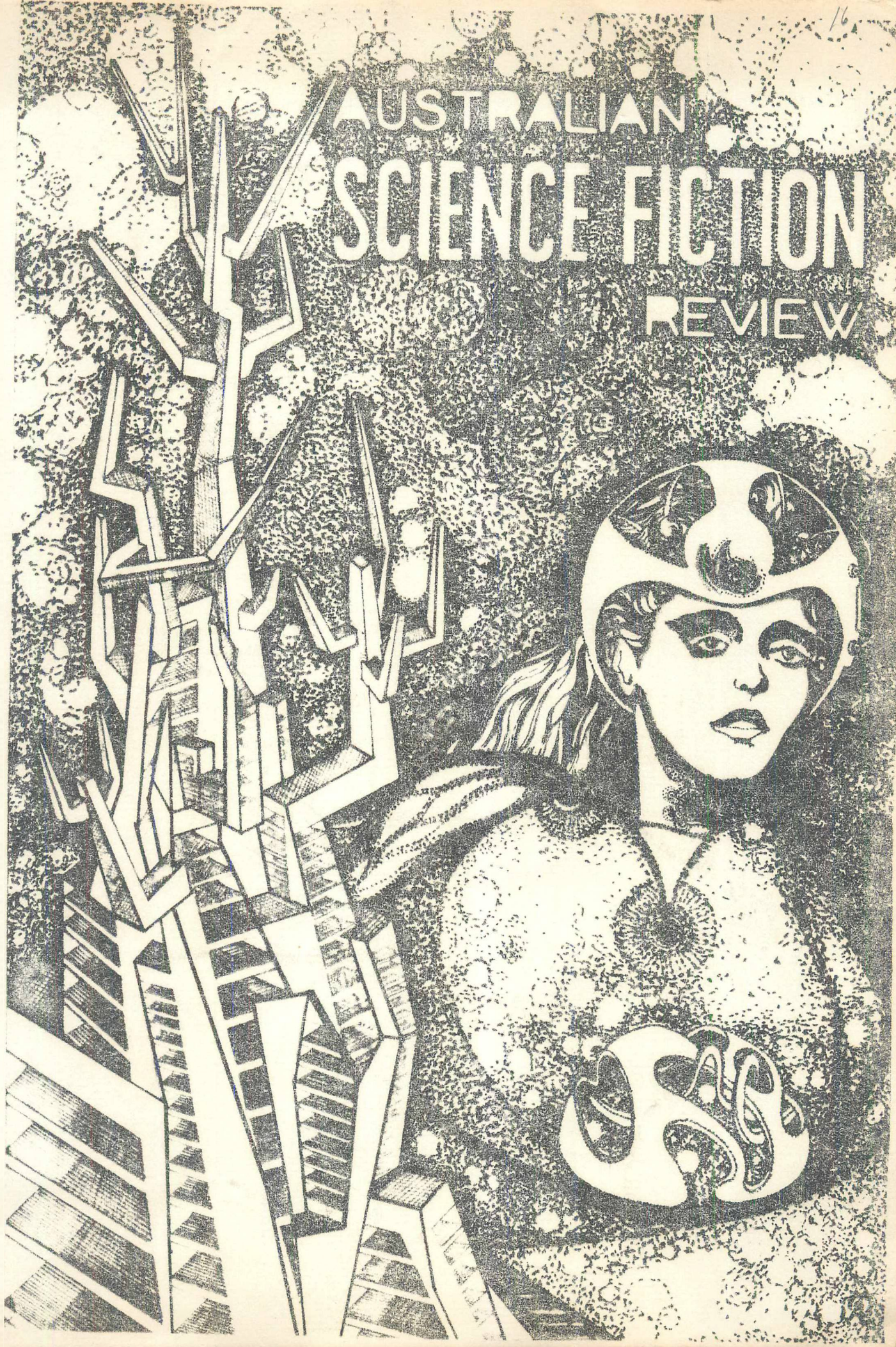


16

# AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW



Give me the source - most out of some but how do you  
make source - most out of blubber?





JUNE 1968

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Put Bigotry Back Into Guy Fawkes' Day!

Burn A Catholic!

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## EDITORIAL

This austere-looking issue marks our second anniversary. In honour of the occasion I have invited John Foyster to reveal to you once and for all...

### THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF ASFR

(with the original cast)

The Time: Easter 1966  
The Place: The Clubrooms of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club  
The Occasion: The last-but-one sf convention: Author Panel  
The Context: A discussion of sf in Australia

I trace the actual words, as caught by the magic of the Phonoceel, extracting where necessary, but finally apportioning the blame as merited.

A member of the audience has asked about agents...

John Foyster: "I think you fellows would agree that Ted Carnell in England does a pretty fair job..." (murmur of assent) "I think he's a good agent. He may not be a good editor, but he's a good agent."

Unidentified Voice: "If he flogged something of ((editorial deletion))'s for two and a half thousand dollars, he's bloody miraculous."

.....

John Bangsund: (ah, fatal words) "Mr Chairman... the business of a fanzine... As everyone here knows, I'm quite new to the whole thing about science fiction. It's only my personal contact with Lee a couple of years ago that started it. I am most impressed with the idea of a fanzine. Perhaps I've got an unfannish view of fanzines, but it does appear to me that in what we've been talking about in the last few minutes - the business of keeping in contact with one another, and all this kind of thing, could be very well done through a fanzine, if it could be produced regularly."

Note that Bangsund does not volunteer at all.

Lee Harding: "If we were considering reviving The Gryphon or..." (pregnant pause) "having Mr Bangsund edit a new journal... We should have certain writers committed..." Lee meant committed to producing regular material, but I am sure that John would agree that committing Lee Harding would not be a bad thing.

Let's take up the development of this "journal" a little later...



Lee Harding: "Do you fellows up here feel that there's anything to be gained by a small circulation magazine devoted to the discussion of science fiction?"

I point out that ASFR has a circulation of 350.

John Baxter: "This sort of thing is a great idea. You just have to turn to someone and say, You're the editor."

Mixed voices: "Ron Clarke..." "Lee Harding..."

But Harding reacted quickly, and in a loud voice proclaimed: "I nominate John Bangsund."

.....

John Baxter: "What we're thinking of is an amateur magazine, circulated amongst people who are interested in science fiction, and probably containing articles and reviews and stories, perhaps."

John Foyster tried to turn the tide, suggesting that the Australian SF Association was the organization which should publish this journal, but his labours were in vain. Two months later the die was cast, since when the cast has been dying.

John Foyster

Two years... Sixteen issues, seven hundred pages, four hundred thousand words, give or take a few pages, a few thousand words (half the issues and far more than half the word-age typed on an Optima portable)... Nominated twice for the fanzine Hugo... Enthused over in Buenos Aires and Kvikkjokk, Lapland... Reprinted in an American paperback, a Spanish fanzine, and who knows where else... Even mentioned in Analog.

And I didn't even volunteer...

I've been looking back through those earlier issues, trying to recapture some of that fine frenzy that seems to have departed from the magazine over the last few months. Months spent, as some of you know, out of work or, worse still, in work I absolutely loathed; every day confronted by a vast mound of unposted ASFRs...

Remember these?

'...out in the Outback, by Alice Springs...a little illicit publisher...printing genuine old vintage Heinleins, turning them out on a hand press in little limited editions that would sell for the earth in the big cities...'

'You know, when we are old and tired probably Australia will be producing the best sf... We'll be sitting in our wheelchairs moaning about "the new sf"...'

'No less a personage than Spike Milligan has been so moved as to take pen to paper and ask, "Why is there no monument to porridge in this land?"'

'From where I sit it looks like a pretty good future for sf.'

'One of the dangers of becoming a successful sf writer is that some day you may become the subject of one of Sam Moskowitz's potted magazine biographies...'

'On it were typed but four words: RORK! IS A ROCK!'

'What a splendid idea - omitting all details of price, publisher and availability from your book reviews! The reading public has been pampered far too long...'

'You begin with a masterpiece; you write it down; you are left with something merely - marketable...'

'I doubt that exposure to Campbell editorials does much harm to anyone...'

'"Jeez! ... another great Joe Poyer novelette! Wait till I tell the boys in the machine shop about this!"'

'This book, described by the publisher as being "a novel by Isaac Asimov", seems rather to have been written by someone's Second Eleven...'

'...Dr Jenssen. His agile brain alert and active even at so early an hour (9.30am), he soon recognized me and showed me in...'

'It used to be my secret ambition to sneak into Campbell's office one night and file the exclamation mark off his typewriter...'

'Phil, I'm glad you said that about editors. If you only knew how difficult it is to ride a hobby horse, beat a drum, and print stuff - all simultaneously...'

'"Captain Chandler is a different person..."'

'Bludupta? you say, Where's Bludupta?'

(continued on p7a)

# MOSKOWITZ ON BLISH

SAM MOSKOWITZ / BLISH ON BLISH a book review

THE ISSUE AT HAND by William Atheling Jr

Edited & with an introduction by James Blish Advent: Publishers Chicago 1964 136pp

One of the great frustrations of modern sf writers has been the elimination of reader columns in many of the magazines and the diminution of these sections in others. 'Man does not live by bread alone' applies in spades to the writer. An occasional book review (if he is fortunate enough to have a book published) helps assuage the need, but does not entirely compensate for it.

