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S C I E N C E F I C T I O N N E W S
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No. 50

The MOVING FINGER

Well, so we've made it to our 50th issue. No great deal, perhaps. Yet in the highly unstable realm of science fiction's supporters few publications last beyond a year — we're in our eighth — and without having ever thought of keeping count your editor feels sure that of the thousands of ephemeral sheets begun, the number seeing a second issue would be a slender majority.

Indeed, if we chose to count the earlier series of Science Fiction News running from 1953 to 1959 we could add another 24 to our score. That was an ambitious project: not to put too fine a point on it, it was pretentiously unrealistic. Some issues letterpress printed, some offset, it surveyed the limited world of SF in a manner more in keeping with its claim to cover the news than the present mimeographed product. But we chose to revive the title because it seemed a good one. Without claiming too much, it plainly announced its field of interest to the stranger picking it up; unlike many titles in this field, it did not try to impress with a fancied wit or profundity — nor did it express contempt for the serious reader of SF by deliberate absurdity. It was also sufficiently general to cover a wide variety of material, wider in fact than we have used. This is one reason why we would not be tempted to change it, say, to Science Fiction Review — though this would also have a precedent, a monthly bulletin of that name having been produced privately by Rex Meyer and circulated to the old Australian Science Fiction Society in 1952/3.

In short, we are still here.

The SEEDBEARERS, by Peter Valentine Timlett
Bantam PB (T2570) 272 p.

A novel about Atlantis? In 1976? Surely you jest. But no, here it is, just as though no work had been done in archaeology, history, physical and cultural anthropology, linguistics, oceanography or geophysics since the 17th Century. Folklore doesn't respond to new information very fast, does it?

Well, it's not the Atlantis of Plato — Timlett emphasises that in a preface both naive and misrepresentative — nor the technologically advanced version nor as he claims fully the occultist one, but a group somewhere around Jamaica with longships making exaggerated Viking raids on the mainland.

There is a lot here to remind one of Robert E. Howard, not only in the style and the lovingly described sadistic violence but in the casual anachronism mixing names and elements from many times and cultures.

To look at a few points —

The mainland being debauched is "Amaria", though the navigator Amerigo Vespucci, whose work made it clear that the new lands couldn't be part of Asia, made his voyages between 1497 and 1512 AD, and this is all supposed to take place quite some thousands of years ago — around 11,000 following Plato.

The locality first seen is the "Gulf of Mehico-han", and the map shows it in modern Campeche or Yucatan, perhaps 700 miles from the district whose name the Conquistadores gave to the whole country. The ancestors of the Nahuatl speaking Aztecs and others must have been primitive hunters somewhere around Utah or Minnesota then anyway.

In this Atlantis the master race (got to have a master race to emphasise the kinky authoritarianism in a book like this) are the Toltecs, who of course are known to history as part of the early wave of Nahuatl speakers entering central Mexico from the north in the 9th Century AD; in this period they were represented by the same ancestors as the Aztecs. Another ethnic group, the Akkadians — a fair-haired lot who produce all the islands' craftsmen and are often homosexual — are further out of place, the

historical Akkad being the northern half of Iraq. The historical Akkadians had their great period from about 2300 BC when King Sargon founded the now altogether lost capital city Agade, to 2000 ~~where~~ the leadership shifted to Babylon. Their greatest extent was from the Persian Gulf to Syria and the Taurus region, with trade to Crete and India; being a Semitic group they were black-headed, and it is not recorded that they were any more often gay than any other nation. Timlett was probably thinking of Classical Greeks, who however were not fair either.

Then there are some 7-foot black slave warriors (Dr. Freud — 1) presumably from Africa though it doesn't say so. As slaves they wear iron collars — well, primitive ironworking contrary to the general impression goes back as far as copper, to around 4000 BC, but that's not the same as being able to make something as demanding as a collar, which brings us to more like 1000. And the collars are marked with the broad arrow symbol of state property first known to be used by James II in London in 1687.

Some of the names look Greek, which would be a bit strange; others suggest other peoples — like Kumara, a Hindu god first noted around the time of Christ. And the blacks have medicine men called Shamans, who in reality were priests in certain northern Asian cultures whose name has been loosely used for similar figures in other parts of Asia all the way to Indonesia and in North America.

But if you like pseudo-historical adventure with plenty of bloody action it reads well enough. No doubt there's a public for it.

