

# STARLING 7









# STARLING

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This is STARLING #7, published by Hank Luttrell, Rt. 13, 2936 Barrett Station Rd., Kirkwood, Missouri 63122. November issue. This thing is obtainable with 25¢ (4/\$1.00), a letter of comment, contribution, or who knows what all.

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# YOUR MAN IN MISSOURI

This issue is going to be late. . .but only a little bit, considering it's a quarterly to begin with. At the last moment, I've cut out a Long editorial; one which I've been working on for some time. It was patterned somewhat on last issues, in that it was written in an attempt to not only tell you people how I felt about a few things, but to provoke a few comments in your letters! If I had finished it to the point I felt it publishable, this issue would be even later; too late, I thought!

Also, it would have taken up pages. I'd rather give to something which just came in a few days ago; a report on the English Worldcon! As worldcon reports go, it is rather short, . . .but long enough to crowd out the editorial--and good enough to warrant the crowding out, also!

You have noticed, I think, that part of this issue is in a very nice elite type face; while the rest of it is in the old pica stuff. The next issue will be in all elite, which should make for one of the biggest single improvements ever made in STARLING! Now, if I would only learn to type!

Another improvement, I hope, I hope, is the color! Now, I like it! And you?

Before I do anything else, I want to mention that England's Roger Peytom has compiled some very good checklists which you should be interested in! His CHECK-  
LIST TO SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE (the British ADVENTURE, that is) is 20¢, and  
RE

his CHECKLIST OF POUL ANDERSON is 50¢; they may be ordered from me, at the address given in front.

Just a short look at the returns on my last editorial and how I handled the comments on this subject in the letter column seem in order! Almost every one had something to say; sometimes just agreeing or saying I was crazy. Usually, I didn't print these, as most of the points brought up were handled better, in more detail, by the letters which devoted quite a bit of time to the subject--which was Tolkien, by the way! Even some of the longer discussions were edited quite a bit, or cut out altogether, because someone had covered all the ground before! Moral of the story: if you are really concerned about having your letter see print, fully cover your subject, and get it to me Early, like, before someone else does!

A lot of people have complained I don't edit the letter column enough! This letter column, now, was edited! I left unpublished much more than I printed! It seems just as long as any past column, but notice all the pretty pictures taking up space like crazy! And maybe I recieved more letters!

Dave Hall tells the story about our new local science fiction fan club in his column! Much has happened since this was written! . . .but not much of it important enough to take up any of the little remaining space! One thing, however, . . .the local daily newspaper, THE ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH, ran a fairly long piece about us on the first page of the Everyday Magazine (the comics, movie-ad and-review, and supplement section) in the Sunday paper! Also on the page was an article about science fiction writers dreaming up "many fanciful things that came true!" So far, nine or ten people have contacted me about joining.

---HANK

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THE BALLAD OF THE CONGOER by Richard Gordon

Being an account in dubious verse of the  
1965 World sf convention held at the Mount  
Royal Hotel, London. To be sung to the  
tune of WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE, with apolo-  
gies to Bob Dylan and all slandered persons  
herein described!

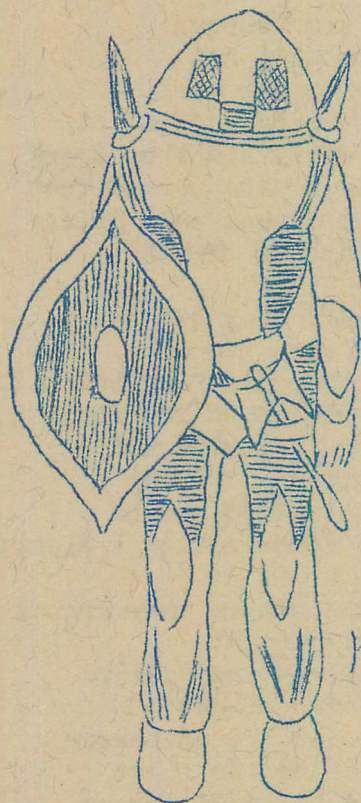
Oh the worldcon it is over  
The fans are at rest  
They're flat on the floor  
For the booze has gone west  
Of the cons that I've been to  
This was the best  
And for giving good binges  
The Mount Royal's passed the test.

I came to London town  
T'was late in August of '65  
I staggered thru Oxford Street  
I felt scarcely alive  
Collapsed on the hotel escalater  
So that into the fen I could dive  
Determined to battle heroically  
And for fannish recognition strive.

Oh me, I didn't have any room  
It was freeloading for me this time  
And anyway fen don't sleep at cons  
But talk and drink, it ain't no crime  
And if people think them nuts  
Then it don't matter a dime  
So I dove into crowds of fen  
And for a time I felt fine.

I met Brian Aldiss  
And Poul Anderson too  
But the drinks they bought me  
They were all too few  
They signed my con programme  
God, was I in a stew  
And for all that damn whisky  
The bill is now due.

Oh the ball it was crowded  
With fans and the pros  
It was Harrison's speech  
So John Campbell arose  
He talked and he stood there  
Ignoring his foes  
He talked and he stood there  
Till the convention was closed.



6. Monsters monsters everywhere  
And all the fen did shrink  
Monsters monsters everywhere  
Nor any blood to drink  
Then I saw Forry Ackerman  
It was a sight to make you think  
I stared at enough monster magazines  
To tremble on insanitiy's brink.

There were many books to buy  
And more paintings to see  
Not quite like Leonardo  
But more like Paul Klee  
Some were quite good  
Others like Kandinsky  
But the pulls weren't yet open  
Where we wanted to be.

Oh the pork pies were flying!  
From the stage to the door  
Where is Harry Harrison?  
We won't see him no more  
The bar it was crowded  
It's become fannish lore  
That he drank twenty whiskies  
'fore he sank to the floor.



Some fen were sercon  
And others were not  
Rampaging on the roof  
There were a hell of a lot  
For they drank and they drank  
Till their brains were a knot  
And though it was only Friday  
Their minds were a blot

Oh the staff they got angry  
And threw some fen out  
For some they did freeload  
And the rules they did flout  
And others they were noisy  
Too loud they did shout  
Ruining televison ariels  
The staff fetched them a clout.

11. But the others they argued  
All thru the night  
About Heinlein and Ballard  
And sf's dire plight  
The Yanks they're in terror  
They're losing the fight  
We think Heinlein is Wrong  
And Ballard is Right.

The con it was international  
There were fen from the Mid-West  
And more from Germany  
Others from Japan no less  
Me I dig their accents  
The Mid -West it was best  
What they were talkin' about  
I couldn't even guess.

Oh T'was in the Times  
And the Observer as well  
And many more papers  
Of the con they did tell  
Of the nuts and the crackpots  
Oh how they did yell  
Giving the public a laugh  
They can all go to hell.

"How high can you get without  
Actually going into orbit?"  
This John Brunner told us  
He t alked quite a bit  
He talked for so long  
That we got up and git  
I don't like him talkin'  
I prefer what he's writ!

We talked on a cold park bench  
All 'bout the Franco-Prussian war  
An how Anne Boleyn sans head  
Couldn't get very far  
We made some strange noises  
And stared at the stars  
People paid us no more attention  
Than distantly passing cars.

Oh me an' Mushling  
We tried an' wo tried  
As we walked down Charing Cross Road  
To sing "With God on our Side"  
If Bob Dylan had've heard us  
He'd have laughed till he cried  
But the passers-by didn't hear us  
Wouldn't've till they died.

17. Back at the con hotel  
We collapsed on the gound  
The fancy dress parade was over  
Or so we soon had found  
So we sat in the lounge with friends  
Talkin' all the night round  
'bout vampires an' werewolves  
While the irate staff frowned

We were thrown out the hotel at five  
And spent half an hour on a wall  
I was so damn tired an' weary  
I knew I was headed for a fall  
Chris Lee floated past like a ghost  
He was dark an' satanic and kinda tall  
But we were all so blind 'n' exhausted  
That we didn't know it was him at all.

Then we wandered the streets  
It was so dark an' cold  
'for the new day was born  
Down Oxford street we'd strolled  
At six o'clock in the morn  
And 'gainst granite walls we lolled  
All bleary and utterly tired as the  
To the wicked night our souls we'd sold.

Somewhere down in Piccadilly  
We caught a tube train  
Back again we banged on a door  
Crashes poundin' in my brain  
We were let into the room  
I lay down as if slain  
And soon was unconscious  
Sleep merciffully to attain !



Out of bed we staggered  
It was now midday or later  
Our heads was still swimmin'  
But the room now seemed straighter  
We rang for room service  
For we wanted a waiter  
But when he saw the state we were in  
For us he refused to cater.

Oh but I wasn't blamin' him  
For wantin' to hide  
Crazily ragged people  
All lyin' by my side  
All bleary an' filthy  
Heads on the slide  
After a night on the streets  
We looked like we'd died;

'bout this time I'd forgotten  
23. What I was doin' at all  
But we managed to get up  
And to the lifts we did crawl  
Eventually we all ended  
In the convention hall  
And once in a chair  
Back into sleep we did fall

Oh we saw the Aliens' films right thru  
And all the fans did cheer  
They had all the pros in Breathworld  
And from the small screen they leered  
Harrison versus Aldiss with pork pie  
Plus Moorcock an' others all well beered  
The hotel's screen never been the same  
Since all the pros on it appeared.

So I didn't go to the banquet  
It cost twenty-one shillings  
I didn't hear the speeches  
My head it was still spinnin'  
I didn't see the Hugo's  
Nor the authors who were winnin'  
But I didn't need all this for  
My weekend was still swingin'

Fritz Leiber got the Hugo  
I'm wonderin' why  
It's a good book -sure-  
We can wave DAVY good-bye  
Oh Cordwainer Smith  
He surrealist and he's sly  
But he and John Brunner  
Didn't get even a pork pie!

So Dickson got the short fiction  
And Schoenherr the art  
Leiber the novel  
And Heinlein's on the cart  
Brunner got on the short list  
Well, that's a start  
But what the hell happened  
To Arthur C. Clarke?

Oh, Ghod, not Analog again?  
Year after year it's the same  
There's never been any difference  
Ever since John Campbell came  
Yandro's the fanzine  
Now Coulson's a bit lame  
To run the best 2nd-rate zine  
He no longer can claim.

29. It's impossible, so I thought  
At a world convention  
To have politicians  
But no, for there's an election  
Rival US groups they're screamin'  
For Fandom's protection  
And over next year's world convention  
There's too much damn dissension.

Then Ted White he stood there  
Praising Philip K. Dick  
He don't like Jim Ballard  
A fight he did pick  
But all this was so boring  
Back into sleep I did slip  
While they argued and argued  
He's just too helluva thick.

All these lectures and panels  
With Name after Name after Name  
And last the ceremony of St. Fantony  
A new kind of fannish game  
And fan after fan was elevated  
To the Hall of Fannish Fame  
And we learned of the great St. Fantony  
And of the lands from whence he came!

It was now late on Sunday  
Not much longer to do  
I was so bleary  
The time seem to flow  
I spilt some Dubonnet  
I shouted, "oh no!"  
The girls dress it was ruined  
And I started to blow!



Then I went to someone's bed  
It was quite a strain  
I collapsed unconscious  
Relievin' my brain  
Though dreamin' 'bout dresses  
And a great stain  
When morning come  
For five hours I'd lain.

When I'd got on the train  
It all seemed like a dream  
My head it was so soggy  
An' all off the beam  
Many a strange thing happened  
I could write ream after ream  
But now I'll release you  
From the worldcon supreme.

END

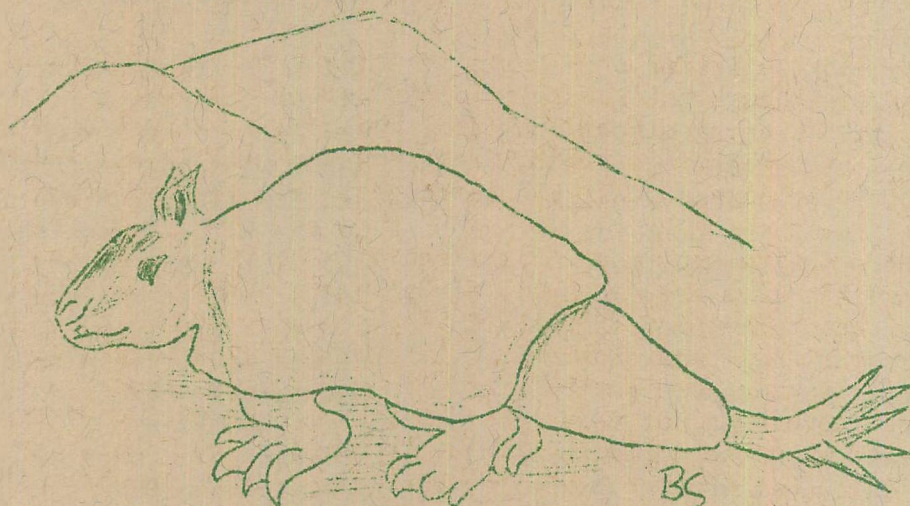
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Just in case any of you are interested, I've got some duplicate books and magazines I'd very much like to sell:

PAPERBACKS (new condition, 25¢, 5 for a \$, unless indicated) THE PURPLE CLOUD, Shiel; RECALL TO LIFE, Silverberg (50¢); SEVEN FROM THE STARS & WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM (one book) Bradley and Laumer; DOUBLE STAR, Heinlein; THE GALAXY PRIMES, E. E. Smith; TWICE IN TIME, Manley Wade Wellman; THE PUPPET MASTERS, Heinlein; THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU, Wells; AGENT OF VEGA, Schmitz; PLANET OF THE APES, Pierre Boulle; WALDO & MAGIC, INC., Heinlein;

MAGAZINES: GALAXY, March 1955 40¢, October 1965 30¢; GAMMA #5 (September '65) 30¢; SCIENCE FANTASY #53, 54, 56, 58, 40¢, 69 30¢; TREASURY OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION STORIES #1, 30¢; THRILLING WONDER STORIES Aug. 1951 50¢; STARTLING STORIES May 1953 40¢; FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES Aug 1949; FUTURE COMBINED WITH SCIENCE FICTION STORIES Jan, March, July 1951. all issues of these two magazines 50¢ per.

