

No. 15

MARCH 1970

CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS

ANDERSON, Poul, 1926-

LET THE SPACEMAN BEWARE! Dobson, 1969. 98 p.
18/- (1st Ace 1963 b/w Bulmer, K. The Wizard of
Starship Poseidon) Review: Analog Jan 64 p. 87

-- ed. NEBULA AWARD STORIES, 4. Gollancz, 1969.
287 p. 35/-.

ANTHONY, Piers [i.e. Piers Anthony Jacob]
OTHON. Macdonald, 1970. 252 p. 28/-

ASIMOV, Isaac, 1920-

PEBBLE IN THE SKY. Sphere, 1969. 186 p. PB 5/-

BALCHIN, Nigel

KINGS OF INFINITE SPACE. Pan, 1970. 224 p. PB
6/- (1st Collins 1967; Doubleday 1968)

A marginal item: delerium of a hospitalised
astronaut. Reviews: T&SF Jan 1969 p. 33; Lib-
rary Journal 1.5.68 p. 1914; National Review
(NY) 13.8.68 p. 811; New Statesman 6.10.67 p.
400; N.Y. Times 14.7.68 p. 36; Times Lit. Suppt.
2.11.67 p. 1029.

BRUNNER, John [Kilian Houston] 1934-

MEETING AT INFINITY. Ace 1969. 155 p. PB 60c.

Current Books

BURDICK, Eugene and WHEELER, Harvey

FAIL-SAFE. Dell (2459) 1969. 285 p. PB 75c.
(1st McGraw-Hill 1962; Hutchinson 1963)

Reviews: Analog Feb 1963 p. 173; Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists June 1963 p. 28, Nov 1963 p. 19; Economist 6.4.63 p. 61; Encounter May 1963 p. 82; New Statesman 5.4.63 p. 491; Times Lit. Suppt. 15.3.63 p. 181; Christian Science Monitor 26.10.62 p. 2/1. See also The Politics of Destruction, Saturday Review 9.11.63.

CAPPS, Carroll M.

SECRET OF THE SUNLESS WORLD. Dell (7663) 1969.
204 p. PB 50c.

CONKLIN, [Edward] Groff, 1904-1968 ed.

SCIENCE FICTION ODDITIES, 2nd series. Rapp,
1969. 9-160 p. 21/- (1st Berkley 1966)

DICK, Philip K[indred] 1928-

The WORLD JONES MADE. Panther, 1970. 160 p. PB
5/- (1st Ace 1956 b/w St. Clair, M. Agent of
the Unknown; Sidgwick 1968) SF? Perhaps. Pre-
science. Reviews: Astounding US Sep 1956;
E&SF Aug 1956

FARMER, Philip Jose

The GATES OF CREATION. Sphere, 1970. 154 p. PB
5/- (1st Ace 1966)

-- The MAKER OF UNIVERSES. Sphere, 1970. 155 p.
PB 5/- (1st Ace 1965)

-- A PRIVATE COSMOS. Sphere, 1970. 158 p. PB 5/-
(1st Ace 1967) Sphere calls these "science
fantasy"

contd. p.14

R E V I E W S

CAMP CONCENTRATION
by Thomas M. Disch

Panther PB, 1969

What else has Disch written?

I have read *The Genocides*, which is good, but have not seen Echo round his Bones: so while I can compare him with other authors I cannot judge this book against the author's own work. What is this book about? It deals with a concentration camp where people are concentrated in order to get them to concentrate on research. The main character is Louis Sacchetti, imprisoned as a conscientious objector, and the book follows his internment. As background, we have sketched in a war situation with East versus West (but not precisely delineated) in a world overcome by excess population, at a time about 1990 or so (but not clearly dated). The location of Camp Archimedes is apparently in the U.S.A. (but not exactly located). All in all, the world described here is no different from our own, with no interesting technical developments to show it's the future.

