fall 1955

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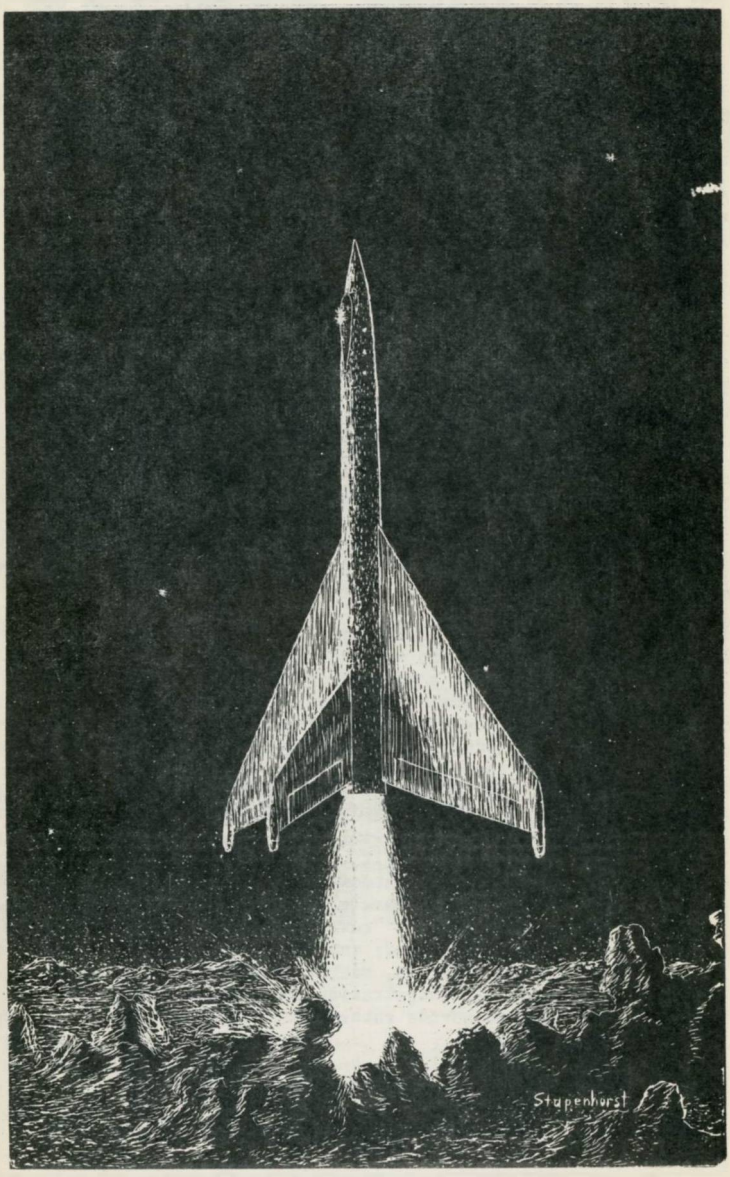
fantastic worlds



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the silent writer

bernard kelly is a denver newspaperman with the ability to take a theme which everyone swore was exhausted and weave it into a story so well that you'd swear nobody had ever used it before. mr. kelly is preparing a collection of his stories; we can hardly wait.

by bernard kelly

IT BEGAN ON A NIGHT they were working late at the state house, the Governor and Duncan, his confidential secretary.

The Governor had paused in his dictation for a long time, studying the voluminous report in his hands and puffing occasionally on an old briar.

For the Governor was troubled.

Two hundred miles away a life was at stake. Not much of a life; perhaps you might even say a worthless life--one not worth saving, or even worrying about.

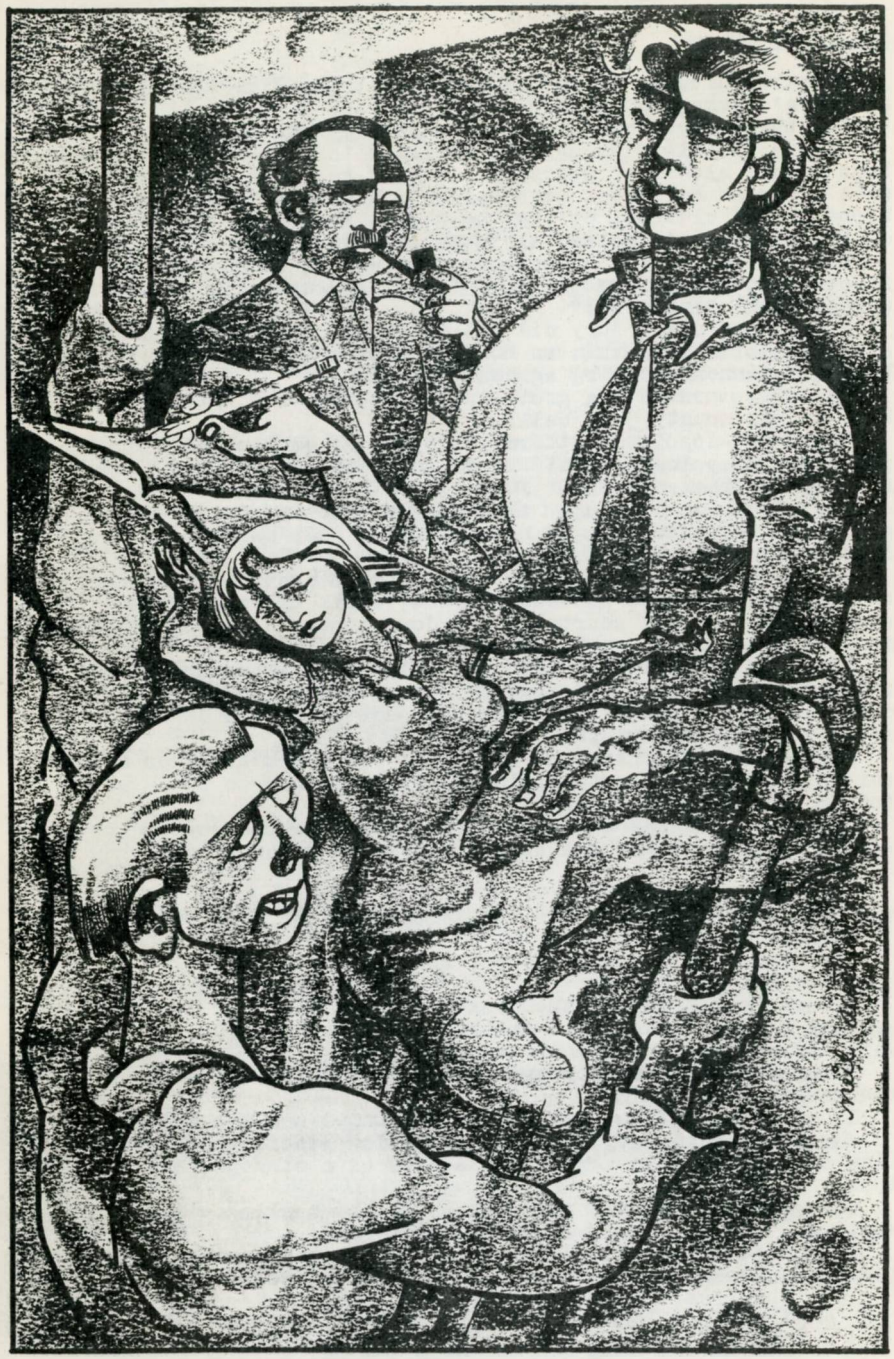
In a death cell at the state penitentiary near Claremont, a man named Kelsoe Farladay was crouching. A convicted murderer, Farladay had a date, not too far away, with the hangman.

The condemned man, in spite of good native intelligence, and considerable plausibility, was really little more than an animal, and clearly guilty.

He had--or so the evidence at his trial showed--gone to the home of his estranged wife in a mean section of the city, throttled her, battered her head in with a club, and then in a final, magnificent surge of savagery, hurled her dead or dying out into the snow, where shocked early-rising workingmen found her lifeless the next morning.

It hadn't taken the police long to fasten the crime on Farladay.

They found him in his room at a cheap hotel, sleeping off a drunk, an empty bottle rolling on the floor. There was blood on his clothing--but perhaps not as much as there ought to have been.



Illustrated by NEIL AUSTIN

There was mud on his shoes. Mud something like that around his wife's home, but perhaps not quite the same.

And there were scratches on his face and arms.

It was fruitless enough for Farladay to protest that he had been drunk, alone, in his room. Or that he had been in a fight with a man he had never seen before and been scratched and got blood on his clothes. Or that he had no idea where that mud got on his shoes--he'd walked all over town in a frenzy of drink.

But innocent--yes, he protested he was innocent. He repeated it over and over. It would come from his mouth with no other words. Just: "Innocent!"

A district court jury did not think so. They found him guilty after a little more than an hour's deliberation, and went home to their dinners feeling agreeably firm.

Farladay, protesting grotesquely that he was innocent, went back to his county jail cell.

His court-appointed attorneys looked at each other and shrugged. They loaded their books under their arms and went back to their offices and their lucrative divorce cases.

Farladay hadn't brought them much publicity. There was no glamor in the case to make news stories, only sordidness and dirt.

In due course Farladay was sentenced to death and screamed that he was innocent and was hurried, still uttering great screams, out of the courtroom and down to the state penitentiary near Claremont.

"What an offensive brute!" the judge said afterward in his chambers. "Of course he's guilty. . . . Mortenson, when an application for a new trial comes up, just prepare a denial for me. . . . I'll sign it."

Farladay's attorneys had to appeal for a new trial as a matter of principle. Court-appointed attorneys had to be careful not to slight these things.

The new trial was denied, and an appeal to the supreme court --also automatic--was unsuccessful. Farladay had to die.

Unless . . .

THE GOVERNOR STIRRED in his big leather chair.

"Duncan," he said.

The secretary did not answer, and the Governor looked up in surprise.

He saw Duncan across the desk from him, his head leaning back against a high-backed, old-fashioned leather chair. His eyes were closed. He appeared to be asleep.

"Duncan!" the Governor said again, and began to reach across the massive oak table.

It was then that he saw that the younger man was writing.

His right hand gripped a bright yellow pencil which was making trip after trip across the sheets of a stenographer's notebook.

The governor quickly rose, astonishment masking every other emotion.

He walked around the heavy table. He looked once again at Duncan's closed eyes. Looked down at the notebook.

Cherries, cherries, limes and lemons
Limes and lemons and cherries and limes and lemons
Now Is the time for all good men to

(Here a break occurred in the neat Palmerian script of Duncan and an untidy new hand began.)

To whom it may concern:
In the matter of Elizabeth Merritt Farladay, deceased
Innocent innocent innocent innocent
The man in the cell is innocent
The man in the cell is innocent
Oranges and limes and lemons
No more now!
G. has closed with R. W. S. People may know. Books overdue and
No more now

The yellow pencil suddenly fell to the desk with a clatter. The sound seemed to echo out through the Governor's outer office, through the open door and up, up, up into the dome over the rotunda.

Duncan was blinking his eyes in bewilderment.

