

newsletter

The Bulletin of The Irish Science Fiction Association

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1979

NUMBER 21

SECOND STARGATE SALE

Once again, Stargate has achieved a sale of some of our work to a foreign publication. The latest member to join the ranks of the professionals is Sean Moraghan, whose story Who's Calling? was bought by Brudte Graenser, the Danish SF magazine. Unlike as was the case in Chris O'Connell's sale, Sean's piece was translated into Danish before publication. Both these works are now available in the ISFA Library (See Library News inside for details).

The editor would like to take this opportunity to remind people that the deadline for submissions to the next (May) Stargate is 4 March, give or take a few days. It is expected that the majority of the issue will be taken up with the five finalists for the short story contest; but the length of entries for the contest has been very diverse, so the editor does not yet know how much space will have to be filled by other things. We are hoping to have more artwork this time, preferably by more than one or two artists, and more poetry. In the case of artwork, submitters are reminded that their work should be black-and-white, on A4 size paper, and with minimal shading or solid blacks. Take care to ensure careful packaging of the work if it is mailed in, as bent, creased, spindled, or just plain filthy stuff won't reproduce well. (Actually, it won't reproduce at all, because we won't print it.)

Members are also hereby given their final warning about the short story contest. Remember the vital points: closing date of 28th February, typed, clean manuscripts, no name of author on the work itself, you know the drill. Don't forget that there is a minor contest for the name of the prize as well. All submissions should be addressed to the Secretary, Brian Redmond, 14 Granville Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

For future planning: the date of the award dinner has been pretty much set for 28th April (a Saturday night), though the venue is still uncertain. Those who are interested in attending should start budgetting a few bob and the evening now. We want a hefty turnout for what we hope will become a popular annual event.

+++ UPCOMING MEETINGS +++

+++ Sunday, 25th February 1979 +++

+++ The scheduled guest for this evening is a man who is quite well known to +++
+++ a few of the ISFA Members, but probably not as familiar to the general +++
+++ membership. He is Kyril Bonfiglioli, a former editor of a British SF mag +++
+++ azine. We are sure his talk will be of particular interest to the writ- +++
+++ ing subset of the ISFA. The meeting will be held at 7:30 PM at the Parl- +++
+++ iament Inn on Parliament Street, Dublin 2, as usual. +++

+++ Sunday, 25th March 1979 +++

+++ The scheduled guest for the March meeting is Mr. Alun Ilewellyn, who was +++
+++ the guest at the initial meeting at the Parliament Inn last year. He +++
+++ to give us a sequel to his very entertaining talk into the nature of our +++
+++ perceptions of time. +++

Recent Meetings

D. CEMETER MEETING REPORT by Rita Meehan

The calm reserve of the Parliament Inn was shattered by the raucous clatter of a helicopter landing. Throughout the evening various other noises were hoard which seemed rather out of place in a quiet Dublin street. The roar of a lion was followed by the hysterical laugh of a hyena.

Innocent passersby blanched at this assault upon their senses and hurried homeward muttering fervent prayers. Perhaps they would have rested more easily that night if they had known that they had been allowed the privilege of over-hearing extracts from the ISFA's reading of Ray Bradbury's play The Veldt. But then again, perhaps they wouldn't have.

The story centers around what happens when an everyday family of the future decides to install a computerised playroom for the children, enabling them to conjure up the sights and sounds of places they would like to visit.

Instead of providing harmless fun, however, the room takes on the sinister aspect of the open grassland in the African Veldt, the brutal reality of the scene, and the ferocity of the beasts of prey which inhabit the image and unnerves the parents who feel that something is seriously wrong.

The family psychiatrist diagnoses (?) this disturbing creation as a manifestation of the children's resentment at their parents' lack of involvement in their lives and advises them to turn off the room. Doing so proves to be disastrous, however, when the children succeed in turning it on again. The computer has by now completely internalised the children's feelings of hatred and, trapping them within the creation of the Veldt, the computer and the children wreak their gory revenge.

The cast was composed of seven brave members who risked all for the cause of art; Brendan Ryder, Tessa Ryan, Sean Moraghan, Moira Harrison, John McCarthy, Miles O'Byrne, and of course Robert Lane, who not only directed and narrated the play but also provided the evocative, if at times somewhat temperamental soundtrack, which deserves special mention.

All must be congratulated for the amount of work they put into making the play a success, which it undoubtedly was, judging from the enthusiastic reception it received from the audience. And although the play did have its unrehearsed lighter moments (eg a frantic search through the tape for the sound of the laughing hyena) this can be put down to the relative inexperience of the cast.

The message of the play, however, was not lost and the evening proved to be both stimulating and entertaining. It is to be hoped that now that this precedent has been established, the ISFA will aspire to even further heights in the theatrical arts and also reach larger audiences, because science fiction has something to say to anyone who cares to take the time to listen.

After the play, cake prepared by Moira Harrison was available in keeping with the festive season.

JANUARY MEETING REPORT by J.J. Struben

At the January meeting, founding patroness Anne McCaffrey gave us an informal and thoroughly entertaining talk entitled "The People in my Worlds".

She told us how she had recently received a letter from a young man serving four years for burglary, who said he identified with Menolly in Dragon-song, who finds herself in a male-dominated culture totally unappreciative of her talents as a musician, and accidentally acquires some firelizards. The comforting relationship between human and emotional symbiote which results paralleled the comfort this young man derived from his memories of a similar experience he had with his dog; this allowed him at least temporarily to forget his imprisonment. This Anne compared to the situation described in Jack London's novel Star Rover, where the hero escapes from the attentions of a brutal warden by following the old Asiatic teachings of astral projection.

There are many people who write in to her to suggest the most involved and unworkable sequels to the Dragonseries. What they don't seem to realise is that, as Anne succinctly put it: "These are my worlds!" This means two things. We have to realise that the whole creation that is Pern is much more detailed than has been, or ever will be, described in the series. She knows

what's on and what isn't --- and the people who drift in don't --- so the many suggestions she gets would never really fit into her image of the world. Second, and this should be obvious, anybody who writes sequels to variations on the Dragonseries infringes copyright and can get into very serious trouble. If such activities remain private there are probably no problems, but publication is a definite no-no.

It is, however, understandable that people feel they can suggest such ideas. After all, Anne's worlds are very logically constructed. Readers identify very easily with characters in the novels because these are psychologically true. Unfortunately, not all readers get the logic right, because not everything may be explicit, which does help to make even seemingly intelligent suggestions somewhat ludicrous. The situation has reached the point where this type of fanmail has to be sent back unread.

