



VECTOR

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No. 23

VECTOR 23.

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THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL

ENCLOSED WITH THIS
issue of VECTOR
are the annual sub-
scription-renewal

forms. Although you are allowed until
next Easter to renew your subscription without
officially lapsing, you are requested to do it as soon as
possible if you can. This saves a last-minute rush at the time
the Treasury records are due to be handed over to that office's
new incumbent. Incidentally, I am asked to remind American members
that they can pay either by cheque or by dollar bills - but not, please, by
coin or stamps. (Our banks won't accept them in small quantities).
Thanks.

It has recently been suggested that Section 7 of the Constitution, dealing
with resignations (ie, non-renewals) should be amended so as to substitute a
definite date (such as March 31st) for the movable Easter-based deadline that
at present applies. Comments on this proposal are invited.

In the mean time, there is some doubt as to the status of those members
who do not renew their subscriptions, between New Year and Easter. My own in-
terpretation of Section 7 of the Constitution (which I had a hand in drafting,
in my then capacity as Treasurer, incidentally) is that despite the several

months' grace, a member who by Easter has not renewed, and is thus deemed to have resigned, has done so as from the 31st of the previous December. Therefore, the B.S.F.A. is under (as I see it) no obligation to supply copies of VECTOR to anybody who is not paid-up to date at the time of publication.

In fact, copies of the next issue (VECTOR 24, due February) will be sent to all the 1963 membership. VECTOR 25, however, which is due in March shortly before the Convention, will not be sent to anybody who is not paid-up for 1964. Sufficient copies will be printed to cover the entire 1963 membership - but nobody will get one until he's paid his subscription.

That issue, VECTOR 25, will contain Harry Harrison's promised article on "Why Robert A. Heinlein's Glory Road is a bad, bad book." It will also contain No. 3 in the series The Author's Lot (Eric Frank Russell being the author in question this time) together with a short story (yes - a short story) by E.C. Tubb. It will thus be something of a star issue, and will not be limited to twenty pages.

VECTOR 24 will feature the article on Edgar Rice Burroughs that I've tried in vain to squeeze into each of the last several issues, together with numerous bits and pieces that ought to have gone into this one but sort of overflowed.

One other matter. Thus far, I am given to understand, nobody has been nominated for any of the vacant committee posts. One prospective candidate for the editorship was looking for a nominator, but has now changed his mind (help - doesn't anybody want this job?) Jill Adams, our Treasurer, is not willing to carry on for a third year, and our Secretary now resides in France which is not the most convenient arrangement. (It doubles the postage for one thing). Besides this, we will require a Vice Chairman to take the place of the present one who is supposed to move up to Chairman.

Nominations are still officially open till the 31st of December. To the Secretary please. AM

NOT-REVIEWS. There has been a good response to the request for assistance in this department. Naturally enough, there's nothing (practically) but not-space in which to run them. Most of the balance to date will, I hope, appear in V24. In the mean time, here's a handful to be going on with.

SPECTRUM II (Ed. Amis & Conquest). Gollancz, 18/-

8 highly assorted sf stories by more or less big name authors.

THE BEST FROM P&SF 10TH SERIES (Ed. Mills). Gollancz 18/-

15 even more highly assorted stories, including some straight fantasy.

A DECADE OF P&SF (Ed. Mills). Gollancz 21/-

As above, but 24 of them this time.

JOYLEG (Ward Moore & Avram Davidson). Pyramid (Thorpe & Porter) 160 pp 3/6d

A not very serious "immortality" yarn full of good-humored erudition.

THE LOG OF THE ARK (Kenneth Walker & Geoffrey Bounphrey). Puffin 159 pp 3/-

Wacky fantasy, ostensibly juvenile.

MARCH OF THE MUTANTS



IN THE DEVELOPMENT of science fiction, many ideas have come to prominence such as giant ants, anti-gravity spaceships, etc., only for them to fade into oblivion as tastes and standards change. The idea that the hidden

side of the moon may harbour alien life has been shattered by reality. Notwithstanding, several basic themes remain. One reason for this permanence - taking the mutant instance alone - lies in the probability, indeed actuality, of the concept. For reality does not always serve to blight science fiction: it can also strengthen it. Verisimilitude, not wonder, is the forte of much modern science fiction.

Initially, mutants were introduced in magazine stories merely to provide colour and a garish denouement. They were almost invariably helpful monstrosities, and it took both authors and editors a very long time to realise the wider implications of the concept.

Edmond Hamilton typified the best of this era with such stories as The Man Who Evolved in "Wonder Stories" for April 1931. To the modern reader, his story is dated in two main aspects: cosmic rays are attributed fantastic properties, and the mutations are immediately effective rather than over successive generations. Low grade horror films apart, it is the more scientifically based latter that holds sway today.

But his story remains an effective piece. A scientist discovers that if he subjects his body to a cosmic ray onslaught, it will serve to evolve him

neons ahead of homo sapiens. With each mutation there comes an increasingly ruthless and growing intellectual power. Inexorably, his human traits, both mental and physical, are eradicated. He becomes a massive brain, seemingly the ultimate evolution for man. But one human characteristic remains: the desire to go one step beyond; a desirous curiosity. Another surge of the cosmic rays - and he reverts to a primordial protoplasm. Evolution has come full circle.

One pre-war aspect of mutation which does not seem to have survived - rather surprisingly - is that of mutations being applied to alien beings.

Edmond Hamilton in Devolution ("Amazing Stories" Dec. 1936) and John Russell Fearn in Worlds Within ("Astounding Stories" March 1937) both told of advanced aliens who came to earth in the remote past. Come, only to suffer a drastic reversal - a veritable devolution - with each generation.

Hamilton's Arctarian colonists are victims of intense terrestrial radiations which affected their genes. They degenerated, changed into lower and lower forms of life, until we today - by comparison pitifully insane things - are their last mutation.

