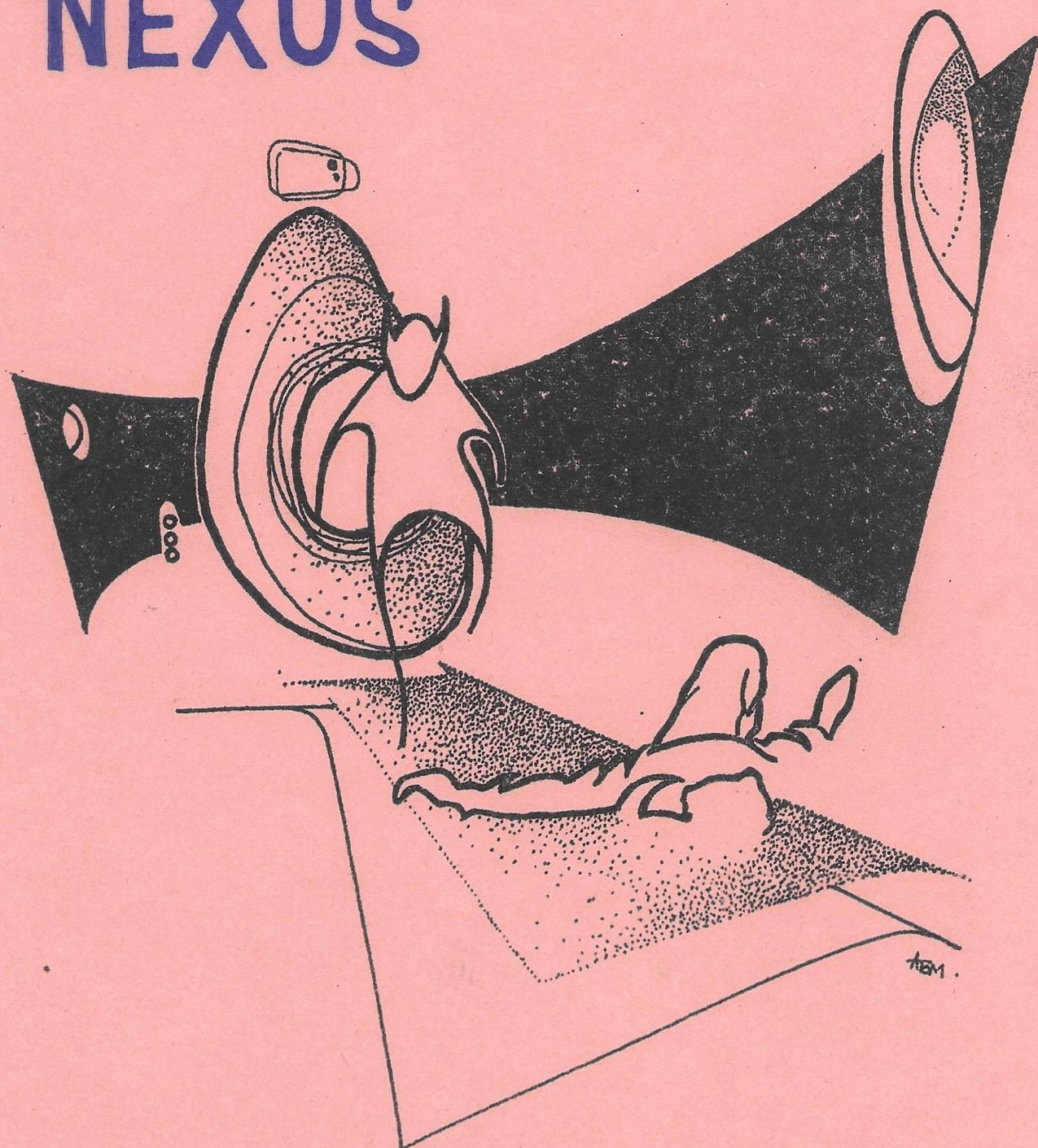


# NEXUS



TEM.



NEXUS





# NEXUS

This is NEXUS ONE, produced on the 15th of June for the BSFA Publishing and Distributing Service(PaDs). It is intended to be included in the first PaDs mailing, and is also for general distribution to a favoured few.

It is not obtainable for money, but copies might be available to Letter writers whose letters can be used next time, to any contributors, and to a few who trade magazines.

Page 1        Contents & intro.

Page 2-3-4 ON THE OTHER FOOT  
your editor hits back at the critics.

Page 5-6-7 DON'T HIT ME BUT

Beryl Henley has a go at my  
ZENITH article on Campbell.

Page 8-9-10 A ROSE AMONG  
                  THE THORNS

Archie Mercer tells about a  
book he found

Page 10 (also) THE MACABRE  
a poem by Bill Webb.

