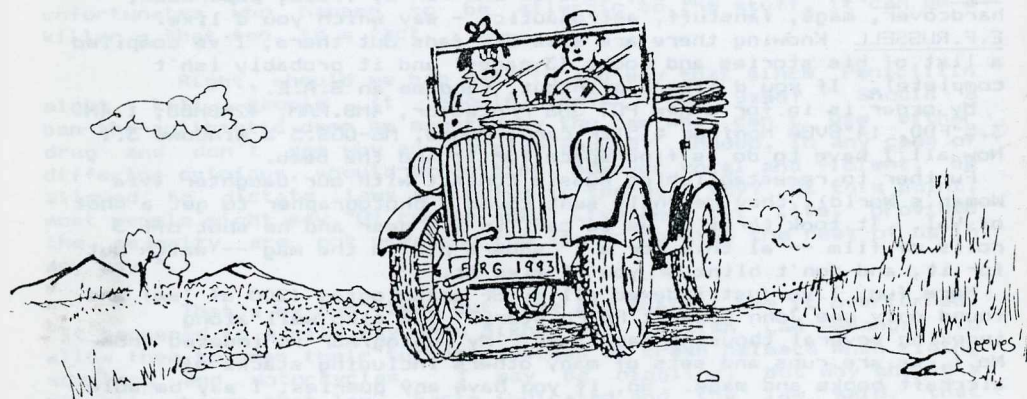
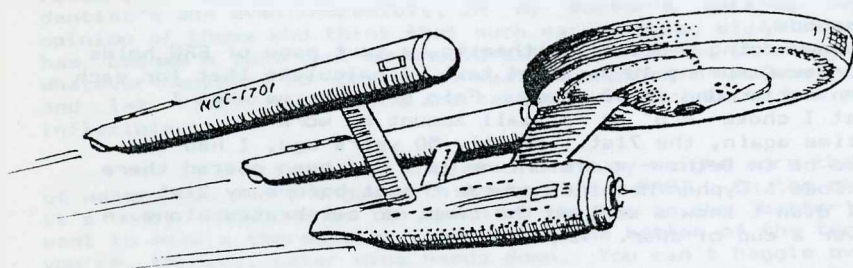


ERG 123

QUARTERLY

OCTOBER 1993



' IGNORE IT HIRAM, IT MUST BE ONE OF THOSE UFO THINGS '

ERG 123

October 1993

Now in its 35th Year

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Scarborough
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Greetings Ergbods,

I've just been doing a bit of arithmetic, a text page of ERG holds about 600 words. Assuming 18 pages of text, I calculate that for each issue I churn out around 11000 words. Fair staggers me when I remember that I chose 'Erg' as 'a small amount of work'.

Birthday time again, the 71st., exactly 50 years ago, I had the misfortune to be in Delhi - a misfortune as I had been posted there on a Typex (Code & Cypher Machine) course - just before my 21st birthday. I didn't know a soul on the camp, so celebrated alone in the NAAFI over a cup of char. Ah, memories.

Coincidence, the day after printing out 'Problem Corner', I got the latest Analog - with an article on the Skyhook satellite. I fancy its new variation has even more problems than the old one.

WANTED Buy or trade, a copy of Galileo USA # 16, the final issue (in 1980?) also, BEYOND THE GOLDEN AGE.4 Ed. Isaac Asimov Futura/Orbit 1978 A.Merritt titles, THE MOON POOL, CREEP, SHADOW, THE METAL MONSTER, THE SHIP OF ISHTAR. Can you help?

SALE - If you want cheap SF, send an SAE for my lists, paperback, hardcover, mags, fanstuff, astronautics - say which you'd like.

E.F.RUSSELL Knowing there are some EFR fans out there, I've compiled a list of his stories and books (3 pages! and it probably isn't complete). If you'd like a printout, send me an S.A.E.

My order is in for a new PC, 386 Processor, 4MB.RAM, 42MBHDD, 1.4M 3.5"FDD, 14"SVGA Monitor & 512K card, Mouse, MS-DOS.5 & Windows 3.1 Now all I have to do is find space for it and the Beeb.

Further to re-establishing Aussie contact with our daughter (via Woman's World), they recently sent round a photographer to get a shot of Val. It took three of us to car in his gear and he shot off 3 rolls of film -- all this for a 1" square pic in the mag -- watch out for it, and don't blink or you'll miss it.

More fun, I've just indexed all my SF anthologies (200 of 'em) and found only one John Russell Fearn story. I'm also well along indexing several thousand magazines. My Analog/ASF is indexed from No.1, as are runs and sets of many others including stacks of aircraft books and mags. So, if you have any queries, I may be able to help - NB, I haven't indexed Galaxy yet.

Our favourite coffee rendezvous, the Holbeck Hall was finally bulldozed over the cliff edge recently and now the earthmovers are trying to stabilise the cliff. We stayed in the hotel before moving here, it was a lovely place and our photos show how far it was from the cliff edge. I gather that its demise even made TV screens in Australia.

Oh well, don't forget to write that LOC, Bestest,

Terry

A MATTER OF

OPINION

Facts are one thing, opinions another. Some people love loud 'pop' music, I can't abide the horrible stuff. Yet for some reason, I get it rammed in my ears in shops, shopping malls, at the dentist's and even incredibly, in my Doctor's waiting room! The opinion of those who think that such ear-damaging stuff is wonderful, has become a fact that we should all be force-fed it wherever we go. Whatever happened to 'One man's meat is another's poison' or 'Live and let live'? Opinions and tastes can vary, facts are a bit more inflexible.

It's a fact that a pint of mercury weighs more than a pint of water, you can't argue with that, it's a FACT. On the other hand, it's only OPINION as to which of the two is the 'better'. If you want to make a thermometer, mercury is the better of the two, but if you're thirsty, water wins hands down. You can't haggle over facts, whereas opinions depend on the parameters you decide to set. The snag is when people disagree over how the facts should be interpreted. As the late Professor Joad would often say when a knotty point cropped up, "It all depends what you mean by....".

Facts can't be changed, but you can always niggle over what to do about them. The humble Aspirin is a godsend to many, but total horror to a few. It's a fact that Penicillin is a very useful antibiotic which has saved many lives. However, to the few unfortunates who happen to be allergic to the stuff, it can be a killer - that too, is a fact.

Right, should we ban Aspirin and say that since Penicillin might kill people it should never be used? Should a ban-the-antibiotic demo be mounted by the few who can't use either drug and don't see why anyone else should? Indeed, in any case of differing opinions, should minorities, however vocal and violent, be allowed to dictate laws and rules to the majority? At this point, most people might say "Of course not. Live and let live, provided the majority are not breaking the law or harming the rest of us in any way.".

That's my own view, but time and again I see it overturned. It happened in a mild way when Sikhs had British Law changed to allow them to wear their turbans instead of crash helmets when riding scooters and motorcycles. I may be giggling, but why should a minority change that law? Facts indicated and the law said, that helmets should be worn because they saved lives. The Sikh opinion believed that for religious reasons they should wear turbans. The choices were theirs; (a) wear a crash helmet, or (b) refrain from motorcycle riding. Instead, the facts were changed from 'Cyclists must wear helmets' to 'Sikh cyclists may wear turbans'. The tail had wagged the dog. Hard luck if you happen to be a non-Sikh and want to wear a turban for cycling.

Whether cycling Sikhs should wear turbans or crash helmets is a minor quibble. After all, they are the only people likely to be hurt by eschewing helmets. Much more sinister is the statement that fluoride is said to be good for one's teeth. I don't know if this is a fact or merely an opinion, but a minority of people are convinced that the chemical should be put into our drinking water - i.e. we must ALL drink it "because it's good for us". Such people look like having their way over the majority who don't want the stuff forced down their gullets. Why can't Fluoride lovers just keep a jugful in their bathrooms for their own personal use when the urge strikes them?

Remember the deformed children resulting from the use of 'wonder drug' Thalidomide? It took a few years of horror before that particular 'approved medication' was proved to be the culprit. Might not fluoride have equally unexpected and unpleasant *long term* effects? Imagine the results if 'do-gooders' decided to somehow lace our water with Penicillin because it killed germs? Already unfortunate individuals find they suffer from a fluoride allergy, what is to be their fate if the vocal minority carry the day? In ten years time, will a trail of death or deformity lead to Fluoride? I don't know, but it seems much safer to leave Fluoridisation a personal option rather than make it a national compulsion.

