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Science Fiction Review

NUMBER 23

October-November 1955

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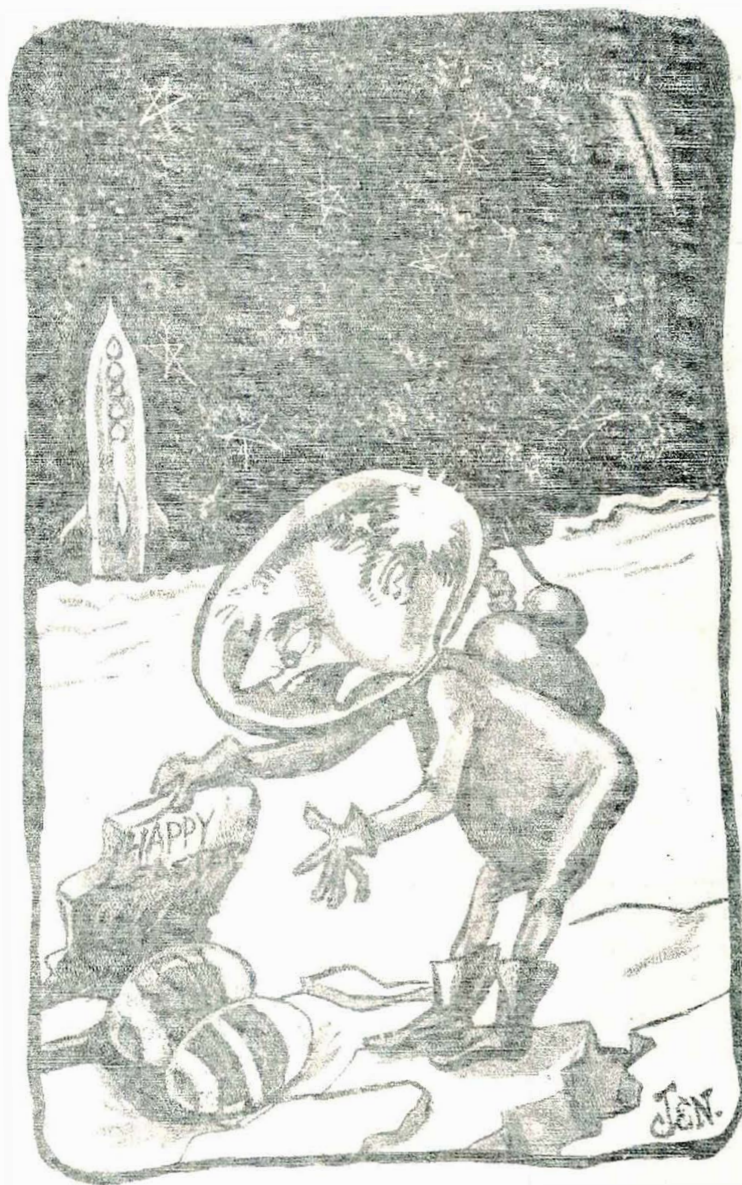
The Goldfish Bowl
by Fred Chappell.
Illo by Dan Adkins

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Edited and Published by Richard E. Geis,
1525 N.E. Ainsworth,
Portland 11, Oregon.

Phone: ATlantic 2-0381

15¢ per copy, 7 for \$1



A Monolog

BY THE EDITOR

about the December IF.

The readers of the December IF will be sadly disappointed if they expected a story on the inside of the mag to match the cover on the outside. The cover shows a boxing ring in which a fabulously proportioned amazon-type young woman is being fitted with razor-sharp wrist weapons and brass-knuckles in place of present-day gloves. She is wearing very little, and lots of smooth pink skin is visible. She is beautiful. In the background a brutish male crowd is looking on. The picture is titled "The Champion."

In a half page box on page 59, the editor asks for letters commenting on the implications of such a picture. He is paying five dollars for the best five letters. I think that's mighty white of him, I really do. He is using a cover to attract all the sadists and masochists who see the magazine and will undoubtedly buy it in the belief that there is a story inside of the suitable gory type to interest them. He is promoting a lively controversy for his letter section, and probably also in a few fanmags. His circulation will unquestionably jump because the cover has a basic appeal for an awful lot of people. All this for the price of the cover and five letters at \$5 per. What a pity he didn't run a story to match the cover.

For the implications in that picture are many and varied. Now, obviously, a fight with such vicious weapons against the unprotected smooth round breasts, warm white belly, beautiful face, would result in those same breasts being slashed and crushed, their tender carmine tips ripped, blood spurting and flowing from a dozen wounds, the belly-torn open by a horrible swipe from the brass knucks and a terrible backhand twist, burying the blades of the wrist weapon in the softness and depth of the abdomen, ripping the guts out, the blood, the gore...(gad, I'm making myself sick). And the face; that beautiful chiseled perfection would be a bleeding ravaged mask of smashed bone, cartilage, teeth, mutilated useless eyes....

All this would happen inside a minute if such weapons were used as indicated. I can just see the men in the surrounding crowd feasting with a hungry gloating in their eyes, cheering, screaming, their gaze riveted to the flashing blades, the brass knucks as the bright overhead lights intensify the white skin and the red blood. I can imagine this fight being color-cast to an eagerly waiting audience of billions. The ultimate in vicarious thrills...modern man's answer to the boredom of a two-day work week...the Arena in modern dress.

And what of the women, the fighters, who are sacrificed to this monster bloodthirsty public? Unquestionably they would be doped to the sky with pain-killers and special drugs to make them kill-crazy. Miraculous healing techniques and incredible plastic surgery skills will have been developed which will rebuild their bodies so that inside of six months they could be mauling again. But would the fantastic money earned by these girls be worth it? Probably to them it would be. And there would be a champion; there is always a champion...the crowd demands it. And there would always be the Good girl fighting the Bad girl. Extrapolate present-day professional wrestling and you can imagine such a fight...only unlike present-day wrestling, the girls would actually be killing each other, not faking it. I can imagine a conversation between two men on the morning after the big fight: "Hey, didja see the fight las' night, Harry? Man, the way Helen ripped that n----- gal across the tits." "Yeah...and I hear that World-Wide has a challenger coming up from Mexico...one o' them hot-blooded types. Still in plastic gettin' in shape and I hear she's gonna have balloons on her that come out a good foot and come to a point. God...when Helen rips into them things..." This will be the ultimate in our civilization's breast fetish.

It's obvious that a terrific novel could have been written around the cover on the Dec-

ember IF. It could have been, but it wasn't. And I wonder why not? It used to be that IF had the reputation of presenting excellent taboo-breaking stories. I remember vividly A Case of Conscience, Earth Quarter, Malice in Wonderland, but of late there has been nothing of like caliber. Why, I'll probably never know, for stories like the ones mentioned above undoubtedly helped up Quinn's circulation to the point where he felt justified in going monthly not too long ago. But, perhaps in an effort to consolidate his gains, perhaps as a result of some letters from morally offended readers, or even because he wasn't aware of what type stories were building his reputation and circulation, Quinn stopped using controversial stories. And then his magazine started downhill. Now, at last, with this cover, maybe he is on the march again and will provide science fiction readers with some meaty food for thought...and incidentally some highly readable stories. I'm getting very much tired of the prim, antiseptic quality of the stories in ASTOUNDING and F&SF. I'd like to see a little raw violence and realism, a little naked emotion and irrational behavior instead of the shallow emotions of cardboard characters who are always subservient to the scientific element and the Don't-Risk-Offending code.

