

W^{THE} TUBES



M. R.

Pg. 1.

U.T.T.
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ARTISTS

Both the cover and the interior illustrations
this issue were handled with fine skill by
Martin Rayner.

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EDITED BY

Stan G. Hyde.

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inside.

U.T.T.erances
an editorial
Stan G. Hyde

Bias. Everybody has a bias, even if they don't admit it. Editors, especially editors, especially editors of crotchymimeographed-clubzines, have likes and dislikes, want to publish certain types of material in preference to other types of material.

Let me say, first off, exactly what I want. What I would like to see Up The Tubes become is an organ of communication between fans. First and foremost, between the fans in the club and in Victoria, later-hopefully-to other fan clubs in the Pacific Northwest, Canada, and all over. One way this can be achieved is to (somehow) print more copies of the clubzine and trade it in return for other clubzines. In this way we can all benefit from each other's knowledge, viewpoints, and specialties.

I also like to print original material.

For these reasons, there is a descending order in which I like to accept material for Up The Tube. I enjoy printing informed criticism, exploratory articles, science articles, material on fandom, personal material related to sf or fandom, reviews, argument, opinion, discussion, and letters. I like the idea of devoting a few pages of the clubzine to poetry-it's hard to find a place to publish poetry.

But I'm not too crazy about printing material that has been printed somewhere else (for one thing, it's illegal), and I'm not too crazy about fiction.

Let me explain:

Reprint material is fine as filler, something to end a column with so that it evens up with the last column. But there

are enough things that have never been thought and never been said in the universe that we may as well print them first.

As far as fiction is concerned, U.T.T. is just not the proper place for it. We already have a writers workshop where material can be critiqued (and professional-caliber material could, and should, be sold).

From now on, U.T.T. will be published once every two months (you're holding the July-August issue in your hands now, next issue will be Sept-Oct--out around the end of October). In the months when U.T.T. is not being published, the fiction from the writers workshop will be published as a separate magazine. That way the writers can take the time to do a careful reading of each piece and organize their thoughts about it. It will make the writers meetings much more valuable for everyone involved and will allow me to take U.T.T. in the direction that-I believe-will make it more useful and interesting as a clubzine.

Anyone who wants to receive the special fiction issues should make their wishes known (regular attendees of the workshops will automatically receive one) and written criticism can be received by people who--for one reason or another--cannot attend in person.

The next issue will be a special Halloween issue and the subject is ~~the~~ supernatural, macabre, horror, and weird fiction.

The deadline date for submissions for the Halloween issue is October 15th. (This means written submissions, poetry, criticism, book reviews, Halloween-lore, etc. I will accept artwork contributions until October 20th.)

The magazine desperately needs artists. Martin Rayner has been doing a fabulous job, but I know that sometime Martin is going to find himself too busy to get committed to U.T.T. (besides, how will he have time to do more poetry for us if he spends all his time drawing). I'm sure that some of the readers are aspiring artists, or have friends who are. The only restrictions on what you draw for U.T.T. is that it should have a 'fantastic' theme. 'Fantastic' is quite a wide, open-ended category, and it is not restricted at all to only science fiction.

See you in October, keep those cards and contributions coming in.

THE END OF THE SCIENCE FICTION WORLD

This year has been the year that destroyed the ghetto. Sf is big business now--the top money-making film of all-time, the most expensive television show ever produced. Take a look at the toys being produced for this Christmas; Shogun Warriors with Godzilla, mercenaries, STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS minitures, GALACTICA toys. And the publishing lists of major hardback and paperback companies include more sf than ever before.

Well, the range of possibility for exploitation that

sf allows makes it probably the only genre which could take all this merchandising, ~~and still~~ and still remain interesting to a jaded public.