For his part, Fearn favoured the device of the earth's relatively heavier gravitation impairing the circulation of the blood. A poor blood stream begets a poor brain, and as the aliens mated, their children's brains were changed, giving them distinctly atavistic tendencies. Again, we are their last descendants.

Mutants created in the laboratory were legion in the early days. Nat Schachner, favourite of the youthful Asinof and indeed still widely remembered today for his adventurous science fiction in the Tremaine "Astounding", was one of the earlier exponents. His May 1934 story, The 14th Generation, told of an island overrun with artificial creatures, each one the ultimate development of some human talent. Obviously based on The Island of Dr. Moreau, it substituted eugenics and genuine mutation techniques for vivisection.

But pulp science fiction was for the most part still chasing up the blind alley Hamilton had inadvertently created. Hackneyed stories of atavism and metamorphosis were still being passed off as mutations. The protagonists in these early stories, though definitely what we today would label as mutants, were only pseudo-creations. The confusion arose because few authors had actually realised how to create a genuine mutant. They continued to utilise cosmic rays and the weird potions of mad scientists, thus obtaining their blessed "instant mutants". Perhaps the literary ability needed to carry their stories across years instead of hours was beyond them - or more likely outside the editorial pale. The latter possibility is suggested by the fact that Weinbaum's Proteus Island had its mutations caused by the effect of radiations over successive generations, and in pace and plotting was ahead of its time.

Meanwhile, Olaf Stapledon's Odd John had appeared in 1935. Although it is not the first fictional treatment of a mutant superman, there are many who have averred it is the greatest. With great skill, Stapledon succeeded in bringing out the strangeness inherent in a supernormal being. His mutant is human, if grotesque. His face is boyish, yet capable of expressing almost patriarchal wisdom. His hair is like a white woollen skull cap; his brow immense. His eyes are the most obviously queer thing about him - larger than

normal, almost devoid of white, and with giant pupils. His body is spidery, but oddly strong and graceful.

But Stapledon was not concerned only with mere physical differences; his story provides insight into the unique mind of John. A telepath, he is quickly able to master all human activities, only to find them wanting. And although he would be able to take over the world, John declines to do so...

"Once in charge I could make a much more satisfactory world, and a much happier world; but always I would have to accept the ultimate limitations of capacity in the normal species. To make them try and live beyond their capacities would be like trying to civilise a pack of monkeys. There would be worse chaos than ever, and they would unite against me, and sooner or later destroy me. So I'd just have to accept the creature with all its limitations. And that would be a waste of my best powers. I might as well spend my life chicken-farming."

Odd John remains the acknowledged masterpiece on this theme, and subsequent stories have to undergo the misfortune of comparison. In 1939, after a great publicity-trangle, Ziff-Davis published Stanley G. Weinbaum's posthumous novel The New Adam. It detailed the struggle of the first of a new species, Edmond Hall, to adjust himself to the modern world. The theme evidently proved too much for the comparatively young Weinbaum to handle, and there is evidence to suggest that the work was never intended for publication, at least not as it stood. All of which prompted Donald A. Wollheim to write that: "Next to the incomparable Odd John ... The New Adam fades into insignificance."

However, the pulp exponents of science fiction in America continued to plough their abysmal furrow for several more years.

The plots were circumscribed around the inevitable genesis of the mutations - cosmic rays, radiation on germ plasma - both of which resulted either from a deliberate tampering by man, or in a remote valley rich in radioactive ore. But in 1938 came a sign of better times. In his "Amazing Stories" editorial for November, Ray Palmer wrote:

"We've had evolution crammed down our throats now for so long that we've been taking it for granted. Here's one author who throws new light on what really might happen if evolution were hastened. Seems to us we should have realised the truth of this before, but since we haven't, McClusky gets first honors for debunking the evolution fiction of the past"

Thorp McClusky's The Monstrosity of Evolution began with the old cliché of the scientist and his cosmic ray laboratory. The mutant resulting from the speeded evolution ran true to form, setting an indelible pattern...

"It was small - hardly over three feet tall. (One-third of its height was head - a head almost twice the size of a man's, utterly, obscenely hairless, and almost perfectly spherical. The nasal orifices were reduced to naked slits set far down in the unseamed, featureless curve of a face. The mouth was a small, toothless, membrane-lined ring of rubbery muscle. The earshells were vestigial, mere ridges of cartilage surrounding naked holes leading into the globe-like head. The eyes were enormous, inches across, with tremendous, staring pupils. The whole head was a peculiar

dread-white in colour, and it was striated over its entire surface with a multitude of tiny bluish veins."

Naturally the mutant is malignant, and has a grandiose plan: to kidnap other men and women and evolve them ahead to its own level. Then mating would be attempted to determine whether the mutation was fixed, transmissible from generation to generation. "From this small nucleus I will build up the super race of the world," says the mutant, who was also capable of a telepathic command too strong for any man's brain to resist.

In his finale, McClusky came up with his new slant which just about justified his anachronistic excursion. McClusky's idea was that it is only through actual and slow building up of natural evolution that a species can gain the necessary resistance and strength to maintain its own life. A slow impression of environmental factors on the chromosomes and genes, to be passed on through the generations in a slow building up of racial strength and virility.

The great dinosaurs failed in this respect, and were unable to adapt themselves to their environment. Thus they vanished from the earth. Pithcanthropus Erectus apparently ran up a blind alley, so to speak, and outstripped his environment. He died.

And so it is with all life. Placed in modern times, the caveman would not survive. He would succumb to the commonest diseases, positively fatal because he has built up no age-long resistance to it. And so, it is quite evident that a completely evolved creature will not be able to cope with a vastly different environment from that actually bred into its constitution.

The old-time mutants were not even anachronisms from the distant future; they had no place in any time. They would die because they were unbalanced accoutrements, because they were unnatural, because they were environmental monstrosities.

Another popular device then extant was the remote valley with heavy deposits of a radioactive mineral. The abundant radiations did the job effectively enough - usually on the local fauna - which presented a sickening menace to intrepid explorers and unwary readers alike. One of the most vigorous yarns of this type was Lloyd Arthur Eshbach's The God That Science Made, appearing in the August 1939 "Science Fiction".

