

Science Fiction NEWS

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NED KELLY RIDES AGAIN

The exorbitant rates of postage are about to go even higher.

However, the ASFA will not take the 20 per cent slug as a cue to put up its subscription.

INFORMATION ON CANADIAN AUTHORS WANTED

Canada's contribution to science fiction has not been given any serious attention before, and a bibliography is being compiled by Chester D. Cuthbert. Few of us probably know many names other than his (he wrote *The Sublime Vigil* and *The Last Shrine* in 1934 *Wonder*), Richard Vaughan, Leslie Crouch and the expatriates Laurence Manning and A. E. van Vogt, but some 200 works at least suspected of being relevant have been tentatively listed. Anyone who might be able to help — say, by having information on an obscure book — is invited to write to 1104 Mulvey Ave, Winnipeg 9, Manitoba.

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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R E V I E W S

WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION, 1970
ed. Donald A. Wollheim and Terry Carr
Ace PB (91357) 349 p. 95c

This is not too bad a collection, although I can't help wondering if the stories exemplify the state of mind of the reader, inasmuch as the editors claim they exemplify the state of the art, since almost half the stories deal with the end of the world in one form or other.

The first story, A Man Spekith, by Richard Wilson, concerns the survival and subsequent rescue by an alien race of the Last Man, a heretofore disc jockey, and the Last Computer. The reader is told that the Earth cracked. So too did the last man. The story is told as a series of soliloquies, by both man and machine, relieved by an excerpt from the log of the rescuing alien spacecraft and a short dialog between the Earth computer and one on the alien craft. There is a twist on an old familiar ending when it is intimated that man gets alien girl, while Earth male computer gets alien female computer.

The next story is also an end-of-the-worlder, After the Myths went Home, by Robert Silverberg. The presumably decadent inhabitants of an ancient Earth call back legendary heroes and myths to relieve their boredom. They soon get tired of them however, and send them back to limbo. The end of the world comes in the usual old form of alien invaders. As both allegory and story, fairly entertaining.

My praise for Death by Ecstasy, by Larry Niven, is not so lukewarm. This is a mystery story centering around the murder of a man by

direct stimulation of the pleasure centers of his brain. This is coupled with the theme of a supply of organs for transplants, a dual theme which has been seen before in the work of Cordwainer Smith. But there ends the resemblance. The story loses nothing by being further decorated with dabs of telepathy and telekinesis.

Alexei Panshin with *One Sunday in Neptune* is next on the list. I found this, sadly, insipid. The blurb claims it is rich in both science and humanity. It should have concentrated on plot!

For the Sake of Grace, by Suzette Haden Elgin, is well written and introduces a curious civilization, a blend of the archaic, superstitious and super-scientific. Enjoyable, but the ending leaves you wondering whether the trials of the heroine were really worth it, for the conditions of her future existence.

James Tiptree Jr. has an excellent story in *Your Haploid Heart*. An alien race wishes to be classified as human, but seems to be suppressing the really human race that shares the planet with it. This is another mystery, albeit a planetary one. The solution to the mystery is fairly obvious early in the piece, but the story loses nothing from this.

Therapy 2000 by Keith Roberts is not quite an end-of-the-worlder, but getting toward it. The theme of too much noise in the world crops up here again, together with the dream love of the main character (he's surely no hero). How to deal with the problem of noise whilst retaining the "girl" occupies the time and effort of this man. I was left with the feeling that he deserved his fate!

Next is Michael G. Conroy's *Sixth Sense*. This, if not at the end of the world, must surely be

Reviews

after some major catastrophe which has altered humanity to such an extent that it communicates solely by telepathy. One interesting facet of this communication is that it is hampered by electrical storms etc, much as radio reception would be interfered with. Quite a good story.

Harlan Ellison's *A Boy and his Dog* would share the honours as the best story in the book with Fritz Leiber's *Ship of Shadows*. Both are, alas, end of the world once again. Both also share a modicum of telepathy. Ellison's monsters are mainly of the slightly altered human and animal type, while the Leiber has implications of ghosties and ghoulies and long legged beasties etc. Both keep up a good pace and maintain interest to the end.

McAllister's *And So Say All of Us*: a schizophrenic splits into three and becomes God. Rather weak.

Ursula K. LeGuin is a writer for whose work I have a decided partiality. She is a close runner up to the Ellison and Leiber. In *Nine Lives* she employs a theme vaguely reminiscent of *Brave New World*: from some human cells are cultured multiple "identical twins", here a ten-clone. The story deals with the problem of how one unit of the clone can survive after the death of the other units.

I did not like the final story in the book, *The Big Flash*, by Norman Spinrad. I didn't like the style, and I didn't like the theme (and guess what that was); however, I do feel that it is possible!

Altogether, I feel the book is worth buying for the few really good stories it contains. For the rest -- well, one has to know just what is

being considered the "world's best science fiction" doesn't one?

-- Denise Teteris

Another review:

The first thought is that if this is really the year's best we're sunk. These stories are competently written, rarely more. And Wollheim and Carr have lapsed from their standards to include at least three fantasies. But the content! Gloom, disaster, the end of the world and some futures so horrible we might as well be dead of a good quick catastrophe.