Most conscious of this void has been James Blish. He not only has lamented the dearth of reader commentary in print; he has preached its resurgence from the pulpit of the sf convention.

Since I commenced the professional phase of my career by selling fiction in 1940, I am entirely sympathetic to the lament and sense of loss experienced by Mr Blish. I have made mental photostats, enlarged them until the type is a foot high, then had them framed and hung in the best-lighted corridors of my mind - comments on such of my stories as 'Man of the Stars' (Planet Stories Winter 1941; included in EXPLORING OTHER WORLDS, Collier Books 1963):

'Man of the Stars' by Sam Moskowitz was unchallenged for the number one spot. (Milton Lesser)

I rate it as one of the best I have read in a long time; a definite first place for 'Man of the Stars'. (William A Conover)

Seriously, I consider his 'Man of the Stars' one of the best sf stories I have ever read. (Josephine Morrison)

'Man of the Stars' was the best story. (Larry Shaw)

Moskowitz leads off a really brilliant parade with something new in sf -

A truly gifted piece of writing. (C Hidley)

In fact, the only criticism in 11 pages of 6-point type of readers' letters was from Damon Knight, and even that was inadvertently flattering because he took two-thirds of a page just to talk about me!

In the immortal lines of George Gobel, 'You just can't hardly get that kind no more'.

Blish publishes two chapters on the need for a revival of readers' columns in sf magazines in this volume. This is a legitimate view, worthy of airing and consideration, and one which can be applauded by fellow writers. But how this apparently long-standing need was acted upon by Blish is disconcertingly shown in this book.

James Blish began to use the pen name of William Atheling Jr for a column of criticism entitled 'Pro-Phile' which he inaugurated in the Summer 1952 issue of Sky Hook, a Fantasy Amateur Press Association magazine published by Redd Boggs. Ezra Pound, a grand passion of James Blish's, once wrote music criticism for a Paris paper under the name of William Atheling - which explains its derivation.

The two reasons given by Blish for utilizing the pen name were to enable him to criticize without being 'excessively cautious' and that 'I wanted to discuss my own work in the column as legitimate occasions arose'. He did both.

Under the guise of Atheling, Blish was repeatedly able to slip his name into a



variety of evaluations. A typical example from his column in the Winter 1952-3 Sky Hook:

'If you are interested in the intensively recomplicated story as a technique of fiction - only incidentally because such men as Van Vogt, Schmitz, Harness, Blish and even Knight himself have written sf by this method...'

This was subtly intended to convey the impression that Blish was a master of plotting and technique, and made it possible to place his name in good company, implying stature through association.

The real opportunity came when a 25,000 word novelette by Blish, 'A Case of Conscience', was published in If, September 1953. At last, William Atheling had raw meat. His column in the Autumn 1953 Sky Hook admitted to 'several re-readings'. The illusion of objectivity was provided by passages like:

'Part of the length of the story is contributed by sheer physical description of the planet, in which the author indulges so extensively as to delay telling the reader the story's central problem until he is nearly two-thirds of the way through - and probably losing two-thirds of his readers in the process; but the detail, as it turns out, is valuable, first because it establishes a slow and discursive tone before the reader is plunged into the elaborate four-way argument which is the essence of the piece, and second because most of the details (though not all) are integral to the argument itself.'

Therefore, we see that when Atheling talks about Blish, every knock becomes a boost.

Despite modest asides, Atheling's real intent becomes evident as we find him comparing 'A Case of Conscience' to G K Chesterton's Father Brown stories, and concluding:

'Conceivably, 'A Case of Conscience' is well enough told as a story to carry a similar general appeal; although intricate, it is anything but incoherent, and it is so paced - as I've noted above - as to make the final argument seem highly dramatic, in the face of obvious obstacles to such an impression... This took considerable doing. I have made no secret of the fact that I mistrust the average reader's ability to weigh technical competence, or even to recognize it, so that I can make no present assessment of the effectiveness of what Blish has done here; theoretically, he should have captured his audience, even though most of it will not know why it is captured or how the trick was turned; on the other hand, he may have captured nobody but a cross section of other writers who are in a position to appreciate how much work this kind of a story takes, without being any better able to weight its effectiveness with a non-technical reader than I am.'

This particular evaluation ran for nearly 2,000 words. Obviously feeling that he had written an exceptional story and fearful that, like others in the past, it would not receive its just due, Blish may have hoped to force a general discussion and critical evaluation of his work, with Atheling's comments as the trigger.

In this hope he was to be disappointed, but not through any lack of enterprise, for he rallied to reply to Atheling under his own name in the Winter 1953-4 Sky Hook, saying:

'Mr Atheling's examination of 'A Case of Conscience' is flatteringly lengthy, and of course I'm gratified by his recognition of the labor which went into the story. I'd be prepared to defend the long conversation between my Jesuit hero and Chtexas as an attempt to show the workings of the Lithian mind... On the other hand, I agree that the ending of the story is confusing for precisely the reasons Mr Atheling sets forth. As soon as I receive the galley proofs from Twayne, who will publish the story in a book sometime this winter, I'll take pains to make the necessary changes. Could any critic ask for a more practical accolade? ... I've discovered - to my own surprise - that much

of my recent work seems to be centered on the nature of various kinds of faith... Mr Atheling's demonstration that there is a growing place for it in the magazines too helps to convince me, especially since I can add to it as evidence the stories magazine editors have been buying from me ever since I began thinking about the whole question of why people believe what they think they believe.'

Eventually, the fact that Atheling and Blish were the same was officially codified in FANCYCLOPEDIA II, edited by Richard Eney. Previously, Blish had let the information leak in various fan magazines and fan meetings, but the FANCYCLOPEDIA II inclusion caused several commentaries and 'lifted eyebrows' by Richard Bergeron in Warhoon January 1960, and by Walter Breen in Tesseract March 1960. Breen concluded a three-page article, 'The Case of James Blish's Conscience', by stating:

'Without making any libelous remarks about Blish, one may nevertheless question his motives. Propaganda? Would a really good book need this? Why was Blish making an apologetic about his own book? Was he perhaps aware of some of the points I have brought up here? What was the state of his own conscience about the whole affair? How honest is it to pretend objectivity as a reviewer, while reviewing one's own book under the cover of a pseudonym, particularly when using adjectives like "unique"?'  
'As Bergeron put it: "How can you trust a man like that?"'

In this form, Blish received a slap on the wrist for his subterfuge, and that would have seemed to end the matter. Certainly the average individual would not have been proud of the exposure. Certainly, there is a difference between reader reaction to the revelation that Henry Kuttner was Lewis Padgett writing stories like 'The Twonkey' or that his wife, C L Moore, was actually Lawrence O'Donnell, author of 'Vintage Season', and the disclosure that Jim Blish was in fact posing as William Atheling Jr and busily engaged in writing love letters to himself.

Society can understand an attractive woman fanning desire in a man she passes in public, and looks with indulgence when he releases an expressive whistle of appreciation. Similarly, Blish's deception, while not approved procedure, is understandable and forgivable. But his sanctifying his lapse in hard covers is comparable to our previously aroused male exposing his eager genitals in public. That sort of thing 'just isn't done!'

Yet it all may be unblushingly found in the chapter, 'Cathedral in Space', and the only thing left to be grateful about in this blatant abrogation of good taste is that Blish did not also inflict on the readers his letter of appreciation to Atheling!

As if conscious of this omission, Blish did add a 1964 commentary on Atheling's 1953 views with blase asides such as:

'For example, Atheling complains of the 'catalogues of local raw materials'; but eventually it becomes important to the story that one of those raw materials is amazingly abundant, whereas certain other more likely ones are very rare - and both these facts are buried in the catalogues, detective-story fashion, for the reader of the novel.'

What baffled me particularly in Blish's account was his references to C S Lewis's novels, OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET, PERELANDRA and THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH. I checked back to the original in Sky Hook and they were also there.

I had good reason to be puzzled.

When my book, EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE, was published in 1963, as part of the promotional program I appeared on the Long John Nebel radio show as a guest author for a five-hour discussion on sf. Among those participating were James Blish, Lester del Rey, Fred Pohl and Michael Girsdansky ('The Shape of Us to Come', Worlds of To-



morning July 1965). During the course of the discussion, I was outlining the plot of a C S Lewis novel when, with considerable indignation, Blish interrupted me with the 'correction' that my plot outline was for his 'A Case of Conscience'. When Girdan-sky assured him that the story I was relating was indeed C S Lewis's, Blish gave every indication of never having read it. This entire session was taken down on tape and was preserved.

At the time Blish wrote and published 'A Case of Conscience', William Atheling Jr had admitted his familiarity with C S Lewis's sf trilogy. After the success of A CASE OF CONSCIENCE as a novel, James Blish seemed to have no memory of it.

Atheling had said in 1953:

'The interplanetary novels of C S Lewis (OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET, PERELAN-DRA and THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH) offer more recent examples; they set out to impose upon the solar system a strange Anglican-cum-Babylonian theology and cosmogony, with amazingly convincing results despite Lewis' decidedly foggy view of astronomy and most of the other sciences he seeks to diabolize.'

Had he failed to read those novels and merely referred to them through hearsay, implying scholarship?

Had he actually read them, but now feared that such an admission might leave him open to a charge of derivation?

