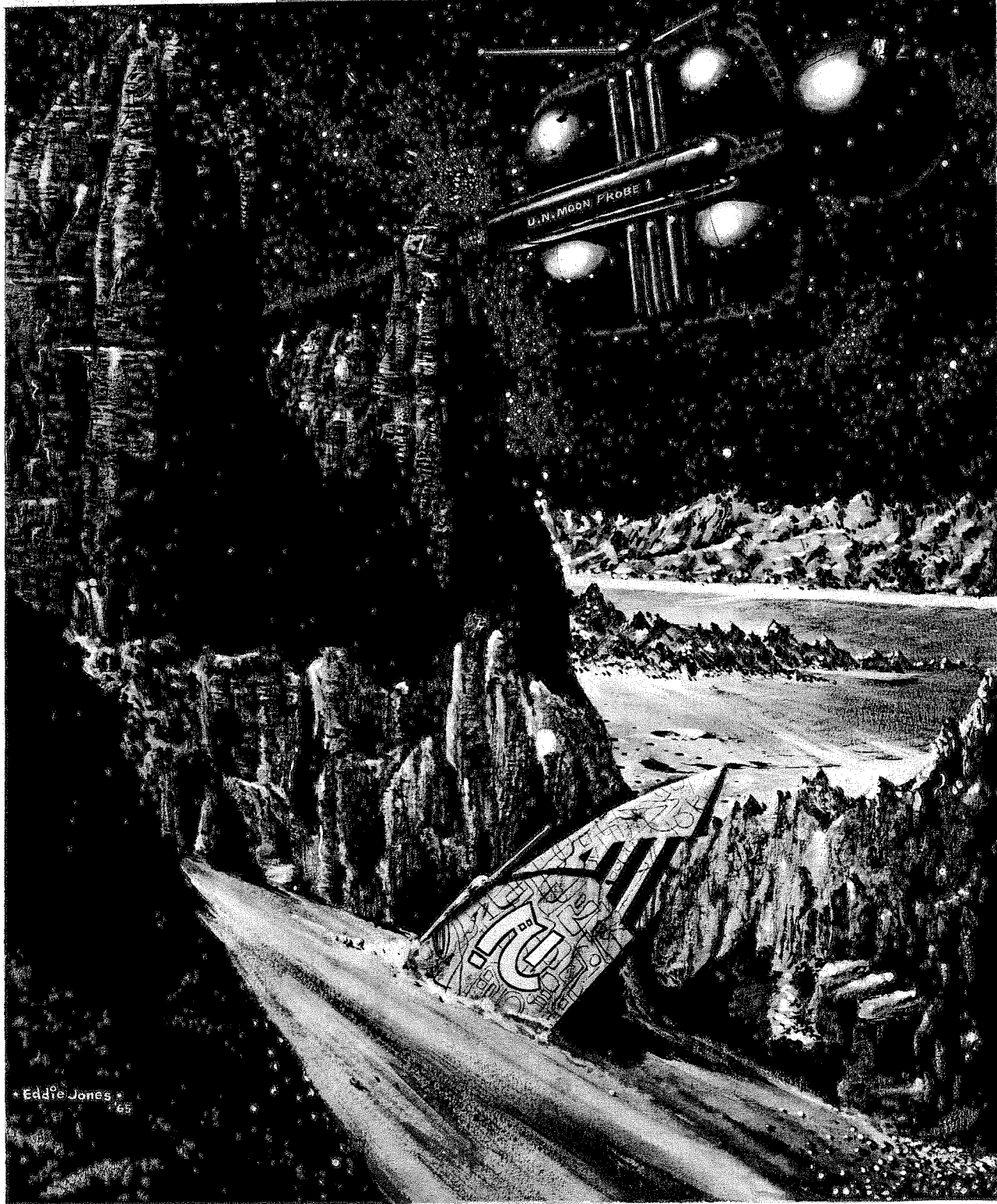


# ZENITH SPECULATION



• Eddie Jones • '65



# ZENITH

## SPECULATION

JUNE 1965

2<sup>nd</sup> (35¢)

ZENITH Speculation: an amateur magazine of comment on, and review of, speculative fiction.

Single copies 2/-, 5 for 10/-

Published quarterly from the editorial address, to which all articles, artwork, comments on the magazine, and UK subscriptions should be addressed.

Complimentary copies will be sent to contributors, & ZENITH will be exchanged with other magazines, as prearranged.

U.S.Agent- Al Lewis 1825 Greenfield Avenue, Los Angeles, 25.

Single copies 30¢, 5 for \$1.50

ZENITH-9

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U.S. Agent Al Lewis is at present on extended holiday in the UK & Europe; Subs should be sent direct to the editor until the Autumn.

Back issues, 5, 6, 8, 2/- each.

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FRONT COVER by EDDIE JONES

BACK COVER, by arrangement with  
Faber & Faber Ltd.

### ARTWORK:

Harry Turner 3; 14; 15; 23;  
Brian McCabe 11; 19; 23; 27; 32; 35  
Ivor Latto 9; 17

## EDITORIAL

When those who discovered science fiction today enter the fandom of 1970 and thereabouts, they will find fanzines of that time full of nostalgic memories of "the good old days of 1965." Fans will look back on the present as a "Golden Age", in which more than ever before, speculative fiction became an accepted and (comparatively) well-written medium.

And these future fans will be quite correct. 1965 is a new Golden Age. This conclusion dawned on your editor just a short time ago, after a lengthy period of exasperation with the field.

Magazines have lost ground in the battle to keep their reader's interest, but they are to a large extent now on the upswing in readability and science-fictional appeal (even to older fans). ANALOG, since the reversion to the small size, has shown a staggering increase in the quality of material. GALAXY, long much-abused, is now producing roughly one good issue in two, while companion magazines IF and WORLDS OF TOMORROW are producing science fiction that is among the best ever written. There is still rubbish in good measure, but Editor Pohl's policy of straightforward action with a respectably science fictional treatment, is paying remarkable dividends. The recent trend towards amorphous and meaningless stories may have been greatly overrated; certainly this looks to be one of the 'blind alleys' explored by speculative fiction.

Every publisher of note has a 'science fiction series', and I have yet to read an SF-labelled book of this current crop of 'respectable' publications, that is not at least "adequate" in plot and treatment. Contrast this state of affairs to the lamentable "boom" of 1953-4 (in the UK) when so much idiocy was committed to print. Science fiction readers have no cause for complaint: there are currently more good books than there is time to read them.

This is indeed the Golden Age

.....

ZENITH will meanwhile continue the consistent policy followed (with inconsistent success) since the earliest issues. This issue contains some superficial changes, and at least one more lasting alteration.

It has long been my opinion that Book Reviews should be the heart of a magazine such as ZENITH, and not merely a 'necessary but dull' department. To this end your editor and his reviewers have always worked. Now at last the Book Review Department has attained a size and nature sufficient to present interesting material at length. This, we hope, will spark off more than one discussion.....

The FANOPAMA column has been a casualty of the recent resettlement of Walt & Madeleine Willis, now at 'Strathclyde', Warren Road, Donaghadee, Co Down, N.I. but will, we hope, be contained once more in the next issue.

ZENITH certainly welcomes material from those who have had some success in one aspect of the field or another, but certainly does not prohibit the use of material from just about anyone who can write reasonably well and interestingly. Your editor will always be glad to receive articles, reviews, discussion points, letters, artwork, and just about everything except amateur science fiction.

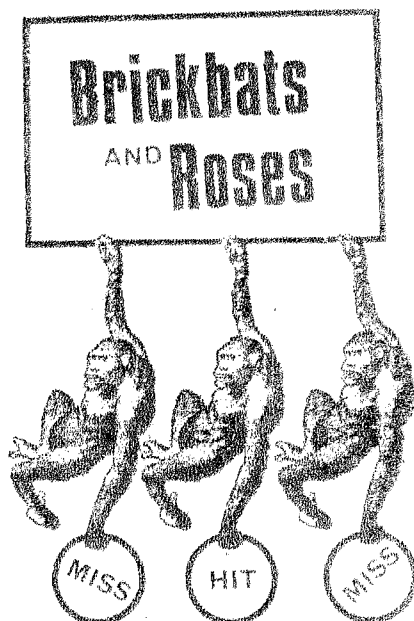
ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION & SCIENCE FACT.

April 1965.

Firmly rooted in the past as I am, and needing no acting-assistant-under-paid-deputy to scratch by back when it itches, I am not pandering to the gallery when I say that I welcome ANALOG's return to the digest size. Apart from the greater ease of storage, and the fact that it feels more like what a magazine should be, it is also easier to slip into one's pocket, or read in bed.

This issue boasts another Schoenherr cover, but for once it lacks his normal blocky figures and sombre tones. Not strictly SF, perhaps, but still a good cover. Interior artwork is severely limited (but good), and I hope this is merely a temporary shortage. As for those who have been carping over changing sizes in mid-serial, it isn't the first time, since the same fate caught Doc Smith's 'Second Stage Lensman' back in 1941 when Campbell first tried an expanded 'bedsheet' ASF. However, the contraction also seems to have affected the stories, as there are only three this issue, together with an article, and Part 4 of the serial.

Goblin Night by James H Schmitz, is another story about Telzey, the teenage telepath, this time on a visit to a National Park, where she encounters another esper. This one turns out to be an accident-maimed technician living in an automated house and with a thousand and one gadgets. (Do I detect the mod version of the old 'mad scientist' ?) Aided by lots of unexplained money, the villain has developed a mechanical ESP augments, and has also established underworld 'connections' which first supply him with an alien predatory monster, and then with humans for it to hunt under his telepathic guidance. He first immobilises Telzey -- and her aircar -- with a mysterious ray (In



MAGAZINE REVIEWS BY

**Terry Jeeves**

the days of John Russell Fearn it would have been a magnetic one.) and draws her into his web. Accepting all the unlikely happenstance, and my general dislike of female, teenage, heroines, this was a story I thoroughly enjoyed.....B.

No Throne Of His Own by L.A.Perkins, is another psi yarn wherein a Terran spaceman in the occupying forces stationed on some planet finds that the local brew gives him TK powers. He not only bedevils his nasty sergeant, but also solves the problem puzzling the Occupying Forces. (First the aliens stood off the whole fleet while in space, with terrific destructive powers, then when the fleet finally made a landing, the natives welcomed them, and showed no signs of having weapons.) For stretched contrivances this story takes some beating, but it was a pleasant piece nevertheless.....Rating C.

Fad by Mack Reynolds, concerns a group of Con-men who foist a 'Joan of Arc' cult on the public in order to cash in on merchandising of tied goods. The ending is of course highly predictable. Never believable and seldom interesting, I found nothing here to recommend the yarn, not even to a fanzine. You'll find far better material in Alien Worlds.....Rating E.

The Space Technology Of A Track Meet by Robert S Richardson is an interesting article on why we can't just multiply Earth records in order to estimate what a record will be on the moon, or by other 'g' based parameters for the various planets. The points are interesting and well-made, and I see no reason to doubt the logic. A good article, but with two minor flaws. First, the methods and calculations themselves are not given, and secondly, Richardson varies (or rounds off) his ideal athletic weight and performance in a variety of ways in order to simplify his arithmetic.

All in all, a good issue, particularly so in this current age of crud-thumping. I greatly regret the day some unmentionable NIT took a long lingering look at Picasso, Pop art, The Emperor's New Clothes, and the general attitude of "I don't-understand-it-but-I'll-pretend-I-do" and introduced the gimmick into SF. I suspect it was Bradbury...(or perhaps Galaxy magazine ?)...but the fact remains that we seem to be stuck with it..which makes this issue of ANALOG a welcome departure from the norm.

May 1965

Trouble Tide, by James H Schmitz, is reminiscent of Clarke's DEEP RANGE, and deals with sabotage of the undersea herds of 'sea beef' on another planet. The investigating scientists undergo an unexpected sea-change, solve the problem, fix the baddies, and change back to normal. Plenty of action and double-talk, but otherwise not up to this author's standard.....Rating C.

Planetfall, by John Brunner. A visiting spaceman from a star-ship meets an Earth girl. Both are dissatisfied with their lot, and envy the other. Each pours out their reasons why, and then he goes back to his ship. And that's the story. A poor 'D', and nowhere near Brunner's normal level.

Captive Djinn by Christopher Anvil. The usual captive Terran uses the dumb alien's lack of knowledge of humans to affect his escape. Anvil has done this so well, (and so often) before, that this version has nothing to offer.....D.

Prophet Of Dune by Frank Herbert (serial--last of 5 parts). Concerning a highly implausible 3 cornered conflict between the Freeman, the Emperor, and a hostile planet. Accepting the multi-barreled names, improbable society, and implausible plot of winning a planet back from nature and the Emperor's Baron,

this story rattles along beautifully on the action level, with a fight or a duel in every episode. Added intrigue comes from the superhuman powers of those trained by the Bene-Gesserit society, and added danger from the giant sand-worms. Good to give your adrenals a work-out, and worth a B rating.

June 1965

Muddle Of The Woad by Randall Garrett. The sickening title conceals another Lord Darcy detective-story set in the semi-modern, semi-feudal England where sorcery is real and we see only the more pleasant side of a pseudo-Middle Ages society. I enjoyed this one and rate it B for the way it is handled. However, beyond saying that Lord Darcy is appointed by the King to find a murderer who has dyed his victim blue, there is little else to add except that I hope the Garrett pitcher makes no more trips to this well....Rating B.

