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SPECULATIVE

This is volume 2, number 1, of Speculative Review, a magazine of comment on and review of professional science-fiction and fantasy. It's published under the auspices of the Washington Science-Fiction Association, filled by the writings of the members, and edited (temporarily) by the president, Dick Eney. True, the cover logo is by Richard Bergeron, but that's not exactly in the magazine...

You may remember the appearance, a couple of years ago, of another series of Speculative Review from the irregular mimeograph of John Magnus. This is, in a way, a continuation of that magazine, written by other WSFA members and appearing as a club publication of sorts.

What happened was this: After the Detroit Convention we of the Washington SF Association -- impelled mostly by Bob Pavlat -- took up the idea of publishing a club magazine which would also be a medium for review of the prozines. Magnus volunteered the use of his old title, and offered to deal with publication.

But then, for a number of reasons, Magnus suffered an acute attack of gafia. After a bit of shuffling, the magazine wound up in my hands -- an awkward thing, in a way, because despite the number of fanzines I've published this is the first one addressed to general fandom.

Consequently for this first issue Speculative Review is presenting magazine reviews only; books, and possibly artwork, being reserved for the future. This, alas, is the first time I've done a lithographed publication; consequently the thing has been delayed until the cover date of the magazines it reviews. And you know how far delayed that is!

Speculative Review is edited by Dick Eney, 417 Ft Hunt Rd, Alexandria, Virginia (USA), on behalf of the Washington Science-Fiction Association, and produced as Operation Crifanac CLVII. This issue free as a sample.

REVIEW

AMAZING STORIES, November 1959.

(The man behind the analytical balance for the next few pages will be Bill Evans, one of our most indefatigable collectors and classifiers.)

Minor Detail, by Jack Sharkey; 7 page short...: This story poses a problem: I can't decide whether it is intended as a satire or a straight story. In either case, it fails. As a story it offers wretched characterization and poor writing unrelieved by a new idea. The "science" is faulty -- it is based on a misunderstanding (all too common, I fear!) of the difference between velocity and acceleration -- and even if one grants the premise on which all depends, the development is also faulty and the story ends with a plop. If satire is intended, it is also not successful, because the characters are reproductions of the newspaper and comicstrip stereotypes of the military and political minds. (For the chap who just sprang up looking indignant, this is burlesque, not satire.)

... The Observers, by GL Vandenberg; 18 page short...: Another of the "hidden aliens among us" stories, in which the plot hinges on the defection of one alien who gives secrets to the military. (Ours.) The central character, a personnel officer trying to fill a vacancy in the weapons center, gradually comes to realize that the aliens are using him to get into the center, to undo the damage the defecting one has done. Involved also are the usual seductive brunette and bumbblondsecretary who Saves Things At The Last Minute, and Gets Her Man. The plot, obviously, creaks with age; its saving grace is that, for once, the hero doesn't win out all by himself. As for the characterization, only the hero is more than two-dimensional (say, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ dimensional ...); the rest are cardboard (thin cardboard), appearing and disappearing at will. The writing is jerky, with unexpected paragraph breaks and short sentences that trip over one another. I got more of a feeling of satire from parts of this than from the first story; this may have been unintentional...

... Shepherd of the Planets, by Alan Mattox; 8 page short...: A spaceship crew is marooned on a planet inhabited by humanoids, tho of a marginal sort. Under the leadership of the captain our gang does its best to bring agriculture into being, and meanwhile feed the natives on synthetic food. Obvious ending: the natives chant as they get their food from the captain, and the crew's linguist translates it -- a paraphrase of "Our Father..." An idea which has been used before may be redeemed by good unity or characterization; pity this wasn't.

... Science and Superman by Poul Anderson; 8 page article...: A soundly-reasoned argument for the non-appearance of the superman as he has been depicted by Stapledon and others. Poul makes a couple of points about the social consequences of superman and points out that our own society is doing a good job of ensuring the degeneracy of the race. Nothing new, but neatly summarized.

