

**FANKLE**



# into each life...some rain must fall.

And why should you think you're immune?

You may well be wondering why you should have been so singled out by Fate to be a recipient of this first issue of FANKLE. Well. I was originally in such a rush to get this out that I didn't have time to advertise it, and thus give you all an opportunity to besiege me with demands for a copy. So this is in the nature of being a free sample, and is being sent out to anyone I think might be interested. In which case, you only have yourself to blame, for bringing your name to my attention. So don't read it then..... tear it up..... see if I care!

In greater detail your particular indiscretion may be found below:

YOU CONTRIBUTED.  
(GOD BLESS YOU)

I HAVE RECEIVED YOUR FANZINE AT SOME TIME.  
(RETALIATION)

YOU ARE WALT WILLIS.  
(DROIT DE SEIGNEUR)

YOU ARE AN AMERICAN FANZINE EDITOR AND I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE YOUR FANZINE AND YOU HAVE NO BRITISH AGENT AND I WOULD RATHER BE TORN ASUNDER BY WILD HORSES THAN ATTEMPT TO SEND MONEY FROM THIS COUNTRY AGAIN, SO MAYBE WE CAN EXCHANGE COPIES? HM!

WE CORRESPOND  
(HOW'S THE WIFE? HOW'S THE OLD MAN FOR THAT MATTER?)

YOU ARE A SCOTTISH MEMBER OF THE BSFA.  
(WHA'S LIKE US?)

YOU ARE THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

YOU ARE A BIG NAME AND I WANT A CLASSY MAIL COLUMN.  
(DELUSIONS OF GRANDOUR).

I READ YOUR NAME SOMEWHERE, AND I HAVE TO GET RID OF THIS FILE OF OLD RUBBISH SOMEHOW. THERE ARE COPIES GOING TO CONSERVATIVE GENERAL OFFICE TOO YOU KNOW. AND TO WAR ON WANT.

Assuming you are masochistic enough to wish to see the next issue of FANKLE, I might mention that it will be available for a letter of comment upon this copy, for contributions (no fiction please), for trades, or for money if necessary: 1/6d. for one issue, 4/- for four.



# COLETS



This is FANKLE 1, the first issue of an indefinite series, with any luck, an amateur magazine vaguely concerned with science fiction, and associate matters.

FANKLE is produced and edited by Ivor Latto, 16 Merryton Ave., Glasgow W5, Scotland. Publication will be roughly quarterly....very roughly.....the editorial motto is "Procrastination!". Available for letters of comment, trade, contributions, or even money.

This issue is dated JUNE 1965.

FANKLINGS.....(editorial).....IL.

THE PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES OF SLUM LIVING.....CHARLES PLATT

BIRMINGHAM 65.....IL.

SCOTCON.....(a patriotic appeal).....DONALD MALCOLM.

WORLD WRECKER:AN ASSESSMENT OF J.T.McINTOSH.....RICHARD GORDON.

DAN, DAN, THE PLANETARY MAN.....IL.

WE NEVER CLOSE....(reviews).....IL.

MISCELLANEOUS MACABRE QUOTATIONS.....ALAN DODD.

All artwork was done by the editor, as were the headings, spelling mistakes, and typographic errors....like that one. The fact that FANKLE appears at all may be attributed to the goading pen of Pete Campbell, and the encouragement and patient advice of Alan Dodd, Charles Platt, and Pete Weston, to whom....my appreciation. You might like to express something entirely different to them after reading this. But send your insults to me.....it all goes towards a letter column.



Yes, yet another new fanzine. Well, it's Spring after all....when a young fan's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of publishing. And if everyone and his uncle is bringing out a fanzine, then why not me? Still, I can't really give you a satisfactory reason why this should appear at this moment; there wasn't any deep purpose behind the editorial brow.

Well, that's not entirely true. Granted that FANKLE is not designed to fill any gap in the field of "serious sf" fanzines, or "fannish" fanzines. Yet it does have the unique status of being a Scottish fanzine, which certainly gives it a distinct rarity value. (First editions of Scotszines become collectors' items, folks. Tell your friends to send two guineas to me for one of the few copies of FANKLE I still remaining. All approved by the Council of Industrial Design.) Furthermore, although the editorial policy of this publication is going to be based upon the Predilections, preferences and prejudices of the editor as far as the contents are concerned, I would be especially interested to have comments....and contributions.... from sf enthusiasts living in Scotland; of late, Scots have taken little part in sf affairs. There appears to be enough talent up here to warrant a certain optimism that participation in matters science fictional might revive, even to the position of activity achieved in the early fifties, when NEBULA was in flower. And if FANKLE can help to promote such a revival, my drudgery shall not have been in vain.

However, apart from that modest patriotic ambition, this will be an exploration of the technical mysteries of amateur publication. Of necessity, most of the contents of this issue are from my own fair hand, although a couple of trusty fans have come across with contributions. There will be a more varied selection next time, with any luck.

I suppose an explanation of the title is necessary....it's traditional anyway: "fankle" is a Lowland Scots word meaning "To tangle up", and was chosen partly for the "fan" bit....oh, it's all terribly subtle....and partly because I got all fankled up trying to produce this thing. The meaning might be clearer in the context of this famous Scots poem, for instance:

" Abune thae whirlymichties,  
Ayont yon nurnynoo,  
Hings a chitterin' flichty,  
Spurlin' doon the brae.  
Och, th' bonny murdle!  
Jinglin' as it dreichts,  
It hasnae got a murdle!  
A' fankled up wi' yeicht."

Ah, exquisite! They don't <sup>write</sup> like them like that nowadays. I only wish you could appreciate all the nuances. We all speak like that up here you know. Nothing in fandom can approach Scots dialect for sheer inscrutability; fannish esotericisms are as nothing to someone brought up on Burns.

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"Nonsense Hargreaves, no one has lived in this old castle for centuries....."

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FANKLINGS is intended to include any odd thoughts that come into the editorial head, and that can't be legitimately shoved in anywhere else. As a title, the word has its drawbacks, but at least Ethel Lindsay hasn't used it yet. (She hasn't, has she?) Anyway, this time it's thoughts on Early Bird:

Presumably you saw the inaugural broadcast from the States by the Early Bird satellite? It's curious that the thing has only been operating for a few weeks and yet we find it completely commonplace. I suppose there must be a limit to the amount of time people can go about nudging each other and saying "Hoboy! How about that then?" Even so, although one might expect sf fans to be rather blasé about such old hat space achievements, surely the great lay public might have been expected to show a greater degree of wonderment? Perhaps they might have, if the Grand Introductory Telecast had not been specifically designed to destroy every vestige of potential interest.

After Richard Dimbleby had assured us in hushed tones of the significance of this broadcast, in that everything we would see would be coming direct, live, from America, it was rather comical to see so much rehashed newsreel film in the programme....real old film, coming live from across the Atlantic. And whose was the brilliant idea to regale us at supper time with what seemed like twenty minutes of a heart operation? "Your Guts In Their Hands": can you think of anything more likely to drive your audience away? Incidentally, I wonder how they explained to the patient that the surgeons prodding about in his innards were going to have an audience of 200,000,000 people? Some people will do anything for publicity I suppose.

That particular slice of nausea was presumably included to show the practical uses of trans-Atlantic television ....as if they felt guilty about it....as also no doubt was the farcical item involving the policeman flashing wanted posters hither and yon. Scotland Yard's representative must be the worst TV presence since they discovered Sir Alec; I thought at any moment he would wave to the camera and send all his love to everyone at no.47 Inkerman Rd. His U.S. counterpart, on the other hand, seemed so well drilled in visual public relations that one would not have been surprised to see him open his jacket wide and let his shirt demonstrate the degree of whiteness that could be obtained.

But probably the most entertaining thing about this type of programme is the way every country feels obliged to live up to its mythical image: America came across with the baseball and skyscrapers, the Germans had their Ruritanian brass band and march music, Italy with Renaissance-type costume epic, Mexico with a rather entertaining rodeo performed by sombreroed vaqueros (surely the least they could have done was to stage a revolution?) Thank God that Scotland didn't participate. It's bad enough that our regional programmes always include items dealing with the Forth Road Bridge, or Highland depopulation, or slum-clearance in Glasgow. Always. I can imagine what would have happened if Scotland had to be put across to a world audience: a group of hirsute tartanned clansmen, kilts blowing in the breeze, their faithful haggises yelping at their sides, shouting

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"Doctor, come quickly, I can see the torches of the villagers....."

