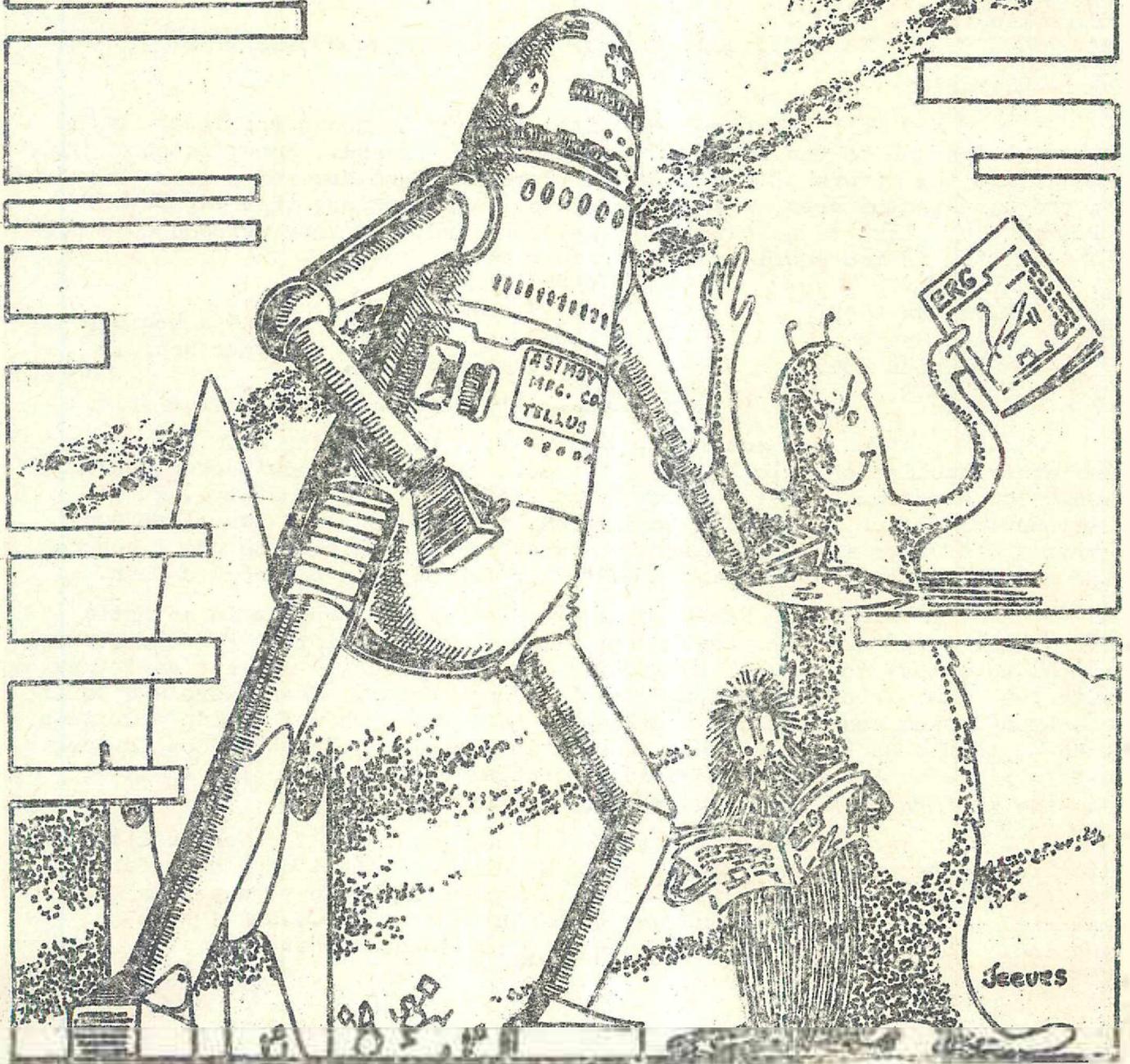
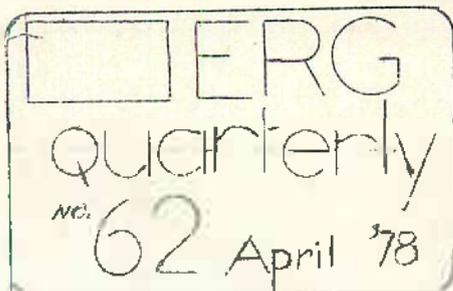


ERG 62

QUARTERLY APRIL 1978





ERG is edited by
Terry Jeeves,
230, Bannerdale Rd.,
Sheffield S11 9ET

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With this issue, ERG commences its 20th Year of Publication.

Mini-Editorial

Well the first good item of news is about the First Fandom scheme to get me to the World SF Convention in Arizona. Money is coming in, and so are the offers of hospitality. Current plans are for a week or two in the Los Angeles area, a couple of days in New Mexico, then IGUANACON.

If you would like to help the Fund, please send your very welcome donation (and no item is too small to help) either to:-

DAVE KYLE

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OR
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Berks RG6 1PL.

and a bonison on your house.

(Other faneds...I'd appreciate a plug for this)

You may recall the trouble I've been having from the ageing Gestetner machine on which I run off ERG... well I have now been given a RONCO 750 electric. Last weekend it ran off Triode 26 smoothly..and it will be brought on to the ERG production line as soon as I can clear away current Gestetner ink supplies. Once that is done, I plan to use the Roneo for normal running..and save the Gestetner for running a second colour.

RINGWORLD RAMBLINGS in the last issue brought in an extra large mailbag of comment...so in this issue I take a tilt at PTL spacetravel in the hope that is as well received. I'm also proud to present an interview with the Head of Sector General himself, James White. Then there's a brief question-answer session with Sterling E. Lanier..to whom I couldn't write a note of thanks as I mislaid his address in Austria. Keith Seddon is back with a piece on his brief career as a special effects man, plus loads of goodies in the book line, and a short lettercol.

So how can I top that for the next issue ? Well a little item from none other than Robert Bloch should be in that one, so I feel it about time ERG declared its policy. Herewith..to keep on publis hing material about items..or from people, of interest to me...and I hope to you too. So don't forget to let me know if I'm succeeding.

Best, Terry Jeeves

...OF

Relatively Speaking

by
Terry Jeeves

'Ringworld Ramblings' in the last issue seemed to go down well, so here is a bit more speculation on a much-loved theme of SF.

Any text book will tell you that the nearest star is around 4 light years away...which is another way of saying that if you travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second, henceforth referred to simply as 'c') it will take you four years to get there - and a similar time for the return trip. An eight year journey seems a bit grim; until one digs into Einstein's Relativity equations and finds there is one which has a bearing on trip time. Since all tests and observations confirm his theories, maybe we can improve that 8 year figure a bit.

