

THE DEVIL'S WORK
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COGNATE #19 - ROSEMARY HICKEY

There are Spanish-language comic books, even sf comics. I've seen a number of them on the stands in Durango. And one of the grad students in Spanish had some for teaching purposes. There must be a Spanish-language book and magazine store in the Dallas--Fort Worth area in which you could find such items (and Spanish-language sf).

ERG #47 - Terry JEEVES

"Earthman, Come Home" is not Blish's final Okie story, that is The Triumph Of Time/A Clash Of Cymbals. One of these days I'm going to have read the collected volume (Cities In Flight) and see if they stand up better together than they seemed strung out in magazine and book form (I read the magazine stories in random order, some when they first appeared, others when I picked up the back-issue magazines and the books as they were first published -- but Blish was working with the same handicap by writing them over a period of years, out of order. As Damon Knight pointed out the basic concept of bindlestiff cities voyaging through the Galaxy looking for work is questionable, the execution is certainly uneven and I felt that Blish was trying to do too much with too little. Blish once said that the entire idea came from a detailed letter of rejection of another story by Campbell. Each episode was written in response to a point of Campbell's objections. The result was selling six of the eight stories to Campbell (one went to 2CSAB and the eighth to Avon). Mullen's article in Riverside Quarterly (reprinted in Cities In Flight) seems more interested in by-products of the fiction than in the stories themselves. But it is nice to see such material in the appropriate book. And reading it after finishing Cities In Flight might add to the enjoyment.

SYNAPSE (for FAPA 148) - Jack SPEER

In my indexing I use ASF for Astounding-Analog from Jan 30 to date since I consider that the abbreviation should be retained in spite of title variations unless it's too far afield (thus I change FSQ to FSM). If the abbreviation is changed every time the title is changed it would mean a considerable increase in the abbreviations and less utility due to having to look up all the variants. (As much as possible I prefer abbreviations that suggest the title of the magazine, there are those who don't agree.) Apparently you don't agree.

Thanks for pointing out "The Branches Of Time" as having alternate worlds generated by time-traveling.

I'll still contend that Campbell was more influential than Gernsback though I had more in mind what Campbell did directly with the leaders (and more of them) in sf writing. Gernsback's putting sf into a ghetto had unfortunate effects (though apparently unintended by Gernsback), Campbell at least moved sf in the proper direction. (His article in the Saturday Review Of Literature about sf and literature I think was tongue-in-cheek, devil's advocacy and baiting of phoneyes.)

If you eliminate the reprints from Gernsback issues of Amazing you're not left with too many authors that Gernsback/Sloane developed (though apparently Gernsback did develop some of them in his electronics magazines before reprinting their stories). In Science Wonder/Air Wonder/Wonder Stories Quarterly/Wonder Stories Gernsback (and later Hornig) did far more to develop new talent than he did in Amazing Stories/Amazing Stories Quarterly/Amazing Stories Annual. During 1930-33 Astounding suffered from the stigma of being a literal pulp, the first one in sf, and having pulpish stories. So the real competition was between the Sloane Amazing and the Gernsback Wonder until the Oct 33 issue of Astounding. After that both of the predecessors were eclipsed literarily and financially.

But if you consider this to be less important than the overall direction of inadvertently brickwalling sf away from mainstream, creating fandom, etc., then Gernsback did have considerable influence (though I still contend less than that of Campbell). The sense of apartness did not originate with Gernsback. It was present in the letter columns in the pulps, particularly Munsey's, that published sf. Indeed, Gernsback decided on publishing Amazing due to letters from fans (Amz Apr 26 p. 3). His editorial in the Apr 26 issue discusses literature and his plans for reprinting sf, without any indication of any more fundamental difference than subject matter.

No, I don't confuse quality with importance. Some quite crude stories have been important in sf in starting new directions of thought or challenging authors to do better. And I think that both Williamson's quality and importance went up after "Crucible Of Power". "Crucible Of Power" is not top quality, but it does mark an attempt to grapple with the implications of the plot (there may be earlier examples in Williamson's work, I haven't read it all). The SeeTee stories carried this further and "The Equalizer", "With Folded Hands..." and "...And Searching Mind" represent the apex of Williamson's quality and importance. Dragon's Island and the Sol III Quarantine stories are about the last good stories.

STAR TRAIL TO GLORY #2 - SETH McEVOY

Short stories are hardly "a relatively recent invention, thrust upon us by turn-of-the-century pulp editors". They must go back to the beginnings of speech and they've certainly been written for millenia. Consider "The Book Of Ruth", the Arabian Nights, the Gesta Romanorum, etc., etc..

