SPACESHIP

#24 ~~JANUAR 1954~~

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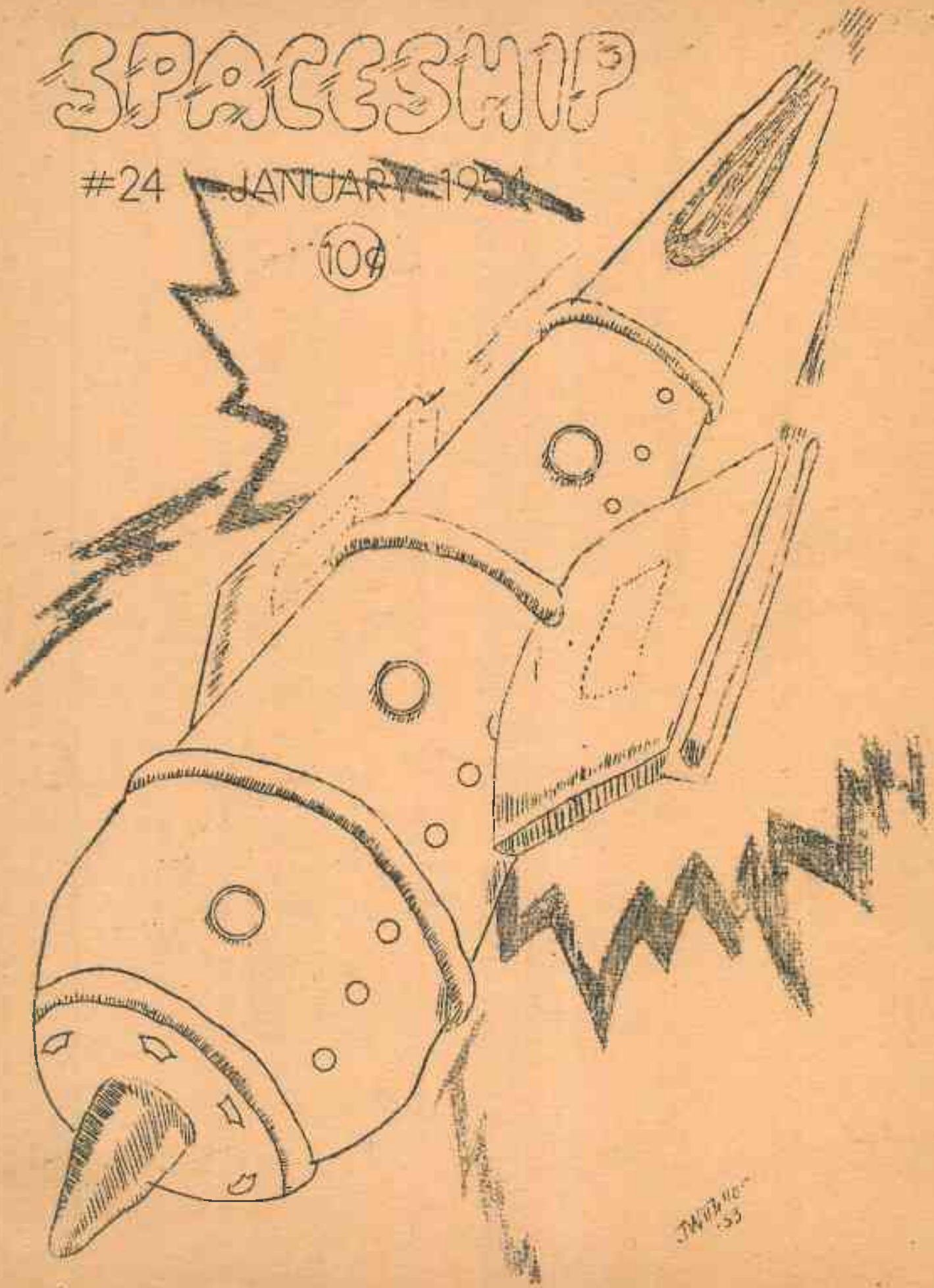


SPACESHIP

#24 JANUARY 1954

a quarterly review of science fiction
fifth year of publication

Bob Silverberg, editor and publisher: 760 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn 13, New York. 10¢ per copy, 3 issues 25¢, and longer subscriptions in the same ratio. Advertising: $1 per full page, 50¢ per half page. British rates, 3 issues for 2/-, payable to Captain K.F. Slater, 13 Gp. R.P.C., B.A.O.R. 42, c/o G.P.O., England. Australian rates, 3 issues for 2/6, payable to Roger Dard, 232 James St., Perth, Western Australia.

Circulation this issue: 150

1953

IN REVIEW

BOB SILVERBERG

A year ago, in an article called 1952 in Review, I characterized the just-ended year as "The Year of the Jackpot"--the year in which more science fiction had been written, published, and read, than ever before.

In 1953 even more sf appeared than in 1952. On the surface, then, it would appear that the steady progression which began after the Second World War had merely continued in its path. On the surface, that is.. Even though 1953 saw a 25% increase in the number of professional science fiction magazines, indications are that the boom has reached its peak and has begun to level off.

In 1949, 90-odd prozines reached the newsstands. In 1950, 119. In 1951 there were 144 issues. In 1952 we had 157. Last year there were 182 prozines issued,under 39 different titles. But in 1953 we had a recurrent pattern of suspensions (six 1952 titles failed to start the new year, five more folded during the year, and at least three seem in suspension now), page cuts (ten magazines reduced pages), and changes in frequency (seven magazines slowed production). All this points to a considerable recession in science fiction magazines, despite outward appearances of quantity.

There were fifteen new prozines started in '53; of these, one failed to survive the year (Avon Science Fiction and Fantasy Reader.) The other of this crop, recordbreaking in size, were a mixed bag. Some, like Beyond Fantasy Fiction, Fantasy Fiction, and Science Fiction Plus, have become important members of the field. Others are merely mediocre: Cosmos Science Fiction, Fantastic Universe, Rocket Stories, Science Stories, Spaceway, Universe Science Fiction. Ray Palmer's Mystic deserves a category of its own. Only one, Vortex Science Fiction, was notably bad

Significant was the virtual disappearance of reprint magazines, at one time a powerful element in the field. Only one began in 1953, the sporadic Tops in Science Fiction, and Famous Fantastic Mysteries,a longtim favorite, was among the missing.

Five magazines folded. FFM's loss was a big one. Space Stories and the Avon Reader never amounted to much, but hardly were objectionable. Only Fantastic Adventures will scarcely be missed. But the biggest surprises of a year studded with them were the actions of Ray Palmer.

Other Worlds was sailing along in its fourth year. making vast strides forward with each issue. Suddenly, for reasons still not completely

clear, Palmer dropped Other Worlds and announced three new titles: Science Stories (actually a continuation of Other Worlds minus the features, the back cover paintings, and thirty pages); Mystic (a curious magazine of esoteric fiction); and Universe Science Fiction, which had seen two issues from another publisher.

But such moves were almost common during the year. Right at the start, Amazing Stories, loweat-ranking pulp for a dozen years, switched to high quality format and fiction. Its five "quality" issues during the year told a story of retrenchment: first, loss of the backcover paintings. Next, a page-cut of 16 pages. Then, elimination of the color interiors. This was followed by another 16-page cut, and then adoption of cheap paper. During the year Amazing produced little of major importance in the way of stories, but its general level was high.

This startling metamorphosis was exceeded only a day later when Hugo Gernsback re-entered the field after an absence of seventeen years, with his Science Fiction Plus. In slick format, remarkably attractive with its five-color covers and colored interiors, this magazine failed to attract readers, probably because its fiction was devoid of any reader interest of the modern sort, and after five slick issues it was forced to drop to pulp paper and bi-monthly publication.

