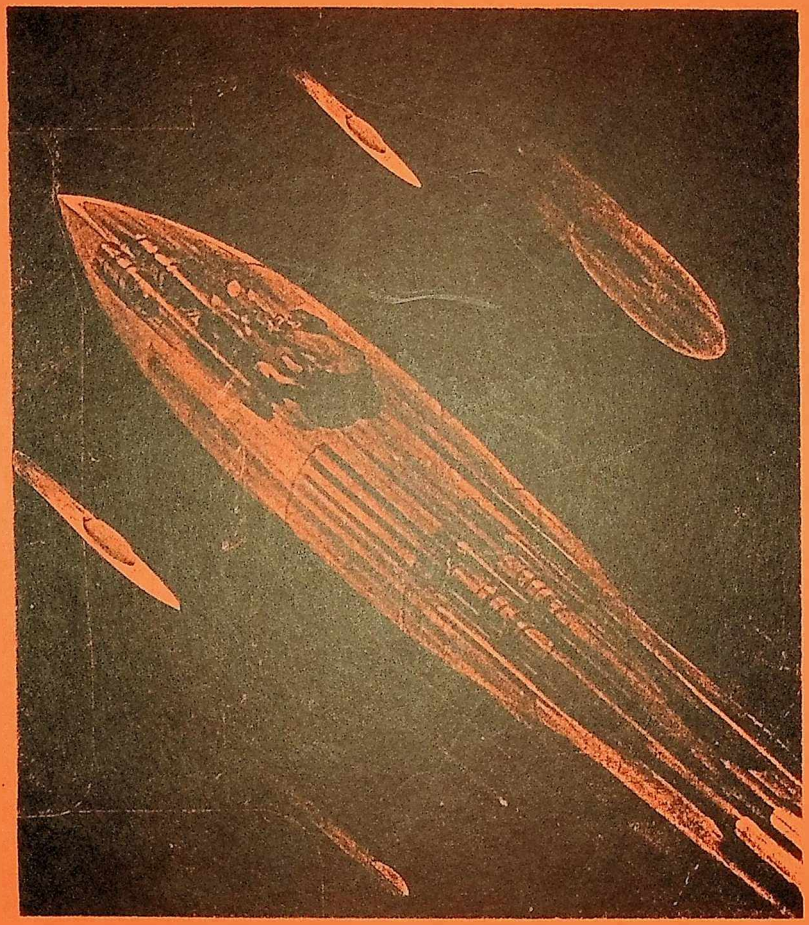
FANTASY COMMENTATOR



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The front cover is by Howard V. Brown, illustrating Donald Wandrei's story "Colossus" for the January 1934 issue of *Astounding Stories* magazine.

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Articles

Verse

Regular Features

This is the fifty-second issue of *Fantasy Commentator*, a journal devoted to articles, reviews, checklists and verse in science-fiction and fantasy, published irregularly. Subscription rates: $5 per number, four numbers for $18, postpaid in the United States; foreign postage 75¢ a copy extra. Opinions expressed herein are the individual contributors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the entire staff. Manuscripts accepted for publication are subject to editorial revision. Unless writers request otherwise, communications of general interest may be excerpted for the journal's letter column, "Open House."

The Triplicated Man

THE THREE FACES OF ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES

Mike Ashley

Although memories of his contributions to science-fiction are already fast fading, Robert Lowndes is probably remembered mostly as editor of a string of low-budget weird, fantasy and science-fiction magazines which, for all their financial restraints, delivered a regular supply of average-to-good material.

A few may also remember Lowndes the writer, though the chances are they recall his non-fiction more than his fiction. He was a prodigious peoducer of essays, criticism and analysis in the fantasy and crime fiction fields, much of which emerged under the guise of editorials. But early in his professional life, he was the author of weird, fantasy and science-fiction——and a poet as well.

Finally, there are those who remember Lowndes the fan, one of that core of radicals known as the Futurians, who sought to lead the way out of science-fiction's pop-eyed, golden-wonder days into the socialistic realities of the post-Depression, pre-nuclear age. Those days in fandom helped shape his attitude towards the world and were a proving-ground for the years to follow. They also led to his early professional work as a writer, agent and editor, one activity gradually metamorphosing into another.

He was only just into his twenties when he began to frequent the New York City streets and befriend those fans who, by 1938, had formed themselves into a clique called the Futurians. Apart from Lowndes, its leading members were Donald Wollheim, Frederik Pohl, John Michel and Richard Wilson. Others included Damon Knight, David Kyle, James Blish, Judith Grossman (later Judith Merril), Jack Rubinson (later Jack Robins) and Harry Dockweiler (better known as Dirk Wylie).

Lowndes lived for a period as a vagrant in New York, sleeping in the subways and subsisting on charity. For a time he worked as a porter in Greenwich Hospital. Altough his nickname "Doc" had originated earlier, this occupation served to confirm it. By December 1939 he was sharing life and lodging with fellow Futurians, eventually moving into their communal Brooklyn apartment called Ivory Towers.

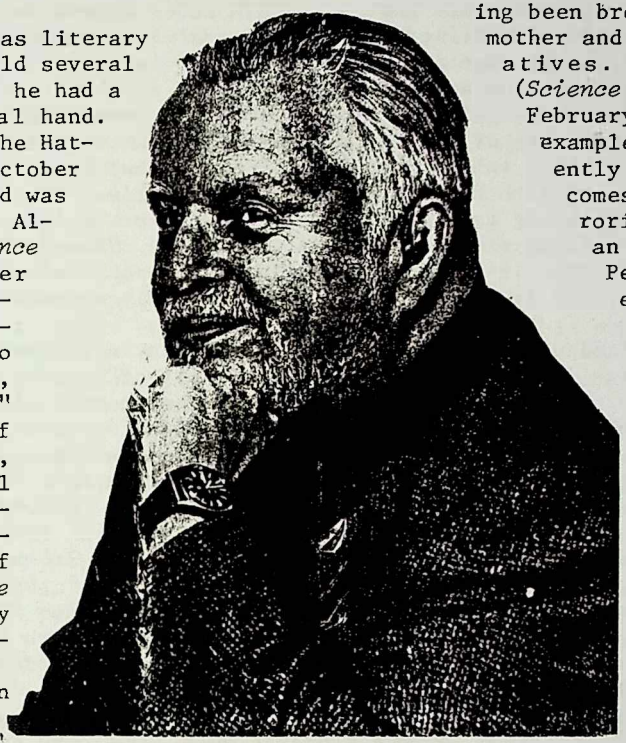
The professional s-f magazines had been publishing letters from Lowndes since 1932, and from 1934 he became an increasingly active fan. During that period most of his creative energy went into writing verse. This had a tendency toword the erotic, and used an exotic vocabulary showing the influence of such decadent poets as Charles Baudelaire and the fantasists Clark Ashton Smith and Lord Dunsany. Lowndes was well read, his tastes stretching beyond fantasy to classics of literature. He was also a devotee of H. P. Lovecraft, with whom he corresponded briefly in the months before the latter's death in 1937.

Much of his verse was ambitious, perhaps over-ambitious, but it was none the less effective. His first appearance in print was the short piece "Derelict," in the Winter 1935 issue of William Crawford's semi-professional magazine *Unusual Stories*. Its circulation was negligible, and most of Lowndes's other contributions at this time, appearing in amateur magazines, were seen by very few. It was not until some of it was bought by Mary Gnaedinger at Pupular Publications for inclusion in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Fantastic Novels* in 1941 that it reached a wider and fairly appreciative audience. These poems eulogised leading fantasy writers——Lovecraft, Merritt, Poe——and sensitively capture their moods.

Lowndes's earliest stories, like his poetry, were heavily influenced by the exotic wordsmiths. "The Courtiers of Lanth," in his first fanzine *Strange* (1938), was a Dunsanian fable. A year later, however, we find "The Gourmet" (*Polaris*, December 1939), a down-to earth horror story. Few of his early tales were traditional science-fiction, since from the outset he had a preference for the weird and fantastic.

In his role as literary agent, Lowndes sold several stories in which he had a slight editorial hand. The first was "The Haters" (*Unknown*, October 1940). The second was "The Outpost at Altark" (*Super Science Stories*, November 1940), which Frederik Pohl mistakenly credited to Lowndes. A third, "Strange Return," a clever story of alternate Earths, was rejected by all the s-f pulps until Wollheim published it himself (*Stirring Science Stories*, February 1941), as by Lawrence Woods.

Lowndes's own first sale, "A Green Cloud Came," was to Orlin Tremaine (*Comet*, January 1941). It appeared under his own name, but most of his fiction has been printed under pseudonyms. Some of these (of which Paul Dennis Lavond was the most common) masked collaborations with fellow Futurians. Wilfred Owen Morley was predominant in the 1940's and Michael Sherman in the 1950's; others include Mallory (or Mal) Kent, Carol Grey, Jay Tyler, Ward Raymond, John Lackland, Carl Groener, J. K. Stuart. (There are many more.) This profusion of pen names hid Lowndes's total output. Few realize that he had over a hundred stories published



ROBERT LOWNDES IN THE EARLY 1980's

In its basic premise "A Green Cloud Came" is unexceptional (a poisonous area in space threatens approaching Earth), but Lowndes gives it a novel twist by introducing a dominant female character who uses the situation to win back her lover. Strong women often appear in his fiction; perhaps this has something to do with Lowndes having been brought up by a stepmother and other female relatives. "Intervention" (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, February 1952) is another example; here an apparently harmless girl becomes a fearsome terrorist when faced with an alternate culture. Perhaps his strongest story on this theme is "Lilies." When it was first written in 1940 it was considered too risqué for the American magazines, and first saw print as "Lure of the Lily" in the Canadian *Uncanny Tales* (January 1942). It did not see American publication until Lowndes revised it extensively for his *Magazine of Horror* (Spring 1967). In that version the narrator is involved in a road accident, which leaves a blank period in his memory. As snatches of the past return, he realizes that he had been involved with a witch who controlled him. The accident broke her hold but he still has a psychic attachment to her, and becomes aware that she is seeking him.

Perhaps Lowndes himself felt hunted when he first wrote "Lilies." Another story, "Quarry" (*Future Fiction*, December 1941), about a man who believes that

something alien is pursuing him, has a similar theme. One can link with this "Passage to Sharanee" (*Future Fiction*, April 1942), a story about a space-ship plagued by a shape-changer; this was apparently rooted in a Futurian in-joke, though to my mind it shows similarity to A. E. van Vogt's "Black Destroyer."

One may suggest that the feeling of being hunted stayed with Lowndes for some while. One of his most accomplished efforts, "The Duplicated Man" (*Dynamic Science Fiction*, August 1953), written with James Blish, shows a lineal descent from "Passage to Sharanee," though here he deals with a duplicated man (nowadays we'd say a clone) rather than a shape-changer.

If the number of times it has been reprinted is any measure, Lowndes's best known story is "The Abyss" (*Stirring Science Stories*, February 1941). It isn't one of his best, but it does have a certain shock appeal and betrays a strong Lovecraftian influence. It tells of a group of occultists under the influence of an adept. The adept takes one of them a little too far, and he hallucinates upon patterns in a carpet, seeing ancient beings deep in an abyss.

Lowndes's own contribution to Lovecraftian pseudobiblia is his "Song of Yste," and the appearance of that in a story always shows the presence of Lowndes. One finds it in two other tales bearing the by-line Paul Dennis Lavond, which designated collaborations with Frederik Pohl and Dirk Wylie. It is hard today to think of Pohl contributing to a Lovecraftian story, but it was less surprising fifty years ago. Neither of these is especially good. "The Mantle of Graag" (*The Unique Magazine*, October 1941) is an inversion of Lovecraft's "Outsider," whilst "Something from Beyond" (*Future Fiction*, December 1941) reveals the ancient gods in the space age.

It is difficult at this time to identify an individual Lowndes voice in most of this fiction. When not inspired by Lovecraft or Dunsany, or sharing authorship with Wollheim or Pohl, he seems to be drawing on other influences. For instance, "My Lady of the Emerald" (*Astonishing Stories*, November 1941) is a Merrittesque tale set in a hidden valley. But a solo voice does start to appear in Lowndes's stories about a single man facing cosmic or incomprehensible odds. These are not simply one-man-against-the universe stories, but reflections of man as a pawn of fate.

The earliest of these is "The Other" (*Stirring Science Stories*, April 1941), where the protagonist has recurring premonitions of possible death, and each time the gap between the vision and the event shortens. This is very similar to "A Message for Jean" (*Future Fiction*, June 1942), where a character is compelled to progress through a series of time-lines, each one resulting in a slight change and loss of identity.

Linked to these two in following the workings of fate are "The Grey One" and "The Lemmings" (*Stirring Science Stories*; June 1941 and May 1942), both of which show the futility of escaping the inevitable. Similar is ". . .Does Not Imply" (*Future Fiction*, February 1943), a clever piece about an unrejectable, indestructible manuscript.

A number of these follow the form of the "barstool story" (a variant of the club story), where the narrator meets someone in a bar and hears his strange experience. That approach to fiction was typical of other Futurians but the technique was developed best by Lowndes and Wollheim. It almost certainly reflects the way they worked, one testing out ideas with the others, and plots developing by narration rather than composition. It may result in a superficial tale, but usually one which is instantly likeable.

Other titles which fall into this category are "Blacklist" (*Uncanny Tales*, May 1942), "The Collector" (*Future Fiction*, October 1942), and perhaps the most effective, "*Dhactwhu!*——Remember?" (*Super Science Stories*, April 1949), where an elder race deep in the Amazon jungle uses a trigger-phrase on explorers in the hope of unlocking racial memories.

Perhaps Lowndes's best works are those which explore the inexplicable. He was particularly fascinated by the concepts of time and other dimensions, and collaborated with Pohl and Kornbluth on two tales about worlds which defy nature: "Einstein's Planetoid" (*Science Fiction Quarterly,* Spring 1942) and "The Extrapolated Dimwit" (*Future Fiction,* October 1942). But when he alone turned his hand to these themes he brought a concentrated strangeness to them which was missing from the collaborations. "The Long Wall" (*Stirring Science Stories,* March 1942; later revised as "Settler's Wall," (*Startling Mystery Stories,* Fall 1968) tells of an entity encased by a seemingly endless, impenetrable wall. Lowndes took this one stage further in "Highway" (*Science Fiction Quarterly,* Fall 1942), where the narrator believes one town is changing into another, but occasionally a highway opens up to alternate realities. This story may owe something to "The Upper Level Road" of Warner van Lorne (*Astounding Stories,* September 1935), and presages the much better known "The Hour After Westerly" by Robert M. Coates (*The New Yorker,* November 1, 1947).

Lowndes developed these concepts further in later novel-length works. *Believers' World* (1961), expanded from "A Matter of Faith" (*Space Science Fiction,* September 1952) brings together a hyperspatial society and a theology built upon Einstein's theories of relativity. *The Puzzle Planet* (1961) combines Lowndes's passion for science- and detective fiction, presenting an ingenious series of problems on an alien world. Both are well written and cleverly plotted, although they lack the impact of his shorter fiction.

When Lowndes isn't trying to puzzle his readers, his stories have a more reflective, mystical cast, bringing greater shape to his his exotic fables. "No Star Shall Fall" and "The Slim People" (*Future Fiction,* December 1941 and August 1942) typify these lyrical fantasies, conjuring dream-like images. They belong to his early writing period; one regrets he did not experiment further with this form in later years.

Perhaps surprisingly, Lowndes's politics were seldom embodied in his early fiction. Like most Futurians, he held strong communist beliefs, though not as extreme as those of John B. Michel, who felt that science-fiction should be a vehicle for political advancement. If anything, he became less politically inclined as the years passed. There seems no doubt that the savagery of World War II and the threat of atomic weapons affected him, as they did most young fans.

Lowndes's political and war-inspired stories tend to be shallow. In "The Peacemakers" (*Future Fiction,* August 1942) and "The Deliverers" (*Science Fiction Quarterly,* Winter 1942) he introduces altruistic aliens capable of stopping war; in the second story they decide not to, leaving mankind to its own fate. "The In-Heritors" (*Future Fiction,* October 1942), written with Michel, is far more grim; it portrays a dying post-nuclear world struggling to survive against a new threat. The best of these stories is "Chaos, Co-ordinated" (*Astounding Science-Fiction,* October 1946), a collaboration with James Blish. Here is seen a direct parallel of the Allies against the Hitlerian hordes, as Terrans use their individuality and imagination against a multitude of alien races co-ordinated by a soulless, senti-machine which has no imagination at all.

When the war brought an end to the science-fiction magazines run by the Futurians, Lowndes concentrated on editing the surviving detective, sports and western pulps. By the late 1940's he had begun to write a string of westerns, and an occasional sports story. Whilst he quite liked the interplay among characters in westerns, he was not enamored of the genre, and the few of these stories that I have read are shallow and routine.

Although he wrote a few more stories in the 1950's, and expanded some of them into novels, by then his creative spark had dimmed. One or two of these later stories, especially "Object Lesson" (*Future Fiction,* August 1958), read more like editorials, cogently arguing various philosophical theses. This is most no-

ticeable in the novels, which became expanded psychological puzzles. He seemed to take a delight in making a plot as convoluted as possible. Thus *The Duplicated Man*, *The Puzzle Planet* and *Believers' World*, whilst fascinating to read, have to be savored more for the delight in unravelling complicated patterns than for relaxation. Here Lowndes the philosopher has taken over from Lowndes the fantasist. The elements of pedantry in these novels seem symptomatic of his increased desire to write highly reasoned criticism rather than fiction.

Lowndes the critic and philosopher emerged strongly in the 1950's. He used the editorial space in his magazines for a wide range of essays on the nature, content and quality of science-fiction. Often these were more relevant and clear than any of the more highly regarded editorials in *Astounding* by John W. Campbell, Jr.; they also bear favorable comparison with the widely known criticism of Damon Knight and James Blish, which was also appearing in Lowndes's magazines.

Frequently Lowndes's essays are highly personalized, drawing on his experiences in the field as an editor or a reader. One of the first of these was "Maturity in Science Fiction" (*Future Fiction*, October 1954 -Winter 1955), which discussed the immaturity of much early work in the genre, and questioned whether any of it could be regarded as literature. It was a theme he returned to time and again, as in "It's More Than Just Trying," "Job for a Superman" (*Science Fiction Stories*, January and September 1957), "Many Mansions" and "Key Question" (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, August 1957 and February 1958).

Lowndes also analyzed the nature of science-fiction, and what might be needed to improve it. In "Perfection is No Trifle" (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, November 1955) he considered the proposal that it had to stimulate creative thought, not just the emotions. This was another of his favorite questions——should science-fiction be primarily for entertainment or instruction? Later essays on this topic were "Entertainment" (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, November 1955), "The Pedagogical Question" and "Not Both Ways" (*Science Fiction Stories*, March 1956 and July 1957). He explored as well in "Wonderfulness" (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, February 1956) exactly what constitutes a sense of wonder, and in "Freedom?" (*Science Fiction Stories*, January 1958) what disciplined science-fiction as a medium.

All of these theories were eventually refined by Lowndes into a series of essays dealing with the genre firstly as instruction, then as propaganda, and finally as entertainment. They appeared in *Famous Science Fiction* magazine during 1967-69, and were collected in book form as *Three Faces of Science Fiction* (1973). The book is a masterpiece of analysis and reasoning.

Lowndes was often propounding ideas in his editorials, particularly on how to write good science-fiction. In "Want Ad" (*Science Fiction Stories*, July 1955) and "Super Science vs. Pseudo-Science" (*Science Fiction Quarterly*, August 1955) he explored the extent to which a writer needs a firm foundation of scientific knowledge. "What Makes Them Run" (*Science Fiction Stories*, September 1956) dealt with characterization. "Theory and Practice" and "Disciplined Imagination" (*Science Fiction Stories*, March and May 1958) summed up what constituted good science-fiction. Whilst his examples may now seem dated, his instructions remain sound, and aspiring writers can still learn much from them.

It is a shame that more of Lowndes's non-fiction has not been collected in book form. In later years this comprised nostalgic, personal reminiscences rather than reasoned argument, but his memory for details and ability to remain objective made them immensely informative and entertaining. He began writing them in the 1950's for *Future Fiction* under the general title "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow," which looked back at the early days of science-fiction magazines. He has also written in detail about *Weird Tales*, Hugo Gernsback, fellow writers in the field (especially James Blish), and about his connections with H.P. Lovecraft, Seabury Quinn and David H. Keller, amongst others. To read Lowndes's reminisences is to experience intimately an exciting period of science-fiction history.

I was particularly pleased when he agreed to work with me on *The Gernsback Days*, a lengthy study of Hugo Gernsback that I was writing. Apart from his help and advice on the historical aspects, Lowndes contributed a 70,000-word personalized survey of the stories published in the s-f magazines between 1926 and 1936. It is one of the most significant contributions I have read to the study of the genre's early years.

So far we have considered Lowndes the writer, but an account of his contribution to science-fiction and fantasy would not be complete without a few words on his work as an editor.

Like many enthusiasts, he published his own fanzines. The first was *Strange*, which appeared in 1937. It consisted of eight letter-sized, carbon-copied pages. Six copies of the first two issues were made, but they were never formally distributed. For the newly-founded Fantasy Amateur Press Association, Lowndes produced a third, ten-paged issue dedicated to H. P. Lovecraft. This was hectographed, and distributed by the association in its April 1938 mailing. During 1938 and 1939 he brought out a few other short-lived titles; these included *The Vagrant* and a poetry magazine, *Vision*.

Lowndes's first significant fanzine was *Le Vombiteur*; its first issue was dated December 1, 1938, and it appeared weekly for the next five months. After a hiatus it reappeared, now in a mimeographed rather than a hectographed format, continuing at irregular intervals until January 6, 1941. A total of 37 issues were published. *Le Vombiteur* was usually only two pages long, and served as a personal letter to fandom. With this publication, Lowndes became the first to introduce the practice of exchanging his fanzine for a letter of comment instead of a proscribed subscription price. During this period he also published another chat magazine, *Science Fiction Weekly*, which ran from four to ten pages. Fifteen issues appeared between February 18 and May 26, 1940.

Lowndes dropped his fan publications when he became a professional editor, though when his science-fiction magazines folded, he issued a new fanzine, *Agenbite of Inwit*. This was distributed first through the Fantasy Amateur Press Association and then by the Futurians' Vanguard Press Association. It lasted for 27 issues, expiring in September 1949. With James Blish Lowndes also produced *Renascence*, a "little magazine" devoted to avant-garde literature, which ran from August 1945 through September 1946. All of Lowndes's fan magazines were vehicles for his strong and lively views, dotted with comment, occasional poetry and vignettes.

Lowndes entered the professional world in 1940, taking over from Charles Hornig at the helm of *Future Fiction* and *Science Fiction Quarterly*. There was an immediate change in their content, as he began using material from his fellow Futurians rather than the first generation s-f writers whom Hornig had drawn upon. It made the magazines more interesting and lively, but broke no new ground. What also changed was the editorial attitude. By making this more personal, Lowndes brought to the magazines what he had liked about the old *Wonder Stories* under Hornig's editorship. *Wonder* had been the most reader-friendly s-f magazine in the mid-1930's——unlike *Astounding Stories*, where Tremaine remained rather aloof, or *Amazing*, which seemed to exist in another age. Oddly, Hornig had never brought this quality to *Future Fiction* (or its elder sister *Science Fiction*, which he continued to edit), but Lowndes did.

His qualities as an editor became more apparent in the early 1950's when the field was expanding. Although he had a limited budget, he was still able to make his magazines look as if they were offering greater value for their price. Apart from his own contributions (which included extensive comments on readers' letters), Lowndes was able to bring considerable diversity to their pages. He procured material from such leading names as Clifford Simak, Philip K. Dick, L. Sprague de Camp, Isaac Asimov, James Blish, Poul Anderson and Arthur C. Clarke. It may not always have been first-submission work (some probably having been re-

jected by *Astounding* and/or *Galaxy*), but often it was very good. Lowndes's flexibility regarding pulp taboos also encouraged more enlightened contributions to his magazines, where one will find some quite liberating fiction by Lester del Rey, Ward Moore and William Tenn, as well as the writers I have cited above. In criticism he also allowed a free rein, printing much of the vitriolic writings of Damon Knight and James Blish.

One of the most lasting achievements of an editor is not just the good stories he publishes, but the new writers he discovers and/or develops. Even mediocre editors by chance occasionally discover new writers (as Hornig discovered Stanley G. Weinbaum), but discoveries are made consistently only when an editor is prepared to encourage a writer and take the risk of accepting new and radical ideas.

Despite his low budgets, Lowndes has a very fine track record in this area. Of writers whose first or early works he published, the most famous is Stephen King. King's first two stories appeared in *Startling Mystery Stories*. Lowndes was also the first to buy or encourage contributions from Hannes Bok, Judith Merril, Edward D. Hoch, Kate Wilhelm, Carol Emshwiller, Thomas Scortia and R. A. Lafferty, as well as a host of lesser-known writers such as David Charles Paskow, Steffan B. Aletti and Rachel Cosgrove Payes. We might almost include Ramsey Campbell amongst that company. As Campbell revealed in an interview in *The Count of Thirty* (1993), it was Lowndes's review of "The Cellars" from *Travelers by Night* that widened Campbell's awareness of markets for his material beyond Arkham House, and thus expanded his writing career.

As an editor and to some extent as a critic, then, Robert A. W. Lowndes brought a perceptive, open mind to the worlds of science-fiction and fantasy, and in small but measurable ways shifted their paths, enabling us to see new vistas.

• • •

My First Editor

I was still in high school when I first decided I wanted to be a writer. There were still a few of the old pulp magazines around in the late 1940's and the early 1950's, and one that caught my attention was *Famous Detective Stories*, probably because its November 1949 issue featured a new novel by Wade Miller, "Devil on Two Sticks." It joined my regular submission list—a bit behind the prestigious *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, but on my list nonetheless.

A few things intervened, like two years in the U. S. Army, but after some rejections I finally received a postcard from Robert A. W. Lowndes dated July 6, 1955 (of course I've kept it!) which read *in toto*: "Your story, 'Village of the Dead,' hit me just right, and I shall use it in a forthcoming issue of one of our detective magazines."

I sold several other stories to Bob Lowndes after that—seven, in fact, before I broke into another market. During one period, when payment was late, I stopped up to see him on a visit to New York City. I found him a soft-spoken gentleman with a bit of a twinkle in his eye, working for a company which also published Archie comic books. He reminded me just a little of Anthony Boucher.

I saw Bob Lowndes many times after that, at his office and for an occasional lunch. He especially liked my Simon Ark stories, perhaps because he was a great admirer of the Jules de Grandin stories of Seabury Quinn. An idea he gave me grew into one of my best Ark tales of that period, "Sword for a Sinner." *Famous Detective*, its successors and its companion magazines had all ceased publication by that time, and "Sword for a Sinner" found a home in *The Saint Mystery Magazine*. However, Bob later reprinted it and several other Ark stories in the digest-sized *Startling Mystery Stories*.

It's been years now since I last saw Bob Lowndes, but I still remember him fondly. He was my first editor, and one of the best.

Edward D. Hoch

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Memories of Bob

Ruth C. Lowndes

I was the youngest in the Lowndes family, and the only girl. Bob was twelve years older than I, so it was years before I really got to know him. But he, my brother Hank and I were always close, and gradually I learned a lot about their earlier days. They made me feel special, and I've always been very proud of them.