All orders should be sent to Hank Luttrell, at the address given in front. I'll pay the postage. Don't forget to order the two checklists mentioned in the editorial.



8



# THE INTELLECTUAL INVASION

BY RICHARD GORDON

Modern science fiction is taking on an aspect which is gradually earning grudging approval from the intellectual world; frenzied scurrying from the trend hounds; and often bitter recrimination within the world of science fiction itself. There is a gradually widening split midst its ranks.

On one hand, there is the science fiction which for want of a better name, I will call traditional sf. This is still by far the most popular and largest section, represented by such writers as Clarke, with his brilliant extrapolations, Pohl and Sheckley, with their satirical stories of Earth gone wrong, Simak, with his pastoral pieties, and many others.

On the other is a gradually spreading group of young writers, mainly British, who have what could be called the intellectual outlook to science fiction. Sf, they say, should give up the puerilities of outer space, and in the words of their number, J. G. Ballard, start exploring the "inner space" of the mind. Ballard has said that the business of the sf writer is the creation of "an authentic mythology for the 20th century" though quite what he means by this is difficult to see.

Ballard, an Englishman, has a following that almost reminds one of Goldwaterism at its most rabid. The opposition from the traditionalists is as virulent, too. For instance, the editor of New Worlds Michael Moorcock, has said that "there can be no question that Ballard has emerged as the greatest imaginative writer of his day." An examination of his works, to my mind, hardly bears this out.

He is perhaps the leader of a group of writers who are generally accepted to be sf writers, although their work is occasionally rejected by sf readers. This group contains, among others, Ballard, Brian Aldiss, Kurt Vonnegut and others. Also associated with this group, from time to time, though perhaps wrongly, have been William Golding and William Burroughs.

It is difficult to know when this trend of intellectualism actually started, and quite what its aims are, in spite of Ballard's claims. I, for one, was not really aware of the trend, and of Ballard in particular, until the beginning of last year, though I had read stories by all previously. Ballard first had stories published in book form in 1962, and his first novel appeared the same year. This first novel was not very memorable. It concerns the struggle for survival of humanity when the world is attacked by a wind which goes far beyond hurricane proportions. Ballardites have very hurriedly forgotten about it.

His next novel, which appeared the same year, was immediately acclaimed as a minor masterpiece by both science fiction and by mainstream critics. This is the DROWNED WORLD. In this book, the temperature of the world has gone up, and evolution has reverted to prehistoric and triassic, in particular, times. The humans eking out existence on the poles gradually become aware that the physical conditions are having an adverse effect on their minds, drawing them back into



a dim racial subconscious derived from the revious triassic era! At the end, the hero sets off towards the south, in a world dominated by a blazing sun, though why he has to go, he does not know! This is perhaps one of the first modern novels to seriously explore the unknown area of the subconscious and why we are motivated to do things we cannot explain! .

In the two novels he has written since, he seems to have developed a technique for turning psychological phrases that appear to be full of meaning, but only serve to intrude on the reader's mind! Two examples will suffice! One is from his recent novel, THE BURNING WORLD, which is little more than a re-exploration of ground he has already covered! In describing a house, he writes:

"In a sense, the house was now a perfect model of a spatio-temporal vacuum, a hole inserted into the continuum of his life by the private alternate universe of the house boat on the river! ! ."

And again, from his recent serial in New Worlds SF, Equinox:

"! . ,an aromatic memory we are born with of some ancestral paradise where the unity of time and space is the signature of every leaf and flower! ! !"

and

"! . ,the virus, with it's semi-animate, crystalline existence, half-in and half-out of our own time stream, as if intersecting it at an angle."

These are concepts that are clearly little more than nonsense! Ballard has the ability to create an atmosphere of complete alienness, but it seems that he cannot resist the temptation to play around with words and phrases for their own sake! Many of his ideas are also rather strange:

"! . ,the intense focus of light within the stones simultaneously produced a compression of time, so that the discharge of light from the stones reversed the process of crystallisation! Perhaps it was this gift of time which accounted for the eternal appeal of precious gems, as well as all baroque painting and architecture! ! !"

Passages like these are such a pity, for they subtract from the beauty of the story, EQUINOX, in which the whole universe is metamorphising into a network of radiant crystal! There are many passages of great beauty in it!

From these excerpts it can be seen that he is much preoccupied with the concept of time, and indeed, so also in his two best known short stories, "The Voices of Time" and "The Terminal Beach." The first in particular is one of the most beautiful stories I have ever read, though also one of his strangest. It concerns a man gaining total awareness of the universe and infinity, and this apparently impossible concept is handled in a brilliant manner:

"! . ,above him! ! ,Powers! ! ,could hear the stars, a million cosmic voices that crowded the sky from one horizon to another, a true canopy of time! Like jostling radio beacons, their long aerials interlocking at countless angles, they plunged into the sky from the narrowest recesses of space! ! !"

It may be argued that these concepts are also nonsense, but in the context of the story, they do make sense, in a strangely surrealist manner! Ballard is the literary equivalent of Salvador Dali, and this comes out in his story, in which he dispenses with formal techniques and uses surrealist technique in his description of a wartime bomber pilot who returns to Eniwetok obsessed with the idea of finding "a key to the present!"



"! . . here, the key to the present lay in the future! The island was a fossil of time future, its bunkers and blockhouses illustrated the principle that the fossil record of life was one of armour and the exoskeleton."

I personally was completely unable to understand this story, and I know I was not the only one! In a way, it reminded me of Golding's PINCHER MARTIN, a work in many ways similar, though considerably more lucid and not so surrealist in technique! But in that PINCHER MARTIN is a fantasy where the hero is dead from the first paragraph, undergoing hell, the two stories are different in aim, though the treatment is basically similar! It is perhaps this book most of all which has linked Golding to the "movement" we are discussing!

Thus while Ballard is a brilliant writer technically, many of his images are obscure, and his work is uniformly pessimistic, which is surely not a good thing! since it means the range of his fiction is limited!

From Ballard we move to his contemporary, Brian Aldiss, who is more of a writer of pure science fiction! However, he has a touch of grotesquerie in his literary make-up! Many of his stories are also conceived from an intellectual viewpoint! A good example of this is his recent novel, THE DARK LIGHT YEARS. In this apparently straight forward science fiction novel, human beings of a century hence make contact with an alien race, the Dapdroff, who are intelligent and of a markedly philosophical bent! They look something like hippopotami, and their way of life demands that they spend much of their time wallowing in their own excretion! Naturally, this is intolerable to the hygienic Earthmen, so after killing a few!

they capture and imprison a couple in an Earth zoo! The aliens refuse to make contact since they have been deprived of their excretion in the name of hygiene, which is the ultimate insult! Eventually, the Earthmen discover that these creatures are immune to pain, and butcher them in an attempt to find out why! The secret might have military uses! The book ends up with humanity all but exterminating both itself and the aliens!

One is reminded of one thing in the treatment of these creatures, the similarity they have to the dolphins on which such scientists as Lilley have been experimenting on! The viewpoint of the story is largely from the aliens! The other part of the book is that "The trouble with our culture is that it is based on a fear of dirt, of poison, of excreta!" Mr. Aldiss' point is that this entails a divorce from nature, which in turn signifies madness--he has said that part of the idea for the book came from a suggestion that mankind, is, in fact, mad--by philosopher Charles Berg!

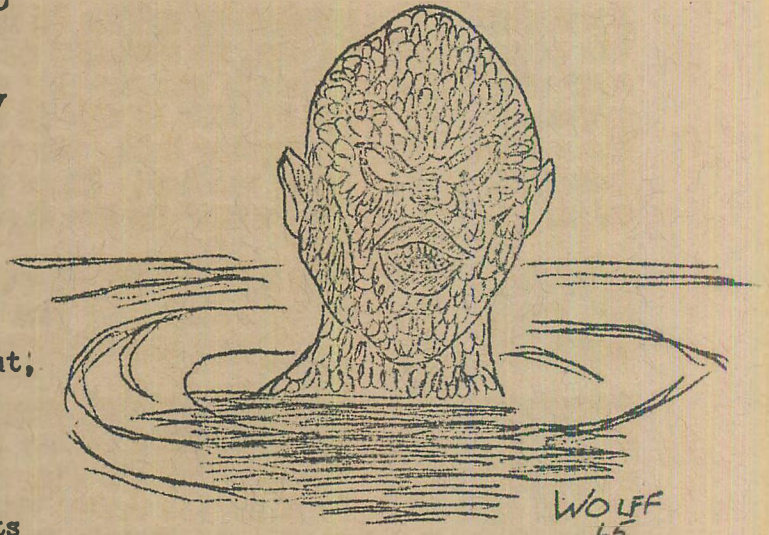
There is a complete difference here to Ballard, and to my mind, a much more worthwhile one! Several morals are pointed, it is critical of man, it is strongly reminiscent of the forced of savages to Christianity in past centuries!

For me, at any rate, this is Brain Aldiss' most memorable book by far, although he





has written other more praised stories, such as his Hothouse stories, which are vaguely reminiscent of THE DROWNED WORLD. The premise here is that the world is dying, and so is humanity. The descendants of present day humanity eke out a fantastic existence amidst evolution run wild---they themselves are only several inches tall. But this is more fantasy, though grotesque and sensible fantasy, with some good digs at modern civilization.



From Aldiss, we move on to Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., an American writer, whose main claim to fame is his fantastic satire, THE SIRENS OF TITAN\*. Vonnegut is a rumored atheist, and the book bears out the rumour. It concerns the efforts of one Malachi Constant to avoid doing things he knows he has been predestined to do. However, it is useless, and he does everything in spite of himself. On the way, Mr. Vonnegut manages to satirize everything there is to satirize, especially religion. It turns out at the end of the book that everything done on earth for the last four thousand years has been preordained by a small alien from the Lesser Magellanic Cluster, whose ship broke down while he was passing through the solar system. Thus the whole of human history has been engineered by him so it can attain a culture sufficient to repair the broken part and send him on his way again, to deliver a message to the other side of the galaxy. To top it all, it turns out that the alien is only a robot, and the message, quite simply, "welcome!"

The style is brisk and amusing, very like Heller's CATCH-22, and while it is very funny, it is also a book of genuine criticism of man!

I would call another American, Alfred Bester, one of the group, as well. He is not recognized as such, and no doubt this is because he writes so little. He is the author of the justly famous THE DEMOLISHED MAN, one of the finest "straight" science fiction novels ever published. Since then, he appears to be veering toward the "beats" in style, such as Kerouac, et al. His collection of short stories, THE DARK SIDE OF EARTH, bears this out. His writing style is entirely individual; often he makes use of patterns of letters and phrases, perhaps to describe telepathic communication or something of the sort, and while this may seem an artificial expedient, it is also used by the intellectual "beat" writers. This would seem to make it appear that Bester is not adverse to being numbered among their ranks. "The Pi Man" is one of his most distinctive and typical stories. The hero of this is a "compensator", who is sensitive to the patterns and rhythms of life. When a particularly abominable act is committed, he has to restore the balance by doing the opposite, and vice versa. Thus he can never allow anyone to fall in love with him, etc.; love forms patterns, and he would have to balance them with some frightful deed. It sounds a very peculiar subject, but it is a highly effective story. The writing is very effective, too:

"I pick one who glitter. I talk. She insult. I insult back and by drinks!.

She drinks and insult2. I hope she is lesbian and insult3! She snarl and

\*Yes, this article was written before the author had read CAT'S CRADLE.--HL



hate, but helpless. No pad for tonight. The pathetic brown paper bag under her arm. I quell sympathy and hate back! . ."

And:

" $X^2 + X + 4I$  = Prime number!

