SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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In this issue:

IF IT'S YESTERDAY, THIS MUST BE AMERICA!

By James Verran.

If you have been thinking of entering the L. Ron Hubbard, Writers Of The Future Contest, do it!

December 1989 began an amazing episode in my life. I received a phone call from Algis Budrys, editor for, L. Ron Hubbard presents, W.O.T.F volume VI. He had some bad news and some good news. I had narrowly missed winning a place with my entry, "The Dive". However, he had found it appealing enough to buy the first world serial rights etc. and to publish it in, W.O.T.F. Anthology volume VI. The rest, as they say, is history.

As part of the deal to publish my story, I and a companion of my choice (read; wife's choice), would be flown to the U.S.A. I was invited to take part in a writers' workshop prior to attending the awards presentation and book launch with my wife.

All this for My Story, the kind of thing that only happens to other people! At last, it was our turn to be The Other People.

After months of anticipation, we flew out of Adelaide on the 28th of May. QANTAS all the way, bless them. The non stop flight from Sydney to Los Angeles in a new Long Reach Jumbo, was a tiring ordeal. Thanks to the international date line, we had to do Monday the 28th, all over! The short flight from L.A. to Las Vegas, via America West Airlines, was a no frills flight, in a spacious aircraft with excellent cabin service.

Upon entering the Las Vegas Airport Terminal, we were immediately greeted by poker machines! We and the other writers, were stacked in the arrival lounge as we stepped off our various flights, by Algis (A.J. to his friends) and Mrs. Edna Budrys. Edna Budrys proved to be a charming lady of interminable patience, but then, she is married to a writer. The plan was, that our companions would fly in, later in the week, after the workshop. However, due to the distance from Australia, my better half had travelled with me and had to face Las Vegas alone, for four days.

Having seen my beloved safely on a bus for her hotel, I rejoined the other writers, to be bussed to Boulder City, Nevada. We were accommodated in the Boulder Dam Hotel, a registered historic landmark building, similar to an Australian, National Trust registration. After being allocated share rooms, we assembled for dinner and an orientation talk. Later, I called my somewhat nervous wife, to find that she had settled in, double bolted her door and was hoping to get some sleep.

The Boulder Dam Hotel is quiet and comfortable, boasting a lounge room, panelled with wood, imported from Australia! Our four days at the hotel provided ideal conditions for study and revision, after each day's workshop.

For the next four days, we assembled at 08:45 and walked to the Boulder City Recreation Center, where we worked until lunch time. A.J. allowed occasional breaks and after lunch, we were required to complete set assignments, then

study and review the morning's work. We were paired with a "twin", with whom to share and discuss the various assigned tasks. A.J. considers this technique to be superior to unrestrained group activity, which often produces a workshop group of clones. Most group interaction took place at the morning workshop, during discussion sessions.

The workshop covered more aspects of writing than can be detailed here, but A.J.'s quiet authoritative manner, got the message across. Most of the material provided for our course was based on, or consisted of, assays on various aspects of writing, by L. Ron Hubbard. Some were quite recent, while others were extracts from articles he wrote in the 1930s and 40s. Of course, there were also specialist essays by A.J., on the essentials of good story structure. He gave many anecdotal examples of what makes a good story and how to please a publisher or editor. After all, who better to impart such advice?

No audio or visual tapes were used during the workshop. A.J. delivered the entire four days' program face to face, battling on, while suffering less than perfect health, for several days. We can only hope that he got a well deserved rest after the Awards Event. As an added bonus, he read and reviewed a short story from each of us, then later passed on sound, constructive advice, to each writer, personally.

"But," you ask, "What of L. Ron Hubbard?" The late, L. Ron Hubbard, was much more than the man who developed Dianetics. A subject which was only mentioned at the workshop, in passing, during a reading of some background notes on his career. In fairness to L. Ron Hubbard, too few people remember him for his work as one of the world's most prolific and successful writers. However, he is still greatly admired by his contemporaries for being just that, a prolific writer on many and diverse subjects! He must also be commended, for his efforts to aid new writers through The Competition which bears his name. A Competition, supported by many of the great names in Science Fiction writing, today. writing, today.

