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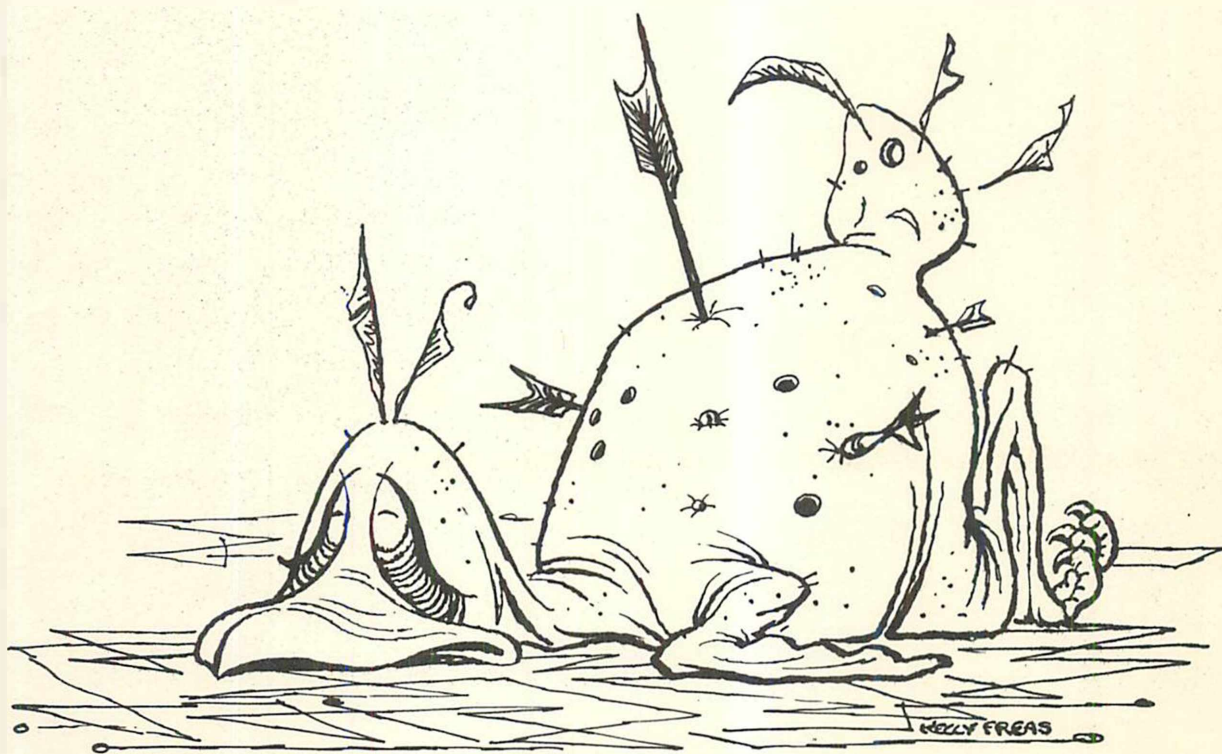
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this is a SaFari publication, it has not been proofread

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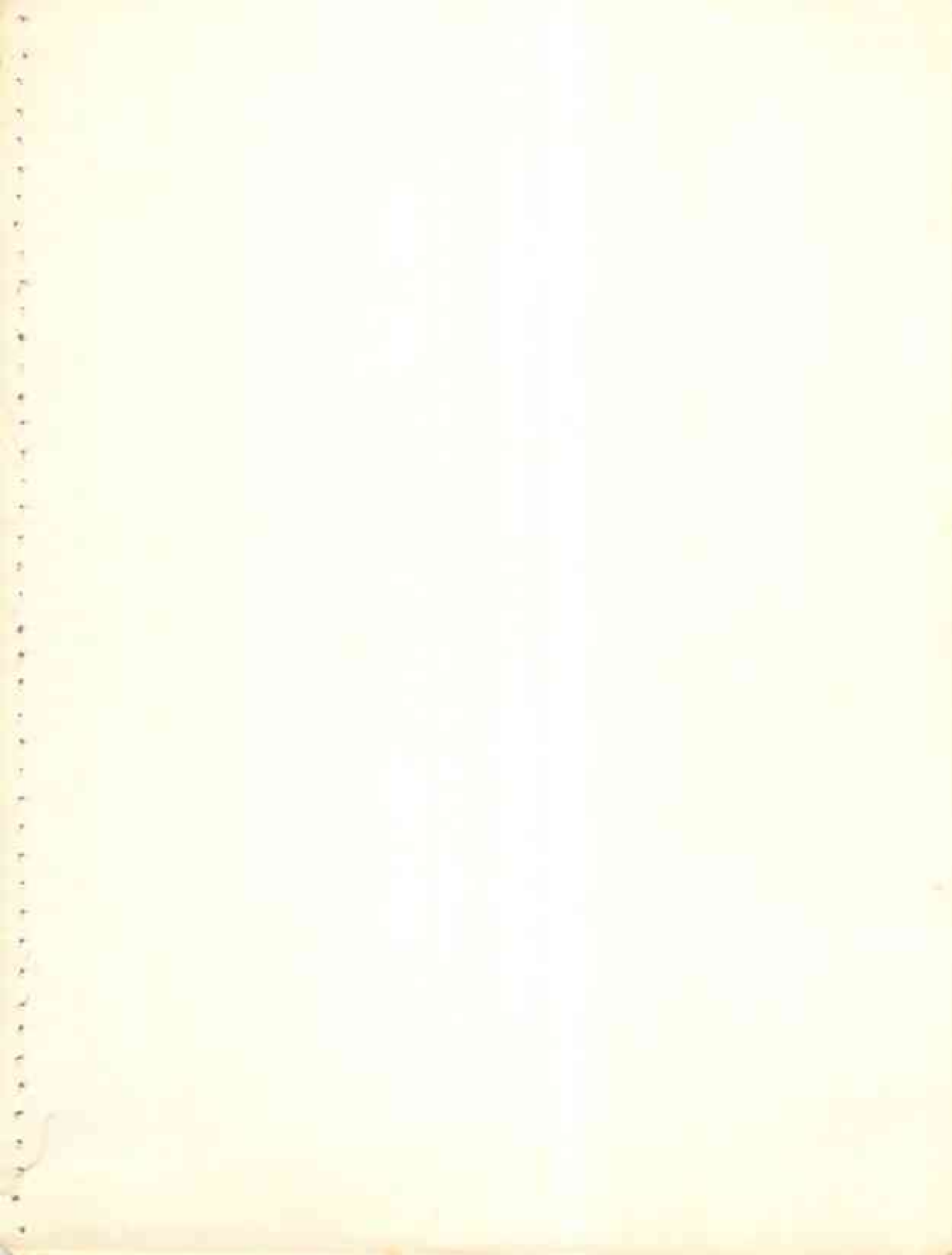
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WHO KILLED



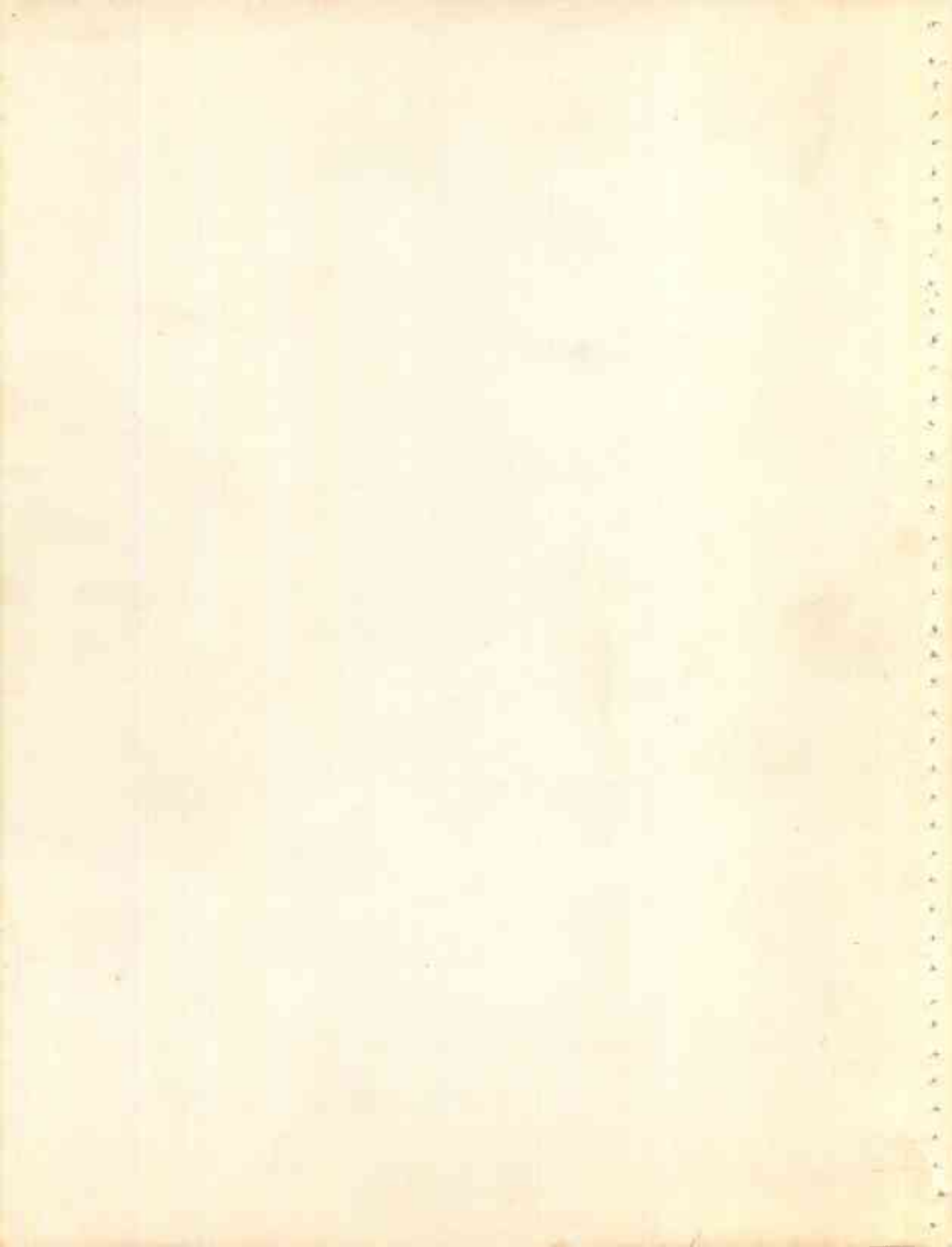
Science Fiction?

an affectionate autopsy



.....us?





LIKE AN INTRODUCTION

I was reading the 48th mailing of The Spectator Amateur Press Society and discovered the following quote:

"It is in some ways surprising that much of In Search of Wonder appeared originally in fanzines; there isn't any criticism of this quality appearing in fanzines today. As a matter of fact, there isn't any in the prozines either..."

The statement was made by Bob Leman in the fourth issue of his SAPSzine, Nematode. I said to myself, "God, he's right," and kept on reading.

For about a paragraph...

Then I went back and read the quote again. "Why are there no pieces of serious constructive criticism appearing within the field?" Naturally I couldn't answer this it presupposes a knowledge I don't possess, even if I do speak to myself with adjectives like "God". Immediately a self-imposed edict came heralding to the rescue: IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE, DO IT YOURSELF.

Move in fast, get the facts, hit hard, splash!

Competence, Roman candles, splash!

Blanket the field, Quality, splash!

Catchy, skyrockets, splash!

Splash:

WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION?

* * * * *

For well over two years I had heard far too many people decrying the death of magazine science fiction, and like Bob Leman, mourning the lack of critical soul-searching from within the field.

How shall I go about it? I determined first that I would restrict this critical Colossus to the magazine field only and decided on five specific points of enquiry, which were:

- 1) Do you feel that magazine science fiction is dead?
- 2) Do you feel that any single person, action, incident, etc. is responsible for the present situation? If not, what is responsible?

- 3) What can we do to correct it?
- 4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation?
- 5) What additional remarks, pertinent to the study would you like to contribute?

The next step was to prepare a letter setting forth these five points.

The original intent was to abstract the replies to this questionnaire into tabular form, write a small article about the findings and publish them in SaFari, extending the circulation for the issue to cover all those who had responded to the enquiry.

Who should I send the questionnaires to? It was essential that the replies come only from within the field, consequently a rigid control was placed on the questionnaire mailing list, restricting it to (as I said in the questionnaire) "everyone within the sf field who has ever expressed an intelligent critical look at the field. Since most of us have derived some measure of enjoyment, recognition and income from the field over the past many years I feel it is up to us to make a definite step toward understanding (at least) and overcoming (if possible) the threats before us."

In order to assure a greater volume of response, realizing that the people from whom I wanted answers were accustomed to being paid for their verbage, I said that the report would be published, which it is. I said that the report would not be for sale, and it is not. I said that circulation of the report would be restricted to the contributors and to The Spectator Amateur Press Society, and that it would be published on April 15, 1960.

That date is now!

As the first few replies to the questionnaire arrived I knew that it would be an impossible task to abstract them and settle for a brief resume in article form. Among the first to arrive was that of Algis Budrys; a report of such nature and quality that the entire article demanded to be included. And more followed it, of such magnitude that only by printing the entire piece could justice be done to the author. Hence, shoot the budget to hell, print everything that comes in.

And now you have it, the complete report on WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION!

The title of the study itself bares little or no relationship to the actual five points under observation. It was merely to serve as splash -- fuel to light the fire that would get the five questions answered. Apparently it worked, because there were some "who's" named.

It would have been impossible for me to answer the questions personally once I started reading the replies as they arrived because I found my opinions becoming very highly influenced by others. Reluctantly then, you will find my own answers excluded from this report (but just for the record I will answer only one, point one: I definitely believe that magazine science fiction is dead).

There will be no attempt on the part of Nancy, myself or SaFari to conduct a follow-up on this report. Contributors to this symposium of a professional status within the field are encouraged to send any afterthoughts directly to The Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies. The Secretary for the Committee on Publications has authorized me to say that a continuation of this study fits directly into the pattern of research now under way at the Institute and he joins me in encouraging you to send any further material directly to the Institute.

* * * * *

And now if you please, the abstract report:

From an initial 108 questionnaires mailed there were 71 responses. Of this number one was unsolicited (Edmund R. Meskys; included here because he answered the five points) and one additional reply was not counted in the figure of 71 (that of Rodney Palmer, included in the report as an example of a complete outside-the-field view, but excluded from the count of 71 because he did not have a copy of the 5 points under study). Or, a total of 70 solicited answers from the original 108 for a 64.8% return, which anyone can tell you is something like a new world's record.

No attempt was made to tabulate the many references to Dianetics, psionics, quackery, saucerism, Shaverism and/or pseudo-science or references to "Literature", professionalism and/or "Maturity" (wherein the literature and maturity have respectively a capital L and a capital M, underscored).

It is perhaps significant to note that from the authors contributing to this study four have indicated that they are no longer writing for the science fiction magazines and/or are no longer writing science fiction at all.

Now, let's take the specific five points under discussion and examine the results:

1) Do you feel that magazine science fiction is dead?

NO: 55 replies, of which 38 qualified their 'no' by following it with "but...", and an alarming percentage of these 38 indicated that the death struggle was already in sight.

YES: 11 replies, stating either 'yes' or definitely dying already (this figure includes my personal vote).

2) Do you feel that any single person, action, incident, etc. is responsible for the present situation?

NO: 24 replies.

YES: Several people were specifically named, but in numbers too small to make any tabulation significant.

2a) If not, what is responsible?

As contributory causes the following were named in order of frequency: 19, dull, boring and inferior material being published; 18, changing market and/or times and outside interests; 13, television; 12, inexcusable distribution practices; 11 each, comics and paperbacks, Sputnik and/or The Race For Space; 10, incompatible word rates and a narrowing market; 9, "science fiction" movies; 6, rising costs, including magazine cover prices; 5, fans and/or readers and 4 each, "ability to read disappearing," "Decay in English literature" and authors. In addition to this, 15 contributions indicated editors as being either responsible for the present poor situation or that they should endeavor to adopt a "hands off" policy in the case of re-writes for item #3.

3) What can we do to correct it?

This is untabulatable. The most frequently appearing remedy is the last item mentioned above (at 2a) that editors should endeavor to adopt a "hands off" policy in the case of re-writes (15 responses). Also running, in order of frequency: 9, writers should work harder (each of these 9 -- a professional author), of these one added "for less"; 7, readers and/or fans should adopt a "quality" approach with what is currently appearing within the field (reading studiously, commenting intelligently and in general taking a more active interest) and 5 indicated that we should purchase all the magazines published, regardless . . .

4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation?

YES: 24 replies.

NO: 16 replies.

5) What additional remarks, pertinent to the study would you like to contribute?
This, of course, is untabulatable, but instead forms the bulk of this symposium
-- the entire publication that you are now holding before you.

Read on then . . .

Somewhere here are the thoughts of others that confirm your own suspicions --
or random thoughts that will lead you down unsuspected paths to, we hope improvement
and most certainly profit. But above all we sincerely hope, several hours of enjoy-
ment and a volume of lasting significance that you will want to retain for reference.

Thus ends, or begins the great affectionate autopsy of The Year Of Our Decline,
1960.

* * * * *

A work of this nature and scope cannot be conducted and delivered as a finished
product without the assistance and encouragement of many people. We should then,
like to make our acknowledgments to the following:

To Bob Leman, for the idea

To Algis Budrys, for the line: "to slay the dragon . . ."

To Theodore R. Cogswell, Secretary, Committee on Publications, THE INSTITUTE
OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDIES, for assistance all the way . . .

To Edward Emshwiller, for the burial site

To Frank Kelly Freas, for meritorious service above and beyond the call of duty

To James O'Meara, for sharing a back-breaking coalition job

To Lynn Hickman, for the reproduction

and

To YOU for your personal help in working together long enough to make this a truly
valuable study.

Thank you, one and all . . .

EARL AND NANCY KEMP

Chicago, Illinois

April 15, 1960

WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION?

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LIKE SOME OPINIONS

ANONYMOUS #1

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. Nor do I feel that any single person, action, incident, etc. is responsible for the present situation.

3) I don't know what all the bitching is about. Twenty years ago we had three leading science fiction magazines, plus several marginal ones, period. Now we have three leading science fiction magazines -- whose editors are always screaming for copy -- plus several marginal ones . . . plus television, movies, radio, pocket books, anthologies, trade books, book clubs, foreign rights, and a wide open market in all the general magazines. What the hell do they want? An egg in their beer?

If it is the writers who are screaming, I can't see what they have to complain about. Of course, many of them now writing have not been writing long enough to know the meaning of a dry spell, or a market with poor pickings -- say back in the thirties when you either sold it to the pulps, all rights for a cent a word or a half cent a word, and if it did not sell to that market, then you might as well use it for toilet paper. So they talk about a "collapse" in the market -- hell, the market hasn't collapsed; the present market is pure heaven to anyone who remembers the thirties. But some of the writers have collapsed.

Of course, the recent confusion in magazine distribution has hurt writers and publishers alike -- but "this, too, shall pass." Economic dislocations come and go . . . and only one fraction of a writer's market was hurt by this one . . . and the big three still publish.

If the readers are screaming, they have more reason to. Science fiction is a branch of the entertainment business, the first axiom of which is: if the audience doesn't laugh, the clown is not funny. Tedious rehashing of elderly themes will not cause the readers to applaud. I suspect, from some of the crud that one sees in print, that there are 'SF' writers who jumped in because they thought it was a gravy train, an easy way to get rich without working.

Any writer who comes along today with stories as fresh and novel as those of E. E. Smith and Stanley Weinbaum were when they were first published is certain to find a publisher and to receive ringing applause from the cash customers. But a writer who serves up the same tired old stew, simply polishing old stories, will cause the readers to sit on their hands -- no matter how finished or slick their writing techniques.

ANONYMOUS #2

There is a dianetics group still going strong in Phoenix. A man I know who does not practice dianetics but is familiar with the group has told me that there are more than a few former practitioners of dianetics who are now in mental hospitals. And they are there as a result of dianetics. I know two writers who became all fouled up through dianetics. Neither has amounted to much as a writer since then, and one of them is still goofed-up. I think that Campbell is as responsible as anyone for these people becoming institutionalized. If he had been more careful about approaching dianetics, if he had waited a reasonable period to investigate it before pushing it in Astounding, this fraud might have died a-borning. He owes all of us science fiction readers an apology, but he has never offered it. Instead, after being disilloussioned, he has gone off the deep end on psi.

ANDERSON, POUL

...I can't give your questions the reasoned answers they call for...here are some offhand, thumbnail reactions to your questions.

1) No, though it's obviously in poor shape. But let's give credit to good (or at least acceptable) stories where they do appear; because they still do, from time to time. For my money, F&SF is currently maintaining the highest literary standard: which isn't saying much, I know, but accept that Bob Mills is trying his best. So, in spite of opprobrious comment, are John Campbell, Horace Gold, Bob Lowndes, and one or two others.

2) No, there is no single cause for the present sad condition of science fiction. For over a year, now, any number of pros have been arguing with great heat -- and, often, great perception -- in Cogswell's Publications of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies, trying to find a cause and cure; but there seem to be as many causes assigned as there are seekers. In my own opinion, the decay of science fiction is part and parcel of a general decay in English literature, traceable to the same -- extremely many and complex -- causes.

3) To correct it, everybody will have to do his part. Publishers will have to give the writer an economic break. Editors will have to stop imposing their own personalities on all their writers (and I am not thinking of any particular editor) and will have to edit more creatively: finding and developing new talent, encouraging old talent to experiment -- in short, taking more of an interest in their job. Writers will have to stop playing verbal games and start writing. Readers will have to develop some appreciation of quality (which, actually, rather few of them now have), offer it their moral and financial support, and be patient. You can't cure the disease overnight.

4) There are no "points of salvation." Paperback originals seldom pay well enough to justify themselves to the author: only if he also sells serial rights will he begin to approach a decent word rate. By and large, book editors are guilty of the same sins as magazine editors, plus some of their very own. Not that I'm against paperback originals, understand. They can form a very valuable supplement. I just don't see all worthwhile science fiction moving to them.

5) I don't like the idea of asking Who Killed Science Fiction? It may be sick, but it isn't dead; and particular scapegoats are merely an outlet for suppressed aggressiveness. Instead of sitting around feeling sorry for ourselves, I suggest we do something about our problems (cf. #3) and leave to literary historians the dissection of etiologies.

1) Magazine science fiction is not dead, obviously, since there are magazines still on the stand, more magazines than there were in 1948, for instance. I admit magazine science fiction seems to be declining.

2) Obviously no single person, action, incident is responsible. There is a whole complex of causes. Magazines in general are in a decline. Pulp fiction is virtually dead, killed by comic magazines and by paperbacks. The magazines as a whole suffer from rising costs, from the competition of paperbacks and from television. Science fiction, in particular, suffers from all of this and from one additional factor I have not seen anyone mention.

Beginning in 1938 (with Campbell, of course) there was increasing stress on literary quality in stories. This was accelerated from 1950 on and at present the literary standard required by the better science fiction magazines is as high (and higher) than those required by the slicks. Good! So nowadays a science fiction writer who makes the grade finds he can write well enough to make the slicks, which pay more, so he does. Robert Silverberg came up from fandom, cut a swath in science fiction for two years, and has now graduated to the slicks. Robert Sheckley did it in four years. Others took longer but went there anyway. Meanwhile we've all gotten used to well-written science fiction and we find it difficult to go back to the kind of pulpy writing done by newcomers before they learn the ropes. (And after they learn the ropes, they'll be gone, too.)

None of this applies to me. I am interested only in writing science fiction and no other kind of fiction. I've always known that and I've always known that possible greater incomes would have no lure for me. So I did think I would be in science fiction forever. However, I did write an occasional book of science-fact. Then came Sputnik -- Suddenly, books on science-fact were in great demand and I found myself deluged with offers. As it turned out, straight science was the one thing I found more fascinating than science fiction and I have written no science fiction to speak of since Sputnik. I tried to help things by giving up teaching and becoming a full-time writer, but that just means I write more non-fiction. I hope to get back to science fiction sometime but I don't know when.

3 & 4) The original paperback is no substitute for the magazine since it is heavily weighted in favor of novels which can only be turned out decently by authors who are past their apprenticeship. And without magazines where will the apprenticeship take place? Furthermore, there is a continuity about a magazine that builds up a loyal following who support science fiction and act as a reservoir for new fan-turned-pro authors. The casual on-and-off readers of the paperback novel cannot substitute for this. I don't know what we can do to correct the matter except to support the magazines. That means buying all the copies we can, whatever the price, and writing stories for them whenever we can, whatever the rates. The wheel of fortune turns and magazine science fiction may enjoy a recrudescence.

5) Obviously, Sputnik and all that followed bears a major share of responsibility for the decline of magazine science fiction. The newspapers are so science fictiony now that there is scarcely any urge to continue looking for more science fiction in the magazines. In fact, the type of science fiction in the newspapers now--all this talk of space and satellites and moonshots -- is so interbound with cold war and national prestige and military brass-hats that it makes science fiction unsavory, even to me, for instance. This isn't helped by the fact that too large a proportion of science fiction stories written today are "tomorrow fiction" -- that is, deal with a situation one step ahead of the headlines so that one gets the impression that all science fiction is but a

kind of "home life at Cape Canaveral" or "Look, Ma, the general is jutting his jaw and says the next satellite will go through carrying a man, Ma."

Hell, for a group of people who have been bouncing around the Galaxy for twenty years, its downright sickening to go back to trying to reach the moon with chemical rockets.

BAILEY, J. O., Prof.

I have read with interest your, "Who Killed Science Fiction?" Here are the best answers to your questions that occur to me:

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. So far as I know, any really good, original story may still find a publisher.

2) Since it is not entirely clear to me what is meant by "the present situation" (for magazines carrying science fiction are still on the newsstands), I do not have any idea who or what may be responsible for this situation.

3) First, I should say, define with particulars and details what needs correction.

4) I am not sure what is meant by "salvation." I have the general idea that publishers of paperback books will publish whatever they think they can sell to enough people to make a profit.

5) No additional remarks occur to me.

BARRETT, C. L., M.D.

(Doctor Barrett starts by including a copy of Stephen Takacs' speech "Alas, What Boom?" delivered at the Cleveland convention and pointing out "as you can see practically all of his predictions have come true." EK)

1) However, some of the situations Steve mentions are only part of the story. One of the factors which he did not mention which I think Hans Santesson mentioned in Detroit, was the fact that when science fiction apparently became popular, is that everybody got on the bandwagon and put out some twenty plus magazines. Hans, and some of the other editors there stated that whole magazines appeared on the newsstands with stories by good authors, but material rejected by most magazines in existence before the boom.

Whole magazines were published of second rate material from good authors. People buying this stuff, if they read that crud would have choked, which they did, and they didn't buy again. The end of it was that we are down now to five or six magazines.

That is not the whole story as to why they quit. Another factor is the pocket-books. I find that the itinerant or casual reader would much rather have a long complete story in a pocketbook and read that than read a magazine. So that is why I say the original paperback may be a point of salvation (Item # 4 on the questionnaire). It will keep a certain number reading but it will not help the fan field at all. No, magazine science fiction is not dead, despite everything.

2) I do not feel that any single person, act or incident are responsible. One of the facts that you failed to bring in is outside interests. I have been corresponding with Ted Carnell for years, and he is behind in correspondence. The reason now is that he is so interested in forming a new Masonic Lodge that he is spending a lot of time with that. He has given up all except his professional activities. He expects to come back in again but will probably take him two or three years to get this Lodge going right.

The same thing has happened with me in Shrine, I have a Funster Unit of some 40 clowns and developing that has and is taking a lot of time.

Man is not given to being satisfied with any one activity. Over a period of time he may (watch particularly the Doctors) get into farming and have cows, sheep or something, then change to motorboat racing and then to airplane flying. And they go through a cycle, it may be the same series, it may be a different series but their interest vary from time to time and that is true of any group of people.

There is only so much time that a person has to use and when you find yourself in an activity like this where the individuals that I work with, I like so well that we go to dances eight or ten times a year, there is less time to read science fiction than previously. Now another factor is those who have children. I would say that Kemp and Hickman are the only ones who have a larger number of children that have been able to keep active in science fiction. They have, in spite of their broods, been able to continue.

Now, with most of those, such as our friend Milton Rothman in Philadelphia (I have been corresponding with him and been trying to get him back in) it is children, work and degrees that is keeping them busy now. Eventually they will filter back into fandom after their children get older.

I found that we were unable to indulge in social activities when our children were young. The number of dances per year dropped to one or two until the youngest child got to be eight or ten and the older children were old enough to take care of that one. Of course we were stymied some by the fact that my mother-in-law had a stroke and for some five years was bedfast with nurses. Others are having, not exactly the same, but similar circumstances.

Each of us must have a group that we run around with, a local group, etc. The fortunate ones find themselves in a science fiction group (Cincinnati) and all their friends are in that same group and they can continue to have more activity in fandom. Those of us who are isolated are bound to acquire friends that have no interest in science fiction, and live and play with them.

Another factor which has entered into the situation is the rising cost of food, clothing and everything, consequently there is less money to spend on magazines. One reason the magazine field collapsed (that is the general field) was that the percentage of money spent for advertising stayed the same. The newspapers still kept their 76% but the other 24% made a very marked shift from magazines to television. Some four and one half billion, I think, that the television industry picked up in a year was the year Bluebook collapsed and other magazines. That meant that the magazines that had the lesser circulation and lesser general appeal lost out. That is why today Life is selling at 19¢. They were losing out. The advertising people were channeling their dollars into television rather than into the magazine field and, of course, the magazines of a particular field of lesser circulations were forced out.

As far as books are concerned, a science fiction fan goes through a period of time where he is not married, and all of his spare money goes on science fiction. Then he begins to take up bowling or tennis, swimming or skin diving, or chasing women or something. He may join the Elks, Masons or Eagles and he has less money to spend so he becomes more selective in what he spends his money for. If they want to spend their money and get as many books as possible for say \$25 or \$35 a year, quite naturally they turn to the book clubs which collapsed all of our friends who had gone into the publishing of science fiction for the love of it. I find now that the book reviewers don't list the better science fiction books as science fiction, but as imaginative literature or extrapolations of the possibilities of future development.

What we also forget is that from 1922 to 1923, the time I can remember, I knew everything that was being published and read everything up until the '40s. Since that

time, it has been impossible for any one person to read all of it. There has been so much in the book as well as magazine field that after you get it, you wish you had never seen it at all, you couldn't even read it. . . It is only a few completionist fools like myself and Dr. J. Lloyd Eaton that will even attempt to do this. I find that it is totally impossible for me to obtain all the books that are published each year, financially as well as otherwise. I am more interested now in obtaining some of the old classics that I know are good, than I am in obtaining everything that is published today.

3) I don't think that we can do a whole lot to correct it. I do think that one of the important things is for all science fiction fans to subscribe to Galaxy, Astounding and F&SF, which seem to be the only ones that will survive, although Amazing has an astounding ability to come back. The fans are such a small part of the buying public that we could do very little except stabilize it a few places. My idea of permanent subscriptions to the major magazines to keep them going is about the only contribution that I think we can make.

With the magazine or book publisher, everything is purely money. He is only in the business to make money (Fan publishers excluded). This is a part of a trend that may be good. After it is all cleared up and some of these have lost their shirts in the market, they will quit publishing and leave it to the ones that can put out better literature which will keep the quality of the magazine up and maybe eventually build up a greater number of readers outside of the fan circle.

The thing that we are not doing is increasing our fan groups this way. All we can hope to do is get in touch with them through the letter columns and by advertising the conventions, attempt to gain back what few we can, or get an increase of changing readers-to-fans, insofar as possible. Only one or two percent of the readers probably are of that peculiar mental quirk or abnormality that could make fans of them. Our plan should be to try to get, and get as many of these as we can, into the fan field. However, somebody else may have better ideas than myself on that. It is a possibility that eventually the fans may have to put out the type of science fiction they want to read in privately circulated fan magazines devoted entirely to fiction.

BARTLETT, LANDELL

1) I certainly don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead! The big name magazines (with their big name writers) are still going strong -- in fact, getting better all the time. Notable are F&SF, Astounding, Amazing, Galaxy, Fantastic -- to mention a few. Star and Vanguard were fine, but died a-borning. The plethora of titles attempting to ride the boom in science fiction following World War II deservedly faded away, for they offered only second-rate fare at the best, and there just wasn't room for so many -- or demand. Parenthetically, shouldn't it be "what" killed science fiction, rather than "who?" (Besides, I'm trying to say science fiction hasn't been killed!)

