

(dissecting)
^ THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Operational Procedures
Supervised by
Richard Delap

Spring! When greenery once more becomes green and a light, flowery touch of nature beckons good from everything but the science-fiction editors' hearts. March and April are generally run-of-the-mill this year, sad to say, with the too few touches of memorable plot and prose appearing like chihuahuas-with-beerkegs in the Alps...rarely.

This is not to say that there haven't been some noticeable attempts. A couple of well-known authors flub out in experimental directions from a common base, one magazine knocks out a dreary final issue (but is scheduled for comeback under new hands later in the year), and two magazines have returned to the "respectable" fold once again (though several purportedly burned authors assert it's being done by hook or crook, mostly by crook).

Spring! When a young fan's fancy turns to science fiction...and a one-sided affair is better than none at all, isn't it?

Magazines for MARCH-APRIL, 1970

AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC:

I see no reason to separate these magazines hereon as the only difference between them is that FANTASTIC will publish s&s in addition to sf. Both reflect the changes instilled by editor Ted White, predominant of which are the new (and often fan-oriented) columns and articles. Fritz Leiber reviews books for FANTASTIC--generously sharing his space with some excessively wordy Hank Stine critiques--and easily outshines all seven "guest" reviewers in AMAZING. White's editorials often whine like streetcar beggars, and my personal opinion is that he's wasting a lot of time (and space!), where efforts to clean up his lousy spelling and dedicate his time to editing would do far more to increase circulation. White did get AMAZING back on the Hugo list this year, and this month's FANTASTIC is especially good, so youthful enthusiasm will hurdle some barriers. Give him time--he'll keep that and grow up, too, someday.

AMAZING -- MARCH:

Serial:

By Furies Possessed (part one) -- Ted White.

Novelettes:

Trial By Silk -- Christopher Anvil.

As a shipload of men take their leave on a planet which offers a wide and appealing assortment of addictive pleasures, the chance for a plot to build around the men's bent for fun, entrapment and eventual escape is dissipated with a slow, stolid leadin and simplistic moralizing climax. Routine.

I'm Too Big But I Love To Play -- James Tiptree, Jr.

Tiptree has created a quite startling study of the interaction between mankind and an alien intelligence which, playing its way across the universe, finds Man a fascinating puzzle. Concerned with the establishment of communication, the story winds around a parallel of destruction that is intelligent and unnerving. Good.

Short Story:

Breaking Point -- William C. Johnstone.

Written around the cover illustration, Johnstone's story almost fits it but fails to come up with a plot. When an emergency module crashes on a new planet, the heaviest drama presented is getting one man to face the fact he'll never see his True Love again. Dreary, it's so dreary.

Reprint:

The Tree Terror (1933) -- David H. Keller, M.D.

Science:

Is Anybody Out There? -- Greg Benford & David Book.

FANTASTIC -- APRIL:

Novella:

The Snow Women -- Fritz Leiber.

Leiber once again proves himself the master of the written word, the subtle mood and, above all, the world of fantasy that captures readers in the spell of its reality. This time we go to the northern Cold Waste to meet a young and green Fafhrd, ignorant of the mighty civilization to the south but eager to take off and explore. To do this, he must first break the icy and tangled hold of his mother, Mor, a snow witch whose grasp is cold enough to freeze even her hot-blooded son. And speaking of hot-blooded, Fafhrd's love affairs--with a snow woman who carries his child and a traveling "actress" whose talents cover many fields--prove once again that Leiber has no trouble blending in some spicy and healthy eroticism. Fast but not reckless, fun but never trivial, this man understands exactly what makes swords-and-sorcery work.

Novelettes:

The Wager Lost By Winning -- John Brunner.

Although decently written and not excessively detailed, Brunner's fairytale (the third in the Traveller in Black group) is so concerned with each aspect contributing to the underlying moral that the author seems unaware of how difficult it is for modern readers to accept terms of pure black and white. Not really a bad story, but it offers no credible challenge.

Dear Aunt Annie -- Gordon Eklund.