Page 11-12 THE IRON FIST  
I look at SF militarism &  
H.Beam Piper's works.

Page 13-14 BIRMINGHAM  
a look at the place by an  
inhabitant.

EDITOR & CHIEF HACK,

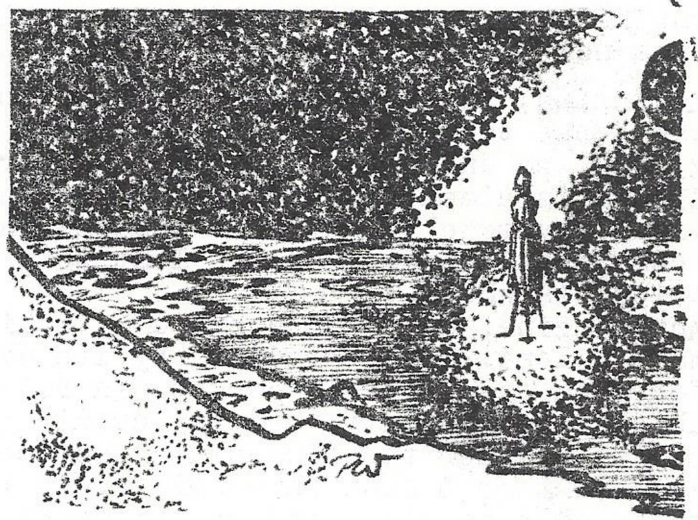
Pete Weston, 9 Porlock Crescent,  
Northfield, Birmingham, 31.

EDITORIAL :

I wanted a change from  
the sercon ZENITH. This is it.

COMPETITION;

What shall I call my  
duplicator (besides Roneo 350)



---

All My Own Work -----

COPYRIGHT THROUGHOUT 1964

Covers by Atom & Howett  
Interior illoes Jeeves & Mik & myself . Thanks, all.

## ON THE OTHER FOOT

An Editor criticises the critics.

The amateur publishing field has for a long time been diagnosing the symptoms of 'pseudo-campbellism' in fanzine editors. Yet a parallel syndrome has been largely unrecognised save by the disgruntled fan-editors themselves. This is the pseudo-knightism exhibited by so many critics of fanzine material.

damon knight (the small initials are intentional) is well known as a gifted and ruthless critic. His standards are consistently high, for any field. For science fiction, so often poor and 'pulpy', they are almost too high. His comments on inferior material are penetratingly accurate and a joy to read. He is a successful reviewer and critic because he can himself write in a manner that makes an attempt (often successful) to live up to his own standards.

And the 'pseudo-knightists' often can't write a thing themselves.

The present day critics of the fan field can be broadly divided into two classes, with an occasional exception that merely proves the rule. There is the somewhat lenient, considerate and successful reviewer, who can himself write well; and who has most probably been through the mill of fan-publishing (Ron Bennett, Ethel Lindsay, Walt Willis.) And there is the frighteningly thorough reader who can find fault with anything, has little if any discrimination in his attacks, and who does not temper his criticism with consideration for other viewpoints.

A fanzine, let it be said at once, is not a professional magazine in the sense that Galaxy and Analog are prozines. (In my own case, with ZENITH, an unfortunate semantic error has caused some to think that ZENITH is aimed at becoming a fiction-falled prozine; while in fact it is merely modelled after a prozine in that it is presented in a formal, 'commercial' approach. The last term itself deserving further elaboration elsewhere.)

Any fanzine, unless supported by a kindly philanthropist, is going to make a loss. It is produced by its editor(s) as a hobby, and is paid for from the editor's pocket. In return, he takes the not inconsiderable responsibility, and any credit (or the opposite.)

He has neither the financial resources nor the literary talent of a Fred Pohl or a John Campbell Jr. A fanzine cannot be run on the same scale as a prozine, and cannot maintain the same standards.

But it can, and must, have standards.

Once standards are set, it is only fair that the editor should keep to them whenever possible. But the editor should not be expected to set his sights too high, and should not be expected to work miracles at the drop of a hat. He cannot afford to pay for material. -- he is dependant upon whatever is offered at any given moment.

To switch now from the general to the specific. This article is aimed principally at the people who criticed the last issue of ZENITH (5 -- June 1964) It is intended to show that that issue was not below the standards that had been set for it, was in fact perfectly in accord with the aims and intentions of the magazine.

The issue created more comment than any other issue has done. One letter alone praised everything. One letter alone condemned the whole magazine. In between was the entire spectrum of comment. Every item has drawn both the utmost praise and the worst of abuse. The contents range, evidently, from 'boring and rubbishy to read' to 'interesting and entertaining throughout.' Panorama was both 'a personal attack on Charles Platt' and 'deft, perceptive and amusing.' SECTOR GENERAL was 'a complete waste of space' and 'particularly interesting and very well done.' The story was 'excellent' and 'without any virtues whatsoever'.