When Slan, a four part serial by A.E. Van Vogt, appeared in the September 1940 issue of "Astounding", the past mediocrity of mutant fiction was forgotten. For Slan was immediately recognised as a "classic". Van Vogt became the first author to seriously explore fully the sociological complications attendant upon a mutant race attempting to survive amidst normal humanity. Even Stapledon, although hinting at the chaotic outcome, had stopped short in so far as his mutant colony had committed suicide before contact with the normal world could be effected.

It is only towards the end of the book that we become aware of the true nature of the supermen. The Slan Leader explains:

"We are the mutation-after-man. The forces of the mutation were at work many years before that great day when Samuel Lann realised the pattern of perfection in some of his mutations ... nature was building for a

tremendous attempt, Cretins increased alarmingly; insanity advanced by enormous percentages. The amazing thing about it was the speed with which the web of biological forces struck everywhere across the Earth ...

"For hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, the tensions had been building up. And then in a single stupendous quarter of a millennium more than a billion abnormal births occurred ... very few of these ultra-normal births were alike. Most were horrible failures, and there was only an occasional perfection."

Slans were that mutant "perfection". Capable of reading minds with the slim antennae embedded in their heads, and possessing a double-heart which afforded great stamina, they were superior both mentally and physically to normal humans.

"... slans were hunted like wild beasts. There is no modern parallel for the ferocity of human beings against the people they considered responsible for the disaster." It was only through their own powers and the machinations of Lann that the slans were able to organize and survive at all. It is Lann also who comes to be hated by later human generations who are led to believe that he had created slans artificially. And that they, following his unholy design, were responsible for the monstrous imperfections of the rest of humanity. The name 'slan' was a derivative of Lann's own: S. Lann - slan.

The story unfolds from the viewpoint of Joany Cross, a slan child. After the murder of his benign parents, Cross fights to survive in Van Vogt's skillfully conceived society, wherein slans are hunted to the death by ordinary humans, whilst the tendrillous slans - created by the slans themselves, but non-telepathic - present an even greater danger. The unusually finely characterized viewpoint employed served to afford an unprecedented plausibility to the narrative.

Van Vogt is famed for his inventiveness, and in *Slan* his facility for devising a succession of suspenseful situations is particularly evident. This literary device was highly acceptable in its day, but recently modern readers have come to question its merit. They point to the involved speeches of the protagonists, where a conflicting course of action would seem more logical, and to the riotous imagination of his manipulation of atomic powered spaceships.

This latter criticism seems a little unfair in view of the fact that his scientific precepts were propounded some years before the atomic bomb, and have stood up extremely well since then. As for the former, it has been set at a discount by the majority of the later generation of readers. Each successive reprint of *Slan* has been enthusiastically received. Still in print today, it remains as popular as it was twenty years ago, when fandom went so far as to adopt the term 'slan' as an actual addition to the vocabulary.

The effect of this story was not to be fully felt until some years later. A decade had passed, yet admiration for its basic concepts prompted such a worthy as Jack Williamson to pen *Dragon's Island*, a *Slan* variation quite out of character with most of his other writing. But before *Slan* could be properly assimilated, the horizons of mutant fiction were widened still further by the actual release of atomic energy.

The advent of the atomic bomb as a reality was a gift to science fiction

writers. After all, almost everyone knew that radiations resulting from an atomic war would be bound to cause mutations in later generations. There was little need to convince the reader that this was so, and the mutant concept was thus given a tremendous impetus. An entire species, a new society even, of mutants, could be conjured up without difficulty.

Under the aegis of John W. Campbell and "Astounding Science Fiction", several top-ranking authors began to explore the ramifications of atomic wars, and effort. One of a group of stories by Theodore Sturgeon was Farwell to Eden, a grimly ironic look at the result of an atomic holocaust. In the story, a man and woman wake from suspended animation, following out a master-plan of several years earlier. Atom-war has come and gone on earth, and the plan calls for them to migrate to Venus, there to find a new Eden.

Before leaving, they examine the earth's surface with a tight-beam scanner. What they see sickens them; everywhere there are humanoid mutations, bestial remnants of vanished humanity. Suddenly they see two blue creatures, different to the others, strangely beautiful and graceful. All at once the two are set upon and devoured by a marauding horde of cannibalistic mutants, because they are different. "Mankind has always pulled down and destroyed anything that is different," says Sturgeon - who proceeded to take the concept a stage further in his shock denouement.

Eventually landing on Venus, they alight from their ship and gaze around at their new haven, then ...

"There was something near them in the fog. He raised his head, holding her tight, and saw it settle down through the air a little way off - something big, angular, metallic - ...

"Out of the hexagonal ship tumbled scores of them; blue people - but blue people dwarfed and transformed, with knotty little tails and shambling limbs, without the leaping grace, their beauty warped and gone -

"It was over in a few seconds. One by one the blue mutants crawled away, spitting out the torn, bloody fragments."

One indelible idea in modern mutant stories, following Slim, is the situation wherein the mutants have banded together into an underground organisation, directly opposed to humanity - either by inclination or necessity. With this trend has come the virtual oblivion of the old fashioned monstrosity of evolution. Today's creation is a mutant in mind only; the changes are non-physical. True, Van Vogt's slans had slim tendrils in their hair, but this was largely a plot device. One of the finest of the modern versions of Slim is Henry Kuttner's Mutant, a series of novelets published collectively by Gnome Press in 1953

"In the beginning there had been three distinct types, not recognised until after the post-Slim-up chaos had subsided into decentralization. There were the true, sane Baldies, typified by McNay and Barton. There were the lunatic off-shoots from a cosmic womb raging with fecundity, the teratological creatures that had sprung from radiation-battered germ plasma - two-headed fused twins, cyclops, Siamese freaks. It was a hopeful commentary that such monstrous births had almost ceased.

