

Speculation

January 1967 2¢



Please note that from March 1st, 1967, the editor's address will be

81 Trescott Road
Northfield,
Birmingham, 31.

All correspondence should be now addressed accordingly.

This issue of Speculation has been delayed past its original publication date while this change of address has been confirmed. It is now published in March 1967 and all deadlines in this issue should be revised from "April 2nd" to May 20th, 1967

All letters, material, advertisements, etc, should reach the editor before May 20th 1967 in order to be included in the next issue.

Many thanks to Darroll Pardoe for his assistance in printing this issue.

Speculation

JANUARY 1967

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THE SPECULATOR

CLASS NOTES

Although we all probably read a lot of science fiction, I wonder how well we might manage in a formal course on science fiction & fantasy ?

Yes, after all these years during which we've looked upon SF as no more than enjoyable reading, someone has made it into an academic subject !

Speculation's US Agent Al Lewis reports that the University of California & Los Angeles is running a 12-week Thursday evening course titled "English X 497; Science Fiction and Fantasy".

"I'm not sure just what I expected this course to be," said Al, "but I did not expect the course that I think I will be getting. This one is the brainstorm of the **instructor**, a member of the UCLA English Department and an old-time SF reader."

Al reported that each pupil will be expected to write a term paper and two lesser papers; story reviews, essentially. There will be no final exam in this course, but the class will be doing a good share of the work

"Fred Glavin M.A. is the instructor" writes Al, "a theatre arts major working on his Ph.D. in that field and a long-time reader of science fiction from the old pulp magazine days. He knew Korshak, Bleiler and Dikty years ago, but has had no other contact with the fan field, has never attended a convention nor seen a fanzine. His list of authors for term paper subjects includes authors such as Doc Smith, van Vogt, Heinlein, Tolkein; - but not Bradbury, Ballard, Clarke or Cordwainer Smith. Or, for that matter, Harlan Ellison."

Al finds it interesting that science fiction has now reached a stage of literary respectability such that it can be included in a university curriculum. "I shall get along in this class," he concludes, "but I had hoped for a more scholarly, academic approach - in other words, a viewpoint of the field different from my own."

Let's hope that some enterprising college in this country begins a similar Extra-Mural course - and students, no term papers to be cribbed from any fanzines, if you don't mind !

BETTER LATE....

There's still a faint guilt hanging over the Speculation editorial offices, if that is what they can be called. That last October issue was rather late - many copies were not posted until mid-November, and the "24th December" deadline has meant a lot of readers' letters have missed this current issue. Comments on Speculation Vol II No. II will mostly appear in the April issue.

But then again, this sort of thing is always happening to fanzines. It's very nearly a law of nature - editors, being human believe it or not, usually are tempted with other things to do during the summer months. Only in the Long Cold winter does the mood change, and the important business of cutting stencils take first priority.

DEL REY & TUCKER

Guest of Honour at 1967's World Convention in New York will be Lester del Rey, with Fan Guest of Honour Bob 'Wilson' Tucker.

A flyer from the Nycon III Committee gives details of the programme and arrangements for this convention. Three Progress Reports will be sent out, and advertisements are now being accepted for these and for the Nycon official Programme Booklet.

\$1.00 or 7/- will buy an overseas non-attending membership for the convention. Not only does this entitle the member to all the convention literature, including the special MEMORY BOOK, but it also gives the right to nominate and vote for the year's Hugo Awards.

Once again Speculation urges its readers outside the United States to join the convention. The World SF Convention is not "just another American convention", and it invites the support of the whole of international fandom.

Membership is \$1.00 (7/-) to Nycon 3, P.O.Box 367, Gracie Square Station, New York.

CRITICISM

Damon Knight was probably the best SF critic of his period, and certainly the most entertaining. He so indoctrinated me at an early age that until recently I would not have added that qualifying "of his period".

But now there is at least one other critic whom I consider Knight's peer; fortunately a critic who is currently writing a perceptive series of essays. I refer of course to Algis Budrys review column in Galaxy.

THE SPECULATOR

The first few reviews in Algis Budrys' Galaxy column were written in a somewhat flowery style, very different from his incisive fiction, yet containing somehow the same suggestion of penetrating truth submerged below the surface. Since then he has simplified his style and proceeded to give what I consider to be some of the very best evaluations being written today of science fiction books.

Budrys has reviewed those SF books which have had claim to "setting the pace" in the last 18 months. He shed some light on that motivation which persuaded an author who had written a novel such as the classic UNDER PRESSURE to produce a book so very different in tone as DUNE. He tempered praise for PALMER ELDRITCH with the frank admission that he didn't know what it was all about. He authored a critique of SQUARES OF THE CITY which must surely be the bluntest comment that Brunner will find to the effect that a chess game does not a story make !

Budrys has now reviewed another "keystone" of modern science fiction, the latest Heinlein book, THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS. In his review, Budrys has spotted one fundamental difference that will surely bear quoting between this novel and a story by J.G. Ballard. You will find a much fuller and lengthier critique in Galaxy for December 1966;

"...Whoever the actual hero of THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS might be, the actual villain is inertia. This is precisely the opposite of the situation reflected in the books written by such new and spectacular writers as Brian Aldiss and J.G. Ballard.

"A story by J.G. Ballard, as you know, calls for people who don't think. One begins with characters who regard the physical universe as a mysterious and arbitrary place, and who would not dream of trying to understand its actual laws.

"Furthermore. in order to be the protagonist of a J.G.Ballard novel, or anything more than a very minor character therein, you must have cut yourself off from the entire body of scientific education.

"In this way, when the world disaster - be it wind or water - comes upon you, you are under absolutely no obligation to do anything about it but sit and worship it. Even more further, some force has acted to remove from the face of the world all people who might impose good sense or rational behaviour on you, so that the disaster proceeds unchecked and unopposed except by the almost inevitable thumb-rule engineer type who for his individual comfort builds a huge pyramid (without huge footings) to resist high winds, or trains a herd of alligators and renegade divers to help him out in dealing with deep water.

"This precondition is at the root of every important J.G.Ballard creation, and is so fundamental to it that it does not need to be put into words. Being buried as it is, it both does not call attention to itself and permits the author's characters to produce the most amazing self-destructive reactions while making reasonably intelligent and somewhat intellectual mouth-noises."

ALL FANDOM UNITED!

Believe it or not, but SF fandom has actually had chance to be useful!

It seems that "Star Trek", the only good science fiction series to ever be shown on US television, is in rating trouble and might be cancelled unless a better viewer response is received.

ADVERTISING

Column advertisements 6d (10p) for 10 words. Box numbers 1/- extra charge (We forward your mail). Display advertisements £1.0.0 (£3.00) per full page; 10/- (\$1.50) per half page; 5/- (.75p) quarter page. Back 3 inside front and back covers, lithographed advertisements at £4.0.0. (\$12.00) per full page.

Overseas readers may remit to their Speculation agent. All enquiries and advertising matter must be sent to the Editor, 9 Porlock Crescent, Northfield, Birmingham 31, U.K.

ALL MATERIAL FOR THE NEXT ISSUE MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 2nd.

FOR SALE: USA hard-covered books, all 1st Editions. Mint to v. good condition Offers welcome. Michael J. Waskett, 506 Ley Street, Newbury Park, Essex.

Crown 1952, "THE GALAXY READER", ed. H.L.Gold, 566pp,.....£2.0.0.
Ox/N.Y. 1956, "FUTURE PERFECT" ed. Franklin, 402pp,.....£2.0.0.
Gnome 1951, "TOMORROW & TOMORROW/FAIRY CHESSMEN", Lewis Padgett,..£1.10.0
Simon & Schuster 1957, "MIND CAGE", A.E.van Vogt,.....£1.0.0.
Harcourt Brace 1955, "STAR GUARD", Andre Norton.....10/-

HELP!

DOESN'T ANYONE have copies of (Zenith) Speculation numbers 9 & 10 ?

Your editor needs two copies of each, and will pay your price for these issues!

Please...send them back where they came from;- to Peter Weston, 9 Porlock Cres., Northfield, Birmingham 31, UK.

ARTWORK

FOR SALE:-

Lot 1; Sketch by Jack Gaughan for If, illustrating Keith Laumer's "The City That Grew In The Sea". The drawing measures 7"x11", in black and white on board. The original was used in If & appears in the March 1964 issue on page 59.

Highest bid received by April 2nd 1967 takes the lot, minimum bid is £1.0.0. (\$3.00)

Lot 2; Sketch by Jim Cawthorn, which appeared on the cover of Zenith 10. This illustrates "Entry Into Dragons-guard". Black on white on board, 12"x2.1". The reverse side has six other original Cawthorn sketches, never used anywhere.

Highest bid received by April 2nd 1967 takes the lot. Minimum bid is 10/- (\$1.50).

Bids to the editor, Speculation.

COMICS

Complete set of GARTH strip from the Daily Mirror, titled "Night of the Knives" and a story featuring Jack the Ripper. Available for sale, or would consider exchanges for comic book material.

WANTED; Early issues of Daredevil, Thor, X-Men, Fantastic Four & Spider-Man comics. Would exchange for British editions, reprints, & original comics published in this country.

Enquiries to; Box 5, Speculation

The producers of the series appealed to the Science Fiction Writers of America and they in turn appealed to fandom.

Buck Coulson writes, "I wrote to everyone in the States that I owed a letter to (and a few besides) and told them to write; - to the studio, network, to the sponsors, to anyone. There was very little time in which to act, since we only found out about it all last week, and the decision to cancel or not to cancel will be made this week."

By the time that this issue of Spec. comes out, US readers at least will know what happened. We've often been told that a vocal fannish minority had a big influence on the old SF pulp magazines -- let's just hope that fandom hasn't forgotten how to letterhack!

*COVER NOTE

"GARDEN OF EDEN" might be the title for Pam Yates' cover picture this month. It is her first full page drawing for the magazine, although her interior artwork has been appearing for some time.

Incidentally, it's rather interesting to look at the names of artists who've illustrated (Zenith) Speculation covers from the very early days onwards. The order has been; MIK:MIK:Atom;Atom; Eddie Jones: Eddie Jones: Brian McCabe; Atom; Eddie Jones: Jim Cawthorn: Joseph Zajackowski: Jim Groves: Ken McIntyre: Riccardo Leveghi: & Pam Yates. That's a pretty good assortment!

Can you draw? - because we have yet to choose a cover for the next issue. Artistically-minded readers might like to submit artwork for cover or interior use, subject to the regular deadline of April 2nd. Those sketches that can't be used will be returned immediately.

PUBLICATIONS

That busy enclave on the US Pacific Coast has been actively publishing again.

Received recently was the LASFS Album, published for the 1500th meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society on May 12th, 1966. This is a photographic collection apparently edited by Al Lewis and the first of a projected series.

Most of the faces that have been seen in active West Coast fandom since 1939 are represented, and the 100 or so photographs are well worth having. The Album, Volume I, can be obtained from Al Lewis, 4600 Kester Avenue, Apt D; Sherman Oaks, California.

Also received, this time from Advent Publishers in Chicago is a hefty volume entitled "The Universes of E.E.Smith". This is the non-fiction concordance to E.E.'Doc' Smith's work, intended to accompany in particular the 'Skylark' & 'Lensman' series (now in reprint from Pyramid.)

The book contains a long glossary of people, places and planets, compiled with a light touch by Ron Ellick; a similar but shorter section for the Skylark series, and compiled by Bill Evans; a bibliography compiled by Al Lewis and an introduction by old professional James H Schmitz. At 272 pages and \$6.00, the book is a handsome addition to any collection. Illustrations and jacket are by Bjo Trimble. Order from Advent:Publishers, P.O.Box 9228, Chicago 90, Illinois, USA. Or from FANTAST, 75 Norfolk St., Wisbech, UK.

GALAXY GROUP

"At the World SF Convention in Cleveland, September 1966, the "Hugo" Award went for the first time to If as the most popular SF magazine in the world.

Other winners included Isaac Asimov, Roger Zelazny, Frank Herbert, & Harlan Ellison.

"To celebrate, the March 1967 issue of If will be a Special Hugo Winners issue, and in it there will be stories by all the above, and a cover by Frank Frazetta, who won the Award for best cover artist of the year."

(From an announcement in the latest If - sounds as if that's a good way for Fred Pohl to say "Thank You".)

EASTER WEEKEND, 1967

John Brunner will be Guest of Honour at the 1967 Science Fiction Convention, to be held in Bristol at Easter.

No further details of the programme have yet been announced, but with well over 100 already registered, including those Convention perennials Brian Aldiss Ted Tubb and Harry Harrison, the convention shouldn't lack for entertainment.

The convention will be held in the Hawthorns Hotel, Bristol. There are still some rooms left, but the convention will begin on March 24th. If you want to attend, register now !

Science fictional proceedings will be covered in the next issue of Spec., all being well, and your editor, Pete Weston, will be glad to meet new faces and old friends.

Registration is 7/6 per head, to Tony Walsh, 61 Halsbury Road, Bristol 6. This will bring you all progress reports and con. literature.

See you there !

Peter R Weston

all about the CHANGE WAR

THE BIG TIME was published in Galaxy magazine in 1956, and promptly went on to win itself a Hugo Award for that year. People have had many different opinions of the novel, at different times ranging from "it's very deep" to "a load of bull". Just what was THE BIG TIME all about ? On what level was it written ? Here are some comments from Fritz Leiber, who is after all the man best placed to make them.

Robert Silverberg once said he knew why Horace Gold bought THE BIG TIME - it all happened in one room ! (While he edited Galaxy, Gold lived almost entirely inside his New York apartment, never visiting and rarely venturing outdoors).

Frederick Pohl was advising Gold and reading for him at the time Galaxy purchased THE BIG TIME. Afterwards Pohl told me that he said to Horace about the novel of Spiders and Snakes; "I don't know whether this is any good or not, but I know it's going to win the Hugo."

Judith Merrill told me she thought I'd written the book for self-therapeutic reasons. I'd just been through something of a crisis in my life.

Well, as far as Silverberg's comment goes, I decided to stick strictly to the unities of space, time, and action in the book; write it as if it were a drama on the stage; one set, three couches, some curtains and a little odd bric-a-brac, action taking three hours, etc.

