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(With an addenda by F. Orlin Tremaine!

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Arthur C. Clarke:

Prophet

With a Poet's License

Like Omar, another poet in another age, Arthur C. Clarke is a philosopher-scientist. It is a rare combination; joined with his literary craftsmanship, it qualifies him uniquely for science fiction greatness.

Consider the writer: his feeling for figure of speech, for metaphor and simile, is unequalled in the field. Thus he sums up the evanescence of individual power in "Exile of the Eons": "Like them"-- Napoleon, et al.--- "he would be a blurred figure far down the infinite corridor of time, dwindling toward oblivion." (p. 95) In the same story, he pictures a dying earth: "It was night, and very still, for the earth was now too weary even for winds to blow." (p. 110) How melancholy seems Man's retreat before nature in "The Forgotten Enemy": "Twenty years ago he had watched the last helicopters climbing heavily out of Regent's Park, their rotors churning the ceaselessly falling snow." (p. 19)

Like all writers of the English school, a major facet of his style is his capacity for sketching in details which, prima facie, have nothing to do with the story but which add the final touch of verisimilitude. Whether to achieve characterization (Childhood's End: "Stormgren walked to his desk and was fidgeting with his famous uranium paperweight." p. 9-10), to render the unknown more horrible by injecting the known ("A Walk in the Dark": "With a shudder he remembered the giant polyps that had snared the first explorers on Var-gon III." p. 136), to make a scientific extrapolation more convincing by attention to collateral detail ("The Fires Within": "I was rather surprised to see large numbers of birds in the vicinity attracted by the hundreds of dead worms lying in the ground." p. 105), to add historical background ("Earthlight": "Even under one-sixth earth's gravity, only two men had ever reached (Pico's) summit. One of them was still there." p. 65), to suggest the passage of vast time (Against the Fall of Night: "There had once been a ship, legend whispered, that had circumnavigated the Cosmos between

the rising and the setting of the sun." p. 181), or just to make a scene more fetching by hanging pictures on the wall ("Hide and Seek": "Our bag was small but varied ... four rabbits (one, I am sorry to say, an infant in arms), and a couple of pigeons ..." p. 112), it breathes life into even his most trifling stories.

These, however, are merely signposts of a great literacy; equally important-- what is he saying?

His short stories are spun upon a pattern that reveals a philosophy and a thinking process. It is not so much that they end almost invariably on a note of surprise, but in the significance of the "surprise" itself. "Surprises" only because they are not directly inferred from the preceeding content, they are always logical and consistent with the narrative premise. Often the story will seem a tragedy, but by a startling climactic reorientation, become triumphant, even stirring, in tone. "Rescue Party" concerns the literally last minute attempts of a galactic survey ship to rescue what it can of humanity before earth's sun becomes a nova. They are puzzled when they find all human life gone from an earth far below them in scientific development; then they discover "lying across league after league of space ... thousands of tiny pencils of light ... 'This is the greatest fleet that has ever been assembled ... they dared to use rockets to bridge interstellar space.'" (pp. 357 - 8) "Loophole", his first story, tells in a series of Martian communiques of the Martian suppression of Man's nuclear research. The restriction succeeds, but the last two communiques are Terrestrial and reveal that man has developed electronic transmission of matter and has destroyed the Martians.

Obviously, the theme is that adversity gives rise to achievement. It is therefore no coincidence that the spaceship in "Jupiter Five" is called the Arnold Toynbee; Clarke's stories are essentially extrapolations of Toynbee's law, "The greater the challenge, the greater the response." Toynbee appends, however, that there is a mean between an excess and a deficiency of challenge, and Clarke thinks so too, for in "The Forgotten Enemy" the challenge of another ice age is simply too much for Man, and in "History Lesson" man is destroyed by the same natural force, while "The Awakening" stuns with its horrifying ending: "... he knew ... that the ancient war between Man and insect had long ago been ended: and that Man was not the victor." (p. 85) The golden mean is achieved, however, in all the novels (even Childhood's End, though the response as we shall see is in a form unpalatable to Clarke), in most of the novelettes, and masterfully in the response of an individual to an intellectual challenge in the amusing "Hide and Seek" and in that fine character study, "Breaking Strain". In the latter there is also a failure to respond, in the person of Grant, who is unequal to the challenge and thus does not survive.

In Clarke's stories, then, a challenge is presented to a society (or occasionally an individual), which either responds successfully or is unequal to the challenge. When its response is insufficient, or the challenge too great, the re-

sult is an evocation of overwhelming tragedy; but when the response is adequate, at hand will be a moving reminder of Man's potentialities and of Clarke's philosophy.

Clarke's novels, and most of his medium length stories such as "Seeker of the Sphinx", reveal another pattern, related to the simpler framework of his short stories but a broader, more natural concomitant of the novel form.



Into a "utopia" is born, or appears, an individual not completely satisfied with that society, who comes into contact with a message from a more vigorous past. As a result of this contact, the protagonist's character is altered, the "utopia" is shattered and the future regains the virility of the past.

By "utopia" is meant a self-satisfied society, passive, static, and convinced of its own perfection and opposed to change. Clarke's first novel, Against the Fall of Night, is the clearest example of this.

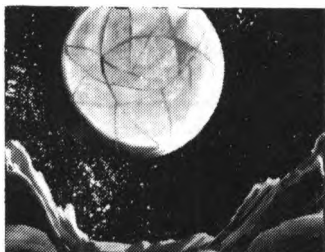
Static indeed is the society of Diaspar: "They were, perhaps, as contented as any race the world had known ... This was Alvin's world, a world which for ages had been sinking into a gracious decadence." (p. 17) Eloquently, Clarke describes the introspective isolation of the culture. The restlessness of the protagonist, Alvin, is an inborn dissatisfaction with "utopia". Told that men in past ages had more space but were less happy, he wonders, "Was it true? He thought once more of the desert lapping around the island that was Diaspar, and his mind returned to the world that earth had been ..." (p. 15)

Driven by curiosity, he explores the outer edge of Diaspar, and there discovers the message, spelled out as in no other Clarke story. "There is a better way," declares the warning that halts him at the borders of the outside world. (p. 24) Transformed by this, he begins a search that leads to the revival of civilization and the end of insularity for Diaspar.

In Prelude to Space, this pattern is less obvious, but just as distinct. The "utopian" society is simply our own, blind to the challenge of the stars, averse to change. The message appears to protagonist Dirk Alexson in the form of the sea-vessel Discovery, which carried Scott into the Antarctic. "Dirk stared intently at (it) ... His mind slipped into the past, and it seemed the embankment was gone and the old ship was steaming past walls of ice into an unknown land ... the sense of historical continuity was suddenly very strong. The line that stretched through Scott back to Drake and Raleigh, and yet earlier voyagers was still unbroken ..." (p. 11) Much later Dirk reflects that "... (he) was still only partly aware of the effects his new surroundings were having on his character ... For the first time in his life he was with men who were shaping the future and not merely interpreting the past ..." (p. 79) The transformation in his character is complete. The revivification of the future is only implied,

but Alexson is now a vigorous spokesman and propagandist, and will be a part of the invigorated tomorrow.

