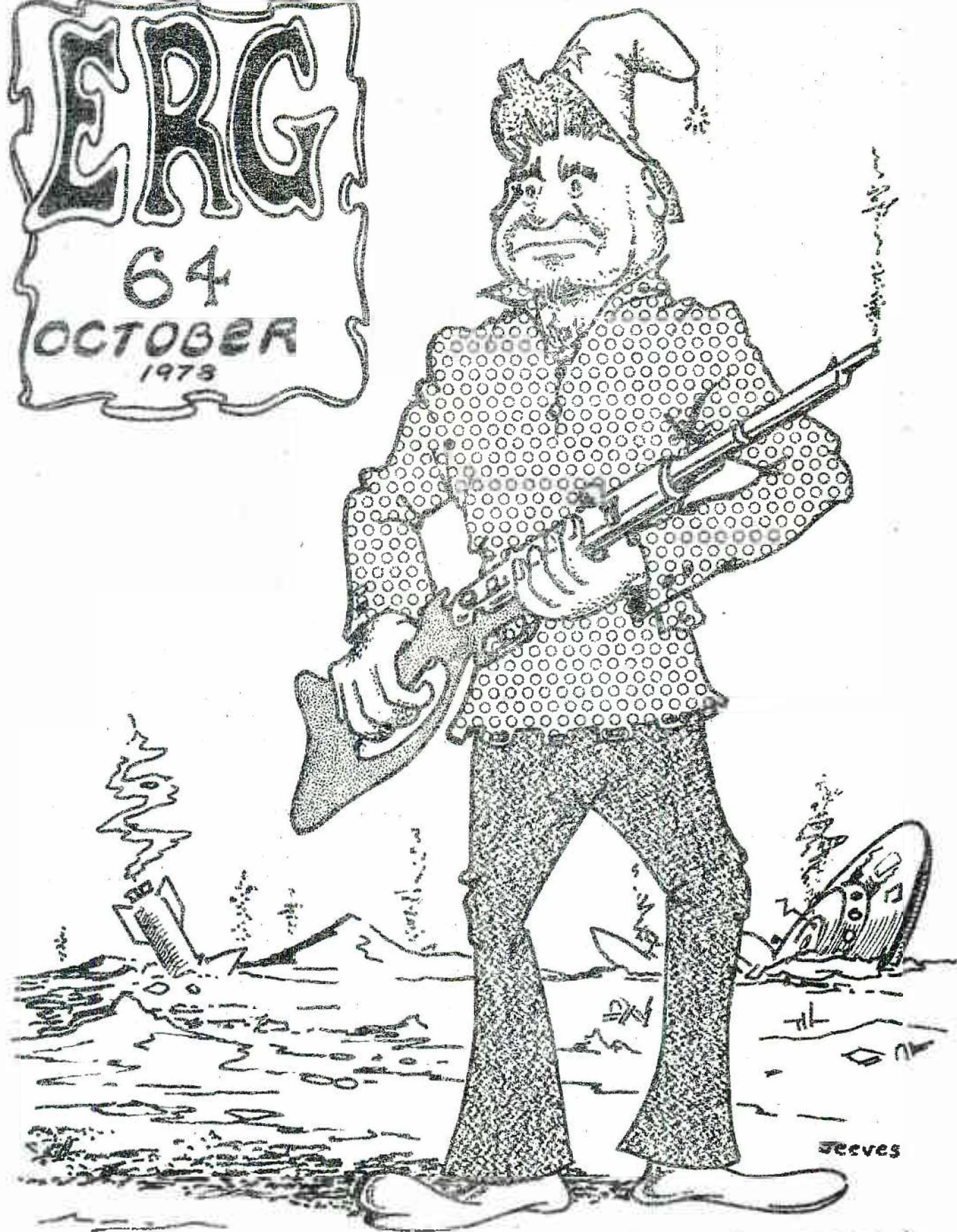


ERG
64
OCTOBER
1973



ERG
QUARTERLY
No 64. OCT. '78

ERG is printed, produced and perpetrated by
Terry Jeeves
230 Bannerdale Rd.,
Sheffield.

An X above the ERG heading
indicates your sub has
expired..I hope you'll
renew.

Subscription Rates

U.K. 4 issues for £1

U.S.A. 4 issues for \$2.00 (bills, not cheques)

MINI-ERGITORIAL Wherein I mention things I couldn't squeeze in elsewhere,
===== such as the fact that I am agent for Michael A. Banks,
fanzine CO-AX..(Rates are 3 for 50, 7 for £1). ..and also for Michael
Roden (whose art you will soon be seeing more of) who publishes 'THRU BLAZE
HOLMES'..at I fancy, similar rates. Both very neat, well illustrated..and
lightly factual zines.

APOLOGIES will be due to many people for the next couple of
months, I shall be/was away from the UK for three weeks while attending two
Conventions in the USA, and visiting in Los Angeles and Albuquerque areas.
So...I'm preparing ERG before departure so I shouldn't be TOO late on the
October datelin (pardon me if I am)...and I shan't be able to answer your
letters..except perhaps by a duplicated form letter..for quite a while
after that until the mail and review piles are conquered. I'd appreciate
people trying to avoid letters which will require an answer, during that
time....ta folks.

ERG 65, will contain an article by Rog Pile, in which he
responds to my request that he choose his own favourite sf story to be made
into a film...and selects the actors and actresses he would like to see in
that film...I think you'll like it. That's for January '79.....

ERG 66, for April 79, marks the completion..or to be
pedantic..the start of ERG's 21st year..thus making No.66, the 20th
Anniversary issue. Lined up so far are a couple of items from Brian W.
Aldiss (and my heartfelt thanks to a busy writer who can find time to send
something along to help such an issue). I plan to make the whole issue a
slightly larger than normal one, and if it gets really big, then I'm afraid
that No.66 will only be going to regular subscribers...sorry folks, but
bear with me suspending the free list for just that issue will you...on you
could take out a sub now and be sure....?

CALIFORNIA HERE I COME...the story of my Stateside journey
should start to appear in ERG 65..and continue to run as long as I have
interesting things to talk about. Also starting in that issue will be
a new artist (new to ERG) Michael Roden. He has a striking and excellent
style and I fancy we'll soon be seeing a lot more of his work.

WANTED...anyone interested in trading certain paperbacks ?
I'd like to get hold of :- Any G-8 and his Battle Aces in paperback
format (for a nostalgia kick)..or Dusty Ayres and his Battle Birds, also
copies 1 to 12 of STARLOG. I can offer assorted magazines, and plenty of
new paperback titles...so drop me a line if we can make a deal.

Regards to all, Terry.

STOPPRESS. Wife taken ill week before trip...tour cancelled at last minute.

EDITORIAL

Terry Joeves

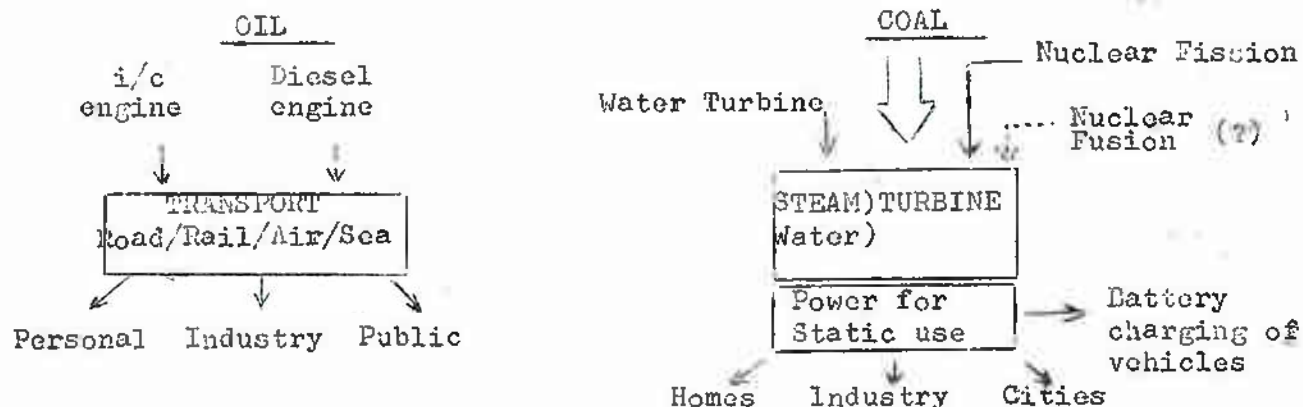
Every so often, we hear the dismal warning that all our fossil fuels will be exhausted within, ten, fifty, or a hundred years. The warning is usually followed by a quick mention of nuclear power, news of the latest wave experiments, and a word of windmills. After winding up with a snug advice to 'Save Energy', the pundit climbs back into his 2,000cc gas guzzler and vanishes in a cloud of blue exhaust pollution,

The man-in-the-street furrows his brow, switches off the GO!! lamp in Junior's bed room and returns to his active 'sports' life before the TV screen. After all, 'They' will solve his problems, that's why he pays taxes.

Me, I'm scared! No, not for myself, I reckon I'll have run off my last fanzine by the time the real crunch arrives. I'm thinking of my children and grandchildren (right now, I have three of the former, and two of the latter). What will they have to face? Well, let's take the fifty year estimate as the end of all fossil fuels (whether it is out by even a factor of as much as 10, is irrelevant..they WILL run out someday...soon.)

So, by 2030 you won't even be able to get enough petrol to fill a cigarette lighter...there won't BE any. BUT, this doesn't just mean that the only change in our lifestyles will be a switch from petrol-moved cars, to electric vehicles..oh dear no!