One of the side-effects of the merchandising phenomena is that sf magazines have come back in fine style. Even GALAXY, which has been threatening to suspend publication for years, has been yanked from the jaws of doom and plans to continue publishing indefinitely. And beside the digests, we have seen the creation of a whole field of magazines in large-formats, running the gamut from fly-by night junk to fine publications like STARLOG and FUTURE. (The visual impact, wide-range of coverage, and fairly intelligent articles make both magazines a joy--and the colour art reproduction leaves me breathless.)

The science fiction world has changed, it is not the same world we knew when we read sf in our youth. There is money here now, it is big business, and if this has some bad effects it also has the good effect of imprinting the future on the public consciousness. For the first time many people are realizing that there will be a future, on the earth, in space, and that they will live in it.

The newest entry into the mass-media sf world is a PENTHOUSE magazine creation called OMNI. (It was to have been titled NOVA, but apparently someone pointed out that the name had been used for several previous publications.)

OMNI has fiction by Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, Ron Goulart and James B. Hall, in the first issue. (It also pays about \$800.00 per story on acceptance, and this unheard of word rate will change things throughout the short fiction field, encouraging the short story tremendously.)

OMNI also covers technology in the fair-handed, well-researched manner that has become a trademark of
(continued on pg. 15.)

VOICES FROM THE OTHER SIDE

-Wherein your humble editor's views on the state of SF film (U.T.T. #1.) are examined in the cold light of reason.

IN PRAISE OF GARBAGE
by Dixie Sackett

Plants move in to open ground. After a time, earliest generations of grasses and weeds give way to other successive groups - each changing and preparing soil for the next, leading up to the ultimate and stable "climax vegetation" of an area. I wonder if the state of S.F. films couldn't be likened to plant succession. There is a lesson in nature, which produces prodigious quantities for a very few "successes."

Mr. Editor, your criticisms of S.F. films were well put, often valid, but perhaps a bit hasty. "We are being deluged in garbage. (colourful too) Hugo Gernsback would be proud." Perhaps these "spaghetti westerns in space" have their necessary place just as Gernsback had his. He prepared the way for today's S.F., and did so mostly with garbage. We may be seeing the same process in today's film industry.

S.F. is a young genre, no more than five decades old. We might look by way of comparison, at the small proportion of fine novels that have been made into quality films. Yet the novel, in our culture, is over four centuries old. Perhaps as S.F. fans we should be delighted that S.F. films are being made at all. In time quality can perhaps be refined from quantity.

You wondered, Mr. Editor, "Is it because the people who make it (the junk movie) can't think? Or because they don't want us to think?" Aren't you giving us a

dichotomy when there may be more than two choices? Perhaps we, the paying public, don't want to think, indeed actively resist any pressure to make us think. We might paraphrase for filmmakers, "Love of money is the root of all mediocrity."

But in spite of all, S.F. movies are being made and money is being made. So more will come. Gernsback might well be proud. As to their quality -- well, it takes an execrable amount of manure before any tree bears fruit

WESTERNS IN SPACE
by Garth Spencer

Our noble editor commented at length in the last U.T.T. about the tendency of science fiction to be presented to the public, as utter tripe, and ended by saying he didn't understand it. Let me suggest some reasons.

In the first place, science fiction started out to be a serious speculative branch of literature, in the hands of writers like H. G. Wells. Then came the pulp era, in which Hugo Gernsback was influential. Pulp were what comics are today, low-grade entertainment for children and other credulous life-forms which happen to belong to our species. Anyone who has seen cover from that era, or read the Cthulhu mythos by Lovecraft, knows the pulp relied on ges-whiz, whambo-zambo-type spectacle for their entertainment value. Stories like H. G. Wells' The Island Of Dr. Moreau or The Time Machine lent themselves admirably to the publisher's attempts to provide spectacular graphics or copy.

The trouble is that ever since, a lot of people have been advertising as "science-fiction"

what is not. So we have miseries on screen like "The Incredible Melting Man." They aren't reasonably based on a "What if X...?" or "If this goes on...." speculation. They try to provide entertainment by spectacle, by blowing the audience's minds. This is more or less what Lovecraft was after.

