



THE FEAR ELEMENT IN SCIENCE FICTION



THE FEAR ELEMENT IN BORNEO FICTION

THIS IS PANELZINE, devoted to the subject of "Fear in Science Fiction". This one-shot is published by Hal Lynch and George Heap, out of 5 South 18th St., Phila. 3, Pa., and is available for trade or 25 ¢ in cash. George says he'll print letters of comment in his new zine, ANCALAGON.

PANELZINE, I once dreamed, would be a regularly appearing pub discussing off-beat aspects of science fiction, like sex in SF, SF and police power, role of the family in SF, and similar topics. It's taken so long to get this one produced, however, that I'm thoroughly discouraged from undertaking another. I'll leave this game to the Earl of Chicago. More power to him!

The method we used was to send out a kind of invitation to comment, mentioning that SF has long dealt in horrifying catastrophes, and asking whether the fright aspect is good or bad for SF. We mentioned that SF in movies is almost exclusively Monster stuff and wondered if the public isn't being conditioned to fear science. We asked whether or not serious readers might be put off SF by its element of "I wants to make your flesh creep." We told our contributors to express themselves in articles, essays, short stories, or in any form they pleased.

Our thanks to all the writers and fans who replied. Many of them explained courteously enough that they had no time to write, or they just couldn't think of anything about our subject that they wanted to say. Fair enough, and thanks for replying.

But our special thanks goes to those who sent us comments. We were very fortunate to wind up with such a fine, balanced "panel". From relative newcomers like Gary Deindorfer to old-timers like Ed Trenton, all have contributed thought-provoking ideas. A noted author and critic, Damon Knight, comments briefly and to the point, making a careful distinction between two types of unpleasantness. Two gentlemen from overseas, Mr. Berry and Mr. Bennett, survey current publishing and films. Dick Schultz gives us dramatic dialog and Dave Jenrette draws an apt parallel.

They give us our CONTENTS

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ART: Cover by G. Heap, p. 6 by Schultz, p. 8 by Deindorfer, p. 11, by Heap.

Thank you one and all

Hal Lynch

A
PERSONAL
VOICE

(You Philastines have begged the question)

by Ron Bennett

I don't read science fiction any more. I used to enjoy Shackle and Van Vogt and Heinlein and Vargo Statten and all the other classics, but it finally dawned on me that the reason I was being

kept awake at night was because I feared being chased by those wild and purposeful machines in my dreams. Accordingly, I am now quite content to bask in the better life, pronounced Better Life, which fandom offers, with its totally unbelievable monsters like Ron Ellick and Will J. Jenkins.

I read somewhere -- and no cracks please; I can read when I'm really put to it -- that psychiatrists and head shrinkers and what have you work on the theory that people read horror stories as an outlet, as a sop towards keeping the fearful in fiction and out of their real lives. I suppose that this is a sort of sacrifice to the gods of Horror, a subconscious heritage of the days when every old woman with a cat was a witch, and every stranger suspect -- rather like Silas Marner. All of which is merely a viewpoint on why horror stories are read.

There are all types of horror stories, of course, from the stories in which the horror is underplayed, to the stories in which horror oozes from every forced phrase. Take the latter type first. Edgar Allen Poe seems to fit the bill very nicely. The atmosphere he sets in each tale ensures the reader that he is face to face with something which isn't exactly a piece out of Patience Strong. For example, who can possibly mistake the mood of the story, reading "During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country --" the opening lines of The Fall of The House of Usher? (Hal Lynch might, admittedly, but then he lives in New York City these days and to him such descriptions might be realistic.)

For myself, I prefer the other type of horror story, the type in which the horror is emphasized because it is underplayed. Stories which contain an adequate amount of realism and then shoot off into the horrific with a climactic punch line are the type of horror stories which appeal to me. Offhand, I can think

of Matheson's Shipshape Hero, whilst if I were put to it I might even remember the title of that story from F&SF in which the hero is left locked in a man's rest room while his prim and proper lady love waits in the restaurant, and they are the last two people left on Earth.

This is a personal preference, though, and in any case the examples cited deal with "horror" in SF, rather than with the element of fear. I'm told that one fears the unknown, but in the three stories I've mentioned above, the horror in each case is a known one -- so where does that leave us? Except to say that perhaps horror and the "fear element" -- whatever it is -- is neither good or bad for SF or any other fiction in itself.

There's a "fear element" in straight fiction. How about Bob Bloch's Water's Edge for a start? Or how about that masterpiece by Morinoc, The Blue Room? Remember the old story about the sleeper who is, on awakening, hypnotized by the bright eyes of a poisonous snake at the foot of his bed? (In the morning he's found dead, his sightless eyes staring at a shoe lace.) The "fear element" depends on its treatment. It is neither good nor necessary for science fiction, but the correct story won't suffer from containing such an element. A wild generalization, I know, but I don't see it any other way, even when I borrow my father's bi-focals.