MANY LEVELS

I think the story hit people, perhaps sometimes against their better judgement, because I went to considerable trouble to make it poetic and allusive, a story told on many levels but in no contrived way and with no hidden meanings. To get this effect, I;

- (1) keyed the story to several pieces of music, which I usually played each time I started to write (Beethoven's "Pathetique" piano sonata, Schubert's "Unfinished" symphony, and that Beethoven symphony with the Fate Motif - dah-dah-dah-DAH; and of course the songs 'Lili Marlene' and 'We're Gentlemen Rankers from Over the Sea');
- (2) based most of the characters on (a) real friends of mine and (b) often literary characters; for instance Sid Lessingham is both Falstaff (pretty obvious) and Hugh Walpole, a British semanticist who worked with Ogden and Richards;
- (3) identified each character with a card from the tarot deck - not to tell any particular fortune, or to give each an occult meaning, but just to enrich them in my imagination, give them more hooks to grapple with into my unconscious;
- (4) worked in as much poetry as possible - the chapter-heading quotes, Rupert Brooke's "Granchester", putting some of Kabrysia's talk into DAH-dah tetrameter and, as I seem to recall, some of Bruce's speeches into iambic pentameter, etc.
- (5) played with words recklessly - even those horrendous puns Greta keeps making to herself; Hey Zeus ! (Jesus in Spanish); Gott mit uns (Got mittens, of course - old hat - but of course the whole tale turns on a glove);

and there may have been other devices which I've forgotten.

INTOXICATION

As a result, I think, of these "stunts", I had a greater feeling for words while writing that story (it took 100 days from first conception to the sending-off of the final typed MS) than I've ever had at any other time in my life. My methods also resulted in multi-symbolism, both conscious and unconscious. The Change War can thus be taken to stand for intoxication and also for creativity (note the hangoverish feeling when the Major Maintainer cuts off, or rather, isolates them from the outer "real" world. By its shape and size, incidentally, the Major Maintainer seems to "stand for" two fifths of whisky in a paper sack, though I certainly didn't consciously intend this. Also, when the Change World temporarily dies - meaning that the characters can no longer scoot about, trying to change reality, the females become fertile again (something I hadn't planned but which came to me at the moment of writing)).

I think it is this word-richness, and the warmth and truth of the emotions involved, which apparently made many readers like the story.

NO MYSTERIES

As far as plot goes, there are no mysteries; it's exactly as I tell it; A Recuperation Centre in a Change War is temporarily opted as an Operations Room; there is a mutiny which is suppressed - that's all !

I did make two changes to please Horace Gold, who despite Pohl's recommendation was doubtful about taking the story. Gold didn't suggest these changes. (1) I tacked on to the beginning an introductory section in which Greta sketches out the situation; this reads almost like a publisher's blurb and I don't much like it - the story should begin on p.8 (Ace ed.) with the words; "The Place was jumpy like it always is on an approach."

THE BIG TIME received many reviews when it was published. Here is a critical article written by Dick Eney and reprinted from Speculative Review

If the comically dreadful results obtained by many reviewers who Speculate On Psychological Motivations didn't warn me off, I'd chance a guess that Fritz Leiber's theatrical background accounted for an odd theme in his stories; action-packed tightly-written adventures in which the situation-scene doesn't really change. Consider for example, GATHER DARKNESS, in which splendid Underground plottings and adventures undercut the conservative ruling class (which conceals advanced science behind a facade of superstition), replacing it with a revolutionary ruling class (which conceals advanced science behind a facade of superstition). Consider DESTINY TIMES THREE, in which a universe of multiple time-lines is threatened with inter-probability warfare, and in which after a tense, dramatic series of events in three different worlds results in a universe of multiple time-lines threatened with inter-probability warfare. Consider finally THE BIG TIME, in which a desperately disoriented band participating in a mad and meaningless Change War wind up as a desperately disoriented band of participants in a mad and meaningless Change War.

But Leiber's round trips are of the sort in which the journey is all the fun any reasonable person could desire. This fantasy of a schizoid break under the strain of a lunatic war is as full of dazzlement as a trip through a burning fireworks factory. Our actors have as much characterisation used on them individually as most writers use for their whole cast of characters; Leiber-people parade their psychic quirks with as much aplomb as the rest of us walk dogs, and almost as regularly. Neither is this done for mere sport; Leiber blushes not to account for psychological turmoil by arranging plot-situations disturbing enough to cause people to get badly shaken. It is true that he doesn't usually make them quite as disturbing as in this case, in which two groups of soldiery, escaping one jump ahead of the enemy, are first cut off entirely from the space-time universe, and then trapped in a superlatively locked box with a live, ticking atomic-bomb; but then one is relieved to find some author who realises that people need an excuse before plunging into the depths of emotion.

(2) I somewhat rewrote the last chapter, putting in Spider Boy's superficial, rather twaddly talk about "reality binding"; originally the book ended with an inner cry from Greta that she was only halfway a woman - because the crazy dance was going on and on and they weren't getting anywhere with themselves, as Bruce had briefly persuaded them to try.

Naturally, the whole story at another level, is about war and emotional pacifism.

CONSERVATION OF REALITY

I think the novel should be classified as metaphysical rather than scientific speculation. There is considerable thought in it about space, time, and change. I later learned (and used in the sequel, NO GREAT MAGIC) that according to St. Thomas one of God's attributes is that he cannot change the past -- odd that there should even be a theological objection to time travel ! My Law of the Conservation of Reality (developed in the related short-story TRY AND CHANGE THE PAST) is more metaphysical than scientific, despite its scientific suggestiveness.

I capitalised certain words (mostly nouns - the effect was Germanic !) simply to show that they were being used in a special sense true only for this story; e.g. Change, Place, Zombie...

I didn't know then - and still don't - who the Spiders and the Snakes are, or much about them (though I may discover more if I write any more Change War stories - and I've done considerable on one, TARGET: C.J.CAESAR). The Spiders & Snakes notion was a sort of pacifist squeak; that most or all wars are a matter of Nasty fighting Nasty.

NO MESSAGE

Oh yes, and I'd just read Joyce Cary's trilogy THE HORSE'S MOUTH, TO BE A PILGRIM, and HERSELF SURPRISED, and they'd made me very keen on extreme first-person narrative, hence the telling of the story solely by Greta in her rather wacky and naive-sophisticated and mebbe even silly language.

But to close up now on THE BIG TIME. It wasn't suggested in any way by Horace Gold, or by anybody else for that matter. And I wasn't trying to get across any message whatsoever -- whereas many of my tales are chock-a-block with message (all the stories in THE NIGHT OF THE WOLF, "The Ship Sails at Midnight", "Nice Girl with Five Husbands", "The Night He Cried", and many others. It seems to me that the plot of THE BIG TIME is as tight as they come - it's a sort of ultimate in locked-room mysteries, (even though not a detective story that can be solved by the reader). I tried to have a real assortment of characters. Do they come alive - the Little Commandant, Bruce, Greta, Lily, Maud (her name derives from Noel Coward's "We're all of us just rotten to the core, Maud.."), Sid, ? Some of the rest are more types than people - the gambler (Beau something-or-other) especially. If the short novel has a theme, it's that of love between man and woman, Greta and Erich; Bruce and Lily, and Sid and Greta. It's not a real science fiction story - a "hard" sf tale sticking as much as it can to current science and propounding a problem and solving it...no, it's a tale of people and their relationships, ordered (or organised) by a quite strict science-fantasy background.

ADVERTISEMENT

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

I am always interested in !

I collect his work in all languages and in every conceivable form. I have built up what I think is a nice selection of British Burroughs books and magazines, but I have a long way to go. I need dozens and dozens of various British editions of Burroughs books, for I want to collect ONE copy of EACH edition of EVERY ERB title published in England. That means I will need the 31 separate volumes of the Methuen edition of TARZAN OF THE APES. So far I only have 9 of them, and only the more recent Goss dust jacket. So I need 22 more to complete the set, and am particularly interested in getting one of the early volumes in dj, and a first edition of this title. Such is the case with most of the other ERB titles published in Gt. Britain

THEREFORE please send me a list of any and all E.R.Burroughs books that you have and would like to sell (or trade), and indicate: title, edition, condition, and if in dj.

I am also interested in obtaining a set of SUN WEEKLY, with "The Martian" in it; plus the 3 British comics of John Carter of Mars (reprinted from the U.S. comic). I can also use almost any Four Square ERB titles you may have, if you can accept 30¢ each. I might be interested also in the British Tarzan comics (TARZAN ADVENTURES, etc) but these must be fairly cheap since they are for resale. (However I would pay \$5.00 (£2) for a copy of Vol.2 No.1 of Tarzan Comic, monthly, for my own collection).

I will also pay an excellent price for sets of Tit-Bits with TARZAN & LION MAN: Pluck, with AT THE EARTH'S CORE. I am also interested in ALL foreign languages ERB books, particularly the older, out-of-print editions.

ERB-DCM

This is the fanzine that no real Edgar Rice Burroughs enthusiast can afford to be without. Current winner of THE HUGO, each issue with full colour cover, completely offset-printed on classy paper. It's an absolute MUST fanzine. Four issues for \$2.00 or 15/-. The additional 4-page BURROUGHS BAZAAR lists ERB books, magazines and comics etc for sale.

Subscription orders can be sent to Jim Belton, 64 Westman Road, Winchester, Hants, England. Sale lists, etc, should be sent directly to me:

CAMILLE CAZEDESSUS Jr., P.O.Box 585, Breckenridge, Colo.80424.

GREAT S.F. POTBOILERS OF OUR TIME

ROBERT COULSON

In a field swamped with mediocrity, the really bad science fiction story is likely to be an entertaining change, if nothing else. In this article Bob Coulson discusses some SF potboilers, then wanders from his theme to report on some rib-tickling stories. This article was originally intended for panel discussion at the last World SF Convention (Tricon) and discusses British SF "because the other three panelists were planning to pick on bad American SF."

I feel that I'm here somewhat under false pretences. A "potboiler" is, technically, a book written by a competent author for the sole purpose of filling his pot, containing no artistic pretensions whatsoever.

But very little US science fiction falls under this category. There is a lot of bad science fiction - hoo boy, is there a lot of bad science fiction! - and there is a lot of eminently forgettable science fiction. (Quick now: name the stories that appeared in Analog, Galaxy & F&SF three months ago.) Most of it though, is written for other purposes than mere financial ones, mainly because authors interested in financial considerations take one look at the pay scale of science fiction and hastily go into another field. The only form of SF that regularly produces potboilers is visual SF; films and television.

Even if there were lots of true SF potboilers to choose from, discussing them wouldn't be very interesting; by definition a potboiler doesn't contain anything, good or bad, worth remembering.

The sort of science fiction I want to talk about is the really bad stuff; very few potboilers can compare with an opus by a bad writer with a burning desire to get his name into print.

It is my contention that no American writer has approached the depths reached by the poorer British writers. One exception might be vanity press work, but while I know that some science fiction and fantasy has been issued by the vanity houses, I've never read any of it. I have read large amounts of British science fiction, however, and it includes everything from the best writing being done today to stuff that most fanzine editors would reject.

As I'm from Indiana, my favourite example comes from the magazine Supernatural Stories, and is a tale titled "Lycanthrope", written by one Ray Cosmic. (That's another thing about the low-grade British writers; quite often they are disinclined to use their own names. I would be too, if I wrote the sort of rubbish they do. They hide under names like Ray Cosmic, Nal Rafcam, Pel Torro, Volstead Gridban, and Astron del Marta.)

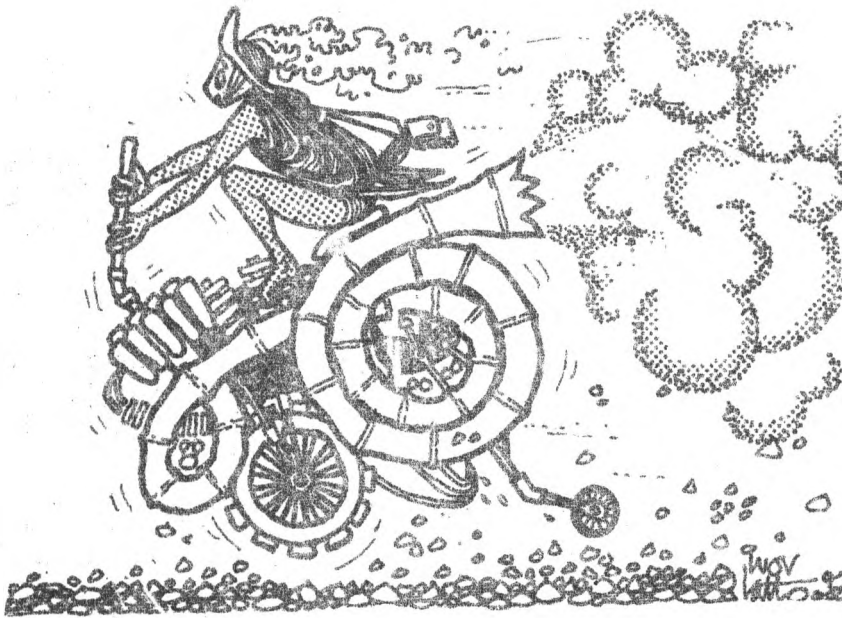
Cosmic begins his story with the hero being rowed through "the swamplands in this God-forsaken corner of Indiana" to a mysterious mansion. After his arrival, another guest mentions that boatmen willing to make the trip are hard to find; "Damned superstitious lot of beggars, these natives!" (Truly effendi, we of Indiana entertain beliefs that are strange to Western eyes...)

Our hero mentions seeing a "monkey-like thing" in the swamp, and is informed that "there are no monkeys around here for at least a couple of hundred miles." (This isn't as funny as it used to be - just a couple of weeks ago a squirrel-hunter near Logansport bagged a monkey. But otherwise the nearest ones would seem to be in the Michigan City zoo).

Later one of the party is killed by an alligator. It turns out to be a were-alligator, so maybe it doesn't count, except that nobody is surprised to find the reptile so far from its usual haunts in Florida and in the sewers of New York City. Still later, when another member of the party is crushed, a survivor says "Only once have I seen anyone like this. That was in South America when a native was strangled by a python." He neglects to reveal what the python was doing in South America at the time, swam over from Africa, no doubt!

Another lovely bit of writing appears in the magazine Space Fact and Fiction, in a story titled "The Black Menace of Zenolius", written by the disappointingly-prosaically named Reginald Brown. This begins as the hero is being hired by a group that is obviously villainous (obviously to everyone but the hero, that is!) to, in his own words, "...fly you out to Venus in your own crate.."

They take off: "...the old ship trembled and shuddered frighteningly when the turbines built up the terrific thrust which pushed her with a deafening roar into space." Just before dawn of the fourth day our hero is at the controls when the villain sticks "an ugly-looking heat gun" in his back and orders him to change course, handing him a home-made map to go by.



"In Clouds of
Glory ? "

He asks where they are going, and the villain says "We are going to land on Zenolius." "Well," says our hero, "I know a lot of the planets around here but I've never heard of that one."

