

SCIENCE FICTION *News*

No. 35

November 1971

CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS

anon. ed.

FROM THE "S" FILE. Playboy Press. 192 p. PB 75c.
16 stories, not all SF though so labelled: Playboy
has long been vague about this. The authors are
alliteratively Sturgeon, Sheckley, Sambrot, Sladek,
Slesar, Sharkey and Spinrad, an appealingly zany
idea.

-- LAST TRAIN TO LIMBO. Playboy Press. 187 p. PB
75c. Another 16 stories by Bradbury, Clarke,
Nolan etc.

ALDISS, Brian W[ilson] 1925-

BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES. Faber. 3-260 p. HC
£1.75. Called a revised edition of the 1965
collection (also as Who can replace a Man. Har-
court 1966)

ASIMOV, Isaac, 1920-

NIGHTFALL TWO. Panther. 192 p. PB 30 np. "The
last 15 stories" from Nightfall and Other Stories,
(Doubleday 1969; Rapp 1970).

BLISH, James [Benjamin] 1921-

ANYWHEN. Faber. 3-185 p. HC £1.75 (1st Doubleday
1970). 7 stories. Review: F&SF June 71 p. 23

-- et al.

STAR TREK 4. Bantam (S7009). ix, 134 p. PB 75c.
Review: this issue.

Current Books

BLUM, Ralph

The SIMULTANEOUS MAN. Bantam (N5878). 182 p.
PB 95c. (1st Little, Brown and Deutsch, 1970)

Reviews: Analog Jan 71 p. 165; Library Jnl
1 May 70 p. 1763; NY Times 26 Apr 70 p. 46;
Saturday Review 11 Apr 70 p. 36

BOYD, John [i.e. Boyd Bradfield Upchurch, 1919-]

SEX AND THE HIGH COMLAND. Bantam (N6551). 212 p.

PB 95c. (1st Weybright 1970). Reviews: Analog
Jly 70 p. 163; this issue

CAMPBELL, John Wood, 1910-71, ed.

ANALOG 8. Doubleday. 227 p. HC \$5.95. 9 stor-
ies, a lazily edited selection from 1968/9.

Review: Analog Dec 71 p. 163

CARNELL, [Edward] John, 1919- ed.

The BEST FROM NEW WRITINGS IN S-F, 1st select-
ion. Dobson. [2], 253 p. HC £1.50.

COCKBURN, Claud, 1904-

OVERDRAFT ON GLORY. Penguin. 267 p. PB 35 np.

(1st Lippincott, Boardman, 1955, signed James
Helvick) Premature invention of a jet engine
in 1908. Reviews: Library Jnl. 15 Sep 55 p.
1919; Manchester Guardian 20 Sep 55 p. 4; New
Statesman & Nation 17 Sep 55 p. 341; NY Times
28 Aug 55 p. 19

COOPER, Edmund, 1926-

The LAST CONTINENT. Hodder. 192 p. PB 25 np.
(1st Dell PB 1969; Hodder HC 1970)

- DICK, Philip K[indred] 1928- and NELSON, Ray
 [i.e. Radell Faraday Nelson] 1931-
 The GANYMEDE TAKEOVER. Arrow. 192 p. PB 25 np.
 (1st Ace 1967)
- DICKSON, Gordon R[upert] 1923-
 SLEEPWALKER'S WORLD. Lippincott. 203 p. HC
 \$5.95. Review: Analog Dec 71 p. 167
- The TACTICS OF MISTAKE. Doubleday. 240 p. HC
 \$4.95. Review: Analog Oct 71 p. 168
- DURRELL, Lawrence, 1912-
 NUNQUAM. Faber. 3-285 p. PB 60 np. (1st Faber
 and Dutton 1970) Female android robot.
 Reviews: Book World 5 Apr 70 p. 5; Christian
 Science Monitor 26 Mch 70 p. 15; Harper's
 Mch 70 p. 110; Library Jnl 1 Apr 70 p. 1390;
 Nation (US) 27 Apr 70 p. 508; New Statesman
 27 Mch 70 p. 450; NY Times 29 Mch 70 p. 4;
 Saturday Review 21 Mch 70 p. 29; Time 18 May
 70 p. 88; Times Lit. Suppt 26 Mch 70 p. 328
- EDMONDSON, G. C. 1922-
 The SHIP THAT SAILED THE TIME STREAM. Arrow.
 192 p. PB 25 np. (1st Ace 1965)
- EKLUND, Gordon, 1945-
 The ECLIPSE OF DAWN. Ace (18630). 7-221 p. PB
 75c.
- HASSLER, Kenneth W.
 INTERGALAC AGENT. Lenox Hill Press. 192 p. HC
 \$3.95
- HERBERT, Frank [Patrick]
 The WORLDS OF FRANK HERBERT. Ace (90925).
 7-191 p. PB 75c (1st New English Lib. 1970)
 Nine shorts.

