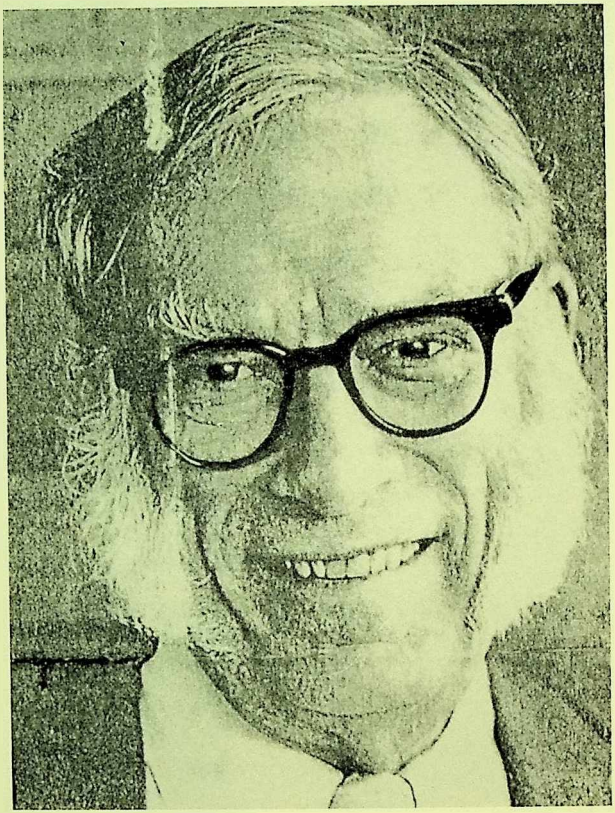
FANTASY COMMENTATOR



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Articles

Verse

Regular Features

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Isaac Asimov

1920-1992*

John Clute

BY ALL RIGHTS Isaac Asimov should have been considered the father of modern science fiction. He began his long publishing career in 1939, the first year of the Golden Age of the fledgling genre in its American form, and from the outset his daunting intelligence expressed itself in a flood of works, both fiction and non-fiction, of lasting influence. Though ill-health dogged his final decades, and after 1990 forced him to stop writing, by the time of his death he had published over 400 books.

But he never did become the undisputed father of the modern genre. It was also in 1939 that Robert A. Heinlein began to publish his first novels and stories, and it was Heinlein, with his stylistic flair and his mesmerising grasp of the potentials of the new form, who became and for half a century remained the father-figure of the field.

For those 50 years, until Heinlein's death in 1988, Asimov was the younger brother; brash, boastful and workaholic, he seemed always at the verge of displacing his older contemporary as the dominant figure in the tight communal world of science fiction, but he never quite accomplished the feat. The reason for this failure may lie in his greatest strength as a writer, the utter clarity with which he expressed himself. Through the proper exercise of this stylistic and intellectual clarity he became one of the century's greatest and most prolific popularisers of science and the arts. Without ever telling a lie, or avoiding a thorny problem in physics or astronomy or biology or half a dozen other fields, he made everything seem easy; even books in fields unrelated to science, like his *Annotated Guide to Gilbert and Sullivan* (1988), were illuminating.

At the same time, however, Asimov proved almost incapable of conveying in his fiction a sense of the full richness of the world that humans must inhabit. For him, the world was a premiss to be argued from, and in almost all his novels and stories human emotions and human actions were relegated to the wings, in order to give room to the long theoretical discussions which, for him, were the heart of the matter. It is not surprising that his fiction always suffered from chill.

For the first decade of his career, Asimov wrote nothing but stories (Heinlein's instant and remarkable competence as a novelist may help explain this abstention) but there was no way an ambitious young science-fiction writer in 1940 could have avoided confronting the intense and dictatorial presence of John W. Campbell Jnr, another father-figure, in whose *Astounding Science Fiction* most of the significant work of the 1940s first appeared.

Asimov soon became identified as a Campbell writer; it was Campbell who suggested to him the premiss and plot of "Nightfall" (1941), his single most famous story, and the single most popular story ever published by a science-fiction magazine. The story as Asimov developed it embodied the essence of the genre's appeal to the conceptual imagination: what (he suggested in language which made the idea limpidly clear to his readers) if there were a planet whose complex orbit around a multiple-sun system precluded the fall of night, except for one or two hours of eclipse every 2,000 years? When eclipse did finally bring darkness and a view of the innumerable stars to the inhabitants of that planet, they would immediately (he asserted, less convincingly perhaps) go mad.

It was in close consultation with Campbell that Asimov evolved the premisses that shaped his two most enduring contributions to the genre, the robot stories and the Foundation series. The "Three Laws of Robotics", which Campbell and Asimov formulated in 1940, may have had little to do with the infant science of robotics, for they were in fact laid down to establish some usable literary protocols for the treatment of artificial creatures, and indeed in written science fiction their promulgation sounded the death-knell for certain kinds of sensationalism about killer robots and the like. From about 1940, the Three Laws have underwritten all science-fiction discourse on the subject of mobile artificial beings, and whatever their intrinsic scientific worth they have been influential as well in the general field of cybernetics. These are the Laws:

> One: a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Two: a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. Three: a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

From the first, Asimov used these Laws as a kind of abacus for the

*This obituary appeared in the April 7, 1992 issue of *The Independent*, and is reprinted here by permission.

calculation of possible robot stories. For half a century, no matter how far one of his tales might seem to stretch the Laws, the initial code always stood revealed and justified, in the end. The stories collected variously in *I, Robot* (1950) and *The Rest of the Robots* (1968), and in novels like *The Caves of Steel* (1955) and *The Naked Sun* (1957), presented an image, or vision, of the artificial being as a helpmeet to humanity. It was not, perhaps, a vision which weathered well, and advances in Artificial Intelligence over the last decade significantly darkened the imaginative response of human beings to creatures, whether or not artificial, more intelligent and more capable than we are. Even Asimov, when he returned later in life to the question of the Robot in compilations like *Robot Dreams* (1986) or *Robot Visions* (1990), tended to hedge his bets. And late novels like *The Robots of Dawn* (1983) or *Robots and Empire* (1985) began cautiously to suggest that humanity might have a greater need for keepers than for servants.

In the Foundation stories, most of which were also written in the 1940s, Asimov cast a similarly rational eye upon the traditional world of American space opera, taming its ray-gun Ruritania excesses through a sustained and sober use of historical analogies. In the tales collected in book form as *Foundation* (1951), *Foundation and Empire* (1952) and *Second Foundation* (1953), Asimov recast the decline and fall of Rome as an epic set millennia hence, when a vast interstellar empire suffers a slow inevitable sclerosis. Along with some clear-cut speculation on the nature of political and cultural decadence, Asimov offered solutions to the problem of the Dark Ages which must follow the great collapse. His solution is a secret Foundation created to respond actively to the laws of "psychohistory" (in Asimov's hands, this discipline little resembles twentieth-century versions of psychohistory), and thus to shorten the period of darkness.

Thanks almost certainly to the highly secular clarity of his intellect, Asimov's Empire proved a rather more convincing creation than the Foundation which he had created, inevitably, with the Christian church in mind. Unable to convey a sense of religious fervour, he opted for a secret organisation held together by nothing more than obscure mutual interests, so that the Foundation, in his conception, more closely resembled a building society than a church. All the same, for decades after 1950, science-fiction empires in space had a recognisable Asimovian cast.

Asimov was born in Russia in 1920, but his family moved to the United States in 1923 and, with his strong New York accent, Asimov was the very model of an urban American. He rarely left New York in later life, at least in part because he adamantly refused to enter an aeroplane. Having been raised in a milieu of intense ambition, he was from an early age conscious of the need to establish himself in a genuine career (his family did not think of writing as real work).

He was an apparently gregarious and friendly man – a cogent arguer for rational and liberal points of view – but at the same time a solitary workaholic, fixed to his typewriter or his computer screen. Like so many people who produce large volumes of work he was very private, a man haunted by his own career. He was obsessed by numbers, by the number of books and articles he had written, and in 1984 published a conspectus of his work entitled *Opus 300*. Many more titles would follow.

At Columbia University Asimov took a B.Sc. in chemistry in 1939, an MA in 1941, and a Ph.D. in 1948, after war service. In that year he began work as an instructor in biochemistry at Boston University School of Medicine, becoming an Associate Professor in 1955. At this point he was afflicted by a crisis of ambition. Two decades of producing science fiction had made him famous (though not quite famous enough) in a field looked down upon by his professional colleagues; he had come to the end of the road, as far as he could then predict, of both the Robot stories and the Foundation epic. He published several volumes of short fiction, including *The Martian Way* (1955) and *Earth is Room Enough* (1957), and wrote one singleton, *The End of Eternity* (1955), an intricate tale involving time paradoxes which ends in atomic war: but seemed to stall after that effort.

In 1958 Asimov decided that he must transform his career; he announced his retirement as a writer of fiction, and gave up active teaching at Boston University, receiving no salary but retaining his professorship. Of the hundreds of books he published between 1958 and 1982, most were general scientific books and only three were novels, though one of these, *The Gods Themselves* (1972), may be the best tale he ever wrote, superbly lucid in its presentation of the sociology of science, and in its description of the mathematics of parallel universes. The others, produced at a rate of up to 10 books a year, were the works of accessible scientific popularisation which made him a household name in the United States, and made him rich. He had a clarity of mind equal to that of a Bertrand Russell, with the unusual capacity to mean the same thing by a word when he used it on the first page of a book as on the last.

Asimov was made a full Professor at Boston in 1979, but remained inactive as an academic. In 1982 he returned in full spate to his first love. He had maintained strong personal links with the science-fiction world, and when he began writing novels again he produced work designed to demonstrate both his contemporaneity and an unbroken continuity with the past. To accomplish this, and to the advantage of the marketing revolution which had transformed science fiction from a minor and eccentric genre into a source of bestseller titles, he decided to return to his Robot and Foundation

books, and to amalgamate them, through a series of large and ambitious sequels, into one giant entity, through which future history of unparalleled scope might emerge.

With the exception of a number of short stories and two relatively weak novels, Asimov therefore concentrated his energy on this one task. The effort was gargantuan — the new sequence comprised five doggedly enormous novels, *Foundation's Edge* (1982), the two late robot novels already mentioned, *Foundation and Earth* (1986) and *Prelude to Foundation* (1988). Critical response was mixed, for it seemed Asimov had lost in old age much of the intense conciseness of his early years. But the books sold extremely well, and in that sense were far more successful than that early work.

Asimov was a man of ample ego and wide friendships. The huge autobiographical volumes — *In Memory Yet Green* (1979) and *In Joy Still Felt* (1980) — attest to his self-involvement but also the help, the advice and commendations, he freely gave to other science-fiction writers. For years, all the fiction he had ever written remained in print. The field honoured him repeatedly with Hugo and Nebula Awards.

Ever since 1958, he had written a monthly column for a science-fiction magazine, without a single break. When it was announced, therefore, that he had been forced in 1990 to abandon work half-way through the composition of the four-hundredth column, a feeling of premature sadness swept the field: his full retirement was soon announced, and he stopped work on *Forward the Foundation*, which which will now be published next year. Even in his last years, everything he touched was purged by the clarity of his cognition; he seemed to clean the world by thinking about it. For that unique flavour of mind he will be long remembered.

• • •

The Good Doctor at St. Vincent

Eric Leif Davin

If there is anyone who needs no introduction, surely it is Isaac Asimov, Ph. D., polymath man for all seasons and science-fiction writer extraordinaire. "The Good Doctor," as he sometimes referred to himself in editorials and columns, wrote science-fiction for over half a century, ever since story "Marooned off Vesta" appeared in the March 1939 issue of *Amazing Stories*. Additionally, he may be close to or have claimed the Guiness record for the most prolific author of all time, writing almost 500 books; he was the only genre author to have his own magazine named after himself; each of his novels appeared on best-seller lists after publication; and he was perhaps more widely known outside of science-fiction than any other writer in the field.

Still, a few words about the man are in order to introduce the following interview. Asimov was graduated from college in 1939, the same year he began his writing career. In 1941 he received his M.A. from Columbia, and in 1948——after a wartime hiatus——his Ph. D. in biochemistry. In 1949 he joined the faculty of Boston University, where his name is still on the roster, although he gave up active teaching there in 1958 to write full-time. The fiction with which his name is most closely associated, his robot tales and the "Foundation" series, were all initiated early in his career; "Strange Bedfellow," his first robot story, appeared in 1940, and "Foundation" in 1942. In recent years he returned to both subjects, and the resulting novels again became best-sellers. *Forward the Foundation*, which was finished shortly before his death, will appear posthumously.

Despite being the most widely recognized science-fiction writer of our time, Isaac Asimov harbored an odd resistance to new technology. He long resisted giving up his typewriter for a word processor, and all his life adamantly refused to fly anywhere. The latter quirk severely restricted his speaking schedule——which might well have been a reason behind it! Thus it was a genuine coup when St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, managed to lure

him from New York City for an April 14, 1983 speaking engagement. The college gym was packed with an eager audience well before the appointed hour, and I managed to obtain a few minutes with The Good Doctor beforehand. The following interview was the result.

• • •

Eric Davin: *Science-fiction has gone through many phases in your career. Now it seems to be in the midst of a burst of popularity. Why do you think this is?*

Isaac Asimov: Well, the most remarkable growth has been in the visual media. Starting with *Star Wars*, science-fiction has become the commercial blockbuster of the age. That doesn't mean that printed science-fiction, in which I deal, has grown with it. Still, if even one person out of every thousand who see pictures like *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *E. T.*, and so on, switches to the printed medium out of sheer curiosity, that means a sudden expansion in the number of readers. This is reflected in the fact that for the last six months a number of science-fiction or science-fiction-related books have been on the best- seller lists, including my own *Foundation's Edge*.

Let's talk a bit about Foundation's Edge. *In your autobiography you spoke extensively about the writing of the first Foundation series. Do you feel you captured the same feeling the originals had in this new book?*

Well, I did my best. The thing is, the original stories were written for magazines. That was the only venue then. Thus, the only life I ever imagined their having was that each individual story would appear on the newsstands for one month and then disappear forever! It wasn't until after I had grown tired of the series and decided to go on to other things that major publishers started to put out hard-cover science-fiction. In 1949, in fact, they put out three volumes of my Foundation stories. These just happened to fit into three volumes, so they called it a trilogy. I had no intention then of writing any more.

However, to everyone's surprise——certainly mine——the books wouldn't die! They wouldn't go out of print! They kept selling and selling and selling! These days, people reading them often weren't yet born——in some cases their *fathers* weren't born——when I started writing them.

Finally Doubleday, my publisher, buckled under the pressure and told me I had to write another Foundation book. That scared all sorts of things out of me because I wasn't sure I could get back into the mind of a fellow in his twenties. I wrote all those books between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-nine. Now I'm just a little over thirty!

But I thought I'd try. So I reread the trilogy and started *Foundation's Edge* as soon as I'd finished in an effort to retain the same atmosphere. I think I succeeded. Of course, I've become a better writer since. I hope that shows.

As soon as the advance sales started coming in, Doubleday jumped up and down, clapping its collective hands, and handed me a contract for another novel! This one is the continuation of the Lije Baley stories, *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*, the long-promised third book of that series. It's called *The Robots of the Dawn* and it'll appear, I think, this October. I like it and my editors like it. I hope it has some success, too. Apparently Doubleday is certain of it, because before I was quite finished they handed me a contract for yet another novel! I don't know how long this trend will continue.

You're very fond of your robot stories. . . .

Yes, I am. In a way, I'm the grandfather of the modern robot story, because I invented the Three Laws of Robotics. In doing so, in the March 1942 issue of *Astounding Science-Fiction* on page 100——I looked it up, so I could be sure of the exact page——I used the word "robotics" for the first time in the history of

the world! I *invented* that word! I didn't *know* I was inventing it——I thought that *was* the word. I get the credit now for my invention, mostly because I insist! After all, I have to have *some* deed that I can credit to myself as contributing to the history of science——and that's my contribution!*

Arthur C. Clarke came up with the idea of geo-synchronous Earth satellites years before their time. . .

In 1945. Too bad he never made any money off it, poor guy! Now he's probably just the richest man in Sri Lanka.

You're not doing so badly yourself.

Yeah, but Clarke's book *2010* was ahead of mine on the best-seller list! Well, I'll get him some day.

It's taken you 252 books to reach immediate best-seller status. Granted, people point to the Foundation trilogy as a classic, but a lot of the 252 books you've put out to date have been things like Isaac Asimov's Guide to the Bible, *Asimov on astronomy, Asimov on this or that, compilations or anthologies, instead of what some people call "real books." And you pride yourself on being prolific. Do you think there's any contradiction between prolificacy and high quality?*

Generally if you're that prolific, the quality has to suffer. No one can write as well quickly as he can write slowly, with thought. But in my case I have no choice. I long ago realized it was impossible for me to take thought, so I just do the best I can. If I wrote slowly I wouldn't do any better. That doesn't mean that the stuff I write quickly is *good*, you understand. But if I wrote it slowly it wouldn't be any better. So I might as well be prolific!

How many drafts does one of your short stories or novels go through?

Two. These days, now that I have my word processor, I edit each page as I write it, so there's only one.

From reading your editorials, you seem to have resisted word processors for some time.

Yes, but now that I've got into them I like them. But I've *not* abandoned my typewriter. I still do first drafts of my novels in the old-fashioned way, on sheets of paper. I then do final copy on the word processor and edit it there. Instead of editing with pen and ink and retyping, I retype it onto the word processor as it is and edit it page by page as I go.

My shorter pieces I do on the word processor to begin with. It makes for cleaner copy and it encourages me to make editorial changes, because it's easier to do that on a word processor.

When you were persuaded to lend your name to a science-fiction magazine back in 1977, what were your expectations?

They were not high. I felt——and I told this to the publisher, Mr. Joel Davis——that fans would resent a science-fiction magazine being named after a living author, It would look as though I were trying for self-aggrandizement, and there might be trouble getting other authors to write for it, not wanting to contribute to my self-aggrandizement.

But Joel Davis wouldn't hear of any other arrangement. At that time he had two mystery magazines——*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*——and he was simply determined to keep up the tradition and issue

* Asimov's memory fails him here: he used the word "robotics" even earlier. It first appeared in *Astounding Science-Fiction* for May 1941, page 53. He also coined the adjectives "robotic" (*ibid.*, p. 50) and "robotical" (*Amazing Stories*, February 1942, p. 227) and the term "roboticist," an expert in making and operating robots (*Super Science Stories*, September 1940, pp. 70 and 72).

a science-fiction magazine associated with the name of an author.

So he talked me into it and he did it. And to my astonishment, my fears were not realized. People didn't feel I was promoting myself. For one thing, I write the editorials and there's a determined self-mockery in them, so I'm forgiven.

It's interesting that both your magazine and Analog *are published by Davis, but they seem to have very different tones about them.*

That's deliberate. At the time my magazine started, *Analog* was published by Conde-Nast. Several years afterwards Conde-Nast lost interest, and Joel Davis bought it with the understanding that it would be kept under separate editorial control and that *Analog's* aura would not be changed. And it hasn't been. Mr. Stanley Schmidt, who is now the editor, was the editor under Conde-Nast and, although there have been superficial changes in cover design, etc., the interior remains entirely as Stanley Schmidt wants.

My magazine is less serious, largely because that's the tone I deliberately set. I'm not a very serious person. Yet at the same time I think we've developed a lot of very fine new writers, and I'm very glad of that. Occasionally, we even win an award as a result, and that's pleasing, too.

The science-fiction world has changed tremendously since you were a young whipper-snapper just starting out. What advice would you give to a young person today who wanted to be a science-fiction writer?

The advice remains the same now as then, although I think the task is, if anything, even harder than when I was a young whipper-snapper. There are more people trying, so the general level of writing is higher. On the other hand, the rewards are greater, too. But there are three pieces of advice:

First, you've got to read science-fiction so you'll know what it is you must write! You've got to read with study and care in order to understand what the successful writer is doing and how he goes about doing it.

Next, you've got to write and you've got to write *a lot!* You can learn only by writing and watching the story build or break apart under your own fingers. There is no other school than your own writing.

Then, having read a lot and written a lot, you must screw yourself up to withstand disappointment, because the life of a writer in 99% of the cases for 99% of the time is nothing but the cruelest disappointment. If you can't take disappointment, then you'll never be a writer. And if you can't take it, perhaps that's the best sign that you *aren't* a writer!

Do you think that science-fiction today is formulaic, or is it pretty open-ended?

That depends on the writer. As in all fields of art, the poor artist is invariably formulaic. It's the one who breaks through the boundaries and stakes out new territory who makes it open-ended. In science-fiction, the good writers are experimenting and staking out new territory all the time. I'm not referring to myself here. I staked out new territory back in the 1940's and 1950's and now I build on what I've done. But other, younger, writers go far beyond me, do things I can't do. They are the ones upon whom the future of science-fiction depends.

Yet it seems you've written your share of fresh short stories and novels in recent years . . .

It's kind of you to say so, but I'm never sure that I can seriously say that because I write these things with the same old brain I've had all my life. What we need, every once in awhile, is new brains. That's the importance of the succession of generations. It'd be nice to live forever, but if everyone did, that'd put an end to evolution, to change. The world would become very boring. I'm afraid death is the price we pay for improvement.

In the last ten or fifteen years there's been a big influx of women writers into science-fiction. There were also some back in the 1930's and 1940's, but apparently they had to write under male pseudonyms, such as Andre Norton, or else hide behind initials and use androgenous names, such as C. L. Moore and Leslie F. Stone. All this tended to obscure the fact that there really were women in the field at that time. Was there ever any necessity for this subterfuge then? Did the women really have *to obscure their feminine identity?*

Yes, in the early days science-fiction was a male chauvenist field of unimaginable intensity. For one thing, it was "understood" by everyone that science was not for women. Science was exclusively male. Furthermore, adventure stories were not for women. They were exclusively male, too. Everyone knew that women read only mush. Therefore science-fiction, which was essentially adventure stories involving science, was *doubly* not for women!

Besides, most of the readership of science-fiction magazines in their first decade or two of existence consisted of male adolescents who were, by and large, misfits because they were overly intellectual. They were shunned by their peers and they were afraid of girls—I remember that well! Therefore they didn't *want* girls in science-fiction stories, and they didn't want women writing them.

It wasn't until around 1960 that women really became a force in the field. Now, of course, I would say that of the *new* writers there, those who've entered it in the 1970's and 1980's, there are more women than men in the top ranks. They consistently win awards and they consistently emphasize characterization, society, emotion, rather than the old-fashioned science lectures and mindless action which used to be the substance of science-fiction. That's all to the good! They've brought a much needed leaven into science-fiction.

But there's room for men, too! We mustn't ever think that if we allow women in somewhere, the men are therefore kicked out. By the fact that there are both, the status of men is improved too, because now males don't have to indulge in mindless action if they don't want to. They can now compete with women in creating well written stories with depth of characterization and some feeling of emotion. Why not? If they learned that from women, they're all the better as writers!

Do you think editors in the 1930's would have rejected stories if they'd known they had been written by women?

Not really, but some would've insisted on a male pseudonym.

So, the women authors didn't need to be told? In a sense they knew it anyway, and instinctively obscured their sex?

Sure, just as there were times in the 1930's when there were Jewish science-fiction writers who wrote under WASP pseudonyms. I refused. John W. Campbell would've perhaps insisted I adopt such a pseudonym, but fortunately I'd already published under my own name in *Amazing Stories*, and thus established it. Therefore he didn't suggest it—and I'm glad, for if he had I'd've refused.

May I ask your reaction to President Reagan's SDI program, the so-called "Star Wars" deterrent?

Well, I'm not really an expert on this technology, and I don't pretend to be. There's always a temptation to sound as if I knew everything, but the truth is, I don't. However, these are my thoughts:

I'm very interested in space, and the expansion of humanity into space. I want to see the transfer of our industries there as far as possible, and the use of space as a source of new knowledge and of energy and raw materials. I want to see homes in space, I want to see humanity *living* in space in a large way. All of this is going to take a great deal of money and a great deal of effort and a great deal of emotional commitment.

Unfortunately, weapons in space will also take a great deal of money, effort and emotional commitment. I don't think we can do both. If we begin to tie our technology into making space an arena for war, and if the Soviet Union does the same, as I suppose they inevitably will, then there's going to be very little, if any, left for the peaceful development which I desire.

For that reason, I'm totally opposed to the project. There are other good reasons for opposing it that other people will undoubtedly put forward. But I say that making space an arena for war will forever blunt the drive for humanity to expand into a larger home.

Where do you think our society is headed?

That's up to humanity to choose. I don't believe in a fixed future, that somewhere there's a book which details everything that's going to happen and that like automatons we simply follow along the path. I think humanity has the ability to choose whether our civilization is going to expand and improve, whether our problems are going to be solved and a better world will be made——or whether we will remain in a position of stasis and eventually collapse and decay.

If we choose to maintain the fiction of the nation-state, where any region of the earth that happens to have political independence can decide for itself what it wishes to do, what its rights are, what its national security entails, all without any consideration for the good or evil effects on humanity as a whole, then civilization is bound, eventually, to destroy itself. I think we must learn serious international cooperation, that we must attack the *real* problems that face humanity——hunger, misery, ignorance——and solve them in a global way, through global efforts.

As the situation worsens here on Earth, there'll be greater and greater pressure for a global attack on problems, simply because it'll become much more obvious, from year to year, that no nation, by itself, can possibly solve all the problems that confront it. However, by the time circumstances force us to understand the importance of international cooperation, it may be too late. So I should like to see human beings resolve to address these problems voluntarily before sheer catastrophe forces them to.

May I end by asking you your favorite limerick?

At a bullfight Jose made his bid.
When his girl friend said "Yes," he was rid
  Of all inhibition,
  And desite the condition,
When the crowd yelled "Ole!" Jose did!

I wrote that!

• • •

"Tips on Tales"——continued from page 313

ever read. Knight's chief fault in assembling *Thirteen French Science-Fiction Stories* is devoting so much space to three mediocre works of Nathalie Charles-Henneberg ("The Blind Pilot," "Moon Fishers" and "The Non-Humans"), which together take up over a third of the collection. All resemble drearily familiar domestic efforts much too closely, and only the last manages to capture and hold the reader's interest. This space would have been much better devoted to some work by Jacques Sternberg, whose fine *Futurs sans Avenirs* I praised here some years ago.* Knight's anthology is unfortunately now out of print. However, with all its faults it is still an interesting item that discerning collectors should hunt for.

**Fantasy Commentator IV*, 150-152 (1980). ——*A. Langley Searles*

Psychobiography of a City Man

Belle C. Cassidy, Ph.D.

This paper was written while the author was in graduate school in Reno, Nevada in 1968, several years before its subject's own autobiographical books began to appear, and is published here for the first time. Dr. Cassidy's doctorate was earned in clinical psychology, and she is licensed as a marriage, family and child therapist. Currently she is in private practice in Sacramento, California.

The Karen Horney tripartite social theory of personality-shaping, i.e., that one moves away from, towards or against other people, depending upon how one has responded to the environmental influences of one's childhood, seems particularly well suited to explaining the personalities of people growing up in crowded environments. Country folk, with fewer around them, can attempt to take people in smaller doses; but the city dwellers have people thrust upon them in great lumps, constantly, with little relief. Thus, a theory of personality which involves a revolving about people seems particularly apt for cities.

The influence not only of this crowded environment but also the relationships of a child's family to it and to their offspring within it may serve to further or to suppress their growth.[1*] To illustrate this, a longitudinal case history of a man whose life has been greatly affected by cities will be attempted.

Isaac Asimov is today famous, a present writer of books on popular science and a past writer of science-fiction. A famine in Russia in 1922 caused his family to emigrate to the United States when he was two. His father, an accountant, found he could no longer practice his profession here because of the language barrier. He went to work as a knitting mill operator, and later opened a candy store in Brooklyn. The unpleasantness of a social demotion from white-collar professional to blue-collar worker, and then shop-owner, was constantly dinned into Isaac's ears. His father wanted to see him in a "safe" scientific profession, respected and employable in any country. This desire, coupled with the traditional Jewish high respect for the professional, caused him to pressure his young son to strive for medicine or some highly regarded scientific field. From the age of six on the boy held a public library card, but not until he was ten was he allowed to read anything except non-fiction.

Isaac's mother was physically a tiny woman, and as addicted to worry as a smoker is to cigarettes. She always seemed to be chain-worrying, and her son had to be careful what he told her. So, since his father lectured and his mother fluttered, Isaac withdrew into a private bookish world where communication was less painful.

These two types of parental pressure caused him, as Horney said,[2] to seek gratification and security in ambitious strivings because of his insecurity and his dissatisfaction in human relations. Isaac's father was a very strict authoritarian. Although he never struck his children he was a martinet at home, a master of the sarcastic, cutting remark, of tongue-lashing and verbal tyranny. Isaac learned from him that people can be controlled by words, and in order to combat (and comprehend) his father, he developed a voracious appetite for vocabulary. He became so proficient in using words that he began writing seriously at the age of twelve. His parents expected him to do well, to be a scholar, and were constantly pushing him toward science and learning. This situation is analogous to one described by Horney as "a combination of smothering love and intimidation, of tyranny and glorification."[3]

*References will be found on page 254.

Isaac's parents so kept his nose to the educational grindstone that he was never allowed to leave New York; he was pressured into reading constantly, during vacations as well as during school time. This had its later effect: he fears the country, animals and pets; he loves cities and is unhappy away from them. His science-fiction novels have no animals, no extra-terrestrials as characters, but are full of people and robots maneuvering around one another, indulging in verbal manipulations in what are really palace intrigues set in the future.

Being intelligent and blessed with an excellent memory, Isaac did very well academically. He finished high school at 15½, college at 19½ and earned his master's degree at 20½. However, he was a teenager during the worst years of the Great Depression. Not only had the family experienced anti-Semitism in Brooklyn, but the customers in his father's store began to tell him stories of their desperation, bad luck and poverty until, being a rather shy youngster, he became afraid to greet people with a "How are you?" for fear of graphical responses. His father was not a good business man and his mother daily pyramided her worries about failure, thus exerting still more pressure on her offspring to succeed.

Isaac withdrew more and more into his studies. He began to walk around the city in a dreamlike state, failing to recognize his father's customers when he encountered them on the street. He earned the reputation of being an anti-social snob. Since this had the effect of cutting him off from people, he learned to draw comfort simply from the presence of crowds, from people *en masse*, and to dislike them as individuals. At the same time he dreamed of success, of being admired, looked up and listened to with admiration and interest. These conflicting needs caused him to develop an attention-getting mechanism. He began, when among groups of people, to play the clown, to carry on a self-deprecating but humorous monologue in a high-pitched voice which was amusing and entertaining. He could keep this up for long periods of time, being well schooled in the use of sharp, witty speech. This made him a desirable life-of-the-party type, and he began to receive invitations. These monologues, interestingly, were composed almost entirely of jokes at or about himself. It was as if this was the most effective way for him to buttress his sense of personal worth while remaining modest. Horney explains this phenomenon with her statements that "The center of psychic disturbances are unconscious strivings developed in order to cope with life despite fears, helplessness and isolation. . . . The essential elements of these are unconscious." And: "Although his self-inflation may be most obvious even to an untrained observer, the neurotic is not aware that he's idealizing himself."[4]

As Isaac Asimov grew older and passed more of the milestones on his educational road, he began to pontificate, and the clown monologues gave way to ones in which he played the role of a learned, impassive elder statesman (at the age of 21!). His self-image was obviously improving; but to his listeners he was in this aspect unwittingly funnier than in his clowning. Isaac didn't notice. He was climbing toward the plateau of scientist, and it was fitting that he act the part.

