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ASH-WING 20 is brought to you by Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W.,
 Seattle, WA 98166. It is a publication of the Bran & Skolawn Press.
 It is available for samurai swords, crock pot recipes, rustling autumn
 leaves (gold or red), used valve caps (metal only, please) and warmth.

Dedicated to Christine McGowan, this year's DUFF winner,

THE FREE COMMOTS

Sometimes I wonder how I got into this crazy game. The rest of this zine has been sitting in semi-collated state on the davenport in the living room. Ah, what wives must put up with sometimes. Every time I pass through the living room, those stacks stare at me balefully. I wince and try not to notice. Lately I've taken to snarling at them. "I've been sick, dammit. I've had the flu twice in three weeks. Can't you wait until I feel a little bit better?" Of course, they don't reply; they just sit there and smirk.

So tonight, feeling only slightly better, I decided to whip a stencil into the machine and let her rip. Ghu guide me. I haven't the vaguest idea of what will come out. On the other hand, I have only two pages to myself, so if all goes awry, you won't have to suffer very long.

I suppose that I can start off by apologizing. The item that draws the most commentary from Ash-Wing readers is the lettercol. So, of course, it is completely missing from this issue. Oh boy, will the snarls come in. Usually the second most heavy comment comes on this column, however wandering the comments of the editor. So I find myself with only two pages to meander. Well, blame it on the Post Office. Hee, hee. A while back I decided that one way to save money on this monster was to stay under 4 oz., or, as it works out, 40 pages. Now look what it's done to me. Backed me right into a corner. I suppose if I'd admit it, I did a poor job of editing this time. Just ran myself out of space. But I wanted to get it into the mail before I take off for MileHiCon in Denver, so what you see is what you get. I'll admit that it comes out badly. Not that the material isn't good. I like it very much and would not want to have the authors think otherwise. It's just that it's a very uneven issue in terms of balance. Well, I get to produce a bumper once in a while and I promise to do better next time. I'll start in on the letters in the file first, so don't be surprised if the next issue is just as uneven. Half letters. Maybe one of these days I can get back to putting an issue together right.

Then there's another serious matter for which I must make public apology. I lost a music column by Don Keller. Don asked me about it at Westercon and I promised that it would be upcoming in the next issue; this one. At the time I talked to him I know that I had it. I had seen it recently. Whether it got lost in the shuffle of all things science fictional to their new home in the converted bedroom or what I haven't the faintest idea. But the loss of someone else's work is nigh unforgiveable. All I can do is hang my head and apologize to Don. I really am sorry.

It seems that so much has happened since the last issue that it is difficult to write anything at all. My column is usually just ramblings about the doings in my life. I'd need ten pages to tell you all since the 1st of July. As a matter of fact, if any of you would like to have a copy of THE ROGUE RAVEN when it comes along sometime during the next month, drop me a postcard and let me know. A number of people have been receiving the personalzine for some time. Some are going to be cut off for not responding and there will be some new names to take up the slack. The print run usually stands at about 80, so it will have to be first come, first served.

There have been an unusually large number of fans through town over the summer. They will be a major topic of discussion in TRR, but it's been a lot of fun having them through, even though they have disturbed my equilibrium and nearly sunk the Denton publishing empire. You can't continue to churn out fanzines and apazines when there

were so many interesting people through town to visit with and talk to and show around a little bit. Just before Westercon Dave and Marcia Hulan were in the area for vacation and we spent most of a couple of days with them. Sheryl Birkhead arrived at about the same time and was houseguest for a while, then accompanied us to Westercon. After we arrived home, we found that Jon Singer and Hope Leibowitz had already beaten us to Seattle. We had a chance to visit with them and test Jon's prodigious culinary powers. Shortly thereafter Jerry Kaufman followed him into town to stay with Loren MacGregor. We had a chance for a short visit. At the same time Eli Cohen flew down from Saskatchewan to accompany Anna Jo and I to the Wagner Orgy, the complete Ring Cycle. Much fun and we ate and slept the Nibelungen for a week. Susan Wood arrived near the end of that week for a few days stay.

Lessee, then lonely Montana fan John Carl visited for a couple of days, staying overnight one night with us and one night with Loren. Soon after Ed Bryant was in town and we had him out to dinner for an evening. Then it was Don Livingstone and family for dinner one night as they wandered around the Pacific Northwest on their vacation. Finally Dale and Mona Goble sped up that ribbon of highway called I-5 to spend a weekend with us. Is that enough name-dropping? If your name does not appear in one of the two preceding paragraphs it's because you did not visit. (Please, Chu, don't let me have forgotten anyone!!!)

Afraid to stay home for fear someone else would come visiting, we took off on the big bird for Wisconsin in mid-August. There were several things in mind. My mother's relatives still live in Milwaukee and the surrounding countryside. We stayed with a cousin in Racine, visited my Aunt Susan in Milwaukee. Susan is 82, just recently had open heart surgery with three bypasses, and is in super condition. Another aunt, Alice, celebrated her 80th birthday while we were there and the surprise birthday party was really a surprise, with about 50 people in attendance.

Later we rented a car and drove up to Madison to visit Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell. They happened to be having a collating party at the time and we had a chance to meet others of the mad MADSTF crowd. Hi, gang. The following morning we turned south and drove to Illinois to visit with Gene Wolfe. Had a super time with him, except that it was too short by days. We only had about three hours to visit with him as we had engagements back up in Wisconsin for that evening. Amongst all of this we were able to sandwich a trip to the Wisconsin State Fair and a day trip to Cedarburg, an older Wisconsin town which has been kept in excellent shape by people who care and which has an old woolen mill converted into a winery and specialty shops which can hold your attention for an entire day. It was lots of fun visiting the relatives and seeing a different part of the country. The only regret is that the stay was much too short and there were other things which we would liked to have visited.

A couple of weeks ago we journeyed to Portland to take in a program called The Wonderful World of Children's Books. Four speakers were featured but the two who held the most interest were Nancy Ekholm Burkert who does outstanding children's illustrations and Ursula LeGuin. Ursula has just returned from a year in England and it was good to see her again. Look for her new collection of short stories, ORSINIAN TALES. I managed to get caught up on the autographs for a stack of books that made the rest of the people in line envious. Thanks to Jeff Frane we stayed at his folks fabulous home east of Portland and had a fantastic dinner prepared by his father. Excellent weekend.

This last weekend I journeyed to Vancouver to be on a panel at the British Columbia Science Fiction Association. The panel was late starting and who should waltz in the door and blow the whole evening but Harlan Ellison. The panel was out; Harlan stood and talked quietly with groups of fans and made the evening a super one for the Vancouver fen. Out of room; next time maybe I'll get it together better. Till then.

CARICATURE IN SCIENCE FICTION

eric mayer

/ When Eric sent me the following article he added a little note which I thought I might pass on to you, the reader: "I think I've started, finally, to get down on paper a lot of random thoughts that have been going through my mind for a long time without ever coalescing. If the thing seems drawn out or stilted it's because I'm trying my best to get at something, to delineate a certain mode of thinking, to illustrate a certain train of thought that is, perhaps, more important than the conclusion itself. I'll be anxious to hear what the readers think about it." So there you have it, an open invitation from the author to discuss his ideas. - fdd /

I have no doubt that in the future early science fiction will be studied for its historical value despite its artistic shortcomings, just as medieval morality plays are studied today. No other branch of literature is so distinctly a product of the 20th century. I have doubts, however, about the future of most present day science fiction. Modern writers seem to be adhering to contemporary fashions in style and theme and nothing is more certain than that fashions change.

More importantly, present day writers are losing contact with their roots, forgetting the traditions of the genre they are supposedly working within. Many sf writers will change their styles until they are producing mainstream literature with fantastic overtones. Others will produce interesting but flawed hybrids. There is nothing wrong with this, certainly. I'm sure I'll be fascinated to see what kind of mainstream books my favorite sf authors can produce. But it troubles me that science fiction itself may fail to reach its true potential.

The presently popular idea of infusing science fiction novels with the kinds of style and content usually found in critically and academically acclaimed literature is unsound. It's like orchestrating a rock n roll song. The result may be interesting, it will surely be more complex than the original song, but it won't be rock n roll anymore, either.

If science fiction is to evolve rather than metamorphising into just another subform of mainstream literature, it must develop its own traditions rather than borrowing, fifty years too late in most cases, the traditions developed by mainstream authors for mainstream purposes.

Unfortunately the majority of science fiction writers and critics have become so

mesmerized by mainstream critical standards that they have lost sight of just what traditions the science fiction genre has to offer. A good example is to be found in the area of characterization.

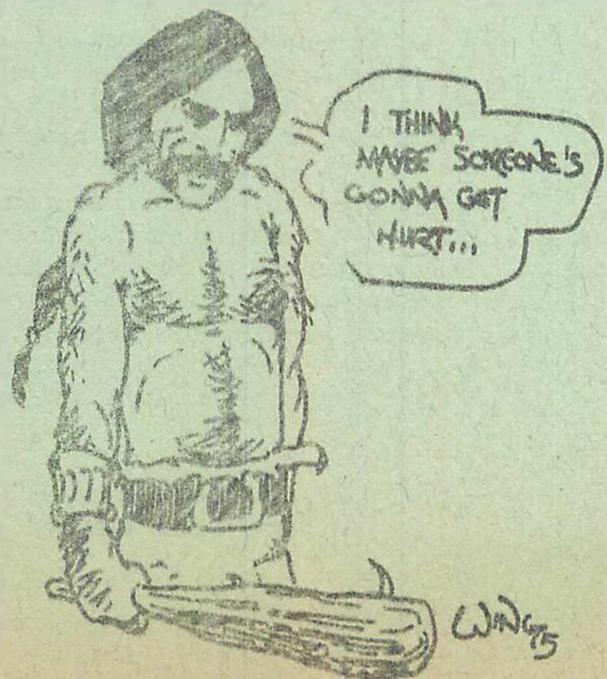
Today's leading schools of criticism tend to place characterization on a pedestal, considerably higher in esteem than the many other elements of literature. So it isn't surprising that much science fiction criticism and the writings of many modern science fiction authors, focuses primarily on character. Science fiction, according to these observers, has "progressed" from the days of the early pulps when stories featured stereotyped mad scientists and the like, to the present when the best received stories feature intricate, "well rounded" characters complete with neuroses and sex lives. John Campbell is usually cited for his role in introducing characterization to the genre, thus bringing about the golden age and starting science fiction on its way up the literary ladder of progress.

It is odd how the very writers who tend to sneer at simplistic notions of technological progress, seeing such "progress" in a dystopian light, are so willing to accept the equally simplistic notion of literary progress. Literature changes. That is not to say that the changes are always for the good and that the literature of today is necessarily better than the literature of yesterday. When one considers literature in this frame of mind it is only too easy to dismiss older writings as merely "crude", or even "bad" -- steam engines compared to today's nuclear reactors. In fact such a narrow view leads to a considerable amount of distortion. In science fiction, for instance, it is simply not true that those stereotyped mad scientists of the pulps were merely crude, unevolved, ancestors of the rounded characters prevalent today and to dismiss them as such is to misinterpret and neglect one of the genre's most valuable traditions.

To begin with, "stereotype" is, in this case, an incorrect term because it is pejorative and seems to suggest that a very poor attempt at characterization has been made. This is not true. Early science fiction (for example: Edmond Hamilton's "The Man Who Evolved" or Neil R. Jones' "The Jameson Satellite" - the first two stories in the Asimov anthology, Before the Golden Age.) was not primarily, if at all, concerned with characterization. It was an intellectual literature, concerned with ideas and "stereotyped" characters were exactly what was called for in such a context.

In Agatha Christie - Mistress of Mystery G.C. Ramsey points out that the mystery, another intellectually oriented genre, tends to feature caricatures rather than rounded characters for the simple reason that the puzzle, the whodunit aspect, is of primary importance and to reveal a character's personality fully would be to reveal either his guilt or innocence, thereby spoiling the Puzzle.

In much the same way, early science fiction writers employed caricatures so as not to detract from the intellectual content of their stories, the scientific theorizings and speculations which were their primary concern. To criticize early science fiction for its poor characterization is to misinterpret it. One might



point out that much of the intellectual content of the pulp era was trivial and that the caricatures - the two dimensional characters - used by the authors were unoriginal and badly drawn. But that is not to say that there is anything inherently wrong or crude about a story built on ideas and using caricatures. If the present day author wants to write a higher quality science fiction story he should concern himself with developing more challenging ideas and better drawn caricatures rather than throwing away the traditions of his genre and replacing them with the character study that has so long been the primary concern of the mainstream.

There is nothing artistically "wrong" with caricature. A caricature is a simplified portrait of a person, focusing on and exaggerating a few individuating characteristics. The caricatures used by early science fiction writers were often so crude and uninteresting as to seem stereotypes. It was the execution that was flawed, not the conception. For proof one need only consider the work of Charles Dickens who has one the approval of readers and critics alike. For those who have read Dickens' novels, caricatures like Uriah Heap, Wilkens Micawber and Tiny Tim live on when memories of hundreds of well-rounded characters have faded.

Customarily, caricatures are employed in supporting roles, while the protagonist is depicted in three dimensions. But in the science fiction novel the protagonist is the idea - the scientific puzzle or speculation on which the novel is based.

