



E.C. TUBB — AN EVALUATION

BY PHILIP HARBOTTLE



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COVER - Suggested by "Venusian Adventure", and drawn in the tradition of the old science fiction pulp magazine covers.

PAGE 3 - General introduction.

PAGE 4 - Tubb's novels : A critique.

PAGE 14 - Redrawn from the original cover by John Richards.

PAGE 17 - Bibliography; synopsis chiefly from the actual books.

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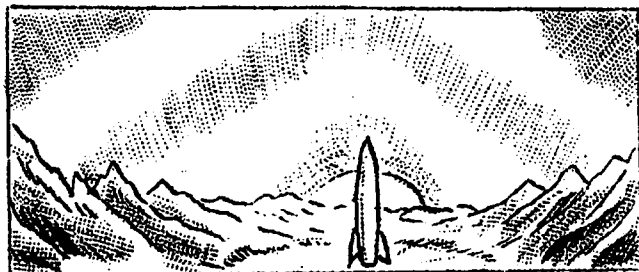
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The author, E.C. Tubb, for a painless and pleasurable introduction to the general pleasures of sf reading.

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READ ANY GOOD HACKS LATELY?

IN THE FIELD OF SF, there have been only a few hundred practitioners, and literary masterpieces have been few and far between. All hail to Wells, Stapledon, Bradbury, Clarke and Sturgeon. But what of the other writers? Are they to be regarded simply as hacks? Just because they have never written a masterpiece, should we ignore their contributions of yesteryear? In many cases, yes. But ever and again there rises a prolific writer who turns out one story after another, all of them good, in a degree, but few of them outstanding. Fans of the day avidly read his stories, extravagantly praise them ... but then, as tastes and standards change, and/or the writer's own circumstances, so that he writes less, or switches to another type of fiction, or perhaps dies ... then he is forgotten. His creations are banished to the deciduous backfiles of a few 'peculiar' afficiendoes.

SF is studded with forgotten men. There is David Keller, Raymund Gallun, Otto Binder, Donald Wandrei, Ross Rocklynne, Nat Schachner, Arthur Burks, Nelson Bond, Stanton Coblentz, Harl Vincent, Manly Wellman, and others. The classic example in this country is John Russell Fearn. There are others, like Murray Leinster, Frank Long, Jack Williamson and Edmond Hamilton, who continue to write across the decades. But they are for the most part read for their current work. Few care to uncover their earlier stories. When these authors die, their work will be forgotten. If they are lucky, some fan-admirer turned publisher may reprint their work, as August Derlerth has done for H.P. Lovecraft.

BECAUSE such authors are the life blood of sf, because the genre could never have developed without them, I believe these names are entitled to a measure of respect. Their work should be brought to the attention of all true sf fans, to be read and evaluated. In modern times, when magazine sf has become a degenerate form, there is greater need than ever for such old-time reprint magazines as FANTASTIC STORY, and the AVON FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION READERS. Only by understanding sf's past can we shape its present and its future; there is little to be gained by going over the same ground, again and again.

IN the early 1950's, this country was rediscovering sf. The flame of sf expression, flickeringly set alight by John Russell Fearn, was fanned by such writers as H.K. Bulmer, F.G. Rayer, Bryan Berry, William Temple, E.C. Tubb and legions of lesser lights to build up to an inferno that almost burned itself out. But where many contributed wood, Tubb threw on first-grade coal. For a long time, British sf burned with a bright, steady flame. Tubb sat back, as it were, warming his hands, and occasionally throwing on another piece of coal in the form of an infrequent story or two.

IT is not the purpose of this critique to go into the reasons why Britain is now without a sf magazine. Others, more qualified than I, have and will come forth with their opinions. Already we have heard tales of changing fashions, the exigencies of publishing display, and God knows what else. No one has yet suggested that the stories may have been getting worse, and I will resist the temptation to do so. But I do know this much: when E.C. Tubb was at his prolific peak we had AUTHENTIC SF, NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY, BRITISH SF MAGAZINE, NEBULA... In recent years, Tubb has had the cover over his typewriter more often than not, and today we have no sf magazines in this country.

BUT enough of gloom and introspection. Come with me now to those thrilling days of yesteryear...

E.C. TUBB WRITES AGAIN!

-PHILIP HARBOTTLE

IN 1952 the men behind Scion Ltd, Publishers, were very slightly worried. Two years earlier, they had got John Russell Fearn to sign a two-year contract with them, and had launched their "Scion Scientific Novel" series. It had been a success; thousands of copies were sold, new Fearn novels miraculously popped into their hands right on time, month after month. Surely it was too good to last? And then there was those other fellows, Curtis Warren Ltd, Panther Books, and John Spencer. Competition for the attentions of their young readers, who were just discovering sf!

Then there was those damned fan letters. Grubby missives which claimed that "Vargo Statten" (Fearn) was writing crud. They didn't like it, they'd read it all before, and they deserved something better. Drastic action was threatened if Scion didn't mend their ways. Even Fearn himself was getting a little difficult. He was complaining that he was getting just a trifle fed up with destroying the solar system twice a month. Long ago he'd developed a personal force-shield against fan criticisms - but the mud pies they were throwing were beginning to cake on the outside and he was having trouble seeing out.

"Let me show them what I can really do," he pleaded. "F'rinstance, there's this family that has a teenage son whose always telling lies, so his scientist Dad..."

"What!" thundered the scions of Scion. "A kid who tells lies, whilst halfway across the universe a race of primeval alien super scientists are destroying ketabolism with cosmic rays, and Atlantis is about to be overwhelmed by the Deluge caused by the passage of a Runaway Star? With thousands of youngsters waiting to read about it for the first time? Come off it! You're still under contract to us, remember, so get back in your cell with your old copies of Tremaine ASTOUNDING, and we'll expect that new novel next week -!"

And Fearn, who really liked writing these things anyway, wrote on...

"What we need," remarked one scion who was wiser than the rest of them, "is a new author!"

"If we can stay in business. We're having to reduce our number of pages to 96 with "Laughter In Space."

"Hell, do we need to? I thought "G-Bomb" was a best-seller? -"

"Sure, but we'd better be safe than sorry. The biggest Big Name Fan in the country has written in to say he's going to stop buying our books to give to his kid brother if we start running ads for bust cream, pimples, and jock straps ... and I've just started running them on the inside back cover."

"What's he complaining about?" came a querulous voice, "I wear one of those Vigour Belts myself. No buckles, buttons or fasteners, and I haven't been ruptured since I tried to..."

"Will you both shut up? I said we need a new author, and by God, we're going to find one! Now get the hell out of here and start reading those damned books of the other fellows; see if they've got someone we can use. Get the office boy to read the Spencer stuff if you can't yourselves..."

THE scene: the editorial offices of Scion some time later. Two men enter the room, approach the editor's desk.

"Well?"