2) Just what is the present situation? Why is the status "deplorable?" (There I go -- answering a question with questions!) Admittedly, there has been more sex than science, more bug-eyed-monsters than betatrons, than many would care to see, including myself. Perhaps Gernsback's rigid insistence on science in science fiction is the answer, with a soft-peddling of fantasy. In other words, not enough of the former, and too much of the latter, perhaps, in current offerings? Many adult readers are revolted at clumsily contrived fairy stories palmed off as science fiction. I would say, then, let them take the trouble to be selective, and read only the best, if science fiction really interests them.

3) I presume "we" refers to the writers in the genre. Personally, I prefer

those who follow the H. G. Wells, A. Conan Doyle and Olaf Stapledon pattern -- practitioners with great literary skill and imaginative originality. Dialogue a la Hemingway may be all right, but usually is mangled. "We" should stick to a strong story, plausible, catching the desirable sense of wonder -- thus classics are spawned, and if they are good enough, will never become dated.

4) The original paperback need not be "a point of salvation." More and more they are shouldering their way into the picture, and more power to them. They, alone, are evidence that science fiction has not been dealt a death blow. As for magazine science fiction, I still believe that it will survive, if only to meet the competition of the paperbacks.

5) To sum up, I believe that magazine science fiction will pull through because the best editors know that what they select must have a pretty high standard of excellence. The shake-out of fly-by-night, gaudy, childish, low level magazines is about over, don't you think? The only threat facing "us," as I see it, is mediocrity.

BESTER, ALFRED

Here are my answers to your questions. I hope they can help. I also hope that you will not take them too seriously. They are only the opinion of a writer who most emphatically does not regard himself as a sage and elder statesman of our fascinating and infuriating science fiction.

I don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead, but I do believe that the public interest in science fiction, as we have known it, is dwindling. The inexorable progress of life is responsible for this. The tremendous strides that science has made in the past decade fill the public with so much wonder and amazement that the headlines of the daily newspapers now provide what science fiction used to offer. Fiction has been supplanted by fact.

What do you mean when you ask: "What can we do to correct it?" We must move with the times. We should be delighted with the change. There is nothing to correct unless you mean the diminishing magazine market for science fiction. The answer to that is the fact that the situation is correcting itself. The more popular entertainment media are becoming aware of the fascination of science fiction. Television and movies are hungry for it. Even the more popular, and better-paying magazines (who themselves are rapidly dying out) are becoming interested. The market isn't dead, it's merely changing; and writers must adapt themselves to this change...either by satisfying the demands of the existing market, or by creating a new one with a new science fiction.

There will always be a market for paperback science fiction, just as there are markets for detective fiction and westerns. There are other markets, too, as I mentioned above, but there is no market for the limited writer. The writer who has devoted himself exclusively to science fiction is himself the only source of his woes. He has been living in a dream world for the past thirty years, imagining that this tiny, specialized area in the vast field of literature and entertainment, can be a self-sustaining world in itself which will go on forever.

Sensible people have always known that science fiction is a luxury for the writer, and sensible writers have always made sure of their bread and butter in other, less esoteric fields of literature and entertainment. The man who dedicates himself exclusively to science fiction today has my sympathy, because he's fallen upon hard times, but he doesn't have my respect. There are too many other branches of literature and entertainment that offer a living; there is too great a demand for talent; and there are too many opportunities.

To my mind, the crux of the situation is this: Are you a modern writer, in tune with your times; or are you trying to remain an old-fashioned science fiction writer, still exploiting an aspect of literature that is rapidly becoming outmoded? Science fiction isn't dying; it's changing. And we must change with it, or become extinct.

BLISH, JAMES

My own views on all the questions you ask appear in issue # 131 of Ted Cogswell's Publications of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies:

...Nor do I think that a writers' strike against the science fiction magazines would have to work out the way Bob Lowndes predicts. It never has been tried, on a formal scale. If Horace Gold's tally of inactive writers is even vaguely correct, there is an informal strike going on right now, and Horace is hurt by it and says so. That the slump in the field might be due at least in part to a wildcat writers' strike had never occurred to me until I saw Horace's figures quoted in PITFCS; up until then, I suppose I had thought I was the only striker. But it makes sense. Contrariwise, there is no slump in the market for paperback science fiction books, and hence no strike; they pay well, they sell well, and everybody seems to be churning them out like mad.

Poor pay and a narrowing market seem to me to be adequate explanations of the strike itself. While I agree with A. J. that persistent editorial meddling can become so annoying as to cause a writer to go out of his way to avoid it, I think he does not make it clear enough that this complaint applies primarily to Horace Gold, with whom it used to be a habit (I have no recent experience to draw on); none of the other editors in the field, in my experience, have asked for changes except infrequently and on a small scale, and like Anderson I've found that Campbell's relatively rare suggestions have mostly been helpful. Editors differ. Horace also used to write rejection letters of such remarkable viciousness that I could hardly blame a writer who never wanted to read another of them. Tony Boucher sat on manuscripts, unless they were by women, for months and even years and refused either to answer queries about them or return them; I gave up submitting to F&SF for this reason alone and I wonder if I was the only writer to do so. Even price may not be a deterrent -- that too depends a great deal on the editor: I hate Lowndes' rates but he has taste and puts up a gallant battle to put out a good magazine all the same -- you would need three hands to count all the gifted newcomers he has spotted -- and I for one had a wholly uneconomical leaning toward taking his 1¢ rather than Super Science's 2¢.

I gather from Russell's letter that there's also been some complaint about psionics in this context; all right, I dislike the stuff myself and could draw my philosophic objections to it out some distance. But as far as the market is concerned, psionics narrows it only in that it cuts down the number of pages available for other kinds of copy, in the top-paying market. Campbell also buys stories on other themes and does not put a gun to anybody's head; people who want to push his psionics button do so of their own free choice.

...I am quite in agreement that it would be impossible to put together a readable magazine from the slush pile. During the five months that I was reading for Vanguard, I got a hell of a lot of slush, especially after the first issue appeared, and out of all that material I was very fortunate to find one printable story by a brand new writer (H. M. Sycamore's "Success Story," which Bob Mills recently printed). Most of the rest of it was downright awful; for that matter, even much of the material I got from agents ranged from mediocre to poor. (Naturally I do not count submissions by good writers who have no agents, like Dick Wilson, as part of the slush pile.)

I was interested, too, in your (Cogswell's) reply to Dean McLaughlin, particularly by your remark that "the stories we write...have little or nothing to do with Literature." While I don't want to anticipate Dr. DeWitt's forthcoming article, I have a few comments; I'm not sure of your meaning. In the scientific sense of the work, everything we write is part of "the literature," in that it is in print and can be run down and consulted. As producers of Literature which is accepted as being a necessary part of an educated man's cultural furniture, and which gets talked about in survey courses etc., we have no standing; but this rarely happens to a practitioner in any way during his lifetime anyway, numerous though the exceptions are.

But if you will accept into your definition of Literature any work of art undertaken with serious intentions and which realizes those intentions reasonably well, regardless of whether the public or the Establishment recognizes it as such, then it seems to me that there are a number of science fiction stories and novels you will have to allow. What you say to Dean certainly needed to be said, but I don't want to see More Than Human, for example, written off for the sake of a forensic point.

The fact that much of what we write is not literature even in that sense of the word is mostly simply a reflection of the fact that science fiction is commercial fiction, and shares with all the other kinds of commercial fiction the flaws of haste, inattention, perpetuation of cliches and adoption of made-to-order values consequent on working in an art as though the products were link sausages. What is more important is Anderson's point, "science-fiction is not the whole of literature." As he says, there are things that it cannot do. Still worse, there are things that it can do but that most of the readers don't want to see done; perhaps this was the point Dean was shooting around. Most of the science fiction I have ever read, including most of what I would classify as good science fiction, has little or no emotional content -- and I can see no evidence that improving this situation, which is certainly remediable, would be welcomed by the readers. The career of Ted Sturgeon is a glaring example of this; though Ted is held in relatively high esteem, I don't recall anybody's ever handing any medals on him for being the finest and most thorough conscious artist this field has ever had; he ought to be covered with medals by now, but now it seems to me that most readers prefer such writers as Heinlein, Asimov and Arthur Clarke, who regardless of many other strengths as writers generally produce work where the emotional content is shallow or even absent. For a writer who believes that human emotions make up the primary raw material in this and every other art, science fiction has indicated pretty plainly that the rewards are just plain not there. Secondly, most of the science fiction, good and bad, that I have ever read has been weak on intellection. That may seem to be a peculiar statement but I think it is true. One of the rewards of fiction lies in the chances it gives the writer to tackle a large philosophical question; he may not supply the answer but at least he has the chance to illuminate it from all sides in terms of its implications in human life, an opportunity denied to the non-fiction writer. Very few science fiction writers do this or even seem to be aware that it can be done; and here again I am not at all sure that it would be welcomed by the fans. On the other hand, every science fiction novel by an "outsider" which has gained a large public following does this very thing, and it doesn't have to be a big-name outsider, either: look at Bernard Wolfe's Limbo. Meanwhile the pros sit around groaning because their much more professional work doesn't seem to gain any status by these occasional successes, oblivious to the fact that the difference between a pro like, say, George O. Smith and an "outsider" like Kurt Vonnegut is that Vonnegut can plainly be seen to be thinking about something.

Originality in the invention and elaboration of fantastic ideas and scientific rationales is of course a form of thinking, and more of that kind goes on in science fiction than in any other kind of fiction, but it will never command a large audience

and there's no point in wishing that it could. The kind of thinking I am talking about is fundamental to good fiction of any kind (is there anybody in the audience who thinks Moby-Dick is primarily about whaling?) and in science fiction it is usually 100% absent.

...Currently I am doing just as much science fiction as I ever did, and perhaps a little more, but it is almost entirely novels. Whether Horace can use them or not, that is where the money lies; it is uneconomical to write magazine short stories when with the same expenditure of time you can produce a chapter of a novel for two or three times the expectable income. Anybody who has been doing this for long soon finds that the difference is substantial, particularly as the small checks for subsidiary rights pile up; for the past three years, I have made more money on subsidiary rights than I have on first sales of new work, and I am not complaining.

But I have also come to share... (the)...feeling that science fiction is far from the whole of literature and that in certain specific respects it is a cramped and unrewarding genre. I am not moving out of the field, which certainly would be financial suicide for me -- and besides, science fiction is fun; but I am expanding to cover more territory where the restrictions don't apply, and I will be well satisfied if I can eventually reduce my science fiction writing to an occasional jeu d'esprit. I hope I have found something to do which will not only engage my full attention and allow me to do things that science fiction doesn't allow, but which also will enable me to use as much as three fourths of the special skills a science fiction writer develops; but every writer has to solve this problem in his own way, and there's no reason to attempt a solution even a second in advance of the time that you yourself really come to think of it as a problem.

BLOCH, ROBERT

Your questionnaire...is a good idea, I think...

1) No, I don't feel that magazine science fiction is 'dead' although it might well be moribund...due to the same factors which adversely affect all other types of magazine fiction. Said factors, in my opinion, being price increases, which bring magazines into direct competition with full-length novels in pocketbook form, and the continuing influence of television on reading...and on the ability to read, which seems to be diminishing rapidly amongst the adolescents.

2) No single villain is responsible for the present situation, in my opinion. The above factors play a part...and there are at least two others which I would mention. (1) the bad 'advertisement' for the field provided by so-called science fiction movies, which misrepresent the quality of science fiction to the general public. (2) Atrociously low word rates, which do not encourage writers to spend an inordinate amount of time, thought and effort upon their output--unless they write as a hobby and earn the major portion of their income through such illegitimate channels as teaching, projecting science fiction movies, or fronting for the Syndicate.

3) I believe individual effort and individual proselyting are the only practical avenues of correction available to us. We cannot 'organize' any 'movement,' nor do complaints seem efficacious. But we can, each of us, do our best to sell science fiction to friends as a source of entertainment. And we can do our best to correct erroneous impressions, produced by the worst possible examples of what is mislabelled science fiction, by recommending the best.

4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation? For an answer to this one, I suggest you just look at the original paperbacks which have been published. When you stop vomiting, then rephrase your question. Do not pass Go, do not collect \$200. Just hope and pray that someday there will be some new paperback

publishers who will open a market for decent work instead of the crud now offered.

5) Undoubtedly, amongst the answers you receive to the above questions, you will find many which infer or directly state that magazine science fiction is in a bad way because of editorial decisions. While there is a case to be made for this view-point (and a host of enthusiastic hatchet-men to splinter the kindling and construct said case) I feel that editors, by and large, do a conscientious job within an area which is horribly constricted. It is the publishers who peg the low rates, who insist on the stinking luridities, who often dictate choice of material, who stick their noses into policy, who botch up distribution arrangements and circulation deals.

BOK, HANNES

Lost your letter anent who what why when and how science fiction was killed, so can't perhaps answer all the queries therein, but here's one man's opinion (cribbed by the way from Wylie's Generation of Vipers, which I've been rereading, and which I noticed was very applicable in this instance):

Who killed science fiction?

The editors, naturally. A writer can write the superbest yarn of all time, but it won't do him any good if editors don't feel like publishing it. Hence it's editors and editorial policies that have run science fiction into the ground.

How?

By printing only what they, the editors, think that the public should (or might wish to) read. Since people can purchase only what's on the market or else not purchase anything, either they had to "make do" with the unreadable garbage in print, or else switch to other forms of literature. Both of which they've done.

WHY?

Science fiction was okay in early days when it was IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE, with no holds barred. But then the "scientific attitude" came into domination. Stories could be written ONLY extrapolating known facts. Now I've always maintained that NEW facts are bound to be discovered time and again in the future, many of which may negate today's 'facts'--hence 'visions of the future' which are based strictly on today's principles are bound to be wrong. (And oh boy, are they DULL!) As Wylie says (except that I apply it to today's editors): "He is...unable even to conceive of the possibility of knowledge that is broader, other, or different."

For instance, science has ignored a lot of subjects (astrology, witchcraft, etc.) which DO work (I've plenty of proof). I've always wanted to write a story in which the future United States is run by witchcraft (after all, think of the 50 pentagrams on the flag, and the Pentagon Building wherein 'evil forces are summoned' all too darned often. And what about that 5th Amendment, h'm?) But it wouldn't stand a chance in today's magazines. Science 'knows' that witchcraft can't work (just as a hundred years ago it 'knew' that heavier-than-aircraft was impossible).

To quote Wylie: "The result is not science but 'scientism'--authority set above free inquiry /Bok: substitute 'imagination' for 'inquiry'/ and while almost any sane scientist will admit that science has much truth to learn, almost every" editor behaves "intellectually as if nobody had a right to question the finality of his concepts in his chosen field." Yeah, man. Yeah

BOUCHER, ANTHONY

The one thing I'm fairly certain of is that science fiction is in a bad way. I

should suspect that it was just me--that I've lost my taste or gone stale--if it weren't that I hear so many other reactions similar to mine.

I haven't even tried to keep up with magazine science fiction in the past year; but as a book reviewer I am plain bored. Everything that comes in is a retelling (sometimes competent) of a dozen earlier stories. I have to flog myself to read science fiction books, and half the time (at least) I see no reason to finish them or to publish a review.

(Note: This is emphatically not true in the much older field of the mystery novel. To be sure, there's always a fair amount of repetitive crap; but there's always enough fresh creative work to keep a reviewer stimulated and happy even in his 18th year of professional reading.)

This quality of boredom prevails even in the work of (onceuponatime) very good writers. Let's not mention names, but keep it clean. I felt the same way in my last year or so as an editor. MSS would come in from authors whom I used to feel I could damn near buy sight unseen -- and the MSS wouldn't even be worth finishing.

The very existence of your survey reassures me that the fault is not (entirely) in me. Something is wrong, and the only thing I can think of is that science fiction needs some kind of a new breakthrough.

Which apparently it should have every ten or twelve years. In 1926 there was Gernsback. In 1938/9 Campbell brought the field to life with better science and far better fiction. In 1949/50, first McComas and I, and then Gold tried to expand the horizons and place more stress on literary and psychological values. And each time the result was vigorous exciting creative work for five years or so.

It's time for yet another fresh new revitalizing approach . . . and if I knew what it was, I'd probably get back into the field and do it.

As to the questions:

1) Of course science fiction is not dead. It's always been a small part of (particularly Anglo-American) literature, and doubtless it always will be. Whether we've succeeded in creating an economically satisfactory market for it as a specialized labeled category (comparable to the mystery or the western or the historical) is another question. The necessary converting of new readers once looked like a hopeful project; I doubt if much conversion is going on right now.

2) Responsibility? I don't know. Certainly not any single factor: I do not believe that science fiction has been "killed" by psionics or psychology or literary selfconsciousness or any of the other frequently heard assertions; the bad effects (if any) of each of these affected only a portion of the field. And the weariness is everywhere -- in psionic stories, in sheer space opera, in "novels of character" . . .

3) To correct it? I only wish I knew.

4) "The original paperback as a point of salvation?" Well, economically it's been a help to writers. But the standards of editing have been so low as to encourage writers to turn out crap for a fast sale. The trend does seem to be away from magazines and toward the paperback book, on the part of both readers and writers. This could possibly be all right (for everybody but magazine publishers)--but not at today's standards.

5) Additional remarks: or I suppose this should really have been under #4: I was interested in a recent remark of Poul Anderson's -- that he's now writing mostly novels rather than shorts and novelets, because the eventual total income on a novel (which means principally the paperback money) makes it a more profitable procedure.

Novels used to be the rare and welcome plums in science fiction--infrequent and usually something special and exciting. An author didn't embark on the financial risk (in those days) of a novel unless he had a story he strongly wanted to tell, an idea that demanded extensive development. Now . . .

BRADBURY, RAY

1) A bit dormant, perhaps, but soon science fiction will spread through all the other types of magazines.

2) I believe we're in a period of transition, when science fiction, under that label, may vanish, to re-appear in the guise of realistic fiction everywhere, as indicated above. I believe the Space Age itself, the beginning of it, might be responsible for this period of uncertainty we're going through. But once we've assessed our goals, set up some ways to get where we want to go, established values, I see an influx of talent into science fiction from all sides. We need more good writers and writing. Ten writers, and there are about ten really excellent writers in the field, cannot do all the work. They need help. There are only eight or nine good western writers, eight or nine good mystery writers. Eight or nine good practising novelists in the broad general field. But I would like to see more people, like Robert Frost, for a wild example, coming our way.

3) We can do our part, by writing as well as possible when each of us, as writers, sits down to do a science fiction story.

4) The original paperback will help, in some ways, yes.

5) I have some ideas I want to try myself, in order to move science fiction into new fields. I have already finished two science fiction one-act plays. I am starting work on a science fiction one-act opera, have already finished another chamber opera, and two others, based on my works, are in existence done by young U. S. composers. We should stimulate more of this in order to prepare a climate of acceptance, not for science fiction per se, but for the Space Age itself, which should be the end-all and be-all of this hullabaloo.

BRADBURY, WALTER I.

I am really at a loss to offer anything intelligent on the points of inquiry.

I not only have not been able to keep up with science fiction magazines, but have unfortunately been removed from even the book publishing end of it. I'm afraid my opinions and knowledge would be from a time so far back that it would do you no good.

BRADLEY, MARION ZIMMER

And then the corpse sat up and demanded to know why in the hell they were holding a funeral over him?

And they, who professed to love him, quickly pushed him back and screwed down the coffin lid, muffling his cries.

That is how I feel when I hear all this talk about "Who killed science fiction?"

Science fiction is not dead, even in the magazines. It is being read, even the poor stuff which is passed out today. But it is perilously sick from malnutrition. Who is keeping it on this starvation diet?

The writers. And a worse damned bunch of incompetents never lived. All of us...and I include myself in this indictment...are directly responsible for the state of science fiction; and if we want science fiction to boom again (and the time is ripe for such a boom as you never heard) it is going to be up to us.

What sparked the previous booms? The first big boom was the Golden Age of Astounding, and I think we have to give Campbell's forethought in envisioning a fascinating magazine, without gadgets ("grant your gadgets and start from there") the

credit. Unfortunately, he has now abandoned this notion -- of printing wonderfully readable stories -- in favor of using his pages as a crusade to save the world through psi, and this is as dreary as such crusades usually are. BUT THE WRITERS ARE TO BLAME: they played along, writing this dreary claptrap, to soak up those fat Astounding checks.

The second boom came with the great explosion of magazines in 1953; through sheer quantity, some of these stories had to be good, some of the new writers who were able to break through the clique of "big names" had to be good ones.

And then we got careless and complacent. For a while, there were so many magazines around that editors would buy almost any piece of writing which was half-way literate. This gave new writers a chance, sure. But it also gave good writers, who should have known better, a chance to write (and, worse, to SELL) the kind of thing they secretly wanted to write but that nobody really wants to read at all, except a very small percentage of "literary" writers. The editors, starved for stories, printed everything with a "Big Name" on it...including those "writer's darling" stories which the writer loves and his friends love and which bore HELL out of the readers.

We forgot the main thing; that pulp magazines exist, not to create works of art, not to develop great writers who are too good for the pulp magazines, but to ENTERTAIN A VAST, NOT TOO INTELLIGENT AUDIENCE. I'm not saying we should write down to this audience; I say that we should write enjoyable stories...not write "literary pieces" and say, when they complain, "Of course you don't understand it. Man, this is literature, nobody understands it, but you clods keep on reading it and some day you'll be IN."

Now we come to a common alibi offered by writers. "Sputnik killed off science fiction. Now they can read it in their daily papers."

My answer to that is terse and unprintable, but the general gist is "Oh, shut up, who are you kidding?"

Did the atom bomb kill off science fiction? Heck, no; it spurred the biggest boom in science fiction we've ever had. Sputnik could easily have done the same, but the current crop of writers, instead of challenging this wonderful new era, immediately flocked to change their spots. They started pluming themselves and preening; "Now we, the science fiction writers, are the writers of TODAY!" Instead of writing for new vistas of tomorrow, new worlds to conquer, more escape from the grim realities of Russian satellites overhead, they tried to amalgamate science fiction into "realistic timely stories" -- and the bastard product was as unhappy as all illegitimate offspring.

Science fiction, by very nature, dares not be TIMELY. It must exist outside time and space.

So what kind of science fiction have we been getting? Well, we got some "gutsy" stuff about how it feels to be one girl in a ship full of spacemen (shades of True Confessions!) or pale little emotional vignettes about the emotions of a spaceman taking off on a rocket. Plot? Heavens, no; that's old stuff from the pulp magazines, and have you forgotten? (so they swagger,) We are creating Literature now! We are the current Big Men!

The few people who stuck to the escape fiction have often, grossly and culpably, gone to the other extreme and written sheer spoof stuff. Space opera? Oh, no, that's old stuff, so let's write a nice subtle (or blatant) little parody on space opera!

And how does this affect the kids, the garage mechanics and policemen and college students who want to relax their brains after an evening wrestling with the problems of the world, the boss and the devil? I only know how it affects some old readers and non-fans I've been talking to lately. "Science fiction used to be fun to

read," they say, almost in the same words. "Nowadays I pick it up and I might just as well read the newspaper or somepin'. Either it sounds like somepin' out of the men's mags (or else I can't make sense of it, it's like a private sort of joke."

Their reaction? The magazine goes into the corner and on goes the TV set, and next time they buy a copy of Rogue. Which may suit Harlan Ellison just fine, but it jolly well doesn't suit ME.

People who read science fiction are, by definition, people who are bored with today and they are looking for tomorrow.

Another common argument says "People are scared of space, what with Sputnik and all." Well, back in 1946 they were scared of the atom bomb. But it is the function of science fiction to look beyond the immediate dooms to the bright or bitter tomorrows. (Or beyond the immediate delights to the bitter tomorrows.)

People go to science fiction, by and large, because today-ish fiction has failed them somehow. Some writers still say science fiction ought to be timely and realistic. I say timeliness and realism are killing science fiction, and between the TV and the men's magazines, if it ever gets screwed down in that coffin...well, coffins are harder to get out of than to get into.

I don't believe the paperback novels offer any solution. Writers love to write novels, but I am sadly conscious that a lot of people today don't want to read them. The average novel used to be 100,000 words long. The magazine's "book length novel" was about 50,000. Now the "paperback novel" runs about 90,000 and the magazine novel about half that...and what they print as book length novels in some magazines would hardly be called a novelette in the old magazines, but they are still complained about by people who want something to pick up and read quickly. Oh, yes, inveterate readers buy novels, but the backbone of readership must always be the people who read with some difficulty (even college students show reading deficiencies, and the mass of the population wants something short; if we don't give it to him he will buy Rogue and Reader's Digest, not a pocket book. Of course, once we have gotten him firmly snared, and as he reads more, THEN he will read novels; but the new readers must be snared by short stories, and for that we need MAGAZINES.)

Will science fiction die or boom? I think the only hope is for the writers to change their spots, and to think less about their goddamn "artistic development" than about writing stories which the average reader will flip over.

And if they don't -- well, we will have all our leisure time to write artistic stories for our own delight and read them aloud to one another in our garrets where we slowly starve.

BRINEY, ROBERT E.

1) Not necessarily dead, but science fiction magazines are on their last legs.

Science fiction is still in the process of reverting to its status as a specialty field, catering to a limited audience, and able to support only one or two small magazines entirely within its borders. (And this specialty field will never again reach even its modest popularity of the mid-30's, let alone the "boom" periods of ca. 1940 and ca. 1950...) As the reading audience falls away, existing magazines turn in different directions to widen their appeal; all of these directions lead away from science fiction proper, none of them will do any good for the field, and at least two of them may even hasten "the end."

One direction, being taken by Analog: Science Fact & Fiction (formerly Astounding) is implicit in its title. Symptoms are the large, slick, illustrated fact articles, and the emphasis on twists in old ideas for the stories. Within a year, I'll bet Analog

will scarcely be distinguishable from Popular Mechanics . . .

Another direction, that adopted by Fantastic Universe, is toward the cult-occult borderline; this is heralded by increasing prominence given to ("fact") articles, most of them on spiritualism, UFOlogy, and other topics calculated to appeal to readers of Galac-Ticks...Even in the stories, this increased emphasis on spiritualism and mental powers is evident. (And in more concrete terms, it is worth noting that most of the lead stories are reprints from British magazines; this seems to hint at a lack of original material, or at least at word-rates too low to encourage original material.)

A third direction; and (at present) by far the most successful, is the appeal toward the general adventure story market: in science fiction terms, an emphasis on space opera and reworking of old ideas--BUT, at least as evidenced in the Ziff-Davis magazines Amazing and Fantastic, it is good space opera, and the "old" ideas are old only to science fiction enthusiasts, but still fresh and (I hope) exciting to the general reader. These two magazines seem to have a monopoly on the best current American science fiction, at least in the longer stories; and they represent one of the few markets for new writers in the field. (Jack Sharkey may turn out to be another Sheckley--little ideas, highly polished--but at least his is a fresh voice in the field.)

As for other directions--well, Galaxy has always marched to its own music; seemingly unaffected either by the economic troubles in the field or by the fact that it publishes trash; and now If is going along with it. And the Columbia magazines seem to exist on a shoestring, which is becoming more and more frayed...And as for F&SF--the Boucher magic has worn away, Mills seems to have run out of ideas, and heaven knows how long it will take for Ferdinand Feghoot to kill the magazine completely.

The biggest problem faced by the field (and the one that will eventually deliver the coup-de-grace) is the economic vicious circle: dwindling readership leads to dwindling rates, which cause the full-time writers (the ones who write for a living, not for fun) in the field to look elsewhere for markets; as the authors desert the field, the editors find it more and more difficult to fill their issues with readable material; thus their circulations drop even more, and...In addition, the low rates and the general unexciting atmosphere of current science fiction combine to keep new writers from entering the field. There are just no paying markets for any except the most prolific and well-known authors, and most of these can get far higher rates in other fields.

Sudden thought, from another angle: the science fiction magazines are about the only fiction magazines left on the stands. Even the mystery magazines are down to two regular titles; and everything else except the "true confessions" variety has all but disappeared. With the wealth of reading material available in paperbacks, people just don't read fiction magazines anymore. This will also be a large contributing factor in the death of science fiction, and means that even the appeal to a general adventure audience, which seems now to be working well for Amazing and Fantastic, will sooner or later fail (and probably sooner).

In spite of all this, there would probably always be enough people willing to buy and read (and hence others to publish) science fiction to support a small publication. But there is a further factor, nibbling at the very roots of the science fiction growth: science fiction just isn't very interesting any more!! It has none of that particular excitement which should differentiate it in an essential way from other types of fiction. Character study, psychological probings, emotional and physical conflict, suspense, adventure--all these are available in many other areas, so why get excited over finding them (however well done) in a "science fiction" story especially when that story offers nothing more to the reader. It isn't the gadgetry that's missing--or rather, that isn't what really counts, since gadgets are not exciting any more--but the type of thinking that used to mark a good science fiction story--philosophical, historical, or

scientific speculation and extrapolation, looking at things in a new light, from an odd angle . . .

Part of the difficulty may be that science fiction settled too far into a fixed mould in the "boom" periods: editors found out what sold copies, and began insisting on getting exactly that. No experimentation, no deviation from the norm that makes us money--and now, firmly settled in the rut, with the authors who would have welcomed the chance to experiment, try out wild ideas and new writing styles--with these authors turning away, science fiction is suffocating in the old, used-up, oxygen-starved atmosphere of conformity.

Thus:

(a) Authors turning away because of low pay and lack of opportunity to experiment; and no new authors coming in, for the same reasons.

(b) Diminishing market for fiction magazines of any kind.

(c) Diminishing interest on the part of science fiction readers or potential science fiction readers, due to general lack of quality and/or excitement in present-day material.

These factors are killing science fiction magazines (and #c is helping to do away with science fiction in any medium).

4) Not for science fiction as such; the paperback originals (except for certain ill-fated experiments which the publishers did not repeat--Jack Vance's Dying Earth for example) have been mostly of a "pro-integrationist" variety (in P. Schuyler Miller's phrasing) -- combining science fiction with straight adventure, with mystery and suspense, or just with sex, and depending on the wider appeal of these other areas to sell the books.

Maybe, as Miller says, science fiction is being integrated; but even if it is, this will contribute to its demise as a special field. The "integrated" commodity must appeal to a wide class of readers, hence will have lost the special appeal that good science fiction should have.

BUDRYS, A. J.

Well, yes, I feel magazine science fiction is dead--in the sense that the great days of the magazine science fiction form as we recognize it are gone, never to return. This statement holds true, I think, no matter what particular days in what particular magazine are the "great days" to your mind. I, personally, have become reconciled to the fact that the 1940's Astounding is past all resurrection. At the moment, there seems to be a paucity of magazine editorial policies capable of exciting and attracting large audiences; even "large" in science fiction magazine terms. Whether this is because science fiction has become exhausted as a reservoir of exciting editorial ideas, or whether this is because the world's English-speaking population has exhausted its capacity to be excited by science fiction among other things, remains to be decided, if it can be decided at any point between these particular two extremes.

I do not think a specific cause for this effect can be pinpointed. I am of the opinion that the first people to see this current lethargy coming were the editors--who have been roundly excoriated for espousing strange, unorthodox policies which, it is true, may be one of the causes of today's difficulties, but at least represented an attempt to do something. Since we cannot see the actual causes--or at least, for the life of me, I cannot--I hesitate to advocate remedies, for fear that we might wind up in an alley equally as blind as the attempt to make Galaxy metamorphose into The Saturday Evening Post, or to make Astounding the standard around which the partisans of some worthy cause might rally.

The original paperback, by definition, cannot save magazine science fiction. The original paperback is the mortal enemy of the magazine, and, furthermore, occupying the newsstands in its present position, an enemy who has won. But this is not the same as saying that the paperbacks--particularly but not entirely the original paperbacks--killed the magazine market. They may have--though the evidence for this fails at a few crucial points--or they may simply have moved in and occupied a vacuum. Phil Klass, Bob Sheckley and I did some arithmetic on this a few months ago, and came to the conclusion that original paperback wordage just about equals the difference between magazine wordage today and magazine wordage before the advent of Ballantine Books and the start, in reaction, of the extensive general science fiction paperback publishing program. But what this means, exactly, is something we can't tell. I offer it to you for what it's worth. As for whether the original paperback can "save" science fiction--science fiction as something larger than magazine science fiction--the evidence quoted above does seem to indicate that it represents only a metamorphosis in form, and has little effect in either increasing or decreasing the amount of science fiction published. It does, of course, circumscribe the length, and so to some extent, the kind of science fiction for which a ready market is available. This may very well lead to a sharp division, on criteria of length, between paperback science fiction (I think we can forget about hard-covers except as library items in editions of 2,500 copies) and the magazine science fiction of the future. Because some of the technical effects of writing to given lengths are not completely understood, it would be an invitation to error for anyone to predict what the science fiction magazines would be like under this hypothesis--but they would not much resemble anything in the market today.

