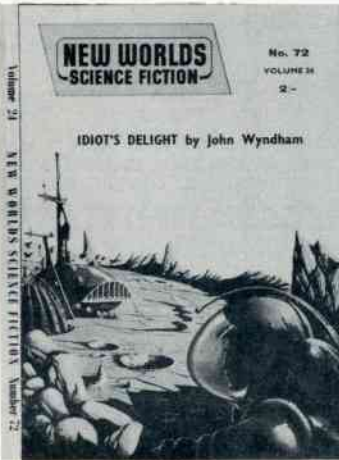


# SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

No. 22

May - June 1958



Covers for the current issues of the three Nova magazines, Brian Lewis' striking paintings typifying the current artistic trend.

Jacket for "Lockende Zukunft", German SF anthology edited by H. Bings, is more traditional.



PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY by  
G. B. Stone - Box 4440, G. P. O.,  
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia  
12 issues 7/6d.

AMERICAN Subscriptions: C. Randall Skinner - 43 Palmer Street, St. Augustine, Fla.  
12 issues \$1.00  
EUROPEAN Subscriptions: Erwin Scudla - Wien XVII/107, Rützergasse 30/1, AUSTRIA  
12 issues B. Sch. 30  
NEW ZEALAND Subscriptions: Roger Horrocks - 18 Hazelmere Road, Mount Albert,  
12 issues 6/- Stg. Auckland SW 1

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# BOOKS

THE CLOCK OF TIME

by Jack Finney  
(Eyre & Spottiswoode)

## DOUBLE STAR

by Robert Heinlein  
(Michael Joseph)

Heinlein's new novel — his first for adults since "The Puppet Masters" — is one of his finest productions to date. Rather weak on story, perhaps, but it contains some of the most superb characterisation and just plain good writing that has ever been produced in our field.

When a down-on-his-luck ham actor, The Great Lorenzo, is hired to impersonate a missing statesman at an important ceremony, he is caught up in plot ramifications. For political reasons, Bonforte must be present to be adopted into the Martian "nest", but his enemies have kidnapped him, knowing that his failure to appear for the honor will, according to the Martian code of ethics, be an insult demanding interplanetary war. Lorenzo puts on a good show, but discovers he must keep it up — for Bonforte is released, physically and mentally injured, and the impersonation must continue until the damage can be repaired.

The impersonation lasts much longer than Lorenzo expected.

The story is not the important point. It is the character of Lorenzo, the ego-inflated actor, who slowly changes as he is brought into contact with Bonforte's ideals, and with political and economic conditions which had previously bored him. Essentially a study in character, you watch his personality develop, his scope widen, his character mature — and it's all done through his own words.

It is sheer technical wizardry, and I have never seen anything like it before in science fiction. There have been memorable characters before — Giles Habibula, Hawk Carse, Northwest Smith, Adam Link, Captain Nemo — but they were essentially exaggerations, outstanding because they were so different, so original, so definite. Lorenzo is an outstanding character because he is not a caricature with sharply defined and memorable mannerisms. He is a mediocrity to all outward appearances; his personality is given through subtle, delicate shadings, rather than bold and heavy strokes. And the development of his character is so gradual that you cannot mark its turning point, and so inevitable, so real.

Story-wise, "Double Star" is minor in comparison with earlier Heinlein novels; but for subtle writing, characterisation and delicate balance it is the finest novel he has ever written.

The oldmaster's talents are not waning, but improving. He still retains his crown as the finest science fiction writer alive, to which "Double Star" adds an extra lustre.

LIN CARTER

## Twelve short stories:

Such Interesting Neighbours; The Third Level; I'm Scared; Cousin Len's Wonderful Adjective Cellar; Of Missing Persons; Something in a Cloud; There is a Tide...; Behind the News; Quit Zoomin' Those Hands Through the Air; A Dash of Spring; Second Chance; Contents of the Dead Man's Pocket.

Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd. have made a workmanlike job of the British edition of this collection of twelve stories by Jack Finney, which saw publication in the USA last year under the title "The Third Level". The volume is well printed, sturdily bound, and clothed in a modernistic jacket. It will sit handsomely on your library shelves.

