

SPECULATIVE REVIEW, December 12, 1957.

NUMBER ONE, Published weekly by John Magnus at 6 S. Franklinton Road, Baltimore 23, Maryland

Our intention is to experiment with various critical methods, some new, many old. Only in this way will science fiction gain a critical insight appropriate to its own needs and excellences. SR's aim is not to form a "judgment" of each story. Rather, it is to discuss science fiction in light of the current output. Sometimes we may be curt, at other times cryptic, but it is hoped that our opinion will be cogent on the whole, if not in each of its parts.

NOTE: MAGAZINES WILL ORDINARILY BE REVIEWED DURING THE WEEK OF THEIR PUBLICATION. SINCE NO NEW MAGAZINES APPEARED ON THE STANDS IN BALTIMORE FROM NOVEMBER 27 TO DECEMBER 10, MAGAZINES APPEARING IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THIS PERIOD HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE. SERIALS WILL BE REVIEWED THE WEEK THEIR LAST INSTALLMENT APPEARS.

CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY, by Robert A. Heinlein. Serialized in Astounding.

The most dishonest use of science fiction is the addition of elements which are adventitious to a story. The most honest use of science fiction is the converse of this. It is to extend a story to such dimensions that science fiction is its natural vehicle.

CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY is so much a science fiction story — and such an honest one — that it is in danger of being mistaken for the former variety. For its scientific qualities are so sublimely presented that one is apt to overlook them in a forest of mere accompanying characteristics.

In a given story elements from a number of different times, places, cultures, may be needed to build an environment in which a given character will have the particular opportunities and importunities necessary to develop him to the fullest. Science fiction gives the writer the complete freedom he needs for this. The ideal interrelationship among character, situation, and environment requires freedom for the author to select all three. In science fiction he can do this, whereas in mainstream fiction he is more limited.

A glance at how the great authors have chafed at this limitation is convincing enough to me. Granted they have done magnificently; but the ability of genius to do without this freedom is a challenge to those who choose to do with it. Heinlein is one of the latter, and he does not abuse his freedom.

Every quantity in this story can be found in non-science fiction, excepting the assumption of galactic civilization — "galactic" could be exchanged for mere "world" without really affecting the story. The slave markets, the quite different subjective realities of diverse cultures; everything in this novel can be found right here on Earth 1957, just by changing a few names. BUT to get them all into one story requires science fiction.

Just try to actually rewrite this story in terms of today's civilization, or in terms of the civilization or lack of same during any other period, and you will dis-



cover the meaning of science fiction. Stated in other than scientific terms, the story would be at best pallid and at worst moralistic balderdash.

But from all the past and all the future of human experience Heinlein is able to condense the most extensive overview of the interworkings between the individual and his physico-cultural environment I have yet read.

Dichten = condensare. Writing is the creation of ambiguities; literature is the resolution of same. Effectiveness in communication is squeezing the most info out of the least noise. Heinlein = dichter, literateur, communicator. Ancient knowledge hints that the thorough knowledge of one thing contains the foreshadowing of knowledge of every other thing. Heinlein, philosopher of the infinite life, certainly gives the impression that if he doesn't contain the sum total of human knowledge, he damn well suggests it.

There are hundreds of personal encounters in the book. Each one is fraught with realism for the realist, idealism for the idealist, and everything else from A-ism to Z-ism. In fact, it's just about ideal science fiction in my book, and I'm certainly not going to pick at the cracks until better comes along. □□□□

I N F I N I T Y, January 1958.

Stories in this issue have an aura of being rewrites of stories done before, but this time with fuller realization. It's a fuzzy sort of feeling to have about a magazine, but I think more than personal whimsy is involved. Perhaps ISF has taken up from the "decadence" and blind alleys of some other magazines, emerging with a modus operandi more satisfying than these others. Infinity has not yet reached the immense individual achievements which stud the career of the elder magazines. But it will.

