

# THE FANTASY FAN

## THE FANS' OWN MAGAZINE

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### OUR READERS SAY

"Some of us have seen Paul's illustrations so long that we can't get used to Morey's or Wesso's or anyone else's. I would suggest that THE FANTASY FAN have a *different* artist to illustrate a *different* kind of picture in a *different* way. We don't want that stereotyped kind of illustrating we are getting in the other magazines. And we don't want that stereotyped kind of writing that is being done so much lately." — Art Skold

It will probably be quite some time before THE FANTASY FAN can afford to have its stories illustrated, for it is an expensive proposition. Weird stories such as we print should have illustrations by artists who know how to draw *weird* pictures such as Hugh Rankin and Brosnatch.

"The March THE FANTASY FAN looks like an excellent issue—typographical impression improved. But may I ask that some extremely misleading misprints in my letter be corrected? One is especially bad, giving a direct contradiction of what I really wrote—this being the substitution of AN for NO in the phrase meant to read '*no* especial morbidity.' (Your Views department). Other

errors are 'prospection' for 'perspective' and the omission of 'g' from the word judgment.

"Glad to see the interesting tale by Robert E. Howard and the powerful poem by Clark Ashton Smith."

— H. P. Lovecraft

We are very sorry about the typographical errors in your article and our printer has promised to do better proof-reading in the future.

"I enjoyed the February issue. 'Polaris' carries off the honours. I liked very much the poem by William Lumley and hope you will print more of his work. Barlow's fifth 'Annals of the Jinns' is another gem.

"I am sorry that the argument in 'The Boiling Point' has aroused any ill-feeling. Perhaps you are wise to discontinue the column and start one on a more abstract intellectual basis. Later on, I may have a little to say on the problems broached for discussion.

"I look forward to seeing the stories announced for future publication. More power to TFF!"

— Clark Ashton Smith

"The 'Our Readers Say' is always interesting, and I'm glad you're increasing the length of Lovecraft's article in the next issue. Lester Anderson's article was good, as well as



humorous, and so is Hoy Ping Pong, as usual." — Kenneth B. Pritchard

"The March THE FANTASY FAN was a wow!—hope it keeps improving!" — Bob Tucker

"The March issue is very interesting. Howard's story is both unusual and well-written, and any poetry of Smith's is predestined to excellence."

— R. H. Barlow

"I read 'Polaris' and especially liked the Pole Star's poetry—the ten line ryme in the center of the story. I found Miss Marianne Ferguson's 'Visit to Jules de Grandin' the most interesting article in the February issue, while the Spacehound's column was very good. I look forward to the stories you forecast."

— Forrest J. Ackerman

"The tales in TFF are clever and entertaining little things, and now and then one is a classic, like 'Polaris' by Lovecraft in the last issue. Also the other features of the magazine—entertaining, provocative of thought, and withal interesting and divertive. Whatever others thought of it, I thought the hot-fire 'debate' between Ackerman and C. A. Smith highly amusing. Best wishes to TFF, and I hope your dire predictions of bi-monthly-ism do not come true." —Eando Binder

"Glad you substituted 'Your Views' (a prosiac heading) for 'The Boiling Point.' The readers' department is sometimes too long, but your stories are short and excellent. Lovecraft's article has always been too short. 'The Ghoul' was *great*. Barlow is consistently good. About the best thing in the February issue was Smith's article on M. R. James. I hope you can

persuade Smith to write some articles on Machen, Blackwood, Bierce, etc. They are highly informative."

— Lester Anderson

"H'ray and so forth! I've discovered a magazine that isn't published in N'Yawk — namely THE FANTASY FAN. Well, be that as it may, I must tell you that I enjoyed your February issue. I like such a page as you have wherein the readers can have their sayso about stories and authors and whatnot that fills a magazine. I always look for such a page in any magazine, and I was both surprised and pleased to find that you feature yours on the first page. Boy, I must admit that I liked that tale by H. P. Lovecraft, 'Polaris.' I enjoyed Miss Ferguson's visit to Jules de Grandin (hope she reads this)."

— Gertrude Hemken

"I hope that your future issues will be as good as this February issue was and is. All of the articles were very fine, and the stories were very good, too."

— Fred John Walsen

"I enjoyed the February issue of THE FANTASY FAN thoroughly. Lovecraft's story was fine, as usual, and I particularly like C. A. Smith's article about M. R. James. Could you persuade him to write further articles about other famous fantasy writers? Your list of stories to come look very good."