Take a look at the diagram...



...broadly speaking, we need two kinds of power - they may overlap, as in the case of railways...which can be steam, electric, or diesel electric, but this overlap is only to a small degree. If you scrub OIL and COAL from the diagrams, then virtually ALL transport has gone, and the only 'Static' Power left worth looking at, at least in the UK, is the Nuclear Fission Plant. (Places like Italy, Norway etc, can get much of their power from

hydro-electric schemes. Even if we assume storage batteries capable of moving vehicles with anything like the flexibility of oil powered transport, we shan't have the spare power to charge 'em.

UNLESS we come up with a new source of power, then electricity will be very severely rationed...we shall be starved for transport, lighting, heating....and above all, FOOD !

Why food ? Well, in the U.K., we only grow a fraction of the food we need - the rest has to be imported..skipping the question of how do we harvest our own small effort, the big problem is that with no aircraft and no fossil-fueled cargo ships, the only food reaching these shores (assuming other countries have any spare to send us) will be in sailing vessels..and the few nuclear-powered vessels some politician with more for-sight than the rest may manage to squeeze past the anti-nuclear ostrich brigade...that lot would rather die of certain starvation, than live a life under the remote risk of a nuclear accident.

However, let's assume a lot. That other countries will feed us for free (we've nothing to export when the power goes), and that they will find some way of getting it to our shores. We're still faced with the problems of powering factories to process it...wheat into bread, for instance, and then we have to distribute the food. Perhaps by then, our nuclear power plants will have been expanded (if that anti-nuclear lobby permits) to the stage where we can not only process our food, but also supply a small surplus to run a limited electric rail network to central distribution points. From there it will be up to horse and cart..or shank's pony along unlit, unsurfaced streets to homes which are heated and lit by the burning of wood or animal fats...for as long as they are available. Luxury goods will be out, little if any radio, no TV, no record players, powered shavers or lawnmowers, not even holiday travel beyond walking distances.

Sounds like a science-fiction fantasy doesn't it? Well it will be shockingly real if we can't do something about it. What alternative forms of energy can we develop ?

First, and currently the only method offering a present solution is nuclear fission...we have some plants, and we should be developing more and more to the total exclusion of coal or oil fired stations. Second, fusion power may be available within our fifty year breathing space. We should bend every effort to cracking that one...once the fossil-fuel runs out it will be too late. Currently, these are the only two power sources which can make an appreciable dent in our demands - but what other sources are there ?

Fuel cells, where sodium and water react together to produce power could power a car, house or ship. Apollo-type fuel cells which combine hydrogen and oxygen (new types can use ordinary air) can supply at the 100,000Kw level and higher, so these offer good prospects.

Wave Power and Wind Power (particularly the former) can make massive contributions to our National Grid..if we DO something more than agree on the possibility. Then there is Geothermal Energy, whereby the Earth's heat is tapped...in San Diego, a pilot plant experiment is under way.

Solar power can help, especially in equatorial areas, but what may seem a really way-out (pun intended) use of solar power is to build giant orbital mirror stations. These would collect the Sun's energy, convert it

to microwave energy, and beam this down to ground stations for distribution. I shudder to think of the results if the beam wandered off target.. I fancy George O Smith (Venus Equilateral) and Isaac Asimov (Reason) both had stories based on similar themes.

In America, experiments to produce power from the burning of alcohol derived from grain show some promise. The American Cynamid Company currently market 'lightsticks' which consist of two liquids within a tube which if united by breaking a separating seal, produce enough light for several hours. Experiments are under way to make energy by means of photosynthesis utilising algae. These and many other possibilities, large and small may eventually be pressed into service to make out our supplies.

The essential point is that we press ahead and develop some..or all, of them right now, instead of talking glibly about 'doing something'. But even then, if we do succeed in staving off our energy crisis as far as static sources are concerned, we shall still commute largely on foot, on pedal cycle, or for the fat cats, a fuel-cell powered vehicle. There will be little or no pleasure travel or holiday jaunts...and unless the USA revives its aborted plans for a nuclear powered aircraft, there will be no air travel...apart, of course, from the numerous hot-air balloons and Zeppelins which will navigate our skies.

What is needed is some radically new PRIMARY power source...but unless one comes along, then even if we DO solve our crisis in time to keep us all from starving to death...we can still expect a 21st century radically different from any that the science fiction writers have predicted in any of their stories.

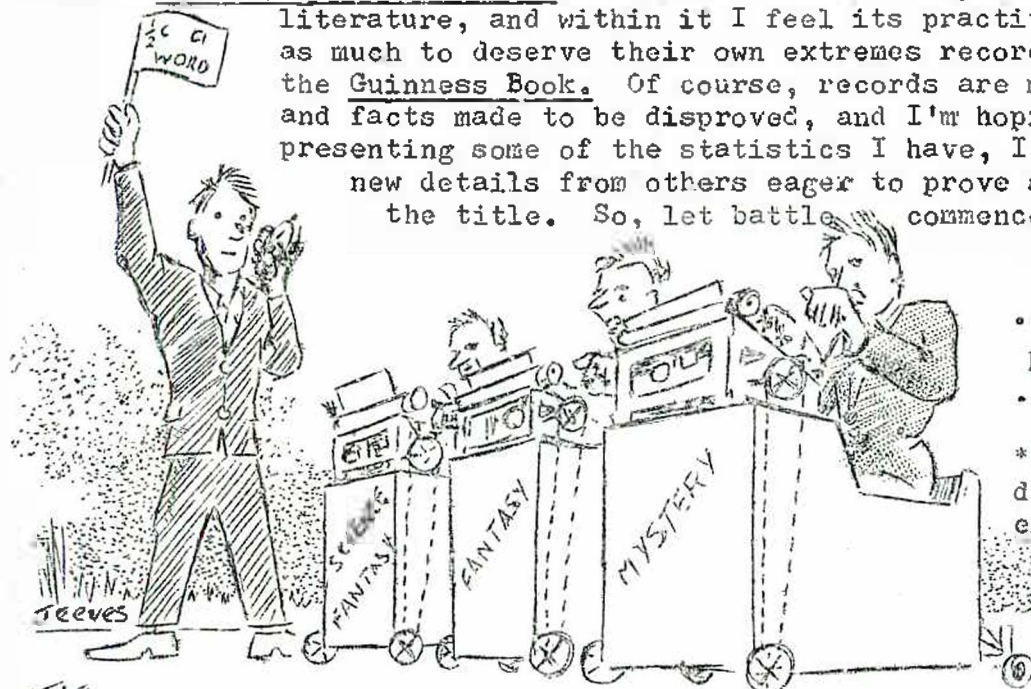
Just as an exercise, sit back and review a typical day in your life....and how it would be changed without energy, and the goods and services which energy brings. As I say, I'm scared...for what the next generation will have to face unless we do something during this one.

ELECTRONIC STENCILS in this issue are From Mr. B.C.Sexton, 14 Ventnor Court, Holstenholm Rd., Sheffield S7 1LB. I use his 'short run' stencils at 75p each, but he has long-run vinyl at £1.15 and £1.30. (inclusive of postage) post your stuff off direct..or send SAE for full details..or ring him (after 6pm) at Sheffield 582931. ..and mention ERC.

DUPLICATING NOTES...I keep getting enquiries about copies...sorry, now right OUT OF PRINT..until I get around to producing a second edition.

SCIENCE FICTION for Sale. Send S.A.E for list/catalogue, to John Rupik, 17 Westmorland St., Balby, Doncaster. Plenty of Fantasy & Occult included. Good service guaranteed, and plenty of new titles into stock.

For a long time now I have been collecting data for what I hope will one day become a Fantasy Book Of Records. Science Fiction is by nature an extreme literature, and within it I feel its practitioners have done as much to deserve their own extremes recorded as those in the Guinness Book. Of course, records are made to be broken and facts made to be disproved, and I'm hoping that by presenting some of the statistics I have, I might attract new details from others eager to prove so-and-so holds the title. So, let battle commence....



.....
MIKE ASHLEY*
.....

*(The man who
does all those
excellent
anthologies)

The QUICKNESS OF THE HAND

This first article was supposed to be about the writer with the most pseudonyms, but as I was preparing for it some new information has caused me to investigate further, so I would rather shelve that matter for a while until I can confirm matters more fully.

So instead I've turned to another topic - the most productive writer. Now I don't mean the writer who has written the most science fiction - that's yet another category. I mean simply the writer who has completed a science fiction novel in the shortest time.

The Guinness Book Of Records cites three writers in this sphere, Edgar Wallace, Erle Stanley Gardner and John Creasey - all writers of mystery fiction. Creasey in particular wrote two books in six-and-a-half days. Gardner would dictate up to 10,000 words a day, and then had a staff of typists. One writer not cited is George Simonon, and though I have no records to hand, I believe he is alleged to have produced some books at a fast rate. However I am convinced that all these writers pale to insignificance when compared with a number in the sf field.

The SF field has always been notorious for its low payment. Those who had to make a living by writing could not hope to live by sf alone unless they wrote extremely fast. Even then they had to find sufficient markets, and at times this was not possible. Generally therefore the writers drifted to other fields to help their income, and sometimes ended up staying in those fields because the writing was easier and the rewards more lucrative.

There were two periods when writers seemed to be at their most frantic - in the U.S.A. during the 1930s, and in the U.K. in the 1950s. That does not mean there were no other periods. It is known that Luis Senarens and other dime novel writers of the 1880s were exceptionally prolific, whilst two of the authors I shall mention below are very contemporary. No, I mention them because they are comparable and because they provide a number of legendary stories about the writers.

