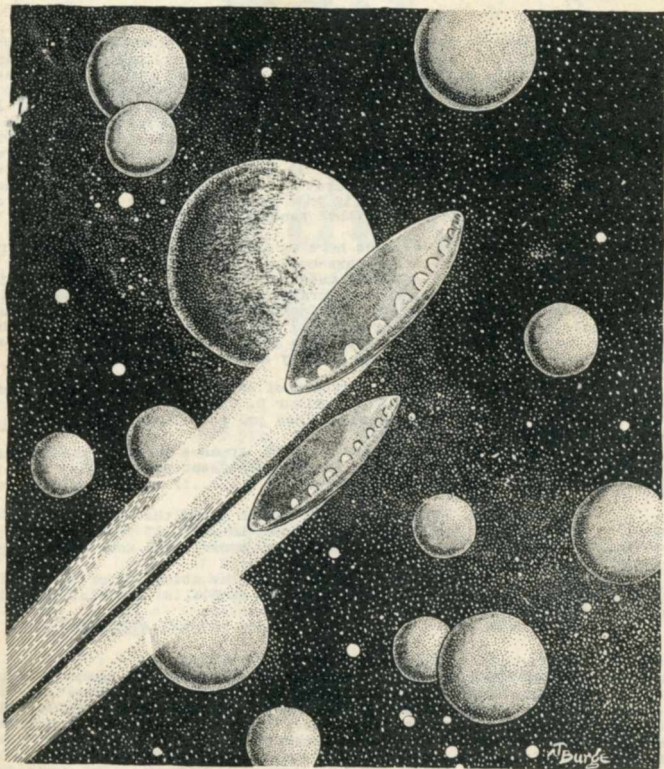


COSMAG SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2

NOVEMBER, 1951



SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST

\$64 per issue

\$1.25 per year

When I The #4 issue of Science Fiction Digest is ready for mailing to the lithographers ON TIME! Several nights of furious typing, pasting, snipping have brought us to the editorial page, which I attempt to leave till last and darn near left out this trip. I had only planned on 16 pages in #4 but whereas in the past I have worried about finding something to fill the 16 pages, this time I actually had to decide what to leave out! And it's a nice feeling, believe me. Three artists have offered their services to SPD, Dave Stone, Richard Ward, and Harold Hostetler. Harold did the illos for Ganley's "Sorry Saurian" in this issue, as well as the heading for Willis' "The Immortal Teacup". He was the first to offer his services, and hence the only one of the three to appear in this issue. I'll try to have all of them represented in #5 and you can then render your preferences.

I would like to express here my indebtedness to Vernon McCain, firstly, for spending God-only-knows-how-many hours digging thru piles of moldy fannies in search of suitable material for SPD, and further, typing it legibly into double spaced manuscripts. In addition, Vernon had the Lemuel Craig article written expressly for this mag, and has promised all needed assistance in procuring material for SPD in the future. From this issue, you may consider him as Associate Editor of SPD, for he will be a decisive factor in bringing you top quality articles in the future.

Walt Willis begins his history of British fandom in this issue with an expose of the private life of Arthur C. Clarke; you should read the second installment! That's intended to lead you to believe I already have the next installment!

Bob Johnson's auto-biography of ONB appears herein, accompanied sadly, however, with the news that his NOLAN issue was the next to last regular issue. You know the story as well as I.....if not, read "The Orb and I".

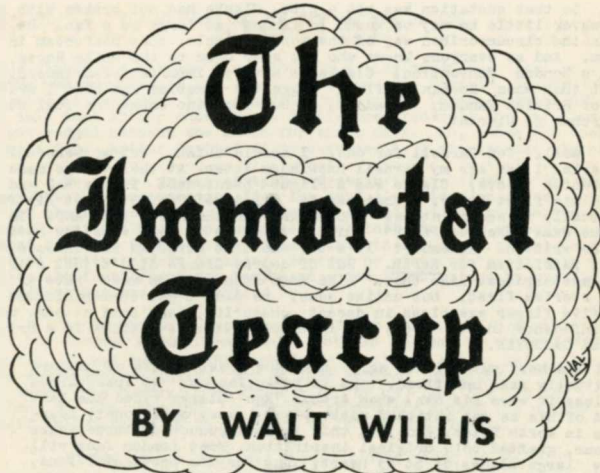
Paul Ganley's "Sorry Saurian" struck me as the answer to these pleas I've been hearing lately for 'more humor in sci-fi'. If you don't get at least several chuckles from it, I suggest you consult the nearest auditor. Who said that dirty word?

Before I leave, I would like to call the attention of certain UK correspondents to the beautifully evened edges of Willis' article....and the horribly ragged remainder. I lost my whip.....

I await your verdict.

Henry

CONRAD-SCIENCE-FICTION DIGEST, co-edited by Henry W. Burwell, Jr. and Ian Macaulay, is published bimonthly by the Atlantic Science-Fiction Organization. Subscription rates are 25¢ per copy - \$1.25 a year or 10¢ copies of your favorite in trade. British subscriptions, nine shillings per year, are to be sent to Derek Pickles, 41 Compton St., Dudley Hill, Bradford, Yorkshire, England. All other subscriptions and other money should be mailed to Ian T. Macaulay, 57 East Park Lane, N. E., Atlanta 5, Ga. Advertising rates: Full page \$3.00, half page \$1.75, quarter page 1.00. And other divisions upon request. No charge for simple preparation of ads. A circulation of 300 copies will be guaranteed.



PART ONE.

PEOPLE

"I shall never break completely with fandom."

-----Arthur C. Clarke, VOM #40, March, 1945

Some years ago Rick Sneary sent a questionnaire to various prominent fans. One of his questions was whether it would be a good thing if all fans lived in the same town. With uncommon common sense, most of the fans replied that it wouldn't, because if fans could talk to one another instead of writing, some of the most enjoyable of fan activities would tend to die away, such as fax publishing and letter writing. In London, this is what has actually happened. It has at once the biggest number of fans and the least activity of any city in the English speaking world.

But London fandom is far from being dead, whatever unkind things we provincial barbarians may say about it from time to time. Old English fans never die, they merely fade away into the saloon bar of the White Horse Tavern, where every fan in the greater London area congregates on Thursday nights. Coming into this place, the astounded neo-fan feels like his American counterpart entering PAPA and encountering the giants of a former era. But the White Horse is no elephant graveyard, full of white sepulchres fulfilling their minimum activity requirements. It is more like the Elysian fields. There, any Thursday night, can be seen our ancestors, the legendary heroes mentioned in the Fancyclopedia, alive and fanning still after their fashion.