What can I do ? And each and every writer knows what they want, and urges me (sometimes openly, sometimes between the lines) to make ZENITH more like what they want.

How impossible! With several hundred readers to cater for, all with differing tastes, I can only produce a hodgepodge that is going to have both good and bad points to anyone. The essence of the magazine must be compromise. When one fellow wants 'all fiction', (yes he does!) and another wants 'no fiction', they both get one story per issue. When bibliophiles want information first, there will have to be a 'dry as dust' item for the swashbucklers to complain about. When someone says that the book reviews are 'too up-to-date, and too complete' the completeist wants to know everything new that comes out. So I shall expect -- and get, disapproving letters.

But in these letters, I'd like you to be fair to me. Consider.

I am spending time and money to produce a fanzine. It is a hobby, true enough, but is also to your benefit. There is no good reason why I should not pack it all in today. Please do not write letters that imply that I am a black-hearted villain whose only concern is money; that imply I deliberately publish poor items; that imply I will not publish anything disagreeing with my own opinions; that demand I raise my standards.

My standards are not high. I will publish material that is intelligently written, and likely to be of interest to (at least part of) the readership. I will not write it all myself. And I will not be addressed as if any items considered poor are my personal fault.

ZENITH provides a forum for almost anyone to express himself about a topic that interests him. If standards are raised too high, nothing will be usable. The magazine will degenerate into a regular sheaf of columns, with no other article or story content. Which I could do and which would be easier from my point of view than chasing around after fresh material.

Write something, damn you, or else don't pull someone else to pieces.

A parable;

'...and so, all in all, I hope you don't mind my saying this, but I'm afraid that your magazine is very poor. There were only 100 pages this time, and their was a spelling mistake on Page 66, and the grammar are poor, and the articles were bad and you must do better than this. Why do you use such very bad material ? I don't know how you have the nerve to print it.'

Sincerely....

PS I enclose a story/article for the next issue.

...The story/article will like as not be nonsensical, rubbishy, poorly written, ungrammatical, a rehash of an old theme, and generally useless. So after I've rejected it, the fellow can tell everyone how misguided is my policy, and how he won't send his work to be insulted and how he is going to write letters criticising the next issue.

Actually none of my correspondants are this bad. They should, however, realise that I tend to take most notice of people who have proved that they are capable themselves. Back-seat-drivers with no qualifications are always suspect.

A final point that galls me on occasion. When criticising an issue, some people only mention the bad points. Reproduction on ZENITH 5 was near perfect, yet very few mentioned this, or the good illustrations, or that cover -- which Eddie spent hours painting and I spent pounds printing. The bad points, no matter how small (such as my 'poor typing') get brickbats. The scoops, such as -50 pages, TAPP results, complete book information, and so on, get no comment.

This is hardly fair is it ? But, as I am finding out rapidly, there are few rules to this game.

In conclusion.

A future issue of ZENITH will contain the best of what material is on hand. Whether this is good or bad depends to a large degree on what is sent for use. Material will be 'angled' for the different factions of the readership. Your opinions are welcomed, but before you attack something, ask yourself, 'Will other people also dislike this ?' and 'could I do better ?' This is not an excuse for poor material, but a reason why it may not always be perfect in your judgement. You may say that a piece is not 'good'. You have less right to say a piece is 'bad'. After all, 'average' is a fair average.

Peter R Weston....



DON'T HIT ME  
BUT.....

In ZENITH-3, published last February, there appeared an article, 'Campbell's Kingdom' by the editor, Peter Weston. Ever since reading this I have been intending to write an article in reply I have been so busy (as Pete, among others, will confirm,) that only now have I managed to get around to it.

I, too, have always enjoyed 'Astounding/Analog.' I haven't always understood the technical data in some of the stories, and I haven't liked all of the stories featured. Nevertheless I agree that "there never has been, nor probably ever will be, a magazine to outrank it." Peter goes on to say....:

"...JWC spent years in painfully raising the standards of his magazine, and gaining a good reputation for it, then placed in jeopardy the repute of ASF by embracing a pseudo-scientific 'brainchild'." This is certainly one way of looking at it. 'Analog is still very much to the fore, though, and at an increased price! (Perhaps a lot of people don't read editorials ? )

Another possible angle is that those years of growth and rising standards were, in part, a preparation for the launching of Campbell's pet theories and hobby-horses. So that when he did put them forward, they were read and discussed by a large and world-wide SF reading public.

