

be described as the glorification of change. Under the Campbell regime there has been a feeling for problem-solving social man, and his long editorials ransack new scientific developments for new problems, cosmologies and kicks (thereby indicating current editorial policy).

But why did Campbell feel obliged to emphasize the very scientific angle of his brand of science fiction further by changing the magic title *Asimov's*? Mainly, Mr. Alloway suggests, because sf is being pushed away from its pulp origins. To compete with the slick and highly sophisticated general magazine market in the States Campbell changed the title and publishes long and pretty solid articles with illustrations on art paper—this is not done in the British edition, partly to keep the price down, and partly, perhaps, because we are less sophisticated.

Paperbacks, Mr. Alloway continues, are another source of pressure on the traditional magazine. Originally they reprinted serials and series, thus preserving standards of impact and vividness; in the last few years, however, the magazine stage has tended to be left out, and the sf paperbacks have appealed direct to the general novel market. This means that an influence from novels is now being felt on the magazines which once led the field.

Mr. Alloway remarks: 'As serious science fiction draws nearer to the general fiction field, away from the specialized magazine, there will be a slowing down of pace, a reduction of the number of incidents, and an expansion of what remains, so that the parsimony of the conventional novel will replace the speed and plenty of science fiction that remembers its pulp ancestors. A more leisurely account of character and motive is already showing which, if it goes too deep, will destroy the bright, legible patterns of societies which science fiction writers display in terms of action and plot. . . . The problem is to earn a prestigious market without sacrificing the science in science fiction.'

Comment: Mr. Alloway's argument that sf is moving away from its pulp origins seems reminiscent of that type of jazz criticism which avers that as the music gets further away from its New Orleans origins it loses its distinctive character and ceases to be jazz. This *penchant* for the primitive (in any branch of the arts) is understandable—how nostalgic to pore over yellowing and faded issues of *Asimov's* (or scratchy 78 r.p.m. pre-electrical recordings of the Harlem Footwarmers), muttering that things aren't what they used to be.

But of course they never were. When pulp sf was new it was regarded as a vulgarization of Wells and Verne (just as the critics saw early jazz as cacophonous and undisciplined).

No, the point is: if we are moving (I think the tendency, if it exists, may be more marked in America than here, anyway) from the era of pulp magazine sf to that of paperback or hard-bound book sf and a greater attention is being paid to character, plot, atmosphere, style, this *desirable* improvement need not limit incident nor 'destroy the bright, legible patterns of societies which sf writers display in terms of action and plot'.

Take *Venus Plus X* by Theodore Sturgeon (recently available in *New Worlds*). Here is no paucity of action nor of 'bright, legible patterns'. Or take *Limbo 90*, Bernard Wolfe's masterpiece—it's almost over-full with ideas, action, 'realism'. Or Clifford Simak's *City*, or Sturgeon's *More Than Human*. . . .

No, on examination the thesis collapses because, in fact, sf writers, like jazz musicians facing the limitations of three minutes' playing time, have been compelled by the short story form into crudities and unexplained assumptions. Thus the serialization of larger pieces became necessary and the flight from the 'pulp roots'—if flight there has been—was led by the pulps themselves.

It is immaterial whether a sf story starts in pulp or book form. The medium has immense possibilities for development and indeed it is questionable as to which have made available the best sf—magazines or book publishers. Both are needed; the mags to try out ideas, to launch new talent, to explore new themes; the paperbacks to open up new markets, and . . . SFBC to serve the public with *durable* editions of selected sf at popular prices. O.C.

SFBC Competition

WHAT SHALL WE CALL IT?

Since it first began, greybeards and others have argued over the name 'Science Fiction'. That was all very well, it seems, in the days of Verne and early Wells, when the fiction was almost more science than fiction, and in any case was not called 'science fiction' but 'fantasy' or 'scientific romance'. Anything in our line before then was called 'fantasy', 'myth', 'legend', 'fairy-stories', 'fable' or even 'lies'.

Clearly none of this will do. The *genre* has too many branches, or too many radiations, twists (depending on which science you view it from). The name 'science fiction' entrages as many scientists as it delights. And, ignoring the Asimov school for a moment, the 'science' part doesn't cover everything, at least, not yet. Psionics, telepathy, are still crank words to science, no matter how satisfactorily we have proved their truth to ourselves. Time travel? The conventional regard

this idea with amused indulgence. Alien cultures? That is more feasible, they say, perhaps. The Fourth Dimension, and Dimensions beyond that? That is a hypothesis in mathematics, on two-dimensional paper.

Science has a knack of catching up with sf, because its aim is always to increase its knowledge. No one can tell what will happen in the post-World War III Scientific Renaissance. But in our time we can be reasonably sure that a good deal of science fiction will remain impossible to, and perhaps despised by, science. So what shall we call our fantasies, what name can cover the grave, ranging beauty of Simak's *City*, the delicious improbabilities of Sprague de Camp, the terrors and glories of Bestler's *The Stars my Destination*, the scientific plausibilities of a Clarke or an Asimov?

It's most unlikely anyone will win a prize in this competition, but you may just have a brilliant suggestion that nobody has ever thought of before. If you have, send it in and win two guineas (first prize), a 30s Conway Stewart fountain-pen (second prize) or a copy of *And There was Light* or a past title (third prize). Closing date for British readers is 30th April; for readers overseas, 31st May. Please send your entry to SFBC, 10-13 Bedford Street, London, W.C.2.

Six Books Ahead . . .

'The asthmatic cough of a lion sounded. Barton dodged by the tank and tossed his blood-stained bandage over the railing. There was a flurry of water slashed into foam as the great shark woke to life.

'And, from cage and tank, from the beasts waked into a turmoil of light and sound and blood-smell—came the variable. 'Sue had got her siren working, and its shattering blast bellowed through the night. Patterns of light blazed erratically here and there. Barton saw Smith pause and shake his head. Vargan, teeth bared, ran forward, but he too was shaken. Their thoughts were confused—now. For this wasn't chess any more. It was skip-handball, with a variable gone wild.

'For beasts are not intelligent, in the true meaning of the word. They have instinct, tropism, a terrible passion that is primevally powerful. Even non-telepaths find the hunger-roar of a lion disturbing. To a Baldy . . .

'What blasted up from the great tank was worst of all. It shook even Barton. The paranoid minds could not communicate, could scarcely think, against that beast-torrent of mental hunger and fury that poured through the night.'

This is an extract from *MURKANT*, by Henry Kuttner, SFBC's Choice for December, published originally by Weidenfeld & Nicolson at 9s 6d, now out of print.