

S F COMM ENTARY 34



This is

the journal of omphalistic epistemology 6 (part 2) : february 1973

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s f commentary 34 : May 1973

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Bruce Gillespie.

We continue here the project commenced in SF COMMENTARY 32. The authors of
the various remarks about science fiction run from Budrys through to Gernsback.
The next part will begin with remarks from well-known world-travelling
gadabout Bruce Gillespie, provided that Conde-Nast doesn't make him an offer
he can't refuse, causing him to decide not to return to Australia and thus
interrupting the smooth flow of issues of SF COMMENTARY which you've been
admiring this year.

As a number of readers have remarked, George Turner among them, the
presentation of these quotations in alphabetical order creates some
interesting juxtapositions. In particular I direct your attention to
Kendall Foster Crossen's remarks of February 1953 and Hugo Gernsback's remarks
of April 1953.

Gernsback and Campbell dominate in this issue - if not in volume at least
in importance - and of course reading these few snippets is no substitute for
a more detailed examination of their writings. Similar remarks might be made
about most of the contributors, but those two stand out.

It now seems likely that JOE 6 will run about 200 pages - perhaps this will
encourage Bruce to stay away. At any rate, in Bruce's absence I shall cut
the occasional stencil, and have an unpleasant pile waiting for him on his
return.

Two Notices

I intended to thank, on page 40a of SFC 32, those who have provided some of
the material in these issues. I do so now. Robin Johnson, Lee Harding, and
Bruce himself have all helped in this way, but I am particularly indebted to
JOE's Floyd C. Gale, Tony Thomas, for lending me such a large quantity of
~~useful~~ useful reference material.

If readers feel that I have omitted any important remarks by particular writers,
I would be pleased to hear of it. I have sometimes omitted something because I
felt a similar point had been made, better, elsewhere or by someone else. But
any suggestions for authors up to Gernsback would be welcomed. N.B. The TIMES
LITERARY SUPPLEMENT remarks of September 17, 1954 are to be listed under TIMES,
not Anon (unless anyone can tell me the author's name...).

Gerald Carr drew the cover, a long time ago. Thank you, Gerald. Over to Bruce.

Algis BUDRYS:: Almost any science fiction writer who writes about politics takes the point of view that if we can only learn all the ramifications of the theoretical structure of human society, of the government of human beings, of the management of human society, then any man given sufficient wit can use these things to manage society regardless of whether he is actually trained and skilled. I don't believe this is true, it has been my assumption all my life that this is not true. I have direct evidence, dramatic evidence which I have occasionally tried to convey in my stories, that there are men who can make human beings malleable - who can suspend the power of the individual man to reason for himself and turn society into a personal vehicle or at least an avalanche which goes, not where it wills, but certainly where he has directed it. This is the thing that I am fascinated with. The management of human society by special individuals.

Now I think Heinlein feels this same way. I think this is what makes him difficult for the majority of 'politically conscious' readers to understand. Heinlein theorizes, I theorize, but we theorize on the basis of this feeling and also on the basis of observed fact. We have seen an experiment before us and are now trying to explain it. We are not establishing an hypothesis as I believe most science fiction writers are doing. (The Proceedings; CHICON III p 196)

102. The great fashion in dealing with science fiction used to be to treat it as a pocket universe. And "used to be" is not so far behind us that we do not still get home at night with shoe-tip bruises on our heels and elsewhere. Nor has there been as yet a marked thinning-out of either numbers or energy among the vigorous proponents of that root-bound view. In one aspect, that view is nurtured by making critical comparisons of stories by, say, Paul Janvier, to the writing of "the Mainstream". On those rare occasions when something more specific is obviously called for, the comparison is always to, say, John B. Sentry. This is because whether the names of these two science fiction writers are remembered now or not, they are obviously safer in each other's arms than they would be if party of the second part were, say, Herbert Gold, much less somebody like Terry Southern.

I don't propose to enlarge much on this here. My point is not that Gold or Southern are intrinsically better writers than, say Sam & Janet Argo. My point is that many, many science fiction people of various degrees of graceful intelligence have been scared for a long time that they are, or have been certain of it and have been playing the point spread to build little copies of Mediterranean villas for themselves out here just this side of Hadrian's wall. They are now having to come to terms with the invasion of the cosmopolitans. (GALAXY, April 1965, p. 137.)

103. A story by J. G. Ballard, as you know, calls for people who don't think. One begins with characters who regard the physical universe as a mysterious and arbitrary place; and who would not dream of trying to understand its actual laws. Furthermore, in order to be the protagonist of a J. G. Ballard novel, you must have cut yourself off from the entire body of scientific education. In this way, when the world disaster - be it wind or water - comes upon you, you are under absolutely no obligation to do anything about it but sit and worship it. Even more further, some force has acted to remove from the face of the world all people who might impose good sense or rational behaviour on you, so that the disaster proceeds unchecked and unopposed except by the almost inevitable thumb-rule engineer type who for his individual comfort builds a huge pyramid (without huge footings) to resist high winds, or trains a herd of alligators and renegade divers to help him out in dealing with deep water.

This precondition is at the root of every important J. G. Ballard creation and is so fundamental to it that it does not need to be put into words. Being buried as it is, it both does not call attention to itself and permits the author's characters to produce the most amazing reasonably intelligent and somewhat intellectual mouthnoises. (GALAXY, December 1966, p. 128.)

104. A young writer - Bob Shaw is a young writer, whereas, say, Algis Budrys, who is approximately the same age, is an old writer - should be doing what Bob Shaw has been doing; working his way through stories. He should not think much about what he is doing, or why, or if he does he should not take up the reader's time with evidences of these purely personal concerns. The reader has paid his money and demonstrated a certain willingness, but it is not a willingness to have the writer move in with him. Unless he be working for a specified audience of people who are interested in various aspects of his technique - that is, unless he be teaching the craft - to people who have in some manner paid tuition fees, as distinguished from the great number who buy tickets to stories, he has to distort both himself and those who deal with him, or else he has to be distorted by them, each time he does anything but present his story as distinguished from himself.

These are not statements of my opinion; they are statements of fact, and I hate to keep harping on them, especially since I then find my opinions quoted favourably by people who think you can legislate creativity, almost as often as I find them attacked by people who believe literary criticism is a branch of press-agentry. But I must harp on them in cases where they explain, first of all, talented but somehow less satisfactory writers.

The general quality is most often called by the term "story-telling ability", and it has now gotten so scarce, in the minds of some people, that even a curmudgeon like Lester del Rey, who really knows better, is moved to give him overblown praise on the covers of a merely adequate novel.

Only Keith Laumer, of all those pressed into service as shills by Terry Carr, speaks an undeniable truth about The Two-Timers, an Ace Science Fiction Special. "Smoothly written, immensely readable," he says correctly. "Painfully good," says Harlan Ellison. "A damned fine book," says Lester.

No. No. It is a reasonably well told narrative about a man who wants so much to bring the dead back into his arms that he succeeds in crossing time, where he does indeed find his beloved - in his own arms, he being still married to her in that parallel world.

...

...By plastering this book over with praise, the editor has preconditioned the audience response. Since the book is not that good - and I can't believe Terry Carr thinks it's that good - he has deliberately preconditioned it toward distortion. By lending themselves to the extravagant praise Terry wanted to have, del Rey and Ellison have participated in a situation based on some consideration other than objective appraisal. Ellison loves to write critical phrases like "The writing is exquisite. It knocked me cold..." because there's a definite charm in writing like that. Del Rey loves a good story and nurtures storytellers. But he can't really have "finished with a feeling of complete satisfaction."

Come on. If you praise a mediocre book, because you want to sell more copies, or because you like writing blurb copy, or because you sincerely believe the writer deserves good things, what you are doing is helping to perpetuate the book's errors. You stand in danger of encouraging a writer you like to inject cosmic sf elements into a human story, to that story's inevitable diminution of impact. You stand in danger of encouraging a man to think of gimmicks, of driving him directly into the arms of a seductive way of life in which things are made so pleasantly flattering that one loses the guts to actually put out any unusual work. The process is plain to see, and always has been. And where it starts, and who it starts with, is not in the obviously sycophantic and ponderous extravagances that every interesting new writer encounters and can recognize; it starts with the well-intentioned distortions of those he respects and who often wish him well. (GALAXY, February 1969, pp188-191)

105. The value of science fiction - a philosophical, speculative vehicle by definition - cannot be even as immediately effectively as that of the muckraking contemporary roman a clef. Science fiction is almost inescapably a vehicle for ideas whose time has not come.

This doesn't and shouldn't prevent people from trying to make something else of it. Inevitably, one of them will find a way. But it does make the odds quite heavy against any given individual's success in producing anything socially deeper than what we already know. And unfortunately we are beset with people who sincerely believe that to say anything above the conventional level of mediocrity is to explore territory never before beheld by man or artist. These appear to be people who have not yet realized that conventional mediocrity is a proven effective survival mechanism for the individual, if not for the mass, and quite often a consciously thought and devotedly cultivated mechanism which no trumpery concoction of the tale-teller's art can hope to disarm. It is to be remembered that the itinerant unthreaded pipe salesman knows he has seen a good deal more of the world than the garret genius. It is to be considered that if he has scales on his eyes, perhaps it is because of the scars on his back, and elsewhere.

Now, I may be wrong. But more and more do I feel that our bigger thinkers are whistling up their spouts, and I think perhaps I know why. More and more often as I accumulate abrasions in the course of nurturing mine own torch amidst the nighted palisades of life do I crave a plain tale plainly told. I do my own damned expert agonizing. What I need from a storyteller is some convincing hint that it's not all for nothing. (GALAXY, September 1971, p 144)

106. The most popular writers are semiliterate. Quib me no quibbles - certainly there are literate works of fiction that have enjoyed audiences of millions - over the tens and hundreds of years. The overnight success of the masses, however, is invariably written as though the author regarded the language as an impediment. And that is precisely so. Language, in any form, interferes between the reader and the writer's concept.

It remains for the mass-successful author only to restrict himself to concepts that have already been half-communicated for him by the ambient popular mood. After that the purpose of his language is to deliver the recognition signal and get out of the way - to travel no graceful paths, to cling to every rut of popular grammar, to be completely unobtrusive - except, perhaps, to a teacher or a critic.

Thus James Bond, Tarzan and the Valentine Smith of Stranger in a Strange Land's back half. Thus Leon Uris, Arthur Hailey, Harold Robbins and A. E. van Vogt.

But this is an old assertion here. Now towards a new point:

Hardly anyone is so miserable as to write badly on purpose. In his mind any writer chosen at random will have an image of what constitutes good writing. And though he will from time to time depart from it in his actions for one pressing reason or another, as long as he holds the image and feels he can duplicate it in his actions, he still considers himself a good writer. The reams of flawed or uninspired copy in his closet do not have, for him, the weight of the three or four results from the times when he was acting in accordance with the image. Though he has authored Blood on My Jets a thousand times, he is redeemed for himself by one time when the muse whispered to him while he wasn't busy with something else. And that's how it should be - for his sake. But suppose he wrote Blood on My Jets rather well? When he goes to his grave with his one manuscript and consigns the piles of lead novelettes for Stupendous Science Monthly to the dungheap, what is he heaping on what may be a vast congregation of fans?

Does a writer see two audiences? A good audience for his work in accordance with his image of good writing and then, for the other stuff, an ignominious one? Does he perhaps see one audience without the power to differentiate?

These are terrible traps to set for one's own soul. (GALAXY, November 1971 p119-120)

Kenneth BULMER:: Of course it was absolutely right that in its own time SF should leave the 'ghetto' - as some axe-grinding propagandists rather hysterically termed that enclosed world - and see about shaking-up the static and stagnant world of mundane fiction. Many SF stories deal with ideas of preparing a separate pool of genes, and then at the right time letting them loose upon the genetic pool of humanity, with beneficial results. Science fiction itself was one such isolated genetic pool, and the ferment still goes on. SF ideas and concepts, the images of SF, are now common currency in the world of fiction at large, where they have given a fresh impetus to decaying forms.

Recently we have been descended upon by a monstrous regiment of academics. Many of them merely repeated the postures of bygone days; the modern equivalents of incensed authority, schoolteachers, parents. Others saw in SF a cheap bandwagon for cut-price thinking. Others tried to use SF as a tool, with which to measure their own particular disciplines.

The divines, too, stepped in, with religious parallels and condescending nods towards some of science fiction's attitudes towards theological disputes and mysteries. And the mystics - they're still struggling to find out the inner core of SF's meaning, in defiance of the protean complexity of the various strands comprising SF.

But many academics did try, with varying results, to be helpful. To try to understand, and come to some understanding of, science fiction. I think all SF devotees welcome those who take SF on its merits, as well as its demerits, as it comes, and who are willing to learn and not stand back upon a pre-erected construct of their own prejudices.

Scientists are not the best people to write science fiction. There are a few excellent SF writers who are practising scientists, but very few. A scientist, if he is any good, must have limited his work to a very specialist approach to a single subject. This tendency has accelerated recently out of all proportions, and yet at the moment seems the only way to handle the masses of data daily being researched. The scientist is not only too close to his subject, and thus limited in handling anything else, in the same way that an ordinary person is, but more damagingly, he is as it were hypnotised by his discipline into accepting what present-day experiment tells him to be true. This he is inhibited from taking a wide-ranging swing at prophecy, of supposing, in the grandest sense.

(SPECULATION, September 1970, p.26)

108. What is interesting is that those people who clamour for SF to return to the fold of so-called mainstream writing are blinkered. Now I leave aside here all questions of writing quality. SF has had some foul writers in its own ranks, and still has them. But the generality of 'mainstream' writing, taken over all its various examples, shows no better average. What SF is doing with validity is introducing SF concepts and common images to the mundane world. By definition, as soon as a work does contain SF concepts as part of its structure, then it becomes SF. It was thought at one time that a hybrid might be constructed, wherein all that was good in mundane literature could enhance the basic values of science fiction. But immediately, it becomes SF, simply because it no longer deals exclusively with man's reaction to man. I find this valuable. It is this liberating influence that makes SF, surely, the most exciting literature to emerge, for SF can say that man's reaction with man and man's reaction with the Universe, together make a literature far more satisfying to the latter end of the 20th Century than the literature that deals solely with man's reaction to himself.

(SPECULATION, September 1970, p. 30)

109. We all know that the label 'science fiction' is in reality a misnomer, (and I prefer, as I have indicated, to let 'SF' speak for all the various brands). Because of this, science fiction, always a tender plant in the minds of the thoughtless, fluctuated in quality and appeal. They equated it with science. And a

casual reading revealed the antipathy towards science in modern SF. The casual reader was bewildered - as well he might be. The high days of early SF, when science was really believed in as the means to a bright end, were gone.

(SPECULATION, September 1970, p. 30)

110. What I am saying is that it is the job of SF, in whatever guise, to explore with every resource at its disposal all the avenues of hope for answers that do not end in atomic holocaust or pollution stagnation. I ask for no facile optimism - we know that from the schemes of betterment so often spring more and darker tragedies. You can say that what many modern SF writers of the no-hope school are doing is merely to parrot again and again the old tag "the road to hell is paved with good intentions".

Now although SF is widely acclaimed today by all manner of unlikely people, who a few years ago would have scoffed at SF readers as a bunch of nuts, and who have recently jumped on the bandwagon, it is this very acceptance and proliferation of SF that is at the root of its own current weakness. Science fiction is not a respectable literature. It is a literature of revolt. But there is so much of it now, most of it unreadable, that its sting has been drawn. It is accepted by the Establishment: "just another form of quasi-literature". Those who seek to do what I have indicated is impossible by definition, and re-unite SF with mundane literature, are hoping to make of SF a toothless, escapist literature.