Which brings me to my main abhorrence in the 'We know what is good for you' field. I'm thinking of those violent, rabid anti-abortion groups in the USA. They are perfectly entitled to their views, to tell them to anyone who will listen or to write their Senators. But not content with peaceful picketing to make their views known, many have already demolished one clinic and killed a surgeon. Who gave that crazed minority the right to such brain-damaged, anti-social actions?

Yes, I'm a pro-abortionist. My view is that only two people have a right to decide whether or not to terminate a pregnancy, the mother and the father -- and if push comes to shove, then the woman deserves the casting vote -- PROVIDED - The termination be carried out before it endangers the mother.

No, I don't think the unborn child is sacred, nor do I think it right that a woman should be forced to bear a child which is the result of rape, or is going to be deformed, brain-damaged or handicapped in some way. If, for her own reasons, a woman wants an abortion, and is of sound mind, then that is HER BUSINESS and not that of those whose opinions differ. Let 'em write letters, lobby politicians, carry banners and make speeches and try by all peaceful means to gain their ends.

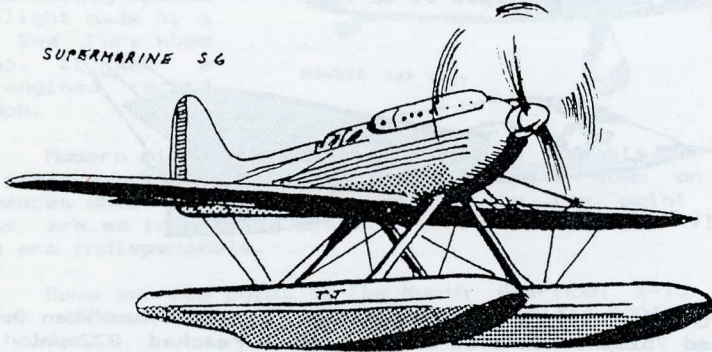
I see no earthly reasons why they should resort to violence and intimidation to enforce their own private opinions. To actually kill people in the name of 'Pro-Life' indicates that they are several cornflakes short of a Weetabix in the mental department.

By all means support the use of Aspirin, Penicillin on your cut finger, Fluoride in water and anti-abortion groups, if such is your opinion. BUT, please support them for individual use by choice, and NOT their compulsory enforcement on everyone. You're entitled to your opinion, but so am I, and that's a FACT.

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THE SEARCH FOR SPEED

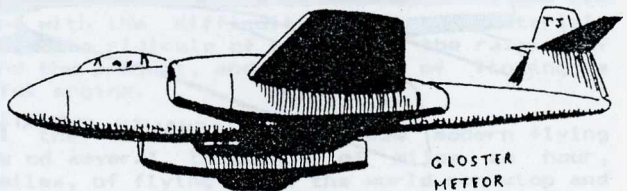
SUPERMARINE S 6



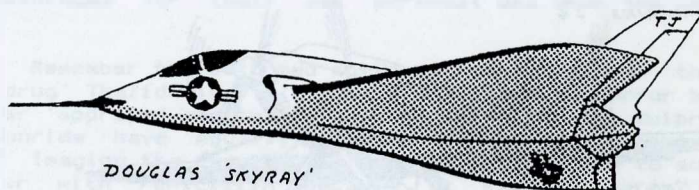
In 1903, Orville Wright made the first true powered flight, reaching a speed of 35mph and an altitude of four or five feet. Only seven years later, the first Gordon Bennett air race was won at a speed of 60mph. When Jacques Schneider presented a trophy for the fastest seaplane, France won the first contest in 1913 with a speed of 73mph. The following year, Britain won with a speed of 139mph and the search for speed was really under way.

The Great War saw the race suspended until 1919 and in 1925 an American Curtiss won with a speed of 232mph, then a few days later, upped the Air Speed Record to 247mph. Four years later, the Supermarine S-6 pushed the mark to 357mph and in 1931, the S-6B notched up 407mph. The Schneider Trophy had obviously stimulated the development of high speed seaplanes. Landplanes lagged well behind - it was 1932 when Jimmy Doolittle flew a GeeBee racer to a landplane record of only 296mph. A seaplane pushed the absolute record even higher when in 1934, Flight Lieutenant Agello flew his Macchi MC-72 to a world record of 440mph! Landplanes finally caught up in 1939 when a German Heinkel achieved 463mph, to be followed a month later by a Messerschmitt 209 flown by Fritz Wendel to 469mph. For propaganda purposes, Germany claimed the flight to have been made by a standard Me-109 fighter.

Once again, a war interrupted record attempts but the stimulus of hostilities saw great strides being made in aircraft performance. The jet engine came on the scene and in 1945 a Gloster Meteor clocked up 606mph.

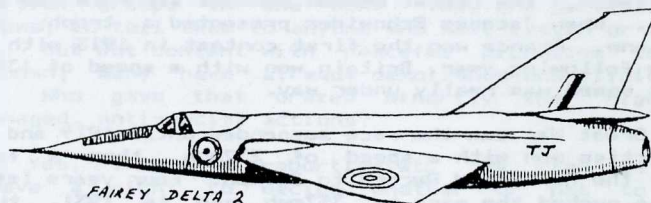
GLOSTER
METEOR

In 1946 another Meteor raised it to 615mph. It fell to 'Chuck' Yeager flying the rocket-powered Bell X-1 to be the first man to crack the sound barrier in level flight with a speed of 700mph. He did this whilst suffering cracked ribs after a riding accident. This achievement was followed by a string of American records until in July 1953, a Sabre set a mark of 714mph. Britain responded in September when a Hawker Hunter did 727mph and less than three weeks later a Supermarine Swift upped it to 735.



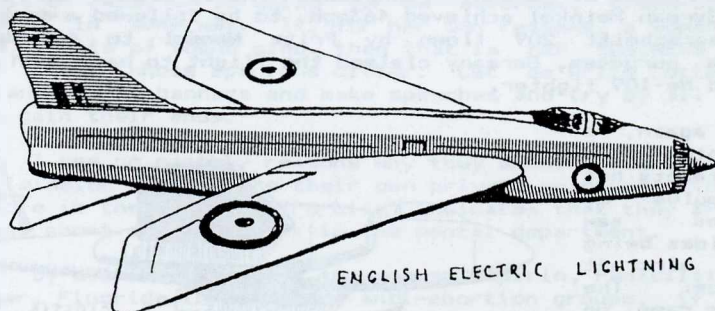
DOUGLAS 'SKYRAY'

It held the record a mere eight days before an American Douglas Skyray managed 752mph. In 1955 a Super Sabre reached 822mph. Less than a year went by before the superlative little Fairey Delta 2 screeched across the skies leapfrogging the record across the 900 and 1000mph gaps to reach an incredible 1132mph!



FAIREY DELTA 2

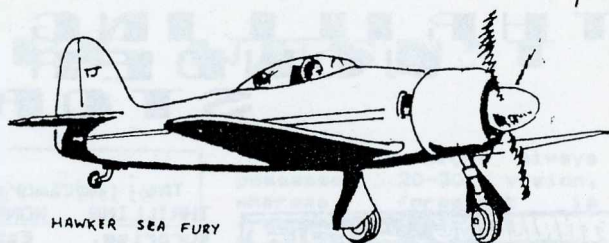
This was the last time Britain held the official record, although in 1958, the English Electric 'Lightning' powered by a pair of Rolls Royce Avon engines set a speed of 1500mph.



ENGLISH ELECTRIC LIGHTNING

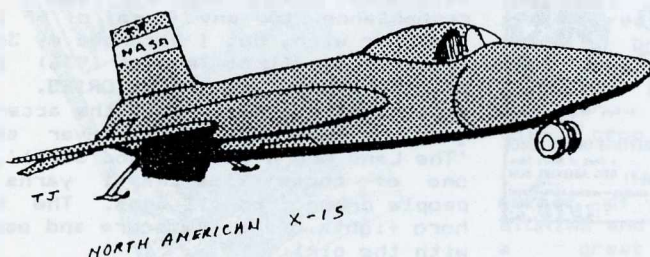
From then on it became an American monopoly with only a couple of times being captured by Russian Sukhoi machines at the 1483 and 1665mph marks.