At the conclusion of the four day workshop, A.J. simply said, "Be yourself!" Later, we attended a private graduation ceremony and received our certificates. Importantly, we all have our workshop materials and notes, to provide an invaluable resource, as we attempt to practise what was taught in Boulder City, Nevada, in 1990. As our bus for Las Vegas pulled away, one character said, "Goodbye Mom and Dad," to the waving A.J. and Edna. We had all grown quite fond of them!

In Las Vegas, we met our wives, husbands, lovers and whatever, then attended a reception and book signing. After a pleasant meal and social get together, Bridge Publications Inc. wheeled in an enormous pallet of broad sheet, uncut pages. Each writer was then given a pen and invited to sign all his or her first pages, near the byline. The signatures were for a leather bound, limited edition.

This year, the illustrators shared in the glory and it soon became obvious who the artists were. They had the more legible signatures!

Saturday 2nd of June, dawned hot in Las Vegas, near 40 degrees celsius, in fact. We had a special breakfast laid on, then departed for the Las Vegas Convention Center, to attend various functions and listen to several panels of guest speakers. Later, we returned to our hotel, the Flamingo Hilton, to rest before the night's celebrations.

The awards were presented after a delightful dinner. Then followed a veritable orgy of autograph signing by the writers, illustrators and judges. Before leaving Adelaide, I had vowed to get the autograph of Frederik Pohl. I met him and was surprised, when he seemed honoured to have been asked by me, a novice writer, for his signature! He kindly signed personalised autographs for myself and my daughter. The night raced by and eventually, I was cornered by a marauding television interviewer. Thank God it was being prerecorded! When I remembered the question, I'd forgotten the answer and when I had a beaut answer, I'd forgotten to repeat the question. However, several takes satisfied the camera crew and I was allowed to leave, shaken and in need of a good stiff drink!

The next two days were ours to see the sights. I bullied my wife into going shopping, little realising, that she had already had her fill of the 40 degree heat of the Las Vegas Strip. Five kilometers from our cool hotel, on foot, I realised that Las Vegas was designed for automobiles, not pedestrians!

We had spent one week, as the guests of the L. Ron Hubbard, Writers of The Future Contest Organization and had been looked after in grand style! Our return to Australia was a reversal of the outward trip and we arrived home for lunch on June 6th.

In closing, I urge all eligible Aussie Science Fiction writers, to enter this Competition. Who knows, if enough of us win, they may be forced to hold the celebrations Down Under?

Entry forms and contest rules may be obtained by S.S.A.E. to; L. Ron Hubbard's, Writers of The Future Contest, P.O. Box 466, Paddington, Sydney, N.S.W. 2021.

A REVIEW OF

A PURSUIT OF MIRACLES

- a collection of short stories by
GEORGE TURNER

(Aphelion Publications, 1990.)

I have been chipped (which is several stages worse than being criticised) for putting into my critiques comments based on my own personal likes and dislikes, and I stand behind the defence that a critic may do that, provided that those remarks are clearly labelled under that heading. So here we go again; stand by for some objective reporting and some personal comments.

Turner is one of our local, Australian, writers who has succeeded in cracking publication, even overseas, and I therefore envy him openly. Indeed, I have to confess that I have on my shelves of unread material by him, and that's one reason why I welcomed the task of going through this collection of his short stories.

My immediate conclusion has been that I have neglected Turner for too long. Those unread books will be consumed in the near future. But here we have a 'personal taste' reason: he has a dry way of presenting his thoughts which appeals to me, and I'm therefore conscious that he may not attract all others.

Well, getting down to business, I didn't like the cover, which is a Dali-like collection of bits and pieces which I can't relate to the contents. Also, why did Aphelion choose dimensions (198 x 127 mm) not those of a 'standard' paperback (about 180 x 110 mm)? Yes, those are trivial items but I think they're worth mention.

The first item in the contents is an introduction by Micheal J. Tolley, and I ask: who is he? - - - because he has a style of writing not commonly seen today, classically erudite. But perhaps too much so for the general reader; I had to grab a dictionary to check just what he meant by 'meliorist' and 'extrapolist manque' (that last used in a reference to Frederik Pohl).

It's a good introduction and I felt it made some points close to my own way of thinking, one being that he considers Turner doesn't see a rapid evolution of ethics in the future to match the possible developments in any form of technology, particularly bio-technology. My comment on that has been that the meek will continue to believe they can inherit the earth, but the greedy will always be pushing to the head of the queue to get in first.

