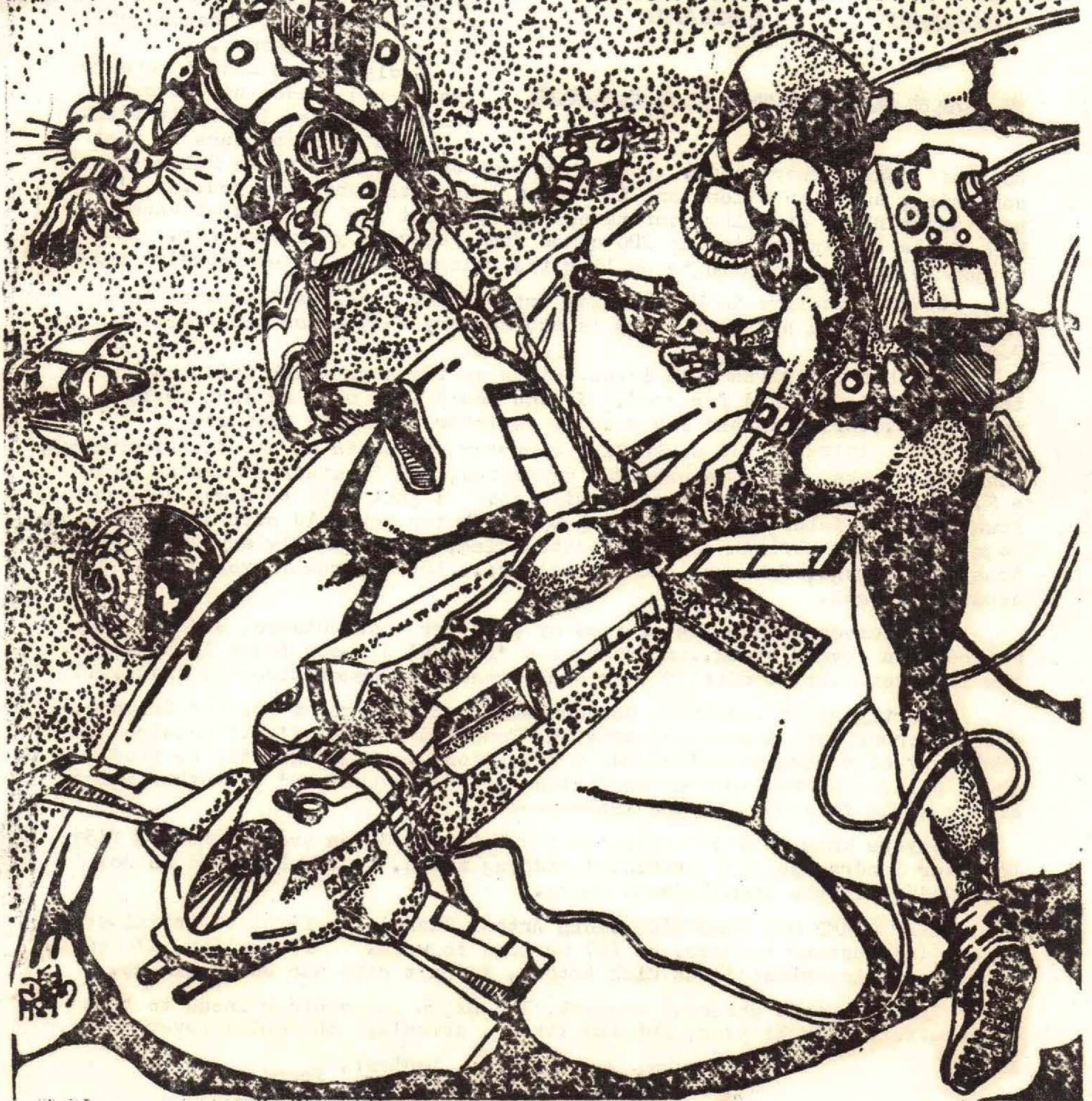


EREG 88

QUARTERLY

OCTOBER 1984



NOW IN ITS TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR !

ERG
QUARTERLY

Terry Jeeves
230 Bannerdale Rd
Sheffield S11 9FE
ENGLAND

This is ERG Quarterly No.88 of that grand old publication, now in its 26th. year of life. You can get the next copy by sending a LOC on this issue, plus 30p in stamps (or 40¢). That's what I prefer..but if you MUST sub. then £1 will get you two issues..or \$2.00 (bills, not cheques) will get you three issues.

Sadly, I can accept no more trades and seldom use outside contribs unless I solicit them. So, if a cross appears in that

top left hand corner above...then this must be your last issue unless you DO something, and a question mark indicates I hope to hear from you..or I'll have to think of dropping your name. Sorry about that folks..but honestly, 90% of the fun in publishing ERG comes from receiving your comments. It is no joy to me if I seem to be nailing the things into a non-responsive void.

COVER this time is by Canadian artist Eddy Dean...and another is on file for sometime next year...as is the January 1985 cover which will be by Ted Hughes.

THE MAN OF COPPER this issue, winds up the saga which fainthearts thought I had finished for good. If you would like more of such revised pulp sagas...write in and say so...or register your vote against.

SALE LISTS If you would like computer printouts of all five..Hardcovers, Mint Paperbacks, Older paperbacks, magazines, and Fanstuff+oddments, send me a S.A.E. Statesiders..40¢ stamp will do. I just HAVE to clear some space. However, I am interested in trading my books for your old pulp (pre-1940) mags..I'm after certain issues of Astounding, and virtually any G-8, Flying Aces, Doc Savage, Unknown, etc of that era. Let me know if you would consider a deal.

Goodperson Robbie Cantor read my plea for space stamps, and has duly mailed me a lovely stack..including the 'Balloon' jig-saw issue I was after. Now if anyone has it mint??? ..or other space commemoratives to trade...?

Shortly after receiving Goodman Sullivan's cargo of Popular Science, see 'Fancrama this issue, and writing 'Tomorrow's Whirled'...I acquired a 1924 copy of a Gernsback 'Science & Invention'...it has greatly tempted me to do a piece on the various predictions, 'new inventions' and other items of his world to come. Anyone interested ?

Anyone know of a job going in the Palmer's Green area of LONDON N13? Daughter Sandra has just graduated, adding a B.A. to her B.Ed and is now No. 3241513 in the unemployment queue.

HELP STAMP OUT DEMOCRACY..Join Arthur Scargill's fight to intimidate anyone (a) wanting to vote, or (b) wanting to work. Personally, I'm quite neutral and impartial about Kink Arthur, I don't care who duffs him up.

And with that cheerful thought, I consign yet another issue to that long-suffering duplicator, may its (their, actually) shadow(s) never grow less.

Bestest, Terry



Immortality has long been one of the favourite themes of SF. Ponce de Leon sought the Fountain of Youth, Haggard's 'Ayesha' staved off old age by bathing in a weird flame and James Hilton's hidden city, Shangri La preserved its inhabitants well beyond normal span.

Professor Jameson became a metal-bodied and eternal Zorome, but Heinlein's 'Families' achieved their longevity as a birthday present in

their genes.

Immortality has generally been held up as a nice thing to have, but just what sort of immortality do we have in mind, anyway? Living for ever? Never growing old? ...or what? I think it was 'The Invariant' in A.S.F in which the central character defeated death by having his body cells renew themselves after each slight change. This prevented him from growing but also prevented the fellow from remembering anything longer than a minute or so before the memory cells got renewed. I can't imagine anyone wanting that sort of immortality.

A simple (?) 'living for ever' might not be such a magnificent prize either..unless it was accompanied by a halt in body decay. Of the one or two centenarians I've seen, each shows a frightening bodily frailty, loss of mental acuity and on-going impairment of hearing, sight, speech etc. Activities are limited to days spent sitting in a chair wondering what the next meal might bring. Extending such an existence for any further period is not my idea of fun and games.

However, since we're talking about the impossible (??) let's set a few guidelines. Immortality should:- (a) Stop further ageing but in no way impair bodily functions or memory. (b) Stave off disease, sickness and aid repair in case of accident (c) If applied to older people, it should regress the body (not the memory) to a physical age chosen by (or acceptable to) the recipient.

Under that system, anyone could retain their most active and capable age for ever and ever...Amen

But would it be a good thing? What hidden pitfalls lurk before an ageless person..in an ageless society? Boredom, certainly. Even now, far too many retired people complain of 'nothing to do' Usually because they never had any interests other than work and telly. Like the poor, such wights will always be with us..but what about the active-minds? The scientists, achievers and others who can never cram all their desires into a standard-size lifetime..they will keep working away...and so it will mean all the top jobs are filled with non-retiring personnel. The newborn

won't get a look in. But worse than that...all those who retire on pension would be in for a shock. The world's population would rise at a rate to make Harrison's 'Soylent Green' world look like the wide open spaces. No deaths, only births would rapidly bring a frightening fall in available food, land, housing, power, transport..and indeed EVERYTHING which the modern consumer society demands.

Take pensions...even today, the problem of the rising tide of octogenarians is posing problems to pension funds. More and more people queuing up at the outlet end and expecting index-linked handouts far higher than the cash they have paid in. At the input end, thanks to fewer who have jobs to be tithed, the input to pension schemes is even falling. You can expect THAT problem to become really acute within a decade...let alone when immortality comes along. Have you ever wondered why succeeding Governments have failed to bring in that bit of 'EQUAL RIGHTS' which would allow men to emulate women, and retire on State Pension at 60? At one stroke, that would take five years (and the highest paid ones) off the paying IN side of the scale...and plonk an extra five years of people on to the side of those calling for money. Imagine the chaos Immortality would bring.

