



Nº 58

# VECTOR



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JOHN CROMPTON on  
CORDWAINER SMITH

# VECTOR

# NO 58

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Among my intentions for this column, it has been my aim with each issue to write of one book that has caught my attention in the months immediately before. Thus far we have had one of book written by a "mainstream" author and a fantasy written by a non-if author. This time round I want to discuss a non-if, non-fiction book written by someone outside the field entirely.

The book is Norman Møller's documentary A Fire on the Moon.<sup>8</sup> As it happens, at more or less the same time as reading this I read Marshall McLuhan's The Gutenberg Galaxy and Ernest Hemingway's posthumous Islands in the Stream. For those who read nothing but if, McLuhan's book is a complex appraisal of the changes in Western society as it moved from high mediaeval "manuscript" culture to a "print culture" (incidentally giving us glimpses of a society as exotic as many in if, separated from us merely by a few hundred years), and Hemingway's is a novel of fishing, fighting and living in the vicinity of Cuba before and during the Second World War.

But it is Møller, writing of Apollo 11 and the Moon landing, that I wish to concentrate on.

If you can cast your mind back to 1962, one of the voices you may remember hearing was someone how the Apollo project was all rather hokey, the grey end of a grey technological society that America seemed busy producing, that it was cold and anti-humanitarian, and that they would have done better to have the imagination to send a poet to the Moon. There were even those who suggested that it had all been done much better long before by Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Heinlein, so preferring the intention to the deed.

Somebody did have the imagination, however, if not to put a poet on the Moon, at least to put Møller near enough to the pad to report honestly what he saw, and felt and thought.

<sup>8</sup> A FIRE ON THE MOON. NORMAN MØLLER  
[Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970, 53-28]

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Characteristically, the situation that Møller found was ambiguous. Orison Faltaco, who had explored much the same route earlier in her The Sun Dies, wrote a book of conversational literature along side St. Augustine's Confessions or William Burroughs's Nova Express. But Møller, sandwiching Apollo 11 between the failure of his mayoralty campaign in New York and the break-up of his marriage, winds up finding that he is quite unable to tell whether this thing has been the instrument of God or the Devil's Apocalypse.

"The more he visited Houston, the more he knew what what unhappiness is not automatic to tell that he might have hindered into accepting the hardest story of them all."

### A POET ON THE MOON

Perhaps one of the best bits of the whole book comes at the launch itself. Møller has been told that when the launch comes it will be unforgettable, that the very ground will move - as it did for the pair in For Whom The Bell Tolls (the Hemingway reference is not gratuitous: Møller uses Hemingway's death to inform the opening pages of his book), and he disbelieves them. He is feeling depressed and has a headache, and anxiety awaits the antiquities. And then the Saturn vehicle lifts. For fifteen seconds the sound has not reached him, and the rockets blossom fire in silence. For six of those seconds the vehicle is actually flying into the skies. Then, finally, the sound reaches him, and the ground does move, and everything that he has been told proves true.

Yet, at the end of all this, he still does not know. What Heinlein did not say, what Clarke failed to say, what those who cried for a poet on the Moon had utterly failed to comprehend was that there was nothing simple about it, about good or evil. What makes Møller greater than these is that he should recognize that this ambiguity exists, and that he should continue to wrestle with the meaning of good and evil. Despite his personal failure in the physical world, and despite the gargantuan events which he observes, it is its spiritual meaning which he is compelled to explore.

Earlier, I mentioned Hemingway and McLuhan together. Hemingway perhaps obviously, for Møller himself chooses to use Hemingway for his epigram. But Hemingway is a

more significant way, for Hemmingway also was the master of surface reportage. And one of the different things about Mailer's book - is that it reports essentially what Mailer hears, sees and feels (and smells) moment by moment for this particular event. The history, the future, play very minor parts indeed in the book. He enters as if as they are loading Apollo 11 with propellant, he leaves as the splashdown waves die out. And while he muses on the psychology of machines, and while he uses a technique borrowed from science to examine the same events over and over with greater care, he lives in the present. It is faithful to the event - it was a moment when the whole world seemed to live right up against the present, and for a moment thereafter we seemed to be living slightly ahead of ourselves. But for its significance we have to turn to McLuhan.

#### THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

Somewhere in his book Mailer objects to the fact that the Apollo project is simply visual. It has been cleaned and glossed so much that half of his senses seem to be atrophying. He finds it necessary to invert the science of smells to tell him that this is human, and even that does not test him enough.

Now, in The Gutenberg Galaxy, McLuhan observes that one of the significant changes that was brought about by the change from manuscript to print was a change in "the ratio of the senses. Vision suddenly became a dominant sense, independent of the others. In the manuscript era people read aloud - the difficulties of reading made it that slow and to be able to read in silence was to be a prodigy. In the print era silent reading became the norm. And everything became visual. In science it was the "reading" - the visual indicator that mattered. The litmus changes colour - it does not give a "ping" or turn fizzy.

One of McLuhan's points is that we are in transition now to a new culture - the electronic culture and the ratio of the senses is again shifting. We listen to the radio - the TV provides pictures and sounds mixed. And so we find that we have new senses.

Apollo is science, right out of the print culture, essentially visual. But Mailer is of the new age. He mixes into his narrative the voices of the astronauts from the Moon, the press releases, the television pictures from the pick-up ships. And there, at least, is part of the reason he feels it is an incredible enterprise - but he must question, is it life?

#### THE MORAL

Now, where has all this got us? What, in all this, has it to do with science fiction - because that is what we are supposed to be here for?

Well, ladies and gentlemen, it is my thesis that if that is, you and I and all the incredible conglomerate wrote it and brought it and read it and stood up for it - we are in part responsible for putting that fire on the Moon. How do you think that an idea like that gets accepted, anyway? Not by Werner von Braun saying "I think that it would be interesting to build a rocket and go to the Moon." Nor yet by John Fitzgerald Kennedy saying "Listen I'm president, and I think it would be a good idea to go to the Moon." No - long before that you've got to persuade people that it is possible. You've got to fire people with a vision of it. You've got to sway public opinion enough for the politicians to feel safe to wheat and deal for it. And somewhere in the middle levels of the information chain there will be what Richard Hoggart calls "the riteny" - spreading ideas that it is possible, being informed about it among their neighbours, even supporting a chain of literature that might turn out a generation of Sias-buzzed engineers who would imagine that the highest calling in their profession was extending the range of mankind's transport out into space.