Improbable and inconsistent in detail, told from shifting viewpoints, and carrying a message that many current novels would find too rich to bear--these are the "errors" of Eklund's first story, the tale of a newspaper columnist of the post-war future with advice for people whose neatly regulated lives can bear only the most minor suggestions. Such being the case, Eklund deserves only praise for tromping over them all, making them negligibles while turning out a story that is one of the neatest and most provocative delights in any recent magazine. Recommended.

Short Story:

The Freedom Fighter -- Ray Russell.

Russell predicts the future of the current boom in porno, with his own experience in the film industry giving him a valid insight from which to work. You don't have to be an industryite to second-guess the author here, but the story is short, predictable but reasonable, and very easy to swallow.

Reprint:

The Pulsating Planet (1941) -- John Broome.

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ANALOG:

With a continually entertaining book column by P. Schuyler Miller and sometimes provocative science articles (the discussion of the Food and Drug Administration seems especially relevant at this time), one can't help but wonder why Campbell's magazine can't find its way out of a mire of conservatism. If ANALOG's readers are so damned intelligent (engineers and such, you know), why do they settle for such predictable, machine-made plots and sterile writing? While it seems basically unfair to link one man's publishing stratagem to politics, I can't help feeling that Campbell's work reflects a smug "redneck" satisfaction: don't look for a change when you're making a profit now, don't offer a challenge to people willing to pay for a cheap ride to nowhere. If Nixon wants force to smash dissent, Campbell wants to numb reality with a sedative, and never mind that its long-range effect may be terminal. Neither he nor I will change the world with our opinions (or, likely, actions), but I don't believe blindness is cured by swallowing aspirin. ANALOG is aspirin, buckets of it.

MARCH:Serial:

The Siren Stars (part one) -- Richard & Nancy Carrigan.

Novelettes:

Ravenshaw of WBY, Inc. -- W. Macfarlane.

WBY (Wild Blue Yonder) Inc. has been formed for the express purpose of listening to people with unusual notions, "a clearing house for ideas". Ravenshaw is put in charge because of his unorthodox past record, but finds even his acid-tongued cleverness put to the test when an odd "invention" brings him into contact with more than he can comprehend. The reader is kept in the same position, for despite the cool and calculated dialogue, the story doesn't really make much sense.

Revolutionaries -- M.R. Anver.

Political skullduggery is the impetus behind this story of candidates vying for a world's top position. Several side issues are threaded in as well, including human/alien racism, but the plot centers mainly on the Federation representative whose involvement seems to play both sides against the middle. The nice stream of action might be more effective if the characters weren't of such objectionable paper-thinness.

Short Stories:

One Step From Earth -- Hank Dempsey (Harry Harrison).

The step is to Mars, made across "B-space" through the use of a new matter transmitter; but the story of that step is straight from clichéville--mysterious deaths, technical problems and, finally, a tired rehash of the right of the individual to make decisions opposed to the establishment. Tiresome.

Protection -- Steven Shaw.

Planet explorers find a new world inhabited by something which can kill without leaving a trace of the weaponry used. The story's impact lies with the revelation of "how", but is lessened by the fact that both the situation and resolution are incompetently contrived.

Wrong Rabbit -- Jack Wodhams.

The magicians are the technicians working the instantaneous transport system moving travellers from world to world. But what do you do when the wrong (i.e., alien) rabbit emerges? Initial fright and hysteria soon calm to a concerted effort to right matters, and the story alternates between human and alien view in a suggestion that any intelligence works along similar lines. The method works only to make it all as commonplace as possible.

Science:

Rover Does Tricks In Space -- Walter B. Hendrickson, Jr.

APRIL:Serial:

The Siren Stars (part two) -- Richard & Nancy Carrigan.

Novelettes:

Here, There Be Witches -- Everett B. Cole.

Another story of cultural interference, this one features a planet at a point in development where belief in witchcraft plays an important part in both personal and political interaction. The pattern is pretty well proscribed by now, and Cole does little to sustain interest after killing off his best character early in the proceedings.

Quiet Village -- David McDaniel.