So that quotation was not a gibe. Clarke has not broken with fandom, however little he may be known to fandom at large as a fan. He fans still, in the circumscribed way of the London Circle, that microcosm in the microcosm. And as everyone knows who has ever been to the White Horse, or attended a London Convention, Clarke is a very important fan indeed. So important that when Norman Ashfield suggested sometime ago that I write a History of British Fandom, he added, "But then who knows the full story, except Arthur C. Clarke?"

Well, Ted Carnell for one, I should think, but we were talking about Clarke. I can air my Carnell Knowledge later. At the time he made the promise quoted above, Clarke was a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF and had just sold his first story. That was to Gillings' PANTASY, but his first story actually to see print was "Loopholes" in the April 1946 ASP. In the next issue came "Rescue Puffy" which I think is in some ways the best sf story ever written. Remember? It's the one that gave you the unaccustomed thrill of patriotism for Earth. But of course Clarke didn't just start in writing masterpieces like that. Like most authors, he must have written many bad stories first, but unlike some, he didn't get them published. He did his five finger exercises in decent obscurity, and sold nothing until he had confidence in it. Look, for instance, at this article in a British fan called GARGOYLE.

"All the best authorities agree that the great events of history habitually pass unnoticed. So it is in fandom. No cheer arose (unless it were his own) when Arthur "Ego" Clarke typed the last word of his as yet untitled masterpiece, away on a lonely mountain in North Wales. And yet, this is the product of three years' labour, grafted onto original inspiration. Most London fans will know large slices of it by heart, but for the provincial fans, one may baldly summarize:

The story concerns a youth, Raymond, the first child to be born in millions of years in the city of Diaspar, ringed by the deserts of the dying Earth. In him is the initiative that the men of Diaspar have lost, and he sets out in a 'borrowed' air-cruiser to discover what lies over the far horizon. He finds a race still progressive in the last fertile oasis of Earth, and with another youth of that race, he sets out to track down that more adventurous part of humanity, that in the dim past had gone out to the stars. On a planet of a vast artificial system of seven multi-coloured stars they find a monument to the last of their race, who have laid down life after exhausting all the knowledge of the Universe.....

That story was surely "Against The Fall of Night". And that issue of GARGOYLE was dated April 1941.

At the age of 33 Clarke is today one of the best half dozen sf authors in the world. In the last few years he has also become a BSC, the Chairman of the British Interplanetary Society, and Britain's foremost authority on astronautics. As for the man himself, I have met him only a couple of times and found him very amiable. I can't really say, on that acquaintance what justification there is for his nickname of "Ego", but on the one hand, it has certainly stuck, and on the other it seems to be used with real affection. As for instance, by William F. Temple, that old friend and sparring partner of Clarke's, in the following classic of fan journalism. This article first appeared in NOVAE TERRAE, June 1938, and was written just before Clarke and Temple moved together into "The Flat" at 88 Gray's Inn Road, one of the most famous addresses in the history of fandom, and about which I'll have more to say when we come to the "EVENTS" part of this narrative.

THE BRITISH FAN IN HIS NATURAL HAUNTS

#3 Arthur C. Clarke

Arthur Clarke and his ego live alone in a tiny divan bd. stg. rm., h. & c. running water, use of bath. rm., in a house in Norfolk Square, W.2. The smallness of this room is a standing joke in the London Branch SPA---there is a tale that Arthur once wore a double-breasted suit for the first time, and got wedged between the walls for three days. So, when one beery night at the A.O.D., Arthur invited me to examine it, I accompanied him eagerly.

We toiled up many flights of stairs: A. lives on the top floor. (Funny how these astronomers like the roof.) At last we stood outside the door of the famous den. A. (hereinafter called A.) flung open the door with a magnificent gesture, and thundered "Behold!" But the effect was somewhat spoiled for he'd forgotten to leave a lamp in the light socket, and the den remained obstinately in darkness. However he advanced boldly into the gloom fumbled about and found the lamp (and a few other things by the sould of it) and had another go: "Behold!"

But again an anticlimax. My fault this time. I wasn't there. You see, I'd noticed a small room on the stairs and had to retreat there quite urgently. It had been a VERY beery evening at the A.O.D. Still, I came back again commendably quickly, and at last entered the sanctum. Only just tho. For there was hardly room for the two of us, and A's ego had to be left outside on the landing. A himself generously opened the window and sat himself half outside it to allow me to look around freely.

Pinned on the wall was a yard square photo of the moon. Actually it was made up of four smaller sections, each of different sizes and parts, the consequence was a moon that bulged badly in the wrong places, and one hemisphere missed the other completely and stuck out into space for several hundreds of miles. But A knew his craters and rapped them out as I indicated them: "Tycho, Aristillus, Copernicus....." "What's this?" I asked, pointing out a strange straight mark in the Alps. "The Great Cliff" said A promptly. "Weer thing-----there's no debris in or around it. It's dead straight too, like the slash of an atomic ray-gun."

"Ha! Let's get on to science fiction then. What's your favourite story?"

"One I wrote myself", interpolated the Ego, poking it's head in the door. I batted it one and it retired with an even more swollen head than usual. With true scientific indeterminacy A couldn't decide upon his favourite story. I caught sight of some books piled on top of his cupboard and brought them down in a shower of sugar and granupetes. Did I mention that A's ladder is on top of the cupboard too? The first book I looked at was "The Moon" by Professor Pickering. Impatiently I threw it aside and picked up the next. It was entitled "The Moon" by Nasmyth and Carpenter. "Hack!" I said and picked up the next. Yes, it was titled "The Moon"...this time by Neilson. I gave it up.

"You B.I.S. moonatic," I said, "haven't you anything less technical?" A replied "My library is at Tamton, my home town. It contains complete sets of WONDER, ASTOUNDING, about 100 sf novels and more than 100 other books of pure science." "Darned if I'm going to Tamton (if there is such a place) to check up on it" I said. "I'll just have to take your word for it. Here A's conscience smote him. "Well, to tell you the truth, my ASTOUNDING collection is two short" he mumbled. The Ego thrust it's head into the room at this and gave A such a look of utter contempt that the poor fellow blushed. "A fine chance to boost yourself without being detected-----and you throw it away, you weak twerp!"

it remarked bitterly and withdrew. I made another desperate attempt to make something of Relativity" by Knopf. "Dammit, this is a bit steep" I grumbled, "Can't you remember what books you've got at fauntom, wherever that is?"