In THE ISSUE AT HAND he makes a strange reference to my criticism of M P Shiel's LORD OF THE SEA:

'...and it is ridiculous, but characteristic of Sam Moskowitz to call the book anti-semitic.'

Since LORD OF THE SEA is probably the single most vicious anti-Semitic book in the entire canon of sf, and a prototype for the Nazi movement; and since Shiel returns again and again to anti-Semitic references in many of his works that follow, is it possible that Blish has actually not read Shiel? Or does his admiration for Ezra Pound's poetry extend one step further to embrace certain aspects of that man's political and social philosophy?

The second-longest chapter in THE ISSUE AT HAND is devoted to a single story by an author named Arthur Zirul, who almost receives more attention than Heinlein. The story, a novelette entitled 'Final Exam', appeared in the March 1954 Astounding Science Fiction and was the first story Zirul ever sold. He later published three more stories in 1958, and has not appeared since. Sf was merely a bit of fun for him; by profession he was an electrical engineer.

Blish proceeded to rip that story apart, examining dialogue, grammar, plot and syntax, and then concluded that 'this is one of the worst stinkers ever to have been printed in the field'. Aside from the fact that the first story Blish ever had published (which would appear to be 'Emergency Refueling', Super Science Stories March 1940) would not have survived so surgical a literary exploration as he subjected Zirul's to, the Analytical Laboratory shows Zirul beat out Walter M Miller Jr's 'I Made You' in the same issue by a good margin, and was rated not too far behind an Isaac Asimov serial. It raises the question of whether, Blish's criticisms being valid, the readers of Astounding Science Fiction have values different from Blish's; and instead of the publication of 'Final Exam' indicating 'a case of collapse on the part of a great editor', it is a validation that Campbell knows what his readers want!

That Zirul must have infinitely benefited by Blish's 'criticism' is perhaps indicated by Judith Merrill's inclusion of his short story, 'The Beautiful Things' (Fantastic Universe May 1958) in SF: '59 - THE YEAR'S GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY.

The entire book runs only 135 pages, which is far from a substantial quantity for five



dollars. This could be justified if it was compensated for by quality, but the entire volume is a melange made up from fan magazine columns, speeches and asides; and some chapters are merely reviews of a single issue of a magazine. The best piece is the commentary on STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND by Robert A Heinlein, but it is questionable as to whether eight pages are worth the price tag.

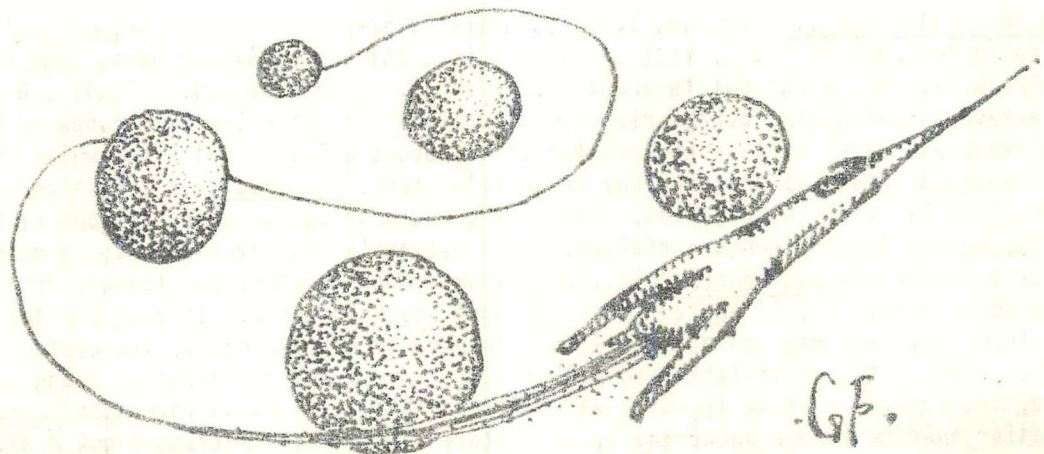
If Blish were a truly outstanding and revered figure in the sf or fantasy field, someone of the stature and reader fascination of H P Lovecraft, Edgar Rice Burroughs or A Merritt, this marginalia might have a relevance and interest beyond that of trivia. This does not happen to be the case.

Add to that a fatuous pomposity and a degree of perceptiveness of which the kindest thing that can be said is that it is warped a bit to the right of obtuseness, and you have flaws that are in no way relieved by the patently obvious vanities and spites that appear to motivate many of the pieces. The man apparently so badly needs to feel important that when he is not blatantly telling you why he is, he is advising on how to go about changing a critical situation to help ensure him his just due.

If Blish were as adroit stylistically in his criticism as even Damon Knight, whom he attempts to emulate, the results might at least have been readable. Sadly, THE ISSUE AT HAND is the work of a man who, after years of agonizing application, writes criticism that moves about as effortlessly as an aged pachyderm with a double hernia dragging himself through the African mudflats on his way to the Elephant's Graveyard.

Sam Moskowitz

JB: The above article is reproduced, by arrangement with the author, from his FAPA magazine, Different vol.3 no.2 October 1967.  
James Blish/William Atheling Jr's THE ISSUE AT HAND is available in the edition referred to in the article at US\$5.00, or in a paperback edition at US\$1.95. Among Sam Moskowitz's historical-critical works are SEEKERS OF TOMORROW (Ballantine pb US\$0.95), EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE (Meridian pb US\$1.95) and THE IMMORTAL STORM (currently, I believe, out of print).





## EDITORIAL (continued)

A funny thing happened on the way from p7 to p8... Originally this issue was planned to run to about sixty pages, since the material was available and the anniversary occasion traditionally warrants a larger size than usual. However, a bright shiny vacant look about the ASFR coffers decreed otherwise. So I planned a twenty-page issue, coverless and spartan. With the new Optima 14 (the miserly deposit for which I found by postponing several of my less legally inclined creditors) and its 14-characters-to-the-inch sanserif block elite type, I estimated that I would still be publishing about 15,000 words, and that you, gentle subscribers, would not be too offended at the niggardly look of the thing.

However... I still had the electro-stencil for Dimitrii's rather fabulous cover, which was intended for the last issue. I couldn't really keep Dimitrii in suspense any longer, so I decided to use it this time. Yes. Well. You'll have to take my word for it that the original illustration is fabulous, since between us the duplicator and I loused it up. The duplicator, I should perhaps mention, is a circa-1896 model Roneo electric, with Spewmatic Attachment (which accounts for the footprints you may from time to time have found in your copies) and Intermittent Jetblack Adhesor Device, neither of which features may be relied on nor eliminated. It may also have an Offcentre Placement Control, which enables you to have leaning columns and borders, and which is stuck permanently; but it may be, alternatively, that I am, shall we say, not to put too fine a point on it, an unskilful operator. In mundane terms this means that for every three sheets cleanly ejected by the machine there are two thrown onto the floor or wafted gently up the wall, and one or two which adhere to the stencil; and all of them are printed implacably out of plumb. So now you know about the cover. I have another hundred-odd covers which Paul peeled from the drum as I turned the handle and passed over to Leigh who laid them elegantly about the room to dry, and they are so black I swear they must have used a full bottle of ink between them.

Usually I stencil the entire issue before I start duplicating, but this time, naturally enough, I wanted to see how the new type and Leigh's headings looked, so I ran off a few pages as I went. And now you know how p8 happened not to appear on the back of p7. And how I finished up with twenty-four pages. There was a mild panic when I first discovered what I had done. I desperately wanted the issue to weigh less than two ounces (postage 5¢), and I thought I couldn't safely go beyond eleven sheets. I even considered for a moment transferring Don Symons's review to these pages, which would have meant the pages running 7 18 17 8 - but I couldn't bring myself to it. Without much hope I stapled and wrapped a dummy twelve-sheet copy, and dispatched Paul to the post office with it. I was busy playing best man at Ruth and Barry's wedding (my sister and Diane's brother, yes) when Paul returned (I know it's unusual, yes, but that's the way it worked out) and it wasn't until (yes, yes, I know that makes me my own brother-in-law) the next day that I learnt (no, I don't feel any different: should I?) that you can post thirteen sheets of Gestetner 201 paper for 5¢.

About the next issue... Presumably I could post a 52-page issue for 9¢, so that looks like being the size of no.17, if I can manage it. (At 800 words per page, less cover and illustrations, this works out to about 35,000 words. I must be mad.) In 17 I hope (note that non-nemesis-tempting word, friends) to publish: an interview with renowned Australian artist, J S Ostojka-Kotkowski, creator of the Sound & Image programme, which at this year's Adelaide Festival featured Ray Bradbury's story, The Veldt; a symposium on 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, with enlightening, endarkening and provocative contributions by Lee Harding, George Turner, Hungo MacCallum, Bruce Gillespie and maybe others; a number of excellent reviews by Damien Broderick, Don Symons, John Foyster, Bob Toomey, Bruce Gillespie and others; and, if there's room, a short story or three. If you like the look of this lineup anywhere near as much as I look forward to publishing it, you would be wise to check your status as indicated on p20 of this issue. The free list is being ruthlessly pruned, and however much we love you we can't run ASFR any more on love alone. Our first obligation must be to our subscribers, and lately they've been getting a raw deal.