"We found him, Chief," babbled the first one, waving a couple of messy looking pbs. One of them had inch-thick red letters proclaiming the legend, "Saturn Patrol," by King Lang. The cover showed three men worried by the fact that they were going

bald. The artist's name ended in bald, too. "He's great, Chief. Listen to this:

"The breeding cells of the Dreedas were in a vast cavern hollowed out of the depths of the planet. Tunnels radiated from it. From the mass of rotting flesh, decomposed vegetation, and fetid slime on the floor, a pale, wavering light shone. Squatting in the centre of the cavern was the Queen. The huge body was bloated beyond all resemblance to the hideous, but alienly graceful Dreedas. The spidery legs were useless; the great jaws atrophied; from the abdomen dripped a continual stream of waxy eggs...!"

"I like it. What else has the bloke written?"

"Got it right here, Chief: 'Argentis' by Brian Shaw. It's even better than the other one. Got a dash of sex in it."

The editor sat back, closed his eyes and beamed awhile. Then he sat up, pinned the second man with a belligerent gaze.

"And you?"

"I found this, Chief. 'Atom-War On Mars' by E.C. Tubb. Swell job; scientist builds his own spaceship and hero tries to kill his friend."

"Just a minute. Lang, Shaw, Tubb - just who is this man?"

"His real name is Tubb, Chief; the others are house names."

"Tubb? Never heard of him!"

"Neither had we, but ... Well Chief, the fans like him, and..."

The editor shot bolt upright. "Like him!?" he screeched, "the fans like him? Is it possible?"

"It's true, Chief. They like him personally; he attends fan meetings, and such guff. Writes short stories for the fanzines, too..."

"That does it! We're all set." He rubbed his hands. "The fans will buy Tubb, and the plebs will buy Statten: we can't lose! Go get an exclusive on him, boys... oh, and think up a new name for him. Tubb makes him sound like a little fat man. We want something... something cosmic. Like 'Castiron Bedpan' or something... Hell, ask Jack Fearn, he'll be able to think of one..."

1 * * * * *

THE foregoing account is fiction, of course - but fiction based on fact. Scion did go looking for new talent, and the man they chose as being the best available was none other than Ted Tubb. His first novel for Scion was "Alien Universe" and the blurb-writer really went to town on it:

'VOISTED GRIDBAN is a powerful writer of Scientific Fiction whose services we have secured after a world-wide search for talent.

'HE INTRODUCES a hyper-space concept, and borders on the hair-raising. The alien universe is about us all the time - but what is time?

'GRIDBAN, as well as having studied Cosmology and ultra-physics, has postulated the idea of their being tubes-of-flow in time and space, as in a material liquid under agitation, and is regarded as a pioneer of new knowledge in world Science circles."

Could Tubb live up to (or down) a blurb like this? The answer was that he could - and how! Tubb never looked back, and went from strength to strength, running up thirty novels or thereabouts, in the space of two years.

"Reverse Universe" and "DeBracy's Drug" quickly followed. This time the name 'Volsted Gridban' was emblazoned on the cover in giant letters. Scion rode the crest of the wave - for a while at least. And then Tubb was suddenly in demand.

Scion were unable to hold him exclusively, much as they would have liked to - For this was 1953, the year of the boom, and small publishers were springing up overnight. They all competed for Tubb mss.

Milestone, publishers, started out early in 1953, with an identical format to Scion, and they were even enterprising enough to steal Scion's new star author, Volsted Gridban. His "Planetoid Disposals Ltd" carried a terse note on the fly - Note: Volsted Gridban writes only for Milestone.

Scion didn't like this one bit. Hurried consultation with all concerned soon resolved the situation, however. Volsted Gridban would, after all, remain exclusive to Scion. Good old Jack Fearn, with a nice new contract (less binding than the first) would continue being Vargo Statten and Volsted Gridban. Tubb invented the name 'Charles Grey' for use with Milestone. Everybody was happy. Especially Tubb! He couldn't put a foot wrong.

The publication of "The Wall" ensured a long run of success for Charles Grey. Paladin press gave Tubb the opportunity to use his own name for "Alien Life", which sported a magnificent cover and neatly summarised Tubb's position on the back cover:

"There really is no doubt that the name of -

E.C.TUBB

is well known to all readers of Science Fiction. This book of his, "Alien Life," is but one of the many he has written and that you have enjoyed. You will look forward with pleasure to his next great novel

VENUSIAN ADVENTURE

which is a terrifically exciting story set on this cloud covered planet - a story of drama and high adventure that will hold you spellbound.

To be assured of a good story it is only necessary to ask for any novel by that master of the Science Fiction world

E.C.TUBB

His books are available everywhere but, to avoid disappointment, we advise you to place a regular order with your local newsagent or bookseller for E.C.Tubb's novels as and when they are published."

Extravagant praise, and yet not so extravagant after all. For within a year of his debut, Tubb was the most popular sf author in Britain. His only decent rival in this respect was Vargo Statten, but even he never had the measure of Tubb's success, for Tubb had the following of the fans. Just what made Tubb's books so special?

It was not originality of plot. Tubb's plots came straight out of the old-time sf magazines - but with a very important difference. The treatment was unique. Tubb hit on a formula, a formula so potent he could use it time and again, and the reader would only come back and ask for more.

What they got was an exciting amalgam of fast action, a sense of wonder interlaced with a definite sensuous appeal - all present in huge quantities. Paradoxically, although Tubb's stories were primarily of the action variety, they were very heavy on description. But instead of slowing things down, the action was speeded up by judicious adjectives.

Another quality which, if not original, then at least unusual enough to appear so to the mass of readers, was the treatment of the hero.

Tubb's heroes got beaten up, shot and blasted at - in fact generally ravaged to hell. They came through in the end of course, but they certainly suffered on the way. They could hand it out themselves, too, and quite frequently killed, or attempted to kill others who stood in their way.

This trend is typified in an early novel, "Atom-War On Mars". The hero, John Benson, is lying wounded in a jungle clearing, a little apart from two comrades who are caring for him. The trouble is, Benson is playing a double-game, pretending to be a rebel sympathiser, whilst he is in fact in the employ of a dictatorship...

"He touched the dressings, wincing slightly. With care he thought he would be able to do what was necessary without too much danger.

"He had to kill Wharton!"

This Benson attempts to do by calling to Wharton plaintively, and when the man comes and bends over him, he twists round and aims to crush Wharton's skull with a concealed heavy stone. No advance warning. No chivalry. No "Choose your weapon," or "Draw!" Instead, a sneak attack, the most logical thing.

These elements of logic gave Tubb's novels an image markedly lacking in other sf. Realism! Tubb's formula was to first conceive his plot, frequently audacious and absurd, true to the traditions of the old-time space operas, and then proceed to write them in a realistic manner. He invented his own sets of characters - who became stereotyped - and they performed realistically in any given circumstance. Tubb got human motivations off to a fine art, and it put him streets ahead of most other British sf practitioners at the time. Logic and realism were the two pillars on which Tubb built up an impressive number of novels between 1952 and 1954.

