

RESIN #11 from Norm Metcalf, P.O. Box 336, Berkeley 1, California, USA. This is intended for the 61st SAPS mailing, 15 Oct 62. Crudpub #50.

Die Wis #6 - Dick Schultz

I'm surprised that you find James White's Sector General stories entertaining (your underscoring). You must never have read any of them before. The first few were okay. But after that I began automatically giving them last place in "The Literary Line-Up". With other stories you had a fighting chance of being entertained. But White ran the Sector General series into the ground. And for some reason Carnell kept buying them. Apparently the voting readership of New Worlds falls somewhere between my views and those of Carnell. (The latest Sector General story, "Field Hospital" finished 2nd, 1st, 2nd. At least this is better than "Seeteer Shock" whose last instalment finished in fifth place, ahead of only Sturgeon's "Prodigy".) But even though you consider the stories entertaining you do see the faults in the stories. Basically the trouble is that White is rewriting the same story.

Number One #1 - Mike McInerney Mike McInerney

If you like Odd John but find Stapledon's Starmaker unreadable you might try Last and First Men. If you can get through that you might be in the mood for reading its sequel, Starmaker. And then you could go on to The Last Men In London. Sirius is another breed of dog entirely. And it's a fine work. The various novelettes are interesting but they lack the scope of his (to me) better works. And I consider them to be better because of the scope. Very few other authors even have the nerve to write a novel covering billions of years (unless it's a time-travel yarn and the years between aren't covered in great detail). And who else has the talent to make such narratives into interesting stories? I remember Schuy Miller's comment that he had found that Stapledon was unreadable when read in interrupted periods. But when read at one sitting he was gripping Miller's attention. And I think this advice applies to any good book. So I have such reading projects as Tolkien's Middle Earth, Smith's Lensman series, McCutcheon's Graustark, etc. waiting until I have all parts in one place and time to read them.

Warhoon #16 - Richard Bergeron

Blish: Not only are some authors hostile to adverse criticisms of their works, but what's worse some of them don't even care about any criticisms. Percentage-wise I'd guess that pros are more interested in sf than fans. Too many fans are interested in themselves rather than sf. I think these fans are in greater number than pros who are only interested in money. (And after all, there isn't that much money in sf.)

Blish: It's rather obvious that Galaxy makes false statements in its advertising. There isn't more room in Galaxy because it has 196 pages. It only has 192 pages plus covers. Secondly ASF has 125% more words per page which adds up to 88,000 words minus 73,400 words or room for 14,600 more words in ASF. This wordage represents more than two "novels" by Galaxy's standards. (Like a Galaxy novel is one if the author's name is big enough, not if the story exceeds a certain length.) I haven't seen an ad in some time for any of the non-existent foreign editions. All of the foregoing are objective discrepancies. On the subjective side of the ledger I don't believe their claims for publishing the best stories. But that's a common practice with most magazines which are second-rate or lower. The best magazines don't have to brag up their circulation. And if Galaxy's circulation was as big as they claim they'd be monthly.



Baxter: I defy you to prove that the Nova pubs are ahead of American zines "in every category from binding to distribution that comparison is downright embarrassing". Considering binding the Nova pubs are ahead only in comparison to some copies of Galaxy (and this is probably due to the thickness of the issues). This is based upon a comparison of bulk shipments at the local newsstands. Perhaps you're basing your statement on bulk shipments of the Nova pubs and individual copies of the American zines. Individual copies have a tendency to become damaged in shipment. Distribution is probably poorer on Nova zines than with Analog. With regard to the others I suspect Nova is ahead. Do you have the circulation figures for New Worlds, Science Fantasy and Science Fiction Adventures? The interior illoes in the Nova pubs are superior to those in Galaxy, If, most of those in Amazing and Fantastic, equal to those in F&SF and inferior to those in Analog. As for story quality I'd rate the nine prozines: 1) ASF, 2) New Worlds 3) Science Fantasy, 4) Science Fiction Adventures, 5) Amazing, 6) Fantastic, 7) F&SF 8) If and 9) Galaxy. As you can gather from the foregoing I like the Nova pubs but I'm certainly not going to come with sweeping statements that are very hard to prove true.

Baxter: You seem to be missing the point on cover dates. American magazines are dated ahead so that they'll sell. The cover date is the last day for decent sales. If a customer finds a back-dated issue he tends to think he has already bought that issue and thus he doesn't buy it. Most sf magazines, present and past, are off the stands before the cover date, as you complained. But it's not a matter of dishonesty, merely one of being helpful to the newsstand customer. In England it's a slightly different story. Back in New Worlds' past Carnell explained why the cover date was dropped from the Nova pubs. He said the issues sold better if there was only a number on the cover. The practice of having cover dates was re-instituted with New Worlds #120, Jul 62 without explanation.

Baxter: "Father of Lies" isn't as original as you seem to think. For example, the following stories have the same basic plot of an enclave sealed off from the outside world, yet not in an alien dimension. You don't need an "inter-dimensional-mobile" to get to them. Mona Farnsworth's "All Roads", Unknown Aug '40, Editor's Choice In Science Fiction; "Carol Grey"'s (Robert Lowndes) "Passage to Sharanee" Future Apr 42; some story I read in Weird about nine years ago; Ken "Bulmer's" "The Map Country" Science Fantasy #45 Feb 61; de Camp's "The Glory That Was", Hodgson's The Boats of the Glen Carrig, etc., etc. The ability to arrive in what is essentially an alien dimension without science, symbolic logic, drugs or gadgets of some sort is an essential part of "Father of Lies" yet it's common to all of the aforementioned stories. Thus I hardly think Brunner's story qualifies for uniqueness. And while it's competently written I'm with you in wishing it was longer and even better written. Until then, if I want to read this type of story I'll re-read The Boats of the Glen Carrig or "The Glory That Was".

Blish: The earliest example (that I know of) which discusses light-pressure spaceships is Russell Saunders' "Clipper Ships of Space", ASF May 51 plus a letter in that issue's "Brass Tacks" from Willy Ley which commented on the manuscript of the article.

Donaho: Your mention of Blish and Breen both fleshing in the bones of Stranger In A Strange Land brings to mind a theory I formulated once upon a time. To wit: that the greatest novel of all time will be the one which contains something meaningful for everyone, something which will impel each one to think further along some line (not necessarily the same line). This is in direct antithesis to the school of 'if it's popular it can't be good'. The reductio ad absurdum of the



latter position would be a person's stream-of-consciousness to be published in an edition of one copy. And this would be a literal transcription. And this isn't as absurd as it sounds. One or two of the leading exponents of this theory to be found in fandom have and still do publish fanzines which are only semi-intelligible to the rest of humanity.

Mistily Meandering #1 - Fred Patten

You seem to be somewhat familiar with Graustark. Perhaps you or some SAP can help out on a listing of Graustark books. As I've figured it out the books run The Inn of the Hawk and Raven, Graustark, Beverly of Graustark, Truxton King, and The Prince of Graustark. Are there other Graustark books? And since I have not read them, is this chronology correct?

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