Reduce the Seven Samurai to Five, call them Scouts and set them in the year 2636 in a country ravaged and depopulated by "Plague"; build up pity for the villagers battling off the human "rats", then give them the Scouts to do the dirty-work; and there you have McDaniel's amoral bit of plagiarism. Blah!

The Life Preservers -- Hank Dempsey (Harry Harrison).

A team of medical specialists discover a planet whose inhabitants have regressed over the thousand years out of contact with other worlds. The medica are faced with the double-task of preventing both war and plague, and the tale is fast

and action-filled enough to make one try to overlook the nonspeculative medical trimmings. Passable, if you're not too demanding.

Short Stories:

Come You Nigh: Kay Shuns -- Lawrence A. Perkins.

The title clues the reader in to what sort of code must be used to baffle unfriendly aliens. One of the characters is a compulsive punster, I suppose to balance such heavy science as: "...we discovered sub-etheric nondirectional instantaneous time-space matrix distortion..." Yeah, pretty heavy bull!

Seed Stock -- Frank Herbert.

Colonists braving a subtly inhospitable world where food is scarce and the settlers gradually become more sickly--this is the underlying unity of a well-done story of survival which includes a convincing reversal of the intellectual-male-loves-simple-female stereotype. Nice.

Science:

A Case of Overprotection -- Hazel Mosely.

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COVEN 13:

It didn't take long for this magazine to fold--though I recently heard that it is scheduled for revival by a different publisher--and if it wasn't already dying, this issue might certainly kill it. Editor Landis has apparently given up all thought of gathering a serious readership when he begins to write such lousy lines (about currently received manuscripts) as "scared the hell out of our staff". The serial is concluded, the short stories are desperate page-fillers, and the features and articles are nearly but not quite bad enough to be funny. Whether distribution problems or hewing too close to "traditional" horror concepts caused the demise, I wouldn't care to guess, but I for one will not welcome it back without some very drastic changes.

MARCH:

Serial:

Let There Be Magick! (conclusion) -- James R. Keaveny.

Short Stories:

The Bidderfrost Dragon -- Buddy Saunders.

Magically snifted from Earth to a fantasy-world of magic and demons, a tank crew is forced into battle with a fire-breathing dragon, their war-machine barely a match for the flying beast. This kind of tomfoolery is easily destroyed with flowery writing or tepid characterizations, and this one uses both to excess.

I, Vampire! -- Pronzini/Wallman.

The editor who rejects the lengthy, longhand biography submitted by an admitted vampire calls the work a "trite asinine ridiculous monstrosity". I'll try to think of a nicer way to phrase my rejection of this trite asinine ridiculous monstrosity. Nope, sorry, can't think of a nicer way....

The Convert -- S.M. Clawson.

A biochemist retires to study at his family's old country home, his work a sharp contrast to the surroundings which reek of witchcraft and magic. The story's nicely written but dully plotted, nothing worth bothering with.

The Thing On The Stairs -- Lee Chater.

A weekend with a family of ghouls is the premise of this routine spoof of the genre. Each person dodges hidden traps and poisons until the winner is revealed...and then the real winner is revealed. The dialogue is minimal where sharp repartee might help disguise the author's misjudged concept of satire.

Eats -- Sidney Harriet.

An utterly senseless tale of a traveller who stops in a rainstorm and is invited to eat a hearty meal with a group of country folks. He eats alone, stuffs himself actually, and catches on too late--but the reader should have it down pat by paragraph two.

Verse:

Feach Air Muir Lionadhi Gealach Buidhe Mar Or -- Robert E. Howard.

Feature Article:
Bell Book and Tarot -- Jean Cirrito.

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FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION:

A few good stories this time around for F&SF, but still not up to the high level one expects of this magazine. Asimov continues to show why science (and scientists!) can be remarkably lively instead of schooltext dull, and James Blish (a pseudonym of William Atheling, Jr.?) marks a welcome return to discussing books. There is usually a nice, no-nonsense yet non-pretentious attitude about F&SF which allows it to publish both the ordinary and bizarre side-by-side without seeming to cater to one or the other. Readers seem to be grateful for this, as witness the two recent Hugo wins, and the policy should continue to pay off so long as Ferman keeps an eye on the balance.

