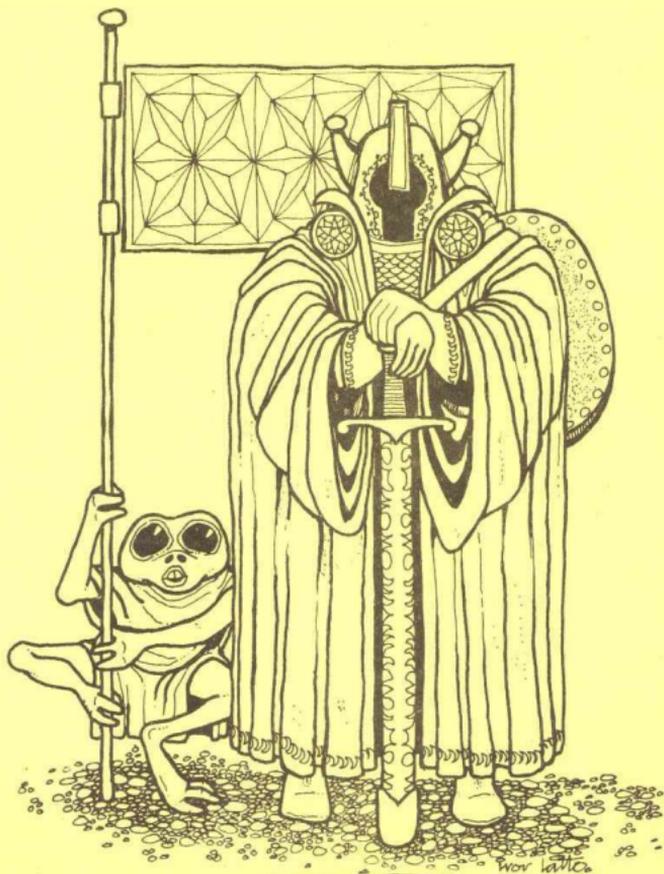


Vector



VECTOR

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

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The contents page of this issue bears the names of last year's committee as this issue is, officially, the final one to be produced in their term of office.

The committee for next year has now been settled.

It will be:-

CHAIRMAN - Roy Kay, 91 Craven Street, Birkenhead, Cheshire. Roy has done one term as Vice-Chairman and now automatically takes over from Ken Choslin as Chairman.

VICE-CHAIRMAN - Joe Navin, 77 College Road North, Blundellsands, Liverpool 23. Joe has been Librarian for the last couple of years but has now resigned. As from August 1st, 1965, the Library will be handled by John Nash.

SECRETARY - Mrs Doreen Parker, 38 Millfield Road, Deeping St James, Peterborough, Northants. Originally, last year's Secretary, Graham Bullock, was standing for re-election but had to stand down for personal reasons.

TREASURER - Charles Winstone, 71 George Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23. Charles continues as Treasurer for a second term.

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER - Reg Peyton, 77 Grayswood Park Road, Quinton, Birmingham 32. Results of the voting were 57 votes for myself and 27 votes for Charles Platt.

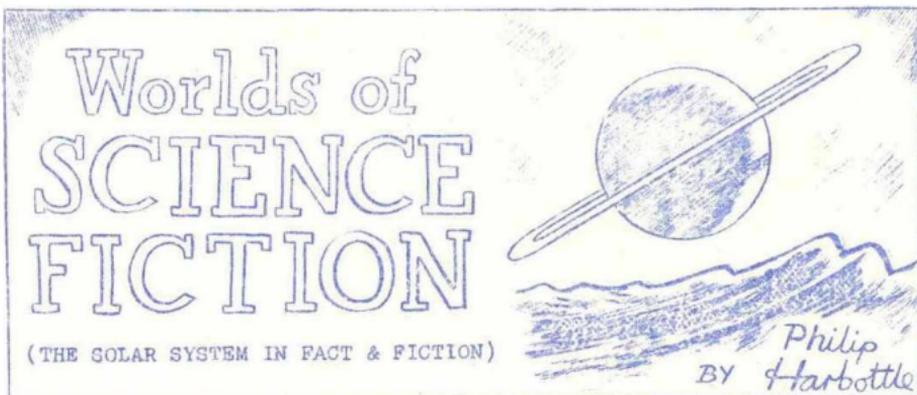
Unfortunately, the committee isn't as centralised as it was last year but we will be having committee meetings whenever possible.

As mentioned previously, Joe Navin has sent in his resignation as Librarian. This will become effective as from August 1st when John Nash will take over. John's address is 5 Whitechodge Road, Garston, Liverpool 19. Please note, however, that up to July 31st, the Library will operate as previously from 77 College Road North, Blundellsands, Liverpool 23.

While on the subject of the Library, I'd like to make a point about books reviewed in VECTOR. All books reviewed in VECTOR are immediately put into the Library, so if you see any book reviewed which you want to read, write to Joe Navin straight away - there's no need to wait until a Library Supplement is issued.

This year, if possible, I'd like to get someone else editing TANGENT. Is there anyone interested? It would entail editing the material, printing, collating, stapling and mailing. A lot of work per issue but there would be only two issues per year. If anyone is interested, please write to me as soon as possible.

In my plans for the post of PO, I said that I'd like to start a series of information sheets. The first of these will be a list of fanzines which are available in this country together with a few of the leading American fanzines. Pete Weston is compiling this at the moment and when it is completed there will be an announcement in VECTOR. The second one will probably be information about checklists. Beyond that? Well, that's up to you. What do you want information about? Let us know and if there's enough demand, a sheet will be issued.



INTRODUCTION: In this series of articles it is proposed to go on a round tour of the solar system, visiting each major body in turn, and discussing the concepts of science fiction writers as opposed to current scientific belief, and to each other. In this connection it would be as well to note that it is not intended to catalogue every story centred on a certain body - or even to pick out the best of them. Rather, a random and varied sample will be taken, as much for ideas rather than undue literary significance.

PART ONE: THE SUN

The sun can be considered as lord of the solar system by way of its tremendous mass alone. It has, in fact, a mass one and a half million times that of the Earth - well over 500 times that of all the other bodies in the solar system combined. The planets, whilst inter-acting one upon the other, are held in rigid gravitational thrall around it.

It is perhaps strange that, whilst the sun is a dominating factor in the solar system, it has never held sway in the field of SF writing. Many SF writers have explored the solar system simply as a vehicle for creating alien life forms - usually humanoid and inimicable to Earth. Because humanoid life cannot possibly exist on the sun, many writers have ignored it in their pursuance of hackneyed 'invasion' plots centred amongst the inner planets. Stories dealing with Mars or Venus are accordingly more numerous. Nevertheless, the sun has figured in many SF stories, some of which will be considered for the purposes of this article.

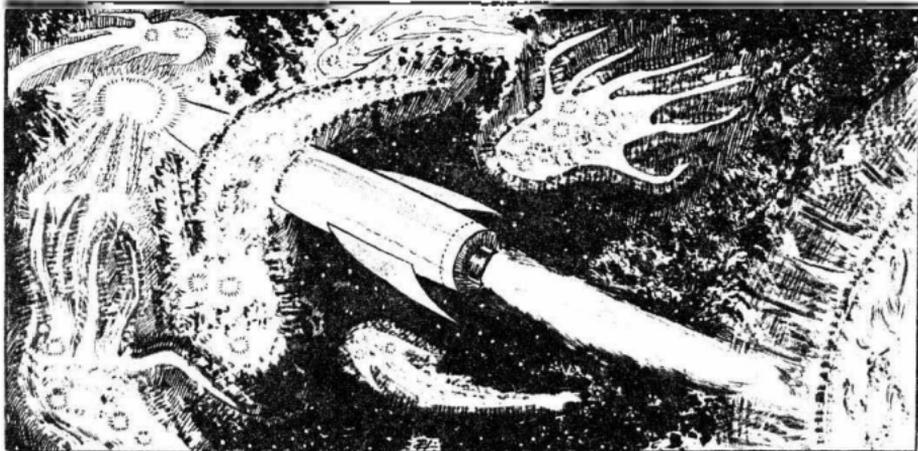
Several authors have speculated on the sun as the abode of life: life by necessity utterly at variance with all known terrestrial forms. Fantastic life indeed, to exist at a temperature of about 6,000 degrees Centigrade, and where matter itself can only exist

largely in the atomic state. Within the sun's atmosphere, atoms are beginning to break up, whilst farther towards its centre, matter is transformed into energy. All known evidence points to the fact that complex living structure cannot exist in a really high temperature. Compounds begin to break up as the temperature rises. Pressure, too, acts to preclude any understandable life forms on the sun, running as it does into billions of atmospheres. But SF writers have a habit of getting around the most constricting of facts in order to weave their fantasies of alien life.

Extending for hundreds of thousands of miles beyond the sun's photosphere are perhaps the most spectacular of solar phenomena - the prominences. Some of them, the faculae, can even be seen with the naked eye. The predominant colour of these luminous vapours is red, indicative of the high hydrogen content of the solar atmosphere. These vapours assume fantastic dancing shapes, cavorting in almost a serpentine fashion. Almost, they seem to be.....alive.

