
Vector
33
DICK HOWETT

Vector

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

Number 33 June 1965

CONTENTS Page

Art Credits:- Dick Howett (front cover, pg 21,26); Ron McGuiness (pg 10); Ivor Latto (pg 17,34); Mike Higgs (pg 23,37); Terry Jeeves (pg 44); all lettering by the Editor.

VECTOR is published eight times a year. It is distributed free to members of the British Science Fiction Association and is not available to the general public.

All material, artwork, letters of comment etc., for or concerning VECTOR should be addressed to the Editor (address opposite). Books and magazines for review should be sent c/o the Vice-Chairman (address opposite) until further notice.

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With this issue of VECTOR you will find an order slip for future issues of the BSFA's fiction magazine, TANGENT. The material for the second issue has been gathered and edited by Chris Priest who has now taken over TANGENT completely. Please note, however, that any material for TANGENT should be sent to me at the editorial address, and not to Chris Priest. Members have been asking for fiction for a long time - we hope you will give TANGENT your support now we have finally succeeded in producing this magazine.

LIBRARY

As you know, the BSFA Library will be moving from its present home, to 5 Whitehedge Road, Garston, Liverpool 19. To facilitate the removal of the books to their new home, the book section of the Library will be closed from July 1st until August 1st. The magazine section will continue to operate as normal. John Nash will be taking over from Joe Navin, who has been an excellent Librarian since he took the job on two years ago, but unfortunately the future of the Library is rather uncertain. It may well be that John Nash can only take over the job for a short term. If this is the case, the present committee is left with the problem of where to store 25,000 books! So, if there is any member who has access to a large storage space suitable for shelving the Library, the committee will be most pleased to hear from him/her.

ADVERTISING

Whilst discussing advertising outlets for the BSFA, one of the committee members raised the idea of advertising in the magazines of large companies, etc. Many large firms in this country produce a magazine for its employees and there must be quite a few BSFA members who work for these firms. Roy Kay, our Chairman, is handling all BSFA advertising and would like to hear from members who can get the BSFA advertised in any of these magazines.

'DOC WEIR' AWARD

As mentioned elsewhere in this VECTOR, Terry Jeeves was the deserving winner of the 'Doc Weir' Award at this year's convention. Terry wishes to express his thanks to all those who voted and would like them to know that he really appreciates the honour. He is only too sorry that he couldn't have been there to receive the Award in person. Congratulations, Terry.

****

I'd like to thank Pete Weston and Alan Roblin of the Birmingham SF Group for the help with this issue. Pete will be printing this issue and Alan will handling the collating, stapling and distribution.

RGP

I M P O R T A N T

THE PAGES OF THE ARTICLE "SF AND PHILOSOPHY" HAVE BEEN NUMBERED INCORRECTLY. TO READ THE ARTICLE, ONE HAS TO READ PAGES 3,7,6,5,4,8,9 & 10 IN THAT ORDER.

ROGER G PEYTON
(EDITOR)

SCIENCE FICTION & PHILOSOPHY

RICHARD GORDON

Of late, science fiction has been used as the vehicle for all sorts of odd ideas, especially those dealing with philosophical and psuedo-philosophical concepts. Although it is difficult to split these concepts up into any sort of order, there appear to be at least two distinct trends. One, in general, glorifies Man, his works and his future, while the other does the exact opposite. Whether or not these philosophical notions are mere literary pretensions on the part of the authors concerned is a moot point. In science fiction, as in other fringe mediums struggling to obtain the approval of culture and the cognoscenti, we are constantly treated to the sad spectacle of some author desperately churning out passages of little value of any kind in his efforts to attain literary significance.

However, in the case of science fiction, it is interesting to note many similarities of view between different authors, and such unanimity would appear to suggest sincerity in what they are setting forth. At the moment, the most popular view of homo sapiens, for example, is that it would be something of an unparalleled disaster if he ever manages to perpetrate himself on an unwary galaxy. There is certainly much to be said for this idea! There is also the generally accepted fact that the average SF author has rather more of the crusading spirit than do writers of other branches of literature, and this would also appear to argue a sincerity in what they are writing about. But quite apart from such idealism is the sordid financial fact that even SF writers have to live somehow, and in order to sell stories, even the best writers have to turn out potboilers. Many of such stories in the SF field are characterised by slick philosophical notions which usually are as transparent as the story itself. The fact does remain, however, that the science fiction author is rather more prone to philosophise on the human condition than are most other writers.

This tendency to philosophise is usually obvious in the worst space operas and can be split up into one of the two trends in

is damned little good" in the universe! It would seem at the present that the glorifiers have suffered unconditional defeat!

However, in THE JOY MAKERS by James Gunn, we come to a different sort of philosophising, the kind that takes Man for granted, be he good or bad, and instead presents him in relation to the universe he inhabits:

> "The only road for Man is the hard road - up and out - the road of dissatisfaction, the road of anger....to look back is to die a little. To look forward is to live forever."

And in THE SEED OF LIGHT, Edmund Cooper observes, perhaps somewhat presumptiously:-

> "Man can never evade the intolerable burden and distinction of mind. And mind is so fashioned that it can never renounce the pursuit of meaning.
>
> Perhaps it is part of the celestial paradox that only the microcosm of mind can discover a purpose in the random drift of the galaxies. And perhaps it was the function of the stars simply to create mind.
>
> For, without mind, there can be no meaning."

Science fiction is full of passages of which the two quoted above are typical. For the most part, they are mere literary pretensions, in the words of Shakespeare: "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." That about sums up the majority. Typical of these writers is Ballard, who persists in producing passages which seem to be full of some hidden meaning which persists in eluding the reader in most cases. Even if the author is being sincere in what he is writing, which he probably is, there appears to be a continual striving after some hidden philosophical truth which is beyond the literary powers of the author to represent. So for the most part they resort to cliches and purple passages to explain something quite unexplainable, because even if their passage means nothing, it looks impressive enough.

However, in the very occasional passage, there is the glimmer of light showing through the murk, which makes one wonder if they have something or not. And this fact makes all this sort of psuedo-philosophising worthwhile, in my estimation, for amidst the great mass of turgid maunderings there is the occasional truth of some sort or another, perhaps produced by mistake, yet saying something which may have meaning for the reader of the story. Maybe it is a phrase which temporarily rekindles the much maligned sense of wonder, and surely that makes it worthwhile! Whether meaningful or not, this sort of philosophising adds to the variety and interest of SF.

The basic purpose of this sort of philosophising is, as far as I can see, the search for some sort of reason or purpose to existence and the universe. Nothing new, of course:-

> "He sought for purpose with a sharp-edged mind that probed at the roots of existence and of happenstance and sought to evolve out of the random factors that moved beneath the surface of the universe's orderliness some evidence of a pattern that would be understandable to the human mind. Often he had it, but it always slid away from him like

not a tear. The satire is bitter, the philosophy is valid and telling.

Arthur C Clarke is a good example of the author who writes straight adventure fiction with the occasional extremely moot philosophical points with regard to his characters. CHILDHOOD'S END is the novel that immediately springs to mind. Karellan is one of the truly philosophic SF characters, and the novel as a whole displays a philosophical awe of the universe which few other SF novels have even approached. One calls to mind his scientist on the Moon who regards the conquest of space as a new Renaissance, and also the character in THE DEEP RANGE who advances what most meat-eaters would consider to be an immoderately liberal view:-

> "Within a century or so....we shall literally be going out of the Solar System. Sooner or later we shall meet types of intelligent life much higher than our own, yet in forms completely alien. And when that time comes, the treatment Man receives may well depend on the way he has behaved towards the other creatures of his own world."

This is as telling a remark as I have read anywhere and although not exactly philosophy, the point it makes is certainly a philosophical one, one which it would do everyone good to consider. For put this way, we would have no right whatsoever to complain if a bunch of intelligent BEMs from Betelgeuse came along and decided to exterminate the human race in the interests of hygiene! The same point has been made before, but never quite so effectively.

A novel - or rather a set of novels - which carries this idea of Man debased in the presence of superior beings is the C S Lewis trilogy beginning with OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET, in which Earth is represented as the silent planet of the title. This particular novel appeared in 1938 and was one of the first SF novels as such to embody a really serious attack on the human way of life. However, this and its successors were written from a mainly religious viewpoint with a religious aim, and I would guess that this has prevented many people from taking it in quite the same light as other critical and philosophical SF, the tendency being to regard this trilogy as allegory. Whatever one's opinion of this trilogy, there is little doubt that it is an unusual and important branch of philosophical SF writings insofar as the author attempted to produce a more cosmic and metaphysical brand of religion while still sticking to basic Christian principles.

To return to the two opposite trends, it now seems obvious that there is little support for those who would believe that there is something worthwhile in the human race. One sees only the occasional cautious remark about human courage in having struggled out of the dust. There is the remark here and there which makes one think that either the author has his tongue in his cheek or that he has drunk rather too much of the milk of human kindness. One such example is the statement by Isaac Asimov in THE END OF ETERNITY that: "there are many happinesses, many goods, infinite variety.... <u>that</u> is the basic state of mankind." Just as one begins to think that here at last in SF is an author who has some belief in humanity, one reads THE STARS LIKE DUST. Here we read that: "there

A good bit of Heinlein's considerable and doubtless well-earned reputation must have come from his peculiar philosophical notions, which are particularly prominent in his latest books. Although he spent most of his time writing stories in his first (and best) books, he still found the time to slip in the occasional idea. In METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN and again in one of his more recent novels, he made one of his better known remarks, to the effect that "there are no dangerous weapons, only dangerous men." I think there would be many people who lived near Hiroshima in 1945 to contest that particular opinion. In BEYOND THIS HORIZON, one of his better novels, written in 1942, he expresses the ultimate in pessimism, a view which has unhappily become very prevalent and which might be called crude existentialism:-

> "I know of no reason why the human race should survive...other than the fact that their make-up ensures that they will. But there's no sense to the whole bloody show. There's no point to being alive at all. I'm damned if I'll contribute to continuing the comedy."

These words, spoken by Felix, the traditional anti-social hero of the book, were presumably symptomatic of the author's views when the book was written. Since then, his beliefs appear to have grown stronger. One of his latest published novels, GLORY ROAD, is chiefly memorable for having a plot which is constructed of peculiar philosophical notions rather than with action. Although several of the remarks he makes are amusing when taken out of context, the book as a book is considerably worse than anything else he has written, and as such is an excellent example of science fictional philosophising carried to its worst and most undesirable degree. True, SF is supposed to be a literature of fresh concepts, but I have yet to see any form of novel which is able to succeed without having any sort of a plot to work on!

Heinlein is the prime example of the good SF writer who has allowed his philosophical conceptions to dominate his stories, to their detriment. For when he writes a story rather than a philosophical tract, then there are few writers to beat him.

Luckily, most of the more serious SF writers who are accustomed to mixing in some philosophical notions with their story have not yet gone as far. Several excellent books have been written with a philosophical or moral background, while others manage to make telling points during the course of the story.

One of the best recent examples of the primary type of book is Aldiss's THE DARK LIGHT YEARS, already mentioned, which could be said to employ as its philosophy the remark 'To our way of thinking, civilisation is reckoned as the distance Man has placed between himself and his excreta'.

This is an excellent novel, which makes a number of very telling points, and it proves that an SF novel can employ a philosophy and still be an excellent story. Where Man is concerned, he could not sink much lower than the excretion in which the aliens of the story wallow. It is a complete denigration of Man, for by the end of the book, one identifies completely with the unfortunate aliens, and sympathises with their fate brought about through contact with the human race. For Man's near extinction, one spares

most cases. Symptomatic of the man-glorifiers is the following passage from Bester's THE DEMOLISHED MAN:-

"...There is nothing in man but love and faith, courage and kindness, generosity and sacrifice. All else is only the barrier of your blindness."

Taken out of the context of the book, perhaps naive - but refreshingly so, for the view that there may actually be some good in Man is virtually swamped by the second class, which is strongly symptomatic of Hiroshima and Belsen, and which refuses to believe that Man will ever emerge beyond a gadgeteer talented enough to make bigger and better bombs to make life hell for anyone who happens to come into contact with him. Illustrative of this opposite and more common view is the following passage from Brian Aldiss's THE DARK LIGHT YEARS:-

"By the standards of another species, our culture might merely seem like a sickness."

It would now be valid to query whether this latter viewpoint, with its distrust of anything human, is one which is universal in SF today. To a large extent, it is so. It would be true to say that modern science fiction is the most distrustful form of literature there is, which may be one reason why many people fight shy of it. It persists in showing people where they are going wrong in such books as BRAVE NEW WORLD and in the Utopian satires of Pohl and Sheckley. People being people, most dislike this and thus SF is likely at best to remain a controversial and fringe genre. Even when modern SF is engaged in laughing at Man and his blunders, it is also being extremely satirical and critical - this, after all, appears to be the essence of modern SF. Thus the pessemistic and distrustful viewpoint characterised by the latter passage could be said to be generally symptomatic of SF.

The battle between the glorifiers and the denigraters does not employ the entire strength of science fictional philosophers, there also being those who are content merely to comment on Man in relation to his universe, but it is the most important and it would be most useful to consider it first.

