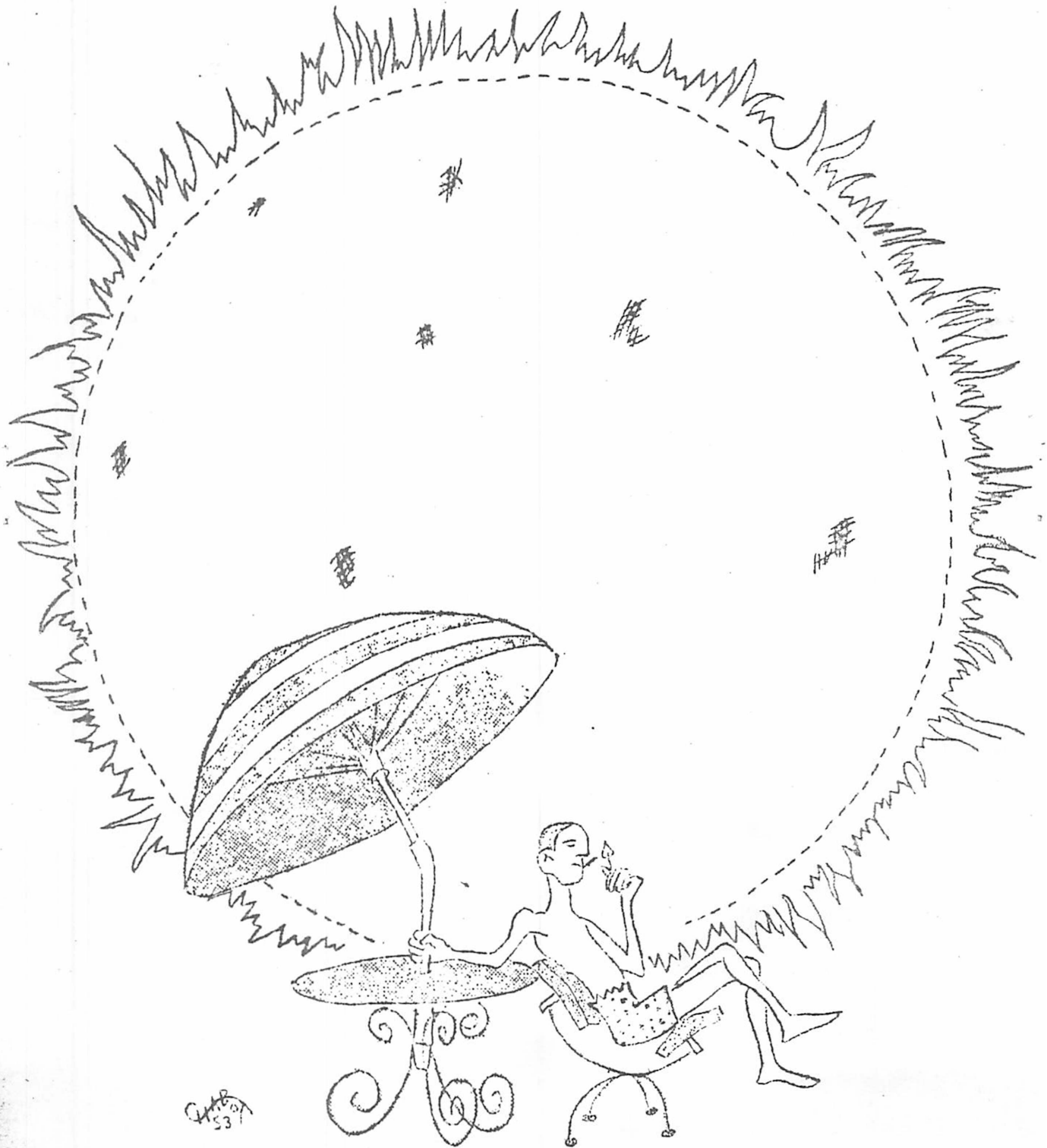


# SKYHOOK

SUMMER 1953

NUMBER 18



# SKYHOOK

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## TWIPPLEDOP

### THE GREAT CHANGE

This fanzine changes its title with this issue.

