

Science Fiction NEWS

CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS

ALDISS, Brian W[ilson] 1925-

REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. Sphere. 156 p. PB 5/-
(1st Faber 1968) Review: The Australian 21.9.68 p.12

ANDERSON, Poul, 1926-

BEYOND THE BEYOND. Signet (T3947). 263 p. PB 75c.
6 stories: Memory; Brake; Day of Burning; The
Sensitive Man; The Moonrakers; Starfog.

-- THE MAKESHIFT ROCKET. Dobson. 97 p. 18/- (1st in
Astounding US Nov-Dec 1958, Br. Feb-Mch 1959, as
A Bicycle Built for Brew. Ace PB b/w Un-Man, 1962)
Review: Analog Sep 1962 p. 159

ASIMOV, Isaac, 1920-

An ISAAC ASIMOV SECOND OMNIBUS. Sidgwick. 516 p.
35/-. Contents: The Currents of Space; Pebble in
the Sky; The Stars, like Dust.

The Currents of Space 1st in Astounding US Oct-
Dec 1952, Br. Mch-May 1953; Doubleday 1952; Sig-
net PB 1954; Panther PB 1958.

Reviews: Galaxy US May 1953; Br. no. 7; Imag-
ination July 1953; New Worlds no. 37; Space SF
July 1953; SF Advertiser Jan 1953; N.Y. Times
8.2.53 p. 24; N.Y. Herald Tribune 11.1.53 p. 12
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Current Books

ASIMOV, Isaac. An Isaac Asimov Second Omnibus

Pebble in the Sky 1st Doubleday 1950; Galaxy Nov
ol 14, 1953; in Two Complete Science Adventure Books
Winter 1950; Bantam PB 1957; Corgi PB 1958; Sidg-
wick 1968. In Dutch as Pussen twee Vootstappen; in
French as Cailloux dans le Ciel; in German as Radio-
aktiv.

Reviews: Astounding US Aug 1950 p. 146; Super
Science May 1950; Thrilling Wonder June 1950; SF
Advertiser Mch 1950; Library Journal 15.1.50 p. 104;
Saturday Review 15.6.50 p. 32; N.Y. Times 29.1.50
p. 31

The Stars, like Dust 1st in Galaxy US Jan-Mch
1951, as Tyrann. Doubleday 1951; Lancer PB 1963;
Ace PB 1954 b/w An Earth gone Mad, by Roger Dee,
as The Rebellious Stars. In German as Sterne wie
Staub.

Reviews: Astounding US July 1951 p. 155; Gal-
axy US June 1955; N.Y. Times 3.6.51 p. 19

BRUNNER, John [Kilian Houston] 1934-

The SQUARES OF THE CITY. Penguin. 311 p. PB 6/-
(1st Ballantine 1965) Reviews: Analog Sep 1967
p. 167; F&SF Apr 1966 p. 34; Galaxy June 1966
p. 147

BUDRYS, Algis [Jonas] 1931-

The IRON THORN. Coronet. 159 p. PB 4/- (1st in
If Jan-Apr 1967; Gollancz 1968; SFBC 1969; Gold
Medal PB 1968 as The Amairs and the Iron Thorn)

Reviews: Analog Oct 1968 p. 164; The Australian
27.7.68. See Budrys' comment in Galaxy Feb 1968
p. 161

BULMER, H[enry] K[enneth] 1921-

The FATAL FIRE. Hale. 174 p. 18/-

-- The PATIENT DARK. Hale. 192 p. 18/-

DAVENTRY, Leonard

REFLECTIONS IN A MIRAGE. Hale. 192. p. 21/-

-- REFLECTIONS IN A MIRAGE and THE TICKING IS IN
YOUR HEAD. Doubleday. 358 p. \$5.95

De FORD, Miriam Allen, 1888-

XENOGENESIS. Ballantine. 231 p. PB 75c. 16 shorts.

WICK, Philip K[indred] 1928-

The VARIABLE MAN, and other stories. Sphere.
220 p. PB 6/- (1st Ace 1957) Includes Second
Variety; The Minority Report; Autofac; A World of
Talent.

