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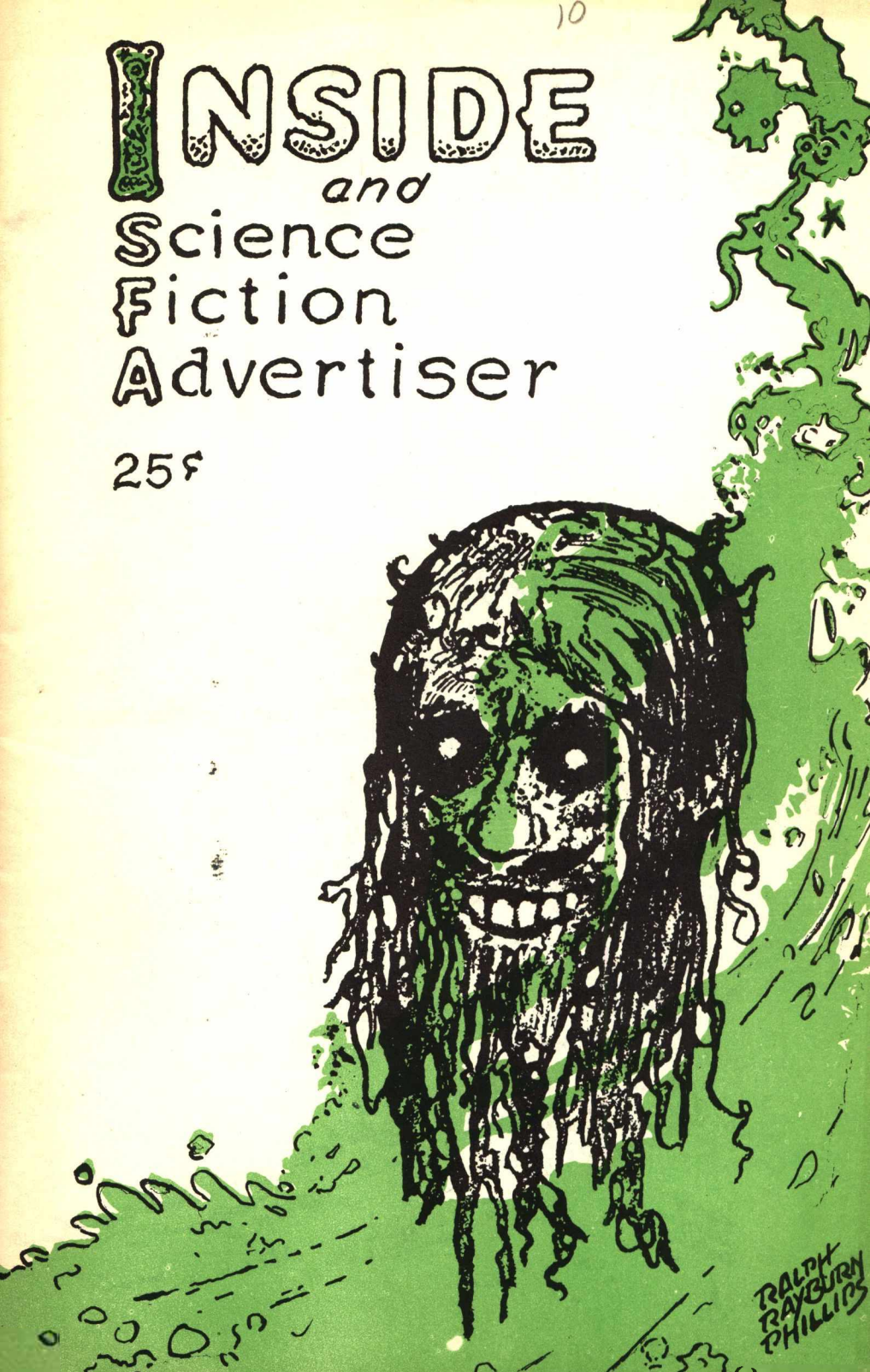

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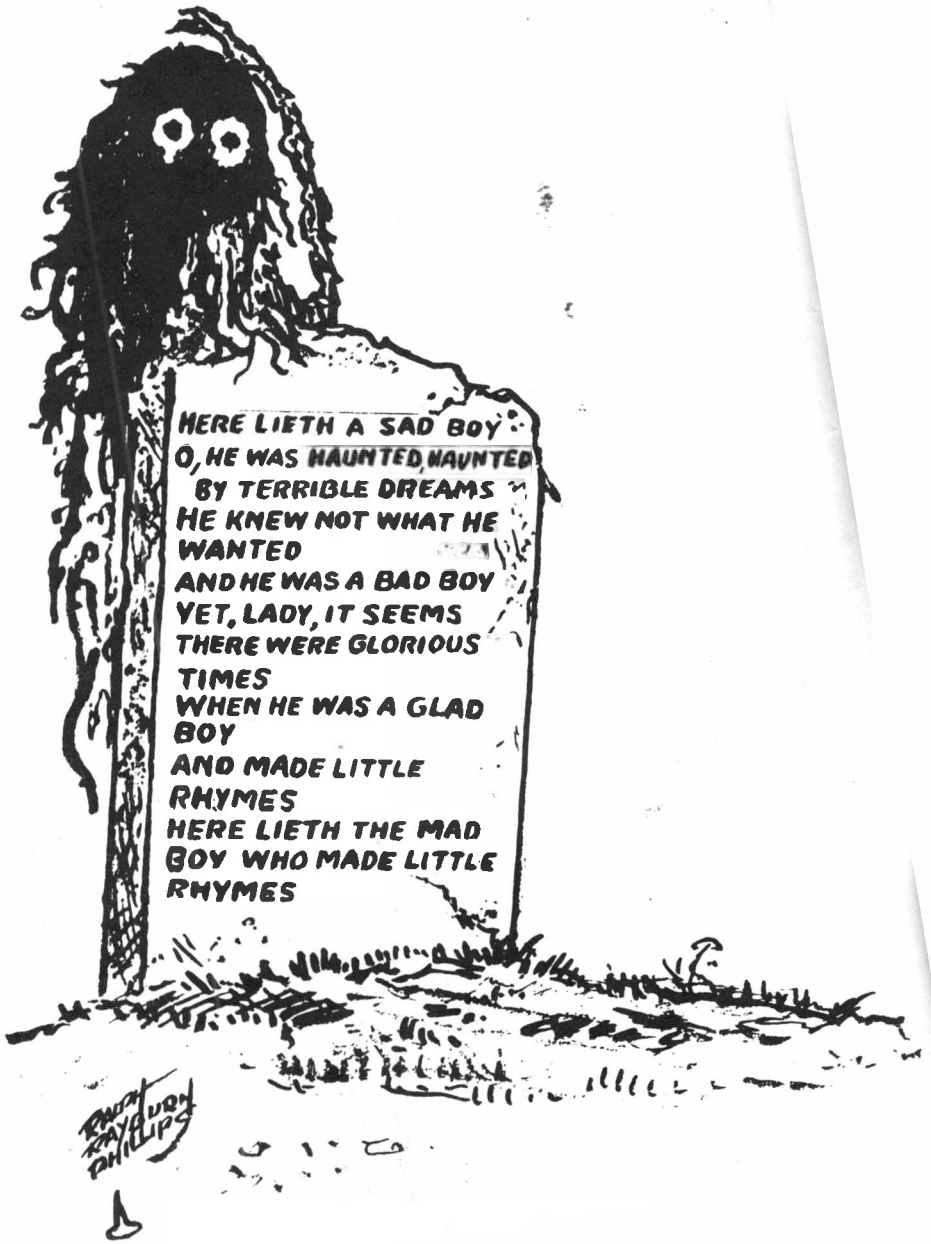


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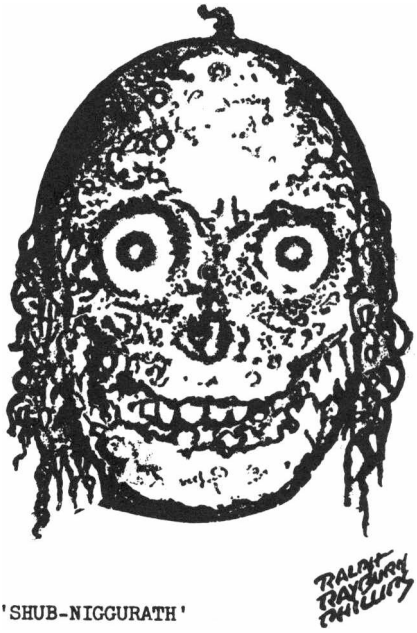

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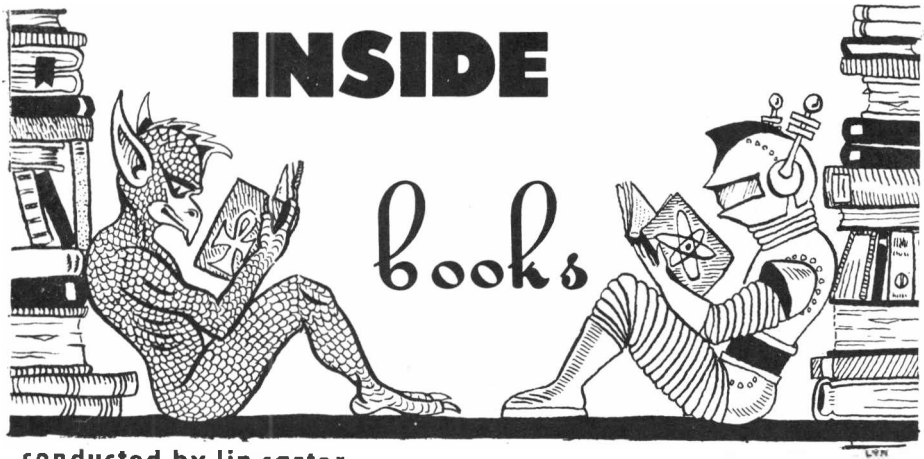


conducted by lin carter

NORTHWEST OF EARTH by C.L. Moore (Short Stories). Gnome Press, 212 pgs, $3.00.

Catherine L. Moore—Mrs. Henry Kuttner—is one of the most talented science fiction writers alive, as any one knows who has read her VINTAGE SEASON, or novels like JUDGEMENT NIGHT. As she seldom publishes nowadays, we should all be grateful to Dave Kyle and Marty Greenburg for resurrecting these old stories from the back files of Weird Tales and making them available to everyone again.

NORTHWEST OF EARTH is the second, and, I suppose, the last collection of her stories in the Northwest Smith and Jirel of Joiry series, which originally appeared in the thirties. This book consists of seven short stories, two in the Jirel series, and five in the Northwest Smith saga. The book, therefore, is a curious blend of far-space futuristics and medieval romance.

Northwest Smith, if you are not already acquainted with him, is one of the few great characters in science fiction—ranking equally with Hawk Carse, Adam Link, and Giles Habibula, and just a shade under Captain Nemo and John Carter. He is a cold-eyed, rangy outlaw of space—a sort of 25th Century Jesse James, or perhaps a Dan'l Boone of the spaceways. (Gary Cooper could play the part splendidly.) He first appeared in Miss Moore's classic SHAMBLEAU and he is wonderful. There's nobody around nowadays to touch him.

Jirel, on the other hand, is a fiery hellcat straight from the Middle Ages, something like a wanton Joan of Arc, or a female Conan —and what a pair she and Howard's Cimmerian would make! She is all swashbuckling heroics, with a curse on her soft lips and a longsword in her velvet hand.

The seven stories in this book make wonderful reading, for they are in a long vanished style of story telling, the sort of thing that makes old guard fans sigh for the good old days. The fact that they do servive re-reading some twenty years after their first publication, is a direct compliment to the brilliant talents of Miss Moore. For she has succeeded in doing something enormously difficult: telling a tale of supernatural horror or idyllic fantasy that is also science fiction. And this is more difficult than it might sound. Lovecraft attempted it—IN THE WALLS OF ERYX, for instance—but couldn't quite bring it off. Clark Ashton Smith has only occasionally succeeded in doing it, and admirably, in stories like THE VAULTS OF YOH-VOMBIS. And Leigh Brackett has done it a few times in some of her Mars stories.

Actually, though, these are not exactly stories in the strict meaning of the term, but rather mood pieces, very descriptive and adjectival, becoming now and then straight poetry. Take this

passage for example, describing a city which once existed on the Moon:

> "Presently he was standing on the slope of a low hill, velvet with dark grass in the twilight. Below him in that lovely half-translucency of dusk, Baloise the Beautiful lay outspread, ivory-white, glimmering through the dimness like a pearl half-drowned in dark wine. Somehow he knew the city for what it was, knew its name and loved every pale spire and dome and archway spread out in the dusk below him. Baloise the Beautiful, his lovely city."

Miss Moore has a marvelous talent for describing the undescribable, too. She can picture a completely alien scene, an imaginary color or non-human sense, an unknown emotion or some utterly alien experience in such well chosen words that they become fully real to her reader. Her description of the Cyclops-Woman in JULHI, for example, is a small sort of masterpiece with its careful restraint, delicately hinting at the unhuman anatomy of the creature.

For all their merits, however, these tales may be too highly spiced and exotic for the present day devotees of the neon-and-chromium cosmos of a Kornbluth or a Bester. Like a draught of some rare, Lemurian wine, they may be too heady for any but the jaded taste of the conoisseur who can wholly appreciate their decadence of taste and sensuous bouquet. And one might wish that Smith and Jirel had each been given a book of their own, instead of being mixed together in the same volume. It was obviously the only thing the publisher could do, since the Smith tales would make one very big book and the Jirel stories a very small one, but still it jars.

And, as Damon Knight once remarked about another book: burn the jacket.

MAD STRIKES BACK! by Harvey Kurtzman (Cartoons). Ballantine Books, 183 pgs, 35¢.

I'm sure nearly every science fiction fan in the country is familiar with MAD, the only comic book worth reading now that POGO COMICS has ceased publication. Well, last year Ballantine published a superb collection of the cream of the MAD crop (yet one more reason why "Every Science Fiction Fan Loves Ballantine Books"!), and this year they have followed it up with another selection, equally good.

Herein the interested reader will find such MAD classics as Prince Violent, Gopo Gossum, Poopeye the Sailor, Manduck the Magician and Teddy and the Pirates; as well as satire on familiar TV shows, advertisements, a certain movie about a giant ape, and other Americana. Nobody since the early Al Capp has done such marvelous lampoons of our manners & morals & movies & magazines, so—if you are among the unfortunate half-dozen or so who haven't by this time discovered MAD, by all means do yourself a favor and buy this book.

You won't regret it.

THE HONOR OF GASTON LE TORCH by Jacques Perret (Novel). W. W. Norton & Co., 276 pgs, $3.50.

This witty, charming fantasy will remind old-guard fans of Hubbard's TYPEWRITER IN THE SKY and James Thurber's justly-celebrated SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY.

M. Gaston le Torch, retired French infantry officer ("his body bore the marks of tough experience: the scars of two bullets and three stray shell splinters, a cracked kneecap, a missing eye, a severed left thumb, six cicatrized button-holes where steel had pierced his flesh, and a dent on one side of his forehead like

that in the crown of a Homburg") becomes interested in the past history and vanished glory of his ancestors. Ploughing through records in the Bibliotheque Nationale, he learns they were famed in every famous war or battle since the Gauls, both on land and on sea—where they accounted for an accumulative total of 28 Spanish, 32 Dutch, 43 English ships, not counting Genoese and Turkish. All were famous fighters, it seems, save for one—a certain Eugene le Torch, Captain of the pirate galleon La Douce, who turned tail and fled from an English war ship of inferior tonnage and eight less cannon.

Our le Torch, burning with honest Gallic fervor to erase this ancient blemish on the family escutcheon (it all happened in 1697), brings his sad news to the surviving members of the clan, who are noticeably undisturbed to learn of the cowardly behavior of their two-centuries dead ancestor.