MARCH:

Novella:

The Fatal Fulfillment -- Poul Anderson.

I didn't care for Anderson's story, written from a prologue by Keith Laumer, but to be honest I must add that my own personal "likes" are expertly circumvented at every point, so that my reaction may be only personal. The story is certainly interesting to read--concerning one man's involvement in various futures, each developed from a single theme and each, unsurprisingly, a resounding failure--and Anderson's writing shows he is far more versatile than he has often been given credit to be. Yet it's difficult to ignore the fact that the man's search for a "cure", in both a physical and psychical sense, is frightened of its own enigma, and ends by merely acknowledging that an enigma exists. I liked reading this, but I didn't like it.

Short Stories:

The Night of the Eye -- Dennis Etchison.

Successful mingling of the contemporary scene with traditional horror (as in Leiber's classic "Smoke Ghost") needs a writer well aware of the basics of both genres. Etchison has chosen the California freeway for his modern setting where the gothic spectre death-symbol makes its appearance with no loss of dread. Well-done.

Harvest -- Leo P. Kelley.

Kelley speaks emotionally against prejudice with this story of an alien world where human "outcasts" are forced to the decision of allowing the last survivors of their once-persecutors to land on the idyllic world. The theme is moving, but Kelley's handling is uninspired pseudo-drama, all bones and no meat.

Fun-nee -- Miriam Allen deFord.

Escaping their overcrowded home, human colonists find that some problems have come with them--i.e., some are violently against mixing socially with the "inferior" alien natives of the blue skin and red eye. Like explaining Chess in a few words, it's quite distorted by patent oversimplification. Routine.

The Chameleon -- Larry Eisenberg.

A funny yet serious fable about turning a Presidential candidate with a record for losing into a winner. The man adjusts to each audience by using a new invention to gauge what each group wishes to see. The buildup is clever and the backfire is too logical to be unfair.

The Tangled Web of Neil Weaver -- Charles Miller.

The current upsurge of interest in the occult, witchcraft, etc., will probably make this tale of students dabbling in the supernatural (with remarkable effectiveness) a more acceptable item than it might have been a few years ago. The plot is handled efficiently, if not probably, and the characters are enjoyably full of life.

Article:

The Falls of Troy -- L. Sprague de Camp.

Science:

Bridging the Gaps -- Isaac Asimov.

APRIL:Novella:Til Met In Lankmar -- Fritz Leiber.

Patient fans are at last rewarded with this story of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser's first meeting. In Lankmar, destiny has drawn these two now-young adventurers (and their lovers) to seek to ply the trade of thievery along with a mission of revenge. The all-powerful Thieves' Guild is not kind to outsiders, however, and death awaits at every turn, from flashing swords to the even deadlier danger of wicked sorcery. Best of all is Leiber's revelation of the grief common to both men, a disclosure which most satisfactorily explains their strange comradeship. A good, if not the best, Mouser story, and a must for s&s fans.

Novelettes:In Black of Many Colors -- Neil Shapiro.

A woman, the only human telepath, is kept asleep at all times she is not needed for "contact", so that her 100 years are actually no more than 20. She falls in love with the ship's captain on a trip to a planet of uncommunicative natives, a love which on arrival proves an unexpected doom. As artsy-craftsy, self-conscious and pretentious melodrama, it is at best merely annoying.

Short Stories:Soulmate -- Charles W. Runyon.

Horror stories can bring chills by successfully creating a beastly creature of either human or nonhuman origin. In this, Anne is a cold, hard woman who has been defeated both physically and morally, but whose final defeat is beyond anything she could ever have anticipated. It's a completely ruthless story about people beyond compassion, and you should most certainly read it. Excellent.

The Brief, Swinging Career of Dan and Judy Smythe -- Carter Wilson.

I suppose wife-swapping is what is considered de rigeur for "swinging" these days, but Wilson's "brief" warning is much like a Disney cartoon on child molesters--the medium and the message make a most unsatisfying mixture. Distasteful.