Fantasy? Yes, it was...once. However, on Jan.8th 1984 the BBC ran a documentary on this very theme. I missed the programme, but the Radio Times 'plug' opened with.."By the end of the century we would be living to 150 or 200 years of age"..as quoted by an M.D. Maybe that's not the sort of immortality we had in mind earlier on...but it's roughly a doubling of a 'normal' lifespan...and in its turn would double the demand on food, housing, power...and of course, those pensions. Moreover, since the M.D. only specified an extended lifespan...and NOT some sort of return to youth via rejuvenation..once can expect that virtually all of those post 100 year citizens would need extra special geriatric care.

Immortality has long been offered up in fiction as something we would all like to get our hands on. If scientists succeed in locating that 'gene clock' which ticks away until it thinks we've had enough...and then stopping it...we might find the golden prize is not such a desirable thing.

Brave ~~My~~ Old World, here we come, ready or not.

T.J.

=====
 ... UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS cum free adverts:-

All electronic stencils in ERG are handled by H.J.Bridge, Rectory Row Press, 363 Kennington Lane, Vauxhall, LONDON S.E.11 He charges £1 a stencil inc. of postage (reductions for over ten stencils) and the service is almost by return of post (subject to GPO dithering). Other services are available, paper/ink/litho plates/rubber stamps/corflu/..also thermal stencils, plastic film laminating (pass cards etc.) and occasionally equipment..as of the time of writing, a Roneo for £35. Send him a large S.A.E for lists.

SF BOOKS..well, if you're not sending for my list and buying from me..try an S.A.E to Simon Gosden, 25 Avondale Rd., Rayleigh, Essex S56 8NJ..for an excellent catalogue and reasonable prices.

I'd appreciate your mentioning ERG if you write..or my name..who knows, someday I might win a free electronic stencil machine..or half a ton of books!



PART 10

In

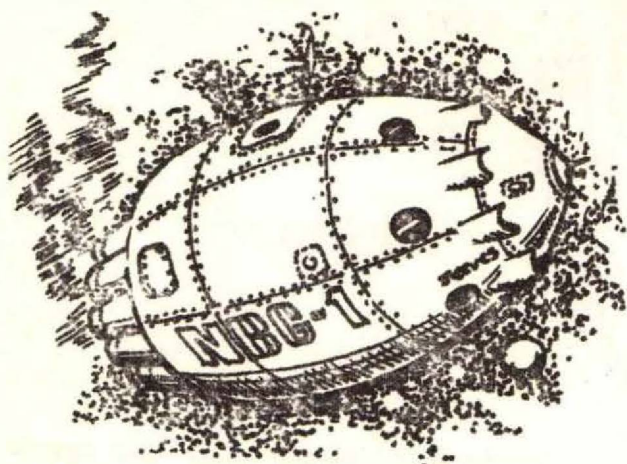
England,

..... Then

Various oddments clog the crooks and nannies of the memory-bank as I muse back over those pre-war days. Galaxy happens to be one of them. At this point, SF buffs will reach for their rule books and holler, "FOUL..Galaxy came out in 1950, NOT 'pre-war'!" Ah, but they are thinking of the SF magazine. I'm thinking of the slim little, A5-sized affair which specialised in popular science, modern marvels and the like.. a sort of English forerunner of 'Science Digest'...except that it only cost one shilling for an issue on slick paper and with the occasional photo.

Around this era, Newnes jumped on the SF band-wagon (anyone remember that programme?) by publishing the standard-pulp-size 'FANTASY' for 1/6d. The lead/cover yarn being a robot saga translated from the Italian and illustrated by Drigin. The cover featured showed a robot (in a garish mixture of human styling in leather covering) rising from an operating table to confront its creator. An interior illo showed the whole horde of the creatures wading lemming-like into a river. I forget why..maybe it was bath night. Highly forgettable..but on the other hand, I recall fairly well a tale about a future malcontent in a police state. He is to be eliminated by a friendly agent who takes him for a ride along a scenic railway. Both men are strapped in their seats and have donned gas-masks as part of the route goes through a gas-filled valley. To achieve his foul ends, the agent has donned a good mask, whilst he-who-is-to-be-done-in has been handed a duff one. However, being an altruistic twit, the good guy (not knowing of the fate awaiting him), has innocently swapped masks to protect his 'friend' from risk. Thus, the agent gets bumped off and the good guy finally catches on and escapes.

Most..if not all, of the interior artwork in FANTASY came from the 'soot-and-whitewash' work of S.Drigin (of SCOOPS and AIR STORIES fame). This tended to give the interior of the mag, a rather gloomy air. Couple this with the fact that his futuristic aircraft were multi-strutted, wire-braced and canvas covered as per contemporary aircraft, and you can see that his concept of the 21st. Century left something to be desired. On the other hand, whilst things that flew in air always reminded me of rather flimsy bird cages, Drigin never let the same weakness appear in his out-of-atmosphere illustrations. I suspect he worked on the theory that spaceships were akin to submarine..the former had to be tough to keep the water out,



and the latter had to be equally tough to keep the air in. He thus served up rocketships with more stern and bow tubes than a multi-barreled pom-pom. They were made by shipwrights from hefty steel plates, profusely riveted and with smoke drifting lazily upwards even in interstellar space. Maybe this helped to limit FANTASY's life to a mere three issues. Pity, it was a good magazine.

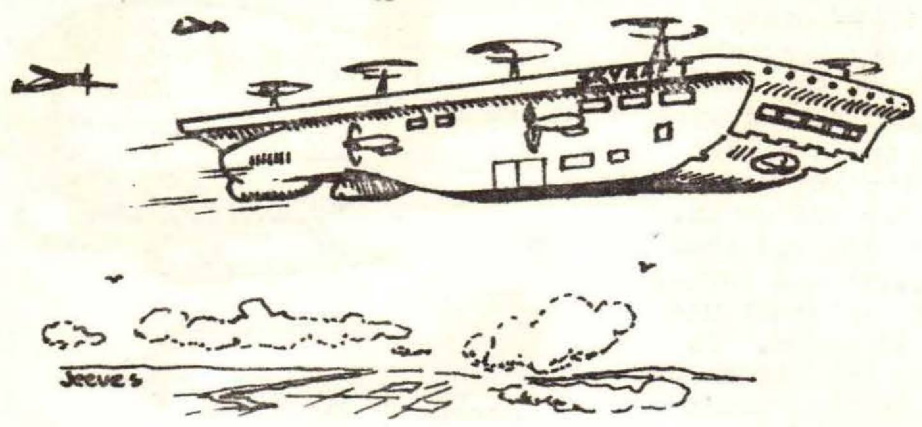
You can't keep a good title down, and shortly after the war, another firm chanced its arm and published....FANTASY. Again, this only saw three issues, but unlike

its predecessor, this version was a slim, A5-sized affair little more than a pamphlet, retailing at a shilling. The only yarn I recall from this short-lived little affair was called 'Basic Fundamental' which had something to do with sound harmonics..I also have a vague feeling that Arthur C. Clarke made his debut in the mag...and that another yarn concerned a bloke turned around from left to right in a power station accident..but that is about my limit. Which tends to show that British SF was highly forgettable in those days...(now, it seems even more so in the little I encounter.)

Even more title duplication was narrowly avoided when (I think in 1938), the magazine SCIENCEFICTION appeared in the USA, edited by Charles Hornig. It didn't last long but years later, John W Campbell began his metamorphosis of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION by phasing out the 'Astounding' it became obvious that before long...we should have a new version of the SCIENCE FICTION title...but someone must have pointed this out, as the phasing shifted to give us..eventually...ANALOG: Science Fiction - Science Fact'



Leaving magazines for a moment (I shall return, fear not!), there were..despite fannish beliefs to the contrary..other 'mainline' SF titles. These often surfaced as Christmas presents, and stood out like beacons against the standard stocking-filling fare of THE HOTSPUR and BOY'S CINEMA annuals (Nowadays, would it be 'PERSON'S CINEMA, PERSON'S MAGAZINE' and 'MODERN PERSON' ??). Such rare SFnal items earned my AAA rating...which guaranteed them immunity against being involved in some of my more interesting, but book-damaging schemes. Books made excellent backstops for airgun pellets for example. Then again, I still recall the horror of a maiden aunt when she discovered that I had transformed my copy of BIBLE STORIES into a hideaway for secret plans by cutting out the centres of each page, then gluing them together to form a book-like secret box.



SKYRAFT was one of the yarns which rated high on my list.

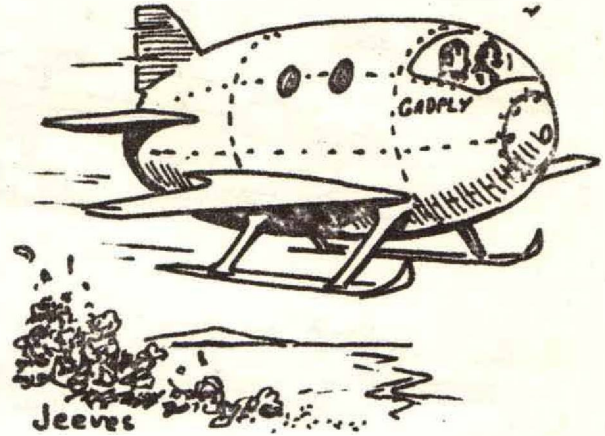
It was by a writer called Clarke...no, not our dear Arthur C, but

some totally different bearer of the name..probably answering to the nickname of 'Nobby'. The Skyraft of the title was a gigantic flying platform (resembling a cross between an aircraft carrier and F.P.1.1, supported by numerous airscrews along the sides..Sikorsky would have thrown up at the thought. The device was operated by pirates who flew it around the world at several hundred miles an hour..and way up in the stratosphere. To carry out their foul plans, they commuted down to Earth in special (high-speed, black) monoplanes...jist as baddies in the Westerns always rode around on black horses. Now and then, when more fuel was needed, the whole machine would settle near some secluded oil-refinery, the staff would be clobbered, and Skyraft tanked up on umpteen thousand gallons of high-octane.