"I keep a list. That's the best of having a methodical mind," answered A, yanking a drawer open. I've never seen such a jumbled clutter of bric-a-brac as was in that drawer—buttons, pins, stamps, the B.I.S. cash-box, cutlery, pamphlets, wool (A durns his own socked sardine cans, tram tickets, bits of well worn chewing gum, —everything came flying out as the methodical mind searched for it's list. There were too, I remember, thick files of letters from Sam Youd and Eric Frank Russell, and very thick files of carbon copies of letters written by A himself. This last file was, I learned, the Ego's favourite reading material on Sunday afternoons.

At last the list. It was an exercise book printed neatly at first and then degenerating into A's wildest scribble as it went on. Against each title was A's rating—F, G, VG, etc. There were all the familiar titles known to every fan, and many that were new to me, Lance Sieveking's "Stamped" (illustrated by G. K. Chesterton) and Beresford's "Gods of the Purple Planet". A. wouldn't venture to name his favorite book, but I noticed that though VVG (very very good) was not uncommon, against Stapledon's "Star Maker" was just the one word "Superb."

I had another glance round the room. There was a microscopic radio set in the cupboard—there was no room for it outside. But that was OK, for A. While lying in bed could swing the cupboard door with his foot, thus regulating the volume of sound. It occurred to me, rather belatedly, that I ought to include a personal portrait of A. in the interview. So I looked at him. One must take the bad with the good in a reporter's life.

I beheld a tallish, rather clever looking fellow (appearances are deceptive) whose eyes glinted at me through horn rims with a condescending expression. He looks as if he hopes he looks like a scientist does A. His hair cannot make up its mind whether it is dark or fair, is perfectly dry and sticks up like a wire brush. An over-zealous barber wandered about in it for days and when the search party found him told an astounding story which A. used as a plot for one of his yarns.

He's impatient and highly strung, and says he's not, and given to sudden violent explosions of mirth (mostly at his own jokes). This is sometimes embarrassing to we fans who meet in Lyon's on Thursday evenings, and when he rolls on the floor convulsed in mad mirth we pretend he isn't with our party, and wonder why the manageress allows these queer people in. The bowls are soon empty of lump sugar on our table too, for A. eats pounds of it, ever since he heard that diabetic persons, (eg. H.O. Wells) are intellectually cleverer than the average.

While I was thus ruminating, A. suddenly heard the call of the sugar bowl and invited me out to supper. So we tucked the Ego in the little bed (it was its turn tonight —A. was sleeping in the washbowl) and went to the cafe on the corner, and had some lump sugar and crumbly sausage rolls. I had to pay for myself. I still don't know where fauntom is, but now I suspect it's somewhere in Scotland.

("The Immortal Teacup" will appear regularly in SPD henceforth)

Robert W. Chambers
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Operation Fantast is taking advance orders for 'THE SANDS OF MARS' Arthur C. Clarke's latest interplanetary novel, to be published in October, at \$1.50.

Mr. Clarke, perhaps best known to fandom for 'PRELUDE TO SPACE' in Galaxy Novel #3, and his novelette 'AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT' in Startling, Nov. 1948, has now written an equally realistic story of the first colonisation of Mars. There are no Martian princesses, no BEWs, involved in the maiden voyage of the "Ares". Instead, there are the plain facts which have to be faced by the colonists, on a planet with a hostile environment, an unbreathable atmosphere. There is the indifference of the home world, forgetful of the trials of the first men to dwell on another world, now that the first glory of conquering space has passed.

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THE SORRY SAURIAN

By W Paul Ganley



As the sun nudged the forty-fifth degree of it's arc in the heavens, it's rays finally dispelled the thick blanket of clouds that hangs like a smoke screen over the surface of Venus for two-thirds of it's rotation.

In the engine room of the interstellar freighter S.S. Mandalay, the Chief Engineer, a tall middle-aged fellow who claimed the name of Ethan Dewcastle, was busily at work. A bottle of Venusian whisky stood ready at hand in the event the diligent Mr. Dewcastle required psychological assistance in his task.

Judging from the level of the liquid in the container, Mr. Dewcastle had certainly required a goodly amount of assistance. At length, having dispatched the last drop of his assistance, Dewcastle prepared for the routine task of concealing the evidence.

"Well now," he told himself shakily, "what better use for this superb example of plasti-shaping than to bestow it upon that outstanding First Mate of the good space ship Mandalay? No doubt he would appreciate the gesture, kind soul that he is, and get himself fired."

It was worth the trial, however, so Mr. Dewcastle got to his feet and prepared to descend upon the empty cabin of that jovial companion, the delightful First Mate Bronson, whose latest injury had been merely the fact that he had been allowed to go "ashore" while Dewcastle was left holding the bag. The door was locked, of course, but to a man of Mr. Dewcastle's manifold accomplishments, that proved no insuperable difficulty. After a moment it slid inward.

"Sure, now, and that Venusian whisky must've been a bit too strong," he said. "I'm thinking I'm seeing things here; and while I must admit there is a strong resemblance to Mr. Bronson, it does seem to be a mite greener around the gills, and it's teeth are a bit larger."

"Well, don't just stand there, Mac," said the thing, "come in if you're coming. What's that you got there? Venusian Dew? Can smell it a mile off. Oh, I'm Jake."

"What?" Said Mr. Dewcastle blankly.

"Jake" said the monster.

"Jake, schmake," said Mr. Dewcastle, recovering his wits. "What are you doing here anyway?"

"What are YOU doing here?" the monster countered, "I bet you're Castledew. Mr. Bronson warned me about you. Said you were always drunk."

"Is that so now?" Mr. Dewcastle sniffed. "Let it be known to all—even monsters Ethan Dewcastle is never drunk."

"Then what's that Venusian stuff you had there? It doesn't look like you left much of it."

"Huh? What? Oh, this." Mr. Dewcastle had suddenly recalled the nature of his errand.

"You should have left some of it for me. But then Bronnie would know I was talking to you."

"What d'y' mean?" Mr. Dewcastle inquired sagaciously.

"Who else would have Venus Dew?" the monster said logically. "Bronnie---- that's what I call him when he isn't around----hid his stuff so I can't get at it any more."

Mr. Dewcastle pored over this bit of information. "He's got Dew? But that's against the law. Yessir, he'd git in mighty bad trouble. I never would have thought it of him. He was always a careful, law-abidin' critter. My, my." Mr. Dewcastle shook his head sadly at the thought of his fallen ideal.

The monster suddenly jumped up and Mr. Dewcastle sauntered over behind a chair. "I just thought of something," Jake exclaimed.

"That's too bad," said Mr. Dewcastle. "Er--not hungry, are you?"

