

# Science Fiction NEWS

No. 14

FEBRUARY 1970

## CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS

BESTER, Alfred, 1913-

The DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH. Pan, 1969. 171 p.  
PB 5/-

BLISH, James [Benjamin] 1921-

SPOCK MUST DIE! A Star Trek Novel. Bantam (H5515)  
ix, 118 p. PB 60c. "Original novel built around  
the characters and background of the television  
series." Star Trek is going to haunt us, it  
appears.

COMPTON, D[avid] G[uy] 1910-

The STEEL CROCODILE. Ace (78575) 1970. 5-254 p.  
PB 75c.

CONRAD, Earl, 1912-

The DA VINCI MACHINE; Tales of the Population  
Explosion. Fleet Press, N.Y. 1969. 189 p. \$5.95.  
Review: F&SF Sep 1969 p. 24 - "Satirical fon-  
tasiaes in which the science is purposely ab-  
surd" - Joanna Russ. You have been warned.

Current Books

DARITY, William A. Jr.

The SHADES OF TIME. William-Frederick, N.Y.  
1969. 67 p. \$2.25. Review: Amazing My 1970  
p. 114-5

GORDON, Rex

The YELLOW FRACTION. Ace (94350) 1969. 5-160 p.  
PB 60c.

HENDERSON, Zenna

The ANYTHING BOX. Panther, 1969. 192 p. PB  
5/- (1st Doubleday 1965; Gollancz 1966)

KAMIN, Nick

EARTHERIM. b/w RICHMOND, Walt and Leigh  
PHOENIX SHIP.  
Ace Double (66160) 1969. 5-147; 5-106 p. PB 75c.

KEY, Alexander

The GOLDEN ENEMY. Westminster, 1969. 176 p.  
\$3.95. Juvenile post-blowup with the tradit-  
ional mutants of the 1940's. Review: Analog  
Jan 1970 p. 166

LAFFERTY, R. A.

FOURTH MANSIONS. Ace (24590) 1969. 7-252 p.  
PB 75c. Review: Amazing Mch 1970 p. 133

MATHESON, Richard

The SHRINKING MAN. Corgi, 1969. 188 p. PB 4/-  
Review: SF News Ag 1969 p. 11

MERLE, Robert

The DAY OF THE DOLPHIN. Simon & Schuster; Weid-  
enfeld, 1969. 320 p. US \$5.95, Br. 25/-. Trans-  
lated from French by Helen Weaver.

MERLE, Robert. The DAY OF THE DOLPHIN (contd.)

Reviews: Analog Sep 1969 p. 160; Library Journal 1 My 1969 p. 1899; N.Y. Times 13 Jly 69 p. 4; Newsweek 28 Jly 69 p. 82; Saturday Review 28 June 69 p. 39; Australian 7 Mch 70 p. 24

MOORCOCK, Michael

The BLACK CORRIDOR. Ace (06530) 1969. 187 p. PB 75c. Review: Amazing Mch 1970 p. 132

NOLAN, William F. ed.

A WILDERNESS OF STARS; Stories of Men in Conflict with Space. Sherbourne, Los Angeles, 1969. xiii, 276 p. \$5.95. 10 stories by Bradbury, Clarke, Sheckley, Anderson etc.

O'DONNELL, K. M.

FINAL WAR, and Other Fantasies

b/w RACKHAM, John

TREASURE OF TAU CETI.

Ace Double (23775) 1969. 9-118, 5-134 p. PB 75c.

"O'Donnell" is a pseudonym intended solely to draw attention to the author, who gives so many clues to his identity here it becomes absurd.

