SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

No. 19 October 1957

OFF THE GROUND AT LAST

After our many years of looking forward to space flight, word of a successful launching of an unmanned artificial satellite comes as no surprise to any SF reader. The man in the street, never having taken in before what was going on in the IGY program, was undoubtedly more excited.

Sputnik 1 gives us cause not so much for satisfaction as for relief. Because, in the last few wasted years, it has often seemed as if nothing was going to be done in our time about interplanetary flight. Such work as was done on rockets went into dead-end military models, and the growing danger from misused atomic energy presented to us the possibility of an unhabitable world, and no means of escape.

Well, now a start has been made, and as even the daily press has discovered the race to the Moon is on. And there is not much doubt that the primitive spirit that makes it a race is on the way out, so that it will not be a struggle for the planets, but an orderly and civilised endeavour.

But let us not congratulate ourselves about this. We knew it all along, yes. We didn't do much about it, though. Posterity will not thank us for dreaming. We have only ourselves to blame for rocketry falling completely into political and military hands, and the conquest of space remaining shelved long enough for private enterprise to have reached the Moon, until the effort of the IGY brought about this beginning. We're lucky at that: it might well have been left another 25 years until the originally scheduled Third International Polar Year in 1982-3.

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NEW BOOKS

FALLEN STAR
by James Blish
(Faber & Faber)

Here we have the third, or the first, novel by James Blish seen in a British edition. ("Jack of Eagles", a pot-boiler about psychic supernatural abilities based on juvenile power-fantasies, doesn't count.) "They Shall Have Stars" and its companion "Earthmen, Come Home", were originally short stories later brought together: "Fallen Star" has been planned and executed as a whole. But this is not by any means the only difference from the two former books which is important. Indeed, the differences in theme are rather interesting.

The two connected books have their settings at various future times, and mainly on other worlds — known and hypothetical — and in interplanetary and interstellar space. Fair enough. This is quite typical of modern science fiction. Now, in the early days — in the magazines of the 'twenties — the center of interest was in the here and now. Only about one story in three had anything to say about other planets or space flight, even obliquely, and by far the majority of all stories took place more or less in the present or the past. One of the things that happened as SF developed was that the emphasis changed to the future, and in particular the indefinite future when various technical achievements had become commonplace — and to settings on other planets. First the known planets where certain more or less justifiable assumtions were made about the environment, and then to imaginary planets of other systems where the conditions could be whatever the writer wished.

This practice is a dangerous one. In the hands of many writers it led to pseudo-scientific fiction which, while good clean fun at its best, led us nowhere. True, it did enable many ideas to be developed which could hardly be relevantly introduced into a story set on Earth or Mars. But the convention that a remote future whose society can be practically ignored, a planet of any kind in any situation, and interstellar flight to get there, can all be taken for granted as a starting point, has had some disastrous results.

In Blish's previous two books, he dealt fairly with his material. The human side was believable. The picture of Jupiter was completely in accord with the facts we have and vividly detailed. Where there were developments we cannot expect from present data, it was made clear that they were at least consistent with what we know: control of gravitational force, and rejuvenation, the two points on which the second book depended, were justified as possibilities. Now, in "Fallen Star", he applies the same principles. But this time the setting is on Earth, though mainly off the beaten track, in the year 1958, and there can have been few SF stories with more factual background.

This book is about an expedition to the North Pole, a private project co-operating in the International Geophysical Year. Its objects: a variety of researches, especially oceanographical. But to the expedition's organiser (a larger-than-life professional explorer) the important thing is the ocean-floor dredging after meteorites, which might help confirm his theory that the asteroids are fragments of a destroyed planet. The case for the theory gets the only complete and believable presentation seen yet in science fiction, and this reviewer for one is sold on Planet Four-and-a-Half.

It's in the first person — not Blish's usual choice, but handled very skillfully. A scientific journalist commissioned to write up the expedition is the viewpoint, and it's bad luck that the expedition makes a sensational, but completely unprintable, discovery.

There is some brilliant atmospheric writing, mystery and suspense that are truly compelling, and the adventurers live with an unquestionable reality. The hostility of inanimate nature to Man is brought home remorselessly in the setting of the least habitable region on Earth, as foreign to us as another planet. Altogether, science fiction at its best.