Attempting to answer these questions leads, I find, to larger questions. For example: What is there about magazine science fiction that makes it worthy of a special concern more intense than any concern for science fiction as a whole? When I attempt to answer that question for myself, I find myself forcibly flattering my nose against the unkind fact that my concern for the magazines is either sentimental or provincial, but not rational. The science fiction I liked best, as an adolescent, was magazine science fiction--furthermore, as published in a particular magazine. And even by objective standards--that is, my subjective standards dressed up in stiff collars--the flowering of the science fiction form occurred in the magazines. But magazine publication represents an eyeblink in the span of science fiction's existence, and there is really no reason to suppose that simply because it was there when we were children, and was acknowledged chief, it will still be there for our children. There have after all, been other presidents since Franklin Roosevelt, though you could have gotten large bets against it at one time.

Then, again, one is brought to ask: Since there are still well over sixty issues of science fiction magazines published every year, representing, at rough count, at the very least some three million annual words, how does this square with the notion that the field is dead? It is true this represents an enormous come-down--magazine science fiction has now sunk to a volume comparable to that of the crime fiction magazine--but the next question fairly leaps to mind: Are three million words of readable anything publishable every year?

We tend to forget that even in the 1940's, when, for my money, the marks were being set, every issue of Astounding was matched by four or five issues of incredible crap turned out by men who have, some of them, become leading lights in the market today, but who were in those days interesting only to students of literary evolution and who were, in any case, swamped by the hackwork of literary plumbers trained to conform rigidly to standards low enough to make a subway platform guard disdain them. We hear a lot of folklore nowadays about roses that bloomed forelorn in the

pages of Stirring Science. Examination of the work in question undeniably leads to pleasant surprises in the form of a well-turned phrase here, an unconventional character there, or a curious plot-twist elsewhere--mostly at the hands of one man. But as a whole, even the best of these pieces are, as I've said, only the yearling stumbles of men who did not walk tall until much later, and the folklore stems from the same nostalgic phenomenon that leads forty-year-old businessmen to ascribe importance to the interfraternity politics of their college days. In the 1940's, magazine science fiction had an abysmal average standard of excellence; the memorable stories, which men like Healy and McComas, Groff Conklin, and others have skimmed off for all our enjoyment, come largely from Astounding, and come largely from a handful of men--run your eye down the contents page of the Healy-McComas anthology and see how many individuals are represented--who, in their contemporary setting, were buried under a swale of John Russell Fearn. And who, furthermore, had no idea whatsoever that they would someday be referred to as standards.

We see the 1940's from a viewpoint created by the good writers of the 1940's, and the standards by which measurement of their excellence is made are the highest standards which they set. We are the convinced audience they created--"we" meaning I and anyone who thinks as I do--and it's no wonder we cannot find others to equal them, or magazines as satisfactory as the one that published them. But when we decry the magazine science fiction of today, and concern ourselves with its deterioration, we're missing the point of the old saying that the winners write the history books. We miss it because the proper word should be not "winners," but "survivors." Those people who survive as magazine readers, should the magazines survive in any form, may well find excellences, in the contemporary magazines, that you and I are totally unaware of; they may well idolize writers we ignore, just as a Polton Cross enthusiast of 1940 would have said: "Who?" to the mention of Heinlein's name. Ted Sturgeon has said that ninety percent of everything is crap. Maybe so--it seems unarguable to me that three million words of anything must be largely crap, which might be concealing almost anything from our eyes--but not to the eyse of those who, ten years from now, will be looking back from another viewpoint.

So I honestly think that much of the rife dissatisfaction with today's magazines stems from a hopeless nostalgia as inevitable, and as inconsolable, as Sam Moskowitz' yearning for the Gernsback Amazing. And I think also that whatever the causes of the deflated science fiction boom might be, they are only the latest causes of a condition permanent to science fiction and all other evolutionary organisms--the shedding of dead skin and the generation of new organs and functions. I think we expected the boom to last, and I think we feel cheated that it didn't because we feel that science fiction deserves to boom. But by what rational thinking can it be said that it does? Simply because it is "better" than the crimezines? By whose standards? When you come down to it, what service does science fiction perform for the average magazine reader that is not performed as well by a dozen competing specialties?

* * * * *

In looking over this essay, I realize that I haven't done what I, as a convinced fan, desperately hoped I would do--assign some simple cause to the current (unfair) decline of magazine science fiction, and having done so, recommended a straightforward and obvious (if somehow up-to-now overlooked) remedy. But though I could snipe at editors and publishers--and, were I an editor or publisher, snipe at writers and readers--I would only be adding to the surf of backbiting that surrounds the rock of our mutual affection for science fiction as a whole. I have, God knows, done enough of that in the past to see its futility.

I think it quite likely that the frustration many of us feel at our failure to slay the dragon is that, as so often is the case, there is no dragon and we know, deep in-

side, that the broadsword we hold poised is only going to give us one hell of a case of bursitis. I am sorry I haven't done what I'd like to have done, just as I would be pleased to see that despite my best rationalization here, someone else has found the dragon I overlooked, and slain it. But so many people have gone over the ground--cries of a lack of soul-searching are, to be kind about it, based on a misapprehension so ludicrous as to be past laughter--that I cannot for the life of me imagine where the beast might be, that it should have evaded such persistent detection.

I think science fiction will continue, in one form or another, slowly increasing its readership in direct proportion to population growth, despite our best efforts to lead fresh horses to water or to express our discomfort when the stream changes channels. Science fiction is, I think, a literary form that springs inevitably from the mind of a certain kind of person, and appeals to a certain kind of person. That's the only certainty I have on this point--I couldn't begin to define what I mean by "a certain kind," except negatively: Fans are NOT Slans...nor are they Ted Sturgeon's only non-telepath in the world. But matters of form are only matters of form, and while an inquiry of this nature will inevitably bring a number of valuable small things to light, the large decisions will, it seems to me, be made by the surviving readers of perhaps a decade from now.

BUSBY, ELINOR
(A postscript)

I think that science fiction needs some new ideas, or new approaches, or an entire new crop of readers.

BUSBY, F. M.

1) No. Things are poor, but they've been worse (1946-48, for instance). In that period the science fiction field consisted of 28 readable issues per year: 12 Astoundings, 6 each Startlings and Thrilling Wonder Stories and 4 Planets. Even with this scarcity, I found Amazing (monthly) and Fantastic (by-monthly then, I think) mostly not worth buying. There were also several strictly fantasy zines: Weird, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, Fantastic Novels and several short-lived digest-sized zines, but I'm not much of a fantasy buff except for the Unknown sort of thing.

We now have 12 each Astounding, F&SF and Fantastic Universe, plus 6 each Science Fiction Stories, Future, Galaxy, If, from U.S. sources only, for a total of 60 issues per year. Further, Amazing (monthly) and Fantastic (what is that one, monthly or bi-?) have become quite readable indeed since Cele Goldsmith got rid of Fairman's backlog, so that makes either 78 or 84 readable U.S. issues, each and every year. Also, the UKzines are available with a little effort: 12 New Worlds and 6 each Science Fantasy and Science Fiction Adventures.

Titlewise, we had 4 readable and 2 cruddy science fiction magazines in the U.S. in 1946-48. Today we have 9 U.S. and 3 UK titles available, though there is some reprint-overlap on the latter. Which brings us to:

2) Distribution, and high-handed tactics of distributors, appear to be a major factor. Distribution is in horrible shape today. So now somebody tell me of any extended period during which distribution has not been horrible except for one or two stands in any given town. 1953 was probably the high point, but knight's Worlds Beyond and the attempted resurrection of Marvel were killed by indifferent distribution just two years previously. Today's distribution trouble is made worse by the recent

advent of several new kinds of crud-in-volume: the "men's" zines (both the sadistic and the Playboy imitator types), the Dirtzines (Confidential, et al), and the straight semi-nude picturezines, are all relatively new and are taking up a greater share of the shelf-space all the time, along with the perennial True Confessions, movie magazines, teenzines (TV idols), true crime, etc. And going to less offensive things, the flood of hobbyzines (cars, hi-fi, photography, etc.) is growing rapidly, too. These are all large size zines and take a lot of shelf-space. Science fiction is relegated to the backshelves with the 'peekaboo' zines full of saaad jokes and cartoons of girls with big teats saying something stupid. As a small-circulation deal, science fiction has it tough against large circulation crud.

3) What can we do? Bitch in all directions, probably, but I'm not much of a crusader. There'll probably be all sorts of things suggested that would be of some help if done consistently by a great number of science fiction readers. However, I do not advise a gross rearrangement of the zines at your favorite newsstand, to give the science fiction magazines a featured display -- not unless you want a clop over the ear from your favorite newsdealer. He wants to find things the way he put them, next time he has a box of assorted zines to lay out.

4) Yes, as a last resort, maybe we should look to the original paperback -- but as a poor substitute. Certainly we'll fall back on whatever medium is printing original science fiction. I buy most, if not all, of the original science fiction paperbacks, and sometimes even rewrites and one-side-new doublebacks, but I won't buy anthologies with one new story for bait, except about one in ten. The paperback is not really a good substitute for the magazine, because it has no personality, and let's face it -- we who are hooked on the stuff go for the personality of a zine every bit as much as we do for the stories therein, in most cases.

5) The people who bug me are the ones who bemoan the "death of the prozines" but mention in the same breath that they, "don't buy them much, anymore." Somebody is going to holler about Quality and Sense of Wonder in connection with my quantitative remarks under Item #1. But I think that if you face a relatively new reader (3-4 years, say) with the 1946 output and the 1959 output, and ask him to list the Really Good stuff, he'll list much more 1959 than 1946 material. The same greater quantity, though, insures that we get a surfeit. Not only a surfeit of crud, but a plain old surfeit. I won't bet you on the percentage of Good Stuff in the 2 years cited, and I am definitely not the guy to make the assessments, since I was 13 years fresher when I read the 1946 zines, and we all know about nostalgia. That's why I specified a reader who (1) had not previously read the 1946 crop, (2) had not been worn out by the 1953 boom, and (3) has been reading long enough to recognize a few of the standard plots and not go all goshwow over trite items. 1946 is a good comparison, because Campbell was just as overboard then on Atomic Doom as he is now on Psi, and on Strong Men. 1944 or 1945 would have been even rougher for quantity; everyone went quarterly except Campbell, I think. And the war years have all too many tired war-propaganda bits in with the good stuff. Anyhow, I don't agree that magazine science fiction is dead today. In trouble, surely, and for reasons that are hard to cope with at the fan level. All we can do is buy the stuff, and maybe write some encouraging letters and do a bit of missionary work, unrewarding though that usually is.

CALKINS, GREGG

1) No, I don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead, although at the moment things are in a very precarious position, largely due to the fact that Astounding has recently changed publishers after a number of years and nobody seems to know what

their attitude will be towards a monthly science fiction magazine in the future. I believe the future of magazine science fiction rests largely, if indirectly, on what happens to Astounding in the next several years. Another recent blow to magazine science fiction was the loss of Anthony Boucher from the editorial helm of F&SF.

As for the death of the other science fiction magazines, with the exception of the complete disappearance of the true pulp magazine, I can't help but feel it's a good thing. The market was overstocked--and with poor quality science fiction to boot!--and eventually supply exceeded demand with the characteristic drastic results as far as the suppliers were concerned. It is my opinion that the magazine science fiction field is at its most stable configuration with one to three monthly magazines complemented by two to three times as many bimonthly or quarterly magazines.

In short, if the magazine science fiction field is trimmed to a more reasonable size, I believe it will continue to exist in spite of the increasing encroachment of pocket-book science fiction... unless the major standard-bearer since 1930, Astounding, either folds or changes to pb format itself. I do not think magazine science fiction can withstand this assault. Even if this disaster should occur, however, I am not convinced it would kill off magazine science fiction completely. Temporarily, perhaps, but a certain number of science fiction magazines would reappear after the hiatus, I believe.

2) Not any single action of any single person, no, although of course some people had more influence cause-and-effect-wise than others. Editors are a bit more to blame than authors, as a group, boo... Campbell for letting his hobbies run away with his science fiction magazine; Gold for his policy of presenting the type of fiction most readers want, regardless of whether or not it is very good science fiction (and I defend this accusation by pointing out that most people have very poor taste, on the whole, than does any select group, whether they be science fiction fans, music lovers (witness Presley vs. the classics), persons with college educations vs. the other 90% of humanity, readers of good books vs. readers of sexy pocket books); and the other editors for their apparent policy of making money while the boom boomed and to hell with science fiction. Too many stories were hastily written, shoddily conceived, and uncritically accepted to be very good science fiction. True, the authors are at fault here to some extent--but an author is out to make money and he'll sell as much as he can with as little effort as he can and it is up to the editorial staff to see that the authors produce quality instead of curd. I think the editors have failed us miserably in this respect.

3) Complain first and then stop buying the magazines so they'll know we mean it. For instance, Gold knows, I think, that I haven't bought an issue of Galaxy in several years and he also knows why. At the present time he thinks I'm just wrong or spiteful or something, but at least he understands my opinions. If other sales drop far enough, perhaps he'll remember my complaints and reconsider. Maybe not, but there's a limit to what a reader can accomplish against an editor. The ultimate weapon of the consumer is the refusal to consume. If the producer cannot sell his product he has two alternatives: (1) re-design the product until it will sell, or (2) get out of business. Since either way I fail to get good quality science fiction, I do not care which end I accomplish by my boycott--that is, either way if he continues at present or folds rather than modify his magazine. If he re-designs to suit me this is, naturally, the best result I could wish for.

4) What is the "original paperback"? If you mean will pb's take over the field and bring us science fiction even though the magazines fold, I'd say yes. The pb field has increased astronomically in recent years and I think it will continue to do so, regardless of how the magazines fare. In other words, we--the reading public--are going to be able to get good science fiction in the future no matter what. We can't lose

...but the magazine publishers can...and will, if they don't change their ways.

5) To tell the truth, I've been so windy this far that I can hardly add more without repeating myself. If you want me to do that, I will.

Namely: the science fiction field is not dead but it sure isn't healthy, either. Conditions are not impossible, but a lot depends on the immediate future of Astounding under its new publishers. I'd like to see the field cut down still a bit more than it is at present...at least the magazine part of it. Pocket-books are doing a wonderful job, especially in the development and preparation of the science fiction novel, and the quality of material they present (with the possible exception of the recent Ace offerings) is consistently high. I'd like to see more and better pocket books.

Editors and authors are both to blame for the present sad state of affairs--and I suppose we could include a substantial percentage of fandom, too, for their lack of disapproving noises via letters to the editor--but editors more than authors. Personally, I hope the bad editors fail to make it through the next couple of years...harsh, perhaps, but survival of the fittest environments always breed the best genetic types, and science fiction could use a few hardy souls in editorial circles.

CAMPBELL, JOHN W., JR.

- 1) Dead?! We're going better than ever before!
- 2) First establish that the alleged situation exists! I haven't found it!
- 3) Why correct it? What would be more correct than it is?
- 4) Not for me, thanks!
- 5) It isn't science fiction that's in trouble -- it's fantasy fiction!

CARNELL, E. J.

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. Basically, the science fiction short story will always be the backbone of the genre. At the moment, however, it is going through one of its periodic transition periods -- the curve being forced lower than usual by the vast strides astronautics has made during the past few years.

2) It would be unfair for me to say what I think is wrong with American science fiction, as this is purely a domestic problem. Obviously editors are looking for some new trend which will give an indication that the waning interest of their regular readers is being revived.

As a British editor with an international readership I probably have a better insight into what is happening to science fiction in the three main centers of interest

IF YOU ARE A SCIENCE FICTION PROFESSIONAL YOU ARE AUTOMATICALLY
A MEMBER OF

THE INSTITUTE OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDIES

YOUR NONOBLIGATORY SUPPORT IS REQUESTED ALONG WITH YOUR COMMENTS ON
WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION?

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BALL STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE + MUNCIE, INDIANA

-- Europe, America and Australasia. None are exactly the same, but all follow in each other's footsteps; the cycle seems a closed one, but there are deviations on each continent.

Basically, however, I agree with John Campbell's feelings that one of the main contributions to the present low in science fiction is the mess that Hollywood movies have made by labelling weird and horror films as science fiction. Potential new readers of the genre, appetites whetted by both American and Russian space probe successes, must receive a severe jolt when viewing a movie labelled "science fiction" which, apart from the appallingly poor dialogue and mediocre acting, is based mainly upon some monstrosity from outer space or the depths of the ocean. The sight of the words "science fiction" on a magazine cover must be sufficient for these people to shy a long way away from it.

Unfortunately, while fat profits can be made in the movie industry for a modest outlay of about \$10,000 per picture, there will be little change of heart. The fat profits coming from the vicarious thrill teenagers get from this type of junk. And the teenager who goes to see a horror movie is not the type who will eventually become a regular science fiction reader.

Another contributing factor, I believe, is the vast upswing in pocketbook exploitation and sales. We know that there is a constant transition of science fiction readership -- old readers drop out (temporarily in many cases, permanently in others) through some changing pattern in their life: change of job, location of business, illness, marriage, a growing family, loss of job, increasing overheads. In the past, when there were a surfeit of magazines (and no horror movies), it seems to me that there was always a progression of new readers coming in at the lower levels and graduating upwards to the adult magazines. At the moment, new readers (apparently) are just not coming in.

In America, I believe that a greater part of the loss of sales of the magazines to the pocketbook market is due largely to the chaotic system of distribution -- in fact, the science fiction depression stems largely from the collapse of the American News Company. This was the straw that broke the camel's back and had repercussions throughout the American trade. However, any commodity that works on 25 - 50% wastage to effect a profit cannot be operating at maximum efficiency. To be allowed to operate in the land of Time and Motion Study seems fantastic to me!

3) If any of us (professionals) could answer this one accurately we would be assured of a place in the Hall of Fame. I guess that every editor, past and present, has done his damndest to improve the lot of science fiction, in sales and storywise. Making science fiction 'respectable' has been a major ambition of both professional and amateur, assuming that respectability also carried increased sales. By book reviews, radio, TV, even the better quality films, plenty of people have tried to improve science fiction's lot. Sometimes it seems to no avail. In the long run I think it will prove worthwhile. But that doesn't answer what can be done about things now.

4) No, except for salvation of the novel. Outside the States the anthology and short story collection is practically dead (there are exceptions, of course). To project the science fiction short story into pocketbook form does not appear to be the answer, mainly because there appears to be increased resistance to reading collections in book form (paper or boards) by the general reading public. Such anthologies or collections are more collectors' items.

5) Most of the foregoing remarks cover the questionnaire but one additional aspect does present itself to my mind.

It does seem to me that magazines in general are in a period of moral regression, especially those where the short story is dominant. 1959 saw mergers of some of the largest British magazine publishing houses. The same "take-over" sys-

tem was also applied in the States. Out of the ruck of reorganization, many regular titles are merged with competing titles with, presumably, some boost to circulation. But, the fall-off in advertising revenue continues. At least in Great Britain, where the small land area is now adequately covered by commercial TV.

I follow the by-yearly statistics of all British newspapers and periodicals very closely and the last two years have shown that, apart from the phenomenal rise of womens' magazines, all other publications have been steadily dropping. Television cannot be entirely blamed for this, although it must contribute something. After the 7-week printing strike here, when all publishers expected to lose some circulation, sales in fact increased over 10% and have remained up despite a 5% to 10% increase in cover prices! This seemed to me to be proof that after a surfeit of watching TV the general public found that reading was, by and large, a more interesting past-time.

In view of this apparent regression -- a general shrinking in numbers of all forms of magazines -- the number of magazines now devoted to science fiction are still in proportion to the number in the general field. Being mainly (or solely) concerned with the science fiction field we have been inclined to assume that the 'depression' was only hitting us. If the regression is general, as I suspect (and American readers of this will be able to check statistics in their own country which are not immediately available to myself (Sam Moskowitz, for instance) then science fiction has only been taking part in the present phase of redistributed leisure time.

Both the movies and magazines have lost part of their regular audiences to TV, but, in general, the masses are spreading their spare time over a far wider range of outlets, due primarily to increased wealth.

CLIFTON, MARK

1) No, I do not quite feel that magazine science fiction is dead. But how long it can continue to survive its present treatment is anybody's guess.

2) I see a process taking place resulting from certain points of view, rather than any particular person, action or incident as responsible for the enfeebling of science fiction.

There has been the tendency to freeze the concept of science fiction into a static mold. Perhaps some of this may be due to the timidity of pro editors who found a formula which was financially successful and feared to change lest they lose position and money. Some of it due to highly vocal pressure groups of fans who oppose anything new lest the traditional flavor of science fiction be lost. Both fail to take into account that by definition, by its very nature, science fiction must be ever changing, ever exploring, ever experimenting, else it cease to be.

John Campbell put his finger on it some years ago when he turned down a story of mine which was too much like the previous one I'd written: "You said this in your other story," he wrote. "Our readers are bright. They get the idea the first time."

But editors have not applied this admonition to themselves, for there is nothing new in science fiction, it has all been said before, many times. I can well understand and sympathize with the pro editor in his attitude toward his magazine. He feels it is his own creation, his responsibility, and so it is; but this exacts some penalties when carried too far. In recent years the pro editors seem to have adopted a kind of 'orchestra leader' attitude, with the authors taking the part of the performers in the orchestra who must play each note of their stories in time with the beat of the leader's baton, and with the interpretation he demands. But performers and composers are two different breeds of musicians. When we know that we must confine ourselves to certain themes, written in a certain way, with a certain interpretation, we cease to be

creative authors and become ghost writers for the editor's ideas. This produces a monotonous effect after a time. No matter how unique the flavor at first, it becomes monotonous with repetition, the miasma of sameness lays over it all, as if a cheap brown gravy in a greasy-spoon restaurant were spread over everything served regardless of the dish. Not only does each issue read as if it were all written by one person, but issue after issue, year after year.

In any field of human activity, where a leader grows so dominant that only his view is permitted, that activity cannot grow beyond his own personal limitations; and this has happened to science fiction. But the readers are bright, they get it the first time, and want something new.

But ah, do they? Then what of these highly vocal groups of fans who bitterly oppose any new theme, idea, or treatment? I never thought to see the day when science fictionists would become traditionalists to oppose any change from what has been done in the past. Yet, on every hand, I see this among the fans.

For a quarter century science fiction was a literature of material gadgetry. This was fine. Around the turn of the century when the science emphasis was on new concepts of the nature and behavior of the material universe, some wonderful new concepts came into being, and science fiction from about 1925 to about 1950 rightly explored the potentials of these concepts. But science emphasis changed from theorizing to implementing those theories, pure research gave way to engineering exploitation, and advancing new theories fell out of fashion. Consequently the new material available to science fiction began to diminish, dwindle away. We'd speculated on everything, in our extrapolation we'd explored to the limits of the material universe. What could possibly be said that hadn't been said before?

But there was a new field opening up to us. Although we have libraries full of writings about the nature and behavior of man, now we began to realize that these were nonscience and often nonsense opinions about him, no more valid than the middle ages opinions about energy and matter. We began to realize that no really scientific work had been done about the nature and behavior of man, that we had been so busy stating our opinions of what we thought he was and how he ought to behave we'd never actually taken a good look at what he really is and how he really does behave.

We began to explore the nature and behavior of man in science fiction, as we had explored the nature and behavior of the material universe. And a howl of outrage went up from the fans and is still howling. "Psychological junk!" they cry. "No scientific basis --" they cry again.

Well now, there are a great many concepts in the old, traditional literature, accepted by everybody with no trouble, for which there is no scientific basis. Such as space-warp, hyper-space, contra-terrene, super-time, anti-gravity, laminated dimensions, time travel, etc., etc., etc. Why then the refusal to consider mental speculation? Anybody who can swallow time travel ought to be able to contemplate poltergeist effects, particularly since there's a great deal more evidence supporting the latter than the former.

Have we lost the power to use our imaginations, to speculate on the possibilities of something? Have we grown too timid in our thought processes? It would seem so.

You can't have it both ways. You can't have new stories if you won't permit new ideas and new themes to be introduced.

The twin effect of these two points of view (1) the editor's refusal to print a story which doesn't conform to his direction and (2) the refusal of the fans to permit exploration not confirmed by tradition, these two things have stopped the growth and expansion of science fiction, made it as formularized and limited as a western story.

3) What to do about it? I think the first move must come from the fans. I think they will need to give first-aid to their imagination, pump the breath of life into it

again. Then letters to editors saying, "The story in the November issue is a repetition of the story in the May issue. What goes on here?" I think we may legitimately attack the theory as much as we please, so long as we have an alternative solution to offer; but the trend of attacking the theorizer for daring to advance a possible explanation, or attacking the editor for printing it, this seems to me to be anti-science fiction in every sense of intent and performance. Let us then pull the theory to pieces if we will, but encourage the theorizing.

I think we should demand that some science be used in the writing of science fiction. We have gone so far in the other direction that we are solely concerned with exploiting outré effects and seldom permit any discussion of causes. This ceases to be science fiction and becomes pure fantasy. In our letters to editors we need to demand some substantiation of causes to account for the effects.

Yes, I know, editors say the vocal fan makes up only some 2% to 5% of their readership, and they print what the total readership wants; but I believe they will, nonetheless, respond to letters from fans.

4) The original paperback can be a partial solution, but it won't solve anything if it duplicates the same errors we are now making in the pro mags. If anything, the editors of mainstream publishing houses are even less hep to what makes vital, strong, alive science fiction than the magazine editors, will be more inclined to select fantasy. We went through this back in the late 20's, when the Gernsback magazines were making money. A host of imitators arose, and the various adventure magazines started playing up the outré theme. But they didn't get the idea, and their selections were not satisfactory. They were like opera stars trying to sing rock and roll; they just didn't have it. There's no guarantee that they've got it now.

5) I think I've made the essence of my remarks.

COGSWELL, THEODORE R.

1) I do not feel that magazine science fiction as such will ever die. However, I have an unhappy feeling that magazines devoted exclusively to it do not have too bright a future. If three years from now only Fantasy and Science Fiction and Astounding (or whatever its new name is) are the only survivors, I will be unhappy but not surprised.

2) It does not seem to me that any single person, action, incident, etc., could have a pronounced effect upon an entire field. What has happened, I think, is that the general intellectual climate has so changed that the particular type of romantic escape which science fiction represents is no longer palatable. I see popular science fiction as growing out of the economic conflict and chaos of the late 30's and early 40's. For both writers and readers it reflected a then acceptable escape into an exciting sort of dreamworld. I believe that the basic thesis of much successful science fiction was that something was wrong with the here and now and that something should be done about it. Current complacency has no place for such questioning.

3) Nothing. Individuals cannot change climate -- at least not immediately.

4) The original paperback may save the novelist but it offers scant salvation for the short story writer.

5) What seems especially significant to me is that new young and creative writers are conspicuous by their absence in the field. The few younger people that are coming in, with the exception of a few who don't belong there in the first place, seem to be content with turning out tired imitations of the work of their elders. I believe I am safe in saying that the average science fiction writer is now definitely middle-aged. He may have acquired more technical skill than he had 20 years ago,

but he has lost the ability to believe in his own dreams. What impresses me especially is that now the age of space is finally with us with tremendously exciting and dramatic things happening every day, both science fiction writers and ardent fans have turned their backs on the very age whose advent they spent so many years proclaiming. They are no longer a brave little group who can obtain emotional satisfaction from feeling that they are the wave of the future. The future has become the now and the prophets have been left behind in a stagnant little backwater in which all they can do is to imitate their earlier selves. There are obviously a number of exceptions to this blanket indictment, but still, generally I cannot overlook the complete lack of interest of the field in the startling technical advances of the past few years.

COLEMAN, SIDNEY

Although magazine science fiction may not die, it will never grow back to the size it had in the recent past, not even to a state of 150 magazines a year. Although this sad state of affairs is probably the result of things done by science fiction people, in the sense that if all the editors in the field had paid 6 cents a word, all the writers consistently turned in copy as good as Heinlein, and all the distributors treated every science fiction pulp as if it were Life, the field would undoubtedly be considerably healthier now, still I do not believe that what has happened is Campbell's or Gold's or Palmer's fault, nor do I believe that any dozen decisions or policies done differently would have had any large scale effect. I do not think there is anything we can do to help the magazines. I think that if there is another boom like that of the '50's, it will come to the paperbacks rather than to the magazines, and that in any case, the paperbacks will grow to overwhelming domination of the magazines.

Now there are two points I would like to make at some length, explanations of possible mechanisms that have contributed to the processes we have observed. I don't think they are the only causes of what has happened by any means, but the other causes have already been analyzed, and these have not been. Please understand that I do not think these are THE CAUSES or even THE MAJOR CAUSES; I have no desire to see myself damned as a dirty Aristotlean or a pig-like Scene-Agency thinker (both of these are rather mechanistic explanations), at least when I am not one.

FIRST, about Booms and Busts. It has been my experience, in high school and college, that there is a large group of young people who are potential science fiction readers. Sometime between ten and seventeen they come across science fiction, and are enchanted by it, but for the wrong reasons. They are enchanted by what they take to be its freshness and originality, its store of new ideas. What they think are new ideas may be new to the non-science fiction reading world, but they are really the cliché's of science fiction. I don't only mean gimmicks like time-travel and robots, I mean plots like the one about the bucolic pleasant-like aliens who turn out to be really so much superior to us, and moods like end-of-the-empire weltschmerz, and characters like...etc., ad. nauseam.

When these young people see their supposed new ideas and fresh insights turning up again and again, they become bored with science fiction and go read something else. Often they do not realize what has happened; if queried as to why they dropped science fiction, they will say "They don't write stories like they used to" or "I guess I just outgrew it; it doesn't seem to interest me any more." The whole process, from first discovery to total disenchantment, seems to take a year or two.

In normal times, these people are entering and leaving the science fiction world at equal rates. However, when a boom comes along, there is an enormous amount of publicity about science fiction. All of these potential short-term science fiction

readers, some of whom would not, in normal times, come to science fiction until four or five years later, learn about science fiction at once. They all enter the field at once (i.e. in a year or so). A year or two later, they all leave, and the number of science fiction readers is depressed not only by those who left, but by those who, in normal times, would have been passing through the field, and now have already done so during the boom. I am not so foolish to claim that this mechanism is a major cause of booms and busts, but it does undeniably act to make the booms bigger and the busts more depressing. How powerfully it acts I do not know, and cannot tell from the facts available.

SECONDLY, about the advantages of pocketbooks over magazines. In large part, I think, it is homogeneity. Magazines are heterogeneous, they contain many different kinds of stories. Pocket books are homogeneous; every part of a novel is of the same quality and tone as every other part.

Much science fiction is bought by people who do not read all the science fiction published, not even all the science fiction published that meets their taste. They may read three or four magazines and pocketbooks a month. Let us take as a case a man I know, an experimental physicist, whom I will call Joe Brain. Joe likes Heinlein. In days of old, when he felt the desire for some science fiction, Joe would amble down to the corner drugstore and look through the magazines. The one that had the installment of a Heinlein serial, or an Asimov novelette (Joe also likes Asimov) would be the one Joe would buy. But now, when Joe comes down to the newsstand, that magazine has got to compete not only with magazines that contain no Heinlein or Asimov, but with pocketbooks, some of which are solid Asimov or Heinlein. Joe, no fool, plunks down his 35 cents for the pocketbook, getting his full 70,000 words of the desired product, instead of only 20,000 words of Heinlein and 50,000 words of some junk he doesn't like.

Somewhere, although I have never met him, there exists Joe's counterpart, Sam Clod. Sam can't stand Asimov -- all that fancy talk is too much for him -- but he likes Real Science Fiction Adventure, like, you know, Jerry Sohl. Sam must exist because Ace Books, which is not in business for its health (or for that matter Bantam Books, which is also not in business for its health, and is in much better health besides) finds it profitable to publish Jerry Sohl. When it comes to taste, Sam is far from Joe. But when it comes to the drugstore, he rejects the magazine as surely.

There is no way magazines can duplicate this advantage of pocketbooks without publishing all-one-author issues, i.e., becoming pocketbooks. (I wonder how the all-Leiber Fantastic sold.) And likewise, publications that share every advantage of pocketbooks except homogeneity, such as the Star sequence, will not sell as well as pocket novels.

One footnote on the above: I have heard it argued against my opinions (most recently by Silverberg) that the real advantage of the pocketbook is the better display it gets, the longer period it spends on the stand. This may be true at bookstores and magazine stores (universally known as cigar stores), but it is far from the case at the place where most science fiction is sold, the corner drugstore. I have been timing the science fiction pocketbooks at local drugstores, and rarely do I find one that stays on the stands for a time as long as Galaxy's two months. And in addition, the druggists have no scruples about placing a book on the racks, behind newer books, sometimes only a week after it arrives, so it can only be found by assiduously searching. (I am talking about science fiction books, not Lady Chatterley's Lover.) I hardly ever see this done to magazines; Astounding has at least its spine showing, and often its face, for all the time it's in the store.

