

Gilson

ASH-WING 18

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Free Commots; editorial ravings.....	2
Into Each Life -- Ben Indick.....	5
Rain of Terror -- fiction by Keith A. Daniels.....	11
Laser Books - The First 9 by Jeff Frane.....	13
The Movement of Man -- fiction by Ben Indick.....	15
The Red Book of Westmarch -- reviews.....	22
The Feathers Fly -- letters.....	35

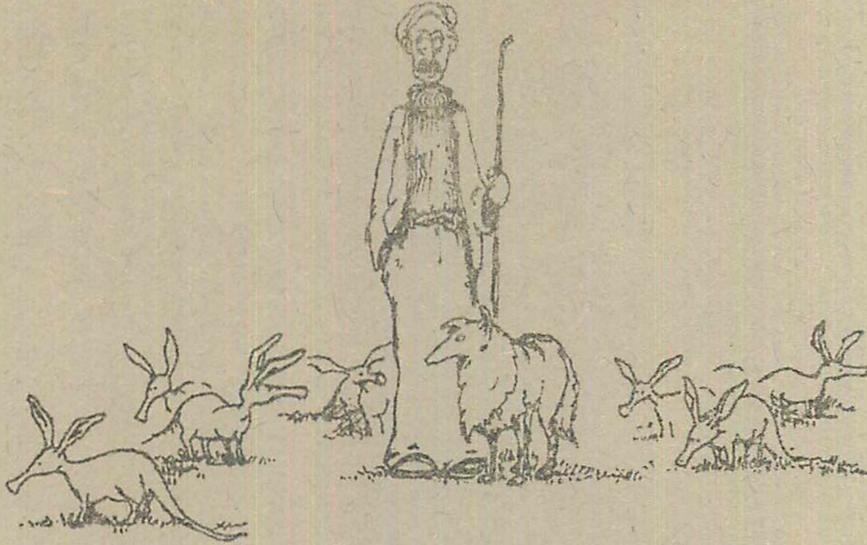
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Other Art

Grant Canfield.....	38, 40
Jann Frank.....	10
Don Herron.....	42
Terry Jeeves.....	6
Barry Kent McKay.....	8, 29, 35
Jim McLeod, Jim Shull.....	19
Mario Navarro.....	17
Brad Parks.....	37
Joe Pearson.....	33
Stu Shiffman.....	21, 24
Bruce Townley.....	12
Chuck Wing.....	14, 26

c by Frank Denton

ASH-WING is published irregularly (you should know by now) by Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166. It's available for all of the usual stuff, but especially this time for stuffed badgers, Dunlop golf balls, dried bracken, complete sets of Dickens, cancelled tickets from Atlanta Hawks games, crush-proof boxes and deer horn buttons.



THE FREE COMMOTS

What follows is even less editorial than is usually found in Ash-Wing. It is truly a composed on stencil hodge-podge. I had every best intention to really work at presenting something relevant this time, but alas... Most of the zine is finished; the pages run and only this little light piece to do. It will be, I'm afraid, a pot pourri. Today is Christmas Eve so let me wish each and every one of you, Dear Readers, a Very Merry Holiday Season and the Best of New Years. May you find new friends in fandom, read nothing but the very best books, produce the winningest fanzines, and win every game of Dungeons and Dragons. How's that for wishing? Of course, the season will be somewhat past when you find this in your hands, but know that I was thinking of all of you when it was written.

Christmas Eve came a day early for us. The Gryffyn Band opens at a place in State Line, Idaho on Christmas Day and this evening will be spent in loading equipment and getting ready for the cross state drive. So last evening we gathered for a full Christmas dinner, turkey and the works, and then the opening of presents. We missed Tim and Candy, who are working near Dutch Harbor, Alaska, but darned if Tim didn't call at about 10:30 last night. That made the evening rather complete. He thinks they may stay up there until the end of May, so it will be a while before we see them again. All in all, it looks like a very nice Christmas season.

I've been meaning for the last couple of issues to include a poem which Sam Long had sent to me which he felt fit the owlsh tradition of Ash-Wing. I declared that this issue it was going to be included somewhere and now is as good a place as any.

It's entitled "Sweet Suffolk Owl" and the author is unknown.

Sweet Suffolk Owl
So trimly dight in feathers like a lady bright,
Thou sing'st alone sitting by night,
Te whit, te whoo, te whit te whoo.
Thy note that forth so freely rolls
With shrill command the mouse controls,
And sings a dirge for dying souls,
Te whit, te whoo, te whit, te whoo.

As long as I'm in this mood of letting others write this column for me, I may as well continue. I had a letter from Henry Roll way back in June before I went on the trip to England. It included the following request:

"Help! In the early 50's I read a novel published in a pulp magazine. The hero's name was Raven. He and a female teammate had a lot of unexplained super powers with which they fought evil forces, etc. A whole army of mutants were arrayed against them; telekinetics, teleporters, pyrokinetics, chameleons, mini-engineers... The punchline of the plot (forgive me, dear author) was that man was a lower form that metamorphosed after death into a moth-like being that could fly between the stars and communicate mentally with the universe; Homo in Excelsis. This rests fondly in my memory as the best sf I've read -- I'd like to locate it and find if it twer or twern't." -- Henry Roll

Well, Henry, I'm not so sure that we should allow you to look it up and find the great disillusionment which will surely come. But you have Eli Cohen to thank for the answer. He tells me that the novel in question is Sentinels from Space by Eric Frank Russell. I have other friends who claim Russell to be the supreme sf writer, so maybe you will find it as fine on second reading. I've read very little Russell, something I keep reminding myself that I must do one of these days. After I get this terrific urge to read a Fu Manchu book out of my system.

You'll not above my passing allusion to the trip to England this summer. We did go for five weeks and had a generally marvelous time with lots of neat experiences. I did bring a ton of books home again; well, if not a ton, then certainly enough to keep me reading for a long while. We did spend more time in gloriously beautiful Scotland, and as a consequence had to skip Wales for this trip. We did spend five days on Exmoor and were rewarded by seeing 26 red deer. I could rave on and on, but that is the purpose of the travel report. Yes, patient souls who have asked for it, there will be a travel report and it will probably be started as soon as I get this into the mail. So don't despair. If you asked for it, your name is on the list and it should be done in the next couple of months. It tells all, or most all that I can remember, and will include the book list once more for your enlightenment and edification (also worth a good laugh to see what that silly Denton buys when he's over there.

I think that it was Sean Summers who asked for someone to do an aardvark cartoon because he loved aardvarks. Well, Gene Perkins came through with the heading for this column based upon some previous illustrations which have been used for The Free Commots. I hope that this makes Sean happy, as it surely tickled me. I've been asked several times about the title of this column. Like the title "Ash-Wing" it also is from Lloyd Alexander. In one of the books of the "Chronicles of Prydain" there is a valley where a hermit tends to a variety of animals who come there for healing and rest. It's a sort of Paradise before the fall concept. In Alexander's book it is called The Free Commots. A commot is a cantred, a Welsh geo-political division. Simple answer. When I first started this magazine back in 1968 the concept was appealing and I used the title for this column. I see no reason to change it as the concept is still appealing. It will go on as long as the zine does.

If this looks like a Ben Indick issue, well, I guess it is. I have had the story by Ben in the file for some time and figured that it was time to break it out and use it. Then I got a very brief postcard from Ben saying that he had just returned from the fantasy con in Providence, that it was his first con, and that he had enjoyed the heck out of it. I thought that it might be nice to cajole a con report out of him, especially for this con which was a bit different from the run-of-the-mill cons that most of attend. (Erase that; it sounds like a slur on cons and I enjoy them as much as anyone else.) Ben kindly complied with the report herein. So you have a story and a con report both. Not to worry. Both are good; the con report is inimitable.

One of my original intentions this issue was to do a con report myself. Anna Jo and I flew to Denver at the end of October for MileHiCon and had our usual wonderful time. MileHi is a relatively small convention and there is lots of time for just sitting and talking to people. Bruce and Elayne Pelz had come over from Los Angeles and Bruce and I had more opportunity to talk than we have had at all of the many West-concons which I have attended. Another surprise visitor from L.A. was Milt Stevens. I got to hear a little bit from Don Thompson about his trip to Australia. I got to talk to some authors and would-be-authors at great length, and we ended up with a super-until-5-in-the-morning party on one night. Joanna Russ was the Pro GoH and Bob Vardeman was the Fan GoH. A good time was had by all, but time has erased the enthusiasm for doing a con report and one such to an issue ought to be sufficient.

On the other hand, there has been a veritable stream of visitors to the Denton household, so some excellent conversations have been held. Immediately after West-con Jon Singer and Andy Porter wended their ways up the coast and stayed one night at the Denton abode. Not many weeks ago Charlie Brown was in town for a business appointment and he stayed one night. Would you believe he tried to convince me to go off-set? That same weekend Mike Bailey was down from Vancouver, B.C. hot after news of greater fandom. There was a postal strike on and he was starving for news, poor lad. Just a couple of weeks back Susan Wood came down for the weekend and she and John Berry came out to the house for dinner and conversation. Finally, just last Sunday Larry Paschelke stopped much too briefly on the way back to Portland. He and Judy and the girls had been visiting relatives and could only stay for less than an hour, but it was good to see them again, as we hadn't been together since sometime last spring. Ah, yes, the Denton household is always an interesting place.

There has been much movie-going lately, an unusual occurrence around here. We were tired one night and just felt like a movie. Nearby a good double bill of Woody Allen's "Love and Death" and Peter Sellers' "The Return of the Pink Panther"; so, of course, we went. But while looking through the entertainment page I discovered that a downtown theater had the double bill of "Chinatown" and "The White Dawn", neither of which we had seen before. Tonight, before it scurries out of town, we are going to live it up with "Doc Savage." "Mona, you're a real brick." And there are several other things opening on Christmas day which are musts to see, most notably "Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother" with Gene Wilder debuting as a director as well as acting in his own film, and also with Marty Feldman. Ought to be a gas.

Speaking of Sherlock Holmes reminds me that I've been reading a great many more mysteries and suspense stories than I have science fiction and fantasy. I seem to have run out of steam, or they are all running together and seeming too much like one another. So the mysteries are a relief for a while. Not to say that I haven't been reading any sf. Just not as heavily as before. You can see by the book review column that there are some things read, and the DAW Books I've reviewed for Chet Clingan.

Next time (hopefully, he says, with crossed fingers) there may be a longish reminiscence of H. Warner Munn and the early days of the Lovecraft Circle, which will be culled from a tape taken at a sf teacher's workshop in which I participated. Also mayhap Ken St. Andre with new partners (remember Ken and Terry). And other junque, 'n stuff. Til then, lang may your lum reek.

INTO EACH LIFE

a con must fall

by Ben Indick

A report on the First World Fantasy Convention, Hallowe'en, 1975.

Some months ago, after the announcement of the First Fantasy Convention, my good friend Gerry de la Ree looked at me over the brochure and I stared uneasily back. "What do you say?" he asked, "wanna go?" I shrugged. I wasn't sure, recalling the brief hour I had spent a few years ago at a Lunacon in New York, walking carefully between the teen-aged bodies sprawled throughout the hallways, and watching the management fighting with wild-eyed hucksters.

I shot back a telling response. "You wanna?" He hitched his shoulders and said nothing. I read the prospectus carefully, wherein it carefully excluded by inference or otherwise all Trekkies, Apes, comic bookists, and cultists (except us, the Right Kind) and hinted at an average con attendee age of 64. I said, "Okay, you go -- I go." At a little over 50, we should be the kids!

By Hallowe'en, I had gotten by bashed car door fixed, and was ready. At the last minute we learned Steve Fabian, that fine, fine artist was planning to go by bus and we invited him along. He lent class.

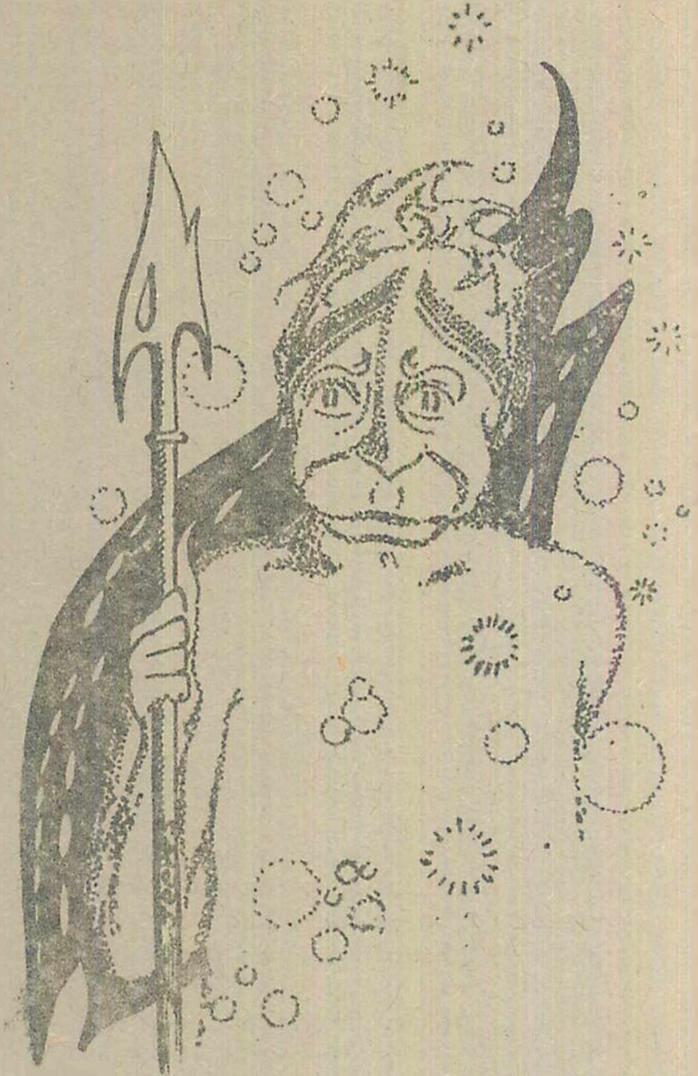
Providence, R.I. is only a 3 or 4 hour drive from Northern New Jersey, and on this beautiful Autumn day was a most pleasant one, in spite of Gerry's cigars. We wondered why the brochure had not stated which Holiday Inn in town we would be staying at, and then realized there was only one! Indeed, I managed to zip right through Providence, and had to return. Happily, the return drive landed us neatly at the door of the motel. The lobby was already filling, and while I started looking for buddies, Gerry neatly sidled into the huckster room and bought books to resell to me later at a profit. Steve was looking for Don Grant, for whom he had just done a book of Hodgson stories, and hoped to do a novel by the same author. Only I was there to be sociable. In no time at all, I was meeting fans I had been writing to for years -- there was Ned Brooks, and David Shank, and a clutch of my beloved fellow-Acolytes of The Esoteric Order of Dagon, the HPL-apa, including Chet Williamson and Doug Nathman (with others to appear later.) Several seemed surprised at the mysterious disappearance of my flaming red hair, for which I am justly famed; unfortunately, I had left my Raggedy Ann mop at home. A husky guy with a solid head of dark blonde hair came

up -- Eric Carlson, good friend for years, and others besides. Now, for all you Con regulars, meeting fan friends is old hat, but for me it was a new and genuine delight. My EOD circle is particularly close, and here, in the home town of our patron writer, it was especially meaningful. By the time the shindig had ended, you can believe the friendships were cemented for keeps.

But I'm only talking about myself so far. You may wonder, Mah Nishtonah, How Is This Convention Different From All Other Conventions of the Year? Well, I can't speak for others (not even the one next door, of middle-aged secretaries in costumes playing banjos) but, just judging from their advs., how many others can boast at least a dozen writers, plus publishers, artists, and a weekend (yes, complete with late-night parties) where no one lay beboozed or bepotted in the hallways? Hell, there were more celebrities than non-entities!

Let's go into the details. The first night there was to be a sort of author-reading-his-own-stuff session in the big ballroom. Organization seemed absent while the lights flickered on and off and no one took the mike at center stage. Finally andy offutt got up, welcomed everyone to the "hungry i!" He warmed things up for chief entrepreneur Kirby McCauley, who apologized for the lighting and invited the authors to worry their eyesight by starting. Joseph Payne Brennan read poetry; Donald Sidney-Fryer, in troubador get-up, pranced about and read Clark Ashton Smith and Nora Mae French; Ugo Toppo, in a resonant voice read some of his new Conan record and Robert E. Howard; Ramsey Campbell, fresh from England, (I had met him in an elevator; seeing his name tag, I said "Hello". Like a stiff arm his hand came out jovially, with a voice which sounded like a cross between John Lennon and Ringo Starr) read in unintelligible but delightful English one of his ghost stories. And, at last, in a broad mountainy drawl, a giant in life as well as in fantasy, Manly Wade Wellman, reading some anecdotes about John, his mountain man. Highly intellectual, you say. What the hell, it sure was, but using your brains can be fun. It was only the beginning.