SF is a disreputable form that goes against established authority, when that authority is manifestly incapable of visualising the future it is bringing upon us. But SF itself now shares a disrepute among those very people who should in its pages find the stimulus for questioning. I suggest that the hatred of science, so cosily fostered by SF, has recoiled upon itself. And it's not too far beyond the pale of possibility to suggest that SF itself must advance boldly into the territory of fantasy, in order once again to make itself a form of communication that will jolt no-hopers, complacent office-holders and ignorantly-prejudiced into a fresh awareness that "By God we're in a hole and we're going to be in a worse hole, but we can get out of it." (SPECULATION, September 1970, p. 31)

Anthony BURGESS:: Many novelists set themselves the task - before and after the war - of exposing Wells's optimistic scientific liberalism as a sham. Science and education, said Wells, would outlaw war, poverty, squalor. All of us carry an image of the Wellsian future - rational buildings of steel and glass, rational tunics, clean air, a diet of scientifically balanced vitamin-capsules, clean trips to the moon, perpetual world peace. It was a fine dream, and what nation could better realise it than the Germans? After all, their scientific and educational achievements seemed to put them in the vanguard of Utopia-builders. What, though, did they give to the world? A new dark age, a decade of misery. Wells lived to see the break-up of his own rational dream and believed that homo sapiens had come to the end of his tether. It was time for evolution to throw up a new race. He died a disappointed liberal.

(THE NOVEL NOW, Faber, 1967, p. 39)

112. Post-Wellsian specialists in science fiction are serious intellectuals whose concern is with prophecy as well as with entertainment; the works of Isaac Asimov in America and Brian Aldiss in England are no easy fripperies for a loose-end evening; they demand concentration as Henry James demands it. And Ray Bradbury thinks the themes of science fiction worthy to have showered on them all the riches of most poetical and sophisticated language.
(op. cit. p. 208)

William BURROUGHS:: Well, I've felt a considerable number of parallels with Mr. C. S. Lewis, that is his concept of the ... I believe he calls it The Bent One ... is very similar to my Mr. Bradley-Mr. Martin. That is, this evil spirit that he feels to be in control of the earth. And also the

conspiracy in "That Hideous Strength" was very similar I think to many of the conspiracies that I develop, ideas of conspiracies that I develop in "Nova Express". I'd say that that was the closest parallel among science fiction writers that I can think of. (SF HORIZONS 2, p.4)

114. Well, I think the word real is a very ambiguous word indeed. It has often been my experience when talking to someone during a schizophrenic or so-called psychotic episode, that they made more sense then than they did later, when they decided that all this was not real. We now, for the whole concept of "Operators and Things", we merely have to look at any modern hierarchic organization to see this quite in real operation. A hierarchical organization like Time-Fortune, or Madison Avenue. You talk to people there, and they feel, say someone in the lower echelons, and he feels that he is being manipulated by the people above him and so on up the pyramid. And it is true, and he is, and often with very little consideration for him as an individual. This is certainly true of most large companies. They are valued insofar as they perform certain functions, and that is it. Well this would seem to me to be being treated as a thing; it's one, I should say, one of the great problems of the modern world. Now, whether you regard these operators as - well they certainly are real insofar as there are office managers, people above office managers, there are officers in an army, etc., etc. (op. cit. p. 5)

115. I have always felt that science fiction is a form that gives you so much leeway that you really can say perhaps more in this form than you can in any other. (op. cit. p. 7)

116. Well it seems to me that the future of science fiction is practically unlimited. Now that we are entering the space age it is going to become more and more important.

...

It seems to me that science fiction will always be one step ahead of the so-called reality. I mean we haven't even made any landings on the moon yet ((1965)), let alone on other planets. Of course, science fiction has explored possibilities of other planets, other forms of life quite different from our own. It would seem to me that the contrary is true. (op. cit. p. 9)

117. Wait a minute, I'll just check my coordinate books to see if there's anyone I've forgotten - Conrad, Richard Hughes, science fiction, quite a bit of science fiction. Eric Frank Russell has written some very, very interesting books. Here's one, The Star Virus; I doubt if you've heard of it. He develops a concept here of what he calls "Deadliners" who have this strange sort of seedy look. I read this when I was in Gibraltar, and I began to find Deadliners all over the place. The story has a fish pond in it, and quite a flower garden. My father was always very interested in gardening.

...

I think there's going to be more and more merging of art and science. So Scientists are already studying the creative process, and I think the whole line between art and science will break down and that scientists, I hope, will become more creative and writers more scientific. And I see no reason why the artistic world can't absolutely merge with Madison Avenue. Pop art is a move in that direction. Why can't we have advertisements with beautiful words and beautiful images? Already some of the very beautiful color photography appearing in whiskey ads, I notice. Science will also discover for us how association blocks actually form. (THE PARIS REVIEW 35, Fall 1965, pp28-29)

118. Science eventually will be forced to establish courts of biologic mediation, because life forms are going to become more incompatible with the conditions of existence as man penetrates further into space. Mankind will have to under biologic alterations ultimately, if we are to survive at all. This will

require biologic law to decide what changes to make. We will simply have to use our intelligence to plan mutations, rather than letting them occur at random. Because many such mutations - look at the saber-tooth tiger - are bound to be very poor engineering designs. The future, decidedly, yes. I think there are innumerable possibilities, literally innumerable. The hope lies in the development of non-body experience and eventually getting away from the body itself, away from three-dimensional coordinates and concomitant animal reactions of fear and flight, which lead inevitably to tribal feuds and dissensions. (op. cit. pp46-47)

Michel BUTOR:: If the genre Science Fiction is rather difficult to define - disputes among the experts afford superabundant proof of that - it is, at least, one of the easiest to designate. It is enough to say: "You know, those stories that are always mentioning interplanetary rockets," for the least-prepared interlocutor to understand immediately what you mean. This does not imply that any such apparatus occurs in every SF story; it may be replaced by other accessories which will perform a comparable role. But it is the most usual, the typical example, like the magic wand in fairy tales. (Science Fiction: The Crisis of its Growth, in SF, THE OTHER SIDE OF REALISM edited by Thomas Clareson, Polular Press, 1972, p. 157.)

120. In order not to acknowledge ourselves vanquished, we raise our sights: instead of describing what might happen on Mars and Venus, we leap at once to the third planet of the Epsilon system of the Swan, or else, since in fact there is nothing to stop us once we have started on this path, planet n of star n in galaxy n. At first the reader is impressed by these cascades of light years; the solar system was certainly a wretched little village, here we are launched into the universe at large. But he soon realizes that these ultra-remote planets resemble the earth much more than they do its neighbours. Out of the immense number of stars which populate space, it is always permissible to imagine one on which the conditions of life are very close to those we know. The authors have rediscovered the islands of the eighteenth century. They employ a vaguely scientific jargon and decorate the sky with charming fantasies; the trick is turned.

This infinite freedom is a false freedom. If we flee infinitely far into space or time, we shall find ourselves in a region where everything is possible, where the imagination will no longer even need to make an effort of coordination. The result will be an impoverished duplication of everyday reality. We are told of an enormous war between galactic civilizations, but we see at once that the league of democratic planets strangely resembles the UN, the empire of the nebula Andromeda stands for the Soviet Union as a subscriber to Reader's Digest might conceive that nation, and so on. The author has merely translated into SF language a newspaper article he read the night before. Had he remained on Mars, he would have been obliged to invent something.

At its best moments, the SF that describes unknown worlds becomes an instrument of an extreme flexibility, thanks to which all kinds of political and moral fables, of fairy tales, of myths, can be transposed and adapted to modern readers. Anticipation has created a language by whose aid we can in principle examine everything. (op. cit. pp160-161)

121. We see that all kinds of merchandise can be sold under the label SF; and that all kinds of merchandise seek to be packaged under this label. Hence it seems that SF represents the normal form of mythology in our time: a form which is not only capable of revealing profoundly new themes, but capable of integrating all the themes of the old literature.

Despite several splendid successes, we cannot help thinking that SF is keeping very few of its promises.

This is because SF, by extending itself, is denaturing itself; it is gradually

losing its specificity. It furnishes a very particular element of credibility; this element is increasingly weakened when it is utilized without discernment. SF is fragile, and the enormous circulation it has achieved in recent years merely renders it more so.

We have already noted that the flight to ultra-distant planets and epochs, which seems at first glance a conquest, actually masks the authors' incapacity to imagine in a coherent fashion, in conformity with the requirements of "science", the planets or the epochs which are closer at hand. Similarly the divination of a future science affords, surely, a great freedom, but we soon discover that it is above all a revenge of the authors against their incapacity to master the entire range of contemporary science. (op. cit. pp 162-163)

122. ((SF)) has the power to solicit our belief in an entirely new way, and it is capable of affording, in its description of the possible, a marvelous precision. But to realize its full power, it must undergo a revolution, it must succeed in unifying itself. It must become a collective work, like the science which is its indisputable basis.

...

Now let us imagine that a certain number of authors, instead of describing at random and quite rapidly certain more or less interchangeable cities, were to take as the setting of their stories a single city, named and situated with some precision in space and in future time; that each author were to take into account the descriptions given by the others in order to introduce his own new ideas. This city would become a common possession to the same degree as an ancient city that has vanished; gradually, all readers would give its name to the city of their dreams and would model that city in its image.

SF, if it could limit and unify itself, would be capable of acquiring over the individual imagination a constraining power comparable to that of any classical mythology. Soon all authors would be obliged to take this predicted city into account, readers would organize their actions in relation to its imminent existence, ultimately they would find themselves obligated to build it. Then SF would be veracious, to the very degree that it realized itself.

It is easy to see what a prodigious instrument of liberation or oppression it could become. (op. cit. pp 164-165)

L. Sprague de CAMP:: Formerly they ((science fiction writers)) located their ideal commonwealths in the distant past or in undiscovered parts of the world. Now, however, that the unexplored places left on earth are few and uninviting and the history of the remote past is fairly well known, they prefer their Utopias in a distant planet or even on other planets. (cited in YESTERDAYS TOMORROWS by W. H. G. Armytage, p 139 as from LOST CONTINENTS.)

124. Thus the later Victorian prophetic story-writers managed to be right in a few broad and simple respects in their prophecies of the latter half of the 20th century. They foresaw that the world would become more mechanized, populous, and complicated; that Socialism would grow and would attain power in some countries; that faster transportation, especially by air, would affect men's lives.

As they got more specific and detailed, though, they went further astray, and some important developments they overlooked pretty generally - the automobile, radio, and motion picture; the internal combustion engine in its many forms; prohibition, birth control, and wide-spread divorce; the fading away of the old Judeo-Christian nudity taboo; and so on. Their ratio of success is little greater than that to be expected by luck; it seems greater because we remember the successful forecasts and forget the wild guesses.

The science fiction of the present appears to be considerably better
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grounded scientifically, sociologically and psychologically, in its higher forms. Even if we cannot point to any one story and say with confidence, here is the real future, the mere concept of a different future is an enormous advance. When the Martians land, or tyranny clamps down on the world, or we bomb ourselves into barbarism, science fiction readers at least won't rush about crying: "It's impossible! It just can't be!" They'll have been through it all before.

The possibility, in fact, if we judge by the older prophecies, is that we'll turn out to have been too conservative. Not only pessimistically but otherwise, for science fiction also envisions happy futures as well as doomed ones. It will be interesting, to put it calmly, to see what some citizens of 2000 A. D. will say in reviewing the stories in Galaxy Science Fiction. I'd rather like to be one of them. (GALAXY, February 1952, p. 12)

John W. CAMPBELL, Jr.: To be science fiction, not fantasy, an honest effort at prophetic extrapolation of the known must be made. Ghosts can enter science fiction - if they're logically explained, but not if they are simply the ghosts of fantasy. Prophetic extrapolation can derive from a number of different sources, and apply in a number of fields. Sociology, psychology and parapsychology are, today, not true sciences; therefore instead of forecasting future results of applications of sociological science of today, we must forecast the development of a science of sociology. (The Science of Science Fiction writing, in OF WORLDS BEYOND, edited by L. A. Eshbach, Dobson, 1965 (originally Fantasy Press, 1947), pp. 103-104.)

126. Above all else, a story - science fiction or otherwise - is a story of human beings. (op. cit. p. 104)

127. In older science fiction, the Machine and the Great Idea predominated. Modern readers - and hence editors! - don't want that; they want stories of people living in a world where a Great Idea, or a series of them, and a Machine, or machines, form the background. (op. cit. p. 104)

128. An idea is important only in how it reacts on people, and in how people react to it. Whether the idea is social, political, or mechanical, we want people involved in and by it. (op. cit. pp. 106-107)

129. The idea that it takes something 'great and noble and new' in the way of an idea to make a good science-fiction story is basically wrong; it takes a new and detailed viewpoint, a real consideration of an idea or concept, to make the really powerful stories. Only with the backing of such patient and detailed analysis can the author earn his keep - do for the reader what the reader is actually seeking. (op. cit. p. 107)

130. Essentially it ((style)) is based on the way an author puts his ideas into English. The words he uses, and the way he uses them. Some authors excel at a flow of wording so smooth, with so much rhythm in the roll of the syllables, that the language has a dreamy, easy effect. Robert Moore Williams and Lester Del Rey can do that when they want. Ted Sturgeon does it at will. Other writers as good or better seem to have no sense of word-rhythm in writing at all, but have in full measure some other attribute that makes their writing pungent and pleasing. Sprague de Camp never uses the smooth, word-rhythm type of writing, but de Camp is the past master of a special art - and it, because it is unique with him, is the fingerprint of his style. De Camp makes an almost infallible choice of precisely the right wrong word when he wants it, and uses that trick with extremely good discretion, not overworking it. To point up a statement, or sharpen a phrase, to establish a character, de Camp will select a word that is entirely unexpected at that particular point; it will be some word that neatly catches the attention and strongly reinforces the phrase used.

Ted Sturgeon, as mentioned, can use that very smooth-flowing wording at

will; he can also change to a sharp, arhythmic style that, by its contrast, sharply focuses the particular scene he wants. In his story 'It' in the old Unknown - and since considerably reprinted - he produces a feeling of the quiet, brooding horror of his monster by using the smooth flowing type of language. In the scene between the two brothers when one is determined to get the man, woman or thing that killed his dog, the wording is choppy, completely arhythmic, and heightens the entire effect. In 'Killdozer', he uses the same effects with equal success. (op. cit. pp110-111)

131. Science-fiction can be, and by rights should be, a thoroughly philosophical literature. While most people tend to think of it as being Jules Verne and H. G. Wells up-to-date, perhaps we might better remember that the tradition goes back earlier to Gulliver's Travels and even to Aesop's Fables. Aesop, of necessity, talked to his contemporaries in terms of Foxes and Lions and Donkeys; in our more enlightened age we call those same characters Robots and Martians or Sarn. But they're still the same people: human beings in fancy dress, because the reader-listener can more easily, more psychologically-comfortably, witness the errors of the ways of those silly non-human entities. In this age, which has somewhat deified the machine, it's much easier to accept the Machine that answers all prayers, and consider the consequences. But, after all, wouldn't the same consequence stem from the existence of any all-answering Being? There's nothing quite so stultifying as having someone around who has all the answers - and gives them to you. (Introduction to CLGAK OF AESIR (Lancer, p.13))

132. The modern set-up in "literature" is that the term is restricted to things that meet the approval of the small, self-adulatory clique of Literateurs who have decided that they, and they alone, are fit to determine what is Good and what is Worthless. The number of those who constitute the Literateurs is remarkably small - but they are most remarkably effective in guiding the reactions of the Sheep of Suburbia. What they say is Bad, the sheep baa at faithfully - and they can do a remarkably good job of lousing it up commercially. What they say is Good, the sheep ooh at and buy, even if it has no intrinsic merit.

The Literateurs do not like any form of literature that incites the sheep to think for themselves - which is the avowed purpose of science fiction. They are, therefore, very ready to grasp any evidence that science fiction is Bad. Being pure scholars, lacking all sense of humor themselves, they will see this book as a Scholarly Work and react to it as such.

