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In this issue:

ADAM LINK vs I, ROBOT

A comparison of Eando Binder's robot stories with those of Isaac Asimov.

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Both Isaac Asimov and Eando Binder wrote science fiction during the early 1940s based on robots. The pair wrote several short stories each for different pulp magazines, Asimov for Astounding and Binder for Amazing. In both cases these short stories were gathered for compilation books, Asimov's published in 1950 and Binder's in 1965. Comparing the two authors and their works one notices similarities which raise the questions - "Was one author influenced by the other?", "Did one 'steal' ideas from the other?" and on an equally dramatic scale "Whose use of science and technology had the greatest influence on society?"

Eando Binder was the pen name of two brothers, Earl and Otto Binder, some reports stating Earl retired from writing in 1936, others say 1940. Whichever is the case, it seems that Otto did the bulk of the writing of the robot stories which were based on a robot named Adam Link.

'I, Robot' was the first of the Adam Link series, published in Amazing Stories in 1939. Binder's creation - Adam Link - is what Asimov called a "Robot-as-Pathos". This was the first robot story to actually have the robot recount his own experiences. Adam Link himself was remarkable because of the human characteristic of emotion. He is blamed for the death of his creator, and in the original short story he commits suicide. The character was revived soon after for a continuing series totalling ten short stories during 1940 and early 1941. There was an additional story published in May 1942 entitled Adam Link Saves The World.

Asimov's first robot story was 'Robbie', about a robot used as a child minder, written in 1940. Asimov went on to write several short robot stories in the early 1940s. 'Reason' and 'Liar' were published in 1941, 'Runaround' in 1942, one story each year between 1944 and 1947 and 'The Evitable Conflict' published in 1950. Nine of these short stories were collected in the 1950 book 'I, Robot'.

In 'Adam Link - Robot', Binder created a robot with a mind. This robot, through the course of many adventures learns of the various emotions humans feel. Early in the book he is persecuted because it is believed he murdered his inventor, but when he is befriended by a journalist who eventually finds evidence to set him free, he feels the joy of friendship and the joy of freedom. During further stories he learns of love, anger and many other

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emotions. Binder believed his robot was an equal to humans and therefore throughout the book the one objective of the robot is to become a citizen of the United States of America. Several of the stories show Adam Link working to earn a living and later Binder even has Adam build himself a girlfriend robot.

All this is very much in contrast to Asimov's concept of robots through that earlier period. He portrayed them as semi-intelligent beings, definitely not equal to humans. Asimov claims that whilst writing Robbie he began to "... get the dim vision of ... robots as industrial products built by matter-of-fact engineers." He wrote of three laws controlling robots which are implanted in their brains:

1 - A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction allow a human being to come to harm.

2 - A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

3 - A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

These laws are a measure of control placed upon the robots which are used for industrial purposes and frequently for space ventures. Two characters, Gregory Powell and Michael Donovan have several amusing adventures on planets such as Mercury and on space stations where they are employed to field test new robots.

Yet Asimov's second robot story was 'Reason', published in 1941 which deals with a robot given the ability to reason. What eventuates is a robot who works out his own theory of existence and begins to worship a machine. Perhaps this was written experimentally before Asimov had developed his own concept of robots. Certainly it was before Asimov had firmly established the three laws of robotics which were first stated in completion in 'Runaround' in 1942. The laws were devised in collaboration with John Campbell, much-acclaimed editor of Astounding (which, later, became Analog).

One thing to note is this second robot story wasn't published until after most of the Adam Link series had been published. Asimov admits that he was very impressed with Binder's story because it represented a different class of robot - that of "Robot-as-Pathos". He also mentions that he was impressed by Lester del Rey's 'Helen O'Loy'. Until these innovative robot stories there were mainly "Robot-as-Menace" stories which weren't to Asimov's liking. After this admission, the question to ask is: did Asimov's ideas come from these works and subsequent Binder stories? or was he using original thoughts? It seems Asimov was inspired by these other writers and his first stories were experiments for him to develop his own ideas along similar lines.

What resulted was a concept which was much more successful than Binder's. Evidence of this is the fact that Asimov spent many years proud to be "the father of the modern robot story." His three laws of robotics have become well known and well quoted outside the area of science fiction as well as a basis for many

science fiction writers who followed. He can hardly be criticised of theft because so many writers are originally inspired by another's work and then write quite a different story. Asimov certainly had that difference.

A similarity to note between Binder's robots and Asimov's was the suggestion that robots could have a human-like appearance. Binder did it by merely covering his metal robots with a thick plastic and glueing hair to that. It is used as a disguise and is not considered as a permanent appearance. Asimov, on the other hand, suggested a robot which cannot be distinguished from a human. For example, it is never established in 'Evidence' that the character in question is a robot but Asimov suggests it is possible by (cleverly) leaving the question hanging in the reader's mind.

