THE MYSTIC RENAISSANCE IN ASTOUNDING STORIES

BY LELAND SAPIRO

PART 2 OF 3

SECTION 4. SOME RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES

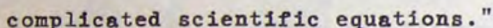
Thus far, we have considered only the more obvious examples, where mysticism was expressed as a unification of some kind--either conveyed directly or implied by the occult notion of "sympathy." But for reasons just indicated we also should expect the doctrine to be conveyed indirectly by a minimizing or a derision of man's rational faculties.

Such views frequently were expressed via an unfounded reliance on instinct. The first such story was T.C. McClary's "Rebirth" (February 1934), in which a scientist obliterates the memory of everybody in the world. Following this event, men are enabled by instinct alone to recognize sickness, dislike rats and corpses; and to perform complex actions like the gauging of relative velocities and the apprehending of an adulterous mate.

Another advertisement for instinct was J. Harvey Haggard's "Lost in Space" (August 1935). This story, like Harl Vincent's "Cosmic Rhythm," describes a spaceliner seized by an inexplicable force--but in this instance the ship is thrown so far off course that the very constellations look unfamiliar.

The ship appears lost--and this news is accompanied by a radical change in the behavior of everybody on board. The chief pilot resumes biting fingenails, explaining to the captain that "I had trouble with the habit when a boy"; a previously reticent matron kisses a strange man who passes her in the corridor; a crewmember, explaining that "I've always wanted to do this," burglarizes the safe where "most of the ship's currency" is stored (where he proposes to spend the money the author does not specify).

No self-consistent explanation is given; so let us just say that there is a release of inhibitions caused by each person's belief that he will never be held to account for his actions (1). In any case, the ship eventually finds its bearings with the aid of a canine passenger. Even while the ship was floundering, the dog always ran to that side facing the Earth; so by using the dog as a guide the Captain is able to reorient his ship. "You can't lose a dog," explains a (human) passenger. "They've got a sense of orientation which is utterly unexplainable even by the most



complicated scientific equations."

And so what begins as an interesting psychological study culminates in a trite observation on the instincts of Man's Best Friend.

Now, a statement that science or intelligence is "not enough" can be construed in several ways. If it is taken as a reference to behavior patterns which are "instinctive," i.e., not learned, then the sentence is a biological truism. A similar remark applies to the frequently heard statement that intelligence and compassion do not always occur together. But sometimes the inference is made that intelligence precludes emotion. Such a statement is a cliché, but unlike the other two--which are facts of common observation--it originates from sentiments which are centuries old.

In the "scientific" universe of the 18th century there was no soul, no Deity, no human values--but only a multitude of atoms, with motions specified by the laws of Newtonian Mechanics. Such a universe was not conceived as a fit habitation for human beings; and the widespread resentment was conveyed by the Romantic emphasis on emotion and those qualities which distinguish a human being from a mechanical thinking machine. On another level, this resentment eventually was expressed by the popular conception of the scientist himself, who was represented as a being without sentiment, a human embodiment of the Newtonian World-Machine.

This stereotype was encountered many times in Hugo Gernsback's Amazing Stories, and it was not entirely absent from Tremaine's magazine.

"Science does not admit love or pity," asserts J.R. Fearn's chemist-astronomer ("Before the Earth Came," July 1934), "three thousand years of scientific progress have drilled such sentiments out of us." Similar unconcern is manifested by the scientists of Harl Vincent's "Rex" (June 1934), who "immersed in their work and oblivious of all else....gave little thought to the plight of their fellow men." Finally, there are Nat Schachner's "Saprophyte Men of Venus," (October 1936) who plan to enslave the Earth. "What frightful things these Venusians are," cries the heroine, "with all their intellect and scientific knowledge."

From the wickedness of scientists it seems a natural transition to the wickedness of science itself. Actually, the concept of science as "forbidden" knowledge is an abiding part of the Christian tradition--as is seen by the medieval Faustus legends (2)--and antedates Newtonian Mechanics by many centuries. Nevertheless, this "Faustian" notion was conveyed to Tremaine's readers by the same trio cited above.

Thus we learn in Nat Schachner's "Isotope Men" (January 1936) that many chemical substances--in particular those in the human body--are comprised of "mixed" elements, or isotopes, with non-integral atomic weights; and the story describes an attempt to create two human beings from one, with each man's body comprising "pure" elements instead of isotopes.