Horney states that "the outstanding characteristic of neurotic trends is their competitive nature . . . objectives are pursued indiscriminately. [If it is attention] . . . a person must have, he must receive it from friend and enemy, from employer and bootblack."[5] Isaac accepted the desires of his parents that he become a great scientist, never exploring extensively what it was that he himself wanted to do. His early life had fostered so many economic fears and insecurities and made him so lonely that he felt in order to survive he "must stick to the established path at all odds, lest he succumb to the dangers threatening him."[6] For him, these were lack of respect and the earning power of a professional.

He started reading science-fiction magazines at the age of ten when he discovered them in his father's store, and won his first big battle with his father, who had forbidden him to clutter his mind with such trash, by pointing out cleverly that machinery and scientific laboratories were depicted on the magazine covers. Surely his parent would not deprive him of access to science in any form?

Though uncertain, his father would not, and Isaac read these stories avidly. In them, one could leave the unpleasant everyday world and restructure the universe, populate it as desired, and make the outcome happy or sad, depending on one's mood.

This is a classic example of what Horney calls moving away from people. In this situation a person wants neither to belong nor fight, but to keep apart. He has little in common with others; they don't understand him, so he builds his own world.[7] Yet this kind of person has tremendous dependency needs, and has "an unconscious tendency to rate himself by what others think of him. His self-esteem rises and falls with their approval or disapproval, their affection or lack of it."[8]

While in college, Isaac began to write science-fiction successfully. However, all his characters were unreal, wooden, as if he could not identify with, understand or predict the actions of his fellow man in the singular. He then began to deal with large groups of people over longer periods of time, as being infinitely more manipulable and comprehensible. He invented the term "psychohistory" for one of his stories, defining it as "that branch of mathematics which deals with the reactions of human conglomerates to fixed social and economic stimuli . . . . Implicit in all these definitions is the assumption that the human conglomerate being dealt with is sufficiently large for valid statistical treatment . . . a further necessary assumption is that the human conglomerate be itself unaware of psychohistoric analysis in order that its reactions be truly random."[9] Being unable to relate to people on a one-to-one basis, Isaac tried to manipulate them not only in groups at parties, but in city-sized batches in his stories. Significantly, one of his most famous fictional characters is a skinny, ugly man who actually used the guise of a clown, and could manipulate people's emotions to make them like him.[10]

Unconsciously here he was striving to move against people, "accepting and taking for granted the hostility around him and determining, consciously or unconsciously, to fight. . . he rebels in whatever ways are open to him . . . wants to defeat [people] partly for his own protection, partly for revenge."[11]

Asimov is most famous for his series of stories about robots. These he could characterize with extreme delicacy for they weren't people and he could feel at ease with them. Of all his characters, they have the most memorable personalities. And it is through them that he expresses his mechanistic approach to people, whom he treats almost as guidable cams. His protagonist, a robot detective, says in discussing justice, "Justice is that which prevails when *all* the laws are enforced."[12] For Isaac, all people are still the trouble-ridden, unhappy, poverty-striken customers in his father's candy store, and he is afraid to get too close to them. (He did develop a social conscience when in college, but it was for the masses, not for individuals.)

The reason for keeping a barrier between himself and others lies again in his childhood. He could be classified as a Sheldon endomorph, disliking physical exercise of any kind and all sports except as a spectator. He hated fist fights and preferred to compete with his father's weapons—words. He took all his exercise mentally. However, as befitted a future scientist who was going to be different from other men, he preferred to swim against the stream. In the Brooklyn of the 1930's and 1940's, when rabid Dodger fandom was rampant and it was worth your life to root for another local team, Isaac was a Giant fan.

Having obtained his Ph. D. degree in biochemistry, and thus established himself as a scientist unimpeachably, he began to write works on popular science. His science-fiction, which he continued writing for a little time longer, then became not an incursion into an unrespectable writing field, but the idiosyncracy of a very democratic, educated man. When his popular science work began to sell, he dropped this idiosyncracy. Despite all his striving for the cloak of a scientist, as a laboratory researcher Isaac was not creative. He could give charming lectures and did a great deal of writing, but none of it was scientifically innovative. He had achieved the status of scientist, but was not a real one; he was

a fraud (this is his own word), and he used the scientific status as a jumping-off place to do what he really wanted to do——write.

Even here he could not escape the conditioning of his youth to be scientifically-minded. He turns out six popular science volumes a year, every year, and now has a total of over a hundred books to his credit. He uses the guise of a scientist to write popular science, and claims he enjoys doing that more than he ever would writing any kind of fiction. There is a freneticism in the way he turns out these popular science works. Since he has ceased trying to teach or do research, they have become the sole source of his income. He must produce them continually. But since science itself changes rapidly, they risk becoming outdated almost as soon as they are published, and the older ones drop out of the picture rather than continuing to produce royalties.

Asimov's childhood pressures to be a scientist have led to his current overwhelming desire to remain one in some fashion, and this ambition tyrannizes him. He fears he is truly uncreative and merely a weaver-together of others' researches——just a rewrite man. He is afraid that if he stops this frenetic writing he will lose income. Since he is doing little else scientific, he will also lose his mantle of scientific respectability——an untenable thought. Such people have "amazing blindness,"[13] and have so idealized an image of the person they would like to be (but cannot) that they are unable to recognize any value in what they are doing. Isaac seems unaware of the tremendous need for the work he is doing, the dearth of people who do it well, and of his very real talents as a writer of popular science. Horney expresses this succinctly by commenting, "The neurotic is not proud of the human being he is."[14]

Thus Isaac spends inordinate amounts of time at his typewriter, which for him has become a veritable monster to which he must remain forever chained to prove his ability. However, it also serves as a protective monster, for while he is engaged in writing he cannot be expected to receive people, and can continue to be socially aloof.

Isaac married for the first time after knowing his future wife for only five months; she was even more shy and retiring than he, allowing him to make all decisions and never interfering with his writing. His needs caused him to perceive her in this way; however, it is true that she does not interfere.

He has a peculiar form of behavior towards women in public at meetings and parties when neither his wife nor his scientific colleagues are present. Pretending to be a man of the world, he pinches their breasts and bottoms, accompanying his actions with an ebullient flood of compliments and propositions. He then enjoys the attention showered upon him and the envy of the other males present. However, faced by a woman who doesn't treat this behavior as a joke, but responds, he becomes frightened and disappears. He is still unable to relate to people unless in public and on display. Off stage, any one-to-one relationship distresses him. But he is apparently fascinated by the idea of having a woman other than his wife (he even wrote a story about that), and he continues making these abortive overtures.

It is as if the man he is cannot find congruence with the man he would like to be. He would like to be a great scientist, but cannot be that, and he also would like to be a great lover, but the barriers have been up too long for him to step out from behind them and succeed at this either. He is constantly moving towards and away from people in the singular and against them in the plural.

Horney's personality theories make the neurotic far more comprehensible, for she considers that the essential difference between a normal and a neurotic conflict is one of degree.[15] Thus there is not the hopelessness of the Freudian approach to instinctive, uncontrollable behavior, but the very practical idea that with knowledge of the environmental influences and their possible restructuring, some reduction in these neurotic conflicts might be secured. One wonders what the future years will bring to Isaac Asimov.[16]

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(3) *Self Analysis*, p. 44.
(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 40 and 97.
(5) *Ibid.*, p. 41.
(6) *Ibid.*, p. 45.
(7) Horney, Karen: *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945), p.43.
(8) *Ibid.*, p. 54.
(9) Asimov, Isaac: *Foundation* (1951), chapter 1.
(10) This character appeared in "The Mule" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, Nov. and Dec. 1945).
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(12) R. Danoel Olivaw in "The Caves of Steel" (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, Oct.-Dec. 1953).
(13) Horney, Karen: *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950), p. 8.
(14) *Ibid.*, p. 14.
(15) *Our Inner Conflicts*, p. 31.
(16) I am also indebted to Sam Moskowitz for discussions, and for material in his article on Isaac Asimov in *Seekers of Tomorrow* (1966).

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I Remember Asimov

53 YEARS OF MEMORIES

Sam Moskowitz

Few authors, in science-fiction or otherwise, have left us a fuller record of their lives than Isaac Asimov. In addition to the innumerable semi-autobiographical essays and introductions that he loved to write, we have those two massive accounts *In Memory Yet Green* (1979) and *In Joy Yet Felt* (1980), comprising some 700,000 words based on his personal diaries. I have never seen the latter but it is my understanding that they describe all his day-by-day activities from 1938 until nearly the end of his life. Despite that there are happenings, some of them important, that he chose not to mention in print. For the sake of both interested readers and the historical record I shall therefore devote most of my recollections here to these.

One such happening was Asimov's one and only meeting with Hugo Gernsback. This was certainly a notable event in the life of a man who had honed his interest in science-fiction on Gernsback's magazines, and who gained several "Hugos," those rewards for merit affectionately named in Gernsback's honor.

I know there was such a meeting, for I met Ike in the waiting room of the Gernsback Publications office at 25 West Broadway, New York City. I was then managing editor of *Science Fiction Plus*, Gernsback's unsuccessful attempt to reenter the science-fiction field. I made no record of the date at the time, but ancillary events enable me to state that it must have occurred on some weekday between September 1953 and February 1954. Since Ike was then living in Boston, it also had to be during one of his multi-purpose visits to New York for business and family get-togethers. I think the most likely period was during the week of October 18th, because on October 23, 1953 he gave a lecture on writing the science-fiction novel before my science-fiction class at the City College of New York.

I was not aware beforehand that he had an engagement with Gernsback. I simply happened to be walking through the cramped waiting room and there he was, sittingly restlessly, his eyes occasionally shifting to get a better look at our switchboard operator, an attractive, willowy young lady named Millicent Wilde.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, after a second glance had confirmed that it was indeed Isaac Asimov before me.

He shifted nervously in his chair, seemingly not at all his usual outgoing self. "I have a luncheon appointment with Mr. Gernsback," he replied.

"Well, you're in for a good meal," I assured him. "He always lunches at

the swanky Miller's Restaurant in the basement of the Woolworth Building." (For the benefit of younger generations, I should remark that before the Empire State Building was completed the Woolworth Building was the tallest in the city; it was featured regularly on the covers of science-fiction magazines, where it was shown being carried off by flying saucers, crunched by an advancing glacier, and so on. It still retained some of its former glamour, and was only two blocks from Gernsback's office.)

I tried diplomatically to learn the purpose of the meeting, but Ike claimed it was strictly a social occasion. I had my doubts, because many months earlier I had tried to get him to contribute a story to *Science Fiction Plus*. He had demurred, saying that his agent Fred Pohl handled all such business; but when I contacted Fred, he assured me that if I were successful in persuading Asimov to write a story for me, he would not stand in the way. By the Fall of 1953 it didn't really matter, because there were grave doubts about how long the magazine would continue, and it wasn't certain that any story purchased then would ever be used. But nevertheless I was curious.

I asked how things were going for him Boston University, and he turned exceedingly glum. "I'm thinking of quitting," he replied.

"Quitting!" I exclaimed. "You don't go through all those years of college, get your Ph. D. and then quit. You overcome problems and prevail. And what would you do if you quit?"

His answer horrified me: "I'd go into full-time writing."

"But writing isn't a reliable way to make a living," I said. "Even salaried editorial jobs like mine can blow up in your face any minute." (And on February 6, 1954 mine did just that.) "With writing you're rich for a month when you get a few checks in, and then you may write for six months without getting another nickel. I think you'd be making a big mistake."

"I don't know," Ike replied. "You've got to take risks if you want to get anywhere in this world."

At that point Gernsback emerged from his office and the two trekked out. To this day I have never learned what that luncheon was all about. Hopefully at some future time some one will consult Ike's diaries and find out.

Like many others, our conversation suffered a lack of information. What Ike didn't tell me (but later revealed in his autobiography) was that at the time he was under great pressure to reduce his writing and do more laboratory research. By his own admission he was not a good researcher, and the threat of academic action by his superiors was a real one, especially as the decision as to whether he was to be given tenure was pending. (He got it and stayed until 1958, though uncomfortably.) Nor did Ike tell me that he was already making more money at part-time writing than full-time teaching. Had I known these facts, I might well have spoken differently.

When it comes to understanding Isaac Asimov's background, environment and early life, at least through his teen years, I believe my qualifications are better than most, for we share a common heritage. His parents were born in what was known as Russia before World War I, and were Jewish by religion. His father was an accountant. In the early 1920's the family emigrated here and became United States citizens. His father opened a series of candy stores in New York, not too successfully, where the children had to assist him. Ike became fascinated by science-fiction, joined a group of fans called the Futurians, and during the latter part of the Great Depression held an NYA job.* He strove to write science-fiction, and sold his first story, "Marooned off Vesta" (*Amazing Stories*, March 1939) when he was eighteen years old.

My own parents were born in Russia, and they too were Jewish. My grandfather was an accountant. Around the turn of the century my parents emigrated to

*The National Youth Administration (1935-43) was a government agency that sponsored part-time work for unemployed youth, paying about a dollar an hour for up to 20 hours of work a month.

the United States and became citizens. My father also opened a series of candy stores and delicatessens, not too successfully, and for years my siblings and I had to assist him. I became fascinated with science-fiction, joined the Queens Science Fiction League chapter in New York, and worked for the NYA as an assistant gym teacher. I strove to write science-fiction, and sold my first story, "The Way Back" (*Comet*, January 1941), at the age of twenty.

We first met in 1939. This is substantiated by his diary, which cites his going to the May 7, 1939 gathering of the Queens SFL chapter to meet Charles D. Hornig, who was then editing *Science Fiction* magazine. A photograph of the attendees was taken, and has recently been published;* among others, it shows Hornig, Asimov and myself. It was an auspicious meeting for Asimov to attend. I know, for I wrote an account that was printed in *Fantasy News* (May 14, 1939). In addition to Hornig there were present authors Eric Frank Russell and his wife, visiting from England, Jack Williamson from New Mexico, and Otto Binder of Chicago, the active half of the popular Eando Binder writing team. So were a group of fans who are today becoming the substance of legend, such as Julius Schwartz, Conrad H. Ruppert, Thomas S. Gardner and John Giunta. In all some two dozen people came, a large number for that era.†

Because of the celebrities present who had to be catered to—and I was one of the club officers who took care of this—I had little time to talk with Asimov. He was then already a professional author; I presumed that was the only reason we were letting him in, for the charter of the Queens SFL chapter specified that members of the group now known as the Futurians were not to be members, but instead form their own separate group. Actually Asimov, though a Futurian, was a guest, having been invited by Hornig.

Asimov had originally intended to participate in the activities of the Queens SFL chapter, but when he was ready to do so he found that this restriction had been implemented, and there was no longer one club, but two. By chance, then, he happened first to attend the charter meeting of the Futurian Literary Society, which was held on September 18, 1938 at 730 Nostrand Ave., Brooklyn, which was a Communist Party headquarters. Among those present were Donald A. Wollheim, Fredrik Pohl, John B. Michel, Cyril Kornbluth, Walter Kubilius, Jack Gillespie, Rudolph Castown, Jack Rubinson and Herman Leventman. The group was a front for the Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction, which organization and its publication *The Science Fiction Advance* were dedicated to the promotion of communism in fandom. Reviewing the group in a letter to me dated November 15, 1978 Rubinson (now Jack Robins) stated that "Asimov wasn't interested in politics in the slightest." To outsiders, nevertheless, he was for some years tarred with the red brush. As for himself, he said he enjoyed the company immensely.

At the time of his charter membership in the Futurians, Asimov had already acquired a small reputation in the field through the traditional medium of the readers' department in *Astounding Science-Fiction*. The July 1938 issue carried his letter saying that he was going to write every month. In August his letter raged against science articles, saying that if the magazine carried any at all they should be no more than quarter-paged fillers, one of which was enough for any given issue. In later letters he campaigned against romance in science-fiction, and was contested by one of the few feminine fans of the period, Mary G. Byers. She would later move to New York City where Ike would date her, sometimes on a double date with Cyril Kornbluth, whom she eventually married.

His oratorical skills were launched against Donald Wollheim at the Futurian meeting of November 13, 1938. The nation had been frightened by the Orson

*In the June 1992 *Locus*, p. 45.

†In his eulogies to Isaac Asimov (*Locus*, June 1992 and *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Fall 1992), L. Sprague de Camp states that he first met him at this Queens SFL gathering. However, de Camp was not named as present in the written account, and he does not appear in the photograph. Furthermore, Asimov's diary specifies that his initial meeting with de Camp took place in John W. Campbell's office on June 6, 1939.

Welles radio dramatization of "The War of the Worlds" on October 30th, and the gathering was to feature a debate as to whether mankind was worth saving from the Martians. Asimov took the affirmative, Wollheim the negative. Though a potent debater himself, Wollheim found himself strongly challenged by his opponent's change of pace from tearful lament to side-splitting humor.

Asimov's performance impressed members enough for them to elect him secretary of the association. They were even more impressed by his sale of a short story to *Amazing Stories*. Although Wollheim had sold fiction to *Wonder Stories* and Pohl had sold a poem to *Amazing*, neither had received a cent a word or been paid on acceptance for their work.

As we have noted, in hindsight Asimov claimed he had much fun with the Futurians. From a practical standpoint, he would have been better off with the Queens SFL group. They had as members or honorary members, in reasonably regular attendence, such editors as John Campbell of *Astounding Science-Fiction*, Mort Weisinger of *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Startling Stories*, Charles Hornig of *Science Fiction*, Mary Gnaedinger of *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and Farnsworth Wright of *Weird Tales*. All of these were keys to prospective markets for aspiring writers.

Eventually he may have come to realize this. He might have preferred to join both fan organizations, but that was not possible, since the two were mutually antagonistic; the Futurians wanted to promote communism, and those in the Queens SFL chapter felt politics should be kept out of science-fiction. Asimov's visit to the Queens meeting of May 1939 must have appealed to his apolitical outlook, for by the end of the next year he had severed his Futurian connections.

How this became public knowledge is an interesting story. One of Ike's friends was a Queens SFL member named Scott Feldman, better known today as Scott Meredith. Though only in his teens, he already had aspirations to become a literary agent. Scott had been elected secretary-treasurer of the chapter, and took over the programming of its meetings. He proved phenomenally successful at this. For the meeting of December 1, 1940 such celebrities as authors L. Sprague de Camp, Arthur J. Burks, Malcolm Jameson, Frank Belknap Long and Harry Walton were present, as well as old-time artist Leo Morey. Scott had invited Isaac to attend, but cautioned him not to bring any of his Futurian friends.

In an astonishing letter of acceptance, Asimov said, "You needn't worry about my companions. I'll be there in solitary grandeur. The scientific definition of a Futurian is: 'a guy with whom Asimov has little, if anything, to do.'" He concluded by saying, "And for God's sake don't consider me a Futurian, not if you want to shake my hand!"

At this December meeting, and probably at Scott's urging as a result of reading that letter, Asimov delivered a talk entitled "What a Science Fiction Fan Ought to Be." The letter was quoted in the December 8, 1940 issue of *Fantasy News*, which also summarized his speech: "This popular author . . . condemned the mixing of political schemes and isms with science fiction, and brought out several arguments which proved, he said, that fans cannot influence the editers, and that therefore neither the world with their Utopian ideas. Mr. Asimov recommended that science fiction clubs be social clubs, whose members are joined together by the common bond of science fiction." On the program of the meeting there was also a quiz of 100 questions for attendees, which Asimov won.

World War II put an end to most of these happy gatherings. Asimov went to work for the navy in Philadelphia, along with Heinlein and de Camp. During the war years he worked a six-day week, married, and had less time for writing or for keeping up with friends in the field. Then he was drafted into the army and went through basic training.

In 1945 he returned to college to complete his graduate work and to fit himself for some civilian occupation. His "Foundation" stories had been appearing sporadically in *Astounding*, and now the volume of his writing increased. Asimov

resumed his fan activities by attending the Fifth World Science Fiction Convention (the Philcon), held in Philadelphia August 30-September 1, 1947. There he became reacquainted with many of his fellow authors, and met his editor John Campbell in more relaxed surroundings. (Just how relaxed I saw with my own eyes, for when I opened the door to Campbell's hospitality suite late one evening there was John on all fours, barking like a dog.) Uncharacteristically, Asimov did not participate in the convention program, and had not yet formulated some of his later outrageous ploys, so he was not prominently noted in accounts of the affair that appeared in the fan press.

That situation had changed considerably by the time of the New York Science Fiction Conference of July 1 - 3, 1950. This gathering was unique in being sponsored jointly by both a professional and a fan group. The professionals were known as The Hydra Club, and while it flourished it was a privilege to attend its chiefly social meetings of writers and editors involved in science-fiction. Among the regulars were Lester Del Rey, Theodore Sturgeon, Frederik Pohl, Martin Greenberg (of Gnome Press), Judith Merrill, Fletcher Pratt, George O. Smith, Willy Ley, William Tenn (Philip Klass) and David Kyle, as well as such other pros as happened to be in town. Heading The Hydra Club was L. Jerome Stanton, assistant editor of *Astounding Science-Fiction.*

The sponsoring fan group was the Eastern Science Fiction Association (ESFA) in Newark, New Jersey, of which I happened then to be Director. In addition to lending the conference importance by linking it with the ESFA, which was at the time prominent and well thought of, my task was to help make up a program for the affair. Asimov was then still living in Massachusetts, and we wanted to get him down to the conference. On June 24, 1950 he replied positively to my invitation: "Thank you for your invitation to speak on 'robotics,' which I accept. You may judge the narrowness of your squeak from the fact that I would have insisted on speaking even if I weren't invited. . . . As you say, I am an excellent speaker, despite the fact that I am usually on the humorous side." Speak he did, on July 2nd; his talk, "Robots and Thinking Machines," was extremely well received, but it was not this talk which was primarily remembered by attendees. What instead remained indelibly in their memories was Asimov's unscheduled participation in the dinner held later that evening.

Not quite a year later (May 21, 1951) *Life* magazine presented its five million readers with a nine-page write-up on science-fiction titled "Through the Interstellar Looking Glass." One of its illustrations showed the scene at that dinner. It is a double-paged spread, so well reproduced that over a hundred fans, authors and editors are clearly recognizable. Staring soggily up from one of the back tables is Isaac Asimov. Seated at the long head table is toastmaster L. Jerome Stanton and various celebrities, including William Tenn. Each was introduced and spoke briefly. William Tenn's talk was full of humor. Asimov, who normally never drank, had been plied with enough innocuous-tasting potations by "friends" to be on an alcoholic trip. Abruptly he stood up and countered one of Tenn's witticisms with a potent impromptu barb. Unfazed, Tenn replied in kind. And thus began one of the most hilarious exchanges ever to take place at a science-fiction affair. Back and forth the quips went for fully a quarter of an hour, with the diners enthralled and Stanton too helpless with laughter to call for order. Both men have been to many science-fiction affairs since, but have never equalled their original spontaneous repartee that was on a par with that of the best stand-up professional comedians. (Unfortunately the exchange was not recorded.)

The Hydra Club was apparently impressed by my ability to lure Asimov, who preferred to avoid travel (and had never flown in an airplane in his life) to the New York area. But this had not been difficult; I knew that he did periodically visit relatives here, also using the opportunity to canvas the local editors who bought or possibly might buy stories from him. I lost no time in exacting another promise from him to speak, this time at an ESFA meeting. The inducements

I used may be surmised from his letter to me of July 4, 1950, which read in part:

"You're so flattering. You're so intriguing. You're compelling. . . . Call for me in a car, huh? Fill me full of food, hey? Wife also, hum? Take me home in a car as well, eh? . . . You've won me over. I accept your invitation. . . . Well, joking aside (I also joke front and back), I would be glad to speak for your group on some appropriate occasion."

I gave him four dates as possibilities; then, finding he would be in New York over the coming Labor Day weekend, I wrote him on August 17, 1950: "Maintaining the staunch tradition that ESFA will do virtually *anything* to make its feature speakers happy, I have dictatorially and arbitrarily gone over the heads of a majority of the voting members of ESFA and switched our meeting date back to the first Sunday in September . . . for your especial convenience. Please think nothing of it, for it will merely mean that I will be impeached and since my term has only one month to go and I shall suspend business at a good part of the September meeting, I do not fear this."

Asimov did not need to be chauffered, for he had bought a car of his own, and drove to the area with his wife Gertrude. As expected, he gave an excellent talk, which was titled "Science Fiction Has Gone Respectable, but Who the Hell Wants to be Respectable?". During the question and answer period which followed the audience confronted him with the possibility that rather than science-fiction having become respectable, the rest of the world had become disreputable.

As at the New York Conference, the most interesting event that day was not Asimov's speech, but what happened later. Following the meeting he was taken to Newark's Hickory Grill, then one of the best restaurants in the city; and after dinner the Asimovs and a number of ESFA members assembled at my home. There, surrounded by the floor-to-ceiling shelves that housed my collection, the conversation flowed freely and discussion was lively and provocative.

At that time a shroud which owners claimed Jesus Christ had been buried in was being displayed in the city. This was commented on, and I recall asking, "Since no sample of Christ's handwriting seems to have survived, does anyone know whether Christ *could* read or write?" The closest anyone could come to an answer was Asimov's hypothesis that since Christ had been born of Jewish parents, since a Jewish boy would be bar-mitzvahed at the age of thirteen, and since part of that ceremony would have involved the boy's reading from the scriptures, circumstances seemed to indicate that Christ had been taught to read, and hence also probably to write.

The evening was punctuated by a dramatic incident that has never been related. I happened to bring up the fact that Asimov had been a member of the Futurians, and out of curiosity asked him, since their meetings had been held at a Communist headquarters, if he had ever been requested to contribute to the Young Communist League. There was a pregnant pause. Asimov, who up until then had been talking volubly, abruptly stopped for a moment before replying, "I never was a member of the Futurians."

"What do you mean?" I responded. "Of course you were! You not only were a member, you were once secretary of the organization."

Again he denied it.

I arose and began to walk towards my filing cabinet, saying, "I have a file of *Futurian News* here, and it says you were a charter member and secretary of the group." I started to open a drawer in the cabinet when suddenly Gertrude flung herself in front of me with clenched fists, shouting, "Anyone who wants to hurt Isaac has to get past me first!" I closed the filing cabinet and changed the subject. Quickly Isaac and Gertrude returned to affability.

Evidently the topic had struck a sensitive nerve. This was a time when an anti-Communist furor, on which Senator Joseph McCarthy would soon capitalize, was sweeping the nation. During that era it would have been very detrimental to anyone in academe if someone made public his connection with a leftist group——past

or present. (Some years later, in a less restrictive political climate, Asimov dealt with his membership in the Futurians freely in his book *In Memory Yet Green*.)

My letter of appreciation for his talk ended by saying, "Also thanks for being a very good sport in regards to my own special brand of ribbing which can occasionally become obnoxious." In his reply of September 17th Asimov wrote: "I had a damned good time at the ESFA. You know that I enjoy talking, but besides that the audience was kind to me, the dinner that followed was delicious and the session at your place was fascinating. I have since dreamed myself of becoming rich and getting a room lined with fantasy of all sorts. . . . You were at no time even anywhere close to being obnoxious, but were the perfect host throughout. Thank you for the kind words on my driving. [I had remarked that he coped well with city traffic when he drove me home from the restaurant.] I have almost 1100 miles on my buggy now, and enjoy it more than ever."

Asimov's ability to generate spontaneous humor at the New York Science Fiction Conference had not gone unnoticed. Almost the entire Philadelphia Science Fiction Society had attended, and when they sponsored the Eleventh World Science Fiction Convention (September 4 - 7, 1953) he was their first choice to be master ceremonies at the banquet, a post which he accepted. This was the first occasion that Hugos were awarded, and Asimov became famous for his annual complaints at not receiving any himself. These continued over the years until he was finally given one for his "Distinguished Contributions to the Field" (Washington, 1963) and another for "The All-Time Best Series, Foundation" (Cleveland, 1965). To a degree these were contrived awards, tailored to reward him not just for his writing, but for contributions to the many conventions in which he had participated.

September 22, 1953 is an historically important date in the history of science-fiction. It was then that the first college-level course on science-fiction began. There had been at least one university-sponsored lecture on the subject previously, which I had presented under the direction of Benjamin Hampton on December 13, 1950; but that of 1953 was a formal course with a syllabus for which students had to register, pay to attend, and for which they received college credit.* I was in charge of teaching this, and invited prominent experts in the field to speak during the classes. For a lecture on the science-fiction novel I wanted Isaac Asimov, since in the previous three years he had had published a trio of original novels (*Pebble in the Sky*, *The Stars Like Dust* and *Currents of Space*.) Unfortunately I was not able to offer him any fee, or even pay his travelling expenses. That problem was solved by Ike's own cooperative generosity. After having been treated so well at the Philadelphia convention, he was in a mood to be magnanimous, and drove to New York at his own expense. He showed up promptly on the appointed date, October 23, 1953. Our classroom had a giant blackboard on wheels and a plentiful supply of chalk. With these, he diagrammed the technical components of the novel and expounded on them with singular clarity. Untypically, his lecture was not punctuated with humor, but all business from start to finish. He dealt edifyingly with locale, plot, characterization, motivation, action and the importance of their integration. I myself was so enthralled that it wasn't until he had finished that I realized I had made no effort to take any notes, let alone record the whole talk. On the basis of this experience, I can state unequivocally that whatever his shortcomings as a researcher may have been, Isaac was a top-level teacher, and that his superiors at Boston University should have recognized this.

It is interesting to note that he had agreed to appear in my class as a guest lecturer as early as June 2, 1953, with the date left to be arranged. He had also expressed willingness to speak on *any* facet of science-fiction writing——that of the novel, as I said, being my own suggestion.

Ike didn't always have to be coaxed to speak at gatherings——sometimes

*For a detailed account of this, see *Fantasy Commentator V*, 3 (1983).

it was the other way around. An example of this was the Metropolitan Science Fiction Conference (the Metrocon), held October 23 - 24, 1954. David Kyle and I were co-chairmen of the event, and from the standpoint of quality the program turned out to be probably the best ever put on in a New York City s-f gathering. The convention theme was "What's Wrong with Science-Fiction?", and spwakers on that subject included William Sloane, Murray Leinster, Cyril Kornbluth, Edmond Hamilton. Leigh Brackett, Thomas Calvert McClary, Lloyd Eshbach, Alan Nourse, James Blish, Harry Harrison, Anthony Boucher, Lester del Rey, William Tenn, Lin Carter, Alan E. Nourse and Thomas Gardner.

While visiting his family in New York Asimov happened to hear about the convention. This, he felt, was an opportunity to show his father that he was a big-name author and speaker. But to his chagrin he learned that there was no room for him on the program. In desperation he telephoned me and explained his ego problem. I replied that it was impossible to fit him in on the first day, but that I would try to do so on the second. This was accomplished by cancelling Martin Greenberg's talk, "Are Science Fiction Authors Grasshoppers?" and substituting Ike with "How is the Foundation in Science Fiction?".

Asimov attended on October 23rd without his father, but even in the latter's absence did not equal his behavior at the 1950 New York Conference. In the lobby there he had approached Judith Merrill (then married to Fred Pohl), obviously pregnant with her child Ann, and after kissing her and pinching her fanny simulated a series of vigorous punches towards her abdomen. His behavior at this period, when out of sight of his wife and in the presence of another woman—her age, appearance or state of matrimony making no difference—was a flurry of hands that hugged, fondled and pinched. Today's feminists may be surprised to hear that somehow he always got away with such conduct. I never saw any of his victims ever smash him one, as he hid successfully behind the facade of Good Old Ike.

His father Judah did show up the next day, and Isaac gave him a double-header. First there was his talk, leavened with humor, and when the last speaker had concluded, he took the podium and gave a stand-up comic routine he titled "We Go Away Happy," which ended the impressive program with a delightful light touch.