The story begins with Sacchetti's transfer from an ordinary prison to Camp Archimedes where he meets Haast the warden, Busk the psychiatrist and Washington a negro fellow-prisoner. All other characters are subsidiary. The first 70 pages are taken up with conversations between Sacchetti and each of these, in which we learn that the camp has been set up to hold isolated prisoners infected with a mutated syphilis-type disease, and as a byproduct make use of the way the disease in its sub-terminal stage stimulates the mental powers. The next 20 pages seem to wander about describing a play being written by Sacchetti, and the performance of an alchemical experiment involving Haast and Washington, causing the death of the

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latter.

The second part of the book, some 65 pages, is written in the form of the ravings of a person in a condition of variable delirium -- quite cleverly done -- and concludes with us being told, so quickly on the fourth-last page, that the reader almost misses it, that the experiment that seemed a lot of hocus-pocus was actually a mind-exchange process: when Washington's body suffered a heart attack his mind shuffled off Haast's. Finally Sacchetti leaves his useless disease-ridden shell to take residence in the corpus of one of the camp guards.

In detail, there's much more to it than that, but I believe this is the essence of the tale. I can now say (a) I didn't like it on the first reading (subjective assessment) and (b) I didn't like it on the second reading (objective, analytical). Why is this so?

Well, on the first reading I was uncomfortable with Disch's mixture of (for want of better terms) low class language and high class literary references. I am quite familiar with the former and recognise many of the latter, and they clash. In my experience of a wide range of social levels, people who are educated to the level indicated don't speak in the way Disch's characters do, in general. Does Disch mean us to see that the characters are under a condition of stress which makes them react so; or in the case of Washington is he trying to illustrate that his brilliance stems from the disease and is not inherent? Or has the author over-reached himself in his wish to grip the reader? I don't know, and can only say that part of the fault lies in the use of a first person narrative which prevents the author from

adding explanation or commentary external to the main character's experiences.

Finally, I was completely lost by the end. So I left it for a while and reread it.

Now I read a book such as this to be entertained (heaven knows, I have enough "hard" reading to do at work and elsewhere), and while I am prepared to be unable to find the murderer in one of Agatha Christie's works until I am told who it was, I do expect to be able, on being told, to look back and see without reference to the text where the answer was made quite evident but I just didn't see it. I expect to be able to think back and quickly say to myself: "Good heavens! Of course that point was so obvious." But in *Camp Concentration* I experienced no such revelation.

Aldiss, in the *Oxford Mail*, described this book as "fieldishly clever". Maybe it's too clever. The key point is the mind-exchange scene which is dressed up to show Haast dreadfully disappointed in the apparent failure of the stunt. Later we find it was Washington venting his spite and enjoying his triumph on his old body, but the events are so well disguised that any reader will take them at face value and not read into the scene anything other than face value. This is simply because we are given no clue to what is going on, again because of the first person narrative, we cannot know anything other than what Sacchetti sees.

To sum up: while there is some good writing in it and a good-idea plot, while the medical details are well put and the fund of literature behind it is extraordinary, it fails as a work of SF entertainment because it does not get through. Disch has not communicated enjoyment to the reader:

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he has succeeded admirably in outsmarting me as a reader and therefore antagonised me as a critic.

-- Ronald B. Ward

SERVANTS OF THE WANKH

Ace PB, 1969. 158 p.

The DIRDIR

Ace PB, 1969. 188 p.

The PNUME

Ace PB, 1970. 156 p.

by Jack Vance

A waste of Vance's talents? I said so of the first of this series, *City of the Chasch*, two years ago. I still think so but for different reasons. Vance is one of SF's greatest, although no one seems to realise it. Certainly neither intelligent nor unintelligent criticism of SF has given him any real notice yet. But there's no doubt of it, he writes too much. Four out of five Vance stories areargeable, polished vacuities that fill up the pages between the editorial and the classifieds and do little more. Vance's vacuities are better reading than most writers' meatiest, so he gets away with it. With his prodigious ability to invent, he endlessly produces novelties, rarely taking the time to develop them. Not all his ideas are particularly good, but it is usually lack of effort in developing them that is the cause of the defect.