"I must have fallen asleep," he said. "Sorry, Governor."

"It's all right," the Governor said, putting a hand on Duncan's shoulder. "I've been overworking you. Go home and get some sleep. We've done enough tonight."

"Why--thanks!" Duncan said, rising. "Phew, my head! Feels like a hangover. Must be smoking too much."

He reached out his hand for the notebook, which the Governor had picked up.

"Go on home," the Governor urged. "You must be very tired. I'll put things away."

Duncan mumbled thanks and didn't argue. He quickly shrugged himself into his overcoat and went home.

The Governor sat there for hours, staring at the strange pencilings on the notebook.

That was the first time.

THE FOLLOWING DAY the Governor dictated a short note to Warden Ed Dreyfus at Claremont.

My Dear Warden:

I am planning a trip of several days which will take me through Claremont on January 17.

Would you be able to whip up one of those beefsteak dinners for me that night? Duncan will be with me.

I have no particular business at the penitentiary, but as long as I am going to be there anyhow, I shall want to talk to the prisoner, Kelsoe Farladay.

As a condemned man, I feel that he should be given every opportunity to say anything he may have to say in his own behalf.

I shall be looking forward to seeing you again.

"You're going to see Farladay?" Duncan broke in, in some surprise.

"Yes. Why not?" the Governor said, a little sharply.

"Of course! If you want, of course. So you want me to go?"

"Yes, I want you to go," the Governor said.

WARDEN DREYFUS WAS GLAD to see them, as he always was, the Governor noted.

"Got plenty of room. Plenty of bourbon, too. Why don't you and Duncan stay overnight and talk to the Star Boarder tomor-

row?"

"We certainly will stay overnight," the Governor said. "But as long as we have a couple of hours, I'll see Farladay this afternoon. Then I can enjoy my dinner."

They faced each other across a bare table in an otherwise unfurnished room, the Governor and Farladay. The Governor scorned guards.

Farladay begged and pleaded. He had been drunk and he had been in a fight. But he had not killed his wife. No, he did not remember where all he had been. No, he was sure he had not killed his wife, even though he could not remember every place he had been.

He did not want to die. He was afraid to die. It was wrong to kill a man when he did not want to die and was afraid to die. He sat and sat and sat in his cell and feared and feared and did not want to die.

The Governor stood up.

"I'm sorry, Farladay," the Governor said. "I can see no reason for interceding to change the just decision of the courts."

Farladay stood up, too.

He began to babble, then to howl. Then he began to scream, uttering scream after scream in a shattering crescendo, the screams of a terrified man.

The guards rushed in.

"I CAN STAND a good stiff drink," the Governor said.

"I hope it hasn't spoiled your appetite," Warden Dreyfus said. "It must have been an ordeal. I wish you had waited."

"It was an ordeal, all right," the Governor said, accepting the proffered glass, "but it has relieved my mind. Clearly the man is guilty. I can eat a good dinner. . . ."

THE EXECUTION WAS SET for March 15. Two weeks before that time the Governor and Duncan were again working late.

The Governor felt a premonition. This was just the same kind of occasion and just the same setting as that--that other. They were alone in the capitol office. It was late at night. Even the scrubwoman had gone.

The Governor looked up furtively at Duncan. He was again leaning back in the chair, his eyes closed.

Almost fearfully the older man forced himself to look down at the pencil.

Clutched in Duncan's hand, it was sliding across the notebook again and again.

This time the Governor stood up and walked behind Duncan, where he watched the words as they spun off the end of the yellow pencil.

Again the handwriting was coarse and untidy.

For the love of God sir have mercy
Innocent innocent innocent innocent
The man in the cell is innocent
C. D. C. beware of super structure cataract byzantine
Oh for the love of God take action akshun axyun
The man in the cell is in

The writing broke off suddenly. Duncan had awakened.

This time the Governor made no move as the secretary stared at the unfamiliar words under the neat Gregg symbols in his notebook.

"Great God," he said. "Who wrote this?"

"You did."

"But I couldn't have. It's gibberish."

"You wrote it. I watched you. You were asleep. Or . . ."

"Or what?"

"You were asleep, or else in some sort of hypnotic trance."

"But for God's sake, Governor, what does it mean?"

The Governor clapped a friendly hand on Duncan's shoulder and sat down opposite him again. He told the younger man of the strange writings that came from his pencil on the previous occasion.

"What does it mean, Governor?" Duncan asked hoarsely.

"I don't know. . . . That is, I'm not sure. Has this ever happened to you before?"

"Never!"

"I suppose it is what they call automatic writing. I've read of it, but never knew of a case of it. Some other . . . soul--or personality--or mind--or entity--whatever it is, guides the pencil. Or perhaps your subconscious mind--"

"But it reads like a warning, or an entreaty!"

The Governor sighed wearily.

"Yes," he said. "And somehow it must mean the man Farladay, I think, when it writes about 'the man in the cell' and 'innocent.'"

"But the rest?"

The Governor shrugged.

"It may have a meaning. Or perhaps it is, well, like static?"

THE VERY NEXT DAY the Governor summoned two bright and eager young attorneys to his office.

But when they discovered what he wanted, there was nothing they could tell him. Yes, they had defended Farladay the best way they knew how. The court had appointed them, remember? Farladay was the greatest liar they had ever encountered. The truth was just not in him. Yes, they sincerely believed him guilty. They had done the best they could for him, but the man was guilty.

The judge who had tried Farladay was equally certain. There had been no doubt in his mind--after the trial, of course--that Farladay was guilty. To be sure, he had a fair, impartial trial. The man was a born criminal--a beast rather than a man. If the Governor had heard him scream when sentence was pronounced, he would have thought Farladay a beast, too. Such screams--. Yes, he had gone over all the facts again when the motion for a new trial came up and--well, Farladay was guilty. He would bank on that.

The cold, solemn solons of the supreme court could add nothing to that. They had read the transcript of the trial. There had been no reversible error. The people had spoken.

THE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 15 was a wild, snowy day. The Governor had cancelled all his appointments and sat with Duncan in his inner office.

"I have made arrangements to keep a line open to Warden Dreyfus until after the--until it's all over," the Governor said, standing at the window, watching the wind whip the snow into gray, ghostly shapes.

"The time is to be eight o'clock."

Duncan nodded. Tiny perspiration beads stood out on his face and head.

"If I could only know who or what it was," he said.

"Everything that can be done has been done," the Governor said. "But--if you are willing--we'll give this unknown thing one more chance. God knows, the voters would take us for madmen. But a man's life is at stake. We'll sit here until we have word that it is all over, you with pencil in hand--just as we were before."

"Yes," Duncan said in a hoarse whisper.

The night fell. A single light burned high over the oak table as they sat there. The Governor's phone lay off its cradle between them. It hummed and popped occasionally with the odd sounds of an open line. Duncan sat there, a blank notebook before him, a pencil in his hand.

"Perhaps if you would write something?" the Governor suggested.

Duncan nodded. Idly he began to copy from a brown-bound book of legal citations. The hands of the clock went round, nearing eight o'clock. Once the Governor and Warden Dreyfus conferred briefly on the open phone.

"No, there is nothing," the Governor said. "Go ahead with your plans. Have somebody at the phone, in case of an emergency. . . ."

The minutes went by. The two men sat silently. The sweat on Duncan's forehead suddenly sent a liquid furrow down his face. The red second hand made its final trip around the clock's face, and it was eight o'clock. Still Duncan's pencil merely copied the text from the book of citations. Several minutes passed.

"It's too late," the Governor whispered, more to himself than to Duncan.

Suddenly he knew that Duncan was no longer copying the dry, legal phrases. The pencil began to fly across the sheet. The executive half rose, leaned across the table and watched the words form. His lips moved drily in a shocked prayer.

Stop it now
Stop all this nonsense now for I am hanged
I am hanged and dead
I was guilty
Oh my God I was guilty
Someone is coming

Suddenly the pencil flew out of the thin fingers of Duncan's hand. The pale, slim man threw his head back against the chair and began to scream.

Scream after scream split his throat as though torn from his body. They rocketed against the empty walls of the huge corridor outside, and rocketed again and again in a continuous echo.

The Governor had heard those screams before.

The phone on the desk began to click. A raspy voice was speaking. Duncan suddenly stopped screaming and lay still, breathing heavily. The Governor picked up the phone.

"Yes?" he said. " . . . That was Duncan--he had an attack of some kind, I believe. All right now. Is it over? . . . I see."

The Governor nodded as the phone rattled in his ear. Then he said: "I know, it was a nasty job. But he was guilty. Now, warden, will you send me a sample of Farladay's handwriting?"

nucleonic brakes

harold mckay is an electronics consultant in san francisco. this story reminds us of the sort of thing that was published in the heyday of the gernsback era—and we also found it amusing.

by harold mckay

FRED SOLLER was a brilliant physicist; that was good. He was also a determined experimenter; that was not so good. But he was no astronomer and that was too bad. But it was a combination of these qualities that enabled him to make the first flight into space achieved by man.

As a consulting engineer, he had worked on every atomic project of importance, and he was on intimate terms with protons, neutrons, and electrons. His familiarity with all the laws and theories of physics ultimately led him into a daring hypothesis of his own.

"The Quantum Theory of Motion and Inertia" was the subject of Fred's pet hypothesis. His friends declared he got started off on the subject when a cop tagged him for skidding through a stop sign he didn't see in time. At any rate he spent a great deal of time equipping his car with improved devices to measure acceleration and deceleration.

He even experimented by pulling the emergency cord on a train. While passengers tumbled about him, he hastily copied the readings from the instruments which he had carried aboard in a suitcase. He spent a night in a suburban clink as a result of that experiment.

Eventually he expounded his ideas in papers which were published in the engineering journals. His reasoning was a quagmire of relativity, quantum fields, and nuclear forces. There were few of his colleagues who would say they understood it. Possibly the best explanation was one written by a newspaper reporter for a Sunday supplement.

In this article, Soller's theory was described as an explanation of absolute motion. While motion was commonly regarded as a relative quantity, the new theory held that motion also had a definite, positive value of its own, independent of relative factors. Just as electricity and light have their fields and particles, it was contended that inertia had similar qualities.

When motion is arrested by ordinary means, the energy is converted to heat and dissipated—that is what makes brake shoes get hot. But what if the energy could be drained away in some other manner? Suppose the field of inertia could be collapsed or converted into something else. If this could be done, a vehicle could be made to stop immediately, without skidding, without taking time to decelerate.

Further, if this energy was stored, then later returned to the vehicle, the car would immediately resume its former speed.

All of this appealed to the experimenter complex of Fred Soller. So he ap-

plied the theory to his small sport car. The newspapers carried a picture of the car. It was captioned, "The Car with the Nucleonic Brakes." This wasn't really descriptive, but it was the best the newspaperman could figure out after wading through Planck's constant and four-dimensional geometry.

The little auto was equipped with a large box, mounted behind the seat of the car, which Soller explained contained a condenser for storing the kinetic energy which would be released when the car was stopped. Two large hoops encircled the vehicle, much like the crash hoops seen on hot-rods, which enable them to turn over safely.

