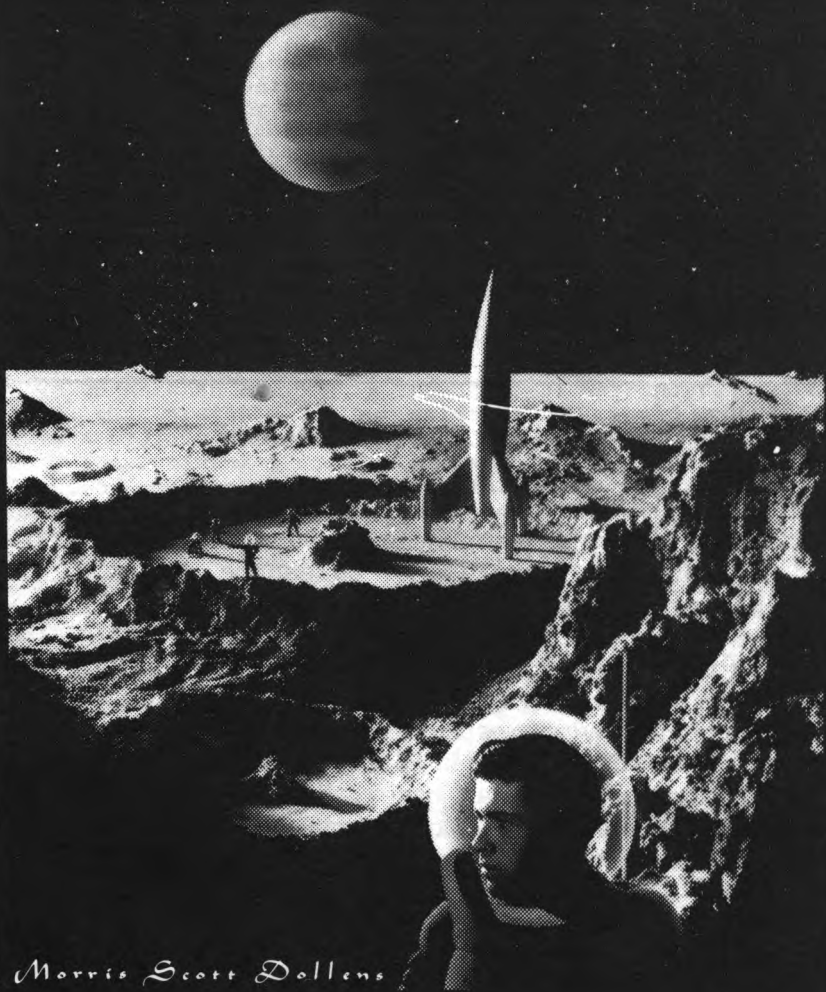


FALL 53

Science-Fiction Advertiser



Morris Scott Dollens

20¢

Fall

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Notes From the Editor

100 PROOF SCIENCE FICTION, STRAIGHT . . . IS IT PALATABLE?

The "Brass Tacks" column of the May 1953 Astounding carried a letter from Mr. John Gilson expressing an interesting idea. He said, "Your editorial on 'The Laws of Speculation' will probably start a lot of speculation, so why not start a department of -- or for -- the practice and advancement of speculation? Call it the Spec. Dept."

Editor Campbell's answer, "The Spec. Dept. is called 'Astounding Science Fiction'", was true enough. His magazine still leads the field in the publication of entertaining speculation, the "what would happen if. . ." story. Which happens to be the sort of story that keeps a good many of us reading science fiction.

But Campbell said, in that September 1952 editorial that Mr. Gilson mentions, "I cannot publish a highly interesting and intelligent speculation, no matter how sound, unless it is wrapped up in a reasonably acceptable story."

That, too, is true. He can't -- but a little publication like the Advertiser can. And, beginning as soon as we can get under weigh, the Advertiser will carry a "Spec. Dept." (for which title, many thanks to Mr. Gilson), and I hope many of you will contribute to it.

To suggest an example, a more complex astronomical situation than prevails in our solar system would undoubtedly have a profound influence on the development of the sciences. Many entertaining speculations have been offered in science fiction concerning hypothetical races whose knowledge of the various sciences grew with emphases differing from ours: highly developed social sciences existing with only primitive physical sciences is a gimmick that has been used more than once, and it offers a wide scope for further development. It occurs to me that inhabitants of a planet of a multiple star system would take a long time in discovering the law of universal gravitation. Perhaps even the lesser handicap of Earth's being our sun's only satellite would have prevented Kepler's formulating his empirical laws. A single example would hardly have warranted their being considered. Does anyone want to kick that around?

Along similar lines, who would like to define a world that could not have produced a Euclid: one that would need a Lobachevski or a Riemann before it would have a usable geometry? Or that could not have had a Newton who was not also an Einstein?

Another approach that has been highly productive of science fiction ideas seeks to posit basic philosophical differences in alien races. Can anyone conceive a satisfactory philosophical foundation leading to a people's automatically applying the opposite of Occam's Razor to their formulation of hypotheses? And would anyone undertake the disordered task of speculating on the probable history of the ideas of

such a people? (I would like it noted that I am aware that humanity has at times profitably flouted the principle of parsimony -- look at the body of science we've developed when the simple hypothesis of a deity explains everything -- but, generally, our most successful investigations have been conducted with the celebrated nominalist's principle implicit in our thinking.)

Is there conceivable a consistent chemistry that would cause solid lenses to be either impossible or dependent upon a complex technology? A lot of fun could be had with that premise if it could be justified.

I've been thinking more or less along one general line of science fiction situation, but there will be no such restrictions on acceptable ideas. Even some that have been used still have a lot of chewing left in them. Despite the several times that other authors have written Heinlein's "Universe" and Leinster's "First Contact", my guess is that alternative developments of those basic situations could still be profitably worked out.