On October 26th he wrote me, saying in part, "I had a swell time at the Metrocon and wish to thank you for knocking your speakers' schedule out of shape Sunday to accomodate me. My father got a great kick out of it and since he did start me on science-fiction and buy me my first two typewriters I felt I had to do something for the old boy. Thanks again for helping."

In general most critics were kind to Asimov, but there was one notable exception, the fan Henry Bott. Bott was best known in the Chicago area, where he was a close friend of W. Lawrence Hamling. He had contributed to Hamling's semi-professional magazine *Stardust* in 1940, and had sold an article to *Astounding Science-Fiction* ("High Vacua," November 1941). He contributed articles to Hamling's later magazines *Space Travel* and *Imagination*, and in 1954-58 wrote a book review column for the latter. He loved to ravage Asimov's books, and his account of *The Caves of Steel* (arguably that author's best novel to date) was particularly cutting. Ever sensitive to anything written or spoken about him, positive or negative, Asimov replied in an article titled "Why Can't the Author Meet His Critics" (*Peon*, November 1954).*

De Camp came to the defense with a letter in the May 1955 issue of *Imagination*. Asimov also had a defender I was unaware of until I received his letter of May 17, 1955: "Just got the May 1955 issue of *Peon* and read your beautiful article on my short feud with Henry Bott. You defended me a lot more boldly and strenuously than I myself would have had the courage to and I am grateful for your

*Over the years Asimov's reaction to hostile reviewing changed: "Like all writers, I fume at bad reviews, and a fellow writer (Lester del Rey) once gave me some very good advice. 'When you read a review,' he said, 'at the very first unfavorable adjective, read no more and throw it away.' I have done that faithfully. . . . I also throw away good reviews, by the way, but I read them first." ——*Rotten Reviews II: a Literary Companion* (1987), p. 90.

support. . . . There was a time after I read the anti-Asimov editorial in *Imagination* when I felt pretty sick. After all, it could be awful good fun for some of the fans to tie a can on me, whereas who the hell is interested in picking on a guy like Bott."

At the time I wasn't receiving *Peon*, but eventually I obtained a copy of the relevant issue and discovered what Asimov was referring to. It turned out to be an article titled "Accuracy and Simple Fact," written by *Henry* Moskowitz. (Henry——no relation of mine——was an active fan of the period, residing in the agricultural town of Three Bridges, New Jersey, where his father ran a poultry farm. He is today better known as Henry Morrison, a prominent literary agent.) I had received credit where none was due. There is no indication in my files showing how this situation was straightened out, but I am sure it finally was.

In 1957 I began selling a series of magazine articles about historically important science-fiction authors, which collectively made up my book *Explorers of the Infinite* (1963). The series continued in *Amazing Stories* with accounts of prominent modern authors in the field, which were later collected in *Seekers of Tomorrow* (1966). Among these was, logically, Isaac Asimov. Now, the advantage I had in writing these essays was owning and having read not only all these authors' genre work to date, but whatever biographical data on them existed. I knew most of the writers personally, and was familiar with their backgrounds. In preparation for writing, I would either interview those who were accessible, or send them a list of questions whose answers were needed to supplement my information. Sometimes I did both.

My approach to Asimov was slightly different. Of course I already owned all his science-fiction, and had been in communication with him since 1939. But an opportunity for further information was about to present itself. My wife, who practiced medicine under her maiden name of Christine Haycock, specialized in general surgery. In October 1961 she was scheduled to take her board examinations in Boston. Since Asimov lived in the area, it would provide an excellent opportunity for her meeting and interviewing him. This she did. Virtually all the material she obtained was then either unpublished or more detailed than previous data. (Incidentally, she was as successful in her examination, which she passed to become the first board-certified woman surgeon in the state of New Jersey.)

I also interviewed Isaac's brother Stanley, who was the night city editor of *Newsday*, the leading newspaper of Long Island. Of course he was immensely knowledgable about his brother, and his information provided a completely different perspective. In addition to learning new aspects of Isaac's life, I was able to confirm and amplify his statements to Christine. Some of Stanley's remarks were never published. Among these are: "Isaac is a tremendous egotist; the world revolves around him." "He's a bit on the thrifty side——a careful man with the dollar, and with the dime and penny, too." The first science-fiction story that Ike read was "Barton's Island" by Harl Vincent (*Amazing Stories*, August 1929). His favorite story of all time was S. P. Meek's "Drums of Tapajos" (*Amazing Stories*, November 1930 - January 1931). In 1961 his favorite old-time s-f authors were E. E. Smith and Nat Schachner; among the moderns, he liked Robert Heinlein, Frederik Pohl, L. Sprague de Camp, Damon Knight and Arthur C. Clarke. Stanley named Ike's closest friends during his college days as Cyril Kornbluth, Frederik Pohl and Scott Feldman. Ike has always been very cautious. He will try doors repeatedly to be sure they are locked, and check gas-stove burners to be sure they are off.

Isaac cannot stand anyone's changing or cutting his work. Once, at his brother's request, he wrote an article describing how the Earth would look from outer space. The paper held it for six months, and as a result had to edit it to bring it up to date before printing it. Isaac steadfastly refused ever to read the article. He also has his magazine works excerpted and bound in hard covers.

Both Isaac and his father were fervent but secretive fans of the New York Giants baseball team. Judah Asimov was a steady type, fond of expounding

Biblical tales to emphasize a moral. He was a busy father, and never spent much time with the children except when they were helping him in the store. Although an authoritarian, he never laid a hand on the children, leaving corporal discipline entirely to their four-foot-ten mother. She was a worrier by nature, always successful in finding something to be concerned about. She and Judah got on well. Ike's sister was no pushover, and the two fought like cats and dogs. He was seldom considerate about other people's feelings. His ability to irritate others has frequently been mentioned, even by himself, and Stanley revealed that if he couldn't get his way he would go into "a brooding sulk," which would persist until something positive suddenly snapped him out of it.

Stanley, on the contrary, was easy going. He had an early interest in editing, and worked on the staff of the New York University newspaper. After study at the Columbia School of Journalism, Isaac helped him get his first job, which was with Trans Radio Press. Richard Wilson, Cyril Kornbluth and David Kyle were all employed by that company, and Stanley worked with them. At the time of my interview Stanley was 32, living in suburban Long Island, and married. His wife Ruth was a science-fiction reader, but when she met him did not know what, if any relationship he had to Isaac Asimov. The couple had three children.

There was a third phase to researching my article on Isaac. On October 30, 1961 I wrote him, thanking him for his courtesy in speaking with Christine, and asking if I might fill in some information gaps with an interview when he next came to New York City. I did not tell him I had talked with his brother, saving that for a surprise. After he consented, I also sent him a list of sixteen further queries, which he answered promptly and fully.

Most of this material was used, but I find a few interesting items remain unprinted: It was Horace Gold, he said, who suggested the idea of a robot detective for *The Caves of Steel*, and "the Malthusianism of the novel was Gold's idea, too." In the Foundation series, the idea of Hari Seldon coming back at crucial points was Campbell's. "Even as late as 'The Naked Sun' [*Astounding Science-Fiction*, October - December 1956] I incorporated some of his notions in the serial. Continuing the Foundation stories after World War II was my own idea, though Campbell didn't discourage it."

My final question was whether he had a long-range goal in mind, and he replied, "My current long-range goal is to write all the books I feel the urge to write; to learn all I can about the universe and get it all down in books; to be recognized as the hardest-trying science-writer in the world, if I can't be recognized as the best."

My article, titled "Isaac Asimov: Genius in the Candy Store," appeared in the April 1962 issue of *Amazing Stories*, and may have been the first critical/biographical account of the man to be published. Isaac wrote me on March 5th that it pleased him, saying, "I certainly found it flattering enough. Even a man of my own monstrous vanity is forced into a blush. Thank you for your very kind opinion of me." There was one minor error in it, he pointed out: I had said that Campbell had threatened to ban his work from *Astounding* if he gave it free to competing magazines. (He had donated "The Secret Sense" to Wollheim's *Cosmic Stories*, where it appeared in March 1941.) Campbell did express disapproval, but it was actually Orlin Tremaine who threatened to ban him from *Comet* if he did not exact payment of some sort from Wollheim——which Asimov ultimately did. (This error was corrected in time for book publication.)

There is an interesting sequel to this matter. I myself liked "The Secret Sense," and included it in my anthology *Futures to Infinity* (1970). I gave forty dollars for the privilege, which Asimov told me was eight times what Wollheim had finally paid him, along "with a rather ill-natured letter." Ike himself thought the story was "lousy," and consented to my using it only to procure the amount he felt he should have received when he first sold it.

Early in 1965 I was approached by Ramsey Short, a moving picture producer for the BBC, who wanted to know if I would act as consultant for a half-hour film on science-fiction. (Short had contacted me on the recommendation of the Film Board of Canada, which I had assisted two years earlier in producing a picture about machines that could think, *The Living Machine*.) He envisaged interviewing on film a number of prominent figures in the field. I named several celebrities I thought would cooperate, offered to contact some of them myself, and suggested his using my name as an endorsement of the project. These suggestions were adopted, and interviews with Arthur C. Clarke, Hugo Gernsback (his only known appearance on film) and John R. Pierce (who helped complete the Telestar project at the Bell Laboratories) were obtained.

Everyone, including myself, was visited by a camera crew at their home or laboratory, and the film, titled *Horizons*, turned out well. It was shown in England and also on public television in the United States and Canada. Everyone in it participated as expected—with the exception of Isaac Asimov. During this period, when outside science-fiction circles, he was trying overly hard to play the role of a serious, deep-thinking scientist. So instead of being his incisive, witty and playful self, he spoke very slowly in the film, pondering each question at length, lowering his voice to seem more authoritative, and attempting a profundity that seemed ludicrous to those who knew him. I heard him speak this way at several of his early TV appearances, and if had kept it up he would have got very few paying lecture invitations. Those who had never heard him speak at science-fiction gatherings might well have concluded this was his natural manner, but they would scarcely have been impressed. Fortunately he either outgrew or deliberately abandoned this pose.

On July 3, 1970, Asimov left his wife and children in their Boston area home and took up residence at the Hotel Oliver Cromwell in New York City. Divorce proceedings began. At the time I was working as vice-president of *Quick Frozen Foods* magazine, which was owned by the Cahners Publishing Company. Periodically Cahners, whose headquarters was in Boston, would call meetings of their editorial and sales heads in the New England area, which I had to attend. On October 22, 1971, when I was at one of these, I happened to buy a copy of a local newspaper, *The Boston Herald-Traveller*. As I thumbed through it, my attention was seized by a headline on page 12: "Mrs. Asimov 'Barely Got By' on $25,000." The story, bylined by Bill McCaffrey, was based on Gertrude Asimov's examination at a support hearing at the Middlesex Probate Court, where she testified that this was how much her husband was giving her, and that $75,000 was actually needed to cover her expenses. (In 1971, it should be remembered, $25,000 purchased, conservatively, what $60,000 does today.)

She was being cross-examined by her husband's attorney, George Michael. "Is it your position you cannot get along on $25,000 a year in a mortgage-free home?" he asked. "Just barely," she replied. She was then asked where she obtained her money before Isaac left her. She testified that Isaac would put money in a box in their bedroom, replenishing it as needed, and that she was free to take whatever she wanted. She said she had never counted how much money was in the box at any given time.

Isaac, it turned out, had left her their residence at 45 Greenough Avenue, West Newton, where she resided with her son and daughter. He had also given her $165,000 in savings accounts, which was then earning an estimated $7,000 annual interest. He had additionally agreed to pay all family medical bills, and the full expenses of college-level education for both children. Apparently all of these commitments were being met.

Asimov himself was called to the stand and asked what his income was. He testified that as a writer his income varied from year to year, but that in 1970 he had grossed $205,000 from writing and lecturing. His lawyer stated that his annual contributions, including medical and educational expenses, were $50,000.

Some years later I discreetly asked Isaac how he had made out at this hearing. He told me the court had actually reduced his wife's alimony, though he did not say by how much. He also stated that he had continued to pay her the original amount despite the court's verdict. It should be mentioned that most people were quite surprised by news of the divorce, for the couple had always seemed to get along well. Gertrude herself was well liked. She died a few years ago.

On April 4, 1973 Isaac telephoned me with important news. He had, he said, made a list of all the science-fiction stories he had read from 1930 to 1939 that still stood out clearly in his mind. He had taken this list to Doubleday, his publisher, who had agreed in principle to publish a massive anthology of 25 stories to be called *Before the Golden Age*. But there was one serious problem. All of the stories were in relatively rare magazines which he no longer owned and did not know how to find. Could I help him?

As diplomatically as I could I said, "You know, Isaac, I'm always glad to do you a favor, even a big one, but what you're asking here would be really expensive. The time it would take me to locate these magazines would have to come from my own editing and writing. It would be very costly for me."

"No one's asking you to do it for nothing," he replied. "I'll pay you! I'll pay you for your time and for the cost of the magazines." He said he would send me his list of stories, which he did the same day. In an accompanying letter he asked for my "professional opinion" on whether they were worth anthologizing, or whether they were too well known to use.

On April 6th we had a long telephone conversation. I told him that, with a few exceptions, he had made excellent selections. Most of them had never been reprinted because they were of novelette length, and past anthologists had tended to use shorter stories. I did feel, however, that "Green Hell" by Arthur K. Barnes (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, June 1937) was inferior to most of the others on his list and would weaken the book. (He deleted it.) I also pointed out that Don A. Stuart's "Who Goes There?" had been the title story in a Shasta book, and was still in print in another anthology, *Adventures in Time and Space* (1946). For this I suggested substituting Campbell's "The Brain Stealers of Mars," which had a very similar plot. Asimov's original selection of Ross Rocklynne's "At the Center of Gravity" was replaced by the same author's "The Men and the Mirror." I had used the former in my own collection *Exploring Other Worlds* (1963), and there was no point in repeating the story when there was available another in the Deveral and Colby series of equal quality that had not been anthologized. We also talked about financial arrangements.

In a letter to me dated the same day Asimov wrote: "It was good to talk to you just this minute, and I am delighted you are so enthusiastic about the prospective anthology. I had thought of it only as a very personal thing, but talking to you makes me realize it could be a very important book from the standpoint of science fiction history. I was astounded to hear that so many of them have never been reprinted in any form whatsoever."

He offered me $300 to help obtain copies of the stories, and another $200 to pay for them. I told him I thought I could assemble them in sixty days. (The reason for my confidence was that several local conferences were in the offing, and between their hucksters' rooms and the dealers with whom I was acquainted, my chances looked fairly good.) As it turned out, I was able to acquire the needed magazines in a few weeks. I also made out a list of the copyright notices; Asimov arranged for all the necessary clearances.

When everything was ready I telephoned him to suggest that since Doubleday's office was only a block from mine, it might be safer, as well as more convenient for him, if he picked them up in person. He agreed. We had lunch together and parted, Ike bearing his booty away in a small suitcase.

Asimov dedicated *Before the Golden Age* to me, and thoughtfully sent me a copy along with a warm personal letter. I have always thought it gave an excel-

lent selection of science-fiction from the thirties. Historians will remember the claim, first by Campbell and later by H. L. Gold and Anthony Boucher, that there was nothing but trash printed before Campbell's editorship. I can still remember Alexei Panshin approaching me, just after the book came out, and confessing that he had believed this until he read *Before the Golden Age*. Yes, he conceded, a lot of good stuff *had* been written earlier.

There is one final aspect of this affair I have not mentioned. Ike had suggested that I might become more deeply involved in his project. He wanted me to write an essay about each of the authors represented in the anthology, and have it published as a collaboration in a separate companion book. But I declined.

"Do you realize how much work would be involved in such a project?" I asked him. "And when it was completed I'd have to share both the credit and the money."

"I'll let you put your name first," he offered. I shook my head. "I don't need it, Ike," I told him.

In 1974 the Public Broadcast System was running a series of plays under the title "The Theater in America." One of these, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, was scheduled for presentation on February 6th. *TV Guide*, for which Asimov wrote from time to time, asked him for an article on it for its February 2nd issue.

In early January he telephoned me. "Sam, I've got a problem," he said. I've an assignment to do an article on Cyrano. I've looked everywhere and I can't locate any extensive information on him except your chapter in *Explorers of the Infinite*. I know you'll hate seeing someone else get paid for what you did, but do you mind if I use your material as a reference and recast it for *TV Guide*?"

"For years writers, fans and scholars have been lifting my stuff without asking permission or giving any acknowledgement, so how can I object to someone who asks so nicely?" I replied.

Isaac thanked me and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"You've already been more than accomodating about speaking at our ESFA meetings," I said, "But if you can, I'd appreciate your working in a plug for *Explorers* in *TV Guide*." He managed to do this. Further, when he reprinted the Cyrano piece in his collection of essays *The Beginning and the End* (1977), he acknowledged *Explorers* as the source.

Over the years Asimov made sporadic appearances at ESFA meetings. When inviting him, I tried always to make the visit one of mutual benefit. On December 3, 1950, for example, though the feature speaker was Theodore Sturgeon, I had arranged with Marty Greenberg of Gnome Press to sell advance copies of Asimov's new book *I, Robot* at the meeting, and Ike was on hand to autograph them.

He also attended the annual open meeting of March 3, 1963, which honored John Campbell for his 25 years as editor of *Astounding/Analog*. Asimov felt that he owed a great deal to Campbell. I am prone to lengthy introductions, and after I gave one for Ike, he opened his talk by saying, "Sam has just told you how much I owe to John Campbell and has said just about everything about me that I can think of. I was going to talk about me, but now I suppose I will have to talk about John. . . . Really, I discovered myself and simply picked him as the first person to inform." As a report on the meeting by Harriet Kochak makes clear, Ike was his usual eubillient self: "Isaac Asimov walked in and signed our copy of *Foundation*, our autograph book, the tablecloth, two neofen, and the manager of the John Birch Society."

The theme for the October 3-4, 1970 ESFA meeting was actually suggested by Asimov himself. It was to honor the thirtieth anniversary of the First World Science Fiction Convention by assembling as many people as possible who had originally attended it, and holding a banquet for the occasion.

He last appeared at ESFA's open annual meeting of March 1, 1981. This was indeed a stellar affair. In addition to Asimov himself, his wife Janet O. Jeppson spoke, as did Stanley Schmidt (editor of *Analog*), Lester del Rey (of Del Rey Books), the artist Stephen Fabian, and Donald and Elsie Wollheim. There was

a performance of the BBC film *Horizons*, which it turned out Asimov had never seen, and a special dinner afterwards to celebrate ESFA's thirty-fifth anniversary. In the years that followed Asimov had to endure triple bypass surgery, I myself had life-threatening bouts with cancer, and I wasn't able to arrange special meetings or didn't want to prevail on him to join us.

When he was guest of honor at the Fiftieth Anniversary Convention of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society on November 15, 1986 I transcribed his talk, which was published in the December 1986 *Fantasy Review*. Its title was "My Seven Steps to Celebrity." In essence, these were as follows: Not permitting his first name to be changed from Isaac to something less memorable (of course emigrating to the United States was at least as important); not permitting John W. Campbell ("a robust and intellectual racist") to force him to print his stories under an Anglo-Saxon pen name; evading Campbell's rule that in every story humans must win out over aliens by populating all the planets in his star systems with humanoids; the publication of "Nightfall," whose plot was suggested by Campbell; following his agent Fred Pohl's suggestion that the science-fiction book market was ready for novels, which resulted in his writing *Pebble in the Sky*; gaining the reputation of "a good guy" by loaning de Camp his own identification badge when both were working at the Philadelphia Navy Yard during the war and that worthy had forgotten his; and letting his Boston University colleague William Boyd talk him into collaborating in the writing of a non-fiction scientific work, *Biochemistry and the Human Metabolism*, which set him on the road to writing popular science material. "In reviewing my life these key factors, aside from personal attributes, are what led to my present status," said Ike; yet "at no time did I assess the situation shrewdly, or calculatingly plan the outcome."

Our last conversation occurred when I went up to him after the talk, and he greeted me in a serious tone of wonderment: "Look who's here, Janet, it's Sam."

I attended the memorial service for him at The Society for Ethical Culture in New York City on April 22, 1992. The only advance notice had been by word of mouth, yet some seven hundred people were present. Only by consulting the registration book could it be ascertained how many prominent figures from the writing and publishing world were there, but among those who gave eulogies were his wife Janet, his brother Stanley, his daughter Robyn, his editor Larry Ashmead, his anthology collaborator Martin Greenberg, Jennifer Brehl of Doubleday, Harlan Ellison, Ben Bova and Sheila Williams, managing editor of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. What was unusually memorable about the eulogies was the pervasive current of humor that ran through them. Even among family members, the recollections were uniformly light and pleasant. Not even the persistent rain outside could lower clouds of gloom upon the memories yet green of Isaac Asimov.

•

WE WON DIDN'T WE

everything in this
place is alien he said after
two thousand planets
decanted Home in
unasked retirement just like
giant dragonfly
living warships of Altair
scrap after the war
glowface kids beat him with words
he'd never heard or
games all new girls with holes in
places strange to him
or mechanised fists when his
pension wouldn't pay
their bill for listening to
past glory stories
crying you're what I fought for
seeing stars again

—*Steve Sneyd*

•

CRUCIFIXION, 2000 AD

Crackling with strange energies,
Polished spaceships come to preach
Against our besotted ways,
Landing near our lonely towns,
Bellowing exhaust and flame,
Torching forests into ash.
They say robotic senses,
Scanning all the galaxy,
Have tracked vast storms of chaos
To our door, and folly's prize
Will soon arrive upon us.
They say all our foolish ways
We must promptly mend, and turn
Our world to some greener peace.
Does nature, hearing, doom us?
Queenly trees, fire-weakened,
Topple and destroy the ships,
Robotic expectations, mad ideals,
Our souls, and all.

—*Thomas A. Easton*

"THE CALL OF CTHULHU": An Analysis

John McInnis

I
AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON SOME PRECEPTORS

In my earlier article, "Father Images in Lovecraft's 'Hypnos,'"* I posed and supported the hypothesis that some of this writer's stories were, at least in part, coded narratives of unconsciously remembered childhood experiences. Here I examine another of his tales, which also seems describable in this way. "The Call of Cthulhu" contains as well disguised memories of the adult Lovecraft. They are most clearly apparent in the name and personality of the investigator and authority figure in the story, Professor George Gammell Angell of Brown University.

This fictional character seems modelled after a well-known Providence academic of the last century, William Gammell (1812-1889), who also taught at Brown University. Professor Gammell won deep respect and even veneration from students, colleagues and acquaintances alike. So beloved was he that a memoir honoring him, edited by James O. Murray, a friend and colleague at Princeton University, was published the year after his death.[1]† It seems very likely that Lovecraft, who was familiar with and interested in Providence history, would have known him by repute, and may well also have read this memoir.

William Gammell, born and bred for academic life, was a perfect inspiration for Lovecraft's fictional scholar. He was associated with Brown as a student (1827-1831), tutor and lecturer of Latin literature (1833-1835), assistant professor and professor of Belles Lettres (1835-1851),[2] and professor of history (1851-1864).[3] He joined the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1844, and assumed its presidency in 1882.[4] In addition he held other prestigious positions, including trustee of the Brown University Corporation,[5] trustee of the Butler Hospital for the Insane,[6] trustee of the Rhode Island Hospital,[7] president of the Providence Athenaeum[8] and president of the Rhode Island Bible Society.[9]

Professor Gammell's intellectual and moral leadership was recognized by his students, in many of whose careers he took a personal interest. Several of these protegés, who became lifelong intellectual and social intimates, wrote letters to Professor Murray, some of which were included in the Gammell memorial volume. Two of these valedictories were from favorite pupils who became especially close friends: the Reverend George P. Fisher, D.D. (Brown class of 1847), Professor of Church History at Yale University; and James B. Angell, L.L.D. (Brown class of 1849), president of Michigan University.[10] Page twenty of the memorial volume, which is given over to communications from former students, begins with the concluding lines of Professor Fisher's letter and ends with an excerpt from Dr. Angell's.

The mental and spiritual kinship of these men, impressed upon Lovecraft's mind, could have led him to blend their names into the name of his imaginary Brown University Professor of Semitic Languages. The "George" of Professor Fisher's given name and Dr. James Angell's surname complete both the Gammell name and personality. (It is also conceivable that the choice was a fully conscious one, just as Lovecraft purposely utilized as a locale in part III of this story the actual

Fantasy Commentator VII, 41 (1990).
†Notes for this article begin on page 280.

Paterson, New Jersey museum of which his mineralogist friend, James F. Morton, was the curator.)

James Angell likewise influenced Lovecraft directly through *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell*, published in 1911. (We can say this with certainty because a copy of that book is known to have been in Lovecraft's library.) The first two pages reveal Angell's Rhode Island ancestry and a close connection with Rhode Island's founder, Roger Williams: "I am a lineal descendant, of the seventh generation, from Thomas Angell, who, an Englishman by birth, came, in 1631, to Massachusetts with Roger Williams, and, in 1636, accompanied Williams when the latter settled on the spot to which he gave the name of Providence."[11] Thomas Angell took a parcel of land at Providence where Angell Street (on which Lovecraft once resided) is located,[12] probably giving that thoroughfare its name.

Lovecraft's maternal ancestors were also intimately identified with Rhode Island, both in reality (for the Phillips line came to Massachusetts at about the time Williams did) and in the mind of the writer:

> The Phillips line here begins with the Reverend George Phillips, son of Christopher Phillips, Gent., of Rainham, St. Martins in Norfold, who came on the *Arabella* in 1630 and settled in Watertown, Massachusetts.[13]

> My ancestry was immediately rural on the maternal side——with the spacious valleys and ancient ways of western Rhode Island behind it, and with the country echoed and re-echoed in the tales of my grandfather [Whipple V. Phillips] and mother [Susan Phillips Lovecraft]——and on the paternal side, behind two generations of New York state urbanizing, there was the tradition of the Old English countryside.[14]

In addition, Roger Williams' foremost friend while at Plymouth was Edward Winslow, who became governor there in 1633, and who was a lineal ancestor of Lovecraft's uncle, Dr. Franklin Clark.[15]

Further identification with the freethinking Roger Williams may have come from Lovecraft's early (and unfortunate) placement in a children's Baptist Sunday School class. His skepticism of the Puritanical doctrines he encountered there caused him to declare to his family that he was a Roman pagan. In 1915 he stated that his beliefs wavered between pantheism and rationalism. "I am a sort of agnostic, neither affirming nor denying anything," he once wrote.[16]

Although Lovecraft did not subscribe to any religious doctrine, he felt that the American Protestant tradition had much to recommend it, and that at its best its spirit represented that freedom of thought for which Roger Williams stood: ". . . Williams called himself simply a 'seeker,' and would be bound by no creed."[17] His founding of Rhode Island was thus to Lovecraft a kind of spiritual epic, much as was Aeneas' founding of Rome (but with the added impetus of actuality). Lovecraft identified strongly with this early preceptor, who may even have become something of a liberating father-figure because of Lovecraft's early loss of his own father and his early engulfment by the Yankee Puritanism of his mother and the rest of the Phillips family.[18]

Surrounded by his family's drab old Puritan behaviors and values, Lovecraft turned toward an ethical rationalism reminiscent of the philosophers of his beloved ancient Rome——Democritus and Lucretius.[19] He used rational materialism to emancipate himself from the "environmental tyranny" he saw around him, and his interest in Roger Williams and the founding and development of Rhode Island culture helped serve this purpose:

> What I really am, is a growth of the soil. My instincts were formed by the functioning of a certain line of germ-plasma through a certain set of geographical and social environing conditions. . . . The emancipation of my consciousness has left my emotions all the freer to follow the ancient patterns without supervision. Without question, my deepest, instinct-

> ive personality belongs to early America in unbroken continuity.[20]

Lovecraft not only traced the Phillips ancestry back to the early seventeenth century, but showed its genealogical connections——and hence his own——with prominent families of Providence.[21] This identification with early Rhode Island and its founder gave him a kind of "hereditary memory" of the state's history: "The old families and the old ideas still dominate, and there are little ways and customs on every hand which attest an unbroken evolution from colonial times, and an absolutely vital identity with the Gothic town of Roger Williams and the Georgian town of Stephen Hopkins."[22] It was thus easy for Lovecraft to think of his preceptors ——e.g., Williams, Hopkins, Angell and Gammell——as actual members of his family, because this embraced the entire colony of Rhode Island: "In truth, the old R. I. stock is perhaps more thoroughly intermarried than that of any other region outside the decadent Tennessee hills. R.I. was more a *family* than a *colony*."[23]

Something of the day-to-day history of this "family" was written by William Goddard, the founder and editor of *The Providence Gazette*, "whose kinsfolk were found throughout Rhose Island colony."[24] This same William Goddard married Abigail Angell, thus grafting her family to his own. The two had a child, William Giles Goddard, who preceded William Gammell as Professor of Belles Lettres at Brown University.[25]

Professor Gammell may well have been an inspiration to Lovecraft's writing style as well as to his study of Rhode Island history. Jared Sparks, then McLese Professor of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard, asked Gammell to contribute two memoirs to *The Library of American Biography*, which he was then editing. Gammell "entered at once with zest into the undertaking, and his memoir of Roger Williams appeared in 1845. . . ."[26] Both historically and rhetorically, this biography would have been a wonderful example for Lovecraft, who had two separate but linked literary goals, "a liking for well-modeled expression in the traditional manner for its own sake, and a wish to get on paper some of the images and impressions constantly running through my mind."[27]

The conscious, Puritan-influenced "mother-family" part of Lovecraft's mind is the trained, consciously intellectual side that takes the form of Professor George Gammell Angell in "The Call of Cthulhu." The task of the Professor Angell-intellect is to find and understand the interplay of raw emotions——most notably the English father half, the germ-plasmic form of Cthulhu that waits in the depths.

II

THE SEARCH FOR THE OTHER HALF

> Being highly imaginative, and sensitive to the archaic influences of this old town with its narrow hill streets and glamorous Colonial doorways, I conceived the childish freak of transporting myself altogether into the past. . . .
>
> ——*H. P. Lovecraft*[28]

A child's watching a man become a monster ia a traumatic experience which nightmares are made of——but how much more horrible if that man-into-monster metamorphosis be made by the child's own beloved father? Such was the fate of Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937), the American writer of horror stories, whose father, Winfield Scott Lovecraft, died of general paresis at the age of 44 when his son was but a seven-year-old child. Otherwise known as dementia paralytica, or general paralysis of the insane, this terrible disease results in a chronic degeneration of the nervous system; in time, the condition completely destroys the personality of the patient. Both mental and physical symptoms appear as the disease (here untreated) moves inevitably towards the extinction of consciousness and finally to the death of the patient. Winfield Lovecraft was committed to Butler Hospital in Providence by family physician George D. Wilcox and Annie W. Hunt on April 25, 1893, and he died there on July 19, 1898.[29]

Some symptoms associated with general paresis appear clearly in descriptions of the monster Cthulhu in "The Call of Cthulhu," written in 1926. Cthulhu seems (as statue and in real life at the story's end) to be the delineation of Lovecraft's father during the time when the latter was confined to the house at 454 Angell Street and later in Butler Hospital—a nightmare past that was screened from the consciousness of the author.