But, though it is not explicit in their Introduction, the editors may have had in mind certain other things than a simple interpretation of "the best". Or maybe there is more being written lately that reflects concern with our closeness to the possible end of human life, and with the other big question, which is "Man's inhumanity to Man", or why can't we recognise a human being when we see one and behave accordingly?. Most of the world's problems can be reduced to this one.

Some of these stories have quite a lot of meaning. Robert Silverberg's *After the Myths went Home* -- one of the fantasies -- looks at first glance a pointless exercise in verbal Goonery, with a gadget that materialises imaginary persons, fictional characters, symbolic figures, gods. But look again. It doesn't say much about why we create myths, but for the thoughtful reader it implies a great deal.

Keith Roberts' *Therapy 2000* has a related theme. It certainly takes a rather special case -- a man driven mad by an intolerable social environment (which is clearly foreshadowed in our own) who

Reviews

can adjust externally by recourse to a private fantasy, an adult version of the child psychotic's imaginary playmate -- but aren't we all special cases?

Ursula K. LeGuin's *Nine Lives*, again, has something to say about identity, and about human relationships, love, friendship, and the isolation of every one of us from every other.

James Tiptree Jr.'s *Your Haploid Heart* reads superficially like a hundred others in *Analog* on the formula about the humanoid culture with something queer to be investigated. Yet the wrongness that emerges is one we can see reflected in other societies closer to home.

And Suzette Haden Elgin's *For the Sake of Grace* is more than another entry in the running informal contest to imagine the sickest and nastiest future society possible. It is a powerful allegory on the way men treat women and how both authoritarianism and meritocracy frustrate the intelligent woman trying to achieve higher status in open competition and penalise her win or lose.

Not a cheerful collection, but worth while.

-- The Bo'sun

A PROMISING PLANET by Jeremy Strike b/w
FLOWER OF DORADIL by John Rackham
Ace Double PB 75c

The only good thing I have to say about this double is that I trust Ace have got rid of all the rubbish by putting it together in the one book, and let's now hope we can look forward to something decent. This surely must be the largest

conglomeration of cliches ever to see light between two covers. The Strike is a real chestnut. Here we find the computer-left-by-an-earlier-race, which has gone mad and decided it is God. It terrorises the natives, who believe it is, and along comes the unsuspecting Earthman in search of a "promising planet for Star Systems Inc." Another ship belonging to a rival company comes along -- captained by a woman, in case you thought you could escape that! -- and the crews of both ships, with the exception of the computerman for the second ship, are taken prisoner. The computerman realises that he has a computer and not a god to deal with, and manages to convey the information to the sometimes captive, sometimes free Earth people.

Strike must have got just as sick of the story as I did, because instead of having the humans dispose of the computer, just as it looks as if they will, the computer disposes of them! The author must then have had qualms of conscience about dealing with his characters so summarily, because he immediately lost what approval he had gained from me by turning the story into a cyclogue (?) with a pilot from another alien race finding the planet an unspecified time later and being greeted by the computer, now calling itself the Great Egg. Like the book -- a great bad egg! (Cyclogue? There is a real word denoting a cyclic type of story, I know it, have forgotten it, and have scoured Adelaide looking for it. The closest the English Department at Adelaide University could come was "rondeau" which was a bit silly. Therefore, English being a living language and all, I manufactured the word!) [Wells called his *The Man who could work Miracles* a "Pantoum in prose", this being an Oriental verse form. We do need an accepted word for the story that ends with a new beginning,

Reviews

since it does turn up in SF -- GS]

The Rackham Flower of Doradil is not really science fiction at all but child level adventure masquerading as SF. It is raised from child level by having a sort of love interest, and from straight adventure by having the action take place on an alien planet with a plant growing, the juice of which heals all ills. The native society is a matriarchy, the women of course being massive, and even more of course completely gorgeous. I wonder what Papa Freud would have to say about the author? The special agent from Earth sent to stop smuggling of the plant and black marketing of it on Earth is a woman (again gorgeous) and, horror of cliched horrors, the image on a rather miniature scale of Queen Sara of Doradil! The whole thing is predictable, the special agent has two male helpers, one gets the special agent, the other gets the queen, the goodies win and the baddies lose, and when will Ace stop publishing rubbish and just stick to the good stuff they have published in the past?

-- Denise Teteris

CURRENT BOOKS

ALDISS, Brian W[ilson] 1925-
NEANDERTHAL PLANET. Avon (U2322). 192 p. PB
75c. Includes Danger: Religion!, Intangibles
Inc. and Since the Assassination.

ANDERSON, Poul, 1926-

The HIGH CRUSADE. Macfadden (60-349). 160 p. PB 60c. (In Analog Jly-Sep 1960. Doubleday 1960; Macfadden PB 1964) Review: F&SF Dec 1962 p. 82

Interesting novel about a shipload of savages from medieval England accidentally imported into an interstellar civilisation.

