

Likewise with science; the science need not be narrow or hidebound. The authors should be encouraged to balk against established science—providing that their ideas, gadgets, and theories are within the bounds of possibility. An intelligent extrapolation of scientific facts that we know to-day is always a good basis to work from.

One aspect of this SF definition business seems to me to need stressing. A definition would be of use and value *only* to SF fans. The ordinary, casual reader needs no definition. To him, it's still space ships and alien invasions, murder and mayhem from Mars.

To the film fan, overgrown tarantulas, ants, and resuscitated prehistoric monsters chasing women who spend half the running time looking like corset advertisements in the Underground fill the bill. It goes without saying that this type of film does SF a great disservice.

I do not visualize the genre ever becoming, to the run-of-the-mill reader, anything more than 'fantastic,' 'queer,' and various other adjectives, most of them less complimentary.

But the mental exercises we do in trying to formulate a definition are stimulating. Don't let's find one *too* soon.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE 'NAUTILUS'

In a world that seems mostly up the pole the staggering news that the American atomic-powered submarine *Nautilus* had actually sailed under the north polar ice cap, fell singularly flat on the ears and minds of the public as a whole.

Our personal reaction was similar to that produced by the news of the launching of the first Russian sputnik—that this was a momentous, first-time-in-history achievement. With the next thought being—but SF got there first.

WE CANNOT ALL AGREE!

PATRICK MOORE, author of our next choice, writes: I feel most honoured that the selection has fallen upon my somewhat acid study of SF as a whole. I expect a great deal of criticism, since I imagine that many people will disagree with much of what I have written; but it would be a dull world if we were all of the same opinion.

My purpose in writing the book was, primarily, to say some things which appeared to want saying, and in particular to stress that proper SF is widely divorced from horror comics. The latter have no redeeming features at all, and this at least is one point upon which I feel we will all agree. I have given my personal views, which may or may not be correct; they will cause some controversy, as indeed they have done ever since the book was first published, but controversy is always a good thing. I have been very pleased to find that, with a few exceptions, the arguments have been carried out in a friendly spirit; senseless acrimony has been lacking. I hold firmly to my own views, but it is hardly necessary to add that I respect the views of others even when in direct opposition.

Finally, I would like to stress that the book was not written in a hurry; it took a long time, and problems of selection were far from easy. I had to leave out many books