"Between the sane Baldies and the insane telepaths lay the mutant-variant of the paranoids, with their crazy fixation of egotism..."

"A war - completely secret, absolutely underground by necessity - in a world unconscious of the deadly strife blazing in the dark. No non-telepath even suspected what was happening. But the Baldies knew."

In Kuttner's story, the paranoids dream of the Conquest, when they, the supermen, will become the sole lords of creation. The Baldies, benign telepaths, are themselves waging a deadly war against the paranoids. The story revolves around their struggles, and also what happens when they are discovered by the normal humans. Kuttner solved his problems by having all humans become telepathic, under the artificial stimulus of an instrument called an Inductor, which bridges the telepathic mutation.

After the war, J.H. Pearn had surprised a lot of people with his series of short stories in "Thrilling Wonder" and "Startling Stories", many of which presented old concepts in a guise entirely acceptable to modern readers.

Few people would have attempted to revive the cosmic ray direct-mutation, yet that is what Pearn did in Twilight Planet, a "Pelton Cross" story in the summer 1946 "Thrilling Wonder". The important proviso was his imaginative postulation of the destruction of the hypothetical "Twilight Planet" between Mars and Jupiter as also bringing intelligence - as apart from life - to this earth. The agent was an incredible mutation, Telsor Rolf, the last survivor of the world which became the asteroids. Yet again, this was an unscientific mutation, although in fairness to the author it is difficult to see how the plot could otherwise be resolved.

One of the chief reasons for the stagnation in mutant fiction had been the preoccupation of authors to create "the next stage" of man - in other words to anticipate evolution. It was an unnecessary limitation - as indeed was the emphasis on human beings. J.H. Pearn helped set the ball rolling in Aftermath ("Startling" Fall 1945) which showed how mutation could be applied equally to any form of life.

Eight years later Poul Anderson began his novel The Escape (later retitled Brainwave) in "Space Science Fiction". This imagined the earth as emerging from a spatial force-field which had been inhibiting the IQ of all terrestrial animals. The resultant turmoil of an increase in intelligence ranging through the domesticated animals to man himself made the story, which was derived from Pearn's novel. Anderson, however, added his own ideas and a superior technique, coming near to producing a classic. Unfortunately, in attempting to depict the thoughts and aspirations of an advanced humanity, he became somewhat bogged down, particularly towards the end of the story.

But with this advancement in mutant writing, there had also come an attendant degeneration. Sensationalist writers churned out "stories" of juno-esque heroines of unlikely virtue, who were menaced by libidinous mutant monstrosities. This new nadir of the fifties exceeded even the hack-works of the thirties in tasteless mediocrity. Happily, this was not to last. Helping to dispel it, apart from natural intelligent reader-reaction, was the increasing number of fine stories.

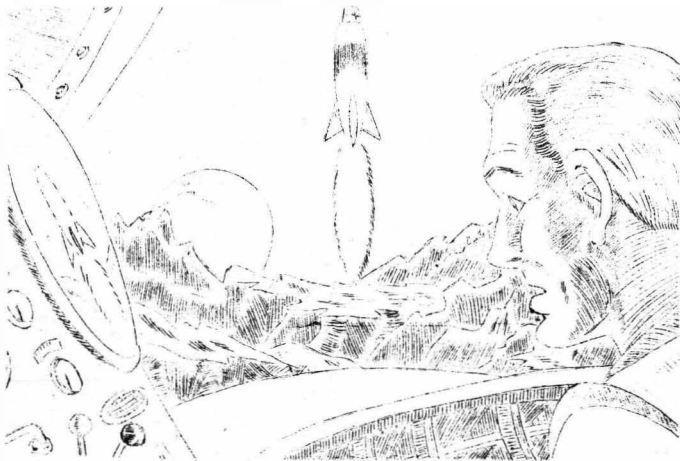
In 1956 Richard Matheson gave things a fresh twist in I Am Legend, probably one of the most exciting of novels of the last decade. The story ends with the emergence of a new race of mutated vampires, able to survive sunlight and live and reason as human beings, and the inevitable capture and death of the last normal, Robert Neville.

Today it is beginning to look as if the mutant story needs a new slant again. Too many authors are continuing to mark time, witness Gordon Dickson in Necronancer. Atomic aftermath, now an ominous possibility, is old hat to blasé readers. True, mutations in parapsychology provided a tremendous impetus to the concept, in such classics as Shiras's Children of the Atom and Theodore Sturgeon's More Than Human, a disquieting study of the symbiosis of a group of supernormal children. But it seems doubtful that this particular vein can be improved upon.

The most promising new frontier in mutant fiction would appear to lie in space travel. Space, with its abundance of virulent radiations, is a likely agent for mutation. The idea is not new, having appeared as far back as 1941 in Robert Heinlein's Universe. As yet, it has not been memorably exploited, although Brian Aldiss came near in Non-Stop.

What forms the new mutations will take, no one can say at present, but the fictioneers will have to move quickly. The next mutants may not be fiction at all. They may be fact.

Philip Harbottle



NOVA PUBLICATIONS - A STATEMENT

by E.J. CARNELL, a director of Nova Publications Ltd and editor of their two magazines "New Worlds" and "Science Fantasy"

It is with regret I announce that with the March published issues of "New Worlds Science Fiction" and "Science Fantasy", these two publications will be discontinued and Nova Publications Ltd. will cease to exist. This decision has been forced upon us by a steady decline in sales during the past few years which stems directly from the lifting of the Import Ban and the subsequent intense competition with the paperback market, both home-produced and foreign-imported.

Material is still required for the last few issues and authors should continue to submit their material to Nova Publications Ltd. until January 31st.

Thereafter my own personal plans are that I shall become a full-time Literary Agent specialising in science fiction, as I have been for the past ten years, but expanding my requirements into general fiction. I shall also be under contract to a major British paperback publisher to produce a new series of science fiction paperbacks containing new short stories only both in the science fiction and weird and fantasy field. This series is being prepared now but will not appear until Autumn 1964.