And don't for the moment think they won't know that an introduction is a stamp-of-approval on the said Scholarly Work of Research and Bibliography! (editorial in A REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING by Alva Rogers, Advent, p. xix)

133. It should be obvious, of course, that "you can't go home again". Could "Skylark of Space" be published, as a brand-new work, today? No, it could not. The present readers, without previous indoctrination that Skylark is a classic, would see that the love interest was poured from the syrup bottle, the science was nonsense, and, as E. E. Smith said, the whole thing is indefensible. You think "Hawk Garse" could get published today? Why not? Well, the science stunk, the whole thing was wildly improbable, it was made up of cliches, it had no characterizations, and it was all black-white-good-evil-yes-no-without-evaluation. Totally unacceptable after "The World of *".

The readers of today are far too sophisticated for stories patterned after the classics of yesterday. The men who wrote stories in the forties lifted the level of science fiction tremendously. That had two effects: it made it a more satisfying and powerful influence on readers - which expanded the readership in the field - and it made it enormously tougher for the younger would-be writers to start writing in the field. Most of the writers who had their first appearances before 1940 were under twenty-five - a number in their teens. (Myself, for instance.)

Writers trying to break into the field at that age now don't have the experience and the polish required - the standards have been made much tougher by the men who developed the field in the forties and fifties. So it's a damn sight harder for me to get good, new, young authors.

So what about the Great Old Authors (please remember that 1940 was almost a quarter century ago)? Well, they're convinced that they already know how to write and aren't gonna be told what they should write by that dictatorial, authoritarian, uncooperative Campbell. They aren't going to sell their immortal birthright of Great Authorhood for any mess of dollars! And granted that the Sense of Wonder is gone, in large part, because the Old Fans are old now. But the Great Old Authors are old, too! Most of them got their scientific education back in the early thirties, and they've been running on it ever since. How many of them are in contact with actual research work being done today - and getting the feel for the major direction of science now? Who's done any extrapolation of the possibilities of super conductive systems, for instance?

They know that science fiction is about rocket ships - so they persist in using rocket ships in stories of the centuries-hence future, when it's perfectly obvious the damn things are hopelessly inefficient and impractical as useful transportation. And the Great Old Authors will not recognize that we've already told those stories; that we've already exercised our Sense of Wonder wondering about those ideas.

Will somebody tell me why the Great Old Authors will not get off their literary tails and consider something new? They hate me for shoving new concepts and new ideas at them - and damn me for their lack of a Sense of Wonder!

The world rolls on and we either roll with it or get left behind to mumble about the Good Old Days. If you think science fiction is getting dull, it just possibly could be you. And I've got a pretty good idea of what's wrong but I don't know of anything that can be done about it.

I don't know of anybody who's growing any younger... (op. cit pp xx-xxi)

134. That group of writings which is usually referred to as "mainstream literature" is, actually, a special subgroup of the field of science fiction - for science fiction deals with all places in the Universe, and all times in Eternity, so the literature of here-and-now is, truly, a subset of science fiction.

In many ways, science fiction is a much more difficult type of literature to write; it puts far more severe demands on the author than does the conventional story - partly because it is not conventional. It is, many times, the author's aim to communicate to the reader the emotional attitudes entailed in an entirely different set of conventions - a task sometimes beyond the author's abilities, and many times beyond the ability of the average American citizen to grasp. Oriented from birth in a culture that holds certain values as Natural Of Course Truths Beyond Question, a story deliberately based on a culture which holds other truths is going to cause considerable mind-stretching ... and most modern Americans, as evidenced by the stories found in the mass-media magazines, don't enjoy mind-stretching new viewpoints.

(Introduction to ANALOG 1, p. 7 of Paperback Library edition)

135. You know, when a man takes a vacation, normally he does not work less, be less active, rest more - he works harder, more violently, and goes short on sleep. The fun of a vacation is not ordinarily lessened activity - but a different kind of activity. The postman takes a bus ride through the country, and the bus driver takes a hike through the mountains; the theater owner hires a cruise boat and goes fishing, while the fisherman goes to the theater. Usually, fun and relaxation prove to be doing something different.

That, in essence, is what science fiction offers: something different - and
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it's strictly an active-participant sort. You have to stretch your viewpoints, you have to reach for new ideas, and move, for a while, outside your own, familiar orientations of American culture.

...

If you don't like that sort of stretching, of course, you can always go back to the narrowly limited confines of modern, mainstream literature, where it isn't considered necessary to suggest that human beings can, and have, experienced really powerful emotions - not petty worries about who's sleeping with who's wife - and can, and have, held deeply and with total dedication, attitudes we cannot believe, today, any human being could hold.

Science fiction is for fun - fun for those who enjoy stretching, reaching beyond the daily limits. If you want to try thinking with new attitudes, if thinking is, for you, fun - then science fiction is fun. (op. cit. pp8-9)

136. Good science fiction is relevant - more relevant than any other kind of fiction. But it isn't properly relevant to what you're thinking now; it's relevant to what you had better be thinking next year and the rest of your life. (letter, quoted in GALAXY, November 1971, p. 123)

Arthur C. CLARKE:: It is obvious that science fiction should be technically accurate, and there is no excuse for erroneous information when the true facts are available. Yet accuracy should not be too much of a fetish, for it is often the spirit rather than the letter that counts. Thus Verne's From the Earth to the Moon and A Journey to the Centre of the Earth are still enjoyable, not only because Verne was a first-rate story teller, but because he was imbued with the excitement of science and could communicate this to his readers. That many of his "facts" and most of his theories are now known to be incorrect is not a fatal flaw, for his books still arouse the sense of wonder.

The cultural impact of science fiction has never been properly recognised, and the time is long overdue for an authoritative study of its history and development. Perhaps this is a project that UNESCO could sponsor, for it is obvious that no single scholar will have the necessary qualifications for the task. In one field in particular - that of astronautics - the influence of science fiction has been enormous. The four greatest pioneers of spaceflight - Tsiolkovsky, Oberth, Goddard and von Braun all wrote science fiction to propagate their ideas (though they did not always get it published!).

Sir Charles Snow ends his famous essay Science and Government by stressing the vital importance of "the gift of foresight". He points out that men often have wisdom without possessing foresight. Perhaps we science-fiction writers sometimes show foresight without wisdom; but at least we undoubtedly do have foresight, and it may rub off on to the community at large. (F&SF, October 1963, pp. 22-23)

Theodore R. COGSWELL:: I think my thesis is that, unhappily, there is very little politics in science fiction. For a very good reason which is, simply, as far out as fans and writers may think they are, they do belong to a society and they do reflect attitudes of that society. Their stories tend to reflect ideas that people consider to be important.

...

I don't know anything that can be done about the situation. I share this myself, a sort of feeling of helplessness. I am reacting in terms of twenty years ago. I am writing in terms of twenty years ago, and most of the rest of you are, too. What we are doing is essentially negative material. We're saying, "dictators are bad, freedom is nice." Somebody comes along and says, "What thinking have you been doing about it?"

...

Why don't we feel strongly about it? Because we don't have the old simple answers; there was a time when we had them. We could thump the platform and say, "this is right and this is wrong". Today, I'm afraid that you are going to get very little important politics in science fiction except that written by outsiders. The men who feel as strongly as Orwell felt in 1984. He looked ahead and he got scared stiff. We don't look ahead any longer. (The Proceedings; CHICON III, Advent, pp. 188-190.)

James COLVIN:: It has never seemed coincidental to me that sf appears to flourish at times of stress in the West; for better or worse it has been, through much of its existence, primarily a literature of paranoia. The last "boom" came at the time of the Korean War and McCarthyism; the present one exists side by side with the Vietnam War and race riots. Flying saucer sightings (always a lovely sign of national paranoia) were multitude in the early fifties; flying saucer sightings are proliferating again in the U. S. as the Vietnam War escalates. The T. V. series The Invaders enjoyed an enormous popularity when it came out in the U. S. last year and the film War of the Worlds (with, consciously or unconsciously, the Martians clearly equated with the Russians) had a similar popularity in the fifties.

...

The saving grace of a writer like Asimov in his hey-day was that he at least saw the problem as being more complicated and the solutions as necessarily more sophisticated. But it was the later school that grew up about GALAXY - Bester, Pohl and Kornbluth, Budrys, Sheckley et al - which began to engage itself more fully with attempting to isolate the causes of its society's ills and produce a fiction far less reactive than that which had preceded it. Even in the best of these, however, one finds a certain note of hysterical paranoia, a tendency to go for fashionable answers, a nostalgia that harked back to the "golden age" of America's agricultural period, a certain tendency to indulge in little witch-hunts of their own while condemning others. Yet they often came closer to discovering the causes of their discomfort while elsewhere McCarthy screamed of Commie plots and Packard and McLuhan yelled that the admen were out to destroy our minds.

...

Meanwhile, escapist sf and fantasy flourishes in profusion and represents, in the U. S. A. and parts of the Continent, at least, the most popular vein still. Serious, engaged sf has yet to convince its largest potential audience of its credentials. The work of Tolkien and Heinlein and Ayn Rand (crypto-Fascist fiction if ever there was) is still more popular than the work of Ballard, Burroughs and the others. As we learn to accept the fact of a so-called "artificial" economy, however, the reversal of this situation seems in sight and a truly popular but uncompromising literature may come about - our new Dickens may soon emerge.

It is an ironic fact that today the old Left and the new Right both seem to have much in common. Both are refusing to accept the facts of our economic and social life and it is left principally for painters and writers to try to bring them to light. The most interesting of these writers are producing what might almost be called a literature of acceptance, delighting in the changes and possibilities of modern society while still concerned with the need to find a new set of morals and ethical principles that will make that society a just one. They are well past the stage of reaction. However, it must sometimes be difficult for a reader used to the old didactic, almost journalistic, approach of good sf of the fifties to recognise the considerable merits of the new "subjective" school, one of whose most important exponents and greatest talents is J. G. Ballard. There is no whit less concern and sense of engagement in Ballard than there was in Wells (still the greatest of the didactic school). Far from dealing in straightforward philosophical ideas a la Kafka and Hesse, Ballard is involved with the detailed physical and psychological reality of the immediate present

and near future. (NEW WORLDS, December 1967/January 1968, pp 59-60)

S. E. COTTS:: The quality of a piece of literature doesn't change with time, only the perspective of the reader. It gives a false impression to call Verne or any of the other 'old' masters dated. In our eyes, they may have changed from science 'fiction' to science 'history' but if they were good then they still are now. They are no more dated than books dealing with the opening of the American West or the climbing of Mt. Everest. (AMAZING STORIES, January 1961, p. 133)

141. It would seem to me a much wiser use of his ((Jeff Sutton's)) specific talents if he would write straight non-fiction science articles for an appropriate publication, instead of passing his books off as novels just because he has sprinkled the pages with a few characters from a stale salt shaker. Are you listening, Mr. Hugo Gernsback, you who have said that it is all right for science fiction to be mediocre as literature so long as it is convincing in its scientific aspects? (AMAZING STORIES, May 1961, p. 134)

142. Most writers on science fiction, even the most avid, have claimed for science fiction a very unique and special niche within the whole literary spectrum. Mr. Campbell boldly rushes into his opening essay by adopting the opposite view: that the whole body of "mainstream" literature is actually a subgroup of the field of science fiction, because "science fiction deals with all places in the Universe and all times in Eternity", not merely the here-and-now. Perhaps one might be more inclined to accept this upside-down attitude as a bit of whimsy, or as a sign of a man's justifiable pride in his work, if Mr. Campbell did not dismiss all the rest of literature in such a perfunctory manner.

In doing so he makes two very dangerous generalizations. First, he claims that science fiction is more difficult to write and puts more demands on the author than the conventional story. I dispute this strongly. It takes far greater skill and imagination to transmute the conventional subject into the magic of great fiction. With an unconventional subject, the novelty of the idea is often enough to carry along less-than-skillful treatment.

Secondly, Mr. Campbell blithely tells us that in the limited confines of modern, mainstream literature it isn't considered necessary to suggest that human beings have really powerful emotions, not merely petty worries such as who's sleeping with who's wife. An absurd statement like that has a wealth of replies. I'll confine myself to saying that who's sleeping with who's wife can be either powerful or petty depending on the people involved, the psychological factors, the prose style, the writer's underlying philosophy, etc., etc. In addition, I would be happy to furnish Mr. Campbell with a reading list of great works on other topics.

Perhaps the weakest link in his argument lies in his use of the term "mainstream literature". He seems to mean it in the sense of popular literature. But great literature (the primary source of that powerful writing he is seeking) is very frequently not mainstream or popular literature. Indeed, this great literature is often critical of, rather than a reflection of, the values and mores of its time. A look at the lives of some of the great writers (or artists or philosophers) will show that their greatness today is often in inverse proportion to their popularity in their own time. So Mr. Campbell really has no valid case at all, since it is both incomplete and illogical to compare the whole of one body of literature (science fiction) with only part of another (mainstream).

As a starting point for discussion, Mr. Campbell serves a useful function, I suppose, but the tone he adopts makes it hard to dismiss the notion that it was written out of his own personal bitterness with our society and culture. (AMAZING STORIES, June 1963, pp 120-121)

Kenneth COUTTS-SMITH:: Science-Fiction, of course, IS intensely Millennial in nature particularly in its earlier 'space-opera-and-end-of-the-world' manifestations. (NEW WORLDS, March 1969, p. 57)

Edmund CRISPIN:: A science fiction story is one which presupposes a technology, or an effect of technology, or a disturbance in the natural order, such as humanity, up to the time of writing, has not in actual fact experienced. On the hither side of this definition, the genre throws up an occasional sober tale - about industrial relations in an atomic power plant, or what not - which is in all essentials not much more than a camera-eye view of contemporary reality; and at the other extreme it is apt to degenerate into goblins. The great bulk of science-fiction, however, remains faithful either to the technical hypothesis and its attendant consequences, or else to the cosmic upheaval - the act of God rather than of the physicists - with all that that implies: it is a distinctive, restricted variety of the Tale of Wonder, the age-old voluminous literature of "If". (BEST SF, p. 9)

145. ((S))cience fiction seems to me, in spite of the superficial appearances, to be by and large easily the least "escapist" type of fiction currently available; and in asserting this I am by no means thinking merely of the infrequent blatant axe-grinding sort. What at first appears to be an opiate is in fact, to anyone capable of cerebration at all, a heavy dose of amphetamine sulphate. What looks like a simple dream is in the long run, to all mankind everywhere, of the most urgent and immediate moment. (op. cit. p. 10)

146. ((I))n the simplest analysis, a science-fiction story is a straight-forward Tale of Wonder, aiming to astonish and awe and delight its readers by recounting prodigies and marvels. What makes it distinctive, on this level, is the rationalisation, or apparent rationalisation, of the marvels by means of "science" - the parade of (often specious) technical terms designed to help bring about that temporary suspension of disbelief which all Tales of Wonder, if they are to succeed, must somehow or other achieve; and it is really only in the use of this device that science-fiction can be considered at all novel. Human beings have always tended to be bored by the predictability of things, have always hungered to experience - in their minds, anyway, if not in their actual lives - such gratifying departures from the expected norm as pumpkins turning into coaches or children being carried off by witches. And it is precisely this longing which science-fiction, like the ghost-story or the fairy-tale, caters for; the only difference being that in science fiction the pumpkin is transmuted by electro-chemical means, while the witches are inhabitants of a Parallel Universe, accidentally dislodged as a result of bombarding titanium fluoride with alpha-particles. (op. cit. p. 11)

147. All genre-writing, however, must inescapably impose at least a few of its special disciplines on the majority of the unruly individuals practising it, thereby establishing some common ground between them. And so it is with science-fiction. Mood, for instance: theoretically there would seem to be no particular reason why any mood at all - humorous, idyllic, satirical, ironic, macabre or what you will - should be incongruous in a science-fiction tale. Yet in actual practice, humorous or satirical science-fiction nearly always curdles into facetiousness - so that the phrase "a humorous science-fiction story" is in itself a sort of definition of misplaced jocularity - for the very good reason that awe and laughter are to all intents and purposes wholly incompatible; while on the credit side, it has been found that romantic horror is pretty well the strongest card in the science-fiction writer's hand - that nowadays, in this department, science-fiction is capable of leaving the thriller and the ghost-story streets behind. This last circumstance was of course to be expected, from the very nature of science-fiction's subject-matter. Mankind has always feared the alien - and space-travel stories necessarily often have to do with alien life-forms. Moreover, mankind has always, more subtly and much more inexplicably, feared the artifact that turns on, and destroys, its maker - and robots have been staple fare in science-fiction from the luckless experiment of Frankenstein through Bierce's vicious

148. In the present context it will perhaps be best, therefore, to canvass briefly, not so much the merits of the genre (which the reader will find well exemplified in the stories that follow) but rather its defects (which he will not). They are teething-troubles, mostly: science-fiction is still at the reckless, half-defensive stage of development through which detective-fiction passed in the early 'twenties, and ought in fairness to be given time to settle down before any serious strictures are put in hand. It squanders its material, yes, ranging too far and too fast; its jargon - positronic, humanoid, Terra (for Tellus), interstellar drive, video-screen and the rest - smells of the clique; a certain stuffy monasticism hangs about it (not only is it not pornographic: it is practically unisexual as well, with women exceedingly rare among the dramatis personae, and plausible relations between them and the men almost unheard-of); and the character-drawing in general is thin - though here, admittedly, the science-fiction writer faces the same difficulty as the detective-story writer, in that he dare not allow his people to become too interesting, for fear that they will overshadow the main intention of his story and so produce a disagreeable hybrid.