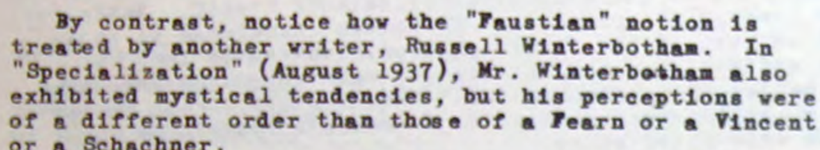
But the experiment has evil consequences because, to quote scientist Malcolm Stubbs, "in our scientific arrogance we tampered with forces beyond our control." Such "arrogance" was demonstrated in the experimenter's earlier claim that "I've done what nature has merely fumbled at doing." "Nature," of course, is a euphemism for the Deity, and therefore Stubbs is properly chastised for his impiety.

A similar allusion occurs in Harl Vincent's "Prowler of the Wastelands" (April 1935), where somebody meditates:

> "...it was sacreligious to do a thing like this, to tamper with nature's law."

But the most outrageous impiety is committed by J.R. Fearn's experimenters on the doomed planet Jin ("Before the Earth Came," op. cit.), who plan to create an artificial solar system and to found a new race on its third planet. This experiment, too, is not entirely successful. "I might have known it," exclaims the scientist-in-charge, "we are usurping the Creator's power." (3)

Thus a writer can express by a stereotyped portrayal of scientists the notion that science is "not enough" and he can express by his own superstitious fear of knowledge the conception that certain things are "not meant" for humans to know. Both of these sentiments are trite and outworn, so that a writer who repeats either one is simply anaesthetizing (in George Orwell's phrase) a part of the reader's brain.



By contrast, notice how the "Faustian" notion is treated by another writer, Russell Winterbotham. In "Specialization" (August 1937), Mr. Winterbotham also exhibited mystical tendencies, but his perceptions were of a different order than those of a Fearn or a Vincent or a Schachner.

> Riker looked at the father and daughter. "I suppose," he said, "that I should object. I should say that I will have nothing to do with it. I should accuse you of tampering with nature and declare that I will have nothing to do with such an unholy venture." He smiled broadly, but nervously. "I confess that I do feel like a bad boy stealing apples from an orchard. But I was never so interested in anything in my life. Dr. von Shuler, I am keenly anxious to witness the experiment."

This author is sensitive to what he "ought" to feel, but at the same time he exhibits such proper sentiment in a new perspective, thus enlarging the perceptions of the reader.

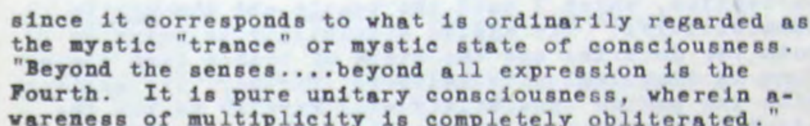
Recall now the original train of thought: we discussed mysticism and the distrust of intellect; this led, by a logical non sequitur, to the concept of the inhuman scientist and thence to the impiety of science itself.

These last sentiments have no direct connection with mysticism--but they will help us to frame an answer to a general question: What connection exists between mysticism and literary ability? More specifically, what mystical stories in Tremaine's magazine possessed literary merit, and how was such merit determined by the author's mysticism?

SECTION 5. AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Before proceeding, we must say a word about the mystical experience itself, as distinct from the creed to which it gives rise.

According to the Upanishads there are four types of awareness of "aspects of the Self." The first two correspond to waking consciousness and to the consciousness in dreams; the third, to what we should call dreamless sleep. The last state is what interests us here,



since it corresponds to what is ordinarily regarded as the mystic "trance" or mystic state of consciousness. "Beyond the senses....beyond all expression is the Fourth. It is pure unitary consciousness, wherein awareness of multiplicity is completely obliterated."