I also agree with Tolley that Turner shows 'a concern for the future', which Tolley regards as 'the hallmark of the genre'. Certainly, no-one would bother to write about the future unless he thought a future is possible.

But that brings me a general comment on Turner's presentation of the future. Back in the fifties/sixties, and even continuing through to today, two schools of writers have been identifiable; the US-Americans and the English. Any broad-based distinction will inevitably have its exceptions, but very broadly the US-A

writers have presented an optimistic future with a general air of improvements, one way or another. I summarise that by suggesting that those American writers are probably technocrat-minded, and they see technology as improving the human condition; maybe we'll still have slums, but at least they'll be happy slums (as presented by Mack Reynolds in many of his stories).

The English school concentrated on the possible disasters, on what might go wrong, one way or another. A Murphy line of thought? And John Wyndham, who rattled off several excellent books on that theme, was one of the leaders.

The other distinguishing feature has been in the style of writing. The US-A writer tends to be more flamboyant in style, the English writer more restrained, and Arthur Clarke is probably the top example of the latter.

Turner stands out, in this collections, as being in the 'English' school. His 'futures' contain some conceivable and optimistic technological developments, as one might expect, but the society using them is not completely 'nice'. He shows a deterioration in the human spirit, which I conclude reveals a pessimism in himself about humanities direction, in spite of what scientists and engineers may devise. Well, as I've remarked above, to some extent I agree with him, but my personal feeling is that we'll muddle through, as we have collectively for centuries.

I don't object to the sort of future he has shown. The literature class over which I presided in Autumn 1990 agreed that we have to look at unpleasant future-possibles so that avoiding them becomes less probable though still possible.

He also has, to me, the 'English' style of writing. It's more personal, more quietly phrased, than the 'average' American writer uses. And while I have no objection to either, my opinion is that Turner's style suits his subject matter very well.

So now, what are the eight futures he shows us? The first is the one with the overall title, "A PURSUIT OF MIRACLES", which is set in a research laboratory in the fairly near future. Several biological experiments are under way, mainly alteration of physique by genetic manipulation. There is also mention of terra-forming Mars, and in general, the atmosphere built up is definitely that of a research group with its conflicts of interest in work and personal affairs.

The central point of the story is transfer of emotions between man and dog. The nearest I can recall coming to this was a seeing-eye dog story in Galaxy, long ago, in which the man could actually see what the dog saw, a more practical idea, and perhaps less capable of serious consequences such as eventuate in Turner's presentation. It concludes with both the dog and the young man being 'put down', but it didn't matter, because the 'man' was a 'non-legal' a bio-experiment, and therefore without survival rights.

Then we come to "NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN", a very interesting and quaint examination of the logical extension of today's generation gap. I say extension because Turner has even

eight generations living at the same time, and knowing what it's like today with only three or four we can imagine how hard it would be to have a meeting of the minds between two people that far apart.

This one attracts because it contains some clever, and quite possible, language variations, and because many readers would recognise some of the behaviour patters shown in the younger generations.

"FEEDBACK", I regret to say, left me uninterested. It's set in the Australian outback, is about telepathy, and involves Aborigines, but I couldn't get onto what Turner meant by it. His notes preceding it suggest he wasn't entirely pleased with it.

The question of what it's like for a long-term STL exploration ship to return has been asked, and written about, before. I can think of Anderson, immediately. And that is the theme of "SHUT THE DOOR WHEN YOU GO OUT". There are many possible (heavens, I know I'm using that word a lot, but it's the word that makes SF a lot of fun to read and to write) and logical ideas for the homecoming, and this is one: so much time has passed, and humankind has moved so far from the pattern the explorers left, that they're no longer welcome. They even find it hard to understand what they're told, that the welcome mat is just not out for them, they aren't wanted, and they should please go.

It's worded a bit obscurely, but that only adds appropriately to the idea of how difficult it would be/will be to communicate with people separated from us by hundreds or even thousands of years.

"ON THE NURSERY FLOOR" returns to genetic manipulation, and is cleverly told by having a central character, a journalist, getting different sections from a series of others. The time-location of this one is given, it's set in about 2060, and to make the Australian reader at home it mentions Barry Jones as Science Minister seventy years in the past (would that he still were in that position). The story, as Turner remarks in the notes, is around what we would do with a superman, and the development of the tale reverses that: to me, it tells what the superman would do with us.