Glimpses Of The Moon by Wallace West. Despite pre-flight agreements, a glory-seeking US astronaut lands first and claims the moon for the USA. Naturally the Russians land and do the same, and so does the European combine. War might develop, a legal hassle does, but this subsides when the rather weak gimmick of aliens-got-there-first is revealed, and we end on the usual "Where do we go from here ?" note..... Rating T.

Duel To The Death by Christopher Anvil. A space explorer runs into a highly organised, hive-minded, microscopic and very dangerous life form. Protective measures would have been adequate to deal with the menace, but for a career-minded officer whose ambitions hamper their reaction time. An excellent story, into which psi powers are introduced in a logical way. Sad to say, an unnecessary twist at the end (to allow us to win ?) needlessly complicates the story and downrates it from A to B.

The G.M.Effect by Frank Herbert. A new drug unlocks racial memories, and allows total recall. Naturally for the good of the nation it must be suppressed. This is done ruthlessly, but who is to watch the watchers ? Unduly verbose and unconvincing.....Rating D.

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#### LLOYD BIGGLE JR, on the subject of Criticism

....I started to put together some material on the art, business and hobby of criticism, but the subject excites me so little that I have been unable to finish what I started. A quote or two from what I collected: From a reference book :

Criticism: Evaluation and judgement according to recognised standards, based on a study and analysis. My questions: whose recognised standards, or standards recognised by whom ? And ---- should criticism be based upon study ?

Peter DeVries, quoted in a new book, COUNTERPOINT: "Divorce of appreciation from enjoyment is the course of academic literary analysis. Think of all those miles of interpretation, and the analysis of the contents of a book without one word about whether the critic had a good time with it, experienced the entertainment for which it was written in the first place. It's as though you told what you had for dinner by giving the recipes for what you ate -- or worse, a chemical analysis of the food!"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

You know, when you really think about it, the last thing that Science Fiction needs is science. Despite what people such as John W Campbell Jr., Patrick Moore, and Uncle Hugo say, there is no very good argument for having a solid scientific basis for either reading or writing SF stories. Admittedly, people will jump on an author if he should get his facts wrong, but surely this is a warning that writers should keep their science to a minimum, if they use any at all ?

How many established SF authors have any connection with science ? Taking a few as they come to mind we have Heinlein, Nourse, Asimov, Clement, Clarke, Hoyle; I'm sure there are others but this is a fair representative sample. Now let's have a closer look at them.

In recent years Robert Heinlein has written little, if anything, which has had the slightest connection with his own field of Engineering. Yes, a lot of his earlier work had a science-gimmick basis, but most of this doesn't compare in quality with his more recent efforts. You can argue here that this improvement in quality is to be expected as Heinlein matures as a writer; but then you must look at the fact that he has matured away from the science-based story set-up.

Nourse, as a doctor, tends to be a special case; although he often brings his branch of science into his stories, psychiatric medicine is about people, and so his stories follow suit.

When one thinks of Asimov, one thinks of the Foundation series, and Caves Of Steel -- and these both have little to do with the physical sciences. Asimov makes sure he has the best of both worlds, by writing good science articles and good science fiction.

Clarke is in many ways similar to Asimov. He has built a reputation by writing books about space travel, and has carried over his wide knowledge of the subject into many of his stories. But few of these stories are good. What do you remember about The Sands Of Mars, Islands In The Sky, and all others of the ilk ? I'll tell you what you remember;

CHANGE  
BUT  
THE  
NAME

J.P. PATRIZIO



you remember vivid descriptions of the inside of a spaceship, or space station; you remember descriptions of Mars, Venus, or of space itself. But where were the people; there weren't any. What about the plot? -- there was precious little of that, either. This is being unfair to Clarke, since he can write well. But when you think of his best story, you think of one in which the science is negligible, such as Childhood's End. Isn't this significant?

Clement and Hoyle are the two writers, of those I've mentioned, whose stories are strongest on physical science, and these are also the two authors of the list who write the dullest stories. Yes, Clement has written some good SF, but I can think of only one, Needle, which wasn't overly full of technical gimmicks. Hoyle, however, is a self-confessed rabid 'science first' man, and this shows in his literary work. Cardboard cut-out characters wander through lifeless (but entirely accurate) plots, delivering lectures on astronomy. Hoyle may be a first rate astronomer but he is only a third rate story teller.

There is little evidence that science itself necessarily breeds good SF writers.

The trouble is, that those who really want science in science fiction maintain that it must be completely accurate. If you demand this, then you agree to a constriction of movement for your ideas, because if present day science says that such-and-such is a fact, then this must be accepted, and the story must be limited accordingly. The sort of fiction produced under these circumstances is well illustrated in the old Gernsback Amazing, where only half the wordage was readable. There is always the good old suspension-of-disbelief loophole to fall back on, but this should be a device used by a good author only to get out of a hole. For example, the FTL drive, which will allow the writer to set his plot on a far-removed planet where he need not worry about physical conditions which are the norm on Earth. So this is more of an argument against science than for it, as the suspension-of-disbelief is really an author's anti-science weapon.

As it is, science fiction imposes severe restrictions on an author, whether he may like it or not. When an author sets his story off the Earth, even a simple line such as "The pale yellow moon rose slowly out of the eastern sky" can be fraught with a multitude of dangers. For example, the author would be laughed at if he had set his scene on Venus. Or, if on one of the other Solar planets, he must ensure that there is a moon, that it would rise in the east, that it would do so slowly, and when it had done so it would be seen to be pale yellow. Now what sort of a job is this for a man who considers himself an artist? A man strong on writing but weak on Astronomy has only once to suffer the torrents of abuse this sort of thing can bring upon his head, to slip thankfully back into the more peaceful (and better paid) waters of mainstream.

Of course, there are some writers who like to do this sort of thing, Hal Clement with Mission of Gravity for one, and as he explained in ZENITH 8, Fritz Leiber with The Wanderer. In both cases the exercise was obviously enjoyable to the authors, but was it justified from a literary point of view? In each case the story was as scientifically accurate as possible (apart from the inherent implausibility of the plot), but did this accuracy make for a better story? I'm sure that both Clement and Leiber would be deeply disappointed if one thought that the worth of their novels lay mainly in the accuracy of their science.

We have a number of science-oriented authors writing SF, but there is nothing to suggest that those who are write better because of their bias. The plot, the action, the characters, these are the most important ingredients of a story. They are the story, and any science which might be in that story is of secondary impor-

tance. We've all read those early Gernsbackian Amazings, and have skipped screeds of pseudoscience which purported to be an explanation of what was happening - and which even suggested that things might one day really happen that way.

True, the occasional story does depend on a particular, perhaps unusual, scientific fact, but only the best writers (rather than scientists) can write these stories properly, as the fact can only be the basis for the story, and not the story itself. When handled incompetently this is the worst type of story, as it rapidly degenerates into a bad lecture. At best such an episode is nothing more than an amusing trifle; of no literary consequence, even inside the restricted field of science fiction.

However, not only is it unnecessary to have real science in a science fiction story, it is rare for an author to actually incorporate any. This has been getting more the case in the last few years, and even looking back on all the best SF ever written, most stories contain only a modicum of incidental science, -- and some, none whatsoever.

What of the readers? To the discerning fan the science in science fiction is superfluous, and detracts rather than adds to the story. If he has a good grounding in the branch of science used in the story, he will find its presence ludicrous if inaccurate, or if accurate boring because of its simplicity. If he knows nothing about that particular branch of knowledge, the scientific waffle is meaningless and will not even teach him anything. In fact, a negative process may take place if he believes what he is told, and having picked up some of the jargon, he thinks he has learned something. If the author is talking a lot of rubbish, as they often do, our reader will make a fool of himself and will drag SF further into the mire in the process.

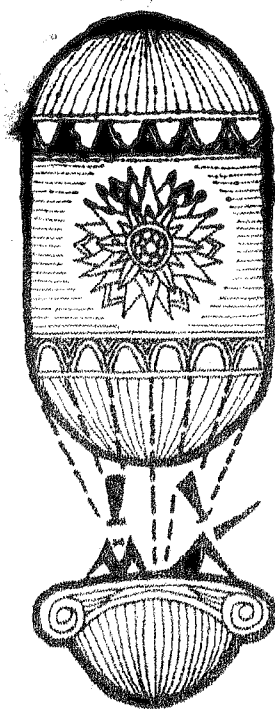
So let us get the 'science' out of Science Fiction -- and while we are about it, let us finish the job and change the name, too. Apart from being a misnomer, the term 'Science Fiction' has very bad connotations -- BEMs, lurid magazine covers, flying saucers, "Do you really believe in Martians?", and all that crazy Buck Rogers stuff.

The term 'Speculative Fiction' (gaining ground in some quarters) carries a much better brand-image, giving an air of intelligence and maturity to the field that 'Science Fiction' has long lost the power to give. Also, it is a term which should appeal more to fans. The day is long past where fans thought that the science in their stories was important, what is more important to them is imaginative ideas. "What would happen if...?", the extrapolation of today into tomorrow, (and SF readers were among the first to start wondering if there would be a future), what will happen if man ever comes in contact with aliens? -- and a thousand other ideas. These constitute the drug which makes an SF addict.

'Science' has been foisted on us; the sooner we throw it away the better.

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An interesting new venture by Ken McIntyre was first introduced at the Birmingham Convention at Easter. Ken is producing printed name-plates for books, illustrated, size 3" x 3½", gummed backs. These are a professional job, very similar to the stickers advertised in GALAXY for the past few years. Price 2/- per set of 12, from Ken McIntyre at 212, Commonwealth Way, Abbey Wood, London S.E.2.



# EDMUND COOPER OVER— LOOKED

BY  
RICHARD  
GORDON

## EDMUND COOPER - AN ASSESSMENT

Edmund Cooper, a rapidly rising English Science Fiction author, has ~~written~~ three novels and has had published three collections of short stories all of which may be judged by the highest standards. His latest novel, *TRANSIT*, published here by Faber, and by Lancer in the U.S.A., attracted a good deal of notice and many favourable reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet, despite the relative success of this book, which shows a degree of professionalism not generally apparent in sf, his name seems to be virtually unknown in sf circles. His books are usually favourably reviewed at intervals but appear to attract little or no interest in the manner of Ballard, Aldiss, et al. There are articles and assessments galore about less important and less imaginative writers, who also enjoy considerably wider reputations. Cooper's style and his ideas are both fresh and original, and although he appears to have started writing only within the last decade, his work compares favourably with Clarke, Simak, and others who are generally venerated as masters of the genre.

Cooper's first novel, *DEADLY IMAGE*, appeared seven or eight years ago, a short time before the first of his story collections, the original Ballantine edition of *TOMORROW'S GIFT*, later published in Britain by Digi. This was a collection of short stories that had appeared in such diverse magazines as *John Bull*, *Authentic*, *Fantastic Universe* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. The title story first appeared in the *Star* sf series some time before, and shows the unusual interest in human relationships - unusual for a writer of sf - which is evident in most of his books and especially so in *TRANSIT*. The stories show preoccupation with time, another theme with which he is constantly involved. In an appreciative review in *Astounding*, Schuyler Miller said of him that he possesses "a kind of forthright realism that helps to make the strangest of paradoxes plausible."

He has had two further collections of short stories published - *VOICES IN THE DARK* and *TOMORROW CAME*, in 1960 and in 1963 respectively, the third collection repeating some material from the second for some reason. The stories show a lack of uniformity since they each seem to be striving after some sort of style, so much so that some of them are recognisable as being nothing more than re-writes of other author's material. His *THE UNICORN* is extremely reminiscent of Sturgeon's *THE SILKEN*

SWIFT, while other stories, such as THE HOUSE THAT ROARED and JUDGEMENT DAY seem to be little more than copies of the comedy of the same name and of EARTH ABIDES. This borrowing is a pity, for it is completely unnecessary. Cooper is a fluent and clever writer who at his best can rank with anyone.

His importance as a writer of sf does not lie in his short stories, which, by and large, are negligible. Although he has only written three novels, they are, in my opinion, sufficient to put him into the top rank of sf writers.

DEADLY IMAGE, his first novel, cannot be called particularly original either in plot or in concept. The hero, an Englishman of the present decade called John Markham, is accidentally frozen and put into suspended animation just before the outbreak of the crippling third world war so dear to sf. The protagonist is revived in the year 2113, into a civilisation largely dominated by androids, who are, to all intents and purposes, human. The human population is low as a result of the war; to work is a social disgrace; everything is done by the androids - until they inevitably decide to revolt. The plot is not particularly original, as social sf goes. But, more important, the book is extremely well written, with characters who seem human and without the annoying discrepancies and childish faults of technique and style which so often characterise the typical sf novel.

His second novel, SEED OF LIGHT, published by Hutchinson in 1959, and later by Panther and Ballantine, shows an enormous advance both in technique and in plot. The main theme of the story - the generations voyage star-ship - is not new, but is put to new use. The book is split up into proem, first part; proem, second part; proem, part three, and "envoi". The reason for this somewhat unusual arrangement is revealed at the finish.