Well then, when I saw him writing recognisable neo-Burroughs fiction in this series my response to the first book was colored by a strong feeling that we need no more neo-Burroughs, particularly if it is going to distract a rarely gifted writer from serious work. There was only one Burroughs, and like it or not he had something defying analysis that pushed a button somewhere in millions of readers: no one else could do the same, not Kline, not Leiber, not a horde of faceless hacks, not do

Camp, Wellman, Farley or anyone else. For the author of *To Live Forever* to be rehashing John Carter seemed a deplorable exercise.

On the second reading, however -- I found it compelled a second reading -- the Burroughs element seemed insignificant. It is there, to be sure; and throughout the four books parallels with Burroughs are many, too many for anything but deliberate and ingenious intent. But Vance is a writer of so much greater depth and sensitivity that the flavor is entirely different. And Vance is writing for adults of a generation with a background of science fiction as well as one of some sophistication, not the frozen-in-1910 mentality that Burroughs aimed at.

In *City of the Chasch*, if you have yet to read it (a defect to be remedied with all urgency), an investigation of mysterious signals coming from the one planet of Carina 4269 was met by an attack that destroyed the ship and left two men to land of whom one survived the first emergency, to scout the hostile planet and escape his mission. Adam Reith, a field operator trained for survival to the limit of 21st Century skill, is naturally the kind of superhuman fighter who alone would stand a stray dog's chance, but this is not emphasised at the expense of intelligent behavior. Just as much a departure from Burroughs as de Camp's approach, the man of ingenuity preferring to exploit weaknesses and avoid conflict in both writers is more believable and interesting than John Carter.

The planet Tschai, as Reith learns, is decadent and fragmented into innumerable local cultures of many races, human and otherwise -- like Barsoom. All seem to speak the same language although many are quite isolated -- as on Barsoom -- with one important exception that is an important plot el-

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event. Trohai has a long history of interstellar arrivals, the three main nonhuman races (one itself evolved into three incompatible forms) that divide dominance between their areas of supremacy having driven the original natives underground and brought in human slaves that have branched into various races. It is an arresting concept, and developed in considerable detail throughout the series. Tschai emerges as a world of endless variety and endless possibilities. It is not conceived as static, although given cultures may be stagnant; it is always alive and always believable in its context. But its continued fragmentation and near-barbarism, the failure of high technology to unify and mediocritise the world, is shown as logical as the result of the forces at work.

Reith's task, then, to find out what the situation is, particularly who generated the signals and who attacked the expedition, and to make his way back to Earth to tell the tale, is the theme of the series. In City of the Chasch he found the impotence of the more backward human groups, made his first allies and as a first approach to getting back to Earth schemed to reach his spacecraft, appropriated by the nonhuman Blue Chasch. Although frustrated in escape, he managed to start a human rebellion against them and found a lead to the source of signals in the most advanced human nation. He incidentally managed to satisfy a Burroughs convention by picking up a rescued female kidnapee who at first seems no more than the standard romantic element.

It is the dismissal of the relationship as an "erotic accomodation" and the unexpected direction in which it develops in the second book that first really shows that this is Vance writing

was Vance. In *Servants of the Wankh Reith* and his companions, two renegades from a wild nomad tribe and the captive Dirdinmen, look for help to get into space, solve some of the mysteries, almost succeed and inadvertantly set off far-reaching (though left offstage with the briefest reference) political events.