Now the assessment of records is fraught with problems. After all, when writing a novel, how can we tell how long the author had been turning the plot over in his mind. How much quicker can he write a novel when it is well planned? How should one measure this duration? It's a problem which cannot be easily settled, and one that only the writer can resolve. It cannot be assessed by taking into account the number of novels published in any given period, because some of these may have been written or sold a year or more before.

Because our wise and kindly editor has many other items to cram into this issue I shall restrict myself to details of just a few writers - specifically Arthur J. Burks, Lester Dent, R.L. Fanthorpe, Robert Silverberg and Barry Malzberg. I could easily mention more, and indeed their exclusion does not mean that writers like Sax Rohmer, Norvell Page, Frederick Faust, E.C. Tubb, Michael Moorcock or John Russell Fearn could not equally qualify for the title. Perhaps we'll save them for another day.

But let's look at examples. Arthur J. Burks was dubbed 'the Speed Merchant of the Pulps' and was envied by many of his fellow writers. He died only a few years ago, in 1974, but alas before I was able to contact him to try and verify a number of the stories about him. He was essentially a short story writer in a variety of fields not least terror, mystery and science fiction. Old timers will especially remember his contributions to Astounding and Marvel, as well as Weird Tales, but all these were but a fraction of his output. In his book The Shudder Pulps (Fax 1975) Robert K. Jones who interviewed Burks tells us that Burks aimed at an output of 18,000 words a day. Whether he always reached it, who can tell, but his output speaks for itself - and even that is difficult to assess. Pseudonyms aside (and he used surprisingly few), Burks never bothered to revise stories and those that were rejected were often used by other writers hard-up for an idea!

Let's just put his typing in perspective. Anyone who types knows one cannot maintain full speed for long. If a manuscript is to look at all respectable one must slacken after a while for fear of keys jamming together, letters becoming jumbled, and words getting ahead of themselves. Considering one must stop to think, to perhaps erase errors, and then of course to eat, answer nature, and then heaven knows what kind of interruptions by way of telephone, visitors and domestic problems...it's a wonder sometimes anything gets written. (For this reason many writers prefer to work during the night and sleep in the day.) However, even at the more than respectable speed of 60 words a minute, it takes five hours to reach 18,000 words, and five hours solid typing at that rate is almost suicidal. Given a normal eight or ten hour day, we can slacken Burks' pace to between 30 and 40 words a minute, which is still an awesome rate.



Keeping within the science fiction field, one of Astounding's earliest serials, in the days when Harry Bates was editor, was Earth, The Marauder serialised in 1930. The story goes that Bates requested Burks write a novel for Astounding, but specifically assigned him to take his time over it and not churn it out. Off went Burks, presumably thinking things over, and the idea must have gelled by the time he reached his typewriter as he sat down and began. In two days, the novel was finished, and although it runs to little over 30,000 words, this does show that Burks could maintain his average fairly well. Burks then put the novel aside for a fortnight whilst he batted out scores more stories, and then took it back to Bates. He was delighted with the result and complimented Burks by saying how much better he was when he took his time!

Lester Dent was the famed writer of the Doc Savage novels. He usually hid behind the house pseudonym of Kenneth Robeson, but it should not be forgotten that he often wrote for other adventure pulps of the 1930s and 40s. Philip Jose Farmer in his Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life (Panther 1975) states that Dent wrote two Savage novels a month totalling 130,000 words, and at times an equal amount for other magazines. A quarter of a million words in a month means that assuming he wrote every day it would be a constant output of 8,000 words a day. To the pulpsters 8000 words a day was easy, so within that month we can even allow Dent time off. (In fact we know Dent spent many days away from the typewriter, sailing, climbing and in other ways putting as much energy into relaxing as into writing). In fact, Farmer records that Dent regularly wrote for 18 hours a day, and Robert Jones reports that Dent is reputed to have produced 56,000 words in a day's work! If that was within his 18 hours, allowing for no stops, it is a constant 50 words a minute. Apparently this was produced by a combination of typing (24,000 words) and dictating (32,000 words), but either way it is staggering.

Dent died in 1959, so the authenticity of these statistics can no longer be checked, but there is no smoke without fire, but at least the remaining three of my examples are very much alive, and for that matter all about the same age. Silverberg and Fanthorpe are in their early mid-forties, and Malzberg is 40 next year. Robert Lionel Fanthorpe is unfortunately remembered with less renown, ~~and he is remembered at all~~. Almost single-handedly he produced the two Badger Books series of sf and supernatural novels. He began writing in 1952 when he was 17, so he also ranks among the youngest sf writers (yet another category), and sold the occasional story to the Badger firm of John Spencer. The British Publishing industry went through a blight in the mid-1950s, but Spencer's survived and by 1957 the directors planned a number of novels series. Rather than take the traditional approach and solicit manuscripts, Spencer's commissioned a handful of writers to produce almost the entire series. (As the series continued so a few unsolicited manuscripts were published but they were the exception). By the early 1960s Lionel Fanthorpe was producing two sf novels, one supernatural novel, and a volume of five or six supernatural stories each month. On average you could say this was a novel per week, which might not seem much on the Burks/Dent scale...but don't forget, they were full-time writers. Fanthorpe worked full-time as a teacher, and also taught at evening school! The novels were fitted into late evenings and weekends, and suddenly this output takes on a different perspective. Fanthorpe adopted the Gardner approach, ~~and~~ dictated the stories onto tape. Frequently he would dictate a novel an evening, and to avoid distraction the family amusingly recall that

whilst they watched television or carried on their own activities, they would drape a sheet over Fanthorpe who would mumble into a tape recorder until the early hours. The tapes were then typed out by his mother and wife, and sometimes others were drafted in during high peaks of activity. Since the novels all average about 40,000 words they could be dictated non-stop in about 7 hours. To sustain the output, Fanthorpe would use stock scenes which often repeated themselves throughout the series - a ploy used by many other word-smiths; and there would be many chapters of padding with the characters passing time with irrelevant but space-filling conversations. This output continued unabated for about eight years, and in all that time payment remained at a miserable 10/- per thousand words!

Whilst Fanthorpe's output made him no fortune. Robert Silverberg was a prodigious earner from his earliest writing days. In the days of the pulps one was considered 'one of the clan' on passing the million-words-a-year mark. Silverberg passed that in his second full year (1956). He maintained this for a decade, writing for all fields. Indeed the year 1962/3 saw the production of 1.9 million words spread over 45 books and stories! Even when one allows for writing every day, that is still over 5,000 words a day, and it is most unlikely that Silverberg wrote every day. (5000 words is about 20 double-spaced pages of quarto paper) Indeed, he recalls in his essay in Hell's Cartographers (Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1975) that he only worked a five-day week at that time, and a five hour day, and spent weeks on holiday. Taking this into account means he was writing at a constant 30 words a minute.

And so we come to Barry Malzberg. Just as Silverberg seemed to be in every magazine in the late 1950s, so appeared Malzberg in the early 1970s as well as novels shooting out like sparks from a Catherine Wheel. In his essay about Silverberg in the April '74 F&SF Malzberg boasted that he held the record for novel writing. I asked Malzberg about this specifically, and he gave the following details in a letter written in September 1977:

"I wrote a non-sf novel in 16 hours on the 13th-14th February 1969. (Stopping for meals and sleep). 60,000 words long it was published two months later. Under no circumstances will I divulge its title or pseudonym ever."

60,000 words in 16 hours is over 60 words per minute. See if you can maintain that speed for even an hour. One wonders what the final quality of that book was.

Malzberg continued to state that Phase IV, a novelisation of the film, was written in three days in July 1975. There Malzberg had no plotting or characterisation to worry about, but adapting a novel from a film is not that simple. Actions taken for granted on the screens still have to be described, scenes set, characters established. Try creating different characters yourself so that they don't all read alike and talk alike...and do it at 60 words a minute.

I think perhaps, once we've reached this kind of record, it's wise to draw the line. That is of course, as Glyn Worsnip would say, "...unless you know otherwise."

Mike Ashley
July 1978



FANZINES

FANZINES

mimeo zines I've seen in years. Pieces on Black Holes, electronic music, fiction, and very good artwork, puzzle, and a backcover of space stamps.

UNIFAN.1 14/4pp mimeo, Ellen Pedersen & Niels Dalgaard, Hørsekildevej 13, IV dør 3, DK - 2500, Valby, Denmark. Trade or LOC. Aldiss interview, humour, Danish news...and a badly drawn cover as the only art.

FAMILY HILL IV 24/A4 photo-lith pp \$1.00/issue. Dan Joy, 3815 Whispering Lane, Falls Church, VA 22041. Beautifully produced, plenty of good art, personal news, con news, fiction, reviews, interview, poetry & LOCs. Still searching for a personality...but it'll get there quick.

GAMNET SCRAP BOOK 5 28/Qto mimeo pp. Dave Cockfield, 57 Wilson Ct., Hobburn Tne & Wear. No illos, piece on Kevin Williams and the MEC, con report, humour, local restaurants, weight training. As you may guess, very fannish, and rather in-group...but fun of you know the participants.

NOUMENON 22/23 40/Qto. Photolith pages. Excellently illustrated. \$5.50 for ten issues from Brian Thurogood, Wilma Rd., Ostend, Waiheke Island, Hauraki Gulf, NEW ZEALAND. A superb fanzine..reviews, letters, comment, news. This issue has a special 18 page 'Futures' section. You also get pop music items and many other items. VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

QUIBBLE 2. 20/Qto. Photolith pages, profusely (and well) illustrated, no price given..but I'd suggest a letter and say 25p (It's worth MUCH more), to D.E Kirkbride, 42 Green Lane, Bellevue, Carlisle, Cumbria. This one has articles, letters, 'adverts', music, cartoon, verse, fiction, ...etc. Heck, this is getting monotonous...but yet again...another HIGHLY RECOMMENDED fanzine. Incidentally, the editor draws very well, too.