There are two basic divisions of the book, the first concerning the world's approach to and engulfment by nuclear war, (the book is dedicated to those who advocate the retention of nuclear weapons) and it seems likely that the majority of this part was introduced mainly as padding, for there is little in it that is important to the main theme. This is the account of the voyage of the "Solarian" from the destroyed world to the stars in an attempt to find a new world where man may start afresh, and the account of the successive disappointments of each generation. This latter part covers many generations, from the first year until the nine hundred and thirty-seventh, when a suitable planet is eventually discovered after years of fruitless searching. Here Cooper shows "the forthright realism which makes the strangest paradox plausible" for one of the members of the crew invents a device programmed to choose the nearest planet in place and time suitable for human existence and to lead the ship there. This it does - and they discover that they have come back to Earth at the time when homo sapiens first appeared. The crew is the first tribe of homo sapiens. Thus man's history has come full cycle and starts all over again.

Were the writing not so good, the story would have failed. But the writing is so effective, (reminiscent of Clarke or Stapledon at their most cosmic) that there is a beauty about the entire book that raises it head and shoulders above anything else written on the same theme. This is quite apart from the brilliant manner in which the story is wound up, the last page joining with the first proem, briefly describing the emergence and rise of homo sapiens. The Novel is a masterpiece of construction.

It would be tempting to quote pages from this fascinating book but that is unfortunately impossible. It is always easy to sneer at passages from a story; easy to say "pretty-pretty" or "pointless and meaningless philosophising." But it would be extremely difficult to find another author as good at this sort of description - I doubt whether even Clarke would be capable of it:-

"Lost in a frigid continuum of space and time, a sea of darkness and silence rippling to the impossible shores of eternity, the galaxies drift - nebulous, remote. They are vortices of starry plankton, bright illusions of life in the tides of a vacant ocean. For darkness is, was and shall be, on the face of the deep...."

And :-

"The universe was empty, yet it was filled with the tantalising brilliance of stars. The universe was silent, yet always there were the whispering of ghosts. Time was without significance, yet moments trickled slowly, as if from a leak in eternity. Space was immeasurable, yet each star was at the very rim of the cosmos. And the Solarian continued to drift, an infinitely small seed, through the dark valleys of creation. But the seed was itself a universe, bound by the dimensions of hope, endurance, and courage. It was a capsule of history, a pin-point miracle, a microscopic dream of resurrection .....A message in a bottle, written by a dying race, and tossed into the black uncharted oceans of the night. A pathetic and magnificent gesture."

Of course, not everyone can be expected to like this kind of "fine" writing. But many do, and they would be hard put to find finer writing and description of this sort.

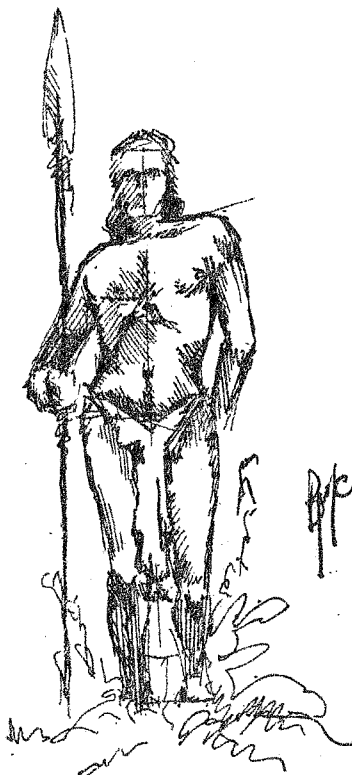
The book is a beautiful piece of writing, a work of art, the point is summed up perfectly in "Envoi."

"But, whatever his ultimate purpose, Man, who is born of the stars and even now aspires to their conquest, may find his consolation, testament, or epitaph in words whose meaning expands even to the very limits of his mind:

In my beginning is my end  
In my end is my beginning."

To my mind, this is one of the finest sf novels to have been written in recent years, one that will stand the test of time. However, it has been more or less ignored, even though it combines purpose and rational philosophy with pure science-fantasy of the finest quality. The near-poetic prose is on a par with an exciting and satisfying plot and a set of characters who achieve what almost amounts to a tragic greatness - something rare indeed in sf. It is a story which can be read on several levels, both as pure adventure and as a condemnation of nuclear childishness, both as an attempt to explain the mystery of the human being and as an attempt to glorify him in spite of his inspired foolishness. As such, it deserves a higher place among sf novels.

After such glorification, any attempt to consider his most recent novel, TRANSIT must necessarily be anti-climatic. For, although TRANSIT is a good book and is good sf, it cannot compare with the universal scope of SEED OF LIGHT. It does contain many of the same qualities that make the other such a fine novel; the cosmic scenes of description, the characterisation, the underlying philosophical purpose. But the main purpose is more that of a mainstream novel, describing the interplay of strangers thrown together into a dangerous situation,



L although it could probably not have been written as anything but science fiction.

It concerns four people who are suddenly transported from various London parks to another planet by some ~~teleportation~~ means not entirely explained. After preliminary tests as captives of a mysterious intelligence which seems to regard them as experimental animals, they are brought together and released on an island on the planet. This is predominantly tropical in climate, and which, as they later discover, circles the star Achernar. They find that there are also four golden-skinned humanoids present on the island, who appear to be utterly inimical to ordinary humanity and who have physical stature comparable to Greek gods. A battle to the death ensues, the four humans win against the odds and are finally visited by their captors, an older civilisation in control of the galaxy, but gradually dying out. These beings have matched forty groups of Earthmen and humanoids (from Alpha Centauris), in order that they may fight to decide the future of their respective races - one will become the local ruler, the other is to be "inhibited."

Towards the end of the story, the author descends to some rather questionable statements of a highly idealistic nature; a weakness to which he appears to be prone. A representative of the older controlling race which was responsible for the experiment says that they managed to survive because "they found another collective strength, which you inadequately call compassion...compassion, and the desire to create. In the end they are the only qualities you will need."

This is perhaps the only major flaw in Cooper's writing - an extremely questionable idealism where the human race is concerned, even when it is engaged in all but destroying itself, as it does in SEED OF LIGHT. He tends to glorify man for little more than existing in an uncaring universe. Though there is little wrong in this for its own sake, this emotional sentimentality can be annoying to the reader and detracts from enjoyment of the story. This idealistic and philosophical jargon is the direct equivalent of Ballard's metaphysical jargon which is often equally annoying.

In fact, there is much in common between the two authors, although ardent Ballard supporters would probably sneer at the idea. But there are definite correlations. Read this passage, and then compare it with parts of VOICES OF TIME :-

"...He was drifting down a dark river of space. He was drifting to the end of the cosmos; and island universes - unimaginable dust bowls of light - seemed to flash by in the icy rapids of creation. It was too cold - not physically cold, but spiritually cold. His half-conscious mind rejected the patterns of awful splendour, groping hungrily for meaning and relief and location..."

Now take a brief passage from THE VOICES OF TIME.

"Like an endless river, so broad that its banks were below the horizons, it flowed steadily towards him, a vast course of time that spread outwards to fill the sky and the universe, enveloping everything within them. Moving slowly, the forwards direction of its majestic current almost imperceptible, Powers knew that its source was the source of the cosmos itself."

They are similar. So similar, in fact, that one might think that the first passage was derived from the second. But this I doubt. Cooper's writing is full of such passages, and although on the surface the words are much the same, the underlying meaning, if there is any, is different. Ballard is concerned with the sub-conscious, the primitive in man; while Cooper is more concerned with what makes man what he is; how people react to strange situations and to each other, and most

important of all; man's place in relation to the terrifyingly large universe in which he finds himself :---

"Man can never evade the intolerable burden and distinction of mind. And mind is so fashioned that it can never renounce the pursuit of meaning.

Perhaps it is part of the celestial paradox that only the microcosm of man and the macrocosm of mind can discover a purpose in the random drift of the galaxies. And perhaps it was the function of the stars simply to create mind.

For, without mind, there can be no meaning."

If there is any point in comparing Cooper's work to that of Ballard, it lies in the fact that Ballard, and one or two other writers, such as Aldiss and Vonnegut, go just a little bit deeper than mere storytelling in their work. Some deeper purpose is usually associated with their work, and I consider this to be also true of Cooper's novels -- although no-one seems to have looked at them in this light.

Before the appearance of these last two novels, science fiction which argued philosophical points usually only did so in order to bring some secondary interest into the story. (With some exceptions, such as Simak's MIRAGE, which, although typically American in its notions, appears to have genuine philosophical concern, as does his AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE. There appear to be many similarities between the writing of Cooper and Simak.)

I think it is highly arguable that these two novels are equally concerned with philosophical considerations as with plot, which is not to say that the plots suffer in the process. They don't, except for the occasional irritating remark. Here is a science fiction author who appears to take his longer work as seriously as does anyone currently writing in the science fiction field, with much better results than most of his contemporaries.

That there are faults in Cooper's work no one can deny. The idealism which is so evident, both in the stories themselves and in the quotes with which he hedges his novels, often seem to be both false and arrogant. But perhaps, at the same time, this lofty feeling for humanity helps the beauty of the writing, proves to be an inspiration. It is difficult to believe that it is cold-bloodedly cooked up for the purpose of the plots; some statements ring too true and too controversial to be anything but genuine. And at the same time, his short stories appear to be very routine and are generally uninspired, with only the occasional exception being apparent. If he is remembered, it will be for his novels rather than for his short stories.

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#### PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

##### THE RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY (ed. Leland Sapiro)

The U.S. magazine of science fictional criticism; three issues so far, of excellent material. 35¢ per copy.  
Box 82, University Station, Saskatoon, Canada.

##### JACK VANCE - SCIENCE FICTION STYLIST

A critical essay by Richard Tiedman. 30¢ per copy from R & J Coulson, Route 3, Wabash, Indiana. 30 Pp, inc. bibliography.

##### AMRA (The Magazine of Swordplay & Sorcery. )

ed George Scithers, 2/-, 8 for 14/- from Archie Mercer, 70 Worrall Rd., Bristol, 8. Best-looking magazine in the amateur field.

##### ADVENT: PUBLISHERS.

The publishers of SF criticism in book form. Many titles. Details, - P.O.Box 9228, Chicago 90, Illinois.

LLOYD BIGGLE JR. On the subject of Criticism. (Continued from Page 5)

I don't want my books "studied". On the other hand, I think I am not out of order in expecting a reviewer to give a book at least as careful a reading as any thoughtful reader who has an interest in the subject. ( if the reviewer lacks such an interest he should not be reviewing that book). What the would-be reviewer is often unaware of is that a good (i.e. favourable ) review can be more infuriating than a bad (i.e. unfavourable) review. One short professional review of my last novel contained, in its five lines, four major misstatements of fact. It was a favourable review. I didn't like it.

Arthur Miller, speaking to Polish students in Warsaw: " The ideal critic should be very small, invisible, and deaf and dumb. I don't care whether he has a typewriter or not, so long as nothing comes out of it."

This is nonsense too. I am unable to generate animosity for a critic simply because he doesn't like what I have written. If he doesn't like it, it is his job to say so. On the other hand, it strikes me as puerile egocentrism for a critic to assume that just because he does not like a book, no-one else should. A critic's responsibility does not extend only to those who are likely to agree with him.

In an attempt to expose the basic fallacy involved in assigning letter ratings to stories, I have written a review of a non-existent story; and I suggest that you ask Terry Jeeves what his letter rating would be if the opinions expressed there were his own.

Of course a critic could not give an "A" rating to a story that is, by his own admission, the worst he has ever read. To do so would be to concede that his ratings were meaningless. On the other hand, if he gives this story less than an "A" rating, his rating standards have no objective validity, and as a guide to readers are completely worthless. By thus oversimplifying an extreme case, I underscore the injustice of oversimplification in all cases.

"...It would be presumptuous of me to state that this is the worst story that has ever been published, but it is assuredly the worst that I have ever read. There is no plot. The seven alleged characters, despite superficial differences in name, mannerisms, and sex, are as interchangeable as bowling pins, and just as wooden. The story begins nowhere in particular, and tediously lurks in that vicinity for 8000 words. Every sentence is fraught with suspense, not because of anything happening in the story, but because the writer's casual approach to English grammar keeps the reader feeling that he must have overlooked something --a punctuation mark, a verb, perhaps a paragraph or two.

The background material is fascinating. The reader looks into the future as into a distorting mirror, and what he sees there is so deftly drawn, so terrifyingly real, that no description or summary could do it justice. A once-in-a-lifetime experience. DON'T MISS IT !

Rating ?

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(Editor)....One can't help but feel there is a contradiction somewhere that makes your argument invalid. In any case, who ever said that Terry's reviews had any worth other than the provision of entertainment (to all except authors perhaps).



## POINT — COUNTERPOINT



Harry Warner Jr

....I've not read EARTHWORKS, or most of the other fiction reviewed in ZENITH 8, but I felt there was some kind of common factor to all these new works of science fiction, as I read through the review sections of your new issue. Finally I realised exactly what gave me this impression. It is the continuing custom for long science fiction stories to deal with the fate of an entire world, if not an all-over-the-galaxy civilisation. It's hard to imagine what might have caused this obsession with races and planets in peril. During the 1930's there were enough SF stories with a limited scope to cause Ed Hamilton to be conspicuous for his own consistent use of the world-saving gimmick. Now it's hard to find a long novelette or complete novel that doesn't deal with the destiny of billions of people, either by direct description or by implication. Perhaps DAVY won so much favour in fandom because of the fresh unusual treatment that it gave to the future Earth, whose destiny is not directly settled by the activities of the people whom the book describes....

/ I believe that Harry has discovered a very real point here, one that could bear a little thought. To illustrate further this trend in science fiction, I'll quote below a few paragraphs that appeared in THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL; Advent Publishers, Sept. 1964. This section by Robert Bloch.

