

Introduction

by Harry Harrison

Many, many years ago when there wasn't a single college professor in the world who taught a science fiction course—I told you that this was very long ago—Brian Aldiss and I decided that what the world really needed was a little magazine devoted to SF criticism. Since no one in the world cared much about this idea, Brian and I, acting as both editors and publishers, brought this project to fruition. *SF Horizons* was born, and, for good or evil, reasoned criticism entered the science fiction scene for the first time. The relevance of these exciting facts will become clear when I mention that this journal contained a series of short items, very handy to fill in the bits of white space at the end of articles, that were labelled Cabinet of Curiosities. These consisted of fragments of SF stories ripped out of context and dutifully commented upon. I recall one, from a story by Poul Anderson, that read 'He swept the room with the eyes of a trapped animal.' After which Brian commented 'A gnu broom sweeps clean?' I am most pleased to see that the spluttering torch of hilarious disrespect has been seized by the short hairs and thrust up to public view in the volume that you are holding in your hand. How, you might ask, is such mockery and disrespect of any value? Should we really make fun of the things we love? The answer to this must be a resounding YES! Science fiction in general—and the readers in particular—can only benefit by any improvements made in the abysmal writing standards that we have come to accept all too mildly in our beloved field of literary and cinematic endeavour.

Also—no justification is really needed. Just relax and enjoy the mind-boggling hilarity that follows. Turn the pages and lose yourself in the side-splitting galaxy of guffaws culled from all the films you were ashamed to see, the books that you were too disgusted to read.

PART ONE
The Books

Attention Please

ATTACK OF THE KILLER BLURBS

A blurb is a brief description of the contents of a book, designed to tease or entice a casual browser into buying it. A blurb should be short, accurate, tantalizing, and give some evidence that the blurb writer has actually read the book being described.

However, even a cursory glance at a few book jackets shows that such blurbs are in the minority.

Science fiction is, of course, not the only literary genre to suffer. Veteran SF author Frederik Pohl worked as an advertising copywriter in the late 1940s and mentions in his autobiography *The Way the Future Was* that he was responsible for gems such as:

In the wickedest city in the world this copper-haired giant built an empire out of gunplay, gambling and the eager hearts of women.

And the classic:

He knew the whole town's secrets but he had one secret of his own: the huge white bride's bed that he kept for the wife of another man.

These clearly demonstrate that, like all advertising, the blurb attempts to appeal to humanity's basic drives—the most accessible being SEX.

THE BLURB SEXUAL

Every woman in the city was his!

BRIAN ALDISS, *The Male Response*

It proclaims on the front cover. And on the back:

This timely story is destined to become the top *adult* science fiction novel of the year. Mr Aldiss' treatment of the many problems of sex and superstition met by a modern scientist in darkest Africa is startling. How a modern Englishman copes with the pagan passions and primitive perversions of today's torrid continent will keep your interest at fever level.

***The Male Response* is *not* science fiction, and bears little resemblance to the plot description given here.**

His fancies had come true—he was a lone man on a planet entirely inhabited by women.

POUL ANDERSON, *Virgin Planet*

WOMEN'S LIB GONE WILD. Dr. Henrietta Carey, Leader of the *FEMS*, the first woman candidate for president and the perfecter of VITA-LERP, the biological skin cream designed to do away with superfluous men, it spelled WAR BETWEEN THE SEXES.

JOHN BOYD, *Sex and the High Command*, (Bantam)

Under the surgeon's knife, Griff Sheridan had become more than any woman dared hope for . . . a superhuman twenty-fifth century lover capable of driving all girls wild!

ROSS CAMRA, *Assault*

LOUIS CHARBONNEAU, *Corpus Earthling*. **In the British edition (Digit) the cover shows a man, and the message:**

He was marked for extermination by the invaders from Mars.

The American cover is almost the same, but the man had been replaced by a full-breasted young lady and the blurb now reads:

She was marked as the first victim of the Martian invaders.

(Remarkably, both blurbs are accurate.)

He defied the twenty-fifth century with a woman who was NOT HIS WIFE—and a WIFE who was NOT A WOMAN!

PHILIP JOSE FARMER, *A Woman A Day* (also known as *Timestop* or *The Day of Timestop*), (Beacon)

Forced to make love to beautiful women! This is adult science fiction at its best.

RANDALL GARRETT AND LARRY M. HARRIS, *Pagan Passions*

The young earthmen explored a fascinating planet, twin to the sun, where one-eyed runts played endless games of sex.

JAMES GRAZIER, *Runts of 61 Cygni C.* (Belmont)

(Actually the planet was twin to the Earth, not the sun; however the blurb is far more exciting than the book it comes from.)

The Major Cult Author of our time challenges the concepts of morality and social organization in *Podkayne of Mars*. Through the eyes of beautiful adventuress and beautiful Podkayne, Robert Heinlein examines the worlds of tomorrow.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN, *Podkayne of Mars*, (NEL)

(A blurb designed to make the book, a fairly staid juvenile, sound rather naughtier than it in fact is.)

He came from Mars and changed EARTH'S IDEAS OF MORALITY!

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, (4-Square)

On a world older than time, built upon dope and vice, this was . . . SIN IN SPACE! An exposé of the Scarlet Planet!

CYRIL JUDD, *Sin in Space*

While most of these books are very innocent and just repackaged to appeal to ‘adult’ buyers, there have been a few SF porn books, such as the next two.

She was all woman. Ask the men who made her!

JACK KAHLER, *Latex Lady (AKA Rubber Dolly)*, (Carousel Books)

Harder than human! A bionic man with a computer crotch satisfies the lust cravings of a super feminine world. More than Mortal Meat!

HORST KLEPPLE, *Hard On*, (Spicy Reader)

Bizarre! Uproarious! Chilling! The most extraordinary things happen when French l’amour meets SF.

DAMON KNIGHT, ED., *13 French SF Stories*, (Corgi)

(One of the few known examples of a franglais SF blurb . . .)

Satyrs from outer space on a lusty earthbound spree.

FRITZ LEIBER, *The Green Millenium*

Potions in the house . . . Evil in the air . . . And a Witch in his bed!

FRITZ LEIBER, *Conjure Wife*

Sex kittens from outer space send two Earthmen into an orbit of eternal ecstasy.

VICTOR LOMAN, *Starship Women*, (Hustler Books)

What happens when the world’s most brilliant mind, inside the world’s finest body, is thrown for a loop by a mere woman?

FELIX MENDELSON JR., *Superbaby*

(The assumptions about men and women implicit in this blurb are staggering.)

Janet’s mission is to find a planet where sex reigns—and when she does, you can imagine her bodily gains!

MONICA MOUNDS (**Do you think that could be a pseudonym?**), *Outer Space Embrace* (AKA *Pleasure Planet* AKA *Janet’s Sex Planet* AKA *Intergalactic Orgy*—etc.) (Bee Line Books)

A startling view of life in 1984! Forbidden love! Fear! Betrayal!

GEORGE ORWELL, *1984*, (Signet—1953 edition)