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EDITORIAL



I Think I'm Picking Up Wavelengths—Hold On for a Second

Those good vibrations—always a help in making a man cheerful. If you're not onto those vibes, wait awhile, it will come to you.

I think it's been missed in science fiction's history, and practically not researched at all, but it seems to me the New Wave of the 70s brought in a whole lot of new concepts, which many have overlooked while taking in the more morbid aspects of the New Wave—that is the influx of "Psychedelic" sf, the form of writing which related to "consciousness expansion", the "far out", the visionary use of the mind. It might have angered a lot of the sf writers of the time to have incoming writing referred to as "far out"—what in that could possibly be of interest to science fiction? It was already far out, yet they had their own form of far out that was supposed to be new, a "new perception of reality" that was supposed to be superior to standard science fiction and perhaps above or outside of their own speculative forays. Study CANOPUS IN ARGUS, very difficult of comprehension, with no clues in it to what it was about. Look at THE SOFT MACHINE and wonder what might have happened to the English language. NOVA EXPRESS? It seems to be going beyond hip or ordinary cosmic consciousness, understandable by way of fold in and cut-up methods familiar perhaps to Dadaists. We are introduced to the Megaverse, apprehensible by meditating upon a moebius strip or a Klein bottle; we know now about alternate realities (such as are seen in THE WALLS OF THE UNIVERSE and inverse concepts of inter-dimensionality perhaps evolved from FLATLAND) and time paradoxes which perhaps have some symbolic meaning. New science comes into play also, with black holes, singularities, and other things apprehended in space once thought void to match the desolation of planets substantiated by NASA.

These were somewhat outside the course of science fiction, but right on the spot science fiction has taken this new wave approach into consideration and you find it in novels (you can't say they aren't novels, they are novel enough) like ARCHITECTS OF EMORTALITY, FINITY, INFINITY BEACH, BEYOND INFINITY, FLASHFORWARD, even the works of Dan Brown—though failed works of this nature are about as novel as an Eskimo eating out of an icebox. An author has to be careful in works of this kind to justify their contents, because the concepts involved are very difficult to work with, and the work visibly involved in the making of them cause them to be less smoothly written, less glib, as it were, than earlier science fiction. Some of the machinery involved in putting across the new scientific

concepts is enough to roast its characters, or mummify them if it is a more active machine, and there is a loss of characters one can easily identify with, if this is desirable in a novel. Character development is a rather slow process if the characters are all frozen in hydroponic sleep for a couple of hundred years. What is happening to interesting characterization here? Sometimes the only action in these stories is the working of the ships. When a story has more machinery than men and women in it, I think its advancements are too much away from people and how they are; I'd rather look at a person than a machine. In this way I think scientific advancement (which suffers from being theoretical) is too harmful to a story.

You have, also, machines which accomplish what no man can accomplish, such as bringing the dead back to life, preserving life beyond the scope of mortality, organizing flyers which disappear in the wind, etc., and a science which makes an experimenter superior to a person being experimented upon, whereas this is not actual superiority, and seems to challenge the humanistic attitude. A lot of fantasy stories are apt to have supernatural attacks on the scientist, perhaps while he is busy placing metallic implants. Give me a good old-fashioned fantasy about helpful fairies saving adventurers from dragons instead. Psychedelic fantasies are apt to be cruel, above life, outside of actual existence, and devoid of human feelings—although this is described as “transcendent”, but who profits from the transcendence? These science fiction and fantasy stories play off of metaphysical concepts which have always been found in science fiction, have backgrounds like the writings of Rosicrucians, or the state of nirvana taken from Zen Buddhism (which is commonly viewed as fantasy), or telepathic oneness abstracted from synergy, (there's a story based on synergy, called syzygy, in the latest F&SF), all very cerebral when studied from the viewpoint of science, or when science is acting according to it.

