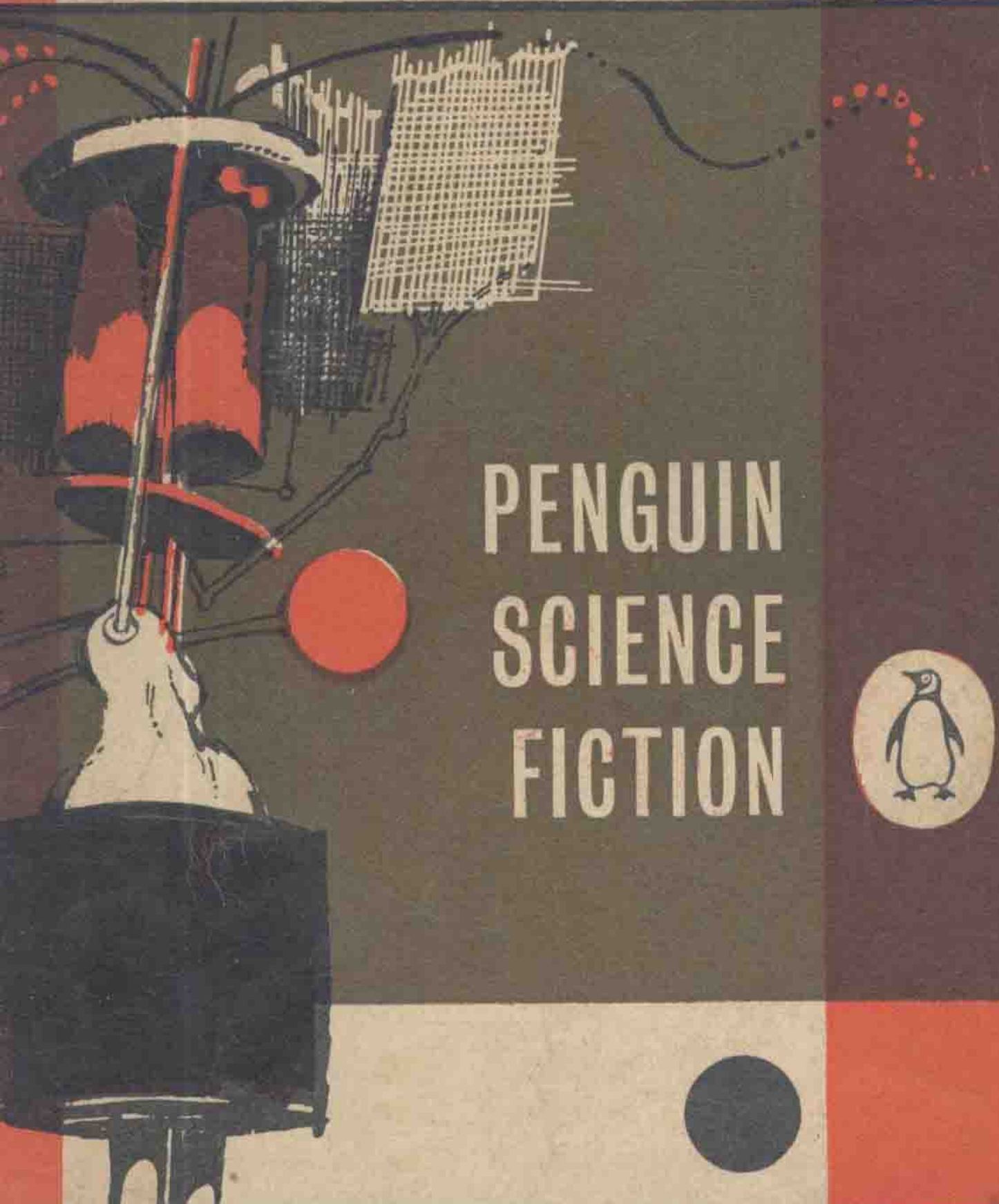


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PENGUIN
SCIENCE
FICTION



EDITED BY

Brian Aldiss

3/6



Oscar Mellor

Brian Aldiss, who is literary editor of the *Oxford Mail*, was elected President of the British Science Fiction Association in 1960. He was born in Norfolk in 1925 and spent his childhood on the east coast and in Devon. Joining the Royal Signals in 1943 he saw action in Burma, as well as close-up views of snakes and utterly silent dying jungles. After the war he toured South Eastern Asia, and then for ten years became a bookseller in Oxford. In 1955 he won the *Observer* Short Story Competition and took to writing full time. He has great faith in science fiction as a vehicle for ideas and excitement. Books he has published, in Britain and America, include: *The Brightfount Diaries*; *Non-Stop*; *Space, Time and Nathaniel*; *Galaxies Like Grains of Sand*; and *Equator*. Such spare time as he has he devotes to painting, swimming, talking, and eating curry.