The odd thing is that, while spectacular (and often very bad) fiction was being mistaken for S.F., works in both categories were providing entertainment.

Let us agree that "Star Wars" is the same sort of thing as "Flash Gordon" and "Buck Rogers". It's not science fiction, but one tends to call it that. All three are what I'm calling spectacular fiction, the same sort of thing as appeared in the pulps. My point is that all three provide at least a minimal, superficial entertainment. I can't think of anyone who didn't enjoy "Star Wars" (except William E. Buckley's wife, and who's heard of her?). And how many of you watched "Flash Gordon Conquers The Universe" and enjoyed it? Come on, be honest.

In the second place, science fiction is confused with fantasy or spectacular fiction because there is often a good deal of the fantastic about S.F. anyway. In the "Terminal Man", a computer implant designed to calm a man's mind turns him into a homicidal maniac. This may be credible to a computer technician but it is fantastic to someone without such training. The premise of "The Andromeda Strain" may be entirely plausible, but just does not seem very likely to, say, a farmer treating his family to a drive-in movie in Kelowna. Yet these are about the "hardest" S.F. stories I can think of.

One can only find merit in a form of entertainment if in fact it entertains. The weakness of S.F. is

that, like horror movies, fairy tales, and "The Lord Of The Rings" it will not entertain those who will not suspend their disbelief.

Having been once in contact with an inferior form of entertainment, it will be hard for S.F. to lose the taint. I think we can expect a great many people to think of it as "that crazy way-out Buck Rogers stuff" for a long while yet.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA a movie review by David Thomson

The newest S.F. movie to hit Victoria is BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, playing at the Odeon 2. The movie runs about two hours and is well worth the \$3.50 admission--plus the added attraction of a Woody Woodpecker cartoon. The overall special effects are excellent and John Dykstra has outdone himself. The film basically follows the book, but as expected parts have been cut down or eliminated in order to condense the film into two hours. Mind you, there are film scenes which were not in the book, which is confusing if you have read the book before you see the movie.

I will say there are some disappointments--to my point of view anyhow--in dialogue and filming. One concerns the Colonial star fighter Viper. There are two scenes in which this ship is on a planet's surface, one is on Adama's home world. In this shot the Viper looks like a wooden model painted silver. You could not see any detail at all. The other scene is at the close and unfortunately looks like it is, full scale mock-ups against a backdrop. The helmets used by the ships' pilots are outlined by lights--what these are supposed to do I have no idea--while the uniforms are a cross

took me three-and-a-half hours to read it, and if you can read 224 pgs. in the same time then it's probably worth it--if you're interested. There are, however, a lot of much better books that you could be reading.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Glen A. Larsen & Robert Thurston
Totem Books \$2.25

LUCIFER'S HAMMER

Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle
Pawcett Crest Books \$2.50

This is a big-budget disaster novel with a cast of thousands. The plot is not especially original (a comet strikes the earth) but Niven and Pournelle handle it in a way that is gripping and they add enough interesting touches to make many sf fans interested in the book. The novel is written in the plastic, general-american best-seller style, and most of the characters are die-out from the movie-of-the-week factory. Still, Niven and Pournelle bring a nice hard-science outlook to the disaster genre, pull very few punches, and occasionally even stumble onto a remarkable character. The story is thought-provoking and even, at times, profoundly moving.

DINOSAUR PLANET

Anne McCaffrey
Orbit Books \$2.25

DINOSAUR PLANET is enough to make me stop and wonder if Anne McCaffrey really deserved her Hugo and Nebula awards. It is a slice of xenophobia that tops BATTLESTAR GALACTICA for vileness. The story concerns a survey crew that encounters a planet mysteriously stocked with Terran mesozoic fauna. Part of the survey crew, the villainous Heavy-worlders, provide what action there is (this being a universally dull book) by being totally and completely evil. It reminds me of the way that Robert E. Howard relentlessly plugged at the yellow peril. In fact, McCaffrey's prose style harks

powerful):

"Too late now to say that the heavy-worlders had been discreet in their vile pursuits. Too late to wish she'd never wanted to check into their activities."