... Sneak Preview, by Robert Bloch; 35 page novel...: One of the changes that has come over Amazing in the last year or so is the use of a long story in almost every issue. Back thirty years ago these were called novellettes -- such stories as "Armageddon -- 2419" (the first Buck Rogers story) and Campbell's "Piracy Preferred" and "Solarite" were novellettes, about as long as this (30-35,000 words); now they are called "book-length novels". However, within this shorter length Bob Bloch has done a reasonably good job on Standard Theme #5, Revolt of the Oppressed Masses. This time, it's a post-Atomageddon world with the remnants of America (apparently that's all that is left) living under some sort of force domes, set up after the bombs. After the end of the war the Brass (it's their title, now) have turned to the psychiatrists for help. The Psychos (psychiatrists; the title is a subtle pun expressing the idea...oh, you got it?), using the communications media, Convert the People; after several generations we see a state controlled by the Brass, the Psychos, the Technobility (engineers), the Eggheads, etc, all under his MGMInence -- who controls the works from Hollywood, where the propaganda films, 4-D sensory-films, etc, are produced... Well, the hero, a Talent (writer) for the Space-Opera Division, is wondering what has become of his father, who was Socially Secured at 50, supposedly retiring to Florida for a life of leisure. He voices his doubts to his companion in a Fornivacation -- and she turns out to be a spy for the Psychos. (One wonders what sort of Basic Training these futuristic policewomen go thru)

Sentenced to brainwashing, our boy escapes, gets on a plane delivering a group of Socially Secured to Florida, finds that they are actually being killed, escapes again, is rescued by a girl from the underground -- the rest is obvious. Come to think of it, so was this... If Bloch had had twice as many words with which to clothe the bones of this standard plot it would have been a thing of beauty; with no room for development, large parts must be inferred, and essential details and action are telescoped. The most interesting character, the girl spy, disappears early in the story; her replacement is a nothing. The central character, Gordon, emerges only by contrast with the rest of the actors (surely the chief Psycho could have been developed further!), the conduct of the leaders at the end does not follow any logical buildup; further... But there; who ever heard of analyzing Bloch's storytelling with a plot summary? Who ever heard of bypassing such asides as calling cigarettes "sigs"...with the deadpan explanation: "oral-erotic tabagistic pacifiers, named in honor of Sigmund Freud, of course, who had often smoked sigars in the olden, golden days." Or labelling as pornography the writings of Asimov, Heinlein, and Bradbury, because they portray vices contrary to the accepted order...looking for touches like these, where Bob has at least the tip of his tongue in his cheek, made the sour job of dissection more chucklesome. The Flesh-man from Far Wide, by David R Bunch; 5 page short...: This is a perfect example of "little-magazine" science-fiction at its worst. There is no story; there is no plot -- and if there were the writing is so poor that no one could find either. There is no background presented; there is no beginning; there is no end. Except to my patience.

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE-FICTION, October-November 1959

The October and November issues are being considered together because the longest -- and most important, in the editor's opinion -- item is Heinlein's serial, Starship Soldier.