A month later two other important magazines made their appearance: Lester del Rey's Fantasy Fiction and Horace Gold's Beyond. Dedicated to the type of fantasy made popular in 1939-43 by John Campbell's famed Unknown Worlds, these two magazines immediately caught on and have become highly successful.

Another new development was the first 50¢ magazine since the jumbo quarterlies of the thirties: Sam Merwin's Fantastic Universe, offering 192 pages of small type for the half dollar. Evidently this did not work out, for the fourth issue of this magazine sees a reduction to 160 pages and 35¢, the first time a magazine has cut its price in the postwar era.

A noteworthy happening was the almost total decline of the pulps. Three pulp-format magazines folded during the year, three switched to digest size, and four went half way by trimming the edges. No new ones began in 1953. This leaves just nine pulps in the field, of which only four still cling to ragged edges.

The trend, then, is to 35¢ pocket-sizers. Most of the new titles have just 128 pages, and that seems on its way to replacing 160 pages as the standard number for 35¢ magazines.

So much for the magazines; let's examine their contents.

At the top of the list, once again, are three familiar names: Astounding, Galaxy, Fantasy and Science Fiction. All three enjoyed consistently good issues, though Astounding fell considerably from the standard which made it the top mag of 1952. Its most notable story of the year was Hal Clement's four-part "Mission of Gravity"; its novelets, by new authors in the main, were an uneven crop, some very good, some very bad. During 1953 the mag changed from aSF to ASF once again, and adopted a costly paper stock which makes it the most attractive magazine in sf.

Galaxy led the league this year, a wealth of fine short material making

up for the lack of any noteworthy serial. Such stories as "Four in One" (Damon Knight), "The Old Die Rich" (H.L. Gold), "Home is the Hunter" (Henry Kuttner), and "Made in U.S.A." (J.T. M'Intosh) brought Galaxy back to the lofty spot it held in 1951.

The Boucher-McComas magazine also had a fine year, capped by M'Intosh's tense "One in Three Hundred," Poul Anderson's rip-roaring Unknown-type serial "Three Hearts and Three Lions," and dozens of outstanding shorts especially by Robert Sheckley's "The King's Wishes," Wilson Tucker's "Able to Zebra," editor Boucher's "The Other Inauguration," and Ward Moore's "Lot." F&SF, taken as a whole, rates just below Galaxy and just above Astounding for 1953, in this reader's estimation.

Only a cut below the big three are the new Beyond, which gave us "Babel II" (Damon Knight" and "Eye for Iniquity" (T.L. Sherred) and a host of outstanding stories, and the powerful trio begun by Lester del Rey and continued, after del Rey's spectacular dismissal-resignation, by ex-fan Harry Harrison. These three--Science Fiction Adventures, Space SF, and Fantasy Fiction, offered a consistent high level of entertainment, and might have been serious challengers for Top Three position had they been less irregular. Noteworthy in the three were T.L. Sherred's Space serial, "Cue for Quiet," Harry Harrison-Katherine Maclean's Fantasy novel "Web of the Worlds," del Rey's own "Let 'em Breathe Space" from Space, and Erik van Lhin's gigantic serial, "Police Your Planet," from SFA. Van Lhin is del Rey.

That makes seven magazines of outstanding quality. The two Ziff-Davis magazines, despite their imposing format, produced little of permanent importance, except perhaps for Henry Kuttner's classic short story, "Or Else." Sam Mines' magazines suffered a severe drop both in quantity and quality from their high point in 1952, and Mines' seeming reliance on Ken Crossen and Sam Merwin to produce most of his material is probably the explanation. "Moth and Rust" in the June Startling is notable... though this second Farmer novel is not coherent enough to match its predecessor. Damon Knight's "Turncoat" was the outstanding item in Thrilling Wonder.

Nearly every magazine managed to produce at least one worthwhile story. If, which will become monthly in 1954, offered Arthur Clarke's "Jupiter Five" and James Blish's "A Case of Conscience" as their contributions. Imagination, an otherwise undistinguished magazine, supplied one of the rare Heinlein stories, "Sky Lift"--hardly classic, but bearing the Heinlein stamp.

Top author of the year in point of view of production and general quality was Poul Anderson, who hit just about everyone with a prodigious number of skilful novelets. Damon Knight produced more top stories than anyone else in 1953. Others who did noble work in the past year were Theodore Sturgeon, James Blish, and two prolific newcomers, Robert Sheckley and Philip K. Dick.

The best story of the year, though, appeared in no prozine. It was Arthur Clarke's original novel, Childhood's End, part of the high-quality series of paperbacks and hardcovers issued by Ballantine Books. Of all the science fiction published this year (and that means very very much) this Clarke work stands head and shoulders above the rest. Other out-

standing items from Ballantine included Star Science Fiction, The Space Merchants, More Than Human, Bring the Jubilee, Ahead of Time, and Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451.

1953, then, was a year of high quality for the many prozines, but a year portending a levelling-off of the field. With so many quality magazines appearing, those catering to less demanding tastes are being forced off the market. 1954 will probably see a reduction in the number of titles now appearing, and a general re-alignment of the field with about twenty regularly-appearing magazines of good grade instead of the present fluctuating group of forty.

CHECKLIST OF 1953 U.S. MAGAZINES

Amazing Stories (8)
Astounding Science Fiction (12)
Avon Science Fiction and Fantasy Reader (2) (new)(Suspended)
Beyond Fantasy Fiction (3) (new)
Cosmos Science Fiction (2) (new)
Dynamic Science Fiction (4)
Famous Fantastic Mysteries (3) (suspended)
Fantastic (6)
Famtastic Adventures (3) (suspended)
Fantastic Story Magazine (5)
Fantastic Universe (3) (new)
Fantasy and Science Fiction (12)
Fantasy Fiction (4) (new)
Future Science Fiction (6)
Galaxy Science Fiction (12)
Galaxy Science Fiction Novels (6)
If (6)
Imagination (11)
Mystic (1) (new)
Orbit Science Fiction (1) (new)
Other Worlds (7) (suspended)
Planet Stories (6)
Rocket Stories (3) (new)
Science Fiction Adventures (6)
Science Fiction Plus (7) (new)
Science Fiction Quarterly (4)
Science Fiction Stories (1) (new)
Science Stories (2) (new)
Space Science Fiction (5)
Space Stories (3) (suspended)
Spaceway (1) (new)
Startling Stories (8)
Thrilling Wonder Stories (5)
Tops in Science Fiction (2) (new)
Two Complete Science-Adventure Books (3)
Universe Science Fiction (3) (new)
Vortex Science Fiction (2) (new)
Weird Tales (6)
Wonder Story Annual (1)

39 titles -- 182 issues

Hardcover books were high in quality in 1953. Ballantine offered a number of outstanding books in its dual editions. Doubleday's most noteworthy new book was Edgar Pangborn's West of the Sun, but this big outfit released a long list of magazine novels, some before the serialization was complete. 1953 failed to produce an original novel on the same level as 1952's Player Piano, Limbo, Long Loud Silence, or Rogue Queen, but the general grade of 1953 hardcover science fiction was high.