There is nothing good about any of the heavy-worlders. At no point does McCaffrey portray their point-of-view or even attempt to understand them. They are simply repulsive, the bad-guys brought in to liven up a dull book.

And what is so repulsive about them? Why, they kill animals and eat meat.

Frankly I felt a lot more sympathy with the Heavy-worlders than with the wimps who are the book's protagonists. For example, Varian--an interstellar vet--portrays her complete lack-of-understanding about natural systems when she thinks:

"It was one thing for beasts to fight and kill each other, following the dictates of an ecology (not that she was prevented from succouring the weaker when she could)..."

If Varian could systematically succour all the 'weaker' then the result would be a population explosion, plummeting them into sickness, starvation, and a far-less clean death than at the jaws of a carnivore. (And a locust looks 'weak' too, in the right situation.) At one point Varian forces a heavy-worlder to kill a Trannyosaurus because (now why didn't someone tell her that carnivores always exist in limited numbers in their range) she sees in it's killing a trace of enjoyment (which she terms 'cruelty'). These are the sick projections of a human mind, used to justify the destruction of a delicately balanced ecology.

It doesn't help that the novel plods along--the only plot element beside everyone wondering what the heavy-worlders are doing behind their backs is the randomly-injected love interest. (McCaffrey often suffers from 'love

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people's relationships and not nineteenth century infatuation.) To top it all off, the novel doesn't end. It is written for a sequel, with all the good-guys in cyrogenic suspension, waiting for the cavalry to arrive.

It would be better to let them sleep it off.

A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE

Michael Bishop

Berkley Books

\$1.75

Michael Bishop's first novel was the intricate and mystical A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE, a finely crafted book displaying great talent. I have yet to read his other two novels (STOLEN FACES and AND STRANGE AT THE ECTABAN TREES), but I suspect that A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE may be his first attempt at telling a story from multiple viewpoints (the sort of trick that a writer like Philip K. Dick pulls off with such well-choreographed success). A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE has it's moments, one couldn't expect less from as good a writer as Bishop, but somehow it never quite lives up to it's promise. A lot is happening; the earth is in the grip of the fundamentalist religious sects, aliens are converting to Christianity, and the dome-city of Atlanta is rife with religious war--but somehow the book has no unity. Bishop's widely published short-stories of the dome-city of Atlanta made it seem a far more interesting place than it is here.

A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE has a very Dickish atmosphere, black humour building to occasional horror, but it is carried off with very little control or sense of style. There isn't even a true climax here, just a weary downhill slide to the last page.

Read Bishop's next book. He's too good not to have learned from A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE and it's bound to be better.

JOURNEY

Marta Randall

Pocket Books

\$1.95

JOURNEY is the story of one generation of a family of human colonists on another world. It is a science fiction 'family' novel (although not on the epic scale of James Michner or Simak's CITY, it covers only a short span of time) and it is definitely a success. The events are gripping, the characters are memorable, and the various life-styles and relationships portrayed in the novel are examined in a pleasingly realistic way. This is not DINOSAUR PLANET folks, there is no swoon-style romance. The people are real, complex and sometimes irrational, even dying occasionally before they've had a chance to finish living. There are no pulp-outs in this book--like cyrogenic suspension. The characters must meet their problems head-on and solve them alone.

Sometimes they lose.

None of Marta Randall's ideas are especially new to SF, but she writes well and every idea seems fresh. It is, simply, very enjoyable reading.