Cover illustration by Brian Keogh

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*Some other Science Fiction
published in Penguins is
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QUATERMASS AND THE PIT

NIGEL KNEALE

1449

This is the script of the third television serial involving Professor Bernard Quatermass. *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Quatermass II* have already been published as Penguins. The same central character appears in all these, but otherwise they are not connected.

When this story opens Quatermass is in London for conferences at the War Office. His rocket research station, hitherto purely scientific in its objects, is being taken over by the military for the furtherance of a terrible space-war project to be known as the Dead Man's Deterrent.

But the nation whose destiny they are discussing has its attention on the past. The news topic of the moment is a building site at Knightsbridge, where excavations have uncovered fossil bones of man-apes estimated to be five million years old. Then, at a still deeper level in the pit, something else is found which is soon claiming Quatermass's expert attention. It leads him through encounters with superstition, ritual, and magic – to a new and alarming conception of the very nature of humanity.



THE BLACK CLOUD

FRED HOYLE

1466

In 1964 a cloud of gas, of which there are a vast number in the Universe, approaches the solar system on a course that is predicted to bring it between the Sun and the Earth, shutting off the Sun's rays and causing incalculable changes on our planet.

The effect of this impending catastrophe on the scientists and politicians is convincingly described by Fred Hoyle, the leading Cambridge astronomer: so convincingly, in fact, that the reader feels that these events may actually happen. This is Science Fiction at its very highest level.

'*The Black Cloud* is an exciting narrative, but, far more important, it offers a fascinating glimpse into the scientific power-dream' – Peter Green in the *Daily Telegraph*

'Mr Hoyle has written a really thrilling book. . . . There is a largeness, generosity, and jollity about the whole spirit of the book that reminds one of the early Wells at his best' – *New Statesman*

'... the imagination is touched by this desperate effort by man to regain control of his environment by using his knowledge and his wits' – *The Times Literary Supplement*

'Mark: Alpha' – Maurice Richardson in the *Observer*

NOT FOR SALE IN THE U.S.A.



JOHN WYNDHAM

The Chrysalids

A thrilling and realistic account of the world beset by genetic mutations. 'Jolly good story, well-conceived community, characters properly up to simple requirements. Better than the *Kraken*, perhaps even the *Triffids*' - *Observer* (1308)*

The Day of the Triffids

This is one of the very few books of its kind that can stand comparison with the science novels of H. G. Wells. The characters are living people, shaken out of the civilization they know into the horror of a world dominated by triffids, grotesque and dangerous plants. (993)†

The Kraken Wakes

In Tennyson's poem 'The Kraken sleepeth', but here John Wyndham tells the story of the awakening and rise to power of terrifying forces from beneath the sea.

'In a class of its own ... you will have to read it through' - Frederick Laws in the *News Chronicle* (1075)*

The Midwich Cuckoos

The book from which the film, *Village of the Damned*, was made. (1440)*

The Seeds of Time

Here a master of Science Fiction 'experiments in adapting the SF motif to various styles of short story'. He is in turn satiric, tragic, humorous, and compassionate.

'He is one of the few authors whose compulsive readability is a compliment to the intelligence' - Edmund Crispin in the *Spectator* (1385)*

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PENGUIN BOOKS

1638

PENGUIN SCIENCE FICTION

EDITED BY BRIAN W. ALDISS



Penguin Science Fiction

An anthology edited by
BRIAN W. ALDISS

PENGUIN BOOKS

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Introduction

THE shortest ghost story ever written – or so schoolboys used to tell each other in the thirties – goes like this :

The last man alive in the world sat all alone in his house. Suddenly the front door bell rang . . .

Today this is no longer the shortest ghost story. It has become the shortest science fiction story. When we read it, we no longer think of a spectral visitor in cerements prodding that bell with a bony or transparent digit. The finger is now a metal finger . . . or something bluish, perhaps, that hardly resembles a human finger at all – a pseudopod, shall we say, or a visiting tentacle.