All regular contributing authors will be notified individually regarding this new project and all manuscripts should be sent to my home address, 17 Burwash Road, Plumstead, London SE.18 for the time being.

At this early stage it is not possible to reveal my plans publicly but as far as the authors are concerned, the new project will give them many additional advantages as well as increased revenue.

Unfortunately, from the point of view of new writers, unless they are already proficient in the art of story writing, it will be far more difficult for them to have stories accepted in the new series but, as in the past, I will continue to help those who show promise.

E.J. CARNELL

SMALL-ADS FREE TO MEMBERS ... SMALL-ADS FREE TO MEMBERS ... SMALL-ADS FREE TO

WILL ANYONE WHO HAS A COPY OF :

THE THEORY OF ELECTRICAL PSYCHOLOGY by DR. N. DODDS (published USA, late 19th Century) communicate with:

H.F. ALLUM, 16 Feltham Road, Earlswood, Redhill, Surrey.

REMINDER. EVERY FRIDAY EVENING, there is an informal meeting of B.S.F.A. members in London. Any member who lives in the metropolis, or simply happens to be there at the time, is always sure of a welcome. Ella Parker is the hostess, and the location is Flat 43, William Dunbar House, Albert Road, London NW.6 - overlooking Queen's Park station. No need to book - just roll up.

BRITISH AMATEUR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (BASRA): anybody interested should communicate with Jim England, 64 Ridge Road, Kingswinford, Staffs.



Michael Moorcock: THE STEALER OF SOULS (Neville Spearman 15/-)

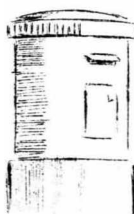
This is a collection of five stories which originally appeared in "Science Fantasy". I suppose it is natural for any regular addict of fantasy to compare any writer with Tolkien and Howard and to see with which type of writing the new book has the most affinities. That is perhaps unfair, but one does it - at least I do. It is the measure of Michael Moorcock's ability to create his own world of fantasy that, after having murmured "Ah - Howard", one soon is prepared to say "Ah, Moorcock". True, as in Howard's creations, Moorcock's minor actors really never come alive, they act only as backcloth to the hero - Elric, the albino survivor of an elder world. There, however, similarity ends. Elric is not simply a swashbuckler, he is a being caught between Chaos and Law, between the dying old world and the emerging new one and desperately trying to come to terms with both - and naturally (perhaps the wrong adverb to apply!) failing. I read the book in one sitting, and although I knew the stories already, it fascinated me, a difficult feat for a re-reading. The only grumbles I have concern the names - why must they be unpronounceable? - and the cover. I have deliberately mentioned nothing of the content of the stories - I do not see why I should rob you of a pleasure and the (deserving) author of a sale!

E.C.S.

George Hay (ed.): HELL HATH FURY (Neville Spearman 15/-)

I cannot say I blame Hell for it, particularly. The book contains "eight stories taken from "Unknown Worlds" which "nova'd into existence between 1939 and 1943" (blurb). I take it they are selected either from the best items or from typical ones. In both cases I think I see why "Unknown Worlds" nova'd (should it be novaed?) ((try "went nova". AM)) The title story takes up half the book and, frankly, after ten pages the quite interesting idea behind it is played out. Perhaps a shorter piece plus some additional stories would have been a better idea, or perhaps I just do not like Clervo Cartmill's writing.

Of the other stories I liked the 'Grny Mouser' piece by Leiber jun. and the A.M. Phillips yarn best, the others [by Schuyler Miller, Jane Rice, Ron Hubbard and Bloch] are adequate and that, I fear, is all. If you now count up and find only seven stories do not blame me. I cannot help it if the blurb writer cannot count! Or is perhaps the eighth story an invisible one, printed with invisible print? If so, it is most certainly the best fantastic idea in the book! The cover, as in the Moorcock book reviewed above, is poor in my



THE MAIL RESPONSE



PHIL HAKDOTTLE
(Wallsend on Tyne)

Mention is made in the VECTOR 22 lettercol of newcomers who get vague and misleading impressions of controversial points in earlier issues, from the lettercol itself. Because Jim England's letter will, if unanswered, give new members the idea that I am some kind of well-intentioned but blundering juvenile idiot, I must give rejoinder to his strange assertions.

Jim speaks of my olangorous assertion that "zero minus one is still zero". We will pass but lightly over the fact that I never said this at all, but merely quoted from the foolish vapourings of a certain nonentity known as Jim (poor devil) Blish. This because I happen to agree with it. For practical purposes - and the issue I was discussing was the feasibility of a mechanical contrivance, a practical application - zero minus one is still zero. To take an everyday analogy, the freezing point of water is 32°F. Drop the temperature one degree, and the water will still remain frozen. I repeat, infinity minus one is still infinity, and zero minus one is still zero.

His other jibe is a bit more tricky - but it can be countered fairly easily. He claims that I wrote that the "time dilation" effect on objects moving at a great velocity was a new discovery in physics. Of course I did no such thing. What I said, in effect, was that the application of time-dilation in sf stories had "developed comparatively recently, arising out of new discoveries in physics." It should be clearly borne in mind that my VECTOR articles interpret events as shown in sf. I am well acquainted with some of the effects of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. Einstein said, at the turn of the century, that an accelerating body must undergo a slower passage of time, relative to a more stationary body. This has been proved many times. The best known instances: the gravity experiment with Sirius B in 1925, and in 1936 Ives of the Bell Telephone Laboratories observed that the vibratory frequencies of an atom of hydrogen were retarded as the speed was increased.