I doubt that I've ever met a science fiction reader who hadn't some sort of story idea he liked to talk about. And I suspect that even the writers could find something for us in their wastebaskets: there are some ideas that just won't make a story!

Well, there's the suggestion. The door's open, there are a lot of pages to be filled for the next issue, and usual rates apply. Any takers?

ON PUBLICATION SCHEDULES

Throughout its seven years of publication, the Advertiser's bi-monthly schedule has presented an annoying problem. Most often it seems that advertisers think of preparing an ad only when a recent issue has reminded them of it. And for ads resulting from one issue to be fitted into the next calls for some pretty tight scheduling, which to a part-time publisher is a hardship. The best practicable solution seems to be to change to quarterly publication, which astute readers of this issue's cover will have anticipated. Six issues for a dollar still holds, and in all probability you will find they will average out to about the same number of pages per year as heretofore.

The extended lapse between this issue and the one previous is the first that I feel personally responsible for. A sincere apology is offered, accompanied by the opinion that, with quarterly publication, it won't happen again.

READERS IN STERLING COUNTRIES...

...may now place subscription orders with Mr. David Cohen, Flat 7, "Paisley", 45 Waverley St., Bondi Junction, N.S.W. Subscriptions to such countries that have expired during the past year have been continued automatically because of the impossibility of their renewal, but receipt of further issues is now dependent upon renewal.

Fantastic Fiction

There is a difference between fantastic fiction in particular and fiction in general which lies outside of considerations of subject matter: In fantastic fiction the motives at work in a story arise from elements or sources external to the characters in the story; in general fiction they usually arise from the relationships existing between the characters.

By "motive" I mean a person's reason for doing something, the cause or purpose of his action. By "fantastic fiction" I mean both science fiction and fantasy. From the standpoint of motivation we are justified in speaking of them as a single kind of story. We might also distinguish between them from that same standpoint by noting that in science fiction the externalized motivating factor -- the fantastic element -- is described in naturalistic terms, whereas in fantasy it is presented in supernatural terms.



Essentially, the external motivation story is a story about something, in which the nature of that something determines the actions and events of the story. In its simplest form it is a story about a situation. Of course, all stories concern "situations" -- but in those which come under our heading of "Externally Motivated" the situation is a physical one, or in some way or another extends outside and beyond the relations between the characters: it is extra-personal or supra-personal.

Quite often it is a sudden situation which intrudes itself upon the characters making it necessary for them to take some sort of direct action to deal with it. For example, there is the "threatening peril" story about an extra-terrestrial

by

Arthur J. Cox

(Photo and painting montage is by Morris Scott Dollens.)

invader (Wells: "War of the Worlds"), a monstrous creature (Keller: "The Worm"), something manmade (Russell: "The Mechanical Mice"), or a supernatural power or entity (Long: "The Hounds of Tindalos"). Similar to this is the "catastrophe" story, which concerns the efforts of its characters to escape death in some overwhelming disaster (Balmer and Wylie: "When Worlds Collide") or to cope with a situation on a comparable scale which is not necessarily fatal (Leinster: "Sidewise in Time"). The story may introduce some object which creates the situation. It might be an invention, the major purpose of which is to make available to the hero various grandiose adventures (Smith: "The Skylark of Space"), or it may revolve more closely about the invention itself, detailing its exploitation and effects (Jameson: "Tricky Tonnage"). There is also the story in which the hero is presented with a problem which he has to solve in order to survive (van Vogt: "A Can of Paint"), or for reasons which are essentially professional, however desperate (Heinlein: "Blowups Happen"). And there is the "alien world" story in which the action grows out of the strange environment in which the protagonist finds himself, sometimes on this planet (Gallun: "Davy Jones' Ambassador") but more often on another (Weinbaum: "A Martian Odyssey").

There are more complex forms of "situation" stories in fantastic fiction which we will consider as they come up: stories which do center their attention on the relations between characters but in which those relationships are conditioned by factors not intrinsically a part of them.

We might divide fantastic fiction into three further types of stories, basing our division upon the clarity with which a story is demonstrably motivated by external factors. Proceeding from the most obvious to the least, there are: (1) the "influencing machine" or possession story; (2) the social science fiction and "world of magic" story; and (3) the "space opera" and fantasy-adventure story.

In the first type, various persons are taken over by some form of non-human entity which is invisible (Russell: "Sinister Barrier") or, perhaps, supernatural (Bradbury: "Fever Dream"); or by another person with a mystic glamour (Sturgeon: "Cellmate") or super-human powers (Page: "But Without Horns"); or by some sinister parasite, usually of extra-terrestrial origin (Heinlein: "The Puppet Masters"); or are "influenced" by machines ("The Shaver Mystery") or by telepathy (Siodmak: "Donovan's Brain"). There are many variations on this theme and elements of it have appeared in the works of A. E. van Vogt, Don A. Stuart, H. P. Lovecraft, and many others. Theodore Sturgeon has perhaps used it the most often and most consciously -- sometimes apparently as a device to bring an otherwise "mundane" story into the realm of the fantastic ("Rule of Three" and "The Perfect Host" are instances).

We might divide social science fiction into two classes (as does Isaac Asimov in his interesting contribution to Modern Science Fiction). The earliest and most prevalent is the story dealing in some way with the effect of technological advances upon society. The story may describe the immediate

social reactions to some technical innovation (Williamson: "The Equalizer") or it may concern special problems associated with the technological scene of the future (Heinlein: "The Roads Must Roll"); in either case, the story is usually just a more elaborate form of the "situation" story first described: it is set in motion by the introduction of some object or by a change in scene.