I don't know a great deal about the influence of these theories on the stories featured in the magazine. I do know that most, if not all, of Campbell's controversial editorials drove me to find out more.

Oddly enough, the one which eventually created the biggest impact on me didn't do so as a result of a Campbell-campaign. This was Dianetics and Scientology, which I didn't investigate until fairly late in 1956.

It has been said that I'm gullible. Maybe I am. But I would rather investigate and explore . . . a fantastic theory and find it to be completely crackpot, than refuse to investigate it at all.

In 1956 Campbell proposed to delve into psi, and asked readers if they would communicate their views on this matter. (I think the editorial was titled, 'We MUST Investigate Psi !' -- right Pete ?) ((Sounds familiar, mate, carry on ...Pete. )) I wrote a letter egging him on It was published (BRE ASF Sept 1956.)

As a result I received a letter from a man in Hull, expressing general agreement with my views. ("How the double-dyed damnation can you find out anything if you don't ask questions ? -- particularly 'why' questions.) A voluminous correspondence began -- and eventually I was asked, did I know anything about Dianetics and Scientology?

To cut a long story short, I plunged in. Let me stress here that I didn't and still don't agree with all of Hubbard's data, theories, claims, etc. But I became convinced that he definitely had something.

It seems to me that whenever I mention that I'm interested in D&S, and have personal experience of its methods, I am met with groans, jeers, and . . . boggle-eyed amazement. I have been told, over and over again, that LRH pronounced his wife the world's first Clear, whereupon she divorced him. ((and produced evidence to show he was 'hopelessly insane.' -- might prove something.)) I sometimes think that's all most people know about D&S!

Again, I must emphasise that those who choose to scoff are granted the right to do so. I take no offence. I engage in no acrimonious argument -- again, I think this will be confirmed; neither do I attempt to shove D&S down unwilling throats or into rejective minds -- I have long since passed the stage of wanting to convert (forcibly !) anyone to anything!

But I do wish its vociferous detractors would read at least some of the writings on the subject before they do their detracting! It seems dogmatic to say the least, to condemn anything out of hand when one knows little or nothing about it.

To quote Pete again; "LRH exchanged a career as an author for a career as a prophet." It is said that a prophet is without honour in his own country. It might also be said that a researcher is without honour in his own century. Other men have been laughed at -- or worse, -- in earlier times. Copernicus, Galileo, -- and what did the doctors say about Harvey? "I would rather err with Galen than be right with Harvey." To be trite, Time Will Tell.

It will also tell if LRH (and the rest of us who have tried D&S for ourselves) is/are wrong, of course. We accept that possibility.

I know that I'm called a crank, (among other things) That's all right -- I'm used to it. One-who-shall-be-nameless said recently, "I may be a boob -- but I'm told I'm a lovable boob." OK, I'm a crank, but I venture to believe I'm a likeable crank. I get along with almost everybody, anyway. People seem to like me enough to bring their private troubles to me -- I swear I have the wettest shoulders in the country! (I'm not complaining, mind... "If I can help somebody.....")

What I'm getting at is this. D&S have helped .. to shape the kind of person I am today. Sticking my neck way out;; am I a bad advertisement for it? (Am I so awful, Noddy?)

Hieronymus machines, psionic machines, and psi itself; I don't know just how much investigation has taken place into these -- particularly psi. However, I tend to suspect it isn't nearly enough. (Anyway I like psi stories. Loved the 'Sir Kenneth Malone' things.) But why do intelligent people like the Rhines, Drs Soal and Bateman, and others, spend so much time on it? Even the Russians have made serious attempts at telepathy, recently. And far too many strange things have happened, under verifiable, if not repeatable, conditions for the whole subject to be dismissed with the contempt that is all too prevalent.