— Emil Petaja

"Those poems by Richard F. Searight and William Lumley in the February issue are great and certainly have a touch of the bizarre that grips one. I am looking forward to the verse by Clark Ashton Smith in much anticipation. The story by Lovecraft hits the



bull's-eye for February, but is closely followed by the excellent series by Barlow, 'The Tomb of the God' in the 'Annals of the Jinns.' I hope, like the rest, that the future instalments of Lovecraft's 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' will be longer. I just about get interested when I read 'continued next month.' I'm all for THE FANTASY FAN and hope it gets better and better!"

— Duane W. Rimel

"I liked Lovecraft's 'Polaris' even better than 'The Other Gods'—beautifully told—like a sweet-scented wind from the tainted unknown."

— Robert Nelson

"The February issue of TFF was the best of the issues up to date. The choice of material was much better than usual and there was more variety which is a very strong factor. Keep it up! Of course, I know you get that song and dance from all quarters, but I may as well add mine, too. 'The Weird Works of M. R. James' was a very fine review. This is what makes a magazine. I hope it will be possible to have Mr. Smith write one of those fine columns every month."

— F. Lee Baldwin

"I was delighted to see the bibliographical note on 'The Time Machine' by R. H. Barlow in the last issue. Similar short items on some of the better known stories should prove of extreme interest to the readers. I hope to see many more of them."

"May I take the liberty of adding a bit of information for the benefit of collectors of Wells' works? The college magazine 'The Science Schools Journal' was founded by Wells in

1886. In the April, May and June, 1888, issues Wells contributed and published his serial entitled, 'The Chronic Argonauts'—the main idea being one of time-traveling. As Mr. Barlow points out, this story was the first version of the time-machine. Collectors of Wells, however, will find that copies of the Journal are extremely rare and almost impossible to obtain because about 20 years ago, Wells purchased all of the back numbers still in stock and destroyed them. I have no doubt that Wells did this in order to prevent book dealers and others from cornering the supply and selling the issues at a high premium.

"Howard's story and Smith's poem were both splendid and I am indeed glad to learn that you intend to lengthen the instalments of Lovecraft's article."

— H. Koenig

Let's hear what you think of the April issue, readers. In this number you will find the first weird fiction attempt of Eando Binder, famous science fiction author. Next month we will give you the sixth 'Annals of the Jinns' by R. H. Barlow, 'The Flower-God,' and 'Phantom Lights' by August W. Derleth.

Here's big news! Beginning next month, we are presenting a brand new newsy fantasy column by those supersnoopers supreme, Julius Schwartz and Mortimer Weisinger.

*Fantasy Magazine* will have a change of Editors with its June number. Chr is retiring because, he says, "I'm going to be too busy with the printing, and besides that, Julius Schwartz will do a much better job, I won't be missed a little bit."



## PROSE PASTELS

by Clark Ashton Smith

I. *Chinoiserie*

Ling Yang, the poet, sits all day in his willow-hidden hut by the river side, and dreams of the Lady Moy. Spring and the swallows have returned from the timeless isles of amaranth, further than the flight of sails in the unknown south; the silver buds of the willow are breaking into gold; and delicate jade-green reeds have begun to push their way among the brown and yellow rushes of yesteryear. But Ling Yang is heedless of the brightening azure, the light that lengthens; and he has no eye for the northward flight of the waterfowl, and the passing of the last clouds, that melt and vanish in the flames of an amber sunset. For him, there is no season save that moon of waning summer in which he first met the Lady Moy. But a sorrow deeper than the sorrow of autumn abides in his heart: for the heart of Moy is colder to him than high mountain snows above a tropic valley; and all the songs he has made for her, the songs of the flute and the songs of the lute, have found no favor in her hearing.

Leagues away, in her pavilion of scarlet lacquer and ebony, the Lady Moy reclines on a couch piled with sapphire-coloured silks. All day, through the gathering gold of the willow-foliage, she watches the placid lake, on whose surface the pale-green lily pads have begun to widen. Beside her, in a turquoise-studded binding,

## SIDE GLANCES

by F. Lee Baldwin

R. H. Barlow is getting out a fine book of the late Rev. Henry S. Whitehead's letters. It will contain some fifty extremely interesting letters to the editor of *Weird Tales* and various other important persons in the fantastic group. The entire edition will consist of but thirty-five copies.

H. P. Lovecraft has written a story in collaboration with E. Hoffmann Price—"Through the Gates of the Silver Key" which will appear in the July issue of *Weird Tales*.

Seabury Quinn, who was formerly a lawyer, is now editor of a trade journal.