When Lovecraft wrote in a letter to Reinhardt Kleiner on November 16, 1916 that his father "was seized with a complete paralysis resulting from a brain overtaxed with study and business cares,"[30] he was unknowingly describing early symptoms of his father's actual illness. "The introduction of paresis frequently presents symptoms of nervous exhaustion which can be traced to some stress or worry," writes Dr. Emil Kraepelin in his monograph *General Paresis.*[31] Lovecraft had no conscious awareness of other symptoms incorporated in the story, because his letter to Maurice W. Moe of January 1, 1915 states that after his father's admission to Butler Hospital he "was never afterward conscious, and my image of him is but vague."[32] These symptoms must come, as Lovecraft wrote concerning the character Wilcox, from "a subconscious residuum . . . that . . . had influenced his art profoundly."[33]

When the family had Winfield Lovecraft committed to Butler Hospital they reported that he had uninterruptedly "been engaged in business for several years and for the last two years . . . worked very hard."[34] Yet the Butler medical record suggests strange behavior during his pre-commitment period. For about a year he had "shown obscure symptoms of mental disease—doing and saying strange things."[35]

Dr. George Darling Wilcox, who signed the certificate of commitment (and whose last name, significantly, is given by Lovecraft to the young artist in the story) had practiced medicine in Providence since his 1849 graduation from the New York University School of Medicine. He had studied in Europe (Leipzig, Vienna and London) to sharpen his skills, so that, as the July 24, 1897 *Providence Journal* remarks, his "reputation was more than local." (In "The Call of Cthulhu" Dr. Wilcox becomes Dr. Tobey, and his office is moved from Washington Street to Thayer Street. But even as he changes the name, Lovecraft cannot resist being his truthful self, for "Dr. Tobey" echoes Providence practitioner Samuel Boyd Tobey, trustee of Butler Hospital from 1850 to his death in 1867.[36]) Dr. Wilcox had no doubt attended Winfield Lovecraft prior to his commitment, but his discretion is shown by the hospital's failure to record any explicit precommitment history.

His relationship to the Phillips family was probably benignly authoritarian. The typical physician of that generation "saw his patients often and knew their lives well."[37] "The usual procedure of a doctor when he reached the patient's house was to greet the grandmother and aunts effusively and pat all the kids on the head before approaching the bedside."[38] In fact, the famous New York neurologist S. Weir Mitchell compared the physician treating nervous patients to a priest hearing confession.[39] Clothed with authority as they were, these Victorian Age physicians emphasized fear rather than hope, teaching members of the family to avoid the fate of any deviantly-behaving patient in order to avoid ostracism by the Puritanical society of that day:

> On the grounds that eccentricity approached insanity, physicians were warned against any course that departed from "average" or "normal" behavior, and recommended that children be taught to "avoid eccentricity and not to defy the requirements of custom without some very excellent reason."[40]

Medical practitioners of that day had very little to do with hospitals, mental or otherwise, which were then "places of dreaded impurity and exiled human wreckage."[41] By the end of the nineteenth century, hospitals had degenerated into little more than "custodial warehouses"[42] that tended the sick rather than worked for their care. Thus "...the idea of confining the sick or helpless members of one's family to an institution was far from being a popular one, particu-

larly among the more 'respectable' elements of society."[43] Whipple Phillips was certainly of the "respectable" social stratum, being high in Masonic circles and a well-known Republican in the state's economic and political circles, and he avoided commitment of his son-in-law as long as he could by using Dr. Wilcox to maintain a belated familial hemeostasis.

Sequestration at Angell Street would inevitably have given young Howard a close look at what went on, experiences that appear in coded form in his later fiction. Like "The Nameless City," "Hypnos," "From Beyond" and "The Colour out of Space," "The Call of Cthulhu" records submerged memories of Lovecraft's father-son relationship.

The central character in this familial drama is Cthulhu himself, together with all the Anglo-Saxondom in the child's mind for which his father and other ascendants stood. Lovecraft could "just recall," he wrote, his father's "extremely precise and cultivated British voice, and his immaculate black morning-coat and vest, ascot tie, and striped black trousers," and in his youth "resented being called anything but an Englishman."[44] So strongly did Lovecraft identify himself with his paternal Englishness that he felt abandoned when his father was striken; "...after that I was brought up in the utter and engulfing midst of a typical old Rhode Island family . . . who have not any link beyond the sea of a later date than 1658...."[45]

For familial reinforcement, Lovecraft had to look back to earlier British antecedents. These he found in the genealogical records of his paternal great aunt Sarah Allgood, which he copied in 1905.[46] They took him back to the heraldry of his forbears in 1500, when "a Thomas Lovecroft (note the spelling) bore as arms a chevron *or* on a field *vert*."[47] He was even able to trace his lineage back into pre-conquest times for an oblique family connection in the period of Edward the Confessor.[48] This, he felt, encompassed "the bulk of the germ-plasm that made up [his] paternal half."[49] All that became blended into an even larger group of images of English countryside settings. "My memory," he wrote, is "full of ancestral images of Old England's hedged fields and willowed brooks, village steeples and Abbey chimes."[50]

Such are the visions that sustained Lovecraft's Anglo-Saxon mindset as he grew up, and which remained with him all his life. In 1931 he wrote:

> Nor can I say that any major change has ever taken place in my emotions. As I was then, so am I today. All my deep emotional loyalties are with the race and the empire rather than with the American branch—and if anything, this Old Englandism is about to become intensified as America becomes more and more mechanised, standardised and vulgarised—farther and farther removed from the original Anglo-Saxon stream which I represent. I could very well use Rupert Brooke's famous lines ..... "If I should die, think only this of me; that there's some corner of a foreign field that is for ever ENGLAND."[51]

Lovecraft's English self felt encircled and endangered by Yankee influences, and he redoubled his efforts to identify with the very milieu that had deserted him through illness and death. "In America," he wrote, "the Lovecraft line made some effort to keep from being Yankeeized—and here for the first time we see an influence which may have directly affected me. Here, almost without a doubt, stems my lifelong Toryism."[52] But because he represses most of the memories of his father, the strength and individuality of his Toryism become to him a tantalizing mystery:

> According to all accepted rules, I ought to be as Yankeefied as any person living—for I was out of touch with any line other than Yankee, and a purely English line domiciled in New York state since 1827 is hardly bizarre or different enough to give a small child any great feeling of half-alienage. That is, by ordinary reckoning. And yet it did ..... and how!"[53]

This familial mystery might be explained by the fact that the child Lovecraft was caught enthralled but repelled by his handsome parent's strange behavior. A child's

natural reaction to a stone-still father is to try to arouse him, to bring him back into the realm of family experience and precision to which he is accustomed. But the child's attempts fail, and the father is estranged. As an adult, H. P. Lovecraft may have noted an entry in *Black's Law Dictionary* (1891) which echoed the situation: "Uncuth. In Saxon law, unknown, a stranger. A person entertained in the house of another was, on the first night of entertainment, so called."[54] In his studies of Anglo-Saxon history he found a name——a noun, even——for his estranged father in the *Laws of Edward the Confessor*. Another statue of this code is:

> Twa night guest. In Saxon law, a guest on the second night. By the laws of Edward the Confessor it was provided that a man who lodged at an inn, or at the house of another, should be considered, on the first night of his being there, a stranger (uncuth); on the second night, a guest; on the third night a member of the family. This had reference to the responsibility of the host or entertainer for offences committed by the guest.[55]

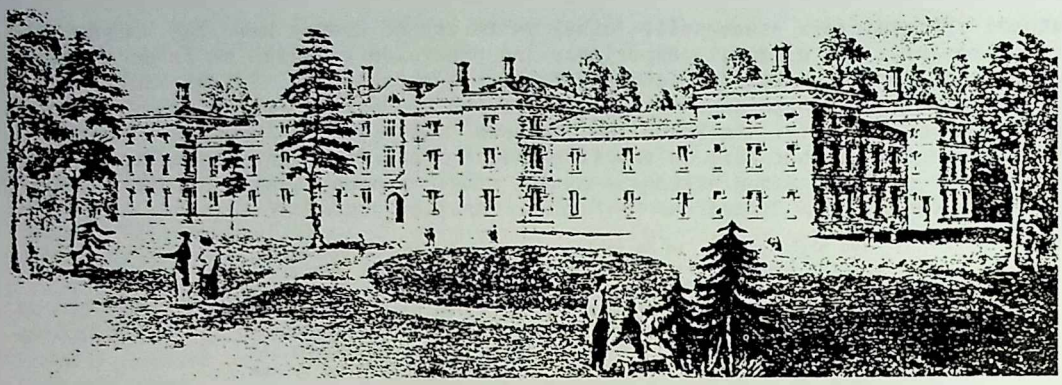
Winfield Lovecraft's increasingly aberrant behavior removed him from his former intimate position with his son, and the latter's repeated exclamation, "Papa, you look just like a young man!"[56] did not alter this process. The episode did, however, give Lovecraft's scholarly reading a basis that would grow into the monster-god Cthulhu, whose physical form was initially derived from the seated, immaculately dressed father whom the son tried to awaken. The name itself, which may be decoded by transposing its first "u," is a brilliant ciphering of the words "cuth," l(ovecraft), h(oward's) and u(niverse). A father beloved by his son would have been godlike to this son, but this "god" had two aspects in the child's mind: an image of immaculate English precision deformed into the "uncouth" actions of a stranger. The adult artist would later write that "the letters CTHULHU were merely what Prof. Angell hastily devised to represent (roughly and imperfectly, of course) the dream-name orally mouthed to him by the young artist Wilcox."[57] This comment of course gives no hint of the word's subconscious origin.

The stone statues of Cthulhu are images of Winfield Lovecraft's depressed state, a profound melancholia; as Kraepelin remarks, "Often in the course of paresis we observe long-continuing stuperous states.... The patients speak neither voluntarily or in reply to questions."[58] An observant two-year-old would have seen his sometimes bedridden father's rigid body as statue-like. There are several statues of Cthulhu in the story, probably representing several visual contacts with the father, whose paresis seems to have developed into "circular insanity," a dramatic series of mood changes which we know today as manic-depressive psychosis or bipolar mood disorder. These can take the patient from the depths of deepest depression to a high point of manic excitement and back again, perhaps many times. "When, in any given case, the melancholic phase recurs again, it is prone to wear the same features as in the first attack.... [the deepest melancholia] may appear again and again as the cycle returns, with the same phase and character again and again."[59] Each statue or statuette would thus represent a reappearance of the same depressive features, separated by the elapsed time of each passing cycle.

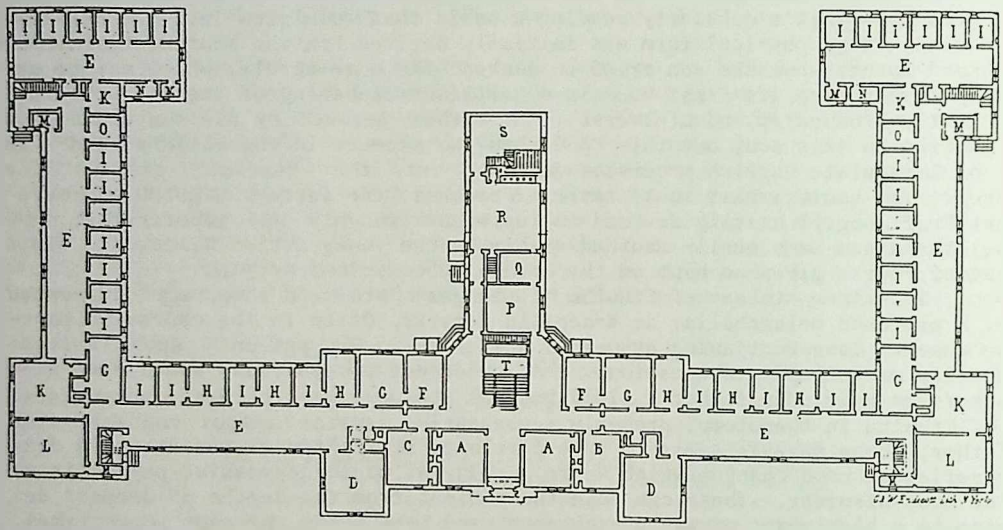
The frenzied actions of the father's manic stages appear as the fervid movements of Abdul Alhazred, the mad Arab:

> With the rapidly increasing excitement, the patient becomes completely confused and practically devoid of his faculties; he produces only a few inarticulate sounds or stereotypes, meaningless syllables, mostly in a rhythmical manner. He dances about the floor, drums and stamps with arms and legs, twists and bends himself, claps, plucks, scratches, cuts his face, blows and grunts, will not keep his clothing on, tears, rubs, sneers and spits, eats his excreta, howls, cries, strikes blindly about him.[60]

The motor excitement of such patients makes them tear the sheets and blankets of



Butler Hospital for the Insane, Providence, 1848[81]



PLAN OF BUTLER HOSPITAL[82]

the sickroom bed into strips with which they wrap themselves. Wrapping their heads in this way would give them a somewhat Arabic appearance. On observing this, the child Lovecraft would identify with his father's outlandish maniacal persona. "At the age of 5," he wrote, "I was a dream-Arab who read Andrew Lang's *Arabian Nights*. It was then that I invented for myself the name Abdul Alhazred...."[61]

There is further deterioration in the paretic as nutritional disorders (caused by the diseased nervous system) bring on inflammatory skin afflictions. Lesions develop, and atrophy of dermal sweat glands cause the patient's skin to take on a dull, earthy appearance. Bedsores form, accompanied by "blebs, boils, herpetic, ecthymatous, or other eruptions . . . about the extremities or trunk [and] furuncles and carbuncles may appear . . . because of the depressed patient's unchanging position. . . ."[62] Relief of pressure at critical points is gained by siting the patient up on the side of his bed; there he would likely remain absolutely impassive in his new posture:

> The individual affected with melancholia with stupor presents a very striking appearance. He sits motionless, his hands clasped before him, his head bent forward, his eyes closed or staring vacantly, or fixed upon the floor. His half-open mouth allows the viscid saliva to drop from his lips. If spoken to, he does no answer or even give any sign that he has heard. . . .[63]

This petrified posture appears in Lovecraft's descriptions of the carved statues of the seated Cthulhu, the most complete of which follows:

> It represented a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline but with an octopuslike head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing . . . was of a somewhat bloated corpulence, and squatted evilly on a rectangular block or pedestal. . . . the cephalopod head was bent forward so that the ends of the facial feelers brushed the backs of huge forepaws which clasped the croucher's elevated knees.[64]

Other peretic effects help explain the stone artifact's ichthyoid features. Loss of tone in the facial muscles flattens the naso-labial folds, and the expressionless look of the patient blends with the grayness characteristic of a premature senescence to give a smooth, fishy cast to the statue's "octopuslike" visage.[65] A precocious young Lovecraft could have likened his father's loss of self-awareness (revealed in the fishy blankness of his stare) to a devolutionary descent to the cephalopods—— cuttlefish, octopus or squid——all molluscs with heads resembling that of Cthulhu.

Lovecraft's description of Cthulhu's head as "bent forward" is another sign of his father's disease: "Often a striking symptom, even in the early stages, is the stooping position of the head, which does not rest upon its base, but is constantly supported by the stiffly-contracted neck muscles."[66] The appearance of the monster's "scaly, rubbery-looking body" may arise from the patient's copious bedsores, which have already been mentioned. Its prodigious claws on hind and fore feet reflect abnormal growth of the nails:

> Hypertrophy of the nails or onychauxis is not infrequent. The nails become thick, rough, uneven, brittle, and lusterless. They are often elevated from the nail-bed. The color changes and usually becomes a dirty yellow-brown. When the nail is bent over, the fingertip [or toe] like a claw, the condition is described as onychogryposis.[67]

Hypertrophic growth of hair would accompany the rapid nail growth, and this could appear on the lethyoid face as feelers. Cthulhu's "bloated corpulence" is accounted for by other trophic problems:

> On the part of the *bladder*, there are frequent disturbances which are independent of paretic attacks: They consist of sphincter paralysis as well as retention. . . .
>
> The *abdomen* is frequently subject to typanitic distention, apparently resulting from atony of the intestinal musculature. The sluggishness of the bowel may lead to excessive impaction. On the other hand, in advanced cases, there is complete inability to retain the feces, perhaps due partly to paralysis of the sphincters, but chiefly because the patient is not aware of the approaching evacuation nor the distention of the bladder even to the umbilicus.[68]

Even with all these strange symptoms, however, the child Lovecraft still seeks to ascribe rationality and intelligence to Cthulhu by the clue of the "voice that was not a voice" in the Wilcox dream sequence, of articulations so low on the evolutionary scale of intelligence as to be only "gibberish."

> [There is a] difficulty in composing words from their syllables. . . . The final syllable is often repeated. . . . The speech may be reduced to a mixture of senseless, frequently-repeated combinations of syllables.[69]
>
> The voice [of the patient] is monotonous, sometimes trem-

> lous; it loses its capability of expression and often its normal resonance (paresis of the vocal cords). . . .[70]
>
> . . .there sometimes occur . . . some of the disturbances of will which are spoken of as catatonic. Not only is catalepsy, at least transitory, frequent enough, but also echolalia, echopraxia, and verbigeration, the continuous, almost rhythmical repetition of the same sentence, word, or syllable.[71]

Such paretic vocal habits describe the nature of Cthulhu's "sense-impacts," but the fictive coding of the creature's monotonous vocalizations as "Cthulhu sleeps" is ascribable to Winfield Lovecraft's somnolence:

> Often in the course of paresis we observe long-continuing stuporous states. . . . The patients speak neither voluntarily nor in reply to questions, lie motionless, taking no part in their environment, eat no food, wet and soil their beds.[72]
>
> In many patients, an actual somnolence develops, so that they are only occasionally fully fully awake when eating or when conversed with, after which they immediately resume their sleep.[73]

While the Cthulhu statues originate from the Angell Street home, the Legrasse and Johansen Cthulhu episodes seem fictive renditions of actual encounters the child had with his father during visits to Butler Hospital. Winfield Townley Scott understands well some of the feelings evoked in Lovecraft by the hospital and its surroundings:

> The grounds of Butler Hospital are an extensive tract of field and woodland overlooking the Seekonk River, the most attractive and unspoiled part of that countryside which haunted Lovecraft from his early childhood . . . an undramatic land, understated; by its very nature, it became in Lovecraft's imagination a landscape where so little happened that anything might happen.[74]

Deeply felt past experiences lie beneath this tranquil, if haunting, surface, as Lovecraft himself later wrote:

> What I said a real artist must have is simply an emotional pull of great depth & sincerity toward something—anything—that is truly related to experience & primary emotion. . . .[75]

And as for the milieu described by Scott, "It is mine by natural placement and personal contact—soaked into my subconscious mind and rooted there by a thousand tentacles," he wrote[76]—"tentacles" here being the roots of family trees still very much alive in his imagination. No wonder Lovecraft felt that he was more sensitive to *places* than to *people*.[77]

> I think an author strongly reflects his surroundings, and that he does best in founding his elements of incident and colour on a life and background to which he has a real and deep-seated relation. This may or may not be his native and childhood environment, but I think it is better so. . . .[78]

Lovecraft was constantly exploring, and ever missing, the residue of his stored memories:

> My most vivid experiences are efforts to recapture fleeting & tantalizing mnemonic fragments expressed in unknown or half-known architectural or landscape vistas, especially in connection with a sunset. Some instantaneous fragment of a picture will well up suddenly through some chain of subconscious association—the immediate excitant being usually half-irrelevant on the surface—and fill me with a sense of wistful memory & bafflement; with the impression that the scene in question represents something I have seen & visited before under circumstances of superhuman liberation & adventurous expectancy, yet which I have almost completely forgotten, & which is so bewilderingly uncorrelated & unorientated as to be forever inaccessible in the future.[79]

Many such "mnemonic fragments" lay beneath the surface of his memory, strongly attracting him along "chain[s] of subconscious association" into an unremembered but not totally forgotten past:

> The source of these images, as tested by repeated analysis & associative training, is always a composite of places I have visited, pictures I have seen & things I have read—extending back in my experience to my very first memories at the age of 1¾, & having about ¾ of its extent in that period of life antedating my 18th year, when I left the birthplace to which I was so utterly attached. The more recent an experience is—be it objective, pictorial, or verbal—the more sharply vivid it has to be in order to gain a place in this subconscious reservoir of vision-material. . . .[79]

At the center of this reservoir lie two visits Lovecraft made to Butler Hospital in his fourth year, later than his earliest memories, but so traumatic as to be buried at the bottom of his subconscious—far beneath the quiet, rustic scene described by Scott as having "haunted Lovecraft "from his early childhood." Apparently he had been taken to the hospital to visit his father soon after his third birthday (August 20, 1893), for Winfield Lovecraft's medical record reads in part: "Aug. 29: A few days ago patient was dressed and permitted to go about ward and into yard; for a time he was quiet, but soon he became even more noisy than before, and as he was fast exhausting his strength he was placed in bed again."[80] If the boy had been visiting his father at this time he would have witnessed, even if at a distance, the melée of the orderlies restraining, subduing and removing the excited man to prevent his destructive involvement with other patients in the exercise yard. Lovecraft later transposed this traumatic event to his Cthulhu story as its New Orleans episode, giving his adult persona the fictitious name of John R. Legrasse, or John the Fat—thinking perhaps of himself during 1925 when (much to his dismay) he weighed about 200 pounds.

As shocking as this event must have been to the child, his perception of it could have been ameliorated by its distance from his person. No such emotional leeway existed at the climax of the second visit, which hospital records suggest occurred on May 29, 1894: "May 29: Mental condition remains the same: is allowed the liberty of the hall and airing court. Very noisy at times. Physically—thin, and anaemic."[80]

In 1894 the Phillips family had two carriages and the stabled horses to draw them, and young Howard's grandfather could have on that day driven the boy the mile or so to Butler Hospital to visit his father. Howard probably felt the gentle swaying of the vehicle, for author Lovecraft changed the carriage-ride to a sea voyage in the Pacific where the *Emma* is sunk by the armed steamer *Alert*. The Phillips vehicle may have run afoul of the "swarthy cult-fiends" of the *Alert*, possibly a group of inmates being transported from one hospital building to another—for in January 1892 there was completed on the grounds a stable designed to house "the horses and carriages so much demanded by the patients for carriage exercise."[83] The second mate Johansen's later-whitened may be an indication of Lovecraft's early age at the time, for he remembered that his own hair, much to his dismay, changed color by the age of five.

The six-man crew lands and climbs the "monstrous acropolis" by stepping upon "titan blocks which could have been no mortal staircase." The presence of this crew hints that the child and his grandfather were accompanied by orderlies as they approached or ascended the flight of steps leading to the building's Lower North men's ward on the second floor, where Winfield Lovecraft had been placed earlier.[84] Attempts to open the "acre-great panel" suggest that the child must have seen the ward's immense hall door, of a size to allow passage of the hospital gurneys. The "now-familiar squid-dragon bas-relief"[85] sign of Cthulhu on the door foreshadows what is to come. An unendurable stench from beyond the door emanates from the ward's oak floor, which had absorbed years of patient incontinence. Other symptoms suggest themselves as the apprehensive crew sees Cthulhu appear in the doorway:

> . . . At length the quick-eared Hawkins thought he heard a nasty, slopping sound down there. Everyone listened, and everyone

> was listening still when It lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed its gelatinous green immensity through the black doorway into the tainted outside air of the poison city of madness."[66]

The lapse of time after the ward door begins to open allows the sounds that foreshadow Cthulhu's appearance to precede him——the shambling steps of the tabo-paretic patient, whose ataxic gait has the "nasty slopping sound" which Hawkins hears: "The movements are clumsy, slow, and awkward. . . . The gait is unsteady with a wide base and is shuffling, often spastic."[70]

Salivating by the monster, so common in late paresis, occurs because muscle paralysis makes swallowing almost impossible:

> Furthermore, since the reflex action of the epiglottis is often entirely lost, there is great danger to the patient from the aspiration of saliva, the mouth cavity containing as it does many decomposition products. . . .[87]

> Particles of food and drink also make easy escape, and are spilled on the beard or clothing. The saliva, escaping through loose parotic lips, and the patient breathing with half-open mouth, the buccal [inner cheek] surface goes dry; and this excites a fresh and increased secretion of saliva.[88]

The "gelatinous greenness of the monster's immensity"[89] suggests observation by the child Lovecraft of still other symptoms. Weakness and loss of tone in body musculature combine with the loosely hanging adipose tissue to produce the look of the "peculiar fatness of the paretic."[73] The green color of the image, as well perhaps as that of the story's second statue, could derive from the several eccymoses on the patient (as bruises caused by subcutaneous bleeding) that occur with even slight bumps to the body as he totters about.[68]

The scene's climax recalls the frightened flight of the small child back from those gargantuan hospital stairway steps at the sight of his insane, excited father, minus the unhelpful orderlies and most of his personal vitality (seen in the quick obliteration of the sailors by Cthulhu as he attacks and chases members of the crew). The death of Parker through misjudgment of the environment suggests that Howard fell at least once in his precipitous flight.

> During the course of the disease, disorder or impairment of the gait often undergoes many fluctuations. Even until late in the disease the paresis is often more apparent than real, and when roused or excited the patient may throw off his inertia and move about with great ease and celerity.[90]

It is tempting, finally, to relate Cthulhu's entry into the ocean (where he is run down by the *Alert* at Johansen's hand) with Butler Hospital's fronting circular coachway, whose shape reminds us that horse-drawn vehicles could not move directly backward, as can the automobiles of today. Whether or not Winfield Lovecraft got through the outer door and into this coachway, only to be repulsed or run down by the departing Mr. Phillips as he drove away with his grandson, we can understand why Howard Lovecraft would never enter any Butler Hospital buildings again, even to see his mother there in her final illness of 1921.[74]

Nevertheless, through writing "The Call of Cthulhu" the adult artist, with the help of his preceptors, was able to seek out and face, symbolically and artistically, the feelings of pain and anguish engendered by his father's terrible illness of many years before.

III
POSTSCRIPT

"The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents."[91] Thus Lovecraft begins "The Call of Cthulhu" with a blunt statement of its central conflict——the artist's wish to know everything about his personal past is countered by a yearning for "the peace and safety of a new dark age" of his own. The look back in time, "like all dread

glimpses of truth, flashed out from a occasional piecing together of separated things—in this case an old newspaper item and the notes of a dead professor."[92] Lovecraft may have first encountered his mentor through old issues of the *Providence Journal*, because the name of one of its early editors finds its way into "The Call of Cthulhu":

> For many years . . . he [William Gammell] furnished articles to the "Providence Journal," whose accomplished editor, the Hon. Henry B. Anthony, was his friend. In this he followed in the footsteps of Professor Goddard [William Giles Goddard, who preceeded Gammell as Professor of Belles Lettres at Brown from 1834 to 1842]. His contributions took various shapes: sometimes reflections on current events, then discussions of matters pertaining to Rhode Island history or the cause of education. . . .[93]

The story makes Gammell's "reflections on current events" into "an old newspaper item" (which itself may derive from Lovecraft's second visit to Butler Hospital), while Murray's memoir suggests itself in the phrase "notes of a dead professor." The editor of the *Journal* appears in the name of the artist, Henry Anthony Wilcox.

Professor Goddard's own letter to Murray eloquently indicates the close relationship of William Gammell to Butler Hospital—and thus, ultimately, to Lovecraft himself:

> On the 27th of January, 1875, Mr. Gammell was elected a trustee of the Butler Hospital for the Insane.
>
> His interest in this great charity had been fostered by an intimate acquaintance with its beneficient purposes, and by personal observation of its measureless blessings to those who were afflicted with the various forms of mental disease. His acute mind clearly discerned the importance to the safety of society of this place of seclusion and of restraint for those whose delusions were dangerous both to themselves and to their fellow men. Before Mr. Gammell's election to this responsible office, he had rendered important aid to the hospital by literary work, undertaken at the request of Mr. Ives, its first secretary. [This was Richard H. Ives, William Gammell's father-in-law.] He was, therefore, by familiarity with the work of the hospital, as well as by his mental endowments and by his sympathy with all forms of human suffering, exceptionally equipped for the high trust of its guardianship.
>
> . . . He never neglected any duty devolving upon him, and often made his weekly visitations when almost disabled by illness. Of the annual reports, by which the work of the hospital is made known and its pressing wants are explained, no less than six proceeded from his graceful and earnest pen. Most of the occasional appeals of the trustees to the public and to the behefactors of the hospital during his long term of office emanated from him. His manners to the patients were singularly attractive and cheering, and he overlooked nothing that would diminish their sense of confinement or add to their slender store of happiness. His services will be long and gratefully remembered by his associates, and in the lucid intervals which sometimes come even to the clouded intellect of the insane his name is mentioned with respect.[94]

The Gammell influence on Lovecraft persisted in yet another way. William Greene Roelker, a director of the Rhode Island Historical Society, writes in *A Century of Butler Hospital*:[83]

> At this point [some time during 1882] Mrs. Gammell offered to give $50,000 in memory of her father, Mr. Robert H. Ives, "the income from which shall be devoted to aiding in the support of such patients as are not able to pay the entire cost of their board and treatment." Mrs. Gammell had known the hospital from her youth and was well aware of the need for such a fund.

Shrinkage in the family's funds probably made necessary the Gammell Fund's payment of part of Sarah Susan Lovecraft's board and treatment from her commitment there

in 1919 until her death in 1921. Lovecraft, who visited his mother on the hospital grounds (but because of painful buried memories never entered the buildings themselves) would thus have felt gratitude towards the name of Gammell and have been reminded of the family's liberality of spirit to Butler Hospital and to himself through its help for both his parents. It is fully consonant with his code of gentlemanly behavior, then, that he would honor his preceptor with a kind of literary immortality by making him George Gammell Angell, Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages at Brown University, in "The Call of Cthulhu."

NOTES

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(3) *Ibid.*, p. 30.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 42.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 51.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 58.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 60.

(8) *Ibid.*, p. 63

(9) *Ibid.*, p. 64

(10) *Ibid.*, pp. 17 and 20.

(11) James B. Angell, *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell* (1911; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), p. 1.

(12) Gertrude Selwyn Kimball, *Providence in Colonial Times* (1912; rpt. N. Y.: De Capo Press, 1972), p. 15.

(13) August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, eds., *H. P. Lovecraft: Selected Letters III 1929-1931* (Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House Publishers, 1971), p. 316.

(14) *Ibid.*, p. 363.

(15) *Ibid.*, p. 351.

(16) August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, eds., *H. P. Lovecraft: Selected Letters I 1911-1924* (Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House Publishers, 1965), pp. 10-11.

(17) *Selected Letters III*, p. 333.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 362

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 322.

(20) *Ibid.*, p. 333.

(21) August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, eds., *H. P. Lovecraft: Selected Letters II 1925-1929* (Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House Publishers, 1968), p. 185.

(22) *Ibid.*, p. 102.

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 237.

(24) Kimball, pp. 313-314.

(25) *Ibid.*, p. 318.

(26) Murray, pp. 24-25.

(27) *Selected Letters II*, p. 107

(28) *Ibid.*

(29) "Medical Record of Winfield Scott Lovecraft," annotated by M. Eileen McNamara, M. D. in *Lovecraft Studies* no. 24 (Spring 1991), p. 15.

(30) *Selected Letters I*, p. 33.

(31) Emil Kraepelin, *General Paresis* (1913; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970), pp. 3-4.

(32) *Selected Letters I*, p. 6.

(33) Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, selected by August Derleth, with texts edited by S. T. Joshi (Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House Publishers, 1963), p. 143.

(34) *Lovecraft Studies* no. 24, p. 15.

(35) *Ibid.* For more on the mystery of the Lovecraft family's whereabouts during the fall and winter of 1892-1893, see my article, "Father Images in Lovecraft's 'Hypnos'," *Fantasy Commentator VII*, 41 (1990).

(36) *A Century of Butler Hospital 1844-1944* (Providence, R. I.: no date), pp. 1 and 17.

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(44) *Selected Letters III*, p. 362.

(45) *Ibid.*

(46) *Selected Letters II*, p. 179.

(47) *Ibid.*, p. 182.

(48) *Ibid.*, p. 183.

(49) *Selected Letters III*, p. 360.

(50) *Ibid.*, p. 79.

(51) *Ibid.*, p. 363.

(52) *Ibid.*, p. 362.

(53) *Ibid.*

(54) Henry Campbell Black, *Black's Law Dictionary*, 5th edn. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1979), p. 1368.