Then, through some never-quite-explained wrinkle in the time-track, a kindly Providence transports Gaston back to the blood-stained quarterdeck of the La Douce a week or so before the incident. From then on the novel becomes a free-wheeling and uproariously funny lampoon of the piratic adventure novel a la Sabatini's CAPTAIN BLOOD and Yerby's THE GOLDEN HAWK. Gaston finds himself among a fascinating collection of seventeenth century French pirates, who pause even in the midst of boardings and sackings to swig Marsala or Burgundy from their helmets, who venture into battle decked out in beribboned plum velvet with fawn colored stockings.

The La Douce is simply wonderful: Her decks are laid out with Persian carpets; the roof of her great cabin is hung with trophies of the kill—two hundred plumed hats of conquered Admirals and Captains; gold bullion serves her for ballast, and her fantastic polyglot crew strew the placid seas with handfulls of gold moidores to woo the wind when becalmed.

From then on the plot thickens. They attack and capture a towering Spanish galleon—giving the author a chance to parody the battle scene, with poor Gaston slipping and stumbling all over the ship, getting tangled in the shrouds, bouncing off yardarms, sliding down sails in the approved Errol Flynn manner, always missing bullets by a hairs-breadth and accidentally slaughtering a couple score Spaniards in the process.

Working against time, Gaston strives to change history by either keeping the ship from her destined rendezvous with the English ship, or making her stand and fight it out. I shant spoil the fun by giving away the ending, but Gaston gets back to his own century unscathed. Charming and delicious as the novel is, one might wish however for a little more solid nourishment beneath all the sugary frosting: a bit more real flesh under the ribbons and lace. Also, since the time-traveling gimmick is never explained, and as Gaston is unexplainedly accepted by the crew as one of them, the reader may find his credulity strained a little too much.

Still, it's all great fun, and you would have loved it in Unknown!

RE-BIRTH by John Wyndham (Novel). Ballantine Books, 185 pgs, 35¢.

There are two kinds of science fiction writers: the first contributes to the magazines, is occasionally anthologized and has novels published from time to time; the second is a "mainstream" writer who does his major work in another field and only once in a while produces a science fiction novel. In the latter category, I would put Philip Wylie, Aldous Huxley and various others. John Wyndham is another of these: He is a writer, apparently prominent in some other field, writing an occasional science fiction piece under the above psuedonym.

This, his third novel in our field, is in many ways his best.

It is a taut, detailed, moving and convincing picture of every day life in a small backwoods community after the atom bombs demolished our society. His vision of Man After The Blowup is a logical and realistic one. He imagines a vast Back-to-God movement, whose leaders believe the Blowup (he calls it "The Tribulation") to have been sent by God to punish the Old People (us) for their wicked ways. This belief, already many generations old as the novel opens, manifests itself principally in a ruthless stamping out of any deviation, biologically speaking, from the fancied Norm. The catch phrases of this Neochristianity are "Only the Image of God is Man", "Blessed is the Norm", "Watch Thou for The Mutant", and so on.

The story is told through the eyes of David Storm, a telepathic mutant. As a child he met and became friends with Sophie, shielded away from everyone by her parents because her mutation (an extra toe on each foot), if ever discovered, would mean sterilization and outlawry. When Sophie is discovered she and her family flee; an event which breaks David's heart—his first glimpse of man's inhumanity to man. But David himself is a mutant, and a far more dangerous deviation than she. This means a steadily increasing sense of danger to David and his half-dozen fellow telepaths in the community.

I shall not describe too much of the plot: It would be better if you read it for yourself. It is admirably constructed and wonderfully told, with especially fine characterization and a truly superb narrative style.

The only flaw in the book (and perhaps it was intended) lies near the end. David and the other telepaths, discovered and forced to flee into the Badlands, take haven with the outlawed mutants. They are rescued by an expedition sent from New Zealand, where a super-modern society composed entirely of telepaths have heard their thoughts and sent to rescue them. The unfortunate thing is that the woman leader of the expedition is such a flawless, soulless creature, frightening in her absolute perfection, that one almost wonders if David and his friends will be happy in the mutant city.

The God-fearing backwoodsmen, brutal and bigoted and ugly as they are, still seem somehow more human.

Despite this perhaps purely personal objection, the book is one of the half-dozen best new novels yet published this year. Get it and see for yourself.

THE LONG WAY BACK by Margot Bennett (Novel). Coward-McCann, 248 pgs, $3.50.

In the year 3406 an expedition is sent to the legendary island of Britain by a negroid culture in Africa that has risen to power after our civilization was completely demolished in the Big Bang. The exploring group is led by Valya, a Spinster of the State, raised from childhood to be an emotionless nun-like class component, completely dedicated to her State and symbolicly wedded to it. Also in the group is Grame, mechanically classified in childhood as a "mechanical-repetitive worker", who has succeeded in getting himself re-classified as a Scientist. Their purpose is to investigate the vague legends of humans inhabiting the mythic land of Britain, and to discover anything of scientific value.

They find the island a jungled wilderness full of weird mutations: vampire robins, carnivorous flowers, inch long cats, and hairless, stunted white men living in primitive villages. The whites, descendents of the few who survived the Big Bang, worship the memory of its cause (the god "Thai") by a sort of religion-by-fear; they have evolved a completely static culture and are terrified of any change in their way of life.

The exploring party is attacked by packs of hideously mutated dogs the first day they reach Britain, lose most of their equip-

ment and supplies and the larger part of their number. For a time they find haven in a village of the whites, by pretending to be messengers from Thai, but before long they attempt certain slight technilogical changes in the culture, and are driven out by the whites and their fanatic priest. Alone in the jungle, they decide to seek the mythic "golden city"—which is apparently London. They are led there by Brown, a renegade white, smarter and more adaptive than the others, who befriended them in the village.

From this brief outline, it is obvious that Miss Bennett had a good, meaty plot from which a really first rate novel could have been written—but wasn't. From the very beginning the story is marred by too hasty writing, very jerky and patchy description, which gives the impression the author was hurrying through the necessary exposition to get on to the parts which interested her. For instance, she shows Grame defying the classification machine that would keep him a simple laborer when he had actually trained himself to realize part of his intellectual potentialities. When the machine refuses to re-classify him, he speaks out against the system, and destroys the machine. This scene, potentially very dramatic, is given so little space that it cripples the entire novel. Again, we are given brief and sketchy glimpses of this African culture: scenes in a University where books do not exist and students "learn" by memorizing a few short speeches, and graduate as full fledged Scientists in a week. We are asked to believe that a culture like this is capable of re-discovering nuclear fission and supersonic flight!

In short, the plot is inadequately conceived, the characters vacillate from cardboard cut-outs to fairly believable persons back to cardboard cut-outs again, the background data is very skimpy and definitely unbalanced, and the writing is just plain bad. As so often happens when a mainstream writer attempts science fiction for the first time, the result is just plain mediocre.

FRONTIERS IN SPACE ed. by Everett F. Bleiler and T.E. Dikty (Short Stories). Bantam Books, 166 pgs, 25¢.

Here Bleiler and Dikty have selected fourteen stories from three volumes of their annual BEST SCIENCE FICTION anthologies. The selection is quite fortunate. A good dozen of the finest talent in the field today is represented with recent contributions. Al Bester with his wonderful "Oddy and Id", van Vogt with "Process" —minor but good—the unforgettable "I Am Nothing" by Eric Frank Russell, and other stories by Tony Boucher, Fritz Leiber, Fred Brown, William Tenn, Damon Knight (and a honey!), Mack Reynolds, Bradbury, and others.

If you are too busy to either read all the current magazines or to pick up the Bleiler & Kikty annual anthology, this pocket book is for you: a consistently above average selection of the very finest short s.f. of the last five years or so. Of course, one man's idea of the best differs from another's—I personally think Damon Knight's TURNCOAT, Heinlein's YEAR OF THE JACKPOT, Boucher's THE QUEST OF SAINT ACQUIN and a few others should be here, while such minor and rather unfortunate items as the Bradbury and the Porges contributions could have been omitted without loss.

But the selection in general has enough top stuff to please everyone.

JAGLON AND THE TIGER FAIRIES by L. Frank Baum (Juvenile). Reilley & Lee, 40 pgs, no price.

It is now well over a half-century since Mr. Baum's first book (MOTHER GOOSE IN PROSE, 1897) was published, and in the ensuing fifty-eight years he has attained the status of possibly the finest author of children's books that America has ever produced.

This book, never before published in hard covers, was written in 1905, after the first couple Oz books had been published. It has now been resurrected and published with new illustrations, edited and with a brief foreward by the prominent Oz-ophile and Baum-collector, Jack Snow.

Mr. Baum was never content to merely imitate the traditional types of fairy stories. His classic WIZARD OF OZ is a brilliant attempt to create a Twentieth Century American version of Fairyland. In another early book, THE SEA FAIRIES (1911), he explored an entirely new branch of fairy literature that had previously only been attempted in THE WATER BABIES: fairies and fairy magic under the oceans. This present book is another such exploration: a Baum's-eye view of fairy life in the animal world. There is not a single human being in the entire story, although certain of the characters herein may betray certain lamentably human traits.

Jaglon is a tiger who penetrates into the Inner Circle of the Jungle and bests Avok the Lion in single combat to become King of the Jungle. He is aided in this by the Tiger Fairies, a truly clever bit of imagination. Although the story is slight and the book is slim, Mr. Baum's conception of jungle society and animal fairies is original enough to fully warrant republishing this long lost tale.

STAR BRIDGE by Jack Williamson and James E. Gunn (Novel). Gnome Press, 221 pgs, $3.00.

Interplanetary civilization evolved until it could spread no more, it's forward expansion halted by the barrier of that inexorable law, "Thou shalt not travel faster than light." Then the Tube was invented: the carefully guarded secret of faster-than-light travel. The planet Eron invented the Tube; therefore Eron dominated civilization; therefore the Eron Empire was born, a

solid and undefeatable tyranny that held the life or death of civilization in its hands.

But somebody wanted the Empire smashed. Horn, soldier of fortune, is hired to assasinate Kohlnar, General Manager of Eron. Through the unexpected help of a wonderful old Chinese, Wu, and his weird companion, the semi-intelligent bird-like Lil, Horn succeeds. Fleeing from vengeance, he takes the only way out and travels via Tube to Eron, hoping to lose himself in her teeming billions. Driven from pillar to post, always a mere half-jump ahead of Duchane and his security police, Horn becomes involved with Wendre, Kohlnar's daughter, and with the underground religious organization, the Entropy Cult, with a superb cast of minor characters. Trapped on Eron, Horn is again helped by Wu and gains the friendship of Wendre (who does not know he killed her father) by rescuing her from an attempted coup by which Duchane hoped to gain control of Eron.

Caught at last, sent to the prison world of Vantee, Horn falls in with the leader of the exiles, Redblade, and escapes via Tube to Eron, just in time to take over a sudden revolt of Eron's slaves. With the others, escaped Sair, the saintly leader of the recently-defeated rebel culture, the Cluster.

Reading this book is an almost unbearable experience: suspense mounts, the plot moves with breathtaking speed—one finds it difficult to lay it down. The story ends in a wonderful, brilliant denouncement, capping climax upon climax. Character after character is unmasked, bringing into view a superbly plotted story-pattern, deftly woven and cleverly designed.

Unfortunately, the writing style is not quite up to the plot. At times the texture breaks down into awkward, almost amateurish purple passages, uncomfortable and self-conscious. Moreover, the story lacks the background detail so necessary to a novel of this type. Where Heinlein would have made the prose crackle and glitter with invented slang, new words, fanciful techicalese, constructing a whole culture behind the action going on in the foreground, Williamson and Gunn are content to concentrate on the stuff going on upstage and let the scenery struggle along mainly in the reader's imagination. This is Asimov's major failing also.

Nevertheless, the novel is a breathtaking job, proving the Old Master still has what it takes. And the Epilogue is a stroke of sheer, honest-to-God genius: totally unexpected, utterly unprepared for, and overwhelming. Whatever you do, DON'T read the Epilogue first!

THE BIG JUMP & SOLAR LOTTERY by Leigh Brackett and Philip K. Dick (Novels). Ace Books, 319 pgs, 35¢.

Miss Brackett's novel appeared around two years ago in either Startling or Thrilling. I forget which. I remember that when I first read it I was not strongly impressed. Good, yes, but not in the same cosmos with her SEA KINGS OF MARS or the early SHADOW OVER MARS. I'm very happy to have this second look at THE BIG JUMP, for upon re-reading I can see just what a good story it is. Very good characterization, flashes of an almost Merrittesque poetry—the rest of the prose terse, clipped, Hemingwayish. But the best thing is the plot: tightly, smoothly constructed so that you never get the idea the people are marionettes, events and incidents follow one another in a tight, logical sequence. Her people are motivated, never manipulated.

The story concerns itself with the "Big Jump" from this System to another sun—Barnard's Star. The first expedition returned: one man alive, the others missing. That man, dying of some ghastly sort of radiation sickness. Comyn, tough space-bum, sets out to find what happened to Paul Rogers, close friend of his, now among the missing. But the Cochranes, a giant commercial monopoly who

backed the first Jump, are holding the ship, survivor, and log. The plot tells of Comyn's attempts to get at the facts—eventually making the second Big Jump himself. What he finds at the end is not only a brilliant s.f. gimmick, but darn good, solid writing.

SOLAR LOTTERY, which is an original, is perhaps even better: a sharp, pointed satire-extrapolation of our society in the best Bester/Kornbluth tradition; the story of a future when the quiz shows take over. Although at times this future society seems about as implausible as the one in Heinlein's BEYOND THIS HORIZON, the idea—and the treatment—are completely fascinating. Imagine a world where political elections are a matter of pure, random chance—where a sort of super-pinball-machine can elect anyone on Earth to the post of "Quizmaster" (President)! Mr. Dick's novel relates what happens when a weary, half saint-half crackpot, proponent of the new religion "Prestonism" wins the cosmic jackpot and winds up as Quizmaster—ousting a rough, blustering Huey-Long-type out of the job. All hell breaks loose—literally—for this society has another charming custom: world-wide lotteries are held to elect a legal assasin to knock off the new Quizmaster! Naturally, the ousted Reese Verrick backs the assasin, substitutes a sort of multi-mind robot that will be able to get through new Quizmaster Wakeman's telepathic bodyguards. Mix all this up with an expedition to a semi-mythical tenth planet, the Flame Disk that is the cornerstone of Prestonism, several other clever gimmicks, and you have a taut, well written story designed to please, entertain and stimulate.

It does all three, and very nicely.

THE OLD DIE RICH by H. L. Gold (Short Stories). Crown Publishers, 250 pgs, $3.00.

This collection, the first of Mr. Gold's stories, is a mingling of fantasy and straight science fiction. Among others, it includes the famous TROUBLE WITH WATER from Unknown, and two more recent efforts, AT THE POST and the title story, both from Galaxy. Twelve stories in all, and nearly all of them well worth reading. Mr. Gold's chief virtue as a writer seems to be a mastery of the 'gimmick' style of writing—but he also does well with the trick punchline type.

And some of the gimmicks are marvelous. The title story, for instance: Gold's idea of what lies behind the mysterious news items of old men and women dying of starvation with seventeen thousand dollars pinned to their coat linings. Another, AT THE POST, gives Gold's version of what makes a catatonic—and his reason, so help me, makes more sense to me than the currently accepted medical theory.

If these stories have a fault, it lies in the style of his writing—almost without exception it is flat, tasteless, uninspired. His characterization is extremely good, however—much better than most s.f. writers are capable of. And his plots are good, original. But the writing, the prose style, the narrative flow, is often dull, colorless, at times even awkward.