Along that line James E. Gunn tried hard in Hoax to deal with a difficult subject and to present it with feeling. But when the inherent requirements of the novelette form and magazine taboo get in the way, not much can be done. In the opening scenes of the story Gunn deals with a mother-son goodbye situation and goofs it miserably. That "Gosh, Mom." on page six seemed awfully corny to me. I thought all the myriad imitators of Jimmy Stewart had laughed that phrase into oblivion. Too, the way Gunn is forced to put out-of-character speeches into the mouths of both Amos, the hero, and his mother is another evidence of a messed-up scene...if any is needed. Indeed, I cannot see why the goodbye scene is required. It is a completely superfluous and painful prologue. But, going back for a moment to that out-of-character bit; actually it's hard to say with much certainty that the dialog is out of character, since Gunn gives Amos and his mother so little depth.

In the story Amos learns that the first ship into space was a hoax; it didn't carry a man to his death, it was merely a shell with a radio and tape setup to broadcast a dying man's words...it was a hoax to milk the public for the necessary funds to build a rescue rocket--and also incidentally a really good man-carrying rocket. He confronts the Commander of the satellite where he is based with this knowledge and



as a result of their talk accepts the necessity of the hoax, faces reality, relinquishes his dream of going to the Moon, to Mars, Venus, the stars, and compromises with the realization that any progress is paved with death, sweat and tears...the glamour is gone from space work.

The story is best in its rendering of technical action such as the initial take-off from Earth and the flight to the satellite. But the life aboard the "doughnut" isn't dealt with in sufficient detail--personal detail--to really convince the reader that it is as hard and tough a life as claimed by Gunn. And the dialog is laughable in at least one instance: "The air stinks. The food is awful. The water tastes of human waste material." Yeah? I submit that a group of men in a cruel fight for survival hundreds of miles above the safety of solid ground with no privacy and nothing but brutally hard work for years at a time, I submit that men in such a situation, as in the somewhat comparable voyages of the old wooden ships, would sprinkle their language with cuss words and then more cuss words. Obscenity would mark every sentence. Water would not "taste of human waste material", it would "taste like shit!" So it would, and I cannot see anything wrong in saying so. The use of that most horrid four letter word would be perfectly legitimate in the context of the story. But I can't imagine such a realistic touch in professional science fiction today; I'm sure there isn't an editor in the field who wouldn't blue-pencil it. That may be what Quinn did. Certainly it's obvious that as long as the editors and publishers insist on excising the human element science fiction cannot claim to be anything even remotely close to literature. Making frustrated philosophical noises isn't enough. Science fiction has "matured" itself away from the public.

But, on to the rest of the issue of the December IF. N4 N5 N6 by James McKimney, Jr. is an example when a writer gets an idea for a story and doesn't expand it enough. The result is a glimpse of a part of an entire social structure, a fascinating fragment of a stratified and rigid society, but no answers to a myriad of questions inspired by that glimpse. There is only a brief comment on the intellectuals of this culture; they are relegated to the lowest living standard of all despite having the highest IQ's. It is mentioned in passing that the intellectuals didn't care about anything worthwhile materially. Well.... This society McKimney paints in curiously incomplete. I wish he had built it into a novel length story.

Irving Cox, Jr., who is doing more than any other author to ruin science fiction, has written another stinker in The Earthman. This story starts off with a robot supply ship crashing into a prison camp. Mind, now, a prison camp. Thousands upon thousands of humans are held prisoner by aliens who have invaded our planet in order to teach us how to live with the great galaxy-wide culture which has sent them. They fear man emerging from his solar system while still a social savage. And, SURPRISE, these aliens look exactly like humans.

So the supply ship crashes into the alien part of the camp. It catches 1400 aliens eating lunch! Only four aliens survive (plot requirements, you know) and all the rest are conveniently and incredibly killed while eating lunch. TWO (count 'em) TWO guards are in THE (singular) watchtower and are saved from the blast...somehow. A woman alien is saved cause she wasn't hungry and so stayed in her cottage, and one newly arrived officer alien is alive cause he was out photographing the lovely Earth scenery. Now, can you imagine a prison compound holding thousands of humans being guarded by only one watchtower? And can you imagine the entire working force of 1400 aliens crowding into one building all at once to eat lunch while only two measly guards are "guarding" the compound? I can't. So help me I can't. Cox asks the reader to swallow too much. An idiot boa constrictor would have trouble gulping it down.

Anyway, after killing off all but four aliens he sends them off on a journey to warn their alien brothers on the coast that a horde of humans is loose in Nevada. Cox piles inconsistency upon inconsistency, illogic upon illogic, and one damned incredible happening upon another. The final assault upon my credulity came in the last paragraph. I threw the magazine across the room and said a VERY nasty word. Why does Quinn buy junk like this? Isn't anything better being written?

In Laboratory, by Jerome Bixby, I stumbled over another nauseating, but mildly amusing, humanization of aliens. In this item the aliens are physically so different from humans that their appearance is hard to visualize, yet they are given human values, human attitudes, human emotions, human morals, ethics, ad nauseum. If you happened to see Walt Disney's recent prostitution of his art called Lady and the Tramp and came away sickened, then this story will bring pure green vomit in a few short moments. This is dishonestest science fiction at its worst. ~~This is professor Whatanose~~ and his bumbling assistant being thrown into a tizzy by two curious mice who mess up their experiments. Only the names have been changed to satisfy Mr. Quinn's odd definition of science fiction.

In The Barbarians Tom Godwin has written a rehash of alien-contact theme. In this one two exploring humans, a man and his wife, are to be killed because the aliens fear their return to Earth would eventually lead to more contact, resulting in disruption and ruin to the alien civilization. As per usual (groan...sigh...) the aliens are human to the last hair, to the last psychological reaction. BUT...just seconds before robot guards are due to execute the two, firing squad style, the Supreme Executive of the planet suddenly recognizes the full turgid significance of The Cat, the name of the humans' small exploring ship. Too, he is impressed with the bravery of the two as they resolutely face death. It would never do, of course, to have Our Representatives faint with fear, cry, babble, beg for mercy, wet and/or mess their pants. In the pulp magazines only the villain dies an unheroic death.

"Steven Russell was born a misfit, a nonconformist, and for the first five years of his life made himself and his parents extremely unhappy." So starts The Happy Clown, a Message story by Alice Eleanor Jones, which in one swell foop throws all of modern psychology and genetics out of the window. If one can be born a nonconformist, why not a conformist, a Republican (shudder), a plumber, a neurotic, a virtuoso, a writer, a shoe salesman? Why not anything? Save a lot of schooling that way.

So this is just another piece of dishonest science fiction; it sets up purely impossible situations, unacceptable premises, and all because a Message is being delivered, by Ghod, and to hell with anything else. The Message this time is that conformity is bad. You, the reader, are supposed to put yourself in the place of Steven Russell and imagine, if you can stagger past the first sentence, that his life might be your life. This is made as easy as possible for you because the infant is born with a 1955 set of conventions and values that emerge from his subconscious like so many instincts! You've got to read this stinker to depreciate it, believe me. Failure to listen carefully to the preaching of Miss Jones will result in a punishment of ten shouts of "anti-intellectualist" from any and all liberals in your immediate vicinity. Makes no difference if it ain't good fiction; it's got a Good Message. This message-type crap is also doing its not inconsiderable bit to ruin science fiction. Now let me stagger on to the next story.

Promised Planet, by Robert F. Young, is the best in the issue, hands down. It is a nicely told story of one man's adjustment to and acceptance of the role he found marked out for him in a society of Polish peasants who were forced to colonize the planet on which their emigrant ship had made an emergency landing. He had been the pilot of that

ship and had found no place for himself among the people. He was stuck with them for the rest of his life, for the ship would never fly again. And yet there was a place for him after all....