Eventually, our hero used a secret, experimental (white) monoplane to fly up and land on Skyraft. Being way up on the fringe of space, he had to hold his breath for the scant ten minutes it took to find a way inside. Naturally, he was taken prisoner...how else could he get to meet the mad scientist running the place..and have the whole mad scheme explained..as well as just where to find Skyraft's one vulnerable spot? Then of course, hero escapes, bungs sugar or some other noxious substance in that Achilles heel, and parachutes safely to Earth as Skyraft plunges to its doom in some secluded ocean. Great stuff in the roaring thirties!

Older readers may recall Herbet Strang, writer of boy's adventure stories. One of his yarns was titled..ONE THOUSAND MILES AN HOUR'..and in the standard format of that era, featured as heroes, two public school boys on the inevitable holiday away from parents (who were off climbing the Great Pyramids or re-pointing the Wall Of China). This time, the boys were inflicted upon an uncle with a hacienda in some remote South American jungle. Whilst out for a jolly stroll, they encounter a pool of water (by the simple expedient of one of 'em falling into it) which has strange powers. Complete immersion of an object frees it from gravity..so the lad who falls in, zooms up to the roof of the cave where the pool is found. Crafty that..had it been outside he would have vanished into space. Then when the water film dries off, he falls smack on his mate..cries of 'Ouch, Yaroo, etc. Being of an inventive nature, our heroes, aided by their uncle, set to work. They cannibalise some old mine trucks, strip off their steel plate..and with the help of rudimentary shaping, planing and mould'ng equipment..to be found hanging around any self-respecting hacienda, they build themselves a bulbous flying device called THE GADFLY.

The Gadfly was a stubby-winged glider shaped like a Rugby football on skis. Along the inside of the roof, it had a set of compartments filled with wooden balls. Stirrup pumps either sprayed these with levitating water..or with air to dry the water off again. Thus Gadfly could be raised and then allowed to fall again...it was during the falling glide that the craft was supposed to reach its 1000 mph. To hell with all the slide rule buffs who point out that falling bodies won't reach such a velocity in the time available (I calculate they need to fall about $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles..neglecting air friction...and they had no oxygen supply for operating at that height). Who cares? Never let facts get in the way of a good story...the good old Gadfly proved its worth by belting across the jungle at top speed and floating down just in time to rescue Uncle from a firing squad. Maybe composed of local union men who objected to him making non-union aircraft.



Another Much-loved title was THE ECHO MAID AND OTHER STORIES, which I discovered whilst rummaging around in the attic. I suspect it was pre-1914 at least. The faded red cover was embossed with the picture of a young girl decked up in various ribbons and one of those long gowns which make the wearer appear to have just jumped out of bed. I don't know what impulse caused me to pick it up and read what was so obviously a Victorian girls' book...but the result was sheer delight. Many of the tales were obviously inspired by well-known yarns..or could it have been the other way round? Like my hair, memory grows thin..but I recall a story about a lad who had to journey up a mountain on some mission. To protect him against blandishments and the like, the good fairy had him turn his back whilst she reached inside him to remove his bump of curiosity. "Let me look" he asks, thus revealing that she missed a bit. That rectified, he sets off and safely braves the dangers of fire mountain. This one reminds me of a tale I read much later... 'KING OF THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN...or some such title..by I think..Washington Irving..anyone confirm this? As to which came first..?

Another story (this one obviously inspired by Swift's Gulliver) concerned a shipwrecked sailor in an undersea cavern populated by little people 'The Wee'Uns'. They never grow old, but when ready to pass on, eat of the fruit of a local tree and simply pop out of existence. Their big worry is a Phoenix chained to a turntable. They must slave away at keeping this turning in order to keep the bird from pecking a hole in the cavern wall and letting in the sea. Our hero solves their problem by feeding the bird some of the death fruit so that it pops off.

There was also a 'secret garden' story about a lad born on Feb 29th. Finding a small key, he enters the garden and finds bushes bearing tarts, cakes, bread and butter, tea and coffee etc. There is also a queer fellow whose mouth encircles his head. He eats specially baked cakes (with a hole in the middle) which he lowers over his head before proceeding to eat outwards in all directions. After a rollicking time, our hero left the garden, promising to return next birthday. Sadly, when the day comes, he

runs at top speed to the door, trips, falls and loses the key, so is unable to re-enter the magic garden.

I loved that book, but like the lad with the key, when after the war, I came home to renew my affair with it...I found it one more casualty of the keep-the-home-fires-burning syndrome which had stolen so many of my other treasures. If anyone out there comes across a copy...let me know.

Getting back to magazines and moving nearer to the present day, that post-war issue of FANTASY I mentioned a while back reminds me of one or two other magazines which popped up from time to time. From somewhere in the depths of Liverpool appeared a slim little magazine titled OUTLANDS. I saw this advertised in a catalogue from the 'V.H.Johnson Science Fiction Service', but somehow never plucked up the courage to risk one-and-a-tanner on buying a copy. Nowadays, Bil Bowers comes near that title with his fanzine (of erratic appearance) OUTWORLDS.

For more title duplication, there was the metamorphosis of the late Ted Carnell's fanzine New Worlds into the longer-lived promag of the same name. NEW WORLDS was a shot in the arm to struggling British fandom..and barely had its impact subsided that a companion appeared. Wally Gillings fanzine SCIENCE FANTASY became the companion publication to NEW WORLDS and for a while, we actually had TWO home-grown publications. Then NEW WORLDS ran into difficulties and was dropped by its publisher. A group of fans leaped into the breach, formed NOVA Publications and once again we had our NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY. Most people have heard the saga, so I don't intend to repeat it here...but how many know of the other Nova SF titles? Look up 'NOVA' in the Peter Nicholls' ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF' and you will only find mention of the Harrison anthologies. You have to try 'NEW WORLDS' to hear of Nova Publications..and even then they don't mention the spin-offs. On two occasions, we had the start of a series of NOVA SF NOVELS. In 1953 No.1 appeared in the digest-sized format and priced at 1/6. That was John Beynon's 'STOWAWAY TO MARS' As far as I know, it was the only one (with a Hitchings cover) to appear. Undaunted, Nova Pubs set about yet another set of NOVA SF NOVELS...this time, large sized paper backs retailing at 2/-. No.1 was Van Vogt's WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER'. No.2 THE CITY IN THE SEA (Tucker) No.3 THE DREAMING JEWELS (Sturgeon) and No.4 JACK OF EAGLES (Blish) They were graced by a striking, style-linked set of cover paintings done by Belfast artist..Gerard Quinn. Note that 'Gerard'...as several of the large-sized 'coffee-table' SF books I have in my collection mistakenly list him as 'Gerald'. Obviously, one made the boob, and successive works have made the usual careless encyclopedist's error of copying from earlier works instead of checking for themselves.

It was about this time that Kemsley newspapers caught on to the fact that there was cash money in this SF fad...they decided to add to their list of CHERRY TREE BOOKS, a set of SF titles listed as FANTASY BOOKS. Garish-covered and costing a mere 1/6d, I don't know who made the selections, but their tastes were most definitely catholic...and informed. The first title..No.406, was no less than Hugo Gernsback's RALPH 124C41+ ...along with a Gernsback preface and a reproduction of the front cover of the 1911 'Modern Electrics' in which Ralph first appeared. No.407 was Eric Frank Russell's 'SINISTER BARRIER', complete with the original Cartier illo which headed the hardcover version from Fantasy Press. No.408 was John W Campbell's 'THE THING' containing that story and six other JWC tales. What a bonus for a total cash outlay of 4/6d..or about 22¹/₂p in today's terms!

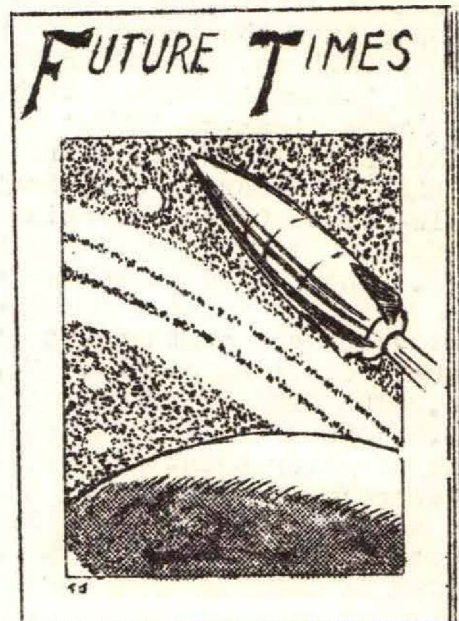
These were the boom years, with seemingly every back (and front) street publisher rushing to get his SF titles on the stands. quality suffered as WONDERS OF THE SPACEWAYS, MARVELS OF THE SPACEWAYS and other equally inane titles flourished. John Russell Fearn, Vargo Statten, Astron Del Martia, Pel Torro, R.L. Fanthorpe and a horde of other names both real and pseudonymous flooded the market with their hackwork. Fearn himself once told me how he was busily typing out and re-selling (under new titles) his earlier, out-of-copyright titles without bothering to revise them. He even sent me a paperback (Scion edition??) of his ASF 'Mathematica' yarn treated in this way. If there was ever a 'Golden Age' for Britain's would-be writers...that was it.