Aside from whatever personal appeal the author chooses to give them, caricatures serve any number of utilitarian purposes. They can symbolize in a concise, yet very human, way different types of personalities or different stratas of society. Consider the rich variety of caricatures in Dickens' Hard Times. Within the confines of 300 pages he presents us with a total cross section of English society - the successful businessman, the displaced and impoverished aristocrat, the factory worker, the labor agitator, the schoolteacher, the student, the members of a travelling circus and many others. By means of caricature each type is presented briefly and memorably. Dickens is writing about the evils of industrial society and how the various levels of society are shaped and influenced by the advent of industry. In his characterization he presents us only with the character information that is pertinent to his theme. Insistence on round characters could only have resulted in a longer, less cohesive and less interesting book.

The pertinence of this method to science fiction should be obvious. Early science fiction caricatures were functional in a clumsy way. The scientist, with his one trait of curiosity, did serve to propel author and reader into the desired realms of speculation. Later writers have made better use of caricature.

Gully Foyle, in Alfred Bester's The Stars My Destination is a brilliant example of caricature - a character driven by the single trait of anger, a trait that is physically manifested by his ferocious tattoo mask. Once again the relationship between Foyle and many a Dickens caricature - Tiny Tim with his crutch, the lawyer Jagers forever washing his hands, Uriah Heap rubbing his palms together and professing to be 'umble' - should be obvious. Foyle is far from being a subtle creation. He is in fact bigger than life and though essentially shallow, he is also unforgettable.

Perhaps the most perfect of all science fiction caricatures are Isaac Asimov's robots whose characters are all delineated, essentially, by three traits - the laws of robotics.

Presently Larry Niven seems most successful in using caricature. His single-minded aliens, while failures from a realistic viewpoint, succeed brilliantly on a literary level. Niven's popularity is not surprising. If Charles Dickens were alive

today and writing science fiction he would very likely be inventing Puppeteers, Kzinti and the like.

Science fiction has been called a literature of ideas. Surely there is room for such a literature and just as surely the caricature is most at home there. In fact, the unique suitability of the caricature to science fiction has been proven again and again. I have cited a few examples, I'm sure you can cite your own. There's no need to belabor the point.

I've already gone on, perhaps, at too great a length. But I have tried to present not only an argument in favor of caricature but a way of thinking, a critical approach to science fiction. I've grown up with science fiction; I think it is a literature with tremendous possibilities, but more and more writers and critics seem to be losing sight of the real traditions and tools of the genre.

It would be ridiculous to criticize a contemporary novel as if it were an Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy. It is just as ridiculous to criticize a science fiction novel as if it were a contemporary novel. The elements of the forms differ.

I can sense this difference when I read science fiction, but thanks to entrenched literary dogma, I find it hard to pin down. I hope, then, that you will consider this article as the first gropings toward some sort of science fiction aesthetic.

finis

/ Just as I was stencilling Eric's article Leigh Edmond's FAPA zine arrived from Australia and what he had written was apropos of the article above. I apologize to Leigh for stealing the following from FUR BOATEN! 1/

To put it very bluntly, I consider A Mote in God's Eye to have been an exceedingly good yarn. When a five hundred page book has me going through it in virtually one sitting it has to have something going for it. Despite various imperfections it really does do wonders for the tired old sense of wonder, and I don't mean just the 'Moties'. True, they are aliens but in the end their motivations become all too easy to understand. Humans in the same situation, with the same breeding pattern, would probably do little different from them. That was the real let down for me, but then it probably would not have been if I'd not heard so much about it before. For once I would like to come across some real aliens. They might not be understandable, but what the hell. Other good yarns I have read have been Grey Lensman and The Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah! In fact, I believe that there is more to good science fiction than just good writing of the sort that makes the critics hearts glad. If I want to read decent writing then there are lots and lots of books that have that sort of stuff in them, but how many with good ideas and sensawonder plots. Not too many, eh?

In all truth, I've been getting myself so worked over about this that I have in mind *gasp* a sercon fanzine which will review mundane fiction by good old stfnal standards. If it's good enough for mundane reviewers to criticize stf for not being up to their standards there's no reason why we can't do the same thing back to them. After all, making judgments that a book is good because of the characterization or because it "says something about the human condition" and lousy because it uses the old "mad scientist and beautiful daughter routine" are purely arbitrary and have nothing to do with the actual state of the cosmos.

I think that I might even call it something like MUNDANE FICTION REVIEW and charge money for it. Now that the busy-body university people have decided to take stf just the tiniest bit seriously we owe it to them to return the favour and be just a little bit serious about why we know that stf is more enjoyable to read. Maybe it's about time they found out what they've been missing in their mundane reading and writing.

// Comments gratefully accepted //

RIK'S RAMBLES

RICHARD STOOKER

/ When I received the following article from Rick I hefted its 24 pages and exclaimed, "migawd!" I thought to myself, I'll read the first few pages and then see if I want to continue. Nearly a half hour later, I finished reading it and had decided to publish it. It's uneven, but it kept me going right to the end and I thought it might do the same for others. It will appear in two parts, the second and final part appearing in the next issue of A-W. /

PROLOGUE:

In the fall of 1973 I took an automobile trip around parts of the country, chiefly in the north midwest. It ended when I arrived at rich and Colleen Brown's house in Falls Church, Virginia and began a stay that would total four months. I took notes as I went along, originally intending to write them up in much more complete form for my personalzine, MUNDAC. Eventually I gave up the idea. However, recently reading them over for the first time in two years, I decided the notes themselves may be worth publishing, if for nothing but some of the pieces of trivia they contain.

Chiefly out of laziness, I have decided not to edit them. Except for a few inserted explanations, words added to complete the syntax and some grammar cleaned up, they appear as I wrote them day by day two-and-a-half years ago. (Unless the editor of this fanzine has decided to exercise his editorial prerogative on them.)

I did no polishing. Some of the wording is careless and confusing. Some of it even I'm not sure exactly what I was trying to say. Some of it will be confusing because the explanations would take up too much space, be tiresome, or simply because I got tired of making those brackets.

There are no great thoughts or perceptive observations here. I had no time to put them in my notebook. I just hope some of the superficialities recorded are moderately entertaining to some readers.

My thanks to everyone; Jim, Doug, Hank and Lesleigh, Clell, Marty and Mike, Betty, and especially rich and Colleen, who gave me their hospitality.

September 11, 1973: Went to Jim's / Turner /. Columbia has changed. A&P gone, turned into parking lot. Tiger Paw Restaurant where Taco Tico should be. Pancake

House where Student Store used to be. Jim weighed in at 450. Lost 150 pounds exactly in six months. Has to quit drinking. Found a fanzine for Terry Hughes at College Ave. apartment where he had not lived for nearly 16 months. Began with 58208 miles.

9-12: Shopped. Checked on Doug's Carroll stencils.

9-14: Noticed that college freshmen look now like high school students to me.

9-15: Anita Brown came to visit Jim. Talked extensively about Jim's plans for a western in 1890's with young W.C. Fields. Had waitress at Pancake House that was unbelievably friendly and considerate. Anita slept on Jim's couch so I wound up on the floor.

9-16: Went to Tipton; Doug gone. He was then managing the Tipton Hotel. I sit in the lobby all afternoon blowing my nose. Weird hotel. Old, broken down; an antique in itself. Old men in the lobby. Doug came back from fishing around dinner. Felt feverish when I went to bed. Spent night that seemed very long. But the next morning when I got up I found it was only eight o'clock.

9-17: Did nothing but sit around Doug's rooms and read.

9-18: Left Doug's. Went through California and Jefferson City and up to Columbia. Nice, pretty gently rolling hills of forest and farmland. Had planned to stay in Columbia only long enough to see if Adams the local used book store. I looked them up in nearly every city I visited. had opened again, but as I went in I heard an ad on the radio for the Lynn Anderson concert that night. Adams was closed; I stayed at Jim's. Concert was nice, Boots Randolph, Floyd Cramer and Lynn. Unfortunately, she had only one set. Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass took up the other part of the second half.

9-19: Went up 63 through Moberly. Stopped at a roadside park just before Macon. Countryside has become much more Illinois-like, flat with rows and rows of corn bordering the highway. The tree next to my car was full of hickory or walnuts. They kept dropping off at odd intervals, making a racket when they clunked against the picnic table or the garbage can. No bathrooms. Had my first experience with shitting in the open and using grass and leaves to wipe my ass. One large camper with a Harley strapped to the front stopped. I thought they might be young, or have kids with them. But it was an old couple because of the season, they were the only other travelers I ran into except on weekends and a little dog who studiously ignored me. Cheese and crackers and gin and Seven-up in the darkness. Draggers from Macon would come by, turn around in the park, pull onto the highway, come to a dead stop, and then start as fast as they could, squealing tires. Very annoying and unnerving. Vowed to buy Kleenex the next day.

9-20: When I woke up found another car had stopped behind me. But he kept on sleeping even as I got up and made a lot of racket. Went through Kirksville - so far, no used bookstores. Found a nice park north of Kirksville with a fair-sized lake. A man is fishing and has caught several catfish and a bass.

Stopped at another park along the way. A herd of sheep, many with black faces, grazed in a nearby field. Two men in a pickup came down to feed them. They called in a high voice; the sheep were agitated but refused to come. One man went over to them but they still wouldn't go until he finally attracted the attention of one. When he got one to follow him, the others followed along. They crossed most of the field but the head sheep finally got tired of walking, and the whole herd joined him in munching grass. By putting food in front of their noses they finally got most of the

herd over to the truck where they fed them a white powder.

Went into Iowa after dinner. Drove until just past Ottumwa (?) and spent the night parked along the highway.

9-21: Used books at last! A book store in Iowa City sold some used books as well as old, and so did the Goodwill Store. Spent most of the day in the library. Tired of small town phone-books the size of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. All Iowa towns of any

size seem to have a town square, a courthouse or a public park. Stores surround it, and on the surrounding streets cars can park diagonally in the middle of the street, separating the two lanes of traffic.

Had piece of very good, unexpected luck. Was driving from Iowa City to Cedar Rapids, looking for a rest stop to spend the night, and discovered a public access camping area overlooking a large river, and very removed from highway sounds.

Met a guy who'd stopped there from a small town in southern Illinois, close to Cairo. Went to school in Carbondale, planning to become a forest ranger. Was seeing a girlfriend in Cedar Rapids. Had driven the whole way just that day.

9-22: Spent the day in Cedar Rapids, looking at bookstores and in the library, then drove back to the same camp ground. A young couple with two children had driven in when I was down by the river. I said hello but they didn't seem anxious to get into a conversation. Tired of driving and putting the kids to bed. Many others drove up after I'd settled down to bed, but most left first thing in the morning.

9-23: Talked to the children. Boy's name was Eric; he was about three or four. Girl's name was Heather. Beautiful name -- must use it sometime / in a story, that is / . She told me she'd start school next year. Both were hyper, blonde-haired rascals. Heather told me they sent swimming last night. Hard to believe. I didn't see 'em, but possible. I was shivering with winter clothes and a light jacket on. They were comfortable in shorts, shoes and light shirt.

Read, and worked on MUNDAC. Picknickers came and went but nobody who seemed to want to talk to me, and nobody I really cared to talk to. Called Mom, and Hank and Lesleigh / Luttrell / . When I got back to campsite a bus with curtained windows had parked. But I never saw anybody come in or out of it. Except for that, I was alone for the night.

9-24: Went to bookstores and library in Dubuque.

9-25: Went to Hank and Lesleigh's.

9-26: Cut stencils and read.

9-27: Cut stencils and read.

9-28: MUNDAC 3 published.

9-29: Left Hank and Lesleigh's.



9-30: Read and worked at roadside park north of Madison. Two old people stopped by to pick up hickory nuts off the ground. Said they lived in Madison and liked to come here for picnics. The nuts had been dropping sporadically all night and bugging me when they crashed through the branches and leaves and banged on the table. When I told them I was headed for Minnesota they said they always went up there in October because it was so pretty. The trees here are just beginning to change color. Cows in a nearby pasture moo all the time, day and night. Called home. Rejections from Bobbs-Merrill on juvenile swimming books. Called Charlie Smith but he wasn't home.

10-1: Drove up to Eau Claire. Saw Ringling Bros., Barnum and Bailey Circus train. Beautiful autumn scenery and fir trees. Will start on novel again. Spent most of day in Eau Claire. Couldn't get Charlie on phone. Stopped at roadside park for night and found a white Schwinn ten-speed racer with rattaps behind the out-house. The screw fastening the two metal pieces connecting fender to wheel was missing, but otherwise it seemed in good condition. Rode it a little that morning.

10-2: Completely failed to get in contact with Charlie. Investigated book stores in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Did my laundry. Stopped by roadside park with a spring-fed faucet that runs continuously. Much easier to wash hair in than a pump, although very cold. Ate lunch in St. Paul in a real diner-shaped diner, like the one in LITTLE LULU.

10-3: Spring seems to be a known place for hunters and campers to stop and get water; they've been doing it all day. Straightened up books in trunk, and the rest of the car. Wind has been blowing up a storm for hours. But it never came.