GROVES, J[ohn] W[illiam]

The HEELS OF ACHILLES. Hale. 192 p. 21/-

HAMILTON, Edmond, 1905-

The COMET KINGS. Popular Library (60-2407).
127 p. PB 60c.

-- OUTLAWS OF THE MOON. Popular Library (60-2399).
128 p. PB 60c.

-- PLANETS IN PERIL. Popular Library (60-2416).
128 p. PB 60c.

(More from Captain Future, Summer, Spring and
Fall 1942. There must be a public for the good Capt.
but it does SF no good to have this stuff in print)

Current Books

HARRISON, Harry ed.

WORLDS OF WONDER; sixteen tales of science fiction. Doubleday. 287 p. \$4.50

HOLM, Sven

TERMUSH. Faber. 110 p. 21/-. Translated from Danish by Sylvia Clayton. A post-nuclear war story: life in a group isolated by radiation.

Review: The Bulletin, Sydney, 8.11.69 p. 61

JAKES, John W. 1932

SECRETS OF STARDEEP. Westminster. 192 p. \$3.95

KNIGHT, Damon [Francis] 1922-

THREE NOVELS: Rule Golden; Natural State; The Dying Man. Berkley Medallion (X1706). 189 p. PB 60c. (1st Gollancz 1967; SFBC 1968. The Dying Man formerly as Dio) Review: ASFA Journal v. 1 no. 11 p. 301

LEIBER, Fritz, 1910-

The SILVER EGGS. Ballantine (01634). 192 p. PB 75c. (Based on short version in F&SF Jan 1959)

LESSING, Doris

The FOUR-GATED CITY. McGibbon, 710 p.

Marginal interest for collectors: last of a series of five lengthy novels of family history, this ends with a brief appendix taking events up to 2000.

NIVEN, Larry

A GIFT FROM EARTH. Macdonald, 254 p. 25/- (In If Feb-Apr 1968 as Slowboat Cargo. Ballantine 1968)

Review: Analog Mch 1969 p. 173

R E V I E W S

RORK!

by Avram Davidson

Rapp & Whiting, 1968

141 p. A\$2.35

This fairly short novel is attractively bound, with good paper, and with an op-art style dust jacket. It is very pleasant when presentation and content both reach high standards.

Avram Davidson's "alienology" is intriguing and his general competence with narrative pace and language levels has won him a wide following: Rork! will not let down any of his regular readers.

Without going into detail, we can say that the novel evokes a consistent and credible atmosphere, one of somewhat tired decadence, upon a remote planet which is the all but forgotten outpost of an imperial Galactic civilisation. A ship from "home" calls once every five years. Into this closed little colonial world comes a junior public servant, whose wish to see more of the planet becomes the excuse for the reader to move out from the small-mindedness of the comfortable garrison HQ to the more gutsy life -- and some interesting life-forms -- of the larger world.

There is of course both intended satire and a moral. The main character is not so much a hero as a proxy eye by which the reader experiences a world's ecology. Along the way, a way which at least in part is a journey out of innocence, we have scattered lessons in tolerance, in living creatures' different needs, their hopes and fears. But it's unobtrusive.

The Rorks are an intelligent, rather spider-like species, but benevolent. They remain enigmatic in a satisfactory way even after their late appearance in the book, having been objects of

superstitious dread (through human ignorance) earlier. The other important dramatis personae are the human "Tocks" (short for autochthonous tribes), the patriarchal and warlike descendants of early settlers who were cut off when Galactic war stopped the supply ships for many years. They have reverted to a primitive level of culture and technology (for example, home-made muskets). Many of knowledgables will detect familiar ground here, for the situation is one of the stock ones, but in this case the cultural recession is merely one parameter of a total world-picture.

Actually, Davidson's story is a good low-key exercise in narrative restraint. There is no cataclysmic bang to end the story, which is essentially a journey, a voyage of exploration and self-discovery. Well recommended.