Now the strange fact is that sf writers took very little notice of these exciting possibilities. L. Taylor Hansen's Prince of Liars (1930) is virtually alone in its fictionalisation before the war. In fact, its very isolation has earned for it a 'minor classic' status. It is only recently, with the advent of cyclotrons and advanced techniques, that new proofs have been found. The observation of extra-terrestrial particles entering our atmosphere undergoing time dilation is one such example, and was certainly never propounded in Einstein's heyday. These new discoveries have been noted by modern sf writers, and, somewhat belatedly, they have turned to writing time-dilation stories. Because I was not dealing directly with time-dilation in my article,

I dealt with it only briefly. Notwithstanding, I had hoped that the foregoing was implicit in the few sentences I wrote. Here we see the shallowness of Lord Jin's thinking; anxious to find faults and pick holes in everything I wrote, he rushes off half-cocked. How does it feel to drop a few clangers of your own, Jin?

Re "Jin". Spike Milligan, scripting the immortal "Goonies", used first Fred, and then Jin, as the first name of some kind of fantastic idiot. Personally, "Singing" Jin Pills was a favourite of mine. Of course Jin is only my second name. Pronounced "Jh-seeen", folks.

Don Malcolm - there is nothing to stop someone creating his own concept of what a hyper-spatial universe will look like, from scratch. Burroughs created an entire Martian civilisation.

In the current VECTOR, Harrison's piece was excellent. The cover he mentions was for Lewis Padgett's double-decker. Not far behind it was McKenzie's amusing parody - the first of a series, I hope?

(Don't look now, but infinity plus one is still infinity. Therefore, is zero plus one still zero? AM)

CHARLES PLATT I see there is a letter mentioning something absurd about stand-
(Letchworth) ardising the cover. You don't really mean you have this in mind, do you? Blue paper, yes, but why do away with another opportunity for sf artists to see their work in ink? There's little enough artwork in VECTOR as it is. Don't scrap the major part of it. So it may not be up to a very high standard; well, artists have to learn somewhere, you know.

I don't like a short 20 page issue of VECTOR. There are only two articles in it and they're too short. The rest is readers' departments all the way.

(Larger issues can be arranged at the expense of frequency of publication. And some issues will still be large in any case, you'll be glad to know. AM)

MOIRA READ Dr. Peristyle ... I can't help out with readership figures,
(Colleton, Devon) but how does the Doc think they can be improved?

I fully sympathise with Charles Platt. It is rather difficult when the Mail Response is all about something you've never seen. (Please - I don't know what a Nanth is either')

(Will somebody please explain how to tell a Moira Read (Colleton, Devon) from a Mary Reed (Banbury, Oxon) ? AM)

TERRY RULL The Author's Lot II was the most interesting item of the lot and like its predecessor it shed a lot of light into the Freudian mire which authors use for a subconscious. The best Sf authors are obviously not the gods I thought; in fact one might almost say they were, sic(k), sick. I think we had better keep it a secret though - imagine the comments in the "Express". On second thoughts it might win Sf Literary recognition and Aldiss and Harrison might become synonymous with Kafka and Ibsen (who were certainly sick).

Dr. Peristyle is off to a good start; no mechanical information provider is he, but definitely informative even in his "witter" moments. Thanks very much for the information on circulation though ---- "Analog" up to 120,000 (who said crud doesn't pay?) and "Amazing" and "Fantastic" only at 35,000; I thought they had a circulation at least as good as "If"s.

Only one criticism of the Reviews and that is that they were too short. I got the meaning of the excerpt from Pag on a Lead, at the 6th reading! I detest Paghoot, detested Breadfruit, but this was saved by the use of the President's name. Oh well - a nicely balanced magazine.

(Good for you mate - I haven't even got the full meaning yet. AM)

TOM WALKER In VECTOR 22 I liked the part giving the list of books Twenty of (Skipton) the Best. Not because I agreed with them; I didn't, not by any means.

It seems a good idea if possible to try the same thing only on a larger scale, and I would be obliged if you could suggest this. All lists could be sent direct to me and I will gladly correlate them. Each book should be given a percentage on each individual list. There will have to be a time limit - I think that all lists should be sent in within four weeks of the publication of this idea.

In respect of Mary Reed's comment on the serious/not serious controversy, I personally like VECTOR as it is. That is, part serious and part in a lighter vein to balance it out.

(In which case, thank you very much for writing in to say so. Thank you likewise for the other suggestion, which is hereby thrown to the ~~birds~~ ~~bantha~~. Note that please, everybody - if you get your list of 20 favourite of (including fantasy if you wish) books in to Tom Walker by the 15th of January, he will take stock. His address is 8 Union Terrace, Skipton, Yorks. AMB)

DONALD MALCOLM

("A Haggis in Orbit")
(Paisley)

Harry's True Confessions made humorous yet significant reading. As a writer myself, perhaps I extracted more from his article than most readers, who have not experienced the depths and the ecstasies of writing truly

creative fiction. I would have liked to read something of his thoughts on the sources of sf ideas and themes, and maybe he'll come back on this one.

Dr. Peristyle's contribution added a neatly barbed set of replies to the questions posed, providing the trace of "acid" necessary to any progressive publication. It was very enjoyable.

His reply to Evan Medger is interesting. Standards do vary widely on the writing side of the fence. This is a reflection of the many facets that form the unique personality of each writer. It's probably true that all creative people (not only writers) try to improve their work. But to take the particular case of writing, improvement isn't achieved merely by rigid adherence to the mechanics of language.

As for the perfect story, it doesn't exist - except for you as an individual. A great majority might agree on the merits of a certain story, but some-one, inevitably, will differ. There is, however, no harm in trying.

Before I reply to The Mail Response, remember, folks:

There'll always be an England

As long as there's a JIM ...

About themes and heroes: a story with a "strictly minor theme" would require a major hero to lend value and impact. Remember, too, that none of the ingredients of a story exists in a vacuum. Each adds to the other and to the whole.

W.P. MORTON (Liverpool) thinks the B.S.F.A. needs more publicity. (It will have less than ever after March, of course, by the look of things - but he wasn't to know that at the time). And JOHN BARFOOT (Newcastle upon Tyne) is another one who thinks that VECTOR 22 was much too short. That's all. AM

RE:INDER. CONVENTION 1964. The Hull Hotel, Peterborough, over Easter.