10-4: State policeman knocked on the window late at night. He looked in and asked me if I were just sleeping for the night, and left without another word when I said yes. Either he thought I was up to no good, or actually thought I might be in trouble and need help.

Went to St. Cloud. Bummer results in both book stores and library. Left to go to roadside park to read and write rest of the day. City did seem to have a lot of hyper-active and unafraid squirrels. First frost that night.

10-5: Found beautiful wayside rest, full of tall pine trees. Saw large bird that looked like a hawk swoop close to the ground between the trees. Had stopped earlier at another park. It had lots of playground equipment and an advertized bathroom and showers that weren't there. A small river flowed nearby that was more the size of a stream or large creek. Called the Red Eye River. Did plan to stay the night there but a busload of highschool students arrived to eat lunch there, so I decided to move on. Glad I did because this camp is much nicer. It's away from town and has bathrooms.

Have noticed that there are many large piles of ricks in the fields. Are these glacier left rocks that the farmers dug out of the ground when they cleared the land? Land as a whole is much woodsier, farm land scruffier than more southern states. Have seen many fir and birch trees.

A blue and white colored bird has been pecking away at a pine tree, not digging into the wood, but peeling away the bark, apparently to get at the insects underneath. It just keeps working its way up. Also saw a chipmunk the size of a large mouse.

10-6: Drove up to Itaska State Park. Saw a place selling velvet paintings and a wood-carving shop on the way up. Stopped in a cafe for breakfast. Already inside was an Indian family. The man was drunk and began talking to me. He was a Chippewa Indian forty-seven years old and was born on the nearby reservation, five miles from the Mississippi. Used to be a Golden Gloves and professional boxer, fought in Chicago.

The family (his wife, two sons and a daughter), lived in Minneapolis and were going to visit old friends for the weekend. He also assured me to go past the lake to find the headwaters of the Mississippi.

When they left the lady running the cafe told me a few other things about the Indians, how the Minnesota Indians were Chippewa, with some Sioux, that in this near reservation the people still lived in tarpaper shacks, took their government checks and immediately bought booze with it before food, loved to fight, that when they moved into a government housing project, they tore out all the light fixtures and sold them, and that it was the half and quarter breed Indians who caused all the trouble, and the full-breeds let you alone, that Indians in other reservations had more self-respect, and in the reservations further west the Indians lived better than in those of Minnesota.

Itaska Park is very beautiful, full of lakes and birch groves and clumps of Pine trees. Visited the Mississippi headwaters. Crossed the chain of rocks at the very beginning, and went wading all around, into the lake and upstream. Soon discovered that the 'headwaters' cover more than just that one place. The area around is very marshy grassland intercut with tiny streams that are fed by the lake and empty into the main body of the river. I waded through some of that land, and discovered a beaver dam, and saw the beaver house. But the lake formed by the dam was too deep to wade through. I also got into the marshland from the side of the lake.

Drove through a long stretch of wilderness preserve on "Wilderness Drive," saw at least fifty miles in an observation tower.

There are two cemeteries in the park, a pioneer one, and Indian mounds. The pioneer has all graves of very old people, or young children, with the exceptions of one man shot while hunting around the lake. The Indian mounds were about three feet high, covered with grass and undergrowth. Most were about the size of a grave, but there was one very big one. It was the same width as the others, but it stretched about ten to fifteen yards long. They were built by the Sioux.

Stopped at a very fancy and done up rest site, with modern plumbing bathrooms. Even has a night watchman who never said a word to me, but would stand outside and watch me when I walked back to the car, and until I'd been inside for about five minutes.

10-7: Drove up to Lancaster. Night watchman was at old rest stop almost all morning.

10-8: Customs an ordeal. There was a car up ahead with two old people and a very straight looking young couple. They got waved ahead with only perfunctory questioning. The guy grilled me on whether I was looking for a job in Canada. He opened up the hood of my trunk and poked around and asked me why I had so many books, looked at them and the comics; but never did find the bottle of gin hidden under fifteen layers of stuff. He asked me how much cash I had, and made me show it to him. Then he asked to see my traveler's checks. When I went around to the front to get them, and headed back, he went to the front on the other side and opened the glove compartment himself. He



poked around and looked at my bank balance in my checkbook. He finally decided that there wasn't any technical reason he could stop me, though he still wasn't convinced I wasn't going to be a drag on Canada's economy, and told me to go on.

When I got to Winnipeg I noticed all the banks and stores were closed, and discovered that it was a holiday, Canada's Thanksgiving. I spent most of the day walking around Portage and finding the various book stores, so I'd go straight to them the next day.

Canadians have a way of painting the trim, and possibly large sections of their houses bright colors. You see homes purple on white, red on white, etc. Very pretty and very attractive.

Discovered a Chinese food place called the Mandarin Restaurant, cheap. It was much an informal cafe. I ate lunch and dinner there: egg rolls, meat cakes, perogi, won ton, mau tau (?), steamed glutinous rice and a curry puff. The woman who ran it came from northern China, so the food was cooked in that style. She'd lived in Winnipeg three years, and Malaysia before that. She told me that the temperature in Winnipeg in the winter got down to 40 degrees below. Last winter had been a mild one; they hadn't had one blizzard. She also seemed fascinated with the subject of tornadoes, when she learned I was from the midwest. She also thought they grew cotton around St. Louis since it was on the Mississippi. Also said some Chinese restaurants put the same filling in all their food, but that hers was different, as it should be.

Wandered around the streets some. Saw the memorials on Memorial Boulevard.

Had decided to sleep in the railway station. I was reading in there about midnight when a porter came by and told me they were closing up, so I spent the night in the car after a-1, parked along a side street. Had spent the later afternoon in the station, when it was filled mostly with old men.

10-9: Went around to the bookstores, picked up more comics and magazines than ever before on this trip. Left Winnipeg around 4:30. About 5:30 or 6:00 found a very nice rest stop. Picnic area, camp grounds that were closed, and a heated bathroom with plumbing.

I got kicked out of one bookstore for not buying anything! I'd gotten through half the guy's stock without finding anything, when he came over and told me I had to go. He had to sell a thousand books an hour to pay the rent, couldn't have people just looking, and there was a time limit of fifteen minutes, police order. He was crazy, but I left anyway.

10-10: Drove most of the way to Thunder Bay, over 300 miles. Very rugged, wild rocky country, full of pine trees, lakes and rivers. Magnificent. Unfortunately, also evidence of logging, quarrying, etc.

Picked up a hitchhiker in Kenora who was going to Frances. He was an Indian guy, a senior in high school. Told me that in the summer he hitchhiked to Toronto in three days, sleeping once by the roadside and once by a park. Usually, he slept in Gulf stations when traveling. I think he said he'd taken a week off school to visit his wife. He was very soft spoken and hard to hear. He played drums in a band that was a 15-piece orchestra, but used only drums, guitar and bass when playing parties.

10-11: Went to Thunder Bay. Left Thunder Bay. Went into Middle Falls Provincial Park. The falls themselves were interesting to see, but decided to go on

into the U.S. At the park I met a hitchhiker headed for Madison, Wisconsin. Offered a ride but he wanted to go up behind the falls and camp there. He offered to share his tent, but I decided to go on. I also decided to leave a bottle of gin behind. No reason to take the risk. But I was sorry at customs. The man thoroughly searched the two car seats and had me open the trunk, and felt around inside my suitcase, but after that either I was too weird to smuggle dope or he just didn't have the energy to inspect all the junk packed in my trunk. Found a nice wayside camp to stop. It has a beautiful view of Lake Superior. Ate in a nearby bar, where various kids, Vietnamese veterans, were hanging out. Some hunters came in from Canada. Had had bad luck. Bar had various animals skins hanging around the wall.

COME AGAIN?
FUNNIES

THAT'S OK -
HE LOVES
CHILDREN...

CAPTION
GUESTY
TO THE
BAR!



10-12: Drove through Duluth. Called Clell [] man who'd moved up there from Alton []. Land north of Duluth very wild and rocky and beautiful, with periodic views of Lake Superior.

10-13: Spent day in Minneapolis. Went to Clell's.

10-14: Babysat at night with Steven, Jonathon and Sue Ellen [] Clell's kids []. Didn't have a bad time, but it was kind of wild around their bedtime.

Minneapolis and St. Paul are the most confusing cities to drive in and try to find something that I've driven in yet. [] Would you believe streets that disappear, then reappear in another part of the city? How about numbered streets that intersect not only other numbered streets, but themselves! []

10-15: Left Clell's. On into Wisconsin, and left the rugged country behind, again into farms and cultivated fields all along the highways. Most leaves are now brown, not as pretty as two weeks ago.

10-16: Spent whole day reading in wayside rest stop outside Green Bay. Was unpleasantly disrupted by workers working on the park, putting in blacktop paths.

10-17: Went through Green Bay, Manitowac, and Sheboygan. Had to drive all over creation to find a certain book store in Sheboygan Falls, a farmhouse out in the country, to find nobody home.

10-18: Went to Milwaukee. Generally unpleasant, though city has some nice old buildings. I found a good library and almost every used bookstore I wanted. Got parking ticket. Made sudden decision that I wasn't up to facing Chicago, and should go home the next day. Stopped late evening at cafe-bar to eat. Had some minor businessman types, one very drunk major businessman type, and a lower class farm-hand/mechanic methodically drinking beer and beer, not saying a word, looking straight ahead and smoking a cigar. When I went to bathroom discovered woman near john-seat, apparently passed out (it was dark). She had her legs crossed, and didn't say a word as I took a piss.

10-19: On waking up -- warm weather! hardly chilly at all. And the leaves on the trees are still green. Went home for almost a week.

(To Be Continued)

MONSTERS IN MORIA

Ken st. andre

Jim Peters

Liz Danforth

The quality of the light around them was changing even as Ken spoke. ". . . because all possible universes must exist in an infinite Universe, then there must be a universe where I can transport myself more or less at will into the fantasy worlds described by great fantasy authors. This just happens to be that . . ."

The large and fuzzily hirsute countenance of Jim (Bear) Peters hung above his massive but flabby shoulders like a great white balloon. His large brown eyes were popped open to the limit, and his jaw hung agape like some yawning pit. Slowly mastering his dumbfoundment, he tried to interrupt the scholarly discourse of his friend and mentor. "Uh, uh, Ken," the voice came out surprisingly weak.

Ken didn't even notice the interruption. "And in fact there is a device," he flourished a short yellow cylindrical object with a locking device on one end, "that actually facilitates the journey between alternate universes in an almost magical--"

But Jim had recovered full use of his voice, and now his shout, and the urgent poke in the arm he administered, interrupted the lecture. "KEN! LOOK AROUND YOU! WE'RE SURROUNDED!"

The object in Ken's hand came free when Jim poked him and went spinning down into blackness in a wide hole that now opened right before him. Ken looked up then, and what he saw caused an expression of dismay to blanch all the brownness out of his high-cheeked face.

Jim and Ken were standing in a cavern, dimly lit by a few flickering torches in the misshapen claws of some man-sized, yellow-skinned, scaly-looking creatures with beady red eyes and protruding fangs. They were clad in ragged-looking strips of mangy wolf pelt, and in a few scattered, dented pieces of armor. They were all carrying broken swords, spike-tipped clubs, rusty pitchforks, and old coal-shovels. Now they all began to sing in hoarse voices at least three octaves below middle C while beating time on the floor with their weapons.

"We are the fighting Urak-hai! Yo ho! Yo ho!
We march through the tunnels to fight and die! Yo ho!
Doom we bring to mortal men,
You'll never see Middle Earth again!

We'll chop you into pieces raw,
And stuff you into the Balrog's maw!
Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho!

"Ken," whispered Jim. "Forget all that I was saying about wanting to go on an adventure with you. I just want to go home to good old safe dull Phoenix."

"Jim," whispered Ken, "you blundering oaf, you made me drop the only thing that could take us out of here. We're here for the duration."

The cavern creatures were starting on the second verse.

"We are the fighting Uruk-hai! Yo ho! Yo ho!
We love to make little goblins cry! Yo ho!
We march these tunnels both day and night,
Just hoping that we can get into a fight,
To rend and tear and gouge and bite
Which is our old ancestral right!
Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho!

Brandishing their weapons and repeating the chant of Yo ho! Yo ho! the fighting Uruk-hai began to edge closer.

"Wait!" cried Ken in a ringing voice. "We are your cousins, the laughing Uruk-low! We came a long way to find you and reopen trade and diplomatic relations. Quick, Bear, say something to them in Snargish!"

Jim thrust out his black-bearded prognathous jaw, relaxed his great body into a sort of anthropoid crouch and bellowed at the top of his lungs in a rasping guttural voice. "Gnargh! Spiderbiters rronngrrk! Gumfoord Quardfot snoogle upyors forshur!"

The change wrought in the Orcs was instantaneous and amazing. They all dropped their weapons with a resounding clatter, fell to their scabby knees, and began beating their foreheads against the stone.

"That's more like it," said Ken, walking among them and appropriating an only slightly broken sword. He also picked out a hefty-looking bludgeon for his partner.

"Please don't hurt us," whimpered the leader of the Orcs. "We didn't know that you were the Fulfillers of the Prophecy."

"What prophecy?" blurted Jim.