Then in 1976, the notorious Lockheed SR-71A ramed the record up to no less than 2193mph. Hardly noticed among these ascending speeds was a flight made by a Hawker Sea Fury when in 1966, it set a piston-engined record of 520mph.



Modern military aircraft may well be capable of bettering these performances, but secrecy has clamped down on details of performances which push flight envelopes to the point where the machines are so inherently unstable that computers and 'fly by wire' systems are indispensable.

Some sources point to the North American X-15 which has flown at 4534mph and to a height of over 314,000ft as being the record holder.

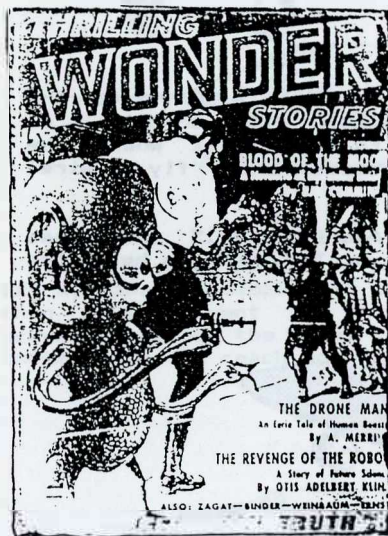


The X-15 made a magnificent series of flights, but they don't qualify for the official air speed record as the rules demand that the aircraft must be capable of taking off and landing under its own power. Since the X-15 was air-launched from a carrier aircraft, its record doesn't come in the same category as the others. Likewise the Space Shuttle's 16,600mph is ruled out because its take off is assisted and its landing unpowered.

In no way do these restrictions detract anything from the magnificent achievements of both machines - and what fantastic progress it shown in only ninety years. Orville Wright's 1903 flight was a marvellous performance for the time it was made. He and his brother Wilbur had to cope with the difficulties of the materials they had to work with, the ridicule of onlookers, the raising of their own finances to fund the project, and the task of finding a suitable light and powerful engine.

I wonder what they would think to see modern flying machines achieving speeds of several thousands of miles an hour, heights of more than 60 miles, of flying round the world non-stop and of a size where the wingspan alone exceeds the distance of their first flight. Truly, a case of Fiction becoming Science.

THRILLING WONDER STORIES



The metamorphosis of WONDER into THRILLING WONDER, caught me by surprise. Each Saturday morning I would stroll round bookstalls in the city market. This had to be done every week to avoid missing any of the goodies before someone else snapped them up. On this particular Saturday, I browsed through the 'rag and tag', bought an old AMAZING and then noticed a magazine with a cover depicting a scaly, bug-eyed monster aiding a stalwart American to beat off an attacking caveman and some Roman soldiers. It didn't bear any resemblance to any form of SF I was familiar with, but I hazarded my 3d and acquired the first (August 1936) issue of THRILLING WONDER STORIES. The science part was minimal, the accent on gosh wow adventure. The cover story, 'The Land Where Times Stood Still', was one of those time-travel yarns with people drawn from all ages. The brave hero fights off a few score and escapes with the girl.

'Robot's Revenge' was illustrated by a scientist ripping open his chest to reveal he had been made into a robot after a murder attempt. He was about to commit suicide when his girl revealed she too had undergone roboticisation so they could be together for ever. 'Blood Of The Moon' saw a lovelorn young miner foil space pirates who attacked a Lunar mine. In 'The Hormone Menace' an America spy braved an enemy complex where giant warriors and a gland-manipulated superman hung out. 'The Circle Of Zero' had an old scientist hypnotise his daughter's boyfriend to 'dream' stock market secrets. (What would modern readers make of a hero who starts off, 'I was a gay Jack Anders'?) 'Death Dives Deep' told of a subterranean boring machine and an encounter with incredibly dense (atomically) beings inside the earth. A man empathised with bees in 'The Drone Man' and 'The Nth. Degree' saw a scientist bluff a criminal into a confession by pretending to regress him into a beast.

There was a also a ghastly cartoon strip story, ZARNAK, so abysmal, reader outrage got it dropped after only a few issues. Marchioni did an excellent job of illustrating everything and in addition to the stories and cartoon strip there was a science quiz, questions and answers, SF League details, Letters, a 'swap' column and a forecast for the next issue. All slam-bang non-cerebral adventure tales, but not a bad dollop for a measly threepence.

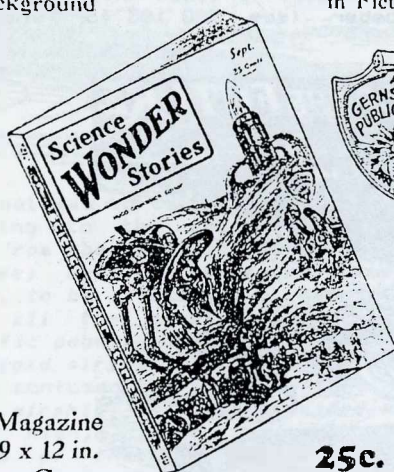
THE WAY THE FUTURE WASN'T

Science Wonder Stories

DRAMATIZED MECHANICS!

Stories with a
Scientific
Background

The Wonders of
Modern Science
in Fiction



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100 Pages



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Hindsight always possesses 20-20 vision, whereas foresight is frequently myopic. Predicting the future is rather like walking a tightrope whilst someone heaves rocks at you. Plastics, jet engines, solid-state devices, nuclear energy, comsats, TV and many other staples of modern life are among the numerous items which have upset forecasters. Even when some widgeo has been invented, experts can't always predict the changes it will bring. The laser was once dubbed 'an invention in search of a purpose'. Nowadays the things crop up everywhere.

Hugo Gernsback, editor of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES and other mags, was a great one for predictions. Although frequently wrong, he did get the occasional near-miss. In his August 1929 Editorial for AIR WONDER STORIES, he says of future flying machines,

"In the first place, the gasoline motor will have given way to something far more efficient. ... The commercial passenger aeroplane of the future will be constructed entirely of metal."

Not bad guesses really, especially if you ignore plastics and exotic composite materials. Unhappily, Hugo had to elaborate on his ideas,

"We will probably see the 25,000 ton aircraft in the heavier-than-air type."

Not for a while yet I'm afraid. Even the massive Boeing 747 'Jumbo' only weighs around 80 tons. By this time, Hugo is really going out on a limb, speaking of a flight from New York to Los Angeles he says,

"Passengers will be taken on and off at intermediate points by smaller aircraft."

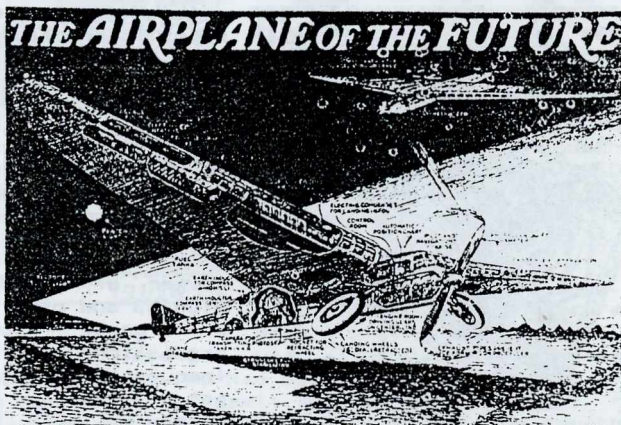
Nevertheless, he was dead right when he added,

"It is the height of foolishness to cover the distance between airports, for instance, New York and Boston in one and a quarter hours, while it takes a passenger almost as long or longer to travel from the city to the airport."

Spot on! In 1982, Val and I flew from Boston to Manchester - several thousand miles in six hours. We landed at 6-30pm and reached home 40 miles away at 10-45pm! That's one problem still with us. Hugo's solution wasn't so far from modern thought. He suggested using VTOL aircraft and describes them....