Excuse please! Sometimes I'm in control and see that compensating must be done. Other times it's forced on me from God knows where or why! Then I must do what I am compelled to do, blindly, like speaking the gibberish I speak! . ."

It is perhaps false to classify these writers as a "group," for they themselves are as far apart in many ways as it is possible for writers to be. But in so far as they, in many ways, are responsible for having begun a genre within a genre, then they can be classified as such! At the moment this almost new form of literature, at least as far as Ballard is concerned, is embryonic in form, and has endless possibilities ahead of it!

Ballard in particular could become one of the greatest writers of this century if he would widen the scope of his novels, and lift some of his pessimism. His writing is brilliant and compulsive, and his ideas are startling and original, even if some of them appear to be slightly false; the product of verbiage rather than mind. While I would not place him on the pedestal that many people have, without regard for the consequences, I would say that Ballard is one of the best young post war writers, and judging by his rapid maturing, could become a good deal better yet! But I would agree with his disciples on one point; where it has been said that Ballard's "intellectual control of his subject matter is only matched by the literary giants of the past! . . a writer who is developing so rapidly that almost every story he writes is better than his last." Ballard said in an article in New Worlds two years ago that, "the only truly alien planet is Earth" and also that "accuracy, that last refuge of the unimaginative, doesn't matter a hoot." In the many stories he has written since then, he has proved his point. Many people would dispute this; but I believe there will come a time when a Ballard first edition will be a collector's item

END

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Ray Fisher, 4404 Forest Park Ave., St. Louis 8, Missouri is interested in obtaining some of the various art folios published some time ago! Anyone who thinks he might be able to do business should contact Ray at the address given!

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Jim Keith, 2834 Santez Drive, Pomona, Calif., 91766 wants me to mention that he is interested in doing art for fanzines. I think any of what he sent me will be in this issue; but it will be here pretty soon.  
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In the letter column, I listed a change of address for Becker Staus. Here is an even more recent one: 104-B Cramer Hall, Pershing Group, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 65202. Jim Turner and Beck are in the same room; call Jim's box number 104-A



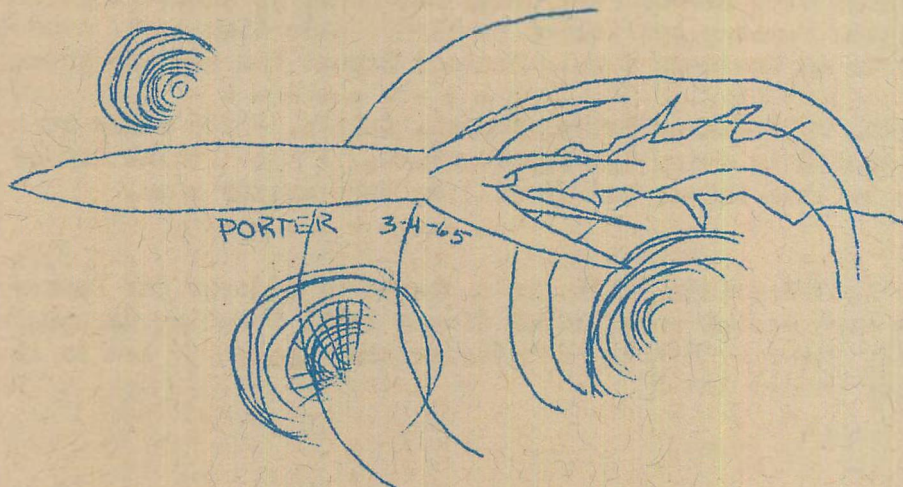
## WITH MALICE TOWARD ALL by Joe Sanders

Two installments of this column appeared in Lee Tremper's Space Cage --but that was years ago. So: My name is Joe Sanders; I'm currently living at the bottom of the academic pile, as a teaching associate at Indiana University. I'm working toward a Ph.D. in English literature. Since the late 1940's I've been reading science fiction and fantasy. More recently I've tried for my own interest to criticize seriously a lot of things, including science fiction novels, fantasy magazines, horror movies, and Uncle Scrooge comic books.

As a critic, I'm a fairly steady semi-subjectivist. That is, although I believe criticism is basically a matter of personal taste and opinions I also believe that value judgments can be to some extent communicated, shared. At least I think it's important to try. Whatever I happen to be talking about in any given column, I'll try to talk about the work itself, by whatever avenues of thematic analysis, quotations, etc., seem profitable and in as much detail as seems practical. I'll welcome any suggestions, questions, or howls of rage you care to send along as your part of the communication process.

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The Doc Savage novels recently republished by Bantam are difficult to discuss for several reasons, not the least of which being a note inside the title page of each: "No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by mimeograph or by any other means, without permission in writing." It seems typical of the people at Conde Nast to hold on to every copyrighted phrase they can, but it makes things a little difficult for the critic. Maybe that's what they had in mind, though. It would be easy to fill several pages with clumsy, ridiculous, stupid quotations from any one of the Doc Savage novels I've read (the first five.) Buck Coulson must be gnashing his mustache at the thought.





And it would be fun: the scene between Doc and one of the red-fingered fellows who've been trying to kill him (Man of Bronze, P. 26), the dialect exchange between two crooks (Polar Treasure, P. 2), hoo boy. . .

Well, that's one way of enjoying the Doc Savage books, and I'm a little hard pressed to find another--or, rather, to explain the enjoyment with which I read the books.

Judged as novels, even as adventure novels, the Doc Savage books are awful. In Kenneth Robeson's plots, possibility is minimal and plausibility is nil. Doc and his crew stumble across not only the lost tribes and cities which adventure heroes are always encountering, but things like a long lost ocean liner, fugoshsakes, which apparently had vanished with no mention whatsoever in newspapers, while loaded full of passengers and carrying \$50,000,000 in gold and jewels. Nor does Robeson spend much time trying to develop his ideas believably. Rather, he jumps from one notion to the next as if afraid that his readers would be bored by any pause in the action. Thus, in Polar Peril, Doc and one of his men have just entered a taxi when they are drugged (with some balls of anaesthetic gas Doc carelessly left lying around earlier). They wake to find themselves searched for escape devices, stripped to the underware, sealed in an airtight vault--and seven short paragraphs after the problem has been defined in all its seriousness Doc announces that he can walk out any time. A page or so later he does, and they are soon on their way again. When crises are created and tossed aside so rapidly, it's hard to get interested in any one. Even more basically, each book is broken in two chunks, when Doc and the boys suddenly change locales completely as if all possibilities for excitement in, say, New York had been exhausted. Robeson may be right, though. It may be only the different settings that make the adventures seem at all different. In Brand of the Werewolf this shift in scene is less pronounced, from a train speeding into Canada to the Canadian wilderness itself, but excitement does wear off rather rapidly in a monotonous series of captures and escapes. Meteor Menace is probably the most successful of the series in this, and in other respects.

The characters aren't much more solid than the plots. Most numerous are the nameless toughs Doc and his crew toss about like the cheap cardboard cutouts they are; slightly more prominent are the respectable citizens who encounter Doc with reverent wonder. Girls usually feel quite a bit more than reverent wonder for Doc, but for reasons I'll get to in a moment he is immune to the charms of whatever interchangeable, beautiful, soft-skinned creature turns up in a given story. Doc Savage himself is an incredible lump of absolute strength, intelligence, virtue, etc., and his five friends represent more simple combinations of one highly developed talent, an extreme physical type, and a few broad personal mannerisms. Thus, a reader usually can be sure what one of Doc's friends will say and do on the basis of the absolute character set up for him. (Of Doc, one can be sure that he can say and do almost anything Good.) This being the case, Renny, Long Tom, Johnny, Monk, and Ham spend a lot of time providing comic relief. They also provide a measure of Doc's superiority, since the sum of these superior chap's talents is less than Doc himself possesses.



It becomes a little dispiriting for the reader. There can be little interest in character development when characters are either so simply drawn that they can't change or created so omnipotently gifted that they don't need to change--they simply produce a new talent to solve each new problem and go on as before!

Despite Doc's vast superiority, he is linked to his friends by a love of excitement, action, danger. Their only aim in life is to travel in search of adventure, helping people who need help and punishing people who need punishment.

And so Doc has no time for women because he doesn't want to subject a delicate female to the dangers he faces and because, more to the point, a girl would get in the way, slow a guy down! This is all, of course, part of the quaint outlook which prevades these books even more deeply than the 1930's technology--all policemen have heavy Irish accents, one may wound a criminal but never kill him, half-breeds are craven and untrustworthy, etc!--but I still hope Dr. Frederic Wertham never gets hold of any of the Doc Savage novels. If Wertham found galloping homosexuality in Batman & Robin's relationship, think what he could do with these six men gallivanting around the world, evading women, bound together by a Strange Bond! And he would note that one of the few times Doc seems even momentarily unsure of himself is when, awakening from a month-long unconsciousness (Meteor Menace, P. 61), he is confronted by a beautiful girl who addresses him as her fiancée!!!

Yes, Wertham probably could build such a theory and might even be able to spin a Sunday supplement article out of it, but he would simply be demonstrating again his inability to appreciate things for what they are. Although Doc and his men never get entangled in an overtly sexual adventure there can be no legitimate doubt as to their hemanliness. And one of the identifying features of El Rabanos, chief villain in Brand of the Werewolf, is his pretty, feminine face! Rather than being homosexual, Doc and his crew are presexual in their outlook--like comic book heroes. Emotionally, at least, they are like small boys: interested in getting along with their pals and in finding new games to play, rather than dating girls--again, like comic book heroes!

Indeed, it's probably as big, prose comic books that we can best appreciate the fantastic adventures of Doc Savage! This series of reprints is another result of the wide interest in escape fiction which has produced the revival of super hero comic books, the republication of those miserable Edgar Rice Burroughs novels, James Bond movies, and The Man from UNCLE! As such, the Doc Savage novels naturally have very little connection with reality in their action or psychology. That's the point: to distract the reader from the real world and its problems. At times, as noted above, Robeson's clumsiness in plotting or character-management becomes obtrusive; it requires more effort to suspend disbelief than the fun is worth. A lot of the time, however, the books work successfully at their intended level. Doc Savage is a perfect vehicle for vicarious kicks; he's everything the reader could wish to be--and often a good deal more than I've ever dreamed of wishing to be. Weak as the books are as novels, and flimsy as they sometimes are even as escape literature, I enjoyed them in infrequent doses for fast, light reading. I can't honestly recommend them to anyone, but the next time you're dead tired but not quite ready to go to bed, why don't you pick up Meteor Menace--you might find yourself staying up much later than you'd planned, curious to see what will happen next, what could happen next, what incredible, stupid, wonderful thing!!!!



# Words From Readers

A Letter column edited by Hank Luttrell

Jurgen Wolff, 1234 Johnson St., Redwood City, Calif., 94061

Great cover on STARLING 6. I hope you carry on with more color inside the issue--it breaks up the monotony of the printed page very effectively, and in some cases enhances the artwork. And by all means keep experimenting.

//I've been doing all kinds of experimentation since last issue. In David Hall's column this time you'll read about the club we recently formed in this area. I'm pretty sure he mentions the fact that I have been running off the publications on my mimec. They have all been in at least three colors--I almost consider myself an old hand at this stuff, now.HL//

The Richard Gordon piece left me unsatisfied. The idea could have been worked into good satire, or else a semi-serious story. As it was, it turned out to be a little of both, and thus got nowhere. The writing style: "This happened, and then that, followed by such and such" is rather boring and lifeless.

Since you stated in your editorial that you won't flout your personal experiences on the pages of STARLING, you've imported Dave Hall to flout his, right?

Michael Viggiano, 1834 Albany Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210

Well, you finally have a longer editorial, which is an improvement in itself over previous issues. I had just finished reading the Lord of the Ring and I agree with some of the things you said. The books were good, but not great. I personally think the books could have been cut in half, by getting rid of long winded paragraphs and getting the action started sooner in THE Fellowship of the Ring.

The artwork was excellent. How about some artwork for the back cover, or rather that blank back cover.

//Yes--how about it? HL//

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Harold P. Piser, 41-08 Parson Boulevard Flushings, New York 11355 is compiling "an-up-to-date bibliography of fanzines." He wants fanzine editors to send him information on title, publisher's name and address, volume, issue and whole number, dates and frequency, size and number of pages, if illustrated, how processed, organizational connection, if any, with number and date of distribution or mailing, circulation, price, house name and number, and a general description of the contents. And he is a non-fan. Write him.  
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Jack Gaughan, address with held

You seem to have had a hard time reading my handwriting so this time I'll type the letter. For instance there are mistakes in your rendering of my letter that call for correction. "Ranschberg" (referring to my comment on art in the magazines) is Rauschenberg, a "pop" artist given to sort of visual Tom-Wolfe-looking -backward-to-some imagined-youth no one ever really lived. Perhaps not to malign Tom Wolfe, Rauschenberg (if I spell it correctly myself) might more accurately be compared to a book, once popular, called "Where did you go? Out! What did you do? Nothing!" This is a book which by its omissions of those rotten things that a kid really goes through painted childhood as a rosy, glowing, golden time of tanks made from empty thread spools and the like. I don't mind looking back. . .but this teary-eyed nostalgia is being laid on a bit thick.

