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The Economics of SF

JOHN BRUNNER

"In an earlier instance the Meredith agency did sell the picture rights to a book then unwritten. That one, Evan Hunter's *MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS*, has now been completed, and German rights have just gone to Kindler Verlag, in a deal closed with their representative here, Maximilian Becker, for a record \$17,000 advance. Also, Corgi have just acquired British paperback rights on a £15,000 advance." (Daniel J. Boorstin's *THE IMAGE*, Penguin p. 158).

It so happens that I'm represented by the Scott Meredith Agency which pulled this trick. Every now and again I feel tempted to photostat that excerpt and send it to Joe Elder, who handles my work, with a terse note asking what Evan Hunter has that I haven't apart from \$17,000 and £15,000.

It's small wonder that most people have an entirely false impression of what authors make, and this impression is distorted even further when one comes down to science fiction, a thoroughly anomalous field in other aspects than its content.

Let's start by getting some of our perspectives straight. First, as to writers and their incomes in general: the British Society of Authors is conducting a survey at present (which I gather has received a substantial enough response, around 50 per cent of the membership, to give meaningful results) which will clear up many misunderstandings when the findings are made public. Consider, meantime, that a reliable source (the *Bulletin* of the Authors' Guild of America) has published an estimate that there are 250 full-time writers in the whole of the United States.

I'll repeat that: 250. Out of a population approaching two hundred million. The remainder are at least partly supported by such jobs as magazine editing, reporting, permanent feature assignments involving non-writing activity, or hold down a professional post to which their writing is secondary. (Advertising is one of the current havens; it's a bit like the jazz greats of the thirties who kept joining and leaving the Ted Lewis band.)

A young writer recently received tremendous acclaim from the British press, I've read the book he got it for, and allowing for slight exaggeration I think the praise was merited. I've lent my copy to somebody so I can only quote a sample from memory: "I doubt," said one critic, "if there are half a dozen people who can match" Mr. X's prose.

He made the headlines recently when a publisher offered to pay him what amounts to a salary for the next two years, on condition they were given a couple of books they could publish. Amount of that "salary"? £800. And he was probably glad to get it. Brother! Given a reasonable amount of overtime, he could probably collect more working on a building

Now the generous publisher isn't buying his entire thinking time, of course. But he's buying the cream of Mr. X's output, and if Mr. X is halfway honest he'll be turning down supplementary earnings which would infringe on the thinking time needed to create books reflecting his true abilities. Many - perhaps most - writers never stop working; everything they do from breakfast to bedtime, everything they read from advertisements to poetry, everything they see or hear or smell or touch or taste gets mortared into the foundations for their subsequent output. Isaac Asimov wasn't joking when he said writing has the characteristics of an addictive drug. Once you're hooked on it properly, your life revolves around it in the same way a junkie's revolves around his next fix.

It can be physically unpleasant to be deprived of the opportunity to write. (Believe me).

What of the writer who, by misfortune, has a temperament inclining him towards SF? Well... I'm one, and a very atypical one, so most of the following remarks must be read as applying to me personally and generalisations should be made therefrom very tentatively indeed. Nonetheless, I feel they may be of interest as a kind of case-history cum guided tour of a thorny question.

Cardinal fact: SF is a minority taste, to the extent that hitherto one has been able to say it's read by one person in every thousand of the English-speaking population. (I refer to habituated readers, and not to those who are exposed to an occasional freak best-seller serialised in the SATURDAY EVENING POST.) For instance, I recall seeing ASF's public estimated at some 185,000 in a country of about as many million; similarly, the Atlas reprint edition used to sell about 45,000 in Britain.

There is a slow upward trend in these figures at present, due to such causes as the adoption of SF by "respectable" houses like Penguin and the discovery by literate readers that there are literate writers in the field. The impact of this has not yet been sufficient to alter much of the economic pattern of the SF writer's life. We will assign Arthur Clarke, John Wyndham, John Christopher and some few others to the stratospheric altitudes of the movie-world (every writer dreams of selling film rights on every book he produces), and concentrate on the somewhat more mundane levels where the majority of the writers who appear in your Favourite Magazines float around.

As pointed out, there is a three-to-one difference in the size of the audience for SF when you compare this country and the States. It's reflected fairly accurately in the rates paid. To try and make a decent living by selling nothing but SF in Britain would be impossible. (John Lymington appears to have found a sort of solution to this, but I have no information regarding other earnings he may have.)

Example: Gollancz's basic advance on a hardcover edition - to which royalties will be added after a very long lapse of time - is £100; I received that much for both THE BRINK, in 1959, and NO FUTURE IN IT, in 1962. Ace, not the largest or most prosperous of American paperback firms, would put down \$1000 for the same MS, or about £350. As to magazines, I recall how pleased I was when Ted Carnell gave me a bonus on a story he published by raising my rate from two guineas to £2. 5. 0. per thousand words. Near as dammit, two guineas is \$6. As far as I know the lowest rate paid in recent years by an American SF magazine has been that from FANTASTIC at 1½¢ per word, i.e. \$15 per thousand or 2½ times as much.

The highest current rate is ANALOG's 4¢ a word, plus a cent a word bonus for topping the An Lab, or half a cent for coming second. The less pretentious of the men's magazines go no lower than a rate of a nickel a word: a cent higher than the best offered by an SF magazine, in other words.

It's a minor miracle that there are so many writers in the SF field, isn't it?

There are basically two ways in which you can keep afloat in SF without resorting to devious expedients like writing continuity for a comic-strip (e.g. Jack Williamson for "Beyond Mars", Harry Harrison and heaven alone knows who else for "Flash Gordon") or beating your brains out on a TV serial (a common disaster among American SF writers, I gather, but not so popular here).

The first is to get the hell out of the United States, if that's where you happen to be, and settle in some country where a phoney rate of exchange stretches your dollar earnings. I live in Britain but almost exactly 90 per cent of my income is from America.

The second is to be prolific as hell, and that's a matter of temperament. I'm lucky; I have a very high rate of output because I actually enjoy the physical process of writing and get unhappy when I'm kept away from my typewriter. I've been writing about eight books a year lately, and banking on selling six of them to get me a decent living. But I can't keep that up forever; I was just about at the end of my tether when I started getting serialisations in American magazines - something I'd previously failed to secure - and was able to contemplate reducing my schedule because of the extra income thus obtained from the same investment of effort.

(There's a third solution: to live on bread and cheese in one room, preferably in a warm part of the country to save on heating bills. Some people can stand it. I can't. When I first moved to London from my home, my earnings as a writer averaged four pounds a week and I was renting a two-guinea room. I gave up and went to work for Sam Youd and it was two and a half years before I plucked up the courage to try freelancing again - by which time I was married and Marjorie was still working, so it wasn't so risky... This suggests another solution I'd overlooked: marry an heiress. Difficult. So few heiresses appreciate SF.)

All this stems from some comments in VECTOR 32, where Ken Slater was explaining the facts of life to those of his customers who wanted to know why they couldn't have the Ballantine (paperback) edition of THE WHOLE MAN/TELEPATHIST instead of the Faber (hard-cover) edition to be followed in about two years' time by a paperback from Penguin.

Well, it's very nice to know that so many people are eager to read my stuff... and I'm not even much hurt by the fact that they aren't eager enough to pay 18/- for the privilege of reading it now this minute. Among my colleagues I'm regarded as something of a subversive for approving of original paperbacks - but why not? After all, there are few books you read more than once. A typical novel is likely to give you an evening's entertainment, at the speed most moderately literate people read. It seems reasonable to pay for it what you'd pay for a seat at the local cinema or a gallery seat in a theatre; say 3/6 to 7/6, the price of a current pb.

But look at the matter from the author's point of view. Look at it, specifically, from mine. Turning out up to eight books a year means that at best one of those books is going to be really good; the rest will range from competent to barely passable or even lousy, and would benefit immensely from being put on the shelf in MS form until I have the time and the inclination to revise, polish or perhaps scrap them.

If, out of a given book, I'm making only £350 less the ten per cent which the agent takes (which is what happens if I sell it solely to an American pb publisher who then markets his

own edition in Britain), I have to keep churning them out. From the outside, I should perhaps explain, writing looks like a cheap way of running a business, but I often find when making up my tax returns that my deductible expenses - i.e. those incurred directly in connection with my work - have used up twenty per cent of my gross income.

The sales of that American edition in Britain add practically nothing to my earnings: the book comes in, months or years after its first appearance in the States, attracts no attention whatever, isn't reviewed anywhere, and does no more than spoil my chance of selling the same work to a publisher in this country. As a matter of fact, British sales may well add nothing to my earnings, because the American publishers simply want to get their back stock out of the warehouse to make room for a newer item - this is called "dumping".

