

THOTS

THOTS is published irregularly by Henry Elsner Jr., at 13618 Cedar Grove, Detroit 5, Michigan for any and all who think it worth the price of 10¢ per copy. No subscriptions larger than 25¢, please. This is whole number 2, dated sometime in January '48

MISCELLANEOUS, ET CETERA

It's been 4 months since the first THOTS appeared, for which lapse of time we suppose we should duly apologize. But a lot of things about us have changed during these past 4 months, and it is still somewhat of a surprise to us that another THOTS is in the making, instead of the "Open Letter" we had planned to send along with your unused subscription money.

As we've said, things have changed. As far as we're concerned, fandom can go hang itself, collectively and individually. It sometimes puzzles us how we ever got connected with such a bunch of weird characters. We herewith terminate all swap arrangements with fanzines -- our reaction to them ranges from sheer apathy towards the good ones to common disgust at the other kind. And you'll notice that there are no editorial prozine comments this time. The reason? Outside of ASF, we haven't even bought a stf mag recently, let alone read one. Our subscription to Campbell's mag still holds out, but we haven't read a story in one from about the time of the conclusion of Hubbard's "The End is Not Yet".

So we'll start off this time with a book review. Our apologies to the publishers, and to you readers, for our tardiness.

THE SLEEPING AND THE DEAD

Pellegrini and Cudahy, Chicago, \$3.75

This collection of 30 weird tales selected by August Derleth, impresses this reviewer as one of the best balanced of the many current anthologies. The lineup of authors includes outstanding weirdists ranging from classicists in the field such as M.R. James, Le Fanu, and Dunsany to contemporary magazine writers like Bloch, Kuttner, and Jacobi -- including, of course, H.P. Lovecraft.

Reactions to the stories themselves will vary with the reader's likes and dislikes of specific authors and types of tales. All of the stories included are well written, although they vary in length from novellettes to 5 page short-shorts; and in content from too-orthodox vampire and ghost yarns to strikingly fascinating off-trail material like Robert Bloch's "One Way to Mars" and Ray Bradbury's "The Jar".

Physically, the book's 518 pages are printed on good quality heavy stock and well bound in black cloth. We would recommend this book especially to those who, like us, are not specialists in weird fiction but enjoy good fiction when it presents itself. Worth the \$3.75 asked for it.

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Next come the letters. This trip, if something in a letter warranted editorial comment, we'll do so; otherwise, all parenthetical remarks are made by the writers, not by us. To start off, let's hear from Gerry de la Ree, who's had rather rough treatment from the letter-hacks in both Stfist and Thots.

[/Gerry Replies to Critics/]

Let's get this Hauser situation straight for once and for all. If I hadn't started this thing a year and a half ago, the story would probably have gone unnoticed like 90% of Amazing's stories do in fandom.

I contended that "Agharti" was good scientifiction and a more interesting story than the heralded "World of Null-A" by van Vogt. That's still my contention. Whether "Agharti" is pro or anti-Nazi was never the theme of my original review. Of course I still claim it is anti-Nazi and can't for the life of me see how Gardner or anyone else can construe it otherwise. I guess to Gardner and the others Nazi and German are identical. Not so with me.

Now we come to "Titans' Battle", easily one of the poorest attempts at a stf story I've ever read. I struggled vainly to finish it and couldn't. The one thing that helped "Agharti" to live was Hauser's excellent characterization. In "Titans' Battle" there were no main characters and as a result the story fell flat. So much for Hauser; one success and one turkey.

Continuing on the "Amazing" theme, however, I'd like to state that I found "So Shall Ye Reap" by Roger Phillips Graham one of the better novels of the year, topped only by Hubbard's "The End is Not Yet" in Astounding S-F. Hamilton's "Star Kings" proved space opera of the usual type.

And finally we get to the "Green Man Returns". Sherman's original "Green Man" story was a well done piece of fantasy humor, but this sequel falls flat. In the original yarn Sherman was at his best when poking fun at Hollywood, present-day radio programs and the like. In "The Green Man Returns" Sherman has to handle a plot laid 30 years in the future. He didn't do a bad job, but the story has none of the humor which crowded every page of its predecessor. --Gerry de la Ree, 9 Bogert Place, Westwood, New Jersey.

//Don Wilson Comments on Just About Everything//

I think Phillips (Graham) had to include that mystic philosophy in "So Shall Ye Reap" in order to satisfy the regular readers of AS, who are, to a large extent, mystics, occultists. It didn't harm the tale to any great extent -- have you read "The Despoilers", RPG's latest? If not, by all means do so at once. In the October AS

Congratulations to you!! For your denunciation of those characters who berate aSF as a textbookishly-incomprehensible science rag, that is. One of the worst offenders in this category admits that he no longer reads aSF anyway. Try and convince them -- it's no use. They still stick dogmatically to their ideal. But it is a relief to once again contact somebody who prefers aSF, after too much exposure to the Shaverites and allied critters...