REYNOLDS, Mack

TIME GLADIATOR. Lancer (74-537) 1969. 192 p. PB 75c. (in Analog Oct-Dec 1964 as Sweet Dreams, Sweet Princes) Misleading title, it's not about time travel. Review: Analog Dec 1969 p. 167

SHECKLEY, Robert

STORE OF INFINITY. Bantam (H5229) 1970. 151 p. PB 60c. (1st 1960) 8 stories,

## REVIEWS

The TROUBLE TWISTERS  
Poul Anderson

Panther PB, 1969

I do find it hard to make an objective assessment of anything by Anderson, because I like his work -- I have 25 of his titles on my shelf. All I can do therefore is tell you what this book is about and why I like it.

It deals with one of Anderson's basic ideas: the Solar Spice and Liquor Company run by Nicholas van Rijn. Unlike other books on this theme we don't meet van Rijn but an employee, David Falkayn, aged from perhaps 18 to 28 in the three episodes which make up the total. At first he is a junior, an apprentice merchant trying to negotiate transport for spares to repair a damaged ship's drive on a planet where Terrans' residence is limited by incompatibility of alien proteins. In the second story he has to locate a planet whose inhabitants are trying to blackmail a customer. Finally, as a member of a Trader Team, he has to establish trade with a newly contacted race divided by internal feuding.

Anderson's brief notes give the thesis that all intelligent races will have certain similar characteristics. He follows up the old idea that all races will think of themselves "I'm human" and of others "You're an alien" by going on to suggest that the merchant, the bureaucrat, the soldier, the priest, even probably the trade unionist will exhibit in his own racial context the same characteristics as in ours. So although Anderson uses his scientific background to set up the planetary scenery, he is also showing us, through his aliens, ourselves. It's an old trick: Swift did it in Gulliver's Travels, for example.

The Three-cornered Wheel states a problem. How

to move a very heavy load several hundred Km by ground transport when there is a local taboo on use of the wheel? The solution is elegant, but to be quite honest I've read it three times now and I can't picture the gadget proposed as a wheel substitute.

A Sun Invisible has as its problem that an inhabited planet must be nearby (in interstellar terms) but no suns are available of the types that normally have planets. The title is a piece of misdirection, for the sun is quite visible but was neglected initially because it was an F3. This the trick Holmes played so often on Watson, which however well played leaves the reader feeling the author has put one over him, as the central character has some special information which he springs out to explain his ability to solve the problem.

The last story, Trader Team, is the longest and best. In this Falkayn is backed up by two aliens (cat-like and dragon-like) and the ship's computer. All four are enjoyably exaggerated: Falkayn slick, suave, with an eye for any available girl (is this wishful-thinking-identifying?), Chec Ben small and ill-tempered; Adzel the dragon strong but mild mannered, dreadfully polite and a Buddhist convert; and Muddlehead the computer absolutely logical but dumb outside his programming. (At the end following its poker-playing programming to the point where it bluffs to win: "I acquired these goods in pursuit of the objective you have programmed into me, namely to play poker. Logic indicates that I can play better when properly staked.") The problem in the story is simply to bring peace so that Solar Spice can make a profit by trading, which is settled quite well.

That covers what is in the book. These basic ideas could be followed by different authors with different results, so let us examine what Anderson dies.

## Reviews

First, they are all problem stories which not only begin by stating what is to be solved but also by stating the limits within which the solution must lie. I live with this sort of thing in a less dramatic form daily, so I enjoy reading of some one else suffering my sort of difficulties. As a corollary, I approve the methods his character uses. In turn, a flash of inspiration under extreme pressure; the result of hard, logical deduction; and by co-ordination of many factors. This sequence is correct. As a youth Falkayn does not have the background experience to find his answer except by inspiration, later he can apply basic learning and acquired ability to think his way out by himself, and at a more mature age he has learned how to get results by using other people working together.

Second, I like his word pictures of aliens because I agree with his proposition that the standard roles will turn up in any society where individuals exist. It would not be so in a group-mind culture.

Third, I like the way he weaves his special knowledge of physics into his work. He shows it in many ways and gives an air of authority.