The story is told as a flashback decades after the emergency landing. The occasion is a wedding and the ex-pilot, now old, is waiting for a little boy to bring him choice tidbits from the foods the wedding guests are eating. This is an excellent story, told in a quiet style that fits perfectly the story line.

In fact, I am beginning to equate this Robert F. Young with very good science fiction after reading this gem in IF, and after the very good Jungle Doctor in the Fall STARTLING Stories. Young is so good that I wonder if that terrible An Apple For the Teacher in the Summer SS was more the result of editorial mayhem than authorial incompetence.

The one thing that amazes me is that the Fall SS is so good when the previous issue was so bad. The quality of excellence in the issue, however, stems from only two stories: James E. Gunn's The Naked Sky, which welded philosophy and action into a very well told story, and the above mentioned Jungle Doctor. The short stories were forgettable.

---Richard E. Geis

EDITORIAL NOTES OF MINOR IMPORTANCE---

I fo'-pawed on the page ending Fred Chappell's column in this issue. It is the last item in the issue, and combined with the protective mailing page I am adding this issue, may give the impression that something more should be present. Ain't so.

No letter column this issue because this is being published so quickly. I am attempting to catch up on the issues I missed during that August-September period in which I thought I was going to revive the former title of this magazine, PSYCHOTIC. In fact, I'm afraid I went and boldly announced to lots of people that good ol' PSY was coming back. I shouldna, and I'm sorry for the confusion it has caused. Be it firmly noted, therefore, that SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW will continue.

And it should also be firmly noted (but don't break the pencil point) that I am trading with only a very very few other fan publishers, and that because A BAS comes out so very infrequently it is doubtful if fanzines sent to me for review actually will be reviewed, especially in view of the A BAS policy of publishing only my hateful reviews. If I like a fan magazine it'll not be reviewed. I don't expect faneditors to send me their efforts just because I am a Big Name Fan.

Well, that's it. Contributions of material are welcome, but they must be on the serious side; material about fans or fandom is not desired.

NEXT ISSUE will contain a review of another science fiction mag, probably Palmer's new format OTHER WORLDS; an article by Joe Gibson titled, Oh, This Bally, Dashed Air Age; a review of The Girls From Planet 5 by Richard Wilson; an article by Redd Boggs titled, Let's Be Pound Wise!; and as many comments from the readers as can be managed.

One other small item: I published a letter by Cal Beck in the last issue, then couldn't send him a copy of it because I had mislaid his address. This will frost him but good, I imagine. Would someone please send me his address? Please? I feel guilty.

---REG

When you grow too old to scream, I'll have you to dismember... When you grow too old to

What IMAGINATION



BY HENRY MOSKOWITZ

Where?

Ready....

To anyone really interested in the sickness in the science fiction field today, I would suggest that he or she read the editorial comments in the first 3 issues of the revived OTHER WORLDS (May-July-September 1955), and also (in the last listed issue) Rog Phillips' commentary in his review of CANADIAN FANDOM on page 125.

Aim....

While this article goes after just one magazine, the inherent faults are common to every mag still surviving in the field when this sees print. Not every fault to every mag, but common rather to the field as a whole.

Fire....

My records show that I bought my last newsstand copy of IMAGINATION in July 1954, issue dated September. I never read it. I kept my files complete with second-hand copies gotten in NYC. Early in January of this year the rumor reached me that Madge was going to run a three part serial by George O. Smith, starting in the March issue. I got the March issue. It turned out to be a four-part serial. I liked the first installment and so bought the next three issues. And the one after that.

William Laurence Hamling has been an editor since the middle Forties, and an editor-publisher since 1951. Since going off on his own hook, he seems to have forgotten that there is any such thing as "balance" in a magazine. He shares a viewpoint common to more than one editor in the field, but shows it in greatest contrast.

IMAGINATION is aimed at a younger crowd, or at least that's where it seems to hit, if not actually aimed so. You know the type. "You've got a great mag, the greatest, Number One in the whole field, the only good mag out today, read all 44 ish and not one bad story." To the young reader all this is true and gospel, for -- let's not forget, old-timer -- the glory is all about, and the star trails are just now opening....the vista is immense.

But Hamling seems to believe this same guff whole-heartedly. We Are The Best, We Publish The Best. Oh, he has admitted that his mag has run some lousy stuff, but never, in my memory, in the columns of IMAGINATION. Very few critical letters appear, perhaps few are received; but it seems that Hamling likes his letters with a little sugar -- just as Palmer, in his heyday, liked his with a touch of acid. In an article in INSIDE & SFA (March 1955), he complained about lack of quality in stories and told how he had to buy stuff "in desperation" to fill an issue and to keep some kind of backlog.

"So you think perhaps Madge doesn't get a look at the good stories? Perhaps our word-rate doesn't warrant it?" That's what Hamling wrote. I admit some such thing was in my head. "In 1952 we were paying from 2 to 5¢ per word so the rates were satisfactory." I have no reason--well, very little--to doubt editor-publisher Hamling's veracity. However, I must say this was the first I ever heard of his paying more than the one-cent basic.

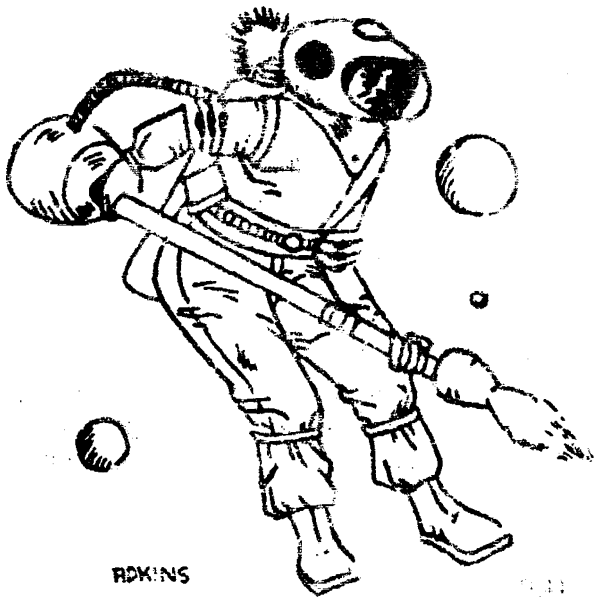
It's a bit strange, though, when you consider the fact that at the time Madge was bi-monthly and then once-every-six-weeks (going monthly with the June 1953 issue). I honestly can't remember one story that was worth 2-5¢ per word. It's also strange that when the mag's sales warranted monthly publication, Hamling was no longer paying 2-5¢ per.

For years, Hamling was against reprints; yet last year he brought out IMAGINATIVE TALES---featuring reprints. What gets me, though, is how these reprinters, some of them, seem to want to hide the fact. Hamling did it by changing titles and listing the copyright in small type in a corner, the usual practice. But not quite as flagrant as one other I can name.

To go somewhat afield, I'd like to quote something from a Hamling editorial in the September 1955 IMAGINATIVE TALES: "As you know we've been following a program of humorous-type fiction in Tales. Sadly enough, and we're not ashamed to admit it, sales figures were not encouraging enough to continue that policy." So IMAGINATIVE TALES changed to action stories, as blurbed on the front cover: "ACTION PACKED SCIENCE FICTION".

Remember what I was saying about "balance"?





He doesn't seem to realize readers no more like great gobs of chuckles than they do equal helpings of pathos and tragedy. So he tries to sell a mag of continual humor.