Not so in that other field of science fiction publishing, the fanmags. 1953 was a year of transition in the amateur field, with the old hands dropping out and newer, less experienced ones taking over. Familiar faces which disappeared in 1953 include QUANDRY, OPUS, RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST, COSMAG, OOPSLA, SCIENCE FICTION NEWSLETTER, TYRANN, FANTASIAS, and many others of the fanmags which led the field during the 1950-52 era. Of the twenty fanzines mentioned in SPACESHIP #15 as having been outstanding in 1951, eleven are dead, four are but occasional, and the other five (OPERATION FANTAST, PEON, FANTASY-TIMES, SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER, and KAYMAR TRADER) are still with us. Of thirty-eight fanzines cited in SPACESHIP #20's 1952 review, only twelve are still appearing regularly.

The fanzine field, thus, is still as ephemeral as ever. During 1953, with most of the veteran publishers dropping out, a new group forged to the top. Harlan Ellison's SCIENCE FANTASY BULLETIN took top rung easily, the most controversial fanmag in years. Other new leaders are Joel Nydahl's VEGA, Jerry Burge's ASFO, Richard Geis' PSYCHOTIC, Bob Peatrowsky's MOTE. Old leaders still appearing more or less regularly include PEON, SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER, SOL, FANTASY-TIMES, DESTINY, FANTASTIC WORLDS, STARLANES, HYPHEN (in lieu of SLANT), KAYMAR TRADER, and OPERATION FANTAST. (Of these "old" fanzines, only five date from before 1951.)

We were sorry to see the foldings of JOURNAL OF SCIENCE FICTION, VANATIONS, and the others listed above. Oldtimers rejoining us after several years' absence included DAWN, DIFFERENT, CANADIAN FANDOM, and ZENITH. Worthy of special mention is Vernon McCain's cogent REVIEW. From Australia came BACCHANALIA, PERHAPS, SF NEWS; from Britain, ANDROMEDA, SPACE TIMES, SPACE DIVERSIONS.

By next year, many of these listed above will be gone, and others will have taken their place. The newcomers, of varying quality, which will comprise the 1954 leaders, will be drawn from the group of fanmags dating from 1952 and 1953--magazines such as FIENDETTA, SCINTILLA, INSIDE, STARMAG, VULCAN, SF FANZINE, BOO, A LA SPACE, SPIRAL, STARFARER, GREMLIN, SCINTILLA, FAN WARP, KOMET, and the other less distinguished mags of today. 1954 will be a year of continued transition for fandom, as its reconstituted membership gains in experience.

1953 ends on a note of pessimism. The seemingly infinite boom which, in 1952, threatened to soar ever upward, has apparently reached its limits, and 1954 will be a year of retrenchment, of realignment, as the pro and fan fields struggle to regain their balance. Fandom will probably divide even more sharply into Eastern and Western halves after the Friscon, and the professional magazines will divide sharply into adult and juvenile divisions, with short shrift for the mediocre magazines which fit neither category. It should be a good year to watch.

--Bob Silverberg

broadway and forty-second street

I have seen echoing towers, roofless
Their giant shafts, skyframing, hollowed
And shouted at the patch of blue above
Nor answer followed

Rank on rank, stone corpses filled with air
Their empty eyes look down on broken stone
And grass that thrusts between the pavement's cracks
I am alone

I came crosstown and found a rusted bridge
Still standing in green vines and cables red
But heard a distant sound, a rattled tread
Of foot that was no human foot on that dead bridge.
In fear, I fled.

--Dave Mason

The novelist was an old man, but a man who had seen and done great things. He had travelled the avenues of space all his long life, and put what he saw and what he had heard and what he did between the covers of a great many books, so that those who had seen and done with him could read and nod at the wisdom and the beauty caught and crystallized by his pen, and those who had not could read, and dream, and hope.

And there he sat, this great man, behind a scarred desk in his study. And this young boy stood and looked at him, half unbelieving, unable to comprehend what had befallen him. The contest had been entered by every boy in his class, but he had won, had been the one chosen to visit this great man, and talk to him and hear him talk. The old man sat, and the boy stood in the doorway and stared for one long, breathless second, as if the very sound of his breath might break the spell. And then he glanced up and spoke, and the spell was broken, but the scene remained reality.

"Well, come in, boy. Close the door. I can't stand the drafts the way I used to."

"Yes, sir."

"Come closer, let me look at you. They said you'd won some kind of contest or something."

"Yes, sir. An essay contest: what contributions you had made to literature and civilization."

"I suppose you thought up a lot of 'em, huh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well--well, I guess maybe you're right. When a man gets to be my age he's probably contributed to one or the other along the way. You read my books, I suppose?"

"Oh, every one, sir. Some more than once."

"I thought so. Like 'em?"

"They're wonderful, sir. The greatest I've ever read."

"Well, you're still young. But you didn't come here to give me a lot of sweet-sirupy buttering-up, did you? Because if you did you might just as well have written a letter so I could let my secretary take care of it. There's something specific you wanted to talk about, isn't there? Some question, maybe?"

"Well, yes, sir. There was something. Sir, I've read all your books-"

"You said that."

"All of them, sir, and I thought they were very beautiful and wonderful, and, and--"

"Well, get to it."

"I just wanted to ask you, sir--is it really like you said it was, sir? Space, I mean. Is it really that way?"

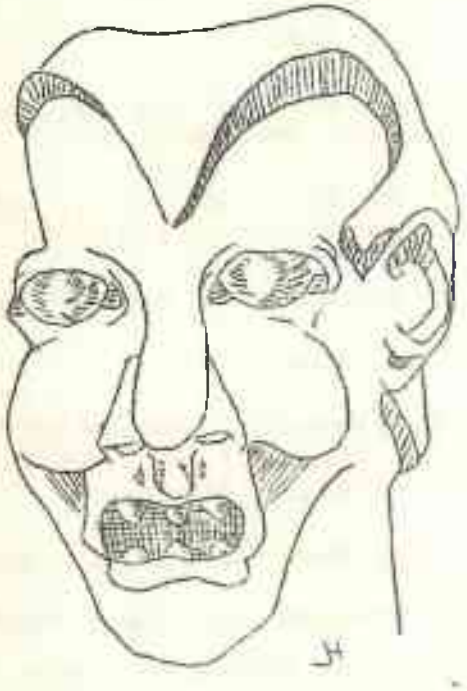
"Is space-- ? Come closer, boy. Here, sit down there. Now, what did I say it was like? What do you think I said it was like?"

"Well, sir--you said it was different from anything man's ever seen before, different from anything ever was before since man was."

"Well, that's right, dead right. But if you stop to think about it, nothing else was ever like what went before either, now was it? What else, boy? There must be something else."

"Sir, you said it was very beautiful and exciting, and life out there is strong and great, and always moving, and always vital and--and alive Things are wonderful and great and perfect out there. And--I just wanted to hear you say it was really true, sir."

The old man frowned and screwed up his brow and looked away for a second. Then he glanced up suddenly, and began as though he were talking about something entirely new.



"Boy, have you ever seen the picture of Luna City that hangs in the Capitol? How straight and clean and free the streets are, and how tall and graceful all the buildings look, and how everything looks so shiny and bright and new? You know the one I mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, boy, that picture is pretty well true. You see, it was taken while the city was just being opened for colonists, and not many were there at the time. But there are now, and the place is a lot different. Oh, the streets are straight, and the buildings still tall and graceful, and the air is almost as free and clear as then--but it's not the same now, boy. There's dirt and dust and grime there now. It's not all clean and shiny any more, but there are people there. It's not spotless, but it's lived in. Follow me, boy?"

"I think so. You mean that space is like that? That once it was clean and nice, but now that people live there--"

"Ah, I didn't say that now, did I? Oh, you're right, though. Space and all its room and all its planets and stars were spotless and new and shiny once, when men looked at them through telescopes. But now men live there, and it just isn't new and spotless any more. Man can't dream about space any more; he lives there.