According to Einstein - and remember, tests indicate he's right - time slows down for a traveller, in proportion to the speed at which he travels. Even for 7 mile a second astronauts, the effect is virtually minimal, but as you get up towards 'c', things change a bit. The relevant formula for the time measured (and that means any kind of clock including the 'body clock') is given by the equation :-

$$t = \sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}$$

So if our traveller moved at half the speed of light ($v = .5c$) then t would be given by the square root of 1 minus .25. Root .75 I'd guess at about .85 so we must multiply our trip time of 8 years by .85. Roughly (my calculator is down stairs) that gives us a round trip of $6\frac{1}{2}$ years. Not a lot better, but we're heading in the right direction. Presumably spacemen might accept such a trip time...but don't forget, this is time measured by the astronaut. As far as people on Earth are concerned, the journey kept him away the full eight years (excluding any exploring time while out there). It would indicate that star goers will be bachelor orphans...families wouldn't want such a wait. Governments on the other hand, can tolerate such a period for their plans to mature. In view of this, how about upping the velocity and cutting the (astronaut's) time even more? Well at .9c you're down to a round trip of about 3 years. Still not brief, but less than the period I spent in India as a R.A.F paid tourist during World War 2...Unpleasant, but bearable. By upping the velocity to .99c the round journey would take just over a year. Shooting the bloke off at light speed itself ought to really speed the wagon, ...but whoa! That gives us the job of finding the root of zero! Well, that must be zero, mustn't it. Egad, at that velocity his trip (as far as he is concerned) would be INSTANTANEOUS!

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It would seem that all problems are solved...off goes the spaceman and eight years later, back he comes after a journey which to him took no transit time at all. Er...well there is a snag. It would take time to accelerate up to c. Assuming he limits his acceleration to 1g, I calculate (and someone is sure to tell me I've missed a zero or two) this would take a full year. Braking would take the same time...and then there's the return trip. Sadly, our 'Instantaneous flight' is back up to four years !

And that isn't the only snag. The mass of a body is also dependent on its velocity by the reciprocal of that earlier equation.

The mass of a body in motion is given by this... $m = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}}$

If you try a few values in that you can see that the faster you go, the greater your mass becomes. It is a negligible increase at the 7 m.p.sec of escape velocity...but insert c into that little equation and as the denominator approaches zero, the end product rises to infinity. At the speed of light, our ship would have infinite mass!

Abort ! yell the faint-hearted. To accel rate or even move, an infinite mass will require an infinite energy source...so it can't be done.

But CAN IT ? Let me interject my own pet bit of high,wide and probably utterly ridiculous item of speculation.

What about that other and more famous Einsteinian equation $E = Mc^2$

Naturally, our craft is fusion powered and its converter gives up energy in strict accordance with that equation...but didn't we just work out that as the ship picks up speed, its mass increases? Well if its mass goes up, then so does the mass of the fuel...and therefore the energy obtainable from that mass. In other words energy will be there to meet the demand..it seems such a simple and neat bit of speculation, I wonder no SF writer has worked it into a story, even if it is as whacky as all get out; writers, I present you with the Jeeves-drive. May it take you to the stars!

Problem solved ? sorry, no. Einstein has yet another joker up his sleeve. The length of our ship will shrink in the direction of its motion by the same factor as the time shrinkage.

... $L = L_0 \sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}$

As our craft goes faster, it retains its cross section, but becomes shorter and shorter. Eventually when our infinite energy drive has boosted its infinite mass up to c, the ship (and crew) have become a flat lamina speeding to the stars. It does sound a bit off-putting, but like the time shrinkage, it will be un-noticeable to the crew although if a spaceman peered out of the window he would probably think everyone else was stretching like mad...ah well, we all have problems.

Maybe he can still go...so why not exceed c...and boldly go at warp factor 5, 6 or 7 etc. ? Well, according to our time equation, if we raise v beyond c, then we end up trying to extract the root of a minus

(Continued on page 10)

Terry Teeves

interviews

JAMES WHITE

Fan, Pro,
and general Good Guy.

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T.J. Can you recall the circumstances which first drew you to become a reader...and later a fan, of science fiction ?

J.W. My early interest in s-f began gradually, I suppose, with reading library copies of The Time Machine and A Princess Of Mars, and by being exposed to the visual wonders of Flash Gordon films -- although it was a long time before I joined the British Interplanetary Society and realised that spaceships do not dribble sparks. Later came the phase when I searched the libraries and bookshops for titles with Star or Space or the names of planets in them, and I soon learned that titles like Under Alien Stars were false, while Sirius was not. But it was reading an instalment of E.E.Smith's Grey Lensman which had, I think, the most profound effect on me -- I discovered that some of the visually horrifying bug-eyed monsters could be Good Guys. It is highly probable that if I hadn't read E.E.Smith, and liked his BEMs more than some of his human characters, I would never have written the Sector General series where all the extra-terrestrials are good, if somewhat strange, people.

T.J. I seem to remember that you used to do some excellent linocut artwork for Walt Willis' Slant. Do you ever do anything in that line nowadays ?

J.W. Oddly enough, my ambition at that time was to become a professional artist. I could always draw after a fashion, and the linocut illos in Slant were there chiefly because otherwise we did not have enough type to fill a page. But the competition for would-be s-f artists was tough in Belfast. Everyone in Irish fandom could draw -- Dob Shaw was very good, New Worlds' artist Gerard Quin was tops, and even Walt Willis could draw a recognisable egg -- especially when he was trying to draw a circle. But my artistic s-f career ended finally (the best way to end anything, you'll agree) with the onset of eye trouble. As Walt put it in a Slant editorial, "The White School of lino-cut illustration has been forced to close because of trouble with the pupils."

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T.J. Can you describe what spurred you to make the leap from fandom to pro writing ?

J.W. The eye trouble left me with more spare time, which was used to write fan letters and the odd -- sometimes very odd -- article for UK and US fanzines, and the first professional sale came about partly because of John W. Campbell's editorial policy at that time. Virtually every story in Astounding ended in atomic doom in those days, and I got the idea of writing a story with an up-beat ending. This was not a very serious or urgent project because it took over eight months to write the 10,000-word thing called Assisted Passage .



When the other members of Irish Fandom read it the consensus of opinion was that it was every bit as good as the other junk being published in the prozines of that time; Ted Carnell, then editor of New Worlds, said the syntax was lousy and I couldn't spell 'manoeuvre' (still can't) but he was taking it for the July 1953 issue; shortly afterwards the immortal (or do I mean immoral, or both?) Chuck Harris, in his fan column, called me, "James White, fakofan, foulness festering on the fringes of fandom, vilest pro!" and I realised that I had lost my amateur status.

T.J. Probably your best known stories are the Sector General series. Did you choose this theme because it allowed you to create a variety of aliens and their problems, or because medical themes interest you and you want to write about them ?