Current Books

HUXLEY, Aldous [Leonard] 1894-1963

BRAVE NEW WORLD. Folio Society. 176 p. HC.
Ill. Leonard Rosoman. £1.90 (1st Chatto 1932)
Well known hysterically anti-science novel.

LASSWITZ, Kurd

TWO PLANETS. Southern Illinois University Press.
408 p. HC \$10.00. From the German Auf zwei
Planeten, abridged by Erich Lasseitz, translated
by Hans Rudnick. Afterword by Mark R. Hillegas.
First, long overdue English version of this
influential 1902 novel.

NORTON, Andre [i.e. Alice Mary Norton] 1912-

STAR GATE. Ace (78071). 9-188 p. PB 60c.
(1st Harcourt 1958; Ace 1963)

Reviews: Saturday Review 1 Nov 58 p. 62; NY
Herald-Tribune 10 May 59 p. 27; NY Times
14 Dec 58 p. 18

PRIEST, Christopher

INDOCTRINAIRE. New English Lib. 158 p. PB
30 np. (1st Faber 1970)

SIMAK, Clifford D.

DESTINY DOLL. Putnam. 189 p. HC \$4.95.
Review: Analog Dec 71 p. 165

SMITH, Clark Ashton, 1893-1961

LOST WORLDS. Spearman. 419 p. HC £1.75 (1st
Arkham 1944) Mainly weird shorts.

-- OUT OF SPACE AND TIME. Spearman. xii, 370 p.
HC £1.75 (1st Arkham 1942) Mainly weird shorts.
The City of Singing Flame and Beyond the Sing-
ing Flame are sort of interdimensional

-- p. 14

Review Section

The HEROD MEN, by Nick Kamin b/w
DARK PLANET, by John Rackham. Ace Double (13805)
5-149, 5-103 p. PB 75c

Set in Canada at some unspecified future date, Kamin's book is blurbed as: "Planned death vs. unwanted birth in the Overpop Era."

On the side of planned death we have the Society of Herod, an international organization authorized to collect child-tax and to enforce prevailing world law of no progeny in excess of two. Its members are licensed killers. Their special powers include the right to destroy unregistered offspring and to castrate males found guilty of fornication. They enjoy a certain status but, needless to say, are not loved.

In the opposite camp we have the Brotherhood of the FROG. Its members believe in Fundamental Religious Orthodoxy and practice unrestricted procreation as a religious rite. They also cherish a nutty hope that, by means of political chicanery, they can force the World Congress to provide them with a starship. In this they plan to escape from persecution with their more fertile followers, and a new "galactic diocese in space.

Both factions come out fighting when Herod Man, KillCaptain Matter, arrives in Manitoba. His mission, to locate a commune known as Gauze and check whether it is violating current population edicts. Barely on the trail, he finds himself ambushed by a FROG agent and discovers the Brotherhood will stop at nothing to keep the true nature of the commune secret.

Kamin has the makings of an interesting situation here. But he fails to develop his theme of opposing ideologies and sacrifices plot for an orgy of rather futile action. Characters go amping along roads gunning one another down; heads dangle from shredded tendons, adjectives and adverbs proliferate, and tense moments give rise to such anatomical absurdities as: [the scream] "collapsed his lungs and sent them bugging out of his eyes."

