

# Ash-Wing 19











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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORIES OF EDGAR PANGBORN AND THOMAS BURNETT SWANN





Before a whole sackful of letters come in telling me that I've loused up the longstanding heading for the editor's column which you are just beginning to skim, I shall make haste to assure you that I did it with no misgivings. This issue has been so long in the making that I figured a lot of people out there would be saying, "Hmmm. Look. A new fanzine from some neo out in Seattle." Most of my loyal readers will have forgotten that this portion of the old bird is usually called The Free Commots. So, what the heck!

I couldn't resist using the illustration that Stu Shiffman sent to me and I couldn't think of any better place to use it than right up front. Stu took the liberty of circumventing the postal service and had the illo hand carried to Seattle by Loren MacGregor, intrepid boy fan and collector of Hoyt Axton records. Loren had hied himself across the continent (doesn't that sound fancier than 'across the country'?) to attend Balticon and to be a part of famous, or infamous, as the case may be, live issue of The Spanish Inquisition. I gathered that Stu did the illustration sometime during the convention and I appreciate his remembering that I am a Steeleye Span fan, along with a growing number of other sf persons who seem to have discovered the group. Humph! Johnny-come-latelies. Anyway, thanks much to Stu for the fine illo and thanks to Loren for playing pony express.

I feel a certain amount of remorse for the lateness of this issue. It's been partly done for some time, but I just don't seem to have had it together lately. I realized that it's been six months since the last issue. That's pretty bad. Recently I received an issue of Swoon from Joyce and Arnie Katz. As usual it contained the excellent writing which one always expects from them. But it had been a long time between issues. After a long tale of their involvement in publishing a wrestling magazine and its subsequent demise, Joyce and Arnie vowed that they were back into fan publishing with a vengeance. Swoon would, indeed, be regular. I nodded, and said to myself, "Sure, Joyce and Arnie. You said that before." Darned if they didn't come along a month later with another excellent issue, some thirty pages in



length. I owe it all to them. They stirred me into finishing this off. I suppose that if I didn't try to stay so active in a number of apas, A-W might be just a bit more regular. But that's life, I guess.

I've had a couple of other time consumers pushing this thing aside as well. You may remember the infamous book shelf project. It all began in the dim and misty past. I think it was sometime around Thanksgiving. I am just getting down to the finishing touches now. Assembling took a fair amount of time, working to my own design. But I had no idea that the staining and two coats of varnish required to achieve the finish I sought would require so much time. It now provides me with 255 linear feet of shelves which will, I hope, house the bulk of the sf collection. I'm not certain that it will. Now comes the job of unpacking the box upon box which cover the family room floor. I think it will be a little like Christmas. I haven't the vaguest notion of what those boxes contain. They've been steadily stacking up over the last two years and I'm quite certain that there are some gems in there. It will probably take another six months to sort everything out. So that's been one obstacle to doing a zine and on some sort of schedule.

The other obstacle, and a quite pleasurable one it has been, is doing book reviews for The Seattle Times, one of the two local newspapers. It takes a good deal more care than the book reviews which I tend to dash off in typical fanzine fashion, but I've been relatively proud of the results. It all started because Vonda McIntyre complained to the book editor that there were never any reviews of science fiction. He responded that the professor at the University of Washington who had been doing the sf reviews had just dried up. He didn't have anyone to send the books to, so had just given up. He suggested that she do them. Vonda is busy with her writing so she called Buz (F.M. Busby). Buz is busy with his writing so he called me. I thought, "what the heck" and called the book editor. It took a while to get things rolling because he didn't know me from Adam. I was smart enough to suggest two fields, both sf and mystery. The books have rolled in steadily ever since, many good, some bad, and the preponderance of them in the mystery field. But I've managed to provide more reviews than he has room to print and he seems to be happy with what I've written. The review section is not very large and I generally have to write fairly lean reviews, but I guess that's good practice. Anyway the free books are very, very nice. No money, but nice, shiny-covered, unsullied, mint first editions.

Does this column meander this issue? If you don't think so, there must be something wrong with your perceptiveness. It's being done directly on stencil as I knew that would be one sure way to get something down. So forgive me this time. Or maybe you think it's better this way. Well, let me know, one way or the other. No, I'll restrain myself and not even talk about the Seattle Sounders of the North American Soccer League or the new domed stadium, The Kingdome. I've already bored people to death in The Rogue Raven and won't inflict it upon you, the more general populace.

It must be visiting time. A week ago I had a most welcome and delightful visit with old fan, Mike Horvat. Remember when I used to write about the marvelous old church that Mike owned and lived in down in Tangent, Oregon. Well, Mike upped and married, a little girl came along, and then Mike packed up the whole family and moved to a nearly inaccessible area east of Lake Shasta in the wilds of northern California. He spent last summer building an A-frame dwelling, planting a garden, and generally preparing for their first winter there. It's even difficult to get to a post office from where Mike lives. All of a sudden here he was, in Seattle. It had been about eighteen months since I had last seen him and he was a sight for sore eyes. He stayed the night and we had a good chance to catch up with each other. I was delighted to have him stay and hope that it isn't so long between visits this time around. It was even good news that Mike will be able to participate in Slan-apa again. That apa is getting close to its 80th monthly mailing and is still just zinging along.



### V-CON TIME

On Friday, May 21, we journeyed northward to Vancouver, British Columbia to attend V-Con 5. I was quite ready for a convention. The last one that we attended was MileHiCon last October. Vancouver has always had their convention a bit earlier in the year, usually February, and that spaced the three conventions which we attend exactly four months apart. They did me in this time by scheduling it later in the spring. So was I ever ready.

John Berry called a couple of nights before to ask if he could hitch a ride up with us. He usually takes the bus or the train, but this time he was taking a case of mimeo paper up with him to drop off at Susan Wood's house and didn't quite know how to handle it. Meantime the faculty was on strike at our college and I couldn't get away early as I usually would have been able to. So I was chafing at the bit a little. We stopped at the border to take advantage of the freeport liquor store and take some booze in for the room party.

When we had picked up our bottles and driven the few yards to Canadian Customs, they asked the few simple questions which they normally ask, then asked me to park the car and for all of us to come inside. "What ho?" I cried. "What is this?" What this was turned out to be unusual precautions because of the Habitat Conference which the United Nations is holding in Vancouver, and even further off the Olympics which will be held in Canada this summer. Just being careful, I guess. They asked quite a few questions, asked for identification, and we laughed a bit because they took John to be our son. It turns out that he is the same age as our Tim so I guess that wasn't too unusual. When they found out that he wasn't, then they wanted to know if we had picked him up as a hitch hiker. We finally got through to them that he was a friend from Seattle. Finally let us go; it really was quite friendly. Not really a hassle, but quite different from the dozens of times we've gone through Canadian customs.

Friday evening at the convention was taken up in the costume bacchanal, as it was termed by Bubbles Broxon, who supervised the show, and just a good deal of conversation which typifies that first rush of seeing old friends at any convention. I had a chance to meet Denny Lien from Minneapolis and had a short talk with Terry Carr who was the Special Guest of Honor. Larry Niven was the Guest of Honor but I've never gotten into a good conversation with him. Didn't this time, either, although I enjoyed the heck out of a speech and question and answer session which he gave on Sunday.

Saturday settled down into just enjoying the convention and the people around. Tom Whitmore had driven up from Berkeley and that was a big surprise. I hadn't expected to see him until Westercon. Eli Cohen had flown in from the prairies of Saskatchewan and we were most pleased to see him again. Terry Carr gave an excellent talk in which he reminisced about working for the Scott Meredith Agency, then moving over to work with Don Wollheim at Ace, how the Science Fiction Specials got started, and how he got involved in the editing of anthologies.

In between we sat in the lobby and talked with a wide variety of people, went to the bar for drinks or coffee (excellent having the bar staffed by convention committee and open all the time), wandered in and out of the huckster room. One of the highlights of the day was stumbling into this good looking young fellow and seeing the name tag "Carl Bennett". Carl is from Portland and is sweeping fanzine fandom with a variety of fanzines, most notably a title "Dork-Pizzle." Disgusting isn't it? He has another title or two that he pulls out of his hat and is also involved in SF Log, the review zine. I was very pleased to meet him as I had not known that he would be in attendance.



In following ancient fannish traditions, Susan Wood recommended a Chinese restaurant nearby and about ten of us trooped off to partake of some very excellent food. More than enough. When I have to quit before the final dishes are brought to the table you know that there is plenty of food and that it was good. After dinner we stopped for a brief moment at Susan's home to admire an excellent Judy Mitchell painting. Fortunately for Susan it was hanging on the wall. Otherwise it would have been drooled upon by more than one. We arrived back at the convention site to listen to the after-banquet remarks and to hear the awarding of the Elronds, Vancouver's infamous worst awards. I jotted them down at the time but have misplaced the list. The awards themselves were not as funny as the long list of nominees which kept the crowd in a constant state of chuckle.

Afterwards it was time for the famous Denton room party. I shake my head in bemusement sometimes as I wonder how we got the reputation for room parties. We had no more than arrived at the convention than people began asking us which night we were going to hold our room party. I won't even begin to name drop as I think I lost track of all the people who were there. I remember having an interesting and thought-provoking conversation with Carl Chaplin, the excellent artist who lives in Vancouver. Later I had some more conversation with Terry Carr in the crowded kitchenette. And finally there was an extended conversation about writing with Carl Bennett. I think we were commiserating with each other about how hard it is to attempt to write fiction. I remember seeing H. Warner Munn there; what a grand old man. His Were-wolf of Ponkert has just been reissued in paperback after having been out of print for years and he is quite proud of that. Many others were in and out, even the Nivens, so I am told. I must say that the Gage Convention Center at the University of British Columbia had fine rooms for holding parties. They were student quarters and there was a bedroom with two beds, plus a small living room and the kitchenette. So there was room for lots of people and I wasn't aware of all of the people in the other room.

Sunday I got a chance to talk with my good friend from Chilliwack, Don Livingstone, who drove back and forth each day of the convention. And I stumbled into Randy Mohr just as he was about to leave. I hadn't even known that he was attending. Randy is a young fan from eastern Washington that I would have enjoyed talking to a lot more than we had time for.

Sunday also saw a fine slide show which Al Betz had put together honoring Hugo Gersbach and the 50th Anniversary of Amazing. It featured covers of many Gernsbach magazines and readings on audio tape by fans (Susan Wood, John Berry, Fran Skene, Ed and Norma Beauregard) of scenes from Ralph 124C41+, which drew many chuckles from the audience.

Larry Niven's Guest of Honor speech was given on Sunday also and drew a good crowd. It was loose with plenty of questions from the audience. Primarily Larry dealt with the ramifications of one change in the future and how one goes about thinking through what this means in writing a story. Then he took examples from the audience members and led them through the questions: How long will it take to develop and how much will development costs be and what will be the side effects? He did this with a broad variety of possible developments and it will help some of the budding authors determine what the effects of their fictional technologies might be in the stories they are working upon.

I was disappointed that there wasn't time for the panel on collectibles which was scheduled for Sunday afternoon. Some of the panelists had to leave to make transportation connections, but I understand that there will be a similar panel at Westercon so I can wait a bit. All in all a darned good convention. Thanks, V-Con. Vancouver is the site of Westercon in 77 and I'll be Fan GoH. Why don't you come?



BLATHER

I had thought that I might quit at the end of four pages but it seems that I have a few more things to say. Nothing of huge importance, but I just don't feel like shutting up at the moment.

Two sadnesses have descended upon fandom in recent weeks. I'm speaking of the deaths of Edgar Pangborn and Thomas Burnett Swann. I have enjoyed the writings of these two gentlemen immensely during the time that I've been involved in the world of science fiction and fantasy. I know that their stories have not had the broad appeal of some writers, but for me both of them wrote gems that put them in a special niche. Their works will be missed. Recently Swann's novel, Lady of the Bees, appeared as an Ace Science Fiction Special. I have not read it as yet, but the blurb on the back claims that the author considered it to be the best book he had ever written. Obviously it's on my must read list. Ed Pangborn had a story which I felt was one of his best shorter works in Tomorrow Today, an anthology edited by George Zebrowski. The story was entitled "Harper Conan and Singer David" and was, to my mind, of Hugo quality. I doubt that many people have read the story or even seen the anthology as it is published by Unity Press and sports a rather hefty \$3.95 price tag. So I doubt that it will be nominated, which is a shame because it is a fine story. Adieu, you two. We'll miss you.