BROTHER BEAR
by Guy Richards
(Michael Joseph)

The jacket warns us that this is a Satirical Novel. But you can wipe that silly grin off your face: this is not funny.

What would happen if one night a totally unexpected invasion force slipped in and occupied lower Manhattan Island without firing a shot or making a threatening gesture? What would the army do? That's right: not a thing. Not till the brass decided if anything more was going to happen, whether the nation was at war and with whom, and what to do about the situation without obliterating New York, which after all was still running as usual.

The invaders' government disowned them as bandits when informed...but that didn't induce them to back down...their leader acted as he knew what he was up to, but what? Well, see what he wants: or what he'll take to go away.

What the General does want is not actually unpredictable, but it's surprising enough. Logical, but you don't quite expect logic applied to international hostility. In this book you'll get some food for thought, a change from the usual neurotic approach. Well worth reading.

NEW WORLDS No. 63 - September 1957

Mission One Hundred - Kenneth Bulmer
Sister Under the Skin - Bertram Chandler
Made on Mars - E. R. James
The Watcher on Sargan IV - Peter Hawkins
The Uninhibited (part 2) - Dan Morgan
Power in the Sky (article) - Kenneth Johns

NEW WORLDS No. 64 - October 1957

The Menace from Earth - Robert A. Heinlein
A Sudden Darkness - D. M. Parks
Sense of Wonder - Bertram Chandler
Mate in One - Lan Wright
The Uninhibited — conclusion
The Solar Atmosphere (article) - K. Johns

SCIENCE FANTASY No. 25

Reason for Living - Kenneth Bulmer
How to Win Friends - Bertram Chandler
Solid Beat - John Kippax
Straight from the Horse's Mouth — John Boland
Bored to Death - John Brody
Comeback - Robert Presslie
Hidden Talent - Robert Silverberg

1957 WORLD CONVENTION

It was hoped to present a report on the Convention in this issue, but not enough information has come to hand. We can say that over 250 attended (including some 60 Americans and a number of Continental delegates); John W. Campbell was Guest of Honor, and the event came almost on the twentieth anniversary of his editorship.

THE DEEP RANGE
by Arthur C. Clarke
(Frederick Muller) *

How does Clarke do it? Here is still another novel with defects that would kill it in the hands of any other man. It has almost no plot, and what plot there is is not rich in incident: a cashiered spaceman is retrained to be a submarine warden, has a bad relapse, hunts a giant squid, rises in the ranks, hunts a sea serpent, makes a dramatic rescue, defends his service during a political crisis, sees his son leave for space. These incidents are connected only by the thinnest of threads, plus the fact that the same man is head actor in each. The reader can't even be sure of that for about the first quarter of the novel, because the author flips the point of view back and forth among a number of other characters like the veriest tyro.

And yet somehow Clarke gets away with it. His unhurriable journalistic prose reports everything with the circumstantiality of real events. His people have the stiffest set of upper lips since H. G. Wells, and yet when they do feel emotions the emotions are genuine and about matters of human importance. And the color is gorgeous — Clarke has made the undersea world his own, and everything in it is vividly set before the reader.

The only comparable stories are the two short novels about the Submarine Products Corporation by Norman L. Knight ("Frontier of the Unknown" and "Crisis in Utopia"), which shared not only the subject but about the same set of both virtues and defects. On balance I think Clarke comes off better — his work is both a little more vivid, and a good deal more deeply felt than Knight's.

Buy the book: you will not be bowled over by it, but I think you'll find it very solid and satisfying.

* Reviewed by James Blish. From Science Fiction Times (USA) by courtesy of James V. Taurasi.

on the SCREEN

The highest price that I have ever heard of for a scientifilm property — $105,000 from MGM — has gone to old time scientifictionist Christopher Samuel Youd, now better known as John Christopher, for *No Blade of Grass*, originally "The Death of Grass". And to think how I used to hate to mow lawns as a kid: I often wished every blade of grass would drop dead. At 50¢ a lawn, 30 years later I still wouldn't be approaching that approximately 40,000 pounds (though the accumulated grass cut might have weighed that much!)