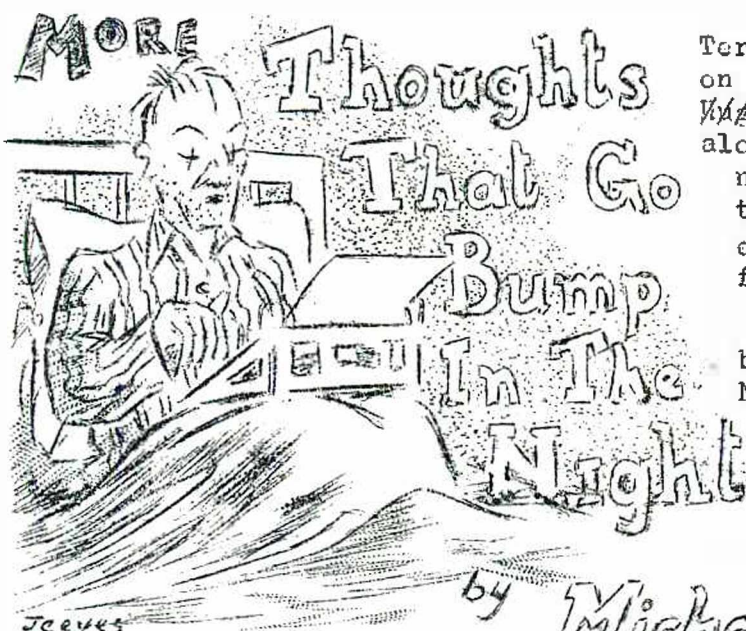
IT COMES IN THE MAIL 28 (and last) some 40 well mimeod pages devoted to all the fanzines (notes such as these) and letters which have thumped through Ned Brooks' letter box in the last year...however, he mentions that a further zine will be forthcoming...so drop him a line at 713 Paul St., Newport News, Va 23605. USA. This one is good...so stake your claim now.

ASH WING 23, 52/Qto pp, mimeo; LOCs/trades, from Frank Denton, 14654 82th Ave SW. Seattle, WA 98166. Nice assortment on personal notes, reviews, comment, letters, fiction and so on. A nice friendly zine with the editor's personality coming through well. This one is a bit delayed, but worth waiting for. Plenty of art, some controversy..and even a bit about life in Australia...what more could you put in a fanzine ?

MAYA 15. 24/A4 pp. 4 iss. \$1.50. Rob Jackson, 71 King John St., Newc. On Tyne. Photolith, plenty of excellent art, letters, material by Bob Shaw, Peter Weston, and a row between Ted White and Charles (Twisher)Platt. No argument, Britain's best fanzine...and a great cover.

FARRAGO 7 44/A4 pp.mimeo. trade/LOC/75c from Donn Brazier, 1455 Fawnvalley Drive, St. Louis. Mo. 63131. Friendly, variegated art, items on the theatre, TV and terrorism, interview, etc. All good stuff and something for everyone.

THRU BLACK HOLES 12/Qto.pp \$1.00 an issue from Michael Roden, 982 Whiteoak Rd., Cinti. Ohio 45245. One of the best produced



Terry has asked me for a few words on what it's like to be a ~~future~~ ~~Waggy-Wagging~~ burgeoning young writer, along with some advice for hopeful neophytes. In compliance with that request, some of my experiences in the literary mines follow....

I began writing for publication because I didn't know any better. Now I don't mean that facetiously; if I had stopped to think about it, I would have realised that I wasn't capable of writing anything publishable back in

by *Michael A. Banks*

1969 when I decided to do a short feature for the local weekly paper. But I didn't stop to think (I never do anyway). Instead I composed a horribly written piece on the history of postage stamps (tying it in with the recent rise in postal rates) and submitted it to the editor of the MILFORD ADVERTISER.

She was delighted with it and put it in a prominent spot in the next edition much to my ego's delight. I was so impressed by my achievement that I began writing on a regular basis for that paper and several others for almost a year. The continual publication did a lot for my confidence and more importantly, improved my writing skills (for which thank Ghu). Fortunately for my writing career, I didn't learn until several years later that editors of weekly papers are always strapped for material to fill extra space, and I will publish almost anything...Like I said, I was writing because I didn't know any better.

But my writing did improve, and about that time I developed a really readable style I lost interest. (Probably because I realised just how bad those first few articles were, and was too embarrassed to continue.)

In 1972, however, the muse again called. I was mucking about the local bookstore one day, mentally grouching at the lack of SF, when I came across a heavy volume titled 'Writer's Market'. Hmmm. . I thought; wonder if this is about making money...sure could use some. Yes, it was about making ~~MONEY~~! My Gawd! PLAYBOY paying \$2000 for an article? \$1500 book advance? 5¢ per word from ANALOG? Yessir, sign me up. I bought the book, took it home and memorised it, and searched out the magazine WRITER'S DIGEST, recommended therein.

(That's right - it took cold cash to bring out the frustrated writer in this fan! ..and don't laugh about WRITER'S DIGEST: Larry Niven says he got started taking the "Famous Writers" Correspondence Course.. He also dropped out when they began the lessons on characterisation.....)

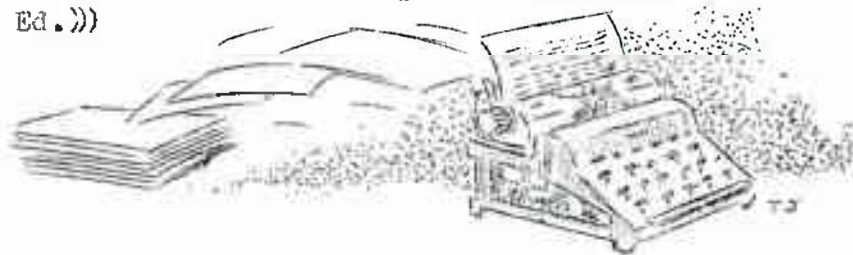
A month later, I received a small white envelope in the mail from a magazine called MODERN PEOPLE. After two other rejections, a short humorous piece was purchased by them for \$10! Visions of a huge income danced in my head, and I proceeded to inundate MP and numerous other magazines with manuscripts, confident that my mailbox would soon be overflowing with small white envelopes. Of course, all I got were large brown envelopes -- rejected material. Undaunted, I analysed the situation and extracted two great truths: 1. Editors didn't like the essays and humour I was sending; and 2. Small envelopes are good news -- large envelopes in the box are bad news. Armed with that knowledge, I decided to try writing something different .. what? SF, of course.

The stories I sent out over the next few weeks were horrible, naturally, since I had never before attempted writing fiction. All were what George Scithers calls 'Tomato Surprise' -- you know, the ones where you find out that the aliens talking over giant loudspeakers to an earthling on a mountain-top are actually talking to Moses, and he thinks they're God... I even made the mistake of asking one editor -- who shall remain anonymous -- for any comments or criticisms on a story I'd submitted. His only reply was the word "Sorry" scrawled across the first page of the story. To this day, I'm still not certain whether he was referring to the quality of the story, or simply expressing his regrets....

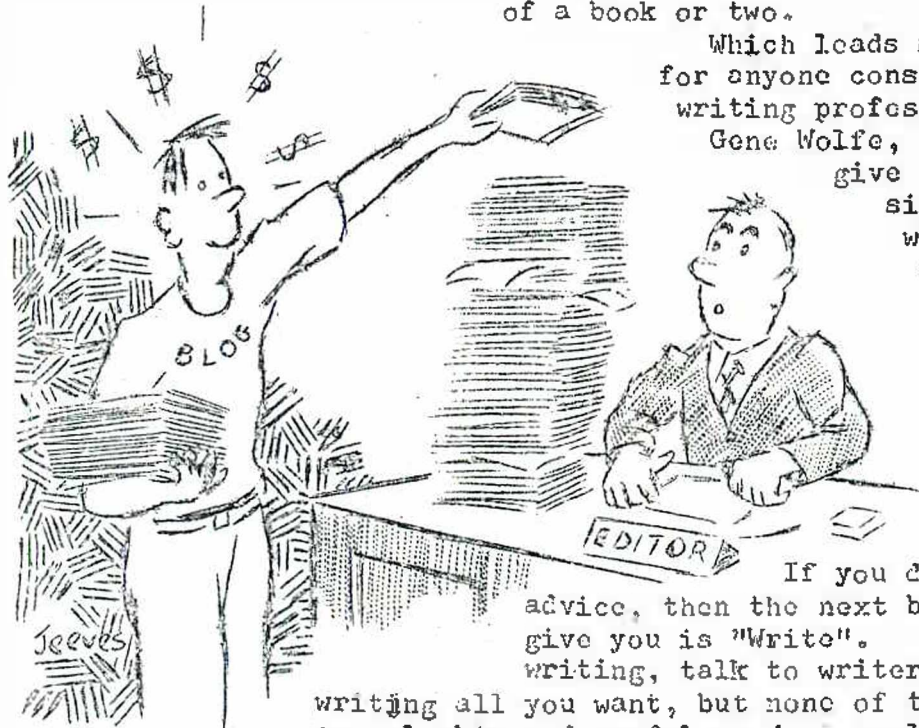
Having thoroughly bombed out on fiction and essays (and not being interested in writing poetry for \$ per poem), I decided to revert to articles. A wise decision, that, since my self confidence, writing-wise, was virtually non-existent. The only thing that had kept me going was the story about how Ray Bradbury wrote for three years before being published (and then only in the Sunday supplement of a newspaper). But I wasn't quite willing to wait three years myself. So I began writing magazine articles on the theory that if I'd done it before I could do it again. (Of course I always sent out the standard query letter first, which is handy since it the editor a chance to tell you why he doesn't want your bit without your having to go to the trouble of writing it.)

