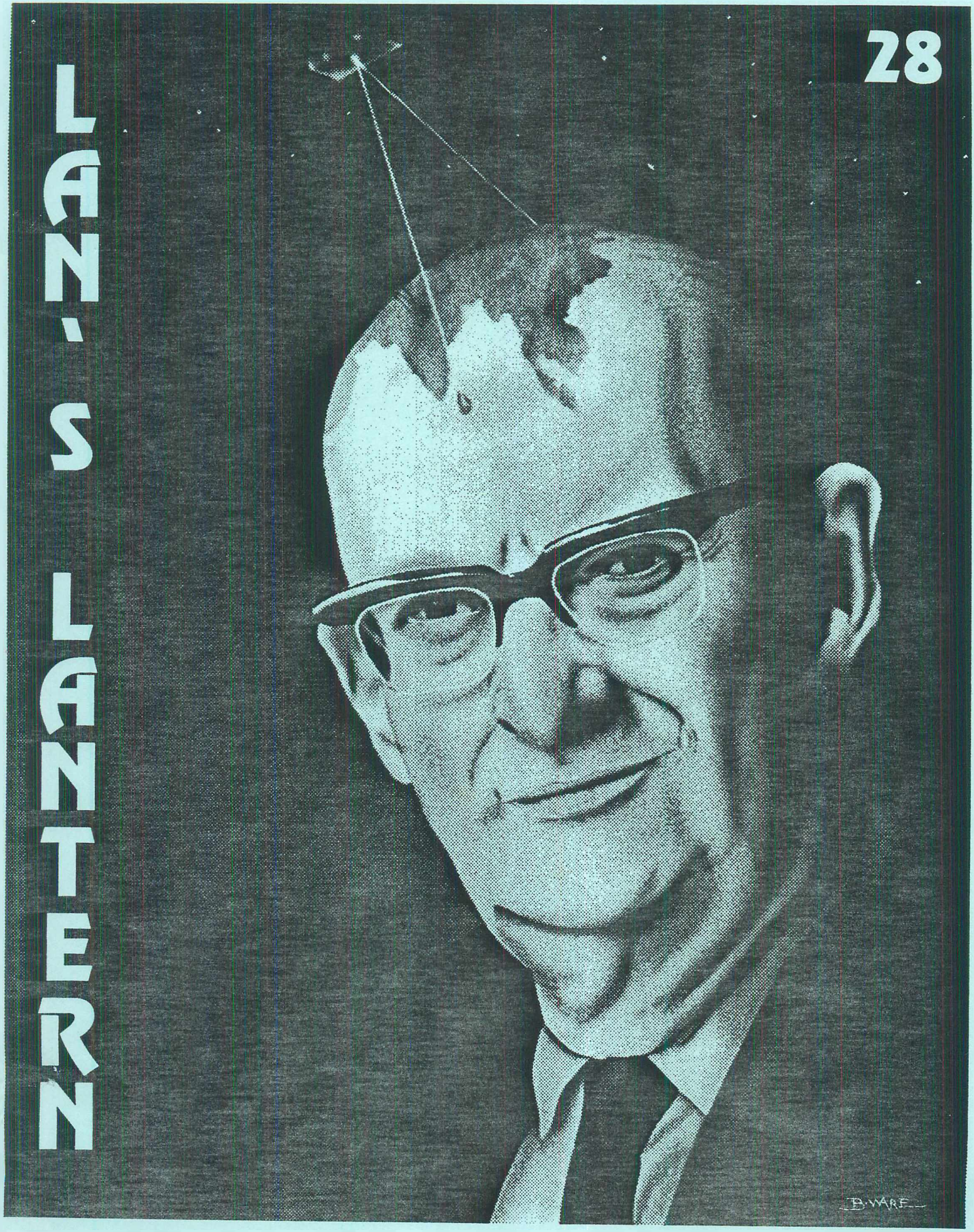
LAN'S LANTERN

28



Arthur C. Clarke

Lan's Lantern 28

An Arthur C. Clarke Special

Table of Contents

Table of Artists

Dedication

To Maia, as usual,

and Arthur C. Clarke,
who made this possible.

Lan's Lantern #28 is published and edited by George "Lan" Laskowski, 55 Valley Way, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013 USA. Phone: (313) 642-5670. Lan's Lantern is available for articles, art, letters (calls or postcards) of comment, even money (US$2), and the whim of the editor. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors, and may or may not be those of the editor. This is Lantern Publication #14, a division of LanShack Press Unlimited.

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___ You have a contribution (art, article) in this issue.
___ You've sent me a contribution (to be published in a future issue).
___ Loc received (to be published in a future issue).
___ Trade ✓ You wanted one
___ We're in an apa together.
✓ I would like you to contribute to the next special issues in 1989: Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, Fritz Leiber, Ted Sturgeon, A. E. Van Vogt.
___ This is your last issue unless you send me something.

From The Editor:

by Lan

I've known Arthur C. Clarke through his writing almost as long as I have been reading science fiction. Harry Purvis became an old friend as I read and reread the stories he narrated in Tales from the "White Hart". Clarke's A Fall of Moondust was read in a single night, as the master story teller drew me from one chapter to the next in this novel of rescue on the moon. The innumerable short stories I read, the few novels -- far fewer than I should have read -- all painted a picture of a highly intelligent, very imaginative person. I have to admit that I did learn a lot of my science from him -- and especially a love of the subject which even now keeps me reading Science News every week.

Of the many novels that Clarke has written, I've only read seven. Maybe this is something I should not reveal in this special issue of Lan's Lantern which celebrates his golden anniversary, but I do have a couple on my "to-be-read" shelf, and the rest are out on the open shelves and ready for reading. But I recall so many of the stories I have read vividly, and many times the circumstances around which they were read.

"Rescue Party" was a short story in an anthology entitled Great Tales of Action and Adventure which I had to read for one of my high school English classes. (I have it in several other Clarke collections.) There were maybe two other people in that class who understood the story, and had little trouble with it. Most of my classmates looked to me for an explanation. I happily provided them with one, especially of that last line.

When I finally saw the film 2001: A Space Odyssey, I was filled with questions about it. The novel clarified several things, and once again I became "the expert" about the film among the non-SF friends I had.

I reluctantly read "The Nine Billion Names of God." I didn't --no, couldn't-- see Clarke writing much about religion and did not want to have the book of the same name in my collection. However, a friend in graduate school suggested that I indeed read it, and did so after finding the story in one of my anthologies. I went out and bought the book the day after I finished it, and read through the rest of the stories. I found the contradictory themes with "Nine Billion Names" and the final story called "The Star" rather interesting and knew then that Clarke was experimenting with ideas, just as he always had. Later he did the same in his novel The Songs of Distant Earth where he postulated that good and evil did not exist; all we term as such was merely random chance. Thus "God" was unnecessary.

Childhood's End was touted as a classic in the field, but it took me some time to discover it as such. Friends urged me to remove it from the box in which it was residing at the time and read it. Religion, again, with another twist. That got me to thinking a lot more about my own beliefs.

So I laud Arthur C. Clarke for keeping me thinking, and promise that one day I shall take his accumulated novels and collections off my shelf and read them all. Long may he live and write!

§ § § § §

In a note sent to me from Arthur, he points out that his "Golden Year was 1982 -- according to David Samuelson's Bibliography." My source was Brian Ashley's The Illustrated History of Science Fiction. Whichever it may be, just consider this issue either on time or long overdue.

I Don't Understand What's Happening Here

by John Purcell

Without a doubt everybody else in this Arthur C. Clarke tribute issue will have personal anecdotes about the man. I do not. You see, England and Sri Lanka are not exactly next door to Minneapolis where I live. All I can add here is to voice what I experienced through 2001: A Space Odyssey.

I fell in love with Clarke's writing with Against the Fall of Night, A Fall of Moondust, and other novels I had read in grade school and junior high. So when 2001 came out in the theaters, I was ecstatic. I dearly loved science fiction movies. And this one was in cinerama, no less. Gosh-wow! My sensawondah kicked into high gear. So with unbridled excitement I dashed off to the Cooper Theater -- alone -- to see the movie.

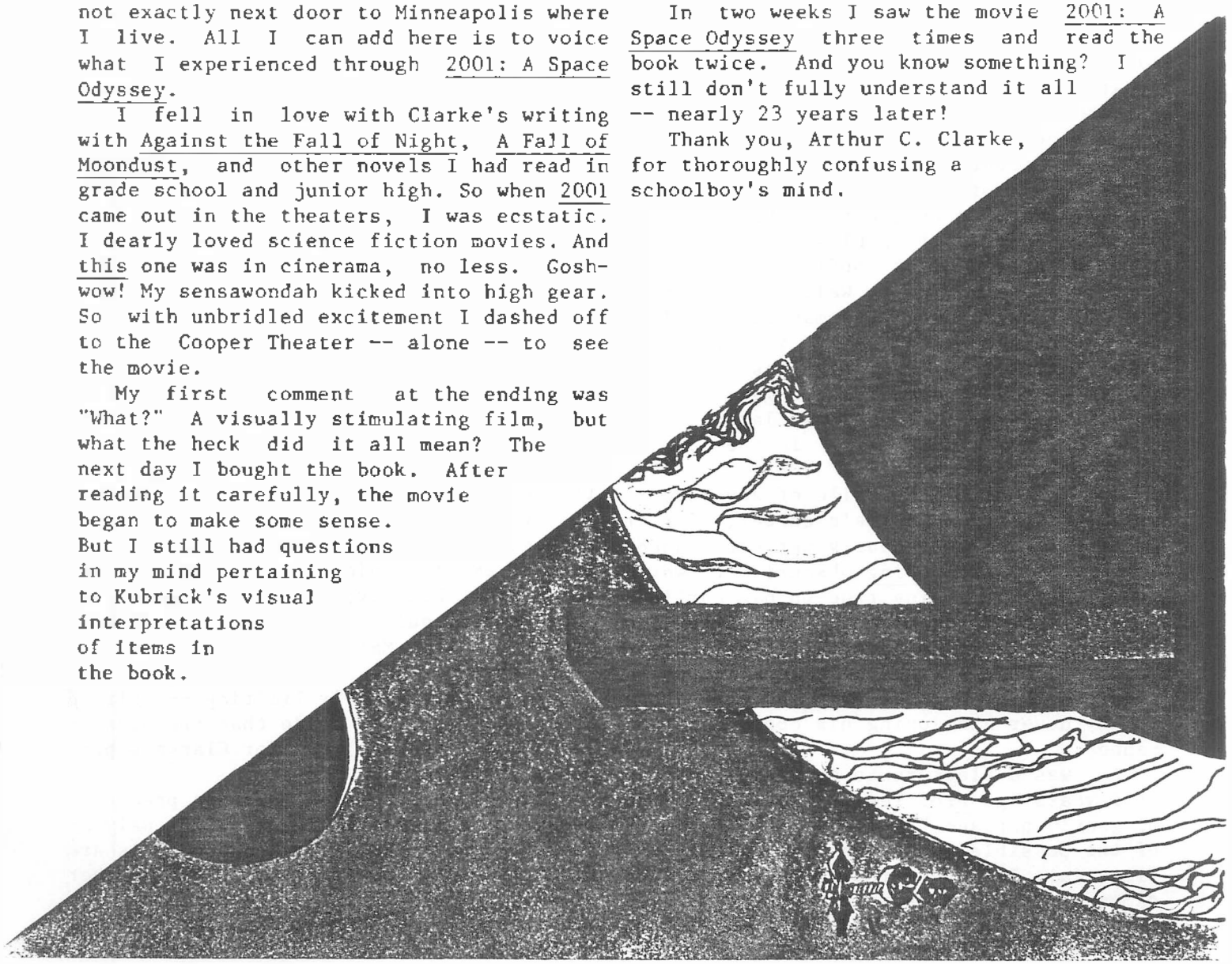
My first comment at the ending was "What?" A visually stimulating film, but what the heck did it all mean? The next day I bought the book. After reading it carefully, the movie began to make some sense. But I still had questions in my mind pertaining to Kubrick's visual interpretations of items in the book.

No matter. The movie was still there, so back I went.

Okay. Now a lot of stuff made sense. The transposition from a Young Bowman to an Old Bowman and the Starchild made sense. The Dawn of Man disco scene now made more sense. But what hidden meanings were there in Bowman's voyage into the monolith? So once again I reread the book. And then it was back to the theatre to check out my ideas.

In two weeks I saw the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey three times and read the book twice. And you know something? I still don't fully understand it all -- nearly 23 years later!

Thank you, Arthur C. Clarke, for thoroughly confusing a schoolboy's mind.