A final word -- a word on "science-fiction" films. I had a pile of OMPazines in from Bill Evans, who wrapped them in a few pages of his local (US) newspaper. Being the type of intelligent reader usually labelled a Noscy Parker I read the paper through and was intrigued to find an American movie house playing a children's matinee with that fifteen-Oscar award winner "The Blob". Over here the film takes an "X" certificate, which means that if you're under sixteen years of age you're lucky enough to be forced to save your cash on the thing. I don't know just what this has to do with horror, or the element of fear in SF, but it does make me wonder how old your children are over there in the States.

#

EDITOR'S NOTE: Recently a New York movie critic suggested that America adopt a film classification system similar to that of the British. However, it would work somewhat differently -- according to his plan, only children would be allowed to go see films like "Hercules".

THE DAY THE SENSE OF WONDER WENT OUT WITH THE TIDE

DICK SCHULTZ

"What on Terra art thou assimilating there, Little Buddy?"

"Oh, hi, Clyde. What's that? Oh, this is just a book."

"Like...what is that thing on the cover supposed to be, Little Buddy?"

"It's a horror story by Matheson, Clyde."

"A horror story with that real gone joke on the cover? Har! Har! Har!"

"Don't stand there and laugh, Clyde!"

"Like...I should stand back and laugh, Little Buddy?"

"Stop that Clyde! You always do that when I let you see any of my books, or fanzines, or MAD comics."

"Okay, okay, okay, Little Buddy. Like...forget and forgive this time around the pole. Yes?"

"Okay Clyde, I forgive you this time."

"Now then, Little Buddy, what in Ginsberg's beard are you poring over? Why the big kick over the thin tome?"

"Oh, not much. Like I said, it's a new collection of Matheson stories."

"Like...who is this Matheson cat?"

"Oh, he's just another one of those science fiction writers that I read all the time. It's mostly tales of the Horror school."

"What's the matter, Little Buddy? Like...I thought you dug this Horror jazz to the utmost."

"Oh, I do Clyde, but anymore I don't get the kick from them that I used to."

"Like...why not, Little Buddy?" Like...I thought you were a Horror believer!"

"Yes, I like a good Horror story, but the authors nowadays just don't have the touch that the authors in The Good Old

Days had. Why when I used to read H. P. Lovecraft, I ..."

"Like...hold on Little Buddy! When did this cat Lovecraft make the scene around this ~~cat~~ like...when did he make out?"

"Lovecraft? Oh, he's been dead for quite a few years now. He died back in the Thirties sometime. Why?"

"Like...when did you dig this cat's action?"

"When did I ... Oh! You mean when did I first read him. Back some fifteen years ago when I got one of his stories, "The Shadow Over Innsmouth", at the Public Library."

"Hmmm! Little Buddy, when you dug up this cool cat, how old were you?"

"How old was I? Just Fifteen. Why?"

"We'll beat back to that wild, wild weed later, Little Buddy. Like...you think Lovecraft invented the word Terror, did he not?"

"Yes Clyde, that he did. Why, I can truthfully say that Lovecraft used to be my favorite author, next to Merritt!"

"Do you dig those cool cats now, like you used to?"

"Why, no. I don't think that I've read any Lovecraft or Merritt for months and months. They just don't hit me like they used to."

"Like...Little Buddy, go ten steps more. Why don't you make the liking scene with these cold-burgers in this Conformist age?"

"Cold-burgers? Oh! You mean now that they're dead, why don't I get the same thrill out of them that I used to. Well, I suppose it's because they just don't scare me any more."

"Why not, Little Buddy? Don't these goosebump merchants cool the vertabrae?"

"No, no they don't, Clyde. I don't know why. Guess I just don't go for that Gothic brand of Terror anymore. Maybe I just don't scare easy anymore."

"Beat on that Bongo a little more, Little Buddy."

"What do you mean, Clyde?"

"Like...why don't you scare the way you used to? Dig man, get with it!"

"Yeah, yeah, I think I dig you now. I was, oh, just about thirteen when I first read "Shadow". Was quite young when it chilled me. Are you trying to say that because I'm not young anymore, I don't like those stories anymore? But why would my age have anything to do with it?"

"Like...you're on like a full string of lights, Little Buddy. Now tell Big Daddy, what have you dug since you made the ever-lovin' scene with that bundle of tortured goods? What have you absorbed in the hat rack?"

"I get you now Clyde, you're trying to tell me that I've learned a lot of this hard, cruel world since I read "Shadow".

Yeah, yeah, I get it now. I don't identify with the fictional characters and I don't have the suspension of disbelief like I used to. Is that the news that you are trying to impart?"

"Now you're reading Big Daddy like a copy of "Fanny", Little Buddy. You do not dig these cats because the thoughts, the ideas, are now old hat to Little Buddy now, like...dig?"