It was explained that the hoops were to capture the field of the car. When a button was pressed, the hoops were supposed to drain the energy from the vehicle, and store it in the condenser. This would stop the car instantly. Just as molecular motion nearly stops as absolute zero temperature is approached, this invention was expected to stop the molecules as a mass.

The day of the tryout for the vehicle found a television cameraman and a few students and engineers on hand for the demonstration. The cameraman suggested that Soller drive the car at a good speed into a garage, then suddenly stop.

Fred Soller did just that. He cruised up the street, made a U turn, and then came roaring back. As he sped through the garage entrance, his hand reached for the stop button. Immediately a resounding crash boomed out of the building.

The spectators rushed into the garage, expecting to find him buried in tangled wreckage. But not a trace of him or the car was to be found!

The walls of the garage were undamaged, but there was a gaping hole in the roof. Apparently the car and its driver had gone straight up. A search of the surrounding neighborhood proved fruitless.

Fred Soller and his little sport car had vanished forever, but he had proved his theory. He also discovered a few elementary principles of astronomy: that the earth turns on its axis; that the earth travels around the sun; that the sun is traveling through the universe; and that the universe is exploding in all directions.

So when he pressed the stop button, he really stopped. He and his car stood still while everything else kept right on moving and left him behind. He didn't leave the earth—the earth left him.

Soller, who was once way ahead of the people on this earth, was now about twenty million miles behind them, and getting further away at the rate of about eighteen miles per second.

[Editorial note: Now we can tell you that there's a good reason for the similarity of this story to the science fiction of the Gernsback era. "The Nucleonic Brakes" is, so far as we have been able to discover, Mr. McKay's third published story; the first two, "Flannelcake's Invention" and "The Flying Buzz-Saw" appeared in Gernsback's Air Wonder Stories for December 1929 and April 1930 respectively. We'd like to extend a hearty welcome home to science fiction after his twenty-five year absence to Mr. McKay and to hope that it won't be another quarter century before he's heard from again. SJS]

revaluations: 2

instead of taking up any one science-fiction classic in this second revaluation, stewart kemble—by the way, this is the pen name of a graduate student in english at the university of illinois—deals generally with the problem of "sensationalism in science fiction."

by stewart kemble

ONE OF THE APPEALS of imaginative literature--science fiction, fantasy, and supernatural-horror--is the sense of wonder it produces in the minds of its readers. There is always something new, something different found in good imaginative writing. The science-fiction story or tale of fantasy has the same fascination for adults that fairy tales have for children. "It is good to renew one's wonder . . . ," Ray Bradbury reminds us. And this wonder, often kept alive by stories of imagination, can be exhilarating and refreshing in a drudge-dreary world.

But delight in the marvelous is a fragile thing; load the vehicle of imagination too greatly and it will break. This is one of the weaknesses of modern science fiction. Authors, in their efforts to amaze and astound their readers, heap marvel on marvel and end by stultifying, instead of stimulating. When the climax of a fantasy novel is reached it often proves to be anticlimactic because many pages before the reader's sense of awe has reached the point of saturation.

The reader of an s-f novel is likely to discover that the story he is reading lacks emotional appeal; he ceases to get enjoyment from the wonders presented. When emotional appeal ceases, the brain asks why? The answer is usually that there is simply too much of a good thing. Even with the willing suspension of disbelief, that all readers of science fiction gladly give, what is presented is too impossible. The story is too incredible for any intellectual acceptance.

This problem has been summarized by Mr. R. Austin Freeman writing nearly three decades ago about mystery stories. What he says is even more pertinent to imaginative fiction:

> . . . no serious author will complain of the critic's antipathy to mere sensationalism. It is a quality that is attainable by the least gifted writer and acceptable to the least critical reader; and unlike the higher qualities of literature, which beget in the reader an increased receptiveness and more subtle appreciation, it creates, as do drugs and stimulants, a tolerance which has to be met by an increase of the dose. . . . The wonders that thrilled at first become commonplace, and must be reinforced by marvels yet more astonishing. Incident must be piled on incident, climax on climax . . . .[1]

"Sensationalism" is one of the reasons science fiction, fantasy, and supernatural-horror have been dismissed by serious literary critics. It is only within recent years that writers of imaginative fiction have begun to discard the old formulas of heaping wonder on wonder; and within their own special s-f or fantastic frame of reference, or "given premise," have constructed what amounted to "realistically detailed" novels that please the sense of awe without saturating it. Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and Arthur C. Clarke are excellent examples of this.

It is clear why so many of the so-called "old masters" of s f and fantasy do not hold up today under repeated readings. E. E. Smith's Lensmen series heaps excess on excess till the intelligent reader begins to feel suffocated. One of the better things about Smith's stories are his space battles. In the first engagements of Galactic Patrol, disintegrator beams, needle beams, fields of force, tractors, etc., etc., are whizzing and zipping around and between the space navies. The reader feels that this might be how a colossal cosmic battle will be fought. However, as the series progresses, and more space battles are described, each one bigger and better because the thrill of the initial battle has weakened similar succeeding combats, each one has less and less appeal till in Children of the Lens the ultimate battle and telepathic struggle becomes meaningless. Smith's conflicts can be summed up as follows: good in Galactic Patrol, fair in Gray Lensman, more of the same in Second Stage Lensman, and piled higher and deeper in Children of the Lens. Mr. Phil Stong has already pointed out that Smith's "invulnerable" screens, fields of force, and beams, are quickly replaced by a more "invulnerable" screen in the Skylark series.[2] Also the reader is never sure that the forces of evil are completely eliminated by the Lensmen. At the end of each novel the Boskonians or Eddorians are destroyed; but at the beginning of each new book a greater and grimmer Boskone or Eddore always appears. In spite of what Kinnison and his offspring do to Eddore in Children of the Lens we can never be sure that the Eddorians themselves were not directed by a higher echelon of alien entities from, say, the eighth dimension. Smith does too much of a good thing: marvel is piled on marvel, invulnerable screen on invulnerable screen, evil entity on evil entity, space battle on space battle. The series becomes less exciting with each addition.

Edgar Rice Burroughs is guilty of the same practice. His first Mars tale, A Princess of Mars, is a good fantasy and can still be read with pleasure. John Carter is a lone man in a strange land. An aura of the excitement of exploring the unknown, the discovery of the wondrous, hangs about the story. The animals and people are strange, the landscape curious. But Burroughs

tries to repeat his success in his sequels, and though The Gods of Mars and The Warlord of Mars are still fairly good reading, the vein begins to run thin. By the time Burroughs tells the stories of Carter's children, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, things get very dull. The reader knows what's coming. The same is true of Burroughs' Venus series and Pellucidar stories. Each initial book in each of the two series is fairly good (though Carson Napier is taken from the same photo-negative that produced John Carter), and thereafter each series begins to peter out. Marvel on marvel is the formula till we have walking mummies, skeleton-men, plant-men, and giant tigers with crab-pincers for paws in some of the latest Burroughs tales. When the reader's imagination stops functioning due to saturation, dullness ensues.

A. Merritt also destroys many of his effects by loading too great a burden on the imagination. In Merritt the super-wonderful becomes mundane. Examine any of his major works of fantasy--The Moon Pool, The Metal Monster, Dwellers in the Mirage, The Face in the Abyss, The Ship of Ishtar--and after the first dozen or so chapters of each book, filled with sorcery, magic, and the supernatural, there is no sense of wonderment. There is just too much of a muchness. All his heroines and villainesses (in direct descent from Haggard's She) are the most beautiful in the world. And whether it is the Metal Monster or the dreaded Moon Creature or the Kraken Khalk'ru, each evil is more evil than any other evil in the universe. After each succeeding act of magic, after each impossibility, anything and everything becomes more and more probable till nothing is impossible. Why should the reader go on? Why not make up his own story and throw in anything that comes to hand? When the extra-natural becomes normal in Merritt, through too extensive use, it ceases to astound.

The same can be said for H. P. Lovecraft's supernatural epic, The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath. Randolph Carter wades through wonder after wonder, horror after horror, till such things become meaningless. The best way to read Unknown Kadath is to divide it up into eighths and then savor its horror with spaced readings; otherwise the reader will get indigestion of the imagination by gorging himself with an overdose of the very thing he is looking for. Lovecraft gains his best pace in his shorter pieces, such as "At the Mountains of Madness" and "The Shadow out of Time." He builds up to a climax in each of these stories and delivers a wallop. In Unknown Kadath he tries to sustain his effect too long by making each incident more marvelous, more horrible, more frightening. When Carter finally hurls through infinite infinity from the back of the Shantak to escape Nyarlathotep, so much has preceded that the effect is lost.

It is significant that Lovecraft tried to recapture the sense of awe by inserting a long realistic descriptive passage toward the end of Unknown Kadath.[3] For no reason relevant to the main stream of the story, Carter is reminded of scenes of Boston, Providence, Marblehead, and Arkham in passages that are realistic and almost poetic. Lovecraft stopped his narrative to bring the reader back to earth for a moment before returning to the marvels of the outermost reaches of outer-outer space. However, it takes more than this brief passage, placed at the end, to regain a sense of reality and to increase or renew a sense of wonder. The reader is soon carried on by Lovecraft at a mad pace again, and the story could have continued on and on and on without end;

out with little pleasure for the reader. Enough of a thing is enough.

Two recent novels using time-space panoramas for background, The Humanoids, by Jack Williamson, and Time and Again, by Clifford D. Simak, make use of this technique of using common realistic elements (as attempted by Lovecraft) to increase the degree of wonder and counterbalance the elements of "sensationalism." Clay Forester of The Humanoids is a much more probable hero than Kimball Kinnison. Forester is about as real a man as found in any s-f story. His fears and joys are understandable. His damaged leg can actually be felt by the reader as Clay is chased by the androids. When Williamson's marvels do come fast and thick, they are acceptable because right in the middle of them is Forester, a little, stooped man, worn out with the cares of the world--perhaps much like you and me. And it will be remembered that though Asher Sutton of Time and Again is a sort of superman slicing through space and time, he finally goes back to Bridgeport, Wisconsin, in the year 1977. Chapter 33 is devoted almost entirely to a loafer sitting by the edge of the river; also there are many passages devoted to descriptions of commonplace things such as fields and flowers and grass. Such descriptions tend to give the reader a breathing spell and give him something he can readily recognize. This technique is better than overwhelming the reader with too many wonders to the point of satiation, as Smith, Burroughs, Merritt, and Lovecraft do.

NOTES

[1]R. Austin Freeman, "The Art of the Detective Story," Nineteenth Century and After, XCV (May 1924), 713-721.

[2]Phil Stong, Other Worlds (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1941), p. 9.

[3]I can only assume that this is the way Lovecraft wrote the story, and that this passage is not a stray fragment inserted by Derleth and Wandrei when the edited the manuscript. Cf. H. P. Lovecraft, "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath," Arkham Sampler (Autumn 1948), pp. 69-70.

