

= Unknown ( magazine ) =

Unknown ( also known as Unknown Worlds ) was an American pulp fantasy fiction magazine , published from 1939 to 1943 by Street & Smith , and edited by John W. Campbell . Unknown was a companion to Street & Smith 's science fiction pulp , Astounding Science Fiction , which was also edited by Campbell at the time ; many authors and illustrators contributed to both magazines . The leading fantasy magazine in the 1930s was Weird Tales , which focused on shock and horror . Campbell wanted to publish a fantasy magazine with more finesse and humor than Weird Tales , and put his plans into action when Eric Frank Russell sent him the manuscript of his novel Sinister Barrier , about aliens who own the human race . Unknown 's first issue appeared in March 1939 ; in addition to Sinister Barrier , it included H. L. Gold 's " Trouble With Water " , a humorous fantasy about a New Yorker who meets a water gnome . Gold 's story was the first of many in Unknown to combine commonplace reality with the fantastic .

Campbell required his authors to avoid simplistic horror fiction and insisted that the fantasy elements in a story be developed logically : for example , Jack Williamson 's " Darker Than You Think " describes a world in which there is a scientific explanation for the existence of werewolves . Similarly , L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt 's Harold Shea series , about a modern American who finds himself in the worlds of various mythologies , depicts a system of magic based on mathematical logic . Other notable stories included several well @-@ received novels by L. Ron Hubbard and short stories such as Manly Wade Wellman 's " When It Was Moonlight " and Fritz Leiber 's " Two Sought Adventure " , the first in his Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser series .

Unknown was forced to a bimonthly schedule in 1941 by poor sales , and cancelled in 1943 when wartime paper shortages became so acute that Campbell had to choose between turning Astounding into a bimonthly or ending Unknown . The magazine is generally regarded as the finest fantasy fiction magazine ever published , despite the fact that it was not commercially successful , and in the opinion of science fiction historian Mike Ashley it was responsible for the creation of the modern fantasy publishing genre .

= = Background and publication history = =

In May 1923 , the first issue of Weird Tales appeared , from Rural Publications in Chicago . Weird Tales was a pulp magazine that specialized in fantasy stories and material that no other magazine would accept . It was not initially successful , but by the 1930s had established itself and was regularly publishing science fiction ( sf ) as well as fantasy . Weird Tales was the first magazine to focus solely on fantasy , and it remained the pre @-@ eminent magazine in this field for over a decade . In the meantime , science fiction was starting to form a separately marketed genre , with the appearance in 1926 of Amazing Stories , a pulp magazine edited by Hugo Gernsback . In 1930 pulp publisher Clayton Publications launched Astounding Stories of Super Science , but the company 's bankruptcy in 1933 led to the acquisition of the magazine by Street & Smith . The title was shortened to Astounding Stories , and it became the leading magazine in the science fiction field over the next few years under the editorship of F. Orlin Tremaine . At the end of 1937 John W. Campbell took over as editor .

By 1938 , Campbell was planning a fantasy companion to Astounding : Weird Tales was still the leader in the fantasy genre , though competitors such as Strange Stories were also being launched . Campbell began acquiring stories suitable for the new magazine , without a definite launch date in mind . When Eric Frank Russell sent him the manuscript of his novel Sinister Barrier , Campbell decided it was time to put his plans into action . The first issue of Unknown appeared in March 1939 . It was a monthly at first , but poor sales forced a switch to a bimonthly schedule beginning in February 1941 . In December 1940 the subtitle Fantasy Fiction was added , and in October 1941 the main title was changed to Unknown Worlds ; both changes were intended to make the genre of the magazine clearer to potential readers . When wartime paper shortages became severe in late 1943 , Campbell made the choice to keep Astounding monthly and cancel Unknown , rather than switch the former to a bimonthly schedule as well . The last issue was dated October 1943 .

Campbell 's plans for Unknown were laid out in the February 1939 issue of Astounding , in the announcement of the new magazine . He argued that " it has been the quality of the fantasy that you have read in the past that has made the very word anathema ... [ Unknown ] will offer fantasy of a quality so far different from that which has appeared in the past as to change your entire understanding of the term " . The first issue , the following month , led with Russell 's Sinister Barrier , the novel that had persuaded Campbell to set his plans for a fantasy magazine into motion : the plot , involving aliens who own the human race , has been described by sf historian Mike Ashley as " a strange mixture of science fiction and occult fantasy " . Campbell asked Russell for revisions to the story to emphasize the fantastic elements , but still demanded that Russell work out the logical implications of his premises . This became a defining characteristic of the fiction published in Unknown ; in Ashley 's words , Campbell " brought the science fiction rationale to fantasy " . The first issue also contained Horace L. Gold 's " Trouble with Water " , a comic fantasy about a modern New Yorker who offends a water gnome ; in its whimsicality and naturalistic merging of a modern background with a classic fantasy trope , " Trouble with Water " was a better indication than Sinister Barrier of the direction Unknown would take . Campbell commented in a letter at the time that Sinister Barrier , " Trouble with Water " , and " ' Where Angels Fear ... ' " by Manly Wade Wellman were the only stories in the first issue that accurately reflected his goals for the magazine .