Pity. Kamin has some provocative ideas, but he needs to tighten up his writing. Until he does, the end result will be little more than second rate.

Dark Planet.

I think it was Frank Muir who said: "Once into the subjunctive and you're lost." Mysticism, for the average writer, is as hazardous. Once into it, not only is he likely to be lost, but there's every chance he'll wind up losing his disgruntled reader as well.

Rackham is a case in point. For the first half of *Dark Planet* I felt he was really coming across. He had me struggling along with his trio of space-crash survivors, up to our necks in sinister blue-green mud, bracing ourselves against destruction by alien micro-organisms and needled by the knowledge that our disaster had been planned. One hell of an experience, I can tell you.

Admittedly there were moments when I realised that my companions ("Gravel Guts" Evans, the most hated admiral in the Space Service; Christine, his bitchy bosomy daughter; and Stephen Query, misfit instrumentman first class) were giving off a distinct odor of *deja vu*. But what they lacked in

freshness was made up for by the novelty of our surroundings. Rackham does have an original eye for scene and the know-how to bring it to life. I'd got to the pleasurable stage of receiving a gourd of fiery liquid from a friendly "primitive" and was looking forward to bigger excitements ahead when Rackham suddenly turned Mystic. In no time, he'd conjured up a flock of flesh-and-blood flying tree-fairies, lost himself in a maze of high-minded italicised prose, and -- well, I'm afraid that's where I opted out. Couldn't buy the rest.

To sum up: don't dismiss this Double, but don't expect too much. Ace should issue both writers a printed reminder: Never underestimate the selling power of a good tight plot.

-- Angus Gordon

The MONITORS
by Keith Laumer

Mayflower
160 p. PB 25 np

Curiously this farce reminds me of Jack Williamson's classic novel *The Humanoids* in plot. Benevolent aliens take over the planet; hero distrusts aliens; hero gets into trouble and joins resistance group; hero is reconciled to accepting aliens in last chapter. The plot is the same but the writing is light-years removed. Laumer writes in a funny, flip and farcical style, throwing in mirth-producing similes in his descriptions. The hero is familiar: one of those not-so-bright types who battles through only because luck is on his side. The other characters are mere cardboard, though there is a certain zany appeal in the paranoid leader of the underground movement that's straight out of Laumer's novel.

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A Plague of Demons. The writing is better than some laumer stories, though the comic device of characters talking at cross-purposes is used too often and in too long a conversation. Passable entertainment if you're not looking for a serious science fiction story.

-- Michael O'Brien

STAR TREK 4
adapted by James Blish

Bantam (07009)
134 p. PB 75c

What you have to be able to do in order to stomach these things -- the Star Trek series -- is to accept uncritically the large amount of "poetic license" involved in their creation. Somehow it is more difficult to "forget" that it is sort of improbable that we live in an English-speaking universe, literally. Or to overlook that it is almost equally unlikely that the officers of a future Federation's finest starship would risk their own necks physically every time they get the opportunity.

I've had a long history of being simple-minded like that, for which I'm thankful, since I was therefore able to enjoy these stories -- given, or perhaps especially since -- I had seen most of them in the TV form.

There is not much point in detailed criticism. As readers of SF News you will know that James Blish is an able SF writer who won't insult your intelligence if he can avoid it. There are six stories in this lot and they include one of the award winning episodes, The Menagerie, using the original, better, and not televised ending.

If you are a Star Trek fanatic you'll remember the stories you liked. Those also included are

All Our Yesterdays; The Devil in the Dark; Journey to Babel; The Entering Incident (next best after The Menagerie); and A Piece of the Action. If for some reason you did not enjoy the TV series, however, I would not bother with the book.

John C. Young

SEX AND THE HIGH COMMAND
by John Boyd

Dantam (N6551)
212 p. PB 95c

Having thoroughly enjoyed Boyd's earlier book *The Rakehells of Heaven* (SF News Feb) I approached his second foray in gleeful anticipation of another tour de force. However, while this book is similar in treatment and tone, I was disappointed by the uneven quality of the writing. The science providing the mainspring for the plot is tossed off in a couple of lines, so if hardcore science is your bag, best give it a miss.