The monster ignored this. "Bronnie said I should keep hidden till after he came back. Now he'll find out I talked to you. Hey, can you do a pal a favor?"

"Well, now," Mr. Dewcastle said doubtfully. He was musing over the situation, and trying to find the flaws in it that he could turn to his own benefit.

"Don't tell anybody about me, huh? Pretend you never saw me? Please?" Jake grimaced petulantly.

"Perhaps" Ethan said, casting his eyes about in search of a suitable resting place for the Venusian Dew. One of Mr. Bronson's jackets lay looped over a peg. It was reasonably conspicuous, and as he wandered over to it, Mr. Dewcastle muttered: "Just where did you come from anyway?"

"Antares II" said Jake. "I was captured and trained by a trader. Bronnie won me from him in a game of poker when I was drunk."

Mr. Dewcastle did not comment on Jake's inebriety. Instead he asked logically, "Then what have you been doing since then? It's been two weeks since we stopped there."

"I've been in my cage" the monster explained, Bronnie is going to bring in an empty box today, and make everyone think I was in it. That's why he wanted me to stay out of sight. Have you got anymore of that Venusian Dew?"

"Listen" admonished Mr. Dewcastle. "Hear that?" A faint voice raised, drifted in thru a half open porthole. "Couldn't mistake that voice, even when there's a foghorn around. And he's with the Captain. Couldn't be better."

Mr. Dewcastle drifted towards the door.

"Hey, wait, neighbor" Jake said. "What about me?"

"You? You stay there" said Mr. Dewcastle. "Don't worry. Your secret's safe with me." He opened the door and scanned the corridor. It was empty. The marled voice of the monster came after him. "Thanks, Castledew, you won't be sorry tha--"

The door clanged shut, the lock clicked, and Dewcastle went merrily on his way.

"Dewcastle I" The voice was raised in high rage. Mr. Dewcastle observed sadly that Mr. Bronson's blood pressure was hitting a new high. He turned with great sorrow, and addressed the First Mate.

"Mr. Bronson, have you been getting yourself drunk again? You have shamed the entire vessel, sir, by allowing yourself to be seen in this condition. Oh, Captain. Have you seen Mr. Bronson here? Look at him, sir! Would it not be a good idea to confine him to his cabin? The Mandalay is not a haven for low drunkards."

"DEWCASTLE I" Mr. Bronson shrieked again, as Captain Pratt ambled out of his cabin and towards his under-officers.

"It will do you no good to plead, young man" observed Mr. Dewcastle soberly. "You cannot shed your infancy so easily. Never would I have thought it, never. Why, even an infant would—sary there I lay your hands off me!"

"Steady," Mr. Bronson snapped the Captain. "This—this—the first Mate choked and turned back to Mr. Dewcastle, who was still shaking his head sadly, "you put that bottle there!"

"Ah, the poor man. His mental stability is impaired from drink. Captain, will you take him in hand? But do not be too harsh on him."

Mr. Bronson gritted his teeth in agony. "Look!" announced Mr. Dewcastle, pointing dramatically. "There. There is proof of Bronson's infirmity. Even we can see it."

Jake had wandered out into the corridor. He spied his master and his new friend at the other end of the corridor and toddled forward.

"Ray, boss, is this Castledew?" he asked jauntily. Mr. Bronson looked frantic. He mumbled something under his breath, then found his voice. "That's Jake" he said. "Jake"

Mr. Dewcastle patted him softly on the head. He got his hand brushed down for his pains. Bronson went on "He's a pet, not very intelligent, but he can talk. I just brought him on board."

Captain Pratt cleared his throat. "It does seem as if we have gotten off the subject. Mr. Bronson seems to be in trouble, as Dew is forbidden off Venus, and this might be construed as an attempt at smuggling. However, there are certain—"

"It's Dewcastle!" broke in Mr. Bronson. Dewcastle sighed deeply. "Mr. Bronson! You will remain in your quarters for the remainder of our stay in Venus. Mr. Dewcastle, you will remain likewise on board. There is something I do not fully understand here, but I think I understand enough."

"But Captain Pratt," Mr. Dewcastle said. "surely you can not penalize me for the indiscretions of our mutual friend, here." Jake patted him on the leg and he leaped ten feet away. "It is not democratic."

But Pratt was adamant.

The reason for Mr. Bronson's secrecy about Jake was not apparent. Mr. Dewcastle amused himself by completing his newest invention, and by drinking the Dew which people insisted was responsible for the first syllable of his name.

Alas, his supply of Dew did not outlast the journey to Earth, where the remainder of the cargo was to be unloaded from the ship. He became morose. He did not even enjoy the nightly poker which the officers indulged in. Especially he did not enjoy it as he embarked upon a prodigious losing streak, and ere half the journey was over—journeys between stars since the powerful interstellar drive could not be used in a star system—he had lost all his pay to the most hated Mr. Bronson.

Docking in an Earth port was no different from docking anywhere else, except perhaps that efficiency was a little greater. The tedious work of unloading the immense vessel had begun, and Mr. Dewcastle was turned loose on an unsuspecting Earth for the first time in three years.

A survey of taverns—"To get the lay of the land"—was always first on the agenda, and this was no exception. However, Mr. Dewcastle's fondest hopes were blasted. Venusian Dew was unobtainable, except at the fantastic prices that resulted from the temperance ban imposed on solar system traffic.

And Mr. Dewcastle was moping disconsolately in his ninth barroom when his mind first began to shape the first tremulous patterns of a plan.

It was getting late. The moon was up in the sky somewhere, raging impotently at the curtain of dark clouds that cluttered the horizon. The old-fashioned fluorescent bulbs painted old age over the smart features of the two bartenders and the three or four other customers.

Mr. Dewcastle was bored. To be sure, there were other potions to imbibe, most of them home-brewed, the rest smuggled in from other portions of the galaxy and available at fantastic prices; but there was no substitute for the Dew. And as we have mentioned, Mr. Dewcastle had been unlucky during the voyage.

So he faced the unfortunate choice of spending all his money on one bottle of under-the-counter Venusian Dew or spending it all on a normal one day consumption of inferior stuff.

He sat considering the problem morosely, when one of the bartenders ambled up to his table and cleared his throat hesitantly.

"Whad d'y' want?" Mr. Dewcastle barked irritably.

"Beggin' yer pardon, sor," said the man, "but you wouldn't be a member of the Dewcastle family, any chance?"

Mr. Dewcastle surveyed the man, whom he did not remember ever seeing before. "It is possible," he stated cautiously. "Why?"

"I usta ship out, sor, with a Dewcastle, name of Orrram. Water shippin', though."