These four strike me personally as being science-fiction's most notable sins. They are none of them, however, the sins of which it is most frequently accused - and this is not strange, when you consider that the accusers have seldom read any science-fiction worth speaking of. "Illiterate! Badly written!" they howl. And it is true that a lot of science-fiction is illiterate and badly written, just as a lot of epic poetry would be illiterate and badly written if the sales of epic poetry equalled those of science fiction; the genre itself is not to blame. "But the science is all pseudo-science!" they complain - an objection analogous to the objection against detective stories, that their crimes are artificial compared with crimes in real life, or to the penetrating observation sometimes heard in lunatic asylums, that the beef doesn't taste very much like mutton today; if this is your criticism of science-fiction, then you had better abandon the stuff and subscribe to technical journals instead. Finally, "Pessimism!" the critics moan. "There is a uniform forlornness and hopelessness, ending in tragedy and futility even when war is absent."* And since this charge has at least a surface plausibility, and furthermore, strikes at the very root of what I believe to be science-fiction's ultimate value and justification, it may be helpful, in conclusion, to examine it in some detail.

There can be no doubt that science-fiction is much engrossed with Doom; not all science-fiction, by any means, but a substantial slice of it. For example, of the fourteen stories that follow, no less than eight, at a conservative estimate, end in some sort of overwhelming catastrophe either stated or implied; and this proportion, in this small sample, is not, I think, unrepresentative of the whole. For this 'pessimism', this obsession with night-mares, the desire to generate romantic horror is of course to some extent to blame. But we are never going to understand the more crucial reason for it until we analyse the events from which, in the stories, these various sorts of nemesis arise: until we note how in DORMANT, for instance, the disaster is brought about by the arrogance, rashness and war-mongering of man; in The New Wine, by the over-hasty application of a new scientific technique; in No Woman Born, by the foolhardy, even if well-meant, alliance of living organic matter with a machine; and so forth. All very moral and just - that, certainly. All very properly sceptical about the benefits of scientific progress - that, too. But there is more. Science-fiction is sceptical about man. It cannot, in the ordinary way, trust him to colonise other planets, other galaxies, without vandalism and brutality; it cannot trust him to investigate even such harmless, amorphous creatures as the prott without bringing the universe down on his head like a ton of bricks. In a word, science-fiction has rediscovered Original Sin.

Now, whether this is a good or a bad thing may be a matter for argument; but no one can deny that in twentieth-century popular literature it is a very new thing - so new, indeed, that amid all the fuss about "bad writing" and "pseudo-science" it

is tending to pass virtually unnoticed. Yet it was inevitable, after all. Only in realistic, "reported" fiction, like Isherwood's Goodbye to Berlin, can an amoral attitude be maintained; the fancy, in story-telling, demands decisions about right and wrong, good and bad, before it will consent to function at all - and every science-fiction writer must make those decisions daily, whether he is conscious of doing so or not. Moreover, he cannot rely on any mere conventions of morality to guide him, for he is constantly adumbrating dilemmas which in their detail, at least, are of a quite unprecedented kind. And here, perhaps, we come to the nub of the matter. Science-fiction is not all pessimism: eight out of fourteen is not the same thing as fourteen out of fourteen. But science-fiction is most certainly all ethics and politics and sociology, is indeed a sort of layman's text-book of vividly stated problems in these fields. In general, the problems are implicit rather than consciously defined; such delicate and ironic awareness as appears in Or Else, for instance, is comparatively rare. But whether the author elects to make them explicit or not, the problems are constantly there, for the not very obscure reason that science-fiction's subject-matter compels them to be there, whether we like it or not. Never before, in a popular entertainment literature, has anything at all resembling this serious and insistent overtone manifested itself; never before have frankly commercial magazines offered their readers stories of the calibre of A Case of Conscience, and still flourished in offering them. It is a phenomenon as astonishing in its own way as the imaginings of the science-fiction writers themselves.

To think about ethics and politics and sociology in macrocosmic terms, without reference to individuals, may admittedly have its dangers; but it is surely - in that it implies a consideration of first principles - a great deal better than never thinking about these chronically relevant topics at all. Certain vested intellectual interests are bound, if they ever have the sense to realize what is going on, to resent, clamorously, the bandying of their own professional topics about the market-place - so that from them we may expect to have to endure the easy sneer and the superficial gibe for some time to come. The inexorable condition laid down by science-fiction's subject-matter will remain, however: readers will continue to have their noses rubbed in ethics and politics and sociology - not to mention religion - and to find the process enthralling, regardless of what the critics may say. And in my belief, the world will be just that modicum the better, and the prospect before us just that modicum more hopeful, because of it. (op. cit. pp. 12-16.)

149. As the popularity of science-fiction increases, so inevitably does the volume of clownish imprecation against it. Much of this comes from professional scientists who have stalked pompously into the trap of supposing that science-fiction is in some fundamental sense concerned with prophecy - that for instance a story set seventy years hence, and postulating the completed colonisation of Venus, is necessarily and finally invalidated by the mere inconceivability, on technical grounds, of such a consummation. It is of course perfectly true that in pursuing its imaginative purposes science-fiction has occasionally come up with a genuine, even a scientifically detailed forecast - heavier-than-air machines, the periscope, the atom-bomb. But such vaticinations are only very rarely basic, while in some cases - Bradbury's stories, for example - they have literally no more significance, in an intelligent evaluation of the final product, than, say, a spelling mistake in a Dickens manuscript. "'Indispensible', Dickens writes. Little Dorrit is clearly illiterate trash." "The author makes a preposterous assumption regarding carbon molecular structure. How can anyone read such stuff..." And so forth.

The better sort of science-fiction, however, is remarkably little concerned with actual science, except as a means to an end. Possibly it is just that characteristic in it that annoys the scientists - that and the genre's tendency to misdoubt, fairly seriously, the wisdom and moral responsibility of technological priesthods. Than this scepticism, nothing, to my mind, could be healthier: for only by perennial widespread mistrust can the powers of rulers of any kind - whether politicians, ecclesiastics, scientists, managers, trades unions, bureaucrats, bankers

or commissars - be kept rather close to a religious bounds. And it is precisely this evocation of a moral attitude involving a political and sociological corollary that makes science-fiction so valuable and so little 'escapist'. Science-fiction is rarely didactic, rarely preaches. Yet over and over again science-fiction stories, by the nature of their subject-matter, isolate and illumine problems of the greatest social and moral consequence, painlessly - at best, enthrallingly - compelling reflection on them. (BEST SF TWO, pp9,10)

150. Science fiction is a product of the Fancy, not of the Imagination, we are liable to be told: the theories of Coleridge and Mr. I. A. Richards imply this, so it must be true. Therefore science fiction belongs inescapably to an inferior level of artistic activity - is indeed almost certainly not really an artistic activity at all. Have we a reply to this charge? We have not - for much the same reason that we have no reply to the assertion "all mimsy were the borogroves." We can point, to be sure, to an intellectual content somewhat superior to that of Emma or The Waves. But when it comes to the science-fiction stories which dispense with this, , charming us simply by their inventiveness (stories such as, in this volume, Zero Hour, The Nine Billion Names of God, and Placet is a Crazy Place), we would seem to be under a definite obligation to dump ashes on our pates, and acknowledge that along with such feckless sinners as Mr. Angus Wilson and Mr. Kingsley Amis we are blaspheming grievously against Literature and the Light.... The fact is, of course, that although quite obviously science-fiction is of a type of "works in words" which does not respond to the same criteria as The Brothers Karamazov (nor do Alice in Wonderland or Rasselas, if it comes to that), a mere difference in kind cannot by any process of logic be made to imply, in itself, either a necessary demonstrable "inferiority" on the one hand or a necessary demonstrable "superiority" on the other. Any such arbitrary hierarchising, in relation to the arts, is simply a product of that vacuous rage for generalised aesthetic speculation - now mercifully at last on the defensive before the assaults of the Wittgenstein-Ryle-Ayer "school" of philosophy - which was Croce's luckless and damaging gift of criticism; and consequently we need not, I think, allow it to mortify us unduly. (op. cit. pp10-12)

151. In the last three or four years science-fiction has become increasingly commercialised. By this I mean that the genre has been intruded on, and its standards correspondingly diluted and lowered, away from inventiveness in the direction of more imitative slickness, by "outsiders" who have started writing science-fiction because it looks a good thing financially rather than because it is the sort of fiction they wish to write in preference to any other. By a seeming paradox, it is the commercial-looking pulp magazines which are the true repositories of science-fiction for science-fiction's sake. (op. cit. p. 12)

152. Science fiction is a reactionary type of reading. It harks back to a literary intention which the Renaissance outmoded and the rise of the novel came near to obliterating altogether - I mean the intention of depicting human beings in their relation to entities having an importance, or at any rate a potency, as great as or greater than the importance or potency of the man animal itself. In science fiction these entities may very occasionally, as in the older literature, be of a religious or quasi-religious nature; but more often they have to do with the laws and potentialities, so far as these are known or can be guessed, of the physical universe which humanity inhabits. Thus, where mainstream fiction, thanks to the monotonously humanist bias of the last five centuries of our culture, has been almost uniformly catatonic in its withdrawal from environment, science fiction seeks to direct man's attention outwards once more - to mitigate the creature's excessive preoccupation with himself and his society by throwing emphasis on the temporariness and precariousness of his situation within the macrocosm. (BEST SF THREE, p. 9)

153. The Other Thing, then, is in some sense the definition of science fiction. And since conflict is apt to make a livelier story than cooperation, humanity and this Other Thing are generally represented as being in opposition rather than as

collaborating. (op. cit. pp 10-11)

154. Moreover, there can be no doubt that for all its sophisticated overtones a science fiction story is basically a fairy tale: as a general rule, it neither overtly recommends nor seriously prophesies, a fact which is apt to be overlooked by those who complain of improbability or pseudo-science, and which I think exonerates writers and readers alike from the charge of being anti-humanist in a morbid or masochistic style. It would take too long to argue in detail the importance of fairy tales to a healthy culture; the effect of such tales is to induce awe and astonishment, and so to bring about some degree of humility with regard to the merits and achievements of humanity in "real life"; and though many would regard such humility as salutary, others might hold it to be weakening. What is incontestable - what the modest recent success of science fiction has proved - is that there exists a not inconsiderable market for a new and satisfactory avatar of the fairy-tale genre; that there is a reasonably widely spread ready-made mental craving for which mainstream fiction scarcely caters at all. If this craving were simply and solely the desire for a Tale of Wonder, tout court - any sort of tale of Wonder - then there would be no injustice in rating the fiction which panders to it as inconsiderable, even if perhaps mildly prophylactic. But as I have suggested elsewhere, although on the simplest level of appreciation science fiction stories are unquestionably fairy tales, they differ from conventional fairy tales in carrying a massive, so to say epiphenomenal, load of religious, political, ethical and sociological implication, and so, at their best, provide intellectual stimulation of a generalised variety which mainstream fiction is incapable of embodying in any tolerable form.²

This bonus accounts for a great deal of science fiction's attractiveness; but in my view the genre's fundamental appeal - or, to the detractors, its fundamental repulsiveness and unreality - derives from its novel, and none too complimentary, revaluation of homo sapiens.³

(¹They overlook also the fact that a very fair proportion of science fiction is the work of reputable professional scientists.

²An excellent instance of its embodiment in intolerable form is provided by the lecturing of Mr. Propter in Aldous Huxley's After Many a Summer. An orthodox science fiction writer wishing to make Mr. Huxley's point would demonstrate it, showing Propter's views in active practice among beings of an alien race, and adding, in all probability, some account of the relationship between those beings and mean sensual man; and although such a treatment would assuredly involve some simplification, the gain in vividness and interest would be considerable. This is not to say that all science fiction writers, or even a majority of them, are didactic in the way that Mr. Huxley is didactic. But it does demonstrate that if fiction is to deal with large general issues it can do so most easily and effectively by recourse to fantasy, as for example in Orwell's 1984 or Mr. Huxley's own Brave New World.

³A side-effect of this revaluation is to be found in the lack of adequate characterisation which science fiction's critics so often bewail. But this lack is to all intents and purposes mandatory. In a science fiction story there is homo sapiens and there is the Other Thing - with homo sapiens quite frequently playing the role not of protagonist but of deuteragonist; and clearly this balance cannot be maintained if the human beings involved are allowed to hog the picture. Consequently the characters in a science fiction story are usually treated rather as representative of their species than as individuals in their own right. They are matchstick men and matchstick women, for the reason that if they were not, the anthropocentric habit of our culture would cause us, in reading, to give altogether too much attention to them and altogether too little to the non-human forces which constitute the important remainder of the dramatis personae. Where an ordinary novel or short story resembles portraiture or at widest the domestic interior, science fiction offers the less cosy satisfactions of a land-

scape with figures; to ask that those distant manikins be shown in as much detail as the subject of a portrait is evidently to ask the impossible.)

(op. cit. pp11-12)

155. ... insulting Man is one of the main purposes of science fiction, and one of the chief reasons for its relative lack of popularity (sf authors share with scholars and poets the unwelcome distinction of being the most poverty-stricken writers in the world). The worst that most people can bring themselves to think of Man is that he is cock of his dung-heap; but sf goes much further than that. It shows the dung-heap as precarious and insignificant, and is disagreeably ready to point out that Man's view of himself as cock of it is prejudiced, to say the least. True, Man controls his environment to an extent unparalleled in any other creature; but who ever laid down that controlling environment is intrinsically meritorious, or, for that matter, the most effective mode of survival for a species? The birds and the insects get along pretty well without the equivocal benefit of a hypertrophied nervous system, and if asked, would probably say that lack of electronic computers and symphonies and the London Times was a price they would gladly pay for the absence of neurosis and war. To the sf writers of the Greater Galaxy ... Man is a figure of fancy so far-fetched that no really respectable practitioner would dream of inventing him. Hence, no doubt, his repeated failures in the tales that follow. Well, even in failure the poor thing may be admirable; let no ill-wisher assert that sf addicts are humanity-haters. But to my mind, it does the cock of the dung-heap no harm to take an occasional look at himself from someone else's point of view. Sub specie Hobbyist, he is a mere scattering of marks on a sheet of glass; and once he knows that, he can never be quite such a conceited nincompoop again. (Blot SF FOUR pp 8-9)

Kendell Foster CROSSEN:: If someone will offer a little soft music to drown out the anguished cries from the bleachers, I will offer two new rules for all writers. If they're followed, I'll practically guarantee a swarm of readers.