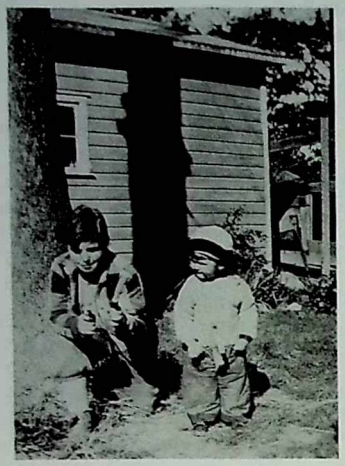
To begin with, Bob was born prematurely, and had to be placed in a sewing box on the back of the old kitchen stove to keep warm. During World War I, when he was two, the flu epidemic hit; he lost his mother (Fanny) and an uncle (his father's brother). Until he was six, Bob lived with his grandparents, aunts and uncles. Some were strict disciplinarians. In 1922 his Dad, Harry, married again. Naomi, his second wife, became Hank's and my mother. Not wanting to confuse Bob about his parentage, it was decided he should call her "Mater."

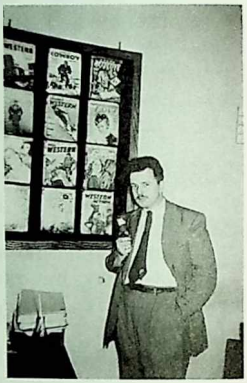
Dad had got a job at the Newport Torpedo Station during the war, and so the family came to Newport, Rhode Island to live. That's where Bob went to school. After a month in the first grade he was moved into the second grade because of his reading ability. Later he said that had been a mistake because he was the youngest in the class and not as mature as the rest. His report cards, which I still have, show that he excelled in reading, spelling and language. In math he was average to fair. By the sixth grade his conduct had improved to very good. The sixth to eighth grades he spent at Rice School in Stamford, Connecticut. He generally was a B student, but in reading and literature was above average. He told me that as a sophomore in high school he realized grades counted, and that's why he was graduated with honors in Latin. The senior class named him Best Actor, Best Politician and Most Likely to Succeed.

He loved comic books, but was not supposed to have them. He told me he used to hide them under a neighbor's porch. More than once he was discovered sitting on the curb reading them instead of going to school. By comics I also mean pulp magazines, for my mother called all of them that. She and her family always impressed on him the importance of the classics and I know he had a fabulous collection of books.

Although both Bob and Hank were voracious readers, I was not. But Bob did help by giving me my first books——*Peter Pan* and *Peter and Wendy*. It was because they were gifts from him that I dutifully read them——and found I really enjoyed them.

Hank was born when Bob was nine. A couple of years later Dad found a better job in Stamford, and the family moved to Connecticut. I was born there when Bob was twelve. The next year we moved again, to Darien. Dad was a Boy Scout leader then, and Bob was a Boy Scout, although he said he was never a very adept one. We went on a couple of camping trips to a minister's summer camp in Shandaken, New York. Bob helped gather pine boughs for mattresses. We drank from a spring, swam in a brook, and Mater cooked everything (including bread) over a campfire. We visited a local farm for our milk and went to see Ashaken Dam, which





Clockwise, from the top left: Robert W. Lowndes with his younger brother Harry, 1927; with his father, Harry and sister Ruth, 1928; with Ruth, 1945; in his office, ca. 1965; with his wife Dorothy, 1948; at a Middletown Beach, 1948; with his family (R.W.L. is the third from the left) on Thanksgiving Day, 1934. (All of these photographs are printed by courtesy of Ruth C. Lowndes.)

was fairly new at the time.

At home there were always chores to do, and Bob was Chief Dishwasher. He assigned Hank and me to dry them. It was during this time, I remember, that Bob taught us how to whistle. He also worked at a squab farm nearby, either while he was in high school or right afterwards.

During the depression Dad lost his job, but finally got into the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). Right after high school——this was 1934——Bob joined, too. It was there that he picked up the nickname "Doc" (not, as one story has it, because he later became a hospital porter). It was given him by other science-fiction enthusiasts at the camp because of his devotion to the "Skylark" novels of E. E. ("Doc") Smith. He felt he spent some of the best years of his life with the CCC in the Maine woods. Occasionally he would hitchhike home for a visit. When he was transferred to Cornwall, Connecticut, on one trip back he tried to take along my cat, which we could no longer keep, to join the camp cats. But Toby had other ideas, and managed to get away from Bob. We caught him and made a second attempt, but this time he headed up the hill to the woods. We didn't see him again for six months, when he showed up at the garbage hole in our back yard. But he no longer trusted us, I guess, and wouldn't stay.

In 1935 we moved a few miles to Canaan. Bob started at Community College in Stamford, and that was when he worked in a hospital for a short time. I remember his coming to Canaan as an electrician's helper with Dad. That didn't work out, though. Bob's strength was in his mind, and his dexterity was limited to the typewriter. He often said he thought I was a genius because anything manual came so easily to me. Of course I always considered him the genius!

Thanksgivings were Lowndes family get-togethers, with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins gathering either at Darien or Ridgefield. Bob was the oldest of the cousins. With thirty or more in the family we had many good times.

We moved back to Newport just before World War II. None of us did much travelling at that time. By then Bob was settled in New York City, writing and editing. In 1948 he married Dorothy (Seador) Rogalin, and the two came up to Newport for their honeymoon. At Christmas my mother's family always held large get-togethers, and they joined us for a couple of these, bringing with them Peter, Dot's son by her first marriage. We always felt Peter was a member of the family.

Bob and Dot bought a house in Suffern, New York, where they lived during Peter's school years. We visited them there, and on one occasion saw Bob act at the Antrim Theater. He dearly loved acting and was very good at it. He told me that when a play came up he would decide which part he wanted and practice it thoroughly before the auditions, so he always got it. He acted in numerous plays, but I think the only one I saw was "The Man Who Came to Dinner."

He enjoyed the country life in Suffern, and it was only after Peter was graduated from college and went into the army that he and Dot moved back to New York City. They lived there several years before separating. It was an amicable divorce, and the two remained friends. Bob always referred to Dot as his favorite wife.

Later he moved across the river to Hoboken, New Jersey, where he had a fifth-floor walk-up with a view of the New York skyline. From there he commuted daily by bus and subway to his city job at Gernsback Publications. But when the firm moved out to Long Island the longer commutation became very hard on his back. Until he retired he was able to limit this to three trips a week, doing the rest of his work at home. He never drove a car. When he took lessons he discovered that his visual depth perception was not reliable; fearing that he would be a hazard on the road he never applied for a license.

Bob loved music and had a fabulous collection of records. He gradually replaced his old vinyl LPs with CDs, and there are almost a thousand of them here in the room with me as I write this. Ninety percent are classical. When I set up a player in his nursing home room for him the first composer he asked to hear was

Mahler. He was a true connoisseur of the classics, and would never listen to them as background music. When listening he also wanted no interruptions, and so at the nursing home he preferred earphones.

After Bob retired he had a couple of bad falls. In one of them we later found that he had broken his back. In other falls he broke ribs. It was after one of these, when he couldn't get out and had to rely on neighbors and the landlord, that he decided to move to Newport and be near me. So we got him an apartment in a retirement home, and Hank picked him up in Hoboken with his mobile home where Bob could lie down for the trip. On his good days we would go on errands and shopping trips around Ocean Drive, a favorite place for him. It became a ritual that he would take me out to dinner every Tuesday. At first we went to different restaurants, but finally settled on one, a Chinese place called Batik Gardens. He loved it, and we were still in the process of going through the entire menu when he became too ill to go out. By then Bob had moved to The Village House nursing home, where he became one of its favorite patients. He always had a joke for the nurses. I always heard at least one, and a little history lesson, every Tuesday night before we had our supper there together. He had a terrific memory, and very rarely repeated himself.

His eyesight had become quite poor; he told me a doctor in New York had said this was due to his diabetes. I never questioned it, but found him an illuminated magnifying glass which he could use to read. Too late we found out the trouble was actually a cataract that could have been taken care of earlier.

He gradually gave up listening to music—just seemed to have lost interest in it—though he loaned some of his CDs to the retirement home for playing over their PA system. He had asked for his typewriter so he could write letters, but I don't think he used it. When I asked him, he always said he'd do them tomorrow.

On Bob's eighty-first birthday Hank and I took and I took him out to the Chinese restaurant for his favorite Peking duck dinner. He was very appreciative, but in great misery from his back, and couldn't have any of his favorite sedative (alcohol) because of his medications. He loved good food, and had been himself a very fine cook, liking to try unusual combinations. I continued to bring him Chinese food once in a while, and occasionally also chopped liver.

Through all this time he remained in good humor. If something arose to bother him he would usually say, "Oh well, so be it," and dismiss it from his mind.

In February of his last year he had a colostomy, and from then on was never himself. He seldom talked, and we had few conversations. I discovered that he had renal cancer when the nursing home asked if I would like the Hospice to come in and keep him company. He lingered longer than they expected, and at one one time even rallied, so that they felt he might not need them. Everyone there was very good to him, and always made me feel he was their only patient.

Hank had come from Kansas City, where he lives, for a visit. He and I arrived at the home the day Bob died, July 14th, 1988.

● ● ●

THE PEOPLE OF THE PIT

They have not dreamed nor slept, nor can the black veil of the years,
Bestrewn with cities, emperors, and gleam of conquests long
Conceal the primal instinct of their presence, nor the throng
Of glories men parade before themselves efface the fears
That writhe within them, subtly as gray tendrils of a mist
Upon the lowlands. They have slept not; all the evil that
Was lost with Naat endures with them; that spawn that Lanth begat
They have perfected, to set free when their immortal tryst
With that which dwells outside of Time and Space is ended. One
There was who chanted tunes invoking That which could oppose
Them; then it was that all men rose to drive them, hastily,
Into the pit and seal the walls thereof. But time has done
A hideous thing; for, year by year, the carvings crumble; those
Who dream have told in vain the horror that some day shall be.

—*Robert W. Lowndes*

We Called Him "Doc"

Frederik Pohl

As you know from reading Mike Ashley's summary, the professional career of Robert Augustine Ward Lowndes goes back more than half a century. But that's not what I want to talk about here. You see, Doc Lowndes and I go back even farther than that——to the mid-1930's, in fact, when the world was young and we were all eager kid science-fiction fans.

As the date shows, he and I have been friends for a long time; in fact, except for a few blood relatives, I've known Doc longer than anyone else alive in the world today. We first met in the flesh when I was sixteen and Doc nineteen, but we had known each other by name even earlier. We were both letterhacks. From 1934 on I had seen his contributions to the correspondence columns of *Wonder Stories, Amazing, Astounding* and *Weird Tales magazines,* and recognized him as a trufan like myself.

I had one fannish advantage over him, however: I had had the wisdom to grow up in the Big City. That meant I had been enabled to discover in-the-flesh fandom almost as soon as there was such a thing. As soon as it was announced I joined that early New York City fan club of the Paleolithic Era, the Brooklyn Science Fiction League, Chapter Number One of the organization Hugo Gernsback had created to help the faltering circulation of his magazine, *Wonder Stories*. Living in Connecticut, Doc had no such opportunities open to him; there weren't any fan clubs in Connecticut in those ancient days. What's more, although New York was no more than an hour or so away, he couldn't get there at first because those were the grimy, gritty years of the Great Depression, and the price of a train ticket to the city was not something to be spent lightly.

Finally, on a summer night in 1936, he did manage to visit Brooklyn and come to one of our meetings. By then the Brooklyn SFL was history, for in those days New York fan clubs had about the life expectancy of a Popsicle in a sauna. But new ones sprang up instantly to replace the old, and it was in the club of the moment that Johnny Michel, Don Wollheim and the rest of us movers and shakers of New York fandom had our first chance to meet Doc Lowndes in person. We liked what we saw. We could tell right away that he was One of Us, and we urged him to move to the city and take his rightful place in the growing science-fiction community.

That was easier said than done: the depression was still going on. Although Doc never failed to keep up his fan correspondence, the necessity of earning a living kept him in Connecticut. For a while he was lucky enough to get a place in that finest of Franklin D. Roosevelt's job-making projects, the Civilian Conservation Corps; and between enrollments he managed to catch on as an attendant at the Greenwich Hospital Association. His finances got a tinier bit easier then, and at last he was able to make regular visits to New York.

For the next couple of years Doc Lowndes was one of the leading lights of New York fandom. Among other things, he was one of the founders of the fabled Futurians, and editor or contributor to any number of fanzines. He even attained the significant honor of being, along with Donald Wollheim, Cyril Kornbluth and myself, one of the distinguished half-dozen fans that Will Sykora, James Taurasi and Sam Moskowitz refused to admit to the very first Worldcon of all, the one in New York in 1939.

I suppose that was meant as some kind of punishment, but it didn't work out that way. Denied entrance to the hall, we formed a Futurian convention in exile and happily spent an afternoon of the convention in the bar next door——which was where most of the pros were, anyway.

We didn't stop there, either. Over the next months we all took another step and became pros ourselves.

Bibliographers, especially Mike Ashley & Co., have made heroic efforts to untangle all the pseudonymous writings and collaborations of those Futurian days. To the extent that it's possible to do so at all, they've succeeded remarkably well. It is not an easy task. As writers, we Futurians were wildly promiscuous. Any one of us might collaborate with any other——sometimes with any two or even more others——and we swapped pen-names around with a reckless disregard for future historians.

Occasionally we did try to provide some clue to the real identity of the authors of a particular work. For example, when Bob Lowndes, Joseph Harold Dockweiler and I decided to write some stories together in a three-way collaboration, we elected to retain at least an ititial of each of our names, and so was born Paul (for Pohl) Dennis (for Dockweiler) Lavond (for Lowndes). But that isn't to say that all three of us were always involved in any particular Lavond story, for that was not necessarily true.

There was another problem of nomenclature, too. Dockweiler had, more or less inevitably, also been known as Doc; but there wasn't room for two Docs in the Futurians. So he bowed to higher rank, renaming himself Dirk Wylie, and the name of Joseph Harold Dockweiler vanished from history.

Now and then one of us did write something all on his own, and even occasionally get it into print in a professional magazine either under his own name or at least one not shared or loaned out to others. Even then, though, the individual authorship was not always Simon-pure.

For instance, one of Doc Lowndes's earliest professional sales was the longish narrative poem "Lurani," which ultimately appeared in John Campbell's fantasy magazine *Unknown* (February 1940, as by Paul Dennis Lavond). I was acting as Doc's literary agent at the time, and so it was I who hopefully handed the poem to John. He read it over, frowned thoughtfully, stuck another Lucky Strike into his long cigarette holder and informed me that something about the poem was displeasing to him. He wasn't himself a poet, he said, but it seemed to him that the meter was *too* perfect. It sounded like syrup gurgling out of a jug; it needed *something*——he couldn't say exactly *what*——to relieve the tedium of so many meticulously cadenced feet.

Even then I was sophisticated enough to know that one of the main jobs of a literary agent was to keep an editor from making a fool of himself by rejecting something he really ought to buy. So I took the necessary action. I shook my head ruefully to express chagrin and said, "Gosh, John, you're right!" I took the poem back out of his hands and read over the last lines, which went:

> I have lain beside Lurani in her python-like embrace
> Through the nights that were immortal, and the evil in her face
> Evermore will keep me ardent, while her dark eyes o'er me gloat,
> Till the night I feel her silken tresses tighten round my throat.

I snapped my fingers. "Now I see the problem," I exclaimed. "We need to punch up that last line. How about if we try this?" I borrowed his pencil and struck out the word "silken." John read it over, and his face cleared. "Now, that's more like it," he said, and ordered up a check.

By the end of the 1930's Don Wollheim and I had taken the next step and become professional science-fiction magazine editors ourselves, and Doc Lowndes saw that that was the way to go. So when, in 1940, the publisher of *Future Fiction* and *Science Fiction Quarterly* needed a new editor, Doc volunteered for the job, and of course got it. He kept it, or jobs like it, for the rest of his working life.

It's probably for his long and successful career as an editor that Rob-

(concluded on the bottom of page 289)

Tale of the Dream Merchant

From the evergreens of Timberidge
to leagues beyond the Agate Tarn,
my wares are banned in every town,
my name and reputation scourged.
They stoned my stall in Yalderin
and drove me from the market
with the flats of their swords.
They say that I defiled youth
and traded in enchantments
that have led good men astray.
Yet the gods know I am innocent
and have never meant to harm.

I have offered dreams diverse
to those who have the need.
My patrons can be any soul
who seeks to ease the burdens
and travails of the everyday.
My prices are so reasonable,
a silver coin, perhaps a gold,
they have never made me rich.
I have not dealt in nightmares
nor ever tried to force a sale.
The gods know I am honorable,
a merchant more than fair.

For those who seek adventure
I provide most any kind.
Glory on the fields of war
with legendary heroes of yore.
Battles with rocs and basilisks
and other fabulous beasts.
Travel through exotic lands
to realize your fantasies.
Bloodshed without danger
and slaughter without loss.
Rivers forded and mountains
scaled at negligible cost.
The gods know that adventure
can illuminate and please.

For those in need of romance
I will fill their wanting hearts.
Princely lads for peasant maids
to charm their darkest nights.
For noble lords and ladies
masquerading on the sly,
desirous of a different taste,
I can supply erotic interludes
with flesh of any age or race.
I can conjure nymphs or satyrs
who are guaranteed to satisfy.
Even the gods play at love
to occupy their empty hours.

Yet the dreams that offend,
the ones they seek to ban,
are fashioned from a higher art
that moves within men's minds
and makes them understand
how to look beyond their fate
and see the world at large,
to question among other things
why some must serve and toil
while others rule and play.
The gods themselves have said
that men can learn to think.

On this far and windy slope
where I've managed my retreat,
I live the dreams I want to live
and I do so without shame.
I watch the ocean changing
and I dance along the sands.
The tides do not judge me
and the waves will never care.
The moon may shine alone,
yet still it lights the heavens
and proceeds upon its way.
And wherever the gods reside,
it must be by an open sea.

From the evergreens of Timberidge
to leagues beyond the Agate Tarn,
a pall now hangs upon the land
that sun and wind cannot dispel.
Wherever thought is censored
by the canons of a chosen few,
when the only lawful visions
are ones that do not speak,
when hope is so ephemeral
you cannot feel it in a song,
men believe the gods have died,
and wonder if they ever lived.

For those who wish to dream,
and those who would be free,
follow the southern caravans
beyond the Beggars' Scree.
You must hike a narrow trail
through the rocky hills of Lorn.
From there make your descent
past the Village of the Outcasts
to the shores of the Sovereign Sea.
Look for a house of mortared stone
that stands against the jagged cliffs.
And don't forget to bring your gold.
The gods know I'm a mortal man
and like others I must eat.

—*Bruce Boston*

Excavations on the Shores of the Moon Pool

Sean Donnelly

Collaborations take place under various circumstances. Lewis and Clark travelled side by side during their westward journey of exploration. I, however, was separated by a distance of twelve hundred miles from my companion, a researcher and author of the first magnitude—but we collaborated nevertheless.

As anyone familiar with the history of our science-fiction microcosm knows, the name Sam Moskowitz graces a priceless, ever-expanding body of informational works born of devotion and tireless scholarship. This same feeling spurred me to write him to express my admiration of and gratitude for his books and articles. My initial letter, dated February 7, 1995, received a prompt answer. In this he acknowledged my praise and interest, and described several fascinating projects on which he was then working. Excited by his friendly response, I immediately sent him a second letter. I thanked him for the information he had given, and asked several questions about the fantasist Abraham Merritt's ties to Pinellas County, Florida, where I live. In particular I wanted to know the location of Merritt's grave and the Florida cabins he owned. Since reading Moskowitz's biography of Merritt, *Reflections in the Moon Pool*, I had tried on occasion to find those sites—unfortunately, without success. Perhaps Sam had some unpublished data that would help me in my search.

His letter to me of March 3rd exceeded my hopeful expectations. In it he provided local addresses, and named the place where Merritt had been laid to rest in 1943 as Anona Cemetery.

Though quite familiar with the area, I knew of no such place. However, there is a small Largo area called Anona, and I began my search by driving towards that. On a number of occasions I had passed the Serenity Gardens Memorial Park at 13401 Indian Rocks Road. Today, on speculation, I pulled into the park and decided to inquire at the main office. The manager there indeed knew about Anona Cemetery. Its area, he explained, had been incorporated into the Serenity Gardens' more extensive grounds when expansion of the latter had been completed. It now constitutes the northwest corner of the park.

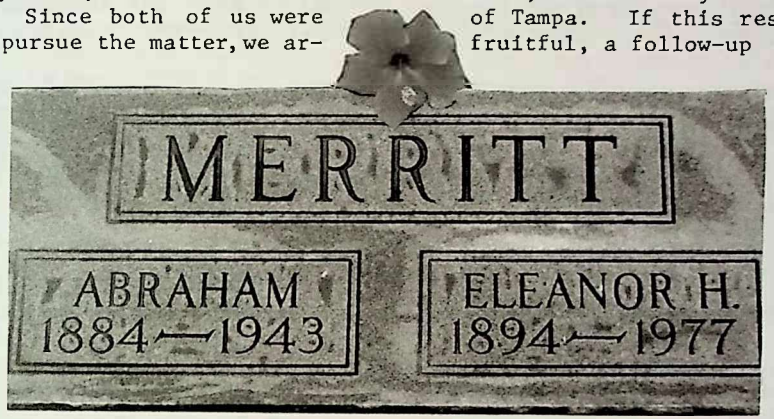
There, after a brief search, I found Merritt's grave. It is marked by a modest marble footstone, beneath which are also interred the ashes of his second wife Eleanor. Surely, I reflected, that modest stone bespeaks a humble nature. His considerable salary and royalties would have allowed Merritt to leave not only a significant inheritance to his wife, but a more ostentatious monument; yet, probably in accordance with his own wishes, there is only a simple marker.

Thus ended the first phase of my research. Next we move onwards to locating the exact site of the "Band Box Cabins," the name which Merritt and local residents alike gave to their vacation residences. The address Sam provided for these was 910 Gulf Boulevard. Today they no longer exist. In their place an imposing beige stone condominium complex, called "Reflections in the Sea," towers high and casts its long shadow across the beach. Perhaps a waxing summer moon's reflection on the languid waters of the gulf lured Merritt to these shores.

Finding the cabins long since demolished in the names of progress and

profit, I visited the Indian Rocks Beach city hall and library. After perusing the available historical records and books, I questioned the ladies who were working at the library. They could not tell me anything that would help my search, but they did give me the name and telephone number of the town's Historical Society president, Mrs. Averill Finke.

When I telephoned her, she seemed genuinely interested in the information that a famous author and editor had once resided inconspicuously in this sleepy town, unbeknownst to other residents. Since both of us were anxious to pursue the matter, we arranged a rendezvous at the so-society's museum with another member, and spent an afternoon examining city records and some aerial photos.



As luck would have it, none of these photos showed the Band Box Cabins, but we were able to add some information to what Sam Moskowitz's research had revealed. The cabins had remained standing until 1970 or 1971; converted to commercial use, they had been rented to vacationers. The undeveloped open area across from their site is still commonly known as "Merritt Field," though nobody there knew any longer who Merritt was.

Mrs. Finke was most impressed by the Moskowitz biography of Merritt—perhaps, in her mind, it elevated his stature, since his life warranted such an effort. I also showed her the recent Donald Grant edition of *The Face in the Abyss,* whose appearance showed that his work still enjoyed a following over half a century after the author's death.

I am presently helping the Society assemble a representative collection of Merritt's works. I owned several extra copies of their paperback reprints, which I gladly donated. Mrs. Finke asked me if I would be willing to give a talk later that summer, which would highlight Merritt's life and career. I would do so with pleasure, I assured her, and expressed the hope that it would generate more interest in him and his writings. Ultimately such interest might even lead to the establishment of some sort of memorial to the man.

I anticipate continuing local research on Merritt in the future. Among other topics warranting investigation is the experimental farm he once owned in Bradenton, about thirty-five miles south of Tampa. If this research proves fruitful, a follow-up to the present article may be warranted.

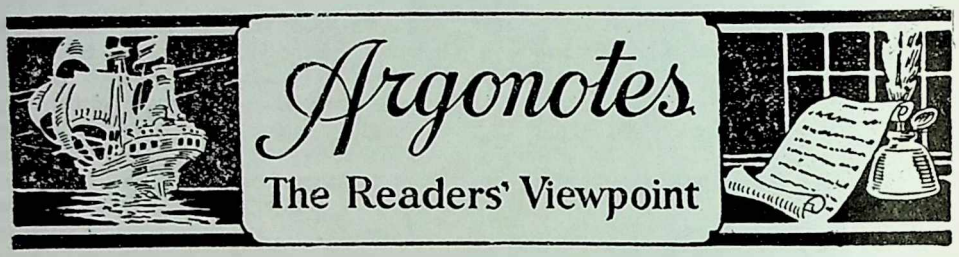
The long-distance collaboration which I had the pleasure of conducting with Sam Moskowitz was a very pleasant and wonderful experience—except for a single inescapable realization: most of the history of the time A. Merritt spent at Indian Rocks Beach will elude us forever. The passage of just a few decades has distanced it from us irretrievably. Had the research I did in 1995 been undertaken in 1945, how much more might we have learned! That is why all of us should take on the task of preserving and documenting our own experiences in the literary field we all love. If we do not, not only we ourselves but also those who succeed us will be left regretting the loss of knowledge that once could have so easily been grasped.

I hope that this bit of research into the life of Abraham Merritt is but the first of many such endeavors, by both myself and others. With that thought, I bid you adieu from the shores of the Moon Pool, where I stand solomnly awaiting the arrival of the Ship of Ishtar.

A. Merritt: a Brief Postscript

A. Langley Searles

Although Sam Moskowitz collected faithfully in part six of his *Reflections in the Moon Pool* practically all the miscellaneous pieces that A. Merritt was known to have written about his own fantasy works, he did overlook two items. Both were exchanges of letters in the readers' column of *Argosy* magazine. The first is Merritt's reply to a fan who was disappointed in the ending of his novel "The Dwellers in the Mirage," which had just completed serialization in the magazine; it was published in *Argosy* some time during March of 1932. In the second (pages 142-143 of the September 24, 1932 number) he gave his thoughts on the rationality of witchcraft. These contributions are reproduced below:



Raymond, N. H.

This week when I opened my ARGOSY it was like opening the door of an empty house. Why? Because there was no A. Merritt. *Leif Langdon* and *Evalie* came alive from the magic of his pen—they lived and breathed and possessed a quality that gripped one's heart. They stay in your mind long after the story is ended.

I have just one tiny little thorn in my bouquet of praise for "The Dwellers in the Mirage." It would have pleased me a bit more if, at the end of the story, *Leif* had been a little more ardent in his love for *Evalie*. He was too lukewarm toward her and too ready to spare the *Witch-woman*. When he regained his own personality, I think he should have thoroughly hated *Lur* for the death of *Jim Two Eagles* and the horrible thing she tried to do to *Evalie*.

E. R. B.

AND the author says he couldn't help it!

This is certainly an interesting letter. I wish I knew who E. R. B. was. I would write and tell him, or her, that *Leif* just got out of my hands at the last and that I couldn't help the fact that honest-to-God he did think more of the *Witch-woman* than he did of *Evalie*.

I am about half through a story that is quite unlike any of the others, and is guaranteed to make their hair stand on end.

