



VECTOR

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One of the most intriguing and difficult to answer questions in all history, which will one day have to be faced, is, when the human race eventually reaches the stars, how will it react to a totally alien culture, which it will undoubtedly find there - and vice-versa, of course? From the viewpoint of the twentieth century, the indications aren't exactly optimistic to say the very least. Looking over our shoulders at our own history, it is easy to see the reason why. Great wars have been fought over the most incredible of beliefs, millions of people killed through religious differences, titan civilizations fallen because, as a species, we are almost totally incapable of communicating successfully amongst ourselves. Is there any chance we will act with any greater restraint once we do meet an alien civilization?

A lot depends on what sort of civilization it is we encounter. A high-technological society is probably safe enough; they wouldn't simply sit around if we tried to exploit them in some way. A civilization with a low-order technology might be forgiven for being nervous, however, as has been occasionally shown in a few horrifyingly realistic examples of contemporary SF; namely, the so-called 'first contact' stories.

If anyone wants proof of this they can, for instance, turn to Foul Anderson's *THE HELPING HAND* (Astounding May 1950). Here we have a typical example of human deviousness and naivety. It is clearly apparent from this story that Anderson's beliefs are that low-order technologies will nearly always become the victims of, quite often, unconscious human corruption. The story opens just as a war between two neighbouring worlds, Cundaloo and Skontar, has ended. Both are devastated by it and their respective civilizations are in ruins, but Earth is willing to help both worlds by pouring in fantastic amounts of aid and technical assistance, complete, in the best American manner, with technical advisors. However, only Cundaloo accepts; Skontar, through the foresightedness of one of its politicians, has to bring itself to its feet by its own bootstraps. Meanwhile, however, Earth is rebuilding Cundaloan civilization at a brick rate; but perhaps not all things are as they might be, for, though civilization is certainly being re-built, it is not

along Cundaloan lines or ones that are suited to that particular culture, but in exactly the same manner that Earth gained its own formidable technology. The result is, of course, that in the process of industrialisation, the natives gradually begin to lose their past, their poetic heritage and their customs, in fact, the very fabric of their culture. All that is a 'superfluous' part of their uncivilized past is replaced by the ill-fitting culture of Earth, which doesn't even have the dignity of the real thing, but is just imitation. Eventually they end up as hopeless and undignified parasites on terrestrial tourists - a sad and lost people.

Skontar, meanwhile, has industrialised in its own way; a way that is suited to its civilization. Soon even Earth respects them and their culture, and they have attained pride, freedom, independence and greatness: in short, they have remained what they had always been - themselves.

Here, the unfortunate aliens of Cundaloa were unable to communicate what it was they wanted to the Earthmen, because they didn't really know how to, and the 'helpful' Earthmen carried on in the way they had always been used to, through their very natures unable to recognise the needs of an alien people, little realising that they were trying to force a round peg into a square hole.

A recent novel by Brian Aldiss, THE DARK LIGHT-YEARS, deals with the same sort of theme: of man's probable basic inability to communicate with aliens. It should be required reading for anyone who is interested in this aspect of SF. However, the nice thing about SF is that everyone tries desperately hard to be scrupulously fair and so, quite often, our author's don't let Man have everything quite his own way. In fact, as in Clarke's celebrated novel, CHILDHOOD'S END, and particularly in Clifford Simak's JACKPOT, the boot is very definitely on the other foot - the alien foot.

Superficially, JACKPOT (Galaxy October 1956) is a piece of straight adventure giving Man a good kick in the pants for his various troubles. However, Simak can operate effectively on more than one level and he develops this novelette into a story of men made hard by a hard Universe and their violent reaction against it by trying to destroy and corrupt parts of it. They are the vultures of space, feeding off the loot of civilizations which are incapable of holding them off. This unpleasant crew of humans encounter, on an isolated and apparently uninhabited world, a vast storehouse of incomprehensible machines which, they later discover, are really fantastically sophisticated 'teaching machines', but teaching machines with a very great difference. Want to know about the deeper philosophic profundities of Arcturan historical civilization? Nothing easier! The machines are the best possible method; they not only make the student become an Arcturan, hypnotically, they make him an Arcturan philosopher specialising in Arcturus' historical civilisation. What the Earthmen have stumbled upon is no less than an enormous

storehouse of knowledge, administered by a race of kindly alien professors who have been busily compiling the Galaxy's knowledge for the last million years or so. Needless to say, they haven't been doing this for the sake of knowledge only; they are no mere hoarders - they want to spread what they have got far and wide. The aliens offer their invaluable gift to the human race with our heroes acting as agents - a task their greediness delights in. They see this opportunity, not as something inherently desirable, but as an opening to make a vast 'killing'. This is the jackpot they have been searching for. However, the kindly professors are not so guileless as they might have at first seemed; in fact they are really pretty shrewd, for there is just one little point that has to be subscribed to - everyone using one of their machines must first undergo an 'orientation course' specially prepared for human beings. This course indoctrinates a spirit of goodness and honesty and adherence to law which makes the individual a paragon of all the virtues we consider good. And mankind remains as safely villainous as it has always been.

Here, the effects of the aliens, upon the human race, are minimal because the danger is recognised immediately, isolated and, for all intents and purposes, destroyed. We might not always be so lucky, for JACKPOT is an implicit warning that Homo Sapiens has not developed his racial mentality and evolved a system of ethics and morals that will protect him and insure his survival against the rigour of the alien. Man, fundamentally good or evil, isn't likely to get away with corruption without himself becoming corrupted in the process, and not, as has been the case of a single-world existence, just a few individuals getting corrupted. The Universe, outside our strictly limited spectrum of understanding and comprehension, can no longer be considered just a physical and organic concept, but an intellectual experience as well - and a pretty traumatic one too.

The unfortunate aspect of the 'First contact' story is its all-too-often reduction to a mere scientific gimmick or puzzle - the petty, stupid and trivial sort of story one instinctively expects to encounter within the pages of worthless journals such as, at the present at least, Analog.

The genre is cluttered up with stories of this ilk, of which Donald Malcolm's FET series are reasonable examples, especially the earlier ones. Strictly speaking they aren't stories at all, but the fictional dressing-up of various kinds of scientific oddities and curiosities - interesting maybe, to the SF reader, but more suited to the sort of non-technical articles that the author himself used to handle with considerable competence. But compare the best of Malcolm's series (YORRICK) with any story in Joseph Green's 'Refuge' series and the shortcomings of the former become painfully obvious.

It would seem to be a good idea to abandon writing about that lazy author's Never-Never land, inhabited by cardboard characters emitting dialogue which might have been thought up by a vacuum-tube computer. It might be hard for scientifically trained, or at the very least, scientifically minded, authors to

realise that SF stands for two words of which the last is unquestionably the most important, but it is important that they do realise it.

While Joseph Green's 'Refuge' chronicle and a rare few other stories and novels are serious attempts to examine the whole question of the hypothetical relationship of man to alien, they remain nothing more than a few lonely beacons which shed a little light on territory that no one has really gone to the trouble of exploring. This is a pity and consequently such themes, just for one example, as religious man in space have almost completely been ignored. Besides THE STAR, the content of which is not relevant to the discussion here, only two competent examples come to mind: James Blish's A CASE OF CONSCIENCE and Harry Harrison's THE STREETS OF ASHKELON (re-titled AN ALIEN AGONY). Good as both are, they are only two isolated examples representing just two viewpoints while, if SF had one iota of the daring and imagination it credits itself with, there would be twice two hundred on the theme. In fact, most SF authors seem to write in a befuddled daydream state displaying symptoms similar to those found in meretric hacks, sad to say. This sort of gormless attitude can be found time and again, manifesting itself, for instance, in the strange, childishly faithful adherence to the ridiculous adage that 'human nature never changes', and consequently the quaint assurance that Man will somehow remain totally unaffected by contact with an alien species - which is just one instance of the general naivety of authors who carry on in the same old way that they have always done. The writer never seems to remember that society has been changed radically and irrevocably because of considerably lesser causes and that exactly the same thing will happen again, in the future. In the same way it is astonishing that even well known and supposedly adult authors can think of space and the Universe as nothing more than a vast backdrop against which various protagonists act out various kinds of juvenile antics. Even the least inane and most sophisticated of these are nothing more than entertaining and superior adventures - a sort of grown-up's 'cops and robbers'. What is laughable is that quite often they are labelled 'serious' literature, certainly not space-opera - their creators shuddering at the thought that they might be taken as such. But whatever one wants to call them there is still a worthy paraphrase worth remembering - that dirty feet by another name still stink!

The cosy belief that human nature is immune to change is an extraordinary unrealistic attitude to take. Of course it isn't immune to change! One of the most basic laws of existence is that nothing remains static; that inevitably there is movement and progression, erosion and evolution, which are as relevant to Homo Sapiens as they are to everything else. But even such an elementary and surely obvious fact seems to be beyond the comprehension of all but 2% of SF authors. Why is this? Possibly one reason is the extreme difficulty of writing a story on this theme when there have been a hundred

permutations of every conceivable trick and angle, written a thousand times before, which makes the creation of something fresh and original rather difficult. So well used has the first contact story been that extremely good and powerful writing only will make something so cliché-ridden stand out from the general mass of mediocrity. Unfortunately, not many SF authors can be classed as superb novelists and master writers, both qualities being needed badly for the task. Therefore, the only solution would seem to be to show a willingness to start anew, investigate new territory; a need to look at the whole problem in a completely different light, risking, for a change, a little controversy - which so many writers seem terrified of. Authors might find it a help if they threw out all their ancient stock gimmicks and creaking plots and started to think instead of dredging up and rehashing the tired old formulas, as they do time after time. Drop the banalities and the trivialities that are constantly thrown to the poor reader. Experiment - try new forms of style and plot. And editors, especially those on the other side of the pond, might get rid of the cobwebs that seem to have been clogging up their brains of late, and allow some spirit of adventure into their policies. An occasionally outraged readership never does any harm.

Of all branches of literature, science fiction has the potentiality of being the most provocative and exciting of all existing forms with the greatest relevancy to contemporary civilisation. It is a pity to see all the possibilities wasted in such a trivial and inconsequential manner as they are at present. The first contact story is a better place than most to start a new revolution on a different front from 'inner-space'. When the fiction becomes reality, Man's contact with the Alien will be one of the greatest challenges he has ever faced - and ever will. Now, let's get some authors writing about it!

Dave Busby

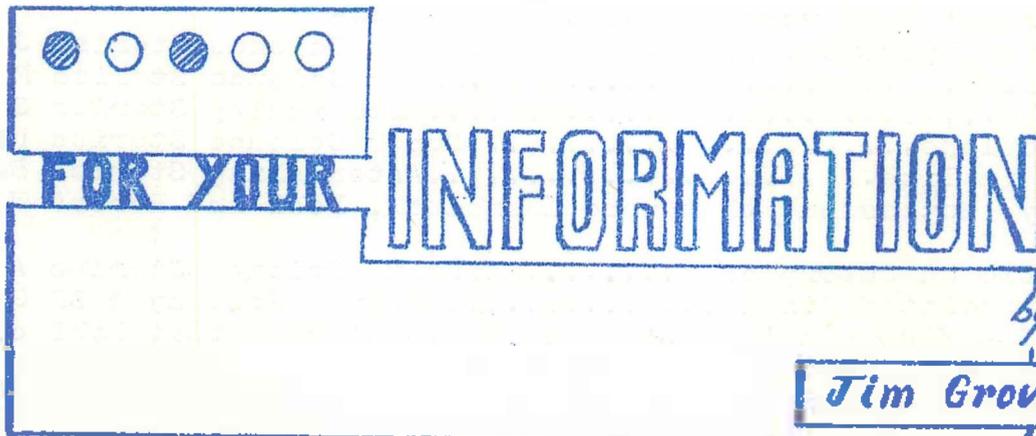
W A N T E D Books on Soviet Science Fiction.