While I'm talking about books let me wonder aloud what took so long for Gene Wolfe's fine novel, The Fifth Head of Cerberus, to wend its way into paperback. It finally has made it just recently and if you have any feeling for Gene's writing, and haven't read this yet, for Ghu's sake, rush out and buy it. It's an excellent novel (really three connected novellas) and makes me want to bury my typewriter. If I could write a story like that.....sure, and if wishes grew on trees. The first publication in hardcover was back in 1972 and one would have thought that it would have seen a paperback reprint sometime in the following year. Well, the error has been corrected and I hope that Gene makes a tidy bundle from it. It's being published by Ace who have never been too bountiful with the pieces of eight for science fiction writers; I just hope that they had reasonable thoughts and spread largesse in the direction of Illinois.

We (notice the editorial 'we') had a lot of fun with "Two Hitherto Undiscovered Anglo-Saxon Poems" a couple of issues back. And then some more fun last time with the letters pouring in wondering who this Dr. Theobald was, and where was Strafford College, and was it a hoax or wasn't it. Strangely, no one seemed to hit the nail on the head. A lot of people thought that it was a hoax, but from their meagre knowledge of the subject, it was a pretty good one. Well, now that we've (there it is again) had our fun, it's time to come clean. And I know you're going to groan when I tell. It was Darrell Schweitzer, of course, in one of his myriad disguises. When he first sent it to me he wrote a letter asking "Why don't you just print it as is and see what happens?" I hope he enjoyed the responses. I certainly did and I guess a good number of readers enjoyed it as well. It gave them something to think about for a minute or two. Thanks, Darrell. Say, have you been catching his interviews in the last couple of issues of Algol. Well done.

Well, I'm about out of room on this page so will round this off. We'll be heading for Westercon in Los Angeles at the end of the month and looking forward to seeing a lot of fannish friends there. Before that, however, we are expecting Sheryl Birkhead to stop in for a visit. Dave and Marcia Hulan will be up this way also in late June and we're looking forward to their visit as well. Larry and Judy Paschelke wrote to say that they would drop in for a bit this Saturday. And in late August Anna Jo and I will be heading to Wisconsin to visit relatives and also spend an evening with Hank and Lesleigh Luttrell. Also will try to visit Gene Wolfe if he'll open the door to us. Good fannish times a-comin'. See you all next issue.



# *GUYING MANNERS*

## *or Lancaster Revealed*

*by Dainis Bisenieks*

If you want to study English social history, to know what the English have fancied themselves to be, go to their humorists. A good set of readings in social history could be drawn at need from the pages of Punch alone. For the 1890's, for example, there is The Diary of a Nobody by George and Weedon Grossmith, chronicling the tribulations of Mr. Pooter, a City clerk who would like to make a good show of it and to be thought a gentleman but who is, alas, a born loser. You could sample the cartoons. It would be a fairly pleasant way of getting an education, and you would learn far more than you could from purely analytical books.

I don't think the same can be true for many other countries. Neither the Americans (except in recent decades) nor the Germans, nor I think the French have mocked their mores in quite this penetrating way. Whimsy is an English specialty. There are few whimsical Germans (the poet Christian Morgenstern was an exception -- see his Galgenlieder) -- they take their pretensions much too seriously. German humor is physical. In the cartoons of Wilhelm Busch, their classic 19th century humorist, far too many backsides get kicked. (Let me digress and quote my favorite German joke -- a cartoon from a satirical weekly. The Bavarian minister of agriculture at a county fair is saying, "That's a fine cow there -- just look at that lovely udder." It is, however, a bull...)

Back to England. A man who is adept at needling not only his contemporaries but their ancestors as well is Osbert Lancaster, an artist both in cartoon and prose. His "pocket cartoons", the width of a newspaper column, have been appearing in the Daily Express for 35 years, and selections of them in book form appear from time to time. They are, as they must be, topical; I don't admire them too greatly. But the books are superb. He writes in long rolling sentences full of ironic circumlocution, often with a stinger at the end. (He has a shocking propensity for starting with a dangling modifier, but let that pass.) This will do for a sample:

For sheer pleasure few methods of progression, one comes gradually to realize, can compare with the perambulator. The motion is agreeable, the range of vision extensive and one has always before one's eyes the rewarding spectacle of a grownup maintaining prolonged physical exertion. Moreover, the sensation of pasha-like power which all this induces is not illusory for, by the simple device of repeatedly jettisoning a teddy bear or rattle, any display of independence on the part of the mahout can successfully be countered,



and should she, maddened beyond endurance, be provoked to reprisals a piteous howling will soon attract the friendly interest of sympathetic passers-by and expose her to public, if unjustified rebuke.

This is from All Done From Memory, the first of two autobiographical books -- with, of course, his own illustrations. The book is not all pure fun -- in several places Lancaster reveals his serious side directly, reflecting on such things as social change or the character of his paternal grandfather. For the rest, there are portraits of a large family, with some visitors and hangers-on, following the ways of life which were soon to be doomed by social change. (It was the motor car, says Lancaster, that made possible the "week-end" and took people away from the formalities of Sunday observance.) Though quite a few of them had their personal eccentricities, they followed the mores of the time -- except for the free-thinking Miss Redpath, whose parody of Canon Pelly's sermon proved too much for some family dependents, the "Grateful Hearts". "Straitlaced" is the word that comes to mind, but when years later the author visited the Belgians who as refugees in World War I had stayed with the Lancaster household, he was surprised to learn what respect and admiration they had for this way of life. He had not expected it of them, for they moved in the most enlightened intellectual and artistic circles, and he had feared they had been amused at their old-fashioned, "Philistine" beliefs.

The next book, With an Eye to the Future, takes Lancaster to 1939. His public school was Charterhouse, a dreary place which had the redeeming virtue of encouraging artistic talent. Max Beerbohm was a famous Carthusian; so was Ralph Vaughan Williams; Robert Graves has described his experiences in Goodbye To All That. Lancaster then went on to Oxford. The descriptions and sketches of various "characters" throughout are delightful. Foreign travel on the 1930's followed, and efforts to make a living with writing and art.

As a child, Lancaster had formed a sense of period while looking through old books and bound volumes of periodicals, and among his earliest works are two cartoon histories of architecture: Pillar to Post (exteriors) and Homes Sweet Homes (interiors). With some additions, these were later combined as Here, of All Places... with some loss of unity of effect, though I like the additional material. The format is of pictures and text on facing pages. There are some styles he likes and says so, but in others he finds incompetence or pretentiousness and puts them down with well chosen phrases. Some of his names, like Stockbroker's Tudor, Banker's Georgian and Pont Street Dutch, have passed into the language. The prose is in the rolling style I illustrated, and here are some of the stingers:

Gothic: the comfort of "the average first-class waiting room in a modern provincial railway-station."

Elizabethan: "acres of woodwork carved and chiselled with patterns of quite staggering complication and hideousness."

Jacobean: "The proportions are still almost invariably wrong but they are not quite so wrong as they had been formerly."

Louis XIV: "The ceiling...was prettily enlivened with a variety of cleverly painted rapes."

Municipal Gothic: "a noble legacy of schools, town halls and railway terminals all in the purest style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."

Bypass Variegated: "It is sad to reflect that so much ingenuity should have been wasted on streets and estates which will inevitably become the slums of the future."



Borough Council Residential: "True, they too look like pickle factories, but quite good pickle factories."

Late Skyscraper: "No structure in the world is less effective than the poor man's skyscraper."

Classical Landscape With Figures and Sailing to Byzantium, on the architecture of Greece and environs, have more text and fewer pictures, and considerably less mockery. Progress at Pelvis Bay, Lancaster's first book (in a somewhat undeveloped style, is on the disasters of town planning and the illusions of "progress" a constant theme. But the masterpiece of wit is There'll Always Be a Drayneflete (Drayneflete Revealed in the British edition), a parody of an English town history. In it, personalities and architectural achievements are described with pride but turn out on closer examination to be faintly disreputable. "A sincere friend of the reformed faith, except for a short period under Queen Mary, Sir Jonas Fidget played no small role in the glorious history of his times." The members of this family do all the trendy things at the appropriate times. The artistic scions of another family are perfectly in tune with their times, too. The poetry of Guillaume de Vere-Tipple in the 1920's is imitation Eliot; in the 1930's he goes proletarian and imitates (in all sincerity) the leftist poets of the time. The two specimens of his work are splendid parodies, and so of course are the drawings of the monuments of Drayneflete's antiquity: memorials, paintings, architecture. There are several series of views from the same perspective, showing the transformations of, e.g., the church, an inn, and "Poet's Corner", which ends up as "this valuable building site."

In somewhat the same vein is the latest book, The Littlehampton Bequest. It purports to be an album of the portraits of the family of Courantsdair, Earls of Littlehampton, from the times of Henry VII to the present -- left to the nation in lieu of death duties. The paintings provided by Lancaster (in black & white except for a full color wraparound for a jacket) are attributed to the fashionable artists and schools of various periods -- Van Dyck, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Copley... The last, for example, records the capture of Fort Shittipore by the younger brother of the 3rd Earl, pointing and waving his sword while around him men charge forward or die in picturesque attitudes. But unfortunately the historian must confess that the Admiral did not come ashore until several hours after the capture of the fort.

Another painting on a military subject, a century later, shows the last "charge of the 27th Light Dragoons at Bhanwhana, led by Captain Frederick Courantsdair, second son of the 6th Earl of Littlehampton. This historic engagement, from which the Captain, thanks largely to his splendid mount, alone escaped unscathed..." -- well, there's that air of disreputability again. As expected, the family members did all the trendy things, several at various times going into the arts. The son and heir of the present Earl is shown as pictured on the sleeve of his current L.P.

This last book is a very British joke and is not (yet) available in the U.S. But you can get Here of All Places as A Cartoon History of Architecture, and the Drayneflete book and the autobiographies have also been published here. Mr. Lancaster's British publisher is John Murray.





# the shark

## by david carew

The man on the fade puts down his burden just inside the doorway of a bar. By the door the shadows seem to dance and run from the gentle noise and life of those up front, where the lady serves her drinks. He steps across the dancing shadows to the pool of light cast down upon a green table and puts his hand on it lightly, fingers spread and hungering for the touch of felt. He makes a pass once around the pockets; they are badly worn. Then his hand moves across the leading edge of cushion at the table's end; again this table shows the sign of much hard use. And next, not checking now, he touches the cue sphere; its hard white surface is made gentle by myriad tiny scars acquired in countless petty battles.

The man on the fade lets the smallest of smiles touch his lips, then he goes up front and gets his beer, taking it back to the rear to sit in the corner just behind the green table.

The night issues forth two more gentlemen, drunk and with convention name-tags pinned on their three hundred dollar suits. They go up front and our scene blooms just a little as they spread their money around, buying drinks and pinching butts with joyous prodigality.

Another man, seen speaking with the prodigal two just one minute ago, comes back toward the table at the rear. He is dressed as a rainbow, lush colors and flashing cufflinks.

He breaks out a rack and idly knocks some balls around, and perhaps he is covertly sizing up the man who sits in the corner just behind the green table.

He misses an easy cut.

"Damn," he mutters and looks at the man on the fade as if inviting comment. His black skin seems to live as one with the night.

When he gets no reply, he tries again.

"Wanna shoot a rack, man?"

"I'll shoot."



So they knock the spheres about with no particular skill.

The rainbow black man speaks several times in the ensuing minutes, trying with practiced and assiduous geniality to draw the other out. He has no success. Finally, just before he leaves the back table green where the shadows dance and run, so that his time would not be wasted totally, he approaches matters more bluntly.

"Lookin' for some action, man? They's a real hot show in there." He indicates the other room where the go-go goes on for a two drink minimum.

"Oh yeah? (pause) D'you own those girls in there?"

The rainbow man smiles and assumes a perfect imitation of the familiar instant intimacy that exists among males on the make.

"Well, man," he says, "the girls wouldn't like t'hear ya put it like that. Ya could say I just handle their interests."

"To sell something, mister, first you got to own it. Now how much?"

The pimp seems alarmed at the other's bluntness.

"You ain't even seen 'em yet, man!"

Just then, as if on cue, one of the dancers appears on her break, wearing white see-through knit over the non-existent top of her dancing costume, and nothing over the skimpy bikini bottom. She has an abundance of dark auburn hair; there is a hint of a promise in the line of her thighs and a thrust to her posture as if she is not yet quite beaten by a world of sharks and sharpers and rainbow men.

The conventioners interrupt their game at the table up front to buy her a drink.

The man on the fade is watching her and shows his appreciation with the faintest of smiles.

"She'll do."

