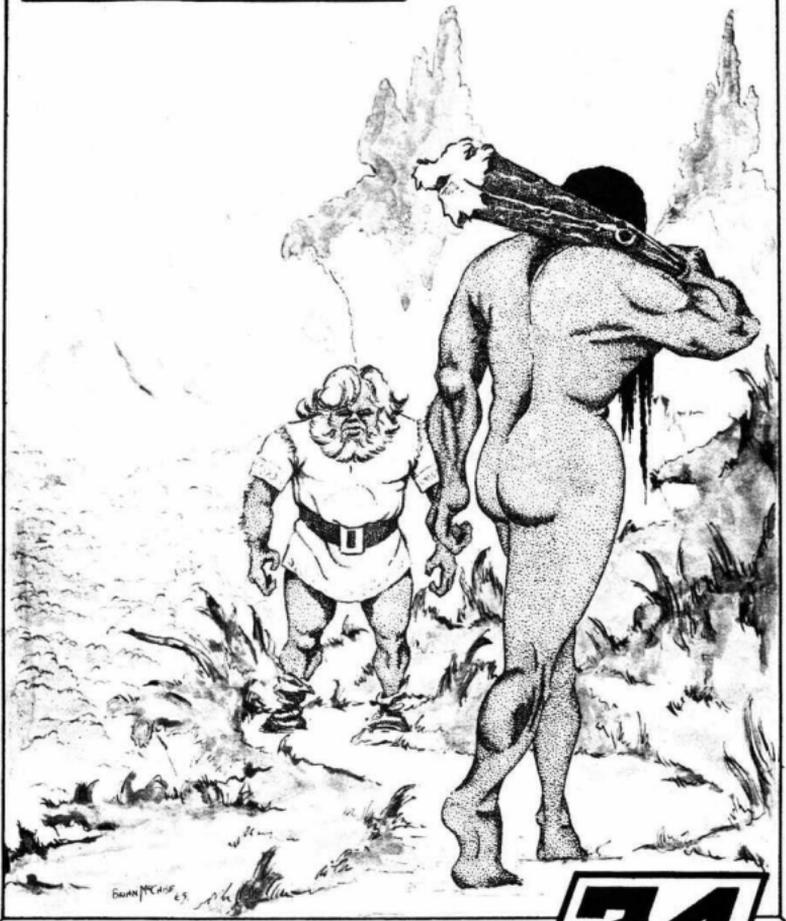


Vector



34

VECTOR

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

Number 34

August 1965

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EDITORIAL

Apologies are made for the lateness of the last issue of VECTOR - No 33. The typing was finished about two weeks after Whitsun and I handed the stencils over to Pete Weston. From there on everything seemed to go wrong; - the duplicator was out of action for a couple of weeks and then when the printed sheets were finally handed over to Alan Roblin for collating, the error in the page numbering was noticed and an extra page had to be run off. By the time you received V/33, most of the news was out of date and many of you must have been wondering if we'd retired or something. Anyway, while all the hold-ups were going on, work continued with V/34. In fact, as I write this, V/33 has only been issued one week and as yet, I have only received a couple of letters of comment on the last issue. So....no MAIL RESPONSE this time but if any really interesting letters are received concerning V/33, they'll appear in V/35 - space permitting.

The Library has now been moved to its new address - anyone wanting to borrow books should now write to John Nash, 5 Whitehedge Road, Garston, Liverpool 19.

Thanks to Archie Mercer who very kindly offered to print V/34 at such short notice.

Rog Payton

((And wishes to apologise for the result ! All))

Any SF fans in the Sheffield/Doncaster areas who would be interested in starting a local SF group (as has been done in London and other large towns) please contact T Jones, 27 Lansbury Ave., Rossington, Doncaster, Yorks.

A CHECKLIST OF POUL ANDERSON compiled by Roger G Payton. 28 pages listing all Anderson's stories to appear in the SF magazines and his novels of SF/fantasy. Plus a foreword by Don Malcolm and artwork by Brian McCabe. Price 3/6 (including postage) from Rog Payton, 77 Grayswood Park Road, Quinton, Birmingham 32, England, or price 50¢ (including postage) from Hank Luttrell, Route 13, 2936 Barrett Station Road, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122, USA.

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"THE ERODED LANDSCAPE" by Bob Parkinson

"Men are so necessarily fools that not to be so would amount to another mode of folly."

- Blaise Pascal
"Pensees"

If literature, and in particular fiction, is concerned with the entire range of human experience accessible to expression by the written word, then we might reasonably expect the choice of locale, in particular cases, to have only the most tenuous connection with what we think of as the present, 'real' world. The world of our familiar, everyday lives is too rich in association, in experience and history, to provide a stage suitable for essential, basic concerns. And to dig beneath the surface of this world is to become lost in a maze of uncertain origins and shifting identities. The result is the incredible, flickering dream-world of Joyce's FINNEGAN'S WAKE.

The alternative is to reduce the world itself to mere essentials; to strip off the trees, flowers, shrubs, topsoil, until all that remains is the eroded skeleton of things as they were. Here the demands of the landscape no longer conflict with the concerns of the survivors, for the two have fused into one. The technique is not unfamiliar in science fiction. At present, it is most readily identifiable in the works of J G Ballard, but it has been an essential component of science fiction from the very beginning: It also happens to be the way of a writer named Samuel Beckett.

Beckett's fiction - both novels and plays - leads itself naturally to description in science fictional terms. A recent critique of his work begins in this manner -

"On Samuel Beckett's planet, matter is minimal, physiography and physiology barely support life. The air is exceedingly thin, and the light exceedingly dim. But all the cluttered complexity of our own planet is required to educate the taste that can savour the unique flavour of Beckett's

creation," *

This might almost be the review of the latest Ballard story. Instead it is the beginning of a work of serious literary criticism.

The effect spreads downwards too; for this is not a solitary, enlightened individual crying in the wilderness. My companion at a recent production of *ENDGAME* also felt the need to qualify the occasion. "It was after an atomic war, or something, wasn't it? They were the only people left?" But her necessity to relate it to the present, 'real' world was a measure of her inability to accept it as a fantasy-world, unrelated in any merely dimensional terms to the here-now. Like Milligan's *OBLONOV*, the locale of *ENDGAME* is the theatre. The actors, if not the audience, are continually aware of this.

ENDGAME is Beckett's second published stage-play, the first being the better known *WAITING FOR GODOT*. Like *GODOT*, it is a 'play' largely in the sense that it takes place on a stage, before an audience, and in a theatre. A certain school of criticism, schooled in misnomers, would call it an 'anti-play'; but the word 'play' also has the connotations of non-utilitarian activity, a diversion, a game. Like his friend and countryman Joyce, Beckett uses the pun as the pinnacle of semantic perfection. It is not by accident that *ENDGAME* is a play about the finish of things.

The scene - if it is anywhere - is a dimly lit shelter containing the last four people alive. The external world is one of desolation and death. One of the room's two windows stares out over the vast wastes of an empty ocean, the other over a barren and scorched earth. Egress from the room is possible only to the still mobile Clov - certainly not to Hamm in his armchair on casters, nor to Nagg and Nell in their respective dustbins - and Clov, we soon realize, will not go, despite his constant threats to do so. The stage has become the world.

Unlike the conventional post-atomageddon stories of science fiction, these people are not concerned with survival - either of themselves, or of their species. In the case of species, the situation is already irredeemable by virtue of certain elementary biological requirements. Nell, mother to Hamm, is already maimed and incarcerated in her dustbin at the opening of the play; and by its end she no longer even answers from that. As for themselves, the characters know they are dying, and would wish to hurry up with the whole tedious business. "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished," are the words with which Clov opens the play. So unconcerned are these people with survival that when Clov discovers still extant life in the form of a flea, his immediate response is to declare total chemical warfare upon it (in the form of DDT) - though it was the last flea in the world.

How different are our reactions! In the background I

* COHN, R. "Samuel Beckett: the Comic Gamut." (Rutgers U.P., New Brunswick, 1962) p. 3.

hear the cry of Gully Foyle, "Millions for defence, not one cent for survival!"

Perhaps the commonest question asked about Beckett is, "Can the man be serious?". To this we can answer an immediate and unequivocal "No!". Beckett is not serious, although his laughter and tragedy mix. His stock character is a tramp-clown; his prevailing mood ironical; his favourite word-play the pun. But the answer no longer helps us, for we can no longer divide literature into the 'serious', and that merely intended for entertainment. Beckett is at the point where the Aristotelian logic of such classification breaks down - the Russell Paradox of literature.