1. Throw the science out of science fiction.(sic)

Heresy? Not at all. I like science-fiction; I don't want to see it die out as the result of too many years of incest. I think we've been kidding ourselves too long. We're big boys now. It's time we stopped making faces in the bathroom mirror and confusing the emotion with love.

It's usually along about here that someone pops up with the records of the old classics. There's one old American classic which contained eighty-some (I'm too unscientific to walk across the room and check on the exact amount) scientific predictions which have come true. Practically everyone in science fiction has mentioned this at some time or other. I have myself. But no one ever mentions that the book also contained four thousand other sentences, all of them badly written. Must we flounder through sixty thousand words of a less than mediocre novel in order to learn that someone guessed we were going to have electronics?

I think we've been kidding ourselves in another way, too. A few of the old masters of science fiction have known astatine from holmium, but an awful lot of our revered science has been strictly pseudo. When an author can take a complex theory like General Semantics and complicate it even more - to the point where a man can be in two places at once - the average reader is apt to conclude that he can be in two places at the same time and will settle for a point about six feet in front of his television screen. And he won't give a damn that some other author predicted he'd be able to do that as long ago as 1911.

So let's throw the science out and start from scratch. How much science does the author need to know? I'd say about the same amount that's required by the author of a love story, a mystery story, or a Western. His description of the Terra-Rigel III space liner doesn't need to be, and shouldn't be, any more complete than the description of the Pan American Clipper which leaves LaGuardia

field tomorrow morning. While the members of the Medium-Sized Monsters Fan Club of Quackonbush, New Jersey, may breathe a little faster on learning the secret of overcoming the Fitzgerald-Lorentz Contraction theory, the average reader doesn't give a damn. In fact, it's a pretty good bet that it's just this which is keeping average readers away in droves.

Don't get me wrong: I love fans, especially those who write in demanding more Crossen; but we're talking about how science fiction authors can get bigger checks and reach larger audiences and, incidentally, how science fiction publishers can make more money. The fans represent 95% of the noise and 5% of the buying public today.

So let's toss the science overboard, retaining only the small amount that's necessary. Then we'll have room for characterization, for ideas, for atmosphere - for all those things which can strike a responsive chord in the readers' hopes and desires. Readers who are interested in predictions can read the science journals or consult the nearest tea-leaf reader. In the meantime, we can restore science fiction to the creative state it enjoyed in the pre-Gernsback era - and maybe readers will flock to it as they did then.

2. Say something.

This is my second rule, not a command to those fans who are already reaching for typewriter and paper. P. Schuyler Miller recently wrote that 'science fiction is moved by the same forces, answers to the same stimuli, and interprets the same ideas with which our society is most concerned. Stylized and restricted as it may be, it is a part of the main-stream of our times.' He's right, but you'd hardly guess it from reading the majority of today's science fiction.

Both as a writer and a reader, I am heartily sick of all the contemporary balderdash about writing for 'entertainment'. Any writer who writes fiction is striving to entertain his audience; he is also offering the reader the 'benefit' of his own observations. In the case of the writer who insists that he has nothing to say, that he is merely putting on an amusing little act in hope that someone will toss a copper, the observations are still there, but he is refusing to take the responsibility for them. We have enough of such writers. But we need more writers who will make more conscious observations, while they are also being creative and entertaining.

Science fiction is, perhaps, suffering from the same anemic condition as other literary forms. The majority of the authors strive to be objective in the mistaken belief of our times that this is admirable. Ethical corruption, political tyranny and social distortions (whether in the future or today) are all reported in the dispassionate mood of calm acceptance. Thus the writer who rationalizes his position as being objective has, whether he wanted or not, taken a positive stand in favour of accepting the situation. And his protestations of objectivity are the highest sort of dishonesty.

Science fiction - in fact, all literature - might well profit, as it has in the past, by having more subjective men, more angry men, take a hand in its creation. Should this be done I think we will have far more entertaining literature. The reader may laugh at satire, but it is produced only by angry men.

There are many examples on both sides of the ledger, but I prefer to give most of my examples by omission. I might, however, point out that two of the finest (if not the finest) writers in science fiction today - not by my own standards, but by those of the majority of the professional critics over the country - are Ray Bradbury and Ward Moore. I doubt if either of them will mind if I report that they know little about science. And certainly no one could ever accuse either of them of being objective - of being anything but 'angry men'.

In closing, I'd like to quote from my introduction to my new science fiction anthology, Future Tense: 'It seems to me that science fiction today offers a

great challenge to writers. If they meet the challenge even halfway, then science fiction, and literature, will become rich in the names of authors who have spoken for the public conscience; if not, science fiction may well sink back into the doldrums until that day in the future when some aspiring president, leader, or commissar proves that he is unassuming and mediocre, just one of the boys, by claiming he reads science fiction.' (STARTLING STORIES, February 1953, pages 6, 126, 127.)

Sten DAHLSSKOG:: 1 SF is not the same as mainstream fiction and must be criticized in its own way, not exclusively by mainstream rules. If this is not so, why separate sf as a distinct genre? Can New Orleans jazz be meaningfully criticized by the criteria applied to classical music and by no other?

2 All mainstream requirements with respect to good characterization, good grammar and so on are equally valid in sf. They are valid whatever you write. But they are not equally important everywhere. There may be other criteria which are more important in other artforms and less important in mainstream.

3 SF is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change in a technological society. Our society is technological, and there is absolutely no sane way out of the mess except making it even more technological. The science due to make the heaviest impact on our way of life in the next twenty years is neither astronautics nor cybernetics but ecology. Mainstream literature seems almost completely unaware of the scientific basis for the society it tries to depict.

4 All literature should first and foremost be criticized according to the manner in which it does the job it tries to do. In particular, does an sf story show some awareness of the scientific method and scientific logic? If not, and if it is as completely and deliberately unscientific as Ballard's, then it might be a good fantasy (in my view Ballard is not a good write of anything), but it is bad sf.

5 The really dismal thing about present sf is not that it is so bad in grammar and characterization but that it is so awfully bad in science.

The above may be a trifle exaggerated.

Now I do not want sf to become popular science. If I want to learn something I go directly to the scientific journals; I do not want it second-hand. But I do want sf to show some awareness of science, I want it to show how people and societies react to existent or future science, and sf cannot do this if it uses bad scientific reasoning or none at all. I want sf to do this because mainstream is (practically by definition) unable to speculate about future changes, and we need to speculate about the mess we are making of things: we have to get out of the rut of just letting disasters slowly creep upon us.

If we throw the science out of sf, as Ballard and some New Wave writers have done to the loud applause of Judith Merrill and others, are we left with anything but Gothic fantasy in a new disguise, a little updated by pseudo-deep psychology and experimental stylistics? And what possibilities would this offer to describe us, our culture and our world?

What I am afraid of is that sf will lose its idea content in the process of acquiring a beautiful literary polish. An sf story without speculative content and without scientific logic should be damned, whatever its mainstream merits.

If grammar and characterization, psychology and stylistics are so all-important, why don't we all give up and start writing little mood pieces for the little magazines?

Is it really too much to hope for a literately well-written sf about science? (SF COMMENTARY 19, pages 26-27)

Basil DAVENPORT:: ...what you think about science fiction and social criticism

depends on what you mean by science fiction, and what you mean by social criticism. None of our authors attempts to define social criticism, though C. M. Kornbluth limits his discussion to effective social criticism, criticism which produces visible results; and the others consider it as criticism concerned only with social structure, as distinct from social attitudes. (THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL, Advent : Publishers, p 8)

159. If anyone does want a definition of science fiction, there is one to be found at the beginning of Mr. Heinlein's 'Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues', which opens this book. His definition is too long to quote here, and 'too closely reasoned to summarise. It covers the ground admirably - although, to support my statement that no two people would agree on precisely the same definition, I must add that in my opinion he stakes too wide a claim. A definition of science fiction that can include ghost stories at one extreme and Sinclair Lewis' Arrowsmith at the other is almost too indefinite to be a definition, though Mr. Heinlein unquestionably makes out a logical case on his own terms. At the paranormal end of his spectrum, I am sincerely grateful to him for restoring to science fiction (which by most definitions deals with the theoretically possible) the important fields of time travel and travel faster than the speed of light; he points out that these are contrary not to known fact but to accepted theory, a point on which I confess I had myself been confused. But when it comes to including ghosts, my objection is not that they are not possible (without committing myself as to what is their nature, I believe that apparitions of the dead are very nearly established facts), but that they are not scientific, and surely there ought to be some science in science fiction. Time travel must be based on some sort of science, but I do not see how ghost stories can be, unless Mr. Heinlein is willing to admit necromancy as a science. My reasons for excluding Arrowsmith are harder to state logically. It is true that a newly discovered cure unknown to medicine today plays a part in the plot, though not a central part. But hang it, Arrowsmith doesn't read like science fiction! Let me put it this way: I read Arrowsmith which it first came out, which must be more than thirty years ago, when I was young and avid for science fiction and there was very little of it around, and I never suspected that this might be a part of what I was looking for. Surely one cannot read science fiction, as Monsieur Jourdain spoke prose, without knowing it. (op. cit. pp8-9)

160. By and large, science fiction has been at its least imaginative in inventing alternative societies, especially alternative good societies. In general any society which differs widely from our own is set up only to be overthrown. Thus there is a regular formula which has produced at least half a dozen novels, some of them highly readable and exciting: the world is run by a single organization - a government, a church, a monster business - with ostensible benevolence; the hero is a dedicated young idealist in the service of the organization, believing its pretensions of benevolence, until a beautiful girl revolutionary shows him the seamy side of it, whereupon he changes sides and overthrows it - yes, practically single-handed. And what he sets up instead is always essentially twentieth century American civilization, plus a few added gadgets. Our own society seems to be not only the best, but the only good society that science fiction has been able to conceive. We need to be reminded that there are other possibilities. (op. cit. pp 11-12)

Samuel R. DELANY:: The reason modern science fiction 'is so awfully bad in the sciences' is that most SF writers (and hardcore SF fans) don't know what's going on in the world, period - either scientifically, artistically or socially. The most important process that has begun and has already affected all our lives is that the boundaries between scientific, artistic and social action are breaking down. The most serious avant-garde literary magazines regularly take collaborative efforts in poetry today, since Kenneth Koch's LOCUS SOLUS which was devoted to collaborations. Ten years ago two authors signing their names to a lyric poem would have put it beyond any serious artistic

consideration. Pop music and film, by many considered our most vital arts today, are collaborative efforts (even when they are headed by one person) in a way that a string quartet never was. As well, they achieve aesthetic excellence on a level that jazz, because of its limiting improvisory quality, denied itself: at their simplest, both involve amazing amounts of technology. Yet the sensibilities necessary for the increasingly important field of abstract mathematics are far closer to those of the solitary poet than they are to the engineer. But the examples just go on....

It is just as "science fiction is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change on a technological society" that it must grow, be willing to cross boundaries, artistic as well as technical, so that it can fulfill these demands.

The scientific vision and the aesthetic vision are practically identical. SF began as an attempt to cross the boundary between these two that a few people realized was meaningless. To treat the boundary between SF and mainstream (detestable word!) the same way is to re-affirm, not to deny.

By insisting on remaining in the strictures of a decade or two in the past, SF only prohibits itself from doing exactly what Dahlsgog demands of it, and foredooms itself to the extinction of the inefficient; and that will leave Dahlsgog's very important job undone.

Change is better than stasis. As a changing field (even if you don't approve of the direction a particular bud is pointing) it admits of more change, and can attract the authors who will want to change it, perhaps in the direction needed to fulfill what Sten Dahlsgog (and I think probably the rest of us as well) sees as its potential.

As a static field it will attract only those writers who want a fixed income from doing exactly what has been done already by rules and regulations that no longer apply because the situation that made them relevant has shifted.

(SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW 31, p. 13)

162. The ornamental conventions (transportation, from rockets to matter-transmission; communication, from video-phones to telepathy; the psycho-physiological, from mutant to alien; the socio-economic inventions, from the totally invented world to the casual solar credit; as well as the miscellaneous time-machine, the after-the-bomb, or wonderful gadget story) of science fiction, as well as the more important convention of attitude are some of the things that limit science fiction. (And I do feel that it is a limited form.) However, a limiting convention can be artistically productive, and lead writer and reader to harmonies unplayable by other instruments, as well as resound with the sympathetic vibrations among the situations of everyday life that make art meaningful. The attitude of the science fiction writer, the most important convention, has nothing to do with 'writing down' to the reader. It has to do with maintaining the clearest, most direct line between idea and dramatization. The science fiction writer must use everything he knows to be vivid and concise; evocative when description must color a story, moving when the heart must make the point, and precise when using technological examples. But the science fiction writer must use all this to construct one effect, one idea at a time. Several effects may harmonize to produce a story, many to produce a novel. But in the best science fiction each is developed in turn, linearly. The technical conventions, used properly, must facilitate this linear development.

"Dismiss the rocketships!" say many of the people seriously concerned with science fiction. But a rocketship is a shorthand way of saying, "This character is travelling between two points which, in the cultural spectrum we know, cannot be bridged by bus, boat, or plane." Roughly, this is what all the transportation conventions signify. What will make the story significant is what the writer tells us about these cultural locations and the people who move between

between them; what makes the story a good one is how clearly he tells us. The description of the rocket itself may inform us about the world that produced it and the world where it will arrive. It may even tell us about the people aboard. But only as it tells us about worlds and men is it important. As it facilitates telling us, it is useful.

There is a frenzy among concerned critics to make science fiction resemble mainstream as much as possible in its conventions or lack of them. This is to blur the excellence that made it a separate form. We must analyze what is there; then, demand change. The analytical method to the significance of artistic statement is the same whether the statement is musical, graphic or literary. It is a dissection of form, a consideration of balance. The elements of the statement must be isolated; then the pattern in which they combine must be defined. The vocabulary comes from the exigencies of the medium in which the statement is made.

...

The limits of science fiction are not emotional ones. They do not, themselves, restrict the humanity of any character or situation. Several critics have used the special term "The Wonderful Invention", trying to separate science fiction from mainstream. It is a useful term, but it leads people ill-disposed to science fiction to assume that science fiction is about "things" instead of "people". Now, to dismiss a story that takes place in a rocket per se because it must be about rocketships instead of people is as silly as dismissing a novel of Melville or Conrad because it takes place in a boat, and must therefore be about boats.

Mainstream and science fiction both belong to the medium of fictional prose. The critical vocabulary of all fiction involves characters, setting, style, psychological veracity, emotional and sensory immediacy. The critic, amateur or professional, who blames science fiction for not being mainstream will miss the beauty of linear development that the more limited work can display.

...

Modern science fiction is stretching, growing, re-examining its conventions. It is trying to approach the theoretical ambiguities of living, which must be solved before the practical ambiguities can be dealt with as in mainstream fiction. We are now nearing a point where we can judge science fiction's best opening attempts a success. If it will go on to higher excellences - that is left to the writers to write, and to the reader to demand. (ALGOL 15, pages 42-43)

163. Gernsback was interested solely in the wonderful things progress might bring. As a popular entertainer, he was just as interested in the possible as he was in the probable. In his own novel, Ralph 124C41+, there is the chaste ghost of a love interest, but it vanishes amidst a host of marvellous gadgets. His use of behaviour went only so far as it showed what things could do. Most of the objects were socially beneficial. When they were not, they were in the hands of the criminals that Ralph triumphed over. But there was none of the socially functional logic in which Wells indulged: Since this is scientifically infeasible, it would not be socially beneficial to discuss what might come out of it. The logic behind Gernsback's view of SF, which persists today, is rather: Even though current technology claims this is impossible, if we were to achieve it, look at what marvels might result.