"Of course I dig you now, Clyde! So many stories have passed before these myopic eyes since that blue bonny day. It is next to impossible for any of these type of stories to faze me. It's a sad thing to say, but I now know where the sense of wonder has gone. It went the way of the wild goose along about the three thousandth book. Isn't that sad, Clyde? I can't get the fright or kick that I used to, because I've read too many stories of the same type."

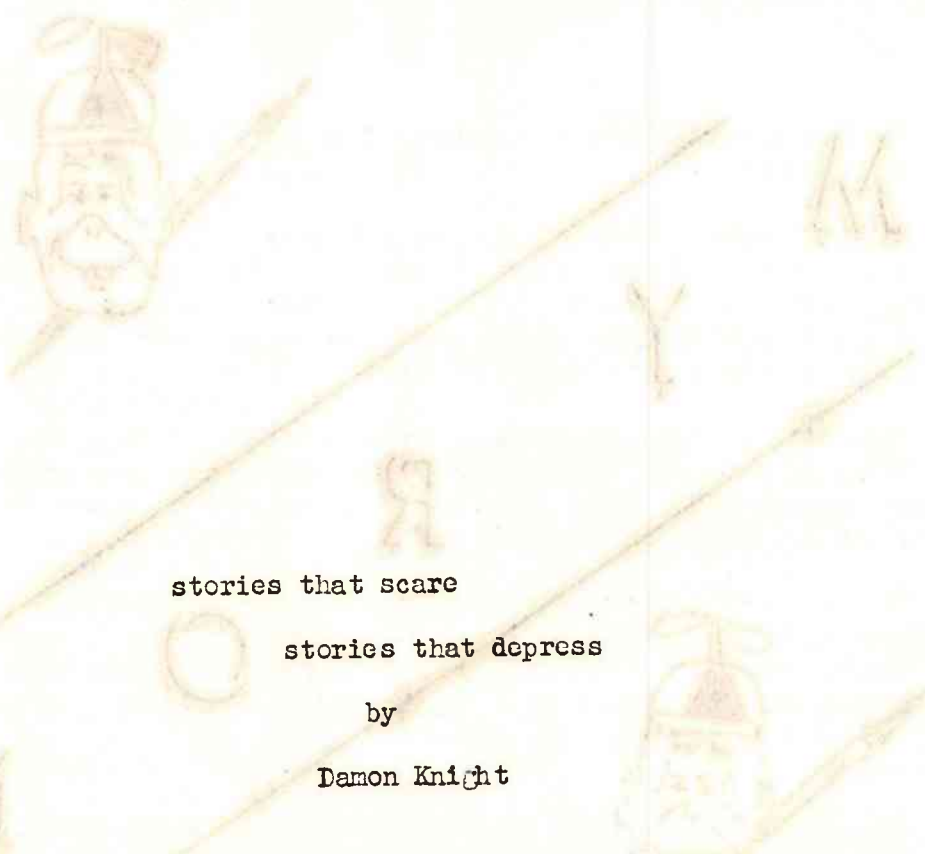
"Little Buddy?"

"Yeah, Clyde?"

"You have got to, like...dig a new type, Little Buddy. Tell Big Daddy, have you ever read "The True Way of Zen"? No? Why Little Buddy, it is the . . . !"



VIVA
DER
G.D.A.!