1) No. I won't admit that magazine science fiction is dead until the last magazine (probably Astounding) ceases publication. But I do think that it's in bad shape.

2) No single person, action, incident, etc. is ever responsible for anything. I think the cause of the science fiction slump is three distinct trends in the nation's reading habits, which may or may not be inter-related. First, there has been an overall slump in magazine sales. Santesson says so, and the folding of non-science fiction magazines and the price-juggling of such stalwarts as Reader's Digest and Life bears him out. In fact, the handwriting was on the wall when the Digest accepted advertising. Life and Reader's Digest can experiment all they like; science fiction magazines don't have the capital for more than one or two attempts; if they don't guess right the first time, they likely will fold. Second, there is a specific trend away from fiction magazines. I've been intending to take a survey of the number of titles on a reasonably good newsstand which contain the word 'True.' What's the present ratio of love pulps to confessions-type magazines, and of detective fiction magazines to 'true detective' types? Look at the adventure field...a good 30 magazines featuring 'true' adventures, and Short Stories couldn't survive as the lone adventure fiction magazine. (Not that I think that Scientific American is drawing any readers away from Amazing Stories -- but I do think that all the men's adventure magazines -- True Men, Savage, Virile, Raw, Guts, etc. -- are draining a large part of the casual readers who were interested in science fiction primarily for the adventure it provided.) Never mind if the stories in these 'true' magazines are really true or not; the label is all that counts. Third, science has become a dirty word, associated with intellectuals and eggheads--and everyone knows that intellectuals and eggheads are nasty sorts who pretend to be better than their neighbors and take money on fixed quiz shows. Science, in short, is a rather dull affair with test tubes, without any of the earthy realism of True Crime or Savage Adventures. And, combining items two and three, a magazine with the title 'science fiction' has two strikes against it to start with, which are too many to allow it to buck the magazine slump. The fact that any magazines at all are surviving is due, I think, to the fact that they've attracted regular readers who know and like them; they aren't attracting the casual newsstand browser anymore.

3) We (I assume you mean science fiction fans) can't do a damned thing about it.

4) I think a few magazines will survive, but the bulk of future science fiction will come out in either original paperbacks or paperback reprints of original hard-cover novels (the latter mostly in the case of established writers in and out of the field). They will provide little salvation for fandom, but should assure that some science fiction continues to see print.

5) I don't know if it's pertinent or not, but at the Detroit convention someone mentioned that paperback publishers should be better informed about science fiction and cited Wollheim of Ace as one publisher who really knew his business. If that's true, I'd like to know why Ace publishes such crud and the only paperback publisher which regularly puts out above-average material is Ballantine. Incidentally, in answer to item 2 I gave no causes for the trends cited. I don't know the causes...or at least I have no idea as to the cause of the general magazine slump. Paperback competition may be responsible; I don't think that television is too much of a villain. People who watch television regularly never read much anyway...if they didn't have television they'd listen to the radio, go to the movies, or play cards, but they wouldn't read. As for the anti-fiction trend--I know it's there because I can see it operating, but as for the cause...I guess people are just more interested in gossip than they are in literature. And the anti-science trend has been with us quite a while and been

documented fairly thoroughly. (What was television's most successful fantasy-type show last year? Alcoa Presents . . . true stories of the weird and supernatural.)

DAVENPORT, BASIL

The following is an answer to your questionnaire, to the best of my ability.

1) I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. I subscribe to and read The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction and I generally buy and read Galaxy. I used to read Astounding, and still occasionally sample a copy, but a few years ago it got generally over my head. This is not intended as an adverse criticism of Astounding; I myself have very little scientific background, and not much scientific interest; the latter owes a good deal to my reading of science fiction. It is an excellent thing that there should be a magazine like Astounding to appeal to readers with more scientific background than I. But I am straying from the point. These three magazines seem to be flourishing, and perhaps three magazines are all that can be expected to survive, in so comparatively narrow a field. However, science fiction is now appearing off and on in other magazines, The Saturday Evening Post, Playboy and others.

2) I do not feel that any one person or action is responsible for the decline in the number of science fiction magazines. I think the boom started with the atomic bomb, which let the genie out of the bottle. A lot of people then sampled science fiction; some of them liked it enough to keep on, and others simply got enough of it.

3) I do not know what can be done to correct the situation.

4) I don't know enough about the economics of the situation to speak very definitely about the original paperback, but I think it might help. I see reviews of many science fiction books which I should be glad to read, and would go out of my way to get, if I could either buy them in paperbacks for 35¢, or could rent them at a lending library, but which I frankly do not want to spend \$3.00 for. It is in my experience a very rare science fiction story that can be reread with pleasure, which is one of the things I consider when putting out money for a hard-cover book.

5) I am sorry to have to confess that my own interest in science fiction is not so strong as it was ten years ago. This may be simply because I have read too much of it for a balanced diet, but it seems to me that the good ideas have all been used. I very rarely encounter a new idea in a science fiction story. I think there is here some hope to be found in the exploration (which is, of course, going on) of such inexact fields as sociology (utopias and reverse utopias) and the paranormal.

DAVIDSON, AVRAM

1) I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead, but it sure is sickly. I think it will survive, though.

2) It would be naive and unrealistic to hold "any single person, action, incident, etc., . . . responsible for the present situation." Sputnik may have lost us readers who can now get their fill of space-satellite-talk in factual publications, but is magazine science fiction confined to space satellite stories? Damon Knight may have scared off a few untalented writers and even improved a few semi-talented ones, but aren't stories as bad as those he tore into still being published? Campbell has been in a rut for years and years, but the rut must suit his readers--look at his circulation. And if the rut doesn't suit everybody who writes or has written for him, I wonder why it suited them five years ago. I see no difference. Bob Mills may not be Anthony

Boucher--in fact, Bob Mills is not Anthony Boucher!--but I suppose fantasy is outside your query's scope; and anyway, I think F&SF is showing definite improvement very recently. Amazing Stories I don't read, but understand it's been buying some material of a better sort than it usually used to. So we come to Gold. I agree Galaxy isn't what it was. H. G. says it's because it doesn't get the stories that it used to. Others say, H. G. doesn't have the critical judgement that he used to. I don't know. I have gotten out because rates haven't kept up with the rise in general prices (including the prices of science fiction magazines! How about that? Printers and paper-makers now get more, but writers get the same, sometimes less) and I can make more writing for other fields--well, this is one reason I got out. Another is that I don't want to be confined to any one field. And the falling market was a factor, too, i.e. fewer magazines, etc.

3) I be damned if I know what we can do to correct. Raising rates might help; most of the science fiction writers I know are writing non-science fiction now in addition and most of these indicate they'd like to get out altogether. But they are used to this field and if they could remain in it, economically . . .

4) Salvation of what? Merely of a type of literature (sic) called "science fiction," no matter how rotten it is? Does anyone claim that original paperback science fiction is better science fiction? (I don't say it's worse.)

If you mean, salvation of science fiction writers, I can't answer. I never wrote any science fiction novels and attempts to sell my collected science fiction short stories to either hard- or soft-cover houses has been unsuccessful; as has, also, my attempt to sell an anthology of science fiction shorts of a particular kind. Publishers say that collections don't sell. Of course, collections continue to be published, anyway--some of them pretty grim. In fact, to return to my remarks about original paperback science fiction novels, I think the general level is much below the general level of magazine science fiction as published in the three top science fiction magazines--and in many cases, below that of the lower-grade magazines. When one considers the time involved and the effort, in turning out a novel, compared to comparable wordage in short stories, I'm not sure the fiscal returns are worth it. I doubt if the literary returns are, either.

5) I observe, in a letter just off to Cogswell's PITFCS, that "the freshness seems to have departed from science fiction." Perhaps it's just that the freshness seems to have departed from me. Like most, I now read more factual than fictive books. I seem to think that the general level of fiction in general is either not what it was or that it has stayed the same while my standards have risen or my taste become more jaded. When I was a kid in the '30s there was something to be found in science fiction magazines simply not to be found anywhere else--a heady atmosphere of Out To The Stars! and On To The Future! Rarely indeed was anything of this sort found in a newspaper or a general magazine. Since the war, increasingly, it is found everywhere; and the question of space travel is now a commonplace before it has more than barely gotten started. Civilization has caught up with the pioneers and the pioneers have failed to move on to newer, more distant, frontiers. As long as fifteen years ago it seemed to me that science fiction was becoming repetitive, writers simply mining or canibalizing other writers. It never seemed to me that this trend was reversed or slowed down. From a nest of singing birds we have become a coop of clucking fowls. I'm told that in times past a science fiction convention was aswarm with kid fans. Last year, in Detroit, there were exactly two (2), count them, two. Why should they bother reading dull science fiction when they can read similar stuff, not fiction, and not dull? The kid who may well expect to visit the moon before he fathers his first child isn't interested in space-opera; nor should he be. Look at your fanzines (if you can bear to): 19 out of 20 never even mention science fiction!

Of course, I cannot really say I was ever a science fiction writer. My stuff was either outright fantasy or damned close to it. Fantasy, mark you my words, doesn't date the way science fiction does. Yet the market isn't there for fantasy, bad as the market may be for science fiction. Sometime you must make an inquiry into fantasy!

DeCAMP, L. SPRAGUE

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Here are the best answers I can give:

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead, but it is in a gradual decline from a peak in the 1930s and 1940s.

2) I think this decline is the result of social forces and not of any individual actions. A genre of literature attains popularity when it has technically equipped publishers, qualified authors and an eager audience.

(a) Science fiction, in the first half of this century, had technically equipped publishers. The techniques of magazine printing and distribution could take care of any such demand. If, for example, there had been a vogue for agricultural, bucolic stories, they could have handled it as well. On the other hand, a science fiction vogue wouldn't have gotten far in ancient Babylonia, because the technique of writing in cuneiform on clay tablets would not have supported any large secular literature.

(b) There were enough authors who had the smattering of science to enable them to write the stories. For those who hadn't, there was a body of popular-science and speculative writing by which they could make up their deficiencies.

(c) There was a receptive audience, because the scientific revolution had progressed to the point where scientific speculation afforded a point d'appui for stories of romantic adventure in exotic surroundings. Such romances have always been popular and perhaps always will be, but their nature changes with the times. Formerly the author could grip his audience either by laying his story in an unknown earthly land (vide the Odyssey) or by dealing with the supernatural (vide Apuleius' Metamorphoses). Exploration, however, has eliminated the unknown earthly lands, and the spread of scientific materialism has made it harder for most readers to believe, or even to pretend to believe, in the supernatural. Hence the decline of fantasy, which has been much more marked than that of science fiction.

These changes left the past, the future, and other planets as subjects for such stories. Historical novels, exploiting the past, have flourished ever since Sir Walter Scott put them on a sound basis 150 years ago, and show no sign of decline.

Science fiction, on the other hand, exploits the romantic possibilities of the future and of other worlds. Now, within the last decade, something has happened both to science fiction's authors and to its audience. A general growth of the publishing business and an opening up of new fields (popular-science writing, juvenile writing, technical writing for advertising agencies, etc.) have lured away some of the abler science fiction authors by higher rates of pay.

Likewise, the audience has dwindled, mainly, I think, not because of anything wrong with the stories, but as a natural result of scientific progress. Stories of pure science fiction (that is, of things that might happen in the future) inevitably date as science catches up with them. Sixty years ago, the flying machine was an obvious subject for science fiction and was well exploited. Now it is no longer available.

Space travel is on the verge of doing the same thing, and some of us may live to see immortality realized in the same way.

As scientific predictions are realized, they become less and less attractive as subjects for stories of romantic adventures in exotic settings. For one thing, the settings cease to be exotic, just as the opening up and taming of Africa have turned Rider Haggard's stories into period pieces. For another, the prosaic facts, as they become known, kill off the romance. John Carter could get to Mars by simply wishing hard; nowadays he would need a million-megabuck project passed through a myriad of overlapping governmental space agencies, and the story would be swamped in technical and administrative detail.

3) I don't think that anything can be done to "correct" this situation.

4) Paperback publication is a good thing in many ways, but I don't think it will save any genre of fiction whose necessary economic basis of audience interest has been destroyed by the march of events.

5) I don't think our knowledge of social forces is good enough yet to enable us accurately to prophesy what will happen. However, I think science fiction will go on being published for a long time, diminuendo. I suspect that it will split into two branches. One is pure science fiction, based upon realistic possibilities. This will tend to disappear as factual knowledge catches up with it, though the development of science into new and fictionally unexploited directions may long provide it with new subjects and stimulation.

The other is the story based on unrealistic or impossible assumptions, such as the story of time travel, alternative universes, or (if I judge aright) extra-sensory powers. Stories of this group will tend to merge with the story of supernaturalistic fantasy, with which they will share a common fate. That is, they will continue to be written, but more and more as labors of love, as fantasies like Tolkien's Ring trilogy are written nowadays.

Exceptional works of these types will be published, mainly as book-length novels, in cloth or paperback form, and may sometimes even return a modest profit. But it will not be possible to make a living by writing such stories, just as you can't make a living writing ghost or weird stories today. There aren't enough readers, willing to pay enough money regularly enough, to make a magazine specializing in the genre an attractive investment for the publisher's dollar or the author's hour.

De la REE, GERRY

If I had a cure-all for the ailments of the science fiction field I wouldn't be wasting my time contributing to a non-profit survey. Rather, I'd be in New York City selling my ideas to the publishers of one or more science fiction magazines.

Still, a problem does seem to exist and batting a few ideas around certainly won't hurt things. And if someone does come up with a few sound suggestions, perhaps the field which we enjoyed these many years will in some small way profit.

In answer to the questions asked:

1) Do you feel that magazine science fiction is dead? Obviously it is not. There are still a steady trickle of magazines appearing on monthly and bimonthly schedules. But while the magazines appear far from dead, there is little doubt that they have enjoyed healthier days.

2) Do you feel that any single person, action, incident, etc., is responsible for the present situation? If not, what is responsible? Well, I'd hardly blame it on any one individual or small group of individuals. I would, however, suggest these as possible reasons for the slump:

- a. Lack of competent writers in the field, resulting in:
- b. Poor stories.
- c. The spate of pocketbooks published in the last decade.
- d. Over exposure of science fiction during the same period.
- e. Man's race into space, which has not accelerated or enhanced the popularity of science fiction to the degree anticipated by many persons, but rather has opened up a new generation of readers primarily interested in factual science.

3) What can we do to correct it? If by we, you mean those of us contributing to this survey, I'm afraid I must confess there is little we can accomplish. I've read fanzines and attended conferences and conventions for more than 20 years. I've watched members of fandom's hard core attempt to dictate policies to the editors of professional magazines, and in the early days of my teens I was as guilty as the rest. But somewhere in the late 1940's I awoke to the realization that fandom is a drop in the bucket. An editor who is foolish enough to follow the dictates of a fan is just asking for trouble. There are perhaps 300 fans who regularly turn up at these conventions or who have at one time or another taken a fling at fanzine publishing. If these 300 fans tomorrow stopped buying a particular science fiction magazine, say F&SF, the loss would be infinitesimal to the publisher.

Fans, I believe, have accomplished quite a bit considering the fact they could just as easily have been told to "get lost" by the professional publishers. More than one pro magazine, I feel, has suffered because of the editor's having leaned too far in an attempt to pacify the fans.

So, in summing up my answer to question # 3, I'd say that we, as fans, can do nothing to correct any slump that may exist in the field.

4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation? Well, certainly the pocketbook field has produced some of the better original work in recent years. Perhaps the rates are superior to those paid by the science fiction magazines. I hate to use the word salvation, but I do feel that pocketbooks are to be encouraged and not frowned upon.

5) What additional remarks, pertinent to the study, would you like to contribute?

Frankly, I think the main fault with magazine science fiction is that the product is inferior. The quality of the writing is poor, but quite in keeping with the rates being paid. When you consider that today's rates on many science fiction publications are virtually the same as were being offered 20 years ago, how can you expect to encourage new writers into the field? You normally get what you pay for, and that's just about what science fiction magazines are getting.

The field has never had what I would consider an outstanding group of authors. Many of them were just plain hacks; others were guys turning out fiction to make a buck on the side. Still others were doing it as a hobby to get away from it all. But the fact remains the large majority of them were not -- and are not today -- good writers. Idea men, yes. Writers, no.

Of course, it's not a field where you expect to find the leading names of the literary world. Most of them would need months of research to turn out a real science fiction story, one that a hack blessed with a scientific background could probably grind out in a few days.

Perhaps it's the fact I'm getting older and more selective as to what I enjoy reading, but the general run of science fiction novel I read today is just plain rank. It's inferior to material I have read in the past. But, again, we're getting what the magazines are paying for.

I think it is a poor criterion for the science fiction field when an author such as Robert Heinlein can sell out-and-out juveniles to one of the leading so-called adult publications. And to top it, I hear veteran fans proclaiming these novels as the best

thing they've read during the year. Gentlemen, these are stories about kids written for kids.

Heinlein is generally regarded as one of the finest writers produced in the science fiction field in the past 25 years. Still, rereading his early efforts I would hardly term him a first-rate author in comparison with his contemporaries in the general field of literature. If he was any more than a good, competent writer of science fiction and juveniles, would he have spent close to 25 years in this type of work?

This is not meant as an attack on Bob Heinlein. I've just used him as an example to point up the sad state magazine science fiction has reached.

Perhaps science fiction is going to go the way of most other pulp fiction. The mystery and detective fields look like they'll go on forever, but I see no similar enthusiasm for science fiction. Still, in the 1930's we had only three science fiction magazines and Weird Tales. Today we have more than that, but we're wondering if magazine science fiction is dead.

I hope that the illness is a temporary thing and that we may one day see not MORE science fiction magazines, but a few GOOD ones publishing GOOD material. I do not see this happening until the money is forthcoming to lure the men who can do the job into the field.

DERLETH, AUGUST

You ask what killed science fiction. I'm not sure that anything did. There will always be a core audience for science fiction, just as there will for any division of fantasy. If you are at all familiar with things I have written and said about fantasy, you will remember that I went on record long ago as saying that for fantasy of any kind there always has been and always will be a relatively limited audience, and that any seeming boom in the field would fairly soon return to the normal core audience. What you have currently is NOT the death of science fiction, but a return to the core audience, and what you want to find out is what factors at this time contributed to the destruction of the boom.

As a publisher in the book field of 20 years' experience, there doesn't seem to me any mystery about that. In the first place, too much romantic-adventure fare thinly disguised as science fiction glutted the market turning away potential new readers, tiring old buyers who found it difficult to distinguish at the counters once old familiar names began to fade out. In the second place, the appearance of paperbacks undercut the hardcover publishers already fighting a glutted market. The magazine field suffered for a variety of reasons, one of which is allied to the book field. Essentially the competition of the paperbacks struck hardest at the magazines. But other factors were also present. Too many magazines in the field for the integral size of the market, for one. Too much editorial meddling on the part of some editors--sometimes this meddling made considerably better stories out of submissions, but just as often it blunted different approaches and variants. Too much editorial riding of favorite horses--I don't refer to favorite contributors here, but to science fiction variations, themes, directions. What editors often lose sight of is the essential fact that a science fiction story of merit is NOT a good story because it has gimmicks, or because it has a startling theme, or because it is better written than most (though this helps), but simply because it is a good story to begin with. There has also been some harm brought to the field by inept, however slickly convincing, criticism. One highly touted science fiction critic is actually one of the most damaging in this regard, indifferent as an author, glittering but empty as a critic. The ideal, in my view, in the

field of science fiction criticism is P. Schuyler Miller in ASF.

Returning to the "good story" theme above for a moment--the failure of editors to keep open minds, for instance, has harmed the field. I refer to the editorial attitude that space opera, for example, are dead, or that psychiatric themes are in, etc., failing to leave room for good stories no matter what their themes may be. Ghosts have altered, too, in the past 20 years--I'm just doing an article on that theme --but a good traditional ghost story still has an appreciative audience.

Now as to your questions specifically:

1) No, I don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead.

2) No single person or event is responsible for the present situation. In regard to what is responsible, in my opinion, see above. There is no such thing, of course, as a pinpointing of responsibility. Various factors contributed, and these factors were and are in general beyond the control of those readers interested in the field. As someone in the field for a long time, but always on the non-sf-fantasy end of it, it always seemed to me symptomatic and ridiculously childish that so many science fiction people were at odds with so many others, that people who liked one kind of science fiction decried others--i.e., the Lensman lovers had no use for the followers of Null A, and so on. This puerile attitude which was held and still is being held by many fans leaves no room for tolerance; there is a stupid insistence that science fiction must be "my kind" or none on the part of these people, who are often the vociferous fellows who write to the magazines at great length. This lunatic fringe is the noisiest, and may mislead editors.

3) Apart from insistence upon good stories rather than upon novel themes or old themes or gimmicks, I don't know that there is anything we can do to correct a situation which, in science fiction specifically, comes up against rapid technological advances at the same time that its boom is evaporating. The insistence on the part of some editors that science fiction is NOT fantasy, that it is NOT mere entertainment (which it most certainly is and always will be if it intends to keep on existing at all), that it IS prophetic fiction has of course boomeranged; science has in some divisions passed science fiction, and the result is that the "prophets" are being deserted. Once we lose sight of the fact that science fiction is an entertainment and NOTHING MORE, science fiction is on the way to extinction. Anything else, call it prophecy or whatever you like, belongs in the article field, the non-fiction classification.

4) My comments on paperbacks as above. They are largely indistinguishable from science fiction magazines, save that they lack departments.

5) No additional remarks; I've put down quite enough already.

One other factor ought, in justice to science fiction publishers and editors, to be mentioned in passing. A magazine which say in 1950 had reached its maximum potential audience even against keen competition found it impossible to increase circulation or advertising costs sufficiently to offset rising production costs as those costs began to climb, and eventually had to fold. This is what happened to many of the magazines in the field in 1953-6. Arkham reached its nadir in 1955, for instance; we are doing just 10 times the business in 1959 that we did in 1955.

DeVET, CHARLES V.

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. However, it will remain limited.

2) Responsible for the condition: The large block of science fiction readers who only read it occasionally is getting enough science fiction type reading from actual happenings to satisfy their casual interest and they do not buy the magazines

any more.

3) What can we do to correct it? Very little.

4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation? To a limited degree.

5) Additional remarks: The field is in a period of change. What the final result will be is difficult to exactly prognosticate. I believe a few of the best science fiction magazines will survive. Some of the general pulps and slicks will print a few more science fiction stories to capture that audience. Pocketbooks will enjoy a slightly greater audience.

DEVORE, HOWARD

1) It is my opinion that magazine science fiction is not dead, that we will go on, year after year, reading the same low form that is now being produced. I do believe the field will continue to narrow down -- until we are supporting not more than six magazines. There will be momentary booms lasting from six months to a year, where some new magazines will appear, but will probably vanish at the next slump. Three, or perhaps four of the major contenders will remain constant. Astounding and MofF&SF will be among these. I doubt that Galaxy will occupy the No. 3 spot.

2) There is doubt in my mind as to what has caused the great slowdown, more than anything I would assume it to be vast utterances by loudmouthed, fatassed politicians, continually assuring the general population that we are well ahead of the Russians, and that the populace need not concern itself with spaceflight -- the politicians will handle all of the little minor details, everything in fact, except the vast millions that will be needed. There is general public apathy concerning spaceflight. What was once thought impossible has become accepted theory and is no longer worth worrying over.

A secondary reason, of course, would be that vast womb, TV; the comic book that turns its own pages. This has lowered the amount of printed matter consumed (and I'm not interested in some set of figures designed to show that TV stimulates the imagination and leads children and adults to do research on their own -- the sale of 'factual' biographies of Wyatt Earp will have little effect on science fiction sales).

3) Personally, I fear there is little that we can do to stimulate science fiction sales, or interest in the field. The average American citizen knows little or nothing of the technological processes involved, and is quite happy that way. He is much more interested in baseball averages, and a can of really cold beer! Science fiction is not for the masses, and I fear nothing will change this situation. The lovers of science fiction are so few that they simply cannot convince the multitudes around them, this has been demonstrated time after time over the years -- I think we have all tried to interest friends in science fiction with little or no success. Oh some particularly close friend may be persuaded to read an outstanding story and may even admit liking it, BUT, will he voluntarily go out and buy a second piece from the newsstand? The only group that seems to be influenced by science fiction is the young college crowd. Ten years ago a fair portion of them were tempted to try this material, and a much smaller percentage have continued to enjoy it, however, it is my opinion that their college atmosphere served only to introduce them at that particular time. I think eventually they would have experimented with, and learned to enjoy science fiction on their own. While I do not feel that 'Fans Are Slans' I do think that they have a much wider range of reading tastes and they are of the group that have learned to appreciate the ideas behind a book rather than the selection of dirty words telling how 'this hot broad lays everyone in sight.'

4) There is some possibility that the original paperback will provide a reasonable income for a very small select group of writers, and that this might enable them to expose the general public to science fiction, however, I'm afraid that most of the paperback readers would wind up as casual readers. These are helpful, of course, but only frequent readers can be expected to support any sort of science fiction publishing.

It is very unlikely that any magazine can continue to exist unless assured of a firm sale of so many thousand copies. They must be purchased by people who buy one, two or ten science fiction magazines and books per month. The buyer who switches from science fiction to westerns or Playboy will never contribute any measurable income to the field.

NOW, assuming that we could consider the original paperback a salvation, who is going to publish this 'original' paperback? The stands are cluttered now with paperbacks from firms who bought the paperback rights ten years ago! Many of these books saw magazine, hardcover and perhaps a first paperback edition in those long dead days. Firms which only a few years ago were proudly announcing that they had the best science fiction writers in the field writing for them, are now sneaking around buying up cheap reprint rights. Much of this trash did not deserve first publication, let alone the continual reprinting, frequently from the editor's own files. I consider it the lowest form of theft to issue a book, and then three years later reprint the same book, using the same plates (or standing-type), and merely changing the background colors of the cover or dust jacket.

5) I have few opinions other than the above. I may have been a trifle brief, but there seems no question that science fiction is in a bad position and frankly, I see little or no hope for the immediate future. I have spent twenty-three years following the field, and while I may long for the dear dead days when science fiction was thrilling I am well prepared to coast along until it shows a gradual revival!

I sometimes think that perhaps Sam Moskowitz was right, or at least partially so, in that the fans may have lost their sense of wonder. But then, so have the writers. They are being forced to turn out stereotyped material to fit an editor's policies, which change only in desperation. An editor making a decent living by purveying a particular type story feels little compulsion to seek out newer, different material. Consequently, the feeling grows, with writers treading in his footsteps -- hacking out re-writes of the previous issue.

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EDMONDSON, G. C.

1) I don't imagine magazine science fiction will ever die completely but it seems to be going through one of its periodic slumps. There are only three real magazines and I stopped reading two of them years ago. Bob's doing a fine job on the third but he's tired too. How long before he pulls the plug like AB?

2) The present situation is due largely to the fact that wages, prices, and everything else have gone up in the last 30 years and rates have gone down. We're actually working for about 1/10th the money we used to get. Sputnik contributed also to the decline -- downgrading science fiction into hackneyed adventure.

3) The only real hope for science fiction is a brand new approach -- something along the lines of what Josephine Tey's Daughter of Time did to the whodunit field. If I knew what this new approach was I'd be writing it instead of this.

4) A good question. I'll answer it when my agent sends word about the first half of the clinker I'm currently writing.

5) Too damn much's been said already. There hasn't been a new idea in science fiction since Boucher introduced the theology cycle nearly ten years ago. There are only so many switcheroos on a given situation and, after two wars and a Sputnik, there's no use dusting off the old sense of wonder for anything less than the Second Coming.

It might help if writers were all kept incommunicado from the mass media and most of all, from each other. It's great to moan about stereotyping and lack of individuality but when we're all exposed to the same stimuli --. Entirely too many times, I've gotten an idea, mulled over it, slept on it, finally gotten around to blocking it out, and just as I'm about to write along comes F&SF and Poul Anderson's beaten me by six months. With only one planet, one history and two sexes this sort of duplication's bound to occur.

I can't help feeling that TV and recreation without reading has left us in the same position as the last dinosaur. There's a wonderful future of some kind ahead but it isn't the one we old fogies dreamed about. And wonderful as it is, I suspect there just isn't a place in it for us. Barrymore's last years were pitiful; he went on parodying himself. How long can I write parodies of parodies?

Marcus Aurelius probably felt this way when he tried to make sense out of Christianity.

EMSHWILLER, EDWARD

See the ritual scene depicted on the front cover. . .

FARMER, PHILIP JOSÉ

1) I don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead. I do feel that it is only half-alive and that it is going to stay so. But the present number of science fiction magazines will remain established or, at least, the top three will continue publishing steadily. And they will continue publishing about the same quality of stories as present. That is, an occasional original and stimulating story, quite a few well-written but non-original stories, and a mass of the same old tripe, both well-written and otherwise. I should break this down into the type the three so-called top magazines will publish. Astounding, soon to become Analog Science Fact Fiction (a laughable and ridiculous title by the way) will continue to publish the same kind of stories it has for the past three or four years. These will consist of an occasional excellent

and non-Campbellian story which will delight with its originality. And a mass of stories based on Campbell's ideas, that is, his obsession with psi-phenomena and a future society based on rigorous class lines. Not that there is anything basically wrong with these ideas. The trouble is that Campbell insists on buying these stories to the exclusion of others, and while the majority of them are entertaining, the very reiteration of the theme becomes monotonous and will continue to be so. Writers who want to sell steadily to him listen to his ideas, which are fed to them through his editorials or personally, and they write his stories and feed them back to him and are rewarded with checks and so continue to give him the type of stories he wants. And so on in a vicious feedback. And speaking of feeding, I am fed up. Perhaps one could forgive Campbell for pushing the psi theme if one thought the theme were valid and valuable. But all one has to do is remember dianetics and his sincere pushing of it to become skeptical. Besides, if this psi does exist, what of it? There is no indication whatever that it can be controlled. Campbell's stories have characters in which psi is a well controlled ability. But all evidence I have seen for it, including Campbell's own articles and editorials, indicate that it is wild to the wildest degree. As well expect to hitch a tiger to the plow and get a good day's furrowing as expect to produce any predictable and beneficial results from the manipulation of psi. But, as I said, the theme can make a good science fiction story. Not when 1/2 or 2/3rds of every issue of Astounding is devoted to the theme, however.

Now, Galaxy. For some years now this magazine has offered a few, very few, great stories. And a mass of trite, skim-the-surface, pseudo-New Yorker stories which are a waste of time to read. For two years now I have purchased very few Galaxies, and those I did were purchased because I wanted to read Willy Ley's articles. I used to buy Galaxy even when it was noticeably on the decline through sheer loyalty to science fiction. I thought I should support science fiction. But now I don't even do that. It hurts me not to buy one; I feel like a traitor. But why buy a magazine I will throw down in disgust, half-read? Is it because Gold can't get good stories? Is the type he has been printing the best he can secure? I don't think so. He shies away from good meaty stories with valid science fiction backgrounds. I know because of personal experience. Mine and several other writers. And the curious thing is that while Gold won't buy these strong and original stories for his own magazine, he is eager to purchase them for Galaxy-Beacon Press, the pocketbook outfit for which he is consulting editor. Gold has seen his magazine decline in quality and in circulation, yet he does not buy stories that might bring up his magazine, if not to its original level, at least to a higher level. And it is not because he can't get good stories. As a point, consider the MoF&SF. They pay less than Galaxy, so Galaxy should get first chance at the stories that MoF&SF buy. Yet Gold bounces them and they go to Bob Mills, and the MoF&SF wins the Hugos for being the best science fiction magazine of the year.

Now, the MoF&SF. High quality fantasy, as good now as when it started. And they publish more straight science fiction stories than when they started. They have the fewest taboos of any of the magazines and are willing to try almost -- not quite -- any new type of story. It's still a pleasure to read the magazine all the way through, something I don't do with Galaxy and Astounding despite my interest and love for science fiction. The magazine is not half-dead as are the other two, in my opinion. Yet -- it still doesn't fully satisfy. Perhaps it doesn't because the other two are so unsatisfying. If the other two published the mass of good meaty stories they used to, then the MoF&SF might be fully satisfying, as a good salad is with a steak. But the MoF&SF now has to shoulder the burden the other two should be carrying. It has to be, not just a salad but an antipasto. And too much antipasto is...too much. MoF&SF, instead of being a complementary magazine, now stands alone and doesn't quite cut the

mustard, if an antipasto can be accused of such a crime. No fault of its own. It's not getting the proper support.