Finally, when he describes something it really strikes the note. As a random example, the scene where a group is fleeing a city on knagaroo-like animals: the description of Falkayn, a stranger to these beasts, working out how to keep on, is superb, and this little bit where the dusty conditions are indicated: "He gritted his teeth. He had only meant to set them, but his mouth was full of sand."

To sum up, Anderson gives the impression of really trying hard to give satisfaction. Perhaps the best example is in his distortion of speech as would come from a mouth with a beak rather than

flexible lips. I feel he must have experimented to find out just how this would turn out, because of the details of missing consonants.

So here I come back to my difficulty in reviewing Anderson because I am biased in favor of him. I can recommend strongly that you read some of his work and let me know if you don't like it. As for this book, read it and look in it for people you know. Perhaps this is Anderson's trick -- perhaps those characters are his associates and that's why they seem real.

— Ronald B. Ward

THE SILENT MULTITUDE  
BY D. G. Compton

Ace PB (76385), 1969  
189 p.

A disaster story in the early SF tradition that seems to be coming back into favor. But it's by no means stereotyped. The menace is a concrete-rotting mould, a more logical plague out of space than an organic one would be; the city being infested and dying is Gloucester, which is a break from New York and London. Whatever efforts are being made to fight it are beyond the scope of the book and never discussed; in this area at any rate the response has been to evacuate and leave the place to fall down. So we have the eerie setting of an abandoned city, a sort of urban *Mary Celeste* in which four strangers meet, each lingering on in the disaster for his own reasons. It must be said that three of them are clearly psychopathic and the fourth at least rather doubtful. There is a mattering old recluse staying because he has never grasped what is going on and rejects human contact too strongly to be helped; echoing his position behind a facade of fatalistic unconcern, a dismissed cleric clinging to the only thing he knows, his church and

## Reviews

routine of ritualistic duties. The other two, younger, more individual, yet equally irresponsible, and led by their asocial instincts to become castaways in the abandoned area of blight (in my interpretation at any rate) are a warped unemployed getting his kicks from the collapse of civilisation, and a witless woman journalist ostensibly working at reporting the disaster, unconsciously perhaps behaving like the Dean or the dropout.

A somber, slow-moving book, with much that is open to interpretation as you see it. I found it rewarding in spite of the lack of action worth mentioning for most of the book and indeed of any real plot, not to mention clear resolution.

-- The Bolan

ENTERPRISE STARDUST                    Ace PB (65970), 1969  
by K-H. Scheer and Walter Ernsting  
The RADIANT DOME                    Ace PB (65971), 1969  
by K-H. Scheer and Walter Ernsting  
GALACTIC ALARM                    Ace PB (65972), 1969  
by Kurt Mahr and W. W. Shols

Well, here it is: the Perry Rhodan series, the endless weekly adventure series that has run for eight years in German, more recently in other languages, sold fifty million copies, broken out in comics, film and hard covers, swamped and threatened to destroy adult SF in German, and recruited uncounted juveniles and people who think like them into 500 supporters' clubs. Now it's here.

Various writers sign their own names to these



episodes (actually, the first three books at any rate are hardly even that but a continuous narrative) where the usual practice with English language series of the dim past that might be compared to them was to cloak the hacks' identity with a house name like Roy Rockwood or Kenneth Robeson; perhaps it tells us something about their public as well as the works themselves, if the personal vision of the creative writer counts for anything at all.

Well, you people who value SF, don't get too worried. Perry Rhodan is not going to engulf us; or if your standards are lower, is not going to take on and gain even the kind of following Tarzan had. This is a recorded prediction. Because, on the evidence of these three books, the appeal isn't there. Whatever magic the original has, it doesn't come through Wendayne Ackerman's quite good translation. It must be a cultural phenomenon.