The anti-science movement in stf might be explained: the stories in which a scientifically governed, over-efficiency-ized culture was shown up to be evil might have been a natural reaction, after the flood of science-worship in early stfan circles. Then the era of formula came along, and -- presto -- the evils-of-efficiency formula became one of the list. It was so merely because it happened to be prevalent when the formulas were being jelled. Could be so?

Really, tho, it is a fallacy to declare dogmatically that science holds the key to curing all mankind's ills, just as much so as to claim that All Science Is Evil.

HAW HAW HAW!!! Despite the fact that I'm not what you would call enthusiastic when it comes to Tech'y, Langan's criticism of Jack S. seems on the beam. I don't see what Bristol gains by using such wordy and ponderous verbage -- it doesn't favorably impress anybody, I'm sure.

Maybe Al doesn't care what he is seen with, but at present it would seem appropriate to emphasize something besides the Amazing, Astounding, Fantastic -- for the public interest in stf, so long predicted, is at last materializing, and you might as well have something nice and conservatively-righteous to show them when they want a sample. Of course, just one mag doing it can't make much impression. FA, FFM, TYS are the worst offenders as far as title is concerned. Would be interesting if all the pulp houses followed S&S's lead and renamed their stfzines -- actually, it was always a mystery to me how the usual policy of naming them got started, since stf is the only pulp field that doesn't use its name in the title. Mystery, detective, love, and the rest have always emphasized the type of fiction, and never the Amazing, Exciting, Lessee -- Amazing would be Mammoth Stf, Merwin's might metamorphose into Thrilling and Exciting Stf... Planet would stay like it is -- and so on.

What will it matter to JFS what political party is in power??? Ahhh...atomic energy. Doesn't seem like the controls are likely to be either established or carried out successfully. And international control of anything would be pretty useless as long as nations continued to be entities. Politicians are not famous for their foresight, anyway. Everybody has tanks -- they are still used in war. Ditto planes, machine guns, Why shouldn't the atombomb act the same way? You might argue that it is too dangerous. Then pray tell me when any politician has ever considered the consequences when making war.

I suppose Speer is interested only in the Democratic party's winning, no matter if Big Bill Tilden is elected -- just as long as he's a democrat, it's okay. I know a loyal democrat -- as staunch a demo as you'll find anywhere. He was greatly amused when he said his grandfather would have voted for anything democratic that ran for president, even the jackass. And even Speer's basic argument seems founded on foregone, pre-conceived conclusions. The assumption that the Democrats' foreign policy is much, much more liberal than the Republicans', and the assumption that accord between a Democratic USA and USSR will be any better than the Republicans could make it. Anyway, as long as we eat, have shelter, and clothing, who cares who is in power???

You can usually spot a dogmatic person by the phrase "this new drug," or "these new-fangled hinkies..." The use of "this" and "these" is a pretty sure indication of narrowmindedness, when used in reference to newly developed appliances. The public antipathy to stf may be gradually decreasing in literary circles, but among the general public it hasn't lessened a particle. They still laugh, every damn one of 'em.

The GBStone had a lot of meaty stuff in it. One of those summations-of-things-in-general that are usually very interesting. The phrase used by the Aussie reds "Strikebreakers, degenerates, drunkards,..." sounds like it is a boycott against fandom, or so it would seem from the recent Laney/Ashley affair. The question of what reception a negro would get if he came to a con, interested me too. I wonder what really would happen?! Probably, if he was pretty well-known in fandom, he would be accepted at least after the primary shock had worn off. That first introduction would be the crucial point. But it sure would prove once and for all whether fen are as broad-minded as they claim to be.

The JoKe cartoon was wonderful, tho it had too much stuff in it. The self-drive rocket, for one. Took me a minute to figure it out.

The all-round impression of Thots is a good one. I don't particularly care

for legal-sized stuff -- principal reason being difficulty in filing among a batch of fmz the majority of which are letter-size -- but it does make the zine seem more informal. I like the informal tone more than anything else. That "spontaneous" aura -- that some call "composed at the stencil" sound -- is hard to achieve, but if it is competently achieved there is nothing more interesting. Its principle fault is that it allows repetition to creep in. But you seem to be blessed with a lack of that fault, so in your case it sounds wonderful. Hope you can keep it up. Don't make it sound forced, whatever you do.

Send Thots out more frequently, please, it is one of the few zines received recently that I've been able to read clear thru from first word to last without forcing myself. --Don Wilson, 495 North Third St., Banning, California.

[Re: "So Shall Ye Reap"]

Your comments on the various promags were extremely interesting. It seemed to me, tho, that you were a bit critical of the philosophy propounded by Lowathy, in Phillip's "So Shall Ye Reap". I think that it wouldn't hurt us at all to follow some of his precepts. If you consider it too "mystical", then what do you advocate? Complete materialism? It seems that many fans have become complete athiests, denying any idea of a God or Creator, saying that the existence of man is mere chance. Now this may be so. We have no laboratory "proof" of such a thing as God. But are you going to completely deny that there is no such Thing merely on that basis? We don't know everything. Perhaps Mr. Phillips could have toned down some of his philosophizing, but a certain amount was needed, I believe, to give a moral answer to the story. After all, there is some question of ethics concerned, when you abandon almost all the human race to death, as was done in the story. To me, Lowathy's statements sounded very well-put. Wouldn't you be glad to know that a man's spirit never dies, and goes on, constantly, for ever?