The other and more recent form is the story in which the events have to, or could only take place in a society whose customs, manners and beliefs are much different from those of the one in which we live. "Beyond Bedlam" by Wyman Guin is a good example; but in considering such a story we are confronted with a curious ambiguity: Is not a culture or society composed of individuals? And, therefore, doesn't such a story simply concern relations between individuals, the characters of the story? The answer is that because a society, by virtue of its complexity and unity in diversity, provides a more-than-human ground for the actions of individuals we may regard it as something external to individuals and the relations between individuals; and when an author shows either directly or by implication the motives of his characters as arising from this external "object" we are justified in examining the story from the standpoint of external motivation.

The equivalent in fantasy of the social science fiction story is the "world of magic" story. If the story depicts a society basically like our own but which exists in a physical world governed by supernatural as well as natural laws which that society actively acknowledges, then it is similar to the first type of social science fiction (Heinlein: "The Devil Makes the Law"). If the society has a structure uniquely its own which was initiated by or made possible by the existence of supernatural powers, it is similar to the second type (Vance: "Ulan Dhor Ends a Dream", a story in The Dying Earth). We have to phrase the distinction in this manner because a story can be decided as science fiction or fantasy (once granted that it is a "fantastic" story) only by noting the way in which it touches upon the external world; purely social phenomena cannot be described as "natural" or "supernatural".

The "space opera" and fantasy adventure stories are the ones most unrewarding to examine in terms of external motivation. By "space opera" I mean those stories which are primarily adventure pieces set against an interplanetary background. The fantasy adventure story takes place in a mythic country and usually has strong supernatural overtones, but the supernatural events and characters are contained in the story -- they do not form the basis for it.

We do not have to accept many of these stories as being examples of fantastic fiction as they have nothing in common with the great body of science fiction and fantasy work, except the trappings. In fact, we sometimes see letters in science fiction magazines complaining that a certain story "was not science fiction at all but simply a western with spaceships for horses and rayguns instead of sixshooters." In short, these stories concern only relations between characters, on however crude a level. As such, they do not dif-

fer from most other "pulp" stories of a non-fantastic nature.

Perhaps this is the point at which to mention that we do occasionally find stories in science fiction and fantasy magazines which cannot be justly called "space opera" or fantasy-adventure, but in which the dramatic developments are derived solely from the relations between characters. I know of four which have been published during the last year or so in the more popular magazines: "Sitting Duck" by Oliver E. Saari, "I Am Nothing" by Eric Frank Russell, "Secret of the House" by H. H. Holmes, and "The Way Home" by Theodore Sturgeon. These stories contain many of the elements of science fiction and fantasy but are themselves fantastic only by association.

Let us try to bring our thesis further into perspective by viewing it in turn from three different angles: (1) external motivation as a reflection of systemized ideas and theories; (2) as a rhetorical device -- its use in prayer, invective, courtship, exhortation -- "propaganda"; (3) as "symbolic" -- what it expresses of the author's feelings and personality.

The first approach we shall discard immediately as not being worthy of investigation in an article of this length: although fantastic fiction is closely bound up with both ideas and external motivation it has few ideas about external motivation. Several of the psychological and sociological theories and systems which situate the origin of personality in impersonal factors have inspired science fiction stories but they have only formed the dramatic bases of the stories; such ideas are seldom found in fantasy. The only writer whose dialectical ideas of motivation have been essential to his fiction is Isaac Asimov, his theories of historical determinism playing a prominent role in his "Foundation" series.

The other two approaches are more promising.

How can external motivation be used in the writing of rhetorical fiction? I see only one way: The author can present his physical or social -- "supra-personal" -- situation and show his characters acting in response to it in order to illuminate existing motives. He can create characters who are identified with certain political, social, esthetic or moral values and then place them within a controlled situation so as to show by their actions their characters and the character of their ideals.

As an illustration, let us suppose that an author wishes to reveal the "basic" motives of some political group or movement. He may feel that existing political and social conditions obscure those motives because they inhibit their exercise or allow them expression only along certain lines. Therefore, he can write a story of a future year in which that group is in power; or he can write a story in which laws have changed and the group has to act through different channels; and so on. By showing the group in response to an entirely different situation he can bring its motives into a new focus -- just as a chemist might experiment with the properties of a solution by varying the proportions of its in-

gradients.

This use of external motivation -- the use to which it is put in stories like Huxley's "Brave New World" and Orwell's "1984" -- differs from the one previously discussed in that it makes certain actions possible, while the other makes them necessary. It straddles the boundary between fiction in which motives arise from sources external to the relations among the characters and fiction in which motives arise from the relations between the characters. It has to do so, if it's going both to involve external motivation and to be effective as rhetorical fiction; if the motives in the story arose solely from external factors, they would have no relevance to the existing situation.

Isaac Asimov suggests in Modern Science Fiction that these stories are not really science fiction but are what he calls "social fiction"; and I believe that he is right in feeling that they differ in kind as well as in quality from the great body of work in the field. One of the most peculiar traits of magazine fantastic fiction is that rhetoric plays practically no acknowledged part in it. We might say that it is devotedly dialectical. Readers seem to be suspicious of any story in which the author doesn't confine himself solely to the discussion of ideas and presentation of dramatic events but allows himself to be distracted by his "editorializing" impulses. Partly, this may be just the average person's resentment at being "preached at", but I think that something else is involved also: a feeling that the fantastic element is diluted by the use to which it is put. The fantastic elements in stories like "Brave New World" are too clearly fictive devices; and since the appeal of the fantastic idea lies in its being accepted literally and unreservedly, the reader is dissatisfied.

An author is not limited to the exploration of political themes, of course, but may deal with social motives of a more general kind -- and we sometimes find stories of this sort within magazine pages: those that describe the reactions of various persons, peoples and nations to some strange incident (Vance: "DP") or invention (Sherred: "E For Effort"). Usually, the story revolves about some physical incident or object which is initially irrelevant to the political and social scene; I believe that this is an additional characteristic making the story unacceptable to magazine readers.