About this issue... The background to the articles by Sam Moskowitz and James Blish will become apparent when you read them. I will just mention my own part in the matter. Jim wrote to me early this year and mentioned that he had written an article for ASFR in which



he replied to criticism published by SaM. The article arrived early in March, and shortly after it I received a letter from SaM, together with a copy of his article. SaM said that he felt it only fair that I should present both sides of the argument, if I intended to use Blish's article. I agreed. I wrote to Jim, suggesting that I run both articles in the same issue, and he replied that this was a fair thing, and that he had no objection to SaM leading off, since he had initiated the matter.

Now SaM is, I gather, a nice guy. He must be: he subscribes to ASFR. I've read a lot of his work, and I've enjoyed it, despite critical reservations. A lot of what I know about sf authors has been gained from his books, and I doubt if I could have picked up this information so readily from any other source. SaM is, as Jim points out, widely regarded as one of America's - and, therefore, the world's - foremost authorities on sf history. He holds opinions critical, religious and political that I can't have a bar of, but what the hell? - so do most people I know.

But I must say that if he hadn't asked me to publish his article on Blish, I would have preferred not to. I make no secret of the fact that, while I respect SaM and share in the general fannish liking for him, I have an enormous admiration for Jim Blish and regard him as a good friend. SaM's article is - and I emphasize the personal nature of this feeling - to say the least, unfortunate. I feel that Jim has answered him completely and in a gentlemanly manner; but he has chosen to ignore the - I can only call them insulting and grossly ill-mannered - personal remarks which SaM has made about him. By publishing his original article I feel I am showing SaM in an even worse light, and I am not entirely happy about this. However, at his request, his article appears here, and the reader must make his own judgement.

About the Hugos... You've probably seen the list of this year's Hugo nominations, so I won't reproduce it here. (If you haven't, send Leigh Edmonds - same address as myself - a note and a 5¢ stamp, and he will send you a copy of the ballot and a BayCon membership application. Overseas readers: it will be too late when you read this.)

Thank you for nominating ASFR again, people. We is quietly proud.

But look at all that crud on the ballot! Hell's bells - five Star Trek episodes to choose the best dramatic presentation from! But what else was there...? The Prisoner? The Americans haven't seen it. Voyage to the... Hmm. Ah well, we needn't worry about next year: there'll very likely be only one nomination.

No names, no pack-drill, (no offensive letters in my mail), but what a dreary lot of fiction there is, too. Delany's EINSTEIN INTERSECTION should win, but if THE BUTTERFLY KID can even be nominated in the novel section I shudder to think what the fans might do. What happened to CAMP CONCENTRATION, AN AGE (or CRYPTOZOIC! as the US publishers call it) or THE HOLE IN THE ZERO? Perhaps they'll be on the list next year, since they will all see American production during 1968. But whether this happens or not, doesn't it in either case raise some serious questions about the Hugo rules regarding date of publication?

New Worlds deserves to win in the pro magazine section, but probably won't. And Harry Warner Jr in the fan writer section. As for the fanzines, here is some really stiff competition, and I'm utterly incapable of objective judgement. But I'm tipping PSYCHOTIC, and not only for geographical reasons: it ranks no.1, by a whisker, among the six or eight fanzines I love best apart from ASFR.

The fannish physiognomy... When I first met Lee Harding, he said, "You look like John Baxter". And when I met John we eyed each other surreptitiously to see if it were true. "What is Andy Porter like?" I asked John Bush, when he was in town a few months ago. "Well", he said, "he looks like you." For some reason I neglected to tell Andy this, even when recently I sent him my photo to hang in his palatial toilet. Andy commented: "You look like Terry Carr." Others have said I look like a less hirsute Mike Moorcock. I don't know, but we may be onto something significant here. If someone says I look like Bloch, Tucker or Warner, I'll know for sure: we must be, in that case, the new Secret Masters of Fandom!

Diane, just for the record, says I look like 25% Robert Mitchum, 25% Peter Ustinov, and 50% Pallid Aurigan Swamp Creature.



from readers' letters about his own first published story, to document a double proposition:

- A. That as 'William Atheling Jr' I consistently praised myself, both in my Skyhook columns and in the book that was subsequently made from the columns and other material; and,
- B. That it was not reprehensible of me to do this while I was not admitting to the pen-name, but it was reprehensible to do so in the book, where I did admit to the pen-name.

I don't quite understand proposition B - this is where Moskowitz shoves in the phallic comparison - but this may be simply moral obtuseness on my part. As for proposition A, it comes with ill grace from a man who used James V Taurasi Sr's fan-publishing enterprise to print extensive passages of anonymous self-praise; but this is only an ad hominem argument - let it pass. Instead, let us see how much substance there is in the accusation itself.

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he replied to criticism published by SaM. The article arrived early in March, and shortly after it I received a letter from SaM, together with a copy of his article. SaM said that he felt it only fair that I should present both sides of the argument, if I intended to use Blish's article. I agreed. I wrote to Jim, suggesting that I run both articles in the same issue, and he replied that this was a fair thing, and that he had no objection to SaM leading off, since he had initiated the matter.

Now SaM is, I gather, a nice guy. He must be: he subscribes to ASFR. I've read a lot of his work, and I've enjoyed it, despite critical reservations. A lot of what I know about sf authors has been gained from his books, and I doubt if I could have picked up this information so readily from any other source. SaM is, as Jim points out, widely regarded as one of America's - and, therefore, the world's - foremost authorities on sf history. He holds opinions critical, religious and political that I can't have a bar of, but what the hell? - so do most people I know.

But I must say that if he hadn't asked me to publish his article on Blish, I would have preferred not to. I make no secret of the fact that, while I respect SaM and share in the general fannish liking for him, I have an enormous admiration for Jim Blish and regard him as a good friend. SaM's article is - and I emphasize the personal nature of this feeling - to say the least, unfortunate. I feel that Jim has answered him completely and in a gentlemanly manner; but he has chosen to ignore the - I can only call them insulting and grossly ill-mannered - personal remarks which SaM has made about him. By publishing his original article I feel I am showing SaM in an even worse light, and I am not entirely happy about this. However, at his request, his article appears here, and the reader must make his own judgement.

About the Hugos... You've probably seen the list of this year's Hugo nominations, so I won't reproduce it here. (If you haven't, send Leigh Edmonds - same address as myself - a note and a 5¢ stamp, and he will send you a copy of the ballot and a BayCon membership application. Overseas readers: it will be too late when you read this.)

Thank you for nominating ASFR again, people. We is quietly proud.

But look at all that crud on the ballot! Hell's bells - five Star Trek episodes to choose the best dramatic presentation from! But what else was there...? The Prisoner? The Americans haven't seen it. Voyage to the... Hmm. Ah well, we needn't worry about next year: there'll very likely be only one nomination.

No names, no pack-drill, (no offensive letters in my mail), but what a dreary lot of fiction there is, too. Delany's EINSTEIN INTERSECTION should win, but if THE BUTTERFLY KID can even be nominated in the novel section I shudder to think what the fans might do. What happened to CAMP CONCENTRATION, AN AGE (or CRYPTOZOIC! as the US publishers call it) or THE HOLE IN THE ZERO? Perhaps they'll be on the list next year, since they will all see American production during 1968. But whether this happens or not, doesn't it in either case raise some serious questions about the Hugo rules regarding date of publication?

New Worlds deserves to win in the pro magazine section, but probably won't. And Harry Warner Jr in the fan writer section. As for the fanzines, here is some really stiff competition, and I'm utterly incapable of objective judgement. But I'm tipping PSYCHOTIC, and not only for geographical reasons: it ranks no.1, by a whisker, among the six or eight fanzines I love best apart from ASFR.

The fannish physiognomy... When I first met Lee Harding, he said, "You look like John Baxter". And when I met John we eyed each other surreptitiously to see if it were true. "What is Andy Porter like?" I asked John Bush, when he was in town a few months ago. "Well", he said, "he looks like you." For some reason I neglected to tell Andy this, even when recently I sent him my photo to hang in his palatial toilet. Andy commented: "You look like Terry Carr." Others have said I look like a less hirsute Mike Moorcock. I don't know, but we may be onto something significant here. If someone says I look like Bloch, Tucker or Warner, I'll know for sure: we must be, in that case, the new Secret Masters of Fandom!

Diane, just for the record, says I look like 25% Robert Mitchum, 25% Peter Ustinov, and 50% Pallid Aurigan Swamp Creature.



# BLISH ON MOSKOWITZ

JAMES BLISH / THE GREAT HISTORIAN

a comedy of oompah\*

Sam Moskowitz is often referred to - and not only by himself - as 'one of America's foremost authorities on the history of sf'. Caveats are seldom voiced. When they are, they usually gently note that although Mr Moskowitz's critical opinions may not always be reliable, he is a vast repository of unique and inarguable facts.

Only in sf - a clannish and self-defensive field - could so fragile a bubble go unpricked for so long, but lately the air has been going out of it at an increasing rate. It is a striking and accumulating fact that hardly any knowledgeable reviewer of Moskowitz's books has failed to come up with a whole clutch of important facts that Moskowitz got quite wrong (and usually, a different clutch for each reviewer). By late in 1967, general summaries of his books complaining not of his opinions, but of too many errors, were beginning to appear in journals of substance in the field.<sup>1</sup>

Such complaints came as no news to most of the living authors whose careers had been summarized by Moskowitz in the magazine articles of which he later made his books. For some reason - misplaced courtesy, perhaps - few of these authors objected to the Moskowitz treatment except in private and among each other (where the objections were often decidedly bitter); but the time for such courtesy is over. As a recent victim of the Great Historian, I propose to explain exactly how Mr Moskowitz's scholarship worked as it was applied to me; and, *passim*, to append the facts which Mr Moskowitz systematically falsified.