In Sands of Mars the pattern takes on a more personal color. The story is about a virile society-- the Martian colony-- struggling against the "utopia" of earth. Earth is represented by the rather egotistical, initially not entirely likeable science fiction writer Martin Gibson, special passenger inaugurating passenger service to Mars. This is mirrored in his personal problem, a past which he thinks he has escaped. But he discovers that "the twenty years that lay behind had vanished like a dream and he was face to face once more with the ghosts of his own forgotten past." (p.65) Here is the message, in a different aspect. It shatters his own personal complacency, characterizing the struggle between "utopia" and virility taking place on Mars. This transforms his character so that later, "The faces around provided the answer. Here were men and women united in a single task ... They had a sense of fulfillment which few could know on earth ... It if was not too late, he wanted to join in the game ... That was the moment ... when Martin Gibson changed his allegiance from earth to Mars." (p.121) He has abandoned "utopia"-- personal and cultural-- for the uncertain future. Clearly the new Martin Gibson will be a vital force in the development of Mars.



Clarke mounts his juvenile, Islands in the Sky, on this same arresting framework, but cast in terms more meaningful to the adolescent mind. "Utopia" in this case springs straight from all classic juvenile fiction: at the outset Roy Malcolm, the youthful protagonist, dissatisfied with earthbound life, faces family objections to his visit to the space station. "They thought it was something I'd grow out of," he comments. (p. 6) This is simply the conservative older generation, content with its "utopia". The message from the past is best conveyed by the decommissioned spaceship Morning Star (even in its name!) in which Malcolm and his young friends have their adventure. At the very beginning there is a pointed comment: Malcolm wins the contest because his opponent cannot identify the picture of the original Wright biplane, "which you can see in the Smithsonian any day ... I thought it served him right." (p. 3) The novel ends with the projection of a virile future: "My imagination had been captured by the little red world glowing bravely against the stars ... the Inner Station would only be the first milestone on my outward road from earth." (p. 209)

Clearly this is more than just a structural pattern. It represents a thinking process, a conception of historical evolution, closely akin to the challenge-response syndrome. Moreover, that it brackets a philosophy is apparent when we consider Clarke's other novel, Childhood's End, which, while adhering to the form, breaks sharply with its content.

In this great novel, "utopia" is again our own complacent, and particularly war-oriented society, and the message ap-

pears in the person of the Overlords, who are, in a most strange way, from the past. Their arrival certainly alters the character of civilization as well as of numerous protagonists, and recharges the future. Yet for all the exalted majesty of Clarke's somewhat fuzzily conceived successors of Man, the response to the challenge-- the transformed future -- amounts essentially to a destruction of mankind. There is no rationalization out of this, any more than to say that the dinosaur still survives because he has been succeeded on the evolutionary ladder by mammalian forms.

Clarke's method is basically documentary. Witness his protagonists: each is a passive personality. Contact and transmit the mighty message from the past they may, but spontaneous action they never take. They are historians (Alexson in Prelude to Space and Gibson in Sands of Mars), sponges (Roy Malcolm in Islands in the Sky and Stormgren in Childhood's End), explorers (Jan in Childhood's End and Alvin in Against the Fall of Night), but they are never adventurers, positive forces; they are witnesses of history's course, of which they are only incidental parts. This is virtually historical fatalism: Man is swept along from crisis to challenge and either finds within himself sufficient response or submits. In Childhood's End utopia is truly achieved; it is also the final scene of human history.

When all is said and done, this novel and Prelude to Space are his masterpieces, and reflect Clarke the prophet and philosopher-scientist most completely.

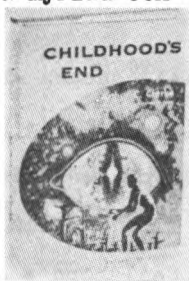
Prelude is both a beginning and an end; the first novel of its type, it so completely explored its subject matter that it could have no offspring. Essentially it is a scientific extrapolation, impeccably accurate, and brought electrically to life by Clarke's sumptuous prose. Historian Dirk Alexson comes into the space project late, and utterly ignorant of all but the most elementary problems involved (a masterful stroke: Alexson hustling to catch up makes possible reader education and gives just enough pace to leaven an otherwise somewhat static situation) as its official chronicler. He arrives a skeptic, not of the project itself but of its value and of the motives of those behind it (thus characterizing the average man's viewpoint of such goings-on and opening the way for a generous portion of scientific philosophy). His personality is transformed by the challenge of the situation (which is itself a response to a yet greater challenge), and he comes to write, "Tomorrow we launch the Prometheus. I say 'we' because I find it no longer possible to stand aside and play ... the disinterested spectator. No one on earth can do that: the events of the next few hours will shape the lives of all men who will ever be born ..." (p. 165)



The philosophy of Prelude is a positive one, the essential facet of Clarke's thinking. In his article, "The Challenge of the Spaceship", he remarks: "An attempt to construct a philosophy of astronautics is therefore far from premature

... we have seen the political and ethical chaos produced when a great technical development comes into a world which is unprepared for it." (p.16) But his concepts are not limited to such immediate considerations: "Everything you see, everything in our modern world is possible because of the knowledge which men won in ancient times; if it stands still it will die," declares one of the Prometheus' builders, (p. 48) and a little later Dirk reflects on the disapproval which must have fallen on curious explorers in prehistoric times and decides "... it was well that the search has been made before the glaciers came grinding down from the pole." In this scintillating phrase Clarke reminds us that even earth itself does not abide unaltered.

Childhood's End is the mirror image of this philosophy. It is not cut from a whole cloth as his other novels, and is almost a patchwork; it is in fact a vehicle for a myriad concepts inexpressible elsewhere. Certainly in none of his other major works, based as they are upon the rejection of a "utopia", would he have detailed his own utopia as he does here (and which of course the novel then exposes).



In this utopia, the "golden age" before Man's demise, the end of economic exchange as we know it has been achieved, thus eliminating the clerks and bureaucrats whose main function was "to transfer items from one ledger to another." (pp. 108-9) "Ignorance, disease, poverty, and fear had ... ceased to exist ... The memory of war was fading ... The cities had been rebuilt ... production had become largely automatic ... robot factories poured forth consumer goods ... It was One World ... There was no one on Earth who could not speak English ... read ... who was not within range of a television set ..." (p. 68) But the tragedy of this is spelled out: because the Overlords already have gained all knowledge, there is a decline in creative science. Creative art comes to an end because of "the end of strife and conflict of all kinds ... the supreme enemy of all Utopias: boredom." (pp. 71-2)

That the Overlords are the physical incarnation of the devil is of singular significance. Noble indeed is "their passion for justice and order ... the dominant emotions in their lives ..." (p. 39) Thus it is through the direct action of the Overlords that racial strife, cruelty, violence, indeed all of the evils that beset Man, are done away with. Clarke specifically rejects religion as a desirable aspect of human life-- "Mysticism-- perhaps the prime aberration of the human mind", quips an Overlord (p. 99)-- and has, consciously or otherwise, seized upon the form which is the symbolized antithesis of Western religion for the embodiment of reason and civilized behavior. "Humanity had lost its ancient gods; now it was old enough to have no need for new ones." (p. 71)

But in the midst of utopia is the greatest tragedy of all, the end of everything man has been. Where in "Seeker of the Sphinx" Clarke could comment "... in life there is no final-



ity every ending is merely a new beginning: and so on to the World's end" (p. 142), in Childhood's End he can only sigh, midway of the golden age which is the world's end: "Where do we go from here?" (p. 109)

That is Arthur C. Clarke-- where now? Because the whole spirit of science fiction is so thoroughly summed up in the man, he has become its first true prophet. Of the resurgent islanders in Childhood's End, he writes, "Everybody on this island has one ambition-- to do something, however small, better than anyone else ... it's an ideal we don't all achieve." Has Clarke himself, perhaps, achieved it?