Mr. Dewcastle leaned back. "Ah yes, Ephram. The black sheep of our family, he is. Ever since he turned to drink, the family name has been shamed." He drained his glass sorrowfully.

"I innerstand," said the bartender. "Own this place her now. Say, yer from the Mandalay, right?"

Mr. Dewcastle inclined his head shortly. "Hah! across a rumor t'other day. Seems one o' our compesters, here, feller name of Schultz, plans t'get a shipment of Venusian Dew. Now just maybe—"

"Enough!" thundered Mr. Dewcastle angrily. "Do you think I would be a party to such doings? Be off with you! At once. Ah, just what were you considering paying for the shipment if it were, well, diverted?"

The bartender smiled. "Well, say Two hundred for a dozen bottles." "Hm," muttered Mr. Dewcastle. "As you say, Three hundred for a dozen. Well, that seems a good price. Perhaps—well, I'll see what can be done. Yes, indeed, if someone is smuggling Venusian Dew into Earth, it is my solemn duty to unearth the scoundrel and seize his ill-gotten gains. Tell me, when will the transaction take place?"

"I nard that they were gonna go after it tomorrow morning." "I—mm. Well, then you show up at about eleven tonight. I'll take care of everything. Ah yes, your name...?"

"Willie Schantz. See you tonight then! How many dozen?" "Perhaps two," Mr. Dewcastle said. "Yes, this is my righteous duty.."

Since it was already three A. M., Mr. Dewcastle collected his faculties and scampered along toward the huddle form of the S.S. Mandalay.

When he awoke later that morning he recalled that something was amiss, and after a few moments of solid reasoning, he dredged up the memory of the barroom conversation. At eleven that evening, things would be happening.



He prepared a little note, slipped it in an envelope, and mailed it to the custom's bureau. The afternoon mail would bring it in, and meanwhile Mr. Dewcastle did some snooping.

Behind the bunk of his cabin the ship's air-circulation system opened into his room. In space it provided a constant fresh supply of good air for every portion of the ship; but now like everything else it was set aside for overhauling.

It was large enough for a creeping Mr. Dewcastle to traverse, and he had not far to go. Mr. Bronson's cabin was only a deck below.

He peered through the twisted steel mesh and observed Jake in the act of poking around in a case of shoe polish. No one else was in the room. Mr. Dewcastle curled a finger around the screen, then withdrew his hand swiftly.

The clump of footsteps announced the appearance of Mr. Bronson. Jake heard it too, but too late. "Get away from that," Mr. Bronson shouted angrily, "how many times have I told you not to poke in there. You whisky-sot!!"

"But boss, I need a drink."

"Don't let me hear you telling anyone anything about that box. And listen, you'll get enough soused when I take you along with me. We'll make the rounds of the taverns. Wait!! the boys see you!"

"More poker again, Boss?"

Mr. Dewcastle's hands clenched at this.

"Yeah, more poker," Mr. Bronson grinned, "I guess you deserve your reward. I cleaned out Dewcastle completely, and everybody else too. Now, come on, get away from that."

Mr. Dewcastle held in his shriek of outrage only by superior discipline. He grew white, red, green. He crouched there in anger and frustration. And then he turned and made his way back to his own cabin.

Mr. Bronson deserved all he would be getting! he thought viciously. Imagine, cheating at poker with the help of that blasted animal. He'd forgotten the thing could talk, and could probably understand how to play poker, too!!

Mr. Dewcastle was quite furious, but he calmed down sufficiently to consider events.

So Mr. Bronson was carrying Venusian Dew camouflaged as shoe-polish! He'd rather suspected those cases of polish...

He strolled out onto the small open-air deck that was laid around the hull in port, watching the work going on.

At six o'clock that evening the customs people clambered on board with a warrant. Mr. Dewcastle was seated, playing poker with Mr. Bronson in an amiable fashion, and losing what little money remained to him. The door burst open without warning.

"Which one of you is Nate Bronson?" one of the men barked.

"Why, he is," Mr. Dewcastle said softly, rising. "What's the matter?"

"Government business," said another of the newcomers. "Come on, Bronson. You and that little monster of yours. You're under arrest!"

"Arrest!" Mr. Bronson stood up indignantly.

"Arrest?" Mr. Dewcastle echoed. "Mr. Bronson, what have you done now?" Mr. Dewcastle caught a betraying glance toward the corner where the boxes of "shoe polish" were lying.

"Come along!" The man stepped close to Bronson, whispering, "Okay we've got your letter. Play along." Mr. Bronson opened his mouth in astonishment.

Mr. Dewcastle heard the swiftly-spoken words, and he smiled.

The men bundled Mr. Bronson and Jake out of the cabin, leaving

Mr. Dewcastle sitting there.

Thoughtfully he went over and inspected the box of shoe polish.

"Well, now," he muttered. "Mr. Bronson a criminal. My, the type

of men one must associate with in this business

of men one must associate with in this business!" He opened one of the bottles and sniffed the contents.

His eyes roved to the air-circulation vent. At eleven that night he would be quite prepared for Willie Schantz.

It was almost midnight when Mr. Bronson returned to the ship. Captain Pratt and Mr. Dewcastle were awaiting his possible return. "Here comes the low criminal, now," Mr. Dewcastle commented.

"Quiet, Mr. Dewcastle," said Mr. Bronson. "Look at this!" He showed a roll of green bills, all new and crisp.

"What happened?" Captain Pratt asked. Mr. Dewcastle had a funny sinking feeling in his stomach.

"The customs people got this note. I didn't write it, but that's between us. I wonder who did."

The Captain read the note aloud: "Gentlemen: For fear of revenge upon my person by friends of the below mentioned party, I must request you to withhold my name. I have been compelled to aid a rebel exile of the planet Puur in his escape from his pursuers; compelled against my will. I am the Mate of the SS Kandalay, recently docked in New York from Venus. Arrest of this transgressor would get me in much trouble, unless you also arrested me and held me for a few hours. Quick action would be appreciated. This person, familiarly named Jake, is a dangerous alien. Hastily, Mr. O. Bronson. S. S. Kandalay."

"I don't get it?" said Captain Pratt.

"Neither do I," said Bronson, "but the police checked the letter. It wasn't completely correct, but pretty close. Jake was actually a dangerous criminal from the planet Ertzyuip. There was a five-hundred dollars reward out for him. Well, toodle-oo!"

He turned jauntily toward his cabin.

A minute later, with Captain Pratt having turned in, Mr. Dewcastle heard the outrageous cry. It provided some measure of balm for his astonished soul. "DEWCASTLE!" came the shout.