Lawrence Durrell, in his ALEXANDRIAN QUARTET, has one of his characters write a book entitled "God is a Humourist". This sums up Beckett's position precisely; his God must be a humourist to create a creature like Man - and so Beckett, in his god-like role as the author, must also be the ironical humourist, to mirror the 'real' universe. At precisely those points at which the audience laughs at the total ridiculousness of the whole thing, or its outrageousness, does the play succeed. And yet the subject of this laughter is decay, dissolution and the approach (although never the actual arrival) of death. We are laughing at these most tragic aspects of our lives - presumably because we could not bear to weep. The evidence is that we must take the depth of Beckett's ironical laughter very seriously indeed.

Beckett himself, in an early work, quotes a paradox of Duns:

"Now among our wise men, I doubt not but many would be found, who would laugh at Heraclitus weeping, none of which would weep at Democritus laughing."

Indeed, this is a serious problem represented by these two archetypes of Greek philosophy. We have a saying to the same effect in the common tongue.

However, the purpose of this essay is not to continue this critical discussion of Beckett's work any further. To do that would demand an astonishing amount of erudition and space, neither of which are available here. Instead, the purpose has been to show that here, well within the boundaries of what we would commonly recognise as science fiction, there is a work not only intelligible to, but also insistently amenable to, detailed literary criticism. Because, despite its alien background, it still deals in recognisably and importantly human terms, that criticism is valid; and because of its existence, science fiction cannot expect a special pleading, but must be judged alongside the criteria of established literature.

But the corollary is also true - the corollary stated at the beginning of this essay: that to investigate the full range of human possibilities it will sometimes be necessary to step completely outside the normal range of human existence. If you like, you can call that science fiction.....

Postscript

The text of ENHGAME, together with a short "Act Without Words 1", is published by Faber and Faber (London, 1963) in a paper-covered edition at 4/6d.

Editor's note

This article is the first of two to appear in these pages. The second one will be titled "The Fantasies of Jorge Luis Borges".

For those of you who are wondering why Bob Parkinson writes about authors who will be unknown to the majority of the BSFA membership, I include here a section of the letter accompanying the second article:

"For those of your readers who wish to know why I choose obscure 'literary' writers from the fringes of SF to write about, instead of people whose work is generally known, I offer the following explanation.

First, there is a growing discontent with the usual (almost non-existent) critical standards within science fiction 'fandom'. By importing works of writers of 'philosophical fantasies' of genuine literary merit into the field of science fiction, I can make the points I wish to make about the field of science fiction writing.

Secondly, I feel that science fiction has become a closed field, unaware in the main of the important developments that have been taking place in fiction writing outside it in the last few decades. I believe that unless we wise up to the situation fast, there is a genuine danger that SF may lose the initiative in the medium it has pioneered."

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CONCEPTS OF SF

Jim England

PART 2: SPACE TRAVEL

It is not strictly true to say (as many SF writers and popular science-writers have said) that all our attempts to forecast the future are bound to be too conservative. One does not have to go very far to find numerous examples of excessive optimism in forecasting the future. They can be found in abundance in the pages of the daily Press. Even in 1965, the majority of journalists show little indication of having much knowledge of science, and many seem quite content to distort scientific findings and make impossible forecasts - anything for the sake of a good story. Even some of the best science-writers have erred on the side of excessive optimism in recent years. Alou E Nourse, for instance, in *NINE PLANETS*, wrote in 1960 that the first manned landing on the Moon would be accomplished "within a decade, and more than likely within the next five years. We can be certain that a landing on Mars will be attempted shortly thereafter, and possibly even before the Moon." There seems little likelihood of this forecast coming true.

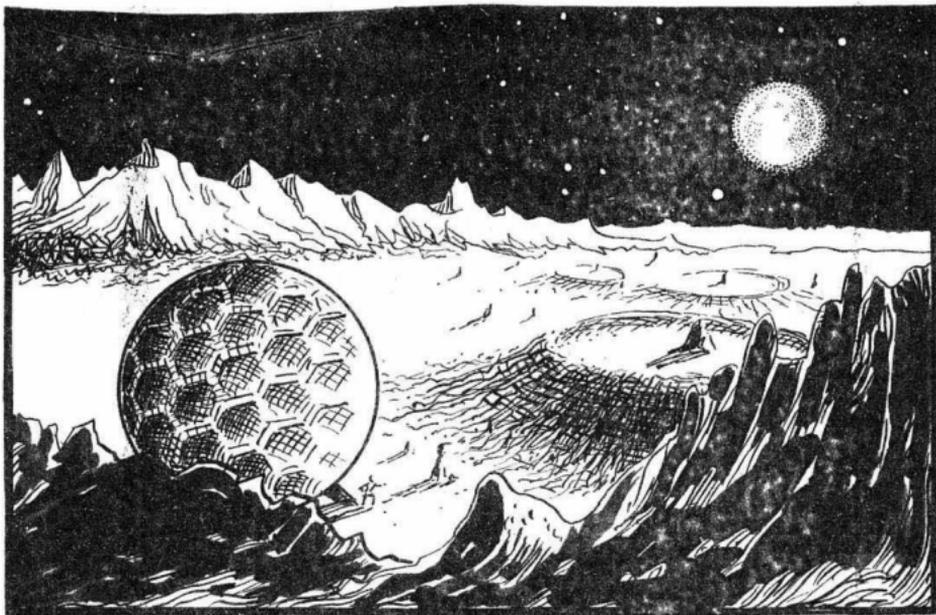
In these days of space-probes and sputniks, the probability that Man will eventually set foot on the Moon and planets is accepted by most people; and rightly so. But many people seem to greatly underestimate the problems to be overcome before such exploits become feasible. At present, the USA plans to put a man on the Moon by 1970, but can we be certain they will do it? The cost will be enormous and will affect people, directly or indirectly, in every town and city in America. The Russians have declared that they are not interested in the 'Space Race' and do not intend to sacrifice astronauts' lives for the sake of it. They will get to the Moon in their own good time. This being so, it is at least possible that no-one will set foot on the Moon until some time after 1970 (although a space-station may well be built before then). Even granted that the present plans of governments for space-exploration materialise as soon as expected, can we be sure that the first manned landings on the Moon and Mars will be followed by further visits? There may be long periods during which World conditions or technical problems make the

establishment of Lunar and Martian bases impracticable.

The optimism of SF writers often arises because they attempt to extrapolate from developments of the past few decades. Because there have been immense developments in the last twenty years - faster planes, more drugs, cars and household gadgets, better living standards - they assume that at least equally spectacular changes will take place in the next twenty years. This line of argument can be made to sound very plausible, but it can be false; obviously so, in some instances. Reasoning by analogy with the past is seldom a safe business. So we must beware of excessive optimism.

On the other hand, excessive pessimism is equally undesirable. Arthur C Clarke gives some good examples of erroneous pessimistic forecasts in PROFILES OF THE FUTURE (Gollancz, 1962), including Dr Richard van der Riet Woolley's famous (or infamous) "Space-travel is utter bilge", uttered just a year before Sputnik I, and now about as familiar to SF fans as Henry Ford's "History is bunk". He goes so far as to state 'Clarke's Law' - "When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong." This is perhaps stretching things a bit, but there is certainly a powerful tendency in men (and not necessarily elderly ones) to ridicule all ideas than the traditional and conservative. Maybe it is connected with 'authoritarian' methods of education. When I joined the British Interplanetary Society in the late forties, and attended branch meetings at Manchester, the BIS was obliged to defend itself continually against criticism and ridicule from 'authorities' who 'knew better' than to believe space travel would ever be possible.

The concepts of interplanetary and interstellar travel are perhaps the most widely used in science fiction and are closely associated with it both by readers and non-readers of the genre. The first tale of flight beyond the Earth is reputed to have been the TRUE HISTORY - a sort of satire involving a trip to the Moon via waterspout - written by Lucian of Samosata around 165 AD, but the theme can hardly be said to have undergone continuous development between then and now. There was a gap of nearly 1500 years between this and the next SF story, Kepler's SOLNIUM written in 1634. Only a handful of space travel stories followed between this and Jules Verne's FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON, in 1865. Verne's space-gun method of propulsion to the Moon is unfeasible because of (a) atmospheric friction, and (b) nobody could withstand the acceleration, as pointed out by Patrick Moore in SCIENCE & FICTION (Harrap & Co. 1958). H G Wells' 'favorite' which came later, in THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON, is also unfeasible, chiefly because its existence would contradict the principle of conservation of energy. Patrick Moore does not state this however; he says "The trouble about cavorite is that it is a purely imaginary substance, impossible to manufacture. The whole idea goes against everything that we have learned about nature... gravity is due neither to waves nor to particles: it is inherent



in every body and it cannot be screened." Moreover, he states "It is easier to believe in Verne's space-gun than in Wells' gravity-screening material. Neither is practicable, but the one is scientific while the other is not." On the whole, Moore's book suffers from 'authoritarian' and rather meaningless statements of this type. Nobody knows exactly how gravity produces its effects. Nobody can say for sure that gravitational waves and/or particles do not exist. And until we know a great deal more about the nature of gravity, we cannot say that methods of neutralising it (albeit not of a favorite variety) will never be found.