A 1927 issue of *Amazing Stories* contained a fan letter of 2300 words and a 1928 number presented one of 2600. How have you been doing, Forrie?



there lie the verses of the poet Ling Yung, who lived six centuries ago, and who sang in all his songs the praise of the Lady Loy, who disdained him. Moy has no need to peruse them any longer, for they live in her memory even as upon the written page. And, sighing, she dreams ever of the great poet Ling Yung, and of the melancholy romance that inspired his songs, and wonders enviously at the odd disdain that was shown toward him by the Lady Loy.



# The Ancient Voice

by Eando Binder

First of all I want to say that Norman Ross was normal. What I mean is that there was nothing odd or peculiar about him. He was just a common, ordinary, likable, erring human being like the rest of us. I say this now so that at the end of the story you won't have any illusions about him.

Sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't escape all this — these tossing nights of sleeplessness, that awakening in a cold sweat of horror, the tortured thoughts that rack my brain continuously? It would be so easy; a quiet, dark night, the rippling water—one splash and it would be done. Perhaps I will be driven to it; I feel that way sometimes.

But I will tell the story as best I can.

Norman Ross and I were operators for the International Radio News Service. Thrown together by chance, we had become good friends in the two years before this happened. We had always been on the day shift and handled calls from Europe. We liked the work and got good pay and often went out together for a little recreation. That is why I can say that Norman Ross was normal. Two years of friendship means a lot.

Well, one day just after working hours Hegstrom, our boss, called us into his office—both of us together.

"Boys," he said, "I need two operators for Central Asia calls in the night shift. I've always had my eye on you two and I'm going to offer the positions

to you two first. There's a little more responsibility and difficulty, but the pay is higher. Then it's night work. Do you want it? Think it over and tell me tomorrow. It's nothing compulsory."

We thought it over that evening, over glasses of beer, and decided to take it for a change. Hegstrom was pleased.

So we took up the night work. A veteran Oriental call operator broke us in the first night and then we went on our own.

We found the work mightily interesting. Many of the calls came in in broken English. You know, the English that a foreigner speaks that he learned from a book. I handled Persia and a couple of little countries with funny names. My friend Ross took the calls from China.

It was a little odd at first getting used to being alone. When we had the day shift, we were only two out of fifteen operators taking calls from Europe. In the night shift, the big room was empty except for us two. The sound of our typewriters was always extra loud in the silence. But we got used to it, and inside three weeks didn't mind the loneliness a bit. We had a chance to talk to each other occasionally, if Ross and I both happened to get short calls at the same time, and had to wait for the next ones. But the rest of the time the calls kept us busy, taking the messages from the Far East.



We had a little trouble, too, getting used to sleeping in daylight. Even with the blinds down you can't forget it's daylight outside and that makes it hard to go to sleep. Neither of us was married so we would hop right home after work. (Ross lived with an uncle and aunt; I roomed alone) and sleep until middle afternoon. Then we'd dress up and have a meal together and later roam around together looking for diversion. With the increased pay we got for the night work, we were able to see all kinds of expensive shows. Our lady companions liked that and we had just about a choice of any. Then after the show we would steer to some beer garden (thank the Lord Prohibition was repealed ten years ago) and laugh and talk the hours away. Ross and I would boast about our work and tell the girls strange—and a bit distorted—stories of some of the calls we took in from the mysterious East.

But I had better leave these abstract ruminations and return to the story. Only I wanted to show you that Norman Ross was really normal in all respects. Then, too, it eases my troubled mind now to think back to those happy days—days that will never be again.

It was just a month after our transfer that it all happened. Ross was sitting as usual with one leg off the floor, the heel of his shoe on a big throw switch on the control panel. It was a dead switch, though, that had never been taken out. Down low close to his stomach was the typewriter and he typed with his elbows resting on the arms of the chair. It was his own chair that he had bought for that particular purpose

because he said he couldn't do any work with the regular armless chair that other operators used. He had used that chair for two years; Hegstrom didn't care a bit, so long he did his work and did it good. Personally, I think Ross had a spark of laziness in him.

Well the particular night this whole story centers about—now my hand is trembling, I hate to go on. But I must. It will explain things to others. Anyway, Ross was imbedded as per custom with that right leg of his in the air. During ordinary calls he would slowly swing his toe back and forth as his heel rested on the dead switch. Once in a while it would stop and then I would know that something a little exciting was coming to him, war news from the north or perhaps a bandit raid in the stormy western part of China. His typewriter, too, would clack a little sharper as he bore down harder on the keys.