Listen, I don't think that it is simple. I don't think that it is even conscious most of the time. Certainly it is never untouched by dirt, by failure, by greed, by all the grubby sons of the world that, whether you believe it or not, in these grubby hands are the power to change the world. Use it wisely.

Lord knows that we need it.

- Bob Parkinson

# C'THEME AND M'STYLE IN

## CORDWAINER SMITH

by JOHN CROMPTON

I have struggled for a long while to find a consistent rationale for why Paul Linebarger's work should be ranked with the work of the best sf writers. It is easy to say that he moves me greatly, grips me completely, impresses me with the firmness of his construction. It is much harder to pin an admiring reader's reaction to specifics in the text: and that is my business.

Good sf and fantasy, as opposed to escapist and merely entertaining writing of any kind, comment upon, illuminate, reality. Projecting the present into future and imaginary worlds (and indeed into the past) is one of the staple techniques of sf and fantasy writers. But it is perfectly possible to use this technique and achieve an angle on the current scene without managing the density and impact of Cordwainer Smith. For example, Harry Harrison's Make room, Make room, takes us quite credibly and readably to New York in 1999 to demonstrate the horrors of overpopulation and advocate the necessary state-initiated contraception programme we should set going now. Yet, competent and convin-

cing as it is, the book does not induce the feeling of being totally involved and the heightened awareness that the great work gives. Rather, the vision of the future is too simple, too clearcut, lacks the human inconsistencies and gritty paradoxes - which suggests the vision of the present which lies behind is at fault. Smith's stories present immediately, however, the agreeably disturbing blending of opposites and inconsistencies which characterises the present, and must therefore be carried into any vision of the future which has depth.

Alpha Ralpha Boulevard, for instance, gives us love and hate (and indeed, as elsewhere in Smith, suggests the necessity of hate), tenderness and violence, love of the human (Virginia) and love of the ideal (C'mell) - the paradox being that C'mell is a cat, and might thus be thought to be less than human, whereas she is somehow (as throughout her appearances) more than human.

This story has such haunting power that I feel the boulevard itself has a

symbolic function. Like the best symbols, it is neither laboured nor clear cut; it grows out of and expresses what the story is about. The three human characters are participants in the Rediscovery of Man. The artifacts and habits of our own are being utilized again: Paul, Virginia and Maximilian Mecht talk French, patronise a reconstructed bistro. Paul's two loves are (partially or wholly?) made possible through the medium of the "new" language. He and Virginia discover not only that things are "picturesque" and "romantic", but that "Homunculi had feelings". Via the new culture they begin to become human.

Yet the culture is (partially or wholly?) synthetic, promoted and put forth by the enigmatic, ambiguous Lords of the Instrumentality. It requires unprogrammed, uncontrolled experiences, such as the encounter with the drunken Bull-man, to dredge up the real humanness of a man. Truth may be an old computer, but the characters, especially Paul, have to pass through the experiences of Alpha Ralpa Boulevard to find it. Up there there are no food or weather machines and though the literal truth is stamped out by the Abba-dingo the human truth is acted out by people. Thus, the huge, arching, broken roadway in the sky is the path to experience.

But perhaps Smith's excellence resides in the fact that no neat exegesis works. Just when one has tidied his work into some sort of pattern, all sorts of perplexing afterthoughts assail one. The boulevard is not natural but man-made - is it that man must find himself in his past? Does that apply to us? Who is Paul's "own true love", C'mell or Virginia? Is Smith really suggesting that all there is to "good" and "bad" is killing or protecting other forms of life? By asking the question himself he simultaneously makes us take note of it and sabotages the idea.

Now I shall take samples of Smith and attempt to trace the sources of his power.

Firstly, The Game of Rat and Dragon. Behind it lies the loving respect for cats (and indeed for all our fellow animals) which informs Smith's writings:

"She is a cat," he thought. 'That's all she is - a cat!'

"But that was not how his mind saw her - quick beyond all dreams of speed, sharp, clever, unbelievably graceful, beautiful, wordless and undemanding.

"Where would he ever find a woman who could compare with her?"

Smith creates such a woman, of course in C'mell. The Game is like a stage along the way to her creation, celebrating as it does the ideal harmony of man and cat, the pinlighting set merging their minds and personalities. So well that Underhill "didn't see how she could take Captain Wow so calmly. Captain Wow's mind did leer. When Captain Wow got excited in the middle of a battle, confused images of Dragons, deadly Rats, luscious beds, the smell of fish, and the shock of space all scrambled together in his mind...their consciousness linked together through the pin-set, became a fantastic composite of human being and Persian cat."

The cats are described in straightforward human terms, the pin-set giving access to minds little different from those of men:

"When he had first come into contact with her mind, he was astonished at its clarity. With her he remembered her kittenhood. He remembered every mating experience she had ever had."

Underhill, the other pinlighters, the cats, are all sketched in for us, making a mixed bag of characters, each with qualities and defects that make Smith's awareness of the mixed nature of mankind plain, and hints at the moral struggle that is the underlying theme of all his work.

As in On The Sand Planet, in which Casher O'Neill returns to Mixer to face the tyrant, Wedder, not with vengeance of blood he has the power to impose.

Instead: "Casher O'Neill merely hold Wedder's hand and said quite simply, 'Your friend!'"

Then he effects some mysterious biochemical changes in the body of his former enemy, which suggests that Wedder was what he was, unavoidably, from his physiology, whereas Casher, thanks to his ordeal in space three, has the moral choice. Wedder is evoked in the same terms as Captain Wow - a creature of a certain atavistic type.

That the "animal", whether man or other creature, need not be morally inferior, is well evidenced by C'mell. Her cat nature, like that of the Lady Way, is simply morally superior to that of such as Wedder. Casher, in fact, makes Wedder capable of the qualities Smith admires:

"The new Wedder was the old Wedder. The same mind. The same will, the same personality. Yet its permutations were different. And its method of expression already slightly different. More benign. More tolerant. More calm, more human."

The "more's" are important, for

Smith's "good" characters are largely good by virtue of being capable of more will, personality, tolerance, humanity than others. And Casher O'Neill's quest on the sand planet brings us to the point at which what matters is not action but the vision of it; the philosophy must be adjusted as well as the anatomy:

"'My lord,' said the once-lady Celata, 'my lord,' she repeated, 'I think this is it.'"