I thought I'd better tell you so you will know. I don't think you'd notice it otherwise, because the change is from Sky Hook to Skyhook, and nearly everybody called it Skyhook anyway.

I'd have changed the title years ago if I hadn't been afraid of upsetting this magazine's stability. A publication that changes its title is usually unreliable, a haphazard venture that isn't going anywhere but tries to give the semblance of progress by "improving" on its title.

Maybe I am confusing cause and effect: the title change is probably evidence of a magazine's instability, not the cause of it, but not even Astounding finally dared to change its title, and old reliable concerns like the London Times would undoubtedly shake the foundations of western civilization if they altered their titles. It isn't safe to experiment.

I am daring to make the change for two reasons: first, to bring the name into line with popular usage; second, to make the title more exact. A "blue bird" is not the same thing as a "bluebird," and perhaps a "sky hook" is not the same as a "skyhook." "Skyhook" is what I have always meant to designate.

### IT KANT HAPPEN THERE

This kid is the son of a filthy rich capitalist, and he's sort of a misfit and

a cry-baby. But he and a big burly guy who has been picking on him are sent back to Earth together as a prize crew on a spaceship. Ever run across this situation? The last time I saw it was on a Captain Video sequence scripted by Jack Vance.

But the thing had an original twist. As soon as they pulled up anchor and set the mizzen-topgallant rockets at full speed, the kid went back to his cabin and picked up a book. He was reclining on his bunk when the bully walked in. The latter asked him what he was reading.

The kid said, "The Critique of Pure Reason, by Immanu-glub."

I think he meant to say, "Immanuel Kant, but on our set it came out "Immanu-glub," because at that instant a bolt of lightning struck a substation of the Northern States Power company and knocked out electrical service for the next three hours.

I was alone in the house and, without electricity, couldn't do much except sit in the gloom (the storm having made it 9 o'clock dark at five minutes to six) and marvel at this kid on a spaceship 75 million miles from Earth, casually picking up Kant's Critique of Pure Reason for browsing through.

There he reclined, pondering Kant's distinction between noumena and Dinge an sich, or maybe Kant's refutation of the ontological proof of the existence of God -- and the spaceship poured through space at how many mind-wrenching thousands of miles per minute?

What savoir-faire! The kid was a

misfit and a sissy on the surface -- but what a man! Here is intelligence mated with insouciance!

If Jack Vance is right about this, and if men of that mould ride the spaceways in the Ley-day of rocketry, that's a future I'd like to be part of.

#### ANOTHER KIND OF ILLITERACY

Film makers for the Mutual Security administration ran into a strange problem when making movies for the Iranians. The Iranians often had never seen movies before, and couldn't understand quick transitions in a film, as from a long shot to a closeup.

Such tricks confused them so much that all films made for Iran had to be specially made in order that the camera could show where all the people in a scene came from and where they went when the scene was over.

After a while, the movie makers hope that the Iranians will become more sophisticated.

#### A CITY ON THE MARNE

Northern France, so often a battleground, is full of military cemeteries. French, German, British, American soldiers lie in the earth they fought upon, and the impartial winds and waters mingle their dust. At Sissonne, French and German soldiers lie within one cemetery wall and in the shadow of one monument inscribed in the two languages, "These men died for their country." Half a dozen British soldiers lie just outside the wall, near the French side, their only monument -- more utilitarian than the other -- a rusty pump.

Eight summers ago I visited the American cemetery at Belleau Wood, a few minutes' jeep ride northwest of Chateau-Thierry, site of a large monument to the American dead of World War I.