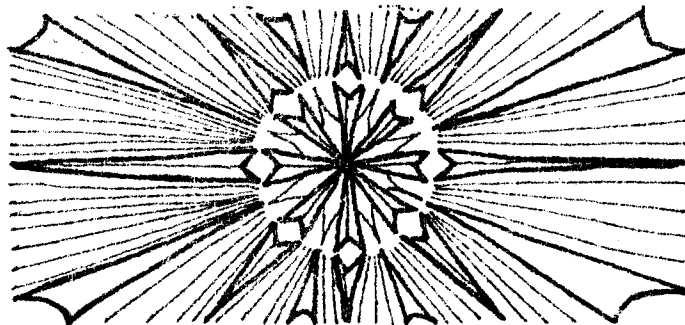
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"What news of the Prince?" and "Remember the Clearances!" at each other. Actually though, the British contribution wasn't the usual colourful-pageantry-steeped-in-the-depths-of-history stuff. True, there was the colourful old H.M.S. "Victory", but with a complement of the Red Navy this time. Very interesting they were too, but the spectacle must have confirmed all the worst forebodings of people across the Mid West about our steadfastness in the face of Communist aggression. Perhaps they put our occupation by Russian forces down to this socialized government.

It was rather a novel touch for once, but not enough to relieve the occasion of every trace of mediocrity. One can easily imagine people thinking that if this was the sort of old guff that could be expected from this latest technological achievement, then what was the point of all the ballyhoo? I can think of few occasions when instantaneous television by Telstar was at all moving or gripping; the US space shots, the Presidential elections, the Civil Rights march on Washington, Kennedy's funeral. Not a great deal really. And what is there on this side of the water that America would like to see? The Vatican Council? Some Royal Wedding or the State Opening of Parliament or some other slice of comic-opera pomposity. It may be great for tourism, but surely we have something better to offer than the Changing of the Guard? (Don't laugh: the first colour transmission from Europe to America will be shots of that hallowed ceremony).

Communication can hardly be an aid to understanding if these who produce these programmes persist in portraying us as busbied Britons, aria-spouting Italians, lederhosen Germans or stetsoned Yanks clustered round the base of the Statue of Liberty singing "My country, 'tis of thee". If the trans-Atlantic link can't be left to simply transmit news, as it happens, and we must involve ourselves in the image-projection bit, then surely we can think of something a little more relevant than the Ceremony of the Keys?

Unfortunately, I can't really think of much that could be used to show Britain as It Really Is. How about a bingo session? Or one of those demonstrations against the introduction of comprehensive schools/automation/railway reforms or whatever? Or a football match, a traffic jam, a fish-and-chip farm? Hm. It isn't so very easy after all. But anything would be better than Big Ben, the Household Cavalry or the bloody Tower.



# THE PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES OF SLUM LIVING : by CHARLES PLATT.

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++The turnover in fannish real-estate seems to be accelerating lately. We have already seen the loss of Oblique House, the rallying ground of Irish fandom, and if reports are correct, the fannish domicile which this article describes in loving detail has now been abandoned to its mundane fate, to join "Nineveh, Tyre and 101 Wagner Street, Savannah"....wherever that is. During its brief existence, it was a notable, nay notorious address:IL++

I live in what many people....visitors here, usually....would term a slum. For those people unlucky enough not to have experienced the many benefits of slum living, the following may be of interest. The carefree atmosphere, the lack of housework, the warm, enveloping odour of damp rot, all these combine .....but let me begin at the beginning.

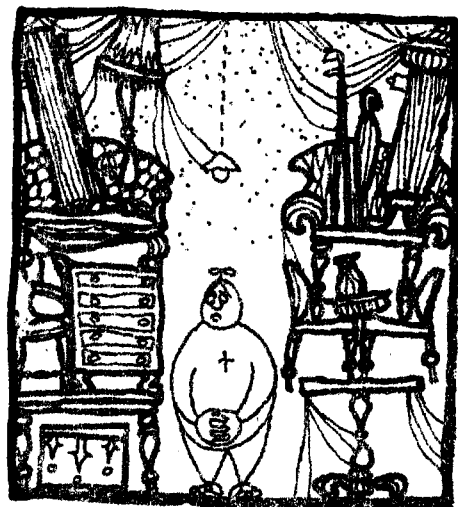
For two months, I had been searching for a communal flat for myself and several other people I know at my college. Searching through the London Weekly advertiser a few days before term started, I saw it: HOLLAND PARK, it read, seven rooms, bathroom, etc., nine beds. Ideal for students. 16 gns.

I fought through London rush-hour traffic in a strange vehicle my father had on approval from some garage, to the address of the accommodation bureau handling the place. I fought back through the traffic to Notting Hill Gate, to rendezvous with the landlady.

She was only half an hour late. While I was waiting, I chatted guardedly with another prospective tenant, who had turned up five minutes later than I. The house itself was one of a long line of semi-detached buildings, of the type very common in Notting Hill areas: four stories, including the basement, with one room front and back on each storey. The bathroom and lavatory had been tacked on at the rear, round about when they had installed electricity.

When the landlady arrived, she was, it turned out, an Austrian Jew who could barely speak English. But she was very good natured. After attempting to explain to her that I had first choice on the house, because I'd arrived ~~first~~, first, we managed to get inside the place. Carelessly, I allowed my sweater to come into contact with one of the yellow-painted walls in the hall. The sleeve came away grey, and when I touched it, it was wet. Half the light-bulbs had been taken away by the last tenants, and the other half were unreliable. We crept up the lino-covered stairs in treacherous darkness.

There was furniture everywhere, cheap furniture, broken furniture, dirty furniture, useless furniture, bits of furniture, bits of what once might have been furniture....The lino that covered every floor was in varying stages of decrepitude, the worst places being covered with small ratty rugs of some hard and unpleasant coarse fibre. There were three gas stoves, one on each floor, (The basement was not included in the offer), and three sinks. There was hot water.....from Ascot-type gas heaters. There were wild combinations of wallpaper: ratty wallpaper, peeling wallpaper, patterned black-and-white wallpaper. All in one room..... One of the ceilings of the top floor rooms had collapsed in one place, but, we were told, was being repaired.



The whole mess wouldn't have been so bad were it not for the fact that our landlady kept plugging the features as being "excellent", "very tasteful", and so on, in the manner of a big-time real-estate operator. After an hour of negotiations, during which the other people who had turned up mysteriously dematerialised and were never seen again, I got her to agree that I had first refusal of the place until my friends had seen it.

The second time we came round was more amusing than the first. When I turned the light ~~up~~ on in the big room on the ground floor, it blew up and fell on someone's head. When we lit one of the gas heaters, it exploded. None of the doors would shut properly, and one wouldn't open. The ceiling that had collapsed had been repaired, but looked just the same to me. The people who lived in the basement told us of the previous tenants, who were Australians. "There were fifteen of them, they said, "half of them girls, too."

"But fifteen isn't divisible by two," I pointed out.

"Yeah, Australians, like I told you. Dead peculiar, they were."

In one room we found a list of addresses and phone numbers, and a pair of miniature rubber breasts with fluffy fur pinned to the wall above a bed.

We took the place over, of course. It was obvious...to me, anyway.....that we would never find anything better. After a two-hour long session with the landlady, who hung out at a ratty shop dealing with 1920 fashions in Goodge Street, during which time we attempted to understand what rent had to be paid, and to get her to understand who was standing surety for ~~re~~ what, we were in.

Three of us, that is. The other two suddenly thought better of it. Not to worry, we said. We'll soon get some more tenants. But the three of us did feel a little lonely in the place, stuck up on the top floor.....

I needn't have worried; a month later there were ten permanent lodgers, one living away from the place but still paying rent to reserve a room that had been taken over by another bloke, and on average five non-paying guests per night. During the month up to this time, we had switched all the furniture round, had the electricity men round to deal with a fuse box covered in a green growth of suspicious-looking nature, had the gas man round again when a main fuse blew. After this, I rewired all the lighting fittings (two more had blown up without



warning). The door bells worked, and stopped working, with a mysterious randomness, until I traced the wires back to another fuse box that had had the fuses replaced with bits of ordinary wire twisted uncertainly around the spring clips. Most of the other fuses were in a similar state.

We tried running a small fire off the lighting circuit (there is no power circuit of any kind) but decided, when the wires got red hot, that this was impractical. Meanwhile, the gas fires were gulping down 6d. per fire every hour.