Looky chere! Don't go trying to make a formal magazine type magazine of STARLING.. Its a fan magazine and those Chatty "Rick Sneary dropped in on me the other day" editorials were part and parcel of what fan magazines are for. . .they are not for reforming or informing or preforming exclusively though they may include all those.

Your editorial concerning the "Ring" books. Naturally I read them. I read them under the pressure of deadlines (which is why on one cover a pterodactyl steed for the Dark Riders became a horse) and I had to read them fast. I did not enjoy them. BUT with some leisure time, a bit of chilled Liebfraumilch or India Ale, a footstool and a big easy-chair (shaggy-dog and fire place optional) they would have been a real joy to read. . . .zip-zam action or sparkling concepts they were not, but crystal clear cool distillation of all that was wonderful in Fairy-tales and legends they were indeed.

//Sorry about the misspelling. Glad you told us who he was, though, I didn't know, and I'm sure most of the others didn't either. I agree, more or less, about the chatty-editorials--now. At the time I wrote the editorial last issue, I didn't have too many interesting things of a fannish nature happening to me--unless you wanted to hear all about the latest back issues of PLANET ~~STORIES~~ or something I just bought. Now, I might just have a few things in the way of chatty-fannishness to report on-- Not this issue, though, not enough room. Anyway, Dave Hall does a pretty good job. HL//

One comment from Seth Johnson, 339 Stiles Street, Vaux Hall, N. J. 07088 which just may answer the question asked by Ben Solon last time: "Why was the fan-fiction in the old fanzines so much better than it is now?" Seth Says: "I respectfully suggest that fanzines with crudfiction of the forties were simply not collected and thus he sees only the cream of the crap."

A change of address: Becker Staus now gets his stuff c/o Dave Hall, 202 Taylor, Crystal City, Missouri. The mail sent to the address printed last issue should have been forwarded. Why it wasn't remains a secret to everyone but the great god Postoffice. Becker is living with the Hall's temporarily while his parents are out of town. 18



Roy Tackott, 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87107

There are editorials and editorials. In the usual sense of the word it infers that the writer is taking a definite stand, for or against, some subject. Not too many fanish editorials fall into this category.

Rather than as an editorail I prefer to look on my own "Writings in the Sand" simply as my own column. It is the place in which I try to keep those who are interested up on what I've been doing. For those who don't know me personally I try to include items of general interest. Usually I allow myself three pages, although I often go over and now and again have trouble filling them. Mostly I do my sands scribblings right on stencil putting down whatever happens to come to mind. Fan doings, yes, because they are of interest, things in my personal life that are a bit out of the ordinary. Book and zine reviews, yes, because I can usually tie them in with something else and they are, I hope, of interest to others. Personal opinion on this and that. . . all find their way into my column.

And now and then I do use the column to take a stand.

Most of it, though, is light and informal. On rare occasions I have done two or three drafts on an item before committing it to stencil. This is when I wanted to make a particular point on a subject and wanted to make sure that I was going to be understood.

Mostly I figure that the editorial column belongs to the editor and he can damn well put into it whatever he wants to. I've never had a planned column or tried to follow any set format on it.

To Evers: I dismiss the Shaver Mystery. Lightly. With a big "Ho-Ho"

//The next letter, card, rather, got here toolate for last issue, when it should have been published. It had some interesting points, I'm going to publish it even if it is out dated. HL//

Joe Sanders, R. R. #1, Roachdale, Ind.

"Good Old Daze" was the most interesting feature. You really succeeded, quite a bit of the time, in giving an idea of what the magazines and stories were like. And this is a interesting thing; more interesting than some of your gags-based-on-the-funny-old-magazines. For example, it's okay to poke fun at Richard Shaver, it's even okay to dislike his fiction. I know know I've disliked the few of his stories I've read. But when the reader hasn't seen the magazine and probably won't, as is the case with the magazines you've chosen, you really should explain a little more what the story like and why you found it boring, trite, etc. Even Shaver deserves that much.

Re Robin Wood's letter and your answer: As a freshly-minted teacher, I know that sometimes it helps a student to disagree with his instructor, as long as he does it well. More interesting that the dull smooth agreement most of the students show.



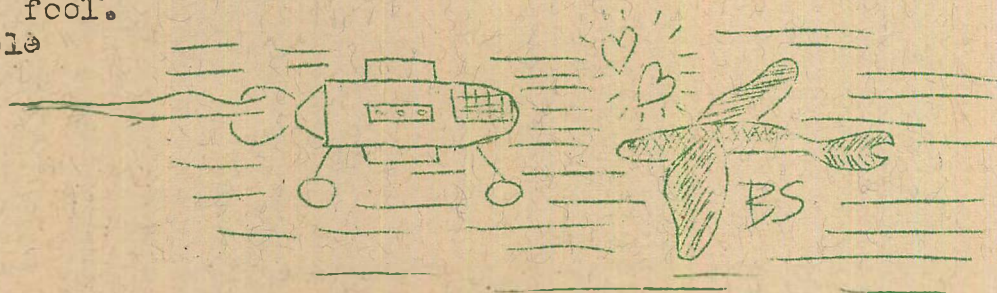
Duncan McFarland, 1242 Grace Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio 45208

There are fannish fads as there are fads and tendencies that sweep through the mundane world. And I see that the editor of STARLING isn't immune to this sort of thing. What I'm referring to is this "... " type of punctuation that one sees so often these days, such as in your editorial, Hank.. I can't see anything particularly wrong with it; surely the use of the dash at every opportunity should be equated at about the same level of informality. This stuff can be carried to extremes, though; as I have gotten letters full of the "... " business that simply looked affected. Such things are most effective when used in prudent moderation. Look at Rick Sneary's version of the English language. He's famous for it, and rightly so; any and every time I read something by Sneary I get a great kick out of it. But notice his misspellings (heh) are judiciously chosen and not at all overdone. Therein lies much of the effectiveness. One has the feeling that Sneary does this sort of thing naturally, instead of consciously doing it all the time, for its own sake.

//I picked up the...in a typing class. The text book we used was full of them. Perhaps your letter writer used the same book.HL//

Most people seem to think that if one reads ERB while very young and still unanalytical he will enjoy him. Otherwise, no. The youngster just isn't concerned with all the flaws of ERB's writing and characterization, and can sit back and enjoy the best parts of the stories. Same thing with me on a different level. I recall reading Charles Eric Maine's High Vacuum and enjoying it very much. Seemed to me that he told a good story and was highly entertaining. Not long after I read a review of the book in Vanguard SF by Lester del Rey. Del Rey tore it to shreds, all because Maine made all sorts of technical errors which made his plot just another variety of the famous idiot one. Del Rey being trained and knowledgeable in this field as well as vitally interested would be highly sensitive to scientific errors; I, not being so interested in science and not knowing so much about it, did not detect the various errors in the story and could simply sit back and enjoy. On the other hand, I demand believable if not good characterization in all my stories, and one reason I dislike the Barsoom series is that John Carter is an absolutely inhuman and an unbelievable fool.

But some people  
don't notice  
that.





The Cincinnati Fantasy Group is I think by most standards a successful club. It has been in existence for something like fifteen years, and is an outgrowth of a bigger Cincinnati club that split in half over the Cinvention in 1949. An official meeting hasn't been called for a decade and a half. The thing that has bound the group together is friendship, not science fiction. I think you will find this true of most science fiction clubs. Not that many people are so fanatically serious that they will associate with people whom they don't especially like just because said people are also interested in sf. And the trouble with young fans founding a club is that most of them will move off to college, and poof, the club has collapsed. Best thing is to have a good cross section age-wise and interest-wise, and perhaps to embark on fanish projects now and then to get the club united, such as the CFG and the Midwestcon. Of course, I've mentioned that if friendship isn't fast enough the club can easily be split apart, as happened after the Cinvention.

James Edward Turner, Box 161, Pilot Knob, Missouri 63663

(Richard Gordon's) story showed no small amount of skill on the author's part, but "comic infernos" rarely delight me. Also, I hear enough about the Beatles, Rolling Stones, et. al. With me, a little of that goes a long, long way.

//I thought one of the better points of the story was in the fact that my sisters like the piece--their heroes, you know--and I liked it as well. I rather dislike the Beatles and company, you know. But not to the point that I can't come across their names in a story and still enjoy it. HL//.

I'm more than a little floored to hear Coulson claim ERB was a better writer than Ian Fleming. //Is Ian Funny, Jim? . Don't mind me, people, a private joke. HL// Fleming showed remarkable skill at the creation of plots (preposterous as they were,) a sharp eye for detail, a gift for the striking phrase. That he can call James Bond books "corney" amazes me. Can anyone think of a more uncorney ending for a book than that of CASINO ROYALE? ERB's plots are loose, slipshod, often relying on pure coincidence. I can think of only two or three likable characters ERB created. On the other hand: M, Felix Leiter, most of Bond's heroines. Bond: "I didn't intend for Bond to be a particularly likable person. He's a blunt instrument in the hands of the government. He's got his vices and few perceptible virtues except patriotism and courage." said Ian Fleming in PLAYBOY, Dec., 1964. The only loose ends I can find in Fleming's books were the ones he reserved for the next book's adventure. ERB's prose is laden. Look at Fleming, the quite sadness in the last sentence of Moonraker, "He touched her for the last time and then they turned away from each other and walked off into their different lives." //That's corney. HL// The striking phrase: ". . .the rain came down in swift, slanting strokes--italic script across the unopened black cover that hid the secret hours that lay ahead." --LIVE AND LET DIE, end of Chapter 4. I see nothing really corney about these books. But for the silly plots (made believable, I think) by considerable writing skill), there is an uncomfortable realism: neither good nor evil triumphs totally and often you can't tell which is good and which is evil.



David N. Hall, 202 Taylor, Crystal City, Missouri

Many of your objections to the Ring books (or actually to the Fellowship alone) are valid, and some of them (and some others) have occurred to me. I think that Tolkien ranks with T. E. White in his field, but I don't think he ranks with Ghod. The main thing is, of course, that you are indeed, a "surface reader." Which is fine; you must read about ten times as much science fiction and fantasy as I, and certainly are better qualified to write and talk about the field. But the most enthusiastic fans of the Ring books are a more plodding sort. (Not that they are dense or slow, but they are interested in the minutest detail of the story.) Tolkien went to immeasurable trouble creating details (including dead language, histories, genealogies, and so forth), and he managed to make them consistently believable. That's why he has attracted a "cult" instead of mass readership; a scattering of devoted readers rather than a great clot like Ian Fleming. The surface reader finds it "slow" (I think P. S. Miller admitted he couldn't get all the way through the Fellowship; you have to be a surface reader to be a reviewer,) while the "depth" reader finds it marvelously exact. I think Tolkien is a truly great writer; his love of detail and exactitude suspends disbelief so thoroughly that I almost believe the War of the Rings happened. But as a story teller, . . . He isn't the sort that presents each line with the idea of carefully tying it in later. As a story teller he is slow in making his point. Frank Herbert might have written the Ring trilogy in one paperback book, and told the story better, but the story is not the superior part of the Tolkien books --the "echoing depth" behind his word is. Tolkien is an epic-teller rather than a story teller.

//I don't think Frank Herbert is the right author to pick for a one paperback edition of the Ring Wars. Remember. . .? He was the one who wrote the wordage of about 3 or 4 normal size books recently for his two magazine serials in Analog, DUNE WORLD and THE PROMISE OF DUNE. And still, for all the length of those two stories, I think they were examples of brilliant story telling. HL//

I think the lack of clear-cut conflict in The Fellowship is deliberate Tolkien meant for Mordor to be off-stage and vague. Perhaps by switching the action between the Fellowship and the actual maneuverings of Sauron in Mordor, he could have given a clear picture of the conflicts, but it would have been an all-together different story. For one thing, it would have been a lot harder to believe, because it is next to impossible to represent absolute evil. For another, there wouldn't have been the sort of "fog of battle" that Tolkien intended to present; the story is given in a "hobbit's eye view", in other words, "realistically," as it appeared to the participants at the time. Soldiers in a war can never clearly understand what is going on about them; they are right in the middle of it all. Gandalf, Sauron and sometimes Sarumna are the only ones who understand all of what is happening, and that because they are in command. Yet, in the end, Tolkien manages to make perfectly clear all that has happened.

Anyway, the Fellowship is basically the foundation; the details of the



world as the WAR of the Ring begins. As it ends, the war proper is just beginning, with Frodo's flight into Mordor and the death of Boromir.

Finally, I think Richard Gordon is right; it is a grim book. The apparent frivolity of the presentation of the hobbits and Sam in particular might have made you think otherwise, but even having read only the one book, the departure of Boromir (a rather major turning point in the book, you know) should give you a hint of the kind of grim shadow that is hanging over the whole story. The book, in fact, is riddled with premonitions of trouble; these become concrete in the latter books. But in some ways the Fellowship is the grimmest book of all, because of the reflections of danger that no one has time to worry about when it is actually happening.

