

GETTING TO KNOW THEM

WE HAVE had this message from the treasurer of the Science Fiction Society of the Students' Union of the University of East Anglia:

'Our society was formed recently and we are eager to get in touch with similar organizations; if you referred to us in your monthly broadsheet it would help us to get "in the news" and perhaps put us in touch with sf fans willing to sell copies of old sf books, etc.'

We hope that members will follow this up; perhaps it is best if you write first to the treasurer, Mr M. Costello, at this address: University Village, Wilberforce Road, Norwich.

THE MARCH SFBC CHOICE

THE PARADOX MEN by Charles L. Harness

SFBC 7s (Faber 18s)

THE MARCH SFBC OPTIONAL BOOK

SPECTRUM IV

edited by Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest

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THE APRIL SFBC CHOICE

THE SEVENTH GALAXY READER edited by Frederik Pohl

SFBC 7s (Gollancz 18s)

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ZENITH SPECULATION

THIS is the name of a magazine of 'review and comment upon speculative fiction'. In this issue of *SF News* there is the second part of an article on J. G. Ballard which first appeared in a recent edition of *Zenith*. It is a young magazine and it would welcome support, from SFBC members overseas as well as in this country. It is published quarterly, it costs 2s and its editor is Peter R. Weston, 9 Porlock Crescent, Northfield, Birmingham 31.

PLEASE MAKE USE OF THE ORDER CARD PROVIDED TO ORDER SFBC AND RU OPTIONAL BOOKS BUT, IF YOU HAVE ALREADY ORDERED ANY OF THE BOOKS LISTED, PLEASE TAKE CARE NOT TO DUPLICATE YOUR ORDER.

THE MAY RU OPTIONAL BOOK

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by Louis Fischer

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'MR LOUIS FISCHER is to be congratulated on a remarkable achievement. For the first time we have a really thorough and objective life of Lenin. . . . This enormous volume is the fruit of a lifetime's work; it contains practically every known fact about Lenin.' *New Statesman*.

'Till now there has been no good biography, at once dispassionate and understanding. Mr Fischer has done it. His book brings Lenin to life both as a man and as a political leader.'

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The May CF Choice

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by Henry de Montherlant

'THE book of the year, wonderfully translated by Terence Kil-martin. There is not only the excitement of the master's style. . . . To say that it is a tender dissection of a revolutionary is not quite right because the old astringency remains. But it is marvellously comic and just manages to stop short of cruelty. Montherlant as he grows older gets better and better and wiser and wiser.' *Sunday Telegraph*.

'Not a word is wasted. . . . [*Chaos and Night*] has a brilliance, an astringency, a pervasive charm all its own: the wit and imagery are dazzlingly precise and reveal a lifetime of observation and study like the late drawings of an old master.' *Observer*

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THE APRIL RU SPECIAL TITLE

THE BIRTH OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION
edited by Michael Grant

SFBC 96s, post free (Thames & Hudson £8 8s)

Issued by the Science Fiction Book Club from 10-13 Bedford St, London, W.C.2
from whom details of membership can be obtained,
and printed by the Aldine Press, Dunhams Lane, Letchworth, Hertfordshire

science fiction news

No. 106

March 1966

Selectors: John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

THE SEVENTH GALAXY READER

edited by Frederik Pohl

THE Editor introduces the book:

It is a convention of life in the publishing world—it is called 'editorial courtesy'—that the editor of one magazine does not speak harshly of other editors in the same field.

This convention I have no objection at all to obeying, because indeed I have little to say of other editors that is harsh. For all I have, if nothing else, is sympathy. And for the best—Horace Gold and John Campbell are two of the giants in the field—I have had great respect and admiration always, in spite of an occasional reservation about specific editorial decisions.

Still, with all respect to the John Campbell who changed the whole shape of science fiction for the better twenty-odd years ago, and the Horace Gold who did the same a decade or so later, I am not either of these gentlemen, and the stories that I think most worth your attention here are undoubtedly not the stories either of them would pick. I hope you will think as I do that this is a Good Thing. Any magazine and any anthology must reflect some of the personality of its editor. When it is an anthology compiled from the very stories which he helped bring to birth in his magazine in the first place, still more of himself must show through. This is that sort of an anthology.

These stories, then, represent as fully as any book I have ever turned over to a printer just what, in my opinion, modern science fiction is all about.

What I hope you will notice first about them is that they do not speak with a single voice. There is not much in common between Damon Knight's *The Big Pat Boom* and Cordwainer Smith's *On the Gem Planet*. What Knight is writing about is our foibles, and with short, acid strokes he shows them to us in a parable about visitors from the planets of other stars. Smith, however, is not writing about us at all; evocatively and, if you will, poetically, he is telling us about our successors—human beings, yes, but so changed by their customs, their science and their conquests that there's not much left in them of the boy next door. While in *The Tail-Tied Kings*, Avram Davidson leaves the human race out of it entirely: his story is about rats.

I maintain that all of these stories, and all the others herein, are science fiction, and that no one of them is a 'purer' form than any other. For science fiction is a variegated bloom; it can offer many kinds of experience to the reader—emotion, ideation, wry humour or a thrill of pride—and what this book proposes to do is to show you a sampling of its colours in their most attractive forms.

But I warn you . . . this blossom is habit forming!

CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION by Frederik Pohl

FOR LOVE by Algis Budrys

COME INTO MY CELLAR by Ray Bradbury

THE TAIL-TIED KINGS by Avram Davidson

CRIME MACHINE by Robert Bloch

RETURN ENGAGEMENT by Lester Del Rey

EARTHMEN BEARING GIFTS by Fredric Brown

RAINBIRD by R. A. Lafferty

THREE PORTRAITS AND A PRAYER by Frederik Pohl

SOMETHING BRIGHT by Zenna Henderson

ON THE GEM PLANET by Cordwainer Smith

THE DEEP DOWN DRAGON by Judith Merrill

THE KING OF THE CITY by Keith Laumer

THE BEAT CLUSTER by Fritz Leiber

AN OLD-FASHIONED BIRD CHRISTMAS by Margaret St Clair

THE BIG PAT BOOM by Damon Knight

247 pages

SFBC 7s (Gollancz 18s)

THE DROWNED PLOT (OF J. G. BALLARD): Part 2

An Evaluation by J. P. PATRIZIO

[The first part of this article appeared in the February issue of *SF News*. It first appeared in *Zenith*.]

(3) *Ballard the Philosopher*.

'Philosophy: Love of wisdom or knowledge, esp. that which deals with ultimate reality, or with the most general causes and principles of things.'

Oxford English Dictionary.

'Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance.'

Keats.

I imagine some attempt will be made to gloss over all I've said above, with the contention that it isn't important; that what is important is the themes Ballard writes about and that the mistakes are superficial. To this I would reiterate that if a writer wishes to be taken seriously he must first show that he can write—and then he can try to say something. But on the whole, yes, what a writer *says* will eventually determine the worth of his work.

It is well within the sphere of sf to present ethical, religious and other problems in philosophy as a basis for stories. Stories always have been the means to present such thoughts to the majority of