All quotes are from the editions indicated:

Against the Fall of Night, Gnome Press, 1953, 223 pp

"The Awakening", Future Science Fiction, January 1952

"The Challenge of the Spaceship", Impact, Spring, 1953

Childhood's End, Ballantine Books, 1953, 214pp

"Earthlight", Thrilling Wonder Stories, August 1951

"The Fires Within", Science Fiction Galaxy, Permabooks, 1950

"The Forgotten Enemy", Avon SF & F Reader, January 1953

Islands in the Sky, John C. Winston Co., 1952, 209pp

"Jupiter Five", If, May 1953

Prelude to Space, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1953, 176pp

"Rescue Party", Beyond the End of Time, Permabooks, 1952

Sands of Mars, Gnome Press, 1952, 216pp

"Seeker of the Sphinx", Two Complete Science Adventure Books,
Spring 1951

"A Walk in the Dark", Thrilling Wonder Stories, August 1950

ALL OTHERS: Expedition to Earth, Ballantine, 1953, 165pp



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SCIENCE FICTION



NEWS LETTER

The San Francisco Convention: Will there be one or has it dropped dead in its here-to-fore slow-moving tracks? Scheduled for the four-day Labor Day holidays, September 3-6, the convention committee has thus far published one bulletin for the membership, dated January; and promised a second issue having a deadline of February 15th. It has not appeared, nor have membership cards for those who joined eight or nine months ago. Beyond free gratis advertisements, letters and pep talks by some of the San Francisco fans appearing in various fan magazines, this writer has seen nothing official on the "con" except that five-months-old "Progress Report Number One."

The Wages of Synergy: As the most casual followers of newsstand magazines must have noticed, the science fiction pulps continue to fall by the wayside, with more to die this summer. Even while following the swing of an inevitable pendulum, some last issues have met with an ironic end. The Gernsback-Moskowitz SCIENCE FICTION PLUS increased its sales by better than 20,000 copies with its final issue, and caught the fancy of a moneyed angel to boot ---but the axe had fallen. At least one attempt to purchase that title has failed; Gernsback clings to it. Ray Palmer's SCIENCE STORIES, chopped off with its fourth issue, showed a startling upswing in sales later on --- too late to save it. Again reflecting the tight magazine situation, the Palmer magazines have cut their word-rate back to one cent. A few such publications have sought and found new, cheaper printshops which may enable them to survive the coming summer.... and of course, the to-be-expected happened: one new magazine slated for tentative appearance next fall has been frightened off; they're now exploring the paperback field instead.

Upbeat: The opposite situation prevails in Europe where not only science fiction books but the many magazines are steadily climbing in popularity. At least seven publications are now maintaining various schedules there, not including the many American reprint magazines. Sweden has the newest magazine, H*APNAL, which reflects both optimism and cash---the periodical is a slick job having multi-colored interiors and layout. The pictures of some eleven authors and editors are presented in an introductory article, splashed with color, while the contents include van Vogt, Rocklynne, Malne, Neville and Prof. Menzel. Illustrations, advertisements, and even the footnotes are in several colors.

In London, John Carnell has found a new backer and his three projects are publishing again: NEW WORLDS (a monthly), SCIENCE-FANTASY (quarterly), and NOVA SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS (presumed to have an irregular schedule). A heavy advertising campaign is underway to acquaint the British public with

the rejuvenated trio. Carnell is buying novels to serialize in the monthly, and to reprint as full-length books in the NOVELS. Current serial is Kornbluth's "Take-Off", to be followed by Tucker's "Wild Talent". Three novels are ready: Jameson's "Bullard of the Space Patrol," Beynon's "Stowaway to Mars," and Jones' "Renaissance." The third magazine presents a mixture of science and fantasy, as title indicates. Carnell and his trio are now headquartered in the Strand.

People in The News

Leo Margulies and his sidekick Oscar J. Friend are in the news again, and

in the same manner as before; a new anthology. Title of this one is THE GIANT ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION (Merlin Press, 600pp, \$3.95), offering ten short novels ranging from Ray Cummings to Robert Heinlein.

Don Tuck of Tasmania has published a HANDBOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY, intended as a supplement to the Bleiler Checklist and to the Day Index, containing some 1300 references. The handbook covers magazines, books, story-titles, writers, etc. (American agent: Howard DeVore, 16536 Evanston St, Detroit 24, Mich. Price about \$1.50. Query first.)

Arthur C. Clarke, now putting the finishing touches on his ninth-?, tenth-?, eleventh-? book, is again visiting the States on his third-?, fourth-?, fifth-? trip, and hopes to make it permanent this time. His wife flew in from London a few months earlier and is house-hunting in Florida.

Sam Moskowitz's newest literary venture is an anthology, EDITOR'S CHOICE IN SCIENCE FICTION (McBride, 300pp, \$3.50). As per the title, twelve editors choose yarns never before anthologized which they believe deserve reprinting thusly.

Fredric Brown checked into Mayo's for a minor ailment. (*) Robert Bloch's wife again hospitalized for probing by expensive specialists; Bloch has published a Lion paperback, THE KIDNAPPER, to help meet expenses. (*) Ted Dikty flew to New York to explore possibilities of a new publishing deal on behalf of Shasta. (*) Bea Mahaffey winged home to Cincinnati for a month's vacation and peace of mind. (*) The Robert Heinlein's now well over the half-way mark on their trip around the world. (*) Bob Silverberg placed a juvenile novel with Winston. (*) Lew Mordecai has closed up shop and the long-famous "White Horse Inn" is no more; the London Circle now gathers about the same host at "The Globe Tavern." (*) Jerry Sohl has sold his second-in-a-row to the S-F Bookclub, THE ALTERED EGO. Earlier, his COSTIGAN'S NEEDLE was taken by the club and placed with a paperback reprint house. (*)

Wilson Tucker's THE TIME MASTERS will be published by Signet this summer; a collection of short stories and novellas entitled THE SCIENCE FICTION SUB-TREASURY will be issued by Rinehart next fall. And if you will forgive this one last plug for myself, I'll quit; THE LONG LOUD SILENCE was published simultaneously in hardcover and paperback, in London, by John Lane.

Mahlan's South African government has banned science fiction magazines.

THE PAPERBACKS

H.J. Campbell has compiled the AUTHENTIC SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK, a sort of abbreviated encyclopedia reprinted from Authentic Science Fiction. Sample entries: "Atomic bomb: an arrangement whereby a maximum number of nuclear fissions occur in minimum time by the very rapid collision of two sub critical masses of fissile material, the first fission setting off a chain reaction that is complete in a period of time of the order of one hundred thousandth of a second." And "Universe: everything that exists." For 32 pages, editor Campbell educates his readers.