But first to the shorter stories. The Man Who Lost the Sea, by Theodore Sturgeon; 11 page short...: Sturgeon gives the thoughts of the first man to reach Mars -- as he lies dying beside his wrecked spaceship. There's no story in a description, unless you count the untold story in the background, so the writing must carry the entire plot-load. If you like Sturgeon's purple passages, you will like this; if you expect clear, lucid writing you'll be disappointed -- but if it were written in a crisp style, rather'n the modified stream-of-consciousness fashion actually used, the central theme would not stand up. An interesting tour-de-force...but I'll probably never reread it. The Height of Up, by Isaac Asimov; 11 page article...: When Asimov puts on his Authority Suit it would be better if he made no inaccurate statements. This is a pleasant review of the temperature scale, but I do wish he'd be a little more careful with the values he assigns to such fundamental qualities as as the triple point of water (273.1600° Kelvin) on the International Temperature Scale, and with things like his definition of the Kelvin scale -- which is historical, but does not describe the scale in use at the present time. And the value (273.12 Kelvin) given for the freezing point of water is not found on any accepted scale of the last thirty years... Well, to get off my hobby horse: And A Little Child... by Zenna Henderson; 16 page short...: The Henderson Style, as somebody remarked, is the sfantasy equivalent of the "had I but known" school in the detective story. If you like the syrupy writing evident here, the story of the little girl who could see the projections of otherdimensional "animals"...oh, yes, there is some kind of story imbedded in the mass of details and asides; after reading this twice, I believe I've even been able to follow it. This piece does not have the connecting strength of the "People" series; it merely exhibits most of their weaknesses of writing style. If the plot were only a little more mundane, Ladies' Home Journal would snap it up. To Be Continued, by Damon Knight; 10 page short...: A refreshing story of alternate worlds; sub-type, Book Collector with Time Machine Obtains Unwritten Books -- the unwritten plays of Shakespeare, Stevenson's unfinished novels, Dickens' Mystery of Edwin Drood, etc -- by visiting alternate time paths in which they were written. The writer chosen this time, tho, is a modern writer of detective stories -- having the collector favor a semi-hack is a pleasant wry twist -- who is shown his still-unwritten book, and persuaded to write, instead, the sequel. And this in turn is used to

persuade him, in another time track, to write a sequel to the two, and in another time track to the three... The writing style damon (or Damon, since he's a Vile Pro here) uses is unobstrusive, moving the story without intruding...and that, to me, is writing as it should be; unless the sheer beauty of the material is the chief aim, as in poetry, writing should never intrude. The Gilashrikes, by Charles G. Finney; 5 page short...: Another story in which the writing lets the plot come through -- and one that is just long enough. If it were two pages longer, it would have dragged; as it is, the wry conclusion to the making of the shrike and the gila monster ties the whole up into a nice package, in which the element of satire is underplayed just enough. Operation Incubus, by Poul Anderson; 16 page short...: Altho the editor forgot to mention it, this is a sequel to Poul's Operation Afreet of a few years back -- set in a "modern" America in which magic (lycanthropy, witchcraft, spells and elementals -- and a flying carpet with a "hundred-dragonpower ~~spell~~ spell", force screen, and convertible top) is as commonly employed as in Heinlein's "Magic Inc." Granted the background, the story of the honeymooning witch and werewolf who select a lonely, haunted house proceeds along the lines of Mercilessly Logical Development that delighted the readers of UNKNOWN WORLDS back in the spacious gracious days of Third Fandom. The writing is almost brash, and the action moves along fast -- fast enough to cover any possible unlogical lapses. Many of the magic gimmicks are tossed in as lagniappe, to set a culture pattern; if the result lacks depth, it more than compensates in entertainment value. One has the feeling that Poul was writing with tongue in cheek; seeing how clever he could be when he opened the throttle all the way. Well, he can be awfully clever, at that. The Pleasant Woman, Eve by Hassoldt Davis; 4 page short...: One of the little-magazine allegorical types, with the usual obscureness. The style was so painful that I finished it only by calling on my reserves of fannish resolution. Of course, if you like this sort of thing... The Pi Man, by Alfred Bester; 14 page short...: This is a fugitive from GALAXY, I feel, with the typical unclearness so beloved there. The writing is so disjointed (on purpose, I believe) that reading is a chore. And never is the plot revealed (it is hinted /I think/). It is possible to have a story with no real beginning (like this) and no real end (like this) and no real characters (like this). But not, ghod save us, with all three factors absent simultaneously. The central figure is so unreal that Bester has certainly been successful in his desire to create an unhuman human; in the process, he's lost his hold on at least one reader. Dagon, by Avram Davidson; 8 page short story...: Davidson, too, depicts a strange unhuman, but with a smooth easy style of writing that's a pleasure to read. However, he is guilty of using words for the sake of words, even indulging in Purple Passages at times. It is a credit to his story-telling ability that these do not harm the flow of ideas, or mar an unusual picture of a supremely egoistic being.