For the newcomer to science fiction, the contents will be interesting, thought provoking and entertaining. Jack Finney can put words together nimbly, and although his canvases are not elaborate, they are well-colored. His brushwork is neat.

Most of the stories deal with time-travel (hence the general title). In "Such Interesting Neighbours", for example, we meet the couple next door who are obviously visitors — refugees? — from the future, learning not to walk into doors in the expectation that they will automatically open before them; in "The Third Level", characters buy up old style currency to grub-stake themselves in the past; and so on.

For the new reader, the what-would-happen-if-I-went-back-and-murdered-my-grandfather? puzzles are quite novel, and make interesting reading. Jack Finney handles some of the standard time-travel situations competently enough for a newcomer to cut his time-travel teeth on.

But for those who read their first time-travel tale twenty or more years ago (as this reviewer did) the Finney stories will hold less attraction. He does not ring any clever changes on the standard situations: there is no "Time Wants a Skeleton", "As Never Was" or "By His Bootstraps" in this collection.

But if for one generation there were Verne and Wells; for another E. E. Smith and John W. Campbell; for a third, Asimov and Heinlein; then perhaps for the current crop of fourteen-year-old fans the Finney tales are sufficient.

One drawback about this book (a slip from an old-established firm like this) is the collection of a number of first-person narratives, eight out of the twelve, with several different "I's" appearing within a few pages of one another. The viewpoint of the story-teller changes abruptly from that of a young (and fairly dull) husband in San Rafael, Cal., to that of an apartment dwelling stamp collector who haunts Grand Central Station,

to that of a grey-haired man of sixty-six — all of whom are "I" to the reader. These sudden changes in centrality are, to say the least, confusing.

As a writer, Mr. Finney has a curious breathless style, as though his stories were written in his lunch-time and he had to hurry on and finish before the stenographer came back and claimed the office typewriter. Whether it was this at times dreamlike quality, or the lack of reasonable scientific hypotheses about time-travel, I had the feeling that I was reading fantasy rather than science fiction.

Nevertheless, "The Clock of Time" made time travel happen, for me. After reading Finney's collection, I found myself back in Sylvania, sixteen years old, reading Rocklynne's "Time Wants a Skeleton", and then back in King's Cross, during World War II, reading Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps". And wondering what would happen if I did go back and bump off my grandfather...

— V. M.

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

by C. M. Kornbluth  
(S. F. Book Club)

There's been nothing like this novel in our field since Heinlein wrote "Sixth Column". It is a taut, realistic, dazzling picture of what happens when America is totally defeated by Russian and Chinese forces on April 17, 1965. The story is told through the eyes of Billy Justin, thirty-seven, ex freelance commercial artist, Korean veteran, now running a milk farm in upstate New York; the story is told from the viewpoint of the small town of Norton. Within this microcosm the great tragedy is enacted and we see how the whole country is affected, by the changes and innovations brought upon life in Norton.

Written with the careful attention to dialog, detail and development that we have come to expect from Kornbluth, the story moves quickly, the characters are sharp and rounded, the impact and emotional values come across with clearness and true life fidelity. As usual in a Kornbluth story, the narrative flow is brisk and well controlled, the prose rich and clean.

A strong, balanced, intensely believable novel, difficult to put down. Not in the same class as "The Space Merchants" or "Gladiator at Law", it is still better than "Gunner Cade" and "Takeoff".

— LIN CARTER

You will have a long green beard before you buy another reprint SF novel as skillful as this one, I suspect. I say this as much in sorrow as in approbation, for "Christmas Eve" makes me wonder what next year's Kornbluth novel will have to offer.

