

ASH - WING 17

ASHWING

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JULY 1975

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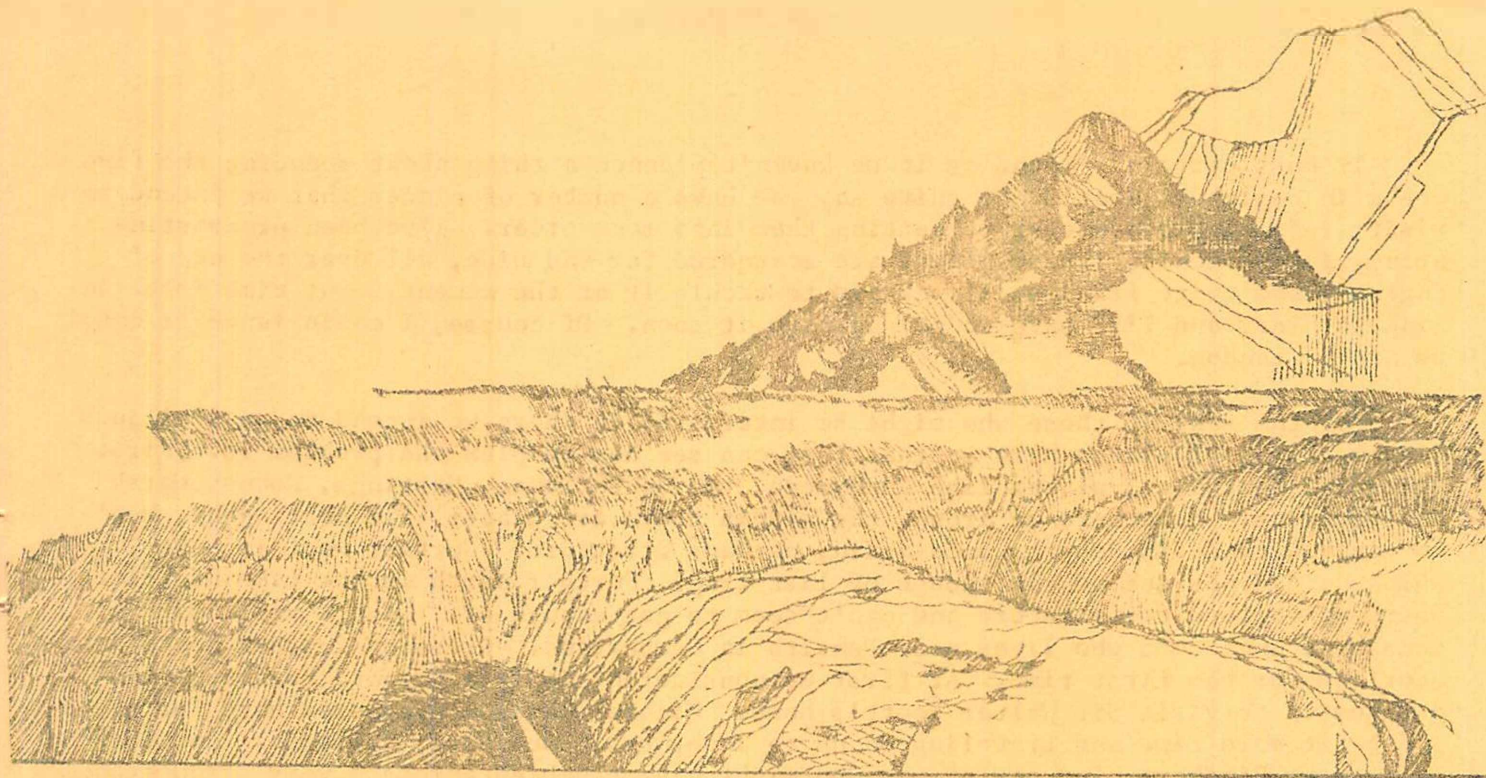
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THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO MICHAEL CARLSON

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And available for all of the usual reasons, plus a goodly number of unusual
one, e.g. first editions of the Gutenberg Bible, signed (by God, not the
printer), french fried mantras, maps for buried treasure in Lankhmar, and
recommendations for records. Thanks especially to Sam Long for the neatest
book of Owl Cartoons, published in Britain and I'll show you some of them
next issue. That's all folks. I'm off to Westercon and then England. Write.





THE FREE COMMOTS

No. You aren't going to believe this. It's only been a short couple of months since the last issue of Ash-Wing came out and here's another one landing in your mail box. Has Frank gone mad? Yes, probably. What caused this burst of fannish enthusiasm? Well, I guess the upcoming trip did. There was material which I was holding that I was sure would be dated before I could crank myself up after the trip. I had visions of not getting another issue out until Christmas time. Then I would be tip-toeing on the verge of fringe fandom; down to two issues a year. People would forget my name. No letters from Harry Warner, Jr. would arrive. No full postcards from Mike Glicksohn. No long distance phone calls from Charles Cushing in Hamilton, Ontario. Fanzines would cease and desist from dropping into my outsized mailbox, and the mailman would become perplexed. ("Hmmm. He used to be the most popular patron on the block. Wonder what happened?") I couldn't stand the thought of all this and my phantom hand just reached out, grabbed an empty stencil and before I knew it, the thing was in the typer and letters were stringing themselves out across the page. Gee, automatic writing.

The trip is less than a month (well, three weeks, to be precise) off as I write this. In between is a trip to Westercon in Oakland. It's really time to be sitting down with the map and trying to figure out an itinerary. I did manage a couple of Sundays ago to sit down and write a letter asking for reservations at a small hotel near Trafalgar Square where we will stay during our time in London. Anna Jo and I are absolutely unable to sleep on the plane. It's just not comfortable enough. The flight leaves Vancouver, B.C. at 6:30 in the evening and we arrive at Gatwick sometime around 11:00 the next morning. It will be about 1 p.m. by the time we get into London and get to the hotel. So we will have been without sleep for some hours. The first thing we do is crash for a few hours, then get up around dinner time. After a meal and a short stroll around town we'll head for bed again and by the next morning we'll be on England's time, albeit still a bit weary. It seems to work out pretty well for us. So we do have confirmed reservations now, certainly a step in the right direction. I have not, however, really gotten down to getting out the map and trying to put together a sensical route for getting to all of the places we wish to visit.

It must certainly sound as if we haven't planned a thing about spending the five weeks in England. That's not quite so. We have a number of places that we intend to visit; it's simply a matter of getting them into some order. I've been procrastinating, I must admit. These places are scattered far and wide, all over the map of England, and quite frankly, I'm afraid to tackle it at the moment. But time is beginning to press and I'll have to get down to it soon. Of course, I could leave it until we are in London.

For the sake of those who might be interested in where we intend to go I'll just list a string of places here so that they can see how complex the problem is. First comes the southeast; places like Runnymede, the South Downs, Hastings, Romney Marsh and environs. Somewhere up around the middle there are places like Nottingham, Henley to visit with Keith Roberts once again, perhaps Stratford. Further west is Wales, which we did not see nearly enough of last trip. Further north is the Lake District, where we've been twice before and can't seem to get enough of. Also a visit with a cousin of Anna Jo's who lives near Penrith in Cumberland. Press on further north into Scotland for the first time. At first we considered simply a trip to Edinburgh and a sidestep to visit Sir Walter Scott's home. Michael Carlson pressured hard for spending a bit more time and traveling on up to Inverness, Loch Ness, Culloden. And that's quite near Findhorn, for any of you who might have stumbled across a very strange book entitled THE MAGIC OF FINDHORN by Paul Hawken. See reviews this issue. Meantime there has been an urge to see some of Yorkshire and that's just about directly opposite the Lakes. So far that doesn't sound like too bad a route in just about the order I've put it. Except. Except that I want to visit Exmoor again and that's clear to hell and gone down in the southwest. I know that there must be a way of putting this together so we won't be retracing our steps any more than necessary, but I just don't have the energy to tackle it, so I'm sitting here typing a fanzine instead.

Last warning about the travel zine that I intend to do after I get home. Many of you saw last trip's zine and seemed to enjoy it. So far the response has been good for the zine covering this upcoming trip. However, I'm only going to print enough to send to those who have asked for it. A postcard will do; I don't need elaborate requests, just a show of interest will do. I don't want to deny anyone who might find it of some interest, but I don't want to do a lot of copies for people who aren't really interested. So send me a card and I'll stick your name on the list. Once there it will be impossible for you to back out.

LOOK OUT, OAKLAND, HERE WE COME

Yep. It's just about Westercon time. I even got around to sending in reservations for the con hotel; just another one of those things I didn't think I'd ever get around to doing. They didn't recognize the name, obviously, because they sent back a confirmation. So in a short time we'll be heading down the highway to see what LA hath wrought in Oakland. For you non-westerners, a word of explanation. The con is being held in Oakland, considered a part of northern California, but the con committee is from Los Angeles. Yep. Strange. So we're all anxious to see how the con is going to come off. A couple of years ago when Westercon was held in San Francisco there were about 2000 people in attendance, and I would suppose that about the same number might be expected this time.

I'm looking forward to it, as always. Cons are for seeing friends and I could name a bunch right off. Like Bill "Swampy" Marsh from Carson City, Vardebob, and Mike Kring and Sal Di Maria from Albuquerque; all the good Denver people (I hope you guys make it this year), Roy Squires, Don Fitch, Tom Whitmore, Fred Whitledge. Shoot, the names could just keep coming for the next two pages and that would be the end of the editorial right there. But there are a couple of other topics that I want to take up and I don't want to run off at the mouth forever like I did last time.

There are a couple of things that I'm looking forward to particularly this year. Letters from several good folks have indicated that they'll be in attendance this time and that's going to help to make it a good con. First I got a letter from Don Keller attached to his music column which is contained herein. I've not had the pleasure of meeting Don and look forward to it. Will the real Don Keller stand up? Is he really as intense as I think he's going to be? Should I tell him his column sucks? (Heh heh). Naw, only kidding, Don. The word wends its ways by footpath and secret mountain passes from Phoenix that Ken St. Andre will be there. Ken was at one Westercon previously and while we met, I was entirely dissatisfied with the amount of time that we really got to sit and talk. Ken, can you stand crowded room parties any better now than you could then, or do I have to spirit you away to the bar and ply you with liquor? Anyway, I'm tickled that Ken is coming and looking forward to meeting him once again. Finally, Bill Bowers wrote me the first note ever. Now, that sounds bad, cuz I'm no better than he is. I've never written to him either. He said that he was anxious to meet me. Hell, I jumped up and down. I'm more anxious to meet him than he could possibly be to meet me. C'mon, Bill, want to duke it out to see who's the most anxious. Now, that's what I call nice. It wasn't a long note, but I thought it was darn nice of him to say that. And Jan Snyder. Now that's not a big name in fandom, but I know her through a couple of apas and she's a King Arthur freak and a Robin Hood freak and we've exchanged letters and shucks, now I get to meet her. So you can see I'm getting all hyped up. Maybe you can change the tenses used above after July 6 and use that as a con report.

One other thing in connection with Westercon is that Susan Wood will be riding down with us. And that's neat. That's like starting the con two or three days early. Right, Susan. Regale us with fabulous fannish anecdotes, avacado stories and descriptions of the Canadian prairie and the agrarian novel. Hee, hee. One of the things that Susan asked if we could do is take a look at the coast. Shucks, I could see those big eyes just pleading right there on the paper. How the heck you gonna turn down a request like that? So that's another map I've got to pull out and look at. Maybe we won't do the Washington coast which is not quite so spectacular, but the Oregon coast is a must. So we'll pick some place to cross over to the mighty Pacific and throw Susan into the cold briney. As it happens, I don't mind that request at all, as the Oregon coast is one of the beauty spots of America. We haven't taken that route for several years as it is time consuming, so it will be nice to spend a day wandering south along the Pacific.

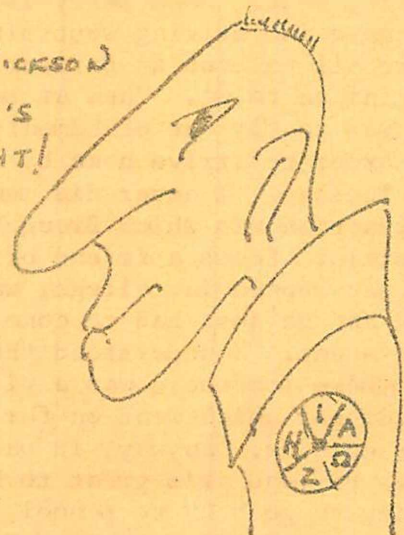
Shucks, the adrenalin is going already in anticipation of the con. Where's the room party? Dena, are you ready? I'm going to avenge my loss to you at pool. What are you going to do with a girl who brings her own cue?

TRAVELS TO SOME ONE

The other day the phone rang and when I picked it up a voice said, "Hi, Frank. This is Michael Carlson." Now I've talked to Michael on the phone once before and the line stretches awfully thin between Connecticut and Washington. "Your voice is too strong, Michael," I responded. "Where are you?" "In Seattle," came the response. Far out. Michael Carlson in Seattle.

So we set up a date for him to have dinner with us on Sunday evening. He arr-

GORDY DICKSON
SAYS IT'S
ALL RIGHT!



ived about 5 in the evening and 10 hours later and a half a bottle of Irish I told him where the spare bedroom was, and that I'd take him back into town the next morning on my way to work.

Aw, shoot. I can't even begin to tell you about all the topics we covered. It was one of the best conversations I've had since V-Con when Susan and Eli and Douglas and Sharon Barbour were at their verbal best. Michael is a great conversationalist with a wide-ranging variety of interests. I'm not sure whether we exhausted them all or not. I guess that we didn't because Michael called Wednesday morning to ask me to stop by on the way home from work. He had two things to give to me. One was the cartoon that you see below. Do you suppose he was trying to tell me something? The other was a book by Tom McHale entitled FARRAGAN'S RETREAT. I haven't had a chance to get into it yet, but I'll report when I've finished it. Michael must have had an ulterior motive in choosing that particular book. He muttered something about "Catholic" and "humor" and the jacket notes say something about "Irish Catholic black sheep." Hmmm. Another quote: "No matter how wild things may be in the streets, it is the family rumble which still can provide life's most dangerous arena."