This phenomenon is not limited to the Dragonseries. Fans write in saying that they would like to read sequels to Restoree and The Ship Who Sang, among others. For varying reasons, this is not going to come about. Restoree "was bad enough", and the Helva stories were written during her divorce proceedings, after which there was apparently no need to write them. There have been suggestions that she remarry.

What is most surprising is that there are all these people who feel they must live in her worlds, but in the process pervert them. The Englishman who set up the "Berkshire weir" is just one example. Some people lay an amazingly large claim on something which is purely imaginary. They insist that somehow Pern is real, that Anne has access to a different space/time continuum. They have even asked her how she does it. Does she smoke pot? This also explains why Robert Heinlein had to hide behind electrified fencing after Stranger in a Strange Land.

Fortunately, fandom has its brighter sides. Who could resist the young man from Florida who came to Ireland with the single purpose of visiting Anne McCaffrey, Wicklow Hills, Ireland. It took him three dyas of (pedal) biking up and down the Wicklow Hills (and there are a lot of hills in Wicklow!) before the local post office gave him the precise address, complete with directions how to get there. One of these days he will find an original hand-knitted (Anne's hands) Arran sweater in his post.

And if you think that being a writer is limited to writing and knitting the odd Arran sweater, you're wrong. The promotional activities involved are a lot of work. From mid-February through May she has an intensive schedule of appearances in two continents, most of which is to promote White Dragon, the latest in the Dragonseries.

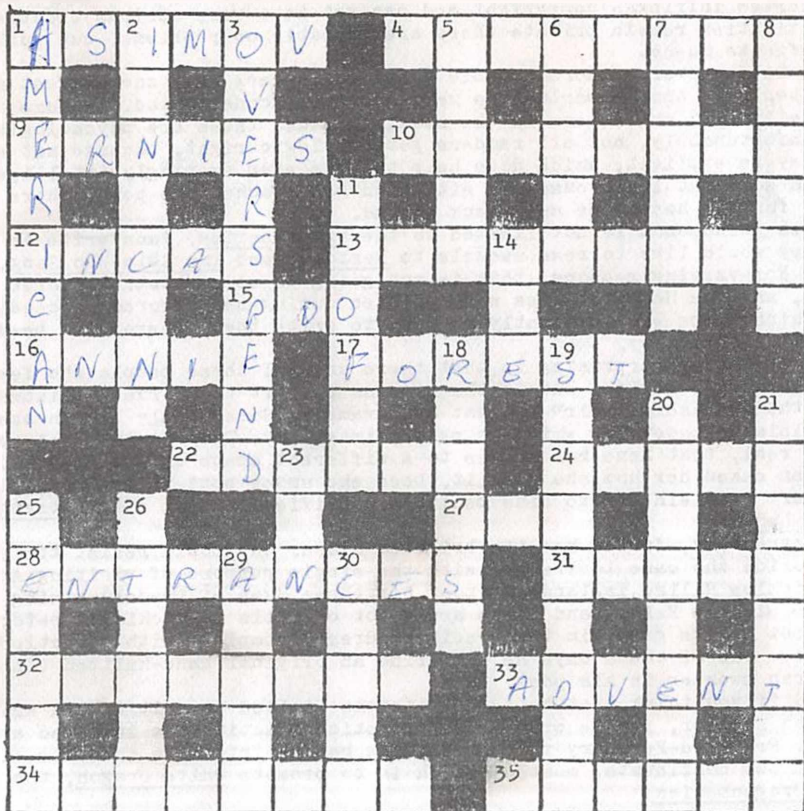
White Dragon is already a huge success in the US. Up to recently, 62,500 copies had been sold, which earned her a fifth place on the New York Times bestseller list. Anne is the first woman SF author to make it onto the list. The Dragonseries has become a major part of Anne's life. So much so that when she tried to write a different kind of fiction, which didn't work because the characters came out too wholesome, Harlan Ellison told her that she was a middle-class matron who ought to stick to the things she knows about: Dragons!

After discussing the main topic of the evening, Anne brought the members up to date as to what is being written and published. Two recent stories involved animals other than dragons. One, written for an anthology edited by David Marcus and to be published next spring (?), is on an Irish theme. To keep it non-controversial, Anne opted to use a horse as the viewpoint character. It was an interesting and difficult story to write. The other one, called "Cinderella Switch", "is as icky as it sounds". It was commissioned by the magazine Mode Internationale and predictably has a fashion theme. Unfortunately the editor who commissioned the story resigned from the magazine before the story could be bought, so that it is now lying in her agent's drawer waiting for a buyer. Apart from that, a collection of short stories, Get Off The Unicorn (typo accidental but correct) is due to be published in Britain soon.

In the secondary (I.E. movie rights) rights field a lot is happening. At the moment there are movie deal memos on no less than seven of Anne's books. How many of these will ever see the light of the projector remains to be seen; but whatever happens, Anne will see to it that she is appointed co-scriptwriter (Continued on page 11)

SF Crossword

by Eoin Baired



ACROSS

1. Well-known Russian-born author (6)
4. A novel of his is a song (8)
9. Gambling computers (6)
10. How to spell astounding in English (8)
12. Ian Watson's were from Mars (5)
13. Put back in (9)
15. Winnie was one (3)
16. Did she get a gun? (5)
17. What's the word for world? (6)
22. 20 Down was of 10 Across (6)
24. Early riser (5)
27. It's supposed to be human (3)
28. Ways in (9)
31. Come to fruition (5)
32. Everything, the lot & oiltankers (8)
33. Comes before, e.g. Christmas (6)
34. Means (8)
35. Scandanavian fairies (6)

DOWN

1. One was in Paris (8)
2. Has no experience, in no money (8)
3. Exceed your budget (9)
5. French boredom (5)
6. Winter pear (5)
7. Imprint on jeans!!! (6)
8. Was necessary (6)
11. Sounds like a seer (6)
14. Maiden's name (3)
18. Most uncommon (6)
19. One looking for double luck (9)
20. See 10, 22 Across (9)
21. Comes out of (8)
23. No room there after 33 Across (3)
25. A ward (6)
26. Doesn't work in baseball (6)
29. Roman sportsground (5)
30. Class of Indians (5)

ANSWERS ON PAGE 9

Book Reviews

Away and Beyond by A.E. VanVogt (Panther, 1978, 824 p.)