\* \* \*

Sam Moskowitz as a historian first referred to me, as far as I have been able to discover, in his first book, *THE IMMORTAL STORM*, somewhere between 1945 and 1952.<sup>2</sup> In that book he accused me of theft, an accusation which would have been actionable had he not been describing an incident that took place when I was 15 years old. Despite the seriousness of the charge, at no time from the Fall of 1945 (when the first installment of the book appeared) through 1954 (when it was reprinted) did he ever ask me for my version of that incident.

That would be a dead issue now, were it not for the additional fact that no other Moskowitz references to me have ever been checked with me, either, including the major one which I am about to analyze. While such neglect would not be unusual for a critic (who deals primarily in opinions), it is decidedly odd for a man who masquerades as a scholar and historian. It is standard operating non-procedure for Mr Moskowitz.

For example, Mr Moskowitz devotes a great deal of space in his two major books to explaining the 'source of inspiration' of the sf stories he describes. In the course of several years of reading reviews of these books by the authors of the

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\* This word appeared as a substitute for 'horse manure' in a joke with which Moskowitz consumed 21 minutes by stop-watch of the speaking time of the guest of honor, Lester del Rey, at the 1967 World Convention, NyCon III. He told the joke as an introduction to a citation-in-absentia for Edmond Hamilton, which Moskowitz had previously promised to hold down to 3 minutes. Moskowitz said the joke was 'highly relevant'. He did not say relevant to what, but since the episode is a Fact, I assume it is equally relevant here.



stories involved, and in questioning them personally, I have yet to discover one author who will agree that Mr Moskowitz ever got even one of these attributions right. Yet he might well have gotten them all right, simply by asking the authors directly.

He never did. Why not?

The answer appears to be (as I have pointed out elsewhere<sup>3</sup>) that Mr Moskowitz, a born though clumsy polemicist, would rather defend his errors than correct them - as witness his famous lost-cause battle with Damon Knight over the origin of the kindly-robot story.<sup>4</sup> But whether this opinion of mine is just or not, it remains evident and on the record that he does not ask questions of the horse's mouth nearly as often as a historian should, though his opportunities to do so are far better than those afforded historians in other fields. This is not an excusable preference, especially in a man of Mr Moskowitz's large pretensions and dog-in-the-manger attacks upon anybody else who poaches upon what he thinks to be his preserves (e.g. upon Alexei Pan-shin<sup>5</sup>).

Now let us turn to the latest incident of this sort. (I apologize for the pomposity; it rubs off on me, I'm afraid.) Just before I do so, however, let me add two facts which just might be important:

1. In 1964 I made in print one unflattering reference to Sam Moskowitz, quite in passing.<sup>6</sup>
2. In 1965 I made in print a great big fat long reference, all of it unflattering, to Moskowitz's work.<sup>3</sup>

These may have nothing at all to do with the issue at hand; I note them for the record. Now let us go on from there.

Under the date of October 1967 (though it did not get into circulation until mid-December), the Science Fiction Writers of America - with which Moskowitz is associated - began circulating the first issue of a mimeographed journal of letters called SFWA Forum. On pp.5-6 of this first issue appears a letter from Mr Moskowitz which includes the following passage:

'This is the most blatant thing of its type since James Blish permitted his essays under the penname of William Atheling Jr to be published by Advent, going into critical raptures about the incomparable techniques of one James Blish.'

Despite the distortions involved in this judgment, I thought it by and large pretty funny. I included a brief note about it in a letter to SFWA's editor; he promptly wrote me that the most recent issue of Different, Moskowitz's magazine for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, contained 'an article specifically criticizing your Atheling-Blish reviewing... you might want to refer to it to find out just what his arguments are. (If you can't get a copy, I'll be glad to Xerox mine for you...)' Since I am not a member of FAPA (as every member of FAPA, including Mr Moskowitz, would know automatically), and since (of course) I had heard nothing about this from Mr Moskowitz himself, I accepted the offer gratefully and with some curiosity.

The piece in Different, called 'Blish on Blish', is cast formally as a review of my 1964 book, THE ISSUE AT HAND.<sup>7</sup> As the title of the review indicates, however, it is mostly devoted to the small fraction of the book's 136 pages wherein I pass judgment on my own work.

If Moskowitz's review has a structure it is invisible to me; however, on the off chance that it does contain one, I shall try to discuss his distortions, half-truths, misquotations and outright errors in the order in which he offered them. (His value judgments, which involve comparisons with erect male genitalia and double hernias, I shall ignore, except to note that they are invoked in the name of 'good taste'.)

Moskowitz lurches to the fray, after a 1-o-n-g paragraph of complimentary quotations



from readers' letters about his own first published story, to document a double proposition:

- A. That as 'William Atheling Jr' I consistently praised myself, both in my Skyhook columns and in the book that was subsequently made from the columns and other material; and,
- B. That it was not reprehensible of me to do this while I was not admitting to the pen-name, but it was reprehensible to do so in the book, where I did admit to the pen-name.

I don't quite understand proposition B - this is where Moskowitz shoves in the phallic comparison - but this may be simply moral obtuseness on my part. As for proposition A, it comes with ill grace from a man who used James V Taurasi Sr's fan-publishing enterprise to print extensive passages of anonymous self-praise; but this is only an ad hominem argument - let it pass. Instead, let us see how much substance there is in the accusation itself.

One of the many things Moskowitz apparently does not know is that it is common practice for a critic who is operating under a pen-name to review his own work as it appears, in order to protect the pen-name. Anthony Burgess is a recent example which Moskowitz might have encountered, since Mr Burgess has published two excellent sf novels, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and THE WANTING SEED. Whether or not it is ever a good idea for a critic to operate under a pen-name at all is another question, and one which I discussed in the three-page introduction (signed by Blish, not Atheling) to THE ISSUE AT HAND, a discussion which Moskowitz sloughs off in one sentence. (I concluded that it was not a good idea, but that I was stuck with it. Moskowitz ignores this.)

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There is a modest amount of truth in this, depending upon how one defines 'typical' and 'repeatedly'; I'll get to an actual count a little later. For the present: the half-sentence he quotes comes (though he fails to say so) from two pages of unalloyed praise for the book reviews of Damon Knight, and the list of other authors is there, just as the sentence says, only incidentally. Moskowitz's confident assertion of what I intended is a pure piece of mind-reading; all I have to do is deny that I had any such intention, and he is out of business, since I am the only person in the world who can know what my actual motive was. On the face of it, this half-sentence is exactly what it says it is: an incidental list of sf authors who up to that time had worked with a certain limited kind of plotting technique. I had done so (in the CITIES IN FLIGHT series, one part or another of which has since been through a total of 42 printings in nine countries), so I included myself; why not?

As for 'stature through association', a simple check of the Day Index<sup>8</sup> would have shown Moskowitz that two of the four other authors on the list had been in the field less than half the time I had, and one in fact (Harness) was a newcomer. Had I wanted glory by association, why didn't I make up a longer and a better list? Simply because these five were the only authors then known to me who practiced the kind of plotting technique I was alluding to.

Moskowitz's next exhibit (and the only other one he cites on this question) consists of three quotations from my discussion of my novelette, 'A Case of Conscience' (one



of which, as he grudgingly admits, I did not include in the Atheling book). Again reading my mind, he adds: '...Blish may have hoped to force a general discussion and critical evaluation of his work, with Atheling's comments as the trigger.' Had this in fact been my motive, I would see nothing discreditable in it; and judging by the first five paragraphs of his review, neither would Moskowitz, except where I am involved. He goes on to say: 'In this hope he was to be disappointed...' Setting aside the mind-reading, I point out that the factual implications of this statement are utterly and completely false. As Moskowitz and nearly everybody else in the field knows by now - and if he did not know, an adjacent passage in THE ISSUE AT HAND, a passage from which he also quotes, would have told him so - both the story and the book versions were widely discussed; the book version won a Hugo for its year; and the book has been published all over the world and is still in print both in the U.S. and overseas. I find it impossible to imagine what could have made him think he could offer an untruth as gross as this without being called on it.

As Moskowitz says, Atheling's discussion of 'A Case of Conscience' in the original column ran about 2,000 words; in the Atheling book it is about twice that long. A fact which Moskowitz never mentions is that this discussion is primarily a history and analysis of the religious sf story in general, and that I am very far from being the only author who is named in it. In fact, the chapter mentions, quotes from or discusses - in lengths ranging from three lines to nine pages - works by Hugh Benson, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Bradbury, Anthony Boucher, G K Chesterton, Arthur C Clarke, Robert A Heinlein, C S Lewis, H P Lovecraft, Robert Lowndes, Walter M Miller Jr, Paul L Payne, M P Shiel and several others - even Moskowitz himself. (In his review, Moskowitz later calls the Heinlein discussion the best piece in the book, but does not say that it comes from this chapter.) The impression the review leaves, however, is that the chapter, which is called 'Cathedrals in Space', is entirely about my story - an impression reinforced by Moskowitz's giving the title (accidentally? well, perhaps) as 'Cathedral in Space'.