The only continuously producing fantastic fiction writer whose work has a consistently high rhetorical content is Ray Bradbury -- a major factor setting his fiction apart from the rest of the field.

Let us begin our remarks on the personal significance of the use of external motivation in fiction with an inspection of it in its purest form: what I've called "the influencing machine" story.

In his paper "On the Origins of the Influencing Machine in Schizophrenia" (Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 1933; abstracted in #8 Neurotica, 1951), Victor Tausk discusses the delusions of schizophrenic and paranoid patients who believe that they

are being controlled and influenced by machines, telepathic powers, demons, and so forth. In his prefatory note to the re-publication of the paper in Neurotica, G. Legman points out the relevance of Tausk's observations to science fiction, remarking in particular on "Sinister Barrier" by Eric Frank Russell (Fantasy Press, 1950) and "Donovan's Brain" by Curt Siodmak.

The paranoid is unwilling to accept certain feelings and impulses as being his own, so he interprets them as originating from outside himself. To justify this idea he invents stories of diabolical machines and sinister influences. It's fairly obvious how this same process of rationalization is used in fiction. The author has his protagonist commit various (unconsciously) pleasurable crimes -- such as murder -- and then says, in effect: "He is not responsible because something -- a super-intelligence, a machine, a magic spell -- compelled him to do it." He is "...innocent in terms of intention, even if...guilty in terms of action" is the way Sturgeon phrased it in a recent story, "The Dark Room".

In the social science fiction and "world of magic" story the author utilizes external factors in a similar but subtler way. Somewhere, the critic Kenneth Burke has pointed out that the quality of an act varies in accordance with the background against which it is set. For example, an act performed against the background of a universe ruled by gods is quite different from the "same" act performed against the background of a deterministic and behavioristic universe. Consider H. Beam Piper's story, "Last Enemy". It describes a society in which re-incarnation has been established as fact: that is, when a person dies his "psyche" subsequently reappears in the body of a new-born infant. In such a world an assassination might have the same political significance as it has in ours, but it would be quite different otherwise. In a sense, it wouldn't be murder at all and this might serve to justify political assassination -- exactly the use to which Piper puts it. We can justly suspect the existence of similar motives behind the selection of any societal or physical background radically differing from our own. (In "Beyond Bedlam", for instance, we are enabled to indulge vicariously in adultery-which-isn't-adultery.)

It is possible that most examples of the first type of "situation" story which we considered have no special importance to our discussion here. There are "the more complex forms", though, which we have rather slighted till now: stories which do center their attention on the relations between characters but in which those relationships are conditioned and qualified by certain external considerations. Of course, the social science fiction and "world of magic" story is one of those forms, but there is another: the story in which the relations between the characters are qualified by the physical, biological, or supernatural state of being of one of the participants in the relationships: he is a robot, a ghost, an "imitation" human being, or an extra-terrestrial creature. The reason the author creates an "ersatz" human being as a character is that this permits him to contemplate with equanimity certain relationships which would otherwise embarrass him with their implications. He is enabled to retain certain

feelings and attitudes as ingredients in a situation without having to recognize them as legitimate parts of the relations between the characters. (Let us say that the author writes a story in which a major character is an "android". He is able to present a relationship between "it" and the protagonist without the embarrassments which would be involved if both were members in good standing of the human race.) This type of characterization has been a predominate aspect of the stories of the new writer, Philip Jose Farmer; he has used it with great awareness in his story, "Mother" -- in which the idyllic relationship between "mother-and-son" is made possible by the physiological nature of "the mother".

It would seem that the distinctive personal use of external motivation is that it enables us to transform our relations with others in ways advantageous to ourselves by the introduction from outside of an extra-personal element into those relationships. Essentially, a deus ex machina device.

And that is what makes the external motivation story fantastic. For, after all, what do we mean when we say that a story is "fantastic"? Simply that it describes events divorced from common experience and ideas contrary to common preconceptions? The Ripley sense of the word? I don't think so. Rather it is an aspect of the story which transforms for the moment the very nature of things, which brings into a new alignment the forces which govern our lives. It does this by reaching in and touching us at the very core of our beings: our relations with others.

FALL Science Fiction Advertiser is published quarterly as
1953 a medium of exchange of ideas, opinions, and the more
V VI tangible items of interest to readers and collectors
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THIS ISSUE'S COVER "Exploring Moon of Neptune" is by Dollens.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE, in addition to the first appearance of The Spec. Dept. (see this issue's editorial), we will present an exceptionally stimulating essay by Reginald Bretnor, "On Taking Science Fiction Seriously".

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A Republican's Utopia

THE SPACE MERCHANTS by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth.
Ballantine, 179 pp; paper, 35¢, and hardbound, \$1.50.

This story of the next century's hucksters hits home with an impact you'll feel down to your heels. Every character is the counterpart of similarly motivated, similarly reacting people we know today. And although the authors have portrayed a world almost fantastically repulsive, the verisimilitude of their story is never in jeopardy, for that world is a convincing linear extension of civilization's path during the past century and a half.

The protagonist, Mitchell Courtenay, is an executive of an advertising agency which employs "a list of semantic cue words that tie in with every basic trauma and neurosis in American life today", in retaliation to the outlaying of compulsive subsonics; that outmaneuvers the "safety cranks" who "stopped us from projecting our messages on aircar windows" with "a system that projects direct on the retina of the eye"; and whose client, Coffiest, contains "a simple alkaloid. Nothing harmful. But definitely habit-forming." After using his free trial supply, the consumer is hooked for life.

"Consumer" is a key word here. To the hucksters, the sole function of everyone else is frantic, total consumption. As a class, the hucksters have everything pretty much their own way, though the competition among themselves sometimes takes the form of legalized commercial war, which is played for keeps with private armies. The government has become only a clearing house for pressures, consisting of an impotent, rather pitiable president, and the Senator from Du Pont and the Senator from Nash-Kelvinator, and so on. (Note that this story preceded our present president's cabinet.)

