes the s-f in the writings of T. S. Stribling; Mike Ashley and Deborah Elkin tell about Hugo Gernsback's early publishing experiences and his relationship with H. G. Wells.

#42 The Weinbaum memorial issue features an interview with his widow, articles on his college years and business correspondence, early photographs and examples of his science-fiction poetry.

#43 Sam Moskowitz begins his serial article on Nat Schachner, and concludes his account of Bernarr Macfadden's contribution to s-f; Andrew Darlington describes A. Conan Doyle's fantasy fiction; and Steve Sneyd reviews the life and work of the s-f poetess, Lilith Lorraine.

#44 The Isaac Asimov memorial issue; also, articles on the work of H. P. Lovecraft and Nat Schachner.

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