A feeling of almost satisfaction came to Mr. Dewcastle at that. It could be only one thing; Mr. Bronson had inspected his cargo of "shoe polish" and had found that it was a very good grade of, Naturally, shoe polish.

THE END

"The Sorry Saurian" is a Science Fiction Digest original story.



THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL-

A LOST ART FORM?

BY LEMUEL CRAIG

The above title is actually a misnomer since this article deals as much with the fantasy novel as the science-fiction novel. However, we are referring to the sort of story made famous by John W. Campbell in ASP and UNKNOWN and not to the anemic inbred product of the more conventional and traditional hard-cover style of writing.

During the last few months I have been reading the early issues of what was probably the greatest sf or fantasy magazine of all time, UNKNOWN. I have found it a highly enjoyable process, despite the fact that many of the choicest morsels have been reprinted in one form or another and are thus already familiar to me. The magazine abounds in what the fan regards as 'classics'. Probably more stories have been anthologized from UNKNOWN and the magazine has maintained a higher per issue quality than any other sf or fantasy pulp including ASTOUNDING and GALAXY.

But the choicest of the choicest, the most delectable treats of all in UNKNOWN are the novels. Several I had previously read. Many of the others I had heard of by word-of-mouth praise for some time. Generally speaking, these stories fully lived up to the encomiums heaped upon them.

Here were the greatest works of L. Sprague de Camp, L. Ron Hubbard, Eric Frank Russell, and H. L. Gold. It must have been an exciting thing reading UNKNOWN when these stories were new. But that brought up a point; all these writers are still writing today or have very recently quit. If this was their product in 1939, how much better could these authors be expected to do with twelve years experience?

But a look around will suffice to show that this logical result has not come to pass.

This caused me to make a thorough examination of the output of 1939 in UNKNOWN and the novels published in the last twelve months.

In the first twelve issues of UNKNOWN (March 1939-Feb. 1940) fifteen novels were published. Of these, seven need not concern us. These seven represent either substandard writing (Steve Fisher's RETURNED FROM HELL), the adventure story in a fantasy setting for which Campbell had a weak spot and which he found most easy to obtain in the early ex-

perimental days of UNKNOWN (FLAME WINDS by Norvell Page), which bore little of lasting interest, low-calibre hackwork (Hubbard's THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE) and one gripping non-fantasy, SOLDIERS OF THE BLACK GOAT.

The remaining eight, or over half, almost unanimously deserve the muchly overused term 'classic'.

They are:

LEST DARKNESS FALL	- de Camp	DIVIDE AND RULE	- de Camp
SINISTER BARRIER	- Russell	THE GHOUL	- Hubbard
NONE BUT LUCIFER	- Gold and de Camp	ENCHANTED WEEKEND	- Mac Cormac
SLAVES OF SLEEP	- Hubbard	DEATH'S DEPUTY	- Hubbard

'Darkness', 'Barrier', 'Slaves', 'Divide and Rule', and possibly 'Death's Deputy' have all seen hard cover appearance. (For the clarification of the reader, the above listing is in order of my own personal preference.) Probably the only reason 'None but Lucifer' never saw a book edition was because it was too dated, although that would appear an easy matter to fix. 'The Ghoul' is much superior to 'Deputy' and will perhaps appear eventually in book form. 'Enchanted Weekend' is a bit too short for solo hard cover appearance but was reprinted in FROM UNKNOWN WORLDS.

This writer is not an admirer of L. Ron Hubbard but he must admit that the Hubbard of 1939 was a far superior writer to the Hubbard of recent years. De Camp also was much more adept in the use of his type-writer than. I don't think that anyone will quibble greatly at the listing of the above stories as truly outstanding, if not 'classics'.

Now let's look at the last year. We have been deluged with magazines, many of which have quickly folded. But how many print novels? There's ASTOUNDING, the old standby. But ASF has only printed one novel in the last year, 'The Hand of Zei'. And none of de Camp's Krishna series compare with his early output. Evidently the book publishers agree since it is his early UNKNOWN novels which keep appearing in print.

It is not surprising that ASF decided to drop serials for a while, since immediately preceding 'Zei', they had published probably the worst serial ever written by van Vogt and just previous to that the paranoid Hubbard novel, 'To the Stars'.

One has to go back to 1949, the November issue when ASF started two serials simultaneously before you find anything comparable to the above novels. That month ASF began Asimov's "--And Now You Don't" and Heinlein's gripping 'Gulf'.

There is GALAXY which has been licking ASF at its own game in most departments. They have run three serials, "Time Quarry," "Tyrann," and "Mars Child". The first two were ASTOUNDING rejects, and read like it. "Mars Child" was an admirable attempt to bring realism to sf along the same line as Clarke's monumental "Prelude to Space". Both the Clarke and Judd stories succeeded in their attempts at realism but failed dismally at the task of providing entertainment at the same time.

GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS is a praiseworthy attempt to present full novels for a quarter that would cost \$2.00 from the publisher or else have never before appeared. Since Street & Smith hold the copy-

rights on most of the best stuff of the past, GALAXY is now steering toward the latter course. Unfortunately, the pay is smaller and more of a gamble than selling a novel for serialization to GALAXY, and the result seems to be that the best writers are digging out the best of their old rejects from the trunk. Most of these are probably yarns which Campbell couldn't see buying for serialization in ASP. Since ASP used to have an extremely high standard of quality, this doesn't mean the stories are bad. Some of them are quite readable. But nothing you're apt to describe glowingly to some neofan five years from now.

STARTLING publishes six novels a year. In the past they have come up with gems like "What Mad Universe", "Weapon Shops of Isher", "The Laws of Chance", and "The Man in the Iron Cap". This last year the best they've been able to do is some highly enjoyable space opera by Jack Vance. But don't ask me to try and remember any of the titles.

Duplicating GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS is Fiction House' THE COMPLETE SCIENCE-ADVENTURE BOOKS. They seem to have encountered exactly the same pitfalls except that they pay less and are getting correspondingly poorer material. But we owe them a vote of thanks for making Laimov's fine "Pebble in the Sky" available at low prices.

Ziff-Davis is usually ignored by the more sophisticated fans but such well known stories as "Four-sided Triangle", and "The Star Kings" (space-opera, true, but what space-opera) have appeared in AMAZING. These bulky magazines offer much space and fairly good rates for long stories. Only the editorial policy of catering to adolescents keeps the quality at such a poor level.

And still, despite their poor reputation, the last two novels to appear anywhere in the field which this writer would rate along with the UNKNOWN titans, appeared in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, but not in the last year. In early 1950 they printed "THE DREAMING JEWELS" (which this reader considers the best all-around full length novel he has ever read in either the fantasy or science-fiction field) and "You're All Alone". But recent novels have been the usual blend of mythology-cum-sex-and sadism.