"IN A PETRI DISH UPSTAIRS" is also about human differences, but returns to those resulting from development rather than interference. Set basically in Melbourne, it shows a different culture, complete with a language shift, developing in the orbiting power stations. It also explores the politics of power, suggesting that the upstairs culture would be prepared to hold the downstairs culture over a barrel (sorry, I'm mixing metaphors, putting the current Middle East crisis into solar power politics) if it comes to the question of who's on top.

A surface-orbit romance is introduced, with physical and cultural difficulties. The whole finishes by pointing out that change is always going on, and getting rid of the problem simply means another will appear.

Now we come to another that left me outside. I refer to "GENERATION GAP". It's about art, I think, and more importantly

another about that long-term culture shift which would/will make future man (if we were to meet him) unintelligible to us and vice versa. The reference to art is, I think, just a vehicle for carrying on the cultural confrontation.

Finally, we have "THE FITTEST". This one is about an unpleasant Melbournian future, and it's very good. Indeed, it admits Turner's own comment in the notes preceding the first story, that the best ones should be spread through the collection for tactical reasons.

This tale, set only thirty years into the future, includes the use of rising ocean levels, pushing Melbourne residents back from the coast, as part-background. The major point of it is the deterioration of society, caused by the loss of employment opportunities, caused by increased automation. This is a serious business to me and I have recently addressed a postgraduate class on it, and have questioned: is technology currently causung unemployment? is increasing technological unemployment really likely? and if so, what can we do about it?

The future he presents has in it black markets, vigilante groups, less education as well a fewer job opportunities, and a greater distance between the top and bottom of society than we have at present, so that neither knows much about how the other extreme lives. The top end he calls 'the Sweet', the bottom end is 'the Swill', and there is the struggle for anyone to climb out of the lower level to the top. Or anywhere approaching it. Towards the end of the thirty-two pages a plague has appeared; one character identifies it as a 'cull', to remove a proportion of humanity from the world-scene and, perhaps, to allow a new start.

Altogether, as more or less predicted by Turner, I liked the first and the last best, and classify them as very good, very thoughtful presentations of what might happen under some of the worst-possible scenarios. Even so, there's a big and basic difference between the two: The first is a sort of 'private' bad scenario, involving actions of a small group which would impinge on the public awareness only peripherally; the second is a highly public scenario, affecting Australia as a whole and probably the whole race.

Speaking very personally, I favoured two, found four acceptable for various reasons, and was left cold by two. Nevertheless, it's a collection which can be read with cerebral enjoyment, because there's good thought behind all of them, and the use of our laguage is at times quite smart and always satisfying.

Why am I being guarded in my praise? Well, to me something's missing: while there's mental stimulation enjoyment in these, and a sense of wry humour at times, there's no fun-enjoyment. Maybe I'm being greedy, but I like that to come through, too, in the fiction I read, particularly the SF.

But don't let that opinion stop you. Turner's worth reading, and if (as with me) this collection stimulates you to try his books, that's good. I'm sure I'll be reading more of him, myself.

R. B. WARD.

MORE ABOUT ROBOTS

Peter Brodie writes: "Lauren Jones' article was of great interest...One thing that came to mind re the Three Laws of Etc was the many references to Robby in the film Forbidden Planet made by people who should know better. They mention how he obeys the three thingos. He doesn't. He's a mindless slave. When Morbius orders him to put his arm into the disintegrator beam he is about to do so until Morbius gives him the command to stop. He therefore does not obey the third law. You could of course extrapolate that Robby is aware of Morbius' "other nature" and sees that losing an arm is preferable to being flattened later by invisible energy creatures from M's brain. From such meanderings have come great things (and many iinor ones)."

T. G. Cockcroft writes: "I think two at least of Asimov's 'three laws of robotics' were to be found, and were expressed, in Ray Cummings' X1-2-200."

This will bear looking into. X1-2-200 appeared in Astounding Science-Fiction, Sept 1938. At the beginning of the 23rd Century robots are in service though apparently fairly new, and X1-2-200 is of the most advanced type yet. Employed as a laboratory assistant, he is capable of acting on his own initiative and has some emotions, though conditioned to the role of loyal unpaid servant. "The free-action button had been set now for a month...so that X1 had responded to Dyne's spoken commands, and, without them, controlled himself with his own selective motivation." But he rarely sees people other than his master and knows little of human affairs.