ASIMOV, Isaac, 1920-

The CAVES OF STEEL. Pyramid (X1824). 189 p. PB 60c. (In Galaxy US Oct-Dec 1953, Br. 12-14. Doubleday 1954; Boardman 1954; Signet PB 1955;

Fanther PB 1955. In French as Les cavernes d'acier; in German as Der Mann von drüben)

Reviews: Astounding US Nov 1954, Br. Apr 1955; Galaxy US Jly 1954, Br. 21; New Worlds 32; Nebula 10; N.Y. Herald Tribune 7.2.54 p. 10; N.Y. Times 7.3.54 p. 16

A rare example of a SF detective story which is fairly successful, also giving a view of an overcrowded and overurbanised yet not impoverished future, and an attempt to fit manlike robots into the economy.

AVALLONE, Michael

BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES. ("Based upon the characters created by Pierre Boulle" as interpreted by Paul Dehn and Mort Abrahams who wrote the original story of this superfluous sequel) Bantam (S5674). 134 p. PB 75c. A retelling of the film, for anyone who can stand it.

BALL, Brian N[eville]

TIMEPIECE. Ballantine (01903). 153 p. PB 75c. (1st Dobson 1960) Review: Vision of Tomorrow Dec 1969 p. 61

Current Books

BENFORD, Greg, 1941-

DEEPER THAN THE DARKNESS. Ace (14215). 5-191 p.
PB 60c. (part in F&SF Apr 1969)

BURROUGHS, Edgar Rice, 1874-1950

JOHN CARTER OF MARS. Ballantine (01531). 157 p.
PB 75c. (Reissue of 1965 ed. 1st Canaveral 1964;
Four Square 1968) Two stories, John Carter and
the Giant of Mars and Skeleton Men of Jupiter,
from 1941 and 1943 Amazing; the first actually
in collaboration with John Coleman Burroughs.
Introd. by Richard Lupoff.

Review: Analog Dec 1964 p. 87

CLARKE, Arthur C[harles] 1917-

The SPACE DREAMERS. Lancer (74-524). 158 p.
PB 75c. (1st as Prelude to Space, Galaxy Novel
1950; Sidgwick 1953; Gnome 1954; Ballantine PB
1954; Pan PB 1954; Harcourt 1970. Also in A
Arthur C. Clarke Omnibus, Sidgwick 1964; in
Prelude to Mars, Harcourt 1965. As Master of
Space, Mayflower PB 1961. In German as Die
Erde lässt uns los.

Reviews: Astounding US Nov 1954, Br. Apr
1955; Galaxy US Apr 1951, Jly 1954, Br. 21;
New Worlds 21; N.Y. Herald Tribune 21.3.54
p. 13; N.Y. Times 28.3.54 p. 21

Now thoroughly dated novel of a first
satellite launching project, of historical
interest -- and evidently it still appeals to
a lot of readers.

DICK, Philip K[indred] 1928-

GALACTIC ROT-HEALER. Berkley (X1705). 144 p.
PB 60c. Review: Analog Mch 1970 p. 168.

GOULART, Ron, 1933-

The SWORD SWALLOWER. Dell (8442). 156 p. PB 60c.
 (1st Doubleday 1968. Collected episodes about
 a shape-changing Chameleon Corps of secret agents)
 Reviews: Analog Jly 1969 p. 166; F&SF Aug 1969
 p. 24

KING, Vincent

LIGHT A LAST CANDLE. Rapp. 219 p. 28/-

Review: Vision of Tomorrow June 1970 p. 28

An ugly future with Earth conquered by ET's,
 genetically modified humans and other elements.

KNIGHT, Damon [Francis] 1924-

BEYOND THE BARRIER. Macfadden (60-444). 142 p.
 PB 60c. (Reissue of 1965 ed. Short version as
 The Tree of Time in F&SF Dec 1963-Jan 1964. Com-
 plete Doubleday and Gollancz 1964)

Reviews: Amazing June 1964 p. 120; Analog June
 1964 p. 87; The Australian 27 Mch 1965 p. 13

Novel of time travel and masquerading aliens
 somewhat in the van Vogt manner.

LEIBER, Fritz, 1910-

The WANDERER. Walker. 318 p. \$5.95 (1st Ballan-
 tine PB 1964; Dobson 1967; Penguin PB 1969)

Reviews: Amazing Dec 1964 p. 124; Analog Nov
 1964 p. 87; F&SF Aug 1964 p. 23

NIVEN, Larry

NEUTRON STAR. Ballantine. 285 p. PB 75c (Reis-
 sue of 1968 ed. Also Macdonald 1969) 8 stories.

Review: Analog Dec 1968 p. 164

Current Books

NOURSE, Alan Edward] 1928-

The MERCY MEN. Ace (52560). 156 p. PB 60c.

(1st McKay 1968; Faber 1969, as juvenile.

A revised version of A Man Obsessed, Ace PF 1955 b/w A. Norton. The Last Planet)

Review: Analog Jan 1969 p. 165

AGEL, Jerome ed.

The MAKING OF KUBRICK'S 2001. Signet. 367 p.

PB. \$1.50. Largely pictorial.

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The Australian Science Fiction Association aims to bring together people interested in science fiction and to promote the study and appreciation of the field. For further information write to the Secretary.