As Binder's story which mentions the idea of humanoid appearance was published long before Asimov's sceptics question the originality of Asimov's work. It is ridiculous to debate such a topic because it has surely been suggested many times by many authors that robots could be made in the likeness of their creators (as in Kapek's R.U.R.). It is hard to believe that Binder was the first to conceive the thought.

Both Asimov and Binder were writing in the early 1940s before the age of computers and obviously before robots were a normal part of the production scene. Although Binder's and Asimov's robot stories differed remarkably both writers approached robots in a way which was unique for that era because of the emphasis on peaceful robots rather than menacing. But it was not only science fiction stories and its fans which were affected by these robot stories. In fact the word "robotics", first used in 'Runaround' in 1942, was an invention that even Asimov was unaware of until later. As most people know, robots similar-in-principle to Asimov's vision of them are common-place in industry today. That is, they are created by engineers for specific jobs, even including safety features, although quite different to Asimov's, whose 'safety features' were the three laws of robotics which have become almost gospel in modern robotics engineering.

Robert A. Heinlein in 'Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues' (1959), defines science fiction as " realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method." Both Asimov and Binder speculated on the future of robotics before "robotics" was even in the dictionary. The science and technology included in their stories was obviously based on that of their era and extended to make a prediction; one more accurately than the other.

The collection of the short stories centred on Adam Link were published in 1965 in a book entitled 'Adam Link - Robot', used, presumably, because. the title of the original Adam Link story had already been used by Asimov in a collection of his robot short stories. This collection of Binder's meant some revision because of the change in technology in the twenty years between the original story and the collection. Binder had to update some

of the technology he mentioned and perhaps revise some terminology, but it is believed little else was changed.

In 'Adam Link - Robot' Binder wrote of electrons in an iridium-sponge brain which gave the robot the emotions he encountered. His robot has vision from photoelectric eyes, hearing, and during the course of events uses plastics to cover his metal body to make him look human. Binder also wrote of thought transferal and the control of actions via this, and space travel at faster than the speed of light. In one story Adam Link encounters aliens from deep in space.

Asimov's robots seemed to evolve with the development of his concept of robots. His first robot story had robots which couldn't talk, but from then on his robots' abilities improved with each story. There were robots who could reason, a robot who could read minds, and much later the suggestion that robots could live as humans. Asimov described the making of robots in his fictional company "U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men, Inc." where they build positronic brains in which the three Laws of Robotics are established by positronic potentials. Asimov also wrote of travel at the speed of light. He prophesied the banning of robots from Earth for several years except for scientific research. He also suggested that computers, which he called "machines", would run our planet, these being merely an extension of the robot.

Society in these robot stories was evidently based on that existing. This is evident in Binder's and Asimov's treatment of women in their stories. Binder has two characters which he classes as female. There is Kay Temple, a beautiful girl who acts as Adam's secretary and Eve, Adam's robot girlfriend. Both are portrayed as equally intelligent, if not more so, than their male counterparts and Eve is portrayed as stronger than Adam, yet both females play inferior roles in their relationships. Perhaps Binder was suggesting some things won't change!

Asimov is a little more adventurous with his female characters, but only a little. In 'Robbie' he deals with a husband and wife in a typical way - the wife nags but the husband wins out in the end. He also briefly mentions the classic "dumb blonde" in 'Liar', but it is the presence of one of Asimov's favourite characters, Susan Calvin, which gives a difference. Doctor Susan Calvin appears in ten of Asimov's robot stories, and is the basis of the collection entitled 'I, Robot'. Asimov himself wrote, in 'The Complete Robot', 1982, "...although most of the ... stories were written at a time when male chauvinism was taken for granted in science fiction, Susan asks no favors and beats the men at their own game." Asimov's prophecy on the position of women in industry might have done wonders for the women's movement of the time but he is still a cynic. Susan's excellence meant that she became a cold woman who remained single all her life. Asimov brushes this off with a comment: "you can't have everything".