Arthur C. Clarke: The Prophet Vindicated

by Gregory Benford

In 1957 I was sitting on the chilly deck of the America when news of the Sputnik launch arrived: a lone paragraph in the ship's newspaper. I ground my teeth, wanting more information, and thought, "I'll bet Arthur is beside himself."

He was. As Arthur Clarke remarks in one of the essays in Ascent to Orbit (John Wiley, 1984), he had no reason to believe his meticulously sketched dreams of space flight would occur in his lifetime. He has become the luckiest of prophets, a vindicated sage in his own time.

While clearly the most famous and international of all science fiction writers, he is not a unique type. He stands in the tradition of English futurists who have used fiction or nonfiction to spread their visions -- H. G. Wells, J. D. Bernal, Olaf Stapledon, Freeman Dyson. They were convinced that only in scientific areas is reliable prediction possible; as Clarke says, "there are some general laws governing scientific extrapolation, as there are not (pace Marx) in the case of politics and economics."

It is worth the while of any hard SF writer to study Clarke's career, for it describes the most nearly perfect trajectory -- from Astounding obscurity to world fame, while remaining true to his earliest interests and devotions. His attention focused on technical possibilities, he avoided high drama and melodramatics wherever possible. Born of pulp, he rose above it by never abandoning his cool, distant manner.

It was a pleasure to see reissued several years ago Profiles of the Future, an elegantly phrased "inquiry into the limits of the possible" which was immediately influential. It served for decades as a fundamental text for SF writers who wanted to think seriously, even systematically about the future. It details Clarke's expectations about what might be achieved within the bounds of scientific law, with elegant brevity which brimmed with unstated implications, ready-made for extrapolation. Books on futurology date notoriously, yet this one has not, principally because Clarke was unafraid of being adventurous.

In a new introduction, he mentions reading a review of a Russian book about the twenty-first century. The distinguished British scientist reviewer found the work extremely reasonable and the extrapolations quite convincing. Remarks Clarke, "I hope this charge will not be levelled against me. If this book seems completely reasonable and all my extrapolations convincing, I shall not have succeeded in looking very far ahead; for the one fact about the Future of which we can be certain is that it will be utterly fantastic."

Clarke's cool, analytical tone pervades all his writing. He prefers a pure, dispassionate statement of facts and relationships, yet the result is not cold. Instead, he achieves a rendering of the scientific aesthetic, with its respect for the universal qualities of intelligence, its tenacity and curiosity. His fiction neglects the conflict and the broad spectrum of emotion which gives it a curiously refreshing honesty; many have been poked and jarred quite enough by superheated prose of the Mailer school, thank you. Even the virtual absence of sex in his novels is not greatly limiting -- writing about sex is easier to do than the strange landscapes of SF, and for Clarke's purposes, pointless.

Indeed, his vision carries precisely because he remains almost obliviously above the fray: "Politics and economics are concerned with power and wealth, neither of which should be the primary, still less the exclusive, concern of full-grown men."

Clarke's wry wit often skewers the short-sightedness of such men. In discus-

sing the space program, he quotes one of the early explorers of Australia "reporting proudly to his mission control, back in Whitehall, 'I have now mapped this continent so thoroughly that no one need ever go there again.'" There are echoes of this blinkered pioneer in current discussion of our space station project.

Futurology has expanded enormously since Profiles first appeared, probably because now most people have seen a half dozen major revolutions happen in their own lives. The effects of this on politics will be vast; most problems today are posed in the formula "What if...?" and "If this goes on..." -- our staple openings.

Along with the figures of the Golden Age (post 1940), he saw that there was no contradiction between fidelity to facts and narrative interest: "It should never be forgotten that, without some foundation of reality, science fiction would be impossible, and that therefore exact knowledge is the friend, not the enemy, of imagination and fantasy."

Getting from speculation to hardware is a long voyage, often taking centuries. Clarke has contributed to this journey, as the collected speeches and essays in 1984: Spring underline. He points out that while gradual progress is essential, great figures like von Braun sometimes spur development long before it is obviously necessary. "If there had been government research establishments in the Stone Age, we would have had absolutely superb flint tools. But no one would have invented steel." If Heinlein's Man Who Sold the Moon was more like Howard Hughes, at least the instinct was right.

Even the great inventors do not often understand the full implications of their work. The Satellite-linked communicators and fast information networks of our immediate future will change office work, certainly, but what of the wider uses? National frontiers will present less of a barrier to the free flow of information, even in such benighted prisons as the USSR. The debate about information control, from Orwell on, "will soon be settled -- by engineers, not politicians. (Just as physicists, not generals, have determined the nature of war.)"

Dip into Ascent to Orbit, his collection of scientific papers, mostly from the 1940s, with autobiographical introductions. It details his early thoughts on rockets and warfare, satellite communications, the "space elevator," and the implications of computers. His principal contribution was suggesting that satellites could serve as economical radio relays.

This came at a time when learned societies devoted to astronautics strove to appear sober and earnest. Without having even seen Clarke's earlier paper, John Pierce ("J.J. Coupling" is SF) published his "Orbital Radio Relays" in Jet Propulsion magazine, so named because "Even the word 'rocket' was avoided as too Buck Rogerish; only 'jet propulsion' was respectable..." Pierce's development of the idea from a mere suggestion demonstrated how Clarke's publicizing of it had slowly made these ideas seem natural. He had wide influence, though as Clarke himself admits, the idea was so obvious that half a dozen others would probably have come up with it at about the same time, 1945. Though he says "I suspect that my early disclosure may have advanced the cause of space communications by approximately fifteen minutes," in fact his ceaseless promotion of it did what good hard SF is supposed to do -- render the future seemingly inevitable, overcoming the usual conservatism.

He was no less right about even larger issues. His 1946 essay, "The Rocket and the Future of Warfare," anticipated the essentials of ICBM nuclear war, and called for measures to avoid it. Though many were concerned with "atom war" then -- the US made its proposal of international regulation of nuclear weapons to the USSR and was turned down -- few saw the fateful mating of the bomb and the rocket. Notably, most of those who did were science fiction writers who had long believed that rockets were the next big step in aeronautics. (They had long before gotten bored with jet planes.)

The oddments collected in 1984: Spring do not shape into a definitive argument; the book is obviously scraped together to capitalize on Clarke's spurt in recognition, following 2010. Still, it gives us oblique views of a man whose life has been focused on the grandest perspectives. Stapledon, whom Clarke idolized, dragged the conflicts of his era into far-future visions, attributing Marxist -- indeed, Stalinist -- dynamics to even alien, insectoid races. This riddles some of Stapledon's work with anachronisms.

Clarke never loses his bearings this way, and his work will probably wear well. He has always played to his strengths, minimizing areas which don't naturally appeal to his own innate emotions. Of course, this is what any writer should do, but it's a damned hard lesson to learn. It requires more self-knowledge than we (or anyway, I) typically have. Hard SF can gain a distance from the present in the "high church" form Clarke espouses, which gives it a rather longer shelf life than sociological SF (which often seems hot and bothered about passing issues) or the muddy irrelevance of science fantasy.

Clarke is an original. He comes across as occasionally exasperated at the stupidity of humankind, but still involved, caring. Against the anti-technological bias of our recent times, he remains impressed with the enormous possibilities science holds out to us. In the end, "...whatever other perils humanity may face in the future that lies ahead, boredom is not among them."

Hear hear!

Of Sarongs & Science Fiction: A Tribute to Arthur C. Clarke

by Ben P. Indick

Some time over a decade ago, I received a British fanzine which featured an interview with Arthur C. Clarke. It had been conducted in his own Sri Lanka, and contained some photos and a lengthy, genial chat. I do not recall the particular fanzine, as I did not save it. Clarke commented in it that he enjoyed the simple life on the island, his adopted home, and enjoyed going about his home in a sarong.

I am an old-timer and I recalled seeing (ca. 1940) movies with Dorothy Lamour clad in what was billed as a sarong. It was, apparently, a long cloth draped form-fittingly about the body. She looked very luscious in a few of the Paramount "Road" movies and Hurricane, Hawaiian and Polynesian fantasies. Clarke's statement surprised me. Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Jon Hall never wore sarongs; only the curvaceous Dorothy did! I wrote to the editor expressing my surprise. I did not necessarily state the great SF author was wrong but I did stand up for Dorothy Lamour and her inalienable right to be sexy. Heck, I was certain that, while Clarke could write rings around her, he would never look as good!

The letter was printed in the following issue, which I have also lost somewhere in time. A short time later, to my surprise and delight, I received an airmail letter from Sri Lanka, of all places -- and this, you can bet, I still have -- containing only a photograph. It portrays an intense, ascetic looking gentleman sitting most comfortably in a book-lined den, radio/phonograph behind him, either in sandals or barefoot (I cannot make it out), but wearing, indisputably, something other than trousers. The wide, skirt-like garment is blue with a print of large fish swimming gently across its width. On the floor is a brightly colored, broadly striped throw rug in bands of blue, yellow and possibly more just out of camera range. On the verso is a brief note:

20 Sept 76

Dear Ben --

In Sri Lanka the men wear sarongs, the women wear saris!

Best,
(And with a fine flourish, his signature.)

(n.b. carpet -- see Imperial Earth)

Well, Need I state the extent of my astonishment, even excitement, at this letter. Arthur C. Clarke, one of my idols for many years, a great scientist as well as a great and original science fiction author, writing a letter to me, an overweight fan. Obviously the gentleman was a man of humor, even if he and Dorothy Lamour's writers spoke different languages. In all fairness I must point out that what the sarong did for Dorothy it came nowhere near doing for Arthur!

Subsequently, I would on occasion drop him a note, although I do not believe in wasting the commodity a writer needs most -- his time. Once, I wished to surprise my clerk who was a SF fan. He liked Clarke as much as I did, so I wrote requesting a signature for him to paste into one of his Clarke books. Very graciously Arthur complied, inscribing it to the young man's full name, and it was Mark's turn to be astonished and delighted now. Years later I did the same for my daughter and her husband, to put into a beautifully leather-bound edition of 2001. They were ecstatic. A man of graciousness indeed.

Clarke wrote me on another occasion, hoping I might know whether Willis Conover was ready with the long delayed second issue of his Science Fantasy Correspondent. Willis had sold subscriptions at 3 issues for $25 and many fans besides myself are, after more than a decade, slowly giving up hope of ever seeing the 2nd and 3rd. Conover was to have been "editing [Clarke's] considerable correspondence with [Lord] Dunsany [and C.S. Lewis]." I had met Conover several times but knew nothing of his plans. The erstwhile Lovecraftian is apparently off enjoying his jazz interests, or goodness knows what else, on my money! I don't care about the rest of those two issues, but I feel much deprived not to be able to see those letters with such landmark fantasists.

Sri Lanka is no longer the island paradise a young Clarke chose to live in. He is himself in what he calls retirement, but meanwhile has plans for much travel, to deliver talks and receive honorary degrees. And, of course, he continues to write vigorously and lovingly of his dreams of a universe whose individual members respect each other. Violence is not a part of his work, nor even has been. Who can forget his irony in "The Star," that an event of unparalleled importance on Earth must be commemorated by the death by nova of a vast star system far off in space? The beneficent space travelers of "The Sentinel" and its offspring 2001, of Childhood's End where a race must at last mature. Scores of stories and novels making his name one to treasure. Humbly I am grateful for knowing him even to so slight an extent, and for his sharing his grace and kind nature with me. I wish him all the time and energy he requires to stay as busy as ever in his "retirement." His Fountains of Paradise are surely those of Ponce De Leon.