And 60 pages of Starship Soldier, to be completed in the next issue. The shorter pieces in the following, November, issue were:

The Martian Shop, by Howard Fast; 21 page novelette...: Plot 4a, Hoax Invasion From Mars to Make Earth Unite and Stop War; but presented, this time, with realistic force. No action as such; merely a report of doings -- from the sidelines, as it were. No overt threats; just three stores offering four advanced gadgets, plus a flying automobile. Interest is aroused, and then the "Martians" leave, leaving behind clues just sufficient to indicate the threat. No classic, but readable and deftly competent storytelling. From Caribou to Carrie Nation, by GO Edmondson; 4 page short...: An odd little fable about reincarnation, with an unusual writing style and not much else. Plenitude, by Will Forthington; 11 page short...: This reminded me of Nanny's City of the Living Dead, with its two groups of people left on Earth -- the city dwellers in their womblike environments and the nature-lovers who reject all machines. The plot is the prodigal son one; fortunately the central character is believable, tho he alone seems real. I'm not sure I like the writing style, but let's give it credit for being interesting and distinctive. Frritt-Flaco, by Jules Verne (translated by I.O. Evans); 6 page short...: Not at all like the Verne of 20,000 Leagues. The doctor is called out on a stormy night -- to minister to himself. But the manner of tell-

ing (or perhaps the translation) robs the story of punch; the reader's reaction will probably be "so what?" I Know A Good Hand Trick, by Wade Miller; 5 page short...: One of those stories about seduction by magic that get some of our West Coast femnefen so upset. This story might have been intended for PLAYBOY; it has the right light, sophisticated style. An amusing trifle about amusing trifling. C For Celeritas, by Isaac Asimov; 11 page article...: Another of Asimov's Little Lessons in Science; this time, $E=mc^2$. The Masks, by James Blish; 4 page short...: A taut little story of future revolutionaries and an interrogation. Well, no, not a story; an episode. Well written, of course, but somehow I didn't warm up to it. As Bob Pavlat explains later, it is Not Science-Fiction. After the Ball, by John Collier; 16 page short...: John Collier's semi-satirical treatment of a pact with a demon -- and how the previously unblemished soul fell from grace at last -- is hardly realistic, but any writer with Collier's skill can despise the merely believable. Why should he try to make us feel that things like this could happen when he can make us feel that they should be possible?

Starship Soldier, by Robert A Heinlein;

serialized 60-/45 page novel...: I think it was Harry Warner who observed, on seeing the dismal Door Into Summer, that Heinlein's writing of juveniles was catching up with him. In Starship Soldier it has caught up: this is no imitation Heinlein juvenile, but the real thing. The use of an 10-year-old boy as protagonist, the almost complete absence of sex, the simpler style (everything is narrated by the hero) permitting close identification by the young reader, the rudimentary story line connecting the Thrilling Scenes; all indicate the well-written juvenovel.

The writing, as is Heinlein's custom, is good; the gadget background filled in rather well, though some of the "cute" touches don't come off -- the recall signals used, for example (each ship, fer gawdsake, plays a Stirring Theme Song) would be very awkward, especially if background music were common.

Unfortunately, Starship Soldier is not a science-fiction story. That is, it is not science-fiction, and it is not a story; it is propaganda. It is not science-fiction in that the plot does not depend on the science element for its development; the same story could be -- has been -- written about World War II, World War I, the ~~War~~ / War Between the States, Napoleonic Wars -- any war in which combat training was used; the same story (although with a plot) was written sixty years ago by Howard Pyle; Men of Iron, despite its juvenile audience, even goes the length of recognizing the Fair Sex, tho in the chaste Victorian Tradition. The discipline of boot camp, of battle, of OCS does not depend on the gadgets used -- space ships or LSTs, pikes or rocket-rifles make no basic change in that. This is as much a dressed up mundane as the most obvious Western-moved-to-Wars. Science Fiction? In a pig's eye!