"....Yet in many..of these novels, something is off-key. Can it be — I wonder — that the heroes are too important ?

That's where some of..these books destroy the illusion of reality for me. I'm transported right back to the days of Hugo Gernsback where, in many instances, the handsome but brilliant young fullback landed on Mars and immediately found himself involved with the Princess, the High Priest, and the Emperor. By the time you reached the fourth page of such epics, Our Boy was always tangling with the highest figures in the Hierarchy, and he and he alone eventually decided the fate and future of the planet, the galaxy, or the entire universe.

And here we are again today. Sophisticated superimpositions of satire, sophistry sociology and psychiatry notwithstanding, there's one basic plot -- Boy Meets Big Wheel, and overturns the world.

Now the thing that made 1984 a convincing tour-de-force was its depiction of an average citizen against an average background. It was not necessary for Orwell to pit his commonplace hero against the Top Dogs in order to make a plot and a point. Indeed, the strength and the conviction of his book lies in the way he deliberately offers a "slice of life" rather than an orgy of name-dropping.

Science fiction as a vehicle for social criticism is stalled when one of those super-heroes climbs into the driver's seat and insists on racing full-speed-ahead right down the centre of the main highway. You're so busy watching for the possibility of accidents and smashups that you never really see the scenery. Thrilling? Yes. Contemplative? Hardly."

There does indeed seem to be a growing tendency for authors to portray their characters as The central figures in their imaginary worlds. It makes it difficult for the reader to identify with the lead character, since, after all, the usual reader's influence on the world's destiny is somewhat near zero. It is hardly worth picking examples now, except to point out that P.J. Farmer's latest novel, Dare has this symptom (failing?) and that Robert Heinlein's last half a dozen books don't.

Harry Harrison,

....Beryl Henley is good, and in all fairness should be called a critic and not a reviewer. I would say this even if she hadn't liked my ETHICAL ENGINEER -- though I can't say I'm exactly hurt because she did like it. It is obvious that she has read the book closely and has made a strong attempt to understand what I put into it. After doing this she has made her judgements about it. (Pp 49-50, Z7: review)

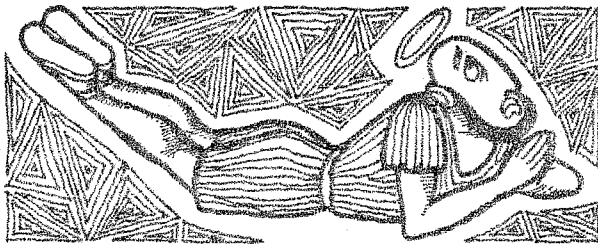
I wish Ivor Latta had done the same thing. For some reason he has read with prejudice and has looked for things to differ with, even to the extent of ignoring what was written (Pp. 30, Z8: letter). Yes, Jason does say "Better to live in chains and learn how to get rid of them." and "There are only two slaves that need freeing here..." But this is not enough grounds to attack the basic philosophy of the book. In the end Jason arranges to have the entire world upset so that all of the slaves are eventually freed. I do not advance the argument that the status quo be accepted, no matter what this implies. Quite the opposite. I thought it was quite clear that I felt the status quo be accepted as a reality -- which it is -- then changed for the benefit of mankind.

In any case I shall not beat this any further. I spent about 70,000 words stating the case; there is no point in going over it again. What I really want to snarl about is the one more boring bit of Campbell-baiting. Why do some people hate John Campbell and his editorials so? It is a good thing that Ivor Latta didn't have the energy to search the editorials for this idea, because it did not come from any editorial. (Though why the implied sneer that there is something wrong with getting an idea from a Campbell editorial?) If Ivor will turn to the front of the book he will see that I have dedicated the book to John Campbell, and have credited him with collaboration. This is for the simple reason that we worked out the idea together over a lunch, and hammered it out later by correspondence. Is this a crime? John has one of the most prolific and fertile minds in the world, and I deem it a great pleasure to work with him.

There are a few things in Ivor's letter that I did enjoy. The part about Mikah being a suicidal fanatic, then "...one wonders how he ever came to live long enough to take part in this saga." One does indeed -- when he is plucked from his home environment and his strengths become glaring faults in a different society. I can

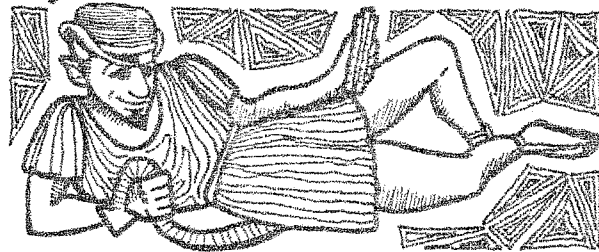
name one British ex-Prime Minister and one American ex-President who have Mikah's insight and flexibility of mind. They are both still alive, and chuntering away at their old nonsense -- though you might very well ask why.

And, Ivor, whether you intend it or not, thank you for the compliment on my writing technique. When Mikah says "Better to die free than live in chains!", you state that he declared this "...stridently and priggishly of course, Harrison sees to that." I did nothing of the sort; - you did. There isn't a single word of description as to how this speech is delivered, in fact it stands alone without any sign as to whom is speaking. I am very pleased to see that this character has a living and breathing personality for you. Strident and priggish, that is correct. I wouldn't have it any other way.



## THE ETHICAL ENGINEER

by HARRY HARRISON



....I've had some second thoughts about my earlier letter, and if there is time I want to add them here. They are mostly inspired by your comments on Ivor's letter. You seem to agree that the philosophy of the book is the one he thought I wrote;-- not the one I wrote. I thought I was being clear as crystal; apparently I wasn't. For the record, then, here is what I was basically saying.

There are no such things as "revealed laws" from above. Man invented all the rules he lives by -- or pretends to live by -- then invented the God concept to rationalise these laws. Once this is understood we can go about changing our moral laws and use our intelligence on such things as abortion law reform, birth control, homosexual legality, and suchlike. The philosophy that supports these ideas is known as Scientific Humanism. And if you think that I am a Scientific Humanist -- you are a hundred percent right. Therefore Ivor is completely wrong in his summation of the "philosophy" of the book, and Beryl is quite correct in her summing up....

Ted Tubb

....I have read THE ETHICAL ENGINEER, and here I'd like to comment on what Ivor Latto has to say. He says, or so I gather, that the protagonist (Jason) is wrong in holding his realistic views, and that Mikah has a point in stating his own code, which Ivor seems to say is of a higher moral tone than Jason's. Well, I disagree. I'm not arguing about the author's intentions because he probably found it very convenient to have a couple of opposed viewpoints which he could set against each other and both fill space and keep the story moving by a succession of minor arguments. This is a literary gimmick which Ivor, if he ever tried to write a story without such props, would soon realise the value of. Let's keep to the 'situation as presented'.

I agree with Jason because he was accepting the world in which he found himself and was managing to survive in it. Mikah wouldn't, on his own, have lived more than

a day.

While we're at it, let's look at that most banal of statements -- "It's better to die free than to live in chains". Now this is pure nonsense and is mouthed by those who have no idea of what they are saying. Certainly the majority of them have never been in chains and positively none of them have died. So -- how do they know ?

How does anyone know that it is better to die free than to live in chains ?

As to the rest -- well, Ivor, a society is a pretty strong thing, and has to be accepted as it is by those that live in it. And, remember, to those who are a part of any society, the habits and customs of that society are perfectly normal and acceptable. At least they are to the majority and, if you believe in democracy, then the majority is right. You can't have it both ways....

#### Alex B Eisenstein

....I found Fritz Leiber's article on THE WANDERER more interesting than the book itself. The book was just too episodic in the beginning, with no "omniscient eye" view as the author hopped around the world. I would rather have seen such an omniscient viewpoint to throw The Wanderer into perspective, with occasional glimpses of personal reactions. Instead, everything is seen through personal and constantly changing viewpoints.

This is my own personal taste perhaps, but there were other faults too. Though many of the characters were well-drawn (mostly among the saucer group -- especially the bald one called 'Doc' ), many were just platinum nickels -- flashy, but phoney as hell. And I submit that the sex scene on the roller-coaster was not only gross but worse, it was physically impossible for a number of reasons (for one, anyone standing in a roller-coaster will soon find himself -- or herself in this case -- flying through the air without the saving grace of wings.) And though there is much wonderful visual imagery (challenging enough for half a dozen wonderful paintings at least), Fritz's style is lumpy with an overabundance of adjectives, many times four or more hung on one poor noun without the help of commas....

#### Jim Groves

....And here I take issue with Chris Priest -- NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY are now the worst of the magazine crop. They never rated very high in my eyes when Ted Carnell was editor, but neither Mike Moorcock nor Bonfiglioli have a fraction of his ability as editors. I stopped buying both these magazines regularly before the changeover, now I often don't bother to read them when my brother, with more money than sense, gets them. And as for the new authors, I'd swap all of them and their writing for one honest-to-god Bulmer potboiler. At least Ken's stuff was worth reading once.

#### Ivor Latto

....I thought Chris Priest's views on NEW WORLDS & SCIENCE FANTASY were very acute. I think I would add George Collyn's name to the list of probable long runners in the Compact stables. As to the others, Thom Keyes is a brilliant find. I haven't enough superlatives to say how much I enjoyed Period of Gestation...really superb. Keith Robert's Anita stories I just can't take; lovable sexy girl witch and lovable grumpy granny witch, chatting it up in dialect...too close to whimsy for my taste.

It isn't quite fair to say that NEW WORLDS is superior to SCIENCE FANTASY; the relative quality of the stories published is much the same. But Moorcock's crusading zeal has certainly given NW a new lease of life, not entirely because of the stories he publishes, but also because of the way his philosophy is backed up in editorials,



articles, and reviews. Either Bonfiglioli has no similar urge to convert, or he has been persuaded to accept NW as the dominant half of the Compact twins. Maybe the publishers feel that they can't afford to run reviews, articles and letters in both mags. Whatever the reason, SF certainly suffers for it in a certain purposelessness. It's always been like that, for some reason, a weak sister to NW in its departments, although usually superior in the stories it prints.

When an editor like Moorcock pushes the literary qualities of SF, the long-suffering reader might well shudder; it could so easily mean a string of tales over-written with adjectives and literary gimmicks. The sort of "stars sparkling dreamily o'er moon-kissed myriad clouds" stuff, reminiscent of Jerome K.

Jerome in an off moment. It's part of the price one pays for new writers, I suppose, but wearying nonetheless. In spite of the ritual homage paid to Ballard and Burroughs, I think NW is, in its own way, seeking after that Holy Grail of SF....the Sense of Wonder (all kneel). And, in its own way, it has succeeded on occasion; James Colvin's The Mountain, and B.J.Bayley's All The King's Men both give one that old sense of awe and majesty, but in really novel terms. One tends to be pessimistic about the fate of SF mags, knowing how many others have bit the dust, but NEW WORLDS seems likely to have an interesting run under Moorcock's editorship. I wonder if the "Oxford antiquarian" will feel the urge to introduce a touch of the cult of personality into NW's stable mate, or whether he will be given the chance to do so.

/ The trouble is that science fiction fans are 'hooked' on the type of SF current in a particular period, and when the bias of SF storytelling changes, the readers don't change. This is the reason for the dissatisfaction expressed by some readers because of 'modern' SF. They cannot assimilate a diet lacking in the essential vitamins supplied by '1950's SF'.

But there is hope yet....many readers are attracted to the style of 'action SF' introduced in such magazines as SPACE SF, INFINITY, and SF ADVENTURES, and they really should try the Galaxy twins WORLDS OF IF & WORLDS OF TOMORROW. The latter magazine especially, is, in the editor's opinion, the best SF magazine (of its type) on the market today. The January & March 1965 issues are really excellent, introducing also a new writer, Larry Niven, a real 'find'. 7

Harry Warner Jr.

....Al Lewis' thorough consideration of FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD (Pp 59-66, 28 article) should set off a discussion as complicated as those caused by several reviews of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND in U.S. fanzines. I can't help thinking that fans and fanzines have changed more than have Heinlein's novels, to cause so much attention to the stories. Despite all the complaints about fandom turning away from science fiction, I can recall little or no commentary of any length or intelligence on his first ten or a dozen long stories. There is a general belief that Heinlein's fiction is more likely to provoke discussion today because of its content, but

I believe that the older novels would have been equally adaptable to these discussions -- they read differently when they're considered as classics and when they've survived the particular world environment and outlook in which they came into existence.

#### Creath Thorne

....I found Al Lewis' article on Heinlein and Farnham's Freehold to be quite interesting. I found myself agreeing with many of his points as I read through the piece. I think that perhaps the reason so many fans have ignored the quality of writing in the Heinlein stories and chosen to argue the philosophical points is because they are emotionally tied up with many of the points that RAH tries to make, and because fans as a norm are argumentative people. You'll note that while there is a great deal of controversy surrounding Heinlein, his books still continue to be read. Even the people who claim his latest to be terrible, still continue to read the books. There's no doubt that Heinlein is a master craftsman. However, a number of people have become disturbed with his reactionary attitudes, his childish attitudes, and other facets of personality that occur in book after book. While one is reading Heinlein, if one really gets involved in the book, one may feel that Heinlein is really profound. But if one backs away and takes a good, long, objective look, one will see that actually in many cases RAH is entirely off on the wrong track, and is barking up the wrong tree.

I think I enjoyed RAH more when he was writing pure technical stories. There, the full flavour of his technique of writing came through. In those stories there were interesting things to think about, but Bob never let the ideas root out the plot. I'm afraid that in some of his later books, he hasn't been able to resist the temptation to let the idea take full control of the story.