Under the Imprint of "The Student's Pocket Library," the Oxford Book Co. of New York has published for classroom use a collection of tales entitled STORIES OF SCIENTIFIC IMAGINATION, edited by Joseph Gallant. (70¢.) The 152-paged book is sketchily illustrated, contains nine yarns by Heinlein, Wollheim, Leinster, et. al., and each story is followed by a page of questions for classroom discussion.



As usual, Ballantine Books continue as the major producer of paperback sciencefiction. An older title accidentally omitted last issue is DARK DOMINION, by David Duncan. Expanded from a Collier's serial, this tells the rather startling tale of a secret space-station being built in the California hills. Entertaining and readable despite a few foolish statements about "stone-age Indians of 200 years ago," and the possibility that space-station personnel may get dizzy from whirling about in their shell. SEARCH THE SKY is the newest Pohl-Kornbluth collaboration and while readable, it is not the sharply delineated, hope-it-never-comes-to-pass story told in THE SPACE MERCHANTS. A touch of that wry, bitter mood prevails at the end, but the remainder of the novel is a frustrated young man's search to discover why his (and other) planets are decaying. Eventually he comes to earth to discover a man with the answer--- a man in the most startling, amusing position ever.

Arthur C. Clarke's newest is PRELUDE TO SPACE, published once before by Galaxy Novels. It is a tremendous story of all the sometimes-dull, sometimes-exciting events that lead up to actually throwing the first rocket into space. Don't pass it by. Robert Sheckley, a recent comer to the field, is present with a collection of 13 tales, UNTOUCHED BY HUMAN HANDS. I am one of those who warmly admire his work and so I warmly recommend this volume. (Some of the Ballantine issues noted here are reviewed in full elsewhere herein.)

Signet Books have reprinted THE DEMOLISHED MAN by Alfred

Bester, hailed wrongly as the first science fiction detective story. It isn't the first but it is head and shoulders above most others; a deliberate murderer commits a calculated crime in the face of telepathic police. OUTPOST MARS by "Cyril Judd" (Kornbluth and Judith Merrill) has been released by Dell. It's a tale of earthmen on Mars, of biology and skullduggery. Not one of Judd's best. Finally, the Ace double-books have issued another back-to-back package: Eric Frank Russell's novel SENTINELS OF SPACE, and a collection of four novelettes brought together under the title, THE ULTIMATE INVADER. Donald Wollheim is the compiler, and the novelettes are by Russell, Jameson, Leinster and Long.

The Glories of Hollywood: Two feature pictures attract our beady eye this month, the first of which is to be released in June, while the other is even now in circulation -- witness it at your own risk.

THEM! (Warner Bros.) stars James Whitmore, Joan Weldon, and others, and comes nearer plausibility than a great many "science fiction pictures" emanating from Hollywood lately. Plot-wise, the studios are back there where the pulps were twenty years ago, and so of course the inevitable scientist and his pretty daughter are on hand to complicate things. The picture deals with the discovery by the New Mexico state police of a smashed store and auto trailer; further investigation reveals that lingering radiation has produced giant insects who, as you might have guessed, are marching on Los Angeles. But all in all, entertaining and painless.

CAT WOMEN OF THE MOON (Astor Pictures) is an incredible melodrama starring Sonny Tufts and Marie Windsor. As usual with these sloppy space-operas, the ship has a narrow escape when it is struck by a meteor (!) and poisonous gases are loosed, threatening to explode the ship. The movie-makers are simply fascinated by those thundering meteors and every second-grade picture throws in a handful. But our heroic crew pushes on to land on the dark side of the moon. Marie Windsor is hypnotized by the villainous women who live there and dark plans are hatched to steal the ship, return to earth and TAKE OVER THE WORLD!! There are also some giant spiders knocking around. I don't recall anything being said about an atmosphere, but then I warned you this was incredible.

Doubleday's Science Fiction Book Club is proving a minor success by all the standards common to this field; a recent serial number assigned to a member was near the 50,000 mark, if that signifies anything. If this represents a true circulation figure, several magazine editors must be bitterly gnashing their teeth-- only a few top magazines are today meeting or exceeding that figure, while others have fallen back to the twenty or thirty thousand sales common a decade ago. Various editors explain this slump in various ways--- most of them will admit they overloaded the suffering horse (you/me) but will they admit they also starved the critter with inferior oats?

-Bob Tucker

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The

Spec. Dept.

1.1 In connection with the Kepler's Law item, didn't Isaac Asimov bring the point up in "Nightfall" in the September '41 Astounding? (Good old Day Index!) It was not his major point in that story, of course, and I don't say that more couldn't be done with it; but he did emphasize that the law of gravity and the candle were two of the most recent discoveries of his people-- who otherwise seemed to match our civilization level fairly closely.

Hal Clement

2.1 I am interested in John Harrington's speculation regarding "an Earth/human-like society where sexual desire does not exist" and can see where there would be some basic and (if you'll pardon the expression) deep-seated differences.

Before examining these possibilities, however, I think it necessary to comment on Mr. Harrington's further opinions regarding what would happen in such a society if the men conceived the idea that "Sex Can Be Fun". He posits a situation where the males would soon be under feminine domination, "working in a world shaped by women even more than they'd realize."

Is Mr. Harrington pulling our leg? If not, I strongly advise him to wake up and take a good look at the world around him right now. Need I belabour the obvious?

But to return to his first notion regarding a world where sexual desire is not a factor.

I am not so sure that I can accept his basic assumption that "the mechanics of sexual reproduction would be possible even without an assist from the emotions": from the standpoint of feminine physiology the answer is yes, according to the majority opinion amongst contemporary observers. There is, however (according to the same observers) a psychic factor influencing masculine potency-- lack of emotion, or even the presence of conflicting emotion seems to inhibit the male from performing the sexual act.

But for the sake of Mr. Harrington's speculation, let us

accept the possibility, and thus adroitly sidestep the whole semantic, psychiatric and biological quibble regarding what constitutes "emotions".

Now, Harrington asks, "In what ways would this unfortunate society deviate from ours on account of the single fundamental difference?"

He goes on to venture his own opinion that women would maintain, and even accentuate, their interests in dress and home-making. And that men would adopt simple, "functional" living and divide their time between a "shop, lab, library and recreation area" home and the delights of fishing.

Here I must venture to disagree.

To me, the greatest apparent change would be in what, for want of a better term, I'd call personification. I believe our present-day concepts of "masculinity" and "femininity" influence our social pattern very strongly, and that these concepts are based largely on the sex-drive. ¶

There was a time when sheer survival-values were implicit in Man assuming the role of hunter, fisher, worker and warrior while Woman played the part of home-maker and agriculturist.

The sex-drive and the survival-drive merged in basic social attitudes then: the man who was a good hunter and skilful fisherman could provide food and was hence a desirable mate. If he exhibited physical strength and courage, he could defend his home and his woman; this too was an advantage. Later, his ability as a worker became an increasing factor in a more complex culture. Conversely, a woman's domestic skills increased her valuation in the man's eyes.

But today, in the light of present technological developments found in our western culture, the situation has changed.