In *The Dirdir* and *The Prime* the enterprise leads to encounters with the third nonhuman great power and the indiginous Prime, with numerous side excursions, and finaltakeoff for Earth. The four books form a continuous narrative under the tasteless title *Planet of Adventure*, which I hope will be changed in an eventual collected edition. Now that the series is evidently ended it can be said that not nearly enough has been done with it. I don't imply that Vance should have covered all of the map of Tschai provided (though I confess to a certain curiosity as to what mysteries fill in the great blank area of Charchan, what is dreadful about Cape Dread, whether the Wild Waste is no more than that, and what peoples inhabit Vord and Rakh -- and the supposedly uninhabited chasms...) but the pages are crowded with tantalising glimpses of ideas worth developing.

Vance should not have to write mere potboilers -- for by the high standards of craftsmanship he is perfectly capable of, this series is no more. Although it has none of the non sequiturs and dizzy leaps of discontinuity of a ven Vogt or the awkwardness of a lesser improviser, it shows signs of having been written at high speed with only a vague intention as to plot. It is full of episodes that extend the wordage without advancing the plot, adding color but throwing away endless opportunities. The seas of Tschai are haunted by pirates,

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for instance; they are mentioned but nothing is made of them, although they would be an important factor in shipping on a technically competent world without great powers interested in protecting trade. But there are many ideas raised only to be dropped here. It is in this sense that I consider Vance to be underexploiting his talents. From another point of view it is much of the appeal of these books that the frequent kaleidoscopic changes of background with lightly sketched or barely suggested detail give us an inkling of the vastness and richness of a whole strange world, its myriad traditions and resources.

--- The Bo'sun

The STARS MY DESTINATION Bantam PB (H4815) 1970
by Alfred Bester 197 p.

Back again, the novel you may have read as Tiger! Tiger! Bester followed up his The Demolished Man, in which he treated telepathy as a possibility for society to adjust to in one of the few sensible treatments of the concept, with this similar approach to the even wilder and remoter teleportation. Taking an imagined magical power and basing what looks like a science fiction story on it was difficult enough; Bester in each case wrote not only a believable but a compelling story. This is the better of the two, a novel of revenge in which a wronged nonentity in his drive to punish whoever it was that left him, a spacewreck survivor, to his fate, becomes a superman. Although there is much more to the background, the main features of his world are the social adjustments to the discovery that most people can be trained to use an unexplained power to move by effort of will from one place to another

through a higher dimension. The changes in work, business, morality, crime and justice are all fundamental to the action and logically follow the premise. There are other points too in a book crowded with incident, not the least a vividly alive creation of the speech of the poor and criminal elements of Bester's world. Future jargon and slang have often been attempted; Bester makes not only new words but new speech patterns and twists of grammar sound natural. Grab no guesses, read it, is all.

-- G.S.

TIME AND AGAIN

Ace PB, 1970

by Clifford D. Simak

256 p.

Another new edition of a book that it is no joke to call a classic of SF. First novel serialised by Galaxy and cover story of the first issue of that then highly unconventional magazine, as Time Quarry, given a different ending for the book version, and once issued in paperback as First He Died. Time and Again is a complex book, difficult to describe briefly. As the present title suggests it deals with time travel, and much of the plot turns on efforts of contending factions to alter future events by tampering with the past, with some crossing of tracks and confrontation of paradoxes. It is also about freedom of the will and freedom of conscience, about man as a member of society and in relation to environment -- about what humanity means and whether other selfconscious beings, extraterrestrials, robots, synthetic people, can be defined into it.

These are not theoretical matters but the very action of the book, although it also has personal

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interaction, intrigue, armed and unarmed combat, treachery, murder and other standard features of the action/mystery novel.

The book revolves around Asher Sutton, the first human investigator allowed to land and after twenty years leave by the never-described non-human owners of a mystery planet. He has a message from them to mankind, and before long has evidence from time travellers out of the future that he will eventually set it down and publish it: precisely what to say in the book is the difficulty, for wars will be fought over its meaning. Sutton's dealings with friends and enemies involve him in plot and counterplot, in conflicts that are rarely all they seem, in pursuit into the ramifications of time travel, before he is ready to write his book.