Those names, Belleau Wood and Chateau-Thierry, were familiar names when I was a kid, before most persons had ever heard of Iwo Jima or Bastogne. When we played war (god help us!), we fought across No Man's Land at Belleau Wood, and our trenches zigzagged past the cannon-blasted town of Chateau-Thierry.

Belleau is just a village, and the military cemetery is a sun-scorched field nearby. The only "wood" I saw was the forest of white crosses and Stars of David sweeping around the hill. Most of them mark the graves of draftees. How they must hate to lie forever in such military precision!

Close to the gate, a little way up the hill, stands a building that serves as chapel, administration building, and even toolshed. It was deserted, cool, and gloomy. On the walls were carved the names of men who died nearby but whose last resting-place is unknown, and I dutifully copied down one name, as follows: "Boggs, James H., Pvt.; 28th Inf Reg, 1st Div; July 19, 1918; Oregon."

On our way back to Reims, where I was stationed, the jeep driver stopped in a little town to buy a bottle of wine, and I remained in the jeep. The village priest strode past as I was absently looking at a girl across the square. He spoke to me pleasantly in French. I shook my head.

"You go Epernay?" he asked then.

"No; Reims," I said.

He pointed back down the road.

"Paris?"

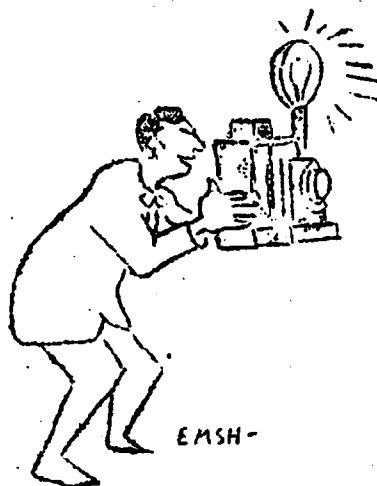
"Chateau-Thierry."

He nodded and walked on. I wondered what Chateau-Thierry meant to him. Did he think of it as the scene of an old battle in an old futile war? As the site of another cemetery? There are so many there, along the Marne. But it is a beautiful place, too, and I hoped that Chateau-Thierry meant to him only a neighboring town with a church on the hill.

#### OUR OWN POLL

I suppose everybody who is associated with science fiction, either on the pro or the amateur side, can type. Am I wrong? But I'll bet that fully 50 per cent are self-taught typists who pound out their stories and letters using only one-fifth of their fingers.

A bit of scandal might liven things up, so why don't you admit it if you are a hunt-and-peck typist, damon knight, Ted Sturgeon, Horace Gold, Bob Lowndes, Lee Hoffman, Dean Grennell, Towner Lansy? It will be the gossip of the convention.



EMSH-



(courtesy d. a. grennell)

## EMSH SNAPSHOT OF THE FANTASTICON

If you can't type at all, I'd glee to learn such an intimate fact about you, but don't write to tell me. I don't read anything but typed material, preferably double-spaced.

And qwertyuiop to you, too.

I REMEMBER WILD WEST WEEKLY

A couple years before I bought my first Astounding, I read Street & Smith's Wild West Weekly. This may be akin to a U. S. Steel trustee admitting that he was once a communist, but it is the truth and I am not ashamed of it. For there were some good yarns in that magazine, which is more than you can say for some science fiction magazines unto this day.

I bought my first Wild West Weekly because I fancied myself as a wild west artist and I needed inspiration. I needed to know what was being done and I needed subjects to draw. So I coaxed a couple dimes from my mother and went off to buy a magazine that had a lot of good western artwork in it.

I don't know why I bought 3W, which had no good artwork in it. The cover, by somebody named Kiemle, was very drab and stiff, a blobby vignette more than a real scene. The interiors were by H. W. Scott (later cover artist for Unknown), who was the Kramer of the western field. I doubt if I got any inspiration from looking at those pictures.