Hunting and fishing are now merely "sports"; moreover, with mechanical assists, a woman is theoretically as capable as a man in these pursuits if she chooses to take the time and trouble to learn the pattern. Physical strength and courage (despite the frantic yaps of the military) are no longer necessarily the decisive factors in global warfare: in the individual instance, no man is "strong" enough or "brave" enough to protect his mate from being raped by a thermonuclear bomb. The myth of the man the "worker" has already been shattered in our industry and commerce. Centuries ago the revolution occurred in agriculture and men took the place of women in the fields: a scant fifty years has served to bring the female to the fore in the school and the office which were once supposed to be exclusively masculine spheres of operation. Today, most roles in life can be played by either male or female; granted the opportunity, the incentive, and the social approval.

Dig that crazy social approval, now. It's what I'm talking about when I refer to personification.

As I endeavored to intimate, our sex-drive and our survival-drive merged, once upon a time. And today, when the survival-drive is scarcely a factor, we persist in maintaining outward forms because of the sex-drive.

That is to say, many men hunt and fish and fight only to establish their masculinity, to play a role that will somehow enhance their sexual desirability. And many women maintain a "feminine" abhorrence of such pursuits and cultivate exaggerated interest in domesticity and/or personal adornment for the selfsame reason. Oftentimes the element of rivalry, of "dog-in-the-mangerism", seems to be as important, or more important than the basic sex-drive itself. There are plenty of frigid women who feel they must be "beautiful" or "sexually attractive" and plenty of men who regard competition in business or sports as a "challenge" and sexual conquest as a sort of prize for excelling: "to win" is equated with "virility".

But in Mr. Harrington's world, there will be no sex-drive and hence no need of "showing off" or "conquest". In case of ties, no duplicate prizes will be awarded-- or desired.

So a lot of this nonsense will cease.

I commend to Mr. Harrington's attention the behavior of the schoolgirl in her early teens: the schoolgirl attending a girl's school, let us say, where there is no direct competition for masculine attention. I do not think it unfair to establish these conditions, for it is only under such circumstances that we can approximate even faintly the situation he has in mind.

Let's take a look at this schoolgirl and her classmates. Let's examine the blue-jeans, the sloppy sweater or the shirt with the tails hanging out. Let's note the tennis-shoes and the hanging ankle-socks. Let's scrutinize the scraggly hair, or the closely-clipped hair that doesn't scraggle but merely grows in haphazard fashion. And above all, let's listen to the raucous bellows, the boisterous (in this case, girlsterous) vulgarity.

Here is Mr. Harrington's female without the presence of a sex-drive. Of course, in our society, this condition is temporary; manifested in immaturity which contributes a certain adolescent exaggeration to behavior-patterns; and we know it changes from situation to situation because the same schoolgirl will (on occasion) revert to the traditional feminine role given a sexual stimulus.

But we're concerned here with a world where there won't be any such sexual stimulus. What then is to keep our schoolgirl from reaching adult womanhood with the same behavior-pattern? At what age is she suddenly going to start being concerned with cleaning her room, hanging up her clothes, getting "domestic"?

I can't quite see where the transition would occur, or why. So I can't see the "attractively furnished houses" either;

nor the interest in dress and coiffure.

On the masculine level, I am unable to swallow the notion of "shop, lab, library and recreation area" and for the same reasons. Once the bait is removed-- once the necessity of establishing masculinity vanishes-- a large part of the incentive towards personal development is gone. In addition to attracting females with such activity, many men today (in our present, hidden-matriarchic society) continue to hunt and fish and fight merely as a form of rebellious self-assertion: they maintain a naive self-delusion that they can "get away from women" and go off into "a man's world" by so doing. This fugue (even though it may take so mild and transitory a form as a poker game one night a month) seems palliative.

Along with the sex-drive comes the notion of sex differences: it is here, on the playground, that the child re-enacts the symbolic growth of his culture and becomes the warrior and physical competitor with his fellows. Thus the boy evinces his interest in sports because he's "not a girl" and (actually, though covertly) brings this fact to the attention of the girls. He persists in such behavior into adolescence, and if he "wins" a girl, or girls, may continue to play his role in later life because it was proven to be successful.

But knock out that sex-drive and you knock out the need of being different: the whole virility-legend topples, and with it the incentive. I doubt very much if, in such a hypothetical society, we would find very many men of 30 or over trying to "get away from the women" on a camping trip, or indulging in strenuous physical exercise to "prove" their manliness (i.e., "prove" their sexual potency to women, or a specific woman).

And with the difference gone, why should a man be any more interested than a woman in the "shop, lab and library"?

By which I mean to say, some men will and some men won't: but there'll be no possibility of generalizing across the board.

Some women will be equally interested, some completely disinterested; the same will hold true for men. The factor to consider here is probably the vague cerebral manifestation of the survival-drive we now dismiss as "intellectual curiosity" and "the creative instinct".

It may well be that, in the absence of the necessity to "show off" physically and spend much time in economic pursuits leading to what Veblen called "conspicuous consumption", many individuals of both sexes would take more interest and satisfaction in the arts and sciences. Knowledge acquired for the sake of prolonging individual or group survival ... art for a survival-surrogate ... these goals might well evolve and strengthen. Particularly in a society where men were not devoting the entire economy to either "protecting" the women from other men or "supporting" them as is presently decreed.

The factors of production would contribute to the formulation of new life-patterns; that is certain. A volume could easily be written on the economic changes as well as the sociological changes; a library could be written on the changes brought about by economic and sociological interaction.

But more fascinating still would be the possibilities of psychic and/or psychological changes.

With the sex-drive gone, what about the so-called "death-instinct", the "will to destruction"? Many schools of psychotherapy have given it many names; few choose to develop a great interest in this concept although most of them grudgingly concede that it is a factor in our existence.

Perhaps the will-to-survive which could manifest itself in the arts and sciences would be counterbalanced or more than counterbalanced by the thanatopic urge: there might be a great wave of suicide or unchecked overt aggression. With the sexes no longer seeking each other's approval: with the familiar familial mould broken (what becomes of the current attitudes towards Mama, Papa, Brother, Sister, Grandpa, Grandma and their later-life surrogates, huh, hey, I ast you once?) the forces shaping social evolution or devolution might assume new and unexpected aspects.

Oh, Mr. Harrington, you have led me a pretty chase-- and were I more of a sportsman, I would continue to follow the elusive quest over hill and dale for many an hour; through theory and hypothesis, across vast conjectures and into a morass of bewildering speculation.

But it is time to draw rein and call a halt. Sitting here at the old campfire and musing idly on the day's pursuits, I con again this question of a world where sexual desire does not exist. I strive to decide for myself whether or not I think the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages.

Speaking personally ... and at the moment ... I'd be all for it. If for no other reason than the fact that it would put an end forever to the nauseating juke-box braying of popular songs.

Misanthropically and misogynistically yours--

Robert Bloch

2.2 O.K., wise guy, so these characters have no sex instinct, but do make the sacrifice in order to procreate. All I wanta know is, how'd they discover the method?

Anon.