This is a collection of eight short stories by an author who has always been, to me at any rate, in that group characterised as "to be read if available cheap, second hand, or in the public library". In other words, a goo craftsman, but not really all that exciting. This collection neither raises nor lowers him in my estimation. The stories are well written, indeed they could be taken as models for a short-story workshop, and the hour or so I spent reading them passed most effortlessly; but I feel that even A. E. VanVogt's most ardent fan could hardly describe them as earth-shattering.

I don't want to give the story descriptions, as I feel that that would be ruining them for any possible readers --- in other words there is little or nothing in them except what actually happens.

Some may say that this review is derogatory. Nothing could be further from the truth. There IS a place for entertainment in writing, as there is in any other art form. A.E. VanVogt occupies his own unique niche amongst the entertainers, and I can think of worse places to be. Let me reiterate: I thoroughly enjoyed reading these stories. If anyone offers you a loan of it, take it. It will be a grand way to pass bus rides to and from the office.

Reviewed by Eoin Bairead
Commissioned by P.J. Goode

Friends Come In Boxes by Michael Coney (London;Sphere, 1976, 55 p.)

This, Coney's second book published by Sphere, is quite entertaining and worth all of the 55 p. it costs. The book consists of five stories all woven together by a common tie which forms a compact dossier of a minority's struggle against their State. Every story is very-readable in itself and they tell of people who cannot cooperate with a State that provides immortality for most of those over 40 years of age. By surgically implanting their adult brains in the bodies of six month old babies, the populace can live another life until they can repeat the process all over again.

But those who have committed so-called "crimes" are not allowed to live again after their present life, and they are forced to join a growing resistance movement, get an illegal "transfer" into another body, or die permanently at forty.

Phillip Ewell, a transfer surgeon, is a character who appears in all but one of the stories; he is the "chain" that makes all the stories come together, forming one main thread: that is the struggle to prevent children being taken away by the State as hosts to adult brains. These stories all take place simultaneously in different parts of the city Axminster and are arranged in such a way as to create a dossier of the struggle against the authorities by ordinary people, one of whom has compiled the dossier. Slowly the day of final conflict is coming...

Reviewed by Sean Moraghan

World of Mists by Patrick Moore and Frederick Muller (1956)

This book was written before the first satellite was sent into space and before scientists knew much about the planet of the title --- Venus. However, some of the episodes that occur within the book --- the launching of a rocket and its journey to Venus --- are remarkably accurate.

The book seems to be aimed at a younger audience and the hero of the story --- Gregory Quest --- is very like Lucky Starr (Asimov's hero of the Lucky Starr juveniles). Even more so in that he has a young and trustworthy companion --- Nigel Whipperfield.

The book begins on Venus where man has lived for 30 years, the period being in the 21st century, and is in the process of extracting the carbon from the carbon dioxide in the air of Venus. This is being done to leave a breathable atmosphere. They do this with the aid of "modifiers" and live in domes around them. However, explosions begin to occur and the resident hero

of the times, Gregory Quest, is brought in to solve the problem. After a lot of amazing coincidences, he finally helps to solve the problem. It turns out that there is a mineral in the soil of Venus which reacts with a concentration of over 15% oxygen and explodes. Quest meets up with a very militaristic person called Lehr who does not believe the solution and refuses to turn off the modifier. So Quest, after evading half the security force at the base, jumps into a helicopter (their means of transport) and crashes it into the modifier. He survives and there is a nice happy ending.

As I have described it, it must sound childish, and that it is. But all things considered, it is an interesting book and worth reading if only for some of the predictions made in it.

Reviewed by Brendan Ryder

EDITOR'S NOTE: This review, and the other one that Brendan did for us, were requested in accordance with our long-standing plea for you all to send in your thoughts on old yet obscure favourite books you might have read and treasured over the decades. If you like it, you never know, maybe someone else would, too.

The Night Shapes by James Blish (Arrow, 1978, 88 p.)

It has long been recognised that not all "Science Fiction" appears under that label. Authors such as Vonnegut, Lem, and Ballard have been presented (sometimes) as mainstream novelists, and indeed, the denials of authors that they have anything to do with SF have, on occasion, been most forceful.

This book is different. The work is hailed as being "from the grand master of SF", and is catalogued under Science Fiction; yet it is anything but. It is a retelling of any African adventure story you care to think of. King Solomon's Mines are interweaved with Alan Quartermain and the Gorilla Hunters meet She Who Must Be Obeyed in one of the most blatant rip-offs it has ever been my pleasure to read.

The story: Kit Kennedy --- called "Ktendi" by the natives, is prevailed upon to take a party of Europeans into the bush to look for a lost valley. "After much adventure" they find it, and a dinosaur which has managed to survive. A second expedition is organised to find more monsters --- which affair is opposed by Ktendi. The story has almost every African cliché known to pulp, and a few more. As a gesture to the swinging 60's, the lady who courts and eventually beds our hero is married to another, who fortunately gets killed.

The style of the book is so extreme that I read the last 90% of it waiting for the clever ending which would show it to be an uproarious send-up. I read in vain. I can't really believe that the writer of the Cities in Flight series and A Case of Conscience could write such twaddle without his tongue being firmly in his cheek, but he doesn't ever

never never never
not even in the slightest way
not even at the end

he doesn't ever give himself away.

If you have any YOUNG relations/friends who have not yet read any of the usual "boys' adventure stories" you could do worse than give him this, telling him at the same time not to bother with any others. DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES READ IT YOURSELF.

Reviewed by Eoin Bairead
Commissioned by P.J. Goode

The New Apocrypha by John Sladek (Panther Granada St. Alban's, 1978, £1.65)

As the subtitle tells us, this tome is "A Guide to Strange Sciences and Occult Beliefs". However, it is not the kind of book that the amateur (or professional, if any) occultists among us will read without some feelings of irritation. For while it is indeed a comprehensive guide to the aforesaid "sciences" and beliefs (which range from Flat Earth theories through faith healing, ESP, spiritualism, perpetual motion machines to the apocalyptic beliefs of Charles Manson, though omitting such equally interesting items as witchcraft, satanism, the Tarot, and alchemy for reasons explained in the preface) the preface begins:

I'm NASA-Fly Me

by Pearse Mooney

Though still regarded as the complete all-purpose launch vehicle, the Space Shuttle now seems destined to enter the 1980's as just one of a range of launchers, each serving different markets. The Shuttle will not meet the launch needs of the world (excluding the Eastern Bloc) and the European Space Agency's Ariane may prove to be the prime contender in this expanding market.

Let us look, then, at just what the prospects are for the Shuttle, and how much of a challenge the Ariane presents.