J.W. The Sector General idea grew naturally out of my fondness for alien characters and my unrealised ambition to become a doctor -- most of my early stories featured medics and/or monsters (sneaky plug) and the Sector General series simply brought the two types together. Originally the series was supposed to end with the third novelette, but people including me, liked the intergalactic hospital background and the series has since run to one novel, 12 novelettes and one short story, the majority of which have been published in the books, Hospital Station, Star Surgeon and Major Operation (Ballantine, US edition only).

The trouble is that every time I dream up a really alien alien, and check it for xenobiological verisimilitude at the next convention with Jack Cohen, who thereupon bombards me with ideas for even more alien aliens, they all seem to sprain a tentacle or take sick and end up in Sector General.

I am currently working on another long novelette for the series, and there are scribbled outlines for two more in my notebook which may never be written because I can't read my handwriting.

T.J. Do you 'invent' your medical details or do you research them in any way?

J.W. The medical and physiological details of extra-terrestrials have to be invented, naturally, but the diagnosis and treatments are based on terrestrial practice. Research is needed sometimes, and my sources range from Principles of Intensive Care (Emery, Yates & Moorhead) through Reproduction (Cohen), to The British Red Cross First Aid Handbook -- quite often the latter, because the ailing aliens are frequently in a situation where they need help from members of a completely different species, a species which has no prior knowledge of their physiology so that the first aid approach of giving assistance with minimum danger of compounding the injuries, is best until their own doctor or a Sector General type turns up. However, if an author invents an e.t metabolism and physiology in the first place, he automatically becomes the universe's leading specialist in the treatment of the being's disorders. A clear case of medical megalomania wouldn't you say?

T.J. Which of your stories give you the greatest pleasure, and why?

J.W. This is a difficult question. Writing is hard work and I, in common with most writers, feel anything but pleasure on completing a story because of how far short it falls of the author's original conception. The story which came closest to doing so with me was Custom Fitting, published in Stellar 2. I think it is the only s-f story which uses tailoring as the science involved. As a tailoring assistant myself for 22 years, I was able to appreciate the problems facing the leading character -- a nice, old tailor and sartorial tyrant faced with the task of making and fitting the proper gear for an extra-terrestrial VVIP who is the first ambassador from the stars. There was no violence in the story, except for pins being driven through unresisting black serge, but it sort of sneaked up and involved the emotions. It was short-listed for last year's Hugo Awards, which shows that sometimes I have good taste even where my own stuff is concerned.



T.J. Is there any s-f writer, living or dead, whose work you admire and may possibly have tried to emulate?

T.J. Many people have different ideas of the Golden Age of S-F. What is your personal Golden Age..and why?

J.W. For me the last two questions are linked. The Golden Age of S-F as far as I am concerned

8 was the period late 1939 to the mid-forties. Great stuff was written before and after that period, and the field has matured a lot since then, but it was those particular stories which had the greatest impact on me during my impressionable years. That is why, when I started to write professionally, I tried to emulate the combination of style, sense of wonder, strength of plot, idea content and increasingly perceptive characterisation of those stories (which had always had clearly defined beginnings, middles and endings). One of the nicest things anyone ever said about my work in the early days was that I wrote like Murray Leinster.

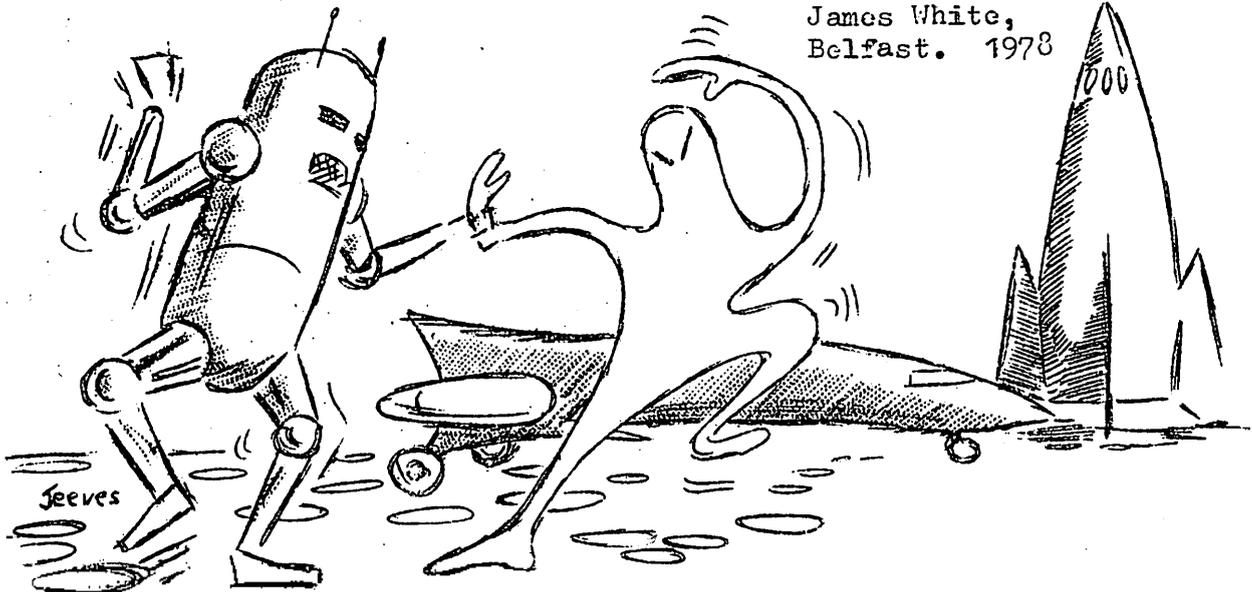
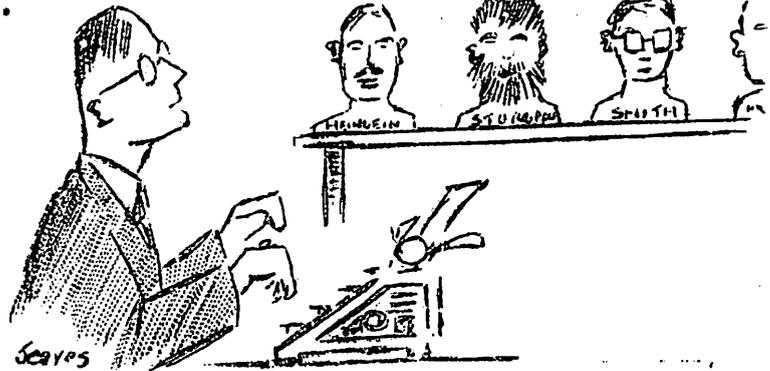
Since reading First Contact, Murray Leinster had been one of my favourite authors, with Heinlein, Sturgeon, Smith (both E.D. and George O), Del Rey, Kuttner, Russell and more of that ilk.