MASTODONIA

Clifford Simak

Del Rey Books (hardback) \$9.95

Clifford D. Simak is one of the grand old men of science fiction (he's been writing it since it was scientifiction) and he has received a Grand Master Award from the SFWA. He is the genre's most accomplished pastoralists, and his plain-folks characters and rustic settings make the wonders he places within them sparkle like diamonds in a field of fresh, green grass. I am, I admit, a Simak-addict and in awe of his descriptive talents, nevertheless MASTODONIA is one of the dullest time-travel stories ever written. The actual story

doesn't begin until page 150-- which, with only 50 pages left, isn't much of a recommendation for the novel. This book has been over-pastoralized--i.e. very little happens and most of what happens occurs off-stage.

I'd recommend instead Simak's next to newest book, A HERITAGE OF STARS or (if you haven't read it yet) his all-time classic CITY.

THE WORLD IS ROUND

Tony Rothman
Del Rey Books

\$1.95

This is a first novel by a previously unpublished writer, and as hard-science stories go this is a good one. It tells the story of a gigantic world called Patra-Bannk (Freeze-Bake) by the natives. The world is much too large, with much too small a mass, to be explained by physical laws; and because of its axial tilt, period of rotation, and period of revolution around its primary, the world's day-night and weather cycles make life a constant fight for survival.

There is a lot that is touched on in the book that could have been developed further; the dependence of man upon natural events for his social development; the importance of a method of telling time to human societies; the awakening of a scientific way of exploring the universe in a culture based on myth. But the book is still a good read, an adventure story (that puts one, somehow, in mind of H. Rider Haggard) which touches on enough points of scientific interest to be engrossing.

COLONY
Ben Bova
Pocket Books

\$2.25

This is one of the first SF books to deal with an O'Neill-type space colony. Bova places his story in his future history series (it occurs a decade or so after the events of the excellent

MILLINEUM) and writes it in his rapid-fire, Brunneresque, political-novel style.

Bova is very good at what he does as a story-teller. His characters always interest and the story always catapults one forward (I read this 470 pg. book in two days). However, you should be warned that very little of COLONY deals with O'Neill colonies. Virtually all the action occurs on earth and is concerned with the political situation there. Nothing is wrong with that, but I can't help feeling that if Bova had taken the time to develop a society 300 years after the establishing of the colonies then the story would have been much more interesting and also closer to what it is advertised as being on the book-jacket.

There are more books to be written about space colonization. COLONY is, nevertheless, good fiction and Bova at his finest.

IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT

Gregory Benford
Dell

\$1.75

Benford is one of the best writers of the last few years. A scientist himself, he brings considerable literary skill, knowledge, and a fine prose style to 'hard science' fiction. Better yet, he proves that a novel of character (are there any other kinds?) can be 'traditional' sf.

Briefly, this novel concerns Nigal Walmsley, himself an alien--an englishman working for NASA--and his several brushes with 'alien life. It is a book about communication, about the meeting and the attempt to understand the 'aliens' by Nigal, and finally about the attempt to understand himself. It is probably the best book of the year and everyone with the least bit of interest in sf should read it.

SWORD OF THE DEMON
Richard A. Lupoff
Avon

\$1.75

This is a marvelous book, reminiscent of Zelazny at the top of his form, mixing myth and magic, written in a fine, elegant, oriental style. The setting for this fantasy is ancient Japan, and the sense of things Japanese is infused into every word that Lupoff chooses to tell his story. This is a rich book, one that needs to be read and savoured slowly, examined like an oriental watercolour.

Lupoff is about to become famous, and SWORD OF THE DEMON is only one reason. (The other reason is THE SPACE WAR BLUES Dell \$1.95) If you haven't been reading him yet you should start now.

THE FANTASTIC FOUR
Stan Lee & Jack Kirby
Pocket Books

\$1.95

Splendidly reproduced in scintillatin' colour (albeit a little too small) these paperback size reproductions of the first six issues of THE FANTASTIC FOUR are sure to bring back fond memories for people who spent any part of their childhood/adolescence with Ben Grimm, Reed Richards, Sue and Johnny Storm.