An Arthur C. Clarke Chronology

by Robert Sabella

1917 Born Arthur Charles Clarke on December 16 in Minehead, England

1931 Discovered Amazing Stories and Astounding Stories, commencing a lifelong love of science fiction

1934 Joined the British Interplanetary Society

1936 Moved to London and became friendly with William F. Temple, Walter Gillings, John Wyndham, Eric Frank Russell and C.S. Youd (John Christopher);
published frequently in British fanzines

1938 Published his first article, "Man's Empire of Tomorrow," in Tales of Wonder

1941 Entered the Royal Air Force

1945 Published his article "Extra-Terrestrial Relays" in Wireless World which postulated the existence of orbiting satellites for use in global telecommunication

1946 Published his first science fiction story, "Loophole," in Astounding

1946-47 Chairman of British Interplanetary Society

1948 Graduated from King's College in London with First Class Honors in Physics and Mathematics;

Against the Fall of Night was published in Startling Stories

1949 Assistant editor of Physics Abstracts

1950-53 Second term as chairman of British Interplanetary Society

1951 Served as Chairman of International Astronautical Federation Congress in London

1952 Won the International Fantays Award (Nonfiction category) for The Exploration of Space

1953 Publication of Childhood's End;
Chairman of the Hayden Planetarium Symposium of Spaceflight in New York City

1956 Moved to Ceylon (later called Sri Lanka);
publication of The City and the Stars, an expansion of Against the Fall of Night;
Served as Guest of Honor at the Fourteenth World Science Fiction Convention in New York
Won the Best Short Story Hugo Award for "The Star"

1957 Publication of Tales from the White Hart

1962 Awarded the Kalinga Prize by UNESCO for his popularization of science

1963 Awarded the Gold Medal of the Franklin Institute for his invention of communication satellites

1967 Publication of The Nine Billion Names of God

1968 Release of 2001: A Space Odyssey, based on a screenplay by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke

1968-69 Served as expert commentator for CBS Television's coverage of three Apollo space missions

1969 Received an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay for 2001: A Space Obyssey;
Received a Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation for 2001: A Space Obyssey;

1973 Received the Science Fiction Writers of America's Best Novella Nebula Award for "A Meeting with Medusa"

1974 Received both Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novel for Rendezvous with Rama

1980 Received both Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novel for The Fountains of Paradise

1984 Release of 2010: Odyssey Two

1985 Received a Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation for 2010: Odyssey Two

A Childhood's End Remembrance

by Gary Lovisi

I first read Childhood's End by Arthur C. Clarke way back in September of 1977 in an old Ballantine paperback edition that had a gorgeous Dean Ellis cover. I discovered this classic rather late, for it actually has been in print as a Ballantine paperback since the olden days, way back in August, 1953.

That first memorable encounter with this wonderful novel was over ten years ago, and though I've not reread this book since (although I still own that same 13th printing from January, 1975), I do take it out every once in a while and fondly look it over. It's like meeting an old friend. When you discover a great book like this one, just a flip of the pages or a peek at the cover can really start the images coming to life and the memories to soar.

Obviously that book made a profound impression on me. It's an excellent novel, a true classic, in or out of the SF genre, and in it Clarke is at the height of his powers as one of our greatest spiritual humanist writers. Later on, with the film of 2001: A Space Odyssey, his brilliant visions would reach the silver screen and the audience is deserved -- a film that was a culmination of all that was good and glorious and hopeful during the late sixties.

But before 2001 there was Childhood's End, a novel filled with Clarke's beautiful poetic dreams, and each one structured sharply and engineered by a man who is also a very competent scientist and scientific thinker. Although seemingly contradictory terms, science and poetry do blend well in Childhood's End. They create a synergistic "sense of wonder" that responds to our hopes and expectations for the future of Mankind. As the back cover blurbs say, "the last generations of Mankind on Earth." And, more importantly in the novel, what is to come after.

Of course, the blurbs give a superficial indication of the plot:

> ...without warning, giant silver ships from outer space appear in the skies above every major city on Earth. They are manned by the Overlords -- mysterious creatures from an alien race -- who soon take control of the world.
>
> Within fifty years, these brilliant masters have all but eliminated ignorance, disease, poverty, and fear. But suddenly this golden age ends, and the guardians of Mankind bow to the will of a superior intelligence.

Early on in the novel I thought that the Overlords themselves were the superior intelligence, but they are in fact only messengers of the "gods." They are rather tragic and lonely figures -- we see by the end of the novel -- not really capable of achieving the great potential that Mankind may be able to reach.

The Overlords initially are a very fearful lot, literally incarnate devils as with their Satanic appearance, yet possessing a gentleness and yearning for knowledge that makes them very interesting characters. In a sense they are almost the eternal child -- and rather than Peter Pan who does not want to grow up -- the Overlords are incapable of growing up, or attaining that maturity which Clarke hopes humanity will grow into. Unfortunately, the Overlords have the apex of their evolutionary development, incapable of achieving any higher levels, no matter how they try. They are, in fact, a stagnant species. They have the sad job of ferrying other, younger and more energetic races to maturity -- even as the attainment of that beloved goal is to be denied them forever. A truly ironic touch, and yet, one that the Overlords handle well, much to their credit. One wonders that, were humanity to shoulder the full burden of the knowledge the Overlords' possess, would we come off half as well?

But these speculations are not to be. In Childhood's End humanity is destined for greater things -- maturity, and the stars. And the attainment of the stars, shining as a beacon to draw on the race, is the message here. The stars can be ours -- if we can but reach up and grasp them! Quite an inciteful and intuituve idea for 1953, 6 years before Spuntik, and an amazing 16 years before the Apollo moon landing. Even back then Clarke was trying to tell us something; it was a universal message of the importance of space exploration to the future of Mankind. Clarke was doing some pretty heavy dreaming in Childhood's End, some really beautiful dreaming that hopefully will not be in vain, now that our space program seems to be on permanent hold after the Challenger tragedy, and as Washington politicos try to hack the space budget and use it to add to the cesspool of waste in government programs. The stars are there -- and they are there for us!

Childhood's End is full of religious overtones which Clarke transposes into a sort of science fictional version of spiritual humanism, and is an excellent example of that very special (and difficult to write with success) sub-genre of literature. The book ranks right up there with another classic which was first published in 1930, Stapledon's Last and First Men.

In a way I believe part of what Clarke says in the book is a very straightforward message to us all -- that the greatness, majesty, and promise which was born as human potential in each and every one of us is ours to fulfill individually as well as collectively. And that the greatest extension of that idea -- and Mankind's true destiny, it's true collective growth and maturity -- lies in reaching the stars.

There's a lot of beauty and meaning in that book. And though, as I say, I've not read it in over ten years, certain images and ideas have been burned indelibly upon my memory. I'm sure that many of you share some of these feelings about this classic book, while those unfamiliar with this novel should not miss out on the experience of reading it.

Of course, I'll reread Childhood's End, probably after I finish this article, but memories being what they are, I thought it might be interesting to let them have a bit of free reign and see what came out in this rather unusual appreciation of a favorite Arthur C. Clarke book.

My Hero

by Mary Lou Lockhart

Around 1972, the University of Michigan advertised a guest lecture by Arthur C. Clarke in Hill Auditorium. Even back then, it was billed as one of his last visits to this side of the world. Whether it would be the last or not I wanted to go.

I'd only been gone from the campus for about five years, but I was long gone from the 60's longhair who'd gone to Hill Auditorium to hear the likes of Timothy Leary and Stokely Carmichael and Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. Now I was a teacher, minus the shaggy hair, and I was teaching science fiction so I wanted to see Arthur C. Besides, I wanted to prove Thomas Wolfe wrong.

The speech was scheduled for an odd time, like 5:00 in the afternoon. I was used to teaching afternoon high school classes when kids O.D. on sugar or whatever makes them obnoxious that time of day. And this was no class of 30; this was Hill Auditorium with 3,000 seats, or so it seemed, and it was filling. The teacher in me started worrying for the gentle British gentleman who had yet to appear. There were days with a class of 30 that I wanted a whip and a chair. What would he do with 3,000 of the biggest smart alecks in the State of Michigan? I used to be one; I worried.

It was time to start and the natives were restless. The balcony bunch were conducting airplane design and flight tests. Not your standard Engine School designs; these were definitely liberal arts models. The true smart asses. Oh God, Arthur, do you know what you're getting into? Then this weird coot (not a kid -- a bona fide coot) with stringy hair, scruffy clothes, and an unfocused look walked down the side aisle, climbed the stairs to the stage, and took a seat on the stage floor. Okay, this is Ann Arbor. People are freer here, and besides, he's an adult and he's not throwing airplanes so he must know what he's doing.

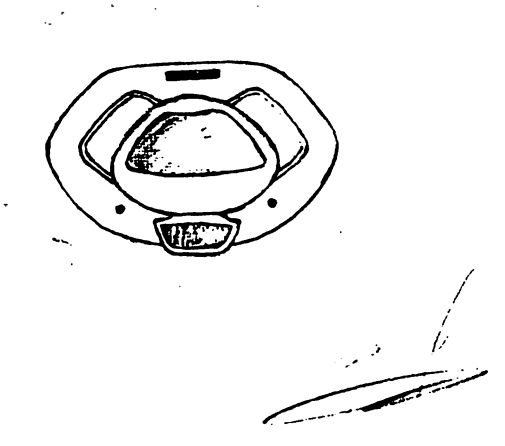
Finally, Lloyd Biggle came on stage and the airplanes stopped. Kids even listened politely as Lloyd gave a lengthy introduction of Clarke's accomplishments without once referring to 2001. Then it was Arthur's turn and there he was, a tall, gangly scholar with thick glasses and little hair and I started worrying again about his handling 3,000 smarties.

First he had to deal with the coot who was still perched on the stage and who was now muttering to himself. Clarke looked over the podium and simply said, "Would someone please escort this person from the stage?" No pleading or panic or anger. Just a simple question, and quickly some student council types lifted the man by his elbows and escorted him out. It was so deft that everyone applauded.

The kids didn't realize it but Clarke handled them just as smoothly. He wove a future with possibilities they wanted to believe could be. He made us sound capable of technical marvels that he said could not be bogged down by the morass of politics. He went on for over an hour and the time flew. He had those kids eating out of the palm of his hand, and here I'd worried about his crowd control. I wish I were that good in the classroom.

After fifteen years, I can still see Arthur C. Clarke that day in Ann Arbor. What a great teacher!

January 24, 1988



A Childhood Well Wasted

Some Thoughts on Arthur C. Clarke

by Andrew Hooper

I have been a fan of Arthur C. Clarke for a long time; as long as I have been reading science fiction, in fact. I can recall reading one of those lovely, durable Ballantine collections of his short stories during fifth grade math class, and being very impressed with the way that they achieved their aims without taxing my attention span; I also recall that the instructor, Mr. Anderson, did not appreciate my stealing time from his consideration of fractions, and that this constituted the first attempt made by authority to discourage me from reading StF. Of course, this effort was not a successful one, and today, alas, I still have trouble with fractions and none at all with Arthur C. Clarke.

Unfortunately, not everyone has their priorities as straight as this. Last week I was sitting in the smoking lounge at Blear House, talking with my friend Pete Winz. Pete has the distinction of being one of the five most dedicated readers of StF I have ever known, and had no shortage of advice when the subject of Clarke came up. I told Peter I was planning on trying to make some sort of consideration of Clarke's work for LL, and Pete offered the opinion that he could think of a vast assortment of authors that he would rather see a retrospective of, and then made rather nasty faces at me as well.

This led to a fairly heated discussion of what we thought worth reading, and I felt it worthwhile to point out that Pete has been known to read Mack Bolan-type books and Piers Anthony besides, but when we got down to the nub of the issue, it was clear we were looking at a difference of stylistic taste. Pete's a plot aficionado, first and last. Raymond Chandler's dictum, "Whenever things begin to slow down, have a man with a gun walk through the door," was written with readers like Pete in mind. He picked up an empty envelop with Ed McMahon's face on the front and drew a little triangular diagram.

"I learned this from Dick Russel," he said. "Here we have the three legs upon which SF is supposed to stand. In one corner is Plot, another Character, and in the third, Setting. Now I like novels which lean most heavily on Plot, but I also prefer things that run toward strong Character as well. So, you remember when I was reading Dying of the Light by George R.R. Martin? Well, I thought the main character was a real wimp through the first half of the book, but the plot was interesting enough to carry me through. And then, in the second half --"

"When the blood really starts to spurt," I broke in.

"Yeah, right, well, I found the characters much more interesting from then on."

I blew smoke at the ceiling and thought about it some more. "Actually," I said, "I liked all those characters all the way through. Thought it was a good book. Character is really what I get into. I mean, Hell, I read Delany. And I like it."

"Well, I mean, there wasn't much to dislike about Dying of the Light anyway," he replied. "The setting was pretty strong as well. Especially when they went out and visited all those abandoned cities. And George is a great guy, besides."

"A very prince of a guy," I agreed.

We sat in silence for a moment.

"What does any of this have to do with Arthur C. Clarke?" I finally asked.

Pete snorted. "You tell me," he said. "Here you are telling me that you get off on good characterization. Well, I'd say that's about his weakest point. I mean, name me a Clarke character by name, any one you want."

I was thinking hard, and was about to say "Dave Bowman" when Pete broke in, "Any character that hasn't been in a movie, too. That's too easy."

I couldn't.

"You see? His books are like Gas Giant fly-by's. The characters are out there performing functions that might as well be left to machines, so why mess around giving them a lot of dimension anyway? And as for his plots, well, I closed Childhood's End in the middle and never went back to it."

"That's hardly fair, is it?" I asked. "I mean, Childhood's End is hardly representative of Clarke at the height of his powers, is it?"

"Whatever," he said. "Clarke is all setting, pure and simple. Airless landscapes, long centrifugal curves, weird zero-G perspectives that turn peoples' stomachs inside out. That kind of thing. That's what you get when you read Clarke."