Veteran author Stanton A Coblentz used the prominences as inspiration for his short story, "Sunward", appearing in THRILLING WONDER STORIES in 1940.

Coblentz visualised a two-man space-ship, specially constructed to negate the tremendous heat it would encounter, flying as near as possible to the sun for the purposes of scientific research. As the ship approaches to within fifteen million miles of the sun, the men suddenly notice what appear to be roddish clouds between them and the sun: "Dimming the sun's fierce radiance, at an indeterminate distance, great nebulous masses had formed, sultry red against the intense yellow-white luminosity." That they were nothing more than eruptions of hot gas seemed the likeliest explanation, but this is offset by the fact that the things are seen to glide toward the ship "with an almost preternatural steadiness of movement - not with the fitful, gaseous swirling that might have been expected." Further, the weird vapours have consistent shapes, billowing in and out with regular pulsations as from the beating of a heart - and whilst the figures were often seen to touch, they never merged, as they would inevitably have done had they been ordinary conglomerations of gas. Abruptly the men are made aware of the true nature of the vapours, and of their own deadly peril: "Now, from the largest of them all - a form shaped like a monstrous crimson spider, except that its legs were more than a dozen in number - there burst a sudden pyramidal column of green light, which extended to the space ship and beyond, and seemed to engulf it." The light soon vanishes, but its effects are evident as the temperature of the ship begins to rise, its quartz observation port becoming liquified with intense heat. Evidently the weird figures outside were attacking them with furnace blasts, intent on shrivelling them to ashes. Then began a most peculiar event: "The great coloured figures split up into three groups, each of which swung around to a different side of the spaceship. And each group assumed a triangular formation, like that of wild geese in flight. It seemed that they all obeyed their own leader, of which one was the crimson, spider-shaped form, while the other two were flame-hued apparitions with the ever shifting contours of gigantic amoebas." Signalling each other with flares, the creatures then move in to destroy the spaceship, now attempting to draw away from the sun.



Pennants of destructive light converge from all sides.

So far, Coblenz had woven quite a gripping story, but his next development was hardly convincing. As his companion collapses to the floor, exhausted by the heat, the other staggers to their radio and switches it on, intent on transmitting a last message to Earth: "Spaceship A-Y ... Powell speaking ... bad news. Bad news ... attacked by space monsters ... Burning to death ... It's a living furnace ... For God's sake, don't send anyone else ... I can't speak any more - throat as dry as ashes. It's the end."

This melodramatic message has a fittingly melodramatic effect - the attacking vapours are killed deader than doornails, reduced to a formless, motionless patch of reddish gas. The ship and its crew are now safe, and Powell offers explanations to his companion: "... those beings out in space were geared to certain wavelengths of light, and electricity and the cosmic rays. But other wavelengths they can't endure at all, any more than the human ear can stand certain wavelengths of sound. The wrong waves just cut through them - worse than powerful radium emanations on the human system. They had never encountered anything like radio waves before. As soon as I started those currents going, their vital elements were simply split up."

Whilst I'm no expert, I'd say offhand that the sun emits wavelengths of all types, including those of radio waves. So the creatures should have been familiar with them, and therefore immune. In any case, it is hard to see how a radio wave could be so destructive to a system that is impervious to the comparatively frightening onslaught of the cosmic ray et alia.

The idea of life in the sun has continued to appear sporadically in science fiction, for the most part in stories of little import by indifferent writers. Yet the idea holds tremendous potential on an emotional level. Not surprisingly, Arthur C Clarke dusted off the idea, investing it with all the cosmic mystery and

awe which is his trademark.

"Out of the Sun" was the story and it appeared in the February 1958 issue of IF initially - later being reprinted in the collection THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY. The story was centred on Mercury and was told through the experiences of one of the terrestrial astronomers based on the Solar Observatory. This was a perfect vehicle for Clarke, himself a scientist. The scientific detail was authentic, but none the less awe-inspiring for that.

The narrator observes a vast jet of gas being hurled into space from the sun's equator. It soon becomes evident that part of the gas is travelling so fast it will escape the sun's field completely. It was an important event to the terrestrial observers on Mercury, for "...it meant that we could capture some of the very substance of the sun as it went hurtling past in a great cloud of electrified gas. There was no danger; by the time it reached us it would be far too tenuous to do any damage and, indeed, it would take sensitive instruments to detect it at all."

The progress of the ejected matter is tracked by long-range radar, as it slowly twists and turns into a cloud a hundred times the size of Earth. The closer it comes to the observer, so is its finer structure revealed on the short-range radar, "...changing minute by minute beneath the action of forces which we have never fully understood. Rivers of fire were flowing in curious paths under what could only be the influence of electric fields; but why were they appearing from nowhere and disappearing again as if matter was being created and destroyed? And what were those gigantic nodules, larger than the moon, that were being swept along like boulders before a flood?"

Then a strange discovery is made: radar echoes are received, indicating the existence of a sharply-defined oval shape, five hundred miles long and half that in width, towards the centre of the mass. By now, others of the Observatory staff are crowding into the radar room, and one of them describes the phenomena as "looking like an amoeba under a microscope."

A tense atmosphere builds up as the onrushing mystery comes swiftly towards them. There comes the realisation that in a few minutes the thing will hit the daylight side of Mercury, "and that would be the end of it - whatever it was."

During these final, fleeting minutes the men gaze intently at the weird thing, seemingly "a translucent oval, its interior faced with a network of almost invisible lines. Where the lines crossed there appeared to be tiny, pulsing nodes of light." A suggestion grows stronger and stronger in the minds of the onlookers...

"As those last moments ebbed away, I am quite sure that every one of us had reached the same conclusion - and was waiting for someone else to say it first. What we were seeing was impossible yet the evidence was there before our eyes. We were looking at life where no life could exist...."

Clarke attempts to resolve this paradox by speculating that life itself may be nothing but organised energy; its form is immaterial, whether it be chemical or electrical. Pattern, not substance, he says, is the important factor. Inevitably, one is led to speculate further, for one of the most interesting qualities of

the story is the way in which the reader can participate, is led to think along the same lines as the narrator. Could this creature torn from the sun be intelligent? Was it aware of its impending doom? The author considered it unlikely that the creature - however intelligent - "could know anything of the external universe, or could even sense the existence of something as unutterably cold as rigid non-gaseous matter."

But Clarke is too skilful a hand to let slip the dramatically emotional possibilities. Wisely, he offers them as suggestions, not as facts, in a beautifully written paragraph:-

"Now it filled our sky - and perhaps, in those last few seconds, it knew that something strange was ahead of it. It may have sensed the far-flung magnetic field of Mercury, or felt the tug of the little world's gravitational pull. For it had begun to change; the luminous lines that must have been what passed for its nervous system were clumping together in new patterns, and I would have given much to know their meaning. It may be that I was looking into the brain of a mindless beast in its last convulsion of fear - or of a godlike being making its peace with the universe."

A lesser author than Clarke might have ended his story at this point, but Clarke's imagination had another cycle to turn. If the sun does contain sentient beings, they may have been there for millenia, may have developed tremendous intellect - the veritable wisdom of ages. It is not a comforting thought, for if somehow the solar intelligences should discover human life...

"They may not like what they find, for to them we should be no more than maggots, crawling upon the skins of worlds too cold to cleanse themselves for the corruption of organic life.

"And then, if they have the power, they will do what they consider necessary. The sun will put forth its strength and lick the faces of its children; and thereafter the planets will go their way once more as they were in the beginning - clean and bright ... and sterile."

Writers have also seen in the sun a vast source of power and raw material, available to the future super-science of mankind. John Russell Fearn, in his novelette "The Last Hours" (AMAZING, August 1942), pictured a world under the domination of one Konda - a rather hackneyed mad dictator. True to form, Konda is intent on conquering the whole solar system - and even beyond. But even in the advanced year of 2240 he cannot fully implement his schemes. As he himself puts it:

"But here on Earth there is not enough power for the construction of machines of war; not enough power to feed the endless chains of factories. We have atomic force and we have the natural power of the Earth itself generated at the North magnetic pole, but more is needed! More! There remains one powerhouse still to be tapped, the greatest of them all. The Sun!

Konda's intention is to utilize the sun's surplus power by contriving a vast beam of magnetic force between Earth and sun, intending to draw - as indeed Earth draws already in a more diffuse form - the electrons and energy streams which would otherwise

scatter in space. This vast surplus would be converted to supply a chain of normal powerhouses.

Bruce Lanning, an astronomer, points out some of the objections to the soul-less dictator... "Do that," Lanning stated deliberately, "and you will destroy the world! Firstly, your magnetic system will not only draw electronic streams, but also the brickbats and flying fragments forever hurtling through space. On this planet will descend an incessant bombardment of incendiary material. Fires will break out. Hundreds of thousands of people will be killed. The extra power gained will be counterbalanced by losses in labour and material."