I did not try consciously to copy (No split infinitives here, lad) the style or plotting of any particular favourite writer, but I did try to produce their kind of story, but updated of course.

There are a lot of younger writers doing the same thing these days, trying and often achieving the same high standard while giving their stories their own particular trademarks, with the idea that we should respect but not worship our literary ancestors. I think this is a very good idea.

Golden Ages are funny things, they never quite fade away.

James White,
Belfast. 1978



DRAMA & TECHNOLOGY



by
Keith
Seddon

* or The Wonders Of Applied Science

In a dim and better past, when naughty boys (and even girls) had the living daylights beaten out of them for smoking behind the cycle-sheds, I attended school. (Can't think what all the fuss was about, now: it was only tobacco... and since they confiscated our supplies, surely they proved that to their satisfaction?)

As a member of the Senior House Drama Group, I volunteered to do the 'special effects' for our House's play. Then I read the script. Special effects? More like Super Effects: at least for me with the aid of whatever I could nick from the Physics department. It was so bad, the Producer decided that someone would have to help me. The other bloke was placed at the other side of the stage. His task was to simulate a tennis match by bouncing a tennis ball through the French windows and into the set. I at my side, was surrounded by marvels of technology, ready to do my bits.

And my bits? On the set was a radio. Immediately behind behind a cardboard wall (hidden from the audience) was a loudspeaker wired to my amplifier and a microphone. Yes! I did the Police Messages.... "meanwhile volunteers are combing the swamps with loud-hailers, shouting, 'Don't be a madman, give yourself up' That is: the end of the police message"

The best bit, which never really came off, was the sound of a wheelchair approaching down several flights of stairs with landings in between. It then had to run out on to the stage (bearing its 'driver') at about 15 mph. The best I managed was to kick several chairs down the side stairs of the stage, then attempt to accelerate the wheelchair to top velocity in about ten feet, launch it and stop myself before I appeared on the stage.

A very mini-INTERVIEW with

STERLING E. LANIER*

T.J. Can you recall what first got you interested in SF ?

S.E.L. Yes, the magazine covers, when I was 10.

T.J. Do you have any favourite authors, stories or themes which you prefer to most others ?

S.E.L. Early Asimov, Lieber, van Vogt (first complete novel read was, 'The Book Of Ptath'), Clarke.

T.J. What started you off as a writer of SF ?

S.E.L. Being bored with bad SF., especially as an editor of same.

T.J. Have you ever had any unusual, amusing, disappointing or outstanding experiences when trying to sell a particular story ?

S.E.L. No. Well, 1st story took 3 hrs to write. Sold to Campbell first crack.

T.J. Can you offer any advice to those who would like to write SF ?

S.E.L. Like to write ... Have an ego-trip (do not take a 'writing course')

T.J. Do you ever try to write in the style of a favourite author ?

S.E.L. Doyle. I wrote a Sherlock Holmes pastiche for F & SF

T.J. What sort of writing schedule do you set yourself ?

S.E.L. None. I work best when entirely alone in a windowless room.

T.J. Is there any type of SF story which turns you off ?

S.E.L. New Wave, hyper-psychological crap (There is good Silverberg and bad Silverberg)

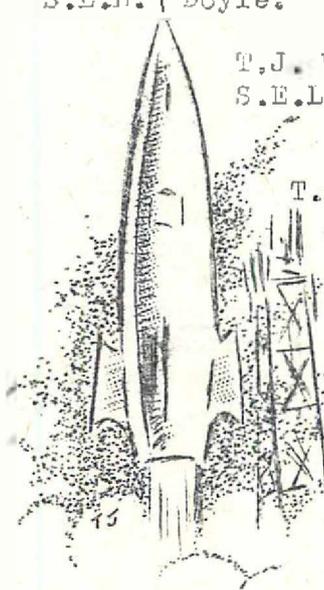
T.J. Do you think a scientific background helps a writer or do you believe ignorance is bliss ?

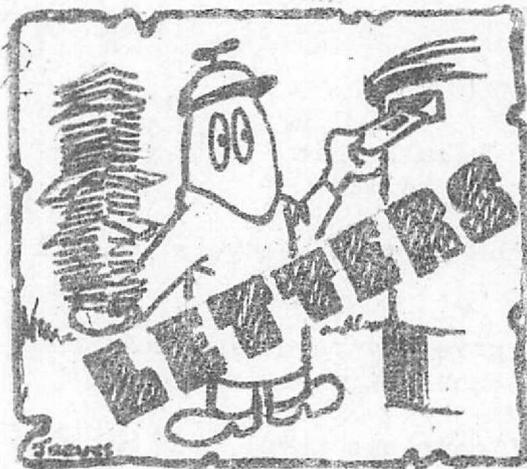
S.E.L. Yes to the first, No to the second. The second may, (or may not) write fantasy.

T.J. Is there any story you would love to write if you had the time ?

S.E.L. The definitive history of the Spanish-American naval war with emphasis on ship design.

* Those 'THE WAR FOR THE LOT and THE PECULIAR EXPLOITS OF BRIGADIER FELLONES (Sidgwick & Jackson), were recently reviewed in ERG.





ERG 61 brought in a king-size mailpile, for which I give many thanks to all those good people who responded. I can't print more than a small fraction of your comments, but keep 'em coming, they are VERY GRATEFULLY received. Herewith a selection...my comments in triple brackets...(((T.J.)))

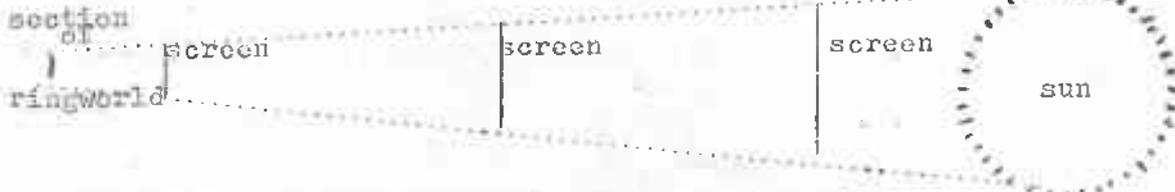
Graham Ashley 86 St. James Rd. Hirchan,
Surrey.

"I must admit I like your new style cover, but it doesn't mean it has to become a permanent feature does it? (((No, I may never use it again. Covers

will continue to vary as fancy takes me. I tried that format, it was nice, but it limited the size and illo type too much))) It's sad to think Paul Fraser thinks you redundant as a reviewer. As Keith Freeman would say, they are not so much reviews as comments. As such, the few lines you give each book are sometimes far better than the over-blown verbosity you find in mags such as Vector and yet you manage to get to the heart of the book. (((Thanks Graham, that is THE point of my 'reviews'. I don't profess to produce arty crafty commentary. My aim is simply to acquaint would be readers with what new books are available and an idea of their themes. The final good/bad verdict is up to the buyer. If I like a book, I'll say so...but very seldom will I pan one, as my hates may not coincide with anyone else's.)))