The book has an added feature which I have not seen before: With each story is given notes from the author's journal, data on how the idea originated, showing how he rejected different ideas on how to handle each tale, and finally his extremely well-balanced criticism of each individual story.

CONQUEST BY MAN by Paul Herrmann (Non-fiction). Harper & Bros., 455 pgs, $6.00.

This book is subtitled "The marvellous story of the men who discovered and explored the lands and seas of our world", which is good as far as it goes, but it does not go quite far enough to

fully describe this remarkable book. Like KON-TIKI, this is a book of adventure, travel, exploration...from Marco Polo to Thor Heyerdahl, from Cortez to Magellan. Like SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET, this is a story of the strange and unusual cultures that lurk here and there about the globe—the mysterious Etruscans, the cryptic Tiahuanaco Culture of Bolivia, Easter Island, and so forth. Like GODS, GRAVES AND SCHOLARS, this book portrays the romance of archeology, of palenotology, of history. But it goes beyond the three books above noted; it attempts to sweep up all of human history into one continuous pattern.

CONQUEST BY MAN will be of unique appeal to the fantasy fan, also. For herein you will find space devoted to the colossal fortifications of Zimbabwe in Southern Rhodesia that Lovecraft wove into his Cthulhu Mythology...the enigmatic ruins of Nan-Matal and Metal-Nim on Ponape that Merritt made the background for his THE MOON POOL...in fact this book could almost be considered a must for every serious fan's library. For here is what science and history know of Ultima Thule and Hyperborea, the Isles of the Blessed, Atlantis, King Solomon's lost Ophir and Queen Hapshetsut's Punt, the "Land of God", Troy, the mysterious "White Gods" of the Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs; such archeological curiosities as the Kennsington Runestone, the alleged Phoenecian inscriptions near Rio, the Easter Island Tablets, Prester John's letters and the Stone Age traveling salesman's sample case.

But Paul Herrmann is no Colonel Churchward: He is preaching no theory of Lost Atlantis or Sunken Lemuria. He evaluates the evidence, or lack of same, and allows it to speak for itself. In brief, this is a fascinating book, crammed full of interesting facts, profusely illustrated with photographs, maps, drawings, etc. Much along the same line as de Camp's LOST CONTINENTS, and Ley's and de Camp's LANDS BEYOND, it is thoroughly entertaining, stimulating and informative reading.

—Lin Carter

THE ROCKET PIONEERS ON THE ROAD TO SPACE by Beryl Williams and Samuel Epstein (Non-fiction). Julian Messner, 241 pgs, $3.75.

Here is another popularization of astronautics, this time by a husband and wife writing team who have turned out over forty books on other topics. As you might expect, it is extremely well written and easy to read, except for the title which sounds vaguely like "The Bobbsey Twins on the Road to Buffalo".

The book deals with the human side of space travel. Eight chapters cover Congreve, Verne, Ziolkovsky, Goddard, Oberth, the VFR, the American Rocket Society, and the Peenemunde Group, in detail. Most of the material has appeared in other books, however some of it is new.

This is a tale of personalities and events: of Hitler telling his generals solemnly "I have dreamed no A-4 will ever reach England" and stopping research on the V-2; of the American Rocket Society dodging the police in the wilds of New Jersey; and of the days when the New York Times labeled the idea of space flight "a severe strain on credulity" (1920).

The pace of the book is even and fascinating, very reminiscent of Willy Ley's style in his "Rockets, Missiles, and Space Travel".

The book is definitely not for the man with a slide rule—there are no formulas, no graphs, and a minimum of explanation—just enough technical background to make each individual's accomplishment understandable.

The major fault of the book is that it ignores recent developments. Dates are plentifully sprinkled throughout, and there are enough 1953s and 1954s to give you the impression that the book is right up to the second. However, when you reach the last page, you are somewhat surprised that it ends there. The authors have seen

fit to ignore everything that has been developed after Peenemunde. True, the WAC Corporal is mentioned briefly (4 lines), but hardly anything else is, and the reader is left with the impression that not much has happened since the war.

Another flaw was the emphasis on American and German achievement and the failure to recognize the accomplishments of British and Commonwealth groups. A completely distorted picture of the British Interplanetary Society is presented, and their war record isn't mentioned. Captain Frank Whittle, inventor of the turbojet, gets six lines.

All in all, an interesting but incomplete book. Entertaining, true, but Willy Ley did it better.

—Joe Schaumburger

SCIENCE AND THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING by J. Robert Oppenheimer; Simon & Schuster, 120 pgs, $2.75.

In the last months of 1953 the Reith Lectures of the British Broadcasting Company were delivered from London by J. Robert Oppenheimer. These lectures have now been collected and published under the title SCIENCE AND THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING.

About half way in time between the delivery of the lectures and their publication was the fabulous decision of the Personnel Security Board of the Atomic Energy Commission that Oppenheimer, although loyal and discreet, with an "unusual ability to keep to himself vital secrets", was a security risk and unfit to be allowed access to classified information. The present book makes no reference to that decision and therefore nothing further need be said about it here. However, with the memory of that case in mind, as it must necessarily be, the reader will gain an illuminating insight into the type of mind whose services the Atomic Energy Commission considers dispensible.

But even if the Oppenheimer case had never made the headlines, SCIENCE AND THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING would still be a book valuable far beyond its modest price. Its six chapters give a very clear and understandable summary of new trends in nuclear physics, and more importantly, an exposition of the interrelation between the world of science and the world of men as it appears to a man long practiced in the scientific way of thinking. To give a brief sample: "We are at once instrument and end, discoverers and teachers, actors and observers. We understand, as we hope others understand, that in this there is a harmony between knowledge in the sense of science, that specialized and general knowledge which it is our purpose to uncover, and the community of man. We, like all men, are among those who bring a little light to the vast unending darkness of man's life and world."

If in the world today the scientific mind still thinks as Oppenheimer thinks, there is some hope left us yet.

—Clyde Beck

THE POGO PEEK-A-BOOK by Walt Kelly. Simon & Schuster, $1.00.

There's only one description: It's a masterpiece. All the other words spoken here and elsewhere in answer to puritan censorship of ideas are like the screech of rubber tires on a peaceful spring day, like the opera student singing in the apartment building across the courtyard as I write this.

All the others are rasping words without beauty by comparison. Kelly's book is subtle, profound, delightful: completely marvelous.

Say the publishers: "If this book has a theme, which is unlikely if we know Kelly, it is that we have nothing to fear but fear itself, and boy, that's plenty."

Says Kelly: "Here is a peek through several windows. Altho a great deal in the book may not be readily understood by the average adult we, the editors, are sure that such materials will do no harm to his tender mind.

"That is, providing that this adult is a secure and well adjusted individual..."

As is indicated by the above excerpts, the book is loosely knit. It rambles. But the theme running like a crooked thread throughout is censorship. And, as is also indicated by the above excerpts, Kelly's views on censorship are piercing and logical. They make sense. With the deft tool of satire he peals back the false skin of appearances and avowed purpose and reveals the inner ridiculousness of it all:

"Oh Fearless Fred,
the Footpad dread,
Set Fire to his
momma's bed—"

"WHAT!?" screams Pogo. "Li'l chilluns likes songs 'bout bunnies an' busterflies—

"Oh, wouldst I was
a caterpiggle,
A creepy, crawly
waggle wiggle."

Kelly continues with another satire on Spillane ("The Bloody Drip Writhes Again"—"An Approved Rouser"), a rewritten version of "A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go" (as it would be rewritten for modern readers), a fairy tale as only Kelly would write it, and various other delectables.

It's all great fun—solid packed with thought.

Suggestion: Don't just buy one copy, buy six and pass them around to your friends!

BANNED BOOKS by Anne Lyon Haight (Non-fiction). R. R. Bowker Co., 172 pgs, 75¢ (paper).

A partial listing of books that have been banned over the centuries giving, in some cases, the reason for the censor's objection. Conclusions arrived at after reading the book: The Irish don't read anything but Sunday School papers; the Catholic Church doesn't approve of most good literature; some people have the notion that there is something evil and degrading about sex; most great literature is shocking within this definition: To go deep into the beliefs men hold dear and illuminate their empty and contradictory cores is to shock, for you are pointing out the truth; the truth shocks people who want to believe what they believe—not the truth. Get this book by all means. Then the next time someone makes the statement "Censorship is necessary", you can counter with some examples of what a minority of men over the centuries have felt the majority has needed protection from. Should you be one who has made that statement, perhaps you will buy the book and have a quiet argument with yourself. A fine reference book for discussions. And essays.

ONE (Magazine), 232 South Hill Street, Los Angeles 12, California; $.27 per copy, $2.50 per year.

A literate, intelligent and handsome job. Recommended if you are a homosexual or if you are a follower of the philosophy that says: Before we condemn a man let's understand him; and once we understand him we will never condemn him.

—Ron Smith

noted

A WAY HOME by Theodore Sturgeon. Funk & Wagnalls, $3.50.
ADVENTURES IN UNDERGROUND FAIRYLANDS by Mildred Crysler (Juvenile). Exposition Press, 199 pgs, $3.50.
ALTERNATIVES TO THE H-BOMB ed. by S. M. Levitas. Beacon Press, $2.00, $1.00 (paper).
ATOMIC WEAPONS AND ARMIES by F. O. Miksche. Praeger, $5.00.
AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Albert Einstein. Tudor, $3.00.
BEYOND EDEN by David Duncan. Ballantine, 169 pgs, $.35.
BIG BOOK OF STARS, The, by Leon Hausman (Bernard Poe) (Juvenile). Grosset & Dunlap, $1.00.
CO-ORDINATION OF GALACTIC RESEARCH ed. by A. Blaauw. Cambridge, $3.00.
ELEVATOR TO THE MOON by Stanley Widney. Wilcox & Follett, $2.50.
FITTEST, The, by J. T. McIntosh. Doubleday, $2.95.
FRONTIER TO SPACE by Eric Burgess. Macmillan, 190 pgs, $4.50.
GALACTIC BREED, The, (The Starmen) & CONQUEST OF THE SPACE SEA by Leigh Brackett and Robert M. Williams. Ace Books, 319 pgs, $.35.
GALAXY OF GHOULS ed. by Judith Merril. Lion Books, $.35.
LAST PLANET, The, (Star Rangers) & A MAN OBSESSED by Andre Norton and Alan Nourse. Ace Books, 319 pgs, $.35.
LOOKING BEYOND by Lin Yutang. Prentice-Hall, $4.95.
MARTIN AND HIS FRIEND FROM OUTER SPACE by Ivo Duka and Helena Kolda (Juvenile). Harper, 95 pgs, $2.50.
POINT ULTIMATE by Jerry Sohl. Rinehart, $2.75.
PRENTICE-HALL BOOK ABOUT SPACE TRAVEL, The, by William F. Temple. Prentice-Hall, 142 pgs, $2.75.
PRENTICE-HALL BOOK ABOUT THE STARS, The, by Hugh Wilkins. Prentice-

Hall, 151 pgs, $2.75.
REVOLT IN 2100 by Robert Heinlein. New American Library, 192 pgs, $.25.
ROBOTS ARE AMONG US by Rolf Strehl. Arco, $4.50.
ROUND TRIP TO HELL IN A FLYING SAUCER by Cecil Michael. Vantage Press, 61 pgs, $2.50.
SARGASSO OF SPACE by Andrew North. Gnome Press, 185 pgs, $2.50.
SORCERERS' VILLAGE by Hassoldt Davis. Little, Brown, 344 pgs, $5.
TOM SWIFT AND HIS ATOMIC EARTH BLASTER by Victor Appleton, II (Juvenile). Grosset & Dunlap, 210 pgs, $.95.
VIKING ROCKET STORY by Milton Rosen. Harper, $3.75.
WHO GOES THERE? by John W. Campbell. Dell, 254 pgs, $.35.

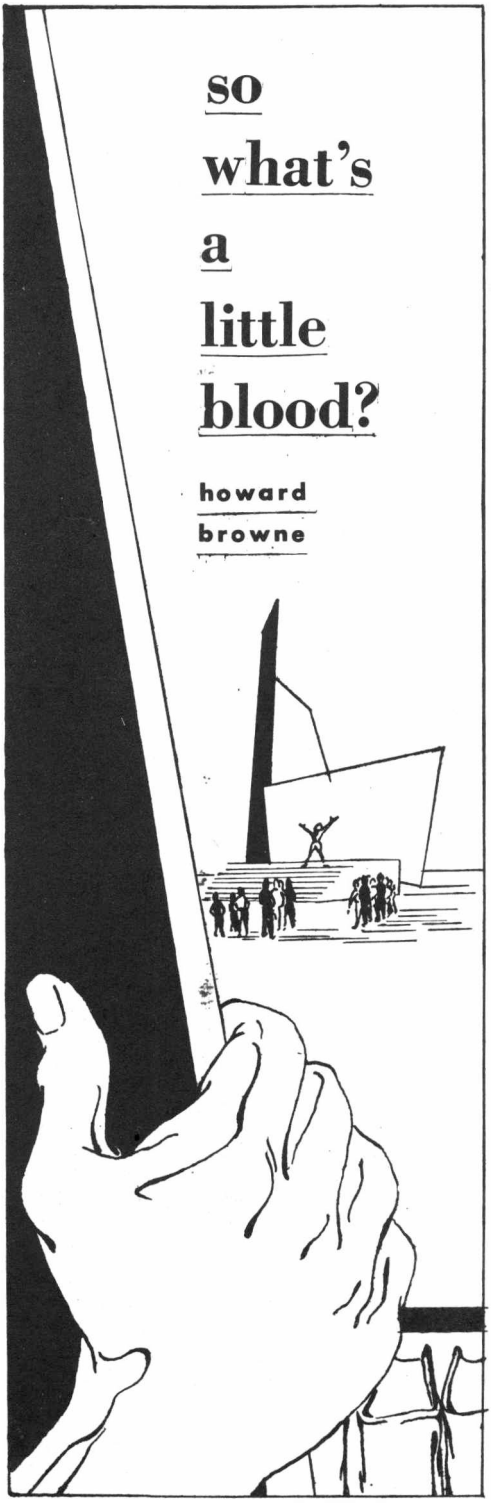
forthcoming

NOTE: Dates listed below are publication dates.

