

SCIENCE FICTION *News*

PUBLISHED ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY

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BOOKS OF THE YEAR

This issue features a list of the science fiction books published in England in 1958. Excluding doubtfuls and juveniles more than sixty books appeared, compared with forty-four in 1957, fifty-one in 1956 and eighty-one in 1955. Yet the general impression was of a dull year with less activity in the book field than for several years. Although there were some excellent books, the general standard was mediocre. There is food for thought in our analysis of the content and origin of the books, too.

For one thing, eighteen books either had appeared serially in regular science fiction magazines, or were based on or included magazine stories. As might be expected, these included most of the books worth reading, because the magazines are still the main stream of SF, and very little of any interest is written by writers without magazine experience. Seventeen of these books were of American origin.

No one could complain that local talent does not get a chance, for thirty-eight books were of British origin. This was far too many, for only a few British writers have enough idea of what SF is all about to contribute anything of value. More opportunity for new writers — fine. But the other side of the coin is more worthless so-called SF.

A substantial majority of the books, thirty-seven, were new editions. Hard covered and pocket editions were about evenly divided. If new editions represented the best work of previous years such a high percentage would be amply justified. Actually they seem to represent the optimism or caution of publishers, and the salesmanship of agents, far better. The paperbacks, new and old, ranged from best to worst.

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LATE!

-- yes, this issue is very late.

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS is not a commercial proposition. It has always, like most activities in support of SF, been produced on an amateur basis, as a service and a contribution to a cause, financed mainly out of its editor's pocket. Therefore, unfortunately, there are times when lack of funds and pressure of work make it difficult to meet a regular schedule. Such a time came at the beginning of this year.

Now here is another issue, and it is to be hoped that there will not be any more such interruptions. However, for the time being NEWS is not being claimed as a bimonthly, but as an irregular publication...I expect to bring it out regularly in alternate months, perhaps in time monthly, but if an issue is late please do not fool lot down.

I believe there is as much need as ever for such a publication as NEWS. If you agree, you can help by helping to get more subscriptions, and by sending in any suggestions or criticisms that occur to you.

-- G. S.

THE YEAR'S BOOKS: 1958

ALDISS, Brian W.

"Non-Stop" (Faber, 15/-),
Based on short of same title
in Science-Fantasy, No. 17.
Review, SFN 23.

ASIMOV, Isaac

"The Currents of Space"
(Panther PB, 2/6) Review,
SFN 23.

"I, Robot" (Digit PB, 2/-) Epi-
sodes. Omits two of nine con-
nected shorts in other editions.
Review, SFN 23.

"The Naked Sun" (M. Joseph,
13/6) Future detective novel,
sequel to "The Caves of
Steel". Review, SFN 22.

"Pebble in the Sky". (Corgi
PB, 2/6) Review, SFN 23.

"Second Foundation" (Digit PB
2/-). Last of the Foundation
trilogy. (The second book not
yet published in England.)

BESTER, Alfred

"Tiger! Tiger!" (SFBC) Serial-
ised in Galaxy as "The Stars
My Destination." Review, SFN
17.

BLACKBURN, John

"A Scent of New-Mown Hay"
(Secker & Warburg, 13/6).

"A Sour Apple Tree" (Secker
& Warburg, 12/6).

BLISH, James

"Earthman, Come Home" (SFBC)
Episodes. Parts appeared as
the "Okie" stories. Follows
"They Shall Have Stars."
Review, SF Monthly (Aust.) 17.

- BOUNDS, Sydney J. "The Moon Raiders" (Digit PB, 2/-).
- "The Robot Brains" (Digit PB, 2/-).
- BOWEN, John "After the Rain" (Faber, 15/-) Review, SFN 21.
- BROWN, Fredric "Project Jupiter" (Digit PB, 2/-). Review, SF Monthly (Aust.) 12.
- CHILTON, Charles "Journey Into Space." (Pan PB, 2/6). Book version of BBC radio serial.
- CHRISTOPHER, John "The Death of Grass" (Penguin PB, 2/6).
- COOPER, Edmund "The Uncertain Midnight" (Hutchinson, 12/6).
- CRISPIN, Edmund "Best SF: Science Fiction Stories" (Faber PB, 6/-). Shorts.
- "Best SF Three: Science Fiction Stories" (Faber 15/-). Review, SFN 23. Shorts.
- DE ROUEN, Reed R. "Split Image" (Panther PB, 2/-).
- DUNCAN, David "Occam's Razor" (Gollancz, 12/6). Current SFBC choice.
- FEAR, W.H. "Lunar Flight" (Badger PB, 2/-)
- "Operation Satellite" (Badger PB, 2/-). Review, Nebula SF.31
- FINNEY, Jack "The Clock of Time" (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 12/6). Review, SFN, 22. Shorts.
- FRASER, Sir Ronald "A Visit from Venus" (J. Cape, 15/-).

