

# VISION OF TOMORROW

No. 21

September 1970

## VISION OF TOMORROW TO END

No. 12 will be the final issue of Vision of Tomorrow, ending the most ambitious and emphatically the best edited and most worth while SF magazine to originate in Australia.

While many criticisms can be made of the style and content of the magazine, it has been well up to the standard that should have been enough to guarantee success. But producing a good magazine is only half the battle, even though that half has never been within the capacity of Australian publishers before this. It has to be got to the reader, and the miserable distribution of VoT has utterly failed to do this.

Quite a lot more could be said about this problem, by no means a new one. But there seems nothing that can be done about it, so we decline to editorialise further: you may come to your own conclusions about the vicious monopoly system involved without our belaboring of the obvious.

Suffice to say that we have seen at last a serious attempt at a satisfactory SF magazine. Ron Graham has earned our gratitude for at least showing what can and should be done.

CURRENT BOOKS

- BALL, Brian N[eville] 1932-  
 TIMEPIECE. Ballantine. 153 p. PB 75c. (1st Dobson 1968)  
 Review: Vision of Tomorrow Dec 1969 p. 61
- BERTIN, Jack  
 The PYRAMIDS FROM SPACE. Lenox Hill Press, N.Y. 192 p.  
 \$3.95. No details. Could this be John Bertin, who  
 wrote The Brood of Helios and Rebellion on Vemus in  
 1932 Wonder?
- BIEMILLER, Carl L.  
 The HYDRONAUTS. Doubleday. 131 p. \$3.50. Juvenile.  
 Future with Earth mostly ocean as a result of nuclear  
 you know what.
- BLACKBURN, John [Fenwick] 1923-  
 BURY HIM DARKLY. Putnam. 191 p. \$4.50. A had-I-but-  
 known shocker with a SF element. Review: Analog Oct  
 1970 p. 165
- BROWN, Rosel George, 1928-67  
 The WATERS OF CENTAURUS. Doubleday. 181 p. \$4.95. Sequel  
 to Sibyl Sue Blue. Review: Analog Oct 1970 p. 164
- BURGESS, Anthony [i.e. John Anthony Burgess Wilson, 1917- ]  
 A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. Ballantine. 191 p. (Reissue of 1965  
 ed. 1st Heinemann 1962; Norton 1963) Interesting though  
 only marginally SF, set in an unattractive future and  
 told from the viewpoint of a layabout who speaks a fas-  
 cinating jargon full of Russian words.  
 Reviews: Amazing July 1963; Analog Sep 1963, May 1964;  
 F&SF Oct 1963; Library Journal 15.2.63 p. 793; New  
 Statesman 18.5.62 p. 718; N.Y. Herald Tribune 14.4.63  
 p. 7; N.Y. Times 7.4.63 p. 36; Time 15.2.63 p. 103;  
 Times Lit.Sup. 25.5.62 p. 377

contd. p. 10

## R E V I E W S

### The YELLOW FRACTION

by Rex Gordon

Ace PB. 160 p.

This book is about an interstellar colony on a planet named Arcon, not, as is so often the case, in the formative years, but five hundred odd years after landing ("A.L.") so that society has had time to settle down. The idea that Gordon flings into the situation is a planetary condition of high enough concentration of elements poisonous to humans over a period to cause the colonists to die at about the age of forty.

First of all we should have a look at this -- is it a reasonable hypothesis? It certainly is. Apart from the really heavy elements, which are very poisonous, there are things like arsenic, antimony and bismuth, and to name a really good one beryllium. There are plenty of items in the elements alone, and if we extend our search to organic compounds we can find enough poisons to go around everyone, I assure you. His analysis of the problem is excellent: "If it was just the water, for instance, then we could distill the water. Or if it was just the air, then we could wear facemasks. But unfortunately these compounds are not only in the air and water, but they are a natural part of the soil and the things we eat." He points out in conclusion that you can't avoid sampling the planet you live on unless you stay in the spaceship you arrived in.

Has this -- is this intended to have -- any connection with today's pollution problems? We are poisoning our present planet with sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, dust, heat, oil in the oceans, and so on. Intended or not, a parallel exists.