"It isn't a planet in that sense, Johnny," says the villain, "it's a tiny sphere, just one of the system of stars related to Arcturus, one of the three brightest stars." (Notice how the space fiction and fact of the magazine title is cleverly combined in that sentence!)

The villains have found out about Zenolius from "an old space-explorer" - I can picture him now, looking a bit like Gabby Hayes and leading a derelict spaceship at the end of a rope halter.

"Toward evening the snow-capped mountains of Zenolius appeared on the Direction Screen." (Pretty interesting space-drive there, four days to Venus and one more to Arcturus). "Johnny was back on duty and he could hardly believe his eyes. The map he had used to chart the course had seemed so amateurishly constructed that he hadn't thought it could possibly lead them anywhere ! 'Well, I'm blown,' he ejaculated."

The rest of the story is fairly sub-standard space-opera, with the noble hero ridding the oppressed people of Zenolius of the Earth villains and some giant insects. You got the idea.

It's interesting to note that when statements like these are made by unknown hack writers, they are considered ridiculous, yet other well-known and presumably better writers seem to get away with something very similar.

Joe Patrizio recently wrote an article on J.G. Ballard for Zenith, and included a sample of Ballard's more ridiculous phrases. No less a personage than professional editor Mike Moorcock wrote a rebuttal, saying that these faults were "inconsequential" because Ballard is a great author. This must be one of the advantages of having a 'reputation' and a following.

While I'm quoting from other people's research, I'd like to add a couple of items from George Charter's fanzine, The Scarr. George reads even more bad British SF than I do, and he excerpts the funnier parts for the benefit of his readers. All of the following are from British original paperback SF novels, probably the worst form of science fiction being currently printed. The first is from MARCH OF THE ROBOTS, by Leo Brett.

"Things were stirring within the disc ship. Strange metallic things; things that were alien to the soft green grass of earth. Terrifying things, steel things, metal things; things with cylindrical bodies and multitudinous jointed limbs. Things without flesh and blood. Things that were made of metal and plastic and transistors and valves and relays and wires. Metal things. Metal things that could think. Thinking metal things! "

Later on, in the same vein; "There were strange flickering lights all around the ship. Terrifying lights, weird lights, uncanny lights, awful lights, inhuman lights, alien lights, robot lights; and all around a great hemispherical glowing shield sprang up. A thing with a pale, greeny blue luminescence. An electronic thing, a mechanical thing." (But we already went through that once. The moral is that when you don't have much of a plot it's nice to know a lot of adjectives.)

An example of the writing of Nal Rafcam comes from THE TROGLODYTES: "Astonishment was shown upon the faces of each member of the crew as he came into contact with the unalignable environs about them." The same author speaks of "foistering a giant wind tunnel project on his government."

According to George, the plot of CONDITIONED FOR SPACE, by Alan Ash, goes as follows; Earth is being bombarded by missiles from Planet Blank, which is 500,000 miles from Earth but has only recently been discovered by "an amateur astrologer in Russia". Our hero takes off from a space platform to visit Blank and blow it up. Thirty-three minutes after take-off the spaceship is doing 19,000 miles per hour and $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours later it is 18,000 miles above the Earth. Three days later the ship has only 100,000 miles left to go on its 500, 000 mile journey.

There is an increase in speed then a decrease, "obviously the space-ship was affected by the gravity of the Planet Blank". It crashes, even though "the retard motors" are used and the fuel tanks jettisoned in a last desperate effort. Once there, they find that, of course, the planet has both a good faction and a bad faction. Our hero joins the good faction, defeats the baddies, and marries a princess.

I might mention one last item, not researched from The Scarr. I have both the books described (one of them purportedly by "Charles Grey") and that double description has become one of my favourite SF jokes.

The true potboiler spirit is reflected by Ted Tubb in his two novels, *THE MUTANTS REBEL* and *TORMENTED CITY*. This is because Tubb is a competent author (he used to be one of my favourites) and because he obviously churned out this stuff as fast as possible in order to make a couple of shillings.

The heroine of *THE MUTANTS REBEL* is named Nyla. "A tall, slender woman, no longer young but as yet unmarred by age. Thick black hair fell in soft ripples to narrow shoulders. Her skin had a faint bronze cast, and her oddly slanted eyes were as black as ebony. She wore a uniform of slacks and high-collared blouse, belted at the waist, and all of a deep black. A faint pattern of thin gold lines weaved in an intricate arabesque over the entire uniform, relieving the sombre colouring. A wide band of gold was clasped to her left wrist, supporting an elaborate chronometer, her long thin fingers were devoid of rings, and her nails lacked polish."

Now listen to this description of the heroine of *TORMENTED CITY*, named Nylala; "She was a tall woman, slim and graceful with a tide of long black hair rippling over her shoulders and with long, oddly slanted eyes as dark as her hair. Her hands were slim and with the long fingers of a creative artist, devoid of rings and with nails merely tinted with polish. She wore sombre black, a high necked blouse and flaring skirt, the deep colour relieved by writhing arabesques of gold thread... A wide band of gold on her left wrist supported an elaborate chronometer."

That illustrates one of the maxims of the potboiler writer; Never throw away a good description - you never can tell when you might want to use it again.

Robert Coulson 1966

WHY HAS so much rubbish been written in science fiction?
Here is one explanation, from editor Horace Gold, and
reprinted from *Oopsla* 27, May 1959.

...."The (science fiction) rush produced so huge a strain on writers, who of course produce the very thing we sell, that quality just had to drop. Too many markets were competing for the output of too few skilled writers. Borderline stories, which ordinarily would have been sent back for tuning-up and polishing, had to be bought as they were because somebody else would have bought them without change. Routine ideas and treatments had to be good enough because magazines were buying wordage to fill pages with, and writers were harried into turning out material that most of our temporary competitors were buying sight unseen. New authors sold quickly, too quickly to learn anything but bad writing habits, and were thus deprived of editorial guidance that would have taken them through their necessary apprenticeship. And, obeying Gresham's Law, - the bad drove out the good. Conscientious writers were demoralised into leaving the field, and some worthy magazine titles were put to death along with the unworthy."

A Series
of stories

Blue Fire

by Robert
Silverberg



BASICALLY MY BLUE FIRE STORIES CONSTITUTED AN EXPERIMENT IN FORM, a technical puzzle. They were conceived as five parts (in 1958 !) and so the book is by no means a disassembled novel which I will then put back together for the Ballantine edition. The book text will be identical to the magazine versions, save only the elimination of minor repetitions and a few inconsistencies. The project was to tell a story dealing with one group of characters through a historical process covering several generations. A novel in conventional form would have required intolerable and irrelevant patches of transition; the proper way to handle the subject, I thought, was by making quantum jumps of twenty or thirty years at a time, while trying to maintain continuity of character and theme.

So far as the subject went - the mysterious cult taking over the world - it's been done a dozen times since Neil Jones' Durna Range. My challenge was to disguise the hoariness of the theme in modern prose, and to attempt to dig at the psychology of the cult-masters rather than to ascribe it all, as the old pulpsters did, to the power-lust.

Power-lust begs the question; why do those seeking power lust that way ? I tried to get at the answer through the character of Vorst (off stage for most of the story) and by showing the metamorphoses in Kirby (who is really the protagonist, since the book begins and ends with him.)

There were places where I had to violate the patterns I set for myself; The first three stories were single-viewpoint, but it became impossible to handle stories 4 & 5 that way, since Vorst had to be introduced and yet Kirby's viewpoint presented. So there's a technical imbalance, but I don't think it is too serious. (If I were doing it all over, I'd still plot it that way, because I feel multiple-viewpoint would be intrusive in the first two stories, and also probably in the third.)

Since I had chosen the chronicle-novel form, each of the five stories had to be plotted both by itself and in relation to the whole. At the outset I feared this might impose artificial conflicts within the work, but I don't believe it worked out that way. Generally I was pleased with the outcome, although it shook me a bit to find such a perceptive critic as Buz Busby failing to see, in your July issue, that the current "Open the Sky" was the final part of the series. If the audience doesn't burst into applause at the final chord, there's something wrong with the symphony. (Or maybe - I hope - Buz wasn't paying full attention. But that's not like him.)

The "message" behind the stories ? I'm of the opinion that message must be implicit in the narrative, so that one can't easily pluck it out. Is the message of CRIME AND PUNISHMENT that "Crime Doesn't Pay,"? or does it lie in some deeper part of Raskolnikov's soul ? Is the message of PALMER ELDRITCH that the world is a confusing, deceptive place ? Possibly Dick is making a more complex statement.

And so here; I am saying that some religions are based on synthetic foundations; that humans are gullible; that extraordinary charismatic individuals exist; that we may have problems when we colonise other planets; that man seeks a structure for his existence, and so on. These things concerned me while Kirby, Mondschein, Vorst and the rest were evolving. Then, too, purely mechanical problems were on my mind, that the reader does not care about, but which are vital to the reader -- the story-telling problems.

I don't expect to win any Hugo for the stories. But they pleased me, they pleased their editors, and they have pleased several people whose opinions I value. I've also been well paid for them. So I've had all the satisfactions possible from the work - and is there any better reason for writing S.F. ?

Robert Silverberg, 1966

THE "BLUE FIRE " SERIES OF STORIES

1. "Blue Fire", Nvt. Galaxy June 1965
2. "The Warriors of Light" Nvt. Galaxy, December 1965
3. "Where The Changed Ones Go" Nvt. Galaxy, February 1966
4. "Lazarus Come Forth" Nvt. Galaxy, April 1966
5. "Open The Sky", Nvt. Galaxy, June 1966

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FANORAMA

BY BRUCE PELZ

On the COLLECTING

ENTER UPON the fanzine scene Josef Neufan, who has been in fandom only a very short time. (A letter to Analog discussing errors in one of last issue's stories brought him several letters from the NFFF, and...) His introduction to fanzines has been a couple of issues of The National Fantasy Fan, a Tightbeam, and one or two NFFF-spawned horrors. He decides he wants to get more fanzines, so he subscribes to a couple mentioned in TNFF, one of which was (inevitably) Yandro.

From there he subscribes to - or writes for, since more and more fanzines are being listed without a price - another dozen or so zines. And then he is hooked; he wants to collect fanzines. With that decision he enters Stage I: Anything-I-Can-Get.

In this stage, Josef letterhacks, contributes, and occasionally - when he can afford it - subscribes. Then he brings out his own fanzine, so that he can trade for zines. His collection expands, and as it does he reads more and more about the Good Ones of the past - the fanzines everyone who wants to collect must have and read. A fanzine collector is de trop if he isn't familiar with Quandry, Slant, Ooopsla.... So....

FANORAMA is traditionally that Speculation department that lets its hair down, and discusses the fan field rather than the deadly serious business of science fiction criticism. Originally created by Jalt Willis FANORAMA is now written by a different one of our roving reporters each issue. Now that Harry Warner has suggested his ideas for an "Index of Indices" (last issue), Bruce Pelz takes over to tell us how to collect fanzines

care and of Fanzines

Stage Two: Only the Best. Joe is now scrounging or buying runs of older fanzines which he considers the Cream of the Crop. His considerations may have been influenced by seeing copies of the zines in someone else's collection, or merely by seeing some of their contents reprinted. Of course, besides the more-or-less universally acknowledged greats, there are others which are Great to some people and not to others. As Josef continues to collect, his list of The Best continues to grow. He is now trying to get back runs of The Best, plus the current crop of fanzines.

By this time Josef has probably joined an APA or two, and has a place on the FAPA and SAPS waitinglists. He has discovered that a number of excellent zines were parts of APA mailings, and he increases the scope of his collecting once again.

This is Stage Three: The Best Plus The APAs. In the early part of this stage, the collector saves only those APA mailings published since he joined that APA; later he goes after the mailings issued before he joined - and mailings of APAs he isn't a member of... yet.

Beyond this there is only one more step; Stage Four: The Completist, or One Copy Of Everything. The Completist can't usually come into the picture until the collector has settled down to a fairly steady address, where he can have enough room to store the ton of paper that will result from his turning Completeist. If he collects everything before he settles down, he would have to move the accumulation of zines from pillar to post - or from college to home - all the time.

The Completeist, in his most fanatic form, is a first class nut ! He saves variant editions, spends money for junk nobody else would have in their collections for free, and tends to go insane when he gets an imperfect copy of a zine he can't replace immediately. The Completeist is the craziest collector of all.

The Waiting Game — and The Accumulator

In the Completeist stage, there are a couple other forms of the beast besides the Fanatic. There is the Spider — once a Fanatic, he has now been active long enough, and amassed enough of a reputation as a collector so that he no longer dashes madly around after zines, but sits and waits, with a firm conviction that he will eventually get whatever fanzines he may have missed on their first appearance. (He buys up collections from fans no longer interested in collecting).

Completeists also vary in method. In general, The Fanatic and The Spider are orderly collectors, who keep their collections in some sort of filing order. This is necessary in order for them to know what they still need to complete their collections.

On the other hand, the most basic form of Completist - the guy who saves everything he can get his hands on as long as he can do it without much difficulty - is the Accumulator. He doesn't care whether he has duplicates, triplicates, or X-number of copies of any particular zine. He stashes them in boxes or on shelves, in no particular order and with next to no possibility of retrieval of any particular item. The accumulator is the bane of other collectors, Completeists and Non-Completeists alike, as fanzines tend to disappear into the Accumulator's collection in large quantities, never to be seen again.

How to Start your Collection

So much for the different kinds of collectors of fanzines. Now for how one goes about beginning...

First of all, set your immediate limits for the stage of collector you intend to be. (You may change your mind at any time -- and as often as you like -- after you have started, but you should have an immediate goal to begin with).

If you are interested in only the current fanzines the review columns of Yandro and TNFF are good sources of information on what is being published these days, and on how to get them. If you are selective, you will have to allow for the prejudices of Buck Coulson (he hates Convention Reports, and most fanfiction), and of whoever does the reviews for TNFF (sometimes they merely list zines instead of reviewing them; you then have to take your chances when you write for the fanzines listed.)

If you are in an APA, you can use your APAzine as a trade for genzines by including one or two items of general interest among the usual mailing comments.

To pick up old fanzines is more difficult.

Occasionally someone will advertise that he is selling off his collection, or part of it. You can then buy either specified items or the whole kit and kaboodle, if you think you can afford it and that it will be worthwhile in terms of filling gaps in your collection.