Your comments on S. Fowler Wright were very interesting. Incidentally, as to Schaumburger's remarks about his (Wright's) being against electric lights, modern life, and such, Wright is opposed to such things. Somewhere in the first couple of pages of his story, DELUGE, he comes out against all of modern society. I forget the exact words, but he criticizes fiction as being an imaginative waste of man's time, and that machines make a lot of unnecessary materials; that man could do his own crop raising, without need of modern agricultural techniques and machinery, and so on. I didn't finish the story, as I was so disgusted with this.

Joe Kennedy's letter was good, altho I didn't think his JoKe (pun) was too good. Here's one that's even worse: The Politburo had an enormous banquet, and after the feast Uncle Joe got up and said: "So ve et!" So-vi-et! Comprehenz?

Other letters were also good, tho they didn't have much meaning to me, as I didn't receive Stfist # 8. How come? You sent me # 7, which arrived o.k., and, not getting any more, figured that was the last one. Can you explain? [Yes -- due to miscalculation, we ran short on paper of the last few pages of # 8, so copies were mailed to only our old subscribers and exchanges, some new subscribers missing this issue. --ed]

Graham Stone's letter was particularly good. I liked that statement of his, where he said that he was sending the letter to Ackerman because of the "permanence" of VOM! And what about his remarks on the hypothetical negro fan. I have no idea as to what fandom would say about such a situation; certainly they should accept him, but would they? I don't know. I would, personally.

I think you rather overestimated Tellman's short, "Tongue Cannot Tell", in the Oct. TWS. It was a novel idea, certainly, but hardly enough to justify ranking it in 1st place. The writing was not too good, and the plot, other than the inexpressibility-of-alien-minds concept, was pretty hackish. But, it's your mag, and you can say what you please. --Guerry Brown, Box 1467, Delray Beach, Florida.

[Norman Stanley Defends S.F. Wright]

The first issue of Thots, it seems, had the astonishing effect of inspiring me actually to produce some of my own, and it is these that I am just now collecting and setting down after much off-putting. Your new magazine is solid, and I like it very much. May it prosper. I dislike the legalength format, but since you say that makes no difference to you, why I'll not even mention it.

I think that this letter is going to deal mostly with your observations on the science fiction of S. Fowler Wright, inasmuch as that gentleman is in some ways a minor enthusiasm of mine. So while I agree to a considerable extent with some of your -- and Schaumburger's -- remarks levelled at particular stories, I can't go along with your generalization that practically all of his writing in the s-f field consists of the crasser sort of anti-science croakings. Where he voices this idea at all, which isn't so very often, I think you'll find, it generally turns out to be a rather minor appendage to his main philosophical theme. Not always, I'll admit. The two short stories of his, in Fantasy Reader and Healy-McComas respectively, are exceptions. It was these, I take it, that were the immediate objects of your wrath. I can agree with you all the way, there; they were terrible, indeed. Not altogether for their ideas, insofar as any were discernible, but for downright bad writing. But I've a pretty strong feeling that those two stinkeroos were rather exceptional

as criteria of his usual output. I don't know for sure, as he's written a great deal that I've never read, and some of that -- his recent "Adventure of the Blue Room" -- I'd judge from FJA's review to be rather uninspired. Perhaps Wright is simply getting crusty in his old age.

For there are other works of his, the earlier stuff particularly, that I rate very highly, and I find his philosophy therein to be both stimulating and challenging, even though I disagree most heartily with large areas of it. But let's look once again at this anti-science/civilization/progress charge, and see if it applies to some of these earlier stories. This much is characteristic of Wright's science-fiction: in it he makes our present culture -- and included in it, technology -- the butt of some pretty trenchant criticism and satire. Ever and again you'll find him engaged in a critical accounting of this aspect or that aspect of what we are currently disposed to consider "Progress" (not always technological, either), and having found that there are evils inherent in it he then poses the question, "Is it worth the price. Wouldn't men be happier without, say, automobiles (and traffic accidents)?" Sometimes he answers the questions he raises to give his personal attitude, and it is true that in such instances the cause of Progress (upper-case) doesn't fare well at his hands. But at least equally often -- I'd even hazard, more frequently -- he leaves the question open by saying in effect to the reader: "You think that this item of civilization's trappings is good, that its benefits outweigh its evils by so much that the latter may be altogether ignored. I don't say your premise is wrong, but I do condemn your conclusion. The evils ought never to be ignored. Look at the question again in this light -- and think it over." Thus Wright. I don't think you can accuse him of being against science, just because he refuses to go along blindly with any cult of Progress for progress' sake, or to assume that every gadget hatched out of man's inventive fecundity is ipso facto good for men. He may be wrong on 90 per cent of the things he criticizes, but that is minor -- in fact it is pretty nearly beside the point, the important thing is that he does take a pretty dim view of many things which we have accepted as improvements on the natural scheme of things, and in so doing causes us, his readers, also to think about them instead of merely to accept them. And that, I submit, is a damned good idea. However much the iconoclast may irritate us, he is nonetheless a useful type to have around.