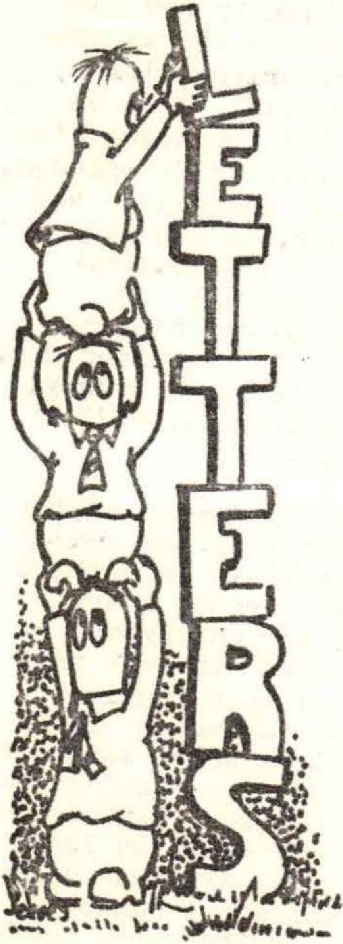
Whilst recalling fanzines which went professional...I had better mention that in this flood of cut-price SF, there was nearly another one to follow that path. Around 1958, when Eric Bentcliffe and I were happily publishing TRIODE (Acclaimed Britain's top fanzine of the period by at least two people). One fine day (courtesy Mme. Butterfly) we were approached by a local printer with delusions of grandeur (he wanted to be a publisher..and an author). How about us putting TRIODE onto the newstands? He would put up the cash and do the printing, we would supply the know-how. Just one minor point...er, he wrote SF and each issue would have to carry at least one of his stories.

Eric and I mused it over..then since we both enjoyed TRIODE, and wanted to keep it as it was, we proposed a new magazine, title and format. FUTURE TIMES was to have been A5 in size, printed, and available at your local newsagent. I'm not quite sure, even now just what went wrong...but at the second meeting (when the money man brought along his non-SF-type wife) there seemed a decided cooling in the atmosphere. It was obvious that she didn't approve of hubby's new hobby...a fur coat would have made more sense.

Nevertheless, I still have the mock-up that was created for that pilot issue. It carries my cover art done via lino block and numerous repeats of 4 typeset pages (Nos. 1, 2 and 3) of 'Never Trust A Machine' by Alfred James....which refers to computers (sic)..one line may interest you..."..the last hour's work was done in Britain by a 70 year old man in 1987". Obviously not at B.L.

I often muse over what might have been. Eric and I as joint editors of THE definitive British SF magazine. All I have is the memory and the dummy..wonder if that will ever be worth as much as ASF No. 1 ?? After all, there were thousands of copies of that issue printed..whereas FUTURE TIMES saw only this single copy of a non-existent first issue. You can't get much rarer than the only issue of a never-published SF magazine can you?





IAN COVELL
2 Copgrove Rd
Berwick Hills
Middlesboro
Cleveland

"I do find your articles on collecting old magazines interesting, because there is no way that sort of thing can be done nowadays. (((There is...you can collect them..and indeed, almost anything else.. IF you have the cash and persistence))). Although I suspect there are as many, if not more actual magazines around the place now, none have that rough and ready amateurism to them. (((True..but they have LASHINGS more adverts and editor-written fillings in 'em)))

G- reminded me much of Philip Jose Farmer's use of pulp heroes in satiric rewrites. The pity is that I've never read any of the original pulp stuff (((Lucky you, it has to be read when you're young, innocent..and I suspect..adolescent, to get the full impact. And in answer to several queries..yes, I'm 'Robert J. Hokum'))) I wonder what the pulp-analogue in our time is? the thing that the future will say the pulp evolved into? (((So few people seem to read nowadays, I'd suggest the caption-less comic book))) While I was reading Colin Grubb's letter I was thinking about the current crisis. Our economy is being decimated by squabbling between pressure groups..by a Prime Minister determined to pound people into poverty. (((Can't agree.. it was Scargill who called 'Strike' and who denied his members a democratic vote. It is Scargill who openly confesses he is out to topple ..by totally UNdemocratic means...a Government elected by democratic vote..NOT by one rabble leader))) What is blackly amusing about Maggie's 'self help' is that not everybody can help themselves..what do they do...starve and die? (((No way..just look at all the doles, allowances, supplements, grants etc.

available nowadays..and then look back fifty years when even sickness could mean a crippling bill. Look at the poverty-stricken miners..who whilst on strike can spend £20 a week on fags and £6 a week on 'the pools'...as Mac said... 'You never had it so good'..until Scargill, Benn, Kinnock and the LEFT came along)))

TED HUGHES
10 Kenmore Rd
Whitefield
MANCHESTER

I liked the Dean illustrations in this quarter's ERG. Do you print them actual size (((Yes, reduction is available, but at extra cost))) I imagine Eddy Dean is a younger man, judging by his choice of subject (((Right on))) I can't see a sexagenarian (wot a word! like you or me turning out

material like that: all muscle and male chauvinism, without a trace of humour. No disrespect to your artist, but the dumpy little Jeeves character does more for me. (((I trust you mean the ones I draw rather than my personal shape?...snag is, I can't draw 'real' figures anywhere near as good as Eddy))) G-8 AND HIS BOTTLE ACES get my approval. Never heard of this Robert J. Hokum fellow, but he's good. (((I blush))). Nostalgia is a force to reckon with..and you don't have to be decrepit to experience it. I can remember being nostalgic for 1930's to 40's tunes when plonky-plonk music took over. Somehow it seems the period to be nostalgic for must be in one's own lifetime. (((I'd be even more specific..see above letter))) By now, the Third World should know how to dig wells/ditches etc. (((I fully agree)))

(Ted Hughes..contd.) I regularly chip in at my local church to send off money to help communities in Africa or South America and think by now they should know how to do these things. Incidentally, when you see the modern cities they have..Lago^s, Freetown or the magnificent South American cities, you (or I, anyway) wonder why they can't find their own experts. I've an idea these backward people like being backward. (((I know what you mean..I've seen it in India as well...Durban the same. India has supersonic jet-planes, A-bombs, nuclear power, colour TV (in the cities), artificial satellites and its own airline...but people still sleep on Bombay's streets..in mud huts at Santa Cruz only ten miles out. There are two answers (at least)..one they are exploited by a top caste which creams off all the profits and sets the goals...and a populace too rooted in tradition to do anything to change it. There is a third factor...sheer graft..where relief supplies etc. get tithed repeatedly along the way..if they ever reach their goals anyway. Until you change the cultural and traditional background patterns..you'll not change the vast majority of Indian (and other) people.)))

KEN LAKE

115 Markhouse Ave.
LONDON E17 8AY

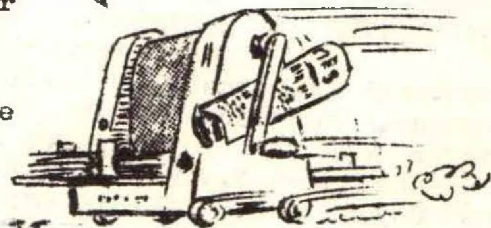
The view from my typewriter is vastly different. (((Try planting a seed box on it))) My present position provides me with a hazy view of suicidal cyclists and maniacal lorry drivers, with the odd bevy of schoolkids or mums with prams, hoary ~~lads/dl/doll~~..sons of toil wending their way to or from their employment at the local Refuse Tip (((miners, dockers or railway 'workers' in your area then))) I too recall some of the magazines that tempted us poor English schoolboys to emulate future inventors, but I confess that the moment I discovered (at the age of eight) that even cigarette lighters won't work for me, let alone doghutches built like cathedrals, I quit trying to manufacture anything. (((Wonder if one of your contemporaries managed to get a lighter to work on York cathedral??))) Ah the dreams of youth. Will our children look back on missed opportunities with home computers, or are they all hung up on ways to produce cutprice heroin from discarded burger casings? I dunno, I wonder whether nostalgia ever was what it used to be? (((In retrospect, yes)))

ALAN BURNS

19 The Crescent
King's Rd South
WallSEND NE28 7RE

I had a query from Alan Dodd yesterday asking as to what American SF is like these days. I said that as far as I knew, it was concerned with sexual hangups and ecological disasters. (((You forgot women'd rampant lib and save the suffering dolphin))) If I want SF, I read 'Laboratory Equipment Digest'. My only comment on G-8 is if you were responsible, not only has the squirrel pinched your nuts, but your marbles as well. ((Some people have no appreciation of modern writing styles in nostalgia))) Fanalog noted..Query though, are duplicators moving with the times? I mean, is the quality of the duping better or worse than it used to be? (((Definitely!)))