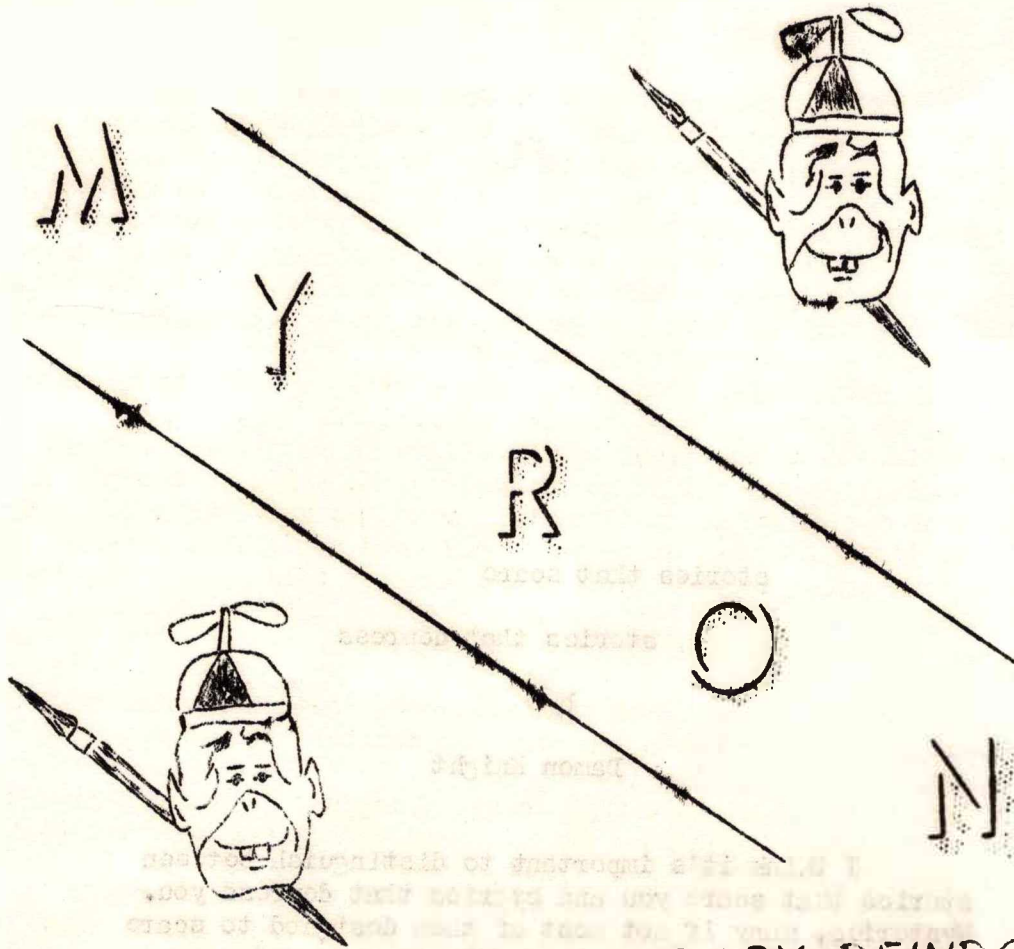


stories that scare
stories that depress
by
Damon Knight

I think it's important to distinguish between stories that scare you and stories that depress you. Mysteries, many if not most of them designed to scare the reader, go on selling merrily year in and year out; on the other hand, booksellers look with well-founded suspicion on novels of no matter what literary merit in which everybody is an unpleasant specimen of some kind, and the atmosphere is one of unrelieved gloom.

More and scarier SF, I would like. But I think it's only too clear that SF writers got onto an unrewarding dismal kick during the middle '50s, and that might easily have been a factor in the decline of the audience. These things go in cycles, like everything else. Now I suppose we'll all get so bloody cheerful that we're sickening, and then it'll be time for another downbeat phase.

* * *



By GARY DEINDORFER

Myron was a thin, intense looking eleventh grader who lived in Brooklyn and had parents who were fat and dark and spoke wretched English.

Myron spoke good English, learned from the science fiction magazines he spent all his time reading. He even wrote stories based on them. Needless to say, his father thought him a bum and was always complaining to his mother, "Myron oughtta get off rear end, and help me on garbage wagon." But Myron's mother, who thought he was a genius because he could speak well and read and write, always said, "Myron, him smart kid. Be big writer fella some day, not garbage can fella like his dad."

One day Myron finished what he fancied to be his best story. It was a horror science fiction story filled with every horrible creature Myron could cram in - bug eyed monsters, vampires, the works.

He called it, aptly enough, "The Revolt of the Monsters." He read it to his mother and all his illiterate relatives (who lived in the house too). They all said, "You make good tale. Real scare story wid all horror animals!" His father said, "Should work on garbage truck, lazy kid."

Myron put on his best (and only) suit, a blue one bought when he was nine. It was tight and gauche looking but what could he do? He combed his straight black hair, put his story under his arm, said good-bye to his mother and all his well-wishing relatives (excluding father, who was out on the garbage truck at the time) and took the bus into Manhattan where he planned to sell his masterpiece to his favorite science fiction magazine.

He finally arrived at the office of the magazine. The secretary, evidently amused at Myron's great earnestness and general appearance, let him by with his story to see the editor.

Myron overcame his initial uneasiness at seeing his god, the editor of his favorite magazine, and shoved the story in the man's face and blurted, "Here's a story I wrote, sir, it's a real fear story, sir!"

The editor, a dumpy looking bald fellow, read the story at his desk while Myron nervously sat across from him, awaiting his verdict. Myron scanned the editor's face while he read the tale, to see what it held. He expected, of course, the editor's face to show some sort of fear - for after all, hadn't he written a fear story? But to Myron's chagrin and surprise, the editor first began to get a ridiculous smile on his face, and then he chuckled, sardonically as he proceeded. Finally, he laid it down, done. He said to Myron, with a smile, "Ha ha, kid. That reminded me of the old days of science fiction. All those ridiculous monsters and things in it, and that stilted dialogue. Hoo? "

Myron, looking hurt, said, "But, but, sir, you're supposed to be afraid when you're done reading my story. It's my horror masterpiece, sir."

The editor collapsed on the floor of the office in waves of laughter. When he finally arose, seemingly recovered he seemed mellow. He said, in the air of the benevolent editor instructing his aspiring writer in the ~~subtler~~ subtler arts of composition, "Son, listen. You're doing what they used to do in the early days of science-fiction." He got a faraway look in his eyes at this point. "They used to put all these BEMs in stories and because they said 'The monster was scary,' well naturally you were scared. You took their word for it."