The current launchers used by the U.S. began life over 20 years ago as expendable military ballistic missiles. However, over the past 12 to 15 years, the use of commercial satellites has increased at a phenomenal rate, while their increasingly aging launchers have continued in use with little or no modification. In its first 10 years of geostationary operations, which began with Syncom 2 on July 26th, 1963, NASA sought to provide a satellite service that could be sold to foreign users. Over the past five years, however, the emphasis has shifted away from the areas which currently interest foreign investigators. As a result, NASA began to launch other people's satellites for a price, instead of selling data from its own space programme. The policy of reimbursable launches has been the mainstay of the Kennedy Space Center in recent years. Most of the satellite traffic in the 1980's will be bound for geostationary orbit, and it is with this in mind that the new generation of launchers is being prepared.

The prime contenders for this market will make their debuts later this year: ESA's Ariane in June 1979 and NASA Space Shuttle in September (probably).

The Shuttle has been developed primarily as a re-usable low-Earth-orbit launcher, while the Ariane has been designed specifically to place satellites into stationary orbit. However, the Shuttle low-Earth-orbit capacity of 29.5 tonnes makes it suitable for placing separate payloads in transfer trajectories to geosynchronous (24 hour period) orbit. These highly elliptical orbits incline a few degrees to the equator, becoming geostationary when they are circularised at a height of 36,000 km and their inclination has been reduced to zero. This leaves the satellite orbiting the Earth once every 24 hours directly over the equator; also, it appears to be stationary above a designated point on the ground. While the Shuttle is capable of putting multiple payloads into transfer orbit, it has to carry additional stages to do so. The consequence of this is a greater unit cost per satellite launched. At 1978 prices the basic low-Earth-orbit Shuttle flight would cost approximately \$26.8 million with each solid spinning upper stage (SSUS) needed to match the geosynchronous performance of the now used Delta launcher costing an extra \$2.6 million.

The Shuttle orbiter will be able to carry four SSUS at once, each with its own 900 kg satellite. This brings the total launch cost to \$37 million. Divided among four clients, the cost per user will be about \$9.2 million.

Ariane, designed specifically for geosynchronous orbit, needs no extra propulsion units beyond its own three basic stages. Because Ariane will be able to carry two satellites, each weighing 900 kg, unit cost for one satellite will be a competitive \$11 million. That is, if ESA can launch Ariane at the projected cost of \$22 million (1978 prices).

A great advantage to the Shuttle is its flexibility, and also there is a distinct advantage in that it carries a human crew. Because of this, the launcher had to be "man-rated". This called for the development of an "intact-abort" procedure, whereby the payload can be returned to a safe landing in the event of a multiple systems failure. On the other hand, if the Ariane suffers a major failure, the payloads will be lost. On a geosynchronous transfer orbit flight, the Shuttle will ascend for about 2 minutes under the thrust of three liquid propellant main engines (total thrust in vacuum 6,272 kn) and two solid rocket boosters (total thrust 23,000 kn). The boosters will then separate and move away from the orbiter/external tank under the power of their separation motors. After coasting from an altitude of 50 km to 76 km the SRB's will fall back to a splashdown about four minutes after separation and about 296 km from the launch site. Eight minutes into the flight, at an altitude of about 90 km,

the external tank, having supplied the orbiter's three main engines with fuel, will separate and fall to its destruction in the atmosphere 3,500 km from the launch site. The orbiter then will have to use its two main Orbital Maneuvering Engines to achieve orbit. This will be an elliptical path 93 km by 185 km. After the Orbiter has travelled 180° around the Earth, the OMS will be fired again to raise the low point of the orbit, and establish a circular orbit of 185 km. The orbiter must achieve an elliptical orbit of 185 km by 296 km. It will then circularise the orbit to a constant 296 km. The cargo doors will then open to expose radiators mounted on their inner faces. Next the SSUS's boost stages can be removed for their independent flights. The orbiter then will move away, and monitor ignition of the boost stages, which will place their satellites in a 296 km by 36,000 km synchronous transfer ellipse. Each payload will carry an apogee motor to circularise its elliptical transfer path at a height of 36,000 km.

Ariane's much simpler technique seems less failure-prone, however. After liftoff the first stage (2,740 kn vacuum thrust) will burn for just over two minutes before separating. The second stage (724 kn thrust) will then begin a 2½ minute burn, and on separation the third stage (60 kn thrust) will burn for 9½ minutes to place the payload directly into a geosynchronous transfer ellipse measuring 2,000 km by 36,000 km. The payload's own apogee motor would then circularise the orbit at 36,000 km.

Although the Shuttle needs more engine burns, greater maneuverability and more complex guidance paths to place a payload into a geosynchronous orbit, the probability of success is 0.99 for the Shuttle as against 0.94 for Ariane.

At present, NASA's Delta launcher costs \$17 million and the Delta and ESA's Ariane will be the only launchers capable of handling high-inclination payloads up to 1983 when the Shuttle becomes operational from Vandenberg. There will be plenty of competition from Ariane during the transition from US expendable launchers to the Shuttle. When it becomes available, the Shuttle will be more attractive for low-Earth-orbit, and heavy payloads including free-flying laboratories and large planetary craft. In August 1978, the fourth Global Telecommunications Traffic Meeting held in Washington predicted that Satellite communications will more than double in the next five years. The market for vehicles to place satellites in orbit has never been better served than it will be in the 1980's, by the Shuttle and Ariane.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF ALL HANDS: In reference to SEACON 79, the world SF convention to be held in Brighton this August, the address to send to for information and reservations is as follows:

SEACON 79
14 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8QJ

Our information indicates that the closing date for applications was 1 January but you never know. If you want to go, it can't hurt to write. Also, if there are any members of the ISFA who might be going with their caravans and are willing to drag along some of the others, please let us know.

Still More Reviews

Slaughterhouse-5 by Kurt Vonnegut (Granada 1978; 82½ p.)

Although he now prefers to dissociate himself from the field of SF, Kurt Vonnegut gave us a classic when he wrote this book. Filmed by George Roy Hill in 1971 (and recently screened by BBC2), and a Hugo winner in 1973, it has been reprinted nine times by Panther since its first release in the U.K. in 1970.

The book traces the passage through time of Billy Pilgrim, the most put-upon hero since Yossarian, whom he strongly resembles. There is no chronology to Billy's story, since he zips from one time span to another, without any particular pattern, reliving his days as a POW in Dresden during the infamous fire-bombing of that city by the Allies, pre-living his life as an optometrist in Ilium, New York, and eventual assassination while imparting the sec-

ret of life to a rapt audience. He discovers the secret of life while making incidental visits to the planet Traifamadore, where he is on display in a zoo.