The fifties brought about stories so farfetched that they made full use of what science fiction had had, and sort of ran out of science fiction concepts as it proceeded into the sixties, with people not knowing what to write about next, aside from embellishing concepts already worked with. This may be what resulted in the New Wave mutation of concepts and conceptual combinations; science fiction also became fixated on spaceships, often to the point where the spaceships were the most important part of a story, rather than just a means of transportation. Some have had the idea that fantasy situations could be moved into science fiction, others (and this shows in how F&SF is becoming) think the answer to perplexity about writing may be found in the avant-garde approach, which has little fealty to science. If we must progress rapidly, let's not have it be progress for its own sake; let's have it be about something, and fitting. The avant-garde is sheer drive. In fact, it may be that it was started in the present time, surpassed the speed of light, and retro-d itself into the sixties, proceeding more placidly with the results it had experienced, as Einstein has said will happen if the speed of light is exceeded. (This has not yet been experimentally tested—or maybe it has been.)

So, good vibrations, touch of spirit to spirit via means not as yet fully known to us, though we are working on understanding instinct and intuition, but our work seems to stop when the work becomes established. Should we have more spirituality and humanism in our writings? People are not really optioning for it these days, that I have seen, but it may be optioning for it, itself, as with there being primal drives and desires within us that search for their expression. A lot of the new movement for self-realization is hung on Karl Jung, who writes scientifically from a spiritual realm. From him we get only substantiation. But I wish someone would write a good story based on these new-thought

premises.

The ranklings of the new-born Age of Aquarius? Jung suggested this might be so. When a lot of people think something is so, it has its truth. We'd do better with that than we do with fully substantiated concepts which may be irrelevant or erroneous. We are less matter-dependent with that in mind. And we ought not be dependent on things which are non-responsive.

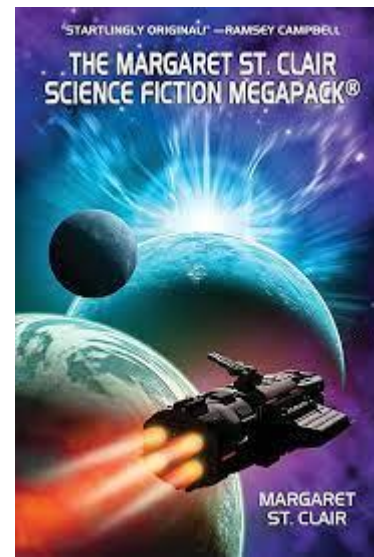
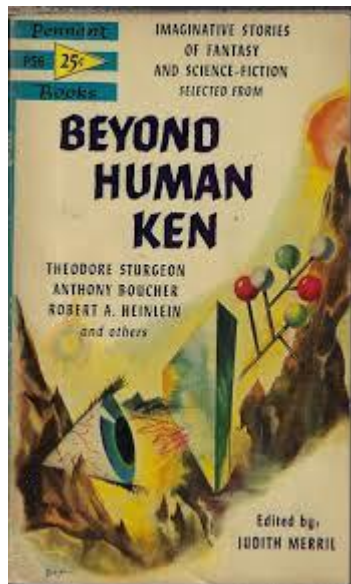
We still are not having very spiritual science fiction, which is a lack science fiction has always had and which I think explains the influx of the sixties, where Star Trek has a kind of missionary slant to it, and when STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND came into being, which has a kinship with the "Love Generation". Also Theodore Sturgeon had people searching for and finding love and redemption in his stories, generally by the hard way. Sturgeon became at last interested in Synergy, which is soul contact. In "It Wasn't Syzygy", it wasn't because it was sex, a drawback he had found in things. Phillip Jose Farmer found disaster attendant upon love in his stories. The new influx found an interest in things of the spirit, rassing with the spiritual conceptions and the spiritual, or magical, approach to things. People are speaking of horror becoming a third adjunctive to science fiction and fantasy; we find that horror involves misunderstood close contact and when we search for new and different things we are apt to encounter situations of horror.