Yours,

MERRITT.

• •

WITCHCRAFT vs. Science? We thought these two letters might be of interest, in view of next month's fantastic novel, "Burn, Witch, Burn!"

New Haven, Conn.

DEAR MR. MERRITT:

ARGOSY announces a story of yours on "witchcraft." Do you believe in witchcraft? If so, how do you reconcile your belief with all the pronouncements of science against it? If you do not so believe, do you think it right, with your reputation for scientific accuracy, to encourage superstition?

J. R. P.

New York, N. Y

DEAR J. R. P.:

Do I believe in "witchcraft"? In the sense of something supernatural, no. In the sense of

a *terra incognita*, an existing region as yet only slightly explored by modern science, yes. In the sense of the evocation of a highly personal devil with cloven foot, horns and shaggy pelt, again no. In the sense of the evocation of forces normally beyond the range of consciousness, the bringing of these forces into recognition by the five senses, which ordinarily limit our conception of the world around us, or the sharpening of those senses, or the awakening of hidden senses, yes. In witches riding around on broomsticks doing their evil deeds—certainly not. But in the conscious exercise of dormant or unknown powers of the mind, overcoming both space and time, yes. There is too much weight of real evidence to deny the existence of some such wisdom.

How do I reconcile this belief with the "pronouncements of science"? Science has already begun to nullify many of these same "pronouncements." For example, it has more than modified its denial of the age-old belief of the "evil eye"—that is, its denial of persons whose glance is malignant, bringing illness or, through induced physical or psychical weaknesses, ill-fortune. Related to this belief, and quite as ancient, is that there are persons upon whom fresh flowers wilt at once, from whom dogs run or cower, and from whom children instinctively shrink. These beliefs, too, science now concedes a positive basis in fact.

A few weeks ago at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Syracuse, New York, Professor Otto Rahn of Cornell University reported remarkable experiments showing that living yeast cells, the same kind of yeast used in making bread, are killed when placed close to the living eye of some human beings. Professor Rahn asserted that a set of special rays is emitted by the living eye, just as special kind of lamps emit invisible ultra violet rays, and that these are fatal to certain organisms.

It was also found that this mysterious radiation from the human body—for the rays come not only from the eyes, but from other parts—actually did cause animals to become uneasy and that very young children showed evidences of discomfort or fright when handled by certain persons. It was no doubt recognition of this fact that gave rise to the old stories of the "evil eye." Racially, the results were accurately observed, but the causes misinterpreted.

This *terra incognita* of which I speak is ruled undoubtedly by natural laws. Yet these laws may probably be entirely different from those we know—in other words, cause and effect rules there as it does with us, but causes and effects may be different from those we recognize. Our situation is like that of a scientist 100 years ago brought up on the Euclidean geometry who is suddenly confronted with the Einstein theory of relativity. One of the articles of belief of such a scientist would be that "two parallel lines never meet." But according to the Einstein theory, they must meet. "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line"—but the Einstein theory proves that a curved line between two points may be shorter than a straight line. Let me say that the *"Dr. Lowell"* of my story is fictitious only in name. He was one of the greatest of psychiatrists, and it was my good fortune to possess his affection and confidence. He was continually stepping upon the borders of this unknown land, striving to penetrate it, to translate its phenomena into terms of credibility, or, to coin a word—understandability. His viewpoint was that of the English philosopher, Herbert Spencer—that the human mind can invent nothing and that in every folk-story or legend or "superstition," there must be a kernel of truth from which they spring. And in that case-book of his from which I have taken the motif of my forthcoming story, there were stories even stranger. He did not desire to "encourage superstition." He strove to destroy it by making plain the truth behind it. Only by explaining the fact can superstition be destroyed; stubbornly to deny the facts is but to strengthen the superstition.

When Merritt's novels were published in book form, their titles were sometimes changed slightly. Thus "The Dwellers in the Mirage" was shortened to *Dwellers in the Mirage*; in some editions, "Creep, Shadow!" became *Creep, Shadow, Creep!*; and the two commas disappeared from "Burn, Witch, Burn!". There were also changes in the texts; so, if one wants to speak about particular printings of these, it is necessary to state which ones are under discussion——or, as I have done here, use quotation marks to designate serials and italics for books.

But critics seldom bother about such bibliographical niceties. Of the ten newspaper reviews of *Burn Witch Burn!* that I have read, for example, only three reproduced correctly the actual title printed inside the book, on its cover and on the jacket. Most of the other other seven cite, instead, the one for the *Argosy* serial. Why was this? I suggest the decision to drop the commas was a last-minute one made after promotional material had already been printed——and this material, which guided reviewers, carried the magazine title. There is some support for my hypothesis: one reviewer noted the book's appearance, but said she'd not been sent a copy; presumably she had seen only the publisher's announcement. We'll probably never know exactly what happened.

Dover Days

An Interview with E. F. Bleiler

A. Langley Searles

A. Langley Searles: *Your last two appearances here* dealt with your work on the* Checklist *right after the war and the annual science-fiction anthologies in the early 1950's. You've also described your discovery of and increasing interest in the fantasy field through your teenage years. Let's fill in a little more background before we go on. After high school you went on to college, didn't you?*

Everett F. Bleiler: Yes, I graduated from Harvard in 1942.

What was your major, and did that reflect an early career choice?

I majored in anthropology. This was in the days when anthropology was a small, struggling field, not a snap-course for undergrads. It was a lot more rigorous, if less imaginative. I hoped to find a teaching job, but the war, the economy and personal changes altered that.

Considering your interest in science-fiction, I think I'd've expected you to major in some branch of hard science.

I don't have supporting figures, but I don't think there's a strong correlation between interest in science-fiction in the thirties and a career in the hard sciences. Most people of my generation wound up elsewhere. Of those who made any mark in the sciences, the only ones I can think of offhand are Isaac Asimov, Arthur Clarke, John Pierce, Milton Rothman and a fellow named Searles. Actually, on looking back, I regret I didn't go in for theoretical physics. I was good at math. But I should backtrack to point out that anthropology, properly considered, is a science.

I'd guess your military service would fit in at this point.

If fit is the right word. I was drafted on May 1, 1942, and took my finals on furlough two weeks later. Actually, my induction was illegal. I was below induction standards with bad eyes, but at that time the services were taking everything that could walk, and a lot that couldn't. For the most part I just put in time doing scut jobs, like walking around Rock Island Arsenal guarding it with a shotgun (a story in itself, but not for this interview) and sitting in replacement centers. Basically they didn't know what to do with me. I was LS—limited service—which meant they couldn't use me as a bullet-catcher. Each time they asked me how I could be of most use to the army (purely a form, of course; the army didn't care), I'd say as a dischargee, but they paid no attention.

Eventually I wound up in Camp Ritchie, a military intelligence training center that is now Camp David, Maryland. I suppose it's safe to talk about it now without violating security regulations, which used to be strict. I worked in post headquarters for a time, and when they were forming cadres to send to Europe, I was scheduled to be first sergeant of the Fourth Mobile Radio Company, which was supposed to intercept German broadcasts and transmit counterpropaganda. But then the brass noticed I was LS, and I was pulled. Very fortunately, for the Fourth

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set up its equipment in full view on a plain in Italy. Along came a stuka, and there was no more Fourth. I may sound callous about this, but I'm really not. It saddened all of us——men, some of them friends, thrown away largely because of stupidity and inadequate training.

My next step was as acting first sergeant in PACMIRS, the Pacific Militray Research Section at Ritchie. As background: MacArthur, whose peculiarities you've heard about, refused to share his intelligence data with Washington. Instead of bouncing him, as they should have, Washington thereupon set up an organization to gather data on its own. Thus, documents captured on the field by naval or military forces other than MacArthur's were sent to PACMIRS, where joint army and navy teams, plus Canadian, British and Indian Army men worked over them. The enlisted men, who did most of the translating and analysis, were Niseis, a wonderful bunch of kids, considering the torments they were subjected to for racial reasons and the fate of their parents and families in concentration camps. (I could go into that, but again this isn't the place.)

I'd had a little Japanese at Harvard——not enough to be of any use, and I'd forgotten most of it. So after a time they decided to send me to Japanese school at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. There I spent the declining months of the war. After the Japanese surrender I could have got a physical waiver and gone to Japan with a commission for a three-year stint but I'd had enough of the army——almost four years of misery and frustration (or perhaps I should say three years of it were misery and frustration) and I could see no way but out. In retrospect that was bad decision number——what?

After military service you did graduate work, didn't you?

Yes, I received an M.A. in History of Culture, an interdepartmental program, at the University of Chicago. That meant history, languages, history of religions, etc. I had two focuses: the Romantic movement in Europe, and India.

Were you able to get this funded on the GI Bill? And why Chicago?

Yes, to the first question. First came the 52-20 Club. This was a program providing veterans with $20 a week for a year, or until they became settled. In practice, however, one was usually booted out after a couple of months. After that, the GI Bill.

Why Chicago? I'll have to backtrack. At Harvard I wrote my A.B. honors paper on the archeology of Northwest Argentina, which was both an outpost of the Inca empire and the site of many different local cultures. I had asked my tutor, Alfie Kidder II, for a topic, and offhandedly he said, "Try something in Northwest Argentina. It's such a complicated mess and the documentation is so bad everyone is afraid to tackle it." Where angels fear to tread! So I went down in the stacks in the Peabody Museum, read everything shelf by shelf, and started writing. (This was in addition to my regular courses, naturally.) I submitted my paper, and that was it.

While I was in the army I received a letter from Peabody saying that Professor Wendell Bennett of Yale (the big Andean expert) had heard of the paper and wanted to see it. (I say "paper"; it was really a small book.) I gave the okay, and soon Bennett wrote me and asked if I'd be willing to do a joint publication with him. It seemed (which I knew) that I had cleaned up a complex area in the field, and he was honorable enough to recognize the work of other scholars. I said yes, and our book, *Northwest Argentine Archeology*, came out from Yale in 1948.

Here's where Chicago comes in. During an army furlough I visited Bennett to discuss the project, and asked where he would recommend my going for graduate work. I wasn't fishing for an invitation to Yale, but meant the question literally. He replied, "Why not try Chicago? It's a fine school, and different from Harvard." Like an idiot, without looking further, I applied to Chicago after the

war. My reason for asking: I didn't like Harvard in general——too much snobbery. And the college had screwed me on my degree. I should have got a *magna cum laude*. but received only a *cum laude*. There were a lot of politics and double-innuendo arrangements that I figured out later, and I swore never to have anything more to do with Harvard. (Once more, this isn't the place for details.)

Well, although I liked the university itself, Chicago turned out to be a mistake. The anthropology faculty consisted of second and third raters, and their approach was a sort of sociology, which I didn't like. So I transferred to the History of Culture program, where I was very happy. But I had lost much time on the GI Bill, which ran out. (To get cash, I took off a couple of semesters and worked with a construction company building a giant intercepting sewer in south Chicago.) I had almost enough course credits for a doctorate but, I must also admit, I wanted a change. I was still floundering around and didn't know what to do. Then one of my mentors, Joachim Wach, died, and the other, Arnold Bergstraesser, returned to Germany——and died, too. That killed my academic backing.

In retrospect, I wonder what sort of idiot I was to take Bennett's well-meant recommendation as gospel. And what sort of compounded idiot I was when I discovered I didn't like the slant of anthropology taught at Chicago, not to have transferred immediately either to Northwestern, where Melville Herskovits was teaching, or the University of Pennsylvania, where Alfred Kroeber was. Or elsewhere.

Didn't you also do some postgraduate work in Europe?

Yes, I went on a Fulbright to the University of Leyden in the Netherlands. I was supposed to be studying Indonesia there, plus the general diffusion of Indian culture in Southeast Asia. I had enough Sanskrit to work in it, though I wasn't expert, and enough Chinese for expansion if I spent another year or two at it.

But mortality struck again. Kramers, the man I was supposed to be working under, died a week after I met him and wasn't replaced. And the Netherlands really didn't have much of anything on Indonesia. In the old colonial days, the Dutch simply sent their young men out to Jakarta or elsewhere to study first hand. Now the Dutch were pulling out, and hadn't yet set up study programs at home. So what did I do? Being lazy, I loafed a year. (Yes, this was incredible stupidity on my part.) After I got home, I got feelers from the State Department every now and then, but I didn't respond, because I didn't know a word of Bahasa Indonesie.

So, how did you get to Dover Publications?

After returning to Massachusetts, I managed to stay alive for a time——barely——and tried to land an academic job. I had no luck, though my record was first rate and I had publications; perhaps I looked too spread-out. I also tried the publishing field.

I heard that Dover had a job open in its advertising department, and I applied. I knew nothing about advertising which, as an ivory tower squatter, I scorned. But the boss, Hayward Cirker, had a peculiar policy that helped me. He believed it was better to train someone with an academic background at advertising writing than try to train someone with a commercial background into academic ways of thinking. As an academic, though a sort of broken-down one, I'd know and feel how fellow academics felt and thought. I got the job and started work in May 1955.

Dover had this same policy in other areas, hiring overqualified people that other businesses wouldn't touch. Cirker's theory, perhaps not verbally articulated, was that as the person grew, the job would grow proportionately. And it usually worked. Most of those under me in advertising were fellow broken-down academics. The same was largely true in the editorial department.

So you worked your way up, eventually becoming executive vice-president. Would you say that Dover was a typical publishing company?

Along the way I learned it was odd in some respects. Dover was situated down on the lower edge of Greenwich Village for most of the time I was there. We had no contact with other publishers, most of whom were uptown. This was a disadvantage, especially since the boss frowned (with a cudgel) on business lunches and had a very strong sense of privacy about what went on at his firm. Thus Dover "just grew" internally, out of contact with the general publishing milieu in New York City. There was little carry-over from other houses. Many years before, Cirker had worked for Crown in the sales department; Bob Hutchinson, who had some reputation as a poet, had worked for McGraw-Hill style-editing; that was it.

In a medium-sized company, as you might expect, I became involved in a number of areas. Advertising led to involvement in marketing, to book selection, to book production, to company policy. Eventually I became general manager, then executive vice-president. As number two in the firm, I'd be in charge when Cirker was absent.

What did you actually do? Suppose you describe a typical working day.

Let me give you one from the middle sixties on, when I lived in New Jersey. I'd take the 8:05 from Ridgewood, perhaps reading a newspaper along the way, but more likely vegetating, half-asleep; get off at Hoboken, squeeze into one of the tube cars to cross under the Hudson, and walk from the Christopher Street tube station along the antique shops on Greenwich Avenue to the Dover offices on Varick Street, a little below Houston. Along the way I'd pick up coffee and a Danish.

By 9:15 or so, I'd be slurping coffee at my desk, whereupon the loudspeaker would blare, "Mr. Bleiler, come to Mr. Cirker's office." There the boss would have things to discuss. For example, What new coloring books should we do? What new postcard books? Look at this; what do you think?

This was always difficult. Cirker apparently awoke mentally fresh at dawn. I seldom was fully awake before ten or ten-thirty, so that while I knew in a vague way who he was, and what a coloring book was, it was an effort to go beyond this and combine both intuitions. But I've always been good at brainstorming, so ideas usually came to me and things progressed. This was the pattern at Dover: processes were usually impromptu instead of being planned.

If Cirker didn't call me for something, I'd pull book catalogs out of the mail (often with John Grafton, Cirker's administrative assistant, later reprint editor) and go through them for possible titles to reprint; we usually got two or three catalogs a day from England and the U.S. Then John would order the books, perhaps a dozen or two a week in almost any subject that seemed possible.

For high-priced items——above a hundred dollars, say——I'd check with Cirker first. Usually I could talk him into a purchase, but occasionally I failed. I still remember with regret his refusal to buy a complete set of *The Black Cat* magazine for $125. For publishing purposes I thought of this as a collection of cat motifs for artists and hobbyists (where it would have been successful), but privately I wanted to read it. I already owned a couple of dozen odd issues.

In addition to poring through catalogs, I'd go up to the auction houses, Parke Bernet and Swan, to look for possible books. Sometimes, if the price seemed likely to be steep and the book was exceptionally good (like Dieterlin's engravings, which auctioned for some $3500), I'd ask Cirker to come up and check me. John Grafton would do the bidding. And a couple of times a year I'd go to Dauber and Pine, rummage under their counters, and buy books that looked promising. (Dauber and Pine was a second-hand bookshop that got a lot of university discards.)

I became official reader on everything except technical stuff in math and the physical sciences. Every week there'd be a pile of books and mail proposals to go through. Some I'd do on the train going home; others I'd read evenings or weekends. Then I'd type brief reports, usually a page or two, describing the book, making critical editorial comments, with a sales evaluation and recommenda-

tion. They served as bases for publication decisions, then for editorial and advertising work. These reports mounted up——about 18,000 by the time I left Dover. I still have a full file cabinet of Xeroxes, altogether about seven or eight feet of them.

I should make an important revelation here, the great secret in publishing that all authors suspect, but few editors will admit: An experienced acquisitions editor doesn't have to read every word of every submission. A proposal for a book, for example, can often be dismissed at a single glance for one reason or another——the author is incompetent, the topic is unsaleable or inappropriate for the house, et cetera. A book may be so bad that reading the first two or three chapters may be enough. On the other hand, those books that were to be taken seriously I always read conscientiously and thoroughly.

Wasn't much of this reading rather dull?

Oh, yes; some of it was deadly. But some of it was very interesting. An item that comes to mind is the complete court record of the Sacco-Vanzetti trials, which I unsuccessfully tried to talk Cirker into reprinting. I read the whole multivolumed set, which came to several million words. I wasn't interested in whether the trials and appeals were fair from a layman's point of view, since that can't be determined well from the printed record, but in Were the defendants actually guilty? My sympathies at the start were totally for them, but I decided, after wading conscientiously through reams of lying witnesses, irrelevancies, misdirections, falsified evidence and legal fakery on both sides, that Sacco was guilty, but Vanzetti was not in on the commission of the crime. (As far as Sacco was concerned, the comparison microscope settled the matter a few years ago.)

Overall, I located a lot of good material that Dover printed, but I also made mistakes. Perhaps my biggest booboo was rejecting a book by Buckminster Fuller. I thought it was a nut book——I still do——but I overlooked the number of people who like nuts. On the other hand, Dover was often willing to take chances on quality books that for market reasons larger publishers wouldn't touch.

Were there any other interesting sidelights along the way?

Well, sometimes my rejections had repercussions; there's a strong grapevine and old boy/girl favor-and-grudge network among authors and publishers. Once I rejected a scientific biography by a fairly well-known poetess; I thought it was a bad job. Some months later she reviewed my edition of *Mother Goose's Melodies* in *The New York Times* (why she, I don't know, since she knew nothing about folklore or children's books), and managed not to mention my name. Since John Opie had just written me a long letter of high praise for the edition, and there was no question of quality, I suspected a link. I wondered for a time if I should protest, but decided not to bother. Let her have her revenge.

I also remember a huge stack of *Shadow* magazines that Walter Gibson brought in for possible reprinting when Dover decided to move into the pulps a little. I took them home——it was summer, and I was due to join the wife and kids on Prince Edward Island for a vacation in a couple of days——lay down on the bed, turned up the air conditioner, and read through the whole stack. I finally picked out two that we reprinted. When was this——the early seventies?

By the way, is your wife at all interested in science-fiction? I wondered if you met her through a mutual interest in the field.

No, no interest at all, although she's tolerant and understanding of my work there. As she says, she doesn't dig s-f. We do share other strong interests, though——detective stories, Victorian fiction. We like pretty much the same authors and music.

I think readers might be interested in how a commercial publishing house

operates, since there's so little precise information and so many misunderstandings about it. For example, you were also involved in marketing at Dover.

Yes. Every week or two there'd be a pricing session, announced by the loudspeaker. Cirker, Mrs. Cirker, sometimes the sales manager, and I would get together in Cirker's office and argue about runs and prices. (The production department would have costs worked out and Leon Gelfond's direct-marketing department would have provided previous sales figures if a book was up for reprinting.)

We worked on a ratio of production cost, and tried to adjust the price approximately. On this I was considered the bull, while Cirker was the bear. He always wanted to cut profit margins and price books low, while I felt than an extra nickel or dime——literally——per book made no difference in the buyer's response. Of course, all this was taking place in a period of rapidly rising paper costs.

We also argued about reprinting certain Dover titles. My feeling was usually to drop the old, slow-moving technical books, while Cirker liked to keep them for prestige reasons. I couldn't see much point in keeping outdated textbooks in print. We rehashed this scores of times. Since he was the boss he almost always won, but on occasion I could talk him into reducing print runs in order to tie up less money. When Cirker was away, I made the decisions about what to reprint, how many copies, and at what price.

How often was Cirker away? It seems odd, since you've said he was a guy who didn't like to delegate.

How often? It's hard to be specific. Perhaps two or three weeks a year, sometimes twice a year. I can understand his difficulty in delegating responsibility, for I had the same problem. But he couldn't take the company along with him——150 or so people, offices, warehouses, printing shop, mailing department, et cetera. And he and his wife seemed to enjoy their vacations. Also, I think that in his own way he trusted me. While he was around I'd argue with him, but when he was away I tried to decide things the way he would have.

Dover books usually had new covers. How were they handled?

Most of them were handled on a free-lance basis by Ed Gillon and Ted Menten (sometimes with their assistants), very talented artists who were also package designers for major accounts. Menten, for example, at one time handled Revlon. We usually gave them ideas and suggestions, often with actual art work to be used. (Dover had a fine collection of swipe-file art, originally started by Cirker, and supplemented with books Grafton and I had purchased.) In a week or so Menten or Gillon would bring in several color sketches for each book. Cirker, Paul Kennedy——our art director, a first-rate man——and I would go over them, criticizing, rejecting, making suggestions, offering new material until something acceptable developed. We'd have these art sessions one or two afternoons a week.

Here's something I've occasionally wondered about. How does a publisher decide exactly when to issue a book?

Most of them try for fall publication to catch the Christmas buying; then secondarily, in spring. We worked differently; since our schedule was heavily tied in with our direct mail, seasons didn't make much difference to us.

We tried to plan a year in advance, but there were intermediate meetings and decisions along the way. First, Cirker and I would go over a list of titles that seemed possible for the near future. This would be based on my reading and reports and those of our technical advisors. We tried to work out a proportionate scheme to fit the various mailing campaigns each year——four scientific, two art, two language and lit, two or three biological and a couple of miscellaneous. This meant choosing suitable books for each campaign.

That was the theory, anyway. In practice it was never that easy or simple. Books wouldn't be ready on time, and there'd be screaming, last-minute substitutions and postponements. So, we floundered along. It would usually end up with Leon Gelfond, who managed the mechanics of the direct mail (which was enormous), and I against Cirker (who didn't have a good sense of time and never realized how fast things were moving) and the editorial department, where people moved along at their own pace.

You've mentioned technical advisors. How often were they involved?

We didn't use outside consultants except in special cases, but we did have two men on retainer. These were Morris Kline, head of the Courant Institute of Mathematics at N.Y.U., who passed on technical books, and Saul Novack, head of the music department at Queens College, on music. Both were highly competent, amiable men, and it was a pleasure to work with them. Morris would come in every week or so, and Saul about once a month. Cirker and I would then go over suggestions for books to print or reprint with them. They would have prepared written reports, which we'd compare with mine or occasional ones from outsiders. (I didn't report in higher math, physics or similar areas, where I wasn't qualified.) Then we'd discuss the books, and choose ones for possible reprinting.

As for in-house judgment in other areas, it was primarily by specialty. Art was primarily handled by Cirker, since it was his hobby, though I had a voice in decisions. Earth science fell pretty much to me, since I'd had some geological training in college. I also oversaw social sciences, sharing psychology with Edward Boring of Harvard. On astronomy we got advice from Donald Menzel, director of the Harvard Observatory and an old-time associate of Hugo Gernsback; we reprinted several of his books. Bernie Davis of Harvard advised on very technical biology. Languages were shared between Stanley Applebaum, a brilliant member of the editorial department, and myself.

In more popular areas, cookbooks were the province of Mrs. Cirker and me; women's crafts, of Rita Weiss, a highly intelligent woman in the editorial department who vied with me for the title of company slob; home improvement, house plans and repairs, Morris Kline, who was quite good at it, and I, from experience working on my old Victorian house. Our first chess consultant was the obnoxious Fred Reinfeld, who tantrumed himself out of the position. It was taken over by Irving Chernev, who was equally knowledgeable, but also amiable, and John Grafton, who was almost in the chess ratings. I handled fiction; nature and gardening (sometimes with the advice of John Everett of the Bronx Botanical Gardens); also mathematical recreations, magic, Oz and Lewis Carroll, with the advice of Martin Gardner and Walter Gibson. Finally, I was responsible for the history of religions, philosophy, occultism and nut areas. (I had a good background in eccentric material——Atlantis, Charles Fort, Theosophy, Aleister Crowley's magick, et cetera.) On all of this, Cirker made the final yes or no decision.

Let's talk a bit about editing. Exactly what does an editor do?

There's a lot of popular misunderstanding in this area, in part because the position may vary from company to company. In general, though, editors come in various shapes and sizes. A style editor works through the manuscripts making changes, sometimes for the better, sometimes just meddling. A production editor takes the edited manuscript and sees it through the printing, reading the galleys, adding publisher's codes, and so on. An acquisitions editor snoops around trying to get material to publish, a post that's more important in the giant houses than medium or small ones. Sometimes there's a managing editor and/or an editor in chief, perhaps titular, supervising all the above. At the top is the publisher, who has authority over all aspects of producing and selling a book——procurement, contracts, editing, production, sales.

As you can see, an editor isn't necessarily the top dog in a publishing

house, and doesn't necessarily have "to print or not to print" power. Nor does an editor run up and down shouting things like "Stop the presses!"

In its earlier stages, Dover relied mostly on reprints, but as it grew it published more and more original books. But there was no question of extensive book-doctoring or midwifing, à la Maxwell Perkins.

How about some of the other divisions of labor at a book publisher?

There are many other functions besides editing. Rights and permissions, for example: people who keep records of contracts and handle subsidiary sales or reprints. There's publicity. In an old-fashioned company like Dover, that meant sending out review copies and releases, trying to get attention; in a more modern company, perhaps arranging for receptions, signing parties, favor-swapping, gifts, bribes, call-girls, et cetera, although the sales department might handle such subterranean matters. (We didn't do these last sorts of things.) Sales is usually concerned with wholesale accounts, supervision of salesmen and possibly retail sales, though this may also be independent, depending on the size of the operation. And there's a comptroller or treasurer and his staff. Finally you have advertising. This breaks down pretty much into three types: point-of-purchase, space, and direct mail (or direct marketing, as it's now called). Point-of-purchase consists of the various gimmicks you see in bookstores——placards, posters, display pieces, packaging and so on. Space advertising is that in magazines and newspapers; TV would be included here nowadays, especially with larger companies. Dover did very little space advertising, which I considered unprofitable. We concentrated on direct mail.

At Dover the president, Howard Cirker, was the equivalent of publisher and editor-in-chief. He made all decisions, maintaining a tight control over everything, personnel, acquisitions, production, advertising——you name it. He was a first-rate publisher, and the results were usually first-rate, although his inability to delegate often caused problems.

From what you say, you gradually became an acquisitions editor of a sort.

Of a sort, though I never thought of myself as an editor. I didn't actually contact people, meet famous authors, or wine and dine celebrities to get them to sign contracts. I simply sought and/or reported on books. Negotiations were Cirker's role. He was very good at it; I probably wouldn't have been.

