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SEX IS A STRANGE MISTRESS

— COLIN STEELE

A study of Sex in Science Fiction and in the Works of Robert A. Heinlein.

> "The sun that had passed into her limbs and through her old bereaved bones came to life in her then, and as they loved and struggled and fought and re-united she begged for him to thrust higher and higher and deeper and deeper because this time there was to be no mistake and nothing was to leak out of her. Afterwards she clung to him with her thighs and extracting herself it was as though he was now the breaking rose and his strength had fallen away inside her like petals."
>
> - "August is a Wicked Month" by Edna O'Brien

> "She lay in my arms and returned the kiss with a fervour I would not have believed possible. As for me, my head was buzzing and my eyeballs were knocking together and I couldn't have told you whether I was 1000 feet underground or on dress parade."
>
> - "If This Goes On..." by Robert A. Heinlein

The position of sex in science fiction is a curious one in that it has such little importance. Apart from a certain small number of authors (and even amongst these it is often poorly done), it is regarded as taboo. This is all the more surprising when SF is compared to the rest of literature. Here, sex is dealt with in a mature fashion and the problem is that sex is over-exploited. American authors like Wallace and Robbins bludgeon their way into the best-seller lists with their weightily documented sex epics. Magazines range from PLAYBOY (relatively sophisticated) through the myriad stag magazines to Ginzberg's banned EROS. The United States (and to a lesser extent, Great Britain) has a sex neurosis: emotions are titillated and boosted by artificial rather than by real means. Does the sex industry reveal a sexually frustrated/hampered society? Consider, LOLITA had no great success in Sweden yet in the United States and Great Britain its sales were phenomenal. How does science fiction reflect this trend and illustrate the contemporary ethos?

By studying the works of Robert A. Heinlein, one can gain some insight in to the question as he is one of the most prolific and highly rated authors in the field. His writings, which I have arbitrarily divided into two, illustrate the two positions which SF has taken towards sex. His earlier works are little concerned with sex and where it is described it is nugatory. This is the type of work that Harry Harrison has criticised so much ("We Are Sitting On Our Potties" - SF HORIZONS 1).

Heinlein's later works reflect the contemporary American preoccupation with sex, i.e., there is much titillation but little involvement or actual congress. Thus, throughout his works, sex is inadequately described. I am not asking Heinlein to be another Genet, Burroughs or Jan Cramer but one must have some adequate description. Sexual relationships, properly described, with their resulting emotional entanglements enable the depiction of much more satisfactory characters and nullify the flat one-sided characters that appear in many SF novels. One has only to read John Christopher's THE POSSESSORS to see how a stock, dated SF concept is enriched by an adequate delineation of character.

Heinlein's earlier novels contain male heroes who are 'one-sided', good guys who have platonic relationships with their girls. These heroes are tough, make no mistake about that, but are very conventional in their sexual ideas and motivations. Initially, they treat girls with masculine contempt but on acquaintance quickly lapse into the romantic vernacular.

Sam in THE PUPPET MASTERS, after he sees Mary, the heroine, wants only "...to drop one wing and run in circles...". By page 19 of the book he has proposed marriage. The traditional Heinlein romance is under way and, of course, he must take her place in a parasite experiment:- "Mary walked straight to the chair and sat down. Two technicians knelt and started fastening the clamps. I watched in a frozen daze. Then I grabbed the Old Man and literally threw him aside and I was by the chair, kicking the technicians out of the way. 'Mary,' I screamed, 'get up from there.' "

See how protective he is? But to keep his pride he has to feel hurt so he calls her a bitch when he recovers for "after all, what was she? Just another babe.",

This is soon made up however and when "she gave me a long sweet smile, I grinned like a collie pup". Marriage inevitably and relentlessly follows, but how far do they go? Read on! "She had kissed me once before; this time she kissed me. I felt myself sinking into a warm golden haze and I did not want ever to come up. Finally I had to break and gasped 'I think I'll sit down for a minute.'" Sex is never discussed even after their honeymoon - "Oh, not that our honeymoon was humdrum".

At the end of the book when the parasites have been defeated, Sam muses "we'll have time for two or three kids". He must be an all-American boy after all!

The lack of sex in this type of book means that the characters are hopelessly 'flat'. The absence of any normal emotional relationship means that the value of the action (which is very good) is considerably reduced. The last frontier of privacy, as David Reisman has called sex, is practically crossed on tip-toe.

Heinlein repeats the basic situations in many books. Idyllic relationships; tough guys get sweet (with just a touch of badness) girls; both live happily ever after. It's amusing also to see how many times the girl rejects the boy just to give a spur to the man, for after all America is a matriarchal society. E.g.:-

1) John Lyle proposes to Maggie in "If This Goes On..."

Maggie:- "I'm honoured and grateful and I'm deeply touched. But oh no John. No John, listen to me first, I'll accept that job as your housekeeper but I won't marry you."

2) Ben to Jill in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

(Ben) He proposed to Jill again as soon as he got her alone ... "I want to marry you and rub your poor tired feet." ... (Vonnegut's bokonism?) But

(Jill) "Dear Ben....Ben, I love you. But don't ask me now .... I have responsibilities."

3) Sam to Mary in THE PUPPET MASTERS

(Sam) "Look me over. I've got both hands and feet, I'm fairly young and I don't track mud in the house. You could do worse."

(Mary) "It's silly to talk about marriage. We've got this job to finish."

4) Duke to Barbara in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD

(Duke) "Why not, Barbara? I'm young. I'm healthy. Why, someday I might even have Clients."

(Barbara) "No, Duke." (This time, Duke doesn't get the girl!)

Mind you, Heinlein's girls don't appear totally virginal; there is just a trace of badness (our tough guy hero could never marry a whiter-than-white girl, now could he?). As Knight and Alpert have shown in their "History of Sex in the Cinema", the 1930's and 1940's saw the rise of this type of heroine to comply with cinematic censorship.

I'm only dealing with Heinlein's philosophy in so far as it deals with morals, for his Goldwaterite ramblings would justify an article in itself. His description of philosophy itself would have made Wittgenstein turn in his grave. In "Lost Legacy" one of his characters says:- "There isn't anything to philosophy. Did you ever eat that cotton candy they sell at fairs? Well, philosophy is like that - it looks as if it were really something and it's awful pretty and it tastes sweet, but when you go to bite it you can't get your teeth in it and when you try to swallow there isn't anything there."

In his later works his philosophy becomes more objectionable and the number of sexual descriptions increase. Heinlein appears to advocate free love, but he never describes it. He fails to comprehend the problems arising in a sexually-free society (it is interesting to note that when these free societies have been tried, as in post-revolution Russia, they have more often than not failed). Why does Heinlein do this? Is it related to the American

preoccupation with sex? Or is it a reflection on his private life and age? STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is the prime example of his policy of titillation without copulation; a scene in a Las Vegas strip club in particular deals with this concept and adds very little to the basic plot. Mike reveals to Jill the emotions of the customers who are watching her strip. A form of mutual masturbation.

Earlier she had posed for him. "This pose is just a little naughty - any showgirl would use it as a professional pic.... and this is a bit more so, some girls use it. But this is extremely naughty and this one is quite naughty....and this is so extremely naughty that I wouldn't pose with my face wrapped in a towel." How can we keep calm?!

Wayland Young in EROS DENIED has shown that this type of description is part of the 'exclusion' policy which pervades the traditional description of sex.

Heinlein moralises through Jubal, his 'alter ego', that "...a prude thinks that his own rules of propriety are natural laws" and "...sex would be a means of happiness" yet his descriptions fit into the same Judao-Christian ethical code that he wishes to reject.

Alex Comfort in an article on nudism in TWENTIETH CENTURY (Winter 1965) postulates that nudism relieves the existing genital neuroses and is more a psychological benefit than physical. Heinlein, judging from his preoccupation with, but not description of, nudism in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is obviously in need of help.

In GLORY ROAD, much of the sex is again 'off stage'. FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD reveals that Heinlein has become preoccupied with his individualistic philosophy once more. Sex is again made to appear dirty .....Karen and Barbara (the two girls in the plot) reveal to each other that they are pregnant....."Good Lord, Barbara, how did it happen?" Barbara shrugged, "Careless. How did it happen to you?" Karen suddenly grinned "How? A bee sprinkled pollen on me; how else?"

We also get a rather sickening description of Karen's childbirth in which Karen and the child die after much blood, sweat and tears amounting to three pages of description. Instead of describing sex as a beautifully, mutually 'giving' action, Heinlein has forgone this and has revelled in the failure of a pregnancy. His priorities have become misplaced.

Hugh Farnham, the usual Heinlein father figure, emerges triumphant in the novel, rejecting on his way the easy servitude and morals of the future society, to settle to happy, contented, married life, a note on which all good Heinlein stories end.

Thus we get, in Heinlein's writings, two positions which sometimes coalesce. It varies from the early naive, idyllic writings to the sexually engrossed ones of the later

period. I am not cynically criticising Heinlein for depicting normal happy relationships but I am criticising him for the lack of depth in the relationships and for being engrossed with sex for the wrong reasons. His descriptions belie his so-called beliefs and he never gets down to dealing with his subject in a mature realistic way.

George Steiner in ENCOUNTER (October 1965) asks "Is there any SF pornography? Science fiction alters at will the co-ordinates of time and space; it can set effect before cause; it works within a logic of total potentiality. But has it added a single item to the repertoire of the erotic?"

The answer, naturally, must be in the negative for there is only a limited range of sexual activities to be described. However, science fiction as a whole has not really made any effort as yet to describe even these and Robert A. Heinlein certainly has not.

Colin Steele.

CONCEPTS OF SF

Jim England

PART 3: FUTURE SOCIETIES

Speculation about the kinds of new gadgets that will exist in the future can be very interesting, but far more interesting is speculation about the kinds of society the gadget will exist in. How will Mankind behave 50, 100, 500 or 1000 years hence? What will be its standards and in what light will it view the antics of present-day Mankind? Will it consist of 'supermen', or will it still be as docile/aggressive, cunning/ingenuous, cynical/idealistic, creative/destructive as it is today? It is often said that 'human nature never changes' and it is probably true that men 1000 years hence will still be born and die, will still be fallible and make mistakes, will still fall in love and be attracted to the opposite sex, will still listen to music, will still ponder on the mystery of the Universe and wonder what life is all about. Beyond that it is rather unsafe to generalise. Mankind may change in many ways, even in what, nowadays, is regarded as fundamental human nature. But, nevertheless, the stability of human nature makes it easier to prognosticate the future of human societies than to forecast remote technological developments.