F. Dubrey Fawcett, in an article in the BRITISH SF MAGAZINE No.6, 1954, discussed two novels by Fearn, and Tubb's "City Of No Return", which had just been issued by Scion Ltd. Speaking of the latter story, he said in part -

"An Earthman has been staked down by Martians who have smeared his bared chest with yellow bait to attract sharp-jawed sand lice. The lice are just beginning their meal when rescue arrives. The rescuer scrapes away the lice with the edge of his knife, and when the victim groans, says, "Take it easy. I've cleaned them off," and wipes the knife on the side of his knee boot. This casual touch of naturalness makes the scene live."

HIS novels had their faults, of course. The main one was the fact that Tubb carried his penchants to excess. For instance, the "flare-gun," a powerful hand ray-weapon, featured in every other story. In this connection it is as well to note that the stories frequently took on the characteristics of the Western. When threatened by bems (indians) out would come the hero's flare-gun (revolver) and blam! Tubb lovingly described the action, in one book after another, without much variation.

"The full-throated thunder of released atoms blasted the air with rolling sound and stabbing light...The searing bolt of the flare-gun stabbed directly towards the gaping jaws, a ravaging blast of energy capable of incinerating a creature the size of a horse."

Synonymous adjectives by the score, but, somehow, the infelicities of style were engrossing rather than upsetting. Certain phrases, too, appeared in several yarns. In this respect, I don't for a moment imagine that the author was deficient in expressing himself. Rather he had favourites, which satisfied him, so that he deliberately introduced them whenever he could. For example, the phrase "the creature screamed!" appeared on a number of occasions. It formed a wonderful climax to such descriptions as this one, taken from "Venusian Adventure." I have underlined the adjectives to emphasise their usage ...

"Again fire lanced from the muzzle, the searing heat of unstable atoms liberated from the heavy charges of the swollen firing chamber. It stabbed like a luminous spear towards the nightmare head, towards the flaming surface of a glaring eye.

"It struck, gouging deep into the armoured jolly, frying and roasting living flesh, turning the great eye into a bubbling mass of charred and burned tissue.

"The creature screamed!"

The phraseology is closely approximated in a whole lot of other novels -

"The reptile screamed" (ALIEN IMPACT)

"The Thing shrieked" (I FIGHT FOR MARS)

"The thing screamed" (DYNASTY OF DOOM)

"The planet screamed" (THE LIVING WORLD)

Tubb's descriptions are sensual and sadistic, and at times quite horrifying.

This should not be taken as being condemnatory, however. In their context they are justified. Outrageous action demands outrageous description. Take this passage from "Menace From The Past." A spaceship crewman has just had every bone in his body dissolved into a useless dust, or thin fluid by implacable vampiric aliens...

"It staggered, a mass of white skin and sagging flesh. It whimpered, its hands clawing before it and two eyes staring horribly from the distorted planes of its face. It hopped, trying to walk on legs that could no longer stand its weight and its arms writhed in a horrible tentacular fashion."

This is the sort of writing that flourished in the weird-scientific fantasies of WEIRD TALES in the thirties, notably by C.L. Moore and Frank Belknap Long. It seems a reasonable assumption that Tubb read, and was influenced by, the Farnsworth Wright coterie.

A case could perhaps be made out for the derivation of Tubb's tall adventurers in their frontier town interplanetary setting, replete with saloons and dives, as coming from the 'Northwest Smith' sagas of C.L. Moore.



ONE of the give-aways of hack writing, in many cases, is where the author keeps on using a set of circumstances or incidents over and over again in succeeding novels. On the other hand, an author may point out that he is trying to form a common background for his futuristic settings, and gains greater realism by so doing. Then again some readers enjoy a story more on account of their familiarity with its background.

Recurring elements in Tubb's novels come under both categories. His hyper-space concept, for instance, remains constant in many books, and is summarised in this quotation from "The Metal Eater." -

"In the engine room the glistening coils of the hyper-drive hummed with unseen energies, holding by that trapped power the field which had warped the ship and all it contained into that unknown region of swirling grey mist.

"The field was a paradox. In a normal universe it could not exist. Every normal law of the space-time continuum fought against it, but, fed with the tremendous power from the atomic pile, it did exist, and so a paradox was created.

"But not for long.

"The field could not exist - in normal space. But it did exist, and so, ripped by unknown forces, the very fabric of the normal continuum itself ripped and tore, expelling the atom-powered field into a region where it could, and did, exist without creating the anomaly of a paradox.

"That fact had given men the stars. For, despite the initial velocity of the vessel, ships travelled at faster-than-light speeds, while immersed in the grey mist of hyper-space. It was as though the field forced the ship into a different space-time continuum, a region where the limitations of normal space did not apply, and for every hour in hyper-space a ship moved in relation to the normal universe almost an entire light year."

I'd say that Tubb's constant manipulation of the hyper-space background was entirely justified. His plots demanded action on an interstellar scale, and a settled method for allowing it became more and more acceptable with the reading of each novel. The reader was carried along very nicely.

After a while Tubb developed a variant on hyper-travel which was rather clever. This involved the hyper-drive engine having three integral parts - special coils, electronically tuned to within a certain degree of similarity. This is again expounded in "The Metal Eater." -

"Machines wear and hyper-drive units are expensive. Too many traders try and make them last too long. They become unmatched, lose their fine tuning, drop from seven to five decimal places of similarity. That isn't too bad. Three places is sufficient to create the field, but the harmonics build up, generate super-sonic vibrations, and the crews go insane or die from ruptured blood vessels in their brains...

"That is the nightmare of all who travel space. Their lives depend on a twist of wire and a balanced helix. If the coils are correctly tuned they have a fair chance, but if something should happen, the coils overheat, fuse, anything, then they can only pray and wait for death."

As might be expected, the leading characters always seem to have trouble with their coils, which makes for some suspenseful situations.

WHAT was not so honourable though, were the minor plot devices - incidents rather - which were obviously padding. The blasting flare-guns and their attendant unvarying description of "thundering atoms" have already been mentioned. To this can be added the "thermocans." Time and again, after hectic action usually, the characters would pass around the thermocans. They would thrust in the tops with a practiced movement of the thumb, then set them down, or swirl them between the palms of their hands as they waited for the built-in chemical unit to heat the energized soup and vitaminised coffee.

ANOTHER feature which some may consider annoying was the author's penchant for re-using similar-sounding names. Nyla, Nylala, Nyeeda, Illraya, Carl, Dell, Fenshaw, Conroy, Merrill, Brett, Branson, Halmar, and others all ending in "is", like Henris, Tenris, Vendis, and so on. Possibly some personal factors were involved. Personally, I found the nomenclature very useful in determining whether or not work under various pen names was in fact Tubb's.

So much for hack work - if we can really call it that. What about that another stigma of the sf world - plagiarism? Was Tubb ever a plagiarist?

After some study, it is apparent that the answer is yes, most certainly he was.

