

ROBERT SCHOLES

ERIC S. RABKIN

Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision

Oxford University Press, 1977.

Pp. 258. \$2.95 pa.; \$12.50 cl.

THOMAS D. CLARESON, ED.,
Many Futures, Many Worlds: Theme and Form in Science Fiction

Kent: Kent State University Press,
1977. Pp. 303. \$5.50 pa.; \$12.50 cl.

The changing status of science fiction, both critically and academically, during the past decade is illustrative of one of its own favorite themes—the acceleration of change in a technological society. Ten years ago one had to search for serious critical treatment of what was generally considered a frivolity beyond the fringe of academic respectability: today it is becoming difficult to keep abreast of articles and texts on the subject. The two works under consideration in this review show the range, quality, and style of this new seriousness.

Science Fiction, by Rabkin and Scholes is a model type of text by two distinguished American critics, who have attempted to cover the entire range of science fiction, as the subtitle suggests. The Table of Contents indicates an extensive coverage of literary history, forms, and themes; the excellent index enables the reader to find his way to specific information—of which there is a great deal. The discussion of ten representative novels is in an academically impeccable tradition.

Unfortunately, the contents are uneven. At its best it is good, as in the case of the interesting discussion of the perceived ideological conflict between Olaf Stapledon and C. S. Lewis in a sub-chapter entitled "Anti-Science Fiction"; at worst, it is glib and simplistic in the treatment of the utopian aspect of science fiction (one and a half pages) and sex in science fiction (two pages). While early science fiction admittedly *appeared* to have no sexual context, that in itself is worthy of some critical analysis. After all, by 1977 it might be expected that critics would glance with some speculation at the implications of putting four or six healthy, virile, and intelligent young men together in the close

quarters of a space ship for three or four years. Even if the speculation were not about what these alleged humans were doing when they were not watching the computer's print outs of star maps, perhaps a little interest in why the authors consistently created such situations might have been in order. As an instant documentary on the whole range of science fiction, Rabkin and Scholes's text is comprehensive, but it offers very little for readers who are at all cognizant of the genre.

Many Futures, Many Worlds is a different type of book—a collection of essays on various topics by a number of critics from such disparate disciplines as Classical studies, English, Physics, and Theology, as well as by writers of science fiction. Edited by Thomas Clareson, who has pioneered and personally encouraged a great deal of the recent bibliographical and critical work in the area of science fiction, the book should be of great interest to anyone with a serious curiosity about science fiction. Clareson has not set out to cover the whole history and scope of science fiction, but to give an insight into a number of facets through the depth of specific treatment and to do so by avoiding "special criteria . . . as though there were something so special or so inferior about science fiction that it cannot be evaluated in the same terms or manner as other fiction" (p. ix).

Of course, not all the selections are equal in quality and one—Canary's "Science Fiction as Fictive History"—is almost as incomprehensible as it is possible for academic writing to be, although I suspect that this article was conceived as a lecture and its possible success as such has not weathered the migration into print. However, there are several excellent items. Beverly Friend's "Virgin Territory: The Bonds and Boundaries of Women in Science Fiction" is both informative in its range of authors cited and witty in its chastisement of some writers whose predilection for machismo situations overcomes their common sense.

Clareson's own contribution, "Lost Lands, Lost Worlds," is a perceptive analysis of that once-popular genre whose authors include Rider Haggard and Edgar Rice Burroughs—both of whom exemplify many of the remarks made by Friend about the treatment of women by male writers. His statement that these writers

wrote in the erotic code of another generation certainly helps to explain their tremendous popularity. Thomas Wymer has a provocative essay, "Perception and Value" that places science fiction in the context of Enlightenment and romantic ideas, and Patricia Warrick's "The Man—Machine Intelligence Relationship" is a valuable addition to the perennial discussion of this topic.

Finally, in "Theology, Science Fiction and Man's Future Orientation," Norman King says, "Man, as science fiction recognizes, is a being who relentlessly searches for meaning and purpose in his life, yet is also threatened by anxiety, death, and meaninglessness. . . . Science fiction thus poses to theology the challenge of discovering and articulating ways to affirm that the quest of man is not in vain, that the human enterprise is of value" (p. 257). *Many Futures, Many Worlds* is a valuable book, both for those who have a special concern for science fiction and those whose interest in literature is more general.

William Prouty

KURT J. FICKERT

Hermann Hesse's Quest: The Evolution of the Dichter Figure in His Work
Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1978. Pp. IV, 159. Cl. \$11.50, Pa. \$6.50.

Kurt J. Fickert, Professor of German at Wittenberg University, has—since 1960—published several essays on Hesse. In this book, he reexamines Hesse's life and work paying special attention to Hesse's attitude towards the term *Dichter*—how Hesse understood the term and how he applied it to himself at different periods of his life.

Fickert proceeds chronologically; he first presents young Hesse who is "clearly under the influence of the German Romantics, with Novalis, in particular, serving as Hesse's guiding light" (p. 15). The *Dichter*, at that time, is a sort of prophet

or saint, chosen by God, something exquisite, but often "doomed to martyrdom" (p. 39). 1915 represents a "demarkation line" (p. 56) in Hesse's life; psychoanalysis and other experiences led Hesse to writing *Demian*. A *Dichter* is now "a man who can, only as a writer, truly attain realization and formulation of his essential nature" (quote from Hesse, translated by Fickert, p. 56). The role of the *Dichter*-artist, his relations with society, which needs him in order not to stagnate, are central topics in almost all of Hesse's later works. Hesse felt now that, as a *Dichter*, he had a heavy and important task; he had to live, think, and write truthfully and uncompromisingly. His final masterpiece, *The Glass Bead Game*, "tends to be a semi-allegory about *Dichtertum*" (p. 134).

Fickert's interpretation of Hesse's main novels after 1919 is—from the point of view he has chosen and to which he limits himself—enlightening and convincing.

Ingrid Schuster

A. H. GOMME, Ed.

D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Study of the Major Novels and Other Writings.

Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978.
Pp. 224. £11.50.

These essays cover a wide variety of Lawrence's works. Four are concerned entirely with his novels: *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, and the first *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The others cover Lawrence and English prose, the *England my England* stories, the *Ladybird* tales, poetry, art, and a survey of the works written in the six years after *Women in Love* (the essays on American literature, the Psychoanalysis studies, *Aaron's Rod*, *The Lost Girl*, and *Sea and Sardinia*). Most of the essays deal, therefore, with Lawrence's prose writings and not with his novels, as one might expect from the subtitle. There are also a chronology of Lawrence's life and a short bibliography.

The goal of the book, stated in Gomme's preface, is to "suggest new openings into what we may think is familiar territory";