I would be curious to know whether or not Moskowitz means to suggest that I should have written a chapter about the religious sf story without having included 'A Case of Conscience'; or whether anybody else would think so. There is, it seems to me, some reason to suppose that 'A Case of Conscience' belongs in such a discussion, no matter who says so, and that it would have been false modesty to have excluded it; just as I felt that if I was going to mention the intensively recomplicated plot (or what Damon Knight calls the 'kitchen-sink' plot), I ought to mention en passant that I was in 1952 one of the only five sf writers who had even tried the technique up to that time. I was even then not unaware that I was walking a tight-rope, as I shall show below, and that my decision might have been wrong. By the same token, as I shall also show, between 1953 and Moskowitz's late-1967 review only one objection was raised to the decision I did make - a period of 14 years; and Moskowitz's own attack upon it has appeared, by his own minimum estimate, a good nine years after all the necessary facts about it were widely available. If there is more to be said, I wish somebody else would get off the dime and say it.

The part of 'Cathedrals in Space' which does deal directly with 'A Case of Conscience' is in itself not wholly admiring. Atheling specifically points out a number of deficiencies in the magazine story; and of the novel he says that the magazine story's drawbacks have been dealt with one way or another, but that the novel has a new deficiency of its own. Nobody would be likely to guess this from Moskowitz's account; he labors long and earnestly to give just the opposite impression. For example, he quotes the following sentence from Atheling:

'Part of the length of the story is contributed by sheer physical description of the planet, in which the author indulges so extensively as to delay telling the reader the story's central problem until he is nearly two-thirds of the way through - and probably losing two-thirds of his readers in the process; but the detail, as it turns out, is valuable, first because it establishes a slow and discursive tone before the reader is plunged into the elaborate four-way argument which is the essence of the piece; and second



because most of the details (though not all) are integral to the argument itself.'9

Moskowitz's comment on this sentence is: 'Therefore, we see that when Atheling talks about Blish, every knock becomes a boost.'

I invite the reader to test this allegation by a simple counting operation. The index to THE ISSUE AT HAND lists 14 references to Blish by Atheling (that is, not counting those which apply to the Introduction, which is signed with my own name). Of these 14, six turn out to be neutral references to matters of fact, such as the name of my first wife; five are mixtures of approval and doubt, such as the sentence about 'A Case of Conscience' re-quoted immediately above; and three are wholly negative. I am of course aware that this count is subjective, which is why I ask the reader to make his own. In the interim, I note that Moskowitz himself indirectly admits the existence of the mixed or negative judgments in his very next words; he calls them 'modest asides'. Quite possibly I am putting the best possible face on the question; Moskowitz, quite obviously, the worst.

\* \* \*

After talking about Atheling's comments about 'A Case of Conscience' as they appeared in the Skyhook column, Moskowitz jumps back to his version of the history of the Atheling pen-name. I shall get to this history shortly; but Moskowitz has still more to say about 'A Case of Conscience' which I think should be taken up first. He puts it this way:

(JB: Here Mr Blish quotes the passage from Mr Moskowitz's review which commences with the words 'When my book...' on p.5 of this issue and continues to the words '...open to a charge of derivation?' on p.6. I trust that Jim, SaM and readers will forgive me not typing it again.)

I remember almost nothing about that five hours of miscellaneous chatter, commercials, music and sandwiches except that I was sound asleep through two hours of it. I should like to see a verbatim transcript of the part of it Moskowitz appeals to (minus such editorial comments as 'with considerable indignation', which depend upon interpretations of voice tone which no transcript could dependably indicate). Pending the publication of such a transcript - and I venture to predict that we will never see it from Moskowitz's hands - I will say firmly that I have never denied being familiar with Lewis's interplanetary trilogy. I had in fact reviewed two of its volumes, earlier on; and I was directly responsible for the first U.S. paperback publication, by Avon, of the third volume, THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH (retitled THE TORTURED PLANET, but by Avon, not by me).

It is, however, highly possible that I failed to recognize the un-named Lewis novel from a Moskowitz plot summary. I have sometimes failed to recognize works of my own from Moskowitz plot summaries, and in this I am far from alone; because he is constantly alleging that one work is 'derived' from another, he tends to make the plot summaries of the works he thinks related sound as alike as possible. Lately, this trick has been wearing thin, but I may very easily not yet have caught on to it back in 1963.

Moskowitz's alternative guess is that I denied having read the un-named Lewis novel (which I am sure I did not) for fear of 'a charge of derivation'. Why should I do this? No author can hope to function effectively without having read as widely as is humanly possible in the works of his predecessors. This is not a crime, but a pre-requisite. Had Moskowitz asked me about the matter directly, I would gladly have told him that one fairly important aspect of 'A Case of Conscience' is indeed indebted to Lewis. In fact, both the novel and the magazine story contain a specific and inarguable reference to the Lewis trilogy, which Moskowitz has yet to spot, as direct acknowledgment of the indebtedness.

I cannot tell from Moskowitz's text whether or not he means to 'charge' 'A Case of Conscience' with 'derivation', but in the light of his whole monomania on this subject, I



think we can safely assume that he does. If so - and I do not pretend to be positive about it - I find it curious that this is the first time he has published such a 'charge' since 1953, or ever. But the whole history of his comments on 'A Case of Conscience' is curious. In his SEEKERS OF TOMORROW (1966)<sup>10</sup> he ascribes to it a different derivation or inspiration. This too is wrong, as was inevitable, since he never checked either with me, and he lacks the equipment to get such a thing right by himself; and neither of the two references to the story in SEEKERS OF TOMORROW mentions any Lewis influence (though P Schuyler Miller saw it, and said so in his 1958 review<sup>11</sup>). Conversely, SEEKERS OF TOMORROW also devotes some space to C S Lewis, but this discussion does not mention my book - three missed opportunities in a row.

In the first such ascription, Moskowitz says:

'James Blish, who went on to win a Hugo in 1959 with A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, a novel of the dilemma of a priest on a planet where creatures exist without original sin, should bow respectfully in the direction of Bradbury's 'In This Sign' ('The Fire Balloons'), published originally in Imagination April 1951, which tells of priests who go to Mars and discover Martians without original sin.'<sup>12</sup>

This quotation shows first of all that Moskowitz does not know that the problem of the plurality of worlds, and the possibility of sinless races upon them, dates back as far as Galileo (though Atheling pointed this out both in 1953 and in 1964); he thinks Bradbury invented the problem, so he assumes that I got it from Bradbury, like a disease. All this really shows is that Moskowitz hasn't read much theology, and either skipped or ignored the Atheling passages which might have set him straight.

Furthermore, despite a superficial show of scholarship, this ascription contains another of Moskowitz's gross falsifications of fact. Despite a certain amount of fuzziness in the references, it would probably lead any trusting reader to believe that 'A Case of Conscience' was first published in 1959, eight years after 'In This Sign'. But of course Moskowitz has shown that he knows that the magazine version, to which his plot summary applies, was published in 1953; and that the book was published in 1958. The book was indeed awarded a Hugo in 1959, but this has nothing to do with whether or not its author was influenced by a 1951 Bradbury story.

These are simple matters which a competent historian should have felt obligated to make clear; but in the passage cited, Moskowitz has managed to fog all of them except the author's name and the work's title. (And at that I was lucky; some other references in SEEKERS OF TOMORROW, as well as in 'Blish on Blish', are wrong on even these counts.)

Furthermore, I think the reader will observe that if Moskowitz wanted to demonstrate that it was possible that I had borrowed an idea from 'In This Sign', the spread between April 1951 (when the Bradbury story appeared) and September 1953 (when my story appeared) would have been quite sufficient; but in making assurance doubly sure by making the spread appear to be nine years long, instead of a little over two years, he has not strengthened his case against me, but only shown himself again to be a historian with remarkably little respect for the facts.

The second ascription, which again insists upon the Bradbury 'inspiration', manages at last to get the raw facts right, but instantly thereafter gets the story all wrong. (A lot of Moskowitz copy, I suspect, might be understood best on the assumption that he has two tin ears, each tuned, more or less, to a different channel.) This plot summary<sup>13</sup> is so completely thump-headed a burlesque of the novel that I scarcely know where to begin to object to it, but its greatest miss (by a small margin) is embodied in this sentence: 'When that world dissolves in space, he is convinced that it was all a snare of the Devil from which he has saved mankind, even though the more logical explanation of the explosion of a fusion plant under construction is diagnosed as the actual cause.' No such diagnosis appears in the novel; Moskowitz has supplied an ending for the book, instead, which destroys my whole



reason for having written it in the first place.

The whole issue of the propriety of Atheling's comments on 'A Case of Conscience', in any event, is, I think, summarized with reasonable candidness in the Atheling book itself, though Moskowitz gives no hint of this. The summary leads off Atheling's discussion of the novel version, and it says:

'Looking at a story of one's own in this fashion is a difficult and perhaps a foredoomed exercise, and one impossible to free from suspicions of disingenuousness or outright dishonesty (of which I was duly accused at least once).' (Make it twice, now. The Atheling allusion was, of course, to a Walter Breen piece, discussed below.)