ALMOST anyone who attempts to write fiction will find that, consciously or unconsciously, he will imitate certain of his favourite authors, either in plotting, characterization, or actual use of words. In sf it is usually one's early favourite - an author read in one's introductory stages to the genre. An analysis of my own attempts at fiction of some time ago clearly shows two dominant strains - the plotting of John Russell Fearn and the writing style of E.C. Tubb. About 70% of the first 50 or so sf novels I ever read were written by these two worthies.

It is reasonable to assume that the youthful Tubb must have had an early "sf idol", and research and comparison leads one to an inevitable conclusion: Tubb was strongly impressed with, and influenced by, Jack Williamson. Williamson, creator of the superb "Legion Of Space" space operas. Williamson, with his superfluity of synonymous adjectives, and at times almost frenetic description. Williamson with his short, punchy sentences. Williamson, whose speciality was to create a suspenseful situation right away, and then add to it constantly as the story got under way; crisis upon crisis, under his characters were labouring under the most terrible odds - only to somehow pull through. Williamson and Tubb - there can be no doubt about it,

The Williamson influence in Tubb's work has, of course, lessened with the years, until today Tubb has his own distinctive style; more sober, but no less forceful and distinctive. But in the early fifties the influence was very much in evidence. The most blatant example is to be found in "The Metal Eater," which novel does in fact serve as an ideal introductory sampler of the early Tubb. It contains a tall adventurer, flare guns, urillium, hyper-drives et alia. More particularly, the character of Hal is a carbon copy of Williamson's Giles Habibula (derived in his turn from Falstaff, in all probability.) of the Legion of Space trilogy. Compare these two passages:

TUBB: "Hal rolled in his chair; his round face and swollen cheeks red beneath the soft lighting of the room. He wheezed, the sound of his laboured breathing echoing through the silent room, and his eyes rolled beneath their folds of fat.

"Think, lad, before you refuse. Think of your poor old friend, alone and helpless on this burning planet, roasting to an early grave by a furnace of a sun, dying for want of a touch of coolness, far from his loved ones and the things which a man needs when he nears his end. Be not too sudden in condemning us both to a life of exile. Think again, lad, for the sake of an old friend who is past his prime, and longs for a mite of comfort to ease his crippled bones....

"Ah, that I should have lived to see this day. Scum, he called me. Called poor old Hal, who has trodden on half the fierce worlds of the galaxy, who has risked his poor old bones for the sake of his comrades, and who has faced death too often not to fear it now in his few remaining years of crippled life."

"He shuddered, blowing his nose with the sound of jets clearing for take-off."

WILLIAMSON: "Jay, it's all in vain," he heard Giles Habibula's weary murmur.

"There's nothing -" the old man's breath went out, with a hopeless sigh. "Ah, me!" he wheezed. "Never did fate perpetrate such a fearful jest!

"Never did men struggle so, for no reward at all." His bald head shook sadly. "We roved the frozen night of Neptune's polar desert to find a ship, and fought a mad

cannibal for it. We voyaged the perilous wastes of space, until the shining monster met us. We dwelt amid the haunting horror of the asteroid, and entered the terror of the comet upon it. We plunged close to death in that atomic furnace. We took that ship, when they tried to make cattle of us, and came fifteen thousand miles upon it, into the core of an armored planet. We worked the locks that were fearful difficult, and made our bodies into a living ship of space - ah, poor Hal, who perished for us! Now old Giles Habibula has exhausted his precious well of genius, to break the strongest safe in all the universe.

'But all in vain. The thing is empty -'

"Sobs choked his voice."

TUBB even took Giles' uncanny skill of cracking safe combinations and locks - which often helped in freeing his companions and himself from deadly danger, and substituted for Hal the ability to tune a hyper-drive coil by ear, which served exactly the same plot purposes. And the gambling scenes of "One Against The Legion" have their counterpart in "Enterprise 2115" (The Extra Man) amongst others.

THE most striking example of plagiarism amongst Tubb's novels is possibly that occurring in the Scion pb, "The Hell Planet." The story in question is Clifford D. Simak's 1941 ASTOUNDING novelette, "Masquerade." Simak's story contained some very interesting ideas - a fact which prompted Donald A. Hohlheim to include it in his early AGE anthology "Tales Of Outer Space."

Simak deals with the happenings at a station built and maintained by Barthson on Mercury's Twilight Belt. The station plays a vital role in supplying power to the entire solar system, by broadcasting energy converted from the solar outpourings.

In this hostile environment, the men's reliance on the mechanical systems of the station is heavily stressed, and on the more cerebral side we have the problem of the natural denizens of Mercury - weird vortices of energy, known amongst the men as 'Roman Candles.'

For a long time the men do not realise that the Candles are actually sentient. As the story gets under way, however, this fact becomes increasingly obvious, until an exchange of thoughts and ideas is effected between the two races, using the body of a dead man as a zombie-like medium for one of the Candles.

Simak also adds a bit local colour with his 'space warps' which abound on Mercury as shimmering, enigmatic 'pockets' of distorted space. This is, of course, caused by the immense gravitational stresses of the nearby sun impinging on space itself. Such effects are now standard for stories based on Mercury.

I have dealt with Simak's story at some length so that a reader of "The Hell Planet" will readily appreciate just how much Tubb owes to the veteran American.

"The Hell Planet" used to be my favourite Tubb novel on account of the richness of local colour and exciting action - when I thought it to be original, that is. In fact, in planning this essay, I had intended to make great play of the excellence of Tubb's Mercurian conceptions. So, in order to evaluate it better, I set about reading all the stories set on Mercury that I had in my collection. The more I read, the more Tubb's stature increased - and then I happened on "Masquerade", helpfully retitled "Operation Mercury" in the Hohlheim anthology. Crushing denouement!

Such is the pit-fall of the bibliographical essay - if I had missed Simak's story, this critique would have been even more worthless than it already is!

I'm happy to be able to temper the plagiarist label somewhat, though.

In the course of his novel, Tubb comes up with several first-class innovations. The most plausible is the setting up at the station of a remote control guiding apparatus which is designed to land ships safely on Mercury - for with the spatial distortion on and around the planet, human pilots cannot rely on their senses.

But there is in Tubb's novels a great deal of originality, lying chiefly in the handling and writing. Attention to the personal discomfort of his protagonists gives his work an almost unique touch, as in such novels as 'Hell Planet' where three men spend several days in the confines of their space suits which elicits the following description: 'He knew exactly how the man felt, for a long time now he had desperately tried not to think of a burning itch on his right thigh, and his face felt sticky and covered in filth from sweat and something which felt like blood but probably wasn't. A spacesuit was more than protection against the heat and lack of air. It was a prison, the smallest prison ever made, and each man was cut off from all outside contact once the great helmets had been fastened down. Some men could stand it, others broke down with claustrophobia, shrieking madly for release and escape. No man could wear a suit for too long because, if for no other reason, no living organism can live in its own waste'.

Motivation was another forte, and the action was rarely contrived, but followed logically on from one scene to another.

Characteristic of Tubb's future society were three main trends.