If you live in a fan centre - or can take the time to travel through a fan centre - you can try looking up old gaffiated fans (whose names & addresses appear in old APA mailings, or in other old fanzines or fan directories) and see if they are willing to part with their old collections. Here's where the constant terrorphrase of the collector comes in; "Oh, I just threw that junk out last week!" You can also, if you don't mind being somewhat ghoulish, try to pick up collections of deceased fans before their relatives toss the zines in the trash and they are gone forever.

Conventions are often good sources of fanzines, though the quality as well as the quantity depends entirely on who decides to show up with what fanzines for sale - and on how badly he wants to get rid of them. (The more anxious he is to sell them off, the lower the price is likely to be). I have yet to hear of a bigger steal than the selling-off of Vic Ryan's collection by Tucker at the 1965 Midwestcon, when FAPA mailings went for 50¢ each and Top Grade genzines for even less.

ON THE CARE AND COLLECTING OF FANZINES



To the Accumulator;
With Best Wishes
from all collectors

For the collector of APA mailings, there are various stratagems. Some APAs will sell surplus mailings to anyone who wants them - N'APA and OMPA do this, along with most of the newer APAs. SAPS sells its extras only to members of its Waiting List, so you'll have to join the list if you want to follow this route. FAPA has only 3 extra mailings, far too few for all the Wlers who would want copies, so only those nearest to the Official Editor have much of a chance to get them; especially if the OE is lazy and would rather hand the extra mailings out in person than ship them to people outside his local area. So for FAPA mailings you must either find a member who doesn't save his mailings, or adopt the Long View and wait until they show up in a sale somewhere. As for the ultra-frequent APAs, - Cult, taps, APA L, as well as the defunct APA F and CRAP - if you weren't/aren't a member, or can't directly vultch (i.e. loom over and stick close to, as in the manner of a vulture) a member, you'd best give it up. Completeness in these things is almost impossible to guarantee, anyway.

The Vulture and The Ghoul

After your collection gets to a certain level of completeness, there is nothing left but to gather in large piles of fanzines from ex-collectors, winnow them for the few things you need, and sell the residue. You must become a vulture, a ghoul, -- or both.

Both the Vulture, and the Ghoul learn exactly who has large collections of fanzines that might be available some day. The Vulture waits for the owner to become disinterested or in need of money, then tries to buy up the collection from the owner as cheaply as possible. The Ghoul waits until the more tenacious collectors drop dead, and then tries to buy or wheedle their collections from the heirs. Each of these two creatures knows full well, however, that he himself is on the lists of other vultures and ghouls.

Some collections can be forgotten about immediately; the Ackerman one is destined for the Ackerman Foundation, a self-perpetuating deal which will continue to build Forry's collection even after Forry dies. (The main consideration here, is of course the magazine and book collections, but the fanzines too are part of the Ackerman Foundation.) Some collections are earmarked for the Institute of Specialised Literature, Inc. -- the 1965-incorporated organisation in California which is an outgrowth of the old Fantasy Foundation. My own collection is so earmarked, and in case the ISL is not in a position to take care of things correctly, there is still the UCLA Department of Special Collections.

Looking After The Collection.

As for what you do with your fanzines when you get them, that will depend on the amount of time and space available. I hope you will not become an Accumulator; accessibility of one's collection is to me a prime requisite. I suggest filing fanzines by title, and checklisting them, so you'll know what you have without having to dig into the actual files. (In some case, indexing by the personal editor is not the best heading for your checklist card -- for Shaggy, use Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society; for TNFA, use National Fantasy Fan Foundation; for Fantasy Amateur, use Fantasy Amateur Press Association, etc.)

If you collect APA mailings keep them together; if you collect only highgraded zines from the mailings, then file them in with the general stuff. If you can afford it, I suggest having important fanzines of long runs bound; I now have somewhere around 140 volumes of bound fanzines now, and consider the convenience to be well worth the price of the binding.

Fanzine collecting can be a hobby that is anything from very simple to very complicated. The early stage collectors have to watch out for scalpers who will overcharge for fanzines they know the new collector must have. The Completeist finds himself the target of all kinds of characters trying to publish uncollectable zines just to bug him. It's a great sport, though the rules are as yet quite indefinite.

One more thing; if you get tired of the collecting game, you can always try reading the fanzines you've accumulated.

Bruce Pelz, 1966

THE FANZINE FOUNDATION

BRUCE PELZ has one of the largest integrated collections of fanzines in the United States. Last year he bought the FANZINE FOUNDATION, assembled by Alan J Lewis from 1960 until about 1964 and stored in Detroit with the aid of Howard DeVore.

Right after the Tricon, the new owner of the Foundation went to Detroit, and with the slave-labour help of Fred Hollander, and some assistance from Howard DeVore, Dick Schultz, and Dian Pelz, shipped the Foundation to Los Angeles. The total weight shipped was somewhat over 2100 pounds of fanzines and boxes; it went out from three different post office branches in a total of 69 boxes. Four more boxes were taken to Los Angeles by car.

The Foundation includes the collections, partial or complete, of Alan J Lewis, Howard DeVore, Martin Alger, Larry Shaw, Phyllis Economou, and R.D. Swisher. The long process of sorting has already begun. Many valuable fanzines have already been found, some of them in duplicate. These will be offered for sale, and special items put up for 1-month bids via Ratatosk. The money will be poured back into the Foundation, for purchasing other collections, binding complete sets, and acquiring filing cabinets for storage of the zines.

As was originally intended, the Foundation will be a research collection. A Xerox copy of an item from a fanzine can be supplied at 15¢ per page. Questions about fanzines or items in them, may be sent to Bruce Pelz, Box 100, 308 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, California 90024, together with a stamped self-addressed envelope for reply.

****from an item in Ratatosk 39, 17th September 1966.****

WHEN BILL BECOMES

A

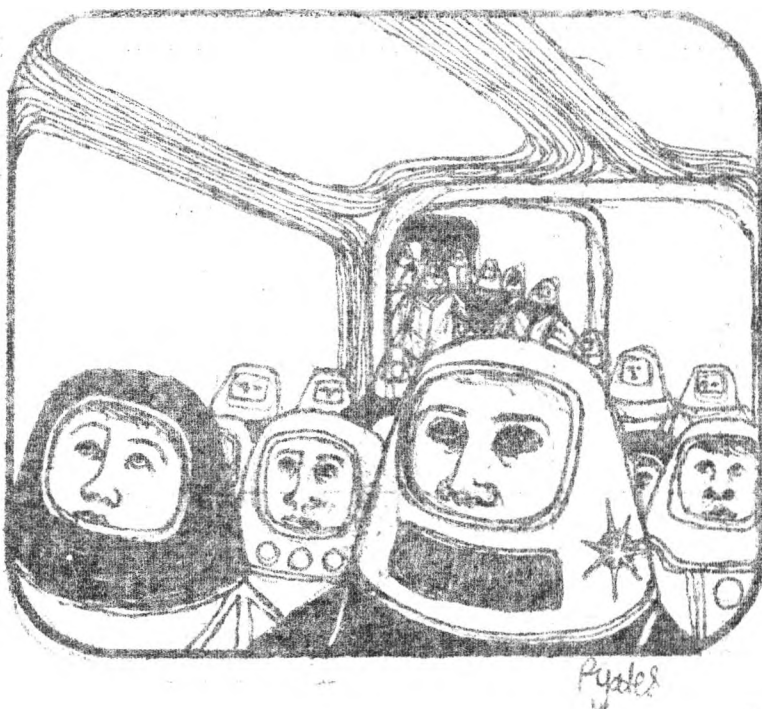
GALACTIC HERO,

I'LL STOP READING

SCIENCE FICTION

by Carl J. Brandon Jr.

This is the reply to Harry Harrison's piece in Zenith 12. Unaccountably overlooked until now, it should be read with Mr Harrison's letter



"Bill, & other Galactic Heroes"

Harry Harrison presents both a weak and a common case for his novel, BILL THE GALACTIC HERO, in Zenith 12.

Certainly, he states that he does not try to defend his novel. This is correct - what he does defend is its attitude, morally and philosophically, towards man and his environment. And what he pleads for is liberalism among reviewers; boiled down his reasoning can be stated in a single phrase; "You shouldn't condemn something just because you don't like it."

"Beryl and Archie, your minds are too closed," writes Mr Harrison. "You are trying to fit things to a pattern you hold as the only acceptable one."

Let's examine this. It means that a critic ought not to try to measure a work of art against any kind of pattern. This implies that he should not consider any beliefs, any artistic or philosophical values, or any experiences when he criticises a piece of artwork. Which means that he must not criticise it at all !

Because criticism is the measurement of an art work against specific patterns which the individual reviewer holds to be true. If he thinks that a book should have a plot, that's a pattern - and if he racks down on a book which lacks plot, that's a result of his comparing that book to his pattern. And if a reviewer thinks a book ought to deal with the heroic in man, and should try to present as logical and realistic picture of the human being as is possible, if he then states a dislike for a novel which glorifies the depraved or the evil - that's a result of his comparing that novel to the pattern.

In his article, Harry Harrison presents views which are today held in common by many of the accepted literateurs. These are that it is not necessary for a fictitious character to be of the type that enables the reader to "identify" with him, and that a character in a work of art need neither be "believable" nor real. These are quite valid points - certainly others beside real and identifiable characters are allowed in fiction. Of course these must be allowed - but do they have to be endorsed? Mr Harrison seems to think so.

"Is it absolutely essential to identify with a character in a story..." writes Mr Harrison, "is this the only kind of hero one can have?"

The answer to both questions is Yes.

To realise the abominability of Mr Harrison's statement, one need only consider what is meant by "hero". A hero is, by definition, *American College Dictionary 1956*, "a man admired for his courage, fortitude, prowess, nobility" While it may be argued that Mr Harrison uses the term "hero" in its meaning of 'central character', he does so only partly; from the context I would say that he uses the word in both meanings.

Is it possible to admire a man because he lacks ~~courage~~, fortitude, prowess nobility and all other heroic qualities?

The meaning of BILL THE GALACTIC HERO is clearly to make fun of the whole concept of heroes, to have readers laugh at their own ideals, at the man who "will reach Victory through Struggle", and at the capacity which makes him able to do so.

This, then, is what an author should not be condemned for trying to do. And usually he is not condemned for doing it. Today's intellectual consensus dictates that a reviewer must accept an author's basic opinions in a book, and only criticise the manner in which they are stated.

Why is this? Surely Mr Harrison would not claim that a book can be fully evaluated if one refuses to consider its contents and looks only at its style? Yet this is exactly what is meant by the notion that a reviewer should not "condemn an author for trying" to do something.

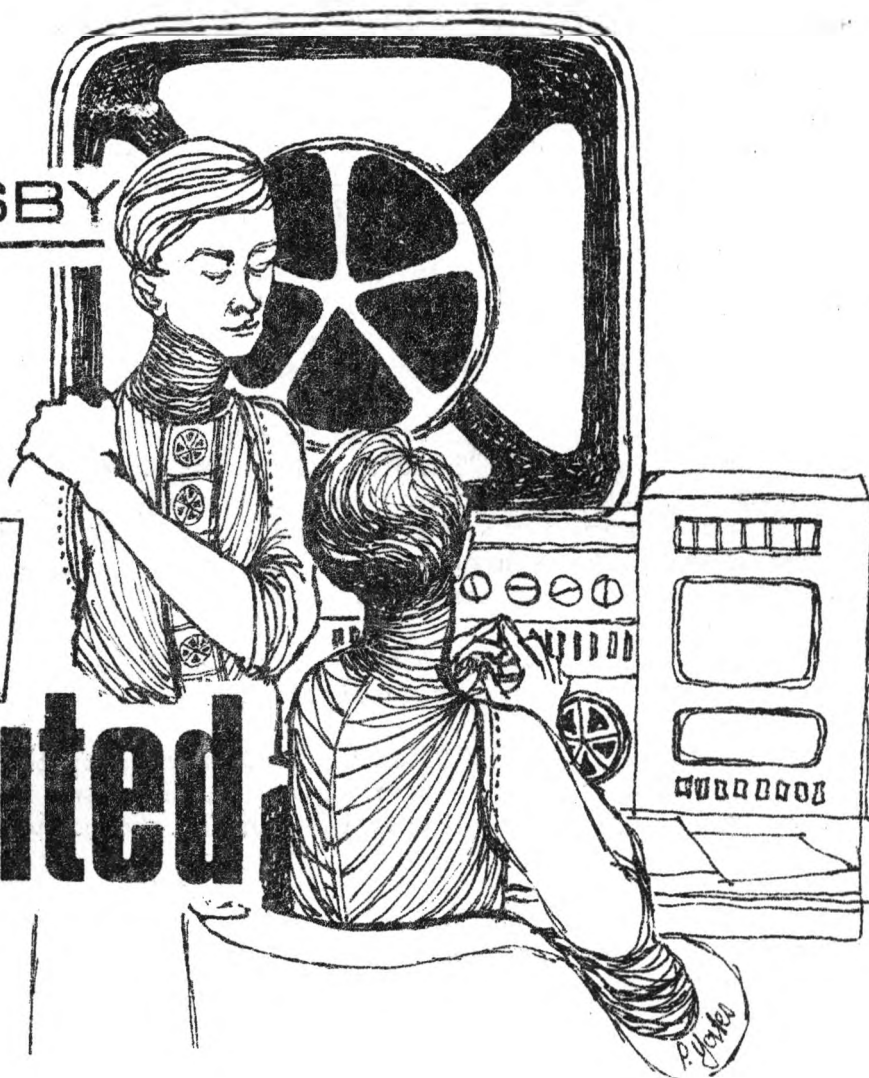
Certainly Mr Harrison himself wouldn't seem to endorse this point of view, for part of his article attacks the basic values he thinks are held by Archie & Beryl Mercer. Even so, he claims for himself the "right" to express any views, without fear of criticism or condemnation for those views, only for the skill by which he expresses them.

I think that one of the most important duties of any reviewer is to state whether or not he agrees with the views of the authors, expressed in the books which he reviews, and why he reacts to those principles, in the way that he does. If Mr Harrison does not agree with me in this, that's his right, but at least he should try to express his disagreement a bit more clearly.

Carl J. Brandon Jr. 1966

BUZ BUSBY

the PLOW revisited



YES, WE KNOW that's the American spelling of 'plough' up there, but this is after all a title dreamed up by an American writer for his column in an American fanzine, and it's still read by a good number of American readers.

'Renfrew Pemberton' reviewed a whole shopping list of magazines in the last issue, and he now drops his masquerade to appear as F.M.'Buz' Busby. For over nine years (March 1955 through to June 1964) Buz and Elinor Busby worked to produce the Seattle magazine CRY of the Nameless every month. CRY was finally folded with sighs of relief and regret, after issue 174 when co-editor Wally Weber left Seattle.