Onward. Not yet worn out from conversation Michael came out to the house again on Thursday evening dragging along three of his friends, all non-fans, although I detected that they may indeed read it occasionally. The occasion, just in case we needed one, was that Michael hadn't had a chance to sample my magnificent Irish coffee as yet. Then I went and blew it on the first batch; got it a little too sweet. By the second glass, however, who cared? We managed to cut the conversation off short this time, somewhere around 6 hours since some of the guys (including me) had to go to work on Friday. Ah, what great fun. Again we ran the gamut of topics, sports, architecture, music, college experiences (Wesleyan must be quite the place and I was jealous of the kind of education these guys got there), film, James Joyce, and on and on.

I was sorry to see Michael go, but good things must end, and I'm sure we'll meet again one of these days. In the meantime his column will continue here from time to time as well in other places. His plans when he left here were to travel north to Bellingham to visit with Pauline Palmer of WILD FENNEL fame, then on to Vancouver, B.C. to take a look at the town, then fly to Edmonton to visit Doug and Sharon Barbour and to meet up with Susan Wood who is moving west. John Berry is helping Susan to move and driving west with her and they were all to meet at Barbour's. Sounds like a minicon to me. Then at some ungodly hour he was to fly out of Edmonton to New York in order to arrive home by early afternoon on Tuesday. I never did mention what the attraction was which Brought him out to Seattle. Seems a friend of his, with whom he had roomed in college, was getting married and he just had to come and witness the event. I understand that sandwiched in there somewhere was a visit from Loren MacGregor which went on for some time into the morning. Anyway, it was great to meet with him and it's great to hear that he is going to go back to school to begin graduate work in English at McGill. G'luck, M.

The Now Society



"Gosh, Ted, has it been that long? I got over my owl thing ages ago."

One of the things that we talked about while Mike was here was Thomas Pynchon. I haven't gotten around to GRAVITY'S RAINBOW yet, although I have a copy. Maybe take it on the trip with me. Another person that came up in the conversation was Tom Robbins who had such a fine first novel called ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION. Just by chance on the following day there appeared a bit in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer about Tom's current doings. Rather than paraphrase, I'll just quote it in full:

"One of my favorite authors is Tom Robbins, enfant terrible among art critics, novelist, essayist, and one of the more illustrious citizens of La Conner, where he hides out from people who might interfere with his writing. Tom made quite a sensation with his first novel, ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION, and was completing his second novel the last time I saw him. Because authors, like ball players, politicians and strip teasers, sometimes make news, I asked Tom to call me when he finished his second book. He didn't call, but he did write a note, and here it is:

'I know I promised to phone, but I've really had little to report, until now. Just recently I finished my second novel, shipped it off to New York (via two boxcars), where it has been accepted. Paperback rights have been sold for more bread than I thought existed outside of Nixon's secret Swiss accounts. There are 121 chapters, 10 interludes, a preface, an introduction and a Special Bonus Parable. The title is EVEN COWGIRLS GET THE BLUES, and while it is truly impossible to describe, one might semi-accurately say that it is a serio-comic philosophical thriller based on the smells of the female body.

'Meanwhile ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION continues to do well. It has sold more than 100,000 copies in paperback now, and is on the required reading lists at more than 20 colleges and universities. A book store has been named after it in Arkansas and a record and plant shop in Chicago. Students have written a musical version and produced it at the University of Tennessee, and two professors at Northern Arizona University are collaborating on a 'serious scholarly essay' about it. To my mind, however, the real mark of its success is the fact that a Jesus freak church recently burned every copy the congregation could lay its hands on.

'Bantam Books is flying me back to New York in about a week, and from the Big Apple I'm gonna continue to travel for an indefinite while. Essentially, I'll be back in La Conner, though, where I may take typing lessons. Regards to all hands at the P-I." (signed) Tom.

Well, that about wraps it up for me this time. Things seem to be going well for me. Life is more than interesting. The Kid is doing just great, and I'm even getting used to being called Grandpa. I've been mulling over what I might take along to read on the plane and during the trip. Yeh, I know. I'll buy enough stuff while I'm over there to keep me reading for a year, but still a guy has got to go prepared. A couple of recommendations have come my way recently that can't be considered strictly sf, but seem to be hovering dangerously near, at least enough so to be more than interesting. Robert Merle (THE DAY OF THE DOLPHIN) has just had his new book published in paper. It's called MALEVIL, and purports to be a story of a group of people who survive a nuclear holocaust because they are in a wine cellar at the time of the blast. They get to start the world over. Another one that I'll take along is William Goldman's THE PRINCESS BRIDE. I'm told that it is more than it looks on the surface, and not to let the cover throw you off from purchasing it. I wish I could remember who made the recommendation; I hate to slight people like that. Ballantine paperback for the Goldman book and Warner paperback for MALEVIL. Look for them. They look good.



BY MUSIC POSSESSED don keller

First, a word about reggae.

The public at large is fairly familiar by now with what reggae sounds like (it rather being the rage recently), whether through imitations (Paul Simon's "Mother and Child Reunion" for one) or honest-to-ghod reggae numbers recorded by others (Eric Clapton's "I Shot the Sheriff"). For a long time I regarded it as an interesting but ignorable variation of soul music. And though I read it was genuinely revolutionary music, even the genuine examples I heard (on an hour radio spot by Jim Capaldi of Traffic) sounded upbeat and goodtimey, too lightweight for serious consideration. (I was wrong, of course.)

I did enjoy what I heard, though, at least in small doses, so I became convinced that, for musical education and breadth if nothing else, I should own at least one reggae album. And recently I came across, in one of the many \$2-used record shops around here, the very one I wanted: BURNIN' by Bob Marley and the Wailers; they are reputedly one of the very best reggae bands in its native Jamaica, ROLLING STONE had said it was better than their new album NATTY DREAD, and best of all, it contains the original "I Shot the Sheriff," written by Bob Marley.

The album surprised me, mildly negatively and strongly positively. The negative side is that, to one used to hearing Yes and Frank Zappa, reggae is not very challenging musically; the ubiquitous wah-wah rhythm guitar and chunky rhythm (catchy and interesting, but very rarely varied) gives a whole album a distressingly samey feeling, on a few listens anyway.

On the positive side...I am a political naif (meaning I ignore it as much as possible) and am not generally in favor of propagandistic art, but even I can tell real revolutionary music when I hear it, and the Wailers are the real thing. The upbeat feeling I discern covers over an underlying melancholy feeling which is an artistic substitution for real anger. They will tell you how they feel, but they want

to play good music, too. The relevance and immediacy of what they say make 'let's get together' folk and soul music (to say nothing of things like Neil Young's "Revolutionary Blues") look like the silly posturing they are.

The two best songs are "I Shot the Sheriff" (though I still like Clapton's version musically: his guitar fills and way of singing the melody are more to my insular taste), a powerful number about violence in the streets, and its immediate successor, "Burnin' and Lootin'", the only number in minor key (which makes it work better for me), positively scary in its implications about freedom, bureaucracy, and violence. Some numbers suggest Calypso (Harry Belafonte and all that, to which reggae seems related like rock is to blues) ("Put It On"), some African music and poetry ("Small Axe"), another source of the form, and several ("Get Up, Stand Up", "One Foundation") show that soul music owes reggae a lot.

I am not fond of black music; until this album the only black artist I had was Jimi Hendrix, who almost doesn't count. Almost all soul music seems to me 'manufactured music' (to quote Frank Zappa); War (whose "The World Is A Ghetto" "Burnin' and Lootin'" -- less insistent but more persistent -- reminds me of) is the only group I remotely like. But Bob Marley and the Wailers have something important to say and they say it well -- so that it reaches even a white effete snob like me.

* * *

And a couple of words about another interesting, but very different band, Sparks. They are, if you can believe such a thing, a progressive English-music-hall band; they sound like the Kinks on speed. They are very catchy (almost too much so) and commercial yet fascinating musically and lyrically. Admittedly, to enjoy them you have to get used to lead singer Russel Mael's yodelly voice, but it can be done. The most unbelievable thing about them is that, for all their effete Englishness, they're just another band from L.A.

Their two most recent albums, KIMONO MY HOUSE and PROPAGANDA, both with thunderous production by Muff Winwood (yes, Stevie's brother, formerly with Spencer Davis) are recommended....but hear them first. Sparks are very easy to hate. For special tastes only.

* * *

Neil Young is an artist who has meant to me (and a few other people) what Dylan has meant to most people. And the parallels between them are very strong; neither can sing or play guitar, both are moody and difficult to deal with, yet they write songs so powerful (and that work so perfectly with what they do best) that, for their devotees, they seem to sum up their experience. (Dylan I need not document; but for one example, Neil's "Sugar Mountain" evokes in four short verses all the important elements of growing up.) And each has, after several disappointing albums, delivered one which shows they are still capable of their power: Dylan with BLOOD ON THE TRACKS (which, what I've heard of it, I really like, something I can say only of "Like A Rolling Stone" and BLONDE ON BLONDE of his other work) and Neil with ON THE BEACH.

Word has it that Neil is due for a new album momentarily, but I think ON THE BEACH deserves mentioning at this point anyway. It is not the landmark album BLOOD ON THE TRACKS is (which seems destined to be remembered as one of Dylan's best), despite the embarrassingly laudatory ROLLING STONE review; I don't think it equals the stuff he was doing at his peak. But after the disappointing HARVEST, the messy JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST and the disastrous mistake of recording TIME FADES AWAY live, ON THE BEACH is a pleasant breath of fresh air, definitely his best since AFTER THE GOLDRUSH.

"Walk On" is a perfect singly, catchy and well-put together; I dug it the first time I heard it. "See the Sky About to Rain" is one of his older songs which he is

gradually re-recording; I like the acoustic piano version of the bootleg better, but this is excellent. And despite my swipe above, I like the urgency of "Revolution Blues": David Crosby's rhythm guitar really carries. "For the Turnstiles" has Neil playing banjo just like he plays guitar (badly), and is offkey and strident, but for fanatics it's effective; and "Vampire Blues" is silly but fun.

The second side is a surprise; the tinny production of the first side is replaced by something fuller and more resonant. Combined with the fact that two of the three long songs have Neil singing lower than he usually does, he's almost unrecognizable. The title song is one of the best things Neil has written in a while: slow, echoey strums full of his spooky ninth chords, lyrics that are a startling insight into how his strange mind works, and one of the finest and most expressive guitar solos he's ever played. "Motion Pictures" and "Ambulance Blues" (the latter of which is considered something of a magnum opus -- it's certainly magnum at 8:57) are rambling acoustic numbers whose lyrics I haven't fully assimilated; they sound similar and a little monotonous till you're used to them, but they are good, sharply observed songs. All in all, it's a fine, listenable album (almost made my Top Ten), and most importantly it's a step back in the right direction for Neil Young.

* * *

For most Led Zeppelin fans, there was a year-and-a-half gap between their fifth album, HOUSES OF THE HOLY, and the new PHYSICAL GRAFFITI. But for me, the gap was between their fourth (which I bought the day it came out and reviewed, along with their first three, in PROCRASTINATION) and HOUSES OF THE HOLY, which first of all came out at a time when I didn't have any money to buy albums, and secondly I didn't like what I heard of it. Acclimatization of a year or more, however, led me to buy it finally (used of course) a couple of months before PHYSICAL GRAFFITI came out. The wait was worth it: HOUSES OF THE HOLY is a first-rate album, probably as good as its predecessor (which I consider one of their best), but it's also very unusual: much of the material is experimentation with things they had not previously done: James Brown ("The Crunge"; a lark, at least), the "pretty" (in a conventional sense) ballad ("The Rain Song"; it comes off a touch cloying, but the weird-for-rock guitar chords are neat). '50s rock-cum-reggae ("D'Yer Mak'er," another lark, with Page playing perfect guitar -- studio musician, remember?), and weirdo pinkfloydo mellotron music ("No Quarter"; it also has one of their strongest riffs ever, and it's the spookiest and finest song on the album). Together with some topnotch rockers (particularly "Dancing Days"), it makes up their only album I find interesting all the way through -- but it doesn't have any masterpieces except possibly "No Quarter."

With their new album PHYSICAL GRAFFITI having taken them so long and being a double besides, one would have expected more stylistic experimentation. However, though there is some, the overwhelming impression is of mindless boogie. Part of the reason is that, reportedly, there are some outtakes from previous albums on here, but even the obviously new stuff seems to take the position that monotonous is best, something that worked for "When the Levee Breaks" but doesn't always work here. The first few listens are, in fact, rather boring and disappointing, but eventually the better songs assert themselves.

There are three songs on the album longer than any previous LZ song and a fourth which, at nearly seven minutes, is one of the half-dozen longest; oddly, these are the album's four best songs.

Every LZ album has one substantial, undisputed masterpiece (for the record: "Dazed and Confused," "Whole Lotta Love," "Since I've Been Loving You,"



"Stairway to Heaven," "No Quarter"), and for this album it's "Kashmir," an incredible modal/moody epic that (to the uneducated ear, anyway) sounds undeniably eastern, and has been described as everything from "In a Persian Market" to the soundtrack from EXODUS. It has a powerful riff, crashing mellotron chord-clusters, and a classical-sounding free-form modal melody in the middle and end. It's also half again as long as it should be; good as it is, it would be tighter and more effective as a shorter piece. It reads a thin line between being hypnotic and boring.

Many of the same things can be said of "In My Time of Dying"; it is also much too long (eleven minutes!) for the few variations it has. It features some excellent slide guitar, but tends to run it into the ground which is a shame. It also trails off into stupid studio talk (which, along with "Black Country Woman," may mark it for their selfconscious third album period).

The tightest and best-composed song on the album is "Ten Years Gone." It begins with soft guitar strums, which segue into layers and layers of down-sequenced guitar riffs, has a gorgeous bridge with Plant singing like Rod Stewart and Page's best solo on the album. A vastly enjoyable song, and more like I expected (and hoped) the album to be.

"In the Light" was touted prior to the album's release as a sort of followup to "Stairway to Heaven," but it's not really. It has a more open and varied structure than most of the stuff, but it doesn't cohere. There are weird Moog noodlings, a good commercial chorus riff, and some spooky guitar runs, all of it good, but though it's a nice try it doesn't really work.