If we define 'sociological SF' very loosely, we can say that it originates with the UTOPIA of Sir Thomas More written between 1515 and 1516. UTOPIA gave its name to the whole idealistic outlook of 'Utopianism' in contrast to the outlook originated by Machiavelli in THE PRINCE, and because of the importance of this some discussion of it seems in order.

UTOPIA is a description of an island on which resides an ideal community - a sort of Christian Paradise on Earth or enlarged monastery. The people of Utopia wear very simple clothes, all alike, and have no money. They attend lectures every morning and are forbidden to waste time on such activities as gambling and playing games. They practise egalitarianism to the extent that no specialisation or division of labour is allowed, everybody being obliged to act as 'jack of all trades and master of none'. More even toyed with the idea of letting the inhabitants of Utopia share wives, but decided against it.

To understand how UTOPIA came to be written we have to go back to the ancient Greeks who were, as far as we know, the first people to realise that a society need not be regarded as something 'given' - a part of the natural order of things - but may be regarded as something having a purpose. Furthermore, that it was sensible to ask what the purpose was, or ought to be, and having found it to try and devise the best means of achieving it. They did virtually all the really fundamental thinking about politics that has ever taken place. They were the first to put forward the ideal of a 'world state'. They originated the idea of a planned society and they invented the word democracy. More was influenced by their thought, and in particular by the "Republic" of Plato. He was also influenced by the discovery of America. The book was really an attack on Feudalism and a sort of protest against the inequality of the medieval world. He acted on the assumption that 'money is the root of all evil'. Nowadays, the book is almost unreadable and we cannot imagine anything like UTOPIA ever coming to pass, except possibly after an Atomic war, but it is important historically as the first of many Utopias.

In contrast, Machiavelli's THE PRINCE, written at about the same time, was the first empirical study of power politics. Whereas Rousseau (later) was to put forward the hypothesis that all men were basically good, Machiavelli decided that it was safer to be unidealistic and regard them as basically evil. The consequences of this hypothesis, set forth in THE PRINCE, led to his becoming regarded as the first 'social scientist'.

In the early twentieth century, a great many utopian novels were written in the form of travelogues with every unfamiliar ingredient carefully explained as they went along. The disadvantage of this was that the author continually intruded, making it impossible for the reader to 'lose himself' in the story. Most ideas of paradise were of super-cities full of fascinating mechanical toys and entertainments, luxurious apartments and beautiful women. In recent years very few utopias have been described. One of the few is ISLAND by Aldous Huxley (Chatto & Windus, 1962) written thirty years after BRAVE NEW WORLD, concerning a sort of back-to-nature paradise. On the cover, Huxley asks "What would be the character of a liberty-loving society dedicated to the proposition that its members ought to be helped, as far as possible, to realise their desirable potentialities?" The novel attempts to answer this question on as many levels as possible but is so appallingly dull and tedious to read that the thesis might have been better expressed in a short non-fiction article. Some of the ideas expressed by Huxley are:- (a) the importance of not taking any philosophy too seriously; (b) the importance of having many substitute parents rather than a single pair, in case the latter are unpleasant; (c) the importance of getting rid of emotions by harmlessly 'letting off steam' rather than repressing them; (d) the importance of paying almost continuous attention to the 'here and now' (a bird, in the novel, is actually trained to keep repeating "Attention!" to remind people of this.). Whereas the first three precepts make a lot of sense, the fourth is most peculiar. The ability to anticipate future events is one of man's greatest assets and to live continually in the 'here and now' one would have to be something less than a man.

Entirely different from the utopias of fiction are the nightmare-societies such as Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR and semi-nightmare-societies like BRAVE NEW WORLD. The latter remains, after over thirty years, the best and most disturbing portrayal of a society conditioned to a philosophy of hedonism to be written to date.

The most obvious and basic theme in BRAVE NEW WORLD is that of science and technology 'interfering with nature'. Whereas writers such as H. G. Wells in THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME saw in this a source of hope and salvation, others have seen it chiefly as a source of danger. E. M. Forster wrote a short story, "The Machine Stops", about a future world in which people lived in cells underground, hardly ever needing to move, because machines supplied all their needs, and in which muscular infants were destroyed because they would not have enjoyed an indoor existence. The chief activity of these people consisted of a search for 'ideas' - which were seldom forthcoming. In contrast, the inhabitants of BRAVE NEW WORLD were conditioned, not to search for ideas but, to enjoy thoughtless activity, mainly of a sexual variety. Forster wrote, concerning his society, of "....the sin against the body - the centuries of wrong against the muscles and the nerves, and those five portals by which we can alone apprehend." Huxley might well have written, paraphrasing this, of "....the sin against the heart and brain - the centuries of wrong against a mind capable of nobler things." Huxley envisaged "squat grey buildings of only thirty-four stories" in London, ectogenesis, Neo-Pavlovian conditioning, hypnopaedia and several other things in BRAVE NEW WORLD which seem much more feasible now than when he wrote it. It is already possible to fertilise ova outside the womb and ectogenesis will probably soon become practicable (the use of hard X-rays to produce 'budding' as described is, of course, pseudo-scientific). The references to there being "Nothing like oxygen-shortage for keeping an embryo below par" and to the beneficial effects of oxygen are almost prophetic in view of recent research. Neo-Pavlovian conditioning is surprisingly reminiscent of 'brain-washing' and similar techniques now familiar. Hypnopaedia is known to be possible and an 'Association for Sleep Learning' actually exists. Finally, the idea of conditioning the populace to become good 'consumers', as the inhabitants of BRAVE NEW WORLD were, is put into practice by numerous advertisers.

There is, however, one major twentieth-century trend notable by its absence in Huxley's novel, and which absence makes the whole thing implausible. This is the trend towards automation. We read that "The Inventions Office is stuffed with plans for labour-saving devices", but that these devices are not used because the low-grade workers would be made unhappy by too much leisure. Yet, elsewhere in the book, the question is posed:- "Why don't you make everybody an Alpha Double Plus while you're about it?" and this question is never satisfactorily answered.

The implication of this is that Huxley introduced the Gamma, Delta and Epsilon members of the society as an artificial device to illustrate the wrongness of the society. They

were not really necessary since automation, if given full rein, could have taken over their work. The world is an evil world because the emphasis in it has been shifted "....from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness." It would be very wrong, given the ability to produce Alpha Double Plus individuals to order, to go on producing a majority of Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons, no matter how happy such moronic individuals could be made. An unhappy Einstein or Shakespeare will always be a more worthwhile product than a blissfully happy moron.

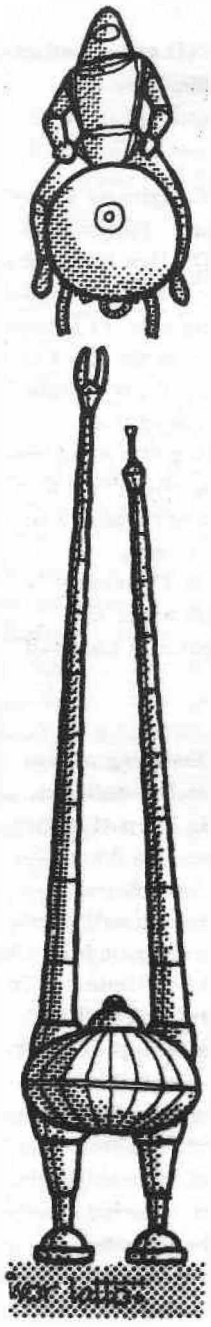
There is much else that one could say about BRAVE NEW WORLD. Despite its implausibilities, it succeeds in presenting a picture of a future society which stimulates thought on many levels. There is the matter of 'soma' for instance. Despite the known harmful effects of smoking, manufacturers continue to produce cigarettes in vast numbers and governments to obtain revenue from their sale. The same applies, although it is a less serious matter, to alcohol. Is it conceivable that a government might encourage the widespread use of a drug such as 'soma' for the sake of social stability? In "Drugs That Shape Men's Minds", an essay published in 1960, Huxley wrote of the dangers of prescribing tranquillizers to all and sundry. On the whole, though, the essay is optimistic. Huxley concludes the essay by looking forward to a time when drugs will make possible "....an everyday mysticism, underlying and giving significance to everyday rationality, everyday tasks and duties, everyday relationships." It is a typical Huxleyan dream. It seems, however, unlikely to come true. There exists already the drug mescalin, which is very similar in its effects to the fictional 'soma'. Governments have not permitted the large-scale synthesis and distribution of it despite the fact that it has virtually no harmful after-effects (such as addiction) and despite the fact that it would give pleasure to a great many people who would be prepared to pay for it. The situation is analogous to the sale of pornography which, although it might have a wide market, is not encouraged. A society in which 'soma' was widely used would probably break down owing to neglect by the populace of things necessary for the proper running of the society. A society in which drugs made possible Huxley's "everyday mysticism" might come to grief in more subtle ways, possibly connected with the fact that some people would always choose to abstain from them.

The question of the rightness or wrongness of sexual behaviour of the kind permitted in BRAVE NEW WORLD is complicated. A strong tendency towards Puritanism in many people prevents them from agreeing with the ideas of such men as Bertrand Russell on this, and so we are a long way from a BRAVE NEW WORLD type of society. The idea is hedonistic and Utilitarian but, even from this point of view, such a society would not be perfect. Sexual activity is undoubtedly the greatest pleasure in life as regards intensity, but it is not as regards duration. How does one decide which is the greater of two pleasures of different intensity and duration? One cannot say, for instance, that because sexual activity brings greater pleasure than eating, a hedonist would be right to spend his time exclusively upon the former!

Let us turn from consideration of the ideas in BRAVE NEW WORLD and countless stories of similar type involving hedonism, drugs, 'Dream Palaces' and the like, to PLAYER PIANO by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (1953).