I must say, as a good critic should, that this

idea has been used before. Dr. Asomov used a beryllium-loaded planet in Sucker Bait, for instance. But so what? That was a differently directed tale. Where does this one go? Gordon begins by introducing a main character in a University environment, with a political background of three parties. The Greens believe Arcon is a good world, the Blues are cautious, and the Yellows are sure they shouldn't be there at all. The last party, of course, is the population fraction of the title.

However, although the story follows a central character it isn't told by just following this Len Thomas around. We get between segments of narrative parts from the "Diary of J. Adolf Koln", "The Short History of Arcon" and "The Arcon Records", all dodging around in a way which makes the reader work hard at keeping up. Among other odd fragments there are quotations from "The Shopping Lists of Mary Jean Smith", which follow a woman whose husband dies at about forty, like everyone. And ~~that~~ that is what makes this book damned good. Gordon throws these little notes in quite casually, a few lines at a time, and they showed me better than pages of prose and dialog the desperation of these people limited to a life of only two score years. I should point out here that although Gordon sets up a good situation as a basis, his real strength is in examining how the people in his story react to his situation. He does this in the two other books of his I have read, No Man Friday and The Time Factor, and in two ways: he deals with the conflict of the situation with the people, and of the people with each other both as individuals and as groups. The literary devices, such as the shopping lists,

used to shape and follow the conflicts reach their peak in *The Yellow Fraction*.

A conflict is introduced between the Army and the Information Office, parallelling the conflict between Thomas and authority. Thomas, with a group of young dissenters, is taken to where a spaceship is being built; the group is sent into orbit supposedly on their way to another star; the whole thing is an Army stunt to seize the Information Service's share of authority; the group devise a way to reprogram the ship and really do head off for the nearby star.

In writing SF the author, having selected and developed his background, is expected to make the utmost of it. I have mentioned the use of the Shopping Lists to show how an average individual reacts to the situation; in addition he has to show what happens to society as a whole. One very interesting and well thought out point is brought out in discussion of the "pay-off balance". This is defined as the ratio between a man's working life period and his education years, which in our society is say 48 to 12 years, or 4. This assumes education from 5 to 17, then working to 65. Someone who goes right through university to PhD level shifts the figures to, say, 5/25/65, giving a ratio of 40 to 20, that is 2. Others who start work at 18 but continue education through the early working years might have an education period of 5 to 25 and a working period of 17 to 65, hence a ratio of 2.4. In an extreme case, of a person continuing part time study to 30, the ratio drops below 2. We can have a lot of fiddles with these figures, so some definition is needed for education necessary to fit for work. In many activities, in for example management fields, education never stops. So I think we have to work in terms of "basic"

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education, and then the ratio varies between 2 and 4 -- in our society.

But in the Arcon way of life the highest possible is 2, and for those enjoying extended education it drops to .75. That is, those on whom society expends years of effort in training cannot pay back with an equal number of years of service. As Gordon remarks, a low-grade farming community can be run on short education time and a short life overall, but any industrial society needs longer learning periods and longer working life. This point rang true and when added to a reasonably good style it made a good book.

I wasn't really keen on the ending, which seemed a bit sloppy as it tried to show the sudden rush of events as the ship went under way and a revolution of sorts began. It failed to hold my attention as well as the earlier part.

Having made some comments on this book, I will make some on publishers. Ace list four other books by Gordon: I have a strong suspicion that *First on Mars* equals *No Man Friday*, and *First Through Time* equals *The Time Factor*. If so, it is an example of the quaint and sometimes perverse tricks publishers get up to, usually to con people into buying the same book twice. (I have never got over buying *Maine's Fire Past the Future* to find it was *Count-Down*.) But that makes at least five titles by Gordon, of which I have seen three. Some day, maybe, I'll find the other two. I hope I do. I know that three are quite good, so where are the others? Why don't we see more of his work?

-- Ronald B. Ward

[Editor's note: Gordon's books point up sharply

the abominable practice of changing titles. Granted, publishers in the UK and US respectively assume rightly that their editions will not be marketed in the other sphere and hence not clash; but in many parts of the world, and certainly Australia, they do. Furthermore, certain paperback publishers often adopt a different title from that of an original hard covered edition in their own country, which should not be tolerated.