Summary: Science fiction isn't dead, just half-dead.

2) Do I feel that any single person, action, incident, etc. is responsible? Part of this question is answered in #1. But I feel that the main responsibility, the main cause, is that the world has changed. This is no longer 1929 or 1947. Science fiction has passed through its glorious birth, its growing-up pains, its fevers and fits, its malaise, its Renaissance, and is now entering, has entered, middle age. Man is on the point of landing on Mars and Venus. Another ten or fifteen years, and he will be there. The only thing left for science fiction writers will be to write of interstellar adventure and of the future of Earth, something they are doing now. You see very few stories about adventures taking place in the solar system. As Fred Brown said in What Mad Universe? the science fiction writers have become adventure story writers. Not quite, but they're on the threshold of being so. And there is a general feeling that the scientists have now taken over the province of the science fiction writers. It's not quite true, for there is a tremendous room left for stories on sociological, psychological, and biological themes. But the number of writers who can deal effectively with these themes is relatively limited, and so long as most of the editors prefer to ride other hobby horses, these themes will not be properly developed.

Another cause: The price of science fiction magazines has been steadily climbing. Some magazines now charge fifty cents a copy. But this raise in price covers the cost of paying for paper and printing. The writers are not paid a penny more than they were ten years ago, and prospects are that they will not in the future. So, even if a writer loves science fiction dearly and would rather write science fiction than anything, he still turns to westerns or detectives or mainstream. He has to make a living. And with a quarter of the thought and originality and hard work it takes to write science fiction he can write detectives or westerns and make twice as much money.

The above causes for the present situation, however, are only contributing factors. The main responsibility for the present situation in science fiction lies, as I first stated, in the changing of the world. The Zeitgeist, the Weltanschauung, have altered faces. The world is a little older, a little wearier, a little wiser, and a lot less optimistic. For the present, at least. And while I think we actually have more reason for optimism than we did seventeen or ten or even five years ago, the world as a whole is not optimistic. It's seen the dreams, some of them, of science fiction come true. And the response is a big Like so we're here? Like so what? So more of the predictions and extrapolations of science fiction come true? Then what? We live in a world that is science fiction; science is progressing at a fantastically fast and geometric rate; it takes all a man's time just to read at a gallop of the new inventions; the world is changing fast, fast, fast; we live in the most revolutionary period in history. The last surviving veteran of the Civil War was born before the telegraph line was put into commercial operation and before the first steamship established a regular transatlantic route. The world population was 950,000,000; it is now 2,750,000,000 and may be double that by 2000 A.D. And the world has changed most noticeably since 1939, and with it has come the slow decline of that sense of wonder of which we talk so much, once knew so well, and now so rarely feel. Why read of things to make you wonder when you live in a world that continually wonders you?

The above is to be taken with a pinch of salt; there are still individuals who feel that wonder and there will be stories written that will arouse that wonder. But they will be few and far between, and most of the science fiction stories will be run-of-the-mill. Unless we have another Renaissance in science fiction, and that is something no one can predict on the basis of today's situation.

3) What can we do to correct the present situation? Nothing. Either events beyond our conscious control better the situation or events will worsen it.

4) We can't look to the original paperbacks as a point of salvation. There are no lengthy letter columns in the paperbacks to create a sense of togetherness, to stimulate a controversial and at the same time a brotherly feeling. This sense and feeling will have to be carried on by the fanzines, which means that only a very small group will have them.

I don't see any revival of the magazine letter columns; for one thing, the price of paper and printing is against it. Alas for the good old days!

5) No additional remarks pertinent to the study except that I hope that I am wrong.

FREAS, FRANK KELLY

(Not only did Kelly Freas contribute the following answers to the symposium, but also the ingenious double title pages. The layout design for the first and second title pages and the text copy for those pages was also created by him, to completely execute his visual presentation of "Who Killed Science Fiction"? There are unfortunately, too few collectors and fans who will use commercial time in the pursuit of a devoted hobby. Thank you, Kelly. EK)

I feel thoroughly unqualified to answer your questionnaire, but if I think on it awhile I should be able to recommend someone ...!

Well, hell -- one more damned opinion ...

1) No -- merely moribund. There are still enough of us to keep it going a few more years.

2) In order of increasing importance:

- (a) Sputniks
- (b) Movies and TV
- (c) Professionalism

3) (a) Pray
(b) See below

4) Only so far as we might learn from it.

5) Duck, man --

To elaborate ...

1) Science fiction is dying of old age. Granted, we are currently enjoying a relatively productive (if mediocre) and respectable (i.e. -- slightly fatigued) middle age -- how can you stop getting older? In a very few years more, the loss of the elder generation is going to start being felt ... then the present one will start dropping off. Oh, yes, -- there is a younger generation ... ever notice how much smaller it is?

2) (a) It should be noted that the depressing effect of Sputnik 1 hit all, not merely science fiction, therefore cannot be given too much blame.

(b) I admit that it's hard to overstate the stench of this horse, but after all, it is dead. Obviously some kids like it and that ought to indicate something.

(c) Uh-huh. I suspect we have "improved" ourselves right off the market. "Pulp" always was a dirty word with us ... Nevertheless, there was enthusiasm, vitality, excitement, in a large part of the aeriest literary junk.

So everybody worked real hard ...

So everybody got real good ...

So we are producing literature, yet ...

So who the hell wants it?

I recently had occasion to read a story by one of the gentlemen of the old school (pulp, that is) of science fiction. It was a positive blot on the face of literature. The plot was asinine, juvenile, illogical and stupid. The characters were inept, inconsistent, unconvincing stereotypes. The writing was ghastly.

I haven't enjoyed a story so much in years.

If he had nothing else, he did have enthusiasm. He was excited about this ridiculous thing: he was obviously writing straight from his Rover Boy's heart, and enjoying every minute of it.

But we don't want to do anything like that, do we . . . ?

Besides, the sort of publisher who would print such bilge is not the type with which we wish our name associated.

Quite right, too.

Whither, science fiction?

3) (a) You never can tell . . .

(b) The urge to improve is more or less universal, and when present, quite irresistible. So we learn, and we practice, and we get better and better -- at making buggy-whips, perhaps?

4) We can't very well revive the old pulps, but there is certainly something to be learned from them. As a reader, I say that the stories were better, on the average. You tell me why.

Incidentally, from a professional standpoint, I think most of the artwork was better too, twenty years ago. But that's another subject entirely.

Frankly, I think we have had it. Yes, it will probably be another twenty to thirty years before the last science fiction magazine finally stops selling enough copies to pay for the office space it takes up; and the fan publishers may keep things going a mite longer.

But the writing is on the wall: we are not bringing in the kids, the way our elders snatched us up, bug-eyed and panting, with their crummy space operas and their rowdy-dow adventures. What's more, we can't. The whole emotional climate of the country has changed -- their escape literature is non-fiction: something like "Ten Sticky Fingers -- the autobiography of a fig-plucker."

But meanwhile, we are still here, all 243,000 of us; and I do like to read a good story now and then, even if it does make me think.

GERNSBACK, HUGO

Throughout the years I have made my position clear about the decline of science fiction. The science fiction now in existence is no longer "science." Usually the material consists of fairy tales.

((At this point Mr. Gernsback called my attention to his editorial, "STATUS OF SCIENCE FICTION, Snob Appeal or Mass Appeal?" in the December, 1953 issue of Science Fiction +, in which he stated his views on the subject of this study as many as six years ago. In shame I confess to have forgotten this particular editorial, and since it is so very pertinent to the present study I could not resist quoting the following brief excerpts. The entire editorial is recommended for further study. EK))

"...The science fiction fan knows far more about science fiction authors, artists, editors and everything that goes into the magazines than do the publishers themselves. And why shouldn't they? Few publishers ever have necessary time to read as much science fiction over as long a time as has the arduous science fiction fan.

"From all this it becomes clear why the science fiction fan sets the pace for science fiction today. He not only influences the author, but the editor and publisher as well. He--and only he--is the main body critique today. All this is quite as it should be--because it helps to drive the art to higher accomplishments.

"Unfortunately, also, the best and most assiduous critics in the world often unwittingly generate forces which in time may destroy the very edifice which they helped so laboriously to rear.

"Modern science fiction today tends to gravitate more and more into the realm of the esoteric and sophisticated literature, to the exclusion of all other types. It is as if music were to go entirely symphonic to the exclusion of all popular and other types. The great danger for science fiction is that its generative source--its supply of authors--is so meager. Good science fiction authors are few, extremely few. Most of them have become esoteric --'high brow.' They and their confrères disdain the 'popular' story--they call it 'corny,' 'dated,' 'passé.'"

And I give you below the answers to the specific questions you ask:

1) Science fiction is by no means dead. It is, however, being killed off by the lack of science in stories. Today, when the American public is looking forward to science in stories, it gets pap and kindergarten-variety material. Only about one in every 50 stories contains scientific facts as a basis for its action.

2) See No. 1.

3) What can we do to correct it? It can only be corrected by putting science back in stories, as we did in the old days of science fiction when practically every story I printed had good science in it. This is what the public today wants and demands.

4) (Original paperback question.) I have no opinion on this.

5) Additional remarks: Some time next year you will see a very ambitious novel of mine which is chock full of science. It will probably run under the title, The Ultimate World.

GOLD, HORACE L.

Magazine science fiction is very far from dead. There is an over-concentration on psi that could be dangerous if it excluded all the other themes science fiction should explore, but the solution is easy -- lay off psi.

I have in a couple of editorials explored what you and 'countless' people are now decrying, and there's no mystery, no killer, no sleuthing at all called for.

Magazine readerships -- all magazine readerships -- turn over; the accepted average, based on a great deal of research, is five years. Exceptions are taken into consideration in establishing the average. In science fiction, the exceptions seem more numerous than they really are because they very vocally turn against rather than away from the field they once loved. Has the beautiful bride become a hag? No, the five-year honeymoon has ended -- and what you and 'countless' others decry is a personal five-year Golden Age for those who've followed you.

Writers and artists also turn over in all fields. There are no statistics on this, except that it always feels worse than it is. Worse for the editor because he has to bring newcomers along all the time. Worse for the writers and artists because so many aimed at science fiction as a goal, hit it, enjoyed it--and now find the goal falling behind them.

I'll let those who relish analyses analyze the causes thereof, in Freudian or

Jungian or any other such terms, but the terms aren't necessary. The truly immense majority of readers who turn over after five years do so quietly, matter-of-factly; they don't expect to be interested--or to be kept interested by "critical soul-searching"--in any one thing forever, and their places are taken by readers leaving one field or another for the very same reason. And it's just as simple, though more painful, for writers and artists--in individual instances. The same immense majority goes without fuss or feathers. The vocal ones are again in the same tiny but highly audible minority. Certainly I sympathize with them, and wish they could stay, and know that some will return from time to time--but a goal isn't a goal when it's reached, explored, exploited, for up ahead is another goal, visible to the majority, socked in to the minority, who hoot through the fog till they can see it, and leave, and have others take their places in much the manner that they'll be replacing others in other fields, who'll have left for the identical reason.

But I do have one recommendation to make. No writer should try to make his living out of science fiction. It's fine as a sideline, supplement, hobby, anything you wish, but not a main source of income. It never was and shouldn't be.

GRAHAM, ROGER PHILLIPS

You ask five interesting questions, Earl, but the answers to them, as far as the writers are concerned, are the same that they were ten years ago. Magazine science fiction is not dead. It has its ups and downs. The present situation so far as sales figures go is caused, as everyone knows, by the magazine distributors. It's being corrected slowly, but unfortunately some of the magazines that folded will never re-appear.

3 & 4) Are answerable together. All any of us can do is what we've always had to do--deal with our individual relationship to the field as best we can, and not blow our top at raw deals we get.

This, of course, contributes nothing to your projected study. But the fact still remains that a really good story will find a quick sale from any editor in the field, because every editor knows he is publishing too much low grade stuff he wouldn't buy if better stories were available.

The bad thing about looking to the paperbacks as a point of salvation is that spending two months on a story that doesn't sell is worse than spending two months on five short stories, one of which sells. It's up to the individual writer.

5) There are two types of magazines: (1) those who pay the writers from their advertising revenue, (2) those who pay their writers from their sales revenue. To illustrate what I mean about this, let's look at the picture in the San Francisco area. One science fiction prozine I know of sends one thousand copies to be distributed among 2,500 outlets. Six hundred copies are sold. The distributor has to tear the front covers off of the remaining four hundred, bundle them, and mail them to the publisher. For all this work he and the outlets split a ripe sixty dollar plum among themselves each month. If some teen age fan steals his copy of the magazine the distributor has to subtract two bits from his sixty dollar take.

At the same time, two boxcars of a certain weekly magazine from Philly arrive every week. The distributor could sell them off the boxcars to a scrap paper dealer and get enough to pay the publisher his cut--and still make money. Each of his outlets makes a couple of bucks a week from this magazine, and he makes as much from each outlet. The unsold copies are sold as scrap paper. The writers in this magazine are paid entirely from advertising revenue, as are the paper company and the printers.

Actually it is surprising that any of the science fiction magazines continue publication. Possibly a questionnaire sent to Street & Smith, and Ziff-Davis, and Mercury Publications, asking their motives for continuing publication, would reveal some very startling things. Or maybe it would not get a frank response but only a booster letter saying they do it for money.

GREENBERG, MARTIN

1) I don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead, however I do believe the magazines are making their own graves by bad editorial judgment.

2) I believe the present situation is due to several factors. The movies of course, do not help us by labeling horror movies as science fiction. The current attempts to reach the moon certainly hurt us since there is no speculation involved, story and picture are available in detail through all types of publications. I feel that science fiction, while its aspects are many, is primarily an escape medium. The great adventure stories of the past are certainly gone from the scene and this should not be. We could have the adventure story back with the better writing demanded today, but the magazine editors are so concerned with their own pet foibles they will not look at the market as a whole but see only their own narrow viewpoint.

3) We can do very little: If we stop supporting the magazines, they'll fold. If we write to the editors they'll send logical letters back to say why they do what they do and it will sound perfectly justifiable and the other magazine is wrong, etc....

4) The paperbacks have a disadvantage in that the average paperback is edited by a man or woman who has no science fiction background. Ballantine, and of course this is a personal opinion, has missed more good bets by lack of editorial judgment than any publisher. They obviously take what's given to them -- and luckily half of these are decent stories -- they could have been great stories, handled right.

5) It is certainly valid to use stories with a psychological twist, to explore psionics. However the basic facts are that science fiction is escape fiction, its appeal is in the sense of wonder of what will be tomorrow and what we will find out there. I truly believe the current slump is due to a lack of interest. Do you remember years ago, when a group of fans got together they'd discuss stories and characters? I spoke with some of the current fans at the Detroit convention and you know I don't think they even read the stories. When questioned they were vague on so many points as to raise doubts as to their validity as fans.

GRENNELL, DEAN A.

1) No, I don't feel that magazine science fiction is dead.

2) I do not especially feel that any single person, action, incident, etc. is responsible for the present situation.

3) As far as the current situation is concerned, I can't see a need for correction.

4) I'm in favor of original paperbacks.

5) I, personally, find that the current Astounding and Fantasy and Science Fiction supply me with satisfactory science fiction and all of it I have time to read.

REMEMBER! IT'S CHICAGO IN 1962!!

On March 31, 1955, I wrote a letter to Tony Boucher, inspired by his comment in F&SF that we needed to take a closer look at science fiction, in which I summed up my feelings about this beloved field of ours. I don't think I can do better in answer to your questions than to quote from that letter, and the remainder comes from that source, excerpted and with some updating to make it comprehensible.

I've been studying science fiction as a literary medium for more than five years now (now ten), but it wasn't until a little over a year ago (1953-54) that I began to feel that science fiction had taken the wrong turn somewhere. I think the great debate on what science fiction is and what it should be is long overdue, and it may be because we've never thrashed out any general area of agreement that science fiction is in its present predicament.

We can never agree on more than a broad definition of science fiction, but perhaps we can agree on what constitutes the mainstream of science fiction and where we have wandered away from it. As a beginning, we must accept the thesis that the mainstream of science fiction is entertainment; and if science fiction is going to be popular, it must be popular entertainment. Whatever else science fiction is, it should be entertainment first and other things in addition, on other levels or other depths.

We have been misled - authors and editors - in a search for a spurious maturity. Any maturity is spurious which tries to deny its origins and its childhood, which tries to change itself into something else. Maturity isn't something to be sought and found. It is grown into, and you either have it or you don't.

Entertainment is a broad term which can cover a multitude of stories and story types. But it's significant that you used the word "excitement" in your review of Arthur Clarke's Earthlight. I used the word myself in a letter to Jack Williamson in February of 1954:

"It seems to me that science fiction has lost something in the last few years; it has gained some things, too, but I wonder whether they quite make up for it. I wonder if what ails the magazine field currently isn't a paucity of excitement, if circulation wouldn't jump tremendously under the impetus of a new serial by Van Vogt or Heinlein . . . Science fiction had something in the Forties that it doesn't have any more: a vigor, a sweep, a dream, an excitement. Nowadays there is a great deal of maturity, subtlety, cleverness, good writing, but very little excitement . . ."

And we aren't the only ones who are worried or puzzled or alarmed. In the January Astounding, P. Schuyler Miller laments the passing from science fiction of that quality he calls "adventure." And there have been others and will be more.

We must face the fact we should have faced long ago: the popular reader doesn't want to be instructed, edified, improved, dazzled, impressed, lulled, or any other substitute for fiction. Fiction is people, and fiction is emotion, and popular fiction is people doing things in an exciting way and feeling excited about it. The popular reader wants to be entertained, and his definition of entertainment is suspense, action, surprise, excitement. He does not like the "literary" story. He does not like satire or essay or parody. He wants a story about a person with whom he can identify himself who gets in a suspenseful situation and has to fight his way out of it. This is what science fiction used to be, and I don't think it's anything to be ashamed of. I think, instead, that it's unfortunate we didn't make the most of it.

To my mind, the golden age of science fiction was the late Thirties and the Forties when Heinlein and Van Vogt and Kuttner and Hubbard and a handful of others

were writing the type of stories I've described, the kind that aren't seen any more. Is it just nostalgia? Are we, who grew up with the science fiction magazines, the ones who have grown old and jaded? Does science fiction still have as potent a spell for the novice and the young in spirit? I don't think so. I used to haunt the newsstands for the latest magazine; it was torment waiting. I don't think that's true for anyone today. For me it isn't, and I don't think it is for many others. Where has the excitement gone?

We have a great many able new writers, but where are the Van Vogts, the Heinleins, the Kuttners, the Hubbards among them? Where are the storytellers? I don't see any. Many as writers are just as good or better in their ways -- but are these the ways that are good for science fiction? I submit that they are not, and it has been proved that they are not.

Science fiction has been betrayed in many ways: by those who have sought to capitalize on its presumptive popularity and sought its least common denominator, by those who have underestimated the reading and viewing and listening public and the appeal and excitement of the drama of ideas, but also by those of us who should have known better. We have had our delusions of grandeur; we have committed the unpardonable sin of the storyteller--we have been dull. We have sought art for its own sake. Our primary function is to hold our audience and to add to it; we must never forget that.

I have been referring to magazines, because it is obvious that the book field is the tail and doesn't wag the dog (Almost five years later, this is not so obvious). And so to the editors must fall a large share of the responsibility. If the editors won't buy the story of the storyteller, the storyteller must turn to something else; it is his nature that he must have an audience (it might be proved that he has turned to the paperback). The editors, in turn, are at the mercy of the readers, but this discipline is difficult to interpret, and too often the readers can't analyze what they like and want.

Why haven't there been any new Heinleins, any new Van Vogts? Their talents are not unique. Their excitement about what they were doing, which poured through into their fiction, was not exclusive. The reason, I think, is because the budding Heinlein, the embryo Van Vogt, has had his stories rejected by the leading magazines instead of encouragement, and he has turned to other modes of expression. It is illuminating that you said of Earthlight, "More books like this, and there'd probably be no need for the questions I posed above." But which of the major science fiction magazines would publish Earthlight today if it were submitted by an unknown author? The question is academic. But I'll tell you who published the short novel from which it was expanded: Thrilling Wonder Stories (August, 1951).

Where did we go wrong? I think it was in trying to mutate science fiction into something else instead of improving on what we had. Satire, for instance. There have been satires written within the science fiction domain, and no one denies them a place within it. But satire is not the mainstream of science fiction; it is only essay disguised. Unlike the mainstream, it cannot, by its basic structure, carry its conviction within itself.

I suggest that it's time for the satirists, the aesthetes, the parodists, and the essayists to give science fiction back to the storytellers. Cleverness is not enough. Fine writing is not enough. The reader of popular fiction demands emotional satisfaction, and if he cannot find it in science fiction he will seek it somewhere else. If science fiction takes the path of the little magazine, seeking self-expression instead of artistry, experimentation instead of communication, then it must accept the fate of the little magazine: small circulation and limited readership.

The function of the artist is to communicate; unless he does this he has failed as an artist. In order to communicate he uses the best means he can find. In science

fiction, as in any popular fiction or in any popular medium anywhere, any time (the Elizabethan stage, for instance), the best means are the storyteller's means. A return to storytelling does not necessarily mean a sacrifice of quality (take Shakespeare, take Cervantes, take Tolstoy and Dostoevski, take Dickens, take Melville, take Hemingway). Within it there is all the room in this world and many others for good writing and meaningful characterization. As authors and editors we must start asking ourselves the right questions: "Is this the most entertaining (not the cleverest) way this can be written?" or "Is this the most exciting (not the most inevitable) development?"

People read fiction for emotional satisfaction; they read science fiction for something extra. Perhaps it is because science fiction is (can be) more exciting. Perhaps it is for meaning. Perhaps it is because our society, like science fiction itself, is oriented toward the future. But the emotional satisfaction comes first, and if it isn't there all the other things won't help.

I would like to go into other things like the trap of the incidental story (if people want to read about meaningless incidents, why read science fiction?). Archibald MacLeish wrote once that a poem must not mean but be. A science fiction story is just the other way around.

KEMP, NANCY

1) Yes, I believe that magazine science fiction is dead.

2) No, I do not feel that any single thing is responsible for the present situation. There are a combination of contributory factors: low rates; poor stories; inadequate distribution; inept editorships.

3) Wider distribution, if it could be achieved, would be a major corrective measure. Depending, of course, on the possibility of producing better stories and a more equitable word rate for the authors of those stories. Call it a cycle, vicious or otherwise, wherein each correction is dependent upon another. But the best, and only starting point is that of better distribution.

4) Yes, we should look to the original paperback as a point of salvation.

KNIGHT, DAMON

1) No, I don't think magazine science fiction is dead. As you know, science fiction in magazines goes through these periodic booms and slumps, and this one is right on schedule. 1960 should be a big year, if the pattern holds as it always has.

2) No, I don't think we should be looking for a villain or scapegoat. Like anything else that's regulated by supply and demand, science fiction goes through a cycle of over-and-under supply. It would be true as far as it goes to say that the people who jump on the bandwagon during a boom are responsible for the slump that follows, but short of putting science fiction under the control of some sort of czar who would limit the number of magazines, there's nothing we can do about it.

3) See above.

4) Well, the paperbacks are doing better, as you know, partly because paperbacks have already been through their disastrous slump, which shook out a lot of marginal producers; partly because paperbacks stay on sale longer, etc., etc. But I don't think they are taking the place of magazines, or likely to.

LEIBER, FRITZ

1) I do not think that magazine science fiction is dead, but I imagine it will continue curtailed -- the equivalent of some half dozen monthlies, at a guess. (Death in some 20 yrs is likely.)

2) Numerous factors are responsible for this curtailment:

a. TV and other forms of mass-media entertainment are cutting deeply into the reading-for-escape habit. Considerable fantasy and science fiction of varying quality is available on TV, in the movies, etc.

b. The paperback book with its one-shot advantages of no limited sale-time is gradually killing off magazine fiction.

c. There is now (in public libraries especially) a store of good hardcover (and paperback) science fiction adequate to satisfy the appetites of many of the young people who get the science fiction bug.

d. Progress and speculation in spaceflight, atomics, robotics and similar fields are no longer under a general editorial taboo. We can read this stuff in the mass media, we no longer have to get this information from science fiction stories.

3) We can continue to publish amateur magazines, which will likely increasingly become a haven for the "difficult," imagination-stretching science fiction story.

4) The original science fiction paperback is certainly a point of salvation. Star SF, Avon Fantasy Reader, and others have set excellent precedents for the one-shot type story-assembly.

5) I think it's tempting, but dangerous, to analogize from the death of fantasy magazines (a sigh for Weird Tales!) to the death of science fiction magazines. For one thing, the latter have to a considerable degree replaced and engulfed the former. Finally, with man entering space, it seems clear to me that the space adventure story, at the very least, will continue.

LEY, WILLY

1) No, I don't think that magazine science fiction is dead, it just isn't feeling very well right now. The interesting trouble, at the moment, is that it has become impossible to explain science fiction to an outsider. In the past one could say "stories based on the assumption that a new invention is being made or has been made." The public now will look you straight in the eye and insist that nothing beyond atomic energy and space travel can be imagined.

2) Not a single event, incident or person. But I do believe that the trend to harp on crank items has done a great deal of harm. Of course Palmer must get first blame with his Shaver business. Santesson insists on saying that flying saucers might be real and now even prints occultistic junk. And Campbell, after running off the rail with dianetics is now wild about psi. I know his answer: space ships are nearly here, atomic energy is here, science fiction has to look forward. But dealing with psi is still a mistake; occultists and mystics may love it, but most people reject it violently. The reason is obviously psychological, though I can't say why. Most people just do not wish to hear about powers (if they exist which I personally doubt) that are not physics and/or nucleonics.

3) Go after the editors and ask them not to print any non-fiction that is not factual, especially nothing occult or flying saucerish.

4) NO. Or maybe for novels. But it would be no fun to wait until one man/woman has written enough short stories to fill a book. Besides, if one does wait, they

don't read well in succession. The variety a magazine can offer is infinitely superior.

5) I probably have made enough enemies by now as it is.

LOWNDES, ROBERT A. W.

1) Not dead, but possibly dying in the sense that all popular magazine fiction may be dying. By 'popular magazine fiction' I refer to the type of magazine that was once known as the 'pulp' and remains with us in digest-size publications. The sports and western titles have gone. The detective titles are mostly gone, and of these we have mostly ultra-cheap, sensational-sadistic crime fiction which has nothing to do with the classic detective story. The remainder consists of publications that are split between reprints of the better (purportedly) stories published in the last decades and new material mostly by authors who made their name in the 'good old days.'

2) There are two elements necessary to a continuing audience for any type of fiction: (1) The steady reader. (2) The new reader. No publication can endure very many years on the basis of 'steady readers'; there is a considerable turnover going on all the time, and even in that category of the enthusiasts, any given individual is likely to lose interest for a time, or, for a time be forced to discontinue regular support. I myself have gone through periods when I was 'fed up' with science fiction. I've always come back, and usually tried to collect and catch up on the issues of the better magazines that I missed -- but that doesn't replace the sales that were lost during my apostasy. Multiply that by 'n' and you can see why 'constant reader' just doesn't form a strong enough backbone.

The 'new reader' may be a transient who picks up one issue only, or who, having been satisfied once will try again months later when he's in the mood for more; and a certain percentage of these transients will subscribe or become regular customers. But what has supported the magazines for years has been the flesh of transients upon the bone of the regulars.

What has happened? For the most part, the volume of transients has fallen to a very low figure -- not enough to support adequately even the few remaining titles in the science fiction field. The disappearance of competition -- or some competition -- can, at times, help the remnant, providing that the reason for the death of a competitor signifies no more than distaste for that particular brand of science fiction. Unfortunately, this is not universally the case. While some may buy Abstract Science Fiction once Abstruse Science Fiction no longer appears on the stands most likely others will not be interested in the Abstract brand -- and others will have been repelled from science fiction completely because of dissatisfaction with what they found in the now-defunct magazine.

Without defining 'good' and 'bad' in this frame, it is still a truism that good competition helps a magazine, while bad competition injures it. A good competitor will leave a reader in a friendly frame of mind toward the field -- and maybe next month he'll buy your magazine, too; and maybe he'll add it to his list or switch to you. Bad competition drives him away; he won't look at any science fiction magazine again, even a good one like yours. (This isn't 100% but describes what has happened in many instances. Bad movies and TV science fiction have also hurt good science fiction magazines in the same way.)

There is further a special situation in the field of distribution. When American News went out of the magazine distribution business, a gap appeared that hasn't been filled. Most of the science fiction titles had to find new vehicles of distribution -- and found themselves up against individual, independent wholesalers who were not interested in handling these magazines and refused to take them or to do much of anything

with them when they did. (This hit the detective titles in the same way.) Result: in many of the big cities, various science fiction titles cannot be found at any newsstand. We have received a steady flow of letters from readers of all our publications who have not been able to find our magazines. They asked their dealers; the dealers contacted the wholesaler -- to be told that "we don't handle these books." Finis. Some have subscribed, but only a small percentage do that -- after all, there is a difference between laying out 35¢, 40¢ or 50¢ once a month, or once every other month, and laying out the cost of a year's subscription all at once. And a large percentage of readership lay amongst people for whom subscribing was difficult. The real enthusiasts, of course, get their subscriptions in; but the larger number isn't that determined. In this frame, it makes no difference how 'good' a good magazine was; if it doesn't get to the newsstands, then it doesn't matter what is inside those covers that no one sees.

General interest in science fiction waxes and wanes. There was a 'fad' for awhile, and that could recur, theoretically. But my feeling remains that there is an audience for a certain number of good titles (at all levels of science fiction), titles which can make a profit (though not a fortune) if the books can get on the newsstands. TV has hurt magazine sales in general and I would say to the extent that there is no longer big money to be made in popular magazines as there was back in the days of the great pulp empires.

3) Who is -- or are -- "we"? I don't think that "we" are in a position to do anything about it -- except to support the magazines that are left (or those which the individual amongst the "we" considers worth helping along). "We" can be sure that we buy our copies each issue, subscribing if necessary, and show a tolerant understanding of the difficulties the magazines are laboring under when "we" write to editors. (By "tolerant understanding" I do not mean pulling punches about what "we" may not like, or think bad -- positively not that -- but in the tone of the criticism and complaints.) And by letting editors know "we" are still with them even though less than radiantly satisfied.

4) What do you mean? Should we (ah, this vague "we" again!) forget about the magazines and just buy pocketbooks? You don't expect me to say "yes" to that, do you! But seriously, I think that "salvation" in the sense of a continuing supply of science fiction -- and a possibility for good science fiction -- is more likely to come through the pocketbooks than the magazines. I'll continue to hope for the magazines as long as there are any left, and suggest that "we" continue to support them up to the end -- hoping that we don't see the end. The situation doesn't look promising -- but as I indicated above, I do not think that "we" can do anything significant about it. But -- what's it going to cost us to try? Nothing shattering -- and if, concurrently with "our" support, the magazine field picks up we can always enjoy the somewhat irrational but satisfying feeling that our efforts helped.

5) No additional remarks at present. See forthcoming editorials in Future and Science Fiction Stories.

McLAUGHLIN, DEAN

Magazine science fiction is not dead--yet. There remain a number of sf magazines, and most of these are published on a monthly schedule. I could even name two magazines which, if there be any justice in this world, should continue to be published up until the crack of doom or the next ice age.

Provided, that is, they can maintain the standards they have maintained up until now.

I don't know if they can do this.

I must admit, the prospects look bleak. Even the best magazines seem to be publishing a large proportion of drab, uninteresting, and unstimulating stuff. The question might well be asked whether there is enough genuinely good sf being written to supply the existing magazines, and all the evidence -- including some fairly direct testimony -- seems to indicate that the answer is a disgusted NO. As a consequence, the lower-budget magazines are able to publish only the cats and dogs which the better paying magazines have declined as not fit company for their masthead, plus -- perhaps -- a thin trickle of superior material which has failed to sell higher up the ladder for reasons of editorial prejudice.

But this is a chicken-and-egg situation. There was a time, not long ago, when the quality of the average sf story was considerably higher than it is today. Without digging into the back files and amassing a horrendous volume of statistics, I think it is possible to maintain that no more science fiction is being published in magazines today than -- say -- ten or fifteen years ago. (There may have been fewer magazines in those days -- I'm not sure -- but, with maybe a couple of exceptions, they were all bigger.) Therefore, the suggestion that as much good sf is being published as there was in the "good old days" doesn't seem to hold water.

Something must have happened, therefore, to cut down the quality of the stories being written. Editors do not willingly publish bad stories, and do so only when they can't get enough good ones. Nor do writers deliberately write bad stories. At least, I hope they don't.

But one phenomenon is very obvious. It has been characterized by the number of top-ranking writers in the field who -- with a gigantic yowl of GERONIMO! -- have vanished in search of greener pastures.