(DR. STRANGE and THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN are also available in this format.)

The artists-writers who work on HEAVY METAL could learn a lesson from Stan Lee and company. There are stories here that are not just dependant on the artwork. There are the beginnings of characters, more so than in other comics, people who we care about and feel for.

End plug, 'Nuff said.

THE EARTH BOOK OF STORMGATE
Poul Anderson
Berkley (hardback) \$14.75

THE EARTH BOOK is Anderson's latest future-history book, a collection that deals with the Polesotechnic League, the planet Avalon, and especially with human-ythrian relations. The Ythrian's were the subject previously of a novel PEOPLE OF THE WIND. This collection, THE EARTH BOOK, has been assembled by a ythrian of the Stormgate Choth for the purpose of instructing his fellow Ythrians about mankind. It includes all short fiction dealing with the Ythrians, as well as other material (including a Van Rijn novel THE MAN WHO COUNTS) to give Ythrian readers an insight into human psychology.

There are good stories here, hard-science stories that constantly approach prose poetry. And the Ythrians have to be one of the most beautiful creations of science fiction.

Excellent reading.

NEW VOICES 1: THE CAMPBELL AWARD
NOMINEES
Edited by George R.R. Martin
A Jove/BBJ Book \$1.75

I read STELLER FOUR the other day and was amazed to find that every story in the anthology was awful. Not just dull, but terrible (including Tiptree's). After seeing all those old pros go down the tubes, I was pleasantly surprised by NEW VOICES 1. The John W. Campbell award is given to the 'best new writer of the year' at the Worldcon. This anthology presents an original story by each of the nominees for the first Campbell award. Every story is entertaining and, at least one, is among the best short stories of the year.

When there are stories and writers like these, how can Judy Ly Del Roy get away with publishing the mindless garbage in STELLER FOUR??!



I

On the winds and waters... dawn appears,
In a cloak of mists and tears,
Striding upon the time and tide,
And breathing down the mountainside.
Night departs and leaves no trace,
Save sentries in their measured pace,
Warily clasping spears to their breast;
From campfires smould'ring in the West.

II

Trumpets stir, whose notes are clear,
The echoes of ten-thousand years;
Funereal music is faintly heard in
The aging bones of rocks and ruins.
Broken ploughs and burnished blades
Scattered over hills and glades:
In phalanx waves, banners furl,
About the crescent, neatly curl.
Thund'ring volleys, pierce an empty sky;
Breathless cannons await reply.
And with an anxious parting glance,
Spurred and reluctant lines advance...

III

No word is spoken and no one hears,
When the field of battle clears.
No man stands upon the plain,
Where lie the nameless victims slain.
No coffin-board or epitaph,
No one to sit back and laugh...

MR

Confined and Barricaded

Cages confine character references
Bars barricade broken dreams,
Escapism is unethical
When confined and barricaded.

G.B. Harper

When...

When the skies of dusk effuse
And the sheets of light diffuse.
When the graveyard vapour clings,
To shroud immortal things.
When horizons open wide,
In the foetid prisons slide.
When suns bend to the flood,
In the twilight of your blood.

MR

Song of the Gulls

Grey waves ride towards the shore,
Above the cliffs, gulls dance and soar,
Then wheel in flight over the sea,
Like notes entwined in symphony.

Lone crimson shaft of yesterday;
Stabs the night, then draws away,
To render dark, nocturnal peace,
Within the faceless shadow's fleece.

MR

Photographs of yesterday still,
Sweep their pain and spill,
Worn impressions on dusty scrolls.
Herein forgotten, rivers roll,
Over memories that drift apart,
And touch another's heart.

Frail young men spin somber tales;
weigh their tears on scales.
Sidling up the railless stair,
in a spiral gait: despair.

Marionettes dance on open graves;
turn pirouettes and wave.
In a mimic play for curious eyes,
the danse macabre dies.