"'But this is nothing,' said Casher.

"'Exactly. Nothing is victory, nothing is arrival, nowhere is getting there.'"

What really matters is the relationship earned by Casher's victory; Celata says: "What we need is a place to find ourselves and be ourselves and I'm not sure that this chance exists in many other cases than this one spot."

In the same way, the "real" experience of Rod McBan in The Underpeople lies in his relation to C'mell, not in his many adventures themselves, necessary though they are, even though they live only in illusion together, for a thousand years in half an hour.

Ultimately, Smith is a romantic, of course; as almost all science fiction/fantasy writers are bound to be. This kind of make-believe springs from a longing for the ideal and Smith's work suggests that the only worthwhile ideal is love.

Hence The Lady Who Sealed The Soul, with its splendidly evocative title.

Heloise and Abelard are early mentioned, and Smith is celebrating the same kind of ideal devotion, which transcends the usual earthly limits. Yet Helen America's sacrifice is greater than Abelard's, or, perhaps, the story is a reversal of his: for whereas the mediaeval lovers bring disaster on themselves through their love, Helen America survives the physical and mental mutilations of her voyage and finds fulfilment.

The story induces the same kind of sad-happy wonder as other archetypal romances, Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, because (and it is time to examine the style) it is told with that magical simplicity that myths and fairy-tales have, which has such curious power of suggestion:

"The nurse did not know that they had foresworn a love on earth. The nurse did not know that Helen America had made a lonely trip with an icy purpose, and the nurse did not know that the crazy image of Mr. Gray-no-more, the sailor himself, had stood beside Helen twenty years out from nothing-at-all in the depth and blackness of space between the stars."

This has a poetic power, based on the apparently artless repetition (as in a fairy-story) and the steady rhythm. It comes right at the end of the story-itself, before the winding up of the mother-daughter-wornout toy framework Smith employs to defend and make plain the romance. We have been through the story, identifying with Helen, though never quite seeing things through her eyes, and in the last paragraph we have the experience summarised and objectified by the use of the nurse.

The voyage itself is dealt with in the same clear, short sentences and made real by the difficulty she has to cope with:

"She got down on her knees trailing the abdominal tube and the feeding tube and the catheter tubes and the helmet wires, each one running back to the panel. She crawled underneath the panel for the servo-robots and she pulled out a written manual."

Here is the same repetition, the same rhythm, kept going with the conjunction. And there is the use of telling detail to suggest the discomfort. The obvious comparison is Hemingway, and, this being a physical and spiritual voyage (hence the title and the name of the ship), The Old Man and the Sea. But I consider that Hemingway's style is too obviously deliberate and becomes hampered, while Smith avoids the tendency by not seeming to strain after effects and by using occasional very short paragraphs to break up the narrative, which are often semi-humorous or casually colloquial:

"She wondered about the matter for a week or two."

"The low charge did the trick."

Such devices are of the same self-protective kind as the mother and daughter dialogues which begin and end the work, a kind of auctorial sabotage which distances the tale itself and makes the reader understand that Smith knows exactly what he is doing and has his material in perspective.

Helen herself is shown to be in the

same sort of position, believing and yet aware that the image is in her mind only:

"Just before she fired, she turned. There, next to her, stood her sailor from the stars, Mr. Gray-no-more. He said: 'It won't work that way.'

"He stood clear and handsome, the way she had seen him in New Madrid. He had no tubes, he did not tremble, she could see the normal rise and fall of his chest as he took one breath every hour or so. One part of her mind knew that he was a hallucination. Another part of her mind believed that he was real. She was mad, and she was very happy to be mad at this time, and she let the hallucination give her advice."

Again the rhythm and repetition and again the telling detail, of his breathing, which makes the hallucination believable to us, too.

Cordwainer Smith is abundantly aware of the evil and suffering of life and projects them, too, into his mythic future. This honesty of vision is partly what gives his work its power. There is, for example, A Planet Named Shayol, a kind of space-age Buchenwald with its sick science, punishment, agony and death. The story is an explicit recognition of "everything which the cruelty and intelligence of mankind could devise."

Yet, on this hell, lives the cow-man B'diddat, unable to kill, not only dispensing mercy to the prisoners, but

working out his exile for the freedom of his race. Nobility is found among the torture, just as the torture exists amidst the wonders of the worlds of the Instrumentality.

It is impossible, when discussing any work of Smith's, to avoid digressing at once from the text into speculation, because, thanks to its clear vision of the ambivalence of life, philosophy is woven into events. Opening The Under-people at random, for example:

"True men are not free, either, spieked the E-telekeli. They too have grief, fear, birth, old age, love, death, suffering and the tools of their own ruin. Freedom is not something which is going to be given us by a wonderful man beyond the stars. Freedom is what you do, my dear, and what I do. Death is a very private



affair, my daughter, and life - when you get it - is almost as private."

Just as one must beware of assuming that Shakespeare is expressing his own psychology through Hamlet's soliloquys, one must beware of reading Smith's view of existence into the utterances of his characters. The above passage, however, is a neat, concentrated precis of what I think to be part of the vision informing all Smith's work.

For some two thousand words I have resisted the word "allegory". But now I shall give in and attribute an allegorical quality to The Underpeople (as to all of Smith). Rod McBan, the hundred and fifty-first, is conducted through a complex series of experiences to find himself, to find out what being a man really means. As with the Catmaster, where he lives through hate to discover compassion, which is an aspect of humility. The lesson is expressed with Smith's usual evocative precision:

"Rod stood there, expecting nothing.

"He had forgiven his last enemy.

"He had forgiven himself.

"The door opened very matter-of-factly and there stood the Catmaster, a quiet wise smile upon his face.

"You can come out now, Mister and Owner McBan, and if there is anything in this outer room which you want you may certainly have it."

"Rod walked out slowly. He had no idea how long he had been in HATE HALL.

"When he emerged, the door closed behind him.

"No, thanks, cobber. It's mighty friendly of you, but I don't need anything much, and I'd better be

getting back to my own planet."

