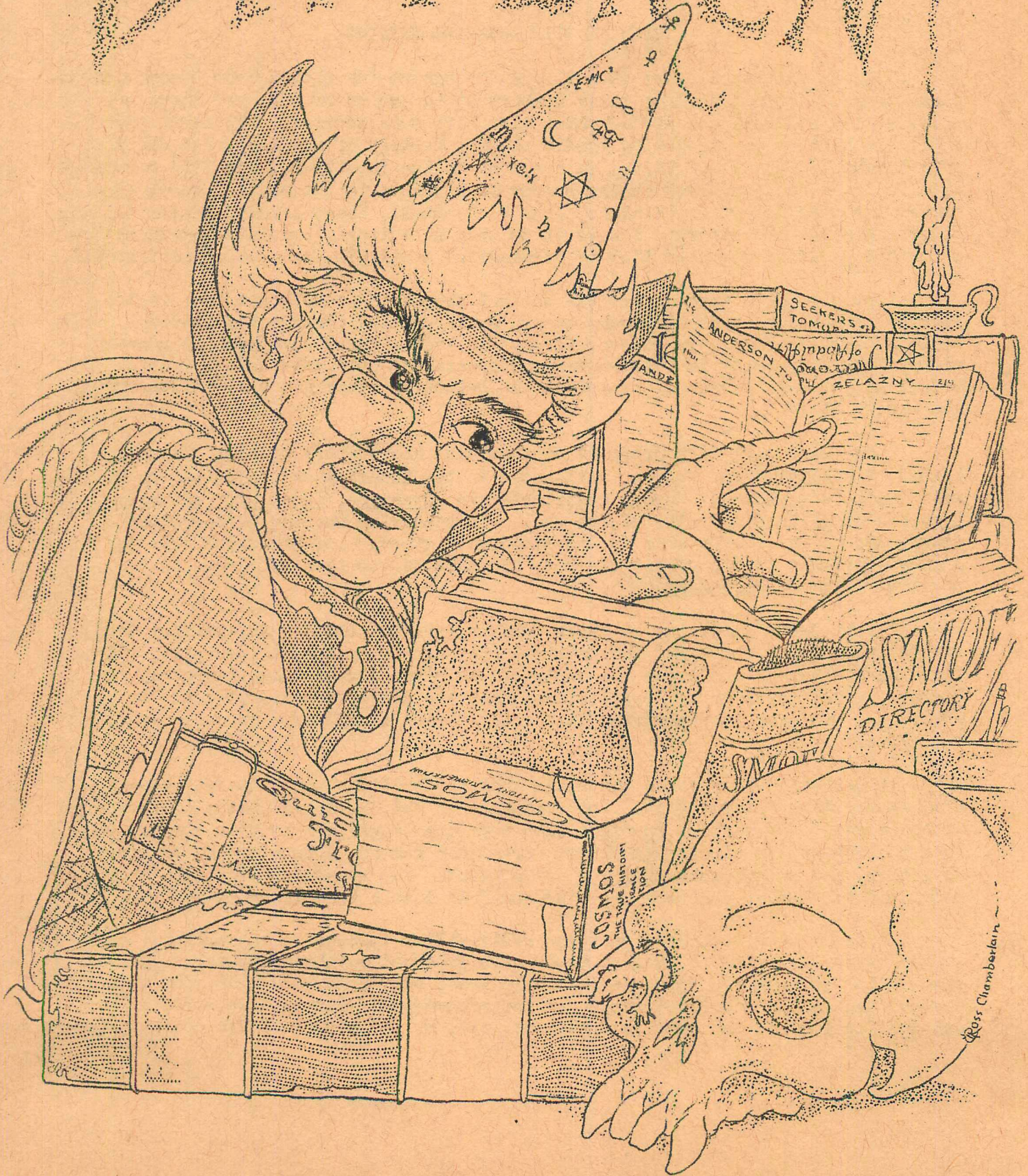


# DIRECTIONS



Ross Chamberlain

DIFFERENT, November, 1974. Vol. IV No. 3. Edited and published by Sam Moskowitz at 361 Roseville Avenue, Newark, N.J. 07107 for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Production assistance on this issue is gratefully acknowledged to Ross Chamberlain for cover and stenciling and to Joyce and Arnie Katz for the mimeographing.