Gordon's No Man Friday is also known as First on Mars; First Through Time is also The Time Factor; First to the Stars is also The World of Eclos; and Utopia Minus X is also The Paw of God. Furthermore, I suspect that the last work is the same as that published in 1955 as Utopia 239. Can anyone verify this?

Gordon's actual name is Stanley Bennett Hough, and he has written some non-SF books as S. B. Hough (also one many would call SF, Extinction Bomber), and Bennett Stanley. -- G.S. ]

#### The YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN

by Wilson Tucker

Ace PB. 252 p.

The Ace Specials have have included some entertaining science fiction of late, and The Year of the Quiet Sun more than maintains the high standard.

It's a time travel story whose protagonist is what van Vogt has called an anti-hero (meaning one imagines that though a genius he's no superman), which gives it a "new wave" flavor if that impresses you, who at the same time is black, which provides the basis for some fairly credible social commentary on the US scene in general. More important if you read

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SF for entertainment's sake, it is extremely readable, involving and entertaining. It is to be recommended for much the same reasons, and with much the same commendations, as, say, *The Space Merchants*.

The plot is simple enough. The US Bureau of Standards, having developed a workable time machine, send a team of three to the year 2000 at intervals of a year, to observe and record the general situation in the neighbourhood of Chicago. They don't find the unexpected, but what they do find forces the reader to realise that he has never really thought it through. It's like Heinlein's *If This Goes On*, really, but written with realisation of the events of the decades since that novel and their logical extrapolations.

The author deftly avoids tangling with any of the classic time travel paradoxes, for example by giving the time travellers strict instructions to avoid meeting their future selves and so on. But perhaps that is a good thing in view of the purposes of the novel. Van Vogt also suggests that this book is a Hugo contender: one can't help but agree.

-- John C. Young

### Another review:

Time travel is pretty debased coin these days. All very well, but what does one do with it? In the first place, Wells and others used it morely as a device to bring a modern observer into contact with some other era, like the Connecticut Yankee's blow on the head, the racial memories in *Before Adam*, or Buck Rogers' 500-year snooze in the old



mine. Then after while a few writers thought of the paradoxes and kicked them around, and Leinster thought of the multiple time track idea, which was mauled severely by a lot of people after the few sensible treatments were written in the 30's and 40's. Then all the garbage written about alternate worlds, which ended up as nothing much to with time travel at all but just like the old fourth dimension or whatever. Or the imaginary planet, for that matter.

It is something of a surprise, then, to find a book in which time travel is used to travel in time. Tucker sees it as being developed on the taxpayers' money to help the government by checking on how policy is going to turn out and how trends are going to shape up. Not a word about how to act on the information, I notice. Whether the future is fixed or not is left out of consideration.

As a projection of the future the book doesn't satisfy me; far too little information -- strictly the viewpoint of the lone time traveller. Tucker's concealment of the all-important fact that his hero (I don't know what van Vogt meant by calling him an anti-hero) is black until the very end of the book seemed to me pointless. Perhaps there are clues to it that the intelligent reader is supposed to pick up earlier on, but in that case I'm unintelligent.

It's a rather strange book altogether, an idiosyncratic book. A book by Tucker is something different from a book by anyone else, and it is interesting to find a lot of strange touches, even oddities of narrative style, that set it apart from the run of the mill. Even the title, which is rather misleading, suggesting geophysical studies. But read it.

-- Cleve Gilbert

Current Books:

CLARKE, Arthur G[harles] 1917-

The LION OF COMARRE and AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT. Gollencz. x, 214 p. 28/- (The Lion of Comarre in Thrilling Wonder Aug 1949; Against the Fall of Night in Startling Nov 1948; together Harcourt 1968) Two early short novels of Clarke. Against the Fall of Night was originally commenced before the war, and later completely rewritten as The City and the Stars.

Reviews: Analog Nov 1969 p. 169; F&SF Nov 1969 p. 49

COPPARD, Audrey

WHO HAS POISONED THE SEA. S.G. Phillips, N.Y. 158 p. \$4.95. Juvenile. Time traveller from a future when the ocean is hopelessly polluted attempts to meddle in events today to prevent it.