This realization of the needlessness of the riches of the Department Store of Heart's Desire is immediately set against the itching desires of the characters seen in the next chapter, "Everybody's fond of Money". Even, or particularly, the Lords of the Instrumentality, have that insatiable acquisitive hunger for cash or power that is the source of corruption. Being now cleansed of this, Rod is ready, like one of the hero-knights of The Peiris Queens, to fight for C'well (as occurs in the following chapter) against the loathsome Tostig Amaral, whose very physical vileness suggests he is a symbolic figure, like the monsters of Spenser's epic.

And there is another word I cannot resist, the small word with the big implications - "epic". Our Editor and I have worn out much typewriter ribbon on that little word and there is no space here to define it properly. But it does seem to me that Rod McBan is a representative figure (such as Odysseus, Hans Castorp, Roland, Pierre Bezuhov) whose adventures illuminate the nature of life. Suitably The Underpeople ends with his embracing his son: life continues.

And even at the conclusion, Smith retains the realism, the unwavering understanding of the ambivalence of human life. Not only has one of his sons failed to survive, sane, the mysterious and terrible initiation ordeal of Old Norstrillia, but he himself is subject to the doubts and melancholia of middle-age:

"Roderick Henry McBan remembered the long years of virtue, independence

and drudgery on Norstrillia with unconcealed loathing. He liked being a rich, wild young man on Earth ever so much better than being a respectable spinster under the gray skies of Old North Australia. When he dreamed, he was sometimes Eleanor again, and he sometimes had long morbid periods in which he was neither Eleanor nor Rod, but a nameless being cast out from some world or time of irrecoverable enchantments. In those gloomy periods, which were few but very intense, and usually cured by getting drunk and staying drunk for a few days, he found himself wondering who he was."

I have not space for a full exploration of a novel, so I shall finish with some threads plucked from a short story - Under Old Earth.

The plot is simple: The Lord Sto Odin journeys deep into the Earth to a forbidden region, to find his death and the magic music of the congehilium. But, as ever with Smith, the journey is more than geographical.

It is, of course, one little chip from the huge mosaic of the Smith cycle. He places it carefully in the opening section, in terms of that cycle, in space and time. It happens before, and helps to bring about, the Rediscovery of Man; and the allegorical/symbolic/epic overtones are immediately proposed:

"The story concerns three of them; the gambler who took the name Sun-boy, who dared to go down to the Gebiet, who confronted himself before he died; the girl Santuna, who was fulfilled in a thousand ways before she died; and the Lord Sto Odin, a most ancient of days,

who knew it all and never dreamed of preventing any of it."

The music, simultaneously transcendental and destructive, is the central experience. Smith tells us so, and at the same time tells us that it is symbolic of more than sound:

"Music runs through this story. The soft sweet music of the Earth Government and the Instrumentality, bland as honey and sickening in the end. The wild illegal pulsations of the Gebiet ... Worst of all the crazy fugues and improper melodies of the Besirk..."

A few lines later we find:

"Later an ancient lord said this: 'There is a music which underlies all things. We dance to the tunes all our lives, though our living ears never hear the music which guides us and moves us. Happiness can kill people as softly as shadows seen in dreams...'"

The Lord Sto Odin himself connects this music (reminiscent of the mediaeval belief in the music of the spheres which motivated the universe itself) with the nature of human life:

"Most people want happiness. Good: we have given them happiness.

"Dreary useless centuries of happiness, in which all the unhappy were corrected or adjusted or killed. Unbearable desolate happiness without the sting of grief, the wine of rage, the hot fumes of fear. How many of us have ever tasted the acid, icy taste of resentment? That's what people really lived for in the Ancient Days, when they pretended to be happy and were actually alive with

grief, rage, fury, hate, malice and hope!"

Apart from the fact that I think we are already well along the way to achieving that ghostly, bland existence Sto Odin so clearly describes and finds wanting, I think it is the intensity of living he ascribes to the far past which the congeheliium induces. And only that intensity of experience, as with Rod McBan, can make men human. Sun-boy is evoked in language suggestive of this intensity:

"The dancer's feet had been moving in the same place while he spoke.

"Suddenly he whirled away, leaping and vaulting over the wretched human figures on the floor.

"He passed the big drum and touched it: ritiplin, rataplan!

"Left hand brushed the little drum: kid-nork, kid-nork!

"Both hands seized the congeheliium, as though the strong wrists were going to tear it apart.

"The whole room blated with music, gleamed with thunder and the human senses interpenetrated each other..."

And the intensity, almost beyond the power of words to express, is cleverly conveyed via the reactions of the girl, Santuna. His power lives in her half-explanations to Sto Odin.

He finds his "fun death", of course, and this, as for Sto Odin, means experiencing life to the ultimate (and thereby, as at the start is stated, confronting himself):

"The Lord Sto Odin felt his old

eyes blur but he could still see the blazing image of the wild dancer.  
"This is a good way to die," thought he, as he died."

And the moral of it all is drawn from Santuna, who becomes in her turn another of the aristocratic Lords:

"In later centuries she brought disease, risk and misery back to increase the happiness of man."

What a splendidly perverse idea! No utopian romantic, unless utopia is being human to the fullest, Smith finds romance in the thousand shocks that the flesh is heir to.

It seems to me that only science fiction nowadays has the scope and range - nothing less than the nature of life and fulfilment. Smith's sweep and depth of imagination required the freedom of the future and the freedom of space. Yet, like all good writers, he bears out that "the proper study of mankind is man."

- John Crompton

#### MAGAZINE CHAIN

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#### NOVACON I

13/14th November 1971 at the Imperial Centre Hotel, Birmingham. 50p will secure registration and progress reports from Vernon Brown, Room 823 University of Aston

## CORDWAINER SMITH:

### A BRIEF PROFILE

"I think that Cordwainer Smith is a visitor from some remote period of the future, living among us perhaps as an exile from his own era or perhaps just as a tourist, and amusing himself by casting some of his knowledge of historical events into the form of science fiction."

Writing this of Cordwainer Smith in the June 1965 edition of AMAZING STORIES, Robert Silverberg highlighted not only the realistic conviction of the stories, but also the unknown character of their pseudonymous author.