I now attempt to criticize the editorial handling without giving said story away to them as ain't read it yet. Highways In Hiding, the serial by G. O. Smith is too good a story to let slip by. Well worth getting second-hand copies of the four issues containing it.

The story is tautly written for the most part. It concerns one Steve Cornell, an esper living in a world of espers and telepaths. It concerns Mekstrom's Disease, named after the spaceman who first brought it to Earth, a disease which turns the flesh to stone. When this effect reaches a vital organ, good-night-for-good. Yet Cornell runs into people who have had this disease and still live. With

their stone-like flesh, they have become super-normal.

The one thing that sets a serial apart from any other story form is that it must sustain the readers' interest over the interval of time from the completion of, say, Installment One to when the next issue of the magazine with Installment Two, goes on sale. At the end of each installment, therefore, it is usual to find that the author has carried the story action to a high point of excitement. Bluntly put it's the principle of the old Saturday afternoon movie cliff-hanger. Will Beautiful Pauline Fall From The Cliff To The River One Hundred Feet Below, Where The Hungry Crocodiles Wait?

This point establishes the difference between the writing of a novel and that of a serial, even tho both may be identical as to plot, character, and motivation. Of necessity the serial author must establish a rapport between himself and the reader. If he succeeds, the reader will be back for the rest of the story, which means buying the next two-three-or n issues. Proving this are the Japanese newspapers, some of which have been running a serial story for decades now (a la our own One Man's Family on radio).

It is with the serial that editing plays an important part. Few authors can consciously write a serial in such a manner that every 20,000 words a high point is reached. The editor has to do a bit of manipulating here and there.

Installment One of Highways In Hiding was a beautiful piece of writing: taut, graphic, clear character delineation. It brought the complex plot along with ease, building to a genuine climax at the end. Just about any reader, I'm sure, would have been anxious for Installment Two...

...Which carried on rather well. Unfortunately, it ran into a snag, that, being a serial, it should have avoided. The action was slowed to observable speed because Hero Steve Cornell was undergoing experimentation to see if he could be artificially impreg-

nated with Mekstrom's Disease. The attempt failed. In Chapter XIII (the last of the installment), page 76, Cornell wrote: "But as the futile days wore on and the fact was practically shoved down my throat, I was forced to admit that there was no future for Steve Cornell." Now there, it seems to me, is a perfect dropping-off place. But no, the story carries on for four more damaging paragraphs. Cornell considers reorientation, wherein one is given a revised outlook on things and becomes a basically new personality. Deciding that this wasn't for him, he got into his car and "sloped."

Boom!

Just like that he had effectively broken all toes with the story. Hunted by one group, trusted by another, he just drove off. Strictly speaking, I didn't give a damn what would happen after that. There was nothing for me to wonder about.

Installment Three picked up again, even tho it was rather slow in getting up a full head of steam. Finally, a neat problem is set up. Cornell has been taken to the Medical Center for treatment, which of course places him among the enemy once again. If he doesn't join their side, he dies. If he escapes he dies--because they have the only equipment necessary outside of the Homesteaders (who are now somewhat unfriendly). With the help of Nurse Farrow he plans to escape, a not too easy thing to do while surrounded by telepaths. They have to crash through the main gate, a very solid obstacle. Farrow leads off in the first car, being a Mek she can survive the crash. Cornell follows in another car.

Here's where I disagree with the editor in allowing the author to present a nice, graphic description of Farrow going through the gate and the guardhouse, and the explosion that followed. Farrow, from somewhere amid the wreckage, teleps: "Get out! Get going! It's your move now--" Cornell puts his foot on "the faucet and poured on the oil."

The same situation arises here as in Installment Two: Cornell driving off into the wild blue who-knows-where. And again I couldn't care less. There is no wonderment as to the outcome. If, however, that bit had ended with the fine paragraph on page 90 it would have been much better. The paragraph:

"We went howling down the road, Farrow in the lead car by a hundred feet and Steve behind her hoping that she didn't think she could pile up and walk away--with me at her side. We went roaring around a curve, over a hill, and I had my perception out to its range, and we bore down upon that wire and steel portal like a pair of madmen."

It's simply a matter of leaving a question in the reader's mind that will continue for thirty days or so: will they make it?

Installment Four carried the story through to a satisfactory conclusion, except for one point. Marian Harrison turns up with a ring on a chain around her neck engraved SC-MH. It is explained that when Marian contracted Mekstrom's Disease she had had herself erased from Cornell's mind to spare him grief, that period of Mek contraction being hell. My question is: When? Nowhere in the story can I remember a spot



where they were together long enough to get intimate enough to warrant a diamond ring in a plain setting.

Outside of the serial, the magazine showed no apparent changes. For the most part the writing was competent, in some spots good, mostly indifferent. The artwork was pretty thin, mostly sketch-work, and as such without solidity. McCauley isn't too bad. But Terry has deteriorated in the last two years or so. Either he's lost the touch or he isn't getting enough money to warrant greater craftsmanship. These two fellows are the mainstays, although a new name, Rognan, has come in recently--but shows little promise.

It has long been known that any color--especially red--against a white background draws the eye. A fine piece of female pulchritude does likewise. Covers March-April-May-June have white backgrounds with lush McCauley girls in form fitting sweaters and skirts and matador pants and dresses. Far be it for me to object! Especially after the unpleasant job by Terry on the July cover. In fact, these four covers are the only things I applaud heartily.

It always surprises me to find a good story in IMAGINATION. Somehow I never expect it. Well, to be honest, I was surprised--more than once!

If you want to read a good story look up Hunting License in the April ish. James McConnell, who also wrote the fine The Game of White, has in this story turned out a biting commentary on a possible tomorrow. A world where Big Game hunting is passe, and men hunt fellow men (even tho they are criminals) on controlled preserves.

Not quite as good, but still well-done, is Flight Perilous by Ray C. Noll in the May issue. Concerning a flight through the uncharted asteroid belt, it has both technical and human aspects to it--and reads like a reject from ASTOUNDING.

In the same issue there is one hell of a neat, uh, well....a satire, I guess. Authored by Ray Russell, a mean man with a typer, titled The Pleasure Was Ours. It's about a guy who offers twelve (count 'em!) beautiful nude photos in color to a man's magazine---for free. Well, almost. In return for printing the model's name and address at which she can be seen and...er, you know! The gimmick was obvious, but the author takes a kick at his own magazine, the wonderously successful PLAYBOY (which now and then features stf and fantasy, not to mention Charles Beaumont.

In the June issue Phil Dick has The Hood which discusses a new (to me) aspect of telepaths and mutations of old homo sap. When is a mutant not? If mutant is by definition an ahead of schedule step up the evolutionary ladder of the human race.

The July issue was the best of the five, and the very best of Madge's entire run. A short novel by Milton Lesser, Newshound, in which the newspapers of the future not only write up the news...they make it. Mack Reynolds in Space Gamble takes us on the longest space trip ever attempted by man, and a year-long fight against insanity. Export Commodity by Irving E. Cox, Jr., is the only piece to fall below the standard set, an alien-comes-to-Earth-and bit of nothingness. Phil Dick's The Chromium Fence is a good characterization story, but not too deep. The top story of the issue I won't even blurb. It's The Lonely, by William F. Temple. Read it!

However, in all honesty, I feel that this sudden rise in quality has for its reason a last-ditch stand on the part of Editor-Publisher Hamling; an attempt to regain enough sales to merit continued monthly publication. The sudden use of a four-part serial, in a mag where serials hadn't been used in over a year, where serials were always unwanted by the readers. New names like McConnell and Noll and others.