By signing a contract which confines distribution rights of the American edition strictly to territories outside the sterling area (the wording varies, but this is an example), I can hang on to the chance of additional sales. Suppose, as happened with TELEPATHIST/WHOLE MAN, Faber buys the MS - I get, eventually, another couple of hundred quid in small chunks; I get the chance of an SFBC selection, which adds a bit more; I get the chance of a paperback sale in Britain, which adds a great deal more; over a period of about three to five years, I've comfortably doubled the proceeds. I know it's an awful nuisance to have to wait for the Penguin edition in 1967 or whenever before you read this book that all your fan friends in Oshkosh or Walla Walla are raving about. But it contains a blessing in disguise: by 1967 I shall have put together my long-awaited epic, SOUL SLAVES OF THE UMPTEENTH CONTINUUM, and it's going to make all my previous work look like Kid-dee Com-ics. Up till now, force of circumstances and the wolf at the door have conspired to make me postpone work on it.

More seriously, here are some hard figures by which you can gauge the economics of the field as they apply to a competent, diligent writer of average output and adequate persistence. Let's call him Theokurt Frishblitz in honour of some of my personal idols.

In Year One of his career, Mr. Frishblitz breaks through the hitherto impenetrable wall of rejection slips, revises his long-standing opinion of all editors as purblind nits, and sells a short story to UNUSED PLANETS, a British magazine with a high reputation and low rates. Proceeds: about £10.

Encouraged, he stands the editor a drink and makes a note in his diary: To business expenses, 3/6. The editor is favourably impressed with his idea for a novelette and promises it the cover if it turns out okay. He also suggests some alterations and improvements in the story line.

Mr. Frishblitz gets it right on the second submission. Proceeds: about £50.

One or two or possibly more stories later, he conceives his first novel, and offers it as a serial. It clicks. Proceeds: about £150.

Provided he has had the good sense to take two carbons of this novel (getting it re-typed by a competent agency will cost him £20-30, so it's much cheaper that way...), he can now cast covetous eyes on the US market. So far, he's been getting nothing but bounces - from the stories which UNUSED PLANETS thereupon bought at the minimal British rates. But a novel, surely, which has been serialised...?

Mr. Frishblitz wraps it up, fills out the customs declaration with an optimistic assessment of the book's value (which will later cause some wrangling and delay in the US

Customs), and mails it to Trump Books Inc., a small but voracious pb house in New York with an enormous output of SF. It comes back, much later, with a reasonably kindly letter saying they published more or less the same story in 1937 and just reprinted it, but would welcome more of his work; they pay a standard advance of \$1000 and would rather the customs slip was marked NO COMMERCIAL VALUE because it makes things simpler at the New York end.

At the end of Year One, Mr. Frishblitz tots up his earnings. Rejections included, he's written some hundred thousand words or so - which is a lot of words if you count them one by one. It's even more if you count in rewrites. He's made about £250, which is damned good going for his first year's sales.

What to do? Well... how about an agent? He applies to Scootfree Cheeryble Inc., who - according to THE WRITER'S ANNUAL - had the highest turnover in America last year and sold one book for a total of \$175,000. A note comes back saying, with devastating honesty, that Cheeryble aren't much interested until a writer is making \$1000 p.a. on his own; then they'll consider accepting him on their list.

He already knows how much \$1000 is - he worked it out when he got the letter from Trump Books. It's £357. Anyway, what does he want to give ten per cent of his earnings away for? He's doing okay, isn't he?

We-ell...

Let's skip the interval during which he learns the basic economics of the job, and jump to the year in which he quits his regular employment to take a flyer as a freelance; let's say that this is Year Five of his writing career. He's saved up enough to risk an initial drop in his total income, though his wife is afraid of having to go back to work and his two children are more expensive than racehorses to feed and keep. The accumulated frustration left over from part-time work, interrupted by having to go to the office every day, lets go with a surge and carries him through the first half of the year with three novels and a couple of good novelettes.

He sells the novelettes - totalling 30,000 words - to US magazines, and makes from them about what he made in his first year's work: £250. He sells the first two novels to Trump, which he now regards as a safe market, for \$1000 and \$1250 respectively. By golly, there's about £1000 for half a year's work!

Novel three comes back with a regretful note to say it's below standard, try again.

To Mr. Frishblitz, this is a sore blow. He does no more work for a month through worrying; then starts worrying about not working; then the worry fouls him up for a further month, during which the children eat the proceeds of the sales so far this year. By the year's end, he's recovered enough to have completed a fourth novel: proceeds this year amount to an acceptable £1500, but he's written about 300,000 words for that, some of it hasn't found a home, and he's not at all sure he can manage the wordage-equivalent of five novels every year from now on - his imagination is getting a bit tattered around the edges and what he really wants to do is spend a month researching a magnum opus about colonising the ocean-bed, whereas what Trump Books is asking for is a sexsational opus about adultery in free fall, tentatively entitled PEYTON PLANET.

If he has any sense, this is when he writes to Cheeryble Inc. again. He has the sales behind him to make them interested, but he lacks the specialised knowledge to exploit himself.

Let's wish him luck and see how he's doing in Year Ten.

In this year, he writes three books, one of them on commission from a publisher who bought an earlier novel. This is a comfortable pace to work at; it allows time for adequate

research, second thoughts, re-reading and if necessary complete revision, and generally permits him to make sure that what he wraps and mails is as good as he can make it. Proceeds are roughly as follows:

The first one appears, specially abridged by himself, as the lead short novel in a US magazine and grosses \$500, then sells to a paperback house for \$1500 and to an English publisher for £150, in the full-length version. The second is published as a two-part serial in a US magazine, which pays \$800, and also goes to a pb house for \$1500, but is too far out to interest the rather conservative British publishers. Not to worry: number three marks two "first" notches for him, his first US hardback edition and his first double sale in Britain, to both hardback and paperback houses, as well as going to a US paperback publisher, bringing in some \$2000 and £400 from a single book. Additionally, he receives some small royalties from previous work, and there is no reason why number two should not later on find a home in Britain; moreover, by now he's picking up the odd translation sale, and when the escudos and francs and marks and whatsits are converted to sterling they add another 100-odd quid to the year's total.

Year Ten, therefore, sees him comfortably established with an income of around £2500 plus past, future and imponderable accretals from work not actually done during the year. He is doing very well considering the field he's in. Next year he may very well make less than £1000 because he breaks his wrist and can't type, or he may make £10,000 because his agent happens to be drinking within earshot of a film producer and seizes his chance on hearing the producer is looking for a science fiction property. He can't tell. But he wouldn't trade problems with anybody. He's hooked on writing.

Mr. Frishblitz did everything right, and had the single essential attribute, out of that list at the beginning of his career, which is persistence. He's probably about thirty-five or forty; he gets half a dozen fan letters a year and is asked to speak at Conventions and when the BBC puts a programme together about SF they send someone around with a tape recorder and use two minutes forty seconds on the air. He's okay. But if it hadn't been SF he wanted to write, if it had been - say - TV serials and he sold an idea which caught on like Dr. Who, he might easily have made in the first two years enough to retire on, in a gracious modern house on Grand Bahama Island with his own private beach, and the seventeen Frishblitz books you so greatly enjoyed over the past five years would never have been written at all.

Some time I must ask Mr. Frishblitz which way he'd have preferred it to turn out, back in Year One of his career...

If this finds its way into the hands of any US subscribers, they should remember the phoniness of the exchange rate dollars-to-pounds. In this country, an annual income in the Frishblitz bracket will provide a comfortably furnished house, adequate food and clothing for a family of four, a medium-priced car and the occasional vacation abroad. At the current Stateside rate, it would compare so badly with what one can earn in business that the writer's wife would almost certainly leave him unless she was desperately in love.

My guesstimate is that Mr. Frishblitz, living in the States, would have to earn some fifty per cent more in order to survive, and at least 100 per cent more to enjoy the US equivalent of Anglo-Frishblitz's standard of living.

I couldn't manage it. That's why I live here. (Also I was born here, which counts for something...)

EAST versus WEST in SF

R. HALDRICKS

The heaviest chemical elements so far discovered are named after American universities - 'Californium', 'Berkelium' and so on. But who knows? One day we may hear of 'Russium - as they call the heaviest element with atomic weight 401'. That phrase occurs in "Cor Serpentis" by I Efremov¹, a Russian author. Soviet SF contains a great deal of nationalistic, pro-communist and anti-capitalist propaganda - not all as quaintly naive as the above example. To balance it, there is, of course, a great deal of anti-Russian propaganda to be found in American SF. On the whole, the American stuff is less blatant than the Russian: in fact, some Russian SF stories read more like political tracts than fiction.

For example, take "Time, Go Back", by A. Meyerov². In this story, an American millionaire perpetrates an elaborate hoax to publicise the American way of life, "...which, like rotten goods, needs advertising..." He fakes a time machine which is supposed to have arrived from AD 2060, bearing films recording the future triumph of capitalism. A Russian professor exposes the swindle. You will find this hard to credit, but the basis of his proof is that free enterprise cannot possibly win because "...the laws of social development are immutable... Mankind is moving towards communism...and nobody can halt the march of History."