I ask you now, why?

The ugly fact is, sf writing is not, on the average, a very remunerative business. To the best of my knowledge, only one man has been able to make a comfortable living writing sf. For all the others, their sf writing must be supplemented by writing in other fields, or by other income. And when the "other writing" is more rewarding financially, the writer is either a fool, a bad businessman, or (honor to them, if any such there be) someone who just plain wants to write sf more than anything else. So the full-time writers, with only a few exceptions, devote most of their efforts toward other markets -- particularly, at present, the true-trash-for-men magazines and those other mens' magazines -- Playboy and its imitators -- which appear to be dedicated to the proposition, and also to the principle that sex is good clean fun.

(Before I'm accused of a holier than thou attitude, I might add that I have recently made a sale to Rogue. However, I do not plan to follow up with a full scale entry into this good-paying field -- I don't usually write their breed of copy; the writer writes the stories he can think of -- not the ones he can't. The ones I think of happen to be science fiction.)

It is possible that the full-time writer is exposed to another influence -- his agent. An agent, by definition, is a businessman, and he is only incidentally interested in artistic satisfaction. And the agent is not without influence over his writers. I have no doubt that at least some agents have persuaded their authors into more lucrative fields -- which has helped both writer and agent financially, but many times has left science fiction the poorer.

Conclusion: only the part-time writer is financially able to devote all his writing to sf. Unfortunately, there are too few good part time writers. Most of them, if they were any good, would be turning it out full time. Unable to do this, either for lack of talent or lack of productivity, they can continue to write sf. But even to these, the call of greener pastures is not unheard -- and off they go.

This raises the question, what makes the pastures greener? Several facts

emerge. First of all, the men's magazines, almost without exception, pay more than the best-paying sf magazine. And even confession magazines consider 3¢ per word rock bottom. Most sf magazines can't pay this kind of money for the simple reason that they don't have that kind of money; they don't sell enough copies to justify any greater payment than they have been making.

Secondly, the past couple of years has seen several very fine sf magazines cease publication. We all regret this, but we cannot argue with the cold fact that they were losing money, and none of the publishers had enough money that they didn't care what happened to it. As a consequence, sf writers have had fewer places in which their work could be published, and the competition for the remaining available space began to look fearsome. Being a cautious lot (remember, you can't eat rejection slips -- you've had enough to swallow as it is) the writers have declined to compete -- have sought out markets where the competition wasn't so tight.

This brings us to the final point. For the present, at least, the men's magazines are plentiful -- there is a large market for copy -- and they at least give the appearance of being financially successful. And for the writer who must make his bread and butter from his writing it is very discouraging to devote time and effort to a story only to discover that the market it was written for no longer exists.

The question of why sf magazines have poor sales goes deeper into such matters as the entertainment tastes of the American public, which I won't attempt to discuss. The fact exists that sf magazines do not sell very well, and very probably several of those now publishing are publishing at a deficit. We might as well face it.

However, two things are worth mentioning. First, the recent developments toward space flight may well be providing the imaginative stimulation which people once sought in sf. If this is a cause of recent setbacks to sf, it is probably only temporary. Once the novelty has worn off, the mind must find other wonders to be stimulated by. Already, satellites are commonplace, and moon shots will become equally prosaic before long.

Secondly, it is worth pointing out that most sf magazines are given very poor distribution. They do not reach the retail stands where they could be sold. Whether this is a consequence of poor showings in the past -- certainly one factor -- or whether it simply reflects the fierce competition which exists for display space on the newsstands -- this is something I can't answer.

I do believe, though, that since the collapse of American News Co. a few years ago (and, granted, its existence was -- at best -- a very mixed blessing) most sf magazines have had for their distributors (their national distributors, that is -- not to be confused with the local magazine wholesalers) second-string, weak-kneed outfits which -- since they lack top-ranking magazines in their lists -- are unable to exert much persuasion on the local wholesalers through which they must work. Astounding is the one notable exception to this statement -- and Astounding is the one sf magazine that can be found almost anywhere where magazines are for sale.

It may be that, as the number of magazines being published dwindles, the quality of the stories being published may improve. This may have already happened, but I see few signs. Certainly, we can expect the more marginal writers to fall by the wayside, or go elsewhere. But also some of the remaining real talents will be persuaded to seek publication in fields where the opportunity of making a sale is not so restricted. Therefore, while I have hopes, I remain pessimistic.

I do not mean to say, by all this, that magazine sf is dead. It must be borne in mind that, proportionately, more sf magazines have survived into the present day than have mystery magazines, western magazines, sports-story magazines, or magazines devoted to love stories. (Unless you count confession magazines.) I do believe that magazine sf is presently in a very weakened condition, and seems to be getting even

weaker. But we still have that occasional work of real worth, entertainment value, and originality -- and still, in some magazines, at least, a fairly high level of general competence -- and a thing should be judged in terms of its successes, not its failures.

I don't know if anything can be done to improve the present situation. Certainly, no obvious salvation is in sight. If the writers could be put under some kind of obligation to write nothing but masterpieces, and if editors could be persuaded to publish only masterpieces, we might get somewhere. But this is not possible. The writers -- those still writing -- are doing the best they know how, even though this is often not good enough. Editors would greatly enjoy publishing nothing but masterpieces; unfortunately, they have to publish stories selected from the manuscripts offered them.

And the only way to woo back those who have deserted would be to present them with a healthy, well-established market for their stories.

All we need, in other words, is a philanthopist with a million bucks who doesn't care what happens to it.

Nor do I believe that the expanding paperback market offers a completely satisfactory substitute. Certainly, in most categories, the pocketbook has replaced the magazine as a source of entertainment literature. This may well happen also with sf -- but I don't like it. It is my belief that the pocketbook does not quite replace the magazine.

Most of the science fiction magazines concentrate on novelettes and short stories. Astounding and Galaxy do publish serials, and Amazing does run things which are called novels -- usually rather short novels. But, while there have been many fine and memorable novels in science fiction, the novelette is the natural form of the science fiction story as we know it today.

I say the novelette rather than the short story because most of the time it is impractical to compress a fully-realized sf setting, idea content, and plot into a short story's restricted length. On the other hand, the novel tends to depend too much on plot construction rather than idea content -- which may make a very good story, but which tends to overshadow science fiction's special qualities.

Unlike the magazine, the pocketbook emphasizes the novel and almost ignores the shorter forms. The only exceptions are the Star SF collections of original short stories (which are almost like issues of a magazine in basic nature, if not in format or publication schedule) and the collections of short stories reprinted from the magazines.

We can ignore the reprint collections in this discussion, since they depend on the magazines for their material. The collections of original short stories and novelettes are another matter, and it may well be that, some day, they will replace the magazine. But I doubt it.

Anthologies like the Star series certainly have advantages over the magazines. Not only do they receive, in general, much better distribution, but they are not pulled off sale after a month or two to make room for the next issue. Several issues of a series can be displayed side by side, and there is nothing odd about it. In practice, it doesn't usually work out quite so ideally; the average pocketbook has an effective on-sale period running only a few weeks. Or less. Nevertheless, there is not the same compulsion to remove pocketbooks from sale (unless they are just plain not selling) as for dated magazines.

But neither does the pocketbook series build up the same identification as an entity that a magazine does. The Star series is, of course, a try in that direction, but with wide-spaced and indefinitely scheduled publication dates, plus the pocketbook format, each issue in the series tends to be thought of as an individual collection of short stories -- not as part of a series.

Also, sf pocketbooks, while presumably profitable to their publishers, are con-

considerably less profitable than other types of pocketbooks. Most pocketbook publishers report sf books as having the smallest average sale of any of the generalized types of fiction. Even so notable a series as Judith Merrill's annual anthologies, published by Dell Books, are given what can only be described as token distribution -- which is a good indication of what Dell's sales department thinks of its potential. (I do not make this statement carelessly; the local wholesaler in my own area -- in spite of his protests! -- receives a far smaller allotment of the Merrill anthology than of even the dreariest Dell western.)

Finally, most sf pocketbooks are selected for publication by editors who do not have an understanding of sf's basic nature, virtues, and advantages. To them, it is simply another form of entertainment fiction. This is fine if all you want is space opera. This is fine so long as much of the work being published in pocketbooks is derived from magazine sources. And this is fine so long as the stories are written by writers familiar with and sympathetic to the traditions and qualities of sf.

But the traditions and qualities were developed in the magazines and have been maintained by the magazines. Cut off from this source, an inevitable process of drift would begin. Perhaps there would be some profit in this -- an unchanging literature, or one with a too-rigid tradition, is well along to becoming a dead literature. But it would be a drift without guidance. There would be a tendency for sf in pocketbooks to become more "commercial" and less thoughtful than the sf we know. (Consider the recent evolution of the "mystery" novel.) I vividly (and with disgust) recall the slickly conceived and executed stories of Kendell Foster Crossen during the early fifties; they are an example of what I mean. They looked like sf, and even had some of the taste. But they were certainly not what I think of when I think of science fiction.

For the same reason, while it is true that -- at least -- general magazines are publishing some science fiction, I doubt that this field offers any real hope. Restricted by that fearful, boneheaded image of the average reader, the general magazine is compelled to publish only the most rudimentary sort of sf, and very old-hat stuff it is, most of the time.

Perhaps I am too pessimistic. I hope I am. But I do not foresee any great improvement in conditions in the sf magazine field. Nor do I see any practical way by which conditions can be improved. I do not like this, but dislike of a fact bears no relation to whether or not it is true. We might as well face it -- with hope, with stubbornness, but not with confidence.

MESKYS, EDMUND R.

1) Maybe not dead, but it will continue to decline in '60. During the last six months I have heard rumors of the impending folding of virtually every magazine in the field. The ONE magazine about which I heard no such rumor is, strangely enough, Amazing Stories. The credibility of these rumors ranged from unlikely to probable, and I would be surprised if more than seven of the present nine magazines are still being published a year from now, or less than five. After a few fold over the next few years, things might stabilize and five or so continue to exist for quite a time. I guess that if some publisher decided to take a risk and put out a new magazine because he has nothing better to do (the way the first Famous Monsters was produced) others might jump on the bandwagon to start another boomlet like, but smaller than, that of '57 started by Infinity.

2) Several things; progress, distribution, the boom of '53 and '57, and movies in descending order of importance.

I have basically the same thoughts on the effects of scientific and engineering

progress on science fiction as was expressed by L. Sprague de Camp at the '59 Philadelphia conference. I remember reading a remainder copy of Nicolson's Voyages to the Moon just about the time the U.S. first announced project Vanguard and wondering how long it would take for science fiction to die. As you undoubtedly remember, Voyages tells of the speculative aeronautical and astronautical fiction published before the first balloon flight, and ends with the note that after a period of great popularity this form of literature died as people realized the nature and difficulties of air travel. By analogy, this should spell the doom of space opera, and the realistic yarns will probably merge with war books (viz Frank Harvey's borderline Air Force!).

Distribution and display is what killed Satellite, and will probably finish off Science Fiction Stories, Future and Fantastic Universe. I don't know how it is outside of New York City, but these three are virtually impossible to find here. And despite the article "The Undistributed Middle" in Inside a few years back, I put the blame on the distributor and not the newsie. My dealer knows I buy everything except F&SF, and tries to get it for me. At times, he has requested a magazine from the distributor five or six times before he got a copy of it, and then just one. Of the magazines they do send him, they usually send only one copy. If something happens and they send two or even three, the extras are sold before the next issue comes out; but they persist in only sending one copy.

The booms, especially that of '52, produced so much gorsh dern awful crud that it must have driven a number of people from the field. If someone had picked up the second issue of Spaceway or any issue of Cosmos, out of curiosity, I doubt that anything could convince him to ever try science fiction again. These are the only real crudzines I remember, but there must have been others (many of which I never read).

Least of all, the movies and "comics" must have scared a number of potential people out of trying the stuff (viz "Worst Foot Forward" in Inside).

3) Buy all of the magazines, which will be a little, but not much help. Of course, if that is done, then poor stories must be vigorously stepped on with letters. I stopped buying F&SF because the annish had four terrible stories which made me quite angry. Had I followed my own advice, I would have written a blistering letter instead of just dropping the magazine. I have also dropped Galaxy Novels for similar reasons.

4) It will augment the meager supplies found in magazine form, but I expect a large part will be borderline like Air Force!, Bombs In Orbit, Red Alert, etc., or disguised as The Rest Shall Die, Live and Let Die, Atlas Shrugged (although the last two are reprints), etc.

5) A sizeable amount of science fiction will be appearing, apparently, for the next few years in disguised form (as the books cited in item #4). P. Schuyler Miller talks at length of this trend in the January, 1960 Astounding under the title "Integration". Good science fiction, not labeled as such, has recently appeared in The Saturday Evening Post and Good Housekeeping, among other places, and on TV (Murder and the Android). Anyhow, if science fiction is integrated with mainstream, this will probably cause another decline in, if not extinction of, the field of pure science fiction magazines. Also, it could spell the end of science fiction fandom (although an active amateur publishing fandom would probably remain, having no connections with science fiction).

At the last ESFA meeting several people brought up the idea that Campbell is trying to escape the death of the field by developing a new market. Explicitly, he hopes to sell his magazine primarily by subscription with very limited newsstand distribution. Also, he hopes that his audience will consist mainly of scientists. That is, his magazine would become a fictional Scientific American having the same audience and method of distribution.

I don't think he's aiming at the scientists, what with all of the cracks he's

recently been making about them, but he might be aiming at the engineers and lab technicians. If this is what he is aiming for, and he succeeds, then Astounding might still be around after the regular market has vanished and all the others are gone. Another thing said then was that he is giving the magazine such a personality and flavor that, should something happen to him, it is doubtful that Street and Smith will be able to find a replacement to carry on.

MILLER, P. SCHUYLER

ON THE DEATH BY SLOW POISON OF SCIENCE FICTION

1) Is magazine science fiction dead?

I think this has now become merely an aspect of the question: "Are fiction magazines dead?" The question may be even broader: "Are American general-interest magazines dead?" (I think that scientific and special interest magazines: trade, hobbies, fashion, some 'upper bracket' literary, will continue.)

I am afraid all magazines are dying, for reasons I will guess at under No. 2. A year or so ago, when I spot-checked the whole city of Pittsburgh in search of a missing issue of F&SF, I found one large drugstore in one of the major sectors of the city which had not had a new issue of The Saturday Evening Post for two weeks--and didn't care. And we're worrying about Satellite!

2) Whodunit?

I suspect that the passing of science fiction is one element in a Toynbeeian 'time of troubles,' and as such is the result of an involved complex of cultural forces. (This is an involved way of saying "I don't know, but I hate distributors.")

A. Ourselves. We, as a people, don't read as we used to. For the present generation, television is probably the reason, but that doesn't excuse the generation just before television, who weren't reading either.

I'll qualify this to say that we don't read as a chosen form of entertainment. We do read for information, and this may account for the success of the 'high-priced' paperbacks on a vast variety of non-fictional topics. The writers' magazines say there's a better market for articles than for fiction. Even the girly magazines are read primarily by free-loaders: I can always tell when a new lot is in, because I can't get near the magazine stand in Kaufmann's Department Store book section.

Because reading is no longer important to us, we can take it or let it go. I suspect that Ed Wood and I are the only people in Pittsburgh who try to get hold of all the science fiction and fantasy magazines, and Ed is the one who really tries, because I haven't seen Ray Palmer's Flying Saucers for more than two years, and couldn't care less. I hunt for them out of habit, and as a completist, but I don't read them all, or even try to. Others read one or two magazines consistently, and don't care whether the ones they don't buy are published or not. I suppose this is partly the effect of the one-time glut of magazines, when the people who had tried to read everything finally gave up because of the quantity and lack of quality.

B. The Outlets. With mighty few exceptions, stores now carry magazines--at least in cities--as a service to their customers. There is not enough profit in them to make the deal good business. In high-rent districts (downtown; fashionable or university neighborhoods), the space devoted to magazine display is losing money for the drugstore or newsstand that handles them, because the same space could be used for records or cosmetics or patent medicines, on which the profit is good.

Since the outlets sell magazines as a service to regular customers, what happens when the customers no longer care whether issues appear regularly? The store owner doesn't give a damn either, and lets the distributor bring what he will, when he feels

like it.

In some places the nuisance factor is throwing magazines out completely. Adolescents and tired businessmen free-loading sex magazines and leaving them thumb-smudged and drool-marked...kids bugging through the comics...girls with the movie and rock-and-roll magazines...keep 'serious' readers from getting near the rack, or even into the store.

But the key fact is that in most places, stores no longer want to sell magazines -- science fiction or any other kind.

C. The Distributor. Here is my personal villain, against whom I was preaching as far back as the Cleveland Convention. Ed Wood's experiences on a nation-wide scale, including such big cities as Chicago, and my own this past weekend in New York, convince me that I am right.

Distributors can solve the whole thing if they want to. They can take the responsibility and initiative that the store owner and the reader no longer take, or force them to take. But they aren't, and they won't. They don't give a damn either, and through some economic perversion that I can't fathom, they seem to feel that they can make more money not selling magazines than trying to sell them. Science fiction magazines, anyway.

AXIOM 1: If you want to sell magazines, you display them where the greatest numbers of people will see them--in the downtown business district, in well-to-do residential districts, in 'highbrow' university sections. They don't in Pittsburgh: apparently to find magazines, you have to go out into the suburbs.

AXIOM 2: If you want to sell magazines, you display them regularly and consistently, month after month, so that faithful readers can count on picking them up. T'ain't so here. Big downtown outlets that do care what they get are given two or three copies of a new issue, or none at all, and a corner drugstore that has never sold more than two or three copies is given 15 or 20--which are promptly sent back. I tried to get the November Fantastic Universe, which has not been put on sale in Pittsburgh, in New York last weekend, and couldn't find it in any of the large newsstands. Larry Shaw recommended the stands near the New York Public Library, but they are no longer open on Sunday and they close early on Saturday nights. In Pittsburgh, an issue of F&SF has been returned for credit (the logotypes, that is) the day they were received, with no attempt to distribute them at all. I believe the same thing happened to the last three issues of Super-Science.

Publishers can keep beating on distributors when this state of affairs is called to their attention. I pass the word on when I can. But I've given up with Ray Palmer's stuff, and I failed on Super-Science because nobody knew whether it was still being published. Most science fiction readers don't care about other magazines as long as they get their one favorite, so who tells the publisher? Nobody.

D. Mathematics. No science fiction magazine prints enough copies so that each issue can be placed on sale in every community in the United States, let alone every drugstore and newsstand.

Let's round off the population at 170,000,000 and the print order of Astounding at 85,000 copies a month. This means one magazine for every 2,000 people. The Pittsburgh area has about a million people, and was sent 500 copies of the F&SF issue that Triangle News never distributed, so my approximation is fairly close. Since mighty few distributors--even the old, noble, community-spirited kind who don't exist--can afford to lug one copy to every hamlet of 2,000 people, they send 'em out a few here and a few there, and skip other outlets entirely. Fifteen years ago, when things were good, an Albany distributor told me that when he got only a few copies of any magazine, he dumped them all in one place, in Albany, and never took any to other outlets there or in surrounding towns in his territory. The bookkeeping was easier

that way . . .

3) How do we fix it?

I dunno, or I'd have been peddling my program long ago.

It still seems to me that the distributor is the key--if there is a key. If the safe door isn't welded shut.

As long as he can make as much money by not selling magazines, or by selling only a few magazines and leaving the rest on the railroad siding (no trucking costs; no time spent opening cartons and counting copies; no bookkeeping; no pickups to make; neighborhood deliveries once or twice a week), he is going to do so.

I suspect that if it were not for the fact that he has to distribute the big national weeklies -- principally Life and Time (I discovered that the Post no longer matters, you recall) -- the distributor would take out other magazines all together, one day a month. One truck and one driver could cover the territory in rotation. Sludgeville gets Astounding on the 1st Monday, and Benson Center doesn't get it until the last Friday. (Quite a few years ago, I once found the August issue of Blue Book in a country drugstore before the July issue had gone on sale in Albany and Schenectady.)

A couple of years ago, when I was doing an article on the Time-Life printing lab for my company magazine, they refused to let me use pictures showing my company's equipment in their lab, though they had plenty of it. The reason: "New York says we're in the business of selling advertising--not publishing." They had turned Alcoa down the week before, for the same reason.

If the big national consumer advertisers decide to pull out of the magazines, there will be no magazines. When that happens, there will be no distribution, no outlets, no magazine stands. All magazines will be like the present literary quarterlies and specialty magazines, sold as a service in bookstores which have to get them direct from the publisher.

And will there be any science fiction magazines then?

If magazines as such don't collapse, then there must be some way of blackmailing distributors into selling the magazines they contract to distribute. I don't know what it is. But until two years ago, Ray Palmer and Bill Crawford could get stacks of their poorest stuff on every corner rack, when you had to hunt all over town for Astounding and Galaxy and F&SF. How did they do it? Why can I now find stacks of If, but no Galaxy? Future everywhere, but no Original SF? The October Fantastic Universe rather well circulated--on the day the November issue went on sale in New York?

4) Is the paperback the answer?

I am coming around to the idea that it may replace both magazines and hardcover books in the United States. For some strange reason, people will pick up a paperback who wouldn't be seen with a magazine -- or a 'real' book. With a few exceptions, the winners in my Astounding popularity poll, a few years ago, were all books that had come out in paperback editions--because the fans who sent in lists hadn't read any other kind. Right now, I suspect that only a serial or a paperback stands a chance of winning a 'Hugo.' A hardcover original just won't be read by enough people in the year it's published; the fans wait for the paperback edition, or for the remainders.

Since science fiction is at present well represented in the paperback field, I think this may be--as you put it--the "point of salvation." What were once serials can appear as paperback novels--and as better novels, since there is no need for the artificial installment structure. Original anthologies like Ballantine's Star series may replace short stories.

5) We're being integrated.

There is one other factor in the picture--or so I said in the column I sent to

Campbell last month-- which affects hardbound books, and may affect paperbacks, though it doesn't now seem as important as it once did in magazines.

Science fiction deliberately segregated itself in 1926, with the first issue of Amazing. Hugo Gernsback began to preach a new religion, and in '26 he built himself a church to preach in. We happily piled into a literary ghetto around the church. We were chosen; we were different; we were elite; we didn't want to be the same as other people. And we didn't want them mucking around with our science fiction, when they didn't know what it was all about.

So science fiction left the general field of popular fiction, where it had flourished in the Munsey era, and became a movement. It became ingrown. It developed its own code of ethics...its own stereotypes (spacewarps; BEM's; time travel; gimmicks)...its own language...its own inner hierarchy (the sectors of fandom)...gospels (fanzines)...heresies (Shaver; dianetics; psi)...pilgrimages (conventions). Stories were full of private jokes, and allusions that only the elite could follow.

We deliberately froze out new readers: neo-fans, who just wanted something different in a good story. We did mighty little missionary work or proselytizing. We didn't want outsiders.

Now--as it must to any minority--comes discrimination from the people we kept outside. They have misconceptions about us, and about science fiction. They won't buy out baskets and wood carving, that we set outside the ghetto gate for tourists. They pay better wages to their own kind, and they may not hire us at all. From being a smug, contented, self-segregated minority, we've become an oppressed minority. Our talented young people get out...try to pass as ordinary writers and artists. Some of them come home on vacation visits, but they feel uncomfortable in the old environment. They're becoming outsiders themselves. They can't understand what the beatniks of the new generation are talking about.

So much for analogy. It seems to me that science fiction is again becoming integrated into the main stream of fiction. More and more writers from outside, with no special background in science fiction, are selling novels on science fiction themes -- some good, some quite crude and clumsy by our standards. Science fiction elements are getting back into mystery plots; experienced novelists are having fun with fantasy. So, if the magazines do die, it may not matter. Science fiction may be back where it used to be in the days of Burroughs and Merritt and John Taine and many another: a minor part of fiction, that good writers aren't ashamed to write, and major publishers aren't ashamed to sell. (Mez Bradley said a while back, in Yandro, that this is the future of good science fiction movies: they'll just be good movies, with no label attached.)

And for my money, if science fiction can restore to popular fiction some of the elements of storytelling and imagination and idea-juggling that have been missing for a long time, it may save reading as a part of American culture.

MILLS, ROBERT P.

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. In terms of F&SF, at least, I believe that there is a solid -- though not enormous -- body of readers who are steadily interested in imaginative, reasonably literate short fiction. I believe that there are many more readers who would enjoy that sort of fiction if they knew about it -- and who will sooner or later find out about it. I wish the number were larger; I suspect it is not, for two major, and a number of minor, reasons: The major reasons:

(a) "Science fiction" connotes cheap pulp to almost everybody I know who does

not read it. Unfortunately, there is some reason for this reputation--an unfortunate percentage of the writing in the field is undeniably bad.

(b) There is not enough fresh, good writing in the field. A fair amount of competent re-working of old themes, a much too large amount of incompetent re-working of old themes and working out of ridiculous themes, and virtually no stimulating new concepts worked out with inspiration or high skill.

However, despite the regrettably small percentage, some good stories are being written, and I suspect that their numbers will increase.

It is true of all forms of literature that rich periods are followed by slack periods, and slack periods by rich periods. It is unreasonable to expect talent to flow in a steady stream as water does from a faucet.

4) Original paperbacks are good for the field, I think, because they offer a source of income within the field to writers who do not wish to go outside the field, but at the same time must earn more money than they presently can from science fiction magazines.

5) These remarks take off in general from F&SF's editorial approach to the field, because that is the approach with which I am most familiar. I should think, however, that the problems and prospects of most other magazines in the field are essentially very much the same.

NORTON, ANDRE

Since my own sales, orders from publishers, etc., have increased very much during the past two years, I am not a very good judge of the 'death' of science fiction. However, I do write for a specialized group in which there is not too much competition, so I can not take my own experiences as a measuring stick. I do feel that my field -- the teen-age science fiction -- was badly hit by very poor editorial selection of books which happened in a rush about four or five years ago. Librarians who

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admittedly knew little of the field bought heavily of this poor stuff and now fight shy of the whole line, not being able to tell one type of book from another.

I can not judge about the magazines. Myself, I read Astounding with a lot of pleasure, Galaxy with not so much enjoyment and The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction third. I dropped my subscription to two others due to the poor quality of the stories -- the 'lunatic fringe' articles about flying saucers, etc.

The original paperback is good -- I know from my own fan mail that many of my books first fall, as originals or paperback reprints, into the hands of readers who will not, or do not buy the more expensive trade editions. To my mind the wider spread the circle of readers the better and the level of paperbacks is higher than the corresponding issues in historical adventure or mystery. A lot of good writing in the paperbacks.

It is my opinion that the group of the faithful will always be limited. In the first place, I am told over and over again by librarians and teachers that the younger readers of science fiction are all in the upper IQ group and that they are impatient with sloppy writing. Those readers call for more stuff, but it must fit their standards and not be a cheap super-man or monsters from Mars type. Since these younger readers are of superior ability, it must also be true that when they collect or read adult material, they are still of the better educated, imaginative, wide-read crowd, and you must produce quality for them. The number of readers may long be limited to the same group, and since they are well grounded in the basic story plots, etc. the authors will have to produce better than pot-boilers to hold them.

Sorry that I can not offer you better than this. But I only know how my own small field is affected.

O'MEARA, JAMES H.

1) I feel that magazine science fiction is dying. It will be a slow, lingering death -- but death will come eventually. Very soon the only place where you will be able to get competent science fiction of any sort will be in the men's magazines. The rates they pay will be the only place that writers can go in order to earn a living.

2) I feel that Campbell influenced the field to a great extent. He influences it because most of the writers slant their stories for him since he pays the best rates within the field. If they do not sell to Astounding, they are placed with lower paying magazines.

3) I don't know of anything that can be done to correct the decline in the magazine field. There is a tremendous demand for science fiction but for some reason it does not carry into the magazine field. Even better distribution of the magazines would not help. The demand for science fiction magazines is just not there.

4) I think the original paperback is in a much better position in the field. It is not that they get better distribution. I think it is because readers, for some reason, would rather buy a paperback than a magazine.

5) When I was in high school, science fiction had always been the most popular fiction form in the school library. It is a Catholic high school for boys and has about 1,200 students. It is a new school and I was in the second class to be graduated from it. The library was opened in my junior year and gave me an opportunity to see the development of it from the beginning. When the library opened it had 19 books under the science fiction classification. The demand for science fiction, even from the first day it was opened, was so great that two years later there were 57 titles in the science fiction classification.

The demand for science fiction was so great that it was the most popular type of

fiction during the two years that I used the library.

When I returned for a visit to my school after almost four years I stopped in at the library and checked to see if there had been any change in the reading habits of the students. The card catalog which I checked had 87 titles under the science fiction heading. I asked the librarian about the popularity of science fiction and she told me that it is the most popular type of fiction in the library and that at least a third of the students read it. Admittedly, most of the books in the library are juveniles, but there are at least 20 good adult science fiction books and the Heinlein juveniles are so popular that there are three copies of each and they are almost worn out from heavy use.

The thing that is so hard to understand is this: If science fiction is so popular why don't the magazines sell. It can't be only money, because when I was in school the students who were interested in science fiction always had paperbacks but they never had magazines. Even magazines designed for the younger readers were never seen. The students interested in science fiction seemed to get what they wanted from the library and paperbacks.

There is a great potential market for science fiction here but these younger readers just don't seem interested in magazines, and after they graduate they seem to be less interested in science fiction. If there was some way to keep these younger readers interested in science fiction after they graduate and go out into jobs or the army it would help the whole field, by providing replacements for the older readers whose periodic rotation take them away. The interest of these younger readers seems to die after they get out of high school, and their connection with the field, if any, is that they occasionally pick up a paperback.

I feel that there will always be a demand for hardcover books for the libraries and that the paperbacks will continue to do well -- but the magazines will slowly die out. The demand for juvenile science fiction, especially, will continue to be great and the paperbacks can count on a large readership from those people who are still mildly interested in science fiction.

PALMER, RAYMOND A.

1) Yes, I feel that magazine science fiction is dead.

2) No, I do not feel that any single person, action, incident, etc. is responsible. Actual events today are more amazing. Also a reaction to "fiction" is very violent in all fields, but particularly science fiction.

4) Looking to original paperbacks, and books, for fans is the only answer -- and there will be a market.

5) Why doesn't Fandom -- (next convention) take up the subject of forming a book club of their own, publish and buy their own selection of science fiction book manuscripts, and use the profits to finance future conventions? 2,000 members who agree to buy four books a year at \$3.50 can thus salvage all good science fiction written today!

Count on me as a life member!

PALMER, RODNEY

See item under Starrett, Vincent

((In response to the mention by Vincent Starrett in the Chicago Tribune Magazine of Books, I received three replies. One was a pamphlet; the most repulsive,

stupid, asinine tract that I have ever witnessed. Another was simply a kind soul who mailed me the clipping from their paper without comment, and this was appreciated. The third, a serious reply to a serious query, is the following by Rodney Palmer. As far as I have been able to determine, Mr. Palmer, a Chicagoan, has no professional connection with the field of science fiction, and has never made contact with Chicago fandom. As a complete outside-the-field view, Mr. Palmer's reply certainly deserves our undivided attention. It must be remembered that Mr. Palmer is not writing in direct response to the questionnaire, and is not covering the specific five points. EK))

This is a subject upon which I've done quite a bit of thinking and wondering myself. I don't believe science fiction is dead--but it's been knocked around quite a bit. We still have Sheckley, Anderson, Pohl -- though I take the liberty of presuming that Sheckley is in a class by himself. The field that it might be said Bradbury abandoned, he took up with a vengeance, because Somebody, somewhere, likes science fiction and won't let the field starve for good reading.

Here's my position: My father read science fiction--the big flat Amazings, an occasional Astounding, maybe Weird Tales. Mostly I associate my interest with the pulp-adventure science fiction era -- the very good early Amazings under Ray Palmer, Startling, Thrilling Wonder, Captain Future.

I could never dig Astounding in the Street & Smith era, and I can't dig it today.

I think science fiction ought to possess sentiment. Somebody once said that sentiment was the soul of art--but don't quote me. I'm not sure. I do know that most of the stories I liked impressed me with the grandeur of the subject--one felt depths of distance, space, majestic worlds.

I think that, disastrously, science fiction started to take itself too seriously. No humor. When was the last time you read a really funny science fiction story? "Pete Manx"? Some of the humorous time-travel paradoxes, the robot stories? Sure, some science fiction was zany. But it was just three or four thousand words of comedy relief at the back of the book. I vote for some pseudo-science once in awhile. Why not, if a good story emerges?

Sentiment: Sentimental about the future, as we sometimes are of the past. "Lost Planet" by Barry Storm, in Thrilling Wonder, embodies the idea I'm trying to get at. Sentiment, not mush.