And still the water was running down the walls and the mattresses were soaking wet.

I'm not complaining, you understand. It could have been worse. We weren't burgled during this time, for instance. The pipes didn't burst. The tap washers held, and are still holding, just. The wiring didn't set the place on fire. No one found any bugs in the beds, and we are without mice or any other vermin.

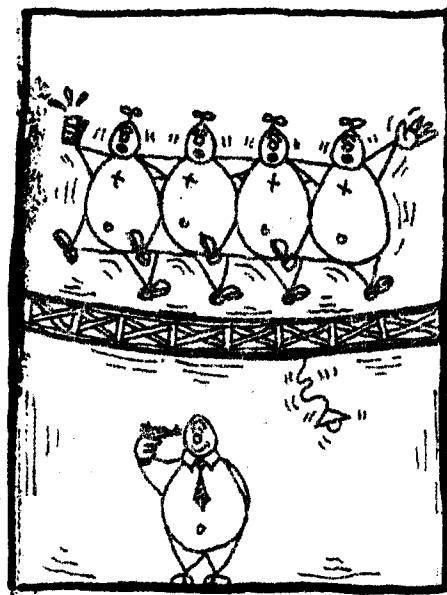
And the advantages were soon making themselves felt. Nine beds, for instance, come in handy: especially when the weekly rent you pay is £16 16s, and you're charging each tenant £2 10s a week, plus electricity charges. And the space was wonderful. For three weeks we had half the beat population spending nights on the first floor, the air thick with marijuana or hash, and later on in the evening, the smell of unwashed flesh. They were clean beats, mind you, (or tramps, as one more respectable tenant called them). But, in the end, I decided it had gone too far. "No more drugging on the first floor", I said. Immediate action was taken; they moved downstairs. Last night, we had twelve of them, as well as the tenants sprawled around here. Fred, a charming beat-type of German-Irish ancestry, who is fanatically inclined towards cleanliness, (he's always sweeping the floor) and cooks people meals for the love of it, and Graham, a bricklayer earning £25 a week, reassured me: "They're all friends of ours," they said.

"That's all right, then," I replied.

Meanwhile, the people in the basement had been complaining about Fred and Graham: "If they could only take their boots off, and not go to bed at 2 am every night, it'd help," they said. "And not move furniture after midnight," another added. "Oh yes, and we hear people screaming occasionally."

Don't worry, Fred told me. They can't do anything about it, and anyway, if they did try to cause trouble, we can always pull up some floorboards on the ground floor, and pour water on to the ceiling below. (Apparently, this is a standard landlord ruse to get rid of unwanted people living beneath).

"That's all right then," I said. The people in the basement still complain, but they are very gentlemanly about it, and do so no more than once a week. Both of us know that it's useless, and a mere ritual, but it keeps them happy.



We had grand schemes for redecorating the place at first, of course. But somehow, they never came to fruition. Hell, after a time, you just get to like brown and yellow paint flaking off, and wet-stained wallpaper, and crummy lino (though I've hand-fitted a carpet in my room, I must admit). You don't mind freezing in bed every night, because, after all, summer's almost here. ~~You don't mind freezing in bed every night, because~~ You don't mind a kitchen that gathers 24 milk-bottles inside a week, none of them washed, and where overnight beats consume two loaves of bread every morning, leaving half of them on the floor as breadcrumbs. Where the table-top is washed daily with tea, and where all cutlery is kept safely in one place, ready to hand, in the sink. It has a certain kind of charm, a certain carefree atmosphere.

What's more, you get used to the smell. I hardly notice it, now; and I got over my chesty wheezing after the first three weeks. It is a little damp, but it'll dry out in summer. I can't run up stairs any more without wheezing, but who wants to run upstairs, anyway?

Here, there's no washing up.....when we run out of cutlery, some more mysteriously re-appears, stamped "LCC" on the handles. Plates and cups, too.

Here, there are no laundry bills, for obvious reasons. There is no troublesome housework to do (the temperature would drop several degrees if the layer of dust over everything were removed; it's an excellent insulator) Nothing can be messed up, it's all been messed up before. There is no danger of keeping fellow-tenants awake with any noise you might be making; they all stay awake longer, and make more noise than you. And there is always someone to talk to; should I say, always someone coming in to talk to you.

So, if you live near Notting Hill, or if you want to live near Notting Hill, or if you're looking for any London accommodation....you'll find £2 10s a week hard to beat, and there is always a vacant piece of floor.....if not a vacant bed.....available. The address is 325A Westbourne Park Road.

CHARLES PLATT.



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"I don't know what game you think you're playing at, dressed up in those bandages....."

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# BIRMINGHAM '65 :

THE HARVEY  
TERRESON SHOW

Well; they say it gets better after the first time.

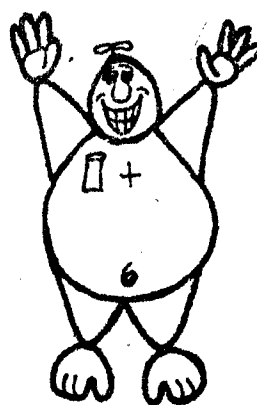
I was exceedingly nervous when I set out to attend the Birmingham Convention at Easter; not only was it my first Con, but my fannish activity up to that point had been entirely at long range, by correspondence, and I knew no-one at all by sight....due partly to my rather isolated position up here, and partly to my disinclination to travelling. The latter was reinforced when I boarded the train in Glasgow and found it packed to overflowing with Easter travellers and at least half of Her Majesty's Armed Forces. Unable to find a seat, I was forced to stand for four hours until the train reached Carlisle, with a loquacious beery Irishman for company. Needless to say, this made the normally rather tiring journey to Birmingham even more wearisome, and so I was hardly in the pink of condition when I finally arrived, at about 8.30.

After checking in and cleaning off some of the nationalised grime, I took a deep breath....and a copy of some fanzine, for identification purposes....and wandered forth, very apprehensive. I located the fanzine room easily enough, but couldn't find any sign of the convention proper, so I rambled here and there, searching hopefully, looking in toilets and broom closets and deserted dining rooms, but no fans. It seemed too quite....no drunken howls or dirty songs or anything of the sort, which I had been given to understand were the signs of fans en masse. Eventually I found someone who told me that the BSFA Convention was being held in the hotel, which God knows I was thankful enough to hear, and I was directed to the Convention Hall.

By this time it was about halfpast nine, and most of the Friday programme was over, so I made my entrance in the midst of the film show....and a hideous experience it was too: when I walked in the lights were on and everyone was sitting around waiting for the start of "Forbidden Planet", and fifty pairs of accusing eyes greeted my appearance....naked but for my sweaty fanzine....with fifty minds all too obviously thinking "who the Hell's this?"

Stunned, I fell back against the wall, clutching my throat. No I didn't, I shuffled nervously to the very back of the hall, and took a chair in the most inconspicuous spot I could find. I've never felt so alone in my life; not since starting at a new school.

HELLO THERE FOLKS!!!  
IT'S ME.....JIM FIAN.....  
THIS IS MY FIRST CON  
AND I'M ALL READY TO  
WHOOOP IT UP!! SO LET'S  
WHOOOP-WHOOOPETTY-  
WHOO.....FOLKS?.....



NO FOLKS?  
COME ON  
NOW FOLKS  
.....HUT?  
FOLKS??

Gazing shiftily around, I tried to identify some of the people I had been corresponding with; I thought I recognised Mike Moorcock (I didn't, it was Peter Day) but I was in no condition to accost a pro....if you know what I mean; I thought I spotted someone who could have been Chris Priest (Pete Weston) and then I spotted someone else who could have been Pete Weston (Bob Little) but I was too confused to follow it up....just as well too. While I was anxiously speculating, Dick Howett ....whom I instantly spotted, started off "Forbidden Planet" and I was stuck there in the dark until it had finished, half watching the film, and half wondering what the devil to do when the lights went up again. When they did go up, with superb indecision I hung around nervously while everyone split into pally groups and disappeared, tried to register, and finally, utterly fed-up, went off to get a drink.

NO, NO, DEAR CHAP.....  
I'M NOT A MONSTER.....  
FAN!!