After World War I, space-travel stories began to be produced in vast numbers, rapidly making up for the shortage of past centuries. Unfortunately, the increase in quantity was not accompanied by an improvement in quality. What Patrick Moore calls the 'Age of Monsters' in SF reached its height about 1934 when the plot of virtually every SF story involved a BEM. The imaginations of SF writers ran wild - as if in reaction against the conservatism of the past. But although they ran wild, they followed the paths of least resistance. The result was almost undiluted rubbish, full of half-naked females, monsters and scientific 'clonsters'. As Terry Bull pointed out in "The World Saver Returns" (VECTOR 31), Edmond Hamilton was writing in 1929

about intergalactic flights lasting no more than a few days, and this was superior space-opera of the period. In general, authors were more interested in writing action-packed adventure-fantasy than in trying to imagine what the future might really be like. Many of them ignored known facts, such as the virtually non-existent atmospheric pressure on the Moon and physical data concerning the planets. Stories were written in which green-skinned Martians hob-nobbed with native Mercurians, Venusians, Jovians, Saturnians and Plutonians. Space-opera is still with us, but at least the aliens have moved out into space to the planets of other stars, and the BELIE are becoming an extinct species.

Ignoring most of the pure fantasy, the stories that have been written about space-travel can be roughly classified according to the period in which the action is supposed to take place. In the past, perhaps too much SF has concerned itself with the remote future and not enough with the near future. One would think that only the remote future and distant reaches of the Galaxy are capable of being interesting. Certainly the most momentous event in the history of mankind will be that 'first contact' with another intelligent race which so many authors have written about. Nowadays, a science fiction story simply describing the launching of an artificial satellite of the kind now familiar would probably never see print, as it might have done a decade ago. The gang of men floating around in space, building a space-station, is familiar to all SF addicts and will probably soon be out of the running, too. But does the same apply to the 'First Men in the Moon' theme, 'First Men on Mars' theme, and 'First Men on Venus' theme? Surely not. There will be surprises waiting for us on the Moon, Mars and Venus, no matter how carefully we plan or how hard we think. The dearth of good stories set on these is not caused by limitations of the subject matter. Some successful stories have been written about spaceships which never even get as far as the Moon. A story by Lee Correy, "The Plains of San Augustine" in ASTOUNDING SF July 1955, has the slight plot that a test-model of a spaceship crash lands in the desert and difficulties are encountered in servicing it. Several stories have been written on the theme that 'the Planners' or somebody sabotage the first attempts at space-travel. In the same month of July 1955, NEW WORLDS featured a story, "No Space for Me" by Alan Guthrie, suggesting that space-travel might prove impossible for obscure psychological reasons. Stories have been written (e.g. Alfred Coppel's "The Dreamer") about prospective space-pilots who fail psychological tests of suitability. J K Aitken's "Performance Test" in NEW WORLDS May 1952, was about psychological tests and free-radical explosives.

Going further afield, excellent stories about the first Lunar Base and first Space-Station have been written by authors such as Arthur C Clarke and Robert A Heinlein. "The Sentinel" by Arthur C Clarke is a thought-provoking little story leading up to the discovery on the Moon of a device to inform aliens of Man's successful arrival. A FALL OF MOONDUST (Collanetz, 1961) has the simple plot that a dust-cruiser is buried 15 metres down in the exceedingly fine dust of the Sea of Thirst, and difficulties are

encountered in rescuing the crew and passengers. Similarly, Heinlein's THE GREEN HILLS OF EARTH is a collection of short stories making such simple themes as air-leakage in Luna City and the loss of a spacesuited boy on the Lunar surface as entertaining as space opera, with none of its incredibility. "Special Flight" by John Berryman (ASTOUNDING SF May 1959) is an early example of a rather dull Lunar Base story full of technical details. Rafe Bernard's THE WHEEL IN THE SKY (Ward Lock, 1954) is a full-length novel of the America-versus-Russia variety involving the first Space-Station. Algis Budrys' "Man in the Sky" (ASTOUNDING SF Aug 1956) has the plot that a man dies whilst working on the first Space-Station and funds are wasted due to the public outcry.

According to Patrick Moore, the artificial satellite theme goes back as far as 1869 when E E Hale wrote "The Brick Moon". The more famous "Of Two Planets" by Kurd Laszwitz (1897) has a plot which revolves around a Space-Station, amongst other things.

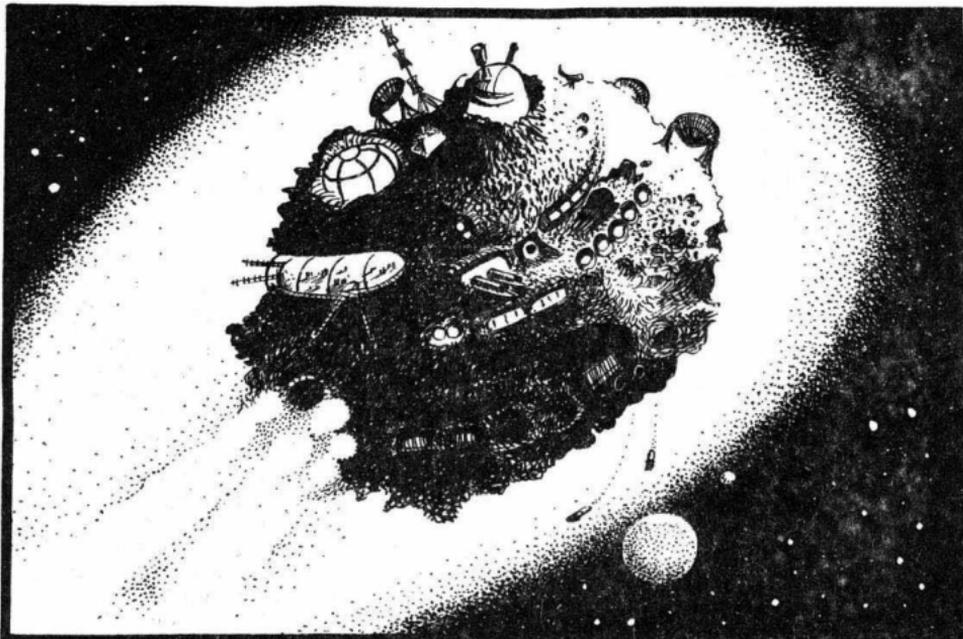
Even now, despite close-up pictures of the Moon, we know very little about the Lunar surface and there is ample scope for stories about the Lunar Base. An interesting question is how soon it would be possible for a Lunar Base to become self-supporting. Chemistry is probably the most advanced of all the sciences at the present time, but chemists cannot answer such questions as how to make the extraction of the 20% aluminium from clay into an economic proposition. How soon could they devise methods of extracting air and sustenance from the lunar rock.

As regards Space-Stations, they have potentialities quite apart from their use as interplanetary bases. They would make possible experiments over a very wide temperature-range (using solar mirrors) and in high vacua, which could not be carried out on Earth. They would also make possible physical, chemical and biological experiments under zero-g. Finally, they could be the site of telescopes (optical and radio) bigger than any which would be feasible on Earth. Add to this their usefulness for communications and weather-forecasting, and it is easily seen that in the long-term they might easily re-pay the whole cost of the Space Race, by resulting in new discoveries.

The military potential of space-stations and Lunar bases seems to have been greatly over-rated. Suppose, for instance, that a Russian manned base existed on the far side of the Moon, completely impregnable because it could not be sighted by circum-lunar probes. Suppose that the base was equipped with large numbers of H-bombs. It might be true that its staff could destroy any Earth city at will, without fear of retaliation. But retaliation against the Soviet Union itself would not be prevented at all. The same end could be achieved, at far less cost, simply by building an underground base somewhere in the vast spaces of the USSR. No matter how all-out a nuclear war became, hideouts could be made which would enable small numbers of mankind to survive. The aim of both sides, however, would be to have large numbers of the population surviving on their respective sides.