An interstellar civilization, with man settled throughout the galaxy, with the leading protagonist a 'free trader', invariably referred to as a 'tall adventurer' who owns his own ship and undertakes dangerous consignments which frequently develop into some kind of quest for alien artifacts and/or priceless urillium, "Urillium", says Carter, a character in 'The Metal Eater', "can replace a lost vessel, replace it with a modern craft, with new hyperdrive coils and efficient rocket tubes. Urillium can make you a king among free traders, could give you wealth in the banks of the inner worlds, can enable you to fulfil your every ambition. Urillium is life".

Terrestrial civilization amongst the stars, whilst of a high scientific level, is essentially primitive, resembling nothing so much as the 'frontier town' of the western, where every man is armed with a flare gun and duelling is frequent. The searching for urillium can be likened to that of the Gold Rush of last century. In fact, an analysis of these stories reveals that they are pure transplanted westerns. Such is their pace and vigour, their driving excitement and fast sadistic action, that the reader is carried along without ever really being aware of the fact that what he is reading is in actuality space opera of the most outrageous variety. They offer pure entertainment, and are eminently suited to teenagers, or adults in search of relaxation.

Another type, very similar, is carried out against an interplanetary backdrop, with the action ranging throughout, but never beyond the solar system. The action is chiefly centred on Venus or Mars, and both planets are modelled from the days of pre-war science fiction, with Venus being a jungle planet, teeming with monstrous life and quite often a primitive race of pasty faced humanoids.

Mars, of course, is a dying world, with thin air and a degenerate Martian race, but having the heritage of a long-vanished glorious civilisation far in advance of Earth's. The plotting follows the familiar line of the dangerous journey in search of priceless alien artifacts. The instigator of the search is an aged professor, who has deduced the location of the alien Eldorado after thirty years of private research, although somewhere along the line he has acquired a beautiful daughter. They are accompanied by the hero, a hard-bitten ex-spacesman searching for a purpose in life, with maybe a couple of undesirables who got killed off on the way. A familiar story-line indeed, and the result would have been the sheerest banality in the hands of a lesser author than Tubb.

The flare-guns are again in evidence, and their "pitted orifices" become even more pitted by the end of the story.

Little wonder, since they are blazing away with the full-throated thunder of released atoms after five pages or so!

Here, the writing is somewhat better and more realistic than the "free trader" operas, although it is replete with the author's favourite phraseology, which gives the impression of cliché - such as beginning sentences with the word "together."

Hardly any of the sub-plots are original, being neatly derived from the 1930s. But to the uninitiate readership of Britain in the early '50s, for whom they were specifically written, this is an irrelevant defect. Sixteen year old Fred Fan, for instance, as he delightedly devoured "City Of No Return" would scarcely be aware that the vanished alien civilisation which has visited Earth in the remote past came from John Campbell, or perhaps Stanley G. Weinbaum's "Valley Of Dreams." They would know even less than the alien 'zoo' came from Oscar J. Friend's "Strange Highway," and the wonderful portal to another dimension is an outrageous theft from Clark Ashton Smith's "City Of Singing Flame."

But Tubb scored favourably with his entertaining treatment, and it enabled him to get away with whatever plots he was using. This sort of thing is ideal for teenagers who have "missed out" on pre-war sf stories. In fact, I think a case could be made out here for the desirability of plagiarism in sf.

Many of Tubb's stories were centred on the Earth of about 20 or more years hence, after an atomic war, when civilisation has picked itself up and is finding salvation in the planets. The Government is usually by military dictatorship, and Tubb paints a convincing picture of political intrigue, together with city life, and the hapless lot of the common man. Frequently mentioned are the "sludge pits", where work the wretched dregs of humanity, and are best detailed in "The Resurrected Man."

"The next day he started work. Dressed in a thick, cumbersome, anti-radiation armour he sweated in the sludge pits as he cleared the waste radioactives from the rocket power piles.

"The work was hard, grappling with tongs, almost as heavy as he could lift, shifting weight at odd angles, trying not to think of the invisible death permeating the entire area from the spilled radioactives.

"With him worked criminal scum, desperate men glad of the chance to work off a few years of their sentences, and yet trying their best to dodge what could not be avoided. It could not be done. The sludge had to be taken from the pile, shifted to the disposal containers, and the containers themselves loaded into the heavy, cadmium and lead-sheathed transports.

The Living World

9^D
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CARL
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In yet a third type of story, we see Tubb writing as himself. The plotting, and most of the ideas are original, and we see the author's concern with man's inhumanity to man. This latter mood has been frequently evoked by Tubb, and it is interesting to note that in a recent story in VECTOR 25 he deals with it again... "Were not all men beasts beneath their skins?" Tubb does however qualify this as being too generalised and "men could not be wholly bad as mud cannot be all mud if it contains flocks of gold."

Religion and the power of the Church have become something of a back number in Tubb's future society, and with their decline there has arisen bestiality. A typical development is that of the Free Circuits, which help shape the shocking climax of "The Resurrected Man" -

"The Free Circuits were a product of stifled emotions and a cynical authority. Regulated boxing was too tame to satisfy the customers, and the police worked on the theory that if a man wanted to risk his life and health in the ring he was at liberty to do as he pleased. So the Free Circuits became simulacrum of the ancient arenas, and men, stripped and oiled, fought like wild beasts to the screaming plaudits of a crowd of jaded women and soft-bodied men."

IN "Space Hunger" the author imagines a future society, artificially shaped by an alien power, in which a man acts as he feels, on impulse, without conscience or regard to duty, utterly selfish and without shame. If a man wishes to become a drug addict, he can. If he wishes to shoot another man, he can - but must guard himself against retribution by the man's relatives or friends. A world of hired assassins and protectors, a world of poverty and thievery, of organized chaos, jungle law.

"Space Hunger" is horrifying and convincing. It is exciting, and the hero, Dell Weston, is a thoroughly believable figure. No longer young, nearly middle-aged, he is caught up in events which move him through all the levels of the latter day society, from the top right down to the bottom, and finally to joining the Antis, a small group dedicated to restoring the old order of things. This progression is realistic and skilfully handled, and even the quasi-allegorical ending seems convincing.

DISCUSSION of this novel puts me in mind of an embarrassing situation whilst attending Grammar School. My fourth-year English class were asked to bring into the next lesson any reputable book they had read which demonstrated some literary quality - such as horror, despair, suspense, or what-have-you. Someone would be asked to read the passage they had selected, whereupon the English teacher (a spinster in her late fifties) would elect to discuss it and draw literary lessons and conclusions from it.

Now it so happened that I had just finished reading a battered second-hand copy of "Space Hunger" which I had by me in my desk to lend to one of my class-mates.

The first of our "new style" English lessons arrived, and it transpired that nobody, but nobody, had brought in a book. They had left it to a neighbour, who had in turn left it to someone else.

The English teacher asked for the first volunteer - and there was an ominous hush. The silence dragged. Miss Tallentyre then pinned me with her gaze ... "Philip, surely you have brought something?"