Puppets collapse.... cut, broken wires,
tossed into the sanguine fires.
Glasses emptied of the world,
down rain-laced streets are hurled.

M.R.



SCIENCE FICTION AND THE
TRANSCENDENTAL EXPERIENCE

by Stan G. Hyde

Roy Neary is driving along a road when a brilliant light shatters the darkness, blinding him, infusing him with a message from above. So Saul was met upon the road to Damascus, and given the message of the Lord. Those who have seen the U.F.O.s are driven mad by visions, abandoning their families and breaking the law in their search for a greater 'truth,' finally gathering at the base of a mountain to hear the words of the visitors from heaven.

It is no coincidence that, earlier in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, Roy Neary's children are watching THE TEN COMMANDMENTS on television. The signs in the sky; the aliens in their messianic haloes; the raising up of a chosen believer into a world beyond, all of these things work together to create a mood akin to religious awe.

Many critics have noted similarities between CZEK and Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Certainly this 'religious feeling' contributes to the climax of both films. Consider the difference if the beings on the other side of the 'star gate' had not been the creators of mankind but merely interested beings from another part of the galaxy?

Even the films of George Lucas, whose impact have been more physical than emotional, do not fail to address the question of religion. The repressed, inward-looking society of THX 1138 has debased the spiritual, Jesus is an illuminated portrait and a recorded voice.

In STAR WARS it is the 'force' that binds the universe together and guides the actions of men. (A fact that has caused some science fiction fans to criticise the film. For if Luke must 'trust the force' then surely it is some mystical power that allows good to triumph over evil. Man is no longer the maker of his own destiny but merely the pawn in some battle between distant, abstract forces.)

Now isn't it odd that a 'nuts-and-bolts' type of fiction, a genre based on solid scientific extrapolation, so often finds its boundaries extending beyond that into the transcendental, spiritual realm.

Well, certainly written sf, as well as filmed sf, has a long history of confronting gods, and many stories are based on religious themes. Robert Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, the top-selling science fiction novel of all time, is the story of the birth of a religion, complete with miracles, life-after-death, the establishment of a church, a martyr, and even ritual cannibalism (as when Jesus's body is eaten when one accepts the host). In James Blish's classic A CASE OF CONSCIENCE a Jesuit priest perceives that an entire planet is a deception of Satan and he is, eventually, forced to exorcise it. On the mars of C.S. Lewis' OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET there has been no original sin, mars is an eden which has never known the Satanic rebellion. And the universe can even end for religious reasons. In Arthur C. Clarke's THE NINE BILLION NAMES OF GOD, a group of tibetan monks enlist the aid of a computer to calculate a list of God's nine billion names. When the computer finishes the stars go out, one by one. Mankind's reason for existing is over, his duty is complete.

Sf examines religion from several different points-of-view. Often it is a question of examining the social and political significance of religious belief. Since the days of Galileo there has been conflict between men of god and men of science. Certain kinds of facts about the universe's physical nature can be damaging to certain kinds of faith. The scientist is often the champion of free-thought, defying the boundaries of dogma. But the question of political significance goes beyond the repression of science, and stories like Robert Heinlein's REVOLT IN 2100 portray a future society where religious dictatorships control absolutely. A similar situation is portrayed in William Rotsler's TO THE LAND OF THE ELECTRIC ANGEL, and in Fritz Leiber's stylish GATHER DARKNESS the free-thinking revolutionaries must style themselves as witches to attack the government that rules by 'divine right', and even stages miracles to prove it.

There is another side to this coin, in which the church plays the role of a civilizing influence, keeping human culture alive through the new 'dark ages.' This is the situation in Sterling E. Lanier's excellent heroic quest novel HERO'S JOURNEY. It is also examined, in a more thoughtful way, in Walter Miller Jr's, A CANTICLE FOR LEBOWITZ. Here the monks of the order of St. Lebowitz are the heroes, risking their lives to bring order to the chaos that is the result of a nuclear war, re-birthing society, dying so that a few scraps of knowledge are saved.