An even cruder example is this further passage from "Cor Serpentis"³:- "Our contemporary writers do not like to describe the Dark Ages when capitalism was coming to an end.... Cosmic knowledge and cosmic power came into conflict with the primitive ideology of private property....In the capitalist half of the world, they could not see the new paths....they saw in the future only wars and mutual annihilation."

This, believe it or not, is part of a casual conversation between two of Efremov's characters, talking about twentieth-century SF. The same note is struck by Kiril Andreev in the editorial introduction to an anthology⁴:-

"Much or even most SF in the capitalist countries today sees only terror in the headlong onrush of science, the speed and scope of social change. It says to its readers: 'Do not learn, do not hope, do not act!' With few exceptions, its pages are full of nightmares, invasions of monsters, descriptions of annihilating wars and universal catastrophes....It cannot be called the literature of dreams. Call it rather the literature of terrifying prophecies and gloomy forebodings. Or perhaps the literature of warning: 'See where we are being led by the pursuit of gain, the venality and pharisaism of modern bourgeois society!'"

Now this strikes me as fair comment, in a way. It is easy to find specimens of these 'gloomy forebodings' and pessimistic forecasts of the future of capitalist society in the pages of Western SF. One very well-known example is GLADIATOR-AT-LAW by Pohl and Kornbluth.

In this book, corrupt business corporations have taken over the American government, whilst most of the population are living in slums to which they are condemned by the economic system. Another example is the very first modern SF story, THE TIME MACHINE by H.G.Wells. In contrast, Russian SF stories (or at least the ones I have read so far) are either brassily optimistic, or at worst, describe how some heroic astronaut tragically gives his life (like Egmont) for the good of Mankind.

This, of course, is precisely where we Westerners score. Because our authors feel free to write pessimistically when they choose, our SF is not only better social comment, but it is also more interesting to read. In any case, even these stories (like GLADIATOR-AT-LAW) end with the defeat of the forces of social degeneration.

Some Russian authors make much more imaginative and penetrating points than those of Efremov and Andreev. Take, for example, "Index 81" by Il'ya Varshavskii⁴. (This author, an engineer who took up writing as a hobby, is the most entertaining Soviet SF writer I have so far encountered. I recommend him to any publisher who is thinking of putting out some translations of Russian SF). In "Index 81" he describes the plight of Sam, an unemployed man in the USA :-

"Sleeping on that park bench again?" growled the cop. "I warned you already, get out of town or you'll finish up in gaol. There's no work here."

Sam's negro friend Tom is even more unlucky:- "...after standing in line for an hour he had received a plate of charity soup. This was all the country could spare for its outcasts from the colossal surpluses piled in its stores...." Tom tries to steal some pig swill. The judge says: "When a man steals food out of the mouths of Mister Graham's hogs, he is stealing food out of the mouth of Mister Graham. In this respect the law makes no distinction between Mister Graham and his hogs. Fifteen days."

Sam is now hired by the General Cybernetics Corporation. They have perfected a device whereby his physical sensations can be transmitted to the brain of a disgusting, senile millionaire who wants to feel young again - vicariously. So Sam has to eat gargantuan meals in a swanky restaurant and entertain young ladies, transmitting his sensations, "including the most intimate", to the millionaire. One day he meets Tom and takes him into the restaurant. They are beaten up by the infuriated clientele: "That'll teach you to bring black trash in here!" Sam wakes up in hospital - where the first thing he sees is a bill for medical treatment which consumes all the money he has earned from the GCC. The beating-up is duly transmitted to the millionaire, who dies of a stroke.

These are valid, if exaggerated, criticisms of the American way of life. On the other hand, the propaganda in "The Victory of Albrecht Durer" by Y Golovanov⁵ is not only a travesty of the truth, but badly written to boot. In this story, the neo-Fascist government of West Germany is having trouble with the guidance systems of their war rockets. A sinister West German biologist is breeding men into deformed dwarfs, to provide suicide pilots who will replace defective electronics!

Now let us try to balance the account with some anti-Russian propaganda from American SF. There was quite a lot of this in ASTOUNDING a few years ago: the best-written example being an amusing story called "I was a Teen-age Secret Weapon" by Richard Sabia⁶. This story pokes fun at the Russian government, which is shown as engaged in constant

interdepartmental plots and intrigues: "It is the national pastime of the power elite" as one character says.

A man called Bushmilov is interrogating an American prisoner:-

"Bushmilov swung up his arm to strike Wims across the face. His hand smacked against the pistol held by the Russian officer standing next to him. The gun went off. The bullet zipped through the window, across the courtyard, into another office and past the nose of Internal Security Officer Modrilensky...

"Modrilensky paled. 'Bushmilov? My truest comrade? Who is there to trust? This I expect from that filthy plotter, Berjanian! Or that sneak, Lemchovsky, or Kamashev... They would all like to denounce me and steal my job! And the others! I know them all, every last one of them, and I'll deal with them, they'll see! But Bushmilov!...' By the time he had despatched men to get Bushmilov and neutralise other potential plotters, the occupants of most of the offices overlooking the courtyard were... shooting indiscriminately at one another."

As General Plekoskaya puts it, "...there is obviously some kind of political readjustment going on within the government."

This is hilariously funny and the Russian atmosphere is good, but of course it paints a very distorted picture of the Russian bureaucracy, even in the Stalinist days.

Another story from this period is "Combat" by Mack Reynolds⁷. This purports to strike a fair and even balance between the two sides in the Cold War, presenting the Russian case as well as the American. For example, an American character says: "I can truthfully say that the worst slums I have ever seen in any country that can be considered civilised were in the Harlem district and Lower East Side of New York." Unfortunately, the author's valiant attempts at fairness crack under the strain when he is confronted with an assistant at the London branch of a Soviet travel agency, 'Progressive Tours Ltd.':

"What was it about Commies outside their own countries that they drew such crack-pots into their camp? Heavy lenses, horn rimmed to make them more conspicuous, wild hair, mawkish tweeds and dirty fingernails to top it off."

There is another kind of SF propoganda, less obvious than the above examples. It depicts alien cultures whose ideologies are vaguely reminiscent of the capitalist and communist camps: this kind of subtle innuendo is much more effective than any direct statements. Let us again start with a Russian example, another story by Il'ya Varshavskii, called "Dictator". The dictator is a ruthless gangster called Lupus Est (one of his assistants is called Pinta Visky!) who tries to conquer the planet Galatea. He gets one of his henchmen to make a speech on the Galatean TV: it goes like this:-

"Brothers!... Take heed... for God's right hand is already raised to smite ye asunder.

"Great is your sin before the Lord. Through Galatea there are roaming vile, unnatural demons, defiling God's image, wherefore He has sent us among you. O my children, I refer to the people with red hair... Why is the red-haired man - if this word may be used for such degenerates - why is he a danger to us? The red-haired are constantly thinking of the fact that they are red-haired - and their hearts are full of spite to every man...

"The danger is the greater because they are few. It is for this reason that your wives and daughters look upon them with favour - because red hair is a rarity.

"The hour is not far off when the red of hair will so breed on Galatea that anyone who has the misfortune to be born brown, blonde, ginger or bald.... will lose his portion of air on the planet.

"Stone the redheads with stones, crucify them on crosses, burn their houses - and you will be doing a goodly deed.

"For every redhead killed you will be pardoned one sin; for two, God will covenant to save your soul; for three - eternal bliss! Redheaded children below the age of three will count as three children for one adult."

This attempt to create racial strife fails in the story because the inhabitants of Galatea are rational beings living in an ideal society, and are not to be won over by propaganda. It is hard to resist the inference that this speech depicts religious conservatism in the service of capitalist greed, while the Galateans represent the ideal Communist classless society. (Note again that colour discrimination is considered by the Russians to be a peculiarly American vice). At any rate, the virtues of the 'hero' culture are more like those of Russia, while the faults of the 'villain' character are more like those of America.

In an American story, one would expect to find this position reversed. Sure enough, this is so in the typical (and very funny) Eric Frank Russell story, NEXT OF KIN⁸. The hero is an ideal American - self reliant, rugged, enterprising, go-getting. He is captured by the Zangastrans, a bureaucrat-ridden, authoritarian, unimaginative race of short, heavily-built, ill-educated android louts. It is impossible to avoid noticing similarities between these creatures and the Russians (or, at any rate, the Russians as conceived by the Americans). Needless to say, the All-American hero makes utter fools of the aliens by a trick, which plays on their mutual hostility to one another and to their own allies. There are many similar stories in the literature.

So we see that the villains in SF often tend to possess just those vices which the writers imagine to typify their Cold War opponents. This is, of course, a very subtle and insidious form of propaganda.

It is perhaps most pernicious when directed at children. A letter in the SUN (6/10/65) reads:

"A recent US children's cartoon series shown on British TV concerned an American party equipped with ingenious scientific apparatus. The ruthless enemy in each instalment was either Chinese or Eastern European in appearance and accent. Needless to say, the American heroes always succeeded in removing the tyrants and liberating the defenceless natives." This writer is to be congratulated on noticing the political slant in these cartoons: the propaganda message probably slipped straight into the subconscious of most viewers.