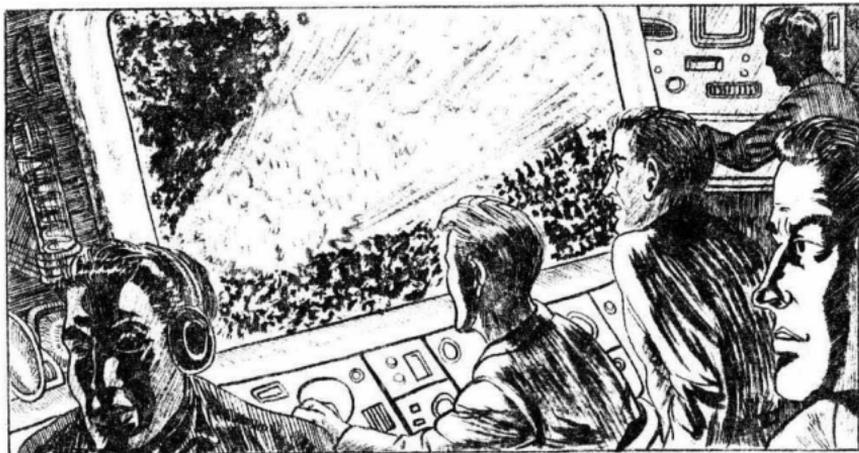
However, Konda remains undeterred by all this, not to mention the threat of electrical storms lashing the Earth, and goes ahead with it.

Things are brought to a crisis when Nemesis, a massive meteorite-comet (which we are told first appeared in 1980) is drawn onto a collision orbit with Earth. Half the size of the moon, and made of 95% magnetic oxide of iron - which caused it to be drawn into the field of the solar magnet - it plunges to Earth at a speed of thousands of miles a minute, igniting the atmosphere and annihilating life like tinder in a furnace.

Once again the old SF edict that "there are limits beyond which Man may not go" had been graphically illustrated. And whilst this is hardly an inspired assumption, it does seem reasonable when dealing with an object like the sun.

Not always has man's tampering with solar forces ended in disaster, however. Edmond Hamilton took the more optimistic view in his novelette "The Forgotten World" (THRILLING WONDER STORIES Winter 1946). The author pictures a time in the far future when Earth has seeded the stars, and a vast loosely-knit empire of stellar civilisations exists. Against this familiar backdrop is the mother planet Earth, almost a 'forgotten world'. As Jonny Land, a crippled engineer Earthman explains to Laird Carlin, an outworlder forced to sojourn on Earth for therapeutic reasons: "Carlin, the Earth's starved for power. You've seen for yourself. To get the power that will revive our world, we've got to have copper. And the copper in our planets was exhausted long ago. But there's still billions of tons of copper in our System, in one place, The Sun. It's there in hot gases, more copper than Earth and our sister planets will need for milleniums to come. It's our only possible source of copper and we intend to tap it."

Carlin is aghast at the idea - and no wonder. He knows that sun-mining has been tried in other systems several times in the past, and has always brought catastrophe. The idea itself is practical enough to the science of this advanced age. A ship approaches the photosphere or visible surface of the sun as closely as possible, protected by heavy heat-screens from the radiation. A magnetic dredge is then turned on. The dredge generates a high-powered magnetic field concentrated into a beam. That beam drives down into the swirling super-hot gases of the solar surface. Those gases consist of dozens of metals and other elements in vapourised form - iron, copper, calcium, sodium and so on, all mixed together. The beam sucks a column of those gases up to the ship. For its magnetic pull powerfully attracts the iron vapour in the mixture



and so the whole mixture is gradually sucked upward. The gases are then passed through a special filter which can be set to screen out the atoms of any desired element. The copper gases are screened out, solidified by cooling, and stored. Other gases go on through the filters and are ejected into space.

However, there is one fatal flaw in the process which Carlin brings out; "The suction creates a whirl in the solar surface, a tiny Sunspot that grows and grows until its grown into a terrific solar typhoon that pours disastrous increased heat and electric forces onto its planets." But Lund and his companions have what they believe to be the answer. Their dredge does not simply eject the unwanted gases into space. It has two beam heads, instead of the usual one. The inner one beams down a positive magnetic pull to suck up the solar vapours. The outer one is designed to use a simultaneous negative magnetism to shoot the unwanted vapours back down into the sun. The continuous kick-back acts to negate the Sunspot effect by equalising the pressure.

Hamilton carried out the mechanics of his scheme with an entertaining mixture of heroism and melodrama, painting a stirring picture of Man taming the elemental forces of nature, of mighty Sol himself. That he saw fit to introduce heavy-handed sentiment at the end of the story barely diminishes its effectiveness. It has been made available more recently in the Margulies-Friend Crest anthology *RACE FOR THE STARS* (1958).

John W Campbell, writing as Don A Stuart, had been one of the first to realise the potentialities of solar power. "Blindness" (*ASTOUNDING* March 1935), one of a group of brilliant stories he wrote in the thirties, details the attempt of Malcolm McKay, a veteran physicist, and his young assistant John Burns, to wrest from the sun the secret of perfect atomic power. McKay, though now past 70 years of age, still dreams of giving limitless power to the peoples of Earth with something akin to fanaticism. As he explains one day to

his assistant: "You know, John, when I started, it was the dream of my life that rockets should have atomic power so they could really reach the other planets. Atomic power! And now, here I am, close to three-quarters of a century old - and I've never even left Earth. A grounder."

"And atomic power isn't so badly needed for rockets, anyway. They have good fuels now, safe ones and powerful ones like atomic hydrogen and oxygen. Atomic power is needed here on Earth, where factories factories are, and men labour in coal mines for fuel, and where they make the fuel for rockets. That's where mankind needs atomic power."

"And by all the powers of Heaven, if the Sun's the place where I can learn, the Sun's where I'm going!"

So it is determined there and then to attempt to "steal the secret of the Sun." Burns, himself as much a fanatic as McKay, agrees to accompany him on the trip. But before their journey is feasible, there remains the seemingly impossible problem of combatting the awesome solar radiation. This is eventually resolved in the best traditions of pre-war ASTOUNDING, with the invention by McKay of a new alloy, thermlectrium, which is impervious to heat, thanks to a kick-back system involving an inverse magnetism!

Finally, they leave Earth in 'The Prometheus', a ship specially built for the task. And what a task! The setting up of a tight orbit about the sun would be relatively simple - but they couldn't possibly pull free with any known power. Only atomic power could do it. When and if they found it!

Orbiting at a distance of 3.73 million miles, the two scientists struggle to obtain the secret of atomic energy from the cosmic furnace below, their lives being forfeit for failure.

"But McKay was happy here. His eyes turned from a deep blue-gray to a pale blue with red bloodshot balls; his skin turned first deep, deep brown from the filtering ultra-violet, then it became mottled and unhealthy. Burns's skin changed, too, but his eyes endured better, for he was younger. Still, McKay felt sure of his goal. He looked down into the flaming heart of a Sunspot, and he examined the underside of a prominence, and he watched the ebb and flow of Sol's titanic tides of white-hot gas."

Three years go by - three years in which they are entirely cut off from Earth and the inner planets by way of the solar outpourings rendering radio reception impossible. And gradually they crack the mystery of atomic energy. But McKay has been blinded: "The sun showed me the secrets it held - and took away the impious vision that gazed upon them."

Breaking free of the sun with an atomic ion drive, the pair return to Earth - and a hero's welcome. For in his absence, McKay, the Grand Old Man of Science, has become world famous. But it is a bitter-sweet fame.

Civilisation has been re-made with free power. Thermlectrium has made it possible - thermlectrium, the lesser thing, which McKay left behind him. "All the industries in the world are powered by it. The elements are cheap, small simple beyond anything conceivable, a bar of common metal - a coil of wire. They require no control, no attention. And the energy costs nothing at all."

For McKay it is the end of a dream - "Then the world doesn't want my atomic energy, does it?" he said, softly. His old body seemed to droop."

'The End of the World' is a subject that has been dear to the heart of the SF writer since the genre's beginnings. One of the more obvious dooms to which Earth might become subject would be the cessation of the sun's light and heat, or a dangerous increase. The prolific pulpsters of the thirties wrote many ingenious variations on this old saw, amongst them such writers as Fearn, Schachner, Williamson and Wandrei.

One of the most ingenious and popular of their devices was the 'space warp' or 'ether fault'. This - alternating with the 'cosmic cloud' - acted to negate the propagation of the sun's light and heat to the Earth. Usually, however, the dire consequences were miraculously avoided. But, looking along the path of science fiction into modern times, the most persistent Earth doom has been that of the nova, or super-nova, chiefly because it is a known and proven phenomenon. Astronomers have recorded these stellar catastrophes for hundreds of years, although it is comparatively recently that they have been recognised as such.

It is still not quite clear why novae occur, but it seems certain that there is a sudden incidence of a nuclear reaction within a star of such violence that the star throws off vast quantities of gaseous material and expands so greatly that its luminosity increases around ten thousand times. In the case of an excessively violent explosion - the supernova - the star may become ten thousand times again as bright as a nova. As the expelled gases cool, the luminosity diminishes, to eventually fade into insignificance. What is of significance to us, is that if the sun should blow up in such a manner the Earth would be engulfed in flaming gases and consumed. Even an ordinary nova in our star would suffice to reduce its attendant planets to cosmic cinders.

The passing of years has seen the increasing humanising of SF, with the emphasis shifting from phenomena to people, and this is nowhere better shown than in the nova story.