There were, I believe, some midnight screenings of stuff Hollywood made out of HPL, but a bunch of us were enjoying an impromptu auction, conducted in expert deadpan by Tom Collins, of warped, stained, worn-out, bedraggled, torn and desirable chunks of George Wetzel's collection. George is a pioneer HPL scholar, and, having been away from the field a long time, came to life with a bang, no doubt fused by young Scott Connors and Dirk Mosig of EOD. George surprised me with endless Yiddish; he practiced "tuchus" on me, and I told him where a man's "baytzim" were, as in "Don't Grab Me By Them." Elsewhere there was an autographing party for Gahan Wilson and his



new paperback, and at this and all parties, pitchers of beer flowed.

After several years of waiting, I finally met Lin Carter, who, as editor of the Adult Fantasy Books at Ballantine, had used a blurb over my name (with my words) on the back cover of Hyne's The Lost Continent. Some of you may recall my article thereon for Ed Connor's SF Echo. I said, "Lin Carter!" and pointed to my name badge. "Hah!" he said, "Ben Indick, FFM!" "Yeah," I snapped, trying to sound fierce. "How come you never answered me letters?" "I never answer anyone's letters," he responded, "why should I answer yours?" It broke me up.

The next morning, Saturday, there was a bus tour of HPL's Providence, courageously conducted without a mike by Harry Beckwith. I was lucky enough to have as a seatmate the Monster Man from LA, Forry Ackerman. He is getting mellow, and the gleam in his eye is pure gold-humor. We drove by HPL's fearful Shunned House, now coated with ugly yellow paint, the Charles Dexter Ward house, HPL's own home, moved from College St. to Benefit St., had a pause at St. John's Church, and many other sites which have a part in HPL's writings. We returned in time for a series of panels, some deadpan, some quite funny. Most of the latter occurred when the Guest of Honor of the convention, the irrepressible Robert Bloch, and his younger alter-ego, Gahan Wilson, were at the mikes. Bloch laid a solid zinger nearly every time he spoke. Eyes always sparkling, he drawled, "All I ever hear about is that shower scene in 'Psycho'. People tell me ever since that shower scene they are afraid to take a shower. Thank God I didn't kill her on the toilet!" Wilson explained the genesis of a cartoon, a trunk murder bit, the guy all dressed neatly in his lab coat, a table carefully prepared with hatchet, saw, scalpel, knives, etc., and another with plastic baggies for the pieces of the corpse to be dismembered and packed away in, and a phone in his hand. "What's that, Marcia?" he is saying, "oh, you can't make it tonight!"

There is a serious panel on a psychological and scholarly investigation of HPL, with such shrinks as Barton St. Armand and Dirk Mosig and amateur shrink Tom Collins; another discusses Epic Fantasy. A kid asks Lester Del Rey, who is in the audience, and is a Ballantine editor, how the HPL paperbacks are selling. Del Rey snaps, "None of your goddam business what the grosses are. I don't ask you what you gross. What do you gross?" "Nothing," the kid says, "I'm unemployed. Everybody laughs; Del Rey too. Donald Wollheim, on the panel, smiles and says that he is sneaking fantasy into his DAW sf lists, that there is indeed a market.

As for me, what should I care? One of Fandom's loveliest gals has come up to me, a bit crestfallen at my unred pate. My God, it's Jodie Offutt, and I embrace her. What else? (Andy wouldn't mind. With my head?) We have a grand talk.

L. Sprague deCamp is marching grandly about, with a neat moustache and goatee which require -- and deserve -- an hour's attention each morning, and everyone wonders when all hell will break loose about him, with all these Lovecraft freaks, gnashing teeth over that biography. Looking at him, proud and ramrod straight, one doubts that he'll ruffle a whisker (especially with his lovely wife at his side!) He's scheduled for Sunday a.m. in the biggie panel. I meet Roy Squires in the huckster room, renew acquaintance with my comrade in detection of an infamous forgery of HPL's "The Shunned House" and am lucky enough to buy a beautifully bound page of HPL's typescript for "The Skadow Over Innsmouth" from him; happily, it is the moment when mention is first made of that sinister organization, The Esoteric Order of Dagon. Roy's bushy face grass and round nose, would qualify him as a department store Santa Claus, but I am delighted to have him where he is, printing beautiful things for us. Across the way, another conscientious publisher, Don Grant, is displaying his latest, and, as always, whetting our appetites for more to come. Nobody is fighting with the management or anyone else.

Frank Belknap Long enters, and, since I was fortunate enough to meet Frank last

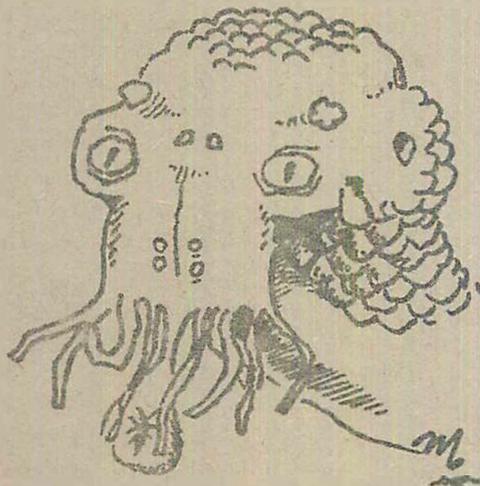
year at his home, it is a happy reunion for me, especially since he remembers me well. He sits with me at a panel, then has to leave for a while. A young fan, alert, excited, chats with me for a while, and then Frank returns and sits between us. I introduce him to the young fan, who nearly falls out of his chair with excitement. Well, how would you react to a legend? And one of the nicest, most modest legends at that!

Later, there is an autograph party for Andy Offutt and his new Howardesque book, Sword of the Gael, published by Zebra Books and bearing a cover in color by Jeff Jones. The beer flows, and by golly, they are giving the book away FREE. Jones is soberly signing copies, while Andy is having a ball. Someone asks, "Don't you mind the books being free?" "Hell," he laughs, "I get my three cents per!" Jodie's here too, lovely in a long skirt (and I remember wistfully my own wife's dream of being at such a soiree after the dreamed-of Broadway opening of a play of mine -- it turns out I walk around when her sculptures open at a New York show!) Jodie is some doll, and I ask Andy to sign my copy to me as "Secret Lover of Jodie," and then I get her to sign his dedication page to her, where her full and complete monicker is used (buy the book and discover it for yourself!). A young fan comes up to me: would I please autograph my essay in the splendid special Fantasy Con issue of Nils Hardin's fan/tradezine XENOPHILE. I manage not to raise my eyebrows at this sudden fame, and sign, then tell the fan to get a real autograph, the big man next to me is Manly Wade Wellman. I should add, however, that I am really proud, fit to bust, over Nils using my article, because, man, do I ever have some royal company in that issue -- original material for it having been contributed by Robert Bloch, L. Sprague de Camp, Willis Conover, Frank Belknap Long, and a clutch of fellow EOD-Acolytes. I tell this to Nils, who has driven in from St. Louis, and he compliments my article, but the glow of pride at being page by page with men whose writings I revere ignites the whole convention for me. I was to autograph another dozen copies yet, but could not, somehow, get to ask the men to autograph a copy for me. It was enough just to be with them.

Don and Shiela D'Amassa, of nearby East Providence, invite a bunch to their home, for delicious chili and desserts, coffee and a perusal of their library of thousands of paperbacks and books. More fan friends are here, Mike Blake, Bob Whittaker, and more, and while I could schmooze the night away with them, I have promised Barry Alan Richmond and a mob to drive them to the Brown University Alumnae Hall for another part of the program. Barry is presenting Grand Guignol theatre and has to talk to his actors, who have had all of two hours to prepare this premiere!

Gahan Wilson introduces Donald Sidney-Fryer, who does a canto from Spencer's "Faerie Queen." In his outfit with bells on his sleeves, leotards, and leathern buskins on his feet, he prances about and in a voice which whispers and sighs, shows us what the Elizabethans must have seen in their market-places. Tom Collins tells me it is more Spencer than most of these fans will ever hear, and as the half hour goes along, I figure it is more than they would ever want to hear. But, what the hell, if the Elizabethan folks liked this kind of schtick, we should at least give it a listen.

Then Wilson introduces Fritz Leiber, and, in the darkened hall, with the only light being that on his lectern, this grand master of fantasy does his actor father proud in a spellbinding reading of HPL's "The Hunter of the Dark," a story dedicated to a young Robert Bloch and taking place on the edges of the campus. Somewhere in the



hall, Bloch is kvelling as the voice goes firmly on, and "Robert Blake" is facing imminent doom. I sit with Tom, with Eric, Chet, Doug and we have a brotherhood which is warm and beautiful. The voice never falters, over an hour and even reaches a pitch at the chilling climax. This is standing-ovation stuff. Barry's company has the misfortune of trying to follow an act which cannot be followed, but they make an entertaining effort, Grand Guignol complete with torn-out eyeball and bloody face! I have chats before and after with Barry, and make his eyes water (just tears) over a 1920's theatre program I own of an American tour of the original Grand Guignol Company, and promise to consider a swap: I give him the program if he puts on a play of mine. We will see about that, one day.

Back home and it's late, a late night in Eric's room. Here, Jack Daniels and I renew a comradeship of years' standing. Someone has inveigled Robert Bloch into joining the mob and he stretches his "few minutes" (it is midnight, after all) into a half hour. I meet Glenn Lord, who is a transplanted Louisianian into Howard country, with a country accent covering a warm and most friendly self. I figure before I get looped I'd better parlay a gag we have, that he sits up nights typing up all those unending Howard fragments, but he only laughs. I yak with a young artist and his girl, meet an adorable young black girl (and am happy that my last two pieces of fanfic had heroines she could have played) (and share with her the knowledge that all the accusations of racism against HPL haven't kept us away!) and swap Yiddishisms with George. At 4 a.m. when I stumble back to bed, my roomie, Gerry, himself in only a half hour earlier, tells me I keep mumbling a name over and over. No, not Cthulhu. "Jodie" he avers, but I tell him it is untrue. It is "Janet", I insist, my absent spouse, and Mr. Daniels' potent brew is blurring my tongue. Then again....

The Sunday morning panel gets down to business. Conover, Leiber, Long and Beckwith versus the indomitable deCamp, in a discussion of "Lovecraft the Man." It is a dazzling discussion, and a moving one, but it is a standoff, and everyone wins, particularly the strange and gentle genius whose spirit hovers throughout, inspiring us to a deeper love of his writing and his mind, here in his beloved city, which, for a brief moment, is the quaint and colonial city his mind's eye saw.

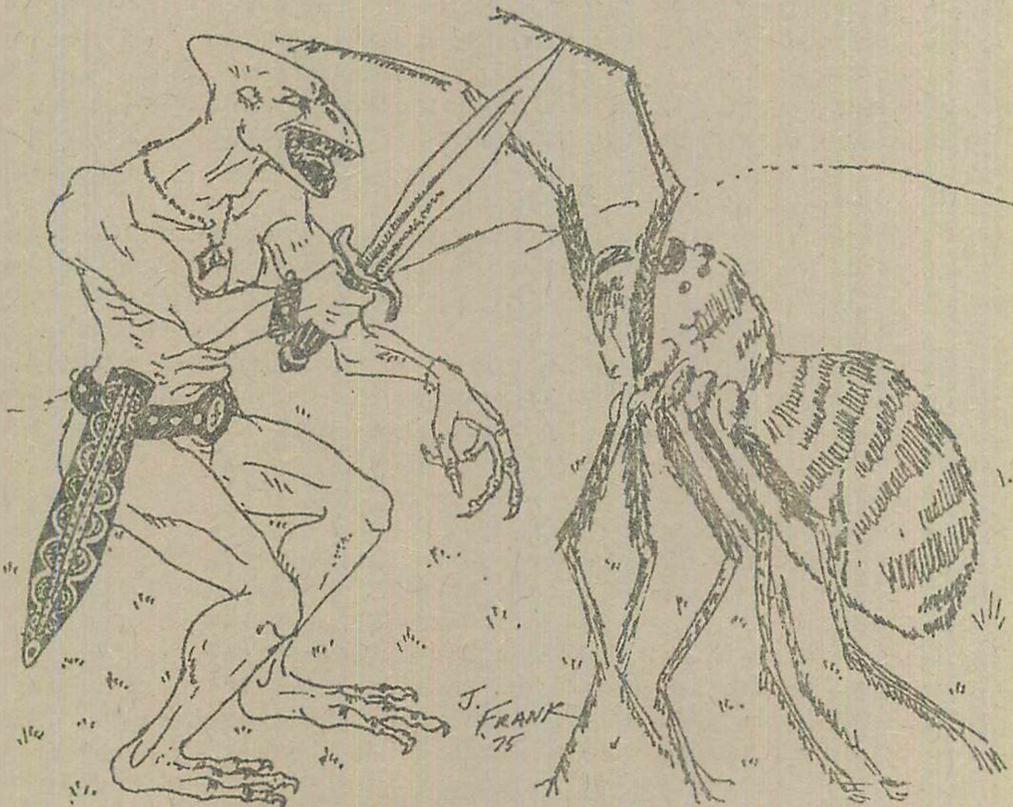
It is time for the Banquet. The Mayor of Providence is on hand to remind everyone that Robert Bloch once wrote the shower scene. Wilson lands a few good ones, and then introduces Bloch. The crowd rises for prolonged applause. When they are seated, Bloch mops his brow. He tells us he was scared: "When you all stood up, I thought you were leaving!" He is alternately hilarious and poignantly serious, recalling his mentor of many years ago, when he was a fifteen year old kid, and had to hide his copies of Weird Tales from his parents "to protect the folks." When HPL died, he says, something in him died as well. Earlier, in a panel, he had told us that his proudest memory is that HPL dedicated "The Haunter of the Dark" to him, and if he were lucky enough to be remembered at all, it would be in the footnote about that dedication. Here, at the Con, we are able to see HPL as a kid from Milwaukee knew him. It is a grand speech.

There are Awards now, chosen by a fine jury. I think I would prefer that the actual voting be done by the attendees, but, at least, there can be no quibbling about the results. Gahan Wilson has designed a bust of HPL himself, grotesque, pop-eyed, angular, and altogether delightful, and, sigh, desirable.....Awards were given to Patricia McKillip (absent) for Best Novel, for The Forgotten Beasts of Eld; to Karl Edward Wagner for Best Short Fiction Work for "Sticks" which appeared in Stu Schiff's Whispers (Karl, an epic hero in a mane of golden hair, also received the award from the British Fantasy Society for this story, given to him by Ramsey Campbell); to Manly Wade Wellman for Best Book, for Worse Things Waiting; to Ian and Betty Ballantine (absent) for Special Award--Professional, and to Stuart Schiff for Special Award -- Non-Professional (at which Manly Wade Wellman bear-hugged Stu and spun him round and round!). Best Artist Award went to Lee Brown Coye (who was ill and could not be present.) This left Life Award, and, competing with Long, Wellman, Donald Wandrei and

Robert Aickman (the latter two were not present), Robert Bloch was given the honor. He clutched the statuette, and spoke haltingly. "This is a doubly great honor," he said, and it seemed he might break down, "to be guest of honor, and to win this great honor also." He paused, and we watched tensely. "I haven't been so happy," he added, "since the rats ate my baby sister up!" The place cracked up. What can you say about such a man? Stand up and holler, that's what.

And what else can you say about a Con which so perfectly fulfilled all its hopes? Well, for one thing, I'll have to admit the average age really was closer to 24, with us old fogeys being a minority. Of the 400 plus folk, for another, it was exhilarating to be in the presence of so many men whose work I have loved since I was a kid. ("When I first started writing," Bloch said earlier, "in prehistoric times, writers hacked out their words on big stone tablets. They would bring the stone tablets to the editors, who would then chisel the words in deeper. Things haven't changed," he continued, "writers are still hacks, and editors are still chisellers.") It was a keen pleasure to meet dozens of fans I have known for years, and I cannot list them all. As we got into the car to leave, Gerry mumbled wryly, "Now all we missed is saying goodbye to Jodie." Well, by golly, there she was after all, and I tooted the horn at her and waved. She looked up and smiled broadly and came running over to my side and gave me a big kiss. Fandom is some way of living!

// I asked Ben for this report mostly because I was jealous. I would dearly loved to have gone to the Fantasy Con, but it was a long way away. When Ben wrote a postcard saying how much he had enjoyed being there, I urged him to write a con report for Ash-Wing. I thought the least I could do was live it vicariously. I'm more than happy that I asked. It's a fine con report, Ben, and thanks so much for it. //



RAIN OF TERROR

KEITH A. DANIELS

The golden, glistening drops descended steadily, leaving small pockmarks in the scot that covered the city. Later, in gutters provided for the run-off, a tacky effluent of brown, malodorous ozze began its gradual journey toward the sewage wells that lay hidden beneath the city. The streets were deserted; the city resembled a corpse in the final stages of putrefaction, and the maggots were hiding.