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genus homo

Out of the swampland's convulsion,
Still marked with its mud and its slime,
The prey of a cosmic compulsion,
He crawled, in the morning of time.

Through eons, through ages uncounted
He followed his star where it led;
And the ladder he used as he mounted:
The body and bones of his dead.

A frenzied and fabulous creature,
Spurred on by a nebulous goad;
With yesterday's failure his teacher,
The law of the jungle his code;

His blood-written records disclose him
As ruthlessly brushing aside
The species who tried to oppose him.
They bowed to his yoke--or they died.

He allowed no inhibiting stricture
To forestall demands for his due;
His creed an incredible mixture
Of reason and tribal taboo.

Yet onward and upward he blundered;
His pathway he carved with his claw,
While a universe watched him and wondered
With mingled amazement and awe.

The mantle of civilization
Somehow he has managed to drape
As a tenuous surface creation
Which hides the primordial ape.

The lord of a world, and its master,
He is craven, a weakling, a slave;
But he stands undismayed by disaster
To look unafraid on his grave.

For he is the heir of tomorrow
And of all that tomorrow may hold
Of glittering triumph or sorrow--
He will not be balked or controlled.

Though he end in a holocaust, fusing
His race and his planet as well,
He will follow the course of his choosing
Though it lead him to Heaven or Hell!

by garth bentley

put out the light

miss jessey is a california writer who has published three novels. here she demonstrates that fantasy can be used to say something pertinent about contemporary social problems.

by cornelia jessey

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS MAN to the senior senator from a state in the deep South was very tired. It had been a hard campaign, a bitter campaign, an ugly campaign. It didn't just seem to him that he had ever worked so hard in his life; he knew he'd never worked so hard. He was tired, every sweating inch of him. As he lay on the couch, the gabbling voice on the radio seemed to grow fainter. He stretched out his hand to turn the volume up but stopped midway. What was the 'use hanging on? The senior senator had lost, no matter how many little outlying counties were heard from. The city voters had beaten him. The city precincts with their foreign agitators, n------loving yankees, yankee-loving southerners, traitors to their own kind—the city precincts had beaten the senior senator.

The public relations man put his hand to his brow, ran it- back over his flushed bald head and then down to his brow again and over his large beaked nose, arresting the gesture with his hand pressed over his mouth. He lay still for several seconds, then dropped his hand wearily to his side. He was very tired and there was no one to take care of him. He had lived all his life in hotel rooms and he would die in a hotel room. There was no one who even cared about him. The tears came into his protruding eyes, which stared fixedly out of his skull like a large frightened bird's. One tear rolled down his cheek, but the public relations man did not try to wipe it away. He was too tired.

All the speeches he had made, all the circulars and leaflets he had written and distributed, the endless trips over rotten rural roads in his old 1940 Chevvy. The senior senator had slapped

Illustrated by NAAMAN PETERSON

the fender of the Chevvy and laughed, saying: "You won't be driving this old buggy in Washington, George. We'll see to that."

Well, he was right. The senior senator's public relations man would not be driving that old buggy in Washington--or any other buggy. Those terrible trips; those angry speeches; those ugly n-----s with their ugly looks; those ugly yankee' papers calling him the senior senator's running dog.

The public relations man lifted his hand and stared at the fine black hairs growing out of the back of it. As he stared, the hand in front of him changed before his very eyes. It changed into a long, thin, sinewy hand, very pale, and with an oddly cut signet ring on the fourth finger. The public relations man stared helplessly at the strange hand. Yet it wasn't strange. It wasn't at all strange. It was very familiar. It was a hand that he had gazed at many times. He knew and recognized it. Whose hand was it? Was it the senior senator's hand? No. The senior senator's hand was pale, too, but very fleshy—and the fingers were short, too short for the heavy palm.

The public relations man was aware of a mild, rather self-congratulatory sense of surprise that he had been so observant of people's hands. He was just about to make a bet with himself that he could recognize all his friends by their hands when he recalled that he had not yet identified the hand that was still intruding on his vision. He studied the hand again. He knevz that hand as well as his own. Where was his own? He wiggled his fingers. He could feel them wiggling. But the hand before his eyes was immobile. He dropped his own hand to his side. The strange hand remained. He could touch it if he had the strength to sit up and try. But he was too tired. He looked at the hand fixedly. He began to play a game of trying to remember vzhose was the hand. Momentarily it drove the election right out of his mind. He closed his eyes for a minute. When he opened them the hand was still there. Dreamily now he studied it. Suddenly he chuckled.

"Colonel Clay Tressider Lee, suh!" He spoke aloud, and his voice seemed to echo back to him: "Colonel Clay Tressider Lee, suh."

That's whose hand it was. The old colonel's hand. The public relations man's pleasure at having recognized the intruder subsided quickly. A peculiar sensation of fear started in his toes and ran right up the length of his body like a cold little lizard. The old colonel was dead.

HE CLOSED HIS EYES, squeezed them tight shut. He didn't want to see the hand. The game was over. He tried to think of the senior senator. Eyes tight shut, he strained his ears for the sound of the radio. But he couldn't hear with his eyes shut, couldn't hear a thing, not even the distant hum"that had been audible before. He had to hear. It was important. The election results were important. His eyes flew open. The hand was still there. He averted his glance. He focused his eyes on the radio. A faint churning sound came from the little box, but he couldn't make out the words. He wanted to raise his hand and turn up the volume, but he was afraid he might accidentally touch the apparition. His arms felt heavy as lead, rigid at his side, weighted at each end by the clenched fists.

What was Colonel Clay Tressider Lee's hand doing here? The old colonel was dead. Why should his hand so indecently come to

life? The public relations man felt his eyes being irresistibly drawn to the hand. Yes, he had admired that hand many times. It was an aristocratic hand. It was a gentleman's hand. It was, in fact, the hand of a true southern colonel. The public relations man grimaced. He could feel the corners of his mouth drawing down in a look of bitterness even while, at the same time, he was making a great effort at composure, for he knew it was childish to make faces at a dead man's hand. An aristocratic hand, a gentleman's hand, the hand of a true southern colonel. It was impossible to fight down memory. Despairingly he gave in to the insistence of the past.

One of the long, slender fingers of that very hand had been shaken under his nose by the old colonel. Cheap white trash, the colonel had called the public relations man. Cheap white trash. The man on the couch tried to force the hateful words out of his mind. If it had been anyone else, anyone but the colonel--the man who stood for the epitome of southern aristocracy; the man he had admired, loved, wished to be!--that man had turned on him, bitten him. Cheap white trash. And then he had waved his hand, that same hand, in a lordly gesture and roared: "Get off my place! Off! Begone!"

AH, IF ONLY THE PUBLIC RELATIONS MAN could laugh! If only he could laugh at this ridiculous old man! But his mouth was pulled down at the corners, stiffened, in a childish grimace of bitterness.

His entire experience with Colonel Clay Tressider Lee had been a travesty. Like many southern aristocrats who still had a little money, the old colonel had turned to writing. He had purchased a newspaper and employed the public relations man to promote the venture. That was how the public relations man had come to know Colonel Clay Tressider Lee. It was the height of his ambition, to be part and parcel of that world of old plantations, old colonial homes, old families.

The public relations man looked bitterly at the long, thin, sinewy hand, very pale, and with the oddly cut signet ring on the fourth finger. How, then, had the rupture come about? As if he would ever forget! The public relations man groaned. Even now, so long after, the old colonel's degeneracy sickened him to the bottom depths of his being.

That terrible, unforgettable conversation.

"You can't mean, sir, that you're really going to bury that old n----- in your family plot." The public relations man still seemed to hear his own voice pleading against this unnatural thing. And the colonel's cold, arrogant tones.

"This old n----- happens to be my mammy, suh, and I'll thank you to keep your trap shut."

But the public relations man could not give up one last effort to bring the old colonel to his senses, to prevent this abomination. That was when the senile old fury had turned on him.

"And not only that, suh, but I've made arrangements in my will to be buried next to my black mammy. That's for your information and good day to you. Cheap white trash." The last phrase was just a mutter. But the public relations man bristled. No one was going to call him that! Not even an old southern aristocrat.

"What was that you said?" the public relations man demanded angrily.

"Cheap white trash!" roared the old colonel, waving his aris-

tocratic finger under the public relations man's nose. "Cheap white trash!" he repeated, and then bellowed: "Get off my place! Off! Begone!"

Helplessly the public relations man lay on the couch, his mouth pulled down bitterly like a disappointed child's. Two tears rolled out of his eyes and down his cheeks. He tasted the saltiness in his mouth, but he did not lift a hand to wipe the tears away. He stared despairingly at the cruel hand that, motionless still, was held before his eyes. Suddenly the long, slender index finger with its delicate ivory-colored nail curved, then straightened out, then curved again. It was beckoning him. He did not want to go. An intense revulsion against the beckoning finger made him press himself inward, deep into the couch. He wanted to grip the couch with both hands and hold on against the persuasiveness of the beckoning finger. He was too tired--too tired to save himself. He knew that he was dying. The senior senator, the election returns--what of them? A bleat of life came loudly from the radio:

M-hm-m-m good!
M-hm-m-m good!
That's what Campbell's soups are--
M-hm-m-m good!

The public relations man cried out above the voice of his time, loudly, so that the beckoning finger would hear him:

"No) Don't let me be buried next to a n-----) Don't bury me next to—"

THE BLARE 0? A TRUMPET was in his ears. Gabriel, blow your horn.

The hand was gone. Everything was gone. He was no longer lying on the couch. He was no longer tired. For the first time in years he wasn't tired. This was strange—not to be tired. It gave him a feeling of vague uneasiness. He walked effortlessly in space. He saw no one. He was alone, just as much alone as he had been in his hotel roctn. He couldn't see himself; he could see nothing. I am a busy man, he said. I have no time to waste. Let's get on with this.

At once he felt a presence beside him. A hand took hold of his. He looked down expecting to see the colonel's hand. But he could see nothing. He heard a voice. What's your hurry? You'll see everything soon enough. You have to get used to this.

The public relations man answered stubbornly: I am a busy man. I have no time to waste.

As if he had entered a dark room out of the dazzling sunlight, his first blindness began to clear. Slowly shapes and forms e-roerged. He saw that there were figures all around him, figures in strange attitudes and occupations that he could not understand. He stopped to stare at a man who was wheeling a barrow of horse manure, carefully, anxiously, with passionate concentration, down a narrow runway. When the man reached the end of the runway, he turned around and wheeled the barrow full of manure back up the runway, with the same careful, anxious, passionate concentration. Then down again and back again, always with the same single-minded care. It was obvious to the onlooker that the rapt worker was terrified lest a particle of his precious load fall out of the wheelbarrow. The public relations man gave a snort of laughter. This was ridiculous! But the man with the wheelbarrow' was oblivi-

ous to his audience. The public relations man felt a compusive desire to taunt him.

Why are you so careful about that load of manure! he called. What are you so worried about? It's only ----! and he bellowed out a brief Anglo-Saxon word that seemed to echo and re-echo through the firmament. The blissful barrow wheeler wheeled on.