Enter the master's estranged children; the son accused of a major industrial theft; the daughter under pressure from the crook who framed him, who is consumed with lust for her person and, well, you get the picture. A typical Cummings plot. X1 responds to her call for help to the extent of ending the villain's existance, which while commendable does not seem to resolve the situation completely, and procedes to avoid a number of questions being raised by his own suicide.

At the critical moment: "...now he knew that he was about to break the Primary Law that was built into every tiniest spun-metal fibre of his being. The Law that never

must he harm a human."

It is also stated that "The law of Obedience had been built and trained into him", as well as some less direct allusions.

As for self-preservation, it is at least implied: "The rain, wet and cool on X+'s warm, dry body-plates, was frightening. The feel of it sent a quiver of instinctive command that he go back to the laboratory, for his earliest training had taught him that no robot ever must get wet and chance the deadly, corroding rust. But the Master had commanded to follow. It was confusing." Thus a conflict of basic orders.

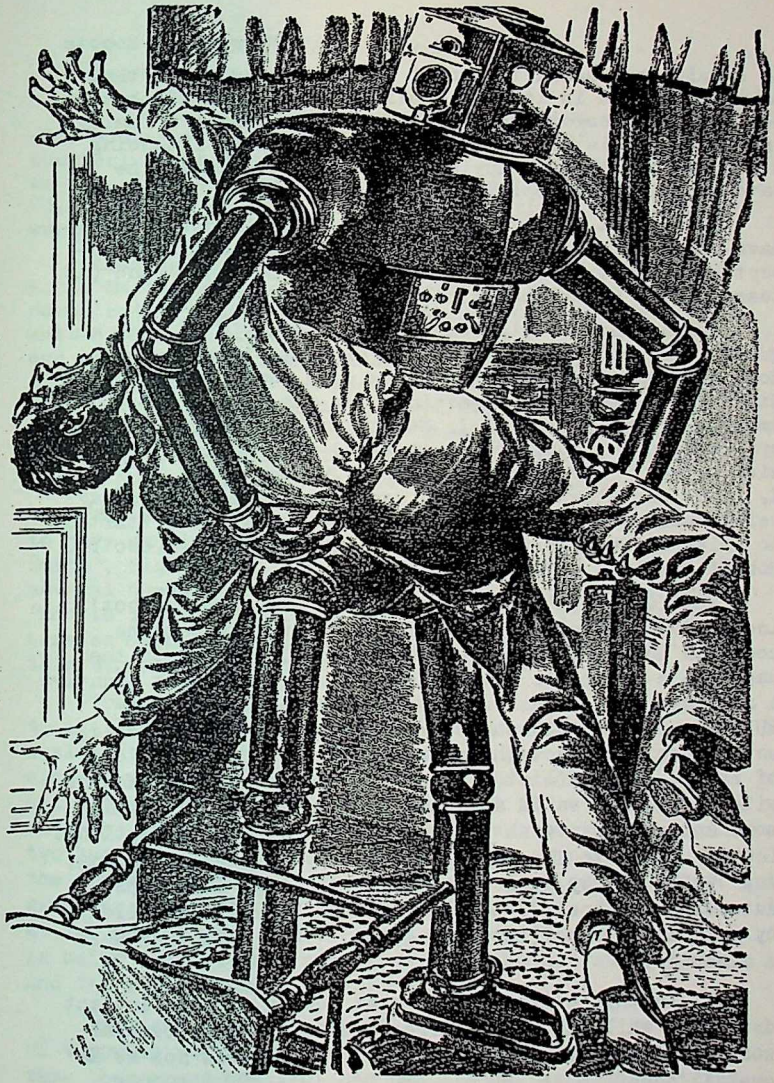
So here we clearly have a robot story considering the notorious three laws. Asimov is generally identified with them but has recorded that they were first told him by John Campbell on 23 Dec 1940. (In Memory Yet Green. Doubleday 1979, p. 286):

"At one point, Campbell said: 'Look, Asimov, in working this out, you have to realise that there are three rules that robots have to follow. In the first place, they can't do any harm to human beings; in the second place, they have to obey orders without doing harm; in the third, they have to protect themselves, without doing harm or proving disobedient. Well...'