-- Bill McNary

The CLONE
by Theodore L. Thomas
and Kate Wilhelm

Mayflower, 1969
141 p. A65c FS

Thomas' short story from December 1959 *Fantastic* skilfully expanded into a tense novel without a trace of padding. Life arises spontaneously once again in the incalculable chemical environment of a city's sewers, an active, hungry, explosively growing mass that adapts with the equivalent of millions of years' evolution in hours or minutes. A challenge to humanity indeed, that makes a horror story more chilling than most traditional themes could ever manage; for who can say that it might not happen? It makes absorbing reading.

-- G. S.

SIX GATES FROM LIMBO
by J. T. McIntosh

Avon, 1969
191 p. PB 75c
SFBC, 1969

While inventive in its main idea and a few of the details, Six Gates from Limbo suffers the fate of many second and third rate novels in its uneasy -- not to say proposterous -- resolution. The ending of such stories has little relevance to the earlier unfolding of character and events, and often becomes a climactic and catastrophic Armageddon-like maelstrom which makes nonsense of any rapport we may have achieved with the author's "on stage" characters. (A lonely exception which comes to mind -- and which is not SF! -- is Hans Hellmut Kirst's No One Will Escape.)

With McIntosh's book we have the curious conclusion to a closed-environment experiment that to solve the Galactic civilization's malaise requires the drastic remedy that old mother Earth must be destroyed. Apparently the practical business of carrying this out presents no trouble, and on this sorry note the story takes its by now awkward leave of us.

The Limbo of the title is the Eden-like, controlled, artificial world into which wake three individuals, two of whom have their previous pre-conscious memories removed by hypnosis and therefore start from scratch to make sense of their new environment. There are six "gates" round the perimeter of their little world, each a sort of space-warp passage to a different planet with special sociological problems. The third inhabitant of Limbo is the director of the experiment. The idea is that the Adam-Eve couple, untainted by the suicidal pressures that are breaking down all human societies, may

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come up with a radical solution after they have found their way to each of the six worlds that lead from their own. Not a bad setup, and I can't think of any direct analogues, so Six Gates from Limbo gets points for originality.

There are some good moments of ironic parody directed at our intractable twentieth-century problems. A society tearing itself apart is not a difficult concept.

McIntosh, a well-enough known name to SF readers, uses a plain-Jane writing style with no frills, and although this aids narrative clarity and gag help towards sharp characterisation, for me the characters never came alive.

Final verdict: interesting in some ways if one is prepared to be irritated, especially by the ending.

-- Bill Menary

THESE SAVAGE FUTURIANS
by Philip E. High

Dobson, 1966
134 p. 18/-

Like High's other books, an extreme kitchen-sink plot that gallops off at a new tangent whenever the author doesn't know what to do with what he is working on. Despite the confusion of irrelevant ideas brought in, mangled briefly and thrown out, there is a sort of narrative movement and the book has a certain appeal as long as you don't stop and think. One extraordinary episode demands condemnation. There is a character who is described as a mechanical genius, and no wonder: he invents in a pre-industrial situation a device High calls an automatic crossbow, one that recocks itself. It does not seem to occur to anyone that if it worked

This would be perpetual motion. Very educational stuff, this science fiction -- is that what you call it?

The PANDORA EFFECT
by Jack Williamson

Ace, 1969
189 p. PB 60c

"His very first collection of short stories..." That was a jolt. Forty years of SF writing, and the young farmhand who wrote *The Metal Man* for the one and only magazine of Scientifiction has metamorphosed into Dr. Williamson of the University of New Mexico, and this his first short story collection -- and in paperback at that. There are six SF stories, mainly postwar and not classic Williamson, and a yawnsome little ghost story. Let me remark at this point that there's material for several books in his many stories in the magazines before 1940, and I wish Ace would retrieve some of them. I admit that a lot of them are rather dated in style and concept, repetitious -- but these faults don't seem to matter (look at a lot of the stuff being printed now) and Williamson had originality and verve which still show I think.