Another key word is "Consie" (changed from the "Connie" of the Galaxy version), the subversive of this society, the Conservationist. And therein lies the struggle. The hucksters, the elite who wear genuine oak jewelry, whose Cadillacs are pedalled by two cyclists, who can sometimes afford to shave with fresh water; versus the despised, underground radicals who favor plans to avoid further waste of the planet's resources.

Kornbluth and Pohl are two of our best, though unprolific, science fiction authors, and this collaboration ranks with the topmost work of each. Notwithstanding my concern here with its setting, the story is one of action, suspense, and vivid character portrayal. But it is also a book that I, who

Last week one of our newer friends told us something that we've since thought of several times. We had been discussing some of the disadvantages that seemed to be inevitable in the complex sort of life that has been developed for us, whether or not we would have chosen it. "Nowadays," he said, "a man needs a number of specialists to help him keep his life in order. Besides his personal physician and auto mechanic, who fulfill their functions the better for their knowledge of his anatomical and automotive histories, he may find that he requires an attorney and a stock broker, on permanent retainer, to keep a benevolent eye on his business affairs. I don't require those last two, of course, but I have come to feel the need of my own personal bookseller; one who knows what I have, what I want, and who will take the time to give my library some thought; who could then make suggestions to me of books I would like to read, and help me get them at prices I can afford."

That is not verbatim, of course; our memory isn't quite that good. But it does express our friend's thought. And as you may have guessed, he had decided that we were the booksellers whom he should have "on retainer". Naturally, we were pleased -- and now we're wondering if perhaps we can't provide a similar service for you.

We think that our antiquarian stock is singularly rich in worthwhile titles on a diversity of subjects, and our reasonable prices have caused many casual browsers to become frequent visitors. But beyond that, we've been told by many customers that they find here an atmosphere of uncommercial friendliness that isn't very common in our time. They speak of such things as our library chairs and table most unneatly cluttered with literary reviews and the like, of the booky gab-fests in the back room, of the perennial tobacco supply and the coffee and doughnuts on Saturday -- and then say that it's something more than that. Whatever it is that makes our customers like us, we're happy to have achieved it, and hope never to get so big that we lose it.

We open the shop in the evening the second Friday of every month especially for our science fiction friends. Come in sometime then, 'most any hour after 7:30, and have a cup (or more) of coffee with us. You'll probably find most of the Advertiser's staff here talking over profound matters for the next issue's "Spec. Dept."

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(P.S. Although we don't ordinarily stock magazines, we do now have perhaps 200 Astoundings, Galaxy's, Startlings, and others, from 1946 thru '53, at 10¢ a copy. They'll go too fast for mail orders to be practicable, but will be here for our next "s f night", September 11th.)

am a Connie, wish all huckster sympathisers would read.

Incidentally, a superficial comparison with the 1952 Galaxy serial disclosed no re-writing, but the omission of a few paragraphs and the entirety of the last three chapters, which latter I consider an improvement. And I somehow detect irony in the fact that this satire on advertising methods is published with this note on the copyright page: "A condensed version of this novel appeared in GALAXY magazine under the title Gravy Planet."

The Other Novels

THE DEMOLISHED MAN by Alfred Bester. Shasta, 250 pp, \$3.

How do you get away with murder when the cops are able to read your mind?

It is an oversimplification to take this as the main problem of THE DEMOLISHED MAN, but hardly an unfair one. In Bester's twenty-fourth century society the existence of a numerous group of people endowed with extra-sensory perception, especially telepathy, affects many other aspects of living besides police procedure. There are Esper physicians and Esper personnel managers as well as Esper detectives. But the author has chosen to consider his imaginary world in the light of a problem in criminology, and as a result the illumination he sheds on it is flashy rather than brilliant. It seems likely that a society with a devoted and powerful group like Bester's Esper Guild in a position to influence decisions on a high level would probably be much more different from the one we know than the sauced-up paradise for hucksters of THE DEMOLISHED MAN.

How do you get away with murder? The answer is: you're crazy. Bester justifies this conclusion convincingly, even if his psychological argument is of the twentieth century rather than the twenty-fourth.

I should like to recommend that the next author who chooses to postulate a telepathic society spend a little effort on speculating about how telepathy works -- if it works. He might give somebody an idea. It has happened.

WORLD OUT OF MIND by J. T. M'Intosh (Doubleday, 222 pp, \$2.75). Earth is attacked by an alien race which sends its scouts out as such perfect counterfeits of humanity that one of them rises to the position of leader of all Earth's forces. This would have been better if M'Intosh had made it longer and deeper, paid a lot more attention to the implications of the vaguely technocratic society he envisages, and left out the fighting.

THE TIME MASTERS by Wilson Tucker (Rinehart, 249 pp, \$2½). Extra-terrestrial visitors again -- only two of them this time, spying on Oak Ridge and each other with conflicting motives. The first appearance I know of of Gilgamesh in science fiction, and a rather fascinating telepathic technique. Tucker's whodunit style fits the story well.

TWAYNE PUBLISHERS, INC.

THE DISSECTING TABLE

by DAMON KNIGHT

WITCHES THREE, by Fritz Leiber, James Blish and Fletcher Pratt. Twayne, 423 pp., \$3.95. This handsome volume contains two old favorites and a surprise—Leiber's *Conjure Wife* from *Unknown*, Blish's *There Shall Be No Darkness* from *Thrilling Wonder*, and a long (199 pp.) never-before-published novel by Fletcher Pratt, *The Blue Star*.