This novel is about a world of the future in which managers and engineers are an elite and ordinary people have been made 'unnecessary' by machines. People have 'classification numbers' indicating their IQ's, and the people with low IQ's live in enforced idleness. The people with high IQ's earn enormous salaries and live apart from the others. The former, however, do not envy the latter, because constant TV propaganda leads them to think of them as having more worries, being engaged in "opening doors at the head of the procession of civilisation." As time goes by, this changes, and the ordinary people begin to feel useless; they long to have useful work to do. The book ends with an unsuccessful attempt by them to regain their freedom to work, by engaging in a machine-wrecking revolt. There are automatised trains without guards or drivers, with doors that open and close automatically and loud-speakers that call out the stops in advance. There are electronic door-openers, thermostatically controlled windows, radar ranges, electrostatic dust precipitators, ultrasonic clothes-washers, and forty-inch TV screens. Culture is so cheap that a man ".... could insulate his house cheaper with books and prints than he could do with rockwool." An enormous electronic computer in Carlsbad Caverns, helping to make it all possible, is described at great length.

What are we to think of it all? Could any of it come true? One thing we can say with confidence is that automation will transform the world. We can be confident because it is something that is both technically and emotionally feasible. It puts money into men's pockets and gives them what they want. Space travel is more of a dream - a dream that has been brought nearer fulfilment than we could reasonably have hoped because of World Politics. But although we can be confident that automation will come, we can be less certain as to how or when it will come. Naive writers in the past few decades have assumed that all work of a repetitive or routine nature will be eliminated in the very near future and that men will only have to work a few hours a day and will be faced with the 'problem of leisure'. Some writers say that the 'problem of leisure' must already be faced. But what is the 'problem' and where is the leisure? Few ordinary people seem to be aware of it. The few who are can easily solve the 'problem' for themselves by taking on a second job so as to increase their affluence. The factors involved are so complicated that we cannot say where it will all end, but it seems likely that human nature will cause automation to come much more slowly than is technically feasible. For a long time, people will continue to do work that could be done by machines, because their abilities only enable them to do the unskilled work that machines can do. A permanent solution will only be achieved when they are paid for doing nothing.



For a minority, of course, work in the future will become both more difficult and more interesting, calling for skills in which much training is required. Man must always be one jump ahead of the machine. As regards the majority, it may well become divided into two types. First, there will be the people who prefer leisure to the accumulation of more money than they need. They will be the hobbyists, the amateur scientists, writers, artists - or layabouts. Second, there will be the people who make a fetish of money and continue to accumulate it long after it has reached an amount sufficient for their needs. This type has always existed and probably always will. We cannot say what percentage of mankind would belong to this type if circumstances made it possible. It must depend upon environment. We cannot say what activities they will engage in or how they would interact with people of the former type. So we have no way of knowing in which direction the semi-automated society of the future will go.

So far, we have considered only societies existing on the Earth, but it is obvious that someday human societies will exist on planets other than Earth. Moreover, the terrestrial and extra-terrestrial societies will interact, and it is interesting to consider how the relationship might develop. Heinlein has written entertainingly on this theme, as have many other writers. Eric Frank Russell's THE GREAT EXPLOSION concerns an expedition to four colonies, each of which has developed unusual customs (e. g. not wearing clothes, not using money, not obeying authority). There is obviously vast scope for other stories along these lines, but space travel is not essential to the theme. Different societies already exist on the Earth, and stories can be written about a future world in which they are isolated from one another for various reasons and have long periods in which to pursue divergent courses of development. It is, of course, quite possible to write good sociological SF using common-sense psychology, but a study of anthropology, sociology and psychology is a useful preliminary to any kind of writing of this type. The findings of anthropology, unfortunately, can often be (and have been) interpreted in many different ways. The writer of sociological SF is usually less concerned with accurately forecasting the future than with thinking up a future with interesting story possibilities, and so some exceedingly unlikely futures have been considered in SF.

The basic technique is either to extrapolate some trend (or trends) in present-day society or to imagine the social consequences of some scientific discovery not yet made. The possibilities are infinite, but some of them can be mentioned briefly:-

(a) citizens of the future may inhabit a totalitarian state in which freedom is very limited, as in Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR;

(b) they may be ruled by an oligarchy, as in THE HEADS OF CEREBUS (in this, the rulers were chosen and kept in power by rigged tests, while the proletariat had no names but only numbers which they were obliged to wear);

(c) they may live under a theocracy or religious tyranny, as in Heinlein's "If This Goes On...";

(d) they may live under a matriarchy, as in Curme Gray's "Murder in Millenium VI";

(e) they may live under a meritocracy or technocracy and have abundant leisure;

(f) they may live under some form of government for which no name, as yet, exists, as in Philip K. Dick's SOLAR LOTTERY, about a world in which the radio-and-TV-quiz had evolved into a game with all power as its stake;

(g) they may be obliged to consume a fantastic variety of expensive products in order to keep ad-men, manufacturers and governments happy, and have no leisure in which to enjoy them;

(h) they may practise eugenics so that their quality as citizens increases every generation;

(i) they may be entertainment addicts living in an almost perpetual dream-state whilst a minority of non-addicts go about their business;

(j) they may practise 'free love';

(k) they may all be, according to our standards, criminals or may be licensed to commit crimes, as in William Tenn's "Time in Advance".

All sorts of permutations and combinations of the above are possible, e.g. if pairs or groups of the above societies were co-existent in the same world - a theme seldom used. Finally, countless 'gloom' stories have been written on the After-the-Bomb theme or on the theme that the world reverts to anarchy after some other catastrophe, as in John Christopher's THE DEATH OF GRASS. Countless stories have been written on the theme that in the future men will be telepathic, will practise teleportation, precognition and sundry other psi-abilities, or that the same results will be achieved through technology.

Charles Galton Darwin, in his depressing book THE NEXT MILLION YEARS, suggests that ours may be a Golden Age compared with the endless vistas of poverty that will follow as a result of population increase, and that there will be innumerable future forms of government - "...oligarchies, bureaucracies, autocracies, theocracies" etc. But, although the book was written in 1952, he never once considers the possibility of interplanetary flight and makes the astonishing statement that "...present methods of warfare would not be nearly murderous enough to reduce populations seriously." Personally, I feel that the forms of government in the future, and the catastrophes, will be nothing like the ones he imagines, and unlike those imagined by most SF writers. Parallel with all the developments in fields such as medicine, cybernetics, work-study and computer-technology that have taken place, have gone developments in the 'human' sciences which are bound to have consequences just as dramatic. Moreover, the

methods of science are bound to become applied over wider and wider areas. We already see the effects of this in the wider use of scientific planning by industry and government, and in the trend away from organised religion. What could be more natural than that a new principle should become accepted by political theorists - the principle of Diversificationism; according to which there is no one 'ideal' form of government, and an optimum number of forms of government should be allowed to operate independently. It is about time there was a swing away from 'gloom' stories to, not necessarily stories about Utopias, but at least to stories about societies one would not mind living in, which are headed towards some generally recognised goal of which each citizen approves. Destruction is so much easier than construction, and criticism easier than creation; but it is about time somebody made the effort.

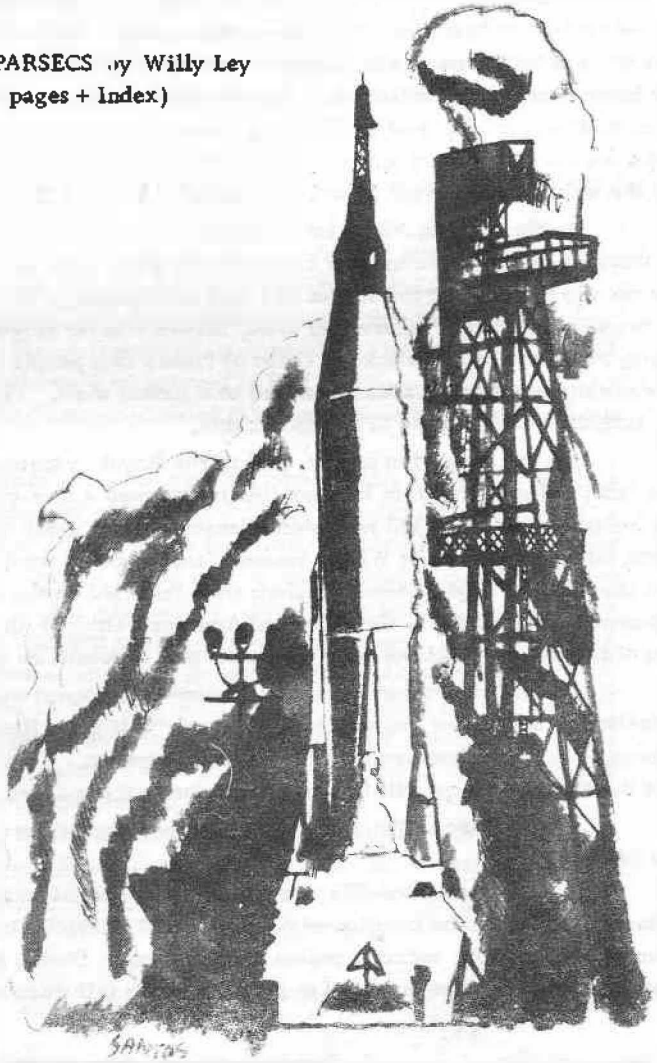
Jim England

MISSILES, MOONPROBES and MEGAPARSECS

reviewed by

Don Malcolm

MISSILES, MOONPROBES AND MEGAPARSECS by Willy Ley
(Signet Science Library, 5/- 181 pages + Index)



Those who read Willy Ley's column in GALAXY don't need me to tell them that the book is informative and well-written. The value that any particular reader will derive from the book will depend on the extent of his knowledge, especially in the technical aspects of space-flight and astronomy.

This book is divided into three sections. The first, "Rockets for War and Peace", is divided into "Rockets for War" and "Rockets for Peace". The war sub-division is saved from the boredom of its many predecessors in the literature of Mr. Ley's ability to ferret out interesting anecdotes. Talking of the bombardment of Danzig in 1813 by Congreve rockets, and the participation in the same year in the defeat of Napoleon by a British unit called the Rocket Brigade, Ley goes on to mention that various European countries followed the

British lead. The meticulous Swiss planned a corps that, had it ever been formed, would have been a sight to behold! The number of buttons on the uniform and the style and colour of the officer's boots were detailed. Britain finally discontinued the use of rockets as part of military and naval armament in 1897. And it looks as if the Swiss, for all their boots and buttons, had the better of the bargain.

