

# Space Journal

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## Space Books

Rocket City Astronomical Association

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SPACE PREVIEW

books recent and forthcoming

Reviewed By

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Hoffman Birney, a Philadelphian by birth, has been associated with the guided missile program since 1947 when he transferred to Fort Bliss as technical editor for the Ordnance Research and Development Sub-Office Rocket. He is a writer of wide experience and author of some 25 books—fiction, biography, travel, and historical novels. He has been on the staff of the New York Times Book Review for nearly twenty years and conducts a monthly column which reviews current western books.

*Exploring the Distant Stars.* By Clyde B. Clason. 384 pages. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$5.

*The Next Fifty Billion Years. An Astronomer's Glimpse into the Future.* By Kenneth Heuer. 144 pages. Illustrated by Chesley Bonestell. New York: Viking Press. \$3.

It is a welcome coincidence that these two volumes should reach the reviewer's desk on the same day. Mr. Clason's popularized treatise on astronomy covers that science from Aristotle and Hipparchus to Fred Hoyle and vaults the heavens and the cosmos—the terrible emptiness of space, in Clason's apt phrase—from our neighbor Luna, less than a quarter-million miles away to dim galaxies that are merely dreamed of as existing beyond the 200-billion light-year range of the Palomar two-hundred-inch telescope or the even longer range of the radio instruments which explore "the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be."

Mr. Heuer limits his discussion to our own insignificant little globe and the possible—not the probable!—circumstances under which it might end its currently four-billion year old existence.

Mr. Clason's book—if the opinion of a very nonprofessional astronomer is acceptable

—takes in too much territory. The chapters on the constellations and on the stars, galactic and extragalactic, from our own Sun to far, far, faraway S-Doradus (it's one million times as bright as our Sun) in the Large Magellanic Cloud—those chapters are so condensed that the reader finds himself floundering in a maze of white dwarfs, red giants, and Cepheid variables.

This reviewer would be first to admit that this criticism is unfair and is the product of his own ignorance. At the same time, it must be admitted that "Exploring the Distant Stars" takes in just about all the territory, universal, galactic, and cosmic, that there is.

Kenneth Heuer, F.R.A.S., has delivered more than a thousand lectures at the Hayden Planetarium, New York. His book discusses the various fates which have been advanced as the possible end of the world. The Moon might approach so closely that tidal waves will overwhelm the continents, or in even closer approach our satellite might shatter into a million or two fragments which would destroy the world in a shower of supershrapnel. We might perish in a collision with an errant asteroid, with the glowing head of a comet, or even in a head-on collision with another star of a magnitude as great as the Sun. It's possible that the end might come when the Sun's fire dies and mankind vanishes beneath the mantle of another Ice Age or—the opposite extreme—when the Sun blows up as a nova or even a supernova.

All of these are natural phenomena. All are remotely possible but very far from probable and so far in the future that no one need worry unless he expects to be around this particular sphere forty or fifty million or billion years from now.

"Here the disastrous effect on just one city—Chicago, Illinois—of the Sun's exploding is shown. Lake Michigan and the Chicago River have already boiled away." (Chesley Bonestell illustration from THE NEXT 50 BILLION YEARS.) ▶



"The Earth is struck by a small comet whose head is about 10,000 miles in diameter." (Chesley Bonestell illustration from THE NEXT 50 BILLION YEARS.)









*"The Moon may be drawn back to the Earth in the remote future. At a distance of 20,000 miles, it will begin to break up, raining huge meteors on the earth." (Chesley Bonestell illustration from THE NEXT 50 BILLION YEARS.)*



However—and here is where you and I and the Australian aborigines are definitely concerned—Mr. Heuer gives us to think over the possibility that man himself might pull the suicidal trigger! If man persists—as man seems to be persisting—in experimenting with hydrogen atoms, with fission and fusion, with cobalt casings and worldwide fallout, then you can write your own ticket against the day when some junior-grade Rasputin dares the free world to play his own brand of Russian roulette.

It is something to think about, but in the meantime, here are two books which belong in the library of every astronomer, professional or amateur.

—Hoffman Birney

*Science and Human Values.* By J. Bronowski. 94 pages, New York: Julian Messner. \$3.

It is quite fitting that this volume is illustrated with works created in the metaphysical imagination of William Blake. "Poetry," writes Mr. Bronowski, "does not move us to be just or unjust, in itself. It moves us to thoughts in whose light justice and injustice are seen in fearful sharpness of outline." Tolerance among scientists cannot be based on indifference; it must be based on respect, Mr. Bronowski says. Respect as a personal value implies, in any society, the public acknowledgments of justice and of due honor. These are values which to the layman seem most remote from any abstract study. What, the layman may ask, have human values such as justice, honor, and the respect of man for man to do with science? "The question," replies Mr. Bronowski, "is a foolish survival of those nineteenth-century quarrels which always came back to equate ethics with the

Book of Genesis." He says that science confronts the work of one man with that of another and grafts each on each; and it cannot survive without justice and honor and respect between man and man. Only by these means can science pursue its steadfast object, to explore truth. If these values did not exist, Mr. Bronowski believes, then the society of scientists would have to invent them to make the practice of science possible. In societies where these values did not exist, science has had to create them.

What power holds the company of scholars together? In answer to his rhetorical question, Mr. Bronowski replies that, in an obvious

sense, theirs is the power of virtue. All scholars in their work are of course oddly virtuous by the worldly standards of public life. They do not make wild claims; they do not cheat; they do not try to persuade at any cost; they appeal neither to prejudice nor to authority; they are often frank about their ignorance; their disputes are fairly decorous; they do not confuse what is being argued with race, politics, sex or age; they listen patiently to the young and to the old who both know everything. Concerning this, Mr. Bronowski writes: "These are the general virtues of scholarship, and they are peculiarly the virtues of science. Individually, scientists no doubt have human weaknesses. Several of them may have mistresses or read Karl Marx; some of them may even be homosexuals and read Plato. But in a world in which state and dogma seem always either to threaten or to cajole, the body of scientists is trained to avoid, and organized to resist, every form of persuasion but the fact. A scientist who breaks this rule, as Lysenko has done, is ignored. A scientist who finds that the rule has been broken in his laboratory, as Kammerer found, kills himself."

Much of Mr. Bronowski's thinking can be said to follow Kant's categorical imperative. It is quite apparent that he considers man, with his tragic dignity, to be an important little creature in the scheme of things. Regardless of where man is destined to go, this reviewer is reminded by Mr. Bronowski's book of the line by the poet Rilke who, after seeing Picasso's painting, "The Saltimbanques," wrote: "But tell me, who are they, these acrobats, even more fleeting than we ourselves. . . ?" In an age of cynicism, Mr. Bronowski's book is refreshing. This reviewer recommends it.

—Ralph E. Jennings

*The Space Child's Mother Goose.* By Frederick Winsor. Illustrated by Marian Parry. New York: Simon and Schuster. \$3.50.

The author of this space child's hydroponic garden of verses apologizes, in his dedication, ". . . if it's vieux jeu and it leaves you cold. Forgive us, darlings, We're Awfully Old."

These poems are not really vieux jeu, but in all probability they will leave the darlings cold because they are written for space parents—and extremely intellectual space parents at that. Even so, many of the poems have a whimsical twist that is provocative and delightful; for example, a poem illustrating the hypersonic genesis of today's Everyman:

Solomon Grundy  
Walked on Monday  
Rode on Tuesday  
Motored Wednesday  
Planed on Thursday  
Rocketed Friday  
Spaceship Saturday  
Time Machine Sunday  
Where is the end for  
Solomon Grundy?

—M. Raymond