If it isn't already apparent, I have been putting stress on the fact that a magazine succeeds or fails on the strength of its personality. I give you as examples in contrast the SatEvePost and Collier's. The former has been under the hand of one man for many years--Ben Hibbs. It is now the top general mag in the country. The latter has tossed around from one to another to still a third. In once instance it was even edited by a fellow who didn't even want the job. It's been losing money, and after 65 yrs as a weekly was forced into bi-weekly appearance.

I think this shows that, regardless of quality and quantity of material used, it is the editorial personality which diffuses into the magazine proper. Hibbs is the Post, and he's built up a long-standing friendship with readers. Collier's is shifty. Look how Herwin personalized Thrilling's stf mags. And then how Sam Mines different outlook showed up in the mags. And look at the dead fish now.

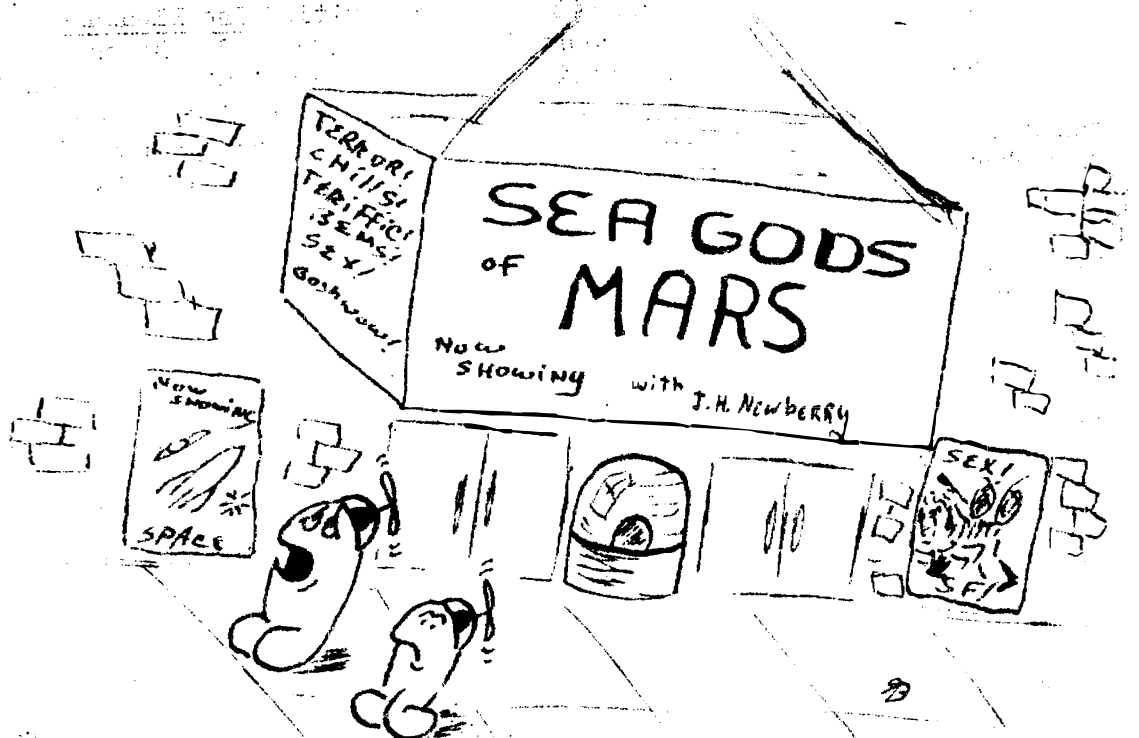
I am at a loss to find the one word that describes William Lawrence Hamling. It shows up in his see-saw disagreements with Sam Moskowitz about Editor's Choice in Science Fiction and in his extremely weak defense of Henry Bott's outrageous blunder and bull (see PEON, May 1955). He's packed letter columns about getting a space satellite of ours up before either the UN or the USSR...because we can't trust Russia...without saying "do other nations trust us?" Then there's the new series of McCauley Girls: "We've really stolen a march on the entire field with this series. We have a hunch we're setting a new standard for the years to come--if we're slightly enthusiastic." Slightly.

Hamling has had the habit of running "novels" of 20,000 words and up. In IMAGINATIVE TALES he promised either one long novel or two short ones per issue. But it wasn't long before he dragged in shorter features, too, without making any editorial mention.

My point is that just as the field has lost much sparkle and originality, it has lost more than that in the fact that integrity has been forsaken.

---Henry Moskowitz

"This is a blot on science fiction."



UP the DOWN escalator



"Sweet Jesus, protect me!"

Joe La Grassa sat bolt upright in bed, twisting the damp sheets between his legs. The perspiration had dried on his naked body, and though the warmth of the August night blew across him, still even the open window could not prevent his flesh from feeling moist and clammy.

Groping for the night stand he upset a glass of water. Water he used with his pills, just before retiring. Pills he had never had to use when Margaret was with him...

His fingers closed about the clock and drew it before his eyes. Luminous numbers stared blankly back into his sweat-streaked face. Five forty. A.H. Still dark. God!

He swung out onto the floor, dragging the sheets with him. They tangled insensibly about his legs; damp weights. He stepped them off and drew a cigarette from the crumpled pack on the night stand.

Its crimson eye flared momentarily as he applied a match, then subsided to a dull, reassuring glow in the darkness about him. He ran a moist palm across a moist chest and felt that moisture emerging from his pores. In the August heat he shivered.

You are going mad, Joseph C. La Grassa, he thought, and solemnly Joseph C. La Grassa replied, "Now that was a brilliant observation.

"Anyone who wakes in the deep of a night, howling, screaming, fleeing from

BY HARLAN ELLISON

something he can't name---and then continues seeing it when he's awake...well, there isn't much doubt." His voice sounded too large in the stillness of the night. Too loud and out-of-place. He continued mentally: Joe La Grassa, you need to see a psychiatrist. What the hell good would that do, I've already been to two of the damned head-shrinkers. They keep telling me its only temporary hallucinatory manifestation, brought on by acute mental disturbance. Which means? Exactly nothing, and you know it!

He walked to the window and pulled back the edge of the chintzy, cheap curtains. Off in the filtering preparation-of-morn he could see the indistinct bulk of some tall structure. Skyscraper? The term seemed to grate on his nerves. He could see the lighter dark of the night, separated from the Earth by a band of buildings, television antennas, steeples, other garbage, and he knew the buildings did not scrape the sky. They didn't even put up a good jumping reach. Skyscraper, indeed!

The building, a pillar against the night, annoyed him vaguely.

He didn't know why. The length of it, a statuesque height, coiled his guts reverse-wise. Unearthed odd feelings in him.

As far as he could imagine, the only thing it brought to mind was the tallness, the straightness of Margaret. When she was with him. Her long smooth limbs, her faintly amused smile...

He put her abruptly from his mind. She was gone and that was finis to the story. End. Climax. Up crescendo and fade out. Sounds of tearful breathing in the background. A class B stinker of a yarn, unfortunately.

And in the meantime, Joe, you're going off your skids.

The cigarette burned his yellowed fingertips. He yelped, dropped it, and without thinking, stepped with his bare foot. He squealed again, and sat down on the bed, clutching the burned sole. Why the blazes do you try to put out butts with your bare flesh, La Grassa, you jerk? That's the third time in two days you've burned yourself like that. And twice on the stove. What's the fascination with fire all of a sudden?

You're not thinking straight, boy!

No, answered himself dutifully, you're not.