HELLO, SON. I'M SO GLAD to see you. A warm familiar voice spoke close at hand.

The public relations man looked around. He saw a chubby black woman smiling at him with an expression of sincere pleasure and love. He recognized her at once. And yet who was she? He couldn't seem to place her, although the face was well remembered. But she plainly knew him and loved him. In an inspiration he thought: This must be my n----- mammy!

He jerked the hand in his, pressing it tightly, and said—for he still believed the presence accompanying him was the colonel:

You see! You see! There's my old n----- mammy. I, too, had a n----- mammy just as you did. I knew it! I knew it! And you called me cheap white trash! But now you see! I'm not cheap white trash, you see--I, too, had a n----- mammy.

He was speaking rapidly and with great joy. His life's ambition, to be a southern aristocrat, was fulfilled. He was an aristocrat. He, too, had had a n----- mammy. He had forgotten. It must have been far back in the past. But how could he have for-gotten his high birth! No, he had not really forgotten, for was it not this remembrance of things past that had pursued him all his life? Why else his desire to save the South from the black menace? Why else his love for the colonel, no kin to him? Why else his bitter despair at the colonel's degeneracy?

The black woman smiled at him tenderly. How are you, Son?

Other figures flowed around him. He was beginning to see more and more clearly. The moment of triumph Vanished. A feeling of dread came over him. All the figures that moved around him were black. Every single one of them. He looked pleadingly at the black woman. She returned his glance with a strange, abashed smile.

They hadn't listened to his dying request. They had heartlessly ignored a deathbed appeal. They, they, they—the strangers who had surrounded him all his life; who had let him live lonely and with no one to take care of him in hotel rooms; who had let him die alone and defeated in one final hotel room—there must always be a hotel room that is the last one—they had committed the final outrage, contemptuously ignoring his dying plea; they had buried him next to a n-----; they had done worse—they had buried him in a n----- cemetery! This terrible conviction rushed into his mind like a black wind. The thing that he had feared all his life had happened. It was the only answer. It explained every-thing: these multitudes of black people smiling at him with their damned familiarity; the n----- mammy he'd never had—everything! All the old leafless sterile hatreds in his mind twisted and writhed in the black wind.

Look, Daddy, look who's here—it's Son!

Hello, George, long time no see, a well-known twangy voice spoke.

The public relations man looked up Into a face there was no mistaking, even though pitch black—the face of his father.

A trumpet blared. Gabriel, blow your horn. Out of the sound a

voice grieved:

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The endless flow of human lives streamed all about him, filling infinite space with infinite heartache.

The wind had blown everything right out of his mind, all the old hatreds, all the convictions, all the despair--everything--swept it clean and empty. He felt his hand being released and the presence moving away from him. Timidly, humbly, he looked down at his hand knowing already that it was black.

the observatory

As the astute reader has already determined, the winning submission to our new name contest was Review of Science Fiction, submitted by Dr. John Theobald of San Diego State College. Inasmuch as Dr. Theobald did not enclose a year's subscription with his entry, he will receive a complimentary subscription.

Reader balloting gave first place to the editor for "Fielding: Writer of Fantasy" and a second place tie to Raymond T. Shafer, Jr., for "The Winners," and Clive Jackson for "Susan." Third place went to Stewart Kemble for "Revaluations: I." First place for art work went to Neil Austin for his cover, and second place to Tom Reamy for his illustration to "The Winners." Checks have been sent—except to Clive Jackson. Does anyone know where he can be reached?

The reader balloting system has been a failure, largely because too few readers wrote in for us to be able accurately to determine how the readership at large felt. We have discussed various other methods of determining payment and have finally decided to offer none at all. This present issue, then, will be the last for which cash prizes will be awarded; if any contributors wish to withdraw their submissions, they may do so now with our complete good will. We still, however, welcome reader comment and suggestions—and, inasmuch as prizes will be awarded for places in this issue, we extend a particular invitation on behalf of our contributors for you to write in and tell us how you would rate our material—first, second, and third place.

The decision to eliminate payment for material, it might be explained, was reached because so few little magazines offer pay for material that we felt we were a foolhardy exception.

It is our determination to return to an orderly quarterly schedule, appearing in August, November, February, and May.

In the next issue we will publish "Self Defense," a story by Clive Jackson very different from his "Susan" but equally good in its way. It is a bitter satire on mankind; it deals with a space crew on an alien planet, what they find there, and how they react to it and to each other. The illustration, by Tom Reamy, is striking and demonstrates the undoubted talent and virtuosity of this young artist. We plan also to publish the first short story of A. Winfield Garske ever to see print—"Women Must Weep," a story about the world of the future which indicates that the problems of men and women are eternal. Mr. Garske, we venture to predict, has a great and abounding future ahead of him.

It is too early to say what else we shall be able to include in the first issue of Review of Science Fiction, but we can list some of the exceptional items that we have on hand: "The Gods of Neol-Shendis," by Lin Carter; " . . . Is Another Man's Poison," by Barbara Kurtiak; "4-D Poker," by Richard Purdum; "The Hour," by Clarence Alva Powell; "Not the Way of All Flesh," by Henderson Starke; "The Madness of Martin Boone," by Wallace Arter; and many others.

the microscope

reviews of recent publications by william atheling, jr., gordon g. leggat, george o. smith, and the editor.

book reviews

Cedric Allingham. Flying Saucers from Mars. British Book Centre, $2.75.

This is an account of his experience by an amateur English astronomer who met, he claims, a man from Mars who emerged from a flying saucer.

Much of the book is taken up with a defense of Adamski's similar narrative of a year ago. Mr. Allingham unfortunately takes the point of view that if one statement in a book is true then the whole book must be equally true. He fails to see that the Leslie-Adamski arguments rest upon three points, which are set up like a syllogism: (a) people have seen flying saucers, (b) flying saucers come from space, therefore (c) George Adamski saw a Venusian. The syllogism, however, is faulty, and both the major and minor premises may be accepted without agreeing to the conclusion.

To be sure, people have seen what are called "flying saucers." I myself have seen something which I cannot explain in any other way. Possibly flying saucers come from space; it is impossible to read Major Keyhoe's books on the subject, I think, without being persuaded of this. But I do not believe that Adamski saw a Venusian, because so many of the events he describes and so much of the evidence he offers are so terribly implausible (see "The Microscope," fw6).

It must be admitted that Allingham's own story is a little easier to swallow than Adamski's. He has not made Adamski's error of trying to invent too many circumstances, with its inevitable result that some of them do not ring true. Indeed, he tells so little that it is difficult to pick a flaw in his account; unlike Adamski's, his communication with the Martian was as difficult as it ought to be. Where he goes into implausibilities is in his interpretation of what the Martian had to say, I think: he builds too much on chance words and gestures.

But there are difficulties in believing Allingham's story nonetheless. Why, when the Martian was standing around encouraging him to take pictures, did not Allingham even ask the spaceman to pose in front of his ship? Was it because the ship and the Martian were not the same size—the ship an Allingham-produced model and the Martian a convenient Scot? (There is a picture of the Martian in the book, by the way; he has no tendrils or tentacles but looks

exactly like many tall, rangy North Britons whom I have seen.) Why was the Martian photographed from three-quarters rear? Was it because Mr. Allingham knew that a front-faced photograph would not show the abnormally high forehead he ascribed to the visitor? Or was it because Mr. Allingham knew that a front view, showing a breathing apparatus such as he described in the book, would display the apparatus as being too obviously faked?

And why, finally, should the saucer have landed at all? Like Mr. Adamski's, this one merely came down, its occupant popped out for a chat, then he got back in and took off again. Very sociable, naturally, but why should they do this?

Granting for a moment that Allingham and Adamski are telling the truth, the only conceivable reason why Venusians and Martians should have made these landings is that they wish, by making a few appearances to individuals, to prepare the world gradually for a more extensive communication. If this is the case we shall soon hear of it, and the truth of the Adamski-Allingham assertions will be easily enough ascertained.

But I think that Mr. Allingham, like Mr. Adamski, is a phoney. He is, it seems to me, a searcher after truth—so hungry for truth that he is impatient and cannot bear to wait for it to come to him. This characterizes Mr. Allingham more than Mr. Adamski, I think, whose motivation was almost entirely that vanity which also, to some extent, explains the former. It is nice to be pointed out and talked about and made the subject of controversy, particularly when the distinction to which you pretend is that of being the first human being to hold a conversation with a Martian. The attractions of this are so evident that I expect a flood of personal experience books of this nature, now that Adamski and Allingham have opened the way. Next in alphabetical order should come Orfeo Matteo Angelùcci, who claimed some years ago actually to have taken a ride in a saucer.

Adamski and Allingham have set the pattern for these books, with their photographic "evidences" and their affectation of the sober cautiousness of scientific writing. They have been able to keep up something of an illusion of reality. I suspect that later books will have equally "convincing" photographs —or perhaps even more sensational ones—but that the plausibility of the stories will show strain as more and more people, with fewer and fewer talents, rush to get into the limelight. (For, after all, if one had any talents which would legitimately entitle him to the limelight, who would choose to get it this way?) My hunch is that soon one of these accounts will be so completely impossible that it will be transparently evident that its photographic evidences must be faked, and that then people will realize that similar charlatanism has marked the Adamski and Allingham accounts.

Flying Saucers from Mars is another hoax. I hate to see this kind of dishonesty rewarded, and so, as I did before with regard to the Leslie-Adamski book, I hope nobody buys it. I understand that 100,000 copies of the Leslie-Adamski volume have been sold here and in England; but, then, I knew there were more fools than that in the two nations anyway. SJS

Groff Conklin. Science Fiction Terror Tales. Pocket Books, 25¢.

This collection contains two excellent stories—"They," by Robert A. Heinlein, remarkable for its convincing portrayal of psychological abnormality (but science fiction only by virtue of an incredible trick ending), and "Let Me Live in a House," by Chad Oliver, brilliant for its creation of suspense. The remainder of the collection is filled in with thirteen second-rate stories by first-rate authors, including Bradbury, Matheson, Sturgeon, Boucher, and Leinster.

It's interesting to compare Mr. Oliver's story with Fredric Brown's similar one, entitled "Arena." The chief difference is that Gordon Collier and his problems are made real by Mr. Oliver, with the result that the reader stays on the

edge of his chair wondering what comes next. Carson's problem in Mr. Brown's story is no more incredible than, viewed skeptically, is Collier's; but Mr. Brown has not made it seem real, with the result that the reader really doesn't care whether he wins or loses. Mr. Brown seems to have been more interested in the check than in Carson's dilemma. If any literature teacher wants an example of one of Aristotle's "probable impossibilities," he could do little better than "Let Me Live in a House." SJS

Leonard G. Cramp. Space, Gravity, and the Flying Saucer. British Book Centre, $3.