It was along about three a. m. that we had a breathing spell after we both had short calls. We discussed a few clipped plans for the following evening and which of the ladies we would take out. When Ross talked to me, he wouldn't budge an inch. He would merely twist his neck in my direction and talk with that toe of his swinging lazily. We both kept our eye on the clock so that we wouldn't be late for a call—Hegstrom would get mighty fussy over complaints from the central wave-traffic office that operators at our station took calls late, even a few seconds.

So about half a minute before his next call was due, Ross turned from me with a sigh—that is, turned his neck back—and stretched a lazy hand to the



dial to get ready for the carrier wave. My next call wasn't due for another two minutes so I watched my friend without any particular purpose in mind.

He reached a slow hand to his head and adjusted the phones on his ears a bit. Then both his hands dropped into position above the typewriter and I heard him say tonelessly, "Call-call-call—xxwz call—" and then his voice clipped off like a voice in a broadcast clips off when a tube blows out.

Watching him I saw first that toe of his stop swinging. Something important I thought to myself. But then I began to sit up tense. In the first place, Ross hadn't touched his keys; in the second place he leaned forward in his chair and *dropped his leg to the floor.*

Now that may sound silly that I mention his leg dropping to the floor, but to a person that knew Ross as well as I did that *is* something. I had never seen it happen before.

I sat up stiff as a board. He had just reached up his two hands to the phones and was pressing them closer to his ears like the message was faint.

Now I knew something big was up and I jumped from my chair.

"What's got into you, Norm?" I said, getting in front of him.

But he didn't seem to hear me or know I was there. He only pressed the earphones tighter. When I looked at his face, I was shocked. Only once before had I ever seen that rapt expression—when he got the call from London two years before at the end of that three-month war telling how the whole city had been gassed and bombed, leaving not one soul alive.

I looked at the clock. It was a min-

ute past the time for his regular call.

I shook his shoulder. "Listen here, Norm," I yelled. "You've got to get that call or—"

"Listen to this, Bob," he cut in, *handing me the phones.*

I put them about my ears. All I heard was a faint voice. I pressed the phones close as Ross had done. Then I distinguished it.

In strangely muffled tones, the voice came in, full of sharp hissing sounds and hard consonants. I could understand not a word.

I tore off the phones. "You fool!" I cried. "What's the idea of listening to some foreign station? Look!"—I pointed to the clock—"You're over a minute late on your regular call!"

Ross pointed to the wave-length dial. "See!" he said. "I've got it on the right wave. Eighteen point seven five meters."

I stared a moment in bewilderment. Sure enough, it was where it should be.

"Sure you want eighteen point seven five? Better check," I cried in a small panic, thinking of what Hegstrom would say.

Ross gave me a withering glance which said without words, "Sure I want it? Did I ever lose my memory."

"Well, I can't fuss around here," I said with a hasty glance at the clock. "My call is due in about ten seconds."

Before I took my call I cried to my friend. "Probably something wrong with the dial control. You better try and find your call on some other number."

Then I snapped my button. The carrier wave was already coming in. I had caught my call just in time.



"Call-call-call—xxw2-zz5" I spluttered.

Next minute I was busily typing the routine news from Persia. With everything going along smoothly, I turned my eyes in Ross's direction. A good operator can do anything with his eyes while taking routine news; he can even use half his brain to think about other things.

I saw Ross playing with the dial and felt relieved that he was taking my suggestion that something had gone wrong with the works so that the dial was in error. Hegstrom would be awful sore when he got the complaint that Ross had failed to get his call. But then I would be witness that it wasn't his fault at all—that some foreign station had come in on that wave-length and spoiled the regular call. Only it was funny—it came to me then—that the regular call hadn't registered at all; I hadn't heard a background of English in the few seconds I listened to the foreigner. Maybe something had happened to the station in China!

I turned my eyes back to my favorite spot—a dull paint spot on the panel—because I was getting some technical stuff and needed to concentrate.

When I next looked at Ross about two minutes later, I heaved a mighty sigh of relief. He was picking at the keys, taking his call. Only one thing bothered me: his leg was still on the floor. "Oh, well," I thought to myself, "that upset him so much that he's a bit off center," and with this philosophy, I went on with my call in a much more peaceful frame of mind.

I finished my call in about fifteen minutes and then I had a breathing spell of four. I looked at Ross. He still had

that leg of his down on the floor and worse yet, his elbows were not resting on the arms of the chair; they were in the air and he was sitting up in his chair stiff as a knife. But he was peacefully typing out his call so after all everything was all right. I did notice one other thing then but not until later did it become significant: his face, as much of its expression as I could get from a side view, had a look of—I know now what it was although then I couldn't get it—amazement; stark, bewildered amazement.