I was in a spot. English was by best subject (believe it or not) and I usually took the lead in class discussions of any kind. My discovery of sf some time before had led to a voracious reading. I read five or six novels a week, with frenetic haste and juvenile glee. This had afforded me an advantage over my class-mates by way of an increased vocabulary and a facility for expressing myself in unusual terms. I had risen to the top of my class in English - an unusual position for me, and one I desperately cultivated for all I was worth, for a number of reasons.

The chief reason was because I was so desperately bad at most other subjects - especially Maths. At the end of the year our marks for all subjects were averaged. Anyone in an A form who had a worse percentage than anyone in the B form was relegated and replaced by his superior. It was only my high English mark that saved me from relegation. So it was that I curried favour with the English mistress to assure myself of generous marking. An odious, creepy task, but one I had to stick to.

"Of course, Miss Tallentyre." With the calm deliberation born of desperation I opened my desk and took out the Tubb pocket book.

"From 'Space Hunger' by Charles Grey," I muttered inaudibly as I flicked through the pages. I selected the beginning of a random chapter and started to read. As I read, I waited for censure - but none came. One page, two, three - and my voice was beginning to crack (a vocal defect of mine when I speak for any length of time). I looked up at the teacher. She was enrapt.

I must have read over ten pages before I slumped back in my chair. "Ploase, Miss, I'd rather not continue...my throat..." Miss Tallentyre beamed. "Of course Philip. I was about to stop you anyway.

"Well now, class -" and she launched into her commentary on my reading. And so help me she raved! Yes, actually raved! She lauded Tubb to the skies, his style, and his ideas, especially his ideas. "The idea of a whole city becoming drug addicts ... fascinating implications ... reflection on our times ... I have a qualification to make in respect of his frequent usage of the word "rill" to denote the flow of blood, but notwithstanding..." and on she went. The class looked at me in awed respect. "And now, Philip, could we have the title of this extraordinary book again, and the author?" The grin on my face became sickly. This was it -!

"It's...it's called "Space Hunger", and its by Charles Grey. He ... he is a pen-name for a writer called E.C.Tubb. At ... at least I think he is." This was awful. "It's published by Milestone, dated -" I desperately thumbed to the fly, "in 1953." That was a couple of years earlier. -"At 1/6. This -" I stared stupidly at the raggy pocket book, with its garish blue and yellow cover -"is a second-hand copy. I - I got it for 1/- at the second-hand shop on Benton Road." Somebody tittered and I flushed. Benton Road is one of the grimmer highways of old Wallsend, in a depressed area, and the shop I was referring to - known as "Dirty Joe's" - was notorious for selling pornographic literature and, it was rumoured, contraceptives from under the counter. Just at that moment the bell went for the end of the lesson.

Miss Tallentyre's face was a mask. "I see. Well ... we'll take this up tomorrow." And she got up, hurried from the room. I suspect she was more embarrassed than I was. She never did take it up again, of course.

Still, this little narrative has served, I hope, to convey something of the power and quality of Tubb writing at his best.

The following listing and synopsis will, it is hoped, be of assistance to those of you who have never read much of Tubb's earlier work (Charles Grey is rapidly becoming a collector's item), and to those older fen who have missed out on his pseudo-nyms.

But most of all I hope it will inspire Ted to get cracking again, and give us some more. Surely, with the number of pocket book publishers in this country, there is a good market for them. Come to think of it, the reprinting of some of them wouldn't be a bad idea, either.

As CHARLES GREY:-

Dynasty Of Doom MILESTONE 126 1/6 pb 1953

Wilner pointed, his finger trembling as he stared at the screen. "There, ships, hundreds of them! A space fleet!"... These were the vessels which had vanished in space over many years- This was the centre of hyperspace the resting place of derelict star ships, the Sargasso of space The amazing happenings following this momentous discovery of a fabulous star ship graveyard, of human life preserved over centuries, lead to an exciting climax in this space epic. Interesting ideas, wildly overwritten.

Enterprise 2115(The Extra Man) MERIT 160 2/- pb & 8/6(?) hb 1954

The Mechanical Monarch(Retitle) ACE 1/2bk 35c pb 1957

There were two, Rosslyn, the pilot, and Comain, the dreamer. Rosslyn died in space, frozen, preserved for two centuries until found and resurrected by a miracle of future surgery. Comain...? Comain remained on Earth, and crystallised his dreams, and when Rosslyn returned he found a civilisation beyond his wildest imaginings. Women ruled the planet, guided solely by the automatic and relentless predictions of a tremendous and frightening machine. A machine that foretold the future and determined the actions of an entire world with devastating accuracy. Into this assured and new civilisation Rosslyn came and the impact of his presence brought near chaos. He had to be assimilated - or eliminated. Rosslyn desired neither. He became the pawn in a colossal gamble with power as the prize, and the future of Mankind as the stake. How Rosslyn resolves his problems, struggling all the time to comprehend alien concepts, and fits himself into the new fantastic world; how he discovers an amazing truth, and learns of the terrifying secret behind the machine, is told in this strange and fast-moving story of human ambition versus a cold, calculating and inhuman monster, unpredictable but fallible. I seem to remember that P. Schulyer Miller, reviewing this book in ASTOUNDING, described it as "a pure parallel of P.K. Dick's 'Variable Man'". It is true that the stories have a similar basic idea, but Tubb did do some rather original variations on it.

The Extra Man(Enterprise 2115) MILESTONE 128 1/6 pb 1954

The galaxy is at war, a war between the oxygen-breathing Terrans and the chlorine-breathing ginzoos. Neither side dare attack the habitable worlds for fear of reprisals, and so the war has become a matter of spaceships firing on each other as they emerge from hyperspace. But now the ginzoos possess a catalyst which can break down sodium chloride into its basic elements, and if dropped into the oceans of the oxygen worlds, mankind would become a dying memory. Lasser has lived with a dream too long. He has fifty days to decide. Fifty days to death. Fifty days to save a planet.

The Hand Of Havoc MERIT 128 1/6 pb 1954

From the coffin ship of Terran Control, five Venusians, carriers of the dreaded rhylla disease, escape to continue the hopeless war against Earth. Armed with a ship and terse orders to end the potential rhylla menace, Superman Ron Prentice sets out into space to track the escaped carriers. The desperate race against time, the effort to discover and kill the Venusian fanatics who refuse to admit that the interplanetary war is over, and the final, nerve-stopping decision which may mean safety or the awful plague-death of Earth, makes THE HAND OF HAVOC a fast-moving hard-hitting story of an incredible enterprise which takes place against the background of the impassive void.

I Fight For Mars

MILESTONE 128 1/6 pb 1953

Fighting For Mars means a battle with the Lobants, a formidable enemy, robot yet human, whose origins are shrouded in a terrifying Martian mystery. Ace rocketship pilot, John Delmar, on a dangerous and unlicensed space flight to the fabulous planet, solves the answer to the swarming scourge of Mars that possesses all the compulsion of a three-dimensional horrific. The future society in this novel is worthy of Bradbury.