The "real life" Cordwainer Smith, Colonel and Professor Paul Linebarger, seems to have been as extraordinary in himself as any of the people in his stories. Born 1912, he was raised in Republican China's governing circles, where his father was for a considerable time a leading adviser to Sun Yat Sen. He obtained his Ph.D at Johns Hopkins University at the age of twenty-two. His qualifications included an M.A., Ph.D., A.R., Litt.D, and a Certificate of Psychiatry (Applied). From 1942 to 1954, as an officer in the US Armed Forces, he practiced the arts of psychological warfare, first against the Japanese and eventually against the North Korean and Chinese Communists. One of his books on the subject, Psychological Warfare, is

a classic in the field. Later he worked for the US State Department, and was one of President Kennedy's advisers on Asian affairs.

Paul Linebarger's first story was reputedly published as early as 1928; titled War No. 81-G and written with the pseudonym "Anthony Bearden", it has apparently since been lost to sight. During the 40's he wrote straight fiction under the pseudonyms "Carmichael Smith" and Felix C. Forest.

For sf fans, however, the story really starts with an ambitious West-Coast small-circulation magazine called FANTASY BOOK which ran to all of six or eight issues back in 1948, and which today is remembered almost entirely for a story called Scanners Live In Vain. It was the first Cordwainer Smith story, and began the whole fantastic and vast history of the Lords of the Instrumentality of Man.

Compared with the later stories, Scanners is a minor work, but already it shows characteristics of the whole complex of interlocking stories of the future that Smith wrote about.

The next story, The Game of Rat and Dragon, which appeared in GALAXY in 1955, was a masterpiece in its own right, and assured Cordwainer Smith's place in the history of sf even without its successors. It was collected into Dikty's Best SF Stories and Novels (1956), the Third Galaxy Reader, Edmund Crispin's Best SF, and Dikty's Six From Worlds Beyond. It appears in the British collection of Cordwainer Smith stories recently issued by Panther under the

title Under Old Earth.

In all, twenty nine short stories and two novels appeared under the signature of Cordwainer Smith. For a long while only minor attention was given to the talent in these stories by critical circles, possibly because of the lack

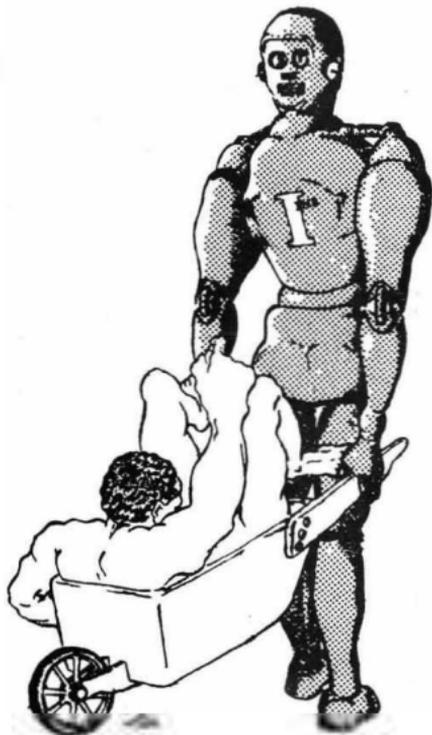
of novels among his work.

From 1959 until his death, Cordwainer Smith stories appeared regularly, for the most part in GALAXY. Dr. Arthur Burns in the AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, August 1967, revealed that in part this was due to the author's increasing sickness in these years, which prevented him from doing other things. In RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, Roger Zelazny further tells that Lineberger's wife, Genevieve, would bail him out when he got stuck on a story by writing a page or two herself.

But one suspects that a very considerable amount of Paul Lineberger's own personality lies in the Cordwainer Smith stories. In 1957 he became a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University in Canberra, and the reflection of his impressions comes in Old Norstrillia. His love of cats recurs in story after story, and particularly in C'mell. And his hostility of racism would be apparent in his stories of the Underpeople even without the dedication in his collection Space Lords (Pyramid, 1965). Even the "Old Strong Religion" which helped Casher O'Neill home and to victory seems to be a reflection of his Anglo-Catholicism.

Paul Lineberger died in 1966. Frederik Pohl wrote of him in an obituary editorial in GALAXY, "He was not a man who could readily be spared." To which all those who were fascinated by his stories and the sweep of his future can add but "Aman."

- Bob Parkinson



# ANDRE NORTON'S WITCH WORLD FANTASIES

reviewed by Fred Oliphant

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WITCH WORLD  
WEB OF THE WITCH WORLD  
THREE AGAINST THE WITCH WORLD  
WARLOCK OF THE WITCH WORLD  
SORGESS OF THE WITCH WORLD  
YEAR OF THE UNICORN

(Tandem Books, 25 p. each)

Before I review these books I would like to make some comments on present publishing trends in general, and the fantasy genre in particular. Fantasy fiction has never had a wide following, unless we include the ancient myths and legends amongst our definition, and these I think stand apart by reasons of their genesis and age. If we exclude these, then I think it is true to say that the following that fantasy fiction has attracted has made up for its small numbers by its enthusiasm,

However, enthusiasm has rarely made a publishing house wealthy when it did not have numbers equal to the enthusiasm of its supporters. In the past, fantasy has only rarely made print and, when it has, it has often been as a limited or privately printed edition with an associated price-tag.

The advent of the pulp magazines in the twenties revived interest in the genre, but the economics of their circulation impeded their reprinting of older classics and the maintenance of high literary standards. It was not until the paperback was established as a literary vehicle that the more obscure works of literature could see print again. The motivation for this move must be due in part to demand, and in part to the prolific consumption of this media.

Recently we have witnessed the expansion of the paperback industry into the field of original publication, and the increasing occurrence of sequential works. The "Witch World" books are one such sequence, and various publishers of fantasy fiction have produced other examples, both original publications and reprints. These include Tolkien's Lord of the Rings (Ballantine Books), Carter's Thongor (Paperback Library), Lieber's Fafard and the Gray Mouser (Ace Books), Moorcock's Etric (Mayflower) and Howard's Conan (Lancer Books). Besides the obvious advantages to the publishers of repeat sales, such series offer the author the advantages of a larger canvas for his brush, and the opportunity to develop a theme or character in depth. The disadvantages are complementary to the advantages, because it is always difficult to sustain the continuity and imagery in a fantasy. There is always present the risk that a series will not see completion, or, as in the case of the Conan series, that gaps will be left in the continuity of the scenario.