Whereas 25 or more years ago some lantern-jawed young scientist might have prevented a nova by firing into the sun three cubes of an isotope from hyper-space or whatever, the more recent trend has been to bring out the inevitability of doom, and to explore more honestly possible human reactions.

Two of the most effective of a group of similar stories appearing in the early 'fifties were "The Last Day" by Richard Matheson and Alfred Coppel's "Last Night of Summer". In each case the time depicted is the immediate future, and the actual astronomical and scientific details are kept to a minimum. All the reader knows - or needs to know - is that the sun is about to expand; to increase its heat.

Matheson has no illusions about how humanity will spend the final hours: in an orgy of insane destruction and carnal indulgence. "A couple of billion people are doing it," Richard said. "When the sun hits us, they'll still be at it. What a sight." The thought of a world's people indulging themselves in one last orgy of animalism made him shudder."

Graphically, Matheson details the reactions and gradual

disintegration of a group of friends, running the grim gamut from suicide to copulation and insanity, ending with a moving passage wherein a mother tries to make her child take a drug before the final annihilation.

"He stared in fascinated horror at Doris holding the pills in her small hand.

"This isn't peppermint," she said, "Momma this isn't..."

"Yes it is." Grace took a deep breath. "Eat it darling."

Doris put one in her mouth. She made a face. Then she spit it into her palm.

"It isn't peppermint," she said, upset.

Grace threw up her head and buried her teeth in the white knuckles. Her eyes moved frantically to Ray.

"Eat it, Doris," Ray said. "Eat it, it's good."

Doris started to cry. "No, I don't like it."

"Eat it!"

Ray turned away suddenly, his body shaking. Richard tried to think of some way to make her eat the pills but he couldn't.

Then his mother spoke.

"We'll play a game, Doris," she said. "We'll see if you can swallow all the candy before I count ten. If you do, I'll give you a dollar."

Doris sniffed. "A dollar?" she said.

Matheson's leading character, an atheist, returns to his mother to spend the last few hours remaining before the holocaust... "he put his arm around her shoulders and she leaned against him. And he did know one thing. They sat there in the evening of the last day. And, though there was no actual point to it, they loved each other."

Coppol foresees a similar reaction, although in the case of "The Last Night of Summer", humanity has been warned long enough to build ten Burrows, underground shelters able to save a tiny minority of the race. Access to the Burrows is attendant upon the possession of a special disc.

Henderson, the story's protagonist, has divorced his wife Laura, leaving her with two small daughters, and married another woman, Kay. In the last hours, in an agony of recrimination, he realises that he still loves his first wife. Kay, under pressure, is revealed as a lascivious nonentity



for whom he has no real feeling. Whilst out on an orgy of self-indulgence, Kay meets a 'privileged' man and, after lulling him to distraction with sex and alcohol, she murders him to gain possession of the two discs he holds. She runs back to Henderson, elated, and begs him to accompany her - chiefly because she could not make it alone - to one of the hidden Burrows.

Henderson pretends to fall in with the scheme, but immediately he learns the location of the Burrow....

"The Luger bucked in his hand. Kay sank to the grass awkwardly and lay there, eyes glazed and open in horrified surprise. Henderson opened her dress and took the two discs from between her breasts. Then he covered her carefully and shut her eyes with his forefinger. "You didn't miss such, Kay," he said, looking down at her. "Just more of the same."

Then he fetches his two daughters, leaving them with the discs outside the Burrow, to be found and admitted by the guard, before returning to his old home...

"There were still a few hours left of this last night of summer, and Laura and he could watch the red dawn together."

Although the overall picture painted of humanity in a desperate situation is a depressing one - a return to animalism, modern SF writers have tempered the image somewhat with the admission that there are a few men and women able to maintain their dignity and humanity.

Possibly, such stories should best be considered as allegory, since our present scientific knowledge points to the fact that the sun is unlikely to blow up, and certainly not in the foreseeable future. However, there does remain the remote and chilling contingency that our sun may be a variable star of such a long period that the span of man's existence as a civilised being has been too short for him to have to become aware of it. The ice ages and past geological upheavals have never been satisfactorily explained. It only needs the slightest variation in the sun's temperature either way to remove man from the face of the Earth.

Thus the sun as mirrored in the worlds of science fiction. The bringer of life, the supreme Controller of man's destiny.

Perhaps the closest conception to a deity in a largely materialistic medium.

Philip Harbottle

.....

FOR SALE OR EXCHANGE - many issues of THRILLING WONDER, STARTLING, SUPER SF, PLANET, AMAZING, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, EF, etc from 1946 onwards - also first few years of GALAXY and last 4-5 years of GALAXY, plus all other SF magazines....and hundreds of paperbacks. Leo J Trotter, 28 Broadway Avenue, Ottawa 1, Ontario, Canada.

FOR SALE - paperbacks and hardcovers. Send for list to Adrian Cook, "St Lucia", West Looe Hill, West Looe, Cornwall.

MAGAZINES

reviewed by

Graham Hall

SCIENCE FANTASY 71 - April 1965 (price 2/6)

The main feature of this issue is a nascent letter column, which, though far from satisfactory as a letter column as yet, is a Good Sign: maybe SCIENCE FANTASY will become a magazine yet, instead of the monthly anthology it is at present.

The lead story is "Man in His Time", a longish piece by Brian Aldiss which presents an absolutely brilliant concept. Very good idea indeed this one, and would have been worth reading even had it been written by a nitty amateur instead of Brian Aldiss. His handling of the theme is mildly experimental and seems more than slightly tinged with Ballardisms - but perhaps that is just prejudice on my behalf. Perhaps it could have been handled better...but I doubt whether anyone else who could have handled it better would have conceived of it in the first place.

Two gems of first-class writing stand out in particular in this issue - "The War at Foxhanger" in which Keith Roberts continues his amusing and whimsical series concerning Anita, an apprentice witch, and her wizened guardian, Granny Thompson - and "Susan" by Alistair Bevan. Mr Bevan's tale is superb in its precise descriptions and lucid theme; all of which make B N Ball's "The Excursion" a harsh contrast. Pretentious is the word that sums up "The Excursion". It builds up quite well as an average SF adventure story, but when Mr Ball tries to reveal the way his characters would break up under stress, he avoids disaster only by the sheer futility and irrelevance of the sequence.

"The Chicken Switch" is a first SF contribution by Elleston Trevor who is apparently well established in another field. This information is hard to swallow; Trevor's description and SF ideas are very good indeed but the plot is pretty badly mishandled. Annoying, because if the story had lived up to its potential, it would have been among the best suspense SF in recent years.

The magazine is made up with "Hunt a Wild Dream" by D R Heywood - a hackneyed "Stormwater Tunnel" type idea with an unusual treatment that suffered tremendously from being serialised and merely 15 sides long in all; and "Over and Out" - a page-and-a-half vignette by George Hay.

Bonfiglioli has selected a photographic cover much in the idiom currently being used by the glossy science journals - and very eye-catching.

All-in-all another good issue.

NEW WORLDS SF 149 - April 1965 (price 2/6)

I've heard this issue described as the best of Moorcock's and I'm almost agreed. It is certainly the most well-balanced.

The lead story is by my old favourite, Ted Tubb, and is the first instalment of "The Life Buyer". "He bought life from others and his body had cost him over a quarter of a million. Then someone devised a spectacular plan to kill him." Rather briefly and dramatically sums up the first sequence which is, unfortunately, indicative of heavy padding but time will tell.

"In One Sad Day" by George Collyn is rather wistful... a queer piece indeed, about the last two members of the human race. Oh my word, this is a saucy one!

One quality lacking in many recent SF mags is that of memorability and this is welcome in plentiful supply in "Death of an Earthman" by Gordon Walters. Gerrero, the armless ex-space-captain-turned-artist and his bitterness will long stay in my Hall of Fame. And how Shelly Spinner, the 'trace analyser' - detective - is met with the problem of a murder by manual strangulation in which the only suspect has no arms.....

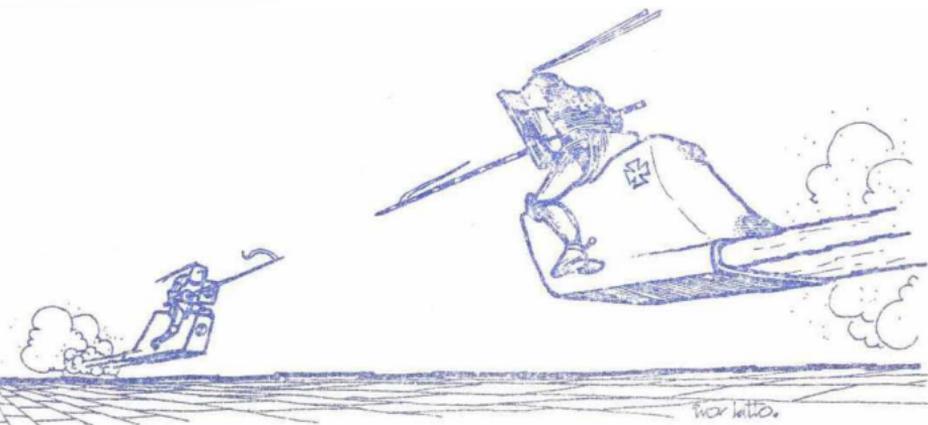
Dan Morgan's piece is more typical in that it doesn't really stand out...the idea has been expressed somewhere else... "Joey is a Man" by Bob Heinlein?