Having paid so much for the original, we believe MGM will make a first class production of it.

Produced at a cost of $200,000, *Curse of Frankenstein* is breaking backs-office records, and a $3-million gross is predicted — despite cool reception by SF fans as no improvement on Boris Karloff's version made a quarter of a century ago — indeed, not a patch on it. In the meantime the screen's seen *The Bride*, *Son*, *Ghost* and *House of Frankenstein* — money-makers all — together with *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* and an Abbot & Costello farcical encounter with the world's most famous monster. And now word comes that there's to be a *Frankenstein's Castle*, and, maybe, *Frankenstein from Space*.

Sam Kurtzman says in a letter to *Daily Variety*: "I'm having last Wednesday's issue encased between two sheets of plate glass, surrounded by transparent plastic and welded within a pressurized steel cylinder. I want my children's children to know that in 1957 a motion picture was named *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. Anxiously awaiting the sequel — *I Was a Baby Sitter for Dracula's Daughter From Outer Space*." Anxious reader may see such a title sooner than he thinks, considering actual plots are afoot to produce *Confessions of a Teenage Vampire*, *Dracula's Blood*, and *I was a Teenage Frankenstein*.

I Was a Teenage Werewolf is actually scientifictional rather than supernatural, based on scientific, or pseudoscientific, or celluloid-scientific theory. And it's almost first-rate, flawed by a mad scientist who is *too* mad. Everyone and everything around him is realistic enough, but he pollutes the picture like ham at a kosher picnic.

There's a disturbed teenager who's so often in hot water he doesn't know if he's a lad or a lobster, and finally he's persuaded to get psychiatric treatment from — yes, the mad doctor. The analyst has the theory that man's only salvation is a return to the not-so-noble savage: he slips the poor mixed-up guinea pig the regression cure and before long he's baring his fangs.

Grave Robbers from Outer Space is actually not too awful, especially if you've never seen a picture before and are under 13 years of age. I saw this picture so long ago, that now I'm getting around to reviewing it I was rather hoping I might mercifully have forgotten all about it. I religiously see *every* film labelled SF, and sometimes feel that I am in domains man was meant to leave alone: but if someone didn't do it, think of all the cinemabominations you and you and you would suffer through.

There's a man around here named Jerome King Criswell, self-styled Twentieth Century "seer" or profit: purveyor of pablum prophecies, idiotic ideologies and maudlin myths of cretinous calibre. Phoney as a four pound note, this immaculately groomed creature is more frightening to me on TV than Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Peter Lorre and the two Lon Chaneys lumped together. Now this Thing From the Tele-Tube is loose on film. He introduces and narrates *Grave Robbers From Outer Space*. Merciful oblivion has wiped from my memory what his message was, but it was probably to the effect that "such things can be" or "what you are about to see is about to happen". But enough prolog, and to uncover the plot of this ghoulish ghoulash of deep significance.

The late Bela Lugosi stands graveside, in a scene from some predeath picture. This is the extent of his ghost appearance, the rest of the time a double does his work, consisting of coming and going (but never getting anywhere) in the graveyard. Maila Nurmi (a wasp-waisted phenomenon known chiefly to Southern California videoglers) also goes for nocturnal strolls among the tombstones under the name Vampira. Tor Johnson also gets into the act, and so far the film is a poor man's Dracula. Suddenly it all goes Space Patrol! A flying saucer (rented from Woolworth's as the production budget did not permit outright purchase) lands nearby, and a scanty-clad (oh, and a bra too) space siren with raygun pops out. But when the Chief of the expedition walks thru on the thescreen, I thought, "S'funny, I didn't know this was a fairy story!" At that it was a novelty, instead of the usual whooshing meteors outside in airless space, to have the swishing taking place inside.

The point of the plot has something to do with the invaders using zombies to force the earth people not to blow up the planet. If you enjoy grave pictures you'll dig this one.