Time and Again is probably Simak's best novel, which makes it one of SF's milestones.

-- G.S.

LOOKING BACKWARD

March 1950 brought us Thrills Incorporated, the first Australian science fiction magazine. It was such a poor effort that recognising it as such is lowering one's standards, but viewed objectively it was by no means the worst ever. The poorest British products of about the same period for instance were distinctly worse written and edited. The first issue had a cover based on a 1947 Thrilling Wonder Stories, showing that someone at Associated General Publications had seen if (probably) not read a SF magazine, and had three stories by those sterling performers Wolfe

Herschelt, E. V. Zinns and Belli Luigi; the second added Otto Kensch and Boris Ludwig. Someone obviously thought SF was a European phenomenon. Who in fact wrote most of Thrills' stories is not known, but later issues introduced a few who used their own names: Clive Bleeck, Durham Garton, Alan Yates (later more successful as Carter Brown) and Norma Hemming. Only the last of these had any feeling for SF and sold stories elsewhere.

Physically the magazine at first resembled a comic. Format varied in size with minor variations and a change to octavo with No. 13, when also the title of the lead story began to be given prominence, making it more like a pocketbook series. The publishers gave the venture a fair chance by continuing for 23 issues, but failed to achieve either a high or a consistent standard. There were readable stories here and there, but the best were plagiarisms from Bradbury, Simak and other Americans palmed off on the blissfully unaware editor. If someone with a working knowledge of the field had been employed, besides avoiding this embarrassment it might have saved the magazine. But with that title, would that have been desirable?

A few copies were sold in Canada and the USA, and two issues of a British edition titled Amazing Science Stories were published.

Thrills Incorporated deserves more credit than it has been given as a pioneer venture. Its policy although founded on abysmal ignorance and misunderstanding allowed for experimentation and provided an opening for writers which more should have been willing to exploit, although the rates paid were hardly more than nominal. Later Australian magazines could well have profited from its mistakes instead of repeating them.

Current Books contd.

GALOUYE, Daniel F[rancis]

COUNTERFEIT WORLD. Sphere, 1970. 158 p. PB 5/-
(1st Gollancz 1964)

-- DARK UNIVERSE. Sphere, 1970. 175 p. PB 5/-
(1st Bantam 1961; Gollancz 1962) Reviews: Ana-
log Mch 1962 p. 166; Amazing Jan 1962 p. 137;
New Worlds 125 p. 125)

GARNETT, David

MIRROR IN THE SKY. Berkley Medallion (X1743)
1969. 160 p. PB 60c.

GILMAN, Robert Cham [i.e. Alfred Coppel, 1921-]

The REBEL OF RHADA. Ace (71065) 1969. 189 p.
PB 60c. (1st Harcourt 1968) Review: Analog Jan
1969 p. 166

GODWIN, Francis, 1562-1633

The MAN IN THE MOONE. Albion Press, 2 Coleraine
Rd., London SE3, 1969. [8], 126 p. ill. Leather
bound. "Limited" to 1500 copies, 150 numbered.
Numbered copies £21, unnumbered £10.10.0.

Albion Press must be joking. \$45-15 for a
special edition? Perhaps. \$22-57 for the same
edition unnumbered? Does this suggest anything
to you? And 1500 is scarcely "limited", but a
fair sized edition for a book of highly special
appeal. The Man in the Moone is of course the
first English interplanetary story, rehashed by
many in the 17th Century. This is a facsimile
of the 1st edition, 1638, interesting to stud-
ents of the history of science but quite irrel-
evant to SF today.