But Hek Belov would stand out anywhere - even in the company of SF's finest characterisations, and Ed Mackin has him riding again in his irrepressible, irrelevant and irreverent vein in "What Next?"

"The Flowers of the Valley" shows once again that Keith Roberts is a first-rate writer. This is one of those 'throwback' stories - some girl actually believes the myths that once flowers grew out of 'the stinking worm-ridden ground' instead of being manufactured in delicate plastics.

P F Woods' "Reactionary" is a fine example how just one SF-ish idea can be woven into a fairly memorable story by an experienced writer.

(Continued on page 21)





general
chuntering
by
ken
slater

Our esteemed editor - long may he edit - requires this column well before the end of March, which doesn't allow me much time to collect new news. That being the case, I'll take the opportunity to describe to you some of the woes of being a bookseller. Well - tryint to be a bookseller.

First of all, I have no less than three people demanding to know why I have not yet supplied copies of John Brunner's THE WHOLE MAN. Now, I had about three copies of this some time back, and listed them in the catalogue. They went..... This was a paperback published by Ballantine. It so happens that the same story was sold by John Brunner to a British publisher - Faber & Faber, who decided to publish the book as a hardcover at 18/-. So Ballantine hold the American rights to this book and Faber hold British rights. Most countries recognise the International Copyright Agreement (passed into law by various enactments inside each country) and just where any given country would come would depend on the terms of John Brunner's respective agreements with Ballantine and with Faber. Offhand I would imagine that the Ballantine could be sold in Canada, but the Faber could not. In Australia probably the Faber edition is legal and the Ballantine ain't. In Russia - well, they just don't recognise the Copyright Agreement.... But the whole point of this is that neither John Brunner nor Messrs Faber & Faber would take it kindly if I continued to sell THE WHOLE MAN in Britain. John would probably send me a rude (not obscene) postcard; Faber would write me a letter. If I persisted either or both could - and would - take legal action to prevent me. The extent of the punishment would depend on the extent of the offence, but in all probability it

would be sufficiently severe to put me (and F-M-L, consequently) out of business.

Of course, there are anomalies in this situation - like a certain hardcover publisher releasing, at around 15/-, a book after the American pb edition has been flooding the country for months - and has dropped down to being hawked at 1/- per copy in various stores. Actually, no-one worries about minor infringements much - if they did, editors wouldn't be able to get copies of books without wising up the publisher on the other side that they were interested. And then so many books are published, and in so many editions, that many of them are wide open. Or one publisher may hold the 'foreign' rights on his edition, and on another edition that publisher only has 'home' rights. All very confusing. But when we don't get a book (we book-sellers) it isn't just plain cussedness. There are often very good reasons which we consider obvious - but are not always so clear to the customers.

Then there are funny things - like the customer who picks up an imported paperback, sees a title listed in his local newsagent or bookseller, and says "Please get me this...". The bookseller checks the appropriate list and finds that the title has not been imported. Now, the straight answer to this one is "I'm sorry, it is not in print". I know this is confusing to you, but if you add the words "in this country" you'll probably understand what the bookseller means. He can, by and large, only supply books which have been printed or 'generally imported' in the UK, particularly in the case of paperbacks. Certain British publishers and/or importers are the recognised agencies for certain American publishers, and vice versa. If the British publisher decides that he won't have a large enough sale for a certain title published by the American firm (and don't forget he is thinking in thousands of copies, not dozens) he won't import it. And the American publisher will not export it to anyone but the given British publisher (and vice versa, all the time, of course). And there you have it..... the bookseller can't get it. He is not being awkward, and the fact that six months later you pick up a copy elsewhere doesn't make him a liar, either. The position may be changed.

For example, I am now importing certain Airmont titles. Now, the publishing groups in America (and I will admit that I was slightly shaken when I found out just what a high-flying collection of publishers I was tackling) have an official representative in London. Most of the material handled - and published - is technical and educational (how Airmont SF gets in there, don't ask me) and for obvious reasons they didn't carry a stock of the paperbacks I wanted in London. Nor did they think my measly little orders were worth opening up the field. But I persisted on the American side and can now get them - because I can sell enough to make it at least reasonable. But if you trot into the local bookstore and ask them to get you a copy of THE MEMORY BANK by Wallace West, and give them all the data including the publisher's address, it is highly unlikely they'll be able to supply. But suppose they do decide to try, they have the choice of two things - they can write direct to the publisher at the address you've given, or they can send an order to one of the British importers who specialise in the American field.

Suppose they take the first course - well, when the letter lands up on someone's desk at Airmont a lot will depend on who it is, and how bright he or she is feeling that morning. On the face of it, this will be an overseas trade order (provided Airmont have the overseas rights to this title) the best thing to do is to send it, charging the ordinary retail price and postage. If this is done, the book-seller will in due course get a paperback with a face value of 40¢, which has cost him - in direct expenditure only - 6d or 1/3 for his order to USA, 40¢, and 10¢ postage on the book, and about 1/- to 1/6 expenses on paying the 50¢ bill by bank draft or money order. Say a minimum of 5/- and a maximum of 6/3. Now he has got to decide how much he is going to charge for it.....

I could go through the various permutations of the other alternative choices I've indicated exist, but I won't. Unless you ask me.....

A similar condition exists on this side of the water. One of the terrible tragedies of the bookselling profession these days is that although it is primarily a 'small man's business', demanding the attention, interest, and one might almost say the undying devotion of those engaged in it, the number of books published today prevent any bookseller - even the biggest - carrying more than a percentage of the 'in print' titles in stock. The percentage one carries depends on the size of the business, and the amount of capital one can afford to have tied up in slow-moving stock which occupies space on which one has to pay rates, etc. I do my best to carry in stock all the SF titles in print in Britain, plus a reasonable percentage of the available American material. This means in fact that I am carrying in stock a percentage of the 'in print' books that is shown by a decimal point followed by a series of zeros...with a figure tailing along the end somewhere. On paperbacks alone there are in print in Britain at any time between 10,000 and 15,000 - say I have a thousand titles on hand (including non-fiction and non-SF) then I can claim to have something like 7%. But then take into consideration the American titles...the 'between boards' material,...

So we then come up with the problem of the customer who wants something you don't stock, from a publisher with whom you've no account. The answer is a 'single copy order'...an order, an invoice, a wrapping and packing, a statement, a payment and possibly a receipt. Add up just the postage involved in that lot and is it any wonder that the trade shudders at the thought of the 'single copy order'?

Various individual publishers and groups of publishers and booksellers have attempted to find answers to this and other problems, and next time I'll tell you something about the various 'solutions' which have been put into practise. But please bear in mind that my remarks are all generalisations, often procedures noted are not strictly true of any one transaction, but a kind of 'gestalt' of the variations that can occur in the type being discussed.

Now to the information for which you have been waiting - what there is of it. I hear from Don Wellheim that Ace will be publishing shortly a paperback edition of THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING...but please note that it will not be available in Canada or

Great Britain. The sale and purchase of this edition in those countries will be illegal and if you skipped all my preceding remarks, now is the time to go back over them and have a look!

I am informed that Ziff-Davis ownership of AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC will cease with the June issues, and the purchaser of these magazines is Sol Cohen of the GALAXY group. I'm not clear on whether Mr Cohen personally is purchasing the two mags or whether the Galaxy Publishing Corporation is the prospective owner, but I've written him on the subject. If the import channels of AS and FANT are changed, then the only two American mags which will be imported with reasonable reliability will be ANALOG and MAG OF FBSF - at least that would seem to be a fair guess!

Rumour has it that there will be a drastic cut-back in the amount of American paperback SF published...well, it had to come. Some of the publishers have really been plunging! I think in one case a new edition was brought out on one title when copies of the next earlier edition were still on the stands, and copies of the edition before that were in the hands of the 'remainder' trade - this, of course, is an example of unplanned obsolescence! And someone was really out of touch with the market....!

New British title, THE TIME FACTOR by Rex Gordon, published by Anthony Gibbs and Phillips at 16/- is a hardcover version of the Ace pb FIRST THROUGH TIME. John Christopher's new novel, THE POSSESSORS, is up to his usual high standard of writing, but not intended to strain the imagination and hence will not have a high 'fantasy' appeal. In the States, Sam Moskowitz' second work on the biographies, and appreciations of the work, of the people who write SF will be out in June, titled SEEKERS OF TOMORROW. There will be a matched companion volume titled MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE FICTION, which will contain one story by each author 'covered' in SEEKERS OF TOMORROW. Price on these will be \$6.00 each. A second edition of EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE will appear in the Fall, and will have a similar companion anthology.