#### Jim Groves

....I see the discussion on Heinlein's latest has reached the same end as the discussion on STARSHIP TROOPERS -- that the plot of any given book expresses the author's beliefs. This was twaddle before and it's twaddle again. It seems to me that in his last few books Heinlein has been amusing himself by washing some dirty linen in public. In STARSHIP TROOPERS it was the undeniable fact that properly applied violence can effectively solve certain problems -- a truth that horrifies liberal minded persons. In FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD he has pulled some really dirty phobias from our subconscious. Incidentally, I didn't like it. I do however enjoy the stir it has created. I eagerly await the next Heinlein 'spoon' epic.

#### Alex Eisenstein

....The deus ex machina in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD that Al Lewis referred to, was not exactly the fact of the time machine (though its explanation was hardly 'plausible', for there simply was no explanation, really;) it was the fact that Ponce steps completely out of character when he sends Hugh and Company back to their own time. (When I say 'character' I mean the characterisation that Heinlein thinks he gave Ponce, as expressed in the views of Hugh Farnham.) Ponce suddenly becomes a "good guy", though neither Hugh nor Heinlein ever notice this. (the nominal explanation is that they are really just guinea pigs for Ponce's time travel experiment, and that they -- Hugh and Barbara -- are selected because they are the only slaves intelligent enough to perform their end of the experiment, which is to set an atomic clock in a safe place -- a vault; this argument is rather weak, as the book itself demonstrates that Barbara and Hugh are the only two slaves who are likely to renege and purposely destroy the atomic clock because they lack the usual slaves' fear of retribution; a rather naive Chosen

scientist tells Hugh that he will be severely punished if he doesn't follow his instructions precisely; even Ponce is amused by this remark.) Ponce becomes an all-forgiving, if a bit crotchety, old man.

/ Alex continued with detailed comments on FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, Al Lewis' review of the book in ZENITH 7, and on the selection of opinions voiced in ZENITH 8. Because too much of any discussion can be a bad thing, this has been (regretfully) left out. Perhaps more extracts from Alex's letter will appear with more comments from other readers. 7

Tom Perry

....After just a glance at ZENITH through my mind the question ran; how would Walt have treated LINK had Beryl been a man? With repetition that perplexes Archie worries on the sexes -- once in ZENITH twice in NEXUS. As he's got Walt over a beryl and it doesn't seem quite fair, I'll say I doubt Mrs Henley can (as Joan Carr could) become a man. That being the case, it'd be unfair to deprive her of all she's heir to; if gallantry is patronising (in even fanzine analysing), then women seem quite used to being patronised by men. And male fans find some charm in the most brummagem of fenne. A question here for Archie to answer, if he can; Is he sure he'd be Linked to Beryl, if Beryl were a man?

Walt seems to be taking care of himself but I can't envy him in having to account for every word, every undertone; I begin to see more why he doesn't like his reputation, or some aspects of it. But his description of the kind of reviews he's attempting is thought-provoking. If anyone can do it, he can, I'm sure; the only problem I see in the idea of "being both honest and kind" is that the reader may not be sure where the honesty leaves off and the kindness begins. The result could be reading all kinds of innuendoes into the compliments; "precision" would be read as nitpicking, "self-confidence" as egotism, "individualistic" as eccentric, etc, etc. Thus every well-meant compliment would be magnified into downright insults by the fanned in question. In purely honest reviews, at least the fanned knows precisely what is meant. I say this not in criticism of what Walt is attempting; his is the more difficult, and worthwhile feat -- and I hope ultimately the more rewarding.

Harry Warner

....I believe that I once write an article that dealt in part with the mysteries of British addresses that Walt Willis mentions in PANORAMA (ZENITH 7 Pp 17). But you on that side of the Atlantic may not realise how baffled these addresses leave those of us who are familiar with the workings of United States post offices, with their long rows of cubbyholes into which mail is sorted by streets and by number. Obviously that doesn't serve the purpose in a great many areas of England. There is no way in which I can get rid of a mental picture of a British post office as a giant room with tiny boxes scattered at random intervals and considerable distances over the floor, where harried clerks work on incoming mail, look on the address on the top, see "The Dovecote", race two-thirds of the way across the room to the receptacle for that particular house, then return to take the next envelope from the pile, stare at it, then pick up a megaphone and shout, "Anyone know where's Crabbs Cottage?" and wait until a fellow employee looms up and guides the letter to the proper spot in the second storey of the building.

Ruck Coulson

....Maybe I'm wrong but I get the impression from Terry Jeeves' reviews of GALAXY Dec. 1964 that he rates stories as much for ideology as for literary content.



That's why so many fans disliked STARSHIP TROOPERS; not because it was a bad novel but because it was a good novel dedicated to the "wrong" cause. I object like hell to liberals who are all for freedom of speech and the press as long as only their side takes advantage of it. (I consider the average 'liberal' to be as much a hypocrite as the average church-goer.)

/ That's something new for Terry to be accused of. But I honestly don't think that any of Terry's reviews are influenced by the 'politics' of the story. And if they were, I suspect that Terry would be influenced to the Right side of centre rather than the other way. You may have received a wrong impression from the reviews for the same reason as did Harry Harrison and Tom Perry (though they received somewhat different 'wrong impressions'.) The reason being your ham-fisted editor's somewhat drastic 'cutting' of BRICKBATS AND ROSES in the last two issues. For which, apologies both to Terry and to readers.

Damon Knight

....As an ex-magazine-reviewer I was able to appreciate the flabbergasted expressions on Jeeves' & Walt Willis' faces. Nobody ever expects writers to react in this hostile way, but it often happens. The truth is that writers don't want criticism, they want praise. And indeed, it probably is true that magazine reviews can't accomplish anything useful from the writers' point of view; even if the reviewer is able to tell the poor hack how he should have written his story, it is then too late. This is not to say that there shouldn't be any magazine reviews, however; they are useful and entertaining to readers.

Richard Gordon

....Into the battlefield, and damned be him who first cries hold...I can't help thinking that the entire magazine is becoming more than slightly stereotyped. On the one hand we have the perpetual war between Jeevesites and rightly aggrieved authors; on the other we have the perpetual back-and-forth flow of correspondence in Leiber and Bloch land. And an unpleasant taste of malevolent criticism hangs over half the pages. So many people seem to be joining the merry-go-round of pointless criticism that they don't seem to be aware of the idiocy of the whole thing--so that ninety percent of the issue is taken up with fannish squabbles of no value whatsoever to anyone and which can only result in bad feeling between all concerned. Now I know it's your duty as editor to publish a representative section of mail received, and thus you can't hope for everything to be a bed of roses, but at least you could tone down the general aura of bitterness that is usurping the purpose of the magazine and rapidly spoiling it. Anyone reading Z for the first time and seeing that it was attempting "to review and comment upon SF" would be forgiven for thinking that he had strayed inadvertently into a battlefield of nutcases. (Now I seem to be joining that merry-go-round) because the general competence and aim of Z is gradually being corrupted to the marrow by all this bickering.

For example, Jeeves appears to have toned down a bit, so that particular war is all but over. However, there are already a dozen others ready to spring up in its ashes.....I know that words such as Good Manners, etc, are dirty nowadays, and out of fashion, laughable concepts which only Victorians at heart pay any attention to, but I reckon it might be a good thing if some of the fervent idealists in the pages of ZENITH paid at least lip service to them.

/ Did ZENITH-8 really give such an impression of 'bitterness' ? Looking back on the issue, I can see that it was over-preoccupied with 'fannish' events. Editing ZENITH is difficult work; what is the purpose and aim of the magazine ? Certainly less bickering and more politeness will now be the order of the day. More letters on science fictional matters will also be appreciated. 7





Herewith the first installment of what we hope are a 'new style' of book reviews. There is also an analysis-cum-discussion by Beryl & Archie, which has been crowded out of this issue and will appear in ZENITH 10.

## DOUBLE BOOKING

### BOOK REVIEWS

*Archie Mercer*

*and*

*Beryl Henley*

SHIELD : Poul Anderson Dennis Dobson Books, 1965, 158pp, 15/-

(AM) There are books that cry aloud for comment -- for praise, or for a thorough panning, or simply for the reader's further thought on subjects prompted by what he has just read. There are also books that, entirely irrespective of whether one has enjoyed them or not, make no such immediate demands. One can quite happily lay them aside as soon as read, and turn to other things. One of the handicaps of accepting books for review is that one has to quickly find something to say about this latter category as well as about the former. And Shield is just such a book.

I could, I suppose, review it to my present entire satisfaction in one short sentence; "This book is well worth reading." That would, indeed, be the easy way out. However, I gather that Something More is expected of me.

Shield, originally (at somewhat shorter length) serialised in two parts in FANTASTIC, is a story of personal adventure in the reasonably near future, with a strong human-interest sub-plot running through it, against a background of scientific (or pseudo-scientific) gimmickry and considerable speculation on the philosophy of government. The human-interest angle is also essentially nothing more than just a gimmick -- which is a pity because I don't like having my emotions tantalised to no particular purpose. It does help to keep the story moving, of course, and I emphasise that it is well worth a read. Very possibly several, the second and subsequent readings concentrating more on the philosophical background than on the foreground.

(BH) Well, one read was more than enough for me. The story began very promisingly -- one man trying to buck City Hall, to say nothing of the NKVD-like police force, known as MS (Military Security), sundry gangster's mobs reminiscent of the Capone-ridden thirties, and -- of course -- the Reds. Admittedly they're Chinese Reds in this instance, which probably proves something, though I don't know what.

But it never really got anywhere. I became more and more exasperated with the "hero", who allows himself to be shoved around to an eventually ridiculous extent, and who hardly ever makes any attempt to do a bit of shoving on his own account. There are several references to "He was fed up to the eyeballs with being pushed around", and one thinks, ah! he's going to cut loose. He doesn't. I didn't mind his starting off as a wide-eyed innocent, fresh in from Mars, but I expected him to have learned a bit of sense, and gained a modicum of savoir-faire, by the end of the book. He doesn't. I lost count of the number of times I wanted to boot him sharply in the rear !

(AM) Taking the book as a whole -- as a basic premise we are asked to accept that there are Martians. This, though its scientific tenability is usually refuted with scorn by those who reckon to know best about such matters, is to my mind justified by the use to which it is put. Alien to each other though they (almost inevitably) be, human and Martian ways of thought are not irreconcilable, and individuals of good will belonging to both races, working together, can achieve jointly more than either race can alone. This suggestion, which definitely appeals is echoed in the general philosophy advocated by Oren Quarles, a character brought on-stage for this specific purpose. A sort of permissive apartheid would, he declares, be the best long-term answer to the world's perennial international troubles.

(BH) Yes -- those Martians. I continually expected them, or the one most frequently mentioned, to be brought into the action of the book -- either to come to Koskinen's eventual rescue (and he's constantly in need of rescue of some sort!), or simply to apply their own brand of logic to the general situation.

No such luck. Mr Anderson succeeded in getting me very interested in the Martians, their way of life, and their (mental) co-operation with humans, and then failed to satisfy the curiosity engendered by this process. Which, I think, is a dirty trick !

(AM) A number of alternative systems to the one explained by Oren Quarles are paraded before us, but they all come ready-provided with built-in weaknesses that will show up sooner or later. And, no doubt, the "Quarles" philosophy contains equally demonstratable defects -- unfortunately. The only defective argument that I can pinpoint right now occurs early in the book -- P. 37. -- and concerns one facet of the then-existent social order. "The police", we are told, "who had enough to do elsewhere, seldom interfered unless things got completely flagrant, and sometimes not then. Any social order was better than none, and crater barons did impose a structure of sorts on the slums." Somebody ought to tell Poul Anderson that the Law of Natural Abhorrence of Vacuity applies socially as well as physically. Somebody will always be there to give the orders, on one level or another.

(BH) (But I thought that's what the author said...oh well....)

(AM) Since, as I keep saying, Shield is worth reading, I'll stop here. When enough people have read it, then it will make an excellent subject for discussion far into the night.

(BH) At which discussion I shall be conspicuous by my absence. I'll be very interested to see what Anderson fans think of Shield. I'm by no means anti-Anderson, but personally, I think he's come a cropper with this one. And I agree with Archie about the human-interest angle coming unstuck, too. Vivienne is a much more worthwhile human being than Koskinen -- courageous, clear-sighted, and quick-thinking. I shudder to think what could happen to him without her -- because she is his real "Shield".

STORMBRINGER : Michael Moorcock. Herbert Jenkins, 1965. 192Pp. 12/6.

(AM) A short parody on this work I once wrote, which appeared in LES SPINGE, was generally misunderstood. This is quite fair, however, because Michael Moorcock's "Elric" saga is equally generally misunderstood. My parody sought to compare the central "Law v. Chaos" conflict with a war to the death between men and women -- but it seems to have been taken by most readers for a simple sexual fantasy -- which was not what I intended. And the "Elric" saga -- of which Stormbringer is the second half -- seems to be commonly taken as nothing more than a somewhat "different" sword-and-sorcery epic. And this, I gather, is not what Michael Moorcock intended, either. The setting is as swordly and sorcerous as they come, -- but the setting is a mere vehicle for the overtones or undertones which are supposed to carry the book's real message.