Combat can perhaps be said to have been joined with the publication of Stapledon's LAST AND FIRST MEN, in 1930. Of course, there had been plenty of equally valid works written previous to this, from Lucian, up through Voltaire's MICROMEGAS, to Wells, but it is most convenient to take this as a starting point since SF proper had only begun some four years previously. This book contains many passages of great beauty, and although Stapledon's men undergo many catastrophes through their own stupidity, there is no mistaking the final words of the Last Man:-

"...Man himself, at the very least, is music, a brave theme that makes music also of its vast accompaniment, its matrix of storms and stars. Man himself in his degree is eternally a beauty in the eternal order of things. It is very good to have been man."

First round to the glorifiers. Apart from the odd story expressing some doubts as to the somewhat aggressive nature of homo sapiens, SF sailed merrily along, engaged in world-wrecking, until the outbreak of World War II and of Robert A Heinlein.

quicksilver escaping from a clutching hand."

This passage is from a story by Clifford D Simak and it describes perfectly the tantalising sense of knowledge that all of us have had at one time or another - the sense that there is some universal key to knowledge round the next corner, and if only we could stretch just a little further.....

Simak, much criticised for being sentimental and pastoral, seems to have a particular interest in this sort of problem. To return to an earlier point, he is one of the few SF authors of any stature to have retained some belief in the human being; he is prone to philosophise but his brand of philosophy is direct, basic and very refreshing after the pyrotechnics of all his colleagues. Yet even he has his moments of pessimism. In ...AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE he has his hero discover the purpose of the universe:-

"David bent above the table and the answer was on the tape. The universe has no purpose. The universe just happened.

'And the second question..' said Jed, but there was no need for him to finish, for what the question had been was implicit in the wording of the second tape. Life has no significance. Life is an accident."

This is presumably the ultimate philosophical question and there are few stories dealing with the problem that deal with it in any other manner. Whether this is a fault of SF or of modern society is difficult to say; most philosophies are usually depressing anyway.

There is a trend to philosophise in any and every SF novel and story published nowadays, and it can be carried to ridiculous lengths. Many novels which should have been written for mere entertainment and which are no doubt meant as such persist in dragging heavy-handed philosophical and ethical points which only serve to slow up the story. A case in point is Harry Harrison's novel, DEATHWORLD TWO (THE ETHICAL ENGINEER). One of the characters, Mikah, is worse than cardboard. Although he is necessary to keep a somewhat forced story going, by the end he is completely unbelievable and detracts considerably from quite an enjoyable adventure story. Mikah - 'a believer in truth' - spends his time acting entirely ethically, to his and everyone's detriment, even to the point of betraying the hero, who has saved his life continually, because it is ethical and because the hero is acting unethically. A little of this sort of thing is alright, but if someone intends to write an adventure novel then let him write it without dragging in psuedo-intellectual hash-ups. This is not to say that it is impossible to introduce a philosophy into a novel - this has been done many times, notably in van Vogt's Null-A series. Such novels are interesting but they usually succeed merely in getting themselves entirely tangled up in their own premises (and again, van Vogt is an excellent example of this - some of his novels are so complex that one virtually needs a high-speed computer to unravel all the different plots and sub-plots.

Humour and philosophy rarely mix, except where Eric Frank Russell is concerned as is shown in NEXT OF KIN and in the last half of his delightful novel, THE GREAT EXPLOSION. The latter shows just what might happen if a civilisation were to be founded on Ghandian

concepts of non-resistance and civil disobedience. SF could do with more novels of this type; unfortunately, they are all too rare!

On the whole, though, science fiction is uniformly depressing and holds out little hope for the human race, where concerned with itself or with the universe. As to whom is right over the battle about humanity, the glorifiers or the denigraters, it is difficult to say. Both represent extremes and the real truth is probably somewhere in the middle of the street.

But at the moment, so far as SF as a genre is concerned, those who are pessimistic about Man and his capacity for goodness are clearly in the lead. This is in many ways a pity, for it is an extremely fatalistic approach, whether or not it is basically correct. This kind of science fiction is merely reflecting the current intellectual trends of pessimism and depression with the world and its inhabitants. However, there is a certain element entirely unique to SF, insofar as this brand of pessimism is the only entirely objective brand available and as such it could be said to be one of the few that are in many ways realistic. Even so, it is an artificial attitude and the sooner SF allows itself the luxury of a little more humour in the midst of all the pessemistic philosophies continually being expounded, the better for the genre as a whole. Life is not all tears, though one might be excused for thinking that such is the case after a choice dose of some modern authors. These authors appear to consider Man already consigned to the scrapheap, without even realising that in many cases it is merely by his own standards that Man has succeeded in condemning himself so thoroughly. It is a kind of vicious circle, taking for granted that we stand equally condemned by other and fictional ways of life as well as by our own, the authors being so thoroughly enmeshed in the workings of the circle that they are unable to perceive anything else.

Pity it may be, but there is also much truth in what such authors have said. SF novels incorporating philosophies which blast Man and his ways also have a lot of pertinent points to offer, which anyone would do well to study. The third kind of SF philosophising, presenting Man in relation to the terribly large universe he finds himself in, also has much to offer from the midst of the melange of pompous phraseology that we have pumped at us.

SF and sensible philosophy can and do mix, but in many cases the resulting mixture is only a tasteless mess which serves merely to intrude on the consciousness of the reader and spoil the story. Writers who tend to philosophise no doubt mean what they say, but only too often, what they say is only a tasteless rehash of some other authority. Many people complain about the psuedo-intellectual element in modern SF: in many cases they are right to complain, for there is little more nauseating than the spectacle of some author trying to be intellectual and only succeeding in being transparently obvious. Some people complain about the psuedo-science in SF: it is the psuedo-thinking they should be complaining about, though even this has luckily disappeared from the best of modern SF. Of course, such faults are as much typical of other forms of literature as of SF, but SF being in the precarious position that it is, it can ill

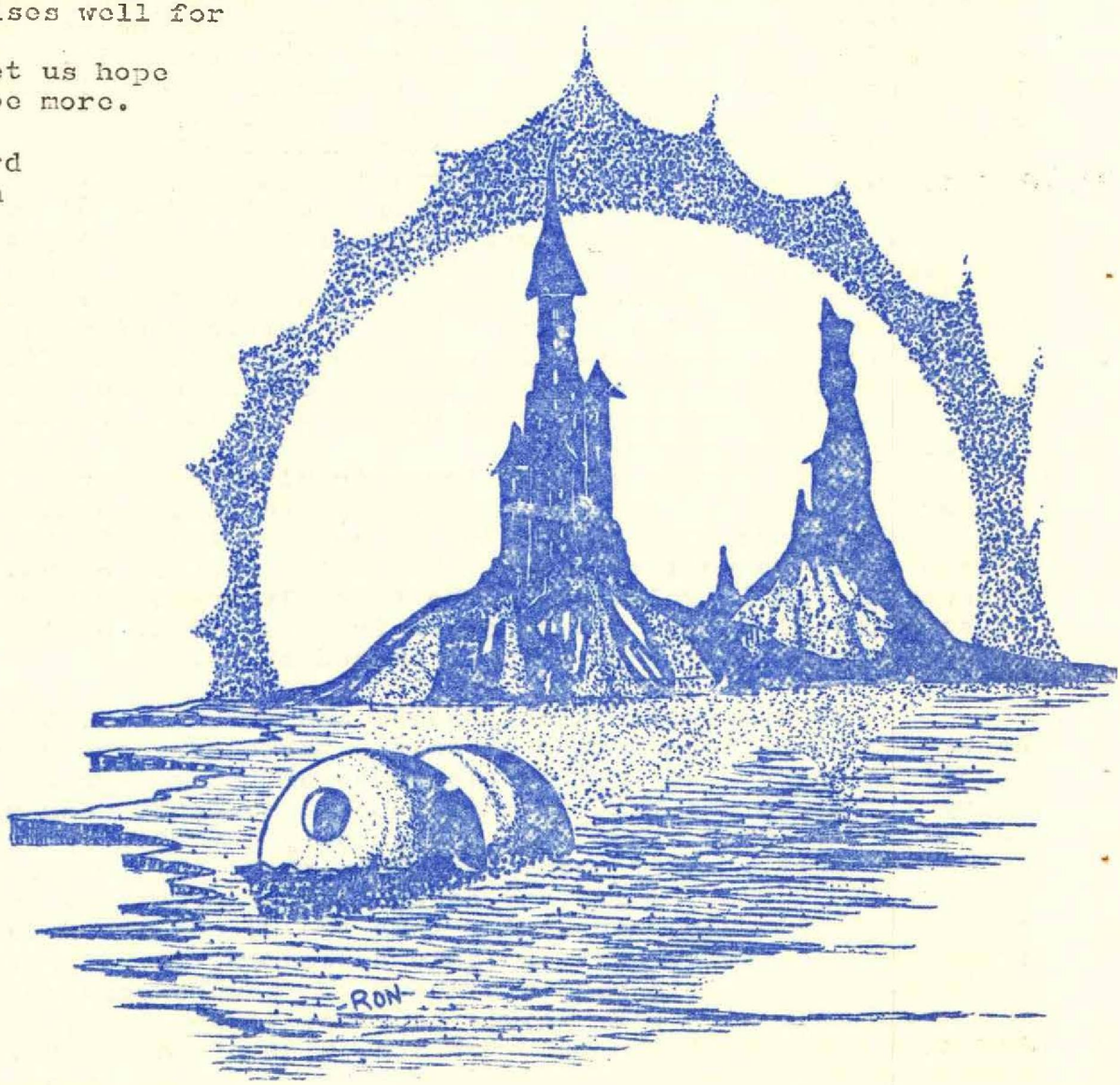
afford to suffer the criticism that such faults automatically bring down upon its head.

There is always room for genuine and mature philosophy, whether depressing or not, and there is an encouraging amount of that to be found amidst the still great dominance of trashy theories and concepts, many of which are at last beginning to disappear, except in comic magazines and on television.

Modern SF is pessemistic in many ways, but there are many passages of common sense and good philosophy to be found, whether one agrees with them or not. It is usually possible to see when an author is playing down (or up) to his audience, and equally it is possible to spot when he is induging in some clear and original thinking of his own accord. There is now quite a lot of this latter class in present-day SF, and it promises well for the future.

Let us hope there will be more.

Richard
Gordon



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

by JIM GROVES

Most of the questions this time are long overdue for answers, I'm afraid - what with conventions and the like, things are tending to slide - enough said.

P Muldowney, Plymouth:

"1(a) How many professional magazines are there in the USA and how have their number varied in the past ten years? (b) the same for Great Britain?

2 How many fan clubs and fanzines are there in (a) USA? (b) Great Britain?

3 What are the circulation figures of ANALOG, IF, GALAXY and NEW WORLDS?

4 Where, how frequently and how much does the BSFA spend on advertising?"

For the period 1955-65 there were approximately 25 SF and associated magazines of which about 8 remain. In the UK there were approximately 6 original magazines and 6 reprints. Two of the originals remain and 2 of the reprints - the situation is however somewhat confused by the number of direct imports. The number of fanzines and fanclubs on either side of the Atlantic are unknown (to me at least) and probably unknowable. The circulation figures of magazines can usually be found in one of the early issues of the magazine each year. ANALOG has a print run of about 140-150,000, AMAZING 87-88,000, GALAXY and IF in the region of 110,000. For BSFA spending, I can but refer you to the current Treasurer's Report, and the committee, of course.

T Jones, Doncaster: "Could you please tell me where to obtain a checklist of Eric Frank Russell's works? Also, has he ever written under any psuedonyms?"

Eric Frank Russell has used the psuedonyms of Webster Craig, Duncan H Munro and Maurice G Hugi. The latter is, or rather was, a real author but EFR used his name on one story ("The Mechanical Mice" - ASTOUNDING Jan 1941). I don't know of any checklist of EFR's work - a partial listing could probably be gleaned from the magazine checklists.

Bill Hillan, Australia: "I saw recently that the magazine GAMMA was published in England. Could you please give me any information on this mag? Nos 1 and 2 were issued here about the middle of last year with the promise of No 3 which so far has not appeared."

As far as I know, GAMMA hasn't been issued over here at all. I've had reports that Nos 3 and 4 have been issued in the States but no definite confirmation. Your best bet, I'd say, would be to contact an American fan or SF book dealer.

David Copping, Chelmsford: "Can you tell me if the name John Beynon is a pen-name of John Wyndham, or if John Wyndham is a pen-name of the former? Also, is Paul Charkin a pen-name for a well-known writer of mainstream fiction?"

The real name of this author is John Beynon Harris. He has had stories published under the names John Beynon, John Wyndham, Wyndham Parkes, Lucas Parkes and also under his own name. I suspect that Paul Charkin is a house name, but who shelters under it I don't know.

Michael Sharp, Glamorgan: "Can you tell me if the old "Fantasy Times" newspaper is still in print? What is Dianetics and what books are there on this subject? What are 'fanzines'?"

"Fantasy Times" is defunct, sorry. As to your Dianetics question - I wrote about this in VECTOR 28; if you don't have a copy there'll be one in the Library. OK?

Fanzines are amateur publications produced by SF fans for their own amusement. I believe that the BSFA is intending to put out a listing of some of the current fanzines which will probably help you. A good reviewzine for fanzines is put out at irregular intervals by Ethel Lindsay (6 Langley Ave., Surbiton, Surrey). Write and ask her to put you on the list for the next issue - it'll cost you 6d. Read what she says about the various fanzines and then send for a few sample copies and see what you think of them.