"You ain't seen the others, man. Come on in there with me an' we'll have a drink an'--"

"Mister, we do this my way or not at all. I said she'll do. Isn't she one of yours?"

"Are you some sort of strange-o? What's the matter with a drink? Man, I don't deal with crazy people!"

"I don't have money for another drink..."

The man on the fade, for the first time, looks directly at his companion in the night. There is a short silence. Then the black man speaks.

"All right. Big joke. But lemme tell you something, friend; in this town, a man can get hurt handing out that kinda fake-out shit to serious people."

This man of rainbows turns to move off. The other steps closer and speaks in a low, flat, and even voice.

"Mister, I can hustle bread faster than your whole stable could take it from me.



Now remember I said her for an all night stand."

Understanding dawns in a smile on the rainbow black man's face. He glances from the stick still in the other's hand to the two businessmen at their friendly, five-dollar-a-rack game on the front table green. The man on the fade is now a fellow member of the night.

"Luck, friend." He moves off.

The man on the fade takes a deep breath. He has put first construction on the night. He feels hot and hollow with anticipation, but his hands are dead white and bloodless, all nerves and control. There is yet much chaos and reality to thwart his quiet purpose. Will he even get an opening, a chance to set the game? He waits.

There are those without the comfort of our great literature, those who have never felt a poem or seen a play. There are yet those who have been shut out of all pursuits of learning, who know nothing of that beauty in the ordered wonderland of mathematics or the subtle thrill of the chase in the sciences, and yet can't feel connectedness with the middle or working class rounds of work and television and consumption-at-your-level. For these ghostly people there is still, if they are lucky, some small semblance of a life. They can grasp at a kind of truth and beauty in the system of a game without much meaning. Perhaps some few can even write a minor sort of art upon the wind, an order out of chaos that will vanish with the moment, swift as an epiphany. The man on the fade is waiting still.

One of the prodigal two up front has been beaten nearly every rack and is beginning to lose interest. The other seems more intent the more he wins.

"Come on, Al, you got me for fifty bucks already. Let's relax and give the girls a look, huh?"

"Joe, five bucks a rack won't break you. Just one more rack -- you can beat me if you concentrate!"

"What the hell, Al..."

The man on the fade moves quickly, unhurriedly to his chance.

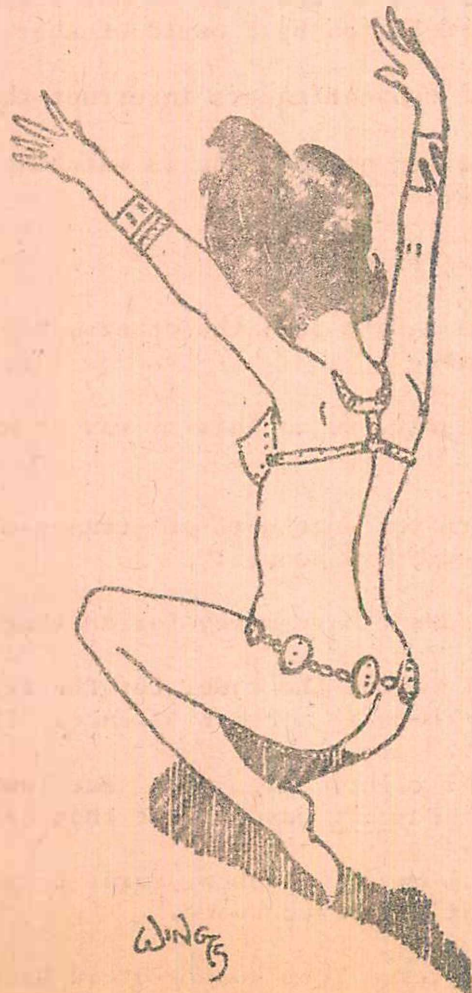
"I'll play you, mister, if your friend is done."

The one Al is thickest and not tall, with the look of an old college tackle. A competitive gleam shows now in his eyes.

"Five dollars a rack; eight ball."

"Fine."

The man on the fade fetches his beer from the back where the shadows dance and run. Al sets the rack and begins to jockey for an edge.





"This is just a friendly game, so I'll tell you straight out: I own a top-of-the-line Brunswick table; I play all the time."

The man on the fade allows himself a carefully calculated look of smug confidence.

"I never owned a table, mister, but I'll play anyway."

He bends to the break and takes three balls, two of them coming off rails in random "luck" shots. He misses on a fairly easy combination set. The businessman moves his heavy form to the table green and does six in a well-thought run. He misses an easy cut, and shakes his head in apparent amazement at this "inexplicable" miss: a hustle. The other finishes the rack in an incredible display of luck, balls taking intricate and random journeys off two or three banks before finding accidental pockets. The eight ball is an easy call.

The man on the fade is now astride the focal ganglions of his purpose in the night. His face is as bloodless as his hands, corpse-white, and set in a small, small smile of concentration. The man of business sweats and curses and throws off his suit coat. He loosens his tie and curses the other's luck; he keeps bumping the price per rack, knowing luck will change. He misses no more easy cuts.

The man on the fade feels ancient and complete. He feels like a vampire, undead and inhuman, one who has had time to become inhumanly good at a game played in the night. If he can test the void and find a human victim, then he shall continue to be. If not, then he will fade and die, as surely as a touch of sunlight kills an undead.

There are questions he must desperately try to ignore. A vampire must have his blood and spreads his own misery in the very acquisition of it. Could such a one vow to never touch his source of "life" again? And should he, if he could? There is before this man in a bar a random array of colored balls on a green table. He is bending his whole being toward a shot that will miss one pocket narrowly and twice touch the borders of his world before "accidentally" dropping into another pocket. He must further orchestrate his purpose to precise effect on the unknown and infinitely complex human being across from him. Can he do it? And should he, if he can?

He is two racks ahead at a hundred dollars per rack when the dancer comes to join him. She sits beside the place where he has put his drink. As he reaches for his drink between shots she smiles.

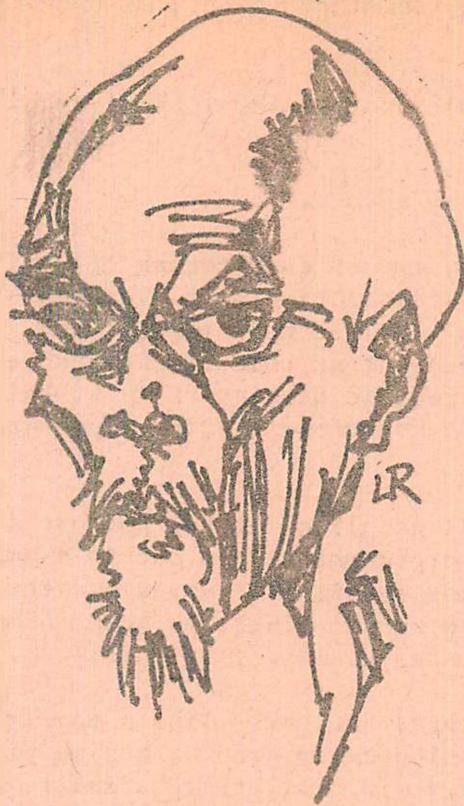
"Good luck, honey."

The man on the fade looks at her sharply, then nods once before moving off. He is suddenly reminded from his concentration that she is woven in the purpose of his work this night. He is disturbed by this. Her eyes are full of cold amusement and her stance there is as purposeful and professional as a slot machine. What kind of lifeblood could he possibly draw from her? Why should he make her lush and ill-used body the symbol and culmination of a victory as pure as his might be tonight?

The room now takes the aspect of nightmare to him. The gaudy black man's smile is wet and knowing, and a tobacco pall lends hazy unreality to the scene. What meaning had his winning anyway? It would be the act of a vampire in a game devoid of continuity, now shown bereft of life or meaning.

His concentration is blown and he misses an easy shot, leaving the bull-necked Al an easy run to win.





"Buddy," he says after putting the eight away, "you are either a hustler too good to believe or else you're just plain lucky. Damm lucky! I say it's luck and I say your streak just ended. Play me a freeze-out: best of five racks; eight hundred dollars on the line!"

The man on the fade is still uncertain, his composure shaken.

"I can't cover that high a bet..."

The rainbow man has been watching with the small audience the match has drawn. He smells money, and speaks.

"I'll take his action. We split the winnings down the middle. OK, man?"

"It's your money -- what if I lose?"

"That's my gamble;" he smiles, "all right, who holds the money?"

Joe, the other businessman, is there to be trusted with the money. One more round is set upon the night.

The man on the fade is surprised to see sheened upon his icy palm a coat of sweat, as light as possible but present nonetheless. He applies a powder fetched from the dancers dressing area, and turns to face the game. He wins the first by taking no chances. The second is even when he pulls short on his first shot that he tries to make "lucky".

"Gotcha now, buddy! You get no more lucky breaks."

The man in the shadow of the sun makes no reply. He looks at the dancer. She could almost be pretty. He breathes deeply and watches the other win the second rack.

He looks again at the woman; she smiles, lowers her eyes, and actually blushes a little under his gaze!

After all perhaps there is some victory or affirmation to be made of his inhuman mastery of the game before him; some small truth to be pursued and captured in the levels of control and order he could bring to bear.

The sound of the break drops him once again into contact with the beyondness of this game that only he can see. He finishes the next two racks in the best of his true style, with colored balls in systems interacting to his advantage in way that just have to be luck.

He puts away the final eight ball and waits.

The chunky businessman finally lifts his eyes from the table green .

"I don't believe it. Nobody can be that lucky, but it's got to be luck! Buddy... who the hell are you?"



The other accepts the money and points to his pool cue.

"I am the man on the fade, in the shadow of the sun. I weave a gentle sort of magic spell with this my wand to live on the money and lifeblood of more productive human beings. If I can long enough resist the fruits of this evil art, or if the sunlight ever touches me, then I will cease to be."

And this time he smiles wide in a bitter, bitter laugh. His teeth flash in a shocking pattern made familiar by countless cheap Hollywood horror films.

The barroom is suddenly dead quiet against the inane thump of the dancers' rock music in the other room.

The man Al's face is white, his mouth open.

"Jesus God," he says in a hoarse whisper, "it's Drac—"

The man on the fade cuts him off with a tiny gesture and a look which seems full of animal fire: cat's eyes! He turns to the auburn-haired dancer and hands her the money. He then moves quickly, unhurriedly to the doorway where he picks his burden up and exits.

The tableau he leaves is quickly broken by the woman, muttering, "I won't leave... some nutball creep with a dental problem... Hey, mister! You come take your money back! You can't just—" She moves to the door as she is speaking.

The street outside is completely empty.

finis

#### BONE POEM

I cast the bone of an ancient sage  
Into the fire and drew it out again  
And read a fortune in the cracks of it  
And the fortune said, "Teach your  
Children to respect their elders  
Lest they cast your bones into the fire."

-- Darrell Schweitzer --



THE  
RED  
BOOK  
OF  
WESTMARCH  
\* \* \*  
REVIEWS



Joy In Our Cause by Carol Emshwiller. Harper and Row.  
Knave of Dreams by Andre Norton. Viking Press.  
The Wind's Twelve Quarters by Ursula K. LeGuin. Harper and Row.  
The Infinity Box by Kate Wilhelm. Jarper and Row.  
Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang by Kate Wilhelm. Harper and Row.

One of the most exciting developments in contemporary sf is the emergence of first-rate woman writers. There have always been a few women in science fiction; such popular writers as C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett and Judith Merrill, for example, were respected for their contributions to the field. Yet the strongest praise they often received in the old days was: "I had no idea the author was a woman; she writes just like a man." In actual fact, I am not at all sure that good writers reveal their sex in their writing, but the fact that the basic audience for sf in those years consisted mostly of young, middle-class males undoubtedly reinforced the basically sexist attitudes of this pop literary form. In recent years, however, sf has begun to break out of its self-imposed sub-literary ghetto. A number of new writers, both female and male, have begun to explore the many intellectual and emotional possibilities of a genre which has always had the potential to break new extrapolative ground. For sf is, potentially, both literature and ideation. The basic problem is that its writers, people writing for money, have usually been willing to sacrifice ideas, as well as all the other qualities which inhere in good literature, to the basic, cliché adventure-story format and its often mindless demands. Science fiction was called a literature of extrapolative ideas, yet what little extrapolation took place seldom entered the realms of sociology, psychology and anthropology in any profound manner but stayed safely in the realms of those sciences closest to technology. What the writers seldom realized was that any major change in even a small part of the total system which is human society will eventually affect the whole. Thus we had ordinary WASPish families living and loving in worlds so changed they could only represent our best or worst dreams.