This time the Plow takes off on the more general matters of reviewers and critics as such, and on the rather pushy intolerance of the "New School" in science fiction writing.

"ask not what SF should be
but rather what the people
who are willing to pay money for it
really want it to be."

ANY AUTHOR, editor, reviewer, or critic, including myself, works through his own prejudices. The author or editor is checked somewhat by the need to put up or shut up in the terms of sales, but the reviewer or critic can and unfortunately often does ride his hobby horse far upstage of the poor author without having to back up his opinions with anything other than more words. Sometimes I think that we in the Vultures' Gallery tend to overvalue the ability to pick holes in a story, by comparison to the ability to sit down and write the story in the first place... which takes work.

These thoughts strike me upon reading Zenith Speculation for July 1966. Strike Two is that the science fiction reader today is in some danger of being sold a bill of goods as to what he "should" like, rather than being sold what he does like, right over the counter. Perhaps it is time to ask not what SF "should" be, but rather, what the people who are willing to pay money for it really want it to be. And since I raised the question, I get my First Druthers;

Coherence, interest, a modicum of credibility

To begin with, I want the standard features of readable fiction of any kind, such as coherence, interest, and a modicum of credibility. The interest may be in people, in which case characterisation becomes important, or it may be in the overall situation, with the people only sketched in lightly. Or a bit of both. The coherence and credibility are personal preferences which are getting scant play from the Mood 'n' Style boys of the New School, who tend more toward surrealism and symbolism and the poignant flavours of futility (assorted).

Now if I need, really need, very much of this New School approach I can find it in abundance among the mainstream; why go to Tau Ceti for what is overflowing the gutters of Brooklyn? If science fiction is merely to make esoteric variations on the flood of avante-garde material based mostly on the here and now, why bother with SF at all? I do not, somehow, think that the present readership of the SF field is composed mainly of people who have spent all these wasted years making do with Heinlein and van Vogt while they waited in vain for Miller or Updike or Golding or even Kerouac to surpass the speed of light.

In fact, it would not really surprise me if it should turn out that most SF readers have been reading the stuff (through the so-called Golden Age and all) because they liked it — or even if they are griping about the present crop because for some reason known only to themselves they don't like that so well.

"the impression that the
'New School' is a rather intolerant
institution; that these boys feel
that their way is THE way."

No, that wouldn't surprise me too much. Because we haven't discussed either coherence or credibility as yet. Neither of these has much place in the New School. Symptomatic of this is that Brian Aldiss in Putting Down THE WATCH BELOW by James White, spends not one word on the very serious flaw in that book; that the "life-systems" arrangements described in the undersea part of the story simply would not and could not work, as described. This is not a matter of saying whether or not time-travel or FTL travel are "possible"; it is a matter of noting that no matter how you floss it up, Man is a wasteful form of life and cannot possibly ("possibly" according to the laws of thermodynamics, I mean here) liberate by muscle power enough oxygen to keep himself alive. Inserting plant life into the cycle doesn't fix it; photosynthesis is a physical process, not a magic wand.

To this extent then, THE WATCH BELOW failed in credibility. But all that bothers Brian Aldiss about the book is that it is a "Forties book"; he doesn't like that. (Parenthetically, that's an inappropriate criticism from a writer who deigned to crib the Hemingway Copout Ending in his African story of a few years back - you more or less inadvertently kill off your protagonist in the last couple of pages, leaving all loose threads hanging - from "For Whom The Bell Tolls", circa 1940.)

A more pertinent criticism of White and of the Forties, both, is in the handling of sex with immaculate kid gloves. The writers of those days had little choice; it was the state of the market, baby, and publishers are difficult to argue with, especially at second-hand via the beleaguered editor. I do not know the particular taboos of James White's publisher in this instance, but Aldiss is probably correct in thinking that the treatment was a lot more prissy than need be.

And while we are at Mr Aldiss, a writer of undeniable talent and vigour despite his unfortunate present bias, be it noted that credibility was the major lack in his otherwise-enjoyable Hugo-winning Hothouse Series; them spiders woul'nt'na made it! (And coherence? It will be left this time as an exercise for the student.)

Banal, conventional, and hackneyed?

What with Aldiss on White and Lang Jones on Pohl (in the July issue), I get the impression that the New School is a rather intolerant institution, that these boys feel that their way is THE Way. I can't see that - it is a Way, yes, and certainly deserves its innings, its chance to make the grade. But I'm put off by the insistence that material which does not conform to the New School "doesn't deserve publication" to quote Jones re. Pohl's story.

"Escape...(is) of the essence
in the attraction that
SF holds for its readers

I don't happen to think that Fred Pohl's *PLAGUE OF PYTHONS* is the Novel of The Year or anything, mind you. But Jones makes a great point of its being "banal and conventional", "hackneyed", etc. Well, I admit that I've only been buying the US prozines regularly since 1939 and that I've missed quite a lot of the British product, but to my limited knowledge the gimmick of demonic-type "possession" of humans by other humans, via an electronic gadget and perpetrated by an organised cabal, has not exactly been done to death if at all. Correct me if I'm overlooking numerous stories on this theme; won't you please, everybody ?

There's always a tendency when one enters a new arena, such as fandom or SF writing, or life itself, to be bored and irritated and impatient with that which has gone before and cannot be directly shared or experienced. This can lead to the attempt to negate or nullify or just plain scoff at previous history as Mr Orwell demonstrated so well in his (alas, now obsolete, I suppose), "1984". Not that this always happens; some egos can allow history to continue to pre-exist, and some can't. But it does seem as though Messrs Aldiss and Jones deplore the fact that SF began before they got here, and are doing their best to try to minimise the importance of past writings. (This sort of thing has led in the general case to a label called "The Take-Over Generation". I'm writing, of course, from the viewpoint of one who is not quite ready to be taken over as yet).

Golly, gang; here I've bugged all these folks and haven't even mentioned J.G. Ballard as yet. I admire the man's imagination and hope he Gets Well Soon. Bradbury is Ballard's precursor, but somebody left the crock open and the vinegar flies got into the dandelion wine. It's a great shame that a man with Ballard's descriptive abilities and imaginative talents should be so preoccupied with all the morbidities, all the ways that the human animal can lose. This is particularly unfortunate since that field has long been over-explored anyway; a fella called Moses got most of the juice out of it, several thousand years ago.

Escape, and the Problem Story

Strike Three: what does SF have to offer that is not present in other forms ? OK, there's "Sense of Wonder", or "well, what would it be like to..?" (Credibility enters here; the fantasy buff can wonder what it would be like to be 30 feet tall; the SF buff needs to be put in a setup where it is credible that at least comparatively or in context he would seem to be 30 feet tall). Then there is the sheer pleasure of a New Environment, or an expanded scope, or a big change in the Rules - all these things are usually bundled together (along with other things I've forgotten to mention) under the label of "Escape", and thus knocked out of contention by folks who do not have any real feel for them. But nonetheless they are of the essence in the attraction that SF holds for its readers.

It's been a long time since I've seen the Problem Story mentioned, and this is a staple in the diet of the SF buff. Done well, it rather than the futuristic murder piece is the SF equivalent of the detection-puzzle story in crime/mystery fiction; the reader has the same chance of figuring out the answer ahead of the author's snapper ending. Campbell carried many and many of these in Analog, and in fact is still showing a few now and then. Obviously, credibility is the major criterion for a successful Problem Story. But Campbell, message-happy or not, is still delivering the meat & potatoes in the SF field, every now and then. Aside from his "psi" kick, JWCjr does insist that a story has to stand on its own internal logic.

And I could hardly agree more, come to think of it; there is very little that bugs me more in the SF field than to read halfway through a story and then discover that the author himself has no real idea just what he is talking about. He is throwing words and snowing himself as well as us, and his punchline leaks sawdust long before the reader manages to reach it. (I'm reminded of a certain prolific writer who tried to take off from Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps". It soon became apparent that he did not have in his own mind a coherent model of his own variant; the whole thing became ridiculous, as there was no predictive quality to any supposedly crucial incident. A sad lapse, indeed.)

But at least that boy did try to fake a coherent picture. He did not just throw unexplained inexplicable impossible phenomena at his characters (not to mention his readers) for Emotional Effect. Comforting....

The point, I suppose, is the relative importance of fact, logic, and opinion in a given context. If you are writing about People it is not needful to give fact and logic any more houseroom than your characters would. But if you are writing about the physical universe, which after all must have some place in anything that wants to call itself science fiction, then it is desirable that you deal with fact in some way, and preferably with some deference to logic. Because the physical universe (psi aside, again) does not really seem to give one good hot little damn about your opinion of it (as JWCjr has said often and often). I feel that a writer of science fiction should know this and keep it in mind to some extent, if only to help the reader feel that the story is worth following through to the end.

At the very least, writers, try to fake a plausible-sounding excuse when goof... Or if not - if you, the writer, really cannot manage to arrange any consistent internal logic to your stories - at least spare us the pretence that this is the sign of superiority. Because somehow I do not think that the public is quite ready for that. I'm not quite braced for it myself, all these Impossible Unexplained Wonders, even aside from the Futility of it All. Colour me Forties if you wish, but I do know what I like, through tastes acquired over more decades than this one. My "druthers" are various, ranging from stimulation of the cerebrum at one end through adrenals and gonads to plain old Itchy Feet at the other; scope, background, action, mood, imagery, characterisation, puzzles, whimsey, shock, brilliant gadgetry - they all have their places.

And I'm by no means as down on the New School as such preceding remarks might indicate. I like some of it now and then - but not as a steady diet. I'd as soon try to make a full meal of nothing but anchovy paste.

F.M. Busby, 1966

The Ice Schooner

- Moorcock's Best Yet ? -

Charles Platt's first full-length story "The Garbage World" begins in New Worlds 167 (Compact Books, 3/6d) It's an entertaining story despite some scientific double-talk. The same unfortunately cannot be said of J.G. Ballard's aptly-titled "Notes from Nowhere", whose only virtue is its shortness. Otherwise in the issue, Thomas Disch's story is disturbingly different and six other pieces went down well. A good issue.

Ballard's lead piece in New Worlds 168 defied reading even by a reviewer attempting to lose some old prejudices. What was obvious was a use of stock landscapes (they can't be called plot elements) that bordered on the cliché. Short stories this time seem mostly 'experimental', and none are worth very much except for Peter Bates' "Thinking Seat", which just may have some depth despite its lunatic characters.

BREAKING THE ICE

A bafflingly inconsistent figure is presented by Michael Moorcock. He is a vociferous champion of one extreme, yet is still able to write such well paced novels as "The Ice Schooner", beginning in Impulse No.9. Here is a story that is excellent in every way.

The rest of the issue makes up for this with some pretty mediocre fiction. Only Keith Roberts and his 'Anita' story provide any real entertainment.

Much the same applies to the following Impulse, No. 10, where again only 'Anita' and Mr Moorcock stand out with good stories. Editor Harrison revives his 'Hank Dempsey' mood to write a lightweight tale of the CWACC. There is also an interview with Kingsley Amis but since The Man has been 'too lazy' to have kept up with the field for the last couple of years, he doesn't have a great deal to say.

VINTAGE STUFF

A new idea from Panther is their 'Science Fiction Through the Ages' series. Volumes I & II are edited by I.O.Evans, and they contain some surprisingly 'modern' material from Francis Bacon, Voltaire, and Plato, among others. Unusual and worth 3/6 each certainly.

Also from Panther is the Hugo Award winner, THE DRAGON MASTERS by Jack Vance. This has a lovely cover around a short but colourful adventure story.

Sprague de Camp's FLOATING CONTINENT is a Compact reprint of the first half of the 1950 serial 'Hand of Zei' from Astounding. The Krishna stories have always been great fun to read.

SHADOW ON THE HEARTH, by Judith Merrill is a kitchen-sink, woman's-eye-view of an atomic disaster. I have always considered this novel to be much overwritten and much overpraised. (Compact Books, 3/6.)

The 'Skylark' series belonged to the early days of science fiction, and E.E.'Doc' Smith might have been understandably reluctant to write a sequel after the passage of 30 years.

SKYLARK DUQUESNE from Pyramid at 60¢ fits the mood of the earlier books surprisingly well, while at the same time being very much better written. The plot line cannot help but be immediately dated of course, but in this case that is how it should be. This once and for all finishes off the Skylark books. A must for the collector.

MESSY

"David's fingers kept falling off - and so did his nose, his feet, etcetera It made for a messy apartment..". And who can resist an opening like that for Theodore Sturgeon's latest collection (STARSHINE, Pyramid 60¢). Six stories, no dates or acknowledgements given, but only "Artnan Process" is dated. The other stories are - "Derm Fool"; "The Haunt"; "World Well Lost"; "Pod in the Barrier" "How to Kill Auntie". All are superb, with a different flavour to each. Highly recommended.

NEW NOVELS

THE MOON --

BY 2100 ?

Can you believe that the first Moon flight will take place in 2010 ? Or that the first ship to land on Mars should be commanded by the military and contain a member of the crew as useless (in this situation) as a newspaperman ?

We can no longer accept this picture of space exploration in the 1967 of NASA and of imminent moon landings. Yet this book was written as late as 1959, and is otherwise a fast-moving and scientifically-accurate story. So far have we come in this decade, and so wrong were science fiction's prophecies! And yet, as has been said elsewhere, now that it has happened, wasn't it obvious all along that the conquest of space would take place in the way that it has ?

NOT IN SOLITUDE by Kenneth F. Ganz
Dobson Books, 21s.

THE CORRIDORS OF TIME by Poul
Anderson. Gollancz 18s.

THE OTHER FOOT by Damon Knight
Whiting & Wheaton, 18s.

DA"Y by Edgar Pangborn.
Dobson, 25s.

Kenneth F. Ganz has 'top-secret Air Force duties', but would seem to also be a fairly competent writer. His characterisation is adequate and his descriptions generally good. Only the methodical development of the plot lacks the fireworks of a more experienced SF writer.

I don't think this book will be any great sensation, but it is a lot better than some of the material coming from established names. And this is a good long story, too. If only that opening wasn't so dated !

HISTORY REPEATED

"All the best bits..are passages of early English and Danish history" says Judith Merrill about Poul Anderson's CORRIDORS OF TIME.

While not completely correct, this viewpoint does have much to be said for itself. The author only appears to truly find his feet when dealing with his Bronze-Age people, and even then falls over the time-travelling technology he has introduced earlier in the story. The whole thing is disjointed, despite Mr Anderson's careful explanation of every action. The care which the author takes to reveal and understand both sides of every conflict result (as in SHIELD) with the reader being unable to identify with either.