Sure, short stories can be just about "one thing", but congratulations on feeling stifled by that as a blanket qualification.

As for feeling that novels surpass short stories, I will debate that with you. I'd rather read a good novel than a good short story, but I'd rather read a good short story than a bad novel. There are numerous examples of padded short stories masquerading as novels, both within and without sf. The Ship Of Ishtar was originally an unpublished novelet which Bob Davis wanted expanded into a novel. It shows the transition point and shows it badly. The effect is muted and the direction changed on page 54 of the Borden edition. Pages 54-309 are padding mixed with plot. The main thrust of the original is the wondrous Ship sailing throughout eternity in an azure sea of a timeless dimension. This portion is not really a story, but the setting of a mood of strangeness to which the storyline is subordinate. Merritt did the expansion gimmick with The Moon Pool and The Face In the Abyss (his second

best novel). His best novel, *Dwellers In the Mirage*, seems to be all of a unity. *Dwellers In the Mirage* would be much different if it were to be cut down to short story length.

I haven't read both versions of William F. Temple's "4-Sided Triangle" at one time but both versions seemed quite successful in years-apart readings. A comparison would be interesting, and if successful in actuality, instructive as an example of successful conversation.

A more common vice is the cobbling of a series of short stories into a "novel". Many times the effect of the "novel" is ruined by the poor workmanship. van Vogt has been particularly guilty of taking unrelated stories and warping them into a common framework. Jenkins and others have taken related stories and warped them into a casual semblance of a novel.

An interesting commentary on "short stories don't sell" was made by Eugene Manlove Rhodes. His first volume of short stories, "West Is West" was published as a novel but with a title page indicating sections (which don't match the stories). There was only minor rewriting and a few bridge passages which don't affect the artistry of the short stories. It outsold any of his novels until his death. (22,000 copies vs. 2,500 to 9,000 or so for the others -- yet his magazine stories reputedly brought in hundreds of thousands of readers' letters, particularly for "The Little Eohippus" which sold only a few thousand copies in hardcover.) Perhaps this is the exception which proves the rule.

As for machine sex you're probably quite right. Most sf authors' pornographic works might be called physiological fiction. The emotional substance consists mostly of mechanistic lust (most of the rest consists of mechanical descriptions of human physiology). But this is true of their sf as well. Emotions are only called into play as the plot demands (or in the case of sex books as the physiological tour demands). Apparently there are some exceptions. One sf author told me about the lesbian novel he wrote which received considerable verbal appreciation from a lesbian of our mutual acquaintance. He said that he'd done no research, only utilized his science-fictional viewpoint and imagined what it would be like to be a lesbian. (Some asinine critics would project backwards to the conclusion that he is a lesbian.) (Though he told me the pseudonym and title I've never^{read} the book so that I have no idea of how successful a piece of fiction it is.)

As for inspiration from living in cities vs. rural habitations for fiction authors -- I'm sure it all depends. Phil Dick moved from across the street from a grammar school to Point Reyes Station precisely for peace and quiet and then told me he wished he'd stayed in Berkeley. (Of course, there were personal complications also, some of which he's gone into in print.) Most of our more successful authors of sf seem to be urban dwellers, though like Jack Vance and Poul Anderson they may have the best of both worlds by careful choice of location within the urban/suburban area. (Read Silverberg's description of his home for another author's attitudes.)

THE ALIEN CRITIC #6 - RICHARD E. GEIS

Ted White: If I understand you correctly you're saying that no editor has the right to reject a commissioned story. I think any editor certainly has the right, and furthermore the obligation to reject any sub-standard story, commissioned or not.

However, your idea of sf writers having a publishing co-operative has considerable merit (though no Merritt). It could be made to work. And in effect that's what **The Council Of Four** did with **The Science-Fictional Sherlock Holmes**. Each author received a percentage of the revenues, rather than a flat fee, and some were quite happy about it, saying that their share was more than the original payment. Edgar Rice Burroughs was probably the first sf author to start a co-operative (with only one member) and he made a good success of himself.

Richard Geis: Robert E. Howard didn't do much research (checking many sources) for many of his stories. He preferred single or double sources, such as plagiarizing Harold Lamb, Talbot Mundy (and probably others), from the pages of *Adventure* (and probably other publications). And that may be a reason why a number of his stories never sold back then, the editors recognized that he was a plagiarist.