And Starship Soldier is not a story; it has no real plot, no ending. It is merely an episode, or rather a collection of episodes. Even the organization of the story is against it -- the opening action, then the long, long flashback, with no transition from the flashback to the present taking the action forward in time. The narrative-hook opening is a sound ploy for snagging the reader and making him hope he'll have more to follow; but really, it should be a fulfilled promise of Good Things to Come. The plot, which should develop and unfold steadily, doesn't appear at all. What plot-elements might be present are afterthoughts, with no real connection with the episodes; we have a series of scenes, strung together, all right, but without unifying plot or purpose. In a short story Heinlein could have gotten away with such formless plotting -- he might even have made a success of it -- in a novel it's fatal.

Negative flaws, these; the third objection, the propaganda, is a positive fault. The text from which Heinlein preaches here is one to delight Helmuth von Holtke ("Perpetual peace is a dream, and not even a beautiful dream"): that war is necessary, and that only those who have borne arms shall be permitted to control the country (world, system, etc) and be citizens. Heinlein feels very strongly about such matters; it has been evident in a number of his recent stories (Citizen of the Galaxy for instance contains many suggestions along this line) not to mention the almost incredible "Sons of Patrick Henry" flier,

but this is the first time such large chunks of propaganda have been openly presented.

As an example, which states very simply the theme of the story, take this ~~xxxx~~statement, put in the mouth of the highschool teacher of History and Moral Philosophy ~~/!/:~~:

"A soldier accepts responsibility for the safety of the body politic, defending it with his life. The civilian does not."

Or the assertive: "The historically untrue -- and thoroughly immoral -- doctrine that 'violence never settles anything'..."

All throughout the story such statements are given and elaborated on, until the total effect is one of a propaganda tract -- and, mind you, lots was supposed to have been edit-ed out of the magazine version. Some of this can go as setting out the background of the story, but massive doses really begin to be reminiscent of Uncle Hugo's Scientafiction Stories -- the ones in which the hero would spend one or two pages (those big Gernsback pages, too) out of every ten discussing the science involved in his gadget. It becomes boring...and so does the story. No, not a story, as I said; Heinlein has let his feelings take control and has written a propaganda essay, with illustrative incidents, instead of a piece of fiction.

In summary, I feel that Heinlein has the same mastery of words, the same ability to make his central character three-dimensional, the same knack of making an unfamiliar background understandable without directly describing it, that made him the top author in the science-fiction field. But what a dirty shame he isn't using those abilities any more!

"...A Z that stands for Zorome..."

Dick Eney coming on mike briefly to touch on a point that occurred to me while putting this on master: is Heinlein perhaps playing Devil's Advocate? That is, is he deliberately presenting the militaristic point of view so repellently that it'll revolt the reader? A scheme so Machiavellian certainly wouldn't be beyond the ability or the imagination of the ~~author~~ of Sixth Column and The Man Who Sold the Moon; but on the other hand neither would it be beyond his intelligence that anti-militaristic propaganda is at present (a) quite superfluous and (b) already being taken care of very nicely, thank you, by a more than sufficient number of people with audiences wider than Heinlein's. And the advocatus diaboli does not perforce adopt the viewpoint of those he's trying to discredit on all points; for instance, antimilitarism would not require Heinlein also to propagandize the idea that there's no danger in radioactivity -- "wearing his I Like Fallout button", as Renfrew Pemberton neatly phrases it. Short of testimony from Heinlein himself under truth serum, there's no way to be sure, but I think we can rule out the possibility that Heinlein's apparently crass propaganda is actually infinitely subtle propaganda.

As for the actual content of this propaganda tract, least said is soonest mended. In point of fact there's a good deal to be said for the author's viewpoint in a broad sense -- the principle that full citizenship rights should be a reward for people who've earned them -- but none for the narrow sense in which he actually expresses it: the only soldiers who can be considered to defend the body politic with their lives are line troops of the combat arms, and if the armies of the future consist mainly of infantry riflemen it'll be the biggest reversal of technical evolution ever seen.