Michael J Moore, 33 Carlton Terrace, Fortslade, Sussex, is preparing an article on Soviet Science Fiction and would be grateful for any information, Books, etc., etc. Cash will be paid but please let him know what you have before you send anything.

W A N T E D The following Vargo Statten books:- NEBULA X; RED INSECTS; INNER COSMOS; BORN OF LUNA; THE NEW SATELLITE; THE CATALYST; 2000 YEARS ON; INFERNO; THE SUN MAKERS.

W Summersgill, 48 Severn Drive, Guisborough, Yorkshire.

Two BSFA publications, the GALAXY and NEBULA checklists, are still available at 1/6 each from the Treasurer, Charles Winstone, 71, George Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

by
Jim Groves

As a follow-up to my last column, some more information on Cordwainer Smith has turned up. What I wrote prompted one of the directors of Herbert Jenkins Ltd., Mr Leventhal, to write and let me know that my guess was correct. Dave Busby informs me that Cordwainer Smith is a psychologist working near Washington who is occasionally consulted, in an unofficial manner, by the State Department. He isn't a 'name' hiding under a pseudonym, although 'Cordwainer Smith' is a non-de-plume. And while we are on the subject of pseudonyms, my brother has come up with the suggestion that the recently developed computer techniques, for establishing authorship, might be of use to us. Anyone out there got access to a computer set up for this sort of thing?!

Charles Platt wants to know whether Professor A M Low wrote any books before *ADRIET IN THE STRATOSPHERE*. I assume you mean novels, his non-fiction output being something phenomenal. I can find only two other SF novels by Prof Low. Of one, I have only the title - *MARS BREAKS THROUGH*. The other was published posthumously and was called *SATELLITE IN SPACE* (Herbert Jenkins - 1956) and concerns two Earth satellites, one controlled by a Nazi, and some aliens from the asteroid belt. Prof Low was an honorary member of the pre-war Science Fiction Association and he appears to have had a high opinion of the worth of SF as a way of attracting people who otherwise might "...be unaware of the beauty of science" (*NOVAE TERRAE* June 1937). And to wander even further from the subject, *NOVAE TERRAE*, originally the official organ of the SFA, developed into the mimeographed *NEW WORLDS* and thence to the science fiction magazine we all know.

Vic Hallett wants to know who 'William Tenn' is and what pseudonyms Frederik Pohl has used. William Tenn is the pseudonym of Morton Klass, an American SF author and anthologist, who was born in London in 1920. Pohl's pseudonyms are James MacCroigh, Warren F Howard and Scott Mariner (the latter being in collaboration with C M Kornbluth). Pohl also wrote under the following pseudonyms:-

ELTON V ANDREWS - used on one poem in *AMAZING STORIES*.

S D GOTTESMAN - This was a pseudonym of C M Kornbluth used by him and in collaboration with other authors including Pohl. Stories

by 'Gottesman' that were Kornbluth and Pohl:-

Before the Universe.....Super Science Stories Jul 40
 Best Friend.....Super Science Stories May 41
 Mars-Tube.....Astonishing Stories Sep 41
 Nova Midplane.....Super Science Stories Nov 40
 Trouble in Time.....Astonishing Stories Dec 40
 Stories by 'Gottesman' that were Kornbluth, Pohl and Robert W

Lowndes:-

The Castle on Outerplanet.....Stirring Science Stories Apr 41
 The Extrapolated Dimwit.....Future Fantasy 3: SF Oct 42
 PAUL DENIS LAVOND - a 'house' pseudonym. Stories that Pohl coll-
 aborated in with Kornbluth and Lowndes:-

Einstein's Planetoid.....Science Fiction Quarterly Spr 42
 Exiles of New Planet.....Astonishing Stories Apr 41
 with Kornbluth:-

Callistan Tomb.....Science Fiction Quarterly Spr 41
 A Prince of Pluto.....Future Fiction Apr 41

with Lowndes and Dirk Wylie:-

Something From Beyond.....Future combined with SF Dec 41
 with Dirk Wylie:-

Star of the Undead.....Fantasy Book No. 2

DIRK WYLIE - although this was the name of a real author, the name
 was also used as a house name. Stories that Pohl collaborated in
 with Kornbluth and Wylie:-

Vacant World.....Super Science Stories Jan 41
 with Wylie:-

Asteroid of the Damned.....Planet Stories Sum 42
 Highwayman of the Void.....Planet Stories Fal 44
 Outpost of the Bombs.....Astonishing Stories Apr 43
 Sky Test.....Super Science Stories Nov 42

These are the lot up to 1959 as recorded in the Don Tuck
 Handbook and Don Day's Index to the SF Magazines 1928-1950.

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THE VISUAL SIDE
OF THINGS

by VOO HALLEFF

This will be a regular column dealing with SF films. From time to time it will include TV and theatre news. It will also occasionally stray from the straight and narrow path of pure SF into the allied fields of Fantasy and fringe subjects of the DR STRANGELove and SEVEN DAYS IN MAY type (both not-to-be-missed). There will be news of films in production, or planned for production. Where a personal opinion of a film on current release is possible, one will be given; where it is not possible, I will quote the general opinion I have gathered from reviews or from people who have seen it (that includes any of you who would like to write to me).

First of all, some odd scraps of news:- American International have got two films lined up which look rather promising. The first was mentioned by Bert Lewis in Vector 26 - H G Wells' 2165 AD WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES is to be directed in London by Roger Corman, who directs the Edgar Allan Poe films for A.I. The second, to be made in America, is called MOON TRAP and concerns "Eleven people trapped on the Moon with five days to live".

At the moment being completed on location in Death Valley is ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS directed by Byron Haskin (the director of WAR OF THE WORLDS and CONQUEST OF SPACE). This is not as far as I know, taken from Rex Gordon's NO MAN FRIDAY, but it uses the same idea, that of a lone astronaut stranded in the Martian desert. It could be really good.

Also in production in the USA is SPACE STATION X, directed by Hugo Grimaldo - more details when available. Back in Britain, Hammer films are planning one called THE REPTILES which will probably be horror rather than SF but it might be worth keeping an eye open for.

I see that London ITV are showing Rod Serling's TWILIGHT ZONE series, so there's hope for the rest of us yet.

Now for a couple of reviews:- In Vector 26, Bert Lewis mentioned a very much up to date version of Jules Verne's FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON. Unless there are two films of this book I am afraid it is not up to date in the sense of being new - it was, in fact, made about seven years ago and has only now been released. Neither is it new in the sense of being modern - the period detail is post American Civil War and is one of the film's few positive virtues. It is one of those films which I would like to be able to praise more than I can. In its favour are the facts that it

faithfully follows the story of a capsule shot to the Moon from a giant gun sunk into the earth; that it does have a fairly literate script; and that it has competent performances by Joseph Cotton and George Saunders as two rival scientists. By far its finest feature is the aforementioned art direction, which combines good period costumes and good sets (notably the interior of the rocket) all in colour, so that at least it is good to look at.

What has gone wrong is the direction by Byron Haskin, which is heavy handed and unimaginative. At first, all goes well with the demonstration of the fuel, the excavation for the gun barrel and the preparations for the launching. It is when the rocket finally leaves the Earth that the film paradoxically stays grounded. Even a meteor storm fails to enliven it and I found myself glancing at the cinema clock more and more as it slowly moved toward the end. Not, by any means, an unwatchable film but, unfortunately, not a very good one either.

This next film came to me as a complete surprise. By all the rules, written and unwritten, it should have been terrible. A Japanese opus, horribly entitled KING KONG Vs GODZILLA, that has poor acting and faults galore. What distinguishes it, in spite of all that, is, first, an ebullient sense of humour (it laughs at itself more than any other film of its type I can remember) and, second, excellent trick photography and model manipulation. Strictly speaking, it is monster stuff rather than pure SF (although there is a manned communications satellite in it) dealing, as it does, with the deadly rivalry of Kong, a giant ape, and Godzilla, a cross between a Tyrannosaurus and a Stegosaurus. By a plot line too complicated to detail, these two are finally brought face to face on Mount Fuji, where ensues a glorious battle to the death. Ignoring any rules (trees are used and Godzilla makes very good use of his tail) this free-for-all is great fun and wonderfully convincing; they genuinely move as real animals would under the circumstances.

Before this final feast, hors d'oeuvres consists of several trains, helicopters, tanks and an atomic submarine being destroyed, and a preliminary bout between Kong and the nastiest giant octopus I have ever seen on film.

In short, it won't win any Oscars but if you are feeling in an uncritical mood and have a taste for glorious rubbish, as I have, you could do far worse than see it and enjoy yourself. As a passing thought, if production values are any standard, one day we are going to get a really good SF film from Japan.

That's it for this time but if you come across any information you think may be of use, or see any films you think worth recommending (or otherwise) then please drop me a line (Vic Hallett, 2 Westfield Place, Yeovil, Somerset). Also, if anyone has any queries about films past, present or future which are in my power to answer, I will do so, either by post or in this column. Lastly, I invite any comments or suggestions of things you would like to see in the column. I may yet live to regret this!

Vic Hallett

GENERAL CHUNTERING

by
KEN SLATER

This column has been A.J.C.L. for some time...and it will be a problem to get it back into shape...and that is a contradiction, as it is a shapeless sort of thing...a sort of junk pile of news items and odd thoughts and what-have-you which will not fit conveniently in elsewhere...plus a sort of Slater's -eye-view of the science fantasy microcosm...if you find it growing on you, don't worry...the condition responds well to treatment...Tom Godwin's THE SPACE BARBARIANS is a sequel to SPACE PRISON...it has original appearance in Pyramid whereas SPACE PRISON first appeared in mag format as THE SURVIVORS...not a very satisfactory book...this is one of the times I'm inclined to agree with Mike Moorcock's opinion of sequels...however, a sequel to Andre Norton's STORM OVER WARLOCK was necessary to clear up some of the remaining 'mystery'...and this has now been written...another of Miss Norton's stories which could do with some clarification is CROSSROADS OF TIME...a sequel to that should be somewhat easier to write...and certainly more satisfying to the reader than is the latest in the 'Time Traders' series, KEY CUT OF TIME...which appears to be primarily concerned with removing some of the protagonists from the scene of action and making it impossible for them to come back...would you care for a replica of a bronze head of a young African, a miniature scent jug... Greek, perhaps Alexandrian workmanship, of about 100 BC... height 4"?...the British Museum will supply you one for £4. 10s. (plus 3/- p&p inland mail)...this is one of the supplementary services that the BM conduct, of which the general public remains surprisingly ignorant...they also offer you Christmas cards... including such things as miniatures from illuminated manuscripts (the Building of the Tower of Babel from the Bedford Book of Hours is one) at 10/- dozen...and then there is the 'rapid copy service'...at 1/9 a page, copies of up to 12 pages in any one day from any printed book or periodical...these are officially 'legible for approximately 3 months only'...but can be fixed for longer unofficial periods by soaking in soapy water...ideal for reading in the bath!...speaking of museum pieces...one of the rarest of SF books is Timkin's THE SHIP THAT SAILED TO PARS... Ferry Ackerman gave a copy of this to Bjo Trimble for a wedding present...now she has something even rarer...a number of years ago a man by the name of Pomroy...special effects man on the original Cecil B DeMille TEN COMMANDMENTS, artist, inventor and man-of-many-talents planned to do a film on the book THE SHIP THAT SAILED TO PARS...he did many preliminary sketches and built a model of the ship...then one day he was found dead in his

laboratory, killed by the toxic effect of some of the chemicals he kept there...the film was never finished...the sketches, models of the Martian animals, the shooting script and all went into a trunk...the trunk went into storage...Fomeroy's widow came down with Parkinson's disease, and everything disappeared from sight...except the model of the ship, which went to a friend...some years ago Forrest J took Bjo along to see this model...it had been damaged when it was knocked over by a cat, but was still handsome...a couple of years ago she wrote and asked if she could bring her husband, John Trimble, to see it...no answer...then in April this year, she had a letter saying that if she liked, she could have the model...in several years she was the only person who had expressed any interest in it...this, I think, ranks for rarity alongside that set of hand-carved Martian Chessmen...recently had a request for Edmund Spencer's THE FAERIE QUEENE...this is in print in the Dent's Everyman's Library, two volumes, at 10/6 a volume...but let me warn you that it does not read like the de Camp and Fletcher Pratt yarns of Fantasy...try some lines from Book II, Canto I, Verse XXI...