The New York City weather prediction system of 2130 was impressively accurate -- as it had to be, since wholesale disaster could accrue from the slightest imperfection in the storm watchers' foresight. The weather was always pernicious, and sometimes even poisonous. Right now it was raining urine.

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The rainstorm lasted for a couple of hours, but the passage of the clouds brought neither sunlight nor human life to the streets of New York. But there was movement of another kind.

Shortly after the last drops had fallen, a phalanx of barrel-shaped robots emerged from holes and portals and scrubbed the city, using water tapped from high-pressure conduits. Then they scuttled away on air cushions, and the city, now clean, was once again teeming on the surface with its hordes of denizens, but still hidden beneath a sallow shroud of smog.

New York City: the largest cluster of humanity and the biggest dump in the world. But its weather was not unique.

In Lawrence, Kansas, home of NOAL (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Laboratories), William Vorsky, a biochemist, was discussing the day's analyses with a colleague over coffee and hamburgers in a local diner known as Lindy's. His discussion was producing rueful headwagging on the part of his colleague, Sims Wenkler.

"Would I be stretching things to the breaking point," said Wenkler, "by suggesting that the chemistry of the upper troposphere approximates the organic soup that covered most of primal earth? Given time, I should think that primitive forms of

life will evolve in the clouds!"

Wenkler was grinning, and so was Vorsky, but he answered, "That's really a bit more than wild speculation. Ninety-eight percent of the atmospheric samples we receive, and a higher percentage of those we collect ourselves in the eastern United States, contain a really complicated mixture of simple and sophisticated molecules, even some long-chain polymers. Most of them are richer in the building blocks of life than a stagnant pond is. When you expose that stuff to sunlight -- especially at very high altitudes -- some of the ultraviolet light that gets through the ozone layer manages to energize reactions that lead to larger molecules. And so it goes until we arrive at the situation you describe."

Wenkler swallowed some coffee and simpered in amazement. Then, growing serious, he said, "Unless, of course, we're able to clean up the damn mess! But it looks like that'll be a long time in coming -- long enough, perhaps, for the evolution of man's betters in the sky, and then, after all of us are gone, they'll do the cleaning!" Wenkler's dramatic nature was getting the better of him now, but Vorsky was nodding in amused agreement.

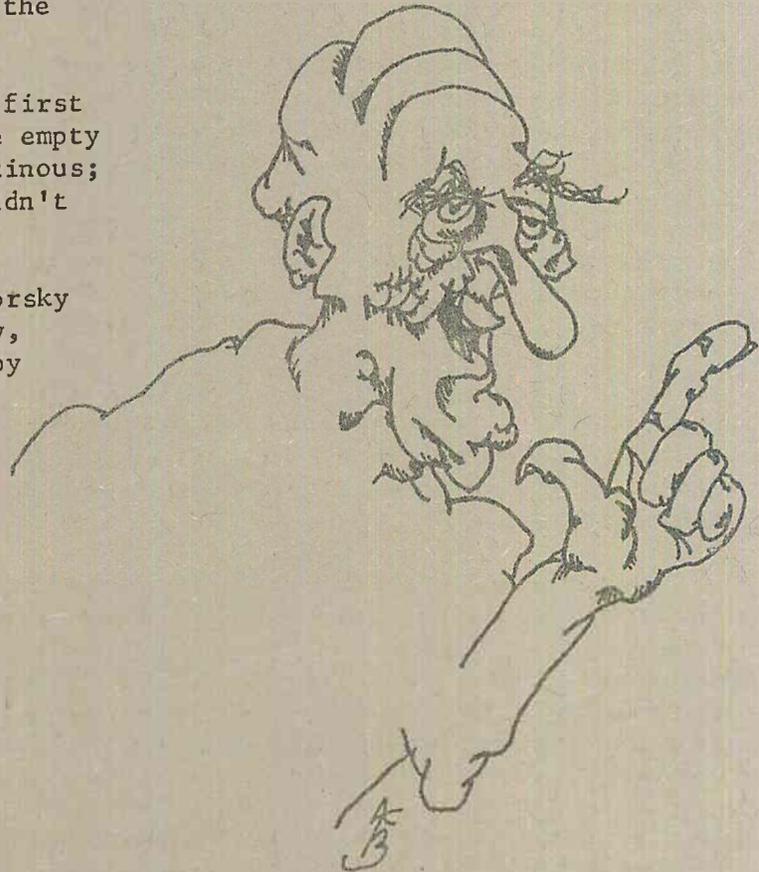
Outside the diner, the weather was taking a turn for the worse. A huge bank of yellowish-grey thunderheads was passing over the city.

Vorsky pushed his chair away from the table, stood up, and walked over to a large, triangular window. Wenkler was finishing his coffee as he called to the waitress for another hamburger. He glanced over at Vorsky and then regarded the scraps of his last hamburger, his fingers drumming on the table.

Vorsky was watching as the first droplets began to spatter on the empty streets. They were thick, gelatinous; and Vorsky was glad that he couldn't smell it.

If this goes on, thought Vorsky as he peered at the living jelly, it'll be raining cats and dogs by the end of the century.

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LASER BOOKS THE FIRST 9

jeff frame

A great deal of what can adequately be labelled pulp Science Fiction is currently being published, and bought by an ever increasing audience. Whether or not that audience would likewise buy "quality" SF, assuming that such fiction would be published, is purely a speculative concern. Any type of fiction that transcends the "adequate" level of entertainment is always in scarce supply, scarce enough that most writing must be viewed in relative terms. This is particularly true in dealing with pulp fiction. The term itself connotes mediocrity of quality, and individual stories or books can only be "better" or "worse" than others in the same category.

Actually, to say that pulp-adventure fiction is experiencing a revival is somewhat of a misnomer. Such forms have always been "popular", which is to say commercial. It is only the form that varies in swings of fashion, from mysteries to westerns to SF. It is impossible with today's audience to discount the effective role of television. The fact is that Star Trek founded a formidable audience for pulp science-fiction, an audience which the producers of television programs have been hard pressed to satisfy. That there is a relationship between that audience and the new consumers of written SF pulp is borne out by the fact that commercials for Roger Ellwood's LASER books are being broadcast during SPACE 1999, the latest Star Trek ghost.

Ordinarily it would be unfair to judge any series of books, or publisher en masse, but Roger Elwood has laid his LASER BOOK series open to this form of criticism by the total uniformity of his packaged concept. Of the first nine books, all are 190 pages in length, all are priced at 95¢, and all feature poor to good covers done by Kelly Freas to a specified formula.

The first six books come complete with an open letter from Elwood promising "worlds of excitement and adventure" and "people with whom you can identify". All in all, a pretty weighty promise, one worthy of the heydeys of the Ace Specials, and one which even the best of editors would be hardpressed to fulfill.

The first novel in the series is Renegades of Time, by Raymond F. Jones, one of the "old pros" touted in the Laser advertising. Renegades is a wretched book, a boy-meets-alien-girl, boys saves the galaxy from disaster by tinkering in his home workshop, boy gets girl story. It's also a "the only thing that can save us is the left femur of the extinct Sumerian tree shrew, and I just happen to have one in the lucky charm my grandmother gave me" story.

Laser #2 is Herds by Stephen Goldin, and although apparently written by a new writer, it is as cliché-ridden as the first, the only difference being that Goldin seems to have gotten his clichés from television. Where else would he get this story

of the aspiring politician who murders his wife to prevent a scandal and then pins the crime on the local hippies. His aliens, however, aren't too badly drawn, and are actually much more realistic than his humans.

The more recent listing in the magazine indexes for Arthur Tofte is 1940, and judging from Crash Landing On Iduna, he's been in suspended animation ever since. It is a monumentally bad book, absolutely riddled with holes and cliches, and the "surprise" ending is positively soporific.

Fortunately for the overall tone of this review, Gates of the Universe, by R. Coulson and G. DeWeese, is a step upward in interest. While not a world-beater, it is an amusing, entertaining adventure story, which is what this series is supposed to be all about.

Walls Within Walls is number 5, it's the second by Arthur Tofte, and if it's got a snapper ending you couldn't tell it by me. I never got that far.

The first six Laser books were released in one month, and if it wasn't for Gordon Eklund's Serving In Time, the whole series could have been written off. Eklund has the ability to create engaging action and convincing characterization, even while working with a well-worn framework.

With Seeklight by K.W. Jeter, Barry Malzberg enters the Laser picture. He has apparently taken the responsibility of developing new talent for Elwood, and has begun with this book by the type of hype used to promote rock stars. According to him, Seeklight is "one of the three or four best sf novels I have ever read". Jeter has written a good novel, and for his first attempt, it is very good. But that kind of brouhaha that Malzberg is attempting to put over can do nothing but damage the author's career and Malzberg's credibility. Read the book, skip the introduction.

Somewhere between Laser #2 and #8, Stephen Golding learned a few things about writing. Caravan takes place in a world developing after the forthcoming breakdown of modern civilization. The world and the story's characters are interesting and well-developed, and unlike the earlier book, Caravan reveals some research by the author.

"It is simply one of the most remarkable first novels, in any field, that I have ever read." That is Malzberg again, in the introduction to Invasion, by Aaron Wolfe. It is a well done novel, admitted, with good character development and an excellent grasp of the art of suspense. It is, however, highly reminiscent of Chad Oliver's Shores of Another Sea, transposed from Africa to the North Woods. A good read, with edge-of-the-seat tension.



THE MOVEMENT OF MAN

Benjamin P. Indick

Worthington Central Teachers University was preparing to reconvene for the new college year. The familiar faces were to be found around the campus, and especially at its heart, the beloved and crumbling archway known as the Old Ventricle. The students of W.C.T.U. looked at each other with bored eyes and squirming bodies, gritting their teeth and acknowledging everyone with a strained "Uhhmmmm". With dismay, they noted, after their lengthy year's-end recess of seventy-six hours, the customary hang-dog expressions, etched occasionally with spasms of pain, and contortions of the abdomen. Nothing new, evidently. Same old problem. Limp hands occasionally touching in greeting, and sometimes pulled the other out of its socket in spasm. A small group of older men and women, instructors and professors wearing immaculately white lab coats, walked by, in the familiar mincing gait. "Uhhmmmm" they grunted at students, and "Uhhmmmm" they were grunted back. After they had passed, whispering behind their backs rose. "Well, I guess it starts today. All this blather about his 'Negative Universe' or whatever." Unhappy affirmations chorused. "Some researcher. What he should do something about, he can't. Just bother about silly theories."

Yet one student, rather alone in his thoughts, did not sneer. Eyes fixed on a small bathroom window, rusty with disuse, rusty with disuse, across the campus, in the beloved Peristaltic Institute, he seemed, behind his contorted features, to bear a spark of life in his eyes. A spark, feeble, but glinting weakly. Puzzlement, too, but hope. He had not noticed the faculty, so enrapt was he in his thoughts.

The chimes of the Fistula Carillon sounded and produced a sluggish motion as the students shuffled to their classrooms.

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Thus it had been for more than eight generations already, on the campus of W.C.T.U., and on any other campus as well. For that matter, every street corner, every saloon, every home, every city was but a microcosm or macrocosm, as the case might be, of this torpid scene. The fabled energy of the metropolitan cities, frenetic, neurotic, was but a memory limed in legend now, as no longer great throngs poured with the speed of cold molasses down the veins and arteries, silent, spasmodic, grunting "uhhmmms", while traffic fatalities dwindled to near nothing, vehicles moving slowly and cautiously, and police whistles rusted in disuse.

Eight generations had seen this malaise, since a courageous humanity had arisen,

phoenix-like from the ashes of near-total calamity. There had been a time, a millennium ago, when Man, greedy for knowledge and power, had mistaken the one for the other, and, in instant conflagration had unleashed weaponry which left total destruction of major and minor centers the world around. The Big Boom had lasted only long enough to send a handful of missiles. They were sufficient, even wiping out by remote control a moon-based experimental station. Afterwards, when looters had completed their work, nothing appeared to be left.

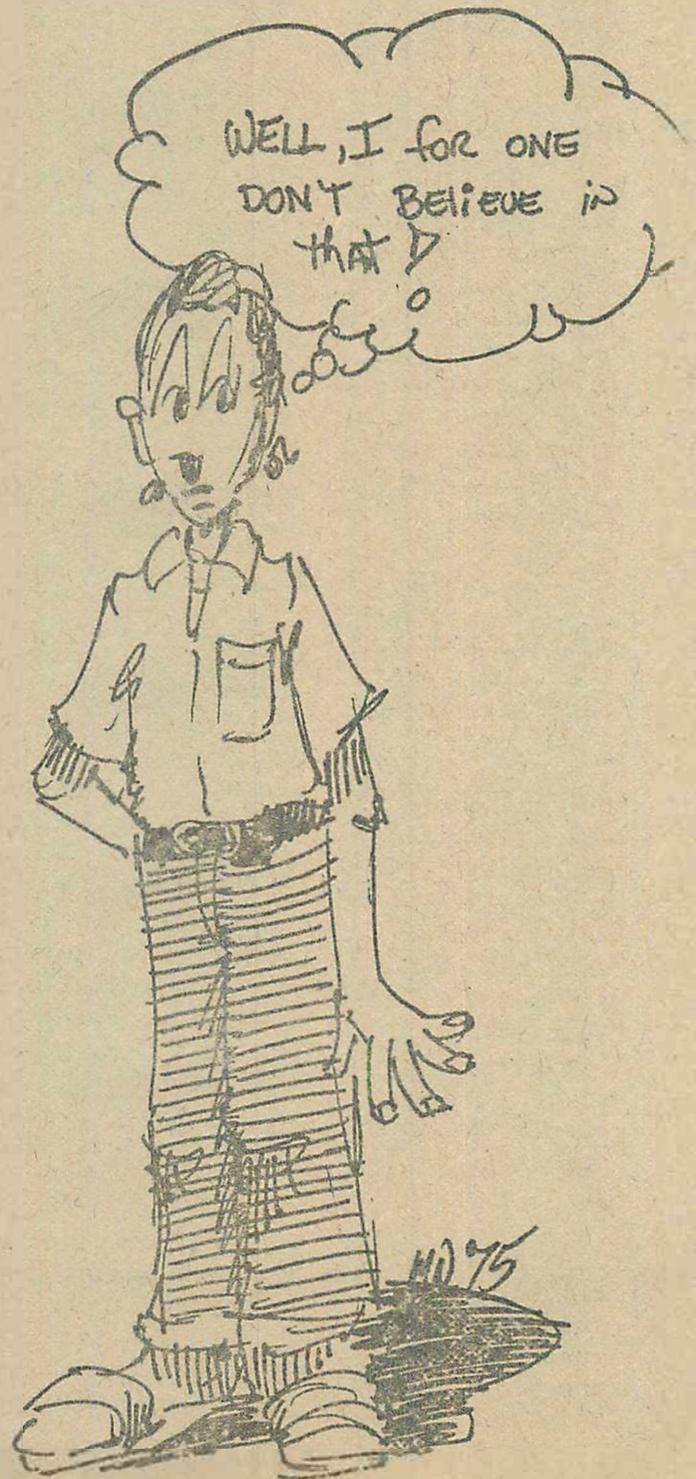
Yet, from nothing, Man recovered; soon, with astounding energy, a new civilization developed, and remarkably along similar technological lines to that it had succeeded. In short centuries, a population rebuilt itself, so that, again, a billion human beings peopled a world, and vast megalopolitan centers developed. Mankind looked again at the stars. Then he discovered an element which had not been apparent to any fixed degree, strange layers of charged atmosphere beyond the stratosphere. Like a shroud they thickened, filtering the light that reached the surface of the Earth. It was certainly bright enough and, some thought, a blessing, as sunburning was rare now; yet, concomitant with the visible nature of this new layer, named the Anticathartic Belt by scientists, there was soon manifest to the trained eye of statisticians, a lessening of the abnormal energy that had sustained the New Breed, as Man called himself in his pride. Philosophers rejoiced, noted that Man was taking stock of himself, slowing down his mad rush to oblivion; an older generation was, however, less sanguine. They felt a young generation was lazy, incapable of setting itself to proper duties. The young wore on their faces looks of bewilderment and, writhing where they stood, could not reply to accusing elders. For lack of aggressiveness, progress deteriorated; the high ideals which had created an ecologically clean world, slipped, through inattention, so that air and stream once again knew pollution. Even worse, within several generations, there was a clear diminution in the birthrate. Scientists blamed the Anticathartic Belt and were cheered when one day it was found to be diminishing. The cheer lasted but a few generations for even though the strange Belt, which had been determined to be an accretion of stratospheric fallout, quite vanished away, it had apparently created lasting chromospheric damage or change. People burned in the sun as they had for immemorial centuries but energy they still had not. Nor interest; nor curiosity. They walked mincingly, writhing in uncomfortable spasms, grunted strained "uhhms" at one another, bore fewer of their kind, and restrained from mentioning aloud, as had pre-bigboomers been so wont, the nature of their distress.