Best part of ERG..the Book reviews, but I think it would be helpful if you could include something relative to whether the books are on sale at the time of review. (((ALL titles listed were published in the last 3 months unless I specifically state otherwise...as with my comments on the Pohl..'THE WAY THE FUTURE WAS'....so shop without fear, if not on the shelves..they CAN be ordered)))



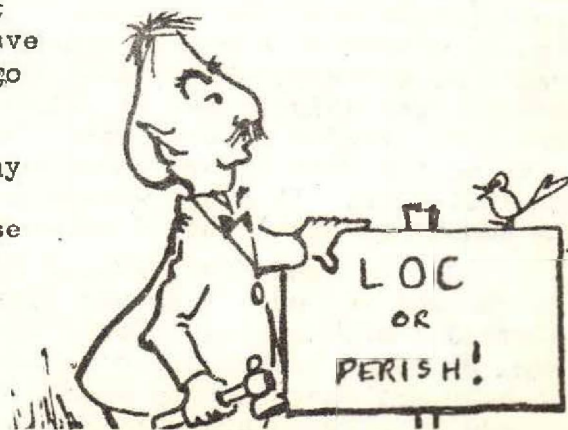
Duplicator moving
with the 'Times'

PAMELA BOAL
4 Westfield Way
Charlton Heights
Wantage, OXON

I particularly enjoyed this issue of DMBL. I don't think the publishers/editors of those times were totally unaware of their social structure but their market research (((Bay they NEVER did any))) would have shown them that children from homes without such niceties as refrigerators tended not to buy..or have bought for them..magazines. (((American readers can correct me..but I suspect that few mag-buying homes had a 'fridge in the 30s...it was the 'cic-man'))) While you might not have had an auto,I'm willing to bet you went to Grammar School (((Right)))and most of your class mates were from families that did (((Right again))) If you didn't go to Grammar School as a reader, you were in a minority among your peers. I remember getting into a debate on this. I think it was Chris Priest who supported the modern trend of setting children's books and characters in high rise blocks (((Bloody stupid idea))) 'Janet & John' may be ghastly, but the ones set in slum environment with the children urging work-shy father out of bed to do something, are worse. (((Dead true..children's horizons should be expanded..NOT cramped. Which is why I was appalled when the new 'trendy teachers' began to play pop music for their assemblies. Pop slop is what kids get everywhere, everyday. As teachers we should at least be exposing them to what else is around.))) Inner city stories (written of course by people who have never been there..or have escaped) suggest that this is the whole world, that negative self-images are justified, that there is no escape except by violence or crookedness. They do nothing to inspire a search for an appreciation of beauty..natural or otherwise...just teach that such things have been cornered by 'THEM' and cannot be attained..so must be torn down. (((As per Arthur Scargill etc. Imagine if the 'set 'em in inner cities' brigade had their way..no SF on space travel, on the world of the future (except to show how lousy it will be), no Kipling, Wells, Verne,Heinlein, Clarke,...no Gulliver's Travels, Black Beauty, Moby Dick and hundreds more. These 'change EVERYTHING to MY way bods make me PUKE!)))

MIKE ASHLEY
4 Thistlebank
Walderslade
Chatham
KENT

A most interesting issue of ERG, especially your piece on the Gernsback technical mags. I've seen a number of these, but never possessed any, and I do feel they've been overlooked somewhat in the development of SF and technophilia. I'm hoping that in the forthcoming book I'm working on with others in the States on Hugo Gernsback and his magazines that these will be given rather more in the way of credit. I always enjoy your book reviews, but for once I feel I must take issue with you on a point. Your rave review of MACHINES THAT THINK seems to go over the top. You say it avoids much anthologised pot-boilers, yet all the stories you list have been reprinted many time and I do wonder why fifty year old stories need remain in an antholigy these days. I really enjoy robot stories, and have read a fair number in recent years that I've thought excellent but few of these have been anthologised as far as I've noticed. Yet why do we need another retread of 'Farewell To The Master', 'Robot's Return' or, 'Answer' (((Sorry I got carried away, but it IS an excellent anthology)))



The Man of Copper

(Part.2 & Conclusion)



A 'SOCK' DAVIDGE NOVEL

by

Terry Jeeves

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:-

To escape the sinister, rocket-powered Malayan Kris which destroyed his aides, 'Sock' Davidge leaped from the 86th. floor of the Ompar State Building..NOW READ ON

Even as he began that sickening fall, Sock's flying hands were busily tearing open his silken shirt. Lashing the ends around his waist, he ripped out his shoe laces and used them to secure the shirt edges to his wrists. Then exerting his superb muscles to the limit, Sock stretched wide his arms. With a loud 'Crack!', the makeshift wings billowed into rigidity. In a graceful sweeping arc, the Man of Copper zoomed out of his headlong dive..and up, up, up in a steep climbing stall. Sock's mathematical mind and superb timing were called into play. The many hours spent training with abacus, egg timer and a manual of wing-foil sections all paid off. At the very instant that his makeshift wings faltered to a stall, Sock's steel-hard fingers closed on a narrow window ledge. A curiously fashioned metal device from a secret waist-belt glinted in the moonlight as it eased open the window. One quick heave of glistening muscles and he was safely on the carpeted corridor of the 70th. floor. Leaping into the elevator, Sock shot it up to the 87th floor, where he tapped out a rhythmic pattern on an unmarked door. It swung wide open to reveal the hairy, ape-like figure of his henchman 'Mink' (named after his resemblance to the fur of that creature)

Behind Mink, ranged Sock's other aides, all grinning cleeefully. "We thought you were a goner, Sock, when you dived out of that window," chortled 'Burp' Rennie; "Yes", chimed in Rear Admiral Nortey Books, better known as 'Hum' because of a certain body odour. "Good job your supersensitive hearing, sharpened by years of cunning exercises with klaxons and pop records gave us enough warning of that intruder, to inflate those full-size rubber replicas that guy blasted away thinking they were us. Now what do we do ?

Davidge strode to a strange device of knobs, dials and gleaming steel tubes. He flicked a switch and waited as steam hissed from a hidden vent. Reaching inside a small compartment, Sock withdrew a piping hot beaker of coffee. He sipped it meditatively and suddenly a strange expression crossed his face. "Dammit, burnt my lip!" he muttered. Straightening, he looked his henchmen squarely in the eyes (consecutively). "Let's see what our visitor is up to". Lifting a trapdoor in the carpet, he lowered a periscope cunningly disguised as a hanging lantern into their office on the floor below. Rotating it slowly, he examined the room in which the attack had taken place...scattered shards of rubber figures...a gaping circular hole in the window..but no trace of their assailant. A low, eerie wailing sound rose into the silence. It was the unconscious sound Sock made when someone stood on his foot. The offending 'Long John' apologised and stepped back. "Gee boss, how do we catch him now?" "Simple", said the Man Of Copper as he led the way down a secret staircase to the scene of the attack. Taking a curiously-shaped torch-like implement from a hidden pocket in his left shoe, he flicked a switch. Nothing seemed to happen, but as he pointed the torch at the floor, glowing footprints leaped into view!

Long John nudged Hum, "Reckon Sock's black light projector is working well. Clever of him to sprinkle the floor with the special podwer*as he jumped out. Now we can follow the fellow." Sock and his men followed the trail of glowing footprints out of the room, into the elevator, out into the lobby and thence into the street. Up Fourth Avenue they went, under the 'Elevated', over the 'Underground' and along the narrow, red-lamp lit street of ill-repute known as 'Broadway'. Now and then, the prints grew pixillated when their quarry had skipped merrily along flagstones taking care not to step on any cracks. Eventually, the trail led to a decrepit brownstone house deep in Chinatown's dockland. Without hesitation, pausing only for a hasty thirty-minute run-through of his exercises, the Man of Copper strode to the front door and grasped the knob. There was a sharp metallic, ping! as his stupendous muscles turned and turned and thrust..something broke with a twang. Sock's braces had parted! (American readers read 'suspenders') However, his emergency strode, followed by his aides. Through a half in the act of rising to his feet, was their cruel Lascar face twisted into an animal-like movement he drew a wicked knife and hurled it at it could have killed even..perhaps fatally, but flicked it aside with a quick blow of the torch, the black heart of another crook leaping from grabbed four more villains, two in each hand together whilst Long John, Hum, Burp and the Demijohn easily dealt with the remaining three as they did so, Sock was moving towards the Chinese-looking Oriental seated behind the It was none other than the dreaded sinister Dr. Yu Munch Tu...head of the sinister 'Coated Overseer of the Underworld and part-time laundry was, the master criminal was quicker. One long fingernail reached out to press a secret resounding crash, a razor edged metal shield

belt held. Forward he open door to the right, would-be assassin. His smart as in one swift Sock. Had it reached the Man of Copper and it sank deep into behind the door. Mink and banged their heads taciturn 'Plinker' dozen desperadoes. Even yellow, slant-eyed, ornate ivory table. criminal master-mind, 'Tong', uncrowned man. Quick as Sock and delicately tinted button. With a dropped from the ceiling

(* 'podwer'.. a substance of Sock's invention closely resembling powder)



and sliced through the ivory table to cleave deep into the wooden floor. The metal barrier delayed Sock for the brief moment it took to remove two tiny glass vials from a hidden pocket in his tie, mix them together into a fuming concoction and burn through the steel plate like butter through a hot knife. In that short interval, Yu Munch Tu had vanished, but a slowly closing trapdoor revealed where. Sock made a quick gesture to his followers before laying down on the floor and stiffening into rigidity. Picking up their leader like a battering ram, they made short work of demolishing the barrier, whereupon Sock threw off the Tibetan trance by which he had stiffened his body into a stone-like mass, and led his aides into the gaping hole. A winding tunnel emerged beneath the pilings of an East end dock. They were just in time to see their quarry scuttle into a tiny, one-man submarine and slam shut the hatch.

Even before the motors could whirl into action, Sock acted. He scrambled up the girderwork of a nearby crane, kicked it into action and luffed it around. With one deft motion of the arm, he snared the hook into the submarine's periscope. There was a groaning of cables under tension and the diminutive craft was swung out of the water and deposited gently on the dockside. It was but the work of a moment for Sock's pocket tin-opener to slice it like a sardine can. Reaching inside, Sock's mighty arm withdrew the struggling figure of Yu Munch Tu. Despite the awful Chinese-type curses issuing in a high pitched voice from the arch criminal's mouth, the Man of Copper clasped the figure tightly around the chest. Then a strange, seldom-seen look of pleased surprise stole across the handsome features of Sock Davidge.