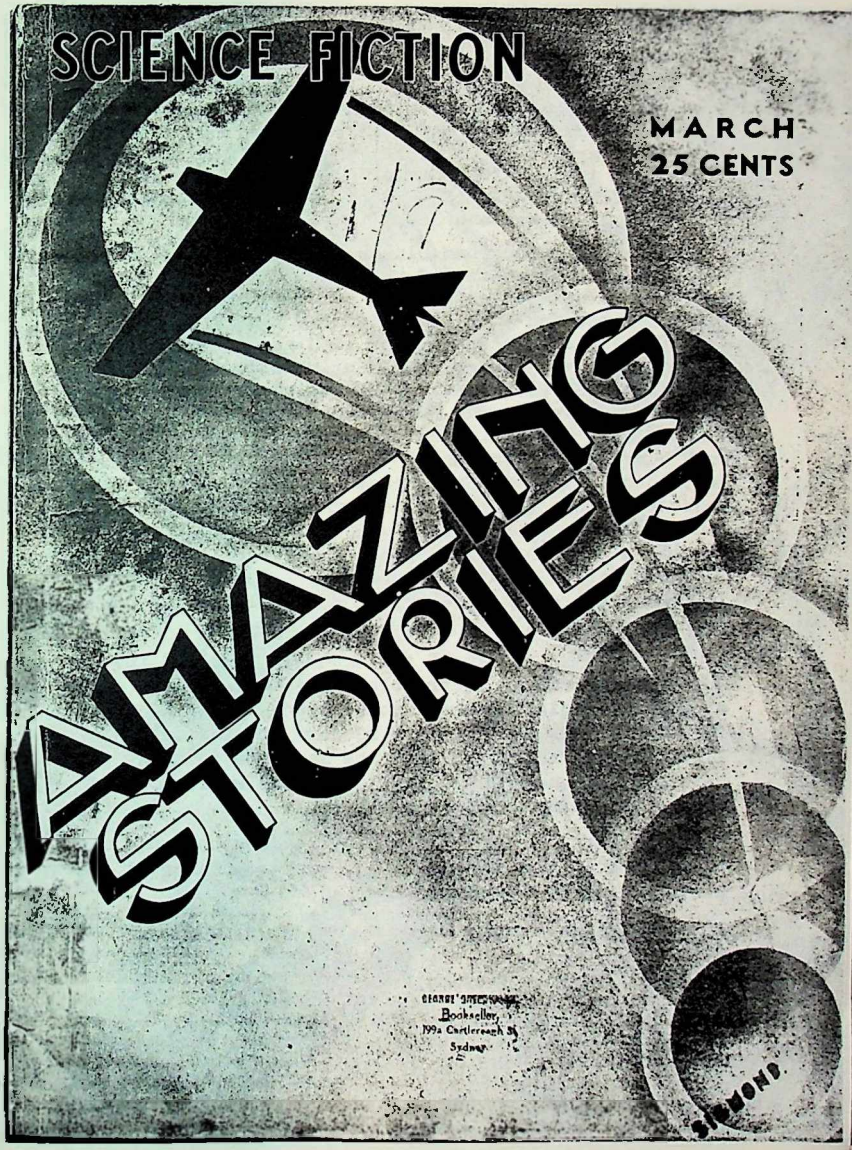
Another element of society dealt with by both authors is the government of Earth. Binder hinted at the fear the United States has of invasion from the Soviet Union when aliens invade and U.S. officials ask Adam to find out which foreign power it was and protect America's freedom.

Asimov in 'The Evitable Conflict' wrote of Earth divided into regions, not countries. Government is of the same form globally, each region looking after itself, and computers, or machines as Asimov called them, looking after everything. Asimov was predicting domination by machines which will eventually have to protect themselves from groups such as the "Society for Humanity" so they can continue controlling Earth - for its own good, of course.

'Adam Link - Robot', written by Eando Binder is a fine piece of science fiction as is Isaac Asimov's 'I, Robot'. Each predicts the future of robots based on the knowledge of their time and shows plenty of imagination. There is ample conflict and tension in both books when robots are a new thing or new robots are tested. From Adam Link society learns to accept the existence of robots and eventually comes to depend on them so they are given equal status with humans and citizenship of the United States. In 'I, Robot' society goes through various reactions as robots are developed, but the robots are generally used for industrial purposes.

Of the two authors, Binder and Asimov, Binder wrote his robot stories first yet Asimov is the better known. Perhaps by getting in early Binder gave Asimov time to develop his ideas and create a more complete concept of the robot. We can not blame Asimov for taking what may be seen as an opportunity. What we are left with is the Three Laws of Robotics, the word "robotics" itself, and the concept that robots can be of great benefit in industry. Already robots in the real sense are being used every day in industry. They may not be of human shape like Binder's and Asimov's robots but they certainly follow Asimov's concept. And women are more often involved in engineering today - another amazing prediction by Asimov!

A comparison has been made and questions answered. Isaac Asimov could have stolen ideas from Eando Binder but so could many other writers. There is no direct copying of material, so although Asimov had the benefit of reading Binder's work before publishing his own, he is no different from thousands of authors who find inspiration in another's work. Perhaps Binder should be flattered. Asimov certainly should be congratulated because while Binder may have altered science fiction writers' approaches to robots, it was Asimov who left a lasting impression on society which affects each of us, no matter how indirectly, today.