It was an age of great danger for the future of Man, in spite of what seemed to be incidental benefits. The decrease in aggressiveness was reflected in a decline in crime, traffic violations and neighborly arguments. Newspapers, freed of their responsibility to carry extended accounts of rape and robbery, got by with less pages; indeed, it was necessary, for advertising lineage had dropped tremendously. People were shopping less, and could not be induced to shop more. They bought only what they needed, and when they needed it. Any activity beyond need became onerous. Golf links now offered open time at any time, for those few still interested in hitting that annoying little ball; tennis courts were wastelands whereon grew crabgrass; baseball, for which a new reserve clause was created and upheld by the Supreme Court, forced reluctant ballplayers to play, at games sparsely attended by glum, squirming people who came, when they did, with little enthusiasm, and left with less. No-hitters were the rule, although few pitchers had the energy to complete more than four innings.

Everyone knew what the basic trouble was and something had to be done. The trouble was discernible to anyone with an eye on sales trends. In this era of declining consumer interest, the one bright spot was the Pharmacy, where there developed runs on such laxatives as were available. Constipation had practically vanished in the years of ebullience following the Bigboom, and with it had vanished Laxative Science. Prune farming in all areas had been supplanted by a craze for Lichee nuts;

television advertisements illustrating eminent physicians recommending products to relieve that morning distress were replaced by plugs with physicians stating which stocks and bonds they were recommending for financial health. Now, under the baleful Belt, and even after it, in the gloom of unreactive bowels, anything resembling what was once called a laxative was frantically sought by all. Pharmacies could not maintain stock on milk of magnesia and citrate of magnesia, even though their potency was relatively weak on a race whose intestine had strengthened like iron, and now could not relax. Bars found that Citrate was more in demand than Martinis, and the Green Cannonball, Citrate laced with a sprig of mint and an olive, plus a dash of vermouth, soon caused the normally staid olive industry to fall behind the demand. Constipation was evidently an epidemic of world-wide proportions; long a bane of Man, particularly Middle-Aged Man, it was now a curse to everyone. Clearly, unless Science could find an answer, and present laxatives such as magnesium products were but weak palliatives, Man as an entity was doomed because it had been proven that the decline in birthrate was directly attributable to the lack of interest and energy brought on by constipation. The President of the nation, using a full-fledged attack by Science to develop a powerful new laxative, initiated a popular catch-phrase: "Cure one, cure TWO!"

It failed to help. Scientists were baffled by an ailment so new to them. They tried numerous substances with small success. At least someone realized it might be a problem not for science, but for archaeology! He argued that perhaps the ancient pre-bigboomers had suffered from this condition and that they might have had something of excellence to try. However, nothing remained of that vanished culture. Immense expeditions were organized, who dug up land from sea to sea. The results were discouraging until, in a ravine near the famous tarpits of Los Angeles, several artifacts were found indicating Man had once lived here: a worn baseball and a strange pennant with an inscription to the effect that "Bums" tenanted tere. Further digging was commenced with the pale energy of men of this period, and with even more positive results, for there were unearthed what seemed to be an oven, which still bore a crudely lettered sign: "25¢ a slice" and a distance away, a worn apparatus at once recognizable as a computer. With much joy the computer was brought to the nearest scientific laboratory. Its work was inconstant and desultory but it did function. Now the trembling scientists applied the great test to it, the word "LAXATIVE" in hopes it would provide a list of such. It sputtered and coughed and its little lights glowed while discs spun, but to their disappointment, the scientists received from it merely the



definition of a "laxative," and no further. They punched in the words "CITRATE OF MAGNESIA" and it dutifully coughed out the correct method of preparation. They knew that somewhere in the bowels of this relic might lie the answer they required, the super-laxative; but unless they could feed the proper and exact name in, they would never find it. And Mankind might well vanish first. In despair, they turned to the oven, plugged it in and watched the shelves revolve. "25¢ a slice for what?" they pondered, and unplugged it.

It was a newspaperman who came up with the idea that was to pave the way, at last, for the recovery of man. Purely as a stunt, he commenced a campaign of advertisements that led off "Do YOU have a treasure hanging around in your attic?" and then urged readers to search for ancient artifacts with exotic names of potential laxatives, promising great rewards. Many attics were ransacked and attic-ransacking parties became the vogue. Occasionally names were found that the computer stated were indeed laxatives; however, they eventuated as no more efficacious than the two already in use, when they were available.

And yet the campaign was to bear fruition. For once a popular vogue and news stunt would pay off, and in the greatest of all payoffs, the Survival of Mankind! Once more Man would reproduce as freely as ever, even send his sons and daughters to the stars, confident in the knowledge that each and every day he might enjoy the pause that truly refreshed!

The combination of circumstances that were to save Man boggles the mind! A student finding an incomplete scrap of paper, and a professor of physics, external, not internal. Two men struggling against the daily vicissitudes of an unwilling intestinal tract. Two men in the eternal conflict of teacher versus pupil. Two men, and but for them, a world well lost!

The momentous events leading to the immortal confrontation began when Charley Buyck, a thirteenth-year student at W.C.T. U. discovered, on the back of an old painting which rumor stated was a pre-bigboom artwork his forbears had found mixed in with a pit of empty cans marked "BEER" and "AJAX", several yellowing scraps of newsprint. Hastily discarding the painting, a repellent thing composed of amorphous blobs and drippings of color, Buyck studied the scraps. It looked promising: "...gularity assur..." It might be ancient pornography: "VULgarity assured"..but no, it would have to be "vulgularity.." Assuming the "-ed" was a suffix to "assure--", the first word must be a euphemism the ancient computer often employed for steady bowel movements, namely "REGularity." Other words followed and he pored over each, to lose not a speck of significance; however, they were indecipherable until he reached a scrap in uneven capitals, "NATUR..." and a final grouping, "Re...t...ackw" The last was hopeless, but the first had to be "NaturE! Or would it be Natural?" A clue must lie in the few other letters, but what? Here, at his fingertips might lie the name of the great assurer of regularity, which, fed into the computer must ineluctably elicit the formula, and thereby, the world's salvation. Charley Buyck was not one to seek personal aggrandizement, and it was love for a suffering mankind that impelled him to telegraph the BCC, the Bigboom Computer Committee that they must try, as potential laxatives of old, the names "NATURE" and "NATURAL." Soon he received a reply, collect, that he should return to school and leave research to the grown-ups. It was a crushing rejoinder but Buyck was not defeated. His answer had to be in that gibberish combination, "r-e----t---a-c-k."

The new college year at Worthington Teachers was reconvening. It was time for class, the bell tolling. And again, Fate conspired. In his left rear pocket, an enigmatic piece of yellow paper from a forgotteen yesterday; in his mind, a wild surmise; in his guts, the characteristic cramp: Buyck went into class and Fate produced his partner in the moment that future generations would immortalize in song, dance and poetry, the Right Man, in the Right Place, at the Right Time, Professor of Physics,

external, not internal, Hans van Wilkensweeterswaat Kobold. Fate! -- and Man Lives!

* * * * *

The students filed into the large auditorium. There was urgent whispering, cautious looking around and then a green bottle and money were exchanged. Others sidled up, faces mixed with spasm and urgency. "All right!" the voice of the seller, "I don't got a case here!" a few more bottles, more money. The buyers hovered over him menacingly. Through clenched teeth they mumbled "Olives!" The buyer unhappily fished out a jar with several olives, slipped them into glassine envelopes. "Now get away!" he cursed at them, and they slipped off while he counted his money. Meanwhile, the bell tolled again and the great Dr. Kobold strode in, walking with firm steps to his chair where he gave a great groan, clutched his backside and fell within the chair. "Uhhmmmm!" he grunted. "But enough time already wasted on foolishness and weaknesses! Mine! Yours too!" he shouted at the disinterested class. "Yah! Time to get to vorrrk! Und, gentlemen, und vimmen," his eyes glinted suddenly, "I am ready to pronounce my new theorem. Yah! A new theorem, I said!"

He turned to the blackboard. Buyck, in the gallery, barely noticed. In his mind, a jumble of letters..."retackw." And others were furtively raising bottles to lips, allowing a clear liquor to gush over olives held between teeth. It was not a scene to offer promise.

"Chentlemen...vimmens!" his booming voice descended to a whisper, and in the silence of the room only a few furtive gurles could be heard. "Before I discuss my new theorem of 'The Negative Universe,' I shall review, for your numbskull brains, some simple facts. In der relatively new science vum Chemicophysicalculus, ve have studied Zweistein's equation of cosmic balances," upon which he wheeled and scawled upon the blackboard an equation, " $e^2 = (mc^2)^4$." You zee, right? Right! Und ve haf studied diligently Newpound's correction of the fallacy known as 'Gravity' as really being caused by zentrifugally balanced seeds, propelling an apple, 'fructus delictii,' in its downflight. Finally, consider the latest element discovered, 'Bunkium,' with its atomic weight of 753,865,850.987654, vich occupies dis long suspected place, No. 5632 on der Periodic Chart!" He poked a ruler at a yellowing Periodic Table, right through the indicated spot. "Ha-HAH! A cow's-eye! Der hole in vun!" He whipped a piece of chalk into the gallery and neatly awoke a slumbering student by lodging it in his snoring mouth.

Indeed, his lecture to this point was all rather elementary to the class, suffering his occasional fits and starts in an accent he affected for belief that it connotated scientific supremacy. Most of them knew it all inside out, in this fifteenth year of study; with a scant twelve years left for the Bachelor's Degree, they wished, if they had the energy to wish anything, to hear about the new theorem.



The Professor suddenly gave a small dance step in abdominal agony. He mopped his head after a moment. "Phew! That was a T-whistler of a shtab in der back! Zo! Now, dumbheads! Ve approach der real business!" He lit a long, black cigar, and taking a deep draught and coughing violently, he continued. "Science has progressed from der electron, der proton and der neutron -- mere child's play in der atomic know-hows -- to der positron, der electrositron

und, not to forget him, der liddle neutrositron. Who isn't even so liddle at that! But that's something else which doesn't affect us. All zis is mere baby-talk. Now dere has been discovered, chust a few years, or veeks, or whatever, back, der positive-negative electrositron, der negative-positive positron, und der cute liddle negative-positive positive-negative neutrositron! Ya-VOHL und dosvedonyah! But did ve researchers shtop dere?" His voice rose to a shrill peak as he pointed to a cringing guzzler, "You bet your citrate ve didn't! Nosiree! Dere vas developed der Zliding-Pole Zyztem, vhereby ve postulated UND DISCOVERED Nothingtrons! Matter vas dereby reduced to its ultimate form: Zpače! 'All right,' you say; 've know all dot!'" He paused and a few students volunteered; "Ve know all dot." "Ah," he continued, "you see? You DO know all dot. But now; mit der aid of Big Business Industrail know-how und a few smart-aleck lucky guessers, und ME, ve have gone all der vay furder, und gone beyond Nothing! Ve haf turned Nothing inside out, backwards, you might say, und out comes DER NEGATIVE WORLD! Vot haf ve found? you might ask--" A few students promptly complied, "Vot HAF you found?" "HAH! You DO ask, and here is vot ve haf found!" He turned to the blackboard and scrawled rapidly and nearly indecipherably some words, barking them out as he wrote: "Virst der counterpart of der nothingtron, der nortignihtron, und den der nortisortuen, der nortisop, und finally, der great big NORTISORTCELE! I said it und you heard it, DER GREAT BIG NORTISORTCELE!" He mopped his head in excitement, and emitted a great "uhhhmmmm!"

Sitting in the gallery; following each word with growing insight, Charley Buyck suddenly leaped to his feet, applauding and shouting violently, "I see! I see! The ultimate negative principle -- reached working backwards--!" The professor silenced him with a well-placed eraser; and Buyck fell down, momentarily stunned. "I do der seeing here! As I vas saying, ve haf yet to develop der zuzpected existencē of der nortuen, der notorp und der nortcele, but zoon ve vill!" Buyck was struggling to rise and Kobold rushed on. "In five years I guarantee ve vill know der zecret of der mota, and den ve can tackle der elucelom himself!" Buyck was on his feet again, shouting "Professor! Professor!" but the bell interrupted, and as the class slowly rose to leave, Buyck forced his way down, and tugged at Kobold's sleeves. The Professor glared petulantly at him. "Vell, Mr. Interrupter! Now vot? Haf you discovered der elucelom?!" Buyck cowered but held to the sleeve. "No, Dr. Kobold, but I think I have found something just as important!" He fished out the scraps of yellowed paper and handed them tremblingly to the older man. Kobold glared at them.

"Zo. Vot haf vehere? 'Gularity assur." Den, 'NATUR' und finally 're t ackw.' Puzzles you give me?" He tossed the scraps away and started off, but Buyck, still grasping him and grabbing back the paper, implored: "Wait, Dr. Kobold, this isn't your kind of physics, but I think you may have given me the clue to solve a different kind! Look! 'Re...t...ackw...' Just like YOUR discovery: "Read it backwards!"

Suddenly the great professor doubled over in agony. "Uhhmmmm!" he groaned. "Read VOT backwards? Huh? Oh..! You mean 'Natur'." "Yes," Buyck begged, 'Natur.'" Kobold sat down. "You don't maybe mean dis is maybe some vormula von der ancient times, dot maybe is...is..?" Buyck nodded violently. Kobold hissed the magic word: "A laxative? A magic laxative?" He threw his own Negative Universe notes into the trashcan, began scribbling on the blackboard. "NATUR...RUTAN..Rutan...? Could it be? Qvick! Follow me!"

Buyck ran after him, quickly explaining his failure to date, as they entered Kobold's office. Kobold seized his phone, dialed a number. "Hello, Eggslahx? Listen, run zis into dot verdammte old computer und zee vot comes out -- schnell! R-U-T-A-N." Buyck sat breathlessly as a long moment elapsed. "I zee. Okay." Kobold slapped the receiver down, looked at Buyck. "Notting. It came out NOTTING, dumb-head. Back to der drawing-board for you!" He took Buyck by the neck, but Buyck slipped out. "Wait, Professor," he gasped, "maybe it's only part of the word! We've got to try more! Try 'natur-AL backward, LARUTAN!" Kobold hesitated, then dialed

again. "Eggsлах? Here's anozer one. 'LARUTAN'." He waited, and Buyck cringed, still hopeful. "Hah!" Kobold slammed the phone down again. "STILL NOTTING, you blockhead! Out, out!" Buyck dodged a barrage of desk stationery and persisted. "Doctor, we've got to try everything!" "EFFRYTING? Vot kind of telephone allowance you tink dey giff us in dis penny-ante joint? Oh vell..."

Buyck sneaked back to a chair next to the desk and solemnly they tried various combinations. "NATURE .. ERUTAN .. und ve can try NATURALLY .. YLLARUTAN :. un den dere is..hm..Naturistic.. Naturistic? Nah! Vot else is dere?" He sighed, dialled again.

"Eggsлах? Yah, it's me again. NOW DON'T YOU SCHTART UP MIT ME, you pipsqveak! Don't you forget your wife is my wife's cousin, and -- all right! Dot's better. Spiel das vord 'ERUTAN' und if dot is ein dodo, play 'YLLARUTAN.' Don't get vise, I said 'VY-L-L-A---' all right. I'll wait." A moment passed, then redfaced, Kobold smashed the receiver down. "Vise guys. All vise guys. UHIMMM!"

Buyck's dreams were fading fast. "Professor, how about maybe... 'natur-es'?" Kobold mopped his brow again. "Natures. If dot isn't der silliest....WHO EFFER HEARD VROM MORE THAN ONE NATURE? No! If I effer tried dot on dot vertummelte, gechlachte, ausgefeffeneh bum of a relation -- No! I say 'No!'"

Buyck fell to his knees, partly to relieve a sharp pain in his backside. "You've got to, Dr. Kobold, for you, for me, for generations of children still unborn who need the chance to live in comfort! If this is the magic formula, why a glassful, or a teaspoonful, maybe even a tablet, taken each evening with a glass of water as ancient physicians prescribed, may allow Mankind to live in peace, to forg his woes, to procreate gloriously!" Slowly he rose to look down at the professor. "Dr. Kobold, we may even reach for the stars!" Kobold wiped the tears from his eyes. "Mine boy," he sobbed huskily, "forgive der petulance of an old und sorely tried professor." He reached for the phone.

History knows this undying moment. It has been reenacted on a thousand screens and stages, on worlds as yet unknown. Buyck. Kobold. Even Eggsлах shares the glory, as bribed by Kobold with promises of shipments of Strudel, Sauerbraten and Dumplings, he punched into the creaking machine the name inspired by a lecture on abstruse molecular science, the reverse of NATURES, and received a detailed description of the elements that a wise ancient world used to compound the miracle drug, SERUTAN.