One difficulty which the reviewer experiences with this book is that, as mentioned above, it is in fact only half of the whole "Elric" saga, -- and leans heavily on the first half (The Stealer Of Souls: Michael Moorcock, Neville Spearman, 15/-). I originally read the whole thing piecemeal as it appeared in SCIENCE FANTASY, but re-reading the second volume I continually felt the need for a refresher course in the first. This was not helped by some patches of clumsy cobbling whereby the author attempted somewhat long-windedly to put the reader completely in the picture.

(BH) I read Stormbringer shortly after meeting its author for the first time at the Easter Convention. It was, therefore, intriguing to compare the character of "Elric" with that of his creator, since, it is said, most authors write something of themselves into their "heroes".

I would hesitate to attempt an analysis of anyone's character on the strength of one meeting, especially in the weird and wonderful atmosphere of a Con. And certainly not of a character as complex as that of Mr Moorcock. However, I did form some tentative conclusions, which provided an unexpected bonus of interest when reading this book.

I have not read The Stealer Of Souls, and I'm not sure if this is a disadvantage or not. I didn't feel that I was missing anything. The idea of the Age Of Chaos being peopled is (to me) a novel one, and I find it appealing. A human being is, after all, a microcosmic world in which Law and Chaos are in frequent conflict, on all planes -- physical, mental and emotional. This conflict in Elric is skilfully portrayed, etched against the background of the greater racial and planetary strife.

(AM) What is the message that Mr Moorcock has for us ? I'm somewhat chary of attempting to read more into a story than I can see for myself, but I can suggest a few pointers. Elric is a survivor of an elder, just-barely-human super-race that had ruled the world for some ten thousand years -- the Bright Empire of Melniboné. This race was the spawn of Chaos -- Elric however, although he was unable entirely to ignore the chaotic elements in his heredity, had leanings towards the side of Law, and became a key figure in the conflict. The two sides of Elric's nature can be taken as broadly symbolic of two similar sides which the reader may discern in his own nature. Then Elric, being an albino, was physically feeble, drawing his strength from an external source, -- the sword Stormbringer. This in turn drew its strength from the souls of those it slew. Now it may be noted that when a person seems to derive strength from an external source, it is in fact merely a psychological externalisation of that person's hidden inner reserves. Thus the runesword itself basically evil though utilised in aid of the good, may be compared to the

reader's own subconsciousness. That, probably, has merely scratched the surface of the book's symbolism -- and may possibly be off the track altogether.

(BH) I don't think so -- I tend to agree with that analysis. There is also an analogy to be drawn between certain descriptive passages in the book, and the possible results of a nuclear war. The random activities of Chaos produce strange, unearthly landscapes, and pitiful, mutated creatures with little semblance of their original humanity. Obviously, part of the message is intended to be in warning vein.



(AM) There is a considerable amount of good, vivid writing present, and some really scrumptious nomenclature -- the Isle of the Purple Towns, Karlaak by the Weeping Waste, Sequaloris -- all place-names, these -- Elric's companion, Moonglum, Flamefang the Dragon, and others of their ilk. So far as plot is concerned however, one must needs be satisfied with the outline of Elric's personal history and significance. As the forces of Law come slowly and belatedly to grips with the forces of Chaos, one is vouchsaked glimpses into other planes of existence that have varying degrees of control over this one -- and over each other, as far as the eye can see. The result is a succession of gods and devils from the machine-- a fault endemic in sword-and-sorcery fiction, of course. The motivations of the characters are thus unconvincing -- Elric does such-and-such because a Being has told him he must, and some other Being fails to prevent him because some third Being has told him to let Elric do it. All too often, if one wonders why Elric does such-and-such a thing, the best answer that comes to mind is: because Moorcock says so. I know that he's telling the story -- but beyond a certain point a story can seem hardly worth the telling, and time again in Stormbringer that point is reached and crossed.

(BH) But Archie, -- if Law and Chaos are inherent in the human character, then these "gods and devils" are, surely, similarly inherent? The "Ying and Yang" aspects of all of us?

(AM) Did you say "inherent" or "incoherent"? Your line of argument seems to be suggesting that there's sufficient in the subconscious, by itself, to cause anybody to do anything. If this is the case, then it's difficult to see any point in ever looking for a rational motivation anywhere.

(BH) That isn't what I meant, exactly.

(AM) Towards the end of the book, the author suddenly becomes delightfully inventive, and throws in an episode that relates the story more nearly to the present day. The motivation for this episode is standard -- Elric does what he does because he's been told to, and everything duly happens as predicted. But all at once the book is lifted momentarily out of its rut. The end is by then in sight, however, and so we say farewell to the world Elric knew.

To sum up my feelings in the matter: I found the separate instalments readable when they first appeared, and although I wouldn't have gone out of my way to re-read any of them, I was surprised to find that they were easy to re-read in novel form. Nevertheless I still have no desire to add the book to my permanent collection.

(BH) For my part, I must admit that I approached this book with some caution. Mike Moorcock claims to understand the obscure symbolism of J.G. Ballard, and I feared that Stormbringer might present some parallel and equally obscure (to me) material. I was, therefore, pleasantly surprised. I read it at one sitting, which I don't do nowadays unless a book is sufficiently interesting to absorb my entire attention. In addition to a strangely compelling central character, the story has colour and vigour and is consistent in a peculiarly logical way.

BEST SF STORIES OF JAMES BLISH Faber & Faber 18/- . 224 Pp.

The trouble with titling a book "Best stories of so-and-so" is that it implies that the rest of that author's fiction is not up to his best. The seven stories in this collection have been selected by the author himself in consultation with one Charles Monteith, publisher's editor, and are perhaps as definitive a "top seven" as can be assembled. Nevertheless, the concept of "best" is so subjective that it can be highly misleading. Although these stories are all good, they are not

necessarily everybody's meat, and somebody entirely new to the field who accepts them as representing Blish's absolute best, and doesn't much care for them, may never know what magnificent Blish-material (such as Jack Of Eagles and the Okie saga) he is thereby likely to miss.

The book's title is further misleading in that the first and longest story, the 59-page "There Shall Be No Darkness" is not science fiction at all, but is out and out fantasy. It does try to pretend to be science-fictional, but the pretence is so feeble that it is of no effect. The story is gripping, nevertheless, with a kind of agonised compassion running through the horror. And the ending poses a question which only the reader can answer. (This story appeared formerly in the collections WITCHES THREE and VULTURE STEW).

2. "Surface Tension" (47Pp) is one of the "Seedling Stars" series -- not an interdependant, chronologically-linked series, but a set of variations on a theme. Blish himself says of "Surface Tension" : "To my considerable bafflement, this is the most popular story I have ever written." It describes possibly the most outre attempt to "travel into space" yet conceived. The build-up to the mammoth effort made by the would-be astronauts is entirely logical and consistent, and despite a certain failure in individual characterisation, the story reaches a conclusion that is both satisfying in itself, and inclined to make one think from a new angle about our present efforts to explore space.

3. "Testament Of Andros" (24Pp) is a quietly frightening story, the effectiveness of which is largely nullified by the author's own prefatory blurb in which he explains in advance precisely what it's supposed to be about.

4. "Common Time" (23Pp) is a memorable story of the subjective experiences of a lone man trying to blaze a trail to Alpha Centauri - a trail which has already claimed two men and their ships. As with other stories written by Mr Blish, this one injects questions into the reader's mind, and leaves it to him to provide answers. This process could prove very irritating, but in this instance it doesn't -- it merely stimulates imaginative conjecture.

5. "A Work Of Art" (18Pp) has one of the most arresting and memorable opening sentences either of us has ever read : "Instantly he remembered dying". And, equally instantly, the reader's attention and curiosity are captured. The mind and psyche of Richard Strauss are "reactivated" and implanted in the body of a 22nd-century man, 212 years after Strauss's "first" death. The question here concerns the creativity of past genius -- does it have true immortality, and would a 20th-century composer have anything of value to offer the half-sophisticated, half-debased minds of the 22nd century ? "Herr Strauss" makes a shattering discovery, and because of it the (almost inevitable) conclusion is not, as one feared, coldly cruel, but rather a kindly relief.

(Personal note by AM. It so happens that Blish picks on the one "name" composer -- apart from the way-out brigade-- to whose music I am so indifferent that I am unable to memorise a single bar from what I've heard in my time. The story therefore, fails to involve me as emotionally as is presumably intended. This I find rather a pity, because I normally like stories with a musical background. )

6. "Tomb Tapper" is cruel, and one shares the "fuming cauldron of pity and grief" experienced by its main characters. Mr Blish says: "The question ...is not 'Can such things be?' but, 'If they can, then how shall we live with ourselves?'" The reason for the pity and grief is the point of the story, and cannot be detailed -- but one fervently hopes that humanity could never sink as low as this.

7. "The Oath" (12pp) is a little story packing a big philosophical wallop. In the opinion of one AM, it is easily the best story in the book. (BH prefers "Common Time".) In effect, we are asked "when is a doctor not a doctor?" This leads smoothly to, "and when is a not-doctor ethically a better servant of humanity than is the doctor?" The two leading characters are almost painfully honest with themselves, and with each other, and whether one agrees or not with their final decisions, the whole thing is extremely thought-provoking.

(AM) And there you are, seven stories, all penned by a master hand, ranging in length from 18 pages to 59, each with a short introduction. James Blish is an author who can write simultaneously on more than one level, and frequently does. In stories of this average length, the deeper levels can and do contain relatively more meat than does the superficial story-telling level. To that extent, I prefer Blish's longer works to these comparative squibs, however brilliant.

(BH) While agreeing with the above remarks, I cannot derive maximum enjoyment and interest from a full-length novel unless I can read it at one sitting. With the very limited free time at my disposal these days, this is (to my regret), rarely possible. For this reason, I find that the short story or novelette seems more "tailor-made" to my reading capacity.

THE JOYOUS INVASIONS : Theodore Sturgeon. Gollancz 1965, 208 pp, 16/-.

This is a thrown-together volume comprising three longish stories dating from the middle-to-late 'fifties. There is no connection between the three except that they are all by the same hand and of the same general period -- and all are worth a read.

I have never, I'm glad to say, been bitten by the collecting bug, says Beryl, but if I were, I'm sure that Theodore Sturgeon's writings would stand very high on my list. I had read the first and third of these stories before; nevertheless I happily read this book from beginning to end for the sheer pleasure and admiration induced by the author's matchless literary skill. And Archie more or less echoes these sentiments.

"To Marry Medusa" (69 pages), shows us a number of characters doing different things in various locations -- and then gradually ties them together. The process is slightly frustrating, because Sturgeon seems to spend too much time following the more repulsive characters, and too little following the really fascinating ones. Part of his message, of course, is that the most repulsive character breathing is people, too. Nevertheless we'd have preferred to see more of such people as Dmitry Carmichael.

There is a saying among journalists: "Happiness is rarely news." The down-beat side of life is featured much more prominently in newspapers than is the sunny side. "Grief an' misery, pains an' woes, debts and taxes" -- these seem to take precedence over the simple pleasures and kindly acts of life. This type of reporting, is, of course, merely obeying the law of supply and demand; if the general public did not wish to pander to its morbid, ghoulish streak by reading of such things, newspapers would not be sold in such vast daily numbers. Perhaps Sturgeon is also appealing to that streak by putting his emphasis on unsavoury characters like Gurlick. But, in a beautiful (if slightly obscure) paragraph which ends in near-poetry that is uniquely Sturgeon, he makes it clear that his characters -- apart from Gurlick, who is the story's pivot, -- are culled at random from all humanity.

(P.48) "There is a place in this narrative for all those close enough to each of us to be called You, and for that far more limited and select company (for many can call a man You), the privileged who are entitled to call themselves "I" (so few may do this, no two the same). Peon, peasant, fellahin, jibaro, mass-men with their hard hands; matador, mariner, apothecary, salesman, tilt-tongued with the special cants, canted each one to a special askew; this is their tale too."

When all these people are finally tied together, humanity promptly moves on to another volume. The possibilities are certainly thought-provoking, -- but the thoughts that they provoke in me, says Archie, are more nightmarish than otherwise. To strive constantly for progress is one thing -- to be handed perfection on a plate, for ever and ever amen, is something very much else. As Sturgeon sees it, stagnation is not involved -- or if it is, then (given perfection) who cares? As I see it, though, once humanity develops beyond a certain point it ceases to be me. "Childhood's End" struck me the same way.

Yes, agrees Beryl, the lightning metamorphosis of humanity is presented a little too casually here. Surely some minds would have cracked irreparably under such a sudden flood of total knowledge and awareness. And in spite of a logical explanation -- "you do not reward a catalyst by changing it, the unchanging, into something else," -- one cannot help feeling that Gurlick deserved better of his debtors.

"The Comedian's Children" (48 pages) is, despite the book's title, neither joyous nor an invasion. It is essentially a character study, but from the outside, not from the inside. The other characters are kept firmly out of the way in this interest. Sturgeon really has a ball with this one -- he skilfully plays ducks and drakes with most of the characters and also with the reader. This could be annoying; it might, indeed, provoke some readers to mutter, "Make up your mind, can't you!" -- but, as perpetrated by Sturgeon, it is powerfully intriguing. The villain's come-uppance couldn't be more fitting. As his particular Nemesis obviously knows, there is more than one way of being dead.

Ostensibly, the story ends on an upbeat note -- there remain uncomfortable echoes. Could such a situation as the author describes come about? Lots of people would say "yes" -- would be surprised, in fact, that it hasn't already.