- GOLDING, William
- "Jupiter In the Chair" (J. Cape, 15/-). Sequel to "A Visit from Venus." Mild satire on inter-planetary communication.
- "The Brass Butterfly" (Faber, 10/6). A dramatic version of the short novel "Envoy Extraordinary" in "Sometime, Never." (Fyre & Spottiswoode, 1956).
- GORDON, Rex
- "No Man Friday" (Corgi PB, 2/6). Review, SFN 18.
- HAGGARD, William
- "Slow Burner" (Cassell, 12/6) Doubtful, some might consider SF.
- HAYNES, John R.
- "Scream from Outer Space" (Panther PB, 2/6).
- HEINLEIN, Robert
- "Double Star" (M. Joseph, 13/6. Review, SFN 22.
- "Robert Heinlein Omnibus" (SFBC). All the shorts previously published in "The Man who Sold the Moon" and "The Green Hills of Earth."
- JONES, Mervyn
- "On the Last Day" (J. Cape, 15/-). Review, Nebula SF 30.
- KNIGHT, Damon
- "Hell's Pavement" (Banner PB, 2/-). Based on "The Analogues" and "Turncoat."
- KORNBLUTH, C.M.
- "Christmas Eve" (Digit PB, 2/-, Also SFBC). Review, SFN 22.
- LOTT, S. Makepeace
- "Escape to Venus" (Panther PB, 2/6).
- MACKENZIE, Compton
- "The Lunatic Republic" (Chatto & Windus, 15/-). Political satire, hardly SF.

International Science Fiction Society Reports from Europe

A SHORT REPORT ON SF IN PORTUGAL.

How does SF go in Portugal? Well, you know, we have only read it since 1954, so we have no modern SF tradition — though of course our youth always read Verne's and Wells' works.

There have been five regular series of SF books begun, only one still running now. This is called "Astronauta", and has published more than fifty books, with many good authors and translations. Best of the other series was called "Escalas do Futuro". It published only two books: "A Cidade no Tempo" (City) by Clifford Simak, and "A Imã do Universo" (Coax de nulle part) by Francis Carsons.

The poorest of the other series was called "Robot", and was imported from Spain. Only an author calling himself "Alan Comet" (you never heard of him, I'm sure) could have written such horrible stuff.* The series "Ciencia e Ficcao" was entirely devoted to Ray Shaldon's space-operas. "Anticipacao" was translated from the French series "Anticipations".

The Clube de Literatura Policiaria, Lisbon, has a special SF section, and plans to publish a SF magazine.

— JOEL LIVA

Clube de Literatura Policiaria
Rua das Faqueiras, 288, I.
Lisboa, Portugal

* This series was imported from Spain, where SF has "arrived" in the last few years. Besides many translations of English and American books there have been local imitations of this kind. Another unlikely-sounding Spanish writer is Lou Space, given credit for such novels as "La Bestia Informa"; other and more convincing names are Alex Simmons ("El infierno de Atómgrado"), C. Aubrey Rice ("La muerte flota en el vacío"), Clark Carrados ("Con-

dicto estelar").

— Ed.

IN GERMANY

Galaxia Science Fiction, the German language edition of Galaxy, is a 128-page glueback in digest size, slightly smaller than the British edition and on better paper. Published monthly (though undated), it is edited by Iothar Heinicke, who writes his own leader, the department titled "Das Observatorium". Contents are translated from US issues of several years ago. There were only shorts in the first two issues, but in No. 3 the first serial began, Cyril Judd's "Kinder des Mars" (Mars Child). Willy's department appears as Wissensarten (Worth Knowing).