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THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH



REVIEWS

SCHWEITZER - BARBOUR - FRANE - BEATTY - DENTON

Lovecraft: A Biography by L. Sprague deCamp. Doubleday and Co., 1975. 510pp. \$10.00

Every way you look at it Howard Phillips Lovecraft was (and still is) tangled mass of contradictions. A man who held rigidly materialistic beliefs and was the greatest and most innovative supernatural fiction writer of his century. A man who was unfailingly cordial and kind to everyone he met, and who married a Russian Jew, was a virulent racist and for most of his life a touter of "Aryan superiority." A self-proclaimed conservative, he held remarkably advanced scientific and philosophical views. A writer who considered himself a failure and died in obscurity, Lovecraft has become an international best-seller since his death and is certainly the most influential writer of his kind since Poe.

The latest in this long series of paradoxes is the existence of deCamp's book. Lovecraft in his lifetime wrote only for magazines and failed to sell a collection of his stories, and after his death the first of his books were published only in limited editions, and his recent best-sellerdom (3 million copies since 1970) has been in paperback only. Aside from one cheap edition in 1945, there has never been a trade hardcover collection of Lovecraft stories. (Rumor has it that Random House is planning one but it hasn't appeared.) It is rather strange then that a trade hardcover of a book about Lovecraft comes out first.

What this means is that Lovecraft is a cult figure. He has developed a devoted following of readers who not only admire his stories but want to know everything there is to know about their idol. For the Lovecraft cultist the book is ideal. It tells you just about everything you care to know about Lovecraft and occasionally a little bit more. (deCamp occasionally catalogues trivial things which really don't belong in a biography, such as the affair of the burnt out lightbulb in Chap. 6, I think it was.) I am something of a Lovecraft expert myself (one of my articles is listed in the bibliography *blush*) and I found little in the book that I didn't already know, but then again there was nothing that I did know that wasn't present. The greatest virtue of deCamp's research is that he has gathered all this information into one place. Otherwise, in order to get a complete picture of Lovecraft the writer, the thinker, and the individual, you would have to plow through innumerable memoirs, articles, journals, three enormous volumes of Selected Letters and other items, many of which are hard to find. Certainly for many years this will be the definitive

factual biography of Lovecraft (as opposed to one containing personal impressions -- deCamp never knew Lovecraft) both because of its excellence and its sheer exhaustiveness. It would take a lot of work to equal, let alone supercede this thing.

The book is unreservedly recommended to scholars and Lovecraft freaks. Also it is very good for beginning writers, because it all serves as an excellent example of how not to conduct yourself as a professional. (In marketing HPL was his own worst enemy and deCamp discusses this at length.) Blacks and Jews are advised to proceed with caution, because they might not believe de Camp's claims that Lovecraft outgrew his racist stance, in the face of the overwhelming evidence presented by deCamp himself. Also de Camp talks too much about the flaws in Lovecraft's fiction, as if he assumes that Lovecraft's considerable strengths were obvious to all. As a result his stories don't sound too interesting, and most of the passages quoted are simply awful. What the reader must know is that Lovecraft wrote conceptually brilliant stories, even though his execution sometimes left something to be desired. Since de Camp's book will get wide circulation, he should be aware that he is in fact the leading publicity man for Lovecraft and his work.

I wouldn't advise anyone to read this book unless they have read some of Lovecraft's fiction (a good place to start is a novel now out in paperback called The Case of Charles Dexter Ward) but after you have read some fiction, by all means read this book.

-- Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer --
(Originally appeared in Concert Magazine,
April, 1975.)

New Dimensions IV edited by Robert Silverberg. Signet, 1974, 237 pp., \$1.25

Silverberg is slipping, I think. New Dimensions has always been one of the most distinguished original anthology series in the past (two Hugo winners from a single volume last time, which is more than all the umpteen million Roger Elwood books have had) but for the first time I am disappointed by it. I was expecting something outstanding and found myself with standard and maybe even substandard fare.

First of all the really bad stuff. Silverberg is extremely excited by a new find, Felix Gotschalk, who is represented with two stories this issue. There's very little I can say about these. It's been a full twenty-four hours since I read them and I can't remember anything at all of their contents, only the most convoluted, clumsy, and thoroughly unreadable prose I've encountered in a long time. I can see no evidence of any talent whatsoever.

Then there's Larry Janifer's "The Bible After the Apocalypse" which is about an alien invasion, I think. The aliens plan to kill off three-fourths of the Earth's population and turn the place into a vacation resort. Unfortunately the story lacks any character or human involvement at all. Its presumed protagonist just stumbles around a bit before being killed, and all we have is a pointless anecdote, which would look below par in AMAZING at a penny a word. In a top paying market like New Dimensions there's no excuse for it.

Roger Elwood is also present with his first sf piece, "Ariel", which shows that Elwood is a decade behind the rest of the field and still caught up in stylistics to the detriment of plot, character, theme, coherent viewpoint, etc., etc. The result is a non-story and not a memorable one, like something in one of the very last issues of New Worlds.

Onward to Barry Malzberg's "State of the Art" which is at least readable. I will confess something here, a prejudice if you will. I have nothing but utter contempt for Barry Malzberg. Not only has he plagued us with an unending stream of

fiction without any conceivable merit, but he freely admits on convention panels, in published letters, and in autobiographical fiction, that he writes only for money and is a totally debased hack of the worst sort. The only thing different about him is that he is the first hackwriter to specialize in what we used to call "new wave" which was previously the territory of those who fancied themselves artists. To make matters worse Malberg tells us that he deserves to be taken seriously (!) while saying at the same time that all sf is crap (including, presumably, the output of Barry Malzberg) and he's fond of trying to convince newer writers, his artistic superiors, to get out of the field while the getting is good. Do we really need a man like that? At least Lester Dent and Fredrick Faust were honest hacks. And they never had a trace of artistry in them, as opposed to Malzberg who has sold out.

Now, then, the present story, like all Malzberg fiction I've seen, is shallow, all gimmicks, with no insides. Alfie Bester insists that a hack writer is tricks and nothing else, and I believe him.

Malzberg's trick this time is the venerable attention-getting device of putting famous writers from different times, like Shakespeare, Hemingway, Dostoyevski, etc. together and let them interact. All they do is ramble on a bit before Shakespeare dies, the rest are rounded up by the police, and the rest of the world hardly notices. I suppose the point is that Great Art isn't appreciated in our society, but then what would Malzberg know about such things? The basic plot idea could be interesting if handled right. Some examples that come to mind are John Kendrick Bangs' Houseboat On the Styx (1898) and sequels, and Lord Dunsany's "The Club Secretary" (1934).

This brings us up the scale of Least Bad to Richard Lupoff's "After the Dream-time" and I'll admit another prejudice. O thought Lupoff's "With the Bentfin Boomer Boys In Little Old New Alabama" was garbage, and I see many of the same faults in this piece, which is set in the same universe. The writing this time is considerably better, less superficially flashy and a lot more readable, and the plot is sufficient to maintain interest throughout the length of the story. (This one is much shorter than its predecessor.) However, when you get down to it, the basic concepts are silly.

First there is the social background. This is the same as "Bentfin Boomer," in that various cultures from Earth have emigrated into space, so that there's a planet



for each. The funny thing is that the cultures haven't changed at all despite the intervening centuries, and the New Alabamans still talk in a drawl, hate "nigras" and behave like stereotyped Southern bigots circa 1964. Not only does this show a superficial understanding of our own times, but for science fiction, set in the far future on other planets, it is shockingly bad extrapolation. It's Star Trek costume fiction.

Okay, the narrator of the story is a descendent of an aborigine who sails on an interstellar ship propelled by solar winds. I'm willing to believe (though I find it unlikely) for the purposes of the story that aborigines have some odd radiation-resistant substance in their skin which enables them to work in space without space-suits, but I will not believe an interstellar sun-jammer for the simple reason that solar wind does not exceed the speed of light and therefore it would take centuries to reach one's destination. Or, if the ship's motors move it at ftl speeds, the wind-catching sails would either drag or simply be useless. Also, I'm not sure, but I would think that the power of light-pressure from a star would diminish with distance, so that solar wind in interstellar space would be negligible. Too bad. My disbelief didn't remain suspended.

Yet another disappointment is the David Bunch story, about Moderan, which might be quite good if I hadn't read all the other stories in the series. Bunch keeps writing the same story over and over, and there's nothing new in this one. It's a rehash of any half dozen others.

This leaves us with the only three stories in the book which I consider to be worth reading. R.A. Lafferty's "Animal Fair" is another of his oddball items, related to the one he had in Universe 4. Barnaby Sheen, the Australopithecus houseboy, the sawdust doll, and the ghost are back again, for those who remember them with fondness. Someone suggests in the course of the story that there's a special language understood only by a select few, and I suspect that Lafferty writes in it. He seems to live in his own universe which operates on its own laws and unique system of logic, and the rest of us can only catch glimpses of it -- just enough to be fascinated.

Terry Carr's "The Colors of Fear" is a very moving short about an alien invasion, in which the situation is hopeless and mankind slowly crumbles away in a last fortified city. The story is best comparable to the Janifer effort, and the only difference is that this one has human depth.

Finally we have "Strangers" by Gardner R. Dozois, a novella which fills half the book. Don Keller read this in manuscript and raved about it, as he does about many things, but I'm not so excited. I too consider Dozois to be one of the best of the modern sf writers and am awed by the emotional power of his work. And I'm pleased that his things are usually well thought out, rather than just outbursts. He's got everything an sf writer needs, and uses it. He even does his homework. Don was once over at Gardner's place and noticed a book on oceanography lying about. What was it for? Gardner was researching a story. (Gee, how much research does Barry Malzberg do?)

Maybe Gardner's only limitation is that he reads too much science fiction. His apartment is stacked to the ceiling with it, and for the first time I think it shows in his fiction. "Strangers" takes a common and imaginative shortcut which has bothered me a lot of late. His setting is another planet. The inhabitants are humanoid. Considering all the chances of evolution required to produce such a shape, that's unlikely but we can let him get away with it. The aliens live in cities, have commerce on rivers, have interesting mythological beliefs, etc. The problem is that there is nothing extra-terrestrial about them at all except for a few details of biology. Dozois' other planet, like easily ninety percent of all sf planets, is simply another country, not another world. It is what China must have been like to 19th Century European traders. Exotic cultures, massive cities, trading concessions, etc., etc.

It reminds me of China, only the climate is colder, and it reminded someone else I talked with of Calcutta. It didn't suggest to either of us that it was the product of a completely independent cultural and biological evolution, inhabited by a different species.



The writing is rich, graceful, at times very moving, the characterization is very good, but I think we're left a little short on the plot. Earthman marries alien woman. Dozois even went to the point of hav-

ing the hero's testicles rearranged so his chromosomes match the alien biosystem, but ultimately we have here a re-write of Philip Jose Farmer's The Lovers with no significant additions. The culture is different, the people involved have different personalities than the ones in the Farmer story, but if you have read The Lovers it's all familiar territory. Dozois has an ultimate shocking revelation at the end, which I won't reveal here but I will say it's the same ending Farmer used, and even if you haven't read it before you'll probably guess it half way through. How well does it compare with the Farmer story? I think the original is more interesting in its setting and background, but the Dozois is more involving, even if you know what's coming. Dozois is a better writer in many ways, but Farmer is more inventive.

In all I'd recommend this book only to people who can't wait for the Carr, Lafferty and Dozois stories to be reprinted elsewhere. New Dimensions hasn't just declined; it's fallen over with a resounding thud.

-- Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer --

LOTS MORE GOOD SF: -- All reviewed by Douglas Barbour --

The Computer Connection by Alfred Bester. Putnam.

Guernica Night by Barry Malzberg. Bobbs-Merrill.

The Jonah Kit by Ian Watson. Gollancz or Doubleday Canada Ltd.

The Feast of St. Dionysus by Robert Silverberg. Scribner's.

The Chalk Giants by Keith Roberts. Hutchinson Publishing Group Ltd.

Sf these days is a truly exciting field, mainly because there's so much room in it for such a vast range of fictional exploits. This means that even the fabled ten percent of good sf -- the only kind I'm interested in -- covers a lot of speculative and fictional ground. As witness the five very different books under review, of which only one is not top-notch entertainment plus.

I loved Alfred Bester's The Stars My Destination, and still consider it one of the best sf novels around. So I was really happy to receive Bester's new novel -- his first in fifteen years. The Computer Connection, however, is not in the same class as The Stars My Destination; I guess I should have known.

It is a fast paced, heady adventure tale, set in a future context which is neatly implied throughout by occasional images and the ordinary (specially devised) idiomatic speech of the characters. The story concerns, first, the addition of a new member to the Group -- individuals who, in nearly dying, have become immortal -- and, second, his link-up with a global computer and the nastiness which follows as the computer attempts to take over the world. Bester throws off ideas like a sparkler

sparks, but he fails to develop any of them. Neither does he develop his characters; I wish he had, for they are potentially fascinating. Instead, he moves, moves, moves the story along in his flashy prose, and before we know it, the trip is over. It's fine light entertainment, but nothing more.

Barry Malzberg is a more recent sf star, but he has already produced good books like the prize-winning Beyond Apollo. Guernica Night is one of his best and most complex fictions. Set in a society completely dominated by the instantaneous matter-transmitter, it tells of a few of the young people in this utterly homogeneous world who choose not to commit suicide.

Malzberg is often accused by more traditional science fiction writers of being an enemy of sf, a traitor to its ideals. Well, Guernica Night is definitely pure sf in its extrapolation of and from transporter technology -- the "factual" underpinning of the narrative. But Malzberg is a truly subversive writer anyway you categorize him, exploring existential terror in the human soul. One aspect of his subversive prose is his wickedly black humour: you laugh to keep the screams down, but you laugh.

Malzberg's characters obsessively pursue meaning but they never really find it -- or do they? They're forever about to achieve major insights into their condition, but insight always slips past. This is the point of his taut, sharp style, the bitterly comic reverses it continually renders.

Guernica Night shows how ultimate bureaucracy destroys the meaning of life by removing all the differences by which individuals reveal to each other that a real world, out there, does exist. It does so with black wit and cutting sexual imagery. It is a powerful fictional experience.

Ian Watson's The Jonah Kit mixes modern astronomy, GÜdelian and Einsteinian math and physics, marine biology, linguistics, plus politics into a volatile package. It is an astringent political and moral black comedy as well as a profoundly speculative vision of cetacean Weltanschauung.

Watson sets his story about 10 years from now in a world almost down the ecological drain: resources practically gone, society locked in stasis everywhere. Although he has a large cast of characters, his sense of speech and his ability to show thought through dialogue bring all the important ones into clear focus. His 'story' moves from Mexico, where astronomers and newsmen gather to argue the end of the universe and God, to Japan, where Russian scientists have imprinted a mathematical model of a man's mind onto a whale's brain, to the ocean itself, where in a marvelously imaginative creation Watson suggests the whales' 'thoughts' on the phenomenological world they live in.

The science is authentic and wide-ranging; the political infighting on both personal and national levels is sharply observed; only the personal lives of the characters appear somewhat superficial in this exciting narrative. The Jonah Kit is fast-paced, full of incident -- usually metaphysical rather than physical -- and it moves to an apocalyptic conclusion, terrifying in its implications. It is not an easy book, but it is written with a verve that rivets one's attention.

These days one can only stand back and praise Robert Silverberg's work as fully as possible. The five stories in The Feast of St. Dionysus reveal once more just how complete is his craft, after more than twenty years of fruitful apprenticeship to his art. Silverberg has learned to use with subtlety and sly wit, the metaphors of sf as pure metaphors. This self-consciousness has not made his invocations of the sense of wonder any less exciting but it has lifted his stories to new meta-fictional levels.

Silverberg uses sf's basic narrative symbols to push his fictional explorations

into what has come to be called, rather pretentiously, 'inner space.' His stories, though their narrative surfaces appear similar to much ordinary sf, are finely constructed spiritual quests. Moreover, his prose is now so limpid and pure, that in the best stories it performs devious operations upon readers' psyches so smoothly we barely even notice it happening.

All these stories are good. The best ones, "The Feast of St. Dionysys," a strange religious quest by an astronaut whose companions died on Mars, "This Is the Road," an intricate fantasia on humanity's deep future, and "Schwartz Between the Galaxies," simply one of the finest stories in recent sf, are mystical visions of superb and subtle power. To balance that mysticism, perhaps, the other two stories deal ambivalently with linear or bureaucratic thoughts in action. All are full of telling details; all touch the heart.

Silverberg does not write stories of easy optimism, yet the admittedly ambiguous endings of these stories articulate a kind of hope in the human spirit's willingness to dare to love the cosmos entire. Such a hope is made a concrete presence in these stories, and that is only one facet of their brilliance and integrity.

Where his Pavane, perhaps the loveliest alternate universe novel of them all, is a myth-laden visionary excursion through England's past, Keith Roberts' The Chalk Giants is an equally powerful mythic-legendary exploration of one possible dark future. It casts a very powerful spell indeed.