Myron said "Uh-huh," dully.

"But nowadays everyone's too damn sophisticated. You can't scare them by throwing a few monsters in a story and saying that the monsters are scary. See? "

"I, uh, guess," said Myron flatly.

"Hell! " said the editor. "Nowadays to scare anybody in science fiction you have to treat some everyday thing in a Freudian, psychological way. You gotta make a common object fearful. You know what I mean, kid?"

"I suppose," said Myron in an monotone.

"Uh, gee, kid, I hope I didn't make you feel bad by laughing at your story. It's just that it was the epitomy of the old monster-scare opus."

"Gee, but ma and everybody said it was scary," said Myron.

"No offense, kid. But your ma and everybody must be lousy critics, kid.

"But, but I put in extra monsters to make it extra scary."

"Yeh, kid. They did that a lot in the good old days. They figured the more, the scarier, or whatever. Like the way people'll go to a movie with ten comedians in it because it's got to be ten times funnier than a movie with one comedian. Usually it's the other way around."

"Hmm," said Myron.

"Y'know your story would make one hell of a funny movie. They're just in this stage science fiction literature grew out of. People who go to those movies are the only people stupid enough to be afraid of that stuff. Haha! "

"Haha," echoed Myron, but his heart wasn't in it.

"My advice, kid, is for you to get back home and write a super-psychological type science fiction horror story. Come back with it maybe ten years from now. It might scare my discerning readers but actually I don't know. Fear in science fiction seems to have gone out with Amazing Quarterly. People just don't get scared today with all the real fear around them. You know - super-weapons, fall-out, freeways, and all that jazz."

"Well, g'bye, sir," said Myron. "Thanks for the advice."

"Will you be back, then, kid?" asked the editor.

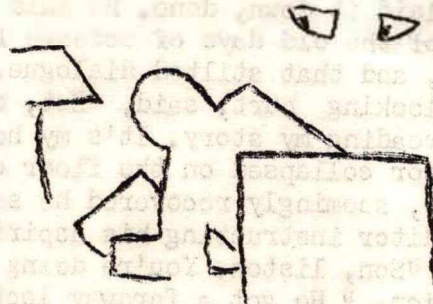
"Hell, no, sir. I'm taking my story out to Hollywood and be a rich horror-movie hack. See you around."

The End

NOT LIKE THE OLD DAYS

by Edward N. G. Trenton

Back in the old days, science fiction used to be about science, and there were wierd types of magazines for the ones who liked to read the wierd type of stories. But after while the wierd magazines all folded and the writers couldn't sell their stories so they all started to write science fiction.



These guys don't know how to write anything but the horror and monster things with everybody dead in the end. They don't know anything about science and they don't know anything about life. If a girl came up to one of these guys on the street he wouldn't know what to do, he'd run a mile, so he puts a lot of sex in his stories so he can show he's a real man, but we know what he is.

So these guys write stories full of rape and monsters and that stuff and they put it on another planet, Mars or Saturn or someplace, and big deal -- it's supposed to be science fiction. The magazines print the stuff because they can't get enough good stuff from the good writers so they have to run something. A lot of the old timers were real scientists and doctors, but today you get these kids who flunked out of grade school so they want to be a writer.

They're always getting the hero in a jam and they can't get him out of the jam so they just kill him. Today's stories are full of dead endings because the writers can't figure out how to save the girl or the hero or anybody else. So its a great tragedy and the editor says this guy is a great new science fiction writer. He's written a powerful story that will scare you right out of your britches, because everybody dies in this one.

One of these things was about a doctor that invents a powder that puts out fires, and there's a big fire on Mercury I think it was and so he goes in this rocket with a big load of powder to put the fire out, and on the way there's this girl on the ship and she doesn't want him to go, and she's naked or something. So while he's taking care of her the

ship crashes into the sun and the powder spills and puts the sun out and everybody in the universe gets killed.

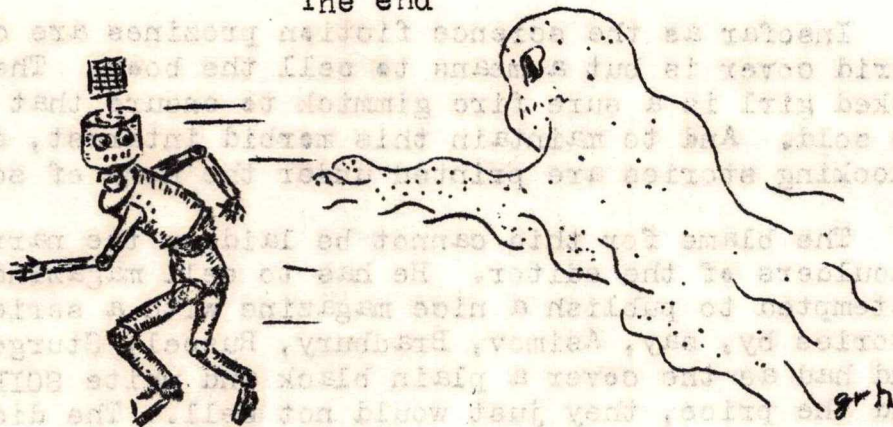
This is what they call science fiction today. If a writer brought that story in to Hugo Gernsback when he was running Amazing Stories he'd have thrown that writer out on his can. In those days they didn't fool around trying to scare the britches off readers they just gave them darn good stories with some science and information in them.