Even in the hotel lounge, the fans were split up into isolated little bunches, and I joined a rather harmless-looking gentleman drinking tea in a corner. By some curious chance he turned out to be only the third Scot at the Con, Mr. David Marwick, from Edinburgh, and even more confused than I was, being almost completely innocent of all knowledge of fandom. So, I was able to recover some of my aplomb by displaying what inner knowledge of fandom I possessed after several months immersion. Throughout the Con, whenever I bumped into him, I found this man to be like unto a spring of fresh water in a jungle, making the sort of common sense comment which I was trying hard not to make myself: "I keep thinking, what does this have that should interest me", that was one, which should be framed and sent to every member of the convention committee, and which in the depth of my heart I believed utterly. Anyway, being rather knackered from my journey, I left Mr. Marwick's company (having seen him shock Brian Burgess by bluntly asking him why he was compiling his mammoth bibliography of British prozines.....because they're there.) and went to bed.

So, Friday was a bit of a dead loss.

Obviously, things couldn't go on like this, so the next day I determined to try to breach this fannish clique. Trouble was, I was afraid of introducing myself to someone, and possibly being crushed, as for example: "Hello there, I'm Ivor Latto!", the possible replies being "Yes?" or "So?" or "We should jump up and down maybe?" I eventually accosted Dick Howett, and gave him the glad news, and he was a good choice. Once I'd registered and received my little lapel ticket things were easier, and kindly people kept coming up and saying "So, you're Ivor Latto!" Rather thoughtfully they said it too, if not warily. Maxim: "A Con goes much more more swimmingly when you know the people there." End of maxim.

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"A BAT you say?"

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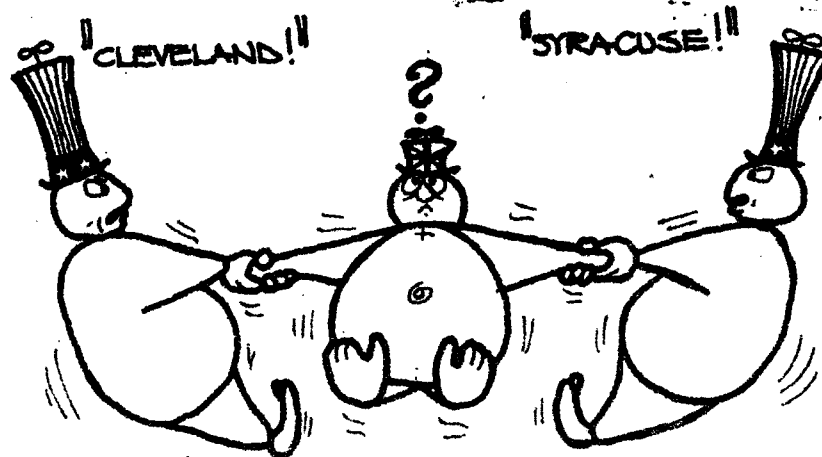
After this experience, I would put no trust in the theory that a person's physical appearance can be guessed at from his writings; I recognised no-one whose photograph or caricature I had not seen. God alone knows what they thought I looked like, if that occurred to them; it must have been a provocative experience in both directions.

It didn't take a great deal of insight to realise that this Con was fraught with internecine strife, waging between Charles Platt (one of "Mike Moorcock's London hangers-on", to borrow a phrase) and the Birmingham group. I must say that I thought Charles was just about the most entertaining person there, but he acted as a sort of one man detonation squad upon the morale of the Birmingham fans, who looked decidedly nervous most of the time. By contrast, their persecutor acted with the careless abandon of one on the verge of gaffiation. I just hung around, trying to avoid being spattered with blood

Seeing this sort of thing in the flesh is of course vastly different from reading about it in fanzines, where the absurdities outweigh the petulance....usually. Another thing: I had often wondered, before attending the Con, why people showed such contempt for "serious" sf fans; it had seemed to me a particularly harmless mania....until I had to endure EXHAUSTIVE conversations with bright-eyed fanatics upon the sexual tendencies of HG Wells, or whatever....the sort of fate Bulldog Drummond used to rescue maidens from.

The Saturday programme didn't exactly set the lights a-sparkling in my bonny blue eyes: a crud-auction, a talk by Geoff Doherty (which I didn't hear, thanks to the endless conversation being conducted by someone with a penetrating voice a couple of yards away), followed by more films. However, I found sufficient interest in meeting and talking to people to pass Saturday afternoon easily enough. It was the great Saturday Night Fancy Dress Parade that I really dreaded: I was sure it would be excruciatingly embarrassing, which it wasn't really....well, not excruciatingly....thanks probably to the dandelion wine (or some such beverage) which was being freely distributed by some benefactor.

TODAY..... BIRMINGHAM!  
TOMORROW.....

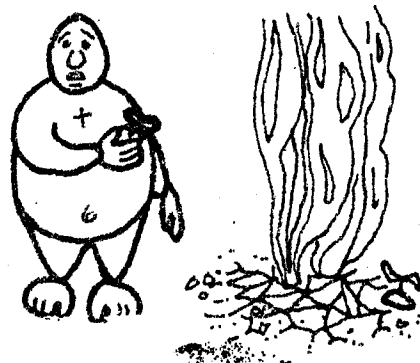


It was at this point, I think, that I realised that, to really have enjoyed the Con I should have followed the advice of the quote-card and started drinking on Friday evening; and continued through until Monday. That might have allayed the feeling of rather desperate forced gaiety which constantly hovered in the back of my mind, the feeling that I would enjoy this if it bloody well killed me. Throughout the Con I was torn between flinging myself heart and soul in to the social whirl, and a reluctance to inflict my company where it might not be wanted. Take, for example, those social highlights of conventions, the room-parties: I had been heartened during that horrible Friday evening, and colourless Saturday by assurances that the Con would really liven up after the Fancy Dress affair, with riotous fannish room-parties. Great! And my resolve was stiffened by Simone Walsh telling me that I would have to search out what life there was....it wouldn't come to me....which seemed very sensible. So, about 11 o'clock on Saturday night, after the Fancy Dress thing had ground to a halt, someone mentions that there is a room-party raging in room twenty-something, and I am boozed-up enough to set out determinedly to Live It Up. Entrance into room twenty-something is like a scene from the Goon Show: rattling of the catch, suspicious stares, passwords, but finally I'M inside this den of vice, grinning sheepishly. Despite a determined effort by the occupants to guard their liquor, I slowly begin to enjoy the party, and am just getting into the swing of it all, when a flunkey comes to the door and has us all flung out for creating too much noise. "To room thirty-something" someone cries, and all eager, I gallop off in pursuit of someone who seems to know where he's going. Unfortunately....he didn't and the second party did not materialise. After a few embarrassing minutes, I cut my losses and retire philosophically to bed.

When Sunday dawned, I had resigned myself to wait out the day patiently, and was looking forward to getting back home. The Annual General Meeting of the BSFA confirmed this mood, if anything. After about two hours of chatter, the main thing to emerge was that VECTOR should be more professionally produced....a pious sentiment indeed. I took advantage of the break in the programme to retire to the bar and stock up on anaesthetic for the long hours ahead. I returned to the Convention Hall stoically resolved to endure the rest of the programme.

But thank God for Harry Harrison! And Brian Aldiss, Ted Tubb, Michael Moorcock! The three or four hours during which they held the floor were sheer enjoyment. As far as I was concerned, the Con started here, and I shudder to think what it would have been like without them. The Birmingham group owe these gentlemen a heartfelt vote of thanks for their efforts. The professionals were followed by Archie Mercer, who did what he could with the

HE WAS JUST STANDING  
THERE, SAYING WALT  
WILLIS DIDN'T WRITE  
GOOD..... WHEN, OF A  
SUDDEN, THERE WAS A  
CLAP OF THUNDER.....



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"I want you to promise me that no matter what happens when the moon rises, Grizelda.....you will remember that I love you very much....."

entation of a non-existent Doc Weir Award, to an absent recipient. Perhaps  
was due to the modest amount of alcohol I had consumed, or maybe it was the  
gering glow produced by H.Harrison & Co., but the remainder of the evening  
at along quite joyfully, even the shambles of an auction, because I picked  
p a Brian Lewis painting I wanted. And so the evening, and the convention,  
proceeded drunkenly....and not unpleasantly, to its close.