The theory proved valid, and before long I was having to file separate tax forms for my writing income. Over the ensuing five year period, I sold scores of articles to tabloids, Sunday magazine sections, men's magazines, etc. Even managed to sell a few essays and short humour pieces, as well as ghost-write a portion of a book.

But that's not all. Five years after I began writing with intent to sell, the score also includes two SF stories in ASIMOV'S (One anthologised), and a book for SF course instructors to be published next year. In the works are a novel, a book for beginning writers, and some more stories, as well as the usual articles, etc. ((Including an excellent 'future' article in STARLOG 15... Ed.))



The reason for my telling you about my track record is to lend some validity to any sage wisdom that might be lurking herein, and to point out something I consider interesting. Despite regular publication, and teaching courses in creative writing, I still do not derive all of my income from writing. There are, as you doubtless know, relatively few people who make their livings writing. My own theory on this is that there is so much competition that it's almost impossible to sell enough quantity-wise. The key is to make it all in one lump (or three or four lumps) with big sales of a book or two.



Which leads me to a bit of advice for anyone considering taking up writing professionally - to paraphrase Gene Wolfe, the best advice I can give a beginning writer is simply "Don't". (I agree with Gene's theory that anyone who can possibly be dissuaded from writing should be. That way, it's that much more for us, heh, heh.

If you don't take the preceding advice, then the next best bit of advice I can give you is "Write". You can read about writing, talk to writers, and think about writing all you want, but none of these activities will be as valuable and useful as just applying the seat of your pants to a chair and writing. Beyond that, don't take rejections personally, be persistent, and don't be offended if an editor asks you for a re-write.

One final word; you may have heard of "writer's block". Don't worry about coming down with that ailment; it's easily cured by doing a little fanwriting . . . and now that I've had my dose, I'll get back to the novel

(Michael A Banks -- From The Wilds of OHIO)

Support TAFF & GUFF

And if you have any doubt as to the best people to vote for....

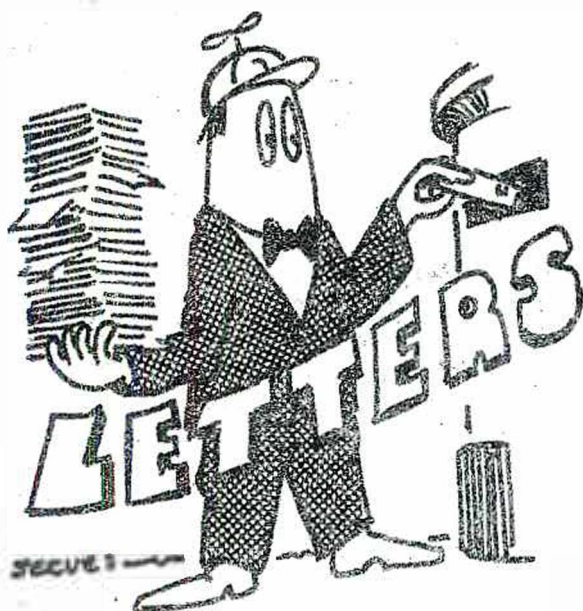
Suzanne Tompkins for TAFF

&

Eric Lindsay for GUFF

VOTE VOTE VOTE VOTE VOTE

AND..if you want a good book shop, when in SHEFFIELD, visit Peter Hammetton's SPACE CENTRE AT 485 London Rd., Sheffield..for everything connected with SF, astronomy, and space...books pictures, comics, models, cards, etc. etc.



Wherein a sample section of the incoming mail is displayed. Once again, the top LOC (FIVE extremely interesting pages, from which only a few excerpts can be squeezed in here, come from :-

Rog Pile

46 Trenoweth Estate

North Country,

Redruth, Cornwall.

"When Is A Robot Not A Robot?" I was able to play about with the three laws you formulated and have come to the conclusion that my tape-recorder..which has the requisite sensory input, plus a basic decision making device and the ability to act on it (it decides when to switch off at the end of the tape) is a robot, no less. (((I'm not so sure..that thing doesn't switch it on...and

the 'off' switch is not a function of the input... it will record an hour of silence..or cut off in mid sentence))) Also of course, the cooker has a sensory device..a thermostat..and a timer, plus the ability to switch itself on and off. The timer is rather temperamental so food is often overcooked or otherwise and generally unfit for human consumption...which I suppose is in direct contradiction to the First Law of Robotics? Maybe I shouldn't call the Electricity Board when it goes wrong, but Susan Calvin. You've made a good job of the White interview (something I'll confess I'd thought was done to death by far too many fan editors), which actually brought one or two new facts to light. This, along with Recent Reading, is the only justification for this issue of ERG. The reason it succeeds, I suppose is you've concentrated on the author's fannish past and the influences which led up to his professional present...so that we're able to read about such obscure, yet interesting things such as his early attempts at linocutting. The caricatures for the article, too are among the best I've seen from you yet.. particularly the priceless sketch depicting the youthful, bespectacled White clutching 'My First Story', at the centre of a ring of applauding fans.

Alan Burns
19 The Crescent
Wallsend
Tyne & Wear

I must say I can't see a lot of difference between the brush stencil and any other (((Ah, but if you were a lady brush stencil....))) When writing seriously, I attempted unsuccessfully to use another word for robot, and invented

Autoid, because as you'll admit, Kapek didn't intend his robots to be thought of as devices full of relays and so forth. Actually, he did a great dis-service to all automatic devices when he reused the Frankenstein syndrome, people are always ready to suspect what they don't understand and will believe the worst. I know of a factory which produced boiled linseed oil. It was fitted with about the first thermostatic controls used in England. By night, there was only a night watchman on duty, and no fail-safe unit. The thermostats went on the blink, he retired smartly and called the fire brigade and went for a cup of tea while they tried to put out the blazing factory.

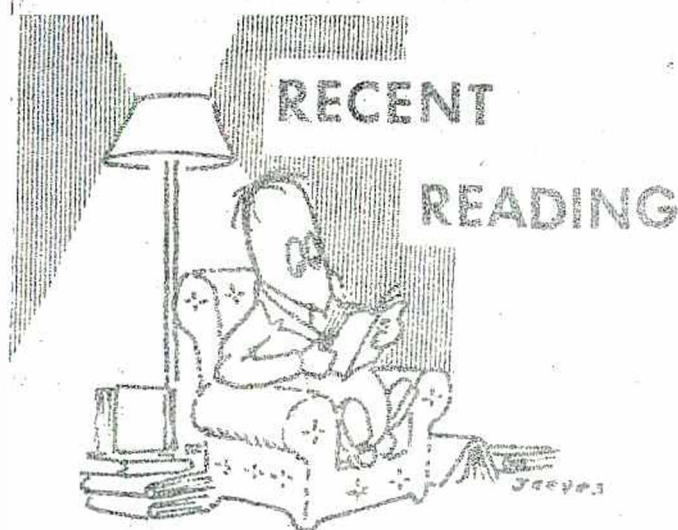
Janos Kis, *****
 Kozpontí Tudományos In November 1978, Polish Science Fiction and Fantasy
 H-1420 Budapest 8 Club organises 1st Science Fiction in Socialist
 Pf 15 HUNGARY Countries from fans, writers, editors and other SF
 specialists. If you are interested in convention,
 please write to the organiser :- Andrzej Pruszyński, 61/19 rue Odynea,
 02-644 Warszawa, Poland-POLSKI. Write in English, Russian, German. Please
 inform all your friends, regards. Janos Kis. *****CONVENTION !!!!

Keith Seddon Cover ? It looks OK man! It looks like what it's supposed
 Vind Auga to be..and that's what counts, eh? .. I always thought
 2 Ducks Ave. spark plugs looked like satellites. I still think CONTENTS
 Watford, MKT5 on the cover is a good idea. It makes it a much easier job
 to find that favourite item you read. The book reviews
 seem to have changed (((Well, they were different books.))) I find them easier
 to read and get the impression you are helping us to decide which books
 could be worth reading.

Mike Ashloy Readable and interesting as ever. I find I turn to the
 4 Thistlebank reviews and flick through them first these days because you
 Walderslade keep them so current (((Always in the stream of things))), and
 Chatham they're so interesting that I find them compelling. (((Thanks)))
 Kent. You frequently include books I've just read or am wondering
 about, and it's good to know how your views go. I nearly
 always agree, though don't concur with your statement that Brunner's,
Traveller In Black stories aren't memorable. I read the stories in their
 original magazine publication and found them very memorable. (((Which of
 course is the essence of the thing..I try to give an idea of what a book
 is about without making my own tastes part of the comment...just a sort of
 added note as a reader guide...obviously we can't all like the same, so it's
 particularly cheering to have people like you appreciate this))). I've just
 bought 'The Ophiuchi Hotline' and your review has truly whetted my appetite.