ALL ABOUT ROCKETS AND JETS by Fletcher Pratt (Jack Coggins il.). Random, $1.95. Sept.
BEAST THAT WALKS LIKE MAN by Harold McCracken. Hanover House, $4.00. Sept. 6.
BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES AND NOVELS: 1955 ed. by T. E. Dikty. Fell, $3.95. Aug. 15.
COMPLETE BOOK OF SPACE TRAVEL by Albro Gaul (Virgil Finlay il.). World Publishing Co., $4.95. Sept. 19.
DEEP SPACE by Eric Frank Russell. Bantam, $.25. Sept.
END OF ETERNITY by Issac Asimov. Doubleday, $2.95. Aug. 25.
FAR AND AWAY by Anthony Boucher. Ballantine, $.35. Aug.
FREDDY AND THE BASEBALL TEAM FROM MARS (Juvenile). Knopf, $3.00. Sept. 19.
FRONTIERS OF ASTRONOMY by Fred Hoyle. Harper, $5.00. July 27.
GREEN MAN FROM SPACE by Lewis Zarem. Dutton, $2.50. Aug. 31.
JOURNEY TO THE FUTURE by Lillian Everts. Farrar, $3.00. Sept.
LONG TOMORROW by Leigh Brackett. Doubleday, $2.95. Sept. 22.
MAN FROM TOMORROW by Wilson Tucker. Bantam, $.25. July.
MOON, The, by H. P. Wilkins and Patrick Moore. Macmillan, $12.00. July.
OCTOBER COUNTRY by Ray Bradbury. Ballantine, $2.00. July.
ONE OF OUR H BOMBS IS MISSING by Frederick Brennar. Gold Medal, $.25. Aug.
REVOLT ON ALPHA C by Bob Silverburg (Juvenile). Crowell, $2.50. Aug. 15.
SALAMANDERS AND OTHER WONDERS by Willy Ley. Viking, $3.95. Aug. 19.
SCREAMING GHOST, AND OTHER GHOSTLY TALES by Carl Carmer. Knopf, $3.00. Sept. 19.
SECRET OF THE MARTIAN MOONS by Donald Wollheim. Winston, $2.00. Sept. 12.
SPACE FRONTIERS by Roger Vernon. New American Library, $.25. Aug.
SPACEFLIGHT VENUS by Philip Wilding. Philosophical Library, $3.00. Sept. 17.
SPACEWARD BOUND by Slater Brown (Juvenile). Prentice-Hall, $2.75. Sept. 5.
STAR GUARD by Andre Norton (Juvenile). Harcourt, $3.00. Aug.
STAR SHIP ON SADDLE MOUNTAIN by Atlantis Hallam (Juvenile). Macmillan, $2.50. Sept. 27.
TIME BOMB by Wilson Tucker. Rinehart, $2.75. Aug. 29.
TOM SWIFT, Jr.: TOM SWIFT AND HIS SPACE STATION by Victor Appleton II. Grosset & Dunlap, $.95. Sept.
TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert Heinlein. Scribner, $2.50. Sept.
INVADERS OF EARTH ed. by Groff Conklin. Pocket Books, $.25. Sept. 1.
OPERATION FUTURE ed. by Groff Conklin. Pocket Books, $.35. July 1.
POSSIBLE WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION ed. by Groff Conklin. Berkley Books, $.35. July 15.
SCIENCE FICTION THINKING MACHINES ed. by Groff Conklin. Bantam, $.25. Aug.

so what's a little blood?

howard browne



Customarily, fandom's appraisal of science fiction magazines and the men who edit them falls into one of two categories: "wonderful" or "phooie!" The newly arrived editor tends to blossom under the former and wither from the latter—until eventually it dawns on him that readers' comments differ not a whit from one year to the next, no matter what he does or regardless of how the magazines are selling. With this realization comes an inner peace which saves him; for you cannot brood too long over being a hero yesterday, a bum today and a hero tomorrow without developing a case of galloping schizophrenia.

This inner peace I speak of is adequate protection from the run-of-the-mill insults by youngsters who have difficulty getting a passing mark in English II, and the high-nosed pseudo-intellectual who never uses a three-syllable word if he can come up with a synonym having five. Just as it is a shield against the "Gosh-I-think-you're-tops!" correspondent who wants his name in print and believes this approach to be the sure way to get it there. But on exceedingly rare occasions somebody in or out of fandom pries deep enough into an editor and his magazines to do a thoughtful, logical and cogent dissection job—and the editor discovers he is still vulnerable to unsolicited criticism.

All of us want to be understood, even though such understanding does not insure full approval. That is why William Freeman's article, A BLOODY FIGHT, in the May issue of INSIDE, wrings this reply from me. In it is neither gratuitous insult nor unstinted praise. In the main it forms an unbiased weighing of virtues and faults, or triumphs and errors, as well as the successes and failures of editor and audience alike. But most important, there is an understanding of what I tried to do with Fan-

tastic at the time the switch was made to digest size.

Freeman's comments on the stories were not of prime interest or importance. That he seemed to find the majority to be above average is gratifying but not pivotal. He is correct in saying that I did not simply sit at my desk and wait for them to come to me. I told writers, directly and through their agents, what I was after and left to them the plotting and the writing. There was no attempt to set an exact formula writers must measure up to; no taboos beyond the limits of ordinary good taste; no hard and fast rules. In such an atmosphere an author does his best work—and his best work was what we wanted and would pay handsomely for. The material that came in as a result of our approach was exactly what the editors had in mind, and it went into the magazine with the faith and the pride of those editors.

But if Freeman's reaction to the stories was not of importance, his clear and forthright interpretation of what I hoped to accomplish most certainly is important—to me! When he says, "Perhaps it (Browne's idea)...was...to bring readers outside s.f. into the field by printing stories of the type and by the authors with which they were familiar"—he hit half the nail with the authority of Dan'l Boone; and when he adds: "Browne's idea could have been ...expand s.f. out to meet other fields, whereby you have a merging..."—there went the other half! For my intention, you see, was actually made up of both these methods.

Sounds reasonable? Certainly I thought so. Yet it didn't pay off.

Why not?

Well, primarily, the untried section of the audience I was reaching for avoided my grasp. I don't mean the regular reader of s.f.; he came through with his 35¢ in fine style! But the (quoting Freeman) "...detective readers, sex readers, and just plain readers —people who like to read anything and everything as long as it is, to them, good...the ones who should have bought the magazine; the ones for whom it was intended."—this is the section of our proposed audience which failed us.

Why did they fail us?

Freeman advances a couple of reasons that make a lot of sense and which deserve a reply. He says, "Browne shouldn't have limited himself to s.f. as much as he did." Okay; why did I so limit myself? Because of an old Chinese custom called "hedging your bets." Look at it the way the publishers of the magazine looked at it: "Something like 70,000 readers buy Fantastic Adventures every month. Theoretically they buy it because it contains science fiction and fantasy. To run only one or two such stories in each issue of the new Fantastic could cost us the very foundation we hope to build on. We can't take that chance." That's the answer to Freeman's first theory. His second, "Another mistake was the title. Fantastic is not likely to appeal to people who consider fantasy a nasty word—which it is to most people." Here, again, we wanted to be sure of getting the audience who had been buying the magazine. So the original title, in condensed form, was retained.

Actually, Fantastic in each of its first six issues was not a limp and pallid flop. It sold in higher figures than any issue of Fantastic Adventures had done in years. But production costs (two-color interior illustrations, book paper, covers), and editorial costs (roughly an increase of 400% an issue!) proved too big a load to carry without the support of the general public. Only one issue—the one with the Spillane novelette—came through for us. More about that later.

And so what I had hoped would be a publication to take the place of the old Argosy, as it was in the twenties and early thirties, never came off. Perhaps most fans are too young to remember that publication. As a weekly it sold hundreds of thousands of

(continued on page 23)

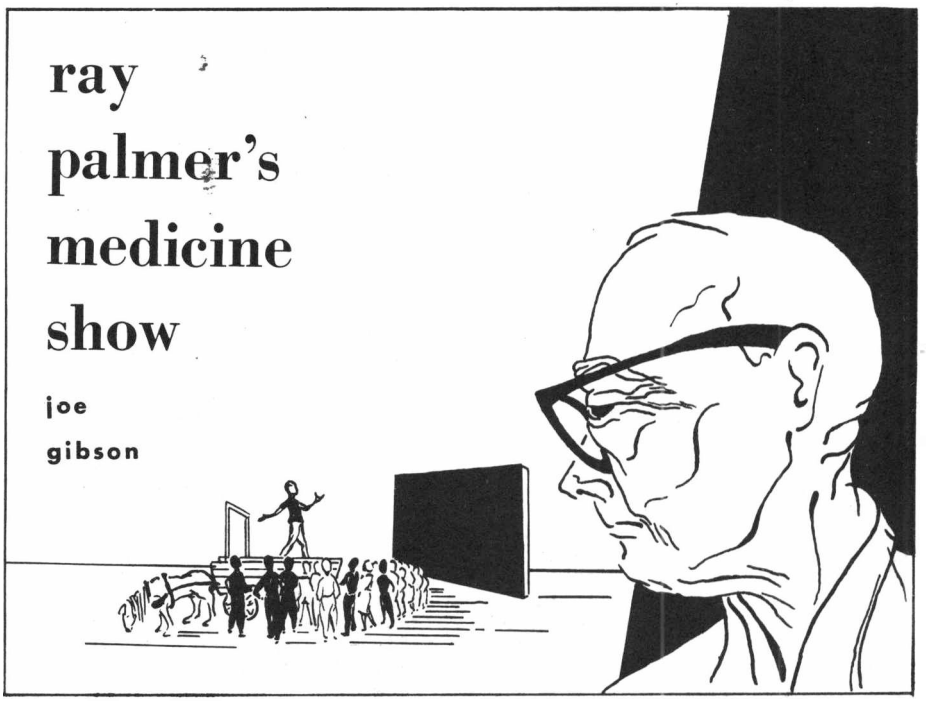
ray palmer's medicine show

joe gibson

There's a legend kicking around out somewhere in my country, which is the wild and wooly West, about the character who rambled around in an old wagon with "MeddiCin ShoW" burnt on the tailboard by a hot running iron. He had a little she-jackass that could dance to a jew's-harp (when she was a mind to) and he peddled a cure-all remedy that was guaranteed to take the warts off a toad or foal a dry mare, among other things. The thing was, this feller actually believed his remedy did some good because it sold well—and it did, too, but not for that reason. Thing was, this feller was from back East someplace and was kind of ignorant. So some feed merchant sold him some stuff to mix in his remedy because it "pepped up" animals. So this feller's remedy had a pinch or two of Spanish Fly mixed in with the thin molasses, red pepper and beet juice. It "pepped up" humans pretty well, too. And everybody knew it but this medicine-show fellen Was a regular side-splitter every time he go up to start selling the stuff. The womenfolk finally got wind of what was goin' on, tho, and some of the boys had to hustle the "doc" out of the country on a fast bronc one night to save him from a female lynching party.

Ray Palmer hasn't been lynched yet, but I've been laughing at him for years. Certainly, his Amazing sold. It topped the circulation of all the other s.f. prozines for several years before Ray ever met Dick Shaver. But the reason for Amazing's popularity during that period was never what Palmer thought it was—or anyway, what he says it was. Ray Palmer's instinct sold Amazing; his personality or ingenuity had nothing to do with it.

I discovered this when Thrilling Wonder & Startling were enjoying the top circulation in the field. (Somebody like H.L. Gold may be wondering how I ever knew any circulation figures, which are such closely guarded "secrets" that virtually everybody on New York's magazine row knows about 'em.) I figured if TWS & SS had some ingredient that made them sell well, it must be something you couldn't find in other prozines which didn't sell well. So I spread a whole mess of 'zines on the floor and studied 'em. You can find



it, yourself, the same way—and you needn't look further than the covers. And what TWS & SS had then, Amazing had under Palmer—and Astounding and Galaxy have some of it now, tho their circulation is only about two-thirds of what TWS once had. Sam Merwin's ingenuity didn't sell TWS, either. He must have stumbled onto the keynote purely by instinct. Campbell still doesn't know what it is or he'd never have stopped using it, not even for a single issue.

Once you see a prozine on the newsstands, its appearance will determine whether you buy it or not. The outer appearance of a s.f. 'zine must satisfy the interests of a s.f. readership. And it can't be faked—it will always typify the nature of the 'zine's contents, somehow.

But Ray Palmer has always seemed to me to be the kind of guy you could never tell anything—unless it happened to agree with what he'd already decided for himself. He has decided that physical sciences science fiction is dead; esper science fiction is the coming thing. Ray calls it imagination when, of course, he's actually confining his imagination to one specific field.

He prefers to blame the downfall of the science fiction "boom" on scarcity of material, on editors crying for stories and writers digging out old turkeys that could never sell anywhere before. He prefers to neglect the fact that some of those "turkeys" proved to be better stories than the socio-pathological crap editors were demanding and giving top credit during that "boom" period. In doing so he fails to realize that science fiction was forced into one specific "party line" by such editorial demands; that the science in s.f. became a stereotyped Campbellian orthodoxy; and that space operas had better characterization. Their cardboard characters were at least real cardboard. So, in specifying a psionic kick for Other Worlds, Palmer is merely a Johnny-Come-Lately pulling the same "party line" trick other editors have already tried.

But you can bet Ray's approach to parapsychology won't be any mere excuse to splash around in beautifully complicated wheels-within-wheels plots, such as van Vogt milked so thoroughly dry in his "Null-A" series. Palmer is a man of direct action. He'll go slam-bang into it with all the colorful trimmings of mystic articles in the Sunday supplements. And it will sell if he doesn't go nuts with it. It will sell if he gives it the same play he gave the Shaver Mystery in Amazing. However, he hasn't been giving that kind of play to the contents of Universe/Other Worlds and it may well be that he's forgotten how. It won't sell if he goes in for mystic symbology or some half-draped broad tippy-toeing on hot coals and whatnot for cover illos—and magazine contents of the same nature. That is, it won't outsell Astounding or Galaxy, tho it may do better than Hamling's Imagination.

He's almost certain to give it the "mystic" treatment to the hilt—a trait he has which occasionally brought forth some pretty weird "science" in the old Amazings—and Palmer's psi research will be like nothing you ever get out of Duke University. Madame Blavatsky should "ghost" write the lead novels, maybe. You won't find "black magic" mentioned as it was several thousand years ago, when it was neither "black" nor "magic" but the religious core of those early civilizations. I remember quite a few discussions back in the prehistoric days of prewar fandom about those walled merchant cities that gave birth to the Eurasian caravan routes long before nations were begun, or empires, and religious teaching hadn't yet turned to fakery. There's far more archaeological evidence to go on now—and slow recognition of the fact that those old priests and philosophers learned a lot, but never developed any means of teaching it to people that would work. We're just beginning to develop some good, workable methods now. We're just beginning to call it psychosomatic medicine and whatnot instead of black magic or voodoo. But when Palmer thinks up fancy terms for it, it will still come out voodoo, if we're to judge from his

actions in the past.

It can't be any worse than Gold's socio-pathological kick or Campbell's semantics kick. Can't be worth any more than they were, either. And it isn't likely to cause the storm of protest in fandom that the Shaver Mystery enjoyed—Palmer isn't pulling his stunt in a top circulation 'zine this time.

But there's one aspect that might be interesting to watch. If Palmer is insistent about his writers straitjacketing their work into one specific field of subject matter, there won't be many good stories come out of it. It'll just seem like "writers aren't able to write good stuff any more!"—if a few editors don't mind my quoting them verbatim. Then, just to be cruel, let's assume Ray's psychic stuff is played off right and racks up top circulation, that he becomes the fair-haired bhoy paying top rates whom no dirty pro dares criticize at a fan convention. Then the rest of the 'zines will be getting what Palmer rejects.

Will I see a lot of dejected fans sitting around wondering why science fiction stinks again?

SO WHAT'S A LITTLE BLOOD?

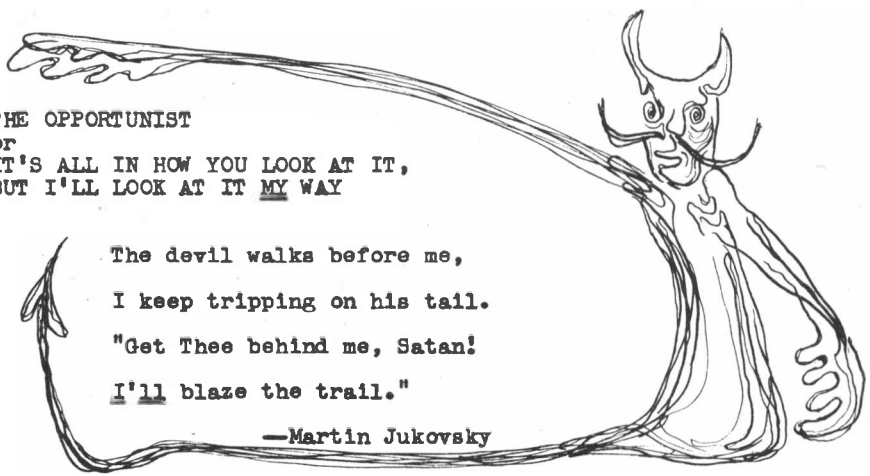
copies per issue, with stories in almost every category of fiction. Many of the Edgar Rice Burroughs novels first appeared in its pages—as well as the best in detective, adventure, western, love and you name it. We didn't succeed in reaching our goal—this time!