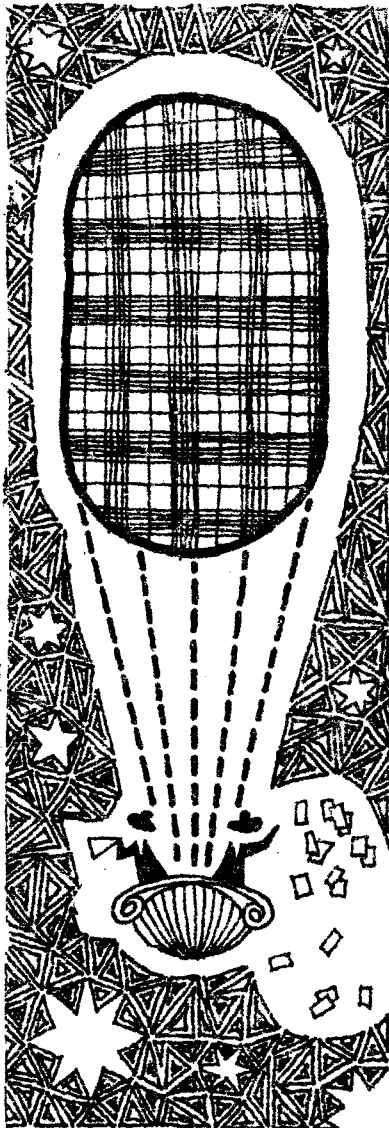
I'm not sure what conclusions I can draw from this, my first convention; the  
fact that I found it so grim on the whole, can be partly put down to the high  
expectations I had of it, and the fact that this was the first time I had met  
any of the people there. But I think I have a legitimate complaint against the  
programme which was offered to us; I for one didn't make that journey in order  
to spend so much time watching films I wouldn't have gone out of my way to see  
at home, nor to sit through auctions of stuff I did not want, nor to listen to  
political harangues over the site of the next WorldCon, which does not affect  
me. And the above items made up at least two-thirds of the official programme.  
For me, the programme only came to life on Sunday afternoon, which was too late  
by far to dispel the two grim preceding days. And they were grim, believe me!  
For the newcomer, or the non-fan, an interesting programme is absolutely vital  
....and an sf programme at that. For fans, the attraction of a Con.

is mainly that of meeting old friends and talking with them and getting  
happily stoned together. For the nervous newcomer this obviously does not apply;  
he has to depend upon a varied programme to hold his interest. I know that it's  
all been said before, but apparently not loudly enough to reach the ears of the  
65 Convention committee.

That said, and despite the overall disillusionment which I felt after it was all  
over, I'm glad I went, if only to have heard Harry Harrison's speech, and to  
have met some of the people I've been writing to for the past few months, most  
of whom pleasantly confirmed my hopes, and to have met some few whom I did not  
know at all before....Tony and Simone Walsh in particular. I trust that the next  
convention I attend will be an improvement, having now broken the ice. See you  
in London?

"NOW REMEMBER FOLKS.  
GREAT YARMOUTH IN '66!"





Conventions have been a feature of the science fiction world for many years. There has never been one in Scotland. Now, with the increasing number of Scots in the British Science Fiction Association, there is a nucleus of potentially-interested people. Nothing can be planned until it is known how many people are likely to attend a Scottish convention. Only two things are certain: the meeting will be a one-day affair, and will be held in Glasgow.

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It's time that Scotland played a greater part in science fiction affairs. ScotCon would provide a good opportunity for sf readers to meet and discuss their particular interests. It all depends on you. Drop me a line, at the address below, mentioning any ideas you may have for a programme. If you mark your letters 'SCOTCON', it will help me to keep your letters separate from INLAND REVENUE pleas to pay the National Debt, and demands from creditors.

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An item similar to this has appeared in VECTOR and further reports will be published, provided the initial response meets expectations. While primarily for Scots, the ScotCon will, naturally, be open to anyone. Furrin' visitors will be welcomed.

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My name & address: DONALD MALCOLM,  
42 GARRY DRIVE,  
PAISLEY,  
RENFREWSHIRE,  
SCOTLAND



J.T.McIntosh is the pen-name of Scots author James Macgregor who, as such, has been writing a large amount of sf over the last ten years. No-one would call him a particularly important writer, but he is certainly an interesting one. His novels and short stories are usually little more than hack-work, with the usual cast of cliché characters dashing through the pages, yet every so often he produces a piece of work considerably superior to most sf.

# WORLD WRECKER?

AN ASSESSMENT  
OF J.T.McINTOSH.

BY RICHARD GORDON

His first four novels have all been published by Corgi, in 1955, save for his best-known novel ONE IN THREE HUNDRED, in 1965. He saw published in American sf mags at the same time numerous novellas and short stories, including MIND ALONE, a highly competent short novel reprinted in the anthology FIVE GALAXY SHORT NOVELS. The three novels published in 1955 were respectively WORLD OUT OF MIND, THE FITTEST, and BORN LEADER. WORLD OUT OF MIND is perhaps the best out of a somewhat stereotyped bunch, and as such is worth considering first.

It opens with the overworked gimmick of a hero who doesn't know who or what he is, and intends to find out....after of course becoming top dog and marrying the beautiful heroine. All of this he does, and finally discovers himself to be the unwilling spy of an alien race bent on conquering the human race, who has been turned into a human being by the superior biological science of the inhuman aliens, to whom all emotion is entirely foreign. However, in taking on the physical attributes of a human being, he also becomes human in nature, and ends up fighting his own race.

But it is not this vaguely interesting plot-line which is the really novel part of the book. Approximately half of the story concerns the efforts of the hero .....Raigmore....to defeat the rigid social conditioning of the society he has been thrown into, by passing all the Tests, and becoming a Wgite Star: a person who has passed all the Tests, and is thus one of the very highest echelons of society. In this respect the book is almost the equal of a Pohl-Kornbluth-type satire, in the detailed complexities of a different civilization, and different social mores. The whole of human life is ruled by the Tests.... it is not compulsory to take them, but one remains a social outcast until one does. Being mainly intelligence tests designed to show up mental attitudes, they fix a person's place in his society for the rest of his life. Although this plot-line is nominally concerned with the cliché of alien invasion, the book is a success as a piece of sociological utopian writing.

Along much of the same lines is one of his more recent novels, published by DIGIT, the ~~NOMAN~~ WAY. In this novel, set on the planet NOMAN, instead of the Tests, we have the Sports. The Noman authorities have a highly original, if bloodthirsty way of keeping their population down....a series of aptitude tests, designed to test one's nerve, skill, and physical strength. Proficiency is recognised by medals and social lionizing; and failure is rewarded by death, since each different test is fatal if not done correctly. Again, the plot is

not particularly memorable or important, and one feels that McIntosh is concerned primarily with the social situation he has set up, and also with the intricate personal relationships of his protagonists. Although ten years separate the two novels, there is no basic difference in the manner of writing, or in his dealing with human relationships.

This is also true of his other novels, which are mainly of the disaster variety. McIntosh has never been particularly interested in the plots of his stories, that is obvious, for in some cases he lifts the entire plot-line from some other novel, and makes only a few perfunctory alterations, to suit his own ideas. He is not apparently concerned with the story for its own sake, but only with the reactions of the characters who find themselves in some extreme or alarming situation which is going to turn them into animals in double quick time. And yet although he is so fond of dissecting human relationships in this manner, he has never managed to say anything new about them... yet he writes an entertaining story. His characters remain stereotyped and predictable.... in the light of similar characters in his earlier novels. There is invariably the tough, Spillane-type hero, who is prepared to assert his strength in an emergency, supposedly for the common good, and if necessary shoot down a few relatively inoffensive wrong-doers as an example to the rest of the flock he has gathered around himself.

This is apparent especially in his latest novel for DIGIT, OUT OF CHAOS, which has practically the same plot-line as both his own ONE IN THREE HUNDRED, and Wylie and Palmer's WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, the only difference being that while the last-named explain the reasons for their catastrophe, McIntosh doesn't bother. He is content to throw his characters into a disaster and leave them to get out of it. In OUT OF CHAOS, published earlier this year, a gigantic earthquake wrecks the Earth and leaves one or two survivors trapped on the islands of land in between deep rifts,



which have split the surface up like crazy paving. The survivors gradually drift together, and the troubles begin. As it says on the blurb: "Gone was the veneer and restraint that civilization imposes upon men and women. Exposed were the brutal, basic passions of lust, hate and survival."

In fact, a resume of the entire book, and most of his others, in three lines. After the preliminaries, someone tries to rape the thirteen-year-old girl the hero has met up with. Now that civilization has gone by the board, he is summarily shot and thrown over a cliff....without anyone making any complaints. As the book continues, sex and death get more and more entwined until finally a reasonably hopeful conclusion is reached! The hero spends his time committing adultery, both before and after the disaster....the Quake....so much so that the book begins to read like a miniature version of Heinlein on an off-day.