Under Campbell 's editorial supervision , the fantasy element in Unknown stories had to be treated rigorously . This naturally led to the appearance in Unknown of writers already comfortable with similar rigor in science fiction stories , and Campbell soon established a small group of writers as regular contributors , many of whom were also appearing in the pages of Astounding . L. Ron Hubbard , Theodore Sturgeon , and L. Sprague de Camp were among the most prolific . Hubbard contributed eight lead novels including Typewriter in the Sky , Slaves of Sleep , and Fear , described by Ashley as a " classic psychological thriller " ; sf historian and critic Thomas Clareson describes all eight as " outstanding " . De Camp , in collaboration with Fletcher Pratt , contributed three stories featuring Harold Shea , who finds himself in a world where magic operates by rigorous rules . The title of one of these , " The Mathematics of Magic " , is , according to sf critic John Clute , " perfectly expressive of the terms under which magic found easy mention in Unknown " .

Other Astounding writers who wrote for Unknown included Robert A. Heinlein , whose " The Devil Makes the Law " ( reprinted as " Magic , Inc . " ) depicts a world where magic is a part of normal everyday life . Heinlein also contributed " The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag " and " They " , described by Ashley as " perhaps the ultimate solipsist fantasy " . A.E. van Vogt , a frequent Astounding contributor , appeared in the final issue with " The Book of Ptath " ( later expanded into a novel ) . Isaac Asimov , despite multiple attempts to write for Unknown , never appeared in the magazine . On his sixth attempt , he sold " Author ! Author ! " to Campbell , but the magazine was cancelled before it could appear . It eventually appeared in the anthology The Unknown Five .

In addition to the overlap between the writers of Unknown and Astounding , there was a good deal of overlap between their readerships : Asimov records that during the war , he read only these two magazines . Sf historian Paul Carter has argued that the spectrum of fantastic fiction from Weird Tales through Unknown to Astounding was far less cleanly separated than is sometimes assumed : many stories in the early science fiction magazines such as Wonder Stories were more like the works of Edgar Allan Poe than they were tales of scientific imagination .

Fritz Leiber 's first published story was " Two Sought Adventure " , which appeared in the August 1939 issue of Unknown ; this was the first story in his long @-@ running Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser series about a pair of adventurers in a sword and sorcery setting . Four more Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser stories appeared in Unknown in as many years , and Leiber 's novel Conjure Wife , about a man who discovers that all women are secretly witches , was the lead story in the April 1943 issue . The protagonist , a university professor , " is forced to abandon scepticism and discover the underlying equations of magic , via symbolic logic " , in critic David Langford 's description . Leiber also contributed " Smoke Ghost " in October 1941 , described by Ashley as " arguably the first

seriously modern ghost story ". Another writer whose first story appeared in *Unknown* was James H. Schmitz , whose " Greenface " appeared in the August 1943 issue .

Other notable stories that appeared in *Unknown* include Jack Williamson 's " Darker Than You Think " ( December 1940 ) , which provides a scientific basis for a race of werewolves living undetected alongside human beings . Expanded into a novel in 1948 , it remains Williamson 's best @-@ known fantasy , and sf historian Malcolm Edwards comments that the two protagonists ' relationship is " depicted with a tortured ( and still haunting ) erotic frankness unusual in genre literature of the 1940s " . In addition to the Harold Shea pieces , de Camp published several other well @-@ received stories , including " The Wheels of If " ( October 1940 ) and " Lest Darkness Fall " ( December 1939 ) , an alternate history story about a time @-@ traveler who attempts to save the Roman Empire from the coming Dark Ages ; Edwards and Clute comment that the story is " the most accomplished early excursion into history in magazine sf , and is regarded as a classic " . Also highly regarded is Wellman 's " When It Was Moonlight " ( December 1940 ) , a story about Poe .

The first sixteen issues of *Unknown* had cover paintings , but from July 1940 the cover style was changed to a table of contents , with a small ink drawing usually accompanying the summary of each story , in an attempt to make the magazine appear more dignified . The cover art came almost entirely from artists who did not contribute to many science fiction or fantasy magazines : six of the sixteen paintings were by H. W. Scott ; Manuel Islip , Modest Stein , Graves Gladney , and Edd Cartier provided the others . Cartier was the only one of these who regularly contributed to sf and fantasy periodicals ; he painted four of *Unknown* 's last six covers before the change to a text @-@ heavy design .