The all-seeing eye of the average fan will have noted the advert in NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY, advising all interested parties that Compact Books are commencing a series of SF pbs, the first being THE SUNDERED WORLDS by Michael Moorcock...second will be THE PRODIGAL SUN by Philip High, provisionally scheduled for May 26th. MAGAZINE OF HORROR & STRANGE STORIES Feb 1964 issue has been imported by TSP at 2/-, and you may be lucky to find a few around here and there. In July, Hodder & Stoughton will publish a sequel to THE SERPENT by Jane Gaskell, titled ATLAN...and Chatto & Windus have a detective novel coming up from Margery Allingham called THE KIND READERS - and ESP is part of the plot. TALES OF TERROR, latest imported Charlton magazine, contains more actual story content than have their HORROR MONSTERS, etc.....the Summer 1964 number has about 15 short yarns, about eight of which are written by Stanton A Coblenz. Newest Ace SF titles are F-325 ORDEAL IN NOWHERE by Andre Norton - a sequel to STORM OVER WARLOCK, and F-326 THE WIZARD OF LEMURIA by Lin Carter - a sort of Kline-Burroughs-Howard saga.

See you.....? KFS

/And just a reminder of the address of Ken's bookshop, for anyone who may be interested - FANTASY (MEDIAY) LTD., 75 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs. /

THE VISUAL SIDE OF THINGS

by VOO HALLEFF

Things are looking up a little in the cinema and on TV, and one can hope that it is the start of something, not just another flash in the pan.

First of all there are two large-scale films on general release which are undoubtedly SF and are labelled as such.

The first of these is ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS, which I found well worth seeing. Admittedly, there are some rather awkward process shots and the spacships are very unconvincing, but to make up for that it is a well constructed film, full of suspense with an unusually intelligent script. The choice of Death Valley for a location was inspired and I must say a word for the actors, particularly Vic Lundin as Friday for being so convincingly alien.

The second film is CRACK IN THE WORLD, which reports suggest is good on special effects but weak on the script.

There is also a double bill consisting of MUTINY IN OUTER SPACE (formerly SPACE STATION X) and THE HUMAN DUPLICATORS, on release. Both are directed by Hugo Grimaldi and both, judging by the reports I have seen, are worth missing.

Alan Dodd, in NEW WORLDS 148, seems to have found a good film called VOYAGE TO THE END OF THE UNIVERSE, which he recommends to all who want escapism.

Another film on general release which comes into our range of interest is Hammer's big budget production of H Rider Haggard's SHE, starring Peter Cushing, Bernard Cribbins, Christopher Lee, John Robinson and Ursula Andress. It's directed by Robert Day and should provide good escapist entertainment.

As for the future - well, it looks as though Vincent Price is the man to look out for. He has just completed two films, one in Britain and one in America, which are science fictional in content. The British one is CITY IN THE SEA - an Atlantis-type story taken from a poem by Edgar Allan Poe. The American one should be even more interesting - it is a film version of Richard Matheson's I AM LEGEND, scripted by the author and called NAKED FEAR.

That other man of Horror, Boris Karloff, is making HOUSE AT THE END OF THE WORLD - an adaptation of one of H P Lovecraft's semi-SF stories.

More nebulous, but also promising possibilities, are Hammer's long-promised and long-awaited films of QUATERMASS AND THE PIT and John Wyndham's THE CHRYSALIDS - for which a script has been written.

No more film news but things are looking better on the small screen also. During the last month (at the time of writing) there have been two plays and two children's serials on TV and there

are two American film series being shown on various ITV stations.

The first of these is VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, which is based on the film of the same name but isn't by any means as good.

The second is THE OUTER LIMITS, which has just arrived on my local station. Having seen only one part so far, I can't judge the series as a whole, but I found the film I did see a well-made bad story that I enjoyed. There's plenty of room for development into something very good.

The future? Edmund Crispin has a serial coming on BBC and they have also commissioned a documentary style film from Peter Watkins (who directed the magnificent CULLODEN) about the aftermath of an H-bomb attack on a British city.

I must end with a mention of the most spectacular TV pictures of all - the Russian astronaut's somersault in space. With that on our home screens, then the future really is exciting.

Vic Hallett

MAGAZINE REVIEWS by Graham Hall (Continued from pg 15)

"The Changing Shape of Charlie Snuff" by R W Mackelworth is yet another of this spate of stories that apparently satirise their own theme - this is about the alien who can change into anything if a human wishes strongly enough. A favourite device of pulp fiction. Apparently Moorcock rather likes these mild unfunny satires. I don't.

Striking cover, adequate book reviews, fair editorial and it's all over for another month. The next issue is the much vaunted 150th anniversary issue with a line-up of famous names.

Even when the stories are bad, both SCIENCE FANTASY and NEW WORLDS are 'musts' for the SF fan. Only they indicate the trend of British SF.

Graham Hall

BOOKS FOR SALE One copy only of each - all in mint condition with d/w at 7/6 each (postage extra)...COUNTERFEIT WORLD (Galouye); BEYOND THE BARRIER (Knight); IT WAS THE DAY OF THE ROBOT (Long); PARADOX MEN (Harness); THE DEEP REACHES OF SPACE (Chandler); MOON BASE (Tubb); SPACE BORN (Wright); UNCENSORED MAN (Sellings); ALL THE COLOURS OF DARKNESS (Biggle); WITH A STRANGE DEVICE (Russell); LOAFERS OF REFUGE (Green)...Pete Weston, 9 Porlock Crescent, Northfield, Birmingham 31.

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BOOKS

Reviews and News

THE MARTIAN WAY by Isaac Asimov
Published by PANTHER at 3/6. 186 pages

This collection contains four Asimov stories first published in the early and mid-fifties. There is no connection between any of them and the 'raison d'etre' for the collection is somewhat obscure. The book smacks largely of having dredged up any four stories in order to get something on the bookstalls. In writing this, I feel it only fair to say that I am of the opinion that the stories most worthy of reprint are anthologised or collected first; it's taken this set ten years.

The title story is probably the best of the four. The colonists on Mars are finding the going tough. Their water supply is being threatened because of extremely emotional political reasons. It is left to the Martian scavengers, the body of spacemen who live by salvaging forgotten satellites, deserted spacecraft and the like, to find the solution. Much of this story is good science fiction. A realistic picture of life in space is painted and an even more realistic one of life on a water-rationed planet is depicted. There is present, however, a slightly deplorable crowing at the final victory, a 'look how clever we are, fellers' attitude which is somewhat unhealthy. It could be argued that this is how people behave, that they are not perfect, but the entire climax to the story, with its very rushed ending (perhaps originally cut to editorial specifications?) seems to possess this trait and nothing else. Contrasted with the painstaking build-up of the earlier part of the story, in which the Martian problem is presented carefully, the ending is surprisingly poorly written. A pity.

In "Youth", Asimov tackles the old turn-about theme, the same one complained of as being hackneyed old hat when Fredric Brown wrote round it in "Soldier". Asimov's treatment is masterly.

"The Deep" features another plot which is no newcomer to SF (to turn to Brown again for a parallel there is "The Last Martian"), viz, the transference of a dying race to a new planet. Again, the Good Doctor's treatment is all we expect from him.

"Sucker Bait" is the longest story in the collection, comprising seventy-six pages. The plot here is hardly tingling fresh, either. A group of scientists is taking part in an expedition

to explore and report on a planet which had been colonised but whose colony has died out because of some mysterious circumstance. A good steadfast standby; SF plot 17B. If you are thinking at this point of a biologist, a psychologist, two or three other odd '-ists', a captain who is as rugged as a John Wayne hero and yet who is not quite 'with it', then you're cheating: you've read stories before. Who else can be thrown in here? The young raw recruit, did you say? Right first time. In this instance, Asimov introduces a slightly different type of raw recruit, but if your intuition has been right so far, then you will not be surprised to learn who solves the overriding mystery.

This then, is a hack collection, a string of Asimov pot-boilers. But do not dismiss it lightly. This collection is worth every penny of its 3/6. Here is a slick, professional example of how to write. Aspiring writers would do well to read it, study it, to analyse it. Such invaluable lessons are rarely given for such a small sum. Here is how to change 'old-hat', highly predictable stories into fresh, highly readable tales of excitement and wonder. Asimov has written science fiction that is much more original, but few writers have rarely written SF that is so unoriginal so well and so entertainingly.

Ron Bennett

AFTER DOOMSDAY by Poul Anderson

Published by PANTHER at 3/6. 179 pages

The United States' first interstellar spaceship returns to find all life on Earth destroyed in an atomic holocaust. The all-male crew return to the volume of space occupied by those alien races which had previously had dealings with Earth, to take revenge for the destruction of Earth and to contact other Earth ships, some of them crewed by women, which were being planned when they first left.

Kandemir, the chief suspect, is fighting a war, so the Americans join in against them and, with the aid of radically new weapons, defeat them in a gigantic space battle. News of the battle reaches a party of European women who were hiding in another part of the Galaxy. As in all mystery stories, however, the obvious murderer turns out to be innocent.

There is nothing outstanding about this book - it is routine space opera, full of fast moving action and super-scientific gadgets. Even the cover is not up to PANTHER's usual standard. If you like space opera, AFTER DOOMSDAY will give you a few hours pleasant reading, but there is little else to be said for it.