One common denominator in all of these flying saucer books is a hidden impeachment of the cult itself. Unfortunately it takes more than a casual interest in science to spot the gimmick. These fellows speak glibly and often quote one another as authorities. They also mix simple facts with some of the most amazing bafflegab that has hit print since science fiction grew away from the razzle-dazzle pseudoscience of a couple of decades ago. However, it helps to recognize both chapter and verse—

On page 117 of this opus, Author Cramp gives himself away by quoting his great and good friend Antony Avnel, who introduces the "Unity of Creation Theory" as follows:

"The recent correspondence in Technical Magazines seems to show that many readers feel the need for something less coldly mathematical than Einstein's Theory of Relativity and his subsequent theories. Few suggest that Einstein's brilliant calculations are faulty, yet by themselves those essays in pure logic are not comprehensible to the average person."

Whereupon we are told that Space cannot be merely Nothing because Space has length, breadth, and thickness, as well as time. Conversely, Nothing has no qualities whatsoever and therefore can support neither material nor ray. However, Space and the Ether are one and the same, and they can be created out of Nothing by generating a grid of Creative Rays which travel in circles, emanating from the Creative Source in all directions. This produces a globular Space all criss-crossed with these creative rays and presumbably surrounded by Nothing.

All radiation phenomena are modulations of these creative rays (right down to ultrasonics, it says on page 154) and the atoms are caused when miniscule modulations of the creative rays cross at right angles in three planes. Gravity is the first modulation of the creative ray; electromagnetic radiation is a modulation of gravity, whilst ultrasonics obtains when electromagnetic radiation is modulated. The Lorenz-Fitzgerald Contraction is caused by doppler effect as the atom moves along the creative ray, foreshortening the modulation wavelength. And so on and on . . . .

The sheer beauty of this theory is that no one has the slightest intention of complicating it with a lot of nasty old mathematics and stuff like equations, neither of which are comprehensible to the average man.

However, if either Author Cramp or Mr. Antony Avnel had bothered to read something other than books on the occult, dreamy volumes on extrasensory phenomena, and/or other authorities on the flying saucer, they might have perused Dr. Richtmeyer's early edition of Introduction to Modern Physics. Dr. Richtmeyer was willing to discuss at length all of the cockeyed theories that had been propounded to explain this and that, and it seems that along about 1914, a Dr. Sahulka of the University of Vienna proposed the theory of the grid of criss-crossed rays in space. But, of course, Dr. Richtmeyer's book is filled with differential equations and therefore untenable. It is too bad that neither Sahulka's theory nor Avnel's theory holds water even down as low as simple arithmetic, since the doppler effect can be calculated by mere multiplication or long division (depending upon whether the other object is coming at you or going away) whereas the Fitzgerald Contraction is basically a formula in dif-

ferential equations simplified so that it can be solved by some manipulation in algebra.

Author Cramp cites Avnel's theory because it supports his own theory of gravity, which he claims to answer the observed data better than the theory of Sir Isaac Newton:

It seems that the notion of one mass sending out some form of ray that attracts another mass is not satisfactory to Author Cramp. No, instead, these creative rays that fill all space converge upon all masses from all directions. In his mechanical analogy of gravity to mechanics, Author Cramp suggests that electrons are formed sort of like knots in a rope, and when some intervening body interrupts these knots as they head for one mass, resistance to the passage of the knots causes the second mash to be pushed towards it. These knots are somehow inexplicably untied as they loop around the center of the mass, thereby explaining why the passage of the knots and rays don't push the second object away from the first as hard as they push inward. Naturally, once this objection is overcome it is easy to see that if pushing rays converge in all directions, any other object will receive a cross-section area proportional to the inverse square of the distance; presumably the number of knotted rays of creation converging on any mass is proportional to the mass.

Author Cramp seems to feel that nobody knows very much about gravity in the first place, therefore his theory of gravity is as good as any other man's. In this he is right. His theory is just as good as that of LeSage, who held forth at the University of Geneva in 1700, and whose theory of an inward push instead of an attractive pull has turned up a good many times in the past 250 years. The papers and theories of this theory aren't quoted in books on Levitation, Atlantis, and Mental Radio, or the other authorities on flying saucers, all of which are on Author Cramp's bibliography of required reading.

But Mr. Cramp is leading up to something. Here, as with other books on the same, is presented the Standard List of Saucer Sightings, with the usual attention paid to the remarkable capabilities of these explorers from another world. You'll recall some of these qualities: they can travel faster than light, they can make right-angled turns at phenomenal velocities, they can whiffle through the atmosphere without making a sound. These are qualities that have puzzled more sober observers who have pointed out that nothing of material substance can exceed the velocity of light, that any crew would be mashed flat at the thrust caused by a right-angled turn these saucers are reported to have made, and that no shape no matter what can be thrust through a resisting medium without creating a shock wave.

In order to explain these anomalies comes the new (?) theory of creative rays and the generation of gravity. The saucer-people (who in this book stem from Venus) have learned how to generate their own creative rays. Since their own little generator develops its own little Space, it can exceed the speed of light in our space (here goes Jack Williamson and the space warp!). This private creative ray generator naturally works on everything in the saucer, ergo G Forces do not apply (here goes Doc Smith and the Fenachrone in Skylark Three!). And since the generator extends its force in considerable scope, the cushioning effect of the fringe of atmosphere carried along with the saucer provides a soft buffer, there is no shock wave (here goes nothing!).

And so I submit that if Author Cramp's lore in science is as specious as the book sounds, then indeed so must his argument that Flying Saucers exist, and that they come from Venus. It is quite possible to state a cockeyed premise and write within that frame of reference for a good many thousand words of sheer speculative fiction. It's been done. But when flanged-up theories must be hoked up in order to explain outlandish observations, I say that someone muffed their observations. On the other hand, I am not so naive as to suppose that any of these characters wrote their books for any purpose other than to make money, and with the current crop of saucer cultists, it is a good bet.

But I think that the flying saucer cult is responsible for the sad death of

Captain Mantell; if a few loudmouths hadn't created such a furore, Captain Mantell might well be alive today doing a more serious job than he did chasing a literary will-of-the-wisp. GOS

August Derleth, ed. Time to Come. Farrar, Straus and Young, $3.95.

Even the best of editors must include a few bad titles in as impressive a list of collections as is given facing the title page of this volume; and this is, bar none, rock bottom for Mr. Derleth. It is the first of his anthologies which I simply could not recommend, no matter how many reservations I made.

The volume contains twelve hitherto unpublished stories and a foreword by Mr. Derleth, who, having said his say in the introductions to the fourteen previous collections he has edited, has nothing new to offer here. Arthur C. Clarke provides, in "No Morning After," one of his better stories, but it is not so good as Mr. Clarke is capable of. "Phoenix," by Clark Ashton Smith, shows that an old master has lost none of his powers; it is one of the best of his stories. "Baxbr," by Evelyn E. Smith, is a light and amusing piece of fluff which would be justified in a magazine, but not a book. The other stories, by Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Charles Beaumont, Arthur J. Cox, Irving Cox, Jr., Philip K. Dick, Carl Jacobi, Ross Rocklynne, and Robert Sheckley, are all clumsy and inept, ranging in scope from a rugged amateurishness to a lifeless competence. There does not seem to have been any good reason for Mr. Derleth to rescue these from oblivion.

On this volume the publishers have lavished their bookmaking skill (but not their best quality paper); it is one of the best designed science-fiction books of the year, although I could have wished that the page number had been on the left side of the left-hand page. The idiosyncratic titling of Miss Smith's story obviously baffled the designer; instead of attempting to reproduce the name of the story in the running title, as he had done with the other tales, he merely repeated the name of the collection. SJS

M. K. Jessup. The Case for the UFO. Citadel, $3.50.

This is a very disappointing book. Dr. Jessup is a professional astronomer and amateur archeologist, and one would think that here, finally, is an expert view of the flying saucers (or UFO, as Dr. Jessup prefers to call them). But Dr. Jessup merely demonstrates that even a Ph. D. can be a fiddlehead.

He simply doesn't make his point, which roughly speaking is that the UFO (unidentified flying objects) are space craft operated by the descendants of antediluvian terrestrials who inhabit space between the Earth and the Moon. He fails chiefly for two reasons—first, he is uncritical in his selection of evidence, and secondly, he is unconvincing in his presentation of his conclusions.

Dr. Jessup forgets that it is impossible to judge of the accuracy of any observation not made by a qualified observer, with the result that his "evidence" is an amazing jumble of persuasive scientific observations and completely unverifiable assertions, with the latter heavily preponderating. He furthermore forgets that it is impossible accurately to interpret the language of an observer who is not using the same vocabulary or terminology you are. He is equally forgetful of the fact that the reliability of the witness is a factor in evidence; for instance, he quotes the notoriously unreliable historian Matthew Paris. If you're going to accept Matthew Paris, why not Pliny, who accepts for Gospel every wild yarn that anyone ever sought to impose upon him? Dr. Jessup also relies heavily upon evidence which comes from Fate magazine—a fact which of itself serves to invalidate it—and takes legendary materials as accurate historical records. You might as easily accept the truth of Wild Bill Hickok's own version of the McCanles affair.

Dr. Jessup forgets that it is unnecessary to assume that all hitherto unex-

plained phenomena have a common explanation. He forgets also that it is not reasonable to conclude that an explanation is correct merely because it is not impossible. But the chief weakness of Dr. Jessup's conclusions is that they are not closely reasoned; he seems to have lacked the ability or the willingness to make sufficient mental effort. In many cases he merely demands what other explanations can be given for his phenomena. But it isn't the reader's job to supply explanations—it's Dr. Jessup's job to prove his point.

If, however, Dr. Jessup is sincere in his desire to have an alternate explanation, here is one: all these manifestations which he demonstrates are interpositions of the hand of God, miraculous interventions of the Deity into mundane affairs, in order to demonstrate His power and might to an erring generation and to teach humility to arrogant mortal scientists. I hereby issue a cordial invitation to Dr. Jessup to prove that this explanation is not as good as his.

If Dr. Jessup had presented his doctoral dissertation to the University of Michigan or his catalogue of double stars to the Royal Astronomical Society in this fashion, the derisive hoots of those learned faculties would have reverberated throughout the World, thus presenting Dr. Jessup with another phenomenon which he might ascribe to the UFO. SJS

Richard Matheson. I Am Legend. Gold Medal, 25¢.

Nobody in years has had so beautiful an idea for a science-fiction novel; it is almost infuriating to see it so incompletely realized by the man who thought it up.

Matheson's initial proposition here is that vampirism is a disease, and one which like most other diseases can reach epidemic proportions (with a little World War III help, but this thread is not important to the book). He begins to tell the story of an immune man in a world which has been almost completely turned vampire. This, however, is not the new idea; the strongest and most poignant point Matheson has to make is confined to the book's title, and to its last page. I shan't give it away here, but I shall remark that it should have been the center and source of the novel's power.

Instead, it is thrown away, and the book is made to depend primarily upon the vividness of its individual situations, which are often well handled and sometimes downright terrifying. Even were they all as strong as a master writer could possibly have made them, they are nevertheless inferior in impact to the major idea Matheson tossed off as an afterthought.

It usually pays a writer to know what it is that he is actually talking about. Matheson failed to recognize it even after it occurred to him.

