

# SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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SOMETHING ABOUT EDITORS (continued)

What has gone before: in the January SFM I set down some thoughts on the way certain short story collections are put together, putting forward in particular the proposition that some editors are not above taking short cuts, like cannibalising a few previous books rather than going back to the sources.

I think it may have been Robert Bloch who once quipped that he was too busy to take an hour off and edit an anthology. If you considered the process of getting the book through the printers the minimum of work would add up to a number of hours, but if you only take the selection of the contents then doing it the easy way could take well under an hour.

Here's one example:

Blue Moon, an anthology of Science Fiction stories, edited by Douglas Lindsay. Mayflower, 1970. This paperback takes its title from the first of the stories included, so Lindsay spared himself the intellectual toil of concocting a title. He (or the phantom blurb writer) characterised the book on the cover as "The mysteries of time and the future unravelled" -- nothing like a little exaggeration, is there?

When we scan the list of titles included we are not at first much impressed, for there is no proper table of contents. There is a list of the eight stories by title without giving the authors, so there is not much indication of the scope and only one story is likely to jog the memory. On thumbing through the book we come up with this list:

Blue Moon, by Norman L. Knight  
Twilight of Tomorrow, by Joseph Gilbert  
Rain of Fire, by Ray Cummings  
Time Exposure, by E. A. Grosser  
The Case of the Vanishing Cellars, by  
J. S. Klimaris  
Ajax of Ajax, by Martin Barrow  
Washington Slept Here, by Hugh Raymond  
The Year of Uniting, by Hugh Raymond

Well, that begins to look good, doesn't it? No tired old faithfuls here. Lindsay must have delved into odd corners to find these unfamiliar offerings, we surmise. Cummings is the only obvious big name from the dim prehistory of SF, and this is not a well known choice from his very numerous writings. Knight wrote a handful of well received tales, was lost from view for a generation and surfaced to collaborate with James Blisn. The rest generally belong to the 40's. Grosser had a very brief career and nothing was known of him personally. Someone (Maybe Julius Unger) suggested that he might be a pseudonym of Graph Waldeyer, which wasn't much help!

The one familiar item is Ajax of Ajax, one of a series written by Don Wollheim as Martin Pearson and much later considerably reworked as Destiny's Orbit by David Grinnell. But the original short was in Flight into Space, edited by Wollheim (Fell 1950; Kemsley/Cherry Tree PB 1951), which also included another of his own early potboilers, Planet Passage. And incidentally, another phenomenon of editing on which something might well be said is the inclusion of the editor's own work.

Well, let's see if we can trace these stories' original publications and see how much trouble Lindsay took to assemble them. Day's Index to the SF magazines 1926/1950 is the logical place to look first. And what do we find?

Blue Moon, by Norman L. Knight, first appeared in Future Combined with Science Fiction, edited by Robert W. Lowndes, August 1942 issue.

Twilight of Tomorrow, by Joseph Gilbert, Future combined with Science Fiction August 1942.

Rain of Fire, by Ray Cummings, Future combined with Science Fiction August 1942.

Time Exposure, by E. A. Grosser, Future combined with Science Fiction August 1942.

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The Case of the Vanishing Cellars, by J. S. Klimaris, Future combined with Science Fiction August 1942.

Ajax of Ajax, by Martin Pearson, Future combined with Science Fiction August 1942.

Washington Slept Here, by Hugh Raymond, Future combined with Science Fiction August 1942.

The Year of Uniting, by Hugh Raymond, Science Fiction Quarterly winter 1941/42.

So how's that for creative editing?

New York Futurians of the heroic era are well represented here. J. S. Klimaris was a name used by Walter Kubilis, who more commonly used the version Kubilius for reasons it is not for us to know, Hugh Raymond was the usual professional name of John Michel. And Pearson was of course Wollheim. If we could find an explanation for the name Barrow being substituted for it here it might well throw light on something or other!

Now, if the odd one out from SFQ had been left out and the complete issue of Future had been reprinted just as it was with the original art work by John R. Forte, John B. Musacchia, Damon Knight and Hannes Bok, as well as the three short bits by Wilfred Owen Morley (that was Lowndes), Mallory Kent (so was that) and James Blish -- why then, that would have been worth while and interesting as well as honest.