The story is set in the not too distant future when the women's lib movement has become a major political force on a world wide scale (even transcending communism in the USSR yet). To add fuel to the fire a chemical means of unlocking the DNA in the ovum without the agency of the sperm has been discovered and marketed. You guessed it, total redundancy of the male in favor of parthogenesis is the central concern of the novel. What has started as pressure group activity against militarism on a world wide scale escalates to wholesale replacement of men by the pill as more and more women become hooked and come under the influence of "Mother" Carey, the leader of the women's lib movement.

Most of the action takes place offstage and

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Mother Carey and her followers are conceived in a very sketchy way. Where Boyd scores heavily is with a catalog of eccentric males from the US President and his cabinet to the Defence chiefs, the members of a monastery, and a kinky FBI agent. Some of these are on a par with Dickens at his best.

The book contains some interesting vignettes and wild sendups -- even parlor games yet! Limerick completions and vocabulary tests -- the Victorians really had something with this little game: guess the naughty word from the number of dashes.

To sum up -- it's an enjoyable frolic, with nil to marginal SF interest.

-- Lindsay Carroll

VORTEX: New Soviet Science Fiction Pan
ed. C. G. Bearne. 190 p. PB 25 np

Curiously, this collection of half a dozen short stories and a short novel is prefaced by a scholarly introduction by Ariadne Gromova who makes the surprising statement that Soviet SF is really only ten years old. Anything before that is dismissed as "two or three decades of creative anabiosis."

The Time Scale by Aleksandr and Sergei Abramov is a readable story of intrigue laced with time travel elements in the style of Philip K. Dick or Alain Resnais. It has been done several times in English. So has Andrei Gorbovskii's Futility, about sea-going aliens who know there isn't any life on land, so why bother looking there?

Artur Mirer's two stories, The Test and The Old Road are part of a series: the result is irritatingly like reading the first and last chapters of a novel, while the writing style suffers from a different translator for each story.

The cover story, Boris Smagin's *The Silent Procession*, is a rather too self-consciously literary anecdote about bringing the past into the present. Also rather a cliché to the Western reader.

More sophisticated is Gorbovskii's *He Will Wake in 200 Years*, which combines the theme of Wells' *The Sleeper Awakes* with the plot of Bierce's *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* to produce a readable piece of quasi-SF.

Occupying nearly half the book is *The Second Martian Invasion* by the famous team of Arkadii and Boris Strugatskii. The title would seem to indicate their debt to Wells, as the story is concerned with the effect (or lack of it) that a Wellsian invasion from Mars has on a small provincial town. The story is quietly written but very effective, reminding me sometimes of the Russian satirists Ilf and Petrov. Probably the most readable story in the book, this is one of those stories about what happens after the invasion such as mentioned last month.

ROCKETS IN URSA MAJOR
by Fred and Geoffrey Hoyle

Mayflower
124 p. PB 25 np

Almost certainly the worst book by Hoyles. If Geoffrey is responsible for the "people" part of the novel as the blurbs suggest, then I'd suggest Fred disown him. Starting off with a Space Corps officer straight out of an old RAF movie, the story lurches through a rather ordinary space opera plot which puzzled me until I learned from a correspondent that the book is adapted from a children's play! It would seem that the publishers are more to blame than the

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authors in one way, for not packaging the book as a juvenile; it's certainly not an adult novel.

-- Michael O'Brien

SPACE CADET
by Robert A. Heinlein

Acc (77730)
7-221 p. PB 95c

Graham Stone's review of this juvenile in SF News July expresses my views exactly. All I can add is the suggestion that Heinlein may have had Conan Doyle's The White Company in mind when he decided to write this account of how a boy recruit, in 2075, wins his spurs in the Space Cadets.

There are references to the "oyster-white" uniform of the service, as well as the ancient virtues of knighthood and code of chivalry. Matt, the young space-hero, shows the same humorless dedication in overcoming obstacles that I remember in Doyle's novice squire Alleyne. The space training school sequences are indeed too pat, and I would have welcomed some of Doyle's dash and romance to leaven the action of the subsequent "quest". Heinlein does just manage to miss the mark with this. Nevertheless he is, as always, too wily a pro to weigh in with anything but a competent book.