And so what if the manly virtues are exaggerated a bit in a science fiction story? Exaggeration -- pulp action style -- can isolate a point and put it over.

I would say sentiment, action, comedy relief in its place, a scientific gimmick with emphasis on weird results rather than technical causes. The slant ought to be exaggerated-masculine-virtuous with disdain for the boudoir; adventure, rough-house, the call to far worlds.

A prop of early science fiction was the older man--usually a scientist--who was usually a friend of the hero, and who often fought right beside him, ray-guns blasting and all.

PRICE, GEORGE W.

1) No, it is not dead, yet, though it has certainly declined. There are still nine magazines, which is the same as when I started reading science fiction in 1947. But the magazines now seem to lack the health and enthusiasm which they had then. It is not yet possible to say whether the magazines will continue to decline down to ultimate death, or whether they can stabilize on a lower level.

2) I do not blame any single person for this decline. I believe that the largest

single cause -- though by no means the only cause -- is the attempt to make science fiction into "literature." It is hard to set a date, but about 1948 there began to arise delusions of "maturity" and "social significance."

Authors and editors had been content to write and publish material frankly aimed at various levels of intellect and scientific interest, ranging from the highly cerebral stories of Astounding to the wild adventure of Planet. No one, least of all the editors of Planet, claimed that it was great literature; it was just fun to read. Of course, I do not claim that everything published in those days was good; much of it was crud, in obedience to Sturgeon's Law ("Ninety percent of everything is crud"). But science fiction compared well with other fields of writing.

Then standard book publishers discovered science fiction. It was at once noticed that the stories selected for anthologization were very predominately from Astounding. The obvious, if erroneous, conclusion was drawn that only ASF-type stories are "good." That, I think, was the first turning point. A trend began towards copying ASF. Galaxy was started as a shamelessly exact replica of Astounding.

Within about two years, Galaxy introduced, or at least made explicit, the second tendency which has contributed to our downfall. This was the emphasis on "literacy," in the very snobbish sense. Here came the concentration on slick writing and "character development" at the expense of the science-fictional qualities.

Apparently we have forgotten what science fiction is; we have allowed, and even encouraged, a blurring of the distinction between science fiction and mainstream. We have fallen under the delusion that "good" writing must devote itself to "character development," to which the scientific and futuristic elements must defer. It is perfectly true that in mainstream fiction the world of society and technology serves merely as a backdrop against which the study of human character proceeds. In this sense, the best mainstream fiction is timeless. In science fiction, on the other hand, it is the future world of society and technology that is the primary subject, and the development of individual character is -- or at least should be -- distinctly secondary. In contradistinction to mainstream, in science fiction the development of character has point only insofar as it demonstrates the nature of the future society and its technology, by showing how these affect and shape various personalities. To be sure, there can be no sharp dividing line between science fiction in the sense I have outlined, and mainstream. Stories dealing with sociology or psychology, for instance, can hardly avoid character analysis, nor should it be avoided, so long as it arises naturally from the speculative ideas which are the science-fictional bases of the stories. But let us bear in mind that science fiction is not just "mainstream laid in the future."

Above, I attributed the decline of science fiction partially to 1) copying Astounding, and 2) the delusion of "maturity." Now, it is not that the ASF-type story is bad (personally, it's my favorite), or that maturity is wrong per se. But these elements have been pushed to the exclusion of all others, such as the aforementioned adventure stories of the Planet variety, until the latter have virtually disappeared. This has been hailed as the "coming of age" of science fiction.

The difficulty is that there are really very few good ASF-type stories or truly mature stories being written. The result has been a tremendous outpouring of bad imitations.

There are enough good thoughtful stories being produced to supply perhaps three monthly magazines. Astounding (or should we now say Analog?) and Fantasy and Science Fiction make two, and there is no third, the remaining good thoughtful stories being distributed more or less evenly through the other seven magazines. Those seven, consequently, assay very high in crud. Most of them, most of the time, read as if they subsisted on Campbell's and Mills' rejects. (Galaxy is now a special case. Sui generis, it is not only full of pseudo-maturity and over-slick writing, it also tries

to be cute.)

I hesitate to make statements as to what other people think, but I strongly suspect that by choosing this path of pseudo-maturity, we have cut off a large number of prospective readers. The new reader, no matter what magazine he samples, will find pretty much the same kind of story; and by the sheer statistics of it, the stories will probably be bad. If the ASF-F&SF types of stories do not appeal to him -- assuming that he sticks long enough to read the good examples -- then he is repelled from science fiction.

If we had a few magazines publishing good adventure stories, they would, I suggest, first bring in many readers who are not attracted by the more thoughtful stories. Second, they would be an introduction to the field for those, especially youngsters, who as they mature will find an appetite for more cerebral material.

It is to the discredit of fandom that it actively denigrated and derided the unthoughtful adventure fiction, without bothering to draw the necessary distinction between good and bad adventure stories. To qualify as good, an adventure story should be entertaining in its plot, readable in its writing, and reasonably accurate in such science as it may mention. It is pointless to denounce stories for not having deep character study, brilliant speculation, or cosmic significance, if they were not intended to be more than passing entertainment for relaxed moments.

For examples of what I consider top-notch adventure science fiction, I nominate the series of "Galactic barbarian" stories that Poul Anderson did for Planet from about 1948 to 1952. Anderson's tales particularly appealed to me because they proved that it is possible to have action without stupidity, sex without pornography or psychosis, and conflict without sadism. Well, there is only one Poul Anderson, and perhaps it would be too much to expect that other authors could write adventure up to his standard. But surely there must be any number who could write passably good adventure stories, where now they write poor ASF-F&SF type stories, and probably heave a sign of relief for being able to make the change.

To sum up my view of what has caused the decline of science fiction: There has been a disastrous drive to puff science fiction up to the status of great literature, with the result that we have suffered a deluge of pseudo-mature garbage, while the less complex adventure stories which should be the ballasting bulk of science fiction have been grossly neglected and even scorned.

3) My recommendations for corrective measures are obvious from the preceding comments. The editors -- and the critics, including organized fandom -- should realize that there will never be much good thoughtful science fiction written, and the magazines should therefore be filled out with good adventure stories rather than with pretentious half-literate balderdash. As readers and critics, we should be careful to keep our criticism appropriate to the type of story. That is, it is not legitimate to lambaste a simple adventure story for being a simple adventure story; it should be criticized in terms of whether it is a good or bad adventure story.

4) The paperbacks have certain commercial advantages over the magazines, notably better distribution and a prolonged on-sale time. Therefore, it seems quite probable that novels will appear more and more as original paperbacks. Even now, Astounding is the only magazine that runs serials regularly. I see no reason why there should not be peaceful coexistence between the paperbacks and the magazines, with the former carrying the novels and the latter handling everything of less than novel length. If the magazines finally go under, I believe that it will be due to their own shortcomings, as already discussed, rather than paperback competition. I doubt if the disappearance of the magazines would lead to a corresponding increase in paperbacks carrying short stories. Rather, the market for shorter works will simply contract, and possibly vanish. Should this prove to be the case, the paperbacks could

be called at best only a partial salvation. I think we can be reasonably sure that science fiction novels will continue to appear indefinitely, but the outlook for short stories is very uncertain. I am reminded that prior to the advent of the science fiction magazines, nearly all imaginative fiction was in novel length, for original book publication.

5) There have been a few recent signs of increasing health in the field, in terms of story value, if not economically. First, I think that Amazing has shown a commendable improvement since adopting the policy of a novel in each issue. Almost all of these novels have been at least passable, and a few have been quite good. Second, the publication of Heinlein's Starship Soldier marks a healthy step into controversy. However, it is far too early to claim that we are due for a renaissance, or even a revival.

REYNOLDS, MACK

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead. Sick, but not dead.

2) Certainly no person, or even combination of persons is responsible for the present situation. I think our main difficulty has been a lack of ability to keep up with developing times. I know I'm being far from original in pointing out that it became necessary to seek new themes when our former ones moved out of our magazines onto the front pages. If we are to regain as our readers those persons with imagination we must deal with other than the old saws that we have been writing and rewriting for so long.

3) The question then, of course, becomes what themes? I am of the opinion that this decade is going to be one of the most decisive ones that man has ever seen. And I believe that people of imagination will be increasingly caught up in the social changes the decade will see. I think then that at least one of our new themes should be the social sciences which, along with sex and humor, have been all but undealt with in science fiction. I know, the cry goes up, "But the science fiction reader is not interested in social sciences!" And that makes me laugh. Probably the biggest science fiction best seller ever to hit America was Bellamy's Looking Backward. At least one of Jack London's best sellers, The Iron Heel was science fiction. George Orwell's 1984 and Huxley's Brave New World are more recent examples. Hilton's Lost Horizon is also a recent modern example. These were all top best sellers. And they all dealt with socio-economic questions.

Frankly, and I'm speaking now as a reader, I'm getting sick and tired of reading stories based ten thousand years in the future where all the sciences have progressed fabulously except for one. In The Weapons Shops stories what is the form of government? Feudalism. In the Foundation stories, what kind of socio-economic system prevails? Feudalism. Hell, far from evolving new societies, they don't even have capitalism; they've gone backwards.

I don't believe I am alone, as a science fiction reader, in being fascinated with what is going on in the world and what will develop in the next comparatively few years. I'd like to see some stories based on the current battle for men's minds. I'd like to see some stories based on anarchism, technocracy, socialism, industrial feudalism, syndicalism, and communism (both the pseudo and real varieties). On an adult basis, of course, we've had enough of the good guys and bad guys crud.

4) No opinion, but I'm anxious to read those of others.

5) None.

RUSSELL, ERIC FRANK

1) No, I do not think that magazine science fiction is dead. The demand fluctuates, always has done and will continue to do so. It has its ups and downs. Every time there's an up the excitable call it a 'boom' and every time there's a down the gloomy-minded view it as a 'collapse.' I'm now old enough and ugly enough to have become philosophical about such things and to accept it as inevitable that changes must occur as time rolls on and that, on the whole, adverse changes are counterbalanced by beneficial ones.

2) No. I don't see anything genuinely abnormal about the present situation. Tough problems exist -- but tough problems always have existed. Thirty years ago the big problem was that of building an economically satisfactory readership for stuff then generally regarded as 'ridiculous.' Today, the big problem is that of how to retain at one and the same time readers thirty years apart in taste and outlook. It isn't easy and it won't get any easier.

3) What can we do to correct it? Nothing that is not being done already. Given that they are in their right minds, publishers, authors and editors do the best they can, because it pays them to do so. But the readership has the final say; if anyone's best isn't good enough for them they cease to buy it. To that there is no answer for the obvious reason that nobody can do more than his best. So the inefficient magazine folds up and the efficient one keeps going. By 'efficient' I mean the magazine that succeeds in pleasing the largest proportion of its readers most of the time.

4) Should we look to the original paperback as a point of salvation? I think the influence of paperbacks is, if anything, beneficial insofar as they tend to introduce a bigger readership to science fiction. But since such paperbacks are bought mostly by readers who are already science fiction addicts, the percentage of gain isn't large. On the whole, I don't think paperbacks have much influence on science fiction magazine sales and what influence they do have is to the good. Further, I consider them complementary to magazines but not a substitute for them. In any single issue a magazine has something a paperback lacks, namely, variety. Readers who want variety -- which plenty do -- buy magazines, either instead of or in addition to the paperbacks.

5) In the long, long ago the science fiction magazines catered for a readership 95% of whom were in the 15-25 years old age-group. Today, the range stretches from 12 to 55 years -- with a tiny minority of old-timers actually in their 60s. The youngsters enjoy and regard as "new" various ideas, themes and plots that the oldsters consider to be old hat, worn to death years ago. They also regard as "silly" and "far-fetched" themes that oldsters consider "refreshing" and "thought-provoking" -- psionic plots, for example. Further to complicate matters, it is natural for young people to want action (as in space operas) and equally natural for oldsters to be more interested in thoughtful themes based on human problems. Worse still, it's natural for young readers to be intensely vocal about their likes and dislikes while older ones say little and content themselves with buying or ceasing to buy. The unfortunate editor who seeks reactions from his readership is therefore likely to get a distorted view from a vocal minority and, if he falls into the trap of trying to cater for it, will do so at the risk of losing the readers who don't bother to speak up.

We're getting rapidly to the point where it is going to become well-nigh impossible to cater to any one magazine for tastes so widely divergent. A magazine with a deliberate "middle-aged policy" should come off best but even that won't succeed wholly. Seems to me that as time goes on the position will sort itself out and we'll end up with some mags aimed at and only at the young readership while others are slanted at and only at the older ones. Each of these two types may have a minor over-

lap with the other, gained from elderly readers still young in mind and from young readers old beyond their years, but, on the whole, they'll be quite different kinds of magazines aimed at quite different kinds of mentalities.

In other words, the entire science fiction field is splitting in two and the \$64 question is whether either portion is large enough by itself to maintain a magazine by its own strength alone. There comes a point -- say, for argument's sake, a circulation figure of 40,000 per month -- below which it just isn't a business proposition to publish a magazine. I've no opinion about whether a magazine is likely to get by in such circumstances; it's something that remains to be seen.

As for authors, assuming that each and every one of them is doing his genuine best to provide entertainment the best way he knows how, I cannot see how they can do any more. The writer not doing his best will pay for it eventually by killing his own market stone dead. On every writer's lap there sits an unwelcome ghost named Nemesis.

RUSSELL, RAY

Let me preface my remarks by saying that even though I have written some science fiction and have, as an editor, published some, I have not written or edited enough of it to consider myself anywhere near an authority. I am, however, a fan.

You ask, first of all, if I think magazine science fiction is dead. I do believe that the fiction in the specialized science fiction magazines, which heretofore has been excellent, has been on the decline. These magazines, which were paying not bad money in the boom years, are paying very little money now; hence, writers are either sending their stories to the slicks, writing hurriedly and badly and in volume in order to keep alive at the low rates, or they are abandoning science fiction altogether and are going to mystery, detective, and so on. I base this knowledge on personal observation and on talks I have had with writers.

I have always felt that the big circulation slick magazines should publish much more science fiction than they do. At one time, magazines like Collier's would publish an occasional science fiction story. Collier's is now dead, and with the single exception of Playboy, I can not off hand think of any slick magazine that is receptive to this genre. Even some of the Playboy imitators, though they imitate Playboy in many ways, do not publish science fiction. A man who was an editor on one such magazine told me that it was a policy of the magazine to reject science fiction because "it might alienate the older readers" (1). But Playboy, if I may toot our own horn a bit, has always been receptive to science fiction and always will be. I don't know if you saw a recent issue of Ted Cogswell's Publications of the Institute of Twenty-First Century Studies in which I made some comments about Playboy's attitude toward science fiction. Here is a copy of the pertinent quote:

"As a matter of fact, purely by accident, the last two stories to cop our Bonus were in the science-fantasy field: Richard Matheson's "The Distributor" and George Langelaan's "The Fly." In other words, each author received a total of \$3,000 for a single story. And we pay no lower than \$500, which is our going rate for short-shorts.

"True, we can never hope to publish as much science fiction as a specialized science fiction magazine, but we do use a great deal of it: we've published plenty of Beaumont, Sheckley, Matheson, Slesar, et al, and hardly a year goes by without at least one of our science fiction or fantasy pieces ending up in an anthology. We publish a science fiction or fantasy story in almost every issue. The hardbound anthology, The Permanent Playboy

(Crown, 1959), contains ten stories in this genre."

I really don't know what to say about the original paperback. I would hate to see science fiction restricted to the novel form, since, in my opinion, the best science fiction has always taken the form of the short story, with only occasionally excellent novels.

One more thought, and then I'll be through: whether or not the low rates among the specialized magazines are causing a decline in the quality of science fiction, or whether it is a decline in public interest in this genre that has forced the publishers to pay less, is a chicken-or-the-egg question and I do not feel qualified to even attempt an answer. I do think we are going through a slump of general public disinterest in science fiction, but we have all lived through such slumps before, and I am quite confident that we will come out of it, if science fiction writers will look to their laurels rather than rest on their laurels. By this I mean: let them not go on writing slightly new twists on the old gimmicks. Let them, rather, dare to break fresh ground in their story ideas and in their writing styles. If blame must be placed somewhere, perhaps science fiction writers should not be so eager to place that blame on the reading public or on editors. Perhaps the writers themselves are to blame for allowing themselves to get into a rut. Anyway, it is something for them to think about.

SELDES, TIMOTHY

Walter Bradbury has left Doubleday and I have taken over our science fiction list which I handled with him. I am not so experienced in the field as he is, but for what it is worth here are my answers to your questions:

- 1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead.
- 2) I think that there was a revival of interest in science fiction after the war, and then again after Sputnik, had the literary and dramatic level of science fiction been up to it.
- 3) I think science fiction could have capitalized on this interest, but with very few exceptions it wasn't right for books purely as a money making device.
- 4) Yes, we should look to the original paperback as a point of salvation, but for any book with any value at all there is no reason not to have a hardbound edition since it will then sell in paperback, and by having the hardbound edition one leaves open the chances for book club and movie sales.

SHAW, LARRY T.

I don't think there's too much point in going into great detail about what's wrong with magazine science fiction, since there are so many obvious things wrong, but we may get somewhere by tackling the question of what can be done about it.

- 1) I don't think magazine science fiction is quite dead--but it is, as you said yourself, in a deplorable state. The magazines that are still alive now may all continue, though at least two of them are very shaky. However, the bulk of what they are publishing is science fiction only by the most generous definition, and what I'd really like is to see a few magazines containing stuff that satisfied me better. And, of course, most of the current crop ignore fandom almost entirely, which is bad for fandom.

To skip to question four, I don't think the paperbacks are a point of salvation. I expect a lot of comparatively good science fiction will be published in them in the future. But I like magazines. It's as simple as that, as far as I'm concerned. A

magazine is a personality, a regular part of the reader's life, and something to look forward to. For me, it fulfills a need that a book doesn't, no matter how good the book is. And, again, the books won't do much to steer people into fandom, where the magazines can, at least potentially.

2) No, I don't feel that any single person, incident, etc., is responsible for the current state of affairs. Many things are responsible. But I refuse to agree with those who feel that the age of science fiction is dead because of historical trends, the state of the world, etc. The distribution situation is responsible, to a great extent. The fact that other types of pulps died first is important; when a science fiction magazine could be published as part of a chain of fiction magazines, each one making a small profit, it had much more chance of surviving. Now science fiction magazines are published either by very small publishers, who must make money on every issue of everything they put out, or by very big outfits who aren't interested in the small profits that a science fiction magazine can bring in because they have bigger fish to fry.

I think that point is crucial and worth stressing. A science fiction magazine will never make a big profit. Unless the publisher is satisfied with a comparatively modest return, he won't continue to publish one. Judging by the publishers I've known, and keeping this fact in mind, we're lucky to have as many science fiction magazines as there are.

I've also come around to the view, after long and painful examination of the facts and my own conscience, that many people who appear to love science fiction--not excluding myself--have contributed to its sickness by trying to make it too literate and too respectable. We've criticized the living daylights out of it in the hope of making it appeal, not to the general public, but to the Saturday Review type of critic. We did all we could to kick out the adventure, the plain good story-telling, and the guts. I do not say that all science fiction should be blood and thunder. I do say--it seems obvious as hell to me now--that when the swashbuckle went out of science fiction, it lost most of its appeal. If we have to put up with the swashbuckle (assuming we don't like it, although that certainly isn't true in many cases) for the sake of the ideas embedded therein, what's wrong with that? While science fiction obviously appeals to a limited audience, it still needs many of the qualities of good mass-appeal fiction in order to survive. We threw an awful lot of those qualities away, not because we had to but because we chose to.

And, of course, most of the good writers went somewhere else. That's natural; most writers develop new interests as they grow older, and they want to make more money as they grow more experienced. We need--and have needed for a long time--new writers. They're not easy to find; I can testify to the ridiculously low quality of today's average (or even today's best) slushpile.

And the magazines, let's face it, grew smaller and smaller. Perhaps 35¢ doesn't represent much more of an outlay to today's reader than 20¢ did to the reader of 20 years ago--but what does he get for it? Then, the magazines being fatter, he stood a good chance of finding at least one story he could enjoy in each. Today, each magazine contains a pitiful handful of stories, most of them very much alike in tone. The odds have shifted. Nowadays, you don't gamble your 35¢; you donate it to charity or to a sentimental memory.

3) So, to correct the situation, we need a publisher who is willing to invest a fair chunk of dough in the hopes of a very small return. If the return is only going to be financial, in fact, we probably won't find him. If he will invest because operating a good science fiction magazine is in itself rewarding to him, we may.

We need good writers. The outsiders who think of writing science fiction as a way to make a living won't do. We can't make a living writing science fiction. At least, you can't make a living that will satisfy you for very long. You have to make

your living elsewhere, and write science fiction largely for the love of it. That in turn means an editor can't just put a notice in Writer's Digest and sit back to wait for great manuscripts. He has to work, and work full-time, at finding good writers and good stories.

Do I think the writers and stories could be found, under favorable circumstances? Yes, I do. I'd love to try.

We need, if possible, something to offer the readers to make up for the sheer quantity we have lost. That's a tough nut to crack, but I think it could be done. A magazine can make up in personality for a lack of bulk. It's hard to make many publishers believe this, however.

Unfortunately, none of this is any good unless we can solve the distribution problem. It may not be completely true to say that any magazine will sell if all the copies printed are displayed prominently, but it's not far from the truth, either. As we all know, today's newsdealer doesn't even open a lot of the bundles he gets. Thousands and thousands of copies, representing the total potential profit in some cases, just go down the drain. The only solution I can see to that is to offer the newsdealer some tangible reward for displaying your magazine, and the only tangible reward that I think would work is money. The only way to do that is for the publisher to take a smaller profit on each copy sold. Of course, he has to find a good, established distributor who is willing to take on his product to begin with.

In short, it might be done...but only with a strictly non-greedy publisher who loved science fiction. I haven't been looking actively for such a publisher, but I'm in the middle of the publishing world and I keep my eyes open. At the moment, I see no traces of such a paragon. But I haven't given up hope yet.

To sum up: there is no reason for science fiction, per se, to die. The problems involved in keeping one or more good science fiction magazines alive and healthy are purely practical ones. Practical problems can be solved--but, brother, these are not easy ones; and finding the solutions will have to start with finding a fairly sizeable quantity of money.

SILVERBERG, ROBERT

In brief response to your questions:

1) Yes, I think magazine science fiction is dead--even though the corpse is still moving. There are nine magazines right now, of which only one (Astounding) offers any sort of attractive rate to its writers, and of which only three (Astounding and the Ziff-Davis mags) pay its writers promptly. A field which cannot afford to pay on acceptance, or to pay much more than a cent a word, is a pretty feeble one from the writer's viewpoint--and more and more writers are deserting the science fiction mags as a result, preferring to earn their livings in fields where the pay is higher and faster and where the market is not quite so thin. Furthermore, of the nine magazines, only Astounding and F&SF seem reasonably secure; folding rumors surround each of the other seven constantly, and within a month's time all seven could easily be blown away. A field with only two magazines in it is not a living field. And the prospects of new titles entering are slim -- there hasn't been a new title since 1957.

2) What is responsible? Neither Russia's space tactics nor the editorial crochets of individual editors nor the high cost of living. The trouble, simply, is distribution. The collapse of the ANC signalled the collapse of science fiction. Only ASF gets adequate distribution today, and they aren't totally pleased. The public can't buy magazines it can't find. The editor of today's weakest-selling science fiction magazine told me that in those areas where his magazine is sold, it does extremely

well. But if your magazine only reaches half the outlets of the country, it has to come pretty close to selling out in order to break even.

3) What can we do to correct it? Not a damned thing, except form our own distributing company. Distribution now is a monopoly of arrogant petty potentates who can't be bothered putting such low-return items as fiction magazines on the stands. Science fiction in magazine form will survive only if we distribute them ourselves--and that's one company I wouldn't care to invest much in.

4) Yes, I think the original paperback is the chief chance of survival for science fiction. The paperback houses have good distribution, in the main, and their books can remain on sale indefinitely. Ace has shown that there is a month-in, month-out market for science fiction paperbacks, and most of the other companies have committed themselves to at least three or four books a year. Of course, this might mean the end of the science fiction short story--but the short western and the short detective story are similarly at the edge of extinction.

5) Additional remarks? Not many from here; it's an unpleasant situation, both for the fans and for the people who, like me, once earned most or all of their living from writing science fiction. After a nasty period of conversion, I'm now busily at work in other fields, and will be writing science fiction only when and if I have some free time and an irresistible idea. (I'll continue to write science fiction novels, though.) I think science fiction has reached the peak of its curve of popularity, and, strangely by the distributors, will drop back to become once again the arcane thing it was in 1948--except for the crud so-called science fiction in the movies and on television, which will remain to haunt us. From a fan's point of view, the best thing to do seems to be to retire to the study and spend the rest of his days with back issues; the science fiction magazines of the future, bouncing along with their penny-a-word rates, will only attract amateur writers, and the prospect of future classics is thin. But there's always Adventures in Time and Space to return to, and the large-size Astoundings, and the early Galaxies -- rearward march, full speed behind!

SMITH, E. E., Ph. D.

I'm glad you're making a study of the science fiction field as it is, and I hope it does some good. I'm very glad to contribute as, over the last couple of years, I have done a lot of thinking on the subject. My answers to your questions are:

1) No, magazine science fiction is not dead. With Astounding, Amazing and Fantastic--and also F&SF, whatever it is--monthly and going strong; and with at least five others in an apparently fairly strong bi-monthly position, the term 'dead' scarcely applies. It is, however, sick; with a sickness that can very well prove fatal.

2) No, I do not feel that any single person, action, or event is responsible for the condition. In my opinion, the principal offenders are the various eager-beaver publishers who dashed into a field about which they knew nothing and cared less. As I see it, there are four major errors involved:

A: Over-crowding of the field. So many publishers rushed in to tap the supposed bonanza that there were far too many alleged "SF" magazines published; more than the field could possibly support and vastly more than could be filled with even acceptable material.

B: Failure of main-line support. In an attempt to lure main-line readers into the science fiction field, editors used many main-line authors (who knew nothing whatever of either science or science fiction) and a great deal of main-line material very thinly and very incompetently disguised as science fiction. Small, safe, insipid tales told in a small, safe, insipid way; bastard-type material that did not attract

main-line readers and that disgusted real science fiction readers.

C: Wrong approach to solution of problem. In an attempt to placate 'literary' reviewers and other main-line Pooh-Bahs, many magazines concentrated on what they called 'writing'--in which slick and precious writing and trick endings were all that were necessary. The fact that there were no ideas involved and that nothing of interest happened had nothing to do with the case. Thus, as might have been expected, main-line readers did not come in and real science fiction readers quit in droves.

D: Failure to face facts. At least, it seems to me to be a fact that the general public never has been, is not now, and probably never will be really interested in the branch of literature we know as science fiction. There is a hard core of perhaps ten or fifteen thousand (I'm guessing now) science fiction addicts (Such as I) who will buy and try to read any and all magazines put out under the label. There are perhaps ninety thousand (another guess) other, more selective science fiction readers who will buy any and all GOOD SCIENCE FICTION magazines. However, most of this group want STORY VALUE, not slick and precious writing. Thus, it is my considered opinion that a science fiction magazine, so edited as to contain stories having real story value, could sell something over a hundred thousand copies per month; but I do not believe that any science fiction magazine, however edited, could sell much more than that. Please note that by 'science fiction magazine' I mean one that would publish real science fiction; and by 'story value' I do NOT mean the famous 'Sense of Wonder.' I mean that the story must be interesting enough to hold the reader's attention--to compel reader identification--and to make the reader feel, after he has read it, that he has read something worthwhile; something worth re-reading. And such stories, in today's science fiction magazines, are DAMNED scarce.

3) I do not know of anything we as fans or magazine buyers can do about the situation, except to keep on doing what many thousands of readers have already done--stop buying the magazines we do not like. Unfortunately, I personally am still buying them all; but I don't know how much longer even I will keep on buying crap that I simply can not read. I do not believe that letters-to-the-editor will help: there aren't enough of us who will write such letters and they are ignored. I think we will have to let economic forces do the work--when enough of the present magazines have folded to cut the survivors down to a number that the field can support, perhaps we can influence the surviving editors to publish good science fiction.

4) No. In my opinion, paperbacks supplement magazines, but do not and never can replace them, for many reasons; four of which are as follows:

A: Every science fiction magazine tries out new authors; some of whom eventually make good. Paperbacks do not; they can't. They must have large sales; hence the unknown stands just about the chance of the proverbial celluloid cat in hell. In other words, magazines develop writers, paperbacks do not. Thus, if the science fiction magazines disappear, science fiction as a field will disappear very shortly thereafter.

B: Each magazine develops a personality and commands at least some reader loyalty; pocketbooks do not. Thus, I would keep on buying Astounding, even though for three months running half of its stories were stinkers, because I would know that it was in a temporary slump. But if I bought one paperback of 'Original Science Fiction Stories' (which I did), and found it full of stinkers (which I did), I would never buy another (which I haven't up to now). The paperback novel, of course, by a Heinlein or a Leinster, is a different breed of cat entirely.

C: Availability. We know when and where to look for our favorite science fiction magazines and they are recognizable on sight. If, however, I had to wade through the helter-skelter conglomerate of paperbacks on the average newsstand--

even if I knew what I was looking for--I would stop buying science fiction entirely except for works of authors I know and like.

D: Identification. Unless someone develops a vastly better system of advertising or announcing paperbacks than any I know of at present, the average reader will not know even what to look for.

5) Additional remarks. First, I question very seriously your use of the word 'Salvation' in Question #4. It carries (at least it seems to me to carry) the implication that the science fiction field should, by some innate right, number in the millions instead of in the thousands. Why? I do not consider such thinking realistic. The field has always, actually, been small; I see nothing to justify belief in any tremendous increase in the number of persons having the type of mind to which real science fiction so uniquely appeals.

Second; it seems to me that the editors of the science fiction magazines, facing the fact that there are a dozen magazines in a field that can support properly only three or four, have made such desperate attempts to enlist outside support that they have deliberately diluted the product; and in so doing have not only failed to attract any significant number of main-line readers, but also have alienated a great many readers such as I myself am.

Third; in my opinion fandom itself is far from blameless. For many years there has been a movement to divorce fandom from science fiction; to make fan activities ends in themselves, with little or no relationship to the 'Professional' science fiction magazines. This movement has been growing and is still growing. Its influence can be seen best, perhaps, in the fact that The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction has, for two years straight, been chosen by the 'FANS' as the best professional 'Science Fiction' magazine. For, as a matter of fact, F&SF is not a science fiction magazine at all. (It isn't even good fantasy.) For that reason, and that reason alone, it has succeeded in reaching a considerable number of main-line readers. It has received more approval from the literati, the cognoscenti and the upper-case critics than any real science fiction magazine ever did or ever will. It has 'succeeded' --but it has done so by NOT PUBLISHING SCIENCE FICTION. Instead, it emphasizes the so-called 'literary' values -- including mawkishness, imbecility, frustration, stupidity and futility -- and to me, three-quarters of the stories it runs are simply unreadable. Unreadable because (again in my opinion) slick, precious, affected and strained writing never have taken and never will take the place of imagination, of well-worked-out ideas, and of honest-to-God STORY VALUE.

Fourth; if fandom does divorce itself from science fiction, I give it not over three years of independent life.

As you've noticed, Earl, I haven't pulled my punches. You asked for my opinions -- in detail -- you've got 'em!

STARRETT, VINCENT

((There was no direct reply to the questionnaire, but the following appeared in The Chicago Tribune Magazine of Books. There were three responses to this item in Mr. Starrett's column, "Books Alive." See the item carried separately under the heading Palmer, Rodney. EK))

EARL KEMP of 2019 N. Whipple St., Chicago 47, is circulating a questionnaire seeking an answer to the question, "Who killed science fiction?" If you have thoughts on the subject, address him, not me. I didn't know it was dead.

STOPA, JON

We killed science fiction. You know: America, from sea to shining sea. We've quit dreaming, and science fiction is dreams.

You can see it in science fiction itself. Take the 'sociological' story: Have you ever read one about how things **SHOULD** be? Nope, they're all about how to get things back to the way they are **NOW**. Nobody seems to be able to think of a single improvement. Just get rid of a few things, i.e. slums, etc., seems to be the best anyone comes up with.

Or take the psi story. I've got nothing against psi: There might be something to it. **BUT NOT THAT MUCH TO IT.** There has been this kind of psi story, and that kind of psi story, until it's become stark-raving clear that most of it is just a neurotic sigh for escape. Psi can be used legitimately, see Sturgeon's More Than Human -- to help explore an idea.