"The present-day aircraft could be turned into a helicopter by using the wings of the airplane itself as horizontally revolving blades. Some means of course would be found to keep the fuselage from rotating as well"

AIR WONDER STORIES also had an 'Aviation News' column, uncredited but no doubt done by Gernsback. Still in 1929, this suggested that in future wars, a 9-ton, pilotless bomber would be guided to its target by a smaller plane attached to it and carrying a pilot. After he has launched the bomber, the pilot would disengage his machine and fly back home. That's a pretty good shot at describing the German 'Mistel' project which used a Me-109 fighter and a Ju-88 bomber (see ERG 103 for further details).



An uncredited article in the September 1929 issue was titled, 'THE AEROPLANE OF THE FUTURE'. Whoever wrote it, (probably Gernsback) really stuck his neck out. Here are a few quotes...

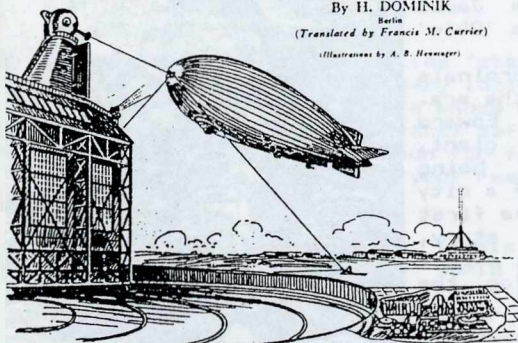
"Accommodation for the passengers will be contained entirely inside the metallic wings." *"The illustration shows a gyroscope for stabilising the airplane."* *"The most important element is the multiple power plant - neither such safety nor anything else is gained by installing separate power plants with separate propellers."* *"There will be many new devices in use, such as the already-developed condenser apparatus for landing in fog."* (Whatever happened to that one?) *"Passengers may be taken off or on by smaller helicopter planes alighting on the back of the larger machine."*

Hugo wasn't far out on two other predictions though, he forecast retractable undercarriages and de-icing gear. *"When a landing is to be made, the wheels are lowered into landing position."* *"Ice can be overcome by electric heaters installed within the wings".*

Looking through the January 1930 issue, I came across an article headed, 'AIRPORTS FOR WORLD TRAFFIC' by H. Dominik. Seemingly the author had never heard of aeroplanes as the whole thing was devoted to airships.

Airports for World Traffic

By H. DOMINIK
Berlin
(Translated by Francis M. Carrier)
(Illustrations by A. S. Henneger)

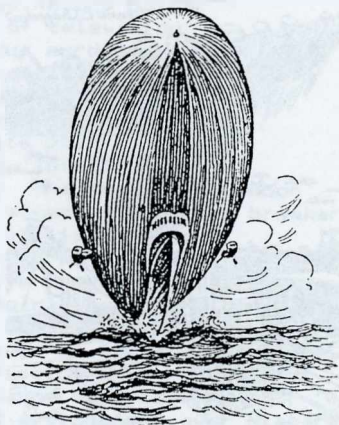


A newly-arrived airship is being drawn to the mooring mast of the rotary hangar. The tractor with the hullest chain is being held in readiness to receive the line let down from the stern of the ship, and connect it with the end of the chain. At the right, below the mooring, is the submersible engine room. The electrically-operated cable drive of the hangar with the hydraulic tension apparatus for the cable. Electric and hydraulic storage plants.

"In order to meet demands created by international aerial transportation to equip extensive landing places with devices suited to all the peculiarities of the airship. Provision should be made for rotating an airship hangar so that its axis may always be placed in the direction of the wind." Once the airship is inside, the whole hangar is to be towed along a runway to the terminal buildings.

An alternate

proposal was to land on lakes or seas. Settling to the water, "It does not sink from the crest into the trough of a wave; but it separated from the water, to be struck by a second wave with all the greater violence. Such terrific pounding would speedily wreck any rigid airship." I think Dominik got a bit confused there but he continues, "The airship is best provided with a long, high, diving keel; the flat bottom of the car must be prolonged into a sharp, wedge-shaped keel, which will dip like the edge of a sharp axe into the water far below. Presumably, the passengers then swim ashore or thumb a passing ocean liner. However, despite the numerous drawings and diagrams, he carefully hedges his bets by concluding, This is not the place to discuss constructional details of this problem; they are very ramified, as one may imagine.



Touching the water! The trans-oceanic airship has descended and touched its keel to the water.

Bernsback did have other thought for flying apart from airships and giant, single-motor aircraft. In September 1929, his editorial explained the forthcoming era of rocket propelled aircraft. Of the fuel, he said, "Of course, once a suitable and powerful enough rocket fuel has been developed, (as it probably will within the next twenty-five years) the problems of controlling the explosions from the different rockets will be easily solved by rocket propulsion engineers. It will be possible to have an aircraft that can hover by simply firing the rocket engines at the desired rate. It will thus just balance the force of gravity."

If the 'factual ideas' were well off the target, the stories were even more so. In the October 1929 issue, Edmund Hamilton wrote 'CITIES IN THE AIR' in which whole cities of opposing factions fought incredible battles. Looking at the illustration by Frank R. Paul, one can't help wondering if that story gave James Blish the inspiration for his 'Okie' yarns?

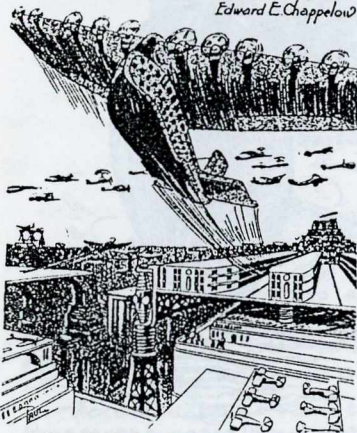
Building-top air terminals were great favourites of the era. 'THE PLANET'S AIR MASTER' by Edward E. Chappelow envisaged a giant, ten-engine flying boat being catapulted from the top of a city block. How it got there in the first place isn't made clear in the story, but after all, one shouldn't expect writers to do ALL the work for the inventors.



AIR WONDER included the question and answer 'AVIATION FORUM' as well as 'AVIATION NEWS' and 'READERS' LETTERS', where Hugo fielded such questions as 'Does the Sun repulse the planets?' and 'Can you breathe in an air-pocket?'. A News item reports a German who has invented a 650mph aircraft which can not only fly, but swim! Even better, an Englishman (called Verschoyle) is said to have designed an anti-gravity aircraft capable of 600mph. He uses "electricity to control the magnetism which is the same as gravity according to Einstein." To be fair, even Hugo said he was sceptical about that one.

The Planet's AIR MASTER

By Edward E. Chappelow



The huge craft was being pushed down the runway by the powerful catapults as it sped. A smaller craft is also shown. The city is shown in the background, with the launchers and the catapults.

smoke prevention and better-looking cities will be aided."

Ah happy days when the future could be predicted with impunity if not with accuracy. It's easy to look back and laugh, but it only takes one unexpected invention to change the direction of progress. Prior to the invention of the transistor in 1948, how many people foretold the revolution in solid-state circuitry which has given us the microcomputer, pocket TV, and many other things we now take for granted? How accurate will modern predictions prove in another sixty years' time? Only one can be made with accuracy -- in the future, things will be quite different.

WHS

20th. CENTURY COWBOYS

Don't Blame Me: I Only Work Here

James Verran

Had I known of the above attitude, thirty-something years ago, my life might have turned out differently. After deciding that fibreglass fabrication was not my destined career, I began working as an assistant silk-screen printer with an advertising display company. What they really wanted was a young bloke to clean the used screen assemblies and generally slosh around in lacquer thinners, turpentine and whatever else.

Determined to be popular with my new workmates, especially the foreman, I offered the benefit of my experience to him. He was attempting to mix a batch of paint for some drapes to promote an airline. The desired, vivid white hue was unavailable, so Mr. Foreman plonked a half cup of antimony trioxide into the paint base and began stirring. After he'd chased the unsinkable blob of powder for several minutes, the new boy (guess who?) took pity on him. This helpful lad had been thoroughly schooled in the art of dry pigmenting resins, a routine part of his former employment. The lad's suggestion that Mr. Foreman should use a smaller amount of the paint liquid to make a paste with the powder, then blend it into the bulk paint, a little at a time, seems ill-advised in view of later events.