It would be pointless to give a long list of stories that have been written about Mars and Venus. Suffice it to say

that there is still ample scope for other stories about them. Nobody knows what lies behind the shroud of Venus, and nobody can explain the changing colours and markings of Mars. It is strange to think that the 200-inch telescope on Mt Palomar can detect objects thousands of millions of light-years distant and yet tell us so little about Mars and Venus, only a fraction of a light-year away and visible to the naked eye. What little we do know about these two planets is intriguing. There is certainly oxygen on Mars and it would be quite easy for Martian colonists to extract it. It is quite on the cards that life will be found on both Mars and Venus, of a kind unknown on Earth. We may even find relics of an extinct civilisation on Mars, as has often been suggested, if it turns out that the planet ever possessed seas in which life could have originated. There is less scope for stories about Mercury and the outer planets, but some good stories have been written. Isaac Asimov's "Runaround" (ASTOUNDING SF Mar 1942), for



*With acknowledgements to Alex Schomburg-
'Space Ark' - Science Fiction Plus.*

instance, involved robots on the 2nd Mercury expedition in 2015. His "Victory Unintentional" (SUPER SCIENCE STORIES Aug 1942) was about Jupiter. So were Fredric Brown's THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY ARE STARS (published in UK as PROJECT JUPITER) and James Blish's "Bride" (ASTOUNDING SF Feb 1952).

Once the first story has been written about a particular planet, the possibility arises of writing follow-up stories. Many writers assume that colonisation will be automatic after the first visits, but is this true? It would be far easier to colonise the unexplored parts of Earth, where conditions are less hostile. The planets will not solve Earth's population problem, nor is it likely that they will ever be mined for metals which will be shipped to Earth. However, some excellent stories have been written about 'planetary engineering' - changing the atmospheres of planets into breathable ones, over periods of centuries. There is scope for plenty of stories about the asteroids and satellites of the planets. Unlike the planets, the asteroids might one day be a practicable source of rare metals. They could also serve as natural space-stations. Finally, a hollowed out asteroid (or best of all a minor satellite of Pluto, if it turns out to have one) might provide an ideal vehicle for Man's first trip to the stars. A lot depends on the physical nature of the planetoids available. But there are plenty of them, and for all we know some may be virtually pure nuggets of gold, some pure ice or carbon dioxide, and some high in radioactives. The shell of a suitable planetoid would make a wonderful spaceship hull for the long interstellar journey, and it would not have to be lifted up from a planetary surface or dragged far from the powerful pull of the Sun.

It has been estimated (C M Cado, DISCOVERY April 1963) that no more than 4.5% of all stars can give rise to intelligent life. About 40 stars are situated within 5 parsecs (16.7 light-years) of the Sun, and probably only two of these meet the conditions required. These are Epsilon Eridani, a K2 type at 10.7 light-years, and Tau Ceti, a G4 type at 10.9 light years. At 25,000 mph, the journey would take more than 250,000 years. There is nothing to stop Mankind sending instrumented space-probes to these stars even now, but it would take too long for the information to come back. A manned interstellar journey will surely not take place for a very long while. Alan E Nourse has said "The ultimate barrier to interstellar travel may well be the philosophy of the men who seek to achieve it: the materialistic 'you can't take it with you' philosophy which today and throughout history has motivated human actions, both individually and as a race." (NINE PLANETS, 1960). Until (if ever) this philosophy changes, the best thing we can do is to keep up a vigilant search for messages from the intelligent races of the Galaxy which almost certainly exist in great numbers. This kind of contact is the best we can hope for, for a very long while. Even if the speed of light could ever be exceeded, Galactic Empires of the kind familiar in SF cannot be taken seriously and must be relegated with great reluctance to the infinite and happy realms of pure, or almost pure, fantasy.

MAGAZINES

reviewed by

Graham Hall

MAGAZINES REVIEWED

SCIENCE FANTASY	74
(July)	
SCIENCE FANTASY	75
(August)	
NEW WORLDS	152
(July)	
NEW WORLDS	153
(August)	

For a considerable time, the British SF scene was dominated by the basic fact that our writers were "good at a catastrophe". This view was largely brought about by the excellence and popularity of John Wyndham's work, with contributions from several lesser writers.

Keith Roberts, in the July and August SCIENCE FANTASY's, has obviously attempted something very much along the same lines; the first two-thirds of his novel "The Furies" is, thematically, almost identical. Roberts is a good writer; his Anita series has proved justly popular, and his style is usually, if not impeccable, not superficially faulted. In this, his first novel, he is a little out of his depth - his characters seem like refugees from the Anita series, and on one or two occasions he uses a painfully mechanical way of continuing the plot or introducing new characters. It has all the marks of a beginner's novel, but, peculiarly enough, it still manages to be a gripping tale. Not up to Wyndham standard, but Roberts seems to be heading for an ending; something Wyndham's novels never quite managed to do.

The July SFY is dominated by the first part of the novel - 97 pages of it - and the only room left is filled with an appallingly abysmal vignette by Johnny Byrne, "The Criminal", which falls way below fanzine standard; a you-can't-fight-city-hall story by R W Backelworth, "A Distorting Mirror"; and "The Door", by Alistair Sevan - another unoriginal but well-written tale.

All-in-all, this is one of the worst issues of SFY - it's badly balanced, and for the second and, for the second issue running, bills two stories on the cover that don't appear inside. But it's worth 2/6d for the first third of "The Furies".

There are another 68 pages of the novel in the August SFY, but the lead story is a slight piece by Eric C Williams, "The Desolators". A tired old time-travel story, a penchant for which Editor Bonfiglioli seems to be suffering from, but, if you can wade through the quasi-scientific explanations and the fatiguing paradoxes, the twist in the tail may repay you. Similarly, "Chemotopia" by Ernest Hill seems to become bogged down in sciences - the science of penology. But it is a fairly unusual development of the theme that made up a large part of Anthony Burgess's fine novel A CLOCKWORK ORANGE.

The last of the Anita series for the time being is

announced - "Idiot's Lantern", which should have appeared in the June edition. The antics of Anita and Granny Thompson in a TV studio are not as amusing as once they might have been, and perhaps Roberts is wise to give his two lovable witches a rest.

The best story in the issue - worth half-a-crown alone - is Clifford C Reed's "Paradise for a Punter". This particular theme is one of my own personal favourites, and it is an unexpected pleasure to come across a superb and original handling of it. It leaves its own quiet taste of terror.

John Rackham has a whimsical story of a dragon - "A Way With Animals" - executed in his usual faultless style; Rackham is technically one of the finest British SF writers. And another Bonfiglioli page-filler, "Grinnel" by Dink Richardson. My first reading of this overwhelmed me, but now I can't think of it as much above typical. It's certainly a once read idea.

A Better Sound

Also improving is NEW WORLDS. The July issue contains a particularly memorable piece in "Lone Zone" by Charles Platt. Unusually excellent for a second-published story, and it certainly bodes well for Platt's writing future.

"The Leveller" by Langdon Jones must be a case of sub-conscious plagiarism - it's a great story but H G Wells did it half a century ago with "Under the Knife".

"The Silent Snip" by E C Williams is similar to a GALAXY story I remember - "Inside John Barth". A microscopic civilisation colonise a space-explorer.

Dink Richardson has another one-page vignette - "A Funny Thing Happened..." Better than the usual run of vignettes.

Richard Gordon's first-published story, "A Light In the Sky", is rather over-written, and one would have guessed that it was by an inexperienced writer. But it, too, bodes quite well. It's a fair handling of an old idea.

Brian Aldiss seems to get slighter and slighter - one day he will just float away. But "Supercity" makes up in



amusement for what it loses in substance; Colin Fry has an after-the-bomb story, "The Night of the Gyul", which has nothing new to say and says it quite entertainingly; Al Good contributes an article on Corman and E A Poe, and book reviews from Lang Jones, James Colvin and George Collin make up the issue.

The promise is maintained in the August issue, with the first installment of Harry Harrison's rollicking parody, "Bill, the Galactic Hero", standing head and shoulders above most of the SF being published in the past few years. Harrison proves that his faster-than-light writing pace can be adapted from the tension of DEATHWORLD to the humorous mockery of the military-galactic novel. Such characters as Petty Chief Officer Deathwish Drang, the Rev. Tambo, Eager Seager and Bill himself will go down in SF's Hall of Fame - but one word of warning: Heinlein Fans - it's illegal to assault anybody, including American SF writers inhabiting Denmark.