Since the series begins with the first few of the original, which in eight years have dated badly, the popular appeal is not very obvious. A first moon expedition radically different from the reality handicaps the first book; then the contact with incredible extraterrestrial humanoids coincidentally operating on the Moon (what are the odds on that?), the original leader of the expedition's self-appointment as world dictator to unify Earth for induction into Galactic civilisation and the existing powers' efforts to eradicate him in his Gobi Desert base. It becomes hard to read on by the third book.

It might get better as it goes along, if it lasts long enough. But for the time being, you can pass it up.

-- G.S.

## LOOKING BACKWARD

February 1960. Astounding appeared titled Astounding Science Fact Fiction, beginning the process of changing to (ugh)

Analog. Campbell had an article going around in circles over the Land color vision experiments, a sensation at the time. (Existing theories on color vision were shown fallacious on certain points; psychologists knew that much already). Amazing featured Transient, by Ward Moore, a short novel of a man's self-discovery in an extended hallucinatory experience. Hardly SF and suggestive of the pro-LSD line made more familiar since then, but an outstanding work

February 1950. Shot in the Dark, an interesting PB collection of SF, remarkable for including nothing from

Astounding, long assumed to have a near-monopoly of anything worth reprinting. Edited by the obscure writer Judith Merril.

February 1940. Two new magazines appeared. Captain Future was about the worst effort to date, exactly what SF didn't need, an interplanetary Doc Savage. Astonishing Stories was pretty bad, but it did have a certain air of individuality. Frederik Pohl didn't last long enough as editor of this and Super Science to hit the standard he hoped for, but you could see where they were headed. In Astounding Heinlein's first serial, If This Goes On, began: handicapped by following Smith's staggering Grey Lensman, but establishing Heinlein as a major writer. A newcomer, H.B. Fyfe, had a neat short, Locked Out; how to break into a spaceship.

February 1930. Little of interest in the four magazines running, with S.P. Meek, Earl Vincent, Charles Willard Diffin and Hendrik Dahl Juve dominating the scene. The books published about this time included Gladiator, provocative superman novel by Philip Wylie; The World Below, S. Fowler Wright's extraordinary tale of a grim remote future; Tarrano the Conqueror, by Ray Cummings, the rise and fall of an interplanetary Napoleon.

February 1920. Cummings' The People of the Golden Atom was running in All-Story Weekly. No one would have the nerve to call it SF now but it's part of our history. The Golden Vapor, by E. H. Johnson, was in The Electrical Experimenter.

February 1910. Not much was happening of interest. There is a gap between Griffith, Verne and Wells, and Burroughs, Doyle and Gernsback's group.

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FROM THE BO'SUN'S CHAIR

About twenty years ago I showed a science fiction publication to an intelligent adult who had never seen one before (such a creature would be harder to find today, but Australia was thick with them then). His first comment was "Why the childish drawings?", to which I didn't know the answer. Nor do I know it now, when they have grown steadily worse in the mean time. Do you?

From the Bo'sun's Chair

What is an illustration? Something to help visualise something in the text. Once upon a time the magazines used pictures that did just that, helping out the more dimwitted reader. Often they merely spoiled the author's effect. (The classic case was the drawing for Edward Grendon's The Figure, which gave away the punch line which was the whole point of the story). Perhaps, like the cover painting, they served to interest the bookstall browser. Perhaps the picture was aesthetically pleasing enough in itself to be worth printing: you could say it of Finlay sometimes, or of Paul or Dold going back a bit, surely not of anything recent.

So why do they do it? What do editors have in mind with these silly drawings? Decorative headings for departments, fair enough, crude as they often are as in recent Amazings: but why the pictures of people doing nothing in particular? (Amazing, March, p. 7, 43, 79) Why the blurred impressions of ditto? (Galaxy, December, p. 16, 27, 49) Why the apparent abstracts? (Galaxy, December, p. 77, 85, 98-9, 122) Why the faces expressing acute pain? (Analog, January, p. 25, 43, 130-1) Perhaps there is some logical explanation for it all, but it eludes me for one.

-- The Bo'sun

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