'Nevertheless, I'm glad I tried it; and in retrospect, it affords me the chance to check on my critical performance in several ways that I couldn't have predicted and hence couldn't have attempted to set up for myself even had I wanted to.'<sup>14</sup> That is still my feeling about the matter.

\* \* \*

Moskowitz's history of the use of and responses to the Atheling pen-name bears marginally upon the question of Atheling and 'A Case of Conscience'; but it is a great deal more interesting as a running example of the Great Historian's way of loading the dice - so much more, it seems to me, that I will run the risk of being equally tiresome by commenting upon it line by line. In what follows, the passages in quotes are from the Moskowitz review; those in parentheses are mine.

'James Blish began to use the pen name of William Atheling Jr for a column of criticism entitled 'Pro-Phile',...'

(The title 'Pro-Phile' was dropped after the second of the twelve columns, becoming 'The Issue At Hand' for the balance of its history. The third column is also plainly labeled "(FORMERLY 'PRO-PHILE')"; and on the opening page of the Atheling book is a footnote which says, after the first six words of text, "'Pro-Phile" was Red Boggs' title for this column, though not for long.'))

'...which he inaugurated in the Summer 1952 issue of Sky Hook...'

(Wrong. It was in the next issue, Autumn 1952.)

'...a Fantasy Amateur Press Association magazine published by Redd Boggs.'

(A half-truth. Skyhook was indeed a FAPA magazine; but it was also 'available for general circulation', as the masthead of SkHk 15 says, and was very widely circulated outside the small membership of FAPA.)

'Ezra Pound, a grand passion of James Blish's, once wrote music criticism for a Paris paper under the name of William Atheling - which explains its derivation.'

(This 'explanation', though it is not ascribed to anybody and thus passes by default as Moskowitz's own, simply paraphrases my own account on pp.8-9 of THE ISSUE AT HAND (book version). It well illustrates the dangers for a Great Historian of relying on secondary sources; for my account contains a serious <sup>error</sup> of fact which Moskowitz has faithfully reproduced. The facts are a matter of record in any public library; and Moskowitz did not even have the excuse of supposing himself (as I supposed myself, however erroneously) to be already familiar with them. In letting me - of all people! - do his research for him, he let slip (among other things) a valid round of live ammunition for himself.

(Before jumping two pages farther into Moskowitz's review to pick up the rest of his Atheling history, let us pause to see what we have picked up already. In the course of just a single two-sentence paragraph, Moskowitz has given us a one-sixth truth, a wrong date, a half-truth, and one appropriated, unascribed other error. We have already seen that this is his customary level of accuracy. There is more to come.

'Eventually,' - (August 1958) - 'the fact that Atheling and Blish were the same was officially codified in FANCYCLOPEDIA II, edited by Richard Eney. Previously, Blish had let the information leak in various fan magazines and fan meetings...'



(What fan magazines and fan meetings? And why is FANCYCLOPEDIA II any more official than any other fan magazine? I told a good many people, prior to 1958, that I was Atheling, which is how Eney got hold of the fact: I did not then know Eney, indeed I had never even seen him, so the Eney FANCYCLOPEDIA II entry was hearsay in itself. This argument of Moskowitz's is an egregious piece of front-dating.)

'...but the FANCYCLOPEDIA II inclusion caused several commentaries and 'lifted eyebrows'...

(Who is being quoted here? Moskowitz does not say. Nor is he (as a self-praising statistician) being very careful about what he wants us to understand by 'caused'.)

'...by Richard Bergeron in Warhoon, January 1960 and by Walter Breen in Tesseract March 1960.'

(This is far and away the most transparent piece of dice-loading I have ever seen from Moskowitz, expert though he is at it. The Bergeron article, which appeared 16 months after Eney's, was written in praise of Atheling's critical practice - as Bergeron said subsequently in a letter to me, and thereafter said in the very next issue of Warhoon, which we must suppose is also in Moskowitz's bottomless files, though he is very careful not to mention it. Breen, to be sure, thought the Bergeron essay Moskowitz cites to be an attack upon my self-criticism, but Bergeron made a special point, in print, of denying that he had any such intention.

(I think Moskowitz knows this just as well as I do... if not better, since I have not thought about this small controversy for years. But he strongly implies that Bergeron's remarks were condemnatory (which they were not), and that added to Breen's (which were unquestionably condemnatory), they came out to something approaching a chorus of indignation about Atheling on Blish.

(The chorus, however, turns out to consist of nobody but Breen, though THE ISSUE AT HAND or all its precedent material has been kicking around, as Moskowitz has been at pains to say, since 1952, has been the subject of reviews by writers and critics of stature, and financially has also been doing pretty well (that is, the book is in a good many hands now.)

(I do not discount Walter Breen's opinions, which I have always found well worth the most serious attention, whether I agreed with them or not; but I do not think he would claim to be a chorus, on any issue at all.)

\* \* \*

This would appear to be the substance, such as it is, of Moskowitz's case against 'Blish on Blish', at least insofar as his review of THE ISSUE AT HAND shows. We are left with some scattershot which could just as well be shrugged off - though some of it is offensively personal - did it not further illuminate his habitual inaccuracy. To take smaller matters first:

'The entire book runs only 135 pages, which is far from a substantial quantity for five dollars.' (The book in fact runs 136 pages, and the going price for it (in paperback) has been \$1.95 since July 1967.)

'...some chapters are merely reviews of a single issue of a magazine.' (No, not 'some' chapters; just one, out of fourteen. Not that it would matter, anyhow, if Moskowitz's report were true, since the title page of the book plainly announces that it consists of 'studies in contemporary magazine science fiction'.)

'The second-longest chapter in THE ISSUE AT HAND is devoted to a single story by an author named Arthur Zirul...' (There are six chapters in the book which are longer than this one. About a third of that chapter is devoted to John W Campbell Jr and Chad Oliver.)

'...Zirul, who almost receives more attention than Heinlein.' (Zirul references in the index, seven; Heinlein references, fourteen. A comparative line count would show



an even greater difference. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND alone is allotted nine pages (not eight - can't the man get anything right?) to Zirul's five.)

\* \* \*

In one of his more charming moments, Moskowitz suggests that I disagree with him over whether or not Shiel's LORD OF THE SEA is anti-Semitic either because I have not really read the book (evidently one of his favorite plays), or because I myself am anti-Semitic, a position I might have 'embraced' from Ezra Pound. Not a trace of evidence for the latter slander may be found anywhere in my more than three million words of published work. Furthermore, the behavior imputed to me is not at all typical of anti-Semites, who invariably grasp at the faintest hint of anti-Semitism in others in order to buttress their own position. As for Pound, my attitude towards his anti-Semitism is discussed at length in a 42-page essay of mine in the Spring 1950 issue of Sewanee Review; so were Moskowitz really interested in this part of this question, he has had seventeen years to run it down. Though he is attacking me specifically as a critic, he shows no sign of knowing that I write criticism in other fields besides his specialty, and quite possibly he has never even heard of Sewanee Review; but page 8 of the book he is reviewing says that I have written about Pound for the literary quarterlies, and possibly he has heard of THE READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE... Or, even more simply, he could have broken with precedent and asked the person most likely to know the answer: me.

I think it might occur to a disinterested reader that the most likely situation is the one Moskowitz does not mention: that he and I have both read the Shiel novel, and honestly disagree over whether or not it can be characterized as anti-Semitic - much as we might honestly disagree over so characterizing THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, and for much the same reason. But imputing honesty to me is clearly not the first thing that pops into Moskowitz's head, or the last, either.

\* \* \*

*Wish I knew*  
I do not know why Moskowitz's review is so loaded and so inaccurate, and though I have some guesses, I shall not inflict them upon the reader. Nor do I offer any speculations about his motives, intentions, morals, passions, honesty, racial beliefs, or state of grace.<sup>15</sup> I think the evidence above shows, however, that he is a slovenly historian; quod erat demonstrandum est.

James Blish

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15. Again for the record, Atheling has two entirely unfavorable reviews of SEEKERS OF TOMORROW in press with Nova SF (Bologna, Italy) and Amazing Stories (though the Nova SF article may appear signed by Blish). Both these reviews were requested, written and mailed well before the publication of either of Moskowitz's attacks, as I am prepared to demonstrate to anyone who cares.



# REVIEWS

JOHN F MICHELL: THE FLYING SAUCER VISION  
Sidgwick & Jackson UK 30s. A\$4.25

R D SYMONS

One of the minor schisms of the age is that between sf adepts and ufologists, and not surprisingly, when one considers the vulgarities of people like Adamski in comparison with the polish that sf, as a literary genre, is now attaining. Sf, in fact, is converging with scientific humanism and its attendant scepticism in an attempt to project possible future worlds from a basis of known facts, whereas ufology, to any rational mind, must usually be dismissed as mythology. Yet we do live in a troubled age, more troubled than our recent past. The bomb is worse than the possible conversion of England to Catholicism by Phillip of Spain, or overthrow by republicanism at the hands of Buonaparte. It ought not, therefore, to be surprising that strange new beliefs should occur and the flying saucer legend would seem to be a timely oddity.

Are the legends completely incredible? Scientific humanism, like many other forms of thought or epistemologies, can become a rigid orthodoxy, excluding phenomena which do not fit into its systems. There are things we don't think about, and this book attempts, in a strikingly bold and sweeping manner, to provide a possible explanation for some of them.