It is just this basic concern with thingness that makes me insist that the initial impulse behind SF, despite the primitive and vulgar verbal trappings, was closer to the impulse behind poetry than it was to the impulse behind ordinary narrative fiction.

As another critic has said, in another context, "Poetry is concerned with the thingness of things." The new American SF took on the practically incantatory

task of naming nonexistent objects, then investing them with reality by a host of methods, technological and pseudo-technological explanations, imbedding them in dramatic situations, or just inculcating them by pure repetition:

Television
Rocketship
Waldo
Spacesuit

But this is SF at its most primitive. The incantatory function - a better word than "predictive" - is no more the chief concern of modern SF than it is still the concern of modern poetry; though remnants of it still linger in everything from Cordwainer Smith's "orrithopters" to Greg Benford's "brain tapping". Here is the place to note, I think, that when the British SF magazine New Worlds was awarded a London Arts Council subsidy, one of the testimonials, from a member of the editorial board of the Oxford Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, explained that science fiction was the most fertile area of writing in the production of new words which endured in the language - a position held up till the mid-thirties by poetry.

Because it was unconcerned with behaviour at its beginnings, SF was eventually able to reflect the breakdown of Victorian behavioural concepts which, for all his advanced thinking, had strictured Wells. It has been remarked, everywhere that man has noted in detail what goes on around him, (you will find the idea in Confucius and in Plato) that the objects around him do influence his behaviour, as well as how he judges the behaviour of himself and others. The philosophers of aesthetics never tire of reminding us that the man who grows up in a beautiful and aesthetically interesting environment behaves very differently from the man raised among ugly, squalid surroundings. The Victorian progressives added to this, that a person raised in an efficient, healthy, leisurely environment behaves quite differently from one raised amidst harrying inefficiency and disease. The aesthete quickly points out that the behaviour of the person brought up with efficiency is still not the same as that of the person brought up with beauty. (QUARK/ 1, pp 189-190)

164. American SF writers, freed from the strictures of the probable, left to soar in the byways of the possible, not bound by the concept of universal human nature, in a country that was itself a potpourri of different cultural behaviour patterns, sat contemplating marvellous objects in the theatre of the mind. Slowly, intuitions of the way in which these objects might affect behaviour began to appear in the stories. Editor Campbell was astute enough to see that this was perhaps the most powerful tool in the realization of these wonderful inventions: He encouraged his writers to use this tool, to make the focus of the stories the juncture between the object and the behaviour it causes. As the writers followed Campbell, SF began to grow up.

By much the same process that poetry expanded beyond its beginnings in ritualistic chant and incantation, to become a way to paint all that is human, and etch much that is divine, so SF became able to reflect, focus, and diffract the relations between man and his universe, as it included other men, as it included all that man could create, all he could conceive. (op. cit. p. 191)

165. Modern SF has gone beyond this irreconcilable Utopian/Dystopian conflict to produce a more fruitful model against which to compare human development.

The SF writers working under Campbell, and even more so with Horace Gold, began to cluster their new and wonderful objects into the same story, or novel. And whole new systems and syndromes of behaviour began to emerge. Damon Knight, in In Search of Wonder, notes Charles Harness's The Paradox Man as the first really successful "reduplicated" novel where an ordered sarabande of wonders reflect and complement each other till they have produced a completely new world,

in which the technological relation to our world is minimal. Now the writers began to explore these infinitely multiplied worlds, filled with wondrous things, where the roads and the paintings moved, where religion took the place of government, and advertising took the place of religion, where travel could be instantaneous between anywhere and anywhere else, where the sky was metal, and women wore live goldfish in the transparent heels of their shoes. Within these worlds, the impossible relieves the probable, and the possible illuminates the improbable. And the author's aim is neither to condemn nor to condone, but to explore both the worlds and their behaviours for the sake of the exploration, again an aim far closer to poetry than to any sociological brand of fiction.

(op. cit., p 192-192)

166. SF has been called a romantic and affirmative literature. J.G. Ballard has gone to far as to point out, quite justly, that the bulk of it is rendered trivial by its naively boundless optimism. But we do not judge the novel by the plethora of sloppy romances or boneheaded adventures that make up the statistically vast majority of examples; if we did, it might lead us to say the same of all areas of literature, novel, poetry, or drama; with no selection by merit, I'm afraid on a statistical listing, expressions of the vapidly happy would far outnumber expressions of the tragic on whatever level. As any other area of art is judged by its finest examples, and not by the oceans of mediocrity that these high points rise above, this is the way SF must be judged. There are threads of tragedy running through the works of Sturgeon and Bester (they can even be unravelled from Heinlein), not to mention Disch, Zelazny, and Russ, as well as Ballard's own tales of ruined worlds, decadent resortists, and the more recent fragmented visions of stasis and violence. And one would be hard-pressed to call the comic vision of Vonnegut, Sladek, and Lafferty 'naively optimistic'.

If SF is affirmative, it is not through any obligatory happy ending, but rather through the breadth of vision it affords through the complexed interweave of these multiple visions of man's origins and his destinations. Certainly such breadth of vision does not abolish tragedy. But it does make a little rarer the particular needless tragedy that comes from a certain type of narrow-mindedness.

Academic SF criticism, fixed in the historical approach, wastes a great deal of time trying to approach modern SF works in Utopian/Dystopian terms - works whose value is precisely in that they are a reaction to such one-sided thinking. It is much more fruitful if modern works are examined in terms of what they contain of all these mythic views of the world. (Carl Becker has suggested that New Jerusalem and Brave New World are the only two new myths that the twentieth century has produced.)

It is absurd to argue whether Asimov's Foundation trilogy represents a Utopian or a Dystopian view of society; its theme is the way in which a series of inter-related societies, over a historical period, force each other at different times back and forth from Utopian to Dystopian phases. (op.cit. pp193-4)

Thomas M. DISCH:: I feel there is justice in Roszak's accusation ... that too often science fiction has given its implicit moral sanction to this double transformation of man and his environment. Roszak notes the prevalence of military-type heroes; earlier I pointed out the faith, usually unquestioning, in a future in which Technology provides, unstintingly and without visible difficulty, for man's needs. The very form of the so-called 'hard-core' sf saga, in which a single quasi-technical problem is presented and then solved, encourages that peculiar tunnel vision and singleness of focus that is the antithesis of an 'ecological' consciousness in which cause-and-effect would be regarded as a web rather than as a single-strand chain. The heroes of these earlier tales often behave in ways uncannily reminiscent of psychotics' case histories; personal relationships (as between the crew members of a spaceship) can be chillingly lacking in affect. These human robots inhabited landscapes

that mirrored their own alienation. This is, in fact, the special beauty of the best of older science fiction - of van Vogt, say, or darkest Burroughs. As later writers began to be conscious of the social and psychological ramifications of their imagery, a tension developed in many of them (Bradbury is a good example) between the sheer power of their naive invention and a desire to bring the 'secret subject' of their fictions up to the level of consciousness, their own and their readers'. Predictably these stories often suffered, either from stifled inventiveness or from the off-putting self-absorption of a beginning analysis.

In the best contemporary sf, however, a new harmony is sometimes achieved, a coming together of invention and awareness. Not only are the figures and the landscapes of the dream resonantly congruent with each other, but now there is also a sense that the dreamer has come to understand the meaning of his dream without outside assistance.

Philip K. Dick and J.G. Ballard are the two writers who have achieved this new synthesis most consistently. Is it coincidental that they should also be the two whose work bears most immediately and directly upon the present ecological crisis? In book after book they have warned us of how we are destroying our world and prophesied of how that world, wounded, will take its revenge.

(THE RUINS OF EARTH, pp 9-10)

168. One thing a lot of sf has in common is that the representational element is wholly lacking or all wrong. When you're sitting in a field and you're looking at something, and you say, I will paint that tree, and then you make a painting of that tree - that's representation. In writing there are all sorts of things that are representation too - pictures of what people are like; how you feel in a given situation; what an object looks like; how somebody dresses. Even the dullest novel can be accurate as representation; in fact, most of the English novel is given over to representation for its own sake. Middlemarch, say, is simply a long novel about what an English town must have been like, and its excellence is in portraying what an English town was like at a particular period.

In sf this element is more elusive because to the degree that it's good sf it's about something that does not exist, and to the degree that it's about something that does exist it's probably not sf. Take one of the simplest sorts of sf - the catastrophe novel introduces one single apocalyptic event into a landscape as normal as the writer can contrive. The normality of what's happening sets off the catastrophe. And it has never been done any other way. No writer has ever taken a bunch of absolutely bizarre people in totally exceptional circumstances and set a catastrophe situation for them to cope with (except Leiber, in The Wanderer, and it was a mistake). (QUICKSILVER 2, pp5-6)

169. In sf it ((pain)) has never existed, partly because sf came out of pulp traditions, which automatically denied that pain exists, because it's an escapist literature, because people read it exactly in order to be away from that awareness; but also, I think, for other reasons. I wrote a letter to the SFWA Bulletin - it was just a short thing - which was my theory that sf is a branch of children's literature, and my final reason for this was that sf does not believe in guilt. So here I was writing out my notes for this talk and I found that I had come up with the same conclusion from another angle.

It seems to me that, ethically, sf as a field has had a very simplistic view of what ethical dimensions are. This is not to say that it is bad art always, because a good artist can have a very simple view: Walt Whitman, for instance, was also completely unaware that guilt existed. He was aware of the world as existing in a state of innocence in which he could approve of everything. He was always writing these poems about 'I accept you all', and then he would name them - all. This is a way of saying that evil doesn't exist. If I can accept you all and make no distinctions, this is a pantheist ethical system - the sun

is shining on everything, and if you just look at a thing you see it's beautiful. At root, most sf seems to share this view.

I was at a panel in the States with Poul Anderson, who seems to me to represent this kind of attitude in sf. Our subject was ecology and saving the world. I was saying "Look! Look what's happening!" and "We're all responsible!" and "The world is going to ----". I was really in a flutter, and agitated, and full of tirades, and doing pretty well. And Poul, the next day, on the same subject said, well, there's no problem that he could see. He didn't think that the environment was in danger. He didn't think that any regulations had to be made; he thought that people would just go along as they were going along and that was all right.

I submit that this is part of a whole way of looking at things which is mistaken but which has an integrity of its own. And that much of the strength of Poul Anderson's best work comes out of this conviction that there basically aren't any problems that science can't solve in a very straightforward way, and that therefore there are really not ethical problems. People, left to their own, will not destroy themselves and each other. I think they will, unless another kind of ethical counterforce is at work. Simply to make the assumption that all's for the best is a mistake, and I submit that it is the mistake that sf has generally made. (op. cit. pp 10-11)

Joseph ELDER:: We hear enough about the uses of space: space for research, space for peace, space for war, space for commerce and industry, etc. What about space for the soul?

This, to my way of thinking, is what science fiction is all about. It may be firmly rooted in scientific fact and reality. Occasionally, it comes up with some startling prediction which, in time, are proved accurate. On the other hand, it is frequently (indeed, more often) far off the mark, or it doesn't even pretend to have anything to do with the world of 'real' science. We didn't need Mariner V to prove that Ray Bradbury's Mars of The Martian Chronicles bears no resemblance to the realities of our neighbouring planet; but if Bradbury's isn't one of the great works of science fiction, I'll eat my space helmet. It endures, as does all great science fiction, because it embodies to an extraordinary degree the very wonder, beauty, romance, novelty, and adventure to which Mr. Clarke referred in his address. In essence, science fiction may have very little to do with science.

Escapism? Of course. Science fiction is just that, and, as such, it opens infinite doors to adventure, exploration, and ways of life totally alien to our own. It creates whole new worlds of imagination in a way that no other form of fiction can. Does it need any other *raison d'etre*? In my belief, no.

(THE FARTHEST REACHES, ppvii-viii)

171. Science fiction? It will no longer be fiction when we have colonized the solar system and set foot on those now seemingly inaccessible planets orbiting the distant stars. Something like science fiction may replace the genre as we know it, but it will be more akin to our present western than science fiction. It will be based not on speculation about what we may encounter in space, but on the reality of what we have encountered (and that will be stranger than anything dreamed of in our philosophy). The fictional settlers will be fighting for survival, not against duststorms and Indians, but perhaps against the methane storms and ammonia-breathing natives of Jupiter. An Earth hungry for the romance and adventure of space, which most of its half-starving billions of inhabitants will never hope to know firsthand, will demand and thus create this new category of space fiction. Science fiction as we know it will be one with the auk and the dodo, a victim of man's inexorable trek to the stars.

Although I shall not be there to mourn its passing, I regret it even now.

It is not an excuse for science fiction. It is sufficient unto itself, and I am thankful that I am here and now able to enjoy it for what it is. (I suspect the above postulated space fiction will be about as thrilling as the last Audie Murphy movie.) Science fiction, it seems to me, is capable of lifting the reader from a humdrum world and stirring in him a sense of wonder, which he had perhaps forgotten how to feel, as no other kind of fiction can.
(op. cit. pp ix-x)

Harlan ELLISON:: It is "steam engine time" for the writers of speculative fiction. The millenium is at hand. We are what's happening.

And most of those wailing-wall eficionados of fantasy fiction hate it a lot. Because allofasudden even the bus driver and the dental technician and the beach bum and the grocery bag-boy are reading his stories; and what's worse, these johnny-come-latelies may not show the proper deference to the Grand Old Masters of the field, they may not think the Skylark stories are brilliant and mature and compelling; they may not care to be confused by terminology that has been accepted in s-f for thirty years, they may want to understand what's going on; they may not fall in line with the old order. They may prefer Star Trek and Kubrick to Barsoom and Ray Cummings. And thus they are the recipients of the fan-sneer, a curling of the lips that closely resembles the crumbling of an old pulp edition of Famous Fantastic Mysteries.

But even more heinous is the entrance on the scene of writers who won't accept the old ways. The smartass kids who write "all that literary stuff", who take the accepted and hoary ideas of the speculative arena and stand them right on their noses. Them guys are blasphemers. God will send down lightning to strike them in their spleens.

Yet speculative fiction (notice how I cleverly avoid using the misnomer "science fiction"? getting the message, friends? you've bought one of those s----- f-----n anthologies and didn't even know it! well, you've blown your bread, so you might as well hang around and get educated) is the most fertile ground for the growth of a writing talent without boundaries, with horizons that seem never to get any closer. And all them smartass punks keep emerging driving the old guard out of their jugs with frenzy. And lord! how the mighty have fallen; for most of the "big names" in the field, who dominated the covers and top rates of the magazines for more years than they deserved, can no longer cut it, they no longer produce. Or they have moved on to other fields. Leaving it to the newer, brighter ones, and the ones who were new and bright once, and were passed by because they weren't "big names."

(DANGEROUS VISIONS (Berkley ed.) pp 23-24)

173. So, it seems to me that science fiction is saying something to the young people, the people who are interested in the world in which they live, the world which is not ripe for them. And it seems to me that this makes science fiction a potentially valid revolutionary kind of fiction.

Too often science fiction writers have not worked with their guts, they talked about the great world out there, the great Rock Candy Mountain, sometime in the future, and they've ignored all of the things that are going on today. All the things that are happening around us. In the last five or six years, many of the young writers have talked about the things that are happening here. I think that an ad like the Vietnam ad that appeared in Fred's magazine and other magazines could not have appeared in any other time past in the field of science fiction. I think the reason why we are having the great now wave controversy of course is because there are so many people who are concerned and trying to do something about it, and feel that it is not merely enough to write about tomorrow when today is pressing us so hard.

(SF SYMPOSIUM page 176)

Philip Jose FARMER:: The science in the science-fiction was, usually, pseudo or pitiful or both. There was a story by Hendrik Dahl Juve, for instance, in which the hero stumbled across a group of skeletons. He suspected that the missing heroine might be one of the skeletons. To identify the female, he counted the ribs of each skeleton.