SCIENCE FICTION
MARCH
25 CENTS
AMAZING STORIES
Bookseller,
199a Castlereagh St
Sydney
SIGMOND

1933

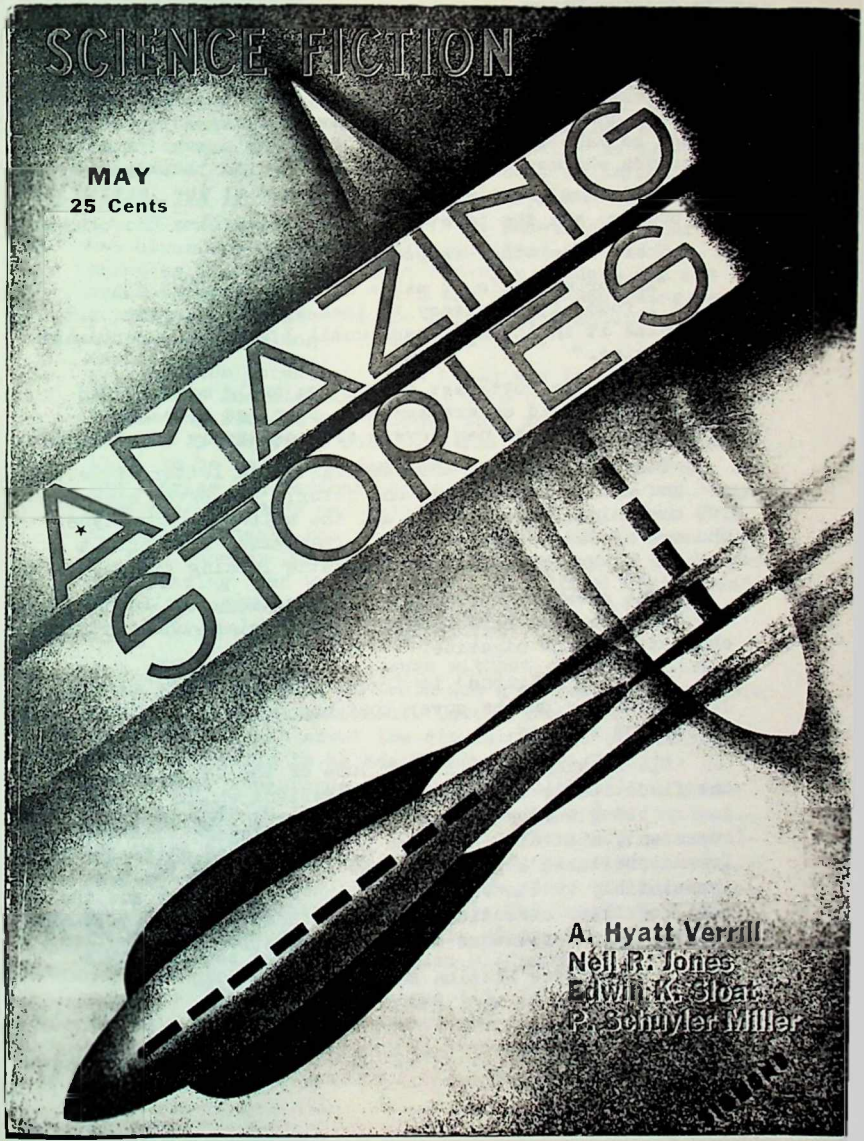
The first seven issues of 1933 used the covers announced as "basic and fundemantal interpretations of science fiction", but they were scarcely that. The work of a Dutch artist, A. Sigmond, they were not all in the same style though all departed widely from the essentially realistic (granted the subjects) representational work of Paul, Wesso and Morey.

January, monochrome blue, showed a simplified space vessel such as readers had become used to, with two featureless spheres suggesting perhaps Earth and Moon. February, red and blue, had a winged dragon in conflict with three globular spaceships such as Morey had shown. March, black and orange, had a silhouette aircraft and geometrical shapes. April, in blue, was an abstract of spheres and planes. May showed two ships similar to Januaries, red and blue. June showed another dragon with both concepts of spaceships attacking it. July was well described by an irritated reader in Discussions: "Four objects in the picture entirely unrelated to each other and entirely out of their elements. Imagine a fish, a planet, a monument and a spear-like projectile consorting together in greatest happiness!...I suppose that things scattered helter-skelter on a colored page is considered art..."

It is hard to say if the experiment helped the magazine, which was in trouble. These covers must have stood out on display among conventional covers, perhaps offsetting the sales lost to readers who actively disliked them or failed to find the magazine in this disguise. Naturally Sloane claimed that they were well received and printed many approving letters.

"Your cover is nice...I thought I had the wrong magazine when I first picked it up, but one glance at the pictures inside reassured me."

"The biggest improvement you've made to date."