"The (Widget), The (Wadget), and Boff" (87 pages) is the earliest of the three stories, and, we agree, very much the best of them. Again the story flits from character to character at the author's whim -- but the link between them all is made manifest right from the beginning. They all inhabit one lodging-house, and most of them are badly in need of a bit of sympathetic sorting-out. They get it -- and in the process one experiences a Sturgeon's-eye view of a number of human institutions.

One also sees how childhood "conditioning", inflicted by well-meaning elders may be painlessly dissolved simply by asking questions. Special questions, of course, -- the kind of deceptively-simple-but-loaded questions which induce the subject under interrogation to probe deeply into his/her own motives, reactions and attitudes.

This fascinating story ends with a small boy's tears; it is, nevertheless, a happy and eminently satisfactory conclusion. We think the author could without too much difficulty have come up with a better story-title, though.

For sheer writing expertise, Sturgeon is hard to beat or even match; this collection is accordingly recommended.



TELEPATHIST : John Brunner. Faber & Faber, 18s. 239 pp.

Certain psi stories represent telepaths as being in danger from the "normals", forced to hide, and in constant fear of pogroms. Slan is probably the best example of this; there is also Russell's Three To Conquer, and Kuttner's Mutant. Other authors show the gifted ones as accepted by the rest of humanity, even if with some resentment and envy, and allowed to use their powers for the common good. Bester's brilliant Demolished Man is a good example.

Telepathist isn't another Demolished Man, but it has certain similarities, in that Mr Brunner's psi-folk are trained to use their powers psychiatrically, for curative purposes. The central character is Gerald Howson, whose life and career are followed from birth. The process is perceptive, showing as it does the slow flowering of a child, orphaned, unwanted, ugly, deformed, into one of the world's greatest curative telepathists.

On strictly medical grounds, Mr Brunner appears to be a bit shaky. Howson's muscles ache when he walks, for instance. Inasmuch as muscles only normally ache when they're doing unfamiliar work, this seems surprising -- be he never so misshapen, Howson has been walking all his life, and one would have supposed that by this time his muscles would have been as used to walking as anyone else's. Then there's a deaf and dumb girl who differs from the usual run of deaf-mutes in being separately deaf and dumb. There is nothing wrong with the vocal apparatus of the typical deaf-mute -- it's just that people learn to talk by listening to other people, a facility which the congenitally deaf person is unable to share. There is, of course, no reason why defective hearing and defective speech should not be present in the same individual -- but the odds against these two defects and no others being simultaneously present must be pretty high. There is, furthermore, no particular plot-necessity for the girl to be vocally deformed as well as congenitally deaf. It looks as if the author doesn't realise what a highly unusual person he's actually called into being.

However much John Brunner may or may not be at home when dealing with the human body though, this book is primarily concerned with the mind -- and the mind is something he does know something about. There are two separate aspects of this blended together -- the general possibilities inherent in telepathy itself, and the particular mental stresses and strains imposed on Howson by his awkward body and -- perhaps even more -- by the reactions of other people thereto. It takes a very detached type of mind to encounter such a person for the first time without even a momentary pang of either disgust or of pity -- or both -- and if the repulsive-pitiable one is himself a telepath, he can be expected to feel it manifold.

Howson's co-operation with his teachers is thus difficult to achieve; he is cocooned in his own bitterness, for despite the tremendous advances in medicine and surgery, he is fated to remain a prisoner of his twisted body. The chapter in which he finally reveals the extent of his power, and the manner in which he is persuaded to do this, is both moving and tensely dramatic.

Through near-tragedy and fearful mental dangers, the story moves to an ending full of hope and promise. One cannot help but feel that Dr Howson has earned this.

The book under its Ballantine title of The Whole Man has been nominated for the Hugo Award for the Year's Best Novel.

THE THIRST QUENCHERS: Rick Raphael. Gollancz 1965, 175 Pp. 16/-

Four stories, three originally from Analog, the fourth and last apparently original with this collection.

(BH) The title story is set on a future Earth which is dangerously short of water. It's a straight-forward action story of near-disaster, and the last-minute aversion of same by two Clean-Cut Young Heroes. Nothing very startling, but written in a relaxed style, following logical plot-rules which tie in all the loose ends neatly, and make for easy reading. Like, "it begins at the beginning, goes on to the end, then stops."

2 "Guttersnipe" This is based on the same theme as the first story, -- planetary water-shortage -- and has virtually the same plot, even including the two C-C.Y. Heroes. Not the same two though.

(AM) "Easy reading," she says. Personally I'd have found it a lot easier not to read either of the above stories. Which only goes to prove that subterranean water-engineering can be boring in the extreme. The identical pairs of identical colleagues are cut from the lowest grade of cardboard available. I assume that there are two in each case simply so that the author can use dialogue. But since the characters do not live, neither does their dialogue. The situations with which they are faced have possibilities, but there are flaws, even so. In the first story, for instance, the water shortage is so acute that the snowfields are sprayed to prevent evaporation before the thaw. Yet nowhere in it is there any mention of the obvious source of unlimited water supplies, -- the sea.

And when our heroes get to work and good-naturedly set everything to rights again, I find it difficult, if not downright impossible, -- to follow what they're doing. They mess around with lasers and things to (It Says Here) good effect, -- but for all it means to me, they might just as well be making mystic passes in the air with their hands. If I hadn't been duty-bound to read this book, I doubt if I'd have bothered to finish the first story, let alone start any of the others.

3. (BH) "The Mailman Cometh". Frankly, I thought this one was pretty terrible. Two young heroes again, but this time far from "clean-cut" Too far for credibility, in fact. Then, literally out of nowhere, arrives the Gorgeous Sample of Feminine Pulchritude, complete with brief shorts, halter, long, lightly-tanned legs, and red hair. The men's reaction to this improbable creature is wildly overdone. It soon becomes obvious that Miss O'Reilly must be something more than a luscious bit of space-flotsam, and sure enough she turns out to be Authority-in-Disguis. (I'm not giving anything



away -- a girl as unnaturally self-possessed as this one never turns up in a story simply for decorative effect! ) She also appears to have many of the attributes of Supergirl, Florence Nightingale, and The Lady Who Sailed The Soul. In other words, she's just Not True! The yarn creaks along through a series of maddening cliches and juvenile exclamations to a boringly predictable ending. It's too silly to be even vaguely amusing, and goodness knows it's far from difficult to make me laugh.

(AM) Possibly the fact that it came as a welcome surprise after the excruciating boredom of the first two stories made me look on this one with a particular favour -- but I enjoyed it. It's the only story in the book that I'm glad I've read -- and the only one I'd ever feel the desire to read again. Granted that there's nothing wildly original about it, and the course of events is more or less predictable. Granted also that it contains the further implausibility that it's unnecessary. The plot hinges on the fact that a two-man team has to stand a complete year's tour of duty aboard a mail-sorting satellite without any relief or off-station leave whatsoever. However, when things go wrong, a relief rocket arrives from the nearest planet in a matter of hours, so this isolation seems ridiculously prolonged. Obviously, therefore, the story could stand a lot of improvement, But I still like it as it is.

The secret, I think, is that I took to the characters right away. As distinct from the impossibly Clean-Cut protagonists of the first two stories, they live. Liking the characters, I then laughed at their antics -- because it was fun to be with them, and the enjoyment was contagious.

And it is difficult to make me laugh.

4.(BH) "Odd Man In" This is not SF, nor is it fantasy, however loosely you apply these definitions. It's simply futuristic, and perhaps not all that far ahead, either. But it's a story which more than compensates for its unfortunate predecessor. The somewhat hackneyed plot line is so well-well handled that the reader forgets that it is hackneyed. Basically, it's a simple story of one man, a living anachronism, who sets himself up against the mighty juggernaut of Government.

(AM) Oh no it's not. It's a simple story of a mighty juggernaut of Government which sets itself up against one man. And -- since this is a story -- guess who wins !

(BH) It's difficult to define just why this story has such a strong appeal, but I think it lies mainly in the delineation of its characters. Or is it that most people inevitably respond to the indefinable magic of a 'Western' ? For this is a sort-of Western, -- the pioneering past of America superimposed upon a logical extrapolation of present population trends.

The "Goodies" are perhaps just a little too good to be true, and the "Baddies" exhibit rather more dull-wittedness and Blimpishness than might reasonably be expected, even of petty bureaucrats -- but no matter. Even the predictable ending is so adroitly presented that one is conscious of nothing but glowing satisfaction that "things have turned out All Right".

(AM) I'll grant that this story failed to bore me, which is a point in its favour. But it's very much of a lightweight nevertheless, and not a patch on "The Mailman Cometh." And even "The Mailman Cometh" is not sufficient justification for this book.

(BH) None of these stories makes any heavy demand on the reader's intellectual equipment, there is neither symbolism nor mystery here. Indeed, they may be dismissed by some as lightweight, even trite, but although "Odd Man In" may be included in this summation, it, at least, is well worth reading, if only for mental relaxation.

EARTHMAN, GO OKIE.

by ARCHIE MERCER.

A Survey Of James Blish's "Cities In Flight" Series, re-issued by Faber & Faber Ltd.

THEY SHALL HAVE STARS	Faber 1965, 18/-
A LIFE FOR THE STARS	Faber 1965, 15/-
EARTHMAN COME HOME	Faber 1965, 18/-
A CLASH OF CYMBALS	Faber 1965, 18/-

As Senses Of Wonder go, mine all too often doesn't even start. The thought of a human being --- or a whole platoon of human beings --- orbiting the Earth does nothing to it. I simply don't want to orbit the Earth. Even the thought of a man landing on the Moon raises hardly a murmur out of it. I have no particular desire to land on the Moon, either.

But the prospect of an entire city taking off as a corporate entity and cruising the galaxy as a boat might cruise the oceans of Earth is something else again, and in particular, James Blish's stories about the "Okie" cities have always contrived to give my sense of wonder a really powerful boost.

The series first hit the reading public with the April 1950 issue of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION, in the form of the original novelette, "Okie". The word derives from Oklahoma, one of the American mid-western states that suffered badly from the dust-bowl troubles of the nineteen-thirties. Many small farmers, their livelihood suddenly swallowed up by the dust-bowl, found themselves obliged to take to the roads in search of work, and an "Okie" came to mean an itinerant work-seeker. James Blish used this as an analogy for his flying cities, which he visualised as odd-jobbing their way from star-cluster to star-cluster, usually keeping within the law, when it wasn't wildly inconvenient, much in the manner of the dispossessed mid-westerners of yore.

The novelette "Bindlestiff", a direct sequel, followed in the December, 1950 U.S. issue of the same magazine. "Bindlestiff" is a word from the vocabulary of American itinerance, meaning a hobo who steals the "bindle" (bundle) of another, and thus makes himself doubly an outcast.

The next story in the series to appear -- also in the U.S. Astounding, in the February 1952 issue, - did not continue the narrative directly, but harked back to the early days of space-flight, before cities as such had been enabled directly to participate. Called "Bridge", it dealt with the most colossal engineering project in human history at that time, the construction of what was ( for want of a better word ) referred to as a "bridge" on the surface of Jupiter. Useless in itself, this "bridge" nevertheless vitally affected the subsequent course of galactic history.

It was another year before any more of the saga appeared, and with it a return to the main narrative. This third story of the flying cities bore the resounding title of "Sargasso Of Lost Cities", and appeared, for no obvious reason, not in Astounding, but in TWO COMPLETE SCIENCE ADVENTURE BOOKS, for the Spring of 1953. This was the longest episode - of short novel length - in the series so far, and was incidentally the one that first brought the saga into my field of vision.



Although the title taken by itself could well be worse, it has always seemed to me that one more keeping with its predecessors would have been "Jungle", referring to the traditional piece of waste ground adjacent to a town, where hoboes were wont to camp. Still, I suppose, different magazines follow different conventions in such matters.

Anyway, when the series returned to ASTOUNDING for the November 1953 U.S. issue, the title chosen for the episode that rounded off the main narrative carried an entirely different mood from that of any of its predecessors, being, "Earthman, Come Home".

In 1955, the same title, "Earthman Come Home" was used for the Putnam book which comprised the four stories (Bridge being omitted) more or less as they stood. This was followed a year later by British publication (from Faber) of "They Shall Have Stars", a novel based on "Bridge", which later saw American PB publication from Avon under the much weaker title of "Year 2018". This book

also contained a large amount of material expanded from the novelette "At Death's End", published in ASTOUNDING in the May 1954 issue. According to the author's own account, these two volumes were intended to form the two halves of a complete work under the general title of "Cities In Flight". However, he was reckoning without his own runaway mind, -- for there was still as much again to come. In 1958 appeared "The Triumph Of Time", another Avon PB. Once again the Americans were obliged to suffer the weaker title (albeit the one that the author claims to prefer), for Faber published the book in Britain as "A Clash Of Cymbals". This dealt with the further adventures of the protagonist-city of "Earthman Come Home". And finally -- so far at least -- some of that city's previous adventures were chronicled in "A Life For The Stars". This was serialised in ANALOG (US Edition) for September-October 1962, and was then published in the USA by Putnam's and in Britain by Faber. "A Life For The Stars" is specifically juvenile-slanted, but is still a relevant contribution to the whole.

The historical framework around which the series is constructed is as follows. The cold war of the mid-20th Century led (in the interests of "security") to an ever-increasing degree of authoritarian government in the West and (specifically) in the United States. This continued until Western life was virtually indistinguishable from that under the communist regimes of the East. Beneath this monstrous security blanket, a number of research projects that under accountable

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1.(Editor) Rather a good pun this, since the theme of the book is -- A Clash Of Symbols. Some bookshops listed the title in this manner, unintentionally, I'm sure.