All the same, I don't think we should object to the appearance of Cold War politics in SF. For one thing, it seems to make for good stories (and, after all, authors' imaginations have to start from something in their own experience). For another, it shows that SF writers have a lively interest in the world around them and do not merely spin fantasies of no relevance to life.

Meanwhile, however, we should clearly keep our eyes open when reading SF, and try to see when subtle hate-attitudes are being conveyed by indirect means. Having detected these attitudes, we can avoid letting them feed our prejudices and prevent them from under-

mining our grasp of social facts and political logic.

R. Haldricks.

SOURCES

1. In V MIRE FANTASTIKI I PRIKLYUCHENII edited by T.D. Zubkova, Lenizdat, Leningrad, 1963.
 2. "Vremya, Nazad!" In NA SUCHE I NA MORE, Geografiz, Moscow, 1963.
 3. ALMANAKH NAUCHNOI FANTASTIKI, Znanie Press, Moscow, 1964.
 4. In V MIRE FANTASTIKI I PRIKLYUCHENII.
 5. "Pobeda Albrekhta Dyurera", in V MIRE FANTASTIKII I PRIKLYUCHENII.
 6. ASTOUNDING SF, November 1959.
 7. ANALOG SF, October 1960.
 8. MAYFLOWER SCI-FI, 1962.
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GENERAL CHUNTERING

KEN
SLATER

Those of the British Fan Fraternity (and sorority) who still condescend to read science fiction, including such stereo-typed magazines as ANALOG, will doubtless have been delighted, dismayed or devastated by John W. Campbell's editorial in the December 1965 issue. John W. Campbell is my favourite cat-among-the-pigeons-putter; more fans on more occasions have been more incensed by his editorials in defence of this or that, in attack on that or this, than by those of any other SF editor. This time John not only repeats his arguments about the distinction between Barbarians and Civilised people, but opens out by remarking on a new discovery in psychology that has been made by a Research Clinic in California. This discovery is one which has been known to a vast majority of village policemen throughout history. The simple fact that a swift clip on the bottom will be vastly more effective in preventing Johnny scrumping apples, than a long lecture.

This one should create more havoc than the Dean Anti-gravity device. Should - but probably won't!

The recent advertisements for Chilton Books in various SF magazines led me to enquire from the publishers whether they would export these titles to the UK. They have informed me that in every case the authors have received British rights and hence copies may not be exported from the US to Britain. Some years ago it would have required an extremely well-known author to demand this restriction in his contract; today it places the science fiction writer in the upper-bracket of the literary scene as quite frequently the author of a romantic, detective or other fictional work sells full world rights or does not sell. Although some of the names in the Chilton list are well-known to us, one could hardly say their works are widely known to the general public, hence it would seem that the simple fact that they are science fiction writers enables them to press buttons outside finger reach to ordinary authors.

The British re-print magazine VENTURE ceases publication with the December 1965 edition. . . . on to the British and American news-stands with no fanfare came GREAT SCIENCE FICTION FROM AMAZING - a 50¢, 130 page digest magazine published by Ultimate Publishing Co., under the editorship of Sol Cohen. The first issue contains eight stories taken from AMAZING between 1959 and 1961, illustrated, 3/6 in UK. Forthcoming Four Square titles are SMALL ARMAGEDDON by Mordecai Roshwald (January), TARZAN AND THE MAD-MAN by Edgar Rice Burroughs (January), THE DARK LIGHT YEARS by Brian Aldiss (February) and CREEPS BY NIGHT edited by Dashiell Hammett. . . . Four Square have also on schedule

ERB'S TARZAN AND THE CASTAWAYS, FIGHTING MAN OF MARS, ESCAPE ON VENUS and SWORDS OF MARS....Also on the Martian scene, the third of Edward P. Bradbury's novels, BARBARIANS OF MARS, from Compact on December 29th. The other and somewhat more famous Bradbury, Ray, now has a new collection of stories - comic strip stories - published by Ballantine at 50¢ titled THE AUTUMN PEOPLE. This contains eight strips from the EC comics. Paperback imports by G Gold (Star Books) for December were Eunice Zadak's X and Don Wollheim's edited MORE ADVENTURES ON OTHER PLANETS....to come in January are Lovecraft's THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE and Jack Williamson's THE TRIAL OF TERRA.....all these at 3/6 each. STARCHILD by Pohl and Williamson has been published by Ballantine at 50¢....this is an enlarged version of the serial from GALAXY. The Pyramid schedule for 1966 is mainly reprint SF titles.

The December issue of IF commenced Robert A. Heinlein's latest serial "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress" in which he discusses yet another political philosophy, which will doubtless bring him as much abuse as did STARSHIP TROOPERS, GLORY ROAD, FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD and STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. As I personally read SF for entertainment I found this latest novel just as enjoyable as the above-mentioned predecessors. As a committee of one, I consider that Heinlein is still among the ten best writers of SF....Please don't ask me to name the other nine! I've just thought of fifteen....

Without wishing to enter the Ace/Ballantine controversy, I would comment that, today, publishing and bookselling is no longer the gentlemanly profession it was even twenty years ago. Economic pressure, large combines and similar factors force many otherwise ordinary upright citizens into the position of turning the fast buck where they can. This may be at the level of the minor misdemeanour such as inflating the travelling allowance claim or the income tax return; it is hardly to be expected that business organisations will do other than reflect the moral standards of the individuals who are, after all, the component parts. It follows that one should take every precaution against being defrauded, tricked, etc. If one leaves a loop-hole and someone takes advantage of it, one can but blame oneself. This appears to be the modern ethic. If this statement offends anyone I apologise for the offence. I can do nothing about the fact.

Lloyd Biggle Jr's THE FURY OUT OF TIME (Doubleday \$4.50) contains a lovely time puzzle. Putting the story in the reverse order, an alien race are stranded on pre-historic Earth, short of fuel. They have a new mechanism which will travel in time carrying one passenger. They send this forward to a point in time where it runs out of fuel and the passenger is killed. Now, the present-day Earthmen re-fuel it from a source which I will explain in a moment. Under the impression that the machine came from the future, they send it forward in time. The future Terrans send it back in time and it arrives at a time a month before it arrives from the past. By analysing the fuel, the present-day Terrans are able to develop a new power source and send the machine forward in time. This is, as far as they are concerned, the first time the machine has arrived in the present day and certain clues enable them to conclude it came from the future. They return it accidentally. You will now appreciate where the fuel comes from when the machine arrives for (from the point of view of the present-day Terrans) the second time. I'll just leave it there and let you puzzle out the

sequence for yourselves. Even Lloyd Biggle has offered no explanation of this paradox.....

For ERB fans, Dick Lupoff's 295-page analysis, biography and bibliography, EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: MASTER OF ADVENTURE, has been published by Canaveral Press in two editions, a Limited Edition at \$15.00 and a Standard Edition at \$7.50. The book is slightly larger in page size than the ordinary Canaveral Press editions. It is, of course, a work for the Burroughs enthusiast and the anti-ERB reader will not find it palatable.

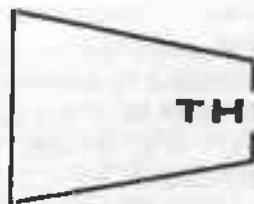
Harry Harrison has drawn my attention to a title in the Artia Pocket Books - Paperbacks series called VAMPIRES LTD by J. Nesvadba which is labelled 'science fiction'. I have not yet secured a copy but from the title the description seems unlikely. If anyone knows of this I'd welcome an opinion. Will everyone please note I always welcome news of books which are of even minor interest to the SF reader.

From Tom Boardman I have word of some Remainder stocks of a few of the Boardman SF titles published in the 'fifties...all mint in dust wrapper which will probably be available at about 5/- a copy. Anyone interested should drop me a line and as soon as I have details I will let them know which titles can be obtained. Currently, I know only of STAR SF STORIES as a firm offer.

A little late, I have just discovered that in 1964 Liverpolitan Ltd., who publish STORYTELLER magazine, issued INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLER OMNIBUS No. 3, which contained 19 SF titles - none of which I recognise, at a cursory glance, as being published elsewhere. Copies of this book are still available on various news-stands. This only stresses that, with the best will in the world, even somebody specialising in a subject cannot know all about that subject all the time - and the assistance of outsiders, non-specialist, is always essential. They may have information the Specialist lacks and needs.

Ken Slater.

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THE VISUAL SIDE

VIC HALLETT

Ray Bradbury's *FAHRENHEIT 451* looks, at last, as though it will get before the cameras. The French director, Francois Truffaut, has been assigned to direct it for 'Universal' release and will start it in England in January with Julie Christie playing the female lead.

Hammer Films are making *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*, which is being directed by Don Chaffey and stars John Richardson. It is being filmed in a process called Giant Panamation and it sounds like the old mixture of humans and dinosaurs.