"The great prophecy of Quardfot," answered the leader. He rolled his eyes back up into his skull so that only the bloodshots were showing and declaimed, "When the realm is faced with dangers, there shall come a pair of strangers. Furry-footed little critters, wizard great and warriors bitter, with both Elves and Dwarves invading, there shall be a mighty slaying, then the strangers pass the Death Frog to release the dreaded Balrog."

"Sounds like a lot of malarkey to me," muttered Ken under his breath to Jim. "Even the poetry is rotten."

"Will you please come with us to see our queen?" begged the Orc captain.

"You have a queen?" wondered Bear. "I don't remember any queen of the Orcs in Tolkien."

"Loveliest creature under stone, is our queen!" boasted the Orc leader.

"Jim," Ken whispered, "sometimes these fantasy universes aren't exactly the way the author describes them in our world. Try to keep an open mind, ok?" Then to the Orcs. "On your feet, trollspawn! Lead on to see the queen!"

+ + +

The horrid shrieking of Orcish laughter echoed and re-echoed in the narrow tunnel. A stubby goblin with breath like a batch of overdone sauerkraut was wheezing before the fantasy travellers. Of his band of fifteen or twenty compatriots, about half had collapsed on the floor convulsed in giggles.

"So I said to him," Jim said, grinning, "Kleeg-un-snargh, ungiuous an automato-pea!"

The wheezing Orc took a turn for the worse as he joined his comrades twitching on the floor.

"That one's as old as the hills," proclaimed the Orc between giggles, "but there's something in the way you tell it that makes the hero's disembowlement that much more hilarious."

With this, Ken grabbed his wooly-pated counterpart and rasped in his ear, "You dolt, aside from the fact that you are giving them bad ideas, at this rate we'll never get the Queen of this clump. Even that compost heap you call a brain can't contain that many more nonsense words."

"Glleep!" Jim replied, giving adequate disclaimer to Ken's charges.

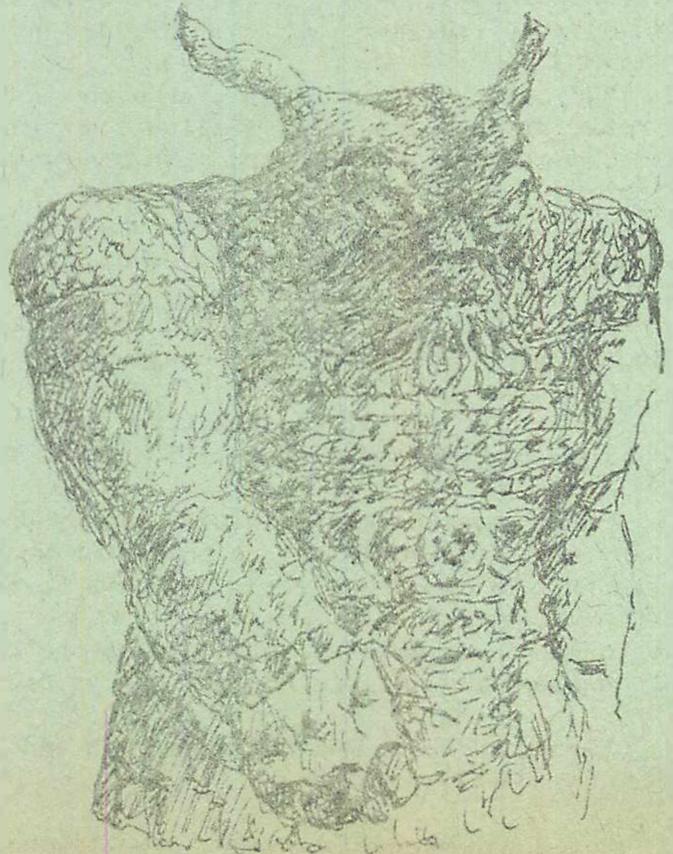
One of the Orcs had risen from the floor ahead of the others, and with the butt of his pitchfork had attracted the pair's attention with a whomp to the Bear's abdomen.

As large oily tears rolled down the Orc's face, he said, "That was very funny, but you must come and see the Queen, unless this is just a delaying tactic to allow you to escape our clutches."

"Never fear," exclaimed Ken, sensing the slowly rising hostility in the surrounding pack, "we are straining in our eagerness to see the beauteous countenance of her infernal majesty."

"Yeah," gasped the Bear, his breath only just returning.

The Orc scraped his scabby scalp with a broken talon, "Whud-hesay?" he muttered in the ancient language of the Orcs.



The rest of the pack, having recovered from their fiendish mirth, were forming up in marching order, which, by odd chance, put our heroes neatly in the center of the group.

Once again in their rasping voices the Orcs sang out.

"We are the fighting Uruk-hai! Yo ho! Yo ho!
In these depths we're dark and sly! Yo ho! Yo ho!
We wander 'round picking fights;
To skrag a dwarf's our hearts' delight
'Way down here in the inky night
We fear not Trolls nor barrow-wight!
Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho! Yo ho!

"Do you think these characters will ever run out of verses to that doggerel?" asked Jim.

"Only if we do," came the cryptic reply.

With the Orcs Yo-ho, Yo-hoing! in the lead, they intrepidly marched off down the tunnel.

+ + +

Liz faded into existence just moments after a sizeable pack of Orcs turned around the far corner yo-hoing with all their croaking might. Ken and Jim were well surrounded and yo-hoing with the best of them.

"Oh, foo," she commented to no one in particular. "Missed 'em again. I'll never get this signed," she wailed, stuffing a sheaf of paper into her pocket and then quietly trailing down the corridor well behind the Orcs.

"At least I had time to grab a bow and arrows from Ken's wall before I left Phoenix. I have the awful feeling I'm going to need it now that those two lovable idiots got themselves captured the minute they stepped into Moria."

Heaving a disheartened sigh, she hefted the warbow she'd snatched up and slung the half-filled befeathered quiver of shafts over one shoulder.

Gales of Orcish laughter echoed strangely up the tunnels, and, thinking she'd heard it off to one side, she stepped into the left corridor.

In no time at all she realized that somehow she'd come the wrong way. She faced around to go back and came face to knee with a small gray-green goblin.

"Why?" she thought painfully. "Why didn't I have the sense to grab something else, even a paring knife? A bow is no weapon for infighting, and I can't reach down far enough to give the little beggar a karate chop."

Instead she grinned as widely as she could and said to the goblin, "Alec! Alec! I'd know you anywhere in Moria! How ya been, kiddo?"

The goblin looked sideways at her and said, "The name's Mcgroc, and I don't know you."

She shrugged expressively. "Well, the torchlight's not too good in these tunnels."

The goblin said, "Do you mind if I ask you a question? What the hell is a chick like you doing in Moria?"

Liz drew herself up to her full if overweight 5'7" and glared down at the little goblin, opening her mouth to throw a scathing retort. She then snapped her mouth shut, deciding that an inexperienced and unwilling adventurer alone shouldn't go around insulting anything.

"Actually, I'm here by accident," she finally replied. "Some friends, Ken and Bear, came down here adventuring. I needed these papers signed before they left, in case they didn't make it back, but they were fading out as I arrived. I caught the last wave of that universe alternator dohickey hoping to catch up with them." Tears slowly filled her dark eyes. "If I can't find those two bozos, I'm stuck here forever! I'll miss all my classes! My cats will tear my apartment to shreds!"

The goblin snorted in disgust.

"I want to go home!" Liz wailed, falling on her knees and grabbing the goblin by the shoulders. "You've got to help me!"

A toothy crack opened up from pointy ear to pointy ear -- the goblin smiled. "Stick with me, baby," he retorted lecherously. "From the way you're built, I figure there's a little Troll blood in your background somewhere, and that makes you one of us."

+ + +

"Oo chemoo," whined Bear, "have you ever seen anything so horrible?"

The throne room was a vast cavern filled with all the most gruesome of Moria's hordes. The door through which the pair had entered was over 50 ft. tall. The captain of their escort seemed even more cowed by the assembled horde than did our muffin-shaped hero.

"Yes," said Ken, not the least disturbed by the general air and airs of their surroundings. "The sulfurous air and general appearance of these critters reminds me of Thoth-Amon's digs in Stygia. Why, when Terry and I were there, we must have seen three times as many slime-encrusted serpents, and the quality of old T.-A.'s sulphur was rather more . . ."

Ken's fond remembrances were cut short by a plaintive squeal from the surrounding pack of Orcs as each struggled valiantly to be first to supplicate himself before the awesome parade emerging from the opposite end of the chamber.

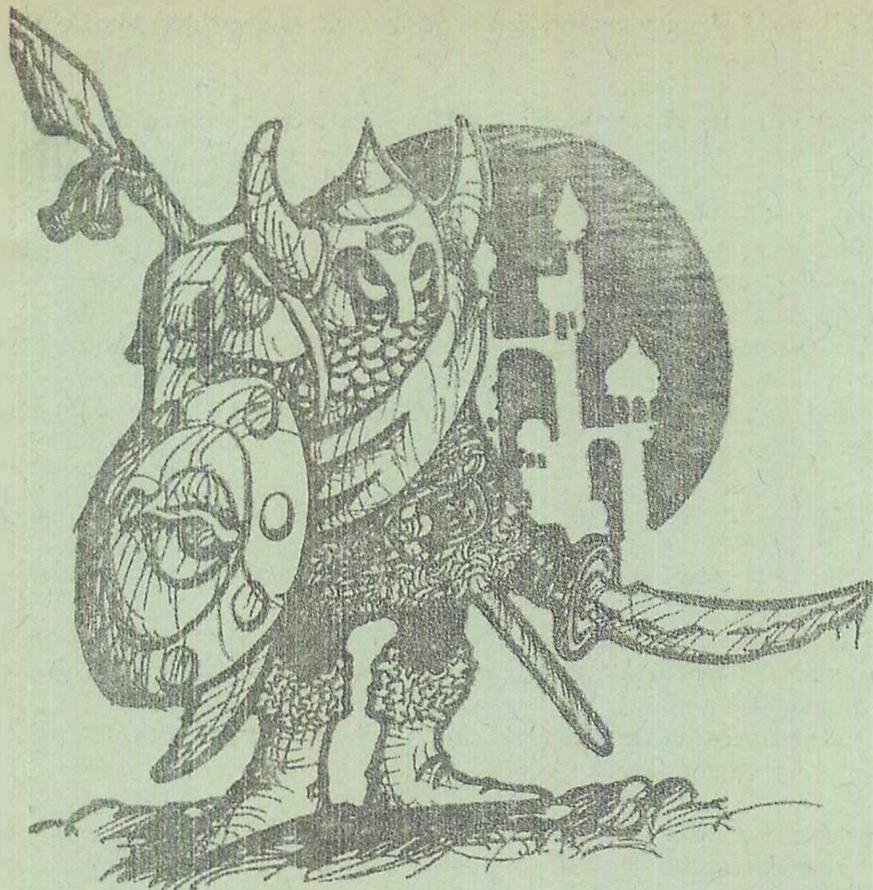
Not a single creature remained upright in the chamber; orcs, trolls, goblins, wargs, serpents, shapeless blobs, even the bats on the roof overhead struggled to rap their foreheads on the dark vault of the ceiling.

"Monsters! Monsters!" the Bear wailed, covering his eyes and peering out from between his fingers.

The procession was led by two trolls who in any other setting would have been called giants. Fifty feet tall at the shoulder, they stooped to enter the chamber.

"Those guys must have quite a time around here," commented Ken. "The tallest tunnel I've seen yet was only ten feet high."

"Ook," agreed the Bear, still peering out through his pudgy digits.



A phalanx of about fifty Orcs in battle armor with pikes shouldered marched in before a golden litter in which reposed what could only have been the Orc Queen.

"Hail the Queen!" cried the assembled throng.

"Wasn't it nice of them to go to all this trouble for complete strangers?" said Ken.

At this, the troll on the right, seventy feet if he was an inch, roared out, "Kneel, knaves, before Her Majesty!"

"Ha!" roared Ken.

"Aieeee!" yelled the Bear, this last prompted by a jab to his hindquarters by Ken's orcish blade.

"We are the fulfillers of the prophecy! If you ever want to see your Balrog alive again, you'll mind your manners in the future," Ken continued.

"Lay some patter on these oafs, Jim," Ken whispered behind his hand.

The Queen, in the meanwhile, had seated herself upon an enormous throne of polished and lacquered bone.

Still nursing his injured pride, the Bear strode up to the foot of the Queen's dais, directly between the giant trolls.

"A, icky, yug unguck, and may Gumfard C. Farquart have mercy on your slime-crusted halls," he stated blithely.

"Capture these imposters!" responded the occupant of the throne.

"Was it something I said?" queried Jim, paling to a sullen grey.

"How in hell should I know? Do you think I speak that gibberish?" retorted Ken, drawing his sword.

In an instant battle was joined as the hordes in the chamber closed in, the mammoth trolls in the lead.

"54-40 or fight!" roared the Bear as his bludgeon slammed down with telling impact on an outthrust trollish finger, brutally chipping the grimy nail.

"A Elbereth Gilthoniel!" yodelled Ken, as he drew a phaser with his free hand,

and, brandishing his sword all the while, proceeded to dispatch the other troll in an irridescent flash.

This seemed to daunt the horde somewhat as they paused in their charge.