Roy Mitchell, Liverpool: "I would like to know where I could purchase the following stories - "Tarrano the Conqueror" by Ray Cummings and "The Night Land" by William Hope Hodgson. Any format would be acceptable. Also, could you tell me if there is any publication in Britain which is the equivalent to the American "Science Fiction Advertiser" (i.e. using mainly adverts of SF items for sale)? And finally, do you know of any member of the Association or any other source where I may be able to purchase WEIRD TALES - any issues between 1923 and 1939?"

"Tarrano the Conqueror" had two book appearances, in 1930 and 31, both in the USA, and also a magazine appearance in SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY Summer 1941. "The Night Land" has appeared quite a few times. Try writing to Ken Slater at Fantast (Medway) Ltd., 75 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs. If he can't put you onto a copy at once, he'll want-list it for you and keep a lookout for it. I don't know of any UK equivalent of SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISER. As for the WEIRD TALES, well you could try Ken Slater again - if you do find a source, let me know too, there are a couple of issues from

that period that I want too!

FOLLOWUP INFORMATION SECTION

The Blish story, "Turn of a Century", so I am informed by G Myers of Letchworth, appeared in an anthology called THINGS edited by Ivan Howard and published by Belmont Productions USA.

Ken Slater has added some titles to the Cordwainer Smith listing started by R.O.Richards in VECTOR 31 as follows: "Scanners Live in Vain" (FANTASY BOOK No 6),"Mother Hitton's Littul Kittons" (GALAXY Jun '61),"A Planet Named Shayol" (GALAXY Oct '61), "Drunkboat" (AMAZING Oct '63), "Think Blue, Count Two" (GALAXY Feb '63), "The Store of Heart's Desire" (IF May '64).

And now a correction/addition from Edmond Hamilton:-

"You say that as far as you can discover, Garrett Smith never wrote anything called "After a Million Years". But I beg to differ, for he did, and I have the old magazine excerpts of it on my desk right now, with a cover of a girl looking out of a space-ship window at receding Earth.

The story appeared as a serial in "The Argosy" magazine, beginning with issue of January 18, 1919, and running for a total of six weekly installments.

It's a by-no-means bad story, if you don't mind such trappings of the period as a testy little professor, his beautiful daughter and a villainous villain named Waldron. The last people of Earth live in Omega, a glass-roofed city in a deep valley in the bed of the dried-up Pacific Ocean. It's threatened with destruction by meteors. The story swings all the way out to Jupiter. It's reminiscent in its last-city theme of Hodgson's "The Night Land", but is, of course, far removed from Hodgson's masterpiece, which I think the greatest of all tales of SF, fantasy or what you may call it.

However, I fed my juvenile imagination on the old Victorian-style stories of Smith, Homer Eon Flint, etc., and to me they will always be great.

Hope this answers the query you received."

INFORMATION WANTED SECTION

Here are some queries I can't answer, can anyone oblige?

R J Charlesworth wants to find a Ray Bradbury checklist - anyone know of one?

Terence Don; "I'm trying to find a story that I read 4 or 5 years ago in an anthology of SF - it may also have appeared in ASTOUNDING SF in the early fifties. It concerned an American attempt to reach the Moon in several one-man space vehicles. Each man was in a Mercury-type capsule, and supply rockets had been sent onto the Moon previously. Finally, after much difficulty, one man succeeded in establishing a base (I don't remember how he got back to Earth). I'm interested in this story as it closely resembles one of the NASA's actual plans for reaching the Moon (in case lunar orbital rendezvous fails) and may well be the way the Russians attempt it. If so, I'd like to see how close the writer was."

I do recall this story but not unfortunately the title or author. I do remember the hero, the only survivor of the attempt, reporting back to Earth in a manner designed to fool any Russians listening in. Something along the lines of "Lunar Base established, some losses. X Officer Commanding" - knowing that his superiors knew that he was last in the chain of command.

Ron McGuinness, London: "I'm trying to trace a book titled TIME AND SPACE. Unfortunately, I don't know who the author is. It's about some time-warriors who go about ravaging different times. They capture someone from a certain period and the book is centred about this person."

And lastly, I have the following from Stu Hoffman, Box 13, Black Earth, Wisconsin 53515, USA:- "I have been working for several years compiling an Index which would include all the English language SF and fantasy magazines. I need some information regarding some of the English paperbacks and authors. Is Robert Lionel Fanthorpe a psuedonym and if not, do you know what psuedonyms he writes under? I have been informed that the following are some of them - Leo Brett, Bron Fane, Trebor Thorpe. Is Lionel Roberts another of them?

I have a few of the paperbacks OUT OF THIS WORLD which also carry the heading (Supernatural Stories). What connection, if any, do they have with the paperback series SUPERNATURAL STORIES?

Do you know any British fan who would like to exchange British SF and fantasy for American?"

Since Stu isn't a BSFA member, would anyone who has information on these questions or who wants to exchange stuff with him please write direct.

Anyone having any queries - write to me at 29 Lathom Road, East Ham, London E 6.

Jim Groves

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SMALL ADS (Free to Members)

WANTED - Ray Bradbury paperbacks in new or good condition. Send list with prices wanted. R J Charlesworth, Flat 1, Over 1 Duke St., Congleton, Cheshire.

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Collectors of rare utopias, anticipations, early SF, prognoses, prophecies, robinsonades and other curiosa in fantastic literature who read German, are invited to ask for free lists of the new SAMMLUNG ANTARES of which 14 volumes have already been published: works by Mehring, Restif, Foigny, Lasswitz, Henne am Rhyn, Paltock, Michaelis, Passer, Pfeiffer, Claude Gilbert, Stanislaus Leczynski, Locke, Laicus, and an anthology - ALGOL. Write to Jakob Bleymehl, 6681 Furth uber Neunkirchen, Saarland, Engelstrasse 5, West Germany.

Henry Manson, 149 McKinley Crescent, Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland, would like to contact any reader of VECTOR who is interested in swapping either a completely built Sinclair Micro 6 Transistor or Sinclair Slim Line for any of the books and magazines listed below. Even a partially completed set would be of interest.

CAPTAIN CUT-THROAT by J D Carr. US hard cover. d/w. mint.
5 American Detective Book Club Novels. mint hardcovers.
PORTALS OF TOMORROW ed by Derleth. US Book Club mint with d/w.
THE POWER by F Robinson. US Book Club mint with d/w.
BEST FROM F&SF: 4th SERIES. US Book Club mint with d/w.
THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY ARE STARS by F Brown. US Book Club mint d/w
TRIAD. US Book Club mint d/w (3 novels by van Vogt: SLAN, WORLD OF A and VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE).
DEAD FINGERS TALK by W Burroughs. British mint with d/w.
LEST DARKNESS FALL by de Camp. British. very good condition d/w.
THE LUMPTON GOBBELINGS (a fantasy) British mint with d/w.

Magazines: 3 oldies - AMAZING Oct 1930 & Jan 1935 and WONDER STORIES Jan 1935. All intact with covers slightly torn.
NEBULA Nos. 28,29,31,33,35,36,38,39,41 all in good order.
SF ADVENTURES Nos 8,14,17.
2 SF MONTHLYs (Australian) Nos 1 & 4. good condition.
NEW WORLDS Jun,Jul,Aug,Sep,Dec 1960, 1961, 1962 and Jan 1963 right through to April 1964. Complete and all in mint cond.

WANTED - Any books by Raoul C Faure, who wrote MISTER ST JOHN and SPEAR IN THE SAND. Also COSMIC ENGINEERS by Simak.

SMALL ADS (Free to members)

WANTED - books about flying saucers, information about any clubs or associations devoted to UFO's. Anyone with information, please contact Angelo Oggiano, Via Nicastro 3, Rome (403), Italy.

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WANTED - Novels by Vargo Statten and E C Tubb. Send lists to W Summersgill, 48 Severn Drive, Guisborough, Yorks.

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A CHECKLIST OF SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES (British Edition). Price 1/6 (postage included) from Rog Peyton, 77 Grayswood Park Road, Quinton, Birmingham 32. Checklist is in three parts: Listing by issue; Listing by Author and Listing by Title.

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WANTED - Back issues of VECTOR. The BSFA needs old issues as we are continually being asked for them by new members. We'll pay for them and for the postage too! Send them to the Treasurer, Charles Winstone, 71 George Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23.

MAGAZINES reviewed by Graham Hall

SCIENCE FANTASY 72 - May 1965 (price 2/6)

One of the poorer Bonfiglioli SCIENCE FANTASYs - just five stories and not much of worth.

The serial, Jael Cracken's "The Impossible Smile" is perhaps the best thing in the issue. It moves along at a fair pace, using a number of good ideas and is quite well-written. Compared with E C Tubb's serial running in NEW WORLDS, it is brilliant - at least, Cracken's characters and situations are not quite as cardboard and stereotyped. The opening sentence conveys pure terror and wonder:- "June 1st, 2020: Norwich, Capital of the British Republics." Innocuous, you may think? Just conceive of Norwich being capital of Britain!

Thomas Burnett Swann always falls down in this particular aspect of short story writing: his first paragraphs are never arresting, never inviting. "Vashti", another of his Persian-Greek myths is.....well, if you like Swann, you'll like this. I withold comment.

Alan Burns' "Housel" is something of a straight SF story. A 'housel' is a unit which receives impressions from the inhabitant of a house and changes that house into his ideal home. Sometimes they go 'franky' (faulty) and when young, foolish, old-maid Linette is troubled by her housel, dashing Philip Devlin, housel repairer, goes to the rescue - and finds some amazing things.

Keith Roberts is present again when his whimsical Anita and truculent Granny Thompson come to the rescue of a love-lorn ghost - with the normal mixture of pathos and humour as a result.

One of Bonfiglioli's proteges, Philip Wordley, comes up with a poorer piece - "Timmy and the Angel". Pretty standard aliens-helping/controlling-the-barbaric-human-race. Worth reading for Wordley's fine prose.

Keith Roberts contributes a cover, and in his editorial Bonfiglioli explains why there are no story-ratings and why they are inaccurate - convincingly, too.

NEW WORLDS 150 - May 1965 (price 2/6)

With a line-up of Brian Aldiss, Jack Vance, E C Tubb, Charles Harness, John Brunner and J G Ballard one cannot but expect first-class material. But if you do expect this, you're likely to be disappointed.

Lead story is, surprisingly, Charles Harness's "Time Trap", written in good old pulp style with cardboard characters, great gimmicks and long explanations of complicated science processes. Major Jon Troy is imbued with the power to stop anything dying in his presence and so is captured for use as an "artificial life" during an operation on a super-being alien entombed in the earth ....revolting, he uses his power to throw himself back in time and carries on round and round and round in a cycle for thousands of times.

One of the best stories in the issue comes, as was to be expected, from the pen of Brian Aldiss. "The Small Betraying Detail" is fantastic in concept, like much of Aldiss's work, and for once, his technique is good enough to put over his ideas well. A TB sufferer slips by accident into another probability universe and, in his delirium, searches for the small betraying detail that will tell him the dreaded truth.

John Brunner comes up with an interesting and unusual way of keeping the birthrate down in "Nobody Axed You". Another memorable story, telling of the days to come when roads are so congested that 12 mph is a high speed and it takes twelve hours to get out of town. And TV violence is psychologically keyed to drive people to murder.....

I guess I am biased when it comes to Ballard - I just don't like his writing in the main - but consider that I can, normally, detach myself sufficiently to appreciate his imagery. Even this is lacking in "Prisoner of the Coral Deep". I leave this for Peter White and his ilk to enjoy.

Jack Vance can still show the best of the British writers a thing or two. His "Alfred's Ark" is a delight to read. The perfect roundedness of the tale of a second Noah - and see what happens to the human race this time round.

E C Tubb's serial "The Life-Buyer" moves along at a rapid rate, his characters merging in their puerile way into an indistinguishable mess - forget the names and you're lost. But there are space-opera fans and this is for them. A disappointment.

The issue is completed with a revealing photo feature, a guest editorial by John Carnell, biographical notes on the contributors and James Colvin book reviews.

Of course it's better than the average issue, but it does help to prove that 'names' don't always write that much better.

NEW WORLDS 151 - June 1965 (price 2/6)

After NW 150, with its all-star line-up, this issue was bound to be a disappointment. And it isn't even up to the average.

Most of the issue is taken up with the concluding third of E C Tubb's novel "The Life-Buyer", and we at last find out what happens to Marcus King and his crowd of cardboard cronies. One can well admire Tubb's all-action style, his imagination and his ideas but never, never his characterisation! I had terrible difficulty in finishing it and found it one of the least interesting novels I've ever read.

B J Bayley contributes the lead story, "The Ship of Disaster". After reading, in the third paragraph, "On a high seat in her poop, languished Elen-Gelith, elf-lord of the Earth's younger days...", I threw the book down in disgust. Elves and trolls in NEW WORLDS!? On finishing it, I was only vaguely disgusted, by Bayley's constantly striving but never succeeding visualisation of scene. It holds a few grammes of interest, but little else.