Your editorials are always thought-provoking, and as I read through your
 dissertation on robots I found myself thinking that in effect a toaster is a
 robot (((as I said, it all depends on how you define 'robot'))) SF readers have
 become rather brainwashed over the years into automatically picturing a robot
 as humanoid, so I constantly remind myself of Tony Boucher's usufoms in
 'Q.U.R.' and 'Robinc'. These are basic units to which can be added a variety
 of self-operating tools. These are almost already with us, and I'm sure in a
 few decades, they'll be everywhere. The thinking-reasoning robot a la Simak
 or Asimov is another matter entirely and when, if, they come about I don't
 think robot would be a satisfactory term...they'll probably be named after
 the firm or inventor that markets them...just as we call vacuum cleaners
 'hoovers' these days. (((Sounds reasonable...Gonolocs, maybe ???)))

David Todd The robot Editorial was quite well done, could have done
 12 Castle Ean with another page or two perhaps, but what was there I
 Tow Law liked. Don't know about your argument for a toaster as a
 Bishop Auckland robot, it does have a sensory input, i.e. heat, but it
 Co Durham doesn't make a decision to do or not to do..it has to pop
 up the toast when a certain level of heat is reached..it
 can't suddenly decide not to. (((It has to decide when that heat level is
 reached though...just as an Asimov 'thinking robot' must decide when to save
 a human...here again, it can't decide not to...so where's the difference ?)))



TELEMPATH
 Spider Robinson
 Macdonald & Jones £3.95.

Originally a short novel, 'By Any Other Name', in the Nov. 1976 Analog. This is the story of Isham Stone in a post holocaust America.

This time, the chaos was caused by a scientist who invents a virus which gives mankind a hundred times more powerful sense of smell. To add to Man's problems, there is also the appearance of the M skies..an ethereal, plasma race akin to the Vitons of 'Sinister Barrier'.

Robinson has expanded the simple story of how Stone finds his lifelong

enemy is really his father...and then added much, much more to show how Stone becomes a go-between for Man and Muskie, aided by a few drugs. Isham becomes boss-man from criminal a bit quickly, but otherwise I think you will find this a pleasant, if not award-winning yarn.

THE VIOLET APPLE

David Lindsay
 Sidgwick & Jackson £5.50

A 600 year old seed is planted and grows quickly to bear two small, violet apples. When eaten, they drastically change the lives of two young people. To reveal more would disclose all.

This isn't sf, and is barely fantasy. Written some fifty years ago, it is of two young romances in the days of £600 a year fortunes, dressing for dinner and stiff upper lips. The style is gentle and delicate, but I can't really see it as other than a slightly dated romance

THE OMEGA PROJECT *****

Brian Griffin
 Robert Hale £3.95

Far off in an alternate universe reached via travel through a Black Hole, the One Mind dominates all life in that region. It plans to take over this universe as well, so sends a three-man gestalt personality to lead

humanity into the correct path to open the way to its powers. The Omega Project is to send a star ship from Terra and in some way, this will make final the linkage. However, there is another power also striving to lead its minions to domination and so things get complicated. This is one of those yarns which some will love, others loathe, taking as it does of part hardcore, part New Wave styles. The plot is involved and following it demands more than average attention, so take it steadily for full enjoyment.

NEW SF FROM ROBERT HALE LTD. The Epping Pyramid by C.Cooper...A galactic immigrant offers his services..but things go astray.

Green Hailstones by N.Hall...A Welsh town vanished overnight..into space.

Fugitive From Time by Philip E. High ..he had faculties and memories which he couldn't explain..... £3.95 each title

OIL-PLANET

Michael Elder

Robert Hale £3.95

A future time in which Combloc and Capbloc are at war for oil. Oil-seeking ships from each Bloc have crashed on an oil rich planet. (This was the story, 'OIL-SEEKER'), now the two bands unite for survival, but after two years, warships arrive from the rival states and they are faced with the idea of resuming their old lives...and warfare. I'd be interested to know if the author is really a woman, as the story seems to be written from such an angle. I particularly enjoyed the encounter/seduction between Sergei and Caroline. However, the denouement seemed far too naive for the implacable behaviour attributed to the warring nations.

THE NIGHT OF KADAR

Garry Kilworth

Faber £4.95

As a completely automated starship nears a suitable planet after a thousand years of travel, its embryo tanks begin to grow, educate and awaken their contents. At this crucial moment, an alien influence makes a drastic change in the procedure. The star ship lands, unloads its humans, then dismantles itself to provide equipment. As the colonists set up home, they find they are on an island, start a bridge to the mainland, then have to cope with strange creatures and their powers, attacking humanoids, and the harassment of the 'Manipulators'. Mr Kilworth has given his colonists Arab origins and culture..and has done it superbly well. Characters come alive, are credible and with believable motives and actions from opening sentence to final full stop. The plot develops neatly, always gripping, and never predictable..with no annoying 'loose ends' to irritate the reader. I'd rate it excellent..and worthy of Award nomination. For me it was top level writing.

UNDER A CALCULATING STAR John Morrissey

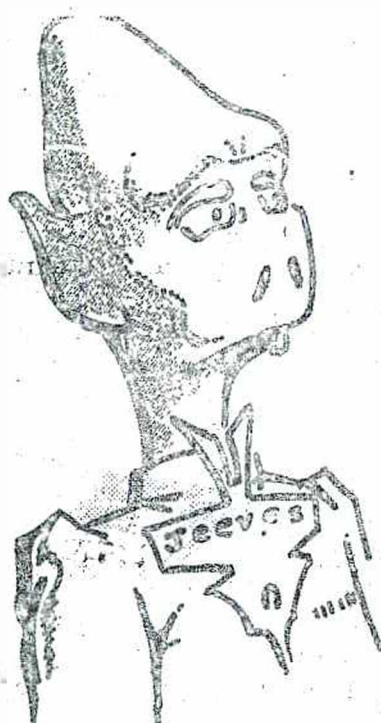
Sidgwick & Jackson £4.50

Really a three part story telling the destinies of space pirate Kian Jorry, and his headshman, Axxol. First, Jorry takes his motley crew to the planet Boroq Thaddoi, a quarantined world, where a legendary treasure is guarded by murderous traps which decimate Jorry's crew. Then comes an interlude in which Axxol organises a slave rebellion and exodus in search of a new world, and finally, Jorry and Axxol each meet with adventures and their different fates.

Fascinating people and places, almost naive at times with rather gentle pirates. This one might well have come from the Golden Age of SF. All the magic is there, but I would have preferred more of the problems and traps of the Boroq-Thaddoi citadel to the later intrigues which at times seemed just a bit too easily executed.

Put quibbles aside and read this as a highly entertaining adventure across the canvas of strange worlds.

Reviewed next issue...two Sidgwick & Jackson titles.. ANARCHISTIC COLOSSUS.. A.E. van Vogt, and SURVIVOR..Octavia E. Butler. £4.50 each.



FURY

Henry Kuttner Mankind has destroyed Earth and found refuge in the under-
 water keeps of the old model Venus. Sam Reed, mutilated at
 Marilyn 80p birth by a grief maddened father grows up to fight against
 the Immortals who disapprove of his plan to colonise the
 surface of Venus...then at eighty, Sam finds he too, is an Immortal. From
 a 1947 Astounding, this is a vintage oldie which still retains all its
 original impact and readability. Hamlyn label this as 'New in Paperback',
 but I have a strong feeling another house issued it in this format several
 years back...nevertheless it remains a must for all SF lovers.

PLEASE EXPLAIN

Isaac Asimov This is a collection of one hundred questions posed to Dr.
 Coronet 85p Asimov, and answered by him in the pages of Science Digest.
 They cover such diverse topics as number theory, astronomy,
 Earth's future, particle physics, gravity, relativity, FTL,
 parity, and the death of the dinosaurs..to name but a few. An excellent
 handbook which gives you a quick answer to many a problem without having to
 wade through a heavy encyclopedia dissertation. Recommended.

THE STOCHASTIC MAN

Robert Silverberg Lew Nichols can predict the future on the basis of
 Coronet 80p trends rather than discrete events, and is hired to lead
 politician Quinn to the Presidency. Then Carvajal comes
 on the scene, he can SEE the future, including his own
 death. Together they supply Quinn with the lines he must follow to ensure
 that destiny is fulfilled. A bit heavy on the usual side sex, but still a
 good, entertaining..and sometimes puzzling yarn. Maybe an award winner ??

SKYLARK OF VALERON

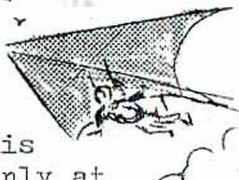
E.E.Smith Phd. Arch-villain, 'Blackie' Duquesne gains Fenachrone skills
 Panther 75p and sets out to hold Earth to ransom. Seaton and Crane
 step in, and along the way, encounter a race of dwellers
 in another dimension, aid Valeron against attacking
 Chlora and finally corner Duquesne. Forty years old, naive by modern ideas,
 but nevertheless, Smith's old space opera still has gosh, wow and plenty of
 the action and sense of wonder which made sf popular enough to survive into
 its present form. I'll wager that he can still hold his readers young or
 old, either from nostalgia..or sheer excitement. Me, I lap it up.

THE BLOODSTAR CONSPIRACY

Stephen Goldin Goldin writing 'with E.E.Smith', again employs the
 PANTHER 65p d'Alembert family to foil a plot by Lady A aimed
 at disrupting a Royal wedding and killing off
 loyal nobility. 5th in the series, this brings
 in Pias Baval and Yvonne Roumerner (affianced of Yvette & Jules d'Alembert
 respectively). Long on action, but short on plot, the agents perform their
 usual intrepid actions as they counter the threat to the Empire.