About the Spillane issue. It sold something like 215,000 copies out of a 250,000 print order—the largest single-issue sale of any science fantasy magazine in history. Why did we run Spillane at all? Just to get one big sale? Nope. Let Freeman answer the question: "...run a Spillane story...and lotsa people are going to buy it...and maybe you'll be able to hang onto enough of them, after they see what this s.f. is all about, to support (future) issues of the magazine." The same reasoning was what led us to use (making sure the stories were good!) authors like Raymond Chandler, Roy Huggins, Shirley Jackson, B. Traven, Harriet Frank, Jr., Truman Capote, Cornell Woolrich, and others of equal stature.

However, the best was not good enough. So we backed away to lick our wounds and pick up strength for the next effort.

Next effort? Oh, sure. Stay in a rut long enough and it becomes a grave. So we've come up with a new idea—an idea which at the moment is being turned into a plan that, barring unforeseen complications, should go into effect before the end of this year.

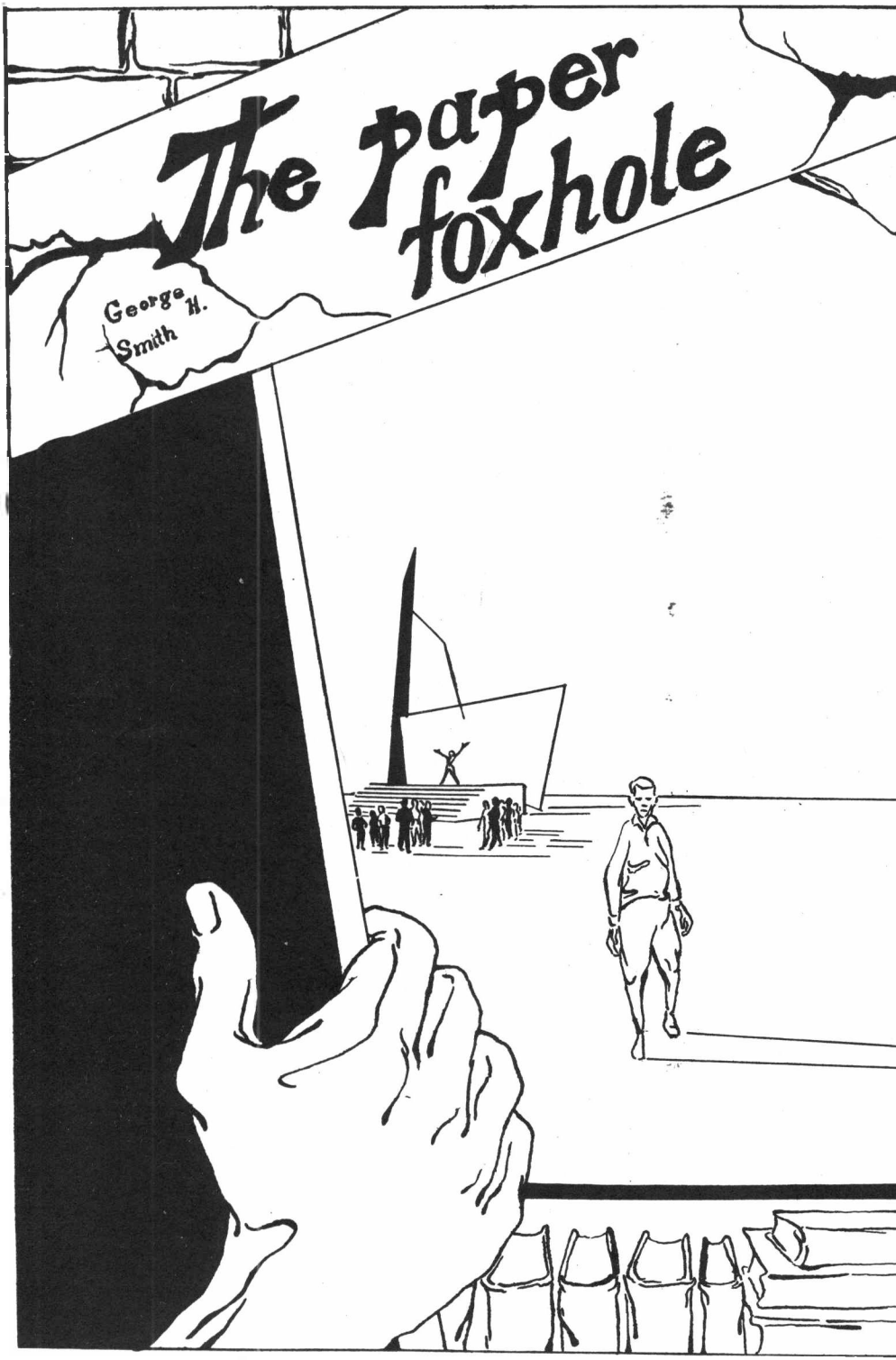
For win, lose or draw—we're in there trying. It's about the only thing that makes any job bearable. That and the money!



THE OPPORTUNIST
or
IT'S ALL IN HOW YOU LOOK AT IT,
BUT I'LL LOOK AT IT MY WAY

The devil walks before me,
I keep tripping on his tail.
"Get Thee behind me, Satan!
I'll blaze the trail."

—Martin Jukovsky


The paper foxhole
George H. Smith

THE DANGER IS NOT ONLY IN THE ACTION,
BUT ALSO IN THE THOUGHT—THE THREAT OF ACTION...

The five men had just completed stacking the heavy bales of ancient magazines to form a barricade across the doorway of the University library when Bryce La Monte, the novelist, gave a shout and pointed out across the dead lawns of the campus.

Jim Frazer looked up from the table on which he had spread parts of an old Springfield rifle beside a book that explained its intricacies. The others were all gathered at the barricade looking in the direction La Monte was pointing. Frazer got up wearily from the box on which he had been sitting and joined the others.

"There's a man coming," old Professor Northrop Emerson said. "La Monte says it's Pullet."

"Pullet the TV man? The commentator?"

"Yes," La Monte said peering over the top of the barricade. "I'd know that walk of his and that pear shaped body anywhere."

"But Good Lord why? Why would he be coming here?" Dr. Townley the aging English teacher asked.

"To see his work completed...to preside over the destruction of the last of the 'eggheads'."

Bill Reinach was holding a shotgun. He was looking at it closely, fingering the stock and running one hand along the barrel.

"You wouldn't! You wouldn't!" Professor Emerson looked at the ex-newsman in sheer horror. "Not violence!"

"Why not?" Reinach said. "Could you think of a better person to commit violence against? Can you think of a man who's done more to deserve it than Dudley Pullet?"

"Good God, no," La Monte put in. "When I think of the way he used to talk about my books..."

"Look...he seems to be searching the grounds," Dr. Townley called out.

"He's looking for something all right," La Monte agreed. "But he couldn't know we're here. No one has been here since the massacre in '58."

"Not until today at any rate," Frazer said.

"Maybe he's just come here after the books, maybe he wants to burn them," Townley said.

"Nonsense, my dear Townley," Emerson told him. "These books have been forgotten. No one cares about them now."

Frazer looked at the stooped shoulders and gray hair of the other four men, their tired and frightened eyes, and wondered if he looked the same. Jim Frazer, explorer, hunter, writer...hiding with four other hunted men in the ruins of a college. If only he had stuck to hunting and not written any books.

"If you gentlemen remember we thought that we were forgotten too until yesterday." Reinach was still holding the gun. "We thought that we weren't important enough to be remembered."

"If he's after the books, we could hide someplace else and let him find them. If we hid and kept quiet, we would still be safe."

"Aren't you tired of hiding, Dr. Townley?" Reinach asked. "Haven't we five hidden long enough? Haven't we kept quiet for enough years as one after another of those who spoke up were denounced by the Pullets and done away with?"

"We haven't committed any crime," La Monte said. "Maybe we're just panicky. Maybe we should never have left town."

"Maybe not but I just got out the back door of my apartment as a committee of vigilantes came in the front." Frazer had joined La Monte who was standing on a box watching the movements of the man outside.

"After all, he's only one man and there's five of us," Reinach said. "Even without the gun we could..." He flexed his fingers and stared down at them.

"Oh no! Oh no!" Townley gasped.

"Well, he's coming this way," Frazer said. "He's sure to dis-

cover this place." He looked around at the others, searching for some sign of strength in their faces but he saw only fear.

I guess we're the dregs, he thought. The strong have been destroyed and only the weak are left. There are no more Colliers.

There was a noise on the other side of the barricade and several piles of magazines were pushed inward and a face peered through. Reinach lifted the shotgun and placed it within an inch of the man's face. For a moment Frazer thought he was really going to pull the trigger but he only motioned with the gun.

"Come on in, Pullet. Come in and join us."

Pullet stood for a moment while his eyes adjusted to the dusty dimness of the library. Then the small round head that sat so incongruously on the large fat shoulders turned slowly from side to side. His eyes seemed unable to wait for the slow turning of the head, for they darted quickly from face to face like a squirrel searching for food.

"Well, well, this is a surprise." The voice which came from the gross body was pitched astonishingly high. "This will make an interesting item for my TV show tonight."

"We're surprised too, Pullet," Frazer said. "We didn't know you were doing your own leg work these days."

Pullet giggled. He seemed to have just now noticed the gun in Reinach's hands. "Oh...I was just out for a walk and thought I'd take a last look at the University. Old times sake, you know. Thought I might pick up something for my column."

"You don't think you're ever going to get a chance to write another of those lying columns of yours, do you Pullet?" Reinach pushed the muzzle of the shotgun against the fat man's stomach.

"What...w-what do you mean?"

"There's five of us, Pullet. All hunted men, all men who've been ruined by you and your kind."

"Now, Mr...whatever your name is...you don't think I'd come out here all by myself do you? You don't think I'd search for five traitors without others along, do you?"

"If we're found, we're dead men anyway," Frazer said taking a stand beside Reinach. "We wouldn't be any more so if we killed him."

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" Dr. Townley interrupted. "Not violence.

Please, not violence. Would you reduce yourselves to the level of this man by killing him?"

Pullet's eyes were on the gun. Perspiration sprang out on his forehead and ran in little rivulets between the folds of fat on his face. "You're not going to harm me. You wouldn't dare! You'd be hunted down like rats and destroyed in this hole of yours."

Rats in a hole, Frazer was thinking. But even rats will fight if cornered. But we never fought. We just watched while one after another of the others were destroyed. Rats in a hole. He looked around at the piles of books. What was it Collier had said just before they arrested him three years ago? "WE'RE DUG INTO A PAPER FOXHOLE ALONG THE MAGINOT LINE OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM." Maginot line had been an unfortunate phrase for the hypothetical line had been turned just like the real one. This was the last paper foxhole left.

Pullet's eyes rested on La Monte. "You're La Monte, aren't you? The historical novelist."

"I used to be the historical novelist...I was until the field was taken over by the sex and religious school of history."

"I wrote a couple of historical novels myself. I never had anything against you."

"That's right, you did, didn't you? Let's see...there was that one about the early love life of Jesus and the one where the Virgin Mary gave up her three millionaire suitors in order to..."

"What the hell are we waiting for?" Reinach broke in. "Let's get this over with."

The little rivulets of perspiration running down Pullet's face became rivers. He was backed up against a bookshelf with the five fugitives grouped about him.

"Please! Please...I never meant you any harm. I was caught just like everyone else. You don't know what it's like. Once you start testifying, once you start your accusations, they won't let you stop. You're in their hands. They knew I had written books and only as long as I kept accusing others was I safe. As long as I kept it up I had money and position. I...I didn't want to harm anyone, I—"

"Shut up, you swine," Reinach said. "How many people...how many deaths and imprisonments do you suppose this perjurer is personally responsible for?" he demanded of the others.

"More than he'll ever be able to pay for," Frazer said. He was thinking of Collier and the lonely fight the man had made in his speeches and writings against the avalanche of terror that swept the country. He was remembering him in court where Pullet had been one of the witnesses against him as he was tried for sedition.

"If he had a thousand lives, he couldn't pay for Collier."

"Gentlemen, please..." Townley said.

"We're here because we believe in democratic means, because we believe in free discussion and judicial processes," Professor Emerson said. "If we summarily destroy this man, we're abandoning our beliefs, aren't we?"

"He doesn't deserve to live," Reinach said as he pushed the shotgun harder against Pullet's stomach. "He's just like his leader, a lie all the way through. When we shoot him, I'll bet he bleeds lies."

"I won't tell where you are...let me live and I'll help you... I'll get you out of the country...I'll..."

"Shut up, you filth," La Monte said, slapping him sharply across the mouth.

"There's a new law. If you give yourselves up you might not be—"

"Yes, that's right, we might not be executed. But we will be sterilized and brainwashed, won't we, Pullet? The big boy doesn't want our moral decay to be passed on either physically or intellectually."

Professor Emerson pushed the gun away from Pullet's middle and

the man breathed a little easier. "You're like all the others. You can't recognize that the day of your liberal decadence is over. America has had a house cleaning that's going to be permanent."

"We're going to do a little house cleaning ourselves, Pullet," Frazer said.

"I suggest a vote. I realize the evil this man represents but I cannot bring myself...I suggest that we bind the man securely and sleep on his fate before we vote on what to do with him," Emerson said.

"Yes, a vote," Townley piped, "I vote for a vote."

"And I say let's get it over with," Reinach said.

"Let's kill him now," Frazer said and all heads turned toward La Monte.

"I...don't know," the novelist said. "He's a filthy scum and he doesn't deserve to live and yet I hate to have his leprous soul on my conscience."

There was rage in Reinach's eyes as he lowered the gun and watched La Monte and Townley bind Pullet's hands and feet. Frazer stood beside him looking at the other three men. "Once we could have saved the country and we were too weak. Tonight we could have saved ourselves and again we were too weak." He turned and threw himself down on his blanket.

Later Reinach shook him awake. "Frazer. Frazer. There's a mob searching the campus. They must suspect we're hiding here."

"Maybe they're looking for Pullet. Maybe..."

"No. He let it slip that he drove straight here from the city. No one in town would know that he was missing."

La Monte had crawled over to crouch beside them. "They may not find us if we stay where we are and don't make any noise."

"Then you better make sure that Pullet is..." Frazer began just as Pullet started to yell. The columnist had managed to break the clumsy bonds that Townley and La Monte had secured him with and struggled
was standing at the barricade shouting.

"Over here! Over here! Here they are! Come and get the rats!"

Reinach lifted his shotgun and pulled the trigger but there was no answering blast to stop Pullet. There was only a click and the reporter dropped the gun cursing. Frazer leaped to grab Pullet and struggled with him in the darkness.

"Over here! Over here! 'Eggheads'!"

Frazer finally managed to get an arm around Pullet's neck and pressed a hand over his mouth.

"Maybe hell!" Reinach said. "They're headed this way on the run. Listen to them yelling for blood."

Frazer could see over the barricade at one point and there was a mob of men running toward them. All of the good, clean, kindly people of the town in their Patriot Veteran uniforms, their Loyal Mother and Vigilant Sons uniforms. They carried gasoline for books and rope for the writers of them.