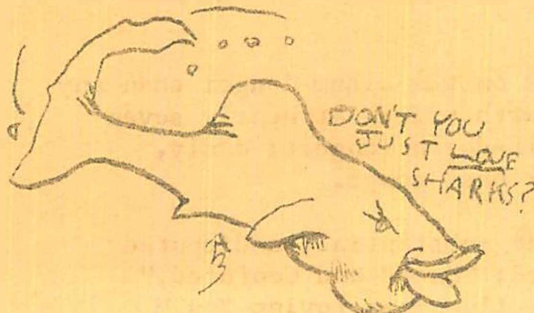
Apart from "Bron-Yr-Aur," a nicely done acoustic instrumental reminiscent of Jorma Kaukonen's "Embryonic Journey", the rest of the album is filler, and all rather similar; whether you like it or not depends on whether you get off on the riff or like the minor embellishments they make. I like the riff in "The Rover," and the Stevie Wonderish electric piano in "Trampled Under Foot," and the bluegrass mandolin in "Boogie With Stu," and appreciate the languid countriness of "Down By the Seaside" (with its possible Sandy Dennis influence), but I don't play them much, and the remainder (most of side 4, for example) not at all.

I am not really disappointed with PHYSICAL GRAFFITI; most LZ albums have a few songs I play and a number I don't, and there is some excellent music on it. I'm just hoping that they have got their boogying out of their system and their old material out of their backlog, and on the next album, hopefully out sooner, get back to the more artistic stuff they profess to be interested in.

* * *

A little more succinct this time, but I also got stuck reviewing albums, which is something I didn't want to do. Looser next time, I hope; one thing I'm working on is "The Problem of Robin Trower." I welcome any who want to write in and argue with me or have suggestions for things they would like to see discussed.

-- Donald G. Keller --



Two Hitherto Undiscovered

Anglo - Saxon Poems

Translated, And With An Introduction By

Theobald Arnold, Ph. D.

Professor of Medieval Literature, Strafford College

The Outcast is a poem of which scholars previously had no knowledge whatever. Very recently a copy of it was found in the British Museum among some unsorted manuscripts, interspersed between the pages of an Arabian sorcery text once owned by the Elizabethan alchemist and scholar, John Dee. How it got there no one knows.

The poem itself presents many puzzling questions. It was apparently composed very late in the Anglo-Saxon period, as its author shows familiarity with a wide range of Anglo-Saxon literature, some of which wasn't written down until the ninth and tenth centuries. The poet was apparently a man of some learning, possibly someone educated in a monastery, but his unconventional attitudes suggest that he was not a clergyman. His elegy contains a considerable pagan element, with its emphasis on doom and fate rather than heavenly redemption. The fact that God is not mentioned anywhere in the poem and that the author speaks of death without mentioning a heavenly resurrection, suggest that he had either abandoned his Christian beliefs in his despair and was unable to ask for God's help, as was Judas in the New Testament, or that he was only at best half-converted to Christianity to begin with.

The accasion for the composition of The Outcast is likewise open to speculation. Clearly the poet's lord has fallen in battle, and his *commitatus* has been destroyed. Some suggest that, considering the degree of the author's depression and the late date of the poem's writing, that the conquerors mentioned in line 22 are the Normans, and that the poem was set down after the Battle of Hastings, which would make it truly the last poem in all Anglo-Saxon literature. If this is the case, then it seems likely that the poet was a member of King Harold's court, whose life seemed hopeless after he saw his leader slain in battle and his country conquered by Frenchmen. This, however, cannot be proven with the evidence currently available.

Aside from those that are obvious, some of the references in the poem are quite puzzling. The mention of Arthur and his "wonder sword" in line 3 suggests that even before the Arthurian cycle developed to its fullest in the French romances, some version of the story was circulating around England. Some of the other names are less

clear. The Aelfric of line 8 we know nothing of, and whatever was written by the poet Eothere no longer exists. Hraef, who is named in line 7, is also mentioned in section xvii of Beowulf and in the Finnesburh Fragment.

In form the poem is rendered slightly out of the ordinary by its use of a two line refrain. Deor's Lament, the only other known Anglo-Saxon elegy to have a refrain at all, has only one line.

There is less that can be said about The Shipwreck. Its author is unknown, though because it was found with The Outcast some speculate that it was written by the same man. The script on the two is identical, but this only proves that the two were copied down by the same scribe. It is very possible that the poem was composed by a wandering scop who didn't know how to write, let alone have the opportunity to.

The subject matter of this second poem is somewhat more ambiguous. There are no specific names given save that of the narrator, so it is difficult to place it historically. We never know the land from which the sailor has come, or where it is that he has been stranded. Either he is a foreign sailor in England, or an English sailor somewhere else. Or perhaps the poem reflects the Saxons' fascination with the sea, which is so eloquently delineated in the far better known elegy, The Seafarer. Additionally, a few scholars see some sort of legendary or mythical basis in the work, taking it to be an account of some magical land which has been lost, perhaps akin to Atlantis or even the Tir-Nan-Cg of Celtic folklore.

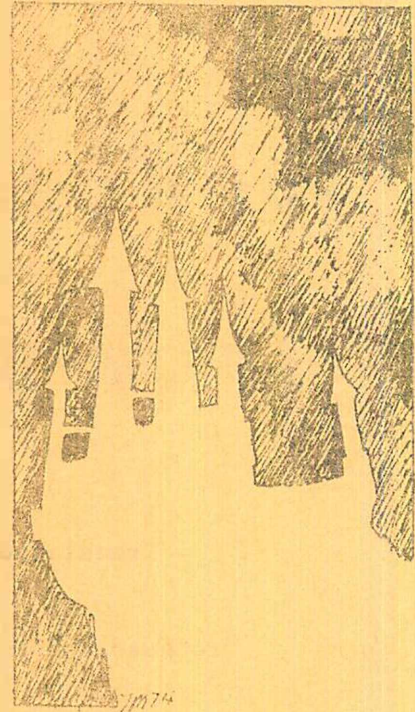
In form the poem is quite conventional. It uses standard Anglo-Saxon phrases, with no more variation than might be expected. The tone is more Christian than The Outcast, as its speaker finds consolation in the fact that only in heaven may happiness be found.

* * *

THE OUTCAST

Let us hear now of the heroes of old,
Of Constantine, the Christian king,
And Arthur, wielder of the wonder-sword.

Their flesh is dust, their bones are cold,
Their ghosts are gathered on lonely fens.



Let us tell the tales of brave warriors,
Of Hraef, who held the hall,
And Aelfric, master of the sea-steeds.

Their flesh is dust, their bones are cold,
Their ghosts are gathered on lonely fens.

Now let us sing of poets, recall the songs
Of Caedmon, who wrought the words of man's beginning,
And Eothere, who warned the world of evil coming.

Their flesh is dust, their bones are cold,
Their ghosts are gathered on lonely fens.

My lord lies slain, his stead is burnt,
His thanes all fallen on the field,
My people cast into the dark earth-cave.

Their flesh is dust, their bones are cold,
Their ghosts are gathered on lonely fens.

Alone have I lived, to wend the ways of weary exile.
I sing of the past, while conquerors rule the land.
There is no one to listen, none who knew the days that were.

Their flesh is dust, their bones are cold,
Their ghosts are gathered on lonely fens.

I know this: that all men shall die,
Their lives shorn short, their deeds soon done,
Soon lords and folk shall sink into sleep,
Soon great will be gone, soon lowly lost,
Soon shall my foemen fall before years.

Soon shall I be with my lord.

THE SHIPWRECK

The stranger spoke, unlocked his word-hoard:

I come from a land far to the west,
Where fair fields bloom, the sun never sets,
A wondrous land, I have lost that land,
Lost too my lord, my wise strong lord,
Gracious and good, guided by God.
Now cut off from kinsmen, warriors and wives,
I wander with new folk, who know not my name.
Hear then my tale --

I am Aethelwulf the sailor.
My vessel was called Whale-Friend.
Stricken by storm, wearied by wind,
Ship shorn of shields by the sharp sea-teeth,
Friends found fates in furious foam.
Comrades thus drowned, cast then to doom,
I seized the mast, snapped by waves' might.
I survived the storm, survived the cold,
Survived the sun, survived my thirst,
Until I came to this shore.

Two years and a day I have dwelt in these dales.
The men of this country are Christian and kind.
They've fed me, they've clothed me,
They've held me from harm.
They took me to church, sang mass for my soul,
Yet still I long for the sea, long for my home...

Never on earth, shall a man find true peace.

MONNEION

frank balazs

WITH APOLOGIES TO JACK VANCE

Ideltrix was the first to receive the cryptic message: NOTHING THREATENS AUSTRALIA.

Soon after, both Rhealtone and Gilcad found similar notes. The former had it engraved on the chest of a newly-deceased servant, while the latter heard it via a mistress who had disappeared by the next morning....with a not inconsiderable amount of his gold.

Before the week was out, the entire Baker's Dozen had gotten varying messages of the same import. They met in the castle of Ideltrix to ponder the matter.

There seemed to be but one possible answer to the riddle of NOTHING THREATENS AUSTRALIA. Haste was needed for Io of Opels, the last to receive the message, had gotten: NOTHING IS IMMINENT! In all probability, the site of the '75 Worldcon (only months away) was threatened by Nothing -- that mysterious intangible force that turned everything into itself. Shrew suggested that all the messages were a NASFiCtion:

"They want us out of the country so they can stage a coup of some sort. Perhaps they have some hideous plan for convincing people to attend the NASFiC over Aussiecon."

"So what? None of us were planning to go to Australia. \$1000 is a lot of money."

"Gasp!" gasped Rhealtone, "they've convinced fans already!"

"I, at least," commented Vermouth, "shall travel to Australia. As I remember, Monneion, our DUFF representative disappeared in the wilds of Down Under and has yet to be heard from."

"You think he's in trouble?" asked Gilcad.

"Not really, I'm just wondering why we haven't heard from him."

"Then, you think ----?"

"Well," interjected Shrew, "Monneion was never one to be deterred by mere gold or silver...."

"Then, then, then..." but Gilcad could not finish his thoughts.

"Yes, yes, yes....?" coaxed Ideltrix.

Rhealtone had to finish, "Then, Monneion must have collected thousands of IOU's!"

"No matter," declared Vermouth and Gilcad at the same time, "my only interests are to find him and save him from the threat of Nothing."

"You'll surely need me," declared Silifant, "I am very good at finding things."

"And," said Hazy of Wary Water, "if Monneion has collected that many IOU's, he'll need someone to carry the money..."

It was soon decided that everyone would go and within three weeks they had set off.

* * * * *

"Are you sure," asked Heresay the Haberdasher, "that koala bear is the best way to travel? What happens when we reach the ocean?"

"Ocean!?" exclaimed the other twelve.

* * * * *

The Outback seemed quite deserted. There were no signs of life; only deserted buildings and streets. Within minutes, the thirteen had settled comfortably down in an empty bar to guzzle the local products. Rhealtone, however, took the trouble to read the labels and made an unfortunate discovery.

"Gentlemen," he stated, "we have traveled all these many miles only to sip liquor imported from the US of A."

"Yes, but consider the shape of the Earth," Ideltrix pointed out. "Naturally one can readily determine its shape by examining but one common object."

"Which object is this?" inquired a besotted Hurtiants.

"Why, the most useful tool in existence: the --"

"Stapler!" exclaimed Hurtiants.

"No, you fool; the mimeograph."

At this very moment Monneion entered and said, "You're all a bunch of fuggheads. The most useful thing in the world is M*O*N*E*Y."

"I meant besides that," Ideltrix gravely stated.

Vermcuth changed the subject to what was pressing on everybody's minds: "But, have we come too late? Australia seems empty and deserted. Is there no one here who can pay an IOU?"

"Of course not. You idiots took so long traveling here by koala that the Worldcon has already started. That is where everybody is."

"Then," asked Gilcad, "what about NASFiC?"

"What about NASFiC? Simple, I wish my revenge upon it! There are many fans who will be attending that convention instead of this one, thus making it difficult for me to collect on my IOU's," said Monneion.

"You'll come back with us then?" Rhealtone asked.



"Are you sure," inquired Gilcad, "that there aren't any more IOU's here?"

Monneion ignored the question to say, "We'll start immediately and travel by eagle, of course."

* * * * *

They arrived in time for the bitter end of NASFiC -- anyone with sense had left the day before.

Monneion gave a list of names at the lobby desk. Only four of the entire list were still registered. It soon turned out that they had heard of Monneion's arrival and intentions to collect, so the four had grouped in the Con Suite. They were making their last stand.

But Monneion had the hotel on his side. The convention was over and the hotel personnel wanted the four out! and home! Unfortunately the four escaped through a window just before the maids descended upon the room. Since they were only sixty feet from the ground they were able to tie together just enough sheets.

The Baker's Dozen caught Monneion off-guard while he was cursing his misfortune.

All they found were the four uncollected IOU's -- Monneion had long since squandered all his money.

finis



THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH

REVIEWS

// Several readers sent along reviews this time and since this is likely to be a shorter issue than usual, there may not be as many of the inimitable Denton reviews. How lucky can you get. So enjoy, if you will, some people who are slightly more critical than your editor. //

SHARDIK by Richard Adams. Simon and Schuster, \$9.95.

THE MISCAST BARBARIAN -- A Biography of Robert E. Howard, by L. Sprague de Camp. de la Ree, limited to 900 copies.

THE LOST VALLEY OF ISKANDER by Robert E. Howard. Fax, \$12.95

THE JAWS THAT BITE, THE CLAWS THAT CATCH by Michael Coney. Daw Books #144, \$1.25

It's curious that a fantasy novel which made the bestseller lists in England and the U.S. should have been almost completely ignored in the fan press. Yet such was the fate of *WATERSHIP DOWN* and, apparently, Richard Adams' second book *SHARDIK* (Simon and Schuster, \$9.95) is destined to share that neglect. Although the title comes from an animal character, the novel is not the animal story that *WD* was. It is essentially concerned with human lives as they revolve around Shardik, a monstrous bear that the people of Ortelga believe is their god incarnate, destined to return their culture to a former glory.