HAMILTON, Edmond, 1905-

The MAGICIAN OF MARS. Popular Lib. (60-2450) 1970. 128 p. PB 60c. Another Captain Future novel. Captain Future was a musclebound space detective who saved the Solar System with monotonous regularity from assorted nasties, aided by his team of stooges, a robot, an android and a disembodied brain, and incidentally the police and military forces. Crudely based on the popular scientific detective character of the 30's Doc Savage, he flourished in a magazine named for him for no less than 17 issues in 1940-44. He was one of the elements in SF parodied in Frederic Brown's very funny book What Mad Universe. Written originally by Hamilton, later by others when presumably Hamilton couldn't stand the strain, the whole mess had we thought been quietly forgotten after some gestures at revival a few years after the war in Startling. But no, it's being inflicted on us again in a series of paperbacks. Alas.

HARRISON, Harry

CAPTIVE UNIVERSE. Faber, 1970. [5], 185 p. 25/- (1st Putnam 1969; Berkley PB 1969)

Review: Amazing Jan 1970 p. 125, Mch 1970 p. 133

HIGH, Philip E[mpson]

The TIME MERCENARIES. Dobson, 1969. 118 p. 18/- (1st Ace PB 1968 b.w. Trimble, L. Anthropol)

HUXLEY, Aldous [Leonard] 1894-1963

GREAT SHORT WORKS. Harper 1969. Includes APE AND ESSENCE, a fragmentary affair we have never heard called "great" before.

Current Books

JAKES, John W. 1932-

The ASYLUM WORLD. Paperback Lib. (63-236) 1969.
171 p. PB 60c.

LONG, Frank Belknap, 1901-

MONSTER FROM OUT OF TIME. Popular Lib. 1970.
127 p. PB 60c.

McCAFFREY, Anne

RESTOREE. Corgi, 1970. 223 p. PB 5/- (1st Rapp
1967; Ballantine PB 1968) Review: Analog Mch
1969 p. 172

MacLENNAN, Phyllis

TURNED LOOSE ON IRIRA. Doubleday, 1970. 182 p.
\$3.95

MASON, Douglas Rankine

MATRIX. Ballantine, 1970. 202 p. PB 75c.

RANKINE, John [i.e. Douglas Rankine Mason]

BINARY Z. Dobson, 1969. 190 p. 21/-

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

issued monthly by

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(new series) No. 15

March 1970

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	Fantastic	"	3-60
	F&SF	"	7-20
	Galaxy	"	6-30
	If	"	6-30
	Venture	12 issues	7-20

Other than SF? Certainly. For instance:

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American Book Collector	"	5-40
Hudson Review	"	4-95
National Geographic	"	8-55
New Republic	"	9-00
Popular Photography	"	6-30
Sky and Telescope	"	7-20

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BOOKS FOR SALE

We have a few copies of the following:

The INDEX OF SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1951-1965,
comp. Norman Metcalf. Offset, paper covers.
Easier to read and generally superior to the
MIT index, more like Day's 1926/50 index.

\$2-00

(Incidentally, Day's Index is in print and
can be ordered at \$2-00)

INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1966,
-- 1967, -- 1968, issued by New England SF Assn.
as supplements to the MIT Index. Offset, text in
computer printout form. Each \$1-00

EXPLORERS OF THE INFINITE, by Sam Moskowitz.

Studies of 18 early writers. Quality PB ed. \$1-80

HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION, by Alexei Panshin.

Thorough analysis of Heinlein's work, one of the
few serious studies of modern SF. Quality PB \$2-20

ASFA Publications:

AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION INDEX, 1925-1967. 158 p.
mimeographed. \$3-00; members, \$2-00

INDEX TO BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES, 1954-
1953. Part 1: Scoops, Tales of Wonder, Fantasy.

36 p. mimeo. 30c; members, 20c

Part 2: Astounding 1939-1953.

65 p. mimeo. 45c; members, 30c

Part 3: Science Fiction, Future Fiction,
SF Qrly etc; Space Fact & Fiction; Strange
Tales; Thrilling Stories; New Worlds 1-21;
Science-Fantasy 1-6

72 p. mimeo. 60c; members, 40c

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