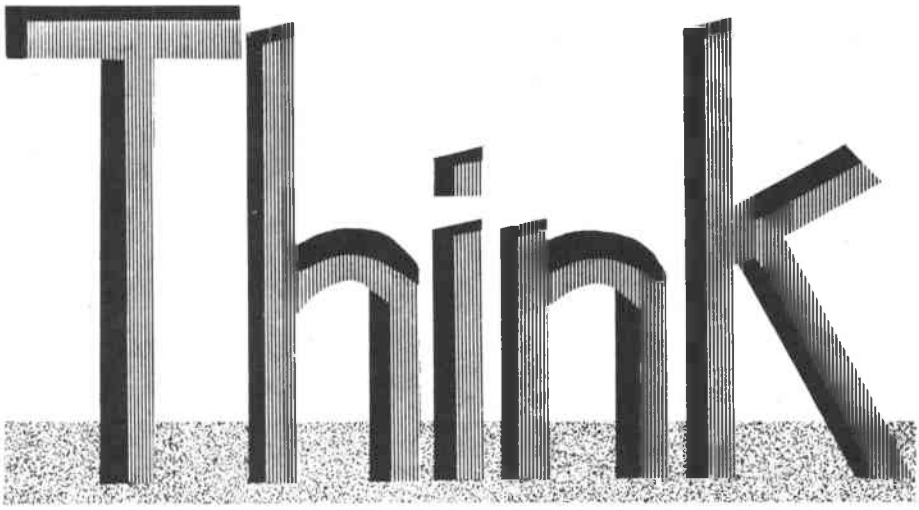
He released Pullet and hurled him forward just as the first of the mob poured over the barricade. Then hands gripped him and he was dragged out over the piles of books along with the others."

"Come on, come on everybody. We got ourselves six 'eggheads'. We're gonna burn them along with their books, just like the boss says to do," a man yelled.

"Six? Six?" Pullet screamed. He looked around as he felt the hands of the mob on him. "No! Just five. I'm not one of them! I'm Pullet. I'm—"

"Shutup! Shutup, you sonofabitch!" A motherly looking woman in a pink dress smashed a club across his face. "We know your kind. The paper tells us about your lies."

Pullet sobbed and struggled as they dragged him along beside Frazer. "What's the matter, Pullet? Don't cry. It won't really hurt. It's a mistake, you know. They're only after 'eggheads'..."



"...the duty of the artist is to preserve art from the contamination of the false values of a corrupt civilization—commercial and financial values, political values and propagandist values, utilitarian values and entertainment values—all the false values that destroy the integrity and the universality of the work of art."
—Herbert Read from 7 Arts

DICK GEIS: Yes, all this freedom is very fine, Ron, but when living in an organized society, a man must expect to have certain infringements on his potential total of rights and freedoms. Because most men are not reliable or responsible enough, or good enough, or intelligent enough, to make such infringements unnecessary. So, we get laws and statutes to protect the common good; so it is that a few irresponsible men force society to react. And those horror comics WERE pretty bad.

Most people, I guess, are afraid of freedom; they fear that if every thing were permissable, if all editors could print whatever they liked, if men could say and teach whatever they wished, then each person's particular self-delusion or pet theory or God, or private interest would break down under the terrible punishment of other ideas, truth, and reality. So it goes and so it has always gone, and I suspect, so it will always go. Man being what he is, I can't see any other prospect. Besides, nothing is really important and nothing really matters. Adapt. The intelligent person can always find and enjoy freedom, as much as he wishes, but this clinging to Honor, Morals, Decency, etc., is for the morons. And even the morons don't act the way they say they do. Their morals are a pretense mostly.

And Clifton set up a straw man and busily knocked him down and stomped on him...but it wasn't Hamling. For Hamling said "Science fiction—like all fiction—is not first intended to make one think, but to entertain..." He did not say that art or all writing is meant solely to entertain. He said fiction is FIRST intended to entertain, and he's right! Why, if a writer has Truth at his fingertips, can't he say it in an article or essay? Why does Clifton apparently insist that the fiction form is the only way a writer can say something? Fiction is an entertainment form—why maintain it should be something else? OF COURSE, if a writer can weave some content into his story, fine, in fact—great. I prefer guts and truth in a story more than Post-type stories...BUT it has to be entertainingly written, or it isn't a good STORY, and the content is wasted to a great extent. In the fiction form, entertainment is, MUST be, the first criterian.

What's wrong with s. f. today is not a lack of guts or content in stories, it is purely bad writing; purely low quality entertainment. Purely it is a lack of writers who can write stories that contain individuals instead of stock characters who never come alive. Today's s. f. writers are putting more and more content into their stories, but they're not peopling them with characters that have any depth, any illusion of reality. The situation is that the writers, and editors too, for all I know, are losing sight of the fact that fiction is escapist. And the test of a story is how well it draws the reader into itself and makes him lose touch with the world around him, makes him lose himself in the world around him, makes him lose himself in the world of the story. The writers have failed to make their worlds believable enough. Mostly, I think, because the people haven't been "human" enough to offset the differentness and essential unbelievability of a future civilization. If the readers are expected to uproot themselves and accept new values and moral systems, even in a story, they must be given three dimensional people as a solid anchor of reality. A believable character in a story, especially in a s.f. story, will tend to persuade the reader that the rest of the story is believeable and real and plausible too.

((What do you mean by freedom?))

HANNES BOK: Gotcher INSIDE today. First time in history I ever found a fanmag so interesting that I sat & read it from kivver to kivver. (And if that is no accolade, what is?)

Enjoyed yours & Bloch's remarx re censorship. Tee hee, I can foresee a future time when kids will take chalk & after looking covertly that way & this, sneak up to a wall & quickly scrawl, WEIRD, TERROR, HORROR, CRIME, SEX and then beat it like hell...

Reason I think that s. f. publishing is on its way out is that all the s. f. editors belong to a nose-thumbing, cynical, pseudo-sophisticated generation & have forgotten that new readers of tender years are forever WANTING to come into the fold. Now Youth is idealistic & hopeful, but most of the s. f. printed today is "clever", "sophisticated", cynical, pessimistic, etc., and the younger readers who MIGHT be s.f. fans are turned away from it.

I never looked on stfantasy as an escape OR knowledge in sugar-coated form; I always liked it (a million years ago in its infancy) because it was a stimulant to the imagination—it kept alive that Sense of Wonder without which Man is nothing but a dreary robot, and which Commercialism is doing its best to exterminate. (Same as dictators try to exterminate certain minorities.) Thus "regulation s.f." never interested me much, nor straight "weird fantasy" either —both were trying too hard to adhere to rigid rules & formulae, so that they were SHACKLED imagination, thus defeating their own purposes. God help us if Lewis Carroll had tried to submit ALICE to either weird or s.f. magazines! And that's why ALICE & a few others are & always will be classics. It's interesting to note that one couldn't sell a Merritt story to any magazine in existence today—yet he's been reprinted by the millions in pocket-books. Apparently there's an audience for that sort of thing, but the magazines are going to stick to THEIR piddling policies, & the hell with what the PUBLIC wants, we'll give 'em what WE think they SHOULD HAVE. (Editorial dictatorship: Looket me, Ma, I'm a public benefactor, I give the public what I think it should have, I kill off the minorities, I'm good, I am.)

RICHARD KYLE: The sixth issue (as you are quite well aware, I imagine) contained Chad Oliver's "What Is Science Fiction?", and although three issues have passed since then, I feel that I should make some comment on it—particularly so in view of Roy Squires remarks in the following issue.

Oliver writes, "...I can assure you of at least one thing: it doesn't fit into any neat categories. You can't say, 'Science fiction is this, that, and the other, for the following seventeen reasons'". He spends the remainder of the paragraph justifying this position. He could have saved himself that paragraph if he had realized that science fiction must, by its very existance, be capable of an exact, unquestionable definition.

Science fiction is the branch of fantasy that postulates that man is capable of understanding the universe he lives in.

A moments reflection will indicate that science fiction is the only branch of fantasy that assumes man is capable of any high order of understanding, of genuine comprehension of the basic forces that compose our worlds. In all other forms of fantasy man lives at the sufferance of higher powers, always an inferior—never an equal. In science fiction he is equal to all things.

It would seem that the primary reason for Oliver's (and many, many others) difficulty in grasping the underlying philosophy that motivates science fiction lies in the existance of: science. Since science fiction treats most frequently with science and with those conceptions that modern science has brought us, it has seemed logical that science fiction must, then, be an outgrowth of this science. No one, to my uncertain knowledge, has offered the apparent truth: science and science fiction are, both of them, products of the philosophy that assumes man can understand this world he lives in.

PAGE BROWNTON: In the March issue of INSIDE there appeared an article, "Gone to the Dogma" by Joe Gibson, which I consider to be erroneous and evidently written without much forethought.

"the Fab'lous Forties"—where have I heard that before? Nowhere that I can recall. The Twenties and Thirties, yes, but this...it seems to be evident that Mr. Gibson's emotions have gotten on the high horse, so to speak. Now, the Twenties produced few stories that are readable by today's standards, and the same can be said for the Thirties, with the exception of certain "classics". The Forties did produce many fine stories, and the point I would like to put over is this: There is actually no dividing line between the Forties and the latest decade. Oh, sure, s.f. has its ups and downs, its rises and declines in popularity, but the basic story has remained the same. And it hasn't become hackneyed either, what with the infinite variations that can be made of present scientific knowledge and extrapolations which have been made upon these. As S. J. Byrne said, "Buxom blondes and V-2 rockets cannot camouflage the triple B plot (Bedroom-Bar & Bromo) of the stockholder's Yes-man in the s. f. publishing game", but good stories are still being written, and with each new scientific discovery there are more possibilities for new stories.

"How the hell am I going to write stories about a dust covered planet?" Well, I don't know how you would, but I'll bet that there are plenty of good authors who could, and have. Just use your imagination! (Not to mention the possibility of using the planet for merely a background.) It seems senseless to me to want to use the old swamp-type Venus when it has been proved, yes, proved, reasonably enough that it just ain't so. If you must have a putrid, noisome old swamp with plenty of awesome monsters lolling around in it for scenery, then why in heaven's name don't you make it an unknown planet of some distant star? I don't know why you want to fight it so...most s. f. writers do want their stories to be plausible. And of course, if they hit upon a good new idea, or if they want to use some run-of-the-mill extrapolated psuedo-science, they aren't going to wait for a paper to be written on it.

So everybody assumes that a star-ship taking many generations for it's trip will go to pot? Not quite, brother. I recall offhand two stories with such a setting—"The Sense of Wonder" by Milton

Lesser in the September 1951 Galaxy and "Stardust" by Chad Oliver in the July 1952 Astounding. The first one got around the problem of decadence quite nicely, and the second one used such a scene for an effective background, and developed the plot much more than Heinlein did. And both of them were good stories. So let's not jump to conclusions.

Moondust and water combined forming a substance lighter than aluminum but tougher than steel too fantastic an idea and wouldn't succeed as a story? Why not? I'll bet it would make a fine story, if handeled right.

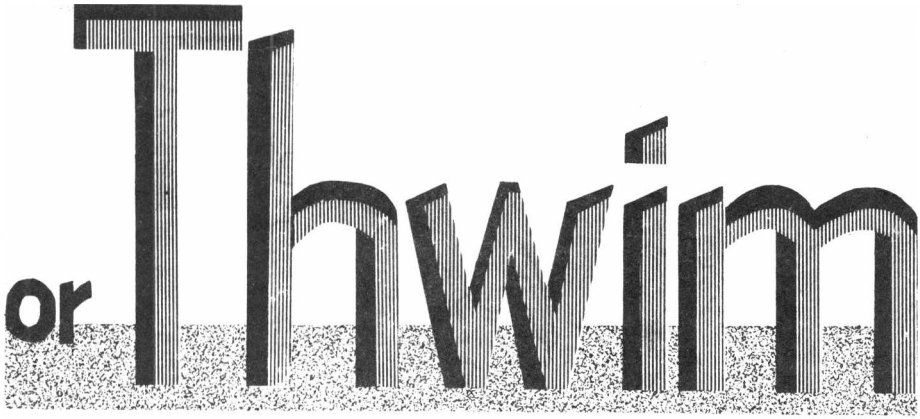
In s. f., people do not always go colonizing other planets because Earth is overcrowded. They do in some, and in others they don't. In many, they do it for scientific knowledge. A spaceship could hold only a very few people, so it would be impossible to evacuate enough people to relieve the problem of population. So they go and populate another planet with their descendants, which is about what the early American colonists did. And if spaceships did become as common as cars are today, that would mean that there would be a source of power large enough for everyone to travel to some ready-made planet. And they might even be able to fiddle around with Jupiter, heat up the outer planets, or something if they wanted to. And vice-versa. If Earth was crowded or not, they could still go out and explore distant planets. You are correct in your statement that it would take hundreds of years by faster than light travel. This would naturally eliminate interstellar empires, I believe that I once read a story dealing with that, and would also eliminate trade. But who would need trade, with whole new virgin planets for their resources?

Hey! what's the matter with rehashing old ideas? You can still get good stories. I'm not saying that there isn't any crud being written, because there sure is, but what do you want for Pete's sake? As I said before, there are always new possibilities. Don't call it dogma. Your own idea about telepathic "sounds" is a very sound idea, but actually it is no more "original" than many stories now appearing on the market, in that it is in itself an extrapolation on what has already been hashed around...

If you wrote a good story from it, which you could, and sold it, when it appeared it would be just another contribution to the run of good stories we've been having all along! See?

You're used to us moving across country—at least I hope you are, because otherwise it could become very confusing. But this time, just to be different, we moved around the corner.

The book reviews are longer this time for a reason: In the future we will try to give you a 99% complete coverage of the field. We can't review all the new books, but we will at least give a listing...RS.



algis budrys

Lately in these pages, I've been reading some pretty interesting articles by Ron Smith and/or William L. Freeman, Mark Clifton, and others. I've even bent myself to reading the poposities of a man I prefer to call The Nameless One, and that's more than I'll usually demand of myself. Finally, I've gotten intrigued enough to bat out a speech of my own.

By and large, it seems to me, all this discussion, no matter how much it is related to any one overt theme such as censorship, the current state of science fiction, difficulties with editors, or anything else, revolves around a basic point: the statement of theories and lectures on what professional writers should be doing with their craft, and to what mission they should devote themselves. Censorship, after all, is the antithesis of such an effort, and so is editorial revamping of a story. Evaluations of the current situation are analogous to progress reports, with an appended critique of where and how much success has been accomplished.

This, in itself, is a game everybody plays. I have a personal scepticism of missions, but this has nothing to do with the fact that I'll happily jump into any bull session on the subject. However, there's more to INSIDE's general attitude than that.

As I understand it, reading not only the material on the Hamling Controversy (this Hamling controversy—not any of the many others) but also INSIDE's editorial comments, the broad viewpoint expressed is that the purpose of science fiction can best be achieved by, on the one hand, Writing Like In The Old Days, or, on the other, by instructing and educating, as well as entertaining. I gather, in addition, that if teaching and illumination would suffer by its presence in too large a dose, entertainment should be soft-pedalled.

This is a viewpoint I haven't encountered so strongly since the height of the Gernsback era, and I am led to believe that I may have skipped a step somewhere. However, the Clifton article certainly tends in that direction, and the editorial in the May issue reveals a deep sense of purpose and ultimate aim for literature. I may be completely wrong about INSIDE, as I say. However, I have been running across this attitude more and more of late, in various places, and this looks like a good one in which to stand up and be counted among the opposition.

First, we'd better clarify a few terms. The attitude which I am here to speak against is that which contends that fiction should educate, and that writers of fiction are obligated to expose the injustices and inequities of our society. Stories and writers engaged in so doing are labelled 'sensitive,' 'perceptive,' 'significant,' and, in critical terms, 'great.' Stories and writers not

devoted to these things are labeled 'entertainment,' 'hack,' and, in criticism, 'good stories, but they don't say anything.' In recent years, this feeling has assumed major importance within the science fiction field, and a good many people now require of a story that it 'say something' before it can even be considered to be qualified for 'greatness.' This attitude has become so entrenched at times that what the story 'says' assumes paramount importance, and the actions, motivations, and statements of the characters, as well as the construction of the plot, no matter how clumsy, are all disregarded in critical analysis. One recent reputation, in particular, has been built on little more than the author's willingness to 'shatter taboos,' with little regard for the fact that the future societies he constructs are flatly impossible, the future languages his characters use violate the laws of linguistic evolution, and the biology he quotes is monstrously inaccurate, to say nothing of the fact that these 'taboos' are taboos only in our current society and not in the ones the writer postulates.