He is discovered by Kelderek, a hunter, and it is this man who becomes the central figure of the book as he grapples with his faith and values in the service of his god. Basically, Kelderek is one of the least likeable protagonists in fantastic literature, until his evolution in the latter part of the book. He is a perpetual dupe to his religion, superstition and to anyone who can use his faith to manipulate him.

As in *WATERSHIP DOWN*, Adams demonstrates a marvelous grasp for the realistic characterization of animals. Unlike the rabbits of the former book, however, *Shardik* is never anything but an unsentient animal, only surpassing that category in the eyes of Kelderek and the other worshippers. He is an untamed, ravening beast, twice the height of a man, railing against captivity, and blindly seeking the forest home des-

troyed by fire.

Shardik's world is one which mainstream critics have and will continue to laud as "highly original", "fully realized" and "reminiscent of Tolkien". Compared to the average mainstream novel it might seem amazing, but it is a basic form of feudal society, complete with island priestesses, that is hardly exceptional in fantasy.

There is no doubt that Adams can write, and write beautifully. The problem in SHARDIK is that he writes too much, and there are times when the prose drags along with all the grace and speed of a dead bear. It is with similes like the following that his prose is at its most ponderous:

As when villagers have taken away the calf from a strong cow she bellows with rage, breaks the rails of the stockade and tramples her way through the village, afraid of none and filled only with distress and anger at the wrong she has suffered; the villagers fly before her and in her fury she smashes through the mud wall of a hut, so that her head and shoulders appear suddenly, to those within, as a grotesque, frightening source of destruction and fear -- so Shardik burst through the tall weeds and bushes on the edge of the ravine and stood a moment, snarling, before he fell upon the kneeling man and killed him even as he cried out.

p. 326

Possibly the most memorable portions of the book are the last two section which deal with Genshed, the slave dealer, and the civilizing of the land of Zeray. The question is how many readers will be able to slog through 400 page of sometimes leaden prose to reach that point.

Gerry de la Ree is well known for producing beautifully packaged limited editions, and this large format, soft cover volume is no exception. It features an attractive layout, with excellent illustrations by a variety of artists, printed on high-quality stock.

The problem with THE MISCAST BARBARIAN then, lies with the content rather than the presentation. Originally intended as a magazine article, the book provides a superficial look at Howard's life and "psychology". But rather than make a straightforward presentation and analysis of his subject material, de Camp has taken the opportunity to flog his pet peeves and, in the process, reveal some interesting information about his own level of awareness. This is de Camp with a literary sneer on his lip:

Writers did not then deem it their duty to endow their heroes with social consciousness, to sympathize with downtrodden ethics, to detail the mechanical problems of copulation, and to make it plain that they were on the side of peace, equality and social justice.

p. 28

One wonders what, if any, reading Mr. de Camp has done outside the realm of sword and sorcery, or at most the pulps.



.....many readers prefer, for a change stories of stalwart heroes doing heroic deeds, with hot action in romantic settings, told in plain, lucid, straight-forward prose, without mention of the school drop-out problems or the woes of the sexual deviant or the foreign aid situation or other contemporary difficulties.

p. 40

Although attempting a superficial analysis of the possible reasons for Howard's suicide, de Camp makes no connection between the writer's sexual immaturity, his death, and the adolescent fantasies revealed and inherent in his writing. Because of de Camp's essential lack of objectivity, the resultant book is of interest only to the most ardent of Howard fans.

For those of us who still suffer from latent adolescence, Howard's THE LOST VALLEY OF ISKANDER (Fax, \$12.95) contains some of his more palatable adventure fiction. While not exactly memorable, it is immensely more readable than a good deal of the REH material being reprinted of late. This package is definitely an improvement over Fax's earlier volume, the Dennis Dorgan book, and contains some interesting illustrations by Mike Kaluta.

In the March '74 issue of GALAXY, a rather interesting novelette by Michael Coney, "The Hook, The Eye and The Whip" appeared, detailing the dangerous sport of sling-gliding, an extrapolation of contemporary hang-gliding. The novelette was tight and well-handled, but has since been unfortunately expanded to book length.

THE JAWS THAT BITE, THE CLAWS THAT CATCH (Daw #144, \$1.25) is essentially a sloppy, hastily written book, interesting in conception but tedious in execution, and in enlarging on the original story, Coney has perforated it with a myriad of holes.

The largest holes are the characters, all of whom move solely at the discretion of the author, with absolutely no motivation for their actions. Joe Sagar, the protagonist, raises exotic X-tee animals for their pelts and is, essentially, a man of no social conscience. Yet he risks his life breaking into a prison for purely moral reasons, and "falls in love" with a woman he's seen three times and spoken with for a grand total of about 20 minutes. He is mystified that she does not seem to return his love, a dilemma resolved when he discovers her unnatural affection for another woman.

The book contains a number of small holes, too. His true love is a bonded spare-parts girl, and when she loses her hands, they are replaced "with glittering, steel prosthetic hands." This is in the distant future, with commercial traffic among the stars, yet things have regressed to a point where the flesh-like imitation hands available today have apparently disappeared. In addition, there are numerous savage pets, aquatic animals artificially adapted for oxygen-breathing. The problem with such creatures is involved with their mobility. While willing to suspend enough disbelief to accept sharks with respirators, I can't imagine a shark being able to do anything on land but flop around like any other beached fish.

Coney's apparent attitude toward women has become well known, and this book is no exception. He writes about them as if they were some alien species he had only read about.

I didn't at that time think the Foes of Bondage were suitable allies. They were a bunch of female crackpots. Not that I have anything against women -- far from it -- but there is no denying that the middle-aged unmarried female is more inclined to get herself in social and community organizations than her male counterpart. Maybe this is indicative of the female's more highly developed social

conscience; I would like to think it is. But although on paper such organizations are fine and benevolent bodies, nevertheless the actions they tend to take can be nothing short of destructive. So it was with the Foes of Bondage.

p. 67

All this, the glittering hands, the land sharks, and the Foes of Bondage are cheap attempts at adding dramatic interest to an essentially hackneyed plot.

There are interesting concepts in the book, and Coney always demonstrates glimmers of real talent. It is unfortunate that he can't seem to take the time to do it right.

-- Reviewed by Jeff Frane --

GO WEST, BEN GOLD! by Clay Turner. Warner Paperback Library.

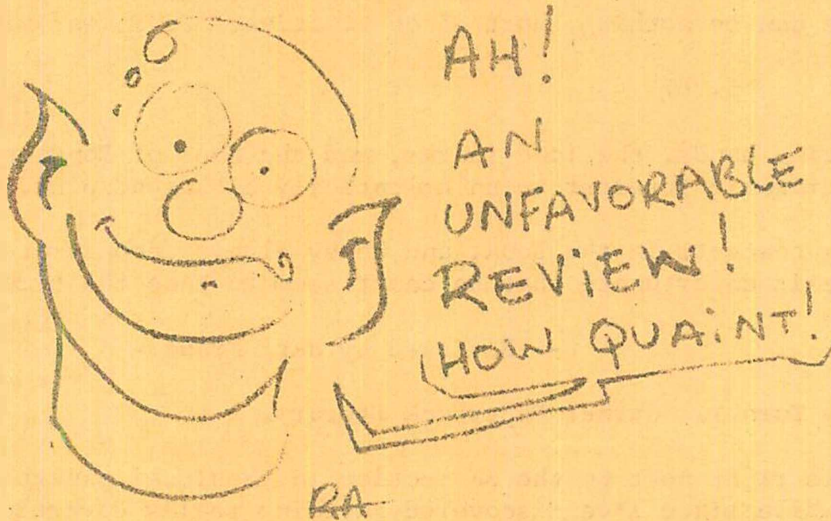
The Western section is right next to the SF section in the local paperback store, see. It's been a little while since I've discovered anything really diverting (Stupefying!) in the good old sf section. And anyway Edgar Rice Burroughs and Perry Rhodan and Doc Savage can get together and squeeze anything else out. And sometimes it seems whatever room that's left over is taken up by Charles Fort and Star Trek books and other such leftovers. So here's the Westerns. They got bright covers, why not? And you don't have to deal with the eternal profundities of Samuel R. Delany or John W. Campbell here. Or at least one hopes not.

Say, what if Thomas Disch wrote Westerns? Would his protagonists (uh, heroes?) hit the trail and have it hit back in some great jolly existential way? What if Jerry Cornelius is a cow puncher? (And who's to say he already isn't?)

Umph, where was I? Oh, yeah. Denver. At least that's where Ben Gold is when he isn't trying to save inept bunches of Jewish (and Plish! What a joke!) guys trying to camouflage themselves as farmers and trying to raise potatoes at the same time. See there's this girl that he meets at this settlement (somewhat utopian, Horace Greeley is supporting so no booze here) of 'emigre' Jews (escaping pogroms and cossacks and such) and Ben wants to prove himself to her. She's a nice girl even though she's got blonde hair (or maybe because?). So these geeks at this idealistic sweetness and light model city cringe from the Indians that steal their horses (let's face it, they're asking for it.) and cattlement (and cattle, of course) that squash their potatoes. So Ben Gold steps in and loans 'em some barbed wire to protect the potatoes til they have some dough after the crop comes in (heh heh). And he goes out and rescues the horses while making the cattlement with the largest spread around eternally grateful for Ben's rescuing of his son. Course Ben doesn't get the girl (she's probably frigid anyhow and there's gotta be more books, see) and there's even a few laughs in the end (laughs last, etc.) And GUESS WHAT! Ben's paw even toddles in with a few Yiddish wise cracks, hoo boy! What more could you ask for?

Actually, not too much. While this book isn't around to enrich you aesthetically speaking, there's very little to forgive, a lot less than I first thought. Specially with a book about a Jewish cowboy (Mel Brooks, right?). It's intelligently and even compassionately written (though not too maudlin) although the writing does tend to get a little wooden ("Apparently the Indians had not even posted





a guard here, so sure of themselves were they."). Great cover, too. Ben Gold looks a little bit like Frank Zappa (briney Groucho moustach, though no lip beard) and more like this guy who was a fellow Savings & Loan teller but whose parents gave him a roll of dough and now he's in Paris, not too bad! This isn't worth ninety-five cents, but what paperback is these days? There's at least one other in this series but I sure can't find it and you might not

even find this one. But if you do see it, you won't be wasting your time to pick it up (and maybe even pay for it).

Next week, mysteries!

-- Reviewed by Bruce Townley --

THE NOT-WORLD by Thomas Burnett Swann. DAW Books, 1975. \$1.25

Thomas Burnett Swann's latest novel takes us away from the Mediterranean setting of his recent books to eighteenth-century England. It is easy enough to take an age known to us only from classical mythology and populate it with centaurs and dryads. It is something quite different to put plausible little folk in a country which has experienced the Industrial Revolution, yet Swann has successfully accomplished that. He has done it by setting most of the story in an infrequented forest, a timeless place little changed from the days when the Celts worshipped Brigit and Ceridwen there.

Swann has handled religious matters differently in THE NOT-WORLD than in some of his other books. The Drusii of the forest are not gods or demons from anyone's mythology; they are more like the Little People of British folklore.

But compared to other fantasy, THE NOT-WORLD looks like a minor effort. There is about as much happening in the whole book as in, say, one chapter of THE LORD OF THE RINGS. In fact, the story is reminiscent of the hobbit's trip through the Old Forest.

Some of the characterizations are not very consistent. One moment Adeline is a prim maiden aunt; the next, guest of honor at an orgy. The Drusii seem more rustic than mythic. The love interest between a gruff sailor and a lady in poor health who thinks that nobody ought to love her was inspired, Swann admits in the acknowledgements, by a movie

THE NOT-WORLD is an enjoyable tale in its own right, but compared to Swann's other works, it does not look very notable.

-- Reviewed by Steve Beatty --

FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID by Philip K. Dick. Daw #146. \$1.50
BORN WITH THE DEAD by Robert Silverberg. Random House, \$5.95
THE FENRIS DEVICE by Brian Stableford. Daw #130. \$.95
THE NEW ATLANTIS AND OTHER NOVELLAS OF SCIENCE FICTION. Edited by Robert Silverberg.
Science Fiction Book Club.
ORBIT 16, edited by Damon Knight. Harper and Row, \$8.95
A KNIGHT OF GHOSTS AND SHADOWS by Poul Anderson. Science Fiction Book Club.
BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE, Book 1, Collected with commentary. Fawcett, \$1.50
COLONY EARTH by Richard E. Mooney. Fawcett, \$1.50

Hummmmm. Time passes and I keep saying that I've got to keep this issue down if I'm to get it out before we go away for a while. So with five pages of reviews already typed, I should just let the stuff I've read go by the boards this time, but I don't feel that would be fair. On the other hand, I may not be being fair to the authors whose works are listed above, because it is going to be rather hurried. Cursory; that's a good word. Jeff Frane says that I'm not very critical, so he whopped up the reviews that led off this column this time. Nobody likes to be told that they aren't very critical, but he made it all right by saying that I'm basically just too nice a guy. Ha. I don't know about that, but I'll agree that I'm not very critical. I just hope to let people know what I've been reading and how it struck me. Criticism is a discipline unto itself and those who do it well ought to not only know the work they are criticizing, but other works that it can be compared to. I will be the first to admit that it requires a lot of work and I admire those who do it well. That's enough about that. Onward.

I haven't read any Phil Dick in a long while. I was tempted earlier to buy the hardback of FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID. I kept myself under control, however, and waited for the paperback. I don't think I would have been disappointed if I had shelled out for the hb. Dick is a writer that I don't think I've read much of until I start totting them up. Then I'm always amazed that I've read so many of them. FLOW is a strange book, but what Dick book isn't. It's about Jason Taverner, a top-rated television star, who wakes up one morning to find himself completely unknown and without any identification papers. Essentially it is the story of him trying to find out just what the hell is going on. It's a fine story, but I'm always wondering how much it mirrors Dick's own paranoia. There are some flaws in the story, but I forgave easily as the story swept along. It's a mover and if you've like other works by Phil, I think you'll like this one also.