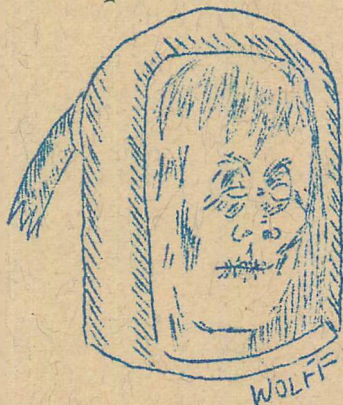
//After I publish this issue of STARLING, and get somewhat caught up with my letter writing and magazine reading, I'll read the second book in the trilogy. And write an editorial about it, of course. Don't expect it next issue, though. But expect it, none the less.

HL//

Banks Mebane, 6901 Strathmore St., Chevy Chase, Md. 20015

You're right about the weakness of the conflict in the LORD OF THE RINGS. It stems from Tolkiens use of the old "quest" plot which usually forces a diffusion and fragmentation of the antagonistic forces. However I like Tolkien well enough to say "so what?" and go on enjoying his work. Besides, if after all that build-up, he had brought Frodo face to face with Sauron, the result would have been bound to be a let-down. As for the whimsy, I agree that it is somewhat misplaced but it lessens as the series advances. I would say it is basically a serious book, but not a grim one.

Stephen Barr's poem on page 5 was excellent. He is one of the few fannish versifiers I've read who has a good ear and enough knowledge of the uses of meter to be able to violate it intelligently and effectively. I liked his images, particularly that of the ship's screw braiding its wake--good observation. If he can write verse this well, I wonder why his prose (what I've seen of it) is so awful.



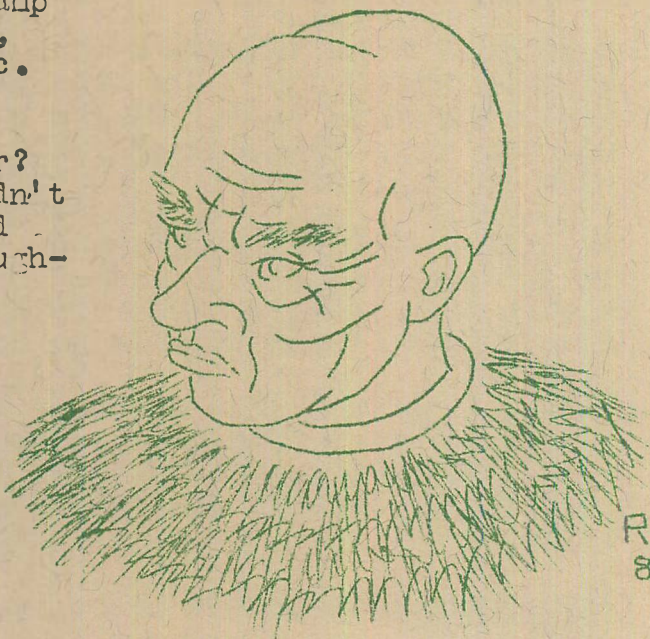
Hall's column was. . .un. . .columnar

You letter column was good, but I think Harry Warner's right when he says it doesn't inspire a lot of comment. Buck Coulson on romantic adventure does remind me that we are getting quite a spate of it in the paperbacks. Since they exhausted ERB and his direct imitators Kline and Farley, they've started bringing back a lot of good old Kuttner, Hamilton and Williamson yarns. And of course we've had Andre Norton all the time. These stories are an entertainment middle way between the complete nonsense of ERB



and Robert E. Howard, and the all-too-rational adventures of DeCamp and Anderson. As Buck implies, too much reason ruins the magic.

Is E. E. Evers serious in what he says about the Shaver Mystery? I agree, though, that it shouldn't be dismissed lightly--it should be dismissed as heavily, thoroughly and finally as possible. SF is subject to these periodic irrational spells, like the Shaver thing and dianetics, and while they are going on the only thing to do is to look the other way politely and hope they will soon pass. But once they are gone, I think any attempt to revive them should be fought tooth and claw.



REG  
871

Thanks for writing "Beatles and Badgers," Hank. I'd been thinking of ordering a few of the Badger books to see if I was missing anything worthwhile, but after your comments I know I don't have to bother. A review that will tout me off a bad book is just as valuable to me as one that introduces me to a good book I'd missed.

C. W. Brooks, Jr., 911 Brairfield Road, Newport News, Virginia 23605

I'm afraid I can't follow your comments on the RING, especially the one that Tolkien isn't a great story teller. I don't see how he could be any better. It's true, of course, that there is no vaudevillian villain dashing about performing nefarious deeds and occasionally shouting "Zounds! Foiled again!" The antagonist is the evil power represented by Sauron. Since Sauron represents the full conscious power of ultimate evil, Tolkien cannot introduce him personally without reducing his stature, thus he is seen almost entirely through his servants. As for the whimsy you mention, I suppose you mean such things as the personality of the hobbit Sam. This is necessary as a foil to the horror of the Black Rider, the blinding glory of the Elves, and the grimness of the Dwarves. Tolkien's first book, ~~THE~~ HOBBIT, has even more of this whimsy, with only a hint of the grimness of the War of the Rings. If the battle on the Weathertop isn't grim enough for you, I don't know what would be.

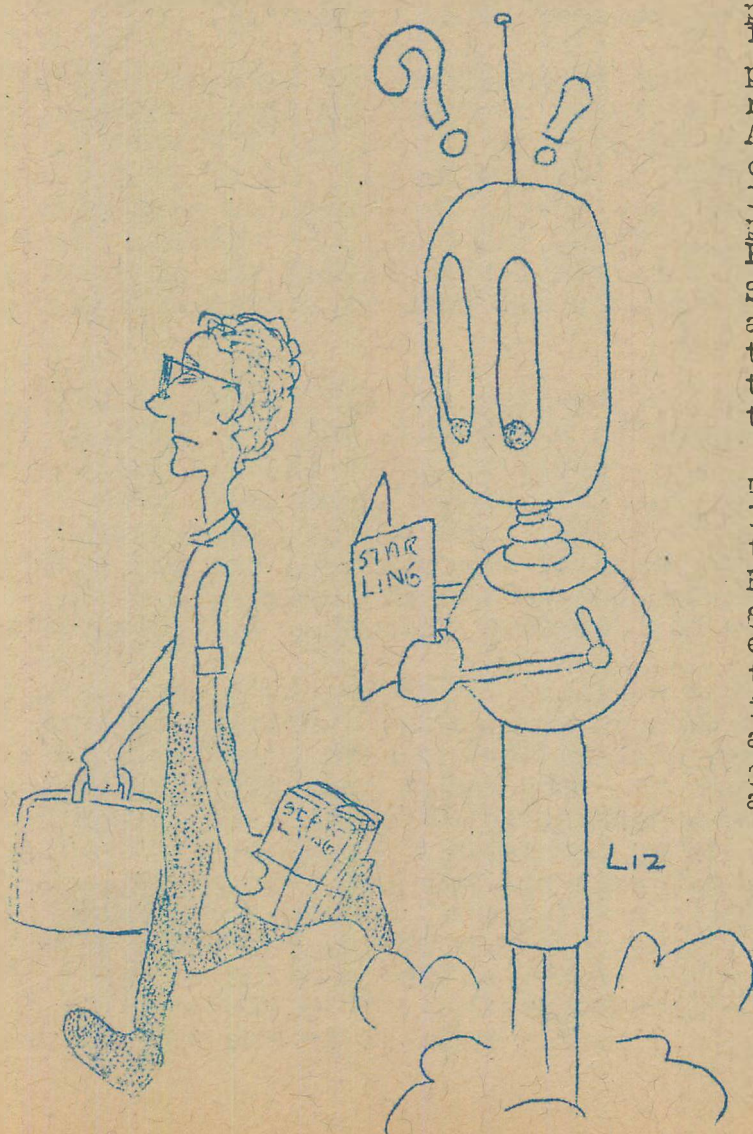
I enjoyed your article on Badger. I knew they were bad, but I didn't know they were that bad. Bruce Robbins claims that one of the stories in SUPERNATURAL STORIES Vol 43, "They Flew By Night" by Leo Brett, is part of the Cthulhu Mythos, as it mentions the "Elder God".



Buck Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, Ind. 47348

I disagree that the conflict (in The Lord of the Rings) is indirect; that's like saying that World War II was an indirect conflict because Hitler wasn't in the front-line trenches. As a matter of fact, the leaders in Tolkien's books have a remarkable amount of personal conflict (that's why the books are fantasy. . .) My major objection to the book is that, having chosen a relatively ineffectual protagonist, Tolkien is forced to end every conflict by bringing in the Marines at the last moment--this gets a bit wearing after the fourth or fifth time it's used. Despite this flaw, I consider the novel one of the great fantasies of all time (Nobody's perfect. . .)

I doubt that nostalgia is responsible for the sale of Burroughs. I think the solution is in the upsurge of fantasy fiction in general, with particular emphasis on Marvel Comics; young readers like stories with lots of action which don't make any particular sense, and Burroughs supplies them. Burroughs modern equivalent is either Ian Fleming or Stan Lee.



Gaughan brings up an interesting point; the readers of science fiction, supposedly a "modern, progressive" form of literature, resent innovations in sf art. Anachronism? Not really--a lot of them--me included--also dislike "modern" writing, as represented by Ballard, some of Phil Dick's wilder works, etc. Sf is simply adventure fiction, and fans like the illustrations to relate to the story, not to the way the artist felt at the time he was making the drawing. (Even so--fannish nostalgia is minor compared to the country at large--the only fantasy author today who is really popular is Ray Bradbury, who offers great globs of nostalgia and nothing else.) And then, there is bound to be some resentment against the idea that anything new--in art or anywhere else--is automatically good, and that anyone who disagrees is not merely wrong, but an old fuddy-duddy. Modern is not quite a synonym for correct.



Pfc Earl E. Evers, US 51533159, 269 Sig Co(Svc), APO 58, New York, NY  
09058

The Fellowship of the Ring is not one book in a series of three, it's one third of one novel and can't stand alone. For best results you should read all three together without a break and then draw conclusion

//Perhaps I shouldn't have commented on the one book, er, first third of the book, before I finished the remainder. However, I did, and I plan to comment on the second part when I finish that, too. And, of course, after I finish the whole thing. That may not be the best way to do it, but I think it may be interesting. HL//

"Cultural Phenomenon" is a pretty good story, but it would have been ~~funnier~~ if the the narrator took himself and his subject more seriously, was more scholarly and pedantic about events instead of just telling the story in conversational tone. As it is, elements of the story are funny, but Gordon fails to maintain the tongue in cheek seriousness necessary to create a mood. When I came to the end of the sixth page, I thought the story was over, and it should have been, the other page is anticlimactic.

Clay Hamlin ((you know what I do to people who don't put their address on their letters? This is what.))

I probably should know better than to deliberately stir up this old thing again, but you have two or three comments in your letter column mentioning this Richard Shaver thing, and I just can't resist putting in my own four cents worth (Inflation, you know.) It is just possible, maybe even likely, that no one else around in fandom at present is really aware of what it was like then, and since, as myself. Heck of a thing to try to take credit for, isn't it? Still, the whole mixed up mess was interesting, and strange, and that is reason enough to study the thing.

Now, a hoax this may be, a deliberate hoax you will never be able to prove one way or another. Confusion there was, and is. Some of it, and I have information from many sources to prove it, was deliberate confusion, created by Ray Palmer. Deliberate hoaxes there were though, even though they weren't on the part of the publishers, editors, or writers (and re-writers) of the stories, but some members of fandom, and others did create some deliberate hoaxes, and they were rather childishly simple to recognise when they did them, too.

Bad stories, you bet. From the earliest criticism that they were no more than sex and sadism, up through some awful difficult to read formula plots, and things that were little more than articles, there was lots of bad writing. There was some awful good writing, too, not so much in plotting and characterization, but in the simple expounding of some of the most incredibly imaginative concepts ever seen. You can start with Stapledon and work up, and not find anyone even remotely as imaginative in totally new (to sf) concepts and ideas as you will find there. Sometimes, not too often, you would also find some fast paced action equal to the action stories of any author around. I have been led to believe that the way to figure out how good a story is, as a story, is directly related to who did the real



writing of it. Because of course it is well known that Shaver himself almost never and maybe not at all, really wrote the finished product. He simply did not and does not now have the ability to write a good story of fiction. As for who did, there are many. Rap, of course, often, Chet Geier frequently, and one of the most surprising, in a few instances the N3F's well known and well respected Ralph Holland did the re-write on them.



There are two or three things that maybe no one will ever figure out for themselves. The stories were written by many people, the concepts, all of them, except for the one original hoax on the part of Ray Palmer when he called the first story "racial memory," came from Shaver, who did not, and does not, possess the education or talent to create out of his own mind so many concepts that have since become

true. Just a few of these things are subliminal perception, the use of electrodes inserted in the brains of animals, (and men?), the use of low voltage shock treatment, and Lasers. There was definitely, the prediction of the first sightings of flying saucers (whatever they may be) before Ken Arnold first made his sightings of the things (or, if you prefer, hallucinations.)