The next week, the lad was transferred to the sunny Australian outdoors: digging postholes for billboards in the 90° heat. A month later, his employer added an extra piece of paper to his pay packet and he spent the Christmas holidays job hunting. That lesson proved invaluable. My next job lasted somewhat longer and a few years later I began my own business, which has kept me in bread over the intervening years. Oh, that advertising firm eventually went bust (gloat, gloat).

Another encounter with professional hauteur occurred after I'd made a fibreglass splint (I tend to retain useful skills) for my wife's injured wrist. The specialist consultant had made her a temporary plaster splint to wear until the 'professional' splint-maker could spare some time. My better half told her physician that I'd occasionally made splints in my former occupation and he said, "Go for it!" or something similar. I did. He was enthralled by my handiwork and confided that the splint maker was 'snowed under' and the Hospital's Board was looking for someone with my ability, so I presented my credentials with the doctor's blessing.

That was when I learned that sheer ability was worthless without the all-important diploma - almost any diploma would have done. My good lady recovered, thanks to her physician and my splint, without troubling the hospital's man.

Enter the dentist from hell. Dr. Fillem is so highly qualified that they used an extra line on his diploma for all the letters. Many years ago, he drilled and filled (he calls it 'restoration') my teeth with good ol' amalgam. Most of the metalwork

is still securely in place and in need of minimal correction. But dentistry - and the cost thereof, has taken a quantum leap since then. For restoration of visible front teeth, glass ionomer (resin filler compounded with another name) is the way to go. Right? No problem, just drill 'n' fill. But the new compounds are tricky to handle, sometimes shrink in situ and need to be finished with a new generation of rotating tools. ARGH! This victim happens to be a gem carver who uses dental tools extensively. At a pinch, I've polished the odd jagged edge from chips in my own teeth, so I knew by the sound that things weren't going all that well. When Dr. Fillem had finished, my smile appeared to have been restored, until I perused the result - close up. I didn't complain, 'cause he's a nice bloke and who else would peer that closely at my teeth? I hope he'll have mastered the new materials before my upcoming after sales service. Maybe he'll give me a discount if I polish them myself.

Optometrists are a particular family favourite. Once again, 'A little knowledge...' I'll put that another way: "Many have the knowledge, but few have the competence." Several years ago, I deigned to change from plastic frames to up-market and overpriced metal. The optometrist hadn't been all that fussy about greasy fingers, so I set about washing and cleaning the new lenses to my own exacting standard. Plop! One expensive bifocal lens dropped into the bowl of water. The miniscule securing screw had ejected from the bezel; it's thread had been stripped. My hasty return and controlled anger prompted the fitting of a new screw with a tiny nut. Through his workroom doorway I watched that 'highly trained professional' place my lens, face down, on his dusty bench top. It made my teeth perspire to see the lens sliding round the bench beneath his fumbling hands. Later, when cleaning the refurbished spectacles, I found several scratches and a small pockmark on the glass. His triennial recall went unanswered.

Herself had a similar experience with a different optometrist. She had blithely accepted lenses, so undersize that a piece of cardboard slid between them and the bezel. The optometrist abandoned his professional patter when I administered a few minutes of verbal instruction in grinding vitreous materials accurately. I know damned well he didn't know enough to argue: like most of his ilk, he was merely a diagnostician/retailer, not the lens maker. Did some good though: my message was obviously passed down and the replacements were spot on.

Of course one can't expect to win every time. Our oil heater had never seemed to burn cleanly. Oh, it passed the installer's flow tests. We eventually ripped it out to replace it with a gas heater and found the flue - bridged with a hand-beaten connection - TWO inches out of alignment! Then there was the plumber who cracked the brickwork and a dozen roof tiles. Mind you, such a quick worker didn't cost much.

One can only shudder at the thought of all those highly qualified, but inept practitioners forcing their attentions onto we unenlightened pawns. Imagine being wheeled into the operating theatre to be greeted by the chief surgeon. He smiles behind his mask and your failing vision fixes on his bent and karate-calloused fingers...

PROBLEM CORNER

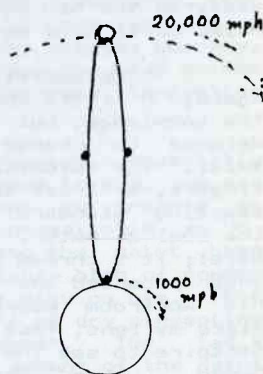
I've asked this question before. If light slows down, loses energy and travels slower through a block of glass, where does it get the energy to speed up when it exits? Nobody could tell me until I came across an article in *Galileo* which said that as it travels through the glass, each photon bumps into other photons and so pursues a zig-zag route. This takes longer and so transit through the block appears slower than through an equivalent distance of air or vacuum.

Solve one problem and another is bound to come along. This one involves that favourite of SF, a cable elevator hanging from a satellite in synchronous orbit. Clarke's 'FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE' was one such yarn, Sheffield's 'WEB BETWEEN THE WORLDS' was another, and I even recall an earlier story where would-be entrepreneurs tried to lower one from the Moon.

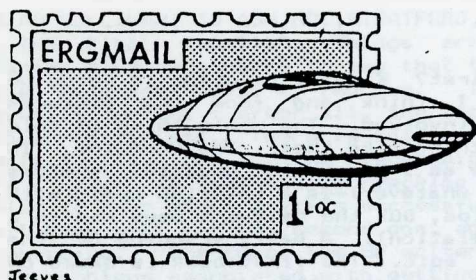
A brief recap here for those unfamiliar with the concept. A satellite in synchronous orbit always remains over the same spot on earth. So, the argument goes, if you lower a strong enough cable down to Earth, you can form it into a continuous loop and run a steady chain of elevator cabins to and from the orbital space station. Since cars being hoisted up will be counterbalanced by those going down, little extra energy needs to be added to the system. At least, that's the argument.

Proponents admit that right now we don't have a cable strong enough, but once space fabrication of mono-molecular diamond filaments (whatever they are) gets under way, all will be well.

Well, I may be dumb, Clarke and others know a darned sight more about such goings on than I do, but to my mind there's one big quibble that never seems to get explained. It involves angular momentum. Assume we've got the cable installed and a car is due to begin its journey from the bottom of the loop, situated on some equatorial mountain top. At this point, it is travelling with the Earth's rotation at around 1000mph. However, the station to which it is going is orbiting at around 20,000 miles an hour! During its journey from ground to orbit, our elevator cab must be accelerated to this speed -- which I submit will require just the same amount of energy it would need to have got there by rocket. Meanwhile, the descending car will have to break its orbital speed back down to 1000mph to match the rotational velocity of the Earth station. Short of fitting rocket thrusters to the cars to accelerate or decelerate them, this task must be done by the supporting cable -- and you'd need a large number of cars, all having roughly the same mass, to average out the different gravity pulls. Remember a car nearer the Earth will be under a greater gravity pull than one just leaving the station. With enough cars, the velocities of those descending could presumably help to accelerate those ascending, but what extra strain is it going to put on the cable if it is to be capable of putting several vehicles into orbit and returning a similar number to Earth?



Skyhook advocates never seem to include this in their theorising.