Does Robert Silverberg have an obsession with death recently? First DYING INSIDE and now BORN WITH THE DEAD. Some friends of mine think that he has. Well, if so, it has him producing stories that are not only entertaining, but also powerful. These three are very fine. You may have read the title story in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. It's the one about the man whose wife has died but has been born again as a "dead". He's obsessed to see her again, to talk with her. Ultimately he makes plans to visit a city of the "deads" to see her and doesn't even realize that he's been watched from the moment he entered. His own ultimate death brings a very strange conclusion to their relationship. "Thomas the Proclaimer" deals with the religious fervor that sweeps over the land after the earth has stood still for a day, seemingly in response to prayers from a new prophet. Not quite what you might expect. "Going" reveals the last days of preparation for death in a society in which allows you to live as long as you'd like. In it we follow a composer, Henry Staunt, as he ponders his life and his decisions to put an end to his life. Fine reading, all three stories.

THE FENRIS DEVICE continues the story of Grainger and the Hooded Swan. This is the fifth book in the series, and I have one more to go. I think that this has been one of the less interesting of the series although it does have its bright spots. The ship is kidnapped so to speak in order to rescue a device of great power from the sur-

ace of a planet that is extremely difficult to get to because of the atmospheric conditions. Once there Grainger is separated from his crew and ship and must return once again to rescue them. There is the continued growth of the relationship with the "wind" that has become a part of Grainger, and the character of Grainger also continues to grow. An interesting aspect is that in the end Grainger cuts himself off from Charlot, his boss and I'm anxious to see where this will lead in the last book.

I suppose that I bought THE NEW ATLANTIS for the LeGuin story, but I knew that it wasn't going to be a bad bargain as I've enjoyed Gene Wolfe and James Tiptree many times over. It was a good bargain all the way around. All three of the stories are just great, and I guess one should expect that of anything which Silverberg edits. He chooses superior stuff. Gene Wolfe's "Silhouette" deals with a mutiny aboard a starship, a communicator no longer completely functional and reports of an habitable planet just below. Ursula's title story is two stories in one: a futuristic bureaucratic society and what it does to its people, and an emerging life, returning after a long rest. I think that this is one of Ursula's less straight-forward and unusual stories. James Tiptree's "A Momentary Taste of Being" watches the crew of a starship disintegrate (one point of view) after its first contact with an alien being. Three very unusual stories that are well worth reading.

ORBIT continues to be one of my favorite continuing anthologies and Dave Piper will just have to accept that. #16 didn't come up to my expectations, but still it contained some stories that were outstanding. Joan D. Vinge's lead story, "Mother and Child", was just fine; lengthy enough to get into and a very interesting technique of telling the story from several viewpoints. R.A. Lafferty has a very inventive story, "The Skinny People of Leptophlebo Street". It can't be explained, but only read and enjoyed. Another that I enjoyed especially was C.L. Grant's "In Donovan's Time."

Poul Anderson goes back to Flandry in A KNIGHT OF GHOSTS AND SHADOWS. Nothing to expect here but a good adventure tale and Anderson does it well. On a one-man investigation out at the edge of the Empire, Flandry meets an old enemy, falls in love with a new enemy (who turns out not to be an enemy after all) and tragically loses not only his new love, but also a son whom he thought he knew better. This isn't a major work for Anderson, but it's satisfying to read about Dominic once again. Must be time for a Van Rijn pretty soon, huh, Poul?

Isaac Asimov is the one who has collected eight classics of the Thirties in BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE, Book 1. (There are two more to come). This anthology covers 1931 and 1932. It gives us stories by Edmond Hamilton, Neil R. Jones, F. Schuyler Miller, Clifford Simak, Charles Tanner, and Jack Williamson. It's nice to see this sort of book in print to give those interested a flavor of what went on before, but I suspect that we'd all tire of the kind of story contained herein if it were all that we had available. There are two stories by Capt. S.P. Meek, "Submicroscopic" and "Awlo of Ulm" which have probably rescued Meek from total obscurity. Leave it to Isaac to do so.

Richard E. Mooney's COLONY:EARTH is a book purported to begin where von Daniken leaves off. It explores a number of things which provide food for discussion. I can't get all that serious about them, but whatever turns you on. Try ape-men, colonization of earth from outer space, the ice age, pyramids, the great stones, Stonehenge. Let's see, what have I left out. Not much that hasn't produced a series of books, all with somebody's own theories about what it's all about. Entertaining, to be sure. All of them contain interesting data, but I'm not sure that the logic doesn't become convoluted in there somewhere. As the cover states: "Skeptics will delight in it." I must confess to being a skeptic who thinks that we've had quite enough of this type of book. Obviously the buyers don't, however, because they keep coming out. If you are into this sort of thing, then try this one. Lost of neat stuff, but ho hum.

Everything in that last two-page mish-mash was reviewed by your editor. There are a couple of items I wish that I had finished so that I could have had even a cursory review but I was conspired against by time. Look for them anyway. F.M. Busby continues the saga of Barton in *THE PROUD ENEMY*, just out from Berkley Books. The other thing that caught my eye was *OPTIONS* by Robert Sheckley. Sheckley hasn't done a novel in eight years, so the cover tells me. This one is outrageous. There is little enough humor in sf, and this one ought to tickle you.

A couple of reviews came in from readers since I started this, so here they are. First another view of *SHARDIK*.

SHARDIK by Richard Adams. Simon and Schuster, \$9.95

This is an important book in the annals of fantasy and mainstream writing both. It is not as great a masterpiece as *LORD OF THE RINGS* with which it invites comparison, but still it towers like the giant bear of the title over other fantasy works of our time.

Power corrupts. This is the story of the corruption of a good and simple man, Kelderek Play-with-the-Children, who is swept along by forces beyond his control until he is the proud Priest-King of the mighty Beklan Empire and *Shardik*, the Power of God, is only a caged and mangy bear. And it is the story of Kelderek's redemption through an incredible amount of suffering, and of the death of the divine bear which reveals his purpose in coming.

Shardik is the story of a god in a primitive, early iron age country. And like the greatest of gods, *Shardik* dies to bring redemption to men. It is a story of heroes, and warfare, slavery, devotion, and love. But the heroes are all secondary characters, and the protagonist, Kelderek, is so ordinary -- or perhaps sub-ordinary -- it hurts. It takes a strong masochistic streak in the reader to allow oneself to identify with Kelderek, but if you can manage it, you will come out at the end of the book feeling purged.

Perhaps I should make a comparison with Adams' other book, *WATERSHIP DOWN*. Like *WD*, *SHARDIK* teems with imaginary names, legends, and heroic actions. I think it is a better book because the reader doesn't have to anthropomorphize a bunch of animals, and the action isn't always being stopped for someone to silflay.

SHARDIK gets a high recommendation. If you're rich, buy it now. If you're poor, get it at your library, or wait for the paperback edition. Whatever you do, don't miss it.

-- Reviewed by Ken St. Andre --

THE BIRTHGRAVE by Tanith Lee. DAW Books #154. \$1.50

"To wake, and not to know where, or who you are, not even to know what you are... that is a strange awakening. But after a while, uncurling in the darkness, I began to discover myself, and I was a woman..."

With that opening, *THE BIRTHGRAVE* sets on its winding, melancholy way to an inevitable -- if somewhat disappointing -- conclusion. Tanith Lee knows her language, and uses it well to provide a succession of sensuous, almost poetic images. Events rise and fall in a strong, natural rhythm, building to a powerful, emotional climax.

That climax never arrives; in the last fifty pages, loose ends are tied together, discrepancies are explained, allusions are fulfilled in a calm, logical fashion. Both the first 350 pages and the last 50 are well-written. Intellectually they fit. Emotionally they do not.

The main character is a young woman caught in a tapestry of events that alternately allow her too much or too little power, but never give her control over her destiny. And so she rises, and falls, building the emotional texture of the story with each new event.

THE BIRTHGRAVE is well-told, a stunning first book; and, though the ending is disappointing, the book is well worth reading.

-- Reviewed by Loren MacGregor --

It's your old editor back again with a fanzine to review. You'll recall that last issue I had a review of a game, STELLAR CONQUEST. It's available from Metagaming Concepts, Box 15346, Austin, Texas 78761 for \$8 and a dollar discount if you mention ASH-WING. Howard Thompson, the high mucky-muck of that organization had spoken about putting out a zine for gamers, especially those interested in science fiction games (as opposed to the hordes of Diplomacy players, and Avalon Hill war games players). So comes into the mail box the very first issue of THE SPACE GAMER. The format is 5½ X 8, a nicely done booklet. The text is typeset in relatively small, but readable, type. There is a lot of text packed into the 20 pages of this first issue. Successive issues promise to be more pages.

Howard's idea is to give people who are into games dealing with science fiction subjects a place to feel at home. He opens with an editorial in which he points out that sf gamers are no more freaky than any other hobbyist, unless one loses touch with reality. He proceeds to talk about where he hopes the zine will go, and a bit about Metagaming Concepts, its success with their first game and what they hope to have in the future. Among other things he offers discounts to subscribers, not just for their own games, but for others as well. For example, a subscriber can get the \$10 rules for DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS (which a lot of people seem to be talking about these days) for \$8.50. That's a saving of half the subscription price of THE SPACE GAMER.

There's exciting news about a new game to be out in the fall based upon Poul Anderson's People of the Wind. The game is to be called THE YTHRI. Later there is to be another game which is going to use Jack Gaughan's illustrations from Jack Vance's THE DRAGON MASTERS. Even to a non-gamer like myself, these sound exciting.

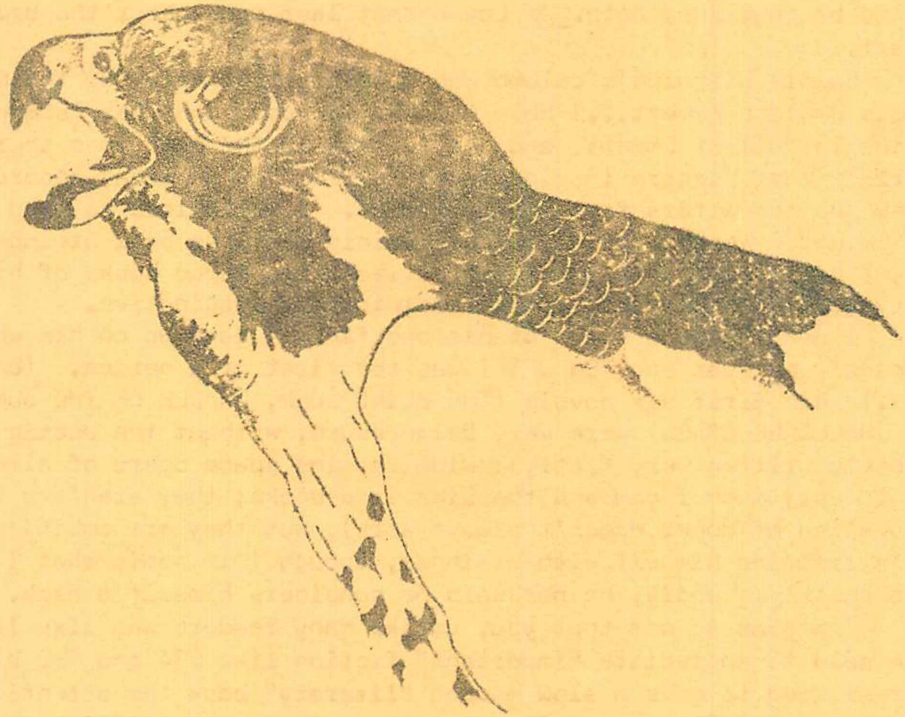
There's a short letter column, expectedly so for a first issue, and I would expect it to grow substantially. There's news and plugs of other games in the sf vein, with addresses, prices, and other relevant information. And finally an article on strategy and tactics for the game, STELLAR CONQUEST.

Even though I don't play, I still found this interesting reading, and am looking forward to future issues. THE SPACE GAMER is to be a quarterly and a sample copy can be obtained for 70¢ from the address above. Go whole hog, though, and subscribe. Six issues for \$3 until January 1, 1976 and then the price goes up to \$4. It's a good venture and Howard needs support for striking off in new directions with gaming. If you are even slightly interested in gaming, I'm sure you'll like what you get.

Do you know that in all the years and issues that I've been publishing this zine, I've never left any space for Ed Cox to doodle? Well, here it is, Ed. Have at it.

Stingy with it, what?
Penurious even.

THE
FEATHERS
FLY



DON KELLER, c/o 3920 Laurel Canyon, #3, Studio City, CA 91604

By the way, I do like your book reviewing method. Thinking about it, it's with good reason: it's the way I used to do my Ballantine Adult Fantasy surveys. It's flexible, because you can say as much or as little about a book as it deserves -- without feeling bad about writing short reviews. (I do, anyway.) Also you can talk generalities, link books together, all sorts of neat things. So if it feels good, do it.

You really are opening Pandora's box with recommending fantasy for Tony Cvetko. The obvious first thing is THE LORD OF THE RINGS, the masterpiece; awfully long, though essential for the beginner. For one absolutely pure fantasy of reasonable length and unimpeachable excellence, read A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA. Can't go wrong there. For an s-f oriented beginner, THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER and THE DYING EARTH are good starting points. It might be good to try a Leiber or Howard or Moorcock to see if sword & sorcery are to your taste. Bad as they are sometimes, Carter's IMAGINARY WORLDS and his book on Tolkien describe a lot of different kinds of fantasy. Terrible books, good surveys. Above all, do not just go out and grab the first Ballantine Adult Fantasy you find: a lot of them are for very specialized taste, and are liable to scare one off.

You and James Nyle Beatty and other Mark Geston fans might be interested to hear this: At Lunacon I ran into my friend Moshe Feder, publisher of PLACEBO and assistant editor of AMAZING/FANTASTIC. He had in his possession a manuscript to give Ted White, being a new Geston novel called (I believe) NIGHT'S REGENTS. He let me see it, and I took an hour or so to give it a close skim. Moshe was very high on it and it looked excellent from what I could tell. Sort of Geston's version of NINE PRINCES IN AMBER, if you can imagine it. Haven't heard anything about it since but hopefully Ted bought it and will run it.