But I'm ranting. Let's put the soapbox away and get back to that look we were going to take at Wright's earlier novels. One by-product of Wright's criticism of western culture is a tendency for him to fall into expounding a somewhat shallow creed of back-to-nature-ism. This will hardly stand up under critical examination, but if you will grant it as a premise -- just for the story, mind -- it does provide a marvelous background for the exquisitely sheer romancing of which Wright is a master. Perhaps the best example here is his "Island of Captain Sparrow", and to appreciate that best you must get it in book form. The FFM version was cut down to little more than a straight adventure yarn and was thereby stripped of much of the beauty of Wright's beguiling narrative-reflective style. There is little of Wright the critic and iconoclast to be found here, the book is almost unadulterated escapism -- delightful, too.

The only other work of his in this genre, and with which I'm personally familiar, is his "Deluge". This, however, is a much more realistic effort and abounds in critical reflections on modern life. This book, as you may know, deals with life as it is lived directly after the civilization of the British Isles is toppled by earthquake and flood. Culture is reduced to a semi-barbarous tribal level, which includes such things as roving bands of criminals, and politicians who set themselves up as small-time feudal barons -- this latter for Joe Schaumburger's attention, to point up that Wright criticizes our culture as a whole, and holds no particular brief for any segment of it, such as politicians, over any other, such as scientists. There is an even neater illustration of that to be found in another book of Wright's, his "The World Below". His description of the civilization of the Batwings therein is the neatest satire on our judicial systems that I've ever read. Back to "Deluge", the most overtly anti-science sentiment that I can recall in it was a scene wherein automobiles are pushed off cliffs by the new primitives and someone opines that everyone will be better off without the smelly things polluting the atmosphere with carbon monoxide. There is a sequel to "Deluge" called "Dawn", but I don't know nuthin about it, having never encountered a copy.

Finally, there's something to be said for Wright's "The World Below". For me, personally, it's far and away the principal cause of my enthusiasm for Wright, as I rate it as my top favorite science-fiction novel, in fact my top favorite work of fiction in any form. If the notion of a modern man's being cast, via time machine, into the utterly alien world of 500,000 years hence appeals to you, I think you'll find it hard not to like Wright's handling of the theme. There is much of the unexplicable in his description of the future age, yet as one gets on with the book many of the unexplained events tie up to form a coherent, but still fascinatingly obscure, picture. Much more is left to the reader's inference than is baldly described. One begins to grasp the implications of Stapledon's observation, in "Last and First Men", that a present-day man transplanted to the era of the "Last Men" might pass among them with as much understanding of their life as a cat would have of the city of London. Yet for all that the reader can still enjoy the companionship of the gently

philosophical, yet quite unhuman, mind of the Amphibian, and detect human foibles in the inscrutable and deific Dwellers.

Pardon, pliz, this rave notice -- it happens every time anyone mentions Wright in my presence.

On the question of the "error" of s-f authors who engage in "one-line prediction", you should realize that all stories of the future ought not to be taken as exercises in prophecy. The author may not be expounding at all on what he thinks is likely to come, when he writes a pessimistic (or optimistic-utopian) account of some future civilization. A very good example, I think, is Coblentz' "After 12,000 Years", wherein he depicts a very unpleasant type of society representing violent extrapolation of some of the less salutary features of our present set-up. Perhaps you're familiar with this story; if not I'll say that it's a typical Coblentz satire. 12,000 years from now, he says, the human race will have split up into several distinct species, but all living together in a sort of bee-hive economy. There's a ruling species, which holds the power by virtue of its owning all the wealth, and is characterized by a wolf-like cast of countenance. At the top there's a wolf-face dictator known as the "Financial Democrat". Naturally all the top executive and supervisory jobs are held by wolf-faces. Then there's an intellectual species, dwarfs with bulging craniums, who do all the thinking that needs to be done. And finally the largest class of all, the "Small-heads", huge men of muscle with peanut brains. Which is as it should be -- they're not supposed to think for themselves but just to obey orders. There is finally a sub-class of small-heads who are bred solely for military duty and are virtually automata. There still exist also a few men of the normal twentieth-century type, who have a primitive (i.e., democratic) culture on the island of Borneo. A handful of these are also to be found in the metal cities of the dominant machine-culture, whence they have been brought as slaves, and of course there they are regarded as the lowest class of all. But I don't think it can be said that Coblentz intended this as anything like a reasonable prophecy of what our civilization will come to; he simply and deliberately assumed such a one-line extension of certain particular features of present-day society in order to produce a broad satire on those features. So that the story, taken as satire, is quite unobjectionable -- indeed, enjoyable, if you don't mind Coblentz' rather unsubtle style, which occasionally borders on the slapstick. There are many amusing digs in the story, for example, when the character who has slept in suspended animation from the twentieth century to the one hundred and twentieth finds the written and spoken language of that day at first incomprehensible, and then gradually discovers that it's a derivation of English, only changed greatly in spelling and pronunciation. Even the letters have changed; S, for example, having acquired two vertical bars, like this, \$. And the word "gold", slurred until it sounds like "god"; not very subtle, but funny.

