Book Reviews

Man Among the Stars. Wolfgang D. Müller. Translated from *Du wirst die Erde sehn als Stern.* Criterion, New York, 1957. 307 pp. Plates. $4.95.

This is an unusual book. To my knowledge, it is the first book to be almost wholly dedicated to a justification of man's plans for the conquest of space. In such a book some historical background is necessary, along with a survey of our present stages in research and development toward such a goal. This is given in concise descriptions of rocketry, the effects of war on development, the present satellite program, and future plans for space stations and space ships. The author implies that the present position of the intercontinental ballistic missile programs may hinder our development of space travel and believes that a straightforward program would be better.

The spread of man over the earth, the exploration of faraway lands, the opening up of the Americas and of our Far West are attributed to built-in drives common to most members of the human race. On this basis, the conquest of space is inevitable, barring a major catastrophe to mankind. Even hysteria, such as the reaction to Orson Welles' broadcast of a play based on H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds,* in October 1938, and the present controversy over unidentified foreign objects, appears to be part of the same pattern of reaction to the exploration drive. Similar and analogous waves of hysteria appeared during the great Age of Exploration, several hundred years ago.

Careful discussions of the effects of the discovery of the telescope on men's minds and speculations regarding gravity, the possible existence of extraterrestrial beings, and the role of religion in the event that such beings should be found to exist are intelligently evaluated on our present level of development. The Roman Catholic groups are far ahead of the other religious organizations in anticipating extraterrestrial life forms and have speculated on their relationship to man and man's personal religious beliefs.

Müller sees the conquest of space as an opportunity for a new dedication of mankind similar to the dedication that arose during the religious drives, the Age of Exploration, and the Crusades.

"We need a new idea," he says, "which might open up such an opportunity, one that would appeal to all of humanity and that could transform our view of the world, an idea with such a good chance of realization that it will fire the human imagination" (page 299).

The spiritual effect on man of such an enterprise, the unlimited horizons, and, if intelligent beings are found, the sense that man is not alone in the universe might serve to unravel some of the conflicts in our age of confusion. It is proposed that such a venture might act prophylactically on man, enabling him to achieve a saner viewpoint on life, and that it could constitute an alternative to the "shock-therapy" or "racial-lobotomy" impact that a nuclear war would have on the survivors, if any, in achieveing racial sanity. Müller's implications bear consideration and may have merit.

THOMAS S. GARDNER
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Reading the Landscape. An Adventure in Ecology. May Theilgaard Watts. Macmillan, New York, 1957. x + 230 pp. Illus. $4.75.

An author, having selected this excellent and challenging title, might have followed either of two courses. The first would have been a statement of principles, shrewdly selected from geology, soil science, and ecology, that the traveler could see exemplified in his journeys. The other, more concrete, is here adopted. It amounts to making the reader a companion on field trips, pointing out specific situations, and showing how to interpret them.

While the 13 chapters deal with landscapes in areas ranging from the Smokies to the Rocky Mountains, interest centers chiefly around the western lake states—Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Here May Theilgaard Watts, naturalist at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois, is completely at home, having had the advantage of training under the late Henry Cowles at Chicago.

It is natural, then, that she should emphasize the ecological communities which clothe the landscape, although the geological and climatic influences that shape it are by no means neglected. The net result is an attractive and usable volume, informally written and illustrated with pen sketches.

I was especially intrigued by two chapters, near the end of the book, which show how ecological analysis can be divertingly applied to simple situations. One of these is the reconstruction of the history of an abandoned schoolhouse; the other, of the effect of changing fashions on landscape design about an old homestead.

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The Wonder of Snow. Corydon Bell. Hill and Wang, New York, 1957. xvi + 269 pp. Illus. $5.

The multifaceted crystals of winter's wonderland, the microscopic and macroscopic magic that forms a flurry of flakes or a "landscapeful" of snow to delight the eye of an artist, provide Corydon Bell with his subject matter. He roams the globe, from pole to pole, and the realms of poetry and prose, wherever snow is featured. He travels the blooming deserts, fruitful because of snow-fed rivers and canals, climbs to mountain crags where avalanches are massive parcels of concentrated energy, flies into and above the clouds where nature works her physical and chemical snow-wizardry, and visits scientific laboratories where meteorologists strive to understand and duplicate earth's atmospheric snow machine.

For all its wide coverage, the book reads well and provides the inquisitive mind with much food for thought. There is evidence that snow has been falling somewhere on earth for much, much longer than men have inhabited this planet. In fact, man probably owes much of his vigor and aggressiveness in organizing the world to serve his needs to the nipping cold and biting wind that accompany winter pageantry. Yet the study of snow in a scientific manner is of comparatively recent origin.

Meteorology as a science, with a background of sufficient data to improve on the old farmer's prognostications, is only some 75 years old at most. (And when the weatherman is wrong, some folks say the science "hasn't been born yet.") Only since 1954 has Ukichiro Nakaya's monumental work *Snow Crystals* been available, with its classification of the crystals into seven basic types and information about how these types originate.

Corydon Bell has selected a well-bal-