To quote a modern authority,

> Mystical experience is marked by the emergence of a new type of consciousness with is not sharply focalized, or clearly differentiated into a subject-object state. The "subject" and "object" are fused into an undivided one....Deep-lying powers...seem suddenly liberated. The usual insulations, which sunder our inner life into something like compartments, seem shot through.... transcendent energies from beyond the margin (and) appear to "invade" the individual self, a larger, environing consciousness, an enfolding presence, makes itself felt. (4)

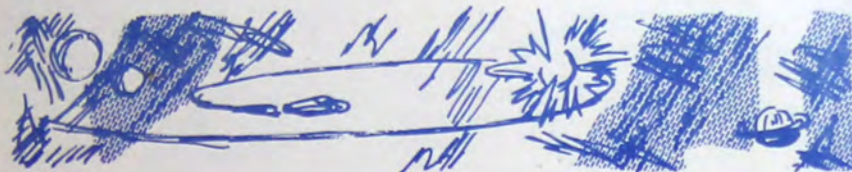
Thus the individual self is diffused into a more inclusive enveloping consciousness, and so experiences (in the words of W.B. Yeats) "that union with created things which assuredly must precede the soul's union with the created spirit."

But to be coextensive with all living things is to experience the perceptions of others as one's own; the true disciple, states the Bhagavad-Gita, is one

> Who burns with the bliss
> And suffers the sorrow
> Of every creature
> Within his own heart,
> Making his own
> Each bliss and each sorrow. (5)

It must be emphasized that the mystical experience need not be articulated in a specific doctrine. Therefore one must distinguish between mysticism as a metaphysical creed and mysticism as a particular kind of experience. The first is a corpus of beliefs--in my opinion, false--about the nature of "reality"; the second is a special kind of consciousness, to which is associated an attitude of universal compassion--and whatever else is desirable in mysticism.

Related to both of these are two similar modes of



perception, which I call the poetic and the mystic sensibilities. The mystic sensibility is prior to both the doctrine and the state of trance (and therefore is identical with neither); further, its alliance with the poetic sensibility will furnish us the desired information about the literary implications of mysticism.

The relationship between these types of sensibility may be clarified through an analogy.

Imagine, first, a drug addict who can recall in exact detail his last night's opium dream, with all the sensations, visual, auditory, and olfactory, which he then experienced. This individual need not possess what is ordinarily classified as "memory," but only an acute sensitiveness.

Next, conceive somebody who via his imagination alone can specify the manifold of sights and sounds and smells which constituted the dream. Such a person--who can recreate an opium dream without taking opium--would exemplify what I call the poetic sensibility.

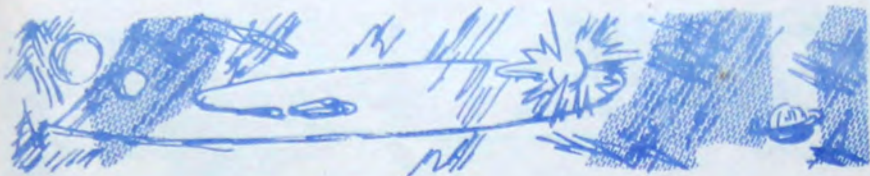
As a rough approximation, we can say that the mystic sensibility bears the same relationship to the mystical trance that the poet's imaginative recreation of an opium dream has to the dream-experience itself. Just as a poet, without the use of drugs, can specify the events of an opium dream (6), so a mystically sensitive person can approximate at will that particular ramifying consciousness associated with the mystical trance.

Now let us approach the subject in a more analytic fashion.

The poet (more precisely, the poetic writer) may be described as a person who is aware of correspondences between external events and his own inward states--and who uses such correspondence to translate his emotions into sense-data. (The reader, by "decoding" these data, then can approximate within himself the poet's original emotions.)

An elementary example is Paul Verlaine's

> Il pleure dans mon coeur
> Comme il pleut sur la ville.
> (It weeps in my heart
> As it rains on the town.)



which conveys a structural similarity between rain and the physical expression of grief.

A more complicated example is Conrad Aiken's "Winter for a Moment Takes the Mind":

> Winter is there, outside, is here
> in me;
> Drapes the planet with snow, deepens
> the ice on the moon,
> Darkens the darkness that was already
> darkness
> The mind too has its snows, its slippery
> paths,
> Walls bayonetted with ice, leaves
> ice-encased.

I leave detailed exegesis to the reader; he will notice that this passage expresses (among many other things) a similarity between lunar gradients and cerebral disposition, and in particular between "bayonets" and unpleasant memories.

A poet, then, is somebody who expresses correspondence between internal and external events--or who relates external events to one another by mediation of his own consciousness.