"Look, brethren," he cried... With one swift movement, his hands flew to the throat of Yu Much Tu's single gown-like garment. There was a brief ripping noise and away came the cunning one-piece disguise worn by the master criminal. Revealed for all to see, was a tall, slim, seductive brunette clad only in a cheong-san, gum boots and a delicate pink blush. Even the normally misogynistic Sock Davidge was affected by her beauty.

"What are you going to do with her, Sock?" panted Mink. "Take her to your secret Fortress Of Solitude, which as everyone knows, is near the North Pole?" drolled Demijohn.. "And make her into a good, moral upright citizen?", leered Lonh John. They all waited breathlessly as their leader took a firmer hold on the lissom figure.

"Not quite," answered the Man of Copper, "But I shall make her, Good!"

=====
Based on 'Sock Davidge', Man Of Copper. Improbable Publications 1827
=====

A limited, copper-bound edition of this work in ninety-three volumes will shortly be available from the publishers during the next decade or so. Pre publication orders must be accompanied by £243 and a stamped addressed envelope. This offer does not apply to employees of ERG Publications, juvenile delinquents, criminally insane, or members of the N.U.N.

WARNING. Reading 'Sock Davidge' may seriously damage your health.

Tomorrow's



Whirled

by Terry Jeeves

Browsing through a stack of Popular Science (see this issue's 'Panorama') I was struck by the rich tapestry of applied science unfolding before us (or behind us if you happen to face the other way). Take the case of the enthusiastic angler whose desire to acquire incredible fish, far exceeds his physical ability to get on with it. Now for a measly \$1196.00 he can buy an electronic, computerised, push-button rod-reel control box.

Without overstraining his wind, heart or braces, he can clamp the thing to his rod, bait the hook (or talk some more energetic fellow into doing this for him), press a button, and the gizmo will deploy the line, jiggle it, play it, and even land the catch. It has limitations though..someone has to take the flaring fish off the hook.

If all that exercise gets you overstimulated.. as indicated by shortage of breath or a few heart attacks, then invest \$49 in the GSR 7. I'm not sure what the letters stand for, but the thing closely resembles a plastic soap-box. Clasp it firmly in your hand, it will hum a high or low tone depending on the tension of your hold. Simultaneously, or at the same time, whichever is the lesser, you play the accompanying tape of tension-relaxing exercises. Immediately, if not sooner, you will be refreshed, energetic and of increased personal productivity, the ad says so. Maybe you'll even feel up to going fishing. (Make your own boat out of six sheets of plywood...Page 29).

If fishing isn't your thing, then all that bursting energy may be used for ski-ing. \$395 sets you up with a ski-treadmill on which you can work out your arms, legs and all the other muscles you use on a nasty cold and draughty piste...without having to mess around in all that nasty cold wet stuff. The ad doesn't say if you can also break your bones in the same way..but after all, what do you expect for under four hundred bucks?

Vicarious, but deeply addicted armchair outdoorsmen who admire those husky frontier-type men with hairy, tattooed forearms as they nonchalantly hog tie a steer whilst puffing happily on a low-tar mentholated cigarette, must wince at the accompanying sales aid from the Surgeon General that...'Cigarette smoking may damage your health' If this scares the living daylights out of you...simply turn to the ads for pipe tobacco, for some strange reason, these carry no such warning. The message is clear, it isn't the tobacco which is dangerous..just the paper they wrap it in..or perhaps all those multi-ply mentholated deep-tar grabbing filters tend to bump people off. One more mystery for modern science to unravel.

I also note that the American police force is trying out a set of king-sized pliers designed to grab and hold in an unbreakable grip any criminal daft enough to stand still long enough for a patrolman to manipulate the things around his lower limbs. From Australia comes a disposable cardboard mousetrap operated by an elastic band. Once it has done its job, you chuck it away along with occupant. For fifteen bucks you can form a company..or better still buy a book which fully explains (with diagrams) how to become a millionaire overnight. For nature leathers, there's an aerosol can which shoots a wasp-killing jet for no less than 12 feet. Short of water..the Hydra-Drill will sink you two or three wells in your backyard ... seemingly, it operates by water-pressure, so how you manage to run it until your well comes in remains a bit vague.



Other ads allow you to save fuel, seal in heat, keep out cold, cut draughts, ionise your air, paralyse mosquitos, grind garbage, secure doors, protect your patio, lock out looters and indeed do a hundred and one things to convert your home into an unassailable fortress. I gather that dozens of Americans have been found dead of starvation on their own doorsteps when, having mislaid their 63 door keys and codes, they are unable to get back into their own homes. Like cigarette smoking, starvation can seriously damage your health.

However, the real game of the day is Conservation. No auto worth a can of beans if it can't do more than 20 miles to a gallon..preferably of diesel oil rather than petrol. If it can also go from 0 to 60mph in $4\frac{1}{2}$ seconds, corner like a Gokart and carry all the family, two boats and a portable fall-out shelter, then it has a good chance of selling well.

The innest thing of all, is of course, *Solar Power*...run your watch, shaver, sun-lamp and power saw off solar cells and you are a real good citizen. As for your home..if that is sun-powered with a stand-by battery cum diesel plant you're on the sea,. Cover the roof with solar cells until it collapses under the weight, brew your own gas from grain alcohol and you will win the Congressional Medal of Honor. Put fifteen windmills on the roof for standby power and you're made. Admittedly, you run the risk of the whole house getting airborne during the next gale..but this is entirely legal as no Certificate of Airworthiness or pilot's licence is required provided you don't fit a wheeled undercarriage..do that and it will no longer qualify as a microlight aircraft.

No doubt about it..science is making this planet of ours a wonderful place on which to live..and best of all, no new skills or training are required..all you have to know, is how to press the button.

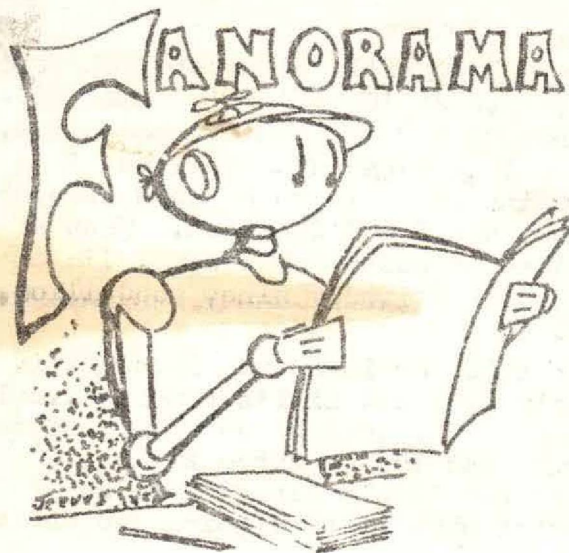
T.J.

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American School, Dept. D-27, Grandet 39th, Chicago



ITEM ONE on my fannish agenda is to pass along a little message from British Telecom..which arrived about thirty minutes after I finished duplicating the last issue of ERG... Hencefifth, the 'phone number here at the Stately Crumbling Jeeves Mansion will be:- (0742) 553791 Note the addition of that extra five..without it, you'll not get through to me..so please amend your records.

WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE. May 1984 has just arrived from Jean Weber, 13 Myall St., O'Connor, ACT 2601, AUSTRALIA. 18 a4, pp dot matrix printed then photo copied..which makes for neat looks. Good opening article on the perils of pets..several feminist book reviews,

Jean's 'Diary Notes' and a hefty lettercol. This is one of the better zines from down under..but too heavy on the cruel men oppressing us poor women angle for me. OK, it happens..but don't blame ALL males for it..you defeat your own case with tedious 'overkill'.

THE MENTOR 49. 46pp/Qto/Mimeo..from Ron Clarke, 6 Bellevue Rd., Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, AUSTRALIA. Con room problems, Bertram Chandler about a nutter who keeps bending his ear, Hailstone on lead/fluoride pollution, letters, book reviews and suchlike...all very s&c, but enjoyable. \$1.00 an issue/etc.

XYSTER.6 44pp/A4/mimeo, from Dave Wood, † Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon. Oodles of illos (mostly culled from ancient periodicals) and about as many variations in type sizes and styles. Reports on..kitchen fittings, illness abroad, Ashworth on books, Mexican rep, a review battle between Ving/Clarke and D.West over the letters fannish opus...this takes up a large slice of the mag. Travels with Hazel Ashworth and letter excerpts round out an excellent, lighthearted issue. No price, but 21p instamps/LOC/contrib or sheer unadulterated flattery may get you a copy.

ANOTHER NICE THING happened to me on the way to the typewriter..remember how Lynn Hickman sent me a copy of WONDER which tied in with a DMBL episode? Well the other day, Val nipped round to the Post Office sorting place to collect an 'undelivered parcel' for me ..and had to get a postman to carry it to the car..and get me to carry it in to the house! Half a ton of back issues of POPULAR SCIENCE mailed from Robert Sullivan in Schenectady. What CAN one say when that sort of thing happens? 'That's seems so inadequate. It's not often words fail me...but this time.... 'Thanks again, Bob.