Restless as I could be while waiting for my next call, I walked to a position just behind Ross to see what it was that had so excited him that his foot was on the floor and his elbows in the air.

I bent down close to see what he had typewritten and then blinked my eyes. The stuff he was taking down was not English any way you looked at it. It was a mess of consonants and s's that sent chills up my spine.

"Listen here," I shouted when I got my wits back, "listen, Ross! What in Heaven's name are you doing? What in thunder is that stuff?"

But Ross kept right on typing as if his life depended on it. Only in one way did he show that he had heard me. He tossed his head sharply once in an unmistakable gesture for me to let him alone.

From this point on my blood pressure rose and my heart pounded—my heart has been pounding ever since then even when I forget for a moment about all this.

I automatically looked at the clock and saw that my next call was due. I calmed down somewhat as I pecked down the routine news. But I felt a



growing fear in my heart as time and again I looked over to my friend to see him typing like a robot, his foot on the floor, elbows in the air. Then my friend my only real pal, was going crazy—how that thought tortured me. I knew perfectly well that he didn't know any other language than English. Why in the wide world should he be clacking down something he didn't understand?

It was just three thirty that suddenly. Ross ripped the head-phones off and dropped them to the floor. He stood a moment looking at the paper in his hand and I noticed then that his skin was deadly white.

I couldn't stand it anymore. I jerked off my own phones and ran to him. Call or no call, I couldn't stand by while my pal was in danger of losing his mind or something else as bad.

"Norm!" I cried, "for God's sake! Tell me what it is! What—"

But I didn't finish. With an explosion of curses, Ross crumpled the paper in his hand and began to walk up and down the room. He was so unconscious of everything else that he bumped squarely into me, reeled a moment, and then went on racing up and down feverishly.

I tried to stop him—grabbed his arm and jerked it—but Ross was a much bigger and stronger fellow than I am, and he went on without noticing me. He didn't shake me off, you understand, but just tore on as if he hadn't even felt my hand. I didn't say anything because I had lost my voice looking at the terrible picture of his face twisted in some agony of his mind.

Then he began to speak, throwing his hands about hopelessly, and swinging

his head like a maniac. While I—I just stood there, out of the path of his walk, panting like I had run ten miles, and listened.

"Great God in Heaven," he cried in a voice that I hope never to hear again in reality, although I hear it every night in my tortured dreams.

"It can't be.....it's impossible..... I'm going mad.....I am mad!.....what did I ever do to deserve this?.....how can it be? oh! how *can* it be?"

For a while he just repeated those things until I wanted to scream out in frenzy. But I didn't do a thing. I could see he was beyond my reach—beyond anybody's reach.

Then his voice changed, it became low, full of intense energy, ominously quiet. "What did he say? He said the weather had become frigidly cold... that it would not be long..... hat soon the Ice would cover the whole earth....."

Then he stopped a moment, his eyes burned maniacally. "But.....I know something about geology.....that was over fifty thousand years ago.....do you hear me?"—he wasn't talking to me, he was talking to himself—"do you get that?.....*fifty thousand years ago!*"

His voice became low and intense again so that my blood turned to water: "What did he say?.....he said to his friend that the land was being flooded with creatures—maddened men and frenzied animals—that were retreating before the Ice.....retreating before the Ice..... the *ice*.....but good God! I tell you that was fifty thousand years ago!"

Then his voice became high-pitched and sobbing: "Oh! Dear Mary and Our One God! release me from this mad dream.....save me from the destruction



that will overwhelm me.....how can it be?.....it's impossible.....how *can* it be?"

He repeated that dozens of times while he rumbled his hair and ground his teeth,

I mustered up courage and grabbed him by the shoulders. Next moment I was spinning backward and hit the wall with a thump. I fell down and stayed there, looking up at Ross with an expression that I sometimes wonder could be. I know my eyes became salty with tears of mental agony — maybe it was blood that I sweated out that night.

Then I heard him again, head to one side, staggering like a drunken man: "The radio was only invented twenty-five years ago.....*this* was fifty thousand years ago.....what did he say?.....he said to his friend that this would probably be his last broadcast as the heat coils were running out.....goodbye.....he said.....goodbye, my friend.....civilization is doomed.....the Ice *will* cover all.....but I know something about geology, I tell you!.....that was over fifty thousand years ago!.....do you see what that means?"

He paused as if expecting an answer, but I knew—my chilled brain told me—that he wasn't talking to me, didn't know I was there. He was still arguing with himself.