George Collyn is also present with "Convolutions", more an essay, certainly not a story and very much not worth reading. An experiment in writing which should never have been published.

On a slightly better level is R W Mackelworth's "Last Man Home". Rather a la Moorcock in the excellent depiction of landscape and scene. Although well-written it has limited plotting and only begins to be absorbing.

Completely absorbing is "Apartness" from new American writer, Vernor Vinge. A rehash of the old ON THE BEACH theme, but by far the best thing in the issue. Well-written and with a fresh angle and emotion that makes it memorable.

The issue is made up with reviews from Langdon Jones, James Colvin and Charles Platt. Altogether a poor issue and one that would discourage a newcomer from taking out a subscription.

SCIENCE FANTASY 73 - June 1965 (price 2/6)

Pick up this issue...read the blurb...see Keith Roberts, Philip Wordley and Jael Cracken. Open this issue...read the contents...see no Keith Roberts nor Philip Wordley. Apart from this slip, the issue is one of the best ever, with a total of nine stories.

The second half of Jael Cracken's "The Impossible Smile" kicks off and manages to be as interesting as the first half. Quite a memorable tale, marred only by an occasional ugliness in style.

"Great and Small" by G L Lack is one of those fantastic obscure stories that are completely unexplained and inexplicable but very powerful. An after-the-catastrophe story with a difference and maybe an hidden meaning.

"Ploop" by Ron Pritchett covers much the same ground as van Vogt's "Dormant". Little of interest but smoothly finished.

"Peace on Earth" by Paul Jents is a cynical and fairly entertaining piece on the Americans taking over the Moon.

Alistair Bevan, one of the best of the new flock of

writers, is also present with "Deterrent". Rather a hackneyed idea but, as ever, well-written and well worth reading.

Brian W Aldiss contributes a piece - "A Pleasure Shared" - first published in PLAYBOY. It is neither SF nor fantasy and its place in a magazine like SCIENCE FANTASY is highly debatable. A Blochish murder story but memorable and entertaining.

Patricia Hoknell, another new writer, has "Prisoner" which is below average. Vaguely similar to some other story I've read.

Best of the lot is "In Reason's Ear" by Pippin Graham. Beautiful visualisation of scene, a tremendous idea and exceedingly well-written. Among the best tales of the year.

Thom Keyes's "Xenophilia" is another of his tongue-in-cheek tales. Amusing, but maybe what some people would call sick.

Personally, I prefer the short length for stories, so this issue, with four stories on the 'very good' level and a couple more just below it, was near perfect. But story-ratings tend to bear out the fact that the longer the story, the more popular it is likely to be. So.....?

Graham Hall

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SCOTCON

Six people have replied to the item in VECTOR 32. Brian Aldiss has agreed to attend as Guest of Honour, but to justify Brian's attendance, the response will have to be much bigger!

Doctor Clarke might be able to arrange accomodation at licensed premises where meals can be had and a film projector will be available. The likely film - METROPOLIS.

SCOTCON is the opportunity for Scots SF readers to congregate, see and listen to an author with a world-wide reputation, watch an otherwise unavailable classic SF film and generally have a good time.

My address, again, is: 42 Garry Drive, Paisley, Renfrewshire.

Donald Malcolm

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WANTED URGENTLY - IF December 1964 to date. Also NEXUS 1 and LINK 2 & 3. Michael Houghton, 76 Fox Lane, Leyland, Lancs.

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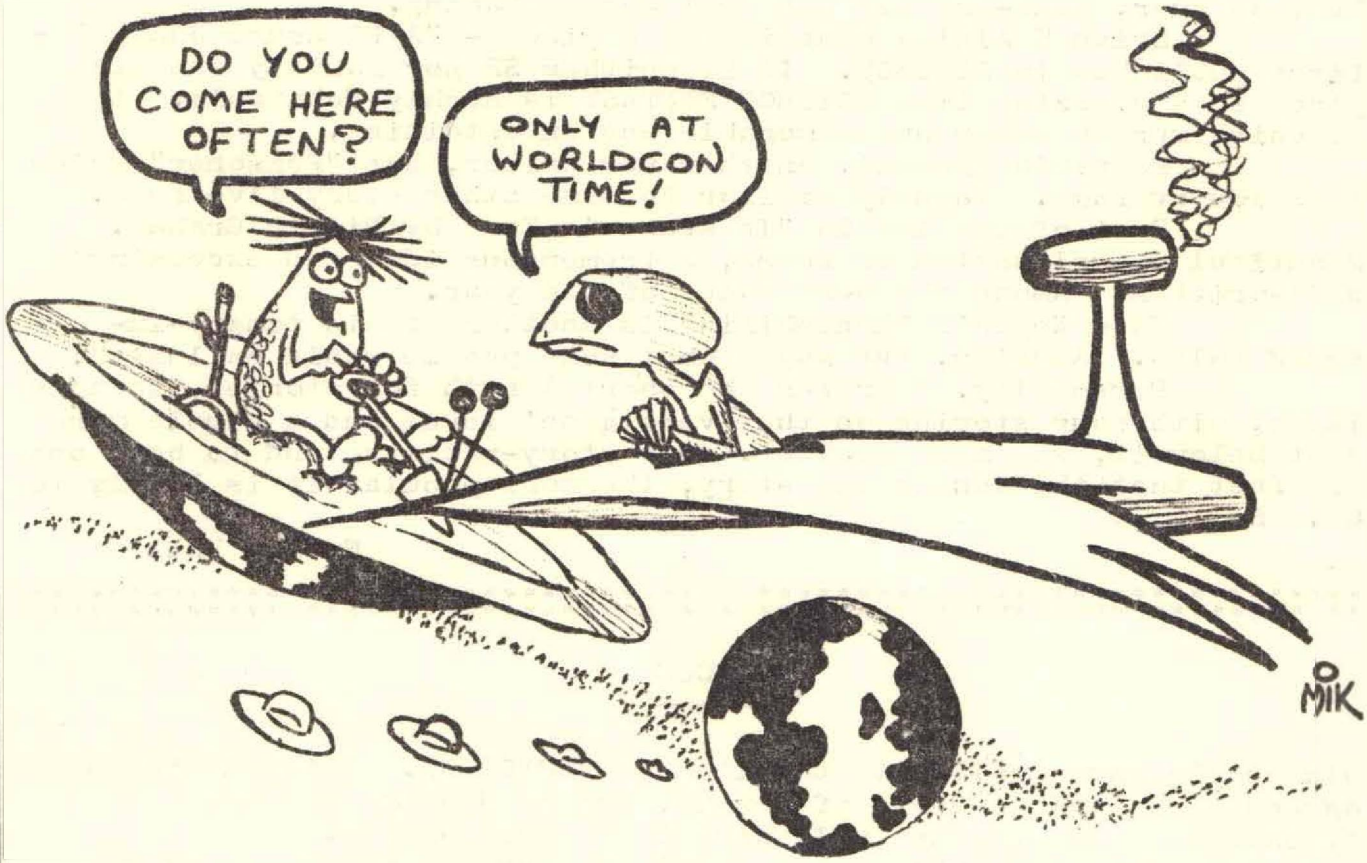
Copies are still available of BSFA checklists of GALAXY (US editions 1950 to 1958) and NEBULA (complete). Price for each is 1/6 per copy (including postage) from the Treasurer, Charles Winstone, 71 George Road, Erdington, Birmingham 23.



23rd WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

GUEST OF HONOUR: BRIAN W ALDISS

The 23rd World Science Fiction Convention will be held at the Mount Royal Hotel, Marble Arch, London W 1 from August 27th to 30th, 1965.

Memberships are 15/- or $2 for non-attending members, and 21/- or $3 for attendees.

Please send all money to the Treasurer, Mr J A Groves, 29 Lathom Road, East Ham, London E 6, making cheques payable to "23rd World SF Convention".

All enquiries to be sent to Miss E A Parker, 43 William Dunbar House, Albert Road, London NW 6.

In VECTOR 32, I said that I would try and tell you something about the various solutions to the 'single copy order' problem which is at present one of the book trade's biggest nightmares. But before I do so I'll mention another instance of the difficulty I described in the beginning of the last article. I mentioned John Brunner's THE WHOLE MAN, published by Ballantine in the States as a paperback, and under the title TELEPATHIST published by Faber & Faber in the UK, and tried to explain why it was not possible for the paperback edition to be imported and sold in the UK. Now a similar situation exists in respect of Professor J R R Tolkein's THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING. Don Wollheim told me some time back that Ace would print a paperback edition of this, and also informed me that Ace did not secure the British and Canadian rights, hence the book could not be exported from America to either Britain or Canada. Ron Bennett mentioned the publication in SKYRACK - and I've had a number of requests for copies in consequence. Obviously, I shall not be able to supply, and although it is possible that by nefarious means some copies will come into the country, any attempt by anyone to sell, or offer for sale, copies of the paperback in this country will, if it comes to the attention of George Allen & Unwin Ltd., bring big guns to bear on the offender. In addition, it could quite well prejudice the relationship between G A & U and Ace Books Inc., as of course the latter would be held responsible for breaking the agreement - even if they did so unwittingly through the act of a third party.

Right, now on to the 'single copy order' question. First, a little background. There is in existence a thing called the 'Net

Book Agreement' which basically is a 'restrictive practice' agreement between individual publishers and booksellers. This lays down the terms on which books will be supplied to retailers, and on which booksellers can supply them to the public. I do not intend to discuss the pros and cons of this at this time, but I'll simply state that at the hearing of the Restrictive Practices Court in 1962 it was agreed that Net Book Agreement was in the public interest. The introduction of the later legislation (The Resale Prices Act which supercedes the 1956 Restrictive Practices Act) means that the whole affair must be rehashed, re-argued and, it is sincerely hoped by the trade, re-agreed.

Among other things, the defence of the Net Book Agreement was based on the fact of service to the public. Under the heading of service come two things that matter here - one, that a bookseller carries in stock a large quantity of slow-moving material in addition to the 'best-sellers' which turn-over rapidly. Often, allowing cost of storage, loss through damage and deterioration and similar things, this can be proved to be done at a loss. Two - that a bookseller is expected to obtain for a customer any book which the customers want and which the bookseller does not carry in stock. Now, this is the thing that is really costly - it calls for an array of quite expensive reference books, and considerable time and labour on research - all of which have to be borne as general overheads. The order for an odd copy of a single book can often run the bookseller into considerable expense before the order leaves his shop... especially when, as happens only too often, the customer has only the vaguest notion of the book he or she wants. I think the bookshop is the only one which constantly resounds to a conversation like this:-

"Good morning, madam, can I help you?"

"Oh, yes, please. I'm looking for a book."

"Something for yourself, madam? Or for a gift?"

"Well, no, actually it's for my mother."

"I see. What type of book does she like, or did you want a special title?"

"Well, she wants a book she read before. She thought she would like to read it again."

"If you'd tell me the title, I will see if we have it in stock."

"Oh, I'm afraid she's forgotten the title. She got it from the library, you see."

"Do you know the author, perhaps?"

"No, I'm afraid not. It was a green colour, she says, and it was about two people who....."

I'll leave the rest to your fervid imaginations. Things aren't always this bad, often the customer can tell you the author and the title and sometimes the publisher. Again, often sufficient clues exist to let you make a reasonable guess - "the latest book

by James Bond" probably means either THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN by Ian Fleming or the Pan paperback of his ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE. However, things can also be very misleading. A request for Mr Seaman's book about China (intended for a gift) after some searching for a 'Seaman' in the catalogue doesn't reveal anything that could be interpreted to be connected, geographically, culturally or politically with China, calls for a reference back to the customer, and one then learns "Oh, not that China - she meant the tea-cup sort". So by a brilliant bit of intuition the chap who was actually faced with this problem came up with MEDIEVAL ENGLISH POTTERY by Elizabeth Zeeman, MA. So simple.... It just happens that this title is published by the Hutchison Group, and no-one would have any difficulty in obtaining it, for the simple reason that almost every bookseller stocks some of the publications of this group of publishers, even if it be only the Arrow paperbacks, and hence will probably have an account with Hutchinsons, and be able to add this single copy of a title he might normally stock to one of his usual orders, or alternatively check his stock for Hutchinson titles on which he was low, and thus build up an order.

However, let us assume that this order for an odd book is one from a publisher with whom the bookseller normally has no account. We'll also assume that the publisher is not one of those who have joined one of the groups of publishers who are trying to find an economical answer to the 'single copy order' question. The bookseller has three choices; if he is in a reasonably large town he probably has an agreement with one or more other booksellers in that town who handle and stock titles he doesn't normally carry, and may be able to get it either from or through one of them. He can order it from one of the wholesale services. Or he can ask the publisher to supply it on a pro-forma invoice; this means the publisher will send an invoice showing the trade price and carriage costs, etc., the bookseller will return this with a cheque to cover the amount, and the publisher will then forward the book. This latter is the quickest and best way, in many cases, but it does have snags. I'll come to them shortly.