Moesig publishers of Munich, who issue Galaxia, also publish two novel series, or magazines using one novel instead of shorts — the most common practice in Germany. Terra Utopische Romane - Science Fiction leaves nothing to chance with its double subtitle. This series comes out fortnightly, size 9" x 6", 64pp. The other, Terra-Sonderband (special volume) is a monthly of 96 pp. Both print both original work and translations. Walter Ernating, the SF Club Europa's President and formerly editor of the Utopia group, first German SF magazine, is now Managing Editor at Moesig.

The Pabel firm of Baden are still publishing Utopia-Zukunftsräume (Future Novels), a 64-page 9" x 6" weekly. German writers are about evenly represented with such Americans as Rocklynne, Leinster, Hubbard, Brackett, John Campbell and Noel Loomis. Utopia-Grossband (large volume) is fortnightly, 96 pages, otherwise much the same. Utopia-Magazin, reduced from 128 pages to 96, is still monthly.

— from ERWIN SCUDIA

Looking Backward

TWENTY YEARS: 1938

Since June, Amazing Stories had changed to a policy of appealing to a potential public which had not read much science fiction before because it wasn't moronic enough. A policy that had been proved successful enough in other fields, for example non-SF pulp magazines and commercial radio, and Amazing showed that it could work here too. As far as it goes, it works. Other magazines have been run on the same principle, sometimes with success. After all, there are plenty of readers for them. But science fiction is not a matter of amusing morons — or even children — and writers for such an audience are not going to produce many ideas worth considering, are they? The most to be expected is pleasant light reading.

The covers on Amazing's issues of late 1938 looked less like SF than like a group of pulp magazines of the time commonly called "horror" — one was actually called Horror Stories, but most of their titles came from the field of which they were an offshoot. "Detective" and "Mystery" were the key words, though some were named for their heroes (Operator 5) or villains (Dr. Yen Sin). Covers on such magazines usually showed a victim, most often a woman, about to be damaged by some kind of elaborate torture machine, while rescuers broke in to interrupt the fun. Until then, such a scene on a SF magazine cover had been unusual; we don't actually remember any, though there may have been one or two. But the new Amazing had on the June cover a masked character (mask was standard horror equipment) carrying a woman up a ladder; August, a fellow about to damage a woman with an electric device; October, a room full of sinister looking gadgets with a white-coated stooge apparently threatened by a muscle-bound giant; October, a bearded ancient shriveling up a man with a death (more or less) ray. December introduced a quaint monster and giant Martian, and we had the kind of cover which Planet Stories later used regularly, for instance.

In Discussions in the August issue, Chester Fain spoke for many in a five-word letter: "Your revis-Amazing Stories attacks."

The first new American SF magazine since 1931 was Marvel Science Stories, which carried the idea a little further in its first two issues, August and November 1938.

Not only were the covers of the "horror" type, but the stories they illustrated presented some mild pornography coupled with sadism. Henry Kuttner's "Avengers of Space" in August was a violent action novelette making a tour of several planets, livened up every few thousand words with a slobbering erotic flagellation session. Silly rather than offensive, but SF's supporters didn't think so then.

"Time Trap", again by Kuttner, in the November issue, was in the same vein. The action oscillated back and forth in time from ancient Sumer to remote futurity, punctuated by torture scenes punitive, interrogative and votive (a sacrifice to a Molech-like idol using live steam), and by numerous never quite successful rapes and seductions. All no doubt written in to order. The rest of the story was very much in the Merritt or Jack Williamson manner, such as Kuttner wrote so well and in such quantity in later years.

We must note that Marvel ran only a few items of this kind. Its policy seemed to be to try anything at least once, and it provided variety in both quality and tendency.

In England, Tales of Wonder No. 4 featured "The Sallee of the Sphinx" by William F. Temple, whose theme was that domestic cats are secretly the dominant race on Earth. Eric Frank Russell, for instance, has used the idea since of other animals. Most of the rest of the issue had appeared in the USA a few years before, and was carefully selected to cultivate interest in SF among new readers, the theory being that the potential British public had not been affected by the American magazines. The new magazine Fantasy, No. 1 of which appeared at this time, was less simplified, more like an American magazine in appear-

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LOOKING BACKWARD

ance, though all contributors were
British except the Italian author
of the lead story, "Nemesis of the
Metal Men", A. Prestagiacomo.