For a hoax, someone surely must have spent a lot of time and money, and taken it plenty seriously, because many of the things first propounded there have actually been created since that day the first story was written.

And it is not merely the physical sciences either, the whole thing really gets plenty confusing when someone starts to exert any effort in the comparison of the myths mentioned there, with the most respected and up to date findings of archeology and anthropology. I did just that, over several years time, taking dates and times of the creation of certain myths of Greece and Rome and working out a time table which was then compared with the various suggestions and hints you will find in those stories quite often.

Every one, with few exceptions, seems to work out to a plus or minus ten percent of the exact date that is the best guess of the actually time these things happened. Altogether too good for simple chance, or so it seems to me. Not that an accomplished anthropologist or archeologist could not do so, if they wished, but to consider that a physical scientist, and a student of these somewhat



more fuzzy headed sciences combine their talents to perpetrate a deliberate hoax, and not to be recognized for what it was is more than a little far fetched.

And anyone with even a smattering of abnormal psychology is bound to recognize stories, in lots of detail, almost complete detail, that could be textbook cases of most every psychosis you will find. So add one more of the necessities for writing of these ideas and concepts as Shaver wrote them. Even a promoter like Ray Palmer, with a smattering of knowledge of just about all the sciences, would hardly have been up doing such a thing without a good many contradictions turing up now and then.

The conclusions reached by Shaver and Co. may be wrong, undoubtedly they are. The stories may frequently be badly written, but quite often there is some excellent writing of certain types; too. For wonderfully imaginative concepts, whether nonsense, or even true, they had no equal to my knowledge, by any of the top authors of this day or any day. These things were different. Bad, maybe, but different, and sometimes almost unique. Lots of people have stomached the writing for these imaginative concepts, as the sales records prove. Nobody sold as many science fiction magazines as this guy Shaver, including Burroughs.

And none of the other authors infuriated readers to such a great extent, either.

Read the blasted things if you feel up to doing so.

//I feel like I should say something in reply to all this. I could, I think, go paragraph by paragraph and disagree or add something. For instance, why should one need an 'anthropologist or archeologist' to do what Shaver did. Clay checked all of, he tells us, with a standard reference. Shaver could have used something like this without too much trouble. ---but I don't think I will go through picking out things like this. I've no doubt made some people mad by even mentioning this thing. I'd make others mad by condemning Palmer and Shaver in detail. If you have something that sounds pretty important to say about this, I may print it next time in the letter column. Other than that, the Shaver Mystery/Hoax is now a closed book in these pages. (((You see, the deros are making threatening noises at me, and I don't want to get into trouble with them)))HL//

Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740

To my eyes, you failed to get the full effectiveness from the multi-colored cover, by the use of that particular shade of paper. Plain white cover stock should have been used to cause the three colors to leap out at the eye, while this medium neutral background detracts from the effect.

//Much of the lack of effectiveness on the first cover in all those three colors was because it was a pretty non-effective drawing. My drawing. HL//

CoA: The one I listed in the letter column was wrong: Joe Sanders, 403 S. Fess, Bloomington, Indiana, is right, as of 9/15.



It's going to be interesting to see the reactions of fans to Tolkien, now that his books are appearing in paperback. There may have been some tendency in the past to feel prejudice in favor of the Tolkien fiction, simply because it cost a good bit to own it. I feel that you'll be more happy when you come to the later books in the tale, for they contain more major conflict between the hobbits and the forces of Mordor. But you've hit upon a very serious defect in Tolkien's major work: the reader must take on faith and trust the awfulness of Mordor and I for one wasn't completely satisfied that things are so terrible in that region. I'm not frightened of things because they're black, I don't feel prejudice against people who live in a different manner from my own habits, and when I encounter a desolate landscape where little or nothing grows I feel that it could be the result of careless farming practices, not some unspecified effect of evil.

Cultural Phenomenon had its limitations as a piece of humorous fiction. But Richard Gordon deserves praise for thinking out a real story, once he got his basic idea of partisans of Beatles and Stones affecting the future course of history. Too often a fan will come up with a basically good theme and try to make it carry a story without the necessary amount of elaboration and with no effort to devise logical consequences from the illogical premise. If I either liked or disliked the Beatles (I'm neutral toward them) and if I had ever heard of the Rolling Stones, I might find this much funnier than I do now.

I've never seen any sound evidence for the validity of even part of the Shaver mythos. Moreover, some of the Shaver Legend is contrary to what we know of science, and science has been emerging from the space exploration efforts with a remarkably good record. I'd always thought that the first space exploration efforts would produce at least one discovery that science had made an enormous mistake about: a major miscalculation about the energy needed to get a rocket out of the gravitational influence of earth, for instance, or the speed of light.

//a very good point. For everything in the Shaver stories that in some round about way predicted a scientific discovery, there are dozens of other details that are completely wrong. Just because Hugo Gernsback's Ralph 12441 made a lot of good guesses, and a lot of bad ones, we don't claim that it is in some strange way a true future history. HL//

Rick A. Luc, 49 West 8th Street, Bayonne, New Jersey, 07002

I wonder if Robert Coulson ever considered just who reads the Fleming and Burroughs novels? I don't think the same group reads both. The worlds of the two are quite different. One creates fantasy and his own world, while the other simply fancifies this world and shows that perhaps you too can be a super hero without going to Mars, Venus or Pellucidar. After the initial novelty wears off, I think Burroughs appeals to younger readers just into their early teens or the older readers looking for the aura they think surrounded their youth. Fleming is for older teens and adults who are looking for something in this world that won't be monotonous. 29



Personally I think Fleming is a better writer than Burroughs, but this may be because I'm of this age, and Coulson is of an earlier age.

//Coulson is of an earlier age? You're obsolete, Buck. HL//

Bruce Robbins, 58 Revonah Ave., Stamford, Connecticut, 06905

Badger Books are also available from Dick Witter's F&SF Book Co.--cheaper (40¢) too. Cheapest of all though is if you buy direct from England, Ken Slater, say. They are a big pain to completists as you say--almost 200 of the damn things--totally unreadable but they keep coming out. By the way, Lionel Fanthorpe, I understand from someone who buys every Badger book, is real--all those other names are his pen names. That's right--one guy writes every one of those Badger things.

//He should be ashamed of himself. I don't know though. . . maybe Fanthorpe writes all the novel lengths, but I think there might be a few other people who sometimes write a short story. Some of them seem even worse than the average Fanthorpe tripe. And Badger does run the customary, "The publisher assumes no responsibility for lost MSS." In fact, I just look inside one, and it says it invites manuscripts. HL//

- - - - -

This time we heard from James Toren, and Tom Sampson with short letters, and from a few of you who didn't send me your changes of address. I hear from you when I get back STARLING with 8¢ due. So let me know these things, okay?

Quick! before you throw your mailing label away, take a look at it. With this issue, I've put into effect a more involved system of keeping records, and the symbols next to your name mean something. Like this, in fact:

S sample. You have to do something for the next issue.  
T Trade. We already trade, or a "T?" means I want to trade.  
I means you usually write a letter

a number means you've paid me money, or something, and you'll get STARLING through the number mentioned





# THE GOOD OLD DAZE

By Hank Luttrell

WEIRD TALES, January 1942, Vol. 36 #3  
edited by D. McIlwraith

By 1942, Weird Tales had already passed through its best years, while it was edited by Farnsworth Wright. Perhaps it wasn't the loss of Wright which hurt the magazine as much as the loss of Robert Howard and H. P. Lovecraft, backbones of the publication.



McIlwraith, while editor for W.T.'s remaining years, always tried to carry on Wright's policies. He brought into print much of the yet unpublished Lovecraft and Howard, as well as dusting off some of the older stories and reprinting them. Some new writers were discovered during this period, as brilliant or more so as the pillars of the magazine's history. Leiber, Bradbury and Sturgeon are outstanding among the examples. Seabury Quinn and August Derleth still contributed frequently. But things just were not the same. The excitement was somehow gone. Instead of marveling over the brilliance of some recent issue in the letter column, the readers' ultimate complement was a wistful "almost as good as one of the oldtime numbers.!"

There has never been as much demand for fantasy and Weird Tales' type of horror story as there was for science fiction. Weird Tales was often alone in a market which supported a dozen or more science fiction titles. When the whole pulp field began to crumble, it's only logical that W.T. would suffer more than most. Authors that might have otherwise breathed new life into W.T. were forced to move to other markets where they stood a better chance to make a little money.

Even so, the whole post-Wright Weird Tales wasn't a barren era. To the very end it published memorable stories from time to time, and maintained an unusually high standard considering the circumstances!

One of the novelettes in this issue is Lovecraft's THE SHADOW OVER INNSMOUTH, which had previously appeared only in book form, never in magazine. In its relatively simple plot, the hero slowly uncovers a horrible secret in the coastal town of Innsmouth. In the climax, he is forced to flee for his life from the dreadful inhabitants. Handled by almost any other writer, this straight forward plot would have read like a Hollywood horror movie novelization. Lovecraft slowly, carefully, laboriously, almost, uses detail and gothic description to build to a high peak of horror. Lovecraft wasn't a typical pulp writer, plunging head long through one wildly adventurous scene into another. Lovecraft wrote for and about mood and atmosphere; often he was quite successful, though sometimes he seems wordy and clumsy!



My favorite story in this issue is one which somehow seems a bit out of place in *Weird Tales*; Nelson Bonds' The Ghost of Lancelot Biggs. Some of you have read the book of Lancelot Biggs stories, edited by Andre Norton, *LANCELOT BIGGS: SPACEMAN* (Doubleday, 1950). This story is one of those included in that book.

Lancelot Biggs is heartlessly corny and sometimes overwritten, and he doesn't seem quite as funny to me now as he did several years ago when I read the book. But I still love it! In case you're not familiar with Biggs, let me introduce you. In the words of the W.T. editor, he was a "gangling genius of the spaceways," a "Crackpot, crackerjack mechanic. . ." In his book, he managed to plunge himself and his ship into one disaster after another, only to somehow pull it out again with a wildly impossible scheme. He gains the captain's daughter's love and eventually even the captain's respect! Altogether Fun!

Seabury Quinn, as I mentioned earlier, was one of *Weird Tales*' Pillars. His stories of Jules de Grandin, the occult detective, were always popular and almost always very good. (I understand someone is finally going to reprint some of them--the someone being Arkham House.) His stories not dealing with the detective ranged from brilliant to pretty fair. Quinn's story in this issue, "Who Can Escape?" wasn't a classic, but it was good! The title suggests the theme. A man murders his wife and then takes his own when his new wife and real love is murdered by the ghost of his first. Quinn's sensitive yet realistic handling of death in this story, as in many of his others, makes it more memorable than it might have been otherwise!

I've run across this issue's "Parasite Mansion" by Mary Elizabeth Counselman somewhere before! Perhaps in an anthology, or maybe even on television, though this last seems unlikely! The story isn't listed in Cole's *CHECKLIST OF SF ANTHOLOGIES*.

In the story, a vicious poltergeist has been haunting the women of an old family for several generations! A young female psychologist who is forced by an accident to spend a few days with the family feels that the injuries experienced by the girl are caused by her own mind, and her belief in the poltergeist! The climax wasn't entirely unexpected, but still somewhat effective! . . . and a nice turnabout on the stories where the ghost are found to be something entirely mundane!

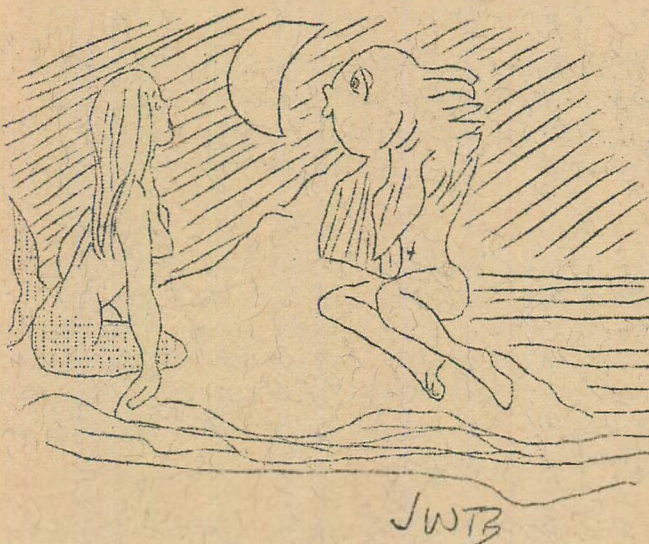
Fritz Leiber's "The Phantom Slayer" (one of the better stories included in *NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS*, Arkham House) is a good story typical of *Weird Tales* and Fritz Leiber. You've probably read it, and if you haven't, you should.