The first choice depends on many things, of course. It calls for all the booksellers in the town to be reasonably co-operative and to be prepared to split their profits on some items (this is always preferable to turning away business, in my opinion, but others can argue that if the customer can't get it at the first shop, he'll try the second - and if that is yours and you are the outfit with the contact to that publisher, well, you get all the profit for yourself), and also for those bookshops to have a fair spread over the range of published material. It can be worked, but not always. The second choice has one big snag - in my own experience is that once you get off the beaten track of titles like THE

CARPET-BAGGERS, THE SUPER-DUPER READY-RECKONER, SO&SO'S DICTIONARY, delay in delivery can be extra-ordinary. In January of this year I ordered, through one of the much vaunted services, some dozen hard-covers (four titles) and some sixty paperbacks (14 titles) issued by a publisher with who I have no account. I have received part of that order during March and April (including six copies of one wrong title), and I have been advised that two titles which were in print as late as the publisher's March list are now out of print. I still have no idea of the position on some two dozen items. One title of which I'd ordered 18 copies came in one little packet of two books, followed by another six, followed by the six wrong titles, followed by four; this spread over March and April. On another service I received a number of copies which were technically 'new', but in such a condition of 'shelf-soiledness' that I'd have had a devil of a job convincing my customers of this. Of course, sometimes the service is excellent - but if one called it 50-50, that would be fair, in my personal experience.

So we go back to the third choice, and the pro-forma invoice. Let us see - book the customer requires is a 12/6 paper-back. You can expect a maximum gross profit on that of 25%, or 3/2. You are going to pay 3d or 4d on your order to the publisher, and 4d postage on the letter covering your return of the pro-forma invoice. If you - wisely - send a postal order, you'll pay 3d poundage on it. If you unwisely send a cheque, you can write-off at least a shilling for stamp duty and bank charges. The publisher is certainly going to charge you postage on the book, which will be a minimum of 1/- (a great many publisher's can't post anything at less than one shilling) and possibly 1/6. You may or may not have to drop the customer a card advising him the book has arrived, which will cost you 3d postage. If we take the minimum figures all the way along, we have an expenditure of at least 1/10d, which leaves a profit of 1/4d - out of which you've also got to find the obvious costs of a couple of envelopes, an order form, and a certain amount of time, and the less obvious overheads. At the other extreme you will have expended 3/5d which makes you 3d out of pocket before you start to count those overheads, obvious or not.

But it is not all so simple. Let us suppose that you have an account with the publisher from whom you want that 12/6 paperback and you need it fairly urgently for a customer. Unfortunately, the customer came in just after you'd given the publisher's representative a big order, so obviously you don't wish to order a batch of books. Well, let us telephone the rep....oh, just a minute, he lives in London, doesn't he....that is going to cost us about three bob, so bang goes the profit in one fell swoop, and he won't be back there for a couple of days, will he? Didn't he say he was staying the night in Norwich? And then going down to Bury? And so on. Oh, well, it will have to be a single copy order, can't be helped. But then a thoughtful assistant chips in - "There was a notice of an alteration in terms last week, I think" - and he (or she) goes on to suggest that this could be rather penalising. So the notice is looked up. It reads something like this - "Henceforth postage charges will be made on all orders under invoice value of £3. An additional handling charge of 2/- will be made on all orders

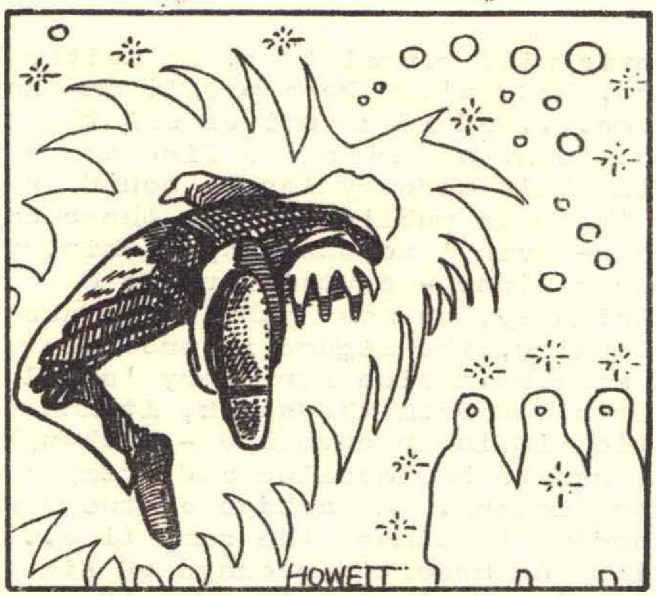
of less than £1 invoice value."

A little mental arithmetic will reveal that, no matter how the bookseller goes about this one, he won't make a profit on that item. He'll be lucky to break even....and if he writes off the working time that everyone has now spent on trying to find a solution to the problem, he'll find he's already lost a pound or so.

At the same time, pity the poor publisher. In these days of high prices, complicated 'labour-saving' accountancy machinery and what not, it can cost - in paper alone - anything up to a shilling for a single invoice! Actually, as most publishers are fairly economical on this sort of thing, the figure is probably around 2d to 4d. But there is a single invoice for every 'single copy' order; the book has to be obtained from the stock, it has to be wrapped (and you can't just stick it in an envelope - although you can use a mailing bag) and it has to be labelled and stamped - and it all takes material, time and labour. A package of two dozen copies of the same book can be handled in almost the same time.... maybe a few seconds longer, is all. An assorted package of six each of four titles will take only a couple of minutes longer, if the stock is reasonably well organised. A couple of gross will only take - again - a few more minutes! So the single copy order is a problem all the time; and yet it makes up a large proportion of the work in the book trade!

Someone, somewhere, has a bright idea - "Why not let the bookseller write the invoice? That will save us time!" That is one of the solutions to the problem. A number of publishers - a wide variety of publishers, in fact - have joined into a 'singly copy' co-operative. Actually, this establishment handles more than single copies - it handles all small account/small quantity orders. Some time back, in an effort to get more system into book-ordering, accounting and so forth, some publishers produced an order form (which the bookseller has to pay for) which is several sheets, with carbons. The bookseller enters the titles he requires and certain other information (including completing labels addressed to himself), one set of forms for each publisher, and mails the lot to a clearing house...and that can be a bit expensive in postage, as the forms are not exactly light when you have a batch of them...the clearing house used to send them off to the publishers, who would complete prices, discounts, account numbers and so forth, and return one copy with the books, using another part of a copy as a label, as an advice note, and so forth.

Now, for the publishers taking advantage of the small orders scheme, the co-operative holds stocks of all popular titles, new titles, and so forth - and can speedily obtain others - and so gets these forms direct, and clears the books quickly - often by return post, it seems. For the bookseller there is another advantage in that he gets the normal trade terms on all such orders instead of paying special penalties for doing what the trade expects him to do - accept all orders - and in addition he gets a combined statement and so needs to pay with only one cheque, instead of getting a variety of statements and making out anything up to three or four dozen cheques. Oh, there are snags, but it is one of the answers that have been evolved which seems to work satisfactorily.



Before I go on to a few news-notes, let me re-iterate that the foregoing is not to be taken as 'specific'; it is a generalisation of the situation.

Now for the news-notes.... STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND will be out from Four Square before this appears in VECTOR, and Four Square are following this with Heinlein's other 'debatable' book, GLORY ROAD.... a new three part Keith Laumer serial, featuring Brion Bayard, started in the April FANTASTIC...whilst a two part Poul Anderson novel, CORRIDORS OF TIME, started in AMAZING for May...from Michael Joseph we learn that the much delayed title THE WEB by John Wyndham is now expected early in 1966...the 'Tarzan Swings Again' series by Barton Werper from Gold Star have been discontinued, a settlement having been made out of court....I'm told that Burroughs Inc. collected enough to discourage any other 'character' pirates ...sighs of relief from Donald Duck, Sherlock Holmes and a multitude of others...another new Keith Laumer book...A PLAGUE OF DEMONS from Berkley, F1086, 157pp, 50¢, is an expanded version of "The Hounds of Hell" from IF Nov-Dec '64....three more Doc Savage reprints are the Bantam contribution to the field...these will be issued by Corgi/ Transworld in June...latest Andre Norton title is THREE AGAINST THE WITCH WORLD, from Ace...the book on magic, etc., to come from Canaveral Press is now announced as SPIRITS, STARS AND SPELLS by L Sprague de Camp and Catherine C de Camp...the other scheduled Canaveral Press title is now in almost final manuscript form, over 100,000 words...EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: MASTER OF ADVENTURE by Richard A Lupoff will include some previously unpublished ERB work, and artwork...it will be in a larger format than the previous Canaveral Press items, and the probable price will be $7.50....other new American pbs...EXILES OF TIME by Nelson Bond from PB Lib, 159pp at 50¢...MORTALS AND MONSTERS by Lester del Rey from Ballantine, 188pp at 50¢ (twelve yarns from the magazines between 1951 and 1963... PLANETS FOR SALE by A E van Vogt & E Mayne Hull from 'The Book Co of America', 171pp, 50¢, which are the 'Artur Blord' stories - previous publication in magazine and book form is not acknowledged in this edition...Pyramid have issued a pb version, written by Paul Fairman, of one of 'A Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea' scripts, CITY UNDER THE SEA...Nelson and the 'Seaview' fight a strange and deadly invader, it says here....and that will be enough for now, I think... happy reading.....KFS.

/And don't forget the address of Ken's bookshop - Fantast (Medway) Ltd., 75 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs._/

THE *VISUAL* SIDE OF THINGS

by

VIC HALLETT

The most exciting production news for some time is that 20th Century Fox are making a large scale Cinemascope and colour SF film called FANTASTIC VOYAGE. It is being directed by Richard Fleischer (who directed 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA a few years ago) and stars Stephen Boyd, Edmund O'Brien, Arthur Kennedy and Donald Pleasence.

It is the story of a time when men and machines can be reduced to microscopic size. A submarine and its crew are sent into a man's bloodstream by being injected into the ear in order to perform a brain operation. The submarine is unfortunately sent off course and the voyage of the title is through the body, trying to find its way out, culminating in a microscopic battle royal.

Britain, meanwhile, is making DR WHO AND THE DALEKS taken from the first BBC serial and starring Peter Cushing as the intrepid doctor, co-starring Roy Castle and Jennie Linden with, of course, our metal friends in attendance.

American International has postponed its production of WHEN THE SLEEPER AWAKES so that Vincent Price, who was to star, can make something called DR GOLDFOOT AND THE SEX MACHINE. I mention the latter as it could well be SF, but then, with a title like that it could be anything!

Currently on release is FAIL SAFE starring Henry Fonda, Dan O'Herlihy and Walter Mattau. This takes the same theme as DR STRANGELOVE but plays it as a completely straight drama.

THE SATAN BUG is one of a crop of spy films which have a science fictional slant in the same manner as the James Bond films and an American TV series called THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. from which the film TO TRAP A SPY has been taken.

I don't know if it will get a wide release or not, but there is a Russian SF film available to cinemas here called COSMONAUTS ON VENUS. Reports suggest that whilst the acting leaves something to be desired, the special effects are very well done.

Also being distributed by the same company is TERROR IS A MAN starring Francis Lederer. It takes the ISLAND OF DR MOREAU theme, of a scientist conducting experiments to turn animals into men.

A Czechoslovakian film, IKARIA X.B.I., was shown as part of a Czech festival in London recently. This won the Grand Prix at the Trieste SF Festival two years ago and has been described as truly adult in theme and execution. It is the sort of film that may only be shown in London but could have a release at least in one of the larger cities.

Vic Hallett

At Easter, over seventy enthusiasts gathered under the roof of the Midland Hotel, Birmingham for the annual convention of the BSFA. Here is a brief report of what went on....

BrumCon² Report

by Roy Kay

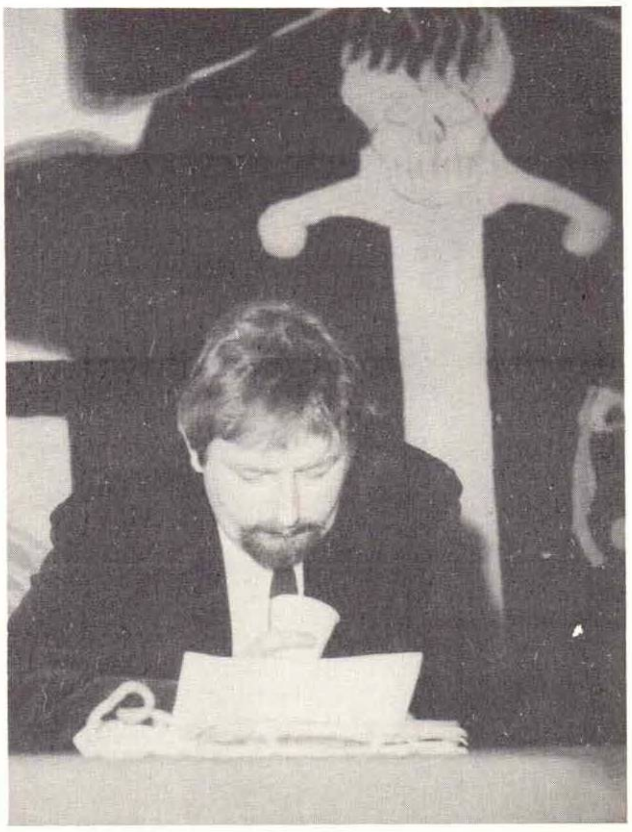
The Birmingham Convention was a success. A small convention, or at least small compared with the record attendances of recent years, yet an extremely enjoyable one. Everyone seemed to pull together to help make things go with a swing. This was particularly evident in one never-to-be-forgotten auction session, where the audience was confronted with the spectacle of Brian Aldiss, Mike Moorcock, Harry Harrison and Ted Tubb combining efforts acting the parts of magnificent huckster auctioneers.