The sea is still popular as a setting for stories of the future. The latest is an MGM production directed by Ivan Tors called *AROUND THE WORLD UNDER THE SEA*. Starring Lloyd Bridges, Shirley Eaton, Marshall Thompson, David McCallum and Ed Wynn, it is the story of a submarine anchored in unexplored waters to investigate seismographic disturbances and is a mixture of known scientific fact with reasonable speculation and, no doubt, a fair lacing of action.

Even before this is released, a sequel is planned. Also to be directed by Tors, it will be called *COLLEGE UNDER THE SEA* and will tell of the training of oceanographers by practical experience from a permanent undersea college.

MGM are proving busy in the SF film field. Apart from the two above and *2001; A SPACE ODYSSEY*, they are making a film of Olaf Stapledon's *ODD JOHN* which is being scripted by Ray Russell and produced by George Pal.

Currently on release is another film by Pal, *THE SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO*, starring Tony Randall with screenplay by Charles G. Finney from his own novel.

Japan's old friend, Godzilla, is once again in a threatening mood, this time in *GODZILLA Vs THE THING*. The Thing in this case is a giant moth, called Mothra, who is later joined by two giant grubs in her effort to save Japan - but for how long?

Also on release is an American film called *THE TIME TRAVELLERS* directed by Ib Melchior from his own original story. This stars Preston Foster, Philip Carey, Merry Anders and in the small role of 3rd technician, Forrest J. Ackerman. From reviews I have read, this promises to be better than the average.

France, at the moment, seems to be on the verge of starting a cycle of fantasy adventures starring strip cartoon characters and Italy is deserting historical spectacles for anything which can be manufactured, including SF. Apart from *THE TENTH VICTIM*, Italy's output seems to be confined to mad scientists, evil aliens and planets of terror but, fingers crossed, I remain optimistic.

REVIEW

THE PIER. This is an unusual French film directed by Chris Marker which was awarded a prize at the first Trieste SF Film Festival. Only 29 minutes long, it is composed almost entirely of stills and tells of a man's obsession with the face of a girl he saw on the observation pier at Orly Airport just before World War III. After the war he is a prisoner of the survivors of Paris who, because of this obsession, use him in time travel experiments, first sending him into the past to meet the girl, and then into the future for the means of their survival. His obsession is so great that when he is given the choice of life with men of the future or death in the past, he chooses the latter on the pier at Orly.

This is the nearest I have seen on the screen to the short obsession stories of J.G. Ballard and it has a great deal of the feeling of some of his best; haunting, beautiful - but always a doomed, sterile, hopeless feeling. Unlike a Ballard hero, the main character in this film does achieve a sort of fulfilment, and whilst the still photographs alienate me from full sympathy it is at least a worthwhile effort to put serious SF ideas on the screen. It probably won't get a wide release, but if you're fortunate enough to get the chance to see it, don't miss it.

Vic Hallett.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Jim Groves

First off we have a correction to a previous answer from Jeremy Barry of Los Angeles: "FANTASY TIMES is not dead: only the name was changed. It is now SCIENCE FICTION TIMES and is a monthly newszine. The cost is \$1.80. per year or 15¢ per single issue. Address is James V Taurasi Sr., 119-46 27th Avenue, College Point, New York 11354, USA. Over 400 issues have been published."

Next is a query from Charles Legg of Stevenage: "Can you tell me how many prozines are on sale in Britain at the present time and which ones they are? Secondly, I was browsing through an American fanzine recently and found that a play called THE WORLD OF RAY BRADBURY has been staged in America. It consists of three playlets: "The Pedestrian", "The Veldt" and "To the Chicago Abyss". Could you tell me whether the play, or the film that is supposed to be being made of it, has been, or will be, staged anywhere in Britain?"

The prozines available in this country include all of those being produced - whether they appear in your area or not, however, depends on your local newsagents. They include NEW WORLDS, SCIENCE FANTASY, ANALOG, FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, AMAZING, FANTASTIC, GALAXY, IF, WORLDS OF TOMORROW, MAGAZINE OF HORROR and GAMMA. As for the Bradbury playlets, as far as I know they are not being staged in this country.

Next, from Peter Jennings of Watford: "I wish to trace a story about which I have practically no information. I know it is about a multi-generation spaceship and little else; I therefore consider the best way to find it is to read a number of these such stories. Could you please list some for me? Also, some time ago on TV there was a series called OUT OF THIS WORLD. Could you tell me the SF stories which appeared in this series?"

There are three novels of the multi-generation starship that I can recall. They are ORPHANS OF THE SKY by Robert A. Heinlein (originally two stories - "Universe" and "Commonsense"), NON-STOP by Brian W. Aldiss and SPACE BORN by E.C. Tubb. There are also quite a few short stories on this theme: three I particularly remember are "Target Generation" by Clifford D. Simak (SCIENCE FICTION PLUS Aug. '53 under the title "Spacebred

Generations"), "Centaurus II" by A.E. van Vogt (ASTOUNDING Jun, '47) and "Giant Killer" by A. Bertram Chandler (ASTOUNDING Oct, '45). But there are many others.

Stories that appeared in OUT OF THIS WORLD series were: "Impostor" by Philip K. Dick, "The Yellow Pill" by Rog. Phillips, "Little Lost Robot" by Isaac Asimov, "Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin, "The Ape of London" by Denis Butler, "Immortality For Some" by J.T. McIntosh, "Botany Bay" by Terry Nation, "Medicine Show" by Robert Moore Williams, "Divided We Fall" by Raymond F. Jones, "Pictures Don't Lie" by Katherine MacLean, "Target Generation" by Clifford D. Simak, and "Kindergarten" - also by Simak. There may have been others but these are the only ones I remember: I have a feeling that there was an Arthur Sellings story, but what it was I'm afraid I don't know.

Lastly, from Brian Stableford of Denton, Lancs., comes a couple of corrections together with queries: "One Cordwainer Smith story no-one has yet mentioned is "The Fife of Bodidharma" in FANTASTIC Jun, '59. Another point from your column - the Sherwood stories "Scarlet Dawn" and "Scarlet Denial" were published by Ace Books (F285) as THE MILLION YEAR PLAN under Sherwood's real name (Kenneth Bulmer). Now, queries: (1) was Kelvin Kent a pseudonym for Henry Kuttner or Arthur K. Barnes? (2) Could you please do something to clarify the use of the 'Ivar Jorgenson' pseudonym? A note in SF ADVENTURES No. 5 (BRE) says that he was born in Norway. The story in question, however, ("This World Must Die") was later published by Ace Books as THE PLANET KILLERS by Robert Silverberg! I have also read in various places that Jorgenson was a 'house name' at one time and is now being used by an ex-editor. (3) Are the following pseudonyms - Thomas Burnett Swann, C.E. Fritch, Fox B. Holden, Zelia Bishop, Tom Purdom: if so, whose? (4) Did de Camp & Pratt ever write a fourth book in the series concerning Harold Shea? (5) How many 'Jirel of Joiry' stories did C.L. Moore write? Did the one bringing Jirel and Northwest Smith together, mentioned in de Camp's SWORDS AND SORcery, ever materialise?"

'Kelvin Kent' was a pseudonym used by both Kuttner and Barnes, either singly or in collaboration depending on the story under consideration. According to my information, 'Ivar Jorgenson' is a pseudonym used by Paul W. Fairman who did quite a bit of editing for Ziff-Davis. As for the Silverberg title, I can only suggest that for that particular story the 'Jorgenson' name was used as a house name. Pseudonyms - I have no information on Swann or Fritch but the other three, Holden, Bishop and Purdom are definitely real persons. There were only three Shea stories - THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER, CASTLE OF IRON and WALL OF SERPENTS. Jirel of Joiry stories - there are three in SHAMBLEAU (plus four Northwest Smith stories) and two in NORTHWEST OF EARTH (plus five Northwest Smith). For the record, there are two other Northwest Smith stories - "Song in a Minor Key" (FANTASTIC UNIVERSE Jan, '57) and "Nymph of Darkness" (WEIRD TALES Dec, '39). The story that brings these two together is "Quest of the Starstone" (WEIRD TALES Nov, '37). There is also supposed to be a Northwest Smith story that appeared in an amateur magazine, but I've not been able to locate this.

By the time you read this column I will have emigrated to the States. This will mean a temporary break in the column, but if you have any queries, please send them to the Editor, Rog. Peyton, who will attempt to provide the answers.

Jim Groves.