Space Hunger

MILESTONE 128 1/6 pb 1953

Earth possessed weapons capable of turning small planets into dust, rocket-planes and guided missiles - everything to kill any alien coming from outer space. Yet, the Arbitrators came. Using orbiting vessels from outer space, they sprayed Earth with an alien form of radiation. A micro-wave pattern of incredible complexity flooded the planet, and the Arbitrators were masters. The populace, glazed with drug-induced euphoria, are scraps of human debris hovering on the thin edge of annihilation. Chaos is truly come again. One atomic-headed war projectile - just one shot and Earth would be liberated. Or so the Anti's thought. With all their fervour and idealism, it remains for the Arbitrators to show Earth the way to Regeneration.

The Tormented City

MILESTONE 126 1/6 pb 1953

The highest paid troops in history deployed in a tremendous gamble with Earth as the prize. The lethal towers of an alien world are generating disintergrating beams which can raze a city in a few seconds and produce malign effects on all humanity.

The Wall

MILESTONE 128 1/6 pb 1953

"Immortality is a myth, a fable, a legend extant on a thousand worlds," Brett said. The old man nodded, "But behind any legend there must exist a grain of truth : Distorted, perhaps, but there." "Ages ago," Brett said, "other races ruled the stars and their ships spread knowledge among the peoples of the universe. Somewhere there is a fountain of youth. Somewhere - but where?" "Beyond the Wall?" the old man said ... Here is the exciting core of Charles Grey's imaginative novel; a quest for immortality in an age when man has mastered every barrier except death.

As VOLSTED GRIDBAN:-

DeBracy's Drug

SCION 127 1/6 pb 1953

DeBracy's Drug only serves as the starting point of this story. It is a drug which destroys all disease, but causes spiritual death as a side-effect by eliminating most of the emotions. A minority group - the Freedom Army - refuse to take the drug, and civil war ensues. A small group of the Freedom Army are cornered, but escape into another probability-world. Here Earth is under the domination of the hideous Star People, an alien race called the Zytlen. Monstrous and tentaculate - the ultimate in bems! Lanson, the leader of the transposed group, uses his knowledge of space-flight (a lost art in this other world) to destroy the alien oppression.

Fugitive Of Time

MILESTONE 112 1/6 pb 1953

Here we have the ultimate dilemma of a futuristic world, replete with every possible scientific advancement, brought to an ignominious impotence by the exhaustion of essential fuels. Starships are grounded, interrupting vital interstellar commerce, all the highly-developed industries have stopped, man turns to the primitive sources of animal fat and wood for light and heat. With civilisation waning, the young scientist

Kleon, sentenced to death for using precious conserves of power in an attempt to generate vast energy from dead matter, makes a spectacular bid for the freedom of the whole universe. A thoughtful study of the possible problems of the atomic age, a highly suspenseful record of the hazardous exploits of a fugitive of time.

Planetoid Disposals Ltd

MILESTONE 112 1/6 pb

1953

Volsted Gridban's concept of the space-time continuum is thrilling in its suggestive possibilities (strictly scientific!) (PH). In this story, which is fascinatingly interesting from the science angle, as well as breathtaking in its excitement and suspense, he conceives of speeds superior to that of light, transport by dematerialization and re-assembly of atoms in a remote sector of space-time. This story bridges the gap between physics and metaphysics. It is practical, possible, occult, mysterious. IT IS THE FINEST PIECE OF SCIENCE FICTION PUBLISHED FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. That's what the blurb-writer on this book tells you. I can only conclude that he was either raving mad or blind drunk when he wrote it! The action is so swift as to be ludicrous and the hero suffers almost as much as the reader, with the concluding events being harebrained derivatives from E.E. Smith (Galactic Patrol, yet) and Van Vogt. I bet Ted was blushing when he got the publisher's cheque for this one!

Reverse Universe

SCION 128 1/6 pb

1952

An expeditionary ship, equipped with a new type of force-screen, is sent closer to the sun than ever before, in an attempt to solve the riddle of perfect atomic energy, and anti-gravity. The ship is warped into another universe by secret matter - whereupon the author gives full reign to his hyper-space ideas in another action-packed space opera.

Alien Universe

SCION 96 1/6 pb

1952

An exciting space opera, in which Tubb introduces the plot elements that were carried on in many later books ...hyper-space, urillium, and flare-guns, et alia. It also set the pattern of monstrous forms of alien life existing in another universe. Outrageous action, fascinatingly written.

As KING LANG:-

Saturn Patrol

CURTIS 111 1/6 pb

1952

A galactic civilisation of the far future is plundered by a loosely-knit group of outlaws known as the Warbirds. The hero, Gregg Harmond, becomes involved with them and after many adventures obtains command and reunites the worlds of the galaxy under a 'Galactic Patrol.' So far as I know, this book has never been credited to Tubb. It cannot be anyone else, however, as the following fabulous quotation shows: "He turned to Gregg. 'Now, shipmate. Where's my blaster?' He took the outstretched weapon, hefted it in one huge paw, then with sudden casual viciousness smashed it against the side of Harmond's head. Again and again. Merry stared down at the huddled figure at his feet. Deliberately he spat." Most older fans will know that the early Curtis books were a mess. Cheap paper, crummy covers by Ray Theobald, and all written under pseudonyms. Most of it was puerile trash. However, a few years ago, I undertook an arduous task. I bought up all the Curtis books I could get, and read them one by one. In this way, after the fashion of a prospector, I extracted gold from the dirt. Two fine novels by Fearn, and two, including this one, by Tubb. But there is a limit to what a man can stand. After reading an abomination called "Elektron Union" by 'Gill Hunt,' I called it a day and unloaded

the whole lot, barring the above four. Memory suggests that a few of the ones I threw away were quite good, and might even have been by Tubb. But I was too sickened to recheck them. The titles were: "Overlord New York" by "Lee Elliot", "Planetfall", and "Zero Field", by "Gill Hunt." Perhaps Tubb himself will come forth and reveal his further pseudonyms, if any.

As CARL MADDOX:-

Menace From The Past TIT-BITS 64 9d pb 19553

An ancient alien race, marooned in our solar system for several thousand years, enlist the aid of a group of desperate criminals and adventurers to help them return to their own world, in another dimension. An action packed space opera using hackneyed ideas of the thirties with Tubb's own hyper-space backdrop.

The Living World TIT-BITS 64 9d pb 1953

The mixture very much as before, with Tendris, the tall adventurer, Carl the big engineer, an ancient alien race, urillium and hyper-space!

As BRIAN SHAW:-

Argentis CURTIS 112 1/6 pb 1952

One of Tubb's best space operas, and one of the least-known. Rival factions, including Earthmen and an enigmatic and fanatical Venusian, voyage through space in a race to locate and find the derelict ship of an Elder Race. Other 'Shaw' novels, so far as I remember, could not have been by Tubb, and that of Bryan Shaw, "Z Formations", was by Fearn.

As E.C.TUBB:-

Alien Dust BOARDMAN 224 ? hb 1955

Ditto SFBC 224 5/6 hb 1956

U.S. edition?