And besides its logical defects, the propaganda of Starship Soldier is open to a double-barrelled objection on other grounds: the esthetic one that direct exhortation is a method unworthy of the author of a work of fiction (if he's going to tell us explicitly what he wants to say, why bother with the pretext of a story?), and the practical one that it hasn't worked...if Bill's reaction and my own feelings about the story are typical, then Heinlein as a propagandist is a good bricklayer. And that despite the fact that I started out agreeing with the man...

"No images nor idols make, / For Danner and his friends to break."

GALAXY, December 1959.

(Wielding the battleaxe from this point is Bob Pavlat, the compiler and publisher of the celebrated FANZINE INDEX.)

When Magnus proposed to revive Speculative Review as a club magazine, I looked forward to the chance of reviewing GALAXY to get some long-standing feelings off my chest. With this December issue I find that I've been had. Rich Elsberry and Gregg Calkins have covered the defects of GALAXY far more adequately than I could (in Oopsla! 27 and 28-29), and Gold completes the reversal by presenting a December issue that is a decidedly refreshing change from the magazine so adequately criticized by Elsberry and Calkins. Galaxy has had some stories during the past four years that have been enjoyable, but this is the only issue since at least 1955 that was reasonably enjoyable thruout, and with no distressing examples of either non-ideas or depressingly melancholy fiction. Most of the illustrations are still varied shades of grey with semi-patterned blobs here and there supposedly representing people -- or chairs, or horses or rocketships (much as any color-blind, near-sighted, somewhat deranged person might see without glasses at late dusk) -- but Wood and Finlay both managed to slip in some solid blacks and whites, in one illustration each, for some slight improvement.

Contents: four novelets, five shorts, the usual departments (Willy Ley still doing well), and purported book reviews. Leadoff novelet was:

Prospector's Special, by Robert Sheckley...: A humorously done repeat of the stranded-pro prospector-in-the-desert tale, with the main (and only) science-fictional element being matter transmission. Except for that, the story is merely a dressed-up western, sub-type uranium prospector. I did, however, like the unconcern of the teleporting robot postman over the prospector's troubles, and his rigid adherence to the traditions and rules of the Venusian postal service. George O. Smith's The Undetected...: A telepathic detective story with George O's usual fast and loose plot, tailored situations, and sex interest. Contrived, and some loose threads, but undeniably science-fiction. Jim Harmon's Charity Case...: This is the monkey-on-his-back novelet for this issue (a pleasant change when there's only one!) concerning a man plagued with difficulties from the future since he, by killing a man, deprived that man's future inheritors of a bit of wealth. Here, too, the story is dependent upon contrived situations and the idiocy of its hero (not to mention a hoped-for equivalent idiocy in the reader) for its existence. The mental gymnastics were interesting, but too imperfectly worked out to make this a sound story. The fourth novelet, Blackword by AJ Offutt, juses the hoary gimmick that dictator Blackword is really Top Secret Agent #1 of the earth-power of the time, and is working for International Harmony, Democratic Government and like that by hiring himself out as a self-described "unscrupulous blackguard" dictator. Blackword's operations were vaguely reminiscent of E Mayne Hull's "Arthur Blord" series (less the sense of wonder), and this story is recommended as an exercise in the science of duplicity. Of the short stories, George Rosel Brown's Flower Arrangement is one of the domestic tragedy stories unforgivably introduced into science fiction by Margaret St Clair, concerning the success, then failure of a flower arrangement (for the garden show -- what else?) based on a Moebius strip. It went from there to Hogarth curves and "the roundest thing in the world" and its peculiar properties, but the story was still only a domestic melodrama -- not lacking in entertainment, but without anything to make it either memorable or worthwhile as science-fiction. Con Blomberg's Sales Talk described the production of a sequence for a "feelie" taped show, complete with emotional impressions. Many stories have dealt with the use of such programs, but none I've read have ever considered the difficulty of putting emotions onto tape -- how to get an actor to experience the emotions desired. (When and if the day comes, I imagine some dubbing technique will be used, doubtless to the further concern and upset of Congress and the FCC.) Blomberg at least tried to cover this new ground, but the story was too patently rigged (disguising what is actually going on in order to have a surprise ending) for my taste. War Game is hackneyed in every sense: customs passes the wrong Centaurian-made toy, which is really a