I don't know any other case of instant editing quite as blatant as Lindsay's, but Ivan Howard is not far behind in contention for the Raw Prawn Award. He was responsible for five paperback collections titled Novelets (sic) of Science Fiction, Rare Science Fiction, Six and the Silent Scream, Things and Way Out, all published by Belmont in 1963/64, and all of their contents originated in the magazines edited by Lowndes. But from 19 issues of Future Fiction, Science Fiction Stories, Science Fiction Quarterly and Dynamic SF, 1951 to 59 -- that's how "rare" they were. Way Out contains seven stories, five from Dynamic Dec 1952, one from Oct 1953 and one from Future May 1951.

## NOTES ON AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION

The TEMPLE OF SMHR, by William Pengreep. Lothian, Melbourne 1952. (Printed Edinburgh). 328 p. 7½" map. Cecil Palmer, London 1932 same.

As often found with Lost Civilisation tales this has a spurious Foreward by a fictitious Peter Treloare to give an air of authenticity. However, it was known at the time that Pengreep was in fact William Talbot Pearson, newspaper editor, of Warracknabeal.

Here we have the almost vanished kind of lost civilisation represented by a remnant of its people with some impressive works and some fragmentary high technology, notably an anaesthetic ray. Its location in Central Australia has unusual features however. For one thing its location is given, Lat. S 25.30', Long. E 131.25' instead of the usual being left vague with mumbled excuses. These coordinates put it about 50 miles south-west of Ayers Rock. Even more remarkably, the author introduces a navigable river running from the general region to the west coast to make the place accessible by boat if one knows where to look for the turnoff to the underground stream.

Once our expedition reaches the the place -- of course its object is to find the usual gold -- the natives show up in their dugout canoes and tastefully kitted in loin-cloths, "their brown-skinned bodies strangely different in color from that of the usual Australian aborigine..." but these are not just your common old primitives, they are people declined from an advanced urban culture now all but gone. Running the show is a standard European villain busy oppressing and exploiting.

Vague on details -- like how the once high civilisation originated, now it ended up in such a remote spot and nowhere else -- the book is quite interesting to read and does qualify as science fiction.

FULL MOON BAY, by William Pengreep. Lothian, Melbourne 1954 (Printed Oxford). Pearson's only other book, this has no SF interest. It is about some bur-

ied treasure on a Pacific island, with a cryptogram (original idea) showing how to find it.

by S. Herbert Mapes.  
The WINGED AVENGER, A Romance and Adventure, Green Press, Sydney 1935. (vii), 194 p. 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Ill. front., small sketches by Nora S. McDougall.

The jacket of this book has: 'The Winged Avenger, a romance and Adventure Story -- which makes more sense and suggests how the oddly worded title page came about. It shows a twin engined float aircraft, no particular model but ordinary for 1935, and is probably the work of Ms McDougall also.

This is in the tradition of plots and counterplots involving radical new weapons. The main theme is a remote-controlled torpedo-carrying aircraft, a guided missile as it would later be called. But on the very first page we have the means of neutralising it along with other engines of war: "a new invention of a radio beam of light" Make up your mind, Mapes. "...so powerful that it would stop all machinery in motion -- aeroplanes, motor cars, warships, submarines. All would be made powerless by this radio wave, and future wars would be fought with machines guided and controlled by mechanical robots, instead of human beings." The last bit is plainly contradictory, but let it pass.

Remember, when we're looking at early works we don't expect much originality or much careful working out of theories or thought about practical details and consequences, though we may sometimes find them. The interest is more in popular ideas about how the future was likely to be.

Mapes wrote other books, including one under the cunning alias Sepam H. 'Trebreh, which do not seem to be of interest.

A CORNER IN WATER, by Bert Mudge and Albert Soldat.  
The Worker Trustees, Sydney 1909. 7-208 p. 7 1/2" Ill.  
anon.

Business rivalries escalating to kidnapping, extortion and various other criminal acts make up the action of this book. The marginal science fiction element is the use of a privately developed airship, not described in detail but clearly ahead of the scarcely functional dirigibles constructed by 1909.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW, by M. Barnard Eldershaw. Georgian House, Melbourne 1947. viii, 3-466 p. 8 1/2"  
-- Phoenix, London reissue of same.  
TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW, by M. Barnard Eldershaw. Virago, London 1983. xiv, 3-456 p. 7 1/2" Pb  
-- Dial NY 1984, reissue of same. 8" Pb

Marjorie Faith Barnard and Flora Sydney Patricia Eldershaw collaborated on numerous works, but in fact though there was some consultation Barnard wrote this book alone, between 1942 and 1944.