Our imaginings and horrors are – inevitably – pitched in a new key. Compared with the simple world of the thirties, when we managed so happily (or unhappily) without most plastics, without antibiotics, tape recorders, space probes, detergents, transistors, television, computers, nuclear fission, and brainwashing, we live today in an age of science fiction.

For most of us, this is a tolerable era, despite its international alarms and the threat of pushbutton warfare. As the tempo of living increases, however, the celestial being that watches over us seems more and more like a Time and Motion Study man. Our predominant gods and ghouls are scientific.

The stories presented here are not scientific. Rather, they are stories which we can enjoy because of the possibilities science has opened up; which is an important distinction. They need little effort to read – indeed, I admit that I find them irresistible.

Science fiction – the fact needs emphasizing – is no more written for scientists and technologists than ghost stories were written for ghosts. We shall see why in a minute.

Only two considerations have gone towards the selection of these stories. Firstly, that they please as stories, and secondly that they please as an anthology; which is to say, that they demonstrate

some of the great variety of reading that lurks behind the curious label 'science fiction'.

Science fiction – 'SF' to its adherents – concerns anything that has not happened; it may be something that is very likely to happen, or something that is very unlikely to happen. Either case depends on an 'if', and in either case, by the rules of the game, the author must persuade you that it could happen. If he does not make this attempt, then he is probably writing fantasy rather than SF. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is fantasy, whereas his *1984* is SF.

If you are interested in a more formal definition of SF, Edmund Crispin, the most expert SF anthologist in this country, has one to offer. 'An SF story,' he says, 'is one which presupposes a technology, or an effect of technology, or a disturbance in the natural order, such as humanity up to the time of writing has not in actual fact experienced.'

It sounds impressive. Yet I often feel it represents as much what Mr Crispin wishes SF was, as, with all its variety, SF actually is.

For it is apparent (though I have never seen anyone mention the fact) that two main streams flow through SF, the scientific and the whimsical. Or the empiric and the runcible, if you prefer. These two streams often mingle inseparably in one story (as in *Skirmish* or even *Command Performance* contained here), but to distinguish them they are best named after their two most notable exponents and called the Wellsian and the Carrollian. My contention is that SF owes a greater debt to Lewis Carroll than to H. G. Wells; which is why I believe that its appeal is more to the layman than the boffin.

A wonderland, that's SF, a realm of the curious, through which a twentieth-century reader wanders like a terylene-clad Alice. Myself, I like this facet of SF greatly, preferring it to the sort of 'Popular Science' side. I'd as lief hear how crazy the world is as how fast it progresses technologically.

In one of the stories included here – Clifford Simak's *Skirmish* – is a sentence that may be relished as at once nicely scaring and typically science-fictional. The hero is confronted by a small rat-

like machine. 'There was no sign of eyes, no hint of face, and yet he knew it stared.' This is a frightening little machine indeed; but are we so far away from the surrealism of the Cheshire Cat when Alice 'noticed a curious appearance in the air: it puzzled her very much at first, but, after watching it a minute or two, she made it out to be a grin'?

And again, in *Nightfall* (written by Isaac Asimov, one of the best-loved SF authors), when men of a very different civilization from ours are discussing what existence might be like on other worlds, one of them says, 'Supposing you had a planet with only one sun ...' Then he adds reluctantly 'You couldn't expect life - which is fundamentally dependent upon light - to develop under those conditions.' Bearing in mind the strange circumstances existing on his world, we see how he feels, even while we are enjoying an object lesson in mistaking a limited human point of view for a universal truth.

You will discover the same type of comment in *Through the Looking-Glass*, in that momentous meeting between human and alien when the Unicorn's

eye happened to fall upon Alice; he turned round instantly, and stood for some time looking at her with an air of the deepest disgust.

'What - is - this?' he said at last.

'This is a child!' Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her, and spreading out both his hands towards her in an Anglo-Saxon attitude. 'We only found it today. It's as large as life and twice as natural!'

'I always thought they were fabulous monsters,' said the Unicorn. 'Is it alive?'

'It can talk,' said Haigha, solemnly.

The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice and said, 'Talk, child.'

Alice could not help her lips curling into a smile as she began: 'Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters too! I never saw one alive before!'

'Well, now that we *have* seen each other,' said the Unicorn, 'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?'

This mood of innocent wonder is very open to attack. We of this generation are a knowing lot, and dislike being thought