(55) Ibid., p. 1360.

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(68) Kraepelin, p. 47. (71) *Ibid.*, p. 16.

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(70) *Ibid.*, p. 19. (73) *Ibid.*, p. 53.

(74) Winfield Townley Scott, "His Own Most Fantastic Creation," in *Marginalia*, edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei (Sauk City, Wis.: Arkham House, 1944), p. 320.

(75) *Selected Letters III*, p. 324.

(76) *Ibid.*, p. 327.

(77) *Selected Letters II*, p. 102

(78) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

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(83) *A Century of Butler Hospital*, p. 21.

(84) *Lovecraft Studies* no. 24, p. 15.

(85) *The Dunwich Horror*, p. 151.

(86) *Ibid.*, p. 152. (87) Kraepelin, p. 37.

(88) Mickle, p. 84.

(89) *The Dunwich Horror*, p. 152.

(90) Mickle, p. 86.

(91) *The Dunwich Horror*, p. 125.

(92) *Ibid.*, p. 126. (94) *Ibid.*, pp. 58-60.

(93) Murray, p. 69.

• • •

THE HANGMAN'S SONG

I am a jolly hangman
  For gargoyles cheer my gallows.
The dogdays rear the devil's child
  Whose mask is met in shallows.

My birth's a bloody tale
  And keeps me to my hood;
My father, one of five who rent
  My mother in the wood.

I sup with thieves and parsons;
  Drape rascals from a rafter.
I've prospered so for many years
  On modest fees and laughter.

I am a jolly hangman
  And nourished by the law.
And if a statue won't provide?
  Call it an alewife's saw.

I've scaffle-board and rigging
  Sufficient to each need,
Come garrulous, with rookish crown,
  With appetite my creed.

I'll rear a rugged gibbet
  In sleet or Lammas-weather.
Drink dregs, who can, to the last doxy;
  Tomorrow, hang together.

I am a jolly hangman,
  Full lusty by my trade,
And exercise a biting wit
  To sway a scullery-maid.

I come to tie the knot,
  To honor the maidenhead.
The foot, so coy at country fairs,
  Relents and climbs to bed.

Good children, close your eyes,
  Nor dare to lift the cover.
The midnight-stranger wears a hood
  And is your mother's lover.

I am a jolly hangman,
  Swing babes, now to, now fro.
I inch their fathers heavenward,
  Clap for the dancing show.

Come dawn, and thrush and jay
  Trill falsely of reprieves.
What profit is that trifling song
  Where I roll up my sleeves?

Who calls me stout and rank?
  My hood, is it not pretty?
I've broken bread and passed the ale
  And lodged in every city.

I am a jolly hangman.
  Hemlock is mother's milk.
For tyrants and for democrats,
  Hang rag or hang fine silk.

One goblet would be kindness;
  Most brotherly, if whiskey.
My surety for Christian debts
  Is piece-work, seldom risky.

My credit is this rope
  And hood and hangman's tackle.
With wormstale crust, with bitter beer,
  Salute the hanged man's cackle.

For I'm a jolly hangman——
  A lusty hangman, I——
And will, with proper hands, correct
  Each countenance you try.

——*Jeffrey Woodward*

• • •

SLIM CHANCE

The Earth's a speck of trivial mud,
Thumping with a thud
Some other planet presently,
Splattered in Time's spacious, stellar sea.

The oceans and the rocks will splash——
Stars together smash——
But will our species splatter, too?
Will, instead, Mankind escape——prevail——anew?

——*Steve Eng*

"A Wild Surmise"

Allen Mueller

"A Wild Surmise" has seldom been reprinted in the forty years since it appeared in the first number of *Star Science Fiction Stories*, one of the many paperback "best of" collections printed in the wake of the pulp market's demise. It certainly deserves a better fate. The story is only one of a great number written by the husband/wife team of Henry Kuttner and Catherine Lucille Moore, whose prolific and synergetic career was cut short by Kuttner's death at the age of 43 in 1958. At that time the two had already published eight novels and hundreds of shorter works. Moore went on to write a few more stories after her husband's death, but none matched the earlier excellence of the couple's combined efforts. Theirs was a true marriage in every sense of the word, and their stories——their only children——continue to live, to breathe and shine, despite the neglect of many modern critics.

In the jacket notes to his 1950 collection of stories, *A Gnome There Was*, Henry Kuttner said, "Fantasy interests me because it is the closest approach to realism I know." This paradoxical statement contains a great deal of truth, not only for Kuttner but also for the science-fiction and fantasy genres in general. In commenting on Kuttner shortly after his death, the author Robert Bloch said that Kuttner's life work was evolving toward a point where he could write "stories which would reveal the fantasy behind our reality, and the realities behind our fantasies."*

This comment helps explain Kuttner's remark. It suggests that in all our lives there is an inextricable mingling of fantasy and reality, a blurring of the lines between subjective and objective truth. It forces us to examine our own realities, to question the nature of perception and the influence of our desires on our existence. It also calls to mind the deconstructionist credo of defining something not by what it is, but by that which it is *not*.

"A Wild Surmise" does all these things, and does them admirably. Kuttner and Moore use an alien vantage point to probe at the present, thereby touching on the disconnectedness of modern life in a way that few other writers can match. They also draw upon two other sources to shore up their observations: "mainstream" literature and psychoanalysis. The result is a story which, though a fantasy, cuts to the very bone of contemporary fear and anxiety.

The plot of "A Wild Surmise" is very simple. A man named Timothy Hooten has been advised to visit a psychiatrist. Once on the couch he reveals to the doctor, a man named Scott, that he feels he is in a dream, and that Scott himself is merely a figment of this dream. Only at night does Hooten feel that he "wakes up" and experiences reality. This sequence ends and another begins: it is night and Timothy Hooten has been urged to visit a psychiatrist, who is a giant insect named Rasp. Hooten, also now a giant insect, informs Dr. Rasp that he feels he is in a dream and experiences reality only in the daytime, when he is "awake." In the course of several sessions of psychoanalysis, both doctors become angered at Hooten's refusal to abandon his concept, and resort to drugs and hypnosis in order to rid him of it. Eventually, the rather thin membrane separating Dr. Rasp's world and Dr. Scott's world is torn apart——with fantastic and horrifying results.

Kuttner and Moore achieve their main effect by juxtaposing two realities, one apparently contemporary and "normal," the other unquestionably alien. An ex-

Henry Kuttner, a Memorial Symposium, p. 17.

ample of this comes at the very beginning of the tale, as Hooten talks to Dr. Scott:

> "It's like a dream, isn't it?" he said evasively.
> "What is?"
> "That." Hooten nodded at the needle-like mooring mast on top of the [Empire State Building] tower. "Imagine mooring a dirigible to that thing. They never did, did they? It's just the sort of thing that would happen in a dream. You know. Big plans, and then somehow everybody forgets about it and starts something new. Oh, I don't know. Things get unreal"

In this passage the authors have effectively pointed out the sorts of things which can indeed make life seem unreal, even dream-like. It is no longer common knowledge, but at one time there *was* a mast for dirigibles on the Empire State Building. In retrospect, the fact seems rather absurd, and the reader is led by inference to extend this to include other examples from the entire march of history. Great plans are made and abandoned, then forgotten, and life does become unreal. Later in the story a similar conversation is held between Hooten and Dr. Rasp: "'It's like a dream, isn't it?' he said evasively, though naturally not audibly. 'Imagine building a Wunkery simply to pleat Quatts. Of course they never showed up. That sort of thing could only happen in a dream.'"

This passage is a clear parallel to the one about mooring dirigibles. Although the reader has no idea what a "Quatt Wunkery" is, its existence is akin to a dirigible-mooring post atop the Empire State Building. And in the act of comparing these two situations——one absurd but real, the other imaginary——both become relativized. The real begins to seem more dream-like, the imaginary more possible. The line between them has been blurred.

Kuttner, a serious student of psychology, uses this background to great effect. His character Timothy Wooten may throw terms like "conscious mind" and "unconscious mind" around with abandon, but he never uses them incorrectly. Both Dr. Rasp and Dr. Scott accuse Hooten of fabricating the other through the process Freud calls *die Traumzensur*, the dream-censor. This is a process by which a portion of the conscious mind "censors" elements in dreams which might be painful or unpleasant. Upon waking, the dreamer is either unable to remember what has been censored, or else substitutes for it some other, less stressful image. The doctors' accusation is ironic, for Hooten's mind is censoring nothing——it appears to be a clear conduit for all his experiences.

By bringing in the concept of a dream-censor, however, Kuttner and Moore heighten the readers' sensitivity to its possible presence in their own lives. We begin to wonder what our own minds might be censoring while we are awake. A similar effect is created when Hooten mentions that he can't remember what his "waking" life is like, and says, "I must have a block in my mind." A mental block is an extreme form of the dream-censor, and the same question arises at its mention. The possibility that our perceptions are blocked or altered in some way by our own minds is intriguing and pervasive.

There is considerable underlying humor in the story. Quite a bit of this comes from Hooten often seeming to have more information than either Dr. Scott or Dr. Rasp. This is because he is "open" to more than one world, more than one set of experiences. The doctors can participate only in immediate reality, and the story's tragicomic end comes about because both attempt to enforce their own limitations on their patient. This doesn't mean that Hooten is not suffering from a delusion. But this delusion is not, as the doctors think, that he imagines whatever he is not participating in at the moment to be reality; it is that he imagines his current experiences to be a dream. Both experiences are equally real, as Hooten and the doctors soon find out. Because they are completely subjective, the terms "conscious mind" and "unconscious mind" become meaningless. Fantasy and reality are given equal weight. The line between them now blurs even further.

Hooten's real problem is ever visiting a psychiatrist in the first place. He does so at the insistence of others. He himself believes he has no problems.

When Scott asks him what he feels they are, Hooten replies, "I haven't any problems. . . . If I had, they'd just be dream problems, wouldn't they?"

This attitude seems to indicate that, left on his own, Hooten wouldn't feel driven to resolve his strange, dream-like existence. In a way, Kuttner and Moore are evoking the classic problem of the danger inherent in too much knowledge. Ironically, however, it is not a search for knowledge which brings the story to its climax, but quite the opposite. Neither Dr. Rasp nor Dr. Scott accepts Hooten's tales as anything but fantasy. In their respective roles as psychiatrists, both are almost fanatically intent on destroying their patient's supposed dream-life. They seek to restrict his knowledge, and force their own, narrower perceptions upon him. Several episodes of what seems unprofessional behavior are mentioned, most of which are spurred by Scott's and Rasp's annoyance with Hooten's knowledge of psychology and an unflagging confidence in his own perceptions. The following conversation is one example:

> "The experiment I'd like to try," Dr. Rasp said, "is a matter of quasi-estivation. Do you know what that is?"
>
> "Certainly," Hooten said glibly. "Hypnosis."
>
> "I don't think I know the word," Dr. Rasp said. "What does it mean?"
>
> "Quasi-estivation. My conscious mind blanks out and my unconscious mind cuts in."
>
> Dr. Rasp suppressed whatever reaction he might have had to this lucid explanation.

This is only one of many negative responses to Hooten's lucidity. The fact that the doctors behave unprofessionally is yet another aspect of the story which leads the reader to question the nature of his or her own reality. If doctors do harm, if psychiatrists are uninterested in the mind and if patients know more than doctors, what is the nature of the world we live in? By pointing out such tangible and believable ironies, the Kuttners underscore life's absurdity and relativity.

Like such other titles as "Mimsy Were the Borogoves," "Two-Handed Engine" and "Clash by Night," "A Wild Surmise" takes its title from a classic piece of literature. The Kuttners' use of a phrase from the John Keats sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" resonates ironically throughout the story. Henry Kuttner is known to have been a wide and avid reader, and his eclectic interests are often reflected in his fiction in complex and ironic ways. The last six lines of Keats's poem read:

> Then I felt like some watcher of the the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The evocation of this poem works on at least two levels. First, the climax of the Kuttners' story reflects events literally depicted. A "watcher of the skies" and "a new planet" seem not only to refer to the alien reality specifically presented in "A Wild Surmise," but also evoke science-fiction images in general. Drs. Scott and Rasp do indeed discover new worlds by their encounters with Timothy Hooten. Being psychiatrists, they are both explorers, not of the Pacific but of the great ocean of the human psyche. This is the most apparent, non-ironic reading of the authors' reference—perhaps homage—to Keats.

With a bit more scrutiny, a subtler, more ironic intention begins to surface. Most obvious is the fact that the prevailing moods in both pieces stand poles apart. Keats's work is full of the sense of wonder. But in the Kuttners' story, the search is reduced to dull, prolonged sessions on the psychiatrist's couch, and when a new world "swims into his ken" it becomes the source of mind-numbing terror. The protagonists, too, are contrasts: Keats's Cortez is described as "stout" and with "eagle eyes," whereas in the course of the story both Dr. Rasp and Dr. Scott can be described as "undoctorly." They exhibit rigidity rather than strength; and far from having "eagle eyes," they cannot "see" or comprehend the

data that Timothy Hooten relays to them. Taken in this way, the reference to Keats's poem appears as a deeply ironic esposé of the darker side of exploration.

It should also be pointed out that Keats's own words are not historically accurate. It was in fact Balboa, not Cortez, who stared out at the Pacific. This infelicity drives the irony in the story to even greater heights. Here too fantasy is supplanting reality. Just as Hooten believes his dream life to be more real than his waking world, so too does Keats create a new (albeit factually inaccurate) level of reality. It is impossible to say with certitude if the Kuttners were aware of Keats's slip, but if they were, they used it to add yet another level of complexity to an already rich story.

In "A Wild Surmise" the Kuttners pay tribute not only to Keats but also to Kafka. As with their reference to "Homer," that to Kafka is multi-leveled. The closeness of fantasy and reality, of dream and waking seen in such Kafka stories as "In the Gallerie" and "The Trial" pervades "A Wild Surmise." Even more significant than the issue of mood in general is the indebtedness to *The Metamorphosis*. In a way, "A Wild Surmise" could be said to be an "Anti-*Metamorphosis*." At the beginning of Kafka's tale, Gregor Samsa wakes to find himself transformed into a giant insect. At the end of the Kuttners', Dr. Scott finds himself suddenly translated into a world of giant insects. The horror of his situation only begins to dawn on him, and the reader is left, as so often with Kuttner, with little or no feeling of closure. While Kafka dissects Samsa's fate with fine surgical skill, Kuttner merely sets up a horrific situation and leaves its dissection to the reader.

Widespread fame eluded the Kuttners, perhaps partly because their fiction appeared under one of eighteen pseudonyms and in a myriad of styles and genres. Nevertheless, they left a significant body behind, and many contemporary writers, including Ray Bradbury, Philip K. Dick and Robert Silverberg, have acknowledged being influenced by it. In examining just one of the Kuttners' stories, one can see why their influence in the field was so widespread. They were not content to be pigeonholed as mere genre writers. Their knowledge and application of classic themes, psychiatry and people in general enabled them to expand simple genre definitions. Their use of irony and multilevel writing makes their prose sophisticated and enduring. "A Wild Surmise" does what any fine fantasy must do, be it Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, or Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown": It reveals the reality behind our fantasies and the fantasy behind our realities.

Book Reviews

MORE SHAPES THAN ONE by Fred Chappell. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 197 pp. 21.8 cm. $17.95.

Fred Chappell, who spoke about his novel *Dagon* at the 1990 Lovecraft Centennial Celebration, has collected here thirteen of his short stories. Nine of them are fantasy. Although he writes with a modern sensibility, these prove to be an uneven lot. Four are very good indeed, triumphs of craftsmanship. Three others begin well, but are flawed in the telling; nevertheless, they are interesting and well worth reading. The remainder are either written in Southern dialect or are too realistic for my taste. I confess to finding modern realism a little dull, and as an English teacher deliberate use of bad grammar offends me.

My favorite here is "The Somewhere Doors," a fantasy about a minor science-fiction writer of the 1930's who is asked to choose between two doors. One leads to a world with no people in it, the other to a world of great cities. (The

actual choice made may surprise the reader.) Chappell also shows that a fine story can be told about a pulp-fiction writer and his struggles with editors, artistic integrity, and making a living. You are taken back to the 1930's in a very pleasant way.

Lovecraftians will enjoy "The Adder" and "Weird Tales." The former deals with *The Necronomicon* turning up in contemporary times, and it is a thoroughly original mythos story. Unlike the usual mythos narrative, "The Adder" presents an aggressively evil book which doesn't simply rest on some dusty library shelf, but actually causes great harm to society; without graveyards or strange entities, real horror is conveyed. Yet the tale is also a mild, gentle spoof of Lovecraftian fiction. The subtle humor is enjoyable, as when the narrator says after a shocking revelation, "Could that be right? It seemed a little farfetched." A *very* clever tale is this; a work of art.

In "Weird Tales" Chappell creates altered history, focussing on the Lovecraft circle of the 1920's and 1930's. Samuel Loveman, Hart Crane and H. P. Lovecraft get somewhat unwittingly involved with monstrous and unseen presences. The deaths of the latter two are attributed to these alien entities. The author's descriptions of some of the Lovecraft circle are interesting, though his portraits are not flattering. Hart Crane (whom I don't believe was a regular member of the circle) is drawn with honest directness. Loveman is called a "mincing poetaster," while Lovecraft himself, described as unhandsome and having a squeaky voice, is said to have "numerous manias." The mild spoofing of mythos fiction that pervades the story shows, however, that there is no malice in the portrait of this "idle" group, merely a healthy and justified irreverence.

"Barcarole" is a tightly-controlled gem of a story about the composer Jacques Offenbach and his discovery of a man who wrote only one musical composition in his life, but that one piece contained a melody which haunted Offenbach for years. The theme here is that great art demands a high price: untold personal suffering——suffering that the artist would not undergo again even for the sake of creating another such masterpiece.

The remainder of the entries in this collection reveal some unfortunate stumbling. For example, "Linnaeus Forgets," the lead-off piece, fades out after a very impressive beginning. The great eigtheenth century botanist receives an unknown plant from the exotic South Seas. This strange plant starts behaving weirdly. It is effective science-horror, but the fantasy soon gets out of control, becomes excessive, and then extravagant. You say, "This is silly!" There is a difference between successful fantasy and a mere "tall tale." The saddest thing is that the story happens to be exceptionally well written.

The same criticism can be levelled at "Ember," which recently appeared in *Weird Tales* magazine. A man fleeing for his life climbs a mountain known locally for its occult associations. The suspense rises as the fugitive comes, at night, upon an isolated cabin. Inside sits an old woman, alone. Chappell writes: "I decided to take another look and this time it wasn't an old woman in her rocking chair but another kind of thing hard to tell about." But after many powerfully suggestive sentences like that, the fireworks fizzle. Instead of definite things happening, we are given odd and unacceptable visions of past and future times. The cabin vanishes, and the plot with it. "Ember" ends dismally in obscurity and dubious metaphysics.

"Miss Prue" is another intriguing, well-told tale that doesn't quite come off; I wasn't able to give it my willing suspension of disbelief. A man has been seeing a prim and proper lady regularly for twenty years, but the two never marry. He commits suicide——and at this point the story begins. Strangely, Miss Prue expects him to come as usual the next Thursday. He shows up, dead, mildly suggests that they might have married, and then leaves. That's it. Nothing seems gained by his return, either in the story itself or the author's artistic inten-

tions. Better to have had their confrontation before the suicide, and then explore their pitiful relationship. Chappell tries hard to make the dead man seem alive, yet dead. The attempt fails, for he appears not alive, but merely sick. "His voice was windblown ash in a desert land," writes Chappell; but it takes more than poetic words to make a living man seem dead, or vice versa. "Miss Prue" is a grim, barren tale, suggesting as it does that all we have is human love——a moot proposition.

The remaining six tales, for one reason or another, either did not interest me or were uncongenial to my temperament. I shall remain silent about them with one exception. "Alma" is written in the bad grammar of an uneducated person. I find that style difficult to enjoy, but two other problems beset the story as well. The fantasy is much too tall——even grotesque; and the plot is gross, for it includes bestiality. The result is an unconvincing mixture of Southern realism, fable and repulsion.

In overall retrospect, I find Fred Chappell's better stories full of suspense, quiet menace, human insight and humor. They are fun to read. Chappell is certainly on a level considerably above many well-known names of contemporary pulp fiction, whose sophomoric efforts seem meant only to shock or repel. He explores the human heart.

Edward W. O'Brien, Jr.

A WOMAN OF THE IRON PEOPLE by Eleanor Arnason. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1991. 525 pp. 21.5 cm. $22.95. (Book club edition, $10.98.)

Recently a boubou, a species of bird thought to be extinct, was sighted in Somalia. It was captured, plucked of a few feathers, drained of a few blood samples, posed for photographs, and studied for a year. It was then released by the conservative biologists who had found it. This caused an intense dispute over whether a very rare creature is more valuable alive or as a fossil.

The systematist-biologists call the boubou's release a crime. There is no way, they claim, to know the questions which will need to be asked a few generations from now. Without the bird on hand, answers will be impossible, and perhaps information vital to the natural life of Somalia will be lost forever. The boubou should have been kept in captivity for the rest of its natural life and then studied as a fossil for generations to come.

Not so, reply the conservationists. To release the bird back into the wild gives it a chance to mate, reproduce and perhaps change its near-extinct status. *Not* releasing the boubou would have been the crime.

Eleanor Arnason poses a similar argument in *A Woman of the Iron People*. Some 400 years in the future human scientists make first contact with the world of Sigma Draconis, over eighteen light-years from earth. The problem is the threat from the explorers——their need to know *versus* the need to protect the planet's Edenic natural envirionment. How far can first contact proceed without changing the cultures of the beings encountered?

One opinion is that even the visual contact with hairless humans has forever changed the lives of these furry people. Another is that if not this expedition then some other will contact them, so it is better to try influencing their culture as positively as possible. The sense that the more technologically advanced earth has a paternalistic duty to protect and guide the primitive society it has found pervades this tale.

Perhaps that is a reason the book feels so derivative. Delete the technology (which is vaguely familiar anyhow), set the scientists in present-day Grise Ford, Northwest Territories (for example), and the argument is immediately recognizable. The Grise Ford community refuses influence from the southern regions which have ruined traditional values known in other Inuit communities. This is clearly observed, they point out, in areas where housing, snowmobiles, general

stores and whiskey have been introduced, replacing generations of survival knowledge involving such skills as igloo-building and kayak-construction.

Arnason's explorers also believe in the "noble savage," a concept long familiar to us. The furry aliens emerge as child-like portraits of Inuit community members, and even tell similar stories. One of these involves the Rope Woman who beats the Trickster at his own game——a tale previously collected by the author in her *Amazons III* anthology. But all the stories have the familiar ring of human mythology. The aliens share the same ones with humans in the way Joseph Campbell documented that different cultures on earth tell similar myths: there are recognizable motifs in all the stories told.

A Woman of the Iron People's narrative is pleasurably page-turning, complete with culture clashes, stories, attention to anthropological detail reminiscent of early Ursula Le Guin and, of course, gender interactions. But it is all too familiar territory which good writing cannot change.

The narrators are an alien female and a human scientist, so the viewpoint presented is clearly a woman's. But we already have novels which recognize women's vision. And despite her fur and different number of digits, Nia, the Iron Woman, unfortunately appears all too human, too like any independent Western woman with technological naivité.

So I find myself in the uncomfortable position of offering an unfavorable review for a book which has been praised by Ursula Le Guin and other of my favorite science-fiction authors, and which has won the first James Tiptree, Jr. Award "for exploring and expanding gender roles in SF." Perhaps I was so entertained by Arnason's words that I didn't pay enough attention to gender role exploration in this novel. I failed to see anything that hasn't already appeared elsewhere in the genre, such as *Oath of the Renunciates* by Marion Zimmer Bradley.

Yet I take courage from Eleanor Arnason herself, who in *Women of Vision* has critiqued science-fiction as a way to "analyze the changes caused by industrialization, to understand what has been lost and what has been gained." Only this book does not add to such analysis. *A Woman of the Iron People* has lovely words, is a wonderful escape——but offers nothing new.

Anita Alverio

NEMESIS by Isaac Asimov. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1989. 364 pp. 24 cm. $18.95 (hardbound); Bantam Books, 1990, $4.95 (softbound). FOUNDATION'S FRIENDS, edited by Martin H. Gereenberg. New York: Tor Books, 1990. 464 pp. 17 cm. $4.95 (softbound).

Is this the real McCoy, or isn't it? Your guess is as good as mine when it comes to these two books. The Foundation is, of course, the galactic order Isaac Asimov first invented back in the 1940's. His stories about it were printed originally in the legendary s-f pulp *Astounding*, then were combined to make novels in the early 1950's. In 1964 the first three of these were collected in a single volume——and their popularity soared. Since then over twenty more titles have been added to the canon, and thousands of readers await each new addition.

Here we have at least two asterisks to add to the checklist. *Foundation's Friends*, subtitled "*in Honor of Isaac Asimov*," is a collection of mostly-pretty-good short stories that mostly-pretty-much deal with one aspect or another of the series. *Nemesis*, a novel by the creator himself, carries a disclaimer: "This book is not part of the Foundation Series, the Robot Series, or the Empire series. It stands independently. I just thought I'd warn you of that to avoid misapprehension. Of course, I might someday write another novel tying this one to the others, but then again, I might not. After all, for how long can I keep flogging my mind to make it work out these complexities of future history?"

Well, Ike's done it before, and *not* done it before. Behind the rhetorical question one can hear the bell toll, considering that the other book is an anniversary present of sorts, on the occasion of his fiftieth year (that's right, half a century!) as an author. Several old and new friends turn out to help him celebrate. Among the guests in these 21 new pieces are the great man's wife, Janet; also Poul Anderson, Ben Bova, Ray Bradbury, Harry Harrison, Frederik Pohl, Robert Silverberg plus a host of other luminaries. To be sure, some of their tales have nothing at all to do with the Foundation Series; but most of them do. A few in this genre-within-a-genre are real gems: "Strip Runner" by Pam Sargent, "Trantor Falls" by Harry Turtledove, "Foundation's Conscience" by George Zebrowski, and the centerpiece of the collection, Orson Scott Card's 90-page novella "The Originist.." These are bona fide. Several are robot yarns without any real Foundation orientation. Connie Willis's "Dilemma" and Robert Sheckley's "Carhunters of the Concrete Prarie" are very funny parodies; Willis has a robot come to Asimov's office for an interview, while Sheckley presents a planet ruled by robots who own humans and run on blood. Shiela Finch's "PAPPI" is a sentimental robot tale, while Harrison's "The Fourth Law of Robotics" has not only a robot that robs banks, but also smokes pot and speaks hep-talk.

Also worthy of mention are George Alec Effinger's "Maureen Birnbaum After Dark," about a broadsword-wielding yuppie girl suddenly deposited in the certifiably "Best Sci-fi Short Story of All Time"—the 1941 "Nightfall"—and Pohl's "The Reunion at Mile-High," in which he, Isaac and their boyhood Futurian buddies are posited in a contemporary alternate reality.

Nemesis concerns humanity when it is just leaving Earth, forming settlements throughout our solar system and evolving a new breed of human, the "spacer." In the 23rd century one settlement finds an undiscovered neighboring star *and* the means to travel there. It opts out of the Earthly rat race, abandoning civilization to make the migration. (One proponent voices his vision of the future: "The solar system will be a dandelion gone to seed, its various components drifting in space.")

This neighbor, Nemesis, will in 5000 years destroy all life on Earth, but to preserve secrecy no warning is voiced. The departing settlement's population of "Euros," (a nickname for the last racial group to dominate the planet) hope that "humanity can make a new start on a homogenous basis." Before a backdrop of romantic, political and scientific developments we see humankind's destiny worked out. Along the way we are introduced to a new intelligent life-form and a newly evolved human mentality. Both differ radically from our traditional conceptions. Much activity here is about interactions among the three sensibilities.

It is these two new concepts that trap our Foundation-phobic focus. Each is embodied by a character who suggests one from the previous series. The former can be equated to Gaia, the world intellect. while the latter suggests the flamboyant character of the Mule. These two new characters, taken together, make it possible—for me, anyway—to understand the unexplained relationship between Gaia and the Mule depicted in earlier Foundation novels.

If this sounds confusing, I suggest recalling, or rereading, the series from the beginning. I'll wager that sly old Isaac has already worked all this out. One gets the feeling of loose ends being tied up—as in *The Robots of Dawn*—and you don't want to overlook any of the nuances. Best also keep your fingers crossed that this superman of publishing can hang on for the additional decade or so that he'll need to complete the monumental life work.*

Asimov tantalizes and teases us at the end of *Nemesis*: "What would there be now? Galactic Empires? . . . Who would be able to make sense out of a Galaxy, when no one had ever made sense out of a single world? Who would learn to read

*Written in 1991; as readers know, Asimov died April 6, 1992. —*Editor.*

the trends and forsee the future in a whole Galaxy teeming with humanity?"

Although Harry Seldon, the discoverer of psycho-history and founder of the Foundation, isn't mentioned until halfway through *Foundation's Friends*, and not until the very last page of *Nemesis* (and there only indirectly) it would seem safe to assume he's the inspiration not only for these artistries, but for a lot of thought-provoking science-fiction still to come.

Real McCoy or not, I enjoyed these two books, and I'm sure you will, too.

H. R. Felgenhauer

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. . . SAM MOSKOWITZ ON HIS SCIENCE FICTION CAREER, edited and with an introduction by Fred Lerner. Center Harbor, N. H.: Niekas Publications, 1991. 96pp. 27.5cm. $5.95 (softbound).

Over the years, in various short articles, book introductions and biographical accounts of others, as well as intermittently through a major work, *The Immortal Storm*, Sam Moskowitz has given us tantalizing short accounts of his own life. Here at last we have a longer one devoted solely to the man himself. It is based on an 1981 interview by Jeffrey Elliot, and carries an introduction by Fred Lerner which should give modern readers, if they need it, the perspective for appreciating the career of "one of the Great Old Men of science fiction."

Sam was born in 1920 and grew up in the New York City metropolitan area. His family came here from Russia in 1911, seeking the American dream and willing to put in the same hard work to get it as immigrants from the Far East are today. Harry and Rose Moskowitz established their toe-hold, survived the Great Depression, and lived to see their children achieve the successes that all parents hope for. Unlike the typical science-fiction fan, often (accurately) pictured as a fragile and mentally mixed-up adolescent, Sam comes across as sturdily normal, a young man who balanced his intellectual gifts and wide reading with an interest in physical sports, and always kept in close touch with reality.

He was an early reader of Poe and Burroughs, but arrived at science-fiction mainly via astronomy. At the age of thirteen he began to immerse himself in the genre pulps, and in 1935 he became member #910 of Gernsback's Science Fiction League. Reading the September 1936 issue of Julius Schwartz's *Fantasy Magazine* ("unquestionably the greatest fan magazine ever published," he tells us) revealed to him the breadth of the field. More important, it introduced him to its past, and thus established an interest in science-fiction history that remained with him, to our ultimate benefit, for the rest of his life. (His very first article for the fan press—*Fantascience Digest*, September 1939—dealt with the history of the special August 1923 science-fiction issue of Gernsback's *Science and Invention*, and still has reference value over fifty years later.)

Though Sam will probably be remembered primarily as a historian, this booklet reminds us of how deep and all-embracing his interest in the whole field has always been. He has edited professional and fantasy magazines, written fiction, reviews, columns and verse, run clubs and conventions, assembled and ghosted anthologies, taught college courses in the genre (including the very first one in 1953), and acted as consultant in almost all these categories—all while holding full-time mundane jobs. "I *never* gafiated," he remarks on one occasion.