After outstanding Harrison, average Aldiss comes as a let-down, and his attempt to SF-ize Jung is more than a little flat after the adventures of Bill. But, like all Aldiss, "The Source" is worth reading.

George Collin is, perhaps, less experimental than in recent issues, in "And Worlds Renewed". But this tale of the new art of planetscaping is more to my taste than some of his pieces.

Another step towards convention brings us to the prosaic and W T Webb's "The Pulse of Time" isn't far from the conventional horror story. The twist at the end hardly rescues it.

Jack Reynolds supplies an infuriating vignette, "By the Same Door", but it will probably stick in your memory far longer than most.

The Michael Moorcock story, "Preliminary Data", I'll steer clear of, not wishing to show my ignorance by under or over-estimating it. Apart from becoming terribly confused in the first few pages, I enjoyed it. No more will I say.

The idea behind "Songflower" is rather good, and the vividness of the writing certainly lifts it above the normal. I have a feeling that Kenneth Foare may be a pen-name for a more established writer.

Dr Peristyle, erstwhile Mystery-Man of VECTOR, makes his usual evasive and nebulous replies to questions, and Colvin, Ron Bennett and Hilary Bailey are present with reviews.

But buy this NEW WORLDS and the next couple just for the Harrison novel.

Graham Hall

THE VISUAL SIDE OF THINGS

by

VIC HALLETT

There seems to be an increase in the amount of SF material being filmed lately, and I can only, once again, express my eternal hope that, out of all the activity, something good will emerge.

The most hopeful looking film in the current batch of projects is MGH's production of A SPACE ODYSSEY, to be directed, in Cinerama, by Stanley Kubrick. There are also signs that one of the most off-on products of recent years, Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451, is getting nearer the stage of actually being filmed. The latest news of it is that Terence Stamp has been signed up for the main part.

Current productions include

Britain: INVASION starring Edward Judd, Yoko Tani and Tsai Chin. Directed by Alan Bridges.

America: PLANET OF BLOOD starring Basil Rathbone, Dennis Hopper and John Saxon. Directed by Curtis Harrington.

Italy: PLANET OF TERROR starring Barry Sullivan.

There is also, although I hesitate to mention it, a Japanese-American co-production with a title which surely ought to win an award. It is called, believe it or not, FRANKENSTEIN Vs THE GIANT DEVIL FISH! The mind boggles.

I mentioned, in the last issue, a Czechoslovakian film, IKARIA X.B.I. I have since discovered that it has been retitled for British release. The new title is VOYAGE TO THE END OF THE UNIVERSE and it is released by American-International.

Contemporary Films are releasing a short (29 mins) French film called THE PIER. It is made entirely of still photographs and takes place in Paris after most of it has been destroyed in a nuclear war. Basically, it is the story of a man who, because of an obsession with the past and his memory of it, is chosen as the subject of experiments to find a loophole in time. The film follows him first into the future and then into the past to meet his destiny. It was awarded a Gold Asteroid at the second Trieste SF Film Festival.

I'd like to bring to your attention an American publication called FAMOUS FANTASY FILMS. Here is an excellently produced, soberly written and informative magazine on a subject

that usually seems to lend itself to hysteria and bad puns. It is printed on good quality paper with a great number of clear black and white photographs - all of which have captions stating what they are, which film they are from and who produced it.

As the title suggests, fantasy films of all sorts are covered, including HOUSE OF WAX and THE FLY but the ones which are of particular interest to this column are articles giving production facts and details about FORBIDDEN PLANET and ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS. There is also a long article on the Trieste SF Film Festivals with synopses of most of the films shown there and another giving a list of fantasy films which have won Academy Awards.

This, the first issue, is the most attractive and readable magazine of its type that I have yet come across and I wish it every luck for future issues. I cannot recommend it too highly. Published bi-annually at 75¢ per issue, it can be obtained from the editor and publisher, Philip B Moschovitz, 65 Bellingham Road, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts 02167, USA.

Vic Hallett

DOUBLE 'X' FEATURE

Recently shown in Birmingham were two SF films - one good and one bad. Both on the same programme, they made an interesting, if not completely enjoyable, evening's picture-going.

The main film was Regal Films International's THE HUMAN DUPLICATORS. Directed by Hugo Grimaldi, from a story by Arthur C Pierce, it tells of a visitor to Earth who has been sent by the Masters of the Galaxy to conquer it by infiltrating androids into Earth's tooming millions. Posing as a fellow scientist, he visits the film's 'eccentric scientist' and, on orders from the Masters, 'duplicates' the scientist and his servants. But he refuses to 'duplicate' the scientist's blind, but beautiful, niece. Needless to say, there is also the Secret Agent and his Beautiful, Blonde Girlfriend. Probably because the alien showed human emotions and was not made up to appear grotesque, I enjoyed this film. In colour, excellently produced and well worth seeing.

When, at the beginning of the other film, the credits said 'Based on the story "Who Goes There?" by John W Campbell', I thought that I would see a good film. But, alas....no. Another Regal Films Interactional release, this time produced by Howard Hawks and directed by Christian Naby. Title: THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD. A flying saucer is reported as having landed in the Antarctic and the investigators discover that it has melted the ice, sunk a few feet and then ice has reformed over it. Using small bombs to melt the ice around it, they succeed in completely destroying the saucer! But a few feet away from where the saucer had been they discover, again buried in the ice, the 'Thing' from the film title!!! No explanation is offered of how
(Continued on page 22)



**general
chuntering**
by
**ken
slater**

Arising from my recent discursive comments on the book trade, one correspondent asks me why, if I dislike it so much, don't I get out of it. To be honest, there have been many occasions when I have felt like throwing in my hand and doing some other, better paid, type of work. But despite my ability to see the financial advantages of driving a dust cart or inserting bolts into holes at the local engineering works, I've decided to stay in the book trade because I enjoy it. Masochistic, perhaps. However, if my comments should have led anyone to believe that I don't like what I do, my apologies - conveying such an impression was not my intention.

But the profits for anyone engaged in retail book-selling in a small way are not enormous - nor, in fact, are those for folk engaged in a large way unless they keep rigidly to the 'Statutory Minimum Remuneration' and suffer the disadvantages of the low-grade employees that they obtain on these scales (there are still a number of folk who engage in book-selling for the sheer love of books, but in our material-reward orientated world, they grow fewer and fewer year by year). This leads to break-down of service to the customer, at all levels. As I mentioned in one of my earlier articles the service element - obtaining the item the customer wants, rather than forcing him to accept what you have - is one of the important points in the book trade today. It is essential that this be continued - and also it is nearly impossible to do it. For example, two large wholesaler concerns now offer 'booksellers' selected mixed batches of 'best selling titles', to my knowledge. There may be others. With one of

these the terms offered are 25% 'on sale' (this means you can return for credit the material you don't sell), and I think the other gives the normal one-third but the material is sent on 'firm sale' (you can't return). The material sent is at the wholesaler's selection, not the retailer's. This immediately and directly strikes at one of the basic tenets of 'good bookselling' - that the bookseller knows the interests and probable needs of his local trade (a good bookseller usually does; even I, with an almost invisible local trade, know that a war book based on the Japanese war will command a larger local sale than a story based on the war with Germany, because the local battalions and regiments were at Singapore). In actual fact, my local sales are so low that this in effect means I don't stock more than half-a-dozen 'German war' novels, and carry a range of a couple of dozen standard items on the Japanese war: one copy of SCOURGE OF THE SWASTIKA to three copies of HOUSE OF DOLLS sort of ratio. But the point is that I know that, so does the manager of the local branch of Smith's, and the three newsagents and stationers in town who carry a fair range of books and paperbacks, but a wholesaler in London can't. Once the principle of pre-selected bulk supplies is accepted, the troublesome 'single copy order' problem is solved - if you don't have what the customer wants in stock, you just say 'sorry' and show him the way out. The same trouble that one has in a supermarket - if it is one of their stock lines, they usually have plenty; if it is not, they don't have any - and they won't get any. Try somewhere else.....