The colonisation of the planets will be done without trumpets, without bugles, without soaring songs of praise, It will be done by men.....The story and history of the establishing of a colony on Mars from 1995A.D. to 2030 A.D.

Alien Life PALADIN 128 1/6 pb 1954

Only one man, Carmodine, returns alive from the first expedition to the planet Pluto. He has taken refuge in madness, and is unable and unwilling to speak of his experiences on the outermost planet. Given therapy, Carmodine is forced against his will to go along on a second expedition led by Brensco, a scientist-adventurer who hates Carmodine, to face again the terrors of an incredible alien life.

Alien Impact AUTHENTIC SF No.21 109 L/6 pb 1952

Jim Warren discovers the secret of the planet Venus - that it is inhabited by an ancient alien race who came from earth 20,000 years earlier, in an attempt to build but a great new civilisation devoted to mental processes. To consummate their civilisation it is necessary for them to remain withdrawn from the disruptive influence of latter-day terrestrial colonists - to which end the "Watchers" are appointed - and Warren is faced with a dilemma.

Atom-War On Mars PANTHER 112 L36 pb 1952

The invention of an incredible new system of improved space travel - the Merrill Tube. Using the invention the Martian colony declares its independence, and overthrows the military dictatorship of Earth.

City Of No Return

SCION 144 2/- pb

1954

For countless years the enigmatic city of Klaglan had rested beneath the racing moons of ancient Mars. Forbidden, guarded, sheltered in the cup of the Blue Mountains and surrounded by waterless deserts it rested there, a place of a thousand rumours and whispered fantasies, and gave birth to muttered tales of incredible wealth and riches. To this city came Halmar, the guide, Lorna, the dancer from Venus, and the man called Smith. Defying the ban of the Torran Authorities, the fanatical Drylanders, and the harsh deserts, they reached the crystal walls of the strange city. There they found a tremendous mystery, the deserted artifacts of a vanished civilization - and found themselves snared in an incredible trap. For Klaglan was more than a city.

The Hell Planet

SCION 144 2/- pb

1954

Between the frozen wastes of the night side and the searing inferno of the day side, the Twilight Belt held all that was Human on the tiny world of Mercury, Hell Planet of the Solar System. A strange world, airless, subject to the alien distortions of Einsteinian mathematics, Mercury was both a promise and a challenge, for here could be found torrents of cheap power essential to the ships and men in space. Lee Correy, Commander of the Station, plunges into the frigid wastes in a desperate race against time to find and rescue both his brother and the essential component of the bean control. Fighting impossible conditions and incredible alien life, he is up against the enigmatic mystery of the sand devils; a dead man who walked, and a machine which could not fail - but did. Here is a story of the future, of the planets and the men who will colonise them, of the way they will live and the problems they will face.

Journey To Mars

SCION 144 2/- pb

1954

All Verrill wanted to do was to get to Mars, to Port Mershan where a ship was getting ready to take the Big Jump to the stars. But he was stranded on Venus, without money, papers, or weapons, with nothing but a keep-sake between him and starvation and the revengeful fury of the powerful Brotherhoods - and charity was a forgotten word. This is a fast-moving, hard-hitting tale of the future, of rocket ships and the men who guide them across the wastes of space, of the perils and dangers waiting at every turn. A story which paints bright colours across the pages of unwritten history.

The Mechanical Monarch - see Enterprise 2115 as Charles Grey.

The Mutants Rebel

PANTHER 144 1/6 pb

1952

Earth was a matriarchy, with women in command and pledged to thwart the men. And Earth, which had barely survived the results of atomic war, was taking too long to regain its feet. Other processes were acting against success, dragging the world into famine and rioting, bloodshed and murder. The women could not see this - at least some of them couldn't. But there were others - those who were not quite human whose mothers had been in radiation during the war - who did see. They saw more than any human eye could possibly see. With that mutant vision, that mutant telepathy, and that mutant power of teleportation, they began a mutant rebellion.

The Resurrected Man

SCION 120 1/6 pb

1953

Baron is killed in space in an interplanetary war, and is set adrift, frozen solid in space, and protected from all decay and cellular break-down. Five years later he is found and revived by the perfect-

ion of a new medical technique of resurrection - is revived to become an inhuman freak, and to be hounded in a corrupt Earth society to a shocking and final death.

The Space Born

ACE 1/2 bk 35c pb 1956

Ditto

DIGIT 156 2/6 pb 1962

Jay West was a killer - he had to be. No human kindness could swerve him from duty, because the iron-clad law of the Space Ship was that no one - no one - ever must live past forty! But how could he fulfill his next assignment - the murder of his sweetheart's father? Yet, how could he not do it? The old had to make way for the new generations. There was no air, no food, no room for the old. One slim hope remained. In the almost mythical Master of the Ship's destiny, Jay might find reprieve. But how can a man find a legend? He had to - or die!

The Stellar Logion

SCION 144 2/- pb 1954

Born in the midst of pain and terror, Wilson, an unwanted waif of the generation-long war of unity, grows up to spend his boyhood in forced labour and intense persecution. Rebelling, he is sent as a convicted murderer to the newly formed penal world and to the harsh incredible logic of the Stellar Logion. There, where life is measured by the ability to think fast and act faster, he survives to win promotion in the most brutal military system ever founded. Here also comes Laurance, Director of the Federation of Man, afraid of the thing he has helped create, and using every means of guile and intelligence to undo what has been done. Pitting wits against Hogarth, Commander of the Stellar Logion, in a tense, two-sided battle with the entire Federation as the prize, terrified lest the human wolves trained and hardened in blood and terror should range the defenceless galaxy. It is worth noting the similarity between this novel and Heinlein's much later "Starship Troopers." Tubb wins hands down in every respect, in my opinion.

Venusian Adventure

COMYNS 128 1/6 pb 1953

Yet another Tubb story of a supposed 'Elder Race' who withdrew and vanished from the Earth thousands of years ago - but who have left their traces throughout the worlds of the solar system. A party of Earthmen initiate an expedition through the jungles of Venus in an attempt to discover a fabled Venusian 'Eldorado.'

World At Bay

PANTHER 159 1/6 pb (also an Australian edition) 1954

England was starving when cheap power could have saved her ... power that would have been available if atomic research had not been forbidden by the watchful League of Peace. But two scientists chose to ignore this ban, and launched an experiment - an experiment that succeeded too well, spreading a tide of black death across the country, and threatening the whole planet. In a world torn by suspicion and war, science struggles with this new enemy, trying desperately to stem its relentless progress as it marches toward the destruction of a planet and a race ... It is a story of human fear, ambition and sacrifice in the face of annihilation - the story of a world at bay.

Addenda - NEW TITLE just issued, MOON BASE, published by Jenkins at 12/6. From the NEW WORLDS serial, 1963.

It should also be noted that my opening remarks about there being no sf magazines in this country were penned before the pb. revival was announced. Even so, they are not true magazines.