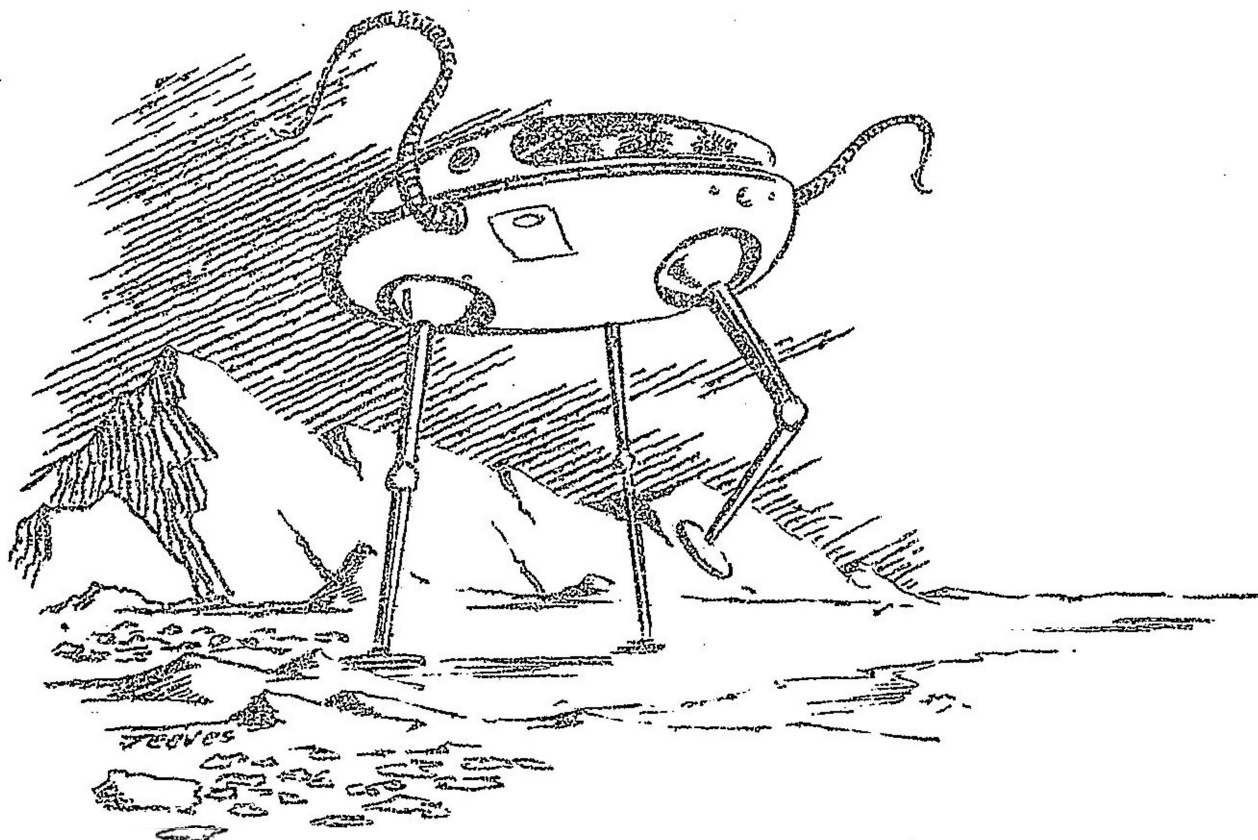
The last I heard about the Dean Drive, -- and my source of information admits that he could be wrong about this, so son't all jump on me at once ! -- was that the American security authorities had suddenly realised its real potential, and had hurriedly shoved it under dense wraps. TOP TOP SECRET, etc. Like I said, this is only rumour, and may be completely unfounded.

I too enjoyed the editorials on colonisation, etc, -- particularly the ones contrasting the role of the Australian aborigines with that of the New Zealand Maoris.

Finally, what of Campbell himself ? What kind of a man is he ? Has anyone ever met him, talked to him, experienced the impact (or lack of it) of his essential personality? Is he a dreamer fortunate enough to be able to broadcast his dreams to a very wide and assorted audience ? Does he suffer from delusions of grandeur ? I'd really like to know. (Wouldn't you Pete ?) I'd like to meet him one day I think perhaps we'd have a lot in common.

Just a couple of (likeable ?) cranks together.....

Beryl Henley.



Back in 1952, there was a boom in cruddy British SF paperbacks. The House of Scion was churning out the 'Vargo Statten' titles as hard as it could go, and Curtis Warren Ltd. was running riot with the "King Lang" and "Gill Hunt" titles. The authorship of these latter varied, and no doubt some of the books were more readable than others. But one paperback house that was making a serious attempt to rise above the morass was Hamilton & Co (Stafford) Ltd, the publishers of Panther Books. Although they had not reached the status they enjoy today, the material they published did tend to be better-written than that of most of the boom-publishers.

One of the 1952 Panthers was Rick Conroy's MISSION FROM MARS. I know nothing about the identity of Rick Conroy -- there was (I think) one subsequent story under that by-line, and that was in no way comparable, But MISSION FROM MARS was a delightful find. It is written from a viewpoint so absurdly left-wing that the holes are sometimes a mile wide. Nevertheless, it's a 'catastrophe' story with a difference, and grand fun.

The story begins on Mars, where a utopian civilisation of human-type beings is getting perturbed about the danger of sharing a solar system with the warlike folk of Earth. The Earthmen seem to do nothing but make war on each other, and the long-range scanning techniques of the Martians have detected plans for the beginning of terrestrial space-flight. Afraid that the Earthmen will only bring their warmaking ways to Mars, the Martians are regretfully preparing to wipe out all life on Earth.