4. A rapidly rotating, and hence noticeably oblate, planet with an extremely massive satellite (twin worlds, if you like) whose orbital plane does not coincide with the planet's equatorial plane. Precession might be speeded up to a period of a few centuries or even less (I'm afraid I haven't actually computed the dimensions involved, but the situation is basically possible). If the planet's orbit were eccentric enough (and it wouldn't take much) so that its varying distances

from its sun produced temperature changes of the same order of magnitude as its axial inclination, the constant change of phase relation between winter-due-to-sun-distance and winter-due-to-axial-inclination should make life interesting for somebody. At one time seasons are in step in the northern hemisphere (as they now are in our southern) giving it the temperature extremes; a few years or centuries later the southern hemisphere gets the works while the northern has a fairly even year-round temperature. Complicate it as you please with geographical details.

Hal Clement

5. A very compact planetary system-- possibly of a red dwarf star-- whose planetary orbits are not nearly coplanar (unlikely by current theories, I admit). The high gravity potential difference from orbit to orbit, combined with great differences in the orientation of their velocity vectors at any time, would make interplanetary travel far out of the question for chemical fuels and enormously difficult even for atomic energy (for example, a flight from one planet to its nearest neighbor might call for a velocity change of a hundred miles a second, instead of twelve or fifteen). In spite of this, the small scale of the system causes planets to pass much closer to each other than they do in ours, and on two of these planets intelligent races have become aware of each other. Maybe they'd ignore each other, but---. You take it from there.

Hal Clement

6. This one I presented a while ago to the "Proxycrave" in D.C., and I understand the article involved was to be published in a fan mag; but I haven't seen it yet. It dealt with a planet of a red dwarf sun, so close to it that its year was only a week or so of our time. It faces permanently a satellite (retrograde for stability-- which I don't swear to anyway) whose period about the planet is two or three days. Orbits are circular, so that seasons are due only to axial inclination-- but it makes quite a difference whether Summer occurs during the day or during the night! I didn't work out the details any closer than that, but anyone else is welcome to. I admit the system may be dynamically impossible; my math is pretty sad nowadays. Still, it's the sort of thing which might suit the "Spec." column.

Hal Clement

7. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, April '54, quotes the Knoxville Journal, February 23: "The Administration is reported to be considering the prospect that bandit leaders or irresponsible small nations may some day possess atomic bombs. Advisors have told the President that the day of outlaw traffic in atomic materials may be unavoidable, and that if it comes, an atomic bomb will cost the rebel leaders only the airplane needed to deliver it."

Ed. note: The Spec. Dept. is laboring under a discouragingly great amount of starting friction-- though perhaps no more than I've always encountered in getting acceptable articles and reviews. The Spec. Dept. is muchly in need of your help if you're an idea man-- or know someone who is.

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The Novels

MISSION OF GRAVITY by Hal Clement
Doubleday, 1954, 224pp, boards, \$2.95

Writing a science fiction story, Hal Clement says (in his article "Whirligig World" in *Astounding Science Fiction* for June 1953), is fun, not work. This is very likely true, but only so to speak. Another way of saying it is that in writing a science fiction story, if you happen to be Hal Clement, a prodigious amount of work can be fun. Fun for the writer, if you take Clement's word for it, and fun for the reader if you take mine, or better still if you don't but insist on proving it for yourself.

The amount of work that went into the writing of *MISSION OF GRAVITY* is obvious only on reading the above-mentioned article, in which the author explains at some length the considerations and calculations that were necessary to make a self-consistent picture of conditions on Mesklin, the third component of the 61 Cygni system. In the book he handles all these complicated factors with an easy assurance that would be commendable if he had actually been there.

This super-planet is many times more massive than Jupiter, and yet the story situation requires that it should be possible for human beings to exist and move about on at least some portion of its surface. The solution is to provide the planet with a high rate of spin, about one revolution every eighteen minutes. The resulting combination of centrifugal force and extreme equatorial bulge reduces the surface gravity at the equator to some three and a half times the terrestrial value. At the poles, which are much nearer the center, and where there is no centrifugal force, the figure is something like 600g.

An expedition from Earth has established an orbital station

above the planet and sent down a remote-controlled rocket to one of the poles, filled with instruments designed to collect scientifically invaluable data about this fantastic gravitational field. But the rocket fails to respond to the take-off signal. The priceless records must be recovered, and the only way is for someone to go after them.

"Someone" in this case necessarily means a native Mesklinite, since no human could hope to exist more than a few degrees from the equator. The natives are there: foot-long caterpillar-like beings of a rugged structure and bizarre metabolism commensurate with the demands of their exacting world. How a group of them is persuaded to undertake the immense journey from the equator to the pole, their adventures on the way, and their bargaining for a suitable reward, make up the body of the narrative. It is a gripping story with plenty of action and surprises. But what makes the book a treat to the real science fiction addict is the way the nature of Mesklin itself is integrated into the story at every point. The use of the spring balance as an instrument of navigation, the question of how far south you can fly, of why and where does a hollow boat sink, of how you make a fire in a hydrogen atmosphere-- these are only a few of the problems which Clement has worked out with a fertile and rigorously controlled imagination. This is where the work comes in, and the fun.

"The fun" (quoting Clement again from "Whirligig World") "lies in treating the whole thing as a game. I've been playing the game since I was a child, so the rules must be simple. They are: for the reader they consist of finding as many as possible of the author's statements or implications which conflict with the facts as science currently understands them. For the author the rule is to make as few such slips as he possibly can."

This statement of principle will make many an old-line fan want to swing his hat and cheer. It is not an exhaustive definition of science fiction, but it sets forth unequivocally a basic requirement that is all too often lost sight of, or flagrantly ignored, or even flatly contradicted by editors and authors nowadays. There must be some fans left still who remember the time when a writer was expected to play according to these rules, and the letter columns of the magazines constituted a sort of running score sheet. A great game-- you couldn't lose really. If the author made no errors you could detect, it was a swell story. If he did, sure the story was lousy, but you had the fun of catching him out.

If you remember those times, MISSION OF GRAVITY is for you. If you don't, get it by all means. It will show you, not so much what science fiction was like in the good old days, but what in the good old days we used to think it should be like. For Clement is a master player of the game. Among all the computations in astronomy, physics, meteorology, chemistry and psychology that he had to make to work out what it is like on Mesklin, I found only one point that is a possible score for me. Maybe you can do better; surely you'll find it fun to try.

One thing only the book lacks: "Whirligig World" should have been included as an introduction.

Clyde Beck

Notice of the publication of a new book by John Taine will, for a large number of readers, very likely by the best news this issue will offer. The new title is G.O.G. 666 (Fantasy Press, 1954, 251pp, bound in genuine cloth, \$3). The G.O.G. is General Order in Genetics; the 666, the number of a directive of a foreign government to its controlled scientific workers. Becoming Gog, the term is used as the name of a being as much beast as man, product of an experiment in genetics. Laced with mystery and international intrigue, and told in an atmosphere of scientific spirit by a man qualified to interpret it, this story is typical of much of Taine's writing and is fully as good as most. Incidentally, Taine, as Dr. E. T. Bell, last year retired from his Professorship of Mathematics at Cal Tech. That this will lead to his writing more fiction is doubtful, but one may hope (as I do). Anyway, there are yet two of his early magazine novels which have not yet been produced as books and, the blurb of this one tells us, several others unpublished in any form. This, too, is news to my liking, provided that Fantasy Press or Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc., does something about it.