### TEACHING PULP MAGAZINE WRITING

Science fiction classes in colleges throughout the nation have become commonplace today. Estimates place their numbers at in excess of 500, and there are universities and colleges abroad which also have such courses. The first such course in history was taught by myself at City College of New York, and ran from 1953 through 1955. I was listed as a member of the faculty and received compensation from the college based on the number of students in the class. Guest lecturers included Robert A. Heinlein, John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Lester del Rey, Robert Sheckley and others. I gave it up when an editorial position at Quick Frozen Foods magazine required that my evenings be available for special assignments.

I plan to do a special article on that pioneering course sometime in the future. I mention it because some regard genre writing instruction as novel. While no earlier course on science fiction is known, there were special courses at New York University in 1942 on various specialist pulp categories. Marie Rodell taught a professional course on the Detective Story and Willard Crosby on the Action Story.

These were part of a group of professional short story writing classes, headed by William Byron Mowery, well-known in the twenties and thirties for his action pulp adventures. Mowery contributed to Adventure, Short Stories, Blue Book and other leading pulps of the era. His specialty was the northwestern story, but he was comfortable in the standard Western. Leo Margulies acted as a guest-lecturer at one of his classes, his talk having been published in a previous issue of Different.

For students enrolling in these courses, special dittoed information was passed around. At the time, the material must have seemed quite ordinary, but times have changed, and today the instructions given students are immensely revealing. They disclose the restrictions that the professional writer had to adhere to, and make it remarkable that good stories at all were produced by the pulps.

It probably underscores the claim that restrictions work towards producing art, rather than retarding it. The dominance of the Americans in the short story arose because non-existent copyright laws permitted magazines in this country (and book publishers) to pirate the finest works that foreign countries had to offer. Why, then, pay an American anything for a novel? The result was that the short story was tackled by geniuses who fine-honed it into a true literary art form.

It seems hard to accept that the restrictions imposed on the writers, as gauged by the material to follow, could have produced anything but pap. In the case of the love story, this was literally true, but we do know that some detective, western and action stories transcended their bounds and survived as works of merit. Science fiction had the same restrictions, but, by the nature of its content, pro-

vided a higher percentage of memorable material than most any other genre pulp field.

What follows are the instructions to students given out by Mowery. Special attention should be paid to the material on "taboos" which reads almost incredibly. There is quite a bit to mull over in the other segments as well. This is what students were taught about writing general short fiction, in the era when the United States had just entered World War II, by a man who had been involved for over two decades in successfully marketing it. The material is historically revealing...

SaM

-----

New York University  
Professional Short-Story Writing  
Mowery

T-A-B-O-O-S

Taboos against Intolerance

1. Religion: no bigotry or favoritism whatever -- creed, sect, rites.
2. Sectionalism: no ill-will, no blanket denunciation.
3. Politics: neither praise nor censure of major parties.
4. Nationality: no villainous foreigner as such; no villainous foreign nation.
5. Rich-Poor: no denunciation of either as such.
6. Profession: no discriminate slam at any profession, calling, etc.
7. Others: no indiscriminate slam at either sex, any relationship, e.g. step-mother, or any other group.

Taboos Based on Social Responsibility

1. Kidnapping: one of the strongest.
2. Sabotage: varies; rigid currently.
3. Suicide.
4. Arson: allowed only seldom; then off stage, brief.
5. Sex Crimes or Abnormalities.
6. Sex as such, or too much.
7. Crime that pays, criminal escaping: most rigid of all.

Taboos Based on Unpleasantness

1. Insanity.
2. Grave sickness: allowed off stage or minor.
3. Horror: except for specialized pulps.
4. Bad family relationships: daughter hating mother, etc.