SCORPIO INTERNATIONAL of Phoenix, AZ. write to say that 'DR. WHO IN AMERICA' ..a documentary on SF, includes an appearance by Tom Baker..and Dr. Hans Sebald, 'a noted expert on cultism'..other mundane notabilities/authorities are listed...but no mention made of any SF 'names'. To be screened on various American channels in Autumn..and possibly to be taken up by BBC.

DR. JAFFAR ALMAHDI of the Arabian Gulf Information Consulting Bureau writes to offer a chance to exhibit ERG Publications in a Travelling Book and Periodical Fair...Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia etc. He must be keen, I got THREE copies of the letter. The address is:- P.O. Box922, Manama, Bahrain if you want to acquire a trade of your fanzine for gallons of petrol.

QUARTZ 18pp/A4/photocopy(?) from Geoff Kemp, 23 Raygill, Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffs. Nice Hunter+Contents front, Pt.2 of 'Space Ace'. Some LOC-comments; reviews; a nice cartoon by Steve Lines; Notes on some games-zines. a review (2 $\frac{1}{2}$) pages of 'Interface'...out of a time capsule maybe?...but I disagree with the author's comment..'The function of SF is to offer a glimpse of possible futures' ..one function maybe, but not 'the' function. Then a guide to the game of 'Sopwith' starts six pages of postal game news. I'm in the queue for the next game of Scrabble. A nice friendly zine, good illos, but they suffer somewhat in the photo-repro.

OUTWORLDS 38 46pp/Qto/min from Bill Bowers, 2468 Harrison Ave, Cincinnati, OH. 45211. \$1.00 and ish. Mainly LOCs and Bill's response..only one (small front) illo, (and the duping is not of the quality we have come to associate with work from the Bowers emporium) and two or three fillos. A Bob Tucker ramble-column. There's also an ad for 'Uncle Albert's Video Fanzine' at \$15. I found the colour/poor print made it hard going and not a patch on Bill's earlier masterpieces.

H OLIER THAN THOU 19 No less than 100

Qto pages, mimeo..from Marty & Robby Cantor, 11565 Archwood St., N.Hollywood, CA 91606.USA Illustrated by 20 or so fanartists: Jammed with natter-tyoe articles and a whacking great lettercol.

The latter keeps quite a few near-feuds and pts-a-boiling in lively manner.

Best item?..Dave Langford's tilt at various books..'The Dragon-Hiker's Guide To Battlefield Covenant At Dune's Edge Odyssey Two'..which kicks one or two near sacred cows fully in the teeth. Get this magnificent publication for 'the usual', Trade, or \$2.00 cash.

CONGRATULATIONS to ERG reader, Ted Hughes, just elected to the ranks of First Fandom. I had the pleasure of being his proposer and hope that Ted enjoys his membership. He's an 'Astounding' collector from way back..and also paints superb reproductions of the cover art (or his own originals) in oils...want a special large-size cover without (or with) the lettering? Contact him for full details..prices run from about \$50. If I had the cash, I'd love that Kimball Kinnison cover.

LYNN HICKMAN writes to say that Air Mag pulps did not die around 1935 as was suggested by Don Francon..and adds a 'Life list' to prove it:- G-8..1933-44 and the following pulps started in.. Air Aces..Dec.1928 Air War..1940 American Eagle..Aug.41 American Eagles..Sep.43 American Sky Devils..Jly.42 Fighting Aces..Mar.40 R.A.F. Aces..Aug.41 Sky Blazers..1942. Earlier mags include..Aces..Dec.1928 Air Action..Dec.38 and Jly.40 Airplane Stories.. Mar.1929 Air Stories..Aug.1927 Air Trails..Oct.28 Flying Aces..Sep.28 and Lynn lists just about as many more..saying, "As you can see, Air War pulps were big business and went from 1927, well into the 1940s"

Which brings another FANARAMA to an end (OK..it used to be 'Fanalog'.. I changed my mind)..and as usual every few months..POSTAL RATES are UP once again. Read the inside front cover...ERG is getting expensive, so sad to say, for many of you..this will be your last issue...unless of course, you heed the good word.

All the best, Terry

***BALD MEN!**
WAKE UP YOUR DORMANT HAIR ROOTS!



MYSTERY WALK

Robert McCannon
Pan £1.95

From his part-Indian mother, young Billy Creekmore has inherited the power to see and exorcise ghosts, but at a revival meeting he rouses the evil 'Shape Changer' and has to be taught his mother's skills. As Billy grows, so do his powers and at the same time, Wayne Falconer, son of the revivalist, takes over the Crusade by virtue of his own healing power. The two are destined to cross..and do so in an on-going sequence of gory violence culminating in a clash between Billy, Wayne, the Shape Changer and a psychotic member of the Mob. Small-town violence (Ku Klux Klan etc) and large-scale action by the powers of evil. If you go for tales of the occult, then this is probably right up your alley.

THE SPACE MERCHANTS

Pohl & Kornbluth
Penguin £1.95

Mich Court-nay, Copysmith for Fowler Schocken, the top agency in an America dominated by advertising Syndicates is a willing slave of the system. Pedal 'Cadillacs', wooden 'jewellery' and an alkaloid-hooked populace form a deftly sketched (and horrific) background. Then Courtenay is selected to 'sell' the Venus Colonisation Project, is shot at, betrayed and after swining over to the Conservationists, sets out to beat the system. Originally a Galaxy (1952) serial as 'Gravey Planet', this has held up well as a rattling good yarn from an era when stories were stories and not plotless breast-beatings. Read and enjoy.

TWILIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS

Jack L. Chalker Penguin £2.50

Fifth in the long-running series. In an attempt to avert disaster as a space rift threatens the Well World, Nathan Brazil and Mavra Chang seek to reach and reprogram the Great Computer. However, they have to cross a large slice off the Hex Worlds with most of the races out to intercept them and kill Brazil. They face a seemingly impossible task..made more difficult by the evil Gunit Sangh and his two-edged plans. Then Ortega's cunning and the kidnapping of Chang upset Brazil's smoothly working scheme. I have enjoyed these yarns..but for my tastes, they are marred by the too numerous changes of alien bodies so that eventually I find myself thinking of 'em all as humanoid. Otherwise, this one is well up to the standard of its predecessors. You can never be sure..but I'd say it is also the final episode.

THE SCIENCE FICTION SOURCE BOOK

Ed. David Wingrove

Longman \$8.95

The best way to review this is simply to tell you what it's all about..and add a few impressions along the way. Basically, it covers a variety of topics dear to SF buffs..opening with a Foreword and a 'Brief History' (in social commentary style). Brian Stableford examines 15 favourite SF themes, and in 'Writers At Work', a similar number of authors discuss their methods. More than half the book is devoted to brief biographical notes on over 800 writers, together with extremely subjective 'star ratings' on their Readability, Credibility, Ideas, and Literacy. It might seem strange that Bradbury, Bishop, Calvino and Lewis Carroll garner more stars than Asimov, Heinlein, Clement or Clarke..until you realise that the 12 writers who did the assessing, are all 'Spec F' rather than 'Hardcore' devotees. David Wingrove has a brief survey and Checklist of the Magazines (Have fun finding which ones he missed), and Malcolm ably discusses the economics of publishing SF. Wingrove returns with an excellent essay on 'SF Criticism'..and adds a Checklist, marred by the omission of source/publication of where each item appeared. Finally, Kingsley Amis supplies an 'Afterword'. The whole volume is enhanced by numerous illustrations, photos and reproductions.

The emphasis is on social relevance, meaning and message...but despite welcoming of women to SF, only 3 of the 27 contributors are female. Sadly, nobody seems to consider that SF..like virtually all fiction is primarily for entertainment...as Sam Goldwyn is reputed to have said..'If I want a message, I call Western Union'. A little less bias to the inner meaning of everything would have helped, but with this reservation, I'd rate this book as a worthwhile addition to your reference shelf.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE'S WORLD OF STRANGE POWERS

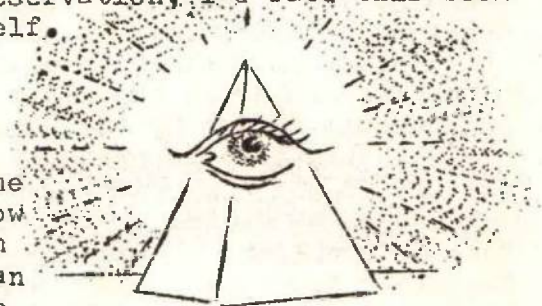
John Fairley & Simon Welfare

Collins \$10.95

Based on the YTV series, this impressive volume opens with a Clarke Introduction explaining how he stands firmly on both sides of the fence in his beliefs of the subjects covered..then in an Epilogue, he includes a couple of inexplicable **facts!**

In between, the main volume of the 248 pages is divided into eleven sections:- Curses. Poltergeists. Precognition. Telekinesis. Dowsing. Spirit Messages, and Reincarnation...each with considerable associated material. The writing style is documentary rather than investigative as it details numerous examples and case histories. Where fakery has been established, it is fully detailed; but this still leaves a considerable amount of data in the 'inexplicable' category. Charles Fort's 'LO!' and the Frank Edwards' books were more highly dramatised (i.e., read 'sensational') but this work preserves much greater objectivity, thus adding greatly to its impact. Both Fort and Edwards seemed to ignore the tricks and to see them debunked, adds greater mystery to what remains.

The volume is large, Quarto sized, slick paper, crammed with drawings and photographs, all of which makes for a highly readable look at some strange phenomena. This will certainly help you to settle quite a few arguments...and no doubt lead you into as many more. Believer, sceptic and devoted fence-sitters will each find this a mine of fascinating information.... and for once, finding a remembered item is made easy, as the authors have included an excellent index.