(Contd. p. 5)

## on the SCREEN

Mary Shelley never had it so bad. I hope there's never another picture like I was a Teenage Frankenstein. It takes place in America today, where a descendant of Victor Frankenstein, engrossed in the same line of work, is conveniently supplied a fresh corps by a head-on collision of cars outside his place. Dr. Frankenstein and his assistant, whom he has Under His Power, work over the mutilated not-yet-stiff in their basement laboratory-morgue, where a crackling Jacob's ladder runs up the electricity bill 24 hours a day, not to mention the freezing equipment to keep the whole place chilly. Now all that really happens is that this crash victim has a leg and hand replaced (shades of Orlac) and is brought back to life with a battered face that looks as if a 5-year-old child modeled it out of putty, and if the truth were known a 5-year-old child probably did, give or take a year. For no clear reason he now has to be taught to talk all over and acts like a monster.

Nevil Shute's "On the Beach", John Wyndham's "The Midwich Cuckoos" (retitled "Village of the Damned" so far), Charles Eric Maine's "High Vacuum" and Frank Herbert's "21st Century Sub" (formerly "Under Pressure") are announced. Other titles proposed or scheduled include "Lost Missile", "Satellite Mark V", "War of the Satellites", and even "My Dog Satellite"; also "Queen of the Universe", "The Space Children" and "The Cosmic Man"; in the other direction, "The Volcano Monsters", "The Amazing Sea Giant" and "Attack of the Giant Leeches".

Jerome Bixby, considerably experienced in the SF field as editor and author of some sixty stories, is responsible for the script of "Lost Missile", as well as "The Vampire from Space" and "The Curse of the Faceless Man".

Frank Quattrocchi has sold two scripts — one to Jewell Productions about a whole island of giants, one to Alex Gordon about a man who gets sliced up into negative and positive light patterns.

From what I've seen of the script by Thad Swift and Larry Maddock, Sinvava is a hilarious scientific farce, ribbing Zientifilms (grade Z scientifilms) in the manner of the old Hope-Crosby Road pictures.

Jules Verne's "From the Earth to the Moon" is getting major treatment in Mexico with George Sanders and Joseph Cotton in the two leading roles. In Rome, by the way, a pic called Mara is being made in English, with Rosanna Podesta, Bruce Cabot and Mara Lane.

— FORREST J. ACKERMAN

# SPACE TRAVEL in fact and fiction \*

Arthur C. Clarke

## CONCLUSION

It is generally supposed that the idea of the space station was first put forward by von Pirquet, Noordung and others in the 1920's. But a story on the subject was published as long ago as 1869, Edward Everett Hale's "The Brick Moon". In this story a group of men decided that it would be of great assistance to navigation if the Earth had a second moon, so they decided to construct one. (A surprisingly modern idea.)

The artificial moon was to be projected upwards by being released at the required speed from the rim of an enormous rotating wheel, and one would very much like to have the engineering details of this remarkable device!

I suppose that one reason why the space station has been neglected is that it is such a nuisance to have to stop and build one, and most writers are in a hurry to get on to the planets. But the space station has a good many possibilities to be exploited. Hal Clement wrote an interesting story called "Fire-Proof" around the idea that it would be impossible to have a freely burning flame in a space station, with no convection to take away the products of combustion. This fact was later demonstrated experimentally by the German physicist Ramsauer by the simple device of photographing a candle in a freely falling chamber.

I have now come to the point where the road branches into countless by-ways, all so tempting that I dare not venture down any of them for more than a few paces. It would be entertaining to consider the secondary features of the space travel story: to analyse, for example, the types of social system encountered on other worlds, the difficulties of communication (so often conveniently overcome by telepathy) and, above all, the reactions of extraterrestrial beings to their unexpected visitors. It is, regrettably, true to say that these reactions are usually hostile — or else overbearingly supercilious. The behaviour of the terrestrials themselves often leaves much to be desired, for in next to no time they usually get mixed up in local politics of an all-too-familiar type.

In a well-known article, the Russian *Literaturnaya Gazeta* once launched a salvo at American science fiction magazines. These deplorable publications, it was pointed out, almost invariably assumed that civilisations on other worlds would be capitalistic and that Big Business would still reign supreme when we reached the stars. If one discounts the somewhat intemperate language in which the attack was couched, one must admit a good deal of truth in the charge. There are few things indeed in human society which are immutably fixed, and it would certainly be strange if the dinosaurs of the Victorian economic jungle survived into the age of interplanetary travel. I feel fairly certain that Big Business will have some unpleasant shocks if it expects to make much money out of astronautics, and though the social systems of other worlds may not be capitalistic

it seems equally improbable that they will be run on strictly Marxist lines.