FFM, being wholly reprint can be ignored.

This leaves only the non-pulp field; slicks and original books. From the slicks we get such outdated and unscientific trash as "Day of the Triffids" and since "Pebble in the Sky" and "The Big Eye", none of the original books seem worthy of attention. I have had no chance to read "The House That Stood Still" but reviews indicate that it can be safely ignored.

The end result? Not one novel published between Sept. 1950 and Aug. 1951 can be compared with the eight novels produced by just one magazine, UNKNOWN, in its first year of publication. In addition, this was the time when Heinlein, van Vogt, and others were riding high, wide, and handsome in ASTOUNDING; and I understand COMET and SUPER SCIENCE turned out a few novels worthy of permanent attention somewhere in this period.

Since I originally made this examination of the field, the situation has changed slightly. STARTLING made a resurgence with Eric Frank Russell's "The Star Watchers". This was equal to neither "Sinister Barrier" nor "Dreadful Sanctuary" but it easily places as his third best novel and with a bit of editing could have ranked along with them. It will not be surprising if this appears in book form soon.

And the new Heinlein serial in GALAXY had a most intriguing first part. This could be another Heinlein novel in the grand manner. But science-fiction serials are notorious for promising far more in their first issue than they later deliver.

Even so, two novels from the entire field is a pretty puny comparison to the eight novels produced by one magazine twelve years ago. And that was under very similar of boomtime conditions.

What has caused the decline? It is well-known that many of the UNKNOWN and ASTOUNDING novels originated in the fertile brain of John W. Campbell. A mediocre writer himself (except for "Who Goes There?"), he has one of the cleverest minds for concocting a plot gimmick ever seen in this business. Another adept at this angle was Sam Merwin, Jr. But Campbell has abandoned UNKNOWN, dropped serials in ASP after a series of mediocre ones and seems more interested in dianetics than fiction. Merwin, another mediocre writer, has abandoned editing for free-lance writing. If any other editor is capable of duplicating their performance he has not yet shown it.

The same writers are still around and grinding out wordage. But the wordage doesn't add up to "Least Darkness Fall", "Universe", "Slan", or "Fear". The music business has a saying that a singer always sang best when he was still hungry. Maybe our toponoters are too prosperous, now. And we've hit a slump when there are no newcomers capable of taking over.

But if science-fiction is to progress, we must surely continue to produce outstanding novels. Novelettes and shorts are being turned out at a tremendous rate. The quality is high, perhaps higher than ever before. But novels are the backbone of any field of fiction. It takes many a Bradbury short story to equal the impact of one "Slan" in making a convert to the science-fiction field. An anthology can catch someone's temporary interest, but it takes an "Incompleat Enchanter" to attach them incurably to the field.

My personal favorites (and I find it hard to say which I like best or least) are "The Dreaming Jewels", "What Mad Universe", and "Headle". I've read dozens of novelettes and many many short stories I liked equally well. But when someone new to the field wants suggestions as to what to read, I wouldn't think of steering him just to "With Folded Hands", "Goodnight, Mr. James", or "Who Goes There?".

There's nothing so impressive to the new reader as a good overall novel. There's nothing more satisfying to the old reader for a good night's reading than that same novel. And nothing pays the author so well. So, damn it, let's get a few worthwhile long stories for a change so we can quit living off John W. Campbell's twelve year old ideas, and everybody will be happy.

(The preceding article is a Science Fiction Digest original)

Senator Pong Wanders:

Just why it is that magazine illustrators invariably put large, round breasts on female robots?

(from "S.T. his nar" April 1945)

THE ORB AND I

by BOB JOHNSON.....

--But Henry, dear boy, you said a little after the Nolaconi - and here sandwiched illegally within the printed-matter-only is a note which says "Wha Hoppin to "The Orb and I"? --Simple...I hadn't written it yet. Whaddaya think this is gonna be? A great literary masterpiece which I shall revise ad infinitum until the middle of September? --Not this boy.

Well, here it is, for the edification and enlightenment of the fan-ish readers of SPD; I hope you like it. It isn't particularly for Laughs, but a pretty thorough account of the high-soots in trials, tribulations and successes of one of fandom's most unusual magazines: ORB.

ORB is now nearing the end of its tether. In a way I'm very sorry to see it go. I have loved almost every minute of it, and the enlightenment about printing methods, amateur journalism, and the general taste of fandom has truly been worthwhile. In R.J. Bank's recent SPD article, he mentions losing \$30 instead of \$27. He's lucky. If I continued ORB as a 'hootchzine', I'd lose about \$100 instead of \$99.50. ORB is, obviously, a tres expensive hobby. And, contrary to the impression I give many fan, my family and I are anything but wealthy. I publish ORB with my own funds. I make \$11 a week-\$7 take-home pay. If ORB is published every three months or so, you can see that I have to do some very fancy odd-jobbing to even keep the collector's agency away from my heels.

This latest issue is running about "265. --It's the Nolaconi ORB, with all the pro material. It will never happen again, though, even if I could manage to continue ORB. It's been in planning for six months or more, and knowing fandom, if I sell every copy, I'll feel faint. --and lose only about \$150.

--And to think that only a year and ten months ago, the first emaciated issue of ORB appeared with a bill of \$7 from the offset printer! It all happened thisaway:

Back in the middle of '49 a group of Greeley kids, whom I was trying to convert into fan tried putting out a fanzine entitled LUNA. The second issue, due to the efforts of one of our members was never released. I was asked to resign because I was doing too much of the work (I) and I then told the remainder of the then-thinning bunch that it would be a cold day before they saw me again. That winter it was 26° below zero. --It wasn't cold enough...but I began to get an idea...(cold weather has always added my mental processes.) The reason why LUNA was so little success was due to too many cooks languidly trying to mix ingredients. So...why not something new? Something with a Latin title, like LUNA, but something of a letterzine...more like DAWN. (Yes...ORB was originally designed as a replacement for the even then fading DAWN.) And so it was conceived. ORB - "with an eye on fandom." I asked a friend for a story--one he allowed me to reprint from a friend's fanzine. I asked John

Grossman for an illustration for the cover, and a friend for an interior, and set out to do DAWN one better. I traced the cover, typed the story, a couple of poems, and some letters I had requested from fan on paper plates, and tied down to the offsetter. --Oh yes...since paper plates are not easily adaptable to the stipling process, I stippled a poem illustration by running a grease pen- oil up and down the perforations in a sheet of stamps held against the plate. (the naivete of neo-fan!) He turned the finished product back the next week, and I went wild with joy. In my egotism, I thought I was even giving the GORGON a run for its money. See parenthesized remark above. --I also got a contributing ed. by the name of Hanson, but he dropped out on #2 so enuf of him.