There are two sides to any convention: the programme stretches through the mornings, afternoons and evenings, while at night and through to the early hours of the morning the convention becomes a social one where fans gather to drink, talk and generally enjoy themselves. It is difficult for someone who has never attended a convention to appreciate the very special convention 'atmosphere'.

The first day, Friday the 16th, was a little slow and confusing, but eventually everything was sorted out due mainly to people like Ken Cheslin, the Convention Chairman, and Birmingham Group and BSFA Committee members Charles Winstone and Rog Peyton. The traditional badges and printed convention pencils were issued, plus copies of the Convention Programme which had been excellently illustrated and produced by Mike Higgs. At just passed 8pm the convention was officially declared open. Shortly afterwards the first of the Con films was shown.

This was the well-known FORBIDDEN PLANET, an entertaining film which went down well in spite of the difficulties in presenting this colour Cinemascope film with somewhat restricting equipment. The rest of the evening was free and fans set about the enjoyable business of renewing old acquaintances and making new ones.

The main item on Saturday morning's programme was the talk given by Mr G H Doherty. Initially dealing with the basic difference between fantasy and science fiction, Mr Doherty went on to describe some of the methods and theories of modern psychologists, relating these to standard SF concepts and ideas. Mr Doherty said that many SF and fantasy themes had their roots in mankind's subconscious hopes and fears. He ended his interesting talk by picking out several well-known stories, including Harry Harrison's



DEATHWORLD, and 'analysing' them from a psychologist's viewpoint.

That afternoon two full-length films were shown, CONQUEST OF SPACE and WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, the famous classic of SF filmdom. These were both enjoyable films although the rather long, unbroken show tended to blunt one's sense of wonder a little.

Later in the evening one of the highspots of the convention took place. This was, to quote the official programme, "The Mad Raving Saturday Night Shindig", plus another long-standing tradition - the Fancy Dress. Few people actually arrived in fancy dress; those that did were appreciated. The ALIEN Group from Manchester provided the usual ghoulish array of monsters, Beryl Henley looked fabulous in a 'Berlington Bertie' type tramp costume, Archie Mercer was mysterious, hiding his identity behind a hood and cloak surveying the scene through a pair of binoculars (the reason for this is still obscure!).

The following morning one of the more serious items on the agenda took place. This was the Annual General Meeting of the BSFA. This turned out to be a long, two hour meeting which at times tended to wander from subject to subject a little erratically. But, as the AGM is the only chance for BSFA members to confront their committee, this overflow of conflicting ideas was perhaps understandable.

At the end of the meeting the Doc Weir Award result was announced and this year the award went to Terry Jeeves. Terry is well-known in BSFA circles both for his artwork and the enthusiastic help he has given the Association in the past.

After lunch it was the turn of the convention Guest of Honour to speak. Harry Harrison, who is as entertaining and forthright in person as he is in his writing, talked on the subject of "SF Confidential". To the uninvited accompaniment of a Salvation Army playing in the street below, Harry gave an enthusiastic audience an hilarious and illuminating 'expose' of the private and professional lives of the American SF fraternity. Harry is a brilliant speaker and his "SF Confidential" was a unique experience.

Following on the heels of this was the Pro Panel - Brian Aldiss, Tom Boardman, Harry Harrison, Ted Tubb, Mike Moorcock and James White answered a number of interesting questions from the floor on writers and writing.

The official part of the BrumCon ended on a rousing note with the Auction. The four auctioneers proved themselves excellent salesmen and made the process of parting with one's money for items of doubtful value, almost a pleasure.

This then was the end of the official BrumCon programme, but not the end of the convention until very much later and until the final farewells on Easter Monday morning.

Roy Kay

Photo Guide. Page 29 - top photo (l. to r.) Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison and James White. Bottom left - Tom Boardman. Bottom right - Mike Moorcock.
Page 30 - top - part of the audience showing Dave Busby (left), Ted Tubb (centre, with bottle), Doreen Parker (partly hidden behind Ted Tubb) and Jim Groves (behind Doreen Parker). Bottom photo shows the ALien group entrants in the Fancy Dress - (l. to r.) Bill Burns, Peter Day, Charles Partington, Harry Nadler.

BOOKS

Reviews and News

SHIELD by Poul Anderson

Published by DOBSON at 15/-. 154 pages

Poul Anderson is one of the most popular writers of SF practising with any regularity today. I've often wondered why he's so highly regarded.

This novel, first serialised in FANTASTIC, is a strong example of a good skeleton in a bland, featureless skin.

It concerns one Peter Koskinen, who has just returned from an expedition to Mars and an experience of communication with the Martians. The main physical result of this rapport - which is what I think was involved, though details are rather vague - is a kind of force field which is impenetrable to everything except electro-magnetic radiation. Light and the like. It is built in the form of a portable pack. Soon after returning to Earth, American Military Security cottons onto the fact that Koskinen had this device, based on a new concept in physics, and they take him into protective custody. It's not protective enough, though. Chinese agents are also on his tail and they force Koskinen and his custodians into the stratosphere before they get a chance to reach Headquarters. Koskinen manages to switch on his shield and jumps out of the plane.

The first third of the book is very good indeed. Anderson goes into some of the possibilities of the shield - and its limitations. But then it degenerates into another of those undistinguished 'revolt against social repression in the near (in this case post WWIII) future' SF stories with great gobs of philosophical discussion about government to fill out the wordage.

My feeling is that it was originally a novelette dealing with the shield and nothing else. The scenes concerning the shielded man falling many miles to earth and the laser beam used as a way to pursuade Koskinen to turn the thing off should have been climactic ones, not introductory tit-bits.

George Locke

THE HAUNTED STARS by Edmond Hamilton
Published by HERBERT JENKINS at 12/6. 168 pages

There is a gentle irony in the fact that Edmond Hamilton has been writing SF since before I was born and here I am, doing a review. I've been an admirer of his work for many years and I've re-read with pleasure such stories as THE STAR KINGS. If I'm making as good a job of writing when I've been at it for thirty-five years, I'll be satisfied.

THE HAUNTED STARS is lucidly written in a style tailored to the type of story, a point that many of our emerging writers would do well to note. In fact, all of us should note that, while, basically, every writer's style remains constant, different types of story require different approaches. Edmond Hamilton, as befits a writer of long and varied experience, has learned an essential lesson: there is no substitute for plain English. Obscure terminology, passages of introspection that are a secret between the writer and himself, in fact, all the trappings that are foisted off on readers under the label 'experiment', are missing from this story.

The story uses the discovery of alien machines on the Moon as a springboard to a smooth narrative. There is nothing very new in the tale of Earth being seeded from the stars and of men returning to the planet of origin. But unoriginality is a criticism that can be levelled at much in current science fiction and might possibly be the reason for the rash of experimental spots that has broken out. As with many of the first generation of writers still in the field, Hamilton shows his experience and craftsmanship by his fresh handling of an old theme. If there is such a thing as a sense of wonder, then it will be found in some of the passages of this book.

I was amused at an early piece of dialogue which runs: 'Everything that happens, they (the Russians) yell warmonger at us. Berlin, and then Suez...' The 'warmongers' at Suez in 1956 were Britain and France - and Israel could be included - and American intervention then is directly respensible for Middle East unrest today. America wasted no time in protecting her interests in Panama. Just as Britain was doing in Suez.

This, as profound thinkers will perceive, detracts not a noodle from Edmond Hamilton's enjoyable book.

Donald Malcolm

TUNNEL IN THE SKY by Robert A Heinlein
Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/-. 271 pages

The plot of this story when reduced to basics, proves to be very similar to LORD OF THE FLIES, in which a group of youngsters are marooned in an untamed environment. There are differences, as all of Heinlein's books differ from their 'stock plot' origins. Here, the youngsters are highly trained and prepared for a period in

the wilds, as the final examinations of their 'Solo Survival Tests'.

It is a hard world that Heinlein postulates, one in which the old problem of over-population has driven mankind to pioneer outwards to the stars. There is none of the sordidness of 'Low level' as in Anderson's grimly overpopulated Earth - indeed Heinlein's world is still quite secure in its creative comforts. But the pioneers in this world are realists, just as Heinlein is a realist, and both author and his creations pull no punches.

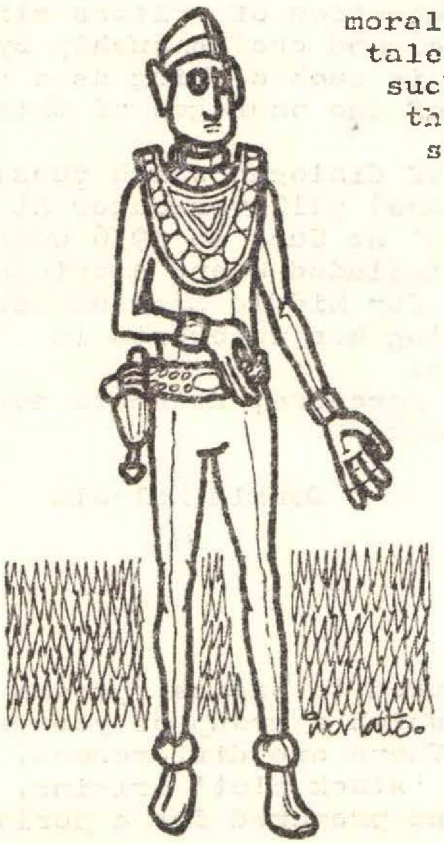
Way back in 1957, ASTOUNDING reviewed this book and pointed out that the final third was a disapp
reviewer read the volume with trepidation, anticipating Heinlein's fall from grace with each page turned. He needn't have worried. There is no weak ending - the book is one glorious whole, one of the strongest and best of all Heinlein's plots and certainly the best of the 'juvenile series'.

Pete Weston

NO FUTURE IN IT by John Brunner

Published by PANTHER at 3/6. 184 pages

John Brunner is one of the most intelligent and creative of the SF authors writing today, his twelve stories in this collection being the most impressive I have read for some time. They vary in mood from the fantasy of the title story to the social realism of "The Iron Jackass" and "Stimulus".



Mr Brunner often contrives to point a moral as well as tell a story, and some of these tales have an exemplary lesson to them. But such is the power of the author's story-telling that the message never distracts us from the suspense and excitement of the narrative.

There is superb humour in such stories as "Out of Order" and "Report on the Nature of the Lunar Surface", pathos in "Protect me from my Friends" and "Elected Silence" and suspense and ingenuity in "Puzzle for Spacemen".

My own favourite in this collection is "Fair". It concerns a stupendous fairground of the near-future into which people flock by the million to escape from the awareness of the ever-present threat of atomic war. The fair-ground, one of many that have superceded other forms of mass entertainment, is a scene of lust and violence, of herded, sweating bodies and blatant sex. And yet, like stories in this volume, the fair has a message for those who care to listen, about the brotherhood of Man.

By all means buy this book if

you have not already done so. It is science fiction in the short story form at its wonderful best.

W T Webb

TRADER TO THE STARS by Poul Anderson

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/-. 174 pages

TRADER TO THE STARS consists of three novelettes, all of which originally appeared in ASTOUNDING/ANALOG during the last few years. Nicholas van Rijn is the 'Trader' of the title and is an entrepreneur of the capitalist dominated stellar empire that Anderson postulates for the future.

Van Rijn is a somewhat more intellectual version of Giles Habbibula of LEGION OF SPACE fame, though these stories are far and away better than Williamson's series.

Each story contains a problem related to the social sciences, rather as many of Clement's stories contain a problem in the physical sciences, and Anderson supplies clues to the reader before the fictional solution is propounded by van Rijn.

The book is very readable and is recommended to those who were not regular readers of ASTOUNDING/ANALOG at the time these stories first appeared. For collectors, though, I would recommend waiting for the paperback version. Very little SF is worth a price of more than a penny a page and I would not rate TRADER TO THE STARS in that select group.

Ian McAulay

THE THIRST QUENCHERS by Rick Raphael

Published by GOLLANCZ at 15/-. 169 pages

This volume comprises four stories - three from ANALOG and one (as far as I know) original. Loosely set in roughly the same future though at different periods, all have a reasonably slick writing style but the dialogue is too frequently juvenile in an over-compensated attempt at lighthearted rebound from the gravity of the story line.

The first two stories, "The Thirst Quenchers" and "Guttersnipe", are both 'problem' stories involving water conservation as a life or deathpublic utility in a future America.

"The Thirst Quenchers" has an earthquake which cracks a reservoir and the resultant water loss must be stopped by the two young engineers. Their solution is threatened by an atomic powered pump which threatens to go 'critical' and explode.

"Guttersnipe" again has atomic hazard - caused when illegal well-drilling fractures a radiation effluent dump and allows it to leak into a water main and thus kill off hundreds of citizens. Again, two (different) young engineers locate the fault, but this time the story plods steadily along a logical fault-to-remedy path without any side tracks.

Both are interesting and reasonably entertaining stories.