Well, all this has changed, and although the vast majority of sf writers still turn out pulp pap for the adventure seeking mass audience, the best contemporary sf writers not only write with greater perception and depth than did their predecessors, they present wide ranging speculations on social and personal possibilities for mankind that are far more awe-inspiring than all the sun-destroying starships of Doc Smith and his cronies. Although the 'hard' sciences are not neglected, the central sciences in sf today are the 'soft' ones; and some of the most exciting voices in the field belong to women such as Joanna Russ, Ursula K. LeGuin, Kate Wilhelm, and a host of younger writers who have just begun to publish in the past few years.



Even five years ago, a large review of sf book by women would have been unlikely, perhaps impossible. That this review can appear is one of the signs of sf's great health as a genre today. These five books range from the mind-bogglingly avante-garde fictions of Carol Emshwiller to the old-fashioned sf adventure of Andre Norton, covering all the ground between. There is something for everyone here.

Although Carol Emshwiller's Joy In Our Cause is not published as sf, many of her fictions first appeared in sf markets. She is known within sf as a writer of strange, but real, power. One of the reasons I like her work is that she's one of the few writers even distantly connected to sf who knows and enjoys contemporary North American poetry. And she writes out of that knowledge as much as she writes out of her feminine and sf backgrounds.

There is no way to paraphrase an Emshwiller story: these are fragmented non-narratives constantly undergoing metamorphoses; they are, I believe, constructed on the subtle shifts and oppositions that make up felt life. One begins reading, wondering just what is going on, only to be caught off-guard by the perfect rightness of what is being said. Emshwiller explores her inner spaces with the cool detachment and disciplined precision of a scientist; her almost Romantic quests are articulated with a cool, savage, often brilliantly ironic, wit. I love the unexpected rightness of her outrageous juxtapositions, the way she turns the knife of her perceptions so that light continually glances off the blade. This is not a book to read in one sitting, for Emshwiller's stories demand a singular attention. Those who are willing to offer such attention will be rewarded with a startling richness of vision not to be found elsewhere in sf.

To move from Carol Emshwiller's magic fictions to the fictional magic of Andre Norton's world of adventure is to move from one end of the fictional spectrum to the other. Knave of Dreams is good Norton, which means it's an entertaining way to escape the mundane world for a few hours. A young man wakes up in a parallel universe; he is at the centre of royal plots and counter-plots and he has powers which, if only he discovers how to use them in time, will guarantee his winning the power, the position and the love of a devoted princess his courage and resourcefulness deserve. It's an old story, meant for those who want their adventures to follow conventional paths. Ms. Norton speeds through the unravelling of the plot so quickly I am forced to wonder if she wasn't bored by those conventions once she had finished creating the background to adventure, the new world in which it all happens.

What sets Ursula K. LeGuin and Kate Wilhelm apart from a writer like Norton is their ability to transcend the conventions of the genre through style, complexity of vision and





of intellection. Although very different writers, they share the ability to write stories which involve the reader on many levels simultaneously.

In The Wind's Twelve Quarters, her first collection of short fiction, Ursula K. LeGuin displays great powers of empathy for all kinds of life and a commitment to the ideal of communication between all beings that is moving in the extreme. There are pure science fiction stories here, speculative explorations of various emotional situations and pure fantasies of great imaginative power. A number of the stories are set in the same universe as her Hainish novels, including that subtle study of the uses of power, "Winter's King." Set on the world of Gethen/Winter, the setting of her magnificent novel, The Left Hand of Darkness, this story has been heavily revised for this collection, and the revisions are fascinating in their implications. Gethen is a world of androgynous humanoids, people who can both sire and bear children. Using masculine terms of office and feminine pronouns, LeGuin creates a profoundly disconcerting fiction, the more so because it so effectively engages our sympathies.

All these stories are fine entertainments, even the somewhat weak early ones and the few didactic later ones like "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." The best of them, however, like the utterly unlike but equally powerful "The Direction of the Road" and "The Stars Below," are gripping mythopoeic fictions. The latter is an evocative and transcendent study of the creative scientific spirit as essentially a spiritual drive, and it is quite simply a beautiful work of art.

Like LeGuin, Kate Wilhelm is especially interested in characterization. The best stories of The Infinity Box are probing, sensitive and delicate explorations of character-in-action. Unlike LeGuin, Wilhelm presents events in a studiously 'realistic' framework, eschewing LeGuin's symbolically resonant imagery for deceptively understated, seeming naturalistic descriptions. Yet where LeGuin often fills in her landscapes in great detail, Wilhelm will allow subtle implications to fill in her environments in our minds.

Although her people seldom participate in flashy physical adventures, they do engage in often terrifying psychological and emotional battles, sometimes with themselves. The protagonist of "The Infinity Box," for example, discovers he can control the mind and body of a woman who, an added sf interest, perceives time in an abnormal manner. With an extraordinary feeling for the ways in which our minds and emotions work from moment to moment, Wilhelm unflinchingly reveals his slow self-destruction as he attempts to deal with this power alone. In "April Fools' Day Forever," temptation in the form of physical immortality is defeated by the powers of art and life in the person of a marvelously vital sculptor. It is a complex drama involving many different people in a world only slightly further along the twin highway of technological development and ecological disaster than our own. "The Funeral," a stunningly fine story, presents a horrifying vision of a dystopian state through the eyes of an adolescent girl. With her, we slowly learn what terrible disasters in the past made the all-powerful state she lives in possible. This story hurts, it's so real, so undeniably emotionally right.

The three best stories of The Infinity Box are novellas, their length allowing the author to carefully build a world the reader slowly slips into. She builds such a world, a world where nearly all of humanity dies in the face of plague, radiation and starvation, in her brilliant new novel, Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang. One family, the Summers of Virginia, see the collapse coming and use their collective wealth to somehow meet the near-eradication of life. Their solution is cloning; it works, but the results are not what the elder Summers desired.

The clones are united as ordinary humans are not by the fact that groups of people are essentially one person. As LeGuin also suggests in her moving story,



"Nine Lives," clones are group oriented to a degree ordinary humans cannot comprehend. Because the whole is more important than any part, the 'family' survives for some generations in its river valley living by a group morality which Wilhelm presents with great subtlety. But the other side of this development is the slow evisceration of original thought in any area of human endeavor. The latter part of the novel deals with the single misfit born to these people and his slowly growing realization that he must destroy their way of life in order to preserve human life of any kind at all. He finally sets up a primitive community where children will once more be unique, for despite the 'fall' to svagery, this is the only hope for human survival.

There have been many end-of-the-world and return-to-savagery novels in sf, but few so intellectually and emotionally acute. Once again, Wilhelm's science is exciting but, more important, her major characters fully engage our sympathies. This book is as rich, earthy and alive as the Shenandoah Valley Wilhelm evokes in her supple prose. It's a marvelous novel, and beside it the kind of fiction Norton writes fades into proper obscurity. Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang is quite simply a magnificent novel.

-- Reviewed by Doug Barbour --

Alternate Worlds; the Illustrated History of Science Fiction by James Gunn. Prentice-Hall. \$35.00.

This is THE book to get for your Trufaan sweetheart or Neofan admirer of sf. I'll admit \$35 is a lot of money, the price of 28 buck an' a quarter paperbacks but you'll never regret it.

Alternate Worlds is 9½" X 12" and measures 256 pages thick including a six-page index plus a listing of the Nebula and Hugo award winners in all categories from day one. There are well over 30 pages of full color cover reproductions of sf pulps and digests with the artists identified plus all throughout the book are b&w cover repros. There are also still from many of the horror and sf movies, conventions, and you bet, pictures of all the pros from Lovecraft to Asimov. Also of note are 41 vol.1, #1 color covers of many obscure pulps from the 1949-1958 era. I will also mention that all color reproductions are superb and on slick paper.

There are a good many illustrations from books of all centuries with portraits of the authors.

As the title implies, AW is visual as well as literary and so pictures of Hugo Gernsback and H.G. Wells find their spots not to mention Jules Verne, Daniel Defoe, Homer, Plato, James Watt, and Michael Faraday, along with various other sf icons. The book not only deals with science fiction but science fiction realities. Consequently one will find pictures of many inventions and their place in sf history.

The utopian books such as The Republic and The Odyssey are dealt with and various fantasies and sf ideas are pointed out. Well over 20 pre-20th Century authors and philosophers are discussed, enabling the reader to do further research into the books dealt with.

As early as 165 A.D. Lucian wrote of a flight to the moon and also argued that the earth was round. And again in 1532 Ariosto wrote an epic poem on a flight to the moon and what he found there. These are early examples of what we now think of as science fiction.

If you are interested in reading some older sf, AW gives many examples. How about a 1771 edition of Memoirs of the Year 2500 by Mercier? Lighter than air balloons were once mere fantasy but Cyrano de Bergerac wrote about his voyages into space with them.



As a matter of argument proving that we live in a science fiction world Gunn lists several major inventions at the beginning of each chapter. Leonardo da Vinci's helicopters and Richard Adam Locke's spoof discovery of life on the moon are only two of the many source materials quoted in the book.

In Chapter Five, Gunn shows the impact that the mass magazine market of 1885-1911 had on sf writing. The dime novels, McClures Magazine, Strand, and Tom Swift truly opened up the writers' market and for the first time someone could turn pro.

Chapter Six points out many of the sf prophets from 1866-1946. Examples are Mark Twain's 1889 TV set or Darwin's Origin of the Species as science fiction. In this chapter several authors are dealt with in some depth, principally H.G. Wells and Jules Verne.

Chapter 7 deals with the pulp magazines from 1911-1926. This is where E.R. Burroughs and Ray Cummings got their start. Street and Smith started publishing them and the magazines Popular Magazine and All Story. The formation and development of many magazines is discussed and what it all meant to the sf culture.

Chapter 8, the one you've been waiting for. Hugo Gernsback and Amazing Stories were to become immortal and cause the first fans. The advent of Amazing Stories and what it printed is traced, along with several other pulps such as Weird Tales, Wonder Stories, Fantastic, etc. This is where Skylark of Space, Edmond Hamilton and Buck Rogers got their start. Amazing Stories was also the pulp Isaac Asimov read before he became the Isaac Asimov we now know so well.

1930-1940 gave us Albert Einstein, the beginning of the second world war, but in spite of it came the first annual sf convention in 1939. That decade also is renowned for E.E. Smith, Asimov's first story and the Legion of Space. Summaries are given of the themes of many stories of that decade including Lovecraft's tales and Jack Williamson's stories.

Chapter 10 is entitled "The Astounding Editor, 1939-1950." This chapter is basically devoted to John W. Campbell with Astounding and how the two went to shape science fiction and its authors. In this period Asimov wrote some of his best sf, such as the Robot series and writers like James Blish, Ray Bradbury and Anthony Boucher evolved, along with many others.

1940-1950, The Big Boom. Pocket Books made it big with sf, the first anthologies came out, and an author is interrogated by military agents for describing the atomic bomb in detail in a science fiction story one year before the bomb is exploded. When the bomb did go off people and slick magazines took another look at science fiction and one magazine said, "Today we are living in a science fiction world." In this same chapter fan projects and publications are discussed along





with conventions. Other sf histories are given mention as well as big name fans. Ace Books had a science fiction line along with Simon and Schuster. Several movie stills are included.

1949-1965, Chapter 12, gives us The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Galaxy, Stranger in a Strange Land, and TV, with serials. Again many of the big stories of the time are brought to light, along with New Wave sf. Chapter 13 gives us the Shape of Things to Come in sf. Gunn talks about how sf stories are put together, sf philosophies, fantasy and Apollo moonshots. Many writers give their answers as to what science fiction is all about. Vonnegut:

"I love you sons of bitches. You're all I read anymore. You're the only ones who'll talk about the really terrific changes going on...You're the only ones with guts to really care about the future...whether the space voyage for the next billion years or so is going to Heaven or Hell."

Foreseeing the future with Asimov:

"...History may not repeat itself but similar broad responses frequently occur under similar broad stimuli. If you stand far away from the great and variegated story of man and squint your eyes so that you drown out the details and see only the broad blocks of color, various repetitive patterns do appear."

Or, not to mention"

"...this world's used up; let's go find another."

And:

"Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light..."

And so ends the book AW with a calendar of events from the discovery of fire to Rendezvous With Rama.

It's a reference book, a history book, a book that will stir your thought, make you look up unread classics, and give your sheer entertainment at the same time. It is logical, rational, it makes a point. All in all, a damn good book.