THE GODWHALE

A re-issue of the superb novel expanded from 'Rorqual Maru' in T.J.Bass a 1969 Galaxy. Deep-frozen after an accident, Larry Dever wakes millennia later to the mutated world of the Nebish, hive-dwellers at 50,000 a square mile. Their food chain is built on cannibalism and plankton, so harvested by giant cyborg creations..one of which is 'Godwhale. When Dever joins the aquatic Benthics to fight against the Nebish, the Godwhale helps .. as does ARNOLD, gene-manipulated warrior. Pace, interest and credibility are sustained throughout in one of SF's classic yarns.

HALF-PAST HUMAN

is a follow-up yarn chillingly depicting the hive-life of the Nebish..cannibalism, rat-hunting, overcrowded and forced to kill their children if born permit-less. This is what mechanic Tinker is supposed to do, instead, he and his wife flee with the child and join the roving (and 'Hunted') surface-dwellers. The 'buckeyes and coweyes' gradually coalesce to a promised salvation by 'Olga' and aided by near immortal Moon (result of gene-experimentation) and the enigmatic cyborg Six, 'Toothpick' eventually take the fight to the Nebish.. and then Olga comes! Even more compelling than 'Godwhale' and as excellently written. If you haven't met them before, rush out, buy both and give yourself a real treat. Good SF is rare these days..so enjoy these two.

THE WINDS OF ALTAIR

A starship orbits Altair VI, its crew hoping to prepare the world for colonists from overpopulated and religion dominated Earth. A mind probe is inserted into one of the giant wolfeats enabling the personality of Jeff Holman to be transferred into it..a process he finds increasingly pleasant. Using this system, Terraforming goes ahead...then Holman realises that their work means that either they kill off all native life forms, or let 30,000 newly arrived colonists die. An excellent, hard-core 'problem' story, but I didn't really go for the solution.

TEST OF FIRE

A short-lived solar flare kills a large section of humanity, panic missile launching wipes out more. The few survivors descend to barbarism, but a small Lunar colony sends down a shuttle to collect much-needed fissionables. Leader Douglas stays on Earth to help re-organise and rebuild, so is regarded as a traitor. Years later his son Alec heads a combined revenge and fissionable-collecting expedition. (The Shuttles are not only multi-passenger carrying, but can make return trips and do plane-like landings and takeoffs). The two factions meet and begin to work out their destinies with salvation for Earth..and the Lunar dwellers as the prize.

Both yarns are entertaining, well-written and give value for money, but of the two, I'd plump for 'Winds Of Altair' if you can only buy one. For the size-for-money brigade, 'Fire' has 319 pages...'Winds' 317. so you get plenty for each penny.



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THE SCIENCE FICTION SOURCE BOOK

Ed. David Wingrove
Longman £8.95

The best way to cover this is simply to tell you what it's all about, adding my impressions along the way. Basically, it covers a variety of topics dear to SF buffs, opening with a Foreword and a 'Brief History' by Brian Aldiss. Brian Stableford examines 15 favourite SF themes, then in 'Writers At Work', a similar number of authors outline their methods. More than half the book is devoted to brief biographical notes on over 800 writers, together with extremely subjective 'star ratings' on their 'Readability', 'Credibility', 'Ideas' and 'Literacy'. It might seem strange that Bradbury, Bishop, Calvino and Lewis Carrol garner more stars than Asimov, Heinlein, Clement or Clarke..until you realise that the 12 writers who did the assessing all tend to the 'Speculative Fiction' domain. Next, David Wingrove has a brief Survey plus Checklist of the SF magazines (he doesn't miss many), and Malcolm Edwards ably discusses the economics of SF publishing. Wingrove returns with an excellent essay on 'SF Criticism'..with an extensive Checklist..which is marred by the omission of source/publication details of where the items appeared. Finally, there is a Kingsley Amis 'Afterword'. The whole volume is enhanced by inclusion of illustrations, reproductions and photographs.

The emphasis is on social relevance, meaning and message, but despite welcoming women to SF, only 3 are represented in the 27 contributors. Sadly, nobody seems to consider that SF (like virtually all fiction), is primarily for entertainment...remember Goldwyn's, "If I want a message, I call Western Union"? A little less bias to the inner meaning of everything would have helped, but with that reservation, I'd rate this work as a very worthwhile addition to your reference shelf.

THE INTEGRAL TREES

Larry Niven
Macdonald £8.95

The descendants of a starship mutiny live a near zero-G and primitive life in the giant trees which float in the habitable atmosphere of a gas taurus surrounding a neutron star. When they encounter another tribe, fight and undergo disintegration of their tree, survivors of the Quinn tribe are captured by dwellers in London tree. They escape a life of slavery by taking over a still operative space module. Meanwhile, watching all this from the original starship in L2 orbit, is 'Sharls Davis Kandy...a cyborg computer program who/which, after 500 years, is still waiting the chance to re-educate the tree dwellers. Originally an Analog 4-parter, this has a superb 'situation' set-up, excellent characters and some lovely dialogue cum sland development. Niven (as usual) holds you from the word 'Go' and for a bonus, you get his 'world diagrams', a list of characters and a glossary of terms. Don't miss it this time round!

NATFACT 7

John Tully
Methuen
Children's
Books £6.95

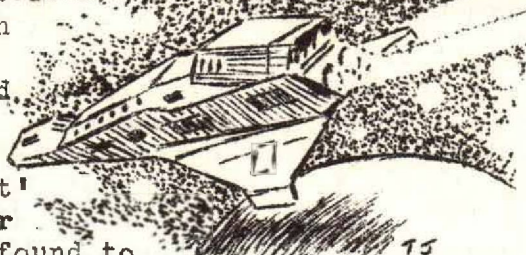
In an elitist Britain, the 'nats' do all the work whilst the Qualified Citizens loaf. The 'All Citizens Equal' movement (ACE) seeks to change this by revolution. 18-year-old Brian Havard is recruited by Sec Division as an Agent and planted in the corrective centre Natfact 7 to infiltrate ACE and identify its leaders. Inmate 'Skip' Greeve and Personnel Officer 'Steve' Drew begin to sound him out, causing his allegiance to change. Then comes the revolution..showing that only the brand of elitism is to change. More permissive than the usual children's story, but not excessively so. The characters are well drawn and credibly motivated in a yarn which never 'talks down'. Indeed, it is a far better story than many an 'adult' offering. So, if you're looking for a science-fiction type present for some youngster, have a look at this one. Incidentally, the future slang is very good and the future cuss words believable without being offensive.

ACROSS THE SEA OF STARS

Gregory Benford
Macdonald £8.95

Second part of the 'Starship' trilogy which began with 'IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT'

wherein an alien spacecraft is intercepted and a warning message sent to the stars. This time, astronaut Nigel Warnsley (a rather abrasive character), rejuvenated via 'Slowslot' is aboard Starship Lancer as it nears the star



Ra, to investigate radio signals. These are found to come from aliens on the planet Isis, a world devastated millennia ago by a 'Watcher' satellite..which suddenly proves it is still operative. Others are located and gradually an inimical machine network emerges. Meanwhile, on Earth, alien ships have seeded the oceans with an inimical lifeform which is gaining the upper hand. Benford links it all together into a taut, attention-holding yarn. My only quibbles being the occasional experimental typography and the 'continuous present' into which he tends to drop... Six years have elapsed since Part 1. I sincerely hope that Greg doesn't keep us waiting anywhere near as long for the final part of this epic.

THE WHITE HART

Nancy Springer
Corgi £1.75

Ellid has been kidnapped by Marc of Myrdon, and is being rescued by godling Bevan, possessor of strange powers, as the story opens. Her cousin, Cuin, who had hoped to wed

Ellid, at first hates Bevan, but eventually they become firm companions...which enables them to fight together against the henchmen of the Mantled God of evil, Pel Blagden..as well as the treachery of Ellid's father Dacarius..who instead of being grateful to Bevan, plans to take the new King's power for himself. Poetically written, less gory than the average 'magic & gods' saga, makes it an enjoyable first part to a new, 'Book Of The Isle' trilogy. Part2...The Silver Sun' is due in November, and Part.3 'The Sable Moon', a month after that.

LEGION

W.P.BLATTY
Corgi £1.75

Faced with a sadistic slaying, Lieut. Kinderman suspects that the long-dead killer, 'Gemini' has returned. More murders follow, with the trail leading to a Psychiatric Hospital..to Amfortas, who studies pain, and Temple, a hypnotist. Clues conflict, inmates are suspect. Kinderman discovers a 12-year-dead-and-buried friend alive in the disturbed ward. Events escalate, as does the tension in a yarn which grips like a vice despite Kinderman's tendency to philosophise in unusual ways. A terrific blend of horror/fantasy into a standard 'who-dun-it'..with only the ending forming a weak link.

BLUESONG

Sydney Van Scyoc
Penguin £1.95

Part.2 of the trilogy beginning with 'Darkchild' (see ERG 87). Darkchild is now consort to the ruling 'Barohna', a woman who has the paranormal powers needed to charge the sunstones which warm the colony in winter. Their son, the adolescent Danior is suffering the mental agonies of his age and unknown to he and his parents, there exists another relative. Keva, daughter of Darkchild's clone-brother was stolen as a child, but is now seeking her heritage. She and Danior meet and pursue the search. A gentle fantasy, its appreciation and examination of teenage problems is likely to give it appeal for younger readers. Keva's discovery of her own strange powers is just the stuff of which dreams are made...."I too, may be coming to a great, if as yet unknown destiny..." We all go through it..sadly, it never seems to come true. Still...that's a dream.