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recognised the importance of this activity, and encouraged it, but they insisted in return that the Okies should obey Earth law in their dealings with the colonists. A city might fall on hard times, and sooner or later most of them did, in which case it became necessary to cut a few legal corners simply in order for the city to survive as an entity. Thus most cities gradually acquired a long "violations docket" and it became more and more important to keep out of the police's way. The ultimate penalty was "breaking up", which remains the more awful for its never being fully described.

The end of the Okie era was brought about by the sudden collapse of the germanium standard. An attempt to replace it by a "drug standard" failed to meet with much success owing to the drugs being too intrinsically valuable to be used as mere money. The Okies found themselves all of a sudden impoverished by circumstances beyond their immediate control. They fought back as best they might, destroying in the process an attempted resurgence of the Vegan Tyranny, (the notorious orbital fort), but at this point a mysterious culture called "The Web Of Hercules" (styled by Acreff-Monales, "The Milky Way's fourth great civilisation" ) took over the Galaxy.

The final volume of the tetralogy, --- "A Clash Of Cymbals" aka "The Triumph Of Time" --- is concerned with a broader spacio-temporal canvas. Matter and anti-matter, it was discovered, were cyclic, and in the near future their interaction would make a fresh start. Both "The Web Of Hercules" and some Okies who had settled beyond the Galaxy were involved in attempts to do something about it. Precisely what happened then is none too clear - for just one thing, the concept of time coming to a stop becomes meaningless when expressed ( as it is) in terms of time itself. "After the end of time seems to lack a certain validity.

It is suggested that each of certain principal characters who penetrated to the heart of the continuum just prior to the cataclysm would be the basis of an entirely fresh and individual continuum. The only continuum that is actually followed past that point, however, (and that only between the lines) is that of "The Web Of Hercules", which contrives to have a continuing history despite all. The chronicler Acreff-Monales, excerpts from whose work "The Milky Way: Five Cultural Portraits" are utilised to help link the series together, would appear to belong to the fifth of such cultures. "The Web Of Hercules" which somehow spanned the gap, he lists as being the fourth such. Terran humanity would presumably then be the third, and the Vegan Tyranny-civilisation the second. The identity of the first is nowhere mentioned.

With the exception of the chronological first of the four volumes, ("They Shall Have Stars/ Year 2018), the series is actually the saga of the City of New York. The "New York" in question does not comprise the whole municipal area as the term is now understood, being limited to the present Manhattan Island which continues - as, historically, it is entirely justified in doing - to call itself "New York". What became of the other four New York boroughs is never made explicit, though one tends to presume that each one went independantly Okie under its own name.

On the whole, throughout the series, characterisation is subordinated to theme. None of the first volume's characters survive into the second. The second volume ("A Life For The Stars") has, besides its young protagonist, only a supporting cast. This does include a closer look at one character, (Sgt. Anderson) who subsequently plays a minor role in "Earthman Come Home", the third volume. This and "A Clash Of Cymbals" which completes the set are dominated by the threesome of John Amalfi, Mark Hazleton, and the latter's wife, Dee, and though a couple of appealing youngsters do manage to break briefly into comparative prominence towards the end it is with that threesome that the bulk of the character-interest lies.

The relationship between Amalfi, Mayor of New York, and Hazleton, his City Manager, is a complex one, involving as it does the co-existent levels of their personalities and of their jobs. The job-relationship in particular I find fascinating in its intricacy. It has in it something of the relationship between a commander and his immediate deputy, something of that between a commanding officer and his adjutant, and again something of that between a British mayor and his town clerk, and is yet directly analogous to none of these. Essentially, the mayor decides where the city is to go next and what to do when it gets there, whilst the City Manager sees that the wheels of administration continue to turn the while --- but that is a gross over-simplification, the two jobs being highly interpenetrative in nature.

A further level of complication is provided by the City Fathers, a linked assemblage of 134 computers which have access to all knowledge which the city has ever acquired throughout its wanderings. The City Fathers are possibly the most fascinating concept involved in the series, except for the central postulate of flying cities itself. Although they are nominally subordinate to the mayor, they have in times of emergency over-riding authority-- unless somebody can turn them off, fast --- and there is an authenticated case on record of their ordering a city manager to be shot. (The sentence seems duly to have been carried out). Furthermore they constitute the entire municipal electorate, mayor and city manager being appointed or dismissed as they in their wisdom may decide. Besides being responsible for such high matters of state, they handle an untold variety of civic matters from simple piloting to garbage disposal.

This threefold division of responsibility between mayor, city manager and City Fathers is thus an elaborate jigsaw indeed. The various facets of it were doubtless improvised by the author on an ad hoc basis as he gradually built up the picture. Although this tends to produce certain illogicalities, the realism suffers not a whit because this is precisely how divisions of responsibility occur in real life.

Although definitely a plurality, the City Fathers are accustomed to acting as a unit. Only two specimens of the 134 are ever referred to individually - the librarian and the "treacher". The librarian's function is self-explanatory, whilst the "treacher", however etymologically justified its title may be, is responsible for personalised catering. Mention is also made of "Communications", but this, though connected to the City Fathers, does not seem to rank as one of their number, being merely the handmaiden of all.

One aspect of New York Okie life that may be remarked upon is the entire absence of civic opposition to the establishment. The conversion of the city from a limited democracy to a limited cybernarchy accounts for the absence of a human opposition in the council chamber, of course, the City Fathers themselves providing more than adequate "opposition" to keep the two executives on their toes, but nevertheless it does seem a bit odd that several million New Yorkers should be so entirely contented with whatever status to which it pleases the City Fathers to call them - and they immortal at that. No doubt the matter can be adequately accounted for -- I simply thought to mention it in passing.

The way in which the saga has been patched together piecemeal, being as it were conceived and written spirally from the centre outwards, is also responsible for a good many inconsistencies in the narrative. I am not concerned with apparent inconsistencies in motivations: to my mind the mere ability of cities to fly



through space is itself entirely adequate motivation for everything that Blish has them do when they get there. What I am concerned about are contradictions of detail. These have existed almost from the first - in the original magazine publication, "Sargasso" ended with New York emigrating to the Lesser Magellanic Cloud, whilst the novelette "Earthman Come Home", its direct sequel, started with its landing in the Greater ditto. This discrepancy was corrected for book publication, and various subsequently-observed discrepancies have since been corrected in later editions of the various books. I do not have the text of all the very latest editions, and there may well have been still further adjustments.

This element of inconsistency, however, I do find somewhat unfortunate- the aspect of the series that it would be best off without. Not merely do the discrepancies themselves tend to irk, but so does the consequent existence of variant texts as the author gradually tries to catch up on his misdeeds. This is perhaps a surprising reaction from an sf fan well used to stories dealing with alternate lines of probability - but if such alternate lines there are to be, I would rather they were stated explicitly and not simply papered over and hushed up.

I should like to list a few such discrepancies - but I would point out that since my latest source for the "Earthman" novel is the British SFBC edition of 1956, for "A Life" the Faber edition of 1964, and for the remaining two the uniform Faber editions of 1965, the number of ultimate discrepancies may well have gone down and the number of textual variants have gone correspondingly up.

In "A Life" it is stated that Russian was "the now dead Universal Language of Deep Space." How this situation came about, in the light of the Russian/Eastern disinterest in, and one-time suppression of, space-flight remains far from clear.

In the third ("Sargasso") episode of "Earthman", Carrel, the City Manager, is stated to have no talents as a pilot, and it is therefore proposed that the pilotage of the city be split off from the City Manager's department, and given to another man who happens to be particularly good at it. In the final volume however the record has been wiped clean of the man in question (a certain O'Brian), his exploits being now credited to Carrel.

In "A Life", Sgt Anderson is in charge of the City's perimeter police, and Sgt. Dulany of a parallel squad which is responsible for boarding- and landing- parties. In "Earthman", boarding and landing are the functions of Anderson's perimeter police, Dulany being the name of one of Anderson's subordinates who is brought on-stage only to be killed in the line of duty. Also, Anderson is important enough to take his orders direct from the mayor. In the chronologically earlier (though later-written) book, Amalfi addresses him by his given name of "Joel". In "Earthman" though, he has regressed to addressing him simply by his surname.

In the "Sargasso" episode of "Earthman", the Vegan orbital fort is stated to be a genuine survivor of the original Vegan Tyranny which had "gone Okie" - the only non-human entity so to do. In Acreff-Monald's prologue to "Cymbals" however, it is stated to be of later construction by a "lost" Vegan colony.

According to the chronology appended to the beginning of "They Shall Have Stars", Hazleton was borne in space. According to "A Life", New York first went Okie with the mayor (still Amalfi) in sole command, and when he eventually met up with a city that had a city manager the post was a new one to him. Yet elsewhere, (the reference eludes me) it is stated that Hazleton had been city manager ever since New York left the lower reaches of the Hudson River.

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3. In 1965, this now seems one of the more unlikely of Blish's postulates.

And incidentally, the whole saga would have been somewhat neater if only things could have been arranged so that the young protagonist of "A Life" had been Hazleton rather than Crispin deFord.)

Annoying as these matters are, they pale every time into insignificance beside the positive glories with which the saga teems. The deadpan way in which the City Fathers elect a city manager for a planet, or a mayor for a galaxy. The Galaxy-wide legend of the orbital fort, the recurrent whispers of the ruthless Okie city, "I.M.T.", which "made the sky fall". (Both of these entities receive their ultimate come-uppance at the hands of, or through the machinations of, Amalfi's New York.) The picture of a Galaxy spanned and pollinated by self-propelled cities straight from the atlas. The perpetually faulty Twenty-Third Street spindizzy, which alone speaks volumes of between-the-lines material on the Okie civilisation.

And what of the future ? The author has brought the history of Okie New York to "close" that appears devoid of meaning and leaves room for a good hefty chunk of explanation, either with or without the pseudo-metaphysical double-talk in which he is clothed the end of space-time as we know it. In addition, there is plenty of scope for further development in the earlier centuries of the chronology. We have seen in considerable detail a number of contrasting planetary cultures and one Okie city, and in somewhat less detail a number of other Okie cities. But Okie-dom was never confined to cities as such. Factories went Okie first, and other assorted locations doubtless followed. Buda-Pesht (sic - though "-Pest" and "-Pesth" are the formally accepted spellings) and Dresden are cities certainly. So, technically, is almost any American municipality - though doubtless Britain contributed her quota of Okie Urban Districts to the roster. Then there might well be acceptable motives for all sorts of things going Okie - Stonehenge, perhaps, the Carlsbad Caverns, the Giant's Causeway, the Alamo, the Taj Mahal. Possibly James Blish, with his known interest in the past and future of Roman Catholic theology, would tell us whether or not the Vatican ever went Okie, either on its own or as an integral part of Rome. And so on.

I like to visualise such a scene as the following. New York, ranging through interstellar space, observes another body approaching on a near-collision course. Amalfi, after hastily ordering course-adjustments to his city, has Communications raise the intruder.

"What City is that?" he growls.

"City be defrosted", retorts the Yeti-face that appears on the screen. "This is the summit of Mount Everest."

And one way or another, I suspect ( and hope ) that there'll be plenty more to come.

Books Received from Publishers, but not reviewed in this issue of ZENITH

The Haunted Stars, Edmond Hamilton, (Herbert Jenkins, 12/6)	
Space Born, Ian Wright, (Herbert Jenkins, 12/6)	
Few Writings In SF 4. ed John Carnell, (Dobson 16/-)	Pyramid, 50¢
The Old Die Rich, H.L.Gold, (Dobson, 18/-)	The Spell Of Seven
Best From F&SF 12th Series, (Gollancz 21/-)	ed L Sprague DeCamp.
Two Tales & Eight Tomorrows, Harry Harrison, (Gollancz 16/-)	(More Sword & Sorcery.)
from Pyramid (50¢ each)	
Space Opera by Jack Vance; Space Lords by Cordwainer Smith: Green Rain, by Paul	
Labori: Tomorrow & Tomorrow, by Hunt Collins: City Under The Sea by Paul W Fairman.	
The Spell Of Seven (ed L Sprague DeCamp) - more Sword & Sorcery.	



# Telepathist

JOHN BRUNNER/Faber

To Gerald Howson, ugly and crippled, looking back on a childhood drab with neglect and looking forward only to an adult life of poverty and misery, the discovery came as a bombshell: *I can read minds!* Yet this was no source of hope to him at first, for he had always viewed the telepathists — those mysterious bearers of a new strange talent — as being, like himself, set apart by their abnormality.

Just how true this was he had yet to learn. Long after the kind guidance of other telepathists had enabled him to become an indispensable member of the psychiatric staff at the great WHO hospital in Ulan Bator, long after the world had ceased to care about his ugly face and dragging leg and learned to respect him for his irreplaceable curative skills, he was haunted by the fear to which only telepathists were prey. The strain of coping with the world might break him, and after that there would be nothing except the fatal drug-like lure of the all-absorbing fantasies a telepathist could become lost in by a simple gesture of resignation.

The voyage of self-discovery which leads him to eventual happiness and security forms the central thread of this story, played out against the fascinating background of a future psychiatry dependent on Howson's power to enter the terrible alien world of an insane mind.

John Brunner has already established a reputation as one of the most imaginative and promising of the younger British science fiction writers; and of the promise *Telepathist* provides full confirmation.

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