You will read accounts of these activities in *After All These Years*. What I find most fascinating there are the details and vignettes which so vividly contrast those times with present fandom. In 1937, for example, fifty copies of Sam's 32-paged fanzine *Helios* cost only $1.70 to publish—and that included *everything:* paper, ink, staples, postage and the amortization of the hectograph; yet even that, he writes, "was a strain on my resources." The total expenditures for running the first World Science-Fiction Convention in 1939 were only $269.94, and you could attend the four-course evening banquet there for just a dollar (yet

only 35 attendees could afford to). The fans of this generation, Sam admits, have "more of everything"; but the "early days of fandom for me, like first love for many, were filled with a thousand thrills of a special kind": "The main thing we had in common, which was probably greater than anything the fans possess today, was a sense of being special: of closeness, of evangelizing, of pioneering. Everything we did was new, and spreading the gospel of science fiction was an end in itself. We expected no reward and were grateful for the tiniest successes."

It was probably this closeness, a fundamental feeling of kinship among science-fiction readers of the 1930's, that made their occasional disagreements become such serious matters. Modern fans, accustomed to accepting a pluralistic society, have been puzzled or amused at how mere political differences could escalate into schisms. But this book makes one realize what a closely knit family fandom was then, and how like divorce and death these separations actually were.

What does Sam look back on as being the most memorable incident for him? The interview doesn't say, so I asked him. "I think it was selling my first story, 'The Way Back,' to Orlin Tremaine," he replied. "In those tough financial times opportunities looked very bleak, and this sale opened up prospects for a career in science-fiction. It's true I didn't become a genre fiction writer, but it proved the beginning of all the books and articles I've done over the years."

You will find a chronological list of these at the end of this book. By the time you have read that far you will probably also wonder when either Sam or someone else is going to write his full-length biography. Throughout this interview there are hints of even more interesting background material to be related, and someone really should get it all down in writing. Meanwhile, you will find this installment both meaty and addicting; it's difficult to imagine a set of reminiscences more enlightening and entertaining than what we have here.

A. Langley Searles

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THE LAST MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE
FROM THE LOST VALLEY OF FONGO-FONGO

It's all true:

There's a Macdonald's in Kor these days.
Ayesha's moved to California,
where she earns big bucks channelling
reincarnated lovers while waiting
for the F. D. A. to approve
her line of Immortal Flame Health Boutiques.

La of Opar's done Feminist.
She was on *Oprah* the other night,
plugging her new book
I Was the Ape-Man's Lust Object.
Jane intends to sue for divorce.

"Shangri-La has been completely liberated,"
the Chinese *People's Daily* reports.

And *Variety* says that Spielberg plans
to shoot *Jurassic Park* at the Challenger Ranch
in Mato Grosso.

Enough is enough!
Our (politically incorrect) White Goddess
Queen decrees
that her realm shall remain lost forever,
retreating like a tide
into legend and memory, into myth.
Far better to be a dream
than a Third World backwater.

Sacrifices to the volcano god continue as always,
and pith-helmetted strangers are killed on sight.

—*Darrell Schweitzer*

•

FINE ART OF DISASTER/
MEMOS FROM MARS

my first mistake was
committing suicide at sixteen,
my next was getting
up this morning,

the cat comes
down from its perch,
the moon flicks in
& out,
I'm in a taxi, I'm in a Bar,
I'm lost on the Headrow,
TV—am irritated with the sound
down,
& the air's hyper-charged with
the green glare of air-conditioning,

(don't be put off by the sound
of poetry / you can slam-dance
to this one)

my pet viper's left
crap-coils in my sneakers
& memos from Mars
on my green-screen,
can't quite decipher it
but it ain't
"have a nice day"

not unless
you spell it
"klactoveesedstene"

—*Andrew Darlington*

The Science-Fiction of Nat Schachner

Sam Moskowitz

PART TWO

VIII

When *Astounding Stories* was revived by Street and Smith with the October 1933 issue, it carried two stories by Nat Schachner. One, "The Orange God," was featured on the cover, and appeared under the pen name of Walter Glamis. In the Himalayas, a Baghdad-to-Calcutta mail plane enters a wall of darkness, streaked through with a beam of orange light. The plane crashes and Ward Bayley, a passenger, sees a girl on the ground screaming just before he blacks out. When he recovers consciousness he makes his way towards the orange light, and finds himself in a chamber dominated by a large globe with a non-human creature floating in it. The pilot of the plane and the girl he saw have been bound and are suspended in the air before the globe. There are hundreds of lamas about, apparently worshipping the alien creature. Bayley fires a shot at the globe and frees the captives. There is a melée with the creature projecting the thought that it is departing. Bayley's shot had almost killed it by admitting the "poisonous" Earth atmosphere, and it is leaving the planet rather than take further risks. This is a traditional horror story but is competently written, and its alien creature well portrayed.

Schachner's second story, "The Fire Imps of Vesuvious," appeared under his own name. Vesuvius is in eruption, and fire balls have destroyed homes of leading government officials. This turns out to be a plot engineered by revolutionaries, who can control the lava flow, to seize control of Italy. In the process intelligent silicon-based life is discovered inside the volcano. A great deal of meaningless action ensues before the country is saved. Though the story is readable, its plot and development are woefully weak.

It is quite probable that "The Orange God" was in the unused manuscript backlog of *Strange Tales* and "The Fire Imps of Vesuvius" in that of *Astounding*, for both were typical of their respective magazines. The new editor, F. Orlin Tremaine, was simply using them up for economic reasons, for neither represented the type of fiction he was to buy in the future himself.

Schachner was represented in the January 1934 number by "Redmask of the Outlands," a tale which proved unusually popular. It depicts an America very much like that in Philip Nowlan's "Armageddon—2419" (*Amazing Stories*, August 1928), the story which became the basis for the Buck Rogers comic strip. Schachner posits that areas like those once dominated by New York, Chicago and Washington have become densely populated city-states. The rest of the country has returned to a wilderness called The Outlands. There people live in primitive underground habitats, in contrast with the high technology enjoyed by the inhabitants of the affluent islands they surround. Red Mask is a futurustic Robin Hood of the skies. He operates an invisible flying vessel, preying on ships from the city-states and supplying the outlanders with needed goods and supplies. The effect is costume drama set against a futuristic background, very skilfully related.

In "The Time Imposter" (March 1934) people in the future have discovered

the principles of time-travel. They have also preserved an ancient book that depicts Mack Sinnott, a condemned murderer, as a hero and Herbert Hoover as a villain. Unaware that the book was an adroitly written satire, they travel to the past to rescue their ancestor. After a series of encounters Sinnott is returned to his era in time for his execution, and history remains unchanged. This is a readable enough yarn, lightweight but acceptable.

By early 1934 Tremaine had used up the backlog of Clayton manuscripts, and the fiction in *Astounding* was reflecting his own editorial policy. He followed Schachner's "thought variant" "Ancestral Voices" with Donald Wandrei's "Colossus" (January 1934), a mind-expanding novelette based on the idea that our Earth is but an atom in a vast macrouniverse. It received enthusiastic approval, but almost no one seemed to remember that the identical idea had already been used in Ray Cummings's novel "Explorers Into Infinity" (*Weird Tales*, April-June 1927). (Wandrei could well have read this, for he was a contributor to *Weird Tales* at that time.) "Rebirth" by Thomas Calvert McClary (February-March 1934), when people of the world forgot everything they had ever known and had to start civilization all over again, was another "thought variant," as was Jack Williamson's "Born of the Sun" (March 1934), where the Earth proves to be a giant egg which cracks under the heat of the sun and releases a space monster. In the same issue John Russell Fearn had a remarkable story, "The Man Who Stopped the Dust," about a machine that removes all dust particles from the air, plunging the world into a strange twilight, for light diffusion is caused by reflection from dust in the atmosphere. The May issue begain serializing Jack Williamson's rousing epic, "The Legion of Space," which featured Giles Habibula, a pot-bellied master locksmith who was one of the best realized characters in science-fiction up to that time.

In that same number Nat Schachner scored with his most successful story to date, a 30,000-word novelette titled "He from Procyon." In this, a greatly advanced, almost godlike entity from outside our solar system by chance lands on the Earth. Invisible to human eyes, he tours the planet, observing the inhabitants. His exploration gives him a low opinion of the human race. For amusement, he devises an experiment. Into the pineal glands of six human beings he inserts a contrivance that will induce others to follow their expressed wishes and commands, even against their will. One of the subjects, annoyed at his wife, shouts at her, "Go jump in the lake!"——and she leaps into a nearby reservoir; another, a middle-aged failure, asks a producer for money and is handed $36,000; a chorus-girl asks for a better part in the show, and gets it; and so on. Of the group the most ruthless is Alfred Jordan. He demands to be——and is——appointed New York City Police Commissioner. He then uses his position as a power base to form a small army, starting with the 50,000 policemen and firemen under his command. There ensues a struggle in which Jordan tries to take over the government, getting people to follow his will through the use of radio broadcasts. All of the "special" people become involved, and for a time it appears that Jordon will succeed, but it turns out that the device works for only a month, and all of them suddenly lose their special powers. He from Procyon departs greatly amused.

One of the characters in the story is named Dolittle and another Hugh Lofting, author of the famous Dr. Dolittle children's books, but no special significance seems implied. Schachner's handling of his characters, with emphasis more on their reactions than on the scientific device introduced, reminds one especially of Dr. David H. Keller, at that time one of the the most popular authors in the field, whose stories were primarily concerned with people's reactions to an unusual invention or social change. As we shall see, Schachner was to write still other stories bearing the mark of Keller's influence.

In the same issue of *Astounding* that carried the first installment of his "Rebirth," McClary had a short story under the pen name of Calvin Peregoy titled "Short Wave Castle." It dealt with tiny intelligent creatures with tre-

mendously accelerated metabolism, who lived generations in just a few days. Because of this speed-up they could solve in a very short time problems that would occupy humans for hundreds of years. These creatures were kept captive by a scientist who supplied them with enough material to sustain them and work on problems, but never allowed them to become a danger to him.

The basic idea of this tale probably originated with Tremaine. The editorial in the April 1934 *Astounding* actually states that he suggested "thought variant" ideas to authors, and in this instance apparently gave it to more than one, for when Schachner's "The 100th Generation" appeared in the May 1934 issue it was blurbed as a "new approach to the idea broached in 'Short Wave Castle.'"

The narrator of this story is Radburn Phelps. Phelps tells of a wealthy research scientist, Bayley Spears, who has assembled supplies of sperm from the world's most distinguished men and ova from its most famous women. He mixes them, and before the fertilized eggs reach maturity somehow combines them with others. This compresses the evolution-time of each generation. He can thus span 100 generations in a year, the equivalent of what would occur during 3000 years of normal mating methods. He plans to rear the 100th generation to maturity.

Several years pass, and then Phelps receives a frantic note from Spears begging him to persuade the U. S. Navy to blow up the island where he has been carrying out his work in isolation. Instead, Phelps arranges an expedition there to investigate. He sees the results of the research, which comprise a weird race of specialists—a creature with a lyre-shaped mouth and a singing voice so magnificent its beauty paralyzes the listener; another with a tough, warty skin and a single eye; and a golden-haired woman of incredible beauty. These specialists plan to take over control of the world. Phelps manages to blow up the facilities and those in them, and then leaves the island. The story is well done, and if you are willing to overlook the shaky science can still be read with enjoyment.

IX

Orlin Tremaine's title at Street and Smith was that of Editorial Director. This meant that he was responsible not only for *Astounding Stories*, but that he headed a staff and had several other magazines to manage. These included *Bill Barnes' Air Trails*, *Clues*, *Cowboy Stories*, *Romance Range* and *Top-Notch*. Writers in this situation who sold to one of the magazines would inevitably try to sell to another. In fact, if they were suitable, Tremaine would sometimes switch stories from the magazines where they had been submitted to another.

One of the longest established of these titles was *Top-Notch*. This had been launched as a monthly with the issue of March 1, 1910 and was edited by Burt L. Standish, author of the Frank Merriwell series. At the time of its appearance, the post office was threatening to classify dime novels as paperbound books; this would subject them to higher postage than the second class magazine rate under which they had customarily been mailed. By putting out a periodical containing a selection of short stories and a serial instead of a complete novel, publishers felt they would comply with regulations for a magazine, and they were right. *Top-Notch* was aimed at a readership of teen-aged boys, and that policy proved such a success that with the October 1, 1910 number it changed to the standard pulp format, priced at ten cents, and began appearing twice a month.

Appealing to teenagers worked like a charm until the Great Depression, when boys could not afford to buy the magazine that often. When Tremaine inherited it in 1933 he changed the policy to stories for male adults. He also introduced occasional science-fiction (which had rarely been used before), sometimes with excellent cover illustrations, in the hope of enticing some readers of *Astounding* to buy it.

One of these covers illustrated Nat Schachner's story "The Dragon of Is-Kander," which appeared in the April 1934 issue. An expedition sets out for the

Gobi Desert in search of evidence to confirm the theory that Alexander the Great had penetrated that far on his conquests. The leader is an American, Owen Crawford, and with the expedition is Andros Theramenes, a Greek archeologist. One night the explorers are awakened by what looks like a huge flying dragon, spouting fire. Kang Chou, their native guide, claims it lives in the mountain, and comes forth to seize unwary women.

Eventually they find a cavern which leads to a hidden fertile valley. Hundreds of people are working in the fields, and near by is a statue which replicates the Colossus of Rhodes. The people are ruled by an old man who claims that he is actually Alexander himself. He tells the explorers that a cordon of Alexander's forces were cut off from the main body of troops two thousand years ago, and that they made their way into this isolated valley. They established a community by kidnapping women from the outside.

Political machinations by Theramenes and Chou, as well as a revolt from within the community itself, ends in the ruler's death and in a gun battle where Crawford kills the archeologist and the guide. The flying dragon turns out to be a rocket plane that had been built several centuries previously. This the remaining explorers use to escape the valley. The ancient rocket plane provides a unique facet to this tale, which is otherwise a standard lost race adventure.

A residue of Schachner's penchant for technocracy appears in his novelette "Stratosphere Towers" (*Astounding Stories*, August 1934). The time is the 26th century. All supplies of fossil fuels have been exhausted, and the world depends on solar power that comes from two gigantic towers twenty miles high. War breaks out, and it is suggested that power from the towers be cut off, which would ground all planes and stop most of the mobile equipment. The scientists ought to take over, says Schachner, since "politicians and statesmen have made a botch of things."

Both towers are attacked, but scientists band together and save them from being overcome. The story ends with the world's chief scientist declaring that he is going to "lay down the law to the nations. Tell them that thereafter the scientists are going to do the ruling. 'I'm tired of the way in which they have run things. . . . I'll turn off every ounce of power . . . That will bring them to their knees.'" This story seems to indicate that Schachner was a willing convert to technocracy, and that the fiction he wrote advocating it were more than mere professional assignments, but represented his own convictions.

Readers might also be interested in comparing "Stratosphere Towers" with Paul Ernst's "Protoplasmic Station" (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, February 1937). Although Ernst introduces substantial elements of his own, the two stories have much in common.

In "The Living Equation" (*Astounding*, September 1934), Schachner again produced a "thought variant." Citing as precedent the "brain machine" at M. I. T. for solving differential equations, he posits the construction of a machine that can think. It can even create new equations describing the universe. Its inventor prepares information to feed into the machine, but before he can do so a burglar accidentally turns it on. In the process a "force bubble" forms, imprisoning the burglar and keeping the inventor out. Rays from the machine pervade the entire universe, creating equations that change natural laws in local areas.

An airplane condenses into a ball and falls, penetrating the earth to a depth of a mile. An ocean liner is lifted from the sea and disappears into space. The Chinese province of Shantung disappears, leaving a hole a thousand miles square and a thousand miles deep. Northern Australia stands on end for hundreds of miles and the ocean flows into the depression, exposing in the Caribbean the ruins of Atlantis. Stars begin revolving around the Earth at trillions of miles an hour. Silicon-based life appears, and a man and his family are cloned in triplicate. The house with the thinking machine disappears, leaving its occupants on what was the front lawn. It is believed that the machine has decided to build an entirely

new universe for itself, and has subsequently entered it.

The idea for the story may also have been given Schachner by Orlin Tremaine. This is suggested by its similarity to "Sidewise in Time" by Murray Leinster (*Astounding Stories*, June 1934), where branches of time from the past kaleidescope around the world, offering a montage of events that might have been. In the introduction to his collection *Sidewise in Time* (1950) Leinster states that his story came out of a brain-storming session with Tremaine. On the basis of my own experience I find this entirely believable. When I was buying stories as the editor of *Science-Fiction Plus*, I suggested plots to Leinster, and would then brainstorm them with him. After writing many stories over the years he was running out of original ideas, though he remained ingenious at improvising and developing those given to him.

The March 9, 1934 number of *The New York Times* reported on an article in the journal *Science* on "heavy water." Such water, which contains deuterium in place of hydrogen, was hypothesized to contribute to the process of ageing. Heavy water was an oddity that was much in the news at the time, and Schachner adopted it for his story "The Great Thirst" (*Astounding*, November 1934). Here, drinking the water on an increasing number of farms does not slaken thirst, but greatly increases it. Whenever that happens a truck selling bottled water turns up shortly afterwards, ready to alleviate the problem—for a price. This condition spreads so widely that the president declares a national emergency. It turns out to be caused by a disgruntled scientist who has discovered a type of radiation that converts ordinary hydrogen into deuterium. He has also created a force screen which protects him and defeats all attempts to stop the radiation. Finally the protagonist finds a way to overcome the screen and kills the wayward scientist.

Several other authors in the genre picked up the idea and wrote stories which followed the news dispatches even more closely. Among these were David Keller's "The Life Detour" (*Wonder Stories*, February 1935) and H. L. Gold's "Age" (*Astounding Stories*, April 1935), which was written under the pseudonym of Clyde Crane Campbell. Both showed people ageing rapidly through drinking heavy water.

X

By the last half of 1934 *Astounding Stories* was pulling far ahead of its competitors, *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder Stories*. It had the greatest number of pages (160) and sold for the lowest price (20¢), Its fiction was far more pyrotechnic, and its writers included some of the most renowned in the field. Among them were E. E. Smith (who contributed "The Skylark of Valeron"), C. L. Moore ("The Bright Illusion"), Raymond Z. Gallun ("Old Faithful," "Telepathic Piracy"), Stanley G. Weinbaum ("Flight on Titan,") and John W. Campbell, Jr., both under his own name ("The Mightiest Machine") and his Don A. Stuart pen-name ("Twilight"). Even Arthur Leo Zagat returned to the fold ("Beyond the Spectrum").

It was against this background of undeniable excellence that Nat Schachner's "The Ultimate Metal" was featured on the cover of the February 1935 issue. A scientist creates element number 93 by the neutron bombardment of sulfur. When alloyed with titanium and beryllium the element, called evanium, gives rise to a metal with unique properties, Coultonite. It is lighter than aluminum, harder than diamonds, has a high melting point and tensile strength; but what makes it unique is that it is naturally luminescent, emitting a perpetual soft, white light. It is promptly used to build a 150-story office building in New York City. But the building proves unstable. The luminescence changes to an opalescent, coruscating spectrum of crawling color and a sort of metallic "music" is heard. The alloy becomes wraithlike—and disappears. The inventor eventually comes to believe that it was actually alive, and that it "died" of evolutionary old age. "The Ultimate Metal" is developed well, and despite its out-dated science can still be read with

pleasure. It is also one of the few Schachner stories to be anthologized, having been selected for Groff Conklin's collection *The Best of Science Fiction* (1946).

In "Mind of the World" (*Astounding*, March 1935) Schachner portrays the population of the planet as divided into "tribes" which are expert at their specialties, but technically ignorant outside them. Because of worldwide crop failures the tribes are called together. Clyde Moorhouse, who has convened the meeting, announces that he has invented a machine that can transmit knowledge from one individual's brain to another's. Kalen Thorn volunteers, and is accepted by those assembled, to be the repository of mankind's collective knowledge. The device works, and Thorn becomes recipient of an almost godlike comprehension. At first he suggests improvements in all phases of life, but gradually he is corrupted by power and evolves into a dictator.

Moorhouse acts to overthrow him by building a machine which can strike through the fourth dimension, but Thorne has anticipated this, and wrecks Moore's laboratory. There ensues a titanic struggle involving scientific weapons between the two, with Moorhouse eventually winning. A new system of technological cooperation is then worked out, with great benefit to all mankind. The level of writing found here is competent, but the various inventions seem purely expedient, and the scientific explanations for them little more than gobbledygook.

By this time Nat Schachner had become so prolific and so successful in selling to Tremaine that, to permit publication of more than one of his stories in a single issue of *Astounding*, he adopted the pseudonym of Chan Corbett. (This seems to have been simply invented rather than derived from any personal source.) His first story under this pen name was "When the Sun Died," which appeared in the same issue as "Mind of the World." A sunspot outbreak that begins in 1981 is of unprecedented intensity, and by 1985 the sun has cooled appreciably. A leading physicist foresees that the condition is not temporary. He carefully selects a thousand people, and they commence building a dome to shelter themselves from an approaching ice age. Other domes are subsequently built elsewhere. The sun collapses irreversibly into a cooler dwarf star, but most of the domes survive the encroaching glaciers. Despite the hopelessness of the situation, the survivors determine to persevere. This account of a natural catastrophe is handled with maximum credibility, and Schchner's description of the plans for and construction of the protective domes is particularly good.

"The Orb of Probability" (*Astounding*, June 1935) is one of Schachner's best stories, and it is surprising that it has never been reprinted. It is laid nearly eight thousand years in the future, a time when scientific refinement has reached the point that men float along instead of walking, are fed intravenously, and have machines to serve all their needs, even rearing their children. Climate and terrain alike have been tamed. The world has become a perfectly controlled mechanism. But, writes Schachner, "The art of conversation was completely lost. . . . Nothing ever happened, nothing could happen, to change the even tenor of existence. Every hour was like the preceding, each day like the last, and one century much like another."

Into this placid existence is born Fran 19 who, because of his imperfect genetic structure, is imbued with a strange restlessness. He wants to introduce change into what he sees as a moribund civilization. He builds and activates a machine which will introduce a random factor into the world. A wide variety of natural disasters begin to occur; even the fabric of time is distorted. The world becomes a chaos. Huge buildings fall. Cities vanish. Old men become young. A nineteenth century farm suddenly appears on a new stretch of land.

Eventually stasis is established by cutting off the machine's power supply. The world starts to rebuild, but unlike "Sidewise in Time" (to which this story is distinctly similar), where all aberrations disappear, here the changes are permanent, and man must start up again with several eras of history existing simultaneously.

Remembering the popularity of "Redmask of the Outlands," Tremaine ordered a sequel from Schachner. This appeared as "The Son of Redmask" (*Astounding*, August 1935). Menacing forces under The Purple Emperor have conquered most of the city-states, including the agricultural community that in ancient times was Washington, D. C. Red Mask, now older and leading a quiet existence there, resurrects his invisible ship and shoots down five of The Purple Emperor's war planes. Then he turns the ship over to his son, who assumes his father's former role as Robin Hood of the Outlands. After much exciting action, he locates and overloads the emperor's power source, plunging the entire fleet to the ground and defeat. The concept of future civilizations operating on a single, central power source is used frequently in Schachner's stories, most notably "Emissaries from Space." The second Redmask tale develops into episodes of rapid, page-turning action; it was also the last of the series, for Schachner resisted the urge to continue it.

He next turned from super-science to relevance in one of his most effective uses of a socially conscious theme, "I Am Not God," a short novel serialized in the October and November 1935 issues of *Astounding Stories*. The story takes place in the near future. Germany has started a war, and all of Europe and Asia are enmeshed in it. The German dictatorship is portrayed as obsessed with its claims of Aryan superiority, America with a love of money, England with royalty, France with scandal, and the U. S. S. R. with such trivia as renaming all its cities in an effort to make communism work.

Against this background an American research scientist, Steven Dodd, discovers a gas that can eventually penetrate anything except lead, and will paralyze anyone breathing it. It does not kill, but if the victim is not revived he will slowly waste away. Dodd is offered twelve million dollars for the formula of the gas, but he refuses. Meanwhile he searches frantically for an antidote.

At the same time, astronomers spot a nebula composed entirely of this gas racing at an incredible speed towards the solar system. It envelops the Earth, plunging everyone except Steven Dodd into suspended animation. Dodd has donned a diving suit, which retards the gas, in order to complete his work on the antidote. He manages to inject himself with this just before losing consciousness.

After awakening, Dodd revives first his girl-friend, then important scientists and their families. After that, a debate ensues over who should next be restored, for idealistically the scientists want to make the Earth a better world of deserving and useful people. Choices are clouded by envy, malice, greed, pettiness, nepotism, nationality, religion and color. The tone, as in several other Schachner stories, begins to resemble that in David Keller's fiction. Finally, the formula for the antidote is stolen and used to awaken the warlord of Germany. On learning of this, Dodd resolves to awaken the entire world——the good, the bad and the indifferent. "I am not God!" he declares.

For its period, the story carried a very powerful message. Long-time readers of science-fiction will probably note the similarity between the plot here and that in Conan Doyle's earlier novel, *The Poison Belt* (1913). However, Doyle is concerned with Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, while Schachner seems a disciple of Charles Fort ("the survivors survive"). There are also significant differences between both works and M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* (1901).

The October 1935 *Astounding* also contains a significant story under the Chan Corbett byline. Although their identity is saved for a surprise ending, it is about intelligent pathogenic bacteria. They regard human beings as planets, and moving through the air towards a new host as interplanetary travel. The greatest scientist among them is Tubo, who first teaches his fellows how to use their reproductive fecundity to overwhelm the defending white corpuscles. But then their hosts die, and the bacteria die with them. Tubo then realizes that their ecology must be better balanced, and to attain this the bacteria must practice birth control. At that moment the host they are in is dying, but by strict

conservation of their numbers they bring about a reversal of his condition. They also dispatch emissaries to other "worlds" to teach this methodology of conservation. At that point, a human scientist is testing an experimental serum on the same host. It seems to work, even though pathogenic bacteria are still present. He achieves fame for his discovery at the same time that Tubo is regarded as the greatest scientist of the "Infra-Planetary" worlds for teaching birth control.

The pro-conservationist message in this cleverly wrought story is clear and forceful. It is also interesting to note that Schachner has Tubo term his plan "The New Deal"—just as president Franklin D. Roosevelt had called his anti-depression economic plan. It should be noted that the premise that the bacteria inhabiting the human body could be intelligent was not new, even half a century ago. It had been used by the iconoclastic Charles Fort in his satirical fantasy "A Radical Corpuscle" (*Watson's Magazine*, March 1906). There is no evidence, however, that Schachner ever read this earlier, obscure work.

In the same month *Amazing Stories* ran a warning tale by Schachner titled "World Gone Mad." (Based on the known editorial policies of the magazine, it had been written at least a year or two previously.) In the near future all the nations of the world are arming themselves with poison gases and Radite bombs, one of which can destroy an entire city. These can be delivered by rocket planes travelling at a thousand miles an hour, of which this country already has 70,000. There is a Sino-Russian alliance and a united Europe, and both are aligned against the United States. There is no declaration of war. Acts of sabotage occur all over the world and escalate into overt military operations. The United States launches a premptive strike that leaves Europe devastated. But then a giant rocket barrage hits New York City with explosives, followed by poison gas.

Because the theme was already familiar in the genre, the potent warning carried by this story was not fully appreciated at the time. It anticipated some of the weapons and fears of the recent Cold War between East and West, as well as the atmosphere prevailing during that period.

XI

In recent years the cloning of human beings has become a frequent theme in science-fiction. That was not true when Nat Schachner wrote "The Isotope Men" (*Astounding Stories*, January 1936), which anticipates the idea. Malcolm Stubbs, a biologist and physical chemist, devises an improved method for separating the elements into their isotopes. He uses this to divide a human being into two; one is associated with the predominating heavier isotopes, the other with the lighter ones. The former proves to possess the dominant, socially positive traits of man, the latter his recessive and negative qualities. The dominant "clone" also has a significantly enhanced I.Q. Ranks of the unemployed submit themselves to this process, and soon their dominant twins, dubbed "isotope men" by the newspapers, are revolutionizing society. In six months there are 100,000 of them.

The recessive twins, perhaps less bright and governed by the more basic emotions, are segregated and put under the control of the military; they are seen as ideal cannon-fodder. While the isotope men feel a strong attraction to their recessive halves, the latter dislike their dominants. Eventually there are confrontations between the two which political forces multiply and exacerbate.

The novelette moves slowly—perhaps too slowly—towards an extremely powerful conclusion. One sees here again the overriding influence of David Keller. All men are brothers, and our failings and good points are but opposite sides of the same coin.

Schachner's next story, "Entropy," certainly qualified as a "thought-variant," and received cover illustration on the March 1936 issue of *Astounding Stories*. It begins in the laboratory of Jerry Sloan, who has built the equipment by which he hopes to attain the temperature of -459.72°, absolute zero. It is his

theory that at this temperature electrons no longer move, and when that happens they cease to exist. When the apparatus is tested at full power absolute zero is reached; the huge tourmaline sphere that is its central point disappears——and so does Kay Ballard, Jerry's fiancée, who was standing too near it. Reversing the process does not bring either Kay or the sphere back. Jerry concludes that they have been transported to "an entirely different order of space time, a new universe." He rebuilds his apparatus and resolves to repeat the experiment, using himself as a subject. By doing this he hopes to find her and bring her back.

But he himself is also swept into oblivion. Forbes Dakin, a wealthy friend, is left in charge of the laboratory. He leaves it exactly the way it is, and every day comes to sit and watch the spot of the vanishings, hoping for a miraculous reappearance. The emotional effect here is very similar to that of "The Sublime Vigil" by Chester Cuthbert (*Wonder Stories*, February 1934), where a woman disappears from a mountain top, and year after year her betrothed watches it from a spot near by, praying that the same freak of nature that took her away will reposit her on the same spot.

Years pass, and Dakin dies. But he has instructed in his will that tins of food be placed in the laboratory and the structure housing it be maintained indefinitely. To no avail. Centuries pass, and the house is finally destroyed in an interplanetary war with the destiny of the couple still unknown.

Their saga has not ended, however. Jerry Sloan comes to his senses inside the intact tourmaline globe. He can see Kay alive in her globe nearby. But there is no way they can reach each other. He deduces that they are living at an inconceivably speeded-up time rate. They are saved from isolation by a greatly advanced human, who "speaks" to them telepathically. He tells them that the universe is collapsing into itself, its energy almost dissipated. But Jerry feels there are alternatives to extinction. Self-supporting tourmaline shells can be created where they can live on "immortal" in a declining universe. He has also brought along with him a device that could initiate another big bang to restart expansion. Despite the bewildering number of far-out ideas, the story somehow does hang together and end on a optimistic note.

Schachner's next work, "Reverse Universe" (*Astounding*, June 1936), was also a thought-variant. Two astronauts are drawn into a universe which they had not seen because it was travelling faster than light. They and everything about them become reversed, as in a mirror-image. They are set down on a world that is concave instead of convex, and see insects revert back to cocoons and grubs. They themselves grow perceptibly younger; they inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen. to overcome the effects of this strange universe they take off in the opposite direction. Unfortunately this tale is entirely unconvincing and confused.

In the same issue Schachner had the story "Ecce Homo" under his Chan Corbett pen name. It is laid in the very far future. Two gigantic brains, El and Om, exist in their crystal balls of nutrient. El is attended by a man and Om by a woman, both ordinary human beings. The two brains have become so bored that mutual suicide is agreed upon. A torpedo destroys Om, but El, who from the begining had planned to be the last brain alive, deflects the one aimed at him. The woman attendant of Om defies El, who then orders his male attendant to seize her. Instead, on impulse, he throws a metal bar which breaks El's globe and kills him. The man and the woman, with all the automated machinery of the planet to aid them, decide to start life on Earth anew. There had been a number of stories with this theme before, and "Ecce Homo" possesses no special merit to rise above them. Perhaps it had been written on rush order to fill a gap in the magazine.