The wartime conditions had curious effects on people's thinking, and the publisher nervously submitted the manuscript to the censors, who had no jurisdiction over imaginative literature but nevertheless read it and ordered a number of deletions. And by the time the book was printed in 1947 the title had been shortened by someone who thought to improve on Shakespeare.

The new Virago edition is therefore pointedly described as Uncensored. Editor Anne Chisholm in her very informative Introduction reports that there was no discernable basis for the cuts, and indeed some of them may have been the work of Georgian's editor. The new version is taken from the original manuscript.

The action of the book takes place in the Australia of the mid-twentieth Century, the war and its aftermath, and also some four hundred years later. It is concerned with politics and social conditions and very little with technology, but there is a sig-

nificant scientific element.

The SIMON BLACK books, by Ivan Southall.

In this series of nine juvenile books we get the doings of an Australian version of Biggles, an aviator who reminds me of Anna Russell's description of Siegfried as very brave, very handsome, very stupid. Southall began writing them apparently in 1935, aged 14, though how far he got and how much rewriting was involved later is something else. Angus & Robertson started issuing them in 1948 and they went over well enough to be revived in slightly revised versions in 1974. Three are of interest to us.

SIMON BLACK IN SPACE. 1952. 223 p. 7½". Ill. I. Matner; new ed. 1974, edited by Anna Stewart. Ill John Brooke.

A primitive piece, readable enough but crude and dated in content. Flying disks are about, and there is a project to chase one to its source using an advanced aircraft with retracting wings, helicopter rotor and on yes, auxiliary rocket propulsion. Southall is very vague on rockets, they may well be solid charges. It's literally a case of two men and a dog, Simon and his sidekick take an Alsatian. And to cut a long story short they do find a disk and track it home to Mars with the returning fleet.

Space is cold! When the fliers first get beyond the atmosphere all the windows are obscured by thick frost! Nothing more is said about the problem however, presumably the craft has heaters and the crew wear woollies. I don't know about the dog. The only difficulty in space flight that seems to be considered is exposure to cosmic rays, and a lot is made of this in the following book, all unrelated to the well established knowledge of the effects of radiation.

And so to Mars, after 57 days, well, that's reasonable for a round figure of 50 million miles it says here. Must have been at opposition, nothing is said

## Notes on Australian Science Fiction

about orbits. Much less about supplies for a long un-predicted flight. Mars proves to have air to breathe, and is not too cold for survival. Just such an environment as someone writing in 1852 might reasonably have assumed.

The Martians are, wait for it, human. And I kid you not, blonde, blue eyed and under five feet short! Winifred Law over again! And yes, they are gifted with telepathy. I didn't care to read any more after that.

The 1974 edition has some minor re-writing and shortening but the absurdities seem untouched. The quite terrible illustrations credited to John Brooke are clearly signed Flash. Format is cheap and nasty.

SIMON BLACK ON VENUS. 1955. Not sighted. New ed. 1974 similar to last, ill Brooke or Flash.

Here the captured Martian disk brought back from the Mars jaunt goes missing and proves to have been appropriated and flown to Venus. Can't have that, so Black has to go after it.

After a lot of verbiage the action moves to Venus, which though its inhabitants also turn out to be human (you've guessed it, they also have telepathy) is shown as a world quite unlike Earth. It's a lot more interesting than Southall's Mars because this time he thought out some possibilities and took the trouble to visualise a very strange environment. The Venerians now live in an other-dimensional retreat because their ancestors overexploited their resources and made the planet uninhabitable.

SIMON BLACK TAKES OVER. 1959. 155 p. 7½". New ed. 1974 similar to others. This time the still awful artwork attributed to John Brooke is signed John.

This is a confused tale with a mystery of ET meddlers in outback Australia and other parts of the globe.

Notes on Australian Science Fiction

-- OR NOT, AS THE CASE MAY BE

THE SECRET OF THE AUSTRALIAN DESERT, by Ernest Favenc. Slackie, London nd (1895). viii, 11-223 p. 7½" Ill. 4 plates by Percy F. S. Spence, 1 map.