This also solves the low-wage problem. Anyone can pack and ship an 'assortment' (sometimes they may get the numbers and prices wrong, but it is no great hardship to straighten that out). But the same standard of staffing can't handle efficiently single copy orders, by and large. One was placed some time back through one of the wholesale services - a publisher from whom I obtain very little, and from whom I wanted just one title this time; Vol II of a pair. The order goes in, slowly it infiltrates the levels until it reaches the central warehouse in London, where it is handled by some employees, who send on its way down through the levels a book...which comes all the way through to my table before anyone realises that this is Vol I of the pair. The invoice accompanying it says Vol II alright. Cover price of item - 10/6...invoice price of item - 9/4. This wholesaler house has its own delivery service, and dropped the item off at our door with a number of other books and magazines. I've had to return it (which I did in person) some 24 miles away, so it would cost postage at least, plus a letter, time and so forth. The department manager I saw admitted that some six different people must have handled the book en-route to us, but also said "What can one do?". I must admit he had a point. The other order is much the same, only direct from a publisher. One consignment of books is correct except for one item which exists in two editions; the more expensive edition was ordered and has been, the cheap edition has been packed. Obviously the publisher has had trouble before; the edition is underlined and marked in red so that the packer can't miss it. But he did.....

A few packers like that in one of the various 'single

copy order' networks will soon destroy the system, it would seem to me. And, unfortunately, as such systems are 'economy' measures and hence will try to keep wage levels down to the minimum, such packers and other employees will gravitate to that type of employment, whilst the better and brighter folk will - er - levitate upwards and outwards to higher paid employment.

Now for the news and so forth. Perri Press (Donald B Day) has now confirmed that the INDEX TO THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINES 1951-1960 will not be published by them, and they are making refunds in cash. If you ordered this through me at some time or other, and hold the Perri Press receipt/invoice, please let me know quoting the receipt number. Don Day also says that they are going to bind a further quantity of the 1926-1950 INDEX, which will be available at a price not yet firm, but probably \$10.00....or £3. 11. 6. approximately....it may be less; depends on the actual increase in binding costs, which is not yet known... if anyone wants one of these, they should let Perri Press (or KFS) have the order as soon as possible, so that the quantity to be bound can be made large enough....I gather that after this, there will be no more.

However, index-desirers should not give up hope. A letter from Erwin G Strauss of MIT Science Fiction Society informs me that they are planning a second edition of their index, over twice the size of the first, hardcovered, to cover all original science fiction magazines published in English since 1950...this will include British and Australian magazines. Of course, it will still not be complete, as it won't cover reprint magazines....

Having just looked at the news notes I put in the last CHUNTERING, I see that they read more like historical records than forecasts, so I'll leave mention of 'forthcoming' paperbacks and such until VECTOR gets back on a regular schedule again. On the less 'professional' publishing fields, I have word from Jack L Chalker that they were hoping to publish MIRAGE ON LOVECRAFT on August 7th, and that THE INDEX TO THE SF PUBLISHERS would be due on August 28th. At the time of his letter, THE SCHWARTZ CHECKLIST (on comics) had been completed but was not yet collated. Al Lewis had not finished the MAGAZINE INDEX for 1964 when he left on his European trip, so that will not be published until he gets back to the USA. For the serious student of supernatural horror fiction, HAUNTED may be of interest. This is a little magazine published by Samuel D Russell, 1351 Trosaine Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif. 90019, USA, and enquiries should be made to him. But I was impressed with the standard of production, and contributions, in the copy he sent me.

In answer to the general enquiries that folk have made to me regarding SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, I can only say - write to the publisher, Robert Franson.....I doubt this will do you any good, as he doesn't acknowledge my letters, but one of you may get a reply...any news will be welcome, either direct or indirect.

Oh, yes, I'll recommend the Burroughs enthusiasts to try Edward P Bradbury's WARRIORS OF MARS (Compact F275). I'll admit I started reading the book with odious comparisons in mind; I finished with reasonable enjoyment - well done on the 'action' level. For the record, I was a Burroughs enthusiast up to some

twenty years ago (I can't quite pinpoint the date) and I can still re-read some of the stories with wild, nostalgic, enjoyment. Others - which I recall I enjoyed once - I cannot commence today. However, the Bradbury story follows the same outline as ERB's Martian stories, uses the same action/romance theme, makes less use of co-incidence, moves the hero through time as well as space to allow for life on Mars, and is obviously the first of a series - second of which will be titled BLADES OF MARS. A far more competent job than were the 'Barton Werper' pastiches on the Tarzan theme, and there is no theft of characters involved.

By the by, postcards informing me of science fantasy items appearing in off-troll magazines, newspapers, and so forth are always welcome. And if you have any comments on anything I say, you can send 'em direct to me. Currently the only comments I get are from the Hon Sec of the BSFA, and as she's usually drinking my scotch at the time, her comments have a faint bias.... I feel. You probably won't get an answer, or even an acknowledgement, but information will go into my files.....KFS.

THE VISUAL SIDE OF THINGS (Continued from page 18)

the saucer, after withstanding a journey through space and entry into Earth's atmosphere, can be totally destroyed by a few relatively harmless bombs. Neither is it explained how an occupant of this saucer can be thrown, in one piece, merely a few feet in the midst of this destruction. A block of ice, containing the alien, is cut out and transported back to camp where, through the idiocy of the guard, the Thing escapes and battles with the camp's dogs. After the battle, one of the Thing's hands is found and when subjected to analysis it is discovered that our alien friend is really an intelligent vegetable!!! (A 'carrot' as the film's comic reporter prefers to call it).

So like dozens of other science fiction/horror films - I wonder how these film companies have the nerve to carry on churning them out.

If this programme comes round to your local, go to see it just for THE HUMAN DUPLICATORS.

Rog Peyton

FOR SALE Three hard-covered sets of USA magazines - (1) GALAXY (USA ed) May, Jun, Jul, Aug 1954 - contains Pohl & Kornbluth's GLADIATOR AT LAW complete; (2) ASTOUNDING (USA ed) Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr 1954 - contains Asimov's SUCKER BAIT complete; (3) ASTOUNDING (USA & BRE ed) Sep, Oct, Jun, Dec 1955 - contains Anderson's THE LONG WAY HOME complete. All 3 in 'int' leather with numbered index and in good condition. N Waskott, 506 Ley Street, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

by Rog Peyton

As Jim Groves hasn't got any queries on hand, I'd like to take this opportunity to clear up a few questions that have been unanswered in the last few issues.

The third issue of the American SF magazine GAMMA has definitely appeared. In fact, it has been imported into Britain at the ridiculously low price of 1/6! The American price still being 50¢. Undated, except for the year, 1964, it contains the following:-

"The Girl of Paradise Planet"
 "The Feather Bed"
 "Angel Levine"
 "The (In)visible Man"
 "Inside Story"
 "The Birth"
 "Buttons"
 "Society for the Prevention"
 "The Snail Watcher"

Robert Turner
 Shelly Lowenkopf
 Bernard Malamud
 Edward W Ludwig
 Miriam Allen deFord
 George Clayton Johnson
 Raymond E Banks
 Ron Coulart
 Patricia Highsmith

There is also an interview with a Russian editor which reveals many interesting points about Soviet SF. Interior artwork is by Luan Meatheringham and the cover (titled "Expedition to Jupiter") is by Morris Scott Dollens.

Another magazine which previously I'd never heard of has also been imported at 1/6 per issue. This is the seventh issue of MAGAZINE OF HORROR (STRANGE TALES AND SCIENCE FICTION). Dated January 1965, it contains:-

"The Thing From - Outside"
 "Black Thing at Midnight"
 "The Shadows on the Wall"
 "The Phantom Parahouse"
 "The Oblong Box"
 "A Way With Kids"
 "The Devil on the Marsh"
 "The Shuttered Room"

George Allen England
 Joseph Payne Brennan
 Mary Wilkins-Freeman
 Seabury Quinn
 Edgar Allan Poe
 Ed M Clinton
 E B Harriott-Watson
 H P Lovecraft and
 August Derleth

The magazine is edited by Robert A W Lovades and published by Health Knowledge Inc., 119 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10003, USA. Subscriptions are £2.50 for one year (6 issues) in the USA and Canada, and Pan American Union. Foreign subs are

\$3.00. Single copies 50¢.

In the first issue of GAMMA there appears the following advertisement**

"THE RAY BRADBURY REVIEW, a 64 page booklet edited by William F Nolan in 1952, contains articles by Chad Oliver, Henry Kuttner, Anthony Boucher and others. In addition, it has a complete index through 1951 of all of Bradbury's reprints, anthologies, original works, radio and television sales, as well as fiction and fact by Bradbury himself. A copy of this booklet may be had by sending one dollar to William F Nolan, 2400 Keystone, Burbank, California."

This should help R J Charlesworth who was enquiring after Bradbury checklists in V/33.