— Trimalchio

TETRASOMY TWO, by Oscar Rossiter
Bantam PB (T2052) 196 p.

A particularly difficult book to review. Definitely recommended, no question that it's very good, but just how much to say about it is a problem. Its impact depends on tension and surprise, and throughout the book a puzzle develops through growing complexity of mystery and paradox, through successive breakthroughs as new perspectives are revealed. Whatever you think

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is going on at any stage is probably going to be contradicted.

"Imagine" -- it's not often I feel like falling back on quoting a publisher's blurb -- "Imagine a person possessing a colossal intelligence many orders of magnitude greater than what we call genius... what sort of life would he choose? He would be considered hopelessly insane, and he would welcome that."

Right. That's the basic premise, a really high intelligence. SF hasn't done very much with the possibly confrontation of man with a mentality too far beyond human experience for any communication. Where the book begins, with a sharp young medic noticing something odd about a catatonic patient, a lot of hardened SF readers will remember Leinster's Case of John Kingman, which is on their shelves in several collections. No. It's not like that at all, folks. It's not like the Arisians or the Pure Intellectuals in E. E. Smith. Or Hoyle's Black Cloud. Or Stapledon's Odd John and his oddball friends and enemies, or the Great Brains he gives such a brief treatment of in Last and First Men. Or the Jockaira Gods in Heinlein's Methuselah's Children. Or anything else you ever read. You'll have to read this book. Don't delay, or you're missing something.

— Cleve Gilbert

STAR TREK 11, adapted by James Blish
Bantam PB (Q8717) 188 p.

Another serving of hashed-up reconstituted rations from the execrable TV series that continues to live a zombic-like existence in these books. Blish has put into undistinguished prose six scripts by eight writers. Whatever virtue was there originally -- and there is some real talent represented, notably Jerome Bixby and Robert Bloch -- it's gone in the end product.

I gather from a reference in the last Amazing that Blish must have died recently. I'm sorry he didn't live to get away from this awful hack work and write more of the kind of work he should be remembered for.

— Trimalchio

Le FULGUR GRIS, par E. E. "Doc" Smith
Ed. Albin Michel, Paris, 1976. 246 p. PB

Comme le plupart d'Australiens de mon époque, j'ai étudié la langue française au lycée, et après succès au "Leaving" examen j'ai oublié le peu on a compris de cette belle (si formidable) langue.

Mais voici ces intéressants SF livres en français -- M. Georges Gallet, un scientifiocionist depuis les 1930's quand SF en anglais a plus precarieux existé, les années de Gernsback, Tremaine et Sloane, de trois faibles SF periodiques et de livres isolés par Wells, Burroughs ou Stapledon, un temps d'experiment précédant l'age d'or de Campbell, Heinlein et les autres du Astounding classique -- Gallet, je dis, donne exemples des SF-romans imprimés sous son dirigance, en l'esperance de revue ou publicité. Merci, mon vieux! Peut-être il y a un peu d'amateurs de SF Australiens avec un savoir de français genuine, qui pourrait lire ses tomes avec plaisir.

Les noms des auteurs sont quelquefois étranges -- Haiblum, Henneberg, Carrigan, Chanbert, Ravignat -- mais aussi on remarque les oeuvres de Heinlein, Vance, Clarke, Niven, Kuttner et autres traduits de l'anglais -- et aussi Ernsting, de l'allemand, et les Strougatskys, de la russe...et le grand serie des épiques de l'espace galactique, de la guerre de civilisation galactique contre Boskone, de E.E.Smith.

Le fulgur gris est le quatrième volet -- Gray Lensman en anglais. Dans le troisième, Patrouille Galactique -- le premier, du serie dans les pages de Astounding, 1937/8 -- Kinnison a combattu les "pirates" de Boskone, découvert le mystère de l'empire do contre-civilisation avec son chef Helmuth, qui seulement "parle pour Boskone", visité les planètes Trengo (source du narcotique Thionite), Delgon (avec ses Suzerains sadistiques), Velantia (avec ses reptiles ailés d'haute intelligence; le brave Worsel qui devait un Fulgur-Lensman, ou lensnonhuman), Radelix, Boissia II et autres...trouvé la grand-base des pirates at Helmuth, et attaqué avec la grand-flotte de la Patrouille.

* sans dictionnaire.