"I suppose so," I admitted, "like that long sequence in 2010 when he describes the center of Jupiter as being a diamond as big as the Earth. It was a very interesting and intricately drawn piece of description, but it didn't do too much for the book as a whole."

I didn't feel like debating the point much further. One of the reasons I couldn't name any of Clarke's characters was that I hadn't read anything by him other than 2010 in the past five years, and I couldn't remember what it was that had riveted me so firmly and single-mindedly back there in fifth grade math class. And in sixth grade, and seventh, and up into my high school years. Was the truth that the reason I had such a positive image of Clarke that I had come upon him at the nominative "Golden Age of Science Fiction," to wit, the very height of my prepubescent inquisitiveness?

I resolved to pick up one of my favorite works by A.C. once more, and put the latter theory to test.

* * * * *

I felt I had a perfect opportunity in the trip I was planning to make to the Northern Minnesota wilderness, to catch up on some of the reading I had been letting slide in order to put out some fanzines and keep up with entirely too much apa-hacking. It was also singularly appropriate that I make a new charge at Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama on such a trip, because an injury suffered on a similar journey back in 1975 had left me flat on my back, and one of the novels I had voraciously devoured to stave off galloping boredom was the aforementioned Clarke classic. It had taken me out of the airless infirmary where I was confined by infection and transported me to a hazardous solar fly-by in search of an understanding of, if not contact with, one of the more mysterious alien presences in the history of the genre. The best therapy I got, I might add.

But events conspired against us. In reality, I had enough trouble meeting any of the trip's official mission requirements, let alone recover any of my fannish sensawunder. Under the weight of such concerns as high winds, forgotten equipment, bad tent sites and wet sleeping bags, I was only able to make a few short notes about what, in serious critical terms, I thought Clarke's strengths and weaknesses were.

Foremost in my mind was Clarke's own oft-quoted statement that sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. This particular point will probably be belabored unto death by other writers in their tributes, but I thought it worthwhile to bring up because it lies at the heart of what attracts me to his work. Like Bob Shaw, I've never had the opportunity to learn much about real science, because I've spent all my time lying around reading science fiction. What I know about the radiation of black bodies and so forth, I've gotten from reading Pohl and Clarke. So, when Clarke presents the various unfolding events in Rama's short spring and summer as mysterious and unfathomable conundrums, the products of a technology far beyond our understanding, I'm very grateful that he does so. Any explanation made on technical grounds would be wasted on me, not to mention all those people that buy fantasy trilogies about talking stoats and blind telepathic lepers. At the same time, my general scientific ignorance leads me to try and judge Clarke on his writing alone, and not on the contributions which he has made to modern technology, through his work with radar, communication satellites, and the art of avoiding face-to-face meetings with editors through emigration to the Indian subcontinent.

RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Mindful of the triune critical distinctions which Pete had made to me earlier, I tried to be extremely critical of Clarke's plotting and characterization, with mixed results. It is true that most of his characters tend to be square-jawed types, who owe more to the Mercury Seven than to any realistic model of what the future working space professional is likely to resemble. But there is some skill in this level of characterization as well. People move in and out of the narrative with specific functions and contributions to make the story, defined more by their job than by any personal quirks or traits, leaving us to supply a lot of the detail with our own imagination. By and large, this is only appropriate, as dwelling further on the appearance, thoughts, histories and goals of the characters would slow down Clarke's narrative. And Clarke's pacing is a very delicate thing indeed.

I had the feeling, while paging through the short chapters of Rendezvous with Rama, that each must have begun life as nothing more than a sentence typed on a 3 by 5 card and stuffed in a file box on Clarke's desk. Each chapter is like a small boy sent out on stage at the annual Christmas pageant who recites his single verse and is heard no more. Once more, I was struck by the brilliance of this technique, as I rifled through "just one more chapter" again and again; in no way could the progress of this plot be taxing to even the shortest attention span. And whereas I once might have been unable to maintain my interest any longer than the five or six pages that each scene takes to unfold, now the book seemed ideally laid out for me to snatch a chapter at a time out of the hectic pressures of the day's travel.

Alas, for those enamored of such things, the book has very few men coming through the door with guns in their hands. At the end, with Rama getting ready to go back into deep freeze at the same time as those Hothead Hermian Halfwits have fired off the Biggest-Bomb-They-Have to deal with the threats of aliens taking their jobs and watching HBO for free, there is some promise of a big finish; unfortunately, Clarke deals with these problems in as workmanlike a fashion as he had everything else that has happened in the novel, and sends out a religious fanatic who presumably doesn't mind dying anyway, with a pair of wirecutters. That's all it takes; SDI planners take note. Then there is also the plight, however brief, of the brave leftenent Pak, who is sent out to investigate the southern end of the great cylinder of Rama on a vehicle that makes the **Gossamer Condor** seem solidly built; to no one's surprise, a stiff breeze destroys the thing, and Pak is left to survive a several kilometer plunge to the floor of Rama, without a parachute. The light gravity enables him to do this, natch, and his subsequent adventures lead him to the discovery of Rama's amazing "biots," who pursue unfathomable tasks with maddening aloofness. These revelations are essential to the story, but it's awfully hard to forget the fact that only an idiot would have sent him out there in such a vehicle in the first place.

This book is about a struggle for understanding, between man and the unknown and possibly the unknowable. Today, most skiffy is about struggles between different factions of humanity, broken down along sexual, religious, regional and intellectual lines; there's something infinitely more uplifting about Clarke's vision of the future, divided by distance, economics and ideals, but capable of acting in concert toward some very lofty goals indeed.

And then, considering the question of setting, I had no choice but to agree with Mr. Winz that this is without question the area in which Clarke excels. The rigors of space travel as presented by Clarke seemed well within my ability to extrapolate from the technologies we possess today; this made the numbing size and mystery of Rama itself all the more compelling, for the reasonable fashion in which the rest of the background was presented.

* * * * *

Last Saturday night on an island in the middle of the Basswood River, I found fitful sleep in a tent that had been pitched at about a sixty degree angle. I dreamt about the cyclopean stairways of Rama, which in my dream I was trying to descend; I awoke to find that I was sliding down into the bottom corner of the tent, and that the night was being split open by a thunderstorm of surpassing violence.

It wasn't a very pleasant feeling, lying there in an S-curve, trying to keep

the rocks from burrowing into my kidneys, while rain drummed on the fly of the tent like falling bricks. After a while, I despaired of sleeping through it, but I found to my delight that the grade of the place where I had had to pitch my tent meant that I was in no danger of being soaked by water gathering on the ground outside; rather, it was flowing quickly down into the river.

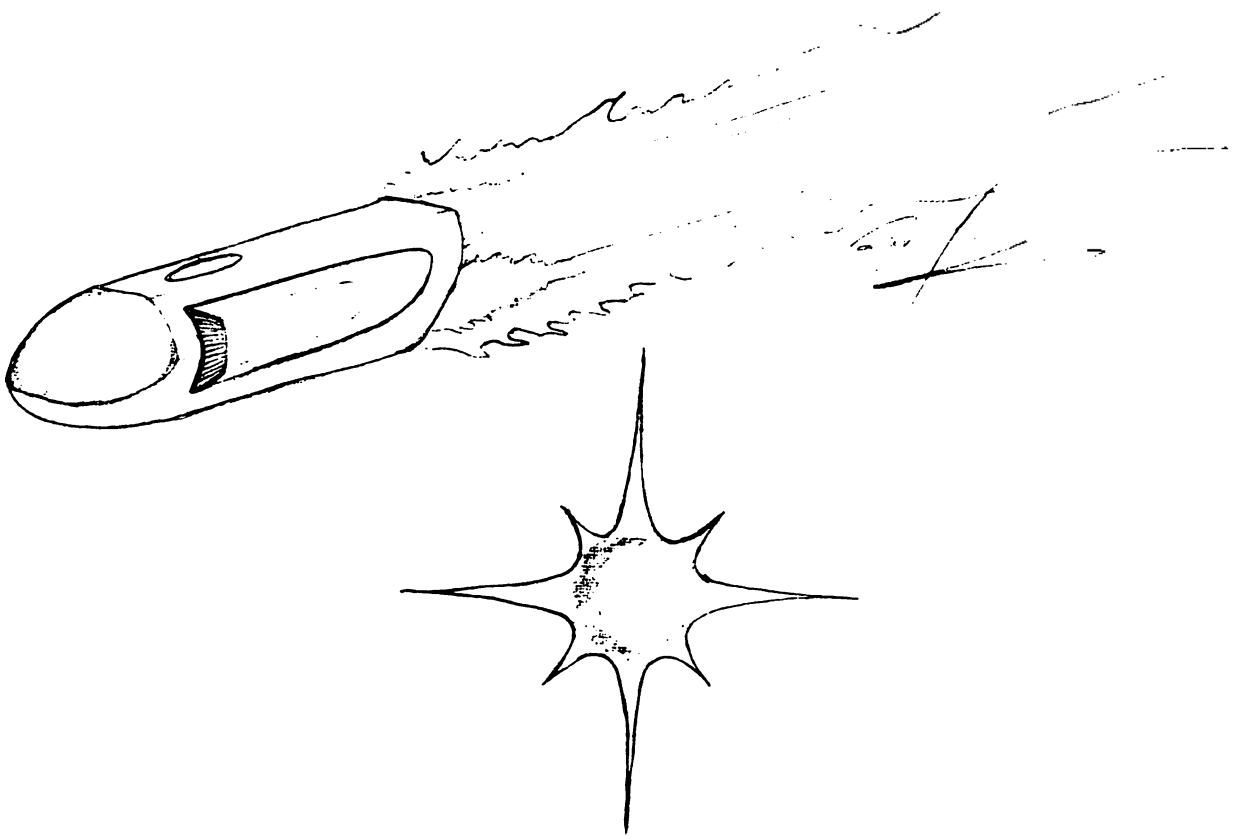
And so I cracked open my old friend Clarke, reading from chapter nineteen all the way to the end, by the light of my torch and the flashes of lightning in the tortured sky overhead. In those latter chapters, as Rama seeks to cheat the tiny humans crawling over its surface of any clue to its ultimate purpose or origin, I found myself swept away in the narrative, to the point where I forgot my fears of being literally swept away; and the novel transported me in several directions at once into the warm reaches near our own sun, and back into that dusty infirmary where I first read those chapters many years ago.

There is a moment near the end when Rama turns on what seems to be the fabled "Star Drive," using means well beyond the ability of the characters to understand, to actually bend space around itself, in preparation for a jaunt right through the sun's outer reaches, apparently to skim fuel. In reading those pages, I once again appreciated Clarke's ability to paint things on the grand scale. He might not be very skilled in the depiction of what future society is actually going to be like, he might not be able to tell us what the well-dressed rocket jockey of the twenty-third century will be wearing as exhaustively as some writers, but when it comes to evoking the wonder and rigor of what space travel is really like, or at least what we hope it's really like, he has no equal. Left behind by various "new waves" over his career, there is still no author I'd rather pick to introduce a neo to what I think science fiction ought to be like. Considering the number of sequels which have been pumped out on the market in the last ten years, I can only lament that we have never been taken as far into this future as we have into that of 2001 and years beyond.

When I finished the book, the storm had passed off to the east, and the lightning had subsided. I was able to return to sleep, and was visited by the same dreams as Clarke's Dr. Perera: The Ramans do everything in threes.

In which case we must presume their publishing industry is much like our own...

Shandwick Hall
6/30/1988



Reflections on the style of Arthur C. Clarke and, to a Lesser Degree, a Review of 2061: Odyssey Three

by Bill Ware

Arthur C. Clarke writes science fiction with a capital Science. His attention to scientific detail and accuracy sometimes results in characters who are merely ineffectual observers, albeit contrived interpreters of cosmic phenomenon. While this is generally not a trait of great literature, it doesn't necessarily lessen the power of his mental exercises and the resulting entertainment value (for those who find thinking to be entertaining). Although Clarke owes much of his popular appeal and acceptance to Stanley Kubrick (Clarke has long passed that point in his career where his name appears first and largest on his books' covers), his writing transcends the glitz and fantasy of popular science fiction. Clarke stays true to the original charter of science fiction by extrapolating reality without resorting to fantasy.

2061: Odyssey Three is no exception. But it is somewhat anticlimactic in the wake of 2010's "**Attempt No Landings Here.**" The warning, presumably from an ancient powerful intelligence capable of triggering the formation of a new star from a planet with the right ingredients (Jupiter), turns out to be a somewhat benign bluff to insure the private evolution of an exclusive environment for a still incognito civilization.