David Strahan
Cox Farm
Boxford,
Colchester,
Essex.

In your 'Ringworld Ramblings' I think you over-estimated the problem of night on a Ringworld. I think that if a civilisation had the capacity or ability to build a ringworld, it would have the ability to regulate its hours of light and darkness (((Yes, but I was speculating HOW they would do it))) You assumed your future civilisation would have the ability to strengthen molecular structures...then they could strengthen the screens so they could be moved closer to the sun and the night time darkness would be deppened and the stars become visible. , (((Jussi Piekkala from Finland made a similar point (I've mislaid his letter) but while this sounds correct in theory..it overlooks the SIZE of the sun..which I what I mentioned in the article. The nearer you get to the Sun, the bigger your screens must be to block out its diameter..otherwise you get virtually no screening at all...see diagram ... eventually, you need a screen the size of the sun.



Jussi drew a similar diagram..but with a tiny sun and this lod him to overlook the fact that his 'tiny' screen near the sun..was really a gigantic affair if drawn to a more realistic scale. I suspect giant polarised city ceilings might be the best answer. T.J.)))

David continues ... You work with the presupposition that only Earth would be used for the ringworld...why not all the other planets ? ((In all probability, they would also be used. I limited my article to Earth, simply to simplify the calculations...the ringworld itself would still follow the same lines, whatever its mass. I chose a ringworld at Earth's orbital distance because that is the place which satisfies our sun-heat balance)) Reviewing hardcover books is all very well, except that I can't buy them because of the cost. How about reviewing paperbacks ? ((But I DO !!!))

Alan Burns

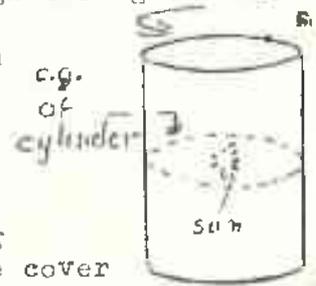
19 The Crescent
Wallsend-on-Tyne

Odd Irishey was nostalgia provoking, but readable nevertheless. Fen are always hospitable, and the conversation is always worthwhile. Vortex..How did you come to start it ? No, it isn't to create a market for SF writings, any mag, no matter what noble purpose it purports to have, is put out to make money. Like the readers who winnow out SF yarns for passing to editors. They don't give a damn about quality, they ask only..Is it commercial ? As always, the review section is the best part of the mag, herein is always real meat. I don't always agree with you, nonetheless by now I know your likes and dislikes and as such where needful will buy or not buy depending on what you say. ((My point exactly Alan..you don't want a value judgement, yes or no..you want to know something about the contents. That I feel is what most people want))

Kevin Martineau

6 Ipsley Grove
Erdington
Birmingham

Your all-electro covers seem to be becoming more common these days. Is that a deliberate policy, or are teachers being paid *vast sums* these days. ((A little of each, I got excellent electrowork done at half price (75p each) from Sexton, 14 Ventnor Court, Wolstenholme Rd. Sheff. at half standard prices (unpaid advt)..and I just got a pay rise. Re your query about using all the planets for my Ringworld...see answer at top of this page)) I'm not too sure of the feasibility of a cylinderworld. Most basic is the same one you gave against non-equatorial synchronous satellites..an orbiting object must have its plane of rotation through the c.g of its primary. ((Don't forget a cylinder is rigid and its cg..being a symmetrical body will lie along the plane of rotation through the cg of its primary...see diagram... a discrete satellite could not orbit around the upper circumference..A but when you consider the whole rigid body of which A is part, then the idea is feasible..providing the structure can stand the strains involved..T.J.))



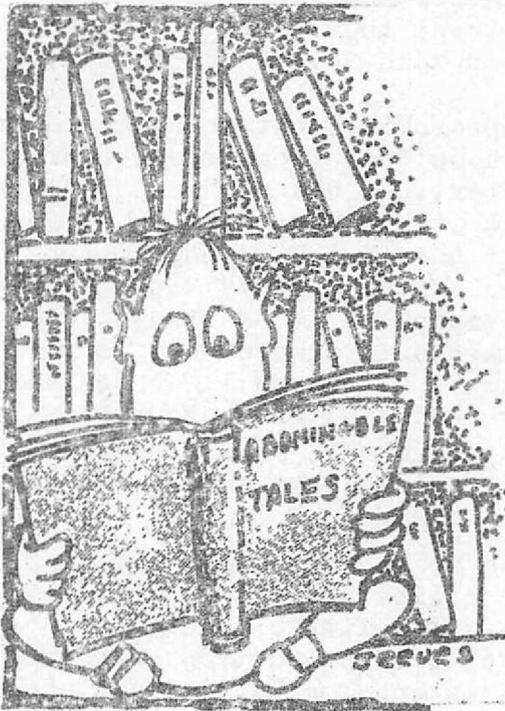
Patricia Doal

4 Westfield Way
Charlton Heights
Wantage
OXON

Don's piece is delightful, shedding gentle light on gentle people. The cover has a professional look about it, but is somehow, not ERG. Which implies that ERG doesn't have a professionalism about it normally. I don't wish to imply that because you do bring professional know-how to your publication, even though it is an amateur zine ((I thank you kind lady..I do but toy, indeed, I can be very trying at times...Val says so anyway))

THANK YOU, all the others who wrote such interesting letters..I can't answer all of 'em personally..or even squeeze 'em into ERG, but I appreciate them and hope you will keep 'em coming.....Terry.

14 RECENT READING



In 1976, Futura issued an excellent series of paperbacks edited by Peter Weston. Now Messrs Dobson have made them available in hardcovers at £3.95 a volume ...

ANDROMEDA 1 has Aldiss, Coney, Shaw Holdstock and a galaxy of others. Happily, the story quality is well up to the scintillating author list. Shaw has a tightly plotted murder story, Coney a neat telepathy tale with a real sting at the end. George Martins tells of a seller of monsters for use in the arena and Andrew Stephenson has a forceful piece of future warfare. Harlan Ellison closes the selection with a grim account of body-organ thieves in which the biter gets bit.

ANDROMEDA 2 is every bit as good, and the mixture equally varied. Shaw details the jealousies and realities of colony life; M.S.Rohan introduces Eastern fatalism into space. You will also meet talking dragons; mutant societies in Earth's far future; the release of an enslaved god; and Dick Geis comes up with an extremely powerful and richly-tapestried yarn about an immortal and a dying ruler.