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Alors, dans ce livre Kinnison continue ses recherches. Nous comprenons, en avant du fulgur, le réalité de Boskone: le conseil de neuf qu'est le Politbureau de la Contre-Civilisation, ses membres les maîtres du race d'Eich, habitants monstreuses de la planète Jarnevon: "creatures multitentaculaires indescriptibles...Celles-ci ne ressemblait pas exactement a des pieuvres mais, bien que recouvertes de piquants, ne rappelaient en rien non plus les oursins. On ne pouvait par ailleurs, malgré leurs ecailles, leurs dents et leurs ailes, les rapprocher des lézards, des serpents de mer ou des vautours."

La negasphere...le corridor hyperspatial...
Kinnison dans le rôle de Bill Williams le Sauvage, le mineur du vide...eh bien, 1939.

Devant Alfvén et Weizsäcker et l'idée modern de la naissance des planètes, Smith a un problème d'expliquer l'existence de millions de planètes, lesquelles l'histoire demandait: son explication, l'interpenetration en passant de deux galaxies, et ainsi la formation de millions de systèmes planétaires par les collisions des étoiles!

Et les deux anciens pouvoirs, Arisia et Eddore, au-dessus et au delà des grands cultures ennemis...

Magnifique, par les moustaches de Klono.

— G.S.

The MAN WHO LIVED IN INNER SPACE, by Arnold Federbush. Bantam PB. 149 p.

An odd book indeed, more than a little out of tune with its time -- with counterculture and protest alike with orthodoxy. There is no doubt where the author stands, he is among those of us who are sickened and frightened by the false civilisation of waste and destruction in which we live, by the mindless rape of the natural world, by the crushing and homogenising of all the Earth's spontaneous beauty and variety into a uniform sterile monotony, by the frantic greed and blind callousness of the exploiters wringing

the last cent out of anything they can process into products as often as not useless or harmful to man in any case. Yet Federbush is not for boycotts or barricades, for organised opposition to entrenched evil — neither is he for dropping out to communal growing of hair and vegetables in loving collectivity.

The message — at least as I receive it — is that Federbush does not love his fellow men and does not try: he sees them as neither able to love nor deserving of love. And viewing our world objectively, on balance he may be right. A terrible thing to believe, and disgusted as I am from a lifetime embracing Hiroshima and Auschwitz, Dallas and Berlin and Belfast and Johannesburg, Nixon and Stalin and Amin and Eichmann, CIA and MVD, oil sheikhs and multinationals, commercial television, popular music and the phony world of pseudo-art, and the contemptible gang of slobs and grafters that constitute our political life — no, I still have enough hope and trust in the good will hiding and waiting for a chance to show itself among people.

But as for the book, it's not like most novels in showing people communicating and influencing each other. After the first few pages, the book's single recognisable human being (we never even hear his full name) speaks to no one, sees no one. A disabled victim of an industrial accident, working alone as a nominal machine-watcher in an automated factory, he is more alone in a great industrial complex than Crusoe before Friday. Be it noted that his employment is really a heartless kind of act of charity: his masters do not know how to do good.

This man, then, shunned and forgotten by his kind, grows out of his servile apathy into a creator and doer with new cares and motives. He is drawn to the wronged environment, to the silent majority of living things, above all to the abused yet undefa ted sea.

The sea! The first setting of life, now utterly strange and hostile to the highest species. Or is it? Many writers since Arthur Clarke have seen it is a new frontier, a realm full of promise: not only offer-

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ing new fields to exploit but a new environment into which man might cautiously penetrate and learn to live in a new way. Living under water is a challenge very similar to living on an un-Earthlike planet, as science fiction has long visualised, a challenge not yet taken up very seriously by research but gradually assuming a place in our future.

Here we have a powerful vision of the sea as a new home and hope for man, even though it is presented as a private vision and something that the human race in general does not deserve a chance to ravish and misuse. The fascination of the sea, of its limitless promise for understanding use, its appeal to those who think in terms of learning new ways of living in accepting a new and different environment, has never been better expressed than in the calm eloquence of language in this book.

In the end there is realisation of the real threat to the sea from mismanagement and pollution, and the need to take action. The recluse become an exile from the world of men has to turn again to confrontation with men, now as an enemy.

A remarkable book, one for everyone to persist with through its utter sense of alienation from all human society.

— G.S.

STAR CHILD, by Fred Mustard Stewart.
Bantam PB (X2101) 239 p.