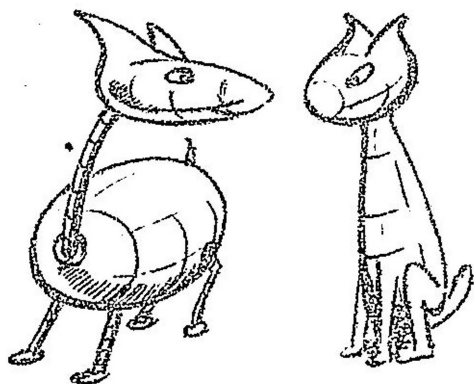
There is a reprieve, though. A young Martian couple who can pass as Earthfolk are granted permission to fly to Earth in one last attempt to save its people. They have with them a weapon -- a ray that will disintegrate all metal that lies in its path, with one important exception -- gold. Not without difficulty, they reach their objective, take their position adjacent to a battlefield of the entirely unnecessary world war that happens to be going on at the time, and turn their weapon on. It works spectacularly, and the suddenly-disarmed soldiers soon find themselves bewilderedly fraternising with their erstwhile enemies. The Martian couple, first by boat and later by aeroplane, make their way to Britain, modifying the ray in the process so that it will disintegrate all metal (with the same exception) on the entire Earth in one fell swoop. It does -- including their (borrowed) aeroplane, depositing them safely in the waters of the Channel. And this, as the saying goes, is where the story really begins.

A  
ROSE  
AMONG  
THE  
THORNS

by  
ARCHIE  
MERCER

The first important result of the loss of Britain's metal is that the government appoint a military dictator -- and have no means of disseminating the news of his appointment. Thus the soldiers (bootless and string-supported) who are sent to mount guard on the capital's food supplies, find themselves engaged in a pitched battle with the police, who take them for looters. The situation is saved by the prompt action of the market porters, who take over control of the markets in the name of their trade union and appoint an ad hoc committee to control rationing during the emergency. The Nobs -- the nation's elite, officers and gentlemen of all varieties, immediately band together in an attempt to crush what one Bishop refers to in horrified tones as: "Stark, raving Bolshevism!" Under the command of a well-known military personality, they march on the Bank Of England in order to save the gold and all that it stands for. However, they have been forestalled -- the Spivs, whose constant vigilance against the minions of the law has given them a superb undercover organisation, are already in occupation. "And the Yeomen Of The Guard?" the book continues, "They hadn't lasted five minutes. After the first volley of stones hurled by the Spivs, they had scuttled away, each with a bar of bullion for a keepsake. Old soldiers never die...."

After three days of fighting, dirty on the Spiv's side, and noble on that of the Nobs, the two impromptu armies come to the conclusion that they ought to be on the same side, and join forces. Against whom? Against the ordinary, peace-loving common people of course, who are getting on perfectly all right on their own. The residual functions of government are being cheerfully wielded by any committee that happens to be handy. "In one street it would be the darts committee at the local, in another the committee organising the annual outing to Southend." Although the prospect of being governed by a darts committee fills me personally with a kind of impotent horror, Conroy puts forward the idea with such gusto that he deserves to get away with it. In the face of the combined Nob-Spiv organisation, the common people (termed for convenience the Reds) hastily create their own central organisation under one Charlie Smith, and both sides settle down to an interesting civil war.



The Martian couple meanwhile have wandered inland. At a flint quarry in the Home Counties -- flint has come into its own again -- they fall into the hands of the Reds, and are eventually brought before Charlie Smith, who has just fought a pitched battle in which the main weapon of his forces is rubber catapults. Smith realises that even if he defeats the Nob-Spiv army, he will have to start another war against the countryfolk who don't see things in quite the same left-wing way. The male Martian goes as an envoy to parley with

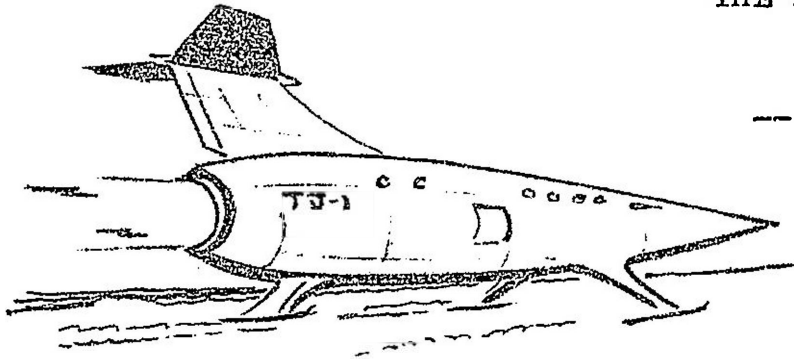




## THE IRON FIST

a look at right wing  
science fiction.