He lay down, again, the back of his hand across wearied eyes. Then the scenes began flowing once more. There was a boat, running upstream against the current, in a river that suddenly turned to blue flame. Molten metal poured from cliffs magically appearing from nowhere. The boat caught fire and sank, leaving a screaming figure, burning horribly, turning to ash, revivifying, burning through again, burning, re-burning and appearing renewed each time, only to char black once more.

He was the screaming figure. He realized it the same moment an entire section of the vesiculated cliffing broke away and fell, steaming, raining droplets of molten slag, upon him. The impact crushed him beneath the dead power of the refuse, pushing him under, filling his mouth with flaming water. Not allowing him the thought that flaming water which drowned and burned at one and the same time was an impossibility. The inertia of the rock and hot metal bore him to the bottom. His feet were thrust deep into the mud at the floor of the stream, which had, without his realizing it, changed to a huge lake, he at the very center.

A boat suddenly cleft the water above his head, pushing through the steaming liquid.

Its prow knifed cleanly through the volcanic debris, forcing oddly-shaped pieces of matter to bubble downward toward the bottom.

He stood there, enmeshed in the slime at the bottom of the lake, which had as suddenly metamorphosed into an ocean, screaming a soundless scream in a nightmare without beginning, without termination.

Inexplicably the vessel continued cutting water directly above him, as though no matter how fast it went, it remained in the same spot, appearing, only appearing, to move, and thrusting the debris-laden flame-water from its bulk.

It seemed the whole world flamed, burned, threw itself in terrible wild destruction, at him. The leaping flames met, joined, raced across the mud in which he was trapped, bore down upon him and consumed him in a shrieking, hissing cauldron of fire and pain. His entire body wracked under the onslaught of the inferno, in small thin-like shafts. No all-enveloping pain, this; it was as though each shred and spark of fire had been equipped with its own personal dirk and was entering his body individually. The pain was terrible, multi-fingered.

The mud erupted!

He was spewed up out of it, into the air, black with sooty smoke, above the water. The smoke parted, and he was sucked as if into a maw. A cavernous opening in nothing opened before him, drawing him up, up, into itself, with another terror of a scream that drew the flesh around his mouth tight, straining folds of flesh up from his neck, under his chin.

His eyes burned, gazed deep into the pit that opened above and all around him. He could see nothing. It was dark. Dark to consummate all dark. A dark like the inside of a closet. God! worse than a closet! A hamper, a cubicle, a shaft, a pit!

He struggled up out of that pit. Clawing with both hands crooked into hooks that shook as they took him to a thin edge onto which he could cling. But there was no edge!

Tears, the softest things he had felt since the agony of it all began, streamed down his blackened and charred cheeks. There was no edge; he would be sucked back into that black chasm, never to emerge again, pulled into horrors more grotesque than he could imagine. Death would have seemed a blessing, had it come by, scythe-sharp and final---for he knew madness was but a fraction away. No edge to cling to, nothing to hoist him back from that ebony depression that glowered and grimaced all about him.

His fingers clawed themselves again, straightened, straining at the joints between each other, seeking, questing some something on which to hang.

They closed over the edge!

They tightened automatically over the brink. He screamed again. This time till the cords stood forth in his throat.

The blood gushed and ran from the severed stumps of his fingers. His hands were a grisly, severed, rent pulp of razored flesh and torn bone. The edge had been ground-glass sharp! He, in trust, had clung to it for respite. The blood ran out, down over his clothes, soaking into them, stickying the fabric to his tortured flesh. He could feel the rough, ragged edges of bone, marrow prominent, pulped edges of epidermis hanging. The feel of it was insanity itself! The voice he heard seemed to come from very far away down inside the black pit that opened around him. Just before he sunk himself into the greater torture of madness he realized that it was his own voice.

He thrashed over, the sweat pouring onto the bed, drenching him the more. He was shaking from the shoulders down. His arms convulsed themselves together before him like two snakes enamoured of each other. The fingers (blessed fingers still there, but ice-cold now) twined in upon each other, as though trying to protect each other, as though trying to protect each other from some oppressor.

Joe La Grassa got up once more, almost tripping in his urgency to be off that bed of horror.

He sat on the rug, half falling. He began to whimper softly. The scream as he woke from the scenes of torment was still causing his flesh to pucker, as though it were in the sleazy wallpaper, forever ringing back back back upon him. He clapped his hands over his ears, but the touch of those ice-cold fingers on the raging heat of his face made him jump again!

He slid over onto his side and lay on the rug, closing his eyes only experimentally, to see if the scene returned.

All he saw, in sculpture-sharp white-on-black contrast was an escalator, going down, on which a tall, alabaster statue rode.

The statue faced him. The escalator went down. But the statue came up. It rose into view, over the curve of the slowly-down-sinking steps, as breasts, stomach, waist, hips, thighs, legs, climbed into sight. It was perfectly motionless and he could not imagine how it could move up if the escalator was moving down.

Then the face of the statue grew in his vision.

It grew with a white largeness like a full moon coming across a desert. All emptiness but that death-pale roundness. The huge, vacant eyes stared exactly at the center of his captured sight, inside the closed wall of his vision. He turned, groped at the flesh behind his eyes, screaming, "Open up, for the love of God, open up!" But the eyes remained tight-shut, forcing him in. Holding him in. Forcing him to remain in that tight-shut room behind his eyes.

He turned again and the statue was almost upon him. The face, with delicate ivory cheekbones prominent above a black slash of a mouth revolted him. A beauty in it that made him wish he could not see anything, that his eyes might be gouged from his head that he might not see. But there was nothing he could do. He was trapped.

The maggoty colored flesh of the statue swept from horizon to horizon, blanketing everything in death-white smoothness. It seemed to bespeak an eternity of nothing but that hideous countenance. Of a beauty beyond his comprehension. Of a life with the torment of that face before him. Of a face he suddenly---suddenly recognized!

His screams mounted to the ceiling, shaking the dime store light fixture, jerking into wakefulness people in the rooms on that floor. And below. And above.

When the house detective, a two hundred pounder in a fading, shiny gabardine suit, broke down the door, he found him lying on the floor, twisted onto his side, his eyes peeled back, fastened on the open window through which shone the full disc of the August moon. His body was trembling, and no matter how he held him, the tremors never ceased.

Over and over he kept repeating: "Margaret, Margaret, Margaret. The knife so sharp and the pieces so small and the furnace so hot and the knife so sharp and the pieces so small and the furnace so hot, and the pieces, Margaret. The Margaret, Margaret, Margaret..."

---Harlan Ellison

Dark Dominion, by David Duncan; Ballantine Books, Inc., 404 Fifth Avenue, New York 18, New York; paperbound, 35¢.

Reviewed by Noah W. McLeod.

Dark Dominion was first published as a serial in COLLIER'S. The author, David Duncan, is a well known writer of sociological and psychological novels.

Dark Dominion itself represents an attempt to apply the techniques of the main-stream novel to science fiction. Dr. Phil Ambert, the narrator, was the civilian director of the super-secret artificial satellite project. The project was to produce a satellite which would give the United States complete military supremacy. The only trouble was that the chief scientist next to Ambert, Dr. Osborne, was insulted in a dispute over a woman mathematician, Gail Tanager, and tipped off an undisclosed hostile power by guided missile.

There was the discovery of Magellanium, the stuff white dwarf stars are made of; and Ambert's discovery of a cave on the project grounds. When, shortly after, hostile scouting planes appeared over the location, Ambert was accused of treason and thrown into jail.