"Back!" Ken commanded.

"Drop your weapons and put your hands on the wall and spread 'em," said the Bear meanly.

The remaining giant troll removed his injured digit from his drooling maw.

"You have the right to remain silent; anything you say can and will . . ." continued Jim.

"Shut up and look for an exit, quick," said Ken.

"Slay them!" came the shrill command from the Queen.

"They got Billy," wailed the remaining troll. "I'll kill 'em!" it continued as a wild light came into its manhole cover-sized eyes.

"Oh-oh, combat fatigue. I've seen it in dozens of war vets and former S.C.A. members. We're in for it now," commented Ken.

"Hey, here's the exit," said the Bear, yanking his friend into a gaping hole in the wall at their back from which emanated the sulphurous stench.

"Aiee!" cried the berserk troll.

"Oig," squeaked the Bear as he started to beat a hasty retreat, slipped and went sliding off into the darkness.

"Take that, you fiend!" cried Ken as he fired the phaser again.

"Poof," responded the rapidly vaporizing troll.

"Kill!" roared the Orc horde.

On this discouraging note, Ken followed his pal into the stygian darkness.

At the entrance to the tunnel, the Orcs came to a skidding halt, too terrified to enter the passage.

"That's the last we'll see of them," commented the Queen prophetically.

Ken caught up with Jim -- in fact, he landed on him -- at the bottom of a very slick piece of tunnel.

When they had recovered their breaths, Jim asked, "Where did you get that phaser, Ken? You aren't a closet 'Trekkie'?" He moved a few steps sideways in the narrow downward shaft.

"No, you dolt, I lifted this off Frank Denton at the last Westercon. Sure came in handy, didn't it?" Ken gloated, patting the charge pack.

"But how can a phaser work here in Middle Earth?" pursued the Bear.

"Suffice it to say," said Ken, "things are not what they seem."

As if on cue, from the depths in the direction they were heading came an ominous sound.

"Redeep, reedeep."

"What was that?" the Bear asked, brushing dust from the trembling walls out of his bushy black mane.

"Let me think," said Ken. "Didn't those Orcs say something about a 'death frog'?"

"Yeah," replied Jim. "But that was just to make that doggerel rhyme, --surely?"

"Reedeep!" answered the sound from below.

+ + +

"The howling is getting louder and nearer," observed Bear a bit nervously. "Maybe we should go back and take our chances with a couple of thousand angry Orcs."

GREE-DEEP!

"So is the croaking," Ken answered, "but as long as I have this, we've got nothing to worry about." He brandished the phaser confidently.

They traversed a narrow ledge, rounded a corner, and an incredible scene spread itself before them. The down-sloping tunnel they were in opened out into a monstrous cavern whose sides and corners were hidden in inky shadow. The floor of the immense chamber was covered by an oily black lake dotted with rushes and huge yeloo lily pads big enough to build castles on. Giant insects with shimmering iridescent wings hung in swarms near the shore line or swooped low to deposit their eggs on the brackish water.

"Gulp," gulped the muffin-shaped hero. "If one of those mosquitoes bites us, we'll look like a vampire's victim."

"Probably more like a shish-kebab," Ken countered. "Leave us avoid being bitten."

MMMMBREEE-GLEEP!

The frog was bigger than the world. "That frog is bigger than the world," said Jim. "Hunga-b'zoo," said Ken. It nearly swamped the lily pad upon which it crouched, and its long prehensile tongue flashed through the dusky air like lightning. It munched up a ten-foot long dragonfly like an ordinary frog would inhale a gnat. Its large blue protruding eyes rolled from side to side around the cavern, finally coming to rest on the two weak-kneed adventurers.

It was at least 1000 feet away, and it looked as if you could reach out and touch it.

"Ooooooh, kill it now!" cried Bear. "Dephase it, unphase it, disphase it!"

"Quit your babbling," said Ken, shaking loose of Jim's terrified pawing. "I'm going to give it a chance to attack us." He turned the phaser up to maximum setting, and then knelt to steady his arm on his knee and thus take a better aim.

A crackling, coruscating energy beam of eye-searing brilliance leaped from Ken's hand across the cavern to splash against the greenish-white underbelly of the Death

Frog. "I can't look!" cried Bear, hiding his beady brown eyes behind his pudgy fingers. "I used to like frogs."

The phaser beam sputtered and then winked out of existence, its charge totally depleted. The Death Frog neither sputtered nor winked anywhere. A red spot flared into prominence on its flabby breast. From where Ken and Jim were standing it looked like a measles seen through the wrong end of a telescope.

The Death Frog began to gather its mighty hoppers beneath it.

"Oh, Crom!" howled Bear. "You just made it mad. It's coming for us!"

SPROING!

It was at least 1000 feet from where the Death Frog crouched on its city-sized lily pad to the shore of the lake where Jim and Ken were standing. It must have covered 750 feet of that distance on the first hop.

"Tidal wave!" yelled Ken, dropping the useless phaser and trying to clutch onto a small nearby stalagmite.

A twenty-foot high wall of stinking black water swept over them, tearing them free of everything they had clutched at, whirling them over, around, and heels over head like chips in a draining whirlpool. A pounding in the ears, a terrible constriction around the stomach, and more whirling, but at least a chance to breathe again.

For Ken and Bear it was as if everything slowed down then to an agonizing crawl, so that they were fully conscious and able to sort out and assign a distinct order to a series of events that all must have occurred within a second or two. They were hurtling through the air wrapped in some sticky gray substance that must be frog tongue toward a gaping mouth that could swallow an elephant in one gulp. They heard a distant shout of "Noooooooooooooooooooo!" and then the frenzied twanging of a bow string. A flight of long pointed shafts hissed by them like bees in line to disappear into that cavernous red maw. One shaft skewered the sticky gray tongue and missed skewering Bear, too, by half an inch.

The tongue had more nerve endings per square millimeter than any other part of the body. The same must be true even for giant Death Frogs. The pain must have been tremendous. The result was a gigantic convulsion of the proboscis that tore the men's shirts to tatters and shook them free to plummet down 100 feet into the roiled water lapping around the monster's lower abdomen. And then, croaking its batrachian agony and rage, the Death Frog made a tremendous leap up and towards the shore.

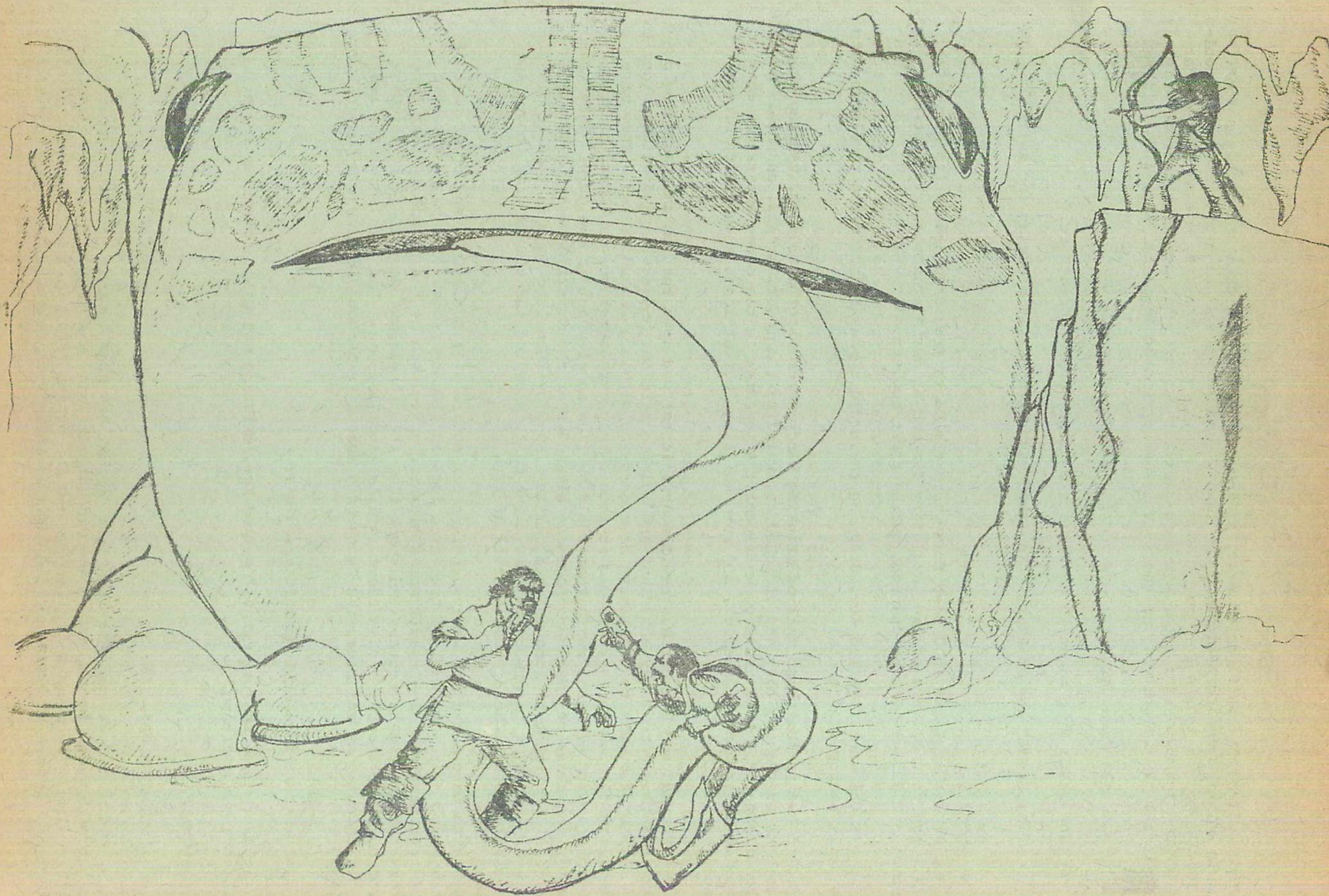
"What an incredible shot!" cried Bear.

"Try to go in feet first!" yelled Ken, twisting his thin unmuscular frame into the upright position.

"What?"

SPLASH! FLOP!

Ken shot down into the lightless depths, his ears hurting so much he thought he would have to scream, but there was not time, and what felt like gallons of water injected itself up his nostrils. He hit the bottom hard, and buckled almost to his knees. A geyser of bottom mud exploded up around him, and something thin and hard



and small jabbed up right through the leather of his left boot and into his foot. Then he was swimming madly back up for the surface forty feet away, choking on foul-tasting water, aching in every part of his body except for the several places that he had gone numb, stars and comets flashing in front of his eyes. He shot completely out of the water on reaching the surface and came back down with a splash.

Bear was floating face down on the water -- his body was alizarean crimson from the earlobes down to the waist. Thin streams of blood trickled from ears, mouth, and nose.

"I'm coming! I'm coming! Oh, shit! I'm coming!"

Liz was sprinting down the beach, karate chopping an ambitious mosquito, divesting herself of bow, arrows, and blouse as she ran. Ken and Bear were in no position to appreciate the bounty being thus displayed for them. Behind her a gaggle of half-pint Orcs and goblins were scurrying after her, yelling out in squeaky voices, "Wait, wait, no swimming allowed in the Death Frog's pool!" She hit the water in a racing dive and long strong strokes carried her rapidly out to where Ken was struggling to turn Bear over in the water.

Jim's breath was coming in faint, weak little gasps when she reached them. "I don't think I can swim," gasped Ken. He was pale and trembling in the water. Blood was gushing out of his left foot, and more trickled out of his ears and nose. He let go of the buoyant Bear and sank beneath the surface, but then he recovered a little and struggled back up.

Liz was treading water and holding Bear's head out of the water. "Just take a deep breath and relax," she told Ken. "I'll get you both out of this."

She followed her own advice about deep breaths and rolled over on her back. Then she grasped the long floating hair of each man in one hand, and began to kick vigorously for hosre.

"HEY, YOU LITTLE TWERPS! NOT THAT WAY! OVER HERE! The voice was thunder deep and cavern-filling.

"What the hell is that?" muttered Liz. She looked hastily around for the source of the voice. . . and found it. Only about twenty feet away and closer than the nearest shore was a large, ferocious looking brown head, complete with fangs that even Dracula would envy. The ears were long, pointed, and seemed inclined to break into flame at the tips.

"It's a floating head!" said Liz in wonder.

"I'M A BLAROG! THE BALROG!" bellowed the head.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Liz. "Can't you see I'm busy saving the lives of these two bozos?"



"COME AND HELP ME. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM."

"What have I got to lose?" thought Liz, who found that towing two semi-conscious eafs through a murky black lake left her gasping. When she got within ten feet of the head, huge hands, very warm to the touch came up underneath Ken and Bear and also provided a place for her to put her feet down.

The Balrog brought them to within about five feet of its head, supporting them easily in the water. "Why, it's old Durin's Bane!" cried Bear, popping up out of his coma like a jack in the box. "How's every little thing in the Balrog business?"

Liz bruised the bottom of her chin on her collarbone, her mouth fell open so fast. From being on the edge of death, Peters had miraculously bounced back up to his normal irrepressible ebullience. Ken was also showing renewed signs of life and strength, working his boot off to get at the thing that had wounded his foot.