"And Then the Town Took Off," two-part serial by Richard Wilson, Part I. This guy writes good, thin balderdash. I'm probably mad for saying that it nonetheless has sneaky levels of depth lurking just under the threshold of perception which aren't quite in keeping with the front of balderdash.

Garrett's "Beyond Our Control" is a pleasant enough redo of Leinster's "First Contact," lacking depth but having enough of the Garrett facets and niceties which make most of his stuff good reading.

"Lenny" practically proves the somewhat fantastic proposition that JWC is consciously out to get crap for his short story department. Even if Asimov wrote this especially for Larry, the fact that stories so appropriate for ASF are around proves that Campbell could get them if he wanted badly enough — God knows what he does want.

Silverberg's Loncon report appears in this issue, and you won't find that in ASF either. And while we're on features, I might mention that Shaw's letter column has a bit of an edge even over Startling's letterhack days, in ways. And Damon Knight is becoming ever more self-aware as a critic.

"The Statistomat Pitch," by Chan Davis, strikes me as being the most original story in the issue, though not the best on other counts.

Gilbert's "Outside Saturn," on the other hand, was the most brilliant thing in

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...of personal accounts in the book. Each one is a chapter with a title for the chapter, and everything else from a chapter is a chapter. I don't know if I'm doing it right, but I'm doing it.

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and then the "two look off." Two-part serial by Richard Wilson, Part I. This one

"The [redacted] is a pleasant enough kind of material, but it is not as strong as the [redacted] which is used in the [redacted]. The [redacted] is also more expensive than the [redacted]."

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...the most original ...

point to fill team off and have to go to go "strong" and "weak"

the issue, BUT the least sfictional.

Three of the five stories in this issue clearly reaffirm Infinity's status as the most off-trail magazine. Indeed, there is a lot to be grateful for in Infinity.□□□□

A S T O U N D I N G, December 1957.

"Precedent," by Robert Silverberg. One of the best dilemma stories since "Omnilingual." This is a good, sound variety of science fiction. Stories of this sort take a theory which may sound too vague to cogitate over, and fill it in with details which convert otherwise transparent cerebration into a solid perceptual whole by giving it a thorough context. You can argue all night, for example, about whether alien primitives should be treated with the equality we idealize: by dawn you might have managed to define a term or two. But in a quarter hour you can read "Precedent," and absorb a working conceptual framework of the problems involved. A story like this has real extension — high information-carrying capacity. Bicker about concrete "bits" of info if you please, but you'll bore anyone who's willing to take science fiction as a fairly abstract info carrier. The importance of sf lies in the breadth of ideas it is able to propound, not upon their specificity.

"Truce by Boomerang," by Christopher Anvil. Not the smoothest yarn of the week, but it's nice to see that invention stories can still be written entertainingly.

"The First Inch," by John Stopa. A problem story with a pretty good problem and a pretty good solution. But Stopa's nice side-effect ideas almost carry away the story. His prose style is smooth and individual.

"Danger — Human!" by Gordon R. Dickson. I can't quite make up my mind about Dickson. He's inconsistent, from paragraph to paragraph as well as from story to story. But this is a good Astounding story of the Earthman-has-a-quality-which-makes-him-invincible persuasion. Someone should draw up a list of these qualities! □ □ □ □

A M A Z I N G, December 1957.

"The Machine that Saved the World," by Murray Leinster. A breathtakingly old-fashioned story; one of the most thrilling I've read in a long time — brimming with ideas. This is SF in the Grand Tradition.

"Get Out of Our Skies," by E.K.Jarvis. Superficially inventive, it overemphasizes self-conscious futurization without a purpose. Only one example is the reference to "Dallas-approved style," implying a shift of fashion leadership from Paris to Texas. A shambles of a plot artistically, but "writermanly" enough nonetheless.