The themes of the s-f magazines then were restricted in number and range of extrapolation. This emphasis on a few themes: revolt of the machines, invasion by extra-terrestrials or yellow perils or intelligent ants, space exploration, superdictators, mutants, supermen, brains without bodies getting mental control of people, and so on, this emphasis was significant. It showed that the editors and writers either had very limited imaginations or their imaginations were inhibited by the times in which they lived. They strove to get beyond the bounds of the present, and when they soared into the future they took the present with them.

Of course, even the best, the boldest and the most imaginative of today's writers, do that to some extent. But the writers of 1929-1939 did not question certain promises of our society. If they had, they would have found it difficult, probably impossible, to get published in any field of literature. If you questioned certain assumptions, certain motives, you were automatically denounced as a Communist or a free-thinker.

That spirit, you all know, has not died as yet.

For instance, I doubt that there was more than one man writing before 1939, writing magazine s-f, who would have even thought of exposing the bases of our society to a critical light. Or of writing a story which extrapolates from the psychical trends of his day and showed what sort of society would evolve. Oh, he would write about the gimmicks which would develop, or the strange powers of the mutant with his ESP. But the revolutions and the movements shaking our world today were existent in definitely visible form in those days.

What were these themes with the author of 1936 did not touch, or, if he did, failed to extrapolate, to prophesy, truly?

These were mechanization, civil rights, space travel, population expansion, the failure of capitalism, communism, and socialism, the revolt of youth, and psychedelic drugs. (SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW 28 pp 7-8)

175. Nobody tried, in 1936, to extrapolate what the effects of a more affluent and educated Negro, and his increasing numbers and social consciousness, and consequent eruption of long-buried hate, would be. For one thing, most of the s-f authors really believed in Negro inferiority, in his "natural" place at the bottom of society. Yet the findings of the anthropologists in regard to race were available; and even a modicum of the imagination employed in dreaming up a new gimmick would have shown them what a Negro felt.

Any writer who could have even half disengaged himself from his society's attitudes for a little while could have seen that someday there would be many educated Negroes, that the Negro was bound to strike for equality when he got strength enough. Every repressed group rebels as soon as it has some educated leaders and the pressure is released a little by the oppressors. I call your attention to the 1775 American Revolution and the 1789 French Revolution for two out of many examples.

The s-f writers, editors, publishers, and readers of that day all believed in equality, of course, as guaranteed by the Constitution, in which they believed even more strongly than in equality. But the definition of equality and its applications, ah, my friends, strange, wondrous, and sometimes disgusting are the ways of the minds of men.

I'm not really blaming the writers of those days too much. If some did

write a story which, except for the Negro movement, I apologize. Because, if it had been submitted, it would have been rejected. And, to be fair, some authors wrote stories which were disguised tracts for tolerance, usually aimed at a plea for understanding between Earthman and some strange form of extra-terrestrial life. The author may have intended for the reader to substitute the Negro for the Martian in his mind or to see the analogy. But any society in which a true integration of Negro and white, of any other race and white, occurred could not have been published. Any s-f editor would have rejected a story in which miscegenation was a taken-for-granted part of a future society.

I was talking about the s-f field between 1929-1939, but now I will tell you what happened in 1952. I outlined a novel about a Negro underground movement, a science fiction novel, to the editor of a prominent science-fiction magazine, probably the greatest editor, in terms of influence, that the field has so far known.

This story, which would take place around 1965 or maybe 1970, just to be safe and not rush things, would describe in vivid detail the oppression and hatred American Negroes really felt, riots, repressions, attacks by militants, and so forth.

The editor halted my enthusiastic telling of my idea by saying that Negroes were inferior, that they'd made no contribution whatsoever to civilization, except possibly magic, that segregation should be rigidly maintained, because the goal of evolution was the differentiation of the human species into races (for some unknown but no doubt worthy purpose). For these reasons, he could not even consider my story.

Besides, he was sure that almost all his readers agreed with his view of the rightness of segregation,

I was shocked, and I argued with my ex-hero. No use. The mills of the gods grind exceedingly weak compared to the grinding of the mind of this editor. Later, I told myself, well, maybe I'm the one who's prejudiced. I'll study his arguments, his thesis. Perhaps he's right. So I reviewed all the scientific evidence about the relative abilities and potentialities of the races of man. And I still believe that segregation is an evil and I believe that the white in this country has cruelly and evilly oppressed the Negro. And, even if the Negro were inferior to the white as a race, and he isn't, even if he were, segregation would be evil.

I mention this incident to make the point that even in a field supposedly distinguished by very intelligent, open-minded, and forward-thinking people, prejudice flourishes. This editor has always been characterized by his insistence on freedom from dogmatism in science and openmindedness on subjects which many dismiss as "crank". I've always admired this attitude in him. But my conversation with him, and my reading of his essays on the subject, convinced me that he had perverted his powerful intellect to justify what his conditioned reflexes told him. The rationalizations about the purposes of evolution were evidences of a superb mind's efforts to validate emotions that were exactly those of an Alabama redneck.

It's a strange thing. At that time, as late as 1952, there were many thousands of science-fiction readers willing to accept blue-skinned, six-tentacled, four-eyed, ten-legged Martians as brothers. But only one in fifty, if that, would have accepted a Negro family living next door. This average of acceptance, however, would have been much higher than the average in the non-science fiction field. (op. cit. pp 7-8)

176. Science fiction has been a foetalized literature, or, I may say, juvenile in spirit. By juvenile I mean immature, playful, adaptable, sensitive in some areas and calloused in others, essentially optimistic but

suffering at times from Weltschmerz, romantic, flighty, impatient with tradition, looking to the future, bumbling but willing to learn, gauche, eager to establish a group identity yet crying against conformity, hateful and loving, fickle and loyal, impulsive. It had, and still has, the distinguishing characteristic of the juvenile, which is a potentiality for growth, for improvement. It is not, like adulthood, fixed or fossilized.

But there are adults and there are adults. Some adults, though they gain certain adult characteristics, still retain a neoteny.

Science-fiction has shown signs of becoming adult. A wave is sweeping through it. I am not talking of the so-called New Wave of writing. The wave I speak of - the indication that we are putting the larval stage behind us - is a growing concern for the world as it now is and as it will be in the next twenty years. It is a concern for the injustices, the oppressions, the miseries and madresses, the hypocrisies, the savageries and stupidities, and the physical fouling and poisoning of this world. (op. cit. pp 12-13)

John FOYSTER:: To discover what we may reasonably expect of a science fiction will be necessary to come to some conclusions about the nature of science fiction itself. There was a time when the sugar-coated pill theory held sway. In the main the argument here was that by introducing science in an entertaining form children and young adults could become interested in science seriously. Practical experience shows this to be quite useless. We see on every side children being encouraged to enter 'scientific' careers. In Australian schools at least there is a division at around age 14-15 into 'science' and 'humanities' streams of the children still attending school, and it is no secret that the average child in the science stream is brighter than the average child in the other one.

A second argument against this school of thought lies in the quite superficial and frequently flawed scientific knowledge possessed by its authors.

A third argument is to be found in the pages of the JOURNAL of the British Interplanetary Society just before and just after the Second World War. The implication is that the readers of science fiction tend to identify with the romantic (pace J J Pierce) and in practice nearly non-existent side of science. A less-than-surprising modern adherent of this notion of science is Charles Platt (NEW WORLDS 187 page 62).

A fourth argument lies in the distressingly low standard of the fiction written with this notion in mind.

And so on.

A modern heresy, upon which I don't propose to waste any space at all, is that which proclaims science fiction to be, now, the one true and worthwhile literary form.

Between these lies a realistic evaluation of science fiction's place in society and in literature. Science fiction is essentially a fiction for young adults (to stretch a point) because it is more suited to dreamers than doers. As relaxation reading it plays a role, or can play a role, in the lives of workers whose minds are normally very active and appreciate the sometimes fertile imagination which gives birth to some of the best science fiction now being written. As a fiction for young adults, the major role fulfilled by science fiction is that of entertaining. From this point of view it is not too difficult to see why so many supposedly mature adults were fired with enthusiasm for STAR TREK, an unashamedly commercial and juvenile television program which lacked all the best qualities of science fiction: because it was better than what had gone before (apparently) it must be good - a typically childish attitude. (SF COMMENTARY 10, p 8)

178. Theoreticians of science fiction don't exist. The 'academics' of science fiction do not exist as a class either. The relatively disinterested writers in amateur magazines like this one are simply not competent for the job at any but the lowest level. And the active writers are not in the slightest disinterested. They fall into two classes - the boosters and the bleeders. The former devote their space in fanzines to magnifying their own works (generally speaking, a necessary procedure). The bleeders are those who faint at the first touch of critical disfavour - and then bleed voluminously over as many pages as are available. (op. cit. p 25)

179. Like the writer of science fiction, any critic must be very familiar with the field of science fiction, and he must be prepared to keep up with the field as it develops. There are quite a few people like this - and some of them are quite competent at discussing science fiction in a relatively limited way. There are two problems which arise from this 'virtue'. Firstly, there is a blunting of sensibility, resulting from reading large quantities of bad fiction. This suggestion has implicit in it, of course, the belief that science fiction is not the greatest literature ever written, and if you disagree with that suggestion you will disagree that I have described a disadvantageous position. Secondly, the quantity of science fiction published now (and for some time in the past) is so great that it doesn't seem quite possible for someone to hold down a job, read all the science fiction published and read widely outside the field of science fiction. Such a problem is usually solved by (1) not reading very much outside of science fiction and (2) reading only some science fiction.

It is widely claimed, in the USA, that the first of these methods is not used to any great extent. Yet there is rarely any evidence that US SF readers do much more than read SF plus occasional mass-market paperbacks picked up to provide variety in the diet. For a critic to be so limited would be disastrous.

The second approach is probably widespread. Readers soon find writers whose works they dislike, and that saves time. There's also the element of chance that throws a writer in our path, perhaps, leading to inquiry and then investigation. Of what use is this to the critic? If he follows the path of selectivity he will obviously not be competent to judge the entire field and, to date, most critics have seen themselves as universal arbiters of excellence. The editor of SF COMMENTARY (in more worthy times) is a notable exception, and his decision to concentrate upon a limited number of authors (Dick and Aldiss, say) pays obvious dividends, although it may also lead to a narrowness of vision which could become disabling.

I would think that this is the most satisfactory path for the young intending critic: to select one author and become thoroughly familiar with his work (not his personality). It should be possible, from this vantage point, to gain some appreciation of the field of science fiction as a whole and, from here, to move on to investigate a small number of other writers, so that he eventually is able to discuss very competently a small section of the field of science fiction. Five such persons are far more valuable from the critical point of view than 100 P. Schuyler Millers, though this should not be taken as any sort of criticism of P. Schuyler Miller who has performed miraculously for so many years. (Op. cit. pp 25-26)

H. Bruce FRANKLIN:: 1. Most twentieth-century science fiction, like most nineteenth-century science fiction, like most realistic fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, like most fiction of any variety of any human time and place, must of necessity be ordinary rather than extraordinary.

2. Much science fiction is based on ancient literary assumptions - such as the premise that literature teaches and delights by being delightful teaching, and the Platonic premise that the creative artist should imitate ideal forms rather than actualities - that happen today to be at the bottom of the wheel

of fashion.

3. A different kind of literature from realistic fiction, science fiction demands a different kind of reading. (FUTURE PERFECT pp xii-xiii)

181. Science fiction as a form of physical (as distinguished from utopian, moral, psychological, or religious) speculation is what Poe may have provided with significant new dimensions, though by no means giving it birth. This is not a fiction which seeks to popularize scientific ideas but a fiction which seeks to formulate ideas that could not be formulated in any other way, certainly in no 'non-fictional' way. It is a fiction concerned not with actual physical details but with hypothetical possibilities which may have physical existence or which may only be represented metaphorically as physical things. This is the fiction which merges indistinguishably into the new scientific hypothesis, and its value must be determined in the same ways - by pragmatic tests and proof of its internal design. One might say that insofar as it can be pragmatically tested as true it is scientifically sound, and insofar as its internal design is true it is mathematically sound. (op.cit. pp99-100)

182. Because the aims of psychological science and of almost all fiction overlap, it is extremely difficult to separate the science fiction which explores human psychology from any fiction which aims at psychological revelation. But even if psychological science fiction is limited only to stories about hypnotic states, extra-sensory perception, teleportation, identity transfers, and extraordinary psychological experiments, still the nineteenth century stands as its first great age. (op. cit. p.248)

183. Whether the psychological ghost story and the plain ghost story - and both were conventional modes of nineteenth-century fiction - should be categorized as science fiction is debatable. But insofar as one calls science what the pre-eminent American psychologist William James was doing in his work with the Society for Psychical Research, one must call science fiction what his brother Henry was doing in 'The Turn of the Screw', 'The Jolly Corner', 'The Ghostly Rental', and 'Sir Dominick Ferrand', to name a few. And behind all of James's ghostly tales lie the conventions and expectations of all the psychological science fiction from late eighteenth-century gothicism on.

The psychological science fiction of the nineteenth century, culminating in James, forms a distinguished body of writing. Unlike the science fiction about space travel, marvelous inventions, and biological experimentation, psychological science fiction attains timelessness with ease; or at least so it appears to us, who are no closer to extraordinary psychic phenomena than the nineteenth century. (op. cit. pp 249-250)

184. As we look at a past vision of the future, what we see is the past, and, in reflection, ourselves. This view may disclose how much one time may be composed of its visions of other times, how a view of the future may place the past in time or constitute the present, how the mirrors of time reflect upon each other so that we, standing in the midst of them, can see ourselves coming and going. (op. cit. p. 402)

Northrop FRYE:: The procedure of constructing a utopia produces two literary qualities which are typical, almost invariable, in the genre. In the first place, the behaviour of society is described ritually. A ritual is a significant social act, and the utopia-writer is concerned only with the typical actions which are significant of those social elements he is stressing. In utopian stories a frequent device is for someone, generally a first-person narrator, to enter the utopia and be shown around it by a sort of Intourist guide. The story is made up largely of a Socratic dialogue between guide and narrator, in which the narrator asks questions or thinks up objections and the guide answers them. One gets a little weary, in reading a series of such stories, of what seems a pervading smugness of tone. As a rule the guide is

completely identified with his society and seldom admits to any discrepancy between the reality and the appearance of what he is describing. But we recognize that this is inevitable given the conventions employed. In the second place, rituals are apparently irrational acts which become rational when their significance is explained. In such utopias the guide explains the structure of the society and thereby the significance of the behaviour being observed. Hence, the behaviour of society is presented as rationally motivated. It is a common objection to utopias that they present human nature as governed more by reason than it is or can be. But this rational emphasis, again, is the result of using certain literary conventions. The utopian romance does not present society as governed by reason; it presents it as governed by ritual habit, or prescribed social behaviour, which is explained rationally. (UTOPIAS AND UTOPIAN THOUGHT (ed. Manuel) pp 26-27)

186. The great classical utopias derived their form from city-states and, though imaginary, were thought of as being, like the city-states, exactly locatable in space. Modern utopias derive their form from a uniform pattern of civilization spread over the whole globe, and so are thought of as world-states, taking up all the available space. It is clear that if there is to be any revival of utopian imagination in the near future, it cannot return to the old-style spatial utopias. New utopias would have to derive their form from the shifting and dissolving movement of society that is gradually replacing the fixed locations of life. They would not be rational cities evolved by a philosopher's dialectic: they would be rooted in the body as well as in the mind, in the unconscious as well as the conscious, in forests and deserts as well as in highways and buildings, in bed as well as in the symposium. Do you not agree, asks Socrates in the Republic, that the worst of men is the man who expresses in waking reality the character of man in his dreams? But modern utopias will have to pay some attention to the lawless and violent lusts of the dreamer, for their foundations will still be in dreamland. A fixed location in space is 'there'; and 'there' is the only answer to the spatial question 'where?'. Utopia, in fact and in etymology, is not a place; and when the society it seeks to transcend is everywhere, it can only fit into what is left, the invisible non-spatial point in the centre of space. The question 'Where is utopia?' is the same as the question 'Where is nowhere?' and the only answer to that question is 'here'. (op. cit. pp 48-49)

Hugo GERNSBACH:: By 'scientifiction' I mean the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story - a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision. For many years stories of this nature were published in the sister magazines of AMAZING STORIES - SCIENCE & INVENTION and RADIO NEWS.