DICKSON, Gordon [Rupert] 1923-

NONE BUT MAN. Macdonald, 253 p. 30/- (1st Doubleday 1969) Review: Analog Oct 1969 p. 172

Del REY, Lester [i.e. Ramon...Alvarez del Rey] 1915-

NERVES. Ballantine. 153 p. PB. (Reissue of 1956 ed. Based on short version in Astounding Sept 1942. In German as Atomalarm; in Spanish as Nervios) Suspenseful novel about an accident in an atomic transmutation plant, written before anything comparable was achieved but soundly based on what was then known. It still makes fair sense.

Reviews: Astounding US Dec 1956 p. 150; Br. Apr. 1957 p. 123; F&SF Sep 1956; Infinity Dec 1956. N.Y. Times 28.10.56

GINSBURG, Mirra, ed., trans.

The ULTIMATE THRESHOLD. Holt. 244 p. \$5.95. 13 stories translated from Russian; the collection was announced as The Useless Planet.

Review: Analog Oct 1970 p. 161

GOULART, Ron[ald Joseph] 1933-

AFTER THINGS FELL APART. Ace. 189 p. PB 75c.

Review: Analog Oct 1970 p. 166

HAINING, Peter [Alexander] 1940- ed.

The FREAK SHOW. Rapp. 256 p. 32/- 20 stories of monsters of one kind or other, largely SF.

Review: Vision of Tomorrow June 1970 p. 30

HARRISON, Harry [Max] 1925-

The DALETH EFFECT. Putnam. 217 p. \$4/95. (In Analog Dec 1969-Feb 1970 as In Our Hands, the Stars -- which was a better title, wasn't it?)

-- ed.

NOVA 1; an anthology of original science fiction stories. Delacorte. xi, 222 p. \$4.95. Yet another projected series of collections. Will these become the equivalent of the magazines? It's not a bad idea at that. This book has 15 new shorts by Brian W. Aldiss, Piers Anthony, Ray Bradbury, Chan Davis, Gordon Dickson, David Gerrold, Barry Malzberg, Naomi Mitchison, K.M. O'Donnell, John R. Pierce, James Sallis, Robin Scott, Robert Silverberg, Donald Westlake and Gene Wolfe. Most of us will wait for the PB to come out, though.

## LOCKING BACKWARD

Ever heard of George C. Foster? He's not on anyone's list of famous science fiction authors, but among collectors two of his books probably have many friends. Both date from 1930, and FULL FATHOM FIVE has just been reissued by Howard Baker. This is a curious book, to say the least. It has some psychic time travel linking the main scene, in the 1920's, with vaguely parallel stories in the days of Pithecanthropus and Eoanthropus (who was of course then still assumed to be genuine). The actual plot is nothing much despite some superficial convolutions, but there is more interest in the incidental talk and philosophising, with a lot of thrusts at the cruder kind of Christianity and its legacy of fog-headedness and sexual hangups. If you think any of this is dated you're an incurable optimist.

The other book, THE LOST GARDEN, is more story than lecture, though not without some gentle satire and food for thought. Beginning in good old Atlantis, where the secret of immortality is found just at the point of disaster, it follows a group of immortals through various eras to the 20th Century, with another being reincarnated here and there.

Neither is science fiction by any reasonable standard, but typical of the kind of books we used to read for want of enough straight SF and better reading than most.

HEINLEIN, Robert [Anson] 1907-

GLORY ROAD. Berkley (N1809). 228 p. PB 95c. (In F&SF Jly-Sep 1963. Putnam 1963; Avon 1964; New English Lib. 1969) Reviews: Amazing Mch 1964 p. 120; Analog Feb 1964 p. 93

-- The WORLDS OF ROBERT HEINLEIN. New English Lib. 127 p. PB 5/- (1st Ace 1966, reissued 1970) NEL are entitled by custom to describe this book as they do in advertisements as "A new collection of stories by the master SF storyteller, including a never-before-published novelette", since it has not been published in Britain before and publication in the rebellious American colonies is traditionally ignored. Contains three early shorts, Life-Line, Blowups Happen and Solution Unsatisfactory, the later potboiler Searchlight, and the first published in this collection Free Men, which is not SF but a political fable.