The Land Unknown ... a prehistoric plot, and I mean that. Old Mighty Mouth the blabbersaurus didn't scare me a bit because *I* could tell there was a man in that suit. The plesiosaurus wasn't much more convincing. The pterodactyl was the only one I liked, and he generally jetted by too fast to get a good

look at him, which was perhaps for the good. I really hated this picture. Big surprise, though — two, in fact: first, the blownup iguanas or whatever weren't from One Million B.C. footage; second, no big volcano blew up in the end doing away with the whole mess. Dammit, now I've depressed myself. The dismal thought occurs that the way is open for a sequel.

America's capital suffers from claustrophobia in The Giant Claw. It's Roc around the Clock as a Brobdignagian avian from Outer Space (where else?) flaps all over the place. Jeff Morrow defeats the macrobat.

Cyclops clops along with one eye (ha, I made a funny) on the horror box-office. Laid in a remote, but not enough, area of Mexico, this minor offering (and even minors may object) concerns itself if not the audience with a gal looking for her fiance. The lost world, junior grade, that is found has Mutating Radioactive Rays, no less, causing an accelerated growth rate in the surrounding animal life. The missing man has metamorphosed into a poor man's amazing colossal man. O. Henry finish: monster does not marry heroine.

From Hell It Came has the son of a deceased chieftain on a not very pacific isle given the decessive treatment himself after getting too friendly with some American do-gooders who have come to give a medicative hand to islanders suffering from radiation-burns. It's difficult not to give a wooden performance if you return from the grave as a not very animated tree, so the resulting monster may be forgiven his pedestrian pace. I won't reveal whether his bark is worse than his bite, leaving you this thrill of discovery.

Daughter of Dr. Jekyll ... Jekylline visits the family manse, where the kindly guardian aims at driving her out of her mind so he can cash in on the estate left by her unlamented dad.

★ In France, Jules Verne's "Face au Drapeau" has been filmed as Invention of Destruction.

— FORREST J. ACKERMAN

Forrest was interviewed on television recently and had the opportunity of getting the record straight on the usual points for Southern Californian viewers. Asked, inevitably, what about flying saucers? he suggested that "Most of the people who see flying saucers are already in their cups. On the origin of SF, "The first science fiction author — a caveman who carved on the wall an outline of something he called a wheel, or spun a story about a do-it-yourself fire kit."

SPACE TRAVEL in fact and fiction*

by ARTHUR C. CLARKE

There are, it seems to me, two obvious ways of tackling the subject which the title of this paper is so careful not to specify too exactly. The first might be called the "Ph.D. or Bust" method. It would involve the reading of some hundreds of books and thousands of short stories, and a prolonged incarceration under the dome of the British Museum Reading Room. At the end of a few years' labor the patient researcher might, if still sane, be able to produce a comprehensive analysis of the interplanetary story since Lucian of Samosata — little knowing what he'd started — first tried his hand at this theme about A.D. 160.

The second approach is the one I have adopted. It relies simply on the fading memories of a youth which, in retrospect, seems to have been largely misspent in the persuit and avid consumption of American SF magazines, on offensive sweeps through my friends' libraries, and on frequent dips into two quite essential books — J.O.Bailey's "Pilgrims Through Space and Time" and Marjory Nicolson's "Voyages to the Moon" — my debts to which I acknowledge herewith.

All I have attempted to do, therefore, is to pick out those ideas and themes in the interplanetary story which have struck my fancy or which seem to me relevant to our present conceptions of astronautics. I have also concerned myself primarily with the technical content of these tales: their literary merits, such as they are, have not been considered here. This means that I will say practically nothing about some of the finest of all interplanetary romances — such as Stapledon's "Last and First Men", or Lewis' "Out of the Silent Planet", which are concerned with social or philosophical rather than technical ideas, but I will deal largely with stories at a far lower literary stratum, such as Verne's "From the Earth to the Moon".

The first problem encountered in this survey is that of classification. My interest now being mainly concerned with techniques, I could not use the simple and obvious historical approach and discuss stories of space travel in their historical sequence. Instead, I have divided them into two main groups which for convenience may be labelled "mechanistic" and "non-mechanistic".

In stories of the first class, some engine or technical device, more or less plausible according to the science of the time,

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* From the Journal of the British Interplanetary Society, by courtesy of the Society.