I think that when looked at this way, the SFWright stories to which you object can be thought of as attempts at satire, and not as dour prophecy. Not particularly good attempts, though, I'll admit.

But that's more than enough about that. Needless to say, I like your analyses of current and past prozine stories. There's so little real discussion of this main stream of s-f to be found in the fan press. Scientifictionist did pretty well by it, which is one of the reasons I'm sorry it had to go; your present magazine does offer one improvement, though -- it has more critical material by Henry Elsnor in it than the other did.

I await with intense interest further exchanges in the Speer-Langan battle. I note, though, that Langan challenges Jack to dig up the difference between "human nature" and "human behaviour", implying that he (Langan) makes a distinction between the two notions. If that is so, then perhaps Langan should tell us what it is, or if it is other than a verbal shift in levels of abstraction. How does one go about observing "human nature", as distinguished from behavior? --Norman Stanley, 43A Broad St., Rockland, Maine.

Better catch your breath now, folks. Here's another 5-pager...

//Astounding Author-Analysis//

At last the proper mood and sufficient time are present coincidentally, so here's that critique on Thots that I've been meaning to write all these weeks. That was a subtle touch, masquerading Thots under a Scientifictionist cover because it put one in the proper frame of mind to receive the same meaty fare that good ol' Stfist always served up. I doubt that any former reader of yours will be disappointed with the new mag.

Despite Wilson's sally about "individzines" (which I read in DQ and chuckled over at the time), I find the species quite as diverting as the general mags. Perhaps this is because I just like fanzines, period, but more likely the reason is that I enjoy letters (and who doesn't), which individzines most nearly resemble. And if no one likes individzines, I wonder why the FAPA has survived for 10 hectic years?

To me, one of the most interesting items in Thots #1 was your survey of ASF during the past year to disprove a correspondent's contention that Campbell's mag has become a "physics textbook" and "hasn't had a new author with a fresh slant for cen-

turies". While your "poll" proves rather conclusively that ASF (aw right, aSF) is less technically slanted than implied, it fails to show up the second alleged misstatement. In fact, aside from the obvious exaggeration of time (why, ASF hasn't even been published a century yet!) I believe the lack of new authors is a legitimate gripe.

All in the interests of fan enlightenment, I bestirred myself to take a survey of ASF (what, other fans also dusted off their files after reading your mag? That's activity for you!). Anyhow, I went through the mag from the January 1945 issue to the current (October 1947) number. This period embraces the beginning of the atomic destruction cycle in ASF, and seems to give a fair and comprehensive picture of the mag in its "post-Golden Age" days. Besides, if I go back any farther I've a few issues missing! But here are the results of my survey: During the period, ASF published a total of 165 stories. 52 authors (disregarding possible nom-de-plumes) produced these yarns. Broken down, here are the individual totals: George O. Smith-Wes Long wrote 19; Padgett, 15 (plus 4 others for O'Donnell); van Vogt, 11; Jenkins-Leinster, 11; Ray F. Jones, 9; Chandler, 8; Asimov, 6; Rocklynne, 5; Clement, 5; and Sturgeon, 5. 40 others wrote the rest. Therefore, one-fifth of the authors wrote 84 stories, or over half of the total output. Of these 10 big producers, none made his first appearance since January, 1945. All were known to some degree before 1945.

Of the 40 other authors, only one apparently new author came up in 1945. He was Geoff St. Reynard, author of a yarn I haven't gotten around to reading; it is likely he is a pen-name. Beginning in 1946, more new authors finally arrived. Nine of them debuted during the year, the most important, perhaps, being Chan Davis, who has appeared a total of 4 times. William Tenn, another prospective big favorite, has had 3 stories in ASF. The others: Kahn, 2; McDowell, Howard, Carter, MacDougal, and Champion, 1 each. Since January 1947, 7 new writers hit print. Poul Anderson and O. W. Hopkinson Jr. sold two each; the others (Dragonette, Sherred, Piper, Grendon, Peter Cartur), one each.

That is a total of only 16 new writers in 34 issues. Some of these may be pen names for old timers. I didn't count such names as René Lafayette, because that's obviously a pen name for L. Ron Hubbard -- and it strikes me now that Lafayette did have one or two ASF yarns around 1940.

Whether any of these 16 new writers contributed a "fresh slant" to the mag is, of course, a moot question and perhaps moot better answer it. However, several have produced stories that won favorable comment in "Brass Tacks". Best example this year (so far): "E for Effort". But it wasn't the type of "trend-starting" yarn that Kuttner referred to in his recent Fantasy Commentator article; in fact, it was a clever variation on the old atomic theme.