"You see?.....it means that I have received a message broadcast fifty thousand years ago just before the Ice came!.....that's what it means.....do you hear me?"

Then he fell into a senseless jargon that I knew meant the coming of the end of his mind's fortitude. It would collapse soon.

"And then," came his voice to me,

a bloodcurdling knife of a voice, "and then, how can you explain that I *understood* that voice?.....tell me that.....I never heard that language before.....it was just a jumble at first.....and then.....and then.....in a flash.....I *understood* it.....just as if I had lived there.....lived there fifty thousand years ago."

His voice became a wild shriek, a voice that a ghost might have: "Ah! Saviour! God! How can it be?.....*how can it be?*"

That was all. I sprang to my feet joyfully—as joyfully as I could after passing through that—and ran to him. The light of madness had died out of his eyes. He had seen me and recognized me. His shoulders drooped as if he carried the weight of a world on them.

With a babble of sobs and broken cries I threw my arms around him and thanked the Lord he had been saved.

He gently disengaged me.

"O.K. Bob," he said weakly. "I'm over it now."

"Darn right you are!" I said more calmly, realizing I must show a braver front than I had. "And *what's* more, we're going to get out of here!"

I took him to the door of his uncle's house and left him there, satisfied that the crisis was over. Then I went back to the station and finished up my calls. How I had the courage and fortitude to do it, I don't know. Before the day shift came in, before I did a lot of explaining how Ross had been suddenly taken sick in the stomach and had to go home, I picked up a crumpled piece of paper from the floor, tore it into little bits, and threw the confetti in a waste paper basket.

I got the news when I went to my



room. Norman Ross had committed suicide at seven o'clock in the morning. That was an hour after I left him at his door.

I told Hegstrom plain out that I wouldn't work that night shift anymore for love or money. He said he'd have me transferred but would I stay one more night until he got a new man? Like a fool, I agreed.

It was three a.m. that next night that I turned the dial to where the China Station should come in that had failed once. I sat petrified for five seconds while I listened to a muffled voice that spoke in hisses and sharp consonants.

Then I tore the earphones off my head, smashed them against the panel with all my strength, and dashed out of the room. I remembered seeing the other operator—the one who had taken my calls—popping his eyes out. Then I was out in the cool air, panting like I had been running for hours.

So it is that I wonder if I shouldn't escape it all—tossing nights, cold sweats of stark terror, a tortured, fevered brain? It would be so easy: a dark night, real dark, you know, so no one would see me and try to stop me, then the cool water to moisten my feverish brow—nice cool water, inviting water—just one little splash, not a noisy one—no one would know—no one would care—no one would understand—just one splash—and then peace.

My friends tell me not to take on so over the death of my one and only pal. They do not know the story. I have

told no one. My friends, they tell me there is a haunted look in my eyes, that lines are deepening in my face. They tell me to buck up, to face life squarely.

But I can't. I simply can't. I'll tell you why. After that night when I ripped out the earphones and blew a fuse in the station by short-circuiting a switch on the panel (I found that out later) I went back in answer to a call from Hegstrom. He was very kind and sympathetic. Wanted to know what had caused me to act so strangely the night before—also wanted to know what had caused Ross's suicide. Hegstrom is sharp. He saw the connection. But I clamped my jaws together and refused to say anything.

Then Hegstrom asked if the thing he held in his hand had anything to do with Ross. I took the paper. Then I think I gasped or screamed or something. It was a paper filled with some of that balderdash that Ross had written that night. He must have filled two sheets, and I only destroyed one.

I left Hegstrom as mystified as ever, but I had that paper in my pocket. I had a plan to save my sanity. I took the paper to a professor at a college—a professor famous as a language specialist, ancient and modern. I gave him the paper and one hundred dollars (he afterwards returned the money) and asked him to find out from what country or place it came from.

I got my answer a week later.

There was no such language in either the modern or recorded ancient times!



## YOUR VIEWS

"I should venture that the fascination of the weird is through a vaguely masochistic pleasure that derives delight from frightening one's self! I believe the simile is ancient that our gaze will often return to the ugliest person in a room rather than the most handsome. Perhaps it is that constant saccharine palls. I claim it is untrue that 'the beautiful, the good, is the aim of every true artist.'"