Brief comment on THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO: something possessed me to buy it (perhaps the brilliant metaphorical title) and I read about 50 or so pages. It's the most fascinating book of statistics I've ever read, even if a bit overwritten. TALIESIN THROUGH LOGRES is tough going; William's poetry is at least as difficult as Eliot's.

That is very bad news about no U.S. edition of THE CHALK GIANTS; the portions I've read rival PAVANE in quality. // Ah, there is good news tonight. There will be a U.S. edition of THE CHALK GIANTS. It will be lacking the first and last chapters of the Eng-

lish edition, so you may want to send over for a copy anyway. I don't know when the book is to be published here. // Loved that last page about the British anachronists; warms the heart.

Dainis Biseniek's column was good, particularly for the memories it evoked. He mentions Rowland Emmett...I have a book, THE BEST CARTOONS FROM PUNCH, published in 1952, which is full of Emmett, and they're easily the best ones therein. He has one of the world's most bizarre imaginations; to give you an idea, according to Jack Gaughan, he once drew the characters from THE GOON SHOW. I would love to find out if there is a whole book of Emmett. Another coincidence: Dainis mentions Saul Steinberg in passing and just yesterday I discovered that there are at least two large books of his NEW YORKER cartoons. He's very airy and abstract, but extraordinarily imaginative.

I used to be a Brian Stableford fan. I gave up on him when I discovered that his slightly sub-par HALCYON DRIFT was the first of a series. (Unlike you, I do not like series.) His first six novels (THE BLIND WORM, CRADLE OF THE SUN, the Dies Irae books, and TO CHALLENGE CHAOS) were very Delanyesque, without the poetic prose (his trilogy is deliberately written very flatly): wide ranging space opera of almost cosmic imagination. I would very much recommend the Dies Irae books; they aren't a total success (their close emulation of Homer doesn't always work), but they are ambitious and well done. I think he's limiting himself with Grainger, though I'll admit that I may have given up on them too quickly. Sadly, he has said he considers himself a hack. He's more talented than that.

I'm glad to see that you, unlike many readers who like light adventure fiction best, are able to appreciate "important" fiction like 334 and THE DISPOSSESSED. Many fans are not willing to give a slow moving "literary" book the attention it deserves. I have a feeling LeGuin's book isn't going to do that well (it'll probably lose the Hugo to Niven/Pournelle's MOTE IN GOD'S EYE) because of its philosophicalness.

Chris Sherman's letter provokes several comments. I seem to be a minority of one in finding HROLF KRAKI'S SAGA disappointing. It's a great story, true, but I found Anderson's alternation of archaic and modern style jarring and annoying, despite the fact that I'm told it's characteristic of the original. And I thought "The Windows in Dante's Hell" was brilliant, Bishops one complete success. His longer pieces are very ambitious, but don't quite jell. But he's so good it scares me; he's going to be one of the really big ones. I can't wait for his first novel, A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE. // FUNERAL seems to bear out your theories about Bishop. I thought that he bit off a terribly big hunk, trying to deal with some very strong ideas and two alien cultures, one of which had a very important sub-culture. It's asking a lot of that to be successful. //

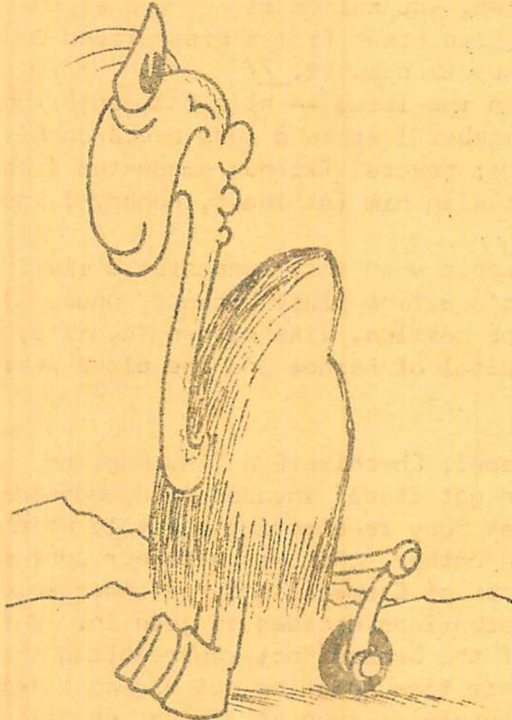
Lastly, from my personal experience, 75% to 90% of fans are introverts -- the kind of kid who gets picked on in high school. Fandom is where introverts go to be extroverts. Chris, you're atypical -- believe me.

SAM LONG, Box 4946, Patrick AFB, FL 32925

I can't say I'm turned on by your choice of records-to-do-fanac-by. My favorite combos are groups like The Academy of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, I Solisti di Zagreb, Andre Benichou and his Well-Tempered Three -- that swinging bunch. // You see, it takes all kinds. I must admit that occasionally fanac is done to Berlioz, Elgar, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Delius. So you're not alone. //

And you ought not to have been caught out by Freff. Wing Commander is an RAF rank (just plain Commander is Royal Navy), and He'd have had to put initials behind it only if he were in the Volunteer Reserves -- RAFVR. You should have been able to say to yourself: "ah hah! He committed a solecism! He cannot be W/C Robin, let me see who he is. Ah, yes, it can only be Freff -- if only because his whiteface is frefffully well done." (See also the book FRAFFLY STRINE EVERYTHING, which will teach you how to speak London-West-End-ese and auSTRaIliaN (e), hence the adverb.) That Clown College is down here in Florida, is it not? // Indeed, it is. Freff finished that long ago. He was not offered a contract by the circus, but I have gathered that he learned a great deal while there, and does not regret having gone. //

Poor Keith Roberts. Back in 1970 I tried to get my Scottish neighbor in Shiplake (a village about 2 miles south of Henley) to stand for Henley's seat as a Scottish Nationalist. He declined. I can't help but think that if he'd stood as a ScotNat in either of the 1974



elections, he might have won Henley's seat. (Which brings up the fact that British politics are somewhat more leisurely than American politics: British candidates "stand" for office, while Americans "run" for them.) As an ex-Henleyite who still has many friends in the area, I too fear for Britain's future. Problem is, Harold's a twit and Ted's a twit, and Jeremy is probably a twit -- who've we got? Not that we're much better off on this side of the ocean, indeed.

That Civil War battle must really have been something. I wonder if the Yewden Singers took part. The Singers are a madrigal group based in Henley and led by Mrs. Win Palmer of Skirmett, about 3 miles north of Hambleden; and our music (for I was a member of the Yewden Singers for over 3 years) is predominately of the years 1575-1625: a bit early for the Civil War. And I hate to tell 'em this, but the Agincourt Song ("Our king went forth...") was 150 years passe' in 1644.

"The Vengeful Corpse" started out shakily, as if the author were being paid by the word -- there were entirely too many adjectives and adverbs that added nothing to the story. But things got better as they went along, and the middle of the story was quite good. The ending was a bit weak; the story didn't quite

jell. But the story was overall a worthy tale, better than the average fiction you find in fanzines these days.

Dainis Bisenieks' article on cartoons was of great interest to me who fancy myself somewhat of a connoisseur of cartoon-and-caricature. This was the best article in the zine, and it did quite a good job of getting its point across without any cartoons in it, which is quite an accomplishment, when you think about it. Dainis has pinned down Hamilton perfectly. I'm going to have to look for Weber's work, tho I think I've seen it before.

The early Asimov books you mention in book reviews are both good. Did THE LION OF BOAZ-JACHIN AND JACHIN-BOAZ tell you where the names came from? They are the names of the two pillars in Solomon's temple, as mentioned in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles 3. One was the pillar of growth and the other of decline, one of blessing, the other of cursing.

JANN FRANK, 416 Nation Hall, KSCP, Pittsburg, KS 66762

Speaking of books, have you ever, by chance, read a book by Lyall Watson entitled SUPERNATURE? It is one of the most absorbing books that I have read in a long time. It is more or less about biorhythms and the effect of different cosmic cycles (like periods of sunspot activity, etc.) on the growth, life, and death of living material. I could not put that book down! If you want to read something that's really thought-provoking, this book is surely it. // Just this weekend I've been reading THE MAGIC OF FINDHORN by Paul Hawken, which is also a mind-boggler. I'll try to have a brief resume of it in the review section, but it's somewhat related to the book you recommend, except more on the supernatural plane. //

PETER ROBERTS, 6 Westbourne Park Villas, London W2, England

I can't, I'm afraid, offer any genuine, accept no-others recipes for sherry trifle in the English manner; the best I can suggest is that you add Cornish cream to it. Admittedly, that would make the sweet un-English and deprive it of its Saxon virtues; but on the other hand, the resulting trifle would taste handsome and some lovely. I am surprised, however, that you think it's possible to make a sherry trifle that isn't edible. In my experience

all such trifles can be eaten with appreciation, unless they're made with poor quality substitutes (fake 'cream' is the vilest example.) // Ah, you nailed it. The ones that are sometimes served have canned fruit cocktail and whipped cream from a pressurized can. Now, you know of what I speak. But a good trifle is a superb dessert. //

I was surprised to see Keith Roberts' letter in the issue -- he's not, unfortunately, a writer who associates himself with fandom. I remember I wrote a long piece on his published sf and fantasy about seven or eight years ago; several friends suggested I should send him a copy, but nobody seemed to be in contact with him (at least, nobody I knew then). In retrospect, that was probably just as well...

Incidentally, I came across the Sealed Knot people when they reenacted a civil war siege at Berkeley Castle just north of Bristol. It's a fine place because, unusually, the Castle is still in habitable condition; most genuine castles, like my own favorite, Restormel (which overlooks Lostwithiel, the ancient capital of Kernow and the place where I was born), are derelict.

ERIC BENTCLIFFE, 17, Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire CW4 7NR, England

Y'see the town of Nantwich, where I work, also got itself invaded by Roundheads and Cavaliers last weekend. The Sealed Knot Society was busy re-enacting a battle which took place there back in our civil war. As far as I can gather, this was a rather confused affair for it was a three-sided tourney...the forces of Cromwell and Pretender were happily having at it, when a marauding band of Welsh Barbarians decided to join in. Unfortunately, there isn't any modern Welsh equivalent of the Sealed Knot representing their ancestors (the Welsh Nationalists spend most of their time painting out signpost letters in English!), so the re-enactment wasn't wholly accurate -- even so, it was chaotic and interesting.

It's a pity, though, that when a medieval happening like this takes place we (British) seem unable to give it the same sort of dedication and attention to detail that the French and Italians seem to manage. I had the pleasure some years back of being in Venice when it was time to celebrate an ancient maritime pact between the (then) powerful city states of Gerona, Padua, Venice, and one Other (whose name is lost in the mists of time and my memory). This affair takes place annually, in turn, in each of the four signatories' cities, and was a true historical pageant. The costumes were fantastic, impeccably accurate in detail and the weaponry was equally authentic -- much of it kept and cared for in museums the rest of the year -- and, because Venice is still a treasure of renaissance architecture, one was literally transported back in time to the middle ages. Fortunately, I had my camera along and possess some fine colour-slides of the event.

I wonder...will there be, in a couple of hundred years, a society formed to re-enact some of the colorful events of the 20th Century. Somehow I doubt it, and the mind does boggle at some of the interpretations that history could put on the weird events of our time! // D'ya mean like Evel Knievel doing himself in trying to leap 13 London busses or d'ya mean let's re-enact the Battle of Britain? Interesting to conjecture about. //

I'd love to see Keith write a book in which our civil war was won by Cromwell. Off-hand I can think of no other writer who could do it better....and I do mean that as a compliment. PAVANE is one of my favourite books of the last few years and frequently gets re-read. It was a different science-fiction book and far more worthy of a Hugo than many that get one. // I couldn't agree more. Don't recall at the moment what did win that year, but I'm sorry that it wasn't PAVANE. //

GARTH DANIELSON, 20-327 Edison Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2G 0L9

Just read WOLFWINTER by Thomas Burnett Swann and really enjoyed it. It was a delight to read and seemed to read itself. This was the first Swann that I had read, but I have the rest and am going to read them also.

I also read the EARLY ASIMOV and enjoyed it. I'm a fan of Asimov and have been for many years. Really enjoyed THE GODS THEMSELVES.

THE OTHER LOG OF P. FOGG by Farmer is the third book that I've read by him and they have all been good. The others were TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO and THE FABULOUS RIVER BOAT. Farmer must have read the old stuff many times and is working on points to tie them together. I've seen the ad for another book called THE ADVENTURES OF THE PEERLESS PEER and I gather it has Sherlock Holmes and Tarzan in it. Holmes is also mentioned in THE OTHER LOG

and he is related to Tarzan, as is Fogg. There is a tree of sorts in TARZAN ALIVE and I ought to look it up right now, but it's not handy.

MIKE GLICKSOHN, 141 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6P 2S3, Canada

This postcard is being typed, to the accompaniment of total silence, one of the most blessed sounds in this world. Not that I object to music, but sometimes it's pleasant to drift along in quiet harmony with the world around you.

Mellow words from you, Keith Roberts and Michael Carlson. Much enjoyed the beauty of your daughter's wedding, even at second hand. And Keith's letter shows the skill of the practicing wordsmith: it's reassuring to know that in a country so sorely beset by modern industrial strife, there is still a little room for the traditions of the past, even if they are almost completely non-self-serving. Several excellent lines in Michael's article make this the best of his continuing series, and perhaps the most enjoyable contribution to the issue. He seems to be developing the ever-keener eye for observing the foibles of humanity, and reporting on them in an interesting and amusing fashion. A fine article, by all standards.

The fiction is,...well, the fiction is, isn't it? Chacun, etc.