The Chalk Giants is a story-sequence bound together by the dreaming mind of one Stan Potts, forty, overweight, cowardly, and obsessed by a beautiful young woman who hardly knows he exists. When it becomes clear that England will be attacked, Potts manages to get to northern England -- or does he? The first story shows him, and four others -- including his love -- attempting to survive in an abandoned house near the sea.

After the bombs fall, literally cutting England in two, the little commune breaks up. Various visions of the future are given unto the surviving Potts: the utter destruction of civilization in England; the eventual return to dark age paganism, and finally the reunification of the island peoples under one strong king and the "god of the wheel," a "god of love."

Roberts is a writer of precision, passion and exquisite taste. His subject is human savagery, the violence which accompanies love and fear and the intelligence with which one can overcome these. The stories are energized by the raw sense of powerful emotions in conflict and by the felt, mythic, presence of the land. England, of course, has very deep mythic/historic roots, which Roberts evokes to give his narrative an almost legendary solidity.

Each story has at least one fully realized character, often more. Roberts is especially good at evoking personalities in barbarian tribal circumstances. His scenes of violence and sexual power struggles are visceral, kinetic, and perceptually acute. An aura of tragic nobility hangs over these narratives, sending flames of bloody light into the darkness in which these people move.

With Pavane, Keith Roberts established himself as a major voice in sf; with The Chalk Giants, he provides full proof of his powers as a creator of fictions both mythically and emotionally profound. This exhilarating book hits you like a fine Jacobean tragedy; and the punch stays with you, long after you've put the book down. Higher praise I cannot give.

-- Reviewed by Douglas Barbour --

// I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Doug for reviewing particularly Keith

Roberts' The Chalk Giants. He has done it in a much finer fashion than I would have been able to do. As you know, Keith is a personal friend of mine and had I done a review it might have been warped. I respect Doug's perceptions and am happy to find as enthusiastic about the book as I am. I feel that I must warn potential readers that the American edition published by Putnam's Sons has been cut, and to the detriment of the book. All of the portions dealing with Stan Potts, the very opening and brief interludes between each of the major portions of the story-sequences have been deleted. The book has been shortened thusly from 271 pages in the Hutchinson edition to 195 pages in the Putnam's Sons edition. I shall have copies of the English Hutchinson edition available for sale soon both for the sake of Keith's American fans and for Keith himself. Price will be \$7.25 including postage and handling. //

Cat by B. Kliban. Workman Publishing Co.

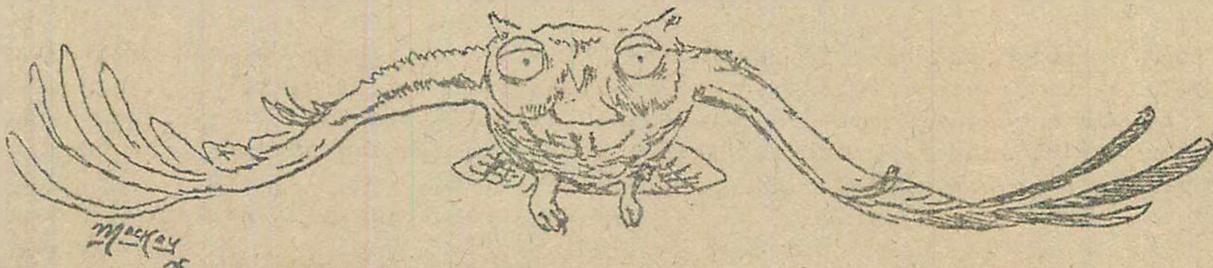
This book is about cats, of course, but I can't really say that it's a cat book for cat lovers. You know, cat fanatics. Incidentally (just to establish my credentials), I once spent a night in a house that had about thirty cats in it, all of them related and pretty inbred, too. A wide selection of neuroses. They had also taken over the bathrooms with their boxes. I was supposed to spend two nights in that house but ended up only spending one and getting sidetracked to someplace else. Subliminal motives? Maybe it's just that I like to think that I know when enough is too much.

This isn't a book of cutie pictures of cats. Cats playing with balls of string and like that, none of that here. In fact, all the drawings of the cats are pretty grotesque. Lots of cats with teeny heads and round pupils and saying things like "Mao" and "Mousie Dung." How are you going to sell something like this to people who know that everything that cats do is loveable and cute and beautiful? What's the point of printing a book without any market? I mean some of these drawings are downright weird.

Which, of course, makes sense. If the drawings weren't weird and somewhat strange wouldn't they be dull and even plagiaristic? Kliban is a craftsman and images are his media. If he can put cats in over a hundred permutations, dislocations, and situations without you actually noticing and saying things like, "Gee, how does he do it?" that means he's a professional. He knows what he can do and what he can get away with. And he does it. Just about all of these drawings are quite funny because Kliban knows how to manipulate the familiar (cats) into the unfamiliar that was always there (cat guns and catsup). He goes overboard and doesn't need a lifejacket because he's a pro and he's back on deck before you know it.

So this is really a book for people who like picture books. It just happens that the guy who did it has four cats (not such a bad number) and why not do a book with pictures of cats? A few straight, well done drawings of cats are included for those who came expecting a cat book. Kliban does girly cartoons for Playboy (pretty good sign that he's doing something right). Tell the cashier at the bookstore when you buy this that and see what she says.

-- Reviewed by Bruce Towmley --



The Way To Dawnworld by Bill Star. Ballantine, \$1.50

A technique becoming common in the "new pulps" is the open-ended series, one designed to hold out as long as reader interest does. This first book by Bill Star is apparently the first in such a series.

This book is apparently an introduction to the forthcoming (we assume) action, for there is little of it here. Most of it is taken up by Ranger Farstar's efforts to educate his son, Dawnboy, in the ways of galactic civilization. Dawnboy, you see, has been raised by Scottish-Apaches, and this necessitates long, didactic sermons on the virtues of capitalism and the gold standard. The end result of his education is Dawnboy's ability to instruct Lulu, the cyborg spaceship, to "burn ether out o'here!"

Weird Heroes, Vol. 1; A New American Pulp, edited by Byron Preiss. Pyramid Books, \$1.50

The book is exactly what it says, a collection of pulp-style adventure stories, and it is good. Each of the authors; Ron Goulart, Archie Goodwin, Byron Preiss, Joann Kobin, and Phil Farmer present brand new heroes, in what may or may not be openings to a series of stories. Each story is in turn illustrated by the likes of Steranko, Jeff Jones, Dave Sheridan and Alex Nino, and, in the main, the book creates the excitement of those bygone pulps.

Not all the stories are science fiction, and in fact, the two best are not remotely related to the field. Archie Goodwin's "Stalker" is a character out of Hammett and Chandler, a tough private eye with a cold eye turned toward the world. He is, however, a thoroughly modern character, well drawn, and as complex as the plot.

Joann Kobin's "Rose In The Sunshine State" sticks out of this book like the proverbial thumb. It is difficult, actually, to understand what it's doing here at all, for it is a moving and quietly beautiful story about a sixty-eight year old woman living in retirement in Florida. Preiss attempts to fit it in by his introduction, but it seems obvious that he merely liked the story and wanted to use it and damn the labels. Good for him.

The book also contains an interview with Fritz Leiber which covers no new material, but would probably be interesting to the uninitiated. Someone, however, should tell Preiss how to spell Arthur Machen's name.

Ron Goulart's story is the best I've seen from him recently, and is beautifully illustrated. Preiss' own story is an interesting beginning, but I wish he would have taken it farther. The Farmer story is about what can be expected from him in his current phase of pulp nostalgia, and is slightly better than his biography of Doc Savage. Weird Heroes is worth getting, and worth trying future volumes.

-- Reviewed by Jeff Frane --

A LOOK AT THE ART BOOKS

Somewhere along the line, Science Fiction in general, and SF art in particular, has become marketable. Perhaps it is viewed as "camp" or possibly as pop-lit, but the result has been a flurry of books dedicated to a long neglected field.

The Fantastic Art of Frank Frazetta (Peacock Press/Bantam Books, \$5.95) is one of the first efforts by Ian and Betty Ballantine after leaving Ballantine Books. It is a beautiful, beautiful book, with the prints well chosen and brilliantly produced, apparently from the original art. The most satisfying thing about it is the fact that it is only the first in a projected series of volumes dedicated to this dynamic artist.

Fantastic Science-Fiction Art, 1926-1954, edited by Lester Del Rey (Ballantine, \$5.95).

Del Rey cut his teeth on the early science fiction magazines, so it is only proper that he concentrate on this early period for his survey. Like the Frazetta volume, the illustrations are printed only on one side of the page, portfolio-style, but unlike that book, these are necessarily reproductions of magazine covers, with a consequent reduction in brilliance. The book is Very heavy on Frank Paul.

Science Fiction Art, edited by Brian Aldiss (Bounty Books, \$9.95) will probably stand as the best and most complete of its kind, although it virtually ignores Kelly Freas and the more recent artists such as Kirk and Barr. Done in a coffee-table size paperback format, the book provides a truly broad survey of SF art in the last 50 years, both in color and black-and-white. Besides individual "galleries" of 30 artists, Aldiss has examined different themes in SF and provides a final gallery of a large number of magazine titles. A good percentage of the book's art is the product of British magazines and artists, most of which should be refreshingly new to the American audience. Highly recommended.

-- Reviewed by Jeff Frane --

Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction by James Gunn; with an introduction by Isaac Asimov. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975. \$29.95

Who is going to spend nearly \$30 on an sf picture book? Well, my friends, I advise you to do so. Take the \$5 bill that you got for Christmas from Aunt May, rob the piggy bank, work a couple of hours of overtime. Because Jim Gunn has presented us with a splendid work that covers the entire field of sf from Homer onward. While the book is profusely illustrated, there is also a solid body of text numbering over 100,000 words, so you're getting your money's worth. Full pages of color, many classic magazine covers. Literally hundred of black-and-white and sepia tone illustrations of cover illos, stills from movies and tv and photos of the writers from the Gernsbach era right up to the present. The latter are of particular interest to the non-convention attendee, and many of them are first glimpses of writers from the opposite coast for even the most inveterate of conventioners. Have you ever seen a picture of Zenna Henderson? The production of the book is excellent and rumor has it that there will not be a second edition. Jim has been working on this for some time, and what he has produced is well worth having for anyone with the slightest interest in where sf has come from and where it's likely to go. The 9 X 12 format is handsome and there is a useful appendix of Nebula and Hugo winners.

-- Reviewed by Frank Denton --

Swan Song by Brian M. Stableford. DAW Books, No. 149. #UY1171. \$1.25

This is the sixth and last of the books in Stableford's series about Grainger and The Hooded Swan, the super-duper space ship. To tell the truth, I'm sorry that it's over, although Stableford may be smart in not trying to extend the series beyond the capability of new stories. At the end of The Fenris Device Grainger had had all he could take of Titus Charlot. He left and thought that he could get away and start a new life. It did not work. He is soon hounded by the Caradoc Company and finally rescued by someone sent by Charlot. It seems that the sister ship of The Hooded Swan has been flown into another universe by Eve Laphorn, Grainger's back-up pilot and sister of his old partner. Titus Charlot needs Grainger to pilot the ship in to her rescue. Grainger isn't about to let the whole crew, including Charlot, go to their deaths, so with a new engineer-friend, he steals the ship at night and the two fly the Swan alone.

The new universe is completely alien, a viscous mass in which the Swan can't fly well and which seems to be radioactive. Grainger is able to locate the sister-ship

and, through great dangers, rescue the crew which is still alive, Nick and Eve. But in doing so the strange wind, an alien being which has accompanied him and become a part of him, is killed. There is some surprisingly emotional writing in this section. If you've read the preceding books, you know what a struggle Grainger has had in accepting this alien being, over which he has no control, at coming to grips with it, and finally bending enough to be willing to listen to its arguments and reasonings. Now he loses it and there is a great let-down at the end for Grainger. While they've been gone, Titus Charlot has died and Grainger is now truly free to seek his own destiny once more.

I'm really quite anxious to see where Stableford will go from here. Having tied off this series what will his next approach be? For myself, I can go back and read his Dies Iraes series, which I have not read yet. I've heard lots of bad reports about those three books, but will need to see for myself. At any rate, I'll be the first to report on what Stableford writes next, as I have been securely hooked by this series.

-- Reviewed by Frank Denton --

2000 A.D.; Illustrations from the Golden Age of Science Fiction Pulps by Jacques Sadoul. Henry Regnery. \$17.95 cloth, \$7.95 paper.

The run of recent science fiction art books makes it easy for one to run out of adjectives. Each, in its own way, is desirable; something that the science fiction fan with the slightest interest in art would love to have on his or her shelf. Each of them represents hundreds of dollars in pulps if you were wealthy and could find all of the items. How nice for someone to do the collecting for us. This book is nicely arranged into topics, such as The Great Galactics, Space Ships, Women of the Cosmos, The Bestiary of Outer Space. Cities, machines, weapons, and robots each have their own sections. The majority of the illustrations are black-and-white and the captions give us a bit about the story which they illustrated and which pulp and issue it appeared in. There are some color illustrations from covers during the pulpera, 1926-1953. How fine it is to see the Finlays, Bergeys, Brundages and others reproduced. I'm not a pulp expert, nor an expert in the sf art of that period, but one doesn't have to be to enjoy this book. I've heard that there are some mistakes in the text, probably due to faulty translation from the French. Ignore them. Just drool over the pictures. It's worth it just for the Finlays and the Boks. There are nine pages in full color including a lovely Ramon Naylor cover from Fantastic Adventures for July, 1948 that I dearly love. 176 pages in all. Very nice.

-- Reviewed by Frank Denton --

Star Probe by Joseph Green. Serialized in Analog, Oct.-Dec., 1975.

Most science fiction is set in far-off times and places. However, many prozine authors, attempting to put "relevance" in their stories, have recently given us a lot of eco-disaster and political-polarization stories. Star Probe has many resemblances to this category, but it is better than most of these stories.

Star Probe is set in the early 21st century on an Earth under the regime of a newly-established world government. An alien probe entering the solar system is detected, and the president of a large aerospace corporation wants to intercept it and bring it to Earth. Study of its engine would result in less expensive space travel, and there were sure to be other, unforeseen benefits.

This course of action is opposed by an anti-technology group called the New Friends of Earth. (This may be a thinly disguised attack on the presently-existing Friends of Earth.) The New FOE are opposed to government or private spending on any effort to capture the star probe, because it supposedly would be at the expense of hospitals in Algeria or food in India. The possibilities of new sources of energy don't seem to matter to them. Some of these characters are irritatingly hard to believe. The



leader of the anti-techs gets in touch with her lieutenants thru the sophisticated intercontinental picturephone system to make plans for destroying technological society. But there are some real people like that.

The story is built around this "contemporary" issue, but the characters are fairly well developed, instead of being stereotypes as in some similar stories. The efforts of the anti-techs to prevent or sabotage the intercept mission, which must be carried out during a limited time period, make for a fast-moving plot line.

There were a few flaws in the story. At one point, two of the anti-techs stow away on a shuttle rocket bound for a space station. In a rocket design that has been used hundreds of times, with all the bugs removed and inefficiencies pared to a minimum, how could there be room for two people to hide until they chose to reveal themselves? The anti-techs hijack the ship and divert it to interfere with the intercept mission. Altho not wearing pressure suits, they wave pistols around and eventually a few shots are fired. In a small, inexpensive space shuttle, this seems a highly dubious practice. However, if you try not to think about these too much, the action picks up and the plot retains its believability.

There is one mention of pressure measured in kilograms, which is a unit of mass, not force. From the value given, it is apparently kilograms per square inch!

The author, for no reason discernable to me, has inserted an implausible and unnecessary sex scene. It is hard to believe that two people whose basic beliefs are so diametrically opposed, who have each worked so hard against everything the other believes in, and one of whom has recently kidnapped and threatened the life of the other, would hop into bed with each other on such a slight excuse as is given here. However, this episode is not vital to the plot, and can be more or less ignored.

A scientific innovation in Star Probe is the practice of recording the mental patterns of great men before they die and preserving them by computer. Theoretically, government leaders can consult these minds for advice in times of crisis. The practical difficulty is in finding a suitable vehicle in which to imprint the patterns. But when it appears that the probe interception may be a suicide flight, new developments are made in this area. The mind of a former president who had also been a skilled astronaut is imprinted on the body of his mentally retarded grandson.

I'm looking forward to the book version of Star Probe.

-- Reviewed by Steve Beatty --

QUICKIES

I guess I'm crowded out this time by so many fine reviews from others. Thanks to one and all. Keep it up, gang.

You'll notice that there is only one DAW review. It's not that I've sworn off of reading DAW Books. To the contrary, although I find them uneven as a series, I still manage to read them. Chet Clingan asked me to do a DAW review column for his zine, THE DIVERSIFIER. That's where all the DAW reviews went; for the last eight books.