SCIENCE FICTION
MAY
25 Cents
AMAZING STORIES
A. Hyatt Verrill
Neil R. Jones
Edwin K. Sloat
P. Schuyler Miller

"The interior of your magazine is different than others and now you have a cover that fits the interior."

"Dazed though I still remain, after the magnificent artistry and restraint of your cover...I have recovered enough to take this opportunity of being among the many thousands who must congratulate you -- and thank you."

"Thank God for the Depression, if it has given you the courage and the impetus to make this climactic change."

There were other responses, though.

"As for me while it makes no difference at all, still I found it necessary to look for it, as I did not recognise it in the new dress until I saw the words Amazing Stories."

"It is the rottenest change you could make in the magazine. The old covers may have been bad although I liked them, but the new covers are positively disgusting."

"Why did you take the familiar block letter title off and why do you use but one color?" (It saved money, for one thing.) "We are not all the self-conscious type who are afraid to read in public magazines with bright colored covers illustrating fantastic looking scenes."

"The cover is attractive and striking, but in changing the cover you have apparently completely changed the character of the magazine."

"I guess (Sigmond) is a good artist, but he always gets something on the cover that has nothing to do with any of the stories."

"In looking back through some of the early numbers one finds really excellent cover designs which, in addition to being worthy illustrations of the stories they represent, must also have had a considerable sales value from a publisher's point of view -- they drew the eye irresistibly by the boldness of their conception and the skill of their execution. Contrast these with the present covers: absurd splashes of color suggestive of a cubist's

nightmare. A badly drawn cylinder of a poisonous blue shade, floating in an equally poisonous blue void, does not suggest space-travel to me, and as for blue and red dragons -- I've a slight preference for pink elephants. It may be quite the thing for some magazines to display 'art' covers, in which the elite are able to catch a glimpse of the thing the artist's soul is trying to express, but it just does not go with Science Fiction."

Sloane ventured in July: "We sometimes wonder if th new cover, so radically different from the old one, has acted as a disguise so that old-time readers did not recognise the magazine." With the August-September issue -- skipping a month for the first time, showing how badl Amazing was selling -- Morey was back.

All the science fiction field was in deep trouble b that time, and clearly has not been doing well for a yea Astounding Stories had skipped July and August 1932 and dropped to bimonthly schedule till it ended with March 1933, to be revived under new management in October. Wonder Stories had reduced pages and price for five issues from November 1932 and skipped July and September 1933. Amazing Quarterly had only three issues in 1932 and two in 1933. Wonder Quarterly gave up after one in 1933. And both Amazing and Wonder changed from their 11½" format to the untrimmed 10" pulp size in October and November respectively. These were hard times.

January was a weak issue without one good story. Bob Olsen's The Pool of Death was a mystery with a giant amoeba as murder instrument. Lowell Howard Morrow's Omega the Man was about the dim future end of mankind, too unconvincing to be adequately gloomy. Franklin W. Ryan's only appearance was with The Last Earl, a quite standard vampire tale with a feeble attempt at rationalisation. Margaretta W. Rea's Delila was about somnambulism. Richard Rush Murray's Radicalite proposed a metalli form of the ammonium radical. Guess what, it exploded an killed the experimenter. Verrill's The Treasure of the Golden God, a commencing serial, offered only strife ove a gold source in South American wilderness.

In February The Ho-Ming Gland by Malcolm Afford was aYellow Peril tale, the Chinese genius producing giants by gland grafting. What was remarkable about it was that it had already appeared as The Gland Men of the Island in Wonder Stories, Jan 1931. Afford had tired of waiting for Amazing to reply to his original submission and sold the story to Wonder. Sloane sourly wrote in answer to a letter in Discussions in November: "After we had engaged the story and before we had a chance to publish it, it appeared in another magazine...We do not know who is responsible for this transaction which from the publishers' standpoint is definitely a dishonorable one." But it was his own fault, resulting from his habit of sitting on manuscripts for years.

Leinster's Borneo Devils were artificially modified carnivorous birds, controlled by addiction to hemp! An extreme example of the Killer Weed superstition.

Skidmore's Souls Aspace was only a page, but that was too much. Probably a fragment of a story, it was an episode of the soul of a dying Martian superman transferring to a human body. Skidmore was a consistently bad writer who was one of Amazing's worst features for several years, this was at least short.

March included Stellarite by Richard Rush Murray, a breathless sequel introducing successive marvels of immediately applied new discoveries in the Smith and Campbell manner; In the Scarlet Star by Jack Williamson, with an unexplained object found in a hockshop (like Wells' Crystal Egg) that gave access to a primitive other-dimensional world; Flame-Worms of Yokku by Hal K. Wells, already established in Astounding, with violent action on a peculiar trans-Plutonian body: Wells was fond of the end of the alphabet, other worlds of his being Xollar, Xothar and Xoran.