There is much good in this book, but even some of that seems a pastiche of the work of other writers and of Anderson himself. The opening for instance, where a strapping young wench picks up layabout hero, smells strongly of GLORY ROAD. Only the author can say whether or not this is accidental

Good reading, but not Mr Anderson's best book. _____

HARD LUCK, NAUMCHIK

When a young German newspaper reporter changes bodies with an alien biped in a zoo, the reader wonders just how his problem will be resolved. But Damon Knight's novel THE OTHER FOOT has an unsatisfactory ending, for Martin Naumchik at any rate ! It almost made me want to ask what the chap had done to deserve such a fate - or perhaps that is the point of the book; I don't pretend to guess.

That is the whole trouble with this book - it does seem pretty pointless. The author has though up a reason for the event, which was conspicuously lacking in the original Galaxy short novel version. There are some pleasant touches to the story, and it remains entertaining although a little shallow and not as well developed as it might have been. Damon Knight best writes short fiction, and has yet to turn out a completely satisfactory full-length novel. This one could have probably been compressed into half its length - and it does all seem rather hard luck for Martin Naumchek !

LIVING WORLD

What a splendid book is DAVY. I am happy to be able to dispose of my paperback edition in favour of the new hardcover from Dobson.

Edgar Pangborn's post-Atomic world is no abstract science-fictional creation, but a living breathing world. In it live people much like ourselves, but in very different circumstances from present day man's mastery of our planet.

The human being is once again a very frail thing when pitted against the beasts of the forests. And ignorance, superstition, bigotry and squalor are once again the villains of the world as well as of the book.

This is the science fiction story at its very best, a tale that speculates on our lives in another environment. There's no super science, no outer space, and even a little sex. But this is not a book to miss.

The Reefs of Space

- POHL & WILLIAMSON'S GRAND CONCEPT -

STARCHILD is set against one of the most magnificent backgrounds to have been created by a science fiction author. The Reefs of Space are both grand in concept and vivid in description.

With fast-moving action and some very good writing added, you might expect an outstanding novel. And it is good. But unfortunately STARCHILD probably won't be as successful as it ought to have been.

BEYOND PLUTO

At the beginning of the book, Machine Major Boysie Gann is assigned to duty on Polaris Station, far beyond Pluto. He is captured, marooned on a Reef, and then flashed from Earth to Mercury and back out to the Reefs in an effort to find the Star-child who has threatened to put out the Sun !

The storyline relies heavily on that old device of keeping the reader guessing until the very end. The protagonist is equally in the dark, with very little idea of what is going to happen to him next. While Chapter One and some of the other chapters are well-handled, its a pity that they read a bit disjointed when put together. I wish more filling material had been inserted, and in some cases more description of backgrounds and characters would have been appreciated.

STARCHILD by Frederik Pohl & Jack Williamson. Dobson 18s.

THE PEOPLE: No Different Flesh by Zenna Henderson, Gollancz 21s

THE QUY EFFECT by Arthur Sellings, Dobson 18s.

UNDERSEA QUEST by Frederik Pohl & Jack Williamson, Dobson 15s.

It is not really possible to guess who wrote which parts of the book. I imagine Jack Williamson was probably responsible for the whole grand idea of the Reefs, while Frederik Pohl wrote in the foreground events. Certainly the Planning Machine and the Plan of Man seem to carry the Pohl atmosphere of a regimented future.

GOOD THINKING !

While remaining unconvinced of the fusorian-built reefs, the spacelings and nuclear-powered pyropods, I like them all as concepts. The round tour takes in all of these phenomena. Action is fast right up to the grand finale, when some metaphysics (or something) comes into the story so that I don't know for sure whether all the loose ends were ever tied up. Much the same sort of book as REEFS OF SPACE - if you have read and enjoyed the one, then you will want the other

SENTIMENTAL....

Zenna Henderson's THE PEOPLE - No Different Flesh is not really a novel although its six stories are much more closely bound together than in most authors' collections. As far as I know the stories are published here for the first time in the UK, although I may be mistaken. They are all about the 'People', who came to Earth when their own world blew up. Aside from sundry ESP powers, they are quite human.

The first 'People' story I ever read was about a girl called Bettyann. I enjoyed it, but found the succeeding stories very much of a muchness. At this late date, it can be said that this particular reviewer tires easily of Miss Henderson's sentimental style.

Be that as it may, this volume is sure to be popular with a suitably large number of readers. The stories contained are: No Different Flesh; Deluge: Angels Unaware: Troubling of the Water: Return: Shadow on the Moon.

RUN-DOWN ROGUE

In some places Arthur Sellings' new book seems to have been written with tongue very much in cheek.

The hero is Adolphe Quay, elderly, run-down, a bit of a rogue with a heart of gold. He tinkers around and finally makes a genuine scientific discovery. But because of a past record that is dubious to say the least, the Weight of Authority descends on him in mighty Disbelief. And from then on Quay's fortunes waver and totter in a most diverting way. Not very significant, perhaps, but good fun to read and an entertaining novel.

This isn't, as has become the case all too often of late, the story of one man saving or destroying the world. There aren't even any great catastrophes or world disasters because of Quay's device. This is almost a 'little-people' story of one man and his grandson, scheming and struggling to get their antigravity molecule accepted by the Establishment. There is a happy ending - but fame and recognition isn't going to stop old Quay from experimenting!

SUB-SEA SCHOOL

Young Jim Eden is a cadet in the Sub-Sea Academy of the near future. In UNDERSEA QUEST he goes through a number of adventures set against a well-worked-out background, and is then suddenly expelled from the Academy. Naturally he must clear himself of the charges, and so he goes to the undersea city of Marinia.....

Does this sound like a boy's book? Because that is how it was originally published, to appeal to much the same sort of age-group as the juveniles from Scribners. Other signs of the book's appeal are found in the first-person narrative and over-simplified issues at stake. People also tend to come in pure blacks and whites with no intermediate stage, but otherwise the book is quite good adult reading.

As can be imagined, the novel is built around a much more orthodox plot than the other Pohl/Williamson book under discussion, STARCHILD. But this gives the advantage of a lot more coherence. The Pohl flavour comes over well in a few places in particular, without clashing with the story's careful pacing. First Published by Gnome Press in 1954. I rather enjoyed the book.

NEW COLLECTIONS

KANGAROO COURT by Virginia Kidd, places first in ORBIT I, a collection of original stories. This is a quiet yet moving piece about an inter-stellar colony that degenerated. And there is so much in this story that the author can afford to give away in the title what a lesser writer might conceal as a punchline. Close behind in excellence is a new story by James Blish, "How Beautiful With Banners", a brittle little episode crammed full with imagination, description and atmosphere.

Next come Richard McKenna's "The Secret Place": Poul Anderson's "The Disinherited": Kate Wilhelm's "Staras Flonderans". All just a little bit above most current science fiction. Keith Roberts' "The Deepes" is good, if you accept the idea of individual homes in an undersea suburbia. Also-rans are Thomas Disch's "5 Eggs": Sonya Dorman's "Splice of Life" and Allison Rice's "The Loolies Are Here"

SLICK STYLE

GOLLANCZ have produced a hard-cover collection of Frederik Pohl's stories from Galaxy over the past decade.

Many of them have a common factor - they are about a world in which one feature has been extrapolated to the extreme, without anything much else also changing. As such these stories aren't particularly believable, and I don't think Pohl intended them to be. But in the slick Galaxy style they show what would happen to the world if heat pumps were used so much that they caused average temperatures to fall way below zero; or if consumption of goods was made the order of the day, to quote two examples. These are polished stories for the most part, although there is only

ORBIT I, ed. Damon Knight, 192 pp; Whiting & Wheaton, 18s.

FREDERIK POHL OMNIBUS, stories by the author, Gollancz, 25s.

ANALOG 3, ed. John W Campbell, Dobson Books, 21s.

minimal characterisation in many, but some unusual ideas handled in Pohl's own sharp style. The stories are:- "The Man Who Ate The World": "Seven Deadly Virtues": "The Day The Icicle Works Closed": "The Knights of Arthur": "Mars By Moonlight": "The Haunted Corpse": "The Middle of Nowhere": "The Day of the Boomer Dukes": "The Snowmen": "The Wizards of Pungs Corners": "The Waging of the Peace": "Survival Kit": "I Plinglot, Who You."

MIXED BAG

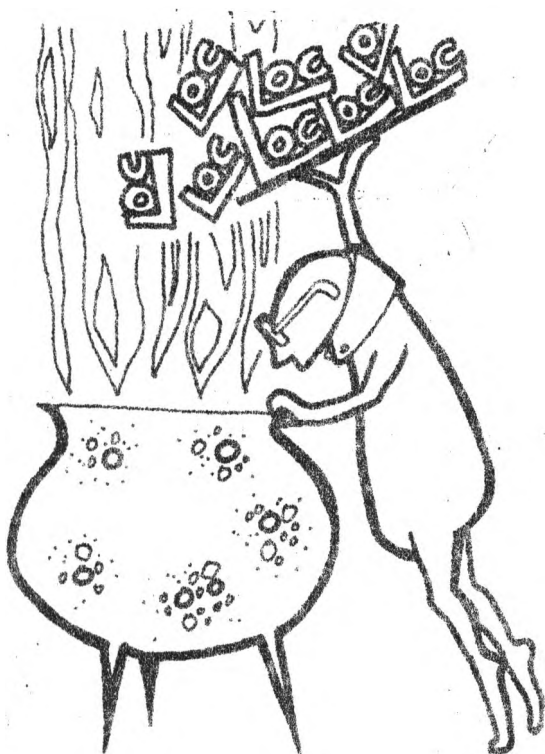
THE FOURTH ANALOG collection is a very mixed bag. The contents range from the Analog "humour" (Christopher Anvil's "Not In The Literature") to "Trouble With Telstar" by John Berryman, which is a superb engineering-SF story.

Dickson's "Hilifter" and "Thin Edge" by Jonathan Blake Mackenzie are both stories built around an engineering gimmick plus slabs of socio-political theorising. Poul Anderson's "Industrial Revolution" is similarly heavy, but a better story, on editor Campbell's "Asteroid" theme.

Seaton McKellrig has an unusual idea in "A World By The Tale", and even treats it carefully rather than pounds it into the reader's skull. The remaining stories, "New Folks Home" by Clifford D. Simak and "Sonny" by Rick Raphael are poor by comparison.

SPECULATION

READER'S MELTING POT LETTERS



SOLON SUBDUED !

Dear Pete,

I think Ben Solon (in his article in Zenith Speculation 13) qualifies for a bit of back-chat. As he wanders through the issue from article to the lettercolumn, he takes some pretty hefty swipes at sundry people who review SF. Those in receipt of his swipes include

professional Judith Merril, and a couple of amateur Mercers. With regard to Ben's strictures anent the latter bicephalic entity, I'll content myself with repeating what I must have said before on sundry occasions, to wit that so far as I personally am concerned the very worst that can possibly be said of any review-writer is that he/she spoils the story for those who may not yet have read it for themselves. And any shortcomings in other directions of the Mercer reviewing team may well be accentuated, if not actually caused, by my constant desire to lean backwards not to give too much of the story away in advance.

So far as Miss Merril is concerned however, I find it difficult to see precisely what is being objected to. To my mind she's both literate and perceptive - and in a pleasantly gentle manner, too. It just so happens that I haven't read any of the stories cited against her by Ben Solon, so I'm not therefore in a position to protest that she describes them accurately. She does describe them vividly, without furthermore giving everything away as she does so. Which nets her, from me, considerable praise.

And certainly, I don't see what the quoted bits of Alan Forrest on STORM BRINGER lack. The book is as he describes it. I suppose Solon does know what sort of a book it is ?

Archie Mercer, 9 Cotswold Road,
Bristol 3.

* Perhaps Ben Solon objected to flowery language and simile instead of cold dissection a la Damon Knight ? *

HARSH JUDGEMENTS ?

Dear Pete,

On Solon's article, I thought

and everyone knew what's wrong with SF; its writers, by and large lack skill in the fundamentals of handling plot, character, and the English language!

Ben Solon is, I think, a bit harsh with Judith Merril; she gives short and superficial shift to books like DARE & GALACTIC DIPLOMAT so she can have more space for what seem to her to be more important books. If she gave equal space to the (to her) inconsequential items she would fill up all of F&SF. And I can testify from my own experience with Speculative Bulletin that it is much, much harder to convey useful information about a book in a hundred words than in a thousand or two. In the August F&SF she has a 12-page column that covers absolutely nothing but two new books by J.G. Ballard; that will leave just that many more books to be reviewed in the next issue, and less space for each of them.

ENOUGH ATTENTION ?

I also object to Solon's criticism that Miss Merril doesn't devote enough attention to the particular book at hand. I don't deny it, but I think he is taking it as a question of method rather than degree, and this is dangerous. Take her comments on Ballard in the August F&SF. What she has tried to do is to relate THE CRYSTAL WORLD and THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN to the context of Ballard's work and the field of science fiction, and this is a highly laudable aim. Ballard isn't writing and we aren't reading, in a vacuum; it is legitimate and admirable in a reviewer to attempt to show in detail how a current work fits into & derives from what has gone before it. Any reviewer worth his salt does that to a greater or lesser extent; when Miller reviews a new Andre Norton book he doesn't treat it as an island, completely unrelated to anything else in

the field; he evaluates it in terms of Norton's other work, and of other books of the type. Furthermore, this is valuable from the standpoint of understanding the reviewer's particular standards and tastes; through comparison with other work we may find out why he likes or dislikes the particular work at hand.

Incidentally, Sturgeon is still reviewing; he has a fairly frequent column in William Buckley's weekly magazine, National Review.

John Boston, 816 S. First St.
Mayfield, Kentucky 42066.

NO PADDING-OUT !

Dear Mr Weston,

I would like to answer a question posed by "Renfrew Pemberton" in the July 1966 issue. It is "Was it 4-5 years ago that James Blish was determinedly padding out his old (circa late '40's) TWS novelettes into full-length paperbacks ?"

The answer is No. I have done this exactly twice, first with JACK OF EAGLES (1952) and then with V O R (1958). And the earlier novel wasn't a paperback either. In both instances the results seemed to be worth the effort, since the 1952 book has been through five editions, the 1958 one two, and there is one more of each coming up.

CANNIBALISING

Of course, sizable portions - or complete texts - of most of my books first appeared in the magazines, but this is not the same thing as cannibalising; it is standard practice, as your critic left-handedly recognises in his next paragraph. Apparently he doesn't like this either, which is

very sad but unlikely to change just to please him. If he doesn't want to read the same novel twice, he has only to check the copyright notice before buying the book version.