There was another story about these women who took a pill and it made them invisible and they went around raping men and then they found out they were going to have babies and they couldn't see the babies when they had them so they all went out of their minds. I think they all killed themselves but I don't know because it made me so sick I couldn't read the end part.

In the old days you could put yourself in the place of the hero and he was a real man, and did the things you wanted to do. But today all the heroes are sick or queer or so scared you feel like kicking them instead of being on their side. If these writers are so damned afraid of the future they'd better give up. They act like everything in this country is bound to get worse and we're all going to start killing each other and pushing each other around worse than criminals do today. Maybe if some of these writers would straighten themselves out they'd stop being so scared of what's going to happen.

If this is what is supposed to be science fiction today, I say the hell with it. I think today's publishers are scared, today's editors are scared, and the writers are just plain yellow.

The end



SCIENCE FICTION - - - HORROR - - - FANTASY A CRAZY MIXED - UP MARRIAGE

by John Berry

I am pleased that I have been asked to say a few words about this interesting subject. I most definitely have an axe to grind. As far as I am concerned (and I referring to my association with my family, my friends and the people with whom I work) I have gone out of my way to emphatically point out that although I am deeply enmeshed in science fiction, I, and any self-respecting member of my particular fraternity, completely abhor, reject and positively hate science fiction movies!

The general public regard we fans as idiots. We are labeled 'ah, the people interested in little green men and flying saucers.'

This insult was inflicted on me by a Canadian Customs Official when I drove from Detroit into Windsor, Canada, last September. He noticed the Convention name-tag on my shirt, and gave a smug smile of superiority, and mentioned the little green men. I didn't argue with him. I just wanted to be left alone to continue my travels. But this Customs man, he was intelligent, and above average in perception, and he looked at me and my companions as if we were certifiable. I find this is an average reception when the fact gets around that I am a science fiction man.

And I blame it all on the movies, and the sub-standard trash dished out behind lurid magazine covers, depicting scantily clad women and great big twisted technicolour BEAMS with about fifteen arms.

Insofar as the science fiction prozines are concerned, the lurid cover is but a means to sell the book. The naked or semi-naked girl is a sure fire gimmick to ensure that the book will be sold. And to maintain this morbid interest, some really shocking stories are printed under the name of science fiction.

The blame for this cannot be laid on the narrow and bent shoulders of the editor. He has to sell magazines. If he attempted to publish a nice magazine with a series of short stories by, say, Asimov, Bradbury, Russel, Sturgeon and Blish, and had as the cover a plain black and white SCIENCE FICTION, and the price, they just would not sell. The discerning reader, browsing through a display at a railway station would perchance buy one, but the market that the publisher had in mind wouldn't stomp up, but would swiftly move to the TRUE CONFES-SIONS or TRUE DETECTIVE stand.

But show a naked girl being borne away by a monster twenty feet tall, and they'll sell like the proverbial hot cakes, to use a British cliché. Such a buyer, depending on reading about the front cover, will probably be disappointed to discover it is but a facade. And ten to one he'll find the stories, or most of them, with a fantasy or horror content. He might like them, or he might not, but one thing is for sure. When he comes into contact with a science fiction fan, he will judge him according to the science fiction he has read... 'Oh, one of these little green men types.'

But so-called science fiction movies have done our cult more harm than all the other possible causes put together. The utter crud is too nauseating for words. In the past I have been so disgusted whilst watching a science fiction movie that I've got up and walked out.

The recent slant has been aimed at horror...fantastically ugly 'aliens' about half a mile tall ploughing across the world and leaving a trail of destruction behind them... 'things' from outer space which keep growing all the time... 'things' from the bottom of the ocean, or out of marshes, with slime oozing from them in a rubbery trail of shocking terror ...and so on.

If they were classed as merely horror films, I wouldn't mind so much, but the much abused term 'science fiction' is brought up all the time, and the simple fact is that the publicity men know that the general public, once they see 'science fiction' tagged on to a film, will come in their thousands...not only for a cheap thrill, but because they have become so used to regarding science fiction as a wide screen for everything stupid and horrible and shocking and fantastic that they are prepared for a good laugh into the bargain.