Adding to the complication is the ascendancy which the idealistic Gail has gained over Aaron Matthews, the commander designate of the satellite. Then the rest of the world declares war on the United States and attempts to wipe out the satellite and the installation for building it. The fuel supply is destroyed when a crippled plane crashes into the tanks. Ambert, now cleared of suspicion, changes over the propulsion system to Magellanium. But Matthews, inspired by Gail, takes off the satellite with most of the women and children in a wild goose chase for an inhabitable planet. Included are Ambert's wife and children. A second enemy attack pulverises the installation, and Ambert, hidden in a cave, writes an account of the events.

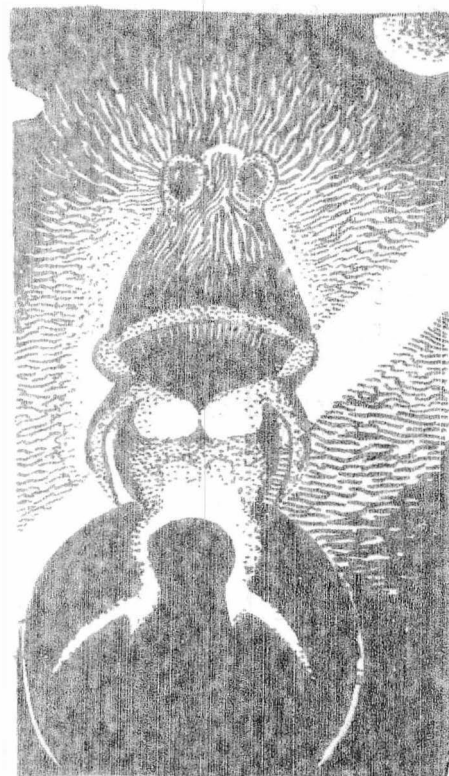
Dark Dominion is a very hard book to judge. Most of the successful science fiction by main-stream writers has been on sociological themes, like Orwell's 1984, or Vidal's Messiah. The theme of Dark Dominion is non-sociological; and the author had the additional difficulty of having to tailor the work to fit the requirements

REVIEWS BY

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JIM HARMON



of COLLIER'S, in which it appeared as a serial before being published as a book.

The writing is excellent, and the extrapolation not particularly bad, although Magellanium (of which more later) is an astonishing substance, even for the cores of white dwarf stars. But the characters are as hackneyed a bunch of dummies as ever stepped out of a PLANET STORIES space opera. Duncan's skilled technique makes the poverty of his characters even more apparent than in the usual space opera.

Dr. Osborne is the mad scientist of horror pulps through and through. The supposedly rational scientist, he betrays his country because he can't have Gail Tanager. Had he been as rational as he thought himself he would have contented himself with the kind of female companionship which is purchasable, if not with money, at least with material considerations.

Gail is the idealistic but sexy girl, so popular as a heroine in campus romances. Her type does exist on the campuses, but not in secret government projects, and I should know, as I am acquainted with both college campuses and government secret projects.

General Humphrey, the military head of the project, is the gimlet-eyed bully, right out of ASTOUNDING. His only distinction is that he has stomach ulcers. Susan Ambert, the wife of the narrator, is the sexy but faithful wife of a thousand slick magazine tales.

Magellanium is an astounding substance in more ways than one. It defies all the laws of degenerate matter worked out by the British Astrophysicists, Eddington and Fowler. To put it briefly, if a substance with the properties of Magellanium can exist, then our whole system of quantum mechanics is cock-eyed. Among other things Fowler and Eddington proved was that degenerate matter can exist only in the interior of the stars. What, then, is Magellanium doing in an atomic pile, where heat and pressure are much less than in stellar interiors? Another thing, even more germane, is this: Duncan says that one piece of Magellanium attracts another with a force independent of distance. W. J. Luyten has shown that white dwarf stars are common in space. If they are made of Magellanium, then given this attraction, and the age of the universe, it would follow that such stars would be very rare because their numbers would be reduced by collision. As extrapolation, Magellanium belongs in the same class as time travel and the hyper-drive.

It is somewhat doubtful if the existence of a satellite project, such as described in Dark Dominion, would lead to a world-wide alliance against the United States. The impulse to get on the bandwagon is so strong, particularly in the Orient, that the project might have the effect opposite to that described by Duncan, making allies instead of enemies.

Dark Dominion might be described as a book in which the excellent writing serves only to point up the faulty extrapolation and characterization. Whether it is worth the price asked depends on the buyer. It is certainly not comparable with the best stories by Clarke or Heinlein.

SCIENCE FICTION TERROR TALES, edited by Groff Conklin. Gnome, \$3. Pocket Books, 25¢.
Reviewed by Jim Harmon.

I bought this book more eagerly than I've bought many, and I was disappointed in an equal ratio. This is just a bad anthology, and it seems incredible that it could have come from Groff Conklin. According to statistics, this is Conklin's 13th solo anthology (plus one with his wife Lucy). Perhaps Groff is subconsciously superstitious because this is certainly an unlucky thirteen. Even allowing for my expecting more than I could get, the whole volume emerges an incredible blunder.

Is the theme anthology so much in demand that an editor must create a category with

which there are no stories to fill it? I would rather see a book called FIFTEEN GOOD SCIENCE FICTION STORIES that did contain good stories than one called ROBOT LOVE STORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION with del Rey's Helen O'Loy and fourteen clinkers. Or one called SCIENCE FICTION TERROR TALES with almost as many crap traps.

Admittedly the idea is exciting and intriguing but there apparently aren't enough published stories to substantiate a book on the subject. Perhaps Conklin could have collected those published tales worthy of antholization and ran a competition for new stories to fill out the book, a la the Pohl "Star" books. If not, he should have left the idea alone or relegated it to a section of a larger anthology.

The original anthology of new stories must be the new medium of the science fiction book trade. Sources from magazines can't hold out to meet the demand for anthologies. Some critics like Anthony Boucher seem to be seriously suggesting that book publishers ignore the demand for anthologies and bring out original novels instead because too many anthologies is "unhealthy". But obviously, if the public wants to buy anthologies it will be given anthologies even if the old sources are being exhausted. Purely from a critical point of view the average anthology is a better buy than the average novel in science fiction. They always have one or two good stories and certainly many novels don't have a single passable chapter. Even this anthology has a few good stories.

Certainly Fredric Brown's Arena and Murray Leinster's Pipeline To Pluto are good stories -- but they are space adventure tales, beginning to date just the least bit around the temples. They inspire terror in no sense of the word -- they are exhilarating rather than depressive.

The only stories that really inspire a horrific crawling of the spine are Bradbury's Punishment Without Crime, Through Channels by Richard Matheson, and two possibilities -- the Paul Ernst story, Microscopic Giants, was nostalgic but it is dating rather badly. I was able to shift mental gears enough to appreciate it in its own frame of reference -- perhaps you could too. Alan E. Nourse contributed a very contrived bit of hackwork that was nonetheless effective. Like the stories of certain old pulps, F.B.I. DETECTIVE (known for the accelerated complication of its plots) and RIO KID WESTERN (combining fictional characters and historical persons in the same yarns) among others, the writing was hack but displayed remarkable craftsmanship.

The rest of these stories were either only competent magazine shorts or really impossible.

All in all, you would take this book to be the work of one of the parasite anthologists, rather than Mr. Conklin, a man of proven ability in judging the public taste. These other anthologists I refer to are people who can't write very well, read very well, edit very well, but they are the world's best second guessers and they find a quick buck in science fiction. I am getting a little sick of these no-talent Joes (and Jo's) picking out a dozen stories from the Top Three magazines, attaching their names to said pin-stickings and pcsing as Big Name Pros. Nice work if you can get it, and the pay is good. Too damn good for them.