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is used to bridge space. The second class contains all those stories in which dreams, supernatural intervention, psychic forces or the like are invoked. This includes most of the very earliest works, but the division cuts across any historical sequence since some of the best stories of our own era belong to this category.

SUPERNATURAL VOYAGES

It is somewhat curious that the first truly scientific moon-voyage invoked supernatural forces. This was the "Somnium" (1643) written by no less a man than Kepler, to whom Astronomy and hence Astronautics owe almost as much as to Newton himself. To the modern mind, Kepler presents something of a paradox. The discoverer of the laws governing the motion of planets — and therefore of spaceships — he was both a scientist and a mystic. His background may be judged by the fact that his mother barely escaped execution for sorcery.

In the "Somnium", which was not published until after his death, Kepler employed demons to carry his hero to the moon, but he was careful to make the point that as one leaves the Earth the air becomes rarified and breathing can only be carried out by "sponges moistened and applied to the nostrils." Even more significant is Kepler's remark that as the voyage progressed it would no longer be necessary to use any force for propulsion. Thus three hundred years ago, before the discovery of the law of gravitation, Kepler had foreseen two of the most important features of space flight. His description of the Moon, based on the new knowledge revealed by the telescope, was also as accurate as possible, though he assumed the existence of air, water and life. It is interesting to note that the "Somnium" influenced Wells, who mentions its ideas in "The First Men in the Moon".

At the end of Kepler's book, it is revealed that the whole adventure is a dream — an annoying device which has been used all too often in imaginative literature. Equally common is the idea that in some trance-like state one's mind, or even one's body, could travel across space to other worlds, not limited, perhaps, by the miserable speed at which light is forced to crawl along. This device was used in Stapledon's "Star Maker" (1937), Lewis' "Perelandra" (1944), and in David Lindsay's remarkable but little-known work "A Voyage to Arcturus" (1920). And descending a few orders of magnitude in the literary scale, it was also employed by Edgar Rice Burroughs to transport John Carter to the blood-stained little planet into whose population he was to make such serious inroads. ("A Princess of Mars" - 1917)

Before the age of science, there was good reason to employ such paraphysical means of conveyance, because they seemed as plausible as any other in times when an air-borne broomstick would have excited less surprise than a balloon drifting across the sky. On the other hand, when a modern writer uses such methods it must not be imagined that he is too lazy to think of anything better: he may have good reasons for his choice. There is, indeed, little alternative if one wants to write a story of cosmic scope, yet assumes that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded. Some of the most thoughtful of recent authors — such as Jack Williamson, in his novel "The Humanoids" (1953) — have suggested that in the long run purely mechanical solutions to the problem of space flight will be superseded by paraphysical ones. How far one is prepared to grant this possibility depends on one's assessment of Rhine's work. It will certainly be an irony of fate if the giant spaceships of the next millenia belong to the childhood of the Universe — if, after all, Kepler has the last laugh.

USE OF NATURAL AGENCIES

In the earliest times, writers who wished their stories to have a certain plausibility, or who did not approve of trafficking with supernatural powers — however carefully one read the contract in such cases there always seemed to be some unsuspected penalty clause — such writers often used natural agencies to convey their heroes to the moon. (It was, of course, almost always the Moon. We tend to forget that the discovery that the other planets were actually worlds, and not mere points of light on the celestial sphere, is relatively recent. It was not known, for example, to Shakespeare, although it had been guessed by some of the Greeks.)

Natural forces were invoked in the earliest of all stories of space travel, the misleadingly titled "True History", written by Lucian of Samosata about A.D. 160. In this book the hero's ship, cruising in the dangerous and unexplored region beyond the Pillars of Hercules, was caught in a whirlwind and deposited on the Moon. It is true that nobody ever has much good to say of the weather round the Bay of Biscay, but this must have been a rather rougher passage than usual.