5/- to Tony Walsh entitles you to receive convention bulletins etc as they appear, and counts towards the admission fee if you attend. Tony has moved - his address is now 36 Saxon Road, Bridgwater, Somerset.

PLEASE BE SEATED, but carry on smoking and non-smoking. Dr. Peristyle's class,

NOW WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE ?

is now in orbit, and the first - and for that matter the last - question comes from

JIM ENGLAND: Can a writer be "great", irrespective of what he writes about?

DR. PERISTYLE: Not quite; it would be difficult to write a great novel about cats, although perhaps it was once possible to write a great poem about one. But plainly it is not enough to choose a "great" subject - the sort of subjects chosen by Tolstoi or Conrad or E.E. Smith. Jane Austen's greatness lies in the fact that she works faultlessly within her small canvas, and has the judgement to stay within it. Many qualifications can go towards making a great writer, an independent mind being the most necessary. Kurt Vonnegut notably seems to have this quality; both his fictional forms and his attitude to life are individual.

JIM ENGLAND: What is wrong with the following statement: The Past cannot be changed; The Future will one day become the Past; therefore the Future cannot be changed ?

DR. PERISTYLE: What's wrong with it (or one of the things - no doubt students will help point out others) is that it is not a perfectly constructed syllogism. The future can be changed - try shooting your landlady tomorrow and see.

TERRY JEEVES: Why do so many modern sf stories end on a climax which could not be distinguished from the rest of the story by the use of a spirit level? They stop where the old master would begin. For example: space ship lands on high plateau...is presumably foreign...or alien... or what. A rescue/attack party sets out to investigate, and after a struggle with snow, ice and a wicked Slobbovakian guide, they finally reach the rocket...the door (by a fortunate coincidence) begins to unwind..."Now we'll find out" says our hero in a level-checked with that spirit bubble - voice. THE END.

DR. PERISTYLE: This sort of story is common not only in sf: the author sets out to convey a feeling or a meaning rather than a plot. Its best known practitioners are Chekhov and Katherine Mansfield, both of whom felt the inconclusiveness of life, and conveyed it in fiction. These may be classed as "slice-of-life" stories, and depend for their success on their content rather than their punch-line. If the struggles of the rescue party (in the story you mention) to get to the spaceship were interesting enough, it could be a satisfying piece of fiction.....

ARCHIE MERCER: But not science fiction, sure!....

DR. PERISTYLE: Stop muttering in the front row there! ... but your example certainly sounds to be a poor one. On the whole, this sort of story needs far more control than a bit of punch-line fiction. Algis Budrys is good at this sort of thing.

JIM ENGLAND: Will there ever be a science of literary criticism?

DR. PERISTYLE: Ever is a long time. It has become possible to analyse natural

perfumes and produce synthetic ones that have as smart a savour. With constantly improving techniques and sampling methods, it may one day be possible to synthesise the goulash isotope. This can then be harnessed to write the greatest plays, poems, novels, ever. (When that day comes, I'm heading for the hills with my column under my arm; I believe that the real grit of literature comes from its impurities - just as it is impurities that make transistors tick!

End of session. The Bad Doctor will be back next time. Class dismissed.

THE MAIL RESPONSE ANNEXE: C.J. PREST (Brentwood) writes: By the way, re Doc. veristyle - he's wrong; the circulation of "Amazing" exceeds 50,000 per copy - and that's just subscription copies. (52,301 at Jan. '63). Add all newsstand copies and exports - say 75,000.

THIS IS A BANTH. ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES.

"I shouldn't look for
banth, if I were
you,

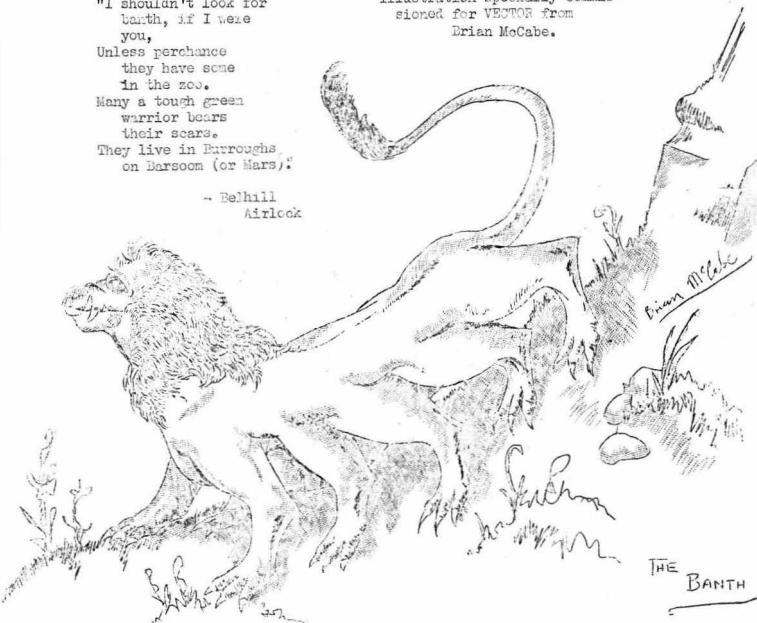
Unless perchance
they have some
in the zoo.

Many a tough green
warrior bears
their scars.

They live in Burroughs,
on Barsoom (or Mars)."

- Belhill
Airlock

Illustration specially commis-
sioned for VECTOR from
Brian McCabe.