"Pacifica" (*Astounding*, July 1936) takes place five generations in the future when Earth is suffering from overpopulation. The reason for this is that dictators of the world want cannon fodder to make a bid for supremacy and in self defense the democracies have been forced to foster the same goal. Further, advances in science have greatly prolonged human life. The solution involves using

Pascal's Law on a prodigious scale. Since the planet's crust floats on a plastic core, pressure applied to it would be transmitted to the crust, raising it at its weakest point. A hole is drilled sixty miles through the basalt, and fitted with a gargantuan plunger. Its operation raises a continent of a million square miles in the Pacific Ocean.

The world and politics of 2100 A.D. here are projected from those of 1936; this suggests both the fallacy of extrapolating from assumed constants, and the creation of an alternate world comparable to projecting what might have happened if the South had won the Civil War. Although elements of political intrigue are introduced, "Pacifica" is essentially an engineering story, and judged on that basis it is a good one. The cover and interior illustrations by Howard Brown are uniformly excellent.

The concept of generations of space voyagers who are born, live and die during a trip between two star systems is one of the most majestic in all science-fiction. It appeared as early as "The Living Galaxy" by Laurence Manning (*Wonder Stories*, September 1934), and gained outstanding realization through such stories as Don Wilcox's "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years" (*Amazing Stories*, October 1940), Robert Heinlein's "Universe" (*Astounding Science Fiction*, May 1941), A. E. van Vogt's "Far Centaurus" (*ibid.*, January 1944) and "Spacebred Generations" by Clifford D. Simak (*Science-Fiction Plus*, August 1953). Generally overlooked has been Nat Schachner's earlier "The Return of the Murians" (*Astounding Stories*, August 1936). In Schachner's story it is the aliens who have made a 5000-year epic journey from a planet of the star Sirius.

The Murians' spaceship is a mile long and half a mile in diameter, and in it animals and crops are raised, sustaining a population of a thousand. Their weapons are more powerful than those of Earth, and the Murians intend to wipe out the human race and repopulate the planet for themselves. But when it is discovered that they are descendants of a race who left the Earth for Sirius many thousands of years ago when their continent here sank, the tension between the two peoples is reduced; and problems are settled when the Murians decide to colonize Venus instead of the Earth.

Schachner lost a great opportunity by failing to make the space voyage instead of an alien menace the focus of his story; he nonetheless did manage to create an interesting blend of three themes——the space ark, the legend of Lemuria and a menace from outer space.

After so fascinating a concept, Schachner's next effort was the disappointingly poor formula tale "The Saphrophyte Men of Venus" (*Astounding*, October 1936). While mountain-climbing with friends, Hugh Warner finds himself in an area which suddenly becomes dark. The sun disappears, it gets very cold, and all power sources fail. A vortex that stretches up into space is sucking all light, heat and electricity from the region. Gigantic fungi drop from the sky, and each one seizes and carries off a human being, to be used as food. Our hero, however, manages to jam the invaders' machinery so that everything blows up. One is tempted to believe that this was a short thriller written by request against a deadline to fill an unexpected gap in the contents of the issue where it appeared.

Schachner's next tale, "The Eternal Wanderer" (*Astounding Stories*, November 1936), seems clearly to have been intended to be a thought-variant. Clifford Havens, who has lead a revolt against the tyranny of the Interplanetary Council, is condemned to death for his actions. The "death" that he will undergo is being transformed into an "Eternal Wanderer." This disassociates the atoms of his body and disperses them throughout space and time. Each supposedly retains a vestige of consciousness, yearning for a reunion which will be forever unattainable. The sentence is carried out and Havens disappears.

The apparatus accomplishing this was made by Harg, a Martian inventor, who had never intended it to be used on an intelligent being, Before his death Harg completes a reintegrator, which will reverse the process, and turns it over

to Haven's girl-friend. She uses it, but due to an error in the reintegration formula, Havens returns as a four-dimensional being. He is capable of passing bodily through solid matter and traversing astronomical distances. He appears on Mars, which had subjugated all the other inhabited worlds, and strikes its leader dead; with him out of the way, the inhabited worlds set up an interplanetary democracy. Havens then returns to the Earth, where he gives his friends the formula for restoring him to normality. They do, and everyone lives happily ever after.

This is not a well thought out story. The details seem improvised, and are often unclear. There are echoes of the earlier story "Entropy," but the potentialities are not fully realized.

The same issue of *Astounding* contained a second Schachner story, "The Thought Web of Minipar," under his Chan Corbett pen name. John Weatherby, a humdrum bookkeeper, does not return home from work and apparently has vanished. When he is found he seems to be suffering from a sort of amnesia; he is unable to speak, but appears to be observing his surroundings with great interest. It turns out that intelligent spider-like creatures on the distant world of Minipar have managed an exchange of intelligences in order to get a first-hand report on the civilization of the Earth. The Miniparian whose mind is in Weatherby's body slowly learns English and is finally ready to report to his home planet. Weatherby meanwhile occupies the body of a Miniparian. He not only becomes accustomed to the civilization of Minipar, but begins to like it. In the end the exchange of minds is reversed, and a very reluctant Weatherby is returned to his dull job and slatternly wife. This story could have had more extensive development, but it is effectively framed and pleasant.

Two of its nuances appeared in earlier fiction of the genre. In Clark Ashton Smith's "The Visitors from Mlok" (*Wonder Stories*, May 1933) an Earthman who has been acclimated to another world finds on his return that his Earth senses are now abhorrent to him. And in "The Flying Fool" (*Amazing Stories*, July 1929) by David H. Keller the protagonist, who has built an ingenious anti-gravity flying machine to escape a dull job and a stuffy home, forces himself to resist using it out of a sense of duty to his wife and child.

XII

Nat Schachner's "Infra-Universe" (*Astounding Stories*, December 1936 and January 1937) is a confused and jumbled short novel that reaches for wordage by combining the plots of three stories into one. Again, it seems improbable that so disorganized a work would have been published had it not been editorially ordered to meet an impending deadline. Indeed, "Infra-Universe" is so disorganized that it is difficult to summarize coherently.

Jim Wentworth obtains a job as an assistant to Professor Matthew Draper, a scientist who is building a peculiar piece of equipment. Claire Gray, a girl who is also working with him, confides to Wentworth that Draper has suffered personality changes that have caused previous assistants to leave the job. Draper's apparatus is activated, and it causes a segment of the Earth's surface ten miles long and two miles wide to be transported to a world lit by triple suns. People find themselves on the "inside shell" of a different universe, which is inhabited by shapeless masses that are neither dead nor alive, but are somehow functional in their space-time continuum. Wentworth assembles the survivors and tries to build a new order, but strange creatures descend from the sky by the hundreds and somehow enter and merge with every human. The resulting bodies require neither air nor food.

These creatures are giant viruses from the world of Orimuz. They are active when joined with the body of a host, but live a sort of half-life otherwise. Wentworth learns that many of the Earth's diseases are caused by fragments of these giant viruses. Their aim is to take over the inhabitants of another world called Aldahar.

In this infra-universe there are also dwarfs, incredibly ugly and with but a single eye. Towering above them is Kam, a being a thousand yards high and shaped roughly like a human, very tenuous in substance. The giants like Kam were once inhabitants of a sun that was blown here by some titanic disruption, and they formed a rapport with the resident race. The dwarfs came from another planet and are dark and evil. A struggle between the giants and the dwarfs is in progress; the dwarfs have superior weaponry, but the giants are indestructible.

Insar, the entity within Wentworth, is feared by all others as well as the Gargantuan leader Kam. There is a "bath of preparation," a lambent fall of green flame, into which the Earthmen jump, so that their hosts may become "fixed" in their bodies. (This reminds one very much of Clark Ashton Smith's "The City of the Singing Flame," where intelligent creatures are lured into an irresistible flame to an unknown end.) Wentworth adroitly manages to evade this fate.

Claire is possessed by a creature that tries to lure Wentworth into a passionate embrace, but the entity possessing Wentworth resists. These overtures are repeated several times, and mark the first appearance of sex into Schachner's science-fiction. This may have been missed by Tremaine in his rush to get the story into print. (One would be hard pressed to discover overt sex in any other story printed by Tremaine.)

In a complex, barely comprehensible series of events the power source of these worlds is destroyed, and the dwarfs flee. Kam and his aides are sealed into containers and projected into another universe, immortal but forever trapped. Fifty Earth poeple not permanently "fixed" are returned to their world, and with that this disjointed, somewhat silly novel ends.

What brought about the injection of sex here? For some time Schachner had been selling fiction to such sadism-, sex- and cruelty-oriented pulps as *Horror Stories, Terror Tales* and *Dime Mystery*. During the 1934-1939 period he wrote 49 stories for them, each with the obligatory paragraph or two of implied sex added to their mix of torture and evil. His insertion of this in "Infra-Universe" may have been little more than a slip of mental reflex.

For those unfamiliar with this type of fiction, citing a typical example may prove instructive. This is Schachner's "Cauldron of the Damned" (*Horror Stories*, December 1935-January 1936). Workers in an old glass plant in Pittstown are exhorted to revolt against their employers, who are said to be inheritors of the Evil Eye, which can bring injury and death to the men and the community. It develops that Dan Burroughs, superintendent of the plant, is behind it all. During the proceedings he dangles Peter Stetson, its owner, above a cauldron of molten glass to get him to sign over the business. Edna, the beautiful wife of the owner's son, is stripped naked and spread-eagled, then tortured by concentrating heat on her body through powerful lenses. There is also a paragraph of sex.

Schachner may have been introduced to these markets by his friend Arthur Leo Zagat, who himself sold some sixty stories there. The attraction was that such stories were very easy to write, for the publishers were never critical of crude plotting and substandard prose, and paid well——mostly a cent a word on acceptance. It should be mentioned that Schachner and Zagat had plenty of company in such work. Among these were science-fiction writers Ray Cummings (as well as his daughter Gabriel Wilson), Henry Kuttner, Frank Belknap Long and Arthur J. Burks; and weird tale writers Thorp McClusky, Paul Ernst, Carl Jacobi and Harold Ward. In later years Schachner told his wife that he was not proud of these writings, and that he would be happy to see them forgotten.

(to be concluded in the next issue)

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Acknowledgements: The editor is indebted to Sam Moskowitz for supplying the manuscript of Dr. Cassidy's article, and regrets the postponement until the next issue of the current installment of his serial, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

Confessions
of a Fantasy Versaholic

John Francis Haines

(*Editor's note:* The reception which greeted "Empress of the Stars," Steve Sneyd's article on Lilith Lorraine in the previous issue of *Fantasy Commentator*, has prompted this entry, the second in a planned series about fantasy poets. These will deal both with those writing today and lesser known names from the past, and may be in the form of expository accounts, interviews or, like this one, brief autobiographies. John Francis Haines lives in Warrington, England, where he was born in 1947. His work has appeared in well over a hundred different journals here, in Australia and in his own country. Fewer than a half-dozen of all his poems are of the mundane variety, and even these, he states, "have the odd genre tinge to them," so that his status as a fantasy poet seems truly assured.)

For a long time now poetry and science-fiction have been equally important to me. It is also fair to say that my discoverey of these apparently very different forms of literature have changed my life.

I was an only child and learned to read early and easily——in fact, I cannot now remember a time when I was unable to. This was to prove my only real talent and later, when my parents dispaired of my learning anything, there was at least one subject, English, in which I would always do well.

On a conscious level science-fiction came before poetry. I was taken to see the films *Moby Dick* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* as a child of seven or eight. Being even then a voracious reader, I borrowed Melville's novel from the local library. Of course I found myself unable to get beyond the first page of that tremendous work, but I was hooked by the magnificent language and later was able to return to it with enjoyment. I was given a junior version of Verne's novel as a present, and this I could appreciate; oddly enough, I eventually read most of Verne's books but never got around to the unabridged version of that first one. Not long afterwards I also received an illustrated edition of Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. As far as science-fiction was concerned, that proved to be a turning point for me. There was no going back. As a result, by the time I attended secondary school in 1959 I was a fan——although I didn't know it then.

At school, poetry was taught differently from the way it is today——there were no "poets-in-residence," no "creative writing" classes: Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth——these were the core of the curriculum. I'm not sure if I was simply lucky, or if my teachers were particularly good, but I emerged loving Milton and Shakespeare; Wordsworth took longer to come to terms with.

I started finding poems I enjoyed and, most importantly, which excited my imagination in the same way as did the science-fiction I was beginning to devour in large quantities. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was probably the first such poem I encountered. Later I found *Paradise Lost* equally thrilling, especially the first two books with the war in Heaven and fall of the angels. "Off syllabus" I discovered Ogden Nash and the *Archy and Mehitabel* verse of Don Marquis, though at the time I don't think I knew that these two writers were American.

Meanwhile my journey through science-fiction was progressing rapidly. The local library had a shelf of yellow Gollanczes which I soon read. (For the benefit of American readers I should explain that Gollancz was a British publisher

who came to fame in the 1930's with his series of Left Book Club publications. At some time, perhaps after the Second World War, he added fiction (including science-fiction) to his lists, and it was these books, with their distinctive bright yellow jackets, that I discovered. So far as I know they are still being produced and must be as much a magnet to budding fans today as they were to me then.)

At this time I had no sense of science-fiction history, and so was unable to tell which books were "early" or "late" works; but once I discovered the yearly anthologies I began to get the necessary perspective from which to view the field. A kindly librarian introduced me to a strange, fairly new work called *Lord of the Rings*. Little did I guess that it was to become a major obsession for a good many years, and not long afterwards acquire a cult following in Britain and America. An equally kind teacher of English, Brian Barker, pointed me towards *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, whereupon I realized that not all science-fiction was to be found between those familiar yellow covers.

At school I discovered that some of my friends also read science-fiction, which began another voyage into the infinite with clandestinely circulated paperback copies of Lovecraft, Wheatley, Burroughs (especially *The Chessmen of Mars*) and many others. I started looking for science-fiction in second-hand book shops and realized that other genres——history, war, adventure——were also worth attention. Occasionally they also gave a passing nod to science-fiction; indeed, some authors wrote in more than one genre.

My school education was drawing to a close and the range of poetry I was exposed to was increasing. More Shakespeare, plus Chaucer, Marlowe, Milton and Eliot. With Eliot I started getting a taste for modern poetry. I must have come across other moderns about this time, but the ones who really stuck were Eliot and Ginsberg. I read *Murder in the Cathedral* at school, finding it wonderful; and I picked up a book on the Beats which included a censored, but otherwise complete, text of "Howl" (the whole poem was there, but the four-letter-words had all coyly been replaced by dashes——so much for the liberated sixties). A whole new world was opening up to me.

About this time Bob Dylan's electric albums were starting to appear and these too had a profound effect, sending me to surrealism. By then I had started writing verse of my own, which was strongly derivative of Eliot; but I was about to be sidetracked from poetry for the next fifteen years as I became embroiled in the first of many unsuccessful folk groups and attempted my first rewrite of *Lord of the Rings* by way of Lovecraft and Wheatley! This first period of writing poetry lasted from about 1964 to 1969. I felt I was only dabbling, that it was merely a prelude to writing prose.

However, just as all this was happening, one further crucial piece of my poetry jigsaw was about to fall into place. I went to college to train as a teacher, and though I failed in that project, the English Literature course there was to change my poetic life by introducing me to the work of Yeats and the poets of the First World War. It is difficult to convey just how vital this was to me; it was the first time I had encountered modern poetry that was not cast in the mold of free verse. From the work of Owen and other war poets I realized for the first time that poetry could deal with *technology*. This seemed a real breakthough, for up to then I'd still thought of poetry largely in terms of subjects other than modern technological ones. I was unaware at that date of the work Hugh MacDiarmid was doing to bring a scientific and technical vocabulary into poetry as in poems such as "On a Raised Beach."

William Butler Yeats came as much a revelation as the First World War poets: the combination of a high romantic and a clear-eyed realist. A combined modernist and traditionalist was something I'd never encountered. I was struck by the evolution from nineties romanticism to post-war modernism without breaking stride or abandoning meter and rhyme. That apparent mismatch created superb po-

etry——perhaps the greatest written in this century. For the first time I could see that it was not essential to discard traditional forms in order to write modernist poetry.

Though I was to continue reading science-fiction and try writing s-f prose, it was not until the middle 1970's that I took up poetry again. I still read poetry, but very little compared to the amount of fiction and non-fiction I was then consuming. Eventually I became convinced that I would never be a novelist, and I turned to poetry again for the first time since school and college. Ever since that time I have concentrated on it; the only prose I now write is confined to reviews, articles and letters. I must have been subconsciously aware of science-fiction poetry or I should never have thought of writing it; it has always seemed an entirely natural form for me. (I think I had come across the *Frontier of Going* anthology at some time, though I didn't think it had influenced me when I did so.)

It would be too tedious to list all the poets I've encountered since then, but suffice it to say that I've been up and down the centuries of English poetry. I've also embarked on a major (and continuing) reading program of American, Australian, Greek, Roman, French, Russian and other nationalities' poetry. All the non-English ones I have to read in translation, and the variety and quality of what I've found has been an education in itself.

It seems incredible that when I first came across science-fiction it was a minority interest, frowned upon by schoolteachers, to be read only furtively. Now it is a multi-million dollar industry. Much has happened since I began to read those Gollancz yellow-backs in Hull Library, not least of which has been bringing a lot of imaginative concepts into everyday life: men in space, personal computers, the beginnings of robotics, genetic engineering. Science-fiction is no longer seen as an unusual form of literature; go into almost any bookshop and you will find shelves upon shelves of it——possibly more than for any other single genre of writing.

In the same period an awareness of poetry has increased as well. It too was once a minority interest, but now almost everyone seems to be writing, if not reading it. Poets-in-residence are regularly found in schools, colleges, even prisons. At the same time, science-fiction has achieved enough respectability to be part of school and college courses. That was just beginning to happen at the end of my school career, when E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" was included in a book of short stories for use in schools.

Will the youngsters of today and tomorrow have as much fun and excitement as I did in discovering these two superb forms of literature? I certainly hope so!

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MYSTERY

How black the waters are to him who seeks
To probe beneath the enigmatic pool
Where Mystery lurks, unheard, unseen, yet speaks
A language freed from every language rule.
For signs and symbols, numbers, stars and dreams
Comprise her speech as all true sibyls know,
Revealing truths more ancient than the streams,
Soft flakes of starlight sifted down below.

How black, indeed, the tarn to them who think
The world is what it seems. No cabalic law
Invites to dive in search of pearls that sink
To depths few men have ever dared explore.
Yet one in love with Mystery will dare
The ebon pool——the plunge——nor yet beware!

THE TWILIGHT ZONE OF NOD

When I lie down to sleep at day's end
my thoughts are wont to wander over spaces
peopling them with enemy or friend,
events that never happened, familiar places
remote in time where I once lived too long,
or not long enough . . . then thoughts return
to *now* with all its problems; shadows throng
my sleepy brain. I drowsily discern
a pattern forming through the murky mist.
The shapes that gather there are vague, unclear,
but beckon me explore——I cannot resist——
their habitat, a place of lurking fear.

Then I awake to find the shades dissolved
and all my fears miraculously resolved.

——*Raymond McCarty*

The Gothic Era Revisited

Steve Eng

THE FIRST GOTHICS: A CRITICAL GUIDE TO THE ENGLISH GOTHIC NOVEL by Frederick S. Frank. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 710.) New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987. 496 pp. 22.1 cm. $50.00.

THE GOTHIC's GOTHIC: STUDY AIDS TO THE TRADITION OF THE AGE OF TERROR by Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 567.) New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988. 485 pp. 22.2 cm. $67.00.

THE CONTESTED CASTLE: GOTHIC NOVELS AND THE SUBVERSION OF DOMESTIC IDEALOGY by Kate Ferguson Ellis. Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1989. 226 pp. 22.5 cm. $24.95 (cloth), $9.95 (paper).

To paraphrase Eclesiastes 12:12, "of making many Gothic books there is no end." Following the pioneering work of Montague Summers, author of *The Gothic Quest* (1938), *A Gothic Bibliography* (1940), etc., and that of his heir-aspirant, Devendra P. Varma, starting in the 1970's there have streamed forth numerous bibliographies of the genre. Each has striven to bridge gaps in preceding works, and at least the primary sources (usually the first and last editions) have been identified with some degree of finality. There has remained a mass of secondary material——from a passing remark in a general history (often merely a slur) to some forgotten essay in an early nineteenth century literary magazine——inviting attention by those dogged scholar-sleuths hoping to search it out.

A few years back *The English Gothic* (1984) by Robert Donald Spector combined primary and secondary sources, the former in a kind of bibliographic-essay format. Shortly thereafter Frederick S. Frank's *Guide to the Gothic* (1984) supplemented this, confining itself to secondary sources and (unlike Spector's work) annotating them. Frank was active as a member on the Board for Gothic Studies of the lamented journal *Gothic*. (*Gothic* and its board sank without a trace, rather like the seaport of Dunwich did off the Suffolk coast, but Frank escaped.)

For most of the past two decades Frank has been working on the early years of the Gothic period, and recently has connected that firmly with the present. In his introduction to one of the books I am reviewing here, *The First Gothics*, he chides Summers for including non-Gothic items in his *Bibliography* without identifying them as such. He reports that overall upwards of five thousand *bona fide* Gothic novels were published in the forty-year (1764-1824) heyday of the genre, and for his own bibliography he winnows this down to five hundred titles.

The First Gothics serves to complement Frank's irreplaceable chapter in Marshall Tymn's *Horror Literature* (1981), not only by plot outlines heightened by critical commentary, but through cross-referencing other critical material. There are many interesting discoveries awaiting the reader here——for example, Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816), he tells us, was written to get even with her ex-lover Lord Byron. Frank's clear and lively prose lifts his annotations above the often dreary academic level. Of *Correlia*, an anonymous 1802 work, he writes, "This unsigned Gothic is built around the sound effect of the cryptic acoustic or supernatural sign emanating from a casket or mortuary vault. . . ."

The book has a helpful Gothic lexicon as an appendix which defines such terms as "towermania"——the "peculiar compulsion to ascend, construct, or reside in towers." (That's one neurosis few people can afford!) A good secondary bib-

liography is also appended. Frank's work serves to remind us that the term "Gothic" has in recent times become attached to a bevy of modern witers, including the popular Stephen King. The maelstrom of paperbacks they have produced give the studies of Frederick Frank a special relevance today.

Benjamin Fisher's *The Gothic's Gothic* concentrates on material to which modern readers, and not just antiquarians, can relate easily. Fisher is a Poe scholar of some durability, having authored at least a dozen Poesqueries since his 1969 dissertation. His 1976 "Ancilla to the Gothic Tradition" bibliography was itself a seminal piece, inspiring in some measure the rush of studies which followed it, even though indebted in part to Dan J. McNutt's *Eighteenth Century Gothic Novel* (1975). An "ancilla," by the way, is a handmaiden or helper——and Frank's initial piece has helped him locate 2614 entries for the present volume, every one of which is annotated.

The introduction gives a good review of prior scholarship, tracing the shifting definition of the term "Gothic." The book is split into the predictable two large sections, authors and subject areas. There are about a hundred of the former, arranged interestingly not by birthdate, but according to when they emerged as authors. The heaviest coverage is of the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries, and the middle Victorian period of Dickens and Le Fanu. Poe gets nearly fifty pages here.

There has been a tendency for critics to find Gothic "aspects" and "tendencies" in mainstream writers, and Sherwood Anderson, Truman Capote and Shirley Jackson have in particular been grist for the academic mill. These have been dutifully (and probably rightly) collected by Fisher. But the real horror writers are not John Hawkes or Jean Rhys, but Joseph Payne Brennan, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, Clark Ashton Smith——at least a hundred names leap to mind. Necessarily these moderns have been excluded, from Arthur Machen and M.P. Shiel forward, since they could easily take up a separate volume of their own. It was probably better to select maintream authors with Gothic traces, to exemplify the continuing "efflorescence" of the Gothic flame (as Devendra Varma might say).

One of the great virtues of *The Gothic's Gothic* is its searching look at poetry: Gottfried A. Bürger notably, who gets 33 annotations. His "Lenore" inspired walter Scott and Matthew Gregory Lewis during the Gothic ballad movement of the late 1790's. (See "Ghost Riders from Germany: a Early Phase of Fantasy Poetry," *Portland Review 27*, #2 [1981], which Fisher missed.) There are valuable sections on Shelley, Byron and Dante Rossetti (though unaccountably not Christina!). Indeed, anyone working on early fantastic poetry will owe the author considerable acknowledgement.

Writers of supernatural fiction like Henry James and M. R. James get detailed coverage, and Bram Stoker something less. Stephen King receives exactly two entries, which makes a louder statement than all the published skepticisms of Don Herron, King's arch-detractor, put together. (There exist several times that many whole books devoted to King.)

Part two, the topical section, covers several important areas---of which "Anti-Gothic Materials," "Wandering Jew/Flying Dutchman" and "Faust" are among the most interesting. Some "true" ghost accounts are annotated also, since these were often confused with short fictitious yarns (and vice versa) in the nineteenth century magazines.

The Gothic's Gothic has been produced on a laser-printer and is typographically very readable. Its convenient size and shape quite literally make it a handbook. Its sheer bulk alone argues for the importance of Gothicism throughout over two centuries of Anglo-American literature, and suggests labyrithian tunnels undermining the rationlist world above ground. It also brings to mind Adrian Goldstone's remark (in his volume on Machen), "The step from book-collecting to bibliography is a short but frightening one. . . ."

The advent of the Gothic novel was a challenge to the smugness of the Enlightenment, and logically the castle of Otranto was erected in defiance of the the tidy uniformity of, say, Twickenham Gardens. (That the Age of Reason was anything but that is a separate topic. From the Hellfire Club of Sir Francis Dashwood to the machinations of Cagliostro, an occult underground burrowed beneath the precise, geometric gardens of rationalist thought.) Soon enough the Age of Reason yielded to the Reign of Terror; figuratively, Horace Walpole anticipated Robespierre.

Now in *The Contested Castle* Kate Ferguson Ellis suggests that the Gothic novel was also an assault on the genteel notion of femininity. It's a fitting coincidence, for example, that William Godwin and Mary Wolstonecraft, that pair of radical visionaries, should have given us——indirectly, via their daughter Mary——the novel *Frankenstein*. The heritage is understandable; as Ellis reminds us, Godwin himself wrote Gothic novels.

Ellis has done a welcome amount of reading in eighteenth century history, and accurately places Gothic (and other) novels into perspective: they were written for women, who had increasing time to read. She sees Ann Radcliffe offering them thrilling escapes from their cosy world. By contrast, however. with *The Monk* M. G. Lewis assaulted conventions more brutally, severely threatening this still-safe domesticity. The final chapter empathizes with that most resolute (and rejected) of heroines, Cathy Earnshaw, who comes back to haunt Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*.

The Contested Castle also reflects ready familiarity with the classic texts, and provides a fresh feminist (if not definitive) reading of Gothic fiction. That is not meant as faint praise, I hasten to add——Gothicism is too complex and often too perverse to embrace in any but tentative opinions. It is too horrifyingly wondrous, thankfully, for any scholar to explain fully.

Tips on Tales

Short Reviews of Books Old and New

E. F. Benson's *Desirable Residences and Other Stories* (1991): In this collection of 27 tales, all but two of which have never appeared in book form before, there are three dealing with the supernatural which we must add to the author's earlier writings in that genre, all of which have been reviewed in this magazine.* "Number 12" and "The Top Landing" date from 1922; they are short and slight, treating routinely (if gracefully) ghostly reënactments of suicide. The third, "Sea Mist" (1935), is longer and better; it tells how a wife returns after death for revenge on her husband, who murdered her so that he might marry another woman. Benson develops this with good choice of detail, using a seaside locale as an effective accent for the spectral happenings.

The book also contains three titles under the heading of "Odd Stories." "The Satyr's Sandals" (1920) and "The Disappearance of Jacob Conifer" (1927) are gentle fantasies, rather different from anything else by this author. "The Superannuation Department, AD 1945" is, surprisingly, bona fide science-fiction. Some time in the 1920's——so goes its protagonist's vision——population pressures bring into being a government Board of Superannuation. By 1945 this bureaucracy begins

Fantasy Commentator I, 3 (1943); *III*, 211 (1953); and *VI*, 178 (1989).

issuing a form to those over 65; it consists of questions whose answers enable the Board to judge whether these elderly people should be permitted to continue living. Although Benson depicts the Board as paternalistic, and seems to support both its existence and work, it is not clear if the Superannuation Department is being offered tongue-in-cheekly or as a grim forecast of the sacrifice future Britain may be forced to endure. In any event, it is an absorbing and enjoyable little tale.

Desirable Residences contains as well a previously uncollected "Lucia" story, and two new "Dodo" ones. For good measure it is prefaced with a helpful introduction by Jack Adrian, whose tireless bottom-fishing through British periodicals from the first generation of this century located its contents. This is a book that should appeal to genre aficionados and E. F. Benson followers alike. It has been recently remaindered, and is widely available at about a third of the publisher's list price.

—*A. Langley Searles*

Toni Reed's *Demon-Lovers and Their Victims in British Fiction* (1988): Ah, sweet misogyny! Abuse of women, or at least domination of them, is certainly a staple in the horror field. The handy adjective "Byronic" covers a multitude of sins—mostly against women—though oftentimes they are portrayed as very pliant in the arms of a Heathcliffe or under the fangs of a Dracula. But with vampire fiction awash in gore, staining the printed page and streaking the movie screen, it isn't surprising that feminists would take the perpetrators to task.

Reed's book, however, isn't merely a trendy tract imposing current norms on literature of an earlier day. Instead, she has traced the influence of ballads like "The Demon Lover" (a title arbitrarily picked by Walter Scott, who standardized an old Scottish ballad) on latter-day fiction. Two of her favorite examples are *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Elizabeth Bowen's short story, "The Demon Lover." Too few critics have acknowledged the effect of the Border Ballads upon the growth of the novel in general; even the numerous Gothic scholars have not read extensively among their texts. Reed, however, has delved into the Bishop Percy, Scott and especially the Francis James Child collections, and her appendices cite several examples.

Although *Demon-Lovers* is ostensibly about fiction, it is one of the very few that deal extensively also with the fantastic in poetry. Somewhat complementary to *The Gloomy Egotist* by Eleanor M. Sickels and *The Insistence of Horror* by Patricia Spacks, it deserves the attention of anyone interested in Gothic literature in general and the history of fantasy poetry in particular. The detailed notes and an ample bibliography add to its permanent worth.

—*Steve Eng*

The Best Supernatural Stories of John Buchan (1991): Although he is remembered today chiefly for his mystery-espionage thrillers featuring the character Richard Hannay (*The Thirty-Nine Steps* and its successors), John Buchan (1875-1940) had a strong interest in fantasy, science-fiction and the supernatural. He wrote at least twenty short stories involving these themes, which are scattered through his earlier collections *Grey Weather* (1899), *The Watcher by the Threshold* (1902), *The Moon Endureth* (1912) and *The Runagates Club* (1928). He also wrote four such novels, *The Dancing Floor* (1926), *The Gap in the Curtain* (1932), *The Magic Walking Stick* (1932) and *Witch Wood* (1927), the last of which was much admired by H. P. Lovecraft. Now Peter Haining, apparently unencumbered by the realization that readers would like to see *all* of Buchan's short genre works in a single volume, has put together here only twelve plus two others which, despite the book's title, are not supernatural at all, and one more that turns out to be a chapter excerpted from *The Gap in the Curtain*. Haining has also written a rather slap-dash introduction which informs us about the chief relevant events in the author's life. There are points of interest, however, in two of the entries. The version of "The

Magic Walking Stick" included here is the short original (1927) one which Buchan expanded five years later into a full-length novel; and the text of "The Watcher by the Threshold" follows that of the American magazine printing which is somewhat shorter than the British one. Neither has appeared elsewhere since, so we should probably be grateful to find them here. The other tales are the effective if familiar ones with which we have long been familiar. Despite the flagrant omission of several stories that should have been included, I am obliged to recommend this truncated collection, since it is the only genre one of Buchan presently in print. Two-thirds of a loaf is better than none.