It is an astonishing fact that, though Lucian wrote two stories on this theme (his second, "Icaromenippus", we shall come across later), no one bothered to imitate him for 1,500 years. Though it is, I suppose, no more astonishing than the fact that for even longer men possessed ships yet never sailed them westwards across the Atlantic. Perhaps Lucian's first story scared them back into the Mediterranean. At any rate, it was not until after the death of Kepler and the appearance of the "Somnium" that the first English story of a Lunar trip appeared — Bishop Godwin's "Man in the Moone" (1638). Godwin's hero, Domingo Gonsales, flew to the Moon on a flimsy raft towed by trained swans. Gonsales had no intention of travelling to the Moon, but accidents will happen even in the best circles, and when he made an emergency takeoff to escape from brigands he did not realise that his swans were in the habit of hibernating on our satellite.

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WORLD OF CHANCE
by Philip K. Dick
(Science Fiction Book Club)

This book is so crowded with incident and detail that it is difficult to describe. Set in a complex future world whose unfamiliar laws, customs and institutions are part of the story as much as the fortunes of the characters; with several concurrent sets of ideas being developed simultaneously; with savage satirical extrapolation of some present trends and satire on credulity in general fitted smoothly into the framework of a gripping, suspenseful novel.

This kind of complication is inevitably compared in science fiction with its extreme and original exponent, A. E. van Vogt. But this is not the same kitchen, though Dick likewise uses the kitchen sink technique. It was because he didn't know any better that van Vogt wrote in everything that came into his head, whether it had anything to do with the story or not. Dick, a successful short story writer writing his first novel, does something different. He keeps up the pace by bringing into the plot a number of sub-plots that contribute to the situation. Some of the minor details given space — the revival in astrology, good luck charms and so on, for instance — are little more than padding, but they do fit the background.

Economically, this world is a nightmare of gigantic organisations ("Hills") in which most people are serfs, highly or lowly placed. Politically, what power the Hills leave possible is concentrated in a dictator whose election and dismissal is completely random, in a lottery that at irregular intervals elevates someone — *anyone on Earth* — to the post of Quizmaster (for the system is based on the radio giveaway show.)

As far as the book has one main character, he is Ted Benteley, freed after years of trying to escape through a depression in his Hill. He joins the retinue of the Quizmaster, a hearty beer-and-sandwiches-for-the-voters demagogue named Verrick, at just the wrong time: for a new Quizmaster is already named and he finds himself a vassal of an ex-dictator instead.

The new Quizmaster, Leon Cartwright, is the leader of a cult whose prophet vanished looking for an alleged habitable planet out beyond Pluto, and otherwise a mystery. His problem is to survive, for there is a safeguard against oppression in the system: one man at a time can be chosen to represent all citizens dissatisfied with the regime as a legal assassin. Benteley finds himself involved as a Verrick minion in a scheme to abuse the practice, which is where the action really begins.

Tautly written, convincing because true to its premises, "World of Chance" is outstanding science fiction, one of the best of the SFBC choices.

ACE BOOKS

The Ace Double books continue. In their still unique back-to-back format the series presents a varied diet of science fiction. A few of the novels have been pretty bad, but not always in the same fashion, and for a frankly popular venture the record is good.

The reason why Ace can turn out a book a month, most of them double volumes, without losing the thread altogether and sliding off into something like — well, what has happened in all the other cases of a pocket-book publisher going to town on popular science fiction — is easy. They have an editor (Don Wollheim) who knows SF intimately. The general intention of the series is right.

Ian Wright's "Who Speaks of Conquest?" from last year's *New Worlds* is teamed with a selection of shorts titled "The Earth in Peril": Hamilton's "The Plant Revolt", the Good Old Days at their most no-good; Leinster's interesting "Things Pass By", others by van Vogt, Kornbluth, Wells and Bryce Walton.

Eric Frank Russell's "Three to Conquer" from *Astounding*, an invasion novel in his own tradition, comes with "Doomsday Eve" by Robert Moore Williams, an odd superhuman and paraphysical story.

Two *Astounding* serials, both collaborations, are "Gunner Cade" by Cyril Judd (i.e. Kornbluth and Merrill), that indecipherable mystery that was the first serial in the British edition in eleven years...and "Crisis in 2140" by Piper and McGuire, which is a very good sociological novel: it ran as "Null-ABC" if you remember, telling of a world not too remote in view of current educational trends — a complex technology with a small minority of educated people to keep it going, a persecuted minority at the mercy of the illiterate masses who thanks to democracy hold all the authority.