Now imagine that the poet experiences not just correspondence, but <u>continuity</u>--that he feels the rain in the town and the weeping in his heart to be correlated not accidentally, but necessarily. Anybody with perceptions of this order we designate as an example of the mystic sensibility. "The mystic is a man who <u>knows</u> by immediate experience the organic continuity between his self and the cosmos" (7)--and such an attitude is merely an extension of the poetic sensibility just described. The mystic and poetic sensibilities gradually merge into one another and (as shown, e.g., by William Blake and W.B. Yeats) frequently co-exist in the same person (8).

Any sensitively written story, therefore, exemplifies the poetic sensibility; it also represents the mystic variety if it expounds some phase of occult doctrine.

In the present context the most relevant example is Harry Bates, the former editor of <u>Astounding Stories</u>. The following account is necessarily brief; for a more

complete discussion, see (9).

Mr. Bates' early theme is the Failure of Intelligence: From "A Matter of Size" (April 1934), his first contribution to the new Astounding Stories, the reader infers that excessive intelligence is repulsive in the individual and debilitating for the species--a viewpoint stated more explicitly in Bates' next story, "Alas, All Thinking!" (June 1935), where intelligence, as opposed to instinct, is represented as an evolutionary dead-end. Of course, this theme had been expressed frequently in the magazine (see Section 4), but (in the editor's words) "never like this."

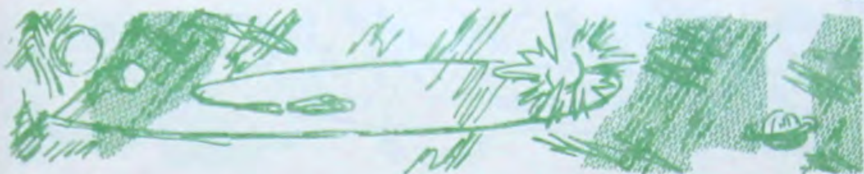
The story is told by Harlan Fric , playboy and one-time physicist, who explains that he has glimpsed the "horrible cerebral future" which awaits humanity. The initial event was a materialization, in Frick's laboratory, of a machine, whose passenger is described as "a baroque out of a far future time."

> I was surprised, but somehow I wasn't much frightened. The person of my visitor was not intimidating. She was just a barefooted young woman.... clad in a....black shift which reached her knees ....she was miles from being pretty. Her hair and eyes were all right....but her face was plain and flat, with an extraordinary and forbidding expression of dry intellectuality.

The scientist asks the girl--whom he calls "Pearl" --if he may visit her own civilization, several million years in the future, and she assents. But on arrival, Frick sees no material signs of progress; there is only a field, "tenanted with a square block of large metallic boxes...."

In every cell there is exactly one human being, whose every instant is devoted to meditation. Frick is assured that the thinkers will not be disturbed by his visit; in fact "they....will be able neither to see nor hear you."

> I saw a man; or some kind of man....he was all one gigantic head, or at least a great mass on whose parchment surface appeared a little round two-holed knoll, where the nose customarily is, lidded caverns where the eyes belong....By not



> the slightest movement....did the monster show he knew I was there. He sat on a high dais; his arms were only bones converging downward; his body....showed every rib....and his pipe of a neck, unable alone to support his head, gave most of that job to two curved metal pieces that came out of the wall. He had a musty smell ....And, final horror, the stuff that covered him to the waist was dust; and there were two inches of dust on the top of his head and lesser piles....on every little upper surface!

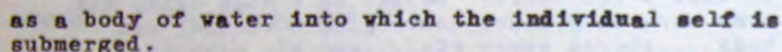
Later Pearl "listens" to the cogitations of one such thinker, and relays them to her visitor:

> "Mind force....How powerful--mm--yes, powerful --Basis of everything living--Mm, yes, everything is relative, but everything together makes unity--therefore we have a relative unit--or, since the reverse is the other half of the obverse, the two together equal another unity.... Sounds as if it might mean something. Einstein was a primitive...."

Frick eventually exterminates these last human representatives; then he journeys back to the present, where he resolves to exercise his brain no more than absolutely necessary.

Certain aspects of this story--e.g., the thinkers' meaningless cerebrations--ought not to be interpreted literally; rather they must be considered as expressions of the author's own distaste toward the purely cognitive existence, with its substitution of concepts in place of direct acquaintance. The shallowness of the purely intellectual life is acknowledged near the end, by Pearl herself, who expresses regreat that "....her poor contemporaries....had died without dreaming life could hold such wealth of emotional experience."