"NOT SO GOOD, BEAR. I'VE BEEN IN THIS LAKE FOR ~~###~~ 537 ~~##&'@~~ YEARS NOW AND I'M GETTING MIGHT WATER LOGGED FROM THE NECK DOWN. I'VE PUT A LITTLE OF MY OWN FIERY LIFE INTO YOU, AND NOW YOU'VE GOT TO GET ME OUT OF THESE MANACLES THAT HOLD MY FEET IN PLACE. IT SHOULD BE EASY NOW THAT YOU'VE DISPOSED OF THE DEATH FROG."

Ken looked up from his foot worriedly. "Hey, whatever happened to the Death Frog?"

"LOOK UP!"

All three looked up and towards the shore where a strange crimson rain was falling on a bunch of hopping mad Half-Orcs and goblins. In its last outrageous bound, it had leaped so high and with such force that it impaled itself on a large sharp stalactite. And now one dead Death Frog hung from the cavern ceiling, and flying monster insects were going crazy around it.

"wow!"

"I'll dive down and take a look at what's holding you here," volunteered Liz. "Maybe we can figure out a way to set you free." She took a deep breath and then headed for the bottom.

"Are you sure you want us to let you go?" asked Bear. "A very nasty wizard and a bunch of dwarves, elves, men and hobbits are due to come through Moria pretty soon, and they might polish you off."

"HAH!" snorted the Balrog. "NOTHING POLISHES A BALROG, LEAST OF ALL HOBBITS! AND IF THAT WIZARD IS WHO I THINK HE IS, WE HAVE AN OLD SCORE TO SETTLE! WHO DO YOU THINK TRAPPED ME IN THIS LAKE?"

"I've got it out!" cried Ken. "Ooooh, my foot!" The thing that had wounded him was a small, yellow, cylindrical plastic object with a locking device on one end. It was rather badly bent and all clotted with blood.

"That's it!" cried Bear, leaping up and down in joy on the Balrog's hand. "That's the thingum that can take us all home. If I never see another Orc it will be too soon!"

Liz surfaced and climbed back up on the Balrog's hands. "Forget it, you guys. It would take dynamite to break this big bozo loose."

The Balrog began to whimper. "YOU CAN'T GO," it sniveled. "IF YOU DON'T GET ME

OUT OF HERE, I'M TRAPPED FOREVER!"

Ken looked glumly at his companions. "Bad news, you guys, I think we're stuck here forever. This little tardis is ruined. It won't work."

A puzzled look contorted Liz's beautiful but chunky face. She reached into the pocket of her jeans and pulled out a sopping wet sheaf of paper. The paper was all stuck together and came apart in her hands. "I wanted you guys to sign this," she mumbled, "the first story we ever wrote together. I even brought you a --"

"Hurrah! We're going home!" yelled Bear. "I'm so happy I could kiss a cactus."

Ken had seized the small cylindrical object out of her fingers and began to do arcane things with it.

+ + +

"Oo chmoo, it sure is hot in here," gasped Jim "Bear" Peters. He lay on the rug panting, wishing all the hot air would rise to the ceiling and leave some cool air with him.

"Sure is," croaked Liz. "I wish I had something to drink."

"Would you all like some cold Pepsi?" asked Ken. "I think there's some left."

"WHAT'S PEPSI?" asked the Balrog.

finis

THE RAIN FROM A DISTANT SUN

The cosmic rain has fallen,
Dripping and burning through every
Barrier set to stop it.

The rain knows no bounds,
And flows through all, covering every
Inch of uncorrupted earth.

And the rain never stops,
Flowing over distant dark corpses
Rotting in the dying sun.

It is my fault. No one else is to blame. I am ready to accept whatever punishment the Council chooses for me. I am seventeen. I have broken the law of Aryan. The law is plain. It has remained unchanged for as long as civilized Aryans have lived. It states plainly that no Aryan (male or female) may marry outside of the planet. This the law that I, Vir, willingly broke. It was not for the good of Aryan or her people that I broke her most strictly enforced law. It was for my own selfish reasons. We Aryans know that we are ugly. We know also that we are a dying race.

This, combined with our hideous appearance, is the reason the law was written. We can never marry beings from other worlds. Infection and death would be the results of such a mistake. Every century when a census of the planet is taken the total number of Aryans alive is less than the century before. This is normal on all worlds. But on Aryan the drop is too sharp to be considered normal. Each generation is weaker and more feeble than the last. We have accepted our fate as a part of the way of things. Birth, life, and death are pieces in the great puzzle of Creation. All the pieces fit perfectly. Aryans are more tolerant of death than are the beings of other worlds. We are not bitter.

Despite our appearance we have expanded our culture. Aryan has visited and communicated with other worlds. Pluto is no longer a mystery to us. Jupiter and Saturn have both welcomed us warmly. From Pluto we learned to serenade our planet and visitors with music. Every Aryan home has music piped through it. Our courts and palaces are also filled with music. We have taken from and given to many worlds.

It was not until we came into contact with Earth that I broke the law. Aryan lies in a completely different solar system than Earth. Earth's sun is only a tiny star to Aryan. We visit easily any world we choose through teleportation. When I first visited Earth I was awed and adored the god-like beauty of her peoples. The other worlds held beauty but never in the form of their denizens. Never had we of Aryan seen such perfect symmetry of form. It was our favorite pasttime to visit the beaches of Earth and watch the living statues in their brief bathing suits swim or sun themselves. Aryan had complete access to Earth. I visited often. Sometimes I came alone. Sometimes friends came with me. I was always more entranced by the beauty of the people than the beauty of the planet. Even though the planet hold much to admire.

THE LAW OF ARYAN

Carol Blalock

Earth does not have complete access to Aryan. The reason is obvious. We are too hideous for her people. They are used to their own differences. The Oriental, Indian, Negroid and Caucasian stocks are at least bound together by humanity. Aryans are not human in manner or appearance. We find Earth populated with beauty. Earth would only find Aryan inhabited by monsters. They would love our technology. They would think our gardens and lawns beautiful as they sprawl green and lush beneath our twin suns. The builders of this beauty would revold and fill them with disgust. We would never come to Earth undisguised.

Our favorite way is to come folded in clouds and join with the natural coulds of Earth's atmosphere. We can also come shielded behind a wall of invisibility. Then our movements are more restricted. We come invisible for diplomatic reasons. Biel and Mandor are both members of Aryan's nine-member ruling council. They are also my uncles. It was not necessary for me to come to Earth with them. I wanted to and they gave me permission. Aryan has communication devices connected in every ruling place on the various worlds we visit.

America knew we were coming. She welcomed us. We got there as fast as tele-
portation could take us. The three of us stood on the lawn of The White House. My uncles stood discussing the structure of buildings and automobiles. My attention was snatched away by Phillip Fletcher Pratt. At the time he was only another nameless god for me to admire. He rode past us on a bicycle. The sun and breeze had caught and tangled in his dark hair. I was enchanted by his body. It moved from side to side as his powerful legs pumped the pedals. He wore a tennis outfit and held a racket in his left hand. I was in a daze when I followed my uncles into the presence of the president. I attended physically while my uncles invited America's president and his cabinet to a banquet on Aryan. My mind was still with the living statue that had pedaled past us. The president accepted the invitation. We left for home. It should have put an end to the bicycle riding god but it didn't.

Even while I baked breads and delicate pastries, roasted turkey, pheasant and beef for the banquet my mind would not shut out thoughts of Phillip Fletcher Pratt. Aryan gave banquets frequently. Each city had a recipe file in its library. We were sure to include on the menu foods that each guest was accustomed to. The banquet was four days away. Two hundred guests from various worlds would be attending. I was kept very busy but still found time to slip to Earth. I did this on the third day from the banquet. I saw him on that day. He was playing tennis. The ball passed over the net and the game ended. Then I learned his name.

"You've won again, Phillip Fletcher Pratt," his opponent said. The man was a graceful and quick-moving Oriental. Both men were exhausted. They drank air into their lungs in hungry gulps. Sweat rolled down their faces.

"You weren't as rough on me as I know you could have been," Phillip answered. "Let's go to my house to shower and relax." They went to a car, got in and left. I returned to Aryan.

Phillips Fletcher Pratt became an obsession. I wanted him. Not as a lover. Aryans don't have a concept of love as Earthmen do. I wanted him as a pet. I wanted to admire him every day. A way opened for me to do that; at least for a while. When I got home the Council sent for me.

"Vir, do you have anyone that you would like to attend the banquet? You have worked very hard helping to prepare for it," my uncle Biel said. There were other names I could have mentioned. I didn't have to say Phillip Fletcher Pratt but I did. He was asked. He accepted. On the day of the banquet Aryan was in very high spirits. Happiness was everywhere. Banquets on Aryan do not usually start until

late at night. There are two reasons for this. The citizens will have time to do their shopping and be home and asleep before the guests arrive. That's the most important reason. The other is the time difference between countries, nations, planets, and universes. Banquets are always held up for a few hours to insure that every guest will have time to arrive before the eating starts.

The banquet hall was beautiful. Every globe of light revolved and sent light throughout the hall in multi-colored sparks. The guests were showered in sparkling radiance. The plates, goblets, and other utensils for eating were of pure gold. They were all encrusted with precious stones. The music helped put things in a festive mood. Guests milled around the ahll making new friends and greeting old ones. Each guest was done up to perfection. Shimmering jewels threw off as many sparks as the globe lights. We Aryans wore our best suits of illusion. Most of the guests knew what Aryans looked like. There were sometimes a few that did not. It was to save these few from shock that we disguise ourselves. When the occasion called for it we hid our true appearance. Our Venusian guests saw us as tall slender stalk-like beings. The Plutonians saw us as cloudy shapeless creatures. When Earthment looked at us they saw beings as statuesque as themselves. We wanted our guests to feel comfortable. Phillip Fletcher Pratt did not know what we looked like.

That is how I won him. For those brief seven days that the banquet lasted I had him to myself. He assured me that I was the most beautiful girl that he had ever seen. He is twenty-seven and was studying to be a doctor. I guided him through our museum and halls of learning. We took long walks through the parks and gardens. I even took him to the bottom of the Camda Sea. When I told him about the Knaits and explained to him about their high intelligence he wanted to see them. I watched him let the Knaits climb over his body and then crawl off leaving slimy trails on his skin. He tolerated them better than I thought he would be able to do. The Knaits are ugly too.

In those few days Phillip asked me to be his wife. I consented. We were married on Earth. It was the one way I knew of having my living statue near me. I had broken the law and was beyond caring. We are free to come and go on Aryan as we like. The law has been so deeply planted into us from birth that my uncles had no reason to think that I would go to Earth and deliberately break it. It had never been broken before. In the beginning there had been no such law. An Aryan had married someone or something from another world. My world's slow death and degeneration began with the product of that union. It had happened ages back but the damage has spread to every citizen of Aryan. It cannot be corrected. I understand now why the law was written. Nature's own laws have punished me already.

I became pregnant. The birth took place on a beach in the hot sun. Thankfully the mass of squirming flesh died immediately. Phillip has not once stopped screaming. I could not keep up the illusion during the birth. He saw the product of our union. He saw me as I really am; a shapeless mass of protoplasm covered with a transparent skin. It was too much. His mind snapped. There is no hope that his sanity will ever return.

The Council will probably choose death for me. It does not matter. We are a dying race anyway. I can no longer leave Aryan to visit other worlds but I am free and not locked in a cell as Phillip is. I used to go to his cell and watch him through the bars. I don't anymore. He has become so lean that I can no longer look at him. He was on his way to becoming one of Earth's most valuable citizens. I have condemned him to spend the rest of his life screaming in madness on Aryan.

I will have the Council's decision tomorrow. This is, after all, my fault.

THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH

REVIEWS

- .O. Bruce Townley .O.
- .O. Doug Barbour .O.
- .O. Steve Beatty .O.
- .O. Jessica Amanda Salmonson .O.
- .O. Jeff Frane .O.
- .O. Frank Denton .O.

The Best of Judith Merrill. Warner Books, \$1.25
The Best of Barry Malzberg. Pocket Books, \$1.95
Triton by Samuel R. Dalany. Bantam Books, \$1.95

Science fiction isn't the only popular entertainment to achieve artistic stature in this century, but it is one of the most interesting. As with the novel, sf began as pure entertainment, and as with the novel, the best sf is still entertaining: it's just a lot more besides.

The early fifties marks the rise of a generation of sf writers capable of expanding the pulp boundaries of the genre. Judith Merrill, always a bit of a maverick, wrote some of the most interesting sf of that period (that she came to Canada to become a citizen when, in 1968, she decided that the U.S. no longer offered its daughters the kind of freedom she desired, reveals more of her maverick nature).

The Best of Judith Merrill is all that, plus a revealing Introduction by Virginia Kidd in which Merrill explains why she came to Canada. But the stories make the book. Judith Merrill was one of the writers who humanized sf. Writing within the context of technological extrapolation which characterizes the genre, she uses almost all of its conventions; but her perspective on those conventions (feminist, when feminism was not a cause) is different from that of her (mostly male) peers. Her very first story, "That Only A Mother," a parental view of the effects of fa-lout, is still a moving shocker. Her interest in alien societies is revealed throughout and the warm, human presentation of ideas in these stories suggests why she is considered something of a cultural anthropologist today.