This was reputed to be a lost civilisation yarn, but no such luck, let alone SF. An exploring group looking for alleged hot springs, a "burning mountain", find it all right, as well as an unrecorded cannibal group and a last survivor and record of the fate of Leichhardt's expedition. There are also some unusual cave paintings and other traces of an old Asian colony in central Australia including a well built tomb and some unidentifiable writing. However it's all left unresolved since the colonists are long gone.

DEAD MEN'S TALES, by Charles Junor. Robertson, Melbourne 1898. xv, (16)-269 p. 7"

This was described as snorts, some fantastic. Only one seemed to have any such theme. Titled The Genius of the Glass, it begins with a device for reading thoughts from the brain of a recently dead person out then goes into the supernatural with apparitions that naunt alcoholics

AT THE SOUTH POLE, by W(illiam) H(enry) G(iles) Kingston, 1814-1880. Cassell, London 1870

This book is elusive, and I have not been able to determine whether it is of interest. However, I have learned that my impression that Kingston was Australian was wrong. He was never here, though that didn't stop him writing at least one novel set in Australia and several booklets about the country for prospective immigrants. After all, he was never in the Antarctic either, but what of that? Burroughs was never on Mars was ne?

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WHIRLAWAY, a Story of the Ages, by H. C. F. Morant. Hutchinson, London 1937. 19-237 p. Ill. Jean Elder: 9 col. pl., some drawings, endpapers. 8½"

Juvenile time travel, Australian setting, I was told. An introduction to palaeontology in the form of a tale for children, the British Museum Catalogue has. While not acceptable as SF I found it an interesting, unusual and attractive book, a desirable item for the collector of children's books. Morant acknowledges the collaboration of Eleanore Macfarlane and slips in some verse by Gilbert M. Wallace, and Frank Tate contributes an Introduction. All were Melbourne residents.

As the BM reported, this is basically an outline of palaeontology in the form of a guided tour of the main geological eras using a time machine. To that extent it's a reasonable form in which to present the story of evolution for the pre-adolescent. But unfortunately they didn't just have it that way but had the 12-year-old and her pet koala escorted through time by a sunbeam fairy: that's what Whirlaway is.

Not for us, but an unusual book with points of interest. The facts are all right for the period and target age group, the art work is quite good.

BLOOD TRACKS OF THE BUSH, by Simpson Newland, 1835-1925. Bell, London 1900. From the description -- "Detection and adventure set in Australia...survivor of Leichhardt's expedition describing an enormous mountain ...relics of an ancient race..." this sounded very similar to The Secret of the Australian Desert. Yes and no. There's a story of (what else?) gold in a cave with rock paintings, absolutely no details of who left them. And the story is not confirmed. Not a lost civilisation book, and no SF aspect.

ASHES, a tale of two spheres, by Hume Nisbet. Authors' Co-op, London 1890. xi, 404 p. 7½"

The spheres are culture and trade, or maybe Europe and Australia? The title refers figuratively to

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the fires of Moloch. Victimisation of writer-artist commissioned to work on a major Australian descriptive work: partly autobiographical I suspect. But no, not of SF interest.

The SAVAGE QUEEN, a romance of the natives of Van Dieman's Land, by Hume Nisbet. White, London 1891. xi, 324 p 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

No, it's not a lost race book either. Tas in 1813, convicts and natives interacting.

STORIES WEIRD AND WONDERFUL, by Hume Nisbet. White, London 1900. 127 p. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " PB

No SF here, but four out of fourteen shorts are of supernatural character. Weird collectors note. A Cup of Samos: suspended animation from Druidic age to 19th Century, unrationalised. The Old Wreck: spirits at work? Dream episode leads to buried treasure. The Vampire Maid: as title indicates. The Old Portrait: vampire apparition haunts it.

AERIAL AND TERRESTRIAL TRANSIT: an Inquiry therinto by a Paid Select Committee... by Varney Parkes, 1857-1925. Dymocks, Sydney 1895. 7" PB

Sir Henry Parkes' less famous son, a state MP, lampoons parliamentary committees here. A committee of nincompoops considers crazy inventors' proposed airships, none functional. Demonstrates the foolishness of making unqualified worthies responsible for technical matters. Now if one of these flying machines had worked! But that wasn't the intention.

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