The Wizard of Atala -- Richard A. Lupoff.

Lupoff's swords-and-sorcery fairytale (lots of sorcery, very little swords) tells of a neverneverland where a sorcerer seeks to help his leader and country by stemming the invasion of strangely-powered enemies. Not really poorly written or characterized, it's simply very bland, unexciting and forgettable trivia.

They All Ran After the Farmer's Wife -- Raylyn Moore.

An odd but clever fantasy set on a Kansas farm--and from first-hand, I can tell you Moore's descriptions are quite accurate--involving a down-and-out preacher and a Bible-quoting farmer with his ugly/pretty wife. It's slick and polished on the surface, but with other, darkly funny things hiding beneath the veneer.

Science:The Nobel Prize That Wasn't -- Isaac Asimov.

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GALAXY:

Jakobsson seems to be moving towards the experimental side of sf, and if grateful readers laud the move off the old schtick, they will likely need to buffer their patience to plow around the tiresome failures that are surely, as here, to appear. I'll be happy to see GALAXY take on some new aspects, so I'll try to control my present urge to rant extensively about some of the disappointing fluff currently appearing. Budrys' book column stays reasonable, but Bodé's "illustrated feature", "Sunpot", gets progressively worse, a childish idea of sophistication. Jack Gaughan contributes some striking graphics to the March issue, and Robert Silverberg ends one novel to begin another (what is he? America's answer to John Creasey?). Changes are evident here, so keep your eyes open....

MARCH:Serial:Downward to the Earth (conclusion) -- Robert Silverberg.

Novella:

The Region Between -- Harlan Ellison.

Written from Keith Laumer's prologue (as was Anderson's F&SF novella), Ellison has a different destination in mind for his non-hero, Bailey, who enters the Euthenasia Center to die, and winds up not dying...several times. "Death came as merely a hyphen", says Ellison, his first and best line in the story; from there on it's all downhill as Bailey's "soul" comes into possession of the Succubus and is shuffled from planet to planet, body to body, in a corrupt black market operation that has worked beautifully for its operator--that is, until Bailey. Dangling dangerously between farce and tragedy, all the effects are lost in a muddled and foolishly overwritten group of vignettes that are grandiose and shallow. Jack Gaughan's art and Heigemeir's calligraphy add visual interest far more exciting than any picture Ellison conjures.

Short Stories:

The Propheteer -- Leo P. Kelley.

Another picture of people of the near-future who are protected from themselves--at the slightest action to create harm, the Propheteer pushes a button which stops unsociability. Kelley's writing seems to improve with each story, but he's still hung up on simpleton characters and plots. One of these days, now....

A Place of Strande -- George C. Willick.

What is it that man has brought to the alien Rai--only a brush with mystery or something far more profound? The story's short, too short to do more than merely point out its theme, which wonders if man can develop an answer to his problems among the stars or if he is simply spreading the disease.

Reflections -- Robert F. Young.

Two representatives of the race to which man has evolved reflect upon the heritage they have been given from Earth. Studying forgotten authors, they wonder at the misguided Age of Hypocrisy (today), and finally hit upon a thought which seems endemic to their time. It's not, of course, and Young conveys a subtle message while saying so in this thoughtfully done story.

Illustrated Feature:

Sunpot -- Vaughn Bodé.

APRIL:

Serial:

The Tower of Glass (part one) -- Robert Silverberg.

Novelettes:

Allison, Carmichael and Tattersall -- Stephen Tall.

The first three men to travel to Jupiter's Callisto, these "Callistonauts" are not the sterile two-dimensional heroes common to dated sf, but neither are they multi-faceted antiheroes so dear to many modern readers. Instead the men are lively, loony, simple and amusing. Their discovery of "life" even before they reach their destination is entertaining in a mild, undistinguished way.

Discover a Latent Moses -- Michael G. Coney.

In a future ice-age, a small colony of human survivors lives in a snowbound bell tower, tunneling below to reach canned and frozen stores of food and keeping watch above against the mysterious (but never explained) "flesh hunters". An ice-cube of cynicism here, an odd growth of sentiment there, the story coalesces only as an imitation of qualities it strives to realize. Fair.