In short, Busby's innuendo is neither fair nor accurate. I have a book to show for each of the 25 years I have been a professional writer - not a unique record, but not an ordinary one either; and of these only two, both of them quite early (my second and my sixth, respectively) even vaguely match Busby's description.

James Blish,
Alexandria, Va.

* Several other readers, notably John Knight of New Zealand, wrote in to correct Renfrew Pemberton. Apologies to Mr. Blish ! *

PRAISE FOR THE PLOW !

Dear Pete,

Return of the Plow was a splendid surprise. The original column was one of the first prominent things that attracted my attention when I resumed fanac outside TAPA in the late 1950's, and ever since its discontinuance, I've looked in vain for professional magazine reviews that contain this particular blend of elements like self-confidence, good background, ability to relate stories to the mundane world when necessary, and brevity. I wish I could share Buz's happiness with a fair proportion of the stuff in the prozines, though. The SF magazines seem to me to have degenerated frightfully, and I have found most of them totally unreadable during my recovery of interest in reading science fiction.

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NOTHING BUT THE PULPS !

The difference between the quality of American and British science fiction writing has always impressed me as having a quite simple explanation; the Britishers write as if they'd based their styles and construction on the great novels, while the Americans always seem to have read nothing but the pulp magazines. This is not to say that the British novels are always better written or better plotted, and of course it doesn't apply to the Englishmen who deliberately write badly to appeal to juveniles or for the semi-pornography trade.

I had the same temptation to try to read THE WATCH BELOW as a parable on all of us lost souls in fandom. But I imagine that James White was just tossing in a few allusions that would pass harmlessly between the irises of mundane readers but would be instantly comprehended by fans. I thought the novel was excellent until its later stages, and then it suffered from ending problems like almost all science fiction stories of any length at all. Maybe the difficulty rises from a basic fact of science fiction's life; it's terribly hard to imagine what things will be like in the future, but a hundred times harder to figure out the outcome of the events that those hard-to-imagine things will set in motion.

BETTER AND BETTER ?

I dislike Brian Aldiss' criticism of the book, "that it reminds me of fiction written in a previous decade". Unless he is attempting to show that science fiction stories are getting better and better as time passes, or believes that an SF story must contain references to the latest scientific

discoveries to be worth reading, this consists of confusing history with quality.

Harry Warner Jr, 423 Summit Ave.,
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.

BALLARDANIA

Dear Pete,

That man of sound sense, Bob Coulson, seemed to go badly adrift at one point in the last Zenith (13). He says, with reference to THE DROWNED WORLD, "A broken marriage has damned little to do with Man and Nature." I could, and possibly one day will, write a novel refuting that. If marriages and broken marriages are not to do with Man, then with what? And there is a whole lot of Nature in a marriage, if I'm not mistaken! Supposing I wanted to create an SF novel demonstrating that the times were ill, then I might feel moved to diagnose that illness as a divorce between Man and Nature (though I would be more subtle than that about it, because I don't see that the two are entirely separate entities); and if I did feel so moved, then I would illustrate that illness, symbolise that illness, examine that illness - by portraying a broken marriage.

PHILISTINE

Really, the more I read Bob's letter, the more philistine it seems. This business about there being something wrong with a work of art if you need a psychology course to understand it - it's just an excuse, basically, to shy away from the difficult. Art doesn't come in pre-digested form to the common man; he has to spruce himself and go to it. It communicates, but first you have to get the wax out of your ears.

(You understand I'm not doing a furtive defence of THE DROWNED WORLD I'm on about James Joyce, Rembrandt, Shakespeare, Melville, Kafka, Bach, Mozart, J.M.W. Turner - as if they needed a word from me !)

Brian W Aldiss,
Oxford.

PAROCHIAL AND INGROWN

Dear Pete,

As you asked me for my comments on the new wave of sf writing, herewith a condensed and bowdlerised version of same.

First off, any policy followed by Mike Moorcock does not affect me at all, as I do not write for NW, nor have I for a long time before the change in editorship.

There is a great deal of truth in what Mike says of sf, about where it had taken itself to, (one reason for my stopping writing sf for some time) and the probable future for the medium if it did not change. Science fiction was parochial and ingrown, and dealt very timidly with many important themes; but a great many people liked it like that, which is their privilege. That many other people did not like it like that is also their privilege, and their attempts to change it are praiseworthy.

One of the biggest mistakes the Ballard crew makes is their insistence on sole authority; they are right and everyone else is wrong.

GET TO GRIPS WITH LIFE

I read Shakespeare and Homer and Aeschylus and people like that when I could be reading sf. When you want



"O for the wings of a dove"

to get to grips with life they offer more. And, after you've been reading Chaucer and you turn to a modern paperback the comparison presents an unedifying spectacle of modern standards. Even Joyce and Woolf and Lawrence show shakily in this league - and all sf fans have heard of them. It has been said, with what truth I leave you to decide, "why read a grubby little sf paperback when you can read Proust?"

UNFINISHED

In sf everything changes every now and again. I assign Ballard and his followers to an important place in the development of sf, but they by no means present a finished product, just as Joyce and Woolf did not. Probably the best example of sf trends today is being written by Brian Aldiss, who is a real writer. I disagree with George Locke - how he can call Aldiss a Stylish Hack is a mystery!

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CRIPPLED

I also disagree with George when he says, (as he has elsewhere) that Ballard can't write; Ballard writes his own style very vividly, his images are among the best in the field today. He is a limited and an obsessed writer; but that is his strength as well as his misfortune. If he ever wrote a rounded novel it would be really great, I imagine, but his obsession will not let him do this, which is a great pity for the sf field needs a Ballard or two every now and then. But if he didn't have this tight vision he wouldn't write as he does, and therefore wouldn't be Ballard. You must accept him for a dynamic but crippled force. And he has written some lovely stories. But Aldiss is still the greatest

SENSE OF SURREAL ?

When Mike Moorcock says he is trying to replace the old 'sense of wonder' (which still exists for those who know how to find it) with by what he calls a 'sense of the surreal' (I think), which is a sort of system that exhausted itself in the twenties and became outmoded around then, it would be laughable and pitiful if I didn't believe Mike to be a most intelligent person with something essentially serious to say here. Which is, as I see it, to replace the impetus for what we call the 'sense of wonder' by an impetus stemming from adult motifs and inner landscapes that give us much the same quality of emotional reaction. I can read Shakespeare, where all this is there already, but it is nice to find someone wanting to put all that into sf. Or put sf into all that. Old Sigmund would probably spin in his grave if he knew he would get the blame.

MORE THAN MAINSTREAM

I still believe that sf can do more than mainstream literature in the long run, whether you merge them or keep

them separate, or have one or the other by name which means nothing separate.

LURED BACK

I haven't been writing a lot of science fiction myself lately - that "Doomsday Men" you were kind enough to say you liked, in If, was a pruned version of the book due out from Doubleday in the spring - but what is happening now could lure me back.

I was condemned to write space-opera for so long that even you consign me to an 'old' school. Most of my stuff is simply straight-forward, but in the later stories there creep in levels of meaning and double-entendres and like that, which you might not care for.

Ken Bulmer
Tonbridge, Kent

* The Ballard of today is the Bradbury of the 1950's. And we know what happened when Bradbury was accepted so enthusiastically by Literature. FAHRENHEIT 451 should just about be on release now; how long before DROWNED WORLD makes it?

JANGLES

Dear Pete,

Patrizio's article on Ballard in No. 11 was very good. Ballard's misuses of language jangle on my nerves and his prose is hard to follow smoothly. I think that a good editor who could fall in with the mood of Ballard's writing could help him quite a lot. The Moorcock reply in the next issue is inadequate in my opinion. He says the tricks of standard technique are fine for telling a light, superficial story, but get in the way when an author is attempting something more serious. With all respect to Mike

Moorcock, who is one of my favourite fantasy writers and who certainly knows how to write, I think that he is being blinded by Ballard's fascinating bag of new tricks of technique to the point where he fails to see that these are often used so much that they get in the way of what Ballard is trying to say. At least, they do for a sizeable group of readers. I do not dislike Ballard, but am sometimes annoyed at the way he misuses the promise that he has shown.

LOW OPINION

Moorcock also says that Ballard's characters are adequate, and at the same time are ideas rather than personalities. I frankly fail to see how both can be, unless Moorcock has an exceedingly low opinion of characters in science fiction. Ballard's symbolism is a bit over my head, and I still miss it even when Moorcock explains it to me in words of a few syllables. Which may of course be my fault rather than anyone else's. So Ballard is investigating man's relationships with, and attitudes toward his environment. I can see this, but not the **reason** why this makes Patrizio's comments "somewhat laughable".

NOT FUNNY

The one thing I dislike about BILL THE GALACTIC HERO, is that all I had heard about the book, and about the short novel "The Starsloggers" in Galaxy had led me to **expect** a humorous story. Neither have any humour in them. They have satire (and a very biting satire to anyone who has been in the military), but this is not humour. Nothing moved me to laugh or even gave me that cerebral satisfaction that seems to characterise DeCamp's dry humour; Harrison just wasn't funny.

Rick Brooks, R.R. 1, Box 167
Fremont, Indiana 46737

EPHEMERAL, BUT...

Dear Pete,

I found Alex Panshin treating well a neglected area of Heinlein's output. ("Heinlein's Non-Fiction", Vol I No. 12) But I also found myself wishing that Panshin had received some cooperation from Heinlein himself, because it seems quite probable that Heinlein has published more non-fiction than the items listed here, if by non-fiction we include things as ephemeral but as important as that advertisement Panshin quoted.

MOST ASTONISHING THING

If I'd have done the article I might have had trouble in resisting the temptation to include a quotation of the most astonishing thing I've seen in Heinlein's non-fiction. That is a section of the 1941 worldcon-speech, that I found quoted this way in Science Fiction Times, a dozen years later; "I think the corniest tripe published in a science fiction magazine beats all the Anthony Adverses and Gone with the Winds that were ever published, because at least it does include in it that one distinctly human-like attempt to predict the future!" This statement is striking, both for the overwhelming importance Heinlein apparently placed on this time-binding business a quarter-century ago, and for his apparent notion of what constitutes important mundane fiction.

IN HIGH PLACES

I share the doubt that SQUARES OF THE CITY is really science fiction. The Drury books like ADVISE AND CONSENT and A SHADE OF DIFFERENCE are essentially in the same category as the Brunner novel; obviously the author wanted to tell about events in high places today and either set the story in the future or moved the

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events to a mythical nation because he didn't dare use the names of real Prime Ministers and chiefs of police and congressmen. Power and politics might be the proper designation for volumes that adopt these subterfuges without providing other elements of science fiction, to distinguish them from Sword-&-Sorcery tales that occupy an almost equivalent role for fiction about the past.

IN CONCLUSION

I'm not a chess enthusiast, but managed to follow the progress of the game. The novel's failure to carry it to its proper conclusion was somewhat puzzling, but more serious was the manner in which events occurred as and when the players desired, even when the players had done nothing (nothing we are told about) to make certain that this or that character would be killed or would commit suicide or would otherwise be removed from action.

STUDENT BODIES

Buck Coulson overlooks an important method of recruiting fans, that has bobbed up over here since the decline of fan-sections in the prozines. This consists of getting some kind of formal or informal group going at a college or university, and making it known to potential new fans who are students there. This has produced excellent results at MIT, Caltech, Michigan State, and at various other places. Some of the larger universities have student bodies today that are not too much smaller than the readership of a small-time prozine, and most of the universities seem quite willing to give a science fiction group official sponsorship, which means a place to meet, and publicity in school publications, and maybe even something exciting like financial help with a big publishing project. This sort of recruiting might become the only means of contacting large groups of potential fans in a few more years, if all the

prozines collapse, or drop their letter and fax sections.

I sat here for ten minutes, trying to decide whether I should complain that the shadows lie in the wrong direction on the cover of the July issue. If it weren't so all-fired hot here I might be willing to come right out and say that less of the Earth would be brilliantly-lighted if the sun were somewhat behind and slightly above it.

Harry Warner Jr, 423 Summit Ave.,
Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740

- * Those shadows were confusing on Ken McIntyre's cover painting for the July issue. Originally the face of the Earth was much more in shadow; but the half-tones in the painting didn't come through reproduction with any success.
- * Besides the US colleges & universities, I see mention in Analog of the Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group. In the days of the old Birmingham Group, we used to draw a lot of support from students; as does the current Bristol Group.
- * "Power & politics" - I like that as a category. Let's see, a lot of other borderline fiction could be so classified - Peter Bryant's TWO HOURS TO DOOM (published in the USA under a different title), and such as WHEN THE KISSING HAD TO STOP, perhaps.
- * As for the "chess game" gimmick in SQUARES OF THE CITY - the best and most penetrating review I've yet seen of the novel appeared in a recent issue of Galaxy; "What happens if we strip away the chess game gimmick is that the protagonist, who tells the story in the first person, is really a nasty young man who happens to have a marketable

skill and who is forever insisting upon his rights, who is sent to a country that does not exist, and a city that does not exist, to deal with people who do not exist, and who thinks of them all, very nearly to the absolute utter very end, as just so many units." And there is more to precede and follow this quote, taken from Algis Budrys' column in Galaxy for June, 1966. *

THAT INDEX AGAIN !

Dear Pete,

Ned Brookes has been running an index to the indexes (as suggested by Harry Warner in Speculation 13), in the National Fantasy Fan Foundation magazine, Collectors' Bulletin. At present there is no rhyme or reason in the order in which items are printed - as he uncovers them he prints them. You may wish to note this in Speculation so the fan who does publish the final Index will have this information to work with.

Bruce Robbins, 436 S. Stone Ave.,
LaGrange, Illinois 60525.

- * I recently received an issue of the Collectors' Bulletin, courtesy of Ned Brookes. It is the most worthwhile thing I've seen to be put out by the NFF. The editor mentions that a systematic Index to the Indexes may be compiled, and that the editors of Lore are also interested. (This is another US information-zine of considerable value). So, with so many hands at this particular plough it may well be that the Index à la Harry Warner will soon be an actuality. For readers interested in this sort of bibliographic data, Ned Brookes' address is 713 Paul Street, Newport News, Virginia 23605. Tell him you read it in Speculation ! *

OLD CHESTNUT

Dear Pete,

I recently read an article on sex and science fiction in Vector, which dragged in and dirtied the name of poor old Robert Heinlein. Perhaps you remember this piece? I'd like to see a decent article in Speculation setting the matter straight, though it hardly seems fair that you should have to set yourself against the BSFA. But really, this old chestnut about sex and science fiction is really due for a final, definitive demolition.