April began a dismaying aberration, subheadings introduced two or three to a page to kill what interest and continuity a story might have. Here are examples, from The Phantom of Terror by Ed Earl Repp: Discovery of a

Way to Penetrate the Fifth Dimension; Succumbing to the Threat to Kill; A Glib Lie Well Told; A Blow on the Head -- Collapse; The Phantom Bandit in the Newspapers; Details of the Bank Robbery; A Visit from the Detective Police; The Bloodstain on the Floor -- The Bandaged Head; Another Robbery and Murder -- What is a Fish?; The Reporters Crowding the Police Chief's Office; Transferring the Body to the Fifth Dimension; Hiding in the Fifth Dimension; A Plan to Catch the Phantom Burglar; The Public Begin to Protest in Communications to the Press; Ten Sets of Fifth Dimension Apparatus for the Police and Mortenson; The Police Chief Attacked in the Street; The Phantom Bandit Appears to Mortenson -- The Interview -- Threats; The Threat of Assassination...well, they went on, but that's enough to show the imbecility of the practice. It went on for another four issues, and somehow the magazine survived it.

When the Comet Returned by Harl Vincent in this issue was a story of a visit to a long-period comet, conflicts of purpose among the travellers, and what must be encounte with unseen aliens, ending with mysteries unsolved. It still reads quite well though later knowledge conflicts with many points.

Outstanding in May was The Three Suns of Ev by Edwin K. Sloat. The crablike Thaks of Ev wanted Earth's best scientific thinking to help save their doomed world and abducted a group to that end, to no avail. One interesting aspect is that the obvious idea of taking over eart as a new home is never raised. Another is that there is a rare acknowledgement of the state of race relations in the USA in the 30's. The Thaks send one of their human servants to Earth to prepare for the operation, but as they are black he does the job only with great difficulty.

Jeremiah Jones, Alchemist by P. Schuyler Miller was not quite science fiction, or perhaps only just, but an agreeable tale of modern re-examination of alchemists' efforts.

June introduced a name that was to figure often in the magazines for the rest of the decade to their detrimen

and to write over a hundred paperbacks in the 50's. John Russell Fearn. His first effort, The Intelligence Gigantic, serialised in June-July, was a fair indication. The Intelligence was a synthetic humanoid; not bred or cloned -- Fearn did not seem to have heard of genetics -- but "by the blending of the elements and atoms that make a human being..." Elements and atoms, forsooth. And then? "Next, we have to reproduce the same chemical element, the same reaction, that started life on this planet of ours." Simple, eh?

And the purpose of the whole project? Not to create life from inanimate matter, nothing so trivial. Nor to grow it into human form, which would be quite some feat. It was to produce high intelligence. "Almost every human being has five times as much brain material as he ever uses", Fearn tells us, introducing for the first time in Amazing this modern myth. "With a nerve connection to make the entire brain of use, we can operate our brain power to the full." Therefore, as the android develops, "As our synthetic man takes on shape we can strengthen those nerves which will take the strain of tremendous brain-power, and so, finally, by linking up all the brain-cells, complete our creature." A little later this is, er, amplified: "That intellect will have to be connected up in much the same way as a radio engineer connects a wireless apparatus." With a soldering iron?

The Intelligence's first words clearly show that the experiment was not a good move. "Gentlemen, you have created me from artificial products, and by artificial means. You have endowed me with an intelligence five times greater than your own. From your minds I have already discovered the entire state of this planet, and the so-called intelligence of the beings which populate it. In addition, I have read and can speak every language on this earth..." Short on humility. Well, the rest of the story can be deduced I think.

Unto Us a Child is Born by Keller in July was a horror story if ever there was one, a ghastly future regimented society with reproduction under bureaucratic

eugenic supervision.

Hibernation by Abner J. Gelula showed that there was a depression on. It suggested an answer to the unemployment problem: put the unemployed in suspended animation. Don't laugh, anyone, we all know there are those who would approve it. Gelula showed it as an instrument of oppression without considering the other obvious objections.

The Meteor-Men of Plaa by Henry Kostkos, his first appearance and cover story in Aug/Sept., was remarkably confused. After some rambling build-up about life on minor satellites of Earth there is a flight to investigate in a vessel "motivated by polarity rays, that is magnetic lines of force which acted independently of the force of gravityupon the huge magnet, the earth, to either attract or repel the space ship." Whatever, our heroes luck on to not a satellite but a flat surface of spongy material with a tenuous atmosphere. Obviously it has humanoid tenants who just happen to be in the middle of a dispute in which the visitors get involved and...well, you get the picture. The whole place proves to be flammable when the fliers defend themselves with the flame-thrower they just happened to have along, and the ship falls (yes), no longer supported...together with barbecued natives.