Once, some seven or eight years ago, I almost had hysterics in a cinema. The film was the truly classical crud item, "ROCKET SHIP X-M"...it got bad and then much worse...a sin in the name of science fiction. The crowning horror was when they finally alighted on mars, and someone kicked metal buried in the sand. A professor picked it up, a primitive cast of a face, such as is found in darkest Africa. The professor allowed a worried look to cross his face, looked right at the audience and said in a terrified whisper, "My God, this is the work of a very advanced civilisation!"

Honestly, I felt ill. The people who I was with turned and looked at me, trying their hardest to disguise the contemptuous curl of the upper lip.

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The whole kernel of the matter depends on the definition of science fiction.

Actually, these horror movies are science fiction, literally....they are fiction at its most fantastic, and they deal with scientific subjects....madmen who create monsters....'IT' from outer space, etc. The blurb, 'a horror science fiction film' (which I saw outside a cinema the other day), is a true statement.

My definition of 'science fiction' is the conservative one. I think of the serious speculation on scientific possibilities made in conservative science fiction stories twenty years ago....wonderfull ideas, a lot of which have come true. I think of the science fiction classics, stories written by men of perception...stories, unfortunately, few and far between. I think of science fiction fandom. People with imaginations more subtle and pliable than those possessed by their mundane associates...people who forsee that the Scientific Age which is just starting could be the greatest boon...or the greatest curse, to mankind.

.....

My own humble opinion is that there should be a separate fantasy fandom.

I've noticed Lovecraft cropping up very frequently in fanzines, but I've never bothered to extend my knowledge of his works.

I will freely admit that I have horror books in my small library. I purchased them when I was in my late teens....I got a kick out of reading horror and fantasy in those days, but it's fifteen years at least since I allowed myself the doubtful luxury of reading Lovecraft's 'The Rats in the Walls', or 'The Dunwich Horror', ...or any of the horror classics by such masters as Poe and Wells and W. W. Jacobs and Algernon Blackwood.

Another thing which bears out my theory of a separate fantasy fandom is that in none of my horror books (and they constitute many thousands of pages) is science fiction mentioned.

This, to me, is one of the most outstanding clues to the whole problem of the marriage of science fiction and fantasy. Personally, I hope for an early divorce, and I am prepared to offer myself as co-respondent.

.....

I wonder is age pertinent to the discussion?

On re-reading that last section above, I note my statement that I upgraded from horror in my late teens. Therefore, are the fans who regard fantasy as being an integral part of science fiction the youthful members...?...and are we old fans over the thirty year category the ones who don't

(continued on p. 16)

BARRIER

by

Dave Jenrette

I might throw out the whole question of the value of "fear" in science fiction by saying that I believe the True Fan will find his way thru the maze of creep, shudder, horror, etc. - the barrier thrown up around S-F. Don't you?

John W. Campbell, Jr. tells us in poll after poll that the readers of aSF (as I used to label it; thus dating my entry into fandom at about the early 50's when John was playing down "a") are noble young men of a scientific turn of mind. Somehow they got thru to the promised land.

I read something the other day that seemed to fit the occasion; something about "only those fully qualified to enter should attend"; something about a convention of the world's best mountain climbers having a party on top of Mt. Everest-- if you got there you had proven your right to be there. So let it be with science-fiction. If you can get thru the deserts, the thorn steppes, and the dismal swamps that surround Pal-ul-don, then welcome. If not, well...

On to another point: (Does Hollywood's stress on "horror" SF make fans scorn SF films?) SF fans scorn the Hollywood productions most of the time. Example: I was present at the Philly SF meeting when we (I was a member then, alas) received an advance notice about THE DAY THE WORLD STOOD STILL. Well. I can recall the disgusted reaction - the pungent comments, the chuckles. All this harsh criticism without seeing the movie, of course. It seemed perfectly natural to be so sarcastic at the time, but it, of course, wasn't a bit fair: "everyone gets a fair trial" and all that.

Which makes me suspect that the True Fen don't particularly want S-F to be "cleaned up". They want it to remain esoteric, hidden, private, something to be a bit ashamed of when the boss visits, or Johnny's teacher stops by. I think the True Fan wants the small groups, else he wouldn't have joined a small, outer group in the first place. You can't tell me the S-F fan wants to come out into the light of day!

No, fans are just plain sick.

(Uh-- of course this is all true if you consider the rest of humanity as being sane; and---uh--- naturally humanity is in pretty bad shape and going worse by the hour. I say, perhaps the tiny circle of fans--- like the Second Foundation will emerge and rule after the Final War. That's a thought, you know.....)

((SCIENCE FICTION...HORROR...FANTASY continued from page 14))

regard the two as being synonymous?

It is an interesting conjecture.

....

There is, above all, one major disaster caused by the flood of crud, in movies and books, under the name of science fiction. I am distressed to reflect on the really wonderful fannish types who have been diverted from the true path by their erroneous conclusions regarding our associations with science fiction, or rather what they think is science fiction.