Other Taboos

1. Fanciful Inventions: except for specialized pulps.
2. Atheism.

3. Fanaticism: any extreme view urged violently.
4. Deus ex machina: e.g. rich uncle from Australia.
5. Stories about Writers: seldom allowed, then not as writers.
6. Tricking Reader: e.g. the dream story.
7. Making the public the villain.
8. Contempt toward human race: portraying humanity as animalish, brutal, shoddy, robot, etc.
9. Cosmic Significance: stories that settle immemorial human problems.

#### Miscellaneous Points to Avoid

1. Fantasy: Johnny Pye's are rare.
2. Dated Subjects: neither current nor historical.
3. War Stories: inventories are full on nearly all war topics.
4. Stories based on hot news items.
5. Stories based on market tips.
6. Seasonal stories: specifics, e.g. Christmas, are usually arranged for.
7. Fact names, places, addresses, used in derogatory way.
8. Story based on anybody else's story.

#### Taboo Treatments

1. Tragedy for its own sake.
2. Cynical of supercilious attitude.
3. Sophistication.
4. Blatant moralizing.
5. The sappy-happy story which popular magazines are supposed to want.
6. The Fiction Strut and Pose of the hack writer.
7. Highly spectacular or melodramatic situation, action, tone, characters, treatment.
8. Wide departure from fiction norms, such as:
  - a) The character sketch: static and usually precious.
  - b) The story too solidly dialog: 25% is average; over 50% is dangerous.
  - c) Too much stream of consciousness.
  - d) The "realistic" sketch.
  - e) Description with a cursory dab of narration.
  - f) The "corridor trotting" story; incessant, picayune action with little or no author interpretation.

#### Suggestions for Study of Pulp Love Stories

Carefully select twenty representative stories. Clip and staple. For each story put down these points, in writing:

- 1) Estimate length, within 250 words.
- 2) List name of chief girl, chief man, other main characters.
- 3) State location, in actual name -- section, city, district. If a generalized setting, state.
- 4) State time covered by actual story. Disregard antecedent action.

- 5) Estimate percentage of dialog.
- 6) State occupation of chief girl. Does it have good Reader's Ken?
- 7) State number big scenes. List where, i.e. night club, theater, etc.
- 8) Estimate what fraction of story the two lead characters are together.
- 9) Describe chief girl briefly: Age, physique, family status and personality.
- 10) State precisely the nature of the "barrier," the factor keeping the two chief characters apart.
- 11) List appeals by which reader sympathy is enlisted for chief girl.
- 12) State how much conventionality allowed.
- 13) Describe chief man briefly.
- 14) State how and how soon Basic Action is introduced.
- 15) Describe the rival or chief antagonist briefly. Type, status, physique, etc.
- 16) State how many characters actually appear in story.
- 17) Mark one quite objective and one quite subjective passage.
- 18) List the steps in the development of the Basic Action.
- 19) State surprise and mystery, if any.

When finished with this detailed study, make a digest in essay form of each point. Type study carefully, and put in notebook.

-----

### IRON-BOUND RESOLUTIONS

As a safeguard against repeating the same mistakes endlessly, we should study our past and present work, sort out both our mistakes and successes, and set them down in precise language. By doing this, we can peg our gains and move on.

The following list of iron-bound resolutions is made up partly of items from my own private "Resolutions," which is a carefully kept document, and partly of points especially for beginners. This list is far from being adequate or complete. Each person must make his special own. This is intended only as a starter for the self-analytical paper which you should begin now.

#### Items of Policy

1. I will write no story I don't believe in. This is hack writing and carries the seeds of its own destruction.
2. I will give intelligent thought to selecting a magazine field where I can write with complete integrity.
3. I will write no story which is of unrecognizable type or which fits no definite magazine group.
4. I will violate no taboo, either taboo subject or taboo attitude.
5. I will write no toss-offs or quickies. Better one story a month that places than half a dozen that don't.
6. I will know what magazine group I am writing for and what type of story I am writing.
7. I will send out no sloppy manuscripts. Any script of mine will be a professional job, with good format, good paper and ribbon, firm paper mechanics, and careful proofing.