SHORT STORY OF THE WEEK: "A choice of Miracles," by James A. Cox. A rare story which surpasses the science fiction mode. The beginning is indistinguishable from many a bad start I've seen, but first glances at the work of a truly autonomous artist nearly always are victimized by prejudice. The slow paralysis this story builds up surpasses most of Kuttner in mood. The denouement is excruciatingly exotic. It's hard to believe a story can do this — I hardly expect it in life. If you don't read this ending three times, you haven't read the story.

I'll never miss another issue of Amazing...for fear I'll miss something like this.

Anthologist...grab.





"The Nothing Equation," by Tom Godwin. A perfectly slight story we've all read before, about how the Nothingness of space drives men crazy when they're left alone in it. Poring over certain mags for the past few years you can find a file of them. If van Vogt or his editors had followed his first triumph, "The Black Destroyer," with "The Slan Destroyers," "The Weapons Destroyers," and "The A Destroyers," the result couldn't have been more pitiable than this title.

"The Happy Unfortunate," by Robert Silverberg. A surprisingly good story about a division of races between Spacers & Earthers. Silverberg usually gets a certain cultural depth into even his hastiest yarns, though this one is superficial in every other respect.

Book reviews by S.E.Cotts prove for the nth time that euphuism is not criticism.

A very well-balanced issue, though I do not consider "balance" a sacrosanct value. All stories being at least adequate, however, it makes for a pleasant editorial tour-de-force. □ □ □ □

## SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES

SFA is sort of immune to criticism: it is meant to be read, not reviewed. But it is noteworthy that the two shorts in this issue are better put together than the two novelettes. Both of the latter are one-sitting jobs as far as craftsmanship is concerned. But "Jorgenson" understands and genuinely likes sf — he also has enough talent to spare to toss off a few literary sparks while working through a picnic-plot like "Hunt the Space Witch!" But Sohl — I really had to gasp at the total lack of enthusiasm for writing this story displayed in virtually every paragraph. Sohl escapes his character by having him (1) duck away from a secret agent (2) climb through a window (3) give the agent a shove (4) go up an elevator (5) shove the agent off the elevator (6) get off the elevator at other than the top or bottom floor (7) wave at a deus ex machina (a pretty girl takes pity, appears outside the window in a flyer, scoops him up with an "are you all right?" — & woosh) (8) by colliding harshly with three agents who appear at the door &c through 40+ pages. This sort of run & punch 'em routine deserves to be reviewed, not read.

The two shorts are ambitious attempts which try to go deep in places, but which use very shallow tools in other places.

But as I implied above, I'm dubious of the need to review space-mags like SFA. Makes me feel like a sordid little kid running a vitamin analysis on his desert. □ □ □ □

## THE SPACE ENCYCLOPEDIA, Special non-fiction notice.

This book deserves mention as one volume which stands in a field of its own,, above the inept, uninformative popularizations now clotting the market. It is a thorough reference work for those who need miscellaneous chunks of information pertinent to space travel. I for one found many gaps in my knowledge I didn't know existed (not to speak of those I did know about). E.P.Dutton & Co., Inc., 1957, 287 beautifully laid out pages, worth the \$6.95.

*SR is published primarily to effect a revision of my views, not merely for the purpose of publicizing these views. I hope that comment on SR will save time spent in preparation many times over, by calling to my attention what would have taken longer to find out without your response. Those not receiving SR free may subscribe to 52 issues for \$5.*

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maintaining the same amount of time for the same amount of work.

1. 1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the reader, dated 1945. The letter is written in a personal, conversational style, and it discusses the author's experiences during the war. The author mentions that he was a member of the 101st Airborne Division and that he was involved in the Battle of Normandy. He also mentions that he was captured by the Germans and that he spent several months in a prisoner of war camp. The letter ends with a statement of the author's purpose for writing the document, which is to provide a firsthand account of the events of the war.

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The following information was obtained from the records of the FBI New York Office:

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