"Death Thumbs a Ride" by Robert Arthur is an overdone tongue-in-cheek ghost story which isn't funny very often! "The White Lady" by Dorothy Quick attempts to capture a mood of fantasy and an era "When knights were bold. . ." In a simple story about a few nobles, a ghost, and two lovers, it almost makes it!

The best art work in this issue was by Hannas Bok! The two page spread for "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" captures perfectly the evil malignancy Lovecraft attempted to communicate in prose! His illustration for "Parasite Mansion" sets the mood for the story! Dolgov, who often drew in something of the same style as Bok, was quite impressive in his representation of the tragedy of Quinn's "Who Can Escape?" Harry Ferman seemed sometimes as talented as any of his contemporaries in W.T., but more often his drawings were pedestrian and static, as they were in this issue!

All in all, a very good issue! "Almost as good as those old time numbers! . . ."





THRILLING WONDER STORIES April 1948  
Vol 32, #1, edited by Sam Merwin

I know very little about Arthur Leo Zagat; except the rather impersonal data found in various indexes. Of the stories listed in Dor Day's Index to the 1929-1950 science fiction magazines, Zagat wrote 17 stories by himself, and 9 more in collaboration with Nathan Schachner. Of these, two were novels, one alone and one with Schachner. The magazine most frequently contributed were ASTOUNDING, Gernsback's WONDER, and THRILLING WONDER. All but just a few were published in the 1932-1937 period. The others were published in 1946 and 1948.

Zagat has 4 stories listed in Cockcroft's Index to the Weird Fiction Magazines; 2 with Schachner and two alone. One appeared in a 1931 ORIENTAL STORIES, while the rest appeared in 1931, 1942 and 1943 WEIRD TALES. One, in the 1931 WT, may have been near novel length.

I also know he hasn't been published in book form very often. He has no books listed in Brad Day's CHECKLIST OF FANTASTIC LITERATURE IN PAPERBACK BOOKS, and only one story listed in Cole's CHECKLIST OF SF ANTHOLOGIES. His only published book listed in Brad Day's THE SUPPLEMENTAL CHECKLIST OF FANTASTIC LITERATURE is SEVEN OUT OF TIME (Fantasy Press, 1949.)

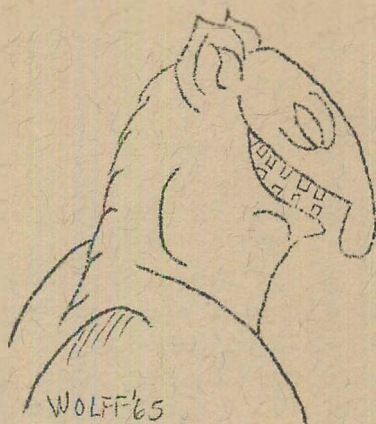
All of this to me seems rather puzzling; just from the novelette presented in this issue of TWS ("The Faceless Men") I should think his work is at least as good as much of the material now in print by many other authors. Not that this novelette (the magazine called it a "complete novel", of course, of course) was that tremendously good--nor, in fact, do I think ACE should bring it out in next month's batch. I would much prefer seeing good original books, rather than more or less good reprints. I would even prefer mediocre original books, rather than slightly better than mediocre reprints. It just seems strange that with all the reprints of even less than fair quality stories floating about, that a reasonably good author would be so utterly forgotten by paperbacks, hardbounds, and anthologies!

The plot of Zagat's lead story is nothing special--". . . Scientist Brad Lilling alone can save Earth's cities from entombment and death." Remember Zagat's "The Lanson Screen" (the one reprinted Zagat story in anthology form, in Conklin's THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION)? In that story, the author entombed a city in an energy shell. Here, some badies do the same thing, and our Hero sets things straight!

The writing is very adequate; and though Zagat attempts nothing as sophisticated as characterization beyond stereotyping, the story moves right along, in a seemingly quite modern style.

Most the other stories in this issue are quite forgettable. In fact, in several cases, they seem to have faded away considerably in the few weeks since I read them!





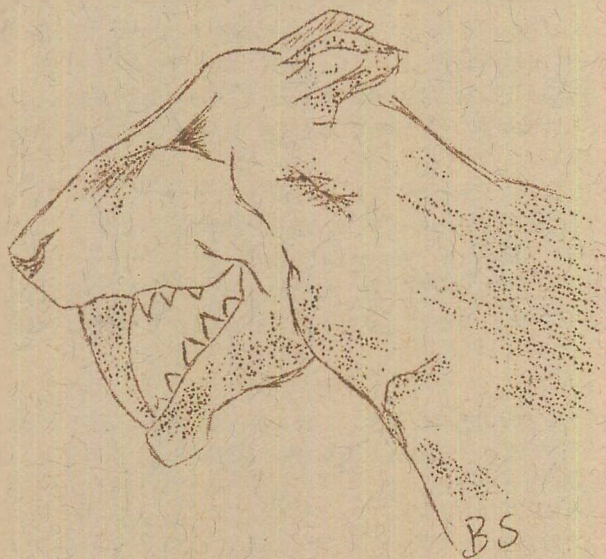
I didn't forget Henry Kuttner's "Pile of Trouble," however. Anyone who hasn't met Kuttner's Hogben family should do so. No author, before or since, has written ridiculous fantasy in quite the same way, quite this funny.

The other more or less readable stories were "Dud" by Kenneth Putman, not too bad, and "Thieves of Time" by Arthur Burks, more or less good compared with most of the stories published in the magazines at this time. There were bad stories present by Frank B. Long, Carl Jacobi, Matt Lee (a pseudonym used by editor Merwin) and George O. Smith.

The TWinSS aren't remembered for their art work. Except in the very early and very last years, almost all the cover art was done by Earle Bergey. Bergey was at best boring and unimaginative. Throughout most of both STARTLING STORIES' and TWS' life, the cover artist worked under a publisher imposed formula: Girl (scantly clad), BFM, and Boy. Spaceship optional. This didn't help the already poor situation much!

Most of the art that was good came from Virgil Finlay. I frankly think that Finlay is more at home with fantasy than with TWinSS' brand of space opera. In this issue some of the Finlay art for "The Faceless Men" was slightly wooden and stiff looking. The art for Burks' "Thieves of Time" was very good, however, with Finlay touching on the mystery and mood of the story. None of the other art, by other people, was really worth mentioning.

E N D





# FROM THE ISHTAR GATE by David N. Hall

A columnar column

Sometimes you sit down at the typewriter and it glares at you. Sometimes you sit down and it starts typing out a love-tune in perfect key with you. I sat down at mine and it stared at me. Nothing. It wasn't that I didn't have ideas for my column, it was that I had too many and all of them were unformed half-ideas or deformed. They just didn't fit. Finally, at the last Meeting of OSFA, I confessed to Hank that I had no idea what I was going to write. He suggested I write about OSFA.

OSFA is, of course, not a space agency but the Ozark Science Fiction Association. Only one of our members actually lives in the Ozarks, and he only in the foothills, but that didn't bother us, . . . none of the other names we thought of would be pronounceable by it's initials. OSFA has 17 members, ten or so of whom are currently active.\* We hope to expand considerably; this fall, three members. . . myself, James Turner and Becker Staus. . . will be at the University of Missouri in fact sharing a triple room in the dorm (tha'd frightening, even more so because Turner could use a triple room to himself) and we may even open up a chapter out there (Chapter Eight, I think, or How I cured My Incurable Illness).

We've got some good members. Ray Fisher, whose apartment seems to be the hub of the club, has great stacks of old pulps in his apartment and was a fan of days of yore. I've seen some copies of his fanzine CDD (which is being revived, by the way) and it looks like a pretty fannish publication. His wife Joyce writes and carries on conversations that keep the meeting going on when it would otherwise boggle down in the middle of a Risk game (more about that later.) Rich Wannan is a movie fan, and knows quite a bit about them, and is constantly being badgered by the rest of us to put out a fanzine. (We have this scheme to take over APA 45, you see, so we can use the mailings for crud-sheets). Bill Scheidt spends his time talking to Joyce about eternity, and Staus spends his time laughing. Jim Turner is a raconteur of practical jokes and insults, and managed to. . . but to that in a minute. Luttrell and Gilster spend most of their time communing with the pulps. My father minds the treasury and grows a mustache. Jack Steele makes jokes. We have all sorts, and we have only ten attending members. Pretty good start, huh? huh? But we haven't and (simper, gasp, Gollywow) femmefans, other than Joyce. Who is taken, anyway.

The main activity of . . . is games. Oh, every now and then Hank will read the Constitution that came in the night after eating too much water melon and hot peppers, or Dad will demand that someone besides his run for Secretary-Treasurer, but no one pays any attention to these or other underhanded political activities. The main game is Risk, but we also play something of Hank's called Chase Back, and I tried to introduce Shogi, but the board didn't get to the meeting.

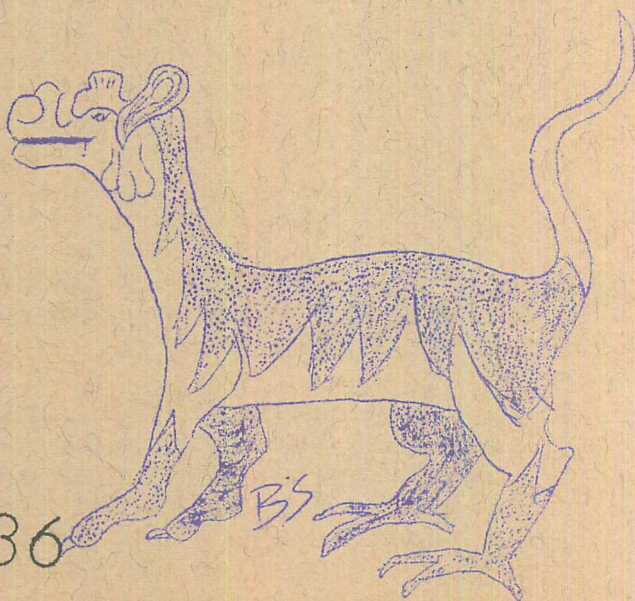


Risk is one of those Conquer-The-World games, not as good, I'm told, as Diplomacy but we haven't a Diplomacy set yet. There was a game held during the second meeting that lasted six hours. I cleverly managed to arouse interest in it by announcing that I was the Napoleon of the Game Board and had never been beaten. (Which was quite true, at the time.) When next meeting came around, everyone wanted a chance to dethrone the Champion, (except Staus, who sat on the floor and red apa mailings) so the game got under way. Well, after a few moves, the Fishers arrived, and Ray started drooling over my shoulder and reeking of interest, and about three moves later I was in trouble so I turned my armies over to Ray and joined Staus on the floor. Five and a half hours later, Ray and Steele had driven everyone else off the board and were chopping at each other. Finally, Ray had driven Jack into a corner and it looked like it would take another three hours to demolish him, so Jack resigned. This made my status as Champion very unsure. It was claimed by some (led by Ray) that I had committed suicide in my bunker and was not intitled to reap the rewards of victory. I was willing to be nice about it: said I'd retired undefeated as champion and Ray was now the Champ. However, there were still some, I understand, who clung to the theory that Ray and I were co-champions.

The test came at the third meeting in Rays flat. I got into a game with and Rich, and in no time at all became the target of both. In less than three hours my luck gave out on me. Hank and Paul wandered out of the den (where the old pulps were) and laughed at me (which me quite mad, you realize) and went away. Right after that I had bad luck on two consecutive turns, and didn't get the extra armies I had counted on, and was completely wiped out. I threw my Risk cards at Ray (which was what the louse was after) and went into the den, where Hank and Paul were reading Big Little Books. "Gentlemen" I said, "It is over." They didn't seem very sorry. Later, Wannen had to leave, so I took over his armies. Had I won, the championship would have still been in doubt.

But I didn't. Wannen had so mis-managed his troops that even I could do little to redeem them. Ray swarmed over me like a black tide (he always uses the black players.) So now Ray is the RISK champion. He won't be for long, I'm sure; Risk is one of the games a player can be effectively wiped out if all the other players turn on him (as opposed to chess, say, where having an opponent out for your blood doesn't make a hell of a lot of difference.) I hope the Diplomancy arrives and makes the Risk obsolete.

Perhaps the most interesting story behind OSFA is the production of the club bulletin. Now listen carefully, because this is a story not even the members have heard.





The first issue of Sirruish (whether it was named for this column or this column for it is a minor point; it's the same beast) came out before the club was even organized. It was right after the Midwestcon. Some friend of Duncan McFarland, who had, I think, one too many, kept telling us how honored he was to meet "Neofans, . . ." a vanishing breed; according to him. We were a little irritated by this, especially since he was nothing but a fakefan (oh his name did get into McFarland's fanzine once, attached to a quip I'm sure he didn't intend to make.) But we kept silent. Much later Staus arrived and the fellow tried the same line on him. Staus delivered his famous line, "How can we help but be neofans? We are isolated from the fannish world." . . . then he departed for Cleveland and no one saw him for a week. We did the first bulletin when we got home and sent it to whoever seemed interested. When we held our first meeting, Sirruish was shoed in as the title, seeing as how it already had inertia. Sirruish is usually done at Hank Luttrell's house by me and him. From the very start we decided to make the bulliten look better than most. Hank had recently started working in more than one color, inspired by an abortive attempt of mine to use colors. We use granite (like the stuff this is printed on) as it is "neutral" like white, not conflicting with any particular hue, but with less greasy show-through that white, and most of the bulletins look quite good. They have Staus' best work, some from Wolff, and some others.