"The Mail Man Cometh" has (once more) two young mail

sorters based on a deep-space mail station where mail is delivered in robot carriers. Overwork is compounded by illness and a young, female postal inspector. Their problems are finally solved, but not only is their dialogue juvenile, their actions are often equally so. Strictly a pot-boiler.

"Odd Man In", which forms the final quarter of the book, seems very much like a prozine reject thrown in to fill out the volume. By legal oversight, an 80 year-old farmer has continued to farm his cattle ranch smack in the middle of a national park. He refuses to sell out to the Government and barricades his homestead against attack. In a typical Simak back-to-nature set-up the good old way of life is contrasted to the bad modern one, and a compromise with honour is reached.

Raphael seems far better at describing situations than in constructing plots or handling dialogue. Because of this, the first half of the book is far better than the second. Had the latter featured one of the 'Thruway Police' yarns, the volume would have been greatly improved. However, for Raphael fans, this is still good value at the price.

Terry Jeeves

THE OLD DIE RICH by H L Gold

Published by DOBSON at 18/-. 250 pages

The stories in this book are the kind that would have appeared in the pulp magazines in the bad old days and so I'm of the opinion that this book gives poor value for money.

But these stories, poor as they are, have an attraction in that each is concluded with an excerpt from the working notes of the author, telling what the inspiration was, how he decided upon the theme, and how he developed it.

This is, as the cover says, a how-to-do-it book for would-be SF writers - the notes could have done with being longer, though.

The title story, "Trouble With Water", "Love in the Dark", "The Man With English" are all fairly well-known having being reprinted in other collections at various times but they are, like the other stories, merely pulpish - cardboard characters, strained dialogue, forced pace, poor visualisation, too much concern with the twist ending etc., etc., etc.

Graham Hall

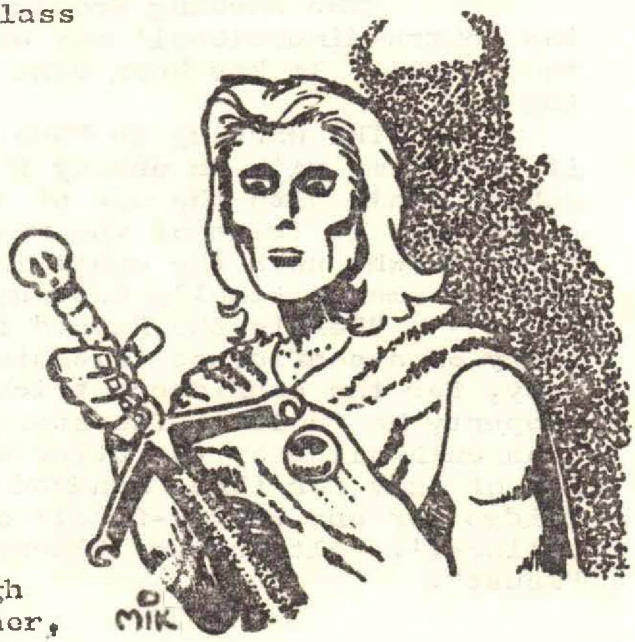
STORMBRINGER by Michael Moorcock

Published by HERBERT JENKINS at 12/6. 184 pages

This is the second collection of the 'Elric' stories which originally appeared in SCIENCE FANTASY, the first collection being THE STEALER OF SOULS. Here, Moorcock has taken four stories and blended them together to form this novel.

Set in a time before the History of Mankind when sorcery is a commonplace thing, Moorcock uses the unlimited possibilities

which this offers to produce a first-class adventure story which fairly blasts along.



The main character could be said to be Elric, the albino prince of Melnibone, although one might say that it is Elric's two-handed broadsword, Stormbringer. This magical sword is an evil weapon that sucks the souls from its victims and transplants their energy into Elric, who depends on his sword to give him the strength that he is short of due to his deficient blood.

At the very start of the book, Elric's wife, Zorazinia, is abducted by evil beings and then, throughout the book, Elric goes through various adventures on his search for her, until he finds her, and the final battle between Good and Evil is fought.

Certainly one of the best 'sword and sorcery' books I've read and I strongly recommend it to anyone who enjoys this type of tale.

This is an excellent start to the Herbert Jenkins Fantasy series - I eagerly await the titles to follow.

Mike Higgs

NEW WRITINGS IN SF 4 edited by John Carnell

Published by DOBSON at 16/-. 178 pages

The series of NEW WRITINGS IN SF are, at last, beginning to live up to the original claim as the most radical change in SF short story writing. This collection of seven stories are most definitely the best I have read for some time.

"High Eight" by David Stringer is an ominously hair-raising story of intelligent electricity. It is, at the start, reminiscent of Wells' "Lord of the Dynamos", but "High Eight" is a more interesting story that builds up very gradually to a frenzied climax.- a climax that.unfortunately never quite comes off for the ending is left to the reader's own imagination.

Isaac Asimov's "Star Light" is a reprint from SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. A super-short tale of crime and punishment.

"Hunger Over Sweet Waters" by Colin Kapp is the longest story in the book. Multi-coloured floating rocks, unrequited love, shipwrecked scientists - all go together to make a very interesting story of marine 'mining' on an alien planet.

"Country of the Strong" by Dennis Etchison is an all too believable story of the post-atomic war reaction to mutants. Although a little depressing, it captures the readers attention.

"The Parking Problem" by Dan Morgan is a wry repetition of the 'extra-dimensional' way of coping with the parking problem of the future. It has been done before, but not in such an entertaining way.

The warning in "Sub Lim" by Keith Roberts is so clear that it leaves me with an uneasy feeling in my mind. This story of film-making deals with the use of subliminal images to sell motion pictures. It tells of the rise and fall of a second-rate film director who uses the subliminal images on television films and of how the images finally destroy him.

"Bernie the Faust" by William Tenn is, on the surface, the story of a confidence trickster who discovers an easy 'mark'. Too easy, for the confidence trickster ends up by buying all the property he 'sold'. The story starts off a little slowly but I was soon enthralled by the utter absurdity of the transactions. 'The Sea of Azov for three hundred and eighty dollars!', 'The Golden Gate Bridge for one twenty-five!' or 'The Earth for thirty seven hundred dollars!'. Altogether, "Bernie the Faust" is a very nice satire on "Faust".

Charles Winstone

SPACE BORN by Lan Wright

Published by HERBERT JENKINS at 12/6. 167pp

This novel, having survived serialisation in the old NEW WORLDS as DAWN'S LEFT HAND, and Stateside paperback publication as EXILE FROM XANADU, now appears for the first time in this country in book form.

I call this sort of book a 'borderline' novel. Everything about it just scrapes home as satisfactory, but leaves no margin for acceptance as a success. The plot is marginally SF: an extended account of a mysterious murder given a galactic backdrop and science fictional trimmings. The writing is acceptable, but trips over into melodrama at the slightest bump of action. And the originality of the piece cannot be judged by count of ideas, but by waiting for the periodic plot-twists.

Very briefly, the plot is laid like this: Regan, protagonist central and thinker extraordinary, is involved in a spaceship accident that kills his cabin-mate, one Manuel Cabrera. He escapes with a badly-burned body, whose former beauty plus a little more is replaced by the surgeons of an alien race, that happens to inhabit a handily-near star system. On regaining consciousness, Regan finds he is mistaken for the dead man. Needless to say, the spaceship 'accident' was no such thing, and Regan is now in an unenviable position. After a flaccid episode of intrigue, arranged by his envious 'cousins', Regan sets off to lay his forerunner's murderer. There's a Big Surprise when Regan, and the reader, find out who the murderer is; then it's back to Earth and the loving arms of his 'sister'. End of novel.

I find this sort of book very unsatisfactory to read. It reduces SF to the level of the pop mainstream novel. There's nothing in this book that hasn't been encountered a dozen times

before; it's just a restir of the old ever-boiling plot-pot. Because of this, more than for any other reason, this book is a nothing. It's competent, and it's literate, but it's still a nothing.

Chris Priest

THEY SHALL HAVE STARS by James Blish
Published by FABER at 18/-. 177 pages

A CLASH OF CYMBALS by James Blish
Published by FABER at 18/-. 187 pages

Once again, Blish's famous 'Okie' series hits the bookshops. For the uninitiated, this saga begins with the development in the early 21st century of two major scientific principles; anti-gravity and anti-death drugs. The first book (THEY SHALL HAVE STARS) describes the discovery of the two, and the political and sociological upheavals that went with them. A CLASH OF CYMBALS is the fourth and last book in the series (the middle two being A LIFE FOR THE STARS and EARTHMAN COME HOME). This one deals with the other end of the stick when Galactic culture is running down.

The four books together form an excellent example of the extrapolated type of writing, where the author takes a major change in culture or science and follows it through to its logical conclusion (and never did the word 'conclusion' acquire so much meaning as when it is used to describe A CLASH OF CYMBALS.

Definitely a couple of 'musts'!

Mike Turner

BEST SF STORIES OF JAMES BLISH. Published by FABER at 18/-. 216pp

A collection of seven stories selected by Blish as those being the 'best' according to his own ideas. They've all appeared in collections or anthologies more than once before so I see little point in the collection at all, especially considering that three of these seven appeared in the collection GALACTIC CLUSTER!

The stories are "There Shall Be No Darkness", "Surface Tension", "Testament of Andros", "Common Time", "A Work of Art", "Tomb Tapper" and "The Oath". Every one an excellent story - but you probably know this as the chances are that you've read them all before.

SPECTRUM 4 edited by Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest. Published by GOLLANCZ at 21/-. 308pp

This fourth volume begins with a discussion between Amis, Brian Aldiss and the late C S Lewis which was taped a few months before the latter's death.

An excellent collection of fourteen stories with brilliant items such as Cordwainer Smith's "A Planet Named Shayol" and Hal Clement's "Hot Planet". Marred only by the inclusion of

"The Marching Morons" by Kornbluth, "The Large Ant" by Fast and "Compassion Circuit" by Wyndham. Although all three are good stories, they've appeared numerous times elsewhere.

AMERICAN BOOK RELEASES

ORDEAL IN OTHERWHERE - Andre Norton (Ace 40¢)
WORLD'S BEST SF: 1965 ed by Don Wollheim & Terry Carr (Ace 50¢)
ALPHA YES, TERRA NO - Emil Petaja/BALLAD OF BETA 2 - Samuel R Delaney (Ace 45¢)
DR BLOODTHIRSTY OR HOW WE GOT ALONG AFTER THE BOMB - Philip K Dick (Ace 40¢)
SECOND ATLANTIS - Robert Moore Williams (Ace 40¢)
INSECT WARRIORS - Rex Dean Levie (Ace 40¢)
LOAFERS OF REFUGE - Joseph Green (Ballantine 50¢)
R IS FOR ROCKET - Ray Bradbury (Bantam 50¢)
SECRET OF THE BLACK PLANET - Milton Lesser (Belmont 50¢)
SPACE TUG - Murray Leinster (Belmont 50¢)
SF ADVENTURES IN DIMENSIONS ed by Groff Conklin (Berkeley 50¢)
SF ADVENTURES IN MUTATION ed by Groff Conklin (Berkeley 50¢)
TARZAN AND THE WINGED INVADERS - Barton Werper (Gold Star 40¢)
BEYOND THE SEALED WORLD - Rena Vale (Paperback Library 50¢)
SPELL OF SEVEN ed by L Sprague de Camp (Pyramid 50¢)

BRITISH BOOK RELEASES

TALES OF TEN WORLDS - Arthur C Clarke (Pan 3/6; Oct)
THEY WALKED LIKE MEN - Clifford D Simak (Pan 3/6; Oct)

MAGAZINE NEWS

GALAXY - Feb issue contains "On the Storm Planet" by Cordwainer Smith, "Planet of Forgetting" by James H Schmitz and "The Man Who Killed Immortals" by J T McIntosh. April issue contains "Committee of the Whole" by Frank Herbert, "War Against the Yukks" by Keith Laumer, "A Wobble in Wockii Futures" by Gordon R Dickson and "Wasted on the Young" by John Brunner. Big thing in the June issue is the welcome return of Robert Sheckley with a short novel titled "Mindswap". Also contains Robert Silverberg's "Blue Fire".
IF - "Starchild" by Jack Williamson and Fred Pohl starts in the Jan issue and is supported by "The Recon Man" by Wilson Tucker and "Retief, God Speaker" by Keith Laumer. Feb issue has the second part of "Starchild" and "The Replicators" by A E van Vogt. March issue features Eric Frank Russell's "Meeting on Kangshan" and also contains the conclusion of "Starchild". A two-part serial by John Brunner titled "The Altar at Asconel" begins in the April issue and stories by C C MacApp and Fred Saberhagen are also featured. May issue has "Raindrop" by Hal Clement and "Way Station" by Irving E Cox Jr plus the conclusion of John Brunner's serial. In the June issue, the long-awaited "Skylark Duquesne" by 'Doc' Smith starts and is supported by "High G" by Christopher Anvil.
WORLDS OF TOMORROW - Jan issue features a short novel by Philip Jose Farmer called "Day of the Great Shout". March issue contains

"Planet of Ptavvs" by Larry Niven, "Scarfe's World" by Brian W Aldiss and "Pariah Planet" by Lloyd Biggle Jr.
ANALOG - serial beginning in the July issue is "Trader Team" by Poul Anderson - another Erik van Rijn adventure.