The Rub -- A. Bertram Chandler.

I have let it be known that the Grimes/Rim World series are not my favorite sf stories, but occasionally Chandler manages to tone down the contrivances and tie on a clever little mind-twister like this story which returns Grimes to the way-out planet, Kinsolving. Okay of type.

Short Stories:

No Planet Like Home -- Robert Conquest.

A near-infinity of races is scattered across the universe, among them appearing the recurring mutations. The problem lies with finding a way to care for these misfits, one which Conquest solves easily--likely too easily for most readers who will find the final punch somewhat lacking in power.

Kindergarten -- James E. Gunn.

Neither light nor frothy nor serious enough to speculate upon, Gunn's story of (presumably) Earth's creation in seven "days" by an alien child is only a light-bulb idea tacked up to pose as a story. On top of that, I think someone did it before...somewhere....

Verse:

Darwin in the Fields -- Ray Bradbury.

Illustrated Feature:

Sunpot -- Vaughn Bodé.

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IF:

IF, having lost much of the personality it once (long ago) possessed, seems to have greatly declined in popularity as well. Its quality must now rest almost entirely on the fiction content, which is generally far less selective than its sister magazine's. Good stories are not absent, but bad stories are so incredibly bad that one wonders if the editor has become purblind as well as insensitive. The letter column is as dull as it ever was, Lester del Rey discusses new books, and the monthly listing of regional and national conventions is the only concession to fan-oriented activities. IF needs desperately to recapture that missing personality or to become far more discriminatory in its story selection.

MARCH:

Serial:

Whipping Star (part three) -- Frank Herbert.

Novelettes:

SOS -- Poul Anderson.

And on the moon it's Westrealm vs. Asia in a battle of aggressive tactics, the winner of which will assume control of Earth's major problem--namely, the rapid magnetic decrease. And if that sentence seems rather silly, just wait until you read Anderson's story...no, on second thought, don't. Don't wait and don't read it.

The Thing In the Stone -- Clifford D. Simak.

Simak's latest garners mixed emotions. It tells of a man, a recluse in the Wisconsin backwoods, who is able to make contact with an alien intelligence stranded on Earth. The story is an old standby which Simak has little interest in expanding beyond familiar territory; but even in this the appealing Simak touch can still bring strong response--herein, the evocative descriptions of the tastes and colors of autumn and first snow. The mood is convincing, the plot isn't.

Short Stories:

Telemart 3 -- Bob Shaw.

After an unsuccessful attempt to kill his spendthrift wife (now confined to a wheelchair), husband Ted restitutionally buys her a Telemart Three, the exciting new television which offers instant home delivery of any advertised product. But unlimited spending leads to another attempt at murder, and if Shaw's final twist is expected, it's still a funny story of the agony of frustration.

The Ethics of Trade -- Timothy M. Brown ("first").

Constructed as a series of short letters from the president of the "Mallson Wombat Co." to the Planetary Zoo Commissioner, Brown's jab at future business ethics (no different from today's) has a few amusing one-liners but still succumbs to strained humor.

In the Silent World -- Ed Bryant.

Two telepaths make communication at a southern college, speaking mind-to-mind and passing the moments until they can meet in the flesh. If, like me, you don't see Bryant's intentions before the climax, you should enjoy this underplayed tale.

Traps -- George Zebrowski & Jack Dann.

To capture a specimen alien lifeform, a man must only sit back, relax and let his machine do the hard work--until the alien proves empowered with a protective device that devours not the body but the mind of the hunter. A workable idea smothers under an unworkable load of pallid, pedestrian prose.

The Time Judge -- Dannie Plachta.

Condemned for "the most heinous crime of all", the Prisoner is sentenced and his "punishment must fit the crime". The question of the Prisoner's identity is answered in a final sentence which depends--despite its explicitness--upon reader interpretation. To me, the effect was very slight indeed.

Love Thy Neighbor -- E. Clayton McCarty.

