

range; within that range there is a certain type called a science-fiction novel. It would be a mistake to think of a book as science-fiction first and as a novel afterwards. To take one distinguishing feature of the s-f novel and develop it to the exclusion of other things would relegate s-f to an ivory tower peopled by cranks.

"Stapledon's *Last and First Men* is possibly the best that can be done in an s-f novel without characters. How poor it is when compared with Stewart's *Earth Abides* in which the s-f element is just as strong. Why is this? One of the characters in John Mantley's *The Twenty-Seventh Day* gives us the answer when he says: 'Nobody can think emotionally in terms of global catastrophe. . . . Suffering is an individual thing. It can only be appreciated in terms of the individual.' That is why, even in s-f, characters are so important. Life, present or future, Terran, Martian or Vegan, is an individual thing. It can only be appreciated in terms of the individual."

\* \* \*

Well? Care to reply?

#### DETAIL

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## PASSING THE TIME

by I. Asimov

Isaac Asimov, whose *I Robot* and *The Caves of Steel* have been among the most popular choices in the Club, writes to us from West Newton, Massachusetts. We had asked him what he did beside think up those inimitable robot stories, those s-f detective thrillers. Now we know. Mr. Asimov is Associate Professor of Biochemistry at Boston University School of Medicine, married, with two children. His literary activities for 1957 seem phenomenal:

"In January, 1957, my book *The Naked Sun* (11th adult sf novel) was published.

In April, 1957, *Building Blocks of the Universe* was published. It is a teen-age book on inorganic chemistry and my fourth teen-age book on various phases of science.

In July, 1957, *Lucky Starr and the Moons of Jupiter* will be published. It is an sf juvenile under the pseudonym of Paul French and the fifth book in this series.

In August, 1957, the third edition (completely revised) of *Biochemistry and Human Metabolism* will be published. It is a biochemistry text for medical students.

In October, 1957, *Earth is Room Enough* will be published.