It is nice to see approbation for the fine illustrative cartoons of Emmett and Searle, two of England's finest practitioners. I wonder if Dainis is familiar with the work of the incredible Gerard Hoffnung? A genius of the first order in many fields. // I'd be almost bowled over if Dainis doesn't know Hoffnung. I couldn't help thinking about the first time I heard a recording of the Hoffnung Festival. A forerunner of P.D.Q. //

DARRELL SCHWEITZER, Gruntvig's Mead Hall, Hackscribbleovik, Iceland

Hwaet! Schweitzer ma elode; wordhorde onleac:

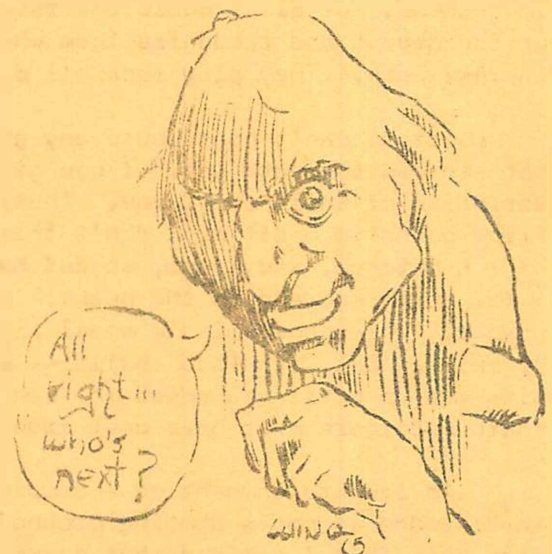
Michael Carlson's article provoke one comment. He found it amazing that this sheltered girl didn't meet any "rare types" like Jews until she got to college. As if this is something unusual. You see, I didn't know any Jews either until I got to college and I don't live in a backward neighborhood. Jews seem to live mostly in cities, and if you live in the suburbs or the country you may not meet any. The area I live in is heavily Catholic (over 50%) and the rest are assorted Protestants. A telltale sign is that there are no synagogues.

However, when I look back on it, I must consider that I have been in fandom since I was 14, and I must have known several fans who were Jewish. I didn't know that they were, though, which is in itself a lesson. People of minority groups are no different than anyone else, and if they don't tell you they're a member of such a group, you may never know.

Another sign of this is the fact that I never met an anti-semite until recently. It took me many years, and I finally ran into one.

FRANK BALAZS, 2261 Indian Quad, SUNYA, Albany, NY 12222

Ever hear of a group called Oregon? I don't know how long they've been around, but only recently have they been getting airplay on New York City stations. I know that they have just released a new album and have at least one other that came out in '73. I would have bought that one except for the \$5.19 price tag. Only recently have I had to break my policy of not buying albums for



over \$4.00 and it won't be long till my new limit of \$5.00 may have to be revised. I can wait for Korvette's record sales and get almost any album for under \$4.00 still, thank god. Anyway, I've only heard a few cuts from the new album -- all very good and on the longish side. One piece, "Tidepool", reminds me quite a bit of the Winter Consort.

A stewardess with clouds, eh? Mike hasn't seen an Albany station's weatherblimp. I don't use the term "blimp" insultingly as that is what she wants (or her producers want her) to come off as. I've only watched her a few times out of sheer disbelief and only on the 11:00 report. At six, I'm told she brings on her little dog for the kiddies. On the 11:00 news, she tries for a different image, however; once she said, "I know all you guys are lusting for my hot, fat body..." Supposedly she attends SUNYA as an Atmospheric Sciences major.

"The Higher Heresies of Oolimar" by Lin Carter was not a bad story at all, I feel, unlike Bruce Arthurs. I haven't read much Carter to compare it with, as I try to stay away from your average s&s potboiler (let us fuss not and admit that this is what Carter usually writes.) His editorial abilities are quite good, and I'm glad to see all his fantasy reading has finally rubbed off on him and he's writing with some genuine thought and humor. How could Lord Dunsany, James Branch Cabell and Jack Vance not penetrate his writing? All right, I wouldn't yet call his humor "subtle," but we can't all be Jack Vances. Given time I think Lin Carter may blossom into a writer to be remembered. // I agree that Lin seems to be striving for some levity in his writing. Although I didn't finish it, I read the biggest share of his first book in the new Gonwane saga, and there were moments of delight in it. -- Mmmm! Frank passes along some fantasy titles for Tony Cvetko, if he can find them buried in here. Anything by Clark Ashton Smith, THE KING OF ELFLAND'S DAUGHTER by Dunsany, THE DYING EARTH by Vance and THE SWORD IN THE STONE by T.H. White. //

SAL DI MARIA, 628 San Pablo S.E., #2, Albuquerque, NM 87108

Let me say that I definitely like your new format for the book reviews. Not that the old way was bad, hell, no. I just like the informal Frank Denton the best. You should definitely stick with it. I, too, have noticed that little mentions and discussions of music have slowly crept into A-W from time to time. A conspiracy headed by the devious Mike Kring, no doubt. There was a time I would have said, "Bah! Humbug!" to rock and folk music, but I must confess that I have been slowly brainwashed into not only accepting rock, but into actually liking it! I'm definitely a neo at it (I was sitting in a bar with Vardeman and Kring once and they began talking about rock. They might as well have been talking in Chinese, for all I could understand. However, slowly but surely, I'm beginning to pick up the groups and recognize them when they come on the radio -- thanks mostly to the guys where I work. They play rock all day long in the lab. I have to learn.

Sorry I can't contribute any great recipes. I'm a survival cook myself, i.e., I have not starved to death yet. I can give you the recipe for a concoction I made up. It's a variation of Chile con Carne. Thus: Warm up a can of refried beans (if you can't get refried beans in Seattle, I don't think I can help you as I don't know how to make them.) // You betchum, Red Ryder, we get Mamacita's refried beans // Brown some ground beef, about 1/2 lb. worth and add to the beans. Add a small can of chopped chilis and lots of chili powder. When done, mix in small pieces of sliced American cheese (the yellow type) until it melts. Eat with Taco shells -- a delicious Southwestern staple. // I think I stayed with you up until you added the can of chopped chilis and the "lots" of chili powder. You southwesterners must have cast iron stomachs. //

I'd like to comment on a couple of letters, too. // Go ahead. // Steve Johnson says that fandom is not a dumping ground for social misfits. I do agree with you there, Steve. It's just that I noticed that there seemed to be a higher percentage of introverted people in fandom than it would seem for the size of fandom. By the way, I'm slowly getting out of that 'psychological boat' too. Like Steve, I cannot attribute this to any one event. I guess you just grow out of it. // Ronze helps. You oughta seen this kid at last year's MileHiCon. Talk about uninhibited. A little drinkie or two certainly help, eh, Sal. //

I didn't say that all fans are introverts, by the way. It's like I mentioned above, a higher percentage than average. Then again, there's no psychological literature that I know of that covers this. Maybe someone could do this for a thesis. // Aw, let's turn it over to Dr. Wertham. //

DON D'AMMASSA, 19 Angell Dr., East Providence, RI 02914

Michael Carlson's latest wanderings were among the better installments of the column that I've seen. I was similarly amazed when the Army chose to reassign me to Oklahoma a few years ago. While driving through southern Indiana, I wore tie-died pants, a turtle neck sweater, and a large brass medallion hung from a chain. We were followed through shopping malls by groups of short-haired youths, women ran across the store to remove children from my path, and waitresses in restaurants managed to either burp, spill, or forget to serve our food. It was like being in another world. // I had this strange experience recently. I used to play in a bagpipe band and the band had its 20th anniversary and invited everyone back for a big party. There amongst the plumbers, gas station owners, and other generally middle class types, I caught all kinds of flack about the length of my hair, which is a tad long, I'll admit. I guess the environment in which I work where long hair is so common, has protected me from these barbs. Funny for a 45 year old man to be catching that kind of treatment. Oh, yes, other than that the party was a smashing success. I didn't let it bother me and we had a splendid time. //

Ben Indick's article was very well done, and the Keith Roberts letter reminded me that I have long considered him one of the most underrated writers in the field. I notice that THE CHALK GIANT did subsequently sell to Berkeley Books, though there's no mention of a collection. Roberts had a large number of stories in Moorcock's NEW WORLDS, and they were almost invariably the gems among a rather mixed bag of quality. How's that for mixed metaphors? I remember particularly a short called "The Scarlet Lady", which I think appeared under a pen name, Alastair Bevan.

I found myself in general agreement with your book reviews. Although I enjoyed HIERO'S JOURNEY, I suspect he should have broken it up into two novels. The procession of giant sized versions of familiar fauna began to get a bit monotonous, as did the alacrity with which Hiero foiled the opposition each time. I cannot believe that mutation would so one-sidedly favor giantism. A thoroughly good adventure story though.

Brian Stableford is another of the better recent writers who aren't getting the attention I think they deserve. The Grainger series is just about the best space opera being written lately. The fifth volume, THE FENRIS DEVICE, finally frees Grainger from Charlot. I have the impression that Stableford wanted to at least temporarily end his series with this volume, that he was tiring of the characters and plot limitations, but if you are certain there is a 6th volume, I'm obviously wrong. // Of course, SWAN SONG is out now and you've probably read it. I haven't yet. // The DIES IRAE trilogy consists of sfntional version of the Odyssey, the Iliad, and a third volume of Stabelford's own concoction. I enjoyed it, but it's not the kind of think that would make a writer's reputation. I'm rather fond of his early novel, THE BLIND WORM, myself, but it's the kind of novel that appeals to a limited audience.

334 is indeed excellent. I grow increasingly impressed with Disch's ability as time goes on. His short fantasy story, "Descending", is a classic if that word has any meaning at all. He turned a fair TV series (THE PRISONER) into an outstanding novel for Ace. And I can't think of anything he's written that wasn't at least worthwhile.

I suspect that the reversal of names in Russel Hoban's book served a symbolic purpose. Hoban apparently wanted to point out that while father and son were very similar, they were also diametrically opposed. It isn't the most subtle gimmick in the world, but it does the job. I wasn't as completely impressed with the book myself, but I have an ingrained prejudice against fantasy. // See Sam Long's letter re: the names. //

The Susan Cooper whom you mention is also, I believe, the author of an adult novel entitled MANDRAKE, which I managed to pick up in a Penguin edition. MANDRAKE is one of the most brooding, atmospheric novels I've ever read, and one of the most terrifying. Cooper postulates that the Earth itself is, in some metaphysical way, a self-aware entity. She couples this with some disturbingly well done sequences about the ties between man and environment. Outside of a rather unsatisfying ending, the novel is superb, and its unavailability in this country mystifies me.

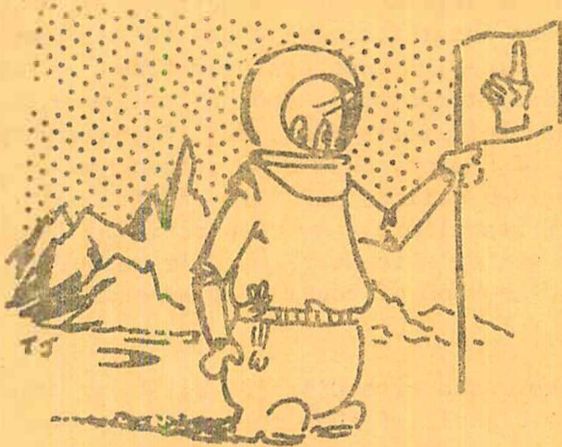
As mentioned above, I am not particularly fond of fantasy, but Tony Cvetko might find of interest Peter Beagle's THE LAST UNICORN, Eddisons THE WORM OUROBOROS (if he skips the terrible introductory chapter), Andrew Sinclair's GOG, Gardner's GRENDL, Evangeline Walton's ISLAND OF THE MIGHTY, Katherine Kurtz's DERYNI series, Cabell's THE SILVER STALLION, and most of Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser stories.

I disagree with James Nyle Beatty that EXCALIBUR is good. It struck me as a better than average Harlequin type romance with trappings of magic. On the other hand, I agree entirely that Mark Geston is an excellent writer, though I had misgivings about his most recent, DAY STAR.

BRIAN TANNAHILL, 615 East 69 Street, Kansas City, MO 64131

That Grant Canfield cartoon on page 47 is in the worst possible taste. It's just completely disgusting, and after looking at it the first time, I clutched my Bible to my chest and shook my fist to high heaven, and denounced you for printing it. And then I explained to the crowd of curious onlookers why I was rolling on the floor and laughing hysterically for ten minutes.

I had a bad experience yesterday at the Savings and Loan where I keep a fair amount of money. After I stood in a line for just under thirty minutes, I filled out a withdrawal form, signed my name, and handed it to the teller. She took it, stepped out of the cage, and came back in a minute to tell me my signature on the form and the signature in the file didn't match. Both were my signatures, of course, and they did match. Part of the signature was pretty sloppy, but even at a glance they were quite similar in size and shape. She asked me for some identification; I showed her my driver's license and draft card. She had me sign my name again on the withdrawal form, and then gave me my money. I put it in my billfold, glared at her and left. I was thoroughly disgusted at the time, and the more I think about it, the madder I get. I would expect to be asked for ID if the signatures really didn't match. The thing was, the lady didn't even know how to compare signatures. // Ah, Ash-Wing, the fanzine that lets you blow off steam. I remember getting ticked at the big bank with a thousand branches here in the Seattle area, taking all of my money out and opening an account in a small independent bank which is open 6 days a week until 6 in the evening. Neat! They even know me by name. And on Halloween the people all dress in neat gingham dresses and they have a big tub of apples for bobbing, and that's the way a bank ought to be. The other bank even called my wife to see how come, and (heh-heh) she told 'em.