"...I heard the Three Laws first from John Campbell and I am always embarrassed to hear myself given the credit. Whenever I tried to tell Campbell himself, however, that he was the originator, he would always shake his head and grin and say, 'No, Asimov, I picked them out of your stories and your discussions. You didn't state them explicitly, but they were there.'"

But Campbell was also drawing on his background editing Astounding and impressions of other stories he had published, including the specific points Cummings made here. Other robot stories in Astounding in the late 30's may well be relevant -- or elsewhere.

Another Cummings robot story of about the time was Zeoh-X, in Thrilling Wonder Stories Apr 1939. Different



To the rescue. H.W.Wesso for X1-2-200

in detail, but again the robot (a curious quirk is that only at the end is it made explicit that he is a robot, not a human laboratory helper) finds his master's family in trouble, this time the father suspected of financing a revolution on Mars. Spying on his own initiative he catches the two conspiritors behind it all.

It is just barely possibly that Otto Binder might have read X1-2-200 before writing I, Robot, but his concept of a robot is quite different from Cummings' and (at least in the early shorts) Asimov's.

Asimov undoubtedly read X1-2-200 even if it made no great impression at the time. In his autobiography he does not mention Cummings; but he does mention meeting Binder on 7 May 1939, remarking: "In the January 1939 Amazing he had published I, Robot, a short story about a sympathetic and noble robot that had made a great impression on me." And a little later: "The memory of Binder's I, Robot was clear in my mind, and meeting him three days before had stimulated that memory, so on May 10 I started to write my own story of a sympatnetic and noble robot... Robbie."

What was notable in Binder's series was the robot's independent existence, making his own way as best he could in human society. The conventional view up to then had been a synthetic being designed as, putting it bluntly, a nonhuman slave. In some stories, as in Capek's play RUR which introduced the very word, robots were intelligent enough to reject the role, and the story became one of revolt and conflict. Robots considered as individuals with rights as valid as those of humans interacting in some amicable way with humanity have been rare exceptions. One can point to The Last Evolution by Campbell (Amazing, Aug 1932); Rex by Harl Vincent (Astounding, June 1934); Automaton by Abner J. Gelula (Amazing, Nov 1931); Pride by Malcolm Jameson (Astounding, Sep 1942). But they were a minority.

It is this writer's hope that robots are not in fact developed while the human defects causing the perennial social problems remain unmodified. They would not be an overall benefit. -- G.S.

1934

Only three science fiction magazines were published in 1934 (disregarding the unfortunate last Quarterly) but they all ran the full year without missing an issue. The total of 37 issues was better than the 33, 23, 25 and 31 of the next four years: times were getting worse.

Amazing started the year featuring Triplanetary by E. E. Smith, which would have begun in the previous March's Astounding had that magazine not suspended. Smith must have been attracted by Astounding's better rates and perhaps too displeased by Amazing's decline under Sloane's uninspired management. Recovering his manuscript from Harry Bates he might have offered it to Gernsback for Wonder; but no, it fell to Amazing to feature the latest novel of easily the most popular writer in the field, guaranteed to help its waning popularity.

"We are sure that our readers will be highly pleased to have us give the first installment of a story by Dr Smith", Sloane pallidly introduced; "It will continue for several numbers" a dismaying admission of disorganisation "and is a worthy follower of the Skylark stories which were so much appreciated...we think that they will find this story superior to the earlier ones."

Triplanetary was later revised to serve as a prelude to the later Lensman cycle, and reads better in its original text. Though it stands alone it seems fairly consistent with Spacehounds of IPC, Smith's only novel set entirely within the solar system. But while it begins with the Three Planets -- Mars and Venus must be the other two but they are left in the background -- having crushed the Jovian aggressors, grappling with formidable pirate group preying on an extensive space traffic, it is only at the end of Part 1 as a great space battle with pirates is being decided that nonhumans from another star appear and the scope becomes interstellar.

Rays and missiles are no more than logical extension of throwing rocks, and some of us have thought for some time that armed conflict has had its day as a major topic.

Smith's space warfare was relieved however by interesting thoughts about unearthly environments and alien peoples as well as by ingenious proposed technology. Triplanetary still has much to hold our interest today. The amphibious Nevians, taking up interstellar exploration and war for the sake of the iron lacking in their stellar region and needed as power source, fought to a standstill and trying negotiation instead, are more believable than the usual monsters. The concept of nullification of inertia also appears here for the first time and opens new vistas.