—*A. Langley Searles*

C. J. Cherryh's *The Goblin Mirror* (1992): It is rare when an established author succeeds after taking stylistic chances. Too many times popularity and fame tempt writers to create that one book they had always wanted to, or write in that style they had always admired, only to end in being a complete failure. And yet, when is it better to tackle something new than when one is on top? Perhaps the difference lies within: is the new venture really an old dream brought to light, or is it a divergent path in the author's own evolution?

Cherryh has switched styles before and made each one work, even if the results did not become extremely successful. Now with *The Goblin Mirror* we see yet another side of this author, a stream-of-consciousness sort of writing that dips and weaves through the characters' words and actions with equal weight and force. Thoughts are broken, incomplete passages and fragments appear as one would expect actual thought to be. This jumbling, sometimes chaotic movement is extremely difficult to pull off without losing one's audience; yet Cherryh not only holds the readers' attention but makes them want to push on.

Though clothed in familiar trappings, the story itself is a bit unusual. As in her three previous fantasies, Cherryh draws deeply on myth and folklore to provide the background and setting. A young prince must journey over the mountains to seek a witch. With him is his older brother, a sorcerer, a chief huntsman and a retinue of men. Along the way they are attacked by goblins; some of the party are killed and the rest find themselves separated. The prince meets a witch's apprentice and a goblin; at the same time the prince's younger brother and his dog, who have followed them into danger, join the sorcerer and the chief huntsman. The various groups split, meet and split again as the story progresses and the quest continues. One thing that makes the plot unusual is the fuzzy line separating who is evil from who is good, as well as who holds power and who does not. Trust proves to be a rare commodity, for everyone doubts everyone else. Further, all is not as it seems, and discovering the truth therefore proves more enjoyable.

As in previous Cherryh works, one expects and finds strong, well fleshed-out characters. Their placement in a world very different from what one anticipates will surprise and please readers. Where will C.J. Cherryh go next? We may wonder, but remain grateful to be taken along.

—*Steven Sawicki*

Michael R. Collings's *Dark Transformations: Deadly Visions of Change* (1990): This collection of verse and some prose is organized into three sections—the first being dedicated to your pal and mine, the familiar werewolf, complete with fangs and "gallows-eyes that slay and tear and burn." Frankly, lycanthropy is not for everyone, particularly the protagonist of "Wiros" ("I weep to die and cannot"), who plainly would prefer to hang up his wolf act, but has to stay compulsively on the job. The woes of the profession are even more drear in "A Midnight Shooting on the Golden State Freeway," which is the best poem of its kind that this reviewer can recall. It sure beats Jerry Jeff Walker's recording of "L. A. Freeway" all to heck—since a silver bullet is shot at a deserving motorist!

The second section carries an unfortunate misprint: I'm sure "red-rimed

eye" is a misprint for "red-rimmed," since a rhyme on communism clearly wasn't intended. The third section deals with science-fiction verse, of which "The Star-Scout Handbook" is a wonderful parody for anyone who remembers the lost innocence of the scouting movement a generation ago. "Our tents are plastic bubble-domes/ Conserving moisture and body heat / Against the vacuum. . ." doesn't sound like the kind of camping trip envisioned by Lord Baden-Powell, scouting's founder. Colings's gift for music is especially well displayed in these pieces.

There is good story-telling in most of the poems, a virtue too often missing in so-called mainstream poetry. The cult of self-expression seems to ask only that a poet be "poetic" while unloading a dump-truck of personal feelings on the reader-victim. Too seldom have such modern efforts much movement——which may explain why so many poets prefer the fantasy field where, in the horror ballad or the lyrical science-fiction epic, both writer and reader actually *go* someplace. Whether merely down the clammy steps of a mausoleum, off to Transylvania for some fresh blood, or hurtling starward faster than the speed of time, at least it's a trip from somewhere to somewhere else.

Collings has a rich, varied vocabulary, and he employs it accurately, although occasionally his language is rather densely compacted. At times a little less might tell a little more——and a little better. But mostly this is strong poetry and——quite rare even for the field——it spans the distance between horror and science-fiction with ease.

The typeface and paper quality in *Dark Transformations* are first-class, betokening, we hope, a new and higher standard for Starmont printing and design.

——*Steve Eng*

Darrell Schweitzer's *Transients and Other Disquieting Stories* (1993): You will find the fifteen entries in this collection quite unlike most of the author's fiction, unless you have happened to encounter them in Small Press periodicals, where most of them originally appeared during 1986-1991. They are not whimsical fantasies, but deliberately designed to shock and horrify. And they do! Three themes dominate: back-from-the-dead ("The Paloverde Lodge," "The Children of Lommos" and "The Spirit of the Back Stairs"); time dislocations ("Short and Nasty"); both of these ("Clocks" and "Jason, Come Home"); and insanity("Soft,""Peeling It Off" and "The Man Who Wasn't Nice to Pumpkin Head Dolls"). I confess I couldn't make head or tail of one story, "The Man Who Found the Heart of the Forest"; and "The Throw Suit," which perhaps contains the most original idea here, doesn't quite come off. But the title tale, which seems almost as original, is fully successful, and in fact struck me as the best of the collection. That leaves us with thirteen tales which fully live up to the publisher's blurb. These also carry occasional in-references to the genre——*The Necronomicon*, Frazetta, Poictesme, St. Toad and so on, which are not dragged in simply for effect, but always used appropriately in context. Schweitzer's prose style is spare, penetrating and acerbic, and matches the subject matter very well. So does the art of Stephen Fabian, whose illustrations are, as usual, a delight to see. There is, generously, one of these for every story.

——*Lee Becker*

Mike Resnick's *Alternate Kennedys* (1992): Having enjoyed success with his fi st anthology, *Alternate Presidents*, Mike Resnick now explores what might have happened under different circumstances to just one of them. As might be expected, some of the contributors here are well known in the field——among them David Gerrold, Pat Cadigan, George Alec Effinger, Susan Shwartz and Michael Kube-McDowell ——while others, like Nicholas DiChario and Mike Aronson, are first-timers. (A few names appear in both anthologies.) The results are uniformly appealing, for even those efforts that don't come off as well as they might are still interesting.

Not surprisingly, two common motifs appear in most of these stories: the Kennedy itch for sexual conquest and the overwhelming ambition of the family pa-

triarch, Papa Joe. Apart from that, Barry Maltzberg's "In the Stone House" explores the kind of president Joe Jr. might have made had he survived World War II, and how a very different face might have been behind the rifle at the Texas Schoolbook Depository on November 22, 1963. In another entry, Laura Resnick posits the Cuban missle crisis ending in a nuclear war, and the tale of what happened becoming a genuine myth as it passes orally from one generation to the next.

A number of contributors deal in pure fantasy: JFK meets a mermaid while swimming for his life after his PT-109 is sunk; he goes back in time to the court of King Arthur while on a visit to London; and he and his brothers replace the Beatles as the singing sensation of the 1960's. A few of these are very cleverly done. One such is Esther Friesner's "Told You So," where a leprechaun causes problems in the White House. In "Eoghan" Nancy Kress examines the effect a magical coin has on four generations of the family, and what happens when a compact involving it is finally broken; and in "The Kennedy Enterprise" David Gerrold has JFK and his buddies displace the crew on a well known TV starship.

However, I felt the most effective contributions to *Alternate Kennedys* were those that made full use of the aura of tragedy that has surrounded the family. Thus "Rosemary: Scrambled Eggs on a Blue Plate" by Alan Rogers and James D. Macdonald provides a chilling explanation of the necessity for both assassinations: alien intervention; and Pat Cadigan's "No Prisoners" provides an interesting lesson in how a writer should construct his alternate world——it is quite plausible that a Father Robert Kennedy *would* have demonstrated against the Vietnam War, even resorting to extreme methods, for RFK was always ruthless in pursuing his goals. Two other entries, "The Best and the Brightest" and "Bobbygate," speculate how this ruthlessness might have got him into serious trouble had he become president. Edward Kennedy does not figure markedly in most of the book, perhaps because he is still living, though Nicholas A. DiChario makes a stunning debut with "The Winterberry," portraying him as a man burdened with a terrible secret. Finally, in a short vignette Resnick himself explores the psychology of Marilyn Monroe as plain Norma Jean Baker, a Washington waitress in "Lady In Waiting."

This is a collection best taken in small doses for maximum enjoyment. Whatever its flaws, its mix of pleasant satire and sober reflection is never boring. Overall you will find it a good, but not great, anthology.

——*W. Ritchie Benedict*

Thirteen French Science-Fiction Stories (1965): With one exception, the entries that editor Damon Knight has chosen and translated for this paperback collection originally appeared in the 1955-1964 decade, and most come from *Fiction*, a genre magazine founded in 1953. They are on a higher level than most American short stories from that period, emphasizing human reactions to the fantastic rather than the fantastic itself; there are no strikingly new concepts, but more carefully examining the familiar ones provides an empathy often lacking in the field. Thus Catherine Cliff's "The Chain of Love" and Alain Dorémiex's "The Vana" explore the master-pet animal relationship from antipodal standpoints, each to excellent effect, and Gérard Klein's "The Master" and Claude Vieillot's "A Little More Caviar?" describe invading aliens in fresh and sympathetic detail. Claude Chemisse's "Juliet" is the ultimate extrapolation of a man's psycho-sexual attachment to his car, and "The Notary and the Conspiracy" by Henry Damonti offers a pleasant reprise on the theme of living two simultaneous lives——one in the present, the other in the historic past. The oldest entry here is "After Three Hundred Years" by Pierre Mille (1922); it is an effective after-the-holocaust vignette that still reads well.

Three stories veer into sheer fantasy: Damonti's "Conspiracy," an after-death tale with a novel twist; Suzanne Maleval's "The Devil's Goddaughter," perhaps the weakest entry in the collection; and Boris Vian's "The Dead Fish," which is not only the strongest but one of the strangest and gripping oddities I have

(concluded on page 249)

Open House

Reader Dennis Lien writes:

In part five of his serial article on Bernarr Macfadden (*Fantasy Commentator* #41, page 27), Sam Moskowitz mentions an alleged occult experience of H. Rider Haggard that was described in the December 1929 issue of *Ghost Story* magazine, but said that he could not locate it in that author's published work. It is indeed authentic, and appeared under the title "A Ghostly Connection" in the July 21, 1904 number of the London *Times*. I enclose a copy which others might be interested in seeing:

The following story is so strange and its sequel so extraordinary that I have hesitated to write it down although I know its circumstances to be well worthy of record. I have considered telling it anonymously, yet after much thought I have made up my mind to publish it over my own name, although I am aware that by doing so I may expose myself to ridicule and disbelief.

On the night of Saturday, 9 July, I went to bed about 12.30, and suffered from what I took to be a nightmare. I was awakened by my wife's voice calling me from her own bed upon the other side of the room. As I awoke, the nightmare itself, which had been long and vivid, faded from my brain. All I could remember of it was a sense of awful oppression and of desperate and terrified struggling for life such as the act of drowning would probably involve. But between the time that I heard my wife's voice and the time that my consciousness answered to it, or so it seemed to me, I had another dream.

I dreamed that a black retriever dog, a most amiable and intelligent beast named Bob, which was the property of my eldest daughter, was lying on its side among brushwood, or rough growth of some sort, by water. My own personality in some mysterious way seemed to me to be arising from the body of the dog, which I knew quite surely to be Bob and no other, so much so that my head was against its head, which was lifted up at an unnatural angle.

In my vision the dog was trying to speak to me in words, and, failing, transmitted to my mind in an undefined fashion the knowledge that it was dying. Then everything vanished, and I woke to hear my wife asking me why on earth I was making those horrible and weird noises. I replied that I had had a nightmare about a fearful struggle, and that I had dreamed that old Bob was in a dreadful way, and was trying to talk to me and to tell me about it. Finally, seeing that it was still quite dark, I asked what the time was. She said she did not known, and shortly afterwards I went to sleep again and was disturbed no more.

On the Sunday morning, my wife told the tale of my nightmare at breakfast, and I repeated my story in a few words.

Thinking that the whole thing was nothing more than a disagreeable dream, I made no inquiries about the dog and never learned even that it was missing until that Sunday night, when my little girl, who was in the habit of feeding it, told me so. At breakfast-time, I may add, nobody knew that it was gone, as it had been seen late on the previous evening. Then I remembered my dream, and the following day inquiries were set on foot.

To be brief, on the morning of Thursday, the 14th, my servant, Charles Bedingfield, and I discovered the body of the dog floating in the Waveney against a weir about a mile and a quarter away.

On Friday, the 15th, I was going into Bungay when at the level crossing on the Bungay road I was hailed by two plate-layers, who are named respectively George Atterton and Harry Alger. These men informed me that the dog had been killed by a train, and took me on a trolly down to a certain open-work bridge which crosses the water between Ditchingham and Bungay, where they showed me evidence of its death. This is the sum of their evidence:

It appears that about 7 o'clock upon the Monday morning, very shortly after the first train had passed, in the course of his duties Harry Alger was on the bridge, where he found a dog's collar torn off and broken by the engine (since produced and positively identified as that worn by Bob), coagulated blood, and bits of flesh, of which remnants he cleaned the rails. On search also I personally found portions of black hair from the coat of a dog.

On the Monday afternoon and subsequently his mate saw the body of the dog floating in the water beneath the bridge, whence it drifted down to the weir, it having risen with the natural expansion of gases, such as, in this hot weather, might be expected to occur within about forty hours of death. It would seem that the animal must have been killed by an excursion train that left Ditchingham at 10.25 on Saturday night, returning empty from Harleston a little after 11 o'clock. This was the last train which ran that night. No trains run on Sunday, and it is practically certain that it cannot have been killed on the Monday morning, for then the blood would have been still fluid. Further, if it was living, the dog would almost certainly have come home during Sunday, and its body would not have risen so quickly from the bottom of the river, or presented the appearance it did on Thursday morning.

From traces left upon the piers of the bridge it appears that the animal was knocked or carried along some yards by the train and fell into the brink of the water where reeds grow. Here, if it were still living – and, although the veterinary thinks that death was practically instantaneous, its life may perhaps have lingered for a few minutes – it must have suffocated and sunk, undergoing, I imagine, much the same sensations as I did in my dream, and in very similar surroundings to those that I saw therein – namely, amongst a scrubby growth at the edge of water.

Both in a judicial and a private capacity I have been accustomed all my life to the investigation of evidence, and, if we may put aside our familiar friend 'the long arm of coincidence', which in this case would surely be strained to dislocation, I confess that what is available upon this matter forced me to the following conclusions.

The dog Bob, between whom and myself there existed a mutual attachment, either at the moment of his death, if his existence can conceivably have been prolonged till after one in the morning, or, as seems more probable, about three hours after that event, *did* succeed in calling my attention to its actual or recent plight by placing whatever portion of my being is capable of receiving such impulses when enchained by sleep, into its own terrible position. That subsequently, as that chain of sleep was being broken by the voice of my wife calling me back to a normal condition of our human existence, with some last despairing effort, while that indefinable part of me was being withdrawn from it (it will be remembered that in the dream I seemed to rise from the dog) it spoke to me, first trying to make use of my own tongue, and, failing therein, by some subtle means of communication whereof I have no knowledge, telling me that it was dying, for I saw no blood or wounds which would suggest this to my mind.

I recognise, further, that, if its dissolution took place at the moment when I dreamt, this communication must have been a form of telepathy which is now generally acknowledged to occur between human beings from time to time and under special circumstances, but which I have never heard of occurring between a human being and one of the lower animals. If, on the other hand, that dissolution happened, as I believe, over three hours previously – what am I to say? Then it would seem it must have been some non-bodily but surviving part of the life or the spirit of the dog which, so soon as my deep sleep gave it an opportunity, reproduced those things in my mind, as they had already occurred, I presume, to advise me of the manner of its end or to bid me farewell.

On the remarkable issues opened up by this occurrence I cannot venture to speak further than to say that, although it is dangerous to generalise from a particular instance however striking and well supported by evidence which is so rarely obtainable in such obscure cases, it does seem to suggest that there is a more intimate ghostly connection between all members of the animal world, including man, than has hitherto been believed, at any rate by Western peoples. That they may be, in short, all of them different manifestations of some central, informing life, though inhabiting the universe in such various forms.

We are grateful to Mr. Lien for sending this piece. Next, Mike Ashley comments on the same installment of Sam Moskowitz's article:

I was very interested to read Sam's treatment of Macfadden's *Ghost Stories* because by coincidence I have just had published a piece on the very same subject! Although the development of our two articles was similar, we know neither of us was influenced by the other. Between us we've covered just about every aspect of the magazine, and perhaps in the future someone will bring the information together in a final authoritative text and index.

I have a few comments on Sam's article. On page 23 he refers to the reprint of H. G. Wells's "The Man Who Saw Half-Way Round the World." I don't own that issue, but the new title reminds me more of "The Remarkable Case of Davidson's Eyes" than "The Man Who Could Work Miracles." On the same page he speculates on the demise of *True Strange Stories*. An article sent me by Walter Gibson (which as far as I know is unpublished) lays the blame on the Wall Street crash whose impact, he says, "was most immediate on magazines like Macfadden's, which depended heavily on advertising, so their general policy was to tighten the line by dropping magazines that were still in the process of development." And on page 26 there is a minor slip: Bassett Morgan was a woman, not a man.

One project I've been getting to grips with is a bibliography of William F. Temple, one of several I am doing for Borgo Press. His widow, Joan, has kindly given me access to all of Bill's papers and records, which include a complete listing of all his writings and sales. This shows quite dramatically the full extent of the writings (far greater than is generally imagined) and his persistence in trying to sell rejected stories. Some went the rounds for years before scoring, which puts the historical development of his work into a different perspective. I've always regarded Temple as a stylish craftsman, and though some of his tales are dated, their style still holds.

Mike's article on Ghost Stories *magazine appeared in the booklet* When Spirits talk *(1990), which was issued by The Ghost Story Society. For information about this, write Jeff Dempsey, 2 Love Road, Croxteth, Liverpool L11 6LJ, England. ... Anita Alverio writes:*

As the prices of paperbacks continue to escalate, one publisher is counteracting the trend by reviving a modern version of the old dime novel. Each little volume in its Short Story Paperback Series is priced at $1.95. Several dozen genre authors are already represented, and a selection of mystery titles is in the offing. Most of the stories have previously appeared elsewhere, but since reading time is limited and magazines numerous, this is clearly a welcome service to s-f readers. For a free catalog, write to Pulphouse Publishing, Inc., Box 1227, Eugene, Oregon 97440.

*Readers may also be interested in knowing that the Wolfhound Press of Dublin, Ireland has published the two famous fantasies of Mervyn Wall (*The Unfortunate Fursey *[1946] and* The Return of Fursey *[1948]) in an omnibus titled* The Complete Fursey. *Both hardcovered (£15) and softbound (£7.50) editions are available. Order from your own British bookseller or from Central Books, Ltd., 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN, England. I recommend this omnibus highly.*

We hear next from Sam Moskowitz:

Since writing "Bernarr Macfadden and His Obsession with Science-Fiction," which recently appeared in *Fantasy Commentator*, further research has added to the man's history. I am summarizing below what I found, since the data are not available elsewhere.

Several biographies, as well as his *Who's Who in America* entry, state Macfadden began publishing his *Physical Culture* magazine in 1898. This is not true; as I have pointed out, he did not start it until March 1899. By repeatedly making an earlier claim Macfadden was probably trying to give the impression that it had come out before, or concurrently with, Eugen Sandow's *Physical Culture Magazine*, whose first issue was dated April 1898. What I have recently discovered is that a magazine titled *Physical Culture*, published in New York City by Archibald Cuthbertson, existed even earlier. The first number was dated October 1890, and the latest one I have seen is labelled May 1892.

The publication had 32 pages, was ten by seven inches in size, and was priced at twenty cents. (The high price may have been the reason it did not survive; Macfadden's later magazine sold for only a nickel.) It was completely legal, incidentally, for Macfadden to adopt the name for his own later magazine; according to copyright law, you can't retain a publication's title if you don't use it for a period of one year.

These facts show that while he was a successful popularizer of physical culture, Bernarr Macfadden was by no means the originator of publications in that area.

For some reason, these biographies also omit the paperbound book *McFadden's System of Physical Culture*, published in New York in 1895 by Hulbert Brothers and Company, a manufacturer and marketer of bicycles and firearms. In addition to the text this contains fifty photographs of Macfadden posing in typical stances. During the first two years of *Physical Culture* this book was offered as a premium to potential subscribers.

I enjoyed Steve Sneyd's article on Lilith Lorraine, and was impressed with the amount of research he put into it and the obscure references he unearthed. While her claim to be the first woman writer to appear in the genre magazines isn't true (Clare Winger Harris and Sophie Wenzell Ellis were earlier), her *Challenge* probably was the first periodical devoted to science-fiction and fantasy poetry. I can think of at least one earlier "one-shot," however: the 20-page booklet *Fantaverse*, issued by Robert Formanek for the First World Science Fiction Convention in July 1939; this contains work by James Blish, Henry Kuttner, Robert W. Lowndes, Duane Rimel and others.

Bob Silverberg may indeed have submitted his story to *Different*, as Sneyd says, but it never was printed there. It was eventually published in Lorraine's annual, *The Avalonian*, for 1952. In addition to Silverberg's, there are six other science fiction tales in that issue, which probably should be included in indexes of genre magazines, since Lorraine paid $5 a story.

There was no funding for *Challenge* within the s-f community other than subscriptions from those who knew about the magazine. At the time it was not widely known (and lasted only four issues, Summer 1950 through Spring 1951), though it featured verse by such well known names as Lin Carter, Stan-

ton A. Coblentz, Edith Ogutsch, Ken Slater and Clark Ashton Smith.

Lorraine also ran a s-f poetry column titled "Songs of the Spaceways" in *Fantasy Book* magazine in 1948-1950. She also had a story in the May 1930 issue of *Astounding Stories*, "The Jovian Jest." (*Several other readers called attention to this ommission. —ed.*)

She was quickly forgotten because she had only six stories published professionally in the field, all quite readable, but none of classic proportions and the last one appearing back in 1936. And *Different*, despite its frequent inclusion of genre material, was not well known in the fan world.

For those who would like to learn more about Lilith Lorraine's fiction, consult references 11 and 12 in Steve Sneyd's article (Fantasy Commentator *#43, p. 226). For comments on the former, see letters from Eric Leif Davin and Jane Donawerth,* Science-Fiction Studies *#52, pp. 418-421 (November 1990). David Drake comments:*

I found one glitch in *Fantasy Commentator* #42: the lines on the Holocaust in H. R. Felgenhauer's review (p. 134) were Clarke quoting von Braun—not by Clarke himself.

Terry Jeeves writes about the same issue:

I must admit that Weinbaum was never a favourite of mine. You have nevertheless done a sterling job in getting so much coverage on the man. I particularly enjoyed Davin's and Moskowitz's pieces. One cavil about the latter. At the foot of page 112 he says of "The Ideal" that it was about a "predatory machine that smashed cars." Memory tells me that incident was only a brief mention of a small machine which lunged out of the lab corner when shown a *photo* of a car. Admittedly, the cover painting showed otherwise, which may account for the discrepancy. Wasn't the "Ideal" actually a machine which showed the hero his perfect woman?

T. G. Cockcroft noted this also, and comments further:

Note 28, p. 125 of *FC* #42, states that Weinbaum produced a chapter of "Cosmos." If he did, it wasn't used! But he did supply a chapter, or portion, of the s-f tale "The Challenge from Beyond."

On p. 150, reviewing Ashley's anthology, you say of Metcalf's "The Feasting Dead" that its only previous appearance was as an Arkham House book—but it also is part of the contents of August Derleth's anthology *When Evil Wakes* (1963). And on the same page: I've never read *The King of Kor*—but I have read *She*, and as I recall, Ustane there is a woman, a girl-friend of Leo who is meanly murdered by Ayesha.

I don't envy Sam Moskowitz's task of reading all of Nat Schachner's fiction, though at one time he was a favourite author of mine; I remember being particularly impressed by "He from Procyon," "Stratosphere Towers," "Infra-Universe" and "Simultaneous Worlds"—but I doubt if I'd care to read any of these today! His best story may be "Master Gerald of Cambray"; were I compiling an anthology of short time-travel stories, I should probably include this—even though I disapprove of time-travel stories, except for those involving suspended animation.

I was surprised to find that the contributors to *Studies in Weird Fiction* seem to think that Donald Wandrei is a good poet. I think I've read all his verse, and long ago formed the opinion that he was worthless as a poet, apart from being little better as a fiction-writer. Steve Eng surprised me me by praising his verse, and I was surprised also that S. T. Joshi took it seriously. Joshi admits Lovecraft was a poor poet, but I think him a far better one than Wandrei.

Chuck Rothman writes:

The artists' colony mentioned on p. 94 of *FC* #42 is undoubtedly Yaddo, in Saratoga Springs, New York. The description, location and location are all close fits.

Fred Lerner also wrote, giving the colony this same identification.

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Book Reviews—continued from page 291

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. xxxvi-1370 pp. 25.5 cm. $75.00

While this is indeed the second edition of the same editors' *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* (1979), it shows so many changes that the two hardly seem related. Most obvious is the expansion. We have over half again as many entries and over double the wordage; a two-column format printed in larger, more readable type; and a sturdier, head-banded binding in a volume that weighs nearly seven pounds. The number of contributors has tripled. The (mostly unneeded) illustrations in its skinny predecessor are gone, as are the fussy, three-column format and numerous listings from outside the genre (as Bram Stoker and Seabury Quinn). Most importantly, furthermore, there has been a rigorous revision of all old material and a thorough updating to include new topics.

In the past fifteen years numerous specialized volumes have appeared which describe in detail genre magazines, films, artists and so on. To some extent their content has supplanted that normally included in encyclopedias. The editors are aware of these, have made good use of them, and helpfully refer to

them at appropriate points to aid readers. If this compendium has a slant, then, it is the making of its massive store of information more accessible, especially to readers with minimum background. There are, for example, some 2100 cross-references (in addition to the 4300 main ones), and a checklist of 175 major themes. The latter include such new ones as "Cyberpunk," "Edisonade," "Fabulation," "Hitler Wins," "Poetry" and "Pseudonyms." I particularly like "Edisonade," a Clute-Nicholls invention ("any story which features a young US male inventor hero"), which encompasses the earlier and narrower term "woodshed scientist."

One of the nicest characteristics of this work is its *balance*. Opposing views of unsettled, controversial issues are almost always presented (as in an encyclopedia they should be) in even-handed summations rather than one-sidedly; the shallow bias and the jargon so prevalent in academic genre writing is wholly absent. Thus it has been fashionable, while conceding its influence, to denigrate the work of A. Merritt; here credit is also given to "the genuine imaginative power . . . and . . . emotional charge" of his prose. In the same vein, there is recognition of the importance of Weinbaum's *The New Adam* and the sense of wonder permeating E. E. Smith's "Lensmen" novels.

Nowhere is this balance more evident than in the "Sense of Wonder" entry. I shall not attempt to summarize this——it already is a summary, even though it runs to some 1500 words——but shall add two points. This particular quality is found chiefly in pulps because that is where the cutting edge of genre fiction has always been honed; but it is certainly evident outside them, e. g., the works of Olaf Stapledon. Secondly, I can personally testify that a sense of wonder is not simply fulfillment of adolescent dreams. For two decades in my life I had little contact with science-fiction, but during a catch-up reading program begun at the mature age of 57 I encountered about a dozen stories that triggered the combined intellectual and visceral pang which, for me at least, marks its quintessence.

It is pleasant to encounter also the names of genre contributors whose recognition has been needed. You will find here that early, tireless bibliographer Bill Evans; the veteran fan editor and letter-writer Harry Warner; the French author Jacques Sternberg; the poet Bruce Boston; and so on. No previous compilation mentions them, or a number of other entries.

Well, is there anything wrong with this encyclopedia? In several days of scanning I found very little. We all have our druthers, of course. Had the choice been mine, I should have included separate entries for David Lasser, one-time editor of *Wonder Stories* (under which heading he does get a passing mention) and author of *The Conquest of Space* (1931), one of the earliest books on rockets; Robert Grisewood, the first to write the type of novel for which Edgar Rice Burroughs became famous; Gerald Jonas, long-time genre reviewer for the *New York Times*; and technocracy, a strong influence on the field in the early 1930's. But these are trivial omissions to cavil about when set against the monumental wealth of what we have been given.

There is even an echo of my feelings towards this book in the genre itself. The protagonist of de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall* has time-travelled to sixth century Rome. There he is able to gratify a long-felt wish: to visit the Ulpian Library. He enters it "with much the same visceral tingle that a lover gets from the imminence of a meeting with his beloved," and almost shouts when he sees on the shelves "stuff for which more than one twentieth century historian or archeologist would cheerfully commit murder." That's almost how I feel when I heft *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* onto my lap.

The editorial professionalism here comes through strongly in approach, content and format. John Clute, Peter Nicholls, chief additional contributor Brian Stableford and the remainder of the staff have put together a volume which eclipses all of its competitors. To put matters succinctly, this book will be indispensable, a bible for researchers and readers alike.

A. Langley Searles

INDEXES

TITLES

CONTRIBUTORS

BACK NUMBERS

#29 Articles on H. P. Lovecraft, Olaf Stapledon and Stapledon's own forecast of man's biological future.

#30 Articles by Sam Moskowitz on C. L. Moore and Olaf Stapledon; by Stapledon on telepathy; the first installments of a biography of Edward Lucas White, and of a description of White's unpublished s-f novel of life in 50,000 A.D.

#31 Continuation of the White serials and the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#32 Now out of print.

#33 Sam Moskowitz describes the first college course in s-f, and Lloyd Eshbach tells the history of Shasta, an early s-f publisher.

#34 Mike Ashley reveals his research into Algernon Blackwood's early history, and Blackwood himself describes how he got story ideas. Conclusion of the serial articles on Edward Lucas White, and the continuation of Moskowitz's history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#35 Articles by Moskowitz on Stapledon, by Ashley on Blackwood, and by S. T. Joshi on the history of Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

#36 Begins Moskowitz's account of Bernarr Macfadden's obsession with s-f, articles by J. J. Pierce on survivalist s-f, and Gary Crawford on the fantasy writer Robert Aickman.

#37 Eric Davin interviews the early editors of *Wonder Stories*, David Lasser and Charles D. Hornig.

#38 Everett Bleiler reveals the inside story of how *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature* came about; Eric Davin interviews s-f author Raymond Z. Gallun.

#39 Eric Davin interviews Charles Hornig about his wartime editing years and Frank K. Kelly, s-f writer of the 1930's; Mike Ashley describes the middle years of Algernon Blackwood; Sam Moskowitz continues his account of s-f and Bernarr Macfadden, and his history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#40 Sam Moskowitz describes the s-f in the writings of T. S. Stribling; Mike Ashley and Deborah Elkin tell about Hugo Gernsback's early publishing experiences and his relationship with H. G. Wells.

#41 The H. P. Lovecraft centennial issue. Now out of print

#42 The Weinbaum memorial issue features an interview with his widow, articles on his college years and business correspondence, early photographs and examples of his science-fiction poetry.

#43 Sam Moskowitz begins his serial article on Nat Schachner, and concludes his account of Bernarr Macfadden's contribution to s-f; Andrew Darlington describes A. Conan Doyle's fantasy fiction; and Steve Sneyd reviews the life and work of the s-f poetess, Lilith Lorraine.

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