At the risk of taking a personal digression, I find it pertinent to mention a passing opinion expressed by Kara Dalkey (author of Curse of the Sagamore) in some personal correspondence with me. In one letter she stated that the "core ideas" of Asimov's and Clarke's stories were "always interesting, but they don't handle plot and characterization well enough to carry a novel." If you put the same premium that Dalkey does on plot and characterization, you will find the same inadequacies in 2061.

I remain loyal to Clarke for the thought he provokes and the extended possibilities based on current scientific knowledge that he explores. And he usually does it on a level that the layperson can understand. But even when he examines civilization on a colonized planet, as in The Songs of Distant Earth, fictional characters (human and alien) are merely an interface to the reader.

About the Cover

by Bill Ware

In the painting, I tried to combine Clarke's likeness with symbolic representations of his Sri Lanka residency, his pioneering proposal of communication satellite relay systems, and the monolith of 2001 and 2010.

My Childhood's End

by Kathy Mar

Some of my earliest memories of my many years of SF reading are associated with Arthur C. Clarke. Long before the librarians granted me permission to prowl the adult stacks in fifth grade, I can remember eagerly absorbing whatever my mother had checked out. Clarke was one of her favorites and quickly became one of mine as well.

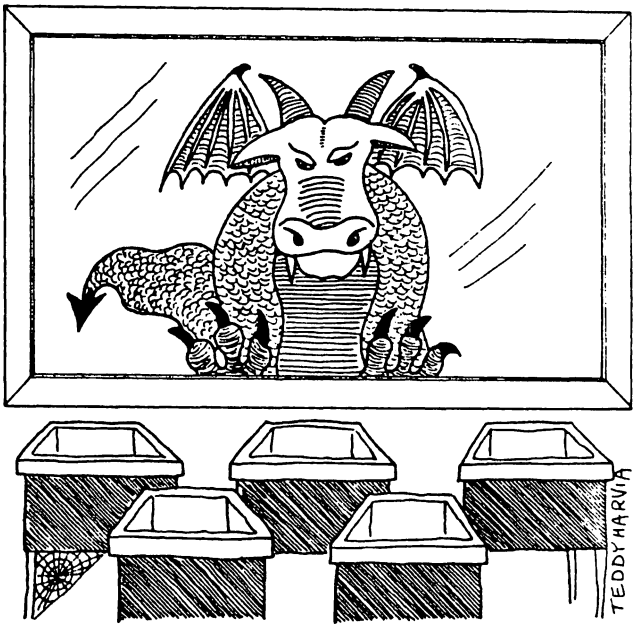
As a fervent Catholic pre-adolescent, sure of my calling to the sisterhood, I was profoundly moved by Childhood's End. It differed so dramatically from dogma, and yet rang true when compared to my own intangible mystical experiences. As I finished the last page, I really felt I had been granted a brief but absolute glimpse of the eternal and infinite face of God.

Arthur Clarke became one more small obsession and soon I was devouring everything of his I could find. His characters leaped from the pages as dear friends that dwell in my memory to this day. It is still overwhelming to realize that the many eyes I looked through in his stories were explorations of the unique perspective of one man.

No matter how far his protagonists traveled from the where and when I knew, they always carried the bedrock of their Earth heritage with and in them. Clarke's expansion into near space is blended inextricably in my thoughts with the real thing; not only because he was so accurate in his portrayal, but his presence in the news coverage from mission control was so integral and informative that it is difficult to imagine it without him. In my opinion, that crossover between the sciences and science fiction marked the beginnings of our respect for ourselves as dreamers of the future.

Some of his writings haunt me still in ways I can't pretend to even understand. City and the Stars, Rendezvous with Rama, Tales from the White Hart, so many different voices raise a paean to the glory and greatness of man and the universe. All of them were, finally, the voice of one very special man.

I've left behind my childhood now, but not my sense of wonder. It imbues my own writing and singing. It embellishes the universe wherein I live. It gives me one more priceless legacy to pass on to my children. I think I owe that to all the fine dreamers, but Arthur C. Clarke truly shines on as one of the finest and rarest stars in the firmament of wonder!



CHILDHOOD'S END

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Childhood's End

Chorus: I'll look upon the face of God
And through a billion eyes
And take the planet of my birth
Beyond the endless skies
And sing the universal song
Above the reach of right and wrong
And find the devil is my friend
When I have come to childhood's end.

They touched our world and changed our bloody history
They gave us peace and always dwelt in mystery
They eased the hunger of the endless realms of men
And taught us how to love each other once again.

They promised they would walk among us on the day
When all their ministrations had prepared the way
And when the work was done and fifty years had passed
They left their ships to show themselves to us at last

Chorus

The horns and wings and tails no longer brought us fear
Our minds were now unclouded and our eyes were clear
No longer would we judge things for the way they seem
And on that day the children would begin to dream

The dreamers were the promise of a new mankind
They soon would touch the universal overmind
And as they pondered what that touch would someday bring
In all our thoughts their hopes would brightly dance and sing

Chorus

The Devils were the guardians of our infant Earth
They supervised the circumstances of our birth
In loneliness they cross the seas of stars alone
And never share the song that calls us all back home

Words: Kathy Mar
Music: Kathy Mar

On cassette tape: Songbird by Kathy Mar
Available from: Off-Centaur Publications
P.O. Box 424
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Arthur C. Clarke
Memories & Musings

by Terry O'Brien

For many years, and still today, there exists the basic ABCs of science fiction: Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, and Arthur C. Clarke. For ideas, we have Asimov. For poetry, we have Bradbury. And for scope we have Clarke. Granted, there are other writers today who can be favorably compared with them, but these three will remain the giants against whom most everyone else is measured.

Starting with such works as Childhood's End and The City and the Stars, through his Odyssey series, Arthur C. Clarke has written about the wonders and majesty of the universe without having to leave the solar system, all taking place in our own backyard, so to speak. Whether it be mankind's grand and glorious destiny, as in Childhood's End, or something far more mundane, as in "The Nine Billion Names of God," Clarke has taken and stretched our imaginations to the human limit and beyond.

You can say that Clarke was one of the major influences in my early SF reading. In my sixth grade class every student had to write a book report, and I chose A Fall of Moondust, not one of his best, but one that had impressed me at the time. At least it impressed me enough to work extra hard on the report because I got an A on it. I can still remember seeing the report hanging up in the kitchen, and every now and then I remember a part from the book. Among everything else he is known for, Clarke should be well known as a memorable writer.

I can still remember my brother reading out loud from Childhood's End to the family one afternoon. I had just purchased it while he was visiting them, and he had picked it up and started glancing through it. He read the part where the Overlords had placed the two polarizing fields over a city in South Africa, cutting off all sunlight, in response to the discrimination of the white minority. Twenty years later that same brother gave me a copy of 2061: Odyssey Three; one wonders if he remembered as well.

And can you believe it? I can still remember the catalogue number of the Overlord's star: NGS 549672.

I was somewhat saddened when Clarke was unable to attend CONSPIRACY; one of the reasons I had attended was to meet one of the writers whose works had greatly influenced me in my youth, but I could understand his reasons for not attending. At least he has not stopped writing. And one thing I did do was discover the White Hart while wandering through London after CONSPIRACY.

So, unless I meet him sometime, I will have my memories. And that will suffice.

The True & Strange Worlds of Arthur C. Clarke

by Alan David Laska

Arthur C. Clarke, who wrote such classic science fiction pieces like 2001: A Space Odyssey, Childhood's End, Rendezvous with Rama, and 2010: Odyssey Two, hosted a couple of television shows produced by Trident Television Group. These programs dealt with the world of the supernatural, the occult, UFOs, sea monsters, Bigfoot, ESP, ghosts, and topics of that sort. These sound like things that Stephen King or Steven Spielberg might do, but Clarke's show was not fiction or fantasy; it was based on fact, on actual true stories. The two shows were entitled Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World and Arthur C. Clarke's World of Strange Powers.

The first program, Mysterious World, handled the following phenomena: "The Missing Ape Man," "Monsters of the Deep" (which dealt with sea monsters and giant squids), "Circles and Standing Stones" (which looked at ancient stone circles like Stonehendge), "UFOs," "Ancient Fires" (dealing with strange round rocks, 2000-year-old batteries), "The Great Siberian Explosion" (a strange object that crashed with the force of an atomic bomb in Russia in 1908), "Of Beasts and Snakes" (about oversized reptiles and strange animals whose existence is yet to be confirmed), "A Cabinet of Curiosities" (ice, hazel nuts, frogs and fish falling from the sky without an airplane in sight), and "Ball Lightning." In his program, World of Strange Powers, Clarke examined things like ghosts, dowsing, ESP, mind over matter, fire-walkers, and reincarnation.

On some of these subjects, Mr. Clarke takes a strong position of being a skeptic; on many others he has an open mind about it. He will not take a position on it until he gets and receives all the evidence.

He does not have an explanation on UFOs, but he is more interested in the cases of reported landings where physical evidence is left. On the strange things that fall out of the sky he believes that the chunks of ice that fall in clear, cloudless days are ice from outer space left over from the creation of the solar system. Clarke says he can't explain the hazel nuts or other things that fall from the sky.

These programs are highly researched. The producers went all over the world to get interesting film footage, and to interview many people for these two programs.

There were two books based on these programs which are also interesting to read. You might be able to obtain them as your local bookstore or library. They are: Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World (1980, A & W Visual Library, New York) by Simon Welfare and John Fairley, and Arthur C. Clarke's World of Strange Powers (1984, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York) by John Fairley and Simon Welfare. Of course, Arthur C. Clarke has written introductions and and comments for each of these two books.

I congratulate Mr. Arthur C. Clarke for taking the time to research this area usually ignored by the scientific community. One should not ignore or be a skeptic to something without first at least taking the time to study it.

Arthur C. Clarke

THE MAN WHO MADE THE MONOLITH

An essay by Alexander Bouchard

Undeniably, the primary image that comes to mind from the works of Arthur Charles Clarke are two large black monoliths in the proportions of 1:4:9, one found buried in the crater Tycho, and the other found out by one of the moons of Jupiter.

These are not the only images from his work; the Overlords from Childhood's End, with their undeniably demonic aspects; the first rise of the newly-ignited Deimos over Port Schiapparelli in The Sands of Mars; his stories of the first expedition to the Moon, which was a joint American-Soviet-British venture, with its stories of brilliant, unlikely, but plausible improvisations, the given reasons (and the real reasons) that the British crew agreed to be the last to leave the Moon, and other amusing incidents; the chillingly simple last line of the story, "The Nine Billion Names of God"; many others come to mind.

In addition, he has been a member of the British Interplanetary Society for many years, was instrumental in the development of radar (detailed in the novel Glide Path), and figured out the proper altitude and placement for geosynchronous communications satellites. He has written for motion pictures (2001 and its sequel, 2010, most notably), appeared on television as the host of a program several times, and has written of his other abiding interest, scuba diving. He has lived in Sri Lanka, which was formerly Ceylon, for many years, and communicated with Peter Hyams (the writer/director of 2010) by modem and e-mail during the preproduction stages. (A book of the transcripts of the exchanges is out, with introduction and commentaries by Clarke.)

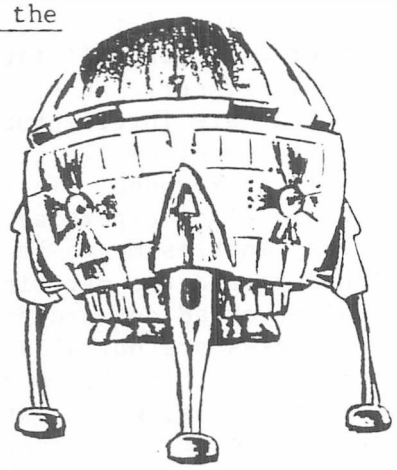
He has not produced as many epigrams as, say, a Heinlein or an Asimov, but he has produced something that has passed wholly into the public bank of "laws" like Murphy's Law, Cheops' Law, and O'Toole's Commentary on Murphy's Law. The statement that reads "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" is Clarke's Third Law. (The other two are more obscure; the one I remember is the First, "In order to make a new scientific discovery, consult the most eminent scientists in the field, and find out what they say can not be done. Then go do it.")

I have enjoyed Arthur Clarke's writing for many years, and even more so after I learned a pivotal fact; he, I, and Ludwig von Beethoven share the same birthday (the 16th of December). In this way, I feel connected, if only peripherally, with two immense talents.