But I was fascinated by the stories. Today I probably wouldn't be able to wade through most of them, but I enjoyed them all then, and I remember them with nostalgia. There was the lead yarn, "Smoky Clark — Trail Boss," and the Circle J story, "Tangled Herds"; there was "The Thunder Bird at Gray Horse Mine," about which I remember little except that when the arch-villain The Thunder Bird broke out of jail during the night he left a taunting note for the sheriff: "Gone — on a gray horse!"

Best of all, there was "The Desert Phantom's Showdown," by Walker A. Tompkins. This was the last in a series of six yarns, but it was complete in itself, and I enjoyed it outrageously. Looking back at it today, I realize that it was pretty stereotyped; nevertheless, it was colorful and dramatic. It built up to a whacking climax, and the punchline, the final line in the story, was: "The courthouse clock was striking twelve."

I read a lot of other yarns by Tompkins, "The Sheriff Killer," the "Terror Trail" series, and others, but "The Desert Phantom's Showdown" was my all-time favorite.

Years later I exchanged a few letters with author Tompkins and of course told him of my enthusiasm for that great yarn. He replied that the sixth yarn was by no means the best of the series and he was prouder of a couple of the others.

Some day, when I have collected all the science fiction magazines I want, I am going to hunt for the five issues of Wild West Weekly preceding the first issue I bought as a kid.

I haven't thought about it in years, but just now I'd trade my Amazings containing "The Skylark of Space" for those five Wild West Weeklys.

### A MATTER OF FICTION

Did you hear about the poll taken recently among well-known pro editors and writers? They were each asked the question, "What matters most to you?" These were some of the answers:

H. L. Gold: "A matter of form."

Willy Ley: "A matter of taste."

Ross Rocklyne: "A matter of length."

Harl Vincent: "A matter of ethics."

Wilfred Owen Morley: "A matter of philosophy."

Harry Bates, Samuel Mines, and Norman Lazenby all replied: "A matter of size." Bates later changed his answer to "A matter of speed."

William Lemkin PhD: "A matter of nerves."

L. Ron Hubbard: "A matter of matter."

Upon receipt of this last reply, the poll committee began to distrust the accuracy of the poll and declared their investigation at an end.

### THE MAN ON THE SPAR

Inscribed somewhere on the Pequod's papers, along with the name and mark of Queequeg, is the name and perhaps the mark of Tashtego. The Pequod, you know, is Captain Ahab's ship, in Moby Dick.

Tashtego, an American Indian, is not as important to the ship as Queequeg (for the latter receives "the ninetieth lay, and that's more than ever was given a harpooner yet out of Nantucket"), and certainly he is not as important to the book as Queequeg, but he is an interesting and significant character.

Tashtego is one of the "tigers" -- the harpooners -- too, and he is the "squire" of Stubb, the easy-going second mate. "Wild" is the most frequent adjective associated with Tashtego, and he is

also called "heedless" and "reckless." His temperament contrasts with Stubb's: his war-whoop of "Whoo-hoo! Wa-hee!" is an accompaniment of the second mate's steady admonition to "keep cool, keep cool -- cucumbers is the word -- easy, easy...."

Tash always acts through instinct rather than through intelligence; he is part of the heart rather than the mind of the crew. As a man of action he shows the intuitive alertness such an individual must possess in order to survive his own headlongness. Tash is the first man to sight the whales on the first lowering, and -- along with Queequeg and Daggoo -- he is the first member of the crew to divine that Captain Ahab is in quest of Moby Dick. In fact, Tash is the first character in the book to pronounce the name Moby Dick. Only Ahab sights Moby Dick before Tashtego does, "almost that same instant."

Tashtego is a leading figure in the climax of the Pequod's quest, the end of the three days chase when the boats have been lowered to pursue the great White Whale. Seeing that the flag is gone from the main masthead, Captain Ahab sends Tashtego up with hammer and nails to fasten a new flag to the high spar.

The wild Indian is perched there, hammering mightily, when Moby Dick lunges at the Pequod. Again, Tashtego (with Starbuck and Stubb) is the first to see the danger.