Nor was the rest of the issue much better. One story with considerable if fuzzy thought behind it was The Essence of Life by Festus Pragnell, in which visitors from Jupiter, standard enough humans who however were domestic animals owned by superior others, offered to provide treatment giving longevity and cure all ills, and oh yes, they'd of course have to take over Earth to keep us in order.

October was in the new 10" ragged-edged format as noted before, a change considered as a major setback and loss of status, putting the magazine firmly in a class with the other all-fiction magazines of the time. In hindsight this seems more an improvement. There were many pulp magazines, by no means all of similar quality. There was a wide range of interests catered for and a spectrum

of sophistication. Overall they were cheap popular entertainment, and it was a crowded and competitive field with titles coming ang going and keen competition for readers. Pulp writers had to tell a convincing story in straightforward style and have a good command of all the elements. The original science fiction magazines were written by people with varied backgrounds, but professional writers were few. They were very often someone with a lot of original ideas, whether plausible or otherwise, who could not construct a story based on them. Harry Bates' Astounding stories was run by a capable pulp editor and written by experienced pulp writers, and the difference was very obvious. They had a lot to offer.

But Wonder kept its original character and did not absorb much from the pulp field. Amazing under Sloane was even less receptive. Many new names appeared in Amazing in the next four and a half years of his tenure, but not one had a general pulp writing background. Leinster, Merritt, Cummings had figured in the magazine's early issues, but they were of an earlier generation.

Readers often asked for reprints, and for whatever reason there was one in October: The Diamond Lens by Fitz-James O'Brien brom December 1926 (and ultimately from the Atlantic Monthly, January 1858). The most frequent demand however had been for The Skylark of Space, and Sloane had talked of a possible book -- but if he had any serious intention the times were obviously not good enough and no more was heard of it.

The Men Without Shadows by Stanton A. Coblentz were tenuous visitors from Saturn, who naturally, as one modestly explained, "have long attained the perfection of civilisation. We exist in a state of spiritual bliss and freedom, unimaginable by you of this petty, brawling planet." They made an effort to put Earth on the right track, but gave up in disgust. "If beings so unenlightened wish to destroy themselves, why in the name of a better universe should we interfere?"

contd p. 20

A REVIEW OF A LITTLE-KNOWN BOOK
BY AN EQUALLY LITTLE-KNOWN AUTHOR.

THE BLOSSOM OF ERDA
(St Martin's Press, 1986, 247 pp.)
BY
L. A. TAYLOR.

There's more than one reason why this critique should be associated with a stanza from Gray's 'Elergy Written in a Country Churchyard':

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Taylor's 'The Blossom of Erda' is such an item. Who has heard of this author? And who, reading this now, has seen a copy of this book? I picked up my copy in some remainder shop at $1.95, just on the off-chance, and I'm astonished at the value I received.

I may as well begin by telling of what struck me as its only 'fault', a minor point, simply that it has (to me) a slow and rather complicated opening. This is, of course, not unusual in many of the well-respected SF works; one immediately calls to mind the original 'DUNE', which is *extremely* obscure in its opening, and calls upon the reader for both patience and care for more than a few of the early pages.

Related to that, I have to say he has what I call the 'English SF style, which is much more slow and thoughtful that the American, which tends so often to verge on the thud and blundery. One could readily compare Taylor's style with that of Clarke, or the style of quite a number of other well-known English authors.

Anyway, my impression was that I had to work hard at the beginning, to catch onto what was going on and what would go on thenceforth. Indeed, it went to page 19 before the author explained some of the essential factors in the setting.

Which is: a distant future from us, a group of five planets, two being Erda and Terlia, fairly close to each other in astronomical terms. These are inhabited by people who, although having racial differences, are aware they must have a common origin.

The clues of that common origin are not only biological but because they all have no traces of their civilisation earlier than four thousand years before the time of the narrative - - - the inference being that they were settled together at some time in their past, fell into a primitive society, then worked their way back up to a technical level and onwards to interstellar flight. They also have some legends in common, and a common game, played on a board with sixty-four squares - - - you can guess what it is, even though their name for it isn't *quite* the same as ours.

In those first fifty-or-so pages we get an impression of the military and government organisation with which we will be dealing. It all rings true; there's a lot of suggestions of politics (inevitably) and personalities (some individual, some societal). There's indications of some hocus-pocus between an Important Person and an underling, and of affairs between those who attended training together.

It's all very natural, but made intriguing by Taylor putting in a few twists to show he's not dealing with *today's* humans, but with humans modified by centuries of a different environment.