Harry Bates is especially interesting because of his progression through the entire range of mystical beliefs; his next-to-last story, "Death of a Sensitive" (Science Fiction Plus, May 1953), depicted with unforgettable clarity the occult oneness of all life, and his "The Triggered Dimension" (Science Fiction Plus, December 1953) depicted the psychic ocean literally



as a body of water into which the individual self is submerged.

Of course, neither of these was printed in Astounding Stories; but the first, "Death of a Sensitive," will nevertheless provide us with a standard by which the Astounding story can be judged.

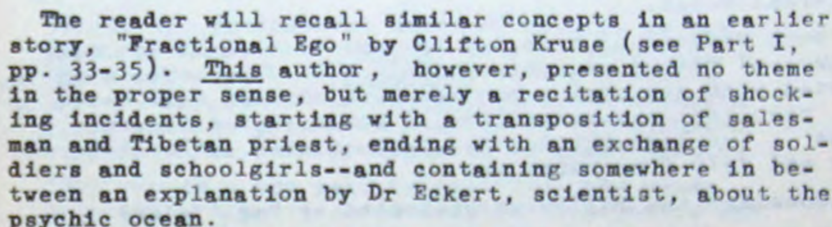
Here, the mystic sensibility is expressed by and in the story, with its two "sensitives," John Inglis and his brother, each finding that his multiplicity of awareness makes existence almost intolerable:

> "We were sensitive, but much too sensitive. The normal person lives within a shell which gives a measure of protection from the disharmonic waves of the psychic Mother Ocean; we seemed to lack that shell. We could be bruised by a look, wounded by a thought; we could be lifted and tossed and battered and half-drowned in the great swells of animal emotion from the great submerged herd. With increasing divergence we more and more sought quiet and seclusion...."

Strange reports are being circulated about John, who is behaving like a friend to the insects descending into his apartment. "The people upstairs are doing something which drives them down," he states. "I think they are poisoning them...."

Inglis explains how he had once spilled flour on the kitchen floor; afterwards, while preparing to sweep it up, he notices something. As described, later, by the narrator:

> Near one edge of the whitened area lay a large cockroach, dead. Backward from it lay the trail it had made in its passage from the other side. The trail twisted and doubled; it looked like writing. Suddenly I saw that it was writing. Four words lay spelled out there in a wandering schoolboy hand....They read, "do not kill us." The last "s" was not quite finished, and the writer lay on its back, its legs folded symmetrically inward....I was frightened. The air around me seemed charged with unknown potential. Somewhere in space-time--somehow--an intelligence could conceive this--will this--possessed the undetectable force to effect this.



The reader will recall similar concepts in an earlier story, "Fractional Ego" by Clifton Kruse (see Part I, pp. 33-35). This author, however, presented no theme in the proper sense, but merely a recitation of shocking incidents, starting with a transposition of salesman and Tibetan priest, ending with an exchange of soldiers and schoolgirls--and containing somewhere in between an explanation by Dr Eckert, scientist, about the psychic ocean.

By contrast to Mr Bates, whose mysticism expresses a specific point of view, Mr Kruse introduces his mystical theory solely as a convenient way to explain irrational happenings. The makeshift character of Kruse's theory is attested, e.g., by his failure to conform with common-sense notions of probability: with several billion people in the world and with the transpositions being (in Eckert's words) by "mere chance, it is improbable that any of the exchanges would concern the inventor's own employees.

Now let us return to our original question, which (stated more precisely) is this: Does there exist a positive correlation between literary merit and the fictional expression of the mystical creed? The answer is yes, provided that the doctrine represents (as for Harry Bates) a mystic sensibility; in such a case, the mysticism informs the story and gives relevance to each of its components.

It was the mystical doctrine without the corresponding sensibility that so often resulted in literary catastrophe for Tremaine's magazine; for then the mysticism was extraneous, i.e., it represented not a special mode of perception but merely a quick (and usually contradictory) solution to a problem. This explains why in so many instances where the doctrine was stated "conceptually" through an occult union or sympathy, it also was expressed stylistically by incoherence in the narrative itself.

SECTION 6. ON "THOUGHT-VARIANTS"

Our previous topic was something common to the mystic and the poet; but there is another characteristic, which the poet and mystic both share with the child, namely, the inability to distinquish between one's self and the

external world.