Jeeves

ROGER WADDINGTON, 4 COMMERCIAL ST, MORTON,
MALTON, N. YORKS YO17 9ES

Responding to Ted Hughes, I'd say part of the attraction of the old magazines is not so much the writing, the stories, or the artwork, as the memories, the nostalgia, they carry with them. The magazines in my collection might not be considered lasting literature and any literary merit must be

doubtful in the extreme, but they also bring back my London years when I was haunting the racks every weekend for the latest issues, and searching the corners of the car for other sources of sf. I have particular memories of a cheapjack shop selling household goods, which, for some unknown reason had piles of mint, remainered, Astounding BRES. *☞ I think you're dead right there. ☞ Ken Slater's Chunterings remind me of what every fan must face at some stage, what to keep and what to abandon; maybe a skiffy version of the Balloon Game where you put famous personalities in the basket and decide who's least needed to lighten the load. It's a point I reached some time ago, recently I've been going through my books finding all those to read once and put aside and ruthlessly weeding them out - those that I have left, there's a memory with every one.*

☞ Now there's a great idea for an ERG article, "Which prozines shall I junk? and why? Snag is, I can't junk any" ☞

ALAN HUNTER, 1186 CHRISTCHURCH RD., BOSCOMBE EAST, BOURNEMOUTH BH7 6DY,

I loved your covers on the last two issues - very SF. The two 'wood' cartoons were also clever and amusing. The 'First Issues' feature is also of great interest. Although I have a copy of Galaxy No.1 the information on the others is very welcome. I hope you can find sufficient first issues to keep the series going for some time. *☞ Well, I have about 30 first issues, so they should do. ☞* Your hospital reminiscences were also amusing in a macabre way, and paralleled my own experience for a similar operation. On the subject of hobbies, you have certainly interested yourself in a wide variety of pursuits. Several of those you list, but by no means all, I have dabbled in but not to continue as far as you. *☞ It doesn't matter whether a person has one hobby or a dozen, so long as it keeps 'em interested and doing something themselves. Modern 'TV Watching' isn't a hobby, it's a soporific. ☞*

STEVE JEFFERY, 44 WHITE WAY, KIDLINGTON, OXON OX5 2XA

Love-Craft/Hate-Work? Oh dear Terry. Pancakes & Bedsteads was very entertaining. You'd never believe any of these things could ever get built, let alone off the ground. There's a really strange beast flying over us. It's Richard Branson's new toy and rally looks like it's been put together back to front. I forget the name, Star something or other. It has backswept wings with a pair of rear-facing pusher propellers and another pair of small stabiliser wings at the front of a long nose. *☞ Sounds like the Beechcraft 2000 'Starship.1', see ERG 117 for details and pic. ☞* Neat crop of fanzines and book reviews. Did you get sent a copy of Encyclopedia of SF? *☞ No, I had to shell out £45 for my copy ☞*

Vince Clarke, 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent DA16 2BN

Do you want the good news first? Kimball Kinnison is going on video! It's animation. Japanese I think and from the pictures accompanying the article, kids are involved. The whole thing is told in a comic called MAGNA or something like that. The Headline, '10 Lensman Videos Free' caught my eye as I passed the magazine shelves in the supermarket. MAGNA (or whatever) is a thickish comic with loads of not very good-looking strips, but the relevant news was in a two-page article by 'Clarke' (no relation). A hasty scanning of the article showed that it was our epic. The first book is based on 'Galactic Patrol' and costs £12.99. In fact, the article was quite accurate as far as I could scan it, mentioning the origin of the series etc. → Last I heard, Doc Smith's daughter was involved in a law suit with a Japanese firm over copyright (which I believe she holds). I wonder if this is connected? If the result is anything like the Super-8 Japanese cartoon films I've got, don't rush out to buy. ← Letters show a curious sameness regarding hobbies, but I was surprised to see you disclaiming d&p knowledge. I always thought your Christmas cards were completely executed by you. → They are, apart from d&p-ing the photos. We did a d&p (black & white) course some time back, but it's tedious and we lack a dark room here. ←

ALAN BURNS, 19 THE CRESCENT, KING'S RD STH. WALLSEND, NORTH TYNESIDE NE28 7RE

Your Mountains of Murkiness is about the only fit thing to be done with the Miskatonic, Akham rabble of rubbish. I take the greatest exception to a Doctor looking into a bloke's earhole and instantly running out of the room screaming at what he saw. → Another HPL story perhaps? ← Your article on aircraft prompts me to ask which is the most efficient shape for a flying object where in the hard vacuum of space it doesn't matter. You have the spaceship in Disney's BLACK HOLE that looked like a fugitive from our shipyards. → Shape doesn't matter for streamlining in a vacuum, but other factors come in. A sphere is the strongest shape for a given amount of material, and encloses the largest volume. On the other hand, puffer jets at the ends of a long thin ship would make it more manoeuvrable than similar jets on a sphere moreover, such a long ship would allow crew to be remote from an atomic rocket engine and a flattish disc would be handier for spinning to create artificial 'g'. You pays yer money... ←

MARK NELSON, 21 CICIL MOUNT, ARMLEY, LEEDS LS12 7AP

Ken Slater's column is brilliant. Is there any chance of it being extended by a page or two? Possibly into a fanzine of its own? → GC first appeared in Ken's own zine, OPERATION FANTAST way back in the fifties. Space is always at a premium in ERG, but if I do have room occasionally, and Ken is willing... ← I find it very difficult to throw things away. I've got all the zines/letters I've been sent which fill shelf after shelf. I've got all my school exercise books, university notes, magazines for all the hobbies I've ever had... a right pile of useless junk. → I still have school text books, my architecture note book, maths exercise books, etc. It's a disease called 'Collectitis'. ← I managed to throw some things away, I've gutted my collection of 'New Scientist' → Very sensible, I liked its articles, but loathed the way they allowed political bias into them. ← Whenever I have a clean-out session, the temptation when running my fingers over a 'treasured' item, is to open it and flick through the pages. A fatal mistake, as the memories return, I declare there is no way I can throw the item away. → I know EXACTLY how it is. ←

ALAN SULLIVAN, 30 ASH RD., STRATFORD, LONDON E15 1HL

THE FINAL FRONTIER: Things are tightening up all over... some Faneds have been heard to say that they are thinking of folding if the response doesn't improve. It can't all be down to zine quality/content - after all, the loccol is there for readers to voice their criticisms. There is only so much a Faned can do. Not every article/issue can set the readership's minds a-flame. ➡ True, but it's nice to feel *ERG* is reaching people. ⚡ GENERAL CHUNTERING. Glad to hear about Joyce's successful knee-joint operation. I hope all goes well for the second one, and that you both can get back into con-going. One thing the SF writers also didn't mention was some of the problems associated with getting the operations done at all. Presumably waiting lists are a thing of the past in techno-utopias.

Real-life synthetic replacements for failing limbs and so forth still have a bit of a way to go before they catch up with their SFictional counterparts - and then there are related issues to be considered:-

"If more than half of him became spare parts, could he be declared legally dead?" L.M.Bujold.

It's an interesting thought. ➡ Reminds me of 'The original George Washington axe, only had two new heads and four new handles.' Just when does a person become a construct? ⚡

JENNY GLOVER, 15 AVIARY PLACE, LEEDS LS12 2NP

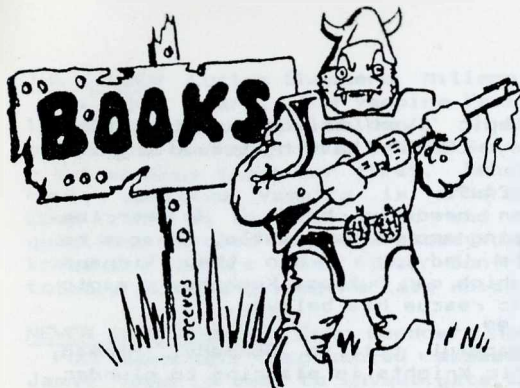
Thank you very much for *ERG*. I see the letter column is dominated with views on hobbies. Here in Iona, hobbies are in the luxury market. Back home in Leeds I can fiddle with the word processor and prettify the result, run off a fanzine and play with sophisticated hobbies but in Iona, getting food is more important. Perhaps we have different definitions of hobbies. ➡ Dunno, but I'd say a hobby was something one does for pleasure in one's spare time. It can also be an extension of one's daily work, the essence is you do it from choice rather than necessity. I presume you go to Iona for a holiday. Wouldn't you say that came under 'leisure' and 'hobby', even if you have to work at it? Anyway, I'm delighted you could find the time to write. ⚡ I see your book reviews are dominated by dark fantasy and horror. At first, I thought this reflected your personal tastes, but unfortunately it reflects the jumble of SF/Horror on bookshop shelves. ➡ Dead right, I can't abide S&S, horror and heroic trek sagas myself. ⚡

C.W.BROOKS, 713 PAUL ST., NEWPORT NEWS, VA 23605, USA

I enjoyed the Lovecraft spoof, but didn't M.M.Moamrath already use this title? ➡ Dunno, I made it up, but it seemed nice. ⚡ Interesting article on the first 'Galaxy'. I suspect that contest was conveniently 'forgotten' when they found the promised prizes couldn't be arranged. The airship and sky-writing plane probably could have been gotten cheaply enough, but I don't think atomic research labs or submarines were all that accessible in 1950. I often argue with Chester Cuthbert as to whether there is any reality behind the various accounts of supernatural event. I can only say that if there are any ghosts or ESP powers to be had, I have never experienced them. The British collectors of orgone energy toned it down somewhat from the original conception of the inventor, Wilhelm Reich - he apparently believed the 'energy' of sexual orgasm could be collected in an insulated box, hence the term 'orgone'. The destruction of his lab and burning of his books by the US Government was just rabid Puritanism. Not that he wasn't a loony, but he was no loonier than dozens of others who were ignored or simply charged with mail fraud if they were selling misrepresented gizmos by mail.