-- Reviewed by Roy Berger --

Best of Judith Merril. Warner Books, \$1.25.

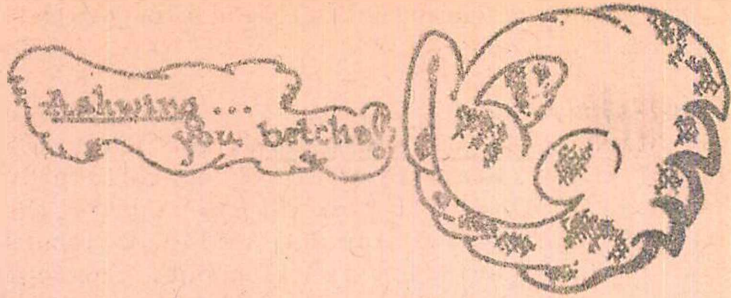
The last year has produced a profusion of single author collections, primarily of the "Greatest Hits" variety. Ballantine and the SF Book Club have their fine Best of.... volumes, the DAW series have the somewhat biblically titled, The Book of .... (Even, in Leiber's case, The Second Book of ....), and Doubleday is creating a noise with its Early Asimov, Early Del Rey, etc.

Most of these collections represent a long term survey of currently active and popular writers. Warner Books has chosen to make its opening gambit into the sub-genre with a collection by a writer who, though apparently alive and well and living in Canada, has pretty much disappeared from the field over the last several years.

The Best of Judith Merril is a good collection of stories, none of which has been overanthologized, and most of which can still stand the light of day. It is a collection which, for various reasons, deserves to be published and read.



While no longer an apparent influence on science fiction, Merrill has at times been very much of one. She was one of the very first to apply that Best of.... title to sf, starting with her series of annual anthologies for Gnome Press twenty years ago, and later carried the torch for the so-called New Wave coming in from England.



According to Virginia Kidd's introduction, the lead story, "Only A Mother" made Ms. Merrill's reputation overnight. In the perspective of 1946, this story of a genetically mutated child and motherly love was probably fresh and shocking, but in the light of the real-life results of drugs like Thalidomide and the heroic efforts of their victims, its contemporary reading lacks real punch.

One of the most interesting stories, stylistically and otherwise, is the short "Wish Upon A Star". Written in 1958, it deals with the ramifications of sex-role reversal, a field of intense interest nearly 20 years later. Nowadays, the interstellar ark is a familiar enough device, but in this story the concept and its related society unfolds slowly and gracefully, and maintains its interest.

The remaining stories quite naturally vary in quality, though most are readable. Merrill was adept at characterization and, at times, stylistically innovative. Occasionally her stories and her characters may seem overly "feminine" in today's world of feminist writing, but it is important to maintain the perspective of the time. These stories were written when the field was totally dominated by male writers, and are strikingly warm by contrast with a great deal of contemporary work. Historically these stories might be viewed as transitional, between the opulent space operas of Brackett and Moore, and the work of the fine new women writers. It seems likely that without the widening of possibilities offered by writers like Merrill, we would not today have in the science fiction field the likes of LeGuin, Wilhelm, Russ and McIntyre.

-- Reviewed by Jeff Frane --

Triton by Samuel R. Delany. Bantam Books, \$1.95

Imperial Earth by Arthur C. Clarke. Harcourt, Brace and Janovich, \$7.95

Within a month, a brace of novels was published by two of science fiction's most respected authors, Chip Delany and Arthur C. Clarke. Both novels operate on the premise that the moons of the outer planets can and will be made habitable for Man, and an attempt is made to describe the society and environment which would evolve. In both cases, the protagonist visits a future Earth, and a similar attempt at description is made there. Predictably, beyond these points the difference between the two novels is far more striking than the similarities.

Certainly the most obvious difference is that of style. Clarke's straight line, narrative prose never seems to change, and it remains thoroughly readable. Delany, in contrast, seems to be in a constant state of change and growth, and carries on a blatant, occasionally obscene love affair with the English language. Simplicity of tone is as alien to Delany as a paranthetical statement like this would be to Ernest Hemingway:

(A very few [slightly less than one out of five] like Philip -- who was standing on the other side of the hall, rubbing his beard on his wrist and talking to three, junior programmers,



whose sex Bron could not even distinguish [though one of them was naked] for the men and women passing between -- lived in complex family communes.)

Delany's stylistic pendulum does seem to be swinging away from the artistic pretentiousness that reached its peak (or nadir) in Dhalgren. This appears to me a sign of maturation of his talent, a replacing of self-consciousness with self-confidence, and the resulting ability to use language as a tool for communication, rather than an experimental subject.

What Triton possesses that Dhalgren lacked is a movement of story, an evolution and development of character. It is this character development which further sharpens the contrast between Triton and Imperial Earth. While not, eventually, a likeable character, the protagonist, Bron, is exotic but real, an individual whose complexity is strikingly different from Clarke's Duncan Makenzie, a name only, never a person. At no point in the book does Makenzie ever excite interest or create empathy in the reader. The possibilities inherent in his curious birth and heritage are never realized and the third generation clone remains a gimmick, a gimmick which fails to delineate the character in any memorable way.

In many ways, the whole projection of future life on Titan and Earth seems a similar gimmick, as if Clarke himself never really got the imagined worlds fixed in his mind. Delany's prose lends an air of fantasy to Triton which perversely adds to the believability of his construct. Rather than being a series of Futuristic technological extrapolations, it is alien, yet convincingly human. The lives of those who lived 150 years in the past were totally different from our own. How can we deny that those who live the same distance in the future will not be at least as different.

While it is apparent that the contrasts between the two novels are greater than the similarities, the very differences should be a source of credit to the genre of science fiction. With these two books at which to point, no one can ever accuse the field of being narrow.

Fade Out by Patrick Tilley. William Morrow & Co., \$8.95

What is it that distinguishes the mainstream science fiction novel from the more orthodox, fan-accepted book? In most cases, those books appear to the regular sf reader as a mish-mosh of hackneyed ideas and outdated concepts, predigested pap for the general public.

In some cases, however, that predigestion merely makes those concepts understandable to a reader who has not been steeped in the somewhat esoteric background of the field. A case in point is Patrick Tilley's Fade Out, the account of the social, scientific and political ramifications of the landing on Earth of an extra-terrestrial space ship.

The spaceship in question first makes its presence known by creating a twenty minute long disruption of all high-frequency radar and radio wave bands. It is a good while before the American military and scientists determine that the ship was causing the interference, still later before they become convinced that the ship is not a product of the Russians. The ship's actual landing is covered by a similar, longer fade-out.

From this point on, the book divides its attention between the machinations of Presidential advisors and the efforts of a team of scientists to comprehend a totally alien device.

The failings of Fade Out do exist, and they are the failings of modern mainstream



fiction. Tilley unconvincingly portrays telepathy as nothing but a silent form of speech, and leans a little heavily on the theories of Von Daniken at times. Furthermore, the concentration on the high circles of power seems unfortunately reminiscent of the Harold Robbins school, though admittedly, it would be these circles who would control any action taken in such a circumstance.

-- Reviewed by Jeff Frane --

Eaters of the Dead by Michael Crichton. Alfred A. Knopf, \$6.95

With this novel, Michael Crichton has made a curious departure from his previous successes. He has written a strange tale of Viking heroism. The novel masquerades as the travel log of one Ahmad ibn-Fadlan, an Arab sent by his Caliph on a diplomatic mission to the King of the Bulgars in the year 922. Crichton has worked hard to make this read authentically in the style of a 10th century manuscript. In so doing he may discourage some readers at first.

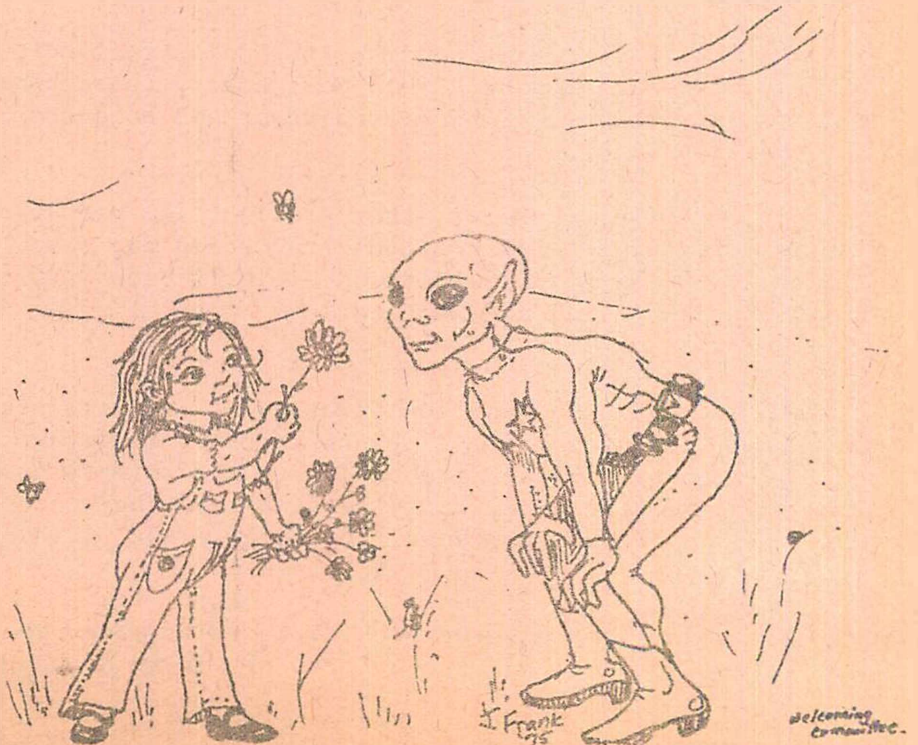
Those who persevere, however, will find themselves caught up in a fine tale. The cultivated and cautious ibn-Fadlan is kidnapped by a band of Vikings. Omens have told their leader, Buliwyf, that a foreigner shall make the thirteenth of their number. As they travel north, ibn-Fadlan has the excellent opportunity of comparing his own culture, religion and customs with those of the fierce Norsemen.

When the band reaches the Scandinavian kingdom of Rothgar, they set out to rid the realm of the wendol, humanlike beasts with incredible strength. A series of battles and forays ensues, climaxing in a Viking raid on a sea cave to kill the mother-creature of the wendol. The manuscript leaves off curiously as ibn-Fadlan makes preparations to travel southward to his homeland after the final battle.

Throughout Crichton has added footnotes to explain curious occurrences or customs. They are couched in academic language to lend credibility to the manuscript. Likewise there is an appendix explaining the humanlike wendol and a bibliography which is at least partially authentic.

Eaters of the Dead

is a curious novel from one who has written such best-sellers as The Andromeda Strain, The Terminal Man, and The Great Train Robbery. Crichton obviously had fun writing it and the reader should find good entertainment in the reading of it. One cannot help but think of John Gardner's fine novel, Grendel, and the epic poem Beowulf. Myth runs deep in mankind and Crichton has let a little of it out.  
-- Reviewed by Denton --





# INSIPIDNESS

by MIKE KRING

AN EXPLANATION UPON THE CURRENT OUTBREAK

by James N. Waxlow-Hyde II (member of T.H.O.O.T.D.R., T--3rd Class)

edited and condensed by Michael Kring (S.O.B.)

(Presented as a Public Service by the same wonderful and kind people who brought you tasteless lime beer.)

Insipidness in all its various and myriad forms and manifestations is easily recognized but greatly misunderstood. Most insipid persons are, to be sure, natural home-grown talents, and, as such, can be easily tolerated for short periods of time. However, it is not generally recognized and/or realized that the truly inspired insipid person has been trained to use his or her talents to the fullest extent possible with methods we now know. The training of insipid persons we shall endeavor to examine later in this paper (if at all), but, for now, we shall merely trace the history of the only one, true organization gifted with the sacred task of training insipid persons: THE HOLY ORDER OF THE DYING ROSE.

The Holy Order Of The Dying Rose (or the Rosey-Crusties, as they are more vulgarly known) was founded in the year 1415 by Sir Reginald Smythe-Meadows III. (He was knighted for having bored a foreign diplomat to sleep, thus allowing other agents on His Majesty's Secret Service access to the diplomat's papers, consequently averting a long and costly war with the Giant Pygmies of Outer Wonderland. Unfortunately, during the Knighthood Ceremony at Buckingham Palace, the Royal Couple kept falling asleep, being merely in the presence of Sir Reginald. Sir Reginald was later officially knighted by proxy. The proxy was a blind, deaf-mute, and thus nearly severed the head of Sir Reginald during the Ceremony. It required thirteen stitches and a bottle of very expensive brandy to sooth Sir Reginald's nerves after the aborted ceremony. The blind, deaf-mute was later trampled to death by a herd of albino mice as he slept. Some say it was instigated by Sir Reginald, and others declared that it was a miracle. Thus the blind deaf-mute was canonized and made a Saint. And that's where St. Bartholomew-of-the-White-Mice came from.