Taking them in order, *Conjure Wife* is easily the most frightening and (necessarily) the most thoroughly convincing of all modern horror stories. Its premise is that witchcraft still flourishes, or at any rate survives, an open secret among women, a closed book to men. Under the rational overlay of 20th-century civilization this sickly growth, uncultivated, unsuspected, still manages to propagate itself.

Leiber develops this theme with the utmost dexterity, piling up alternate layers of the mundane and outre, until at the story's real climax, the shocker at the end of chapter 14, I am not ashamed to say that I jumped an inch out of my seat. From that point onward the story is anticlimax, but anticlimax so skillfully managed that I am not really certain I touched the slip-cover again until after the last page. Leiber has never written anything better . . . which, perhaps, is all that needed to be said.

Conjure Wife applies some of the principles of scientific methodology to the occult, and spices it with such modernisms as tape recorders and Rupert mirrors. *There Shall Be No Darkness* attempts something intrinsically much more difficult—rationalizing the traditional werewolf story all the way down to the bottom, leaving no residuum of the occult at all. Blish does a spectacular job of it, taking no more liberties with biology than we are accustomed to expect from an ordinary science-fiction story about totipotency, longevity or bifocal brains.

The Blue Star, which, on several counts, ought to have turned out to be the weakest story in the book, is nothing of the sort. A certain brace of science-fantasy editors whose editing and writing I esteem (although I'm sometimes at loss to account for their opinions) recently brushed this novel aside with a reference to George U. Fletcher's *Well of the Unicorn*—which I haven't read, unfortunately, so I can't say; perhaps *The Blue Star* is derivative. If so, I don't see that it matters; it's a magnificent job of writing, a gem-perfect example of a branch of pure fantasy so rare nowadays that I was beginning to think it was extinct—the dream-world story. The distinction between this and all other types—Utopias and Dystopias, interplanetary stories, projections of the Earth into the distant past and future—is that the dream-world must be completely insular, without the smallest contact with the mundane universe either in space or in time; one touch of reality withers it.

John Ciardi's introduction, *A Plea For Witches*, is penetrating and good-humored, erudite without being pedantic—a notable achievement.

Watch Twayne.

If they can keep their future projects up to this standard, they're sure to reach the top in short order.

Science Fiction Adventures May 1953

SECOND STAGE LENS MEN by E.E. Smith (Fantasy Press, 307 pp, \$3). This fifth story in Doc Smith's Lensman series first appeared in Astounding in 1941-42. Doc remains unsurpassed in the authorship of deep-space adventure. His first story, The Skylark of Space, stirred up a bit of a sensation among readers of the 1928 Amazing Stories, and in this reviewer's opinion his yarns have, with perhaps one exception, been each superior to its predecessor. If you haven't yet been introduced to Smith's brand of action-packed, super weapon-anti-super weapon, galaxy-wide adventure (which so few other writers can carry off with conviction), try this. I would say it is inferior only to FIRST LENS MAN (Fantasy Press, 1950).

THE PLANET OF YOUTH by Stanton A. Coblentz (Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc.; 71 pp, \$1.50) is a tale from a 1932 Wonder Stories which anticipated THE SPACE MERCHANTS in its concern with an attempt of powerful propagandists to "sell" a miserable planet Venus to potential colonists. The economic motivation and the methods that implement them are very similar in the two stories. But the treatments differ considerably, though the inevitable comparison of the modern story with the one authored by one of the most admired science fictioneers of twenty years past shows that neither irony nor satire are recent discoveries for "the pulps".

Old-time author, fan, and (as Fantasy Press) pioneer s f publisher Lloyd Eshbach has brought out the second title in his Polaris Press series of first book publications of early magazine "classics". This most commendable project intends to alternate between science fiction and fantasy. The first of the series (THE HEADS OF CERBERUS by Francis Stevens) was science fiction; the second, a fantasy, is THE ABYSS OF WONDERS by Perley Poore Sheehan -- unavailable since its publication in Argosy in 1915. Polaris Press books are published in editions limited to 1500 and in all respects are examples of superior bookmaking craftsmanship. For economic reasons they are available only from the publisher (Box 159, Reading, Penn.); the price is \$3. While discussion of stories which make no attempt at being science fiction is outside the scope of this publication, we do want to state that their support of the entire Polaris Press venture will be to the advantage of science fiction readers.

"The Conditioned Captain" by Fletcher Pratt (Startling Stories, May, 1953) has been published in a 35¢ paper-bound and a \$2 hardbound edition by Ballantine as THE UNDYING FIRE.

In fast succession Gnome Press has published books by three of our most popular modern scientist-writers. Hal Clement's ICEWORLD (216 p, \$2.50) was a serial in last year's Astounding. See Anthony More's article in the November '52 Advertiser for a discussion of this story which explores problems of communication between people of worlds of divergent chemistries and temperatures.

In AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT (223 pp, \$2.75 -- from a 1948 Startling Stories issue) Arthur C. Clarke relegates his beloved space flight to an incidental niche, and writes of the mutual rediscovery, after thousands of years of isolation, of two divergent Earth cultures. Astronaut Clarke does this

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sort of thing quite well, too.

The third Gnome "big name" is Isaac Asimov, whose SECOND FOUNDATION (210 pp, \$2.75) completes the book publication of his "foundation" series from Astounding. The two parts of this volume (originally "Now You See It" and "...And Now You Don't") carry on with a famous running epic of far future galactic history. Neither the state of galactic affairs at the conclusion of this volume nor the series' popularity among readers tolerate an abandonment of the saga. Let us hope that Asimov acts accordingly.

George O. Smith has been called the best hack in the business. HELLFLOWER (Abelard Press, 264 pp, \$2.75) is a good illustration of the reason why. It's got everything: wronged space-pilot fighting for vindication, clandestine alien invaders, inspired gadgetry, interplanetary dope-running, galactic cops-and-robbers, intelligently but unprofoundly handled sex, and a prose style that escapes pedestrianism by reason of its going on well-oiled roller skates. If you can stand it, you will like it a lot.