Although Clarke is not as well appreciated here as I feel he should be, his lifetime of achievement in the field speaks well for him, and for us, who keep buying and reading his work. Clarke has never been one of the slam-bang space opera narrators, and the "New Wave" of psychologically-inspired SF was born well after his debut. In such books as Rendezvous with Rama, Imperial Earth, and Against the Fall of Night, he limits his scope to one solar system -- our own. The human race does not have the glittering starships, or the completely united governments of the pioneers of the field, such as Doc Smith, early John Campbell, or the like. His characters have real motivations, real problems, even real religious dilemmas. In Rama, there is the member of the crew of the **Endeavour** who is a member of the "Cosmo Christers" -- the First Church of Christ, Cosmonaut -- who cannot allow the government of Mercury to destroy Rama, the alien probe, with a thermonuclear torpedo.

Clarke has always been classified as a

"hard SF" writer; this is primarily because he knows enough about science to get the scientific details right. This is something we aspiring writers would do well to emulate. Unless it is necessary to your story that things are otherwise, learn and use the rules of science as they are. Sweating the details makes for better thinking; you may never use any of the background you're getting in the story, but someone reading it can tell that it's consistent. I know, when I read a bit of orbital mechanics, or physics, or other scientific tidbit used as background in a book by Clarke, that it's been checked, and it's as right as it can be in the context of the story.



Arthur C. Clarke is a soft-spoken, polite, gentlemanly giant in this, our field of science fiction, and has been for many years. With any luck, he shall continue to be for many more to come.

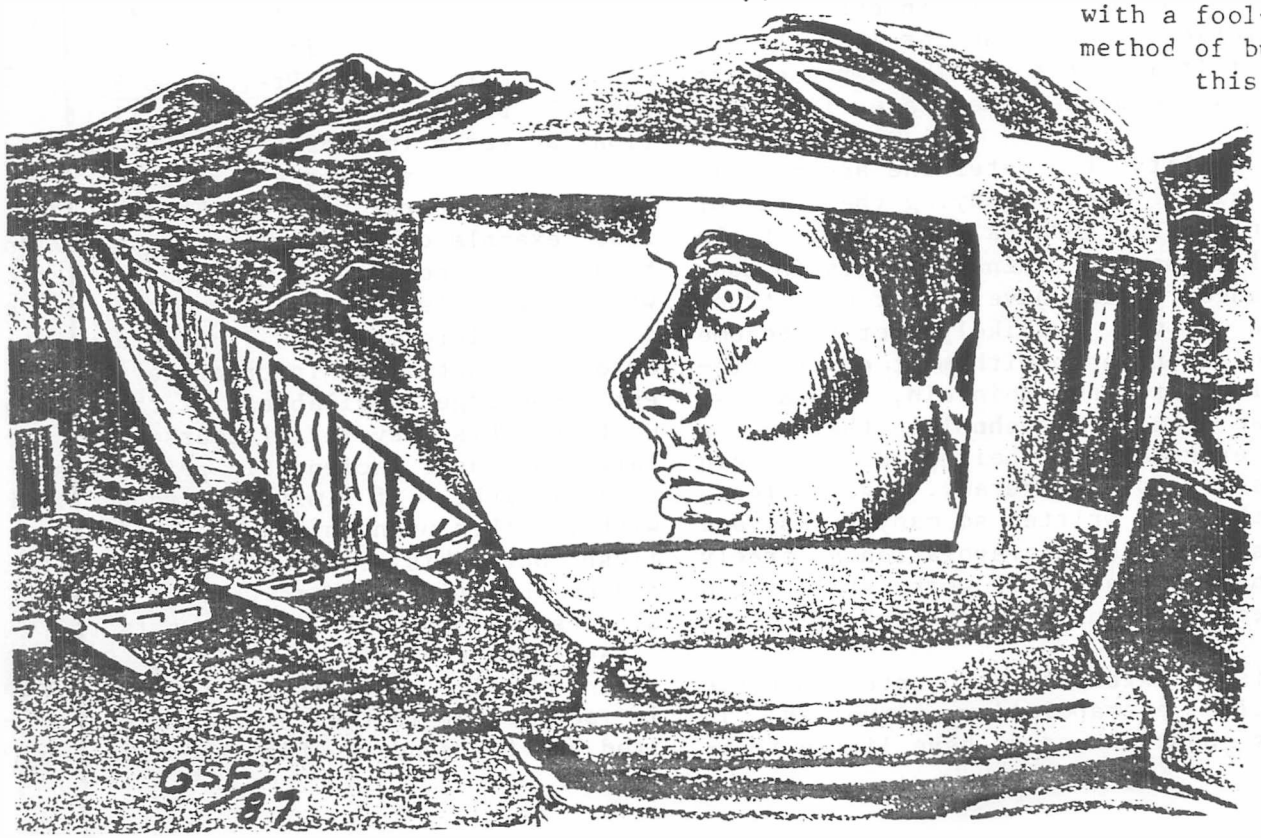
HALlucination 9000

by Arthur C. Clarke

Even twenty years after 2001 first appeared, I still receive several letters every month from SF fans and computer bugs (not to mention serious historians of science) who suddenly "discover" there is a strange "relationship" between the name HAL and IBM.

It is still not widely known in the computer industry and SF circles that HAL stands for Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer, even though I spelt this out carefully in Chapter 16 of the novel. I've spent the past two decades trying to disown the legend that HAL is derived from IBM by transposing one letter. But alas, like many convincing legends, it refuses to go away. I even had my characters in 2010: Odyssey Two contradict this canard (see Chapter 35).

I'm now thinking of offering an attractive prize of a Computer Virus called HALlucination (which invades IBM and compatible machines and makes them sing "Daisy, Daisy,...") for anybody who will come up with a fool-proof method of burying this myth.



The Predictions of Arthur C. Clarke: A Limited Study

by Joseph Green

Three years ago, for reasons not pertinent here I did a study of the predictive capabilities of Verne, Wells, Clarke, and Heinlein. The intent was to examine this aspect of Science Fiction as a whole, and to contrast two old acknowledged masters with two modern ones in the process. What follows here was excerpted from the larger work, but rewritten, condensed, and (sometimes) added to as necessary to stand alone. Almost all of Clarke's previously read major works were skim-read again for the study; the few I had missed were read for the first time.

One of the problems encountered when studying the predictive capabilities of recognized masters of science fiction, including the contrasts between early and modern, is that the new draw upon the old -- and usually try to outdo them in imaginative extrapolation. This has caused many of the ideas and concepts in current science fiction to move so far into the future that it is not possible at present to state how accurate they are likely to prove.

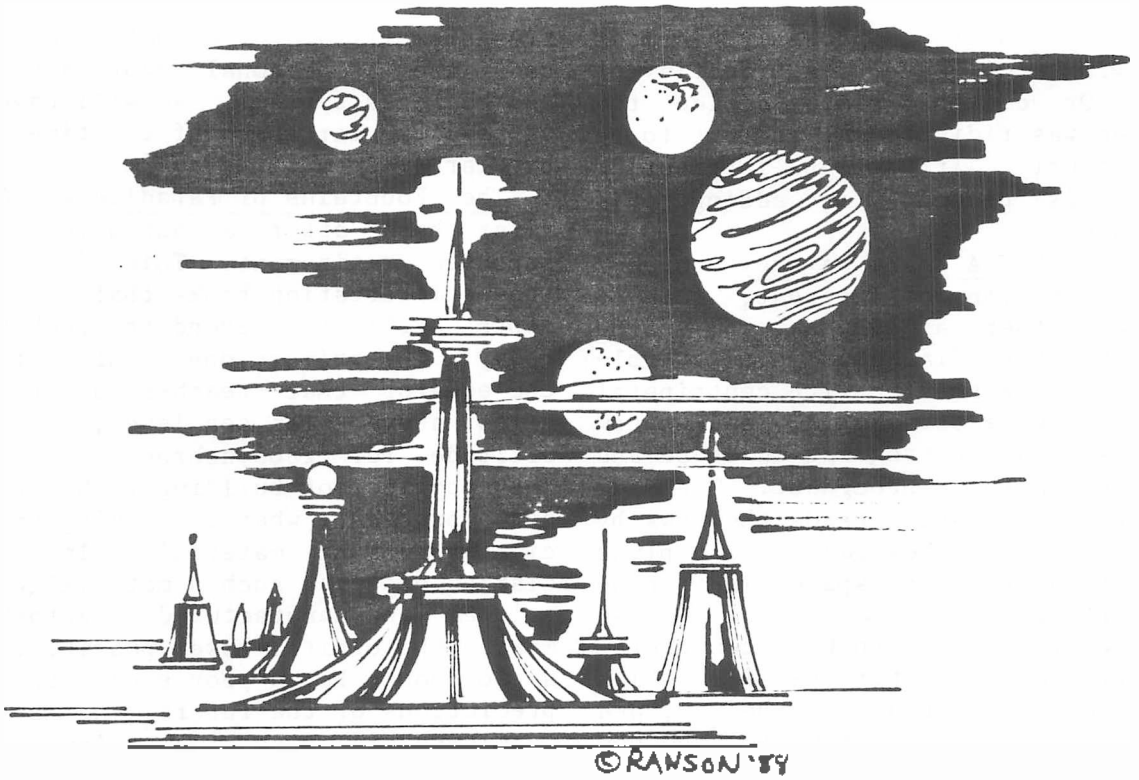
The ability to determine accuracy is fairly clear when studying the works of Verne and Wells. Today a great many of the ideas of these two seminal figures in modern science fiction have either come true, or been proven unlikely ever to become fact. This contrasts with most of the stories of Clarke and Heinlein, who are so far ahead of modern technology that only a small percentage of their predictions can be checked for accuracy. Nevertheless, each author has written so many books, and used his powers of extrapolation so freely and so often, that their works still yield a respectable number of "hits" or "misses."

It is interesting to note that the imaginative extrapolation involved in Clarke's books seems to have little relation to the age of the author when the books were written. Some of those he wrote thirty-five to forty years ago are among the most imaginative of the lot.

As a writer of science fiction, Clarke is a superb imagineer. He spins tales of the future that are intellectually interesting and often emotionally gripping. His technological background, in those areas where my own level of expertise in science and technology enables me to be reasonably certain I understand the material, is usually carefully worked out and quite accurate. His mistakes are normally attributable to writing within the bounds of what was known at the time, which later discoveries have since proven wrong. He is an outstanding example of the type of science fiction writer who first made the genre fascinating to technologically oriented "kids from nine to ninety."

According to the foreword in a later edition, Clarke's first novel was The Sands of Mars, though Prelude to Space was actually published earlier. The first edition appeared in 1952, long before space flight was considered a serious possibility by the general public. This book is a fine example of the work of a careful and technically competent science fiction writer who is working with incomplete or incorrect information. It contains many errors of fact, but incorporates the latest knowledge available at the time of writing. His several discourses that relate to basic scientific principles are usually right, if limited in scope. It is with the then unknown details necessary to flesh out this story of the exploration and colonization of Mars where his material does not match the now-known facts.

Against the Fall of Night, Clarke's second novel, made his reputation, but it is set so far in the future it is of limited use for studying his predictive abil-



ities. At the time of its first appearance in 1948 it was a quite short novel, serialized in the magazine Startling Stories. A few years later Clarke revised and expanded it into the definitive version, retitled The City and the Stars. In either form it is an excellent example of thoughtful science fiction, but most of its predictions cannot be verified today. Among the more interesting of these is one that is astonishingly prescient, in the light of today's knowledge of solid state physics. It is an epigram that appears posted on an equipment room wall:

"No machine may contain any moving parts."

"The opinions expressed in this book are not those of the author."

Childhood's End was Clarke's most famous book until the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey appeared, and made the movie novelization of the same name a bestseller. This book deals with the growth and change of the human species into something not recognizable today; fascinating as speculation, but not technological in its predictions. The novel does contain two sociological statements of high interest to anyone who studies or is concerned with technological progress. The first deals with science:

> It works both ways -- you've told me that yourself. Our free exchange of information means swifter progress, even if we do give away a few secrets. The Russian research departments probably don't know what their own people are doing half the time. We'll show them that Democracy can get to the moon first. [1]

This clear understanding of the importance of free exchange to scientific progress has still not been grasped by many Western politicians and military leaders!

The second and longer statement starts on page 19, where Clarke picks South Africa as the last bastion on Earth of racial prejudice, one he apparently expected to last for many, many years. [2] That one gives every indication of coming true.

One of the strangest aspects of this book is that the copyright page contains a statement found on most of the later editions, the statement what heads this section: "The opinions expressed in this book are not those of the author."

One wonders why Clarke felt it necessary to add this tiny little disclaimer at the front of reprints. Most readers do not ordinarily consider the varying ideas and beliefs expressed in a work of fiction to be directly representative of those held by the author. (Good writers try to give both sides of any question.) Did Clarke

lose faith in what was probably his most far-out vision of the ultimate destiny of humanity? Or did he simply decide the whole idea was ridiculous, and not to be taken seriously? It would be interesting to learn his reasons for adding this strange note.