"Did you know that the rockets leave fuel-trails all over where they go? Great streams of live steam frozen into ice-particles in a second, and all swirling around behind every rocket that goes anywhere.

"And the cities aren't spotless, aren't lovely, aren't bright and dea and new. There's dirt and dust in Luna City, and on Mars, and Titan and Venus, and Centaurus. And spacemen aren't strong and handsome an great. They're rough and coarse, and most of them are dirty a lot of the time. No, it's not all beauty and excitement any more, boy."

"I see. Because men are there now."

"Oh, but that's just it! Listen, boy, you were right. Space is new and different and it's tried to change man, tried hard and still tries all the time. But man will not be changed. He survives, and endures, and instead of changing he changes other things. He always will."

"But space is not beautiful any more."

"No, boy, it's not. Not the way you mean beautiful. Because to be beautiful that way, something must be free and unchanged and untouched, and unattainable. Like Luna City, all space was beautiful and clean and spotless--but there were no people there. And now it's changed and a lot of it is rough and scarred and dirty. But there are people there now. It's not as it was; of course it isn't. How could it be? Only so long as no one was there could it be beautiful and spotless. But remember this, boy: it was beautiful, and spotless, but it did not belong to man. Do you see? Do you understand, boy?"

"I think I do, sir. Only--"

"Yes?"

"Well, sir, why did you say it was beautiful, then? If space isn't beautiful any more, then why did you say so?"

The old man smiled and shook his head.

"I won't answer that one, boy. I don't think I could. But I will tell you this: you go out and see for yourself. Some day go out and take a look at space, at all the emptiness, and the dust and the dirt, and all the men contesting against space and winning, and sometimes not winning. Take a good long look at it all,

and then decide if you can find beauty there."

"I will, sir. I'm sure I will."

"Well, is that all? No more questions?"

"No more, but thank you."

"Well, I think you'd better go, then. I'm not good company for the young much any more. You see my secretary on the way out and she'll take care of you."

"Thank you, sir. Goodbye."

The novelist sat at his desk a long time after the boy had left, staring out the great window of his study. The streets of Luna City spread out below him long and straight between tall, graceful buildings, and traffic was light and slow in that section of town. On the sidewalk opposite a few green grass-blades had sprung up in cracks where dirt had collected--grew and hung tenaciously to life in a place where, save for a bit of dirt, they could not have dared sprout. The novelist glanced up at the door through which the boy had left, looked at his hands for a moment, and sat back in his chair.

--Larry Stark

by Bob Silverberg
700 Montgomery St.
Brooklyn 13, N.Y.

SPACESHIP #23: Oct 53. Stark, Boggs, Silverberg, Ellison, Dard, others. Three-color cover. A few copies left at 10¢.
SPACESHIP #22, Jul 53. Grennell, Elsberry, Shapiro, Hirschhorn, others. Lithographed Grennell cover. A few left at 10¢.
SPACESHIP #17, Apr 52. Famous Third Annish, with material by Boggs, Moskowitz, Willis, Elsberry, many others. 40 pages. 15¢.

IRUSABEN, the Silverberg FAPAzine. Numbers Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen, at 10¢ each, all three issues for 25¢.

Air Wonder Stories Feb 30, Mar 30, no covers--each 25¢
Amazing Stories August 30, no covers--25¢
Mar 50, Jun Sep Nov [illegible] 52, [illegible] 53, good condition--each, 25¢
Astounding Apr 51, fine--25¢. Feb 41, fair--50¢.
Famous Fantastic Mysteries Jun Aug Oct 52, good--each 25¢
Fantastic Adventures Apr 48, Sep 49, good--each 25¢
Galaxy Dec 52, Jan Feb Jul 53, good--each 25¢
Space Science Fiction Nov 52, Jul 53, fine--each 25¢
Startling Stories Fall 46, good--25¢
Thrilling Wonder Jun 38, no back cover--10¢

I pay postage on all orders

WANTED, for completion of file: Astounding Nov 30, Oct 33, May 34, Mar 36. That's right...just four.

book review:

THE RED PERI

by STANLEY WEINBAUM

TERRY CARR

"The author of this volume sold his first science fiction story in 1934. A year and a half later, he died. Within that brief period he compressed a writing career which has made the name of Stanley G. Weinbaum known to science fiction readers everywhere." So says the dust jacket of this final collection of Weinbaum's short stories and novelets, published in 1953 by Fantasy Press. It is all quite true; however it must be pointed out that science fiction has changed considerably since 1934, and so have its literary standards. This collection is a good indication of the changes that have occurred in nineteen years.

Then, as now, science fiction concerned itself with ideas based on science, with stories woven around the ideas. In 1934, though, the basic science-fictional concepts were not old enough to have become hackneyed, and a Weinbaum who could bring a fresh slant to the eight-year-old field was hailed as the successor to H. G. Wells. He wrote around ideas, fascinating backgrounds, believable alien creatures; his fiction was well received by a public already weary of strange monsters whose only interest seemed to lie in making meals of heroines.

The Red Peri, the last collection of Weinbaum's works to be published, is an inferior collection. Most of his best work was published in earlier books, and as a result the volume at hand suffers. The title story is a novelet dealing with a space-pirate, a beautiful girl who is determined to avenge her father against the huge Interplanetary Corporation by raiding their ships and setting up a rival corporation with the money she gains. A love story develops, the space-pirate is captured and escapes, and the hero and heroine (the beautiful space-pirate) wind up separated. A modern science fiction magazine would probably bounce this immediately, despite the novel (and improbable) "scientific" concept which endeared the story to 1935 fans, the notion that it's possible to endure brief exposure to space without after-effects.

The other novelet of the volume is "The Revolution of 1960" (originally 1950, in the 1938 Amazing Stories version.) This is a cloak-and-dagger story of a revolt against a United States president who sets himself up as a dictator, an unoriginal story believed by some to have been written by Ralph Milne Farley from Weinbaum's notes.

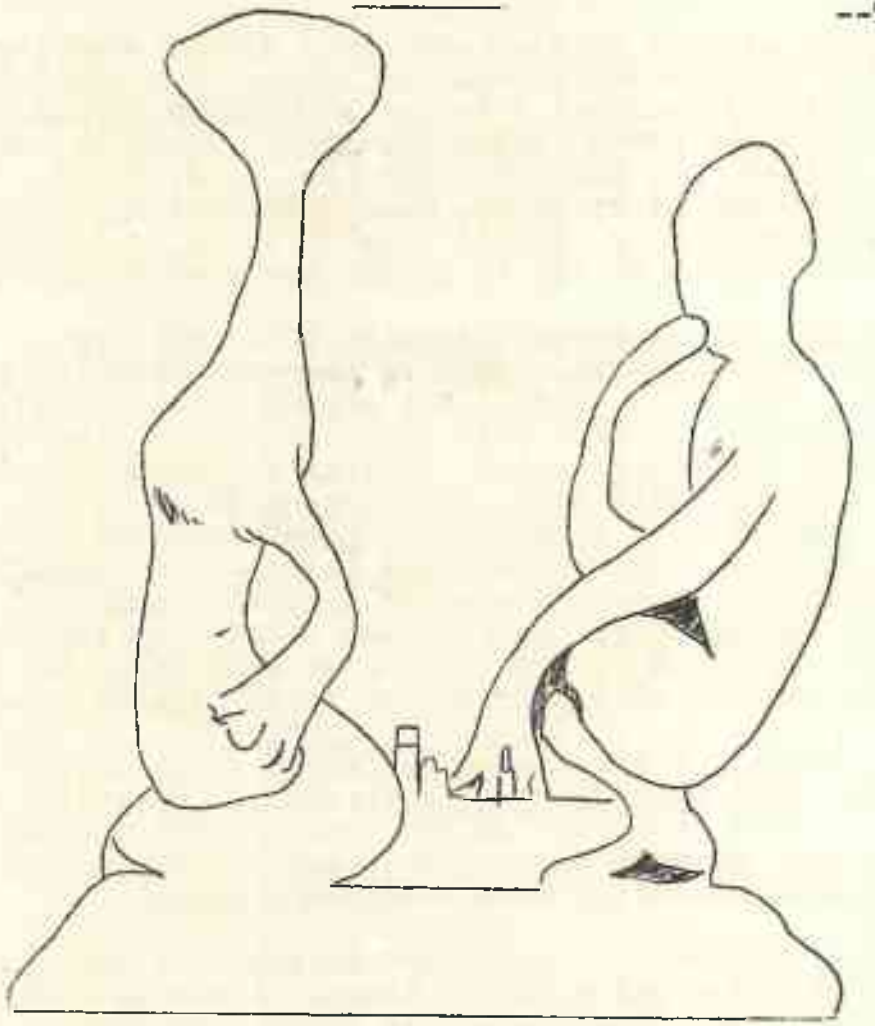
"The Brink of Infinity," the shortest story of the collection, is more of a mathematical problem than a story. A man is kidnapped by a madman and given a mathematical problem to solve, on pain of death. It is a fascinating problem, quite logically set up, and the story is a good example of Weinbaum's best.