= = Influence = =

*Unknown* was , along with *Weird Tales* , an important early influence on the fantasy genre . In the foreword to *From Unknown Worlds* , in 1948 , Campbell commented that fantasy before *Unknown* had been too much infused with " gloom and terror " ; his approach in *Unknown* had been to assume that the " creatures of mythology and folklore " could be characters in an amusing tale as easily as they could be made part of a horror story . Horror stories , he said , had a place , but " horror injected with a sharp and poisoned needle is just as effective as when applied with the blunt @-@ instrument technique of the so @-@ called Gothic horror tale " . Campbell insisted on the same rational approach to fantasy that he required of his science fiction writers , and in the words of Clareson , this led to the destruction of " not only the prevalent narrative tone but also most of the trappings that had dominated fantasy from *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Monk* through the nineteenth century to *Weird Tales* " . *Unknown* quickly separated itself from *Weird Tales* , whose fantasies still primarily aimed to produce fear or shock . The closest predecessor to *Unknown* was Thorne Smith , whose prohibition @-@ era " Topper " stories also mixed fantasy with humor . Before *Unknown* , fantasy had received little serious attention , though on occasion writers such as James Branch Cabell had achieved respectability . In Ashley 's opinion , *Unknown* created the modern genre of fantasy , though commercial success for the genre had to wait until the 1970s .

Clareson also suggests that *Unknown* influenced the science fiction that appeared in *Astounding* after *Unknown* folded . According to this view , stories such as Clifford Simak 's *City* series would not have appeared without the destruction of genre boundaries that Campbell oversaw . Clareson further proposes that *Galaxy Science Fiction* and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* , two of the most important and successful science fiction and fantasy magazines , were direct descendants of *Unknown* .

*Unknown* is widely regarded as the finest fantasy magazine ever published : Ashley says , for example , that " *Unknown* published without doubt the greatest collection of fantasy stories produced in one magazine . " Despite its lack of commercial success , *Unknown* is the most lamented of all science fiction and fantasy magazines ; Lester del Rey describes it as having gained " a devotion from its readers that no other magazine can match " . Edwards comments that *Unknown* " appeared during Campbell 's peak years as an editor ; its reputation may stand as high as it does partly because it died while still at its best " .

In a conversation with David G. Hartwell in 1962 , Shirley Jackson stated she owned a complete run of Unknown and expressed strong admiration for the publication , stating " It 's the best " .

= = Bibliographic details = =

Unknown was edited by John W. Campbell and published by Street & Smith Publications throughout its run . It was pulp @-@ sized from its launch through August 1941 , and then bedsheet @-@ sized from October 1941 to April 1943 . The last three issues were pulp @-@ sized again . Street & Smith had planned to switch it to digest size with the December 1943 issue , but it was cancelled before that issue appeared . The price began at 20 cents and rose to 25 cents with the change to bedsheet size ; it remained at 25 cents when the size changed back to pulp . It had 164 pages when pulp @-@ sized and 130 pages while it was bedsheet @-@ sized . It began as a monthly and switched to bimonthly from December 1940 on . The volume numbering was regular , with six volumes of six numbers and a final volume of three numbers . The title began as simply Unknown . In December 1940 " Fantasy Fiction " was added as a subtitle , and with the following issue the title became Unknown Worlds .

The first six U.S. issues were available directly in the UK , but thereafter an abridged British reprint edition was issued by Atlas Publications , beginning in September 1939 . It was pulp @-@ sized , and priced at 9d ( nine pence ) throughout . It appeared on a regular monthly schedule until December 1940 , after which the schedule became quite irregular , with two or three issues appearing each year until 1949 . The volume numbering initially followed the corresponding U.S. editions , with some omitted numbers in 1942 and 1943 , and then disappeared for four issues ; from the twenty @-@ eighth issue ( Spring 1945 ) the magazine was numbered as if it had been given volumes of twelve numbers since the start of the run . The title was changed from Unknown to Unknown Worlds with the March 1942 issue .

= = = Related publications = = =

In 1948 , Street & Smith reprinted several stories from Unknown in a bedsheet @-@ sized magazine format , priced at 25 cents , with the title From Unknown Worlds . This was an attempt to determine if there was a market for a revived Unknown . Street & Smith printed 300 @,@ 000 copies , against the advice of John Campbell , but although it sold better than the original , too many copies were returned for the publisher to be willing to revive the magazine . The issue was reprinted in Britain in 1952 , reduced in size to 7 by 9 @.@ 5 inches ( 180 mm x 240 mm ) and cut from 130 pages to 124 ; it was priced at 2 / 6 ( two shillings and six pence ) . Part of the run was issued in a hardcover binding at a higher price . One story from the U.S. version was omitted : " One Man 's Harp " by Babette Rosmond .

Three anthologies of stories from Unknown were published in the early 1960s . The Unknown Five includes four stories reprinted from Unknown and the first print appearance of " Author ! Author ! " , by Isaac Asimov , which was sold to Unknown shortly before Street & Smith shut it down . Two additional Unknown anthologies were published in the late 1980s .