Readers who enjoyed the Manning Draco stories in Thrilling Wonder will find "The Merakian Miracle", "The Regal Rigelian", "The Polluxian Pretender", and "The Caphian Capen" presented as a novel in ONCE UPON A STAR (by Kendall Foster Crossen; Holt, 237 pp, \$2.95). Others may find the Draconian antics worth a laugh or two if they are in a particularly amusable mood.

In THE TRANSCENDENT MAN (Rinehart, 244 p, \$2.50) Jerry Sohl has hit upon a somewhat unusual variant of the "we are property" theme: human intelligence has been implanted in humans by Capellan invaders in order to make the thought-forces released by the death of a human high enough in quality to serve as their food. The plot is thickened by the Capellans' ability to take on human and notably female human form. Unfortunately, the author still writes like a newspaper man.

The Anthologies and Collections

Since these columns closed for the last issue, five anthologies have come our way, which is quite a respectable quantity indeed. (And any snide remarks to the effect of its having been a long time since the last issue will be countered with the observation that, considering the summer lull normal to the (book) publishing business, that's still a fair number of anthologies to pile up between issues.) Taking them in order of receipt, the first is SCIENCE-FICTION ADVENTURES IN DIMENSION edited by Groff Conklin, and, for the Grand Old Man among the anthologists, somewhat of a departure. For in this one he has narrowed the subject and broadened the treatment of his selections: all his present inclusions concern time-travel or parallel worlds, but outright fantasy is mixed in with the science fiction. (Vanguard, 354 pp, \$2.95.)

For Ballantine Books Frederik Pohl has collected fifteen previously unpublished stories (STAR SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, 202 pp, 35¢ and \$1.50 in the usual Ballantine dual edition).

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"Tom Sawyer" (with Norman Rockwell pix), "Le Morte D'Arthur", "Idylls of The King", must be good, clean, boxed editions.
Any Edition---Richard LeGallien translation of "Odes of Hafiz".
James Branch Cabell---
"Jurgen", "The Silver Stallion", "Cream of The Jest". In edition illustrated by Pape.
Miscellany--- Copies of Chanticleer, Acolyte, Shangri L'Aff., Big-Little Book: "The Laughing Dragon of OZ" and any Prince Valiant comic books; or Sunday strips prior to 1946.
L. Frank Baum's "Queen Zixi of Ix", "Woggelbug Book", and "Sky Island" (under pen names).

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LC

Rumors of fantastically high rates are kicking around in the usually misinformed circles with which I mingle, and whatever truth there is to them is powerful argument for a viewpoint I have frequently upheld in discussions of my salary with my boos. For, paid them or not, these writers have earned top pay for these stories. Highly recommended.

In CHILDREN OF WONDER (Simon and Schuster, 336 pp, \$2.95), William Tenn has collected 21 stories about children who are even more unusual than usual. Sources are, almost equally, the s f magazines and the wide, outside world.

At the opposite end of a qualitative listing from the Pohl anthology is PRIZE SCIENCE FICTION edited by Donald A. Wollheim (McBride, 230 pp, \$3). This is the first of an intended annual series of stories selected by "The Jules Verne Award Committee", who are the volume's editor, Forrest J Ackerman, and Otto v St. Whitelock. The sources include the best of the magazines, and some of the authors are among our favorites -- so (as always) don't rely too heavily on this one man's opinion. #

The YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS (edited by Bleiler and Dikty; Fell, 315 pp, \$3.50) this time are: Tenn, "Firewater"; Ellanby, "Category Phoenix"; Blish, "Surface Tension"; Leinster, "The Gadget Had a Ghost"; and Miller, "Conditionally Human".

Ten stories by Henry Kuttner have been collected under the title AHEAD OF TIME (Ballantine, 177 pp, 35¢ and \$2). This is perhaps the versatile Kuttners' (Hank and wife C.L. Moore who use various by-lines indiscriminately) best collection to date. Astounding is the most often tapped source and original publication dates run from 1942 through 1953. There is additionally one till-now-unpublished story, "Year Day", an episode of the future depicting one way of escape from some torturous advertising methods that would induce envy even in a Mitch Courtenay). Clearly among the most skilled science fiction writers appearing today, the Kuttners prove in this one volume that they also rank among the most ingenious sociological and psychological speculators in the field.

Wilmar H. Shiras's "In Hiding" made quite a splash when it appeared in a 1948 Astounding, and her two subsequent offerings in the same series attracted much, if less, favorable commentary. Those three tales of highly intelligent, misunderstood mutant children, with whom, one gathers, many s f fans have little difficulty in identifying themselves, are presented with 2 others, previously unpublished, in CHILDREN OF THE ATOM (Gnome, 216 pp, \$2.75). It is this observer's opinion that their quality descends rather linearly from the initial story through the last.

Some Non - Fiction

In MAN IN SPACE (Bobbs-Merrill, 291 pp, \$3.75) Heinz Haber concerns himself primarily with the physiological and psychological difficulties which will face space travelers and col-

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onists after technology has got them there. He concludes that ". . . a trip to Mars would strain the toughest body and mind beyond the breaking point." "Man," he says, "is and remains an earthly animal" and "Colonization of the solar system is an utterly unrealistic, utopian idea." As an inescapable corollary to that thought, Dr. Haber submits that "This planet must be preserved; it cannot be replaced." But "As regards the artificial satellite, the realization of space flight is a sound and, within reasonable time, an entirely realistic and promising project."