I didn't like most other aspects of editorial work. After my first couple of years at Dover I was offered the title of editor, which included running the editorial department, but I refused it. Too uncreative. I don't like counting commas or styling other people's work.

But you didn't leave the advertising end of the business where you began.

Oh, no. Apart from general publishing duties, my main job was v. p. in charge of advertising. This consisted of supervising the advertising and publicity departments, and of planning. As I've said, our advertising was almost wholly by direct mail——we sent out millions of pieces a year. I had four or five employees under me who did most of the actual writing——letters, circulars, blurbs, publicity releases and so on. There were some very good people among them: Joyce Thompson, a successful novelist; Stuart Silverman, who became a professor of English at Northwestern; Terry Haggerty, also a successful rock musician; and Lance Wallace——I don't know what became of him, but he was a fine writer——an expert card player, leading man on the Columbia bridge team, and (when he wanted to take off) a professional card player at a Hawaiian casino. In later days I didn't have time for much advertising writing, though occasionally I'd handle an important or specialized book; but in early days, when Dover was small, I did all of it. That sometimes came to half a million words a year, comparable to the output of a good pulp hack.

The other part of advertising was controlling the direct mail operation.

We had lists of our own, and we rented lists, for hundreds of individual campaigns. I'd plan the material that would go into each mailing——which books would be of interest, what should be stressed, how many pieces would be mailed, what follow-ups made, perhaps with changes, depending on what sold. The bookkeeping department recorded the results, which I'd study in making future decisions.

Working out these mailings was tricky, since it involved a great deal of prediction. Book production figures would be based in part on advance estimation of direct mail sales. For example, I might decide a book would sell 5,000 copies on the science list, another 500 on two biology mailings, plus scattered sales elsewhere. These figures would help predict the book's printing run. For all this I had a crazy formula a statistician would have laughed at——functions of the nature of the list (in part based on previous performance), time of year, external crises, strength of individual titles, et cetera. You mightn't think it, but external crises really affected the direct mail response. For example, the assassination of John F. Kennedy strongly diminished our sales.

How did your predictions work out?

Almost always very well. I can't remember a failure. Partly this was because both Cirker and I had extremely conservative expectations. We didn't expect any best-sellers——in fact, we wouldn't have known what to do if we had one.

I can remember a couple of my predictions about the Dover *Dictionary of American Portraits*. We'd sent out campaigns to libraries and commercial artists. A day after the results began to come in, I announced to my staff with due éclat, "At noon, April 30th [an arbitrary date three or four weeks away] we'll have sold copy number 1,000 through the mail." Came April 30th, the mail was processed, and we had sold 985 copies. I was furious. It shouldn't be! Just then the controller wandered in with a bundle of orders from wholesale accounts that had been held for checking——and there was copy 1,000! My day was made.

Cirker and I had faith in this book (which was a huge, costly editorial and production job) and pushed for it, while the editorial and sales departments sneered and scoffed. Just before it was published Cirker decided to hold a guessing game. How many copies would be sold in a year, with a $25 prize for the closest estimate. One of the editors speculated 250 (which would have been death) and Cirker was outraged. I put in the highest estimate, Cirker second highest. I came within 25 copies. Perhaps I shouldn't have accepted the award, since I had my finger on the company pulse, but I did. The book was very successful.

How did the direct marketing actually proceed?

I've mentioned the writing part. After I approved the copy, it would go to the art department, where I'd supervise design of the circular. (Sometimes I did a rough to save time.) Then, when the type was set and the paste-up finished, I'd okay it and it would go to our captive printing plant to be photographed, printed, trimmed and folded. My share in the production ended there. The circulars and letters would go to the direct mail department, where a battery of machines would insert them into already addressed envelopes. Then out.

That's pretty much what I did, and how at least one specific publishing house operated back in the 1960's. Acquisitions, general publishing, advertising.

Now, since you've been listening to me blow my horn, you might think I was the height of efficiency, the ne plus ultra of accomplishment. Far from it. I was the company slob. My desk was always piled with a heap of books, papers, old mail, lunch, and so on; my in-basket was always overflowing, sometimes onto the floor; I mislaid things (though never really lost them, since I never threw anything away); and I knew (with amusement, though it was supposed to be secret) that people under me kept an eye on things. My reading reports were sometimes months behind schedule. I was also a terrible administrator. Like Cirker, I

couldn't delegate anything. It wasn't that I doubted the ability of the people I worked with——just a personal compulsion.

What saved me, apart from natural charm? Several things. I was a very good planner and could whip up a program at a moment's notice. I could isolate outside interest trends before they peaked. I could spot saleable books, plan or replan books easily, and judge books well editorially. I had a good memory and could handle a myriad of things at once without losing track. I had a good knowledge of general publishing, could evaluate artwork, and make business decisions rapidly and, I think, accurately. I could write clearly. I had a wide background academically. I could learn fast and worked fast. I'm naturally very lazy and prefer to sit around doing nothing, but I can usually force myself to the grind.

Also——I mention this with due immodesty——I was one of the very few people in book publishing who could think both as an editor and as an advertising man. Editors are a dime a dozen; good book advertising men are scarce; but people who can work well in both editing and advertising can be counted on your fingers. (A couple of years ago there was an article in *The New York Times* about some woman——I forget her name——who was the current prodigy of the publishing world, since she could function in both capacities. I read it with amusement.)

With this split personality, I knew as an editor what a book should contain and what would appeal to readers, and as an advertising man knew how to approach readers and make them buy it. The result was that the Dover advertising department was recognized as one of the very best in the business.

So there's a good, egotistical self-analysis!

Let's get on to your more personal work. How did you start writing book introductions?

After I'd been at Dover only a short time, the boss asked me if I'd be interested in doing an introduction to *Peck's Bad Boy*. Why me? Where possible, he liked to get such material from employees. This was mostly a matter of economics. It was cheaper having it done in-house than by hiring an outsider. Also, the introductions would be work done for hire, and Dover would own the copyright. But I must be fair and add that he also felt his employees should have a chance to see their names in print and was very unselfish about this.

The Peck introduction turned out fairly well. Cirker liked it, and commented that it was as good as Clifton Fadiman could have done. (That was meant as praise, but I wasn't sure whether I should feel insulted.) I don't remember how much I got for it; perhaps $100. Then he asked me to do one for Alexander Gardner's *Photographic History of the Civil War*, a collection of contemporary photographs made by Matthew Brady's former employee and later chief rival. This meant doing some research on early photography, about which I knew very little.

These two established a pattern, which resulted in Dover's later mystery and supernatural series. Along the way I did Okakura's *Book of Tea*, the first edited printing, which corrected dozens of mistakes in the standard text; d'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, a fun selection; unsigned introductions to *The Drawings of Heinrich Kley* and a collection of memoirs about the Titanic; plus other miscellaneous material. I suggested Okakura and d'Israeli, Cirker proposed the Kley, and the Titanic came from outside.

I also did some grammatical work. This included rewriting a Spanish grammar (I still remembered Spanish from my college days); redoing a German grammar, which was published as a collaboration; and totally writing an elementary Japanese grammar to accompany a record set. This last was based mostly on my Harvard days and those in the army in the war. It's apparently still used at Harvard and in Japan. I remember getting a fan letter from a Siberian linguist in the U.S.S.R., in perfect English, saying that after reading it he understood for the first time what was going on in Japanese. For the Japanese grammar I got $250. It's the old Stratemeyer principle: You do it in your spare time, and even if it

doesn't pay much. It's real money, and you don't have the problem of trying to sell what you've written.

How about the fantastic fiction reprints?

Dover never really had a science-fiction program. The major Wells collections (*Seven Famous Novels, Twenty-Eight Science-Fiction Stories*) originated before my time. So did the collections of Haggard novels, which dropped away for lack of sales. At a later time, Cirker suggested we do Jules Verne. I tried to talk him out of it, pointing out that s-f readers considered Verne too old-fashioned, but he liked Verne. We checked translations, and settled on the Edward Roth ones as the most lively. Unfortunately, they were also the most inaccurate, being conflations of Verne's text, better in some ways than the original, but not real Verne. That was a bad mistake. They didn't sell well, either.

As for the other genre titles: Abbott's *Flatland* dated from before my time; we sold it as a preparation for relativity, which it is not. I believe the Stapledons were offered by an agent. I had nothing to do with them, and have no idea what the financial arrangements were; I could have looked at the contract, but I didn't. Burroughs: This was during one of the Burroughs booms, what with various paperbacks and the Canaveral clothbound editions. Several publishers were latching onto material that had gone out of copyright. (The Burroughs estate is notorious in publishing as a case history in mismanagement of rights.) We didn't do Tarzan because there was too much around elsewhere, but I put together a Martian volume and a *Moon Maid / Land That Time Forgot* combination. They sold reasonably. To return to Wells, I did suggest *Three Prophetic Novels*, and wrote an introduction to it. I wanted to get *When the Sleeper Wakes* back into print as a good dystopia, and to restore the periodical sections of *The Time Machine* that Wells had dropped on book publication. Also, I felt the planned future history aspect of his work had never really been observed.

Why didn't Dover have a real science-fiction program?

Mostly my fault, I suppose. I was still very soured on s-f; I'd read too much crap and was unhappy with the business aspect, as I mentioned in my last interview; it took me about twenty-five years to get interested in it again. In retrospect I was wrong. I should have suggested reprinting some of the earlier material——not as wonderful reading, which most of it isn't, but as historical antecedents.

The supernatural and detective lines were another matter. *Three Gothic Novels* came out in 1960. It really consisted of two novels and a shorter piece: Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Beckford's *Vathek* and Polidori's *The Vampyre*. A small Gothic boom was beginning, and such a collection seemed a good idea. Fred Shroyer suggested adding Byron's fragment at the end of the volume, which I did. I put a good amount of research into the introduction, which is fairly elaborate.

Working on these introductions was difficult. The New York Public Library, my only research source, was having financial problems then, and for quite a while was open in the evening only on Thursdays. This meant I could put in only about three or four hours of research a week. I'd've preferred to do more. (Weekends were out, since I liked to see my wife and kids once in a while, and also I was busy restoring an old Victorian house we'd bought, doing carpentry, plumbing, painting, wallpapering, and so on.)

Looking at my list of publications, I can see the concept of a series really emerged in 1964 with Bierce's *Ghost and Horror Tales* and LeFanu's *Best Ghost Stories*. Actually, I'd started the Bierce a bit earlier, perhaps 1962, but with one thing and another didn't finish the introduction until '64. (Usually I'm a rapid writer, but here the sheets of paper kept piling up inch by inch, because I wasn't satisfied with what I'd done.) Previously, Dover had published

Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary,* which was a solid seller, though once in a while someone from the Bible belt would write complaining and urging us to forswear the Devil.

With the first LeFanu, the concept of a supernatural series, rather than sporadic volumes, became firm. I had a pretty good collection of his fiction; I'd picked up a file of the *Dublin University Magazine* in Chicago around 1948-49, and owned *In a Glass Darkly, A Chronicle of Golden Friars* and others. I did the first collection, and we assigned Fred Shroyer, who'd taken his Ph.D. on LeFanu, to do the introduction to *Uncle Silas.* For the story "Schalken the Painter" I tried to track down in Irish galleries the painting LeFanu described; I never found it, though I still think he had a specific work in mind. But that was the trouble with trying to do research with a full-time job and many other things going on at the same time. I wasn't always satisfied with the results.

After this we had a ghost-story slot in every year's schedule. I would recommend something that was feasible and then gather material. Much of it was routine, although I put a good deal of work into some volumes. In *The Best Tales of Hoffmann* collection, Cirker wanted stories with musical associations included, but otherwise I chose what seemed best. The early translations are execrable, but we had no choice except to use them, though I did state candidly at the end of my introduction——something unusual in such cases——that the collection was an interim one until somebody translated the stories decently. (Several reviewers picked up the comment.) To my knowledge, E.T.A. Hoffmann still doesn't exist in satisfactory English, though I admit I haven't kept up with all recent publications. Some of the stories I edited a bit to make them more human. "A New Year's Adventure," which we included because of its use in Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann,* wasn't available in English. I translated it under the pseudonym of Alfred Packer——with obvious reference to the famous Western cannibal (though his first name was really Alferd.)

At about this time I brought up the question of *Varney the Vampyre,* the notorious Victorian thriller. I'd read it in the British Museum around 1950-51 and I knew it was pretty horrible, but I felt it should be published for historical reasons. It was an important piece of popular culture and deserved preservation. (Also, I wanted a copy for myself!)

I looked around for an original, and finally got an imperfect copy from G. Ken Chapman for, I think, £100; it was generally chewed up and lacked several pages. We obtained photos of the missing and bad pages from the B. M., and I was ready to start work on the introduction. A problem then arose: Cirker wanted to see the book. He took one look at it and said, "We can't print this!" So I talked and talked, stressing its historical importance and how grateful readers would be to buy *Varney* for ten bucks or so. Eventually he agreed to let it go through.

The introduction was a special problem, since *Varney's* authorship was uncertain. It was originally published anonymously in weekly parts, then assembled in book form. Montague Summers, a learned but unreliable man, had puffed mightily for Thomas Pecket Prest as the author. But Summers had the odd habit of attributing many things to Prest that were impossible. (Like a group of sermons he claimed Prest had ghosted for a clergyman relative; it turned out that Summers had the wrong Prest——Thomas Pecket would have been eleven or twelve years old at the time!) The other traditional possibility was James Malcolm Rymer, who was equally mysterious. Some said his real name was Errym, others that it was Merry (both anagrams of Rymer). Scholarship in this area at the time was abysmal.

So I dug around and discovered that Rymer's name really was Rymer; Errym was simply a pseudonym he'd used on a few books. He also turned out to be a more significant author than anybody had thought——by no means a penniless hack, but a well-to-do practitioner, something like a successful modern pulpster.

Were you able to link him to the authorship of Varney?

There was no real documentation yet on this, so I decided to do a stylometric check. It seemed an ideal situation for that—popular writing of this sort would be impromptu, done in great haste, unedited, and would show basic writing personality. Via interlibrary loan I obtained a couple of books definitely known to be by Prest and Rymer and worked through them, taking adequate samples and tabulating stylistic features. Judging by such factors as vocabulary, sentence-length, special rhetorical devices, it was soon obvious that Prest wasn't the author of *Varney*, while Rymer could have been. A couple of years later D. James revealed in his *Fiction for the Working Man* that he had unearthed Rymer's personal papers, which showed he really was the author.

But *Varney* was still not reprinted. I kept putting it on the schedules, and each time Cirker would look at it and say, "We can't reprint this." That would be it. But then Devendra Varma entered the situation, In the series of Gothics he was editing for Arno Press he reprinted *Varney*. I finally put it to Cirker: If Arno, which is owned by *The New York Times*, can print the book, why can't we do a better edition? So *Varney* was scheduled. It sold well, going through two printings. And there was no adverse criticism for our having reprinted it, though I got several letters angrily asking me how I dared to differ with Montague Summers.

Did you and Varma ever make contact through Varney?

Yes, he telephoned me. I was concerned that he might resent the Dover edition of *Varney*, even though I'd actually planned it and it had been announced several years before. But he was so enthusiastic about Gothic literature in general that he was delighted to see another edition. His enthusiasm was so strong that at times it became unrealistic, for he couldn't understand why American publishers shied away from reprinting Gothics once their boom began to wane.

Now that I've mentioned him, perhaps I should say a little about him. Devendra Varma was a remarkable man. He had been born in Bihar in central India, was educated in India, taught English in Egypt for a time (where a special secret service man was assigned to follow him around), and finally settled at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, where he wasn't very happy because of ethnic prejudice. He was a highly intelligent, extremely amiable and generous-hearted man.

Whenever he came to New York, perhaps once or twice a year, he, his wife, a Bihari friend and I would go to an Indian restaurant for dinner. In addition to Bihari and Hindi, Varma spoke at least Bengali and Gujerati, for he was able to converse with all the waiters and proprietors in their native tongues. Our discussion would usually focus on Gothics, with Varma bewailing the fact that American and British readers were so little interested in the literature that their ancestors loved. I would tell him that publishers were interested in the rustle and clink of money, not in what their benighted ancestors may have liked, but he could not accept this.

A sore point with him was that his third series of Gothics with Arno, although contracted for, was never published. At that time Arno had gone broke, with whole warehouses filled with unsold books. Arnold Zorn, the president, had died, and his widow wasn't interested in more unsaleable material. Poor Varma was stuck with introductions written by well-known scholars that would never be printed. He would ask me, "How can I face these men? They trusted me, and they expect to see publication!" I would tell him he shouldn't mince words, but frankly blame it on the publisher. The scholars would understand that. But he still felt enormously guilty.

(I should mention that I did one introduction for Varma. It was to *The Wild Irish Boy* by Charles Maturin. Cirker was very annoyed about it, for he felt proprietary about my work. Oddly enough, I never saw a copy of the book until last February, when my son Richard got a copy for me to see. Few libraries bought it.)

Back to Dover. The supernatural program continued, with *Five Victorian*

Ghost Novels, M.R. James, Algernon Blackwood, G.W.M. Reynolds, more LeFanu, Gustav Meyrinck, Paul Busson, Mrs. J.H. Riddell, A. Conan Doyle and others.

There's not much to say about most of these. Reynolds's *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf* went through without difficulty, although I was apprehensive that Cirker mightn't approve it. In the introduction I was able to make a case that Reynolds was an important historical figure, apart from his thrillers, and Cirker, since he'd accepted *Varney*, went along.

I should mention one aspect of Reynolds: his bibliography was perhaps the most screwed-up in modern English lit. Much of his work was first published in parts, then bound into books and sometimes retitled; then broken up again, and often retitled a second time. Add to this the piracies in America, with still different breakdowns, retitlings and even rewritings. Further, since he was very popular, fraudulent works were attributed to him.

The formal bibliographies were no help. The Cambridge bibliography was not only incomplete, but filled with errors. Montague Summers, on whom most people relied, offered an absolute mess, misidentifying titles he obviously hadn't seen and making ludicrous mistakes, such as attributing to Reynolds a technical book on steam engines.

It took me about a year to straighten things out. I bought as many of the odd editions as I could find, got interlibrary loans, tracked down contemporary references, and on a trip to the B.M., when my wife and I were on vacation in England, dug up a little more. I'll mention one incident. Yale had some odd material. I visited the library, only to learn that *Reynolds' Political Instructor*, the only set in the U.S.A., was in the bindery and couldn't be seen. But a helpful librarian, who whispered that it might be there for years, let me look at it. The result was a thorough distentanglement of Reynolds's work. I don't think that anyone appreciated how much labor went into it.

On Mrs. Riddell, I'd been gathering her stories for years, and had all her supernatural work and quite a few of her social novels. I didn't find many problems in writing the introduction, but there was one small point I wanted to clear up. Her first novel, *Zury's Grandchild*, had been published under an unidentified pseudonym, since lost. She never revealed it, though the book's existence was known from a later reprint published under her own name. So, Thursday evenings at the New York Public Library, when I was tired of other reading, I'd spend a half-hour or so working through the index of the *English Catalogue*, title by title. I finally located the pseudonym: R.V. Sparling.

How about the two other areas at Dover, detective fiction and oddities?

I'd been thinking about a reprint series of classical detective stories for some time, and in 1972 approached Cirker about it. R. Austin Freeman was the obvious choice for a beginning. He was arguably the major British figure in the early twentieth century after Doyle, was an excellent writer, and was (I believe) if not wholly, almost wholly out of print. The boss also liked Freeman. We put through two volumes, one of novels and the other of short stories. In the latter I included the hitherto "lost" version of *The Mystery of 31 New Inn*. I found it in an old issue of *Adventure* magazine, which I'd bought as a kid.

As a follow-up I picked Ernest Bramah. Though his work is uneven, he wrote some fine material and was even harder to get second-hand than Freeman. We didn't consider Chesterton, since much of his work was in print or easy to obtain.

The series did well enough that we assigned a yearly slot to it in our publishing schedule. Jacques Futrelle was the next choice, mostly because of "The Problem of Cell Thirteen." At the time, apart from Poe's work, that was perhaps the best-known early American detective story. On a hunch I went to Boston to consult files of *The Boston American*, where it first appeared. The only surviving file was in an annex to the Boston Library; all others had been destroyed. (Previously I'd called the various Hearst offices trying to track down the paper, but

I found it almost impossible to get across to them what I wanted and eventually gave up.) The trip to the annex was very worthwhile, for it turned out that the story had originally been printed without an ending as a contest; the ending was supplied later. I also found several hitherto unknown Futrelle detective stories, a couple of which I put into the Thinking Machine collection. Using these involved a problem——the library's newspaper file was bound so tightly it distorted the type into the gutters. At Dover I wrapped the photoprints around a cylinder and had a part-timer transcribe them with a lens.

Among other early material was *Richmond: The Cases of a Bow Street Runner,* the first (1827) collection of real (not half-way) detective stories. Back around 1950 I almost had a set of my own. While exploring Hall's Bookstore in Newton, Massachusetts, I discovered the three volumes, laid them aside, and then forgot them. So it was a thrill when I saw a set, possibly the same one (since it's a rare item) offered in Goodspeed's catalog for $250. I showed it to the boss, expecting he'd turn it down, but he didn't and we reprinted it.

Some time later, while on vacation in England with my wife, I stopped at the B. M. and got photocopies of other Victorian material which formed the basis of Dover and Scribner books.

We also did a Gaboriau volume (where it became obvious that Conan Doyle had lifted heavily, without acknowledgment), and ones by Arthur Morrison, Roy Vickers, Baroness Orczy, plus several I didn't do introductions for: T. S. Stribling, Melville Davidson Post, Wilkie Collins, Maurice Leblanc, Gaston Leroux, et cetera. Perhaps the most interesting discovery was the mysterious H. F. Wood; he wrote *The Passenger from Scotland Yard,* the finest detective novel between *The Moonstone* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles.*

Among the miscellaneous projects I did in spare time at Dover was a translation of Schwander's *Calligraphia Latina* and an edition of Sweert's 1612 *Florilegium.* The latter was interesting because it involved the botanical identification of plants shown in the book's beautiful plates. Many of these plants had dropped out of cultivation, and I had to hunt them down in old herbals and botany texts before offering modern taxonomy. The most useful reference book I found was *The Encyclopedia of Plants* by Jane Webb Loudon, author of the 1827 fantastic novel *The Mummy!*

An amusing sideline at Dover was the occult, or nut list. I felt some books of this sort were historically important enough in our culture that they deserved study, regardless of their lack of ultimate value. Thus I put through Ignatius Donnelly's *Atlantis, The Antediluvian World*; I stated in the introduction that though the book had been completely discredited, it had served generations as entertainment and as stimulation to more worthwhile things. (Several letters arrived scolding me for being a skeptic about Atlantis.) We also did Aleister Crowley's *Magick*, a booklet by Ouspensky, Budge's *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (a solid work, even if used by occultists) and others.

About the time I was getting ready to leave Dover, I scrounged up a copy of the 1672 Garencieres English translation of Nostradamus's prophecies. Examining the text revealed that the translation was hopelessly bad and the French very corrupt. What to do? My first plan, which had Cirker's approval, was to edit the text and correct it. A little thought showed this wouldn't work; it would mean completely rewriting a worthless book. Also I'd become intrigued with working out the little semantic puzzles the Provençal charlatan had created. I gradually decided that my next project would be a new edition of Nostradamus——not for Dover, but published by myself. I knew it wouldn't make money since it was rational and would be rejected by the supernaturalists, but it seemed worth doing.

Because I now had free time, I worked at the N.Y.P.L., reading French renaissance history, learning the grammar and different vocabulary of the sixteenth century, and then set to work. I published the book in a small edition of

750 copies, circularized the libraries, and sent out review copies. Result? The silence I'd expected. But in the *London Times Literary Supplement* Dame Frances Yates, the foremost authority on Renaissance spiritualism, praised the book highly in a full-page review. That made all the work worthwhile.

By the end of 1977 I'd left Dover and started to work at Scribner's as a consultant——but that, as Edgar Rice Burroughs used to say, is another story.

Thank you very much, Everett Bleiler.

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It had originally been intended to append to this interview a list of all the titles cited in it. However, I suggested to Mr. Bleiler that a complete bibliography of his published books might be more appropriate, for it would furnish additional information that was interesting, useful and historically valuable. He generously consented to compile such a listing, and it follows below.——Editor.

Science-fiction and supernatural fiction reference:

The Checklist of Fantastic Fiction (Shasta, 1948)
The Checklist of Science-Fiction and Supernatural Fiction (Firebell, 1978) (Corrected, enlarged edition of above, with subject matter keys)
Science Fiction Writers (Scribners, 1982) (Editor and contributor)
The Guide to Supernatural Fiction (Kent State, 1983)
Supernatural Fiction Writers (Scribners, 2 vols, 1985) (Editor and contributor)
Science-Fiction: The Early Years (Kent State, 1990)
Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years (Kent State, 1998)

Science-fiction and supernatural fiction anthologies edited:

Best Science Fiction Stories. Volumes for 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952 (Fell. With T. E. Dikty)
Year's Best Science Fiction Novels. Volumes for 1951, 1952 (Fell. With T. E. Dikty)
Imagination Unlimited (Farrar, Straus, 1952. With T. E. Dikty)
There were also spinoffs, paperbacks and British editions of the above.
**Three Gothic Novels* (Dover, 1960)
**Five Victorian Ghost Novels* (Dover, 1971)
**Three Supernatural Novels of the Victorian Period* (Dover, 1975)
**A Treasury of Victorian Ghost Stories* (Scribner, 1981)

Science-fiction, supernatural fiction author collections edited with introductions.

Wells, H G *Three Prophetic Novels* (Dover, 1960)
*Bierce, A *Ghost and Horror Stories* (Dover, 1964)
LeFanu, J S *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. LeFanu* (Dover, 1964)
*Hoffmann, E T A *Best Tales of Hoffmann* (Dover, 1967)
Chambers, R W *The King in Yellow and Other Stories* (Dover, 1970)
James, M R *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (Dover, 1971)
Dunsany, Lord *Gods, Men and Ghosts* (Dover, 1972)
*Rymer, J M *Varney, the Vampyre* (Dover, 1972)
Blackwood, A *Best Ghost Stories* (Dover, 1973)
Lovecraft, H P *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (Dover, 1973)
*LeFanu, J S *Ghost Stories and Mysteries* (Dover, 1975)
*Reynolds, G W M *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf* (Dover, 1975)
*Meyrink, G and Busson, P *The Golem, The Man Who Was Born Again* (Dover, 1976)

*Asterisks indicate fairly elaborate introductions

*Riddell, Mrs J H *Collected Ghost Stories* (Dover, 1977)
Doyle, A C *Best Supernatural Stories* (Dover, 1979)
*"Noname" *The Frank Reade Library*. (10 vols. Garland, 1979 ff.)
Haggard, H. Rider. Introduction to *She* (Easton Press, 1991.)