Contrast this picture with that of ASF during its heyday of 1939-41. Note the new authors who appeared during those years: Heinlein, Asimov, Berryman, Bester, Brackett, Gregor, van Vogt, Sturgeon, Hugi. Plus many others who appeared once or twice but made little impression on the field. Remember that four of ASF's top writers made their debuts within three months of each other: Asimov and van Vogt in the July 1939 issue; Heinlein in August, 1939; and Sturgeon in September 1939. And all of these definitely brought a "fresh slant" to the mag. No such galaxy has burned forth in recent years. Which ends this dissertation. (Whew!)

The letter section wasn't as interesting as "For 'Em and Agin 'Em", but it was good -- all except my letter, which was written between strokes of a table-tennis contest -- er somethin'.

Graham Stone's letter from Australia is perhaps the most important of the group. His query about colored fan which concludes with the confident, not to say roseate, statement, "As far as Australia goes, I'm sure of the answer. If an aboriginal fan turned up, he would be accepted on the same footing as a European," reminds me that the recent invitation to American ex-GI's to migrate to Aussie-land excluded Negroes from the invitations. From this, it must be assumed that Australians are no more tolerant in this respect than Americans, despite the fact that the black aboriginal holds a place in their country analogous to that of the Indian in ours, which is to say that they were pushed aside by waves of civilization and remain "on the land", rather than in a position of urban proximity, such as the Negro holds in America. Apparently, Aussie fandom is a microcosm similar to ours, which generally embraces a more liberal, more tolerant citizenry than the country at large. But their fandom is very tiny; ours is made up of several large groups and many scattered individuals. Without any evidence to support my statement, I would say that U.S. fandom as a whole would accept a Negro fan. Whether the PSFS or the LASFS would welcome a Negro as a member of their organization is a question to be answered by them. But of the fans I've met none, I am sure, would object to colored fans.

I meant to comment on Stone's other controversial remarks, but this letter is getting longer and longer, and I've a little dissertation (love that word -- I wonder whether I use it correctly) inspired by your "Men and Machines" item. As far as I can ascertain, S. Fowler Wright's alleged "antipathy to science and the scientific method" is confined, in Brain, to the "depressing picture of scientific government" that Schaumburger mentions. I can discover no indication of an attitude that would cause him to "come out against" such modern devices as Joe so facetiously lists. Nor can I find any implication that science and scientists are essentially

"evil". Maybe elsewhere, but not in Brain. Taking that story, in which scientists played a major role, as an example, I believe that Wright's position is sound. The "fallacy" about machines making the race degenerate is another problem, but his "anti-science" attitude with regard to scientists as legislators -- as politicians, in the legitimate sense of that word -- should be treated here, I think, because it is more or less connected with this Technocracy questionnaire you sent.

Wright's proposition is this: that a good scientist does not necessarily qualify as a good administrator, prime minister, dictator, or what-you-will, merely because he is a scientist. Scientists are, alas, only human and prone to human error and human failings. And the application of the scientific method to government seems premature until the human factor has been solved. Human behavior, not only en masse, but down to the last individual, must be rendered predictable down to the last twitch of the eyelids before death before a "political scientist" can really apply methods worthy of his name.

The true "scientific government" would, I suppose, be one administered, not by scientists as a class, but by men especially trained for the job....a political scientist without the quotes around his name. Phil Schumann advocated a similar method during a discussion in which Phil, Donn Brazier, Bob Stein and I participated; his was the idea that presidential candidates should be chosen on merit, as determined by competitive examination of all qualified persons. This seems like a neat, scientific way of assuring that no more misfits take a lease on the White House for four years, but its fatal flaw is that no one has yet developed an infallible test which will expose the presence of the spark of personality, the force of leadership, which is the mark of the successful president. The latest attempt to discover that quality was the large-scale effort of the armed services to choose qualified officer candidates from the ranks during the war. The number of bungling dopes who, despite all weeding efforts, won through to commissions was appalling. The possibilities of political pressure and graft in a presidential competition are numberless, and the end-product of such a process would probably be scarcely less disheartening than the present system. When science manages to instill a conscience in the human race which will balance the greed for power and position, then perhaps such a grandiose scheme will succeed.

Enough of that. A few other comments on the rest of your mag. I'm glad to see you are also of the opinion that Geosmith's "Kingdom of the Blind" is great stuff. From where I sit, it is the best Startling has put out this year, and for one who has not cared for Smith's ASF yarns, that's quite a statement. As Dream Quest so aptly stated, "George O. Smith has at last found his metier." "The Tongue Cannot Tell" was an outstanding short, but hardly the best story of that issue. For the relative profundity of theme, the yarn was remarkably pulpish in development Raymond F. Jones' "Person from Porlock" seemed to be receiving a lot of favorable comment, and although your "thots" on the subject reflected a calm, even unimpressed, reaction to the yarn, I think a positive condemnation of such tripe is in order. It seems that those who've professed to enjoy it have carried this "suspension of belief" gimmick too far. If there is such a race as Jones describes which plays guardian to mankind, those people are not going to reveal themselves without a great deal more pressure than was applied in the story. Virtually without any persuasion, the "person from Porlock" in the story glibly admitted, yes, he'd been interfering -- he was one of a race that habitually meddled with the affairs of mankind. Why, yes, even the "Kubla Khan" poem incident was an affair engineered by one of their number because the poem would have revealed their hideout! Reading this, I began to anticipate pleasantly; the explanation was too patent, and I decided it was going to turn out that this alleged "Person from Porlock" was apparently a phoney, with the climax one of Campbell's special "is-it-or-ain't-it?" twists that leave the reader mystified. But no, Jones finishes the yarn with a straight face, asking us to believe that, at least for his story's sake, there is a "porlock" race. Nuts!