Also in V/33, T Jones asked about an Eric Frank Russell checklist. Russell was one of the authors included in Don Tuck's "Author's Works Listings" back in 1960. These listings were a loose-leaf series which appeared during 1960 and as far as I know there were three sets published. The first set included complete listings of the works of Isaac Asimov, Nelson Bond, Fredric Brown, Roy Cummings, Robert Heinlein, Damon Knight, Harry Stubbs ("Hal Clement") and Stanley Weinbaum. Second set included Paul Anderson, Arthur C Clarke, Will Jenkins ("Murray Leinster"), David H Keller, Otis A Gline, Nat Schachner and H S Whitehead. Third set included August Derleth, Edmond Hamilton, C E Kornbluth, Frank Belknap Long, Eric Frank Russell and Clifford D Simak.

And finally, in response to requests for a Cardwainer Smith checklist, I've delved into my checklists, indexes and own personal collection and come up with what I think may be a near complete listing. If anyone can add to this, I'd appreciate hearing from them.

"Drunkboat"*	AMAZING	Oct 63
"The Crime and the Glory of Commander Suzdal"*	"	May 64
"Scanners Live in Vain"*	FANTASY BOOK	No. 6
"Alpha Ralph Boulevard"*	F&SF	Jun 61
"The Game of Rat and Dragon"	GALAXY	Oct 55
"The Lady Who Sailed the Soul"	"	Apr 59
"When the People Fall"	"	Apr 60
"Mother Hitton's Littful Kittons**"	"	Jun 61
"A Planet Named Shayol"*	"	Oct 61
"The Ballad of Lost C'mell**"	"	Oct 62
"Think Blue, Count Two**"	"	Feb 63
"On the Gem Planet**"	"	Oct 63
"The Dead Lady of Clown Town**"	"	Aug 64
"The Boy Who Bought Old Earth**"	"	Apr 64
"On the Storm Planet**"	"	Feb 65
"The Burning of the Brain"	IF	Oct 58
"Western Science is so Wonderful"	"	Dec 58
"No, No, Not Rogov"	"	Feb 59
"From Gustible's Planet**"	"	Jul 62
"The Store of Heart's Desire**"	"	May 64
"Angerhelm"	STAR SF No. 6	ed by F Pohl (Ballantine)
"The Good Friends"	WORLDS OF TOMORROW	Oct 63

Stories marked with an asterisk are those which form part of the 'Rediscovery of Man' series. Two paperbacks have appeared in this series - THE PLANET BUYER which is an expansion of "The Boy Who Bought Old Earth" and THE SPACE LORDS which is a collection of short stories from various magazines. Both are published by Pyramid Books.

Rog Peyton

NEW MEMBERS

- A 611 SADLER R.A. 4 Forthview, Niddrie Cottages, Edinburgh 15.
 M 612 HEATHCOTE B. 149 Upper Gate Road, Stannington, Nr Sheffield.
 M 613 McCABE J.B. 17 Wellington Street, Slough, Bucks. /W4.
 M 614 PIPER D.C. 102 Abinger Road, Bedford Park, Chiswick, London
 A 615 CHORLEY A.J. 18 Garnet Street, Bedminster, Bristol 3.
 M 616 BRUNNER J. 17d Frogal, London NW3. /USA.
 O 617 DUPREE T. 809 Adams Boulevard, Jackson, Mississippi 39211,
 O 618 CLARKE R. 78 Redgrave Road, Normanhurst, Sydney, New South
 Wales, Australia.
 O 619 HERKART P.G. 25 Palmer Square West, Princetown, New Jersey
 08540, USA.
 A 620 COTTRELL C. 18 Maple Grove, Newark, Notts.
 M 621 RIDING A. 10 Breckside Park, Anfield, Liverpool 6.
 M 622 GARNETT D. 22 Tudor Road, Hunt's Cross, Liverpool 25.
 M 623 BARR H. 52 Gurney Drive, London N2.
 A 624 NIELD E.J. 33 Percy Street, Northwich, Cheshire.
 M 625 NEARY D.J. 6 Ingersoll Road, Enfield, Middlesex.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

- Eric Baker now 9 Tower Buildings, Rosia, Gibraltar.
 Harry Harrison now Apartado 20, Fuengirola, Malaga, Spain.
 D A Livingstone now 1996 West 44th Ave., Vancouver 13, B.C.,
 Mike Moore now 50 Cambridge Road, Hove, Sussex. /Canada.
 Michael Mullis now 13 The Mead, Guelphs Lane, Thaxted, Dunmow,
 M J Waskett now 506 Ley Street, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex/Essex.

FOR SALE Fredric Brown's MARTIANS GO HOME (USA Ed) Very good condition. Jack Williamson's THE COMETEERS (Fantasy Press - USA) Fair only. M J Waskett, 506 Ley Street, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex.

WANTED Paperback editions of SINISTER BARRIER, NEXT OF KIN and DREADFUL SANCTUARY (not the Lancer edition) - all by Eric Frank Russell. Also any information about Russell.
 T Jones, 27 Lancbury Ave., Rossington, Doncaster, Yorks.

BOOKS

Reviews and News

THE JOYOUS INVASIONS by Theodore Sturgeon

Published by GOLLANCZ at 16/- . 204 pages

Anytime you want an experience analagous to that of tweaking raw nerve endings, read Sturgeon. Of all SF writers, he is the most adept at drawing the reader into a story, providing a glass-sharp view of life from the inside.

SF has never been strong in characterisation, mainly because of the requirements and conventions of the field. Sturgeon has solved that particular problem, often to the point of nausea. He submerges us in the blighted spectrum of human misery and, somehow, we come up liking it. He exposes, with ruthless clarity spiced with genuine empathy, the emotions, aspirations and motivations that encompass what passes for human existence. Sturgeon's people - from three-year old boys to Dowery bums - are complete in themselves and in perfect harmony with the stories in which they are set. The stories are, in turn, expertly developed through the actions of the characters, and are worthy of study by less experienced writers.

In THE JOYOUS INVASIONS, Sturgeon has produced three novellas (an extremely difficult story-length), written between 1955 and 1958, and they form an excellent collection. We see a star, not as it is, but as it was; with these stories, new readers especially can read Sturgeon as he was and savour the feast that awaits their awakened appetites. Anyone who has read them before will certainly find additional pleasure upon re-reading the stories.

In "To Marry Medusa", the familiar spore from space gets eaten (in a half-consumed hamburger!) by Gurlick, a cringing wine-sogger. The intention to incorporate the peoples of Earth into an inter-galactic hive mind doesn't go quite according to plan. As with most Sturgeon stories, the scientific aspect is shaded by his revelations of human nature. In the way Gurlick maintains his mode of life, however pathetic, Sturgeon tells us that a man must always be true to the set of values that mould and sustain him.

"The Comedian's Children", in which a famous comedian

establishes a Foundation to find a cure for a disease brought in from space, that affects only children, Sturgeon again analyzes brilliantly with deft, compassionate insight just what makes people tick, and why. It isn't always pleasant; but reality seldom is.

The final story, "The (Widget), the (Wadget), and Boff", is about a survey team from space, testing the reactions of a selected group of people to provided stimuli. It has the beautifully balanced intricacy of a top-quality Swiss watch and, like the other two tales, flows along with the effortless ease of a Rolls-Royce. The lesson here is that people must not be afraid to solve their own problems, for, within themselves they may find a potential greater than they ever dared dream of.

THE JOYOUS INVASIONS can be appreciated on many levels, by SF and non-SF readers alike.

Long may Sturgeon continue to produce such matchless male caviar!

Donald Malcolm

TWO TALES AND 8 TOMORROWS by Harry Harrison

Published by GOLLANCZ at 16/-. 183 pages

Harry Harrison's work is made difficult to assess by certain contradictions within it. Sometimes one thinks of the author as a writer with a message - a sort of ethical engineer; at other times he appears as one of the slickest operators in a stainless steel rat-race.

The contradictions are present in these ten stories, but at no time is there any doubt about Mr Harrison's capabilities as a writer. The craftsmanship in this book is excellent from cover to cover. It is especially impressive in "Rescue Operation" and the really splendid and haunting "Final Encounter".

"Portrait of the Artist" is a grand story with a cynical and, to my mind, superfluous four-line conclusion.

As a vegetarian, I particularly appreciate the sentiment in "The Pliable Animal", which is set in a vegetarian society. Despite a certain flippancy of treatment, a serious question is raised and answered. How would an enlightened, vegetarian community deal with the necessity to slaughter an animal - or perhaps a man?