Such naiveté is regarded by some writers as implying a general method of composition. W.B. Yeats, for example, quotes with approval a passage from Shelley, who urges us to "recollect our sensations as children," during which time "...we less habitually distinquished all that we saw and felt from ourselves..."

Consider the following statement by Paul Valery:

> Let us imagine that the sight of things that surround us is not familiar, that it is allowed us as an exception, and that we only obtain by a miracle, knowledge of the day, of the heavens, of the sun, and of faces. What would we say about these revelations, and in what terms would we speak of this infinity of wonderfully adjusted data? What would we say...if the world only appeared very occasionally, to cross, to dazzle, and to crush the unstable, incoherent world of the solitary soul?
>
> Mysticism consists perhaps, in rediscovering an elementary and in some ways primitive sensation. (10)

The term "primitive sensation" conveys precisely what is experienced by the child, for he has not yet organized this "infinity of data" into recurrent perceptions.

To a child, for example, John Peale Bishop's lines--

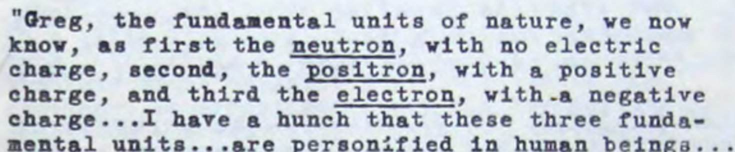
> Upon that road, a man goes
> Dragging a shadow by its toes--

might express a literal truth, since he possesses no empirical knowledge about the optical behavior of objects in sunlight.

But the child's naiveté must be lost in order to be recaptured; it can serve as a literary method only for a writer who, in the meantime, has acquired an adult's knowledge and technique and awareness of complexity.

The reader has undoubtedly anticipated my next statement--that many writers of the Astounding story possessed child-like naiveté, not as something deliberately recaptured but as something which never had been outgrown.

A typical instance was J. Frederick's "thought-variant story, "The Einstein Express" (April 1935):



"Greg, the fundamental units of nature, we now know, as first the neutron, with no electric charge, second, the positron, with a positive charge, and third the electron, with a negative charge...I have a hunch that these three fundamental units...are personified in human beings...

"The man in a sex pair is positive; the woman negative. A positron is a union of negative and positive. You, unpaired, and with a generally negative temperament, I am sure would register neutral. You would be the neutron."

When used properly, the so-called pathetic fallacy--the ascribing of human emotions to inanimate objects--furnishes the poet with a means to convey structural analogies between external events and his subjective states. However, when a writer considers this device as an expression of factual truth, he is no longer a "poet" but a bad metaphysician.

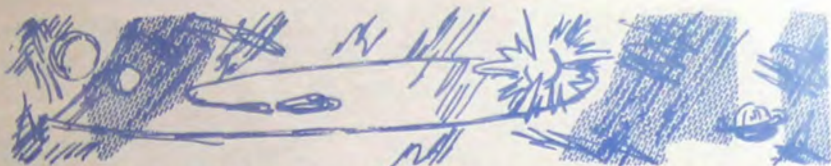
"Organic" notions also were conveyed in Jack Williamson's "Born of the Sun" (March 1934):

"Did you never wonder...why the sun...expands and contracts in the rhythm of the sun-spot cycle, with a beat like the pulse of a living thing?"

Mr Williamson's "thought-variant" idea was the literal conception of the Earth as a "Great Egg," which splits upon development of its embryo.

Here it might be objected that the author himself did not seriously entertain the idea, which by his own admission was preposterous. ("Born of the Sun," I must explain, arose from a dispute between Mr Williamson and another writer, in which one maintained that "no idea was too impossible to make convincing in a story" <11>.) Unfortunately, Mr Williamson has written other "thought-variants" for which no such excuse can be offered.

This author's "Galactic Circle" I cited previously (see Part I, p. 38), and similar naivete was displayed in his "Islands of the Sun (September 1935), whose title refers to planets conceived as rotating in the photosphere. Humanity is saved from the wicked solar inhabitants, the Xyli, when the planet is vomited from the sun into its present orbit--an action described by the editor as a "thought-variant conception of the gaseous origins of the earth."



Still another "thought-variant," Nat Schachner's "Reverse Universe" (June 1936), describes a Captain and his First Officer being tossed adrift, in a space-boat, by mutineers. Seized by a "super-force of unimaginable intensity," the craft is impelled into a faster-than-light velocity and thence into a new universe, where time runs backwards. To quote a justifiably indignant reader,

> Reverse Universe approximates...the struggle of a sympathetic author without imagination to protray in verbal form a theory beyond his own scientific comprehension...(12).