Most fantasies, as distinct from the horror genre, can be divided into one of three groups. The first group

covers a multitude of creations and I would allocate to it the generic name of Whimsy. This would label such diverse works as Lewis Carroll's adventures of Alice, Charles Pinney's The Circus of Dr. Lao and many of the tales by Clarke Ashton Smith and Lord Dunsany. The second group is Heroic fantasy, the type of adventure tale which is represented by Robert E. Howard, Fritz Lieber, C.L. Moore (Jirel of Joiry), Lin Carter and John Jakes (Brak the Barbarian).

The last group comprises what I call Apocalyptic stories, with an eschatological theme or crisis of "Gottterdammerung" proportions. This includes J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis (for the Narnia chronicles), Poul Anderson (for Staff of the Broken Sword), Michael Moorcock (for Elric, Dorian Hawkmoon, and Corum Jhaelen) and lately Joy Chant (for her novel Red Moon and Black Mountain).

These are not, of course, watertight compartments, but merely a set of useful subdivisions for purposes of comparison within the genre. Early works do not easily fall into any group, nor do classics like G.U. Fletcher's The Well of the Unicorn (which I would place under Apocalyptic) or Eric R. Edlison's The Worm Ouroboros (which I believe squeezes into the Heroic category).

All of the books in the present series under discussion claim the Witch World for their background, but only the first five share the same characters and general location. In fact I found the last book rather tedious and in many ways the least notable. It appeared to be a follow-up on the success of the earlier books (they were originally published in America by Ace Books between 1963 and 1965), and, if this is true, represents one of the temptations I mentioned above. They fall into the Apocalyptic category.

The series begin with Simon Tregarth, an essentially honest man who is being hunted by a criminal organisation he has double-crossed, employing the services of Dr. Jorge Petronius to avoid capture. Simon uses a trans-dimensional Gate in his final desperation to live, and thus he enters the Witch World where he possesses strange powers. This literary device of transporting somebody into another world, another time, so that the reader can learn through the subject is rarely satisfactory since the protagonist often asks questions which suit the author but not his audience. A similar device is used by Joy Chant in her book, and Edlison, in his Worm Ouroboros, is even more perfunctory as he ignores his voyager after the first chapter. Andre Norton gives us a smooth transition from Earth to the Witch World, and injects a suitable amount of ambiguity into the plot to keep us guessing. In addition, by opening with the Gate, she familiarises us with a concept which is used more than once in the later novels. By the beginning of the second book Simon is married, and triplets are delivered by the start of the third, so our hero is not exactly letting the grass grow under his feet!

One of the more interesting elements in this series is the introduction of a scientific culture of technocrats into the plot as an adversary to magic. This is another plot-line which requires skillful interpretation if it is not going to appear incredible, or even incongruous. Moorcock has frequently employed the same plot, probably to best advantage with Dorian Hawkmoon in the History of the Runestaff, and although Norton succeeds admirably in her marriage of

## COMMUNICATION and ORGANIZATION

- Keith Freeman

Very small groups of people can survive in what appears to be a state of anarchy. The reason is easy to see, in a small group everyone knows everyone else and, more important, they know what to expect of each other. Leaders and led need not be defined with labels or titles. In large and/or scattered groups (and the BSFA is certainly scattered even if not large) anarchy can only lead to disaster.

The BSFA has, at present, the nucleus of an organization - though after the number of years it has been in existence, in one form or another, it is far from the best organization it could be. However this situation can be (and will be) tackled "from the top". The general membership should only be aware of the smoothness with which any points they raise are dealt with.

Communication is another matter - and to be specific affects the BSFA in two ways:

Firstly there is the problem that the officers of the BSFA can only normally communicate with each other by post - this

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the two in her own way, neither approach the deft brush strokes of Vance's The Dying Earth.

I know that most people hold strong views for or against Andre Norton. I can only say that I was sufficiently engrossed by these books to read them within the span of my five-day working week. I would like to praise especially the fourth novel, Marlock of the Witch World, for its display of imaginative ingenuity and almost surrealistic imagery.

- Fred Oliphant

slows down decision making drastically. Simple decisions that could be discussed, debated and voted on in a half hour meeting and thereafter implemented take weeks, if not months!

There is little we can do about this - the second problem is even more important ... but luckily is also a problem that has some answers!

The problem is, briefly, the lack of communication between the BSFA members and BSFA officers. We, the officers, can communicate with you, the members, by means of the BSFA Bulletin and Vector. Perhaps we have not done as much as we should in the past - and this is an attempt to remedy the situation. It will be of little use, however, if you do not respond. If you feel the BSFA could be doing something for YOU - or if you feel the BSFA could be improved - LET US KNOW. The BSFA officers are elected/appointed to help the association (that means YOU) and that is what we want to do.

In future issues of Vector I hope to discuss more specific points and problems. All criticisms will be appreciated - but constructive criticism is what we want.

- Keith Freeman

# BOOKS



## ADAM, EVE & CHARLES HARNESS

THE SHATTERED RING - Science Fiction  
and the Quest for Meaning  
by Lois & Stephen Rose  
(SCM Press, 90 p.)

When you pick up an sf book do you open it at Chapter 1, or do you first read the Preface, the Introduction, the author's and editor's notes?

I think it a pity if you just read the story. What is printed before Chapter 1 is like the overture to an opera - it gets you in the mood, and there are many overtures these days played for their own sake when the opera that they preface is seldom, if ever, performed. Many editorials of sf magazines are like these - worth having for their own sake, and not just for what follows.

This is the Preface - perhaps you have skipped it! If you like reading prefaces, editorials and the like then you will enjoy The Shattered Ring. If you don't - read this book and maybe in future you will.

Lois and Stephen Rose are free-lance writers and teachers who live in Massa-

chusetts. After reading James Blish's A Case of Conscience, Stephen observed in an article he wrote that sf contained a suggestion that the Papacy might be one of the few Christian institutions to survive in the long run. This led to a request that he should write an article on science fiction and theology. The Shattered Ring, in partnership with his wife, is the resultant "study".

It is a small book of only 127 pages and deals with a vast subject. Having been interested in the religious implications of sf for a few years, I feel that the book should have been four or five times the length to do justice to the subject. Books which have touched on it include The Future as Nightmare by Mark R. Hillegas (GUP, 1967), Yesterday's Tomorrows by W.H.G. Armytage (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) and A Lively Corpse by Miriam S. Weiss (Thomas Yoseloff, 1969). Although Lois and Stephen Rose admit that they write with "amateur's eyes" they do not seem to have read any books on sf - not even Kingsley Amis' New Maps of Hell.