Then we come to what appears, at this stage, to be the 'real story', where the two main characters (Sorenlon, a woman from 'Erda', a senior officer, and Dreleccur, a man from 'Terlia', and an under-officer) go down onto Regel, a planet which is being seeded with new vegetation. They find someone has been there before them, althought the site was supposed to have been left empty for years. The landing beacon has been damaged, the solar cells for their residence has been weakened so that it collapses in a storm, their ship is damaged, and the distress call facility doesn't work.

They also find the building has been provided with poisonous spiders, the locality contains hornets, and a rattlesnake is living in a nearby gully. Much of the emergency equipment to cope with those sort of problems has not been supplied. The ship which put them off to land cannot return, because the captain has orders to go elsewhere, to do elsewhat, and he knows he'll be in deep trouble if he uses his initiative, having been already given a black mark for that earlier.

The flora has also been prepared for them, and this is where I really admired Taylor's inventiveness. There is a slasher tree (the name is sufficiently self-explanatory, the description reminded me of the yacca bush I have near my front gate), and dart-flowers, throwing poisonous seed pods, spring up. Both are obviously unpleasant things to have around.

All that, the intelligent reader (which, of course, includes the whole population of SF readers) concludes, appears to add up to a well-orchestrated plot to sabotage the location, and the reader can deduce that the motive is to, ah, *eliminate* those two main characters. But why?

To learn that we must wait, even though we've been given an inkling of who the villain is, a person (Rinold) in a powerful position in government and military..

Events on Regel move fairly rapidly, with both Sorenlon and Dreleccur suffering physical injury and in effect rescuing each other, helped by means to which I'll come in a moment..

There is, also, the I-suppose-inevitable romantic afair between them, quite nicely, even tastefully described, and even in that Taylor is able to show how he has conceived the differences between the two related races. As examples of that, the Erdans (Sorenlon) find the body odour of the Terlians (Deleccur)

objectionable, and there are some carefully contrived differences in social mores. It's well done.

That also turns up later, in an interesting way. It's made evident that the Terlians have some mental abilities which allow them to speed healing, and to transmit and receive emotions. For example, when the two on Regel are having their problems and getting injured they are able to let each other know that help's needed by this trick the Terlians have.

That, however, is one of the major sources of racial intolerance between the two; the Erdans (who regard themselves as the 'more human' part of the five races) distrust the Terlians because they are reputed to be able to read minds. What's shown, however, is that their ability is to pick up strongly transmitted emotions; when Sorenlon is menaced with physical danger by the villain (Rinold) and Deleccur shows he's heard the message from her another Erdan comes close to wanting to lynch him.

Taylor has also introduced some quaint speech colloquialisms to show he's writing about an alien-human society. The one I recall noticing in particular was the reply given when one person admitted being in another's debt for some service; the reply was: "Of nothing," corresponding to the USA-ism: "You're welcome."

Summing up, I find as is often the case, that I can't say definitively why I liked the book. It's a mixture of realistic, though novel, situations, and of people reacting in ways I can believe as responses to what they're facing. There's little in the way of clearly expressed technology, but that's the usual way in SF, and what's there makes sense, for example, in the way the people relate to the gadgets around them.

Rounding off by returning to my quotation, this book (and, possibly this author) is a flower blushing unseen on the odd second-hand shelf, with, probably, no remainder copies left. In it Taylor (who *is* he?) has outlined a setting capable of extended use, and it's a pity there's not more about it.

The other aptness of the title is also in the poem. I'm not certain, of course, but I assume the 'blossom' is the character Sorenlon, who is said to be from 'Erda'. Well, it could be so, because the artist who drew the cover illustration showed her as a most attractive person, but that, of course, is something cover artists often do whether the character deserves praise from their pen or otherwise.

Just one final point: there's something in the writer's style that suggests it may have been a first for him. If so, then we can readily pardon the slowness of development, and hope he'll improve as well as produce more.

-- R. B. Ward

The Amazing Story

November was a poor issue, not much helped by The Battery of Hate, one of John W. Campbell's poorest efforts, about a fuel cell and conflict over its application. The best thing in the issue, indeed, was a creaky 19th century item, Edgar Allan Poe's Mellonta Tauta (best translated as Things to Come) about a balloon trip in a rather nasty 29th Century.

December featured Time's Mausoleum by Neil R. Jones, continuing the Zorome series. This time they met an advanced species who had a time-scanning device, and 21MM392 was privileged to view Earth in past ages and see events that appeared in various of Jones' stories. The Four Dimensional Escape by Bob Olsen was another of his ingenious treatments of the concept. Into the Meteorite Orbit by Frank K. Kelly was his only story in Amazing. He wrote another nine elsewhere, generally well told tales of action in the interplanetary future. Here there was a first Moon voyage with a background of a power struggle in a 22nd Century world.

-- to be continued
G. Stone

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