His is the last proper name shouted by Ahab standing upon the deck of the stricken ship: "What ho, Tashtego! let me hear thy hammer!" Our last glimpse of the Pequod is that of Tashtego "in the act of nailing the flag faster and yet faster to the subsiding spar," till the sky-hawk swoops down, "incommoding" him; and ship, spar, flag, hammer, bird, and savage submerge beneath "the great shroud of the sea."

"Mad" is a word used to describe both Ahab and Tashtego, and it is significant that these men are the only two to defy the all-conquering whale even after their defeat. Ahab hurls the harpoon: "Thus, I give up the spear!" The other "pagan harpooners" stick to their posts, but only Tashtego actively "spits his

last breath" at Moby Dick by fastening the flag, symbol of defiance, "yet faster to the subsiding spar."

Both actions, by Ahab and Tashtego, are irrational, but there is something tragic and magnificent in that irrationality. McReady in "Who Goes There?" took a grim pleasure in man's "driving, unquenchable fire," and that's the sort of relentless spirit that Tashtego represents, clinging to his hammer in a death grip, as he rides to his watery grave enfolded in that defiant flag.

Even on the dawn of N-Day, man will cry, "Tashtego, let me hear thy hammer!"

### THIS CORNER OF THE UNIVERSE

Clifford D. Simak has stories coming up in all the Big Three, and is at work on still another aimed at Galaxy. "Kindergarten" (Galaxy, July '53) has brought him more letters from readers than any other yarn he's written....

Noel Loomis is writing full-time, at least temporarily, to finish up three books, all wanted by 15 September. One is a serious novel. He has been called to Washington to testify before the House ways and means committee on income tax as it affects writers....

Do you read Science Fiction Adventures -- or do you read Science Fiction Adventure Magazine? The cover title and contents-page logo do not agree as to the proper name for that magazine....

Fred Pohl gave up his authors agency recently after seven years in the business....

News item: "Rocco Gianariano and his son Richard learned at New York it doesn't pay to trifle with the so-called weaker sex. Two policewomen, Ann Gilchrist, 27, and Joan Hocter, 29, seized the father at his Manhattan home in a bookmaking inquiry. The 170-pound son went to the aid of his 200-pound father. The women officers wrestled and hauled the father and son to the sidewalk and one of them summoned help. Both men were jailed." And if they were accused of attempting to rape these women, they'd be convicted!....

Our Fond du Lac operative has uncovered an item for old-time Buck Rogers fans: A St Paul firm is marketing a new gadget for shooting dandelions full of 2-4-D. This formidable implement is called a "Killer Kane"....

The Siriano primitives of Bolivia are almost unique in having no time records and no calendar. If they saw Marilyn Monroe, they'd be inspired to invent one....

Robert Bloch has moved to Weyauwega, but what is Weyauwega?....

Anybody got a copy of the May 1953 Startling? I missed that issue -- the first since 1946, probably, -- and I have since been informed that Sam Mines mentioned Skyhook in it. He didn't send me a complimentary copy, either....

Dean A. Grennell says Mickey Spillane types his stories single-space. He also thinks single-space....

Who else besides Lee Correy has both written the lead yarn in a sf magazine and painted the cover scene? He did it for "And A Star to Steer Her By" in ASF, June 1953. And who else besides Poul Anderson copped the cover on two successive Astoundings, as he did with "Enough Rope" and "Sam Hall" on the July and August issues. Smiths E. E. and George O. did it with serial instalments, of course....

Art Rapp recently heard from Jack Clements of Cincinnati, one-time BNF and co-editor of Fandom Speaks around the time of the Graham-Ackerman feud in 1947-8. JaClem's chief claim to fame was as the author of an anti-femfan polemic in Spacewarp, but he is married now....

If a triangle could speak, it would say, "God is a triangle"....