What is "the Shattered Ring"? Sf addicts may have tumbled to The Ring of

Ritornel by Charles Harness. This is a retelling of many myths, including Adam and Eve, and the search for a motherless virgin. Ritornel is the cyclical religion in which everything is predestined. Opposed to it is Alea, the religion of chance. In the story Charles Harness questions the basis of science as well as religion - are things static and predictable or are they dynamic, by chance and therefore unexpected? The truth would seem to contain both.

Lois and Stephen Rose maintain that sf serves the function traditionally that of "folktales" and "myth", which "confirm the existence within consciousness of collective memory and striving towards a resolution in story of life's contradictions and disparities". (They go on to say that sf is escapist literature - which I thought had been killed long ago. This one phrase does, I believe, show what "amateurs" Lois and Stephen are.)

Whether we like the term "new wave sf" or not, we have to admit that many writers of sf concern themselves as much with "inner" as "outer" space. They believe that "sf is moving into a special position of potential leadership within the written arts" and "will be rendering its best service when it seeks to renew the realm of art, that is when it helps us to order and comprehend our "inner space." You can guess that J.G. Ballard, Samuel Delany, Thomas M. Disch and Roger Zelazny are quoted along with Arthur C. Clarke, Walter Miller, Robert Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon. There are however some surprising omissions - Aldiss, Bradbury and Philip Jose Farmer - to name only a few writers of "religious" sf stories. The authors apologise for

omitting anyone's favourite from the list of newer writers, but seem to have overlooked a number of older ones.

Perhaps the book is aimed at too wide a market. Lois and Stephen write "hoping to stimulate debate among long-term buffs and interest among those whose acquaintance with this literature is casual". Still, it is stimulating to read their reviews and explanations of old favourites, and having tried to interest people (especially clergy) to take sf seriously for some time, I say "three cheers" to their second aim.

Sf is beyond any doubt a "very fertile field of ideas, debate and potential insight into ourselves, our world, our future". It shatters old forms in its quest for meaning, and gives us a new way of looking at things. The Shattered Ring is more than a Preface to a book, or to many books, it is a very stimulating preface to the whole of science fiction.

- Leonard S. Rivett

THE SQUARE ROOT OF MAN  
THE HUMAN ANGLE  
OF MEN AND MONSTERS  
all by William Tenn  
(Ballantine Science Fiction, 30 p.)

Two collections of short stories and one novel, itself expanded from the short The Men in the Walls. William Tenn is one of the ablest writers of the type of sf that takes a sideways look at mankind, and his writing is the witty, entertaining yet thoughtful variety that flourished in the GALAXY of the fifties and early sixties. One introduction credits him with originating the non-hero (not, it should be noted, the anti-hero) and this is a fair comment. Without being frivolous, he

deflates man's pomposity and refuses to take him over-seriously; but he does not despise him.

Introducing The Square Root of Man, Tenn modestly admits that he was tempted to rewrite some earlier stories, but feared to destroy what merit they had. As it is the storius form an interesting record of his progress from a derivative to an independent style. The shorts in The Human Angle contain many from GALAXY in 1954 & 1955.

There are genuinely original ideas. In my personal favourite an amboid sells an earthman pictures pornographic to the former but not to the latter, and a harassed bureaucrat must decide: has a crime been committed? "Wednesday's Child" shows what happens when a man marries a very strange woman. Even to the time travel paradox and the vampiro legend Tenn brings a fresh touch. Not all the stories are sf, one is not even a fantasy - "My mother was a Witch" describes how a newcomer triumphs in the claustrophobic, self-absorbed world of the ghetto by sheer native wit. His account of the dumping of LSD in New York's water supply proves that hallucination and chaos can be described convincingly without undisciplined writing.

In the novel, Mankind has been deposed by the Monsters; gigantic beings who conquered Earth almost disregarding man's attempted defence. Men and women are reduced to the status of cockroaches, living in the insulating material in the Monster's walls. Some tribes live deep in the walls and retain a certain civilisation; others live as near-savages close to the surface, pilfering from the new lords of Earth. Eric the

Only - so called because his mother, shamefully, bore only one child - wants nothing more than to pass his initiation test, become Eric the Eye, and Steal for Mankind. Arguments on whether the best chance of hitting back at the Monsters is afforded by ancestor-science or alien-science leave him cold, but when an attempted coup makes him an outcast he is forced to re-examine his attitudes.

In his skilled construction of societies adapted to some change in man's environment, Tenn could be compared with Daniel F. Galouye. Yet whereas Galouye, in Lords of the Psychon, reinstates man in place of the Spheres, Tenn's own men and women are reconciled to their roles as parasites. Perhaps, after all, man is not fitted to be lord of creation.

Each of these books is worth the money. Of the collections, The Human Angle is the better in being less uneven. At the very least the novel belongs in any serious library of mainstream sf.

- Brian Rolls

INTERFACE  
by Mark Adlard  
(Sidgwick & Jackson, £1.50)

Some of you may have noticed Mark Adlard's name appearing in these review columns of late. Now he has published his first novel.

In writing a novel about a pseudo-utopia of the near-future (an ideal world with the humanity taken from it) an author inevitably invites comparison with the masters. In particular - since this is an industrialised, computerised future - the comparison is with Vonnegut's Player Piano. This particular sub-division of

the genre has been a special field for first novels by (in general, British) writers who seem relatively unfamiliar with it, and are invariably hailed as "brilliant", and who have subsequently sunk without trace. In addition, such a future set in Britain generally has a parochial flavour which takes the bite from the terrors of the invented hell.

Mark Adlard has avoided these two pitfalls. In his opening chapters he has managed to encapsulate a genuinely imaginative future which is still recognizably our possibility. I suspect that some of his power comes from the fact that he has chosen to build on the industrialized North rather than the more usual "cultured" South. Or it is possible that, as a son of Sheffield, I was held by the exposition of the Industrial History of Steel that occupies the centre of the book (the "works" produce something called "stahllex" which is a steel substitute), and how he relates this history to the industrial/cultural interface that is the central theme of the book.