Mystery and detective fiction, edited with introductions:

Bramah, Ernest *Best Max Carrados Detective Stories* (Dover, 1972)
Freeman, R A *Best Dr Thorndyke Detective Stories* (Dover, 1973)
Freeman, R A *The Stoneware Monkey, The Penrose Mystery* (Dover, 1973)
*Futrelle, J *Best Thinking Machine Detective Stories* (Dover, 1973)
Thomson, H D *Masters of Mystery* (Dover, 1975)
*Gaboriau, E *Monsieur Lecoq* (Dover, 1975)
Futrelle, J *Great Cases of the Thinking Machine* (Dover, 1976)
*Morrison, A *Best Martin Hewitt Detective Stories* (Dover, 1976)
*Richmond *Richmond: Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Runner* (Dover, 1976)
Wood, H F *The Passenger from Scotland Yard* (Dover, 1977)
Orczy, E *The Old Man in the Corner* (Dover, 1978)
*Vickers, R *Best Department of Dead Ends Detective Stories* (Dover, 1978)
*Bleiler, E F *Three Victorian Detective Novels* (Dover, 1977)
*Bleiler, E F *A Treasury of Victorian Detective Stories* (Scribner, 1979)

Miscellaneous fiction, edited with introductions:

Ade, G *Fables in Slang* (Dover, 1961)
*Bleiler, E F ed. *Eight Dime Novels* (Including Ellis, The Steam Man) (Dover, 1974)
*Maturin, C R *The Wild Irish Boy* (Arno, 1976)

Classical children's books, with introductions:

Peck, G *Peck's Bad Boy* (Dover, 1958)
**Mother Goose's Melodies* (Dover, 1970. Also bibliographic study)
**Marmaduke Multiply* (Dover, 1971. Also bibliographic study)
Mother Goose in Hieroglyphics (Dover. 1973)

Miscellaneous introductions, etc.

Gardner, A *Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War* (Dover, 1959)
d'Israeli, I *Curiosities of Literature* (Dover, 1964?)
*Okakura, K *The Book of Tea* (Dover, 1964)
*Donnelly, I *Atlantis, the Antediluvian World* (Dover, 1976)
Bernath, S *Common Weeds Coloring Book* (Selection, letterpress. Dover, 1976)
*Sweerts, E *Florilegium*. (Translation, introduction, plant identification. Dover, 1976)
Kley, Heinrich. *Drawings of Heinrich Kley*. Dover. (Anonymous introduction)
Winokur, J *The Story of the Titanic*. Dover. (Anonymous introduction)

Contributions to reference books:

Entries in John M. Reilly, *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* (St. Martins, 1980)
Entries in James Vinson, *Twentieth Century Romance and Gothic Writers* (St. James, 1983)
Entries in Walter Albert, *Bibliography of Mystery Scholarship* (Brownstone, 1984?)

Entries in Jack Sullivan, *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural* (Penguin, 1986)
Entries in John Clute and Peter Nicholls, *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*.
Entries in James Gunn, *New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Viking, 1988) My entries were so hashed up by the house editors, not Gunn, that they are embarrassing.
Entries in John Clute, *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*
Paper on H. P. Lovecraft in *Science Fiction Writers, Second Edition*, edited by Richard J. Bleiler

Language materials:

Essential German Grammar (With Guy Stern. Dover, 1961)
Essential Japanese Grammar (Dover, 1963)
Phonetic sections to language record manuals: *Listen and Learn Modern Greek, Listen and Learn Portuguese, Listen and Learn Japanese.*

Translations:

Latin: Kepler, J *Somnium*. In August Derleth, *Beyond Time and Space*, Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1950.
Schwandner, J *Calligraphia Latina* (Dover, 1960?)

German: Hoffmann, E T A A New Year's Eve Adventure. In *Best Tales of Hoffmann* (Dover, 1967)
Meyrink and Busson, *The Golem, The Man Who Was Born Again*. (Restoration of original text to earlier abridged translations)

Dutch and Latin: Sweerts, E *Florilegium* (Dover, 1976)

Italian: *Law of Unemployment Benefits* (Linguasist, 1982)

Danish: Skytte, A The World of Nero Wolfe. In *The Mystery Fancier*, 1983.

Swedish: Ekstrom, J *Deadly Reunion*. (Ghost translation of about half the novel. Scribner, 1982)

Polish: Zbigkowski, T *Sprawiedliwe wyroki sedziego Pao-Kunga*. Translation of introduction and review of book on Chinese detective stories. (*Armchair Detective*, 1978) (I've also translated the stories Zbigkowski includes, if anyone is interested in publishing them.)

French: *Prophecies and Enigmas of Nostradamus* (Firebell, 1979, under the pseud. Liberté E. LeVert) This is not a sign of senility. It is the first scholarly, rational translation of Nostradamus.

Archeology:

Northwest Argentine Archeology. (With Wendell C. Bennett. Yale University Press, 1948)

Miscellaneous books created or edited for Scribner; exact titles not known in some cases.

Four-Hand Piano Music. Compiled from old Scribner sets.
Classical Piano Music. Compiled from old Scribner sets.
[Crude furniture]. Collected, laid out from magazine.
Soldier Talk. Elting and Cragg. Rewrote, added lots of material.
Album of American History. Second vol.. Gathered material, wrote letterpress.
Audubon Society book on birdwatching. Planned, restructured.

WEST OF MARS (VIGNETTE)/ INVASION FROM THE SIXTH DIMENSION

here, cold spectres
drink silent earthlight

as moons shine in
their hollow eyes
beneath
massive horizons
of shimmering numbness

here, ripples of energy
are generated by
falling snowflakes, as they
listen to the soft collision
of subatomic particles

a monastry cut from the texture of night, an
orchestration of silence for the negation of fear,
steps drag in a shifting silt of dead memories that
bathe this accursed dimension with deceptive sleep,
steps dragged across moon-frosted dreamscapes
clawed by the heavy breath of terror

but fear now lies behind me, in the perpetual night,
where it watches, and will wait without impatience
for an end to which the present is but a slight delay,
where words etch upon the void of uncertain sanity,
echoing through this House on the Borderland,
tantalising with truths that lie just beyond utterance

torchlight ochres this interior, painting
shifting walls with the memory-ripples
of a lake trapped crimson by reflection
in a far continent, on a far world,
where still there is sunrise, but the long
benches carved by prayer have long since gone,
tarrying only a moment after the final pilgrim,
so cold plaques of stone floor provide my rest
while questions wash with the tides of fatigue as
saints in alabaster whisper their moving shadows
of secrets lost in eons past, and music inlaid
by celibacy upon damp walls still echoes
its final requiem before parting,
for the moon is lost, and fear
only temporarily eclipsed

shelter, perhaps sleep until daybreak ... ?
but there will be no dawn, not ever again,
for this is a darkness that resides within

the whisper of antiquity intimates words,
the pages of the book which dwells in visions
'thought, perhaps, like a half-tone photograph,
is made up of so much light', he breathes
'and so many points of blackness, and
only by standing back from the immediate
and glimpsing the whole is it all made clear'

outside, cold spectres
drink silent earthlight

moons shining in
their hollow eyes
beneath
massive horizons
of shimmering numbness

here, ripples of energy
are generated by the silent
interaction of subatomic particles,
and they listen to the soft
impact of falling moons

the fugitive turns at a
sudden startle of noise

for somwhere,
dawn is breaking .

Andrew Darlington

Book Reviews

PIONEERS OF WONDER / CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FOUNDERS OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by Eric Leif Davin. Amherst, N. Y.: Prometheus Books, 1999. 405 pp. 23.5 cm. $24.95.

Those who have enjoyed Eric Davin's articles, which have been appearing in this magazine since 1987, will be pleased to see that a dozen of them, chiefly his interviews with famous names in the science-fiction field, have now been collected into a handsome volume. If you have missed any of them, or would simply like to reread his conversations with Charles Hornig, David Lasser, Lloyd Eshbach, Raymond Gallun and others, *Pioneers of Wonder* offers you an opportunity to do so. Also included here are three previously unpublished accounts. These deal with Laurence Manning, who wrote some of the earliest science-fiction with an ecological cast; Kurt Neumann, the Hollywood director of the innovative film *Rocket Ship X-M*; and Curt Siodmak, whose professional career as novelist, screen-writer and publisher has lasted over seventy years. Siodmak shares this span of accomplishment with Jack Williamson, who, appropriately, is also represented here by a useful and interesting forward to the book.

What I particularly like about these pieces is how very clearly they reflect that sense of wonder their period so often and so vividly presented. Today, when for better or worse this quality has been lost to characterization and commercialization, it is refreshing to encounter it so prominently. It even echoes the circumstances in which stories were created. My favorite example of that is Ray Gallun's writing an interplanetary yarn in longhand at his dining room table by the light of a kerosene lamp.

Another aspect of these interviews is impressive: the amount of information they pack in. Much is highly specific——how Charles Hornig happened to be hired by Hugo Gernsback to edit *Wonder Stories* at the age of seventeen; what gave Stanley Weinbaum the idea of those huge circling caterpillars in his tale "The Planet of Doubt"; the four-year gap between Gallun writing "Old Faithful," his most famous story, and the date of its publication. These facts range from trivial to historically pivotal, but all of them are interesting.

The very title of this book has unfortunately upset a few critics, who feel that those interviewed here are too modern to be designated "founders"——that these should be confined much earlier writers. I myself would have preferred to call them "shapers" of science-fiction, but the point here is that either Dr. Davin ——or the Prometheus editorial department, which I am told had the final say on the title's wording——has inadvertently ventured into an ongoing academic squabble. There is no present agreement among critics, you see, as to exactly when science-fiction began. Jack Williamson, for example, thinks it has been around forever, and includes Homer's *Odyssey* on the reading list for the university course on s-f that he teaches. At the opposite extreme, Gary Westfahl favors the early 1920's, and neither he nor his disciples would have the slightest objection to calling the people interviewed here either "founders" or "pioneers." Others knowledgeable in in genre take chronological stands between these two positions.*

Wherever you happen to be on this issue, it should be noted that the authors and editors who spoke for the record in this book certainly *were* pioneers in the sense that they regularly wrote and/or judged science-fiction for a living, something no early practitioners ever did. Routinely thinking up novel fantastic ideas for your stories every day in the week is far different from doing so just a few times during your working lifetime.

I spotted a few errors in *Pioneers of Wonder*, such as stating that Hugo Gernsback never paid writers more than half a cent a word in any of his magazines (he paid several times that much in *Science Fiction Plus*, for example), and it

*For more details on this see the review of *The Mechanics of Wonder* on page 273.

would probably be worthwhile to keep track of these so that an errata sheet could eventually be issued. When the book gets into a later edition——I think it will; it has the mark of a potentially steady seller——such matters can be taken care of by textual changes. None of these slips are serious, anyway.

I agree with Sir Arthur Clarke's statement on the jacket that *Pioneers of Wonder* is truly a wonderful book; it is one of those meaty, satisfying volumes that buyers will put on an accessible shelf not only because it willbe wanted for ready reference, but because it will certainly be reread for pleasure.

Lincoln Van Rose

THE HAUNTED MIND. THE SUPERNATURAL INVICTORIAN LITERATURE edited by Elton E. Smith and Robert Haas. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1999. xiv-138 pp. 22 cm. $35.00.

This book contains nine short papers (together with an introduction by the editors) that deal mostly with aspects of Victorian supernaturalism. Two of the papers have appeared in previous publications; the rest are original.

The editors describe the volume as "a comprehensive, critical treatment of the influence of the supernatural on the literature of the Victorian period" involving various critical structures and covering a range of topics, creating "a persuasive cultural critique of the fantastic in Victorian ideology" (p. vii).

This is an enormous overstatement. No volume of about 150 pages could cover or offer a critique of at least three cultural subperiods in the time span called "Victorian" or the varied types of supernaturalism. As I recall, it took the admirable Ricarda Huch about ten times as much space (the figure is from memory) to cover about twenty years of the early German romantic movement, and her work was then far from complete.

The Haunted Mind, actually, is a miscellany of small isolated topics——in other words, the equivalent of a single issue of a scholarly periodical. (Not that there is anything wrong with this *per se*, assuming that the papers are valid.) For the most part they promote special interpretations, occasionally offering the lay reader a glimpse of the strange things done in modern criticism.

As for the papers themselves: Elton Smith ("Winged Ghosta"), a noted Tennyson scholar, says a little about Arthurian poems, then comments upon equivalents of mystical experience in "In Memoriam," Tennyson's poetic statement of his feelings about his dead friend Arthur Hallam. Smith writes beautifully, but his topic seems far-fetched as Victorian supernaturalism.

Three of the papers show a quiet, perhaps unconscious, rebellion against one of the basic concepts of postmodern criticism: the dogma propounded by Barthes and Derrida (and sometimes carried to an absurd extreme by others) that a work, once uttered, is divorced from its author and stands by itself for various readers——whence the slogan, "There are no authors." Kath Filmer ("The Specter of the Self") analyzes *Frankenstein* and *Great Expectations*, revealing their similarity in structure and detail; as a theoretical basis for analysis she invokes Jungian theory, whereby the author projects unconscious mechanisms. Elaine Showalter ("Dr. Jekyll's Closet") describes the homosexual elements in both the personality of Robert Louis Stevenson and *Jekyll and Hyde*. Her interpretation is thought-provoking, but I find it somewhat forced at times——though still worth reading. Tammis Elise Thomas ("Masquerade Liberties and Female Power in Le Fanu's 'Carmilla'") is based on various shibboleths of modern feminist criticism: First is the concept of the masquerade as sexually liberating for women and overturning male power; this is dragged in by the scruff of its neck, since it is not a strong element in "Carmilla." In any case, masquerades liberated men as well as women, as Shakespeare well knew in his *Henry VIII*. Second is the equation of literary vampirism with real-life homosexuality, which seems a dubious, partial view. As is indicated in the title, the buzz-word "power" is dominant. This paper, the longest in the

book, could have profited from editorial tidying.

E. M. G. Smith ("Kipling's Key to the Haunted Chamber") surveys supernatural elements in Kipling's poetry and fiction, while Nancy Jane Tyson ("Caliban in a Glass") analyzes calculated ambiguity in *Dorian Gray*. Harry Stone ("*A Christmas Carol*") brings in elements of popular culture and shows levels of structure in Dickens's well-known work. Elton Smith ("Pedophiles amidst Looming Portentousness") offers a very insightful close analysis of "The Turn of the Screw." Reminiscent of the Chicago school of the 1950's, it is well worth reading.

The ninth paper, Roger Schlobin's "Danger and Compulsion in *The Wind in the Willows*," is a puzzling irrelevancy, since Grahame's book appeared in 1908 and is not Victorian in any way.

Recommendation: For the most part, this is a reasonably good small, miscellaneous collection, but it is not for the general reader, being, as hinted above, often doctrinaire, in that the writers often interpret their material narrowly in terms of a particular critical assumption which is taken as dogma. *The Haunted Mind* would, however, be suitable for the stacks of a large library, for occasional reference.

Everett F. Bleiler

THE MECHANICS OF WONDER / THE CREATION OF THE IDEA OF SCIENCE FICTION by Gary Westfahl. Liverpool, U.K.: The Liverpool University Press, 1998. viii-344 pp. 23.5 cm. £32.00 (hardbound), £14.95 (paperbound).

When I was an adolescent, one read science-fiction chiefly for pleasure, and few people worried about defining it. Had anyone asked me, I should have handed my questioner a couple of issues of *Astounding Stories*, saying, "Stuff like this." Frederik Pohl and Norman Spinrad also defined it by example, just as A. E. Housman defined poetry. But by the late 1930's those dealing with the genre began to include simple definitions of it in their writings, mostly to help readers who knew little or nothing about it. These were based largely on the breadth of their own acquaintanceship with science-fiction, which was gradually being perceived as an ever larger body of writings whose roots went back some two thousand years.

In the 1950's academics entered the field. For most of them it was a *terra incognita* rather than a *terra firma*, so they understandably sought to impose order on what seemed to them an area of amorphous disorganization. Unfortunately, however, their attempts never led to a single, nicely-honed description that became generally accepted. We live today, then, with widely different schools of thought at the most basic level of criticism.

There are two important consequences of this. First, as Lester del Rey has pointed out, how you define science-fiction determines where you place its chronological origin. Thus critics have come up with the dates 1634, 1644, 1790, 1818 and 1870, and now in *The Mechanics of Wonder* Gary Westfahl states climactically that it all began in the 1920's with Hugo Gernsback because, *inter alia*, he was the genre's "first significant critic."

As you scan the differing cut-off years you can see the second important consequence: while the work of early investigators continuously expanded the compass of science-fiction, that of the moderns is increasingly contracting it. (Cynics have suggested that such contraction is popular in academe because it is self-serving; the more background you can eliminate, the shorter the history of the field, and hence the less work that is required to master it.) Forget about *Gilgamesh*, Lucian, *Frankenstein*, the Utopias and imaginary voyages, the scientific hoaxes and romances——they aren't the real McCoy. Let me be exact here: we aren't actually *forbidden* to examine them, but we must always do so only "in the context of science fiction"——i. e., the author's new "Gernsback tradition."

The first chapter in *The Mechanics of Wonder* sets forth Westfahl's ar-

guments. They are better presented and contain fewer factual errors than in their initial appearance (*Foundation* #47, Winter 1989-90), but I still find their exclusivity reductive, disturbing and unacceptable. That stated, I am pleased to add that although the rest of the book was supposedly written to support them, it can be read without worrying about any new airy hypotheses. Not only read, in fact, but enjoyed. It is interesting, well written, and collects a wealth of information; having to endure a few pages of mental masturbation as a prelude is a small price to pay for what follows.

What we are given are detailed evaluations of Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr.——how they looked at science-fiction and its history, their immense influence on it, and how it evolved under their leadership and guidance. There is no escaping the conclusion that for nearly two generations these two men, in their pulp magazine setting, largely controlled its major development.

Both come off well here. The picture of Gernsback should add to his reputation, which recently has undergone steady improvement; that of Campbell, who over the years has been virtually deified, becomes more believably human without losing importance. Westfahl uses their own words to support the thesis that Gernsback defined the nature, purpose and origins of science-fiction, and that Campbell continued and extended many of his ideas. He then analyzes works which exemplify their credos in practice, *Ralph 124C41+* and Heinlein's *Beyond this Horizon*. Westfahl's interpretations are usually even-handed; my only quibbles would be that he is occasionally a bit too willing to accept their statements at face value if they happen to fall his way, and that he glosses over inconsistencies in their professed beliefs.

Take Gernsback's defense of *The Moon Pool*, for instance. Privately, he thought it a fairy tale rather than science-fiction, and did not wish to reprint it, but was persuaded to do so by Carl Brandt, who strongly recommended publication because the novel had been immensely popular with readers; commercialism having overridden principle, Gernsback lauded his wares as any good salesman would. In a similar vein, Campbell was not always as consistent or forward-looking as he is made out: although eventually espousing social themes, he earlier explicitly stated that he did not want stories which were "dressed-up propaganda——or socially significant, if you want to call it that."

In summation and comparison, I should nevertheless rate the treatment here of these two pivotal figures as fair, and as up-to-date as you will find today. Michael Ashley's detailed account, *The Gernsback Days: the Evolution of Modern Science Fiction, 1911-1936*, covers more ground but still languishes in manuscript (although two chapters from it have been printed in this magazine*); Sam Moskowitz's pieces remain useful, and so are sections of Everett Bleiler's recent *Science-Fiction / The Gernsback Years*. Similarly, while *The Collected Editorials from "Analog"* and Alva Rogers's *A Requiem for Astounding* help with the big picture, Westfahl's account of Campbell is more analytical and punchier. What comes across, too, is that both men clearly loved what they were doing. Score one for good, old-fashioned nostalgia.

The book has an index of names and a "Works Cited" section that runs to twenty pages. The far-reaching entries in the latter emphasize that Gary Westfahl certainly put a lot of hard work into his research. There is no U. S. edition or domestic distributor, but the publisher can be addressed at Senate House, Abercromby Square, Liverpool L69 3BX, U. K., or faxed at 0151-794 2235. *The Mechanics of Wonder* is worth a little extra effort to obtain, for it offers insights with which both traditionalists and innovators should be familiar.†

A. Langley Searles

Fantasy Commentator VII, 49 (1990) and *VIII*, 95 (1994).

†A shorter version of this review appeared in *SFRA Review* #239 (1999), pp. 29-30.

ARTHURIAN FICTION / AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY by Cindy Mediavilla. Lanham, Md. and Folkstone, Kent: Scarecrow Press, 1999. xvi-157pp. 21.5 cm. $24.50 (paper).

Beyond a fairly static cover of a knight and castle by Tammy Grimes (the former, paradoxically, rather Germanic) there are no illustrations. The book is cleanly and readably laid out on a workmanlike basis——it is a useful tool rather than one to feast the eye.

The author, now a professional librarian teaching at the university level, provides a succinct but useful introduction. Her parameters there make clear that she is aiming primarily at teachers and fellow librarians wishing to recommend books to teenage readers, although anyone interested in science-fiction would find her compilation a useful overview of what is available in the field.

In thus limiting her choices to 200+ novels which "may appeal to and are appropriate for a young adult audience" she excludes older works in archaic or pedantic prose, those with explicit sexual content, and the classic literary and historical works, e.g., Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. This is understandable, although her reason seems odd: "they are not generally considered fiction." Non-teenage users of this bibliography should note that in the Reading Level system (which she explains) novels written mainly for adults are indicated as "High School Level."

For bibliographic purposes, she defines Arthurian fiction as being that either (a) set in Camelot; (b) featuring characters from the Arthurian legend; presenting a realistic depiction of the historic Arthur (she wisely avoids trying to define the terms "realistic" and "historic"); incorporating a major Arthurian theme (like the Grail search or Arthur's return); or (e) hingeing on discovery/recovery of a crucial Arthurian artefact, such as Excalibur or Arthur's tomb.

After briefly discussing the story's origins, and noting a recent trend towards character-driven retellings that voice female viewpoints or those of traditionally negatively-seen figures like Mordred and Morgan le Fay, she explains the volume's arrangement.

Arthurian books are grouped under eight overarching themes: (1) Romance of Camelot——the tragic love stories, the Arthur, Guinivere, Lancelot and Mark, Isolde, Tristan triangles; "Arthur the Roman [i. e., historical] Leader" (many would cavil at her adjective here, preferring "British," "Celtic," or the neutral term "Dark Age" to prejudging a still-open issue); (3) the Women of Camelot; (4) Merlin, Kingmaker and Mage, including his childhood and final downfall; (5) "Unlikely Heroes of Camelot," including minor figures (often coming-of-age stories) and those focused on Mordred——also, presumably as awkward to put anywhere else, Mediavilla spatchcocks here accounts here accounts of Arthur's own childhood; (6) the Holy Quest (the Grail); (7) the Return of the King——reawakenings of Arthur, usually twentieth century or later; and (8) "The Legacy Continues," in which non-Arthurian characters of the present past and future are thrust into Arthurian situations.

Inevitably these broad-brush divisions produce anomolies——why, for instance, is the Connecticut Yankee an unlikely hero rather than an example of the continuing legacy? But so intertwining are all Arthurian matters, it may be unfair to criticize; almost any system would probably produce anomalies.

In addition to "the big eight" there are also specific sub-themes. Two examples of these are "time-travel" and "science fiction"——both, in my opinion, rather arbitrarily treated; their index-entries lead the reader to only a few of the books which actually fit those categories. The index also requires a bit of time to get used to; numbers in it refer not to pages, but to the key numeral assigned to each book in the bibliography.

As an *ad hoc* practical test of the book's comprehensiveness within its own parameters, I checked my own reasonably-sized collection of modern Arthurian fiction against Mediavilla's entries, and found the majority included. Of the ex-

ceptions, one was a rather childish film novelization, *The Spaceman and King Arthur*; another, Adam Fergusson's *Roman Go Home*, used Vortigern's dealings with the Saxons as an excuse to pillory modern radicalism (as its time-frame precedes Arthur's rise, it arguably falls outside her remit); Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Road to Camlann* (1981), a straightforward Malory retelling; and Christopher Webb's *Eusibius the Phoenician* (1969), a dramatic story involving the Grail.

Two of Mediavilla's omissions really did surprise me, however. Firstly, Michael Moorcock's Von Bek series about a military family's hereditary involvement with the sacred cup and Lucifer's plan to perfect Earth in despite of God. These are among the most original Grail novels I know. They are full of adventure, using dramatic historical settings like the Thirty Years War, and certainly would appeal to teenagers; they also have interesting pro-feminist elements. Perhaps the title of the second in the series, *The Brothel in Rosenstrasse* (1982), damned all of them by association. The second omission, Patrick McCormack's *Albion: the Last Companion* (1997), is in my opinion the finest Arthurian novel to appear in many years. Admittedly this has a pre-Cambrian setting, but it exhibits masterly handling of flashback throughout. While nominally an adult novel, it surely has teen-gripping qualities.

To balance this criticism, I should add that the compiler has included many remarkable but sadly little known or nearly forgotten books. I was particularly pleased to see the inclusion of H. Warner Munn's extraordinary *Merlin's Godson*, a pulpish but wonderfully "what if" saga of escape by survivors of Camlann to America to overthrow a dictatorship of the Mound Builders and cause the Aztec Empire to rise. Further evidence of her thoroughness are inclusion of two particularly intriguing oddities from the area where thriller and Arthurian fiction meet, the agreeably daft comedy-melodrama *The Camelot Caper* by Elizabeth Peters, and Anthony Price's *Our Man in Camelot*, a Cold War spy story which also makes a thoroughly researched stab at pinpointing the mysterious location of the Battle of Badon.

The descriptions of individual titles in this bibliography vary in both length and rigor. While generally balanced and adequately comprehensive (they average around a half-page each), some appear a little brusque oe superficial, and others are over-entangled with plot details, on occasion to the point of imparting the feeling that there is no need to read the originals.

An appendix of short story anthologies is also included. Although this is a barebones list it is useful, drawing attention, for example, to the massive compendia edited by Mike Ashley, which include so many lost treasures. The chief omission here is the anthologies edited by Alan and Barbara Lupak and published by their Round Table Press; but perhaps Mediavilla did not feel that small press material should be included.

In summation, let me say that as a whole, this book represents an extremely valuable resource for anyone with an interest in, or love of, retellings of the Matter of Britain in fiction.

Steve Sneyd

COLOSSUS / THE COLLECTED SCIENCE FICTION OF DONALD WANDREI, edited by Philip J. Rahman and Dennis E. Weiler. Illustrated by Rodger Gerberding. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fedogan & Bremer, 1999. xxx-464 pp. 22 cm. $29.00.

Colossus gathers 23 stories by this once well known and popular author. Together with *Don't Dream* (reviewed in the last issue of this magazine), that brings all, or almost all, of his short fiction in the fantasy field back into print.

It is difficult to review Wandrei's work fairly today. Those who read it on initial appearance, or shortly thereafter, praised most of it. Some stories, like the title one and its sequel, "Colossus Eternal," have become cult-pieces. The latter happened to be in the first science-fiction magazine I ever

read, and in 1934 I confess I enjoyed it hugely. On rereading it today, however, I felt (not surprisingly) that its faults tend to predominate. It is like most of the other entries in this collection, which seldom rise above approved editorial formulas and break no new ground in their scientific extrapolations. Indeed, Wandrei himself never thought much of it; he wrote such pulp fiction to support himself while trying——unsuccessfully, as it turned out——to compose more serious work. When asked which of his tales he would like to have in an anthology August Derleth was planning, he replied, "Damned if I know any s-f story of mine that's worth putting in."