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NEW MEMBERS

A 594 PITT M. 84 Wood Lane, Handsworth, Birmingham 20.
M 595 FULTHORPE D. 22 Henley Road, Cullercoats, Northumberland.
O 596 HODSON A.G. c/o C H Waring, Solicitor, Somerset House, B'ham 2.
O 597 KYLE D.)
O 598 KYLE R.) Radio Station WPDM, Potsdam, New York, USA.
M 599 BERRY J. 3 Mill Crescent, Woolavington, Bridgwater, Somerset.
M 600 DOBING E. 6 Scawfell Crescent, Seascale, Cumberland.
M 601 HUME C.A. 107 Leigham Court Road, Streatham, London SW 16.
M 602 NATTEE P.R. 11 Kingsbury Drive, Old Windsor, Berks.
M 603 MILLAR S. 388 Cleethorpe Road, Grimbsby, Lincs.
A 604 BENNIE T.G.S. 10 Marmion Road, Grangemouth, Stirlingshire.
M 605 MORRIS P.S. 371 Malpas Road, Newport, Mon.
M 606 HALE J.R. 365 Kennington Road, London SE 11.
O 607 BLEYMEHL J. 6681 Furth uber Neunkirchen, Saarland, Engelstrasse 5, West Germany.
A 608 FLAVIN D. 216 Muswell Hill, London N 10.
O 609 THOMAS A.G. "Boldrewood", New Line Road, W Pennant Hills, New South Wales, Australia.
M 610 REVILL G.(Miss) "Orwell Bank", 21 Newbattle Road, Eskbank, Dalkeith, Midlothian, Scotland.
M 313 RAISIN A. 338 Easterly Road, Leeds 8.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Jeremy Barry now 613E Cottage Grove, Bloomington, Indiana 43403, USA.
Peter Day now Flat 4, Beau Manor, Roebuck Lane, Sale, Cheshire.
David Ford now 945 Wolverhampton Road, Langley, Oldbury, Warks.
Ian Hatton now 66D Canfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW 6.
Frank O'Neill now 49 Greenfield Drive, Wishaw, Lanarkshire.
Charles Platt now 18E Fitzjohns Avenue, London NW 3.
P C Rapley now 35 Nolton Place, Edgware, Middlesex.
A J Shimwell now 40 Stanhope Gardens, London SW 7.

****

WANTED Cordwainer Smith fan urgently requires the following items: "You Will Never be the Same" by Cordwainer Smith; Fantasy Book No 6; Galaxy, April 1959; April 1960; June 1961; April 1964.
If, February 1959; July 1962.
Star Science Fiction Stories No 6 ed Fred Pohl.
Please write stating price to Douglas H Poole, 37 Minden Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

AMERICAN ACE PAPERBACKS

CRASHING SUNS: Edmond Hamilton (Ace F-319, 192pp). Five stories from the 'sense of wonder' days of 1928-1930, when the Interstellar Patrol of the Federated Suns was in its full flower.....

THE MARTIAN SPHINX: Keith Woodcott (Ace F-320, 149pp). A solution to the problem of Earth's teeming millions has been found, but this in turn presents its own problems; and in solving this mankind meets the riddle of the sphinx - and gives its own answer.

STORM OVER WARLOCK: Andre Norton (Ace F-329, 192pp). We'll not offer you any remarks on this novel, or any of Andre Norton's. We'll just say that we sell more Andre Norton titles than any others. According to some reviewers this puts a good many of our customers 'beyond the pale'..... But we'd suggest, if you've any doubts, you look up some of P Schuyler Miller's reviews in ASTOUNDING/ANALOG.

GALACTIC DERELICT: Andre Norton (Ace F-310, 192pp).

THE BEAST MASTER: Andre Norton (Ace F-315, 159pp).

WARRIOR OF LLARN: Gardner F Fox (Ace F-307, 160pp). If you like the 'Martian' yarns of Edgar Rice Burroughs, you'll probably like this. If you can't stand ERB, you'll be wasting your money, probably.

THE DARK WORLD: Henry Kuttner (Ace F-327, 126pp). This is a reprint of one of the 'science fantasy' yarns from STARTLING STORIES Summer 1946.

THE HAND OF ZEI and THE SEARCH FOR ZEI: L Sprague de Camp (Ace F-249, 113 and 143pp). These two novels make an action-adventure with somewhat humourous touch in the writing, originally published in ASF. In the 'Viagens' series.

THE TWISTED MEN: A E van Vogt, and ONE OF OUR ASTEROIDS IS MISSING: Calvin M Knox (Ace F-253, 130 and 124pp). The first part of this Ace Double is three short yarns by

A E van Vogt, "The Twisted Men", "The Star-Saint" and "The Earth Killers"; the second half an original novel of interplanetry skullduggery.

DEMON'S WORLD: Kenneth Bulmer, and I WANT THE STARS: Tom Purdom (Ace F-289, 139 and 115pp). Mr Bulmer tells the story of a Lilliputian colony which has lost contact with Earth; the yarn by Tom Purdom tells of a race who have the answers to all problems, and offer these freely to anyone who will learn to understand the answers.....

PLANET OF PERIL: Otis Adelbert Kline (Ace F-211, 160pp). This is the first of Kline's 'Venusian' series. Kline was the only author considered by Burroughs fans to approach in any way the work of the 'Master'. Obviously, if you like ERB's writing.....etc.

THE UNIVERSE AGAINST HER: James H Schmitz (Ace F-314, 160pp). This book includes "Undercurrents" (ASF 64 May/June) and the previous short story of Telzey Amberdon, the juvenile mentalist who caused some consternation in galactic society.

THE ASTRONAUTS MUST NOT LAND: John Brunner, and THE SPACE-TIME JUGGLER: John Brunner (Ace F-227, 138 and 84pp). A duo of novels by John Brunner, the latter a science-fantasy of plot and counter-plot, the former tells of a returning starship and its crew - who have the right personalities, but monstrous bodies.

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Mixed bouquets and brickbats for VECTOR 32. First off, congratulations on an excellent cover; intriguing, unusual and uncluttered. This cover and the neat illo on page 15 make Ivor Latto the best artist I've seen in your pages. I don't really think VECTOR artists can hope to turn out artwork which actually illustrates an article, as illos in a professional magazine illustrate a story; articles are, after all, mostly expositions of ideas, and illos like that on page 9 and those to your other recent lead articles are really irrelevant to an article which has anything to say. Ivor Latto's illos are complete in themselves; they don't rely on a minor point in an article as an excuse.

The article, "Worlds of Science Fiction: The Sun" by Philip Harbottle, was, I thought, out of place in VECTOR. The trouble being that you can't really talk meaningfully about the Sun in SF; you can talk, as Philip Harbottle does, about stories by Stanton A Coblentz, Arthur C Clarke, Richard Matheson, etc., but all you've done at the end of that is outline the plots of these stories. Now, if your subject was something really significant - the attitudes shown to humanity, or religion, or pacifism, or what you will, in SF - and your article finally said something about these attitudes in SF as a whole, it would be worthwhile. But surely a discussion of a few selected SF stories about the Sun, or robots, or time travel, doesn't really say anything except 'SF authors have lots of ideas'. Either you make it plain you're going to discuss such-and-such stories, and you discuss them with reference to style, originality, etc., as well as plot, in which case you've got a collection of short critical essays; or else you catalogue all the SF stories you can about a particular subject with synopses, print it, and see if you can sell it as a checklist. When it comes down to it, Philip Harbottle hasn't really said anything at all, except for the highly arguable observatuon that the Sun is the nearest thing to a deity in SF. And if this is his main point, he hasn't argued it very well. An article about such-and-such in SF is only worthwhile if it has something to say about SF in general as a result; Philip Harbottle's article, regretably, doesn't.

/Philip Harbottle was not trying to write about the Sun with reference to style, etc., neither was he attempting any sort of checklist. And it did have something to say: in the introduction he made it quite clear what he was attempting to do - "...visiting each major body in turn, and discussing the concepts of science fiction

writers as opposed to current scientific belief, and to each other." In the limited space available, I feel that he made enough relevant points to make the article worthwhile. - RGP_/

JIM GRANT
7 Sydney Road
Fairmile
Christchurch
Hants

Philip Harbottle's article, though rather drawn out, was very interesting and held its interest right to the end. But where on Earth did Phil drag the stories that he mentions from? They are the most obscure bunch of titles that I have ever come across; the only one that I have read is the one by Arthur C Clarke. And I'm sure that most of the others are unobtainable. Surely he could have chosen some better known ones, or was obscurity his intention. Though Phil probably chose the examples as the best possible ones to illustrate his points. Overall, I think he handles the theme quite well. His illos are good as well, though a bit patchy.

Ballard's work seems to be causing quite a bit of controversy. I don't know just how many of the BSFA members are also members of the Science Fiction Book Club, but those that are may remember in the news letter a couple of months ago, a member wrote in to the Club giving some pretty severe views/criticisms of the books by Ballard that the Club had issued. I won't quote her exact words, but what in effect she was trying to say was that Ballard's work is either the work of a genius or an idiot. It is generally recognised that the margin of difference between a genius and an idiot is very fine indeed, and though there is a difference it is often very difficult for the uninitiated to draw a dividing line between the two. To sum her up, what she tries to tell us is that whether Ballard is a genius or an idiot, his work is far beyond the comprehension of most SF readers. Please note that she does not say far beyond the reach of SF fans.

I personally find the work of Ballard extremely compelling, fascinating and beautifully written, although I won't profess to understand everything that he writes. His symbolism is fantastically sharp and shouldn't fail to leave an impression in anyone's mind. But that very symbolism is one of the reasons why so many non SF fans shout his work down as rubbish, though they may be regular readers of the genre. The fact that they decry symbolism brings me to another point.

What is any fiction, or for that matter artwork, painting or sculpture, but symbolism. Surely just because most people who practise these artforms use symbols that everyone recognises, it is not a crime to use symbols of the imagination, that won't be recognised so easily? A painting, say for arguments sake, a portrait by Gainsborough, is described as a portrait of a beautiful woman, an abstract painting by Picasso by itself is just as incomprehensible as the symbols used to represent time by Ballard. If you are told by an expert that Picasso's abstract is a portrait of a beautiful woman, you will more than likely believe him, but tell anyone that Ballard's individual symbolism represents time, and you will almost immediately hear cries of 'fraud'. Surely this is wrong?

/Surely it's the duty of the writer to make himself as clear as

possible in order that his readers may understand the story he is trying to tell, and if he fails in this, he is failing as a writer. Many readers (of SF and other forms of literature) claim to understand Ballard, and if he can make a living from the sales of his work to these people, then he is succeeding.

As to your first point about Harbottle's article and the rarity of the items he discussed, I can only point out that they are all available from the BSFA Library. - RGP/

ROJE J GILBERT
c/o 39 Sandhurst Road
Edmonton
London N 9

I have one mighty complaint against a certain Ted Ball with his opinions of AFTER DOOMSDAY. I think he must have read the cover and the last two chapters and then based his review on that. "There is nothing outstanding about this book." says Mr Ball; did he by chance not read the first chapter? Personally, and I'd better stress that this is all my own opinion, I have yet to read a book with a more eye-catching opening than a picture of a disrupted Earth, cleaned of life. However, this seems to leave Mr Ball cold.

Secondly, the novel has some interesting and very sensible concepts. It shows admirably the incredible scale of the galaxy, which is hardly diminished by the possession of hyperdrive. Anderson's aliens are sensible too: he doesn't litter his planets with BEMs or overgrown amoebas or intelligent marsh gas - he has the federation of Monwaing, consisting of avianform creatures (these are quite within the bounds of possibility), the Vorlakka are ursoid (another evolutionary possibility that could equally well have taken place on our planet; it just so happened that the apes were first in Earth's case), and the Kandemirians, the chief villains apart from the destroyers of Earth, are not made into super-insects but they are given humanoid, if somewhat outlandish, appearance.

Thirdly, Mr Ball complains that the obvious murderer turns out to be innocent. Well, how pointless the novel would be if the obvious murderer was the murderer. The obvious murderer in most detective and suspense stories is usually given a clean bill of health in the all-explaining last chapter, but Anderson avoids this hackneyed idea. Instead, the Kandemirians are not left to gloat in their own goodness but are smashed in one of the most originally-told space battles in the genre. In a masterfully constructed poem, the battle is sketched in epic style with notes inserted by an imaginary reviewer. But this doesn't seem to be novel enough for Mr Ball.

Finally, (it's nearly over Ted, but you see, I do like Anderson very much, and he needs a bit of defence after so much adverse criticism has been written against him), it seems that Mr Ball considers a complaint about the cover relevant to a review of the contents. The cover doesn't count a tinker's damn! More often than not, the most sensational covers are put on the worst rubbish. AFTER DOOMSDAY's cover is hardly in that class, and the contents are a masterful handling of the well-worn space opera, with many new ideas besides.

/We also heard from Ray Bowen, Terry Jeeves, Gerald Kirsch, Ian McAulay, Charles Platt and Brian Stableford. Sorry, no more room./

HERBERT JENKINS

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BRITAIN'S LEADING SCIENCE-FICTION JOURNAL

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Editor: MICHAEL MOORCOCK

Published Monthly by
Roberts & Vinter Ltd.