I would like to end this survey of certain aspects of the interplanetary story by considering a point of particular interest. What, we may ask, will happen to these tales when space travel actually begins?

A test case has already arisen in connection with atomic power. Up to 1945 fiction was still being published about the first release of nuclear energy: though it is no longer possible to write stories with this particular theme, nuclear energy is still a familiar subject in science fiction. Similarly, when space travel is achieved, the frontier will merely shift outwards, and I think we can rely on the ingenuity of the authors to keep always a few jumps ahead of history. And how much more material they will have on which to base their tales! It should never be forgotten that without some foundation of reality, science fiction would be impossible, and exact knowledge is the friend, not the enemy, of fancy and imagination. It was only possible to write stories about the Martians when science had discovered that a certain moving point of light was a world. By the time science has proved or disproved the existence of the Martians, it will have provided hundreds of other interesting and less accessible worlds for the authors to get busy with.

So perhaps the interplanetary story will never lose its appeal, even if a time should come at last when all the cosmos has been explored and there are no more universes to beckon men outwards across infinity. If our descendants in that age are remotely human, and still indulge in art and science and similar nursery games, I think that they will not altogether abandon the theme of interplanetary flight — though their approach to it will be very different from ours.

To us, the interplanetary story provides a glimpse of the wonders whose dawn we shall see, but of whose full glory we can only guess. To them, on the other hand, it will be something achieved, a thing completed and done countless eons ago. They may sometimes look back, perhaps a little wistfully, to the splendid, dangerous ages when the frontiers were being driven outwards across space, when no one knew what marvel or what terror the next returning ship might bring — when, for good or evil, the barriers set between the peoples of the universe were irrevocably breached. With all things achieved, all knowledge safely harvested, what more, indeed, will there be for them to do, as the lights of the last stars sink slowly towards evening, but to go back into history and relive again the great adventures of their remote and legendary past?

Yet I think we have the better bargain: for all these things are still ahead of us.

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

# The British Interplanetary Society

1933 - 1958

Secretarial Address: 12, BESSBOROUGH GARDENS, LONDON, S.W.1

THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY was founded in 1933 to promote the development of interplanetary exploration and communication by the study of rocket engineering, astronomy and other associated sciences; it now includes among its members many British and foreign workers prominent in these fields.

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Science Fiction News

No. 31 March/April

## TIGER! TIGER!

by Alfred Bester

(Sidgwick & Jackson, 12s. 6d. ; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

No. 32 May/June

## CHRISTMAS EVE

by C. M. Kornbluth

(Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d. ; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

No. 33 July/August

## ROBERT HEINLEIN OMNIBUS

(Sidgwick & Jackson, two volumes, 9s. 6d. each ; SFBC, 5s. 6d.)

Robert Heinlein has long been regarded as one of the outstanding writers of science fiction. This volume contains all the stories in Heinlein's "Future History" series, originally published in the two volumes *The Man Who Sold the Moon* and *The Green Hills of Earth*. "The name of Robert Heinlein is now recognised on both sides of the Atlantic as the hall mark of science fiction" —Leslie Flood in *New Worlds*.

## BOOKS

### CHRISTMAS EVE (Contd. from p. 3)

This one is not as good as Kornbluth could have made it, although it is far better than anybody else could have made it.

Admittedly I am carping, but that is part of the critic's function. The visible fact is that Kornbluth could have written this novel much better than he did write it, and his failure to do so is a cause for complaint. The book essentially is a study of a conquered America, in the very near future. It is realistic, fast-moving, tightly plotted — and scamped. The people in it are people who seem more real than those you will find in, say, Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here"; the details are better imagined

and worked through than Lewis'; it is better written than Lewis' book; and yet, and yet, it is only half as thorough — a thriller instead of an honest study, a melodrama instead of a full-scale novel. Kornbluth has points to make which would never have occurred to Lewis — yet he makes them only by halves: Lewis' half-baked ideas are better for being examined thoroughly than Kornbluth's philosophical points are after being touched upon and then glossed over. Lewis' characters are ciphers no matter how long Lewis labors over them, but Kornbluth's are half-realised only because, for some strange reason, he decided not to do the job all the way.