EX-PRODIGY: MY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH (Simon and Schuster, 310 pp, \$3.95) is Norbert Wiener's autobiography to his 31st year. The author of CYBERNETICS and THE HUMAN USE OF HUMAN BEINGS (which are enthusiastically recommended to any Advertiser reader who isn't familiar with them), who entered Harvard's graduate school at the age of 14, maintains a noteworthy objectivity in telling of the problems of the superior child, but at the same time one feels that the unemotional approach was employed too consistently to permit an adequate exposition of how it feels to be a kid genius. However, I suspect that this failure of realization was unavoidable through the simple difficulty, to such a lesser intellect as mine, of identifying with this story's protagonist. The book is good reading throughout, despite the author's low opinion of science fiction (page 84)!

Three excellent books discussing the philosophy of science have recently appeared, each written by British authors. In THE SCIENTIFIC ADVENTURE (Essays in the History and Philosophy of Science; Pitman, 372 pp, 30/-; obtainable in the U.S. from The British Book Centre, inc., \$6.75) Herbert Dingle, Professor of the H. and P. of Science at University College, London, has collected twenty easily comprehensible essays discussing aspects of his subject of interest to the person who is well acquainted with it as well as to those of lesser education. THE COMMONSENSE OF SCIENCE by J. Bronowski (Harvard, 150 pp, \$2) is an exceptionally provocative essay that discusses the relationship of science to other activities of civilized man. The author's historical sense is well developed, and in treating of scientific progress since its modern beginnings in the 17th century he sheds a goodly amount of light on the development of the philosophy of science. WHAT IS SCIENCE by Norman Campbell, reprinted last year by Dover (186 pp, \$2.50) from its original edition of 1921, examines its subject in such a manner as to lead the reader to do some healthful thinking about matters he may always uncritically have "taken for granted".

Because the editor has been unable to turn up an accommodating astrophysicist to discuss ASTROPHYSICS by Lawrence H. Aller (Ronald Press, 412 pp, \$12), he will quote the publishers on the book's behalf. Subtitled THE ATMOSPHERES OF THE SUN AND STARS, the book is "a pioneer in its field. . . deals with the fundamentals and major modern developments in the study of stellar atmospheres. It covers both the methods employed and the results obtained in investigations of the atmospheres of the sun and stars and solar-terrestrial relationships. The book presents a full discussion of the nature of the observational data. It also presents a brief review

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of some of the cosmic problems which come within the scope of astrophysics. Some of these are -- in Dr. Aller's words:

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A GUIDE TO THE MOON by Patrick Moore (Norton, 255 pp, \$3.95) is a popular treatment of its subject which includes such topics as the satellite's origin and space flight and lunar bases, as well as a description of its present characteristics. The author, a noted amateur selenographer favors the volcanic theory of crater origin and accepts as facts that the moon has an atmosphere .0001 as dense as Earth's and that changes to its surface have been recorded.

HOW ABOUT THE WEATHER has been reprinted by New American Library as HOW TO KNOW AND PREDICT THE WEATHER (167 pp, photographic plates, 35¢). The author, Robert Moore Fisher, fulfills the promise of the title to this layman's satisfaction.

The Reprints

The most significant offering among the new editions of the older stories, and by any reasonable standard one of the best of recent books, is Basil Davenport's one-volume collection of five of Olaf Stapledon's novels, TO THE END OF TIME (Funk & Wagnalls, 775 pp, \$5). Included are "Last and First Men" (slightly and honestly abridged, with excluded chapters listed and so identified on the contents page), and in their entirety "Star Maker", "Odd John", "Sirius", and "The Flames". A handsome volume of otherwise out-of-print stories by one of science fiction's great writers.

Edwin A. Abbott's classic mathematical fantasy, FLATLAND, (first published in the 1880's under the pseudonym of A. Square) has been reissued in paper- and cloth-bound editions (Dover, 103 pp, \$1 and \$2.25). A milestone in early SF, FLATLAND is still delightful reading.

A.E. van Vogt, one of the giants among modern SF writers, has been sorely missed by magazine readers during the past two or three years. His 1952 collection DESTINATION: UNIVERSE! now appears in a paper-bound reprint (New American Library, 160 pp, 25¢). Here are ten stories, mostly from ASF, dating from 1942 through 1950.

The Juveniles

What prolific writer of science fiction since the first year of Amazing Stories can still be depended on to turn out an absorbing yarn? Only Murray Leinster fits that definition. In SPACE PLATFORM (Shasta, 222 pp, \$2.50) we have an-

other book which, like some of those by Heinlein, is directed to younger readers but is not without appeal to all who read science fiction. The platform in this story is in the construction stages. The world looks on it as a means of war prevention. Those who disapprove of that ideal are on hand in force to sabotage the project. The youthful protagonist has a large share in seeing the platform to a successful launching.

The latest crop of juveniles from Winston is less rewarding to the older reader than were the two previous. Among their earlier books, titles by Poul Anderson, Philip Latham, Chad Oliver, and Arthur C. Clarke could be recommended for trial by the aficionado in his less demanding moods. With no such recommendation we note the current titles (each something over 200 pp, each \$2): Robert W. Lowndes, MYSTERY OF THE THIRD MINE; Jack Vance, VANDALS OF THE VOID; Richard Marsten, ROCKET TO LUNA; Kenneth Wright, THE MYSTERIOUS PLANET; Erik van Ikin, BATTLE ON MERCURY.

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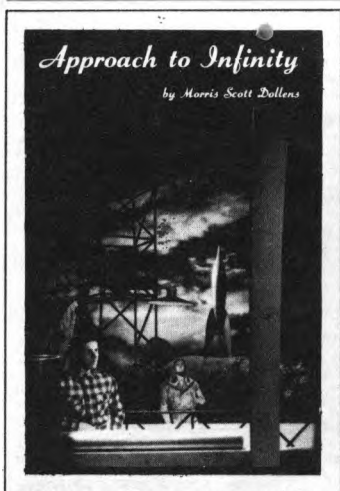
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