"Shifting Seas" has perhaps the most fascinating theme of any of his

stories. It involves a simultaneous eruption of the entire chain of Pacific volcanoes, which range all along the Pacific coasts of North and South America. As a result of this terrific disturbance, a good deal of Central America sinks below the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This changes the course of the Gulf Stream, leaving England a frigid land comparable to Iceland. The events are developed logically and compellingly, with a great exodus from England and other parts of Western Europe to the New World. There is a more personal story involved, of course, but it is dwarfed by the greater drama that forms its background.

There are other stories--"Flight on Titan," "Smothered Seas," "Proteus Island," "Redemption Cairn"--a total of eight in all. Better writing can be found in almost any 35¢ magazine today, and the book is interesting to the science fiction aficionado only if he is interested in Weinbaum or in the development of science fiction since Weinbaum's day. The uninitiated might find these stories, the best of the '30s, crude and almost childish at times, but only because the science fiction of the 1930s had different aims and different techniques from that of today. The stories in The Red Peri are fascinating--if it's ideas you're after.

--Terry Carr



HARNESS

FILE 13

REDD BOGGS

THE WORLD'S A BUBBLE--

The only people who have never speculated about the stars are the Venusians, who never see them. All the primitive peoples of Earth have theories as to what the stars are, and use these theories in their folk stories and songs. Everybody knows about the Greek myths, in which the Milky Way was the road to the gods' abode and such gods and mortals as Callisto and Astraea became stars or constellations, and in sentimental poetry we find echoes of other folk-theories such as that the stars are "fire folk," or that they are the souls of the dead, or that they are the campfires of a sky-dwelling people. Charles Fort suggested that the stars might be celestial volcanoes on a surface not so far above the earth. But, as in many cases, the probable truth is the most fascinating hypothesis of all. Our scientists say that the stars are distant suns. This is perhaps the most easily acceptable explanation; surely it is the one best suited for story-telling purposes.

Science fiction owes most of its strength and vitality to this scientific speculation. If the stars are far-off suns, then there may be other planets circling them, and if there are other planets, there may be other intelligent life in the universe besides ourselves. Every yarn from The Legion of Space to Childhood's End depends on such a speculation. But there is another possibility for science fiction stories in the same hypothesis, and it has gone out of favor in recent years.

Anyone who wanders outdoors and gazes up at the stars on a clear and brilliant night feels the realness of that possibility. Even the primitive who believes that the stars are fire folk senses it: the alienness and vastness of the universe. If the stars are only a race of gods dressed in blazing armor, they are nevertheless so far away that one can reach their realm only by climbing a moonbeam. If the stars are suns and some of the mistier ones are pinwheels containing millions of suns, well, how large the universe must be, and how small our planet and how small we must be! If our world is only a grain of dust blown in a starry gale, what is to prevent it from being smashed, burned, or stepped on, in the next second or two? With Earth so insignificant and the universe so huge and unfriendly, our life here is precarious indeed. On such a mighty stage, anything is possible and any fate may be a reality--from the searing nightmare of Frank Lillie Pollock's "Finis" to the watery catastrophe of Garrett P. Serviss' "Second Deluge."

Civilized folk don't look at the stars much; you can't see them plain in a smogged-in, neon-lit city. Most science fiction authors are fragile creatures, unfit to breathe an atmosphere unpolluted by tobacco smoke and liquor fumes; most of them write about space travel without ever looking up at the stars their heroes flit off to. Thus, I think, we have fewer "world catastrophe" stories in science fiction than we

would have if science fiction were somehow to become the preoccupation of primitive story-tellers living in Polynesia. Perhaps it is no accident that two of the best world's-end stories in the last ten years were written by an astronomer--Philip Latham's "N Day" and "The Xi Effect."

Once in a while we get a world catastrophe yarn. One of them appeared in ASF, November 1953--"Potential" by Robert Sheckley. In this yarn a man is discovered alone in a speeding spaceship, the only survivor when the Earth was destroyed by Nova Sol. After some curious adventures, he discovers that he possesses, stored in the nerve connections of his mind, the entire population of Earth, each person existing as a "dormant nonmaterial molecule." It is a good story, but it is low-powered and it is on a small scale. The destruction of Earth is handled so casually that one instantly senses that Sheckley lives in Brooklyn, where the stars haven't shown since 1854.

Surely there is an elemental appeal in the world catastrophe story that would make acceptable and even popular a large-scale story of the genre even in this day of sophistication. Handled with the care lavished on "Mission of Gravity" and with the maturity evident in "The Demolished Man," a true world-catastrophe tale could hardly help being a classic. I weary of stories of atomic war. I would welcome a story where nature herself tried to wipe mankind out by destroying his world. Perhaps the best advice for science fiction writers is contained in Gerard Manley Hopkins' sonnet, "Starlight Night": "Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies!"

SHORT SHORT STORY

Savant's Secret

by E.M. Hull, L. Ron Hubbard, and Henry Kuttner

Enter the professor.
The professor was a thief.
Exit the professor.

CLEAN SPEECH REVISITED

Last column I mentioned a petition sent by the Christian Reformed Church to President Eisenhower, asking him to "curb and prevent" profanity in the armed forces. In a recent letter to me, Claude Hall reported the sequel to this item: "True to the item mentioned, the President did issue orders about profanity. Daily bulletins, memos, and such, have plagued us in droves. And a chaplain gives an hour lecture on 'Clean Speech' each eight-week cycle.

"It was my pleasure to witness a humorous incident on this matter about two weeks ago, at which time we were on the range. On the firing line, the order was given to cease fire. Three of the four guns did so, but one gun continued to fire. A corporal--Korean vet, and a regular army man all the way--rushed up and proceeded to give the gunner what he thought would be a good tongue-lashing. Alas and alack! The captain was standing nearby and he overheard the corporal's angry vocal effects. He immediately ran up and began to bawl the corporal out for using profanity in front of the trainees.

"To emphasize his point, the captain was using a great deal of the 'old soldier's slang' himself. He finally saw what he was doing and began to laugh. The laughter followed the chain of command and soon everybody was having a good giggle. Result: we still use our natural tone of voice, but no one tells us what to say--or how."