In 1905, Baron Vilhelm von Unge devised an air-to-air rocket, for use against airships. Successful demonstrations culminated in the purchase by Friedrich Krupp in 1910 of all rockets, equipment and patents. Surprisingly, Krupp's scientists, after a year's experimentation, gave up the project. Had they persevered, one wonders what course world history might have taken.

Chapter 5, "The Era That Began with V-2", is a mercifully short recording of payloads, thrusts and boosters which bored me to tears. Ley could have given us some information about the people he mentions only briefly: Ziolkovsky, Zander and Goddard. He could have mentioned, for instance, that Ziolkovsky (sometimes known as the Father of Astronautics) was totally deaf from an early age and that he was largely self-taught. A rocket is just a rocket: people are unique - every one. I got the feeling that Ley himself was glad to finish the war section and get on to that dealing with peace.

In the section, "Rockets for Peace", Ley is much more relaxed and interesting, even though a considerable amount of facts and figures were necessary. "The Line Throwers" traces the development of the rocket as a means of getting a life-line aboard ships in distress. The idea was originally Prussian. In 1784, Master Weaver Ehrgott Friedrich Schaefer, of Kolberg, suggested to Frederick the Great of Prussia that people might be saved from a grounded ship by means of a line attached to a mortar shell. The military conclusion was: "This invention could not be at all practicable."

On the suggestion of a Lt. Cell of the Royal Ordnance Corps, an inspector of the British Army, George William Manby, finally designed a line-carrying mortar. From 1807 till 1823, his invention saved 332 sailors and fishermen from death on the Norfolk coast. John Dennett, of Newport, Isle of Wight, reasoned that a rocket would do the job better than a mortar shell and in 1824 Congreve rockets were installed on the island. Subsequent development was done mainly by Britain, Germany and America, although the Swiss adapted the idea to the laying of temporary telephone lines across the tops of forests on mountain tops.

I would like to have seen much more enlightened speculation in the book but practically the only tidbit comes when Ley says: "It is quite likely that line-carrying rockets will have a future not foreseen by their original inventors. I can imagine that a rocket like that of the Engineer Corps will be very useful during the manned exploration of the Moon."

Probably more than Mr. Ley thinks, because of the almost total lack of atmosphere on the Moon.

The chapter about "The Hail Fighters" is full of interest and the history of attempts to influence clouds by the creation of noise, first by church bells, sometimes aided by mortars or cannons and, finally, rockets, makes good reading. During a series of attempts in 1906 to influence clouds, R. Baur managed to induce snow to fall when he was trying to prevent rain!

A few years after the Great War, a Mr. Muller of Emmishofen, Switzerland, produced an anti-hail rocket. Max Valier, an early rocket pioneer, told Ley that Swiss communities using Muller's rockets had their hail-insurance premiums reduced by insurance companies (imagine that happening in Manchester!) The statement was uncorroborated.

Ley relates Valier's account to him of an eye-witness sighting of an anti-hail firing received from Karl Birner of Konstanz:

"If the first rocket is released when the first grains of hail reach the ground," he told Valier, "the explosion of the rocket has the result that the hail is changed into large, soft snow-flakes that turn into raindrops after the second or third rocket. If several rockets are released simultaneously, it will rain, even though hail comes down around the area that is beyond the effectiveness of the explosive charge carried by the rocket."

Both Valier and Ley had doubts about the accuracy of Birner's description. But who knows if noise has any effect on clouds? Officialdom is sceptical, with the exception of the Russians, who find that rockets are effective in Georgia. Australian fruit growers, Italian, Swiss and Austrian farmers use them.

Thought: maybe nuclear bombs do affect the atmosphere.

The chapter on rocket mails, "The Mail Carriers", is fascinating, doubly so for me as I'm a philatelist interested in air and rocket mails. Heinrich von Kleist, editor of the Berlin EVENING NEWS, was apparently the first man to suggest the possibility of missile mail, in the 10th October, 1810 issue, in an article headed "Useful Inventions: Preliminary Thoughts About Mortar Mail". Kleist's idea was to fire mail in hollow shells from one fixed point to the next. The procedure would be repeated until the mail reached its destination. He estimated that the distance from Berlin to Stettin (75 miles) would be covered in half a day.

A witty letter in the next day's paper claimed that, most news being bad, ox-cart should be used to slow it down!

After mentioning other important rocket mail milestones, Mr. Ley ends the chapter with a well-reasoned summary of the pros and cons of the method. Missile mail still has its uses.

In Section Two, "Into Space", the chapters that held my attention were those headed "Writer's Choice" (I've a feeling the apostrophe should be after the 's') and "Scientists' Selection". Here, Willy Ley is on his own ground, dealing with photon drives, solar sails and space guns.

There is little in Section Three that cannot be found in any good astronomy book, although Mr. Ley does manage more than most writers to convey the immense sense of adventure in Man's attempts to pin point his place in the Universe. Two good stories, one concerning the part played by the Konigsberg bridges in Bessel's search for a method of measuring the distance to a star, the other about Theodore Roosevelt's way of reducing Man to size, are too long to recount here but are worth reading.

In conclusion: for me, this book was enjoyable only in parts, but this is probably because I have read deeply in astronomy and astronautics and therefore found little that was new in those sections. There was, I thought, undue emphasis on German contributions.

But what the book really lacked was a final chapter giving Mr. Ley's educated guesses about the future.

Despite its shortcomings, the book is recommended.

Don Malcolm.

Behind the Scenes

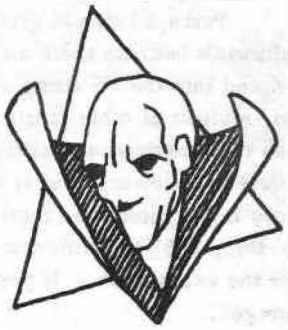
a fan column by Malcolm Edwards

A recent columnist exposed a long-held and festering belief that the BSFA was only a recruiting station, that the Association had no purpose other than to provide cannon-fodder for the Big Guns of Science Fiction Fandom. Now, that's an extremist attitude (one not to be encouraged, semaphores the outraged committee behind the scenes, pulling the strings that give a quality of pseudo-life to this puppet column), yet I'll stick out my tender neck and say that it does have more than some elements of truth. Like it or not, this is a dual-purpose organisation, and there's been no end of dispute as to what really is our raison d'etre.

The obvious purpose of the BSFA is defined somewhere in those dusty passages of the Constitution (dusty because I haven't opened, or seen, my copy since it arrived in 1961). The Association was founded to publicise and encourage the writing of science fiction, or words to that effect. That's the motive behind such innocent-appearing innovations as Your Devious Editor's recent change to a 'professionally' printed VECTOR, and its predominance of formally-written material, All About science fiction. It's a worthy aim, at that, and the BSFA's effectiveness has surprised more than myself.

Second in clarity is the aim of the Association to promote friendship and cameraderie among fellow science fiction fans; and a lot of trouble is caused because no-one will decide whether or not this second objective is secondary in importance. This phase of activity overlaps into, and becomes part of, that microcosm of its own, 'science fiction fandom'.

Rather naturally, fandom doesn't let science fiction worry it as much as does this journal. Fandom has many of the aspects of a glorified correspondence club, and while a common background of interest in SF is necessary for introduction, it is not essential for continuing and maturing friendship. Science fiction fans are a heterogenous coterie who discuss all sorts of things, but all of these different topics are looked at, and evaluated, through the common focus of the SF fan's view of the world. Fandom is a rather wonderful labyrinth of intellectual side-streets that lead to many an intriguing discovery. There is many a doorway into the maze, but possibly the easiest way is to get hold of a few of the current fan-magazines, and to do what comes naturally from then on inwards. I've led you through my own confusing domain for long enough, so at last we'll take a brief look at what the field has to offer. And be warned, it's a quiet time of year; in the spring a young fan's fancy will turn to publishing, and after me, the deluge!



I think one of the best introductions a body could wish for would be to find a copy of LIGHTHOUSE in the mail-box. It's published by one Terry Carr at 35 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201 (the last is the Zip-Code number which you Had Better Not Omit!) It costs 25¢ per issue, which is 2/-, and I don't quite see how to get around the currency barrier for one issue. One dollar will provision you with four issues, and a dollar bill can usually be bought from a Travel Agent's in Britain. That's one way of handling the transaction; or you could throw yourself on the editor's mercy and request a sample copy. I wouldn't be said to recommend this course, but the cheeky might try.

The current issue is number 13, and is dated August 1965. Take no notice of the date; every fan-magazine takes longer to produce than the editor thought it would. This was the current issue at the time of writing. It's characterised throughout by good, easy writing: the sort of thing that is never pretentious, is rather 'chatty', but is very pleasant to read. The difference is that between listening to a lecture and listening to a friend. You don't have to be familiar with the mythos of fandom to be able to enjoy this magazine since any name-dropping is self-explanatory and incidental. There's writing about publishing, some few thousand words about science fiction that say more of worth than do most issues of VECTOR, and all sorts of other goodies that you'll discover for yourself.

I'd advise you to take George Metzger's column with a pinch of salt, but otherwise there's nothing here that I wouldn't expect my best mundane friend to enjoy. Terry Carr's writing in LIGHTHOUSE is probably better than that in his Ace books - and I have no complaints as to the quality of the latter.

Similar in subject-matter is DOUBLE: BILL, also numbered 13, and this again being the current issue. You may buy it from a certain Charles Smith at the Village School House, Culford, Nr. Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk for 2/- per single copy. The writing isn't generally as good as that in LIGHTHOUSE, and the contents are a fraction less easily understood for the complete novice. You'll understand that at great pain and effort I am attempting to place myself in the position of such a newcomer (it is fortunate that I practise Yoga) in an attempt to 'see the world through other eyes but mine' as it were. But an apprentice to any trade finds that almost anything takes a little time and practice to appreciate, and SF fandom

is no exception. After all, if there were no mysteries to a newcomer, there would be no depth for the veteran.

Perhaps I should give a fractionally more detailed break-down on this one. We get two editorials because there are two editors - both named Bill. One has recently been conscripted into the US Army and isn't certain that he likes it. There is some amateur science fiction, reviews of other fanzines (which will give you further valuable insight into the field, because these reviews are written by an acknowledged expert, far better baptised in fire than is your present reviewer), and at least two, by my count, interesting and thought-provoking articl . You may enjoy more than these two; (no, Virginia, they're not about science fiction). The whole thing is 52 big American-sized pages long, and I think that ½d per page isn't too much to pay for the experience. It probably cost the editors more than that to produce, and they weren't discouraged.