The ending, with its inevitable revolution, fails a little by contrast, and by the fact that a number of characters who have hardly been mentioned suddenly occupy a part of the stage, causing the reader to shift his viewpoint. But the novel is inventive and thoughtful, and shows another "technologist bridging the two cultures gap". You shouldn't be disappointed that it isn't a whizz-bang adventure story as well. Recommended.

- Bob Parkinson

#### THE WAR OF TWO WORLDS

by Poul Anderson

(Dobson, 90 p.)

#### SATAN'S WORLD

by Poul Anderson

(Collance, £1.40)

These two novels offer an interesting contrast in style, displaying the development over the years of an established author. They span a gap of fifteen years although published within a month of each other in this country.

Satan's World was a serial in ANALOG, May to August 1968, featuring those old favourites, David Falkayn and Nicholas van Rijn. War of Two Worlds was originally in "Two Complete Science Adventure Novels", Winter 1955 under the title Silent Victory, and was published by Ace in 1959. It concerns the aftermath of a curiously inept war between Mars and Earth.

They might have been written by two different authors. The hero, David Arnfeld, in War of Two Worlds is at times naive, callous, cynical, trusting, sentimental and devious. These traits do not add up to a particular character. The plot of the story demanded these reactions, and the character was suitably modified instead of the plot being altered to take account of the accepted make-up of the protagonist. The story is fast-moving and interesting; I liked the book, but would have liked it better if it had been rewritten to make the hero consistent.

At the other extreme, in Satan's World, although the plotting is as good as ever, the characters so painstakingly built up by Anderson in his van Rijn series are allowed to become bland and stereotyped. This is probably because Anderson feels that his readers ought to know and understand van

Rijn and Falkyn by now; I call it laziness on his part. Curiously enough (or on second thoughts not so surprisingly), the characters who emerge most effectively in the story are the owners of Serendipity, Inc., a mysterious group who buy and sell information on a grand scale. They were probably new and interesting to the author, and so he developed them more thoroughly. It shows.

At least they both remain good stories. On balance, I prefer the Collance novel. It is better written and better value for money (at 204 pages .7 p per page as against Dobson's with 108 pages at .83 p per page). Today's Best Buy!

- Gordon Johnson

THE TWO-TIMERS  
by Bob Shaw  
(Pan, 25 p.)

John Breton is about to change the whole course of his life (and incidentally a universe), simply by picking up a ringing telephone and talking to himself, or should I say Jack Breton, who claims that John Breton has been living with his wife for almost exactly nine years, and that he is coming over to get her!

John is about to dismiss the first phone call as some kind of nut-type joke, when he remembers that almost exactly nine years ago his wife was saved very mysteriously from being raped and murdered by a psychopathic killer. She was apparently saved by a phantom gunman who vanished into thin air after shooting the killer in the head with a bullet that disappeared (which gave the police one hell of a headache, I'll bet).

With all this happening around him, it is no wonder that Breton does not take any notice of a seemingly unimportant meteor storm that hits the Earth, and continually increases every day.

All would have become plain if John had known that he was the product of a time off-shoot caused by Jack Breton crossing across time to protect his dead wife who, in the 'A' time track was murdered by the killer that in the 'B' time track was shot by Jack Breton (or would it).

Bob Shaw takes us through this exceedingly complicated and very good plot with the ease of a very talented writer, and keeps bringing new twists into the story, which make seemingly insolvable situations, like the destruction of two entire universes, seem like a game of draughts played by a master chess player.

For lovers of time-travel stories, this book is a God-send (in the case of agnostics, a Something-send); it has the kind of paradoxical climax which this kind of story can have, and I recommend it to anyone who likes a puzzle right to the finish.

- David Austin

DAY MILLION  
By Frederik Pohl  
(Collance, £1.40)

Day Million is a collection of six short stories and four novelettes by an author whom Kingsley Amis has dubbed "the most consistently able writer science fiction, in the modern sense, has yet produced". This is a wildly exaggerated claim, but at its peak Pohl's work is imbued with a satiric bite and imaginative

vision that few other sf writers can emulate, let alone surpass. With three exceptions, these stories are culled from the 1960's, when Pohl abandoned his running battle with Madison Avenue to produce sf of greater imaginative scope.

The above qualities are brilliantly displayed in the succinctly spectacular title story. The locale is Earth, about 1000 years in the future. At first sight the story concerns a perfectly normal boy-girl love relationship. But the reader is quickly disillusioned. The heroine, Dora, is somatically female but genetically male and the hero, Don, is a cyborg starman with a cadmium centrifuge for a heart. They make love by exchanging their symbol-manipulating mathematical analogues. Day Million is extrapolative of carried to near-perfection. It is the best story Pohl has ever written and a classic of its kind.

Immediately following comes The Deadly Mission of P. Snodgrass, a light-hearted spoof of deCamp's Lost Darkness Fall. The Day the Martians Came features a disconcerting new angle on the first contact theme, with a bitterly ironic sting in the tail. The fourth story, Schematic Man, involves a programmer who inserts a mathematical model of himself into the memory core of a computer, with disturbing results.

Small Lords is a futuristic Gulliver's Travels in which the crew of a Terran scoutship are marooned upon an alien planet that is inhabited by minuscule humanoids referred to as "the midges". Making Love is an insubstantial vignette about population control and electronic

ally-induced sexual orgasms. Way Up Yonder is an instantly forgettable space opera.

Speed Trap is a protracted but thought-provoking mood moulder in which a scientist concludes that human development is being inhibited by inimical extra-terrestrials. But his theory is unconfirmed and the story ends on an ambiguous note. It's a Young World (1941) is a turgid period curiosity, crudely written and dull. Pohl should have left it to fester in peace.

The concluding novelette, Under Two Moons, was published in IF during 1965. It is an obvious parody of James Bond - featuring an interplanetary super-spy named Johan Gull. The action is set on a preposterous Mars, with a breathable atmosphere, natives, camels, sandy deserts and even a tourist park called Barsocmland! Pure hokum from beginning to end, but I enjoyed it nevertheless.

- Graham Andrews

ROCKETSHIP GALILEO  
by Robert A. Heinlein  
(NEL, 30 p.)

A poor Heinlein juvenile from 1947, in this one an eccentric genius builds the first rocketship to the Moon in his backyard (well, nearly)! The book is a cliché. NEL apparently are reissuing it because there are a dozen Heinlein titles in print and the name sells. Not recommended.

- Bob Parkinson

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