Kilgore Trout, SF writer, and Eliot Rosewater, eccentric millionaire and Trout fan, make guest appearances in this novel, through no fault of the author --- I think he had lost control of both of them at the time it was written!

Inspired by Vonnegut's own experiences as a POW in Dresden, Slaughterhouse-5 is not just an extremely funny story --- it is one of the most powerful anti-war novels I have ever read. The bleakness of Billy's adventures in Dresden contrast strongly with the rest of his story.

I heartily recommend Slaughterhouse-5 to those few who have not yet read it and also to those who have --- it stands up well to rereading.

Reviewed by Tessa Ryan
Commissioned by P.J. Goode

(Editor's Note: This book also bears the alternative title The Children's Crusade; in the U.S. edition, there is a fairly good introduction to the background of the novel, that is well worth reading as well.)

The Bloody Sun by Marion Zimmer Bradley (Arrow 1978; 88 p.)

I was very reluctant to review this novel, as I can't stand Bradley's books, but after a flattering amount of pleading and just a few tears from our Librarian, I agreed to do it!

I must grudgingly admit that it's technically quite competent, with the usual complement of baddies, goodies, weaklings turned hero, etc. If you like that sort of fantasy, you'll like this one and are probably already an ardent fan of the so-called "classic" Darkover series, of which this is a continuation. For me, The Bloody Sun is --- I can't resist it --- bloody awful!

Reviewed by Tessa Ryan
Commissioned by P.J. Goode

The Heirs of Babylon by Glen Cook

This is probably one of the most obscure of the modern SF novels I have ever come across. It was written in 1972 by an author whose work I have never found any more of, yet it is a most professional story. It concerns the adventures of the chief quartermaster of a 250 year-old war-surplus destroyer of the Fletcher long-hull 2250 class (internal evidence). The war from which it is surplus has lasted basically since the Vietnam era. Due to political ramifications, Europe and the undevastated remains of the Americas are teamed up against the China-Australia bloc in a war which was designed to prevent the economies which were destroyed in the initial holocaust from developing a sufficient surplus to redevelop nuclear weapons.

This old rusting hulk is called the Jäger, and was put back into commission by a bunch of Germans who unaccountably wear US naval uniforms, carry guns measured in inches instead of MKS. The technical detail is often very *dated* (at least enough so that I could find innumerable errors and inconsistencies) but would probably be most convincing to the basic layman reader. Anyhow, this once-sleek grayhound of the fleet is called to a gathering of Allied forces in Gibraltar, from where they are scheduled to go to a "final" meeting with the Australian fleet off of Ceylon. Behind all this is a self-preserving political elite vaguely similar in dress, custom, and demeanor to your basic SS. Battle is finally joined, a nuke is tossed around, and the book ends.

But why did I like this book, as I most certainly do? The characterisations are very strongly yet sensitively handled, for one thing. The wealth of technical detail which I mentioned above, though often faulty, gives us an extremely accurate portrayal of life on board a ship of this class; and unusual for anti-military books, gives a honest, unbiased, and uncritical picture of the practice of military protocol on a ship underway. This gives us different type of anti-war outlook, for it blames the horror not on the officers present but upon the politicians whose machinations are usually off-camera. A must to read, if you can find it.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

Other Days, Other Eyes by Bob Shaw

In the first eight pages of Other Days, Other Eyes, Alban Garrod, by luck or intuition, escapes death in a car accident, and watches impotently as the first American SST, the Mach 4 Aurora, crashes into the runway after her public maiden flight. Again by intuition, Garrod knows that he is responsible for the accident. For he is the man who developed Thermgard, a glass that only lets through visible light, not heat or any other energy waves and therefore is ideal for use in windshields of supersonic aircraft. The Aurora, which had ordinary transparencies on her early low-speed flight tests, had the Thermgard windshields installed just before the fatal crash.

It doesn't take Garrod long to find out why Thermgard caused the Aurora crash. You see, light passes through Thermgard, all right, but it takes somewhat longer than it should. Light goes into it on one side, and, depending on the thickness of the glass (inter alia), it comes out a second or more later, as if it hadn't travelled an inch, but one light-second, i.e. 186,262 miles. When Garrod succeeds in growing crystal that slows light down much more than that, he's in business, because the commercial possibilities are lucrative, indeed. It also sets the novel on its slightly unusual way.

What Shaw sets out to do is to show what kind of an impact such a technological development would have on individuals and on society. His methods could be said to be two-fold, because the book is divided into the novel which begins in chapter one, with third-person narration from Garrod's point of view, and three so-called "sidelights", which are basically short stories (and in fact have been published as such elsewhere) that have little to do with the main plot of the novel, but give emotionally moving impressions of some consequences of "slow glass", as Thermgard came to be called in one of its later evolutionary states, which are not emphasised, or at least differently, in the novel.

Ultimately Shaw's view of technological developments such as this one is pessimistic. Its impact on some people, at least, is destructive, even in its original form. And further development follows lines dictated by the needs of the powers-that-be, who, almost inevitably, Shaw seems to say, apply it to serve their own sinister needs.

Other Days, Other Eyes is a competently handled, well-written novel, with some unforgettable scenes and imagery, such the one that wraps up the argument: the crop-duster aircraft spraying the entire country (U.S., in this case) with slow-glass dust. If you don't mind a bit of paranoia, this one is strongly recommended.

Reviewed by J.J. Struben

The Way the Future Was by Frederik Pohl

This book is not SF --- it is about SF, in the form of Fred Pohl's autobiography. The story of the early infighting in the pulp among the various Brooklynese fans occupies perhaps a disproportionate amount of space, but it is well worth reading. Then came along the Futurians, and we all know what happened from there. But this section makes me think that the ISFA is doing all right with nearly three years under its belt...