Sf also approaches religion from the viewpoint of mythology. Gods and religious mythologies were born of man's attempt to explain the cosmos-why there was lightning, why there were seasons. Science fiction occupies a similar niche, exploring the universal. Brian Aldiss,

one of the genre's most respected critics, has defined sf as,

"...the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould."

Ignoring the stylistic mould of sf it is clear that this definition makes sf akin to myth, seeking to create an understanding of the universe and mankind's place in it. It is easy to see why many sf writers draw heavily on mythology. Sf is a place where the old myths are being replaced by the new, and many of it's writers--aware of this debt--have acknowledged it openly. Writers like Roger Zelazny (LORD OF LIGHT--CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS) and Samuel R. Delany (THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION--NOVA) have taken the old gods and wonder of mythology and followed them down a new labyrinth, transforming them and re-examining mythology's revelations under a new light.

Perhaps in the pursuit of this question, of a definition of man, sf must finally come to accept man's divinity and his responsibility for his own destiny. In Lester Del Rey's short story EVENSONG an all-powerful being is pursued by the creatures who it has raised up out of savagery. He has tried to control their destiny and they have revolted. Finally, captured, the being pleads, "But I am God!"

And the others reply, "But we are man."

Whatever the answer, sf must continue to seek it out, for it lies at the basis of it's nature. Whether man is the maker of his own destiny, or merely has some small part to play in a greater one; whether faith is a constriction or a necessary part of human

society, god-and his possible
natures-is essential to the
basic question that sf asks.
For we must explore and discover
ourselves, even if we must behold
the face of God to do it.

**A CHECKLIST OF SF WITH RELIGIOUS
THEMES**

FIIM:

2001:A SPACE ODYSSEY-Stanley Kubrick
& Arthur C. Clarke
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND-
Steven Spielberg
STAR WARS-George Lucas
THX 1138-George Lucas
THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL-Robert
Wise & Harry Bates
DEMON SEED-Dean R. Koontz
ZARDOZ-John Boorman

NOVELS:

IF THE STARS ARE GODS-Gregory Benford
& Gordon Eklund
A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE-Michael Bishop
A CASE OF CONSCIENCE-James Blish
NOVA-Samuel R. Delany
THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION-Samuel R.
Delany
THE NIGHT OF LIGHT-Philip Jose Farmer
STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND-Robert A.
Heinlein
REVOLT IN 2100-Robert A. Heinlein
THE INFINITE AT LARGE-Carl Kapeek
HIMROES JOURNEY-Sterling R. Lenier
GATHER DARKNESS-Fritz Leiber
OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET-C. S. Lewis
VOYAGE TO VENUS-C. S. Lewis
THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH-C. S. Lewis
BEHOLD THE MAN-Michael Moorcock
TO THE LAND OF THE ELECTRIC ANGEL-
William Roessler
LORD OF LIGHT-Roger Zelazny
CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS-
Roger Zelazny

SHORT STORIES:

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN-Poul Anderson
THE LAST QUESTION-Isaac Asimov
THE QUEST FOR SAINT AQUIN-Anthony
Boucher
THE MAN-Ray Bradbury
THE STAR-Arthur C. Clarke
THE NINE BILLION NAMES OF GOD-
Arthur C. Clarke
THINGS WHICH ARE CAESAR'S-
Gordon R. Dickson
THE DEATHBIRD-Harlan Ellison
PAIN-GOD-Harlan Ellison
THE WHIMPER OF WHIPPED DOGS-
Harlan Ellison
EVENSONG-Lester Del Rey
THOMAS THE PROCLAIMER-Robert
Silverberg
GOOD NEWS FROM THE VATICAN-
Robert Silverberg

THE END OF THE SF WORLD
(continued from pg. 3.)

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