But with the ever-increasing demands on us for this sort of story, and more of it, there was only one thing to do - publish a magazine in which the scientific fiction type of story will hold forth exclusively. Toward that end we have laid elaborate plans, sparing neither time nor money.

Edgar Allan Poe may well be called the father of 'scientification'. It was he who really originated the romance, cleverly weaving into and around the story, a scientific thread. Jules Verne, with his amazing romances, also cleverly interwoven with a scientific thread, came next. A little later came H.G. Wells, whose scientifiction stories, like those of his forerunners, have become famous and immortal.

It must be remembered that we live in an entirely new world. Two hundred years ago, stories of this kind were not possible. Science, through its various branches of mechanics, electricity, astronomy, etc., enters so intimately into all our lives today, and we are so much immersed in this

science, that we have become rather prone to take new inventions and discoveries for granted. Our entire mode of living has changed with the present progress, and it is little wonder, therefore, that many fantastic situations - impossible 100 years ago - are brought about today. It is in these situations that the new romancers find their great inspiration.

Not only do these amazing tales make tremendously interesting reading - they are also always instructive. They supply knowledge that we might not otherwise obtain - and they supply it in a very palatable form. For the best of these modern writers of scientifiiction have the knack of imparting knowledge, and even inspiration, without once making us aware that we are being taught.

And not only that! Poe, Verne, Wells, Bellamy, and many others have proved themselves real prophets. Prophecies made in many of their most amazing stories are being realized - and have been realized. Take the fantastic submarine of Jules Verne's most famous story, 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' for instance. He predicted the present day submarine almost down to the last bolt! New inventions pictured for us in the scientifiiction of today are not at all impossible of realization tomorrow. Many great science stories destined to be of an historical interest are still to be written, and AMAZING STORIES magazine will be the medium through which such stories will come to you. Posterity will point to them as having blazed a new trail, not only in literature and fiction, but progress as well. (AMAZING STORIES, April 1926, as reprinted in AS, April 1966, pp 188-189)

188. A science fiction story fails of its purpose in our opinion, and from what we have learned, from the opinion of our readers, unless there is a point to it. (WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY, Summer 1930, p 574)

189. In time to come, there is no question that science fiction will be looked upon with considerable respect by every thinking person. The reason is that science fiction has already contributed quite a good deal to progress and civilization and will do so increasingly as time goes on.

It all started with Jules Verne and his Nautilus, which was the forerunner of all modern submarines. The brilliant imagination of Jules Verne no doubt did a tremendous bit to stimulate inventors and constructors of submarines. But then, of course, Jules Verne was an exception in that he knew how to use fact and combine it with fiction.

In time to come, also, our authors will make a marked distinction between science fiction and science faction, if I may coin such a term.

The distinction should be fairly obvious. In science fiction the author may fairly let his imagination run wild and, as long as he does not turn the story into an obvious fairy tale, he will still remain within the bounds of pure science fiction. Science fiction may be prophetic fiction, in that the things imagined by the author may come true some time; even if this 'some time' may mean a hundred thousand years hence. Then, of course, there are a number of degrees to the fantastic in science fiction itself. It may run the entire gamut between the probable, possible and near-impossible predictions.

In sharp counter-distinction to science fiction, we also have science faction. By this term I mean science fiction in which there are so many scientific facts that the story, as far as the scientific part is concerned, is no longer fiction but becomes more or less a recounting of fact.

For instance, if one spoke of rocket-propelled fliers a few years ago, such machines obviously would have come under the heading of science fiction. Today such fliers properly come under the term science faction; because the

rocket is a fact today. And, while rocket-propelled flying machines are as yet in a stage similar to the Wright brothers' first airplane, yet the few experimenters who have worked with rocket-propelled machines have had sufficient encouragement to enable us to predict quite safely that during the next twenty-five years, rocket flying will become the order of the day.

Which is the better story, the one that deals with pure science fiction or the one that deals with science faction? That is a difficult thing to say. It depends, of course, entirely upon the story, its treatment and the ingenuity of the author.

Of course, the man of science, the research worker, and even the hard-headed business man will perhaps look with more favour upon science faction because here he will get valuable information that may be of immediate use; whereas the information contained in the usual run of science fiction may perhaps be too far in advance of the times and may often be thought to be too fantastic to be of immediate use to humanity. So between science fiction and science faction there will always be a great gap - and each will have its thousands and perhaps millions of adherents. (Science Fiction vs. Science Faction, editorial in WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY, Fall 1930, page 5)

190. Let me clarify the term Science-Fiction. When I speak of it I mean the truly, scientific, prophetic Science-Fiction with the full accent on SCIENCE. I emphatically do not mean the fairy tale brand, the weird or fantastic type of what mistakenly masquerades under the name of Science-Fiction today. I find no fault with fairy tales, weird and fantastic stories. Some of them are excellent for their entertainment value, as amply proved by Edgar Allan Poe and other masters, but when they are advertised as Science-Fiction, then I must firmly protest. (SCIENCE-FICTION PLUS, March 1953, page 2)

191. Some day a very learned psychologist will write an important book on the complex mental processes of inventing. The resume will probably show that the inventor's mind absorbs all types of outside stimuli, experiences and impressions which are then sorted and finally crystallized into an invention. In this process, many things that the inventor saw and heard in the past - ideas which he acquired while reading books, magazines, newspapers, technical writings of every kind, and so on - are used by his analytical mind. The end result - the invention - is therefore mostly a distillation of the inventor's outside impressions, plus his native ingenuity. Or as Edison put it more realistically: "An invention is ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration!"

This brings me back to the vital role which the Science-Fiction author plays and has played in the past. Frequently he is the one who has furnished untold inspirations for the modern technical world in which we live. In fact, it is he who is often the actual inventor. Unfortunately, being only an author - which is his real metier - he is rarely interested commercially in his brain child. Worse yet, he does not believe in his heart that the idea is workable, or will ever be practical. So he hardly ever patents the idea, no matter how good it looks on paper. (op. cit. page 67)

192. ...I would like to make a serious plea. Science-Fiction has grown up to a stature no one would have believed 25 years ago. Today it is a force to reckon with. The public at large is beginning to take Science-Fiction seriously. People look to it confidently because they know that for the first time in the history of mankind - through the medium of Science-Fiction - man can now gaze into our future world with all its wonders - not with an uncertain look here and there - but with steady insight, month in and out and for all the years to follow.

For that reason, let us treat Science-Fiction with the seriousness and the dignity this great endeavour is everlastingly entitled to. (Op.cit.p 67)

193. For reasons often difficult to comprehend, there is still a good deal of confusion about Science-Fiction and what it really is.

Let us therefore analyze the term. Science, the dictionary tells us, is: 'Ordered and systematized knowledge of natural phenomena gained by observation, experimentation and induction'. Fiction is: 'Imaginative prose literature'.

Science-Fiction therefore can be defined, in short, as: Imaginative extrapolation of true natural phenomena, existing now, or likely to exist in the future.

Good Science-Fiction must be based on true science - science as interpreted and understood by responsible scientists. In other words, the story should be within the realms of the possible.

Should an author tell us that we can hear the noise of an A-Bomb explosion taking place on the Moon, we would have to say that a story based on such a premise is impossible, because science tells us sound cannot traverse the vacuum between the moon and the Earth.

Such a story would be properly termed Pseudo Science-Fiction.

Unfortunately, nowadays, an increasing number of authors write a vast array of pseudo Science-Fiction, with the result that a multitude of readers have become confused and misinformed.

In our opinion, a reader has a reasonable right to expect that the science part of a Science-Fiction story should be true or possible. If the 'science' is distorted or exaggerated - becoming pure fantasy or a fairy tale - then the reader is deliberately misled.

In due time he finds this out. Then he and Science-Fiction part company.

A further point, often overlooked, is the important fact that in our present scientific and technological age a large percentage of Science-Fiction readers deliberately choose Science-Fiction because they want to be informed - not misinformed. Hence the science content of the story or novel should be reasonably accurate. If it is not, Science-Fiction is not fulfilling its mission.

This condition is aggravated by a periodical crop of pseudo-scientists, charlatans, and out-and-out fakers, who try to cash in on the public's ignorance of science. Often authors, who should know better, fall prey to these perverted science-peddlers and base their Science-Fiction stories on such science-nonsense. (SCIENCE-FICTION PLUS, April 1953, page 2)

194. There is, for instance, a segment of scientists who have little or no patience with science-fiction. They scoff at it, they ridicule it, and consider it beneath their dignity. This feeling is quite understandable if we but consider that many of the purveyors of science-fiction are partly responsible for this state of affairs.

For the past ten years, unfortunately, a very large percentage of literature masqueraded under the name of science-fiction, when actually the bulk of the endeavour was undiluted fantasy or hopped-up fairytales - with little or no science.

This, however, is only one of the reasons for the prejudice against science-fiction that we encounter not too infrequently. For, make no mistake - during the past twenty-five years there has been printed a vast array of most excellent SCIENCE-fiction stories and novels, with the accent on science - good science, too. Many of these books and stories have not escaped the eye and mind of scientists, engineers, technicians, and other professionals in

their respective fields.

Nevertheless, there remains a constant stream of antagonism against science-fiction by many scientific people - not a major percentage, but still a disturbing sector. (SCIENCE-FICTION PLUS, June 1953, page 2)

195. Modern science-fiction today tends to gravitate more and more into the of the esoteric and sophisticated literature, to the exclusion of all other types. It is as if music were to go entirely symphonic to the exclusion of all popular and other types. The great danger for science-fiction is that its generative source - its supply of authors - is so meagre. Good S-F authors are few, extremely few. Most of them have become esoteric & 'high-brow'. They and their confreres disdain the 'popular' story - they call it 'corny', 'dated', 'passe'.

Nevertheless we note with interest that when a publisher recently brought out a popular priced quarterly which had only 'antiquated' reprints of science-fiction of the late '20s, it sold far better than other similar efforts. The lesson would seem to be plain from this and other examples: there is a fine market for crepes Suzette, but an infinitely larger one for good ice cream.

If the young and budding S-F author - unspoiled by the prevailing snob-appeal - will look around carefully, he will note that all S-F media - with the exception of science-fiction magazines - always cater to the masses. They rarely have snob-appeal, the story is nearly always simple, understandable to the masses, young and old.

Yes, motion picture producers buy the rights for esoteric S-F books, but their scenarists carefully re-write the whole story into simple language so that it is not over the heads of the masses. Radio and television scripts follow practically the same formula. So do newspaper strips and the comics.

At present, science-fiction literature is in its decline - deservedly so. The masses are revolting against the snob dictum 'Let 'em eat cake!' They're ravenous for vitalizing plain bread! (SCIENCE FICTION PLUS, December 1953, p. 2)

196. Both Verne and Wells wrote a large variety of other stories, yet in my opinion and that of many authorities it is the science fiction content that makes them enduring and historic - deservedly so.

Both of these illustrious authors had succumbed to the phenomenon of science fiction fatigue - the creative science distillate of the mind had been exhausted. New prophetic visions could no longer be generated.

Science fiction exhaustion is well known to every author of the genre; some succumb to it early, others late in their careers. It is a phenomenon only too well understood by all editors and publishers, who must cope with it. Nor is it any wonder that the science fiction output of nearly all authors who have ever tried it is so limited. Only those who have attempted it can know how difficult and exhausting the subject can become.

Verne and Wells continued writing until advanced ages, after they had written themselves out in science fiction themes. They then went into many other avenues of literature. To mention only one: Wells' famous The Outline of History (1920).

The true science-fiction author must have a high order of inventiveness; he must have constant inspiration, intuitive and prophetic insight of the future; and, above all, he must know his science. No wonder that there are only a handful of first-rate science fiction authors.

(AMAZING STORIES, April 1961, Page 6)

The main purpose of this page is to reassure/disappoint SFC readers with the news that I am not dead, lost, stolen, or strayed, and that SFC is not, as one reader believes, on the skids. Alex Robb has a subscription to No 70, so I can't close down the magazine yet. However, SFC has met more than the usual number of obstacles recently (most of them pleasant). Let's just say that my future is as uncertain as ever, but that I have hopes of finding time to leave Australia on August 29 to attend Torcon in Canada and to visit as many poor, unsuspecting overseas fans as possible. Upon returning to Australia, I will be without employment, but as yet I'm not too worried. When I'm broke I will be. Important note: Please continue to send letters of comment, and please continue to send them to my usual box number. All mail will be picked up, and I hope that it will reach me while I am travelling. Second important note: If I can help it, SFC is not going into hibernation while I am away. David Grigg hopes to publish a TOUCHSTONE/SFC, John Foyster might publish a Foyster-type SFC or simply continue JOE 6, and I've already made tentative arrangements to publish at least two issues while overseas. SFC might appear a lot more regularly than it does at the moment.

Publishers keep sending me books, and I keep not having time to read them, reviewers to review them, or space to publish reviews of them. However I feel I should say something about the following items:

KURT VONNEGUT JR: A CHECKLIST, compiled by Betty Lenhardt Hudgens (Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan 48226, USA; 67 pp; 1972; \$8.50) is, I am afraid, the most extraordinary ripoff at that price. However libraries interested in Vonnegut might want to buy this very slender book, the contents of which would fit on about fifteen of SFC's pages.

I haven't read J O Bailey's PILGRIMS THROUGH SPACE AND TIME (Greenwood Publishing Company; 1947, reprinted 1972; 341 pp; \$3.50) yet, but it looks a lot more valuable than the above item. Unfortunately it seems to be one of those Verne/Wells/Swift books about "science fiction", so it might not be a lot of use to most readers.

BILLION YEAR SPREE by Brian W Aldiss (Doubleday; 1973; 339 pp; \$7.95) purports to be THE TRUE HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION, but unfortunately it is also one of those Verne/Wells/Swift books, with lashings of Mary Shelley and the nineteenth century. However, even though I disagree with the book's methodology, I can't quarrel with Aldiss' prose (although it's easy to see which authors he has read and which he hasn't). Aldiss' criticism of s f readers in general: "A swimming pool is a poor place in which to swim when there is a great ocean near by." Of A Merritt: "His world ends not with a bang but a simper." Valuable to librarians, but not invaluable - damn it all, nobody has yet written the true history of science fiction - of Campbell, and Gernsback, and Carnell, etc. The British edition is by Weidenfeld and Nicolson and Aussie price will be \$10.20 (!).

Very much enjoyed: two books of James Blish's short stories: ANYWHEN (Faber; 1971; 185 pp; 1stg 1.75) and BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF JAMES BLISH (Faber; 1973 (rev. ed.); 216 pp; \$A 5.60), which made me realise how very few of Blish's stories I had read. Most enjoyed was TESTAMENT OF ANDROS which out-New-Waves the New Wave by about fifteen years (in BSFSOJB), SURFACE TENSION (my third reading of it), and a few stories in ANYWHEN.

You must buy: Seabury Press' line of European s f. Two Lem novels (THE INVINCIBLE, with a wooden translation, but a brilliant last chapter, and MEMOIRS FOUND IN A BATHTUB); Franz Rottensteiner's collection of European s f, VIEW FROM ANOTHER SHORE, which includes an excellent, well-translated Lem story, IN HOT PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS; the Strugatskys' HARD TO BE A GOD (see Suvin's review in SFC 35); and Stefan Wul's THE TEMPLE OF THE PAST. All at \$6.95, available through Space Age.

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