The author suggests that the saucer legends are literally true, that this planet has been visited from time to time since remote pre-history by superior beings, the gods of antiquity, from whom all blessings have flowed. Human progress, he believes, has not been a steady evolution based on experiment and observation; the major steps towards civilization occurred after visitations by the gods who showed us what to do. He even suggests that wheat, which cannot be found in the wild state anywhere on earth, was literally a gift of the gods. This doesn't convince me entirely. Outside Australia, where draught camels were turned loose, there are no wild camels. Wheat could have grown only in one of those Middle Eastern river valleys which after being intensively cultivated are now desert. He suggests that the gods of all the known polytheistic religions are racial memories of visits by real, higher life forms.

The proposition has an attractive simplicity. It would roll this small part of the universe, at least, into a ball. One could extrapolate all kinds of theories from this central idea. Neurosis might be explained as an estrangement from or denial of mentors of whom we have an unconscious racial memory; psychosis as awareness co-existing with total failure of such arcane knowledge. Certainly we tend still to think of human development as a relatively steady progress. Nineteenth Century optimism, which gave us the habit, was eclectic. It chose to believe in a continuous evolution from the Egyptian and other pre-Hellenic civilizations, through Greece and Rome, Christianity and the Renaissance, to industrial Europe. There was such a discernible line of development, but European and Middle Eastern societies, we know, have been contiguous since the Sumerian empire of eight or nine thousand years ago, while that other ancient world, China, with its invasions, dynasties and assimilations, has achieved its own continuity. But European optimism has tended to ignore, or leave unanalysed, the awkward fact that societies may also decline, particularly when isolated - a fact most clearly illustrated in the fate of the Tasmanians; even H G Wells admitted that they had degenerated from some earlier condition.

The author searches for, and claims to find, truly remarkable parallels in the reports and beliefs of peoples living far apart in time and space. The Australian aboriginals are naturalistic in their cave painting with one notable exception, the Wondjina figures. They explain the figures by saying that they, too, are naturalistic, that



they depict a race of gods who visited Australia. It is easy enough to dismiss a statement which does not fit in with our current beliefs. We may refer to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle on questions of land tenure, or crime and punishment, yet class as superstition this passage of AD 793:

'In this year terrible portents appeared over Northumbria and miserably frightened the inhabitants; there were exceptional flashes of lightning and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air.'

What had been thought to be pure myth has often been discovered later to be a true record; the Iliad and the Trojan War, for example. There was a popular awareness of the two satellites of Mars long before there was any scientific awareness of the fact. Dean Swift wrote GULLIVER'S TRAVELS in 1727 and described the two moons and their orbits, yet it was not until 1877 that the American astronomer, Asaph Hall, became the first man to see them through a telescope and found that they fitted Swift's description accurately. Readers of ASFR will be familiar with Shklovsky's calculation that Phobos, the nearer of the two to Mars, must be hollow, and his conclusion that it may be an artificial satellite, launched long ago from the surface of Mars.

Myths and legends should, perhaps, never be entirely dismissed. All over the world there are artificial features on the surface of the earth which can only be seen from a great height and defy explanation in familiar terms. Michell suggests that they were aids to saucer navigation. Yet I think there is an inconsistency here; if our aircraft, crude as they must appear to Michell's gods, may fly by gyro-compass and radar, it seems to me that a supposedly far superior race, navigating along the variable trajectories of the solar system or beyond, would have no need to rely on mere vision. Perhaps they had them set out to impress the locals.

There is also, I think, an obvious omission from Mr Michell's world survey. Throughout, he has his saucers seeking high places, cleared hilltops, artificial mounds, pyramids, the 'vitrified forts' of Scotland, round stone towers which at some time have been subjected to heat so great as to melt and fuse together the stones of which they are made. With all this interest in high places and the occult and his speculations on lost arts of flight, he makes no mention of Tibetan lore. I should have thought that the Tibetan plateau might have proved a rich source. It is the only contemporary society, or priesthood at least, with a living tradition of levitation and of arcane knowledge and the occult, remote enough to have been discreetly visited by the gods in recent times in order to keep such knowledge alive, high enough to satisfy the aeronautical predilections which he believes they have. He has a chapter on actual mysterious disappearances of people, such as the crew of the 'Marie Celeste' and on possible infiltrations by an alien race, which might have included a section on the search for each new Dalai Lama, conducted according to ancient astrological laws.

But it is a fascinating book, and not without erudition. It quotes Jung, who, apparently, came to believe in flying saucers, and mentions Wittgenstein. There is, unquestionably, forgotten knowledge. To this day, in Wales, they will tell you that the Druids knew all about the so-called mind-expanding properties of fungi, that they kept this knowledge secret by saying that all but the common mushroom were poisonous, a belief which survives in Anglo-Saxon countries. All but two of the fungi of Victoria are edible; of these two, the police apparently have yet to discover that one is a powerful narcotic. A contributor to ASFR, whom I know too well to disbelieve, has seen lights in the sky which could not be explained away.

Perhaps, in spite of our human conceit, we are somebody's property; other ages have found it possible to live with that idea. We can only say we don't know. This book raises the questions in an intelligent and literate manner. I have never looked for saucers before, but after reading it I just might turn an eye to the night sky, occasionally.

R D Symons

JB: Readers of ASFR may be familiar with Shklovsky's calculations, but the editor certainly isn't. If you're pulling my leg, Don, I'll submit your reviews in future to a Scientific Authority before I publish them.



The desire to write 'the ultimate analysis' of a given author's work is an understandable one, and one probably harboured by any number of sf fans. When the author concerned is regarded by his chronicler as being miserably underestimated by his fellow fans, then the resulting work may take on something of the character of a crusade, and this is what has happened in the case of THE MULTI-MAN.

Philip Harbottle never met Fearn. He has contacted only a few people able to give him information, and he has failed to gain the co-operation of Fearn's widow, so this book gives rather an inadequate account of the author's life. But it does give an excellent guide to Fearn's work: nearly two hundred novels and as many short stories, written under his own name and no less than thirty-four pseudonyms - and Phil, stout chap, has over the last nine years collected and read them all.

As Phil traces his author's career a picture emerges of a man gifted with an almost incredible facility for writing and a sharp eye to the main chance; a disciplined man who could write from 9 to 12, spend the afternoon at the cinema, write again from 6 to 9, and repeat this programme daily for years; an adaptable man who could switch from sf to mysteries to westerns to romances and back again, without a sign of psychological stress.

There is a picture, too, of a gifted writer deprived of recognition by obtuse (and even dishonest) editors, publishers and readers. How true this picture is is beyond my knowledge to judge, but it seems to me that Phil rather overstates his case. Fearn was no literary giant - far from it - so we do not have here a case of neglected genius. He apparently lived comfortably on the proceeds of his writing, which is all that any man can ask for, and more than most achieve. It seems to me rather that editors and fans tended, rightly or wrongly, to regard Fearn's work as so much garbage, and ignored it. They had a perfect right to do this, and it did not interfere ultimately with Fearn's financial reward for his work, since less discerning readers bought it in huge quantities. What it did do was to exclude him from the sf pantheon and his readers (until they passed on to better things) from sf fandom.

Something like this appears to be happening in Germany today (and might start happen in America before too long) in connection with the Perry Rhodan books. Fandom deplores the series, but the books are bought in vast numbers and there are Perry Rhodan clubs all over the place. As long as there are people to read stuff like this there will be people to write it - but the writers (and their biographers) should not complain if they miss out on Hugos, or even kind words, from the 'regular' fans.

Phil's 70-page book divides evenly into an essay, 'The Ultimate Analysis' (there's a certain Moskowitizian grandeur about that title), and a complete annotated bibliography. The essay concludes with the news that the New English Library is considering issuing a paperback selection of Fearn stories; but the author informs me that Mrs Fearn has subsequently wrecked this venture by refusing permission to reprint. A quote from his letter: 'Her attitude came as a shattering blow to me - it was the last thing I expected. Here I've been flogging my heart out for nine years to restore her husband's tarnished reputation, finished the job, practically putting money in her hand, and doing nobody any harm, and she just doesn't want to know.'

This is a sad business. Just as sad is the news that fandom generally seems to be ignoring Phil's book completely. I know, I know, 'fandom is a money-spending thing', but surely this kind of enterprise deserves some kind of compensation? 'Not one member of the British SF Association to whom I sent a circular, and I sent around 300, wanted to buy a copy, with one exception. A full page ad in Speculation elicited no replies whatever from this country.' Closer to home: 'I sent an outline and sample to Mr Mervyn Binns, the friendly bookseller who has been on first-name terms with Hugo

Gernsback since 1926, but his expert attention must have been diverted elsewhere because I was never favoured with a reply. Not to worry.' Actually, Mervyn did mention the book to customers and club members, but the net result has been the same.

Phil's essay and bibliography should be of invaluable assistance to sf collectors and historians, and the essay should be of interest to most fans and aspiring writers. As well as tracing Fearn's career, the essay gives some interesting glimpses of sf activities and attitudes, pro and fan, British and American.

Tell you what: you buy Phil's book, either from him or from me (I hereby appoint myself honorary agent), and I'll add an issue of ASFR free to your subscription. Fair enough?

John Bangsund

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