BIRDMEN

K. Messenger An 80+ page, factual account of the history,
 & R. Pearson achievements and technique of hang-gliding.
 Corgi £1.50 Quarto-sized, and on glossy paper carrying
 a superlative set of photos and drawings, this
 is a 'must' for anyone interested, even if only at
 the armchair level, in this fast growing sport. Written in layman's
 language, I found it enthralling, and at the price, I don't know how Corgi
 manage to do it.



THE DAY OF THEIR RETURN

Poul Anderson
Corgi 85p

The planet Aenaeas has been mis-governed by Terra and is ripe for revolt. Firstling Ivar Frederiksen flees after an abortive attack on a military convoy and meets with a nomadic tribe, the offer of being the focus of revolt, and a winged alien. Also complicating things, is the master spy, 'Aycharaych' from the Flandry tales, and rumours of a return of the 'Old Ones'. All of which gives the new Commissioner a tough problem. This one is as complicated as all get out..but never dull - or predictable.

FAR OUT

Damon Knight
Methuen Magnum 90p

This is one of those rarities, an anthology (13 tales) in which every single one is GOOD. They date from Knight's 1950-60 era and include TO SERVE MAN, the cookbook item; CABIN BOY humand tarpped on an alien ship, IDIOT STICK, alien construction methods and a load of others..pick at random, they are all excellent. This is one of my treasured hardcover collections, but in paperback, you get a much better cover by Chris Moore, than Tony Palladino's effort on the '61 Book Club version. Buy it for yourself ..or as a present (and read it before giving)

THE SWAN'S DEVICE

Brian Stableford
Pan. 60p

Fifth in the 'Hooded Swan' series. Boss-man Charlot and a couple of aliens want Grainger to land the Swan on Mormyr, a storm-ridden gas giant. Grainger refuses after an abortive attempt...but then a gun and bomb-carrying maniac takes over, the Swan is forced to land...and a giant ship equipped with an alien weapon is salvaged. This time, Grainger's mind parasite takes a bigger hand and the story proves one of the better 'Swans'

SWAN SONG

Brian Stableford
Pan. 60p

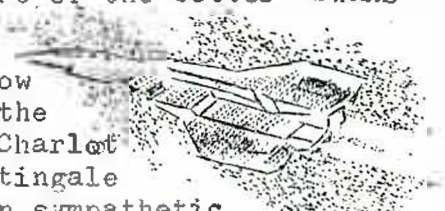
6th (and possibly the last ?) in the Swan series. Grainger, now free of Charlot, is hounded by the Caradoc Company, bailed out by Charlot and induced to undertake a mission through the Nightingale Nebula into another universe. I find Grainger an un sympathetic character, and one who never seems to have any free will - always being pressurised into actions against his will. This time, he loses all such external (and internal) effects, so if there is a 7th, he'll be his own man.

TOMORROW'S CHILDREN

Ed. Isaac Asimov
Orbit 21.25

Crammed to the gunwhales with no less than 16 top-level stories, each one centering on a child. They can see another dimension; eschew wizardry in favour of accountancy (a devilish kind); employ telepathy, (Telzey is here with a crest-cat); or cause things to vanish by mind power. There are telekinetics, absnet-minded-genius children, levitators, and mental monsters. You will meet time-travellers tending future rulers and the superbly lovely 'Cabin Boy' of Damon Knight. Oh yes, 'names' are here by the carload, but forget 'em, this is simply a superb, delightful 400+ pages with not a single stinker in the lot. My only quibble is the cut-price use of a Foss cover originally used on Haldeman's 'Mindbridge'. Otherwise, RECOMMENDED !

(About that Foss cover....this practice seems to be happening more often these days....dust-jackets from hardcovers are turning up on the paper backs. I sup ose it is an economy measure, but does the artist get paid anything for second usage ? ..and what do the artist's unions think of the matter ? If you know, perhaps you'd write and tell me)



FUTURE FACTS

Stephen Rosen Once in a while, along comes a book which every SF writer
Corgi £1.95 ought to have on his shelves..this is one. Don't let the
price intimidate you...this one is a biggy. 535 pages..each
20x13 cms. closely printed and plenty of line illustrations.
Its ten chapters (Medicine, Power, Food, Society etc.,) are packed with brief
essays on the latest advances in just about every field of human interest.
Cancer research, nuclear watches, computer games, cloning, holograms, plus
many more. The book doesn't just tell you what has been done..it tells you
what is likely to be done next. As I say, every SF writer ought to have a
copy...and so should every SF reader...Highly Recommended !!!!!!

THE BOOK OF FRANK HERBERT

Panther 60p Right at the other end of the paperback price
scale..and equally good value for money, is this ten-
story (ex-magazine) collection. Herbert is one of my
favourite authors, and here he covers adaptive colonisation, the powers,
alien control of humanity, the fight against a travelling plague and quite
a few others. Some long, some short, but all having that tightly plotted
credibility which is the hallmark of the master writer..and of Frank Herbert.

THE BICENTENNIAL MAN

Isaac Asimov For my taste, Asimov will never write a great story,
Panther 85p. but to balance that, I can't recall catching him out
with a bad one. His tales are workmanlike, pleasing
and frequently very good. Here are 11 (plus a scrap
of verse) many of them on robots, others on undersea development, mass
murder, and even one on where Gernsback got the title 'Amazing'. and one
delicious little creepy, which hints that maybe robots can ..and will, get
round that first Law. As I said, nothing great...but all entertaining.

NEBULA AWARD STORIES 11

Ed. Ursula K. LeGuin Leiber on a world where Germany won W.W.1; the end
Corgi 95p of the Forever War from Haldeman; robot revenge
by Zelazny; then Peter Nicholls talks about SF;
there's a tale about an immortal 'child'. Ellison
tells of a man who doubled. Reamy has a piece about magic and wish fulfill-
ment, a strange time story, Vonda McIntyre writes of SF and for a bonus you
get a listing of all Nebula Awards from 1965-75. My favourite was 'Home Is
The Hangman'; but your tastes may differ...but don't worry, with 250 pages
for your 95p, it's still a far better buy than most prozines.

THX 1138

George Lucas Actually, Lucas did the screenplay (with Walter
Panther 75p Murch), Ben Bova wrote it into a novel - and a
good one too. A cradle-to-grave dominating
society, but more futuristic and gimmicky than
1984. Citizens are controlled by drugs and robot police.
THX 1138 indulges in the crime of Sexact, and is soon imprisoned.
He escapes and his pursuit makes the longest part of an enthralling
book. Oh, there are anomalies...humanity is so jam-packed it
has pedestrian-jams, restrictions as to where one may go and
what one may do.. yet Bova introduces 8 lane highways and rocket-
exhausted cars powered by nuclear engines. Total TV surveillance
and drug-sedated children clash with actors in plays showing how
to circumvent authority. Minor quibbles really, I thoroughly enjoyed it.



MESSAGES FROM THE STARS

Ian Ridpath
Fontana 95p

This is NOT a pseudo-science item, but a sober, factual investigation of the probabilities of there being life elsewhere in the universe..and can we contact it. It examines possibilities within the Solar System, devotes an interesting chapter to the Mars lander experiments, then moves on to space colonies, starship exploration and communication attempts to date (Ozma etc) plus a look at possible future methods. The author also looks at possible results of contact; debunks von Daniken and casts cold water on many UFO 'sightings'. All in all, a pleasing and entertaining work...and one which ought to stimulate much thinking.

BLACK HOLES

Jerry Pournelle
Orbit 95p

When a working scientist (and sf writer) sets out to make an anthology with Black Holes as its theme, one expects something out of the ordinary. Pournelle does the job superlatively. Not only do you get 13 excellent stories by such stars as Niven, Bretnor, (yes, Papa Schimmolhorn gets in the act) and Pournelle himself, but you also get no less than four articles in simple layman's language which explain what the theme is all about...a great collection and for my money, has only one slight flaw...it also contains two 'poems'.

OPERATION ARES

Gene Wolfe
Fontana 80p

After establishing a Martian colony, the USA. has slipped back to a near-agrarian society where science is scorned. Predatory animals roam at night (though they rest up a bit after Chapter 1.) A virtual dictator is in power, and small town teacher, John Castle tries to join resistance force ARES being raised by Martians who come and go as they please. Plenty of action, but lacking in plausibility for those who like all the ends neat and tidy.

CINNABAR

Edward Bryant
Fontana 75p

Cinnabar is a strange future city, where time spirals in to its centre and passes more quickly the nearer you approach. Here is a delightful, near-fantasy collection relating the adventures of its inhabitants - a reconstructed shark, fabricated humans..and animals, sex-star Tourmaline and her man the scientist Obregon. Then there's the city-ruling computer, Terminex; a time-traveller; Cougar Lou, future Robin Hood, and many others. I thoroughly enjoyed the gentle approach...all the joys of Bradbury or Ballard, without their faults.

SHINY MOUNTAIN

David Dvorkin
Methuen 'Magnum' 95p

Decadent, tour operating world Larmon re-discovers Earth, and sends a spaceship crew (including Mash, an oriologist) to prepare the planet for large scale tourist invasion..which involves killing off the natives. Mash defects, helps the natives to discover a hidden base, arms cache and a starship. This all helps to even up the odds when the Larmon fleet comes in for the finish. Naive at times, often using impossible coincidence, this is still a light, pleasant, and even fun type novel. If you're not a hard-core purist, this could be for you.

BEYOND THE BARLIE

Damon Knight
Hamlyn 80p

Amnesiac Professor Naismith is framed by two time-travellers and forced to accompany them into a future where aliens, gnomes and a slave society are beset by a monster Zug. Naismith meets the monster, a time barrier is erected, and he meets a strange destiny. This one reads exactly like a van Vogt novel with all his twists and bafflement...there's even a ten day poison. I'd be interested to hear if anyone knows of a connection.