Pohl certainly doesn't come across as a "nice guy". He spends some time on his marriages (4 to date), the quasi-incestuous behavior of SF writers & mates in the early days, and the infamous Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conferences, which are all worth reading about. Also interesting are the descriptions of the various trades he has pursued which were merely tangential to his career as a writer: advertising copywriter, literary agent, and magazine editor. He seems to be someone whose tolerance for the foibles of the human race is rather limited; but in view of his experiences, this is quite understandable. Strangely enough, he spends little time reflecting (at least in print) on the role of SF in modern society. Though he doesn't say so, he is the archetypal self-made man. For example, he is the Encyclopaedia Britannica's main contributor on the Emperor Tiberius, although a high-school dropout. In other words, he writes from the gut, having polished himself apparently according to whim. While this may be enviable, it is not necessarily admirable. Fortunately, he does not hesitate to confess ignorance occasionally. And quite convincingly, I might add.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

Science came into the world a couple of centuries ago, with a twin pseudo science gripping its heel. Ever since, both have been manoeuvring to get our blessing: Science, by giving us gifts, and its twin, by a sly imposture. (Page 13)

It is that sly imposture that the emphasis is on in this book. The author almost invariably accompanies a short sketch of each pseudoscience with a description of how it fared when examined by its opponent, science. In other words, The New Apocrypha is a look at the field of pseudoscience through the eyes of its dualistic enemy, science. Needless to say, in John Sladek's account pseudoscience again and again crumbles under science's steady gaze.

The main body of the book consists of a description of this conflict, which in itself is a good thing. However, the book's value is enhanced by a look at what lies behind the many incidents in this conflict, in the last chapter (Ch. 26), entitled "Seeing is believing".

And if it weren't clear to us already on which side Sladek stands, the appendix dispels all doubt:

If hundreds of millenia of fervour haven't cleansed the human soul of blood-lust, how is it expected that three centuries of science should have managed the job? (Page 338)

So what do you want me to tell you? Whether this book is worth buying? Well, if you're interested in the subject and don't mind reading about it in a hostile light, it certainly is. And while you're at it, you might find it interesting to look at it from a semantic point of view. That is to say, the question of how words are used by the authors Sladek quotes throughout the book, and indeed by Sladek himself, is a very important *raison D'Etre* for this book. This may sound a bit too academic, but just look at the quote from Occult Gazette on page 15 and you'll see what I mean.

Reviewed by J.J. Struben
Commissioned by P.J. Goode

Space-Time Task Force by Preston Yorke (Hector Kelly, 1953)

This book, while its title might sound a bit juvenile, is a well-written, interesting book of an invasion of Earth. However, it is an invasion with a difference. Invasions usually come from space alone, but this one comes from space and time. The aliens attack Earth with a time weapon, one which allows them to travel back in time and destroy the opposing forces before they leave the ground. They destroy by means of a "rhythm ray" which interferes with the atomic makeup of the object and thus destroys it.

Earth at this time is divided into two different sections. One is the "primitives" and the other a scientific elite. It is set after an atomic war when ordinary western man lives in the western continents and the scientists elsewhere. The scientists have developed a subservient species to serve them by a process akin to the "testube babies"; they have a separate worker for each task. But the scientists have let science take them over and when nothing they can do can stop the invaders, they call in the primitives. Eventually, mankind triumphs but in a novel way. The book ends with a description of the various terms and the scientific basis for them. All in all, a good book and well worth reading.

By the way, has anyone ever heard of Preston Yorke before, or is this a pseudonym for some other famous author(ess)?

Reviewed by Brendan Ryder

Pulsar 1 by George Hay (Ed) (Penguin Books, 71½ p.)

I think that this is one of the best magazines I have ever read. I know that it's really a book, but the concept behind it is one which could be profitably taken up by any literary magazine --- Science Fiction or otherwise. What George Hay has done is to print five new short stories --- by A. E. VanVogt, Ian Watson, Bob Shaw, Michael Coney, and Josephine Saxton --- and to follow each with a critical essay based (often loosely) on it. Just to finish off there is an interview with Isaac Asimov and a short article by H. G. Wells.

With any five authors of such stature there are sure to be some mixed reactions to the stories. For me the best was VanVogt's "Death Talk", and I did

not like Josephine Saxton's story; my reactions to the others' varied, but overall I liked 'em.

In some ways the articles were of a more consistently high quality than the stories, with the one by Chris Boyce after Bob Shaw's "Small World" being particularly fine. Even though the connection between the articles and the stories was in most cases nebulous, it was surprising how the styles of the two writers --- author and critic --- matched and complemented each other.

I suppose I could give brief resumes of the stories, and perhaps criticize the articles, but to do that properly would be too longwinded. I will, instead, make two points. The cover is appalling. Adrian Chesterman, whose name appears as artist, has done a cover which would seriously dissuade me from buying this book. The second point isn't really a point at all: I just want to avail myself of the opportunity to say in public how totally disgusted I get with Isaac Asimov telling me interminably how intellectually superior readers of SF are to the broad mass of humanity. He does it again here. I read Science Fiction and I'm not superior. I DON'T WANT TO BE SUPERIOR. I'm happy in the broad mass --- the broader the better. Now that I've said it, I feel better.

P.S. --- Read the book. In fact, read Chris Boyce twice.

P.P.S. --- One thing. If you think VanVogt's story is simple speculation, you may be interested to know that Hewlett Packard market a watch at \$400 which monitors the wearer's heartbeat and emits a warning beep when it becomes erratic in any way.

Reviewed by Eoin Bairead
Commissioned by P.J. Goode

+++++
Library News

If you didn't pick up your new Library Booklist at the January meeting, you might notice that there was a copy enclosed with this Newsletter. In any case, P.J. Goode has asked that you make the following additions to the list if you want to keep it up to date.

BALL (Brian N.)	Timepivot
	Timepiece
BRADLEY (M.Z.)	Winds of Darkover
BOVA (Ben)	Duelling Machine
BURROUGHS (E.R.)	Moon Men
	Moon Maid
COMPTON (D.G.)	Steel Crocodile
CHARRYH (C.J.)	Gate of Jorel
DICK (P.K.)	Handful of Darkness
HOFFMAN (Lee)	Caves of Karst
HIGH (Philip E.)	Time Mercenaries
JONES (Neil R.)	Space War
KENDRICK (Walter)	Fire in the Sky
KNIGHT (Damon)	Beyond the Barrier
LEINSTER (Murray)	War with the Gizmos
McINTYRE (Vonda)	The Exile Waiting
NORTON (Andre)	No Night Without Stars
PANSHIN (Alexei)	The Thurb Revolution
POURNELLE (Jerry)	High Justice
REYNOLDS (Mack)	Space Visitor
	Equality in the Year 2000
ROBINSON (Spider)	Callahan's Crosstime Saloon
RASPALL (Jean)	Camp of the Saints
SELLING (Arthur)	Junk Day
SHEFFIELD (Charles)	Sight of Proteus
SABERHAGEN (Fred)	Berserker
SARGENT (Pamela)	Cloned Lives
VanVOGT (A.E.)	Anarchic Colossus
VINGE (Vernor)	The Witling
WEST (Lindsay)	Empire of the Ants
BRUDE GRAENSER	Vol. 2 No 2