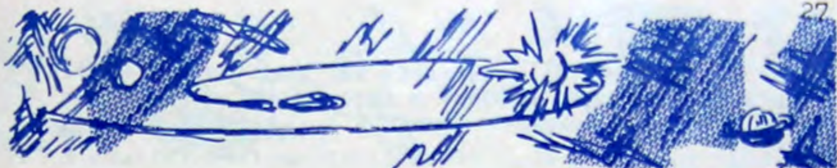
However, we must not suppose that the editor reserved the label "thought-variant" only for works distinquished by their manifest absurdity; he likewise affixed to to another, smaller group of stories which exhibited no positive characteristics whatever. Typical were "Warner van Lorne's" "White Adventure" (April 1936), a catalogue of distressing events caused by an abnormal snowfall, or Nat Schachner's "He From Procyon" (April 1934), which tells how a deific Being attaches a special device to the pineal gland of six people, thereby endowing each with the ability to make others obey his commands. Here, the familiar stereotypes--henpecked husband, brainless chorus girl, ambitious political boss, etc.--are manipulated through an unbelievably tedious fifty pages.

I remark that any science fiction story which depends on stereotypes--figures with preassigned sets of characteristics--invariably degenerates into just a catalogue of events; for an event is interesting only when it happens to somebody, and a stereotype, being merely a set of conditioned reflexes, cannot be conceived by the literate reader as being a legitimate somebody.

Thus Murray Leinster's "Sidewise in Time"--the "thought-variant" for June 1934--tries to elicit feelings of wonder by allusions to Chinese junks sailing the Potamac, toga-clad Roman soldiers marching through Missouri, etc. But the author cannot convey to us the reactions of appropriate people, because there are no "people" in his story.

More generally,

> We cannot put stress on the bare events, since the unnatural extravagance of these events makes them sound hollow and absurd when thrown into



> too high relief...All that a marvel story can... is a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood...Therefore a fantastic author should see that his prime emphasis goes into subtle suggestion...imperceptible hints and touches of selective and associative detail...instead of ...bald catalogues of incredible happenings which can have no substance or meaning apart from a sustaining cloud of colour and mood-symbolism. (13)

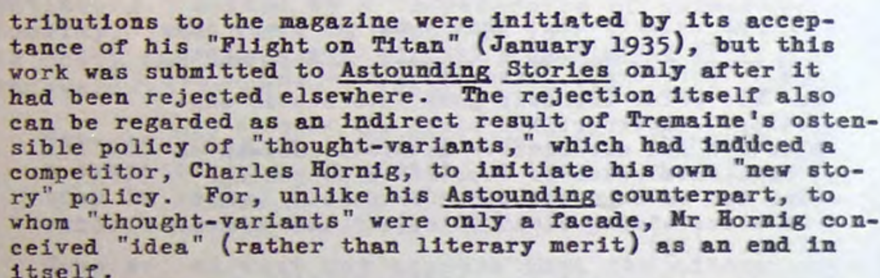
Such "selective and associative detail" was approximated in a pair of "thought-variants": Orlin Tremaine's own "Upper Level Road" (August 1935) and H.L. Gold's "Inflexure" (October 1934).

Tremaine's story, while absurd, was not manifestly absurd, and stylistically it was competent. Mr Gold's story, like Mr Leinster's, depicted a sequence of miraculous events--a Long Island fishing party being devoured by an ichthyosaurus, a dinosaur being shot in Africa by Hugo Miller, an exiled German physician, etc.--but it was lifted above the ordinary "thought-variant" by its author's perceptions of incongruity (14). Typical was Mr Gold's description of the sea-reptile's luncheon (the only person not eaten: "Hard-tack" McNutt) and his characterization of Herr Miller's crime as "practicing vivisection on his patients without regard for their social status."

With two exceptions, then, the "thought-variants" were "hollow and absurd"--or simply lacked any noticable characteristics. Only a minority contained occult notions ("Galactic Circle," "Time Entity," "Before the Earth Came"); but nearly all displayed a child-like naiveté, akin to mysticism. (15)

At this point we must distinquish between Orlin Tremaine's actual and his ostensible editorial policies. From his printed remarks about "thought-variants"--that they were "blazing a...new trail" (February 1934) or that they "have injected new life into a field...rutted by habit-driven vehicles" (April 1934)--the reader might have inferred that they were important; but the success, literary and financial, of Tremaine's magazine was mostly the result of his superior discrimination.