Buy number 1, 2, or both. Whichever you choose, you'll get a feast of modern s-f with all the rich imagery and wordplay brought by the 'New Wave', but with all the plot details of the old school. Peter Weston has selected an ideal blend of material - may he long continue so to do.

WAR OF THE WINGMEN

Poul Anderson
Dobson \$3.95

Originally titled, 'The Man Who Counts' when it appeared in 1958 as a three part serial in Analog, this yarn has Trader Nicholas van Rijn, one of his crewmen, and the high born lady Sandra marooned on Diomedes. With only a few weeks food left, and local foodstuffs high poison, their only hope of rescue is to intercede in a war between two races of flying beings and then enlist the help of the winners.

Personally, I find van Rijn an annoyingly unbelievable character, but if you can stand his posturings and avoid asking too many questions, then the action is high wide and handsome with old style goodies and baddies..but with wings.

NIGHT OF DELUSIONS

Keith Laumer
Dobson \$3.95

Private-eye, Florin finds two strangers in his room and is immediately pitchforked into a nightmare sequence of events and progressions through a sequence of illusions and repetitions as he struggles to sort out his connection with a senator, the beautiful Curia Regis (who vanishes from the story without a trace), a sinister lizard alien and an illusion inducing machine. This one had me snatching every moment to find out how it would all work out as each new situation proved to be yet another chimera. Sadly, the end did not sustain the terrific build-up, and proved a damp squib instead of the Nova it first appeared to be.

CENTRIFUGE

Hilary Green
Robert Hale, \$3.75

Nell Fairing and her husband struggle to raise their children and preserve their way of life in a Britain torn apart by strikes and shortages. A new party, the KBG (Keep Britain Great) appears, non-supporters have accidents and Nell's husband is killed in a riot. The KBG sweeps into power and Nell sets off with her children to try and reach her parents' home in Wales. Ms. Green paints her canvas with a chilling accuracy for the small details which make it live...local informers, travel passes, identity cards and ration books. Only the rather Deus ex machina ending reduces the impact of a yarn which has a far greater ring of truth than any boom from Martian invasion: potboiler.

ALIAS CULTURE

Peter Macey
Dobson \$3.95

Microbiologist Steve Lander and seductive agent Sophie are sent to steal a bacillus brought from the asteroids. The seduction technique fails, but the mission succeeds. Steve's Pharmaceutical firm tries to develop a new medicine from the culture, but instead produces an addictive drug Elixirin and the culture proves itself intelligent..and bent on making the Earth's populations into its slaves via the addiction which spreads rapidly in all directions.

I found this an enthralling yarn, deftly and realistically developed and one of the best and most convincingly written 'alien menace' yarns to come along in a long time. As with 'CENTRIFUGE', the action is in a normal everyday setting without belief-sapping dramatics and high speed fakery.

JULES VERNE

Peter Costello
Hodder & Stoughton \$6.50

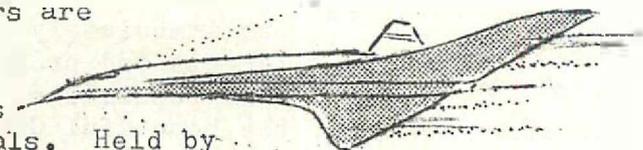
With the 150th anniversary of Verne falling this year, it is not surprising to see another biography of 'The father of SF', (an earlier biography by his grandson was reviewed in ERG 56). Comparisons with

the earlier work are inevitable, and perhaps the most obvious difference lies in the fact that whereas the grandson tended to edit Verne's less endearing activities such as the writing of scurrilous verse, Peter Costello puts them neatly in perspective. Verne at twenty was a bit of a playboy, a gad-about and had acquired a mistress. Likewise the new biography clearly indicates that when Verne did marry, the storms and tribulations of that union were as much his fault as that of his gentle wife. These and other facets of the author's life style, the background and character derivations of his stories are all brought out in fascinating detail. Also included is a brief photo section, an appendix of 'round the world' records, a bibliography and an excellent index. My only quibble is that once again, though Verne's funeral carriage is shown, there is no illustration of the inspiring tomb stone erected over his grave.

16 THE WITLING

Vernor Vinge
Dobson \$5.95

When two space explorers are stranded on the planet Giri, their inability to reeng or seng, brands



them as witlings in the eyes of the locals. Held by the prince-imperial, they must nevertheless journey across the planet to summon help before dietary trace elements kill them both. A fascinating, well worked out and neatly plotted interpretation of the old journey-for-a-purpose theme. I'd like to have seen more reeng/seng side issues, but their absence in no way detracts from a highly entertaining narrative.

THE ANYTHING TREE

John Rackham
Dobson \$3.95

When Philosophy Corps Agent, Selena Ash makes a deep space jump, she finds her craft has been sabotaged, she sets down on a handy planet to lube the culprits within range (what she intended to do then, is a bit obscure).

In short order, she encounters a castaway, sentient planets..and two lots of saboteurs. Next on the scene is an intelligent, powerful tree which was discovered by the castaway and can create anything you desire..including a better you. Ignoring the coincidences, this is all woven into a pleasing whole with only the romantic angle tending to slow things in the last chapter. Personally, I liked it a lot.

A BILLION DAYS OF EARTH

Deris Piserchia
Dobson \$5.95

Homo Sapiens has been replaced by homo Superior and they as a whim have mutated rats into men and forced them to relive human history. Into this world appears Sheen, a being of quicksilver who can 'acquire' living

things...and who quickly causes a crisis. Then there is Rik, a thinker and rebel against the status quo..and the upper-crust families, the Pillys. The mixture is well stirred and moved along smoothly until the final third, when, as is so often with modern stories, it sagged when trying to unite the whole and give it meaning.

THE HAND OF OBERON

Roger Zelazny
Faber & Faber \$3.95

'Amber' lovers will welcome this fourth member of the series (recently published in the USA by Avon). Here we have Lord Corwin and his fellow princes beset by dangers, which in the main, stem from an unknown traitor in their ranks. Their dimension-warping pattern has

been warped, their father missing, and indeed the forces of Evil appear to be gaining the ascendancy. The imagination and colour forming Amber's rich tapestry are all here, the strangeness of the Shadow-world and the interplay between the princes. The action is more sedate, but for Amber fans that will prove no hindrance.

THE ALCHEMICAL MARRIAGE OF ALISTAIR CROMPTON

Robert Sheckley,
Michael Joseph \$4.50

Alistair Crompton, exotic perfume blender and part of a schizophrenic personality, sets out to re-combine with his alter-egos, now freeliving in pseudobodies elsewhere in the

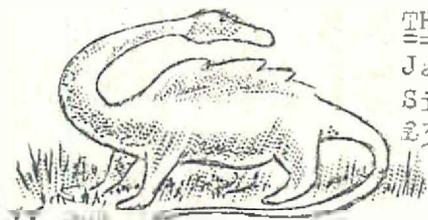
Galaxy. He succeeds in re-joining with the hedonistic Loomis and murderer Stack and a three cornered battle for their body develops. A lighthearted galactic fantasy romp, verging on lampoon. Entertaining, but never really getting anywhere.