-- H Beam Piper



The position among SF fans with regard to politics is probably an uncertain one. Although we often feel (so I'm told) a little 'above' the man-in-the-street with regard to such matters, due to our participation in matters of truly cosmic scope, in truth most SF fans have absolutely no qualifications in politics or economics, or even history and law, in which to judge our contemporary political and social system. All we have is our individual preferences.

I'm not particularly interested in local stuff in this article. I know that Ken Cheslin doesn't like the Tories, but hopes that the other lot won't win the election since they're worse, and I think I agree with him. Party politics aren't much concern of mine here, since I won't change your mind, and I won't be taken with your opinions.

I'm interested in the grand scale, of the pros and cons of democracy itself against competitive systems of government. A lot has been said recently about all this, what with JWC having a go at the mess US democracy is in, and Robert Heinlein sounding the death knoll of democracy with STARSHIP TROOPERS. Perhaps I'll look at these in another NEXUS, but right now I'm concerned with H. Beam Piper, who incidentally is one of my favourite authors for reasons I can't explain. It might be because I tend to share the viewpoints expressed in his stories, such as SLAVE IS A SLAVE and SPACE VIKING.

These two stories are part of the Piper future history. (ZENITH 4) Briefly, an interstellar federation -- the Terran Fed. has broken up and a new Galactic Empire is rising, based on a monarchy. VIKING is at the very start of the Empire, SLAVE 300 years later. All through these works, a philosophy of 'hit them before they hit you' is expressed, a self-evident truth I would have thought, much more obvious than any of Tom Paine's and Jefferson's rubbish.

A few quotations I've taken may express a few points, far better than I can. The stories themselves are worth reading. SLAVE was more Hugo-worthy than DRAGON MASTERS, (and I like Vance ! ) while VIKING, in the uncut Analog version, is a grand story, with every ingredient -- including space opera, handled skilfully.

Quote, SPACE VIKING IV, Pp 155 -- "There's something wrong with democracy. If there weren't, it couldn't be overthrown by people like (Hitler) attacking it from within by democratic procedures. I don't think it's fundamentally unworkable, just has a few of what engineers call 'bugs'. It's not safe to run a defective machine till you learn the defects and remedy them. "

Quote, SLAVE IS A SLAVE, BRE Analog Pp 54. .."He was opposed to the use of force. Force, he believed, was the last resort of incompetence. Of course, he was absolutely right, though not in the way that he meant. Only the incompetent wait until the last extremity to use force, and by then, it is usually too late to use anything but prayer. "

Quote, SLAVE, Pp 66-67, "Freedom was a Good Thing for everybody, everywhere, and all the time. (....) knew it, because freedom was a Good Thing for him. (..) thought suddenly of an old tomcat belonging to a lady of his acquaintance at Paris-on-Baldur, a most affectionate cat, who insisted on catching mice and bringing them as presents to all his human friends. To this cat's mind, it was inconceivable that anybody would not be most happy to receive a nice, freshly-killed mouse..."

Quote, P 94, " And, of course, their exploiters were a lot of heartless villains, so that made the slaves good and virtuous innocents. That was your real, fundamental mistake. The down-trodden and long-suffering aren't at all good or innocent or virtuous. They are just incompetent; they lack the abilities necessary for villainy. You saw, this afternoon, what they were capable of doing when they were given an opportunity. You know, it's quite right to give the underdog a hand, but only one hand, Keep the other hand on your pistol -- or he'll try to eat the one you gave him! As you may have noticed today, when underdogs get up, they tend to turn out to be wolves. "

VIKING, Pp 155 (Part III) " That may be the way you do things in the Sworld Worlds, Prince Trask. It's not the way we do things here on Marduk. Our government does not propose to be guilty of shedding the blood of its people. ..He had it on the tip of his tongue to reply that if they didn't, the people would end by shedding theirs. Instead, he said softly, 'I'm sorry Prince Edvard, you had a wonderful civilisation here on Marduk, you could have made almost anything of it. But it's too late now. You've torn down the gates. The barbarians are in.' "

The parallels to be drawn with Hitler's Germany, especially in VIKING, are obvious. This 'militarism' seems like Senator Goldwater's ideas. Fascism !

So what !? Nothing wrong with imperialism, in the right time and at the right place. Goldwater is just 50 years too late.

Piper talks sense to me. I might discuss his ideas more fully next time, depending upon the response this piece gets. But do read the two stories mentioned before refuting these quotations.



Those who will be coming to next year's Convention in Birmingham, may like to be told (and warned) about the city.