It is surely no coincidence that he did not get along with John W. Campbell, editor of *Astounding Stories*. *Astounding* had been his most lucrative market since Street and Smith took it over in 1933, and his relationship with F. Orlin Tremaine ("one of the best of the science fiction editors") was always congenial. But he found Campbell, Tremaine's successor, "impossible," he wrote Derleth in 1939, "insisting on endless revisions and establishing the damndest taboos. I'm not going to send him anything any more." Wandrei wrote very little for the fantasy field after 1937; he was more comfortable in the past than in the future, and devoted himself after that to Arkham House and purely mundane pursuits.

Two of the stories in *Colossus* are being printed for the first time, "A Stranger Passes" and "If——." The former reads like an early 1930's reject; and the latter, while nominally complete in itself, could be a précis or outline for a larger work Wandrei never completed. I shall not comment in detail on the other entries here——if you're interested, you'll find summaries of most of them in Bleiler's *Science-Fiction / the Gernsback Years*——except to say that the ones I think stand up to time the best are "The Red Brain," "Murray's Light" and "The Holiday Act." The last is a pleasant satire laid in the future which appeared in

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UNDER ALIEN OBSERVATION

Pervasive and disturbing
as a jackhammer chorus
tripping on full bore,
they come careening
into quotidian existence
to calibrate the pell-mell
pulse of life and death
upon the planet Earth.

Like bugs on the ceiling,
the walls, in our soup,
they slip into existence
seemingly from nowhere,
devouring our passions
from public to private,
surveying each moment
with eyes by the score.

Yesterday or the day
before we could have
deplored their invasion
as monstrous, but the
press of their persistence
——more savage than sage
in its boundless curiosity——
has quashed all resistance.

Fixed beneath the gaze
of their merciless scrutiny
like paramecia trapped
upon a laboratory plate,
framed in the gigawatt glare
of their pandemic projections,
we now judge our existence
by the lives that they explore.

DIMENSIONS OF COSMOGENIC DOUBT

There was a time before TIME
when nothing could proceed.
Stars were waiting to be born
and LIFE was just a seed.

KA-BANG! went the cosmic goo,
and TIME and SPACE began:
suns and moons and planets
that led the way to MAN.

At least that's how MAN calls it,
but who's to say he's right?
His brain is 10^{-10} the size
of the smallest star in sight.

——*Bruce Boston*

Minnesota Quarterly in 1930; it will probably be new to most readers.

Colossus also includes a short autobiographical preface by Wandrei, an interesting (if diffuse and rambling) introduction by Richard Tierney, and six pages of photographs. Jon Arfstrom's jacket is attractive, but the interior illustrations, while adequately executed, show little or no relationship to the text. This continues an unfortunate legacy: I can't name a single one of Wandrei's stories, either in *Don't Dream* or the original pulps, that was accompanied by striking black and white illustrations, although two ("Colossus" and "The Blinding Shadows") did inspire excellent colored magazine covers.

Let me conclude with a brief note on the texts given us. I have not meticulously compared all those here with the original ones, but my impression is that the latter have been reprinted unchanged. The sole exception is the title-story; this was very lightly edited by Wandrei himself for publication in Derleth's anthology *Beyond Time and Space* (1950), and *Colossus* uses the revised version. (The revision involves cutting a little over a hundred words which would have appeared just after the first paragraph on page 126.)

Should you buy the book? If you enjoy nostalgic reruns, you'll find them here in generous measure; but if your literary tastes have changed markedly since you were a teenager, I can't recommend it.

A. Langley Searles

MEMOIRS OF A SPACEWOMAN by Naomi Haldane Mitchison. Introduction by Hilary Rubinstein. London: The New English Library, 1977. 160pp. 18cm. UK70p (softbound).

In a recent review of this author's *Solution Three* (*Fantasy Commentator* #51, pp.223-224), I mentioned that I was searching unsuccessfully for her *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962). Since then the editor was able to find for me a reprint of it from the Science Fiction Masters set edited by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison.

It then sat on my desk awhile awaiting a block of uninterrupted time in which to savor what John Clute, in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, described as "a radiant book." It seemed appropriate to give it particular attention since Mitchison died just last January at the age of 101. Finally, though, I picked up the book to meet my review deadline——and stayed up all night to finish it! Not to find out how it ended, for this is a series of episodic accounts of a female communications scientist on Terran exploration missions into deep space. No, I forgot about sleep deprivation because *Memoirs* so spell-bindingly explored issues that were immediately relevant to my own recent reading: How do we observe others? Can we allow ourselves to learn from them? Do we significantly interfere with the lives of those whom we choose to observe and document?

Recently I read a travel article which complained that "the American institution of condescension" was as prevalent during tours on foreign soil as was finding a McDonald's there. "Who are we," the author argued, "we of humiliated presidents and O.J. trials——to say what a decent way of living is?"

Of course this warning occurs often in modern science-fiction tales about alien contact. Eleanor Arnason's *A Woman of the Iron People* (1991) included the warning to human anthropologists: ". . . Remember, also, that categories are not fixed. 'Good' and 'evil' change their meaning. 'High' and 'low' are relative. The distinctions——the discriminations——you take with you on your journey may not be useful when you arrive."

But Naomi Mitchison wrote *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* in 1962 at the age of 65——and its was her *very first* excursion into science-fiction. In her earliest accounts the protagonist, Mary (who was prone to forget about the other people in the expedition if she came upon an interesting communications problem), ponders on how contact with others causes change——"we take ourselves for granted as stable personalities, as completely secure. . . . But the impact of other worlds on the apparently immovable stability comes as a surprise. Nobody enjoys their

first personality changes." And Mary is just as concerned about how other worlds' populations, whether of insect-type beings or humanoid-appearing Martian hermaphrodites, are affected by explorers "merely being there, by standing and staring, by collecting information."

After she decides to become, herself, the subject of an experiment which involves implanting a foreign being onto her body in an attempt to establish communication, Mary admits that she was not a good reporter of her own condition.

"Interference" is of course a big problem on the expeditions, and once a young scientist, also a woman, becomes emotionally involved in internal politics on a butterfly world——again, who are we to dictate how others should live?

In a recent *Newsweek* article, Anna Quindlin explained a similar problem. "The press sometimes seems to suggest that reporting is objective science, that there's no scrim between the reader and the information. But there is always a scrim. The scrim is the reporter. . . . We always carry with us what we've learned and those we like."

But then, you see, I'm guilty of the same thing in this review. I've gone on and on about what made this book so fascinating to *me*——emphasizing, especially, the fact that it seemed so recent, rather than over forty years old. The only anachronism I found in it to date the story was the referral to keeping information in hand-written notebooks, which I'm sure would not escape a watchful editor's pen today.

The introduction by Hilary Rubinstein points out that *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* "is one of the very few novels in the genre to exploit the limitless strange and comic possibilities in human sexuality." She reminds us that in 1977 (when the introduction was written) only a few men——John Wyndham, Philip Wylie and Philip Jose Farmer——had come close to Mitchison's comfortable way of writing about sexuality. (Ursula Le Guin had done so too, she notes, but so "clinically" as not to have had the same effect.) What Rubinstein finds awe-inspiring about the book is that Mitchison "should have written with such open and life-enhancing enjoyment of sexual experimentation from a woman's point of view ... before Betty Friedan had blazed the trail of Women's Lib."

Sarah Lefanu, in *Feminism and Science Fiction* (1989), further explains that Mitchison and her protagonist Mary are unusual in science-fiction in that they are both fascinated by the process of reproduction. *Memoirs,* Lefanu says, provides a "gentle analysis of sexual ethics and mores."

Perhaps all this also helps to explain why the book feels so modern. Mary talks easily of whom she wishes to bed and have children with, even though there is no exploration of other possible couplings (such as the homosexuality detailed in *Solution Three,* written thirteen years later). And although she does think aloud that some jobs seem more suitable to women than men (no, housekeeping and raising babies aren't on that list), Mary's first love is always the challenge of her chosen profession. The possibilities for women are as open and exciting as those for men. No wonder later readers thought Naomi Mitchision was a feminist foremother, even though that was a designation which totally surprised her.

Finally, a few thoughts on an aspect of *Memoirs* that I mentioned earlier. In Clute's encyclopedia, under "Communications," Peter Nicholls deals with human-alien contact, but I do not find there (or in other reference books) anything about Mitchison's particular slant——namely, that contact itself necessarily causes intrinsic changes in both parties to it. This, with a nod to Werner Heisenberg, I shall call the anthropological uncertainty principle, and I feel it may well be the most important part of the whole first-contact process. The only example I've found of this that precedes Mitchison's (can any reader supply others?) is John W. Campbell's novelette "The Idealists," which appeared in *9 Tales of Space and Time* (1954), an anthology edited by Raymond J. Healy. Like *Memoirs of a Spacewoman,* it's a story you'll find rewarding to seek out and read.

Anita Alverio

WE'RE STILL WAITING FOR THE ANSWER FROM YOU

"Check ignition and may God's love be with you."
—'Major Tom'

up up it goes and now beyond turnback
point now he's never coming back
now they can't get him back next
stop Antares V and now

he can tell everyone out of his whole
life just what he thinks of them
and all the harm they did to him
forcing homework high test results

you must get on you must succeed
not opening thighs or opening and then
under moonlight by cicadaed creek
comparing unfavorably

with cooler wilder DA ed ones
and so and so as when dictator
takes the realm first
searches file to find

where now what doing enemies false
friends hated relations of the
schoolyard years he'd rehearsed
every cutting word he'd planned

as if preparing video will
to get them all where they live
hurt like a festering splinter
cannot be removed forever and

now they can't hit back
not even if they could get into
Mission Control and grab a mike
he's shut reception channel off

he's ready to go to get
each harsh word said and then
jewel spill suddenly lighting
a dark sack the stars unfold ahead

and he forgets and goes forth
singing a song they thought
real dirty behind the auditorium
dodging the school play to drink to smoke

how Polly and her Pimp
met the wally and the wimp
and sings his hymn
to heaven having

stored up on earth
no treasure to go back for
worth the going dust now even
all those treasured hates.

—*Steve Sneyd*

Five Reference Books

Lincoln Van Rose

FANTASY AND HORROR / A CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL GUIDE TO LITERATURE, ILLUSTRATION, FILM, TV, RADIO, AND THE INTERNET edited by Neil Barron. Lanham, Md. and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1999. xi-816pp. 26cm. $85.00

THE FAR NORTH AND BEYOND compiled by John Bell. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University and London: The Vine Press, 1998. 65pp. 27.5cm. $28.95 (softbound).

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FANTASY edited by John Clute and John Grant. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 1049pp. 25.2cm. $75.00.

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE STORY INDEX, 1926-1995 compiled by Terry A. Murray. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Co., 1999. ix-627pp. 26.2cm. $65.00.

SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR: A READER'S GUIDE by Roger Sheppard. London: The Library Association Career Development Center, 1999 (U.S. agent: Trigon Press, 117 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JJ, England). 416pp. 22.2cm. £25.00 ($52.00 postpaid).

Is it possible, I wonder, to assess fairly in the compass of a brief review such lengthy compilations as most of these? Has anyone, save perhaps their proofreaders, ever read any of them in entirety? And even if anyone did, what are the chances that he or she would be competent to pass judgement?

As I approached the task myself, I was comforted by the recollection that Hans Koenig once critiqued the entire classic eleventh edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* for *The New Yorker* in a little more than 7000 words, and that Anatole Broyard reviewed the fifteenth for *The New York Times* in a mere 950. I have read enough of these reference books to form opinions about them, however, and whether for better or worse shall share these candidly with my readers.

I can deal with the Clute-Grant *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, the heftiest of the bunch, in the briefest span. It's been around for three years, and already has had widely favorable reviews; I'll simply say that in usage I found that it usually lived up to its reputation and to the goals of the compilers. Its coverage is comprehensive and the few errors I noted were typographical rather than factual. I was disappointed that it didn't have an essay on fantasy poetry, but pleased that it did include an excellent one on fantasy opera. Overall, it's certainly a worthy companion to the earlier Clute-Nicholls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Both seem now accepted as the primary reference texts in their fields, and have been reprinted in lower-priced editions by The Science Fiction Book Club ($24.98 apiece). Now, that's a bargain you just can't beat.

The contributors to Barron's *Fantasy and Horror* conveniently divide the primary literature into seven overlapping periods which are described in introductory essays; those by Brian Stableford struck me as particularly well done. There's also a very nice piece by Steve Eng, "Fantasy and Horror Poetry," which includes (as do the others) a useful bibliography. (I wonder how many followers of fantasy and science-fiction poetry, by the way, realize that it represents the last *terra incognita* in their fields? Everything else has been pretty thoroughly documented, yet we still have no comprehensive bibliography——or even a checklist——of verse. A few devotees try to keep interest in such a project alive; Steve Sneyd, for instance, regularly records in his publication *Data Dump* most new genre

verse as well as current reprintings of newly discovered titles from the past, so much raw data is available for eventual collection. We badly need another Terry Murray to systemize this area. Perhaps Eng will take on the job.)

The portion allotted to secondary literature and research aids is very appealing. Barron himself has authored several pieces on fantasy publishers, library collections, holdings and catalogings, theme-indexing, and co-authored another covering reference and online resources; these should certainly be helpful to readers. There are also essays on fantasy and horror in art, illustration, film, television and radio, and even one on teaching the genres. Robert Morrish and Mike Ashley have provided a comprehensive description and history of the fantasy and horror pulps which supplied the popular reading fare since World War I; it is not only informative but interesting.

Finally, although *Fantasy and Horror* is primarily a guide to books and related materials, Barron has put together an appendix treating their authors. This charts them alphabetically, with their dates of birth and death, and cites which of fourteen other source-books, available in most libraries, may be consulted to learn more about each. The volume ends with the expected indexes covering authors, subjects, themes and titles.

The judgements of the various contributors are of course their own, and on the whole seem sound and fair. I did find one exception, however, which I cite for the record: the assessment of S. T. Joshi's *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (entry 12-160) is wildly off-base. Far from being a "superb collection of critical essays," it is a very mixed selection, replete with untenable conclusions and factual errors, including some by the editor himself. I suggest readers consult detailed contemporary reviews (such as the one in this magazine*) before accepting anything in the book at face value.

Aside from this, I have no serious complaints. I found the work reader-friendly throughout, and admire the amount of information that Neil Barron has made accessible. The price isn't out of line for what you're getting, so I don't hesitate to recommend it for personal as well as library purchase.

While they have different goals, there is one interesting basis for comparing *Fantasy and Horror* with *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, however: by what they may omit. I have my own favorite works, of course, and I was curious to look for them to see how many were included. I found that Clute leaves out Caldecott's *Fires Burn Blue*, Gilbert's *The Landslide*, Gray's *Tedious Brief Tales of Granta and Gramayre*, Level's *Tales of Mystery and Horror* and Saltoun's *After*, but that all of these are in Barron; similarly, Barron leaves out Aymé's fantasies, Asimov's *Azazel*, McBain's *Ghosts*, Heron-Allen's *The Strange Papers of Dr Blayre* and Sharpe's *The Stone of Chastity*, but all these are listed in Clute. I was a bit surprised, though, to find that fifteen of my favorite fantasy authors appear in *neither* volume: Valery Brussof, March Cost, M. P. Dare, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, John Gunther, Vincent McHigh, W. C. Morrow, Shiela Kaye-Smith, Dennis Parry, Roger Pater, Bertrand Russell, Nevil Shute, R. E. Spencer and Jane and Robert Speller. I'd rate some of these names as reasonably important in the field, too. Well, since Barron's and Clute's browser's paradises should remain in print for several years, perhaps we may look forward to revised editions or, at least, addenda sheets.

The scope of Sheppard's *Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror*, the third book of reference to be dealt with in this article, is broader than Barron's, yet most of its listings and descriptions are of modern works——1960-1998. Still, it manages to include some 600 authors and 3800 titles, chiefly from England and the United States. It does have some value as a guide for novice readers, but since one can buy *both* Clute encyclopedias for the same price, its market niche seems to me rather uncertain. Librarians might find it useful, but I can't recommend it to individual purchasers.

**Fantasy Commentator IV*, 223-227 (1982).

The price of *The Far North and Beyond* seems a bit high for its size. The scope of this short booklet is given by its subtitle, "*An Index to Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy in English Language Genre Magazines and Other Selected Periodicals*," and it is to be followed by a sequel, which will be devoted to the post-1995 period which *The Far North* does not cover. Bell is an experienced researcher in the fantasy field, and has, as expected, done a competent job in this narrow compilation. He includes indexes by author, title, artist, magazine and series, an appendix on genre magazines published in Canada in the pulp era, and an exhaustive bibliography. While he is aware that he may have made omissions, and asks readers to supply any new information they can, I doubt if he will receive much. The booklet is legibly printed on good quality paper, and is sturdily bound in a heavy wraparound cover. It is the only reference work presently available to cover this particular area, and should be welcome to fans of Canadian fantasy.

Terry Murray's *Science Fiction Magazine Story Index* is a reference book historians in the field have been needing for years. Heretofore they have had to rely on a sheaf of separate booklets, mostly in paper covers, and probably tattered from age and use, so it is extremely satisfying to have, finally, all the stories from the fantasy pulps now in a single volume.

Well, *almost* all of them. Since Murray is a purist, and has insisted on compiling his listings from the magazines themselves, not relying on second-hand information, there are a few limitations here. The stories in *Thrill Book* and *Weird Tales* aren't included, for example. I don't find this a serious limitation. Richard Bleiler's exhaustive description of the former tells absolutely everything anyone would need or want to know about that title, and the latter has been indexed several times in various ways over the years by T. G. Cockcroft, William H. Evans, Frank Parnell and Robert Weinberg. Murray also doesn't index verse, non-fiction, letters, etc. Some may miss these (I myself miss the verse, which after all is arguably a kind of fiction), but if there is sufficient demand for them, they could be handled by future supplements.

In any event, this volume covers some 34,000 stories that have appeared in 133 genre magazines. These are indexed by magazine issue, by title, and by author. There is also an appendix of prolific authors (those who have written at least 25 stories), each followed by an alphabetical list of stories. I've not had the need to use this index myself, but I have used all the other listings a number of times and found their contents readily accessible.

Technophiles will inform you that Murray's compilation has competition. You can buy a CD-ROM of William Contento's and Stephen Miller's *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazine Index (1890-1997)*, covering over 11,000 issues of 730 magazines, for $49.95 plus postage, or that *and* Contento's and Charles Brown's CD, *Index to Science Fiction Anthologies and Collections* combined with *The Locus Index to Science Fiction, 1984-97* for about $100, shipping included.

I'm not knocking these, which certainly have expanded coverage (if you happen to need it), but a book is intrinsically easier to use, since you don't require an expensive computer to access it. Call me old-fashioned if you wish, but I also find the actual handling of a book more personally/psychologically satisfying than manipulating computer hard- and software.

Well, whatever your preferences, I recommend Murray's index. It's sturdily hardbound in head-banded cloth (not just paper-covered boards) and printed on good quality paper. The author will also supply errata/addenda sheets to purchasers without charge if you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to him at 2540 Chapel Hill Road, Durham, NC 27707-1463.

Finally, I've not seen the Australian *MUP Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (1999), but I have heard a good bit about it. Most of my informants feel that it includes much material that is actually outside the area which it is supposed to cover, so I've not attempted to get a copy. *Caveat emptor*!

REMEMBERING SAM

PART THREE

KENNETH FAIG, JR.

What we shall miss most of all about Sam are his contributions to *Fantasy Commentator* when your file of Moskowitz material is exhausted. Sam was very kind to me. He was patient with me as proxy editor of the Moshassuck Press 1989 Nils Helmer Frome collection, and agreed to lend his name to what was essentially a copy-shop production. (Perhaps it will eventually be one of the more difficult items for Moskowitz completists.) We had several very congenial conversations at the Lovecraft Centenary Symposium in 1990; I believe I also saw him once more, at the NecronomiCon at Danvers in 1993. When I published my Edith Miniter compilation in 1995, Sam was one of the very few folk from the science-fiction community who took a chance on buying a copy, and he sent me a very detailed and valuable letter of comment after going through the volume in his usual meticulous way. I shall miss him a lot.

—Letter, July 11, 1999.

EDWARD O'BRIEN

I first saw Sam Moskowitz in March of 1985, when he appeared at a writers' conference in Newark with, I believe, Joseph Wrzos. His fame, of course, had preceded him; here was one of the greats of First Fandom. But I didn't really get to know him until the summer of 1990, when Robert M. Price, editor of *Crypt*, drove Sam and myself to the Lovecraft Centennial Symposium in Providence. It was an enjoyable experience listening to Bob and Sam discussing science-fiction and fantasy fandom and politics on the way to Rhode Island.

My first experience of Sam's innate decency and generosity came the next day at noon. He had stayed at the Day's Motel, while I had passed an uncomfortable night on the Brown campus. The weather was hot, and there was no air-conditioning in my rather drab dorm room. It was also noisy at times, and I had trouble getting to sleep. By late morning the next day I even thought of going home rather than face another such uncomfortable night.

When I told Sam about this he promptly offered to pay for a room for me at the Day's Motel, since I din't have the necessary money with me. He did this even though he hardly knew me at that time. I accepted his kind offer, promising to send him a check when I got home. The next two nights at the motel were delightful, and I was able to host Sam for dinner on Sunday night; we had a great conversation over the meal.

Sam's kindness to me continued over the next five or six years. I was beginning to write fiction for the fantasy and science-fiction press, and I sent some of my manuscripts to Sam and also to Langley Searles for comments. Both of them always replied promptly with detailed and very helpful criticisms. They taught me much about writing and the world of science-fiction. Once I sent Sam a photocopy of an article that my father (who was also a writer) had had published in *The Trenton Times* back in 1948 or 1949. This was a very positive and detailed account of the Jewish community as it had existed in "old Trenton" during the era of 1900 to 1915. (My family lived in Trenton.) Sam really enjoyed my dad's piece, and wrote me a letter back describing Jewish society in Newark when he was living there as a boy.

Finally, I visited Sam at his house in Newark, once in 1991 and again

the following year. Langley happened to be present on both occasions. Sam took us on a tour of his fabulous collection of science-fiction books, magazines and pictures. As we examined the impressive items in it he remarked simply, "I enjoy my collection, and consult it a lot in my writing." At one point, his wife Christine came in and greeted us warmly. All this was a wonderful experience for me. We sat around the living room and chatted; Sam's anecdotes about the pros and celebrities of fandom were always fun to hear.

The overall impressions I have of Sam Moskowitz are these: he was a decent human being, respectful and genial. There was a quiet dignity about him, and it was always a pleasure to be in his company. —Letter, December 13, 1999.

JOE SANDERS

The obituaries of Sam Moskowitz that I saw—in *Locus*, for example—were pretty perfunctory. Over the years he had annoyed a lot of people with his bluntly expressed opinions, and put others off with his unpolished writing. For better or worse, science-fiction scholarship has been taken over by academics who have a sense of orderliness and protocol that Sam didn't care to follow. It's also true that research into early s-f has become unfashionable, probably partly because the raw materials—the stuff Sam so diligently gathered—is difficult to find. Besides that, the field has become so sprawling that it's impossible for anyone to do the kind of stories-in-context, this-idea-begat-that-one, that he favored. For all these reasons, in his later years Sam seemed to drift to the periphery of s-f scholarship. Most people ignored him.

He and I butted heads about a review I did (for Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell's *Starling*) of the series of classic reprints Sam had edited for the Hyperion Press, some of which were pretty sloppy. I'd also become frustrated by trying to find the point or follow some of his scholarly essays, especially because I cared so much about the subjects myself. As a freshman comp. teacher, thus, I'd find myself mentally reworking the pieces, scrapping digressions and focussing the evidence more sharply.

When I started planning *Science Fiction Fandom* for the Greenwood Press, I knew I wanted Sam to contribute but that I'd have to be ready to edit his work severely. And, given Sam's public, bombastic personality, I didn't know how he'd take that. Our initial delings were fine, with his immediately agreeing to do an essay on the roots of fandom. The essay he submitted was an original, fascinating, though extremely debatable interpretation of "fan" - reader of fantastic lit, which enabled him to set the roots of fandom in ancient Rome. It was a strange but entrancing notion, developed with many unfamiliar facts about the Gernsback era. Unfortunately, the essay was also a shapeless blob, as Sam couldn't let go of a single bit of information on the subject his research had uncovered. And it was insufficiently documented to boot. So I went through the piece carefully, not with the goal of changing its thesis but with emphasizing the ideas that were buried and scattered. Then I retyped a new version and sent it to him, along with several pages of queries.

Sam didn't blow up. He looked up the sources more carefully. He didn't object to my changes in his text; and though he suggested that some could be clarified, he didn't quibble. He wasn't offended that a relatively pipsqueak scholar was daring to find fault with the way he wrote. He was thoroughly professional and helpful, a model of how to react to editorial revisions.

In some ways, Sam's essay in *Science Fiction Fandom* is especially satisfying to me; of all his introductions and essays, I think this piece of writing shows him to especially good advantage as a thinker and researcher. I wondered then—and I wonder now—why no other editors seemed willing to take the time and trouble to help Sam display his original thinking and wealth of information. If my own experience is any criterion, he'd've accepted help if it had been offered.

Finally, when I returned to the manuscript after a lengthy hiatus, Sam offered calm, practical advice about shortening it to meet Greenwood's requirequirements. I owe him that, too.

In all, Sam was a bigger man than shown by the non-reaction to his death. He deserves to be remembered, warts and all, with respect. ——*Somewhatly* #9.

GRAHAM STONE

It was late in 1940. About two years earlier, in the cultural backwater of Adelaide, I had discovered science-fiction——or at least discovered that it existed and that that was what you called it. I then moved to Sydney, where I found back issues in abundance. I began determinedly seeking out and reading through the output of s-f in the 1930's. A bookseller who had been supplying me some good stuff from a hoard he kept in the back room asked if I knew two other teenagers living close by who were also strongly interested in s-f. And there were others; in fact, there was a club. So I gave him my address to pass on, and soon got a letter from Bert Castellari asking me to call around.

I knew a few other readers, contemporaries in high school, but none with a serious interest or much knowledge of the field. From reading a lot of magazines cover to cover I understood that there were serious s-f followers amounting to a movement, and organizations, in the U.S.A. I had even seen a few letters from Australians in the correspondence pages. But I hadn't made any move to make contact before. I wasn't naturally very assertive, and besides I didn't think these intellectuals would want to hear from kids in short pants. It turned out that most of the locals I was able to meet were only a couple of years older than I was, and they wanted to meet anyone who was interested.

Castellari had enough s-f magazines to call them a collection——a few hundred, with some older issues I hadn't seen——plus *Argosies* and other pulps I recognized. (I'd been put off by the covers on *Weird Tales* and *Unknown*, and by Campbell's promotional effusions in *Astounding*.) He had a few books (I already knew Wells and Burroughs, but not many more). He also had something I had read about, amateur productions, which immediately appealed. I realized I had found what I had missed, an intelligent community. I met some of the others: the club was actually inactive for a few weeks then (the previous executive had dropped it) but I joined when it was reorganized, and I was off and running.

Bert explained that U.S.A. fans weren't quite one happy family. There was a sort of schism, with two factions more or less led by Donald Wollheim and Sam Moskowitz. My local group preferred Wollheim; that was why they had named their club the Futurian Society of Sydney. Well, I knew there had been disputes, and I knew something about both of those names already from letters and from the Science Fiction League department in *Wonder Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder*. But now, although a long way away, they became real persons.