8. I will make an open-minded study of my fiction assets, my strong points, and have a policy of using them.
9. My story will have Action -- thrust, flow, movement, development.
10. I will have the background of my stories authentic, either by personal experience, or study, or both.
11. I will revise and polish every script till it is the best I can do.
12. I will avoid the sensational, melodramatic, highly unusual material.

#### Some Items of Specific Nature

1. I will have one chief character and one only. He will be unmistakably and overwhelmingly chief.
2. I will never shift viewpoint from one character to another in a short story.
3. I will have my Basic Conflict clear within the first three hundred words.
4. I will have no confusable character names. No similar sounds or spellings.
5. I will never use a sharply specific autobiographical incident or situation as the basis of a story.
6. My story will be reasonably near the acceptable length for my magazine group.
7. I will not editorialize about characters, theme or other elements.
8. I will not load my story down with antecedent material -- long flash-backs, involved situations, detailed explanations.
9. I will have the time, place, action and general situation crystal clear at the beginning of my story, not the end.
10. I will visualize and emotionalize my story till I see and feel it, before starting to write.

-----

#### THUMBNAIL ON TITLING

—

This resume is based on a study of five thousand titles. The sources were English and American literature, past and present -- drama, novel, short fiction, cinema, and narrative poetry. The list was weighted in favor of short fiction.

The study was entirely empiric; that is, actual proved titles were studied and generalizations were made from them, without prior theory.

Titling is difficult with many authors. Probably half of all stories are renamed in the editorial office. However, your script must have a title when it goes in, and this should be at least adequate. If the editor can then get a better one, let him. This thumbnail may not guarantee you a brilliant title, which is a rare item; but it will help you get a title that is adequate and attractive.

#### Length

Among these five thousand, the 3-word title was overwhelmingly the most frequent. The 4-word and 2-word had nearly the same frequency. The 1-word title came fourth, the 5-word fifth. Above 5 the number was negligible.

### Key Words

Certain words reoccurred so often, with every sort of work and author, that they clearly are title favorites of long standing. The most used word of all was Heart. Other high favorites were: Dream, Love, Song, Gold, Flower, Girl, Night, Call, Trail, Kiss, Fire, Voice, Range, Secret, Man, Light, Star, Law, King, Sword.

Often key words were doubled up, as in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

A number of favorite verbs and a smaller number of adjectives were noted but not lifted out.

These title favorites should be used judiciously, or your title will sound forced and hackneyed.

### Title Designs

About 80% of these titles fell into designs about which generalizations could be made. Here is a list of these main designs, with examples. Designs 1, 3, 5, 8, 12 and 13 are best for short fiction.

1. A physical object important in the story: *The Gold Bug, The Monkey's Paw, The Indian Drum.* (Very good for short fiction, especially if used symbolically.)
2. Name of chief character: *Dodsworth, Hamlet, Romola, Childe Harold.* (Best for novels, especially in character study.)
3. Large dynamic phenomena of Nature: *The Tempest, Rain, Thunder on the Left.*
4. Function of the chief character: *Test Pilot, The Shepherd, The Three Musketeers.*
5. Function of chief character plus some indication of setting: *Shepherd of the Hills, The Vicar of Wakefield, The Sheriff of Coyote Creek, The Outcast of Poker Flat, Riders of the Purple Sage.* (One of the best and most frequent.)
6. An indication of time and place: *Alice of Old Vincennes, The Last Days of Pompeii, The Covered Wagon.* (Most suited for historical fiction.)
7. An outright moral, usually from Bible or common proverbs: *Whoso Diggeth a Pit, Gather Ye Rosebuds, One Man's Meat.*
8. Significant apposition, with "and" or "or": *The Sword and the Sea, The Lady or the Tiger, The Devil and Dan'l Webster, Sense and Sensibility.*
9. Words deliberately unintelligible or plain gibberish: *Habledash, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, The Oink-Oink of Attu-Utta.*
10. Puns on well-known titles or current best sellers: *Gullible's Travels, Ptomaine Street, Two Gentlemen and Verona.*
11. Titles deliberately suggestive: *The Midnight Kiss, Pearls of Desire, Passion Tryst.* (Not in good taste or in favor with popular magazines.)
12. Symbolic summary of the action: *Lady into Fox, The Golden Cocoon, Flame into Dust.*
13. Titles based on literary quotations: *Look Homeward, Angel, If Winter Comes, Vanity Fair.* (The chief sources were the Bible, Shakespeare, occasional poems. Milton, Shelley and Burns were well represented. Any quotation used should be very well known, and the use of a literary quotation as a show of learning is of course to be avoided.)