The book 2001: A Space Odyssey contains several predictions of interest, some of which are either already here or on the immediate horizon. Clarke projects a "rolling wheel" space station with centripetal gravity for the Western World, and we now know it will be rectangular in shape and operate at zero-G throughout. The head scientist, Dr. Floyd, reads the news by using a foolscap "Newspad," which plugs into the circuits of the spaceship to connect him with data bases on Earth. We can do the equivalent now with home computers. The intelligent computer HAL 9000 which Clarke projects is already on the way, and it would be very interesting to know how many of today's researchers in AI (Artificial Intelligence) were inspired by seeing this demonstration of such a future possibility.

At a certain point this story moves on into dimensions of science and technology so advanced as to be useless in studying Clarke's predictive abilities. It also began with a speculation that cannot be proven, that intelligent beings tampered with protohumans to increase their intelligence and lead to the development of Homo sapiens. Throughout the central part, which is set in the year 2001, there are many predictions of future capabilities we can see coming true around us today. But they are not yet established fact.

Rendezvous with Rama is set in the year 2131, and is so far advanced as to not offer much material for predictive studies. The theme is the arrival in our solar system of an automated scouting vessel, and its exploration by a group from Earth. Most of the action takes place inside Rama, and we see little of the Earth of that time.

Imperial Earth is another far future book, where Clarke has people living below the surface of the moon Titan. The year is 2276, normally too far ahead for predictions to be expected. But one emerges that is rapidly becoming possible today, and is of interest. It is a computer so small and of such large capacity that it can be carried in the pocket as a man of today carries his billfold. In that era everyone uses them as personal record depositories and business systems. We will have such a capability far ahead of the time depicted by Clarke.

The Fountains of Paradise was Clarke's first book after an announced period of supposed retirement. This is another of those interesting books that feature concepts still far beyond the technology of today. The primary one is of a tower on the equator that reaches up to 22,238 miles above mean sea level, the correct altitude for geosynchronous satellites. The physics of building such a tower are not a problem; what is lacking are sufficiently strong materials. In this book Clarke projects such a material being developed and manufactured in zero-G, this making the orbital tower possible. This is a good book, but a poor source to mine for predictions of the future.

Clarke is also the science fiction writer who outshines all others in his factual books about space travel and the development of near-space. His 'idea' books, such as Profiles of the Future, are the best and most likely scenarios of our technological future to be found.

Profiles contains a listing of some of the most important scientific discoveries and inventions since 1800, followed by an extrapolation of progress into the future, as Clarke envisions it. Clarke predicted a lunar landing by 1970, and was off by one year. He also predicted translating machines by 1970, and they came in about that time. (He called for efficient electric storage, and that didn't happen.) He predicted planetary landings by 1980, and instead we retreated from even our closest neighbor, the moon. Clarke believed that artificial intelligence would arrive between 1990 and 2000, which seems reasonable, but also colonizing of the planets by the latter year, which does not. Before the year of 2100 Clarke thinks we will have attritions in human replication, immortality, matter transmission, interstellar flight and a host of other triumphs -- all of which remains to be seen.

Clarke crosses easily back and forth from future fiction to future fact in his production of books, while normally keeping both quite believable (as much so as possible when the fiction segments are sometimes highly visionary). His engineering and physics background is unim-

peachable, and this expertise suffuses his work. But it is interesting to note that his later works of fiction, like his factual books, have tended to focus more on the near-future and less on the truly distant possibilities.

One of Clarke's weaknesses as a writer, and probably the one cited most often by readers, is that his characters tend to be stiff and withdrawn people. He is a writer about ideas, and his people sometimes seem mere automatons, acting out their roles. In some of his later books, particularly the final (we hope) third book in his most profitable effort, the Odyssey series, Clarke's penchant for emphasizing ideas over people becomes overpowering.

Odyssey 3 is really a series of explications of ideas, thinly held together by an amorphous plot. Although warm, living, breathing human beings--people with warts, BO, and pretensions to nobility--have never been one of Clarke's strong suits, his characters are usually recognizably human. In this book they are only names written on cardboard. The ideas revolve around the discovery of living beings on Europa, both before and after Jupiter becomes the star Lucifer in Odyssey II. This is an idea not likely to be tested for predictive ability within our lifetimes.

Strongly contrasted with this Clarke who serves as the prophet of high technology it that mystic who foresees all of humanity maturing into an entity of pure energy and mind-force (Childhood's End), which then leaves Earth forever to join the universal overmind. Clarke has also written quite a number of stories in which humanity is saved from itself by a higher power, a concept not too different from a belief in the omnipotent powers of a "God." This idea of beings and powers so far above us as to be completely beyond our comprehension owes its origins far more to religious belief than to scientific inquiry.

As has been noted by others, any thorough study of Clarke's books confronts an enigma, as difficult to fully reconcile within his published works as if he were two different people. Any attempt to sum up the meaning of the total corpus of Clarke's work has to confront this contradiction between science and mysticism. Fortunately, the more limited scope of this article permits me to slide gracefully away from this problem.

For the purposes of this study, the conclusion that emerges from a detailed study of Clarke's books (and those of Verne, Wells, and Heinlein, for that matter) is that the much vaunted predictive abilities of science fiction are a myth. For every prediction that comes true, there are a hundred that do not --and only the selected vision of hindsight can point out the winner and ignore the ninety-nine losers. Unfortunately, at the time the predictions are made it is usually impossible to distinguish those that will come true from those that will not.

Arthur C. Clarke, although far better technically qualified than most science fiction writers, and with a well-earned reputation for writing quality speculative non-fiction, is nevertheless no more accurate than his peers in predicting the future. His books must be read for the enjoyment of good fiction, and their ability to open up the human mind to the acceptance of new possibilities--arguably a far more valuable attribute of science fiction for most readers than a supposed ability to predict the future. /*/

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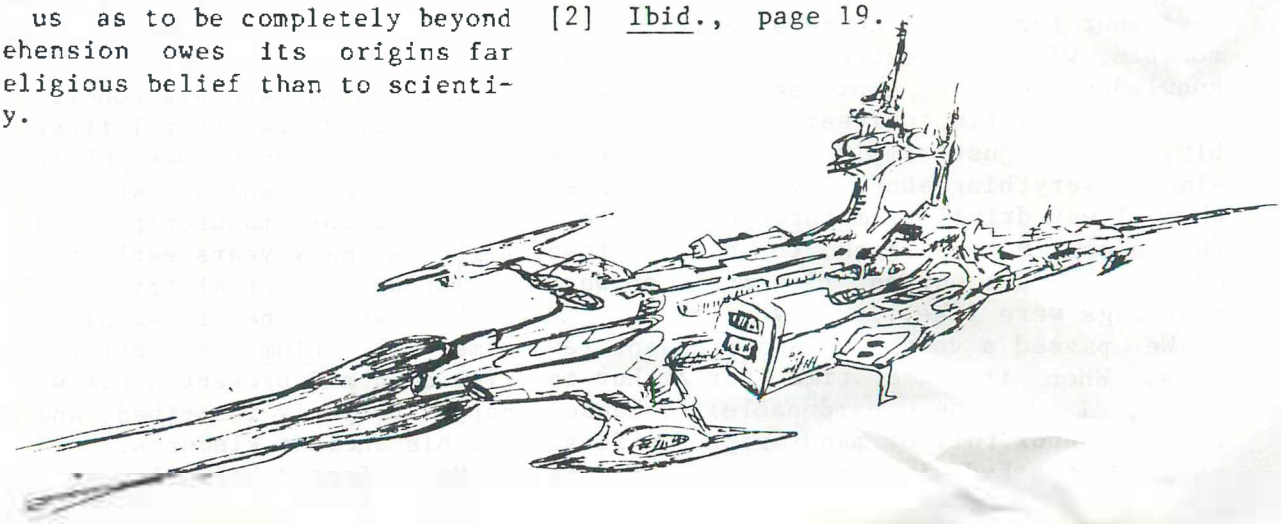
[1] Arthur C. Clarke, Childhood's End, Ballantine Books, Inc., 1953. Page 9.

[2] Ibid., page 19.



Arthur C. Clarke and Chet Kinsman

by Ben Bova

Early in 1956 I was working as a newspaper reporter in suburban Philadelphia, when I learned that the United States had started a program to launch an artificial satellite -- "man's first step into space," it was called then.

I talked myself into a job as a Junior Technical Editor on Project Vanguard, with the Martin Co. in the Baltimore area, the company that was building the satellite launching rocket. I was thrilled with being a part of the fledging space program mainly because I had been reading science fiction ever since my first trip to the Fels Planetarium, many years earlier. Now I was helping make those science fiction stories come true -- at least a little bit.

One autumn day my supervisor (a Senior Technical Editor) told me that some English writer was going to visit the plant as part of the research he was doing on a book about Vanguard. I asked the writer's name.

Arthur C. Clarke.

I had read Clarke's science fiction, of course, and even his non-fiction books about rocketry. When my boss asked me to spend the next few days escorting Clarke around the plant and answering his questions, I was ecstatic. But somewhat fearful, too. After all, this was not merely a writer. I was a writer. This was an author. One of his books had been in the Book of the Month Club, for gosh sakes!

Arthur turned out to be a genial, personable, witty and extremely kind man. And knowledgeable. He impressed the somewhat suspicious Martin engineers very favorably, and he just simply awed me. He knew almost everything about everything. Even when I was driving him through a pea-soup fog along Rt. 40 back to his downtown hotel, he discoursed pleasantly on what real fogs were like, in London.

We passed a very busy and pleasant few days. When it came time for Arthur to leave, I did the unpardonable: I handed him a shoebox full of manuscript (my first novel) and asked him, please, to read it and tell me what's wrong with it.

The man lived in Ceylon! But he smiled and took the ten pounds of paper all the way back home with him, then wrote me a long letter pinpointing all the problems with the novel (and returning the manuscript at his own expense). The letter was depressing, in a way; there was a lot wrong with the novel. But Arthur worked a good deal of encouragement into his letter, too. Enough to keep me going.

The novel was based on the idea that the Russians would get into space before the U.S., but then the Americans would launch a crash program to put Americans on the Moon before the Russians got there. Even with Clarke's critique helping me, no publisher would touch it. One editor, however, told me that he thought it was good enough to publish, but that Senator Joe McCarthy, an anti-communist witch hunter, would make trouble if he did. He advised me to write something else.

I did, and the editor published it. My first published novel is a source of great anguish to me, for many reasons. But that's another story.

I couldn't help tinkering with the unpublished novel. The characters in it -- especially the protagonist, Chet Kinsman -- kept nagging at me to let them see the light of day. I wrote other novels. I wrote short stories and magazine articles. I wrote nonfiction books. I became reasonably well known in the science fiction world. Arthur and I became friends, even though a half a world separated us.

But Kinsman and his cohorts stayed with me. And 20 years after I first met Arthur, my novel Millennium was published. It was the logical (and artistic) outgrowth of that shoebox manuscript I had foisted on Arthur so many years earlier.

Through a mutual friend I learned that Arthur would be in Washingtin DC at the time Millennium came off the presses. I flew down and presented him with the first copy, properly inscribed, and thanked him for his ancient kindness.

He professed befuddlement. "Read your

manuscript? I never read other people's manuscript," he proclaimed. Then he delved into his capacious briefcase and pulled out a form letter, the all-purpose letter he uses to answer mail from strangers. There's a long list of items on it, with a space on the margin to check off which item this particular letter dealt with.

Arthur scribbled "Dear Mr. Bova" at the top, then checked off the line that read, "Sorry, but I simply cannot read your manuscript." Then he signed it with a flourish and, grinning, handed it to me.

Okay. A few years after that, Arthur was a Guest of Honor at the Worldcon in Brighton. Lovely affair. Rain and gale-force winds; temperatures in the low 40s all weekend. Oh to be in England in August!

I was asked to give a speech. I prepared slides of Arthur's letter and told the story I just told here. With one addition. I showed the slide of Arthur's letter as I said to the jam-packed auditorium:

Now, if Arthur sends you a form letter like this, don't believe him. He does read manuscripts. He's a very kind man."

From the darkened auditorium came a single roaring voice --- Arthur's: "You Rotter!"

We are still friends, despite distance. We speak now and then on the telephone, using the communications satellites that he invented. Of all the writers who have worked in this field we call science fiction, I think Arthur best represents my personal ideal, my goal of blending scientific knowledge with the poetic soul to foresee how the world might be in the future.

And, despite his form letters, he is the kindest of men.

Clarke and Temple

THE FANS BEHIND THE PROs

by Harry Bond

In common with many another writer of SF in those days, and indeed of today, Arthur C. Clarke and William F. Temple both started as fans. In fact, they began their careers from a common base.