Ken F Slater

Current editorials in the promags are subjecting s-f to some self-examination. Marion Zimmer Bradley considers the downgrading of language, where the introduction of free use of "swear words" has removed the impact of such terms, and the like. Stanley Schmidt discourses on the popularity of fantasy as opposed to science-fiction and the differences between the two (if any), and in the next editorial he has some words to say on the over-attention paid to "realism" in much modern writing. "Realism" in writing appears to mean not only the inclusion of characters who are more complex than than the simplistic "good" and "bad" guys of the early pulp fiction (and the early films; every youngster who went to Saturday morning silent cinema knew who to boo from the colour of their hats, black = boo; white = cheer) but also the inclusion of considerable sordid detail that doesn't advance the tale or add to the plot one iota. To be reasonably truthful, I've found annoying irrelevant details outside s-f; I like Georgette Heyer's Regency novels, but on occasion her detailed descriptions of meals made me scream - "a saddle of mutton, accompanied by perished peas and corrupted carrots, removed by a compost of cherries, followed by..." - but I digress. Elsewhere someone was commenting on the number of science fiction writers who were moving over into the adjacent field of fantasy, and the slightly more distant area of horror, writing. I am inclined to think that there is little difference between good science fiction and good fantasy (you can quote me as having stated on numerous occasions it just depends on whether you use a magic carpet or a space ship to get your characters to the scene of the action) but reading these editorials made me aware that many science fiction writers today assume that we all suffer from psychological hangups, mostly severe. If you do accept these characterisations as "realistic", then most of us must be varying grades of "black hat wearers" from the just plain "bad" to the "utterly evil". Seems most anyone around could qualify as a "speaker for Boskone". Not only that, but frequently we are on a downpath to hell, as a race, and we can get there without a handbasket. Even the yarns with a "good" ending appear at best to preserve the status quo; the situation is rarely improved. Now, I find that in the fantasy novels (even those that include "realistic characterisation", and have people pop behind trees to defecate and urinate) the end of the quest or adventure does bring some satisfying - at least to the proponents and general mass of the populace - solution, and an upgrading of the joy of living. Is it possible, do you think, that this could be one reason why fantasy is slowly pushing science fiction out of the booklists and off the shelves? You don't have to reply, but spare it a thought. Of course, my opinion will probably be slammed by all the "literate" people. Good stories are not necessarily good literature; when they combine both the elements of good story telling and top grade literacy they become something special. On that matter, let me draw your attention to what may be an ongoing argument just started in INTERZONE #75. Letters column; Colin Munro writing about S.T.Joshi's article on Stephen King in MILLION's last independent issue. I don't particularly like Stephen King's work; I have (so far as I can recall) only finished one book by him - *EYES OF THE DRAGON*, which I thoroughly enjoyed. So why don't I enjoy the others? I know not. But I do know he is a successful story teller, and that it seems to be the usual literate establishment attitude that if you are popular you cannot be a good writer. From Dave Langford's column in the same issue of IZ I understand that WHSmith's Bookcase #34 states Terry Brooks' 1977 *SWORD OF SHANNARA* was the wellspring of Epic Fantasy. Dave is justly scathing about the insinuation that Terry Brooks has been widely imitated. For those who would like a better opinion on the state of fantasy let me recommend Jo-Ann Goodwin's article on pp32/33 of THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY for 25th July 1993.



STAR WARS: The Last Command
 Timothy Zahn Bantam £9.99

Despite their rivalry, insane Jedi C'Boath is aiding Grand Admiral Thrawn to use ships crewed by clones for a final assault on the forces of the Rebellion. A hit squad comes after Leia and her new-born twins. Luke Skywalker and Han Solo with the help of Mara who has sworn to kill Luke, set out to find the source of clone

production. Nit pickers will find the plot has more holes than a tea-strainer but for lovers of space opera this has all the ingredients of a fast-moving action adventure. Space battles galore, smugglers and criminals, goodies and baddies. A fun read with Thrawn as the most interesting character as he pursues his devious plans.

PORTENT James Herbert N.E.L. £5.99

Now in paperback. Underwater explosions, volcanic eruptions, fires, floods hurricanes and other disasters are increasing and mysterious lights accompany them. Meteorologist James Rivers is baffled when he first meets Hugo Poggs and hears his Baia theory of a 'living Earth'. Poggs' daughter Diane has two adopted, psi-powered children who, with others, are the world's only hope through contact with a mysterious Dream Man. Seeking to destroy them is the evil, malevolent Mama Pitie. Crammed with incident and excitement, a fantasy of escalating horror in which the pace never slackens.

SERPENT MAGE M.Weis & T.Hickman Bantam £4.99

Now in paperback. Volume 4 of the Death Gate Cycle. Wizards have divided the world in four realms, sky, stone, fire and sea. Haplo is sent to the sea world to prepare the way for his master, The Lord Of The Nexus. Islands drift in air bubbles and humans, dwarfs and elves are menaced by dragon-snakes. Haplo seeks to help and begins to question his allegiance as the final conflict approaches. Epic fantasy from two of the genre's most prolific exponents.

SORROW'S LIGHT Freda Warrington Pan £8.99

When Prince Tikavn's intended bride is killed by 'The Unseen', the night-ranging demons of banished god Sudema, she is replaced by sixteen year old Iolithie. On her wedding night the Prince insists on complicated rituals before making love. Things get worse, getting no help in the Palace. Iolithie sets off on a desperate ride braving the demons to seek help from the King. She encounters Sigurthur who dwells in a walking house and opens her eyes to unexpected truths. A trade-size romantic fantasy in fairy-tale vein.

DARKNESS John Saul Bantam £4.99

Mary and Ted Anderson return with their daughter Kelly to the small Everglades town of Villejaune. Dwelling in the swamp is the mysterious 'Dark Man' who incites locals to evil rites and demands that their children be dedicated to his service. He has a powerful claim on Kelly and young Michael Sheffield with whom she discovers a strange affinity. Gradually the Dark Man exerts his powers to enmesh all in his web of terror. A yarn of brooding, growing horror.

To accompany the third tale in the epic 'Ivan' trilogy set in a 13th Century Russia where magic works, LEGEND have re-issued the two earlier yarns:---

PRINCE IVAN Peter Morwood, Legend £4.99

The household needs money and Ivan needs a bride. He marries sorceress Mar'ya and whilst snooping around her castle, manages to release the evil Wizard Koshchey the Undying - who then kidnaps Mar'ya. Ivan must find a horse which can outrace Koshchey's magic and face terrible dangers if he is to rescue his beloved.

FIREBIRD Peter Morwood Legend £4.99

Life for Ivan and Mar'ya seems peaceful, but in Germany, Herman von Salza, Grandmaster of the Teutonic Knights is planning to plunder Russia and take her riches for the benefit of his Order. To aid him, he calls in the evil witch, Baba Yaga. Shape-changing, Mother Wolf offers her son to help Ivan, there's a strange Firebird and a magic map. For the interested, there's also a bibliography for further reading.