psychological warfare device meant to teach kids that losing is winning -- Monopoly in reverse. This, of course, will make these children unable to defend their possessions once they are adults and in charge of Earth's affairs. Horsefeathers! (Or maybe we must decide that the varieties of card games children play where the object is to get rid of all your cards, or the variety of checkers called Giveaway, are merely other imported products of this alien culture which is going to overwhelm us.) Pohl's The Snowmen was a dandy. The Earth is evidently old, tho man (and woman) has changed little. Only three people are in the cast, with a few others mentioned but not present on the stage. The action takes place primarily in the woman's home, tho we briefly see the man's home and the snow-car used to go from one to the other. The setting is sheer simplicity: the places exist only to the extent necessary to set a scene of life in comfort with modern heat pumps as the power supply. The heat pumps are the core and curse of the story: life exists on Earth due to the pumps, which take heat from the environment and convert it into the energy needed for comfortable living. Living should be rough at 10° Kelvin (the heat pumps have lowered Earth's temperature to this level) but the heat pumps can cope, ever driving the temperature lower. Pohl presents the enemy, the cold, simply, without finding it necessary to dwell on the dangers, and he even manages to introduce the government's fight against the continued use of heat pumps without detailing what the form of government is, where it is, or who's in charge. The true villain in the story is the people, immune to understanding, remorseless in their ignorance, happily living their lives except for the usual concern over stomach, comfort, and sex. So the two, the man and the woman, stuff the visitor (from space, but what difference?) into the food locker, strip his ship of everything usable and, the first two needs satisfied, turn to the third. This was not a powerful story in initial impact. It might have been equally powerful without the visitor. Its beauty is the stark simplicity with which the whole story is told; without wasted effort, pointless expositions, or complex turmoil of plot and counter-plot. And while the heat-pump gimmick is faulty science (for the law of conservation of energy would bring most of the pump's work back again as heat, eventually) it doesn't damage the story. This was the top story in the issue, and one of the best shorts of the year. As a model of short story technique, it's one of the best I've seen in science-fiction. The final short, Bloch's Sabbatical, had a time machine, a professor who used same, a show producer who fell for his own detested "lousiest script" type, sharp comparisons of our culture (or lack of same) with that of 1925, and the usual interesting Bloch patter. I enjoyed it even if it wasn't science-fiction. ✖

The only stories in this issue which could not exist, in all essential details, without the science-fiction setting were Smith's "The Undetected" and Blomberg's "Sales Talk". Bloch used the time machine only as a vehicle, "Flower Arrangement" threw in some strange "scientific" properties of an inside-out balloon (which was the aforementioned "roundest thing in the world"), and "Blacksword" used foreign planets for its setting in a manner quite comparable to Heinlein in Starship Soldier -- see the review by Evans regarding the difference between this and science-fiction. Pohl's story was essentially one of people and their refusal to act in the best interests of all, or to see where their own best interests lay, and it could exist apart from science-fiction, although without the impact of man's self-destruction. Harmon's story, like Brown's equates science with magic, and the story would be unchanged with the supposed scientific elements deleted. Smith's telepathic story might seem similar, but there is an element of analysis of the consequences of telepathy which shifts this story from magic into the realm of science-fiction -- an exposition of the imagined results of a technological change or condition on society or its members. Two, maybe three, science-fiction stories in an issue of a science-fiction magazine is not bad in today's SF market; it's unfortunate that the two stories which were basically science-fiction were not among the best stories in the issue.

It's encouraging that Galaxy is printing science-fiction, and that this issue did not possess the man-entrapped-by-fate theme of so many previous issues. I want to read the next few issues to see if this improvement can be maintained.

Speculative
Review

from Richard H. Ence
417 Ft. Hunt Rd
Alexandria, Va.

because

you trade
you are Talked About
you sub
you belong to WSFA
you contributed
you wrote
just for kicks

PERIODICALS
No commercial value



Dick Ellington
PO Box 104
Cooper Station
NYork 3, NY