Henry Ness

PRELUDE TO SPACE by Arthur C. Clarke, variously mentioned & discussed by Tucker and More elsewhere in this issue in its Galaxy Novel, paperback, and English editions, is also available in its 1st Am. hardbound edition (Gnome Press, 1954, 191pp, \$2.50). This writer's memory would be sorely taxed to recall a science fiction book he'd enjoyed more.

RAS

Here's a real odd one. THE DELUGE, a novel by Leonardo da Vinci, edited by Robert Payne (Twayne, 1954, 99pp, cloth, \$3). This purportedly Leonardo first edition, principally the work of its editor, "reconstructs" a number of fragments (which are clearly indicated) from Leonardo's papers into the novel they were intended by him to become.

Henry Ness

A far future, where scholarship and cannibalism flourish side by side, is the scene of a new book by S. Fowler Wright, SPIDER'S WAR (Abelard, 1954, 256pp, boards, \$2.75). A woman of (presumably) our time is, by magic, placed in that future -- where she avoids being eaten by her captor through the device of suggesting as an alternative that she and her captor's wife exchange functions; where she engages in a war against gigantic spiders (whose sizes, energies, etc., are, as is usual in such fantasies, all to the same scale); and where she becomes the author's means of sneering at our society.

Jack Kelsey

Too late for review: PLANETS FOR SALE by E. Mayne Hull; Fell, \$2.75. Concerns Artur Blord; no prior copyright given.

The Anthologies and Collections

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, Third Series.
Edited by Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas.
(Doubleday, 1954, 252pp, boards, \$3.25.)

You should be warned at the outset that I am hopelessly biased in favor of Boucher and McComas, and tend to view their work in whatever form with a warm eye. Their magazine has long been a personal favorite and so of course most of the stories in this volume are pre-judged. The book opens with Philip Jose Farmer's "Attitudes", and I think it would be difficult to find a better opening; in the past I have viewed some Farmer efforts with a quizzical eye, wondering what the fuss was all about-- but this one is a departure from the past and still first-rate imagination.

Ward Moore's "Lot" is another gem, as is "Child by Chronos", from Charles L. Harness. Boucher's own "Snulbug" from many years ago remains a brightly humorous tale; on the other hand I understand that Ann Warren Griffith's "Captive Audience" was quite a hit when it appeared in the magazine-- but I can't see it. There are sixteen stories in the collection; writers represented in addition to the above are Bretnor, Gresham, de Camp and Pratt, Wellman, Rogers, Hubbard (no, not that one), Nearing, Jr., Seabright, Ready, Middleton and Bester. Bearing in mind my opening statement, I warmly recommend the book.

Bob Tucker

THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS: 1954 (Fell, 317pp, cloth, \$3.50) as selected by Bleiler and Dikty are: H. L. Gold and Robert Krepps, "The Enormous Room" (Amazing); Kendall Foster Crossen, "Assignment to Aldebaran" (Thrilling Wonder); Frank M. Robinson, "The Oceans Are Wide" (Science Stories); Murray Leinster, "The Sentimentalists" (Galaxy); Philip K. Dick, "Second Variety" (Space Science Fiction).

THE SECOND GALAXY READER OF SCIENCE FICTION ed. by H.L. Gold (Crown, 1954, 504pp, \$3.50). PORTALS OF TOMORROW, ed. by August Derleth (Rinehart, 1954, 371pp, \$3.75).

GALAXY READER goes back to 1951 to pick up some good yarns excluded from the first READER and carries through 1953, reprinting 31 stories and one editorial-- perhaps about half as much quantity and twice as much quality as you'd get with a year's subscription. Derleth offers 16 stories: 6 from Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, the rest broadly assorted. The introduction calls it "the first collection in a series in which we shall hope to do for the fantastic story what has been done ... by Martha Foley ... and Edward J. O'Brien for the short story in general." In line with that intent, an appendix presents "A Checklist of New Fantastic Stories Published in American Magazines in 1953" wherein Derleth's favorites are indicated, and lists of his choices of best collections and stories published in books during the year.

In 9 TALES OF SPACE AND TIME (Holt, 1954, 307pp, \$3.50), as in NEW TALES OF SPACE AND TIME (Holt, 1951), Raymond J. Healy has collected an assortment of stories never before published. This one is notable for "Overture" by Kris Neville (sequel to the much-acclaimed "Bettyann" in NEW TALES), Reg. Bretnor's "Genius of the Species", and the fact that it includes stories by the four editors of the field's three top magazines (yup, even Campbell!) as well as the editor of the book. JK

Subtitled "10 Complete Short Novels", THE GIANT ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION is edited by Leo Margulies and Oscar J Friend. The contents are: Ray Cummings' oldie (first published in 1919), "The Girl in the Golden Atom"; five from Thrilling Wonder-- Hamilton, "Forgotten world" (1945); Kuttner, "Sword of Tomorrow" (1945); Leinster, "Things Pass By" (1945); Wellman, "Island in the Sky" (1941); and Williamson, "The Sun Maker" (1940); and Brackett, "Enchantress of Venus" (Planet Stories, 1949); Fredric Brown, "Gateway to Darkness" (Super Science, 1949); Heinlein, "By His Bootstraps" (Astounding, 1941); and van Vogt, "Rogue Ship" (Super Science, 1950). (Merlin Press, 590pp, cloth, \$3.95.) RAS

In four short years Richard Matheson has become solidly established beside top writers like Bradbury, Heinlein, Sturgeon and Clarke in the production of consistently excellent science fiction. Since 1950, when his electrifying short, short-- "Born of Man and Woman"-- gained immediate attention in The Magazine of F & SF, some 44 Matheson stories (including 2 westerns and 4 mysteries) have appeared in many publications ranging from Blue Book to Weird Tales. Now 17 of these have been assembled under one cover as BORN OF MAN AND WOMAN (The Chamberlain Press, 1954, 252pp, cloth, \$3). The book provides rich and varied fare for the jaded palate of the reader who seeks, but all too rarely finds, intelligently written and imaginatively conceived fiction in this overcrowded, highly competitive field. Beyond the justifiably famous title piece at least five of the stories ("Mad House", "Disappearing Act", "Through Channels", "Witch War" and "The Traveller") prove outstanding examples of Matheson at his best-- tales which exhibit the author's amazing adroitness in successfully handling a wide variety of styles. "Third From the Sun", "To Fit the Crime" and "Dress of White Silk" also qualify as first-rate Mathesonian. Unfortunately, two of his finest stories ("The Last Day" and "Mother by Protest") fail to appear here and four of the included stories ("F---", "Return", "Dear Diary" and "Lover When You're Near Me") fall somewhat below par in this reviewer's opinion. "F---" (originally titled "The Foodlegger") seems to strain for its humor, while "Lover When You're Near Me" leans too heavily in the direction of the "repulsive" without the redeeming qualities of a similarly "repulsive" tale, "Dress of White Silk". Of course every story in such a book cannot please each individual taste-- so let it suffice to say that this collection certainly belongs on the shelf of the reader who appreciates excitingly original and beautifully characterized science-fantasy. Keep your eye on this boy. In or out of the sf field Matheson is a talent to be reckoned with.