CORREY'S CAREER

Those of you who like Lee Correy, Astounding's new find, should take a quick look at him while you've got the chance. He isn't going to be with us very long. Correy has written three stories for ASF and several others for the slicks; each story to date demonstrates his strong potentialities and his painful shortcomings. I think his shortcomings will soon lead to his extinction as a Find.

According to Campbell, Correy is a rocket expert and has had "actual experience with actual big rockets." Unquestionably he knows his stuff and it shows. Furthermore, he enjoys writing about the big rockets and enjoys speculation about the day when White Sands will become Earth's first real spaceport. His stories to date have had a rare verve and gusto that old grinds like Murray Leinster and L. Sprague de Camp must gnash their teeth over, and the verisimilitude of these stories can hardly be matched except by another rocket expert. As a picture of daily routine aboard a rocket, "And a Star to Steer Her By" outshines--but only in that respect--Robert Heinlein's "The Green Hills of Earth."

Nevertheless, as works of art none of Correy's stories so far have been remotely masterful. The novelette mentioned above was weak in plot and motivation, and these weaknesses are even more prominent in two short stories, "Pioneer" and "Ill Wind." In fact, these two yarns are essentially the same story retold, and play on the ancient theme that heroes are really just ordinary guys with average courage, driven by circumstances to risk their lives in line of duty. In this case, the "heroes" are rocket pilots who ride spaceward on pillars of fire, not for glory or a desire to conquer space, but because their shrewish wives or fickle girl friends drive them to it.

In neither case is Correy's plot developed beyond the obvious. The rocket pilot does his risky job and gains a certain satisfaction and self-respect from doing it, but the emotional aspects of the story are only superficially explored. The whole reason for Correy's stories to date has been to display some extrapolations about rocket flying.

Campbell's audience is undoubtedly interested in such matters, but how long can Correy go on selling the same story? As long as he thinks of a new extrapolation about rocketry? Before then, I think, even ASF readers will be yawning and Campbell will be using the return postage enclosed with Correy's manuscripts. Correy has some skill as a writer, but his forte is rocket technology, and as soon as the novelty of this background wears off, Correy will be a hasbeen.

At this stage in his development Correy reminds me of George O. Smith in the days of Venus Equilateral and the Plutonian Lens. Smith knew his technology; his extrapolations about interplanetary communications were sound, and he enjoyed writing about them. But as soon as the novelty wore off, Smith had to write about something else. At first he committed some awful things--"Trouble," "Fine Feathers,"--but eventual-

ly he augmented his technical knowledge and his elan with an elementary but solid knowledge of story-writing craft, and he wrote some competent, even excellent yarns like "Kingdom of the Blind," "Fire in the Heavens."

Maybe Lee Correy can pull the same trick. If he doesn't, technology and elan won't be sufficient, and his career as a science fiction writer won't last beyond 1955.

NOTES THAT MISSED MY WASTEBASKET

If he was still a fan, Richard Elsberry might startle and restartle fandom this spring with two impetuous actions. He may attend the SFcon, but asks me to remember him to his "old friends and correspondents" and to"wish them hail and farewell. And all that sort of rot." # Marion Z. Bradley's "Centaurus Changeling" will appear in the April F&S Meantime, Charles Harris of the Essex Harrises has also become a Professional Author. He was the last known fan who hadn't sold a story. James Blish and damon knight are collaborating on a new novel. Watch also for a sequel to "Surface Tension." # Terry Carr and Bob Stewart of San Francisco recently announced that they are "reviving Quandry." By this they apparently mean that they are turning Boo! into a close imitation of Q, in format, policy, and material. They are soliciting material from many in the Q circle, but they didn't say whether they have obtained the indispensable ingredient in Q's success: Lee Hoffman herself, as editor. # And has anyone noticed the number of monthly fan mags that have been coming out more or less monthly of late? The Shares' Hodge-podge, Richard Geis' Psychotic, and of course Walt Willis' Hyphen. All of them are well worth reading too, if you have time to read three fanzines every month. # Report from Burbee: "A local movie director tried suicide after writing to a local newspaper: 'When I couldn't even get a job as an usher I felt that my movie future was rather bleak.' Beside his unconscious body was found a copy of Fantastic Tales. Fandom in the headlines?" Another case in which fandom almost made the headlines was reported in a recent issue of Time. Unfortunately I sent the clipping to Martin Alger, so check with him. You won't learn the fascinating details in File 13. # Slightly misgauging my interests, someone recently gave me a booklet full of colored pictures of Marilyn Monroe. I was fascinated by captions like this one: "She wears only her dress, doesn't like anything to spoil the lines. She sued for divorce when she was 18." Is there a connection between those two statements? # Speaking of cheesecake, I wonder if the January 1954 Beyond is possessed of antigrav circulation because of that cover? Don Wollheim claimed that Avon Fantasy Reader sold spectacularly when it used such covers. The charming thing about Beyond is that it's got fine stories printed on its inner pages.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Rather than waiting till distant February and Skyhook #20, I'd like to take a few lines here to thank everyone who sent me a Christmas card. I would mention Lee Hoffman's original, a pleasantly horsey card; Dean A. Grennell's photo card, with pix of the whole Grennell clan; and Walt Willis' "card" published for the "More-Reading-on-Christmas Cards Movement," but this would mean ignoring a double handful of lovely Christmas cards from others among you, which were equally appreciated. So just consider that these last few lines were occupied by a "South Gate in '58" ad, will you? I'll see you again when the dogwood blooms.

--Redd Boggs

REPORT FROM AUSTRALIA

ROGER DARD

Some months ago, I remarked to Bob Silverberg that I hadn't received my copy of SPACESHIP #21. He guessed it had been lost in the mails, and offered to advertise for another copy for me. But I've just received a letter from the Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Trade and Customs, which explains where my copy of Sship has been:

> Dear Sir, One copy of "Space Ship No. 21," which was contained in a parcel of Books addressed to you, was detained for review. # It has been decided to release the copy, which is accordingly forwarded herewith. Yours faithfully
>
> S.M. Butterfield
> Collector of Customs

My copy of SPACESHIP #21 had been held by the Customs for months, until they decided it was not likely to bring the Australian government down in bloody ruins and released the 'zine. I've often said that I would never be surprised at anything the Australian Customs did, but I take it all back. I've never known them to bother with fanzines before, so SPACESHIP has set a precedent: it's been in Canberra, getting reviewed by everybody from the Minister for Customs down.

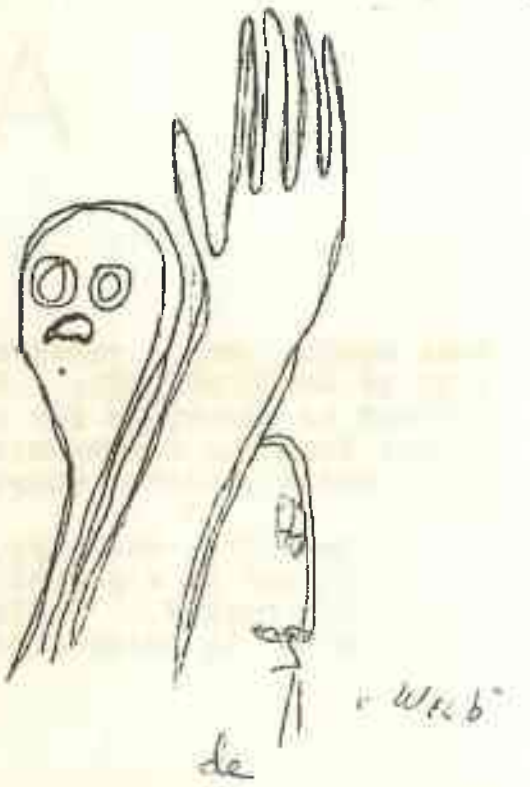
Apparently I'm not the only one having trouble with Customs; recently Vol Molesworth, veteran fan, pro author, and Fantasy-Times columnist, had a run-in. When a Customs officer seized a parcel of his magazines and announced his intention of burning them, Vol blew his top and, declaring, "It was vandals like you who destroyed Rome, Carthage, and Athens," promptly slugged the Customs guy! News like this revives my flagging faith in human nature. Molesworth has requested his American correspondents to file a complaint with the United Nations, charging Australia with interfering with United States Mail.