Sir Reginald was indeed a truly inspired insipid person. It is said he fathered many bastard children upon unsuspecting ladies, for his mere presence put them into such a stupor that he could do whatever vile and odd liberties he desired. Such rumors were never proven. After several years of working for His Majesty, Sir Reginald gathered together a band of like-natured individuals (having discovered that they were the only ones he could converse with, since all the others fell asleep), and founded The Holy Order Of The Dying Rose. (The legend has it that the organization



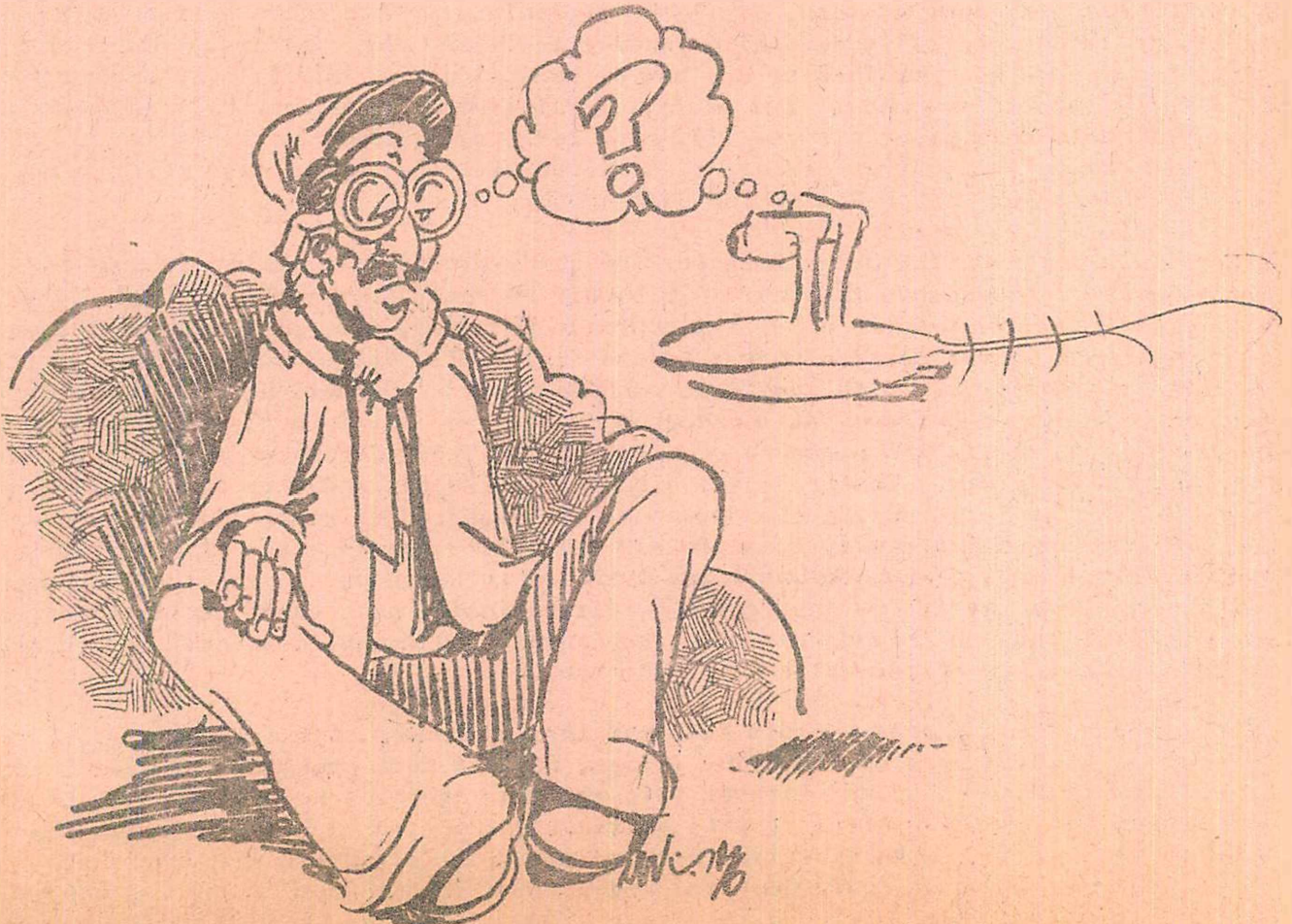
was named after a mysterious dream Sir Reginald had one night after several plates of sauerkraut followed by several pints of bitter beer and topped off with a quart of sherry. Needless to say, Sir Reginald was a man of strange and odd tastes. However, to continue with the legend, the dream was thus: "I was standing upon a hill overlooking the Thames when a ghost came out of nowhere and accosted me. 'What do you wish, Sir?' I asked of his grisly visage. 'Nothing, Sir Reginald, my good Sir,' the ghost replied. 'I merely wish to give you this.' And he gave to me a dying rose. And as I stared at it, it grew black, then like iron, never shriveling in the meantime. I stared and it began to rain, and as I looked up I beheld God in His Heaven yawning down at me. And when I looked again at the iron rose, it was rusted and crusted all over with slime. I immediately threw up and awakened."<sup>1</sup> Or so says the legend.) After several years, Sir Reginald was declared the Master Twit, the Head of the Order, and it was off and stumbling.

A direct descendant of Sir Reginald (after having married a Margaret Winnow-Waist), a certain Wadsworth Harold Smythe-Meadows, was described by Boswell thusly: "The man doth dote on each syllable he spits forth from the open wound that is his cavernous and gluttonous mouth. He maketh obscene blurping noises in the presence of the queen<sup>2</sup>; and, truth to tell, I doth not comprehend how our gay majesty doth tolerate the impudent fellow. Amost foul and obnoxious person, indeed!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, p. 138 of SIR REGINALD SMYTHE-MEADOWS III JOURNAL OF ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE AND GARDENING, Rosey-Crustie Press, 1943.

<sup>2</sup> Hackworth Trever-Gargle IV -- the very first reported closet queen in written history.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. III, page 1413 of the INFAMOUS LOST JOURNAL AND CHEESE SPREADER OF HOWARD BOSWELL, M.D., M.S., AND C.B.





The Holy Order Of The Dying Rose has revealed that there are several orders and degrees of insipidness. Ferald Ford, the current President of the Colonies, is a mere rank amateur of the art, albeit a fine one. He has not had any true training of his talents, and thus has not achieved the full stature he would surely get in the Insipid World if he had done so.

The degrees are as follows (with six orders in each, in ascending order):  
1) Boob; 2) Dim; 3) Moron; 4) Dunce; 5) Imbecile; and 6) Twit. The person that is the Twit -- 6th Class, is the Master Twit, and, ergo, the Ruler of The Holy Order of the Dying Rose.

There is one last order that has been granted to only a very few of the Order: The Imperishable, Most Righteous Holy Order of Dwid. Sir Reginald was the very first to be declared a Dwid in the year 1643, 180 years after Sir Reginald's tragic death. (He was murdered in the streets of London by a giant, enraged hedgehog.) Only three other Dwids have been declared in the 560 year old history of the Order. They are: Frederick W. Foxworth, granted Dwid in 1723, 60 years after his death; Mugwort H. Mudbottom IV, granted Dwid in 1810, 30 years after his death; and Carol C. War-Hyde-Manners, granted Dwid in 1915, 45 years after her death.

In order to be declared a Dwid, a Holy Council must be convened, and that only on the order of the Master Twit himself. (There have been six Female Master Twits.) The Holy Council is composed of Twits -- 5th Class only, and, of course, the Master Twit, who is the head of the Holy Council. After consulting all of the facts, and comparing them with the examples of the behavior of the other Dwids in the Order's glorious history, the secret vote is taken. The result must be unanimous before another Dwid can be added to the scrolls.

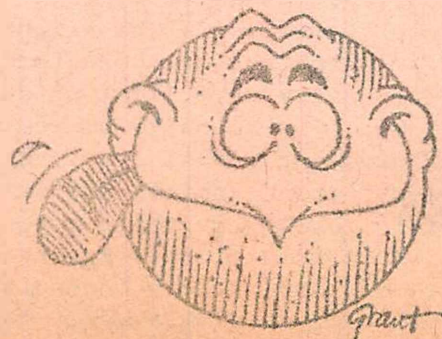
The training of applicants and apprentices in The Holy Order Of The Dying Rose is taken care of by Morons -- 4th Class. The training usually takes place through the mails as a face-to-face encounter would merely put the applicant to sleep, unless the natural talents were very strong. After progressing through the Orders (via a series of exhaustive and documented tests), the applicant might indeed one day become the Master Twit!

In recent years, there has been an outbreak, so to speak, of natural insipidness all across the globe. Most of it seems centered within the various governments of the world. However, some of the natural insipids (as they are known) have been corrupted by a rival organization called the Divine Blue Order of Mutual Enemies (or Blue Meanies, as they are properly known). The Blue Meanies tend to corrupt the insipids into using their powers for their own personal gain. Thus the rise of the population explosion and the immense increase of idiots in the world, for unnatural sex while under the influence of a Blue Meanie Spell sometimes damages the forming fetus.

So, beware! Especially of all persons in the government, for they are more than likely under the Blue Meanie Spell.

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# RHAPSODY IN REVIEW

by David Kleist

On February 12, 1924, George Gershwin's "serious" career began with the presentation of "Rhapsody in Blue," a work later classified as symphonic jazz. In 1969 Leonard Bernstein, performing a dual role as both conductor and solo pianist, presented his interpretation of Gershwin's brilliant musical monument for release on Columbia records. Together with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Bernstein captured the vibrant instrumental moods of "Rhapsody" in a fashion which George himself would surely be proud of.

The work itself can be broken down into three basic parts: theme one, a bluesy, medium-fast melody which is the keynote of the entire work; theme two, a more animated and quick-stepping musical line; and theme three, an extremely melancholy yet impressive arrangement in which the entire orchestra is dominant.

"Rhapsody" begins with a high and lazy clarinet's version of theme one, supported by the strings and brass. Following is a short piano interlude, and then the full orchestra bursts forth with a majestic rendering of a series of solos which are, alternately, slow and fast variations of the first theme. This leads into a jubilant and rousing orchestral rendition of the theme, accompanied by a fully-jazzed piano, followed by Bernstein's pounding out of a succession of slinky, grand-piano-like, and improvisatorial solos which lead into theme two.

Theme two consists of a number of rambling and rapid blues variations performed solely by the persevering piano. They're executed perfectly. Then, with a solemn and reverent pause, the orchestra articulates a sentimental and flowing version of theme three, which soon rises to a crescendo in which the brass play a vital role. The rapid imposition of plucked strings and vibrant piano variations of this theme soon follow. Then a set of alarmed, staccato versions spring from the keyboard; the horns enter, loudly and brilliantly, blaring a new, fast variation of the third theme, which is backed by the strings. Then the climax is reached, and after a sliding measure from trombone and piano, a glorious and unexpected return to theme one occurs, featuring, once again, the complete orchestra. Finally, enhanced by crashing cymbals and reverberant piano, the finale arrives with overwhelming grandeur.

Without a doubt "Rhapsody in Blue" is one of the finest - if not the finest - symphonic jazz pieces ever written. It combines every aspect of the structured symphony and the easy-going jazz improvisation to form a perfect conglomerate of both styles, meshed flawlessly. The moods created by each facet of the piece are a study in themselves. The bright portrayals of themes one and two and the sad and beautiful etchings of theme three cannot but remind one of the subtle contrasts we encounter every day: light on darkness, happiness on sadness, new on old, beauty on grotesque. I personally am reminded of New York City, with its architectural splendor and tenement slums, its love and hatred, its noonday smog and neon lights. The "Rhapsody" counterpoints are remarkable, and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra with Bernstein, bring out these opposing forces with true flavor and zest. Their presentation is immaculate. For these reasons I am thoroughly awestruck by Gershwin's finesse and Bernstein's ingenuity, and can thereby sum up both the piece and the performance in a single word: magnificent.



## DON'T PUT OFF UNTIL TOMORROW

RANDALL D. LARSON

Thaddeus Quibb had planned for a long time to do away with his wife. And after much procrastination he finally decided the time had come to do it.