The book's scientific trappings also show inexperience. They have the air of having been "gotten up" for the occasion by a writer who did not understand much of what he found in the course of his research. In particular, Matheson's discussions of the antibody reaction show that he failed to grasp even the elementary propositions of immunology—which is one of the world's most difficult sciences in any case, easily knottier than relativity; and the scene wherein his hero examines his heroine's blood demonstrates that Matheson's only contact with a microscope for many years must have been via a Listerine ad.

But the novel's frequent moments of intensely visualized conflict, and its several moments of pure situational horror, make it well worth anybody's quarter despite its defects. If you start it expecting something good, but not nearly as good as it should have been, you'll not be disappointed. WAJr

[Those readers of fw who enjoyed Mr. Atheling's analysis of I Am Legend will want to follow his regular column in Skyhook, obtainable from Redd Boggs, 2215 Benjamin St. N. E., Minneapolis 18, Minn. I think it's the best of the mimeographed fan publications; but I will concede readily that I may be prejudiced and it is only one of the two best. Cost: 15¢ each. SJS]

Judith Merril, ed. Beyond the Barriers of Space and Time. Random House, $2.95.

In the spate of anthologies, it becomes harder and harder to find appropriate titles; the strain begins to tell in the title of this one. BBST is not only unwieldy: it also, while apt, does not make the subject of the anthology immediately apparent. The 19 stories in this bargain priced volume deal not with space or time but with those powers of the mind which Dr. Rhine has been studying at Duke University. My personal preferences are for "Wolf Pack," by Walter M. Miller, Jr.; "No One Believed Me," by Will Thompson; "The Laocoön Complex," by J. C. Furnas; "Belief," by Isaac Asimov; "The Ghost of Me," by Anthony Boucher; and "Interpretation of a Dream," by John Collier. But there is not a clinker among the other selections, which include stories by John Wyndham, Mark Clifton and Alex Apostolides, Philip K. Dick, David Grinnell, Agatha Christie (who has written some other good fantasy stories which anthologists might investigate), Bill Brown, Rhoda Broughton, Ray Bradbury, J. J. Coupling, Peter Phillips, Theodore R. Cogswell, Robert Sheckley, and Katherine MacLean. The book is attractively produced, except that without its jacket it looks like a textbook, and it has, in addition to a preface by Miss Merril, an interesting introduction by Theodore Sturgeon. One noteworthy feature is a list of books which Miss Merril recommends but which for one reason or another she was unable to include in this collection; under a curious misapprehension that people read stories on account of their subject matter, she has arranged them according to whether they deal with ESP, PK, etc. SJS

Chad Oliver. Shadows in the Sun. Ballantine, 35¢ (cloth, $2).

This is a story about people rather than things; a reaffirmation of the fact that, while progressive civilization changes man's culture, man himself does not change. This is not a yarn for the Saturday matinee crowd, for Oliver goes into detailed description of the emotions of his protagonist; without Oliver's descriptive passages the present 156 pages could be cut to 56 without leaving out any of the plot.

But the plot—which revolves around the idea that man has been created more than once on more than one planet in more than one galaxy with varying degrees of civilization, and a need for more living space—is not as important as the sociological premise that man himself remains constant in the fundamentals regardless of his changing frame of references: that, basically, the neanderthal man and the man of the twentieth century are the same as the man of the year 3129. Shadows in the Sun is a sociological study of what might happen in the future, rather than a mechanical one—an interesting tangent.

Mr. Oliver is good, very good in spots, but he is never great. When he learns how to set a mood, and then stop, he will be much better. At his present stage of development he tends to be repetitious, weakening rather than strengthening his excellent writing style.

Mr. Oliver is, I understand, a young graduate student in anthropology at UCLA, and this is his first novel aimed at adults. If he keeps on with his literary career, he stands a good chance of writing a book that is too good to be a best seller. And if he never writes another line he has nothing to apologize for.

Shadows in the Sun is a book worth reading. Chad Oliver is a writer worth watching. GGL

Lewis Padgett. Line to Tomorrow. Bantam Books, 25¢.

All seven of the stories in this collection appeared in Astounding or Unknown (although the latter magazine isn't credited on the indicia) between 1941 and 1949, and hence belong to the Kuttners' major period. As a result, this volume is markedly superior to their Ballantine collection, Ahead of Time.

which is devoted to recent work apparently representing a sort of interregnum between styles. This group includes, besides the title story, "A Gnome There Was," "What You Need," "Private Eye," "The Twonky," "Compliments of the Author," and "When the Bough Breaks." Every one is smooth, technically airtight, ebulliently written; one of them—"Private Eye"—would be my example, were I asked to give one, of the perfect science fiction story. The collection would be a steal at three bucks; get it. WAJr

Frederik Pohl, ed. Star Short Novels. Ballantine, 35¢ (cloth, $2).

This is a better collection than the editor—to judge by his baffled introduction—realizes. He is under the impression that the three short novels collected here, by Jessamyn West, Lester del Rey, and Theodore Sturgeon, are all good science fiction. They are not, and that is the reason for the excellence of the collection; they are not good science fiction, I repeat, and all, oddly, for different reasons.

One thing that science fiction does is exploit the sense of wonder, just as the Gothic novel and the medieval romance did. Where science fiction differs basically from Gothicism is in the nature of the explanation of wonder: science fiction does not admit the existence of the supernatural; the wonder has a natural explanation, it is a development of human (or non-human) technology, the cause is ascertainable and identifiable. "Little Men," by Jessamyn West, is bad science fiction because the wonder in the story--a swap in size between children and adults—is never (probably because it never could be) explained. It is supernatural, beyond reason.

Aside from this, Miss West has done a remarkably fine job in writing science fiction; for science fiction is a literature of ideas, and "Little Men" is packed with ideas. Two principal threads dominate the work: the parent-child relationship and social questions of various types. Miss West rarely touches on an aspect of the relationship of parents and children or on any of the diverse topical problems which she introduces into the story without illuminating it. She has, as have the best science-fiction writers, used an imaginary world to reflect the conditions of humanity; she has wrested the reader from his viewpoint as an insider and forced him to look on the people and institutions around him as if he were a stranger: not making him accept her interpretation but making him realize that these things are to be thought about and investigated by the mind, that he is called upon to take a stand on these issues. Reading "Little Men" is a challenging and stimulating experience to the thoughtful reader.

A story which deals with the alterations of sizes naturally reminds one of Gulliver's Travels. Also like Swift, Miss West sometimes turns on her Brobdingnagians, the "Chilekings," with savage satire and sometimes holds them up for emulation. The ambiguity of her attitude will be annoying to the reader who likes things black and white; but anyone who has graduated beyond this stage will find the ambiguity provocative.

"Little Men" is told in the first person; the style is perfectly adapted to the character of the narrator, but it left me wondering what Miss West might have been capable of in her own person. The beanie set will find it hard going.

Miss West has done a distinguished job, perhaps most remarkable for her piercing insights into the nature of children, although it is not, as advertised, science fiction. It is an impressive performance, beside which the productions of all but a few science-fiction writers pale into insignificance; but I doubt that it will be a popular one, not because of its defects but because of its merits: the average reader will find it too cerebral.

The second story in the collection, apparently included only to pad it out, is a foolish one by Lester del Rey. Its only function is that of contrast; beside del Rey one can see what stature Miss West and Mr. Sturgeon really have.

The title is "For I Am a Jealous People!" It is about religion and Kansas (Mr. del Rey knows nothing about either, or if he does he has not allowed his knowledge to creep into the story), and there is an alien invasion. Mr. del Rey, with an admirable flourish and much fanfare, succeeds in knocking down the straw man he has set up, without actually coming to grips with the real question that he has, apparently unawares, revised. This is one of the worst stories I can remember; but fortunately I won't remember it long.

In this sandwich the bread is more important than what's between: del Rey is the filling, and the excellence of Miss West as the top slice is balanced, but in a different way, by Theodore Sturgeon on the bottom. But not even "To Here and the Easel," although it is by an old science-fiction hand, is good science fiction. "Little Men" was not good sf because it was based on a supernatural and unexplained premise; "For I Am a Jealous People!" was not good sf because it was a bad job of writing; and "To Here and the Easel" is not good science fiction because it breaks completely out of any attempt to fit it into a generic classification. It is different from anything. It is also one of the greatest jobs of sheer writing that I have ever seen: the stylistic legerdemain is dazzling, scintillating, corruscating. Some times, unfortunately, as in the lamentable "Golden Helix" in the silver-anniversary issue of TWS, Mr. Sturgeon writes beautifully but is unable to bring the rest of the story up to his style; but in "To Here and the Easel" everything fits, perfectly, to demonstrate that Theodore Sturgeon is, although virtually unknown outside of science fiction, one of the most talented young writers currently producing in the English language. Some time ago Vance Bourjaily, writing in discovery, declared that he looked forward to a new book from William Styron with greater anticipation than to a new book from Hemingway; I must confess that I feel exactly the same way about Mr. Sturgeon.

What is "To Here and the Easel" besides style? It is comedy—great, high-spirited comedy; it is a penetrating and brilliant comparison of the twentieth-century man with the ideals of the Italian renaissance, showing as much insight into both as a man has any right to expect from another human being; it is a searching discussion of the nature of art. It is baffling, bewildering, profound, alarming, discouraging, provocative; sometimes infuriating but never dull. Reading it is a staggering esperience. It won't be popular; people generally dislike being staggered.

Sturgeon grows in stature with each collection of his work, it seems. The rate has been accelerating—at least when he writes what is most himself and forgets commercial formulae. If he keeps on he will become a force to reckon with in American literature before long. He is refining his grasp of the vernacular and is developing a mastery of language and an individuality of approach that, someday, is going to knock Truman Capote right off his sofa.

Only one complaint: writers who don't realize that "thou" is used for the subject and "thee" for the object shouldn't attempt the forms. Mr. Sturgeon, who spent a stretch of time in Philadelphia, got confused by the Quakers, who use an eighteenth-century corruption of the usage which he attempted to capture in the story. SJS

William Sloane, ed. Stories for Tomorrow. Funk and Wagnalls, $3.95.

As a quick look at your own bookshelves will show you, the word "tomorrow" seems to have become almost as obligatory for science-fiction anthology titles as is the word "yes" in broadcast commercials. In most other respects, however, this is a highly unusual anthology.

For one thing, the editor's preface and his introductions to the individual stories are on a level of literacy which should (but won't) move every other anthologist in this field to gasps of pure awe. They may cavil at some of his selections, as I shall be doing below, but his own writing for the book (including his fiction contribution) could hardly be improved.

Secondly, the anthology is unusual for the large number of authors who are represented by two stories each. As the introduction shows, the apparent duplications did not result from any excessive respect for the authors involved; Sloane was, instead, searching for stories which showed particular aspects of science fiction to the lay audience at which his collection is aimed, and paying little or no attention to the names that were signed to the stories. The impression is hard to avoid, all the same, that these six writers—Bradbury, Simak, Jones, Neville, Blish, and Clarke, in order of appearance on the contents page—must be especially reliable producers, and the evidence for that impression is worth examining.