— R. H. Barlow

"The element of horror in a tale often makes the story; it gives you that weird, creepy sensation and cold chills. Thus, the greater those feelings affect us after, or during, the reading of the yarn, the greater we say the story is. Of course, if the horror part is of too intense a nature in that it causes a continued after-effect producing nervousness in the reader, then the virtue of the use of horror may be questioned. However, strong horror can be read by strong minds, or by uncomprehending minds, without damage. It would appear, then, that it depends equally upon the reader and the quality of horror used. Horror has a certain fascination to everyone; it is a thing that seems inborn in us—perhaps it is because we try to understand subconsciously, something mysterious, just beyond the conscious cognizance of the things that are known.

— Kenneth B. Pritchard

"In the horror story, one can find true beauty — beauty that is glorified from tossing seas of blackness—shining beauty that comes with cosmic fear, lurid silence, frightful death—all

this and more fascinates one's appreciation of true art. 'When people read these and say that they are distasteful to the well and normal mind' then these certain people should not read them. No one is compelling them to do such. And why do we wish to read a sinister tale of evil or monstrosities? Listen, readers! Those of us who know life and have grown tired of its futile strivings, its worries, its hard realities, (and most of us have by now) are able to forget it all by steeping ourselves with the nameless terrors and evil spawns of that 'darkness visible'."

— Robert Nelson

"As to the virtue of horror stories, one might ask what virtue there is in any yarn? What are we looking for in a story?—mental relaxation, thrills, morals, spine chills, or what have you. Certainly, they are *different* from the usual run of blood and thunder, hero stuff. They are also something to think about *after reading*. We read them again to feel the effect of the words once more. I dare say that the average story one reads is enjoyed while being absorbed, then forgotten. I am probably wrong, but pass over it. The point is, we read horror tales because we *like* them."

— Duane W. Rimel

"Aren't most tales that are weird and fantastic a bit horrifying? Consider the strange beings around which the tale is woven—incomprehensible monsters, neither animal nor reptile; strange man-things bearing only a resemblance in bodily structure, but too warped to be human. I can see no virtue in them, except that when I finish the story and

(continued on page 127)



## SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE

Part Seven

by H. P. Lovecraft

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### III. The Early Gothic Novel

The shadow-haunted landscapes of *Ossian*, the chaotic visions of William Blake, the grotesque witch-dances in Burns's *Tam O'Shanter*, the sinister daemonism of Coleridge's *Christabel* and *Ancient Mariner*, the ghostly charm of James Hogg's *Kilmeny*, and the more restrained approaches to cosmic horror in *Lamia* and many of Keats's other poems, are typical British illustrations of the advent of the weird to formal literature. Our Teutonic cousins of the continent were equally receptive to the rising flood, and Burger's *Wild Huntsman* and the even more famous daemon-bridegroom ballad of *Lenore*—both imitated in English by Scott, whose respect for the supernatural was always great—are only a taste of the eerie wealth which German song had commenced to provide. Thomas Moore adapted from such sources the legend of the ghoulish statue-bride (later used by Proper Merimee in *The Venus of Ille*, and traceable back to great antiquity) which echoes so shiveringly in his ballad of *The Ring*; whilst Goethe's deathless masterpiece *Faust*, crossing from mere balladry into the classic, cosmic tragedy of the ages, may be held as the ultimate height to which this German poetic impulse arose.

But it remained for a very sprightly and worldly Englishman—none other

than Horace Walpole himself—to give the growing impulse definite shape and become the actual founder of the literary horror-story as a permanent form. Fond of mediaeval romance and mystery as a dilettante's diversion, and with a quaintly imitated Gothic castle as his abode at Strawberry Hill, Walpole in 1764 published *The Castle of Otranto*, a tale of the supernatural which, though thoroughly unconvincing and mediocre in itself, was destined to exert an almost unparalleled influence on the literature of the weird. First venturing it only as a 'translation' by one "William Marshal, Gent." from the Italian of a mythical "Onuphrio Muralto," the author later acknowledged his connection with the book and took pleasure in its wide and instantaneous popularity—a popularity which extended to many editions, early dramatizations, and wholesale imitation both in England and in Germany.

The story—tedious, artificial, and melodramatic—is further impaired by a brisk and prosaic style whose urbane sprightliness nowhere permits the creation of a truly weird atmosphere. It tells of Manfred, an unscrupulous and usurping prince determined to found a line, who after the mysterious sudden death of his only son, Conrad, on the latter's bridal morn, attempts to put away his wife Hippolita and wed the lady destined for the unfortunate youth—the lad, by the way, having been crushed by the preternatural fall of a gigantic helmet in the castle courtyard. Isabella, the widowed bride, flees from this design; and encounters in subterranean crypts beneath the castle a noble young preserver,