*

Popular and Future, the two Australian prozines, do not seem to be in too healthy a condition. It is now many months since the first issues of both appeared, and they are badly overdue. I understand that the second issues will shortly be on the stands, but the lag between issues is ominous.

However, the reprint digest-sized American Science Fiction continues to appear like clockwork each month. Latest titles: "Dead Knowledge" by JWC, also containing "Men of Ten Books" by Jack Vance and "The Rats" by Arthur Porges. "The Dead World" by Clare Winger Harris and Miles J. Breuer headed the list of stories in the previous issue, supported by

Nelson Bond's "My Nephew Norvell " and Wallace West's "The Belt." This magazine very generously has given Australian fandom free back cover ads in the last three issues. They have listed the best-known fan in each state, for the convenience of neo-fen who want help in becoming more active, improving their collections, etc.



The Third Australian Science Fiction Convention will be held in the spring of 1954. Membership in the Convention is 10/-, or $1, to be remitted to the Organizer, Walter Judd, 94 Hargraeve Street, Paddington, N.S.W., Australia.

*

The slick magazines seem to be getting interested in science fiction these days. The Australian Post, in their issue of October 8, gave Aussie fandom the first publicity it has ever receivd in a slick magazine. In an article entitled "Bug-Eyed Monsters," Melbourne fandom gets a writeup, with passing references to a few fans outside Melbourne--Don Tuck of Tasmania, Ian Moyes of South Australia, and your columnist here in Western Australia. The article was embellished by a photo of prominent Melbourne fan Bob McCubbin, and the cover of the issue showed a typical BEM and scantily-clad girl.

The Australian slick Pix (a sort of down-under Look) recently published a symposium on space flight. The feature covered three consecutive issues, from September 19 to October 3.

The Sydney newspaper Sunday Sun has begun running science fiction again lately, using stories by Shaver, van Vogt, and local fan Gene James.

*

New fanzines out: BACCHANALIA, devoted to weird stories and articles. Edited and published by Race Matthews, 8 Barnett St., Hampton, Victoria, Australia. Neatly mimeod, lithographed cover, fair material by Matthews, Terry Jeeves, Dave Cohen, Roger Dard, and T.G.L. Cockcroft. Also: WASTEBASKET (no connection with Vernon McCain's zine) edited and published by Leo Harding, 510 Drummond St., Carlton, N.3, Victoria, Australia. Mainly a mimeographed fun-zine, with wacky humor and cartoons by Hal Shapiro, Roger Dard, Leo Harding, and Toby Duane. Both these publications state that they want material, so fans interested should contact them direct.

And that covers the news from this hemisphere for now.

--Roger Dard

THE WAY I SEE IT

BERT HIRSCHHORN

We fans, that is, readers of science fiction, have the distinction of living in an era when great technological and medical steps are taken daily: the very same steps predicted by Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and the eternal Hugo Gernsback. And also, as fans, we are witnessing the great transition of modern-day science fiction.

At the turn of the century, when literature was coming into its own in American life, all the various types of stories started out in fashions of their own. It was quite normal for a mystery to have a body on every page. Pauline and her Perils were great stuff, to say nothing of Tom Swift and his electric thingamagig. But as the people grew up, they became more discriminating in their tastes. Pauline didn't appeal any longer.

And so literature changed, evolved to bring about greater perception of human behavior. And in a like manner science fiction has also grown. It comes from a heritage rich with trigger-happy villains, frog-men, and luscious babes in bikinis and space helmets.

We have left the space-opera stage, happily, and science fiction is beginning to mature. The process is going on right in front of us, having begun in Astounding in 1939 and spread to the other magazines within the last five years. We still have Neanderthals (such as Planet) clinging to life, but evolution has passed them by. With the process taking place as we watch, contemporary fans have a great role in determining the course science fiction should take.

Two arguments have developed. One group wants to emphasize the science of science fiction, while the other thinks the human angle should be developed.

We find that ten or so years ago the entire emphasis of science fiction was on science, of a sort. Today such a viewpoint is still prevalent, but fortunately the wild, untamed, everything-goes "science" of yesteryear has been overthrown by the present extrapolative fiction, with authors going to great pain to make every detail accurate. If you've been reading Astounding lately, you'll recall Hal Clements' "Mission of Gravity": almost purely technological stuff, as accurate as could be. Yet I asked myself as I tried to wade through the serial: to whom does this appeal? To the ordinary reader? I doubt it. To the technologist? Yes, but how many are there?

And how many more people are there interested in the human angle of the story? Hundreds more, thousands. And therefore, it is my opinion that the science should be de-emphasized as much as is practicable in science fiction. This is a sort of heresy. After all, if that Hirschhorn fellow can't understand the science, why should he crab?

The fact is that a literature to become popular and widely read must be

able to reach the masses. Howard Browne, with his formula of doubtful science fiction, is working on precisely that idea. I think that it is rank snobbishness for fans to assume that science fiction is for them and them alone. Science fiction is becoming popular and to make it so the science in it must be cut down.

I will admit this may be a flimsy argument. What then will science fiction be? I read an article recently that rightly deplored the loss of the want to speculate. Things are, said the author, being made into pocketsize, digest size, and condensed versions. The speculation is mapped out for the reader. And science fiction, continued the writer, is one of the last outposts of speculative thought.

It is a valid point. And it would seem that my plea to cut down the science in science fiction is an attack on speculation. But this is not so.

Science fiction is a misnomer as far as I'm concerned. I believe that the modern, mature science fiction should deal primarily with sociology of man. Speculation would not be lost, but instead of speculation in mathematics or physics, there would be the free-moving speculation of human relationships.

For instance: in a science story, we say, "What happens if the space-warp is a type that turns matter inside out?" In a sociological story, we ask, "What happens if man meets with a culture that tells him there is no God? How does man react?" This higher culture can be able to turn matter inside out as well, but that doesn't form an integral part of the story. This takes us completely away from the science fiction. I would think the sociological fiction much wider in scope and theory. Almost anythingwould go. Science-minded authors are limited to plausible theories.

Most fiction today emphasizes human relations. But today's ordinary fiction tells how the author thinks people will react to conditions existing at the present time. In the science fiction story, the author is free to use his imagination in setting up cultures and incidents to describe how future man will react. He is at liberty to describe the science of the future, of course, if he can.

I have read much of this type of story and I find that for myself it is quite stimulating. It may bore the people who are currently pleading for a return to science fiction of old. John W. Campbell, jr., a protagonist of that theory, represents that point of view in his own stories, in which character and plot are secondary to scientific gimmicks. They are merely speculative articles covered by a thin sheet of fiction

And that, I believe, is not the role of science fiction. Science fiction is not for the few who wish to dabble in complex theory, but for the people as a whole, who love to speculate on the future and history of their descendants.

