

# Voices

edited by Robert Rubens

(The July CF Choice)

A COLLECTION of new short stories. . .

'The mist seems to be lifting at last and they'll be hotting up the search for Sam and me.'

'Harry called me a few minutes ago and told me that he was talking to Edward Albee at a party the other night and that Albee had told him that it was stupid for anyone to write before they're thirty.'

'I should think the secret is never panic. The secret of life, I mean.'

'Nowadays we bump into far fewer of our friends in the street, we no longer walk so much about the street, we spend our time jammed into little cars.'

'The child sat under the cherry tree and ruled the narrow garden with a glance.'

These are opening sentences from stories in this collection: they were chosen at random, as a simple means of showing the diversity of ways in which writers approach a short story. The twenty stories in *Voices* are a good proof of the curious spaciousness in this small form; it seems to have been settled as one of the Laws of Literature that the short story is an immensely difficult medium to master, and when reviewers have reached this conclusion again, they usually pass a vote of confidence in either Chekov or Maupassant, implying somehow that in this field you are either a master or nothing. Perhaps it would be more useful sometimes to deal with the strong points of this special form, instead of the pitfalls: it is, after all, practically impossible to write anything well and yet people do it fairly constantly; the twenty writers in this collection chose to walk on quicksand and none of them disappears from sight.

One of the things that has kept them all safe is the realization that they do not have to sustain thoughts or emotions for any length of time. A large number of contemporary novels suffer miserably from inflation—one not very vigorous idea can be made to totter the length of two hundred pages, not by its own momentum but by the force of repetition and the weight of detail, and it is interesting that one of the longest contributions to *Voices* should also be one of the least successful. This is judging strictly, as almost all the writers here have judged their own material, shaping it so that there is no awkward gap between content and length, finding the way to make a small impression stand proxy for a great deal of life.

It is a good thing too to find the work of new writers beside that of established ones: some of the authors have not been published before in book form, and other contributors include Doris Lessing, Gabriel Fielding, Dan Jacobson, Patrick White and Olivia Manning. 'All of these writers,' as the editor points out, 'whether they are dealing with youth or old age, with frustration or sexual awakening, are trying to pull together a few of the elements of the fragmented, moment-to-moment level on which so much of life is lived. . . . The real force remains an original vision of life. . . . The short story will remain one of the ways we can see it, if only for a moment, and crystallize it.'

264 pages. Michael Joseph 21s; SFBC 8s, post free

THE JUNE ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) IS  
**CAMONICA VALLEY** by Emmanuel Anati  
(Cape 45s; SFBC 27s, post free)

THE JUNE EXTRA (OPTIONAL) IS  
**THE STORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BRITAIN**  
by Ronald Jessup  
(Michael Joseph 25s; SFBC 13s, post free)

THE JULY ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) IS  
**THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE** by Harold Kurtz  
(Hamish Hamilton 50s; SFBC 27s 6d, post free)

THE JULY EXTRA (OPTIONAL) IS  
**MAN, NATURE AND DISEASE**  
by Richard Fiennes  
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson 36s; SFBC 24s 6d, post free)

[Full details of the last two books were given in the Optional Catalogue included in the May issue of SF News.]

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## The Value of SFBC

Value in two senses: first the value of the SFBC Choices as *books*, as expressions of one of the most vital and creative developments in literature, and secondly, value in the sense of cost. If you feel that this special book club, like science fiction itself, is worth support and encouragement, even if it sometimes comes short of your expectations, then will you bear with us when we say that, in order to meet the rising costs of production and distribution, the price of the monthly Choices must be increased in July from 6s to 6s 6d. An increase of 6d is not large, but we do really regret the fact that it is necessary. We feel we can fairly say, however, that at the new price of 6s 6d SFBC Choices will still be excellent bargains, proof of what a book club can achieve *with the continuing support of its members*. Nothing is more important than that.

O. C.

## NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

### REVOLT IN 2100

by Robert Heinlein

THIS volume contains one of Heinlein's best novels, 'If This Goes On—', and two short stories, 'Misfit' and 'Coventry'.

The setting for 'If This Goes On—' is America in the year 2100, America ruled by a corrupt 'religious' dictator, maintaining his power through clever use of advanced psychological techniques and through a dedicated military cadre. Freedom of thought and the right to pursue knowledge have been denied, and under the surface of this suppression rebellion is growing.

In the dictator's temple in New Jerusalem John Lyle is a legate, an officer of the guard, leading a severe, almost monastic existence, unequipped to deal with the temptations which suddenly face him. His love for one of the temple virgins is in defiance of the law, and it leads him ultimately to membership of the underground cabal, to capture, escape and flight. At last he sees the revolution come to its culminating point.

'Coventry' takes up the theme *after* the revolution is over. The new system of government, the Covenant, allows complete freedom to the individual, provided that the freedom of no other person is curtailed. Those guilty of breaking the Covenant are offered two choices: either brain surgery or expulsion to Coventry, an area behind a Barrier, a place which can only be penetrated from the outside. MacKinnon has broken the Covenant and chooses to go to Coventry, thinking that it will be a place without any laws to interfere with his wishes. What he discovers there is a great shock.

The 'misfit' in the third story is Libby, a mathematical genius. He is young and he has had very little formal education, but he is able to visualize complex mathematical relationships, and his strange gift is invaluable to the commander of a space ship when the craft's electronic computer breaks down.

305 pages.

Gollancz 16s; SFBC 6s 6d

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS  
**COUNTERFEIT WORLD**  
by Daniel F. Galouye  
(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS  
**REVOLT IN 2100**  
by Robert Heinlein  
(Gollancz 16s; SFBC 6s 6d)

## In Touch

MISS LISBETH COHEN, living at 21 Kent Road, Dunkeld West, Johannesburg, is a long-standing member of SFBC; she has asked us to put this note in *SF News*, and we hope that it will result in other members getting in touch with her.