Thrilling Wonder Stories had
shorts by two other magazines' ed-
itors in its August and October
1938 issues: "Catalyst Planet" by
Amazing's Raymond A. Palmer, and
"The Brain Pirates" by Outstanding's
John V. Campbell Jr., respectively.
In December there was "Hands across
the Void" by Bill Garth (Kuttner?)
in which an alien from Titan saved
the human race from a plot by the
ants. There was also "Tidal Moon",
a Stanley G. Weinbaum short finish-
ed by his sister Helen, and "The
Last of Time" by Clifford Simak,
which was plagiarized in the Aus-
tralian Thrills Incorporated as "SOS
in Time".

Outstanding Science Fiction led
the field as it was to do for years.
It had been the only monthly since
1935, and Amazing's resuming monthly
schedule from October did not mean
competition.

L. Ron Hubbard's serial "The
Tramp" (Sept-Nov) was hardly sci-
ence fiction. Man acquires a magic-
al Evil Eye power after recovery
from brain injury. Campbell would
still use it today and call it psi-
what have you. In October William
Sell made a first and last appear-
ance with "Other Tracks", not the
first but one of the best of alter-
native timetrack stories. Gallun's
"Magician of Dream Valley" was out-
standing lunaradventure. An astro-
nomical cover showing Jupiter from
Ganymede illustrated Simak's senti-
mental "Reunion on Ganymede". The
cover had a terrific error which
was let go: readers were invited to
pick it, but it was no content. It
showed Ganymede throwing a shadow
large enough to eclipse Jupiter. We
could name covers with worse flaws
and no excuses.

December had Leator Del Rey's
"Helen O'lay", the first story of a
robot (not android) masquerading as
human, as well as Gold's "A Matter
of Form" and de Camp's "The Norman".

The British Interplanetary Society

Forward Address—11, 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.

The Society organises meetings, lectures, exhibitions and film shows. Recent examples are *Probing Interplanetary Space*, *Portable Breathing Apparatus*, *The Planet Mars*, *Combustion Chambers for Rocket Engines*. These programmes have been planned not only to assist the spread of technical knowledge, but also to bring home to the lay public the limitless possibilities of rocket propulsion, and in particular the ultimate implications to human society of the crossing of space.

Membership of the Society is open to all persons throughout the world who are interested in interplanetary travel. All members are entitled to attend the Society's lectures and to receive copies of its publications. There are no age limits.

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship is open to those who possess some relevant scientific, technical or professional qualification.

MEMBERSHIP

No technical or other qualification is required for Membership as this grade is intended particularly for the large body of persons who realise the possibilities of astronautics and wish to keep in touch with current developments, but who do not possess the qualifications for Fellowship. It would be appreciated, however, if applicants for Membership give details of any qualifications they may possess, details of occupation, etc., as set out in the official application form.

PUBLICATIONS

The greater part of the Society's resources is devoted to its bi-monthly *Journal* which is published in January, March, etc. It is a well-illustrated publication, averaging about 64 pages per issue, and contains full reports of all lectures delivered to the Society. These lectures, and other papers, frequently report original work undertaken by members of the Society. The *Journal* also offers members a unique information service, since it prints reviews and abstracts of all important publications on rocketry and astronautics throughout the world, and gives news of all current developments.

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MAINE, Charles E.

"Crisis 2,000" (Corgi PB. 2/6).

"The Tide Went Out" (Hodder. 12/6). Review. Nebula SF 36. Next SFBC choice.

"Timeliner" (Corgi PB, 2/6) Review. SFN 23.

MANTLEY, John

"The Twenty-Seventh Day" (Beacon PB, 2/6).

MATHESON, Richard

"The Shores of Tomorrow" (Corgi PB. 2/6) Shorts.

PHELPS, Gilbert

"The Centenarians: A Fable" (Heinemann. 15/-). Review. Nebula SF 31.

POHL, Frederik &
KORNBLUTH, C.M.

"Gladiator-at-Law" (Digit PB. 2/-). Originally serialised in Galaxy. This version is fuller and better.

RUSSELL, Eric F.

"Three to Conquer" (Corgi PB. 2/6). Originally serialised in Astounding as "Call Him Dead."

"Wasp" (Dobson. 11/6). Originally serialised in New Worlds, 69-71.

SHELLEY, Mary

"Frankenstein" (WDL PB. 2/6).

