

# science fiction news

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*Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter*

## NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

### MUTANT by Henry Kuttner

ANOTHER sf classic reissued by the Club, this is the exciting story of mutants which sprang from the radio-active cities, under constant suspicion from normal humans, not only because they were hairless, with egg-like skulls and lashless eyes, but also because they were endowed with strange telepathic powers. *Mutant* is the story of their struggle to be accepted by the world around them—a stirring tale of heroism and treachery.

In the early years after the Blow Up not all the Baldies, as they were nicknamed, were decent people like Al Burkhalter, who wore a wig and respected the privacy of his neighbours' minds. Unknown even to the Mutants themselves, some of the 'Baldies' were born paranoids, cruel malignant creatures determined to wipe out the normal human race and establish the rule of the Mutants. It was only after a bitter struggle that Al Burkhalter rooted out the paranoids within the 'Baldies', amongst which he found his own son. But the troubles of the 'Baldies' were not over—in the next generation it was the humans themselves who threatened to wipe out the Mutants in a gigantic pogrom. Into this desperate conflict came David Barton, the 'Baldy' naturalist, who had to destroy the menace of the Three Blind Mice, before the Mutants could discover a way to use their strange gift for the benefit of mankind, and so at last live at peace with their neighbours.

(9s 6d for 5s 6d)

## 'SCIENCE' FICTION & SF

PROFESSOR FRED HOYLE, whose recent science fiction serial *A for Andromeda* brought chills to the spines of BBC viewers in the autumn, was interviewed at the commencement of the series on 'Tonight'.

During the course of his remarks (which in general were pro sf) he said (and I quote from memory) that he would not use as a key idea in a story anything which was beyond possibility—e.g. interstellar travel.

Now this baffles me.

In the first place sf will wither and die if its authors do not allow their imaginations free rein. Inconsistency, implausibility, absurdity—these they should shun, but not that which *looks* 'impossible' from the vantage point of the Cam or the Isis. What sf demands is a consistent and logical vision, however remote from practicability, grounded in scientific 'conceivability' (e.g. interstellar travel, time travel, telekenetic powers, telepathy, robotics, extra-terrestrial life breathing gases harmful to humans—all these are 'scientific', whereas magic, voodoo, ghosts, fairies and hobgoblins are the stuff of various forms of fantasy).

In any case, if interstellar travel is impossible so was Hoyle's own thinking 'cloud' in *The Black Cloud*.

And, finally, why is 'interstellar travel' 'impossible'? Interplanetary travel is almost with us and the nearest star system is within range—provided we are prepared to spend some years (in suspended animation, no doubt) getting to it. After all, Magellan, Drake and Cook didn't boggle at spending months or years at sea.

No—Hoyle seems to be unduly and unnecessarily hampered by his narrow definition of impossibility. A pity. Perhaps he should read more sf!

## SIX MONTHS AHEAD

### THE STARS ARE TOO HIGH by Agnew H. Bahnson, Jr.

THE top brass at the Pentagon are stunned when they see a strange object fall from an immense height on the radar screen—but Dr Henry Alvin could have told them what it was. But he had been sworn to secrecy. Excitement rises steadily in this well-thought-out novel about how the cold war *might* be ended.

June 1962.

(Random House \$3.95 for 5s 6d)