THE EYES TRILOGY

Stuart Gordon
Sidgwick & Jackson
£5.95

17
Into one massive (6cms thick) volume, S & J have united the three Gordon epics. ONE EYE opens with Khassem's hordes attacking Phadraig and an invincible golem smuggles the newly-born mutant away. The pursuit follows into the wilderness, where the child exerts its powers and the mumen rout Khassem's warriors.

TWO EYES is even richer and more colourful as esoteric forces begin to move their pawns. The Cyclone Brotherhood mounts a Project against the mutant and the strange Hu'ons operate through mirrors to gain their ends. In THREE EYES, Gordon unites his sub-plots, the Mutant sends his mumen to loot the Pyramid, the Cyclone Brothers combine against the madness threatening the land and a flashback reveals the origins of Gordon's wonderfully detailed and colourful world. The emphasis shifts subtly from epic fantasy to SF and you have in one monumental volume a work which bids fair to place its author alongside the cult figures of Peake and Tolkien. Moreover, if you couldn't afford the individual books in the series, here they all are, in one handsome volume, for half the cost of the separate titles. Highly recommended.



THE MAGICIANS

James Gunn
Sidgwick & Jackson
£3.95

When Private Eye, 'Casey' is offered a thousand dollars to find the name of the head man at a Magicians Convention, it seems like easy money. However it

turns out that his client..and the victim, are both witches...as are all the other attendees (hence the 'Convention'). In no time at all, Casey is involved with a lovely girl, his own brand of magic, and a desperate battle between good and evil. Plausibly - and pleasingly, written; this is one of those highly entertaining yarns which keeps you hooked without biting your nails in desperation. It probably won't win any awards, but will give enjoyment to its readers.

The Illustrated Book Of
SCIENCE FICTION IDEAS AND DREAMS
David A. Kyle
Hamlyn £4.95

Once again, Dave Kyle, member of First Fandom and Knight of St. Anthony has dipped deeply into the wells of nostalgia to produce a worthy companion to his earlier 'Pictorial History of SF'. Of similar,

king-size dimensions (23 x 31 cms and 172pp) it absolutely creaks at the seams beneath its load of artwork, photographs and sections of strip-cartoons. The author uses Verne, Wells, Gernsback and Campbell as the four corners of a frame inside which he examines ten main theme areas of SF..including Monsters & Mutants, Voyages, FTL Travel, Robots, Supermen and many others, all interwoven with a scholarly text boasting numerous excerpts from the tales under discussion. No doubt the nit-pickers will complain about some insignificant error such as a misplaced comma or transposed title, but for those whose interest is devoted to what SF was, is, and will be, this is one of the highlights of the publishing year and a worthy successor to 'Pictorial History'.. ..now let's hope that there is a third volume in the works to cover the fannish side of the scene. I recommend this one to all who love SF.

Piers Anthony
Corgi 35p

This completes the trilogy starting with 'Omnivore' and 'Orn'. Starting off in top gear, dimension jumper Veg confronts a hostile machine. Joined by Cal, the beautiful Aquilon and the Android super-agent Tamme he roams the patterns of alternity meeting a questing energy pattern, OX. Having played with hexaflexagons, I know just how tantalising they can be...and so is this involved sequence of jumps through alternity which are based on hexafelagons. This yarn is as difficult to put down as those amazing pieces of paper.

PROMISED LAND

Brian Stableford
Pan.60p

Third in the 'Hooded Swan' series wherein Space Pilot Grainger (and his mind parasite) hare off to the planet Chao Phyra aboard the 'Swan' in an attempt to return a kidnapped girl. After adventures in the jungle which include a confrontation with a band of two ton spiders, the girl is found

THE PARADISE GAME

Brian Stableford
Pan 60p

Fourth in the series though the Swan stays on the planet Paradise while Grainger tries to sort out the rival factions laying claim to the lush place. His job is to find a way to prevent exploitation...but the local survival ecological system beats him to it by producing its own breed of nastiness aimed only at nasty people. I enjoyed this one far more than its predecessor...if you can only afford one, this should be your choice.

THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION

Samuel R. Delaney
Sphere 75p

Lobey, a mutant and a telepathic musician lives in a future world populated by a variety of other radiation-made sports. The period is the junction of Godle and Einsteinian space. Kid Death kills Lobey's woman, Friza and Lobey sets off in a nightmare hunt among computers, 'magic' and other fantastic occurrences.

THE MAN WHO AWOKE

Laurence Manning
Sphere 35p

Norman Winters constructs a crypt and hibernates for three thousand years to find a world of forest dwellers. In repeated 'sleeps', he encounters a world Drain, a society of dreamers, an age of individualists, and other wonders. Billed as 'A Classic Novel of SF's Golden Age' (It comes from a 1933 issue of Wonder Stories) this one reads surprisingly well for its age.

REPORT OF PROBABILITY A

Brian Aldiss.
Sphere 35p

For some unknown reason, watchers G, S, and C (Not to mention pigeon X) spy on Mrs. Mary. Their activities are reported in meticulous, repetitive and boring detail in the form of a report read by yet another watcher, Domolcdassa who secretly spies on them..and is in turn watched from another dimension- and his watchers are also surveyed..etc. The only apparent common denominator is an obscure 19th Century painting. If you read, understand and possibly enjoy this, please write and explain it to me.



ANYTHING
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Eight Blish-yarns from the magazines, each concerning a person and a cause. Earth's official traitor on a mission; rat-like space travellers on a journey of extermination; saving a race from (human) contamination; the take over of a giant spaceship: and a wide range of other themes..including my own favourite of the living space suit - but you may prefer the doctor who singlehandedly sets out to cure a planets diseases. Blish is always good - this time he sparkles!

THE LIFE SCIENCE
=====

P.B. & J.S. Medawar Paladin £1.25. A wide range of essays on the tremendous strides and current trends in modern biology. It includes such items as; inheritance and the DNA code; heredity and natural selection, eugenics, microbiology, cancer, senescence and many other themes. All are dealt with lucidly with a firm, but gentle push being given to 'old wives tales' and 'everybody knows' bits of legend. Not a text book, but a collection of ideas which will appeal to writers and authors with more than a passing interest in biology. An excellent general coverage, plus a helpful glossary.

DIMENSION OF MIRACLES
+++++

Robert Sheckley Panther 60p Carmody is transported instantaneously to Galactic centre to collect an unexpected lottery prize (and one which can speak). The return journey is not so easy and involves jumps through time and space, plus encounters with gods, talking dinosaurs and other impossibilities. All the time, Carmody is hotly pursued by a merciless predator. Sheckley does this sort of thing well...and often.