After twenty years, I've finally gotten used to the place. It isn't all that bad -- I've seen much nastier looking towns, -- Sheffield is one example -- and there is the convenience of the extensive shopping centre. But the city centre always has been a bit of a mess, and just lately -- during the last five years, the Corporation has been doing its best to completely demolish the city. The new Inner Ring Road Scheme is now well under way -- you've probably heard all about it, even in your remote and backward reaches of the world. Actually, the new City Centre is jolly nice, including such landmarks as the Bull Ring Centre -- opens on May 29th, and is worth a look if you're ever in the city. Claimed to be the biggest shopping centre in Europe. Just behind is the Rag Market, another very famous landmark. It's the place where I picked up seven Weird Tales for 6d each. Then there is the Rotunda building, 27 stories in all, though three are below ground. The whole building is circular, like that queer-looking building that they used to advertisie on Record labels. By 1965 it should be finished, and I hear that a restaurant will open on the top floor. Should be a good view. One claim to fame is that Brum has its very own leaning tower. The Rotunda is built on half a dozen concrete stumps (the whole lot is over the railway tracks) and it seems that when they were half-way up, the building sunk a bit, and is now very very slightly tilted. Nobody seems to be worrying, though.

The hotel, that has been booked is the Midland, and all the details will be in BRUMBIE, the Con-newsletter. But this hotel is very nice, it has a great sea-food bar, and American Bar, & is in New Street, right in the centre of town, next door to that well-loved establishment, Hudsons Bookshop, where the largest selection of SF in the Midlands is on show (plug!) Actually, Rod hopes to get the Ace double titles in shortly. The hotel is in front of New Street Station, that famed hell-hole of the London Midland. I shouldn't count on seeing it, since they have now begun dismantling the station. Snow Hill will be closed soon, too. Ghod knows how the B.R. will work things. The Midland Red is about the best way of getting to Brum, and here again, the depot is only 5 minutes away from the hotel. (Mind you, it will probably take a lot more than 5 minutes for you to find it. And its no good asking directions -- you won't understand a word the Brums say, and maps are no good, since they are bound to be at least 6 months out of date, and all of the buildings and streets will have been switched around.)

Reminds me, I must caution anyone who has a car, not to bring it into the city. Don't believe me -- but all of the streets are one-way only for at least part of their length, and on top of that, there are diversions, and the directions of all the one-



-way streets are changed every so-often, apparently at random. You wouldn't like driving through the place -- and there is no where to park, we have those blasted meters now. Yes indeed, come by bus and leave your motors at home. Chas Platt and myself went through a bit of the city, to get to Cliff's home, and he was shaking and sobbing by the time we got there. And that was a quiet period. Mary has seen the city a bit, I take her round it once in a while to have a gander at the men digging holes in the ground. She is fascinated by a 'Big Hole' which neither of us have quite worked out what it is meant to be. Outside the Gaumont -- something like a subterranean Winter-Gardens. We have a site lined up for the John F Kennedy Memorial Gardens, and the Bull-Ring includes a little park-like layout. Quite nice in the summer.

You'd better bring your own entertainment -- the place closes at 11. There are a few clip-joints -- chemmy, poker, etc, but it is difficult to get into these. Used to be an all-night cafe, the 'El Sombrero', but this has been buried now. Also, very few good pubs in the city, since the Quakers are still a strong influence, and they don't like the boozers. There is one sub-urb, Bournville, where there are no pubs at all. There, a trip to the local means a 10 minute bus ride. If you are a drinking man, Beware !

Brummie buses are OK. Cheap, too, and there is a night service, which is damned useful.

Other notorious landmarks include the Kardomah cafe, which has seen many complicated fannish transactions in the basement smoke-room. Every day sees a few fans in there -- the place may soon have a 'By Appointment Purveyors of Coffee to the Fen.' put up. We have on occasion spent hours in there, without buying a coffee. Again, Mary has seen us in action, Rod, Rog, Mike, Cliff, a few others, all swapping 'zines and material.

On the whole, I think you'll like Birmingham. You probably will not see much of it -- the ConCommittee intend to put out a very full programme. If you should venture outside the hotel, I think you'll be almost certain to get lost. Be sure to have a good mooch around, have a look at the reconstruction -- some of it is a bit horrible, but I'm proud of it in a way.

I was going to fill up the bottom of this page with a few notes on some non-SF book that I've read lately, but I seem to be so much in the grip of the cult, that I never read anything but SF. I might recommend a magazine to you -- PLAYBOY. This has some very interesting features, including a line-up of SF authors almost every issue. There have been some very good SF stories and articles in Playboy, and I hope to reprint some of them in ZENITH, IF I get permission.