Migod, the aliens are here! They take over men's minds, controlling the thoughts while using the bodies to house their tiny, near-invisible selves. Migod, what grade-Z movie was the author watching when he wrote this? Migod, was the editor watching the same movie?

All Brothers Are Men -- Basil Wells.

The humans who settle the planet Okar are never more than referred to by the alien characters; but their effect on alien religious belief, as well as economics, is the major concern of this overly busy tale which tries to say that alien self-destruction happens no less foolishly than does human.

APRIL:Serial:

Whipping Star (conclusion) -- Frank Herbert.

Novelettes:

Waterclap -- Isaac Asimov.

Man continues to expand in two directions, with the sea-city of Ocean-Deep and the moon's Luna City. But it seems only one is destined to survive when limited funds prevent the sustainment of both, and an unhappy moon resident decides to take survival matters into his own hands. The best thing to be said for this is that the suspense mounts smoothly to a well-motivated yet not really believable conclusion. Readable, nothing more.

Spaceman -- Lee Harding ("first"?).

Intense and beautifully written, Harding's story is of clashing ideologies--the expanding, safely controlled and sterile existence of the spaceman vs. the "outcasts", colonists who find a natural way of life on a new world more to their ideals. The reader is subjected to the spaceman's reactions but remains more able to access those reactions from a less irrational standpoint. The climax of suggested torment is aptly a strong condemnation of both physical and mental conditioning, inevitable and moving. Very good.

Short Stories:

To Touch a Star -- Robert F. Young.

If man and his ways are a paradox, should there not be a place or a time where "anti-paradox" exists to set right the inconsistencies of man's history? Young's drama is a strange fusion of both the personal and objective (or, perhaps, "scientific"), with a view of totality that is both shocking and depthful. Well-done.

Swap -- Ron Coulart.

I can't see much point to Coulart's adventures of a mate-swapper in the L.A. of the future, other than his idea seems to be to state such an existence is at the mercy of mistake-prone machines and human apathy. The thin humor seems a strangely out-of-tune lead-in to the dramatic downbeat climax.

Ride a Tin Can -- R.A. Lafferty.

Delightfully funny, from the Singing Pig Breakfast Food Company to the string of stories told by the goblin-like Shelni, Lafferty as usual has much more in mind than a light bit of froth. If you think you're inured to this author's odd little twists, the black satire at the end of this one will still box your ears!

Thou Spark of Blood -- Gene Wolfe.

Wolfe opens his short tale in the midst of a problem: on a ship to Mars are three men, one of them dead, murdered. Which of the others is guilty? There's not too many ways you can go with such a set-up, and this version chooses an easy and unoriginal out. Wolfe is usually much better.

into the frey: book review

stand on zanzibar
john brunner
doubleday book club edition

my name is not kahsam
it is yngvi
yngvi the cockroach
who is not a louse
it doesnt bother me at all
to mull over
the same story
again and again
i spent five years
in a gideon warehouse
before i discovered
science fiction
an oriental friend
liked
the red book
until he got
too big
and had to join
the party
the book i have
just finished
reminds me of a
three layer cake
chocolate
vanilla
and tutti frutti
with pineapple icing
the kind with a
pin in it
the chocolate wins
the vanilla loses
and the tutti frutti
goes on forever
theres so much going on
all at once
that it reminds me of
the wanderer
with delusions of squalor
one thing you must say
mr brunner is thorough
he tells you
everything
about his world
and his people
and his machines

he even tells you
about the story
right in the story
which is nice of him
otherwise
the book would be so
engrossing
and convincing
that you might manage
to forget
its just a story
this consideration
is doubtless
a ripple
from the new wave
the old wave
was far more
inconsiderate
i notice this book
is likely
to get a hugo
i dont care
rocket ships
give me
heartburn
anyway
im glad to know
that mr brunner
has an electric
typewriter
i wish i did
i have to use
a manual typewriter
for these reviews
to make the keys move
i have to jump
from the ceiling
headfirst
and it gives me a
headache
me
yngvi the cockroach
who is not a louse

-- yngvi

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