IN 1950
=====

Damon Knight Methuen 'Magnum' 75p A scintillating seven, from the magazines of the fifties, (where else can you find so much good, plot-constructed SF?) You meet the four ingested by a blob of protoplasm; an alien contact which drives men mad; a question-answering pattern; social ostracism; interstellar portals, and a care-less future superman. All lovely stuff, every single one a winner, and indubitably Damon Knight at his very best.



NEW WRITINGS IN SF 29
=====

Ed. Ken Bulmer Corgi 75p Once again, an eight story of completely new tales covering a variety of themes from time loops to telepathic empathy and from deep space problems to a spot of population control. All are extremely well-written but for my money, I prefer the Tubb 'First Contact' tale, the Malcolm aliens and dan Morgan's murder bit. These are complete yarns as distinct from the indeterminate conclusion and action in the others. My quibble apart, this volume well maintains the series' standard.

THE COSMIC QUESTION
=====

John A. Keel Panther 75p An assnby of rumour, hearsay and dubious reportage which attempts to prpve that there are unknown forces shaping our destin. A chart of the known electro-magnetic spectrum is presented...and with equal status, it is extended to a 'superspectrum' encompassing ESP, Dowsing and suchlike. If you want to hear this sort of stuff....help yourself.

STAR TREK Photonovel 1.
CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER
Corgi 85p

Remember those Italian 'pictorial romance' magazines whereby a complete story is told in a series of photographs? Well here is a paperback which re-creates Harlan Ellison's famous ST episode using clips from the film. For good measure you also get a brief Ellison interview, a glossary of terms and a quiz. Quality-wise, it can't be faulted. Trekkies will snap it up and if you like photo-stories, then this is an excellent way of reliving the voyages of the Star Ship Enterprise.

THE MALACIA TAPESTRY

Brian Aldiss
Triad/Panther 95p

An alternate world story set in the ossified city-state of Malacia which approximates to Venice of the Middle Ages, but with winged people, magicians and monsters. Perian de Chirola is a bit actor, philanderer and very much a man of his time as he pursues his amours against a backdrop of intrigue in support of progress and change. Aldiss gently and skilfully develops a richly detailed and fully credible, stratified society with all its sparkling facets and dirty corners; the whole making the Malacian tapestry. This is a book to read slowly as you savour its joys. Indubitably, Aldiss at his best.

BLOODSTONE

Karl Edward Wagner
Coronet 85p

A re-issue (at no increase in price) of the tale of the mighty warrior Kane, a Conan-type superhero who is also an adept in the Black Arts. Here he acquires the Bloodstone only to find its mighty powers are not quite what they seemed. A rattling good adventure.

DARKNESS WEAVES

Karl Edward Wagner
Coronet 95p

The further adventures of Kane the immortal. When a traitorous queen is caught and sentenced to a terrible death, her crushed and maimed body survives. Elfrid, the queen, studies the mystic arts and starts to raise armed forces and black powers to gain her revenge. She calls upon Kane to lead them into battle. Again, blood and gore by the car load, but a gripping adventure nevertheless. Both are good tales, but I fancy this the better of the two.

THE EXILE WRITING

Vonda McIntyre
Pan.75p

Mischa is a telepath, living as a thief in Earth last underground city. Bound by empathic bonds to a warped sister and cruel father, she braves the ruler's palace and its cruel, slave society to try and win escape aboard a starship-flown in by two Pseudosibs. A taut, involved yarn, which does not pander to the reader, but develops logically and convincingly. There are no loose edges, but an excellent narrative.

COSMIC KALEIDOSCOPE

Bob Shaw
Pan.75p

A scintillating nine story collection. Take your pick from a Western SF story (No, NOT 'Bat Durstaon'), Yetis from the stars, alien traders, the mutual dependence of man and plant in 'The Silent Partners', or perhaps Mona Lisa used on a Zoetrope? There's a lovely murder monster in 'The Uncomic Book Horror Story and a nifty switcheroo on rich old man/flighty young wife theme. Heck, pick anywhere, they are all good...and they all tell a story rather than a pallid shadow of one as is so common nowadays.

McCaffrey lovers will be pleased to hear that Corgi have come up with paperback editions of two choice items :-

DRAGONFLIGHT

===== This one is a real item
Anne McCaffrey for those wishing to
Corgi 75p have a large slice of
the 'Drago' versus
'Threads' story in one volume. It
holds the four tales which make the
saga.. Weyr Search, Dragonflight,
Dust Fall (originally, 'Dragonrider')
and The Cold Between. Without doubt, a
'snip' at the price.



DRAGONSONG

===== This one is the story
Anne McCaffrey of Menolly, she wants
Corgi 75p to be a Harper, but
there is too much

opposition so she flees her Hold just
as the Threads commence to fall. Taking shelter in a cave, she accidentally
'impresses' a group of fire-lizards. Dragonriders barely appear in this one
as it clings to the poor, suffering Menolly and how she attains her ambition.
Of the two yarns, Dragonflight is the one to get if your pocket is finite.

THE WORLD'S WORST AIRCRAFT

===== James Gilbert
Coronet 34.25

This is one of those factual accounts which grip
you on page 1 and never let go as the author
(himself a flyer, and editor of Pilot) delves
into the background history of many a well known

flying machine. His net gathers in the first attempts at flight, gliders,
and balloons before moving on to cover powered machines, dirigibles, military
planes, flying boats, jet planes and even man-powered flight. Not a dull
technical treatise, but a lighthearted and highly entertaining look at
aviation. You may quibble a bit (Four 0.5 calibre guns shouldn't be brushed
off as 'four rotten little machine guns') but otherwise, this is a treat for
aircraft buffs..and indeed all those interested in the science of flight.

CYBERNETICS

===== F.H.George
Teach Yourself Books
75p.

Professor George of Brunel University first explains
just what is covered by the field of cybernetics, then
continues with chapters on cybernetic models, logic,
information theory, neural nets, automata theory and a
host of other allied topics. This is not a 'popularis-

ation' - indeed, it gets a bit heavy in parts with Venn diagrams, set theory,
truth tables and suchlike. Nevertheless, if your interest in cyhernetics goes
beyond watching the bionic man, you will find this an excellent primer..and
of great use to aspiring writers of 'hard core' sf.

A SONG FOR LYA

===== George R.R. Martin
Coronet 35p

Analog readers will be familiar with the writer's praise
winning, 'With Morning Comes Mistfall' and 'A Song For
Lya'. Both are included in this ten story collection,
along with an assortment which includes a future alien-

human football game; mind control of corpses, post A-war troglodytes, FTL
travel, space madness and a host of other gems. Martin fans..get it!