EXPERIMENTAL SEX

The reason why there was for years no sex in science fiction was simply because there was no market for it. Sex was taboo with editors, who felt impelled to protect the interests of their largely juvenile readers. It is the sheerest stupidity to suggest sexual deficiencies in the make-up of the older SF writers, which supposedly made them write sexless stories. The writers simply wrote what would sell. Look at the old Marvel, whose editor decided to experiment with stories with a sexual interest. The howl of protest from fandom played hob with the magazine, which went through a series of title changes and finally disappeared altogether. Henry Kuttner's reputation was tarnished, and he had to build it up through pseudonyms - because he used sex in stories.

NO REALISM

Not only sexual realism was taboo but even realism in ideas and of events generally - just look how Hamilton's "What's It Like Out There?" had to lie for years and years before it could be published. Forgive me mentioning him, but study of John Russell Fearn's correspondence to Temple in the late '30s showed me conclusively how rigidly JFR and his contemporaries followed the dictates

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of the market and of the editors; they had to, those were depression years, and if you didn't sell steadily then you were in trouble. Now that SF is aimed at a less specialised audience, the demands of the market approximate the mainstream, and that means sexual realism to a greater extent, and the authors are providing this.

MARKET DEMANDS

Complications have arisen because, in America particularly, there is a vast 'general public' market for sexual titillation. The writing of a professional SF writer will, in the main, tend to mirror the demands of the market and not, repeat not, the maturation of the author. A few talented writers might write to please themselves, and if they have enough talent and popularity they may get away with it. But my feeling is that all these so-called penetrating critiques we read in Vector - and elsewhere - that link "the man with his writing" are in many cases pretentious balderdash.

"SEX VARIANT"

Not many authors may care to admit this; they would prefer to let it be thought that they are 'artists', striving for a creative outlet. But the truth is that if, in 1934, Tremaine had introduced a "Sexy Variant" of SF, rather than his "Thought Variants", then Fearn, Williamson, Schachner and the rest would have added sex and titillation just as readily and adroitly as current writers.

STRAIT-JACKET

The fact that SF is, in the main, not a highly profitable market means that anyone specialising in it must sell continuously. This is one reason for the existence of a lot of hack-work in SF. (And this in turn has led to the existence of hundreds of ridiculous articles examining the question as to whether or not SF is or can be 'literature', or whether SF is a special form wherein hack writing is in some mysterious way

inseparable from the nature of SF. But that's another story). What should be obvious here then, is that the SF writer to some extent wrote for many years in a strait-jacket. He couldn't afford to write something that might not sell, and this meant he had to eliminate realistic sex.

ROLLICKING

More recently we have seen the ridiculous irony of Beacon Books, the US publishers who would not publish SF unless it was sex-laden. Thus writers like Philip Jose Farmer used sexual themes with a great deal of exuberance and facility because they wanted to make money and knew that they could sell to Beacon. Farmer in particular is probably writing the sort of stuff he prefers, but this is a distinction which makes no difference to my basic argument. Farmer showed that it was quite possible to write darn good SF with rollicking sex as part of the whole - FLESH, for example.

NOT DEFICIENT

Of course modern SF is better than the old. But this is simply a reflection of how the market has changed. Just because John Russell Fearn and his contemporaries wrote about cosmic rays instead of sexual intercourse doesn't mean that they were mentally deficient.

STATTEN & ALDISS

Realisation and appreciation of the simple commercial exigencies of SF writing over the years is a point I haven't seen stressed too often in fandom, if at all. In essence it simply calls for a blowing away of the fog of back-slapping and back-stabbing that seems to characterise modern SF criticism, and substituting a little common sense instead. In this way I am enabled to follow my own tastes

and read Vargo Statten one minute and Brian Aldiss the next - and to enjoy both of them.

Phil Harbottle, 27 Cheshire Gardens
Newcastle on Tyne, Northumbs.

* But why does the market change over the years ? Like any other chicken-&-egg question, what comes first; - the publics' taste or what they're given by the writers?

LICK, MAN, LICK !

Dear Pete,

One of the reasons why I've never written you a Letter-of-Comment for Zenith is that such a magazine deserves a learned and significant LoC (and no doubt it gets quite a few) but I'm not quite up to writing that type. So rather than make you cringe with my inane rambling, I settled for being another grey and faceless Zenith subber..... however, even that is now denied me.

One of the penalties, I should imagine, of producing a "relatively" wide-circulation zine like yours is that it might tend to become impersonal. And when a subscriber lashes out the massive sum of 10/- for a five-issue sub. he does tend to feel that it obviates him from the necessity of writing a Letter of Comment.

It's hard to think of Zenith ever having had a first-issue - it's become almost an institution....

Graham Charnock, 1 Eden Close,
Alpertown, Wembley, Middlesex.
(extracted from a letter not originally intended for publication.)

* Too true that minimal editorial content & maximum number of subscribers on the circulation list makes for an impersonal magazine. Not that this matters as much as it might, if this were not a serious magazine anyway.

But then again, reviews, critical articles, letters and whatnot have to come from somewhere. If I can spark a few readers' interests with each issue, it makes it that much easier to fill the next one.

- * This point about Significant Letters - please don't ever be put off from writing because you think your opinions won't stand up in print. Your judgement on literary matters is sure to be at least as good as mine; even if you don't want to have your comments appear in print - even if you only send a postcard to say "I liked", I still appreciate hearing from you.
- * Ten shillings is a lot of money. And I don't expect a letter from a subscriber, just welcome it when it comes.
- * An institution eh? A few mad days before a deadline around here and I feel as if I'm in an institution!

CURRENCY DIFFICULTY

Dear Pete,

I'd like to get Reg Smith's "Weird Tales In The Thirties", but I don't know how to send the money to the U.S.A. The booklet was advertised in the last Speculation at 25/- or 2/-, can you tell me how to go about getting the article?

John Muir, 50 Holker Street
Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester 13.

- * In this case I'm sure Reg Smith would accept a 2/- piece in payment. It's easier to send larger amounts of money to the USA; an International Money Order can be obtained, British currency notes sent, or a dollar bill purchased from a travel agent. Sometimes a dealer or fan in the USA will accept unused British stamps.*

- * That would appear to be all the letters in this particular Melting Pot. The first comments on last issue's HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION article are now beginning to appear, but will be reserved until the next issue. Don't forget that all letters on this issue will be welcomed, and should be sent to the editor before April 2nd 1967.

The next issue will feature some of the proceedings of the annual British science fiction convention at Bristol along with other items of interest. Just received are long manuscripts on Jack Vance and Philip Farmer - these go into Speculation as soon as room is found for them. And that's it for this issue. The Editor.

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From: Richard Gordon, Cairnfield,
Buckie, Banffshire, Scotland. (March
17-April 20th at home). Lists of
titles are available; send S.A.E.

REVIEW:

Just received is Leland Sapiro's
RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, Vol 2. No. 3.
This contains Part IV of Panshin's
essay on Heinlein, probably the best
chapter yet to appear. Other items
include "SF in Russia Today"; A Crit-
ique of The Once & Future King; Jim
Harmon on old underground movies,
Lee Sapiro on Tremaine's ASTOUNDING,
etc. No address in the magazine, but
35¢ (2/6) from the editor, Box 82,
University Station, Saskatoon, Canada
UK Agent; Graham Hall, 57 Church St.,
Tewkesbury, Gloucs. England.

LATE LIST - NEW BOOKS RECEIVED

Murray Leinster has written a novel
based on the US TV series, "The Time
Tunnel". It tells of trips to the past
& future where the two protagonists
dull-wittedly save the world as we know
it by a series of coincidences. Written
as a 'popular' SF story, but well-told.
Pyramid 50¢, THE TIME TUNNEL, 140pp.

THE ZAP GUN from Philip K Dick is not
a satirical novel, nor a serious one.
It is hard to read, almost boring, and
terribly pointless. Usual Phildickian
'craziness of concept', and mention of
drugs. Surprised this reviewer by not
hallucinating! In WoT as "Project
Plowshare". Pyramid 50¢, 176 pp.

MORE & MORE POHL....

Yet another book written/edited/publ-
ished by Fred Pohl. This is the annual
collection from Galaxy, and a good sel-
ection of stories from an average year.
Contents:-

An Ancient Madness, Damon Knight; The
King of the Beasts, P.J.Farmer; The
Watchers In The Glade, Richard Wilson;
Jungle Substitute, B.W.Aldiss; How the
Old World Died, Harrison; The Children
of the Night, F.Pohl; To Avenge Man,
Lester del Rey; The Monster & The
Maiden, Zelazny; A Flask of Fine Arctur-
an, C.C.McApp; Wrong-Way Street, Niven;
Wasted on the Young, Brunner; Slow
Tuesday Night, R.A.Lafferty.

12 stories, 205 pp, THE 9TH GALAXY
READER, ed Frederik Pohl, Gollancz 21s.

WHY CALL THEM BACK FROM HEAVEN is the
title of Clifford Simak's new novel.
That is a slogan from the book, and is
about as weak as the plot. This is a
reduction to absurdity of the 'freeze
the dead' proposal being voiced in IF
recently. Writing is fairly smooth, but
never believable. Gollancz, 160pp, 18s.

ANTHOLOGIES ALL AROUND !

Just about every publisher is putting out a science fiction anthology. From Gollancz comes TIME PROBE, by Arthur C. Clark. This collection of 11 stories each represent one 'science'.

Contents include:-

"And He Built A Crooked House", Heinlein: "The Wabblers", Leinster: "The Weather Man", Thomas: "The Artifact Business", Silverberg. "Grandpa", by Schmitz; "Not Final", Asimov: "The Little Black Bag" Kornbluth: "The Blindness", Latham: "Take a Deep Breath", Clarke, "The Potters of Firsk", Vance; "The Tissue Culture King", Huxley.

Some of the 'sciences' are a little forced, and this reviewer somewhat egoistically believes he could compile a more representative selection of stories. Archaeology, for instance, would be better represented by Piper's 'Omilingual' than by Silverberg's piece here. Otherwise a good collection. TIME PROBE, Gollancz, 242pp, 2ls.

Whiting & Wheaton have a winner to contend with Gollancz's Galaxy series, by picking an assortment from the sister magazine If. Once again, Frederik Pohl can do no wrong - he edits a really fine collection from this magazine. Stories include: "When Time Was New", by Robert F. Young; "Father of the Stars" by F. Pohl: "The Life Hater", Saberhagen, "Old Testament", Bixby: "The Silkie", VanVogt; "A Better Mousetrap" Brunner; "Long Day In Court", Jonathan Brand: "Trick or Treaty" Laumer: "The 64-square Madhouse", Fritz Leiber.

Some items, such as Young's and Van Vogt's stories, are little short of nonsense. But there is an overall freshness to this collection, as found in Leiber's and Brand's stories in particular. This collection is, above all representative of the magazine - a bit rough in spots but bustlingly alive! THE IF READER OF SCIENCE FICTION. ed. F. Pohl, Whiting & Wheaton, 2ls, 252pp.

One book has stood out above the usual run of novels, and that is THE REVOLVING BOY, from Gollancz and by new author Gertrude Friedberg.

This has something rare, a very new and original 'wild talent'. And furthermore there are no wild heroics or last-minute humanity-savings. The hero does achieve a minor triumph; (or is it the biggest triumph ever?) but is throughout a believable character. The author has, in addition, tried to show us a wholesome future world with some ingenuity, and has a soundly constructed plot underlying the whole. For once I don't think there are any quibbling points - this is an excellent book. Recommended. THE REVOLVING BOY, Gertrude Friedberg, Gollancz 1967, 192pp, 18s.

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED:

SPACE WINNERS, Gordon R. Dickson, Faber & Faber, 1967, 186pp, 16s.
SPACESHIP TO SATURN, by Hugh Walters, Faber & Faber, 1967, 160pp, 16s.
MASTERPIECES IN SCIENCE FICTION, ed. Sam Moskowitz, World, 550pp, \$6.50

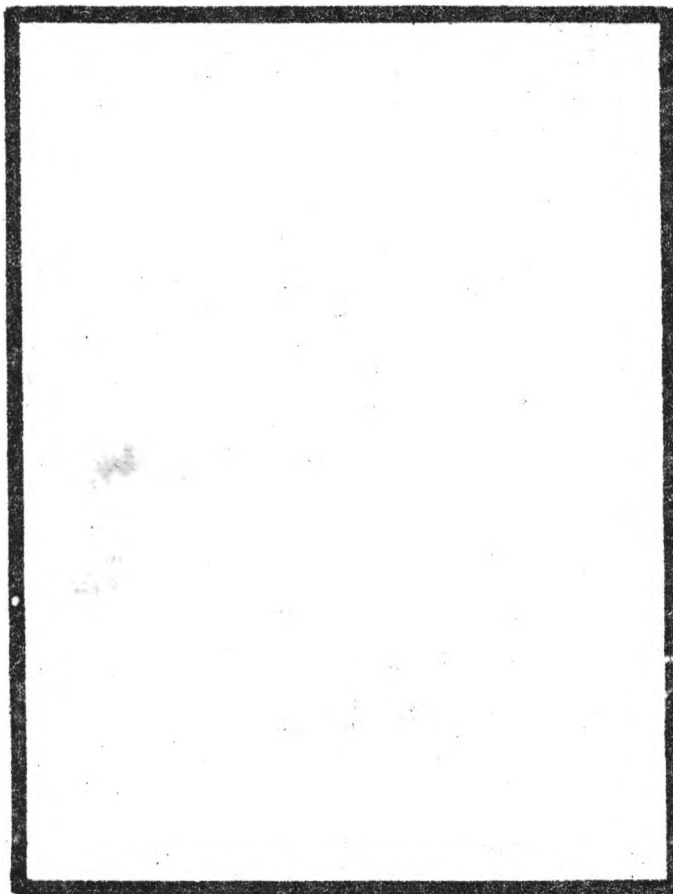
(the above to be reviewed in the next issue.)

NEW TITLES FROM DOBSON BOOKS :- (to be published in 1967)

THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS Heinlein - summer 1967-
THE WANDERER, Fritz Leiber25s
PLANET OF NO RETURN, Poul Anderson (Question & Answer, ASF 1953).....13/6
SINISTER BARRIER, Eric Frank Russell21s.
SENSE OF OBLIGATION, H. Harrison..16s.
BREAKTHROUGH, Richard Cowper.....18s.
SF HORIZONS 1, ed Tom Boardman....18s.
NEVER THE SAME DOOR..John Rankine.18s.
NEW WRITINGS IN SF, 9,10,11,
ed John Carnell.....16s.

Dobson Books Ltd., 80 Kensington Church Street, London W8.

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