It may be argued that if they are potentially so fannish, somehow they will find their way into our ranks...but as long as we are considered to be idiots who believe in horrors emerging from swamps and marshes or from the bowels of the earth or from the bottom of the ocean...or even from outer space.....we shall continue to be laughing stocks.

....

I would like to conclude on possibly one of the best endings I've ever managed in my fannish writing career.

My son has just brought in the Sunday papers to me, and the first thing that hit my eye is this paragraph...it speaks volumes.....

'I'm pining to see the latest American movie development - a system devised by producer Mervyn Leroy to stop the film after a big laugh from the audience and re-start it when the laughter dies down.

The idea is to ensure that the next piece of dialogue won't be missed.

It sounds like a good idea. And it should work overtime ~~xxxxxx~~ in some of the horror films I've seen.

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD FUTURE?

by Hal Lynch

Many types of fiction, "main stream" as well as mystery, historic, romantic, or science fiction, contain elements designed to frighten the reader. Since reading is supposed to be for pleasure-- reading of fiction is, anyway-- why should it contain so nasty an element as "fear"? Why should any reader want to be scared?

One plausible explanation is the old one of the happy moron for pounding his head against a wall. It feels so good when it stops. On a little deeper psychological level we might put it that reading frightening stories is the way we "play with" bravery. And we play at being brave in order to make ourselves truly brave. It's a kind of inoculation of the psyche. A little exposure to imaginary fear hardens us to resist the real thing.

At the same time, reading frightening stories actually reassures us. Fiction, including science fiction, can serve us as a form of magic, providing a symbolic survival. When we read a story of some terrible calamity which the hero and heroine live through, we readers live through it, too. When we thrill to the novel, "When Worlds Collide" we symbolically get aboard the spaceship and leave Earth just before it's destroyed. Lucky us! In "Slan!" we readers live on after the poor old human race is finished. But what about the stories in which the hero and heroine don't make it? Well, too bad for them, but we readers got through it, didn't we? We get to read the finish of the sad story, weep over the heroine's grave, etc. No matter what happens, we always outlive everybody in the story. In symbolic, magical terms, the story whispers to our subconscious, "Don't worry, if anything like this ever did happen, you'd get through it." No matter how catastrophic a story may be, we can close the book afterwards and return to a world in which life goes on.

If fiction, including science fiction, engendered only normal, healthy fear, we'd be all right. A certain amount of fear (or commonsense caution) is a useful attribute for any living organism. Teaches us to avoid danger, to take preventive measures, etc. Trouble is, there's another kind of fear-- a neurotic anxiety, that can do us much more harm than good. It has been called the characteristic sickness of our age.

Neurotic fear paralyzes the will, keeps us from doing what needs to be done to get ourselves out of trouble. In this way neurotic fear can cause increased danger. It poisons all our values. Security becomes so all-important we are ready to sacrifice anything for it. Sociologist David Reisman speaks of the modern conformist as having lost "the nerve of failure". Being so neurotically afraid to fail, we refuse to take necessary risks, convinced we can only make things worse.

And if this is the condition of modern man, if we're all at least a little more neurotically afraid than we ought to be, science fiction certainly isn't helping the situation. Today's SF continuously shrieks of perils to the left, to the right, and above all in front of us. Things are bad and they're going to get worse. Much worse. If we don't manage to blow ourselves up, we'll overcrowd or overregiment or overbore each other until we'll wish we had blown ourselves up. Has SF completely lost the ability to imagine success? (It's always been easy enough to imagine failure-- there are always an infinity of ways to fail at anything.)

SF has especially promoted a neurotic fear of government. Now, nobody need parade before me all the distinguished philosophers who have warned us to fear government. None of them advocated blind terror. Even if (a big if, in my opinion) all government of whatever brand is evil, unrelentingly evil, we do not help by telling each other frightful tales to demonstrate that the only thing to do about it is withdraw. Boo! The Government will getcha if you don't watch out!

Often this kind of scare-talk only makes things worse. Apparently a lot of the government-is-dangerous stories were floating around Germany prior to '33. Well, were they predictions, or contributing causes? Enough stories proving that government is dirty, dangerous, and doomed can help make it so.

Too many SF shock-tales of today show their authors are simply scared stiff of authority. The boys are spooked by responsibility, and they are spooked by the future because the future is loaded with it. Today we need stories about the problems of responsibility, written by responsible people who remain unshook by the burden.

What SF ought to be about, today as always, is the celebration, in the old meaning of the term, of the joys, the thrills, of problem solving. Conquest by intellect, conquest by imagination, conquest of the problem, is the core of SF, whatever element of fear, love, or hate may happen to be associated with it in a particular story. If some problems are frightening, if some solutions are "unsatisfactory", if some problem-solvers are destroyed, we nevertheless will go on reading, but ultimately we want to read about excitements of the brain, not freezings of the heart.

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