Over in the corner, near the door, another magazine has crept in, and this is really for those who prefer to 'put a toe in the water to see if it's fine'. It's a half-hearted fanzine because it's so limited in scope. That is, it's a semi-professional magazine exclusively about 'speculative fiction' (to quote their punch-line; they say that science fiction is an outmoded and vague title.) There's forty pages in the current sample of ZENITH SPECULATION, which is actually ahead of schedule - the January 1966 issue arrived in mid-December! Topics covered are - well, topical; criticism is specific and more agreeable to my taste than in SF HORIZONS, and the writing is good, better again than usually found in VECTOR. But then, in my opinion, it should be in VECTOR, not in ZENITH SPECULATION. 2/- per copy from Peter Weston, 9 Porlock Crescent, Birmingham 31.

And while space is now so limited, I'll recommend a couple of others and retire into my grey limbo until my next animation. These are YANDRO, from R & J Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, Indiana 47348, 30¢ monthly (and I mean monthly; 150 issues to date!); and NIEKAS, quarterly from Ed Meskys, c/o 1360 Emerson, Palo Alto, California 94301, again at 30¢.

Malcolm Edwards.

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WORLDFARE PUBLICATIONS

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GENERAL CHUNTERING

KEN SLATER

There is one advantage in running this sort of column, especially under the circumstances at present holding good. One can pontificate, largely without fear of correction. Probably various readers send in corrections to, or arguments about, my bald or embroidered statements, but as Ye Ed never seems to publish these, and never communicates them to me, I can sit behind my typewriter in safe self-satisfaction.

Only now and again does some person who knows me direct-contact-wise see fit to prick this bubble.... this despite the fact that I have oft invited such action in the most crude way.

Oh well, on to the column. You all know that I am a bookseller; the lowest existing form of the vile professional. This gives me a little sort of insight to both sides of the triangle (uh?) of the book world. On one side we have the people who write the stuff you read (mostly for money); then we have the people who publish it (almost certainly for money); and on the other side we have the readers (mostly for entertainment at the cost of money - even if through the rates/library system). The plane of this triangle is the retail bookselling trade or racket. Readers meet authors at one point (enjoyment of what is written, I hope) and publishers at another; authors and publishers have a point of contact. Booksellers, to some extent, have a regular contact with all three. Do you follow me? Good, then please show me the way back.... I seem to have got myself lost! I was intending to discourse on a couple of recent happenings..... Right, now.

One of my customers was seeking an out-of-print book - several, to be honest - and I'd not been able to help him. He asked me if I would advise him on a certain outfit which was currently advertising their ability to obtain scarce works. I can't recall exactly what I told him, but I expect I said I knew nothing about them, but to take due care anyway. One of the books he required was Eddison's A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON. Just recently he was offered this book, by the book-search outfit. The description given was decidedly less

than I usually give for an 'ex libris' title at a few bob in my catalogue; the price asked was ....steady.....£20!

Now, I know that in the antiquarian book field prices have to be high; one antiquarian book seller I was speaking to recently stated that he has to make five times cost price on every item he sells, to cover the costs of the items he doesn't sell or 'bulk sells' to clear his shelves. I can tell you that when you 'bulk sell' you don't get much. Last year I cleared some 150 feet of shelving of non-SF books (not paperbacks) which ranged from some privately printed sermons (dated 1790 something) to cheap editions of Edgar Wallace, with detours round some old atlases, bird books (winged type) and so forth. If shelf-space is meaningless to you, we stacked it all in an A35 van, floor to roof right through and then piled three cardboard cartons on the passenger seat and shoved some more books between these and the door.....and so on. I still had a few left over that couldn't be squeezed in any place. In due course I got the payment ..... 25/- cash.

For all I know, the chap who took that lot from me may have sold one of those titles for £10. I don't know, and I don't really care. I do know that in all probability none of my customers would have paid me anything for any of the titles. I do know that if he did, he still had to shelve and store and sort and finally dispose of in some way or other, all the other stuff. Probably he'll have sold some over the counter at 1/- or 6d a time. Some he won't sell at all; he may destroy them (a terrific job) or he may in turn 'bulk sell' them to yet another general dealer (who in turn may find something among the batch which he can sell at a real profit). The big probability is that neither of them will make any big profit on any one title - it is just the isolated case where that 'big sale' crops up. It does crop up sufficiently frequently to enable people to stay in business, and 'book searchers' to stay in business - but.....personally, I prefer the less profitable, harder graft, business of specialising.

Which brings me to point two. I do purchase books, but I'm not overly fond of accepting anything anyone cares to throw my way. Especially when they try to tell me how much I'll pay for them..... Just recently, someone who had been given a book he didn't want tried to sell it to me. He isn't a customer of mine, incidentally, and I don't think he is a BSFA member either. His proposal was simple: He would send me the book, which was priced at 21/-; I would send him 17/-, which was 75% the price of the book and the cost of posting it to me. I made him an alternative proposition: I would pay him 5/- and he could pay the postage! As far as I was concerned, the book was second-hand - I didn't particularly want it, and in any case I would not pay more than 25% cover price for any in-print, second-hand title, and this was far above the 'reasonable' price in the trade for second-hand books. I've not heard from him since: I think he must have been discouraged.

Now we come to the crux of the matter - the value of any book, paperback or

magazine. I have often been asked to 'value' something, and I am always prepared to do this - if there is a lot of stuff and I have to take time, I'll charge you a fee. But this valuation has to be a two-level one; there is the value which I would pay if I were buying it for resale, and the value I expect to sell it at. And if it is a collection of material, it gets difficult. I know (and you don't) that certain items in, say, a 1956 year of a magazine title are 'good' - I could sell two dozen of one month if I could get them. I know (and you don't) that certain other items are a 'dead loss'. There is a warehouse where I could go and buy a gross of those three scattered issues for 30/-. I don't intend to, as I've got twenty plus copies of each on my shelves already. So what is the value of that 1956 year run? To me, roughly, it is half to two-thirds the value of the items I could sell 'immediately', less the value of the items that will sit here for the next umpteen years, plus some uncertain element for the ones which are not 'dead', but which also are not in demand. I know that sounds a bit complex, but for obvious reasons I can not give specific figures. The other value is the one it will cost if you want to purchase the items. This can, obviously, be anything up to four times the figure I'd arrive at from the other end. Or even more, depending on various circumstances (one recent letter from the U.S.A. tells me that 'good' copies of THRILLING WONDER STORIES and STARTLING are now fetching prices that a few years back would have been considered expensive for very good copies of ASTOUNDING).... and those various circumstances are constantly varying. For example, although a first edition of a book will normally demand a higher price than any other, if the value depends on scarcity rather than any other factor, the first edition value combined with scarcity can lend a very artificial value to an item. A certain title which a couple of years back would always find someone willing to offer up to five pounds (or even more) for a copy is not now changing hands with any speed at all. Someone bought out a paperback edition at 35¢..... It now has only a first edition value - although it may be scarce as such, it is not scarce as a book, and many folk who have now read it aren't bothered any more.

You will probably have guessed that there is a certain element of gambling in this. As a collector, you are gambling. You may be a serious collector and your prime instinct may be that collector's bug that finally leads a wife round to saying "they go, or I go!", but you would be inhuman if you've not thought now and again - "well, if I have to, I can always sell my collection and raise X pounds".

Friend, don't bank on it!

Just in from the U.S.A. - not necessarily on sale in the U.K., now or at any future time: new printings of DRAGON'S ISLAND by Jack Williamson (Tower Books, 60¢); THE MIND CAGE by A.E. van Vogt (Tower Books, 60¢); GALACTIC CLUSTER by James Blish (Signet Books, 50¢); a new novel by John Brunner, THE SQUARES OF THE CITY (Ballantine, 75¢) in which a city is built so that a South American country's political leaders can fight out their battles .... in the form of a chess game; William F. Nolan edits MAN AGAINST TOMORROW (Avon, 50¢) - a dozen yarns from eleven magazines; and a paperback edition of

Stanley Ellin's 'Mystery Stories' under the title QUIET HORROR (Signet, 50¢).

Tom Boardman, Jr. has been digging around in his company's warehouse, and recently turned up a batch of some fifty copies of the boards edition of STAR SF STORIES, which I have been selling through my catalogue. Tom's just written and told me that he has now found copies of PROJECT JUPITER (THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY ARE STARS) by Fredric Brown, and I'll be selling these too, I expect. There may be yet other titles to uncover. These are being sold at roughly 50% of the original published price, by the way.

Professor Fred Hoyle's newest novel will be out in time for the Convention, the title being OCTOBER THE FIRST IS TOO LATE. The book is due April 4th. Faber have a new collection of Brian W. Aldiss' stories upcoming spring/summer; provisional title THE SALIVA TREE AND OTHERS; also a reissue of THE CANOPY OF TIME, and the Edmund Crispin edited BEST SF 6 - fourteen stories although I don't have details yet.

K.F.S.

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THE BRITISH MAGAZINES REVIEWED BY CHRIS PRIEST

MAGAZINES REVIEWED

SCIENCE FANTASY 80
(January 1966)
NEW WORLDS 158
(January 1966)
SCIENCE FANTASY 81
(February 1966)
NEW WORLDS 159
(February 1966)

SCIENCE FANTASY 80, January 1966.

This issue features John Rackham's "The God-Birds of Glentallach". An ancient Scottish legend, about fearsome birds and strange beings, is rationalised when a party of archaeologists conducts a 'dig' on the grounds of an old ancestral home. The entire story is given away by the first couple of pages, wherein the origin of the legend is implied. The subsequent thirty-two pages then slowly unfold the mystery, to the increasing impatience of the reader. Stage-Scottish characters and a fumbled love-interest only add to the exasperation.