The Expendables: The Deathworm of Kratos by Richard Avery. Fawcett P3306. \$1.25
The Expendables: The Rings of Tantalus by Richard Avery. Fawcett P3307. \$1.25

These two begin a new series by a young English writer. They concern a group of misfits, outcasts, criminals who are called The Expendables. Their job is to explore planets to see if they are inhabitable for human colonization. They are good straightforward adventure tales. Well written, good swift pacing, surprisingly a bit of character growth. Certainly not Hugo material, but better than some things I've seen lately. Nice covers by someone reminiscent of Jeff Jones. The third one is now on the paperback stands.

Enchanted Pilgrimage by Clifford Simak. Berkley Medallion, Z2987. \$1.25

I'd forgotten just how much I enjoy Simak. This is the first time in paper for this title. There have been a couple of other things re-issued, including Destiny Doll.

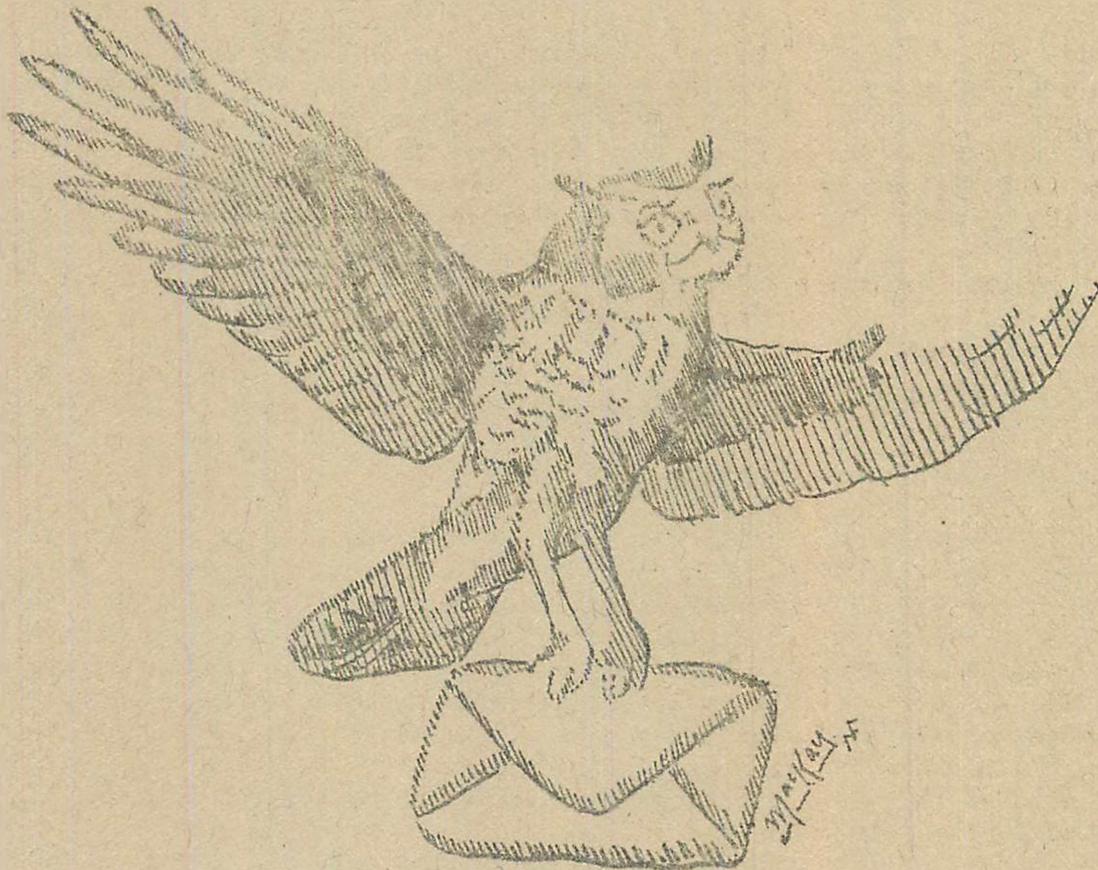
"The rafter goblin spied on the hiding monk, who was spying on the scholar." With an opening line like that you just know you're going to enjoy the book. This is a quest book, as the scholar has found a hidden book that talks about greater knowledge to be found. But where it is to be found requires a very dangerous journey. And a most enjoyable one for the reader along the way. The scholar, the girl, Gib of the Marshes, the rafter goblin, the Dark Piper. Lots of adventures, plenty of obstacles in the way, some of them downright nasty. Simak hasn't failed me yet for just a plain old enjoyable story.

No Night Without Stars by Andre Norton. Atheneum, 1975. \$6.95

I was just a bit disappointed in this one. The last Norton books which I had read stood up to what I was looking for. They were Forerunner Foray and The Jargoom Pard (just out in paperback, by the way, and it's the kind of book we look for from Andre Norton). This one concerns a metal worker in some future time when the big bomb has gone off and everyone is starting over again at the tribal level. The metal worker determines to leave the tribe and seek the knowledge of the ancient ones which he has heard about, but is not quite sure of the whereabouts. Before long he teams up with a girl whose whole village has been destroyed and the inhabitants killed. She is knowledgeable about many things and has been the sachem of her village. Together they have many adventures in avoiding mutant beasts and humans and ultimately find an underground computer installation which they think will tell all. Well, it's powermad, that's what it is, and they escape after destroying it. Didn't learn a whole lot before it blew. I enjoyed it, but not nearly as much as some of the Norton books I've read.

In the Wake of Man; A Science Fiction Triad by R.A. Lafferty, Gene Wolfe and Walter Moudy. Bobbs-Merrill, 1975. \$7.95

I like both Lafferty and Wolfe and bought this to read on the plane to Denver while flying down for MileHiCon. And it was good flight fare. I won't say that these are the best stories that these two gentlemen have ever written, but they certainly entertained me for a couple of hours. Lafferty's strange mind comes up with a future in which a Pop History group is conventioning in town and determined to change reality by simply throwing out a lot of stuff. There are some wild and zany scenes; "From the Thunder Colt's Mouth", it's called. Gene Wolfe presents "Tracking Song" in which the protagonist has fallen from a giant sleigh, is nursed to health by local tribes, then sets off to catch the sleigh. He never does but he has marvelous adventures along the way and meets Cim Glowing (such a lovely name for the maid of the story.). Again we have an underground city (a cave system this time) and the overthrow of a tyrant. Wish this were only part of a novel. How about it, Gene? Walter Moudy's story is the weak one here; did I hear that he had since died? Someone? Anyone?



THE FEATHERS FLY

BILL PATTERSON, 1919 W. Berridge, #1, Phoenix, AZ 85015

Anglo-Saxon Poems: Is this a hoax. It is a good one if so. "The Shipwreck" especially is steeped in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. As far as I can see, the annotations are self-consistent and in the best tradition of academic commentary; terse, interesting, neatly done. Rosco save us from the prolix! If it is a hoax, I congratulate the hoaxer. If not, thanks for printing them. It's hard enough to penetrate the spirit of the people and the times; any such help is welcome.

Brief comment on Jeff Frane's review of The Miscast Barbarian: I first glanced at the book this past Westercon, but I have read deCamp's extensive non-scholarly biography of HPL. I was left with the impression that deCamp had some strong prejudices which he tried manfully to keep under control -- and he succeeded for the most part. If his prose in The Miscast Barbarian is similar, the kind of strip-quoting Frane did is just not fair to the author. About Jaws That Bite: the first story that attracted me to Coney was a novelette in Galaxy which later became part of Friends Come In Boxes. The novelette is centered on an adolescent girl and I did not note the "alien species" approach Frane notes. Once again, I have not read the new book (distribution is spotty in Phoenix) but if this is another example of strip quoting, I'd judge Frane to be guilty of irresponsible reviewing. Naughty! Naughty!

Don Keller's letter surprised me a bit. He speaks of Stableford's Halcyon Drift as "Delanyesque, without the poetic prose." I though Halcyon Drift was strongest on prose and color -- different colors than Delany's, true, but just as fine in an icy blue and black way. I must confess that I have not read The Dispossessed. Nor am I likely to; for some reason, I have never been able to get into LeGuin's prose style. She and I just miss somewhere and never quite get together. I've tried. Ghu, how I've tried, wading through City of Illusions, The Left Hand of Darkness, Lathe of Heaven and short stories such as "The Direction of the Road." Dutifully I read every LeGuin I come across, but nothing connects. My most grievous fault.

Sam Long: Right now I'm loccking to Grieg, Purcell and Vivaldi. It does take all kinds. Usually I find romantic music best to write fiction by, but baroque best to type by. I try to choose music by the emotional range, to suit the stylistic palette I'm using in my writing.

Jan Appelbaum: Heh, heh. I've just solved that problem for myself. I recently moved across town and, getting ready for the move, discovered that I had about 1½ tons of books, magazines, etc. So I said to meself, says I, "Patterson, at 23, you've got too much junk to be carting around for the rest of your life. So I just extracted the stuff I read most often and had the local sf club cart off the rest as an extended loan. So now I've only got eight 6-ft. shelves of books and records left -- and I can get at the rest whenever I want.

K. ALLEN BJORKE, 3626 Coolidge St. N.E., Minneapolis, MN 55418

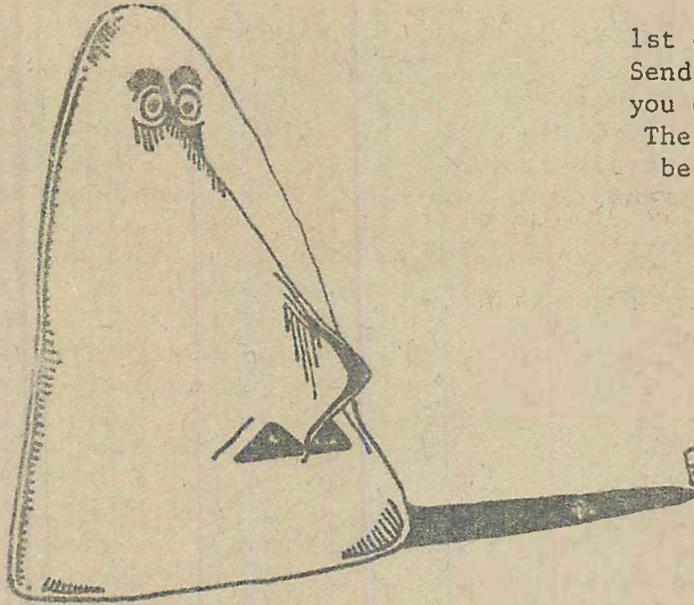
Although most of A-Ws 16 & 17 were quite tasty, I always dread reading the reviews if they're of books I haven't read or by people I don't know well -- ever had a case where an especially well-written review has turned you away from buying this or that book, while other, more poorly written reviews say it's good. And when you finally decide to read it because the library finally has a copy and it won't cost you, you find it to be quite a nice thing? So unless I know the book or the reviewer's tastes, I'm fearful fo reviews. (Now is that paranoid or is that paranoid?)

This Sealed Knot Society invasion business seems like a lot more fun than the re-creations of battles here in the good ol' USA, since ours use guns and they use swords and all that cool stuff (though I must admit that Minnesota does have the Renaissance Fair every year. But those battles are nothing in particular but a lot of sword-hacking. Perhaps I should go there myself sometime and join in. Y'suppose they could use a Viking?

SIMON AGREE, 8001 Reseda Blvd. #102, Reseda, CA 91335

I liked A-W very much. To tell the truth, I like anything that gives me a chance to look at more of Bruce Townley's art (and book reviews even; the western section is right next to the sf section in my local bookstore, too. They ease you into it, tho. The border between is Perry Roadhog books.) // Gads, you can't be serious about Brute, can you? Bruce gets dumped on more than Jeff Schalles used to. I like seeing his strange brain work. It's unusual to say the least. The reason I like Bruce is that he has such good taste in music; anybody that's a Blue Oyster Cult fan can't be all bad. //

Don't feel slighted on other grounds. I've got all this other stuff I could be reading; instead I chose your own Free Commots, and chose well. // Gosh! // Especially interesting was the section on Tom Robbins. Another Roadside Attraction is (need I say: in my humble opinion) the Best Book Ever Written. I had no idea that he had finished a new book; now I'm hard pressed to keep the drool off my typer as I write. The trouble with liking Robbins is that when you mention his name, people think you're talking about the dork who wrote The Carpetbaggers. // Want a hardcover



1st edition of Another Roadside Attraction?
 Send \$2.50 to me and I'll be happy to sell
 you one. Anybody else is welcome also.
 The book is fantastic and there seems to
 be a real cult of Robbins followers. //

doug barbour, 10808 - 75 avenue,
 edmonton, alberta, canada t6e 1k2

well, i'm going to ask:
 where is Strafford College?
 who is Theobald Arnold, PhD?
 it seems too perfect, too
 right, somehow, & indeed
 the introduction is just
 proper, from a tonal point
 of view. i'm not truly
 up on my anglo-saxon, but
 i guess the 'translat-
 ions' are OK; i feel
 they slip too often out

of the otherwise obvious (& proper) attempts to preserve something of the originals' alliteration. this happens a bit too much, that is, there isn't enough alliteration in "The Outcast", which, as Dr. Arnold already points out, is somewhat out of the ordinary as to form. funny, tho, it does have something of the feel of the earlier great AS poems of loss, & he's certainly right to refer to "Deor's Lament". i am half a believer, half a cynic here. & i do recommend a look at the Penguin Book of Anglosaxon Poetry for anyone who was caught up by the feel of these two poems. it contains the best translations i've ever found anywhere.

i once again enjoyed the long & wide-ranging book review section (i also really enjoy Denis Quane's list of what he's been reading, even when i haven't read most of what he talks about) (i guess i just love hearing other people talk about books, no matter which books or at what (short or long) length). i guess i'm going to have to read Shardik one of these days, but i'm still not sure i want to. i can truly say i have a lot of other books to read first, though. i finally read 334 just the other day and it is very fine indeed. Disch is so damnd subtle, & so keenly aware of people as people in their world. his handling of homosexual relationships for example is a lesson to all writers, for he places them in a world where it can be so, & shows us the various couple interacting as ordinary people caught up with each other. something Ursula LeGuin was (alas) unable to do in The Dispossessed (tho, had she done so, it would have made Urras-society much more deeply intelligible). i was also bothered a bit by the sentimentality (almost) of the marriage relationship in "The New Atlantis." tho, i think i enjoyed that story more than many reviewers seem to have. the best one in the book was Tiptree's "A Momentary Taste of Being" tho. i guess you were right to not give away the philosophical mind-explosive the story contains, but you therefore didn't really indicate what an exciting story it was. // Yes, Shardik still sits unread here and I have the increasing feeling that I wish to slow down on reading some of the stuff that isn't all that good, and get to several things that I've kept putting off. I've been sent some things to review for The Seattle Times and that requires time, as well. // The review column is one of those things that I like to read as well, and I guess that's why it takes up so much space. Maybe that's why I started a zine in the first place, to see what other people were reading and recommending. It's been a lot of fun, and I guess I plan to continue to have a fulsome book review column. Especially with some very good people helping out from time to time. //

can science explain why a child can't walk around a puddle?

HARRY WARNER, JR., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740

The editorial made very pleasant reading, except for the natural pangs of jealousy that you inflicted on me, in such ways as mentioning a long auto ride with Susan Wood and wavering over the manifold possibilities of traveling around Old Blighty. I tried to console myself with the memory of the evening Sheryl Birkhead was in my attic this summer.

There just isn't anything specific I can say about Don Keller's column this time. I read it all, and considered it just as professional sounding as the reviews that appear in High Fidelity or Stereo Review. But I don't know this music, with a few minor exceptions, and Don doesn't delve this time into basic issues on which I might have some opinions. Naturally, I do wish that you could run some material about the field I'm familiar with, serious music or classical music or long hair music, or whatever you want to call it. But realistically, you'd come close to wasting time and paper, because there are so few fans with an intense interest in it. // Well, I'm not all that certain that there are so few fans. I've had requests from fans to make tapes of some classical things I've mentioned in other zines. In conversations long hair music comes up often enough. Anyone out there want to do a brief column on classical music and see what sort of response it gets? //

I didn't know quite what to make of the Theobald Arnold article. At first, I assumed that it was some kind of parody or in-group joke. But if that's the case, it's all too subtle for me because I don't find anything in the text to support that supposition. At the same time, even though I know about as much of Anglo-Saxon poetry as I do about Led Zeppelin records, these two poems don't ring true. They seem too concise, too neatly rounded out, to jibe with my vague impressions of the genuine survivals from that era. Maybe I'm convicted by my own ignorance at this point. Or I might be deceived by the fact that these translations are less stodgy than those I remember from literature textbooks. Whatever the real situation, "The Outcast" impresses me as a quite good poem.