### Miscellaneous Points

1. A good title will be five words or under, will have picture words if possible,

and will strike off the main idea of the story.

2. Titles containing verbs or equivalents have a dynamic quality highly desirable:  
The Dead Ride Hard; Bugles, Blow No More; Taming of the Shrew.
3. Avoid lurid beckoning, of sex or anything else.
4. Avoid fads and headline dithers, such as the rash of the "It Happened One -- " titles and the Eagle-Lone-Wing-Lucky run of 1927.
5. Start a list of your own titles -- those that occur to you or you find in reading.

#### L'envoi

If by this counsel or otherwise you work out a title you're fond of and the editor changes it, do not be too wrathful or cast down. A certain author once wrote a serial which he fondly called The Sea Cook. Over his protest the editor changed the title to Treasure Island.

----- \* \* \* \* \* -----

### 2,000 YEARS OF SPACE TRAVEL

By Russell Freedman

A Book Review

By Sam Moskowitz

Back in 1959, in the month of June to be more precise, Fantastic Universe Science Fiction, which was edited by Hans Stefan Santesson, was sold to a company called "The Motor Group" because it published a number of auto magazines. Santesson was retained as editor, and it was announced that the magazine which had been bi-monthly, digest-sized and without interior illustrations, would henceforth be monthly, pulp size with trimmed edges and carrying illustrations. The first issue under the new ownership had Virgil Finlay handling the cover and the interiors and an outstanding lineup of authors including Lester Del Rey, Poul Anderson, Harlan Ellison, L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt and Robert Silverberg.

Because the magazine had 128 pages of smooth finished pulp, it was able to carry illustrations and photos, and illustrated articles were looked for. Santesson arranged to have me do an article for that October, 1959, issue on the early history of interplanetary stories for which I supplied illustrations from my collection and which was entitled Two Thousand Years of Space Travel. This saw a follow-up illustrated feature in the February, 1969, issue of Fantastic Universe titled To Mars and Venus in the Gay Nineties. Neither of these articles has been collected.

Along in 1965 I spotted on a British book dealer's list the announcement of a newly published book by Collins, London titled 2000 Years of Space Travel by Russell Freedman. Understandably intrigued by the similarity of the title to that of my article, I ordered the book. It was apparently the British edition of a title previously published in America by Holiday House. This was apparently a book for the older or high teens, well printed, bound, illustrated with 256 pages including a bibliography and index. It was, as the title inferred, a volume on early science fiction. Somehow it had never come to the notice of the science fiction



collectors. In fact, I never remember ever seeing it listed in the bibliographies of the increasing number of books on science fiction that have appeared since that date.

The author, Russell Freedman, obviously a young man from his photo, was described on the jacket as follows: "Russell Freedman's research for his previous book, Teenagers Who Made History, disclosed to him the early beginnings of space travel. This led to much additional research to complete his story of 2000 Years of Space Travel."

"Mr. Freedman is a native of San Francisco and a graduate of the University of California in Berkeley. He served in Korea with the Counter Intelligence Corps and later became a reporter for the Associated Press and a contributor to the Columbia Encyclopedia. He now lives in New York City where he devotes full time to writing."