It's a time of violence we live in — if you haven't noticed. Heads of state are shot at, bombs are planted in pubs or cars, people are attacked at random in public, aircraft are pirated, and supposed enforcers of the law and defenders of their country's peace use bashing, burglary, blackmail, kidnapping, torture and murder as a matter of routine in their work. Not surprisingly, the same contempt for human life and acceptance of violence as tolerable or at least a proper subject for description carries over into literature. No doubt there are still authors who go on writing, and readers who go on reading,

books where people just get on with their everyday business of living — business, politics, self-improvement, adultery, drinking beer, mowing the front lawn — and no one gets raped, tortured or murdered. It just doesn't seem that way. Stewart doesn't write them like that, for one. So be warned, don't read this unless you have a strong stomach for the horrible.

I wouldn't say it moves right along: in fact it has a plot like a plate of spaghetti, and a lot more happens than need be discussed in a short review. But it turns on some extra-terrestrial visitors who are on their way here to make a few changes, two factions of them with different stories to tell in fact, who first make themselves known to a select few in dreams. From then on it gets hairy, with scheming and counter-skulduggery, a new religion based on the messiah from space (sort of) and much blood-spattered action.

One thing I couldn't swallow right at the beginning, a bit put in to show that the dreams are something else: there's this character, an educated woman in her twenties, a teacher in fact, and we're told not that she never did physics, or that she's not technically minded: rather we have to assume that she doesn't know anything of what goes on around her, is completely unaware of the great debate over the environment and pollution or the power and resources issue, and hasn't read a newspaper in her life (this last is wrong, we're actually told she reads the New York Times). Because she is supposed never to have heard of nuclear fusion. There come some pretty unlikely things later on, but they're not in a class with that one.

Well, you've been warned — if you can take it, read this book anyway. As a mystery it's not bad.

— Cleve Gilbert

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SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN, by A. Merritt
Avon PB. 192 p.

I strike, folks. I'm not going to review Seven Footprints to Satan. It has nothing to do with SF, it's not a fantasy as the title suggests; it's a weak pastiche of Sax Rohmer, and personally I could never get interested in him. Satan is not the guy you're thinking of, just a master crim in the style of Fu Manchu.

But this only the least of Merritt's books -- meant to say last, but its original date surprisingly comes in the middle of his writing life -- and all his others are better. Some of them very much better. Some of them hover around the limits of being SF, some are simply mystical; some like this have their marvels set amidst early 20th Century metropolitan life, the better ones in remote imagined lands.

First and best was The Moon Pool. Originally a short story about a ruin left by a vanished civilization on a Pacific island, where strange forces still worked, triggered by the full moon, and a strange nebulous entity lurked waiting for victims. A ghost story? A Lovecraftian entity? Somehow it didn't seem that way. Then he wrote the continuation appearing separately as The Conquest of the Moon Pool, the two merging smoothly in book versions. Survivors of the events in the original story go back to the island to get to the bottom of it, and do just that -- going down into a vast cave-world where a decadent people use remnants of a superior technology, with death rays and force screens and levitating vehicles in a generally medieval-looking setting. Monsters, intelligent giant frogs, a cult of the Shining One we met earlier, an immortal energy being created by the ancients. As lost-race stories go, it is excellent. Reprinted in early Amazing Stories, it brought Merritt into the SF movement as an extravagantly popular figure.

The Metal Monster (sometimes better titled The Metal Emperor, has the metallic crystalline life forms developing in the dim central Asian region, a great place to put lost races in the naive 1920's. Just the usual nonhuman menace plot, with manoeuvring of

local human factions with an eye to the main chance, but a good yarn. I read it in Famous Fantastic Mysteries during the war, magnificently illustrated by Virgil Finlay; later I saw the even more magnificent drawings by Frank Paul for the 11-part serial version in — would you believe — Science and Invention of 1927. Why doesn't someone resurrect some of this unusual and exciting artwork from early SF?

Dwellers in the Mirage is more lost race stuff — the warm valley in the Arctic, two sides in a permanent standoff from an ancient conflict, some odd critters and an interdimensional gateway with a giant squidlike nasty on the other side to which one side tosses prisoners.