THE GOLDEN HORDE Peter Morwood Legend £8.99 (Trade size)

Ivan is now Tsar, but once again trouble threatens in the form of an irresistible Tatar army pillaging its way across the land. To save the slaughter of his own warriors, Ivan must offer submission and his crown to the enemy ruler. Moreover, he must also take his wife the seeress Mar'ya Morevna and their two children as hostages. Once inside the tented city of Sarai, an even greater peril becomes evident in the form of Russia's ancient gods.

MORTAL MASK Stephen Marley Legend £4.99

Re-issued to accompany a 'Shadow Sisters',. The jacket says, "Chia Black Dragon - powerful, sexy, lonely. A Goddess who walks among mortals. Chia killed her brother, murdered his immortal spirit because that spirit was evil. But sometimes the dead don't lie down... Chia is under attack. Something is luring - forcing - her to a remote bay, a decaying community of hermits, mad monks and whores. A haunted place, terrorised by the unseen evil that has settled there."

SHADOW SISTERS Stephen Marley Legend £8.99 (Trade size)

Another tale of the 400 year old lesbian vampire, Chia Black Dragon. Her pupil Wittigis suffering from unrequited love has betrayed Chia's supporters and the Pope's troops have indulged in an orgy of slaughter and rape. Chia escapes by using the Pope as a hostage and returns to China where she emasculates the Mandarin who puts a huge price on her head - alive and ready for torture. Meanwhile, Wittigis has assumed the title of Crucifer and along with 12 apostles is coming to make her his sex slave. Chia herself is reverting to vampirism and working towards the deadly 'Last Act'.

A TASTE OF BLOOD WINE Freda Warrington Pan £4.99

Charlotte Neville is timid and withdrawn, she improbably allows her parents to coerce her into an engagement with Henry, the dull lab assistant. Then her sister Madeline brings home the charismatic Karl who happens to be a vampire, he and Charlotte fall in love. In addition, Karl must face Kristian, the master vampire who is determined to have his way with his minions. Query - If vampires feel pain how does Karl pick up a beaker of boiling water in his bare hand without noticing it?



THE GOLDEN Lucius Shepherd Millennium £14.99

For 300 years, the vampire Families have been manipulating blood lines to produce 'The Golden'. In the late 19th. Century, members gather in the monstrous Castle Barnat to partake of the girl's blood - but someone slays her first. Beheim, a chief of detectives and a newly admitted vampire is ordered to find the killer. A task complicated by the rivalries and schemes of the Families. His questions involve him in a bloody duel, magic, strange dimensions and treachery before the final confrontation with the murderer. A totally different vampire tale which will hold you enthralled.

NEVER SEND FLOWERS John Gardner Hodder & Stoughton £14.99

Four seemingly unconnected assassinations set the scene before James Bond is sent to investigate the mysterious killing of a female agent while on leave. Teaming up with the beautiful Flicka von Grusse, he follows a trail which links the latest death to the earlier four and leads 007 to a strange German castle and a psychotic murderer who gets his kicks from setting up intricate killings. The final confrontation takes place in EuroDisney and the whole yarn is packed with exotic settings which would (will?) make it into an excellent film.

DEATH IS FOREVER John Gardner Coronet £4.99

Bond is in action again, this time he and agent Elizabeth Zara, 'Easy' are sent to find out who is killing members of the West's best intelligence network, 'The Cabal'. Right from the start, they face a widespread enemy system headed by a madman who is planning a terrible political massacre. Once again, Bond falls in love, faces terrible odds, but wins through in the nick of time. A wonderfully refreshing change from Dark Lords, heroines and symbols of magic and power.

UNWILLINGLY TO EARTH Pauline Ashwell Tor £2.99

Raised on a frontier planet, Lizzie Lee gets involved with civilising some miners, gets a scholarship to an Earth University, traps a saboteur while on a Lunar holiday and finally prevents war on a planet about to be abandoned. No cerebral epic, the story reads as if assembled from four shorter tales, the characters are pure cardboard and the plots creak, but the yarn is fresh, has pace and Lizzie is an enjoyable heroine. I enjoyed it.

A FIRE UPON THE DEEP Vernor Vinge Millennium £4.99

Galaxy-wide species and AI 'Powers' are linked by 'The Net'. Humans in Straumli Realm create a wild AI which destroys them - save one ship which escapes and lands on a world of intelligent group-minded dogs. All are killed save two children captured by different groups. Rescue is coming but a dog leader plans conquest. Elsewhere, the mad AI spreads its power. A magnificent, multi-level space opera with a new idea on aliens and more plot-threads than a van Vogt opus. Highly recommended. and a steal at £4.99

THE NEW NATURE OF THE CATASTROPHE: The Tale Of The Eternal Champion.

Vol.9 Michael Moorcock Millennium £14.99

Latest in the series of the saga of Jerry Cornelius. In addition to numerous Moorcock tales, you also get a variety of other authors - Aldiss, Spinrad, John Clute, Langdon Jones to name just a few. Material ranges widely, as does the artwork. Stories, articles, cartoon strips (ineptly drawn and juvenile) and a Reader's Guide to Cornelius. Moorcock can set a marvellous scene, but personally, I find his work self-indulgent. However if you like his style, the this is a veritable feast of Moorcock and his greatest character.

THE HAND OF CHAOS Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman Bantam £14.99

Having escaped the Labyrinth and visited the four worlds of the Nexus, Haplo returns to warn his master, Lord Xar of the growing menace of the dragon snakes. One has already sowed suspicion of him in Xar's mind and the treacherous child Bane has added to this by further lies so that Xar says Bane must kill Haplo. Haplo wants to rescue Alfred from the Labyrinth, but is ordered to take the child to Arianus and start the enigmatic kicksey-winsey machine, thus causing chaos which Xar can halt and so gain kudos. I suggest you first read the explanatory notes at the rear so you fully understand everything and can get the most out of this 5th Book of The Death Gate Cycle.

FAERY SHADOW C.J.Cherryh Legend £8.99 Trade size

Caith mac Sliabhan, exiled, patricidal wanderer and wielder of a cursed sword, roams with rascally young companion Dubhain, a magic-wielding Sidhe. Fleeting a dark creature they gain refuge in the hovel of Ceannann and Firinne. When the horsemen of witch Moragacht abduct Firinne, Caith sets off to the rescue riding Dubhain who has changed into a horse. Caith suffers numerous dreams and is trapped in the black castle of the witch. A sword and sorcery fantasy saga laced with 'Picturesque Speech and Patter' and even more convoluted than Cherryh's normal space operas. Great for S&S lovers.

GOBLIN MIRROR C.J.Cherryh Legend £4.99

The land of Maggiar has suffered a severe winter, a suspected troll is seen, strange smells and sounds afflict the castle. Wizard Karoly sets off to seek advice from his witch sister. Accompanying him are the princes Tomas and Bogdan but they are ambushed and imprisoned. Younger brother Yuri has followed in secret and the troll seems to be helpful. Another perilous trek saga where events happen thick and fast and once again, a change for Cherryh.

THE FUNHOUSE Dean R.Koontz Headline £4.99

When Ellen is attacked by, and kills, her new-born monster child, her husband Conrad, throws her out and vows vengeance on any children she may have in the future. Years later, Ellen, now a religious bigot has two children. Her ten year old son and pregnant daughter run away - to join the travelling show where - surprise - Conrad runs the Funhouse - and also conceals a murdering rapist. An improbable plot laced with blood, violence and horror.

THE DOLL WHO ATE HIS MOTHER Ramsey Campbell Headline £4.50

Driving a car with faulty brakes, Clare dodges a jay walker but crashes and kills her passenger brother whose arm is severed. It is stolen by the pedestrian who snatches it and runs. Then an old woman is murdered and partially eaten. Writer Edmund and Clare begin a search for the murderer and are joined by the young actor, Chris. A tension-filled psychological horror story of a psychopathic killer ending in a frightening climax.

CATWOMAN Robert Asprin & Lynn Abbey Millennium £3.99

Gothan City has long been famed as the stamping ground of Batman. Now he faces competition in the form of Catwoman who preys on drug barons for her finances - some of which she donates to charities. This time, she is on the trail of 'Tiger' Lobb for his collecting animal souvenirs. Batman is after the brains behind a big arms deal.

The improbable trails cross and lead to an all-action finale with enough loose ends for further tales.