I proceeded to read the book, which was approximately 80,000 or more words in length, and found the following works of science fiction discussed: True History by Lucian, Somnium by Johannes Kepler, The Man in the Moon by Francis Godwin, The Discovery of a New World by John Wilkins, Icaromenippus by Lucian, Voyage to the Moon by Cyrano de Bergerac, The Consolidator by Daniel Defoe, Voyage to Caklogallinia by Captain Samuel Brunt, A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel by Ralph Morris, A Voyage to the Moon by David Russen, A Trip to the Moon by Murtagh McDermot, The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaal by Edgar Allan Poe, The Great Moon Hoax by Richard Adams Locke, A Voyage to the Moon by John Atterley, A Voyage to Venus by Achille Eyraud, From the Earth to the Moon by Jules Verne, The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells and Beyond the Planet Earth by Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.

As a researcher I naturally hoped to find in a book of this size and scope, as early as 1963, some information to add to my reservoir of knowledge. But as I proceeded, the strange thought came to me that not only did the book have the same title as my article (titles cannot be copyrighted) but so far it had not mentioned a single story which I had not covered. Not that the foregoing titles would have provided much difficulty for anyone to find, but still the suspicion lingered that the only research the man might have done was to use my article as a guide and cover at great length only those titles in my article which he could find in the New York Public Library.

At the last moment, Freedman redeemed himself. He listed one title which I had not mentioned (because it was published 20 years after the period my article covered): Beyond the Planet Earth by Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (Kaluga, Russia, 1920) and translated into English and published by Pergamon Press, London, in 1960. Additionally, Freedman had listed in his bibliography Voyages to the Moon by Marjorie Hope Nicolson and Into Other Worlds by Roger Lancelyn Green, as well as Rockets, Missiles and Space Travel by Willy Ley and The Rocket Pioneers by Beryl Williams and Samuel Epstein. Collectively, those books contained all the titles of science fiction covered by Freedman.

About the only satisfaction that remained was that he had covered, with pictures, 19 titles in 80,000 words, whereas I managed to cover 36 titles with pictures in 4,000 words. Still, it would have been nice to have been listed in the bibliography.

## HAMMER AND TONGS

A Book Review

By Sam Moskowitz

HAMMER AND TONGS by Clyde F. Beck. Plus a nine-page Author's Preface. The Futile Press, Lakeport, Calif., April, 1937, 23 pages, 25 cents.

The distinction of having written the first book of science fiction criticism (or possibly the first book on science fiction), probably belongs to Clyde F. Beck, in this petite and pioneering volume published on the presses of his brothers Claire and Groo Beck. Hammer and Tongs was originally a department in The Science Fiction Critic, a fan magazine published by Claire P. Beck. It first ran in the December, 1935, issue, then published out of Reno, Nevada, in half-letter size mimeographed format, and selling for five cents a copy. The department carried the blurb: "Devoted to smashing idols and eyesores of science fiction, and welding and shaping the fragments into better form."

It is parenthetically worth noting that James Blish had an article of criticism in the same issue titled A Slip-Back in Science Fiction, in which he offered the view that science fiction had greatly improved since 1931 with the element of the "invincibility of man" virtually disappearing from the stories. He also deplored the formula stories of Edmond Hamilton, Frank Belknap Long, Stanton A. Coblentz and Joseph W. Skidmore.

Clyde Beck's series was composed of four brief essays, the content of which was almost unchanged from the original publication when reprinted in book form. The last of them was published in the April, 1936, issue of The Science Fiction Critic, which by this time had metamorphosized into a small, but nicely printed amateur publication, set slug-by-slug by the brothers Beck. It would become, during the remainder of its 14-issue life, which terminated with the number dated "Xmas, 1938," one of the best publications of its period.

The first essay deplored the fact that good literary style was rare in science fiction, though the genre could be literature as attested to by the works of H.G. Wells. The second essay offered When the Top Wobbled by Victor Endersby, from Amazing Stories, February, 1936, as an example of "the greatness that science fiction is capable of." His reasons for thinking so (despite considerable criticism of the structure of the story) was that the author "founded the plot upon a plausible development of scientific theory...maintained an atmosphere of reality in unfamiliar surroundings, and he has shown to a certain extent a consciousness of purpose in his writing."