Even now, that first ORB looks pretty good to me. It was rather neat and artistic--and with a purpose, to provide interesting, artistic fan-slanted entertainment (and at that time, controversial letters). I thought I was doing pretty hot stuff. Unfortunately for my ego, the recipients of the first issue mostly seemed to agree with me. Happily, I only sent out about 30 copies (mostly samples) of #1. The subscriptions didn't exactly flood in. A drip is more like it.

The next issue I tried getting a little fancier--got a Gaughan illo from the Neff mess--boo. Due to its execution it had to be put on a metal plate. That's when the worries--and rewards started. The ish was in places, good, but mostly icky. It was neat, though...and that made an impression. Boggs made a few snide remarks and Bob lost his hat as usual. Since that little episode, it was repeated to me that Boggs labels me "the most temperamental editor in fandom." I rather think he's right. My psychological make-up includes one heckuva dash of pride. That ORB also made an impression on the Weld County Credit Bureau--whose letter department printed ORB for me. They offered me a job...asking me to do direct-mail work for them, and design covers for the bulletins. They rather misrepresented themselves (for which I never forgave them), but I took the job eagerly. I made 35¢ more an hour than I have been making while previously ushering at the local popcorn palace. I was overjoyed at the opportunity to make money and do the two things I loved most. Artwork and ORB. The Credit Bureau bored me, though, and I wasn't exactly indispensable. The bosses got tired of me, and when the opportunity came to let a girl take my job full-time rather than my part-time work, they snapped it up...and there went my job. In the meantime, ORB had grown into a prodigious investment, using a huge amount of illustrations and photographs. It was #6, produced at the Bureau that caused the mild sensation at the Norwescon. At the time of my leaving the C.B., with #7 completed, and partially in the mails, I had a bill for \$20 still unpaid from the \$90 it cost me to get it out. Thus, I was in a position to commit suicide on somebody's doorstep. (no unkind retorts, peasants!) During that interval between two and six, I collected a lovely backlog of material and artwork, and found a few pros looking surreptitiously in my direction. All of which made me very proud, and didn't help pay my bills a bit. I got a fairly large monetary present for Christmas, from a relative, so wasn't hauled off by angry Creditors then. Also, near that time, I wangled a job at a local record shop and managed to start saving for a next ORB, for which I thought I had enough material...but somehow a friendship from the Norwescon got me a story from Vernon McCain, rather amateur, but showing promise, and praise of a poem by Betsy Curtis started a long friendship by mail, and eventually a story from her, and so I ditched the original plans for #8. In #7, I had finagled a short from Emil Petaja, a semi-pro, mostly through sheer brass and now I had a Curtis story in #8...a whole ish, surprisingly cost me less than \$70. And surprisingly enough, I suddenly found ORB was a very "arty" little magazine. Of course we weren't exactly trying to be FTTTIESish with that black, pink and gold creation on #6's cover, but it was only an attempt at a cover like a new mag, FLAKH, had been coming out with. With #8, though, we were both definitely in the avant-garde swim. ORB vowed to be the artist fan-

zine ever to hit the mails. We undoubtedly achieved it. It sold completely out. To my knowledge, this has happened to few fanzines. The individualists in fandom were beginning to look on ORB as the place to howl. ORB started to pay for material for its super-duper #9 Nolacon ish.... We were now, but definitely, the FLAIR of fandom. --And I was loving every minute of it. Ella Lee was keeping such a big load off my back with helping with the typing, and I was able to devote more time to production. Then we got #9 started. We even purchased a full-color cover from Frank Preas, prominent fantasy artist. Over \$65 was spent for material. For a fanzine, this was suicide...but we (editorial) thought ORB might be able to grow pro if it made a big enough splash at the Nolacon, and we garnered enough subscriptions. About the end of this big whing-ding, I realized that the job was growing expensive beyond reason. We printed the stories and the illustrations, but the full-color cover was vetoed for the present, for lack of \$100. I did everything from paste illustrations to slip-sheet behind a violently pounding Kluge press. --And suddenly that was it. I was just sick of the whole mess....

I wouldn't give up a minute of ORB for anything, but now that the mag is lapsing back to normality, I can't possibly entertain the thought of doing anything like #9 again. ORB may continue...at highly irregular intervals, but #10 is the last that shall be published on a fairly regular basis. And certainly the last time I shall try to be so pretentious is #9.

Bill Warren has been a wonderful letter editor, and has given invaluable assistance, and Ella Lee has been wonderful about helping with the types, and they deserve a vote of thanks. One more issue is definitely planned, (#10) which will probably resemble #8 in format, but will parody, AS, FUTURE, OOTWA, etc. It'll be called "the timid-and-blunder issue."

After that, maybe one or two issues a year. Just enough to keep the subscribers happy. It's been a wonderful adventure--but I'm just all poohed out; ORB keeps demanding bigger and better things of me, and I lack the wherewithal, not to mention the contacts, to keep it growing. Maybe much later, ORB will go pro, and become a cross between FLAIR and FANTASY BOOK....

But don't hold your breath.

.....BOR JOHNSON

Dear SFD: THE TRUTH IS OUT!

I had pictured one Henry Burwell, inky fingered, tollworn, feverishly churning sheets thru a duplicator with one hand, whilst the fingers of his other hand (he has but two, I believe) flew wildly over the keys of his typewriter..... Now, in my visualisation of the cosmic all, the true scene appears.

Burwell, blood-stained stock whip in hand, evil grin on his face, reclines in his easy chair, sipping gin, watching the production of his fanzine. HIS fanzine? Kay Burwell's fanzinell

Notice the oblique references, the crumbs dropped from the rich man's table. "The thanks should go to my wife Kay.....paste-ups and other laborious dirty details by Kay Burwell."

Poor Kay. I pity her; tired, hungry and tearstained, she bends wearily over the typewriter (probably purchased by slave-driver Burwell out of the housekeeping money) berumbed fingers pecking at the keys, while Burwell raves "Slater said smooth edges! Call those even? Do it again!" Kay murmurs wearily something about dishes to wash...children to feed...the stock whip lashes out and once more her fingers take up the tortured tattoo on the keys...and so it goes on...artwork to fit...headings to paste on.... envelopes to address....HIS fanzine? Says who?

Yours sympathetically,
Joyce Slater.