Ted Ball

TOMORROW X 4 edited by Damon Knight

Published by GOLD MEDAL at 2/6. 168 pages

Although the short story of between three and five thousand words is the most popular and typical SF length, a good

deal can be said in favour of the short novel or novella of around fifteen thousand words. Within it there is room to develop an idea completely. And there is no call for the padding which often makes up a good 50% of the full sized novels.

TOMORROW X 4 contains four novelottes, each by a master hand.

"The Night of Hoggy Darn" by R M McKenna is set on New Cornwall, a planet of low gravity, stupendous forests and four moons picturesquely named Norwenna, Annis, Cairdween and Hoggy Darn.

Flinter Cole, a young ecologist, arrives on New Cornwall to do a survey. At first, he is emphatically unwanted. Conditions are dangerous and shrouded with mystery. But together with Pia, a lovely local girl, with whom he comes naked out of the forest, he finds himself involved in a planet's folk-lore.

This is a really fine story which contains all the best elements of science fiction.

"The Sources of the Nile" by Avram Davidson, is good entertainment. It is a sample of what happens when a really brilliant author writes a story with nothing such to it. The writing is witty, but at times the dialogue sinks to the level of comic cross-talk. You just can't take this story seriously. Enjoy it for the laughs.

"No Woman Born" by C L Moore is a science fiction classic. Excellent, scholarly writing deals with a vital subject in a human, understanding manner. No need here for slick dialogue or verbal fireworks. No need for text-book jargon or deliberately manufactured obscurity. It is a really good story told in beautiful English

The final novelotte, "The Roads Must Roll" is by the Rudyard Kipling of the Space Age, the Baden Powell of Tomorrow's Boy Scouts, the Bard of the Banner-spangled Stars, Robert Heinlein.

The Roads are mechanical man-carriers powered by the sun. Factories, shops, etc., line the roads in a long, narrow strip; and the worker-consumers reside in the nearby countryside. The moving roads are vital to the very existence of the American nation. 'Down inside' toils an army of technicians commanded by military-style cadets.

A revolt of these technicians breaks out in one sector, bringing death and destruction to a portion of the road, and a terrible threat of more to follow. But the Cadets, of course, come to the rescue. The roadways keep rolling.

Good, extravert, vintage Heinlein.

W T Webb

THE LOAFERS OF REFUGE by Joseph Green

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/- . 168 pages

Many people like Andre Norton books, and those who do should like THE LOAFERS OF REFUGE. The style, plotting and characterisation (what there is of it) are all very similar.

Unfortunately, I personally find Andre Norton virtually unreadable, and the same applies to this book. I dislike child-

heroes unless they get beyond the stage of do-gooding know-it-alls who set the world right, and the child hero in this book does not get beyond this stereotyped character-image. I dislike alien worlds identical to Earth in nearly every respect, with honest, hard-working colonists who have rebelled against an overcrowded home world tilling the land; the image is suspiciously like the American whimsical dream of the early US colonists, opening up the West. I also dislike natives of touching innocence and enchanting primitiveness, but who have their own kind of civilisation and who only want to live in peace.

Joseph Green should realise that this sort of thing has been spewed out countless times before, and that the weak situation of an Earth child going partly native and solving all the planet's problems, together with a weak plot that trickles along from one lukewarm event to another, is just not enough to make a readable SF book.

But as I said before, Andre Norton fans will probably like this one.

Charles Platt

TELEPATHIST by John Brunner

Published by FABER at 18/-. 230 pages

As one might expect from an author who sports a goatee and a wine-coloured corduroy jacket, this book is slightly pretentious. Like at least 90% of the psi stories I've read, it attempts to describe the bitterness, the loneliness, the apartness felt by telepaths. It tectors on the verge of success; for me it missed by a hair's breadth; for those who actually like psi stories, it is pretty good.

Gerald Howson is born a cripple, a runt, a haemophilic and a bastard. To add to his bad start in life, he is born in the midst of a crisis which is apparently caused by revolt and terrorism in Britain, but this is left intentionally and effectively vague.

For 20 years, he lives the life of a cripple, a runt and a bastard (he doesn't know he's a haemophilic...small mercies...) and, although this would be enough to drive a person pretty bitter, Howson doesn't turn out more than averagely introverted and cynical.

Then he discovers his telepathic powers. After trying to escape, from he-doesn't-really-know-what, he is taken to the capital of Outer Mongolia (of all places) to the WHO (nothing to do with that Dr.) therapy centre for training as a curative telepathist.

He works out quite well, and there are some brilliant episodes of fantasy that stand out in particular, and then Howson becomes dissatisfied with his lot, sets off home to find himself and manages to do so in a splurge of concentrated emotion.

Brunner's writing is remarkably uneven. Some passages are finely detailed and really extremely well-drawn, yet on other occasions he fails to supply a necessary piece of information, which makes visualisation hard or impossible. The plot wanders a great deal, and the book has the appearance of a number of short episodes welded and bashed by Brunner into forming a novel. But in spite of

certain stylistic defects, his ideas are, on the whole, refreshing - he manages to think of a new artform or two which probably endeared the whole book to me.

It is worth reading.

Graham Hall

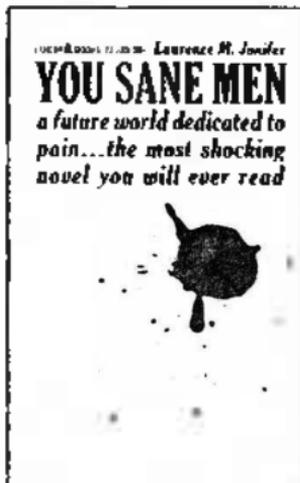
YOU SANE MEN by Laurence M Janifer
Published by LANCER at 50p. 152 pages

This novel is written in the stream-of-consciousness style, where most sentences are repeated two or three times with slight variations. "I am trying to put it all down, all of it, the record of the world I have just left, the record which you of the Comity, you fine Doctors, you sane and balanced men in your safe world, you loose and careless men who surround me, who smile and insist and adjust and aid and understand - the record you are going to find so strange and so odd and so shocking."

A bookful of this rubbish is more than enough to put me off, but since to review the thing I had to read it, I ploughed on. Here is the 'plot' in a nutshell.

The writer lives in a world where there are two classes, the Lords (and Ladies) and the Bound men and women. The latter are a slave class and their main duty is to be available for torture by the Upper Class Lords and Ladies. For this purpose, escape proof remand homes are available, and when a Lord gets niggly, he books a room and is supplied with a girl (bound hand and foot) and a set of torture instruments. Having used the paraphernalia to his best ability, his victim is carted off for healing by their advanced medicinal techniques. However, all is not well in this Utopia, the idle youth foment a revolution (not the Bound people - they never come to life) and the writer, who has formed some sort of love for a particular Bound girl, joins the cardboard revolt against the elders, and escapes into space where he is picked up by Earthmen and tells them his story...he takes the girl with him, but I failed to understand what happened to her.

According to the jacket blurb, this is a shocking novel. For once, the jacket is perfectly true...though not intentionally so. It is shocking that such rubbish can be written, sold to a publisher and foisted off on a gullible public. Apart from the footling plot, the characters never 'live', the situations are no more than backdrops and the whole shebang is never more than an outline quivering around in the fog and never assuming any semblance of reality. Harsh words? Yes, but read the book if you don't accept my opinions. You may like it - some people may even enjoy it - the author probably did, but for me I'd much prefer a good



rollocking .007 misadventure.

Terry Jeavons

BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

SHIELD - Paul Anderson (Dobson 15/-; April)
 THE HAUNTED STARS - Edmond Hamilton (Herbert Jenkins 12/6; April)
 TUNNEL IN THE SKY - Robert A Heinlein (Gollancz 15/-; April)
 BEST SF STORIES OF JAMES BLISH (Faber 18/-; April)
 SOMEWHERE A VOICE - Eric Frank Russell (Dobson 16/-) - short stories
 ANALOG ANTHOLOGY ed by John W Campbell (Dobson 30/-) - originally
 appeared in the States as three separate books - about 900pp
 NEW WRITINGS IN SF 4 ed by John Carnell (Dobson 16/-) - contains
 "High Eight" by David Stringer; "Star Light" by Isaac Asimov;
 "Hunger Over Sweet Water" by Colin Kapp; "The Country of the
 Strong" by Dennis Etchison; "Parking Problem" by Dan Morgan; "Sub-
 lim" by Keith Roberts; "Bernie the Faust" by William Tenn.
 THE OLD DIE RICH & OTHER SF STORIES - M L Gold (Dobson 18/-)
 NO FUTURE IN IT - John Brunner (Panther 3/6; April)
 THE SCREAMING FACE - John Lymington (Corgi 3/6; April)
 THE COUNTERFEIT MAN - Alan E Nurse (Corgi 3/6; April)
 THE ALIEN WAY - Gordon R Jackson (Bantam 3/6; April)
 CITY - Clifford D Simak (Four Square 3/6; May)
 THE BIG TIME - Fritz Leiber (Four Square 3/6; June)
 GLORY ROAD - Robert A Heinlein (Four Square 5/-; ?)

NEW MEMBERS

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS

O 43 Audrey Eversfield now Rue de Javel, Paris 15E, France.
 M 98 Roy Sheppard now 46 Eastheath Ave., Wokingham, Berks.
 M 345 James Ducker now 37 Wye Road, Borough Green, Kent.
 M 347 Vic Hallett now 22 Hertford Street, Cambridge.