All these stories are interesting. The long novella, "Daughters of Earth," in which the slow evolution of stellar exploration is presented through the deeply human 'herstory' of six generations of space women, remains, 23 years after its first publication, one of the best stories on its theme in the whole canon. This is a marvelously entertaining book.

Where Judith Merrill's generation expanded the conventions of sf, the best writers of the sixties turned themselves inside out. Sf had been made human by writers like Merrill; these writers intended to make it art. Sometimes they succeeded. Barry N. Malzberg and Samuel R. Delany are two such writers, and they differ in just about everything but their artistic integrity.

The Best of Barry N. Malzberg contains 38 stories and novellas, with an Introduction and notes on every story by the author. It is a superb collection, but I wouldn't recommend reading it straight through. Malzberg is an obsessed and obsessive writer, and his particularly bleak vision is best taken in small doses. But he is an artist, a craftsman of deadly devious intent.

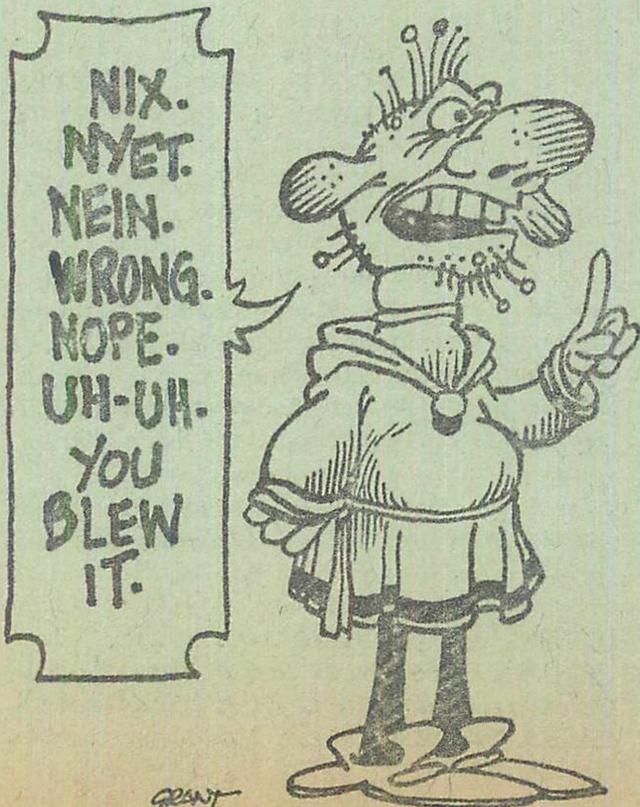
I can't pick any bests from this Best collection; they all get through to you; or, as Malzberg would put it, they all 'work.' Malzberg's intensity, his control of sexual tensions, his inside views of psychological as well as physical violence as it builds, his awareness that the hardware of sf is truly metaphorical, all energize these stories tremendously.

Malzberg's introductory notes are fascinating, and reveal something of the literary self-consciousness of the newer, engaged sf writers. In the final note, after declaring his love for the genre and pointing out that most of the good writers do well for only about a decade, he says he's bowing out of the field which paid him to write the short stories the artist in him had to write. Well, he has given us many examples of the art, as this collection testifies; we should be grateful, and wish him luck whatever he does next.

Unlike Malzberg, Samuel R. Delany still finds sf the most challenging form of literature. He provoked immense controversy with his last book, the huge and experimental Dhalgren. Triton is much more obviously a work of science fiction, but it is definitely not the kind of space opera so many readers still want to read for an easy escape. Although a massive war between the moons of the outer planets and Earth could be at the centre of Triton, Delany quite deliberately keeps it at the periphery of attention. Instead he focuses on the lives of a varied group of 'ordinary' 22nd century people; and varied -- emotionally, psychologically, physically and philosophically -- they certainly are.

Delany no longer writes even the special kind of adventure fiction he once created in books like Nova, The Einstein Intersection and Empire Star. Rather, he explores the inner lives of his characters, their perceptions of the multiplex universe in which they find themselves, and with them he explores the range of social and sexual roles his invented future cultures offer. He also extrapolates wondrously on futuristic art of all kinds.

In Triton, Delany places a 20th century macho (read: sexist) male personality in a society which has almost transcended all codes of behaviour by which such a man could live. Almost, but not quite: the fact of the war testifies to an acutely dangerous atavism in this civilization.



Delany puts this character through a series of situations from which he can either learn to change or freeze into a form of emotional stasis. Much of the tension in the novel emanates from this central situation. Of course, Delany creates a future civilization of great complexity -- he has always been able to suggest a vast range of possibilities through just a few pertinent references -- but he also presents philosophical problems at some length. Triton is a strangely disquieting novel because although it moves at a leisurely pace it continually challenges one's perceptions of the way things are, or should be. As well, though Delany includes some notes on sf as well as on philosophy as 'appendices' to the novel, they are inescapably necessary parts of the whole multifaceted story. Delany's ideas are so stimulating I enjoyed every page of this book, and I believe it will be seen as a major contribution to the changes sf is undergoing in the seventies. It's also a damned fine read.

-- Reviewed by Douglas Barbour --

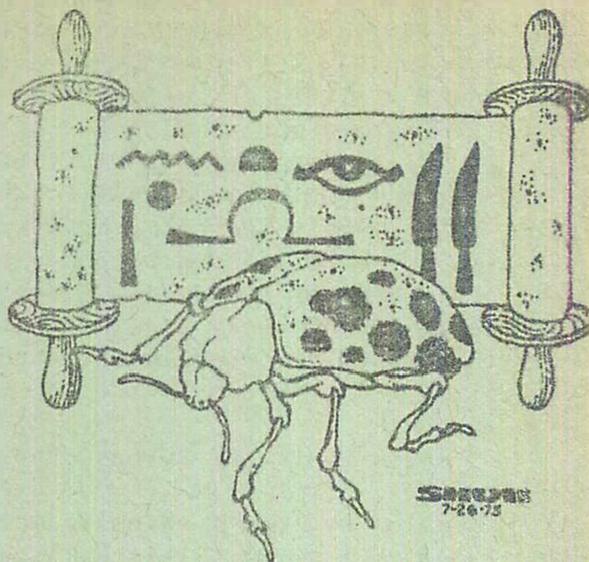
Autumn Angels by Arthur Byron Cover. Pyramid Books (Harlan Ellison Discovery #2) \$1.25

When the sun don't shine in Nags Head, N.C. there is nothing you can do. Or I can do for that matter. Listen, I should know. I been there and when the sun don't shine it's a sorry tale to tell. You can't eat, photoplankton drops to the drear depths and surf n turf is a thing of the past cuz all the larger fish follows em down. Likewise all the fast food joints (the ones that aren't already shut up til the next summer) clam up, no sun, no heat for the vast outdoors griddles and, viz., no chili dogs, not a one. You can't drink, no sun, no electricity for the vast outdoors solar cells (right next to those inactive griddles) and so no refrigeration and from that happenstance WARM BEER! (Also no ice cubes and civilization, that what hasn't already closed up til next summer, crumbles.) And you think cuz that surf just keeps on rolling in from Africa like nothing's happened (though, most likely, nothing will) and you lie there wondering why you can't separate that sound from the sound of deadheading diesels and semis booming on back up Shirley Highway. The only thing left to do is to leave town (such as it is) and maybe take a look at Hatteras, on the other end of the Outer Banks. And when you get back maybe stop at a souvenir shop the size of a B-52 hangar and pick up a book with a neat cover (and hope they've turned off the water so maybe you can read) written by Arthur Byron Cover. It can get depressing.

The best thing about this book is the cover painted by Ron Cobb (saw him on the Today Show once) and I guess the second best thing is the intro by H. Ellison (even though it's mainly just a blurb with gland problems) and third is the novel itself with lowest marks copped by the cover blurbs. A.E. Van Vogt, indeed!

Of course, I can't be too hard on this book because it's just like the first novel that I'd probably write and what's more Cover has even written the thing better than I would (I guess that's what comes of having Harlan Ellison for an editor). And who dumps on their own first novel? But. But Ellison promises from a burning bush (fire season starts early in LA) a Biblical flood in the introduction and all we get is a kinda drippy Towering Inferno. Even if this is good advertising sense (like who are you going to complain to, what agency, if you get gypped by something conceptual like a novel?) and who's gonna dump on their own editing job. The introduction isn't very sensible in any other sense of the word. This novel is not infectious or contagious but it is a little nauseating. The writing is turgid and clumsy when the ideas and novel situations should just trimly trip off the page. There is a lot of secret code, and I'm giving Cover the benefit of the doubt here, assuming that there is some secret to his code. And when you're not forced to desperation by goofy obscure references you're clubbed over the head with plywood cut-outs that stand for characters here (supposedly deeply presented archetypes from all sorts of media, but generally only fuzzy Instamatic snapshots of the surfaces of comic book characters) and the god damned phrase "god-like men" (like, what about

the women?). Also, allow me to reveal my distrust of remote control psychiatry here. If the words crazy and insane are used to describe this writer and his work, they're used twenty-two times. But it's been my observation that crazy people don't do very much writing (like Frederick Nietzsche in the last twenty years of his life) and they also tend to destroy what they have managed to write (like Nikolai Gogol and the sequel to Dead Souls). (Of course, to be Russian or German it helps an awful lot anyway to be a little nutty.) Painters, for some reason, seem to work throughout their sick periods (some say it's better work) like Van Gogh or Goya or Munch. So it's no surprise that this thing is pretty dumb half the time, and even eccentric (and for the very best stretches, feverish) and not, no no no, deranged. And anyway most of the guys calling this guy crazy probably don't know him very well (and certainly have never met him) so how should they know?



But don't get me wrong. I'm glad I finished it. For the end's the best part, you see. Leading up to it, too, are some very funny and even inspired pieces of writing. So you might pick up this Cover for its cover but you'll stay for what's under it. -- Reviewed by Bruce Townley --

Shadow of Alpha by C.L. Grant. Berkley, \$1.25

Shadow of Alpha is apparently Grant's first novel, and as such does contain promise. The execution is good, although the concepts have a certain weakness.

For reasons that remain unclear, Frank Parric, a bland bureaucrat is entrusted with the care of a Town, populated by experimental androids. The androids have been created to fill an economic and social gap in a decreasing world population. Shortly after Parric is joined by a female journalist and her photographer, a global bacteriological war breaks out. The plague weapon being used has an effect on that portion of the androids' mechanism composed of synthetic cellular material, causing the simulacra to run amok. Unable to cope with the androids as well as irate inhabitants of a nearby village, Parric and the other humans make their way across the countryside to another of the Towns.

Grant's writing is particularly successful when he is creating tension. The scenes of confrontation with berserk androids are evocative of the classic horror film, "The Night of the Living Dead". There is the same sense of the terror of humans facing creatures more powerful than themselves, grim caricatures of humans that are wildly alien. However, a good deal of the tension is dissolved by the predictability of the conclusion.

The characters are clear cut and well drawn but the story line, on the whole, is too derivative. It owes more than a little to the post-catastrophe novels of the British school with their feudal townships and warlords. It is particularly difficult to accept, in this case, such profound regression in the extremely short period of the book.

Grant is stylistically adroit, avoiding most of the technical failures that flaw early efforts. It is especially gratifying to note that he avoids the romantic clichés so common to this type of story. Altogether, he provides not a great sf novel, but a promising attempt. -- Reviewed by Jeff Frane --

The Word for World Is Forest by Ursula K. Le Guin. Putnam/Berkley, \$8.25
The End of All Songs by Michael Moorcock. Harper and Row, \$8.95
The Light Fantastic by Alfred Bester. Putnam/Berkley, \$7.95

Today the topic is style. The three books under review are not only good sf, not simply good story telling, they are superior examples of the art of prose. All three writers have a superior command of technique and know how to use it most effectively to tell and add lustre to their tales.

There can be no doubt that Ursula K. Le Guin is one of the best contemporary sf writers. Her latest book, The Word for World Is Forest, can only further enhance her reputation. A brilliant, tragic, exploration of the theme of contact between alien races, it is set in Le Guin's huge future history, on the planet of Athshe a few centuries from now. Earthmen, from an utterly treeless Earth, have come to this forest world to exploit its major resource. Although the natives are humanoid, the male earthmen treat them as animals --"creechies"--and enslave many of them for labour.

The novel recounts the native uprising, as their leader, Selver, finally brings the power of killing other humans to his people so they can save their world from complete devastation. In doing so, he upsets a finely balanced and vibrant, though apparently static, culture; even with themselves, the Athsheans will never again live without the possibility of murder.

Le Guin's presentation of the ecological and anthropological background of Athshe is one of the triumphs of this novel. Her other great technical achievement is her adoption of three points of view; Selver, an Earth anthropologist, and an exploitative army type who also believes men are the kings of the universe. As she shifts the tone and imagery in which she presents them, she provides profound psychological insights into their behaviour. Much more could be said about The Word for World Is Forest, for it is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally powerful; it is also a marvelous, gripping narrative, one you won't easily forget. It certainly deserved the 1972 Hugo for short novel, and is a book every Le Guin fan will want to own.