Theodore, who seems to be a peasant yet strangely resembles the old lord Alfonso who ruled the domain before Manfred's times. Shortly thereafter supernatural phenomena assail the castle in divers ways; fragments of gigantic armour being discovered here and there, a portrait walking out of its frame, a thunderclap destroying the edifice, and a colossal armoured spectre of Alfonso rising out of the ruins to ascend through parting clouds to the bosom of St. Nicholas. Theodore, having wooed through death—for she is slain by her father by mistake—is discovered to be the son of Alfonso and rightful heir to the estate. He concludes the tale by wedding Isabella and preparing to live happily ever after whilst Manfred, whose usurpation was the cause of his son's death and his own supernatural harassings, retires to a monastery for penitence; his saddened wife seeking asylum in a neighboring convent.


Such is the tale; flat, stilted, and altogether devoid of the true cosmic horror which makes weird literature. Yet such was the thirst of the age for those touches of strangeness and spectral antiquity it reflects, that it was seriously received by the soundest readers and raised in spite of its intrinsic ineptness to a pedestal of lofty importance in literary history. What it did above all else was to create a novel type of scene, puppet-characters, and incidents; which, handled to better advantage by writers more naturally adapted to weird creation, stimulated the growth of an imitative Gothic school which in turn inspired the real weavers of cosmic terror—the line of actual

artists beginning with Poe. This novel dramatic paraphernalia consisted first of all of the Gothic castle, with its awesome antiquity, vast distances and ramblings, deserted or ruined wings, damp corridors, unwholesome hidden catacombs, and a galaxy of ghosts and appalling legends, as a nucleus of suspense and daemonic fright. In addition, it included the tyrannical and malevolent nobleman as villain; the saintly, long-persecuted, and generally insipid heroine who undergoes the major terrors and serves as a point of view and focus for the reader's sympathies; the valorous and immaculate hero, always of high birth but often in humble disguise; the convention of high-sounding foreign names; mostly Italian, for the characters; and the infinite array of stage properties which includes strange lights, damp trapdoors, extinguished lamps, mouldy hidden manuscripts, creaking hinges, shaking arras, and the like. All this paraphernalia reappears with amusing sameness, yet sometimes with tremendous effect, throughout the history of the Gothic novel; and is by no means extinct even today, though subtler technique now forces it to assume a less naive and obvious form. An harmonious milieu for a new school had been found, and the writing world was not slow to grasp the opportunity.

German romance at once responded to the Walpole influence, and soon became a byword for the weird and ghastly. In England, one of the first imitators was the celebrated Mr. Barbault, then Miss Aiken, who in 1773 published an unfinished fragment called *Sir Bertrand*, in which the strings



of genuine terror were truly touched with no clumsy hand. A nobleman on a dark and lonely moor, attracted by a tolling bell and distant light, enters a strange and ancient turreted castle whose doors open and close and whose bluish will-o'-the-wisps lead up mysterious staircases toward dead hands and animated black statues. A coffin with a dead lady, whom Sir Bertrand kisses, is finally reached; and upon the kiss, the scene dissolves to give place to a splendid apartment where the lady, restored to life, holds a banquet in honour of her rescuer. Walpole admired this tale, though he accorded less respect to an even more prominent off-spring of his Otranto—*The Old English Baron*, by Clara Reeve, published in 1777. Truly enough, this tale lacks the real vibration to the note of outer darkness and mystery which distinguishes Mrs. Barbauld's fragment and though less crude than Walpole's novel, and more artistically economical of horror in its possession of only one spectral figure, it is nevertheless too definitely insipid for greatness. Here again we have the virtuous heir to the castle disguised as a peasant and restored to his heritage through the ghost of his father; and here again we have a case of wide popularity leading to many editions, dramatizations, and ultimate translation into French. Miss Reeve wrote another weird novel, unfortunately unpublished and lost.



continued next month

### Your Views

(continued from page 124)


come back to the normal world, I'm glad that I am what I am. It takes real intelligence to write something that is not known to the general populace. I read weird tales for variety. I get a bit tired of the general run of stories found in *sensible* magazines."

— Gertrude Hemken

"Just what is a normal mind? This pertains, I think, to the commonly accepted *norms* in vogue at any specified time in history. Even in different communities, what is considered normal in one is sometimes abnormal in others. This must be constantly kept in mind. On the other hand, how many people are what you might call 'normal'? Not many, I imagine. The ones that are probably the most utterly boring, stupid, lifeless creatures that roam this planet are the *normal* ones. Also, please remember that when a person dislikes something he (or she) usually says it's distasteful to a 'normal' mind."

— Lester Anderson

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