I understand now something of what the New York split was about, but it didn't seem to mean anything in particular to us then. At the meeting to restart the FSS the chairman Bill Veney, in a keynote address of sorts, said there were two general ideas about the purpose of s-f which were behind it: Gernsback's emphasis of scientific predictions and the educational aspect; and Wollheim's and others' interest in the role of science in society and world affairs. Not the whole story, of course, but that was part of how it had started.

Whatever had happened in 1939 and earlier, a year later no one in the U.S.A. seemed to be doing anything in particular to keep the controversy going; in fact it no longer seemed significant. Leading figures in the movement we were in communication with then included Ackerman, Warner, Madle and others not involved; and Wollheim, Pohl and Wiggins from the Futurian side. I cannot recall that Taurasi and Sykora were heard from at all, and all I would have seen from Moskowitz was some of his writings——in Warner's fan magazine *Spaceways*, for instance——

which didn't relate to the dispute. But he was there, a presence, and so he would remain.

There is one thing Sam wrote in that era that seems to me very significant: the story "Grand Old Fan"(Madle's *Fantascience Digest*, March-April 1939). I don't know if it made much impression on its readers then; letters in the next issue mostly approved it without saying why. But it has something to say to us now, I think.

Briefly, it goes like this: Jack Adams (now there's a symbolic generic name for you) is an experienced, active supporter of science-fiction, a voluminous correspondent and an amateur journalist, widely known and influential in the field, respected as an authority and a leader. A publisher planning a new magazine offers him the post of editor, seeing him as the ideal choice.

For Adams, ambition could seek no more; all his voluntary work for s-f has prepared him for this ultimate position. He deserves the recognition and it will be acclaimed by everyone. Furthermore, after struggling through the depression years, he still does not even have a regular job.

As things stand he has commitments that take all of his free time and effort: he will have to drop them when he takes the position. That is understood. But for the moment, he is writing furiously to deadlines, giving any who ask the support and advice expected of him. Then he gets an urgent appeal for help. A fan trapped into running a convention is out of his depth with the work involved; can Adams save him? Yes, of course Adams can, even though it means effectively and self-effacingly taking over the convention. And in the end the circumstances force him to abandon the chance of a lifetime, the job that meant everything to him.

The background to this is plain. The metamorphoses of Hornig, Weisinger and Palmer had been major events that must have influenced the thinking of any active scientifictionist. Sam knew all too well the treadmill of regular activity; he knew about conventions and how they don't just happen. He would certainly not fall into such a trap if he had his chance——as, in time, he did.

I liked *Science Fiction Plus*. It was out of step with the established magazines and not universally appreciated, but I understood what Sam and Gernsback were doing. Every serious reader in the early days of science-fiction dreamed of a slick magazine, an impressively presented showcase that would take the field out of its pulp setting and give it dignity and status. And *Science Fiction Plus* was much of what we had imagined in our most optimistic dreams. The quality of the stories was average, compared with the other s-f magazines of the day, but it was the appearance that was special. The art work was overemphasized and there was much that suggested *Science & Invention* more than *Amazing* or *Galaxy*, but that was just what made it special.

I noted Sam in action as he developed into a historian of science-fiction——for a long time the only one worth mentioning. It is easy to criticize his writing——he needed better copy-editors——but the volume of his original work is staggering.

I had no direct contact with Sam until 1979, when I wrote him to pass on the information I had found on Walter Rose, the only South African writer in early science-fiction. I thought Rose's novel "By Jove!" held up well and should be reprinted. "What do you think of it?" I wrote. His reply (which I have shortened a little) was characteristic.

> That author stands out in my mind, and is usually remembered by those who were buying magazines in 1937. During a period when *Amazing Stories* under Sloane was barely surviving, . . . when every reader counted, he would schedule a three-part novel in a bimonthly by a literally unknown author from South America with a cover illustration. I remember the February 1937 issue for several reasons. First, it was late, which was unusual for *Amazing Stories*. Second, it was not at the regular spots that handled *Amazing* . . . and I remember walking easily ten miles over a period of a week from store to store until I saw that striking cover of the giant reddish purple insects.

I did not think it fair to your question to give my reaction strictly from memory over a gap of 42 years so I reread it and the other two Rose stories. . . . The earliest published was "The Horror of the Cavern" in *Nightmare by Daylight*, edited by Christine Campbell Thomson in 1936. This pulled you right into the story with the proper atmosphere, held your interest with the exploration of the cave, and though at times a bit overdone, in its encounter with a cannibalistic tribe of degenerate humans, did carry one through. Its weakness was its familiarity. There had been so many tales like it. . . .

I found "The Lurking Death" in the February 1936 *Amazing Stories* far better than I remembered it——probably because in those days I wanted something more fantastic than just another detective spider story. It is well done though the same thing had been done a number of times before.

"By Jove!" started off with a modern touch by putting aside the building of a space ship and immediately launching the ship into space, and not taking up too much of the story with its journey. The early pages were very crude writing, even for 1933 (Rose signs the prologue December 1933). As the story progressed the writing steadily improved until its last two thirds were written extremely well . . . as I progressed the story held me, and I enjoyed it as thoroughly as any of the better modern stories.

It was a real pleasure to read a story in which the author was paying close attention to buttressing through science. Hugo Gernsback would have loved this story, for it exemplified what he was looking for.

I think it belongs among the legion of stories that we remember with pleasure but which may not have that "extra" to justify a publisher's investing in its reissue; it would also be very hard to convince modern readers that this is something they should buy.

Later I communicated with Sam about other matters, notably the Australian writers Desmond Hall, Alan Connell and J. M. Walsh. But this letter perfectly demonstrates his devotion to science-fiction and readiness to share his experience with anyone who was interested.

——Letter, June 14, 1999.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

I knew Sam Moskowitz, as did most of us, and came to respect him as a great raw resource of science-fiction research, a fount of data spewing like an oil well that's just been struck. And his facts tended to check out; he didn't just make statements off the cuff. One of the most remarkable things about him was that he could always remember his references and sources, as if he carried a vast bibliography in his head——which he did.

But one does wish (as Everett Bleiler once said about Lovecraft) that he had learned to write better. His prose was never better than wooden, and as even the recent installments of his unfinished "Immortal Storm II" show, he tended to put down just the facts, all the facts, without any real feeling for form or narrative. That makes a lot of his work very valuable in one sense, but in another almost unreadable. What we have here is raw material, which hopefully will some time be mined and shaped by others.

For example, the ms. for the piece on W. C. Morrow that he wrote for my *Discovering Classic Horror Fiction* contains, I suspect, 98% of all the information available on this author, and 98% of *that* probably came from Sam's own research. One imagines that he had taken vast amounts of notes, and couldn't bear to discard anything. To force the article into readability, I edited it very heavily, removing whole pages of data. Was it really relevant to our understanding of Morrow the writer to know precisely how many slaves his father had owned, what they had cost, or the nature of the family's hotel business? I also rewrote sentences, carefully preserving their sense, but attempting to make them grammatical. I am sure anyone writing a detailed biography of Morrow would want to see Sam's draft (and a draft is all it was) but for publication even the version that I produced was pretty cumbersome.

Yet it is typical of Sam's graciousness that he made no protest to me at all, even though I'd cut his work with a meat-axe. Possibly he thought it no more

than an editor's job. I hope he could tell that I was quite appreciative of all the research he'd done, and was just trying to make it presentable. My guess is that he really cared only for the research part of the job, and wasn't all that interested in the actual writing. The experience made me wonder if his superior mini-biography of William Hope Hodgson in *Out of the Storm* mightn't also have been heavily edited by someone else.

Well, we shall never see the like of Sam Moskowitz again, and I hope that all his research notes and mss. will be carefully preserved, so that future scholars will have access to them. The sheer volume of what he discovered is enormously impressive, and as a repository of information in the field he is probably irreplaceable.

——Letter, Feb. 27, 1999.

SEAN DONNELLY

Reading Sam's memoirs of his association with Gernsback reminded me of one of the reasons I miss him: the wealth of detail in his writings. Few other writers in the field tell as complete a story as he did. Any lasting work, fiction or non-fiction, lives and breathes in the details. Because Sam respected and understood the value of detail, as opposed to dry generalization, he made his subjects come alive——whether recounting the life of Hodgson or chronicling the misadventures of fandom.

——Letter, April 12, 1999.

• • •

THE HOUSE-GUEST'S GHOST STORY

In the end it came to this:

The phantom thing
had stood without my chamber door,
scratching and muttering,
——*No!* it was *not* the wind!——
moaning for entirely too long,
and I, unable to bear the terror of it,
flung wide the door to confront
the dreadful apparition.

But I saw only myself,
ss if I stood before a mirror.

And, unable to bear the terror of it,
the figure before me fled.

I entered through the open door
and searched the empty chamber.
There was no other door.
The windows were locked.
I even looked under the bed.

Therefore I've walked these halls
for three hundred years now,
continuing my desperate search,
uncertain that I shall be able to bear
the terror of its conclusion.

——*Darrell Schweitzer*

SONG OF THE MINOR POETS

A dozen, a hundred, a thousand,
babble all at once,
proclaiming, exclaiming, declaiming,
in conventional rhyme or otherwise——

There's a purpose in this white noise,
for at least it shuts out
the awful and sublime,
the terrifying silence.

——*Darrell Schweitzer*

• • •

"We Called Him Doc"——concluded from page 246

ert A. W. Lowndes was best known, and will be best remembered. But he had the makings of a poet and was a prolific and highly regarded writer. He was also, as Mike Ashley reminds us, a science-fiction fan. I shall always remember him for these things, too.

CURSE OF THE STAR-PILOT'S HUSBAND

Bruce Boston

In the vast involucrum of sidereal space
she has conjugated every constellation
and calculated instantaneous interstellar
trajectories that convert the inconceivable
distances of the space-time continuum
to the flip of a switch, a single calibration.

She has sampled systems by the score,
planets and moons by a score times ten,
the colors and vistas of alien landscapes,
the incomprehensible customs of complex
extraterrestrial cultures, the flavors and
fashions of worlds far beyond human ken.

When he kamasutras her from head to toe
with tactile skill (even if he does it twice),
when he exhibits the long-distance stamina
of a marathon medalist and explores every
erogenous nook and cranny known to man,
she merely whispers——"That was nice."

• • •

Recent Publications

BRIEF NOTES OF INTERESTING FANTASY ITEMS

One of the season's most appealing group of books, all by or about J.R. R. Tolkein, has been issued by the Houghton Mifflin Co. Here for the first time all three parts of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is available in a single paperback edition ($20); this runs to nearly 1200 pages, some 150 of which are devoted to useful indexes and appendices which deal with chronology, places, people and similar topics. *The Hobbit*, a prelude to *The Lord of the Rings*, is also available in paperback, and both titles can now be had in a boxed set of four ($45). For the first time as well you can buy a paperback edition of Tolkein's *Roverandum* ($12); it has helpful notes plus illustrations by the author, some in color. The most recent of these paperbound reprints are *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkein* ($15), which includes a new, expanded index, and Humphrey Carpenter's fine biography of the man, carrying a useful checklist of his writings. There are three hardbound books in Houghton-Mifflin's package also: Tolkein's *Letters from Father Christmas* ($20), a beautiful volume containing heretofore unpublished letters and drawings, mostly in color; a fiftieth anniversary illustrated edition of *Father Giles of Ham* ($17); and a delightful miniature edition of *Poems from the Hobbit* ($5.95). All of these are highly recommended. Supplementing them is *Tolkein's Legendarium*, edited by Verlyn Flieger and Carl F. Hostetter (Greenwood Press, $59.95); this contains fourteen interesting essays on the history of Middle-Earth and a valuable, updated bibliography of Tolkein's publications compiled by his son.

Of all the major domestic publishers of fantasy and science-fiction, there are two that I feel deserve readers' particular attention. One is St. Mar-

(continued on page 301)

The Return of Hugo Gernsback

Sam Moskowitz

PART TWO

VI

So intent was Hugo Gernsback on maintaining maximum security about issuing a new science-fiction magazine that all manuscripts and correspondence were still being received at my home address although I was commuting to the New York office and working there every day. By this time his obsession with secrecy was causing a problem. I had been circumscribed as to what authors I could solicit for manuscripts, mostly those who had written nothing for a decade. Some could not be induced to write again. Others would send me their old, hopeless rejects. Few could be encouraged to approach a typewriter with any urgency. My first deadline was going to be some time in December, quite possibly early in that month. I didn't have much on hand to be selective about.

About the middle of November Donald Menzel's promised story arrived. It was a 12,000-worder titled "The Other Side of Zero." Gernsback had solicited this story himself and seemed inclined to buy it unread. Possibly in order to obtain it, he had promised Menzel's daughter a job. Lacking my employer's confidence, I approached the story with trepidation. It was with considerable relief that I found it easy to read and even showed a modicum of originality.

The concept behind it was that heat is motion. Motion is an activity of atoms. If all motion were stopped, temperatures would drop below absolute zero. A professor builds a device to accomplish this. Powered by a bolt of lightning, it causes him to disappear. When brought back, he asserts that he continued to exist and retain awareness even though in a sort of limbo. He had been carried back, he felt, to the realm of *pre-birth*. The intelligence and personality of new-born infants had to come from somewhere, and the professor contended that they originated and existed in that realm of the universe which was below absolute zero. This was simply mysticism with a patina of science, reminiscent of an earlier period of magazine science-fiction.

Now, Gernsback had earlier set up criteria on which we were supposed to judge each story. They were: Is it entertaining? Is the science sound? Is the writing good? Is it educational? Is it thought-provoking? Does it contain a new idea? Technically, one would have to answer "Yes" to all six points for Menzel's contribution, but that did not make it a superior yarn. But I felt we should accept it, since we had nothing for our first issue and it was time to start building an inventory. So in my commentary I wrote: "I found this story to be fast-paced and smoothly written. It is set up like a detective story at the beginning and well handled. The dose of science at the end is a very large one, but I think it is quite clear in its present form and may not have to be edited. If the explanations are not clear to any of us we could rewrite them more simply." (The "us" were Hugo and Harvey Gernsback and myself.) Hugo scribbled "Good!" on my memo after reading the story.

On November 20, 1952 I wrote Menzel, telling him his story had been accepted and that he would receive two and a half cents a word ($300) for it. "I must confess that when Mr. Gernsback first told me he was soliciting a story from

you, I had considerable misgivings as to its probable quality. I was somewhat encouraged when I read the galley proofs of your forthcoming *Flying Saucers* [Harvard University Press (1953), the first book devoted entirely to debunking the subject], where you displayed great clarity of style. I was immensely pleased to read the finished story. I found that it was well written, artfully contrived, and incorporated an idea which had not been employed in science-fiction before." In hindsight I feel my estimate of "The Other Side of Zero" was somewhat too generous; but since Gernsback was cultivating Menzel I had no choice about accepting the story, and felt it was politic to do so as cordially as possible. He replied:

> Thank you for your kind letter of 20 November. I have since been my daughter, who gave me additional information about the magazine. I am pleased that you liked my story and also found it original. It is even more flattering that you ask for additional contributions, which I may be able to do. As I wrote Mr. Gernsback, I could scarcely justify spending the time for anything less than five cents a word——but we shall see.
>
> Since you have the old *Science and Inventions*, you may be interested to know that I wrote frequently under various pseudonyms, most frequently as Charles T. Dahama. I also wrote as Charles S. Howard, Joseph M. Howard, Don Howard (in *Science Fiction* and *Weird Tales*, for example), Don Home, Gene Deachem, George W. Zint and possibly others that I have forgotten. I have not used a pseudonym for many years, however. I don't even know why I used them, unless it was because of the belief that writing so much on the borderline of science might weigh against a young scientist.

The Don Howard pen name had appeared for the story "The Machine from Outside" (*Weird Tales*, May-June-July 1924); the others were probably used on scientific articles.

The next order of procedure with the Menzel manuscript was copy-editing. Gernsback had a freelancer for that named Charles A. Phelps. He was a cultured and dignified man in his late fifties who worked full-time at Simmons-Boardman Publications, a firm specializing in trade journals. I believe he also did some work for *Radio Electronics* and the Gernsback library. Phelps was not the only one who copy-edited manuscripts; he merely got first crack at them for obvious errors of grammar, spelling and syntax. To accomplish this he was provided with a green pencil or crayon. I used green ink. Elizabeth Menzel worked with blue, Harvey Gernsback with purple, and Hugo with red. Thus each person's contribution to a manuscript would be readily identifiable. The Menzel story was not heavily edited, but all of those colors managed to show up on it. I don't know exactly what Phelps was was paid, but in a discussion I participated in a year or so later I learned that $50 a manuscript was a fair amount for copy-editing, so I assume he received something in that range.

The hottest new author to emerge in science-fiction during 1952 was Philip José Farmer. In a field whose readers were then still predominately teenaged males, there had been few major women characters; let alone overt sex, in the fantasy pulps. In his short novel "The Lovers" (*Startling Stories*, August 1952), Farmer took the first step in making sex a legitimate "science" for science-fiction. He did this in a delightful story containing elements reminiscent of Stanley G. Weinbaum, L. Frank Baum, L. Sprague de Camp and Robert A. Heinlein, for Farmer was well read in the genre. Publication of that story encouraged Theodore Sturgeon, Richard Matheson, Wallace West and Sherwood Springer, among others, to introduce previously taboo subjects to the fantasy magazines.

Farmer's outlook was new and fresh, in welcome contrast to that of the old-timers I had been soliciting. Furthermore, since Gernsback had been publishing *Sexology* magazine for many years, I felt he would not object to a story with some adroitly injected sex. I therefore set out to get Farmer to contribute to *Science Fiction Plus*.

I had met and conversed with him at the recent Chicago convention where Gernsback had been guest of honor. So I wrote him at his home in Peoria, Illinois, reminding him of our conversation. "As you know," I said, "I was very favorably impressed by "The Lovers"——impressed by your good story-telling technique,

your adroit dialog, and the careful and interesting scientific explanation and background of the story." I informed him about the new magazine I was editing and the rates it was paying, and told him I urgently needed material. If he could work up something promptly, there was an excellent chance it would be accepted.

He responded by return mail. Though elated by the prospect of a sale, he explained that he already had two commitments. One was writing a sequel to "The Lovers" for Samuel Mines at *Startling Stories* (this was subsequently printed as "Moth and Rust" in the June 1953 issue); the other was to combine these two stories into a novel for Erle Korshak and Ted Dikty's Shasta Publishers (which did not ever appear*). Despite these pressures, however, he thought that he might be able to submit something to us. He was presently working, he said, on two stories; one was titled "Press Gang," the other, "The Bite of the Asp." The latter seemed nearer completion. If I was interested in it, would I give him a go-ahead and a time-limit? I did so, suggesting two weeks to finish the story.

Farmer wrote that he would do his best to meet my deadline. After acknowledging his reply I added: "There is no question in my mind that the beat thing that ever happened to you was *Galaxy Science Fiction* saying they weren't interested in "The Lovers" without a complete overhaul that would have entirely changed it. The result would have been just another yarn in *Galaxy* and another writer molded into their pattern. But published elsewhere as you wrote it, the story was a stand-out, and you became well known overnight." (Farmer was to win a Hugo at the next year's worldcon for being the most promising new science-fiction author.)

His submission arrived within the deadline, accompanied by a note. "I started "The Bite of the Asp" 9 A.M. Tuesday morning, and worked until three the next morning. Then I rose at nine, began working, and stopped at one the next next morning. And I worked all day Thursday. . . . What took me so long? Well, I'd planned the story to be five thousand words. But development of the characters demanded more space; I took it. As you can see, it's of novelette length. I want to get it to you as soon as possible for a chance in the first issue, so I'm driving down to the post office now. This will go out on the 7 A.M. air mail. I'm too tired to go over the story. Wouldn't have time, anyway. As editor, you can cut out or correct. I know work needs doing on it, but nothing serious."

I felt a sense of elation when I received the manuscript, but this was short lived. The pressure of Farmer's obligations and deadlines were achingly apparent. The story lacked organization and its phrasing was hurried and careless. To be acceptable, a lot of editorial work would be required.

The plot of the story revolves about a newly discovered virus nicknamed "the Asp." When it infects a human being it stimulates the glands and nervous system to produce an rising reaction of fear. It is infectious by contact, being exuded and excreted through the skin, breath and urine, all of which carry an unpleasant odor. Its effects last for eight years, during which time the host is a marked pariah. No cure for it has been discovered, but a way is known to render a person immune to the virus for a few hours at a time.

Bill Ogtate, who has been infected by the Asp, lives in seclusion. He happens to possess a secret called the Belos, which would be a defense against the weapons of an alien race with whom the planet Earth is presently at war. In order to get this secret from him, the planetary government provides Ogtate with everything he requests. At the same time, one of its female agents has infiltrated his house, hoping to seduce him out of his secret. She finds one of the aliens living with him who has the same goal. Ogtate decides to reveal the secret to both warring factions. The female agent has discovered a cure for the Asp; she administers this to Ogtate, and the two decide to make it a twosome.

There were several weaknesses in the story. First, Farmer had the aliens

*An expanded hardcover version of "The Lovers" alone was published in 1979.

arrive from another solar system by what he called "the Rubberband Drive." Nothing more. I felt that was far too glib a way to introduce faster-than-light travel. Second, he had not stated if the Asp made others recoil because of its stench or a literal creation of fear; that had to be clarified. Third, the explanation of the Belos was delayed so far into the story that its importance was reduced to mere terminology. Fourth, sex was introduced in parts of the story without taste or necessity. Finally, as previously mentioned, the story as a whole was poorly organized and seemed hastily written.

I circulated the manuscript among our other readers. Harvey Gernsback termed it "Sex adventure in the YYth century with mumbo jumbo science jargon. Well written and entertaining for the non-science-fiction market." Charles Phelps suggested cutting out some of the sex, one other entire sequence, and most of the last two pages. Elizabeth Menzel thought it a "good, entertaining story. Characterization is unusually good." But she felt, as did I, that the first half of it needed reorganization, that the Belos explanation should appear earlier, and that the last few pages should be heavily cut. She also pointed to some questionable grammatical constructions and timeworn clichés. But the real problem was Hugo Gernsback's reaction. His memo read as follows:

> This is my first encounter with Farmer. It depresses me. I would call it Mickey Spillane pseudo-fiction. Farmer is a master of illusion, making the untutored reader believe he is reading science when, as a matter of fact, it's all gibberish. The science is very reminiscent of "The Moon Pool" nonsense.
>
> This story is too good without all of the sex embellishments. Normally I would not object to these, but evidently Farmer, like Spillane, writes only for the sex-impact entertainment, without offering anything in real science. I would label this as another retrograde science (?) fiction story, certainly not the kind of stuff we should encourage.
>
> Yes, I am certain he will sell it somewhere else, and that readers will eat it up. Our entire philosophy is that we won't exist if we duplicate the kind of stuff in other mags. I hope they keep on publishing it.

While extreme, this criticism had some justification. The problem was that I needed readable stories, and under the time and policy limitations Gernsback had imposed, I had to make the most of what submissions I had. I therefore went to bat for "The Bite of the Asp," assuring him that it could be fixed up by a Farmer rewrite and the work of our own editorial staff; further, since the impact of "The Lovers" was still being felt in the field, its author's name would be an asset for *Science Fiction Plus*. He remained adamantly against it.

Then I played my last card. I predicted that if the story was included readers would rate it the best in the issue. Gernsback took up the challenge and agreed to insert a postage-paid voting card in the magazine to disprove my point. By this action he was tacitly agreeing to accepting the story.

On October 29, 1952 I wrote to Farmer, outlining the weaknesses I perceived in the manuscript, and promising acceptance if they were corrected. On November 3rd he returned the story, revised according to my suggestions. At this stage of his career he was still a new writer trying to expand his markets, and was eager to be represented in the first issue of a new magazine. Of course I had phrased my requests tactfully, and he responded as follows:

> I thank you for your compliments about my forcefulness as a writer. As to my scientific qualifications, I am getting a Master's in philosophy, with a major in semantics and a minor in axiology. I have had courses in biology, chemistry, etc. and my geology teacher was Dr. Tarr, a world-famous authority in his line. As a side note, I'd like to say I have in mind a story that concerns a brand-new slant on geology and evolution, one that quite reverses the common concept, and is backed up by certain undeniable and annoying facts that the orthodox paleonteo-bio-physicist ignores because it does not conform to his theory. If you're interested, I'd like to write it for you some day.
>
> My wife is a registered laboratory technician, with majors in biology and chemistry. Some of her comments on this story have been very helpful. She has, in the main, agreed with your revisions. Any faults of the story that now exist are due either to my lack of ability or lack of time.

Farmer had changed the aliens from interstellar to interplanetary invaders and discarded the "rubberband drive" in favor of one involving energy/matter conversion. He had moved up explanation of the Belos, and more carefully explained the nature and effects of the Asp virus. The extraneous vulgar sex episodes had been eliminated. I sent the revised manuscript to Gernsback along with a memo noting that all of our suggestions had been incorporated. I added that I found the characterization superior, and that I had never previously read a story about a man being injected with an anti-social acting agent. Any other deficiencies present we could smooth out ourselves. He agreed.

Farmer's manuscript was indeed heavily copy-edited by Menzel, Phelps, and myself. Gernsback also had a hand in it, giving it a new title, "The Biological Revolt." I wrote a blurb for it, but Gernsback, with some enthusiasm, completely rewrote this, so the one that appeared in *Science Fiction Plus* is chiefly his.

At the time I felt the story might have been over-edited, but upon rereading it forty years later I found it ran smoothly. Yet even after revision it was not one of Farmer's better stories. Neither the original nor the revised version has ever been reprinted; apparently it is not one of his cherished works.

Because of all these preliminaries, the story was late in going to the printer. Frank R. Paul was asked to do five illustrations in two days for it——an unreasonable deadline which he met——but they were not up to his usual standard.

The cost of getting readers' votes, counting printing, binding and the return postage, was about two thousand dollars. We received a thousand responses, which I tabulated, and Farmer's story won first place by a wide margin. But the overall results taught me a publishing lesson. There was not a single story in the issue, even a short-short, which didn't win at least 25 first places! This meant that there was a wide divergence of readership interest in the publication. Gernsback said little about the results, but he never included a reader survey in any future issue.

On November 20th I mailed Farmer a check for $338.33, a payment of two and a third cents a word for his story, which came to 14,500 words.

VII

Meanwhile, other manuscripts were arriving. Otto Binder came through with the first of several submissions, a piece called "The Time Capsule." A farmer discovers a large cylindrical metal object buried in his field. Three levers project from it, facilitating its opening. It contains a variety of objects, including an anti-gravity device. All are in excellent condition. There are also pictures depicting great cities, marvellous inventions, and humanoids with heads a quarter larger than our own. It is evident that these artifacts come from a race and civilization far more advanced than ours. Careful examination of everything in the capsule leads to the conclusion that it must have originated in the *future*! It is from a period when an impending global catastrophe forces the human race to leave the Earth for another world. They cannot leave a record of their accomplishments for their descendants, because the planet will be destroyed. They can leave it only to the past, so they send a capsule back through time. This is why all the objects in it are in such good condition——they have literally just arrived.

There were weaknesses in the telling of the story, but I felt that it was potentially acceptable. Gernsback also thought it might be. However, both of us wanted some revisions. The story was only three thousand words long, and I explained to Binder that he could compensate for the rewrite by lengthening it; for example, by describing more of the objects in the capsule.