This mess that we're in is general--we came out of World War II with hopes of turning back the clock, and when we couldn't, we tried to, at least, hold the advancing hand.

There was a time when we had a dream--so we strode across a dusty continent ...and almost tripped into the Pacific. We've been trying to catch our balance ever since, grabbing onto the 'West' with its boots and saddles and oaters--grabbing onto 'South' and its grubby teenagers who need a bath (and a haircut so that their hair would be at least as short as their sisters'.) and its Civil War buffs and its black hate--grabbing onto the 'beatnik' with his dingy mind, shallow shadows and delight with 'Idea'. As long as they are little and unimportant and, most of all, dead and unrevivable.

But this is not the place for a political tract -- so enough . . .

TAKACS, STEPHEN

There is no science fiction field any longer. If I had stuck to selling science fiction during the past four years, I would have starved to death long ago! Since the first Russian Sputnik went up two years ago last October, it seems that every high school and college student in the U.S. has quit reading science fiction: disillusioned and disgusted with American science! I know, during the past two years, I did not have any visits from any teenagers -- and they used to form the backbone of the science fiction field. Not even during the Summer vacation periods of 1958 and 1959 did any youngsters come in -- I never see a young person anymore!

1) I certainly feel that magazine science fiction is dead -- magazine rates to writers are so low that the best writers don't want to contribute any more. I speak to the writers personally here at my store, and they all admit they have quit. It pays more to write for the 'men's magazines' -- or direct to pocket book publishers who pay a lot more than the magazines.

2) What is responsible? I am enclosing my speech that I gave at the Cleveland convention; this will explain! Two factors are responsible, 1. the tremendous advances made by Russia--our (U.S.) repeated failures to catch up to them, plus 2. Arrangements by which readers can purchase books for very small amounts in pasable 'hard-covers.' These (30,000 to 40,000 -- figures are mine, E.K.) readers have, since 1953 been people who do not ordinarily buy hard bound books, confining themselves to buying the magazines as they came out. When the chance came to buy these 'bound' editions they turned away in droves from the "fan" publishers like Shasta, Fantasy Press, Prime Press and Gnome Press. Bookshops during the past

five years have "learned the ropes" and refuse to stock any hard bound science fiction. I know, I can't sell any myself--If I had not gone back to dealing in 'out-of-print-books' I would have had to go out of business a long time ago. And when I say 'out-of-print-books' I don't mean science fiction--the demand is all for Lost Race novels, and for the weird-supernatural type, fantasy, etc., Burroughs, Talbot Mundy, H. Rider Haggard, everything but science fiction!

3) What can we do to correct it? I am afraid it is too late now to correct the situation. The dozens of horror (science fiction) films released by Hollywood during the past few years, have so turned the public (intelligent public) from science fiction that the publishers are moving heaven and earth to take off the words "science fiction" from their titles of their magazines. I recently heard that Astounding, after 30 years is changing the title to Analog Science Fact Fiction(!!!) to try to disguise the magazine in the hopes of getting more technicians to buy the magazine and to make it more 'respectable' to the general public.

4) I certainly feel that we should look to the original paperbacks as a point of salvation--the entire future of the science fiction field rests in the hands of the paperback publishers, and the more original novels they put out, the better for the field.

5) (As 'additional remarks,' Stephen attached the complete text of his Cleveland Convention speech, "Alas, What Boom?" with the stipulation that the most pertinent observations, those that had the greatest shock-effect value at the time, be deleted from the manuscript. I do not have courage enough to override Stephen's wishes and print the entire text. It has been published though, in its entirety, I believe in Science Fiction Times, and is to be considered recommended reading for this study. EK.)

TUCKER, BOB

No one killed science fiction. It isn't dead.

When I first became acquainted with the literature (and it is, however questionable the quality) there were but three magazines being published on a somewhat-regular schedule with, of course, a "quarterly" or an "annual" thrown in now and then for the hell of it, and for a fast buck. These latter books were produced cheaply and remained on display a long time, so that if they sold at all they represented a nice profit for the publisher.

Because I've never known less than three magazines, I've always considered the field alive and kicking lustily as long as three (same three) continued to exist. Thirty titles a year (or more) seemed a glut, an unhealthy glut which encouraged cannibalism, and I failed to mourn the passing of the superfluous magazines. I wouldn't consider magazine science fiction dead unless their number dropped to zero.

But at the same time, I realize it is a matter of relativity. To those readers who entered the field when ten, or twenty, or thirty titles were being published, a drastic reduction of the (to them) normal number seemed to signal the death of all. Not so -- but of course it is difficult to convince those who are used to more populous times (not prosperous, but populous).

I believe first, that the excess number of magazines (and their deplorably low level of fiction) helped to destroy themselves and each other; and second, that the number of hardcover and softcover books also contributed to the general destruction. The quality level of the fiction in these two kinds of books may or may not be higher than the levels in magazines, but it is a different level in some ways, and until this difference palls the books will continue in number. (A decade ago when the hardcover publishers discovered magazine science fiction, they flooded the bookstores and libraries with reprintings of cheap novels and serials, and quickly killed the new

market they were developing. Of late, the low quality short story collections seemed destined for the same end.)

What can we do to correct it? ("It" meaning the dearth of magazines.) Nothing. Don't try to correct it or you will again have thirty titles on the newsstands with no more decent stories to read than before. Buy and read the two, or three, or four magazines you have a genuine liking for, and let the jungle claim the unworthy. Not everyone will buy the same ones, but in the end the buying majority will save some, and the field will return to what I grew up to consider a normal state of affairs.

The same rule should be applied to the hardcovers and the paperbacks: buy those you honestly believe to be worth buying and let the devil take the rest.

VONNEGUT, KURT, JR.

Nobody killed science fiction. Science fiction is not dead. More money will be spent on stories with science in them during the next year than in any year in history -- will be spent by magazines, television, radio, book publishers, movies and even Broadway.

So what is the beef?

The pulp writers can't make a living any more? Tant pis. They made intelligent readers want to throw up.

Anybody who announces that he is a science fiction writer is announcing that he is in damn bad company financially and artistically.

You are trying to conduct a post-mortem without a corpse. I would love to provide you with one. I would love to see the expression science fiction butchered this very minute in order that stories with science in them not be identified, in the minds of intelligent readers, with pulpers, beginners and hacks.

WEST, WALLACE

1) No, I do not feel that magazine science fiction is dead -- but only resting. And some very good and thoughtful stuff is being published in Astounding, F&SF and the Columbia magazines. Vide: "The Sky People."

2) What is responsible? The current uncertain political and economic situation in the United States. All types of fiction are in the doldrums. Authors get little encouragement.

3) To correct the situation: End the cold war and get on with the business of living.

4) We should not look to the original paperback alone as a point of salvation. Magazines, hardcovers, fanzines, etc., should all help.

5) Seems to me the world is in a transition period now, from which we go over the edge or on to what Wells called "a storm of living." History shows authors don't work well in such a period.

WILLIAMSON, JACK

There are a good many reasons for the present unsatisfactory state of magazine science fiction. It has been hurt in a triple squeeze between television, the comics, and the paperbacks. As escape fiction, it is to some extent the victim of the events and inventions that it has most often prophesied -- the Russians, for example,

are busy removing the Moon from the domain of the free imagination. People generally are reading less fiction; the interest in any literary form seems to be more or less cyclic. And all these damaging effects tend to snowball; as the market shrinks, many of the best writers turn to some other way of making a living, and the market shrinks again.

Yet I don't think the outlook is hopeless. There is still good science fiction in a few magazines, as well as a paperback market for science fiction novels. Magazine science fiction might be revived, I think, by a new editor with the enthusiasm that a few editors in the field have had, and the writers that such an editor might discover and develop. Thirty years ago, when I first discovered science fiction and began trying to write it, it was tremendously important to me as a new way of looking at this changing world and saying what I thought and felt about it. This study itself is evidence that some people still take science fiction seriously, yet I suspect that the essential trouble with magazine science fiction is simply that too few people, readers or editors, or publishers or writers, are serious enough about it. Once we have a trend in the other direction, with more serious readers interested in something that justifies their interest . . .

WOLLHEIM, DONALD A.

I have finally gotten around to your letter asking opinions on "Who Killed Science Fiction?" So, to answer your questions:

1) I don't think magazine science fiction is dead. Of course not. It is just going through one of its regular setbacks, which happen continually because the field is not and never was quite as big as publishers suppose. It can't support two dozen magazines and when an imaginary book causes the band wagon to get overloaded, it's got to break down. The breaking down must and does damage all magazines alike.

Magazine science fiction is a vital necessity to the field. It serves as the breeding ground of new writers, the womb of new science fiction ideas and themes. It's the proper entry port for fandom and those enthusiasts who form the living guts of science fiction readerhood. It is the easiest market for the embryonic writer to break into -- and that's damned important.

2) But why did the magazine field break down? Primarily as I said before because the field is not that general in interest to support too many magazines at once. Every now and then news begins to seep through the magazine publishing field to the effect that such and such a theme is selling like crazy. When that happens, there are always a dozen marginal operators who will hasten to leap on the rising rocket. If TRUE Magazine sells, suddenly there are several dozen men's magazines -- and the others must and do get cruder and cruder as they try to shortcut the means to success by boiling out all but the most elementary factors in that success. If MAD moves, bingo, a dozen imitators (which die fast, as you can find out) in a field which never could support more than one such satire. If Playboy starts, again the mad rush to get rich quick -- a hundred magazines becoming more and more salacious and cheaper.

Hence the recent boom in science fiction, which broke down. Saturn, which I edited because requested to do so by just such a marginal producer, had fairly good short stories in it, even though they were the selections from everyone's rejections. But I know they had at least some taste and passable quality. However, look at the overall appearance of the magazine -- the cheapest printer in the trade, the shoddiest proofreading, the sloppiest artwork. Likewise the rest of the fly-by-night science fiction titles of that boom . . . Some were better printed than Saturn, but they were

still inferior to Galaxy, Astounding, and F&SF. So every time a fan, or a reader, who didn't happen to be a millionaire, bought one of these johnny-come-lately products, he just possibly didn't buy one of the better magazines that month. Hence the circulation of all was hurt. Since the field wasn't that big, it was simply spreading its limited readership thinner, to everyone's hurt.

Now this isn't a crime -- it happens to be the way any business is conducted today. It happens continually in all fields of publishing, and of manufacturing also. Sometimes the field has really expanded, but often it's an illusion. It will happen again, too, in science fiction. I don't know when, but it surely will. And the same results . . .

(And I won't hesitate to edit a magazine similar to Saturn when next it happens, even though the end product may be the same. It's money in my pocket -- and if I don't do it, some one with even less fan taste will surely do it . . . You may be interested to know that even with this alleged bust, I am advised by Saturn's publisher that the five science fiction issues did not lose money! Each and every one of them cleared a profit . . . but a small one. However, the detective Saturns cleared a bigger profit for a while.)

Now, besides the above, is there a single element we can say ruined our gal? I have a feeling there may be . . . and I'd say that the idiotic "psi" stuff initiated by Campbell (whom I regard otherwise as the best man in this science fiction magazine business) was a big factor in undermining the basic foundations of good science fiction. "Psi" is -- just the Occult under pseudo-scientific terminology. You couldn't even peddle the Occult to Weird Tales readers... Mr. Campbell is a wizard at understanding real science, but unfortunately he is so woefully, boneheadedly ignorant about anything outside of the physical sciences that he falls into the first trap any hokum artist hands him in psychology, sociology, or theology. (Remember Dianetics?)

Because I know that when plowing through the slush rejected by the biggies for Saturn I ran into an awful lot of psi material. Hence, when someone desperate for material on a low budget is scraping the barrel, he must take some of this simply because it may be readable and better written than other stuff, even if he disagrees with it. Hence the low quality of his new magazine gets even lower by real science fiction reader tastes.

3) What can be done? Nothing, I suppose. We can't shoot Campbell -- he's too darn good and we shall have to put up with his foibles and hope the rest of the field doesn't follow him. And when somebody goes nosing around the New York publishers that "Oh boy, oh boy, Galaxy just tripled its circulation" . . . the boom will be on again.

4) No, we should not look to the original paperback as a point of salvation. The original paperback is a fine source of novel length fiction, but I don't think it properly replaces magazine science fiction. Besides it tends to be too big a financial risk to allow a publisher (or his editor) to experiment too widely -- and science fiction needs some medium for experimentation.

Besides, if science fiction is reduced to nothing but paperback novel publishing, it will mean the end of fandom. Because readers of paperbacks do not write letters -- not to the editors and certainly not to each other.

Ace does about two or more science fiction novels a month -- and must reach as many people regularly as the best and biggest magazines, yet our mail commenting on the science fiction we publish is -- nil. No comments, no mail.

How can you hold up fandom on that? How can an editor know the difference between a good original science fiction novel and a poor one if nobody writes to comment -- and it may take a year to get any kind of a circulation report -- and since each book is different, the policy line of the company is a lot less clearly defined than

that of a periodical.

5) I guess I've said as much as I ought to.

WOOD, EDWARD

At a time when space travel seems but a matter of no more than a few years, the fact that magazine science fiction is so close to death is indeed incongruous. While a large portion of the blame will be rightly placed on the incredible distribution mess that has blighted America for years, to say it is the whole blame is a mistake. Consider Playboy or better yet, Mad; magazines that have hit a responsive cord in the American people and are not only successful but have dragged along with them imitators who also seem to be making money.

The verdict if and when rendered will be: SUICIDE!

Have the magazines offered science fiction that was really science fiction? Or have they offered incomprehensible double-talk devoid of imagination, idealism, scientific outlook, or even simple understanding? A sterile emphasis on literary content, sex, occultism, monsters, misplaced humor, babytalk, etc. have all been fads at one time or another in the broad spectrum of science fiction fantasy magazines. Since the ultimate reward of absurdity is ostracism, what is now upon us seems not harsh but rather overdue.

An inept expansion of magazine titles plus a mistaken commercialism coupled with a gigantic misunderstanding of what science fiction could do have all combined to accomplish what depression, a world war, and pulp shortages could not do. The number of the readers, publishers, editors and writers who have assisted in this destruction is legion.

The science fiction magazine field is now in a trap from which escape is difficult. If a magazine were today to start publishing the greatest stories ever printed in the field with high caliber artwork and a top grade format, it could not reach more than a small part of its potential audience. ONE CANNOT BUY MAGAZINES THAT CANNOT BE FOUND!

What is to be done?

Someone is sure to suggest subscription to the remaining magazines. While this sounds attractive, it contains some self-defeat in it. Suppose a few thousand dedicated fans subscribed and no longer bought the magazines on the stands. The few stands that do display a few magazines (believe me, they are mighty few!) might decide to drop them entirely. How would it be possible to gain new readers when they couldn't even find the magazines to sample them?

One can buy one copy of every issue of every magazine that shows up to indicate to the dealers and distributors that there are a few bucks to be made in the field.

Of course there is always the last recourse of the apathetic -- resignation to the situation. The end result of this is painfully obvious.

Personally, I shall read all the magazines I can obtain. I shall not subscribe. Nor will I beg anyone to read science fiction. I can try to explain to an interested person what science fiction is and what it is not. It is not possible to force something like science fiction on people who do not care for it. The loss is theirs . . .

If, as seems most likely, the science fiction magazines do disappear, the paperbacks and books should continue . . . for awhile.

Adding up the three decades plus of science fiction magazines one can truly say that it has been a wonderful time (this in spite of the many defects) for us who have read the magazines and it is indeed a pity that more people would not join us.

* * * *

LIKE MORNING CALL

There is, in the Vieux Carre of New Orleans a quaint restaurant named "Morning Call." Here there can be purchased coffee with chicory only, and some obscure pastry twists from a deep-fry vat that are referred to as "doughnuts". One goes to Morning Call in the morning naturally, after a night on the town, after carnival is dwindling to an end, as the early rays of sunshine bounce off the Mississippi and glitter across the Quarters.

Here one relives the experiences of the night, the delight of Al Hirt's trumpet at Dan's Pier 600, the pleasant song-fests at Pat O'brien's and last but by no means least, the moment of truth that comes for you and the dark haired beauty in the little apartment over Rampart Street.

And one gags on the syrupy chicory-coffee and sprinkles confectioner's sugar from a shaker onto the grease-soaked doughnuts.

It was quite an heroic fete, going through these 95 pages of highly opinionated remarks without allowing my editorial blue-pencil to intrude occasional remarks of my own. Only the most necessary comments were interjected; those adding to the continuity or explaining some perhaps obscure reference.

Some statements made in these contributions pleased me so much, or grated on my prerogative to such an extent that I have to reply.

This then is like Morning Call. A moment of truth for Who Killed Science Fiction?

In the first bright flashes of a snow-covered morning, I find myself with the following words for:

ANDERSON, POUL: Your point #5. I could not agree with you more completely about the question "Who Killed Science Fiction?" as being an outlet for suppressed aggressiveness. I found a large per cent of the comments contributed falling into this category. Including your own remark that it is such an outlet. I could not disagree with you more completely about the need for such a study. Where in the hell would we be today if we left writing (i.e. science fiction and/or detection) to literary historians? I love science fiction, the people that manufacture this product and the purchasers. This includes you, John W. God, Jr. and Joe McFann from Podunk. What has happened within the field in the past was my business -- what is currently happening is my business -- what will ultimately happen is my business and I'll damn well attend to it!

BARRETT, DR. C. L.: Your point #2. Ted Carnell came out of gafia for this study,

see page 35. Same point, and children. Honestly, Doc, I don't consider three to be such an unhandy number, except of course when buying school supplies, and shoes that somehow manage to last a whole week. I think it would be wonderful to have a dozen, would that I could afford so many . . . Need I mention that George and Mary Young are doing their little bit? How about the Fords? Does Dean and Jean Grennell hold the record in fandom?

BOUCHER, ANTHONY: Your remark, "This quality of boredom..." Once I hated Arthur Koestler for a very similar remark. Little did I know then that it prefaced a very prophetic article. Pray he doesn't revisit the field to sample the current crop. What devastation he could render this time, and justly so...

BRADLEY, MARION ZIMMER: Beautifully done, cuts to the core with perception and integrity. Thank you.

BUDRYS, A. J.: Galaxy cannot metamorphose into The Saturday Evening Post. As I see it from here Galaxy could never be "under the dryer" reading because it radiates (or did radiate in the past) one, and only one theme in monotone: "One Small Room." A depressed view that "people are no damned good"; this I hope will never receive the mass treatment.

CAMPBELL, JOHN W., JR.: Your point #1. I believe the 38 out of 70 "but" replies to this query are indications that the magazine field is indeed dying. Now you prove that you're "going better than ever"; I keep as close a watch as possible on circulation figures, which are to me and I presume Condé Nast, the best indication of how any book is "going". The 'wool' will not stretch this far, assuming you're pulling it over your own eyes first. Your point #2, if you haven't found it by now it's quite possible too late. Your point #3, "it's fantasy fiction...that's in trouble"; this of course includes psi...to which I must repeat a joke I've heard many times, but don't know the source, "John Campbell is editing a new anthology, he's going to call it 'Psianthology'." Joke #2, source unknown, from Yandro, "Analog, the greatest idea since the Edsell" I wish I'd have thought of that.

CLIFTON, MARK: "John Campbell put his finger on it..." Without a doubt Campbell is the greatest editor the field has ever had. No one within the field currently has so much power, literally controlling what material goes in what magazine, regardless of publisher or editor. Who else can dredge a superb story out of a mire of gibberish? If this percentage of 'superb stories' slips any lower though, I fear I will not be alone in charging him with mis-management of the power he wields. Psi is NOT the answer, and perhaps Campbell should skip some of the Wednesday sessions of passing out "Campbell ideas" to mirror hacks and let some of this psionic excrement settle under a little quick lime.

COLEMAN, SIDNEY: Brilliant and sparkling, as usual, who wrote it for you this time?

DAVIDSON, AVRAM: No, Avram, the freshness has not departed from you. Your point #5, "look at your fanzines...never even mention science fiction." Is this the fault of the editor of the fanzine, or the fault of those capable of writing intelligently about science fiction? The two are not necessarily the same. I will call to your attention Norman Metcalf's New Frontiers, as being outside the type you mean, and what is this you are holding in your hand at the moment, if not a fanzine? Surely you will agree that science fiction is spoken here! True, all that glitters is not criticism by knight, neither is all that stinks to be referred to as "fanzine". I will assist on your inquiry into fantasy, when will you start?

DEVORE, HOWARD: Your point #4. I cannot agree with you on reprints. No publisher is stupid enough to reprint a book where there is no demand for same. When a title is out of print, and in demand, I have nothing but praise for the publisher who will take the chance and risk his thousands. Example, Simak's City. There are

others, badly in need of reprinting, i.e. Vance's Dying Earth. And in another category entirely, there are those badly in need of bound editions for libraries, i.e. Bester's Tiger, Tiger!, Budrys' Who, Blish's A Case of Conscience. What is dishonest though is the practice of publishers who change titles from the original publication without mentioning the original, i.e. Ace; publishers who reprint British material copyrighted under the last convention rulings without credit or acknowledgment, i.e. Ace, Ballantine and Santesson's version of New Worlds. Such actions are inexcusable.

FREAS, FRANK KELLY: Remarkably true and entertaining. Thank you for contributing.

GOLD, HORACE: Thank God you aren't wearing blinders. At least you acknowledge that the situation does exist however your contributory reasons, true as they are, are very minor compared to the actual reasons. That you acknowledge them is at least a step in the right direction, the music of the masses must be drowning out the sound of distant drums.

GREENBERG, MARTIN: You are quite right in questioning the validity of some of the fans at the Detroit convention. Convention fans fall into many categories, the innocent by-standers, the "Ijustcamewiths", the hucksters, the lookingforadrinks, the obnoxious, the painfully-juvenile, the pain in the ass variety and others. Indeed I remember the discussions about science fiction, a few of them that I have had have included you in the discussion group. We have a real crazy fan club here in Chicago, for 11 years now we've had regular formal meetings almost every other week where we sit around and...you guessed it...talk about science fiction. We have a rather unfortunate reputation of being quiet, no feuding, no fussing, too damn little fanzineing, but by God I'll bet we discuss more science fiction per capita than any other group.

KNIGHT, DAMON: So, what's new?

LEIBER, FRITZ: Your point #5, "a sigh for Weird Tales," have you seen a new entry onto the scene called Shock? It bears looking into, if for no other reason than nostalgia.

LEY, WILLY: Your point #3. A very loud seconding motion.

LOWNDES, ROBERT A. W.: I wish I could finance you, Doc. Either that or Mr. S. should keep his damned hands off. You have more integrity than any editor in the field, and not the slightest chance to exercise it. Pound for pound, and a quarter-cent notwithstanding you consistently deliver the impossible. This is maudlin, and probably serves no purpose, but man would I like to see what you could do with 3¢ plus bonus, payable on acceptance.

McLAUGHLIN, DEAN: Dean, sex is good clean fun. In life, literature and the pursuit of a healthy romp in the hay. I do not think you should condemn Playboy for this dedication, after all, Heffner, Russell, et al know which side of the mattress the sheet is on. Nevertheless your contribution was one of the really high points of the study. Thank you, Dean.

MILLER, P. SCHUYLER: Detailed and delightful reading, a very worthy contribution to the study. I had hoped for a large number of double value contributions like yours, of great value content wise, with a secondary -- entertainment value. Miz Bradley, Budrys, McLaughlin, Price, Smith, Wollheim and several others join you in giving this study a portion of entertainment. Thank you, Sky for your work towards the success of this effort, and our very best wishes for the success of the Pittcon.

MILLS, ROBERT P.: Your point #5, "the problems...of...most other magazines in the field..." Did you perhaps notice that at least one editor says he has no problems? Absurd! Man, we all got problems in this field. You -- F&SF are in an

ideal position because you claim a measure of loyalty unique in the field -- a firm, though small, unyielding group whose loyalties are not split three ways, between you, Scientific American and now Popular Mechanics. With unfailing support from the publisher you could outlast them all!!

NORTON, ANDRE: Do not be sorry that this was all you could contribute. Your contribution was of special significance because of the branch of science fiction that you represent, the extremely popular juvenile field. Thank you very much for adding your views.

O'MEARA, JAMES H.: Your remarks about the younger, casual readers added support to Sidney Coleman's remarks. There is truly a Heinlein/Norton monopoly on quality fiction within the juvenile field, with continued integrity the two of them could singlehandedly (or would that be doublehandedly or quadruplehandedly?) supply all the excellent material this field could assimilate.

PALMER, RAYMOND A.: Your point #5. Ideally I suppose, this 'club' could work out. But there is NO ideal situation. There are no authors and/or agents who would go along on this deal. There are no fans willing to assume the momentous task of administering this 'club'. The profits would be dubious, to say the least. There are not 2,000 fan/members who would agree to buying anything four times a year for \$3.50 a throw, even you, though you say it now, would probably poop-out if your bluff were called. There are very few fans who would enter the administration of this 'club' once they looked into the multiple-income tax structures, could visionize the piles of crap-mail they would receive. I know, because Advent: fits your description in all but one point, that of financing future conventions. Because there is nothing left with which to finance anything. Once you pay out \$1.80 for the manufacture of a book that Doubleday could reproduce for less than 10¢ a copy -- once you pay the agents, the express bills, the jacket printing bills, the mountainous postal expense, the packaging costs, etc. -- Then you get your periodic letter from Alphonse Q. Fugghead or one of his cousins describing his perfectly marvelous, delightful, science fiction type novel about this here guy who sprouts wings and flies off to Venus to fight the whatchamacallits that we really should publish because we're sure to make a million off it and we can have it for only \$5,000 advance on royalties, of course there is one catch, the manuscript is a little jumbled up. It appears that Alphonse wrote it at the age of 15, last year, using a #3 pencil, none too sharp, and writing on kraft wrapping paper, all 675 pages of it. We can hardly wait...to file Alphonse's letter...in the round file...

PRICE, GEORGE: One of the better contributions, thank you, George.

REYNOLDS, MACK: One tends to forget that you are rather isolated over there, what with your iniquitous dens, hashish and all, so that point #4 really has little meaning. I would like to recommend some to you though: Budrys' Who; Vonnegut's The Sirens of Titan.

RUSSELL, ERIC FRANK: Your point #5 is very well taken. When one gets to be my age they stop and take a second thought before referring to someone else as an "elder sage" but you display a wisdom here of the field, and a devotion that does not come easy, nor without a great deal of work. You are one of my favorite authors, if that is any consideration, and Sinister Barrier is my number one recommendation for non-sf readers as a point of entry into the field.

RUSSELL, RAY: "Perhaps the writers themselves are to blame for allowing themselves to get into a rut." Fortunately \$3,000 will pay one hell of a towing bill . . .

SELDES, TIMOTHY: In filling Walter Bradbury's shoes you have quite a task before you. Initially you face a prejudiced audience. It is prejudiced because you are in a position to bring the finest quality science fiction to the greatest number of people, resulting in the greatest amount of income for the field and/or the author. But this

is seldom the case. Instead the Doubleday science fiction line just manages to crawl out of the box marked mediocre. The major factor in your disfavor is that a sale to Doubleday means simultaneous, or at best a one month delay, release through the book club. This relieves the author of expecting any trade sale. The individual book purchaser knows that he has to wait only one month to get the book at one-third price. Admittedly the individual purchaser is infinitesimal, but the author, and especially the author's agent will not recognize this fact. The sale is to institutions, and only to institutions. The book club revenue comes second. It is my thought that the club has been a major cause toward the almost complete disappearance of science fiction from the lines of all publishers, and an almost complete absence of science fiction titles (those that are published) from book stores. Why should they stock an item that won't be bought from them? The few special requests will be ordered for drop-shipment, let the others wait for either a remainder copy, a book club edition or a paperback reprint. This has more bearing on your point #4. You are wrong in that any book with any value at all in hardbound editions will sell to paperbacks. You say this as final -- yet there are many books, highly successful in hardbound editions that for some reason or other cannot be placed with any paperback publisher. "...having the hardbound edition one leaves open the chances for book club and movie sales." The book club facet has already been mentioned here. For the life of me I cannot understand your reference to movie sales. Many authors and/or agents are deserting the hardbound field for that very reason, that the publisher takes a cut of the club sale, of the movie sale, of the other dramatic sales, of the variety of potential resales. Titles that cry out for a place on your library shelf are available only in a crumbly, pulp-paper edition that's pulling loose from the cement on the spine. I can only repeat that Doubleday has the organization, the equipment, the facilities, the financial structure and the personnel to produce the largest amount of quality science fiction this field has ever known. The selection of just what material to produce now rests with you, somehow I do not envy you this job, but I do sincerely wish you all the best...

SHAW, LARRY: Your point #3. If you find this rich man, willing to finance a science fiction magazine, let me know. I'll be first in line...

SMITH, E. E., Ph. D.: Well, Doc, I felt that someone should call a spade a spade, something is rotten in science fiction, I didn't find it with this study, perhaps like Budrys I was expecting someone to come up with the perfectly logical, but as yet unrecognized solution. Your point #5, subject 3; I am naturally, aware of the movement to which you refer, to divorce fandom from science fiction. I cannot say that it pleases me very much. Sure the correspondence would continue for a while, and the fanzines probably -- but it would be an undeserved continuation. On the same subject, I must agree with the majority regarding F&SF, I see the continued awarding of the trophy to this title as a loud, deliberate booing of John Campbell, a protest against psi. Galaxy, of course, does not enter into the competition at all. F&SF is the most pleasing prozine published today, and will probably continue receiving the Hugos as long as Analog persists in pushing blatant quackery. Subject 4, three years is perhaps too long a time, I would be inclined to cut this by half.

STARRETT, VINCENT: Thank you very much for the plug in "Books Alive" but if you receive consistently the percentage of quack mail that I got from this one little insertion, you have my deepest sympathy.

STOPA, JON: The army has got you waving too many flags, pal. Hurry back and pick up where you left off with those promising stories.

STURGEON, THEODORE: Extremely sorry you are not included here. Of all the people whose opinions were asked, only yours and one other I consider a definite

loss to the study. A man who can stand in defiance of time and slan/fans should be included here. Only one thing would make me happier than having you contribute to this study, to discover very shortly now a new, original novel by you. In my worthless opinion, the science fiction field has produced two literary geniuses, you, and standing slightly outside the field itself is the other; Ray Bradbury, whom I steadfastly refuse to include within the category of science fiction itself, fantasy yes, science fiction NO.

VONNEGUT, KURT, JR.: Bullshit! I've spent the last twelve years doing my damndest to bolster the label "science fiction" and you would love to butcher this label. I would be sorely tempted to refer you to the traditional cliché, "if you don't like the apples, get out of the tree" but then this would be extremely inappropriate, from the personal view. Because kind-sir-who-annoys-me-muchly, I like your apples, by name Player Piano and The Sirens of Titan, and I do not want out of the tree!

WILLIAMSON, JACK: Yes, Jack, some of us do still take the field seriously, as seriously apparently as others (i.e. Vonnegut) detest it. I am deadly serious about it, and once your trend does start, I'm sure we only have to wait about . . .

WOLLHEIM, DONALD A.: I admire your frank honesty with regards to Saturn, but despite this feel that it did damage the field. And you sir are a cad for recognizing this fact and yet standing ready to do further damage to the field with a Saturn-copy, should the occasion arise. I felt your contribution to be one of the better ones made for the study. Thank you.

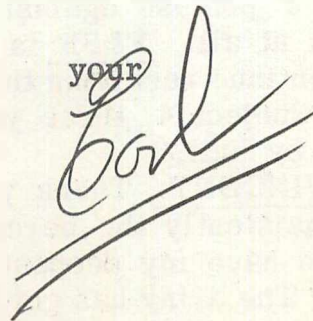
WOOD, EDWARD: I hold the same feelings you do regarding subscriptions to the magazines, with added taboos. Like forinstance, receiving the subscription copies a week after the issue has already gone on sale, and naturally you have already purchased it, thinking yours was somehow lost in the mail. Then there are the copies that arrive completely and irreparably mutilated by the mis-handling of the post office department, so that you wind up buying about two out of every three copies from the newsstand anyway, in order to maintain a somewhat uniform collection as far as physical condition is concerned.

* * * * *

There you have it, my replies to some of you that would never have been written had I not included them here. Forgive me for taking this public place for carrying on my petty, personal gripes and praise.

The end of the physical work required to produce this study is now rapidly coming into view. It has been a tremendous amount of work, far more difficult than I had ever dreamed when I began. I think though, that it will all be worthwhile, sometime . . . in the future . . .

But for now, I'm just damned tired . . .

your


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APPENDIX A

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES 1926-60

compiled by Edward Wood

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1926-50 based on Don Day's INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES 1926-50.
1951-53 based on Edward Wood's indexes published in Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy.
1954-59 based on personal notes of Edward Wood.