Most of the reviews are well done. I do object to the basic attitude that there should be condemnatory reviews in any well-regulated review section. There's a great deal to be said for the assumption that a bad book isn't worth the reviewer's and the reader's time and that good review sections should guide people to the best stuff or to the books which despite flaws are basically worth having. But I know it's more fun for some people to demonstrate their ability to tear something apart.

That's an interesting question that Eric Bentcliffe poses, about re-enactments in the distant future of 20th Century events. Would people feel like having sham battles depicting Revolutionary and Civil War engagements if there were movies or videotape available, showing the original events in full detail? Maybe the impulse to imitate big historical events won't be inhibited by the full documentation of most of the big 20th Century events. After all, little theaters all over the nation continue to produce plays and musicals which have been done in unbeatable style by the movies.

Freff's letter was particularly interesting.



I wish he'd write for some fanzine or other a long article on his experiences in the clown college. And if anything in the world could persuade me to pay another extended visit to New York City, it would be the opportunity to see him getting around the city on a unicycle. // Y'hear, Freff. Harry Warner wants a command performance. And Ash-Wing would be pleased to publish such an article. //

DARRELL SCHWEITZER, Arf's Garth, Newlostland, Thursday, Eighth Month, 875.

I read Professor Arnold's piece in the new A-W and I have serious doubts about it. First of all, it strikes me as odd that such a find, if genuine, would be in a fanzine rather than in a learned quarterly. Frank, I think somebody is pulling your leg. I smell a fake. Outcast Saxons and crazed Elizabethans indeed!

Of course, I am not as knowledgeable in this field as the distinguished Professor is, and my understanding of Old English literature is rather superficial. I cannot be sure, but I think there's something wrong with the meter. As I understand it, OE meter consisted of four stresses per line, with a variable number of non-stressed syllables in between so that roughly it's like this:

...X.XX...X
or
...BANG!.BANG!...BANG!..BANG!

The two poems here stray from this often. In fact, a lot of the lines seem to be made of three stresses rather than four, like"

Of Constantine, The Christian King

Also I might mention that the basis of the alliterative pattern was that something in the first half of the line had to alliterate with the third stress. I am hard pressed to find a single line in these poems that does that. Of course, much is lost in translation, with words coming out with different letters and all, but something of this should have survived. The present items have too many lines like:

Stricken by storm, wearied by wind
1 2 3 4

Properly there should have been a "w" for either #1 or #2. This stuff is at least adequate for fanzine poetry, but let's not kid ourselves.

By the way, in all the translations I've read the gentleman who kept the party-crashers out of the Mead Hall in the Finnesburgh Fragment was named Hnaef, not Hraef.

Just where the hell is Strafford College anyway? I looked it up in a listing of colleges and there ain't no such. Even Miskatonic University was listed, but not this. // I, too, went to the latest edition of American Colleges and Universities after some of the locs seemed to doubt the authenticity of this piece. Darrell's quite right; it's not there. I have written back to Professor Arnold's address and have received no answer. On the other hand, neither has my letter been returned as undeliverable. Your guess is as good as mine, folks. //

Let's see Professor Arnold prove himself and produce the originals of these poems. If he fails they'll go the same way as the Poems of Ossian did. (Quick, what's that?) // I'm trying to remember where I heard or read about the Poems of Ossian. They were a magnificent hoax during the late 19th century, if memory serves. Attributed to a Celtic poet, and later found to be the work of a Scotsman. Now, I did that without looking it up, Darrell. How close did I come to the correct answer? Do I get a prize? //

Life is what you make it; subject to government regulations, of course.

SAMUEL S. LONG, Box 4946, Patrick AFB, FL 32926

Theobald Arnold's two Anglo-Saxon poems were much better, and more interesting, than most. I kind of wish you'd printed the original Anglo-Saxon, too; it would be interesting to compare the two versions. Hmmm, 'Constantine the Christian King' mentioned in the first stanza of "The Outcast" could refer to the Roman emperor who founded Constantinople and swung the Empire toward Christianity; but the Emperor was not a king. However, I read that (according to Malory) Sir Constantine, son of Sir Cadur of Cornwall, was chosen to succeed King Arthur, and it is just possible that this Constantine is meant. I must say I don't think this latter is likely, for a lot can happen to legend in four hundred years -- the time between the Conquest and Malory. And if the original word is not "king" but the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of "Caesar" or "emperor", then Constantine the Great is the one referred to; for his doings, like those of Charles the Great (Charlemagne), were mighty matters of legend in the early Middle Ages. Anyhow, a good article and good poems. This sort of thing ought to appear more often. // I don't know my Arthur as well as I sometimes profess to. I immediately thought of Constantine the Great, but your explication is worthy of thought. //

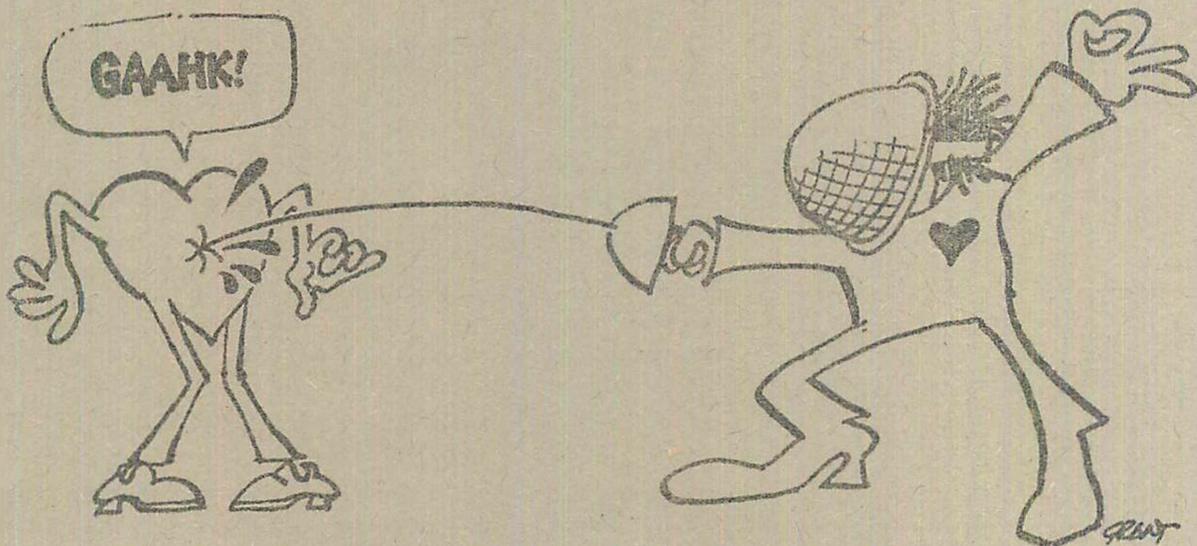
I've not read Shardik (I'm waiting for the paperback), but I immediately recognized Adams' somewhat strange simile quoted on page 21 as being very similar in form, content, and sometimes mal-a-prop-ness to those of Homer in The Iliad, an example of which I'll give below:

With nips at flank and haunch, a well-trained hound
After a lion or wild boar will bound,
The fleeing monster dares not turn around,
So sharp his teeth!

Hector adopted similar tactics, spearing stragglers...

This quote was from Book VIII, Robert Graves' translation. In another part, the fortunes of war are compared to the delicately balanced scales of a "...honest widow (who) spins all day..." Graves notes that "...[m]any of the pastoral, agricultural, and hunting similes which strew the later books...seldom quite suit their contexts," But I'm getting away from my point, which is that Adams has become Homeresque.

You just get over the Asian flu and along comes the income tax.



FREFF, 3624 North Potomac, Arlington, VA 22213

I have discovered a new author, Dick Francis, about whom I will spend a paragraph. He writes mysteries/thrillers. In the middle fifties he was the Queen's jockey in Britain, retiring after one fall too many for his age and peace of mind, and turned to writing. His first book was excellent, and surprised everybody. His second was better. In the last week I have devoured five of them (Nerve, Flying Finish, Dead Cert, Odds Against, Blood Sport and Rat Race...oops, make that six) and am hungry for more. He has certain skills I admire so goddam much...an extremely wide and believable range of characters, excellent timing, a careful eye, an odd insight into psychopathia...and my favorite proof of his writing skill is that even though all of his numerous books are first person narratives they are quite clearly not the same narrators. This is a difficult trick, and he pulls it off easily. I am impressed. I will be re-reading all of them within a year, I am sure.

A version of my face is on the cover of Laser Book #6, The Gates of the Universe, and I also play an imaginary character in the book. Space Commander Freff, indeed. Coulson's sense of humor...my reaction to the Laser packaging has been rather negative. I'm afraid. They've even managed to make Kelly Freas paintings look bad by rushing him, by insisting on that goddam head format, and then packaging the thing in an amateurish graphic design. I personally don't think the series will be any kind of success critically -- Elwood is simply not the person with anything I'd recognize as editorial taste -- but it might sell, with their distribution.

// Hmmm. You been gazing out the window again, my boy, when you should have been paying attention to your lessons. I've been touting (a good word, especially as it concerns Dick Francis) this author for many moons. I second everything you say about him, just a super-fine writer. By now I'm sure you've read Smokescreen and Knockdown as well. What else have we left out? Enquiry. Readers, now pay attention, dammit. If you have the slightest interest in the mystery/thriller genre, go get some Dick Francis. Slayride, that's another title.

BEN P. INDICK (who let him in here again), 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666

Jim Garrison's illo with the several little folk wearing headphones and transistors was most apropos to Keller's article on music. I like pop and rock, and do not know one outfit or singer from another. If I cared it would give me an inferiority complex, but I hope that one day someone will discuss serious music in A-W. It really is nearly as interesting, and not necessarily any less ephemeral than pop...nor more ephemeral. What did annoy me was my daughter laid down \$4 or so for the LP of The Captain and Tinneale or whatever, which is just pop-junk. Come a few months, she'll find it unlistenable. // Easy, Ben. Blood pressure, you know. 'Tis a phase that must be gone through, to the tune of \$\$, to be sure, but an educated ear will come of it eventually. //

I liked very much the Anglo-Saxon poetry section. I was reminded somewhat of Pale Fire by Nabokov, which presented a hypothetical poem and then discussed it (however, Pale Fire is a cleverly disguised and brilliant mystery story, with a splendid poem in Frost's style.). "Arnold's" poems are, like his article, straight-faced, and I am curious as to the author's motives; I had expected satire. Instead the poems are well done in their own right, and the repeated chorus of "The Outcast" is haunting. So, if it isn't satire on Scholarship (viz. the recent piece examining The Wizard of Oz in "scholarly" manner, the writer and title of which I forget) what is it? It is not, for goodness sakes, straight, or what is it dowing in A-W? // Dr. Arnold's exegesis of those two poems has raised more fuss than anything else I've ever published. Gads, even more than the Ken and Terry stories in the early A-Ws. By golly, at least somebody is reading this rag after all. If I could answer your question, I would. //

LARRY CARMODY, 118 Lincoln Ave., Mineola, NY 11501 (This is a COA.)

Stableford is a much better author than he says of himself. It's just the economics of the situation which seem to cause him to turn out things a bit too quickly. Have you read any of his shorter material, particularly "Judas Story" which appears in Best Horror Stories, Series III from DAW? Excellent, and I think Keller would really appreciate it.

DON LIVINGSTONE, 8555 Southlands Crescent, Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 1A8 Canada

Recently you mentioned the Cap Kennedy series. I have read, and greatly enjoyed, the first two stories in the series of 14 published so far. They are well written, have good characterization and, for me at least, bring back that old "sense of wonder." Try one, you may like it. In my opinion, they are highly entertaining stories -- but then many people consider my opinions to be rather odd. For instance, I have always considered Marlon Brando to be a mediocre actor of limited range and felt his performance in "The Godfather" to be inept -- I felt Heinlein's Time Enough For Love was an excellent soporific -- and I feel that some of the Great Canadian Films made in recent years are further evidence of how masochistic we sometimes are -- but Cap Kennedy is great.

In case you are interested, Argo Records of England has just released a three LP album of Nicol Williamson reading The Hobbit. I have yet to buy the album, but plan to do so soon -- the price here is \$16.50. Argo released an excellent two LP album of The Wind in the Willows some years ago. I have this and have enjoyed it greatly. This album is a dramatized version of several of the parts of The Wind in the Willows, not a reading as is the Hobbit recording.

TERRY JEEVES, 230 Bannerdale Rd., Sheffield S11 9FE, England

Have cheer, I thoroughly enjoyed the book reviews. Even when a reviewer's views disagree with my own, I still enjoy them as they often give me a different insight into the book under review. Like Dick's Flow My Tears...this bored me, but your reviewer found something therein. New over here is Patrick Tilley's Fade Out, a taut, well-written yarn about what happens when an alien satellite enforces a power black out as the military work to unravel its secrets. I enjoyed it immensely...wonder if others will.

D. GARY GRADY, 3309 Spruill Ave., Apt. 5, Charleston, SC 29405

Dr. Arnold's poem translations were not the sort of thing I expected to see in a fanzine, even Ash-Wing, but I thoroughly enjoyed them. The refrain, chorus, or whatever you call it of "The Outcast" is something that will haunt my memory for a long time to come. It's one of those things that, when you read it for the first time, seems immediately to become an old memory. Also I think I'm one of the lonely fen their ghosts are gathered on..



I thought Jeff's criticism of deCamp's Howard book was a tad strong. Similar things have been said about deCamp's views of Lovecraft. But I think he (Jeff) might be missing the point of some of the things deCamp is trying to say. I don't believe, for example, that deCamp was referring to anything but sf & f when he wrote the passage about writers eschewing socially-conscious works at the time. DeCamp is tremendously well read (see his meticulously detailed historical novels and non-fiction, for example) and not at all averse to putting sex and social commentary (usually in the form of satire) in his own work (see The Goblin Tower, The Continent Makers, and almost anything he has written in fiction). Unfortunately, deCamp is also highly opinionated and will produce this sort of angry review.

STU SHIFFMAN, 59-17 162 Street, Flushing, NY 11365

Speaking of books, have you read Autumn Angels by Arthur Byron Cover? It's the latest book in the series that Harlan is editing for Pyramid. It is insane. The cover, that is the front illustration as opposed to the author, (although I'm not opposed to the author) is this really wild painting by Ron Cobb. Have you ever seen any of his political cartoons? He is a crazy (meshuganeh) person. Anyway, this nutty book has characters in the far, far future who have taken identity personas from the past, including the demon, the lawyer, the fat man, the Big Red Cheese, the scheming Oriental doctor, the other fat man (who raises black orchids) and his assistant, the witty leg man, and others. You see, somewhere in the future, the bems had raised mere man to the status of god-like man, and the entire book occurs millenia after that. Weird.

KEN JOSEPHANS, 7602 Vicar Place, New Carrollton, MD 20784

I hope you keep Don Keller's column for some time to come. It's very useful as a buying guide. You see, all of the stuff that Don raves about that I've heard, I've disliked. So if his taste is exactly the opposite of mine, his column is just as useful to me as a columnist who agrees with me all of the time. One thing I do envy is his ability to discuss music in words. I don't seem to be able to do that; for me the music is there and words can't be applied to it at any level more complex than like/dislike. I may practice, though, and start a music column in Wyknot. It sounds like a good way to build up the local.

The two Anglo-Saxon poems take the prize for the strangest article I've yet seen in a fanzine. (The former winner was Susan Wood's teddy bear article in Outworlds 19 or 20). I really enjoyed reading them and wish I'd been able to publish them, even though I'm not sure they would have harmonized with the rest of the issue. In Ash-Wing, though, they blend right in.

CHESTER D. CUTHBERT, 1104 Mulvey Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 1J5 Canada

I enjoyed Ross Bagby's second story better than his first; it seemed more unified. His two principal characters have their ultimate fate so clearly defined, however, that they seem inevitably scheduled to conquer all dangers which they encounter. The series may develop a purpose for their wanderings, but so far Ross has mentioned only aimlessness. // Eric Bentcliffe's tribute to P. Schuyler Miller was well deserved. Miller was above the average of the writers of sf who were publishing stories when he appeared, and his frank admiration of A. Merritt struck a kindred chord in me. I have often wondered if any modern writer of fantastic adventure stories has surpassed Merritt, but I have not even sampled the work of many of the greatest since his day. The reviews you publish may lead me to some very enjoyable reading, but I doubt if I am capable ever again of the near-worship of any writer which Merritt inspired.

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Gads, out of room. We Also Heard From: Chris Hulse, Tim Marion, Jim Allan, Fred Miller, Robert Alfonso, Eli Cohen, Mike Bracken, Dorothy Jones, Doug Barbour, Laurine White, Joe Pearson, Jodie Offutt, David Kleist, Randall Larson, Charles Cushing, Jon Singer, Ken St. Andre, Howard Thompson, Don D'Amassa, Jim Meadows III, Ken Mayo, Alison Abramowitz, Steve Beatty, Wayne W. Martin. Visits from C. Brown, S. Wood, J. Berry, H. Baile