"Her purpose was not such as she did faine,
 Ne yet her purpose such as it was scene;
 But under simple shew, and semblant plaine,
 Lurkt false Duessa secretly unscene,
 As a chaste Virgin that had wronged beene:
 So had false Archimago her disguysd,
 To cloke her guile with sorrow and sad teene;
 And eke himselfe had craftily devisd
 To be her Squire, and do her service well aguisd."

...mind you, it makes enjoyable reading if you can handle that style and mode of thought with a modern-type brain...but it won't beat FANNY HILL in the best seller lists...and FH is almost as difficult to read...and has a far weaker plot line...Alva Roger's REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING - a history of Astounding SF from Jan '30 until its transformation into Analog, will be published by Advent Publishers...this will be an enlargement of the articles published in VIPER...price of both American and British pbs is creeping up...most new SF in the USA comes out at 50¢ now...and so do the reprints of things previously published at 35¢...while in UK the 3/6 figure has become the common price, with the 5/- increasingly frequent, and the 2/6 one rarer...British VENTURE is up to 3/-...Thorpe & Porter will no longer be importing Lancer pbs from the USA...rumours that ANALOG is folding still creep in to me...having heard these for the past ten years, I've come to ignore them...but I do know that some weakening of British sales is apparent, and obviously if the 'returns' factor gets too high, then there won't be a British distribution...on the price argument, by the way, someone in VECTOR recently made the point about ANALOG being 5/- and prompt, and GALAXY being 3/6 and late, and drew some sort of conclusion from that...I'll shove an ear in...both AMAZING and FANTASTIC are 50¢ in USA...3/6 British...and prompt...so where does that get us?...of course, there is the carriage factor involved, and ANALOG makes a pretty hefty package in bulk for the comparative number of copies...then again, Z-D give better terms (at least in my experience) than do Conde-Nast, at least on whole-

saler-retailer basis...the reverse is true of subscriptions...but regretfully I can only say, truthfully, that there is no real explanation...so much depends on individual ways of doing things ...and a corporation or company is, in this respect, as much an 'individual' as you or I...recently I met three fairly high-up folk in one such 'individual' corporation...each of them agreed that the way the corporation was doing something was not the best way...that, in fact, it was (as one of them expressed it) - "the worst possible method"...and yet it appeared that it was the only method on which all parties concerned could agree...each department had some strong objection to the alternative better methods ...and so one of the poorest was in use because no-one objected strongly...the corporation therefore, at least in this one way, was an 'individual' separate from all of the persons controlling it...so too, you can analyse lots of decisions taken by groups of men...and find that they don't reflect the thoughts or opinions - truly - of any of 'em...the Greeks had a word for it...so do we... compromise...incidentally, the standard rate on imported books is, very often, 10/- to £1.00...and it works the other way, too...a book on sale and published in Britain at, say, 12/6, will probably cost you £2.25 or £2.50 if you buy it in New York...unfortunately, there is a high risk involved, and also...as I said before... carriage costs can be high...on the Ace invoices I get, for instance, carriage costs come to over 20% of the net cost of the invoice...in other words, books value (net) at £100 will cost £120 with carriage...and while you can sell someone a packet of tea every day, or every week, you can only sell him one copy of THE FAERIE QUEENE...and then only if you're lucky...Al Lewis has issued amendment sheets to the first two magazine INDICES...if you bought copies of an Index from me (at the Convention or otherwise) send me a 3d stamp and I'll send you a copy of the amendment sheet you want - 1961 and 1962 are the years...THE VALLEY OF CREATION by Edmond Hamilton originally appeared in Startling Stories July '48, and is the latest in the Lancer SF series, at 50¢...more a fantasy than a science fiction yarn, but will appeal to Merritt-lovers, or to those who have enjoyed Horton's 'Witch World' stories...THE BOOK OF PTATH by A. E. van Vogt, one of the scarcer of the 1950's limited edition publications, will at long last appear as a paperback, titled 200 MILLION A.D....some fancy prices have been fetched by copies of this title...but the bottom will now fall out of this market...happy blast-offs...Z.F.S.

WEIRD::TALES::WEIRD::TALES::WEIRD::TALES::WEIRD::TALES::WEIRD::

GRAHAM M HALL, 10 Barton Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, wants WEIRD TALES in any condition, U.S. editions preferably but British considered. Also wants correspondence with WEIRD TALES fans.

INVITATION - Any fans going to the west country for their holidays can use Tony Walsh's house as a staging post for the journey. Please let him know in advance. Address is 38 Saxon Road, Bridgwater, Somerset.



By Fandom, I mean anyone who takes an active part in any branch of the genre, be it Weird, Occult, Fantasy or Science Fiction in its purest sense. The films are any that would be covered by any of the above groups, and we have had films that could come within any of them.

One thing arises out of this article which is not too obvious; that the films came before fandom. Before you start getting up on your hind legs over that statement, let me elucidate a little.

As one of the older members of English fandom, I well remember films that could well be classed as science fiction, although by present standards, you would probably want to class them as fantasy. These were way back in the era of the silent screen and included pictures like *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*. Some of Conan Doyle's books must surely come under the heading of SF, viz: *THE LOST WORLD*, which was screened long before the influx of sound on film. So was Rider Haggard's *KING SOLOMON'S MINES* and *ALLAN QUATERMAIN*, both of which were made into films in the 'silent' period.

Later, of course, we had *METROPOLIS*, an epic by any standard, but still one which saw publication as a book as well as a film, as was *FRAU IM MOND (GIRL IN THE MOON)*, although the latter was made both as silent and with sound.

Fandom as such, however, was not really born until American SF magazines were imported into this country about 1927/28, and even then its beginnings were only very small over here, mostly confined to a few scattered enthusiasts who took the trouble to write to the various magazine editors, to be seen later by other fans, with the eventual result of their linking and forming of small correspondence groups. I think that you will agree that 'fans' were reading books by Doyle, Haggard, Verne, Astor and even Swift, without realising that they were fans in the accepted sense - I know I was. I think I was about sixteen when I first encountered the Tarzan stories and later I found a 'boys' magazine called *FLUCK* which featured, as a serial, Burrough's *AT THE BARTH'S CORN*, which to me at the time,

was just 'out of this world'. I was always impatient for the successive parts each week.

Having made that point, let us make a survey of the various aspects of films, be they Weird, Occult, Fantasy or Science Fiction in its accepted sense. We must, of course, start in the days of the silent screen, from which we have already seen a few titles, but these go well back to the period between the wars.

The coming of sound to the silver screen opened up a vast field of possibilities for our type of film. Unfortunately, it never received the credit due to the originals from which the films were taken. This was largely due to producers who had their own ideas as to what should, and what should not, be used in the film, with the frequent result that the film only partly represented the ideas in the original written work. This has been very evident in films in recent years too - as well we know. The pre-war sound version of KING SOLOMON'S MINES for instance; here the story was sacrificed for the provision of background to a singer. Good as he may have been, this was not justified in the result, from the point of view of the story.

Again, we got the sound version of THE LOST WORLD and although this was a very fine production, to me it fell far short of the original silent version, in so far as it distorted the author's original ideas.

The between-war-years did, however, give us some very fine efforts in the field of SF: LOST HORIZON was one, and amongst the finest was the great epic THINGS TO COME. This was not only good science fiction, it also showed, as was later seen, that SF can, and does, forecast the future. So much so, that within a few years of its screening, part of it had come true. I well remember the reports of it in the newspapers, that "This could never come true. No enemy could ever bomb us like that...", but they did, as we know to our cost. Its forecast of space-flight was a bit out, although space-flight as such did become fact within twenty-five years.

One of the finest examples of book being adapted as a film was Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN; one also which gave Boris Karloff his first big chance in pictures. Unfortunately, the horror which was invoked by the story became the wedge, used by later producers, to herald in what we know as 'horror' films - films which under more normal circumstances could have been made into really good SF films. So, as has been shown only too clearly, horror as such has taken the place of science in so-called science fiction films.

I suppose you could say that such films have done for the film industry, what bug-eyed-monsters did for the later pulp SF magazines - a phase we could have well done without.

It was only natural that SF writers should use their somewhat vivid imaginations in producing creatures both strange and alien; in stories of other worlds and dimensions, it needed very little more on the part of the producer to give us something that was out of proportion to the original context.

This has been particularly noticeable in the treatment of prehistoric monsters. In films like KING KONG and the early THE LOST WORLD, these were well handled, but film producers soon had them served up out of all proportion to the original ideas.

The idea of an alien monster can be very good and in some films has been really well used. This was so in such films as THE BLOB, THE HUNGRY RED PLANET and in particular, in FORBIDDEN PLANET. The trouble seemed to start when the idea of mutation effects were first introduced into this type of film, then they really let their imaginations run riot - 'ad nauseam' in fact.

From some stories, however, we do get a few SF films which are outstanding, from the points of view of production, direction, story content and even to being scientifically feasible. I refer, of course, to such films as those produced by George Pal. They were even convincing to the film-going public who had probably never read a science fiction book in their lives. In fact, they were probably indirectly responsible for a few conversions to the SF genre generally.

Unfortunately, such films are too few and too far between, so in consequence we have to put up with a lot of mediocre films which can only be classed as SF by a great stretch of the imagination.

Even vampires and werewolves have been used simply to 'sell' films to a rather gullible public, although they probably end up as 'creep stuff' for teenage couples who have nowhere else to go, except to get off the streets. In saying this, I have in mind such films as I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE and I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF as two of the type - or should I say 'tripe'. Even the idea of selling space-stories to the public has now been contaminated with the idea that they must contain some kind of monster, with the result that space-flight is only used as a 'back-drop' to a horror film.

Throughout all these rather poor examples of SF films we still fortunately get a few that are outstanding as good examples of the genre. Amongst those made over a number of years, I would list the following as fine contributions to the field of SF in films:- THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL; THE CAT PEOPLE; AT BEAR OF NIGHT; THE MAGNETIC MONSTER; PROJECT MOON-BASE; THE NIGHT OF THE BEAST; INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS; THEM; THIS ISLAND EARTH; EARTH VERSUS THE FLYING SAUCERS; IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE; TWELVE TO THE MOON; FORBIDDEN PLANET; WORLDS WITHOUT END; THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE; VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED; THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT; QUATERMASS II; THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON; 80,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA; JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH; THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS. These are just a cross-section of films and are not in any way intended to be in historical sequence or grading.