Philip Wylie pointed out in Opus 21 that our great fault is that we do not lay the groundwork for our children and our children's children. We are too selfish for our own period. This leaves our descendants to relearn things all over again.

A close study of sociological science fiction would perhaps bring people to speculate on possible futures and on just how they can make the world a better place for their children.

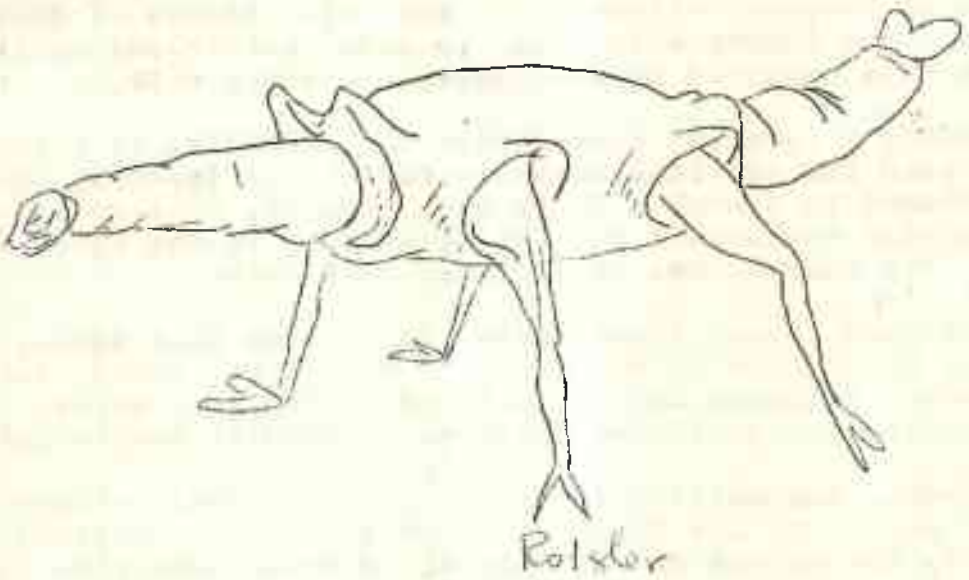
I feel we've let technology run away from human relations. Today's science fiction, having served its purpose of predicting scientific advances, must assume the leadership in predicting the great sociological advances of tomorrow. It is up to us to see that people begin to speculate about the future, their future, and man's future.

--Bert Hirschhorn

SPACESHIPS

As from a common wrist
A child's radial fingers are sprung,
So from the spinning center
Which is Earth
The vapor trails
Spread into the darkening night,
Grasping,
Groping for the crystal stars
Which now seem
Just within their reach.

-- Larry Stark



BACKTALK

This is an announcement which causes me great anguish. Effective with SPACESHIP #25, April 1953, the price of this fanzine will be 15¢. It's a step I've put off taking for years and years, but various economic forces drive me to it now. I've long felt 15¢ an unjustified price for a fanzine, but since it seems to have become the standard price for magazines of any size and quality, I no longer have any reason to keep to the old price. Since SPACESHIP offers more pages than most of the 15¢ magazines, and offers, I'm told, a fairly good level of material, I don't feel I'm cheating anyone by raising the price.

The new rates are 15¢ per copy, 2/25¢, 5/50¢, and ten for a buck. One thing I'm afraid of is that this will encourage too many two-issue subscriptions, while I like my subscribers to stay...and stay...and stay. Your attention is called to the long-term rates, which remain at the old figure of 10¢ a copy.

This move leaves Lee Riddle as the only major publisher still charging 10¢ for a fanmag of considerable size. How he does it, I don't know.

This issue's contributors:

LARRY STARK, who made his fanzine debut last issue and captured top position, is a talented fellow who recently graduated from Rutgers, had a miraculously short stay in the army, and has returned after a two-week career of soldiering to help hold up the sagging fan field.

WILLIAM ROTSLER, whose pics have bestrewn the last few Sships courtesy of Redd Boggs, is the madcap artist of the far West whose chief contributions to Western culture have been six issues of MASQUE, the gaudy fanzine, and innumerable illustrations in various publications. At present he's occupied by wire sculpture and a wife.

REDD BOGGS, a longtime contributor to SPACESHIP, is a perceptive Minnesotan noted for critical articles and his peripatetic column, at present harbored in Sship. Boggs is a redhead, believe it or not, and has been quietly publishing the best fanzine in the field for five or six years. His magnum opus will appear next issue.

JOSEPH MILLER, whose first Sship cover is on this issue, is a newer fan residing in Rochester, New York. He has published six issues of THE BARSOOMIAN, a fanmag dedicated to Edgar Rice Burroughs, and his artwork and articles are beginning to crop up often in the fan press.

ROGER DARD, Australia's leading fan and an Sship columnist since 1951, is best noted for his frequent brushes with the Australian Customs Department, the latest of which involved Sship (see page 19).

BERT HIRSCHHORN is a well-known New York fan, publisher of the ex-fanzine TYRANN, contributor to many fanzines, and an N3F member.

TERRY CARR (who is not Peter Graham) appears for the first time in Sship, but he's contributed stories, poems, articles, and artwork to many fanzines, and publishes six or seven of his own.

*

SOAPBOX has unfortunately been crowded out this time, and whether it'll return next time is doubtful, in view of the two long articles scheduled for #25: Redd Boggs' study of Doc Smith's Skylark trilogy, which runs 18pp. in manuscript, and Richard Verdan's analysis of Limbo, Space Merchants, and Player Piano, which is eight pages long.

Last issue's results look like this:

1. Tie: Science Fiction is for Kids (Larry Stark)
   File 13 (Redd Boggs)
2. Twin Prophets of Doom (Bob Silverberg)
3. Upbeat (Harry Warner)
4. Report from Australia (Roger Dard)
5. Dragons (Dave Mason)
6. Brother (Fred Chappell)
7. Party of the Second Part (Harlan Ellison)

The first three items finished so close that it's really untrue to set one up as higher than another. Stark's item drew the most comment and much disagreement, while Boggs was welcomed back with a rousing demonstration of unanimous approval. Stark drew the most first-place votes, but just enough people rated him low to keep him tied with Boggs, both just a snitch ahead of #3.

Joe Gibson didn't agree with Stark, pointing out that "Hollywood's messing up science fiction because they have yet to learn what they can do with it and make money...but most s-f fans probably won't like what they come up with when they finally get on the ball." Steve Schultheis suggested that Larry might have been overly critical, but noted that there have been few scientifilm successes.

Redd Boggs picked the Stark item as the best in the issue, appreciating the thoughts behind the article even though disagreeing with many of them. Boggs also pointed out what others said of Twin Prophets: "Perhaps better ((than Stark)) so far as critical insight is concerned, but I'd have liked to see you go farther with this review; as it stands it is all too brief."

Other letters are on hand from Bob Bloch, Russ Watkins, Fred Chappell, Ian Macauley, Dean Grennell, Burton Beerman, Ray Allard, Denis Moreen, Ted Wagner, Jerry Burge, Vernon McCain, and the usual misfiled half-dozen who always get left out. If there were a SOAPBOX this issue, you'd see excerpts from these letters, but there isn't and you won't. Letters of comment are always welcomed and read eagerly here, so keep them coming.

SPACESHIP #25 will appear in April, and will be the Fifth Anniversary Issue.

--Bob Silverberg

SPACESHIP

Published quarterly by Bob Silverberg, 760 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn 13, New York. Single copy, 10¢. Three issues, 25¢. Advertising rates: Full page $1 and Half Page 50¢. Smaller ads pro rata.

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