This book seems to me to be a hack effort, turned out purely to earn some money, and as such it is probably unfair to probe deeply into it. In mood and theme it is strongly reminiscent of both ONE IN THREE HUNDRED and THE FITTEST, both of which are disaster novels; the first having a plot lifted from WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, and the second from THE TRIFFIDS and similar novels. Again, the accent is entirely on the degeneration of "civilized" human beings when the going gets tough....the author obviously has no great belief in human dignity, except that of the harsher variety.

McIntosh is more or less the science-fictional equivalent of Mickey Spillane: the police are always "cops", and gunplay and death is seldom very far round the corner. In his novel THE MILLION CITIES, recently published by PYRAMID, there is for McIntosh a slightly unusual plot. The Earth is entirely over-crowded, and the government has outlawed space-travel. Of course, there is a group ready to defy the autocratic government, and equally inevitably, both hero and heroine get mixed up in it. There are Machiavellian politics, murder, torture, whipping, the lot. It is a readable novel, but one tends to get rather tired of the long list of atrocities which are continually being showered at one, culminating in the failure of the rebels' space ship to take off, with the eventual result that nine million people are killed by the out-of-control-ship. We are treated to gory details about women being disembowelled, headless children lying around and similar edifying details.

McIntosh is, above all, a highly competent writer. When one picks up a novel or a short story with his name, one knows that it will be readable, even though almost certainly stereotyped. Very few of his stories are at all memorable, except perhaps for the odd short such as THE BLISS OF SOLITUDE, published in GALAXY in 1952, concerning a lone space-station operator who suffers from hallucinations....or so he thinks; seeing the customary beautiful girl hovering around him, he believes her to be a hallucination....the "girl" has to prove her existence to him. This she does, but in the process, he realises that he has been suffering from hallucinations after all. His girl is in reality an old woman, whom he has rationalised into what he wants to see.

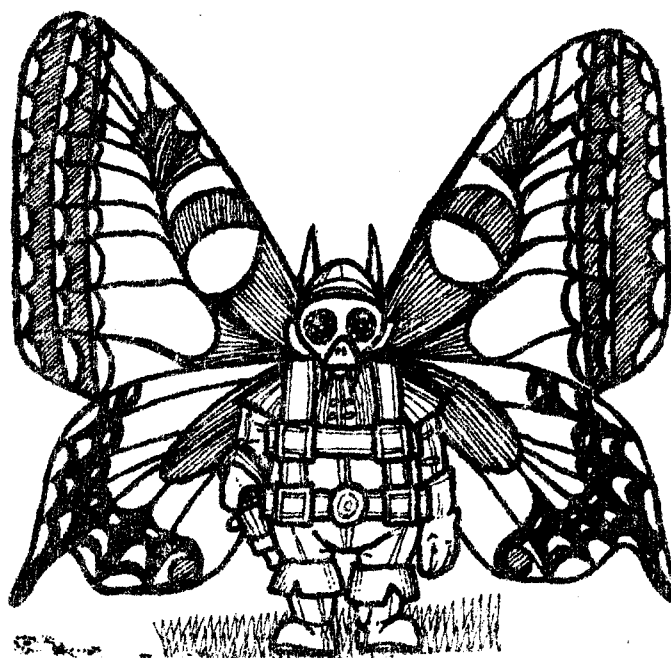
A McIntosh character, taken on its own, is considerably more deeply drawn than the majority of sf characters. He writes sf primarily so that he can dissect human relationships: one novel, instead of five or six, would have sufficed for this, but since an author earns more for more work, five or six it is; his two

latest novels are little more than rewritten versions of his earlier books.

But the main test of a book is whether or not it is readable, particularly for this sort of sf, and McIntosh's stories pass this test.....as a writer he is considerably more competent than many of his fellows. His lack of variety is the greatest criticism that can be levelled against him, indeed, he is in danger of joining the great Lymington-Maine group of writers....who just rewrite the same story in every different book. But he is a fresher writer than these: a book like *NOMAN WAY* is intriguing in the same way that a good painting is intriguing, for he draws a rich picture, and then sits back and lets the reader enjoy it. His characters are stereotypes, but stereotypes with much more interesting features to them than most of sf's supposed individualist characters such as Ben Reich, or Elijah Bailey. His style, with its pseudo-toughness, "cops", and strong arm rule, is rather wearing, but his books are readable and enjoyable, the characters, in their context are entirely credible, and their artificiality becomes apparent only after reading three or four of his books with their relatively similar characters.

Whatever the book is, it is safe to say that it will at least be competently written....and if that sounds like damning with faint praise, then I wonder how many authors, especially sf authors, that can be said of! He is a prolific writer.....recently it seems as though he has taken over Randall Garrett's once permanent function as hack-writer for *ANALOG*....which breeds this sameness in his work. I for one have always found his work eminently readable; he combines technical know-how with occasionally arresting ideas, and if one cannot expect literary pyrotechnics from him, one can expect, and usually get, a good story. And that is worth a lot these days.

RICHARD GORDON.



# DAN, DAN, THE PLANETARY MAN

I sometimes think that the most embarrassing thing you can ask a science fiction fan is "What first aroused your interest in sf? What got you hooked?" In fact, I doubt if there is any other hobby/pastime in which that sort of question would arouse such feet-shuffling, embarrassed coughing and blushing. Hardly surprising when you consider that for most sf enthusiasts the answer would probably be Tarzan, or Vargo Statten, or Cap'n Billy's Whiz Bang, or something equally shame-making. Happy is he who cut his tooth on H.G.Wells or Jules Verne! Alas, like most others, my initiation into the Noble Art was at the hands of a character who, even now, I hesitate to publicly identify (anyway, we were too poor to have an H.G.Wells). I allude to that British Buck Rogers, Dan Dare, Pilot of the future.

Well, we all have to start somewhere. I must admit though, that whenever I've been asked that dread question (see above), I have invariably lied and said "George Orwell" or "Aldous Huxley"; even "Kipling!" But the more I learn of fandom, the more I realise how uninhibited people are in these matters....bare-faced is the word. Ergo: Latto Tells All! Actually, this outburst of confidences was occasioned by Mike Higg's fanzine SHUDDER 2, which has an exhaustive and bibliographic article on Dan Dare and his exploits, and which, I was rather startled to find, had me twitching with nostalgic interest. Disconcerting, to say the least: much as I despise comic fans, I nevertheless find myself in the company of those who know Billy Bunter's waist measurement or the brand of tobacco smoked by Sexton Blake, in that I can tell you the number of buttons on Dan Dare's tunic (four).

The history of Col.Dare, and the EAGLE comic which carried his adventures is not without interest to the sf fan, especially as I believe that many of the younger fans were also originally hooked by his allure....more than would care to admit it. The first copy of EAGLE saw the light of day in 1950....a rather drab time for most people, but especially for children: sweets were still rationed for one thing. And the young mind in search of literary stimulus had to choose between anaemic British comics, badly printed on crude paper (which was rationed too) and poorly illustrated....and garish, lurid, sexual-sadistic American imports.

Naturally, we chose the US imports, being too young to be nationalistic, and too flighty to be troubled by the balance of payments situation. But there were drawbacks: the American comics were somewhat pricey, and difficult to find, unless one had a kindly relative in the States (everyone in our street had a

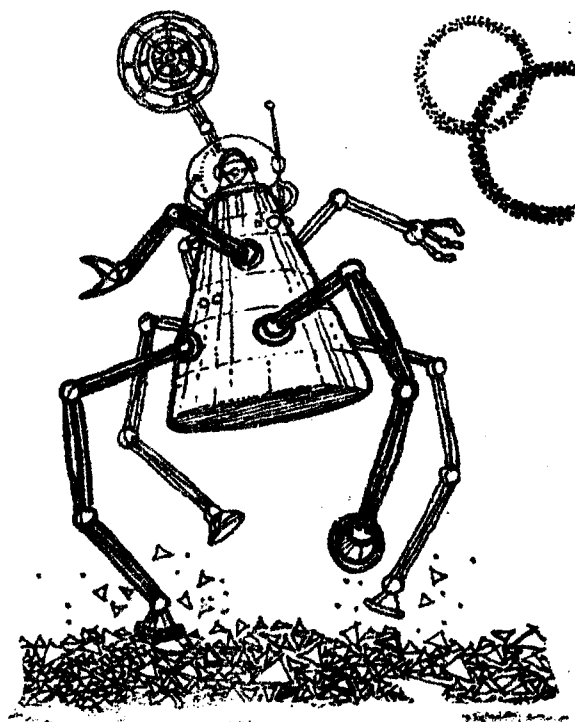
relative in the States....the Clearances, you know); and, the greatest drawback of all, adults tended to frown heavily on catching their offspring reading them. Indeed, at this time there was a press crusade against the US pulp imports, to the effect that they were corrupting Our Children with their violence and sex. This puritanical campaign gained force when the Korean war brought a spate of publications showing GIs merrily bayonetting, garrotting and braising canary-yellow Red Chinese.