"The Revenge of Frankenstein: based on a screenplay by Jimmy Sangster with additional dialogue by Hurford Janes." (Panther PB. 2/6). A sequel to a film version, apparently.

SHERRIFF, R.C.

"The Cataclysm" (Pan PB. 2/6) Originally published 1939 as "The Hopkins Manuscript." Said to be revised. Moon falls to Earth.

SIMAK, Clifford D.

"Strangers in the Universe"
(Faber, 15/-) Review, SFN 23.
Shorts.

VERNE, Jules

"The Begum's Fortune" (Han-
ison, 12/6).

"Dropped from the Clouds"
(Hanison, 12/6) (Part 1 of "The
Mysterious Island").

"Five Weeks in a Balloon"
(Hanison, 12/6).

"Five Weeks in a Balloon: Edit-
ed for Schools" Allen & Unwin,
5/9).

"From the Earth to the Moon"
(Hanison, 12/6).

"Round the Moon" (Hanison,
12/6).

"Round the Moon" (Ward, Lock,
4/-).

"The Secret of the Island"
(Hanison, 2/6) (Part 2 of "The
Mysterious Island").

"Twenty Thousand Leagues
Under the Sea" (Dean Classics,
2/6).

WALLACE, Doreen

"Forty Years On" (Collins,
13/6). Review, Nebula SF35.

WALTERS, Hugh

"The Domes of Pico" (Faber,
13/6). Juvenile, sequel to
"Blast Off at Woomera."
Review, SFN 23.

WELLS, H.G.

"Selected Short Stories" (Pen-
guin PB, 3/6). Includes some
SF classics.

In Australia, Jubilee Publications of Sydney produced two pocketbooks. Misleadingly numbered 215 and 216, they were actually the 5th and 6th in the firm's Satellite Series. Both are reviewed in SFN 23.

MILLER, R. De Witt
and HUNGER, Anna
"Year 3097"

Based on Miller's short "The Master Shall Not Die," this appeared in the USA as "The Man Who Lived Forever."

SOHL, Jerry

"The Mars Monopoly"

contd. from p. 1

Science fiction's characteristic form is the short story, mainly because of the strength of the magazine tradition. But only nine books were collections of shorts. At present, most science fiction novels by even experienced writers are mere pot-boilers, while the efforts of writers without an adequate background are usually bad. At least seventeen of the year's books were their writers' first attempts in the field, incidentally.

Evidently some British publishers think that science fiction is a form of light entertainment, like the spy and western conventions or what is now

called "romance", which any literary drudge can deliver on demand. Well, if anything can kill science fiction, this attitude will.

The year's best novel was undoubtedly Robert Heinlein's "Double Star", really a straight novel of character with emphasis on external motivation: showing a man under pressure of circumstance radically changed in personality, converted if you will to an entirely different view of life — and told in his own words. Every second would-be novelist thinks he can do this, and the results are sad. But Heinlein has done a creditable job with one of the hardest tasks in creative writing. The setting, some two centuries away, is a lightly sketched but rather intriguing future society. Science fiction, but only just. In other hands it would have become a camouflaged historical novel.

Brian W. Aldiss' "Non-Stop", handicapped with an unusually stupid and misleading jacket blurb, was good if not remarkable. David Duncan's "Occam's Razor" was his best work to date, strong in ideas if weak in plot and action. John Bowen's "After the Rain" was

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St. Augustine, Fla.
Subscription: six issues, 50 cents.

NEW ZEALAND -- Roger Horrocks, 18 Hazelmere Rd.
Mt. Albert, Auckland SW 1
Subscription: six issues, 4/-

EUROPE - - Erwin Scudla, Wien XV11/107,
Rotzergasse 30/1, Austria
Subscription: six issues, Sch. 15

an unusual disaster novel, its theme mainly psychological. With the possible exception of Asimov's "The Naked Sun" and Cooper's "The Troubled Midnight" it is hard to call any other new novel outstanding.

The short story position was much better. Asimov and Blish were represented with

integrated series of connected stories. Finney, Matheson and Simak each had a new selection published. The Heinlein "Omnibus" combining the contents of "The Man Who Sold the Moon" and "The Green Hills of Earth" was the Science Fiction Book Club's best offer to date. Crispin edited a valuable anthology in "Best SF Three."