But in the same January issue Joe W. Skidmore gushingly tells of Adventures of Posi and Nega, his pair of anthropomorphic fundamental particles:

"'Great Cosmos!' rasped Posi, the positive electron. 'We're in Millikan's deadly Alpha Ray machine. The scientists are trying to smash our atom with the powerful energy of the fearful device. It --'

'Will the rays destroy us?' shrilled Nega, the radiant negative orbital electron. Her hissing flight became a whistling threnody as her color vibrations turned to a deep, agitated purple.

'Destroy us?' shrieked Posi. 'Of course they will! If the horrible rays strike our iron nucleus squarely, we are doomed. The scientists are trying to discover what we are made of...This device of Millikan's will hurl an energy of three hundred million volts among us. It will rip us apart!'"

Nor is this the silliest item in the issue. David H. Keller's The Lost Language, about a child inheriting knowledge of an extinct language, is treated in an arguably more foolish manner. And I.R. Nathanson's Gold, about a process for cheaply converting mercury to gold, has some of the queerest misconceptions about money likely to be found anywhere.

The Australian J. M. Walsh appeared only once in Amazing, with the serial Terror out of Space under the name H. Haverstock Hill. It is much less ambitious than his interplanetary novels in Wonder Stories Quarterly. Some Martians come to Earth, touch town on a remote Pacific island and abduct some European exploiters as representative Terrans

to impress with Martian culture. But it appears that there is a second satellite of Earth so located as to be permanently occulted by Lune, with aggressive humanoid inhabitants, and the Martians have to confront them. Neither alien race is shown in any detail and the story is slow and weak in incident. The island locale as well as the cautious speculative element suggests an unplaced manuscript from Walsh's earliest writing days. But a more memorable novel must have been overwhelmed by the last three parts of Triplanetary running in the same issues as its first three. It was no contest.

Two serials began in the May issue. Measuring a Meridian by Jules Verne was one of his less successful books and could not reasonably be called science fiction even in 1872. The Lost City by Milton R. Peril had survivors of Atlantis underground in Egypt, ho hum. Nasty racism and the agonisingly familiar plot did not help. The May cover picture was the drawing by Morey of Verne's memorial at Nantes which had headed Amazing's contents page for years. Why feature it on this occasion: Echo answers "Why?".

The next issue with parts of three serials was July, with Life Everlasting by David H. Keller commencing. Like many Keller stories this was perhaps allegory rather than fiction. A universal cure for all ills is found and the world's population is soon in rude health: unfortunately however they stop reproducing. No prize for guessing the ending.

Two new serials started again in September, Through the Andes by A. Hyatt Verrill and The Moon Pirates by Neil R. Jones. The first was as the title suggests, a tale of footslogging through wild parts of South America. In search of -- yes -- traces of contacts with Atlantis. No such luck, but instead something even hairier, one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. But before we get to that, there is the community carrying on the pre-Incan culture, complete with the lost Inca treasure and the surviving carnivorous dinosaur that munches on maidens. As lost city yarns go, quite good if one can tolerate the irritating dialect of some of the characters.

The Amazing Story

Moon Pirates suffers from comparison with Triplanetary, having a basic setting roughly similar. In the 26th Century space flight is well established, Venus and Mars have been colonised to accomodate some of Earth's surplus population (simple!) and extensive space traffic invites piracy. A trip from Venus to Mars takes two and a half Earth days, by the way. With no mention of something like Smith's intertia neutralisation, these people can certainly take acceleration.

In contrast to Smith's escalation of forces on a scale suitable to the interstellar setting, the action in Moon Pirates is not totally unlike the operations of some pirates of history. There are weapons and devices of a future time, but the behavior of those using them is familiar. On the whole, fairly interesting reading.

The next serial, running from November to January, was Land of Twilight by the otherwise unknown Robert Page Preston, and is mentioned only for completeness. Flight to Mercury and predictable advantures with its human aborigines.

(to be continued)

DIFFICULT TO COMMENT ON THIS

We see in Science Fiction Chronicle (plug) that a Society of Rejected Writers has been established in the USA. Membership is $10 and 30 rejection slips. Information from Bonnie Kaufman, SRW, 225 Central Park West/ 11-17, New York NY 10024.

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