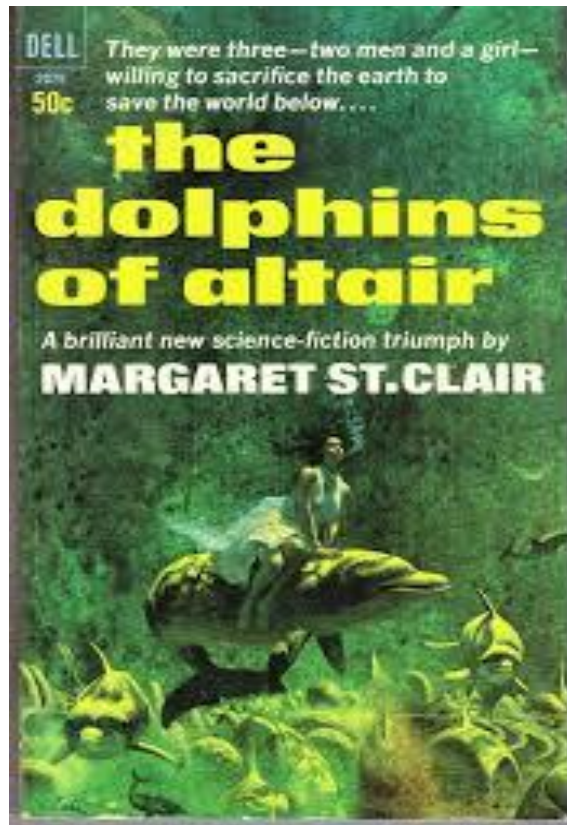
When we don't look for the "soul of science fiction", we aren't delving very deeply into our reading or finding out what science fiction may be all about. We might look to science fiction art to find more about the spiritual qualities science fiction does have, and there are tries at science fiction music, which looks for the good vibrations which might be emitted by the science fiction search. But in all of this we may become preoccupied by the search itself, and what it involves; it is where we are active, and find ourselves studying ourselves. In our computer activities, we become preoccupied by computer skills, and we are less with communication and with furtherance other than the development of computer skills. "Making the d--- thing work" is where we find ourselves.

My original idea in suggesting that we have this bureau was having something that would explain science fiction and get people more acquainted with it. This became the more substantial history and research bureau, which does in fact study and develop understanding and acquaintance with science fiction and fantasy fiction. What lies under the material we read? Research finds answers to this, and history shows where it came from. Jeffrey Redmond was doing well at this interpretive research, until it was found that he was quoting a lot of things verbatim without accrediting the sources, by people doing research on him and us. There's an overall attitude in what he writes, which is either him or everybody having the same attitude. We're missing what he has brought forth; he was very accurate in discovering things. A good researcher, otherwise. His writing had quality titles, apparently his own judging by their consistency. We continue to do a good job of history and research, while lacking what Redmond has uncovered.

Still looking for those good vibrations, while being also jangled by bad vibrations. I think we want to have more spirit in our researches.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE FICTION: IDRIS SEABRIGHT, AKA MARGARET SAINT CLAIR by John Thiel





Here we have two writers, of equal stature, going by the same name, and I learn from Google that they are the same person. One is Idris Seabright, the other Margaret St. Clair, and I find that Margaret St. Clair is the real name of the author. Having always liked the writings of Idris Seabright, from seeing a story by her first in Judith Merrill's anthology BEYOND HUMAN KEN, I took the liberty of using the pen-name for this view of the author, as Idris was who I had chosen to write about in this issue, being thereafter surprised in doing my research to discover the duplicity, so to speak. Also, I've read more of Seabright than Saint Clair (all the while not knowing it was really Saint Clair I was reading, for the editors were not letting on about it, perhaps not knowing about it, and were doing portraits of Seabright that I suppose were not very factual, for St. Clair had established a second identity), though both were found together in more than one of Groff Conklin's anthologies, with individual bios, these inclusions making "them" mainstream, in terms of fantasy and science fiction. I found "Idris" to be eccentric and outre, Saint Clair to be uncanny, a similarity. Both were quite fitted for a place in science fiction, fixed and eternal. Groff Conklin said once that these qualities fit in well with science fiction. I did notice in reading them that there was some similarity in these "two" writers.