It was by virtue of his literary discernment that this editor acquired his two most important writers: Don A. Stuart and Stanley Weinbaum. Mr Weinbaum's regular con-



tributions to the magazine were initiated by its acceptance of his "Flight on Titan" (January 1935), but this work was submitted to Astounding Stories only after it had been rejected elsewhere. The rejection itself also can be regarded as an indirect result of Tremaine's ostensible policy of "thought-variants," which had induced a competitor, Charles Hornig, to initiate his own "new story" policy. For, unlike his Astounding counterpart, to whom "thought-variants" were only a facade, Mr Hornig conceived "idea" (rather than literary merit) as an end in itself.

> Many will recall Wonder Stories' "new story" policy of 1934, when every tale had to embody a new idea or an original twist of an old one. When "Flight on Titan" arrived...the most careful perusal failed to reveal even a microscopic fragment of a new idea...So it was rejected. Anyone could have recognized a great story such as "A Martian Odyssey," but it took Orlin Tremaine to recognize a fine writing style in an ordinary adventure yarn...So it was...that Wonder Stories lost what might have been an exclusive option on Weinbaum's imagination and the reader-appeal that went with it. (16)

Similar remarks apply to Don A. Stuart, whose classic story, "Twilight" (November 1934), was accepted by Tremaine's magazine after being rejected by both its competitors.

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. According to the captain, "this shunting of the ship ...seems to bring the primeval, more degenerate characteristics to the fore"--but the pilot's nail-biting appears to be a reversion to a childhood habit rather than anything "degenerate" in the racial sense; while the sexual by-play in the corridor seems not quite the mental lassitude noted elsewhere in the story. Even the explanation given in this paper is contradicted by the author's final diagnosis, that the strange behavior was caused by malfunctioning of the air-purifier.

2. See this writer's "The Faustus Tradition in the Early Science Fiction Story," Inside Science Fiction (Editor: Jonathan White, 90 Riverside Dr., N.Y.), where

it is argued that the wickedness of science and scientists was the central notion of Hugo Gernsback's Amazing Stories.

3. A similar rationalization--"I have a feeling that one cannot look into the gulf without being destroyed"--appears in J.R. Fearn's "He Never Slept" (June 1934).

4. "Mysticism," Hastings Enclopedia, 83-84.

5. Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita (New York, 1954), p.67.

6. Cf. Clark Ashton Smith's "The Hashish Eater."

7. Waldo Frank, "Foreword," The Complete Poems of Hart Crane, xiii.

8. The poetic and mystic sensibilities gradually merge into a third variety, the maniacal, in which causation is perceived in nearly everything. All three modes were exemplified simultaneously by the French symbolist poet, Gerard de Nerval, who believed that the moon's orbit was determined by the path which he traversed in the garden. Not only this: "I attributed a mystic meaning to the conversations of the guards and of my companions. It seemed to me that...we were to arrange a new movement of the stars" (Richard Aldington, trans. Aurelia, p. 50).

9. A.J. Cox, "Harry Bates: A Matter of Identity," Skyhook, Autumn, 1957.

10. "On Painting," from Selected Writings (New York, 1950), p. 224.

11. The Fantasy Fan, I (1934), 152.

12. John R. Carroll, Astounding Stories, September 1936, 157.

13. H.P. Lovecraft, Marginalia (Sauk City: Arkham House Publ., 1944), 142.

14. H.L. Gold was the number one purveyor of irony in the Astounding story, with Nat Schachner (incredibly enough) being an occasional second--as can be seen, e.g., from his "Thought Web of Minipar" (November 1936), 108-109. Enjoying a reputation as satirist was Stanton Coblentz, for reasons which I am unable to determine.

15. Cf. Robert Lowndes: "Tremaine was willing to go along with almost any sort of mystical nonsense for the sake of what he called 'thought variants.'" (Discord, January 1962, 12.)

16. Sam Moskowitz, "Stanley G. Weinbaum: A Comprehensive Appraisal," Fantasy Commentator, III (1951-1952), 137.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT ISSUE