THE BRITISH
MAGAZINES
 REVIEWED BY
 CHRIS PRIEST

MAGAZINES REVIEWED

SCIENCE FANTASY (December)	79
NEW WORLDS (December)	157

SCIENCE FANTASY 79, December, 1965

"Plague from Space", Harry Harrison's latest novel, commences in this issue. On the strength of this first chunk, it looks like just another disaster story, though I suspect there is something more than that to come. A spaceship crash-lands in New York, with a dead or dying crew. As the airlock opens, an unknown virus radiates, and things start happening. The story reads quickly and entertainingly, the medical chat seems convincing and, for once, the hero is intelligent and human. "As Others See Us" by E.C. Tubb is about a man who finds a piece of metal which enables him to read people's minds. Oddly down-beat in conclusion. Richard A. Gordon's "A Question of Culture" is a sociological satire, extrapolating the influence of the culture cults. Extremely predictable ending, but enjoyable enough. "Democratic Autocracy" by Ernest Hill is about a future system where old and unnecessary citizens are disposed of by euthanasia: time comes when the Government Minister in charge of this faces a problem of his own.... It all seemed familiar to me, though some of the side-issues were quite entertaining. "Cleaner than Clean" by R.W. Mackelworth is another satire, though a lot of the comment gets lost in the unclear narrative form. This one is about sewers which blow up and spread white stains everywhere. A very odd story. "Passenger" by Alan Burns is a confusing and weakly-plotted story about aliens occupying human bodies. I found the action quite preposterous in places, and can only conclude that the story was written quickly and to order.

Mr. Bonfiglioli's editorial, evidently written very soon after the London Convention, promises great things to come in future issues. There is a wide gulf in this magazine at present, between the worst and the best, and anything constructive towards narrowing this breach will be welcome.

NEW WORLDS SF 157, December, 1965

James Colvin's "The Wrecks of Time" continues in this issue. Although the story has latent plot gimmicks and pseudoscientific paraphernalia, it reads quickly and well. Superficially, "Transient" by Langdon Jones is similar to Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon", but it doesn't create the same poignancy or character-identification that that classic short story did. "J is for Jeanne" by E.C. Tubb is about the obsessional fear a young girl has that her nightmares will become reality. There's a little more to it than that, and a surprise ending on top. Michael Moorcock's "Further Information" is a second short story in the Jerry Cornelius series. This is a pointless story with esoteric footnotes, awkward and unnecessary sex and a quite obscure plot. Not recommended. "Dance of the Cats" by Joseph Green is 'straight' SF. Two young photographers visit an alien planet to film the rather erotic native dances, and in so doing solve and resolve a sociological dilemma. Very good, of its kind, "To Possess in Reality" by David Newton is difficult to describe without giving away too much. Briefly, a spaceship pilot gets blown to a fair world where he wins his Princess, then takes her back to Earth. A few fantasy cliches come off the worse in the process, and so does the hero. Try this story. Robert Cheetham's "A Mind of My Own" is a trifle about a psi-sensitive 'other half' who experiences in full his partner's emotions. "Ernie" by Colin R. Fry is a somewhat sadistic story about mining on the Moon, and a dwarf with a grudge to clear. The story is a bit too callous, but makes its point.

The usual variety of features adorns this issue: Dr. Peristyle, rather less acerbic than of late; letters; book reviews by Langdon Jones and R.M. Bennett; and a London Convention report. A fair issue, not properly representative of the average quality.

Note. With the March 1966 issues, both **NEW WORLDS** and **SCIENCE FANTASY** undergo changes. The price increases to 3/6d, and the number of pages increases to 160. The name **SCIENCE FANTASY** is to be dropped, and will be replaced by **IMPULSE**. The price—and size—increases are a forward step; both editors have found the present size restrictive, and the expansion should enable more latitude in both content and quality. **SCIENCE FANTASY**'s name-change will ultimately affect both magazines—whether for the better or worse, remains to be seen.

Chris Priest.

BOOKS

Reviews & Future Releases

OF WORLDS BEYOND edited by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach
Dennis Dobson, 13/6, 112 pages

This volume is sub-titled "The Science of Science Fiction Writing" and is the first in a proposed series called "Studies in Science Fiction". Both book and series are noble in purpose and deserve a rousing cheer for the mere act of leaving the launching pad.

The first thing that must be considered is how far does this attractive, blue-clad volume go towards justifying our general enthusiasm? Certainly the list of contributors is encouraging; Heinlein, van Vogt, Campbell and others, and serves to balance the fact that the contents are about eighteen years old. Do critical points - even by men like these - still have anything to offer the modern reader and writer after the passage of so many years? Let us see.

On the negative side, the opening piece by Heinlein supplies completely dated advice on writing for slick magazines, and informs us as well that *MEIN KAMPF* is a work of fiction. Aside from this, Heinlein does give some good guidance on writing short stories for the commercial markets, though for the most part, what he says applies to general fiction and only incidentally to SF. Half a hit, half a miss - because of the dated material - score .50.

Dr. Eric Temple (John Taine) Bell does better with advice on writing the hard-science SF that still stands up well, other than his out-dated information on which science magazines to read. The only lack - and the lack is mainly my ignorance - is a bit of missing detail when he discusses a new kind of 'numbers' for which the order of multiplication gives different results. Are there any mathematically-minded BSFA members who know what these new numbers and their system are called? Taine says they are used in the mechanics of rotation and in optics. My eternal thanks and a hit for a meat pie, good at the next convention, for the first member to send in the correct answer. Score .90.

Jack Williamson writes on "The Logic of Fantasy" and refers to his own stories to make his points. The stories may be dated, but the advice is still good. The reader, as well as the writer, should profit by this one in gaining enjoyable insight into the 'story behind the story' of a good deal of Williamson's work. Score .90 here, the missing .10 dropped because most modern readers won't be acquainted with the stories referred to.

Van Vogt gives us a lecture on van Vogtian madness that can't possibly date because

it is so personal. His 800 word-scene-theory is absolute nonsense for any other writer, and I feel it is for him as well. My personal belief is that when his stories work, they work in spite of this eccentric writing gimmick, and when they don't work, the change of scene at 800 words is utterly destructive. The anecdote about the writer who took van Vogt's advice is hilarious, unintentionally I must add, and a perfect example of the monstrous and unflappable ego that all writers seem to have. Score 1.00 on this, not for any valuable advice on writing SF, but for entertainment and insight into the mysterious workings of one of the most important SF minds.

L. Sprague de Camp writes about humour in SF and I am tempted to give this a big .000 on the basis that his advice on how to write funny ha-ha SF is completely worthless. One can either write humour or not - and no amount of advice will ever alter that fact. Sprague is in top form when writing about funny stories, he has an eidetic memory and is a wealth of anecdote, and this is probably the most readable entry in the book. Facing the fact that I am crochety and mean, but still unable to give 1.00 for a piece I disagree with in theory, I assign a compromise .75.

The late E.E. Smith has a most warm and human piece on how he composed his epics. Like the van Vogt article, this is personal and can only help a writer in a most general way, and its real interest lies in the insight it gives us to his personality and his work. Score 1.00; it's a piece that all Smith fans should have on their shelves.

The volume closes with some general John Campbell advice that has aged not at all. You may accuse John of a lot of things, but never of flightily changing his mind. Years ago he made up his mind about the ingredients of a good SF yarn and time and history have proven him correct. The worst that can be said is that he had said things elsewhere: this doesn't alter their basic validity. Score 1.00.

A quick bit of work on the back of an envelope produces an overall score of .86 for the book, which is not bad at all. A highly specialised volume, but a good one for a very fair price. Buy it.

Harry Harrison.

THE LONG RESULT by John Brunner
Faber, 18/-, 194 pages

The trouble with reviewing is that there is always insufficient data. The criteria of criticism have a limited use. Reviewers have to contend with the Great Unknown in the equation of criticism: the writer.

The trials and tribulations of writing - of creating - are, I think, better understood by SF readers than by any others. There is a feedback in SF which is found in no other branch of writing. Through the media of personal contact at conventions, fanmags and correspondence, writers are continually quizzed - and not always gently, either!

A writer is always fascinated by his fellow-writers. How and why do they get their ideas, what motivates them to write as they do, what do they hope to achieve - those are some of the questions one writer wishes to know of another.

A writer doing reviews has a slight inside edge, but there is still light-years of room for guesswork and speculation.

This brings me to John Brunner and his present book, *Entertainer? Crusader?* Or a mixture of both? His previous writings and his activities outwith SF indicate that he would find it impossible to write a story that did not present some comment on contemporary society. He is a man of Causes.

The theme of the book is the relations between Earth, Starhome and a clutch of aliens. Brunner might possibly be using that to express his views on the colour problem, violence, international relations and how he would deal with them. Guesswork, yes: but mine is probably as good as anyone else's.

We expect, and we have here, a professionally-written, interesting story, one that I feel is written on two levels, one of entertainment, the other of crusade, or message. The ingredients are expertly mixed.

The story is written in the first person, a good choice as the reader is directly involved throughout. There is a smooth blend of action and dialogue with none of the irritating digressions that often occur when the story is told in the third person.

The construction of the story is a bit weak in places. I can't cite specific instances for fear of giving the plot away, but some revelations came as no surprise.