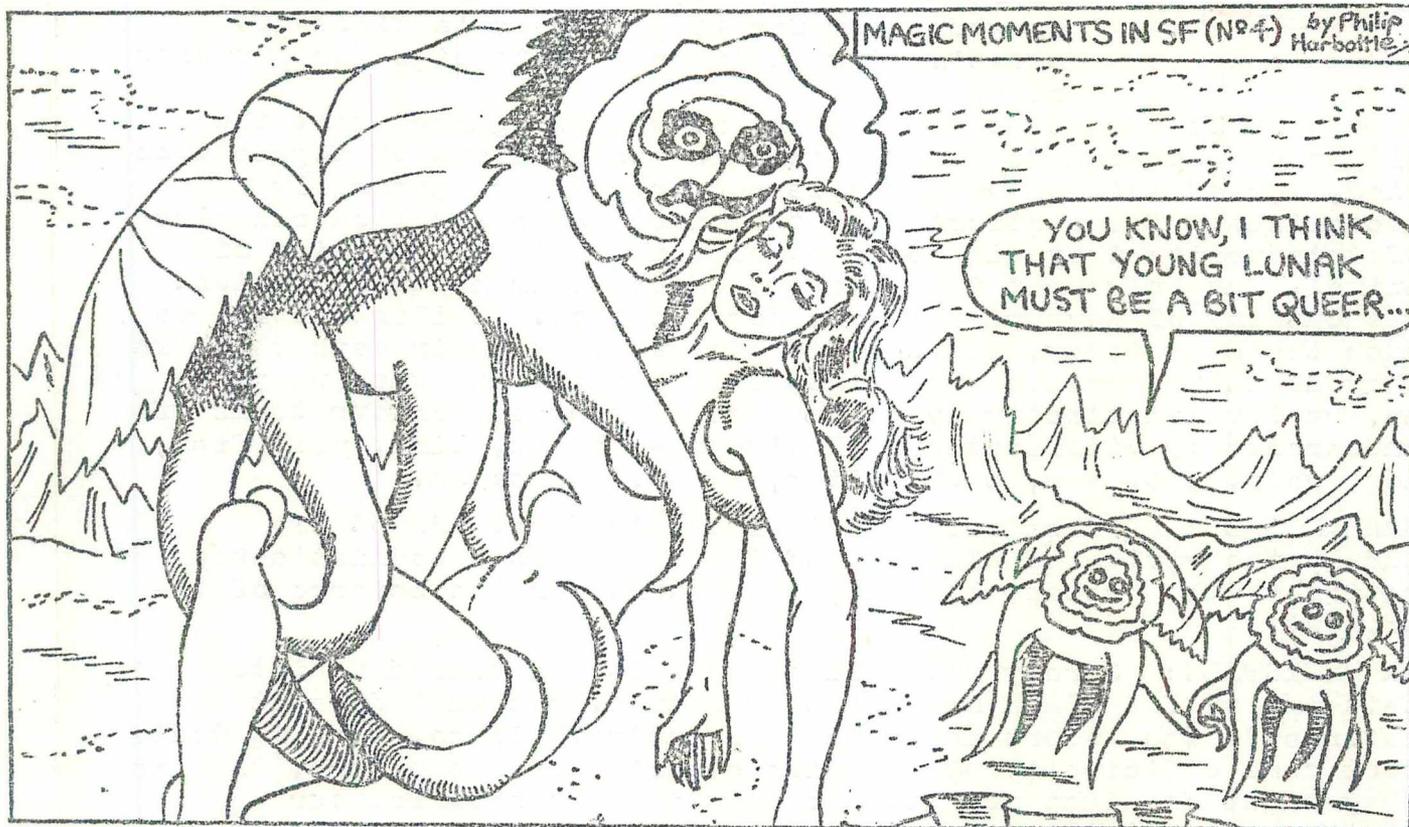
When I consider the great dearth in SF films today, I feel sure that some of the films I've mentioned above would stand the test of being re-issued and I feel sure they would

compare very favourably with some of the stuff that is being literally 'thrown' at us from the silver screen today.

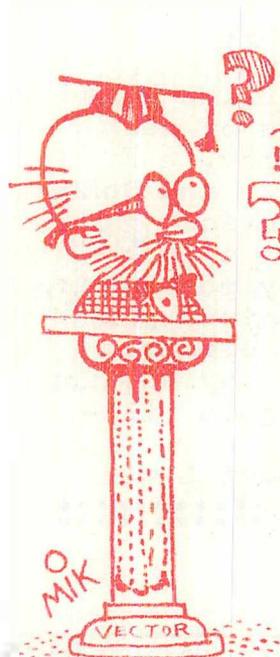
I look forward to the day when enterprising producers will look into the possibility of making films based on some of the classics of the SF book world. Books by such authors as J W Campbell Jr, Dr E E Smith, Isaac Asimov, A E van Vogt, our own Eric Frank Russell, Arthur C Clarke and John Wyndham. I wonder - is this really too much to hope for?

I hope I have got my points over to you in this article. I also hope that I have not trodden on any pet corns, or that I have bored you with it. If I have entertained you just a little or brought back just a few nostalgic memories, then I consider myself duly rewarded. Whichever it may be, for those of you who like this kind of entertainment - good film-going.

Bert Lewis



Kon Cheslin, 18 New Farm Road, Stourbridge, Worcs., is now collecting the registration fees (5/-) for next year's Easter Convention to be held at the Midland Hotel, Birmingham.



DR. PERISTYLE'S COLUMN

NOW WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE?

BERYL HENLEY: Why does Odd John refer to the human race as cattle, when Darwin says we're descended from apes, and Alan Nourse says we're descended from pigs - or would you rather be a fish?

DR PERISTYLE: Not a fish; an octopus possibly, or an eagle. Darwin's answer is scientific, Nourse's fictitious, Odd John's metaphorical - as when we refer to people as 'a flock of sheep'. Orwell likened us to pigs for purposes of allegory.

Strange that even before it was recognised that the difference between us and the animals was more one of degree than kind, our affinities with the lesser breeds were generally recognised. The bestiaries of the Middle Ages are good examples of this trait; they did not recognise the animal qualities of animal, but only what they thought of as their human qualities: the cunning of Reynard the Fox, for instance. Children still do much the same today, and seem to believe that their pets think as they do and comprehend what they are saying. And when we grow up, we turn instinctively to the animal kingdom for our terms of endearment or vilification: "You're a - kitten, bird, poor fish, dog, wolf, cat, cow, skunk, lion, lamb", and so on.

GRAHAM HALL: I disagree with Peristyle's first law of SF. Surely the virtue of all good SF is that it is a sophisticated satire of the present by using the future, or the science of the present?

DR PERISTYLE: Surely not? Kingsley Amis has teased us into thinking of THE SPACE MERCHANTS as satire, but what does it satirise? The modern advertising industry? If so, then it would work more efficiently by stabbing conditions as they are, than as they might or might not be. Or does it just satirise our contemporary civilisation in general? But if so, how can it do this effectively by showing us Pohl and Kornbluth's picture of a culture that plainly, and despite resemblances, is not our contemporary civilisation? And note that these objections stand against anyone's claim that any SF novel is good satire. But even if it were satire, my First Law holds there too: satire itself is valueless unless there is a worthwhile mind working with it. Give IBM's beautiful and versatile 7090 computer to an

idiot - how many useful answers do you think he'd come up with?

CHARLES PLATT: Do you think that with its respectable outlook and new publishing firm, ANALOG's editor, JWC, will cease creating sensations over fake scientific discoveries?

DR FERISTYLE: No; not as long as JWC remains in control of policy. Superficially at least, JWC is an easy man to read. The intellect is strong enough; the ego and will are stronger. He would like to leave his mark on the world - which in fact is true enough of any writer who plays god in his stories, as do most SF writers. But JWC is also a failed SF writer; so his wish has become a compulsion, boosted as it is, by a need to compensate for the lack of creative writing outlet. One obvious way of making a mark on the world, or of changing it, is open to a man in his position: he can open the door to some unorthodox invention that will shower on us all a new way of life; mental or physical, Dianetics or Dean Drive, it's all one. And to increase one's likelihood of being able to do this, one rants on against established science, knowing that this is one way of drawing to one's side, the Hubbards and Deans of this world. This is the situation; even if he has the fortune to draw some mute inglorious Einstein to his side, it will still be the situation. If your humble servant may venture an opinion, he deplores this situation; for a side effect of it is that the stories for which the magazine should exist have become increasingly subject to the arid Campbell dogma. The main criterion is no longer worth but slant.

GRANAM HALL: How come you know so much anyhow? Are you really a computer?

DR FERISTYLE: According to strictly biological classification, I am human. I owe my miraculous fund of humour, as well as my bottomless pit of knowledge, to the fact that I wasted all the years of my youth reading science fiction, when everyone else who thought they knew better said I should have been doing something else.

* * * * *

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB

Choices for the next six months

Jun TALES OF TEN WORLDS by Arthur C Clarke
 Jul THE 4-DIMENSIONAL NIGHTMARE by J G Ballard
 Aug THE EXPERT DREAMERS edited by Frederick Fohl
 Sep MUTHUSELAN'S CHILDREN by Robert A Heinlein
 Oct THE JOY MAKERS by James B Gunn
 Nov CONDITIONALLY HUMAN by Walter D Miller

All choices cost 6/- each plus 1/- postage and packing.

Science Fiction Book Club, New Enrolments, 10-13, Bedford Street, London WC 2.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NEWS

THE COUNTERFEIT MAN by Alan E Hourse

Published by DOBSON at 15/- . 105 pages

Several of the eleven short stories in Hourse's new collection seem reminiscent of some of the more celebrated names in SF. The title story compares, unfavourably, with Kuttner's "Camouflage". It presents the very worn theme of 'an-alien-loose-in-a-spaceship-and-we-gotta-find-him-before-we-hit-port'; the only thing that distinguishes it from the others is that the 'goodies' seem to have lost.

"The Canvas Bag" is a sentimental story in the Bradbury style. We do, however, get an original theme, and a good one, in "Circus". Quite an amusing and interesting problem here.

Satire, Pohl-style, is represented by "An Ounce of Cure" and "Meeting of the Board". The former on the Medical profession - and as a doctor, Hourse would seem to be well enough qualified to attempt such a satire - and the latter, in which he really seems to have something to say, on Trade Unions.

"The Dark Door" is a psychological-type story in the Brown fashion.

"My Friend Bobby" reads like something straight out of Matheson.

"The Link", about the best story in the book, is a good story well told, but again, it is reminiscent of Clarke's "Expedition to Earth". Its closest challenger to this title is "The Expert Touch", another very good story with an unexpected twist.

"Image of the Gods" seems to end in mid-air; although I got a 'this is where I came in' feeling to start with, it turned out quite differently to the usual development of this idea. "Second Sight", again, is unoriginal.

Although the stories are well written, the book, as a whole, rates as only fair.

Paul Richardson

CYCLE OF FIRE by Hal Clement

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/- . 185 pages

Hal Clement is probably the finest writer of pure SF that there is. His plots are meticulously worked out and make compulsive reading, especially for those whose introduction to SF came during the 'golden years' of ASTOUNDING SF.

CYCLE OF FIRE deals with the encounter between an alien, Dar Lang Ahn, and a Terran Space Cadet, Hils Kruger. Both have been stranded on a remote part of the alien's planet, that of a binary sun. They travel together in an effort to reach the alien's fellows before the expected death of his race. The gradual growth of understanding between the two castaways and the development of the reasons for the imminent death of Dar Lang Ahn's race form the main theme of the book.

The most frequent criticism of Clement has been that his human characters are lacking in believability in comparison with his aliens. I have never been able to see this, but if you noticed it in his other stories you may see it in this too.

CYCLE OF FIRE is perhaps not quite as good as the classic MISSION OF GRAVITY, but it was, even on my second reading of it for this review after a lapse of five years, the best SF I have read for a long while. It did not appear in the magazines, so if you collect, this is a must for your bookshelf. As sheer good reading, it is unreservedly recommended to everyone who likes plenty of science in their science fiction.

Ian McAulay

IN DEEP by Damon Knight

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/- . 145 pages

This is a collection of seven stories, all of which have previously appeared in the magazines. For the benefit of the collector, I understand that the American edition of the book contained eight stories, "The Handler" being dropped from the British edition.