Column Lavelle
45 IVEAGH GARDENS
Crumlin DUBLIN 12
IRELAND
500023

RECENT CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ISFA LIBRARY:

James White
Paddy O'Connell
Colm Lavelle
John McCarthy

Mary Gallagher
Nicholas Emmet
Gerald Whelan

Maurice Handleman
David Larr
Paddy Fitzpatrick

ANSWERS TO THE SF CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Asimov
4. Heinlein
9. Ernies
10. Analogue
12. Incas
13. Reinststate
15. Poo
16. Annie
17. Forest
22. Editor
24. Alarm
27. Err
28. Entrances
31. Ripen
32. Universe
33. Advent
34. Averages
35. Trolls

DOWN

1. American
2. Innocent
3. Overspend
5. Ennui
6. Nelis
7. Engram
8. Needed
11. Profit
14. Nee
18. Rarest
19. Starrider
20. Campbell
21. Emanatos
23. Inn
25. Nebula
26. Strikes
29. Arena
30. Caste

Want-Ads

As a new feature of the ISFA Newsletter, we are starting a want-ad/personal type column. Responses should be sent to the Secretary, Brian Redmond, 14 Granville Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Mark the outside of the envelope in the upper left corner, saying it is in response to an advertisement, and mention the box number if appropriate. Persons submitting ads should tell Brian whether they will want responses sent out, or if they will pick up any replies at the next meeting. If replies are to be forwarded via P&T, enclose an SAE, please.

WANTED, a copy of The Early Asimov Vol. 3 in paperback. 50 p. offered. Box AAA

NEEDED desperately by poor writer: second hand typewriter. Price offered around £10. Box AAC

EMPLOYMENT SOUGHT in the Dublin area, starting in July, by long-standing ISFA member. Box AAB

MONUMENT by Lloyd Biggle sought. No reasonable offer refused. Box AAD

More Reviews

Retief and the Warlords by Keith Laumer (New York, Pocket Books, 1968, \$1.75)

This is a fairly difficult book to review, unfortunately. The main problem is that it is so uproariously funny and entertaining, any reviewer must have serious doubts about his ability to provide a review worthy of the book. Long-time Laumer fans will of course be well familiar with Jaime Retief, diplomat in the Corps Diplomatique Terrestrienne. His usual nemesis, the Groati, only make a token appearance; this time the enemy are the foul Haterakans (known as Hatracks in common parlance), who are trying to preempt a cluster which already has widespread human settlement. There are a rather powerful bunch of Terrestrial bad guys, too...but that is for the reader to find out for himself.

Anyhow, the plot. At the start of the book, Retief is sent off to try

to push through a debilitating proforontial trade agreement with the Hatracks to appease their appetite for expansion. Needless to say, the beings who are to be debilitated are the Terran colonists already living in the cluster. Our hero is well aware of his headquarters's ploy; he therefore engineers his own kidnapping and subsequent capture by a marauding Hatrack fleet. He manages to turn the tables on the enemy general Harrumph and escape --- only to be recaptured by Harrumph's superior, Grand Admiral Hikop...Are you getting the idea? If you add in the torture chamber scene and the escape from the major Hatrackan Coliseum scant millimeters ahead of the teeth of a ravening horde of wild beasts...well, it's a laugh a minute. I should add that I have only begun to scratch the surface of the enormous depths of humour which Laumer has employed with his usual skill.

Anyhow, if it weren't obvious by now, I'd have to recommend this book to any reader who can stand the almost incessant bellylaughs. It's a goody.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

A Scanner Darkly by Philip K. Dick (St. Albans, Panther, 1978; £1.04½)

The publication of a new novel by Phil Dick is per definition an event. The UK paperback publication of A Scanner Darkly is an event I awaited with ever mounting impatience, and, after reading Deus Irae, his previous novel (a less than successful collaboration with Roger Zelazny), some apprehension. One wonders whether this is the perfect state of mind with which to approach a book, for I have had, and still have, some difficulty assessing satisfactorily Scanner. But let me first tell you what it is about.

It is summer 1994 (page 9 says "1944", but internal evidence sets the novel later than that, and the blurb on the back cover places it in "the mid-1990's", so we may assume that the well-known British typographical skill has once more evidenced itself to the annoyance of the reader) in California, an overheated wasteland of highways, supermarkets, and plastic hamburger joints. Society has rigidified into two subsocieties, completely alien to each other, the straights and the dopers. The narcotics branch of the police forms virtually the only bridge between the two. Bob Arctor is an undercover narc, who is known to his superiors only by his code name of Fred. He is addicted to Substance D, a new drug also known as Death. He is schizophrenic, and the two hemispheres of his brain are losing their connection, both physically and mentally, the former the result of his job, the latter of his addiction. In short, he is a human being in the process of total disintegration.

But the incidents of this novel, funny or frightening as they may be, are not of prime importance. They are the vehicle of what Dick, the writer, tries to tell us, the readers. In Scanner, Dick intends to convey an idea of what it was like to live through the Californian drug culture of the '60's. Dick is a survivor from that culture and suffers from the mental and physical damage inflicted by it, so it is understandable that it is not an idealised picture he paints, but a more than disquieting one. He doesn't focus on the glories of the psychedelic experience, but concentrates on the irreparable, often fatal, damage the abuse of drugs of all kinds can cause. It is this damage, made most acute to the reader in the breakdown and human death of Bob Arctor, and the continued existence of the former Bob Arctor as an organism without identity or awareness of his purpose that makes Scanner an unpleasant book to read.

Which doesn't mean that it is not worth reading. Certainly, if you expect Scanner to be (just) another madly funny Dick novel, like The Zap Gun or Galactic Pothealer, or another novel of mad grandeur, such as Martian Time-slip or The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, this one is not for you. It certainly lacks that Dick trademark, survival of the hero's identity. In Scanner, Bob Arctor doesn't survive. This is what Dick considers to be the ultimate horror, and that is what drug abuse does to you.

Like I said, I find it difficult to assess Scanner. I very much enjoyed the first 200 pages. The last 50 pages turned me off competely. Perhaps that is the best indication that Dick got his point across. Unfortunately, Dick doesn't seem to see it this way.