In The End of All Songs, Michael Moorcock brings to a close one of the wittiest, most stylish works in contemporary sf, the trilogy "The Dancers at the End of Time" (the previous two novels, An Alien Heat and The Hollow Lands, are also available from Harper and Row. Although it can be understood on its own, there is no doubt that The End of All Songs gains immeasurably if read as the conclusion to the trilogy.

Moorcock has concocted a moral fable out of all the ingredients of fin-de-siecle decadence. If Wells' Time Traveller figures here, he nevertheless speaks with the voice of Oscar Wilde. The book fairly sparkles with paradox, snobbish humour, wit, and yes, even philosophy. Moorcock's story is a kind of ultimate comedy of manners, in which decadent Immortals run up against the Victorian Lady, Mrs. Amelia Underwood, with all her mores intact, like her virtue (a concept they cannot comprehend).

The plot of this novel, let alone the trilogy, defies description, but everything works out in the end. Besides, the plot is not important; rather, the characters, and their intricate social intercourse, are important, are, indeed, marvelously winning fey creations. Moorcock's command of language propels the story through its violent twists and turns to its final brilliantly parodic new beginning. This is a deliciously droll piece of storytelling.

Alfred Bester is certainly a spellbinding tale teller, and seven of his best stories are gathered in The Light Fantastic, subtitled the Great Short Fiction of Alfred Bester. The stories range from 1942 to 1974, a period of over thirty years. Yet "Hell Is Forever," the earliest piece, though it reveals the youth of its author in a myriad small ways, remains a very readable novella of demonistic horror.

Bester has been both applauded and attacked for his stylistic pyrotechnics. I have always been an applauder: aside from the narrative drive of his stories there is the sheer joy of being carried along by a bravura performance. Certainly, none of the stories in this collection disappoint in either category, and the often corruscating wit, the brio of psychological insight in them, is an added delight. An even further attraction is the witty commentary Bester has supplied to the stories, providing technical and personal background. Stories like "5,271,009," "Fondly Fahrenheit," "The Men Who Murdered Mohammed" and "Disappearing Act" have long been treasured by sf cognoscenti. I hope the publication of The Light Fantastic will bring these marvelous entertainments to the larger audience they deserve. Meanwhile, the fans can just enjoy. And there's more to come; this one is only Volume One of a two volume set.

-- Reviewed by Doug Barbour --

Minotaur in a Mushroom Maze by Richard and Nancy Carrigan. Serialized in Analog; May, June, July, 1976.

In this serial the Carrigans have blended three components of a good science fiction story: scientific speculation, a well-developed plot, and genuine characters.

The scientific situation of the story rests on the discovery of the petron, a sub-atomic particle which is, among other things, a magnetic monopole. The discoverers believe that the petron holds the key to the use of matter-antimatter annihilation as a practical source of energy. The properties of the petron are not described in detail. But in the current state of high-energy physics, theories are still uncertain enough that not very much justification is needed for the introduction of this new particle.

The scientific background is realistic; the authors are familiar with what they are describing. The portrayal of a professional meeting as a 'cattle market' of those seeking employment is amusing, even if exaggerated.

Snatches of routine conversation and action such as 'that neutral K meson experiment at Fermilab' or 'I want to get this run before the computer switches over to batch operation for the night' also abound in the background. This may be establishing atmosphere by the use of jargon, but at least it's realistic jargon.

The plot complications begin when someone deliberately destroys the experimental equipment that produced the petrons and steals a vat containing the only isolated petrons in existence. (The stability and long lifetime of the petrons is justified less by scientific speculation than by the requirements of the plot.) The protagonist, a physicist-investigator, is hired to investigate this vandalism and theft.

Meanwhile, an investigator for the Securities and Exchange Commission is concerned about mysterious purchases of electric stocks by anonymous parties fronted by a Lebanese banker, and also by a hard-sell operator selling worthless mining stocks to retired people in Appalachia. As he pursues his inquiries, connections between the two cases begin to appear.

Our protagonist, looking for leads, deduces that the petron thieves plan to do something with the particles and probably need skilled help. So he puts himself on the 'cattle market' and is hired by a Pennsylvania firm, supposedly a mushroom farm, which wants him to help operate a superconductor coil. They lamely explain that the

coil will be used to sterilize compost for the mushrooms. This strains the reader's credulity, but not to the breaking point. Naturally the investigator is suspicious; he knows that the coil could be used with the petrons.

From this point the plot thickens. The protagonist finds himself virtually held captive in the 'mushroom maze,' which is located on an island patrolled by vicious mastiffs. (The reader can genuinely feel his frustration that this could happen in America, right near Pittsburgh even!) The authors skillfully weave the three plot lines together and bring the story to a high climax and satisfying conclusion.

Some of the characters in Minotaur in a Mushroom Maze are three-dimensional, unlike the cardboard puppets which populate too many hard sf stories.

In particular, although there is a clear division between 'good guys' and 'bad guys,' the villains are not monolithic. They have different aims and motives, ranging from lust for worldly power to prophecies of ancient Cretan mother-goddess worship.

There is a tendency for antagonists to be introduced with 'funny hats'; thus we have the power-lusting Moroccan (named Bull Tauroman -- redundant symbolism there), the sexy Moroccan, the fey Moroccan, and for contrast the power-lusting Moroccan's American step-daughter. But these characters are developed later. The protagonist and the reader gradually become aware of their motivations and the differences among them.

One flaw in the character development is that the authors waste one character; they have the SEC investigator murdered in order to prevent things from being too easy for the physics investigator.

To sum up, Minotaur in a Mushroom Maze may not be notable for original ideas or the spark of inspiration. But it is a hard-science sf story with skillful plotting, developed characters, and careful speculation of next year's science.

-- Reviewed by Steve Beatty --

THE DEADLY ASSUMPTION

A Review of Darkover Landfall by Marion Zimmer Bradley

by Jessica Amanda Salmonson

Pamela Sargent, in her long introduction to Women of Wonder, writes, "Often the treatment of women in sf is rationalized by setting the story on a far planet where the characters are colonists or are accidentally stranded. Much of this type of science fiction assigns women to the traditional roles of bearing and caring for children and the home, on the grounds that the primary duty of the colonists is to procreate. Normally the women agree to this necessity; those who do not usually find fulfillment, as the novel progresses, in their "natural" function. Our roles are often dictated by the surroundings...yet it is surprising that the colonists do not experiment more with social structures and the women trapped in the constraints of certain roles are not treated more sympathetically. (This) leaves the women in the position of brood mares."

In a foot note she adds, "It would be interesting to show the conflict between the role demanded by physical necessity and her desires to use her other abilities. It would be even more interesting to resolve the problem, and not simply by having the woman find fulfillment as a mother."

Pamela could we-1 be talking about Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover Landfall, but she cites no specific novel (Marion is mentioned nowhere in this article about women in sf, and I trust this was an oversight rather than a slight on Pamela's part).

The Darkover series has a vast following, and Marion's two most recent additions to the list (The Heritage of Hastur and The Shattered Chain) are bound to increase those ranks, since both are not only good adventure, but well-characterized -- a rare thing in much science fiction.

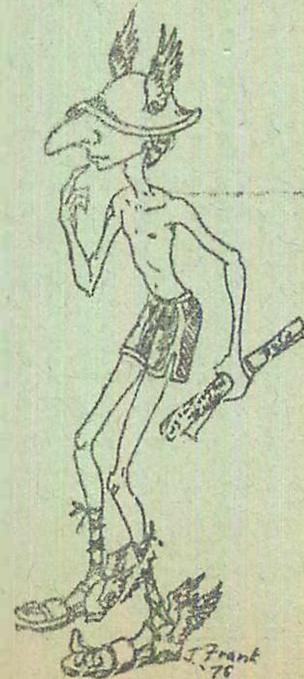
Earlier Darkover novels are less intense, but no less entertaining. Darkover Landfall is about the first ship to Darkover. Darkovans of the distant future do not know that their heritage is Terran, so Landfall would be, to them, pre-history. This pre-history of Darkover is interesting on a couple of different levels. If you've never read another book in the series, Landfall is engrossing as an excellent example of the Castaway and Survival theme. To those who are familiar with the series, it is fascinating to find Marion's reasoning for that planet becoming what it became. These Terrans are, after all, the roots of that almost-medieval and decidedly un-terran race of Darkover, and we always knew something catastrophic must have happened to make that terran stock produce the culture it did.

Why, for instance, is Darkover so damnably sexist? The answer is here, and it's a feminist's nightmare. Why is none of their terran heritage remembered even in mythology? That answer, too, is here. Why does the culture grow to so much resemble Gaelic culture? Why was every scrap of earth technology lost? So many things we've taken for granted, unexplained, take on new dimensions with this background information.

In the fanzine, WITCH AND THE CHAMELEON, Vonda McIntyre took Marion to task for writing such an anti-feminist novel. Marion initially defended the book, but was obviously forced to re-evaluate some of her formulas. The result was The Shattered Chain, a new Darkover novel that on the one hand defends Darkovan culture in all its sexist splendor, and on the other hand shows the one alternative of Darkovan women who may, if they choose, become members of the Free Amazons, a sisterhood who wants no part of role strictures.

Marion does make a deadly assumption when dealing with the survival of these marooned terrans, their adaptation to their new world and the discoveries of its alien mysteries. She assumes women won't balk too much if told, flat out, to get pregnant or else. She assumes the situation demands a dictatorial patriarchy, lest that first generation fail. Why couldn't she assume, I wonder, that some sort of early tribal matriarchy works as well? Why didn't her castaways devise a social order that gave the women at least a fifty percent say? (Mostly, in this novel, militant females are belittled into accepting the necessities, any complaints aren't even weighed for merit.) Why don't the women just get fed up and say, "Hey, wait. Ain't no one telling me what I do with my body, cuz that's called rape!"

We might look out our own windows for the answers. We live in a society that allows these same grim attitudes to prevail daily -- men



making decisions that affect women, women grumbling a little, then going right along. Marion's picture of survival may not be a kind one, but it is not unreasonable. She says the Judaeo-Christian oppression of women will not have died out by Year One on Darkover. I don't like it, but I can believe it in my more cynical moments.

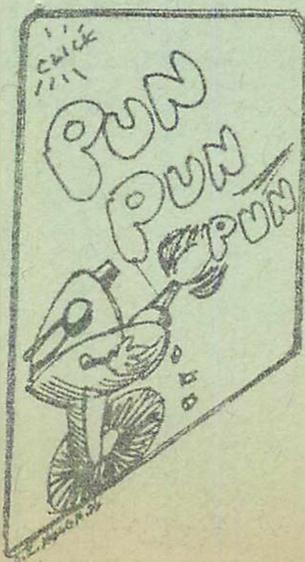
With a shipload of characters to deal with, there are just too many people in the story for any of them to be perfectly fleshed out. Characterization, so well done in Marion's recent novels, is a weak spot in Landfall. The planet, then, is the star of the show, and the author describes it skilfully and lovingly as a mysterious, menacing, and wildly beautiful place to be. The prose describing the rapid, colorful blossoming of mountain meadows is breathtaking -- beauty that ironically turns to terror. What the drug-pollen brings is no common hay fever! The majesty of the Darkovan mountains is equally well conceived. The first contacts with two semi-human native races is fascinating and piques the curiosity.

Look around those deadly assumptions about woman's role in planet-building, and you see a grand painting that must be read. I enjoyed it, even while it made me mad.

QUICKIES ON STENCIL BY YOUR EDITOR, MORE RAMBLE ABOUT BOOKS THAN REVIEWS. MAYBE NEXT.

There has been so much good stuff coming out lately, that it is hard to keep up with it. I don't know why I try sometimes, but it seems to appear, luring the dollars out of my pocket and ending up on the 'must read' shelf.

God is not dead, or so Philip K. Dick and Roger Zelazny would have it in their new collaboration, Deus Irae. The time is after some holocaust or other and the new religion is The Servants of Wrath. Their god is Carleton Luftueful, and he is still alive somewhere. Tibor McMasters is commissioned to paint a mural, a portion of which is a portrait of god. He won't be satisfied unless it is truly Lufteufel that he paints. Tibor has a problem, however; he is a Paraplegic. The problem is not in the painting; this he does quite well with the extensors he is equipped with. The problem is in transportation; a cart pulled by a cow, Darlin' Corey, is not the best way to start off on a quest. A delightful story. One always wonders when considering a collaboration just who is responsible for what. This one ought to give you the fun of trying to figure it out. I occasionally found bits of Phil's philosophy and I thought I saw Roger's characterization, although that's not quite so easy to tell. Anyway, try your own luck at it, and enjoy the story as you go along.



Lee Brackett sails along famously with her latest in the series which began with The Ginger Star, and continued with The Hounds of Skaith. The third book is The Reavers of Skaith and if you are already into the series you won't want to miss it. Eric John Stark is still trying to assist the peoples of the dying world and not being very successful at it. An agreement with the Antarean, Penkawr-Che goes sour and Stark finds himself a prisoner of a very treacherous person at the beginning of the novel. Escape only leads him deeper and deeper into trouble, the kind of plotting that we have come to expect from Leigh Brackett. Exciting adventure; good stuff.

Next time I hope I have room for a few more of my own reviews; some good stuff out lately and perhaps I can talk about it at greater length.



Ritcher '74