What has happened, in short, is that an increasing number of nominal 'stories' in the field have become fictionalized essays, the construction of which justifiably (for its purposes) neglects the rigorous structural demands of the kind of science fiction story which, until recently, was held to be the highest refinement of the field.

What we are dealing with, to my mind, is a form new to the medium, which cannot be considered 'good,' 'bad,' or 'great' in the terms of the old, but must be considered on its own merits as a potentially successful or unsuccessful evolution. Not even the terminologies of the new and old approaches are interchangeable.

Consider, for example, the verb 'says.' The old kind of story; the 'entertainment' story, to give it a handy if inaccurate label, also 'said' things. But it devoted itself to the statements of broad emotions. It showed the reader a situation, a man in action within that situation, and required of him that he decide for himself, drawing on his emotional responses, whether what the man and the situation were undergoing was 'good' or 'bad.' The new kind of story also shows a situation, and characters in action. But, in order that the reader may make no mistake over what is 'good' or 'bad' within the complex, the story specifically tells the reader, with a greater or lesser amount of sublety, just where the 'goodness' and 'badness' lie, and this 'goodness' or 'badness' are not defined in relation to the hero and his immediate environs but in relation to the reader. The characters in the new kind of story do not exist as discrete beings, with some hope of joy and sorrow for themselves. They act as sounding boards from which the things they undergo are projected at the reader, and, having served this purpose, their ultimate destinies are completely unimportant to them, and they usually die or are otherwise crippled or removed in a climax designed to make the reader understand that this could happen to him unless he (A) agitates against television (B) resists censorship or (C) votes Vegetarian, to throw out a few examples, one ridiculous and two actual.

This new form, as I said earlier, shows distinct relationships to the old Gernsback dictum that science fiction must teach science and interest its readers in science, above all. But it has now been transferred to the region of applied sociology, where, to all intents and purposes, it may be classified as 'new'—to science fiction, that is.

It is far from new to mainstream fiction as a whole. It is the classical dialectic approach, which I have personally always found to be dull. I find most dialecticians—and emphatically so, the new science fiction dialecticians—much too preoccupied with what offends them and too little concerned with what pesters the human race as a whole. Their pretensions to 'perception' and 'sensitivity' impress me as egotistical, and I have definite misgivings

about the validity of the philosophies they push and the observations they make. I know too many writers to be at all trustful of the breed except when they are doing what their training fits them for—the telling of stories. We are not, after all, Wise Men, and some of the institutions these writers attack, and the taboos they 'break' would seem, on examination, to be perfectly valid mechanisms intended to further the progress of civilization and the continuation of the human race. Too many shallow thinkers have taken advantage, consciously or otherwise, of the fact that the printed word is invested with much more authority than the identical verbalization delivered from atop a soapbox, but I have yet to see God put more truth into a man's fingers than he puts in his mouth.

However, we're not here to listen to my personal opinions. I'm making no pretense at absolute objectivity—I don't like that kind of writing, and I make no bones about it. Ron Smith expressed a deep disgust at parents engaging in sexual intercourse in the presence of their children. I feel the same way, but, logically—in terms of complete dispassion—what Ron is advocating is censorship of a perfectly normal and frequently beautiful human action. It follows that something's wrong with the logic used, as well as in the attitudes of the onlooking children. It is in examining just precisely what it is that's paradoxical about such a situation that we find the self-defeating mechanism in what I've called the dialectical approach and you may call anything you please.

Personal opinions aside, what follows here is what I believe to be a logical structure...If you can develop a flaw in it, you have then defeated my argument, and, if you submit it to me or for publication here, you might even change my mind.

If the dialectical school of writing is sincere in trying to educate the great mass of the American public (I restrict myself to American science fiction) then it might give a thought to this:

In order to educate, it is necessary to achieve a high percentage of communication with the person to be educated. The percentage of communication with already educated people (educated in your terms, that is) is extraneous, since your only achievement is redundancy. Beautiful redundancy, perhaps, but redundancy nevertheless.

What you want to do is get your pupils to listen to you—otherwise you might just as well address your observations to the bottom of a rainbarrel and bask in the magnificent echo. For example let's go back to the parents and the children.

It is essential that children learn the facts of sexual intercourse. (If anyone disagrees with me here, please refrain from taking up my time with your replies.) However, there is something obviously wrong with the method employed. It makes no difference whether the parents in question were motivated by a desire to instruct or by some more selfish passion. The facts were presented; in the purest dialectical manner, I might point out. The reaction on the part of the children was one of rejection. Why?

I submit that this action, observed by an adult, (who is already educated) would call forth either attention to new wrinkles on a basically familiar technique, or else amusement. I submit that the children were disgusted because they held the belief that sex is private, titillating in a 'dirty' way, and a mysterious form of adult magic. The fact that the two adults had entered into it gladly, with obvious gratification, and a willingness to devote a certain large measure of energy to the process, and that no Heavenly thunderbolt struck them down—all indications that the children's previous concepts were wrong in whole or part—made no impression. Where they got those concepts is of no concern here.

In terms of information theory, the children were not 'listening.' Not only that, this occurence probably tended to leave them with a lasting greater or lesser block on the entire subject of sexual relationships. The attempted communication not only made

no impression, it inhibited the transmission of similar information at a later time, when we might presume the audience to be a bit readier for it.

I hardly expect to sway anyone with argument by hypothetical analogy. Nevertheless, you might keep the above in mind as we now get back to science fiction.

Let's take a look at HARDCOVER, the short story by Harlan Ellison in the May INSIDE. I'm going to be deliberately unfair in one facet of my criticism, and I therefore chose this story because it is not only readily available and perfectly exemplary of the dialectic approach, but also was written by a friend of mine who will understand that this in no way reflects my opinion of his basic ability.

This is a story about an adolescent boy in an anti-book society who finds and reads a book. He is not introduced as being anything more than the perfect epitome of this society's juvenile members. He is, in fact, not a true character but a prototype. Nevertheless, he reads the book.

Would you, with your social conditioning, eat a raw snail except under extremely unusual conditions? This an anti-snail-eater society. Presupposing yourself starving—really starving—you might eat a snail. But you would hardly tell anyone about it—you would, in fact, take as many steps as seemed necessary, and a few for good measure, to ensure that no one would ever, under any circumstances, learn about the loathsome thing you'd done, and you would find yourself suppressing your own memory of the deed to a point where you would, in a very short time, have forgotten about it as much as possible.

Nevertheless, the boy reads the book. By so doing, he immediately stops being a character in his own right, with a consistent flow of motivations and development, and becomes a sounding board. 'See?' the author says in effect to the reader, 'this isn't really somebody living in the future. This is somebody like you—if you were trapped in this world. Now see what I'm going to do to you.'

The boy is hypnotized by 'Twas brillig and the slithey toves ...' (For purposes of hypnotism, I've always had a preference for 'Punch, brothers, punch, punch with care, punch with care for the passenjair...' but no matter.) Having quoted these lines aloud in the classroom (where, in this society, they were nevertheless recognized instantly as being something more than schoolboy slang or doubletalk), presumably on emerging from a sort of Penrodian daydream, he is grabbed up in horror and dragged away, presumably to be torn apart between four horses. And the reader is expected to realize that this can happen to him, if this world is allowed to develop.

The unfairness of my criticism here lies in the fact that, for full understanding, it requires the reader to be acquainted not only with Carroll and Booth Tarkington, but also a fairly obscure story by Mark Twain. So, too, the point of HARDCOVER, despite the writer's efforts, must remain largely obscure to the reader who does not already agree, before he begins the story, that censorship is bad. (This aside from the protagonist's suddenly displaying an incredible stupidity merely to serve the writer's purposes.) The story—this kind of story—is organized with the assumption that the reader will enter into the story as the protagonist, simply because he is the protagonist. The author makes, in effect, an intellectual appeal to the reader. 'See—this is you.' And the reader is expected to follow along, as I imagine most of you did, as did I.

But who is it this type of story is intended to educate?

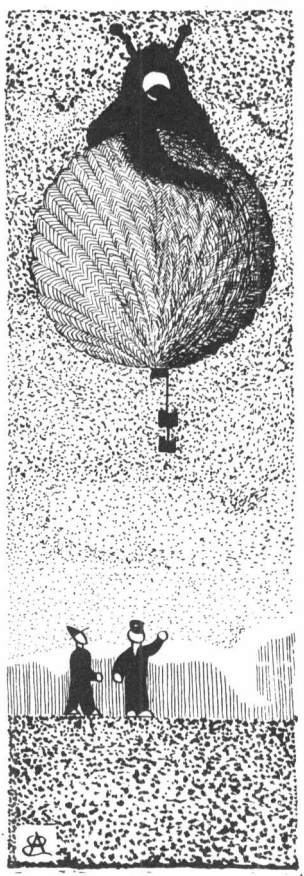
Precisely the type of mind which would create the anti-book society in the first place. Not except under extraordinary conditions which the writer cannot possibly expect to occur will that type of person agree to feel, for the duration of the story, that

these things are happening to him. He knows that too much reading is bad for the brain—that writing is full of subversive ideas, or ideas people 'would be better off without.' His reaction to this kind of story is twofold.

He will never, in the first place, consent to play the part of the protagonist in his own mind. He follows along as an outside observer, watching this deluded fool sinking deeper and deeper into the morass, precisely as the reader of Victorian tracts watched the deluded young man fall into the clutches of the scarlet woman.

If, at the outcome, the fool becomes completely depraved, this reader applauds as human society deals out well-deserved justice. If the fool sees the error of his ways before it is too late, and undergoes a fitting process of redemption, the reader applauds again. But if the fool is suddenly proved right in the end, this reader recoils in righteous anger from this auctorial abomination, and will never go near it, or its kin, again. He may even feel strongly enough to do something else. What message do you suppose FAHRENHEIT 451 conveys to someone organizing a book-burning, except that here is another book to throw on the fire?

The children watching their parents go away with psychic scars which will probably hamper their sexual development forever. The very person you're trying to educate closes his ears and refuses to ever listen again.



SEE! ITS JUST A HARMLESS WEATHER BALLOON!

Look at some more professional stories, some of them by people I consider inveterate dialecticians, some of whom I don't, and all of whom have technical skills I admire. All of these stories have recently been cited to me as 'significant.'

Where's the punch of DARK INTERLUDE if you don't, before you ever learn the writer's views, agree that race prejudice is stupid?

What price ALL SUMMER IN A DAY? Seen through the eyes of someone who regards children as insignificant, as runny-nosed snivelers, or any sensitive person as fair game, it doesn't get through. Unless something similar has happened to you at some time, the story is completely without purpose, and in that case, you already know what the writer is saying. You may applaud his skill in saying it, but this is not the purpose of his mission.

How about THAT ONLY A MOTHER? In the mind of someone who'd regard mutants as abominations in the sight of the Lord, what other point can the story have except that the poor deluded woman had gone mad with grief, but that she undoubtedly recovered after her monstrous child was taken away and destroyed.

It makes no difference to my point that I read these stories and liked them, as you probably did. We are not the people at whom the educational mission of the dialecticians should be directed, if its purpose is truly education. We know. The percentage of communication with us can be placed as high as you like—the figure has no effect on the percentage of communication with precisely the people who are baffled, bewildered, or enraged by these stories, or, at best—or worst—completely misunderstand them.

Regard the example of Mark Clifton's trouble. While his dialectic is much closer to the Gernsbackian type than most, his mission is avowedly educational, and what happened to his story is therefore an excellent example of what I'm talking about.

He submitted his story to an editor who wasn't interested in 'pseudo-scientific doubletalk.' This man knows what a science fiction story should be, and isn't willing to consider any other kind except with contempt. Moreover, I think he's right, and has a duty to his readers not to confront them with something they aren't interested in, and would reject. I repeat—he was right, and Clifton was wrong.

The crux here lies in where Clifton was wrong. Apparently, his philosophical approach to education-through-fiction does not include the formulation that the educator's and pupils' interests must coincide at some vital point before an exchange of information can be made. But that is the raison d'etre for the entire advertising industry, which sprang up because somebody realized you can't sell Frotnitzers unless you perch a pretty girl on top of one.

He should have sent the story to Campbell—where, other considerations aside, the story would have been gladly received by ASF readers who already knew what Mr. Clifton was talking about, in general, and would have admired the new wrinkles in the technique. As it is, the rewritten story appeared in the magazine which likes Mr. Clifton when he is being only a little bit educational and a good deal entertaining. It came out a pretty good story, too.

Well, then, if dialecticians cannot educate those who need it, by the very nature of their method of instruction, what is it they accomplish?

They entertain. You and I, who are already steamed up about race prejudice, anti-eggheadism, censorship, and Reimannian mathematics, can read their stories and enjoy them, since we understand their basic premise.

But, granting for the moment that, in the first place, there is such a thing as an intellectual class as opposed to the great mass of clods, and that we belong to it, we are then in a minority of staggeringly small proportions, and we're not the people this great mission should be directed at. There's no point in bringing the Light to us—we have matches, thank you.

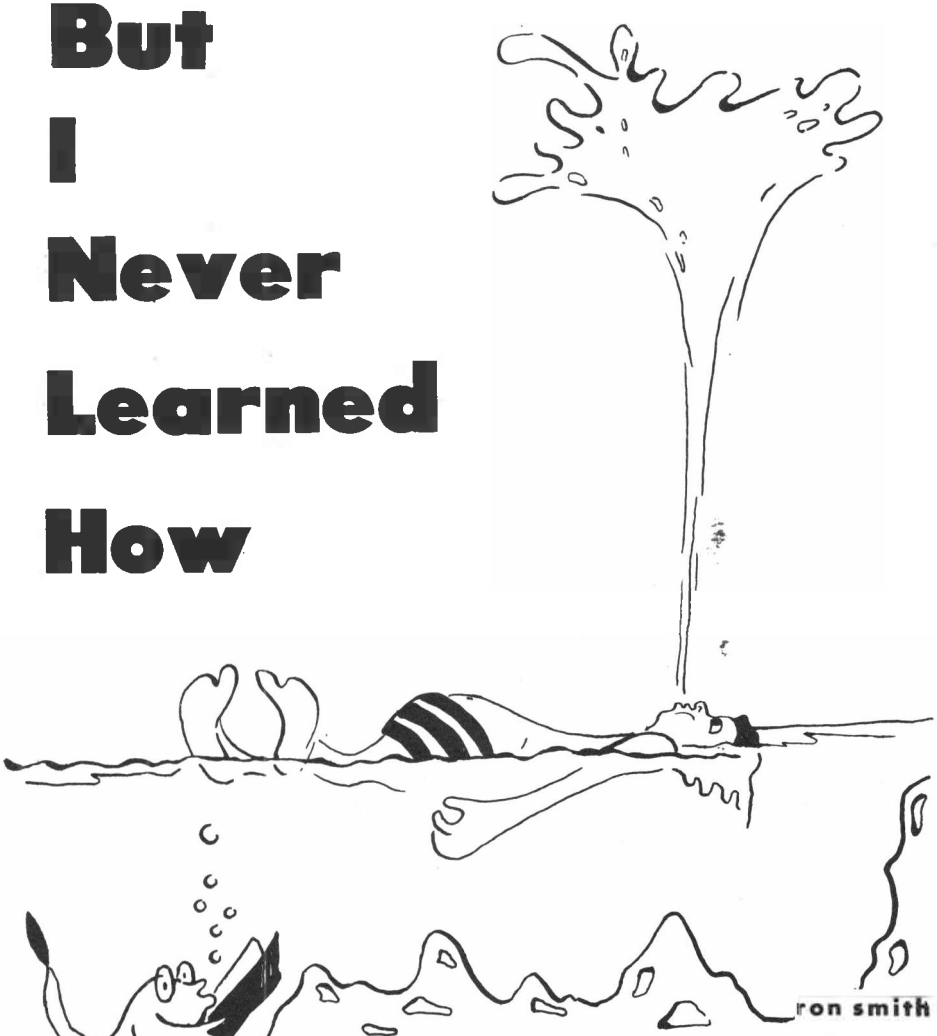
If you're out to educate, go to the great undistributed middle, if you absolutely must educate, and if the sacred flame burns high within you.