NEW MEMBERS

- O.403 H.S. Winter: 901 S. Fieldcrest Rd, Draper, North Carolina, U.S.A.
 M.404 A.E. King: 159 Victoria Rd, Leeds 6, Yorks
 A.405 C.J. Stone (Miss): The Unicorn Inn, Great Rollright, Chipping Norton, (Two)
 M.406 M.W. Hughes (Mrs): Hendre Farm, Pontraeth, Anglesey, North Wales
 M.407 I.F. Clarke: 17 Cameron Drive, Millermont, Bearsden, Glasgow
 A.408 D. Morton: "Rosemount", Beverley Rd, Market Weighton, York
 M.409 R.G. Peyton: 77 Grayswood Park Rd, Quinton, Birmingham 32
 B.410 P.R. Weston: 9 Porlock Crescent, Northfield, Birmingham 31
 M.411 C.G.R. Teague: 1/299 Heath St, Winton Green, Birmingham 18
 M.412 O. Harver: 12/40 Eracebridge St, Aston, Birmingham 6
 M.413 H.J. Hilner: 44 Sheepwash Lane, Great Bridge, Tipton, Staffs
 A.414 M.E. Turner: 54 Park Hill Rd, Harborne, Birmingham 17
 M.415 D. Sewell (Mrs): 2 Ponbridge Rd, Werrington, Peterborough, Northants
 M.416 B.W. Honley (Mrs): 59 The Fearnings, Crabbs Cross, Redditch, Worcs
 O.417 R.A. Richmond: (A/LDEN H. Richmond P/W 981073), 26 Moss, H.M.S.
 Lincoln, c/o G.F.O. London
 M.418 E. Mackin: 17 Oxford Street, Liverpool 7
 A.419 I.D. Kelley: Alderwood, Dalginross, Comrie, Perthshire
 M.420 N. Pipe: 122 Lowford Lane, Chelmsford, Essex

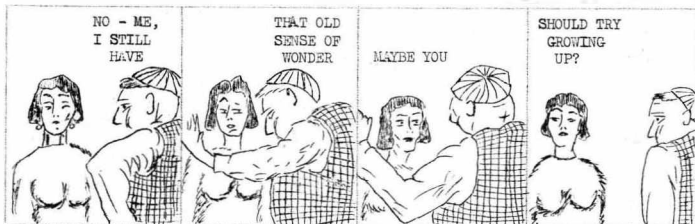
CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- M.158 C.A. Miller: now 10 Freegrove Rd, London N.7
 M.169 A. Walsh: 38 Saxon Rd, Bridgwater, Somerset
 M.206 B.A. Koller: The Flat, Chase's Stores, Chieveley, Newbury, Berks
 ("until about next April")
 M.260 A.D. Cook: "St. Lucia", West Looe Hill, West Looe, Cornwall
 M.302 E.W. Hall: 3 Ruskin Building, Wareham St, London SW.1
 M.304 M. Jakubowski: 218 bis, Rue St. Denis, Paris 2, France
 M.306 J. Humphries: 42A Alfred Rd, Birkonhead, Cheshire

CHAIRMAN, HEAD BOWED with shame, announces that, due to a slight domestic accident (Fahrenheit 451), the "Round Robin" file has gone up in smoke.

Will those who have written to me re Round Robins please accept my apologies, and write again? (Preferably on asbestos).

- Phil Rogers, 5 First Avenue, Ashfield, Scunthorpe, Lines

SF WRITERS ANONYMOUS

THROUGH HYPERSPACE AND OVERTIME WITH BERNARD BODFOLD, JR. II

With Sol in a post-Nova stage, the best-loving inhabitants of the infernal regions of Staten Island approached Bernard Bodfold, Jr., in a great frenzy of consternation.

"Mr. B-bodfold," they cried, shivering convulsively; "the g-government have negated our sub-etheric positronic f-force. Our bed-warning b-blankets won't work!"

"In that case" replied Bodfold, an instant master of the predicament, "we'll just have to go to the nearest hot spring, and fill our bottle."

C.P. McKenzie

FANZINE REVIEWS

POINT OF VIEW (Charles Platt, 8 Sollershoth West, Letchworth, Herts. Price 6d; No. 2 future issues will be very slightly dearer, and have a different title). HERE IS AN excellent little magazine. It is half-foolscap size, 30-odd pages, and neatly reproduced (with a minimum of trivial mistakes) on a spirit duplicator. The contents include two good short stories, besides the backside of a serial, a brief satirical article, an editorial that remains (as intended) provocative even though there appear to be a number of hyper-special jumps in the reasoning, and an article on the situation resulting from the forthcoming demise of Nova Publications - precisely the sort of article, in fact, that should have appeared in this issue of VECTOR. I recommend this zine. AM

ZENITH No. 2 (Peter Weston, 9 Porlock Crescent, Birmingham 31) has not yet appeared though expected daily. ZENITH has the same format - and neatness etc - as POINT OF VIEW, also running to the same type of contents, with the combined talents of the new Birmingham group behind it. AM

WANTED

Person or persons willing to unhitch a vast quantity of old editions of "New Worlds" SF in my direction. Best prices paid. Write to:
Dick Howett, 94 Ravensbourne Crescent, Harold Wood, Essex

THE DEATHS HAVE recently been announced of Aldous Huxley (author of Brave New World) and Professor Clive Staples Lewis (C.S. Lewis, author of the trilogy Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra and The Pilgrims' Progress) as well as the juvenile fantasies of Narnia. Both men were writers from other fields who trespassed successfully (and were welcomed) in our territory. AM

SOME MORE NOT-REVIEWS

DARK TIDES (Eric Frank Russell) Panther 128 pp 2/6d. Short SF/Fantasy stories.

THE LANI PEOPLE (J.F. Bone) Corgi 152 pp 2/6d. Sociological adventure concerned with the precise definition of "human" (with the accent on the female)

THE SOUND OF HIS HORN ("Sarban") Ballantine (Thorpe & Porter) 125 pp 2/6d. Short novel of alternative universe where the Nazis won WW2.

THE SILVER EGGHEADS (Fritz Leiber) Ballantine (Thorpe & Porter) 192 pp 2/6d. Robot novel that satirizes human relationships.

Thanks to Doreen Parker, Tom Walker and Brian Rolfe for providing not-review material for this issue. Thanks also to Robert Worrell, Terry Bull and John Barfoot, whose titles remain among the backlog. Next issue then. And a merry Christmas and so forth in the mean time. AM