The other books are less interesting to me. Burn, Witch! has doll-sized people running around doing mischief for a naughty old hag (filmed as The Devil Doll, which nobody I know of remembers seeing); Creep, Shadow! has immortals, ghosts and stuff. The Face in the Abyss and sequel The Snake Mother are more lost race adventure, in the Andes somewhere, with a complicated lot of unusual elements — the Face, an immobile Power that rules indirectly; some ancients including a top-half-woman that turns into a serpent from then down (no comment from me); spider-men. Then there are some short stories and fragments worked on by Hannes Bok after Merritt's death.

All of these still have popular appeal: Avon keep them in print most of the time and say they have sold five million copies. So you should be able to find some of them easily enough, and I think you might find them worth while.

— Cleve Gilbert

STAR TREK: THE NEW VOYAGES, ed. Sondra Marshak and Myrna Culbreath. Bantam PB (X2719) 237 p.

As for this collection of...of...

"Abomination" is the best word I can find. Look it up.

Not only do idiots keep the memory of that embarrassing series alive when it should have vanished like

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a nightmare. Not only do they applaud when a crude animated version inflicts its imbecilities on young TV victims. Not only do they read the prose versions ground out by Blish. Now they've started writing new stories using the same material. This is really too much.

All of the eight dollops flung at us here were written by women, which does nothing to help improve the status of women in a world still 'unfairly' male-dominated. As a matter of fact they bring to mind Dr. Johnson's cruel witticism about the lady preacher.

Women have been writing science fiction -- and do not quote me, I pray you, as admitting that trash like this is to be acknowledged as science fiction, but only that the publishers describe it so -- from its beginnings. Louise Taylor Hansen was up among the best writers around 1930 -- only she wrote so little, and there was always the suspicion that the mysterious brother whose portrait she used to hide her sex might have helped a little. C. L. Moore was a better champion. But after that, none of the others made much impression. Clare Winger Harris? Amelia Reynolds Long? Leigh Brackett? Margaret St. Clair? Winona McClintick, whom our editor once named as his favorite writer on the strength of her first story? * They did no more than help fill a few more pages. Andre Norton? Joanna Russ? Ursula LeGuin? No sir, I cannot believe you are serious.

But such really sickening nonsense as this does real harm to the cause of women, as well as hitting science fiction below the belt; also detracting from the generally fine record of the Bantam organisation.

-- Trimalchio

* Yes, so I did. I still admire In the Days of our Fathers. But I meant it as a silly answer to what I thought was a silly question. Who could seriously name one writer as the best? -- G.S.

IN OUR HANDS, THE STARS, by Harry Harrison.
Arrow PB. 217 p. A \$1.40

I am momentarily at a loss. What to say, for an audience who have an active interest in science fiction, about a novel serialised in Analog, and previously in book form, even an SFBC choice?

Well, it's always handy to have a good SF book — and this is one of the best — available in paperback. You can mention it to anyone who hasn't read it, and you can pick up one or two copies as spares to lend people. Lend it to your Uncle Alf who generally reads the sporting page.

"Here you are," you can tell him, "Here's a pretty damned good book to read. You want to know what I see in science fiction, reading this will help explain it better than I can.

"It's about antigravity — maybe you think from high school physics that that's impossible, but perhaps not: we don't know everything yet, even enough to say confidently what the nature of gravitational force is, or even if it should be called a force or something else. So a way of neutralising it is not ruled out and might be found, possibly from an accidental clue as imagined here.

"And anyone can see how important such a discovery would be, not only its value — immediately making interplanetary flight a practical proposition and interstellar flight not far behind — for science, but its possible misuse for international aggression.

"Another interesting thing about this book is that it gets away from the moronic flagwaving you expect from Americans. Harrison has spent a lot of time in Denmark, a country he obviously likes and respects, and which he believes — and to anyone outside America it will seem no less than obvious — is more to be trusted with the possession of such a power than America. True, a lot of the horrifying revelations of the last few years have made most educated Americans more humble and more sceptical about their government and its servants — but Harrison was ahead of his time in speaking out as he does here. The story is inter-

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esting and the characters are believable. You'll appreciate it."

— Clove Gilbert

The BANTAM STORY: Thirty Years of Paperback Publishing, by Clarence Petersen. Bantam PB. 167 p.

A revised version of a popular account of the firm issued in 1970. Not having the original at hand for comparison it is hard to say how much has been changed and added, but there seems to be more about personalities in the operation and about the practical side of getting books sold.

Publishing today is an industry dominated by massive, rather impersonal organisations. It is most interesting to get any insight into how they really work and what attitudes move them.