Well, then, we have *The Metal Man*, written when radioactivity was unfamiliar enough ground for any writer to invent his own phenomena. Here we have the radioactive crystalline life forms that others made a standard SF concept, though Williamson may have thought of them first in this story from *Amazing*, Dec. 1928. *The Cosmic Express*, a 1931 piece gently damning the adventure tradition. *Folded Hands*, the story of the too efficient robot servants which he unfortunately overshadowed with the less successful novel *The Humanoids*. *Guinevere for Everybody*, another look at robots in society.

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The Happiest Creature, on the theme of Earth as a backward world guarded from interstellar sharp operators. The Equalizer, which was rather late in 1947 with the old notion of the breakdown of all state power and establishment of utopia through a device giving free unlimited energy. But it did suggest something of its personal impact, and at the time its treatment of that stock figure of the 'forties, the dictator, was fresh and illuminating. Bravo, Ace, let's have more please.

ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D.
by Philip Francis Nowlan

Ace, 1969
190 p. PB 60c

Forty years is more aging than most SF stories can endure and retain any appeal beyond nostalgia and historical interest, but there are plenty of exceptions. The two stories making up this book ran in Amazing as Armageddon 2419 A.D. and The Air-lords of Han in Aug 1928 and Mch 1929 respectively, though I suspect they may have been written much earlier like Smith and Garby's The Skylark of Space which began in the first of these issues. Nowlan was a real find; or he should have been, but he went on to write a comic strip version of these two and continue it for eleven years, Buck Rogers. So he wrote little more SF. In 1940 he was beginning to get back into the magazines, appearing in Astounding and Fantastic Adventures simultaneously and with a Space Guards series planned, but he died suddenly and that was that.

Well, that's history. I enjoyed Buck when I was in his age group, and a bit later read the original two stories, but that was in the early 'forties and it would be exaggerating to say I remembered much of them when I came to review this new edition.

So it has been a pleasant surprise to find the book not only something to recall the early days of SF and one's own experience of them, but also a readable SF novel of some merit.

The plot, old enough then, has Rogers, accidentally longsleeping for 500 years, awake to join in the revolt of the surviving Americans, driven into hiding and dismissed as savages, against the conquering Hans, ultimate development of the Yellow Peril. What was new was the scientific element. Nowlan worked out a number of developments in weapons, particularly rocket applications and portable radiophones, which were then future possibilities. But his more advanced technology of antigravity, atomic power, disintegrators and so on has not had much attention. I was interested to find that these are not mere fantasies: they are logically worked out from properly stated premises.

When this was written, there were atoms, generally agreed to be composed of protons and electrons, and understanding of fundamental structure went no further apart from all the unexplained data on radioactivity. Nowlan proposed a system of particles and forces within atoms, imagined how they interacted and what further properties they could have, then how these might be applied as the bases for the marvels he described in action.

The writing is brisk and down to earth. Characterisation is slight, the interest being in the situation and events. The dated racial prejudice I expected proved not to be there after all. The sketch of decadent Han society shows a considerable social insight, although the culture of the Gangs is simple mindedly utopian.

Altogether, early SF at its best. Recommended.

— The Bo'sun

ANNIVERSARIES

First issues of magazines included Planet Stories, 1939; it ran until 1955 and had to be seen to be believed, we couldn't describe it. A. Merritt's Fantasy Magazine, 1949. Some of Merritt's work was 1F or near enough; this magazine featured him and included other oldies in its five issues.

Authors first appearing --

1928. Jack Williamson. The Metal Man, Amazing
1931. Robert Arthur. The Terror from the Sea, Wonder
Arthur K. Barnes. Lord of the Lightning,
same issue
1937. Robert Moore Williams. Beyond that Curtain,
Thrilling Wonder
1950. J. T. McIntosh. The Curfew Tolls, Astounding
1952. Ron Goulart. Conroy's Public, Mag of F&SF
1953. George H. Smith. The Savages, Universe
Astounding had the field's first two-color illustrations, van Vogt's Discord in Scarlet providing a rare opportunity for a red monster, 1939.

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