It's the same old NFFF. More than a year ago the NFFF obtained permission to reprint the Astounding Story-Key and Fanspeak. This spring I finally obtained a half-dozen copies of each -- but nobody seems to know whether other copies have been distributed or not. The NFFF could collapse completely and fandom wouldn't know about it for three years. Maybe it has collapsed!....

What has Colorado got that Philadelphia hasn't got?....

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Dying involves such a grave undertaking.

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RECENT REMARKS about my apparent pre-occupation with syzygy came as something of a jolt. One needs to be told about such things. No one knows what he thinks until it's crystallized for shipment, unspoken thoughts being the formless, tintless things they are.

WHY

My first reaction was to deny such an allegation and say loftily that you guys haven't been reading enough Sturgeon or you never could say such a thing. One gets strange and wonderful impressions from fanzines from time to time, like the science fiction historian a couple years back who said I was a discovery in 1940 and in the next paragraph said that Astounding had a dull year in 1941, no one there but the old regulars like Sturgeon. Or the knowing note identifying William Tenn as Robert Heinlein; and that magnificent tarfu explaining that H. B. Fyfe was of course H. Beam Piper, and since only vhf researchers know that ultra-short waves are led through plumbing, that the guy was obviously J. J. Coupling -- followed by the informative parenthesis: (Dr John Clark). So me and syzygy, this is just one more of those things.

My first-and-a-half reaction was to list some recent stories just to show you how wrong you are, and when I did, I found by God you have something there. It wasn't the something you state, but it is something, and I hadn't realized it before.

I've been accused (or reminded) of a number of other thematic repetitions. Horace Gold asked me for a story over the phone recently and begged me not to make it another of these multiple personality things. Someone wrote to me not long ago and said my story in Suchnsuch Stories was fine, but when am I going to quit writing about children? And you would be surprised at the reaction I received from my yarn: "The World Well Lost" in the first issue of Universe Science Fiction. (I won't quote it because I wouldn't want to spoil a narrative switch for those who haven't read it, but if all authors wrote from source, as charged, then Bob Tucker is a murderer and Isaac Asimov is a mule.)

Fourteen years ago I wrote a story out of sheer self-defense; I knew it was unsalable but the damn thing got between me and everything I tried to do. For ten years it kicked around from market to market, and finally sold. It won a prize (\$1000) in an English magazine and had a Graham Greene short for the runner-up. Groff Conklin reprinted it last year in his Permabook In the Grip of Terror, in case anyone wants to look it up. It's called "Bianca's Hands."

Now, that story had a peculiar effect on people. One editor I took it to called me up in a quaking rage and said he was sending it back using his own postage (that was really something in those days) because he wouldn't have it in his office. An agent I wanted to hook up with pushed it and a pile of other manuscripts across his desk to me and told me he wouldn't touch anything written by a guy who wrote such a story as that.

Recently in Skyhook you took somebody to task for a remark about "there is no reason for sex except for the purpose of procreation," and drew an eloquent analogy with the statement that sex is here for the purpose of a balanced economy: "Without sexual pleasure there would be no passionate attachments between humans." I think that in "Bianca's Hands" and "The Perfect Host" (Weird Tales, November 1948) and in the Universe story mentioned above, and in the remarks just quoted, we have suffi-

# SO MUCH SYZYGY?

cient material for the tentative establishment of that denominator. Mind you, I'm the least qualified of all Sturgeon critics to make this analysis; on the other hand I do have a bit more material on the subject than most people. I've read more Sturgeon than anybody.

It has to do with the enormously complex field of passionate human attachments. There are passionate lovers of women and passionate lovers of new panties and old shoes. There are also passionate lovers of music, Shakespeare, sports cars, and smorgasbord, and all these passions have their areas of sharing, of direct involvement of other human beings. It would seem easy to make two clear-cut divisions: this one is sexual and that one is not, but it isn't that simple. Then one might shade the matter off and say this is clearly sexual, that is also sexual but sublimated. You'll bog down on that one, too.