Will be interested in your reactions to Hubbard's "The End is Not Yet". Me-thinks that yarn will prove unpopular with a large portion of fandom; Hubbard's arguments will doubtless dismay communists, Technocrats, and half a dozen other political creeds. I suppose the last page of it will be denounced in Thots as "anti-science" propaganda?

Speaking of which, your suggestion that we call our favorite literature "Anti-Science Fiction" falls coldly on my ear. Surely, science-fiction is the proper place to discuss the possible evil consequences of science, as well as the good. Your attitude that science is above criticism is comparable to the church's stand which outlaws critical interpretation of the Bible as "un-Christian". Should not the liberal viewpoint include a faculty for seeing both sides of a question with eyes equally clear? By all means, let us have stf showing science leading the way to a better tomorrow, but -- if only for purposes of admonition -- let us also have the intimations that, through wilful misuse, science can thrust us, as easily and probably with a more positive reaction, back into the darkness.

There is much more to cover in this issue of Thots, but I imagine I have made myself murky and argumentive enough for one letter. Let's have another Thots as soon as possible. --Redd Boggs, 2215 Benjamin St. N.E., Minneapolis 13, Minnesota

Religious Fanaticism and Technocracy

Finally getting around to a few words on THOTS. I'm disgusted with your legal size format, because these oversize pubs are hard to fit into any filing system designed primarily for the usual letter-size publication; phooey on such false economy!

With respect to the contents of the magazine, my opinions are mixed. Your comments on the pros are generally interesting, although I think your "anti-anti-scientist" campaign lacks merit largely because conditions aren't as bad, as far as the sf pulps are concerned, as you suggest. However, I agree that there is a strong antagonism among people in general, with respect to scientists expressing opinions on political, etc. matters. The people of the world are, perhaps, more world-minded than ever before, but the rank and file can't conceive of "One World" except as an extension of their own national forms, methods, and prejudices. You can't change that by requiring the pro pulps to publish only "pro-scientist" stories. Actually, though, ASF and the two Standard mags (at long last!) do stick rather closely to your requirements in this respect. And they are the only mags at present presenting stories which are basically science fiction.

As for Technocracy as the cure for all human ills (granted; it doesn't claim to be) I think the best answer is found in the last page or two of Hubbard's "The End is Not Yet" in Astounding SF. As Buckingham and Le Chat agree, were Martel living after the establishment of the new government for which he fought so hard, he would almost immediately start planning another revolution, and justifiably so. The best government in the world can not be proof against the infiltration of lazy or definitely malevolent people into high places, especially, and most certainly, if there is no strong, organized resistance to that government. So I think, anyway. Maybe the benefits of a growing, progressive Technate would be so obvious to the vast majority of the people of the world that it could go on for centuries, but frankly, I do not think so; religious fanaticism, for one thing, is still too strong a force in the world to permit that; and however much the Technate might try to leave religious beliefs undisturbed, it couldn't possibly help running counter to the strongest beliefs of fundamentalists of whatever creed you would care to name. In India, right now, under the new independent Hindoo State, practitioners of the ancient religious systems of medicine are being installed as chiefs of health offices in important cities. Their methods and beliefs haven't changed in many, many centuries; and while there is some worthwhile stuff scattered around through their great body of custom, there is no opportunity for progress and no provision whatever for checking results; powdered pearls are just as efficacious for the treating of certain ills, in their eyes, as are some of the very potent herbs for others; they know that is true, because it was "revealed" to their practitioners centuries ago; experimental proof of worthlessness means nothing at all, since humans are fallible, while the gods are not. To a lesser extent, the same sort of thing exists here, and all over the world. Gradually we seem to grow more rational, largely because of scientific experimentation and discovery; but the people don't believe it. And Technocracy, it seems to me, has the same faults as these ancient religious medical systems; it demands belief, rather than reason. Technocracy may be a step on the way toward rationality, but, by fighting fire with fire, in the field of prejudice and belief, it demonstrates very clearly that it has not reached a stage where it can substitute reason for emotional propaganda. I prefer to struggle along with a two-party system of some sort, where two brands of propaganda are preached, so that both sides of the problem are presented, however faultily. I have very little quarrel with the underlying aims of Technocracy as divorced from its political ends; I have a great deal of opposition to the only apparent methods available to bring about these aims.