Binder replied, agreeing enthusiastically to the rewrite. He also sent along another short story titled "Space Is So Empty," which I found disappointing. I said as much in a memo to Gernsback, adding that I doubted if it could be sal-

vaged by rewriting. Gernsback agreed: "Ridiculous. Juvenile. Pulp-style 's-f.' Amazing that Binder could write such stuff."

The revised "Time Capsule" arrived a few days later. "I had that old feeling as I worked it up," wrote Binder in an accompanying letter. "Time swept me back fifteen years . . . to those days when I wrote stf in a fever of inspiration and sweat. My old touch is back—something you can't put your finger on, but when you've got it, you *know* it." I read the story immediately and sent it along to Gernsback, saying, in part, "This has been revised and expanded, and the author has incorporated *all* of our suggestions. It is considerably improved, and I think we should buy it." "Excellent," he scribbled back. "Our best story so far."

In my acceptance letter of November 7th I enclosed an agreement form for Binder to sign. "As I stated to you on the telephone we buy magazine rights only. Book, paperback, radio, television, movie and all other rights are retained by you, and the agreement form has been so modified. On receipt of this signed form you will receive promptly a check for $101.25." (I had offered him 2½¢ a word, and the story now came to 4500 words.)

I returned "Space Is Empty," saying its idea had already been used frequently. Then I tried to give him a better picture of the kind of fiction we were looking for. "We want modern writing, but we want the old-time flavor. If you go to Mars, tell us a little about Mars. If you go to the future, describe how things are there, what the scientific achievements are, what the cities and social customs are like. Give yourself something to write about, give the reader something to chew on. Write as if you weren't completely familiar with the marvels that are depicted; show that they don't bore you, but arouse your interest and enthusiasm. It is this 'sense of wonder' that has been lost from modern stories. They have better writing than 90% of the old ones but they read like modern fairy tales. We don't want the characters to yawn with boredom and drink cocktails as they flash by Alpha Centauri. We don't want cloak-and-dagger stories where galactic empires instead of Earth empires are overthrown. Swing the emphasis onto the scientifictional elements—those things that could be told only in science-fiction, and in no other medium." I couldn't yet give him details about the magazine except to say that it would start as a monthly, and that we would be hungry for material.

Binder replied, "You're a real square-shooter, Sam, for insisting on buying only magazine rights. . . . It's the only right thing to do, of course, but alas, but most publishers greedily took all, at least in the old days. He enclosed another short yarn titled "Fair in Space."

This involved young aspirants for a lonely job in a space weather station. Binder had dreamt up explanations, some glib, some convincing, for observing space rain, snow, hail, hurricanes and even rainbows. Aside from these, the story had a strong juvenile flavor. "This might do for *Boy's Life*," I commented to Gernsback, "but I don't think we should take it. He's writing well now, though; maybe we should give him a plot." Binder then submitted "Old Stars Never Die," a story that postulated existence of about a hundred giant dead stars between our solar system and the double stars Alpha and Proxima Centauri, which reflected radio signals back to Earth. I thought it carried some fresh ideas, but the Gernsbacks disagreed. "The idea isn't bad, but the writing is like Tom Swift. I don't see how to salvage it without drastic rewriting," commented Harvey. Hugo simply wrote, "Return." I believe our decisions were fair. Even though there were then at least twenty active markets for science-fiction, none of these three rejected stories ever turned up in another magazine.

At this point it should be emphasized that although no company name was cited when I solicited material, I was sufficiently well known that prominent authors had no hesitation in writing stories for me on speculation. This might not have happened had Gernsback hired someone not considered part of the science-fic-

tion scene. Another author who came through for me on faith was Frank Belknap Long. A manuscript from him arrived in late October, written on a two-week deadline. In this story Ruk Lann, a brilliant scientist of the future, discovers how to travel in time. In doing so he disrupts the harmonious, but rigid, government of his era. He escapes in his time machine, and travels to our present day. Lann becomes involved in much adventure here, and finally leaves to stay, by choice, in the prehistoric past, thrilled to be part of a period when men are taxed to their utmost merely to maintain their existence on the planet.

I thought Long handled the interchanges between Lann and people of the present day very well, and recommended that we buy his story. Gernsback was willing, but wrote a 500-word memo describing alterations he felt should be made to avoid the paradoxes inherent in many time-travel stories. He also thought that a new ending could be written in which the time-traveller became a symbolic Wandering Jew, never stopping permanently anywhere as long as he lived. Harvey felt that several of his father's suggestions would destroy the story, and did not see how it could be altered, except by ending up as a dream. I compromised by asking Long to strengthen the science in the early part of the tale, and to rewrite the ending. He agreed to do this, and eventually received payment of $191.25 for the revised work, which came to 8,500 words. I also urged him to start on another submission for us. We now had two time travel stories, and I decided to hold Long's for the second (April 1953) issue of *Science Fiction Plus*, where it was printed as "Throwback in Time." The changed title was Gernsback's, and was intended as a *double entendre*: not only did the scientist of the future travel back into the past, but psychologically he craved a more primitive period of history.

A few words about Frank Long himself seem germane here. He was a Mayflower descendant, and had long been a close friend and confidant of H. P. Lovecraft. Until the early 1950's he lived with his mother in New York City, and she kept house for him. The two shared a very close relationship, and after she died Long moved to a series of rented rooms. About the time of her death he underwent a medical examination, and was told he had only six months to live. After a year passed and he was still alive, a second checkup revealed that the doctor's diagnosis had been mistaken. (Very mistaken——Long died in 1994 at the age of 91!) But these two incidents understandably had a cumulative traumatic effect upon his life. Thereafter, in my opinion, he never wrote as effectively as before. Long was primarily a short story writer, and though in successfully writing for a living he had sold hundreds of stories, it had never been easy; now he was subject to increasing economic pressure.

Another well-known author I had solicited was Robert Bloch. He had become relatively inactive in the field by this time, and in effect I was prodding him to return. He had been working for the Gustav Marx advertising agency in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and he replied on the firm's letterhead, agreeing to contribute. "Your cunning exceeds that of the serpent," he wrote. "First, you flatter me about my M.C. work [at the recent Chicago convention]——knowing, of course, what a ham I am. Then you further flatter me by entrusting me with a secret. That's straight out of the sales psychology texts. Finally, you are kind enough to ask for material——with inducements, yet." Bloch also wanted to know preferred story-lengths, and whether I wanted a straight or humorous slant.

He mailed me "It's All in Your Head," a 6,000-worder, on November 12th. In this aliens in a space vessel hovering a hundred miles above the Earth are planning to wipe out all life there in order to make it hospitable for themselves. They have accumulated a great deal of information about the planet, but as a final precaution decide to gauge the resistance they are likely to meet. To do this they send down a humanlike robot to observe and report. The only thing the robot has to shun is water, only small amounts of which could damage its sensitive apparatus and cause its malfunction. To secure clothes, the robot robs a pawnshop. It obtains a gun, and holds up three men for their money. It attends a boxing

match, and records how easily humans can be emotionally influenced. On analyzing the lives of old people, it finds that they live in constant fear of danger. Perhaps, conclude the aliens, they can induce fear which will render people helpless when they invade. But then the robot checks out another group, human teenagers. In a penny arcade it buys a science-fiction magazine one of them wanted. They surround the robot, and one of them squirts it with a water pistol. Its delicate mechanisms begin to malfunction, and it plunges over a railing into a pool of water below. This persuades the aliens to delay, if not abort, their plan, for if fear cannot be universally induced, humans might successfully resist them.

In submitting the manuscript to Gernsback I wrote, "This is a light, amusing short with a pretty good ending. The author is well known. But it would need careful editing to remove overused "they's," pare away some superfluity, and make the story more compact." Elizabeth Menzel thought the writing was excellent and the style "very effective." Gernsback returned the manuscript with the word "good!" scribbled on my memo.

Although Bloch was promptly paid $150 (two and a half cents a word) for his story, it did not see print until our third (May 1953) issue, where it appeared as "The Proxy Head." This change, as usual, was Hugo Gernsback's; he could rarely resist tinkering with story-titles.

It should be underscored, however, that authors as coöperative as Bloch, Binder, Farmer and Long were not in the majority. Many of our overtures met with disappointment. One such rebuff came from Nelson S. Bond, to whom on October 21st I had sent an invitation to write for us. He replied the next day as follows:

> The prospect of my becoming a contributor to your projected new magazine is very dim indeed. You assume rightly that other projects than fiction are consuming the bulk of my writing time——television is the prime answer. I still try to maintain a steady flow of new fiction pieces, but with the hot breath of TV story editors on the back of my neck at all times, I fear this "flow" is more of a trickle than a torrent.
>
> Still, when I do turn out a new fiction piece——however rarely——it is usually pre-spoken for by markets which pay so much more than you (alas!) are able to offer that I cannot look with any keen delight on 3¢ a word. My magazine rate, in general, averages out at something more like 10¢ per word——has done so for many years——and that's the reason why you have seen nothing of mine in any of the science-fantasy magazines since (I believe) 1942-43.

Bond did offer to sell us reprint rights to fantasies of his that had appeared in non-fantasy magazines at three cents a word, however. Shortly after this time he dropped writing entirely, and became an antiquarian book dealer.

VIII

While all this correspondence was going one, the deadline for the first issue of *Science Fiction Plus*, which was to be dated March 1953, drew increasingly closer. Its planned lead-off feature was a reprint of the entire 1949 *Quip*, a "Christmas card" which Gernsback claimed had been mailed to 8,000 people. This was titled "Exploration of Mars," and carried nineteen illustrations, most of them by Frank R. Paul. His depiction of a ten-foot Martian with a tremendous chest, spindly legs, an elephantine trunk for a nose, eyes on stalks and ears like radar receptors became famous, being widely reprinted in newspapers and magazines. The feature also included a photograph of Gernsback in a space helmet captioned "Grego Banshuck, Explorer."

Gernsback had never abandoned the theories of Mars put forward by the famous astronomer Percival Lowell early in the century. He had read these as a youth in Luxembourg, and remained faithful to the hypothesis of canals built by a decaying Martian civilization long after most scientists had discarded it. The *Quip* reprint scientifically explained the Mars of Lowell, even depicting the machines which had constructed these canals, in the form of a travelogue. It was written convincingly and with interesting details.

The cover of the magazine, by Alex Schomburg, showed a man propelling himself through the air with a device similar to the rocket belt used in the Buck Rogers comic strip; as I have previously noted, this had originally been painted for the aborted *Popular Atomics*. Gernsback's explanation for it, titled "The Cosmotomic Flyer," took the form of a hypothetical story from *The New York Times*. This described a Sorbonne professor announcing invention of the device to a group of scientists and reporters assembled at Columbia University. The belt is propelled by two "cosmic-atomic" engines, which convert mass into energy. A round-trip test run between New York and Philadelphia has been completed by the flyer in 23.75 minutes.

As Gernsback aged, he increasingly tended to recycle his old ideas. "The Cosmotomic Flyer" was a typical example of this. Over thirty years earlier, he had had Howard V. Brown, remembered today chiefly for his *Astounding Stories* covers in the mid-1930's, paint an almost identical scene for the February 1922 issue of *Science and Invention*.

The first *Science Fiction Plus* also carried a scientific hoax. This was a reprint from the October 1952 *Scientific Monthly* of "The Schuss-Yucca," which had been written as a spoof by Gustav Albrecht of the Department of Chemistry at Taft College. The article told about a plant that purportedly grew to a height of ten to twenty feet in less than three weeks. Illustrating it were five plausible photographs, allegedly taken minutes apart. (Actually, Albrecht had visited the plant at much longer intervals, which the position and size of the shadows in the photographs revealed to perceptive readers.)

The final article, which was unplanned and unexpectedly timely, capitalized on the futuristic policy of *Collier's* magazine. At that time, *Collier's* had the second highest circulation of any popular weekly in the United States, trailing only *The Saturday Evening Post*. Since 1950 it had been featuring speculative articles and fiction in an effort to attract even more readers. We know that the publisher, Edward Anthony, must have favored such features, because he hired and fired several top editors during the period when they were being printed. Most remarkable had been the magazine's October 27, 1951 issue, which was devoted entirely——130 pages——to "Preview of the War We Do Not Want." This described a nuclear conflict with the U.S.S.R., and had such distinguished and famous contributors as Robert Sherwood, Hanson W. Baldwin, Lowell Thomas, Arthur Koestler, Walter Winchell, Edward R. Murrow, Bill Mauldin, Red Smith, Walter Reuther, Philip Wylie and J. B. Priestly, with Chesley Bonestell among the illustrators.

A year later, just as I was first reporting to my new job, the October 18, 1952 *Collier's* printed another of these extrapolations, "The Man on the Moon," with a cover by Bonestell depicting the interior of a space vessel. This illustrated an elaborate, detailed scenario of how the moon could be reached by 1977. Remember, this was five years before the first Earth satellite had been launched! The contributors to this collaborative forecast were all well known: Dr. Fred L. Whipple, chairman of the Astronomy Department at Harvard; Willy Ley, the popular writer on science and rocketry; and Dr. Wernher von Braun, the world's foremost rocket designer. This work elicited our unexpected article.

Leslie Shepherd of the British Interplanetary Society (who had already sold us the article "Interstellar Flight") and A. V. Cleaver, another society member, read this issue of *Collier's*. They felt strongly that its scenario was impractical and far too optimistic——particularly von Braun's notion of establishing so quickly an orbital station which could construct three new space ships. They therefore wrote their own account of how such explorations would be more likely to occur. They foresaw unmanned satellites within the next decade, piloted ones by 1975, and lunar landings occurring only after the turn of the century. This outlook, titled "The Evolution of the Space Ship," they submitted to *Science Fiction Plus*. We accepted it, paying them $75, and postponed "Interstellar Flight" until the second issue.

One of the advantages such forecasters have is that many years usually pass before they are proven right or wrong; by that time the very magazines that featured them may be long out of business, and the prognosticators themselves long forgotten. Here, of course, neither von Braun nor his rebutters were correct.

Gernsback's editorial for the issue, "The Impact of Science Fiction on World Progress," was derived from the speech he had given at the recent Chicago convention. I wrote a book review column, covering Simak's *City*, Weinbaum's *Red Peri*, Arthur Clarke's *Exploration of Space* and Donald Menzael's *Flying Saucers*.

Gernsback decided to duplicate a department that had been popular in his old *Science Wonder* and *Air Wonder Stories* called "Science News Shorts." This was made up of selections from releases of Science Service, which we got every few days, and items culled from several clipping services to which Gernsback subscribed. Winfield Secor assembled these; they took up four crammed pages in the magazine. For another department, "Science Questions and Answers," Gernsback enlisted Joseph Kraus, who had worked for him off and on since the days of *Science and Invention*. There was also a "Science Quiz," based on material in the stories themselves. Elizabeth Menzel would frame questions about some of the tidbits in these, and append page-numbers where readers could find the answers. Finally, to fill spaces where stories occupied less than a full page, we used fillers, several of which ran under the general heading of "Stranger than Science Fiction." Gernsback himself often composed these.

Since no advertisements were being solicited until the magazine's circulation became stable, we needed something for the back cover. Gernsback had his daughter Tina, who had an artistic bent, draw a rough sketch to represent "The Spirit of Science Fiction," which was then executed in detail by Frank R. Paul.

Actually Paul was too busy to illustrate the entire issue, and it was necessary to obtain other artists. I could easily have contacted established fantasy illustrators, but Gernsback's policy of secrecy prevented this. He therefore placed an ad in the "Help Wanted" section of *The New York Times* for an "artist to render future imaginary machines. Must know wash drawings, airbrush, also figure work. Bring samples. Radio Electronics, 25 West Broadway."

Many aspirants showed up, most of whom had never had an illustration professionally published. I interviewed all of them, usually in the presence of Elizabeth Menzel, who seemed alternately amazed and amused. Amazed because my questions and appraisals showed a confidence and self-assurance that belied my total lack of experience (she did not realize that like most fans I had been critiquing science-fiction illustrations since I had begun reading the genre). Amused by the applicants themselves and my responses to some of their remarks.

Most of them knew only what rates the major slick magazines were paying. Ours were $150 for covers (though we didn't need any), $50 for a full interior page or a two-page spread, $35 for a half-page, $25 for a quarter-page, and $10 each for the little spots or designs used to break up solid pages of text. These rates were as good as those offered by the best payers in the field——and better than most of them. But the applicants did not realize this, and would respond, "Why, *The Saturday Evening Post* pays $200-500 for illustrations!" "So how many have you sold to the *Post*?" I would ask. "None," was the inevitable admission. "Then they don't pay you those rates, do they?" I would show them some illustrations by Finlay, Lawrence or Emsch and ask, "Do you think you can draw as well as or better than these artists?" (None felt he could.) "Well, *they* think these rates are okay ——those are what they all work for."

Another argument I'd get was, "Why, at your rates I couldn't even pay for my models!" "Do you mean you can't draw a human figure without a model?" I would ask. "Well, not very well." "Look at this work of Virgil Finlay. He never uses a model, but he draws pretty good figures, wouldn't you say?"

(to be continued in the next issue)

(Recent Publications——continued from page 290)

tin's Press, which is bringing out an attractive selection of books that are well above average quality. Even the thrillers, such as Holden Scott's *The Carrier* and Thomas Tessier's *Fogheart* ($24.95 and $23.95) are a cut above the ordinary; and Arthur C. Clarke's *Greetings, Carbon-Based Bipeds* (435) is clearly of classic status. This is a wonderfully comprehensive collection of his essays, ranging from the 1930's to those of recent vintage. There are over a hundred of them to savor, each chronological group prefaced by an author's introduction and commentary. Included also is a generous portfolio of photographs, mostly new to print. This handsome volume is a must purchase, and surely rates as one of the very best.

St. Martin's also continues to issue well-chosen annual collections in the field. The 1999 *Year's Best Science-Fiction* is the sixteenth to be ably edited by Gardner Dozois, and *The Year's Best in Fantasy and Horror* the twelfth assembled by Ellen Datlow and Terri Widling; each is available in both hardbound ($29.95) and paperback ($17.95) editions. Together they offer over 1100 pages of entertainment——about half a million words——a combination not easily surpassed. Since it is impossible to keep up with all the fantasy fiction now appearing, I recommend these as an excellent way to enjoy representative bests of what the field offers. Dozois has also edited *The Furthest Horizon* (paper, $17.95), in which he collects seventeen adventures in the far future; these originally appeared during the last four decades and still read well today.

The second firm I call to your attention is Fedogan and Bremer. This publisher specializes in pulp reprints and has prospered steadily since it brought out its first book, Donald Wandrei's *Colossus* (reviewed on page 276 of this issue) a decade ago. It has since issued *Don't Dream* (reviewed on page 227 of the last issue), which assembles all of his fantasy and horror tales, and *The Early Fears* ($29), which contains 39 tales in the same category by Robert Bloch. The company has also printed several anthologies of stories in the Lovecraftian vein, as well as collections by Hugh B. Cave, Howard Wandrei, Basil Copper and Richard Lupoff, and is currently expanding its scope to include detective fiction. One of these, *Dark Detectives* edited by Stephen Jones ($29), is an anthology of stories featuring supernatural sleuths, and should be of especial interest. I suggest writing the publisher for a complete list of its offerings.

In the realm of reprints, there are four new items worth noting here. First, the University of Nebraska Press has reissued J.D.Beresford's 1911 classic *The Hampdenshire Wonder* as *The Wonder*, its American title, with an introduction by Jack Chalker (paper, $13). This fine novel of a superhuman still reads well today, and is a must for serious science-fiction readers. Second, Penguin Books has brought out *The Cornell Woolrich Omnibus* ($16.95, £9.99), a paperback edition of over 600 pages containing the novels *I Married a Dead Man* and *Waltz into Darkness* plus *The Rear Window and Other Stories*. While not strictly fantasy, these works have a sufficient *noir* cast to be of interest to many genre readers. Third, I suggest you request a list of available books from The Tartarus Press, 5 Birch Terrace, Hangingbirch Lane, Horam, East Sussex TN21 OPA, U.K. This firm has already published three volumes of selections from Arthur Machen's fiction, *A Night with Mephistopheles* by Henry Ferris (£20) and *The Collected Strange Papers of Christopher Blayre* by Edward Heron-Allen (£25). The latter includes fantasy and science-fiction tales from two extremely limited editions now all but impossible to find, and is happily of unusually high quality as well. Finally, if you are interested in color reproductions of movie posters, send a sase to John Monster, P. O. Box 469, West Plains, Mo. 65775 for a list of his offerings. Many are of fantasy and science-fiction films, and are available in five different sizes.

If you have enjoyed Bruce Boston's work in this issue of *Fantasy Commentator*, you will be pleased to hear that the Science Fiction Poetry Association has conferred on him its Grand Master Award for distinguished contributions to the genre over the years. The staff of this magazine is happy to congratulate Mr.

Boston for earning such distinguished recognition. I appropriately note here two of his most recent publications: a second edition of *After Magic* (Dark Regions Press, P. O. Box 6301, Concord, Cal. 94524, $5.95 (to be reviewed in the next issue); and *The Lesions of Genetics*, a beautiful broadside from Miniature Sun Press, P. O. Box11002, Napa, Cal. 94581 ($4), which is limited to 125 numbered and signed copies, and is sure to become a valuable and treasured collector's item.

The Hilltop Press (4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD5 8PB, U. K.) continues to issue worthwhile collections and compilations of and about genre verse. Here are some interesting recent titles: *Skip Trace Rocks*, 29 s-f poems by Peter Layton (£2.70, $6); *Ape into Pleiades*, a selection of of Lilith Lorraine's work plus a brief biography and a checklist of her books and articles about her (£2.75, $6); and *In Space's Belly*, Steve Sneyd's compilation of "poetry in UK Sfanzines and the Little Magazines (in) the 1970's" (£2.50, $6) and his *Far Beyond, Poetry in the US Fanzines—the '70s, '80s & '90s* (£1.70, $4).

A new English translation of Harry Martinson's famous epic poem *Aniara* has just appeared ($15.95 from StoryLine Press, Three Oaks Farm, Box 1240, Ashland Oregon 97520-0055); a long review of this appears in *Star*Line* 23.3 (May-June 2000). Three titles of A. C. Evans have recently been published: his long poem *Space Opera, Colour of Dust* (a new collection of poems and texts) and *Angels of Rancid Glamour* (essays on neo-decadence); for details write Stride, 11 Sylvan Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 6EW, U.K.

H. R. Felgenhauer, whose work often appears in this magazine, has edited an interesting, bulky anthology of fantasy verse and fiction, *Insects are People, Too* ($6 from the author at P. O. Box 146486, Chicago, Ill. 60604). This is truly a bargain—over a hundred pages in letter-sized format, profusely illustrated, and featuring work by Bruce Boston, Steve Sneyd and Rick himself.

Recommended also is *Gothic Fever*, the latest title by Gary William Crawford ($8 from Nashville House, P. O. Box 111864, Nashville, Tenn. 37222-1864); this is a sheaf of six notable stories, chosen by Bruce Boston. And in case you missed them, Crawford's earlier verse collections, *Poems of the Divided Self* ($5) and *In Shadow Lands* ($6) are still available from the same publisher in the form of attractively paperbound booklets.

Finally, serious readers should be aware of Galactic Central, which publishes bibliographies and checklists of s-f and fantasy authors. Over fifty of these are now available, priced at £1.25 to £7.00 according to their lengths. The moving force behind this worthwhile enterprise is Philip Stephensen-Payne, 25A Copgrove Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire L58 2SP, U.K. Lists are available from him or from his American distributor: Chris Drumm, P. O. Box 445, Polk City, Iowa 50226.

—*A. Langley Searles*

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(Indexes—concluded from page 304)

ADVICE FOR NEW GALACTIC WARRIORS

Be vigilant
For the enemy has seen
Lucy, Gilligan
and *The Brady Bunch.*
And knows all our weaknesses.

Be innovative
For the universe is filled
with races older
than our own.

Practice aphorism
For Military History
is always seeking
a few good lines.

Be paranoid
For *Alien* isn't
the half
of it.

Kill
For War is Man's
greatest single
public expenditure.

Expect a parade
But not anyone you
knew before your
ship went half *c*.

And don't
Bring any of
those diseases
home.

—*Thomas Esaias*

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

In a dark disordered city
on a dark deserted plain,
men and beasts are crying
for the dawn to come again.
Yet the night, it stretches long,
like a panther fresh from sleep.
The stars no longer turn
in the vacuum of the deep.

In a bright bewildered city
on a bright and burning plain,
men and beasts are crying
for the dusk to come again.
Yet the day, it stretches long,
like some monolithic snake.
The sky is bleached of color
far above the scalded lake.

Earth has ceased its motion.
Its once-windy sphere is still.
Not a slip of air is moving
in the heat or in the chill.
Dark is dark. Light is light.
Untempered truths abound.
Those who see in shades of
gray must do so underground.

Yin is steaming to the sun
and yang is limned with ice.
We've stratified the soul
and made the heart precise.
All goodness is a blessing
and the sinful will be cursed,
yet is there any difference
in a static universe?

—*Bruce Boston*

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INDEXES

TITLES

CONTRIBUTORS

(concluded on the bottom of page 302)

BACK NUMBERS

#31 Further description of Edward Lucas White's unpublished s-f novel about life in 25,000 A.D., and the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's history of s-f, "Voyagers Through Eternity."

#34 Mike Ashley researches Algernon Blackwood's early history and Blackwood himself describes how he got story ideas. More about "Plus Ultra" and a continuation of "Voyagers Through Eternity." Letters about Lovecraft.

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

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

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

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

#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.

#42 The Weinbaum Memorial Issue, featuring an interview with his widow, articles on his college years and correspondence, and early photographs.

#43 Moskowitz begins a serial article of Nat Schachner and concludes his account of Bernarr Macfadden; Andrew Darlington describes Conan Doyle's fantasy and s-f; and Steve Sneyd tells of the s-f poet, Lilith Lorraine.

#44 The Isaac Asimov Memorial Issue. Four articles on Asimov; also an article on Lovecraft and continuation of Moskowitz's serial on Schachner.

#45 & 46 are combined into a gala 50th anniversary double issue: interviews with Frederik Pohl and Lloyd Eshbach; articles on Taine's unpublished novels and on s-f pulps during the Great Depression; fantasy verse by Robert E. Howard and others; and the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's sequel to "The Immortal Storm." (Count this issue as two numbers when ordering.)

#47 & 48 comprise another double issue: articles on Bradbury, Whitehead, Flint and Starzl; interviewing E. F. Bleiler; Moskowitz's serials continued; an index to letters in *Weird Tales*; book reviews; letters; and much more.

#49 Articles on Poe, Whitehead, Boston and Hubbard; an interview with Steve Eng; book reviews; continuation of Moskowitz's histories .

#50 The Moskowitz Memorial Issue. Articles by Sam, and remembrances of him by friends and acquaintances. Also material about H. P. Lovecraft, Stanley G. Weinbaum and Steve Sneyd.

#51 Features the beginning of Sam Moskowitz's book-length account of his relationship with Hugo Gernsback in editing *Science Fiction Plus*; Everett Bleiler's interview of Neil Barron; and Jack Robins's Futurian experiences during the depression before World War II. Plus other articles, book reviews and verse.

The above issues (some in small supply!) are available from the publisher. Price, postpaid in the U. S.: $5 each; any eight, $35; any twelve or more, $4 each. Foreign postage is 75¢ per copy extra. Remit to:

A. L. Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, N. Y. 10708-5909