Three of the stories are fairly light. In my order of preference they are: "An Eye for a What?", a look at the problem of devising an appropriate punishment for a member of an alien race; "Four in One", one of Knight's best known stories concerned with the troubles encountered by four Terrans collectively absorbed by a non-sentient alien blob of protoplasm; and "The Beachcomber", a wryly humorous tale in which the lead character is an alien with a strange reason for his profession. Though only two of them originally appeared there, these three stories are all characterised by the Galaxy flavour.

The best story in the book, to my taste, is "Ticket to Anywhere". It is an absorbing story about a man who escapes from a tyrannical regime on Earth by daring to use a portal to another world. "Stranger Station", also excellent, deals with a once-in-twenty-years meeting between a Terran and a representative of an

alien race.

The two remaining stories seem to me to be impaired by a striving for literary significance. In particular, "The Country of the Kind" deals with the question of how Good should deal with Evil, somewhat implausibly typified by a solitary psychopath in an otherwise sane world. Lastly, "Ask Me Anything" is concerned with the fate of a man who misuses a machine which answers questions. The background isn't believable and the lead character's come-uppance is a bit predictable; I suppose it's very laudable insofar as it's basically a humanistic philosophy which is shown in a favourable light, but the theme is too routine and the treatment too ordinary for the story to rise above the commonplace.

This collection shows a good cross-section of Knight's writing and all the stories are readable, indeed five are very good or better. The stories were originally published between 1951 and 1957, so if you didn't read them then, now is the time to catch up on them. On the whole, the collection is good SF and is definitely recommended reading.

Ian McAulay

CARDINAL OF THE STARS by Francis G Rayer
Published by DIGIT at 2/6. 154 pages

A good cover conceals a pot boiler with no claims to distinction other than an entire cast of cardboard characters. The hero, Robert Newlyn, is ordered to find the Cardinal - a mystery mutant superman, and hunted by humanity though not heard from for twenty years.

Two secondary (?) plots emerge:- a conflict for power between two officers, and contact and conflict with a race of aliens (of even thinner cardboard!).

Our hero jaunts all over space like a tourist with a thirty day travel pass....and with as little reason. He discovers the Cardinal is really a good guy, joins him, gets the girl, foils the bad officer and only just fails to avert the first military clash with the aliens. However, as we fade out to love, and glowing hopes for the future, we feel that maybe he will succeed in preventing utter catastrophe.

The story is not a bad one, but a perfect example of the 'racy' tale in which we move along so quickly and smoothly that we never query why we're moving at all! It has no obnoxious 'clangers' or stereotypes, and is definitely a cut above the Vargo Statten material which has formed the backbone of British paperback SF for so long.

If you can ignore a trumped up superman, a selective inter-space transmitter which prevents our hero being rescued from the 'Snowdrift' on one page, but allows it ten pages further along; gloss over the padding and just rattle along, then this pb is ideal for bedside reading if you have insomnia....especially if you can share the cost with a *Galaxy*

Terry Jeeves

A SCENT OF NEW-MOWN HAY by John Blackburn

Published by DIGIT at 2/6. 154 pages

This book is another of what might even be called a new genre which has emerged in the last few years. I refer to the conventional thriller with SF overtones written by an author not noted for SF. This is quite a reasonable specimen of the type.

Briefly, the plot concerns a biological weapon developed during the Nazi period by a woman scientist. By treating a fairly harmless fungus with radiation she mutates it into a parasite that attacks the female half of the human race and gradually changes them into a rather monstrous plant/animal. This is not released until some years after the war for various reasons. Initially it appears in Russia, but it also appears in Britain and most of the story is concerned with stamping it out before it gets a chance to fruit and spread its spores all over the world.

On the whole, this is a fairly good book with only one real flaw. This appears when the characters are discussing ways and means of halting the menace. They decide that they need to know what means were used to mutate the fungus in order that they may reverse them and so cure the fungus victims! In other words, they intend to de-radiate to de-mutate the fungus! Apart from that little point it's worth reading once anyway.

J.L. Groves

WHEN THE WHITES WENT by Robert Bateman

Published by DIGIT at 2/6. 152 pages

The publisher's blurb describes this as 'the explosive, terrifying best-seller.' - I found it depressing rather than terrifying, and if it was a best-seller, there must be a great deal of morbidity to be pandered to in the reading public.

This is yet another catastrophe book, strongly reminiscent in many ways of Algis Budrys's SOME WILL NOT DIE. The title means exactly what it says: all the white races (and the Chinese and Indian too, incidentally) are completely wiped out by a plague. As in the Budrys book, it is believed that the pestilence was caused by an experiment that got out of hand. Be that as it may, the pure-blooded negroes inherit the Earth, and many of them are anything but meek.

The story skips about from the doings of one group (occupying Buckingham Palace under the iron rule of the self-styled King Sam) to those of another which consists mainly of educated negroes who realise the need to establish some sort of government and give a lead to the leaderless. There is a third group, led by Waldo, who has 'got religion' and needs a flock to whom he can do some hellfire preaching. A fourth group, led by a mad Commissar, is hourly expecting the Russians to arrive and succour everybody.

Various individuals wander in and out of the story at intervals. This kaleidoscopic manner of writing is extremely

suitable to the story, evoking a vivid idea of the chaos and uncertainty that would prevail in such a situation.

This is a study in contrasts; not all the educated negroes retain their veneer of 'civilization'(?), and not all the simpler negroes revert automatically to savagery. The question posed by the author is - just how far down does civilization reach under a man's surface? Just how close to that surface is the impulse to atavism? And obviously these questions apply to all races.

A well-written story, centring around a penetrative study of a man who, very conscious of his own shortcomings, has unwanted leadership thrust upon him. It will probably appeal to those who like catastrophe stories, and depress those who, like me, don't. But at least there is a promise of better things to come in the final pages and, to paraphrase a cliché - while there's hope, there's life.

Beryl Henley

THE MARTIAN WAY by Isaac Asimov

Published by DOBSON at 15/- . 209 pages

Two novelets and two short stories make up this excellent Asimov collection.

The title story poses the problem of supplying water (necessary for rocket propulsion) to Mars-based spacecraft, and the effects of this problem on the Scavengers - people who make money by salvaging the cast-away, free-falling booster stages of the Earth-Mars ships. When the trouble-making of an Earthside politician results in the rationing of water for the Scavenger's ships, they hit on an ingenious and very satisfactory way of getting their own water, and in the moment of triumph over adversity, they succeed in making the politician and his party appear very small.

"Youth" is the tale of two children who find and capture a pair of small aliens in the barn, and are tempted to use them to join a circus. Luckily, their plot is discovered by their fathers and the understanding and forgiving aliens depart, after an exchange of trade agreements. The twist at the end came as a complete surprise to me, and is unpredictable (or should be) to anyone who is not psychic.

"The Deep" tells of a subterranean race and a daring individual who sends his mind scouting across the void to Earth. Unfortunately, he knows nothing of the astronomical distance involved believing that Earth is actually the surface of his planet. However, the expected mix-ups don't happen as the two cultures turn out to be mutually incompatible - but are they?

"Sucker Bait", which completes the collection, is a very well-integrated 'what-dun-it'. The scene is a planet in the Hercules cluster; the mystery, the disappearance of a colony; the central character, a boy in the Mnemonic Service who is a walking memory bank. Dr Asimov again shows his ingenuity in the nature of the danger, which is recognised by the boy when he remembers an ancient book on.....but that would be telling.

The background to each story comes alive in the impeccable Asimov style and the collection is thoroughly worthwhile and readable. The discriminating SF addict cannot afford to give this one a miss.

Michael Turner

GUNNER CADE by Cyril Judd

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/-. 212 pages

The most incredible thing about this book is why Gollancz bothered to credit the book to 'Cyril Judd' and then take up a paragraph of their fly-sheet explaining that 'Cyril Judd' is Cyril Kornbluth and Judith Merril.

GUNNER CADE is one of the most excellent handlings of power and its corruption that I have ever read.

The central character of the book, Cade himself, is a soldier in a future society upholding, in their Klein philosophy, that the World and the Emperor were made simultaneously 10,000 years in the past. Apart from this date, the action could as well take place in any totalitarian state of today, as on the Earth and Mars of the future.

Cade has been brought up to treat War as almost a religion. It is so stereo-typed that there are rules that are never broken. Cade believes that his rulers are virtuous and divine, so when, through a mistake in which he is presumed dead, he finds out that it is not so, he is completely lost.

"This was no joke, Cade numbly realised. It was the end of his world.....Things are not what they seem, nor what you thought they were.....It's been kept working for 10,000 years by things being as they are and not as they seem.....Cade had been drained empty of the certainties of a lifetime."

After terrifying chases, Cade escapes to Mars, where the climax of the action takes place.

The ending vaguely dissatisfied me, as Cade seems to accept a very similar illusion to that which he has just so painfully been taken from.

Graham Hall

COUNTERFEIT WORLD by Daniel F Galouye

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/-. 155 pages

This book gripped me from the start and I was hoping that it wouldn't let go, lost I land with a thud.

It's superlatively written, always exciting and credible - sometimes too credible! Possibly influenced by Dunne's theory of serial observers, Galouye gives us a there-are-higher-beings-than-us story that easily laps anything on a similar theme.

The story is told in the first person - a good choice as the reader is sucked right into the action.

The world is controlled by a Government that uses a horde of Certified Reaction Monitors to sample public opinion on

every aspect of life. The results are used to determine policy. Hearing completion is a machine that will simulate electronically a community in its entirety. By testing the reactions of the 'people' in this electronic world, the Government hoped to apply the data to 'reality'. The CRMs see that their livelihood is in danger and, like all good unionists, threaten industrial action. Also, there is growing antipathy between two groups; one wants to use the machine for purely sociological purposes, while the other has a political, hence personal-power, motive.

From the time Doug Hall becomes technical director of Horace P Siskins' Reactions Inc., he is the 'i' in nightmare. REIN security chief, Morton Lynch, disappears, practically under Hall's eyes, then everyone denies that he ever lived. Hall struggles to hold on to his sanity despite frequent blackouts, sabotage to the machine and other inexplicable disappearances.

The 'people' in the simulelectronic machine don't know that they aren't 'real'. But one who is a contact man manages to transfer to a 'real' body and reveals that he knows he is merely a set of electrical impulses.

Gradually, the terrible thought grows in Hall's mind that his world, in its turn, has been created by a still higher authority and that it could be switched off anytime. Through Jim Fuller, 'daughter' of the eliminated Hanson Fuller, inventor of the machine, Hall learns that a higher Doug Hall, with a mean streak, is the simulelectronic controller who is going to destroy the world.

The story has an exciting climax, which I'll leave you to enjoy for yourselves.

If there are any prizes lying around, looking for a deserving book.....

Donald Malcolm

TWILIGHT WORLD by Foul Anderson

Published by PANTHER at 2/6. 123 pages.

It is partly because of the writing style and partly because so many books on the same theme and using the same ideas have been brought out since TWILIGHT WORLD was first written, that it now seems dated. When "Tomorrow's Children", the short story that makes up the first 25 or so pages of the book, was published in ASTOUNDING SF in 1947, it may have had a lot of unusual interest value. Today, with our complacent knowledge and even acceptance of nuclear war and mutation, the book's material seems practically devoid of any impact.

The writing style is depressingly lacking in innovation or above-average skill. A typical example of the rather obvious imagery and hackneyed manner of narration occurs on the first page "The man in the stratojet swore softly and bitterly, his knuckles whitening on the controls. He was a big man, his gaunt rangy form sprawling awkwardly in the tiny pressure cabin, and he wasn't quite forty. But his dark hair was

streaked with grey, his shoulders stooped in the shabby flying suit, and his long homely face was drawn into haggard lines.....He had seen too much, survived too much....."

