

that "submarines, for example, were Science Fiction when 20,000 Leagues under the Sea were written." But 1984, she concludes, is not Science Fiction: "No! No! No! It is far too close to the unpleasant realities of this world."

This point is made by others, and it is surely a good one. In its small details, particularly, like the notes about food and drink, the book adhered most faithfully to the wretched stuff we ate and drank during and just after the war, with only slight touches of exaggeration. "To the layman the book is not science but politics," says Mr. H. W. Waterson of Sutton Coldfield, and Mr. T. R. Bond from West Lothian, makes a point when he says that the still untouched bomb-sites in the big towns, the rows of cheap council houses, and the whole placid acceptance today of shoddy and badly-made products and of the delay and muddle of bureaucratic government, shows our own "placid acceptance of the world of 1984." He seems to be going a little too far, however, in adding that 1984 "is a brutal and accurate presentation of what can easily happen." The details of torture in Orwell's book are not realistic but sensational, stuff from a boy's paper which is only effective because of the power of Orwell's imagination. There is something in his own simple remark about the book: "It wouldn't have been so gloomy, if I hadn't been so ill."

Only one or two entrants decided quite definitely that the book was Science Fiction. The most interesting was Mr. George A. Floris, who said that the book was "the highest form of science fiction: the scientific experiment by literary means." Directly opposed to this was the view of Mr. W. Mell, who made what seemed to me a good point when he said that 1984 was "probably much closer to *Gulliver's Travels* than any accepted work of S.F."

Entrants were sharply (and to me rather surprisingly) divided about the book's merits. Mr. D. J. Stead of Welling, for instance, said that he had read it only once and "never intend re-reading it for it disgusted me," while Mrs. Doreen Telling from Gloucestershire thought it a great book, adding that if people liked to call it Science Fiction "S.F.

should be proud and grateful to have such a book as this on its lists."

The prize of Three Guineas goes to Mr. H. K. Waterson for a well-written and reflective piece, which was almost the only one to mention one of the book's most brilliant aspects—the rewriting of history by the Party. Recommended also are Mr. Dreyer's article, for its brave attempt to define Science Fiction, and Mrs. Telling's sincere and sympathetic assessment. Book prizes have been sent to these two members.

Thoughts on Orwell's 1984. Is it science fiction?

It did not need the publication of "1984" to tell the world that George Orwell possessed talent as a writer. He had demonstrated his ability in his former works. "Tribune," knew his worth, and the "Observer" appreciated his ability. As a writer of accepted dexterity in the field of politics and social conditions, he set out prior to 1949 to forecast the political and social state of England some thirty-five years later, or so he would have us believe. A forecast of the future will always excite interest. Orwell offered to a large section of the community, anyone up to thirty-five years of age at the date of publication, a picture of the world and a detailed description of an England in which they could expect to live under Big Brother rule. This alone would make his book popular. Television gave it a further boost.

The atomic war of the 1950s to which the writer makes reference must take place during the next three and a half years, or fall behind schedule. It looks more remote in 1956 than it did at the date when the book was published. Atomic war-tension has eased, although an outbreak of war has not passed beyond the bounds of possibility, and once started, it could spread. While there is the slightest risk of war anywhere in the world the use of atomic bombs remains a possibility. Orwell cleverly illustrates this point by

referring casually to a past atomic war that produced its devastating effects.

The writer had the world divided into three continents, Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia, presumably each paying homage to its own Big Brother as supreme head of its Party, otherwise there would have been no need for any two of the continents to be always at war with each other to preserve the peace. The geographical divisions are interesting if improbable. When all past efforts to consolidate Europe into a political and economic unit have failed—e.g., M. Briand's efforts up to the date of his death, and the more recent suggestions of the U.S.A., it is wondered why that miracle the unification is going to be achieved within the next twenty years. In this allocation of land masses England is thrown in with America. Does this emphasise that neither England nor America can stand without the other, or is it a reflection on the U.S. air bases in England? We are not told whether Eire teams up with Oceania or Eurasia. Perhaps they will have their own Big Brother.

The chief characters in the book are not important to its theory. Indeed how could they be when they are not important to the Party? They serve a useful purpose to the writer in making what could be a welter of theories and arguments more easily readable than they would be otherwise. Winston was a weakling. The description of the sexual relations between him and his wife is bordering on the obscene, but they illustrate a point. The behaviour of Winston and Julia, except that they got out of sight in bed or bushes, was akin to that of over-sexed fox-terriers. Later in the story all desires and emotions were crushed out of them. Interest in the Party must be paramount. There must be no desire in human relations beyond the duty to produce another worker for the Party.

Very cleverly Orwell juggles with converse theories and contradictory statements, "War is peace," "Falsification of the past by the Ministry of Truth," "Repression of espionage by the Ministry of Love," fear, rage and hate to bring about the triumph of self-abasement in deference to the