The funny part of it is, I strongly feel that the 'entertainment' writers have done more to get the great wall of ignorance taken down—if it exists—than all the dialecticians in the world. In confronting the world, suddenly, with the complete sex act, as it were, they are setting up a shock reaction. They're trying to butt their way through this wall, instead of getting friendly with the man who built it and persuading him to take it down.

I keep thinking of Jonathan Swift, who wrote GULLIVER'S TRAVELS and had it turned into a book for children. And Lewis Carroll—oh, yes, Lewis Carroll, who wasn't, consciously or otherwise, writing for children at all.

As for me, I'm working on a book in which a man gets pretty friendly with an alien. I can assure you that they commit sexual intercourse neither between themselves nor with a beetle.

But I Never Learned How



Before we get down to cases I had best clear up a misconception. The fact is, I didn't indicate a feeling of disgust towards parents having sexual intercourse in front of their children. I made the point that do-gooders want to protect children from the "evils" of comic books while at the same time they are ignoring—or rather, avoiding—the real cause of juvenile delinquency: parents. They want to protect children from the "evils" of sex—but they disregard the fact that at home some children meet sex in the raw, and these children have no understanding of the natural function of sex or its relation to human behavior. My point was that their efforts are misdirected—if they want to protect children, "save" them, or whatever, the root is in the home. If the illustration we are discussing had a "disgusted" tone it was because the people who do

have sexual intercourse in front of their children are not doing so for the purpose of instruction, but because of a mental psychosis. If I felt any disgust it was toward a mental attitude, not toward the physical act itself.

I can see nothing disgusting about having sexual intercourse in front of children. As you have pointed out, if my opinions regarding censorship are to follow a consistant logic, I couldn't. But let's follow that line of logic and see where it leads us.

Sex is natural and beautiful. We agree on that. But you have made a statement which I think gives us the answer to why mature individuals do not commit the sexual act in order to instruct their children: You said an adult would be amused at witnessing the same. That is true—someone else having sexual intercourse is amusing, if the couple is sincere and not self conscious. And that is why you do not instruct children about sex in this manner: Because they would not understand. They would see only the physical side of it; they would not understand or appreciate the feelings of the couple involved. Love wants to be alone. Love has to be alone. Love is beautiful; sex is pleasurable. Sex is beautiful. Without love you have sex—pleasure. Because of the nature of love; because of the immaturity of children; because of the impossibility of complete communication, it would be ridiculous to assume that this would be a good way to instruct. But, and now you see where our logic leads us, it is equally ridiculous to censor sex. I do not believe in censoring sex. I believe that love seeks to be alone. This is one of the falacies of your argument—you failed to follow my logic to the inevitable end. You don't censor sex, you don't hide, there is no need for you to be ashamed, or disgusted, or guilty. You keep it private—but because you want to.

Now you have made this muchly discussed illustration analogous to what certain writers are trying to accomplish. It doesn't follow. In the above instance you cannot communicate the entire message. It is impossible—you cannot communicate love, it has to be experienced to be "understood". But when we enter the realm of ideas—of observances of material and social reality—this is not true. It is possible to communicate ideas.

But in order to carry the discussion on further we will have to disregard the above illustration because it doesn't apply; it doesn't prove anything.

As I understand it, your main objection is with how certain writers attempt to communicate ideas and observances. You have said that a story should have real people in it. You have indicated that this is all it need have—that it doesn't need to "say" anything. You are saying that writers who try to put over a message don't put real people into their stories and that writers who have nothing to say do put real people into them.

I think that great writers do both.

I think you have made the same error that a lot of critics of modern art make. Because the majority of modern art is mediocre—or just plain talentless—they say "modern art is crap". Because some writers with something to say can't write well, you say that every writer that has something to say can't write well—judgement of the group rather than of the individual is a failure common to us all. But by so doing you will never arrive at a true conclusion. Of course in the science fiction field this is close to being true because most science fiction writers can't write very well. There are only a few capable of creating real people in real situations—in other words, a close facsimile of reality. And there are even fewer who in addition have something to "say"—meaning something that is universally true of human behavior or human minds or of the society in which the writer lives. There are only a few anything-writers who can do both. There aren't many good writers kicking around.

So you can't condemn "saying something" because science fiction

writers can't write. Because the fact is that what is said is the important thing. To substantiate that statement, start a hundred years ago and go back and pick out the literature that has lasted —that is generally accepted as great or nearly great today. The literature that has lived, to be trite. At least the literature that has reached the most people, generation after generation. If you can point out one such work that doesn't illustrate this statement, I'll reconsider; if they don't all have these two things in common: The author could handle his particular language to the extent that he was master over it—he could create beautiful illusions of reality with words—and he had something to say about people or about the nature of things that is as true today as it was when he wrote it.

A story isn't great because it's masterfully written. A story isn't great because it has something to say. It has to have both. And to be even a good writer you have to try to do both. Good writing and communication of an understanding, an idea, are dependant upon one another in the construction of a worthwhile story.

But the point I am making, and have made in the past, is that having something to say is the most important thing. We can't all handle words well enough to write good stories—but we can all think. It is my idea that it is good to encourage people to think for themselves, and not good to tell them what to think. It is my idea that it is good to encourage people to question. And it is my idea that it is good to stimulate people to look objectively at themselves—to question not only authority, but their own behavior and beliefs as well.

It is my stand that ideas, that pure, unadulterated, unwatered thought can be both entertaining and productive. That it is more important to make people think than to lull them to sleep with entertainment—with well written nothings—or, in the case of Imagination, with poorly written nothings.

I say that there is something of constructive importance to be derived from listening to the ideas of other people—it may stimulate you to think. I also believe that everyone has something worthwhile to say, if he is first so stimulated.

It is more esthetically pleasing to read beautifully chosen and arranged words. But it is pleasing for the moment only—the experience of reading them is pleasurable, but you derive nothing of lasting value from them.

So, as far as I can see, the writers in question are not at fault in trying to communicate ideas. I can see nothing wrong with trying to say something. The fault is that most of them can't write well enough. But, in my opinion, these writers who are out to say something, and who do say something, have not written completely worthless stories, as is the case of a poorly written story that has nothing to say.

But we have not yet shown the flaw in your basic premise: that these writers in question do not succeed in communicating; that they talk only to themselves and to people who already think the way they do.

I do not think this is true in a great many cases, because I detect this error in your argument:

You say, "If you're out to educate, go to the great undistributed middle..." And before that you use as examples of people the present "educator-writers" fail to communicate with the following: censors, people "who regard children as...runny-nosed snivelers", people who are prejudiced against the physically deformed and, indirectly, people who are fundelmentally religious. In short: fanatics all. Where in this group are the "average" people? Where are the examples of the undistributed middle? The obvious fact is that all fanatical groups are minorities (just as much as this intellectual group you speak of to which I am not sure I belong). That censors are just as much a minority as anti-censors. That religious

fanatics are a minority; and also people who are fanatically prejudiced. In other words, the spokesmen for the things against which the writers speak are minorities. These spokesmen are fanatics. You cannot communicate to fanatics: Can you communicate to a fundlementalist in any manner whatsoever the idea that there is no God? No, it is not the job of the educator-writer to communicate to fanatics. But rather, as you said, to communicate to the "middle" person—to people who are not strongly pro-censorship or pro-prejudice, etc., which is most people. These people you can communicate with—the fanatics communicate with them, and writers can too. The fanatics have an easier job because they preach hate and fear. It's easy to do both. The writers ask for understanding. This requires thought—and their job is harder.

But were we to accept your premise that writers who ask for understanding, tolerance, and freedom fail to communicate, we would also have to accept the idea that social progress is impossible. That it is impossible for things to be better or even different than they are.

Were we to accept what you say we would have to classify ourselves as "superior" and the majority of mankind as "inferior". I know, I understand these things. But hell, this slob—this slob over here, he don't know from nothin and he ain't capable of learning much either. We got to share our fund of knowledge with him, but we got to slip it to him gently; we got to cover it up with interesting plots and exciting action and nice words so he'll hardly know we're tellin him things. We got to sugar coat the pill, as I've heard it said. Well, I think we ought to disregard the sugar—the disguise that is, not the good writing. I think that all we need to do is make him understand the pill before he swallows it. All we have to do is say what we have to say simply enough so that he can understand it. To do this, we don't have to "write down". We only have to write clearly.

I, personally, am not a member of any group except society, and I fight that. I am not superior to anyone. I may think more than some people—and on the other hand, not as much or as well as others—but this does not make me better than anyone, because everyone can think and is potentially capable of self-realization; and I believe that that is what all "intellectuals" are working for, and that most of them lose the path and forget the goal. Let's put it this way: The mind is a mountain and the peak of the mountain is self-realization. Everyone starts climbing when he is born, but most don't get very far; some climb a short distance and find a niche; a few get near the top; and only a very very few in the entire history of mankind have ever reached the top.

But I think every one realizes—most people unconsciously, because they have been forced to forget it—that this is why they are alive: to attain self-realization, peace of mind, a oneness with yourself, or whatever you prefer to call it. That this is the purpose to life, and that there is no other. Perhaps this is wrong, but it is my opinion at the moment, and it is because of this that I edit INSIDE and defend the writer who attempts to communicate. On the basis of this I can say: It is not a hopeless task. You can get through to people. You can communicate with people—because, actually, all of them unconsciously know what you have to say, since they are neither inferior nor superior to you, and since there is quite truly no new idea under the sun—if you can get through the barriers, the mental blocks, erected by society and experience—if you can make them remember.

And here is where you make another mistake: You expect the writer to communicate to—to change the opinions of—everybody. This obviously can't be done—you can only influence with your ideas a small fraction of mankind, unless you attain self-realization as in the cases of Buddha and Christ, in which case your ideas have a far-reaching effect, but at the same time are still not understood

by many. And since it obviously can't be done, you suppose that the only way to reach the greatest number of people is to say a little and say it entertainingly. The supposition is, I imagine: A lot of thought will reach only a few people, but a little thought will go a long long way. Perhaps—but will you do anybody any good? If people read only to escape and you slip in a message amid the entertainment, are they going to think about your message? Or have you sugar-coated it so well that the reader not only doesn't know it's going down, he doesn't know it's there after he's swallowed it?

But I will disagree with your supposition on the same grounds as before: The literature that lasts, and therefore, in the long run, reaches the most people and has the most effect on human thought, is the literature with the message that is told masterfully. The only communitive literature is that which supposes that people are capable of understanding what the writer has to say; is that which respects the reader. The "entertaining" stories, as discussed here before, are those which suppose that the reader is a mental inferior to the writer.

The communitive literature is that which says what it has to say. The reader knows he is being talked to and must either think about the message or reject it and run away. If he is not a fanatic and still refuses to think about it, it would not have helped to be more subtle—no matter what you would have done he would not have thought. You can talk until you're blue in the face; you can say what you have to say in any manner whatsoever—until the person to whom you're talking chooses to listen, no manner of literary trickery is going to make him hear you. You may entertain him, but you won't make him think.

It is on the basis of what I have said up until now that I say this: FAHRENHEIT 451, ALL SUMMER IN A DAY and DARK INTERLUDE (I have not read THAT ONLY A MOTHER) communicate—not only to people sympathetic with negroes, the problems of childhood, and freedom of the press, not only to liberals and thinkers—but to many others as well. I say this especially of ALL SUMMER IN A DAY. I say that this is wonderfully written and that it succeeds in communicating to people the horrors of childhood. That this story made someone think about his childhood who had not thought about it before. All I ask is that Bradbury succeeded in stimulating thought in one person; that this person, because of his thought, obtained a deeper understanding of children. Then I will say it is a good story—it has communicated. But since I think it reached more than one person, I believe it is more than a good story—because it is beautifully written and because it succeeds in gaining the sympathy of most people—except, of course, the fanatical child-hater. Bradbury has written a story that has something to say and he has written it masterfully. He may not be a great writer—but this is because he is limited in what he has to say. But he communicates. And he makes more money than any other science fiction writer.

And on one final note I rest my case. You have said that these modern writers of science fiction fail to communicate because they put too much thought into their writing and not enough entertainment. That the way they go about saying what they have to say does not succeed in communicating.

The conclusion I reach is this: You think there is another way by which you can reach people. From all indications this "better way", as I've said before, is to disguise and entertain. But actually you haven't told us in a concrete and understandable philosophy just how you propose these writers should go about communicating. You have labeled the present methods—and the old methods too—as ineffective. But you haven't substituted in their place any new way of reaching a larger audience.

Just how do we thwim, Algis? I really never learned how.

names sell, and dont you forget it

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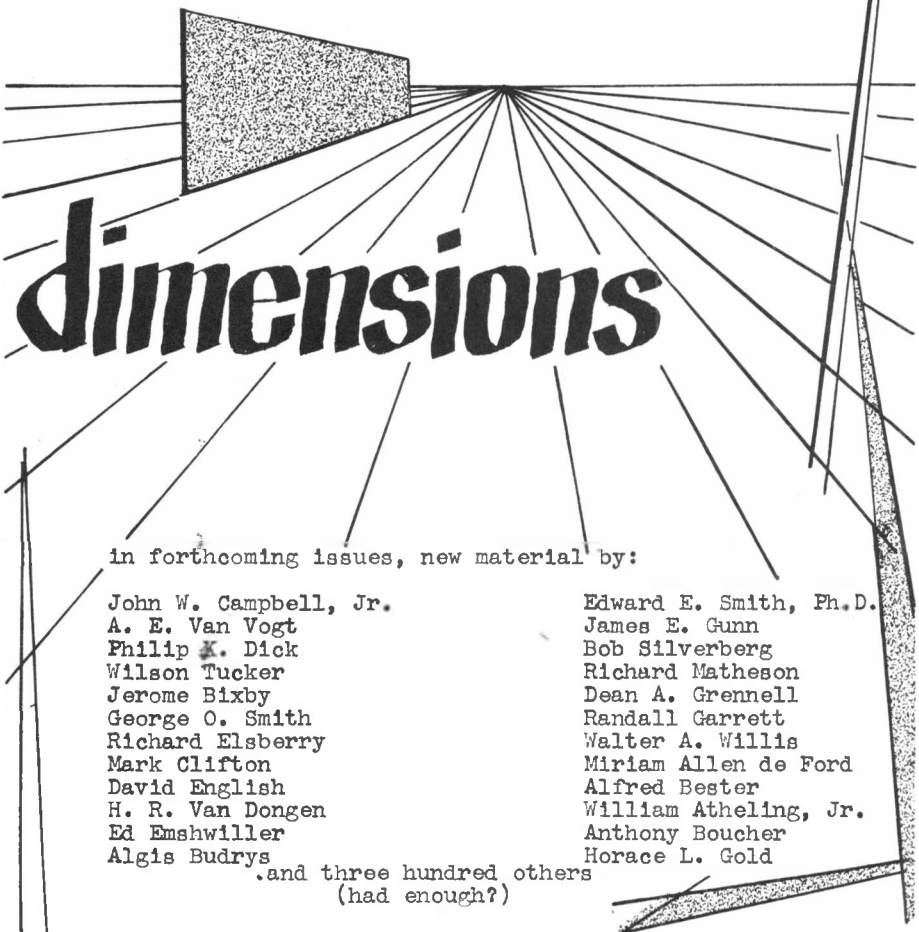

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