"Captain Bedlam" is a slick, fast-moving space-yarn with a novel idea. "Unto my Manifold Dooms" shows how an educated, enlightened group of spacemen react to a situation where the harsh realities of a deathworld planet put a terrific strain upon them.

"Captain Honario Harpplayer" is the sort of skit you might expect to follow such a title. And "According to his Abilities" and "I Always do what Teddy Says" display a disturbing mixture of idealism and cruelty.

"The Streets of Ashkelon" is the story of a preacher who visits an alien planet bringing the Bible to the primitive Uskers, who have no religion of their own.

Samson, in the Bible, is said to have visited Ashkelon when the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and slaughtered thirty

men just for the hell of it. So maybe the Bible is not a book one should use as a guide for primitives. At least Trader Garth in the story didn't think so; and perhaps the preacher should have had more sense.

W T Webb

BEST SF 4 edited by Edmund Crispin

Published by FABER at 6/6. 218 pages

With such recent SF rating no higher than the rubbish level in my estimation, it gives me great pleasure to review something so far above the usual run. BEST SF 4 contains ten stories (four of them culled from ASTOUNDING SF) with not a bad one in the lot. Moreover, in this modern age of fluid rubbish and endings which die in a whisper of incompetence, it is refreshing to find stories which know where they are going and proceed to go there with economy, grace and style.

Mr Crispin has selected an excellent range which should appeal to tyro and veteran alike. To précis the plots is rank injustice, but if you bear in mind the crudities of onscapulation, here is what you'll get:- "The Short Life"...benevolent, alien control of an idiot child; "A Subway Named Mobius"...and a missing train: "It's a Good Life"...because a horrible child so decrees: "Flowers for Algernon"...idiot-to-genius and back again: "Balaam"...allegory in a Martian encounter between priests and aliens: "The Yellow Pill"...which world is reality?: "Bliss of Solitude"...a spaceman is faced with hallucinations: "Psychlops"...where a father must establish telepathic contact with a foetus: "Hobbyist"...dealing with the greatest modeller of them all: and finally " D "

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which deals with a crossword compiler and a Martian invasion.

At 6/6 for this paperback, you can't go wrong. Highly recommended. Even if you've read them all, it's worth having a copy to leave on the guest table to convert your visitors.

Terry Jeeves

MEN, MARTIANS AND MACHINES by Eric Frank Russell

Published by PANTHER at 3/6. 185 pages

This volume consists of four stories, three of which first appeared in ASTOUNDING SF between 1941 and 1943 and the fourth being specially written for the first book publication in 1956.

The characters are the same in all four stories, being the Terrestrial and Martian crew of the spaceship 'Upskadaska City' (in the first story), and of the spaceship 'Marathon' (in

the remaining three).

All four stories are good, unpretentious space opera, with plenty of action, needlers blasting at everything in sight, pocket atomic bombs (this dates the stories a bit!), P-t-1 drive, etc., but they are written in Russell's usual light and entertaining style.

The first story, "Jay Score", has a twist ending which you may not foresee if your Sense of Wonder is still intact. The other three stories are "Mechanistria", "Symbiotica" and "Mesmerica", and deal with the first landings by the 'Marathon' on alien and inimical planets.

An enjoyable book, recommended if any, or all, of the stories are unfamiliar to you and if you don't look for great sociological significance in your science fiction.

Ian McAulay

13 GREAT STORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by Groff Conklin

Published by GOLD MEDAL at 2/6.

186 pages

This paperbacked anthology which was published in 1960 contains stories by Poul Anderson, Algis Budrys, Arthur C Clarke, Damon Knight, Theodore Sturgeon and John Wyndham (plus others, of course) first published within the field between 1950 and 1957. One story, Richard Gehman's "The Machine" was first published in Collier's in 1946.

Basically, this is an anthology of invention, and among other gadgets and doodads can be found an anti-gravity device, a silence producer, various space ships and so forth, right through the spectrum to the invention of an artificial life form itself.

"The War is Over" by Algis Budrys deals with a civilisation of small alien reptiles which builds, across several generations, a space ship - a good story with a pacy style and a meaty ending. In "Compassion Circuit", John Wyndham tells of a robot take-over which is a little more humane and sympathetic than the usual run - a most little horror story. Arthur C Clarke is present with "Silence, Please" from SCIENCE FANTASY. Damon Knight contributes a good, sound story about cathartics which is somewhat spoiled by a poor, hackneyed ending. "The Skills of Kanadu" is written in the best style of philosophical Sturgeon, though the story is watery and suffers from far too much padding.

Wyman Guin's "Volpita", in which a man invents a life form complete with a background of tradition, legend, language and culture, is the outstanding story in the anthology and it is perhaps indicative of the overall tone of the volume as a whole that the story is set in a typical GALAXY middle class background, with a typical READER'S DIGEST humour - a good idea all but ruined by its mediocre treatment and its wafery thick ending.

Here is a competent collection of competent stories, all slickly plotted and reasonably well paced out, but apart from those mentioned briefly above, none is memorable in any way and even the best handful of the thirteen hardly merit a permanent

place on anyone's bookshelf.

Ron Bennett

AMERICAN BOOK RELEASES

THE ALTAR ON ASCONEL - John Brunner/ANDROID AVENGER - Ted White
(Ace M-123, 45¢)
ANTON YORK, IMMORTAL - Zando Binder (Belmont 92-627, 50¢)
AWARD SF READER ed by A M Norton (Universal Paperback A-150X, 60¢)
DRAGON'S ISLAND - Jack Williamson (Tower 43-531, 60¢)
THE ENEMY STARS - Poul Anderson (Berkley F1112, 50¢)
EXILE OF TIME - Ray Cummings (Ace F-343, 40¢)
EXPEDITION TO EARTH - Arthur C Clarke (Ballantine U2112, 50¢)
FIVE UNEARTHLY VISIONS ed by Groff Conklin (Gold Medal D1549, 50¢)
GREYBEARD - Brian W Aldiss (Signet P2689, 60¢)
LORD KOLVAN OF OTHERBEN - H Beam Piper (Ace F-342, 40¢)
MACHINERIES OF JOY - Ray Bradbury (Bantam H2988, 60¢)
MASTERS OF THE MAZE - Avram Davidson (Pyramid 1208, 50¢)
WELL OF THE WORLDS - Henry Kuttner (Ace F-344, 40¢)
WORLDS OF SF ed by Robert P Mills (Paperback Library 54-819, 75¢)

BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

FARINHAM'S FREEHOLD - Robert A Heinlein (Dobson 21/-) out 26/July
NEW WRITINGS IN SF 5 ed by John Carnall (Dobson 16/-) out 26/July
SOMEWHERE A VOICE - Eric Frank Russell (Dobson 16/-) out 16/Aug
THE REEFS OF SPACE - F Pohl & J Williamson (Dobson 15/-) 16/Aug
THE DRAGON MASTERS - Jack Vance (Dobson 13/6) 16/Aug
SLEEPING PLANET - William R Burkett (Gollancz 18/-) 29/July
THE VIEW FROM THE STARS - Walter M Miller (Gollancz 16/-) 29/July
DILL, THE GALACTIC HERO - Harry Harrison (Gollancz 16/-) 21/Oct
A CENTURY OF GREAT SHORT SF NOVELS ed by Damon Knight (Gollancz
21/-) 21/Oct
THE STAR WITCHES - John Lymington (Hodder 737, 2/6) 9/Aug
NIGHT OF THE BIG BEAT - John Lymington (Hodder 738, 2/5) 9/Aug
THE GIANT STUMBLES - John Lymington (Hodder, 2/6)
PRODIGAL SUN - Philip E High (Compact F273, 3/6)
THE DEMONS - Kenneth Bulmer (Compact F 277, 3/6)
BLADES OF BARS - Edward P Bradbury (Compact F279, 3/6)
THINGS ed by Ivan Eoward (Mayflower 050-8745-8, 3/6) 1/Sep

The Spot Wobblers have landed in fandom. Dick Howett, the leader of this motley crew has produced a fanzine called SPOT WOBBLE. Issue one contains a humorous con report by Chris Priest. Spot the fan cartoons. Competitions with big prizes. The inside story on 'Garth', the DAILY MIRROR's cartoon feature. Presenting exclusive interviews with the artist and writer of the strip, plus photos and hitherto unpublished pictures of the very first 'Garth' story. Also Miss Mary Reed in a bewitching mood. For a copy, send 1/- PO to Dick Howett, 94 Ravensbourne Crescent, Harold Wood, Essex.

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NEW WORLDS



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