There is still virtually nothing about science fiction, a surprising omission considering how much Bantam has done to make the field popular with the masses. And — though there is a list of books in print at time of publication — there is still no index! Which is inexcusable!

The book is issued free, for the asking. Write to: The Bantam Story, Bantam Books, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York City 10019. Will any other important publishers take the hint, I wonder.

— G.S.

DECADE: The 1950's, ed. Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison. Macmillan, London, 1976. 15-219 p. HC

The phantom blurb writer is still haunting the publishing world, sabotaging books with his imbecilic misrepresentations. A pity Aldiss or Harrison could not stand guard, Luger in hand, in the Macmillan editorial department and stop him slipping in the text preceding the title page here, assuring us that after unspecified glories from the 1890's onward science fiction "grew even more, until in the 1930's the first specialist magazines were established." (Edited by Chick Sale, no doubt.)

Well, the idea is good. At long last, a series of collections covering the development of SF chronologically. Trying to cover ten years in one skimpy volume is pitiful, but it's better than the usual purposeless collection. Or is it?

Faced with selecting from some 12,000 short SF stories published in the 1950's, Aldiss and Harrison seem to have gone into shock. The dozen stories appearing here (1.2 to a year! What could anyone do?) look like not the result of rational, if desperate, selection as what two old hands might come up with from what they can remember in a hasty meeting over lunch in a pub.

Who were a few of the popular names writing a lot then? Well, Kuttner — Yes, he's go to go in, and we want a robot story anyway so how about Two-Handed Engine? Yes, though I liked Or Else — No good, it's been too overdone even for this book, and besides, saucers — OK, Two-Handed Engine. Then therewas Sheckley — Early Model will do for him. Matheson, how about a different one though...The Last day? OK. Heinlein? — Not many shorts, he was mostly doing novels by then. van Vogt — not writing much either. Farmer! Got to have him. See how we go for space, Sail On! Sail On! if we're pushed, otherwise...There was Cordwainer Smith. How about Scanners Live in Vain, the original? — Right, can't beat it. Bradbury. The Million Year Picnic? Too old. Asleep in Armageddon? So's that. Try The Pedestrian. OK. — Arthur Clarke! The Nine Bill- — No! Never get away with ringing that in again. What about The Star? We want a religious piece anyway, right? We want a big name from outside regular SF writers too. — That's true. Wylie, Kersh, what about Howard Fast? The Large Ant's a good little yarn. Tell you what, we need a woman writer too. Katherine Maclean? I liked Incommunicado. — Too long, make it The Snowball Effect. Speaking of The Nine Billion Names, we want something throwing out all of science. Five Years in the Marmalade, whoever wrote it... — Tough luck, that's 1949 too. But it's a point, so there's Bixby's The Holes around Mars, that ought to be impossible enough for anyone. — Have we got Budrys? No! Plenty of good stuff, say The Edge of the Sea.

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I think we need more humor though. What were some of the funnies? — In the Fifties? Hmm! They don't seem to stick in the mind, do they? Plenty that were good for a laugh at the time, but at this distance ..I know, how about Philips' Dreams are sacred? Great! — Wrong, that was 1949 too. Quite a year, that. — Blast. Well, we put in Bixby and Sheckley anyway. — We haven't got Anderson, Asimov, Dick, Pohl, Kornbluth, Knight, MacDonald — Brown, Reynolds, Russell, Harness, Morrison, Tenn, Coppel, Clement, Simak, George O. Smith, not to mention Fairman, Jorgensen and the Ziff-Davis bunch, Garrett and Silverberg, or a couple hundred others. We've only got room for about 70,000 words here. One more. Got a soft spot for anyone? — Well, Grandpa, by Schmitz, I liked it. — Well, that's about it, when we see how they fit. Have to watch we get a few mags represented besides Astounding and Galaxy too, this time. — OK, that'll do. I'll phone you with the final lineup next week sometime. Toss you for the intro.

It is notoriously hard enough to pick a balanced selection from one year's output. Some day, real editors will do it, I hopefully predict, from 1926 onward — which, in case you didn't know, was when SF really started, not somewhere in the murky past, Wells and others to the contrary — in a series of volumes putting together not just the best but enough of what we've all forgotten to show how it was at each stage.

We'll have to wait a while for that, though. In the mean time, alas, this is just another undistinguished book to add to the second thousand SF short story collections.

— G.S.

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