

Ul
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from Norm Metcalf, P. O. Box 1368, Boulder,
Colorado 80302 USA. This is intended for the
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Off-Trails #64

I see that Ul #26 is included in the 64th mailing without mention in the contents listing and that ROSF I:1 is incorrectly stated as having been postmailed to the 62nd mailing, instead of the correct 61st mailing.

'Ot On the Trails #9 - Gerald Bishop

Lost race stories, per se, aren't fantastic. The purer a lost race the story is, the less possible connection exists between sf and/or fantasy and the story. King Solomon's Mines and Allan Quatermain are two good examples of pure lost race and neither are fantastic. Gobi, or Shamo was written in imitation of Haggard and goes Haggard one further by introducing a group of Greeks in the Gobi who developed and then abandoned super--science. It's not really sf since nothing in the actual plot depends on sf or fantasy, their past is only mentioned. But certainly there are overlaps between lost race and sf and/or fantasy but that doesn't make lost race sf anymore than Asimov's The Caves Of Steel makes all detective stories sf.

Mescific #30 Sep 71 - Fred Hemming(s)

Modern sf wasn't born in Astounding in the 30's, it was only re-introduced to the sf magazine readers' consciousness after a dreary succession of poor, inbred stories resulting from Gernsback's putting sf into a ghetto. I sometimes wonder how much better sf would be today if Weird Tales and Amazing Stories had never been founded and sf was still being published in competition with all other types of fiction in general fiction magazines. (Since this is not the case an examination of the current sf magazines shows that there is a small market for poor stories which is being exploited by the majority of current sf magazines.) However, I suppose a sf magazine was an inevitable development. And Gernsback showed fairly good taste in his reprints, though most of what seems to be original material in his first three years isn't too good. But it is nonsense to speak of the dearth of material or of Gernsback having to develop authors. It is too bad that he didn't. The better sf authors were writing for non-sf magazines, and writing apparently original hardcovers. And the better authors kept on writing for these other outlets leaving Gernsback to develop the second-raters and the fans turning into authors.

Bernarr Macfadden's bankrupting of Gernsback had an ill effect on sf. Gernsback had to start all over again (a wonderful performance) and the Wonder chain never quite became a financial success, though if not for the Depression he might have triumphed. The result was an increase in the number of sf magazines, without a proportionate increase in at least decent stories.

Erg #37 - Terry Jeeves

As for sf magazines leading their readers into science there was an article in Scientific American in 1955 by a big-wig at the National Bureau of Standards who said that he was inspired into his job by reading "The Skylark Of Space" in Amazing Stories. R. C. W. Et-

tinger, the body-freezer, apparently received his inspiration from sf, though whether or not he could be considered a scientist is debatable. And on less publicized echelons I don't doubt that there are at least thousands of scientists, engineers and technicians who were inspired by reading sf to choose their careers.

Hell #3 - Brian Robinson & Paul Skelton

Peter Linnett: You say "What I (at least) read sf for are ideas ... But some authors seem obsessed with the same antiquated ideas -- what they do is give them some twist or variation from story to story." This is a quite true indictment, as far as it goes. But when was the last time a story had an original idea as the basis for the story? And it seems to be a problem with some authors that presenting an idea in fictional form is considered to be the sum total of their obligations. I find the writing, the characterization, the development to be far more crucial to my enjoyment. If the idea is so important to carrying a story then I usually find such stories to be poor and not worth reading the first time, let alone subsequently.

And as for priority of ideas, ptui. It's the job done with the idea that counts or else the legend that this was the original story with idea X. E. E. Smith is often given credit for writing the first story of extra-solar-system travel and is somewhat revered by certain people for this. It isn't so. Jean Delaire's *Around a Distant Star* published by John Long around 1904 is an even earlier example and it may not be the first. Heinlein's "Universe" is credited as the first generation-ship story unless someone remembers Wilcox' "The Voyage That Lasted 600 Years". But Nat Schachner preceded both of them with "The Return Of the Murians". The point is not priority of ideas but the handling (and the press-agentry) that determines the story that is remembered.

This desire is so overwhelming in certain authors that in recent years we've seen an author lying about having read certain stories in order to attempt to credit himself with independent invention of the same idea, an author blasting someone who showed that he wasn't the originator of an idea (and a fairly common one at that) and so on. This is particularly disgusting when they should have been men enough to admit that the ideas had been done before but they were merely trying to improve upon the predecessor stories. The desire for priority must be an overwhelming one when it causes them to lie and libel and slander.