He sees the damage caused by Drug abuse as punishment (meted out by whom?) for what was merely an experiment in the search for a happier life-style (page 253). This point is only made clear in the Epilogue, which is a straightforward explanation of the foregoing novel, a technique that I do not approve of. A novel should be a self-contained experience, and such explanations are then superfluous, and annoying to the reader. What's more, it insults both the reader and the writer, because a.) it implies that the reader isn't capable of experiencing the novel as a self-contained work of art, b.) the reader isn't given the chance to do so, and c.) it implies that the writer is an inferior craftsman. What I fail to understand is why this explanation was at all felt to be necessary, because, quite frankly, the experience was quite moving without the Epilogue, and I am sure that most readers would agree. However, given Dick's deep personal involvement with the issue, his decision to add the Epilogue is understandable. It should be stressed that this applies only to Dick as a person, and not as an author.

After all that, you may well ask: "But is it SF?" No, not really. Yes, it is set in the future; yes, it does contain some new technology; yes, the technology does have an effect on the hero. But the hard SF content is very limited, consisting mainly of straight extrapolation from things we already have; this also applies to the soft SF content, in that the future society (i.e. its subdivisions) is not at all stressed and is in fact completely unnecessary to the point of the book.

Nevertheless, it is clear that he intended Scanner to be published as a SF novel. One gets the impression that Dick had an understandably burning compulsion to get his message out. I suspect that he chose the SF medium for one of two reasons: either because he felt his reputation in the medium would enhance its marketability (and hence it would be a proselytising effort), or because of his knowledge of the SF readership, he felt that the message of the book would be of greater value to the average SF reader. In short, it's a very powerful book because of the circumstances the author has endured. If read in this light, it is a black comment on the potential depths of escapism. Perhaps he felt that by restricting the hard SF content of the book he would be stressing the imminence of the dangers that "easy ways out" could have for the inexperienced or unwary. By deliberately ignoring the incentives for drug abuse (as he does) he is in effect attempting to warn us all that "anything that can happen, can happen to you". In other words, that he feels that biochemical excess in and of itself is the danger and not whatever physical or mental pressures might lead one to partake thereof.

Do I recommend this book? Well, that depends on what you think you need. If you think you've been escaping too much in your literature recently, you'd better read this one.

Reviewed by J.J. Struben with John McCarthy

EDITOR'S NOTE: All readers are reminded that the Newsletter is willing and even eager to accept and print dissenting reviews of books which have already been reviewed in one of our publications.

JANUARY MEETING (Continued from page 3)

or script consultant. This is necessary because what the movie companies actually buy is little more than the title and the names of the characters.

Finally, she had a word of encouragement for all the budding writers amongst us to the effect that (as far as novels are concerned) editors do read unsolicited manuscripts. The best way to go about attempting to peddle your work is mail in the first three chapters or so, a resume or outline of the rest of the work, and an adequate supply of international postal reply coupons. It is not unheard of for an editor to make some useful comments when he returns your submission.

After a lively question and answer period, the assembly allowed Anne to get out from under the lights, and reverted into utter informality. As they say, a great time was had by all. Thanks, Anne.

DUE TO PROBLEMS BEYOND OUR CONTROL, IT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO INCLUDE A TRANSCRIPT OF A DUN LAOGHAIRE TAPE IN THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER. NEXT TIME...

Invaders from Earth by Bob Silverberg

I must say that what I feel about this book are mixed emotions. At first I found it produced a feeling I used to experience when as a child I would hide under the table when Shirley Temple sang. Embarrassment, in other words. This was caused by what I considered amateurish writing, and coming from Silverberg there's no excuse for it. I was also put off the scent by the main character, a chap called Ted Kennedy. I spent the first twenty pages trying to spot the political allegory. This same chap works for the Corporation, which is capitalised as these things always are in this type of book. What? Do I hear outcries of "What do you mean by 'this type of book'?" I mean this sort of book what he wrote, a heavy-handed attempt at a well-worn message oversimplistically, reeking of allegory, analogy, and saccharine.

The awful Corporation is going to mine Gannymede whether or not the sweet poetic gentle inhabitants (better known as Gannys) object or not. In fact, they do object but the foul establishment care not a shoot. The PR men (including our hero) are about to sell their ideas to the public. Our man Kennedy does a fascinating thing which I won't tell because it will give it away, and if you read the book, don't look at the back cover because it'll tell you, too.

Well, to sum it all up I really got the impression that this simple little story was produced in not less than an hour and a half. Now you might think that because of what I've said that I did not like the book. Quite to the contrary, after the first 20 pages, and despite the flaws (dare I mention it) I enjoyed it.

Reviewed by Moira Harrison

There Will Be Time by Poul Anderson

This book is a relatively obscure work, which is unfortunate. Although it was first published in 1973 (and never since, as near as I can tell), it shares none of the weaknesses we have come to associate with later Anderson, such as plodding prose and overvivid and forced imagery, as is evidenced in his recent atrocities Mirkheim and Fire Time.

The basic premise to the book is that from time to time over recorded history, several people have been born with a slight (and perhaps induced) mutation which permits them, their clothing, and a few pounds of cargo, to travel at will through time. This is a standard technique in SF for the creation of interesting plots and sympathetic characters --- nature providing certain individuals with enviable talents, at the same time putting a great deal of moral pressure and responsibilities upon the unwitting recipients. This technique is of course reflected brilliantly in Anne McCaffrey's Dragonseries; it generally leads to the creation of an elite class which nevertheless contains the usual percentage of weaklings and fools.

Anyhow, the hero, Jack Havig, is recruited by an existing band of time travellers which is trying to reverse the collapse of civilisation which occurred (apparently) in the 1990's. Due to the rascality of his new companions, Havig deserts to form his own free-lance group with the same ends but with more palatable means. The message of the book is, basically, that nice guys aren't always dolts. This point is not, however, stressed.

What makes the book enjoyable is the characterisations, very tight plotting, and exceptionally fine handling of switches from first to third person narrative, which many authors of high standing would do well to emulate if they intend to use such devices (I'm thinking of Uris's Trinity here, if you're wondering).

For many reasons, much of the book seems to be a rehash of Silverberg's Up the Line (1969). In particular, I'm referring to the extensive action in the later Byzantine Empire. But the idea of individuals travelling in time with just their clothes on their backs (loosely speaking) is also common to both. I would recommend reading There Will Be Time in conjunction with Up the Line, in fact; the contrasts are very intriguing.

As you may have gathered, this is a fairly entertaining book; it is a shame it hasn't been rereleased. Yet I sometimes feel sad upon rereading it, because it appears to have been Anderson's swan-song.

Reviewed by John McCarthy

This Newsletter is copyright (c) the Irish Science Fiction Association and/or the individual contributors. Inquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, Brian Redmond, 14 Granville Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.