Clarke (whose nickname in those days was "Ego", hence his use of an early pseudonym "E. G. O'Brian") and Bill Temple (whose early amateur fiction bore the distinctly transparent byline of "Temple Williams") were probably the two leading lights of pre-World War II London fandom. Clarke, when he was forced to move due to lack of space (the story runs that there wasn't room in his apartment to wear a double-breasted suit), found that Temple was also looking for accommodations, and suggested moving in together. They found an ideal location; 88 Greys Inn Road, London, was near the hall where early London cons were held, and even nearer to the pub where fans met in those days. The Flat, as it became known, was the first British example of a "slanshack" as is still remembered as an integral part of fannish history.

Sadly the Flat only lasted one year; just after Temple's marriage in 1939 war broke out, and first Clarke and then Temple were conscripted. In a way this was fortunate, for a little later the Flat was demolished by a direct hit from a bomb. The house to which Temple had moved in Wembley was also hit, but Temple was now serving.

During this period Temple had sold professionally to the only British professional SF magazine, Tales of Wonder, and also to several US magazines (his best known story, The Four-Sided Triangle, appeared in Amazing during 1938). Clarke too sold to Tales of Wonder, but only non-fiction articles.

The war, of course, put paid to their writing: Temple gallantly kept trying to expand The Four-Sided Triangle into a nov-

el, but the manuscript was first lost during a battle in North Africa, and when it was finally completed, the ship on which it was sent home was sunk. He had more success with his fannish contacts, though: in a still-famous letter to Ackerman's VOM he said, "...The fan outlook is my idea of vision...", and when the letter was published in 1944 it led to US fans increasing their contact with British ones, which had lapsed during the War.

When the War was over and Temple and Clarke were demobbed, both began to sell professionally again (to the new British magazines New Worlds and Fantasy), and again formed the nucleus of a revitalized London fandom.

At this time Temple was best known as a fannish comedian, and Clarke as his straight-man. They kept up pretenses of a feud in print, though there were the best of friends still, and despite British fanzines of the day being few and far between, they both managed to kill each other off in various improbable ways in their pages. At conventions too, both were valued as speakers (Temple being considered the fan comedian of the period, and Clarke's scientific knowledge had no equals); and in their speeches references were invariably made to each other.

At one convention, in 1951, Temple gave a speech on "the techniques of writing serials". So the programme said. In fact he extemporized a serial by Arthur C. Clarke about the first space rocket. In this serial the first rocket launched contains Temple and Clarke as crew, and despite a successful takeoff proves a failure; when it leaves the atmosphere it grinds to a halt because it has nothing to push against (a common layman's fallacy of the day). A second attempt is made, in a giant onion which flies on Mitogenic Rays. Appropriately enough, this speech raised tears of laughter.

Clarke was described at the time, by Walt Willis, as having "a dashing manner -- at least every time I saw him he was dashing somewhere. I expect that some day when he is particularly excited he'll reach escape velocity and that's the last we will see of him." Temple, it seems, was "a small dark plumpish chap, very quiet spoken..."; but he was well-known for his humorous remarks. At the close of another convention, which Clarke and been unable to attend because of an American trip, Temple walked out the door with Clarke's

THE NINE BILLION NAMES OF GOD

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

brother Fred and saw the moon shining above.

"My God!" cried Temple, "Arthur's left it behind!"

"He's got an American edition," Fred reassured him.

Though their names are best known as professional writers, neither Clarke nor Temple has ever abandoned his fannish contacts. Clarke is only the honorary president of the British Science Fiction Association, but according to Inside Sources he still writes long and constructive letters and tries to keep the somewhat moribund organization going, as best he can from Sri Lanka on the other side of the Earth.

Temple remained a star of the London Circle fan group through the 1960s until it was taken over (bodily) by Michael Moorcock, Charles Platt and the New Wave staff of New Worlds. Unfortunately he recently suffered a stroke which left him unable to type or write except in laboured capitals, but being Temple he still managed to get a laugh from it. In a letter-of-comment he remarked:

> Since I estimate that 50% of my little grey cells were washed away by my brain hemorrhage, I who once had a modest reputation as a wit, can now claim only to be a half-wit.

You can't help but like people like that.

Short Comments on Arthur C. Clarke

David Thayer

I never "enjoyed" the fiction of Arthur C. Clarke as much as I did that of some of others, but it forced me to think like that of few others. It rarely convinced me to suspend disbelief; it did convince me I needed beliefs. Reading Clarke is almost a religious experience for me.

Roy Hill

I've several snippets on Arthur C. Clarke, gleaned mainly from Vinç Clarke's library, and THEN by Rob Hanson:

ACC's fannish nickname was EGO.

He joined the British Interplanetary Society as a young fan in 1934. In 1937, he was treasurer of the new London branch and talked of its formation and the members' hopes on practical research at the first SF Convention at Leeds. By 1948, he was BIS chairman and spoke at the first British post-War convention, the WHITCON.

ACC's bedsit at Paddington, London, in 1938 was so small that legend says he once wore a double-breasted suit and got stuck between the walls.

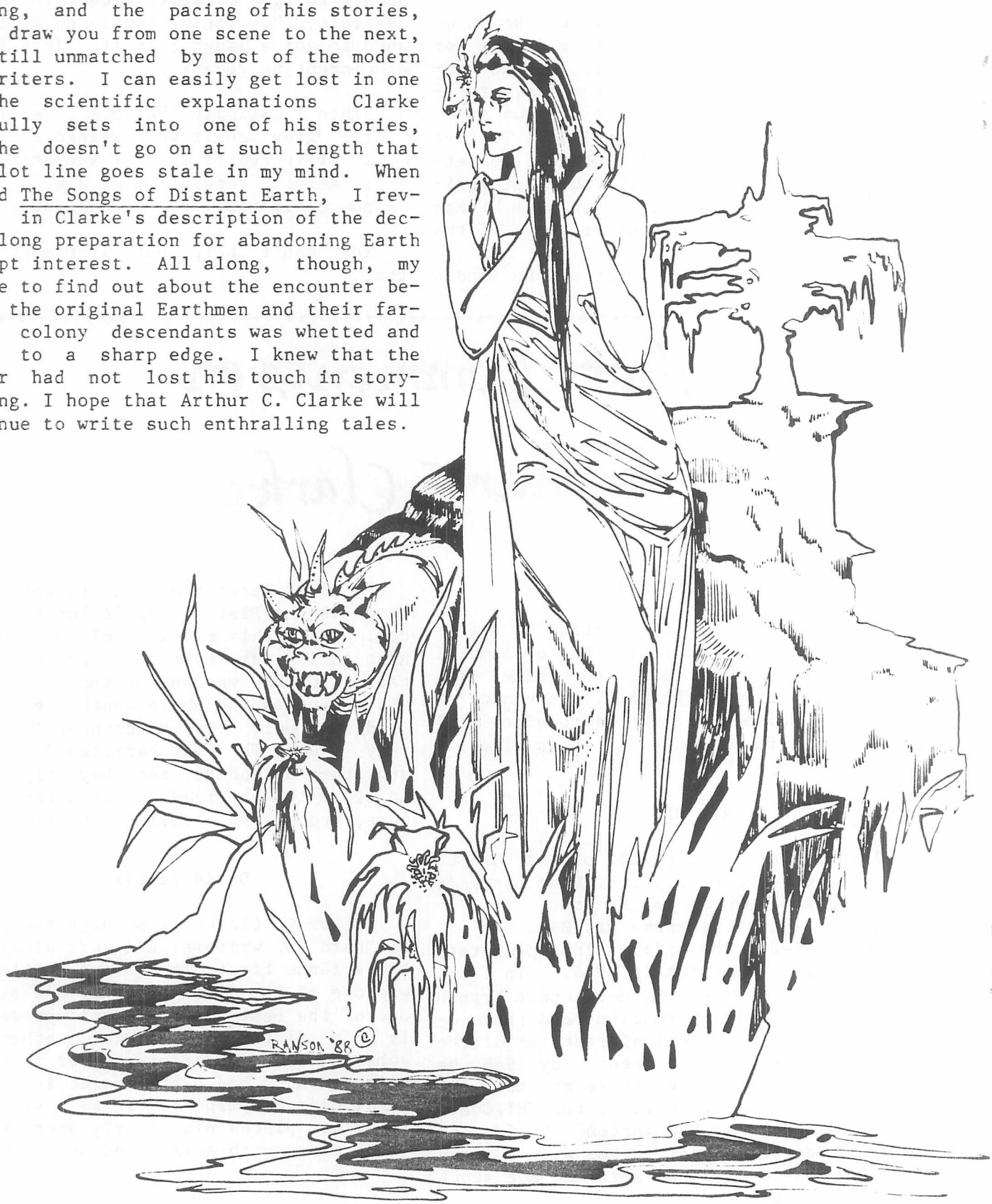
He moved later that year to what became known as The Flat at Gray's Inn Road, London. The weekly meetings of the London SF Association were held there and on one occasion Clarke was one of the teetotallers who stayed behind while another group visited the pub. On the drinkers' return, they found The Flat barricaded by Clarke and other defenders, and they only managed to storm the barricade after a battle with mops, brooms and a rolled umbrella.

David Palter

Arthur C. Clarke is perhaps the paragon of "hard" SF writers; his work always puts the science first in Science Fiction. He was one of the first writers, and still is one of the best, to treat science seriously in a fictional context, rather than substituting pseudo-science, or inaccurate cliches which had proliferated in the primeval days of pulp SF. Clarke's stature in the genre places him clearly among the Big Three along with Asimov and Heinlein.

Larry Nowinski

Normally I prefer stories with good characterization. But in Clarke's case I make an exception. The scientific ideas he presents, always accurate at the time of writing, and the pacing of his stories, that draw you from one scene to the next, are still unmatched by most of the modern SF writers. I can easily get lost in one of the scientific explanations Clarke carefully sets into one of his stories, yet he doesn't go on at such length that the plot line goes stale in my mind. When I read The Songs of Distant Earth, I revelled in Clarke's description of the decades long preparation for abandoning Earth in rapt interest. All along, though, my desire to find out about the encounter between the original Earthmen and their far-flung colony descendants was whetted and honed to a sharp edge. I knew that the Master had not lost his touch in story-telling. I hope that Arthur C. Clarke will continue to write such enthralling tales.



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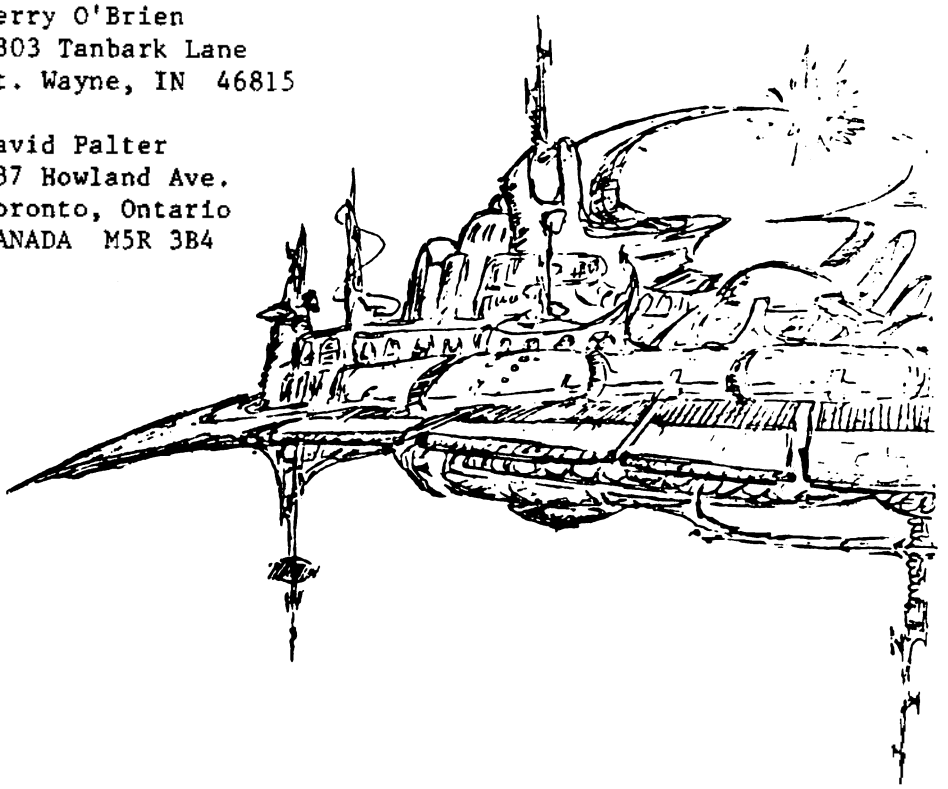

"Reach for the stars"