METAMORPHOSIS

Fifth in the superbly produced Star Trek Fotonovel series. This time, Kirk and his men, together with Commissioner Corgi Bantam 95p Nancy Hedford are kidnapped by an energy being to provide companions for 150 year old castaway which it has rejuvenated. This series is the next best thing to seeing the ST shows once again...and you can run them again as often as you wish.

THE KILLER MICE

In this 15 story collection, Ms Reed scintillates on a variety of near-fantasy themes with brilliant effect. You meet the family which tends 'The Vine' from cradle to death, then there's the baby that kept growing, a lovely satire on women's lib, another on house-proud ladies and a creepy piece about a boscy social worker who pesters an old lady after her children have 'flown the nest'. Pick where you like, they are all short..and very much to the point.

THE HIGH FRONTIER

For those (like me) who firmly believe in the credo that Gerard M. O'Neill we must continue on work in space, this book is a breath of fresh air. Well and comprehensively illustrated, it sets out to describe just why and how mankind should set about building colonies on gigantic orbital stations. The author seems to have done his sums, but has written for the layman..and for my part, he has firmly convinced me that his schemes are feasible. It is enthusiastic, yet realistically..and chillingly sober and interesting all the time. If you are a space buff..or just interested in the future...get this one.

THE BEST OF ROBERT SILVERBERG

A Malzberg introduction, a superlative cover painting (by ?), then 10 tales, each preceded by a brief but interesting auctorial note. 'Road To Nightfall' brings in cannibalism. 'Sixth Palace' a great piece about a treasure guarded by a robot, then there are the body possessors of 'Passengers' and the highly acclaimed 'Hawksbill Station' and 'Nightwings'. Punishment by statutory invisibility and the lovely satire of a robot Pope. Silverberg leans to the downbeat, but if you don't mind that, then this IS the man at his best, and if you couldn't afford the hardcover...don't miss this edition..

MARUNE: Alastor 922

Amnesiac 'Pardero' sets out to find his identity and origins. The trail leads him to a strange society and an intrigue-ridden palace, Benbuphar Strang. The people are never quite what they seem and though you may quibble over the plausibility of their customs, they are given realistic quirks and personality traits. Vance's alien societies are different, and even his villains have interesting qualities..even redeeming ones. This story isn't an Award winner, but is still highly readable and entertaining.

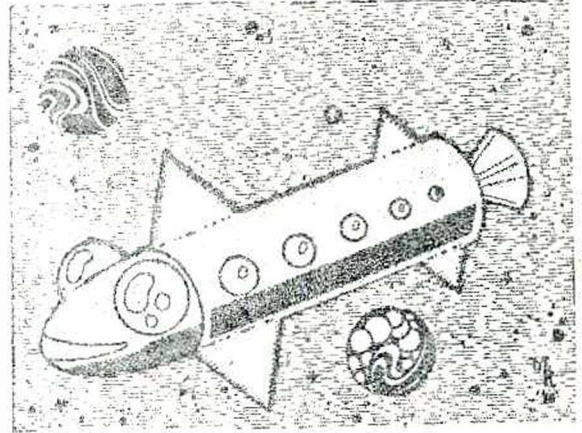
THE THREE DAMOISELS

For lovers of Arthurian romance and legend with all its attendant knights, ladies, magicians and mystery. This is a trilogy, comprising 'The Green Knight', 'The King's Damosel', and 'King Arthur's Daughter'. Mrs Chapman (an octogenarian, no less) paints a broad, measured canvas, letting her tales develop gently and smoothly through brooding menace or castle keep, but adding all the grace, colour and chivalry of that fabled age. Those who cherish the romances of Arthur, Merlin and the legendary knights will find this a feast for their imagination. Mrs Chapman also has 'Elsedud The Bird Man' (Collings, £3.95) due in late September.

From Methuen 'Magnum' Books, come two classic Olaf Stapledon titles priced at £1.25 each.

LAST AND FIRST MEN

This, though fiction, has no characterisation, but is as with Wells' 'Things To Come', a broad panorama of 'future history', as reviewed by one of the Last Men. Starting in the near-present wars ravage the planet. 2nd Man emerges to fight a Martian invasion, then a decline before 3rd Man rises to create his own destruction in the form of the giant brains of 4th man. They in turn create the perfect, giant, 5th Man who takes mankind to the planets, then the stars. A book to be read slowly and the ideas savoured.



LAST MEN IN LONDON

Again, an account of our future as related by a 5th. Man on Neptune. The chronicler 'mind-travels' in time and space to enter the mind of Paul, a young Londoner at the time of World War.1. Paul's life is directed and we are given a Neptunian view of the events leading to the Great War before returning to Paul's love life, adultery and eventual career. The book lacks the wide scope of 'First And Last Men', but is still a notable landmark in speculation on worlds that might come to be. Each title is a SF landmark, and here is a chance to add them to your collection at a modest price.

ROGUE SHIP

A.E. VAN VOGT
Panther 75p

Three magazine yarns went into this tale of the interstellar 'generation ship', 'The Hope of Man'. In order, they are Centaurus II (a favourite of mine) Rogue Ship, and The Expendables. Star after star proves unsuitable or hostile, the journey stretches interminably and mutinies come and go. Van Vogt tends to stretch his logic a bit, and is rather uncertain about his FTL equations, apart from these minor quibbles, the story never loses interest, and there is always some new development hiding round the next page to hold you.

THE WORLD INSIDE

Robert Silverberg
Panther 75p

Each chapter is a complete story detailing incidents in the lives of the dwellers in Urban Monad 116. Housing around 900,000 in its thousand floors, the religion is childbearing, the pastime sex, and 'nightwalking' in search of same. Everything is arranged to make people contented with their hive like existence...but there are always malcontents, and Silverberg looks closely into their problems. All different, each fascinating, and not a dull one in the lot. Rather heavy on the sex.. but it does keep people quiet.

A HISTORY OF THE HUGO AND NEBULA AND INTERNATIONAL FANTASY AWARDS. (Phew!) By Donald Franson and Howard DeVore. 112 pages (5 1/2" by 8"), computer typeset, Hugo nominations from 1953, Nebula from 1965. Overseas \$3.00 postpaid by seamail, from Howard DeVore, 4705 Weddel St., Dearborn, Michigan 48125. But...I reckon Ken Slater, would get it for you..write to 39 West St., Wisbech, Cambs, PE13 2LX.

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FUTURA have come up with a new Tolkien-beating trilogy written by Stephen Donaldson. The whole saga details the Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant: The Unbeliever in another universe where time runs many times faster, and known as The Land. Each part costs £1.25..but as they average out at 450 pages, it is still far better value than the average paperback. Briefly :-

(1) LORD FOUL'S BANE

Thomas Covenant, writer, maimed leper and outcast is transported to The Land by Lord Foul and Drool Rockworm so that they may use him to achieve power. However, the people of The Land greet Covenant as their legendary hero Berek. Cured of his leprosy, the traveller leads them in the struggle for the 'Staff Of Law' held by Foul's henchman, and Covenant returns to the real world.

(2) THE ILLEARTH WAR

Back to The Land, but forty years later and Lord Foul is using the powerful Illearth Stone against the people. Covenant and his Lords seek to raise support but are beset by magic and strange Giants. After a confrontation with Foul, Covenant, who has no real belief in The Land again returns to reality to find that here, his leprosy is still with him.

(3) THE POWER THAT PRESERVES

Summoned to The Land for the final battle, Covenant brings forth his latent powers in the war against Foul and his minions. Sadly, he is unable to utilise these powers to aid him in the real world.

The trilogy is well stocked with giants, trolls magic and esoteric names, people and places. Each volume has both a map of The Land, and a glossary to aid your reading. Billed as (comparable to Tolkien', I'd rate it as 'better than'. I fancy the saga will soon have its own adherents and cult society...the scope is there, as are the characters. All it needs is to be mentioned around among heroic fantasy lovers.

SKYLARK DUQUESNE

E.E.Smith PhD
Panther 75p.

Serialised in IF, 1965, but as far as I know, not issued over here until this Panther edition, this is the fourth and final epic in the famed 'Skylark' series (All available from Panther). Ignore the carping critics, this is space opera in the heroic, superscientific vein for those (like me) who love the stuff. This time, arch-villain, Duquesne has escaped his time stasis imprisonment and is attacked by powerful enemies in deep space. He calls Seaton for help, and the unlikely alliance battle against the might of the Jelmi and their batlike overlords, the Llurdi. All the old magic is there, and Doc even tried his hand at the permissive game..with Duquesne getting 'hooked' in the end. Ignore the s&c whiz kids, read this for fun.

UNLIT COMPULSION

Thomas M. Disch
Panther 70p

A collection of down-beat and dismal Disch stories, most being of the "where did the end get to?" variety. There's a lady who can control cockroaches, the isolation of a cybernetic/female machine, slow mental decay of the last man alive, the collapse of society, and a host of similar goodies. Brian Aldiss says (on the jacket), "an adulterated shot of pure bracing gloom". I agree, and to drive home the point...there are 13 stories. Suit yourself.

REVEALED NEXT ISSUE :- THE FANTASY BOOK. Franz Rottensteiner. Thame & Hudson, £2.95. UNIVERSE FIVE, and UNIVERSE SIX. Ed. Terry Carr, Dobson, £2.25 each. plus of course..SURVIVOR. Octavia E. Butler and THE ANARCHISTIC COLOSSUS by A.E.van Vogt. Both from Sidgwick & Jackson at £4.50 and £4.95 respectively