-- Angus Gordon

PHILIP GORDON WYLIE, 1902-1971

Philip Wylie died on October 27. A strong personality who is most widely known as the original critic of Momism, he was also a successful science fiction author with the general public before it had heard of the movement. His 1930 novel *Gladiator* with its simple plot of an inhumanly strong man and his life of frustration as a misfit was a popular success, inspiring a not very funny film featuring Joe E. Brown and, at least in part, the still flourishing *Superman* comic strip. In 1931 he followed this with *The Murderer Invisible* basically following Wells' concept but taking it further. It was bought by Universal but Wells' version was the one filmed essentially; Wylie did write the script for Paramount's *The Island of Lost Souls*, based on *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. The 1932 novel *The Savage Gentleman* was not quite SF, a tale of a Tarzan-like character raised if not by apes at least away from civilisation.

His collaboration with Edwin Balmer, *When Worlds Collide*, was however more of interest. The theme of the destruction of Earth in collision with an interstellar wanderer (now, what would be the odds against that?) has never been handled better, and it was eventually filmed after a long lapse in 1951; in 1933 the book had a profound impact. Its sequel *After Worlds Collide* inevitably did not quite match it with its vicissitudes of the few rocket loads of survivors on a new Earthlike world, but it was still up with the best science fiction of its day.

There were other stories later -- *Paradise Crater*, an ill-timed atomic bomb novel mothballed until after Hiroshima; *Blunder*, a classic warning in which the world was destroyed due to official secrecy stopping warnings of the danger; several

Philip Wylie

more stories inspired by the nuclear threat in one way or other that were too charged with message to deliver it. In *The Disappearance* (1950) two parallel stories follow the fortunes of a world without men and a world without women: though it is frankly unrationalised, the treatment in each case is thoroughly realistic and its meaning is not over-emphasised. The book is successful as an imaginative tour de force and also as an eloquent plea for a better relationship of the sexes than the armed truce Wylie showed implicit in the society of his age.

Perhaps his voice was heeded by some of his contemporaries. Certainly the faults he embarrassed people by denouncing in *Generation of Vipers* and other books are now at least generally known and rejected by many others.

Current Books (contd.)

STURGEON, Theodore [Hamilton] 1918-

The DREAMING JEWELS. Corgi, 147 p. PB 25 np.
(in *Fantastic Adventures* Feb 50, Br. no. 9.
Greenberg 1950; Nova 1955; Gollancz 1969)

Reviews: *Astounding* US Apr 51 p. 138; *SF News*
Nov 69 p. 18

van VOGT, Alfred [Elton] 1912-

The WORLD OF NULL-A. Sphere. 221p PB 30 np.
(in *Astounding* US Aug-Oct 45. Simon & Schuster
1948; Ace 1953; Dobson 1970; Berkley 1970)

Reviews: *Amazing* Jan 65 p. 125; *NY Herald-*
Tribune 21 Mch 48 p. 12; *New Yorker* 27 Mch 48

WHEATLEY, Dennis

THEY FOUND ATLANTIS. Arrow. 352 p. PB 35 np.
(1st Hutchinson 1935) Occultist Atlantis,
with a group of modern survivors living under
the sea and ogling us via astral projection.

WOLLHEIM, Donald A[llan] ed.

ACE SCIENCE FICTION READER. Ace (00275). 15-251 p.
PB 95c. Three short novels. The Trouble with
Tycho by C. D. Simak; The Last Castle by Jack
Vance; Empire Star by S. R. Delany.

WURLITZER, Rudolph

FLATS. Dutton. 159 p. HC \$4.95. One of those
"experimental" stories, it may or may not be
about a future war-devastated world.

Reviews: Library Jnl 1 Nov 70 p. 3808; NY
Times 20 Sep 70 p. 5

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SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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Box 852, P.O., Canberra City, ACT 2601

The Association aims to bring together
people seriously interested in science fiction,
in their mutual interests. Inquiries and
suggestions are welcome.

G. B. Stone
Secretary