Unfortunately, the words aren't as inspired. It might as well be known that most of them are my fault. I do the writing while Hank cuts illos, runs the mimeo-graph, and so forth. Usually the work is done during the day, when I don't perform best, and so is largely incomprehensible. Only occassionally do squabbles arise over what to put in, for instance, Hank may want me to tell about the business meeting, and I'll scribble some half-serious and half-ridiculous report and he'll object. I say then, "You do it!" Get up, and he allows as how my version was okay.

Only have we with the last two issues started putting in material not connected to club activities. In #3 we had a short vignette by Jim Turner, illustrated by the same sirruish that was the heading in the first issue of Sirruish, and in fact, has illustrated both this column and the first one, last issue. I hope I can get Hank to do this heading in purple, for then we will have had this illo four times in four colors.

In issue #4 we printed another Turner story, and a list of the 100 most useless people in the world. That was the night Jim and I spent the night at Hank's, and we thought the list up then. I said Jim was a connoisseur of insults; Staus had stayed home with a bad cold. . . he still has it, lying in bed coughing occasionally. . . so we put him on the list. (If anyone is interested in our list of the 100 most useless people in the world, write and we'll see what we can do. As it appeared in a club publication, paid for with club money, we can't give it away. Send us a dime for the treasury)

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Oh, yes, I nearly forgot the bull-fighting. That would never do.



I remember on our return trip from the Midwestcon. We were all exhausted. That was when I first noticed something amiss, because there was this billboard with a picture of a bull fight on it, and in big letters "KEEP BULL-FIGHTING OUT OF ST. LOUIS. . . A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT BY YOUR PLYMOUTH DEALER." My first reaction of course, was to sit bolt upright and cry, "Has everyone in St. Louis gone mad?"

I never did find out for sure, but as time went by more of the posters appeared, all reading exactly the same. I have never in my life met anyone idiotic enough to suggest bringing bull-fighting to St. Louis, though of course there may be some fanatics in a basement somewhere cranking out pamphlets right now. My suspicion is that it is only a gimmick perpetrated by the Plymouth people, although Hank pointed out while six or so of us were going home from an OSFA meeting that the car next to us had a tag on the bumper reading "We are opposed to St. Louis Bull-Fighting." Anyway, if they did bring bull-fighting to St. Louis, where would they hold the fights? Busch Stadium?

Oh, it inspired some witticisms. Ray didn't think much of bull-fighting, said you could be yet crueler with less risk to yourself in other sports. . . say, toad stomping. A comment in Sprague deCamp's THE SPELL OF SEVEN inspired Vulture biting. . . and Hank and I later created Lizard Sniffing, for reasons too confused to explain here. . . if you care, write Hank and ask him.

So what with Bull Fighting, Vulture Biting, Toad Stomping, Lizard Sniffing. . . and, most of all, Sirruish editing, St. Louis fandom drags cheerily along.

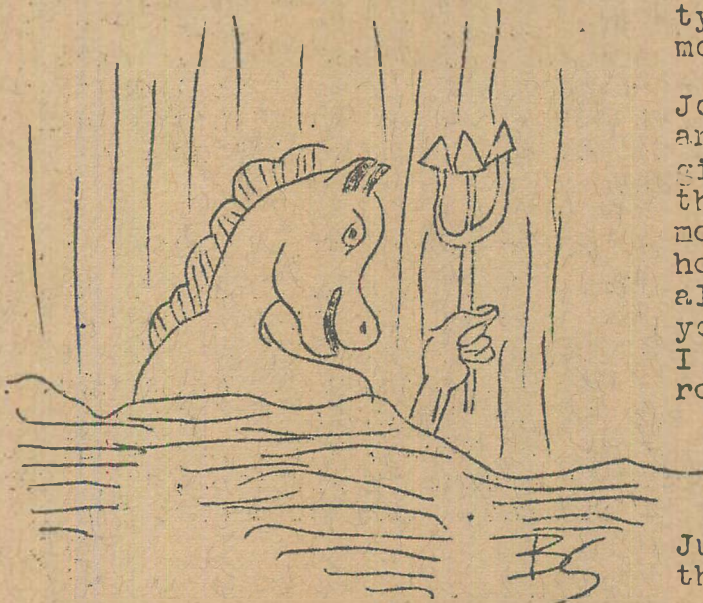
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Lizard Sniffing Luttrell Here: Hall didn't bother telling you what he does with his time around the OSFA meetings. Perhaps you guessed, however. Yes, he worries about the Risk games, and his newest

type of chess, and a Waterloo, mostly, I think.

Joyce is going to be mad at me and Dave. She claims that we are giving her a reputation. It seems that every time we report on the meetings (in Sirruish, and now here) we mention as how she spent all night in a corner with some young male talking about eternity. I don't understand this. We just report the facts.

Stay tuned to this station. We've asked for some sketches of the OSFA members from finofan Jurgen Wolff, for SIRRUISH, and they will be reprinted here.





# LETTER WRAPPED AROUND FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS

BY EE EVERS

God I hope your passport is still good from that Paris venture! The filling this is sandwiched around will take you just about anywhere you think will be safe. Don't get nervous over the amount, it'll be so much paper in a few days anyway, and you're getting it because you're the only one I'm sure will do as I tell you! I only ask one thing--when you get where you're going, get this letter into the safest office archives you can find! You'll have no trouble there, this paragraph alone makes it a Great Historical Document! And get the whole thing into print, as fact or fiction, vanity press or mimeograph if you have to. Just go, and don't worry about me. You're always saying I need a dragon to fight; now I have one, and if it's a windmill, I'll join you later. Don't get your hopes up and torture yourself though, I'm sure of this!

I don't go into bars before noon (Yes, I drink too much, but you sing homemade "folk" songs and recite your own poetry in a Greenwich Village pseudobeat joints for five years and see how you end up! I was sober when all this happened and I'm sober now!) but there's nothing habit forming about looking in windows! Unless things happen like yesterday morning and you break your rule! I was passing this all-glass-front place on West Tenth and here's the Colonel, perched right on the window end of the bar, a shot of vodka in his hand and two big suitcases under his feet! He was so drunk his head swiveled in slow motion to look at me as I came in!

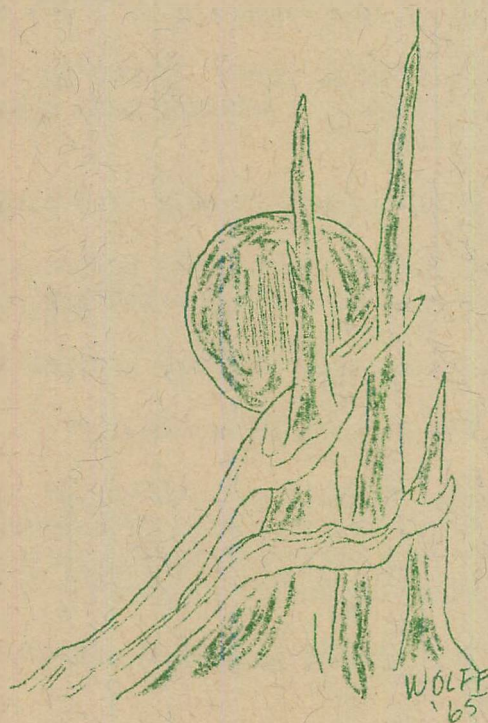
"What scene, Pop?" (we only call him Colonel behind his back, mostly because it was "well-known" he'd really had been a colonel once, though no one knew in what army!)

His speech wasn't hampered by alcohol, only by his accent and his usual inside out approach to the English language. "I am unable to lend you my apartment having signed over the lease. Most do you know use hotels for their 'shack jobs.'" The slang had obvious paratheses!

"Hell, that goddamn palace of yours drops more pants than anything I do."

"Rather the wealth your young friends read into it."

"What is the scene, Pop?"





"You will not accompany me! The journey will pass too quickly I will need no companion! I shall be emigrating!"

"Back to the Old Country?" Maybe I could get the old Bastard to tell the truth about himself for once! It would probably be fairly interesting, though sort of as hell, doubtless--I could see him a Colonel, but only on the losing side of some war or other. In any case it would be better than the story he usually told!

"No not some no longer sovereign Eastern European state! You will believe in my destination before three hours."

I had an afternoon and evening to kill so I'd listen to whatever story he was telling--for all his crazy tales about himself, and his incredible choice of words, he was the shrewdest talker I knew! Not just his trick of seeming to read thoughts, (I can't doubt a lot of people, the Colonel included, can read thoughts to some extent! So what! The boys at Duke U. are interested in mental telepathy, I'm not!) But he could explain almost anything I asked him, and explain in terms of what I meant rather than what I said! It wasn't how much he knew, it was the amount he seemed to understand!

But I was curious who he really was and what he lived through, admitting the possibility he didn't remember much of it! His whole face had that artificial look that comes from a lot of plastic surgery, and God knows how badly he'd been wounded in whatever wars he fought! He could very well come out of some army hospital without a complete memory and crooked up enough to invent a n outlandish background! In fact he could have been younger than he seemed, white hair, sunken eyes, and shaky hands aside! But whether time or shock had aged him, he was old and unmistakably from a military past! I was in the army myself long enough to tell an old soldier when I see one!

"Ckay pop! I'll play! So you're a Martian or whatnot and one of those suitcases is a mind control machine that makes you secret master of the world! I'll accept that for now!"

"You would accept it only if I used the device to give a demonstration!"

"True, except for talking purposes, but according to your own story the machine is set only to control a few key people!"

"To turn a ship one spins a wheel that controls a motor that turns the rudder!"

"And I'm a rivet in the hull!"

"Enough! None of this matters!" A flicker of expression flickered across the face which was incapable of expression! "You want to know if I will desert you and to your destruction and why yes you do not deserve to live and you seek fear not believing in the danger!"

"Now that you've asked and answered my questions, tell me why I don't deserve to live!"

"You singular do as you were called to me! Though you must assist me first!"

"Anything within reason, whether you're running away to Mars, Selisia, or Hell! And I know, not Mars! What do I do, help you launch your flying saucer?"



"Flying saucers were launched from this into that!" He prodded one suitcase with a toe and pointed toward a patron's head with his thumb! "But an act identical in one way!"

"Any time you want, long as I get back by ten thirty!" I decided to ignore the part about summoning me to the bar--I'd long before learned the Colonel contradicts himself when he felt like it and could always cover perfectly! And at length I'd rather not bother!

"Simple in reality the machine must be set to a person but I brought you here!"

That shuddered me a little--any explanation but detailed thought reading would be even more fantastic! I ordered a skotch and soda, English type, no ice to slam against the teeth! the Colonel paid and I pressed home the point he was half steering me away from! "Why aren't we Earthpeople fit to live?" I said it rather loud with the smell of good whiskey in my mouth showing where my courage is! It's right in the pit of the stomach where the whiskey hits first and tied with an icy cold ribbon! I wasn't drinking exactly! just directing as smooth, steady flow down my throat! playing the flame and thawing things out!

He got up and started out of the bar! I was up and following automatically! We got in his car and drove to a place in the woods near the town the letter is postmarked! The Colonel never answered that last question! though he answered my next two, more-than-half-serious questions--Yes to "Are you the only one of your people on this planet?" and twelve to eighteen days to "How long without?"

We both took suitcases out of the car, opened and assembled one into a box the size and shape of an open coffin on end! with a flat solid layer top and bottom (containing equipment?) The Colonel put the other suitcase into the coffin and we put the other side on! We sat in silence for at least half an hour drinking straight vodka from a bottle in the car! When we opened the box the suitcase was gone! I accepted the absence numbly! The Colonel next stepped into the box himself--I asked what next and he said seal him in! the machine itself was automatic!

I waited half an hour and opened the box, found it empty, and my hands started to disassemble the whole machine!

Somehow fought back, a trick I'd heard of somewhere for throwing a fit--take a big slug of liquor and suck it into your lungs as hard as you can! I won't describe my reaction, no need to! but felt no compulsion to dismantale anything after that! I felt as if my body were disassembling itself!

I don't know why the Colonel left! I don't know how I managed to shake off the compulsion to preform his task! I do know that the Colonel left Forty thousand dollars in medium to large bills in his car! No one needed to tell me if for was for transportation to whatever corner of this globe I consider a hole to hide in!

And of course I didn't go! You go! Given the good side of God knows how many big "ifs" I'm getting into that coffin right after I return from mailing this and I'm going to find some brass! To save the world of course, and to arrange a courtmartial for a certain drunken cowardly deserter of a shellshocked old colonel!

END

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