Stories that I read and found memorable by Idris were Short in the Chest, The Man Who Sold Rope to the Gnoles, The Altruists, c/o Mr. Makepiece, White Goddess, Brightness Falls from the Air, and Stawdust. From the work of Margaret St. Clair the memorable stories were The Pillows, Prott, Horrер Howse, The Goddess on the Street Corner, Lazarus, To Please the Master, Vulcan's Dolls, and Piety.

Margaret St. Clair, a prolific writer, was native to Hutchinson, Kansas, born in February, 1911.

THE POSITIVE, THE NEGATIVE, AND SELF RESPECT

by Judy Carroll



I grew up trying to see the positive things in life.

As a young child—if an arm came off a stuffed bear. “Don’t cry. Mommy can fix it.”

As an older child—if someone broke their right arm. “It’s a good thing you are left handed.”

As a teenager—if a friend tried out for the school band. “You’re not the lead drummer, but you are in the band.”

As an adult—talking to a child who accidentally broke a glass. “It’s okay. Even grownups make mistakes.”

And on and on and on.

The older I become the more I see and feel the negative actions of others. Now, don’t misunderstand me. I do have negative thoughts like—“Seriously, she told me she needed that, and I didn’t even get a thank you.” Or a mother yelling at her little girl, “I don’t care what you have. Get in the car, or you’re staying home.” All the little girl wanted to do was to show her mom the heart she made, which reads, “I love you, mommy.” “Doesn’t she realize how hurt her daughter is? I would like to give that mom a dream and let her know how much it hurts to feel rejected by someone she loves.”

I know how hard it is to trust someone and then feel rejected, or used, or discover they are no longer interested in being friends. There are so many emotions one goes through—surprise, bewilderment, sadness, despair, self doubt. And, of course, the mental self-attack. What did I do wrong? Was it something I said or did? What is wrong with me?

What can we do about the situation? Sometimes we may be able to “fix” whatever was “wrong”. But if not—now what?

The only answer I can come up with is self-respect. We need to realize that we must go on. Just our no longer being friends with someone doesn’t mean there is something wrong with us. And we should try our best to think kind thoughts about the person or persons who have hurt us. No matter what other people say or do we should always run our lives in a positive manner. I know it’s not always easy to be positive and it’s hard to stop dwelling on what happened and let it go.

Negative thoughts can ruin our lives if we let them take hold of us and nest in our hearts.

Following are a few positive quotes to help dissolve the negative feelings.

The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.—Marcus Aurelius

Folks are usually about as happy as they make up their minds to be.—Abraham Lincoln

The best way to cheer yourself is to cheer someone else up.—Mark Twain

Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.—Mother Teresa

Another Look at Jeffrey, See How He's Getting Along.



LOOKING BACK OVER THE ISSUE



Togetherness, the doing of things together, is what we want of organized activities. Nothing is really “Go” until we are functioning with others in a group for the fulfillment of similar aims. Judy’s description of negative attitudes in this issue is a good example of what is going on all over—a lack of attention to others, forgetfulness of those we know, desertion of people we have worked with, loss of good feelings we have had about what we do, all of these things have caused a lot of trouble in science fiction and fantasy fandom. A person should indeed retain self-respect and should not relinquish what is right in the things he has done. Why not keep with what is right in what we do? We would be much happier that way and relate to others in a way we should wish to maintain. What profits can people list coming from negative behavior?

Well, that’s our issue for this month, and I hope some of what we have written has given you a certain amount of good cheer. “What we need in life,” said St. Nicholas, “is good will.’ We should keep good in our minds as well as our feelings.