LAUMER, [John] Keith, 1925-

RETIFF: AMBASSADOR TO SPACE. Berkley. 190 p. PB 75c. (1st Doubleday 1969) Seven repetitious shorts: Giant Killer; The Forbidden City; Grime and Punishment; Dam Nuisance; Trick or Treaty; The Forest in the Sky; Truce or Consequences.

Review: Analog Aug 1969 p. 164

LUCIE-SMITH, Edward ed.

HOLDING YOUR EIGHT HANDS: an anthology of science fiction verse. Rapp. xxi, 120 p. HC 30/-, limp 12/6 (1st Doubleday 1969) Reviews: If Oct 1969 p. 144; F&SF Apr 1970 p. 48

Current Books

MAGIDOFF, Robert, 1905- ed.  
RUSSIAN SCIENCE FICTION: 1969. N.Y. University  
Press. 210 p. \$6.95. More examples of modern  
Russian SF, as solemn and timid as ever but  
with the occasional gleam.  
Review: Analog Oct 1970 p. 161

MOSKOWITZ, Sam, 1920- ed.  
UNDER THE MOONS OF MARS: a history and antho-  
logy of the 'Scientific Romance' in the Munsey  
magazines, 1912-1920. Holt. 433 p. \$7.95.  
Study of an important period of which virtual-  
ly nothing is generally known, with 9 stories  
or extracts by Edgar Rice Burroughs, George  
Allan England, Charles B. Stilson, J. U. Giesy,  
A. Merritt, Ray Cummings, Murray Leinster,  
Austin Hall and Homer Eon Flint, and Francis  
Stevens.  
Review: Amazing Nov 1970 p. 142

NOLAN, William F. and JOHNSON, George Clayton  
LOGAN'S RUN. Corgi. 144 p. PB 4/- (Collancz  
1966; Dell 1969) World taken over by juven-  
ile delinquents. Review: SF News Nov 1969 p. 11

POHL, Frederik and WILLIAMSON, Jack  
UNDERSEA QUEST. Mayflower. 127 p. PB 4/-  
(1st Gnome 1954; Dobson 1966) Juvenile.  
Reviews: Amazing Sep 1955; Astounding US Aug  
1955, Br. Jan 1956; F&SF Sep 1955; Galaxy  
Jly 1955

SILVERBERG, Robert  
HAWKSBILL STATION. Tandem. 192 p. PB 5/-  
(Based on short version in Galaxy Aug 1967.  
Doubleday 1968; Sidgwick 1969 as The Anvil of

(Time) Review: Analog Jly 1969 p. 165

SILVERBERG, Robert et al.

THREE FOR TOMORROW: three original novellas (sic) of science fiction. Gollancz. x, 204 p. 28/- (1st Meredith 1969) Contents: Foreword by Arthur C. Clarke; How it was when the Past went away, by Silverberg; The Eve of Rumoko, by Roger Zelazny; We all die naked, by James Blish. Review: If Feb 1970 p. 149

SLADEK, John T[homas]

The REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM. Mayflower. 188 p. PB 5/- (1st Gollancz 1968; Ace 1969 as The Reproductive System) Reviews: ASFA Journal 2/1, p. 28; Australian 24.8.68

VANCE, Jack [i.e. John Holbrook Vance]

The BLUE WORLD. Ballantine. 190 p. PB 50c. (Re-issue of 1966 ed. Based on The Kraken in Fantastic Jly 1964) Reviews: Analog Mch 1968 p. 166; New Worlds 167 p. 153

-- FUTURE TENSE. Ballantine. 160 p. PB (Reissue of 1964 ed.) Four stories: Dodkin's Job; Ullward's Retreat; Sail 25; The Gift of Gab.

VERNE, Jules, 1828-1905

The MYSTERIOUS ISLAND. Bantam Pathfinder (SP5439) 184 p. PB 75c. Trans., abridged by Lowell Bair.

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