Many of the plot weaknesses devolve upon the main character, Roald Savage Vincent, who is as even as corrugated paper. One minute he is telling the police the solution to a murder attempt on the aliens (how he arrived at the solution is never explained), the next minute he is being scathed by his chief, who treats him like a particularly idiotic idiot. At the end of the story, the sarcastic chief, Tinescu, offers Vincent his position as head of the Bureau of Culture. To say the least, Vincent is inconsistent and unconvincing. But he is still likable and entertaining, which makes him all right with me. I must feel sympathy for a character who gets bounded around like a ping-pong ball and still manages to come out on top. Sometimes he's so histrionic as to be almost real. But, despite all that, Vincent, as a character, is too facile, and that tends to mar a little what is otherwise a powerful story.

The book will entertain you and give you something to think over. It's worth reading. At a time when British SF is being subjected to unsorted garbage, we're lucky to have a writer like Brunner who can tell a story in comprehensible terms.

Don Malcolm.

MISSION TO THE HEART STARS by James Blish
Faber, 13/6. 125 pages

Hinted at in the blurbs, though unstated, this is a juvenile. "Jack Loftus, Sandbag Stevens and Dr. Langer are on a diplomatic mission to the Heart Stars". Their aim is to shorten Earth's 50,000 year probation to the Federation by flaunting their alliance with the Angels - Energy beings who have existed since the creation of the Universe. Some of these beings are kind enough to live inside and operate our nuclear power plants. On the strength of this help, Earth politicians hope to bluff the Galactics (a race merely a few million years old) into giving us better terms.

A cardboard spaceship (virtually pulled out of a hat) carries our cardboard characters to several cardboard planets in their two-year journey to the 'Centre'. On arrival, they are

bluntly told that their upstart race cannot be tolerated, therefore Earth must become a slave. Our heroes make a break for home, are overtaken, but are rescued by Jack's friendly Angel who was hiding inside this ship's power plant. They get home safely (I think) after much disjointed talk about dolphins, freedom, humanity, warfare, and the formation of a new Galactic Federation. The Angels tell themselves what nits they have been and that's that. Nothing really happens anywhere in the whole dreary book.

As might be expected, everyone raises scientific and philosophical points which are pedantically explained by Dr. Langer in the traditional story-halting manner originated by Gernsback. Even in the foreword, the author patronisingly explains the meaning of the word 'precessing', then goes on to misuse it in the first chapter.

Verbose and lacking in story line and plausibility. Too high-falutin, dull and dusty for its juvenile readers, and too immature in treatment, characterisation and plot structure for any but the most brainless of adults. The author has long been a favourite of mine but loyalty must bow to veracity.

Perhaps the jacket subconsciously admits this; it says:- "James Blish is the author of a number of distinguished adult science fiction novels and two previous juveniles." The separation virtually admits that this one isn't distinguished either.

Not recommended.

Terry Jeeves.

TANGENT

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE.

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BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO by Harry Harrison
Gollancz, 16/-. 154 pages

Current examples of our favourite reading matter, to my mind, seem to be either dull, colourless, tasteless extrapolations or the polished fan fiction which some British practitioners are kidding themselves is the new wave in science fiction. It's a refreshing change to read Harry Harrison, who excels in straightforward, lightly written thrillers. His new book, chunks of which appeared in NEW WORLDS recently, will delight his fans. It is most enjoyable:

It is the story of a country bumpkin on a planet somewhere in the inhabited galaxy who gets recruited into the Army. It describes his experiences as a rookie, where the bane of his existence is a neanderthaloid Petty Officer with specially implanted fangs (to 'improve' his image) called Deathwish Drang. He graduates as a Fusetender 6th Class, during which he experiences a space battle with the reptilian enemies of mankind, the Chingers. The Chingers have a repulsive image - even more repulsive than Drang's - imposed on the soldiers as 7-foot slimy, scaly crocodiles. They turn out to be lizards six inches long. Bill, more by luck than by judgement, knocks out an enemy ship and is made a hero. He loses a left arm and the hospital fits a new one for him. Well, not exactly new; second-hand - an arm taken from one of his fallen buddies. It is (1) black, (2) half as long again as his old one, and (3) it's a right arm, which means he can at least shake hands with himself. He goes off to the city-planet Helior to get his medal and there embarks on a second series of adventures in a highly mechanised world.

I think it's quite clear that BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO is intended to be a take-off of some common SF themes. For example, E.E. Smith-type space battles, tiered metal cities, nasty swamp worlds filled with swamp critters, etc., and the long arm of coincidence, well-extended in much SF, stretched to breaking point. All this on a good, solid substrata of satire on Army life.

It should have been the funniest SF story ever written. Unfortunately, I didn't find it so. Entertaining - yes. Funny - no. I found it reminiscent of an SF writer's ideas book. It's stuffed full of fascinating little bits and pieces. The material is there but without the tailoring.

Harrison isn't essentially a writer of humour, as Richard Gordon (of the DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE series), Thorne Smith and, in our own genre, Eric Frank Russell are. Humour rarely succeeds when it's tossed at one in a series of gags. It has to be developed, built up carefully. Harrison succeeds in doing this only once or twice. For instance, I mentioned Bill's second right arm. When Bill collects his medal from the Galactic Emperor, he gives a snappy salute. His new arm (which was, of course, his old buddy's saluting arm) makes the salute simultaneously with the other. I roared with laughter, because the gag had been developed and I'd been half-expecting something funny to happen with that arm. But I think the success of the joke was more luck than judgement, otherwise more of the jokes would have come off.

As a writer of good, entertaining fiction, Harry Harrison is supreme. But as a humorist he's as adroit as a man with two left feet.

George Locke.

ALSO RECEIVED

A CENTURY OF GREAT SHORT SF NOVELS edited by Damon Knight (Gollancz 21/-, 371 pages).
 Contains "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" by Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Invisible Man" by H.G.Wells, "The Absolute at Large" by Karel Capek, "Gulf" by Robert A. Heinlein, "E for Effort" by T.L.Sherrad, and "Hunter, Come Home" by Richard McKenna.
 FALLEN STAR by James Blish (Faber 18/-, 218 pages).

AMERICAN BOOK RELEASES

BEHOLD THE STARS by Kenneth Bulmer)
) (Ace M131, 45¢)
 PLANETARY AGENT X by Mack Reynolds)

THE HOUSE THAT STOOD STILL by A.E. van Vogt (Paperback Library 52-873, 50¢)

MIGHTIEST MACHINE by John W. Campbell (Ace F364, 40¢)

MIND SWITCH by Damon Knight (Berkley F1160, 50¢)

SECRET OF THE NINTH PLANET by Don Wollheim (Paperback Library 52-874, 50¢)

TAMA OF THE LIGHT COUNTRY by Ray Cummings (Ace F363, 40¢)

BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

WORLDS WITHOUT END by Clifford D. Simak (Herbert Jenkins 13/6)

THE UNEXPECTED DIMENSION by Algis Budrys (Panther) Feb.

ROGUE MOON by Algis Budrys (Gold Medal S1474, 2/6) Jan. 28th.

PILGRIMAGE by Zenna Henderson (Panther 1971, 3/6) Dec. 30th.

FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov (Panther 1080, 3/6) Dec. 30th.

FOUNDATION AND EMPIRE by Isaac Asimov (Panther 1355, 3/6) Dec. 30th.

SECOND FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov (Panther 1713, 3/6) Dec. 30th.

EXPEDITION TO EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke (Pan X462, 3/6) Jan. 7th.

THE EXPERT DREAMERS ed by Fred Pohl (Pan X463, 3/6) Jan. 7th.

SPECTRUM 3 ed by Amis & Conquest (Pan M113, 5/-) Jan. 7th.

THE MAIL RESPONSE

James R. Goodrich
5 Brewster Drive
Middletown
New York 10940
USA

If you boys want a pro-printed VECTOR - fine, but let's make sure the contents warrant the extra expense! Not that V/35 was bad; it just left me unmoved, text-wise. I don't care what repro method is used as long as the verbiage is legible. Photos, however, are another thing - they require special treatment. Trust we will now get regularly sharp pics of authors, fans, events, etc; better reproed art, also. That's where I would like to see our money go. I'll pay more into the Treasury too, if the illo cost demands.

Based on the reviews in VECTOR, I'm likewise nauseated over the state of British SF (particularly the s&s variety) in the promags. The new FANTASTIC here started off with a bang but is now fizling miserably. None of the others resemble WEIRD TALES, FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and others of that most-lamented genre. Oops, forgot Doc Lowndes' MAGAZINE OF HORROR which probably doesn't cross the Atlantic.

Could you please tell my wife and me whether Brian's nude on the cover of V/34 is a feminine man or vice-versa? Finally, is there anyone around who could provide a report on C.T. Stoneham, the creator of KASPA, the Lion Man?

£ Better reproed art you'll certainly have - if we can get the artwork! Unfortunately, good artwork is very hard to get and we can only just about get enough for VECTOR covers. This is the reason why there has been no back covers or interior illos.