A groff Conklin or Judith Merrill is a rare commodity and should be conserved. If Conklin keeps straining himself with anthologies like this, he is going to have to answer one of the back-cover ads from the old pulps he explores.

The intent of this mag is fannish. do you hear? FANNISH!

If Bloch is pickled for posterity....I wan't that finger for my collection.

I. Make it new

"The Bowl" is revived from Dave English's unfortunately defunct Fantasias. Those who remember it as the worst part of that unusual fanzine will suffer no disappointment when they read it now in SFR. Those encountering it for the first time will do well to compare it to "File 13" or "From Der Voodvork Out." The contrast is invaluable.

THE GOLDFISH BOWL

By FRED CHAPPELL

I may as well quote an invocation from Ezra Pound for good luck: "And Then went down to the ship", and begin by showing how old the notes are for the last installment which was to appear under English. A good example of notes about as timely as the calendar days of Cleopatra is something called

II. The consistent editor

"It's about the rarest thing in science fiction: Simplicity! It's something we've been urging on writers and crying for...it's the secret of a powerful, moving yarn..."

---Lester del Rey, SPACE STORIES, May, 1953

"We happen to like the kind of science fiction that gets one main idea and couples in something else, and adds ideas like a cat increasing the population..."

"...we're sick of all the stories that come in with a nice little economy of ideas covered up with words and more words..."

---Lester del Rey, SPACE STORIES, September, 1953

III. The market increases

News of a new prozine is timely though, and in these days of "the one-shot prozine" (from Filler), it is astonishing to hear of any projected mag which could definitely be of service to stf. However, I am heartened to hear that Ray Palmer is forming one with a new slant. The proposed title is FANTASY REFLECTS, which just about explains everything: he is going to print the rejections of F&SF, ASF, and a few more of the better prozines. Palmer says that writers were attracted to the rapidly expanding market like sexfiends to rapine, but there just wasn't enough room for them all in the top-drawer mags: hence FR. A tip to aspiring authors: all manuscripts which are submitted to Campbell and Boucher first will receive top consideration, and all mss. should be accompanied by a bona fide rejection slip. Later they hope to have a mail service set up between them. Palmer says that he is not attracted by big names particularly, and expects fans to contribute a major portion of his stable. Has Fantasy Times beaten me to this news?

Incidentally, the cover for the first issue is a watercolor by Ralph Rayburn Phillips, ul-ultra-weird artist.

IV. Question and Answer (Poul Anderson):

Human? (Judith Merril)
Human, All-Too-Human (Friedrich Nietzsche)
...And Some Were Human (Lester del Rey)
More Than Human (Theodore Sturgeon)
Slan! (A. E. van Vogt)



V. How brass was our golden?

"Science fiction fans call this the Golden Age," says Theodore Sturgeon in his introduction to the Dell paperback edition of Who Goes There?, meaning, of course, the era from 1937, when Campbell first became editor of ASTOUNDING, until 1944, when ASF's stable was snatched by the Army. "Within three issues (after Campbell became editor), ASF was a personal product." More conservative fans date the Golden Age from 1939, the year Heinlein sold his first story.

But it wasn't that easy. Campbell was a real revolutionary, and his ideas about science fiction were not entirely welcomed with open arms. AFS already had a stable of writers who were used to writing -- and selling -- yarns that give us post-Campbell readers shudders whenever we are confronted with them. Campbell had to buck this stable and it was an almost Herculean task. Fans like to exemplify the Golden Age with issues like that for October 1943.

This issue contained van Vogt's The Storm, Raymond F. Jones' Fifty Million Monkeys, Padgett's The Proud Robot, Russell's Symbiotica, and Fredric Brown's Paradox Lost. Today any other editor might gladly sell his wife for an issue like that. Campbell would have too, at an earlier date. (And he might still today.) He had to work for that line-up.

Consider the December 1938 issue. Things were just starting to happen; herein were de Camp's The Merman, del Rey's Helen O'Loy, and the first Nova story, H.L. Gold's A Matter of Form. Not bad...even though de Camp was too glib, del Rey too sentimental, and Gold not a little bit creaky. Let's look at the rest of the stories. Three more short stories, by Kent Casey, M. Schere, and Edmond Hamilton. They are not good; they read like something Palmer might have rejected for his AMAZING of the mid-40's. The one by Hamilton is improbable, shoddy and cheap. The other two purport to be humorous ---which makes them grim. There were also two serials: Manly Wade Wellman's Nuisance Value, and Nat Schachner's Simultaneous Worlds, one of the last Schachner stories to be printed. These serials are not worth the paper they were printed on. And at this time ASF was printed on the pulpiest of pulp. But things were looking up. In Times to Come this same issue, Campbell says: "The material coming in for issues still futureward is looking far better than it did some months ago. ASTOUNDING has improved; its improvement has evidently inspired authors to improve with it."

Matters being so, we shall look a year ahead to August 1939, when the copy sports de Rey's The Luck of Ignatz, de Camp's The Blue Giraffe, and Heinlein's first story, Life-Line. Not much has changed idea-wise. De Camp is still glib, del Rey is the same; it is Heinlein who supplies the sentimentality. Things have changed, however. The cover is a fine Rogers, and the other stories are readable. P. Schuyler Miller's novelet is a transplanted adventure yarn; Lee Gregor's Heavy Planet is less an anticipation of

Mission of Gravity than a hangover of JWC's own Aaron Lunro; one can even swim through the short stories by Nelson Bond and Ray Cummings (!). This is editorial acumen, of course. Evidently, Campbell had, in sheer desperation, added a third rule for writers: "If you can't research it or extrapolate it, then put it in good English."

Progress was, as you see, slow. Writers were too shortsighted or too lazy to catch on. The readers were not much better. The Brass Tacks of this period is full of complaints against the new type of stf. For a while the mediocre stories continued to beat out the better ones in the An Lab. Campbell had also to create his audience---but they came along. And so did the writers.

Let's make a time break of two years to the July 1941 issue. In doing so, we skip Final Blackout, Slan, Coventry, The Roads Must Roll, Vault of the Beast, Blow-ups Happen, The Stolen Dormouse, Universe, Solution Unsatisfactory, Sixth Column, and a large crock of other goodies. This particular issue begins another Heinlein serial Methuselah's Children. Also represented within are Alfred Bester, Simak, van Vogt, Anson MacDonald (Heinlein again), and Nelson Bond, whose story, The Geometrics of Johnny Day is quite good. The sole clinker is F. B. Long's Brown, which like the Cummings story of two years before, triumphs over itself. This is it then---or almost it. Another two year time-break brings us to that October 1943 issue. But it was a long climb, and a tough one.

VI. Good night, sweet print

Last week, while the above heading was in preparation, I picked up PSY #19, and found that SFR will be "a monthly commentary on current science fiction. If you're not reading this column, you'll know why.

Next installment will probably concern whether there should be a "required reading" list for new fans interested in the criticism of stf, and what that list should contain.

What ever happened to Vanity Science Fiction? Anybody heard of it? If not, perhaps the Bowl shall tell of it. And what happened to Frederic Arnold Kummer? To PLANET COMICS? To Harry B. Moore? To The Great Judge which van Vogt was going to turn into a novel? To the snows of yesteryear?

---Fred Chappell

ALVIN KARPIS
JULY 11, 1935
CHICAGO, ILL.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW
1525 N. E. Ainsworth
Portland 11, Oregon