This illustrates a commonplace (in science fiction) lack of subtlety or perception; and in fact the plot is as unremarkable as the standard of writing.

TWILIGHT WORLD is rather mediocre adventure fiction; it is not a bad book by any means, but we have seen this sort of thing many times before. The Poul Anderson fan will, no doubt, enjoy it and find it entertaining, but to the more discriminating reader it offers nothing different from a lot of other adventure stories - and certainly nothing new.

Charles Flatt

FAR STARS by Eric Frank Russell

Published by PANTHER at 2/6. 128 pages

Here we have 128 pages of entertaining fiction by EFR. The volume contains two novelets, "The Waitabits" and "Legwork", and four short stories, "P.S.", "Allamagoosa", "Diabologic" and "The Timeless Ones".

In the opening novelet, "The Waitabits", we read about a certain scout known as 'Gabby' Boydell. He travels the starways on the lookout for planets worth colonising, and sends home very brief reports. Back at base, Markham, in the Assignment Office, details such officers as Commodore Leigh, of the Battleship 'Thunderer' to follow up the initial report and take the first steps in colonising any suitable planet. And this is where the trouble comes in. Take, for instance, Planet 14 on Boydell's list. He names it 'Eterna' and the information concerning it amounts to one word - unconquerable.

"P.S." is a gem of a story about an old doctor with an unquenchable love for his fellow human beings - and others.

For those who like funny stories, "Allamagoosa" (about a space-ship's dog) will be a real wow-wow. What does "Allamagoosa" mean anyway? It sounds like something rude in Spanish.

"Legwork" is, by itself, well worth the 2/6. It has all the elements of a good mystery story plus such SF concepts as telepathy, shape-changing and the presence on Earth of a ruthless, sinister alien.

"Diabologic" is a funny story about a science which would have little or no effect upon the average SF fan - 'the science of driving people nuts.'

"The Timeless Ones" is certainly not a funny story; neither is it a dirty story although it concerns a race of beings who 'lost every battle in the field - and then won it in the bedroom'. The Timeless Ones are a race of black-eyed bipeds with names like Ah Fong. One day, it seems, they will rule the Galaxy.

One difficulty in reviewing a book of this nature stems from the fact that the stories have no unifying theme or mood, but of course the volume was not put together for the benefit of the

reviewer, but the reader. And as a reader I enjoyed it - especially "Legwork" and "F.S."

The cover, by the way, is tastefully done in shades of blue, green and flame, and is so glossy as to make one suspect it could have been prepared by some secret police organisation for the purpose of obtaining fingerprints.

W. T. Webb

THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE by H P Lovecraft

Published by LANCER at 60¢. 216 pages

One's opinion of this collection of seven tales by the master of Mythos, H P Lovecraft, will depend a lot upon how familiar with his work one is. There is nothing in the collection, although it is representative of the best stories he ever turned out, for the avid Lovecraftian fan. But for the tyro at the stories in the Cthulhu Mythos, it is a must.

"The Call of Cthulhu" is one of the seven. In this, Lovecraft laid down the bones of Mythos which was to spread to so many writers, most famous of which was August Derleth who wrote better tales of Mythos than did HPL himself. This Mythos, of an elder race that was cast out by the Elder Gods, yet still wait, dead yet not dead, to recapture the Earth, is written with such verisimilitude that most of its readers wonder if it is really true. Of course, I am not so credulous - and if anyone mentions that little statuette of Cthulhu I pray to every night, I'll use them as my next sacrifice!

"The Whisperer in Darkness", one of the best Cthulhu tales, is also included, as is "The Shadow Out of Time" - 'considered by many to be the best story he ever wrote', as the blurb runs.

"Cool Air" is another story fringing on the Mythos, and its similarity to "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" by Poe, probably accounts for the majority of the comparison between the two authors.

Three of his New England horror tales are also included - situated in the same area as the Cthulhu Mythos, but not about it.

"The Terrible Old Man", the shortest of the seven, is also among the worst Lovecraft tales published. It tells of three thieves who thought an old wizard was a soft touch - that soft that they sank beneath the surface of existence never to be seen again.....

"The Picture in the House" describes a New England Sawney Bean in horrid realism.

Lastly "The Colour out of Space", which, I discovered upon reading, was my Long Lost First SF Story. It still has the same impact - even the names, Thaddeus, Nahum, Kerwin, Zenas, conjure up horror. The only SF tale Lovecraft wrote, it too is set in the Arkham region, and tells of an aerolite that crashes near a well and 'pizened the whole place', having a terrible effect on the inhabitants of the region.

The best Lovecraft selection I've seen, next to THE HAUNTER OF THE DARK, perhaps. It's well worth getting both if you don't mind the overlap.

Graham Hall

/The above book is not available through normal sources in Britain but if anyone requires a copy, they may be able to obtain one from Fantast (Medway) Ltd., 75 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs. - RGP_/

MAGAZINES

The Magazine of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, July 1964

The lead story is "Cantata 140" (57 pages) by Philip K Dick. This tells of a negro candidate for the US presidency a century or three from now, who will (if elected) be the first of his race to hold that office. There are all sorts of stray characters with subplots of their own, wandering around all over the place, and very little happens that's strictly new - but everything seems to fall neatly into place at the end to make a not unsatisfying whole.

"The Struldbrugg Reaction" by John Sutherland, uses the formula of a Sherlock Holmes parody to be vaguely satirical about the contemporary American scene. At 18 pages, this story is about twice as long as it need have been, and suffers accordingly.

"We Serve the Star of Freedom" (15 pages) by Jane Beauclerk is one of the issue's two high spots - a light-hearted epic set on a planet with a delightfully original civilization. According to the blurb, Jane Beauclerk "is the pseudonym of a poet whose poems 'have been published here and there'; this is her first story sold." The blurb goes on to suggest that further stories of this planet may become available. I look forward to them: 'Jane Beauclerk', whoever she may be, is one poetess whose prose writings I would like to see more of.

There are five other stories, ranging in length from less than one page to less than five, all being essentially run-of-the-mill new-twist-on-stock-fantasy-theme items, and all agreeably short. The authors responsible are Robert F Young, Gahan Wilson, Toni Heller Lamb, Roger Zelazny and Ron Webb. The erudition of the blurb-writer (presumably editor Avram Davidson) seems to be slipping though - surely Wagner didn't write an opera on the 'Faust' theme?

The issue contains two articles, a short 'un and a long 'un. The short 'un, Theodore L Thomas on "Balloon Astronomy", is scientifically informative, whilst Good Doctor Asimov in "Nothing Counts" forsakes strict science for history to produce a fascinating account of various systems of writing numbers that have existed through the ages. This is the other high spot of the issue.

Finally there are two bits of verse by the late C S Lewis (reprinted from FUNCK) and Leah Bodine Drake respectively. And by way of a special bonus - neither hide nor hair of Ferdinand Peghoot throughout the magazine.

Archie Mercer

NEW WORLDS SF No. 143 - Jul-Aug 1964

"The Fall of Frenchy Steiner" (novelet): Hilary Bailey. Similar to THE SOUND OF HIS HORN by Sarban in that it is one of those 'if Hitler won the war' things. Pretty good explanation of how Hitler might have won the war and well written - but includes psi and therefore count it as fantasy.

"Stormwater Tunnel" (short): Langdon Jones. First published effort by the TENSOR fanman. Also unoriginal, being a Mobius circuit mix up - rather like that bird that flew round and round in circles. Well written and the idea is well handled.

"Goodbye Miranda" (short short): Michael Moorcock. Another psi (levitation) fantasy tale about a youth that levitated and promptly became hated. Below par.

"Single Combat" (short): Joseph Green. Another psi piece (who does he think he is? Campbell??), telling of an Earth spy/infiltrator who, by virtue of psi powers, rises to chieftainship on a primitive, undecided planet in a Galactic cold war.

"The Evidence" (short): Lee Harding. Fantasy again. An unoriginal Judgement Day story, all upon which subject was much more effectively said by H G Wells in "A Vision of Judgement" over half a century ago.

"Equinox" (conclusion of serial): J G Ballard. The only piece in the whole issue that falls into the SF bracket - and only then if you stretch a point. The description of the gradual taking over of our planet by a mysterious crystallising process that encases without killing. His description is strangely beautiful in parts but, throughout, I had the impression that he was trying to repeat THE DROWNED WORLD but only succeeding in being superficial. I can't claim to understand Ballard's work - I only know that I was 'deeply moved' by THE DROWNED WORLD but left stone cold by this.

The book reviews are uninspiring although there is an excellent Con report in lieu of Editorial. The Lettercolumn is fannishly interesting but otherwise only average.

Graham Hall

AMATEUR PUBLICATIONS

The BASRA Journal Vol. 1, No. 8. Edited and published by Jim England, 64 Ridge Road, Kingswinford, Staffs., England.

Reviewing this publication is like being asked to taste onions, salmon, orange marmalade, cucumber, curry, vegetable soup and kippers, one after the other, then comment on each individual flavour.

The articles range from "The Development of a 3Mev Accelerator" through "The Ideal Form of Government" to "Changes on the Moon", stopping off to poke provocatively into many a scientific nook and cranny.

I personally found some of the items unintelligible, due

to my own ignorance, but with a publication of this nature, that is inevitable for all readers. It would be interesting to poll the members of BASRA on this particular issue, to find out what percentage of it they understood.

I doubt if the compilation of some primes from 10-60 million has any value beyond the academic.

I like the 'anything goes' approach of the journal, something that should be encouraged. Even the attempt at original thought and research is stimulating to the mind.

The issue is a bit top-heavy with contributions by Jim England (don't stand up folks) but he plaintively admits this himself. Anyway, there'll always be BASRA as long as England's there. (I'm sorry I missed Charlie Platt's graphology article, mentioned here.)

Donald Malcolm

GESTALT 8. Edited by James Marshall, 32 Millway, Sheriff Hill, Gateshead 9. Quarterly - price 1/6.

Not having seen previous issues of this fanzine, I don't know whether it is better or worse than normal. I certainly hope the next issue is better as I thought this one poor. The parts I liked were "Lawfan" by Jim Marshall (a piece of fannish fiction, with characters such as Quiet Burp, Old Dad Slater, Libber Archie and Two Gun Tubb, concerning outlaws supplying duplicating ink to the Indians!) and "I Talked With Ghod" by Phil Harbottle (an account of Walt Willis's visit to Phil's home). Not quite so good but still interesting is Jim Marshall's column "Thro' a Bass Darkly". The rest of the contents were poor, including the Goon tale by John Berry (one of the very few Goon tales I haven't enjoyed). The worst part of this issue is the miscellany column by someone hiding under the name of 'Bushy Hedge'. Fandom can do without cynical comments like those made by Mr Hedge.

RGP

ZENITH 5. Edited by Pete Weston, 9 Perlock Crescent, Northfield, Birmingham 31. Quarterly - price 1/6.

Highlights of this issue (besides the excellent cover) are "The Life of Sector General" by Ed James and "The Nasopods" by Alexander Karanowski (reprinted from ANIMALS magazine). There is also a very good survey on the 1953 SF magazines by Chris Priest, but unfortunately this was spoilt in a small way by unnecessary remarks by the editor. A surprise item is "Panorama" by Walt Willis - a revival of the old NEBULA column. Phil Harbottle is also there with a strip cartoon version of Fredric Brown's short story "Blood". The piece of fiction, "The Day of Mars" by John H Barnsley is extremely poor but maybe I'm prejudiced as I don't like serious fiction in fanzines.