"Sealed Capsule" by Edward Mackin is a good piece of hokum, genuinely funny in places. The overall effect is something like Simpson's play, "One-Way Pendulum", where every next character is madder than the previous. A few SF-situations are swiped at with glee, and the total effect is one of zany seriousness. In E.C. Tubb's "In Vino Veritas" we find a writer who is losing his touch, and who has taken to drink. This is certainly not science fiction, but it is convincingly written, and the central character is a sympathetic one. "The Satyrian Games" by D.J. Gibbs is in rather dubious taste: a planetary ruler selects his government and court on capacity for sexual excess rather than any other quality. Two Earthmen go and sort things out. Daphne Castell's "Fo. One of These" is a feminine-slanted story about a foundling alien baby. This is the sort of story I normally avoid, but I'll be fair: it wasn't as bad as it threatened to be. Harry Harrison's "Plague from Space" continues in this issue, much in the vein (to mix an apt metaphor) of the first episode. I'd like to see how the novel ends, before commencing upon it fully.

NEW WORLDS SF 158, January 1966.

"The Wrecks of Time" by James Colvin concludes on a far stronger note than I would have suspected from the first two episodes. In a way, it typifies the kind of story NEW WORLDS, at

its present stage of development, tends to stress. On the surface of the story there is a fairly straightforward plot, which suffers only from an artificiality of construction. The writing is competent, and at times works up some strong images. (The timeless world of E-Zero with its formless agglomeration of 'new' history stands out in this context). Beneath the superficial plot the author is implying another kind of image: one of reversal of character and motivation. The story is not totally satisfying in itself, but it will make for unobjectionable reading and, if the reader wishes to seek a meaning which is a little deeper than mere plot, he will find it.

"Mouth of Hell" by David I. Masson (remember his "Traveller's Rest" in NW 154?) is about a deep pit which men are trying to explore. This story is quite unlike anything I have read before, and I can only recommend it unhesitatingly. Roger Zelazny's "Love is an Imaginary Number" is not totally to my own taste. It's about a being who can shift at will through time and space, and who is being pursued by others of his own kind. "Anne" by E. C. Tubb is a simple story, very well written, about a dying man and a spaceship which cares for his needs. Charles Platt's "The Failures" is an extrapolation of a few contemporary trends, but apart from this says very little. The sentiments expressed are naive and clumsy, and the action and locale of the plot are limited by their close resemblance to mainstream writing.

Again, NEW WORLDS features several departments. There is a long and intelligent editorial concerning science and religion, and the application of both to science fiction; there is a poem by Peter Redgrove; a good article by John Brunner on the hows of SF-writing (this feature alone is worth the half-crown); book reviews by James Colvin (who seems to be mellowing); and a letter-column.

SCIENCE FANTASY 81, February, 1966.

Thank Heaven for Harry Harrison. This is the last issue, as such, of SCIENCE FANTASY and Kyril Bonfiglioli seems to have gone to great pains to make it a memorable one. In addition to the conclusion of "Plague from Space", five short stories have been included of which, with one exception, the kindest thing that can be said is that they are slight. Harry Harrison's novel (which is, I'm told, to be published by Gollancz this year) is good, fast reading and finishes on a satisfactory note. I would question some of the developments in the plot - in particular the breathtaking speed at which the Jovians learn to speak English, and the sleight-of-pseudopod which produces an antidote more or less out of thin ammonia - but it rattles along competently and entertainingly to a happy ending.

The cover, as eye-catching and attractive as usual, features "Ballad from a Bottle" by Hugh Simmonds. A deformed man finds a bottle in the sea and, on opening it, hears (surprise!) a mysterious message from a tortured soul. This is a very poor story. "Sing Me No Sorrows" by E. C. Tubb is the exception I mentioned above. This is about a very original penal system, and the effect it has on an errant Earthman.

"The Warp and the Woof-Woof" by John Brunner (who should really have known better) is a faintly amusing satire about a big dog and his astronaut owner. "Marina" by John Harrison is over-written to a point which reduces it to self-parody. This, I think, is something about a mermaid, but to be honest I lost interest on the first page. Paul Jents' "Our Man in 1900" is a story about an illusionist who could, quite literally, do an impossible trick. There was a neat twist at the end, but the story was empty and very, very slight.

As I said, thank Heaven for Harry Harrison.

NEW WORLDS SF 159, February, 1966.

David I. Masson is rapidly becoming one of my favourite authors. The story featured on the cover of this issue ("A Two-Timer") is only his third-published story, but it's also the third I've enjoyed. This, we are told on the front cover, on the back cover and in the Editorial, is a satire. A man from the year 1683 discovers a time-machine and in it travels to 1964. This gives rise to much pithy comment on our way of life, presented from the point of view of an inhabitant of an era which, by contemporary standards, is often held to be a pretty corrupt time. The appeal of the story, however, is not the satire but the way in which it is written. The style is strictly period, and, contrary to my expectations, was totally readable. (What a pity, it occurred to me as I read the story, that the printers didn't catch the spirit of the thing and give us illuminated capitals and f's instead of s's!) I recommend this story out of hand: it's good, honest science fiction, complete with time-paradoxes, and yet it is a satire and the points it makes are valid and at all times amusing.

Unfortunately, the rest of the issue is not up to this high standard. John Watney's "The Orbs" is based on the false (in my opinion) assumption that mankind would be so grateful to any alien entity that could regulate the weather, that it would be willing even to sacrifice human life to it. I found it a bit sick, anyway. "Hi, Sancho!" by Paul Jents is a routine paranoid-protagonist story; a man escapes from something evil and makes his way back to civilisation, where he finds things are not as he would like them. The twist at the end made me groan. Philip E. High's "Temporary Resident" is based on a fairly original idea: that of convincing a man that he is dead, to see if he will divulge the secret he carries. As usual, High's characters are two-dimensional and, again as usual, he insults the reader's intelligence by hammering home the point of the story at least three times. "The Sword Against the Stars" by A.F. Hall is not to my taste at all: the human race is subject, and cowers under the constant dread of the occupying aliens. Then a man discovers a sword, and plans to rally the world around him to rid the planet of this scourge. It was all a bit passe for my liking.

A very lop-sided issue. Buy it for the Masson story ... it is not to be missed.

Chris Priest.

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BOOKS | Reviews & Future Releases

PILGRIMAGE by Zenna Henderson
Panther 1971, 3/6. 202 pages.

Reviewed by
W. T. Webb

Six short stories, "Ararat", "Gilead", "Pottage", "Wilderness", "Captivity" and "Jordan", written, apparently, over a period of six or seven years, and originally appearing in FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, are here collected into one volume - PILGRIMAGE; the Book of the People.

The biblical names of the stories and some of the characters, and the lofty sentiments expressed, tend to give it certain aspects of a sacred book. And perhaps Zenna Henderson enthusiasts will consider it as such.

Individual stories from this collection have been anthologised and are well-known and well-regarded by many SF readers.

"Ararat" concerns the arrival of a new school teacher to the remote canyon where a group of the People dwell. It is an exciting story, fully charged with freshness and that certain flavour which results from a combination of SF-type happenings and a hill-billy setting. The sentiment is sane and wholesome; the characters come amusingly to life. This story, I would say, is the best in the book.

The People come from an alien planet, and enjoy certain talents not generally possessed by Terrans. On arrival upon Earth, many of them became separated from the main group. Some of the scattered ones marry Terrans and have families.

"Gilead" is an account of two children born to a Terran father and an alien mother. Their mixed blood, however, does not prevent them from having superhuman qualities. But will this fact, which divides them from other Terrans, ensure that they are made welcome by the People?

"Pottage" relates how a Terran school teacher meets a secret group of the People

who, in the past, have suffered for their special powers. Against bitter opposition she encourages the children of the group to develop their alien capabilities instead of suppressing them.

But such powers as levitation and telekinesis are not the exclusive property of the People. Occasionally a Terran born and bred is similarly gifted. And "Wilderness" tells how a small town school teacher, with very special talents and after considerable tension, contacts the People and is accepted by them.

"Captivity" is the moving story of Miss Carolle and the Francher kid. In any narrow-minded community a youngster with special gifts is looked upon with cruel suspicion. The Francher kid is no exception to this rule. His own speciality is an ability to get music out of any musical instrument without actually playing it in the normal way. In fact, he can vivify the instruments of an entire orchestra in this fashion. But only among the People, where there is apparently no Musician's Union, is this ability appreciated and encouraged.

Finally there comes a time when a choice has to be made on whether the People who have settled on Earth should remain here or proceed to a new home on another planet. In "Jordan" we are told, among other things, how the choice is made by various individuals. This is another fine and sensitive story.

All the stories are good, in fact, but this does not necessarily make for an excellent volume. These stories, I feel, suffer from being presented in a bunch.

Certain authors, such as Ray Bradbury in THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES (THE SILVER LOCUSTS), and van Vogt in THE WAR AGAINST THE RULL, are able to write short stories that actually gain from being collected together. But Zenna Henderson, with these stories at least, is not such an author. Many of the stories have a similarity of plot which is inclined to become boring and predictable. Also, as they are narrated in the first person, mostly by sensitive youngsters or school teachers, there is a certain amount of confusion about which character is telling a particular story. The 'I' of one story is liable to be confused with the 'I' of another, and with the character Lea, a would-be suicide whose contact with the People and their efforts to dissuade her from self-destruction, forms the encompassing narrative within which the other narratives are expounded.

PILGRIMAGE is thus a hybrid between a group of stories and a novel, and as such, I think, is hardly successful. In the novel, the faults of the individual stories become emphasised; the ultra-feminine attitude, the confused theology, the pettiness of the American small town background, and the constant references to Kleenex.

Another remarkable thing about the People is that, in spite of their wonderful talents and sensitivities, they never seem to develop beyond the stature of the hill-billy. This seems excusable in a short story, but in a novel one expects some sort of logical progress.

The stories, and the book as a whole, are well-written. Certain phrases stick in the mind like lines of poetry:-

"The sky was so blue you could taste it, a winy fallish taste of harvest fields and falling leaves."

No doubt, in the years to come, these stories will continue to be anthologised and reprinted. They will continue to give pleasure and uplift to new readers and to others re-reading them after an interval. But only the true Zenna Henderson fan will get perfect enjoyment out of these six short stories compounded into a novel.

NO MAN ON EARTH by Walter Moudy
Ronald Whiting & Wheaton, 18/-. 172 pages.

Reviewed by
Don Malcolm

The superman theme has been used so often in SF that for any new book to succeed, the treatment and writing would have to be almost superlative. In this book, both fall short of the standard required. Mr. Moudy, an American author, apparently wasn't firing on all cylinders when he wrote this book for, in every aspect, it has as much direction as a rudderless ship in a typhoon.