Buy the book, by all means: it is good. But Cyril — from you it's not good enough, not by miles.

— JAMES BLISH

## BOOKS

## THE TRANPOSED MAN

by Dwight V. Swain  
(Panther PB)

A wild and wacky saga of intrigue and adventure and things on a cosmic scale. Alan Lord, secret agent for the Society of Mechanists, is on Luna for a top-secret mission, for something or other. He gets all mixed up with granite faced, grim Security Chief Aniedo, a lady scientist he knew 'way back when, a mysterious chap named Zero who heads the Mechanists, and several other tense, taut, excited, sweat-beaded people — all of whom go garrumphing around in chase sequences and stuff. Exciting. It doesn't make much sense.

Alan has a handy gadget which enables him to get his mind into other people's bodies — a van Vogtian twist — and the story is told with a pseudo-Leigh Brackett style of gutsy narrative that soon palls. Also Mr. Swain crams his story full of invented words and fancy technicalese. Now I have nothing against this in general, in fact it's required for a good futuristic story, and is one of the strong points of Bester, Kornbluth and Heinlein — but in this story it seems every other word is invented. For instance, a brief sample: "I gulped a vidal, then ordered spiked loin of rossa, seared in lorsch, with doralines from Mars and a salad of Ionian tabbat stalks."

Enough of a good thing is often too much, and this story sometimes gets to sounding like a partly translated story by some Ganymedian grllsch-gatherer.

I think you can ignore "The Transposed Man".

— LIN CARTER

(This edition includes a short story, "The Predators" by E. C. Tubb. Its theme is the menace of hypnotic advertising, and it's worth reading for some very good points.

— G.S.)

## THE NAKED SUN

by Isaac Asimov  
(Michael Joseph)

A curiously flat, tasteless novel that attempts to mingle SF, a murder mystery, and a spy-suspense story into one. Elijah Baley (familiar to us from "The Caves of Steel") gets sent to the planet Solaria (sic) to solve a murder and, incidentally, do a little spying for the Earth government.

The gimmick is that Baley, like all Earthmen, has a neurotic fear of the open air, be-

## OBITUARY

## C. M. Kornbluth

(Levittown, New York, 21st March)

Cyril M. Kornbluth died suddenly of a heart attack recently, aged only 35. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Born in New York, he began writing fiction seriously as a youngster, making his first sale at fifteen. He wrote scores of science fiction stories in the early 'forties, writing for various magazines under numerous pseudonyms — Cecil Corwin, Walter C. Davies, Kenneth Falconer, S. D. Gottesman, Scott Mariner, etc, as well as being one of the writers contributing as Arthur Cooke, Paul D. Lavond and Ivar Towers. At this time he was also an active SF fan, one of the remarkable group of budding editors, agents, authors, publishers and critics, the New York Futurians.

Then he was out of the field for some years, serving with the U. S. Army in Europe (decorated after the Battle of the Bulge), later graduating from the University of Chicago and working as a press agency journalist. In the 'fifties he resumed writing science fiction, first collaboration with Judith Merril (as Cyril Judd) on the novels "Mars Child" and "Gunner Cade", and with Frederik Pohl on "The Space Merchants", "Search the Sky", "Gladiator at Law" and "Presidential Year".

Besides collaborations, he had also written "The Syndic", a striking novel not yet published in Britain; "Takeoff", serialised in *New Worlds* in 1954; "Christmas Eve", current SFBC choice; and a number of outstanding short stories, some of which are collected in "The Mindworm" and a somewhat different US selection, "The Explorers". His "The Marching Morons" is a minor classic, and others are memorable.

Kornbluth's untimely death, like that of Henry Kuttner a few weeks before, is a serious loss to science fiction. Though not a pioneer, he had already made his mark in the field.

ing used to the underground cities of Earth.

