

with the jungle, and that classic phrase, 'Any creature under fifteen feet long was classed as a bug.' And in "Alien Dust" it is not the men I remember but Tubb's Mars, grey and ghastly, implacable enemy of life.

Let's have more planets and bugs and keeps! They're the sort of things we go hunting for in sf, not characterisation. Let's produce just as many marvels as we can without losing a reader's belief. For the truth is this: anything is credible if told in the right tone of voice. After all, you believe in genes, don't you? I defy you to think up anything more fantastic than a gene—except of course the notion that sf ought to pretend to be like ordinary fiction!

The next choice is

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by JOHN CHRISTOPHER

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DETAIL

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EXTRAORDINARY FICTION

By **Brian W. Aldiss**

To those of us who love science fiction, two cries have grown revoltingly familiar in recent years. One cry comes from our critics and says 'sf should contain more realistic characters.' The other comes from our defenders and says 'sf is steadily growing more like ordinary fiction.' Both these statements, which started life as something only just less than flagrant lies, have gradually acquired a grain of truth, because sf authors—an obliging lot—have tried to give their characters character and have tried to shape their books like ordinary novels.

In the process, they have lost more than they have gained. The extreme example is Edgar Pangborn's "Mirror for Observers," which won a prize for being so nearly an ordinary novel; James Blish's "The Frozen Year" (soon to be published in England as "Fallen Star") is another such. Both are excellent but...

The subtle critics were not subtle enough. sf has built up a very creditable gallery of memorable characters, quite