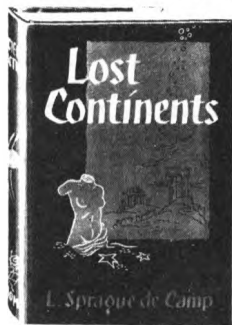
W. F. Nolan

Some Non-Fiction

LOST CONTINENTS, The Atlantis Theme in History, Science, and Literature, by L. Sprague de Camp. (Gnome Press, 362pp, \$5)

This is something new, welcome-- and needed-- in the line of lost-continent books. As the sub-title indicates the theme is centered on Atlantis and with good reasons, for Atlantis is not only the most famous of all the alleged lost continents, it is also the prototype without which the others may never have crept into thought and literature.

That Atlantis, while it may be "lost", was not a continent, has been the conclusion of all serious scholars for a long time. But they not only were in the habit of writing for specialized audiences-- without need for the identification of rather obscure ancient writers and without any thought of translation of a small two-page quotation of classical Greek-- they also wrote for publications rarely known to the public even by name. Sprague de Camp, both a scholar and a popularizer, presents the available information in a readable and often amusing manner, sprightly enough to be read for fun, carefully enough to be used for reference. As for Plato's famous dialogues, the ultimate source of Atlantis, he has taken the position that they are political allegory, embellished with fictional elements for readability-- such as it is.



Of course not even Plato got all the embellishments for his political treatises out of thin air; he relied for them on the beliefs and knowledge of his own time. Thus we can be quite sure that the idea of a major catastrophe was derived from Babylonian astrology, the image of the populous and prosperous city in the Far West from Carthage and Tartessos, helped along by Homer's Scheria (which is probably based on Tartessos, too) and the idea of the earthquake which destroyed Atlantis from a real one which inundated the small Greek island of Atalante the year after Plato was born.

While classical writers, as a rule, regarded Plato's dialogues for what they were, namely political allegories, these were later taken literally and, beginning with attempts at identification, slowly developed (or degenerated) into Atlantis cults. Sprague de Camp has traced this carefully (there is a list of all "explainers" and their explanations in an appendix) up to and including the appropriation of Atlantis and Lemuria by occultists like Harris and Mme. Blavatsky. They took the existing myth, declared that it was true but only part of the truth, and proceeded to "complete the truth" with everything that happened to pop into their befuddled little minds, including all their personal preferences and prejudices. As Sprague de Camp says about Mme. Blavatsky: "she took a poor view of sex-- at least after she got too old to enjoy it herself".

In reading the book one can see how ideas spread and how they, sometimes with the best of intentions, can lead to absolutely incredible confusions. Columbus sailed West and his voyages spread the knowledge of an unsuspected continent. It was reasonable to ask whether America might not be Atlantis. Nor was it unreasonable that Bishop Landa tried to learn the Mayan script. But because Landa's method was childish, to put it mildly, the result was "a Mayan alphabet" which had no resemblance to reality. And on that basis several writers, like Brasseur, Donnelly, and Le Plongeon, "established" Atlantis as the Mother of All Civilization; a procedure which culminated in the Schliemann hoax and the out-and-out fantasies of Churchward, who has only recently been surpassed by Velikovsky.

Naturally there are numerous sidelines to be tracked down: like the rather imaginative conjectures about the origin of the Americans, who were here before Columbus; like the question of whether a few similar words in different languages indicate relationship or not; like the geological problem of whether a small continent could be destroyed at all by seismic forces in a comparatively short period of time, say 10,000 years. Sprague de Camp had to cover an enormous territory in writing this book. More, he not only had to cover it, he had to clean it up. And I think he has succeeded well.

Willy Ley

WORLDS IN SPACE by Martin Caiden, illustrated by Fred L. Wolff. (Holt, 1954, 212pp, \$4.95.)

The worth of this volume (and it is hardly worth the stiff price, whatever its merits) lies somewhere between the elementary space primer for teen-agers, and the formula-heavy tomes for the dyed-in-the-wool spacehands. Accidentally, it is an aid in a way the author probably never realized: many present-day science fiction writers might profitably read it to discover the utter implausibility of those yarns set on Venus or Mars. Wolff's illustrations, 48 full-page plates plus 16 photographs, lend visual aid in setting those same yarns.

Caiden tells the story of rocket development thus far and then pushes on to space stations, space ships and planetfalls on the nearer bodies. He draws heavily upon other authorities in the field, as does his illustrator. Finally, he explores the planets of the solar system with a view to landing or colonizing there-- and in most cases renders a negative verdict. Quite incidentally, and perhaps without realizing it, he offers many plot-germs for writers and would-be writers. The volume is a natural for libraries, will probably be on the shelves of completists, but occasional buyers should browse deeply before purchasing.

Bob Tucker

Omitted from "collections": THE SINISTER RESEARCHES OF C.P. RANSOM by H. Nearing, Jr. (Doubleday, 217pp, \$2.96). Eleven stories from the series of farcical fantasies that have been appearing in Magazine of F. and S.F. since 1950.

The Juveniles

The recent juvenile novels are: MEL OLIVER AND THE SPACE ROVER ON MARS by William Morrison (Gnome Press, 191pp, \$2½); STARSHIP THROUGH SPACE by Lee Correy (Holt, 241pp, \$2.50); and (from Winston, each approx. 210pp, \$2) TROUBLE ON TITAN by Alan E. Nourse, THE SECRET OF SATURN'S RINGS by Donald A. Wollheim, ROCKETS TO NOWHERE by Philip St. John, ATTACK FROM ATLANTIS by Lester del Rey, PLANET OF LIGHT by Raymond F. Jones, and DANGER: DINOSAURS! by Richard Marsten.

The Morrison title arrived too recently yet to be read by anyone here, but seems to concern a circus on Mars, including Space Rover (a terrestrial collie bred for intelligence), a Martian strongman, and a Venusian rubber man, etc. Correy's book includes some of the exceptionally realistic research lab and space flight scenes that have characterized his several fine yarns in ASF. Jones's is a sequel to "Son of the Stars", both of which are among Winston's best. RAS

The younger fans are offered two anthologies this time. SPACE PIONEERS, edited by Andre Norton (World, 294pp, \$2.75), draws on 1951 thru '53 issues of Astounding, Galaxy, Planet, Startling, and others for stories by Fyfe, Russell, Leiber, R. F. Jones, and others. Obviously the stories were written and bought by their original editors with the intention of pleasing readers of more mature years.

The second juvenile anthology is something rather special. Edited by Lester del Rey, it is THE YEAR AFTER TOMORROW (Winston, 339pp, illustrated throughout by Mel Hunter, \$3). From Astounding of 1939 thru '44 are two stories by del Rey and one by Robert Moore Williams. But it's the remaining stories that make this one distinctive: three each by Peter van Dresher and Carl H. Claudy, all from The American Boy. Readers of my generation were profoundly impressed by these somewhere between 1929 and 1932. RAS

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The publisher has in stock copies of each issue from Volume 4, No. 6 (Feb. '51) through the current issue (Vol. 7, No. 2). Prior to January '52, the name was Fantasy Advertiser, but all issues are similar in format and content to those of recent date and average over 32 pages. The price per copy is 20¢, ppd., from S.F.A., 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, California.

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