JAN APPELBAUM, 5836 W. 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ St., St. Louis Park, MN 55416

How do you handle the woes of being a collector? I am in love with printed matter, not just books, nor even just science fiction. My room is swamped with books, magazines, comics and fanzines and I'm still getting more. According to Walt Willis, I'm caught in the fannish land where people are afflicted with the "kollectinbug", but I seem to enjoy it. Maybe I've been substituting books and such for interaction with other people and can't change. I have been getting a bit discriminate in what books I buy and therefore have gotten about nine hundred this past year. I don't even read a third that many books each year. This finally leads me to the point of deciding: is this a disease and can it be corrected? Also, should it be corrected, or like drugs, is it a victimless crime? (Victimless meaning that no one but the perpetrator is hurt.) // I'm not sure I'm the one to be trying to answer your questions. I'm in no better shape than you are. I keep thinking that I'm being discriminate, also. The problem is that I know very well that if I don't buy a book which I may want to read, it's going to disappear from the racks and be virtually impossible to find. When it comes back in its large format reincarnation, you pay through the nose for it. What to do? I've often thought that I shouldn't buy a book until I've read the one I'm currently reading. But somehow that doesn't seem to work very well. //

My reaction to reading Lanier's HIERO'S JOURNEY would have been jumping up and down all over my room going "Gosh wow, o boy o boy!!" (in the favorable sense, but it took me until 3:30 a.m. to finish it. It has to be my favorite thing in reading this past year, so I can barely wait for the sequels. The story just seems to draw you in, wondering about the development of the characters and of the situations. It is the only post atomic story I remember where there is a feeling of hope and optimism present throughout the story; not just the final scene. It was well worth the lack of sleep. I even considered nominating it for the Hugo, but simply have the feeling that THE DISPOSSESSED by LeGuin and Delany's new release, DHALGREN, will completely overshadow it. Oh, well.... // Pangborn's COMPANY OF GLORY had a good feeling except at the very beginning. He's another guy that just does not write enough to suit me. //

SEAN K. SUMMERS, 2301 S. Jeff Davis Hwy, #634, Arlington, VA 22202

..."The Wind Vampires. Hooray! Great! More! More! Very much the sort of thing I like. The background is good. In fact, when I get my Dungeon fixed up, there are going to be Wind Vampyres in its labrynthian contorted coil. I thought the part about him being 'good' in his evilness didn't come across realistically. It should either have been left out or built up more.

Tell Gene that Sheeee's Beautiful! Publish an aardvark cartoon, please! I'm an aardvark fan from way back (as way back as I go almost). Am even a 3/4 Aardvark in The Aardvark Society. // Do you hear that, Gene? Command performance on one aardvark cartoon, please! //

On to Music and Don Keller. No, no. You've got it kind of mixed up. Emotional content is important to music (more so to live music) but musicianship is more important. Emotional content is available everywhere, but musicianship is available only in this one field. Of course, the best is a fusion, but I'd choose the superior musician to listen to anyday. A lot of the emotional content can be lost in record making and there aren't that many studio albums that hold on to it. // I'm not sure who I agree with on this matter. One of my great disappointments was hearing Cal Tjader, the jazz vibes player, for the first time. I had heard his records and his musicianship was so flawless that I was looking forward to it. It turned out that he was so cool, as the saying was in those days. He made absolutely no eye contact with his audience (and this was a small club), but simply addressed himself to his instrument. What came out was beautiful, but I was certainly disappointed in that he seemed not even attempting to communicate with his audience except with the instrument. Granted that a bad musician isn't going to be able to make it up with lots of emotion. Your statement that the fusion is the ideal will have to stand, I guess. //

// Sean goes on to quarrel with Don's best list. He would substitute groups like Gentle Giant and albums like Mike Bloomfield's Tubular Bells. Octopus, The Power and the Glory, are better, in his opinion than Focus. And he wonders why Maria Muldaur didn't make the list. //

DON D'AMMASSA, 19 Angell Drive, East Providence, RI 02914

Although in general I agree with most of the book reviews, particularly your favorable review of THE PASTEL CITY, a sub-genre I normally dislike, I have to point out that Ken St. Andre apparently misunderstood Donald Barr pretty thoroughly. If one reads the introductory section to SPACE RELATIONS, it is pretty obvious that Barr contends that slavery does not brutalize man, that slavery in fact shows pretty clearly the true nature of man. Not that I necessarily agree with Barr, mind you, but his point is diametrically opposed to the interpretation put on it by Ken. I was spurred to look up the relevant quote from Barr: "We like to think institutions distort people. But slavery is a frightful institution because it doesn't. It allows the most direct and unrestrained expression of human nature."

THE GRAY PRINCE is THE DOMAINS OF KORYPHON, so the consensus of opinion was wrong. So it goes. I never heard of a Vance novel called LOVE IS FOREVER. Is this a misprint, confusion, or did I misinterpret? // Probably just the addled brain of your editor. I've never heard of a Vance novel called LOVE IS FOREVER either. What I must have been referring to is TO LIVE FOREVER. Now, why couldn't you transpose for me? //

The wargame flyer is fascinating. Now where can I find \$8.00? I've long been a wargamer, design my own most of the time. My best was large enough that it covered an entire ping pong table, divided into hexes, with 4000 pieces on each side. The first (and only) game took eleven months of fairly regular playing. // Shucks, man, is there anything that you don't have time for? Someday I want to meet you and hear from your own lips the secret of stretching the normal 24 hour day which the rest of us live into a 48 hour day that we all wish for. You obviously have found how to do so. You'll probably be interested in Howard Thompson's new zine which is spoken of at the end of the review column. //

DOUG BARBOUR, 10808 - 75 avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6E 1K2

....if i am going to pay attention to really great players of complex music i'll turn to THE GREAT CHARLIE MINGUS CONCERT (Fantasy/Prestige, 3 records) or to something by Keith Jarrett or Weather Report maybe. The greats of modern jazz are still outplaying any rock-n-rollers when it comes to complex music and making it swing. But for raunch or soul then maybe you can get it from rocknroll. I can. The trouble with Yes is they're very good technically, but I don't hear any emotion. Might be my fault but I get this from most of the avant garde rock groups. Focus, too. I don't like John McLaughlin for the same reason. Flying fingers but little heart. I'd much rather listen to Carlos Santana, whose guitar can really sing, with heart-rending intensity. Now he get to me.

Of course, this does finally come down to what gets to you personally; I can't get off on the technique-oriented bands, though I really appreciate good technique. But it must be wedded to emotional intensity as I understand that term.

FREFF, 2035 Park Road N.W., Washington, DC 20010

Well, the clown college is over and I have many weird memories of it in my feeble head. It was educational, there's that much to be granted. Suffice it to say that there were four thousand applications and forty-eight students, all of whom stuck out the course. A few were obvious bad choices and some were obvious winners. Me, I learned basic juggling, how to ride a unicycle, how to ride elephants, more mime from a good instructor, how to walk a tight wire, the basics of high-stilt walking...sewing enough to design, cut and put together a full costume; how to design and apply professional clown makeups; more circus history; acrobatics on the ground, on trampoline, on mini-tramp; how to work that clown-car comedy routine; more modern and jazz dance; some of the building of props, and more and more and more. Now I need to spend the necessary years of continued study and honing in performance.

I also learned that the Ringling Brother's organization is shot through with politics in a fashion that I find highly unpleasant. But I am content to have a few new friends/acquaintances in and out of the circus, whom I can watch and joke back at the circus trains with.

There was Rick Davis, sf and fantasy reader, lover of the work of Durer, carver of leather, cracker of bullwhip, face like Clint Eastwood but with a smile, aficionado of the Incredible String Band, all of 4'9" tall...



Dr John D. McLaughlin, Jr., ex-army captain, son of a retired three-star general. (Who is a truly fine fellow. We got along famously when I met him and I've a standing invitation to visit them near Richmond.) Both John and Rick made the circus but in different shows, and both are excellent clown characters.

Me, I didn't get offered a contract -- good thing, too, although their reasons for offering me not were based on an incorrect personality assessment instead of the things that would have prevented me from working out in reality.

But I've a face and character and a unicycle named Steeplechase that is very useful in midtown Manhattan, and I've developed this terrible tendency to juggle oranges in check-out counter lines...

...Sutton Breiding bothers me. I agree slightly and disagree a hell of a lot, finding a measure of contentment with his piece only when he admits to being, inescapably, hypocritic. There never was that slower, greener, and quieter place, Sutton. Oh, maybe it was all that; it also roiled with the stink of horse manure and disease, your teeth went bad by your mid-thirties unless you were lucky, people seasoned food incredibly to keep you from not noticing how rotten it was. Minstrels and scribes lived by luck and pleasing their masters who held rein on the pursestrings. There was as much blood shed, as casually, and a lot less chance of being fixed up. The unfortunate problem with being incurably romantic is that there is this easy, easy copout, and I know it because I've a taint of the disease myself. You say *sigh* if only... and play the slight martyr instead of sweating to the goal, which is what everybody you've ever romantically envied had to do. Did the travelling musicians and the players of the renaissance have to work any less to master their instruments? No! And they charged nowhere near the respect that their equivalents today would. So you find "Megacity" fast, and noisy, and upsetting? And uncondusive?

I point you to a story in ANALOG a few years back called "Ecological Niche" that concerned the construction of a true Megacity. Which rapidly fell to the interfering effects of birds and insects and animals and plants that found ways to live there...

So you go out to the street corner and you play. Or you privately prints and distribute your poems and writings. And you sweat. And, by damn, you squeeze from (or into?) the

MetaCity the wine you claim you hunger for!

End of diatribe. There is plenty of room for anachronism in the 20th century, Sutton, and I know because I am a romantic, and I play the personally-supported artist/writer/performer whatever, and I know other who do also.

And that's the reason I'll give money to someone who performs on a street corner, even badly, when I'll refuse it to a "Spare change, fella?" panhandler. I like romantics who act as well as dream.

...On the fans are alienated individuals theory -- how come most of the fans I know, young and old, are intelligent, witty, and generally content in their life endeavors? I think I know more screwed up people outside of fandom than in...

RICHARD BRANDT, 4013 Sierra Drive, Mobile, AL 36609

...Of course, for a rock addict a lot of the fun of Michael Carlson's trip report was trying to identify the sources of all his chapter headings, especially if he got one misquoted. Someone should tell him to listen to "Don't Think Twice" more carefully. Carlson did a good job of painting an overall picture of the con by piecing together a string of brief, clearly pictured incidents; it was a good report.

Ross Bagby's story is so well done that I can't allow the standard s&s style and stock lines to convince me that it should be a parody. It's reasonably inventive, but so are all the readable efforts of the genre. It holds my attention and stirs my imaginings as well as (what they call) the best of them, so I guess you've got a good thing going with the stories.

Great googily moogily, the radio just started playing a song from an LP I forgot to mention: Peter Frampton's SOMETHIN'S HAPPENING, which has this incredible number "Sail Away" (not to be confused with Randy Newman's) that has a high, wailing vocal, some wild guitar work, and a barrage of studio effects, and a good, hard rockin' number called "Baby (Somethin's Happening)" with a good piano line. Nicky Hopkins plays on a couple of the cuts, the other songs are pretty good, but Frampton's style on this LP is so distinctive that I can't be sure everyone would like it. His new LP, which was recorded in a real live castle that a noble patron leases out to ease his sinking finances, sounds pretty good, who I haven't bought and played the whole thing yet; Frampton used to play with Humble Pie, and he plays a guitar like no one I've ever heard. // I saw Frampton in concert with his Camel about a year ago now, and while I was impressed with his abilities on the guitar, I wasn't greatly taken with his music. He's still young, though, and could go a long way if he stays with it. I'll look for the album and give it a listen. // I'm convinced that someone could win a Hugo with a letterzine about rock. I've had more response to Don's column than any single thing I've ever published. Of course, this is supposed to be an sf zine. But I could type pages and pages of comments that came in the letters. Music is such a personal thing to each individual. I've had many letters with recommendations of classical music to counteract the rock; some discussions of jazz. Music is one of those things which most people enjoy or even love in some form or another and they aren't afraid to talk about it. I'm waiting for the first column to come in from Ben Indick or Sam Long or someone else with a classical music theme. It would take two pages alone to list the alternatives to Don's Best Ten list. Much fun, and I'm just sorry that I can't include all the letters of comment about music. I've tried to give you a smattering, but just as an example, I've left out one whole page of Richard's letter, all about music. //

ERIC MAYER, RD 1, Box 147, Falls, PA 18615

Rock music is something like sf. There is a quality of excitement about both art forms, an excitement that is almost totally unrelated to any technical considerations. In fact, rather crudely performed, simplistic rock is a lot more exciting than the more complex stuff we tend to see so much of today. As the Beatles progressed musically, for instance, they lost a lot of the raw power they possessed during their early years. I'm sure their pre-

recording performances in Hamburg were more exciting than their ABBEY ROAD album. The latter of course is of much more musical interest. Likewise, the badly written stf of the 1930's is more exciting, to me, than the more literarily polsihed product being produced in the 70's.

There's a place for all of it, the rock, the more sophisticated music, the old fashioned stf and the lit stf. They are all different genres, to my way of thinking. Not really comparable at all. Certainly one is not better than the other.

I thought you might want to hear about my owl. We found it in a dead tree we'd just cut down. A screech owl.

I started him off on baby food served with an eye dropper and since then he's moved on to protien supplement raw hamburg and now raw strips of beef. I've thrown in a decent ration of worms, grubs and moths as well.

He's rather ornery, with sharp claws and bad breath (you'd have bad breath too if you ate worms) and tends to click his beak at you when he doesn't get his way. He'll ride on your shoulder if you don't care about the consequences to your shirt. When he straightens up and struts about he looks like a creature by Bosch and, in fact, his name is officially Demon though we usually just call him owl.

He's beginning to fly now. We'll have to release him since he's a protected bird, with expensive tastes besides. Right now he's living in a small workshop at the side of the house, making a mess of the place, but you can't very well keep something that wild in a box. He looks pretty much like the owl on your cover this time. // I'm very glad that you have had this experience which no one should miss. Especially glad that it was you and not me. Actually it is kind of neat, but I'm sure you'll be glad when it's all over. We had a strange wildlife happening the other day. Outside the kitchen window a baby robin was making a lot of racket. I figured that it had gotten out of a nest and couldn't fly yet. In a few minutes, however, it was apparent that it could flutter a few feet off the ground. So I said, "Robin, you're on your own." That evening Anna Jo was telling me that the crazy bird had conned an Oregon Junco (snowbird) into feeding it. I didn't think that would ever happen, but I saw it with my own eyes. Even the animal kingdom has its hustlers. //

Well, kiddies, that's all Uncle Frankie has time for tonight. I feel pretty good about getting another issue out before the trip. I'm sorry that I can't have a bigger lettercol, but I must say a big Thank You to all who wrote. I don't even have room to list them in a WAHF. For the last couple of issues I have received close to a hundred letter, and lots of post cards, which I appreciate very much also.

Don't forget to write again. Submit something so there's something to publish next time. I'll probably have another issue for you around October 1st. Finn.