Against this background, the first EAGLE appeared. It was more than just a commercial gambit; it was a conscious effort to provide good, clean, wholesome fun for the kiddies....its first editor, Marcus Morris, was a clergyman. You might think that this sort of policy would be the kiss of death to a comic paper....but not when the audience was the children of Britain, the most conservative creatures outside Westminster. Before they launched their creation the publishers embarked on a sophisticated publicity campaign: cars with huge gilt eagle-effigies (something Freudian there) patrolled the streets proclaiming "EAGLE is coming"; hoardings bore the same evangelistic message, and widespread distribution of gift vouchers ensured a sell-out for the first issue anyway.

When it eventually appeared, it was certainly something of a sensation. It was published on very good quality paper for one thing, a paper which had a most distinctive, not unpleasant odour....a sort of proprietary tang; but its impact came from the opulent, full-colour, Super-Cineramic presentation, and upon the team of first class illustrators employed, led by Frank Hampson, the creator and artist of the Dan Dare strip. As well as illustrating DD, Hampson also handled other features; on the back page, he illustrated a strip-cartoon Life of St. Paul, true to the paper's uplifting ideals, which sort of slipped by in our neighbourhood because the title of the strip was rather evasive, and no-one knew who the Hell Saul of Tarsus was; the other Hampson strip was a full page, full colour advertisement for Walls' Ice Cream, featuring the adventures of one Tommy Walls, a youthful righter of wrongs who preyed on the criminal classes. An intriguing feature of the latter was the "Lucky Walls Sign" which Thomas made with his fingers in moments of acute stress (and was rapidly converted to something more basic by children up and down the length of Britain). This was originally the "Magic Walls Sign" which gave the user the power of unaided flight but, possibly because of the incidence of trusting children hurling themselves from great heights supported only by the Magic Walls Sign, and faith, the manufacturers hastily converted the powers of their product from supernatural to superstition.

Being a particularly credulous child, I accepted readily the energy-giving properties of Walls Ice Cream as exemplified by Tommy Walls ("Come on Bill.... you had some Walls Ice Cream this morning! That'll see you through!") It was a pleasant way to build up superhuman reserves of strength anyway; one reason why I am overweight to-day. Other attractions of EAGLE were: the adventures of PC49, a national radio hero, and a sort of juvenile George Dixon; his favourite expletive I remember, was: "My Sunday Helmet!!" And there was a strip called "Seth and Shorty: Cowboys" which was noteworthy for the costumes and dialogue employed by the artist....they appeared to have sprung from a devoted study of William S. Hart's films. For instance: "There's Seth and Shorty! What er they letherin fer? They must hev smelt our grub!!"

Eagle was nothing, if not informative. There were acres of features telling you how to improve your cricket, and what happens in coal mines (heh,heh) and who Bleriot was. But much more entertaining was the information given by the various advertisers. For example, by following the adventures of Ronnie the Gumster (Rowntrees) you could learn how to tie a knot in a handkerchief without letting go of the ends; or one could pick up such invaluable gems as that a week's supply of Cadbury's Milk Tray chocolates would be 23 times the height of Mount Everest, or that there is a Christmas pudding on the floor of the National Gallery. There was the interesting point that Rome fell because the Romans had no toothpaste, there was the unending struggle between Commander Gibbs and - Dragon Decay, there was the Ovaltineys Own Corner of Amusements (heh,heh) and fascinating books to obtain: "Stamp Collecting through a Keyhole".....for contortionists only?



However, despite these myriad enticements, the main attraction of Eagle was undoubtedly that most British of space-opera heroes, Col. Daniel MacGregor Dare of the International Space Fleet. Whether Frank Hampson, who gave him birth, actually consciously designed this superman to appeal to British boyhood, or whether he was simply a fortuitous combination of diverse themes, I couldn't say. It doesn't matter really, because Dan Dare and his world were the minors' dreams of home as far as I and my contemporaries were concerned.

Undoubtedly much of his appeal lay in his resemblance to the wartime fighter ace. Hampson was in the RAF, so this aspect of his brainchild might have been a hangover from his service days, but certainly in 1950, only five years after the war, one could be sure that every red-blooded British child veered in affection between Sailor Malan and Captain Marvel. In his illustrations for the strip, Hampson laid more than a little emphasis upon the RAF-like qualities of his hero: the International Space Fleet was simply the RAF writ large, with a few funny foreign members...gourmandising Frenchman and horn-rimmed Yanks.... and Dan and his colleagues even wore replicas of RAF officers' uniforms, but green, with rather gaudy braid trimmings. The language too tended towards RAF slang in moments of emotion: "Tally Ho!" "Wizard!" "Bangon!" which was still hot stuff in the early fifties. The whole feature depended as much upon the mystique of Fighter Command, as upon the Mystery of Space.

As far as plot and characterisation went, the series was pretty unremarkable, seen through the eyes of the sf addict. But few ten-year-olds are sf addicts. Dan's companions were what one might expect: a fat, funny other ranks figure, his batman, from Wigan; a beautiful female scientist who provided what love

was  
interest<sup>^</sup> thought to be appropriate for British sub-teenage youth; there was the father-figure of Sir Hubert Guest, Controller of Space Fleet, Gillespie to Dan's Kildare; and of course there was the International Brigade....a nine-foot tall Texan and a chubby Gaul who spoke pidgin English.

The world inhabited by these characters was not unattractive, despite its being constantly under the threat of imminent conquest by sundry alien aggressors. The Earth of 1995 was free from poverty, hunger and disease, international conflict had been abolished, and all nations lived amicably under the benevolent rule of the UN: all super-explosives had been destroyed after "...the final Peace Congress of 1965." (Well? There's still six months to go). In short, a world where one might lead the Good Life, threatened only by external problems which could be left in the capable hands of Col. Dare and his associates. Rather appealing when viewed from the early fifties, at the height of the Cold War.

But the true appeal of Dan's adventures lay in their presentation; for several years the strip was handled by Frank Hampson, who conceived the character in the first place. Unfortunately, it isn't possible to convey the quality of his work in print, my own admiration for him as an illustrator is very subjective anyway. Just to compare his work with the artwork being produced in NEBULA or NEW WORLDS of the same period gives some idea of his ability, and it was his excellence as an illustrator which was ultimately the deciding factor for success for Dan Dare, and for the publication which featured him.

The real test of Hampson's ability is that now, as a hard-bitten sf aficionado when I look back over his work I of course regard with amiable contempt the hackneyed plots and British B-film characterisation, the pseudo-science and stiff-upper-lip heroics, the melodramatic villains and sundry other puerilities, yet the drawings themselves retain their freshness and their appeal. Although there is inevitably some degree of nostalgic reverence in this, I don't think that it is very much of an influence: in all honesty, I can't think of any British artist working in the sf field, past or present, who was his equal. Everyone working in the sf field has to face the problem of creating new worlds and new races, and I should imagine that to do so by actually illustrating them is much more difficult than by suggesting them in print. In any case, the medium of the strip cartoon is purely visual, what written material there is being very subsidiary to the drawings; and in these terms Hampson was certainly as successful as any one who works in the sf field, whether in books, radio, films or TV.

While Hampson worked on the strip, it was a great success, a success in strict commercial terms; at one time there was a sort of Dan Dare boom, with all sorts of articles being produced bearing his name, clothes, shoes, watches, soap, toothpaste. Some years ago, Hampson stopped doing the strip....why, I don't know....and since then, our hero's popularity has suffered. At one point he was even reduced to black-and-white, and removed from the cover....what a humiliation. So maybe I can cover my embarrassment in future by saying that the work of Frank Hampson brought me into sf, rather than (gulp) "Dan Dare!" And as to his bringing others into the fold, I wasn't alone in that thought:

"....with great personal pleasure, I saw the first issue of the new Hulton Press juvenile EAGLE. Here again is this generation's focal point for stimulating thought. Just as the boys of two generations ago....looked up to the moon and stars and wondered when Man would bridge the gap, so will the boys of today look and wonder!"  
JOHN CARNELL, NEW WORLDS no.7, 1950.