He felt that the last point was most often lacking in science fiction. Wells, he was convinced, had made the most conscious use of science fiction to convey an important message and that Stanton A. Coblentz and Miles J. Breuer, M.D., had done so at times. Beck did not intend to crusade for more purpose in science fiction, but believed that "writing to no purpose is a waste, and purposeless science fiction, because of its chances are so great, is the greatest waste of all." It did not matter what the purpose was, as long as it was there, and he cited such titles as In the Days of the Comet by H. G. Wells (Cosmopolitan,

January to June, 1906), The Biped of Bjulhu by Kenneth Sterling (Wonder Stories, February, 1936), Paradox by Charles Cloukey (Amazing Stories Quarterly, Summer, 1929), and the humorous Hick's Inventions With a Kick stories by Henry Hugh Simmons (Amazing Stories, 1927-1928) as being noteworthy, because the authors had some serious end in view in the writing.

The third essay took John Russell Fearn to task for Mathematica (Astounding Stories February, 1936) for emphasis on concepts without regard to the human aspects. He also scored A World Unseen by Joseph W. Skidmore (Wonder Stories, February and April, 1936) for inaccurate science.

The fourth and final essay deplored the superficiality of the average work of science fiction. It expressed the view that an author, in order to write an effective story, must not only immerse himself in background information, but mentally cultivate the proper mood and convey this to the reader. He listed the authors Warner Van Lorne, Joseph W. Skidmore and Neil R. Jones as writers of "...illiterate, maudlin or merely foolish drivel." In contrast he cited "...the unmatched works of H. G. Wells, the early stories of Ray Cummings, a few of the light but sustaining offerings of the late Stanley G. Weinbaum."

In the preface, Clyde Beck points out that these articles were not originally intended to be a book. If he had been writing a book, he said, he would have discarded the term "science fiction" and substituted "pseudo-scientific fantasy," because he felt that scientific patter had been substituted for magic in science fiction. If he had intended to write a book, he asserted he would have set up literary standards for judging science fiction, and those standards would have differed from those utilized to evaluate mainstream literature. It was his belief that science fiction is a nobler form of literature than any other, and the paucity of meritorious stories in the genre was merely an indication of the difficulty of writing them. Beck's standards would have insisted upon scientific plausibility. He pointed out that there is greater freedom of ideas and criticism in science fiction than in any other type of literature, and that this very freedom represents a danger. The danger was that the writer would become more interested in the gimmick, or supernormal events, than in people.

He apologized for not presenting a system for criticizing science fiction, but did feel that the reader would find a system implicit in what he had written.

There probably were not as many as 50 copies of this book printed and bound. As a work of criticism it is trivial and sometimes contradictory, but some of the points do possess continuing validity. The book is well written--the author had sold one story previous to its writing, When Moons Met (Wonder Stories, August, 1930).

It was written around the story-contest cover of Air Wonder Stories for February, 1930, and Beck had won second prize of \$75 for this effort. He was 18 years of age at the time, which would have made him about 23 years old when he began writing Hammer and Tongs. It might be pointed out that this was substantially older than the average fan writing for the fan magazines at the time. James Blish writing contemporaneously, by comparison, was roughly 14 years of age.

Beck was to sell several times afterward to the professional magazines, all

short stories: Anastomosis in Startling Stories, November, 1947; Collision Orbit in Planet Stories, Summer, 1950; and Re-Entrant, Spaceway, December, 1953.

The actual "publishers" of Futile Press, Claire and Groo Beck, had only minor involvement with the science fiction world after they ceased publishing The Science Fiction Critic. However, they did turn out from Futile Press two other very desirable and today difficult-to-obtain volumes. The second was Nero and Other Poems by Clark Ashton Smith (which included several laid-in items, The Price of Poetry by David Warren Ryder, an appreciation of Smith's poetry, and a poem by Clark Ashton Smith dedicated to David Warren Ryder titled Outlanders and signed) and the third, Commonplace Book by H. P. Lovecraft. Claire Beck also finished the mimeographing and distribution of R. H. Barlow's second issue of Leaves, issued in 1938.

SaM