Add to the fact that the Solarians have a neurotic fear of personal contact and live out their lives in complete isolation from each other, and you can see how difficult Baley's task is.

Unfortunately, the mystery seems pretty obvious from the beginning and, as usual in these latter-day (or post-Foundation) Asimov novels, the background is pure cardboard, there is little or no extrapolation, and the story seems just dull.

— LIN CARTER

## BOOKS AT A GLANCE

<b>TIGER! TIGER!</b> by Alfred Bester Science Fiction Book Club 232 pp	Novel of revenge — and much more — in an interplanetary age of a nightmare culture moulded by teleportation. Tremendously powerful and convincing picture.	Our choice as best SF novel of 1956. Don't miss it this time.
<b>EARTHMAN, COME HOME</b> by James Blish Science Fiction Book Club 256 pp	Follows "They Shall Have Stars" historically. Parts appeared in magazines as "Okie", "Bindle-stiff", "Sargasso of Lost Cities" and "Earthman, Come Home". Age of interstellar-flying cities.	Rambling plot, but some excellent long-range speculation.
<b>IF I WERE YOU</b> by P. G. Wodehouse Herbert Jenkins 160 pp (1st published 1931)	An accidental identity-exchange (something to do with the Fourth Dimension) puts a Wodehousian upper-cruster in the body of a Hollywood screen brat.	Hardly SF, but it has as good a claim to consideration as time travel and "psionics". And it's good fun.
<b>THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS</b> by John Wyndham Michael Joseph 239 pp	Unseen aliens invade via artificial insemination or something like it of selected women.	Most revolting idea we can remember in SF. Otherwise the book is below Wyndham's usual fine standard.
<b>THE SMALL BACK ROOM</b> by Nigel Balchin Penguin PB 192 pp	Byways of weapons research during World War II, with a setup where office politics get in the way of winning the war.	Borderline SF when written, still worth reading.
<b>WASP</b> by Eric Frank Russell Dennis Dobson	Adventures of a lone secret operator in future interstellar war, posing as alien.	Routine spy thriller thinly disguised with a thoroughly unconvincing setting.

## SF. IN GERMANY

(from Julian Parr)

At present there is a real SF boom in Germany. There are eight publications: the original Pabel firm issues Utopia Magazin (short stories) and Utopia Grossband (complete novels) monthly, and Utopia Zukunft (novelettes) weekly. Moewig has a similar team, with Galaxis (shorts) and Terra Sonderband (novels) monthly, and Terra (novelettes) fortnightly. Semrau's Abenteuer in Weltenraum (novels) is a monthly, and Lehning's Luna Weltall (novelettes) is a fortnightly.

Besides all these magazines, there is a regular monthly pocket-book series, Utopia Taschen-Reihe, published by Lehning. And there are even regular SF comic books.

Galaxis is the German version of the US Galaxy SF, and the first publication here to reproduce a single source of imported material. The other magazines use a mixture of original stories by such writers as Karl H. Scheer, W. D. Rohr and pseudonyms such as Clark Darlton, and translations from various American and British writers — Gallun, Hubbard, Leinster, Williamson, Gernsback, Wollheim, Arthur Barnes, van Vogt, E. M. Hull,

Williamson, del Rey, Campbell, Tubb, J.F. Burke, Russell, Wellman, Rocklyne and so on.

Many books are appearing also, some imported but more original.

I hear that Stanislaw Lem's novel "Der Planet des Todes" is being filmed in East Germany. This is the only piece of SF I've seen from that direction: it was originally written in Polish as "Astronaucci" and has also been published in Russian as "Astronauti". The story: In the year 2006 evidence is uncovered that the giant meteorite which had fallen a hundred years before in Siberia had been a space ship from Venus. The first Ter-ran ship sets out for that planet, manned by a cosmopolitan crew, and discover signs of civilisation and sentient "Plasma Streams" and metal insects. The political angle is confined to a few lines.

**Acknowledgements:** Reviews in this issue by Lin Carter, from Inside Science Fiction, by courtesy of Ronald L. Smith.

Review by James Blish, from Science Fiction Times, by courtesy of Science Fiction Times, Inc.

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