RICHARD GORDON, Cairnfield,
Buckie, Banffshire.

I'm beginning to feel that all this discussion about Ballard and, in particular, "Terminal Beach" is quite pointless.

The Peter White article was very interesting - I found it even more difficult to understand than the original story itself - all of which shows, as far as I personally am concerned, that either you understand metaphysical meandering, or you don't... I don't, I'm afraid, although I enjoy much of what he writes, and it isn't that his writing is obscure, either. On the contrary, it's beautifully lucid and so, within his own boundaries, is his thinking. Within his own boundaries - the operative phrase. Those lie beyond, below or above most

people, with the result that it certainly seems obscure, with the inevitable result that however lucid he may be, what he writes about will still remain obscure to the unluckily uninitiated such as, unfortunately, I. I can follow his metaphysical, psychological, Freudian (or whatever it is!) reasoning so far, but only so far. Somewhere along the line he takes off for the wild blue yonder, leaving my material mind stranded far behind.

Thus I think the article failed as an article. There's little point in making an explanation, however valiantly reasoned - as was this, when the only solution possibly lies in deep and very probably primitive emotion, not always readily accessible to most people. The only thing such an article succeeds in explaining is that the author thereof shows that he knows what Ballard is talking about, which isn't really of great interest to other people, unless they too think that they understand All... in which case they can compare their own feelings about the story. But presumably the object of the article was to explain to those Who Do Not Understand, for their greater elucidation and edification. In this case, I don't think it worked.

But interesting all the same.

Terry Bull's article on Ed Hamilton was competent but not nearly so interesting as his other article on Jack Vance - perhaps because Hamilton isn't nearly such an interesting writer.

DICK HOWETT
94 Ravensbourne Crescent
Harold Wood
Essex

V/31 couldn't have been any neater than it was. The front and back covers, though unoriginal were up to professional standard. However, could

someone please enlighten me on what the back cover was supposed to be? I hardly think Epping Forest is SF, or vice versa. Also, Phil Harbottle's copied illos should have been properly credited to the original artists, and not with a few numbers and dashes tucked away in the corner.

The rest of the magazine is not really worth commenting upon. Peter White mumbles away about his favourite author and manages to squeeze every single 'hidden message' out of a short story. I suspect if Ballard wrote just one word, White would be able to extol it and fill another two pages of VECTOR with 'what the great man is trying to say, folks'.

I find myself agreeing with Gray Hall over the NEW WORLDS illos of "The Power of Y" as 'childish scribbblings'. I think I am right in saying that the artist who did them is the current rave in impressionistic art in artistic circles, so who's kidding whom? Maybe this artist IS a child? Or perhaps the artist WAS just scribbling at the time. I suspect the latter.

BRIAN STABLEFORD
16 Thompson Road
Benton
Lancs

The covers and Phil Harbottle's illustrations were first class. Terry Bull's article was a little sketchy. He defends Hamilton well, but if he'd mentioned what sort of trips was rampant about this time in the magazines, he could have done a lot better. The only other

writer of the late twenties he mentioned was Doc Smith, who many (not me) hold to be a better writer. Mention of some of the stories by Williamson, Leinster and Robeson would have enhanced his case. He wisely does not give a catalogue of Hamilton's early work.

Peter White's article took a long time to say what was obvious - i.e. that Ballard was dealing with the emotional effects of the bomb, but never really gave an explanation as to how the obscure dressing up of the story helped it. He states that these tendencies in the story helped it. He states that these tendencies in the story are dangerous, and more or less leaves it at that. In my opinion, his defence leaves an awful lot still to be defended.

HENRY MANSON
149 McKinley Crescent
Irvine
Ayrshire

I found Pete Weston's article on the late H Beam Piper very interesting, but I'm prepared to cross swords with him on his statement that Piper's first story appeared in ASTOUNDING in 1947. I'm pretty sure that he wrote a story for AMAZING quite

some time before '47. I may be wrong but I think he was writing in AMAZING before the war.

/According to Don Day's INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES 1926 - 1950, Piper's first story was "Time and Time Again" which appeared in....ASTOUNDING April 1947. Sorry. RGP_/

HARRY HARRISON
Rørtangvej 4
Snekkersten
Denmark

A reviewer may analyse a book, criticise a book, dissect a book and give his opinion of a book. A reviewer may not stoop to insult. I was deeply shocked when I read Charles Platt's comments on EARTHWORKS by Brian W Aldiss. This

is not a review, but a display of bad temper. The final paragraph is a deliberate attempt to strike at Aldiss's livelihood and should never have appeared in print.

The tone of the entire review is demeaning and insulting - and bears no resemblance to literary criticism. A stranger to science fiction who read the review would never realise that Brian W Aldiss is one of the leading writers in this field and undoubtedly the leading stylist. In a field that abounds in terrible, impossible books, he has never written a bad one. His worst effort is far more readable and enjoyable than most of the 'classics' of SF that clutter our shelves and infinitely better than the works of most contemporaries.

I don't know what prompted Charles Platt to write this exercise in bad taste, nor do I care. I am surprised that Roger G Peyton, the editor of this journal, allowed it into print. Nevertheless it has happened. There is, however, one thing that still can be done. One of you gentlemen should write an apology for VECTOR 32. A grave error has been made and in all fairness the record should be set straight.

BRUCE MONTGOMERY ("Edmund Crispin")
c/o Clements
Beaston
Broadthampton
Totnes
Devon

Quite apart from being well over the line which separates disapproval from what is legally actionable, Platt's notice of Aldiss's EARTHWORKS deserves comment for five main reasons:-

- (1) Vituperation is a childish form of writing.
- (2) Vituperation is a barbarous form of writing. Anyone incapable of criticising without resort to hysterical fist-shaking is 'ipse facto' not civilised enough to be allowed to do any criticising at all.
- (3) Vituperation is a gratuitous insult to people - such as, in this case, myself - who happen to disagree with the vituperator. Its implication is that such people must be worthless zanies.
- (4) All vituperation is bad; vituperation directed against Aldiss is ungenerous as well. The fact that as President Aldiss worked hard for the BSFA doesn't of course mean that there's any bar to Platt's writing unfavourably about a book of his. It does very definitely mean, though, that mere puerile malignancy won't do. That just won't do at all.
- (5) Platt's notice is yet another sign of the narrow pointless demonology which is developing inside the BSFA. Amis and Ballard already have horns, forked tails and cloven hooves, and now, it seems, Aldiss is to be given them too. But only the ignorant believe in devils, and think it necessary to shriek curses at them on any pretext or none. Let's grow up a bit, can't we?

/Both Mr Harrison and Mr Montgomery are perfectly correct - the review was bad and should never have appeared in print. For my part it was just gross carelessness in letting it through: I can only offer my apologies to Brian Aldiss and anyone else affected by it.

CALLING ALL SCOTTISH MEMBERS !!

"I've been keeping a close eye on the New Members list and we seem to have enough people North of the Border to justify a one day meeting, probably in Glasgow.

There is a Caledonian SF group and the 6 founder members might be a suitable nucleus for a committee, with additional members.

Before any details are discussed, I need to have the support of at least 90% of the Scottish BSFA members. With them as a nucleus, I think we could muster 40-50 people for SCOTCON.

If enough of you are keen we can proceed. Any and every idea will be welcome. We can't be too ambitious, but an interesting day could be organised. Dr I F Clarke (a member) lives in Glasgow. He is Europe's foremost authority on SF history. He might be able to get us a film. Other notions are a Guest of Honour, panel discussions with audience participation - and food, of course!

Please note that anyone else interested will be welcome, especially Newcastle and Irish members or others fairly near.

If you think you'll need overnight accomodation, say so.

Please write to:

Donald Malcolm,
42 Garry Drive,
Paisley,
Renfrewshire.
(Tel: Bradicand 2324)

Mark envelope "Scotcon".

Don Malcolm

A small news item which members might find interesting appeared in EPOCA dated 7/2/65. Here is a translation of that item from the Italian by Ed James of Solihull:

"From Moscow:- The Science Fiction Library.

Izvestia announced recently that the publishing house Melodoya Guardia of Moscow are preparing for the publication of a collection of books under the title "Science Fiction Library Monthly" in 15 volumes. In the volumes from five to ten will be found works of English and American authors, like Clarke and Asimov, never before published in the Soviet Union. The publication of the Library will be completed in 1966."

THE MAIL RESPONSE (Continued from previous page)

The following is an apology received from Charles Platt:-
"My EARTHWORKS review was a bad one for many obvious reasons. It was offensive, badly written and as a review, useless. As soon as I received VECTOR and read what I had written I sent a letter to Brian apologising. My only excuse for the review - if I have an excuse - is that I wrote it after writing two previous reviews of the same book. The resultant written-out state I found myself in is not, of course, any real justification for my badly-expressed and unpleasant review, for which I offer sincere apologies."

**HERBERT
JENKINS**

SF

BRITAIN'S LEADING SCIENCE FICTION JOURNAL

NEW WORLDS



Editor: **MICHAEL MOORCOCK**

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