The Doc Lowndes mag is imported over here but in a very haphazard way. I, personally, have just obtained the first (Aug. 63) and the ninth (Jun. 65) issues from a local newsagents. They sell at 1/6 per copy. RGP_/

Chris Cook
"St Lucia"
West Looe Hill
West Looe
Cornwall

Although the BSFA membership makes a professionally printed VECTOR economically feasible, I, for one, would rather read the fanzine-type VECTOR as previously produced. The printing of the new VECTORS is legible but the binding is terrible. Also, the reduction in size has made VECTOR seem coldly impersonal (or perhaps that's the lack of the "Mail Response"?). The cover art smacks of the RADIO TIMES attempting to be with-it about SF - in short, the covers of V/35 and 36 were awful. Oh for the days of VECTOR 33 and 34 with matchless covers and crisp contents.

£ Yes, the binding of the last two issues has been pretty shoddy - we hope that it will improve with this issue, though. - RGP_/

Adrian Cook
 "St Lucia"
 West Looe Hill
 West Looe
 Cornwall

I certainly agree with Roje Gilbert regarding the importance of the "Mail Response" - apart from the value of the criticism which it inspires, it also gives the vainer among us a chance to see their names in print. Those book reviews are a bit short, I think - I would also prefer more of them but, as you say, if the publishers won't play ball.....

The scenes from BBC2's OUT OF THE UNKNOWN were excellent and had me gnashing my teeth in frustration at not being able to see the series.

/ This issue's book reviews are considerably longer than usual - we hope you agree with us that it is an improvement. With so few books to review we can allow the space, but sometimes, notably around late summer, the publishers issue more books than we can cope with. Glad you liked the photo section - we hope to do more in the future. - RGP/_

William Aitken
 3 Vogrie Place
 Gorebridge
 Midlothian

So it's in the wind that "Mail Response" is for the axe! The brief reasons given are entirely inadequate and the apparent attitudes of one RGP seem to verge on the dictatorial side. A lot more discussion by other interested parties besides the policy makers will have to be taken before such a drastic step is inaugurated. To me, the "Mail Response" is the most interesting part of VECTOR and without it, it would be a mere catalogue. If even only one member writes, then within broad limits this is entitled to be published as a comment on both VECTOR and other interests and could in fact engender a greater-mail response next issue.

After all, the whole purpose of VECTOR is to create a friendly club where all members can participate and is not the property of one, two or three individuals to take over and use as their personal platform.

Take a look at V/35 and V/36. If the "Mail Response" goes we will be left with an editorial, film news and book reviews between the covers. It may be a nice format but that's no substitute for interesting subject matter and arguable concepts.

No, no - the magazine is becoming stultified, pedantic and dictatorial and if the readers allow this, then one subscription certainly will not be renewed. Where are the interesting articles which could have appeared? Have people stopped contributing them because of too severe rejections? Or are they still contributing and not being accepted? Come on then, readers, send in those letters and put a bit of spice between the too-close covers of VECTOR.

/The purpose of VECTOR most certainly is not to create a friendly club. The Constitution states in Paragraph 2 - Objects, that it (the BSFA) "shall endeavour to present science fiction and associated art-forms to the Press and general public in an advantageous manner..." We can never succeed with this if our journal is full of in-group chattiness. It must be easily understandable to a casual SF reader and not merely to a handful of 'fans'.

We'll ignore the first part of your third paragraph which is so obviously wrong and pass on to the last paragraph. There have been at least two articles in the last few VECTORS - articles which have been very hard to get. Most articles that appear in VECTOR have to be asked for - members very rarely contribute them without being asked. Rejections? I wish that there was enough choice to be able to reject some. There's probably been only about a

dozen articles rejected amongst all those that have seen print. - RGP/_

John E. Derry
520a Haslucks Green Road
Shirley
Solihull
Warks.

I'm not one for dragging out lengthy discussions over controversial articles, but I feel I must add a small postscript to the David Sparrow article/argument.

Agreed his article did contain some erroneous statements, but then so did the letter from Steve Oakey, the predominant error involved being the heavy reliance on Einstein's theory(ies), which I'll come to in a moment. First, I want to clear up this problem of the photoelectric effect. De Broglie put forward an equation which related the energy to the frequency of radiation emitted; $E=hu$ where h is Planck's constant, and hu is termed 'a quantum' of energy. Now the velocity of the centre of the electron wave packet (an electron can be considered as being a wave or a particle. In the present discussion it must be considered as being a wave packet since frequency and wavelength mean nothing when applied to a particle) is the product of the frequency and wavelength of the packet - 'the group velocity'. Thus we have: $E=hu$ and $V=lu$. Eliminating the frequency u : $E = \frac{Vh}{l}$. So, for a packet of a certain wavelength, the energy does indeed depend on the velocity (h is a constant). Likewise, for a given velocity, the energy is proportional to the wavelength. Furthermore, the momentum $p=h/l$, and E now becomes Vp ; p being the momentum of the electron as a particle. But $p=mv$ (v is the velocity of the electron particle) so that $E=mvV$. It is easily shown that $V=v$; thus $E=(\frac{1}{2})mv^2$. This is in fact incorrect by a factor of $\frac{1}{2}$ due to the simple, non-integral treatment. The result should be $\frac{1}{2}mv^2$ - exactly the same result as the kinetic energy for any particle. This, I hope, clears up the confusion about the energy dependence of a particle.

Back to Einstein. Few people seem to realize that the majority, indeed the most important chunk of his theory remains a theory! And little, if any, has been verified to date! Anybody using the theory as a basis for discussion is using a procession of conjectural hypotheses. However, using it in the same manner as 'i' $[-1]^{\frac{1}{2}}$ is used, is permissible since i acts only as a conversion factor and has no absolute, 'real' significance (i.e. value). (It's hard enough for most people to imagine a minus quantity, let alone the square root of one.) Einstein's theory must be treated in a similar way. Until concrete verifications are made (which is highly unlikely, considering the conditions involved would hardly permit any) or a 'real' significance is put on the theory, then it must also remain merely a conversion factor or a 'go-between' so to speak. Any deductions made from it would logically possess the same inherent error - that latent error which automatically accompanies any unverified hypothesis.

Now to the time argument. Perhaps one of the deepest enigmas in any scientific process is that of time. What is it exactly? As a scientist, I can say that it's the interval between any continually re-occurring reaction - the steady emission of particles from a decaying radioactive isotope, for example. Yet this is only a relative definition. It appears there can be no absolute definition, no knowledge of the very starting point of time. This tends to conform with a definition of time - as a fourth dimension - from a Euclidean geometry approach. By consideration of loci it's easy to see that if dimensions one, two and three are represented respectively by length, breadth and depth, dimension four, which must be a locus of all the other three dimensions, is, seen to be a sphere. Can we define a starting point on a sphere? No. What else can we conjecture about time is

the form of a sphere? Surely it can have no direction! In which case, time would appear to be reversible. Furthermore, we find that it is an infinite series of continuous cycles having their beginnings conterminous with their ends (assuming a sphere consists of an infinite series of major circles - a reasonable assumption).

We can conjecture many, many more things about time using this simple analogy to a geometrical figure. However, it was not my intention to pursue this topic into great depths but merely to point out that discussions on relativity and time, or for that matter anything treated absolutely, are verging on the border between man's ability and inability to comprehend. Were he able to comprehend fully, no doubt all the secrets of the universe would be revealed to him one day. That day, along with man's present ideas aent the origin and scope of the universe, exists in theory only.

Don Smith
228 Higham Lane
Nuneaton
Warks

I must start by registering approval of the new format of VECTOR. I'm all for keeping things in a compact size, I read ANALOG much more readily now that it has gone back to a small size - which is odd for one reared on the large AMAZINGS of the early thirties. The illustrations benefit particularly.

The reprinted article on plagiarism by Temple interested me, but provoked the reaction that maybe the literary world is a bit too fussy about such things. Where would engineering be if engineers did not make free use of other people's ideas? One definition of a patentable mechanism is that it is a novel construction based on known principles. Temple develops this theme very logically, but it seems that plagiarism is still a dreaded term of abuse. I agree whole-heartedly with the conclusion to the article - though reserving the rights to test Christopher's book by reading it for myself.

I was also pleased by the tribute to Doc Smith. He above all others, even above Wells, was responsible for making me a reader of science fiction, and I found the news of his death gave me a greater sense of personal loss than that of men I have known and worked with. I've been guilty myself of poking fun at what Hamilton accurately refers to as the Victorian style and characterisation of the stories, but they never lost their hold on me. It has something to do with his capacity for dealing with, and conveying, vast concepts, vast distances, vast powers, vast lengths of time, vast mentalities and vast themes. Above all, it was the sheerest accident that he was the first writer I encountered in the pulps to kindle my imagination, at an age when my imagination was like a pile of tinder ready to flare up at the slightest spark. That youthful fervour is long past, and in any case too many modern writers seem to think that all we are interested in is the feeble-mindedness of their heroes.

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