

# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

Edited and  
Published by  
ROBERT W. FRANSON

FEBRUARY 17, 1964

NUMBER 13

## THE ORIGINS OF BOOKS

by Andre Norton

Books are born, as far as I am concerned, in two ways. One is from a vivid scene-picture which pops into one's head out of nowhere. This will spark a series of other ideas until one has the beginning of a plot in mind, and then the difficult work of fashioning that into a book begins.

The other comes from some note one may pick up in wide reading, which continues to haunt one until some more research is done, and a story grows from the seed. For example—STAR RANGERS grew for me out of a passage I came across concerning a Roman Emperor, who, for a drunken whim, ordered a legion to march east to the rim of the world—the legion, obeying, was never heard of again. Speculation as to where the unfortunate men came to their final end grew into a transplanting of such a march to the future of a stellar empire.

Other times a story, or part of story, which will not work out in the form first attempted, can be used to better advantage elsewhere. The Ver-laine section of WITCH WORLD was first put on paper years ago as part of a tale about the Crusading Barons of Outremer. But, never written as I first intended, it fitted in well for the adventures of Loyse in the fan-

tasy volume.

Wondering "what if" is a good springboard for s-f writing. SIOUX SPACEMAN came from a book on the Plains Indians wherein it was stated that the Spanish advance in the Southwest was definitely defeated, and the European occupation west of the Mississippi deferred for more than a century, because the Plains tribes were able to adopt and use the horse to such advantage for their raiding warfare. So—what if the horse (or some other Terran animal) would play the same part on an alien world? As you see, the possibilities of "what if" are endless.

Once the idea is born, then the real drudgery begins. Research—which means reading from a dozen to a hundred books (depending on the complexity of the background needed), picking up a scrap here and one there to be woven in (altered, of course, to fit alien scenes), is very necessary. I use anthropology, archaeology, natural history, folklore, native magic, and travel books for my sources. Then, one begins with an outline, but does not stay with it. Characters take on their own life and begin acting independently, so you seldom finish the way you had first intended.

It is a complicated process, but it is one you enjoy even while you are sweating over pounding out the pages. You work

(continued on page two)

Copyright © 1964 by Robert W. Franson. All rights reserved. Published biweekly; printed in the U.S.A. The contents of this magazine may not be reprinted without the publisher's permission. Query before submitting material.

## SFR STORY RATINGS

Story category .....	NOVELLAS .....	NOVELETS ...	SHORT STORIES
Length in words .....	(19-39,000) ...	(10-18,000) ..	(up to 9,000)
Worth buying magazine for .	I-IV .....	A-C .....	a-b
Worth reading .....	V-VI .....	D-E .....	c-d
Read at your own risk ...	VII-IX .....	F-H .....	e-g

### NOVELS

(40,000+ words)

Worth buying ..... 1-5  
 Marginal ..... 6-7  
 Buy at your own risk . 8-10

The ratings designate how well we liked the story. We do not rate collections or anthologies. Two stories "worth reading" usually make an issue worth buying.

### THE ORIGINS OF BOOKS (continued from page one)

with one compelling yard-stick—that what you are producing is the best you can make with the idea, the research, and the labor of the moment. There is no denying that some ideas are better than others, or that some unite with the author's emotions and work to make a better book. But—each book is THE best possible—the writer puts into idea and work all that can be given—or else he is only going through the motions of writing. And any reader can detect that false note.  
—Andre Norton

**CORRECTION:** THE PRODIGAL SUN, reviewed in SFR #12, is by Philip E. High, not by Philip K. Dick.

WAY OUT, ed. by Ivan Howard.  
 Belmont, N.Y. L92-575, 1963.  
 166 pp. 50¢

Although the title states that this anthology is "way out," only two of the stories actually fit in this category. The two best stories are "Honorable Enemies," by Poul Anderson (d), and "'X' for 'Expendable'," by William C. Balley (F). The other ratings are one "e" and three "f's." Although the stories are claimed to be new and "never before published," some if not all are reprints.

—Robert Merryman

THE TWISTED MEN, by A.E. van Vogt.  
 ONE OF OUR ASTEROIDS IS MISSING, by Calvin M. Knox. Ace, N.Y.  
 F-253, 1964. 130 & 124 pp. 40¢

This Ace Double is a good buy. The first half is a collection of three stories from 1949-51. "The Twisted Men" is about a starship that comes back to Earth just before Sol is due to go nova, but the crew of the ship is unaware of what's happening (E). The other stories are "The Star-Saint" (E) and "The Earth Killers" (again E).

Knox's half is a novel about a man who files a claim for an asteroid, but the claim is not recorded by the master computer because someone else wants that asteroid—and not for its radioactive ores. NOVEL - 6  
—The Editor

### ADVERTISEMENTS

Science fiction subjects only.  
 Rates: 5¢/word, minimum ad \$1.

For information about the Pacific Science Fiction Association, write to the Secretary, Bill Pond, 4849 49th Street, San Diego, California 92115.

Back issues of SFR are only ten cents apiece. If you like, mention which ones you want when you renew, and they will be deducted from your future issues.