He wasn't about to take any more of her nagging and pestering, not when he knew that she went out nearly every night and fooled around with other men. Their laughable marriage had fallen apart years ago, and Thaddeus realized it must have been out of sheer laziness that neither of them had tried to get a divorce. He doubted if Edith would give him one, anyway. No, it was much too convenient for her to live off of his carpenter's salary, enjoying herself at his expense in the secure surroundings of this home; no doubt laughing behind his back at the husband she felt was too meek to react. Well, Thaddeus would show her that he could react; first thing tomorrow morning.

Then she would realize that he wasn't going to take her cheating and her nagging any longer. He smiled to himself and tried to envision what she would do. She probably wouldn't think he'd have the nerve, and would sit up in bed, laughing at him and sarcastically asking if he'd lost his head. But, in the end, it would be Edith who would lose her head.

Thaddeus chuckled and climbed up the stairs to the bedroom. Edith wouldn't be home for some time, she was supposedly out playing bridge with her lady friends. That was a laugh, Thaddeus frowned angrily. Rather, she was out playing something else with her boy friends.

To reassure himself of his task, Thaddeus opened the closet door and gazed in at the long, shiny hatchet that lay against the far wall. Then he smiled -- tomorrow morning Edith would get the axe. At last she'd realize that meek Thaddeus had come to the edge of his patience with her, and his evilly cunning mind was sharper than his wife would have guessed.

Thaddeus dressed for bed, and then poured himself a small drink from the brandy bottle on the end table. Gulping it down, he snuggled in under the bedsheets, a smile of morbid anticipation on his face. Just before he dozed off, he felt the burning sensation in his stomach, rapidly increasing in pain, only to diminish for him when he fell into a deep sleep.

When Edith Quibb arrived home late that night, after a quiet evening with her lady friends, the lonely house brought her mind back to Thaddeus. Poor Thaddeus, she sighed as she put her coat in the hall closet. Too meek and afraid even to ask about a divorce, and yet probably too stupid to give her one if she brought it up. And



besides, she knew his meekness was only a front for what he was probably up to -- fooling around with other women.

Edith walked up the stairs and into the bedroom, glancing at her husband's still form. Smiling, she picked up the half-empty brandy bottle from the end table and went into the bathroom. Poor Thaddeus, she thought again, he should have realized that she was too sensitive to be treated so unfaithfully. Edith shook her head as she emptied the remaining brandy into the sink, the slight scent of fresh poison fuming up into her nostrils. As she turned on the faucet to flush it away, she smiled once more, and she was glad she hadn't put it off any longer.

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### SMALL TOYS

It was rectangular & thick; one side was curved;  
The edges extended a little too much  
Top & bottom, as if it hadn't deserved  
Full care, or its craftsman had lost his touch

Unexpectedly. As I looked I noticed that  
It wasn't solid, but had layers, the two  
On the outside were bigger, fancy & fat,  
Trimmed in gold & in dust, & some in brand-new

Decorations: my finger-marks. The inner  
Were both many & brittle, some shaded  
Yellow or white, little black marks, & thinner  
Than the outer. & each & every faded

One looked same as the last, yet suspicious;  
The black marks were different, random throughout.  
I hefted the thing & felt the delicious  
Weight on my calloused palms, cast away doubt.

I knocked at the outside, testing its substance;  
I rubbed at the edges, flipped through the layers;  
Held by its curved side, allowed them to dance  
Free in the air...it would please my small players,

A fine toy, I thought, the testing all done;  
Better than branches, toys I made, or stray rocks.  
I tucked it away, took it home for my son  
To play with, in the cave, along with his blocks.

-- Michael Carlson --



## FEATHERS

MIKE BLAKE, 2799 Pawtucket Avenue, East Providence, RI 02914

Your explanation of the Free Commots brings back fond memories of Lloyd Alexander, and reminds me I must schedule him for a rereading somewhat sooner than a simple "eventually". I still recall the elements that made that series excellent with delight: a less-than-perfect hero who actually learns from his mistakes and whose character develops as a result, an engaging and highly individualistic heroine, and such fascinating subsidiary characters as a pig and an overgrown cat. Positively one of the best fantasy sequences since Tolkien, those books.

Ben's conreport makes the Fantasy Con look better than in retrospect it actually was. Let me qualify that. It was one of the worst cons I've been to, but perhaps the best fannish weekend I've ever had. It was the people present who made the weekend, not the con, the existence of which you could almost ignore entirely. We would have had the same excellent results if Kirby McCauley could have persuaded folks to show up at the Holiday Inn on Halloween just for the hell of it, instead of making a pretense of running a convention. For of the usual services you look for at a con, the IFC was sorely lacking. The hucksters were in a room the size of a closet, were overpriced and understocked: ("What? Four dollars for Brak the Barbarian!") Registration was in the small hotel lobby, so small they had lines going out into the street. It was so disorganized they had lost the list of pre-paid registrants, and they ended up pressing poor Jodie Offutt into service typing nametags. That's all the nametags were, too. A plain slip of cardboard with your name typed on it, and a plastic cardholder. They were easily forged, and many did. Considering the twelve dollar registration fee, they were probably the only ones who got their money's worth. I guess they didn't feel they were missing much in not getting a copy of the program book, which consisted of two mimeographed sheets listing the events of the day. Like I said, people-wise it was a fantastic weekend and I had a great time; conwise it was a disaster. This Halloween weekend the Rhode Island Science Fiction Association will be holding a con in Providence and we wish to make it clear we were not the ones responsible for the Fantasy Con's organizational fiasco; but as regards attendees we hope that the same fine people will show up.

Doug Barbour's excellent reviews would have shone out well standing in an article of its own. He at least has a balanced view of Barry Malzberg, whom Darrell Schweitzer stomps



on using New Dimensions 4 as an excuse. One wonders if he will find Guernica Night to be shallow, unreadable, and utterly contemptible, and if he thought Herovit's World and Beyond Apollo to be so also.

I certainly agree with you about Stableford's Grainger series. The scene where he loses the parasite in Swan Song was especially well done. The immensely cynical first person narrative style Stableford used reminded me quite a bit of John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee. Grainger as the Travis McGee of space. The Hooded Swan his Busted Flush? The parasite his Meyer? Well, I guess the analogy doesn't hold up after all.

But did you catch those Monty Python references in the books? Twice in the books a group of attackers burst in upon him through a door...and both times he remarks, "I wasn't expecting the Spanish Inquisition!" However, his attackers were cretinous non-Python fans who didn't know the proper response.

STU GILSON, 745 Townsend Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA R3T 2V5

...no, pardon me, Islandia is next on my list (picked up a really nice first edition of that a while ago from Chester (Cuthbert), and the o.p. price it now fetches boggles the mind...by the way, if you're a completist for Wright's stuff, Plume Books has recently issued a large paperback reprint with an attractive cover. / Thanks for the tip. I have one on order thanks to you. I was astounded when the local book dealer told me the price that Islandia was fetching. I've been a fan of the book for a long time, but never got to buying a hardback of it. It's too late now, obviously. Yes, what's that about hindsight?\_/

I share K. Allen Bjerke's misgivings for the misleading influence of book reviews; I don't think, however, we should disregard their possible value as a means of accurately appraising a given book. Conflicts of opinion between reviewer and reader are bound to arise, but this is to be expected when criticism is entirely subjective. It's the duty, the responsibility of the reader to shop around for a reviewer with whom he seems to share something in common, and then place his trust in that reviewer. Perhaps, in order to accomplish this, we'll run into some godawful writing, but in the end we stand to benefit from the sacrifice and save much wasted time reading worthless material. I can suggest this, of course, but I must admit that it doesn't necessarily guarantee success. I'm still groping about for a critic with whom I see eye-to-eye; I did come to terms with one reviewer a while back, but then that was Schuyler Miller and he's not much help to me now (except when I decide to read some older material and can therefore consult my old Astoundings.

After I finished the Lovecraft biography, my first reaction was to sit back and ask myself, "What has deCamp really accomplished?" Well, he is to be praised for the exhausting detail with which he examined Lovecraft the man (and with as fascinating a subject as HPL, it's difficult to become redundant). I was not, however, impressed with deCamp's attitude towards his writing or personal philosophy; I get the feeling that deCamp allowed a personal dislike for the man to interfere with (and therefore influence) his appraisal of his writing. If the treatment was to be fair and as objective as possible, then Lovecraft the man and Lovecraft the writer should have been considered independently. As it was, it became obvious that deCamp had a healthy dislike for his subject (which is also the case in The Miscast Barbarian). I understand Frank Long's biography of HPL is now in print; that is one book that should prove interesting if only as a contrast against the deCamp. Perhaps then we'll be better able to judge the value of deCamp's work. / One wonders why deCamp chose to do works on two men whom he obviously disliked. One also hates to accuse him of capitalizing on the current high interest in both of these writers. What is one to assume? \_/

The lavish production of Alternate Worlds is impressive; as a matter of fact, it's probably the appearance of the book that will distinguish it most (and not so much the text). I tend to worry, however, that with a widely distributed, impressive volume like



this, renewed public interest in sf shall ultimately follow, and with it, a flooding of our already taxed ranks. Public (and academic) respectability for sf is what the writers have been seeking for decades (they obviously stand to benefit); I have my misgivings, however, that fandom at large shall be incapable of adjusting to the strain of expansion. For in the process, we just might lose that special "something" that makes us such an individual, satisfying unit.

NYLE BEATTY, RFD 1, Fulton, MO 65251

Well, I'm now out of the U.S. Navy, and after trying my hand at various jobs, I'm presently working at the Fulton State Hospital, in the building for the criminally insane. It doesn't pay much, but it does have its interesting moments.

I've discovered that I have developed into quite a home body, since my release from the service. I spend the majority of my free time and money on music and books. What with buying 7-8 albums a week, plus a constant stream of strings for guitar, banjo and fiddle, who's got the money to hit the nite spots with anyway?

Ben Indick's con report was of particular interest to me for two reasons. First, I enjoy reading fantasy as much as science fiction. Second, I've always wanted to meet Manly Wade Wellman, since the day I first discovered his "John" stories. Guess I was first drawn to Wellman because I had heard many of his stories were based on folk legends and songs. Upon reading Who Fears the Devil?, I immediately became interested in a story entitled "Little Black Train." Well, for years I searched for either a record, or someone who knew the song. Finally last year at the North Carolina Folklife Festival I heard an elderly gentleman sing "Little Black Train" at one of the night concerts. The next day he was nice enough to sing it for me, so I could record it.

Oh, before I forget, take a look at Fiction Illustrated featuring "Schlomo Raven".

CHRIS SHERMAN, 700 Parkview Terrace, Minneapolis, MN 55416

Speaking of Civil Wars and reconstructions...

The other day I was with a crazy bunch of Lovecraft fans, about a dozen of us in all, and we decided to do what we usually do when we get together -- namely, exploring some off-beaten, supposedly interesting site in Minneapolis or St. Paul. Last time we rode up the Mississippi on an old, restored riverboat. Once we rented a mansion that belonged to PEI Bonewits, the occultist, and had an overnight Black Mass there.

The activity this time was to explore the restored FORT SNELLING, high on a bluff overlooking the point where the St. Croix and Mississippi flow together. The Minnesota Historical Society did all the work, and what a job they did of it!

The buildings were all reconstructed on their own foundations, and the rock was dragged from the same quarry five miles up-river as was the original rock. All of the tools and supplies were authentic, so the first thing to be restored was the black-





smith's shop and a carpenter's shop. Then they set about with the actual reconstruction, fashioning the nails out of wire (well, they had to cheat somewhere), building all of ~~their~~ own tools, and using them, making the mortar, etc. They had about 100 people working on the fort, all having a ball.

Well, now that they have rebuilt most of the fort, they have opened it up to public inspection. A surprise to me, however, was what happened when we entered.

We was done shot at by a drunken guard.

Suddenly, about a dozen soldiers in full uniform stormed out of the barracks, and began to grapple about in the dirt with this fellow, who by this time had managed to load up his musket with another charge, and fire at us again.

Finally, they got this guy under control, and hauled him off to the guard house. The Captain of the Guard walked over to us, bowed to the ladies, and said, "I'd really like to apologize for Harrison's behavior, folks. It seems he had his own bottle of ale stowed away from the storehouse, and got a lil' off the keel. It's my responsibility, though; I was in dozing off after keeping the night watch against the Indians. I'd like to apologize personally." At which point, he bowed again, and stalked away.