The letter by Graham Brice Stone is by far the best thing in the first issue of Thots, and I'm very glad it reached you and so was published. The comments on the Communist Party in Australia interested me particularly. Never having been a member of the party here, nor ever having had any desire to be one, I naturally have not had Stone's opportunity for observation of typical members of the group; but what little I have been able to observe leads me to think he is quite right in his evaluation of the types of mentalities found. I wouldn't know about the party in Australia; perhaps it is a force for progress of a social and economic sort; but I'm thoroughly convinced that the American Commies definitely are not, even though a very large number of their recruits undoubtedly come from earnest and sincere young men who are true liberals. And, as I mentioned in discussing Technocracy, systems depending upon perfect agreement and cooperation are necessarily dictatorships.

Well, a publication which can excite me to the extent of writing this much must be worth the price you ask, so I'm enclosing 2 bits. --D.B. Thompson, Imperial, Nebraska

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It seems that we have been more or less challenged to comment on "scientific government", with reference to L. Ron Hubbard's "The End is Not Yet" and the body of thought of Technocracy.

We'll take Hubbard's story first, as the basic idea underlying it is much the same as the opinions expressed by Don and Redd. Briefly, Hubbard outlines a situation wherein the world is governed by the politico-economic fascistic dictator-

ship of Jules Fabreken. This regime is overthrown by the forces of Charles Martel's "Alliance", which is composed of most of the world's leading scientists. They in turn establish the "Science Government of the World" which apparently is a benevolent dictatorship of scientists which "guarded and aided mankind and, in particular, kept democracy status quo as the masses desired it..." Then Hubbard concludes by having his characters say: "...when there exists but one power in the world, one power without check even as the Alliance, sooner or later its high principles are perverted by men. You want a hot government? Get good people. From crusaders they will degenerate into fat, lazy brutes, full of jealousy and envy. For what will all this become but another dictatorship. But we have one which is nine times as vicious as the last. For we have real genius at the bottom of ours and no knowledge will ever escape. Why, this is the dark ages all over....We've fought to put chains on all mankind."

No, Redd, we aren't going to denounce this as "anti-science" propaganda. For if we accept, for the sake of the story, the political and economic background pictured by Hubbard, the conclusions he draws are essentially correct. Nor do we have any quarrel with your comments on the qualifications of scientists to administer a "scientific government".

The fallacy in the application of these arguments and Hubbard's statements against the Technate's administrative setup lies in the fact that they are all concerned with the effects of science and scientists upon conventional political concepts and structure; whereas Technocracy deals with neither.

Scientists as individuals certainly will make no better or worse politicians than anyone else. The question involved is not one of selecting competent individuals who, by force of genius, knowledge of "political science" or what have you are supposed to hold together an outmoded political and economic regime, but rather one of designing an administrative setup which will be on a level with the contemporary technological and social scene.

Merely sticking scientists, whether physical, social, or psychological, as Hubbard, Wright, and others suggest does not constitute a "scientific government" but the same old game of politics with a different group in the driver's seat.

Now for a brief summary of the administration in a Technate. In the first place, political government is "out", because with the advent of abundance all the multitude of pressure groups to which we all belong will vanish, thus automatically eliminating that particular group, "government" which controls the other groups to the extent that they do not disrupt the stability of society as a whole. The whole concept of political government arose from the era of natural scarcity when men banded together in groups to get as much as they could from other men, also formed into groups. As society grew more complex, the number and scope of these groups increased until some type of control was mandatory to keep any kind of social stability. The democratic concept of government is that people from all pressure groups are represented in the controlling group, as contrasted to other forms of government wherein one particular group makes the rules for the others. As we have mentioned, the production of a physical abundance of goods and services has eliminated the need for pressure groups and consequently the agency for controlling them.

Technocracy proposes not to impose another control group upon society from above, but rather to remove the present interference controls of politics and finance which prevent the industrial system from doing that for which it was designed: the conversion of raw material into goods for consumption.

In the Technate, all industries, services, and professions will be classified in about 100 or so different "sequences". The officers in these sequences will get their jobs exactly as they do today -- by appointment from above. Selection of an unfitted person would immediately show up in the function of the particular part of the sequence involved, which would result in his demotion or transfer and would also reflect upon the appointing officer. The top men of each sequence (and this would mean not only industrial experts and scientists, but the country's leading medical men, entertainers, educators, etc.) would form the Continental Control Board. They would elect one of their number to serve as Continental Director. He would be subject to a 2/3rds veto on his decisions, and recall by a 2/3rds vote of the Control Board. Like everyone else in the Technate, the tenure of office of the Directors and Director-in-Chief would last only until death or the retirement age of 45 is reached. This is not a political organization concerned with telling people what they can or cannot do, but a functional organization which sees to it that the Continent is kept operating smoothly.

Mention should be made here of a special sequence, Social Relations, which has a branch in every Regional Division. This sequence is concerned with the solution of the problems in human relations which will still exist in the Technate. It will be staffed by psychologists and others trained especially for this type of work.

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That's about all for now. Perhaps next time we'll have some prozine comments as well as other of our thots. See you again in a few months. --Henry Elsner Jr.

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