The biggest fault of the book is that there are far too many pages of unrelieved dialogue. There are few adverbs or cigars; while the characters talked, they did nothing. This isn't natural - people don't simply sit and talk at each other without indulging in the thousand-and-one little habits that flesh is heir to.

The device of stark, unadorned dialogue is useful to give occasional variety but, in normal conversation, the dialogue must be clothed, if for no other reason than to prevent the reader from losing track of 'who said what when'. After perhaps half a page of dialogue without 'guide words' one tends to get confused, necessitating irritating backtracking to pick up the lost thread.

The plot deals with the emergence of a superman among a tribe of hill people who have been isolated on a reservation by the American government and who have been conditioned to believe that they are living shortly after the Great War.

This is how Thad Stone gets started:-

"Without warning it had happened. From the dark heart of that sullen cloud had come a flash of lightning without thunder. The door to her cabin had opened, and the creature had stood framed in the doorway. The murky cloud on Thunder Mountain had wakened with a roar. The creature's eyes had captured the lightning from the skies. It had moved toward her. She had trembled like a leaf in the wind, but she had not moved. She could not move. Nor could she resist as the creature's strong hands had torn her clothes from her." The rest you can imagine.

Thad escapes from the reservation when he's about eleven and sets about detonating his niche in the United States of 2081, intent on the creation of an interstellar ship that will carry him on his search for his father.

His escape is shrugged off as unimportant by the organisation responsible for the reservation but, within a few years, his genius makes him a threat to the delicate balance that exists between America and Russia.

From chapter eleven, Mr. Moudy's story staggers all over space. He uses four chapters to provide a single clue to the likely whereabouts of Stone's father. In fact, too much time is spent in irrelevances. These, plus the immature perpetuation of the Cold War serve to detract from the plot line and weaken the story which, given firm direction and treatment, could have been good.

Two crew-members of Stone's starship find it difficult to adjust to the existance of intelligent life in space. I can only assume that they reflect the writer's views. Based on what is being written and done today, I doubt if few people in 2081 would find "...even the idea of intelligent life....incomprehensible", while blithely accepting the continued existence of the Cold War.

While NO MAN ON EARTH displays a lot of good writing, it rambles too much for my liking.

Not recommended.

NEW WRITINGS IN SF 7 edited by John Carnell
Dennis Dobson, 16/-. 184 pages.

Reviewed by
Terry Jeeves

Frankly, this latest collection of seven stories was a great disappointment; only three of the yarns had any resemblance to a plot and none of them had sufficient reality of description to give any degree of reader empathy. 'With it' wordiness and the whimper ending seems to be the future field of SF, if these are New Writings and 'the next step forward'.

"Invader" by James White takes up a quarter of the book and is probably the best story if you can accept the extremely unlikely premise of a multi-alien space hospital with interwoven atmospheres, transit systems and communal feeding (imagine the likelihood of inadvertent food-poisoning). Another drawback is the stage setting which is drearily repetitious to those familiar with the series, and boring to the newcomer because of its tedious description rather than development within the story.

The story itself follows the usual pattern - a medical (alien) problem, a seemingly hopeless period of work followed by a lifeless solution. In this case, accidents caused by an alien tool which could appear as anything to anyone.

"Man Who Missed the Ferry" (Mason) tells, in fancy phrasing, of the victim of a head injury who walks on water, walks through walls and, on meeting a girl, achieves total communication. They climb a building ... he loses the power ... she falls off ... he jumps... END.

"Night of the Seventh Finger" (Presslie) is a description of a girl accosted by a man-made android from the future. It tries to talk her into having no children, so that its maker will not be born, then it cannot come back to spread disease. The girl bolts, the android kills itself and the story whimpers out.

"6 Cubed Plus One" (Rankine) - teaching machines form a corporate mind and take over a school. Interesting and complete even if not outstanding.

"Coco-Talk" (Temple) - light-hearted diplomatic espionage on swampy Venus. Where every second statement is untrue, how can you pick out the truth?

"Touch of Immortality" (Mackelworth) tells of a dictator who applies to the future for immortality ... and gets it. Cardboard stereotypes but at least it is a story complete in itself.

"Manscarer" (Roberts) is about non-conformists isolated from megalopolis who tire of pointless idiocies and return to the city for more interesting idiocies. Fascinating new 'wordy' style but no signs of a story.

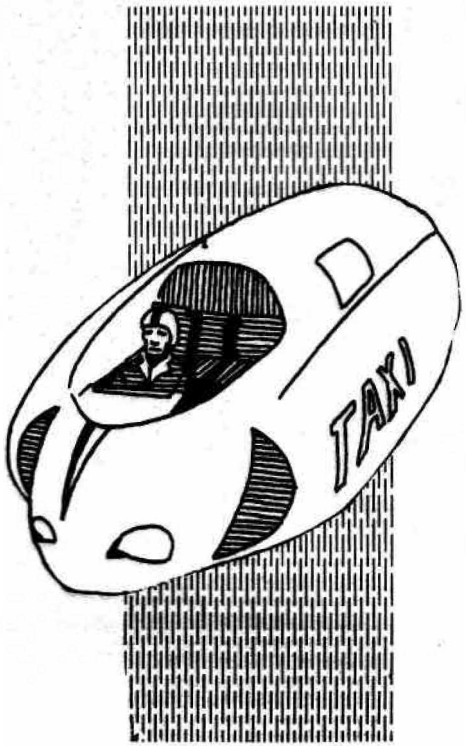
This material might merit paperback price but even at that price it is poor. Some may enjoy it, however.

THE BEST OF NEW WORLDS edited by Michael Moorcock — Reviewed by
Compact H287, 5/- 312 pages. — Chris Priest

Reluctant as I always am to jump on a bandwagon, I must say that this is an excellent anthology. Even NEW WORLDS itself has joined in the acclaim of this book ... a ploy not yet attempted by F. & S.F., GALAXY or ANALOG with their collections. It is probably the best value for years, both penny-per-story and in its varied quality. The stories have been selected with intelligence and with a remarkable balance between popular appeal and the editor's own preferences. Moorcock has certainly not concentrated upon those stories which first appeared under his own editorship; in fact, two-thirds of the book comes from the long, successful period under John Carnell.

The stories are presented chronologically - an interesting innovation. The earliest story, Brian Aldiss' "The Pit My Parish", dates from 1958, and is Aldiss' own personal brand of

British attrition. This story has some strong imagery supporting an unbelievable plot, resulting in a piece of work that is more stimulating than entertaining. The most contemporary story is B. J. Bayley's "All the King's Men", an oblique consideration of what it really means to be an alien. In between these two there is a broad field of science fiction, varied and good. Worthy of particular mention are: "Tableau" by James White, a literally devastating combination of two traditional SF ideas; J. G. Ballard's "The Terminal Beach", a beautiful and brilliant story of which no words can justly be said to describe it, other than a quotation of the whole thing; "The Last Lonely Man" by John Brunner, which is, in a literal sense, a story about a meeting of the mings; and Langdon Jones' "I Remember, Anita...", a frankly experimental story which has an undeniable impact.



There are no stories in this book that are thoroughly bad, though one or two of them fail to reach the overall high standard. I am only surprised that this book was possible at all: most of these stories should have been snapped up for anthologies before this.

Definitely recommended.

THE CREEPING SHROUD by Lan Wright
Compact F293, 3/6. 190 pages.

Reviewed by
Graham Hall

Lan Wright is just an average SF writer. I doubt that he claims to be more. The style of THE CREEPING SHROUD is not great; the vocabulary is stilted and repetitious; even the plot staggers a little in the first couple of thousand words. Yet Mr. Wright has done something that John Wyndham has consistently failed to do; something that many lesser writers have stumbled in attempting - he has Ended a catastrophe novel.

The creeping shroud is 'the weed'; what would happen if the African Water Hyacinth adapted to salt water conditions and began altering weather to suit itself.

A well-extrapolated idea based on fact. It paddles on in a prosaic fashion and, predictably, a love affair is dragged in.

Something slightly original is introduced by way of a Mars colony striving to rescue Earth and the human race....and doing it in a spectacular fashion. The protagonist, biologist Peter Benbow, goes to Mars and, even when he returns to a changed Earth, the reader thinks the story will fizzle out in a predictable way. But then Mr. Wright puts a twist in the tale. Even the love affair turns out unexpectedly, and the last two pages bring the novel to a quietly brilliant finale.

The handling of THE CREEPING SHROUD might have been vastly improved but, as a perpetually disappointed addict of catastrophe novels, I was pleasantly surprised by this ending.

Well worth reading.

AMERICAN BOOK RELEASES

CITIES OF WONDER edited by Damon Knight (Doubleday $4.50)
STRANGE SIGNPOSTS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE FANTASTIC edited by Sam Moskowitz and Roger Ellwood (Holt, Rinehart & Winston $5.50) Jun. 66.
THE ANTI-DEATH LEAGUE by Kingsley Amis (Harcourt Brace & World $5.95) Apr. 66.
FANTASTIC VOYAGE by Isaac Asimov (Houghton Mifflin $3.95) Mar. 66.
FUTURE PERFECT: AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY edited by H. Bruce Franklin (Oxford University Press $6.50) Feb. 66.
THE JOHN WYNDHAM OMNIBUS (Simon & Schuster $5.95)
THE FROZEN PLANET - an anthology of stories from IF (MacFadden 60¢)
THE WATCH BELOW by James White (Ballantine 50¢)
VINTAGE ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FANTASY edited by Christopher Cerf (Vintage $1.65)
THE STARS LIKE DUST by Isaac Asimov (Lancer 60¢)
THE CURRENTS OF SPACE by Isaac Asimov (Lancer 60¢)
THE TIME BENDER by Keith Laumer (Berkley 50¢)
CHILDREN OF THE LENS by E.E. Smith (Pyramid 60¢)
BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO by Harry Harrison (Berkley 50¢)
THE INVISIBLE MAN & 18 SF STORIES by H.G. Wells (Dover $1.75)
CAVES OF MARS by Emil Petaja)
SPACE MERCENARIES by A.Bertram Chandler) (Ace M133, 45¢)
THE CLONE by Theodore L. Thomas & Kate Wilhelm (Berkley F1169, 50¢)
THE GENOCIDES by Thomas M. Disch (Berkley F1170, 50¢)
KING IN YELLOW by Robert W. Chambers (Ace M132, 45¢)
MAKER OF UNIVERSES by Philip Jose Farmer (Ace F367, 40¢)
NIGHT OF MASKS by Andre Norton (Ace F365, 40¢)
PAINGOD AND OTHER DELUSIONS by Harlan Ellison (Pyramid R1270, 50¢)
SQUARES OF THE CITY by John Brunner (Ballantine U6035, 75¢)
THE THROWBACKS by Roger Sarac (Belmont B50-642, 50¢)

BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

FANTASTIC VOYAGE by Isaac Asimov (Dobson 21/-) April
THE FURY OUT OF TIME by Lloyd Biggle (Dobson 21/-)
ANDOVER AND THE ANDROID (and Other Stories) (Dobson 16/-)
MENACE FROM EARTH by Robert A. Heinlein (Dobson 21/-)
ANALOG 3 edited by John W. Campbell (Dobson 21/-)
THE QUY EFFECT by Arthur Sellings (Dobson 18/-)
THE CRYSTAL WORLD by J. G. Ballard (Cape 21/-)
THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH by Philip K. Dick (Cape 21/-)
THE WATCH BELOW by James White (Whiting & Wheaton 18/-) Mar. 31.
SF SHOWCASE edited by Mary Kornbluth (Whiting & Wheaton 21/-) Apr 14.
STAR FOURTEEN edited by Frederik Pohl (Whiting & Wheaton 21/-) May 12.
I CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT ed by Kurt Singer (Whiting & Wheaton 21/-) May 12.
DUNE by Frank Herbert (Gollancz 25/-)
BEST FROM F & SF: 14th SERIES ed by Avram Davidson (Gollancz 21/-)
A HEINLEIN TRIAD by Robert A. Heinlein (Gollancz 21/-)
CODE THREE by Rick Raphael (Gollancz 16/-)
MINDSWAP by Robert Sheckley (Gollancz 18/-)
THE PEOPLE: NO DIFFERENT FLESH by Zenna Henderson (Gollancz 16/-)
CORRIDORS OF TIME by Poul Anderson (Gollancz 16/-)
DARK DECEMBER by Alfred Coppel (Herbert Jenkins 12/6)
PSYCHOGEIST by L.P. Davies (Herbert Jenkins 15/-)
CONDITIONALLY HUMAN by Walter M. Miller (Panther 1989, 3/6) Feb. 24.
TIME GLADIATOR by Mack Reynolds (Four Square 1459, 3/6) Mar. 3.
THREE WORLDS TO CONQUER by Poul Anderson (Mayflower 3/6) Mar. 1.
THE FURIOUS FUTURE by Algis Budrys (Panther 3/6) Mar.
THE ROSE by Charles L. Harness (Compact F295, 3/6) Feb.
THE RICHEST CORPSE IN SHOW BUSINESS by Dan Morgan (Compact F299, 3/6) Mar. 9.
TIME TRANSFER by Arthur Sellings (Compact 3/6)
STARMAN JONES by Robert Heinlein (Puffin 4/6) Mar.
COSMIC ENGINEERS by Clifford D. Simak (Star Books Import 3/6) Feb. 23.
ALTERNATING CURRENTS by Frederik Pohl (Penguin 3/6) Mar.
MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS by Edgar Pangborn (Penguin 3/6) Apr.
GUNNER CADE by Cyril Judd (Penguin 3/6) May.
THE POSSESSORS by John Christopher (Hodder 3/6)

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THE MAIL RESPONSE

Tom Jones,
27 Lansbury Avenue,
Rossington,
Doncaster.

I must point out a mistake in the article "East versus West in SF". The part I refer to is the paragraph concerning Eric Frank Russell. First, Mr. Russell is British and not American. Also, Mr. Haldricks states that the hero is an ideal American and states the 'virtues' of the hero from which he deduced this, but these 'virtues' are surely the ones of any ideal capitalist, be he American, British or West German or a member of any capitalist society.

Mr. Haldricks also exaggerated the description of the Zangastrians and the point was that the Zangastrians mentioned in the book were members of an army at war, which is always very authoritarian. Thus the story was not, as Mr. Haldricks says, an attack on the Russians but rather a satire on the military. Similar satirical points against the military can also be seen in other stories of Mr. Russell's, notably THE GREAT EXPLOSION and "Nuisance Value".

I agree with Mr. Aitken that the reasons given for axing the "Mail Response" were inadequate; after all it should be the readers, as well as the editor, who say what goes into a magazine, and the only way we can do this is through the "Mail Response".

I also think that Mr. Aitken's point about a friendly club is a valid one. You, the editor, disagree with this and quote part of the Constitution, but the Constitution also says, para 2 - Objects:

(i) "The Association shall exist for the benefit of those interested in SF and allied branches of imaginative literature", also from para 2:

(ii) "... it (the BSFA) shall assist and encourage contact between enthusiasts, shall provide liaison between its members and the SF profession....."

then it states the point you make. Also, the operative words in the clause you state are "Press and general public" but it distinctly states at the beginning of every VECTOR, "It is distributed free to members of the BSFA and is not available to the general public", so you seem to be contradicting yourself.

You also say that VECTOR should be understandable to the casual SF reader and not just the 'fan' but unless a person is a 'fan' he won't join the BSFA and thus won't see VECTOR.

/_ From your last paragraph I gather that you consider all members of the BSFA as 'fans'. At a very rough estimate I'd say that somewhere between one-third and one-half (possibly less, certainly not more) of the membership are 'fans'. This implies that we both mean something different by the word 'fan'. I'd guess that you mean an 'enthusiast', as the dictionary definition, in which case, there would have been no need for the quotation marks I deliberately included. By 'fan' I mean someone who produces his own fanzine, contributes to other fanzines, writes letters of comment regularly or attends conventions for the social side of the event. So, anyone who wishes to have a 'friendly club' has the makings of a 'fan'. More than half of the BSFA membership don't give a damn about the social side; they're not interested in writing to other members or reading fanzines. This means that they are fans, without quotation marks! Mention Willis and they'll no doubt say "Who?". 'Fans' have a jargon of their own and I'm sure that if VECTOR were filled with 'fannish' talk, the membership would drop drastically, due to large numbers being unable to comprehend the contents.

Back to your previous paragraph: the operative words in the clause I used from the Constitution were "...in an advantageous manner..." and not the words "...general public..." True, it does say in every issue "...not available to the general public..." but this means that it is not for sale or available for a subscription. But there are still people other than BSFA members who see VECTOR: publishers, contributors, etc. all receive copies regularly. Also, many members must show VECTOR to other people who they think may be interested in joining the BSFA. There is a copy available in the British Museum in compliance with the laws relating to printed books.

I hope these comments help clear up any misunderstandings there may have been.

- RGP_/

Graham M. Hall,
57 Church Street,
Tewkesbury,
Glos.

I'm still far from sure that the contents of VECTOR justify the extra expense of professional printing. But in this issue you have published perhaps the most interesting article I've ever read in the magazine - John Brunner's "The Economics of SF".

Although I'd dispute that there are only 250 full-time writers in America, I do appreciate the difficulties of keeping oneself entirely by creative writing. From figures supplied by author friends, I'd say his guesstimates are pretty close to the mark. But what would have happened, bearing in mind that this Mr. Frishblitz is between 35 and 40, if he had had three children before being in a position to freelance? This puts it off and off and the kids eat more and more, or increase in number until there's a time when he can no longer take the plunge.

-Of the handful of pro-authors I know, more than half are now writing solely to pay off the excessive Inland Revenue demands on all those escudos and francs and yens

accumulating from stories they sold about four years back. But Brunner paints an attractive picture.

/ Mr. Hall also wrote in defending the "Mail Response", the majority of his comments being identical to those of Mr. Jones in the previous letter - RGP /

Chris Cook,
"St. Lucia",
West Looe Hill,
Looe,
Cornwall.

VECTOR 37 was a superlative issue - much better binding and a great cover. John Brunner's article made me wonder whatever prompts a person to enter the danger fraught finance of professional writing.

Why don't the American magazines get reviewed in VECTOR? After all they are sure to be read more widely by the BSFA membership than either of the British magazines.

Another query - why not have a fanzine review column? Look at the fanzines knocked out by BSFA members - LINK, CON, FUSION, etc. They ought to be reviewed in VECTOR.

/ Reviewing the American magazines as well would take up far too much room. Also, we only review books or magazines that have been sent specifically for the purpose of a review and the American magazines do not send us review copies. Fanzine reviews? See this issue. This column will be an experiment which we hope will succeed in converting various members from fans to 'fans' - RGP /

Come to the Yarcon!

GREAT YARMOUTH

EASTER 1966

GUEST OF HONOUR - RONALD WHITING.

THE 1966 BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION CONVENTION WILL BE HELD AT THE ROYAL HOTEL, GREAT YARMOUTH, OVER THE EASTER WEEKEND. (APRIL 8th to the 11th)

RATES WILL BE 50/- + 10% PER DAY, WHICH INCLUDES BED, BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND EVENING MEAL. ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR THOSE REQUIRING BED AND BREAKFAST ONLY.

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a Science Fiction publishing event unparalleled in recent years

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

by

Isaac Asimov

This first new novel in ten years from Dr. Isaac Asimov is undoubtedly his most outstanding work of fiction to date and combines the best of science and fiction expected from such an eminent biochemist and author.

Here is the incredible but believable story of a journey into the infinitely small - into the very bloodstream of a man suffering from a clot of blood on the brain preventing him from divulging vital secrets essential to the security of the West. Within his body four men and a woman, placed in a special submarine and reduced to the size of a molecule, battle perils not even found in nightmares against a time limit which will kill all of them including the patient if they do not cauterize the area before they return to normal size.

While there have been many stories of this nature in the past, never has one been written so accurately or convincingly.

A major film of the book will be released this summer.

Publication April 1966 21s net

Also scheduled for publication during the next few months:-

STAR KING by Jack Vance 16s net

UNDERSEA QUEST by Frederik Pohl and Jack Williamson 16s net

NEW WRITINGS IN SF 8 Edited by John Carnell 16s net

Recently published:-

NEW WRITINGS IN SF 7 Edited by John Carnell 16s net

DENNIS DOBSON