Incidentally, I would like to congratulate Pete who has just gotten engaged to Mary Read on June 27th, and also Cliff Teague who is getting engaged to Lesta Holmes on July 19th - RGP

AMERICAN BOOK RELEASES

- THE DUPLICATORS - Murray Leinster/NO TRUCE WITH TERRA - Philip E High (Ace 40¢)
- TO CONQUER CHAOS - John Brunner (Ace 40¢)
- SARGASSO OF SPACE - Andrew North (Ace 40¢)
- SAVAGE PELLUCIDAR - Edgar Rice Burroughs (Ace 40¢)
- ATLANTIDA - Pierre Benoit (Ace 40¢)
- I WANT THE STARS - Tom Furdon/DEMONS' WORLD - Kenneth Bulmer (Ace 40¢)
- PLAGUE SHIP - Andrew North (Ace 40¢)
- MOON BASE - E C Tubb (Ace 40¢)
- THE FORT OF PERIL - Otis Adelbert Kline (Ace 40¢)
- WORLD OF HULL-A - A E van Vogt (Ace 40¢)
- BEYOND THE FARTHEST STAR - Edgar Rice Burroughs (Ace 40¢)
- KEY CUT OF TIME - Andre Norton (Ace 40¢)
- MILLION YEAR HUNT - Kenneth Bulmer/SHIP TO THE STARS - Fritz Leiber (Ace 40¢)
- PODKAYNE OF MARS - Robert A Heinlein (Avon 50¢)
- INSEDE OUTSIDE - Philip Jose Farmer (Ballantine 50¢)
- FUTURE TENSE - Jack Vance (Ballantine 50¢)
- SPACE BY THE TAIL - Jerome Bixby (Ballantine 50¢)
- MARTIAN TIME SLIP - Philip K Dick (Ballantine 50¢)
- NON-STATISTICAL MAN - Raymond F Jones (Belmont 50¢)
- GODLING GO HOME - Robert Silverberg (Belmont 50¢)
- WORLD OF DIFFERENCE - Robert Conquest (Ballantine 50¢)
- THE STAR KING - Jack Vance (Berkeley 50¢)
- TERMINAL BEACH - J G Ballard (Berkeley 50¢)
- OTHER SIDE OF NOWHERE - Murray Leinster (Berkeley 50¢)
- YEAR'S BEST SF: 5TH ANNUAL SERIES - Judith Merril (Dell 75¢)
- VALLEY OF CREATION - Edmond Hamilton (Lancer 50¢)
- THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE - H P Lovecraft (Lancer 60¢)
- GOLDEN BLOOD - Jack Williamson (Lancer 50¢)
- THE HIGH CRUSADE - Poul Anderson (MacFadden 50¢)
- SINISTER BARRIER - Eric Frank Russell (Paperback Library 50¢)
- ANALOG 1 - John W Campbell (Paperback Library 50¢)
- FOOD OF THE GODS - H G Wells (Popular Library 50¢)
- THE SPACE BARBARIANS - Tom Godwin (Pyramid 50¢)
- THREE WORLDS TO CONQUER - Poul Anderson (Pyramid 50¢)
- THE FALLING TORCH - Algis Budrys (Pyramid 50¢)
- THE DARK LIGHT YEARS - Brian W Aldiss (Signet 50¢)
- DARK SIDE OF EARTH - Alfred Bester (Signet 50¢)
- THE BEAST - A E van Vogt (MacFadden 60¢)

BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

- THE CURRENTS OF SPACE - Isaac Asimov (Panther 3/6 - June)
- THE CAVES OF STEEL - Isaac Asimov (Panther 3/6 - June)
- THREE FROM OUT THERE - Leo Margulies (Panther 3/6 - June)
- THE KIND OF MR SCAMES - Charles Eric Maine (Panther 3/6 - July)
- THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON - H G Wells (Fontana 3/6 - July)
- THE VALLEY OF SPIDERS - H G Wells (Fontana 3/6 - July)

NO STARS FOR US - Robert Ray (Digit 2/6 - June)
 THE DESOLATE LAND - Eric Livesey (Digit 2/6 - June)
 THE NORMAN WAY - J T McIntosh (Digit 2/6 - June)
 ENEMIES IN SPACE - Groff Conklin (Digit 2/6 - June)
 MAN OF TWO WORLDS - Raymond F Jones (T&P import, Pyramid 2/6 -Jun)
 SKYLARK OF VALERON - Edward B Smith (T&P import, Pyramid 2/6 -Jun)
 SWORDS AND SWORCERY - L Sprague de Camp (T&P, Pyramid 3/6 - June)
 ESCAPE TO EARTH - Ivan Howard (T&P import, Belmont 3/6 - July)
 THE ETHICAL ENGINEER - Harry Harrison (Gollancz 15/- - August)
 BEYOND THE BARRIER - Damon Knight (Gollancz 15/- - September)

NEW MEMBERS

O 462 BARRY J.A. 2807, 27th Avenue, San Francisco 94116, Calif., USA.
 M 463 LEA D.H. 26 Heol Muston, Ely, Cardiff, Glamorgan.
 O 464 LAVRINOVICS S., E. Veidenbauma 31-10, Riga, Latvija, USSR.
 A 465 McGUINNESS R. 49 Derinton Road, Tooting, London SW 17.
 A 466 BALDOCK D. 26 Rowallan Road, Fulham, London SW 6.
 M 467 COLLINS C.J. 155 Wilsden Avenue, Luton, Bedfordshire.
 O 468 TROTTER L.J. 21 Broadway Avenue, Ottawa 1, Canada.
 M 469 MOORE F.J. 33 Carlton Terrace, Portslade, Sussex.
 A 470 BURNS W.V. 13 Westbourne Road, Winton, Eccles, Manchester.
 M 471 SMITH J.R. 34 Crookston Drive, Glasgow SW 2, Scotland.
 A 472 WOOD D. 14 Edinburgh Street, Radford, Nottingham.
 O 473 LEWIS A. 1025 Greenfield Avenue, Los Angeles 25, Calif., USA.
 M 474 SUMMERSGILL, W. 48 Severn Drive, Guisbrough, Yorkshire.
 M 475 ARMSTRONG 2nd Lieut. G.K. c/o 'Oaklands', Bulcote, Binton
 Joyce, Notts.
 M 476 SCOTE H.R. 8 Talbot Road, Wembley, Middlesex.
 A 477 MacKENZIE I.C. 9 London End, Beaconsfield, Bucks.
 M 478 WAINWRIGHT J.R. 110 Selborne Road, Southgate, London N 14.
 O 479 LUTTRELL J.H. Route 13, 2936 Barrett Station Road, Kirkwood,
 Missouri 63122, USA.
 M 480 PARKINSON R.C. 52, Mead Road, Cheltenham, Gloucs.
 A 481 MURRAY R. 118 Bonnyton Road, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Bruce Robbins now 58 Revonah Avenue, Stamford, Connecticut, USA.
 Graham Hall now 10 Barton Street, Tewkesbury, Gloucs.

According to the June 1964 THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN:- "The Order of Cthulhu" is a club devoted to the study of the life of H P Lovecraft and the Lovecraftian circle of writers. Membership will come with a subscription to the official organ, THE MISKATONIC JOURNAL, the first issue of which is now in preparation. For further information contact Scott Kutina, 16309 Marquis Avenue, Garden Grove, California 92641, USA.

JIM GRANT, 7 Sydney Road,
Fairmile, Christchurch,
Wants.

On receiving VECTOR 26 and cheerfully reading the editorial (which I usually skip), in anticipation I turned to page 4 and froze. The heading - REFERERCON '64. It seems a bit ironical that close to ten weeks after the Con, reports are still coming in. Why not publish a special report a couple of days after the Con and get it done with?

As usual, the book reviews were dealt with in a manner detailed but explicit - but what's happened to the not-reviews which were useful as notes for reference. And no Fanzine reviews - shocking!

I'd like to see a bit more interior artwork, and some fiction please.

Dick Howett's article was interesting and light-hearted, whether it was meant to be or not, I couldn't say. It was almost the sort of article that appears in the expensive weekend gossip columns.

/ VECTOR was mailed out roughly four weeks after the Con. If you choose to leave it another six weeks before you read it, you can hardly complain. The not-reviews have been thrown out to make room for more book reviews. And as for the fansine reviews and artwork - well, I can't review or print what I don't receive. If anyone sends review copies of fansines I'll include them. - RGF/

GRAHAM M HALL
10 Barton Street
Tewkesbury
Glouce

Dick Howett's article was woolly, vague and futilely destructive. The lack of material, you speak of, is shown strongly....(Actually, my back was well and truly got up by the sentence, "Why, if we see a bona fide Flying Saucer, do we have to ruin our chances of credibility by giving rubbish to the press who live on that sort of thing?". Sweeping statement. Very little press "lives on that sort of thing"). Anyhow, flying saucer reports have been published in Cheltenham as recently as early this year.

So CRANKS GO HOME! Goodbye Dick.

So Peristyle has never heard of Joe P Bronnan? I have



always thought he was one of the most well-known WEIRD TALES authors. Brings out a fanzine, MACABRE, in the US. Counted among the best too.

At last someone has made a statement I can add to! The Bradbury film, ICARUS MONTGOLFIER WRIGHT, is, I am told, an 18 minute semi-animated film based on the Bradbury story, drawn by Joe Mugnani and narrated by James Whitmore and Ross Martin. It has been shown at the White House twice, is released by Format Films (in the US) and was awarded an Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Nomination as one of 1968's five best cartoon shorts.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION bodes well for the future....Let's hope he ANSWERS questions instead of scrubbing round them like dear Doc does.

∟ Seems to me that everybody is going film crazy! All we want now are some decent SF films - RGP_/_

JIM ENGLAND
64 Ridge Road
Kingswinford
Staffs

I must protest at the inanity of the review of BASRA Journal No. 7 in VECTOR 26. From the first to the last line your reviewer shows that he doesn't have the slightest notion of what amateur science is. To start with, "There is room for the amateur scientist in many fields, notably astronomy and photography." says Ian McAulay. I would point out that photography is NOT a science; it is a branch of technology. Next, without knowing anything about the members of BASRA, he remarks that they are not "the most able amateurs in any field". I would point out that there are some very able amateurs in BASRA including C L Strong of SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, V A Firsoff, and others who Ian McAulay cannot be expected to have heard of. Re the form of cancer therapy, he starts off; "As a physicist, I am not competent to comment...", and then goes on to hint that the treatment has 'Hazards' and say that "the results are of no value"! Finally, he compares BASRA Journal unfavourably with professional magazines such as DISCOVERY. Considering that BASRA Journal has just over 50 readers and cannot afford to pay contributors, whereas DISCOVERY has over 100,000 and can, the disparity is hardly surprising. In any case, the primary object of BASRA is to promote scientific research and original thinking by amateurs, which magazines such as DISCOVERY emphatically do not.

PETER SINGLETON
Ward Two
Whittingham Hospital
Nr Preston
Lancs

Ian McAulay's review of BASRA Journal effectively squashed my half-formed intentions of subscribing to this publication. Ian's brief mention of DISCOVERY brought back nostalgic memories of boyhood when I used to delve avidly into the invariably fascinating variety of articles contained therein every month. I perforce developed the downright sneaky habit of carefully secreting copies of DISCOVERY inside issues of BATMAN and SUPERMAN when I felt called upon to read the mag during lunch breaks at school. I was once caught red-handed

with an issue and the curious reactions of my teacher and fellow pupils are too horrifying to bear thinking about. Reading scientific journals just 'isn't done' in modern secondary schools! But I had my revenge when I started carting a small wooden case around crammed with SF and unloading my surplus stock hither and yon. This move resulted in an informal chat among the staff about my 'sensational literature' with the eventual result that one teacher, after sampling a copy of ASF, changed the tag to 'thought provoking literature' - which was OK by me!