Out of curiosity, we followed him back to the guard house. Harrison, the delinquent, looked up at us out of groggy eyes, and mumbled something, then passed out. The Captain of the Guard picked him up, and put his wrists in irons, then threw a bucket of water over the poor fellow.

From this point, we wandered up into the round tower, where they used to ward off the Indians. It is a hollow building about 30 feet in diameter, with three foot walls. The windows on the inside are about two feet wide, narrowing down to a mere slit of three inches. When we got there, there was a soldier aiming his musket out of the window. We asked him about the design.

"So's we can fire out real easy, and the Injuns can't fire in, excuse me," at which point this fellow discharged his gun at some target outside.

This whole thing was becoming a bit much for us, so we left the round tower and went off to explore the country store. Advertised for sale was some chewing tobacco, so crazy old Joe West asked the girl, in full period dress, if he might buy some. "No, sir, tobacco is only available to the soldiers. You'll have to go to the captain if you are a civilian."

There were, I guess, about 20 people in the fort -- men and women, and their whole summer was spent within the fort, playing this elaborate game. They apparently went through a year-long training course, and were the select out of about 1000 applicants. They must not allow people visiting any reference to the 20th century -- for them, it is 1824, clear as day, and anyone who talks about the future is off his collective water barrell, and the people within the fort let them know so.

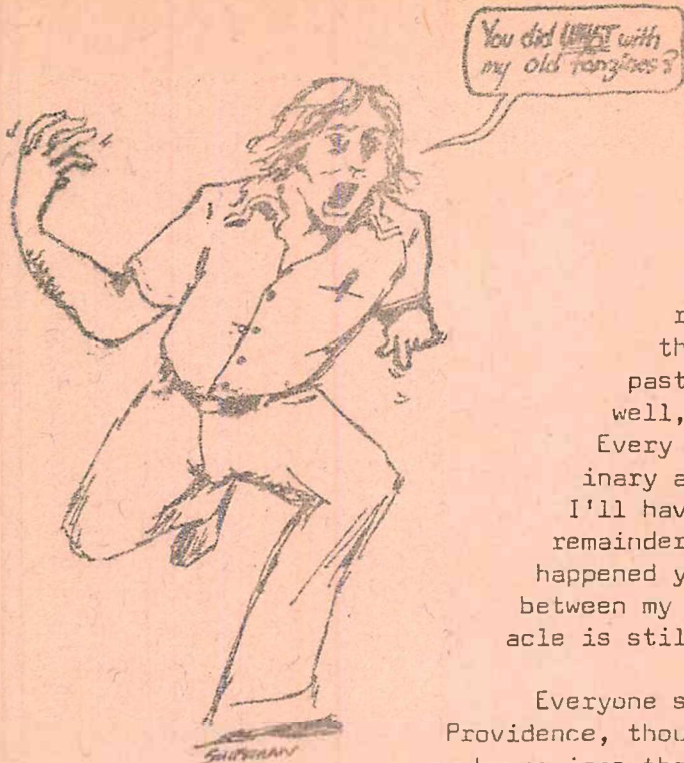
Apparently the ammunition was merely blank, but they actually acted out these things, with no predetermined script. They just lived as people who were in this situation probably did in 1824. They fetched water from the well, made all of their own clothes; the uniforms were of thick cotton wool -- hot as hell, but the soldiers didn't seem to mind.

How is that for an elaborate fantasy? Freaked me out....

∟ Fort Nisqually, once situated at the mouth of the Nisqually River, was dismantled and moved to Point Defiance Park in Tacoma. Each board numbered and reassembled just as it had been. But no elaborate game is played by the people who take care of it. That's a fantastic tale you tell.∟



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



Ben Indick's conreport was very pleasant reading in two ways. It is an excellent example of a declining artform, as I'm sure almost all your locs will affirm. But it had another meaning for me and perhaps for just a few other Ash-Wing recipients. It provided fresh proof that an individual who is considerably past the average fannish age can mingle well, communicate, enjoy himself at a con. Every time I attend a con, I suffer preliminary apprehension for fear that this time, I'll have gone too far out of synch with the remainder of the people on hand. It has never happened yet, but it's nice to get confirmation between my rare con trips that this fannish miracle is still recurring.

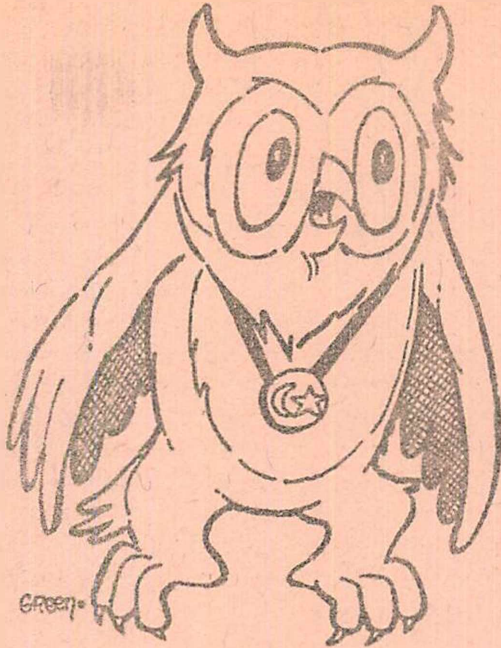
Everyone seems to have had a wonderful time in Providence, though. I even got a first-hand account on happenings there from another Hagerstown fan who made the trip. He snatched a lump of soil from Lovecraft's grave, incidentally, and brought it back to Hagerstown. When he transferred it to a permanent container, small particles from it spilled onto his floor. Before he could clean them up, his dog discovered them and ate them as if they were a great delicacy. My fan friend reports that his dog has been acting strangely ever since.

"Rain of Terror" appealed to me more than most brief stories which depend on a pun in the final line for their existence. It reminded me of the Nova offering on PBS a couple of weeks ago which described the atmosphere of one of our outer planets or a satellite of one of the giants as possibly consisting of this very type of organic molecules. It would be nice if one of the space probes could be converted en route to scoop up a bit of this atmosphere and analyze it to see if it's nutritious and safe for humans. If so, a full-scale space program might be reinstated on the grounds that there's almost an infinite amount of free food for the hungry out there waiting to be hauled back to Earth. / I gather from some things that I've read that there is plenty of food here on Earth right now, and that it's mainly a matter of economic distribution that causes anyone to go hungry. We can't even seem to solve that problem in our own country, much less for all the peoples of the Earth. Pity.\_/

The book review section is highlighted by Darrell Schweitzer's summation of the de Camp book on HPL, probably the most objective of all the numerous reviews of this biography I've seen in any fanzine. Darrell makes one goof when he describes Lovecraft as writing only for magazines. He forgets all those newspaper columns. One oddity, incidentally; while so many people are discussing HPL's early bigotry and the way it subsided in later life, one of the most outspoken racists in fandom of the distant past was present at the Providence convention and seems to have been involved in no difficulties there over his past opinions, which presumably have also moderated.

I haven't seen any of these are books which use old prozines as sources, but their existence is a good thing to know about. Rottensteiner's book on science fiction in general contains some full-color cover reproductions that look much better than the originals ever did and almost caused me to head straight for the advertisements in Xenophile and





start writing checks to fill out gaps in my collection of old prozines. It's particularly fine that one of the new art books emphasizes Paul, because I'm convinced that Paul will some day become the subject of a cult as big and vocal as those which arose over the drawings of Grandma Moses or Wyeth. Another happy revelation is the Simak reissue spree. I've just had a letter from Cliff in which he gives the glorious news that he will retire soon from his newspaper job and will then turn his attention to writing a lot of stories that he wants to transfer from his thoughts to paper.

It was strange to read in the letter section so many variations of the generally suspicious reaction to those Anglo-Saxon poems. I might have known that Sam Long would put the rest of us to shame for scholarly response. I've never known a fan who was so jovial and unassuming and yet capable of producing such authoritative statements on the most arcane subjects.

Not much room left for comments on the art. If that's an owl on the front column, I'd love to know what caused it to get in such lamentably rumpled condition. I don't dare even think about what will happen if the creature on the back cover decides to fly off that cliff; I suspect that its lifespan will become truncated under such a circumstance. The interior illustrations usually provide at least an oblique commentary on the text that they're close to, whether you and the artists meant it that way or not. And I should add a final note of thanks for your consistency with Ash-Wing. It's nice to open at least one big fanzine and feel reasonable certainty that it will contain the mixture as before, in a field which has so many fanzine publishers experimenting and altering policy constantly. / Gee, thanks. Er, what's a policy? /

MIKE KRING (shucks, he's got a new address and I don't have it to hand at the moment.)

Speaking of Stableford, have you ever read some of his earlier works in the old Ace Doubles? That's when I got hooked on Stableford's writing. The man has a knack for creating weird and odd characters that are consistent with the alien background he always seems to effortlessly create. The first one I read was The Blind Worm. Very nice, indeed. I thought it was, on the whole, a weak work but since I believe it was one of his earliest works, I didn't judge it as harshly as I would something from a grand old master. What I especially liked in The Blind Worm was the sequence where all the dead things came out of the sunken city and fought the jungle thing/lifeform. A very evocative scene. The Cradle of the Sun I didn't like as much, but I still thought his protagonist was very different and odd and more than a little psychotic. But then, most of his characters are that way. Granger was at the beginning of that series. He definitely mellowed out as it progressed. Which is another thing that impressed me in that series. The hero progressed from a pure paranoid, demented, bitter man to an almost likeable person. In fact, I felt sorry for him when he lost the wind. I do hope Stableford continues writing novels. I find it difficult to keep up with all zines and things that he appears in with his short stories. / Stableford is up to more new tricks in his latest novel, Man in a Cage. The protagonist is schizophrenic and the book alternates between what is happening to him at the present, remembrances of others in a maximum security institution from which he has been released, and long sequences of dreamlike quality coming from some other part of his personality. It will not be to everyone's liking, even that of devoted Stableford fans. I had a tough time with it myself. /



Have you heard about Roger Dean? He's the artist who did all those lovely covers for the record albums of YES and URIAH HEEP and a couple of other rock groups. He's got a book out with his paintings and sketches in it. I haven't seen it myself, but it sounds as if it'd be dynamite. At \$13 or something like that, it'll be quite a while before I get a copy. / Yes, I've seen it and I'm sure that you have by now. The art work is superb and fantasy fans, particularly, ought to search this out and at least take a look at it. One of my favorites is the album cover he did for a group called RADGER. It seems to me that the price is around \$10.95./

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My own Eric Frank Russell favorites are The Space Willies (originally published as "Plus X" if memory serves) and Wasp. I only wish I could find more of his stuff. It seems to me that the 50's were watershed years for hard-core sf fen; Heinlein was writing the series of juveniles that would culminate in Starship Troopers, magazines like F&SF and Galaxy were rising to prominence, and Astounding was entering the metamorphosis that would make it Analog. Frank Kelly Freas was grinding out some of the best prozine covers possible, Poul Anderson was writing about the vibrant, zestful Polesotechnic League, and Isaac Asimov hadn't yet dedicated himself entirely to science-fact writing. Why speak of the 30's and 40's as "The Golden Age" of sf? It seems to me that 1950-59 produced a lot of damned good stf.

I recently saw "The Man Who Would Be King," a film based on Rudyard Kipling's story of the same name and made in much the same spirit. I'd heard it touted as "satirizing the British Imperial chauvinism" of the Victorian era, and as a critical look at the psychology of power.

Bosh. It was a ripping adventure straight out of Rudyard Kipling's backlog of tales of the British Raj. It did capture the essence of the Empire in those arrogant, overconfident days -- but it also illuminated the type of man who built that Empire, the pioneers who had new frontiers to conquer. Hard times, yes; only the most brutal men could survive, and those times are gone, vanished with the frontiers into seats on the United Nations Security Council. Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India -- where was one the Hindu Kush, Bokhara and Samarkand.

But if the past is truly the mirror of the future, we can look for this kind of man to arise in response to the establishment of new frontiers. SF authors have made their livings out of depicting their struggles -- Laumer and Dickson's Planet Run, Heinlein's Tunnel in the Sky and The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, Bennett's "The Rocketeers Have Shaggy Ears" -- the list could go on forever. The new frontiers presented by sf are what makes the genre vital, living, and an interesting field in which to read and write. Without it, there would be no life in sf. It would become decadent, chasing its tail -- as does Dhalgren -- without electrifying the readers -- as does The Stars My Destination.

So link The Man Who Would Be King with sf; two explorers enter an unknown -- an alien -- place and, with superior technology and technique, set themselves up to conquer and hold the land. Is this so far from most sf. The sense of wonder is there.