James White's "The Secret Visitors" is his "Tourist Planet" from *New Worlds*, and with it is an original, "Master of Life and Death" by Robert Silverberg. The theme of this is the population problem already visible ahead of us with expansion to the limit of the food supply. Interesting.

"Earth Satellites and the Race for Space Superiority", by G. Harry Stine (who is also Lee Correy) is an excellent popular factual book recommended to give in answer to all those queries you'll be getting, despite the nationalistic attitude reflected in the second half of the title. Outlines a probable U.S. program on present (a few months ago) data, without too much beating about the bush with theory: a book about satellites, not rockets and space flight in general.

Jules Verne's "Off on a Comet" is the second Verne novel Ace have presented. Revised with a modern eye (always a good idea, the English versions of Verne being badly out of date), this odd interplanetary yarn reads well and its reappearance is welcome.

SPACE TRAVEL IN FACT AND FICTION
(continued from p. 6)

Gonzales' journey lasted twelve days, and he appears to have had no difficulty with respiration on the way. He did, however, notice the disappearance of weight, though this happened when he was still quite close to Earth. Such a view of the short-range nature of gravity, one might point out, is still quite common even among educated laymen today.

The most ingenious use of natural forces was, I think, that employed by Cyrano de Bergerac in his "Voyages to the Moon and Sun" (1656). In the first of his several interplanetary expeditions, the motive power was provided by vials of dew attached round his waist, for Cyrano very logically argued that as the Sun sucked up the dew in the morning, it would carry him up with it. In other voyages, to which we will refer later, Cyrano used more scientific means and, quite accidentally, made some remarkably accurate predictions.

The last story which I shall mention in this group is Verne's "Hector Servadac"(1877) in which a comet grazes the Earth, scoops up Hector and his servant, and takes them on a trip around the Solar System. As they explore the comet they come across bits of the Earth acquired in the collision, some of them still inhabited. A fragment of the Rock of Gibraltar is discovered, occupied by two Englishmen playing Chess and, according to Verne, unaware of their predicament. I doubt this: it seems much more likely that they were perfectly well aware that they were on a comet but had come to a crucial point in the game and refused to be distracted by trivialities.

SUBTLE ENGINES

So much for pure fancy. With the development of the scientific method in the 17th and 18th Centuries, and the fuller understanding of what interplanetary travel really implied, authors went to greater and greater efforts to give their stories some basis of plausibility, and as a result the first primitive spaceships began to appear in the literature. They were, naturally, not much like the ships of today's fiction; but we had better not be too supercilious, for some of our own conceptions may seem almost as quaint a century or so from now.

(to be continued)

Books at a Glance

A VOYAGE FROM UTOPIA by John Francis Bray ed. M. F. Lloyd-Prichard Front. (portraits) Lawrence & Wishart 180 pp	Utopian traveller's report on early 19th century Europe (particularly England) and America. The Manners, Customs and Condition of the benighted natives.	Bray, an early socialist, wrote this about 1841. It has not been published before, and the message is no longer revolutionary. Good satire.
MR. ADAM by Pat Frank Panther Bks. (paper) 192 pp	1947 novel of all but one man sterilised by atomic accident. His career as the most important man alive, treated satirically.	Avoids the obvious pitfalls of the theme skilfully and provides amusing reading. Humor at the expense of politicians and brass hats.
MARY'S COUNTRY by Harold Mead Michael Joseph 288 pp	Vague events in some indefinite country, presumeably in the future. Group of ruling class children survive germ warfare, and left to their own devices display sadistic orientation.	Incoherent. In so far as it makes any sense at all, most implausible. These things are sent to try us.
THUNDER AND ROSES by Theodore Sturgeon Michael Joseph 255 pp	Misleadingly advertised as a novel, this is a collection of eight unrelated short stories: "'And My Fear is Great"; "Bulkhead"; "The Hurkle is a Happy Beast"; "Meshu's Jet"; "Minority Report"; "Thunder and Roses"; "Tiny and the Monster"; "A Way Home".	An uneven selection, not all science fiction. Worth buying for the title story alone, and probably two or three others.