The photo section was superb - one of the best I've ever seen in a fanzine. It compares well with a beautifully reproduced Swedish fanzine cover consisting of portraits of fans which I remember well; I mean the now long-defunct CASTUS which was published by 'gafiate' Sture Sedolin.

TERRY PRATCHETT
25 Upper Riding
Holtspur
Beaconsfield
Bucks

In reply to Dick Howett's question; is there any reason why alien spacecraft shouldn't look like the saucer in FORBIDDEN PLANET? Would you rather an observer, on seeing a UFO that looked just like the above, altered his description so as to make it seem more plausible? Perhaps they really do look like that; if the occupants know that their ship was really cribbed from MGM they'd probably give up and go home. Definition: Half the time, a crank is someone whose beliefs or opinions you don't agree with.

VECTOR 27 struck me as a rather 'bitty' issue; but since it is the first under new management perhaps it is to be expected. The electro-stencils improved the layout no end; let's have more! The photos were a surprise too; but why did the Guest of Honour appear only once, in the back-background of one photo?

/It was rather unfortunate that Ted Tubb didn't appear in the photo section but I was unable to obtain a good photo of him - he was too busy dashing around trying to get people to join the BSFA!
- RGP_/_

CHARLES PLATT
8 Sollershott West
Letchworth
Herts

I liked Dick Howett's article very much indeed. It was extremely sensible. But not all saucer societies are nutty, Dick; I don't know whether it still exists, but there was one in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (The Tyneside UFO Society) which produced an extremely intelligent magazine called ORBIT. This contained details of all press reports on saucers, UFO's etc., plus the group's work in the field, which was extensive. No dogmatic ideas...just an amassing of evidence with some tentative conclusions. I don't think UFO's should be ignored, accepted or explained away; I think they should be investigated in a logical and scientific fashion like any other phenomena.

The photographs were very worthwhile. No doubt a lot of illusions are going to be shattered all round when people who weren't at the Con find out what their correspondents really look like....

ARCHIE MERCER
70 Worrall Road
Bristol 6

Jim Groves's conrep was a good balance of formal and informal reporting. The photos with it were a disappointment though - particularly that of the Hamiltons. Inasmuch as Jim omits to mention that they are both Hamiltons, and the photo is lousy, it might be as well to confirm that Mrs H. - Leigh Brackett - is pleasantly female. And why three shots of a certain bearded ex-editor of this magazine - surely there were plenty of other attendees worth recording for posterity in this way?

Re Charles Platt's letter - Harry Harrison mentioned when he submitted the "Glory Road" article that certain things he said might be a little too strong for some readers to take. If they were, then that's my fault. A copy of the VECTOR concerned has been sent to Robert Heinlein, incidentally - and Harry Harrison knew that it would be.

/ There were plenty of other attendees but it seems that every time they had their photos taken, you were there as well!! - RGP/_/

HARRY HARRISON
Rørtangvej 4
Snekkersten
Denmark

After reading VECTOR 26, I toyed a bit with the idea of writing an article entitled "Why Ron Bennett's 'Why Harry Harrison's "'Why Heinlein's GLORY ROAD is a Bad, Bad Book'" is a Bad, Bad Article' is a Bad, Bad Letter", but I restrained myself for the obvious reasons. Because in all truth, Ron could not have been more wrong if he put his clothes on backward and tied his tie down between his shoulderblades. The reason the book was bad is the same reason all of Heinlein's recent books have been bad - and getting progressively worse. It is the philosophy that is to blame. What Ron lists as the reasons why the book is bad, is the simple listing of what is bad about the thing - the mechanics of Heinlein's errors. What I have attempted to do is dig out the reasons why the errors were made. Which brings us back to philosophy again and Heinlein's need to propogandize. The reasons why a book is written are most important, and usually cause the book to succeed or fail. (I am leaving out of this discussion things like mysteries, that a competent writer in the field can turn out by the yard like so much salami.)

Let us have some examples to bring the heady talk back to reality. METHUSLAN'S CHILDREN was written because Heinlein wished to show the impact upon our society of a long-lived group living within it. The book was successful. In THE PUPPET MASTERS the oldhat idea of will dominating parasites was dusted off and Heinlein demonstrated that by hewing closely to the material and writing to the best of his ability, a good novel could be pared out of old cheese. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND uses another ancient device to examine a society - a stranger from the Outside. I recall a lovely old book put out by the A.A.A.A., The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism (how's that for a name!) entitled A MARTIAN EXAMINES CHRISTIANITY which used exactly the same device. But the agnostic Martian just kept saying why?

- whereas Heinlein's Martian took only a swift look at Barth, then started to change it. When this happened the propaganda started, boredom set in and the book went on and on. Do you see what I mean, Ron. The author's intentions are dreadfully important. And a last word, before I let you up off the floor, about THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT. I am cheered that you found it "vastly entertaining" and I think you did because it is not a "Hang on boys, I'll think of something in a minute" novel. Though I am glad you think so, that means I have covered the bare bones and concealed the artifice with which I constructed the plot. Before I write anything (and I'm compulsive about this) I have to know exactly where I am going, the major steps along the way and exactly what the ending will be. The RAT was written this way, which was why THE MISPLACED BATTLESHIP was not too successful a story - it was too obviously a chunk out of the middle of a book with a jury-rigged opening and end. Yet it was written before the book - but following the worked out plot structure.

Before I close, a kind word for Charles Platt. I admit the article was very blunt, it had not been planned that way but the events in Dallas intervened and pointed up my arguments. You don't know how lucky you are (and I say this in all sincerity with no tongue in cheek or contempt or suchlike) to live in a country where men have rights guaranteed by law and do not have to live in fear of their lives. This is not true in a lot of other places scattered around the world. I did not set out to insult Heinlein, but if I came close to it that is his fault. Anyone who advocates turning loose armed idiots in my backyard had just better be prepared to find me a little bitter at the thought.

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Having observed the gentle Harbottle/White fracas with growing excitement (rather like the Romans bringing each other's guts out for the inspection of the crowd) I find myself unable to keep out any longer and am compelled to leap into the arena brandishing my sword, longing for mayhem and someone's blood. The someone, in this case, is the relatively innocent figure of Keith Otter. As soon as Mr Otter came roaring in to the defence of one P Harbottle, waving his 2,515 page-long Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, I immediately dived for my own Funk & Wagnall's which, sad to relate, has only 1,572 pages. Here is what it said about mutation. Only the first and third definitions are relevant. (1); "The act or process of change." Simple enough, you might think. However, wait a moment. (3); "A sudden, well-marked, transmissible variation in the organism of a plant or animal, as distinguished from the gradual, cumulative changes over a long period." Mr Otter's quoted definition from his Oxford doesn't seem to agree with my resemblance. The F&W's definitions are exactly opposite Peter White's statement. No, I am not going to quote the quotes of any of these three gentlemen - it is all there in previous VECTORS.

It is my pet theory that no one wanting to know the meaning of a fantastically complex and semantically confusing term

should look it up in a dictionary. You might find a smug encapsulation, but not much else.

I would suggest that all parties retire and read some books first - then, if they still feel like it, return to war. For instance, both J M Smith's *THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION* and Asimov's *THE WELLSPRINGS OF LIFE* are excellent easy-reading popular studies. The Britannica has a very good section on the subject, and for really deep investigation for the amateur, there is always the many standard texts by Haldane, Huxley, Dobzhansky and of course ol' man Darwin himself.

Perhaps, having found out a little more about the subject, people, like Mr Otter and myself, will find it unnecessary to fling dictionary definitions about like confetti.

It was a monk called Gregor Mendel who first discovered about mutation, though the word itself was coined, from the Latin 'to change', by Hugo de Vries. What Mendel discovered was that mutation did not, as was previously supposed, average out after a short while and become lost. In actuality, the same characteristic of a mutation appeared and reappeared for generation after generation without being mixed or diluted with unmutated stock. This effectively proved Darwin's theory of 'natural selection': he was unable to explain one or two rather obvious faults before he died, but Mendel, or rather the discoverers of Mendel's observations, got rid of the uncertainties and, incidentally, deprived the Fundamentalists of one of their major weapons, driving one more nail into their coffin.

However, to get back to the point. If a mutation occurred in a species, the characteristic of it could survive until natural selection either wiped it out if the mutation were a poor adaptor, or advanced it if the mutation were not. That is one way a new species is created. Peter White is right when he says it is a 'random genetic change'. What else could it be? It certainly isn't an evolutionary change even though it might produce a new species. It is simply a change. That's all.

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The VECTOR lettercol seems to be turning into a battleground these days. Even our old friend Jim England is in there snacking my bottom for me. Well, let's see if I can bring a blush to his cheeks.

There is no feud between Peter White and myself. In fact, I'd like to regard Peter as a friend. We sought each other out at Peterborough in order to discuss our respective grievances as evinced in recent respective letters - and were immediately able to resolve our differences. Evidently we had both misinterpreted each other's remarks.

Jim seems to find it contemptible that I should be in the habit of answering my critics. I'm afraid I just don't see it. So long as I consider the criticisms to be unfounded or refutable, I won't hesitate to say so. People are at liberty to argue back at me, so why worry? Useful criticism is always welcome. Charles Flatt, for instance, said, in effect, that I'd

devoted too much space to synopsis and not enough to commentary on stories - thereby losing point and interest. It's good advice and I shall certainly take note of it for future articles. But when I'm called to task for omitting to mention stories which don't even exist, such as STAR WORMHOLES - then I won't hesitate to make a stink about it.

Jim was, for once, quite right in 'exposing' the ambiguity of my remarks anent striking. It should have been apparent to anyone reading them carefully anyway, and in any case I explained the position in a covering letter to the editor at the same time. I wanted to give an initial impression of striking to jolt people up a bit - to make them think a bit more clearly before sending in deprecating remarks. Not just for my own stuff, but for everyone's. A correspondent, replying to my question as to why he didn't send in material for VECTOR, said that he just didn't think it was worth it. Either it's like chucking your work into a vacuum - no response whatsoever - or some clever guy, usually a non-contributor, picks holes in it. This fellow is capable of outstanding work, and it is very much VECTOR's loss. But I don't blame him for choosing other outlets.

Another reason for staying out was that I thought it would give the editor a chance to clear the 'backlog' of material that I may have been holding up - to give others a chance. Now the editor tells us that the VECTOR files are 'disastrously thin'. See my paragraph above and draw your own conclusions.

Thirdly, by announcing my 'retirement' I hoped to encourage people to attempt to fill the gap by showing how they could do the sort of things I've attempted - and do them ten times better - just to show me that I wasn't so indispensable. To my great delight, someone has accepted the challenge. Jim England is working on THE CONCEPTS OF SF for us. Bravo! I look forward to reading them; the working title (which seems familiar) has unlimited scope. I only hope more of the members will follow Mr England's example. It will certainly be in their own interest, because so long as the disgraceful paucity of material continues, the editor will be forced to solicit more clangorous, third-form standard English articles, in which I shall continue to show a fine facility for confusing fact with fiction, imagination with reality - nor will I hesitate to hurl abuse at my critics. Sounds awful doesn't it? And the piece I'm working on at the moment, WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION, will be in eleven parts. So get cracking now and contribute enough material to crowd it out - or take the consequences.

/The material situation is now looking slightly healthier. The next issue is lined up - THE AUTHOR'S LOP by Edmond Hamilton and THE LIGHT FANTASTIC - a study of Jack Vance - by Terry Bull plus the usual features. Articles promised are the above mentioned CONCEPTS OF SF and WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION (when is someone going to send a Fantasy article in?) and another two articles by Terry Bull. So I should fill the next two or three issues quite easily. My main worry at the moment is artwork. Especially cover artwork! - RGP/