I think what I have been trying to do all these years is to investigate this matter of love, sexual and asexual. I investigate it by writing about it because, as stated above, I don't know what the hell I think until I tell somebody about it. And I work so assiduously at it because of a conviction that if one could understand it completely, one would have the key to co-operation itself: to creative inspiration: to self-sacrifice and that rare but real anomaly, altruism: in short, to the marvelous orchestration which enables us to keep ahead of our own destructiveness.

In order to do this I've had to look at the individual components. In "The Deadly Ratio" (the "definitive" syzygy story; its original title was "It Wasn't Syzygy") I had two lovers, only one of whom was real. In "Bianca's Hands" only one of them was human. In "Rule of Three" and "Synthesis" I had (in reverse order) a quasi-sexual relationship among three people, and one among six so it could break down into three couples and be normal. In "The Stars Are the Styx" I set up several (four, as I remember) different kinds of love motivations for mutual comparisons. In "Two Percent Inspiration" it was hero worship, a kid and a great scientist. In "Until Death Do Us Join" it was the murderous jealousy between two personalities in a schizophrenic, both in love with the same girl. In "Cactus Dance" (upcoming in Zane Grey's Western) it is non-physical, perhaps even non-substitute physical love, as represented in several symbiotic relationships between humans and yucca plants. In "Killdozer" it was a choked-up worship for the majesty of a machine. By this time you get the idea.

"Bianca's Hands" and "The World Well Lost" cause the violently extreme reactions they do because of the simple fact that the protagonist was happy with the

by

THEODORE STURGEON



situation. No one was churned up (in these areas) by "Until Death Do Us Join" because the crazy mixed-up little guy was killed in the end. "Killdozer" didn't bother anyone, because love for a machine (as expressed) is too remote from most readers' ability to identify. But write a story well enough to force identification, and have the protagonist indulging in something weird, and let the guy be happy about it, and people explode all over the place. It is fashionable to overlook the fact that the old-shoe lover loves loving old shoes. Write that, and all the old-shoe lovers will love the story; all the deviates who equate their specialty with old-shoe loving will love the story; all the aberrates who so specialize or so equate but feel guilty about it will hate the story and you too.

Now if we can wrench this discussion out of the appetizing areas of pathology, and return to the original question: why so much syzygy? -- well, it's pretty obvious why a clear-cut method of non-reproductive exchange should be so useful in such an overall investigation. It's beautifully open to comparison and analog. It handles all sorts of attachments felt by any sensitive person which could not conceivably be sexually based. It does this almost as well as the general theme of symbiosis, which I think you'll find more in my stuff than syzygy.

If you can understand non-reproductive love you'll be able to understand -- and convey -- those two kinds of awe, the one for Boulder Dam or an atom bomb, and the other for Grand Canyon or a nova. You'll understand why Casals and Segovia and Landowska work with such exquisite devotion, and what's with the GI who falls on the live grenade to save his squad. A guy who could understand things like that could get to be a pretty fair writer.

Oh yes, before some of you super-sophisticates knock down all of the pins I've set up: I know there's a temptation to translate all of love into sexual terms or transferences and sublimations thereof. But I have a deep conviction that it's a little like saucer sightings: you can explain away item after item in known terms, but always you'll find that damned percentage that just won't yield.

And those are the ones worth writing stories about.

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"It is a proud and lonely Thing."

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#### FULLER EXPLANATION DEPARTMENT

Miss Hawkins gave her occupation as a model "for coats, suits, and cheesecake." She said she got \$60 a week for coats and suits and \$10 an hour for cheesecake. Presiding Judge Emilio Nunez asked, "What's cheesecake?"

"Modeling in scanties, abbreviated bathing suits, or G-strings," Miss Hawkins answered.

"What do you mean by G-strings?" asked Nunez.

"Just enough to cover up the vital parts."

-- Minneapolis Morning Tribune.

Next question?

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"I am no Thing."

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