Bradbury is represented at his worst—by "The Wilderness," a yarn jammed to the gables with patent absurdities, both scientific and fictional—and at very nearly his best, with "A Scent of Sarsparilla," an atmospheric fantasy bodying forth Bradbury's longing for the uncomplicated past almost lyrically. The Simak items show a similar interest in the delights of being infantile—a recent but apparently well established trend in Simak's writing—but since Simak lacks Bradbury's poetic gift, both "Second Childhood" and "The Answers" are more likely to produce the embarrassed squirm than the aesthetic thrill.

Both Jones pieces—"The Farthest Horizon" and "Noise Level"—are strongly realized, especially the latter; "The Farthest Horizon," as even the editor finds it necessary to remark, suffers from a pat solution, but the characterizations in both pieces are far stronger than Jones's usual stick-figures, and the sheer intellection is as strong as it always is in Jones's work. Neville is represented by "Franchise," which is nine parts fakery and one part pratfalls, and "Bettyann," a sensitively told story with a highly predictable ending.

"Okie," the first of the Blish items, has been somewhat rewritten and is better for it, but as a part of a series it still shows its essential incompleteness; the other offering, "Beep," is a wiring-diagram story more notable for the speculations buried in it than for plotting or characterization (as, again, the editor frankly points out). Both Clarke stories, on the other hand, are wonderful: "The Nine Million Names of God" is a bit of fantasy-foolery with a very sharp edge, and "The Forgotten Enemy" is an end-of-the-world story so realistic for all its briefness that it will undoubtedly send many readers promptly into the next room to turn up the thermostat.

The remaining entries are of an equally mixed and unexpected character. There is "Starbride," by Anthony Boucher, a poor piece of whimsy to begin with and made even worse by its totally unnecessary and totally sentimental God-mongering; and Mari Wolf's "Homeland," a Good Housekeeping frontier story. These run beside the editor's own "Let Nothing You Dismay" (written around the picture on the book's jacket), which is also a frontier story with science-fiction trappings, but the writing is so mature—and the trappings so carefully made—that the illusion of authenticity is maintained throughout.

Alfred Coppel's "The Exile" presents a grim and bloody situation and does nothing with it; it falls dully at the beginning of a section which ends with Murray Leinster's "First Contact," justifiably famous for its ingenious solution of its plot-problem, but—if I may commit the lèse-majesté—a mechanical story in every other way. Milton Lesser's "Black Eyes and the Daily Grind" is predictable, overlong, and only technically science fiction; the H. B. Fyfe entry, "In Value Deceived," might well prove howlingly funny to your Aunt Susie, who somehow missed reading any Peter Rabbit; but then come John Christopher's "Socrates," a super-dog story as good as anything of its kind ever written, and Wilmar Shiras' "In Hiding," this writer's famous (and only successful) evocation of the super-child. Chad Oliver's "The Ant and the Eye" is unusually good Oliver, not much overwritten, much better put together than Oliver's plots usually are, and marred mainly by a slightly phony tough/sentimental style. It is followed by Eric Frank Russell's genuinely funny novelette about the planet with the Gandhian political system, "And Then There Were None,"

which I find unbelievable because Russell never comes to grips with what happens to non-violentists when they meet someone who is quite willing to kill them, but attractive enough in other respects to get past the author's obvious ducking of this point.

The rest of the contributions, except for Julian May's highly circumstantial "Dune Roller"—notable both for the felt realism of its Indiana lakefront setting, and for its fine limnological patter—range from so-so to awful. Frank M. Robinson's "The Girls from Earth" is another Western story, from the magazine which proclaimed that "you'll never see it in Galaxy," and then proceeded to print more space operas in a year than the other major magazines had printed in a decade. Ralph Williams' "The Head-Hunters" is one of the more recent adaptations of "The Price of the Head" (though not, like the Margaret St. Clair version of some years ago, skirting quite so close to plain plagiarism). Mildred Clingerman's "Minister without Portfolio" is, once again, that story about how the little old lady meets the extraterrestrials and they love her; I didn't; somehow, I never do. Last let us mention E. Everett Evans' "The Shed," a Lovecraftian exercise with a cast of moderately believable children and a plot which came out of the Ark wearing a white beard; and Donald A. Wollheim's "Disguise," on which, since it is not written in English, I cannot report.

This is a massive collection—628 pages; it is beautifully designed and produced; and it scores higher than most on content. It also scores high on number of entries previously anthologized, but I think this makes far less difference to most purchasers than most reviewers like to pretend. It is, in my opinion, well worth its price. WAJr

Wilson Tucker. The Science-Fiction Subtreasury. Rinehart, $2.75.

Most of the stories in this volume belong to the tradition of the anti-romance, the tradition of Cervantes and Scarron; they burlesque certain themes which are often taken seriously in science fiction. This is all to the well and good, but Mr. Tucker lacks the high spirits necessary to bring this off; one feels that he himself takes his burlesque too seriously. The book is light weight; in a minor way it is amusing and entertaining enough, but it leaves no impact. Mr. Tucker is too restrained; he does not let himself go, does not really have fun with his subject in the manner of the great burlesques.

Readers of amateur magazines will be interested in how the two stories reprinted from such publications stack up compared to those which appeared in professional magazines. Both of them—"The Wayfaring Strangers," from this magazine and "The Mountaineer" from Fiendetta—do not seem greatly inferior to the others. They lack the over-slick polish of such a formularized commercial story as "Able to Zebra," which appeared in F&SF, but "The Wayfaring Strangers," I think, has superior characterization. I had thought, on reading "The Wayfaring Strangers" in Ed Ludwig's fantastic worlds, that it merited reprinting; seeing it reprinted, I am now not so sure. SJS

Martian by STEVE BRADY

dream house

alyce de la vergne kleihauer has done nearly everything--built her own house (with some assistance from her husband), toured in japan (with her husband's aid), and written radio scripts (with her husband's tolerance). she is also a charming lady who is tolerant of young and unhousebroken children and who fries delicious chicken--and who has a delicious sense of humor, as this manifests.

by alyce de la vergne

MY HUSBAND AND I have been reading science fiction for about a year now, and it's beginning to have an effect on my housekeeping. I don't mean that I spend hours with my nose in one of those fascinating magazines of the future, neglecting my housework. We read them only in the evening after the dishes are done. But I'll tell you this. I'm getting mighty impatient with these outmoded contraptions I have to work with.

I went to a lecture recently at the Woman's Club, and heard a speaker extolling the conveniences of modern household appliances. He said that the modern housewife had been freed from virtual slavery with the washing machine, the vacuum cleaner, and the sewing machine. Hmph! I'll never be satisfied until I have a robot who really knows how to get things done around the house.

Our "modern" appliances are entirely inadequate, as I see it. Take that vacuum cleaner, for instance. By the time you lug it out of the closet . . . empty it (from the night you had to give the house a fast once-over because the neighbors were coming in to see a television show) . . . hook it up with the proper attachments . . . you're ready to sit down for another cup of coffee, or a dish of yogurt. Once revived, you start your tour of "drudgery-free" labors. The idea is to rid the house of dust. But just how far do you get with that mechanical marvel of the twentieth century? When you see how much dust has accumulated on the floors and furniture in a couple of days, you begin to imagine what the walls and ceilings, and all the other spots under, over, and in between the furniture must be like--and you're right!

It all seems pretty hopeless and unsanitary to me, now that I

know about the future.

I'll never be satisfied until I have a house equipped with tiny vents around the floors, ceilings, and walls to suck away instantly and destroy all the loathsome dust and debris. No, I won't even have to flick a switch. The electronic brain which will keep the house will detect a speck of dust the minute it settles down for a nice gray nap on a wall or a window sill. That piece of dust will be whisked into outer space, and a fresh, deodorizing, antiseptic molecular mass will take its place. There won't be any last-minute brush-up necessary when friends across the country give us a video-flash after supper, saying they're rocketing in for an evening visit.

And another thing . . . that instrument of the dark ages . . . the automatic washing machine. Ha! Automatic, is it? Why, it doesn't even know when there are dirty clothes in the house. It just sits there! The clothes hamper could be filled to the brim, and that moronic block of steel wouldn't budge. I'm through with such inefficiency. If I'm going to have mechanical gadgets around the house, I want good intelligent ones, and a nice electronic housekeeper would be very economical, too. I think I'll call mine "Electronia." I don't know why the robots always have masculine names in the science-fiction stories.

Of course, I realize that every red-blooded American girl is supposed to dream of a rose-covered cottage. Not me! I'm dreaming of a little electronic home in the West . . . West Mars, that is.

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the fireside

INASMUCH AS this is, although belated, our first issue for 1955, it behoves us to list, as we did in our first issue for 1954, our selections of the best science-fiction short stories of the year. Last year we came up with six stories; this year we have only five—four of them, oddly enough (or is it so odd?) from a single source. Without further ado, here are the five best to be published in 1954—in our opinion:

ALFRED BESTER, "5,271,009," Fantasy and Science Fiction, March. The technical virtuosity of this story is remarkable for its intricate handling of theme; it combines with this quality sheer headlong exuberance, commentary on life, satire on sundry objects, and humor. The whole effect, however, is controlled and unified, and related with an individual and carefully constructed style.

LYSANDER KEMP, "The Airborne Baserunner," Fantasy and Science Fiction, May. Humorous fantasy is very difficult to write; even more difficult is the creation of an authentic legend, like those of Febold Feboldson. Mr. Kemp has done both jobs exceptionally well. The story itself is hilarious; and Grasshopper Briggs has the true ring of baseball folklore. The minor characters of this story are equally brilliant, especially Sembower the pitcher. America should be grateful to Mr. Kemp for this addition to the literature of its national pastime.

RICHARD MATHESON, "The Test," Fantasy and Science Fiction, November. More even than any of the stories in his first collection, Born of Man and Woman, this story establishes Mr. Matheson as a writer of the very first rank. It probes deeply, with sensitivity and penetration, into the relation of youth and age, vividly and honestly portraying the mixed emotions with which they view each other, and uses a device of science fiction to show this relation in clearer focus.

JUDITH MERRIL, "Dead Center," Fantasy and Science Fiction, November. Miss Merril has written a tender and powerfully moving story, one which becomes so real to the reader that he lives it. The characters spring into life on the page. Moreover, it is a ringing affirmation of the ability of humanity to meet tragedy, struggling against fate until completely overpowered.

KRIS NEVILLE, "Overture," Nine Tales of Space and Time, ed. Raymond J. Healy. Here is a superb story of people, told with uncommon depth of feeling and a beautifully controlled yet emotional style. It is a fitting successor to the same author's "Bettyann," and it is to be hoped that Mr. Neville will take these two stories and develop them into a novel; the material cries out for such extended treatment.

THESE FIVE authors, as were the six who provided the best of 1953, will be placed on our mailing list for permanent complimentary copies. They've done good jobs, and we'd like to wish them all well.

a chat with the editor

looking backwards

an index of the first eight numbers. roman numerals indicate issue whole number; arabic, page number.

BIG PLANS

see page two