# WE NEVER CLOSE : NON-STOP REVIEW.

THE SUNDERED WORLDS: Michael Moorcock. Compact Books. 3/6d.

Fittingly, Compact start off their new sf series with this novel by their tame editor. Well, hardly tame, I suppose....domesticated let's say. I am an admirer of Mr. Moorcock, for the way he has revived NEW WORLDS during his short term as editor; indeed, I almost realised an ambition at the Con, by shaking hands with him. Unfortunately he was holding a drink in each of his at the time, so the opportunity was lost. However, I can't honestly say that I am an admirer of his professional writing....of that published under his own name anyway. If there is one adjective which describes his work, it is "humourless", by which I don't mean that I expect a laugh a minute in the books I read: but I find his stories to be, generally speaking, fatalistic, even pessimistic, and his characters rather cold and emotionless. I think he regards much of human activity as being of small import.

This novel tends to reinforce these views. In the first place, it deals with great, sweeping themes....the death of a galaxy, the existence of the race, the purpose of humanity. In such terms, individuals are dwarfed, and become ciphers. Briefly, the story is of how the human race is led to safety from a cosmic disaster by a Superman/Saviour/Moses figure....Renark. The danger threatening humanity is that of a "contraction" of the universe, an apparently infinite contraction.....round and round, in ever-decreasing circles, until it finally disappears....and the human race with it. The twists of the plot abound with "multiverses" and "space-time continua", phrases which cover a multitude of themes. Interesting, and arresting ideas crowd the pages, indeed, they tend to hinder the narrative; reading this book is like reading a 2,000 word summary of WAR AND PEACE....you have to stop every ten minutes or so, to digest what has gone before. This is the principal fault of the book, it is too rich in intriguing devices. However, as space-opera, it is successful in that it occasionally produces that curious shiver of appreciation which you know, and I know, but which is so difficult to describe; for want of a better term, that corny old sense-of-you-know-what. Whatever it is, it comes across best in the description of "the Blood-Red Game", the ultimate trial of the human refugees in search of a new home.

I have a feeling that this book is packed with symbols and allegories....the sacrifice of Renark halfway through the book points suspiciously towards a sort of priest-saviour myth; I hope not, for I hate riddles and riddling. At a purely narrative level, THE SUNDERED WORLDS is well worth reading, but I would still prefer Michael Moorcock to deal with human beings, rather than Humanity.

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"I never drink.....wine....."

THE ZILOV BOMBS:D.G.Barron. Pan Books.2/6d.

The Russians have occupied Britain again: thanks to the influence of CND and other pacifist groups(the book was first published in 1962), Britain, along with the rest of Europe, has fallen under the Red hammer. But this isn't the usual democracy-triumphs-over-naughtiness epic, it is really concerned with the nature of pacifism. There is none of the usual Readers' Digest-type Horrors Of Soviet Occupation stuff; or very little of it. The hero of the book is a middle-aged ex-BantheBomber, who, despite the occupation of his country by Russian forces, still holds his pacifist beliefs, regarding that calamity as preferable to nuclear destruction. The theme of the book is how his guilt, as a pacifist, for the events which have led to Britain's defeat, acts upon a latent patriotism, and draws him into aiding the anti-Russian underground movement.

At one level, the book may be read as a simple adventure story, at another it depicts the pacifist's dilemma,as this man is drawn inevitably, powerlessly, into the situation where he alone must literally make the decision whether the Soviet regime, throughout Europe may be allowed to exist, with all its cruelties and suffering, or whether a bloody revolution should be launched against it, leading to the possible destruction of mankind.

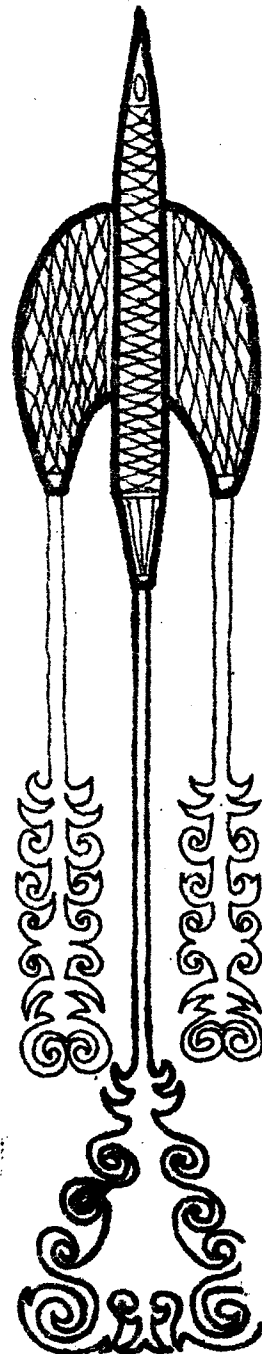
The book is very readable throughout, thoughtful, rational, and very appealing: excellent use of sf by an outsider.

THE FOURTH REICH.Martin Hale.Jonathan Cape. 18s.

"A Fantasy of the United Nations", it says for the subtitle, Well, it all started in Hitler's bunker, you see; this chap Leutmann tries to blow up the Fuhrer with a little bomb, but with un-Teutonic inefficiency, he falls on top of it instead, at just the wrong moment. Bang! Hitler thinks he has been saved by this heroic fellow flinging himself on the bomb at the crucial moment, and fawns over Leutmann disgustingly. Leutmann is enthralled, and vows to support the Fuhrer's views, no matter what. Twenty Years Later, and guess who is Secretary-general of the UN? No, not Hitler.....but cunning old Leutmann. And the rot soon sets in, in that once respectable institution: the decent white nations have nothing to do with it, it is fed with Afro-Asian gold, and it sports a private army of twenty mechanized divisions; it soon moves its HQ to Leopoldville, and starts doing evil things all over the place, hunting "neo-colonialists" and "mercenaries". But fear not! The British Labour government have a secret weapon in the form of Simon Farr, Special Agent, whom they unleash on nasty Leutmann, to bring about his doom!

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"I don't know what I believe anymore....."



The political sentiments of the author seem to be that of the Katanga lobby... in fact I might have thought that Moise Tshombe wrote it....except that I'm sure M.Tshombe writes much better English. I really can't think of anything good to say about this slab of corny old rubbish. In the first place, it seems to have been published about two years too late, all the political references are out of date: not much out of date, but enough to destroy any possible belief in the likelihood of the action....or even to effect the traditional "willing suspension of disbelief" necessary to enjoy any kind of sf. And then, the hero, a junior James Bond, is so horrible: presumably the author was aiming to portray a rather headstrong youngman, careless of conventions because of the endless danger of his work, but what he has created is an insufferable little bastard....I felt more sympathy for Leutmann really. And the plot involves so many corny best-selling-thriller gimmicks it would make you weep: sexy bird, whippings, carnage, homos, even a manly priest, and the final scene, in which Leutmann gets his, by means of a huge tidal wave furCrisake!! Beyond belief!

This juvenile penny dreadful is wrapped up in a writing style so amateurish I could have done it myself. I could never be sure, when reading it, that the author was not indulging in a rather crude parody of wrotten thrillers....I was honestly continually uncertain as to whether he was serious. No, I was wrong, the book has two possible qualities, it is an excellent example of how not to write anything, let alone science fiction, and it is one long unconscious giggle from beginning to end. Rush out and buy it now, if you enjoy a good laugh.

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"Eternal Life!! At last!"

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## POSTSCRIPT!

The first lesson in fanzine publishing, is never to tell anyone your planned publication date....this thing was supposed to have come out before Easter. Oh well, what's two or three months, among friends?

I would welcome any and all comment upon this little effort, from anyone at all, but I would particularly appreciate letters of comment, and contributions, if possible, from sf enthusiasts in Scotland. If you ask me nicely, your letter need not be followed by a copy of FANKLE 2....so don't let that worry you. But of course, I will be just as interested in seeing what non-Scots think of it....oh, we're very broadminded up here, you know. It's the tam o' shanters that do it, .

Right?

